THE VICTORY OF HOPE:

MAGIC, ENCHANTMENT, AND THE TRUE NATURE OF POWER IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

by

ANSELM G. LEFAVE

A THESIS

Presented to the Departments of English and Religious Studies
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2020

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Anselm LeFave for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Departments of English and Religious Studies to be taken June 2020

Title: The Victory of Hope: Magic, Enchantment, and the True Nature of Power in *The Lord of the Rings*

Approved: *Professor Elizabeth Wheeler*
Primary Thesis Advisor

This thesis is an extended analysis of power in the fantasy writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, principally *The Lord of the Rings*. In it, I argue that the supernatural power which would colloquially be identified as "magic" can be distinguished into two fundamentally different kinds of power. The first kind is the power of evil, of Sauron and his servants, and is properly called "magic." Magic, in this sense, arises from lust for power and dominance, and is used to enslave, conquer, and deceive. Magicians like Sauron use their power for no one but themselves and no purpose but their own. The second kind is the power of good, of the heroes of the story, and following Tolkien I call it "enchantment." Enchantment arises from a subordination of one's will to a higher purpose, coming from a person or reality higher than one's self. Enchantment manifests in the world when a character chooses in accordance with that purpose which they have received from beyond themselves. When that happens, they wield power which overcomes the evil which stands in the way of that quest or mission to which they are choosing to subordinate themselves. These choices are "eucatastrophic," participating in and instrumentally causing the ultimate and final defeat of evil in the world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Elizabeth Wheeler for her constant support and advice throughout the process of writing this thesis; it was her fantasy course, taken my Freshman year of college, that renewed my love of Tolkien and set me on the path to the development of this vision, and it was only right that she be the one to oversee its fulfillment. I would also like to thank Professor Rick Colby and Professor Trond Jacobsen for their passionate and vital assistance in the development and fine-tuning of this writing, given on short notice. I also thank my mother, who has been a constant source of inspiration for this project as in all my endeavors; she has always been my primary and most influential teacher. This thesis was a joy to write, and I could not have done it so well without the help and constant support of my teachers, family, and friends, and for that they have my deep gratitude.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the chapter entitled “The Mirror of Galadriel” in J.R.R. Tolkien’s masterwork *The Lord of the Rings*, the Elf-lady Galadriel makes an interesting and puzzling statement about magic. She is explaining to the hobbits Frodo and Sam the power of her “Mirror,” a basin of water in which one may see visions of the past, the present, and even the possibilities of the future. Offering the opportunity to look in the mirror to the hobbits, she remarks, “For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy. But this, if you will, is the magic of Galadriel” (*The Lord of the Rings* 362). Galadriel objects to the same word, “magic,” being applied to both her power and that of the Dark Lord Sauron, and thereby hints at a fundamental and fascinating distinction between kinds of power in Tolkien’s world. But what is the substance of this distinction? What does “magic” mean for Tolkien, and should that word, so common in subsequent fantasy stories, be applied to the power of the Elves and their allies? A close examination of power in Tolkien’s legendarium, aided by a philosophical framework derived from Tolkien’s own theory of the fantasy genre, can give insight into these questions. Careful analysis reveals that the power of the protagonists of *The Lord of the Rings* is produced by those characters’ obedient choice in the face of opposition to pursue their given quest, thereby subordinating themselves to higher realities. These choices affect the world as “enchantment”, overcoming evil’s “magic,” and they act as glimpses and signs of the great Eucatastrophe to come, the final defeat of Sauron, which is brought about by these sub-creative choices of his enemies. By examining *The Lord of the Rings* through this lens, the powerful moral

vision of the text can become clear, a vision which highlights hopeful obedience to the good as the path to victory over darkness and evil. The first task in understanding the nature and effects of power in *The Lord of the Rings* is to elucidate the meanings of the terms "eucatastrophe," "magic," and "enchantment" as I am using them. Second will be to examine the uses of power by key characters both evil and good so as to see how those ideas apply to the power they wield.

Eucatastrophe

In his essay "On Fairy-stories," Tolkien coins the term "eucatastrophe," and argues that this element is essential to the "fairy-story," or fantasy, as a form of literature. A eucatastrophe, as Tolkien defines it, is the opposite of tragedy, the "sudden joyous turn," or the "happy ending" (Flieger and Anderson 75). It is the sudden salvation that appears just as all seems lost. Tolkien thinks all fantasy that is true to the form should have such a turn at the end. He defends this conception of fantasy against the charge that such stories are thereby "escapist," or that they are excessively idealistic or lack realism by clarifying that the eucatastrophe does not preclude the realities of great suffering, sorrow, and failure, and in fact goes as far as to say that these "dyscatastrophes" are necessary for the joy which comes with the eucatastrophe (Flieger and Anderson 75). However, the eucatastrophe certainly does mean that evil can never ultimately win in a true fantasy or fairy-story; it "denies universal final defeat," in Tolkien's words, "and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (Flieger and Anderson 75). As his use of the term *evangelium* indicates, Tolkien applies this idea to the real world in the context of Christianity; he would say that, for instance, the Incarnation of Christ

is the eucatastrophe of human history, and that the Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the Incarnation (Flieger and Anderson 78). The Christian story, for Tolkien, is itself a kind of fantasy, except that it surpasses all others by becoming historical – Christianity is the only "true myth," we might say, in which, as Tolkien says, "Legend and History have met and fused" (Flieger and Anderson 78).

