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A Wizard of Middle-Earthsea

1. Introduction

J.R.R Tolkien, known by some as the father of high fantasy, who popularised said genre for the modern audience. His fantastical creatures breathe life into Middle-earth and entices the reader to get immersed into this diverse and beautiful world. A story of unlikely heroes undertaking an epic quest to save the world. Tolkien's narrative takes place in an imaginative world of his own creation, which is neither completely fantastical nor based on our reality. The world is constructed to provide a vast array of landscapes, creatures, and events that are internally consistent and credible within the context of the story. As a result of Tolkien's massive success as a fantasy genre, he has breathed life into the genre and essentially made it popular among adults. Based on that, my research question is as follows;

> What are some of the aspects and tropes of modern fantasy that were created, popularised or codified by J. R. R. Tolkien primarily through his *The Lord of the Rings* series, and to what extent can that be applied to another modern fantasy writer like Ursula K. Le Guin?

My project entails that I will first need do a close reading of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, then do the same for Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*. I am limiting my project to the first of her books, although if I had read them all, it might have given me a more thorough picture of her worldbuilding. Due to time however, I am restricted to sticking with the first book. I will look through the different claims made by James in his *Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy*, and use them as a lens when I do a close reading of the texts, and make notes of my discoveries. Then I plan on incorporating said discoveries into chapters constituting the main body of this project.

The following quote by James, from his *Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy*, on the topic of the modern fantasy genre's emergence, encompasses a huge part of my argument, and I

have chosen him as my methodology:

> "Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (...) looms over all the fantasy written in English - and in many other languages - since it's publication; most subsequent writers of fantasy are either imitating him or else desperately trying to escape his influence" (James, 62).

This quote by James is spot on, and the reason why I have adopted the methodology proposed by Edward James in said chapter as my own. Edward James makes a few big claims that I plan on exploring further. The first one, and the biggest one according to James, is that Tolkien normalised the idea of having a wholly separate world for your fantasy creation. A secondary world as James calls it (65), but Tolkien himself might use the word Sub-creation. I will delve into what aspects of his worldbuilding makes his world a secondary sub-creation, and to what extent Le Guin has followed this idea. Another claim of James is that Tolkien's significant contribution to modern fantasy lies in his establishment of the Middle Ages as the archetypal cultural model for fantasy worlds. This model was embraced by later fantasy writers and remains prevalent to this day, with many works featuring a mediaeval-inspired setting, complete with feudal social structures, castles, knights, and other elements (70). This Middle Ages-inspired model has become so pervasive that it has even transcended the fantasy genre and can be observed in other forms of popular culture, including film, television, and video games. Finally the third claim, which is one of multitude. James says *The Lord of the Rings* serves as a defining work for the genre of fantasy literature to an extent that its various traits and conventions can be identified and analysed using the terminology introduced by among others, Clute and Grant in the field of fantasy criticism (64). Now James mentioned quite a few of these terms, though I am not going to adhere to them strictly. I will instead see what terms and concepts I myself can discover as I delve into these books, and through secondary scholarship. They claim, however, that Tolkien codified or established several of modern fantasy's structural elements. It is crucial to establish the essential elements present in Tolkien's work that can be considered its foundation, in order to define what Tolkien contributed with to the genre of high fantasy. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the majority of these elements do not originate from Tolkien, but were derived from pre-existing traditions from which he drew inspiration, and ultimately make up what Paxson would call the Tolkien tradition (Paxson 23).

One such aspect of modern fantasy is the archetypal evil character, or enemy of the story. For what is a hero without a villain or some great evil forces to overcome. Tolkien's many images of evil leave quite the impression, so much so as to warrant further research into their meaning and portrayal. In his published lecture *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, J.R.R Tolkien himself brings the importance of monsters and their fights in the Old English epic poem *Beowulf* to light. His lectures moved *Beowulf* into the literary canon where it was appreciated as art rather than taken apart for linguistic materials. By taking the monsters of *Beowulf* seriously, Tolkien may have contributed to the early stages of development in the field of monster studies. Thus Tolkien contributed to the academic work on the monstrous, as well as producing his own terrifying creations in his work as a fiction writer for others to criticise. Using said lecture, along with other scholarship on the aspect of monsters, I will attempt to explore in which manner Tolkien extends the *Beowulfian* heroic monster fights into his own world of Middle-earth, and see whether or not Le Guin has done something similar, or something completely of her own making.

One might say *The Lord of the Rings* is Tolkien's realisation of what he wrote about in 'On Fairy-Stories', about the concept of Faërie in a secondary world. Which naturally means that article will most certainly also be useful in determining what thoughts and aspects of fantasy Tolkien expressed in *The Lord of the Rings* and that Le Guin might have mirrored or expressly avoided in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Some of what Tolkien purports in *On Fairy-Stories* is primarily, when executed with artistic mastery, the intrinsic value of fairy-stories aligns with the broader literary forms. However, fairy-stories possess distinctive attributes that distinguish them, namely fantasy, recovery, escape, and consolation, which cater to the needs of individuals, particularly older readers, in a distinct manner. Children, generally speaking, have a lesser demand for these elements compared to adults (Tolkien, Fairy-stories 22). Are these elements Tolkien mentions as being important parts of fairy-stories present in modern fantasy? Tolkien's contribution to the fantasy genre lies not necessarily only in the works he produced but also in the enduring impact of the literary tropes he established or codified. An example being the genre of escapism, prior to Tolkien, relied on creating wondrous, whimsical worlds as an escape from reality, with no grounding in a realistic or plausible setting. C.

S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia is an example of such a work. However, Tolkien's approach to sub-creation imbued Middle-earth with a depth of reality that stripped the fantasy genre of its childish unreality. This revolutionised the concept of escapism, transforming it into a medium for adult readers. Middle-earth, as a secondary world, is not only believable but also possesses its own sense of existence, transcending mere wish-fulfilment. The profoundness of Tolkien's world-building, with its attention to intricate detail and sense of historical and linguistic coherence, has since become a cornerstone of the genre, reflecting the enduring impact of his work on the world of fantasy literature (James). This leads me to try to answer the question of what makes Tolkien's world-building so effective, and what similarities of his sub-creation can be found in Le Guin's writing?

In essence, what I will try to answer in the following thesis can be culminated down to these questions below:

> I will attempt to discern what exactly makes Tolkien's world of Middle-earth a secondary world, and a realistic sub-creation. And with this knowledge, I will apply it to Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, to see whether or not James' claims hold up. Is Le Guin's world of Earthsea a fully realised secondary world? If that is in fact the case, what makes it so?

> Secondly, I will dive into the claim that modern fantasy is now primarily set in the middle ages, whether or not it is true Tolkien is to blame, and if it holds up compared in light of Le Guin's world. Is it set in a similar setting? If so, what elements are indicative of this setting, and are they also found in both works?

> And ultimately I will attempt to answer the question of how Tolkien laid the foundation for modern, or high fantasy writing, to the point of making him deserve the title of "father of modern fantasy". What specific tropes of aspects has he established within fantasy that I can compare to Le Guin's writing?

The reason I chose Ursula K. Le Guin's work of *A Wizard of Earthsea* is primarily because my

supervisor suggested it as a possibly good book for this type of assignment. After reading it, I can understand why. It is a great piece of work, and it can easily be compared to Tolkien's work in both terms of quality of content, as well as reading enjoyment. It also shares quite a lot in terms of fantasy genre aspects that make the two easy to compare.

Contents of the main chapters.

Chapter 3 deals with Tolkien's concept of sub-creation, and is possibly the most extensive of them all, where I explore aspects such as the geography, culture and history, myths and legends, and finally the use of maps.

Chapter 4 deals with the claim of whether or not Tolkien has normalised the middle ages as the default setting of modern fantasy, where I explore specific aspects that are indicative of the setting, such as customs and real life inspirations, heroic battles, poems, physical attributes such as clothing and weaponry, and finally the concept of the Wild Men.

Chapter 5 deals with the systems of magic, it's use, and the archetypal figure of a wizard. It also goes in depth into how this archetypal wizard figure is portrayed in both works, and what other roles he serves in the narrative.

Chapter 6 deals with the importance of language and names, in both a worldbuilding aspect, and in terms of what it represents in the narrative. What secrets it may hold, and what magical properties.

Chapter 7 deals with the evils and enemies, and their usage of the fantasy element of Dark Towers in both worlds. What their physical attributes are, and what role they serve in the overall narrative.

2. Background theory and Methodology

<u>2a. Methodology</u>

For this project, I have adopted the methodology proposed by Edward James in his chapter on Tolkien, Lewis, and the emergence of genre fantasy. James argues that J. R. R. Tolkien had a significant influence on the development of the fantasy genre, and his claims provide a compelling framework for analysing the impact of Tolkien's work on modern fantasy. Therefore, I have chosen James' text as a guiding methodology for this project. Through a rigorous examination of James' arguments, I will seek to evaluate the validity of his claims regarding Tolkien's influence on the fantasy genre, and assess the extent to which his impact is reflected in contemporary works of fantasy, and I will attempt to put his claims to the test. A brief abstract of the chapter will help make it clearer.

James begins his chapter by quoting J.R.R. Tolkien's iconic opening line, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," which emerged from his unconscious mind while he was grading exam papers. This seemingly innocuous sentence would go on to shape much of the modern fantasy genre. James talks of Tolkien's epic trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings,* as widely regarded as the cornerstone of fantasy literature in English and has influenced countless authors in the genre. Some have attempted to imitate his style, while others have sought to break free from his shadow. Tolkien's hold over readers has been extraordinary, and his popularity has endured for decades. In public surveys conducted in the UK at the turn of the millennium, he was voted the "author of the century," and his book was chosen as the most popular work of English fiction, even surpassing Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. *The Lord of the Rings* has been translated into numerous languages and adapted into a highly successful film trilogy directed by Peter Jackson, grossing nearly three billion American dollars. While C.S. Lewis's fantasy novels, including his *Space Trilogy* (1938-1946) and the seven books of the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), may not have had quite the same impact as Tolkien's works; they have also reached a wide audience (James 62-77). Though I am not focusing on Lewis' impact at all, only Tolkien's.

James speaks on the topic of form, and what makes fantasy, fantasy, he essentially speaks of fantasy texts as a collection of certain shared tropes, mostly of the completely impossible, proposed by Brian Attebery in his "Strategies of Fantasy" (James, 1). Similarly, Farah Mendlesohn's arguments for four different fantasy modes: portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusion and the liminal (James, 2), of which the portal-quest would be the most fitting as *The Lord of the Rings* would most definitely fit into the portal-quest mode, where the protagonist would be part of the fantastic world in question, but they do sort of leave their world behind, to travel out on an epic quest, even though the world is the one and the same. Which gives me plenty of aspects to attack this project from, using this as my methodology. What he is in essence saying is that much of what Tolkien used in terms of fantasy tropes and and aspects have been codified into archetypal of the modern fantasy genre due to his massive success. A sentence from the start of this chapter that probably encompasses most of my coming argument is "most subsequent writers of fantasy are either imitating him or else desperately trying to escape his influence", which is James on Tolkien when speaking of modern fantasy genre's emergence (James, 62). And I will use this chapter of James' *Fantasy Literature* as a lens as I try to emulate his reasoning. In a sentence, why in James' explanation is Tolkien considered the father of modern high fantasy?

2b. Background Theory

Tom Shippey – The Road to Middle-Earth

In this book, Tom Shippey, a Tolkien scholar and medievalist in the same academic lineage as J.R.R. Tolkien himself, offers unique insights into the background and context of Tolkien's work in his books The Road to Middle-Earth. It has a structure of chapters dedicated to The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, the Silmarillion, as well as other minor works. Shippey highlights several important aspects of Tolkien's work, including his use of names and language, stylistic variation, and embedded songs and poems, as well as his sources ranging from Anglo-Saxon culture to Shakespeare's Macbeth. Shippey also explores Tolkien's careful chronology and cartography in The Lord of the Rings and his balancing of Boethian and Manichaean visions of evil, influenced by his Christianity. The Road to Middle-Earth delves deeper into etymology and historical linguistics, and

includes additional chapters on the divide between "lit" and "lang" in the Oxford English faculty and on the disciplinary history and status of philology. It is a valuable resource in anything Tolkien, and provides great insights into the creative worldbuilding process, which is the majority of what I am using it for in this project. It also provides valuable thoughts on aspects of evil, like Tolkien's image of shadows and darkness. Giving me additional information to build up my arguments.

The Lord of the Rings

The primary focus of my literary analysis is *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy authored by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. This epic narrative spans three volumes, commencing with "The Fellowship of the Ring," originally published on July 29, 1954, as Book I and Book II. Shortly thereafter, on November 11, 1954, the second instalment titled "The Two Towers" was released. Finally, on October 20, 1955, the third and concluding volume, "The Return of the King," became available to readers. For the purpose of this description, these three volumes shall be treated as a unified and cohesive trilogy. While the trilogy has now established itself as a substantial and fully developed work, it initially emerged as a sequel to J.R.R. Tolkien's earlier children's book, "The Hobbit," published in 1937. This grand high-fantasy saga delves into numerous central themes, prominently including death and immortality, the eternal conflict between good and evil, the power of friendship, the horrors of war, the dichotomy of nature versus technology, and the incorporation of religious imagery, particularly through the embodiment of Christ and Satanic figures. The narrative follows the protagonist Frodo, inheriting the mantle from Bilbo, the protagonist of "The Hobbit," as he embarks on a perilous journey alongside his fellowship of companions. Their quest is to destroy a malevolent artefact, the titular ring, which they possess and which poses a grave threat to the world. Throughout their arduous voyage, they encounter numerous treacherous obstacles and formidable adversaries, persistently aiming for their ultimate destination but frequently impeded and setback along the way. In terms of narrative structure, the story unfolds chronologically, commencing with the acquisition of the ring and culminating in its successful destruction, thereby fulfilling their quest. The subsequent epilogue sees Frodo departing to reside in the eternal lands, forever burdened by the lingering effects of being the bearer of the ring—a symbol of sin and evil throughout the narrative. J.R.R. Tolkien is widely regarded as the pioneer of the fantasy genre, and

his exceptional craftsmanship transforms this fantastical world into a work of art through his vivid descriptions, meticulous wordplay, and the intricate histories of names and places. The enduring impact of Tolkien's narrative has permeated various forms of modern fantasy, serving as a profound source of inspiration.

A Wizard of Earthsea

In the enchanting realm of Earthsea, consisting of mainly an Archipelago of islands, Ursula K. Le Guin weaves a captivating coming-of-age tale of a wizard. At the heart of the narrative lies the transformative journey of a young boy, initially portrayed as wild and filled with untamed pride. Seemingly destined for greatness. However, this seemingly invincible protagonist soon finds himself ensnared in the clutches of a grave magical misstep, confronted by a formidable force that exceeds his fledgling powers. As the protagonist matures and gains wisdom through experiences, and aid from friends and mentor figures, we witness his valiant efforts to rectify the profound mistake he once committed. In this gripping narrative, Le Guin intricately explores the themes of growth, redemption, and the resilience of the human spirit, as well as an intriguing world of a unique system of magic in place, painting a vivid tapestry of personal evolution within the mystical world of Earthsea.

