THE BONES OF THE OX: HOW J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S COSMOLOGY REFLECTS ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CREATION MYTHS

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Thomas L. Martin, Department of English, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Scholars have well established the influence of the Old and Middle English, Norse, Welsh, and also Medieval Latin and Christian mythologies that influenced the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. In particular, the mythology contained in *The Silmarillion*, specifically the cosmology, behaves as sacred texts do in the primary world and mirrors a number of extant mythologies when they are directly compared. Several scholars have noted, but as yet no one has studied in depth, the relationship between the cosmology of *The Silmarillion* to that of a number of extant ancient Near Eastern mythologies. This thesis seeks to address that gap in the scholarship by specifically exploring Tolkien's mythological creation story in relation to those of the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Abrahamic of the Near East. Such a comparative study reveals a number of structural and thematic parallels that attest to the complexity of Tolkien's work that and can be used to argue that his mythology can be considered as well-developed and surprisingly authentic as any of these ancient mythological traditions.

DEDICATION

I wish this manuscript and all of the work that it represents to the four most important men in my life – my grandfather, Warren; my father, Dan; my partner, Erik; and my brother, Joe. Their love and support through the different stages of my life gave me the courage, dedication, and the ability to make this achievement.

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“Mr. Frodo … I wonder what sort of tale we’ve fallen into?”

“I wonder,” said Frodo. “But I don’t know. And that’s the way of a real tale. Take any one that you’re fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don’t know. And you don’t want them to.”

“No, sir, of course not. Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that’s a long tale, of course, and goes on past the happiness and into grief and beyond it—and the Silmaril went on and came to Eärendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We’ve got—you’ve got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we’re in the same tale still! It’s going on. Don’t the great tales ever end?”

“No, they never end as tales,” said Frodo. “But the people in them come, and go when their part’s ended.”

--- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*

CHAPTER ONE: CREATION NARRATIVES

One of the great questions that mythological narratives try to answer is that which asks how we came to be. What is this thing that we call life and how did it get here? This question is such a critical element in mythological literature that it is addressed in texts from the oldest extant narratives that we have found to date to that of a mythological structure created as fiction in the twentieth century. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* is a mythological narrative that rivals that of sacred texts of the primary world in its depth and complexity of structure. Direct comparison of the cosmology of *The Silmarillion* to that of a number of extant ancient mythologies, specifically the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Abrahamic of the Near East, reveals a number of structural and thematic parallels that attest to the complexity of Tolkien's work and can be used to argue that his mythology could be considered to be as well-developed as any of the ancient narratives. The following discussion is presented to illustrate these similarities in order to suggest and explore the deeper reasons for the success of Tolkien's work.

Tolkien himself realized that it is more ordinary than not for stories and myths to resemble one another. He addressed the subject in his essay "On Fairy-stories," which originated as his contribution to the Andrew Lang lecture series at the University of St. Andrews in 1939 (*OFS*[1] 15). Using the term "fairy-stories" as a term to encompass mythopoeic narratives of all kinds, he stated that "It is plain enough that fairy-stories … are very ancient indeed. Related things appear in very early records; and they are found

universally, wherever there is language." He cautions his audience not to be too ambitious in tracing the threads of the narrative tapestry. He borrows from George Webbe Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse* and uses the metaphor of narrative as a soup: "'We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled.'" He then modifies the quote to fit his meaning, stating that "by 'the soup' I mean the story as it is served up by its author or teller and by 'the bones' its sources or material. … But I do not, of course, forbid criticism of the soup as soup" (*OFS* 40). That, however, has not deterred decades of scholars and critics from discussing and speculating about the range of flavors that his work leaves on the literary palate and where they originated.

The source of Tolkien's desire to write came from his wish to expand on the mythical-historical narratives within his tales of Middle-earth. His imagination had created extensive layers of linguistic and historic detail, and he felt the need to have a setting for his world: "[The idea of creating an entire mythology] had its origins in his taste for inventing languages. He had discovered that to carry out such inventions to any degree of complexity he must create for the languages a 'history' in which they could develop" (Carpenter 100). Tolkien had created fourteen languages for Middle-Earth and needed a history to contain them that would be as intricate and developed as they were, "fit for the more adult mind of a land long steeped in poetry" (*Letters* 144-145). He also realized that in order for his languages to survive and to have life, that they would need a literary structure to contain them. He knew that the lack of such structure was the reason for the failure of other attempts at language creation: "Volapük, Esperanto, Ido, Novial, &c &c are dead, far deader than ancient unused languages, because their

authors never invented any Esperanto legends" (*Letters* 231). His attraction to poetry, the voice of myth and legend, is a key element of the narrative voice of *The Silmarillion*. Had Tolkien written in a different form of prose, for example in the language of a historical document, the novel would not have produced the same effect. He wished to express himself in just the way that other myths did, with a poetic voice, and was aware of the inferiority of other forms of discourse for his purposes (Chance, *Medievalist* 259).

Along with this personal impetus for writing, Tolkien also had patriotic reasons for creating a vast corpus of literature for Middle-earth. He explained his intentions for creating his original stories that would later be compiled into *The Silmarillion* in a letter to Milton Waldman of Collins Publishing circa 1951:

> I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own … not of the quality that I sought and found … in legends of other lands. … I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romance fairy-story … which I could dedicate simply: to England, to my country. (*Letters* 144-45)

Because of the influx of foreign influence in England since the Norman Invasion, the indigenous mythological culture was displaced and dominated over to the point of extinction (Shippey 38, 304). Tolkien sought to emulate the rich narratives that reflected the national identities of other cultures in a way that would be uniquely English. His work as a medieval scholar, linguist, and philologist led him to become familiar with the appearance of English mythology before it was overcome.[2] Tolkien did what he

could to preserve motifs that had survived the "post-Conquest 'defoliation'" (Shippey 306), transforming elements and characters from Anglo-Saxon lore into mythological elements in his own secondary mythology. Upon this foundation, Tolkien then built his invented mythology and fused the two together to "depict an age of the world that had passed, leaving only vague but evocative memories, before our recorded history began" (Noel 36), making the myth and history of Middle-Earth become the myth and history of England as well. Tolkien's work sprouted from a variety of ancient mythologies that served as a catalyst for his visions. Along with the extant Old and Middle English mythology and legends that played a large role in the formation of Tolkien's legendarium, he was influenced by Norse, Welsh, and also Medieval Latin and Christian mythologies (Chance, *Invention* xiii).[3]

In his discussion of the methodology of source criticism as applied to Tolkien, Jason Fisher names three tiers of sources in Tolkien's work. First, there are acknowledged sources, those that Tolkien himself refers to as direct influences (e.g. *Beowulf*, *Völupsa*, etc.); second are sources which the author is known to have contact with that are mentioned in his personal writings but are not directly acknowledged as sources; and third, are possible sources, which are "works that are never explicitly mentioned by Tolkien but which are no more than one step away from an explicit statement [and] *may* be acceptable for a carefully-made and strongly-argued source study," which includes works "by authors whom we know Tolkien was familiar, even if he made no statements on record about a particular work" (36-37). It is this third tier that is of interest in the examination that follows, along with a fourth tier that I would like to suggest. This would be sources deep in the web of mythopoeia that have

influenced all those that followed and that are so interconnected that it is impossible to place them in time and to discern which influenced which and when. Fisher notes that in Tolkien's work, "Some elements may be common enough to derive, in a sense, from a shared pool of mythopoeic elements, found in too many works for us to ever know from which specific one(s) Tolkien borrowed" (38). I would like to add that some elements are so ancient and embedded in the practice of mythopoeia that it is not a matter of "borrowing" elements; it is that they must be present in order for a work to be truly considered to be mythopoeic. Since this is what Tolkien aspired to accomplish, "One can easily see why Tolkien, developing his so-called 'mythology for England,' might have adopted, whether purposely or not, the same kinds of authorial modes of those ancient mythmakers to whose converse [sic] he wished to add his own voice" (34). It is not so much a "borrowing" or "copying" of material; it is that Tolkien worked in the same art form and so needed to structure his work accordingly. It should be clarified that the following is meant to be a comparative analysis, not a work of source criticism. It is not meant to claim that ancient Near Eastern mythological narratives are direct sources for Tolkien's writing. This does, however, provide a working example of the soup metaphor in which the common themes, motifs, tropes, and archetypes of mythology can be found in acknowledged roots of Western mythopoeia. These elements have survived and still have an impact to this day, with Tolkien's work being one of the prime examples to have come about in the last century.

The influence of Abrahamic mythology on Tolkien's work, rooted in his Roman Catholic beliefs, is widely acknowledged and discussed. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian mythologies were present in Tolkien's knowledge, but they influenced

his work to a much lesser extent. Tolkien discusses Egypt only in reference to the image of the crown of Gondor (*Letters* 281), and then only for the sake of comparison. Likewise, Tolkien was aware of the mythology of Mesopotamia, but its influence was not as direct as that of Abrahamic and northern European mythology. In a letter dated from 1967, Tolkien states that "I knew and had read a good deal about Mesopotamia,"[4] however, "no connexions in my mind or intention between Mesopotamia and the Númenóreans or their predecessors can be deduced" (*Letters* 384). In the essay "The Stones and the Book," Nicholas Birns performs a detailed source study of Tolkien's work in consideration of Mesopotamian narratives. He notes that "Tolkien would have had ample opportunity to encounter the study of this field at Oxford, both as a student and as a professor," and then proceeds to list the names of Professors and scholars in Assyriology at Oxford, adding that "Tolkien would have been clearly aware of the academic students of Mesopotamia who were his colleagues" (Birns 54). Birns's article provides an interesting lead in the subject; however, he focuses on linguistic and etymological detail and archetypal figures of the Biblical Genesis more than the narrative structures of the creation stories that, I would like to argue, hold more similarities. The focus of Birns's essay also pertains to Mesopotamian mythology as it influences the Judeo-Christian belief system, rather than analyzing the Mesopotamian mythological narratives that predate the Hebrew texts. When examined separately from the Hebrew narratives, the resemblances are apparent between them, but the differences are enough to warrant treatment of the Mesopotamian texts as a separate entity. Fisher also attempts to match Genesis and *The Silmarillion* chronologically which, though of interest, does not produce any convincing results. Fisher is forcing Tolkien into the

Judeo-Christian scripture as if Tolkien had recreated the same "dish" with different seasonings. Rather, Tolkien's creation myth is a different dish with the flavor of scripture (and therefore ancient Near Eastern myth) worked in.

