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## The Psychology of Power in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Orwell's *1984* and Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

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### The Psychology of Power in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Orwell's *1984* and Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

#### Abstract

Argues that despite their differences, Tolkien and Orwell share a similar response to absolute power, as “parallel evolution in the imagination of two humane British fantasists with an interest in the moral implications of politics.” Sees *A Wizard of Earthsea* as dealing with a similar problem but in psychological terms constrained by the coming-of-age theme.

#### Additional Keywords

Authoritarianism in *1984*; Authoritarianism in *The Lord of the Rings*; Le Guin, Ursula K. *A Wizard of Earthsea*; Orwell, George. *1984*; Power in *1984*; Power in *The Lord of the Rings*; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*

## The Psychology of Power

in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Orwell's 1984 and Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

by Mason Harris

The destructive effect of absolute power, both on society as a whole and on the individual consciousness, has been one of the major themes of the anti-utopian tradition in science fiction. Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell seek to immerse the reader in the atmosphere of a totalitarian society of the future. A similar concern with power, though set in very different terms in a mythical past, provides a central theme of Tolkien's fantasy epic, *The Lord of the Rings*. The difficulty of exploring the affinity between Tolkien and the anti-utopian tradition, however, lies not only in a difference in literary conventions; criticism has tended to treat the genre of heroic romance, of which Tolkien's epic is the leading representative in modern literature, as something totally separate from and opposed to science fiction. Some critics primarily concerned with the social content of science fiction and fantasy have been particularly hard on the heroic romance, finding reactionary tendencies and escapist nostalgia in its predilection for magic and the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup>

In this study I will argue the relevance of *The Lord of the Rings* to modern history by discussing Tolkien's treatment of the drive for absolute power in the light of a general comparison with 1984. I will also take a quick glance at some related themes and images in Le Guin's psychological study of power in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. In covering this varied terrain, I hope to stress the unity of modern fantasy rather than the differences between its various genres, and to show that Tolkien's major work is indeed a response to its time, belonging to modern literature despite its reliance on the methods of epic, folk tale and medieval romance. Also, comparing the invented histories of Tolkien and Orwell may reveal some common elements in the response of the British literary imagination to the rise of totalitarianism in Europe and the advent of world war.

At first glance, such a comparison may appear rather unlikely. On the surface, 1984 and *The Lord of the Rings* seem at opposite ends of the spectrum of modern fantasy: Orwell is a political satirist whose world of the near future seems an extrapolation of the worst aspects of the thirties and forties, while Tolkien invents a world often more beautiful than ours, set in a mythically distant past and enclosed in a self-contained historical scheme which depends largely on magic. Tolkien has repeatedly insisted that this world has no allegorical reference to particular events in real history, while Orwell clearly intends us to identify satiric targets in the history of our own time.

Tolkien's disclaimer is intended as a defense of the artistic integrity of his work, which relies on symbol rather than allegory, but for all its deliberate distancing from real

history *The Lord of the Rings* shares with 1984 a modern concern with the political and psychological implications of power. The relation of Orwell's fantasy to the rise of totalitarianism in the thirties is well-attested by his other writings. Tolkien was much less inclined than Orwell to comment on contemporary politics, but his letters reveal a hatred of dictatorship which extends to a deep distrust of any attempt to reorganize society on a systematic basis. Despite their differences in world-view – Orwell was a socialist and Tolkien a conservative Catholic – both seem to have had similar responses to the period in which they were writing. The relevance of Tolkien's epic to the politics of the thirties and forties lies not in any specific reference to modern history but in its depiction of both the intimidating effect and the seductiveness of absolute power – also the central themes of 1984. Since, due to their dates of publication, neither could have influenced the other, this affinity can only be explained as a case of parallel evolution in the imagination of two humane British fantasists with an interest in the moral implications of politics.<sup>2</sup>

There is no space here to develop a full interpretation of Orwell's novel, but a sense of the nature of power in Oceania can be provided by some famous passages from O'Brien's lectures to Winston Smith in the Ministry of Love. O'Brien makes clear that in Oceania the purpose of power is not to acquire more of the good things of life, but only to enjoy the sense of power itself: "The object of power is power."<sup>3</sup> In order to identify with power in this pure form, Winston must first be purged of all personal responses to the outside world through therapy in the Ministry of Love: "Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling... of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity.... We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves" (1984, p. 220). A similar process is now underway in Oceanic society: "We shall abolish the orgasm.... There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy.... There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed" (1984, p. 230).

The purpose of abolishing "ordinary human feeling" and "enjoyment of the process of life" is to clear the way for an experience of merging with absolute power which will transcend both mortality and the limitations of the individual: "The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual.... Alone – free – the human being is always defeated. It must be so, because every human being is doomed to die, which is the greatest of all failures. But if he can make complete, utter submission, if

he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he is the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal" (1984, p. 288). Erich Fromm has argued that the desire to lose the sense of self either through obedience to power or domination of others belongs to the same state of mind, which he terms "sadomasochism."<sup>4</sup> O'Brien offers Winston a state of mind which will encompass both pleasures: "a world of trampling and being trampled upon," or "triumph, and self-abasement" (1984, p. 230).

1984 is structured around an opposition between curiosity about the outside world, self-knowledge and "enjoyment of the process of life," represented by Winston's introspection and his relationship with Julia – a route to self-fulfillment also vulnerable to risk, change and death – and a disembodied world which offers loss of self and a sense of invulnerability through identification with absolute power. In *The Lord of the Rings* Sauron and the land of Mordor play the negative side of a similar polarity. Tolkien does not provide an analysis of power as thorough as O'Brien's, but correspondences to O'Brien's world can be found in occasional glimpses into the minds of Sauron and Saruman, the response of several characters to the temptation of the Ring, and in criticism of the fallacies of power provided by characters on the good side, especially Gandalf. Of course Sauron's political program is not as systematic or self-conscious as that of the Party in 1984. He offers the thrill of identifying with power only to his highest servants – the Ringwraiths or the renegade Numenorean who greets Aragorn's army at the Black Gate – and relies mostly on intimidation in dealing with other inhabitants of Middle-earth. But then there is the extension of his power in the Ring, which makes its owner temporarily immortal and eats away his personality through fantasies of personal power until he falls victim to Sauron's will, or, if strong enough, becomes another Sauron.

O'Brien makes clear that power consists precisely in dominating the will of another person. "How does one man assert his power over another?" he asks Winston, and answers his own question: "By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation" (1984, pp. 229-30). In his essay, "The Quest Hero," W.H. Auden detects a similar need in Sauron: "the kind of Evil which Sauron embodies, the lust for domination, will always be irrationally cruel since it is not satisfied if another does what it wants; he must be made to do it against his will."<sup>5</sup> In Tolkien's epic we are frequently reminded that torture is a leading entertainment on the evil side. When Pippin looks into the Palantir, Sauron fails to extract vital information because of his enthusiasm to torture a Hobbit. Gandalf explains: "he was too eager. He did not want information only: he wanted *you*, quickly, so that he could deal with you in the Dark Tower, slowly."<sup>6</sup>

This lust for domination expressed in torture is only one aspect of the dark side. It can also offer its victims the dream of dominating others. Both Tolkien and Orwell go

beyond the range of popular fantasy by presenting the power of evil as a temptation to the forces of good. Both give a dramatic sense of the power of the dark side, but are primarily concerned with the destruction both of civilized values and the individual personality through the state of mind induced by fantasies of omnipotence, or of submission to it. Orwell's Winston claims to hate Big Brother but is always attracted to O'Brien. His torture by O'Brien constitutes a seduction in which he is persuaded that surrender of the sense of self is preferable to the attempt to achieve fulfillment through his own experience and consciousness. Sauron's Ring tempts many of the main characters with the fantasy of power, while the central quest on the good side consists entirely of the rejection of this power. Because this power is rooted in the structure of Tolkien's imaginary world, the destruction of the Ring also involves a willing abdication by the most attractive of the positive powers of that world.