3. Sub-creation

One of the major contributions Tolkien had on modern fantasy writing, possibly his greatest achievement as pointed out by Edward James (James, 65), is establishing the idea of a secondary world within fantasy writing as more common. As opposed to having to explain why magic, or fantastical creatures could exist in our world, having to come up with a plausible, fictional link to our world, or the old fashioned cliché of having it all be a dream. As Tolkien remarks, children possess a remarkable capacity for belief, especially when the storyteller is skilled enough to create a compelling narrative. This state of mind is often referred to as the "willing suspension of disbelief," although this phrase fails to fully capture the nuances of the experience. In truth, what happens when a storyteller is successful in creating a believable narrative is that they become a "sub-

creator," constructing a Secondary World that is vivid and immersive enough to transport the reader into its depths. Within this world, the laws and rules that govern the narrative are consistent and internally coherent, making the events and characters within it feel authentic and plausible. As a result, the reader is able to fully invest themselves in the story, believing it to be true while they remain within the confines of the Secondary World (Tolkien, Fairy-stories 18). Tolkien's world of Middle-earth is its own sub-creation, its own world existing independent and outside of our own, a term coined by Tolkien to describe the action of creating a fictional world that is internally consistent and fully realised (Tolkien, Fairy-stories). Everything makes sense in the context of this new world, and the rules are simply what you make them out to be. As Tolkien himself eloquently describes it when talking about the state of mind one enters when reading fantasy: "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful "sub-creator." He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside." (Tolkien, Fairy-stories 18). Sub-creation as a philosophical concept is both something that occurs when Tolkien creates his new world in writing, as well as being a vital part of the creation story of Arda inside Tolkien's stories. Arda is the name of the world in which Middle-earth is set, and although not mentioned by name in *The Lord of the Rings*, the creator of the universe, the Ainur, Men, Dwarves and Elves is Eru Ilúvatar, simply known as "the one". That makes him the first creator within this world, while everything that was subsequently made by the beings he brought to life would be categorised as sub-creation. The Ainur did go on to create the rest of the world, the moon and the sun, and we have a sub-creation within Tolkien's own sub-creation (Tyler 675). Now granted, this is worldbuilding information which is written about extensively in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, and for the purpose of this work I am focusing on the impact of Lord of the Rings specifically, but some information from Tolkien's other works is necessary to explain certain points. The informational backdrop provided in works like *The Silmarillion* was stuff that Tolkien was working on before he gave out *The Lord of the Rings*, according to Clute and Grant, he began his work on it after his service in WWI (951). In terms of Sub-creation as a world-building tool for the Author, the same can be said about Le Guin's Earthsea. Like Middle-earth it also exists wholly outside our own world, in its own universe, but with several similarities to ours.

Tolkien's story is situated not in a wholly fantastical dream world nor in our reality, but in an imaginary world that he created himself. This imaginative world is designed to offer a wide range of landscapes, inhabitants, and events that are plausible and coherent within the context of the narrative. By inventing the history and lore of Middle-earth, Tolkien creates a self-contained universe that is solely governed by his own creative vision. Therefore, the events that unfold in Middle-earth, as well as their underlying causes and motivations, are subject to Tolkien's unique interpretation. In essence, the author's vision of what occurs within the narrative is the only correct interpretation. This approach allows Tolkien to construct a meticulously detailed and internally consistent world, wherein the story and characters are deeply interconnected with their environment and history. Through this method, Tolkien created a singular imaginative world that remains an enduring and beloved work of fantasy literature (Auden, Hero Quest 94).

3a. Geography

Tolkien was an expert at creating unique geography, which is apparent when reading the vivid descriptions of Middle-earth. Not only does the world of Middle-earth contain a lot of named places and points of interest that are explored throughout the story of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien has made a vastly larger, fully fledged out world that the reader will not necessarily get to explore in these books. Much of it is further elaborated upon in his other works, but some of it remains only as a name and place, to help fully realise this world as a believable place. Together with multiple maps with almost 600 placenames (Shippey, The Road 114), you get the impression that Middle-earth is a believable and large world with its own history, akin to our own. Middle-earth is a large continent on Arda (the name of the world), with a long coastline to the west, on which most of the story contained within *The Lord of the Rings* occurs. To begin with, the reader gets to explore the idyllic location of the Shire, where the main protagonist Frodo Baggins is from. Not only does Tolkien describe a beautiful landscape of rolling hills and countrysides, but he includes another map detailing the borders and further geographical details regarding the Shire. From its many named rivers, lakes and forests, down to the unique street names. Through our heroes' adventure, Tolkien takes us across his vast world to explore his many unique landscapes. From quaint villages to massive cities like Minas Tirith of Gondor. Ominous swamps and evil lands, to the magical elven

forests. Middle-earth has it all. In Clute and Grant's entry of Fantasyland, which is what they call the fundamental setting in which a significant portion of genre fantasy takes place, they mention Tolkien's level of detail and solidity in worldbuilding of the landscape, which they imagine has become a template of the landscape of fantasy (341).

Tolkien's unparalleled talent for describing topography is a staple aspect of his writing. Throughout the story, the hero Frodo Baggins embarks on a perilous journey that takes him on foot for over 1800 miles, excluding any rest stops. His senses are kept acutely sharp by fear, vigilantly watching every inch of the way for signs of his relentless pursuers, mainly the black riders. Yet, despite the complexity of this journey, Tolkien manages to create a vivid and immersive world that fully convinces the reader of its authenticity. Every detail is meticulously captured and described through Frodo, making it appear as though he himself has not overlooked even the smallest aspect of his surroundings (Auden 95). With such high praise, one can confidently say that Tolkien's description of Middle-earth's geography and what makes up his world leaves the reader immersed in his fully realised world.

The first chapter of *A Wizard of Earthsea* we learn that the land of Earthsea has its own unique geography, consisting of a collection of islands, each with their own distinct landscape, culture and environment. An Archipelago-like world that is enclosed by an uncharted sea. A notion that is further cemented with the inclusion of a physical map of Earthsea at the beginning of the book, which we will get back to in more detail. In terms of descriptions of the world, we first learn of Gont, where our protagonist Ged is from. An island made up of a mile high, single mountain lifting up from the "storm-racked Northeast Sea" below, with ports in its dark and narrow bays, and towns in its high valleys (Le Guin 13). Invoking an image of a not so pleasant, nor calm location for a village, initially very unlike the imagery of the Lord of the Rings' protagonist hometown of the Shire. Le Guin goes on to describe his home as being: "a lonely village called Ten Alders, high on the mountain at the head of the Northward Vale. Below the village the pastures and ploughlands of the Vale slope downward level below level towards the sea, and other towns like on the bends of the River Ar; above the village only forest rises ridge behind ridge to the stone and snow of the heights" (Le Guin 13). Providing just enough information to the reader to give them a clear sense of its geography and atmosphere. Despite the dramatic location however, Le Guin portrays the landscape

of Gont as an idyllic, rural area with several small villages among lush fields. A peaceful setting invoking a sense of simplicity and tranquillity, much more reminiscent of Lord of the Rings' the Shire. There is a named river, Ar, later described when Ged as a child is taking a swim in its pools as "like all Gontish rivers ran very quick and cold" (Le Guin 14). What might Le Guin mean by describing the river as such? Does it add to the mysteriousness of this strange mountainous island of wizards, or does it add to the believability of world-building by reinforcing the fact that Gont is primarily a high valley with sloped sides and snow capped mountain tops. Of course the rivers would run fast if they are located on a slope, and surely the water would be cold if it originated from the snowy mountain tops. Either way, it ultimately helps to make Le Guin's world a more fully realised and believable sub-creation.

Several other locations are mentioned in this opening chapter, places like the Northern and Eastern Reaches, the Kargad Empire, and the "Archipelago", but not given any further descriptions. Going back and looking at the map provided, one can split the world of Earthsea into several regions; a large collection of islands in the middle, commonly referred to as the Archipelago, and four clusters of islands in each cardinal direction called the North, East, South and West Reach. There is a fifth region to the North East called the Kargad Lands, referred to as four great lands between the Northern and Eastern Reaches in which a savage people live (Le Guin 18). A few pages into the story, and we have a general understanding of the physical make of the world of Earthsea. There are no mentions of locations within our own world, and we are painted this picture of Earthsea as being its own creation entirely. It might closely resemble our Earth in that it is mostly covered in ocean, and consists of several pieces of land, albeit no continents, but rather a series of smaller islands. Making the geography familiar as well as realistic, and ultimately believable. Le Guin's attention to detail in her world-building and ultimately her Sub-creation, is shown through each island visited throughout the book having its own unique landscape and culture. Each part of this world is carefully created, making this fully realised world. From the snow-crowned single mountain of Gont, with its thick forests, green pastures and rocky shores to the cold icy landscape of Osskil, Le Guin describes many different islands each with its unique landscape and environment, wholly created from scratch, yet consistent with reality.

A big part of Tolkien's world-building that makes Middle-earth so successful as its own sub-creation, other than its well crafted and described geography, is all the different histories and cultures found throughout its world. The world of Middle-earth is brimming with different fantastical races, each with their own rich history and unique social customs. In the prologue and the first chapter, Tolkien meticulously describes every aspect of the hobbit's lives, from their physical appearance, to their simple way of life. He even goes into great detail on the history of their home, the Shire, and how it is divided into quarters called Farthings, and further into what he calls Folklands (Tolkien, LOTR 9). Giving the reader a deep cultural and historical understanding of this unique race of people, and creating the impression of a realistic and fully fleshed out world. The age of which the stories of *The Lord of the Rings* takes place is referred to as the Third Age. This implies that there is a lot of prior history regarding the two previous ages, much of which is given through drips throughout the story, and further explained in detail in works like *The Silmarillion*. To make another example of the historical and cultural depth of Tolkien's races, let us look into the Dwarves. According to Tyler, they are the only race of the "speaking-peoples" not to have been directly created by the will of God (Eru Ilúvatar), but are made by Aulë the Valar smith (Tyler 162). They have their own language of Dwarvish and are described as small and stout bearded people that are unparalleled in craftsmanship, and fights using axes. Which is in modern fantasy considered the archetypal Dwarf, like many of Tolkien's figures and aspects. Tolkien's world-building extends beyond the mere creation of gods and languages, such as in the creation myths (coming up), and as each of the major families and nations are imbued with a rich history and background. However, this background is not explicitly presented to the reader, but rather, is revealed through various means such as poetry quoted by the characters, descriptions of ruins and scenic locations, and moments when characters such as Gandalf take the time to provide explanations to the hobbits (Paxson 24). The effect of this approach is to create a fully-realised and immersive world that feels authentic and lived-in. Through these subtle and organic methods, Tolkien is able to convey a sense of depth and complexity to the fictional universe of Middle-earth.

Looking in Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea, in the first chapter alone, the reader is introduced to the

unique culture and society of the archipelago, Gont in particular. The chapter provides a wealth of anthropological detail, which helps to establish the groundwork of assumptions and values by which the reader can interpret the behaviour of the hero, Ged. Throughout the chapter, Le Guin documents the characteristics of Ged's tribe, the people of Gont, portraying them as simple, content, and in harmony with nature. She also analyses the social position of wizards, who are revered and feared by the people of the archipelago, and who are seen as having a special knowledge and power that sets them apart from ordinary people. Additionally, the reader learns of social celebrations and the importance of myths in perpetuating cultural memory and personal fame. Le Guin shows how myths and legends play a central role in the world of Earthsea, shaping the beliefs and values of its people and providing a framework for understanding their place in the wider world. Taken together, these details help to paint a vivid and immersive picture of life in Earthsea, and set the stage for the adventures and challenges that the main protagonist will face as the story progresses. By providing this rich background information, Le Guin invites the reader to engage with the story on a deeper level, and to think critically about the cultural assumptions and values that underlie the actions of the characters (Walker 181). Additionally it creates the framework of a more believable sub-creation that is distinct from our own, yet consistent enough with reality.

Le Guin's effort to create this fully-realised, self-contained fictional world in *A Wizard of Earthsea* that is distinct from our own, has her demonstrating a thorough attention to detail in the creation of the various peoples of Earthsea's cultures, and histories. By populating the world with different races, including humans, dragons, and other magical beings, she adds a sense of diversity and cultural richness to the Earthsea universe. Each race is granted its own distinctive traits and abilities, which are explored throughout the book. Moreover, the book presents a rich mythology and many legends that serve to flesh out the world, some further explored and others remaining allusions. Le Guin's attention to detail extends to the social customs and practices of the people of Earthsea, and these facets of Earthsea's culture are described in great detail. This level of detail enhances the reader's experience of the world and its inhabitants, and adds to its realism. Starting like the topic of geography with the people of Gont, as this is the reader's first introduction to the cultures of this world, and it being the protagonist's home. We already established Gont as an island with its unique environment, with pastures and ploughlands on an otherwise storm-racked island.

But what are the people of Gont's history and do they have their own unique culture? One of the first things mentioned about Gont, is that they are an island famous for their wizards, and that these wizards travel all over Earthsea to work their magic or to serve the Lords of the Archipelago (Le Guin 13). This is something unique to Earthsea, aiding the idea of Le Guin's world being distinct from our own, wizards do not exist in reality, but they are very much real in Earthsea. This also establishes magic as real, since you can't have wizards without magic, but more on that in later chapters. Ged's father worked as their village's bronze-smith, and his siblings either were smiths themselves, farmed the land or sailed the sea (Le Guin 13). Just using the immediate family of the main protagonist, she is displaying an islandfolk of different professions, giving the reader an impression of Gont as a self-sustaining, functioning society. The cultural descriptions we get when first introduced to these people imply that this is clearly in a pre-industrial society, with people living a more simple lifestyle, and we will touch upon why that is significant in the following chapter. Further into the first chapter, more is revealed about what the people of Gont are famous for other than the previously established wizards. When they are forced to take up arms due to being under threat by the raiding Kargs, Le Guin describes their situation as: "There had been no weapons in the village but hunting bows and short knives, for the mountain folk of Gont are not warlike; it is not warriors they are famous for, but goat-thieves, sea-pirates, and wizards (Le Guin 18). Two of their claims to fame, namely being goat-thieves and sea-pirates, aren't generally good things to be known for, but it does serve as a grounding element, and certainly enriches their cultural and historical background. They are flawed people, which makes them more interesting than if they had only been known for their exceptional wizards. It also adds some mystery and depth to their history, making it ultimately more relatable and realistic. One aspect of the quote that sticks out, is the fact that they are not warlike, and the reason is that Tolkien described the Hobbits in the same way in the prologue to Lord of the Rings; "At no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they have never fought among themselves" (Tolkien, LOTR 5). Did Le Guin intend for the island of Gont to be her version of the Shire? This unassuming and idyllic landscape of simple living among the rolling hills and pastures, with peaceful people. Both Hobbits and Gontishmen have strong ties to their communities and to traditional ways of living. Where it differs greatly is the fact that Tolkien makes it a big point that Hobbits are quite unassuming and not known for anything in the bigger

world, which is why The One Ring has been kept there undisturbed for so long. Whereas Gontishmen are quite known for several things throughout Earthsea. And unlike the Hobbits, who don't really want to leave the comfort and safety of the Shire at all, Gontishmen spread out into the world in great numbers. Despite their peaceful natures, both hobbits and the Gontishmen are threatened by outside forces that want to exploit or destroy them. In the case of the hobbits, this comes in the form of the dark lord Sauron and his evil minions, while for the Gontishmen, it is the vicious raiding forces from the Kargad Lands. At least that is the immediate threat in the beginning of the first book. Which means that their otherwise calm existence is threatened by outside forces, and something has to be done.

