CONCENTERING THE FANTASTIC AND THE POSTMODERN: A STUDY OF FABULATION IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S LEGENDARIUM

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Concentering the Fantastic and the Postmodern: A Study of Fabulation in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Concentering the Fantastic and the Postmodern: A Study of Fabulation in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium

This study is an exploration of British fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) trilogy from a fabulative perspective. Fabulation, a term coined by Robert Scholes, is associated with postmodernism and I employ this concept to highlight the concentering or common points where postmodernism overlaps with the fantastic. As a twentieth century fantasy fiction text, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy provides ample opportunity to investigate the fabulative aspects of modern fantasy. The central argument of the study is that postmodernism and modern fantasy fiction are dissimilar genres that largely run along diverging lines; however they converge and overlap at certain points. I postulate that this convergence is along fabulative lines. Fabulative world-making in fantasy fiction entails inventing secondary worlds with an arresting strangeness. These secondary worlds mimic the primary or real world; therefore, amidst the strangeness the reader can still sense a semblance of similarity with the real world. The readers commit their belief to the secondary reality because as soon as their belief falters, the immersive experience of the imaginary fabulative world disappears. On the outset, it seems as if the imaginary worlds are composed of other-worldly, supernatural elements but on closer inspection it is revealed that there is a juxtaposition of reality and the unreal in modern fantasy texts such *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. This study also undertakes a discussion of the Tolkienian concepts of Fall, Mortality and the Machine (or Magic) as fabulative devices. The research method employed in this study is textual analysis. This study is likely to be a significant addition in the production of knowledge in the field of Tolkien studies and fantasy fiction.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LOTR	*The Lord of the Rings*
FR	*Fellowship of the Ring*
TT	*Two Towers*
ROTK	*Return of the King*

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father who has always been a pillar of support for me. I also dedicate this thesis to my advisor and spiritual parent, Dr. Sibghatullah Khan. He has been the wise Gandalf to my clueless Frodo throughout the quest of completing this work.

CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how the fantastic and the postmodern overlap and converge in British fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) trilogy. I have investigated this premise by applying the concept of "fabulation" given by Robert Scholes in his book *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979).

Tolkien popularized modern fantasy fiction through his stories that are set in an imaginary or alternate world named Arda. He created an entire new universe as the setting for his fiction. His *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy belongs to the class of such twentieth century novels that broke away from the strict customary segregation of realistic and romantic novels. Tolkien fused together magic and myth, the natural and supernatural; Scholes referred to this fusion as "fabulation."

The term 'fantastic' has its origins in the Latin word *phantasticus* which in turn, is derived from a Greek word meaning to make visible or manifest (Jackson 13). All fiction, even realistic fiction, is the product of imagination and all fictional works are fantasies to a certain degree. This premise can also be extended to claim that all literary texts are the product of fantasizing and imaginary make-believe. Considering, the scope of the fantastic mode, it has been difficult to accurately define it. The genre is often characterized on the basis of its imaginary setting as most fantasy tales are set in imaginary worlds. Besides settings, the events, characters and plot might contain magical elements. Magic and supernatural phenomenon are an integral feature of fantasy fiction.

Over the years, since the publication of J.R.R Tolkien's magnum opus *The Lord of the Rings,* modern fantasy fiction has come into its own as a rather nebulous literary genre. Critics hold divided views over a fixed definition of modern fantasy. A diversity of opinions exists when it comes to defining fantasy and fixing its evolutionary timeline; according to some critics any fiction with "unreal" elements in it qualifies as fantasy fiction. According to Jeff VanderMeer, fantasy is defined by "the encounter with the not-

real, no matter how slight and what that moment signifies" (Vandermeer). However, like many other critics, he too acknowledges the encumbrance in reaching a conclusive definition of fantasy as the not-real can take on many forms and versions. For Swedish critic Maria Nikolajeva, fantasy is a narrative that brings together a primary and secondary world. It depicts the primary world and at least one alternative world (Nikolajeva 142). The presence of magical worlds or imaginary reality is usually a prominent feature of fantasy fiction. In this context, texts like Lewis Carrol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Edith Nesbit's works come to mind.

Modern fantasy fiction emerged as a genre during a time when realism was dominant in the literary mainstream. Prior to this, fantasy often relied on verse as a vehicle but modern fantasy fiction used prose- specifically novel- as its vehicle which was a medium primarily meant for realist narratives. According to Richard Matthews, prose originated in the form, language, and syntax that had methodically scientized and demythologized the world (Matthews 11). Modern fantasy arrived in the twentieth century, heralding the return of the imaginative spirit. According to T.E. Apter, fantasy in modern literature is a reaction to realism in literature: awareness of fantasy hinges upon the acknowledgement of a normal, real world and the recognition of an otherworldliness that does not adhere to the normal conditions of the real world. The unsettling effect of fantasy arises from its deviation from what is generally considered normal, "from the way in which it highlights the instability, inconsistency or the underlying preposterousness of the normal" (Apter 111). Rosemary Jackson said that, "It is this *negative relationality* which constitutes the meaning of the modern fantastic" (Jackson 15). The perception of fantastic thus depends on its immersive effect and its supernatural traits that set it apart from reality.

Tzvetan Todorov opined that the fantastic is characterized by a sense of hesitation or momentary disbelief which it evokes in a person (Todorov 25). Harold Bloom in his essay "Clinamen: Towards a Theory of Fantasy" differed from Todorov and remarked that fantasy does not invoke hesitation; rather the familiar is contrasted against the unfamiliar or uncanny (Bloom 5). Bloom, along Freudian lines, refers to the canny and uncanny as *Das Heimliche* and *das Unheimliche* respectively (Bloom 5). The readers experience discomfort rather than disbelief as an alternate version of reality is presented

before them that challenges their pre-existing worldview. Therein lays the radical aspect of fantasy. Brian Attebery said that the fantastic infringes upon "what the author clearly believes to be natural law" (Attebery 2). Fantasy, according to Rosemary Jackson, resists cultural and social constraints as it is a literature of desire. It revels in momentary disorder and illegality against the norms of reality, thereby exposing reality to scrutiny (Jackson 21). The subversive quality of fantasy lies in its ability to construct made-up worlds that are neither entirely real nor unreal but are located somewhere between the two (Jackson 19). In works of imaginative fiction that were written prior to modern fantasy, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" was operative on part of the reader but in modern fantasy disbelief is not suspended, rather disbelief is relished. In the words of E. M. Forster, "What does fantasy ask of us? It asks us to pay something extra" (Forster 75). Modern fantasy revels in the unreal.

Andrew Rayment presented the idea of *pragmatikos* and *allos* in fantasy fiction in which *pragmatikos* consists of the secondary world and *allos* are the fantastic elements (hobbits, wizards, etc.) within the secondary world that cannot be conceived as real by the reader (Rayment 16). However, he also acknowledged the difficulty in arriving at a clear definition of fantasy and remarked that genres can be regarded as "metanarratives" in which fantasy cannot be comfortably ensconced (Rayment 15). "Metanarrative" is a term linked with postmodernism.

Much like the fantastic, the postmodern also eludes a totalizing definition. The leading postmodern theoretical figure Jean-Francois Lyotard defined the term as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 24). Postmodern thought scoffs at authority, is skeptic towards all grand narratives and has an anti-foundational philosophical bent. Postmodernism favours relativism over absolutism and does not take any epistemic fixed stance. A number of terms such as post structuralism, deconstruction, differance, uncertainty, hybridity, ambivalence, pastiche, hyperrealism, simulacra, fabulation, magical realism and metafiction are associated with the postmodern movement. Magical realism was earlier mixed up with fabulation-a term coined by Robert Scholes-but later both emerged as distinctive (though interrelated) postmodern creative techniques. Robert Scholes' fabulative lens forms the primary theoretical framework of this study.

1.2 Rationale of my Study

It would be prudent to provide a rationale of this study. For the most part, the fantastic and the postmodern run along diverging lines but at some points they concenter and converge; the purpose of this study is to identify these concentering points between the fantastic and the postmodern. Fabulation is the most suitable theoretical approach for this study because fabulation is linked with postmodernism and it entails the fusion of the natural and the supernatural. Tolkien's trilogy with its epic grand narrative hearkens back to the romantic and at times looks, ahead with baleful melancholy that is characteristic of the realist tradition. This intermingling of genres sets modern fantasy apart from other imaginative works of fiction and endows it with a postmodern quality. Linda Hutcheon remarked in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) that in postmodern art there is intermixing of genres and "conventions of the two genres are played off against each other; there is no simple, unproblematic merging" (Hutcheon 9). It is important to consider that modern fantasy emerged as a riposte to the movement that privileged realistic mimesis over imaginative fiction.

Fantastic texts existed earlier as well but modern fantasy specifically channels nostalgia for a romantic past while capturing the anxiety of its own contemporary zeitgeist. Fantasy fiction has its radical moments on dint of its ability to unsettle its audience; according to Andrew Rayment it is radical in the same vein as postmodern thinkers such as Foucault and Zizek; it pushes the boundaries of ontological and epistemological perspectives (Rayment 17). The fantastic approaches depiction of reality in a distinctive way and this idiosyncratic approach has a tinge of the postmodern element. Scholes referred to such works as "experimental fiction" which through their fabulative elements, steer language towards reality (contrary to the widely held notion that they do not portray reality at all). The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, being a representative text of 20th century modern fantasy fiction, merges magic and myth and portrays reality in a novel form. The narrative of the trilogy is set in an imaginary world that is named "Arda" or "Middle Earth." This fictional setting, along with its fantastic characters and elements, constitutes Tolkien's "legendarium." The fantastic quality in the selected text is a rejection of the traditional realist constraints as it fuses fact and fiction

to magnify the aspects of reality the fabulator (in this instance, Tolkien) intends to portray. For some, this magnification might appear as distortion of truth but it is in fact, an embellishment of truth as shall be explored in this postmodern study of fantasy fiction.

As mentioned previously, the term "fabulation" was made popular by Robert Scholes. In common jargon, any fanciful composition can be categorized as a fabulation but in literary criticism the term is associated with Scholes' definition as "fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way" (Scholes 29). The distinction alleviates the need for the kind of "willing suspension of disbelief" suggested by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

While reading fabulations, the reader immerses himself fully in the make-believe world and commits himself to its artificiality. The author is not apologetic about the artifice of his/her work; rather he/she highlights the artifice and simultaneously assumes the role of writer and critic. This sort of fiction transgresses the realist tradition of the nineteenth and early twentieth century novel and is nearer to Cervantes' "ostensible casualness about plausibility" in *Don Quixote* which according to Milan Kundera is "closer to a Garcia Marquez, a Rushdie, a Fuentes, or a Grass" (Kundera 6). Modern fantasy fiction fulfills the criteria of Scholes' notion of experimental fiction as it blends the real and unreal together and most modern fantasists rely on long narrative verse for creating their fabulations. The fictive experience is one of self-awareness when it comes to postmodern fabulation. This study aims to explore the postmodern attributes of modern fantasy fiction as they appear in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by analyzing them through the fabulative lens.

1.3 Locating J.R.R. Tolkien's Trilogy in the Fabulist Tradition

For gaining a clearer understanding of the link between modern fantasy fiction and postmodern fabulation, it is pertinent to locate Tolkien's trilogy in the fabulist tradition.

Fabulative texts are akin to factions. The portmanteau term *faction* denotes works of fiction that blend fact and fiction. The facts in faction are grounded in historical realities while in fabulation there is interplay of the mundane real and bizarre unreal.

Robert Scholes coined the literary term *fabulation* in 1967 with the publication of his book *The Fabulators*. Around that time, there was a growing disenchantment with the realist movement and various authors like J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Ray Bradbury, Ursula K. Le Guin, H.G. Wells and Frank Herbert were experimenting with story-telling techniques. In England and the United States especially modern fantasy took a firm hold because these countries lacked a universal mythic tradition (Mathews 16). The works of writers such as Lewis Carroll, William Morris and George Macdonald gave a boost to fantasy writing as these texts connected the finite with the infinite; or the plausible with the implausible.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) was a book that was primarily written for children but had wider philosophical interpretations and therefore could be read by both children and adults. The situation was augmented by the prevailing philosophical trends of that time. Jane Flax opined in *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (1990) that all-encompassing and comprehensive explanations of reality proved to be illusions after the failure of Enlightenment. The metanarratives upon which the structures of Western ideas were built since the eighteenth century lost legitimacy. Intellectuals in the twentieth century longed for alternative explanations and portrayals of reality (Flax 7). These transformations also had an impact on the way authors perceived and portrayed reality in their writings and realist texts could no longer sufficiently capture the uncertainty felt in many philosophical circles. As a result, writers started to experiment with storytelling techniques.

A striking feature of this experimental fiction was that it covered varied philosophical concerns. G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis built their imaginary worlds by taking their religious beliefs as inspiration. J.R.R. Tolkien made language the primary inspiration for his mythopoeic world. Le Guin called these texts "thought-experiments" and "as ways of asking questions and trying out different versions of reality in the controlled world of text (Le Guin 158). Some of these imaginative texts were futuristic and classified as science fiction while some were nostalgic and referred to as modern fantasy fiction.

Twentieth century fantasy writers like Tolkien pushed the limits of fiction with their experimental fabulation. Around the same time that modern fantasy fiction was going through its important evolutionary stages in the early and mid-twentieth century, one of America's most prominent realist authors John Steinbeck was trying to incorporate fantastic elements in his work. Steinback wanted to "make contact with the very old, the older than knowledge" and to use this contact as "a springboard into the newer than knowledge" (Scholes 3). While Steinback's aspirations remained unfulfilled, other authors like Pynchon, Barth, Borges, Italo Calvino, Gardner and Coover contributed towards the fabulative movement. Experimentation with storytelling techniques thus resulted in both modern fantasy and fabulative texts. John Barth's work was initially wholly referred to as fabulative before it was categorized as postmodern.

According to Robert Scholes, a picture must have a frame or an edge but a text can contain limitless possibilities (Scholes 12). Peter L. Berger gave the view in his book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) that reality is not something that is fixed. Notions of reality are made up and are continuously being re-synthesized and manufactured. Contemporary reality is not perceived as something organized but as a meshwork of interlinked, multiple realities. It is no longer experienced as an ordered and fixed hierarchy, but as a web of interrelating, multiple realities. Thus, the authors in twentieth century were compelled by the concurrent eradication of old metanarratives and the generation of new ideas to provide an alternative explanation of reality. Angel Flores denounced the "blind alley" of photographic realism whose literality was insufficient to comprehensively capture the contemporary uncertainty towards the world (Flores 109). Robert Scholes said, "It is because reality cannot be recorded that realism is dead. All writing, all composition is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poiesis. No recording. Only constructing" (Scholes 7). Thus according to Scholes, even the most realistic fiction contains some degree of make-believe.

1.4 Situatedness of the Researcher

In a globalized literary environment, western modern fantasy fiction has gained immense popularity all over the world. Pakistan has its own oral as well as written

literary tradition of fable and fantasy story-telling. Epics like *Hamzanama* and *Tilism Hoshruba* still have wide readership to this day. The well-received reception of imaginative fiction in the region has inspired Pakistani contemporary writers like Musharraf Ali Farooqui (*The Merman and the Book of Power*) and Shamila Ghyas (*Cursed Be the Syhlain*) to come up with their own works of modern fantasy fiction. Being a Pakistani researcher, this postmodern study of fantasy fiction will contribute towards local critical interpretations of the selected texts. By working on this, I would be on surer ground while analyzing and interpreting the fantastic element in fabulist writings.

1.5 Delimitation of Study

"Legendarium" means a body or system of myths, legends, stories, etc., concerning or relating to a particular fictional world (Korpua 11). Tolkien referred to his works, including *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, set in the fictional universe of Arda, as his legendarium in his letters. The term was popularized by J.R.R. Tolkien and Tolkien's legendarium refers to the body of his mythopoeic writings set in the fictional world of Arda. The trilogy consists of three parts:

1. *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954)
2. *The Two Towers* (1954)
3. *The Return of the King* (1955)

This research is delimited to analyzing J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy from the perspective of Robert Scholes' theory of fabulation. The trilogy is a huge work for the purpose of this study as it consists of three hefty volumes. But since the argument of this research is critically linked up within all three texts in the series, I have to take up the trilogy in its entirety. As a fantasy fiction series penned and published in the twentieth century, the selected texts are ideal for studying fabulation.