Both Tolkien and Orwell see the fantasy of power as devouring the personality from the inside, while the ruling group which seeks to wield absolute power deliberately destroys the beauty of the external world and the pleasures of living in order to create a world where time and change will be abolished, and there will be no distraction from the sense of power. Both the attack on the self and on external reality threaten to eclipse and finally destroy a sensory world, described in images of sunlit landscape, where living can be enjoyed for its own sake. Both authors place this ideal in scenery suggestive of rural Britain and both are hostile to industrialism, Orwell implicitly in the "Golden Country," Tolkien explicitly with Saruman. Tolkien represents enjoyment of everyday life through the Hobbits, a role shared in 1984 between Julia and the Proles. Tolkien's Elves stand for art and the aesthetic; their Celtic aura with a hint of early Yeats evokes the mood of unfillable longing that is associated with the antique shop and the paperweight in 1984. Both works look backwards in time to a richer past which has succumbed to authoritarianism in the present, though more of the past is left in Tolkien. In the conclusion of both, the ultimate danger lies in the undermining effect of fantasies of power on the personality of the main character. The defeat of Winston is more dramatically rendered, but Frodo's refusal to part with the Ring at Mount Doom indicates that, without the assistance of Sam and Gollum, he too would have become the slave of power.

Since Orwell presents his fantasy "in the form of a naturalistic novel" he places the conflicts of the work within Winston himself, while Tolkien, whose narrative is much closer to traditional romance than to psychological fiction, splits up the theme of temptation and resistance among a number of characters: Frodo, Gollum ("Slinker" and "Stinker"), Saruman and Wormtongue, Boromir, Denethor, and even Sam during his brief period as Ringbearer. The different forms of temptation, whether Boromir's martial prowess or Denethor's despair, have in common an essentially passive sense of self as inflated by, or helpless before, an external power, while the good

characters display a consistent initiative, curiosity about the world, and will to resist no matter what the odds. Perhaps Tolkien brings the good side so close to defeat to show that moral purpose and the sense of self need not depend on external factors. Elrond's admonition to the Council that "There is naught that you can do, other than to resist, with hope or without it" (I, p. 255), also could be the motto of Winston Smith at his best.

## II

The Dark Lord has a paradoxical place in Tolkien's time-scheme. On the one hand, he is an ancient evil which must be overthrown before the new age (our own) can begin. On the other hand, there can be no doubt about the modernity of Sauron; his specific kind of evil represents what Tolkien most fears in our own time and thus, like Orwell's Oceania, could well be lurking in our own immediate future. Sauron and his secondary double, Saruman, possess a modern power of organization associated with industrialism, far beyond the capacity of the feudal world of Gondor and Rohan. With its machinery, slave-farms, barrack-towns and giant armies, the evil side is infinitely better prepared to wage war than its old-fashioned neighbors.

Sauron's talent for social organization, however, is overshadowed by a profound sense of psychological disturbance implicit in the imagery associated with himself, his realm and his servants. Like Oceania Sauron's realm is a world of deliberate ugliness where no enjoyment can be derived from power but the pleasure of domination itself. The land of Mordor presents the antitype to all the pleasant landscapes of the story. Permanently shrouded in cloud and smoke, it appears as a grey void with no clearly-defined objects on which the eye can linger. If there is no sensory enjoyment in Sauron's landscape, it also appears that neither he nor his servants possess a body capable of enjoyment in the physical world. Though a very old-fashioned kind of Christian in his beliefs, Tolkien here reverses the traditional opposition between spiritual and physical realms. In this story goodness resides in the visible, the tangible and especially the edible, while evil inhabits a disembodied spirit world. Tolkien's almost obsessive use of darkness and the color to describe the forces of evil is intended to indicate a condition of non-being resulting from denial of external reality, the world of light. By the same token, Sauron's reliance on darkness sometimes results in an inability to perceive the actions and motives of his opponents.

Sauron's chief servants, the Ringwraiths, are vindictive ghosts who haunt the visible world, to which they are nearly blind. Surprisingly, the blindness of the Ringwraiths in the daytime is compensated by a sharp sense of smell, but in their case this ordinarily very physical sense only represents the perception of a vampire seeking its prey. Aragorn explains that "at all times they smell the blood of living things, desiring it and hating it" (I, p. 202), an attitude that suggests a state of impotent jealousy

which might well go along with the absence of a body. They wear their black robes only "to give shape to their nothingness when they have dealings with the living" (I, p. 234).

Though they seek to become the rulers of the world under Sauron, the Ringwraiths seem to lack any tangible means to enjoy such power. Sauron may possess a more concrete form than they, but we never find out because he is never seen outside the Dark Tower, where he appears only as a malevolent eye staring out the window. From glimpses of the mythical past, we learn that Sauron has repeatedly been disembodied in his various defeats. After causing the fall of Numenor he loses forever the ability to assume a fair bodily form, becoming "black and hideous" (III, p. 317). After his last defeat his ring finger is cut off by Isildur, who describes his body as fiery hot, suggestive of charred cinder. Apparently Sauron reconstructs another body, but according to Gollum's testimony he still lacks a finger (II, p. 250). The repeated destruction of his body, his seclusion in the Tower and his humiliating amputation, all suggest a physical disability which leaves him no enjoyment other than sheer domination.

The chain of command in Mordor reveals the sadomasochistic relationships characteristic of the authoritarian state of mind. In his notes on Auden's review of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien says that Sauron sought to gain strength through submission as well as domination. "Because of his admiration of Strength... he had become a follower of Morgoth... becoming his chief agent in Middle-earth." When Morgoth was defeated Sauron remained in Middle-earth, at first direct its reconstruction, but "When he found how greatly his knowledge was admired by all other rational creatures and how easy it was to influence them, his pride became boundless."<sup>8</sup> Thus Sauron's evil originates in a slavish identification with strength as well as in a sense of superiority to others.

The Ringwraiths have the power to dominate other creatures, even many of the Elves, through terror, yet they are no more than empty clothes inflated by Sauron's will. Gandalf explains that the Ringwraiths were not drowned in the flood at Rivendell because, "You cannot destroy Ringwraiths like that.... The power of their master is in them, and they stand or fall by him" (I, p. 286). The Ringwraiths can dominate the visible world and are invulnerable to it, but only because they have become bodiless slaves to an absolute master – a grotesque combination of power and servitude.