The greater world of Earthsea displays an array of racial diversity, both in terms of unique fantastical creatures, and between the different peoples spread around. The reader is transported to this realm of faerie and the fantastical by Le Guin's inclusion of creatures like Dragons and her own creation, the Otak. Dragons are mentioned quite a few times throughout the book, implying their existence, and how powerful they are. They speak Old Speech, the language that made the islands of the world, and is behind every spell, enchantment and invocation (Le Guin 50-51), giving the impression of this mythical, yet important, primordial being. Then there is the Otak, Le Guin's own creation. A little animal, described as a rare strange beast that are "small and sleek, with broad faces, and fur dark brown or brindle, and great bright eyes. Their teeth are cruel and their temper fierce, so they are not made pets of. They have no call or cry or any voice" (Le Guin 52). Almost opposite of how the dragons are described, in both looks and importance. Where the dragon is massive and scaly, with membranous wings, the Otak is tiny, furry and cute, apart from its cruel teeth. The fact that they are described as having no voice, not even a call or cry, is in stark contrast to that of Dragons, whose voice is basically that of magic and power. There is also the Gebbeth, a terrifying shell of a man that has been possessed by an evil shadowy creature, which we will tackle in greater detail in the Monster and Enemies chapter. However, Le Guin does not only populate her world with fantasy creatures, but include many animals from our world, the "first creation", which would be familiar to the reader. There are the goats which the people of Gont are herding, a traditional and familiar livestock. Animals that are typically found in mountainous regions, able to climb shockingly steep hills, which makes perfect sense given the geography of Gont. There are

ordinary birds like falcons, and there are fish in the sea. Having these familiar animals in a world of Dragons is quintessential to Tolkien's view on Sub-creation as being its own separate world, a part from our own, but having the consistency of reality (James, 66). A familiar, internally consistent world with elements of reality intertwined with that of the faerie. Tolkien too had dragons in his world, though primarily explored in his first book *The Hobbit*, they are frequently mentioned throughout the Lord of the Rings series as well. The dragons were but one of the many fantastical creatures inhabiting Tolkien's world. He popularised many of today's typical fantasy creatures like elves and dwarves, making them essential stock characters in modern fantasy. Both elves and dwarves existed before Tolkien, but his specific depiction of them is what dominates most of the modern fantasy genre (Clute and Grant 316). He also created all kinds of unique fantasy races and monsters, from Hobbits, Nazgûls and Orcs to the mighty Ents and Balrogs to name a few. Each with their own rich culture and historical background. Many of which have become staples of what makes up high fantasy today.

Le Guin certainly has different types of people inhabiting her world, however, they are more closely related to realistic people, than that of Tolkinian fantastical races. The protagonist of the book, and the majority of the "civilised" part of Earthsea are all humans, described as having darker, or at least more tanned skin tones. Though there are other characters described with varying coloration of skin colours throughout the story. No dwarves of the mountains or elves of the woods, but more of a different racial and ethnic background. When Ged meets someone from the East Reach, he is described as "very dark of skin, not red-brown like Ged and Jasper and most folk of the Archipelago, but black-brown" (Le Guin 44). This is also in stark contrast to Tolkien's relatively fair-skinned characters, of which much could be attributed to his world of Middle-earth being heavily influenced by Mediaeval European culture and tradition (Flieger 9). Tolkien rather generally focused on other physical attributes like height, hair and eye colour. When we first see Gandalf for instance, all we get is his rather fancy clothing, and that he is an old man with a long white beard and long, bushy eyebrows (Tolkien, LOTR 25), nothing about the colour of his skin. The fact that Le Guin incorporates a more varied colour palette when it comes to the skin colouration of the different people of Earthsea, as well as different cultural backgrounds, may help make her sub-creation feel more believable and consistent with reality. Where Tolkien had a predominantly fair-

skinned world when it comes to the good guys and heroes, the most predominant enemies of the story, the Orcs, are described as having a swart face, dark or black skin (Tolkien LOTR 325). Interestingly Le Guin has done the polar opposite in her worldbuilding. With her protagonist and the majority of the Archipelago being darker in skin colouration, and describing the enemies, the Kargs, as white-skinned and yellow-haired (Le Guin 44). But more on that in the Monsters and Enemies section.

Apart from the racial diversity, the cultural differences of Earthsea are also shown through unique social customs and practices. Such as child naming ceremonies and apprenticeships. There is an important ritual of passage described in the book, which is a unique cultural trait amongst the people of Earthsea. Though not as common these days, such rituals are quite consistent with our reality of people living in similar pre-industrial times. It is quite common that primitive cultures initiate members of their society into adulthood using such rituals (Walker 179). At the end of chapter 1, Ged goes through his ceremony of passage, where he is given his true name. When reaching 13, a witch of the village took away the name he was given by his mother as a baby, Duny, and he had to walk "nameless and naked into the cold springs of the Ar" (Le Guin 24). Once he reached the opposite bank he was given his true name, Ged, by the wizard Ogion, and "Thus was he given his name by one very wise in the uses of power" (Le Guin 24). The whole ordeal is then celebrated with food, drinks and songs. The whole naming ceremony is not just a worldbuilding tool to make the people feel more culturally developed, but it also highlights the importance of names, more specifically true names, which is a very big part of how Earthsea was created and how it functions. Another social custom would be the practice of apprenticeships, where young people learn a trade or craft and gain the skills and knowledge necessary to become skilled practitioners in their own right. It is also a way for the older generation to pass on their knowledge and expertise to the next generation, ensuring that their skills and traditions are preserved and continued into the next generation. Similar to historical systems of apprenticeship in our own world, where young people would learn a trade or skill by working under a master in that field. Ged becomes a prentice of Ogion, the wizard that named him, but had been propositioned by other magically inclined individuals before then, like the old weatherworker of the Vale who taught him several charms (Le Guin 19). Such unique social customs as these two help flesh out the cultural depth of the people of

Earthsea. The use of magic, and the role of wizard, mage or sorcerer are also unique cultural aspects of Earthsea that are also essential to Tolkien's worldbuilding. It is such a big part of the two worlds as to warrant its own chapter, and as a cultural aspect, this brief mention will have to do.

3c. Myths and legends

Tolkien incorporated great myths and legends as part of the history of Middle-earth, not only adding a feeling of historical depth to his world, but catering to his love of old legends and mythologies. When I speak of myths and legends I am referring to the way in which Clute and Grant describe the aspect of Legends in fantasy. Namely legends that are tales or events that have evolved over time to attain mythic proportions, often featuring heroic characters and actions on an epic scale. Although closely linked with folktales, legends typically surpass them in terms of the heroic scope. When a group of legends coalesce around a culture's founding stories or heroic figures, they can develop into a cohesive mythology (Clute and Grant 572). This includes all the smaller myths and legends mentioned throughout the story, but also the creation mythology of Middle-earth itself. While the creation myth is not a central focus of "The Lord of the Rings," it is an important part of the larger mythology of Middle-earth, and is referenced throughout the story as a way of providing context and depth to the world and its inhabitants. According to Clute and Grant, Tolkien recognized the importance of such legends to the beliefs of a culture's foundation, as to make it essential to any sub-creation of a secondary world (572).

Middle-earth has a deep creation myth, only referenced in *The Lord of the Rings*, but explained in detail in works like *The Silmarillion*, which I will not be going into. However, as mentioned, having a fully formed mythology around your secondary world makes it a more successful fully realised creation. Tolkien's unique creation myth of how the gods and their spirits originally sang the world into being, and all the separate smaller creations thereafter makes the world of Middle-earth feel more mystical and interesting. He called this created world Ëa in his language Quenya, which was the word spoken by Eru Ilúvatar, their God, when he created the material universe, according to the High-Elven tradition (Tyler 169). Within this mythology, there are several other smaller, but equally important lesser myths and legends that help fully flesh out this world. Tolkien had extensive myths

and legends on everything from the creation of all the fantastical species, to heroic figures of old. One such myth is that of Durin's Bane. The story of how the Dwarves of Moria dug too greedily and deep into the earth in search of mithril, a precious mineral, and uncovered something dark and evil. A Balrog of Morgoth, who subsequently killed two of their kings, the first of which was called Durin, and forced the Dwarves to flee their city, hence the name Durin's Bane (Tyler 56). The myth of a monstrous creature told to our heroes as they travel through the mines of Moria, where they ultimately have to face it themselves. This makes the legend of Durin's bane also function as a linguistic tool of foreshadowing, in addition to making the story richer. Another example would be the myths around the creation of the rings of power, including that of the One Ring. Which tells the legend of the most remarkable display of craftsmanship accomplished during the second age of this world (Tyler 543), and is essential to the story of The *Lord of the Rings*, as it is the whole reason for their current predicament. These are but two of the many myths and legends that make up the history of Middle-earth, of which there are too many to mention. And in the words of Paxson: "But before Tolkien, no writer of fantasy, not even James Branch Cabell, had ever developed quite so elaborate a backdrop for his action (Paxson 24). Not all fully elaborated on in *The Lord of the Rings*, but still present and known. To what extent Tolkien went to in order to create this backdrop wasn't fully known until further explained in works like *The Silmarillion*.

To create the illusion of a larger lived-in world, which is culturally and historically deeper than that which the reader gets to explore through the story, Tolkien also utilises the linguistic tool of allusion. A world-building tool that implies historical or cultural depth through the mentioning of figures, events and sayings that are clearly known by the characters existing in the world, but not explained any further to the reader. Their only purpose is to allude to a historical moment or person, creating the impression that his separate world, Middle-earth, seems larger than it is, and ultimately more believable as a fully realised sub-creation. Some of these allusions are to heroic figures or stories existing in this world, which adds to the medievalist heroic fantasy feel. A topic that clearly interested Tolkien, as he was a professional medievalist (James 63), a topic we explore further in the next chapter. Some of these allusions to Middle-earthian figures and events were disliked by his critics, as Edward James says when writing about how one such allusion was used when Aragorn spoke of Gandalf as being "surer of finding his way home in a blind night than the cats of Queen

Berúthiel" (James, 66). The critics didn't care for Beruthiel's cats, as it had nothing to do with the story at all, however, by including these random facts or seemingly famous characters, the world seems more complex, and in line with our reality, creating a successful fantasy world. Tyler's excerpt on Berúthiel says she was a malignant queen of Gondor, married to Tarannon, but more importantly feared for her 9 black and 1 white cat which spied for her (Tyler 85). This is not explained in the story of *The Lord of the Rings*, and it does not need to be. The whole point is that this alludes to an event, or legend even, that has happened in Middle-earth and exists inside the public knowledge of its people. Such a reference to something that exists in our world, makes Middle-earth ultimately more believable as a realistic sub-creation.

There are instances in *A Wizard of Earthsea* that show Le Guin partaking in Tolkien's use of historical allusions to create the impression of a larger, lived-in world. One such example is the myth of Erreth-Akbe, first introduced to the reader as the explanation behind why there are yellow flowers called "Sparkweed" blooming in the sunlit pastures on the island of Roke where they attend the wizard school.

> "They grow where the wind dropped the ashes of burning Ilien, when Erreth-Akbe defended the Inward Isles from the Firelord." He blew on a withered flowerhead, and the seeds shaken loose went up on the wind like sparks of fire in the sun" (Le Guin 44).

This tells of a legendary figure within Earthsea, and in the example provided here, it additionally serves as a piece of worldbuilding mythos surrounding these specific plants. A tale of a powerful wizard, in this case defeating a primordial, most probably evil being, adds to the realism of this world in the same way as say Tolkien's legends of Isildur once defeating the Dark Lord Sauron. Though given further context later, it still works towards this concept of alluding to a greater world. We later learn more about this legendary figure and how the inhabitants of the Archipelago, in Roke particularly, sing about the "long Deed of Erreth-Akbe" (Le Guin 58), about his long travels and the creation of the towers of Havnor. This figure is clearly an important cultural part of Earthsea, and exists as a myth in their common consciousness. There is also a creation myth in Le Guin's world, first hinted to in the form of a stanza of a poem as the epigraph of the book (more on that in the next

chapter). It is part of a much larger poem called "The Creation of Éa" (Le Guin 12), and as the name suggests, pertains to the myth of creation. We are told it is the oldest of all songs, and is the first thing the wizard students of Roke learn from the Master Chanter. Interestingly enough, from the same master they also learn about the "Deeds of heroes" (Le Guin 47), which means these myths and legends are integral to studying the arts of magic in Le Guin's Earthsea. What we know of the creation myth of Earthsea, from the first book alone, is that someone named Segoy raised the islands of the world using the language of Old Speech, which is also the language of Dragons, and the basis of all magic (Le Guin 50-51). Additionally, at the Island of Roke there is a mystical grove whose legend tells a tale of what can only be described as the end of the world:

> "It is said that the trees of the Grove themselves are wise. It is said that the Master Patterner learns his supreme magery there within the Grove, and if ever the trees should die so shall his wisdom die, and in those days the waters will rise and drown the islands of Earthsea which Segoy raised from the deeps in the time before myth, all the lands where men and dragons dwell." (Le Guin 73)

It tells of the undoing of what Segoy did in the creation myth, if the trees were ever to perish, a sort of doomsday myth. It has the makings of a prophecy, in a similar fashion to that of Glorfindel's prophecy about the Witch-King's death, in *The Lord of the Rings* (More on that in the magic chapter). It also says that the trees of the Grove are wise. Perhaps there is a little of Tolkien's forest of Fangorn there, and his most ancient race, living trees of the Ents (Tyler 205). It is clear Le Guin has her own fully fleshed out myth of creation, that may not be as intricate as Tolkien's, but together with her many other myths and legends, it clearly helps fully realise her vision of Earthsea as a separate world.

3d. Maps

When creating a new secondary world, having a physical representation of said world helps create an impression of depth and well thought out world-building. The reader gets to see the world that they are immersing themselves into in a picturesque way, which might add to their immersion and

understanding of the world. Additionally, the maps of Middle-earth and Earthsea support the narrative structure of the series, providing readers with a visual representation of the world that helps to orient them as the story progresses. By being able to refer back to the map throughout the series, readers can gain a better understanding of the different locations and cultures that the characters encounter, and can follow along with the story in a more immersive and engaging way. By including many locations and placenames, the writer would also allude to a larger lived-in world, with deeper history than what is necessarily explored in the written text, and therefore aids in representing a larger world. According to Tolkien Scholar Tom Shippey, in his work *The Road to Middle-earth,* the importance of plot within fiction comes second after maps, names and languages, who served as both inspiration and invention for Tolkien's worldbuilding (133). In fact, he also mentions that Tolkien once said "I wisely started with a map, and made the story fit" (114) in a previous entry.

Tolkien made several maps, the first of which were two he included in his first instalment of the series, The Hobbit. These were quite simplistic though, and did not include that many names of locations. The Lord of the Rings however, came with three highly detailed maps containing almost 600 different placenames (Shippey, The Road 114). The use of maps in the fantasy genre, according to Clute and Grant, were mainly used as an authenticating device, as well as providing a textual understanding (624). There were some maps included in prior works of fiction, but Tolkien's highly detailed maps set a new standard in the context of fantasy novels, and just like normalising a secondary world, including detailed maps of said world became equally expected in the modern fantasy genre, a notion shared by Clute and Grant on their entry on Maps (624). It is noticeably missing if absent in modern fantasy.