1.6 Thesis Statement

The fantastic elements in J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium, that includes *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, seem to converge and overlap with the postmodern and, thus, constitute the research problem. Moreover, the novelty of the fictive elements in the selected work(s) rather serves to present a unique and fresh perspective on the nature of existence, both in

realistic and imaginative domains. Robert Scholes' notion of "fabulation" may serve well to read Tolkien's fantasy world for my research purposes.

1.7 Research Questions

In accordance with the thesis statement, the controlling questions for my research will be as under:

Q-1 How does the fabulative effect play out in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy?

Q-2 In what ways do the fantastic and the factual converge and overlap in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*?

Q-3 How do Fall, Mortality, and the Machine (or Magic) act as fabulative devices in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy?

1.8 Research Plan

I have arranged my study according to the following outline:

In chapter one, I have introduced the premise and rationale of my study along with research questions. In chapter two, I have undertaken a thematic review of existing scholarship relevant to my study and identified research gaps. In chapter three of this thesis I have discussed the theoretical framework and research methodology that I have incorporated in my work. Chapters four, five, and six deal with textual analysis of my selected primary texts. Finally, in chapter seven I have concluded the study, discussed the findings of my research and suggested recommendations for future research.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This dissertation contributes towards fantasy fiction scholarship by exploring its fabulative aspects and its unique intersection with the postmodern. The significance of this study lies in investigating the artistic and philosophical worth of modern fantasy fiction by presenting a fresh understanding of how it evokes our response towards imagination and produces verisimilitude. My research shows that modern fantasy fiction is not merely based on an archaic romantic literary mode; rather it addresses topical realities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of literature review is to situate the project in contemporary scholarship by reviewing the relevant secondary sources. A vast range of scholarship and critique is available on modern fantasy fiction. A review of relevant key critical works would be useful in order to contextualize my research in critical scholarship and to identify gaps in existing research.

As this research project involves an analysis of postmodern aspects of modern fantasy fiction, the sources for review include critical texts on fantasy fiction that discuss the main concerns of this study. I have proceeded with this review in a thematic manner. I divide this review into largely two themes and then subsume the relevant secondary sources under corresponding heads respectively.

This section consists of three parts. The first part gives a brief overview of the research and gives a summary of the objectives of the literature review. The second part forms the main body of analysis of secondary sources. This part helps ascertain whether the critical works under review are relevant and how do they contribute towards understanding the project under discussion. I have further divided this part into two for making an analytic review of scholarship even more clear. In the third part, I conclude my review and relate it to my research area and topic. As there is a plethora of existing scholarship on modern fantasy fiction, I have been highly selective while choosing secondary sources for this review and opted for those that strictly adhere to my research domain.

This chapter has been useful in supporting my research as now I am in a position to identify gaps in previous scholarship. I am able to avoid repetition of research by assessing existing critical works and I can make suggestions for further research.

2.2 Review of Literature

For proceeding with this review in a clear and systemic manner, I have divided literature review into two parts. I have reviewed critical texts that fall within the following two themes:

I. Modern fantasy fiction and realism

II. Modern fantasy fiction and postmodernism

(I)

Fantasy and reality may seem like antithetical concepts, but the truth is that the two are intertwined in a much more complex manner. Modern fantasy fiction appeared at a time when the Western world favored naturalism over metaphysics; the development of modern fantasy fiction thus did not remain uninfluenced from its surrounding philosophical milieu. As exploring the link between the fantastic and the factual forms a major premise of this project, therefore I have reviewed important critical sources that pertain to this context.

Any critical discussion regarding the fantastic and the real is incomplete without mentioning Tzvetan Todorov's book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970). In this critique, Todorov has undertaken a rather general analysis of fantasy texts based on their overlapping similarities rather than focusing on disparate works. He compares literary genre with biological species and writes that if we know the traits of species (for instance, tiger), we can infer the traits of every tiger in that biological group; the evolution of a tiger with some new traits does not modify the whole group (Todorov 6). Similarly, if we know the qualities of a particular literary genre, this knowledge can be used to study new off-shoots of the genre.

Therefore, even though the fantasy tradition in literature goes back to ancient times, only minute changes took place in the genre over successive time periods. Todorov's critique is helpful for my study because it subsumes intricately linked imaginative writings under the heading of fantasy and gives us a clearer understanding of what constitutes a fantastic text. Todorov draws upon Northrop Frye's theoretical assumptions towards literary modes (or genres) given in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and

writes: “Another fundamental category is that of verisimilitude. The two poles of literature are here constituted by the plausible narrative and the narrative whose characters can do anything” (Todorov 11). Todorov places purely imaginative fiction like fairy tales and realistic fiction on two completely opposite poles.

Works that are wholly imaginative and portray no resemblance to reality at all do not fall into the category of fantasy; rather fantasy exists in the liminal space between these two poles. Todorov further adds in chapter two that fantasy takes up the space of uncertainty where we are unsure about a phenomena or entity, that whether it is an illusion or a figment of our imagination (Todorov 22). According to Todorov, the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event (Todorov 6). Thus, the fantastic effect is produced in a text when the reader can no longer confidently distinguish the natural from the supernatural and is intrigued, shocked, or moved by the unreal.

Todorov’s definition of the fantastic characterizes fantastic texts based on the reaction of the reader; the plausibility of the narrative should always swing between the natural and the supernatural but at no point should the reader become accustomed to the uncanny or unreal events within the text. The fantastic should always evoke a strong emotional response in the reader. The reader should never accept the extraordinariness of the narrative as the new normal. Todorov suggests that the fantastic has a precarious presence; it can vanish at any instant. Instead of existing autonomously as a genre, it oscillates between the boundaries of the marvelous and the uncanny (Todorov 41). He further expands on his requirements of a fantastic text and writes that fantasy texts should not be read in an “allegorical or poetic manner” (Todorov 32). Todorov cites Roger Callois and opines that fantastic texts contain “infinite images” and “limited images”. Infinite images do not serve the purpose of verisimilitude at all while limited images can be eventually interpreted.

Thus, from a review of this secondary source I have garnered Todorov’s input about the connection between fantasy and reality. According to Todorov, fantasy veers towards the real at times but does not reach it all the way through. This is contrary to the opinion of several critics who are of the view that fantasy has nothing to do with reality.

While Todorov has given many important insights about fantasy fiction in this book, his theoretical assumptions are limiting and regressive when applied to the study of fantasy texts. What one reader may find marvelous, uncanny or supernatural, another may not. My research project will address this gap and I will try to explore the interpretive possibilities of fantasy fiction in a manner that does not exclude the innovative capacity of the genre.

C.S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), was a famous fantasy writer and critic. He was a contemporary and close friend of J.R.R. Tolkien and besides fiction, penned several critical texts. His book *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961) is relevant to this study as in it Lewis delves though the imaginative and realistic aspects of fantasy. According to Lewis, modern fantasy fiction combines fact and fiction. He explores this premise by breaking down the conventional criteria of judging a text by its content and instead focuses upon the response that the text under examination evokes in its reader. He divides readers into two categories: the literary and unliterary. The unliterary only read a book superficially. They often choose books that conform to their notion of reality and that make sense in their own individual system of thinking. They do not go searching for new ideas or new perspectives on reality. These type of readers look down upon modern fantasy fiction. Lewis opines that both literary and unliterary readers want to know more about the world around them but the latter can only perceive reality when it is presented without any imaginative flair. They find it nigh impossible to wrap their head around invention as a literary activity (Lewis 29). On the other hand, literary readers completely surrender their pre-existing biases and notions before entering the world of the text.

Literary readers usually read a single book several times to fully grasp its meaning. They open their minds to the possibility of alternate versions of reality; different from the one that they already know. This approach towards reading and receiving meaning allows the reader to gain new insight and knowledge. According to Lewis “The first demand any work of art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way” (Lewis 19). In modern fantasy fiction texts like *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), the reader is presented with a setting that is an altered version of reality but it is not entirely unreal.

In Chapter 6 of his book, Lewis states that readers and critics who always privilege realism over the fantastic refuse to accept the unreality of fantasy fiction. They cannot extend their imagination to submerge itself in make-believe worlds even though ironically they readily accept the improbable coincidences necessary to the plot of many realistic novels. According to Lewis, such readers suffer from "inertia of imagination" and he further states that unliterary readers only want a superficial realism in the texts they read because they are too wrapped up in their own world to open up their minds to other possible versions of reality (Lewis 56). Lewis calls this preference for realism "egoistic castle-building" because even while reading fiction such a reader cannot detach himself/herself from a faint hope that what they are reading might turn translate into reality (or material benefit in some form) while readers who enjoy reading fantasy indulge in "disinterested castle-building". The reader continues to look inward rather than outwards.

Lewis opines that even though realistic fiction is all the rage and imaginative fiction is considered childish, it would be a folly to take this preference for realism as an established rule in literary criticism. According to Lewis: "The unblushingly romantic has far less power to deceive than the apparently realistic. Admittedly fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all" (Lewis 67). Fantasy is unabashedly open about its artifice while realism lulls the reader into a false sense of security. Lewis further states in the Epilogue: "Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness particular to himself [...] My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through the eyes of others. In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself "(Lewis 141). Thus, according to C.S. Lewis fantasy does not merely consist of infantile tales full of imaginary creatures; it provides the reader with alternate perspectives on reality.

To fully reap the benefits of fantasy as a reader, one has to fully let down one's guard and wholeheartedly embrace the make-believe reality. This sort of surrender indicates a sort of selflessness and open-mindedness in readers as they are willing to consider that their perspective on the world is not absolute or final. In this vein fantasy author Terry Pratchett noted: "There's certainly prejudice in some quarters against fantasy, but this tends to be from people who think it is all swords and dragons"

(Pratchett 467). The skeptics of modern fantasy fiction reduce its worth to the superficial motifs of the genre while ignoring its deeper themes.

Thus according to Lewis, an obstinate preference for realism is indicative of egoistic mirror-gazing in which the reader only wants his/her own particular worldview reflected back but fantastic fiction has the power to present reality in an altered form which can help the readers view reality through a different and new prism.

In the secondary source reviewed above, C.S. Lewis has emphasized the importance and merits of reading imaginative fiction in detail elaboration but he has not pointed out the difference between modern fantasy and imaginative fiction that preceded it (of the romantic tradition). This research project will attempt to fill that gap and will elaborate the unique character of modern fantasy fiction in portraying reality even though it is set in make-believe worlds.

Peter Hunt's introductory essay, "Fantasy and Alternative Worlds"(2004), to his and Millicent Lenz' book *Alternative Worlds and Fantasy Fiction* is a useful secondary source for my study as Hunt endeavours to dispel the widespread notion that fantasy has no concern with the real world and explains how fantasy fiction presents reality. Hunt initiates his argument by highlighting fantasy's genre defying character. According to Hunt, the interesting thing about fantasy is that either it is taken seriously by its proponents or rejected outright by its cynics. For its adherents, it is essential as a counterpart to reality and for its skeptics it is akin to self-indulgent catharsis (Hunt 2). Therefore, its skeptics call it childish or trivial. For many critics, fantasy is regressive and out of step with the post-romantic, modern, realist zeitgeist. Those who regard it as a formulaic genre associate it with outdated romanticism. Due to the myriad of these varying opinions, modern fantasy resists classification into a fixed genre which endows it with a postmodern quality. Hunt further says that there is a misconception associated with fantasy that it does not portray reality at all. Hunt comments on the relation between the real and the unreal in fantasy fiction: "Fantasy is, because of its relationship to reality, very knowing: alternative worlds must necessarily be related to, and comment on, the real world" (Hunt 5). Fantasy thus does not circumvent concerns of the real world but takes a road less travelled to address them.

This verisimilitude in fantasy fiction, according to Hunt, is due to the presence of 'realistic focalizers'. However bizarre or outlandish the narrative may seem, these realistic focalizers make it feel relevant to real life experiences at certain points. Hunt writes that in fantasy texts, a realistic focalizer is essential because despite the strangeness of the imaginary world, the reader relates to the story when they find their own lives reflected in the text (Hunt 9). For example, even though *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is set in an imaginary world, Dorothy's desire to return home resembles human sentiments in real life.

According to Hunt, there is method to the (apparent) madness involved in making up fantastic stories. There is a juxtaposition of the natural and supernatural in fantasy world making and that is why the reader can empathize with the story or characters while reading through a perspective-shifting story. Fantasy authors introduce these "realistic focalizers" in various ways; for instance the 'Muggle world' in the *Harry Potter* series highlights the contrast between the natural and supernatural; wizards and witches in the alternative world of Harry Potter experience grief and loss much like real humans. Any reader who has lost a parent at a young age can relate to Harry's sadness. Due to these realistic focalizers, the realistic concerns of fantasy fiction are highlighted and the readers feel a sense of familiarity in an alternative, imaginary world that is in all other appearances different from their own.

Hunt further says that modern fantasy fiction often draws ire from critics who look down upon the literature of imagination because according to them, these works cannot be used to derive any truths about real life (Hunt 5). They overlook the creativity and delight of the imaginary worlds, and boil down the literary worth of these fantasy texts to their meaning-making potential.

Hunt, while tracing the timeline of modern fantasy fiction, comments that by the 1960s fantasy fiction started to gain acceptance as other experimental writing such as absurdist writing and magical realism garnered attention in the literary mainstream. Hunt quotes Tom Shippey: "The fantastic', as academically denned and studied, is just not the same phenomenon as the bestseller genre of 'fantasy' now to be found in every bookshop"

(Shippey 9). Therefore, through its evolutionary timeline, fantasy took up multiple dimensions and inspired other forms of experimental writing.

Hunt comments on British author Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that such fiction has: "an underlying seriousness, not to say grimness" (Hunt 24). He further adds: "This is fantasy locked on to the real world. In fact, despite all appearances, the one thing that the books are emphatically not, is nonsense" (Hunt 25). According to Hunt, new fantasy authors tried to expand the horizons of the genre and continuously "moved it on in new directions" (Hunt 36). Thus, while fantasy stories appear childish and simplistic on the surface they contain undercurrents of radical, somber themes and meanings that bring their content closer to the real, known world.

Peter Hunt has aptly explained the position of fantasy fiction as a genre-defying literary category but he has not explained its postmodern attributes in detail. This research work will explore the postmodern aspects of fantasy fiction in greater detail.

Robert A. Collins' essay "Fantasy and "Forestructures": The Effect of Philosophical Climate upon Perceptions of the Fantastic" (1982) is a useful secondary source for this study because in it Collins discusses the relation of fantastic narratives and reality with reference to the corresponding "philosophical climate". According to Collins', it is difficult to delineate modern fantasy as a genre accurately because reality is difficult to define as well. As the uncertainty of modern man increased towards reality, so did the inventive techniques in fiction as authors tried to come up with new ways to grapple with this uncertainty. Collins' critique has added immensely to my understanding of the environment under which modern fantasy texts such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* were written and why did fantasy authors turn to writing in this mode instead of sticking to the prevalent realist techniques.

Collins' critical analysis of fantasy fiction is rooted in Heidegger's phenomenological idea of *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world. Collins' writes: "For Heidegger (and others, of course) no process of perception may be characterized as objective; the process itself is impossible without both subject and object (perception is always perception of something)" (Collins 109). As skepticism towards objective truth has increased, so the critic cannot predict with certainty that what would be the response of

different readers towards different events in a fantasy text. Therefore, simply defining fantasy by its opposition to reality is no longer sufficient. Notions of reality and the unreal can vary from reader to reader and critic to critic. According to Collins': "For the Renaissance reader, "realism" and "naturalism," had they existed, would have been perceived as alien literary stances; they are indeed products of a different "philosophical climate," one dominated by"exactitude in representation" suggested or demanded by the model of the natural sciences" (Collins 112). Thus in Collins' opinion, perception precedes interpretation and this perceptive vantage point varies from person to person.

He analyzes Eric S. Rabkin's attempt to characterize the fantastic and writes: "In fact, the author obviously assumes, *a priori*, that his assessment of the nature of "the existent" is essentially similar to that of others" (Collins 115). While Rabkin considers playwright Eugene Ionesco's work as fantasy, Ionesco himself says about his work: "I write to say how the world appears to me," he tells us, "what it seems to me to be, as honestly as I can" (Collins 115). Therefore, Rabkin's and Ionesco's perceptions of what constitutes reality are vastly different. Collins' further expiates the link between modern fantasy and its philosophical climate in which humans feel a sense of alienation: "To redress "mainstream despair," many English and American fantasists have intuitively reached for an organic vision of coherence, for a fantasy world in which meaning and value are integral" (Collins 117). Thus, the perceiver (or reader or critic), creates meaning on the basis of pre-existing fore -structures.