It should be held in mind by the reader that the excerpts of Near Eastern mythological narratives that will be presented in this paper are not exhaustive in the mythological corpus that they represent. There are often many versions of these mythological narratives within the collections of each civilization that exist at one time, let alone over the course of millennia. The following analysis is meant to be a glimpse at the selected example narratives that encompass larger ideas that are of interest to the topics of discussion. This is not intended to make overarching claims for the entire civilization in question, nor is it meant to speak for the entirety of the associated belief systems. With this in mind, consider the following passages:

> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
>
> **********
>
> I am he who came into being as Khepri. When I had come into being, being (itself) came into being, and all beings came into being after I came into being. Many were the beings which came forth from my mouth, before heaven came into being, before earth came into being, before the ground and creeping things had been created in this place.[5]

****

When the skies above were not yet named

Nor earth below pronounced by name,

Apsu, the first one, their begetter

And maker Tiamat, who bore them all,

Had mixed their waters together,

But had not formed pastures, nor discovered

reed-beds;

When yet no gods were manifest,

Nor names pronounced, nor destinies decreed,

Then gods were born within them.

****

There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made.

All of the above are the beginnings of creation narratives. Only one is not part of an established belief system either of the past or the present. Setting aside any familiarity with the excerpts above, it may not be easy to discern which of them is not involved with an established belief system. The first excerpt is from the first chapter of Genesis in the King James Version of the Christian Bible (v. 1-2). It is similarly translated in Bereshit of the Hebrew Bible. The second is a telling of creation from Egypt that was intended for recital as a spell to overthrow Apophis of the underworld to protect Re, the sun-god, in his daily journey (Pritchard 6). The third is from the epic of creation of

ancient Mesopotamia (Dalley 233). The final excerpt is the opening of *The Silmarillion* (*Silm*. 15). This initial comparison illustrates how Tolkien's narrative voice reflects that of the example mythologies provided. This can be examined further by drawing parallels between the structural elements of the brief excerpts above. In this comparison of ancient Near Eastern mythology, I will limit my comparison to the Abrahamic (Christian, Hebrew, Islamic[6]), Egyptian, and Mesopotamian narratives.

The Primary God

Each of these narratives gives a name to the primary character, or god, who is introduced: God, Khepri,[7] Apsu, and Eru. It is established that this god is the one who has existed from the very beginning, before the creation of the world that we know. It is also established from the onset that this god is also responsible for the creation of our world, which gives an etiology of how the world we know came to be. When our world is first created, the primary elements in each of these narratives are those of earth, water, and air (or similar which indicates an ethereal plane). Two of these narratives account for a time before the existence of the physical earth as well. In the Abrahamic narrative, "the earth was without form and void." The Egyptian has similar imagery: "I am Atum when I was alone in Nun [the waters of chaos, out of which life arose]; I am Re in his (first) appearances, when he began to rule that which he had made" (Pritchard 3); "I am the great god who came into being by himself" (Pritchard 4). In *The Silmarillion*, there is a great Void in which the new World exists once it is created (*Silm.* 14, 17). The music of creation (discussed below) "passed beyond hearing into the depths and into the heights, and the places of the dwelling of Ilúvatar [Eru] were filled to overflowing, and the music and the echo of the music went out into the Void, and it

was not void" (*Silm.*15). Once creation happens, void and emptiness cease to be. Ilúvatar and the lesser deities that come after him seem to exist in a plane that is separate from this great Void, but its true nature and place remain ambiguous.

The concept of a great Void that is inhabited by the primary deity is a common characteristic in cosmological narratives. The realm of the spiritual has a name (in the examples of this paper, they are Heaven, Nun, Anduruna, and the Timeless Halls), but its exact placement is not discussed in detail and is largely implied to be above the physical world within the cosmos or beyond. It satisfies the complication that arises if gods are considered to be earth-bound. If the god's existence is tied to that of the world, then it is difficult to explain where the god and the earth came from. Naturally, this assumes that the existence of the world is not eternal, which is also a common element in the theology of these belief systems. The narratives that they have created, then, seek to answer the question that asks where everything came from and how it came to be. These narratives begin in a time that is truly before anything tangible or of existence is made. Once the earth is created, the remainder of the setting is put into place. At first glance, it would seem that the Mesopotamian narrative differs from the others in that the skies and the earth have not been named. The implication is that they are there, they just do not have words associated with them. Naming, however, is crucial to Mesopotamian creation philosophy, and when compared in consideration of the other narratives it is strikingly similar.

In the Mesopotamian epic of creation, the power of the voice is that which causes creation. This is implied in the example above, but is specifically illustrated in a later passage of the Epic in which Marduk, the secondary deity, creates by speaking:

> He spoke, and at his word the constellation vanished.
>
> He spoke again and the constellation was recreated.
>
> When the gods his fathers saw how effective his utterance was,
>
> They rejoiced, they proclaimed: 'Marduk is King!' (Dalley 250)

Therefore, in the third example above that is from Mesopotamia, the phrases "not yet named," "pronounced by name," and "nor names pronounced" reflect an element in the belief system in which naming and speaking is that which causes something to be.

Similarly, in the Egyptian passage, the phrase "came forth from my mouth" is used in the same context. Evidence for this can be found in a Memphite record of creation mythology in which the primary god is described as the manifestation of thought (heart) and speech (tongue):

> There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted (*life* to all gods), as well as (to) their *ka*'s [sic], through this heart. … and through this tongue … (Pritchard 5)

Ka is the vital spark or spirit of life. As this excerpt shows, the essence of life itself is an idea of the primary god, but it did not exist until that idea was verbalized. The same passage takes care to stress the importance of this relationship in the history of creation:

> It is [the report of the senses to the heart] which causes every completed (concept) to come forth, and it is the tongue which announces what the heart thinks. Thus all the gods were formed

> and his Ennead was completed. Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded. (Pritchard 5)

The footnote to this passage clarifies that "The senses report to the heart. With this reported material, the heart conceives and releases thought, which the tongue, as a herald, puts into effective utterance" (Pritchard 5). The utterance transforms the thought into reality. The Egyptians include the idea of the heart, the intention, to underlie the act of speech. Instead of just saying, "Let it be," the primary god *thought* and then *spoke*, essentially making the thought (in connection with emotion and intellect) the first act of creation. Speaking then commands the thought to be so. Therefore, the thought (heart) of the god of creation along with speech (tongue) are the instruments of creation (see also Hallo 22 and 23).

Abrahamic mythology holds the same trope. In the passages following the example from Genesis above, the deity speaks and creation occurs: "And God *said*, Let there be light, and there was light," "And God *called* the light Day, and the darkness he *called* Night," "And God *said*, Let there be a firmament. … And God made the firmament … And God *called* the firmament Heaven" (emphasis added) (*Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:3-8). This act of speaking and naming continues throughout the rest of the creation narrative. Hence, the thought and speech of a deity are the catalysts for the creation of the temporal world. Though its later scion, the Qu'ran, is constructed in a different manner, the ideas are similar. Speech makes reality so, as in the passage which sky and earth come together:

Moreover He comprehended

In His design the sky.

And it had been (as) smoke:

He said to it

And the earth:

'Come ye together

Willingly or unwillingly.'

They said: 'We do come

(Together), in willing obedience.' (*The Qu'ran*, Ha Mim Sajdah 41:11)[8]

It is the command in the speech of the primary gods in each of these texts that is the catalyst of creation and the structure of existence as we know it.

Likewise, in Tolkien's creation myth, Eru makes the Ainur, who are the offspring of his thought (*Silm.* 25). Here again, the thought and intention of the primary deity is necessary for that idea to come into existence. Vocalization plays a creative role in Tolkien's myth, but in a different manner than just speech. Once the secondary deities, the Ainur, are created, they begin to make music in the form of song, the themes of which come from Eru (*Silm.* 15). It is here that I will note that *The Silmarillion* has two recordings of its creation story, much as Genesis of the Old Testament (compare Genesis 1 and 2). The first, called "Ainulindalë," is a detailed story of the song of the Ainur and the results thereof in the heavenly realm. The second is called "Valaquenta" and gives just two paragraphs of the events of the creation before concerning itself with the primitive history of Arda (Middle-earth); thus, the two overlap briefly before the narrative continues. In "Valaquenta," the creative powers of the Ainur are demonstrated

when "Ilúvatar made visible the song of the Ainur, and they beheld it as a light in the darkness … Ilúvatar gave to their vision Being, and set it amid the Void … in the time appointed was made Arda, the Kingdom of Earth" (*Silm.* 25). The Ainur, then, exist with the primary god before temporal creation, as the passage above establishes. The idea of secondary deities as having a role in the act of the creation of the Earth is also a parallel trope when it is held in comparison to the other mythologies of this examination.

