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Pillaging Middle-earth: Self-plagiarism in *Smith of Wootton Major*

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Abstract

Examines the fraught concept of “self-plagiarism” in Tolkien’s works. Self-plagiarism or self-borrowing is something more than just repeating themes and motifs throughout one’s literary career, and Long details examples of scenes, dialogue, character traits, and so on echoing from one work to another, with particular attention to *The Lord of the Rings* and *Smith of Wootton Major*.

Additional Keywords

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*; Tolkien, J.R.R. *Smith of Wootton Major*



ILLAGING MIDDLE-EARTH:
SELF-PLAGIARISM IN
SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR

JOSH B. LONG

PABLO PICASSO ONCE REMARKED, “We must pick out what is good for us where we can find it—except from our own works. I have a horror of copying myself” (10). This was never a concern for Tolkien; he borrowed, reused, and adapted so frequently from his own work that John D. Rateliff has suggested that Tolkien had a “knack for autoplagerism” (*History of the Hobbit* [History] 370).¹ Despite Tolkien’s inventive mind, he sometimes struggled to write;² rather than create *ex nihilo*, he simply re-created, recycling earlier material into new forms. This wouldn’t be an issue except for the fact that one of the tenets of modern literature is originality. Since the Enlightenment, writers have been hard-pressed to produce works of novelty—those who achieve this feat are often praised. Conversely, those who give way to unoriginality are condemned as minor, inconsequential, or impotent, and it is assumed that they are simply not good enough.³ *Smith of Wootton Major* is arguably Tolkien’s best minor work. However, the story is heavily, even superfluously, indebted to his *legendarium*.

Defining and Considering Self-Plagiarism

The word *self-plagiarism* does not appear in the *OED*, nor does its equivalent *autoplagerism*. The reason why is plain: the word is inherently self-contradictory. If plagiarism is “literary theft” (*OED*), surely one cannot steal from

¹ E.L. Ridsen concurs, noting that Tolkien “continually mined his own earlier work, concepts, and languages for new steps in his fiction and poetry” (24-25).

² Tolkien’s publisher Rayner Unwin recalls, “There were times [...] when the pressures of work or illness within his family totally engulfed and dispirited [Tolkien] and dried up his invention” (84).

³ It cannot be overstated how important originality has become to literary aesthetics. In *Stolen Words*, Thomas Mallon suggests, “Originality—not just innocence of plagiarism but the making of something really and truly new—set itself down as a cardinal literary virtue sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century and has never since gotten up” (24). Similarly, Jason Fisher notes, “While it was once perfectly acceptable to borrow and allude—or if not always acceptable, certainly widespread—being *unoriginal* is now considered one of the greatest defects of modern fiction” (34).

oneself.⁴ For my purposes, *self-plagiarism*, as a term, is simply the idea of borrowing from one's previous work without acknowledging it. In *Faking Literature*, K.K. Ruthven defines self-plagiarism as "the use of bits of one's earlier writings as unmarked components of a 'new' text" (140).⁵

It is sometimes assumed that plagiarism is, strictly speaking, the direct lifting of whole passages, verbatim, from one work for use in another. This is, of course, the most common form of plagiarism; however, plagiarism also includes the reuse of ideas. The *OED* defines *plagiarism* as "the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own." Although there are certainly places where *Smith's* language parallels Tolkien's other stories, Tolkien was more inclined to refashion a setting, reuse an object, or recycle a character type. This is not the same thing as a theme. While a theme is a "salient abstract idea" that can be found "recurring in a number of literary works," self-plagiarism is a concrete detail that has been taken from one literary work and placed in another (Baldick). This would include such things as objects, characters, actions, scenarios, word strings, and settings.

In Tolkien studies, Tom Shippey was the first to draw attention to Tolkien's self-plagiarism; in *The Road to Middle-earth*, he asserts, "In *The Lord of the Rings* his invention came, to begin with, from a sort of self-plagiarism" (105). In particular, he notes that the "hobbits' first three real encounters" contain characters derived from Tolkien's poem "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil" — the Willow-man, Tom Bombadil, and the Barrow-wight (105).⁶

John D. Rateliff and Mike Foster have also explored Tolkien's "autoplagerism." In "Gríma the Wormtongue: Tolkien and His Sources," Rateliff makes a compelling case for the "'gollumisation' of Wormtongue" (16). He points out that Wormtongue is analogous to Gollum in the following respects: both are warped, both speak of themselves in the third person⁷, both are known by their epithets, and both are referred to using the simile "like a dog." Most compelling of all is his assertion that both undergo the same moral regression. Each becomes "the doorkeeper of his own prison, then a beggar, then a murderer and (probably) a cannibal" (17). In the end, each destroys not only himself but also his master — Saruman and the Ring, respectively.

⁴ *Plagiarism* is derived from Latin *plagiarius*, meaning kidnapper (OED).

⁵ Some readers might find self-plagiarism too pejorative. However, I am taking my cue from Tom Shippey and John D. Rateliff. The latter, of course, uses the synonym *autoplagerism*.

⁶ For more on the connections between Tolkien's poem "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil" and *The Lord of the Rings*, see Christina Scull's "Tom Bombadil and *The Lord of the Rings*."

⁷ Gollum does this consistently. Wormtongue does this when he pleads with Théoden: "Do not send your faithful Gríma away!" (*The Lord of the Rings [LotR]* III.6.519).