This essay has proven very useful to my study because Collins emphasizes that fantasy fiction also contains verisimilitude like realist fiction; it depends on the perceivers whether the various components of the narrative are fantastic from their vantage point or realistic.

Even though I found Collins' ideas about modern fantasy fiction very pertinent, his essay does not differentiate between the myriad of narrative modes of experimental writing that developed in the twentieth century. In my research project, I will endeavor to fill this gap.

Richard Mathews's essay "From Antiquity to Infinity: The Development of Modern Fantasy" (2012) is a vital secondary source for my study because in it, Mathews

sheds light upon the progress of modern fantasy in a predominantly realist literary milieu. He writes: “Fantasy as a modern literary category on its own took shape through a dialectic with this new literature of realism” (Mathews 3). Modern fantasy writers such as Tolkien and Ursula K. Le Guin mostly chose novel as the form for their narratives in contrast to imaginative authors of the past who relied upon verse and poetry. This is evidence that even though modern fantasy fiction diverged from the popular realist mainstream of its time, it did not remain unaffected by it. This resulted in an unprecedented genre and mode of narrative fiction in which the real and unreal existed in tandem. According to Matthews, fantasy fiction does not rely on logic of the natural world for the reader to make sense of the bizarre and outlandish events in fantastic texts. Fantasy worlds have their own logic propped up by magic or other such devices. The unexpected presence of incredible elements in a conventionally realistic literary form (novel or short story) brings about an interesting duel between form and content in which the reader’s commitment to the make-believe world is tested in various ways.

Fantasy associates with reality in a unique way and the readers may have different responses towards it. Some readers experience Tzvetan Todorov’s idea of “hesitation” when they come across an impossible event in a fantasy story, some may deliberately suspend their disbelief as Coleridge instructed while some may even immerse themselves completely in the narrative. “In either case, the fantasy writer’s freedom to depart from realism involves an obligation to coherence and to the establishment of a relationship with the reader’s experience” (Mathews 4). This degree of familiarization in fantasy with real life events is what juxtaposes the factual against fiction and produces an effect of verisimilitude.

According to Mathews, in the twentieth century the British and American public readily accepted modern fantasy fiction and it came into its own as a genre against the backdrop of mainstream literary realism. While Britain and America did not have their own mythic traditions, fantasy comfortably adapted itself to the global stage in areas which already had an established fantasy tradition through the works of writers such as Borges, Calvino and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. This spread of the fantastic technique in fiction resulted in a plethora of innovative writing modes. Modern fantasy fiction, however, is largely defined within the boundaries of the British and American tradition

(Mathews 32). The works of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez are largely categorized as postmodern fiction.

Richard Mathews' critical discussion regarding the origin and development of modern fantasy fiction is relevant to my study because it provides a context for the transition of modern fantasy texts to postmodern fiction. It also provides useful insights into how fantasy relates to modern reality. Matthews' essay is deficient in the aspect that Richard Matthews has not clarified the difference between modern fantasy texts and surrealist, absurdist texts that often fall within the category of postmodern fiction even though they share some similarities with modern fantasy fiction. This study will attempt to make the distinction clear between the two.

(II)

In the second section of this literature review, I have discussed secondary sources that deal with modern fantasy fiction from a postmodern angle. A review of these secondary sources will prove useful to me in approaching modern fantasy fiction from a postmodern perspective.

The first work that I have reviewed in this section is by Lori M. Campbell. In her book *Portals of Power: Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy* (2010), Lori M. Campbell explores the relation between the 'familiar real' and the 'strange unreal' in fantasy fiction and she identifies the postmodern character of modern fantasy texts. According to Campbell, fantasy texts unseal portals to unknown worlds for the readers which unlock a transformative experience. The portals initiate a process of transformation on numerous levels—social, psychological, political, and spiritual" (Campbell 6). Generally, the portal is considered as merely something that shifts spatial configuration between the primary and secondary worlds (for instance the barrier at King's Cross Station in the Harry Potter series) but Campbell says that the portal actually acts as a liminal space where various power exchanges and shifts take place depending on the fantastic narrative. According to Farah Mendlesohn: "We commonly assume that the portal is from 'our' world into the fantastic, but the portal fantasy is about entry, transition, and negotiation" (Mendlesohn 19). At the point of transition between the real and unreal, significant power shifts may occur.

Lori Campbell further states that fantasy fiction is heir to the folktale and borrows its magical elements and motifs to place itself within a universal tradition while its thematic concerns are topical. These magical rituals and beliefs allow the fantastic to transcend reality and navigate the infinite spaces of impossible worlds (Campbell 7). Campbell then says that the nineteenth century ushered in a new zest for individualism which arose out of industrial capitalism (Campbell 10). Concurrently, traditional organized social and religious institutions began to lose their foothold and modern secularism started to emerge. By the end of the century, the link between imagination and reality became more complicated.

In her book, Lori Campbell has discussed the radical and subversive nature of fantasy fiction that gives it a postmodern character. Fantasy engages with the real world by subtly taking up political themes; fantasy stories act as portals of power which narratively transfigure the existing power relations of a specific temporal and spatial context while including universal motifs and elements. Thus, fantasy undertakes interplay of the new and the very old.

While Campbell has explored the postmodern character of fantasy fiction in great length, she has not explained this aspect of modern fantasy in conjunction with the realist tradition that was dominant in the literary mainstream in the early twentieth century when modern fantasy emerged. This research work will try to overcome the aforementioned gap.

Larry McCaffery's essay "Form, Formula, and Fantasy: Generative Structures in Contemporary Fiction" (1982) is of importance to this study as a secondary source as McCaffery has discussed the limits of imaginative fiction and how fantasy attempts to break those barriers. According to McCaffery, fantasy fiction is a game of generating infinite and limitless impossibilities. There are a specific number of known realities, specific rules on how the world around us should be arranged. Animals should not be able to converse with humans therefore, in the realistic novel, animals only make animal noises. Regular notions of reality operate according to certain possibilities. McCaffery begins his essay by giving the example of Borges' story *The Library of Babel* in which a multitude of texts are created out of a specific number of symbols. However, the

language in these texts is composed of haphazardly arranged symbols and thus these books remain inscrutable to most people. Similarly, the elements of the universe around us are arranged in a particular manner and if their arrangement becomes disoriented, such an event appears supernatural or unreal to us.

Larry McCaffery writes that humans have come up with fixed logic regarding the state of language, myth, science and mathematics so as to impose a sort of order upon the chaos of the universe (22). In literature, different literary elements are ordered into genres. Critics try to approach a definition of fantastic by considering it as a fixed strategy in which non-fact is placed in a context where it seems to be real. McCaffery opines that “this reduction of literature to a sort of "verbal algebra" does not automatically destroy the value or utility of artistic production” (24) however, there are several issues in accepting this formulaic perspective on fiction or the ability of language to depict reality. In the modern world, interest moved from content to forms of disciplines and the ways in which age-old structures were upheld.

According to McCaffery: “There no longer being any "higher truth" to appeal to, intellectuals in many fields were forced to examine the accepted paradigms from new perspectives” (26). This awareness resulted in the production of self-aware, non-realistic texts. It sparked the interest of writers to revert back to pre-existing writing patterns and to experiment with them in new ways. Like scientific rules, mythological patterns offer people a familiar outlook towards the world around us. However, when writers of the twentieth century took up these mythic patterns they had to come up with fictive forms that could overcome the “central tension between the mythic framework's tendency to organize and rigidify its elements into teleological wholes and the ambiguous, fragmented nature of contemporary experience, which refuses to yield to formulas and patterns” (31). The “game of impossibilities” can be reimagined with new conventions and new meanings, resulting in new and radical combinations of old materials. Thus, McCaffery’s essay describes how fantasy transgresses the metanarratives associated with rules of genre in literature and this endows it with a postmodern quality.

McCaffery has succinctly analyzed the various aspects of experimental fiction in this essay but he has not connected them to the philosophical underpinnings of fantasy. My research work will attempt to fill this gap.

Andrew Rayment's book *Fantasy, Politics, Postmodernity* (2014) is a valuable secondary source for my study because he has discussed the relation between modern fantasy fiction with postmodernism in detail and he has explained how the two overlap while portraying reality. Rayment poses questions that what does dissent in the fantasy genre imply and what features of fantasy engage with the political? He suggests that even though it outwardly it seems as though fantasy fiction is based on outdated, romantic structures it actually conforms with Lyotard's vision of the "radical aesthetic" (Rayment 20). This is because fantasy texts are capable of inventing, displacing, transforming and disrupting reality.

According to Rayment, modern fantasy's form and content makes it an ideal vehicle for subversion. Fantasy is not only subversive in that it challenges the limits of literary experimentation but also the innovative techniques used to produce fantasy texts can be applied to critique power without being easily detected. In this book, Rayment has analyzed the works of modern British fantasy authors such as Mieville and Terry Practchett. According to Andrew Rayment their works are partially postmodern in character as: "They displace elements of the 'real' world of our everyday social reality, de-contextualize them, give them a non-real appearance (an appearance that is transformed or disrupted) and then throw it back at us as 'real being" (Rayment 21). Thus according to Rayment, fantastic fiction challenges pre-existing notions of reality and the status quo by opening our minds to alternate states of existence and a possibly better world. This quality makes modern fantasy radical.

Ralph C. Wood's essay "Tolkien and Postmodernism" (2011) is a relevant secondary source for this research work because Wood has outlined the postmodern attributes of Tolkien's work. Ralph C. Wood says that many aspects of Tolkien's life show his antimodernist bent. He lamented the destruction of the natural world due to expanding industrialization and refused to drive an automobile. Tolkien remained politically affiliated with the British conservative party all his life and was a royalist as he

believed in the effectiveness of hierarchal organizational structures; whether at university, Church or in the arena of governance. He also aspired for the return of Roman Catholicism as the officially recognized state religion of Britain. In all his writings, moreover, Tolkien repeatedly went back to decidedly pre-modern literary forms, especially epic and romance.

Kenneth Craven commented: "J.R.R. Tolkien was an ancient in the sense that he never wanted to live in the present time, but in saner ages and in eternity. . . . Tolkien was as ancient as Treebeard, a mossy poet who lived in the languages and poems of the Dark Ages" (Craven 145). Yet, despite all these aspects Tolkien channeled some several postmodern concerns in his writing –even if they did not appear in postmodern terms or forms. Ralph C. Wood is careful to emphasize that he does not consider Tolkien as a postmodern author, rather he considers him as an author whose concerns often coincide and overlap with those of postmodernists (Wood 2). Tolkien anticipated the anxieties and opportunities of the postmodern world.

Ralph C. Wood further adds that Tolkien was postmodern in the aspect that his writings contained themes that responded to the problem of the dead deity of modernism. Tolkien addressed these issues in various ways. Firstly, he considered cultural pluralism an essential good in order for a society to progress. Secondly, he refuted modernist and foundationalist thought and was of the opinion that knowledge and truth are grounded in history. He criticized modern culture for its contributions towards devastating warfare. He was also of the view that divine intervention is rather subtle and can be found in small communities of the marginalized and overlooked folk like hobbits.

Tolkien lived through two world wars and witnessed the bloodshed of nearly 190 million people in the name of modern ideals. He also disapproved of the notion of English being established as the new lingua franca of the modern world. Tolkien's secondary world contains several languages. According to Wood, "Such cultural and linguistic pluralism prevents Tolkien's enterprise from becoming anything hegemonic or triumphalist"(Wood 230). Thus, Tolkien's works carry the postmodernist element of celebrating different linguistic modes and cultural diversity.

In this essay, Ralph C. Wood has described the surprisingly radical side of a traditional minded fantasy author. The age of ideological and political uncertainty gave Tolkien's work certain postmodern attributes. While Ralph C. Wood has outlined the causes behind the postmodern dimension in Tolkien's work, he has not explored the attributes themselves in greater detail. My research will attempt to fill this gap.

Rosemary Jackson's essay "From Kafka's Metamorphosis to Pynchon's Entropy" (1981) is a relevant secondary source because in this critique, she points out postmodern moments in the fantasy tradition and traces the intersections of fantasy fiction and postmodernism. According to Rosemary Jackson: "Fantasy shifts from one 'explanation' of otherness to another in the course of its history. It moves from supernaturalism and magic to theology and science to categorize or define otherness" (Jackson 92). Jackson suggests that the fantastic mode has undergone continuous transformation.

Fantasy moved through faery literature to the gothic, and then the surreal. Fantastic worlds are made strange with the help of language; a language that Sartre refers to "a discourse telling of absolute otherness" (Jackson 92). According to Jackson there was "a gradual displacement of residual supernaturalism and magic, an increasingly secularized mode of thoughtness, i.e. of the demonic" (92). Literary fantasy went through several semantic alterations from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century; these transformations were the result of a shift in ideas and beliefs.

Fantasy uses extraordinary techniques to portray mundane life and its intricacies. Modern fantasy fiction, according to Jackson, is always waiting for an epiphany that never comes (Jackson 95). For instance, Franz Kafka's writings reveal many of the qualities which have been identified as belonging to a fantastic mode. His historical situation pushed him towards fantasy as an appropriate form for expressing social estrangement.

According to Jackson, the fantastic quality in Kafka's fiction moves beyond the supernatural or uncanny. The strange is not recognized as a supernatural occurrence. Strangeness is accepted as normal before the story begins. The text seems to convey that everyday life is as strange as it appears in the text; the text merely magnifies and highlights this aspect of reality. In this effort, the text defamiliarizes and familiarizes

reality for the reader and produces a new approach towards reality. While Rosemary Jackson has traced postmodern attributes across the fantasy tradition, she has not analyzed relevant quintessential modern fantasy fiction texts like *The Lord of the Rings.* My research project will address this gap.

2.3 Conclusion

I have reviewed relevant secondary sources that include critical books and essays on modern fantasy fiction. This literature review provides a context for my analysis of fantasy fiction through a postmodern lens in the succeeding chapters. Due to the large volume of existing scholarship on modern fantasy fiction, it was rather tricky to select only a handful of secondary sources but I only selected those for review which were strictly relevant to my study.

Keeping in view the secondary sources that I have reviewed, the gaps in existing scholarship that I have identified and the theoretical direction that my controlling research questions lead to, I have used the theoretical framework, research methodology and approach discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A review of secondary sources in the preceding chapter proved useful to me in selecting a suitable theoretical approach for reading the selected texts. This chapter explains in detail the theoretical perspectives I have chosen to analyze the selected texts and the reasoning behind choosing them. My research approach is largely qualitative, interpretive, exploratory, subjective and non-generalizable. First, in this chapter I will discuss the theoretical underpinnings that form the framework of this research project; then I will go on to describe my opted research methodology.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Modern fantasy fiction is a literary genre that evades characterization and even though it captures its corresponding milieu, it is also somewhat postmodern in certain aspects. That is why I have decided to use a postmodern theoretical lens to study my primary texts. As is evident from a review of secondary sources, the postmodern attributes of modern fantasy fiction have not been explored by literary scholars extensively; particularly from a fabulist angle. The dynamism of modern fantasy fiction piqued my interest to go ahead with this postmodern study of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-55). The theoretical framework of my research is elaborated under the following headings:

3.2.1 Fabulation and Modern Fantasy Fiction

I have selected American critic Robert Scholes' theory of fabulation, presented in his book *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979), to study *The Lord of the Rings* from a postmodern angle. The term fabulation was coined by Scholes to describe such twentieth century texts that went against the prevailing conventions of novel writing and contained experimental techniques both in content and form.