When first opening up Ursula K. Le Guin's book A Wizard of Earthsea, the first thing that meets the reader is a double paged map of the world of Earthsea. It is not as detailed as Tolkien's map in The Lord of the Rings, but it does show a large world with quite a few placenames. The map does include simple locations for mountains and rivers, but they are not named, nor do you get any indication of scale or depth of said features. Like Tolkien's maps, there is also a compass and scale included, providing the reader with an understanding of the world's size as well as the cardinal directions. Including these details adds to the believability of the map. A notable difference here

however, is Le Guin has included an interesting fifth direction in her compass, a direction of "Kargad", which are the lands of the bad people raiding and pillaging the good people of Earthsea. Without knowing the story, the inclusion of this fifth direction raises the question of what it means, surely it must be of great importance or danger to be included alongside the cardinal directions. By looking at the map of Earthsea, you can tell this is an archipelago-like world, with many larger and smaller islands making up the land masses in an otherwise water filled world. Giving the reader an idea of why the world is named Earthsea, through a visual representation.

Some of the placenames on Le Guin's map are English words like "the hands" and "the dragons run", clearly named so due to these islands appearance or possible history, but there are also a lot of names that are made up and don't sound English at all, like "Iffish" and "Narveduen". Knowing how important names and words were to Tolkien, and how meticulously he crafted these, the latter examples from Le Guin's map does make me think about her process behind naming, and whether or not it was equally as important to her. Many if not most of the places named on the map are not explored or mentioned at all in the story of the first book itself. Only a fraction of the map provided is explored at all. The protagonist does travel quite the distance in the story though, and by being able to look at a physical map with a scale in miles, the reader can visualise and really appreciate the distance travelled. The map of Earthsea ultimately serves a variety of purposes, helping to create a rich and detailed world that feels both complex and believable. It is an important tool for both world-building and storytelling. Though it might not be as heavily detailed as Tolkien's maps of Lord the Rings, we get the impression that this is a fully realised world.

4. Mediaevalism

Not only did Tolkien normalise the concept of a secondary world as an entirely separate creation, he also set the standard of its cultural model. As James points out, another one of his great contributions to the genre of fantasy was making the Middle Ages the default cultural model in modern fantasy settings (James 70). It is apparent when reading through *The Lord of the Rings*, that Tolkien was inspired by mediaeval tradition, from *Beowulf* to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as old norse stories, as Flieger points out in the foreword to *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval*

Reader (Turgon 9). Which should come as no surprise considering Tolkien was a professional medievalist (James 63), and being intimately familiar with a wide range of mediaeval texts. The Old English poem *Beowulf* in particular, is the work that influenced Tolkien the most, a notion shared by Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey, who even goes as far as to call it obvious (Shippey, The Road 389). His knowledge of these works were surely instrumental in his ability to adapt and transform his source material to suit his creative vision of Middle-earth. Other than clear inspirations from Beowulf, Tolkien explores several mediaeval typical motifs such as the archetypal hero's quest or journey. A common narrative structure in mythology and literature, characterised by the protagonist setting out on a quest to seek something of importance for either their own survival or of the land they inhabit. This journey takes the protagonist beyond familiar territory and into the unknown, where they are tested and ultimately deemed worthy of achieving their goal. Upon achieving their quest, the hero returns home with the object of their desire, a partner, or knowledge that will benefit themselves and their community. (Clute and Grant 796). This is best reflected in the character arc of Frodo Baggins, the main protagonist of The Lord of the Rings. Frodo's journey to destroy the One Ring echoes this structure, with Frodo facing a series of challenges and dangers as he travels through Middle-earth on this epic quest. Through which he faces trials and tribulations along the way, where he gets to display important mediaeval traits such as courage and loyalty, and ultimately emerges transformed. There are other Quest characters in the story though, like Aragorn and Gandalf, who are both integral parts of the Fellowship of the Ring. But like Auden points out, where they are on this quest because of their particular talents like strategy or leadership, Frodo, the real hero, is not. He has had this burden thrust upon him by no fault of his own, and forgoes his natural inclination to stay out of it, and because of that he becomes absolutely committed (96). Despite his literally and figuratively small stature, and complete lack of any experience or knowledge to contribute with, he displays this courage and commitment mirroring the great heroic legends of old.

The setting is further evoked through a variety of physical attributes, including weaponry, armour, and modes of transport, as well as professions, and other elements of a pre-industrial society, that are portrayed in the narrative. These features are more apparent to the reader, and serve as discernible clues for the reader to infer and construct an understanding of the mediaeval cultural and

historical contexts of Middle-earth. On the very first page of the prologue in *The Lord of the Rings*, the reader is introduced to the hobbit's simple way of living.

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

Tolkien's descriptions of this race of people transport the reader to a simple, pre-industrial little village, idyllic and untouched. A self-sufficient people that are living off the land. This rustic lifestyle is reminiscent of the feudal economy of mediaeval Europe, in which the majority of people lived a rural life of mediaeval peasants. Together with the lack of modern technology, or resistance to it, The Shire's portrayal is one of many aspects that mirror Tolkien's medievalist inspirations. Technologically speaking, his world is situated in a pre-industrial era. Although as Auden points out, the arts of mining, metallurgy, architecture, road and bridge building are highly advanced, there is a notable absence of modern technology such as firearms and mechanical modes of transportation (95). This design choice serves to root Tolkien's world in a more pastoral and traditional period, where the pace of life is slower, and the power dynamics between individuals and groups are not skewed by advanced technology. When Gandalf arrives in The Shire for Bilbo's birthday, he travels by cart (Tolkien, LOTR 24), an old mode of transport. This indicates that The Shire is not alone in the medievalist setting, and that we are indeed dealing with a separate world set in a pre-industrial time. The best display of mediaeval tradition, however, comes in the shape of the Riders of Rohan and their town in the Riddermark. Basing it on rich mediaeval tradition not only displays a wealth of knowledge on the topic, but shows Tolkien's influence by the Old English poem *Beowulf* and the early Anglo-Saxon period in general (Turgon 9). When Aragorn and what remains of his part of the fellowship runs into the Riders of Rohan, they are described as:

> "Their horses were of great stature, strong and clean-limbed; their grey coats glistened, their long tails flowed in the wind, their manes were braided on their proud necks. The Men that rode them matched them well: tall and long-limbed; their hair, flaxen-pale, flowed under

their light helms, and streamed in long braids behind them; their faces were stern and keen. In their hands were tall spears of ash, painted shields were slung at their backs, long swords were at their belts, their burnished skirts of mail hung down upon their knees." (Tolkien, LOTR 431)

The Riders of Rohan, also known as the Riders of Riddermark, or simply The Mark, are depicted as proud and beautiful knights, wearing typical mail armour as if straight out of a mediaeval society, and Tolkien is not holding back on the vivid imagery of this cavalry. Everything about the people of Riddermark is reminiscent of an Old English depiction of ancient England except for the horses, which Shippey interprets as being Tolkien's inclusion of old 'Mercia' (Shippey, The Road 139-140). One of the factors in this explanation is in the name of the land, Riddermark, where 'mark' would certainly be the Mercian's own word for what the West-Saxons called them; *Mierce*, derived from *Mearc* (Shippey, The Road 139-140). Knowing Tolkien's passion for language and its history as a philologist, this is very plausible. Everything else from the Mark, like the golden halls of Meduseld, to the individual names of their people, is straight out of Old English, and highly influenced by *Beowulf*. When our heroes first arrive at the gates of Meduseld, it is described as a great hall of Men, with golden posts and seemingly golden thatch on the roof, and "the light of it shines far over the land" (Tolkien, LOTR 507). This last line, Shippey remarks as being a direct translation of a line in *Beowulf* concerning its great hall of Heorot (Shippey, The Road 141). Additionally, our heroes are stopped by guards who insist on knowing their names and errands, and once permitted entry, they have to leave their weapons in the care of the doorwardens. Tolkien is describing proper procedure on how to approach a king, step-by-step in accordance to how this ceremonial progress was done in *Beowulf* exactly (Shippey, The Road 141), further proving the direct influence of the Old English poem and ultimately adds to the underlying mediaeval setting.

Additionally, throughout *The Lord of the Rings* there are several epic battles, which is another trait commonly associated with mediaeval literature and culture. In mediaeval literature, battles were often portrayed as grand, heroic events that acted as a vehicle to showcase the bravery, skill, and valour of the heroes, or knights and warriors that were involved. Like the Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon*, which commemorates an epic defeat of the English against the Vikings, where an

Englishman's unwavering courage was displayed in battle (Shippey, The Road 178). Big battles like these are essential for the courage of heroes to be displayed, and are a staple of mediaeval times. One such battle from *The Lord of the Rings* comes to mind, which is the battle for Helm's Deep in the second book, *The Two Towers*. Here Tolkien is depicting a massive battle in which our heroes, along with elven archers and the Riders of Rohan are forced to retreat to a stronghold in the mountains. At this location, an epic battle unfolds, where our heroes get to display their heroic courage against an overwhelming force of orcs. Similarly to *The Battle of Maldon*, where the English are told to 'hold their stead' (Shippey, The Road 94), our heroes have to hold their ground to defend all of Rohan's elderly people, women, and children that are hiding behind them. Another mediaeval aspect Tolkien incorporates throughout the series, is the use of verses, in poems and songs. These serve as vehicles for legends and myths, as a literary device that enriches the world of Middle-earth by providing additional layers of cultural and historical context, while also reflecting Tolkien's appreciation for language and the ancient poetry of the mediaeval period. They were also important as people relied more heavily on storytelling and the oral tradition to pass down their histories and beliefs. In his poetry, Tolkien engages with his readers on a distinct and meaningful level that differs from his prose. Through the use of poetic form, Tolkien connects his narrative to grand, mythical ideas, offering readers a vantage point from which they can perceive and connect with primal themes. By doing so, Tolkien's poetry not only enriches his storytelling, but also brings readers into closer contact with the ideas that are at the very heart of his work. Rather than serving as a distraction, the poetry serves as a powerful tool for enhancing readers' engagement with the narrative and its underlying primal themes (Olsen 177-180). An example Olsen uses here is the poem Aragorn chants when entering Edoras on their approach to Rohan, called "Where Now the Horse and the Rider?" (Tolkien, LOTR 508), where they are leaving these strange and alien places behind and entering the lands of Men. Where this poem provides context as our heroes are crossing a threshold, literally and narratively, and entering into a world of mortal men, and the memories of their heroic deeds (Olsen 179). These are but some of the aspects found throughout *The Lord of the Rings* that reinforce the idea that the setting of Middle-earth is a mediaeval, pre-industrial one, and provide the framework of what might be expected from later works of high fantasy.

Moving on to *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Le Guin, it is apparent she does not use poems to the same

extent as Tolkien did in his world, but she did at least have one. Before the story begins, on the opening epigraph Le Guin has the following stanza from her poem called "The Creation of Éa":

> "Only in silence the word,
>
> only in dark the light,
>
> only in dying life:
>
> bright the hawk's flight
>
> on the empty sky."
>
> (Le Guin 12)

This poem is described in the world of Earthsea as the oldest song, but does not appear in its entirety in the first book. It is used to introduce the reader to the mythology and cosmology of Earthsea right away. This particular stanza does however appear again towards the end of the story, once our hero defeats the main antagonist of the story, Vetch, Ged's friend and ally on this final journey of his quest, sings the song aloud as they sailed back home triumphantly (Le Guin 166). Ending the story the way it began, with the same poem. The only other mention of the song happens during Ged's training at Roke, the school for wizards, where it is said "he studied with the Master Chanter, learning the Deeds of heroes and the Lays of wisdom, beginning with the oldest of all songs, *The Creation of Éa*" (Le Guin 47). It tells the creation myth of Earthsea, and is clearly very important in a world that is essentially based on words as magical. It serves as a kind of foreshadowing to the story, which the reader will not understand until it is repeated again at the end. The stanza speaks of opposites, and how they need each other. These contrasting pairs of words and concepts purports to the idea of balance and harmony. Quite similar to Ged's realisation that he wasn't whole without the shadow to his light, which he regains at the end. In the same manner as Tolkien used poetry to connect his narrative to grand, mythical ideas, this too offers the readers a vantage point from which they can perceive and connect with this world. It also sets the tone for the book and emphasises the themes of balance, harmony, and the natural cycles of life and death that are central to the world of the series, along with it possibly being a nod to the mediaeval roots of the genre.

On the other aspects of Tolkien's mediaevalism, we learn on the very first page of the story that Ged has a father that works as their village's bronzesmith (Le Guin, 13), which tells us we are most probably dealing with a preindustrial setting in this world. Bronze is not a very common material used in modern times, and the same can be said of the manual profession of smithing. Coupled with the information that we are in a society ruled by Lords, told through the introduction of Ged's home village being known for their wizards serving in the cities of "the Lords of the Archipelago" (Le Guin, 13), and that their village has pastures and ploughlands, and children herding goats. We can gather right away that we are dealing with a more primitive, possibly mediaeval inspired setting. It most certainly is not set in a contemporary setting, seen from our world's point of view. Their way of living is very reminiscent of how we are first introduced to the hobbits in *Lord of the Rings*, with both areas being described as simple farmland as previously mentioned in the sub-creation chapter. This prevalence of agriculture and manual labour is a good indication of the setting being pre-industrial. Most people in the archipelago at large live in small, self-sufficient communities, where farming and other forms of manual labour are the primary means of subsistence. Additionally, and one of the more obvious indications that it is set in a pre-industrial world is the absence of modern technology. There are no machines or similar other technology in the book, and transportation is largely limited to walking, riding on horses or using boats. The latter being very prevalent, unsurprisingly when the world is more or less a giant archipelago. Boats are the people of Earthsea's most common mode of transport, and they are either sailboats, or rowboats, like in the case of "Shadow", the rowboat Ged sails on in chapter 2, aptly named after the boat. When it is about to embark on its journey towards Roke, "great oars shot rattling out, fifteen to a side. The rowers bent their strong backs while a lad up beside the master beat the stroke of a drum" (Le Guin 34-35). A primitive boat that runs either by manpower, or wind in the sails. We are told that the Wizards of this world that were trained at the wizard school of Roke, "went commonly to cities or castles, to serve high lords who held them in high honor" (Le Guin 77). This notion of having a hierarchical society of high lords that rule the different islands is similar to a typical mediaeval feudal system. And in this hierarchical system, it is said that the wizards are held in "high honour", but still subservient to the lords. Which makes sense when it seems the wizards too are referred to as lords some times, perhaps because of their knowledge or education, like in the instance of Ged

speaking to the Isle-Men of Low Torning which he had been tasked to protect. They refer to him as "sir", "my lord", "Lord Wizard" and "Lord Sparrowhawk" (Le Guin 80), and speak to him as though he was of a higher class. Either way, this whole notion of a clear hierarchical feudal system is very mediaeval.