Mike Foster looks specifically at Tolkien's autoplagiaristic motifs, noting that "betrayal by a loyal member of a company, a sacrificed severed finger or hand, and the creator's jealous love for his creation found in *The Silmarillion* also appear in the hobbit tales" ("Teaching Tolkien" 259). Elsewhere, Foster turns his attention to *The Hobbit* and *Roverandom*; he suggests that Gandalf is reminiscent of the wizard Artaxerxes and concludes that "the spider, eagle, and dragon encounters in *The Hobbit*" are similar to episodes found in *Roverandom* (Review 111).⁸

The Faerian Artifact: From Ring-bearer to Star-brow

The most obvious example of self-plagiarism in *Smith* did not actually make it into the published text. In the draft, Nokes finds a "magic ring" in the spice box, and Smith receives it rather than a star (*Smith of Wootton Major* [SWM] 109). It is obvious why Tolkien changed this—it was too similar to his Ring series (Flieger, "When is a Fairy Story" 63).

Interestingly, the star motif is just as prevalent in Tolkien's works. One source of Smith's star is certainly "Aldarion and Erendis," which was published posthumously in *Unfinished Tales* [UT], though it was probably composed in 1960 (Scull and Hammond 2.35). Tolkien also made a typescript of "a fuller version" of the text at the beginning of 1965 (Scull and Hammond 1.627). This was right around the time he was composing *Smith*. The self-plagiarism is apparent: "Then [Aldarion] saw that [Erendis] had caused the white gem to be set as a star in a silver fillet; and at her asking he *bound it on her forehead. She wore it so for many years, until sorrow befell; and thus she was known far and wide as Tar-Elestirmë, the Lady of the Star-brow*" (*Unfinished Tale* 184, emphasis added). In the same way, Smith places the star "in the middle of his forehead, and he wore it for many years" and "the people of Faery called him 'Star-brow'" (SWM 20, 39).

Smith's star also recalls the Elendilmir that Aragorn wears in place of a crown in *The Lord of the Rings*. "[U]pon his brow was the Star of Elendil" (*The Lord of the Rings* [LotR] V.6.848).⁹ Both stars are a sign of privilege and authority.

⁸ Rateliff also points out that, like *The Hobbit*, *Roverandom* "begins with an unsuspecting innocent encountering an 'old man' who turns out to be a wizard" (*History* 50).

⁹ The Elendilmir is foreshadowed in a vision the hobbits have after Tom Bombadil rescues them from the Barrow-wight (*LotR* I.8.146). The Elendilmir is also discussed in "The Disaster of the Gladden Fields," which "was written no earlier than 1969" (Scull and Hammond 2.209). Here, Tolkien recounts the story of Isildur after Sauron's defeat at the end of the Second Age. Because this was composed after *Smith*, it could not have influenced, but may have been influenced by *Smith*. There is at least one noteworthy parallel. In *Smith*, the narrator observes, "The Lesser Evils avoided the star" (SWM 24). Similarly, Tolkien writes that "the Orcs still feared the Elendilmir that [Isildur] bore on his brow and avoided him" (UT 274).

For Aragorn, it represents his royal lineage and present kingship. For Smith, the star grants him access to the world of Faery and protects him while he is there. Tolkien explains in his *Smith* essay that “those who wore [the star] were thus accredited (as if they were stamped with a crown [...]) and received the guidance and guard of all Elvenfolk, as being in the King’s service or in his favour” (SWM 95). Appendix A in *The Lord of the Rings* also reveals that when Aragorn was almost fifty, Galadriel “clothed him [...] with a cloak of elven-grey and a bright gem on his brow” (*LotR* App.A.1060).¹⁰ Like Alf, Galadriel is responsible for bestowing a Faerian star upon a mortal.

Additionally, Smith’s star is also reminiscent of “the Silmaril [that] was bound upon [Eärendil’s] brow” (*The Silmarillion* [S] 247, 250; *The Lost Road* 327).¹¹ Katharyn W. Crabbe suggests, “As Eärendil could find the straight road to the west only after he bound the Silmaril to his brow, Smith can find his way to faery only after the star is affixed to his forehead” (170).

Although few, if any, critics have alluded to it, Smith is not the only star-brow in the story; Alf, the Faery King, is another.¹² When Alf confronts Nokes at the end of the tale, he has “a great jewel like a radiant star” on his forehead (SWM 58).¹³ Alf’s star, like Aragorn’s, designates kingship, but is also a defining feature of the elves in *The Lord of the Rings*. Legolas sings of Nimrodel, “A star was bound upon her brows” (*LotR* II.6.339). The elves have “white gems in their hair,” Arwen has “stars on her brow,” and Elrond has “a star upon his forehead” (*LotR* VI.5.972; VI.9.1028).

True to form, Tolkien was working from a linguistic basis; as is well known, his stories often originated from words. The reason why the elves are so closely associated with stars and vice versa is due to the morpheme *el*. Tolkien acknowledges that it is “difficult to distinguish ‘star’ and ‘elf’, since they are derivatives of the same basic element EL ‘star’; as the first element in compounds *el-* may mean (or at least symbolize) either” (*Letters* 281).¹⁴ In order to justify this

¹⁰ It is worth noting that Bilbo and Frodo are fifty when they set out on their respective journeys. Although Smith ventures into Faery at a young age, he does relinquish his star in his fifties.

¹¹ *The Lord of the Rings* index indicates that the Elendilmir was “of diamond” and “represented the Star of Eärendil” (see “Elendilmir” in *The Lord of the Rings* index). Also, Fëanor was presumably the one who established the precedent of wearing the Silmarils upon one’s brow; *The Silmarillion* states that “at great feasts Fëanor would wear them, blazing on his brow” (69).