In the early twentieth century, realist novels were all the rage. However, a number of authors felt that realism did not fully capture the shifting philosophical sands of the time and started to experiment with fictive techniques. Some works were purely imaginative; some contained a mixture of fact and fiction. It became increasingly difficult to clearly categorize realist and fantastic writings and the dividing line between the two began to blur. Andrzej Zgorzelski writes in his essay "On Differentiating Fantastic Fiction: Some Supragenological Distinctions in Literature" (1984):

> It would be a mistake, of course, to envisage these types as stable and non-evolutionary. Each of them forms genres which, historically changeable, generate successive conventions in their development, thus offering a general supremely complicated diachronic network of features, and oppositions. (Zgorzelski 303)

Modern fantasy fiction emerged as a twentieth century successor to imaginative fictions of the past. Scientific breakthroughs had given naturalism precedence over romanticism and the modern realist literary movement had set down stringent rules of depiction of reality. However, not all authors felt that the realist mode of writing could represent their vision of the world and they initiated new modes of writing. One of these modes was modern fantasy fiction exemplified by C.S. Lewis' Narnia series and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Besides modern fantasy fiction, writers like Borges wrote postmodern fabulist fiction that strayed away from the realist conventions. While modern fantasy fiction is not entirely fabulative, it does have certain aspects that overlap with postmodern fabulist writings. This concentering or overlap mainly occurs due to the manner in which these texts engage with reality.

According to Scholes, in the twentieth century, most people including critics, teachers and scholars were proponents of realism as the only proper literary medium for writing fiction (Scholes 1). Some people grew tired with this automaton-like method of writing and instead turned their attention towards creating a new sort of fiction which according to Scholes "had much to teach us and many satisfactions to give us" (Scholes 1). In *Fabulation and Metafiction*, Scholes terms these fictions as fabulations. He defines fabulation as: "Modern fabulation, like the ancient fabling of Aesop, tends away from direct representation of the surface of reality but returns towards actual human life by

way of ethically controlled fantasy" (Scholes 3). This "ethically controlled fantasy" entails a fictive experience that is aware of its own artifice. In postmodern jargon, this feature of fabulation is known as metafiction**.** According to Patricia Waugh: "Metafiction is a form of fiction which emphasizes its own constructedness in a way that continually reminds readers to be aware that they are reading or viewing a fictional work" (Waugh 2). Rudiger Imhof writes in *Contemporary Metafiction: A Poetological Study of Metafiction in English since 1939* that metafiction is a device used to explore the link between literature and reality (Imhof 9). Thus, metafiction as a fictive device makes the artificiality of a narrative more prominent to the reader.

Scholes further discusses the relation between fact, fiction, and fabulation and comments: "Our fictions are real enough in themselves, but, as signs pointing to any world outside the fiction or the dream, they have no factual status" (Scholes 9). Even realist fiction cannot capture reality in its entirety because reality is too subtle according to Scholes. He says that language distorts reality much like maps and mirrors; maps give us decipherable signs on how to navigate reality while mirrors reflect the world around them but the reflections are artificial images. Similarly, the language used in both realist and fabulative writings contain verisimilitude only to a certain degree because the signs and symbols of language can only be interpreted against a specific contextual backdrop (which varies according to the individual experience). Fabulation, at times, looks backwards because according to Scholes, the fabulist writer "wants to reach beyond reality to truth, beyond the immediate and contemporary to those aspects of the real which will endure and recur" (Scholes 15). According to G.K. Wolfe: "The notion of impossibility in fantasy, then, must be ... more public than the schizophrenic's hallucination, yet less public than myth and religion. It must ... be part of an implied compact between author and reader" (Wolfe 3). Therefore, fabulation offers a mythic and universal version of the world.

From the fabulative perspective, reality is subjective. Fabulation brings about what Scholes calls a "rebirth of imagination" because it presents various facets of reality before the reader. According to Jane Flax: "No non-discourse-dependent or transcendental rules exist that could govern all discourses or a choice between them. Truth claims are in principle "undecidable" (Flax 35). Scholes refutes the idea that

imaginative fiction does not contain any verisimilitude and writes that fabulist fiction takes up notions of reality familiar to us, rearranges their configuration and presents them to us in new and interesting ways that make us rethink our worldview. The above mentioned aspects of Scholes theory of fabulation make it an apt critical lens for reading my primary texts.

3.2.2 Tolkienian Fall, Mortality and the Machine

Scholes theory of fabulation is my primary critical lens which I will further supplement with Tolkien's idea of Fall, Mortality and the Machine as a secondary theoretical perspective. Tolkien presented this idea in a letter written to publisher Milton Waldman in 1951 (*Letters* 131). Fall, Mortality, and the Machine form three main themes of Tolkien's efforts at creating a secondary world (in the form of his Middle Earth legendarium). A sense of one own's Mortality moves living beings to create art. This awareness of Mortality, according to Tolkien, generates from the being's simultaneous attachment and dissatisfaction with the world. They create non-living objects to leave behind something permanent and the object that they create serves the purpose of fulfilling some desire. However, Mortality may lead to Fall if the creator becomes dangerously possessive of their own creation or use it for purposes that go against the order of the natural world. Tolkein writes: "It may become possessive, clinging to the things made as 'its own', the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation. He will rebel against the laws of the Creator – especially against mortality" (*Letters* 131). If the creator wishes to gain power, he will create evil devices which Tolkien refers to as the Machine or Magic (however, Magic is not always evil nor always wielded by evil beings).

I have chosen Tolkien's idea of Fall, Mortality and the Machine as my supplementary theoretical perspective because it will help highlight the fabulative aspects of Tolkien's legendarium as they appear in his *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

As I have elaborated the theoretical perspectives and relevant key concepts that I have applied in this study, I will now turn to discussing the research methodology and methods that I have used.

3.3 Research Methodology

As I have conducted a postmodern reading of a modern fantasy literary text (trilogy), this study, by its very nature is interpretive, exploratory, subjective and reflective. I have used qualitative approach for data analysis as qualitative method is more suited for literary studies.

According to Michael Quinn Patton, qualitative findings can be gauged from three types of data sets: (1) Open ended, detailed interviews; (2) direct observation; (3) written documents. (Patton 4). I have used written document (literary texts) as my primary data set. Qualitative approach is suitable for my research project because it allows study of issues in expansive detail. Approaching the research without being restricted by preset categories of analysis facilitates an in-depth study. According to Patton, qualitative approach is a naturalistic mode of research. As it constitutes inductive analysis, one can fully immerse oneself in the details of the data to find out significant patterns, themes and linkages (Patton 40). The approach is holistic because it undertakes the entire phenomenon of study and emphasizes complex interrelationships between various aspects of the phenomenon. It is a context sensitive approach as findings are placed are in a social, historical and temporal context. The patterns can be then further extrapolated for potential transferability to other contexts.

Patton further adds that during qualitative analysis, "……..complete objectivity is impossible and pure subjectivity undermines credibility; the researcher's focus becomes balanced – understanding and depicting the world's authencity in all its complexity while being self-analytical, aware and reflexive in consciousness" (Patton 41). Therefore, while adopting qualitative approach I have been reflective about my voice and perspective.

3.4 Research method:

I have chosen Catherine Belsey's prescribed method of textual analysis presented in her essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" for my study. Belsey took up a painting (Titian's *Tarquin and Lucretia*) to demonstrate her particular method of textual analysis. According to Gabriele Griffin, Belsey's textual analysis is augmented by other

methodologies and perspectives to support the reading one carries out (Griffin 12). The consequent textual analysis should be carried out while keeping in mind the cultural backdrop of the artifact under study, the context in which it was created and the response of audience towards it. The interpretative process of meaning making in regards to the subject under study should be ascertained in relation to not only the consumers (readers) but also between the readers and "those to whom consumers communicate the meanings" (Griffin 12). This sort of exploratory analysis reinforces the importance of the context in which the artifact was produced and relativizes meaning-making.

Belsey advocates Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' idea and places the onus of meaning making on the reader (Belsey 165). A lot of critics condescendingly claim that only their interpretation of authorial intention is correct and possibly leave out other possible interpretations. According to Belsey, different interpretations should be taken into consideration to enrich the meaning-making process (Belsey 165). This method of textual analysis is particularly suitable for my research as J.R.R. Tolkien dismissed allegorical interpretations of his work but he did acknowledge the influence of the prevalent zeitgeist and period of history in which he produced his legendarium (Tolkien 20). Belsey's method of textual analysis facilitates me in analyzing my primary texts in relation to the socio-cultural milieu that they were produced in and enables me to approach the interpretive process from various angles.

3.5 Conclusion

I have deployed Robert Scholes' theory of fabulation as my principle critical lens and supplemented it with Tolkien's concept of Fall, Mortality and the Machine to seek answers to my controlling research questions. I have applied qualitative approach and Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis to critically examine my chosen primary texts in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 4

FABULATIVE WORLD-MAKING IN MODERN FANTASY FICTION: J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* TRILOGY

Fantasy, of course, starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness.

—J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories"

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I critically examine J.R.R. Tolkien's magnum opus *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (that consists of three parts: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*) from a fabulative perspective. I propose that the LOTR trilogy, being a representative text of twentieth century modern fantasy fiction, contains some postmodern elements. The series is not a postmodern fabulation in its entirety but it does have certain fabulative components. The inherent radicalism of modern fantasy fiction stems from its refusal to kowtow before the prevalent realist literary mainstream of its time. Modern fantasy authors, such as J.R.R. Tolkien, dabbled in experimental fictive techniques instead of realism because conventional realist fictive modes did not align any longer with how they viewed the world around them.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, born in 1892, was a British academic, poet and writer. He wrote a series of connected stories set in an imaginary universe called Arda (that featured an alternative world called Middle Earth). The creative impulse behind this legendarium was spurred by Tolkien's desire to create a "body of more or less connected legend, of which the cycles should be linked to a majestic whole" (*Letters* 131). Out of these stories, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy were published during his life while the rest were published posthumously. According to Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey, "When it came out in 1954-5 *The Lord of the Rings* was quite clearly a sport, a mutation, *lusus naturae*, a one-item category on its own" (Shippey 12). The publication and enormous commercial success of *The Hobbit* (1937) and the LOTR trilogy led to the establishment of modern fantasy as a distinct, albeit difficult to define, genre. Tolkien is

often dubbed as the father of modern fantasy by literary critics due to the enduring influence and popularity of his work, especially *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Lord of the Rings is set during the Third Age of the Middle Earth stories. It is a sequel to the events in *The Hobbit*. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins comes across a mysterious ring. *The Lord of the Rings* deals with events pertaining to this ring (that turns out to be a weapon devised by the Dark lord Sauron). The main protagonist of this story is Frodo Baggins, Bilbo's younger cousin and heir. My analysis in this chapter centers on the fabulative elements in *The Lord of the Rings* and is further divided into the following tiers:

I. Fabulation and Alternative World Making in Middle Earth: Mapping an Imaginary World

II. *The Lord of the Rings* as Metafiction

(I)

4.2 Fabulation and Alternative World Making in Middle Earth: Mapping an Imaginary World

A prominent fabulative feature of Tolkien's legendarium as represented in *The Lord of the Rings* is imaginary world-making. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien constructs a self-contained alternative, secondary world known as Middle Earth. Imaginary settings and secondary worlds are an important part of modern fantasy texts. With the help of these secondary worlds, the real and unreal are juxtaposed against each other. Some of the norms of the real world are observed in this alternate reality, others are not. Fantasy fiction has a myriad of definitions but most critics characterize it by its particular setting that is a secondary world with fantastic elements. This world may be an alternate reality, a parallel world, a world with a portal entryway or a world in another dimension.

The Lord of the Rings is a heroic quest fantasy in which the narrative moves across the various topographies of Middle Earth. W.A. Senior characterizes quest fantasy as:

1- The quest fantasy has the structure of a stepped journey.

2- As the journey progresses, perils and dangers increase.
3- Primarily, the narrative consists of a single thread but as more characters join in, micro-quests are included in the overall journey.
4- The protagonist (generally a character whose abilities are underestimated) sets off from home reluctantly but for the Greater Good.
5- The quest journey continues across a massive, wild landscape of forests, rivers, mountains, valleys, small villages and occasional cities.
6- The quest usually ends in a confrontation between the protagonist and villain (Senior 1, my paraphrase).

Tolkien has discussed the creative process behind his mythopoeia in detail in many of his critical writings, lectures and essays. In his essay "On Fairy Stories" Tolkien discusses the fictional essence behind his alternative world—a committed, deliberate belief in the imagined reality. This is different from stories in which fantastic events are presented as a surreal, dream vision (like in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll). According to Tolkien, a successful sub-creator (fantasy writer) is the one whom can successfully persuade his readers to willingly immerse themselves in the reality of the imagined world; "You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed" (Tolkien 52). According to Michael Milburn: "Most importantly, "(sub)-creative" is Tolkien's characteristic way of putting Coleridge's idea that imagination is "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite" (Milburn 56). Thus through sub-creation, the author tries to create a new world.

4.2.1 Immersive Quality of Fantasy

Tolkien's Middle Earth in the LOTR[1] trilogy is not simply an elaborate backdrop where the battle between good and evil ensues; rather it is an important setting that Tolkien constructed to pay homage to the landscapes and unique atmosphere of England. The scope of Middle Earth's history is fully covered in his writings such as *The Silmarillion* (1977) and *Unfinished Tales* (1980) that were published posthumously. The

[1] I have abbreviated *The Lord of the Rings* as LOTR

places in Middle Earth were inspired by the English landscape. Imaginary settings, such as Middle Earth, in modern fantasy texts create an immersive atmosphere for the reader due to which the reader completely commits himself to the make-believe world or "artifice" (as Scholes would refer to it). In LOTR, Tolkien's sub-creative process constitutes borrowing elements from the real world and then building the structure of his secondary world with these borrowed elements. There is the author's own input of making these settings as uncanny, extraordinary, fantastic and magical as possible but under all those fantastic layers, the reader can still sense the hint of reality lurking beneath.

There are many places in the real world that resemble the landscapes constructed by Tolkien in LOTR but there are no hobbits peopling our rural landscapes, no Riders of Rohan galloping across grasslands dressed in the attire of ages long gone, no ethereal elves in our woodlands. Tolkien often lamented the fact that England did not have its own epics and therefore wanted to write a body of tales set in an imaginary place that possessed the atmosphere and geographical features of his beloved country (*Letters* 131). Dorothy Sayers suggests that as a fantasy author one should provide the reader with "precise and prosaic details" so that the reader accepts and believes the marvelous tale (Sayers 212). Tolkien did not only create these imaginary landscapes but also drew elaborate maps of the imaginary worlds that he wrote about in order to provide the reader with an even richer immersive experience. Fantastic worlds are intrinsically linked with reality. Tolkien suggests in "On Fairy Stories" that anyone can use the term "green sun". But a true fabulator and fantasy author will supplement this term with a world where a green sun makes sense, generating secondary belief. Tolkien describes this skill as an ''elvish craft" (Tolkien 17). Both "green" and "sun" are familiar concepts for readers; it is their combination that produces "arresting strangeness" or a fantastic effect (Tolkien 18). However, such an effect is difficult to create because once the reader gives up his commitment to the secondary world, the magic is dispelled and the art fails.

C.S. Lewis characterized The *Lord of the Rings* as a ''radical instance'' of sub-creation and a unique ''sense of reality unaided'' (Lewis 297). Many fantasy authors, following Tolkien's suit, continue to include maps of their alternative worlds in their books. The secondary world is mimetic to the real one. According to Brian Rosebury, the

link between the imagined and real worlds is not that of allegory; rather there is some naturalism which brings the fantasy text in proximity to the realistic novel (Rosebury 15). Owing to this characteristic of modern fantasy, the reader does not find the alternative universe quite alien to their own.

These secondary worlds, that are a result of fantasy authors mimicking the real world to create an alternative reality, do not violate novelistic conventions because their own realities appear parallel to those of the primary or real world. According to Martha C. Sammons, Tolkien considered this sort of magical world-making integral to fantasy writing (Sammons 114). Sammons adds: "Instead of magic, Tolkien prefers the term enchantment— the creation of a secondary world into which both ''designer'' and ''spectator'' can enter" (114). Robert Scholes writes in *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on Fiction of the Future* (1975) that all imaginative fiction is somehow linked to the experiential world. Therefore, setting plays an important role in fantastic myth-making. The enchanting quality of the imaginary world presents a different reality before the reader but it is not completely bereft of echoes of primary reality. There is a sense of familiarity beneath the strangeness and splendor of places such as The Shire, Mordor, Lothlorien, Rivendell, Gondor, Moria and Rohan.