Again, the animal frenzy of the Orcs in battle consists of a projection of Sauron's will combined with terror – a Ringwraith is usually stationed in the rear to inspire their advance. In their mingled fear and frenzy the Orcs resemble the populace of Oceania during the various hate periods – in both cases mindless obedience is induced through a combination of fear, slavish submission, and lust to overwhelm an enemy. At the moment of the destruction of the Ring the Orcs fall into confusion while

Sauron's human allies fight on in desperation, thus illustrating the difference between creatures motivated entirely by an external will and humans who, however mistaken, remain self-motivated.<sup>7</sup>

Saruman, more given to argument than Sauron, illuminates the world of authoritarian relationships. First he attempts to persuade Gandalf that only through identification with Sauron's power can they control the future, but then he plots to get the Ring for himself. In his impressive speech after his defeat he tries to draw Gandalf into an elite of wizards, temporarily convincing the rest of his audience that they are hopelessly inferior to him and Gandalf (LOTR, II, 187). (We must take it on faith that the noble feudal realms of Rohan and Gondor will be free of such elitism; Saruman's speech could be taken as a satire on any hierarchical society.) This untrustworthy servant of Sauron has his own slave in Wormtongue, who in his treacherous servility has something in common with Gollum as unreliable guide to Sam and Frodo. At the bottom of the scale of submission and domination is the arrogant but cowardly renegade Numenorean, human lieutenant of Sauron, who challenges the Captains of the West at the Black Gate. In Sauron's service he has forgotten his own name but has come to glory in the title, "Mouth of Sauron" (III, p. 164).

Two aspects of Sauron's repertoire of horrors resemble key methods of control in Oceania. In the Orwellian future the omnipresent telescreen strips away the privacy necessary to the development of individual consciousness; its most important role is to make people feel that they are always being watched. Sauron's leading symbol is the "Eye," representing an omniscient vision which is able to overcome the will of its victims by seeming to perceive their every thought.<sup>10</sup> In response to Eowyn's challenge the chief Nazgul threatens her with a fate which combines destruction of the body with the "Eye" as instrument of torture: "[I] will bear thee away to the houses of lamentation, beyond all darkness, where thy flesh shall be devoured, and thy shrivelled mind left naked to the Lidless Eye" (III, p. 116). When approaching the Black Gate Frodo becomes increasingly aware of "that horrible growing sense of a hostile will that strove with great power to pierce all shadows of cloud, and earth, and flesh, and to see you: to pin you under its deadly gaze, naked, immovable" (II, p. 238). In fact, Sauron does not see Frodo here, but merely the thought that he might begin to undermine Frodo's sense of self; the feeling that both earth and flesh are mere "shadows" suggest an acceptance of the disembodied world of power.

Oceania is systematically replacing normal English with Newspeak; Sauron has invented a new language for Mordor. The only clear example of this language is provided when Gandalf upsets everyone at the Council of Elrond by reciting two lines of the rhyme of the Ring. It would appear from this brief text and some Orcish dialogue that the Black Speech uses lots of consonants to create sharp divisions between syllables along with a

deliberate ugliness—a parallel to the abrupt non-connotative concreteness of Newspeak. Judging from Gandalf's delivery—"menacing, powerful, harsh as stone" (I, p. 267)—this would appear to be a language of pure authoritarian command, the polar opposite to the soft poetic ambience of the Elvish languages. Both Orwell and Tolkien understood that complete domination requires the stripping of language so that there will be no reference to a reality beyond authoritarian relationships.

The rulers of Oceania have two modes of persuasion: on the one hand they possess a fearsome repertoire of methods of physical coercion, but on the other O'Brien labors to convert Winston to loss of self in a paradise of submission and domination. Thus the totalitarian society of the future has both a physical and a psychological dimension. The same could be said for the power of Sauron: he possesses cruel fortresses from which will emerge monstrous armies to overwhelm the world, yet he also exercises a constant temptation over the minds of his most powerful opponents, and the imagery associated with him suggest a state of non-being which is the result of power-worship. Because of the externalization natural to romance, representation of the psychological aspect of power is more difficult for Tolkien than for Orwell. Tolkien bridges the two realities through the extraordinary symbol of the Ring, which combines a clearly-defined set of meanings with a complex role in the plot, commenting on the nature of power while becoming intimately involved with the relations between the characters.<sup>11</sup>

The destructive effect of the Ring on all who wear it must derive from the act of self-alienation in which it originated. In an attempt to enslave other beings, especially the Elves, Sauron placed a large part of his inherent strength outside himself in this object. The Ring adds to his power but also dominates him; he must wield it to retain power, but will lose all his strength if it falls into the possession of anyone strong enough to wield it against him. Thus using the Ring must entail a constant anxiety about potential rivals; Sauron's strength is no longer his own. Thanks to Bilbo's burglary the good side gains possession of the Ring, but cannot use it against Sauron because of its effect on the wearer. It is essential to the nature of the Ring that any leader who overthrows Sauron by using it will become Sauron in turn; hence the Ring represents a state of mind rather than a particular tyrant.

Yet the Ring also fascinates the weak and humble. Gollum has no political ambitions beyond an aspiration to be "The Gollum" and to secure a continuous supply of fish (II, p. 241), yet the Ring is still his "Precious" and he seems as determined as Sauron to get it back. The Ring invariably devours the self of the wearer, quickly if he uses it but slowly if he doesn't. One attribute of the Ring is to stop time in an unnatural way, preventing the wearer from aging yet stretching his life even thinner—the effect of immortality on a being inherently mortal. Also its power to make the person who wears it invisible—a property only

of Sauron's "One Ring" – seems symbolically related to its ability to erode the self. Eventually the Ringbearer will become permanently invisible, a wraith in the spirit world, subject to the will of Sauron.

I would suggest that the reason for the universal effect of the Ring lies in its ability to evoke fantasies of power in all its owners. Since everyone has such fantasies, everyone is vulnerable to it; the Ring works on tendencies already present in the self. Tolkien says that "It was part of the essential deceit of the Ring to fill minds with imaginations of supreme power" (*Letters*, p. 332). At the bottom of the Ring's effect lie infantile fantasies of omnipotence which reject time, change and the external world. In Tolkien's "secondary world" the Ring is a real power behind Sauron's tyranny, yet in its effect on its wearer it also symbolizes the destructive influence on the self of the kind of imagination Sauron represents.

The rejection of power necessitated by the renunciation of the Ring makes *The Lord of the Rings* a paradox in the genre of heroic romance. Despite its mighty wizard and valorous warriors this epic is not about the superior power of the good side, but its relentless renunciation of power. In the quest "the return of the king" is a goal secondary to the destruction of the Ring. Not only Frodo but many others associated with the quest must struggle against the temptation to use the Ring. Yet the sacrifice involved is larger than this. Because of its close link with the three Rings of Power wielded by the good characters, the destruction of the One Ring will mean the loss of many positive aspects of the Third Age, and the end of the power of the Elves.

Gandalf's self-conscious restraint in his use of magic provides the opposite pole to Sauron's attempt to seduce or overawe the sense of self in others. Tolkien says of the wizards: "At this point in the fabulous history the purpose was precisely to limit and hinder their exhibition of 'power' on the physical plane,... so that they should do what they were primarily sent for: train, advise, instruct, arouse the hearts and minds of those threatened by Sauron to a resistance with their own strengths; and not just do the job for them" (*Letters*, p. 202). As Sauron's opponent, Gandalf's task is to strengthen the sense of self in others. Hence he gives much good advice but seldom uses his magic.