¹² In her “Notes” to SWM, Flieger says Alf is “Derived from Old English *ælf*, Old Norse *alfr*, and related to Modern English *elf*, Alf carries the meaning in all these languages of ‘elf’, a supernatural (but not divine) being believed to influence human affairs” (SWM 134).

¹³ See also SWM (95).

¹⁴ Hence, the reason the name *Elendil* means “Star-lover” and “Elf-friend.”

linguistic relationship, Tolkien created a scenario that would explain it. Verlyn Flieger explains the interconnectedness between the elves and stars when she notes that the *él* morpheme “first marked an act of perception—‘behold!’—which established a separation between the perceivers and that which they perceived. It then became a concept, ‘star,’ naming that which they recognized as separate from themselves. It now becomes the word, ‘elf,’ through which they identify themselves in terms of what they have seen” (*Splintered Light* 89).¹⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that the elves chose to adorn themselves with stars, nor is it surprising that Tolkien took up this element again in *Smith*. For one thing, Tolkien was prone to reuse material from his other stories; for another, it makes sense narratively in *Smith*—Alf’s star stands in juxtaposition to Smith’s.

Retirement, Relinquishment, and Reproof: Bilbo’s Departure from Bag-End Recast

Three of the clearest examples of self-plagiarism in *Smith* appear in the scenes when Rider retires as Master Cook, Smith reluctantly gives up his star, and Nokes is rebuked by Alf. Each scene, in its own fashion, reflects Chapter One of *The Lord of the Rings*.¹⁶ To begin with, Rider shares many of the same peculiar qualities as Bilbo not only at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings* but also throughout *The Hobbit*; like Bilbo, “he became a ‘traveller,’” and to the rest of the town, “nothing was really known about his journeys and adventures” (SWM 89). The description of Rider’s first holiday applies equally well to Bilbo’s journey in *The Hobbit*: “[H]e went away, no one [in town] knew where; and when he came back some months later he seemed rather changed” (SWM 7).¹⁷ In fact, both take an unexpected trip, return home, and then leave on a permanent holiday—returning again to Faery. Additionally, both are elf-friends, create a “stir in the village” when they leave, and depart with only one close companion present—Gandalf and Alf (SWM 9). Flieger notes that Rider’s departure “strikingly recalls Bilbo’s farewell to Gandalf at the end of the first chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*” (“The Footsteps of Ælfwine” 195).

¹⁵ See also *The Silmarillion* Appendix for *él, elen* (358).

¹⁶ Tolkien might have returned to re-reading *The Lord of the Rings* at the time he was composing *Smith*. After meeting with Rayner Unwin on 8 February 1965, he agreed to produce a new edition of *The Lord of the Rings* in order to secure the American copyright (Scull and Hammond 1.628); whether Tolkien began re-reading *The Lord of the Rings* at this time is unclear. What is certain is that Tolkien completed *Smith* by February 1965, and according to Tolkien, he didn’t “go on to” revising *The Lord of the Rings* until June (qtd. in Scull and Hammond 1.629, 1.634).

¹⁷ Bilbo’s transformation is made plain; Gandalf tells him, “You are not the hobbit that you were” (*Annotated Hobbit* 19.360).

Bilbo also has much in common with Smith. The correlation between Smith surrendering his star and Bilbo his ring is obvious enough; moreover, both are seized by a desire to keep what is theirs. Randel Helms observes that “the scene of Smith’s hard decision willingly to give up the star closely parallels Bilbo’s hard-fought choice to pass the Ring on to Frodo” (124). In particular, their dialogue in these scenes is remarkably similar.

Smith: “I do not think that I shall ever return.” (SWM 40)

Bilbo: “I don’t expect I shall return.” (LotR I.1.32)

Smith: “*The time has come.*” (SWM 40)

Bilbo: “But the time has come.” (LotR I.1.35)

Smith: “What is that to you, Master Cook? [...] Isn’t it mine?” (SWM 41)

Bilbo: “What is it all about? It is mine isn’t it?” (LotR I.1.34)

Smith: “And why should I do so?” (SWM 41)

Bilbo: “And I don’t really see why I should.” (LotR I.1.33)

Smith: “It came to me [...]” (SWM 41).

Bilbo: “It came to me.” (LotR I.1.33)

Smith: “[M]ay a man not keep things that come to him [...]” (SWM 41, 44)

Bilbo: “And I shall keep it, I say.” (LotR I.1.33)

Alf’s words, “Do you not think, Master Smith, that it is time for you to give this thing up?” call to mind Gandalf’s admonition for Bilbo to “give it up!” (SWM 41; LotR I.1.34). Smith and Bilbo relinquish control, but the magic artifacts go to neither Alf nor Gandalf—both are passed on to the next generation—Tim and Frodo, respectively. In the end, Bilbo and Smith are left bereaved, and just as Bilbo says “Farewell to Middle-earth at last,” Smith must do likewise with Faery (*Bilbo’s Last Song* 26; SWM 99).

When Alf confronts Nokes at the end of *Smith*, his advance towards him is reminiscent of Gandalf’s towards Bilbo at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Alf “grew taller as he spoke.” (SWM 58)

Gandalf “seemed to grow tall and menacing.” (LotR I.1.34)

Alf “stepped forward.” (SWM 58)

Gandalf “took a step towards the hobbit.” (LotR I.1.34)

The responses by Bilbo and Nokes are also synonymous.

“Nokes shrank from him, trembling.” (SWM 58)

“Bilbo backed away to the wall [...] and he began to tremble.” (LotR I.1.34)

In both instances, the wiser, more powerful individual is forced to demonstrate his authority to an unrelenting, stubborn subordinate (Long).