The bleakness and wretchedness of Mordor (Black Land or Land of Shadow) is reflected in many actual geographical locations in the real world. Sauron took over Mordor in during the Second Age of Middle Earth and transformed the expansive wasteland into his evil lair. He set up his Dark Tower, named Barad-dûr, near the volcano Mount Doom. In LOTR, Gollum guides Sam and Frodo through the Dead Marshes to Mordor. Sam and Frodo spend a miserable time trudging through the Dead Marshes, which seems to be a place inspired by Tolkien's own time in the trenches. When Sam and Frodo approach Mordor, the gloom and doom of the place besides the enormity of their heavy task weighs on their minds and conveys the evil of Mordor effectively to the reader: "Across the mouth of the pass, from cliff to cliff, the Dark Lord had built a rampart of stone. In it there was a single gate of iron and upon its battlement sentinels paced unceasingly" (Tolkien 636). Even the horrifying dead lights that Frodo and Sam see in the Dead Marshes have their origin in reality; they are produced in swampy areas due to the decay of organic matter. When Tolkien participated in the Battle of Somme, he

must have witnessed this phenomenon. Everything in Mordor is toxic and noxious; from the air to the water. Tolkien writes in *The Two Towers*: "Every step was reluctant, and time seemed to slow its pace, so that between the raising of a foot and the setting of it down minutes of loathing passed" (703). Evil permeates the very atmosphere of that place and Frodo, Sam and Gollum find it very difficult to walk.

Mordor affords no pleasant sight or sound to the weary travellers. There are only frightening creatures like Shelob the spider, the Ringwraiths, orcs and Sauron's slaves. The structures in the Dark Land are all made out of metal and stone. Fumes and poisonous smokes waft through the air. Frodo remarks: "I don't like anything here at all, step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seem accursed. But so our path is laid" (*TT*[2] 712). Faramir warns the hobbits not to drink any water flowing into Mordor. Frodo feels the terror and misery of Mordor more than his companions because he is the Ring-bearer. Tolkien describes Frodo's condition: "Sam guessed that among all their pains he bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind" (ROTK 935). Sauron was constantly on the look-out for his precious Ring and being in so much proximity to Sauron takes its toll on the Ring-bearer;

Tom Shippey opines that Tolkien was "deeply conscious of the strong continuity between the heroic world and the modern one" (xxviii). The frightening and sinister atmosphere of Mordor makes it seem supernatural to the reader. The hopelessness of Frodo and Sam's task corresponds with the anxiety and uncertainty of Tolkien's time. According to Martha C. Sammons: "It is also important to establish the reality of the supernatural" (120). Only by establishing the reality of the fantastic can the author get the reader to commit to its artifice and achieve a fabulative effect. Moria (Khazad-dum) is another dark and dreary place in Middle Earth. Moria, also commonly known as Khazad-dum or the Dwarrowdelf, is an underground kingdom located beneath the Misty Mountains in Middle Earth. Even though it was grand during the period when dwarves dwelled there, when the Fellowship passes through Moria, it is infested with orcs and dark creatures like the Balrog. Not only does Gimli discover that his relatives have been killed, but Gandalf is also lost while fighting off the Balrog. Gimli is excited to see the

[2] I have abbreviated *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* as FR, TT and ROTK respectively.

halls of his ancestors once more but is crestfallen to see the ruin in Moria. He exclaims that the once great halls of his ancestors had become dreadful. He remarks: “I have looked on Moria, and it is very great, but it has become dark and dreadful; and we have found no sign of my kindred” (318). Despite the frightening aspects of Khazad-dum, its remnant majesty and expanse as described by Tolkien are awe-inducing.

The Shire inhabited by hobbits is a sort of sheltered utopia, free from the cares and worries of power-hungry struggles of the “big folk” (as hobbits refer to other inhabitants of Middle Earth). In contrast to the heavily industrialized Isengard, it has a rural landscape through and through. The hobbits mostly make their living through farming and growing natural things. They turn to Nature for subsistence and cherish the natural world. Faramir comments upon meeting Frodo and Sam: “Your land must be a realm of peace and content, and there must gardeners be in high honour” (681). The Shire’s topography was inspired by the English rural countryside in which Tolkien spent his boyhood. The industrialization of the Shire at the hands of Sharkey (or Saruman) is based on the industrialization of Tolkien’s childhood home in Birmingham.

In LOTR, the Shire is a small but wholesome land, cherished dearly by its inhabitants. The landscape of the Shire is covered by fields, downland and woods. However, even the idyllic Shire does not remain safe from outside trouble and Saruman takes over it with the help of Lotho Sackville-Baggins. Saruman runs the administration of the Shire much like that of a modern state; he sets up armed ruffians, destroys greenery in favour of industrialization and erects ugly buildings that mar the natural landscape. According to Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey, the Shire is not merely inspired by England; rather Tolkien meticulously crafted the Shire as a calque upon England (Shippey 115). For instance, the three founding tribes of the Shire (Stoors, Harfoots, Fallohides) correspond to the Angles, Saxons, Jutes. Thus, the frightening aspects of settings such as Mordor and Moria and the nostalgic aspects of the Shire (or their arresting strangeness) provide the reader with an immersive experience.

4.2.2 Imaginative Displacement from Reality

Besides imaginary and fantastic settings, Tolkien’s characters and invented languages also contribute towards his fabulative world-making. Critic Brian Rosebury

writes: “Its most obvious form is the use of a range of invented languages, mainly in proper names but also in occasional lines of verse or song, salutations or invocations” (Rosebury 23). The variety and range of Tolkien’s invented languages corresponds with the expansiveness of his invented world.

Tolkien’s most magical creatures are elves. His initial impulse for fantasy writing was rooted in his creation of elvish languages (Quenya and Sindarin) as a philologist. The events in LOTR deal with the period when the strength and time of elves in Middle Earth is waning. Tolkien wrote to Naomi Mitchison: “They really represent Men with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties, greater beauty and longer life, and nobility” (*Letters* 144). Elves are immortal and sail to the Undying Lands in Valinor when their time in Middle Earth is over. During the events in LOTR, elven kingdoms are far and few compared to the past. They are aware that the Age of Men is imminent and they become more secluded. Galadriel remarks to Frodo: "Yet if you succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten” (FOTR 365). The elves are dependent upon the rings of power for maintaining their time on Middle Earth. They are aware that once the One Ring is destroyed, their power would be irretrievably weakened and would have to leave Middle Earth. However, they choose this fate for defeating Sauron once and for all. Elves are among the fairest beings on Middle Earth. They are tall and fair and have an ethereal aura about them.

Elves first make an appearance in LOTR in “Three is Company” when the High Elves drive away a Black Rider that is pursuing the hobbits. Sam is delighted to see them and Frodo, who knows a lot about elves remarks that they are among the fairest folk seen in the Shire. The action of the narrative later on moves across two important elven abodes; Rivendell and Lothlorien. Bilbo describes Lord Elrond’s house in Rivendell as “a perfect house, whether you like food or sleep or story-telling or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all” (FOTR 225). According to the hobbit, elves have a great appetite for music and poetry and tales. The most important elf in the trilogy is Legolas; he is chosen to represent the elves in the Fellowship of the Ring. He belongs to the elven Woodland Realm. The elven kingdom of Lothlorien is one of the

most enchanting locations in LOTR. But its beauty is also dwindling when the events of LOTR take place. Legolas comments on the beauty of Lothlorien: “That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people” (335). Tolkien gives this description of the place: “No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lothlorien there was no stain” (351). Even Aragorn is moved enough by its beauty to remark: “Here is the heart of Elvendom on earth and here my heart dwells ever” (352). The lavishness and beauty of the elven abodes greatly adds to the exuberance of the invented world.

Another prominent race in LOTR is that of the dwarves. Tolkien describes them as: “They are a tough, thrawn race for the most part, secretive, laborious, retentive of the memory of injuries (and of benefits), lovers of stone, of gems, of things that take shape under the hands of the craftsmen rather than things that live by their own life” (1132). According to Tolkien, he modeled the dwarves in his legendarium based on the Germanic tradition. Dwarves are short and stocky in stature. Their occupations include mining and metallurgy. The most prominent dwarf in LOTR is Gimli, son of Gloin, who represents the dwarves in the Fellowship of the Ring. Gimli displays a tough, stubborn yet loyal temperament. Dwarves are secretive about their language, Khuzdul. The significant dwarven dwelling that appears in LOTR is Moria or Khazad-dum; the other are the Glittering Caves (or Aglarond). Gimli describes Aglarond to Legolas in these words: "Immeasurable halls, filled with an everlasting music of water that tinkles into pools, as fair as Kheled-zâram in the starlight” (547). Gimli remarks in anticipation of visiting Moria: “Dark is the water of Kheled-zaram and cold are the springs of Kibil-nala. My heart trembles at the thought that I may see them soon” (283). Even though Gimli uses the Dwarven nomenclature occasionally, even this occasional use of a made-up language produces an “arresting strangeness” for the reader.

The Ringwariths, Nazgul or Black Riders are a symbol of terror in the LOTR trilogy. Each mention of them is associated with creeping horror and their pursuit of the hobbits across the Shire and to Rivendell invokes fear in readers’ hearts. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, they take the form of black riders and ride horses but later on they ride winged monsters. They are nine in number and are sometimes are referred to simply as “the Nine”. The Nazgul were initially men who were ensnared by Sauron through the

nine rings of power. The rings gave them immortality but reduced them to a ghost-like existence. They were enslaved by Sauron and were completely under the power of the One Ring. Tolkien calls them Sauron's "most terrible servants". They are led by the Lord of the Nazgul or the Witch-King of Angmar. A prophecy regarding the Witch-king exists that he cannot be killed by any man. He is slayed by the hand of a woman, Lady Eowyn. The divination that the Lord of the Nazgûl would not die by the hand of man is akin to that made by the Weird Sisters regarding Macbeth in Shakespeare's play. Frodo is linked to their presence through the Ring and they attack him at Weathertop. Frodo never completely heals from the injury and carries it throughout his life. The Ringwraiths first make an appearance in the chapter "Shadow of the Past." Their terrifying effect is made evident by the effect they have on others during the Siege of Gondor. When the winged Nazgul pass over the fighting soldiers, even the bravest fall to the ground and darkness overcomes their minds. All fighting spirit is extinguished out of their hearts and is replaced with feelings of death and misery.

Orcs-or goblins- are also villainous creatures in the LOTR trilogy. Orcs (also called Goblins) were the servants of the Dark Lords Morgoth and Sauron. Morgoth created orcs by corrupting captured elves as he was jealous of the favour that Eru bestowed upon the elves. The orcs were bred by Morgoth in mockery of the elves. Tolkien commented on the etymology behind the term "orc" that it was based on the Old English word orc meaning demon (Letters 144). Orcs are foul, cruel and terrible creatures. They usually detest sunlight and prefer to travel in the dark. The orcs that served Sauron bore the symbol of the Eye on their shields.

Orcs are scattered all over Middle Earth. In LOTR, they first make a major appearance in the mines of Moria. They pursue the Fellowship till Lotlorien, where they are killed by elves. The Fellowship is again ambushed by orcs and Boromir is killed in the attack. The attack includes orcs both from Barad-dur and Isengard. Saruman breeds his own army of orcs called the Uruk-Hai. Unlike the orcs of Mordor, they bear the symbol of a white hand. The Uruk-Hai are much larger in stature than normal orcs and they can travel easily by day. The orcs are a constant cause of trouble for the other inhabitants of Middle Earth. They speak a foul, harsh sounding language and sometimes

command wolves. They are capable fighters and can travel great distances without getting tired. Orcs are heralds of evil and trouble in Middle Earth.

The presence of both magical and terrible creatures in Middle Earth contributes towards the fantastic quality of the narrative. Thus, Tolkien's invented characters, settings and languages act as fantasemes or literary devices that produce an imaginative displacement from reality while keeping some linkages with the real world intact.

(II)

4.3 *The Lord of the Rings* as Metafiction

Robert Scholes defines metafiction in *Fabulation and Metafiction* as "experimental fiction in which the fabulator takes delight in his own artifice" (4). Patricia Waugh defined metafiction in *The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (1984) as: "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). The term 'Metafiction' was coined by William Gass in the 1960s. He used this term for fictions that were about fiction itself. Metafiction is generally characterized by attributes of self-consciousness, self-reflexivity, and ironic self-distance. It is associated with postmodern fiction as postmodern novels tend to critically engage with themselves and the fictions that came before them. According to Mark Currie: "The writer / critic is thus a dialectical figure, embodying both the production and reception of fiction in the roles of author and reader in a way that is paradigmatic for metafiction" (Currie 3). In "Fantasy Fiction and Related Genres" (1986), Dieter Petzold writes that while reading a fantasy text, the reader pledges his belief to the fantastic narrative (Petzold 16, my paraphrase). There is a unique kind of reader response where the reader does not express any astonishment on the extraordinary events in the story.

The LOTR trilogy is metafictional in the sense that there are multiple layers of narrators (Tolkien and hobbits) who relay the story through Tolkien's authorial voice. This technique not only alters the way that the author interacts with the text, but also changes the manner of interaction between the text and the reader. There are stories within stories; narrators within narrators. This type of narrative is self-conscious about its

"constructedness"; it puts up no pretensions of reality or objectivity. There are moments in the narrative where the author puts himself in the position of a reader. The reader's perspective on the constructed fictional reality continually shifts according to shifts in narration. The readers are constantly reminded that what they are reading is an invented reality. The narrative thus connects the interior reality of the invented world with that of the outside world where the reader and author are present.

According to Patricia Waugh, this technique endows novel with a new vitality in a world that is increasingly growing aware and introspective about how it mostly functions on the basis of "values and practices that are constructed and legitimized" (19). Verlyn Flieger posits that by using such a metafictional technique, Tolkien wanted to "to bridge the fictive world of the story and the outside, real world, to connect inside with outside and fantasy with actuality through the idea of the book" (285). Brljak writes that even though Tolkien applies this metafictional device by relying mostly on the "Prologue" and "Appendices", their importance cannot be underestimated (5).

4.3.1 Self-Reflexivity in LOTR

In the "Prologue" to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes that the source for his narrative was a book known as the Red Book of Westmarch from where he took up the story. This source was primarily a diary kept by Bilbo Baggins which later on takes the shape of a book and is supplemented by other characters as the narrative proceeds. The copy of the Red Book of Westmarch that Tolkien works from belonged to Peregrin Took's (or Pippin's) great grandson. This copy was copied from Thain's Book (devised by Pippin) that Pippin brought to Minas Tirith where further additions were made to the text. The additions made in Minas Tirith included many annotations and corrections as the primary text was written by hobbits. Pippin's great grandson requested a copy of Thain's Book; the King's Writer, Findegil complied with the request and made an exact copy of the Minas Tirith version of the Red Book that was later on kept in the Shire. On his notes on translation in the appendices, Tolkien explains that the Red Book of Westmarch was written in *Westron* or the Common Speech of Middle Earth and Tolkien translated it.

The Red Book of Westmarch is thus a metaficitonal conceit and it owes its name to its crimson leather case and from its having been stored in Westmarch, a place adjacent to the Shire. Tolkien modeled The Red Book of Westmarch on the Red Book of Hergest; an ancient mediaval manuscript containing records of Welsh poetry and prose. The manuscript was kept in a library in Oxford and Tolkien was well familiar with it as a professor at the university.

While introducing *The Lord of the Rings* in the Prologue, Tolkien writes: "That story was derived from the earlier chapters of the Red Book, composed by Bilbo himself, the first Hobbit to become famous in the world at large, and called by him *There and Back Again*" (Tolkien 1). Tolkien thus presents his story not as a tale of fiction, but a historiographical narrative.

Narratively the plot and story of LOTR can be understood without referring to the Prologue and Appendices. Tom Shippey commented in *The Road to Middle Earth* (2008) on the effect of this technique: "so preoccupied not with what was told, but with how the telling came to be transmitted. Was he ever to gain any advantage from these professional tangles? . . . There is a one-word answer to that question, which is "depth," the literary quality Tolkien valued most of all" (Shippey 308). Tolkien's purpose behind going to such great lengths for including this conceit seems to be two-fold: to emphasize the artifice of the narrative and to hearken back to mythological narratives of old.

The metafictional aspects of LOTR produce a convulated and sophisticated narrative structure even though the on the surface the plot is linear. The story circulates from Bilbo's time till that of Pippin's great grandson from where Tolkien takes up the story and transmits it to the present reader. The narrative changes hands and manuscripts are passed down after the manner of ancient classical manuscripts. This fictive technique conforms to Scholes idea of fabulation because it is self-aware of its own artifice while providing the reader with an immersive fictive experience. Tolkien creates an imaginary world in the trilogy and embellishes it with fantastic details but simultaneously he conveys to the reader that they are not reading a fairy-tale; rather they are reading lore or a realistic historiographic account of a time gone by that cannot be attained again. Tolkien wanted to write a story fashioned after the epic myths of the past like *Kalevala*

from Finland. He does not distance himself from the narrative; he interacts with the characters as a reader of the things they wrote and informs his own readers as much.