In the Christian gospel, the book of John begins with the creation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing that was made" (*Holy Bible*, John 1:1-3). The capitalization of "word" indicates a proper noun, which, according to certain factions of Christian theology, refers to Christ (*Holy Bible*, John 1:14). Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* cites the Greek of "Word" as λόγος, which is *logos*, meaning "something *said* (incl. the *thought*); … spec. (with the art. in John) the Divine *Expression* (i.e., *Christ*) …" (Strong, Greek 55 and 3056). Therefore, in this interpretation, creation was enacted by Christ, who is the Divine Expression, the Word. Setting aside the theology of the Trinity in this belief system, it is of interest to this study to consider what is implicitly not said regarding the creation. It is performed by Christ, who is also known in some denominations as the Son of God. God (the primary deity) is deemed as the Father, creating a hierarchy of the two in which a lesser or subordinate figure by title enacts the creation. If the creation was completed by the single primary god, we would expect the phrasing to convey as much. Instead, it tells of a second being (or beings), who is *with*

the primary god (as opposed to *being* the primary god) that is responsible for creation. This is reinforced by the phrasing of "Let *us* make man in *our* image…" (emphasis added) (*Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:26). Whether that refers to Christ, angels, or otherwise in this passage has been a subject of debate through the history of the Judeo-Christian traditions (Freeman 74-75). The point that I am emphasizing is that the primary god is not alone in creation and that the second party (be they singular or plural) is involved in the act of creation.

In the Egyptian story that is cited in the comparison above, secondary gods also have a role in creation. Khepri, the first god, creates Shu and Tefnut, the air-god and the goddess of moisture, respectively. In the narrative, Khepri speaks of the time before creation in which he planned all that was to come, "before I had spat out what was Shu, before I had sputtered out what was Tefnut, and before (any) other had come into being who could act with me" (Pritchard 6). This statement illustrates, in Egyptian theogony, how the secondary gods came into being through the primary god and also what their role and place was in existence. The primary god does not directly create the gods and beings that will follow them. It is these secondary gods who begin the lineage of subsequent gods and beings: "Shu and Tefnut brought forth Geb and Nut. Then Geb and Nut brought forth Osiris, Horus Khenti-en-irti, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys" (Pritchard 6). Therefore, we have the nine great gods of Egypt, called the Ennead, plus Horus and Seth who are men who would be judged by the gods to determine which of them would rule Upper Egypt and which would rule Lower Egypt (Pritchard 4). Thus, secondary gods have agency in the act of creation, which includes that of man and determination of the order of the world (by virtue of the elements that they personify with the order in

which they come into existence, see below). The narratives of creation here do not account for the creation of plants, animals, and the earth separately. That concept is simply referred to as "Being" as seen above. The secondary gods, then, do not directly create these aspects of existence as was seen with the Christian narrative. Because of personification, however, when these gods come into existence, that is the moment that what they represent comes into being. For instance, the secondary god Shu represents the air and Tefnut represents moisture. Their children, Geb and Nut, represent the earth and the sky, respectively (Pritchard 6). Therefore in Egyptian mythology, then, the birth or creation of a god is the moment that its elemental representation is created. Since later aspects come from the gods that precede them, rather than from the primary deity directly, the secondary and following gods are those which create what follow, giving them a direct role in creation.

In the Mesopotamian story, Apsu is named as the primary god that exists from the beginning with Tiamat who is the one who bears all subsequent gods. From them come Lahmu and Lahamu and then Anshar and Kishar (Dalley 233). As with Egyptian mythology, the gods are personifications of natural elements. In this theology, Apsu represents fresh, sweet water and Tiamat represents salt water (Dalley 318 and 329). Lahmu and Lahamu are water-related gods; Anshar is a sky-god and Kishar is an earth-god (Dalley 317 and 324). Again, subsequent generations of gods come from those preceding, rather than directly from the primary god. In this manner, the Mesopotamian narrative and the Egyptian are more akin to one another than with the Abrahamic. Tolkien's cosmology could be placed somewhere between them. The language of the Abrahamic text elevates the secondary being (or beings) to a level that is closer to the

primary deity. There is not a generational progression as with the Egyptian and Mesopotamian structures. Tolkien's secondary gods are on a level that is more elevated than that of the latter and have a direct role in creation. They perform the act which brings genesis about at the behest of the primary god. There is, however, a generational progression that unfolds in the narrative, which sets it apart from the Abrahamic mythology.

The Secondary Gods

The concept of generational theogony and hierarchy is another important theme that can be traced through these narratives. The manner of creation and reproduction is another instance in which Tolkien's narrative structure resembles the Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts more than the Abrahamic. In the Abrahamic structures, the primary god is eternal and has no creator or source, and the rest of the heavenly beings are created *ex nihilo*. It is a patriarchal structure in which the primary god is referred to as male and the lesser deities are also referred to exclusively in masculine form (Hebrew מַלְאָךְ, mal'âk, and Greek άγγελος, aggĕlŏs, both meaning "messenger" with no other word used in the text to refer to angels [Strong Hebrew 4397 and Greek 32]). In contrast, the other narratives of this examination contain both male and female deities.

As mentioned before, the Mesopotamian narrative accounts for the creation of gods in a generational manner and all with language which implies natural reproduction between them rather than by *ex nihilo*. For instance, the gods "are born within" Tiamat and Apsu: "Lahmu (and) Lahamu emerged, their names pronounced. / As soon as they matured, were fully formed, / Anshar (and) Kishar were born, surpassing them" (Dalley 233); and:

Bel, cleverest of the clever, sage of the gods, was begotten.

And inside Apsu, Marduk was created;

Inside pure Apsu, Marduk was born.

Ea his father created him, Damkina his mother bore him.

He suckled the teats of goddesses;

The nurse who reared him filled him with awesomeness. (Dalley 235)

Thus, the Mesopotamian account has a less mystic approach to theogony than the Abrahamic tradition and so both sexes are present in the pantheon of deities.

The Egyptian mythology also includes biological reproduction in its theogony, going so far as to record onanism as the method of initial reproduction by the creation god in some versions (Pritchard 6). The narrative gives the sequence noted above that Geb and Nut bring forth Osiris, Horus, Seth, Isis, and Nepthys "from the body, one of them after another; and they brought forth their multitudes in this land" (Pritchard 6). It should be noted that although there is language which refers to biological reproduction that is present throughout the Egyptian narratives, a larger amount of the text is dedicated to the idea of creation through thought and speech as discussed above.

Tolkien stands between the Abrahamic and the Mesopotamian and Egyptian stories. Unlike the Abrahamic narrative, *The Silmarillion* tells of both male and female gods. There is, however, no language that refers to sexual reproduction between them. The first mention of anything of the sort is in a later tale, "Of Thingol and Melian" in which the Elf Thingol becomes enamored of Melian, a Maia (discussed below), and from them Lúthien is born (*Silm.* 55-56, 91). As with the Ennead, the nine secondary Egyptian gods, Tolkien has a leading echelon of secondary gods: "The Great among

these spirits the Elves name the Valar … and Men have often called them gods. The Lords of the Valar are seven; and the Valier, the Queens of the Valar, are seven also" (*Silm.* 25). They are not paired evenly, however. Twelve of the Valar are nicely paired with one another, but one male Valar (Ulmo) and one female Valier (Nienna) remain solitary. The rest are not only paired, but it is specifically noted that they are spouses.[9] This is the furthest that Tolkien takes the role of pairing his gods, and it serves to fulfill a companionship function through his narrative rather than existing for the sake of procreation. Gender in his gods serves more to create male-female energy in the powers that the gods hold or the elements that they represent: "the Valar take upon them forms some as of male and some as of female; for that difference of temper they had even from their beginning, and it is but bodied forth in the choice of each, not made by the choice, even as with us male and female may be shown by the raiment but is not made thereby" (*Silm.* 21). For instance, the elements of wind, water, earth, and fire are represented by male deities: Manwë, Ulmo, Aulë, and Melkor, respectively. The female deities tend to be associated with elements of nature (Varda, the maker of stars), fertility (Yavanna, the giver of fruits), and emotion (Nienna, Lady of pity and mourning who "brings strength to the spirit and turns sorrow to wisdom" [*Silm.* 28]) (*Silm.* 343 and 354). These deities, with Mandos (associated with death) and Oromë (associated with land, the hunt, and forests), are nine of the Valar called the Aratar who have a higher position in the celestial hierarchy than others (*Silm.* 29), which is another familiar trope through the mythologies that are being examined here.

The primary gods have been introduced thus far, as well as lesser or secondary gods that have crucial roles in the etiological stories of their respective narratives.

Within this, there is one specific aspect of hierarchy that is of interest, which is the establishment of a god character who is stationed higher than the other lesser gods and who holds what could be considered to be the position of Lieutenant to the primary god. The Lieutenant god of the Christian belief system has already been examined somewhat in the discussion of Christ as a demiurge above. This particular theology serves as the best example of a Lieutenant god in the Abrahamic structures. The idea that the Christ figure is considered by some to be a son, or at least an aspect, of the primary being is the point of interest for this discussion. It should be remembered that the existence and status of this figure is hotly contested among the three descendants of Abrahamic beliefs (see Bowker 32 and 68 and Freeman 168, 180-184, 258-259), so the "us" of Genesis could be interpreted in a number of ways. The focus of this is not concerned with the specifics, but with the plural referent in a passage of sacred text of the Abrahamic traditions that is concerned with creation. The language of the passage alludes to a deity (or deities) that the primary god is speaking to, which gives that deity an elevated status.