Other physical attributes that hint towards the setting of Earthsea can be found in the description of clothing or armour. They are often described as wearing cloaks and robes, like in the case of the merchants Ged met at the harbour wearing "furred robes" and "a red cloak trimmed with pellawi-fur" (Le Guin 34). And in the case of the lords or higher classes, we get a description of how they clothed Ged once he woke up in Osskil: "he saw himself clothed in a tunic of silk and cloth-of-silver like a lord. On a chair beside the bed, boots of glove-leather and a cloak lined with pellawi-fur were laid ready for him" (Le Guin 104). Although a more luxurious and higher quality garment, it is still painting a typically mediaeval look. Overall, the clothing worn by the people of Earthsea is practical, comfortable, and designed primarily for function rather than fashion, though there is also a sense of elegance and craftsmanship to the clothing, particularly in the robes worn by wizards. The latter usually being either black, white or grey in colouration. The fact that the fabric used for the majority of their clothing is wools and furs, further cements this notion of a more primitive agricultural lifestyle. When the town of Ten Alders is under attack by the Kargs we are given further clues of a mediaeval setting, first with the types of weaponry and armour they are wielding. The villagers, not being a warlike people as we have previously established, only had "hunting bows and short knives" and had to fashion their own "new-forged spears" out of hastily made spear-points fashioned onto handles of farm equipment like hoes and rakes (Le Guin 18). Their attackers, the Kargs, however, were described as being "armored with bronze helmets and greaves and breastplates of heavy leather and shields of wood and bronze, and armed with swords and the long Kargish lance" (Le Guin 19). They are properly equipped for battle, unsurprisingly seeing as they are the attacking force, which give us a further understanding of what type of weaponry and armour they were supposed to use in a battle. The fact that they are all wearing mostly bronze is internally consistent with the fact that there are town bronze-smiths like Ged's father, and confirms that it is not only the people of Gont that live this primitively. This type of mediaeval equipment and warfare helps underline the setting.

This battle, although brief, does also constitute an epic battle between the good guys and the bad guys, where the hero of the story gets to show his courage and cunning. Just like in the battle of Helm's Deep in *The Lord of the Rings*, our hero is facing an overwhelming force of enemies. They only have eighteen men and boys defending the town against about a hundred invading heavily armed Kargs (Le Guin 19). In terms of scale it is nothing compared to Helms Deep, but it is similar in that in both stories the hero is vastly outnumbered, defending their home against an outside force. This provides a vehicle for our protagonist to showcase his courage, a very positive trait in mediaeval times, and in the case of Earthsea, it also further familiarises the reader to the magic of Earthsea, with the use of weathermagic. It creates this heroic legend of Ged, "the lad who wove the fog and scared off Kargish swordsmen with a mess of shadows" (Le Guin 22). A heroic legend is a popular mediaeval concept, as the time of Old English was filled with legends of heroic men (Tolkien, Beowulf 10). By overcoming this trial and saving his village, the word of his heroic deed spreads far and sets the events in motion that allows him to become a powerful wizard. This segues nicely into the concept of Ged as embarking on a heroic quest. In a similar manner as Frodo from *The Lord of the Rings*, Ged starts his journey at home, in a comfortable and peaceful idyllic place, and is thrust out into the world on a quest to defeat an evil force. Whereas Frodo is forced to leave his comforts on the threat of death by the ringwraiths, Ged leaves home in the search for more knowledge, knowledge to become a more powerful wizard. Though Ged too travels beyond familiar fields and goes through several challenges on his way towards reaching his goal. He travels to many of Earthsea's islands, on opposite sides of the map, and even enters places unknown. A secondary aspect of the quest that seems to fit Ged's journey even better, is the internal quest. This internal search is characterised by the protagonist engaging in a rite of passage, often involving a series of trials and tribulations that test their resolve and fortitude. Through this process of self-discovery, the protagonist emerges as a more fully integrated person, possessing newfound knowledge and understanding of themselves and their place in the world. In some cases, the protagonist may even become a magus or shaman, embodying the spiritual and metaphysical principles that underpin their journey of self-discovery, and emerges a more fully integrated person (Clute and Grant 796). Clute and Grant's use of the word "Magus" here is especially fitting, as its meaning often converges with Magician, seer, sorcerer and wizard (619). In a sense Ged does embark on a search for knowledge,

either to train as a wizard, or to learn how to defeat this monster he let loose on the world. And it does in fact end with a sort of self-realisation, and healing of himself and the world. He becomes whole again, or as Clute and Grant would put it: "a more fully integrated person" (796). Though quests were a popular literary device in mediaeval literature, it is also a staple of fantasy literature in general.

On the topic of the Kargs, the savage outsiders that attacked Ged's hometown, fit another less-imitated archetypal mediaeval character; The Wild Man. In his work *Tolkien's Wild Men*, Flieger describe this type of character as: "The Wild Man is the archetypal outsider, the prowler on the borderlands between the wild and tame, exiled either by his fellow men or by his own misanthropy" (Flieger 95). Traditionally a more bestial were-beast, often hairy and big, or simply a mediaeval outlaw. Flieger draws the comparison between the mediaeval Wild Men and several of Tolkien's characters, mainly forest trolls, wood-elves, outlaws, shape-changers like Beorn and the most obvious, Ghân-Buri-Ghân (Flieger 99-100). The latter even being referred to as part of the Wild Men in the story when the Rohirrim run into him on their way to defend Minas Tirith (Tolkien, LOTR 831). The Wild Men of Tolkien come in all kinds of varieties. Creatures living outside of civilization, at the fringes both physically and psychologically.

Another one of the aspects of the Wild Men Flieger mentions is one of madness, and being bereft of one's rational mind (Flieger 105). This ties together with the magic of Middle-earth, as it is so often one of corruption and power of mind. The One Ring corrupts the mind of the wearer, or sometimes those close to it. Even Frodo himself, who is told to have a natural resistance to its powers, succumbs to its power towards the end, and enters a kind of madness. The powers of the ring manages to corrupt Frodo completely, possibly realising it is about to be destroyed, or perhaps it was Frodo himself who simply wasn't ready to let it go. Either way, Frodo is overcome by madness and refuses to go through with the quest he had been on for so long, and only returns to normal once Gollum has bitten his ring-finger off. "And there was Frodo, pale and worn, and yet himself again; and in his eyes there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear. His burden was taken away" (Tolkien, LOTR 947). He displayed characteristics of the Wild Man in his madness, and was turning into more of a creature like Gollum, who himself displays many of the characteristics attributed to the mediaeval Wild Man. The story has many encounters with people

being overcome by temporary madness due to the corrupting powers of the One Ring. Through these characters, and the other attributes of the Wild Man displayed throughout, Tolkien turns this mediaeval stock character of the Wild Man into a more modern and timeless figure (Flieger 105). Now back onto the Kargish people of Earthsea, I mentioned briefly they too exhibited traits of the mediaeval Wild Man. They do this primarily in that they are described as being fierce, savage people, "liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns" (Le Guin 18). They also lived outside the boundaries of the civilised Archipelago, outsiders, fitting many characteristics. They are perhaps more similar to another example of mediaeval Wild Man Flieger bring up, the battle-map berserkers (Flieger 98). Something that also fits with their whole viking aesthetic. Like Tolkien and his corrupting madness, Le Guin incorporates similar traits through the stone of Terrenon, and the Gebbeth that takes over Skiorh's body. But more on that in the coming chapters, as it is integral to the magical and monstrous.

5. Magic and Wizards

At the core of the fantasy genre lies the fundamental assumption that magic is possible, a concept that is central to the imaginative worlds and narratives created by authors within this genre. Indeed, the nature and scope of the magic that exist in these worlds often plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative, influencing both the actions of the characters and the events that unfold throughout the story. As such, the treatment and portrayal of magic within the world of fantasy represents a critical aspect of the genre's storytelling, one that has the potential to shape the reader's experience of the narrative (Clute and Grant 616). Magic is a staple of fantasy, and is naturally prevalent in both Tolkien's and Le Guin's worlds. It is not one of the aspects of Fantasy invented or necessarily popularised by Tolkien, but his use of magic was not the typical whimsical magic found in children's fantasy, and was surely part of his efforts of making fantasy more catered for adults. But let us take a closer look into how the magic of Middle-earth functions, who or what has magical powers, and in what way if any, that may have influenced the magic of Earthsea.

In Lord of the Rings, magic is depicted as a powerful force that exists within the world, but it is not

always visible or easily understood. It is often found in songs and words, made by someone that has magic within which is either evil or good. Clute and Grant describe Tolkien's magic as magic being present in a person or an object, either as good as in Gandalf, or evil like in Sauron or his One Ring (616). This magic is part of them because they are higher beings called Maiar, which are essentially angels or divine spirits. And their magic is usually either good or evil, light or dark, and is further embedded into trinkets of their making like the rings of power in Sauron's case. Magic manifests itself in several ways throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, and is often associated with the natural world, such as the power of the wizards to command the elements, or the healing power of the elves. Magic is not just a matter of incantations or spells, but is an integral part of the world itself. The most common ways magic is shown throughout the story is through artefacts like the rings of power, mainly the One Ring which the entire quest revolves around, magical weapons and trinkets, as well as the wizard Gandalf's magical displays.

One of the major ways magic is displayed in Middle-earth is as an evil force, ultimately tied back to the Dark Lord Sauron. This evil, or dark magic is mainly one of corruption, terror, and controlling of the minds of others. It is shown through the twisted, monstrous creatures residing in the land of Mordor, closest to the source of the evil sorcery, as well as through the wizard Saruman and the ringwraith's supernatural ability to dominate people with terror. The most prevalent corrupting force however, is displayed through the powers of the rings of power, primarily the One Ring, this magical artefact created by Sauron himself, and containing some of his power and essence. As Gandalf describes it first: "He only needs the One; for he made that Ring himself, it is his, and he let a great part of his own former power pass into it, so that he could rule all the others" (Tolkien, LOTR 51). At first the ring seems like it only extends the life of the wearer, and makes them invisible, as is the case of Bilbo when he disappears from his birthday party, but through Gandalf we learn of its true nature and power. Not even Gandalf dare touch it as he claims he would gain "power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly" (Tolkien, LOTR 61). This implies two things, the fact that Gandalf is very powerful, even more than the ring itself, but even he would succumb to its corruption. There are several instances throughout the story of people displaying the corrupting effects of the One Ring. There is Gollum, a creature completely consumed by its corruption after being the previous owner of the ring for too

long. Another one would be Boromir, who is a noble man, and part of the Fellowship of the Ring, who is consumed by his desire to have the ring for himself, to use its power to stop Sauron. The ring tempts him with the fantasy of power as Harris would say (Harris 47). He becomes temporarily mad to the point of attacking Frodo and forcing him to flee. There are other magical artefacts, or talismans as Paxson would refer to them as, like this One Ring, throughout the story, such as magical blades, staffs and more (Paxson 24). This element of the talisman is one of the many concepts of traditional fantasy writing Tolkien, as he would call it, has added to his stew in the cauldron of story.

Another aspect of the Tolkien tradition that is also part of this stew, is the archetypal character of the wizard. The figure of a wizard has existed a while of course, but his use of the magic-wielding wizard may have helped codify the trope of this archetypal figure, and what is expected from this type of figure in a high fantasy setting. From reading *The Lord of the Rings* alone, very little is known about the wizards in this world. There are several people exhibiting magic in the world of Middle-earth, like the immortal elves, but the most prominent wizard figure from the books is that of Gandalf, the old wise man. He is first described as an old man carrying a wooden staff, wearing "a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, and a silver scarf. He had a long white beard and bushy eyebrows that stuck out beyond the brim of his hat" (Tolkien, LOTR 25). This image of an old, wise man in robes and a pointy hat has been ingrained into what is expected in today's archetypal wizard.

Gandalf's magical powers aren't a result of study, he gets his magical powers from basically being a lesser god-like spirit, sent to Middle-earth to contest Sauron, as mentioned in the appendix at the end of the book:

> "When maybe a thousand years had passed, and the first shadow had fallen on Greenwood
> the Great, the *Istari* or Wizards appeared in Middle-earth. It was afterwards said that they
> came out of the Far West and were messengers sent to contest the powers of Sauron, and to
> unite all those who had the will to resist him; but they were forbidden to match his power
> with power, or to seek to dominate Elves or Men by force and fear" (Tolkien, LOTR 1084).

He is described as a messenger from the Far West, meaning he was sent from Valinor, the Undying Lands where the gods are from. In Quenya, which is the name of the original high elven language, "Valinor" simply means the land of the Valar, and "Valar" means "power, God, or angelic power" (Fauskanger 144). It is said here that Gandalf is part of the Istari, which are themselves Maiar, lesser Valar, meaning he is part of the lesser gods or powers of this world (Fauskanger 69). Meaning his magic is that of a primal one, granted through his connection to the divine, and not learned. Though he is forbidden to match Sauron's power with his power, we do get to see some of his magic in various forms throughout the story. One ability he has is to make himself appear taller and menacing, and filling the room with shadows, like he did to Bilbo at the beginning of the first book. A display perhaps of the powers of his true self, making his presence felt. Another ability he displays is to conjure bright light, both to illuminate the darkness, but also to repel monsters. The power of this light is shown when Gandalf uses it against the black riders during the siege of Gondor, in the chapter of the same name:

> "At that moment he caught a flash of white and silver coming from the North, like a small star down on the dusky fields. It moved with the speed of an arrow and grew as it came" (Tolkien, LOTR 809).

> "it seemed to Pippin that he raised his hand, and from it a shaft of white light stabbed upwards. The Nazgûl gave a long wailing cry and swerved away" (Tolkien, LOTR 810).

During this scene Gandalf repels the attacking black riders, flying on their fell beasts, using his light. Light overcoming the darkness. These Nazgûl have magical powers as well, and it speaks volumes of Gandalf's powers as he gets all of them to back off. The use of light to repel darkness is also on brand for a character that is analogous to that of an angelic being. During his fight against the Balrog, he described himself as "a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor" (Tolkien, LOTR 330), which coincidentally makes perfect sense when much of his magic is conjuring light and fire. He is shown to light wet wood on fire with the touch of his staff, emit light from his staff to see in the dark, and launches fire and light against his attackers like versus the black riders and the Balrog. There is also an instance of Gandalf exhibiting the ability of foresight,

when he tells Frodo he believes Gollum still has a part to play, "he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or for ill" (Tolkien, LOTR 58). This ability of foresight is a great foreshadowing of what is to come, and it is consistent with the narrative of this world being one of prophecies as well. An example of prophecies coming true would be Glorfindel's claim about the witch-king's death, found in the appendices: "Far off yet is his doom, and not by the hand of man will he fall" (Tolkien, LOTR 1051), which is fulfilled when he is destroyed by Éowyn of Rohan, a woman, after claiming he could not be hindered by no living man. Other than his ability of foresight and spells, Gandalf has another trait, that may or may not be magical in nature, which is his command and friendship to animals like the giant eagles, and Shadowfax, the fastest of all horses. In fact, the giant eagle Gwaihir the Windlord saved Gandalf from atop Orthanc, Saruman's tower, after he spoke to him. Saruman, who himself is also one of the Istar, shares a similar control over animals as he sends out regiments of black crows called "Crebain" to spy out the land for him.