In the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the Red Book merely consists of a leather bound sheaf of papers tied together with string; Bilbo mentions it to Gandalf in "A Long Expected Party": "I might find somewhere where I can finish my book. I have thought of a nice ending for it: *and he lived happily ever after to the end of his days*" (32). Here the text that Bilbo is referring to is his record of the ongoing events that later Tolkien will rely on to reproduce the trilogy. So, there are continual self-referential pointers peppered throughout the story that make the reader aware of Tolkien's fictive process. Tolkien further elaborates in the prologue that the book started off as Bibo's private diary, which Frodo brought with him upon his return to the Shore after the War of the Ring. Frodo added his own account of his dealings with the One Ring. Therefore, after the War of the Ring, the narrative voice that Tolkien takes up the story from belongs to Frodo Baggins.

Brljak comments on Tolkien's metafictional technique in "Tolkien as Metafictionist" that:

> Tolkien also set out to reproduce that singular effect of which he speaks, the effect of the work reaching us as an echo of an echo (of an echo . . .) from a remote antiquity, expending his art in increasing the distance between the (mostly) Modern English text the reader would be holding in his or her hands and the fictional characters and events of which it told. (Brljak 1)

The story is gradually transmitted from the hands of Bilbo to Frodo, then to Samwise Gamgee, then to other Middle Earth historians and ultimately it reaches Tolkien who reproduces it as the trilogy (by translating and rewriting it in his own linguistic mode). Thus, there are multiple layers of narrators that hinder objective representation of reality of the events. The boundaries between author and his characters are no longer distinct; there is intermingling and merging of narrative levels where the voice of the author interacts with that of the fictional characters. At several points, it becomes clear that the fictional characters themselves are telling their story. The reader learns that before Frodo departs for the Grey Havens, he hands over the manuscript to Sam. Then

Frodo adds: 'I have quite finished, Sam,' said Frodo.'The last pages are for you" (1003). Linda Hutcheon says in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980) that, "in overtly or covertly baring its fictional and linguistic systems, narcissistic narrative transforms the authorial process of shaping, of making, into part of the pleasure and challenge of reading as a co-operative, interpretative experience" (154). The reader simultaneously benefits from the author's, the characters' and his own perspective on the events unfolding in the narrative through this technique.

There are many allusions to the metafictional narrative by the characters; for instance, Sam and Frodo discuss at length how their adventures will be relayed to those after them at the Stairs of Cirith Ungol in *The Return of the King*. Sam asks, "I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?" (712), and Frodo replies: "But I don't know. And that's the way of a real tale. Take any one that you're fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don't know. And you don't want them to" (712). Frodo and Sam are fictional characters but they dwell upon the nature of story-telling itself.

4.3.2 Questioning Reality

Metafictional artifice leads to a skeptical attitude towards reality because the narrative reaches the reader through an indirect narrator. There is also evidence of the changing behavior of the primary narrator towards the world around him. In the beginning while setting off to Rivendell, Bilbo is optimistic that his story will have a happy and conclusive ending. However, later on, when he reunites with Frodo in Rivendell he says: "Don't adventures ever have an end? I suppose not. Someone else has to carry on the story" (226). When Sam questions Bilbo about the book, Bilbo admits that he now only likes writing poetry and requests Frodo to collect his manuscripts and writings .He then asks him to give the story some shape with Sam's help (Tolkien 966). The change in Bilbo's worldview is a result of the ever-changing world around him. This shift in Bilbo's perspective on reality makes the reader question reality as well. Initially, he thought that he could completely write a narrative with a proper beginning and end. Bilbo's original concept of how the narrative should have been structured is much like fairytales of old with a proper beginning, middle, and a satisfactory ending. However, the

story remains open-ended as successive generations in Middle Earth make additions to it. Bilbo and Frodo do not get their happy ending.

Tolkien's approach is subversive because he does not fully commit to the memoir-like historicity of the narrative; there are open ends where no single narrator has complete control over the narrative. Brljak writes that the logic of Tolkien's metafictional technique is to generate an immersive, two-fold effect in which the reader is shown a visualization of a golden age long gone by while driving home the fact that this age can never be attained again (Brljak 22). According to Bowman, "He (Tolkien) manages to operate at a meta-fictional level while preserving the illusion of historicity and the integrity of a very traditional kind of narrative" (Bowman 286). These layers upon layers of narrators are distributed across time and space that give the story a myth-like quality. Stories are passed down from generation to generation of a time gone by that cannot be reached again.

Tolkien's metafictional technique also moves the reader to adopt a skeptical attitude towards what is being told because the narrators are unreliable. Tolkien mentions this in the "On Finding the Ring" section of the Prologue. According to Tolkien, Bilbo doesn't give a completely accurate account of how he acquired the Ring from Gollum. In his original memoirs, Bilbo wrote that Gollum gave him the Ring as a "present" after failing to guess the answer to a riddle. Even though Bilbo later told the truth to Gandalf, he never altered his original notes. Frodo and Sam made changes to Bilbo's account of how he came across the Ring in other copies of the manuscript and the true story of how Bilbo "won" the Ring from Gollum was widely known by many people but this example still shows Bilbo's character as an unreliable narrator (particularly under the influence of the Ring).

4.4 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has highlighted the fabulative aspects that went into Tolkien's world-making. According to Robert Scholes, a fabulator takes delight in his artifice. By analyzing metafictional aspects of the LOTR trilogy, it can be said that Tolkien achieves a fabulative effect by acting as both author and critic simultaneously. Within the narrative itself, Tolkien describes the procedure and sources of his narrative.

Tolkien pretends that he is not the original author, but someone who is merely passing on the stories written in The Red Book of Westmarch. Thus, he creates narrative labyrinths within the trilogy. Secondly, according to Scholes, a fabulation returns to reality through constructed fantasy (Scholes 29). Tolkien's secondary world maintains its connection with the real world through the particular way in which it is constructed while compelling the reader to commit to the make-believe world. The secondary world, despite all its magical embellishments, mimics the real world in one way or another. In the next chapter, the analysis will explore the juxtaposition of the real and unreal in the LOTR trilogy.

CHAPTER 5

CONVERGENCE OF THE FANTASTIC AND FACTUAL IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I critically examine the points where the fantastic and the real converge and overlap in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Modern fantasy fiction texts came to the fore when imaginative fiction was not taken seriously any longer by literary critics. Many critics labeled fantasy as merely "escapist" with no relation to real human life or the world around us. Fantasy fiction was looked down upon in literary circles even as its readership expanded. Many scholars predicted that the genre would soon pass into oblivion after experiencing brief popularity. However, since the twentieth century to this day, the appeal of fantasy fiction as a genre has continued to grow. The commercial success of LOTR in America led to an almost cult-like adoration of the author. Other fantasy authors like Ursula K. Le Guin, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett and J.K. Rowling have found enormous publishing success by following in the path that Tolkien paved with his legendarium. The ever expanding readership of the genre is proof that readers not only find solace in these fantastic alternative worlds, but also find the reality of their own lives reflected in them. According to Scholes, fabulative fiction does not represent reality directly before the reader; rather it does so in an indirect manner (Scholes 3, my paraphrase). I use Robert Scholes' concept of imaginative fabulation and Catherine Belsey's textual analysis method to analyze how the unreal converges with reality in LOTR.

I have divided this chapter into the following parts:

I. Political Upheaval in *The Lord of the Rings*

II. Environmental concerns in *The Lord of the Rings*

(I)

5.2 Political Upheaval in *The Lord of the Rings*

Instead of describing the events around him in a real setting, Tolkien came up with an entirely made- up world for his fictive writings. However, Tolkien vehemently protested against allegorical interpretations of his work (for instance, that the Ring is actually a code for the atomic bomb) and favored "applicability" over allegorical interpretation. He wrote in the "Foreword to the Second Edition" of LOTR: "As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical" (Tolkien xix). He later adds: "I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author" (Tolkien xx). Tolkien, as an author, was a product of his time and could not remain unaffected by the momentous events unfolding around him. Rosebury commented on the influence of real world events on Tolkien's oeuvre:

> *The Lord of the Rings* describes a continental war, in which the survival of whole peoples and cultures is at stake. The undertow of apocalyptic dread is familiar to anyone who has lived in the nuclear age, but its primary biographical source must greatly pre-date Hiroshima: almost certainly it lies around 1914–15 when Tolkien, in common with millions of young men, discovered that he would have to go to war. (Rosebury 163)

While he has not included any allegory intentionally in the trilogy, there were no doubt unconscious influences of his social and political milieu on his work. These influences induce verisimilitude in his work and Tolkien leaves it to the reader to relate such instances to their real life.

Brian Rosebury wrote in "Tolkien in the History of Ideas" that the modernity of Tolkien's oeuvre and the LOTR trilogy is not embedded in allegorical coded references to the events of his time, but a an unconscious absorption of his contemporary experiences that permeate his narrative and would not have been present if Tolkien had

not been a man of the twentieth century (163). Tolkien not only lived through two major wars but also fought in World War 1 and later on his sons also fought for Britain. According to Arne Zettersten: "My view is that Tolkien wanted to transfer his overpowering reaction to war's inherent evil into an alternative world of fantasy" (Zettersten 112). As an educated professor and highly qualified academic at Oxford, Tolkien was well-aware of the momentous political transformations taking across the globe and in his own country. There are several instances in LOTR where real-world like events are subtly reflected and interwoven in the narrative. Verlyn Flieger comments on Tolkien's writing in "War, Death, and Fairy Stories in The Work of J.R.R. Tolkien":

> It has been said that myths are the meaning of history, that it is the stories we tell about events that invest them with significance and make great happenings applicable to ordinary people. If that is the case, then Tolkien's invented myth should tell us something about how his writing of it "rationalized". (Flieger 53)

First of all, the magnitude and scale of the War of the Ring is similar to that of the world wars. Even far-flung, quiet areas like the Shire do not escape the ravages of war and the "quiet folk" (hobbits) are dragged into the turmoil. The hobbits do not willingly engage in the affairs of the areas outside the Shire and they prefer to stay out of trouble and political intrigue. But early on in the trilogy, rumours of trouble start to arrive in the Shire and the hobbits can no longer feign deafness to the turbulence of their time. A while after Bilbo's departure to Rivendell, strange travellers begin to frequent the Shire and bring dark tidings with them. Frodo often comes across elves during his daily walks and receives news of the outside world from them: "There were rumours of strange things happening in the world outside; and as Gandalf had not at that time appeared or sent any message for several years, Frodo gathered all the news he could" (*FR* 44). Usually, the chatter in the inns and taverns in the Shire is about mundane things that hobbits keep themselves busy with but as the threat of war grows, the discussions at *The Golden Dragon* inn in Hobbiton turn to more serious topics: "But even the deafest and most stay-at-home began to hear queer tales; and those whose business took them to the borders saw strange things" (*FR* 44). The scope of the War of the Ring is much like the Great Wars of the twentieth century in which even those nations were dragged or forced into alliances who normally avoided confrontation. The impact of this war was felt across the

entirety of Middle Earth and for those who did not ride out to war; war arrived at their doorsteps.

The political turmoil of the events in LOTR led to unlikely alliances and ancient animosity was forgotten to forge new alliances. The most prominent and unlikely bond to develop is that between Legolas the elf and Gimli the dwarf. Elves and dwarves had a history of animosity between the two races and they did not trust each other. However, Gimli and Legolas are included in the Fellowship of the Ring that Lord Elrond forms at Rivendell and the two become friends in pursuit of a common goal to save Middle Earth from Sauron's clutches. Gradually as the story progresses, their friendship grows stronger and they become fast friends. Even though they are always in friendly competition with one another, they come to appreciate each other's companionship despite hailing from vastly different backgrounds.

Gimli and Legolas' unlikely friendship is a remarkable example in overcoming years old prejudice and mistrust and one that can be applied to real life where xenophobia, racism and prejudice wreak tragedy and are constant sources of conflict. It would be prudent to contextualize their friendship against the backdrop of historical animosity between the elves and dwarves. When the Fellowship of the Ring enters Lothlorien (after the disastrous events of Moria), they are very soon discovered by the elves guarding the forest. The captain Haldir's response to realizing that a dwarf is also part of the Fellowship is: "A dwarf! … that is not well. We have not had dealings with the Dwarves since the Dark Days. They are not permitted in our land. I cannot allow him to pass" (*FR* 343). Here by "Dark Days", Haldir refers to the events in *The Silmarillion* where once the dwarves closed the doors of Khazad-dum on the elves instead of helping them in the war against Sauron. Later in the Third Age, dwarves awaken the monstrous Balrog by mining too deeply in Moria and the neighboring Lothlorien is deeply affected by the evil influence of the Balrog.

Another major reason of enmity between the dwarves and the elves is also that once the elf king Thingol of Doriath charged the dwarves with setting the precious elven jewel Silmaril in the dwarven necklace Nauglamir. However, the dwarves lusted after the Silmaril and demanded the necklace and the jewel as payment for their hard work. The

dwarves killed the elf-king and later the dwarves were killed too by other elves. Tolkien refers to this incident in *The Hobbit* (1991) as: “In ancient days they had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure. It is only fair to say that the dwarves gave a different account, and said that they only took what was their due” (Tolkien 194). Furthermore, Gimli’s father Gloin was among the company of dwarves imprisoned by the Elf King of the Woodland Realm in The Hobbit and Gloin brings this up during Elrond’s Council about the Ring at Rivendell: “You were less tender to me,’ said Gloin with a flash of his eyes, as old memories were stirred of his imprisonment in the deep places of the Elven-king’s halls” (*FR* 255). Gandalf also hints at the long-existing feud between dwarves and elves as he replies to Gloin: “If all the grievances that stand between Elves and Dwarves are to be brought up here, we may as well abandon this Council” (*FR* 255). After this, Legolas and Gimli join the Fellowship of the Ring with good grace and brave many difficulties together.

Going back to the discussion on the events in Lothlorien, Aragorn and Legolas persuade the elves of Lothlorien to accept Gimli in their midst but when it is time to lead them to the city of Caras Galadhon, Haldir insists that Gimli should be blindfolded according to their law. Gimli puts up a loud protest and Aragorn suggests that all of them should be blindfolded to put the dwarf ‘s pride at ease. At this point, Haldir remarks apologetically: “Indeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him” (*FR* 348). However, later on, upon the orders of Lady Galadriel and Lord Celeborn, everyone’s blindfold is removed including Gimli’s.

Gimli is first skeptical about Lady Galadriel, having heard fanciful tales about her powers, but after he meets her he becomes her loyal admirer. Tolkien describes their exchange in their first meeting where Galadriel smiles at Gimli and greets him with words from his own language: “And the Dwarf, hearing the names given in his own ancient tongue, looked up and met her eyes; and it seemed to him that he looked suddenly into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding” (*FR* 356). It often happens in real life that we harbor baseless prejudice towards others based on false rumour-mongering and hearsay. This prejudice impels us to keep our distance from the target of our prejudice instead of trying to investigate our biases. However, if by chance

we get to know the other person we often find that our prejudice against them was unfounded. This is what Gimli experiences when he meets Lady Galadriel.

The interaction between Gimli and elves is a great fictive example of overcoming prejudice against others and accepting diversity in the world (both real and imaginative ones). Tolkien critic Marion Zimmer Bradley has written in her publication *Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship* (1968) that "Love is the dominant emotion in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Bradley 109). Gimli and Legolas' love takes the form of *philia,* defined by British author C.S. Lewis in his book *The Four Loves* (1960) as a friendship that is nurtured by an awareness that both people are working side by side with similar purpose, beliefs, or attitudes towards something (Lewis 78). The common goal that unites Gimli and Legolas is a determination to successfully help Frodo destroy the Ring and save Middle Earth.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the political upheavals during the tumultuous events of the War of the Ring are maneuvered in different political setups across Middle Earth. The various peoples in LOTR differ vastly in their ways of political governance. Tolkien's portrayal of these varied political systems is a reflection of the different philosophies of governance being debated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Generations old monarchies were dismantled, republics were established, at some places dictators took hold and at others fascism reared its head. The various ruling systems in Middle Earth range from monarchies of Men to the threadbare governance structure in the Shire to the authoritarianism of Mordor and Isengard.