By comparison, in the Mesopotamian myth, once the creation story of other secondary gods is presented, another god comes from Apsu, Marduk, a hero-god who is referenced above (Dalley 228, 235). Marduk is of principal interest; first, because he is the direct progeny of the primary god, a son, and secondly, because he "ma[kes] up his mind to perform miracles. … 'Let me put blood together, and make bones too / Let me set up primeval man. Man shall be his / name" (Dalley 260-261). The text following the account of Marduk's conception and birth goes on to describe his superiority and beauty; he is named as "highest among the gods" and he was made "so perfect that his

godhead was doubled" (Dalley 235-236). He is the champion of the gods, defeating Tiamat (goddess of waters) when she readies for war against them (Dalley 247-250). He is named "The Son, Majesty of the Gods" and established as King over the gods (Dalley 265; Pritchard 164). As noted before, Marduk plays a role in creation and is given much honor and reverence throughout the Mesopotamian account of creation, including being responsible for the founding of Babylon as a cultural and religious center (Dalley 259). He therefore holds a high place in the theology of Mesopotamia, with active roles in the history of creation and establishment of the natural order, though he is still the "son" of Apsu, the primary deity.

Echoes of a similar structure can be found in the narratives of ancient Egypt. Given the adoptions, exclusions, and amalgamations in the evolution and development of the Egyptian pantheon, it may seem that the narratives lack cohesion and contradict one another. When analyzing the specifics over the course of the history of ancient Egypt, this may be true; however, the larger themes are of interest here, and in considering the establishment of hierarchy in the pantheon there is consistency in ideas and structure behind the details. The example I have chosen to illustrate the phenomenon of a Lieutenant god in Egyptian narratives comes from Memphite-Heliopolitan records that are dated to approximately 2,700 BCE. (Pritchard 4). The narrative reads:

> The gods who came into being as Ptah: -
>
> Ptah who is upon the Great Throne …;
>
> Ptah-Nun, the father who [begot] Atum;
>
> Ptah-Nunet, the mother who bore Atum;

> Ptah the Great, that is, the heart and tongue of the Ennead;
>
> [Ptah] … who gave birth to the gods; … (Pritchard 5)

Which is followed by the passage cited earlier:

> There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted [*life* to all gods], as well as (to) their *ka*'s [sic], through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah. (Pritchard 5)

Pritchard adds that "These forms of Ptah apply to the statement that follows. Ptah was both Nun, the abysmal waters, and his consort Naunet, and in these capacities he brought forth Atum, the creator-god of the Heliopolitan theology" (5, footnote 11). In this version of the creation narrative, Ptah is the name given to the primary god. Ptah is an androgynous figure from which a descendant creator god is produced. The god that comes from this figure, Atum (Khepri), then initiates creation of existence and subsequent gods, as discussed above. This gives the Atum figure a status of higher importance in the hierarchy of the gods. He is second to the primary god and, as seen in other examples, is bestowed with the power of creation. As discussed, his position is so elevated that in other Egyptian narratives, the two are conflated.

In Tolkien's hierarchy, the Lieutenant figure that arises is that of Manwë. He is "highest and holiest" (*Silm. 39*) and "dearest to Ilúvatar and understands most clearly his purposes. He was appointed to be, in the fullness of time, the first of all Kings: lord of the realm of Arda and ruler of all that dwell therein" (*Silm. 26*). It is also said of Manwë that he "is their King [of the Valar] and holds their allegiance under Eru" (*Silm.*

29). Here as well there is among the secondary gods one that is above them. Unlike the other Lieutenant gods that have been presented, however, he does not initiate or participate in the act of creation alone. The Valar are responsible for creation collectively, as discussed above. Manwë is part of the act of creation, but it is equally with the other secondary gods. Once Arda is created, though, Ilúvatar's presence in the unfolding of history fades, and it is Manwë who is the liaison between Ilúvatar and creation. For instance, when the evil power of Melkor rises on Arda and it is brought to the attention of the Valar, "Manwë sat long in thought upon Tanquetil, and he sought the counsel of Ilúvatar," and when he addresses the Valar, he tells them the "counsel of Ilúvatar in [his] heart" (*Silm. 50*). Thus, Manwë becomes the contact and representation of Ilúvatar to the inhabitants of Arda. As the history unfolds, the presence of Manwë and the other Valar fade as did Ilúvatar, and they are spoken of largely as cosmic forces rather than physical presences.

The Tertiary Gods

As the higher members of the celestial hierarchy in Tolkien's mythology fade, it is the third tier of divine beings who step into the role of mediators between the inhabitants of Arda and the higher powers. These beings, the Maiar, occupy a liminal position in the celestial hierarchy, not quite gods, but not mortal, either. This class of lesser gods is another common feature that Tolkien shares with the Near Eastern mythologies. The Maiar are the remainder of the Valar who were not elevated in status. They are "of the same order as the Valar but of less degree"; they are "the people of the Valar, and their servants and helpers" and "have seldom appeared in form visible to Elves and Men" (*Silm. 30*). These characters have access to higher powers, but are not

quite deities. The most familiar Maia is the character of Sauron, who serves the antagonist Valar, Melkor, but entities such as Balrogs are included as Maiar (*Silm.* 31).

Of interest to this study is another class of semi-divine being in the celestial hierarchy of Tolkien's model of existence. These are the Istari:

> But afterwards it was said among the Elves that they were messengers sent by the Lords of the West to contest the power of Sauron, if he should arise again, and to move Elves and Men and all living things of good will to valiant deeds. In the likeness of Men they appeared, old but vigorous, and they changed little with the years, and aged but slowly, though great cares lay on them; great wisdom they had, and many powers of mind and hand. (*Silm.* 299)

The Istari are called Wizards by men, the most familiar character being Mithrandir, known in the language of men as Gandalf. Although Gandalf plays a very active part in the events of the Third Age (recorded as *The Lord of the Rings*), it should be noted in the passage above that the Istari do not perform valiant deeds for the most part, but their role is to move Elves and Men to do so. They encourage the Children of Ilúvatar (Elves and Men) to do good, to provide counsel and guidance, and are a connection between the secondary gods and mortals (or semi-mortals in the case of Elves). Their designation as messengers of the deity figures is a specific subordinate role and has a connection, whether consciously or not on Tolkien's part, to the Abrahamic concept of angels.

The Valar-Maiar structure could be considered to be analogous to the angels of Abrahamic mythology in which there are superior archangels with angels of lesser status below. As noted previously, the word "angel" in use in the Biblical scripture

means “messenger.” The Qu’ran also refers to angels as messengers: “Praise be to God, / … / Who made the angels / Messengers with wings” (*The Qu’ran*, al-Fatir 35:1). There are any number of lesser angels with a designated number of archangels who are of the highest status among them. According to information provided by Rosemary Guiley, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam hold Michael and Gabriel in common as names of archangels. In Islam there are four archangels – Israfil, Jibril (Gabriel), Azrael, and Michael. There is a highest angel who is chief of the kerubim (cherubim) who is in some ways analogous with what in Christianity is known as the Holy Spirit, and all other angels come from this angel. The primary function of the archangels is to worship the primary deity, although in certain situations, such as the Revelation to the Prophet, they interact with humans on the primary god’s behalf. Lesser angels perform a number of various functions in the celestial and earthly realm which may or may not involve direct influence with humans (Guiley 32). Judaism names four angels who are closest to god, those being Michael, Gabriel, Uriah, and Raphael (or Fanuel). In this theology, there are seven classes of angels: cherubim, seraphim, ofanim, angels of power, principalities, the elect one (Messiah), and the powers of earth and water (“angelology”). The early books of Judaism do not have as elaborate of a concept of angelology as later ones, something which is attributed to exposure to Zoroastrianism during the Babylonian captivity (Guiley 28). The Judaic angels carry over into Christianity, keeping the hierarchical structure, and are active figures in the lives of believers through the New Testament, notably the apostles, and afterward in the lives of saints and martyrs (Guiley 30). Similarly, there is a celestial hierarchy of lesser deities within the other two belief systems that are being analyzed here.

In Mesopotamia, Marduk addresses the Anunnaki, who are named as gods, but are subservient to Marduk and, as it appears in the primary text, the named gods. There are six hundred of the Anunnaki; Marduk divides them evenly, stationing three hundred in heaven and three hundred on earth. He then commands those of the earth to create Babylon, and it is they who physically build it:

> The Anunnaki began shovelling.
>
> For a whole year they made bricks for it.
>
> When the second year arrived,
>
> They had raised the top of Esagila in front of (?) the
>
> Apsu;
>
> They had built a high ziggurrat for the Apsu.
>
> They founded a dwelling for Anu, Ellil, and Ea likewise.
>
> (Dalley 262)

These lesser gods are the workmen for the higher gods, and their labor is in turn relieved by the creation of man (see below). Later in the same story, the gods gather to feast in celebration of the creation of Babylon, and mention is made of the presence of fifty "great gods," implying their elevated station over the rest of the Anunnaki (Dalley 263). The selected Egyptian material is not as clear, but it can be deduced from the text that the extensive pantheon of the Egyptians followed once the secondary gods were created, stating that they then "brought forth their multitudes in this land" (Pritchard 6). Also, in the Memphite story of creation, the number of the gods is implied with the passage: "So the gods entered into their bodies of every (kind of) wood, of every (kind of) stone, of every (kind of) clay, … in which they had taken form" (Pritchard 5). This

implies that each of these named objects has an individual god, which would encompass more than those named who make the Ennead.