Gandalf also becomes the chief advocate for the acceptance of time and change, most notably in the speech where he links history with the forces of Nature in the "Last Debate": "it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after us may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule" (III, p. 155). Neither Gandalf nor Winston Smith is able to predict the future, and both accept that death may well be the outcome of a struggle against overwhelming power, but Gandalf, because of his confidence in a providential

plan working through temporal process, is able to take a much more cheerful view of the future than Winston. Hence he can also believe in the effectiveness of individual effort on the good side.<sup>12</sup> For Orwell history is entirely a human product, and thus its significance can be entirely destroyed by the imposition of a world-view which repudiates all historical process; there can be no appeal to forces outside the human world. The only direct manifestation of Tolkien's religion in his work consists of the sense on the part of his good characters that they can rely on a providential tendency which will reinforce well-intentioned actions, even if they are mistaken. (This confidence grows rather dim, however, for Sam and Frodo when they have to make crucial decisions in the land of Mordor.)

In both *The Lord of the Rings* and 1984 obsession with power involves repudiation of the external world and a resulting incapacity to enjoy the "process of life." The deterioration and ugliness of the world of Oceania, the deliberate absence of the amenities of life, and the suppression of sexuality, all facilitate the mood of mass hysteria which constitutes the Oceanic mode of being. In Tolkien's mythical world the shrouded desolation of Mordor, the bodiless Ringwraiths, and the subterranean, light-hating Orcs all indicate the rejection of the external world and its normal pleasures. (This condition has a circular effect: obsession with power creates a sensory vacuum, but in this vacuum power provides the only source of pleasure.) With his taste for supernatural horror Sauron lacks the mass appeal of Big Brother, but through a combination of intimidation, the aura of invincibility and the externalization of his power in the Ring, he exercises considerable influence over other characters. Saruman and Boromir succumb through identification with power, Theoden and Denethor through despair (only temporary in Theoden's case), while Gollum exhibits an amazing combination of the fantasies engendered by the Ring ("Stinker") with the servility involved in power-worship ("Slinker").

Between these two roles little sense of self remains to Gollum. One of the peculiarities of his diction is his persistent avoidance of the first person in referring to himself; usually he uses "we," and sometimes "he." His use of "we" seems to arise from his long period of isolation from the world of light; underground he had no one to talk to but himself. Only when Gollum speaks as "I," thus taking some responsibility for his own thoughts and feelings and placing himself in relation to others, can Frodo have any confidence that he is telling the truth (II, p. 251). Unfortunately the "we" predominates as he leads Sam and Frodo closer to Shelob's lair.<sup>13</sup>

## III

In opposition to Sauron's repudiation of the external world, Tolkien poses two mythical races: Elves and Hobbits. The Elves represent art, poetry, aesthetic appreciation and a conscious love of nature, while the Hobbits are experts in the pleasures of the table and all forms of domestic comfort. The Elves are the most mysterious of

Tolkien's races. Though, except for Legolas, Elves play no active role in the story, they contribute to it a powerful aura of unearthly beauty and infinite longing. The Elves can be seen as a much more elaborate version of one side of Winston's reaction to Oceania: his nostalgia, his fondness for the antiques in Mr. Charrington's shop, and his admiration for the beauty of the crystal paperweight, which becomes a symbol for individual consciousness. As immortal artists and poets, Tolkien's Elves combine beauty with extraordinary antiquity. Elrond's house is a repository of ancient legend, presided over in this case by an entirely benevolent curator for whom the legends are living memories. The specialty of the Elves is to combine an ethereal, poetic beauty with a persistent nostalgia and sense of exile – a longing for a paradisiac "West" associated with a glorious past. Along with this comes a stoppage of time – a sense of stasis which at first seems edenic but finally a bit suffocating. For Tolkien the aesthetic aspect of art is very important, and in the Elves he pays tribute to it. The Elves have an affinity with aspects of the aesthetic movement in the art and literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris and the mood of Yeats' "Celtic Twilight." While the Elves provide essential assistance to the quest, their inaction and the fixation of their realm in an unchanging past suggests that, taken by itself, their attitude towards life leads to impotent nostalgia.

In several letters Tolkien reveals his critical perspective on the Elves who have chosen to remain in Middle-earth. He says that Sauron was able to persuade these Elves to become implicated in the forging of the Rings of Power because the rejection, implicit in all the Rings, of time and change appealed to their passion for the preservation of beauty. "They wanted to have their cake and eat it" by remaining immortal yet continuing to live in the mortal world of Middle-earth, "and so tried to stop its change and history, stop its growth, keep it as a pleasureland, even largely a desert, where they could be 'artists' – and they were overburdened with sadness and nostalgic regret" (*Letters*, p. 197). Hence there is a curious affinity between the timelessness of the opposed worlds of Lothlorien and Mordor: both have attempted to achieve immortality in a mortal world through rejecting time and change. In his sympathetic portrayal of the Elves, Tolkien makes clear that it is much better to do this for the sake of art and beauty than for power, but both lead to a dead end. The Fellowship benefits from the restorative atmosphere and the gifts of Lothlorien, but must overcome the temptation to stay there.

On the other hand, the good intentions of the Elves enable them to break out of their stasis when confronted with Sauron's Ring: their predicament makes possible the epic's most dramatic instance of the renunciation of power. There is a polar contrast between Galadriel's willingness to give up the beautiful but static Lothlorien and Denethor's compulsion to destroy both himself and his heir rather than renounce any of his status as ruler on Gondor, a fading Byzantium which seems a mortal equivalent

to Galadriel's realm. In his notes on W.H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King* Tolkien distinguishes between the "humane" goal of Frodo's quest and Denethor's "merely political" defense of a particular group or region – a definition of the "political" close to the obsession with power which Orwell attributes to "nationalism" in his essay, "Notes on Nationalism." Tolkien says that "Denethor was tainted with mere politics." He became overly impressed by Sauron's superior strength, but if victorious would have become a cruel tyrant himself. In contrast, the Elves "destroyed their own polity in pursuit of a 'humane' duty.... [This loss] was known to them to be an inevitable result of victory, which could in no way be advantageous to Elves" (*Letters*, p. 240-41).

When Frodo offers the Ring to Galadriel, she responds by momentarily acquiring the appearance of a divine being – the projection of her own fantasy of power – and then shrinks back to her normal state as she chooses to retain her own identity even though the destruction of the Ring will mean the end of her power and realm: "I pass the test," she said. "I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel" (I, p. 381). The moral Galadriel provides for Frodo here is not so much the importance of defeating the enemy as the need to preserve the integrity of the self against the temptations generated by that struggle.