The Faery Queen and Faery: A Thinly Veiled Portrait of Galadriel and Lórien

The first indication that the Faery Queen and Galadriel are readily comparable comes from the fact that their homelands and the accompanying settings are particularly alike. When Smith is summoned by the Faery Queen, he makes a long journey into Faery and “often he had been blindfolded by mist or by shadow, until at last he came to a high place under a night-sky of innumerable stars” (SWM 36). In corresponding language and imagery, the Fellowship “came to the high places” at the foot of Celeborn’s chamber and “all the hill seemed afire with stars” (LotR II.7.353, 354). Moreover, just as Smith is blindfolded by natural forces, the Fellowship go blindfolded through Lothlórien (LotR II.6.348). In *Smith*, the narrator’s words, “There [Smith] was brought before the Queen herself” recall Haldir’s charge to Gimli that “you must be brought before the Lord and the Lady” (SWM 36; LotR II.6.347). A “high clear trumpet” sounds when Smith approaches the Queen; similarly, “a small horn” announces that the Fellowship has arrived at the house of Celeborn and Galadriel (SWM 37; LotR II.7.354). While “a great host” surrounds the Queen, “[m]any Elves were seated” around Celeborn and Galadriel (SWM 36; LotR II.7.354).

Certain features of Smith’s first encounter with the Queen, as a dancing maiden, also call to mind other characteristics of Lórien. When Smith first sets foot in the Vale of Evermorn, “he heard elven voices singing” (SWM 31). Likewise, in Lothlórien, the Fellowship “heard nearby Elvish voices singing” (LotR II.7.359). Most significant of all is the “white flower” that is given to Smith by the Queen; we learn later that “a light came from it” (SWM 33, 35). The obvious parallel is, of course, Galadriel’s phial. Both the flower and phial glow and are given as gifts. However, the Living Flower is more reminiscent of “the pale *niphredil*” found among the giant mallorn-trees of Lórien (LotR II.6.350).¹⁸ In a late letter, Tolkien notes, “Lit by that light, *niphredil* would be simply a delicate kin of a snowdrop” (Letters 402).¹⁹

¹⁸ The Living Flower is also reminiscent of the flowers on the Two Trees of Valinor.

¹⁹ The *OED* describes the snowdrop as “a white pendent flower.” Besides appearing in Lothlórien, the *niphredil* play another significant role in Tolkien’s *legendarium*. When Lúthien was born, “the white flowers of *niphredil* came forth to greet her as stars from the

Beyond the setting, there are a number of key details that suggest that Galadriel was an important source for the character of the Faery Queen.²⁰ In their initial descriptions, the Queen and Galadriel share these key features: awe-inspiring beauty, tallness, and pallor. The Faery Queen “stood there in her majesty and her glory, and all about her was a great host shimmering and glittering like the stars above; but she was taller than the points of their great spears, and upon her head there burned a white flame” (SWM 36-37). Similarly, Galadriel is “grave and beautiful,” “[v]ery tall,” and “clad wholly in white” (LotR II.7.354).²¹

The “Queen’s beauty” certainly parallels the “beauty of Galadriel” (SWM 37; LotR App.A.1081). Both queens embody what Tolkien alludes to in “On Fairy-stories” as the “fear of the beautiful fay” (Tolkien *On Fairy-stories* 73). Both are so “perilously fair,” to borrow from Faramir, that mere mortals are terrified and awestruck in their presence (LotR IV.5.680; SWM 37). Both queens evoke the Numinous, a term which Tolkien knew and C.S. Lewis popularized.²² Lewis explains the term by way of analogy: “When we fear a tiger, we fear that it may kill us: when we fear a ghost—well, we just fear the ghost, not this or that mischief which it may do us. The Numinous or Awful is that of which we have this, as it were, objectless or disinterested fear—this awe” (“Is Theism Important?” 174-75). Smith certainly experiences such awe when he comes face

earth” (S 91; *War of the Jewels* 9). Tolkien once again emphasizes the connection between elves and the stars.

²⁰ In addition to the Faery Queen being modeled on Galadriel, both probably share a common source as well. One likely source is H. Rider Haggard’s character Ayesha from his novel *She*. Rateliff describes her thus:

An exceedingly beautiful woman, so beautiful that all who see her remember the sight ever after, She rules over a small, isolated, ancient kingdom, the borders of which none are allowed to pass. Strangers are permitted entrance only if she has sent word beforehand to admit them, and even then they must make part of the journey blindfolded. Beautiful and terrible, worshipful but fearsome, she is not only wise and beautiful but also immortal. (“*She* and Tolkien, Revisited” 148)

The Faery Queen certainly fits this description.

²¹ Though written after *Smith*, in a note related to “The Disaster of the Gladden Fields,” Galadriel is described as “the tallest of all the women of the Eldar of whom tales tell” (UT 286). It should also be noted that although the Faery Queen’s attire is never described, the Faery King is found wearing “white garments [that] shimmered and glistened” (SWM 58).

²² Lewis took the term *numinous* from Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy*, which he cites as one of the books that shaped his “vocational attitude” and “philosophy of life” (Ford 102). There is no evidence that Tolkien ever read Otto, but Tolkien certainly knew of Otto’s term. In *The Problem of Pain*, which was read and dedicated to the Inklings, Lewis discusses “the experience of the *Numinous*” (16-17). Moreover, in Tolkien’s *Letters*, he makes reference to the word twice (151, 361).

to face with the Queen, which is emphasized by the fact that he trembles, is dismayed, and finally kneels out of courtesy (*SWM* 39-40).