The Creation of Man

After the establishment of the celestial hierarchy, the next main topic that these cosmologies address is the creation of man. Pritchard has preserved two texts which tell the Mesopotamian story of the genesis of man. The first is from the Epic of Creation and I will refer to it as the epic text. The second is a fragmentary account of the creation of man which includes a goddess, and I will refer to it as the goddess text. At first glance, they would appear to be in conflict with one another, yet closer study shows that they are compatible and the difference is that they simply focus on different aspects of the event they record. In the epic text, the demiurge is the catalyst for the creation of man. The text reads:

> Opening his mouth, [Marduk] addresses Ea
> To impart the plan he had conceived in his heart:
> 'Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
> I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his name.
> Verily, savage-man I will create.
> He shall be charged with the service of the gods
> That they might be at ease! (Pritchard 68)

The text goes on to tell of Ea's response[10] that the blood for the creation of man shall come from a god, Kingu, who initiated an uprising earlier in the narrative, and "Out of his blood they fashioned mankind" and later, "As artfully planned by Marduk, did Nudimmud create it" (Pritchard 68). Nudimmud is a creator name for the god Ea

(Dalley 320). The plural referent, "they," is not limited to Ea and Marduk, although they are the main agents. The other gods, the Igigi (Anunakki), are present in the narrative as well and surrender Kingu. Though the narrative does not tell of the action of other gods in the creation of man, it does not mean that there was not any. Ea is named in the goddess text in two places. In the first, he is identified by the name Enki, and in the second, he is named as Ea. Damage to the beginning of the original text has made establishment of context difficult; however, the creator-goddess, Mami (who is also known as Nintu and Ninhursag in this text), is called upon to bring forth mankind. She makes the declaration, "Let him be *formed* out of clay, be *animated* with blood!" To which Enki (Ea) replies, "Let them slay one god, / and let the gods be purified in the *judgment*. / With his flesh and his blood / Let Ninhursag mix clay" (Pritchard 99-100). Lacunae on the reverse side of the text disrupts the narrative structure of the remainder of the story, but in what remains, Ea plays a role, seemingly as a mid-wife, in bringing man into the world (Pritchard 100). Thus, in the first text, Ea is given full credit for the act of creation, but in the second, more detail is given and he is assisted by a creator goddess.

In both texts, the reason for the creation of man is identical. As cited above in the first text, mankind is brought into being to ease the work of the gods. Dalley translates this passage as "The work of the gods shall be imposed (on him), / and so they shall be at leisure" (Dalley 261). Mankind is a "plan for the relief of the gods," and once created, Ea "imposed upon it the service and let free the gods" (Pritchard 68). In the second narrative, there are similar declarations in that "The *burden* of creation man shall bear!" and "Create, then, Lullu [mankind] and let him bear the yoke!" to which

Nintu replies, “With his … [lacunae] let Lullu appear! / He who shall *serve* all the gods” (Pritchard 99). In the first narrative, the gods are so grateful for the creation of man, they build a shrine to honor Marduk, which is the founding of Babylon, discussed above.

In Egyptian mythology, the creation of man is not as salient an event as it is with the other narratives. Where it does exist, it is not developed as it is in the ancient narratives that are under examination here. Egyptian mythology holds at least two narratives that record the creation of man and they are very different from one another. In the first, Khepri tells of when the secondary gods, Shu and Tefnut, brought the members of his body to be assembled, and one of his eyes was missing: “After I had joined together my members, I wept over them. That is how men came into being from the tears which came forth from my Eye. It was angry with me, after it returned and found that I had made another in its place, having replaced it with the Glorious Eye, which I had made” (Pritchard 6). The creation of man is a side-note in this narrative. The god does not plan with his heart, nor does he speak with his mouth to bring man into being. Man comes from a completely different source, although it should be noted that his creation is connected directly with the primary god. The other narrative holds more similarities with the Mesopotamian story in that “The god Khnum is the creator of man; he forms the body from clay on the potter’s wheel, and after completing the form and the countenance the soul is blown into the nostrils” (Yahuda 147). The idea that man was created from earth or clay parallels the Mesopotamian narrative discussed above. It is a trope within the Abrahamic story of the creation of man as well.

As noted before, the book of Genesis has two narratives of creation. Both tell of the creation of man, but in slightly differing ways. Chapter one states:

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
>
> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (*Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:26-27)

In this narrative, the focus is on the idea that the primary deity created both men and women (apparently at the same time although it is ambiguous enough to allow for the second version discussed below) and that they are to have dominion over all of the earth.

This is a notable difference from the previous narratives. The Egyptian stories do not give an explanation of why man exists; they only tell how they came to be. It is a larger difference from the Mesopotamian in that man is given a position of power when they are made, rather than for the sole purpose of serving and working for the gods. Chapter two of Genesis gives the account, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (*Holy Bible*, Genesis 2:7). The Qu'ran agrees with this: "and God did create / You from dust" (*The Qu'ran*, al-Fatir 35:11) and "We [God and the angels] created man from sounding clay, / From mud moulded into shape" (*The Qu'ran*, al-Hijr 15:26). The creation of man from dust or clay ties the story to the Mesopotamian and Egyptian narratives in that the element of the earth or soil is the material that is used to create

man. The idea of the god breathing life into the created man is also shared between the Abrahamic narrative and the Egyptian. In addition, the name that is given to the man, Adam, is the Hebrew אָדָם, which means "ruddy" (Strong, Hebrew 120). There are numerous explanations for the reason behind this and, in light of the Mesopotamian narrative, it could be speculated that it is an echo of the trope of man being created with clay and blood. The Qu'ran has a more direct tie in that in addition to dust, the creator god "Created man, out of / A (mere) clot / Of congealed blood" (*The Qu'ran*, al-`Alaq 96:2). The creation of man in chapter two of Genesis also holds a similarity with the Mesopotamian story in that "the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (*Holy Bible*, Genesis 2:15). Man is created for the purpose of doing work and labor. In the second book of the Qu'ran, the creator declares that he will make a vice-regent on the earth which relates to the idea in Genesis of man's elevated position in existence. The angels ask the creator why he will do so, as they anticipate that this vice-regent will "make mischief therein and shed blood," to which the god replies, "I know what ye know not" (*The Qu'ran*, al-Baqara 2:30). This behavior of secrecy in the primary god with relation to the creation of man is the element in these creation narratives that most closely resembles the creation of man in *The Silmarillion*.

Man is the direct creation of Ilúvatar, just as man is the creation of the primary god in the other narratives. The means and reason are known to that god alone, as compared with the Qu'ran above:

> the Children of Ilúvatar were conceived by him alone … and none of the Ainur had part in their making. Therefore when they beheld them, the

> more did they love them … wherein they say the mind of Ilúvatar reflected anew, and learned yet a little more of his wisdom, which otherwise had been hidden even from the Ainur. (*Silm.* 18)

Men have a special, closer relationship with the primary god than the lesser gods, which is similar to the Mesopotamian and Abrahamic mythologies, but the elevated status in existence is given to the Elves. The picture of men in *The Silmarillion* is not one that is worthy of reverence:

> Ilúvatar knew that men … would stray often, and would not use their gifts in harmony; … Yet the Elves believe that Men are often a grief to Manwë, who knows most the mind of Ilúvatar; for it seems to the Elves that Men resemble Melkor most of all the Ainur, although he has ever feared and hated them, even those that served him. (*Silm.* 42)

This is an unusual perspective in the collection of narratives here. The sacred narratives of the ancient Near East have an understandably anthropocentric perspective and therefore place man in an elevated place in the hierarchy of existence. Tolkien, however, has the opportunity to present a view of existence that is outside of the human context.

The Silmarillion is not an objective account of the history of Middle-earth. It is written from an Elven-centered perspective, which accounts for the caveat phrases of "Yet the Elves believe" and "it seems to the Elves" in the segment above (*Letters* 147). The story of the creation of man comes very late in the narrative, not until the twelfth chapter of the book; although the coming of man is prophesied earlier in conjunction

with the coming of Elves (*Silm.* 18). When man does appear, they come from the east and the elves name them:

> the Second People; but they called them also Hildor, the Followers, and many other names: Apanóar, the After-born, Engwar, the Sickly, and Fírimar, the Mortals; and they named them the Usurpers, the Strangers, and the Inscrutable, the Self-cursed, the Heavy-handed, the Night-fearers, the Children of the Sun. … To Hildórien there came no Vala to guide men, or to summon them to dwell in Valinor; and Men have feared the Valar, rather than loved them, and have not understood the purposes of the Powers, being at variance with them, and at strife with the world. (*Silm.* 103)

This reflects the Elves' view of men more than a universal truth in Middle-earth. It does, however, establish the sense of friction that exists between Elves and men and, despite the opinions of the Elves, the earlier segment acknowledges that men have a close relationship with the primary god that is a mystery to all except Ilúvatar.

The Antagonist God

Conflict is another common element in creation narratives as they seek to address why there are struggles and negative experiences in this existence. Conflict in a story is usually instigated by an antagonist, and each of these stories has at least one.