The hobbits do not have an elaborate or complex governance structure. The different hobbit groups each seem to have a patriarch (for instance, the Thain for Tooks) and overall the Shire has a Mayor. There are no large standing armies, no complicated bureaucratic order and no high-profile rulers. The political life in Hobbiton is like all other aspects of life in the Shire; simple and uncomplicated. The hobbits live content lives and at the most get involved in petty family feuds (like that of Bilbo Baggins with the Sackville-Bagginses). Alexander van Bergh comments on political life in the Shire in "Democracy in Middle-earth: J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* from a Socio-Political Perspective": "This consistency, or rather stagnation, in Middle-earth is possible

only because there have been no major changes (no industrialization, technological advance, and/or urbanization)" (Bergh 213). There is little to none crime and violence.

The political naiveté of the hobbits is evident during Elrond's Council where they do not pitch in with heated opinions among the other high-and-mighty people present there. Mostly Gandalf speaks on behalf of the hobbits. Where Men are concerned, Rohan is ruled by a king and Gondor used to be ruled by kings but is governed by the steward instead during the events of LOTR. In *The Return of the King*, Aragorn takes up the throne as rightful king of Gondor.

Even though the rulers of Rohan and Gondor are very different in temperament, Tolkien highlights the flaws of absolute rule under a single figure. When King Theoden of Rohan falls under Grima Wormtongue's evil spell, the kingdom goes into crisis. His own son was killed in an orc ambush and his nephew is exiled so there is no one for the people to turn to in their time of distress. It is only with Gandalf's arrival that the spell is lifted from Theoden and Grima Wormtongue is banished. However, if there was already a proper chain-of-command in place that could take charge if the king was unable to rule properly then this crisis of governance could have been averted earlier. Similarly in Gondor, Denethor descends into madness after receiving the news of his beloved son Boromir's death ; the prospect of an imminent defeat at the hands of Mordor also takes its toll upon his mind and Faramir's apparent death proves to be the last straw for the king. Nobody dares to refuse the king's order to burn Faramir's pyre (even though he is still alive) but thankfully Gandalf rescues Faramir. In Gondor, even the ruler's words uttered under mental duress become absolute law.

The difference in Theoden and Denethor's temperament can partially be explained by the magnitude of the burdens they shouldered as rulers. Rohan is relatively isolated and keeps itself disengaged from outside events. Eomer tells Aragorn in *The Two Towers:* "[...] we desire only to be free and to live as we have lived, keeping our own, and serving no foreign lord, good or evil (*TT* 433). Therefore, Rohan is mostly concerned with self-preservation. On the other hand, Gondor is quite near Mordor and Denethor has the heavy task of not only saving his people from the dark hosts that issue from the walls of Mordor but Gondor also acts as a defensive barrier between Mordor and the rest of

Middle Earth. Boromir describes Gondor's role in protecting Middle Earth in these words at the Council summoned by Lord Elrond: "By our valour the wild folk of the East are still restrained, and the terror of Morgul kept at bay; and thus alone are peace and freedom maintained in the lands behind us, bulwark of the West" (Tolkien 245). Theoden of Rohan is patient and has a gentle disposition while the more war-hardened Denethor has a brash personality and fiery temper.

Theoden treats his adopted children like his own offspring while Denethor treats his own true son Faramir with indifference. Jane Chance remarked upon their leadership styles in *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* (1992): "Merry thus appropriately cries to Theoden, 'As a father you shall be to me' [...], while Pippin, like the ignored and unloved son Faramir, suffers from Denethor's selfish preference for his lost dead son" (Chance 100). Denethor rules like a tyrant while Theoden is a benevolent king.

Various groups of elves and dwarves are ruled by kings as well. The leaders of elves are mostly referred to as lords and ladies except the King of the Woodland Realm (from where Legolas belongs). The monarchies in the kingdoms of elves, men and dwarves are largely established on a hereditary basis.

In Isengard and Mordor, Saruman and Sauron rule in an authoritarian manner and their subjects lead the lives of slaves. Their subjects are only meant to bring profit to their masters. Tolkien mentions Saruman's subordinates in this way in *The Two Towers*: "Beneath the walls of Isengard there still were acres tilled by the slaves of Saruman; but most of the valley had become a wilderness of weeds and thorns" (*TT* 553). He refers to Sauron subjects thus in *The Return of the King*: "Since his return to Mordor, Sauron had found it useful; for he had few servants but many slaves of fear, and still its chief purpose as of old was to prevent escape from Mordor" (*ROTK* 900). Every aspect of life in Mordor is geared towards Sauron's goals instead of providing advantage to its other inhabitants.

Elrond's Council in *The Fellowship of the Ring* reflects the progress of parliamentary politics and multilateral international forums during Tolkien's lifetime. Representatives from different races of Middle Earth meet in Imladris to come up with a strategy to foil Sauron's plans. Lord Elrond leads the council at Rivendell and all matters

pertaining to the Ring are discussed thoroughly and mostly in a civil manner. All of the representatives put aside their mutual antagonisms and unite against a common enemy. If Gandalf and Elrond assigned Frodo as the Ringbearer on their own without taking the others in confidence, this would have resulted in mistrust. Frodo is assigned as the Ring-bearer with mutual consent of the representatives of elves, dwarves and Men. The council also asks Frodo whether he is willing to bear the heavy burden of carrying the Ring to Mordor or not. They only entrust Frodo with the task after he agrees to take the Ring to Mordor.

(II)

5.3 Environmental Concerns in *The Lord of the Rings*

Even though Tolkien mostly avoided confronting topical issues directly in his writings, the environmental aspect in his oeuvre is perhaps the most prominent when it comes to immediate concerns of his time. Tolkien was personally fond of trees and plants and took up gardening as a hobby. Flora of different varieties features prominently in LOTR, for instance, the magical golden flower-bearing tree *mallorn* that is exclusive to Lothlorien.

Tolkien's fantasy fiction addressed the environmental degradation that started in his time. While realistic fiction is mostly anthropocentric, modern fantasy is eco-centric. Ursula K. Le Guin says in her essay "The Critics, the Monsters, and the Fantasists" (2007) that a most striking feature of fantasy is that it fundamentally concerns the non-anthropocentric: "What fantasy often does that the realistic novel generally cannot do is include the nonhuman essential" (87). She claims that realistic fiction relies on anthropocentrism while fantasy veers away from it. Fantasy, in fact, humanizes the natural environment as is evident by the presence of walking trees called Ents in the LOTR trilogy.

Chris Brawley's remarks in *Nature and The Numinous in Mythopoetic Fantasy Literature* (2014): "By making trees walk or animals talk, mythopoeic fantasy is perhaps the most subversive art form there is" (Brawley 23). Brawley further adds that fantasy presents the reader with a new perspective of the natural world by blurring the difference between human and non-humans (23). Heise links anthropocentric values with modernity

and its consumer culture in which the natural world is sacrificed in the name of technology and progress. She argues in the "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism" (2006): "This domination strips nature of any value other than as a material resource and commodity and leads to a gradual destruction that may in the end deprive humanity of its basis for subsistence" (507). Important Tolkienian characters such as the Ents, Tom Bombadil, elves and hobbits, all see themselves as a part of nature rather than dominating it. This relation depicts Tolkien's ecological vision regarding the relationship that humans should have with their environment and their biological-hierarchical place on it. Tolkien presents the components of natural environment in a new and prominent light to emphasize their significance.

In the LOTR trilogy, components of natural environment have an animated presence. They are semi-sentient beings that respond consciously to external stimuli and threats. The first such instance can be observed in the chapter "The Old Forest", where the hobbits depart from The Shire and are about to enter the Old Forest. Pippin has heard strange stories about the forest and inquires whether the stories are true to which Merry replies that the forest is strange and seems to alive. The trees in the forest do not welcome strangers and are a watchful presence. They express hostility by dropping branches on people and are at their most alarming when it is dark. The trees seem to whisper in a strange language and can move around. Merry then narrates an incident in which the hobbits came and chopped down several trees and burnt a bonfire to remove trees from the surrounding hedge (110). This increased the antagonism of the trees.

Hobbits are normally nature-loving creatures who respect the natural environment but even The Shire seems to be under the influence of changing times in which the hobbits clear out trees in order to use the land for their own purposes. When the four hobbits enter the Old Forest, the forest turns its will against them and the atmosphere becomes weary. The trees deliberately block out any source of light to create difficulties for the hobbits and seem to close in on them. They are lured into the heart of the forest so that they cannot find their way out easily.

The trees trap the hobbits and a huge tree with long branches and roots try to engulf Pippin and Merry. Sam and Frodo try to pry open the roots but in vain. At this

point they hear:" A hardly perceptible shiver ran through the stem and u into the branches; the leaves rustled and whispered, but with a sound now of faint and far-off laughter (118). Fortunately, they are rescued by Tom Bombadil who calls the tree by the name of Old Man Willow. Thus, Tolkien gives the trees person-like traits.

Another important ecological setting in the LOTR trilogy is that of Lothlorien. Lothlorien is rich in natural beauty and the elven realm still retains some elven might of old. Aragorn refers to it as "the heart of Elvendom". Legolas tells his companions that the elves dwell in trees and are called called the Galadhrim or the Tree-people (341). The elves of Lothlorien highly cherish the beauty and sanctity of their natural environment. When orcs pass through the stream Nimrodel, Haldir the elf exclaims: "A strong company of Orcs has passed. They crossed the Nimrodel – curse their foul feet in its clean water!" (345). It is evident from such remarks that the elves hold their natural environment in high reverence.

Fangorn forest is perhaps the most significant of Tolkien's environmental settings. Fangorn is home to the Ents who are also known as Tree-Shepherds. Pippin and Merry befriend an Ent named Treebeard after they manage to escape from the Uruk-Hai. Trrebeard has a brownish, man like sturdy figure. Pippin describes his first impression of the Ent in these words: "One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present" (463). Fangorn was quite near to Saruman's abode, Isengard. When Saruman started building his army, his orcs felled the trees for Saruman's war machinery. When the Ents get to know about Saruman's evil actions, they march towards Isengard and take over the place. Patrick Curry commented on the ecological concerns in LOTR: "Nobody can tell me that Tolkien's books do not encourage such ecological activism; nor, for that matter, that he himself would not have been firmly on the side of the trees and their protectors" (Curry 55). Thus, trees and flora in Tolkien's legendarium are not passive parts of the background setting; they are active characters in the story that rise to defend themselves.

5.4 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter upholds the claim that fantasy texts like *The Lord of the Rings* are not entirely unrealistic; they produce verisimilitude and mirror the real world. The interplay between reality and the secondary reality of the invented world present a fresh perspective of the world before the reader. In the next chapter, I analyze the primary texts from the perspective of Tolkien's idea of Fall, Mortality and the Machine.

CHAPTER 6

FALL, MORTALITY, AND THE MACHINE AS FABULATIVE DEVICES IN *THE LORD OF RINGS*

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyze how J.R.R. Tolkien utilizes his concept of Fall, Mortality and the Machine (or Magic) as fabulative devices in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. In 1951, Tolkien wrote a letter to British publisher Milton Waldman in which he discussed the themes behind his mythopoeic process. A prominent theme in Tolkien's legendarium is that of Power, and in his letter to Waldman, he describes Fall, Mortality, and the Machine (or Magic) as sub-themes related to use of power. Tolkien wrote to Waldman: "Anyway all this stuff is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine" (*Letters* 131). In this context, Tolkien derived the meaning of "Fall" from biblical myth, in which Satan and humans were initially without sin but eventually descended into a sinful state.

Tolkien wrote in this letter that "there cannot be any story without fall" ; he probably meant that narrative art only proceeds successfully when there is conflict between characters and this conflict is the result of differing spectrums of morality, goodness and evil of characters. Some characters remain unaffected by evil and maintain their moral purity; others yield to temptation of evil and descend into a sinful condition. According to John R. Holmes, fall is observed in the case of several characters of the trilogy (Holmes 142). For instance, Denethor, a once noble steward of Gondor, is driven to despair and madness by the darkness into which his land descends. His son Boromir also yields to the temptation of the One Ring and tries to take the ring by force from Frodo in a moment of weakness.

According to Agnes Perkins and Helen Hill, the main question that LOTR poses is that what is the impact of the possibility of limitless power upon even a well-intentioned character? "The answer is unequivocal: The desire for power corrupts" (58). In Tolkien's legendarium, characters are drawn to evil chiefly by a subcreative desire. Both the author and these sort of characters are motivated by this desire to create things

of their own; the author's desire leads him to engage in building a secondary world (Middle Earth, in Tolkien's case). This manner of sub-creation imitates that of the Primary Creator (God). For example, fantasy authors imitate reality (or the primary world) to come up with secondary worlds of their own. In the case of characters, however, Tolkien writes: "[The sub-creative desire] may become possessive, clinging to the things made as 'its own', the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation" (*Letters* 131). The fall from grace of most of Tolkien's evil characters has to do with their own sub-creations.

Tolkien's legendarium (including *The Lord of the Rings*) also deals with the issue of Mortality. Tolkien contrasts the mortality of Men with the immortality of Elves for artistic effect. He writes: "The Doom (or the Gift) of Men is mortality, freedom from the circles of the world" (*Letters* 131). Immortal elves in Middle Earth are both intrigued and envious of the mortality of men while for men it is a bittersweet and mysterious end to their lives in which they do not know what awaits them ahead. A desire to extend one's mortality and power also moves different characters to different actions. Elves act on their subcreative desire to devise things good and beautiful resulting in Magic; while others like Saruman fashion devices for evil, that Tolkien refers to metonymically as the Machine.

Characters that desire to enhance their mortality do not only do so for quantity of their life, but also quality. They seek power over others to strengthen themselves. One of the attractions of Sauron's magical ring is that it keeps the ring-bearer youthful and adds to their years of life. Bilbo looked quite hale and hearty until he had the ring because the ring prolonged his life. However, such mortality comes with a price and the simple hobbit must have felt the weight of possessing the ring as he complained to Gandalf: "I am old, Gandalf. I don't look it, but I am beginning to feel it in my heart of hearts" (*FR* 32), and then he adds: "Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread" (*FR* 32). Bilbo is essentially good and senses the evil influence of the ring, even over the extra years of life that he has been awarded.

Towards the end of the story, none of the ring-bearers can die a natural death and have to travel to the Undying Lands like the elves. This loss of normal mortality is

described as a curse that hangs wearily over the ring-bearers such as Frodo. Tolkien applies his concepts of Fall, Mortality and the Machine (or Magic) to embellish his secondary fabulative world. My analysis in this chapter centers on the description of Fall, Mortality and the Machine as fabulative devices.

6.2 Fall, Mortality and the Machine as Fabulative Devices

Tolkien based the narrative structure of his LOTR trilogy on epics of old and his stories primarily deal with the conflict of good versus evil and the corrupting influence of power and subcreative desire. In the trilogy, the reader comes across black, white and grey characters. Fall, Mortality and the Machine are all interlinked as fabulative devices and Tolkien has used their interplay for sub-creating his own secondary, alternative world (or fabulation).

6.2.1 Sauron's Lust for Power and the One Ring

Sauron is the main villainous figure in *The Lord of the Rings*. He appears across various stories in Tolkien's legendarium for instance, in *The Silmarillion* (1977). Sauron was originally one of the Maiar. The Maiar were spiritual beings who were sent to Arda to assist the Valar. The wizards of Middle Earth such as Gandalf and Radagast are re-incarnated Maiar. Initially, Sauron's name was Mairon or "the admirable one". Sauron was among the most powerful Maiar. However, Sauron's good qualities (his love for order and perfection) gradually became perverted and transformed into a will to dominate others. Sauron allied himself with the Dark Lord Morgoth and turned to the path of evil. The elves renamed him as "Sauron" meaning "the hateful one" or "abominable". This change in Sauron's (orinially Mairon) name is well indicative of his descent or fall into wickedness.

After Morgoth was defeated, Sauron pretended to repent before the elves and guided the elvish smiths in forging the rings of power. But he deceived them and secretly forged the One Ring on his own that could control the power of the other rings. This was part of Sauron's plan to dominate all on Arda. Tolkien describes the forging of the One Ring in The Silmarillion in these words: "Now the Elves made many rings; but secretly Sauron made the One Ring to rule all the others, and their power was bound up with it, to be subject wholly to it and to last only so long as it too should last" (Tolkien 344).