Frodo and Sam experience similar feelings in the presence of Galadriel. Galadriel's Mirror and her ring Nenyà fill Frodo "with awe" (*LotR* II.7.361, 365). Before leaving Lothlórien, Frodo is struck by Galadriel's splendor, and "[h]e bowed, but found no words to say" (*LotR* II.8.376). Sam blushes and hangs his head the first time he meets her (*LotR* II.7.357). Galadriel's Mirror later causes Sam to tremble "a little between fear and curiosity" (*LotR* II.7.362). When he reunites with Galadriel at the end of the story, "Sam bowed, but found nothing to say" (*LotR* VI.9.1028). In fact, Galadriel's awe-fullness is best explained by Sam, "But perhaps you could call her perilous, because she's so strong in herself. You, you could dash yourself to pieces on her, like a ship on a rock; or drown yourself, like a hobbit in a river. But neither rock nor river would be to blame" (*LotR* IV.5.680).

The Faery Queen and Galadriel are certainly forces to be reckoned with; on the other hand, they are quite jovial and genial. Smith first meets the Queen incognito as "a young maiden with flowing hair" and dances with her (*SWM* 31). In a description that applies equally well to the Faery Queen, Sam describes Galadriel "as merry as any lass I ever saw with daises in her hair in springtime" (*LotR* IV.5.680). Despite their regality and authority, both queens are generous, which is most evident in their gift-giving. As noted above, the Queen gives Smith a flower. Likewise, Galadriel gives Frodo a phial and Sam a *mallorn* seed. Most astounding of all is the gift Gimli receives—three strands of Galadriel's hair.²³ Just as Gimli promises to make it "an heirloom of my house," Smith's Living Flower is "handed down for many generations in his kin" (*LotR* II.8.376; *SWM* 35).

Most telling of all is the nonverbal communication that takes place between the mortals and elven queens. Smith and the Queen "spoke long together, for the most part without words" (*SWM* 37). In the same way, Galadriel "held [the Fellowship] with her eyes, and in silence looked searchingly at each of them in turn" (*LotR* II.7.357). Both queens are clearly telepathic. Smith "knew that she read" his thoughts just as Boromir acknowledges that she "read our thoughts" (*SWM* 31; *LotR* II.7.358). The Queen and Galadriel possess a sixth sense; they see into the hearts and minds of mortals and discern their deepest hopes and fears. Without any previous conversation, Galadriel remarks on Sam's folks' convoluted view of magic; likewise, the Faery Queen comments on Smith's

²³ Within the larger context of Tolkien's *legendarium*, this gift is significant because Fëanor "begged three times for a tress, but Galadriel would not give him even one hair" (*UT* 230). This results in a breakdown of their relationship ("unfriends for ever") and ultimately provokes Fëanor to create the Silmarils (*UT* 230).

folks' misguided notion of fairies (*LotR* II.7.362; *SWM* 37-38).²⁴ Both possess foresight as well as hindsight and are revelatory as well as discerning. Galadriel's Mirror epitomizes revelation. In Smith's case, after he is touched by the Faery Queen, he undergoes a transcendental or metaphysical experience; once he returns to himself, "he knew that his way now led back to bereavement" (*SWM* 39).

Even in their names, the Faery Queen and Galadriel are related. Both are known by where they are from: "Lady of Faery" and "Lady of Lórien" (*SWM* 38; *LotR* II.7.351). Moreover, the meaning of Galadriel's name is equally applicable to the Queen; Tolkien renders it as "Lady with garland of sunlight" or "Maiden crowned with gleaming hair" (*Morgoth's Ring* 182; *Letters* 428). In *The Silmarillion*, Galadriel's "hair was lit with gold as though it had caught in a mesh the radiance of Laurelin" (*S* 61; *Morgoth's Ring* 177). Though not identical, the Faery Queen has a notable "white flame" upon her head (*SWM* 37).²⁵ The appendix "Elements in Quenya and Sindarin Names" in *The Silmarillion* states that *galad* has "no connexion with Sindarin *galadh* 'tree', although in the case of Galadriel such a connexion was often made, and the name altered to *Galadhriel*" (*S* 360).²⁶ Thus, her name also carries the meaning of "Lady of the Wood" (*LotR* III.2.437)—which is an equally appropriate epithet for the Faery Queen, who resides in the Faerian woods of Wootton.

Smith of Hobbiton Major

Several critics have pointed out that Wootton Major is "slightly hobbitized" (Kocher 162). Colin Duriez suggests that "the villages of Wootton Major and Minor could have come straight out of the hobbits' Shire" (170). Paul Edmund Thomas finds Wootton Major to be similar to Hobbiton because it is imaginary, yet it "suggests a pre-industrial English village" (165). Wootton and the Shire were, without a doubt, inspired by Tolkien's lifelong love of the English countryside; however, this does not mean that the Shire had no influence on Tolkien's portrayal of Wootton. Tolkien was just as fond of hobbits as rusticity; in creating Wootton, Tolkien drew from the Shire as well as Sarehole. After all, even

²⁴ I have included the word *folks* because it is the one used by Tolkien; he is referring to a community in general, not the informal sense of parents or family.

²⁵ The "white flame" image was also used in a vision Legolas has of Aragorn: "For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown" (*LotR* III.2.434). This passage foreshadows the Elendilmir. Also, it is interesting to note that Tolkien first conceived of Galadriel with white hair (*Treason of Isengard* 233, 246).