From the Egyptian:

> He is one fallen to the flame, Apophis with a knife on his head. He cannot see, and his name is no (more) in this land. I have commanded that a curse be cast upon him; … I have made him

> nonexistent: his name is not; … His soul, his corpse, his state of glory, his shadow, and his magic are not. … He is fallen and overthrown … (Pritchard 7)

From the Mesopotamian:

> He [Ea] unfastened his belt, took off his crown, / Took away his mantle of radiance and put it on himself. / He held Apsu down and slew him; / Tied up Mummu and laid him across him. / He set up his dwelling on top of Apsu, / And grasped Mummu, held him by a nose-rope. (Dalley 235)

From the Judeo-Christian:

> How thou art fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God … Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. … But thou art cast out of the grave … and as those that are slain, thrust through with a sword … as a carcase trodden under feet. (*Holy Bible*, Isaiah 14:12-19)

From the Islamic:

> When I have fashioned him [man]
> (In due proportion) and breathed
> Into him of My spirit,

Fall ye down in obeisance

Unto him.

So the angels prostrated themselves,

All of them together:

Not so Iblīs: he refused to be

Among those who prostrated themselves.

(God) said: 'O Iblīs!

What is your reason

For not being among those

Who prostrated themselves?'

(Iblīs) said: 'I am not one

To prostrate myself to man,

Whom Thou didst create

From sounding clay, from mud

Moulded into shape.'

(God) said: 'Then get thee out

From here; for thou art

Rejected, accursed.

And the Curse shall be

On thee till the Day of Judgment.' (*The Qu'ran*, al-Hijr 15:29-35)

From Tolkien:

Last of all is set the name of Melkor, He who arises in Might. … In the powers and knowledge of all the other Valar he had part, but he

> turned them to evil purposes, and squandered his strength in violence and tyranny. For he coveted Arda and all that was in it, … From splendour he fell through arrogance to contempt for all things save himself, … he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness. … of the Maiar many were drawn to his splendor in the days of his greatness, and remained in that allegiance down into his darkness (*Silm.* 31); Melkor is no longer counted among the Valar, and his name is not spoken upon Earth. (*Silm.* 25-26)

In each of these examples we have the antagonist painted in the guise of an evil enemy. There is shared imagery of battle or conflict with domination as the result. Common elements, though not in all, are that of falling (either physically or from position), fire and flames, darkness, domination, and ostracizing of this evil character. These characters are defeated, but they do not go away. I would like to point out the parallels of the Judeo-Christian example and that of the Mesopotamian in which the enemy is slain or compared to those which are slain, then they are trod upon. In the Egyptian, Judeo-Christian, and in Tolkien, the enemy falls or descends into a pit, fire, and/or darkness. Also, in the Egyptian, the enemy's "name is not," and in Tolkien, "his name is not spoken upon Earth." These shared motifs function to establish the etiology of an enemy or evil in a way that is familiar across them all. Thus, in this and the previous comparisons, theological themes are worked into Tolkien's own mythology, and serve to connect the structure of his work to that of extant mythologies.

CHAPTER TWO: ESCHATOLOGICAL NARRATIVES

Thus far, we have seen how each of these creation narratives approach the larger, over-arching themes of mythology: where existence came from, how it came to be, what god or gods are responsible and where they came from, the order of existence, the how and why of the existence of man, and an account of the source of the conflict that is experienced in life. Although not a direct part of creation narratives, eschatological narratives are an integral part of the mythologies of this analysis, and they are a continuation of what was started in the cosmological narratives. The narratives that have been discussed thus far all account for beginnings. For an audience to consider a narrative to be complete, it often must have an end, a resolution, as well. It appears that the myth-makers of the past also felt this need. They therefore continued to develop their mythologies and sought to answer questions as to how the stories that were started might end. As with the beginnings of the creation stories discussed above, the ends of these stories share a number of similarities. The most common element that they share among them are prophecies of forthcoming battle and war between the celestial figures of good and evil to determine which will ultimately rule the world.

References to an End of Days are few in *The Silmarillion*, although Tolkien does expand on eschatological ideas in other writings published post-mortem (Whittingham 189). The overarching themes, however, are present in *The Silmarillion*, and they include a Great Battle, a Second Music, and a re-birth of Arda. Throughout *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien references "a final Battle at the end of the world of Middle-earth,

but between whom and with what results he never tells" (Kocher 221). The first mention of a Battle is made in the second chapter of the "Quenta Silmarillion," which comes after the "Ainulindalë" and the "Valaquenta": "Then [the Dwarves'] part shall be to serve Aulë and to aid him in the remaking of Arda after the Last Battle" (*Silm.* 44). Explanation of this Battle is not pursued, and the passage continues in its discussion concerning Dwarves. The second mention of the Last Battle is similarly structured, only giving a mention of the Battle, but focusing mainly on the topic at hand which, in this instance, is Varda's creation of the constellations, which includes "Menelmacar, with his shining belt, that forebodes the Last Battle that shall be at the end of days" (*Silm.* 48). The final mention is much later in the text, in the tale of the fall of Númenor in which the King and warriors who dared to go to Aman were buried: "there it is said that they lie imprisoned in the Caves of the Forgotten, until the Last Battle and the Day of Doom" (*Silm.* 279). Again, this is not expanded upon and the idea acts as if it is a given in the knowledge of the reader; that is, one who is part of the secondary world who is reading a legendary or historical account of Middle-earth. Familiarity with "The Last Battle" and "Day of Doom" is implied by the structure of the narrative.

Abrahamic eschatology behaves in the same way and holds similar tropes. Hebrew scripture refers to the "Day of the Lord," which carries forward into Christianity as the "Day of Judgment" or the "Day of Our Lord." The first mention of it (keeping in mind that the books of the canon are not in chronological order) is in the book of Isaiah: "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (*Holy Bible*, Isaiah 2:12). As in Tolkien's structure, it does not explain exactly what the Day

of the Lord means, nor the specifics of how the high will be brought low, but it does say that idols shall be abolished (v. 18), and the earth will be shaken (v. 19 and 21), and man will fear the Lord (v. 19 and 21). Later passages become more violent, describing the Day of the Lord as a destruction (13:6), with pain and sorrow (13:8), desolation of the land and sinners destroyed (13:9), the sun and the moon will be dark (13:10), the earth will be moved out of place (13:13), people will die violently (13:15-16), and the streams turned to pitch and the dust into brimstone (34:9). It is a day of anger and vengeance for the god that comes and the descriptions of it tell of a day of destruction and fear with all of the images still associated with the idea of the "end of the world." Mention of war and battle is included: "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (*Holy Bible*, Joel 2:11). The Hebrew Day of the Lord is not, however, world-encompassing as later Christian theology. The result of the Day of the Lord for the Hebrews is their god's coming in order to defeat their enemies in the temporal world; specifically, the "northern army," which could refer to a number of civilizations in the region at the time. The Hebrew word, צָפוֹנִי, tsephônîy, translates directly as "northern" and so is not specific as to whom, exactly, the Lord will drive away from the Hebrews (Strong, Hebrew 6830). The other prophets that mention the Day of the Lord – Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi, with Lamentations as well – follow suit in tone and imagery. Zephaniah is the exception in that his vision is that of global effects of the wrath of his god, saying "for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy" (*Holy Bible*, Zephaniah 3:8), rather than giving a regional viewpoint. In these

accounts, the deity comes to earth and wages violent war on the enemies of the Hebrews. Those that oppose them or their god are destroyed utterly. They do not mention ideas of a world or existence after the Day of the Lord, but Christian and Islamic theologies do make such predictions.

The most recognized writing of Christian eschatology is that of The Revelation. The Revelation is different than any of the other writings in the Christian canon in that it gives exhaustive details as to what will happen, in what order, and the results from the beginning to the end of the Day (or time period), which includes a great battle that is essentially between good (Christ) and evil (Satan). It is, of the texts under discussion here, the most developed of the eschatological narratives and therefore the most complete ending of all that was started in its associated cosmological narratives. The Revelation is the full detailed account of what St. John envisioned when the Day of Judgment (or the Day of Our Lord) is realized. The imagery matches that of the Hebrew accounts with a vengeful god bringing his wrath down upon earth and those who oppose him. It is prophesied that Satan, his servants, and people who are not devoted to the Christ figure and the associated theology are destroyed.[11]

The vision that Islam holds of the end times is remarkably similar to that of Christianity. As with references to creation, passages regarding eschatology are scattered through the text of the Qu'ran. They include concepts of judgment of humans with those who are faithful to the belief system being favored, unbelievers being condemned to hell, and general destruction and chaos on earth.[12] Paralleling Christian eschatology, "The *Quran* emphasizes the inevitability of resurrection, judgment, and the eternal division of the righteous and the wicked," with the appearance of al-Dajjal (the

Great Deceiver), and that of The Mahdi (which some factions believe will be Jesus Christ) who will judge mankind before the end ("Eschatology").

Such a detailed examination of the literary evidence of these belief systems establishes a connection with Tolkien's work in that the tropes are carried forward into his work and are echoed in the eschatology of Middle-earth and include the idea of the demiurge being the one who will eventually have dominion over the earth. Thus, the establishment of the demiurge in the Lieutenant position to the highest deity in the creation narratives is carried forward to the end of the grand narrative and justifies the establishment of the celestial hierarchy in the manner that it was in the cosmological narrative. In Tolkien's narrative, the eschatological element of the demiurge coming to ultimate power over the earth reflects strong tropes found with relation to Christianity's Christ, the Jewish Messiah, and Mesopotamia's Marduk. This is understandable given Tolkien's adherence to Roman Catholicism, but examination of Mesopotamian eschatology shows that it is a link in the mythological chain in which it preceded, if not had a role in inspiring, the eschatology of the Judeo-Christian belief structures.