Tolkien wrote in an unsent letter to Naomi Mitchison: "The basic motive for magia—quite apart from any philosophic consideration of how it would work—is immediacy: speed, reduction of labour, and reduction also to a minimum (or vanishing point) of the gap between the idea or desire and the result or effect" (*Letters* 155). Sauron wields the One Ring as his Machine or device of evil and uses it to control others. Thus, Sauron's subcreative desire leads him to create a weapon that is to be used for evil.

According to John R. Holmes, the terms magia and machine are philologicaly interlinked; both terms have Indo-European linguistic roots (Holmes 142). Therefore, it is not merely coincidence that Tolkien connects a corrupted will and lust for power with the motivation to devise machines (such as the ones seen in Isengard). Galadriel remarks to Sam: "For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy. But this, if you will, is the magic of Galadriel" (*FR* 362). Thus, even the elves use magic but they do not use it for evil and this differentiates their magic from the deeds of Sauron.

Sauron forges the One Ring to obtain unchecked power over Middle Earth. Elrond commented on the One Ring: "It belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone, and is altogether evil" (*FR* 267). He further adds: "And that is another reason why the Ring should be destroyed: as long as it is in the world it will be a danger even to the Wise. For nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so. I fear to take the Ring to hide it. I will not take the Ring to wield it" (*FR* 267). Power associated with the evil that accompanies a character's Fall is channeled towards developing magic or machinery of some sort. Anne C. Petty writes that machinery in LOTR is of two types; internal (such as magic) and external (such as the power within the One Ring). It is also important to see whether the power is manipulated for good or evil purposes (Petty 138-39). Sauron pours his own malice into his weapon and it has a corrupting influence on whoever possesses it. Even the innocent hobbit Bilbo Baggins begins to show signs of deceit once he has the ring.

6.2.2 Saruman's "Mind of Metal"

During the events of *The Lord of the Rings*, Saruman is the head of the White Council that includes other wizards such as Gandalf. Saruman displays a greed for power right from the beginning of his introduction in the legendarium. On the other hand, Gandalf does not desire authority over others. Saruman easily experiences his "Fall" while Gandalf refuses to yield to the temptation of the One Ring even though he could have easily taken it from Frodo. In LOTR, Saruman allies with Sauron against the Peoples of Middle Earth. Initially Gandalf is unaware of Saruman's treachery and tells Frodo that he is setting off to seek Saruman the White's advice: "Yet he is great among the Wise. He is the chief of my order and the head of the Council. His knowledge is deep, but his pride has grown with it, and he takes ill any meddling. The lore of the Elven-rings, great and small, is his province" (*FR* 48). Saruman sets secret spies upon Gandalf and begins to slowly build up his network of influence in the Shire.

There are many aspects of Saruman's personality that contributed towards him joining forces with Sauron; firstly, he was naturally attracted to power; secondly, he was knowledgeable and powerful in his own right and he turned his abilities to evil instead of good. Lastly, he was learned in the lore of the rings of power and knew more about them than Gandalf. By the time Gandalf realizes Saruman's true designs, it is too late. When Gandalf goes to Saruman to seek his advice and help, Saruman tries to recruit Gandalf to his side. Gandalf quotes him at Elrond's Council: "There is no hope left in Elves or dying Numenor. This then is one choice before you, before us. We may join with that Power" (*FR 259*). Gandalf refuses to join his wicked plans and Saruman imprisons him.

Later, Gandalf escapes on the wings of a giant eagle, but the damage is done. Saruman starts building a huge army of weapons and orcs at his base, Isengard. Treebeard, the Ent, tells Merry and Pippin about Saruman's activities: "He is plotting to become a Power. He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment" (*TT* 473). Treebeard also mentions that Saruman seems to be cross-breeding orcs and men to create a new race of goblins that can even travel by day. Treebeard remarks with disgust: "I wonder what he has done? Are they Men he has ruined, or has he blended the races of Orcs and Men?

That would be a black evil" (*TT* 473). Tolkien wrote about this sort of Fall and Machinery to his son Christopher Tolkien and said that fall motivates the individual to actualize desire and come up with wicked ways to obtain power.

He further wrote: "Labour-saving machinery only creates endless and worse labour. And in addition to this fundamental disability of a creature, is added the Fall, which makes our devices not only fail of their desire but turn to new and horrible evil" (*Letters* 75). Saruman channels all of his natural abilities towards creating an army of slaves. His position as the head of the White Council and chief of the Wizards put many powers within his reach. Gandalf described Saruman as a wizard with great strengths and skills. He turned is intellect into cunning. In The Two Towers, Tolkien describes the changes in Saruman's abode once he starts his evil machinations: "But no green thing grew there in the latter days of Saruman. The roads were paved with stone-flags, dark and hard" (TT 554). He breeds his own orcs and repeatedly tries to trick Sauron so that he could possess the One Ring himself. However, Saruman's knowledge and abilities led to his downfall and he became greedy after power and the One Ring.

Saruman was a powerful magician, and his magic was effective even over great distances. After the Fellowship departs from Rivendell and tries to cross the mountain Caradhras, Saruman casts a spell over the mountain that causes terrible weather and the Fellowship has to retreat and enter Moria. His voice was very powerful and he used it to ensnare others. He sends Grima Wormtongue to cast a black spell over the King of Rohan. Even after the Ents destroy Orthanc, he retains this persuasive ability and persuades Treebeard to let him go.

He travels to the Shire with Wormtongue where he continues his evil influence and destroys the peace of the utopia-like Hobbiton. James G. Davis commented on Saruman's ravages in the Shire: "The factory that is using up all the Shire's resources and polluting the stream is the clearest visual image in all of *The Lord of the Rings* of a modern industrial edifice" (Davis 58). Saruman even brings industry to the sheltered Shire but is ultimately chased away by the hobbits and then killed by Grima Wormtongue. Tolkien's concept for Saruman's War Machine seems to have arisen from the reality of war around him where new developments in warfare and industrialization

were not only leading to the destruction of natural environment, but also led to the loss of human lives.

When Gandalf narrates the new developments he witnessed in Isengard he remarks that from the top of the tower where he was imprisoned he saw how the valley beneath him had changed: “I looked on it and saw that, whereas it had once been green and fair, it was now filled with pits and forges” (*FR* 273). Tolkien presents a more visual picture of the fruits of Saruman’s “mind of metal” when the Ents attack Isengard they find shafts that run down many slopes and elaborate caverns. Saruman had store-houses, treasuries, armouries, smithies and gigantic furnaces. Iron wheels revolved there endlessly and hammers thudded (*TT* 554). Saruman’s powers are employed towards coming up with wicked machinations and destructive technology.

Even though Tolkien disliked allegorical interpretations of his work, Saruman’s War Machine seems to have been inspired by the widespread conflict and industrialization going on around Tolkien. Death and destruction hung in the air and technological advancements were being applied to develop new weapons. Countries vying over power rapidly developed different types of weapons; every new one more lethal and destructive than the last. Eventually, America developed the atomic bomb that led to a horrific loss of lives in Japan and a nuclear arms race that continues to this day.

6.2.3 Gollum’s Fall

Gollum is among the gray characters in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. His original name is Smeagol and once he belonged to a family of hobbits known as the Stoors. Smeagol later gains the name of Gollum due to the strange gurgling noise he makes in his throat. Gollum lived an unnaturally long life under the influence of the One Ring.

Gollum experiences his fall right from the moment he sets eyes on the ring. His cousin finds the ring but Gollum demands it from him saying that it is his birthday. His cousin refuses and Gollum strangles his throat. This murder is reminiscent of the murder of Abel at the hands of Cain. Several Tolkien scholars such as Brent Nelson and Ralph C. Wood have commented upon the resemblance between Cain and Gollum. Cain is jealous of Abel while Gollum envies his cousin Deagol for the ring that he found. Gollum, much like Cain, spends the rest of his life wandering miserably over Middle Earth ad never

finds peace. Gollum takes the ring and runs away from home. He gradually becomes a miserable, pathetic creature under the corrupting influence of the ring. His thoughts become dark and he seeks a dwelling under the Misty Mountains. In *The Hobbit*, Gollum runs into Bilbo Baggins and loses to him at a game of riddles. Bilbo comes across the ring and pockets it; Gollum's despair knows no end when he discovers his loss.

This encounter between Bilbo and Gollum proves to be a turning point in the history of Middle Earth. It triggers the events that lead to the War of the Rings. Even though both Gollum and Bilbo belong to the same race, the ring has different effects on both of them. The power of the ring completely consumes Gollum and he grows obsessed with it. He spends his days in darkness, thinking evil thoughts. He eats foul things and shuns all warmth and light. On the other hand, the ring does not seem to have a considerable corrupting influence on Bilbo Baggins. In fact, Gandalf finds it quite extraordinary that Bilbo was able to give up the ring so easily.

Gollum is caught sneaking around in Mordor and is tortured for days regarding the ring. He finally reveals Bilbo Baggins' name that leads the Dark Lord Sauron's servants to the Shire. Later on, he starts following the Fellowship of the Ring at Moria and is spotted by Frodo, Aragorn and Gandalf. He continues following them and is finally captured by Frodo and Sam. Frodo is about to kill him but then he takes pity on Gollum and Gollum turns into their guide. According to Charles W. Nelson, Gollum and Gandalf are contrasts to each other; Gandalf is the good guide while Gollum is an evil, devious guide (47-61). Gollum leads them to Mordor. During their journey, Frodo's kindness towards Gollum softens his heart a bit but the evil influence of the ring is too strong. Sam overhears Gollum having an internal debate that should he act in a good or wicked manner. Once more, he yields to the evil side of his character and tricks Frodo into the giant spider Shelob's lair.

Gandalf once predicted that he felt Gollum had an important part to play in the events of their time. When Frodo and Sam finally reach the summit of Mount Doom, Gollum bites off Frodo's finger and snatches the ring. However, in his excitement he topples over and falls down an abyss along-with the ring. If it had not been for Gollum,

Frodo would not have been able to destroy the ring on his own. Therefore, Gandalf's prediction comes true.

Gollum as a character is quite susceptible to fall. Nearly all of the times when he is presented with moral choices, he chooses the evil path. He cannot resist the temptation of the ring and commits the serious crime of killing his own brother.

6.3 Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis in this chapter, it can be concluded that Tolkienian concepts of Fall, Mortality and the Machine act as fabulative devices in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Hunger for power and a sense of mortality drive various characters to fall from their original condition of innocence into folly; this fall results in sub-creation of the machine (or magic). It depends on the moral compass of the one who wields this particular device that whether they use the machine (or magic) for good deeds or evil deeds. This interplay of these three concepts results in a fabulative effect, because magic and the machine add supernatural and fantastic elements to the story that make the imaginary secondary world different from primary reality. Subcreative desire can move individuals to good or bad actions; people who are good act on this subcreative impulse to create beautiful things and art while power-hungry villains like Sauron are motivated to evil actions by subcreative desire.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have undertaken a concluding discussion of my research project. In this study, I have explored J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy through the perspective of Robert Scholes theory of fabulation and Tolkien's concept of Fall, Mortality and the Machine (or Magic). As fabulation is a concept that is associated with postmodernism, I used this lens to indicate the converging points between postmodernism and modern fantasy fiction. As I conclude this research, it would be worthwhile to go over my research premise again and review why I chose this particular theoretical framework and analytical approach to examine my primary texts. I have conducted an interpretive and exploratory analysis of my selected texts. I analyzed my primary texts with the help of Catherine Belsey's textual analysis method. My research approach has been subjective and non-generalizable throughout. As I critically analyzed my primary texts in the preceding chapters, it may be now clearer to ascertain whether this research supports my thesis statement and if the research questions have been answered or not.

I initiated my analysis with the premise that postmodern texts and modern fantasy fiction texts converge and overlap at particular points because they have certain similarities. I highlighted these converging and overlapping points with the help of Scholes' concept of fabulation. Furthermore, I postulated that fantasy fiction produces verisimilitude and it is not entirely unrealistic because it concerns itself with aspects of the real world. I also supplemented my primary theoretical framework with the Tolkienian concept of Fall, Mortality and Machine to dissect these themes as fabulative devices in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. I have backed up these claims with substantial textual evidence and critical input from other scholarly sources.

My research claims were aptly bolstered with the theoretical framework that I selected and the textual evidence seems to uphold the validity of my controlling questions. There seem to be many points where modern fantasy fiction overlaps with postmodern fiction. My analytical findings also indicate that even though fantasy fiction is set in entirely made-up worlds, it is not thoroughly unrealistic because these secondary worlds are imitations of the primary or real world. I have tried to substantiate my claim that fantasy writings like *The Lord of the Rings* are not merely

escapist but appear to address genuine topical issues of the real world like destruction of the natural environment.

I postulated that postmodernism and modern fantasy fiction overlap along fabulative lines and for backing up this claim I examined how Tolkien's secondary world-making is fabulative in nature. Tolkien's imaginary settings, fantastic characters such as elves, dwarves and orcs, and invented languages endow the LOTR trilogy with fabulative traits (see pp. 35, 49). Metafiction is a concept linked with postmodern fabulation and I have given evidence that how Tolkien employed metafictional technique while writing the trilogy (see pp. 43, 44). His myth-making process is a pastiche of the romantic mythological models of the past.

In Chapter 5, I have explored the manner in which reality and the unreal coincide in fantastic worlds such as the one constructed by Tolkien in LOTR (see pp. 51, 58). LOTR does not contain any direct allegorical symbolism, rather the events can be interpreted through applicability (interpretation from the reader's own point of view). However, Tolkien was a product of his time as an author and even though he avoided conscious allegory, many contemporary concerns of his time permeate the narrative.

In Chapter 6, I have analyzed Fall, Mortality and the Machine (or Magic) as fabulative devices in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (please see pp. 64,66). These three concepts are interlinked in Tolkien's mythopoeic process. Fall and Mortality propel most of the action in LOTR and are the motivation behind evil deeds in the trilogy. For the accomplishment of their evil purposes and to accumulate power, villains such as Sauron and Saruman devise destructive tools (for instance, the One Ring). Characters such as elves and Gandalf use their devices for good purposes; hence Tolkien refers to their special abilities as Magic.

Therefore, in terms of findings of this study, it is revealed that modern fantasy fiction texts such *The Lord of the Rings* are not juvenile or escapist literature. They present alternative perspectives of reality before their readers and provoke them to think about the world in different ways. In a postmodern manner, they break down constructed notions of reality and join several of these elements to construct an alternative reality. They confront reality in their own unique way which is different from conventional perspectives.

Twentieth century modern fantasy fiction is not the outcome of an antique, outdated romantic mythological model. It encapsulates the political milieu of its age and addresses real-world issues. It is revealed through this study that the concerns of modern fantasy texts such as LOTR are not trivial or childish; rather they mimic and reflect the primary world in an imaginative manner.

Thus, the fantastic and the postmodern concenter along fabulative lines. Fantasy authors such as Tolkien deploy known reality and language to invent fictional worlds. The author continuously reminds the readers of the unreliability of the narrative. There is an unspoken agreement between the writer and readers that they will deliberately and knowingly commit themselves to the artifice of the alternative reality. Amidst the strangeness of the invented secondary world, verisimilitude is produced as a result of mimeses of the primary world through which the secondary world is constructed.

Future Research Recommendations

This research project could possibly pave the way for fabulative readings of other fantasy texts and make a meaningful contribution in the field of Tolkien studies. There is not a lot of scholarship available on Tolkien's oeuvre from a postmodern perspective and there are many research gaps that future scholarship could potentially cover. Modern fantasy has become an important component of cultural productions ranging from books to high-budget movies. Relevant scholarship can prove useful in studying the effect and impact of fantasy on contemporary culture. The research approach applied in this study can also be utilized for analyzing other contemporary works of fantasy fiction such as American author George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001), Musharraf Ali Farooqui's *The Merman and the Book of Power* (2019) and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy. My intervention in the production of knowledge regarding this research project is that I have pointed out the subtle ways in which modern fantasy fiction presents alternative perspectives of reality before the reader. This research could prove to be a useful resource for critique that aims to advocate the case for modern fantasy that it is not just escapist or childish; rather these texts can be considered as high-brow literature worthy of extensive scholarly discussion owing to the intricate fictive techniques, creative impulse and themes that go into creating fantastic alternative worlds.

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