²⁶ It is worth noting that Tolkien changed his mind about this. In a draft note, Tolkien suggests that Galadriel's name is associated with trees: "*Galadhrien* = *Galað-rhien* tree-lady" (*Treason of Isengard* 249).

the character names in *Smith* are particularly hobbit-like: Nell, Nan, Ned, Tim, and especially Tom and Nokes.²⁷ Tolkien's *Smith* essay and *The Lord of the Rings* "Prologue" provide necessary background information. To begin with, each of the following descriptions applies equally well to the other.

Smith "is cast in an imaginary (but English) country-side, before the advent of power-machinery, but in a time when a prosperous community, mainly of craftsmen with an agricultural environment, could be aware of and afford imported luxuries such as sugar and spices." (SWM 84)

Hobbits "love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools." (*LotR* Prologue.1)

Economically, the Shire and Wootton are semi-agrarian and pre-industrial. Millers, smiths, ropers, and cartwrights are listed in *The Lord of the Rings* (*LotR* Prologue.6); and smiths, coopers, millers, wrights, weavers, websters, and stonewrights are listed in the *Smith* essay (87). Just as the hobbits make many "useful and comely things" (*LotR* Prologue.2), Wootton Major is known "for the skill of its workers in various crafts" (SWM 5).

Socially, parties and festivals play a prominent role in the life of both communities. *The Lord of the Rings* opens with Bilbo's birthday; in the same way, Nokes prepares for the Twenty-four Feast at the beginning of *Smith*. In addition, the texts make it plain that Shire-holidays "occurred at frequent intervals" (*LotR* Prologue.10), and the citizens of Wootton Major had "many [festivals] in the course of a year" (SWM 6). Because of this, cooking is a natural and important part of both societies. "All hobbits, of course, can cook, for they begin to learn the art before their letters" (*LotR* IV.4.653). In particular, Sam is a good cook (*LotR* IV.4.653). He even takes his cooking gear with him on his journey to Mordor and is devastated when he must, at last, leave it behind: "Tears welled in his eyes at the thought of casting it away" (*LotR* VI.3.437). Cooking is taken just as seriously in Wootton, where it is "a recognized and esteemed skill" (SWM 88). In fact, cooking is taken so seriously in Wootton that the main public official is the Master Cook.

The Fallohides share a particular likeness to the citizens of Wootton Major. The Fallohides "were lovers of trees and of woodlands" (*Wootton*, after all, means "town in or near a wood") (Flieger, *A Question* 250), and "they were more

²⁷ I am referring to Old Noakes, Tom Cotton, and Tom Gardner. Other hobbit names reminiscent of those found in *Smith* are Bell, Sam's mother, and Ted Sandyman.

friendly with Elves than the other Hobbits were" (*LotR* Prologue.3). Alf lives in Wootton Major for fifty-eight years, and Rider and Smith, in turn, spend a large portion of their lives in Faery. Furthermore, Rider and Smith, like Bilbo and Frodo, are "exceptional" because of "their friendship with the Elves" (*LotR* Prologue.7).²⁸

Politically, Wootton Major and the Shire are aligned; in that, there is "hardly any 'government'" (*LotR* Prologue.9). Each has one main public official, though their duties differ slightly. The Shire has an elected mayor whose "only duty was to preside at banquets" (*LotR* Prologue.10). Like the mayor, the master cook has one primary duty; unlike the mayor, "he had to provide suitable fare" for all the meetings and gatherings held in the Hall (*SWM* 6).²⁹ Beyond this, Wootton has a Village Council, who "governed for local purposes" and consisted "of the heads of the chief and most prosperous 'crafts'" (*SWM* 87). They appoint Nokes as Rider's successor, and towards the end of the story, are found debating over the appropriateness of the "re-glazed and re-painted" Hall (*SWM* 9, 46). For the Shire, the Shirriffs and Bounders are equivalent to police and border patrol, respectively. Simply put, little government existed because "[f]amilies for the most part managed their own affairs" (*LotR* Prologue.9).

Hints of Middle-earth in Smith's Adventures

Although Smith's adventures in Faery are not closely modeled on incidents from Tolkien's *legendarium*, there are certainly resonances to be found in these scenes. Brian Rosebury suggests that Smith's encounter with the Queen as a dancing maiden "distantly recalls the meeting of Beren and Lúthien" (132).³⁰ Other echoes abound. The elven mariners episode is redolent of Tolkien's poem "Earendel at the Helm." Both scenes paint a picture of elven mariners sailing in white ships. Moreover, the image of "the blue waves like snow-clad hills" is reminiscent of the "Green waves in the sea moving, / White froth at the prow spuming" (*SWM* 26; "A Secret Vice" 216-17). Just as the elven mariners "lift up their voices in a song of triumph," "From far shores a faint singing" can be heard (*SWM* 26; "A Secret Vice" 217).

²⁸ Bilbo and Frodo are "of Fallohide kin" (Stanton 607).

²⁹ It is also clear from *Smith* that the Master Cook, like the Shire mayor, "preside[s] at banquets" (*LotR* Prologue.10).

³⁰ Given the heavily autobiographical nature of *Smith*, the dancing maiden was probably also inspired by Tolkien's wife Edith. Tolkien notes that Edith "was the source of the story that in time became the chief part of the *Silmarillion*. It was first conceived in a small woodland glade filled with hemlocks at Roos in Yorkshire [...]. In those days her hair was raven, her skin clear, her eyes brighter than you have seen them, and she could sing—and dance" (*Letters* 420).

In the next scene, the King's Tree resembles the Two Trees of Valinor. The most obvious resemblance is all three trees radiate with light; in fact, the description of the King's Tree as bright as "the sun at noon" applies equally well to the Valinorean Trees (SWM 28). Furthermore, the King's Tree, like Telperion, contains "countless flowers" (S 38).