A text referred to as the "Marduk Prophecy"[13] records events of the Neo-Assyrian period of the 12th century BCE. during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (not to be confused with Nebuchadnezzar II from the Biblical scriptures who reigned c. 605-562 BCE). It records events that reflect a time when the statue of Marduk was taken from Babylon. The narrative is in Marduk's voice, telling of his travels to foreign lands. In his absence, Babylon descends into chaos: "mad dogs roam the city biting citizens, friend attacks friend, the rich beg from the poor, brother eats brother, and corpses block

the city gate" (Neujahr 5). After which the narrative changes, creating prophecy by using future tense and speaks of a king that will rise and restore order, ending with:

> a prediction of a future monarch who will rule with the approval of the gods, reverse a situation of foreign domination … restore the proper functioning of the native cult, and institute a period of prosperity. The conquering of enemies, support of cult, and economic well-being for the land are part and parcel of Mesopotamian royal ideology. (Neujahr 9)

The concept that I am focusing on for this examination is that of the foretelling of a time of dire circumstances which are resolved by a figurehead that is affiliated with the gods. Neujahr makes the connection as well, stating that:

> Near Eastern analogs to these [prophetic] texts, in regards to their focus on the imminent arrival of a legitimate native dynast to set all the social and natural disorder aright, is in those biblical texts which look to a future davidic [sic] king who will free Judah from foreign oppression and right social ills—that is to say, in the early (proto-)messianic ideologies found particularly in prophetic literature. (10)

Although Neujahr argues against it, he quotes Sigmund Mowinckel as saying that for him, "this meant that messianism cannot exist independently of eschatology: for while 'the ideal of kingship belongs to the present (though it clearly also looks towards the future), … the Messiah is a purely future, eschatological figure" (Neujahr 10-11). As examined above, the idea of a god or deity figure as a king, especially of a king over all other kings, is a familiar element of ancient Near Eastern theology. Therefore, it is a leader, be they mortal or not, who is the central figure in these eschatological narratives

that will defend the believers, destroy their enemies, and restore order when the prophesied day or time arrives.

One version of Egyptian eschatology can be found in the Prophecies of Neferti that have been dated to the 18th dynasty (c. 1550 – 1292 BCE). Though it holds similarities with all of the narratives of this examination, this narrative resembles the Mesopotamian structure more than the others. Sherine ElSabaie summarizes this text, stating that:

> The text foretells the accession of [a] king who will restore the fallen conditions of the country: 'Then a king will come from the South, Ameny, the justified, by his name,' (24) (…) 'Then Order … will return to its seat, while Chaos … is driven away. (25)' The King here acts as a Messiah; he overcomes all the powers of the chaos and realizes a real eschatology from the ancient Egyptian point of view, a 'political' eschatology one should say, but still a salvation and an inauguration of a new age as Man always hoped to have. (8)

As before, the idea of overall chaos is present with a leadership figure that restores order and renews the world. ElSabaie ties the ancient Egyptian texts of her examination together, noting that they have this common theme:

> In all these texts, a hero will appear to suppress all the calamities. The same hope calmed the Egyptians during the Hellenistic era: king Nectanebo, the last native Egyptian king would come again to overcome the enemies and conquer the world. Many prophecies during the Hellenistic era predicted the coming of a savior king … (9)

The idea of the return of a king who will establish dominion over the world as a savior of those who follow him, then, is a common theme through the ancient Near East.

Although it is not so dramatic or detailed, the idea of the return of a leadership figure in end times is hinted at in *The Silmarillion*. Fëanor, a revered leader of the Noldor (the Deep Elves), rebelled against the Valar and was also the creator of the three Silmarils that create the conflict theme that is present throughout *The Silmarillion*. Of the Silmarils, it is written that "not until the End, when Fëanor shall return who perished ere the Sun was made, and sits now in the Halls of Awaiting and comes no more among his kin … shall it be known of what substance they were made" (*Silm.* 67). This is the only hint that is given regarding Fëanor and the end times that are alluded to in *The Silmarillion*. The theme, however, is there, and Tolkien leaves it to us to speculate as to the events that will unfold upon Fëanor's return.

End time narratives, despite the details of gods and kings, are about humanity. They are a part of creation narratives in that they continue themes begun in these stories of beginnings and provide a satisfactory conclusion in companion stories of how things will end. From *etios* to *eschaton*, the two make a grand mythic arc that seeks to answer questions of where man's world came from and what will happen to man and his world in the end. It is an attempt, handed down for generations, to try to make sense of the existence that we find ourselves in, and their longevity, volume, and similarities attest to the importance of these narratives to humanity.

CHAPTER THREE: MYTHOLOGY AND MEMES

The previous chapter provides an analysis that exemplifies the ways in which Tolkien's mythological structure compares to a number of interrelated myth structures which were not among those favored by Tolkien in his scholarly pursuits. The issue that remains for examination, then, is to question why that might be so. Bringing in the disciplines of Anthropology and Comparative Philology into "On Fairy-stories," Tolkien presented three possibilities for the source of mythological and narrative similarities: independent evolution (invention), inheritance (from common ancestry), and diffusion (from one or more origins) (*OFS* 40). He also made reference to a "Tree of Tales" and "the tangled skein of Language" to convey the complexity of the subject (*OFS* 39). Myths, however, do not concern narratives alone. They are woven in to the tapestry of human existence that includes language, time, and human imagination.

The similarities that Tolkien's mythology shares with the mythologies of this analysis go beyond the structural elements that have been presented thus far. Tolkien's mythology exists in the created world of Middle-earth in a way that parallels the existence of myth in the primary world. Robert Segal identifies the three main topics of origin, function, and subject matter which unite the study of myth across disciplines and therefore can be applied to myth structures in general: "By 'origin' is meant why and how myth arises. By 'function' is meant why and how myth persists. The answer to the why of origin and function is usually a need, which myth arises to fulfil and lasts by continuing to fulfil" (2). The common elements, structures, and tropes discussed in the

first part of this analysis are not exclusive to Tolkien's mythology, nor to Near Eastern mythologies. They exist in mythological super-structures such as the Greco-Roman and the Norse through the hierarchy of narrative to the "lesser" myths found in legend and folk-tales. These similarities are familiar throughout Western myth structures and manifest in a number of their descendant cultures.

The reason for this perpetuation may be deeper than the theories of independent evolution, inheritance, and diffusion and may also suggest answers to questions regarding the origin, function, and longevity of myths. These three theories of mythology do not satisfy the questions they are trying to answer and do not go far enough to try to find the source and the reasons for the survival of mythology. In *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins discusses the broader issue of idea and belief transmission through meme theory that offers a possibility for consideration in conjunction with myth theory. A meme is a "unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*" and refers to ideas that are passed on from person to person much in the same way that genes are in biology (Dawkins, *Delusion* 191, *Selfish* 192). In his later work, *The God Delusion*, which brings meme theory into play with the topic of religion, he propounds that:

> As with genes in a gene pool, the memes that prevail will be the ones that are good at getting themselves copied. This may be because they have direct appeal, as, presumably, the immortality meme has for some people. Or it may be because they flourish in the presence of other memes that have already become numerous in the meme pool. (Dawkins, *Delusion* 196)

He uses the term "memeplex" to refer to this larger collection of memes that exist as a single body and that are all inter-related and sometimes dependent upon one another for survival (Dawkins, *Delusion* 198, *Selfish* 197). Dawkins uses religious structures as a specific example of how his meme theory works, but he applies his idea to any cultural and social practices, ideas, and beliefs. If religious systems are seen as memeplexes, it could be argued, then, that mythology is the glue that holds these memeplexes together and is the vessel by which they are passed from person to person and from generation to generation. Dawkins touches on this idea obliquely when he gives a list of religious memes that have survived due to merit or compatibility with other memes. Included in this list is "Beautiful music, art and scriptures which are themselves self-replicating tokens of religious ideas." He adds a footnote which discusses the tantalizing idea of following this into the History of Art as its "sophisticated tracing of iconographies and symbolisms could be seen as an elaborate study in memeplexity. Details will have been favored or disfavored by the presence of existing members of the meme pool, and these will often include religious memes" (Dawkins 200). This can be taken further in that the art that he speaks of is more often than not inspired by the mythologies of the belief systems that those memes are a part of. Art is the visual existence of the mythological meme. Literature, as a form of art, is the existence of those memes in the form of language.

Language, either oral or written, is the primary method by which myths are preserved and perpetuated. Albert Cook states that "Myth is not only analogous to language; it must inescapably enter language in order to be transmitted" (3). Myth and language correspond in their functions in that they are both inextricably bound to the

transmission and preservation of ideas (see Tolkien quote, *OFS* 40, page 1). Language the actual structure for this communication, and myth, using this structure, provides imagery to better convey the ideas that the language is trying to convey. Because ideas can be transmitted more efficiently in language by using mythological imagery, the myths become part of the structure of language itself. For instance, it is easier and more aesthetically pleasing for Keats in *Ode on Melancholy* to write:

> No, no! go not to Lethe, neither twist
>
> Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
>
> Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
>
> By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
>
> Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
>
> Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
>
> Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
>
> A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
>
> For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
>
> And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul. (Keats 250)

When Keats writes the words "Lethe," "Wolf's-bane," "Proserpine," and "Psyche," he is deliberately relying on the reader's familiarity with the myths surrounding these words to convey deeper meaning and implications in a much more poetic manner than using scientific or non-mythological words.