Although he falls into the category of the archetypal wizard, Gandalf just as importantly serves another purpose in the narrative, that of a mentor figure to the main protagonist Frodo. He helps Frodo namely because he is so wise, and guides him on his way. He is called wise, or part of the Wise ones at many occasions, and many great people of Middle-earth acknowledge him as such. Other than people acknowledging his wisdom, Gandalf provides the reader with several memorable wise sayings throughout the story. One such saying is what he says to the hobbits as he and Frodo are about to leave for Valinor: "I will not say: do not weep; for not all tears are an evil" (Tolkien, LOTR 1030). Another example that deals directly with wisdom would be when he speaks to Saruman and says: "And he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (Tolkien, LOTR 259), and there are many more like them throughout the books. Tolkien expertly proves his wizard as a wise man, instead of only relying on telling the reader. To go back to the topic of language and the meaning of words, according to etymology online, the word "wizard" means "wise one" from Middle English (Harper). A fact that Tolkien correctly attributes to his rendition of the archetypal wizard figure. Furthermore, the other word used to describe Gandalf "Istar", as previously mentioned from the quote of his origins, also means "wizard" in Quenya. "Ista" means "knowledge" or "to know" (Fauskanger 53). Which means Tolkien incorporated the

same history and depth of the word into his own fantasy language.

Moving on to Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, where magic is even more integral to the story's world-building and character development, and is definitely more present. The protagonist, Ged, is in fact himself a powerful wizard who is both skilled in magic and capable of using it to great effect. Moreover, the entire story of this book revolves around Ged's journey to master magic, and his attempts to remedy the consequences of his misuse of it. Le Guin's portrayal of magic in the novel emphasises its complexity, its power, and its potential for both good and evil. She depicts magic as an integral part of the natural world, woven into the fabric of Earthsea's landscapes, cultures, and traditions. At the same time, she shows how magic can be used to manipulate and control others, and how it can have unintended consequences that can be difficult to undo. Our first encounter with magic occurs already on the second page of the story, where the main protagonist Ged observes his aunt attempting to get a goat down from the roof of a hut, and it only came jumping down once she cried out unfamiliar words with a certain rhyme to them. Then on the very next day he copies the words he heard, and shouts them towards some goats he was herding.

> "Noth hierth malk man
>
> Hulk han merth han!" (Leg Guin 14)

It works, but Ged gets cocky and shouts again, making them uncomfortably close, and tries to get away to no avail. But his aunt sees it and calls out another word to release them. This clearly impressed her, as she is said to have seen that "he must have in him the makings of power (Le Guin 15). By using words said in a certain rhyme, Ged was able to perform magic without any prior knowledge. This, coupled with the fact that his Aunt, a witch, is impressed by him, tells the reader that there is something special about our protagonist. It also tells us something about the nature of magic in the world of Earthsea, that it is tied up with language, and the use of specific words. The rhyme provided is also clearly in a made up language, being reminiscent of Tolkien's own idea of making his own languages.The notion that Ged is someone special is further cemented when he shows some resistance against his Aunt's binding spell. She tried to bind his promise not to speak the words she was going to teach him, to other children, and in doing so take away his voice.

However he managed to still laugh, prompting fear in his aunt, as this was apparently "as strong a spell as she knew how to weave" (Le Guin 16). Ged then proceeds to learn several spells and words from the witch, as well as weatherworkers and magically inclined passersby. Clearly magic is quite common, and a big part of this world. It is also a learned craft, as opposed to Tolkien's more innate powers. Quite a different system of magic. Magic is in a way institutionalised, as there is a magical school for wizards which Ged attends.

The magic of Le Guin's world is rooted in the power of true names, an invisible force that allows its practitioners to effect meaningful transformations both in the world of the senses and in the otherworldly realm. This type of magic is characterised by its emphasis on knowledge and the ability to use language in a precise and intentional manner, tapping into the fundamental nature of the universe itself. By invoking the true names of objects and entities, magic users are able to exert their will upon the world, affecting both the physical realm and the metaphysical forces that govern the universe. She calls this magical language "True Speech" or sometimes "Old Speech", and as taught to Ged by the master Namer of the wizard school of Roke:

> "That is the language dragons speak, and the language Segoy spoke who made the island of the world, and the language of our lays and songs, spells, enchantments, and invocations" (Le Guin 50-51).

This speaks volumes of the power of a language. Everything in this world is made up of this language, and it is through knowledge of said language the wizards can control or change the world. The very fact that wizards of Earthsea attend a wizard school to learn magic, is akin to what Filonenko would describe as a typical western world mode of magic. As within the Western world, the concept of magic is strongly associated with the Western esoteric tradition, often referred to as "learned magic" due to its emphasis on rigorous study and intellectual practice. This form of magic is predicated on knowledge of ancient and secret languages, requiring its practitioners to engage in extensive study and learning in order to master the complex systems and practices that underpin its workings. Unlike some other forms of magic, it does not rely on innate abilities or talent, but rather on the development of a strong intellect and a deep desire to learn and work hard. This approach to magic highlights the importance of knowledge and intellectual rigour, offering a pathway to mastery

that is both demanding and highly rewarding for those who pursue it. Through its focus on the Western esoteric tradition, this form of magic remains an enduring and influential aspect of Western culture and mythology, offering a powerful lens through which to explore the nature of knowledge, power, and the human experience (Filonenko 31). This is very different from that of Tolkien's use of magic, which is not an intellectual practice at all. His mode of magic is closer to what Tolkien would call the innate magic of Faërie, described by Filonenko as non-human magical beings' inherent magical powers (Filonenko 34). Which is a type of magic where everything is possible, but more importantly is not a learned endeavour. This is not the case for the majority of beings in Earthsea, but it is the magic of her dragons. For the people of Earthsea, magic is a supernatural force that is channelled through the use of Old Speech, a powerful language with the ability to shape the very fabric of reality. But also spells spoken in Hardic runes, though they are considered to be of lesser potency and effectiveness when compared to the raw power of Old Speech. Just like with all things in this world having a true name in Old Speech, so do the people, and knowing one's name gives you power over them.

Magic is distinctly different in the two worlds, but there are certain aspects of Tolkien's use of magic that piqued my interest as I explored *A Wizard of Earthsea*. One such concept is that of corruption akin to Tolkien's One Ring, magically tempting a creature with the promise of power, or the controlling of one's mind. In Earthsea there is such a magical artefact called the Terrenon, which Ged encounters in the land of Osskil. This stone contains an ancient spirit that promises great power if only Ged touches it and asks it a question, which is a real challenge and a turning point for Ged, as he is searching for more knowledge and power. However, he resists the temptation, and realises he had been drawn to this place, lured by dark powers. Another artefact, or talisman as Paxson would call it (Paxson 24), that is in line with some of Tolkien's, is that of the wizard staff or the magical sword. The staff is an important part of a wizard in both worlds, and they are weakened without their staff. There is also talk of a sword that can fight shadows in Earthsea, a motif of a sword with magical properties, which is quite a prominent artefact in Tolkien's world, from the glowing Sting to the Morgul Blade.

Additionally, Ged exhibits a control and connection to animals in a similar manner as the wizards of Middle-earth. There are several occasions where Ged interacts or controls other animals by

knowing their true name, or straight out transforms himself into one like when he escaped the Terrenon as a hawk (Le Guin 115). Like Gandalf being saved by a creature of faërie, namely the giant eagle, so too does Ged. When he lay stiff and unmoving, spirit-lost, after expending all his powers trying to save Pechvarry's child with magic, it is only by his pet Otak instinctively comforting him that he is able to come back to life (Le Guin 82).

On the topic of wizards, this archetypal figure is featured prominently in Le Guin's works, which should come as no surprise considering they are named in the title of the first book. However, it seems Le Guin has done away with the Tolkien shaped archetypal wizard, of the old, white-bearded man with pointy hat, and made it her own. She has reinterpreted this all too familiar archetypal figure, as Paxson would say (Paxson 25), from being associated solely with Tolkien's imagery of the old man with supernatural innate powers of faërie. Le Guin expanded this one fantasy character trope into a whole world, providing a detailed backdrop of what it means to not just be, but become a wizard. It is no longer just inherited supernatural powers of faërie, but part of a learned craft of knowledge that incorporates science and art. Like Tom Shippey elegantly says; "A mage, then, is knowledgeable, like a scientist; but his knowledge needs to be combined with personal genius, a quality we tend to ascribe to artists" (Shippey, Magic Art 188). Like any learned craft, one needs an institution or system in place to acquire such knowledge, which is why Le Guin has incorporated a school for wizards, and the possibility of apprenticeships under a master wizard. This according to Filonenko, makes Le Guin the establisher of a new fantasy tradition; schools of magic (Filonenko 36). Here the aspiring wizard can learn of magic and knowledge, which as we established are one and the same in the world of Earthsea. As part of Le Guin's take on magic as an intermingling of science with Tolkien's faërie, she also expands on the unique properties of magic. There is not just good and evil, or light and dark magic, but a plethora of different categories inside Le Guin's hierarchical system of magic, called arts of magic. Some examples being: finding, binding, shaping, summoning, human healing, weatherworking and many more, all in a type of hierarchy of occult sciences as Filonenko calls it (Filonenko 37). Le Guin also expanded on what it meant to be a wizard, or a mage, which is used as more of an umbrella turn of people using magic. The world of Earthsea has many different kinds of mages, ranging from: spellwrights, spellsmiths, tellers, chanters, healalls, herbalists, sorcerers, weatherworkers, witches and wizards, and possibly even

more. These are practitioners of different arts of magic, or in the case of witches, simply a female practitioner of magic. This all culminates in a rich universe, containing its own unique system of magic and mages.

There is one wizard in Earthsea that seems a little more familiar to Tolkien's tradition though, and that is Ogion. Ogion is the first proper wizard we encounter in the story of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and he appears to give the protagonist Ged his proper name, and offer him apprenticeship. He is first introduced as "Brother, this must surely be the Mage of Re Albi, Ogion the Silent, that one who tamed the earthquake" (Le Guin 23). Clearly a wizard of some renown. His physical appearance is described as "a man neither you nor old, who came cloaked and bareheaded, lightly carrying a great staff of oak that was as tall as himself" (Le Guin 23), and "He was a dark man, like most Gontishmen, dark copper-brown; grey haired, lean and tough as hound, tireless" (Le Guin 25). The comparison to Tolkien's Gandalf is an easy one, he is an older (though not considered particularly old, he is compared to Ged), grey haired wizard with a large wooden staff, and he arrives at the protagonist's home to help him in some manner. There is no mention of a long beard, and Le Guin makes it a point to mention he is bare-headed, as if she purposely tries to distinguish Ogion from that of the traditional archetypal pointy hatted wizard of Tolkien. Why else would she mention that, when nobody else has been introduced as not having any headwear. He is also darker in complexion, like most people of the Archipelago, which further differentiates him from said archetype. He does however serve as a kind of mentor figure to Ged, and is the one that prompts him to leave his home in the first place, in a similar manner to what Gandalf did for Frodo. Harris makes a similar observation, which is that Ogion serves a role that is analogous to that of Tolkien's Gandalf, and like him, Ogion is a powerful and wise wizard, but chooses not to flaunt his abilities, instead prioritising the fostering of Ged's awareness of the natural world (Harris 53). This approach reflects a deep understanding and commitment to the preservation of the natural world, and puts Ogion's wisdom on display. This image of the wizard as wise, is also a shared notion of Le Guin's, and she understands the importance of the meaning of language and its history. She makes it a point to also describe wizards as being very wise, and even calls the island of which her wizard school is located "Isle of the Wise" (Le Guin 32). Ogion's wisdom is also displayed through several wise sayings, such as "To hear, one must be silent" (Le Guin 26), further enhancing this Tolkinian image

of the wise wizard mentor image. Although Ged leaves Ogion to join the school of wizards, because he does not realise the importance of his teachings, he later returns for his help and guidance. Ged's mages journey, as Filonenko would call it, has him following a path of descending initiation, and where he needs help, which often comes in the form of returning to the starting point (Filenko 40). And for Ged this comes in the form of his old teacher, Ogion, where he receives the aid he requires. This reunion between student and mentor is a pivotal moment in the narrative, as Ged had previously defied Ogion at the start of his journey, driven by pride and disobedience (Filonenko 41). Through this turn of events, Le Guin crafts a powerful narrative of redemption and reconciliation, as Ged must confront the consequences of his earlier actions and learn to overcome his flaws and shortcomings in order to succeed in his quest.

There is a particular scene where Ogion is described with eerily similar imagery as Gandalf, and immediately invoked the image of Gandalf in my mind. It occurs when Ged is foolishly reading about summoning the dead in an ancient book, and finds himself in darkness, being approached by a scary shadowy creature.

> "The door was flung wide. A man entered with a white light flaming about him, a great bright figure who spoke aloud, fiercely and suddenly. The darkness and the whispering ceased and were dispelled. (...) for it was Ogion the Mage who stood there in the doorway with a brightness all about him, and the oaken staff in his hand burned with a white radiance" (Le Guin 31).

This imagery of light defeating the darkness, much like Gandalf's light repelling the Nazgûl or Balrog. This notion is further enhanced by his staff burning with a white radiance, and that the white light was flaming. Very reminiscent of Gandalf's magical displays. The fact that Ogion keeps saving Ged is a recurring theme throughout the story, and it takes Ged a while to understand and appreciate the value of his advice and wisdom. And he is always this reliable mentor figure there ground Ged, or to save the day.

6. Language and names

Tolkien was a staunch philologist who taught both Old and Middle English, as well as the history of the English language (Shippey, The Road 6). This naturally means he was fascinated by the languages of the past, and what it could tell you about the way people thought in those times. A part of Tolkien that Shippey also dedicated a lot of time talking about in *The Road to Middle-earth*, and that is also evident in the names, and languages within the Lord of the Rings itself. To Tolkien, language and words came before anything else, as is apparent from his quote to the American publishers, and from his *Letters*: "The "stories" were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse" and "To me a name comes first and the story follows" (James, 63). These are quotes that give a great insight into his world-building process and speaks volumes to his opinion on the importance of words and language in the story. Tolkien's mastery of the nominative gift, the art of selecting the perfect names for characters and places in a literary work, is unparalleled by any writer, past or present, that W. H. Auden has encountered (95). In a humorous setting, finding suitable names can prove challenging enough, but in a serious one, the task can seem almost magical. Not only does Tolkien display an exceptional aptitude for naming characters and places, but he also demonstrates the ability to construct entire languages that reflect the nature and character of their speakers. An example used by Auden for instance, is the Ents, who are sentient trees with consciousness and the ability to speak, speak a language that mirrors the tempo and rhythms of the natural world. Their language is described as "slow, sonorous, agglomerated, repetitive, indeed long-winded," reflecting their status as arboreal beings that live at the pace of trees (95).