Concluding Remarks

What are we to make of Tolkien's self-plagiarism? According to modern aesthetics, *Smith* is inherently flawed because it is derivative—Tolkien reused his own imagery, plot, dialogue, language, characters, and culture. This might lead one to think that Tolkien's imagination was waning or wanting.

There is some evidence for the former. *Smith* was written fifteen years after Tolkien had completed *The Lord of the Rings*; as a writer, he was no longer in his prime, and he realized this. Writing in 1965, he observes, "I find it difficult to work—beginning to feel old and the fire dying down" (qtd. in Carpenter 237). Aging had certainly taken its toll. Thus, on the surface, the abundance of self-plagiarism in *Smith* could be credited to Tolkien's faltering imagination; as he approached his final years, he simply returned to what he already knew. However, this view does not account for the self-plagiarism found in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In other words, if Tolkien's self-plagiarism were merely a result of failing mental capacities, why can it be found *throughout* his fiction?

The other alternative is Tolkien simply lacked imagination; however, this is simply not true. From its initial reception, *The Lord of the Rings* was hailed for its imaginative depth. Richard Hughes acknowledged that "for *width* of imagination it almost beggars parallel."³¹ W.H. Auden claimed that "no previous writer has, to my knowledge, created an imaginary world and a feigned history in such detail" (45). Edmund Fuller suggested that Tolkien's "extraordinary imaginative feat in the making of an Other-world, meaningfully related to our own, is likely to be one of the most tenacious works of fiction in this present age" (30). Even Edmund Wilson, in his vehemently disparaging review, conceded that "there are streaks of imagination" in the book (329). Whatever faults one might find with Tolkien as a writer, imaginative deficiency is certainly not one of them. For even if other writers rival Tolkien in sheer imagination, no other writer possesses his linguistic talent.³²

³¹ Quoted on the back of the dust jacket of the first edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

³² It cannot be overstated the impact Tolkien has had on modern fantasy. Fantasy author George R.R. Martin puts it this way, "Fantasy had existed long before him, yes, but J.R.R. Tolkien took it and made it his own in a way that no writer before him had ever done, a way that no writer will ever do again" (2). Shippey maintains that *The Lord of the Rings* "has largely created the expectations and established the conventions of a new and flourishing genre" (*Author* xxvi). For an interesting look at fantasy paperbacks that have been

But the question remains: what are we to make of Tolkien's self-plagiarism? I propose that Tolkien's imagination was not lacking but was single-minded—that is, he was wholly preoccupied with his own mythmaking and its meaning. He expressed this most poignantly to Lewis in 1948: "For I have something that I deeply desire to *make*, and which it is the (largely frustrated) bent of my nature to make. Without any vanity or exaggerated notion of the universal importance of this, it remains a fact that other things are *to me* less important" (*Letters* 126-27). He qualifies this statement by noting, "Still, it would be fairer to say of me not that I tend to be imprisoned in my own taste, so much as to be burdened with my own small but peculiar 'message'" (127). This certainly accounts for some of the recurrence in his work—he was indubitably "burdened" with his own "message."

Spurred on by Lewis in the 1930s, Tolkien set out to "write the kind of books" they liked to read (*Letters* 209). His stories, although "linguistic in inspiration," are steeped in myth and fairy tale—what he called a "basic passion" of his (*LotR* Foreword.xxii; *Letters* 144). Although there is no evidence that Tolkien ever used the expression, "mythology for England," to refer to his *legendarium*, he certainly held this to be one of his creative aims. He once told Bill Cater: "I was distressed that almost all the myths were Welsh or Scots or Irish, French or German. All we English seemed to have were a few things like Jack the Giant-Killer. [...] So I thought I'd make one myself."³³

Even in Tolkien's nonfiction, he was largely concerned with his own "message." "On Fairy-stories" can be read just as easily as a treatise on his own art as the fairy tale genre. In fact, the essay characteristically quotes from his poem "Mythopoeia." In a similar way, "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" tells us much about his own fiction—especially his views on dragons, myth, and elegy—all of which permeate his *oeuvre*. Although Tolkien never quotes from his own poetry in his *Beowulf* essay, he does indirectly allude to his poem "Íúmonna Gold Galdre Bewunden."³⁴ What is more, as Jason Fisher suggests, "Tolkien might almost be speaking about his own writings" when he writes of *Sir Gawain*: "It is a romance, a fairy-tale for adults, full of life and colour; and it has virtues that would be lost in a summary, though they can be perceived when it is read at

compared to Tolkien, see Douglas A. Anderson's blog: <<http://tolkienandfantasy.blogspot.com/>>.

³³ Also, in a 1966 interview with Henry Resnik, Tolkien acknowledged that "mythology moves me and also upsets me because most mythology is distasteful to people. But it seems to me that we miss something by not having a mythology which we can bring up to our own grade of assessment" (40). He added, "That's what I always wanted to do—mythological things like Greek or Norse myths; I tried to improve on them and modernize them—to modernize them is to make them credible" (40).