The careful and deliberate selection of mythological images by poets to convey deeper and abstract meaning exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between the structures of myth and language that are part of Western culture. They need one another

to survive and as one changes and evolves, so does the other as they affect most aspects of human interaction and idea transmission:

> It is not only artful language, poetry, whose history can be related to changes in the interaction between myth and language; philosophy and historiography and other forms of formal human discourse become possible, it would seem from the historical evidence, only after and through a shift in the interaction between myth and language. (Cook 2)

Written language is the most superior format for language and myth as it can be preserved for as long as the medium exists and does not run the risk of "dying" with the person who is transmitting the idea. Because literature exists as a tangible entity, it is a beneficial medium for meme transmission because of its inherent longevity: "Jewish religious laws may continue to propagate themselves for thousands of years, usually because of the great potential permanence of written records" (Dawkins, *Selfish* 194). Sacred texts often, though not always, are comprised of narratives which are the mythological stories that contain the memes (ideas) that they are meant to preserve and perpetuate. Therefore, a literary form is the most beneficial and advantageous that a meme can exist in.

Meme theory offers a hypothesis as to the mechanical reasons behind the perpetuation and survival of myths. Why is it, though, that the memes are allowed to survive? What is it, exactly, that Tolkien imitates in his work that readers have found to be so appealing which then causes them to spread the meme? One possible means of explanation would be to consider archetypes as memes as, despite the different "disguises" they may don in the form of differing cultural environments, they are

essentially the same characters. Cook, coming from a standpoint of Structuralism, offers an example that is useful in discussing myth and meme theory: "Myth itself, once formulated within a society, is a given system, a sort of lexicon, where the relations between words are more fixed than in language: the words 'Dionysis' and 'Zeus' may be combined in a sentence much more freely than the [mythological themes] about them can be" (Cook 3). "Dionysus" and "Zeus" are the mythological names for the memes that they represent. This sign-signifier-signified mechanism of written language facilitates transmission of mythological ideas (which Cook argues goes back to cave paintings of Neolithic times [281]), and although Zeus may be signified by "Jupiter," or "Odin," or "Marduk," or "Jehovah," the meme at their root is nearly identical.

Take for example the primary gods and the antagonist characters of the narratives discussed previously. As with Zeus and Dionysus, the meme that is represented, or embodied by, those characters look different in each of those stories, but as the analysis has shown, their purpose is nearly identical beneath the façade. Northrop Frye distinguishes between archetypes and narrative as well, saying that "The myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative to the oracle. Hence the myth is the archetype, though it might be convenient to say myth only when referring to narrative, and archetype when speaking of significance" (Frye 103-104). The story of the all-powerful primary god is the myth; the archetype is the idea of a figure that creates existence. This not only applies to characters, but to themes, tropes, images, plots, and any other structure, such as those that are discussed above, that is at the core of a narrative. Archetypes are archetypes because they are readily identifiable by a large audience. They represent memes that

have survived and replicated, facilitated by the appeal and the very structure of the myth. The elements and structures of a powerful story are repeated because they fulfill a need that is embedded so deep within the human psyche that it allows them to survive across wide spans of time and distance.

Tolkien's art replicates the meme of mythology, acting as a clone, if you will. Because of the detail of his replication and because it satisfies all of the criteria for the mythological meme, it has been allowed to survive and flourish as its own meme, creating a fan-base for his work that continues to grow. *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* are the third and fourth highest selling books of record with sales of 150 million copies and 100 million copies, respectively ("List of Best Selling Books").[14] He is topped only by Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, both of which are reported to have reached the 200 million mark.[15] Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Return of the King* is the fifth highest grossing film of all time with *The Two Towers* being ranked at number eighteen, and *The Fellowship of the Ring* ranked at number twenty-five ("List of Highest Grossing Films").[16] These numbers can be used as quantitative evidence of the success of Tolkien's creation. The clone has taken on a life of its own.

Although Tolkien certainly did not consciously have meme theory in mind when he created his mythology, it was there as his life was so influenced by memes of Western culture that can be traced back to the ancient Near Eastern mythologies that were examined earlier. Thus, meme theory can be used to explain why Tolkien's mythology bears so much in common with ancient Near Eastern mythology. If mythology and religious archetypes are part of the memeplex of Western belief

systems, then it could perhaps be seen that those memes, through Tolkien, took on a new life through his narratives. Tolkien's work is an evolved step in the life of the mythology meme. Ancient mythologies are largely forgotten, and classical mythology is also falling out of favor and is unfamiliar to all but the most diligent of literature majors. A number of mythological memes survive in the Christian mythology that still remains prevalent in Western culture, but existing largely as sacred text, it is in a specialized form that has become distanced from us by time and space.

The need for a mythology to feel close, for it to be part of one's native identity, is perhaps what Tolkien felt when he wrote of his desire to create a mythology for England. There was a void that was not being filled by the dominant sacred narratives, and the modern habit of dismissing myths and stories by relegating them to the nursery, as he said (*OFS* 50), had weakened the memeplex and threatened its existence. It found a willing host in Tolkien and, taking on a new form through his imaginings, was able to adapt and take on new life. By constructing his stories of Middle-earth in the way that he did, by imitating the core memes that a number of surviving mythologies share, Tolkien accessed a deep part of humanity that gave rise to and perpetuated the mythological narratives that can be traced back to our oldest surviving stories.

The Silmarillion and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy were written long after the previous mythologies that have been analyzed here, within living memory of many people today, and are acknowledged to be a work of pure fiction with no religious or ritual purpose behind them. Yet if, in the distant future, the records of our knowledge should be lost and archaeologists and philologists of the future attempt to find religious texts, it is plausible that if they were to find *The Silmarillion*, they would believe it to be

the cornerstone of a practiced belief system as much as the Bible, the Qu'ran, the Enuma Elish, or any other of the myriad mythologies and sacred texts that have been recorded. Further study of Tolkien's work alongside mythological structures will prove to reveal additional parallels. The common themes with the shared imagination and inspiration of humanity lie at the core of our mythologies, our narratives, no matter where they come from, their age, or how they were perceived, how they are perceived in our time, or how they will be perceived in the future. Each step of their conception and evolution is a reflection of the people whose culture it is rooted in and, as comparative study suggests, that of humanity. When Tolkien wrote a mythological narrative for Middle-earth, he constructed it just as myths have been formulated for centuries, and in doing so, succeeded greatly in producing an authentic mythological

ENDNOTES

[1] Citations of "On Fairy-stories" will be abbreviated as *OFS,* as here. Likewise, *The Silmarillion* will be abbreviated as *Silm*.

[2] Cf. Carpenter 55; Chance, *Invention* 61*;* Kocher 3; Shippey 6.

[3] Chance, *Invention* lists Finnish language and literature as an influence on Tolkien (xiii). Kocher states that Finnish mythology has been excluded as an influence on Tolkien's mythology (3).

[4] See Birns, endnote 15, pg. 66.

[5] Ellipses, parentheses, and some brackets in the ancient texts that are quoted in this paper are in the translation text and indicate missing or damaged original text and translation clarification.

[6] It should be noted that within the Abrahamic tradition that Islam does not refer to the Old Testament as a primary religious text as Judaism and Christianity do. Although Islam branched from Judaism and came about in the time of the rise of Christianity in Western culture, its primary religious text is the Qu'ran (Esposito 247). It does not have a chronological narrative of creation as Genesis does, but has references to the creation scattered throughout which reflects the cosmology of Genesis. Although the Qu'ran is from the seventh century of the Common Era, I have included analysis of it and Christian narratives of the New Testament as they are developments within the Abrahamic tradition that continue and further develop concepts contained within the older texts.

[7] The names of Khepri, Ptah, Re, and Atum largely refer to the same primary god. When the First Dynasty established Memphis as its capital (c. 3100 BCE), it established Ptah over the recognized creator-gods, of which there were numerous names and personas throughout the region. The different names still appear in various contexts and versions which reflects the development and evolution of Egyptian religious belief systems through its extensive history (Pritchard 4). This study is not concerned with specific names; rather the interest is focused on the narrative structures surrounding the figures the names represent.

[8] For citations from the Qu'ran, I will list the name of the Sura as well as its number for additional clarification. These are not to be interpreted as book names with chapter numbers as are used in the Judeo-Christian Bible.

[9] See *The Silmarillion* pages 25-29 for detailed descriptions of the Valar.

[10] At this point in the narrative, Ea is the primary god after defeating Apsu (see Pritchard 61).

[11] See *Holy Bible*, Matthew 10:15, 11:22 and 24, 12:36; Mark 6:11; Romans 2:5 and 16; 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6 and 10, 2:16; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 2:9, 3:7, 10, and 12; 1 John 4:17; and Jude 1:6.

[12] See *The Qu'ran,* as-Sajdah 32:10-12 and 25; az-Zumar 39:46; al-An'am 6:31; al-Jathiya 45:27; at-Tatfif 83:10-17; at-Takwir 81:1-29; al-Infitar 82:1-6; and al-Zilzal 99:1-8.

[13] Summarized in Neujahr's essay listed in the Bibliography. Tablet piece BM 99210 that contains the Marduk Prophecy was published by H. Güterbock in 1958 with

additional transliteration and translation provided by Greyson and Lambert in 1964. (Ref. Grayson, A. K. and W.G. Lambert in the Bibliography.)

[14] These statistics were taken from Wikipedia.com: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books). It is currently my best and only source for this information, although its reliability should be questioned.

[15] These statistics were also taken from Wikipedia.com: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books). It is currently my best and only source for this information, although its reliability should be questioned.

[16] These statistics were taken from Wikipedia.com: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films). It is currently my best and only source for this information, although its reliability should be questioned.

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