The fading of the Elves places on the Hobbits the main burden of representing "enjoyment of the process of life." The landscape of the Shire represents the past of rural Britain, closer in time than the eternal Pre-Raphaelite beauty of Lothlorien. The Hobbits seem to have been inspired by the ordinary folk of the rural village Tolkien knew as a child, along with an appreciation of working-class types he met in his war experience.<sup>14</sup> They could be seen as a prosperous Tolkienian equivalent to Orwell's Proles, though treated by Tolkien with more sympathy and a much gentler satire. (The main problem with the Proles lies in Orwell's attempt to make them a basis for human values after depicting their apathy in such grotesque terms.) Like the Proles the Hobbits have no interest, either intellectual or political, in the larger world, but with them this attitude goes along with a sturdy independence and a certain lack of respect for authority. In their resistance to rules, their practicality, and their interest in physical pleasures and comforts, the Hobbits have something in common with Orwell's Julia. Perhaps their extraordinary emphasis on the pleasures of eating is compensation for the fact that, unlike Orwell, Tolkien did not care to include sexuality as a means of affirming life and relation to others. Frequent references to eating are Tolkien's way of affirming the body against Sauron's world of disembodied power.

The Shire could be described as an orderly anarchy based on the family farm: "Families for the most part managed their own affairs. Growing food and eating it occupied most of their time" (I, p. 19). One reason why the Hobbits are so resistant to Sauron's influence may be that,



having nor government themselves, they are rather unimpressed by the feudal authority of the world outside the Shire. (In the "Appendix" Tolkien reveals that, due to a quirk of their dialect of Westron, they address everyone in the intimate form [Ill, p. 411].) On the other hand, their indifference to anything outside the Shire presents the major problem of the Hobbit as hero. Through the experience of the quest Tolkien attempts to give his Hobbit characters something of the attributes of Elves and heroic men. In 1984, The Proles and Julia remain permanently apart from Winston's tormented intellectualism.

#### IV

In his notes on Auden's review Tolkien defines the Iromance-journey as a symbolic conversion from passive to active, "a deliverance from the plantlike state of helpless passive sufferer, an exercise... of will, and mobility – and of curiosity, without which a rational mind becomes stultified" (*Letters*, p. 239), a meaning relevant to the particularities of the landscapes which the questers explore. The three pleasant landscapes – pastoral Shire, edenic Lóthlórien, picturesque Ithilien – are the antithesis of Mordor in the very detail in which they are described, inciting curiosity, exploration and discovery.

No doubt the general tendency of Tolkien's thought is conservative, but romance, in its tendency to splitting and subdivision, has the capacity to express differing attitudes within a coherent whole. I would suggest that the questing Hobbits represent a liberal concept of the self, in contrast to the heroic feudal hierarchies of Rohan and Gondor. Although at the beginning the four Hobbit adventurers seem like children in need of guidance, and are provided by the full Fellowship with rather an excess of parental custody, the plot actually goes to great lengths to ensure that they are supervised when making crucial decisions.

Some general parallels can be drawn between the maturation of Frodo and Winston Smith. Winston struggles to distinguish his own feelings from those induced by external pressures – for instance, the Two-Minutes Hate (1984, pp. 17-19). With Julia, he must perceive and come to terms with the reality of a person quite different from himself. Frodo's first task is to learn that the impulse to put on the Ring is not his "own desire" but comes from the outside – "the commanding wish of his enemies" (I, p. 211). When he leaves the Shire he enters a world dedicated to the martial virtues – and to bragging about them. At a crucial moment Frodo is able to see through Boromir's externalized vision of himself as warrior-hero – "The fearless, the ruthless, these alone will achieve victory.... The Ring would give me power of Command" – and to reply with the truth of his own feelings: "I am afraid.... Simply afraid" (I, pp. 414-15), an admission which enables him to make the decision to go to Mordor alone. Next, Frodo must understand and accept the disturbing otherness of a degenerate Hobbit, Gollum, who is by far the most complex character in the epic. Finally, Frodo recognizes the true warrior in Faramir, and has by now gained enough

moral authority to persuade him to spare Gollum's life and to cooperate with the quest.

Considering Frodo's accomplishments, it is surprising that he is so completely replaced by Sam as hero once Sam is relieved of his feudal subordination to his master by Shelob's poisoning of Frodo. At this point Sam is completely cut off from outside authority; he has to decide to continue the quest alone and must go on thinking for himself in desperate circumstances, despite his despairing self-accusations when the unconscious Frodo is carried off by Orcs. When Sam puts on the Ring, he immediately recognizes the visions it arouses as fantasy. He makes practical use of his helpful objects, including the invisibility conferred by the Ring.<sup>15</sup> Sam's ability to maintain his identity is related to the intense memories of the Shire in which he finds consolation as he and Frodo cross the wasteland. The fact that Frodo, like the broken Winston, no longer remembers effectively, suggests that he has lost his sense of self: "No taste of food, no feel of water ... no memory of tree or grass or flower.... I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire" (III, p. 215). Traditionally, the circle has been a symbol of wholeness and eternity, but here the "wheel of fire" represents an illusory perfection granted by repudiation of time and loss of self.<sup>16</sup>

I suggest that one reason for the abrupt change of heroes may be that Frodo's quest is so renunciatory that it cannot possess the characteristics of "will" and "curiosity" which Tolkien wishes to symbolize in the journey. Bilbo, whose adventures in *The Hobbit* so well exemplify Tolkien's ideal of the journey, goes off with the dwarves because his curiosity overcomes his Hobbitish fear of the unknown, while Frodo wishes that he had never seen the Ring, but also, because of the Ring's influence, would like to keep it, and thus both dreads his journey and is reluctant to fulfill its object. As Jared Lobdell has pointed out, a journey for the purpose of throwing something away is quite different from the usual goals of romance and can only be called a "reverse quest of it is a quest narrative at all."<sup>17</sup> The vital aspects Tolkien's concept of the journey must finally be represented by Sam, who longs to see Elves and "Oliphaunts," maintains a persistent curiosity about the practical side of things (how do Elves make rope?), and is not burdened by possession of the Ring or that personal obligation to destroy it which becomes such an overwhelming burden for its owner.

As a combination of medieval romance and Germanic epic *The Lord of the Rings* has plenty of heroic combat, but the priority of renunciation of power over force of arms as the central theme is made clear by the double plot which, beginning with the breaking of the Fellowship, separates Sam and Frodo from warriors and feudal authority. The two plots become fully integrated in the final movement, where on the one hand the Captains of the West ride off to the Black Gate in chivalric glory, while on the other we are aware that this is a mere diversion, probably suicidal, to divert attention from two Hobbits struggling alone across

the wasteland. This play has the effect of making Sauron himself fall victim to the kind of imagination engendered by the Ring. Since he cannot imagine that anyone would want to destroy the Ring, he becomes obsessed with imagining the plots of the new Ringbearer, supposedly Aragorn, and thus his notorious Eye entirely overlooks the Hobbits in his own backyard. In the end, Sauron becomes the greatest of the victims of the Ring.

Tolkien's ambiguous climax presents an interesting contrast to Winston's defeat in 1984. Both authors believe that it is possible to maintain a mental resistance to overwhelming intimidation, yet both seem to have doubts as to whether the individual can survive the full assault of totalitarian power. Orwell expresses this ambivalence by having Winston hold out for a long time in his secret self, yet finally surrender that too, while Tolkien supplies three characters: Sam resists, Frodo fails, and Gollum illustrates the psychological consequences of failure – though he has the privilege of perishing in ecstatic possession of the Ring.