³⁴ For more on this, see Shippey, "Tolkien and the *Beowulf*-Poet" and Drout (56-58, 199-205).

length: good scenery, urbane or humorous dialogue, and a skilfully ordered narrative" (Fisher 35; *Sir Gawain* 14).³⁵ Such implicit self-reference is characteristic of Tolkien's academic work. In writing about *The Kalevala*, for example, Tolkien observes:

When you first step onto the new land you can if you like immediately begin comparing it with the one you have come from. Mountains, rivers, grass, and so on are probably common features to both. Some plants and animals may seem familiar especially the wild and ferocious human species; but it is more likely to be the often almost indefinable sense of newness and strangeness that will either perturb you or delight you. Trees will group differently on the horizon, the birds will make unfamiliar music; the inhabitants will talk a wild and at first unintelligible lingo. ("On 'The Kalevala'" 246-47)

Although this was written when Tolkien's mythology was just beginning to take root, this description seemingly anticipates Middle-earth.³⁶

Tolkien was interested in not only his own message but also his own craft as a writer. He even wrote stories about his authorial fears. As is well known, "Leaf by Niggle" was inspired by his "own pre-occupation with *The Lord of the Rings*" (*Letters* 257). Similarly, *Smith* was motivated, in part, by the stark realization that he would probably never complete his life's work "The Silmarillion"; like *Smith*, he would have to give up the world of Faery before he was ready to do so. Moreover, on at least two occasions, when he was asked to give a lecture, he opted instead to read one of his stories.³⁷

Tolkien was also aware that his mythical world often overtook and overshadowed his other stories. Writing in 1950, he observes that "the *Silmarillion* and all that has refused to be suppressed. It has bubbled up, infiltrated, and probably spoiled everything (that even remotely approached 'Faery') which I have tried to write since" (*Letters* 136). In another letter, he speaks of Mr. Baggins getting "dragged against my original will" into the "mythologies of the *Silmarillion*" (*Letters* 38). Despite *Smith's* detachment and separation from

³⁵ Significantly, Tolkien once referred to *The Lord of the Rings* as "a large-scale adult fairy-story" (qtd. in Manlove 158).

³⁶ In 1931, Tolkien publically introduced his fictional world into the academic arena in his lecture "A Secret Vice." Like "On Fairy-stories," this lecture also quotes his own poetry.

³⁷ I am referring, of course, to *Farmer Giles of Ham*, which was read on 14 February 1938 and *Smith of Wootton Major*, which was read on 26 October 1966 (Scull and Hammond 1.213, 1.678). According to Tolkien, he read *Farmer Giles of Ham* "in lieu of a paper 'on' fairy stories" (*Letters* 39). In his prefatory comments before his reading of *Smith*, he apologized, explaining, "I must beg the pardon of any who may have come expecting me to talk about Poetry" (qtd. in Scull and Hammond 2.944).

Middle-earth, it remains a work deeply indebted and richly connected to that world; in truth, even when Tolkien was not writing about Middle-earth, he was still writing about it.

Those readers who have found value in *Smith* are responding to real cues; the truth is that *Smith* contains many of the same qualities that have endeared many to *The Lord of the Rings*—magical artifacts, complex characters, and vivid landscapes, to name but a few. *Smith*, like *The Lord of the Rings*, forces readers to take the fantastic and mythic seriously—in the process, we see not only a new world but also our own in a new way.

Given Tolkien's fascination with his art, it makes sense that *Smith's* meaning and message are similar to those in his other fiction. As Rateliff has rightly observed, one of Tolkien's most influential sources was himself.³⁸ E. L. Ridsen concurs, noting "the chief sources for Tolkien's work lie in his own work" (24). This is certainly the case with *Smith*. In composing *Smith*, he borrowed freely and liberally from his *legendarium*. In fact, Tolkien's self-plagiarism is, to a certain degree, self-allusion. While most writers subtly nod to their literary precursors, Tolkien did so to himself. In analyzing the ending of *Smith*, Tolkien suggests, "A time comes for writers and artists, when invention and 'vision' cease and they can only reflect on what they have seen and learned" (SWM 81). Tolkien was speaking from experience. The self-plagiarism in *Smith* offered Tolkien a chance to reflect on his own art—a reflection that was, at once, a commemoration—he was looking back and appreciating his life's work.



³⁸ Rateliff writes, "[T]he primary influence on Frodo's ring is in fact *The Hobbit* itself: here, as so often, Tolkien is his own main source" (*History* 182; see also 139, 143).

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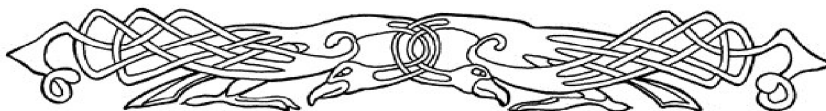
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Duties will include keeping an accurate record of each member and institutional/personal subscriber, monitoring and responding as appropriate to email regarding membership, maintaining a USPS Box for regular correspondence and an annual Mailing Permit for bulk mailings, and working closely with the Subscriptions Manager to keep records of subscriptions purchased. Additionally this Steward will assist Mythcon chairs and the Mythcon Steward with information for conference (membership status) and publicity mailings and supplying copies of the membership/subscriber database to the Treasurer and other Stewards.

The Membership and Discussion Groups Steward is responsible for maintaining supplies of forms and envelopes and sending renewal reminders and welcome packets to new members. He or she also collates and prints the *Annual Report* to the membership and the *Mything Persons* membership directory, and assists the Recording Secretary with triennial elections for the Council of Stewards, as well as printing and mailing print copies of *Mythprint*.

In addition, both positions serve as voting members of the governing Council of Stewards and should attend, when possible, the in-person Council meetings at Mythcon and the quarterly meetings by conference call, track and submit annual budgets for their departments, assist the other Stewards in managing the Society's business affairs, and help to shape and carry out the overall agenda for the Society's activities.

Applicants for either position should send a letter of interest including description of pertinent experience to the Council of Stewards Chair, Lynn Maudlin, at lynnmaudlin@yahoo.com, who can also supply a more detailed description of each position's duties.