As part of his worldbuilding, Tolkien created whole languages. There are many languages mentioned throughout the story, however, Tolkien only fully developed two of them. Namely Quenya and Sindarin. Quenya is the name of Tolkien's oldest language, and translates to simply "The Speech", also referred to as Ancient Speech, and is mainly spoken by the High-Elves of Middle-earth (Tyler 526). While Sindarin on the other hand, is the language spoken by Grey-elves and the Dúnedain, the latter of which translates to Man-of-the-West in Sindarin (Tyler 587). These are both fully functional, and developed languages, which says a lot about Tolkien's dedication to worldbuilding. In addition, there is a history of these languages changing, and having derivatives,

just like the languages of our reality. The same can be said of the Alphabet of Daeron, which is the name given to the first runes used in written language (Tyler 11). They too change over time, and get mixed with other letters like the Fëanorian and Rúmil alphabets (Tyler 12). This just goes to show the amount of incredible detail Tolkien gives to the languages of Middle-earth. These types of runes are encountered at several occasions throughout the story, and if inscribed onto something, often carries with it magical properties as well, as is the case with the Doors of Durin into Moria. The doors had some writing above them, of which only Gandalf was able to read. They were written in Feänorian characters, in the "elven-tongue of the West of Middle-earth in the Elder days" (Tolkien, LOTR 306). The text is a riddle, where the answer was the Sindarin word for friend; "Mellon". Once spoken, the door magically opens. Interestingly, Gandalf says "these doors are probably governed by words" (Tolkien, LOTR 306), meaning it is by the magical powers of language that keeps this door shut, and by speaking the right word it will open. There are other instances of written languages being used to magically affect, or enchant, physical objects. The One Ring for instance, has a magical script written on it that only appears if placed in fire, translated into the common tongue it says the well known phrase:

> "One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
> One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them" (Tolkien, LOTR 50).

This was wrought by Sauron, and created to rule over all the other rings he helped the Elves create during the Second age, and it was given this power over the other Rings of Power by these words spoken in the Black Speech of Mordor by Sauron, when he repeated the Ring-spell (Tyler 544). The power of the language is further enhanced by Gandalf saying to Frodo when he first sees the writing upon the One Ring: "The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode, but the language is that of Mordor, which I will not utter here" (Tolkien, LOTR 50). That fact that Gandalf the wise wizard acknowledges the language as not fit for utterance while in the Shire, says something about the power it holds. On the next page Gandalf repeats the notion that speaking of such dark things could be bad, as he says to Frodo: "We will not speak of such things even in the morning of the Shire" (Tolkien, LOTR 51). Even in such an idyllic and safe place as the Shire, and the morning at that, he

is not willing to risk it. Later on in the story, after Frodo has been stabbed by the Morgul Blade of a black rider, and is in dire need of elven magic to heal his wound. They talk to Glorfindel the elf, who after looking at the blade that stabbed him says:

> "There are evil things written on this hilt,' he said; 'though maybe your eyes cannot see them. Keep it Aragorn, till we reach the house of Elrond! But be wary, and handle it as little as you may! Alas! The wounds of this weapon are beyond my skill to heal" (Tolkien, LOTR 210).

Not even his elven magic is strong enough to heal this wound caused by the dark Morgul Blade, and only Elrond, a much more powerful elf, could possibly be able to save Frodo. The prospect of having "evil things" written on something, making it magically evil as well, is just another example of certain language as holding some mystical power. It shares the power of corruption to that of the Rings of Power, as further evident by Gandalf claiming Frodo would have turned into one of the ring-wraiths (black riders) if not healed.

Onto the Tolkien's naming as part of his worldbuilding. It is clear that Tolkien took great care when deciding what to name his characters, places or things. It is not secret Tolkien took much of his inspiration for certain areas within Middle-earth from his immediate surroundings in England, especially that of the Shire. Which Shippey remarks several instances of, like in the name Buckland which exists in reality, and many other names that all have English analogues like the rivers Gladden and Silverlode, the Tookland derivative of Tuckborough etc (117). Shippey goes further into great detail about the story behind the naming of the Riders of Rohan for instance. As previously mentioned, they are heavily influenced by his mediaevalism, and love of Beowulf. This is apparent when you know the Old English word "eoh" = "horse" and "þéod" = "people", and the Riders of Rohan, famous for their horse riding, call themselves the Éothéod, which literally translates to "horse people" in Old English (Shippey, The Road 140). This is also, like Shippey points out, reflected in the name of their most prominent riders Éomund, Éomer, Éowyn, clearly being named after horses (140). Another example of the thought behind the naming, is that of the

"Orc", which in Tolkien's world comes from the word "Orch" from Sindarin (Tyler 493). It means "demon" in Old English, and would be a sufficient reasoning behind these creatures being named as such, but Tolkien claimed they were not chosen for that reason, but "only because of its phonetic suitability" (Bergen 114). This idea of phonetic suitability is a notion shared by Croft, when she is talking about the naming of characters like Sauron and Saruman. Where elements of "sau" in the pronunciation of these two characters in particular, calls forth vivid imagery of snakes and cold-bloodedness (162).

Le Guin appears to share or at least understand this notion of power behind language and words that was so important to Tolkien, so much so as to make the entire system of magic based upon properties of language. Inside Le Guin's world, language is everything. As previously established, the language called "Old Speech", is the language of Dragons, and with which the world of Earthsea was made by Segoy. A better example of giving power to a language is hard to find. The language of the Archipelago in Earthsea is called "Hardic", and is made up, or grown from Old Speech, as described by the Master Namer Kurremkarmerruk:

> "That is the language dragons speak, and the language Segoy spoke who made the islands of the world, and the language of our lays and songs, spells, enchantments, and invocations. Its words lie hidden and changed among our Hardic words. We call the foam on waves sukien: that word is made from two words of the Old Speech, suk, feather, and inien, the sea. Feather of the sea is foam. But you cannot charm the foam calling it sukien; you must use its own true name in the Old Speech, which is essa" (Le Guin 50-51).

He also goes on to say that no man can learn every word, as there is no end to it, the language just goes on. What he is saying here is that everything in the world has a True Name. It might be made up of two words from Old Speech, but its true name is something else. I am reminded of the incident with the magic door in *The Lord of the Rings* where Gandalf said "these doors are probably governed by words" (Tolkien, LOTR 306). Hardic is not a fully functional, developed language such as Tolkien's Quenya or Sindarin, but it does not need to for the purpose of the story. The reader

is only given a few examples of Hardic and Old Speech words, but it is enough to convince one into believing what the imagined world is trying to convey. On the topic of using True Speech, the protagonist Ged for example, takes control over an animal creature called an Otak, by speaking its True Name "Hoeg" (Le Guin 52), and it remains a loyal pet to Ged until its death. Which means that knowing the right words or names, allows you to control other beings. It is also possible to fundamentally change the name of something, like the Master Changer says: "To change this rock into a jewel, you must change its true name. And to do that, my son, even to so small a scrap of the world, is to change the world" (Le Guin 48). The Master Changer elaborates further: "But you must not change one thing, one pebble, one grain of sand, until you know what good and evil will follow on that act. The world is in balance, in Equilibrium" (Le Guin 48). Not only is the power of language incredibly powerful, but using it wrong could potentially change the world itself for the worse. Though language is a huge driving force for Tolkien in his worldbuilding, it seems Le Guin's passion for language lies in the story itself.

Le Guin's use of language extends outside of the story however, and into the worldbuilding aspect by the way she, like Tolkien, cares for the process of naming something. Le Guin takes the word "mage", which is a word that generally means someone practising magic, and using the same tactic as with her own Hardic language of Earthsea, she combines it with something else, making a new word. Examples of this are: "Archmage", "Magelight" and "Magewind", all unique words, not found anywhere else, but all derivatives of the word "Mage". Le Guin has also named one of her Dragons "Orm" (Le Guin 58), which of course in Norwegian means "Worm", which is a word Tolkien often describes his dragons using. Like in his most ancient and awesome Great Worms like Glaurung (Tyler 154). This notion of naming also seems to carry into her story, as the social custom of naming is a big deal among the people of the Archipelago. When children come of age, they are given their True Name by someone who is wise. In Ged's instance that is done by his mentor figure Ogion. Before this, they have the name they are given by their mother, meaning the people of Earthsea have several names. In the case of Ged, his child name was Duny, but he is more commonly known as Sparrowhawk. Really saying something about the importance of naming, which to Senior is also an important aspect of gift-giving, as a concern for order inside fantasy

(103). She utilises a variety of exchanges to convey the cultural dynamics of its cosmos, including bargains, deals, thefts, and trades, but with an emphasis on the significance of gifts, and throughout the novels, a pervasive pattern of gifts and returns emerges in various forms, encompassing physical objects, names, magical spells, as well as abstract concepts such as friendship and sacrifice (103). She even compares this type of gift-giving with that of Tolkien's giving of the One Ring to Frodo (103). Ultimately this concept of gifts hold a particularly significant role in two important aspects of Earthsea: firstly, in encapsulating the macrocosmic system of the Balance that governs and stabilises the cosmos, and secondly, in charting the character development, moral growth, and eventual integration of the protagonist, Ged, into the world around him (Senior 104).

On the process of naming the evil characters. The main antagonist of Le Guin's first book is the shadow, often in the shape of a Gebbeth. The shadow creature is described as having no name, which in of itself is just as scary, if not scarier than having a snake-like name such as Saruman and Sauron. When we first hear of this shadow creature, it is referred to as nameless as it "Uncalled it came from a place where there are no names" (Le Guin 68). As for the name Gebbeth, there is little known about it, just like the creature itself, but the closest I got to a possible answer was looking it up in the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon dictionary, as anyone looking into Tolkien's inspirations would. The closest word to Gebbeth found there, was "un-gebét", which translates to "unamended, uncorrected" (Bosworth). Which could make sense, considering that Gebbeth is a creature that came from Ged splitting himself, and losing his shadow, becoming uncorrected, perhaps. Just a thought, but it would be fitting considering Tolkien's love of the Old English. This motif of being nameless however, shows up in several places throughout *A Wizard of Earthsea*, first as part of the process of the naming ceremony, where you are given your True Name. Your child name is taken from you, and you are made Nameless, as is the case with Ged, when the witch of the village took his name Duny, and made him "nameless and naked" (Le Guin 24). Then there is the nameless isle of which Ged travels to in his hunt for the shadow. A very mysterious, little known place which by being such named inspires feelings of being lost or somewhere one does not belong. Additionally, this motif of the nameless is also found in Tolkien's world. It is one of many names used to refer to the Dark Lord Sauron, as well as to the land of Mordor, which is sometimes called the Nameless

Land. More ominously however, and perhaps more fitting in this context, is that of the nameless creatures encountered by Gandalf. When Gandalf tells the tale of when he fell down from Durin's Bridge within Moria, as he was fighting the Balrog, he speaks of tunnels far, far below.

> "They were not made by Durin's Folk, Gimli son of Glóin. Far, far below the deepest delvings of the Dwarves, the world is gnawed by nameless things. Even Sauron knows them not" (Tolkien, LOTR 501).

Tolkien expertly uses the unknown to conjure fear, and this motif of nameless, evil beings from unknown recesses of the world, is an effective way to do so. Something it seems Le Guin agrees on, as she too shares this particular use of nameless evil tropes.

At last, a curious observation is the fact that Le Guin calls her creation myth for The Creation of "Éa", which is precisely the name Tolkien uses for his universe as well, called "Ëa". As previously mentioned as being both the word spoken at creation, but also becoming the name of the creation. The name in a very christian fashion, meaning "Let it Be" in Quenya (Tyler 169).

7. Evil and the Enemy

In his article Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics, Tolkien argued that through the killing of monsters, the poet of Beowulf could express real truths about courage, loyalty and duty. In contrast to the critics of the time, who thought them terribly silly. By changing the view on the use of monsters in literature, and instead popularising them, Tolkien has laid the framework for such fantasy writing. Enabling the modern fantasy writers to create their own world where these virtues can be portrayed through the defeating of monsters (James, 68-69). Some of his points were that both Grendel and the dragon are depicted as adversaries of the Christian God, heavily inspired by the pagan gods or monsters of which Tolkien as a medievalist and lover of Old English surely appreciated. Naturally as a consequence of Tolkien's defence of monsters in *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, he set out to prove his point and make his own heroic tales of heroes defeating monsters. Therefore the enemy of such a story has to be a memorable one. By writing his own

wildly popular high fantasy story of heroes defeating such monsters, he further proved what he said in his article *On Fairy-stories*, and paved the way for others. In terms of sales, the numbers do not lie.

When talking of evil characters, the Lord of the Rings himself, Sauron, is perhaps the most important one in the Lord of the Rings story. Despite not even making a physical appearance in the books, Tolkien's Dark Lord Sauron is still one of the most iconic villains of the fantasy genre. He has many names and titles, "The self-styled Ruler of Middle-earth and declared enemy of the Free Peoples; servant of Morgoth in the Elder Days and supreme force for Evil throughout two subsequent Ages: Black Master of the land of Mordor, Eye of the Dark Tower, Seducer, Betrayer and Shadow of Despair; the Lord of the Rings of Power" (Tyler 565), and many more. As Ellison regards, some entities when looking at *The Lord of the Rings* alone, most notably Sauron, are unequivocally portrayed as evil. That is to say, at the point of their introduction or initial mention, they possess no redeeming qualities whatsoever, even though Gandalf may have said that "nothing is evil in the beginning" (21). Sauron acts as this almost omnipresent threat looming over everyone. However, being the title character, and the one to blame for most of the vile happenings in Middle-earth, the protagonist or any other heroes of the story never really get to face him. In fact, he gets very little "screen time" at all. It seems he serves as more of a father of evil role like the Biblical Satan character, working from the shadows to corrupt the world. Now it has to be said that Sauron's former master, Morgoth (also known as Melkor) is the true Satan character of Tolkien's world, however, in *The Lord of the Rings* book series Sauron acts as the ultimate evil, and serves a similar purpose, though his likeness might be more closely modelled after other mythical figures. As Ellison so aptly puts it, "He represents and personifies power in its most extreme form; the drive to world domination as an end in itself" (24).

In the story *The Lord of the Rings* we get the first mention of Sauron in Chapter 2, aptly named "The Shadow of the Past", when we learn that Frodo, the main protagonist of this story, has heard about "whispers of the Enemy and of the land of Mordor" (Tolkien, LOTR 43) by troubled Dwarves now seen in an increasing amount on the road. Here he is simply known as "the Enemy", a non-personal, unambiguous term. This mysterious nature is further cemented in the following passage where we are told that for the hobbits, the race of people which Frodo belongs to, this name is only

known "in legends of the dark past, like a shadow in the background of their memories; but it was ominous and disquieting" (Tolkien, LOTR 43). This is a great introduction to Sauron's monstrous character. Depicted as something unknown, from a distant and bad part of history. Stories that are told and known collectively by the hobbits, legends of the past, but not necessarily authenticated. Its mention does however spread dark feelings of worry and threat for the hobbits regardless, much like the effect Sauron instils on the story and the reader alike.

Sauron's physical appearance, other than being described as a shapeless shadow, is shrouded in mystery in the first of the books, he is simply this evil power. In the second book however, we get a description of his hand from a scroll written by Isildur, the man who previously defeated Sauron and took his ring by cutting off his finger. When speaking of the Ring he acquired, he says that it might miss "the heat of Sauron's hand, which was black and yet burned like fire" (Tolkien, LOTR 253). Something that is both black, yet bright. A dichotomy of dark and light. Fire creates light, which diminishes shadows and darkness, but it isn't necessarily seen as a description of "good" in the same manner as "black" often refers to evil and dark things. Fire is destructive. Darkness and fire are terms most often viewed as traits of evil, and certainly monstrous.