I would suggest that the pattern of response to modern history manifested in *The Lord of the Rings* may have some relevance to 1984. Randel Helms notes that in his alienation from the modern age Tolkien gives much of its energy to the evil side.<sup>18</sup> I would add that elves and Hobbits represent retreats on different lines – art and the private life – from the dynamic evil of Sauron in the present. Since these refuges from modernity turn out to be inadequate, the story, despite all its heroic action, is pervaded by a sense of weakness on the good side – note Tolkien's definition of the journey as antidote to the "plantlike state of helpless passive sufferer." It would seem that civilization has been on an irreparable downward slide since the last battle in which Sauron was defeated: Hobbits are apathetic, Elves are fading, Gondor is decadent, Rohan can only muster a fraction of its former strength, the questers travel on abandoned roads through the ruins of vanished kingdoms. Only the Dark Lord is busy planning and organizing: short of a miracle, the future belongs to him.

Winston's sense of weakness in the present and his corresponding tendency to idealize the past creates a similar mood in 1984. The initial response of both Tolkien and Orwell to the menace of absolute power is heavily weighted with nostalgia, and this threatens to reduce to a stasis the "process" sought for on the good side. It would seem that the nightmare of power becomes a magnet which draws into itself all the energies of the modern world. The good characters resort either to withdrawal (Proles, Julia, Hobbits) or identify themselves with an archaic past (Winston, Elves and the heroic humans of Rohan and Gondor). Thus the attempt to revitalize the self must contend against both a monstrous evil in the modern world and some aspects of the author's and character's response to that evil. In 1984 the positive forces achieve an effective if temporary resistance: Winston's nostalgia is replaced by a struggle to remember what really happened to his mother, while the Golden Country and the antique shop are vitalized by the presence of Julia and by Winston's attempt to achieve

maturity through a personal relationship. The quest in *The Lord of the Rings* enables the Hobbit-adventurers to experience the best qualities of Elves and heroic humans, thus suggesting that the virtues of all three can be combined in human nature. The quest also isolates the Hobbits from the feudal hierarchy so that they can develop on their own.

The triumphant "return of the king" seems a polar contrast to the final gloom of 1984, yet there is evidence that Tolkien was not entirely happy with this transition from a heroic past to a new age. Against the restoration of Gondor, Rohan and the Shire we must set the elegiac note sounded by the departure of so many of the main characters for the "West" – and the departure of their magic with them. Tolkien supposedly sets humans free of supernatural power through the failure of all the Rings, yet, despite the glories of Aragorn's reign, there is a sense of loss in the new age – for instance, the progressive shortening of the life-span of his aristocrats as the blood of Numenor becomes mingled with that of "lesser men." (Also, the "Appendix" tells of the bitter death of Arwen, Aragorn's Elvin wife.) Here the renunciation of magic seems a moral necessity, yet Tolkien's vision extends only backwards from the destruction of the Ring into a magical past.

## V

In his essay on "The Uncanny" Freud locates belief in magic in childhood narcissism and the omnipotence of thoughts, a view borne out by the cruder romances of the "swords and sorcery" genre. In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien reverses the regressive implications of magic by taking as his theme the renunciation of magical power. (Tolkien saw both magic and the machine as engendering fantasies of power [Letters, pp. 145-46].) Maturation through learning to renounce the fantasies of omnipotence implied in magic is also the essence of Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, which develops themes similar to those of 1984 and *The Lord of the Rings* in the more narrowly psychological context of adolescent "coming of age." Magic is the whole subject here (no swords, just sorcery) and yet the story is entirely concerned with the necessity of imposing limitations on the use of magic – abuse of magical powers may disturb the "Equilibrium" on which this world is founded.

Le Guin's wise wizard Ogion plays a role analogous to Gandalf's; he refuses to display his magic and tries to foster Ged's awareness of the natural world. Ged, on the other hand, thinks of magic only in terms of personal power; he assumes that as mature wizard he will be able to overcome all his fears and reshape the world: "Press a mage for his secrets and he would always talk, like Ogion, about balance, and danger, and the dark. But surely a wizard... was powerful enough to do what he pleased, and balance the world as seemed best to him, and drive back darkness with his own light.... The more he learned, the less he would have to fear, until finally in his full power as Wizard he need fear nothing in the world, nothing at all."<sup>19</sup> At the

school for wizards Ged masks feelings of inferiority in a proud aloofness which culminates in his better rivalry with Jasper. Ged accepts an equal relationship with only one student, a rather plump and ordinary fellow called Vetch, who has no unusual powers but how offers Ged "a sure and open friendship which Ged could not help but return" (WE, p. 54). Ged's loosing of the Shadow through attempting to raise a spirit from the dead results from infantile fantasies of omnipotence aggravated by his rivalry with Jasper. Though humbled by this experience, in his first position as wizard he makes a nearly fatal attempt to recall the soul of a dying child. This second defiance of mortality brings back the Shadow, which is described as a creature of darkness blindly groping for him in the world of light. The approach of the Shadow results in a dimming of the sensory world; finally it threatens to turn him into a hollow shell – a "gebbeh" – close to the "wraith" in Tolkien or the final version of Winston Smith in 1984.

In the development of Ged's relations both to other people and the Shadow, we find a reversal and finally a resolution of the psychology of submission and domination, which here acquires a sexual dimension. When Ged calls up the Shadow he is furious with jealousy because the arrogant, aristocratic Jasper has so impressed the young and beautiful Lady of O with his clever tricks of illusion. In attempting to force the spirit of Elfarren, the most beautiful woman in the history of Earthsea, to obey his will, Ged seeks to outdo Jasper in sexual prowess as well as magic. (Finally, it is Jasper's fixation on a social role that makes him so clearly inferior to Ged; instead of becoming a wizard he takes a position as court illusionist for the Lady of O.)

Ged loses the Shadow in a spirit of Sauronic mastery, but his next error is to allow it to control him. Despite his accomplishments as apprentice wizard, he loses his sense of purpose as he gives way to the impulse to escape the Shadow, fleeing wherever it chooses to chase him. The Shadow attempts to make him a gebbeh through the terror of the pursuit itself, setting him up for another attempt to power the Court of the Terrenon – the Lady of the Court invites him to overthrow her Lord by invoking the Stone of Power. Having resisted this, and freed by Ogion from animal form – perhaps a temptation to psychotic withdrawal – Ged follows Ogion's advice to reverse his relation to the Shadow by pursuing it. This enables him to take an active role, but the Shadow still directs their journey.

On his long sea voyage, Ged increasingly abstains from magic. When he pauses to visit Vetch's household, he learns to appreciate the pleasures of ordinary domestic life and to accept a relationship on equal terms with three young people, each quite different from himself. In particular, he is able to accept and feel at ease with the friendship and intelligence of Vetch's sister, Yarrow – his first significant relationship with a female, in contrast to the fantasies of sexual power involved in the losing of the Shadow and the temptation in the Court of the Terrenon.

This experience in turn prepares him to embrace the Shadow as an aspect of himself. Thus the conclusion links the acceptance of otherness in the self with the acceptance of the subjective reality of another person on the basis of equality.

There is a suggestion of immunity against the dark forces of politics as well as those within the self when Ged finally becomes a man "who, knowing his own true self, cannot be used or possessed by any power other than himself, and whose life therefore is lived for life's sake and never in the service of ... the dark" (WE, p. 199). This sums up the psychological goal of the quest in which Winston fails, and which Frodo cannot achieve on his own. In its self-assured humanism, Le Guin's story is not burdened by nostalgia. The conclusion asserts that the meaning of a human life can only be found in the sensory world: "only in dying life: bright the hawk's flight on the empty sky" (WE, pp. 199-200).

Le Guin may have been influenced to some extent by Tolkien in her concept of dragons, wizards and the disembodied quality of the Shadow, but in contrast to the public role of Tolkien's Ring, the Shadow has a more specifically psychological reality as a manifestation of Ged's inner conflicts. Sauron deliberately externalizes part of his power in the Ring, and after this act it remains forever outside him. Ged's Shadow seems to be the dark side of his personality given external form – it is evil only because he will not admit that it is his. He projects the Shadow unconsciously, but reclaims it by recognizing it as his own and calling it by his own name. Ged's attempt at omnipotence is the passionate impulse of an adolescent, releasing a power he did not know he possessed and cannot yet acknowledge, and thus presents a psychological problem rather than a question of "sin." Sauron, on the other hand, commits an irredeemable sin when he makes a calculated attempt to dominate Middle-earth by turning into an object the power he received from his creator.

## VI

In conclusion, I should like to make a brief summary of some philosophical affinities between 1984 and *The Lord of the Rings*, and then consider the relation of both to *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Both Orwell and Tolkien deal with fascism mainly as a moral and psychological problem, endeavoring to represent the totalitarian mind from the inside through grotesque imagery and situations. In their different ways both provide a remarkably similar diagnosis: obsession with power and relationships based entirely on power require refection of the body, time and relation to the outside world; external reality has ceased to exist in both Oceanic and Sauronic world-views. The search for a counterforce to this condition involves an appreciation of the sensory world, the ordinary individual and the pleasures of everyday life. In both stories, the maturation of the individual through experience is pitted against a world of power-worship which tempts the hero to abandon his sense of self in sadomasochistic fantasies.

This struggle has a similar starting-point in both works: both Orwell and Tolkien see the threat to the self as arising from an attempt to assume godlike status in a mortal world. On the other hand, the context of the fallacy is different in each case. Orwell's Party attempts to fill the void left by the failure of civilized values and religious belief, while Tolkien's Sauron, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, sets himself up as a rival to God. Orwell thinks that we should learn to do without God and not seek secular substitutes. Presumably the cure for the distortions Sauron introduces in Middle-earth would be a correct understanding of the relation of God to His creatures – like the insight granted to Adam at the end of *Paradise Lost*. Actually, Tolkien's epic is much more secular than Milton's. In the absence of a personal God or any distinct notion of life after death, his characters must rely on their own spontaneity and a belief in a providential force closely allied to the processes of Nature. While undoubtedly influenced by Christian ethics, Tolkien's "secondary world" seems to be pervaded by a Romantic humanism with no specific link to Christian theology. Whatever might be said of Tolkien's religion, his epic belongs to the world of humanist thought.<sup>21</sup>

Le Guin is at her most Tolkienian with the wizards and dragons of Earthsea, but she adapts these to the psychological exploration of a single character. Except for the temptation in the Court of the Terrenon, the threats to Ged's self are self-generated. Yet the philosophical background to Ged's struggle resembles the positions I have outlined for Orwell and Tolkien. Ged assumes that the mature wizard will possess godlike powers, while Ogion attempts to persuade his novice to subordinate himself to Nature. Even Ged's well-intentioned attempt to call back the spirit of a child becomes an offense against mortality. Ged is healed by "naming the shadow of his death" (WE, p. 199), and the final volume of the trilogy is entirely concerned with the acceptance of death – the enemy here is a wizard who seeks eternal life and thus threatens the vitality of Earthsea by draining away its magic. Like Orwell, Le Guin feels that the sky should be kept "empty" in order for the process of life – partly represented by Vetch and his household – to be appreciated; the danger lies in the temptation to fill this emptiness with false pretensions.

Both Orwell and Le Guin could be described as secular humanists. In his religious beliefs Tolkien would be opposed to this position, but his epic has some affinity with it – perhaps in a "secondary world" his thought could take a more secular direction than would have been permitted by his theology in the real world. If, on the other hand, we find in Tolkien a conservative nostalgia for the past, there is a good deal of this in Orwell and his hero, Winston. Also, the "Equilibrium" of Earthsea has some affinity with the providential order behind Middle-earth. In Le Guin's case this has nothing to do with belief in a personal God, but the order of both worlds involves an "ecological" sense of the relation between the human and natural worlds – Tolkien anticipated the ecology movement while Le Guin clearly is influenced by it. These three imaginary worlds have more in common than the differing world-views of

the authors would suggest, and all reflect a humanist tradition in fantasy. All three are concerned to maintain a humanist concept of the self in the face of forces which deny its existence.

In its closeness to realism and its extensive reference to our own society, the anti-utopian tradition provides the best vehicle for social satire, but it is also committed to remaining within the limits of modern society and working them out to a fatal conclusion; the failure of transcendence is the essence of this genre. In their distance from the present, symbolic power and freedom to base their reality on principles alien to modern thought, *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Wizard of Earthsea* can confront a symbolic version of dark forces while expressing a utopian hope about the human spirit and our relation to Nature. For both Tolkien and Le Guin, rejection of the power to dominate means that we should find a new relation to the physical world as well as to each other.

This sense of a coherent universe is related to the ambiguous value of magic as a fantasy of power, but it should be noted that in the background of both worlds there is in opposition to this a benevolent magic which operates in conjunction with natural process and is closely related to language. The magic of Tolkien's Elves involves the poetic quality of Elvish words and names. The Elves of Lothlorien do not recognize the concept of magic because they make no distinction between magical power and the skill of the craftsman: "we put the thought of all that we love into all that we make" (I, p. 386), while in its emphasis on the relation between words and Nature the magic of Le Guin's school for wizards seems to combine poetry with science – at least a science informed by ecology. In both stories magic disappears at crucial moments to reveal the importance of human relationships – neither the Hobbits nor Vetch's household owe their virtues to magic – while the presence of good magic extends the critique of the psychology of domination beyond social relations to our attitude towards the physical world.