The use of Shadows to represent what is evil is a recurring concept throughout Tolkien's story, and represents the bad half of the dark vs light fight taking place in this story. Shadows are scary and where the monsters hide, the absence of light, the unknown and the dark void. The imagery of shadows is one that is heavily tied to the main villain Sauron in many ways. For Tolkien, the word shadow perfectly encompasses his image of evil, this non-existent yet visible force that is the absence of light, which in many ways personifies Sauron (Shippey, The Road 166). In the story, when Gandalf finally reveals the name of Sauron to Frodo, and confirms the whispers and murmurs he had heard about a potential power rising in the East, we get a repeat of the shadow in the hobbits' stories. "That name even you hobbits have heard of, like a shadow on the borders of old stories. Always after a defeat and respite, the Shadow takes another shape and grows again." (Tolkien, LOTR 51). Much like when the reader first hears of this growing threat, Gandalf replicates the same imagery of the ominous shadow in the far recesses of your mind, and specifically attributes this shadow, as being Sauron. It also compares his physical being to that of a shapeless shadow, that can change its shape as it needs to. Much like Tolkien's view on evil as a shadow, that both doesn't exist

physically, but simultaneously does. On the very next page, Gandalf again refers to Sauron's spirit fleeing when vanquished long ago, just for his shadow to take shape again. His corporal body is defeated, but his incorporeal spirit escapes, and just as importantly, shifts and reshapes like a shadow, only to return again (Tolkien, LOTR 52).

There is another part of the enemy in the story of fantasy, which is it's lair. More specifically the Dark Towers, or dark lands of Mordor in Tolkien's story. Dark Towers, which Clute and Grant say comes from tales of chivalry where it is the quintessential bad place (251). This is particularly true of Sauron's Dark Tower of Barad-dûr situated inside the land of Mordor, as it's name literally means "Dark Tower" in Sindarin (Tyler 58). Tyler further remarks on the magical powers of the Dark Tower as being attributed to being created with the power of the One Ring, and as Sauron's lair, it was the mightiest stronghold of the age (58). There are more Dark Towers mentioned as well, such as Minas Morgul, controlled by the vile Nazgûl, and Orthanc, the tower of Isengard which was occupied by Saruman. Though Orthanc was considered one of the most powerful fortresses there were, it was nothing compared to Barad-Dûr (Tyler 502-503). Together, both of these Dark Towers are the namesake of the second book of the trilogy, The Two Towers.

Le Guin's main antagonist from *A Wizard of Earthsea* is on the surface quite different to that of any of Tolkien's bad guys. It is not a world-ending threat seen from a global perspective, but more of an individual challenge for Ged to overcome. As Filonenko puts it, the entire first book revolves around Ged fulfilling this one quest of unifying his soul (42), after sundering it, and therefore himself, in a foolish display of pride. The main antagonist however, mostly referred to as a shadow creature or shadow-beast, has similarities to that of Tolkien's image of evil. Though vastly different in terms of scope, they are both referred to as nameless, the shadow-beast is so because it has no name, but the Dark Lord Sauron has many names, of which the Nameless Enemy is simply one of them. In fact, the Gondorians called him that in fear of using his actual name. Additionally, as previously established, there are nameless creatures living at the abyss under Moria of Middle-earth. When we first encounter Le Guin's shadow-beast, it is clambering out of a bright misshapen breach in the fabric of the world, and is described as:

"something like a clot of black shadow, quick and hideous, and it leaped straight out at Ged's face", and "It was like a black beast, the size of a young child, though it seemed to swell and shrink; and it had no head or face, only the four taloned paws with which it gripped and tore" (Le Guin 64).

This imagery of the darkness and the shadow is a recurring one throughout her story, just like in Tolkien's depiction of evil, as a personification of Sauron, the growing shadow in the east. As mentioned previously, for Tolkien, the word shadow was analogous to evil (Shippey, The Road 166). Le Guin refers to the creature as coming from "the powers of unlife" (Le Guin 68), and "the wrong side of the world" (Le Guin 72). The former, "unlife", being quite reminiscent of Tolkien's "unlight". Le Guin's shadow-beast hunts Ged, and knows where he is at all times. When Ged ultimately decides to go hunt for the shadow instead of fleeing from it, he too has an understanding of where to go find it. There is a similar turn in *The Lord of the Rings* where Frodo at first flees from the enemies chasing him, namely the black riders, before turning it around, and deciding to travel to the land of Mordor to meet the problem head on, and destroy evil one, by destroying the One Ring. Both stories start with a chase, but undergo a change where they are no longer hunted, but being the hunter.

There is an incident in Le Guin's story where the shadow-beast takes control over a man, which is what Geb feared would happen to him as well if the shadow-beast ever caught up to him. If that happens to a person, they become what is referred to as a Gebbeth, described as "The body of a Gebbeth has been drained of true substance and is something like a shell or vapor in the form of a man, an unreal flesh clothing the shadow which is real" (102), doing the will of the shadow. Le Guin paints a vivid picture of a vile, evil monster, in true Tolkien tradition. This losing of oneself over to evil, is also very similar to the corrupting powers of Tolkien's Rings of Power. Especially in the case of the ring-wraiths, or black riders, who were slaves of the Nine Rings. As Tyler points out, these nine were once mortal men, driven by their insatiable thirst for power, and ultimately doomed to remain in Middle-earth as Úlairi, undead beings bound entirely to the will of their master, with no hope of either moving on or finding rest (545), and the very same 9 black riders that have been chasing Frodo and ring. Sounds eerily familiar. There is also the strange connection between these nine hooded ringwraiths, referred to as simple The Nine, and the "grey-cloaked Masters of Roke,

who were called the Nine" (47).

On the topic of Dark Towers, or the evil one's lair, Ged encounters a tower in the land of Osskil, which can be interpreted as a kind of Dark Tower in the fantasy sense of Clute and Grant (251), where he has been lured to be evil powers. It is by no means the evil fortress of Barad-Dúr, but it is the classic bad wizard's tower, where Ged is challenged by great evil, and escapes by the skin of his teeth.

Moving on to another enemy of Earthsea, one that we as readers only encounter at the very beginning of the story, when Ged is still living in his home of Gont. Namely, Kargs, or the Kargish. They are the enemies from the North-East called Kargad empire, which are described as "a savage people, white-skinned, yellow-haired, and fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns" (Le Guin 18). They are a savage people, and "raiding" using longships, making it quite apparent that these are a viking inspired people. Seeing as the Kargs, which are the first bad guys you encounter in the story, are raiding from the North-East, just like the Scandinavian vikings, would that make Gont and the main islands of the Archipelago, mediaeval England? Much like how Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings* is based on a timeless and idealised mediaeval England (Shippey, The Road 112). Having seen the map of Earthsea provided at the beginning of the book having 'Kargad Lands' as a fifth cardinal direction on its compass, surely means they are quite significant, and must have been a big threat to the rest of the Archipelago for quite a while. Compared to Tolkien's most abundant of monstrous characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Orcs, Sauron's instrument of war. In terms of naming, it does have a similar one syllable, harsh sounding word like Tolkien's Orc. Aragon, one of the heroes of the story in *The Lord of the Rings*, gives us a quick description of the Orcs when they encounter them inside the Mines of Moria. "There are Orcs, very many of them,' he said. 'And some are large and evil: Black Uruks of Mordor." (Tolkien, LOTR 324). A black, larger and more evil creature than that of ordinary Orcs. In the same scene Frodo describes one of the Orcs as having a swart, broad flat face, red tongue and eyes like coals, and being approximately of almost man-height (Tolkien, LOTR 325). The Kargs and Orcs do serve a similar savage, archetypal soldier role in the story. However, as descriptions go, they are a stark contrast to the dark skinned Orcs of Tolkien. Was this done deliberately to appear less like imitating him or perhaps to serve another purpose?

There is another enemy character present in Earthsea as well, one of faërie, the Dragon. Le Guin describes the first dragon encountered by Ged on the Island of Pendor as "like a vast black bat, thin-winged and spiny-backed" and "maybe the length of a forty-oared ship, and was wormthin for all the reach of his black membranous wings" (Le Guin 85). She is painting a vivid picture, one that is more like a vile monstrosity, rather than a giant, scaly creature of awe one might be used to. However, a much larger dragon appears after a short while, which is more reminiscent of the awesome dragons one would expect from a fantasy story. And as previously mentioned, the dragons are ancient beings who speak the language of magic, Old Speech. Tolkien's literary universe also features dragons, which are primarily featured in his debut novel, The Hobbit, but are subsequently referenced throughout the Lord of the Rings series, as mentioned before, and are a staple of what Tolkien would label as the Faërie (Filonenko 34).

8. Conclusion

To conclude, J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth is a fully realised secondary world, worthy of his title of sub-creation, due to its intricately crafted languages, extensive mythologies, diverse cultures, and immersive histories, all of which combine to form a cohesive and immersive realm that feels alive and complete. As part of this fully realised world, Tolkien has a rich, historical and cultural backdrop to his world that is unrivalled, with a multitude of races, some of which he has made himself, and others that he has codified into the modern fantasy standard to the point of it becoming the archetypal figure of the genre. Our understanding of modern fantasy has now gone from and to: "Fantasy didn't mean 'the genre where the author creates his or her unique setting,' It means 'the genre where the books include elves, dwarfs, wizards, and quests" (Brandon Sanderson). His thorough and fully realised world resonates with readers and other fantasy writers alike, to the point where it is hard to picture it any other way. Le Guin seems to have followed the path made by Tolkien in that her world is equally as worthy a sub-creation, though she incorporates only a fraction of the backdrop Tolkien does, it is enough. According to Paxson, Le Guin's Earthsea possesses a unique and unmistakable atmosphere that sets it apart from both Middle-earth and our

own world. Le Guin's writing exhibits a strong sense of focus and a limited scope, with a style characterised by a classical economy that differs significantly from Tolkien's. However, despite these differences, Le Guin employs certain shared tools in the construction of her fictional world. Notably, she shares Tolkien's concern with the interplay between language and culture, and perhaps even surpasses him in her emphasis on the profound connection between words and an individual's perception of reality.

The concept of sub-creation aptly applies to the work in question, aligning closely with Tolkien's own understanding of the term. Moreover, the process of world-building undertaken shares notable similarities with Tolkien's approach. The demonstrated consistency in the portrayal of magic, character motivations, and geography serves as a compelling testament to this assertion.

Le Guin embraces various aspects of what Paxson termed the "Tolkien Tradition," elements such as the incorporation of legendary backgrounds, the portrayal of archetypal figures, the presence of talismans, and ethical considerations. Particularly her portrayal of archetypal figures. She does not use the majority of the typical Tolkien codified figures, but she has rather built upon one of them. Namely the Wizard. It seems that she makes it a point to not portray her wizard figure in the traditional Tolkien way, instead she builds an entire society around this one archetypal figure, and expands on it greatly. Introducing an entirely new system of magic and creating her own archetypes for the fantasy tradition, such as the school of magic. There are of course many similarities found between the use of the fantasy motifs, and in some aspects it appears as though Le Guin has indeed incorporated some Tolkien traditions into her world. In all the ways her wizard archetype is different, there are some that are still reminiscent of Tolkien, in both magic and narrative roles. Tolkien's literary achievement extends beyond being the foundation of a new tradition; it represents the culmination of several pre-existing traditions. What sets him apart is not only his adept fusion of old or traditional elements but also his skillful incorporation of new elements in a harmonious manner. While Tolkien did not invent all the elements he utilises, it is worth noting that most modern readers, including contemporary fantasy writers, lack the scholarly expertise or access to encounter these elements in their original contexts. Consequently, Tolkien deserves credit for making numerous archetypes, concepts, literary forms, and even nuanced details of archaic culture accessible to the contemporary reader. Tolkien's lasting impact can be observed in his codification

of the tropes commonly associated with high fantasy, examples of which include the depiction of aged wizards adorned with pointy hats, immortal elves characterised by their pointed ears, and so forth.

It is also quite clear that the setting of Le Guin's Earthsea is that of the middle ages, as shown through many aspects of which is derivative of a pre-industrial era. Several of which she shares with Tolkien, and it is clear what impact Tolkien's writings have had on this particular field of mediaevalism and the setting of modern fantasy. Though Le Guin mainly incorporates the physical traits, and some customs typical of the setting, such as clothing and weapons, as well as a feudal system of lords.

In terms of the monstrous depictions, Le Guin has a long way to go in that regard, but she seems to share a surprising amount of similarities between her few inclusions of such figures. It is almost as if Le Guin purposely did the opposite of what Tolkien did in terms of the battling of monsters or evil, although ultimately their main antagonists are rooted in the same type of primal, shadowy evil. Le Guin's depiction of battles within her narratives primarily revolves around individual struggles, whereas Tolkien clearly has more of the archetypal heroic battles. The closest Le Guin comes to Tolkien's portrayal of the battle against evil is manifested through the corruptive forces of darkness. While Le Guin may have drawn some inspiration from Tolkien's portrayal of dragons, wizards, and the intangible nature of the Shadow, there are notable differences in their treatment. Unlike Tolkien's Ring, which holds a prominent public role, the Shadow in Le Guin's work possesses a distinct psychological reality, representing the manifestation of Ged's internal struggles. In Tolkien's narrative, Sauron intentionally externalises a portion of his power into the Ring, forever separating it from himself. In contrast, Ged's Shadow appears to be the embodiment of the darker aspects of his own personality, given tangible form. Its inherent evil stems from Ged's reluctance to acknowledge that it is an integral part of himself. This is exemplified in the inner conflicts faced by characters such as Boromir, Frodo, and even Gollum, as they grapple with their own sense of self and, at times, the overwhelming influence of madness. In a parallel vein, Le Guin explores the theme of control exerted by the shadow monster or the Gebbeth, as well as the personal journey of Ged as he strives to achieve wholeness. This struggle is therefore also shown to some extent in Tolkien's story, but ultimately it is as if Le Guin has borrowed a tiny pocket of the world of Middle-

earth, and made it her own.

Le Guin's incorporation of wizards and dragons in Earthsea exhibits a pronounced Tolkienian influence; however, she diverges from Tolkien's approach by utilising these elements as vehicles for psychological introspection within the context of an individual character. With the exception of the temptation in the Court of the Terrenon, the challenges and threats faced by Ged are primarily self-generated, originating from his own internal conflicts and struggles. Nevertheless, she at least acknowledges Tolkien's emphasis on the significance of dragons, and their essence of Faërie.

To answer my research question more fully. It would seem James is correct in his claims that modern fantasy writers have a lot to thank Tolkien for, as it is apparent he has codified many of the archetypal tropes, figures and motifs of modern fantasy. It is clear he is the driving force behind the concept of sub-creation as a secondary world, and the fact it is set in a mediaeval period. He is indeed worthy of the title of father of modern fantasy. Which I would argue could be the chase either way, considering how profoundly successful he was, and because he revived the interest in the genre, as a result of how profitable it was. In terms of Le Guin, there are clear instances of her being profoundly different, but also occasions where it is pretty clear she has profited off of Tolkien's success, thought it is really difficult to know one's actual intent. Not only does Le Guin have an equally fantastic creation myth within her sub-creation, but it literally shares a name with Tolkien's world of Éa, as her myth is called "The Creation of Éa". Is this perhaps a nod to her fellow fantasy writer?

Tolkien has his swords and sorcery, whereas Le Guin has no swords, only sorcery.

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