It would seem that the heroic romance at its best can provide a utopian vision which compensates for the limitations of the anti-utopian tradition. (Le Guin is able to work in both genres – "The Diary of the Rose" is a powerful contribution to anti-utopian science fiction, and aspects of her major novels belong in this tradition.) The affinities between the three works discussed here show that we should see the leading traditions of modern fantasy as complementary rather than antagonistic, and learn from the different ways in which each explores the problems and anxieties of our time.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979) Darko Suvin casts much light on science fiction as social commentary but also makes a severe and to my mind artificial distinction between science fiction and other forms of fantasy. In a partially Marxist approach to fantasy Rosemary Jackson places Tolkien, Le Guin and others unfavorably in a "nostalgic, humanistic vision" which looks back "to a lost

moral and social hierarchy" – *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (New York and London: Methuen, 1981), p. 2. She brands Tolkien in particular as "totalitarian" and says that the popularity of his work "indicates the strength of a romance tradition supporting the ruling ideology" (pp. 155-56). While I agree with Jackson that one should search for the meaning of fantasy in the culture and history of its time, I simply don't understand her judgment of Le Guin or her hostile use of the word "humanist," while her view of Tolkien seems a superficial response to the medieval surface of his work. It is more useful to study the complexities of an author's "secondary world" and to search for analogies between these and real history, than to affix labels from the political discourse of one's own primary world. My own use of the word "humanist" indicates a position which affirms the value of the secular world and individual consciousness without reliance on theology or concepts of immortality. There is considerable value in Jackson's emphasis on fantasies which are close to realism, but she fails to support her dislike of works which create an independent world.

<sup>5</sup> Although not published until the mid-fifties, *The Lord of the Rings* was substantially complete by the late forties; 1984 was published in 1949. Tolkien has stated that the basic concept of his epic was worked out by the late thirties, too early to be influenced by the Second World War. The thirties was, however, the decade in which much of Europe became totalitarian. Robert Plank argues convincingly that when the four hobbits return from their quest to liberate the Shire, the semi-comic enemy they rout is a symbolic representation of fascism – "The Scouring of the Shire," Tolkien's View of Fascism," *A Tolkien Compass* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1975), ed. Jared Lobdell, pp. 107-15.

<sup>6</sup> George Orwell, 1984 (Great Britain: Penguin, 1984), p. 227. Subsequent references will be given in the text, from this edition.

<sup>7</sup> Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon, 1965). At a conference on Orwell in Vacouver, Nov. 1984, I read a paper interpreting 1984 in terms of Fromm's concept of sadomasochism. This will be published in a selection of papers from the conference by Macmillan (London) in the spring of 1988.

<sup>8</sup> W.H. Auden, "The Quest Hero," *Tolkien and the Critics* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbaro, 57.

<sup>9</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954-55), Vol. II, p. 199. All subsequent references will be in the text, from this edition.

<sup>10</sup> George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (New York: Penguin, 1970), ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Vol. II, p. 378.

<sup>11</sup> Angus Fletcher describes the tendency of romance to generate "sub-characters" around a hero or central theme – *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1964), pp. 35-38. Ursula Le Guin comments on the subdivision of character in Frodo's story – "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown," *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), ed. Susan Wood, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 243. All subsequent references will be in the text, from this edition.

<sup>13</sup> For this point I am indebted to an essay by Carey Stuart, an undergraduate at Simon Fraser University.

<sup>14</sup> In a study of the mythic sources of Sauron's Eye, Edward Lense notes the paranoid feelings the Eye and Sauron's omnipresent spies engender in the good characters: "the sense of being constantly watched by terrible eyes is an important part of the texture of life in Middle-earth" – Sauron is Watching You: The Role of the Great Eye in *The Lord of the Rings*, *Mythlore*, Number 13 (Sept., 1976), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Melanie Rauls makes a comprehensive summary of the origin and physical effects of Sauron's Ring in "The Rings of Power," *Mythlore*, 40 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 29-32.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Kocher explains how Providence and free will can coexist in Tolkien's universe: good will win in the long run, but how soon depends on the choices of individuals, who remain free to reject their role in the providential scheme and thus increase and prolong the domination of evil – *Master of Middle-Earth: The Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien* (New York: Ballantine, 1977), pp. 31-52.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Kocher says that when Gollum refers to himself as "we" he is "sinking his own identity in the Ring, allowing his free personality to be swallowed up by it, as is the case with the Nazgul" – *Master of Middle-Earth*, p. 59. In a statistical study of Gollum's speech patterns, Nils-Lennart Johannesson suggests a Freudian meaning for the pronouns: "Gollum's use of WE... indicates that his ego is dominated by the desires

and urges of the id; I and HE... on the other hand, indicate that the societal and cultural norms of the superego have (temporarily) gained control over the ego. Gollum uses I rarely on such occasions; this is when he most openly exposes his ego to his interlocutors. Normally he uses HE as a defensive strategy in order to avoid such exposure of his ego" (*Arda* 1982-83, Annual of Arda Research [Sweden, 1986], pp. 17-18). It would seem that there is a hierarchy of pronouns in Gollum's speech: "I" provides the fullest relation to others, "he" or his own name a more limited relation, while when he uses "we" he is talking to himself and further removed from external reality. Johannesson concludes that "I is a receding variant; Gollum becomes more and more careful not to expose his ego as the story unfolds" (p. 20).

<sup>18</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 81 and p. 176.

<sup>19</sup> Max Luthi argues that the attitudes of the fairytale hero towards his helpful allies, making proper use of them but not enslaved by them, symbolizes a healthy attitude towards the material world – *The Fairy Tale as Art Form and Portrait of Man* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 147-48.

<sup>20</sup> In his Jungian interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings*, Timothy R. O'Neill points out that Gandalf's Ring is called the "Ring of Fire," and that in his case fire represents the power of renewal – *The Individuated Hobbit: Jung, Tolkien and the Archetypes of Middle-Earth* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1979), pp. 92-94. I cannot agree, however, when O'Neill also makes Sauron's One Ring a "symbol of wholeness" with a "transcendental teleology" manifested in the rhyme written on it in letters of fire (pp. 130-31). I would point out that very little is said about the nature of Gandalf's Ring. Gandalf is the leading advocate for the acceptance of temporal process, while all the Rings of Power are suspect because they were created in order to stop time – though the remaining ones are used to support the good side. In its claim to "bind" the other Rings, the One Ring is completely opposed to the world of process and hence entirely evil.

<sup>21</sup> Jared Lobdell, *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), p. x. Here I have called the journey a "quest" because I can't think of a better term.

<sup>22</sup> Randel Helms, *Tolkien's World* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974), pp. 56-75.

<sup>23</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Great Britain, Puffin Books, 1971), p. 57 and p. 67. All subsequent references will be in the text, from this edition.

<sup>24</sup> For a cogent discussion of Le Guin's hostility here to the idea of life after death see T.A. Shippey, "The Magic Art and the Evolution of Words: Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea Trilogy," *Mosaic*, 10 (1977), pp. 147-67. It does seem paradoxical that the very secular world of Earthsea should have a land of the dead. The land of the dead is an effective part of Earthsea in the first volume, where it provides the basis for some powerful and uncanny scenes crucial to the story's experience. In the last volume Le Guin resolves its relation to her secular moral by making it an unpleasant place where the dead are mere shadows and have no feeling for each other. This is uncanny too, but I'm not sure how it fits into the moral structure of her world.

<sup>25</sup> I do not intend here to deny the existence of Christian, or Catholic, humanism, but I doubt whether Tolkien's religious conviction could be called humanist. Chad Walsh suggests that C.S. Lewis' use of myth lent creative vitality to a very conservative theology – "The Man and the Mystery," *Shadows of Imagination: The Fantasies of C.S. Lewis*, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969), ed. Mark R. Hilgates, pp. 1-14. I would suggest that the same might be said of Tolkien, with the addition that through his concept of the "secondary world" Tolkien was able to get further away from theology.

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