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the final destruction of the Ring and Sauron with it is indeed eucatastrophic; it comes about inadvertently and surprisingly, when Frodo finally gives in to the Ring's temptations and claims it for himself, but is then attacked by Gollum, who takes the Ring from him and then plummets into the fires of Mount Doom with the Ring in his ecstatic celebration. Despite ultimately failing in one sense, the quest was still fulfilled through Frodo and with his cooperation. The Ring would not have been in Mordor at all had Frodo not brought it there, nor would Gollum have been alive had Frodo not spared him earlier in the story. It is Frodo's repeated choice to take up his quest and continue it in the face of great opposition that brings about the victory over evil. Frodo thus participates in the Great Eucatastrophe of Sauron's defeat, each of his good choices over the course of the story being, if you will, "little eucatastrophes" which prefigure the fulfillment of the quest. The theory of the eucatastrophe provides a paradigm through which all power of good in Tolkien's work can be understood: Good power is that which eucatastrophically arises from choices in accordance with one's quest. Each such choice is a small glimpse of joy, made with faith in the great and final Joy to come. Evil power, defined in opposition to the good, is thus that which does not participate in any unforeseen or hoped-for future, but which seeks only the increase of

power in the present, and which is turned inward in selfishness, rather than directing oneself and others outward through humility and obedience.

Enchantment

The term “enchantment” appears in “On Fairy-stories” in relation to Tolkien’s concept of “sub-creation,” in which context the term indicates the power of human authors to create, a power derived from and subordinate to the divine power which first created them. The locus of this power is the imagination, and it is expressed or exerted through language. As an example, Tolkien describes with wonder the linguistic capacity of the human mind to distinguish attributes from objects, and then apply those attributes to other objects in strange and wonderful ways: “The mind that thought of *light, heavy, grey, yellow, still, swift,* also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water… In such ‘fantasy,’ as it is called… Man becomes a sub-creator” (Flieger and Anderson 41-42). Linguistic invention like this is real creation, in that it produces new things, unthought of before. However, it is derivative and subordinate because it only reconstructs in the imagination, in a “Secondary World” as Tolkien would say, what already exists in the “Primary World” (Flieger and Anderson 52). In other words, humans cannot make things *ex nihilo*, a power reserved for God alone.

The mark of successful sub-creation, for Tolkien, is that the Secondary World which it produces is so complete, its enchantments so flawless, that everything which the storyteller says within that world is true within that world, and the reader believes what the teller says while he himself is inside. When the reader disbelieves, the enchantment has failed, and the spell is broken (Flieger and Anderson 52). This word

"spell" is important; Tolkien draws attention to the fact that it can mean "both a story told, and a formula of power over living men" (Flieger and Anderson 48). Real sub-creative fantasy exerts a real power, that of enchantment, over the Primary World. Tolkien describes this power of enchantment as an "Elvish craft" (Flieger and Anderson 63-64), and it is this comparison which helps us to bring the concept by analogy into the Secondary World of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The crucial point that Tolkien makes about the character of the enchantment of the Elves is that it is "artistic in desire and purpose" – that is, power is used to create beauty for its own sake, seeking to enhance the goodness of Primary creation, rather than really change it or usurp control over it (Flieger and Anderson 141). In an analogous way, we can say that the power of the good characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, especially Gandalf, Aragorn, and Frodo, arises from their desire to defeat evil and restore goodness in the world, and it is manifested through their choices to obediently pursue the quests they have been given to those ends, and thus can properly be called "enchantment."

Magic

In contrast to enchantment understood in this way, Tolkien describes a very different kind of power to which "magic" refers in a particular way. Magic as Tolkien understands it is not artistic, but rather "scientific" (Flieger and Anderson 33). Magic is technique rather than art, a system of "vulgar devices" which does not endeavor to create a Secondary World, but rather to alter and control the Primary one. The magician, as opposed to the enchanter, desires power for himself, and he seeks to dominate other things and wills, not to make the world better or more beautiful. He is

motivated always by self-centered greed (Flieger and Anderson 141). Like enchantment, this concept of magic can help us to understand Galadriel's mysterious distinction between her power and that of the "Enemy." Sauron, the Ringwraiths, and Saruman after his treason are magicians, pursuing selfish dominance through their own devices, acknowledging no one and nothing as worthy of obedience, unless it be temporarily as a way of advancing one's own goals. This fundamental distinction between "magic" as evil power and "enchantment" as good power will guide our further inquiry into the nature, mechanisms, and effects of power in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Chapter I: Sauron

The nature of the eponymous antagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron, is an oft-misunderstood element of the story. In the *Fellowship of the Ring*, Gandalf remarks that "nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so" (*The Lord of the Rings* 267). That may seem a strange thing to say about an entity who, within *The Lord of the Rings*, shows absolutely no sign of benevolence, regret, or any motivations beyond malice, hatred, and spite, so some understanding of Sauron's true nature and past is needed. The Dark Lord is a spirit, one of the Maiar, who are lesser spirits originally tasked with assisting higher spirits, the Valar, with the formation and governance of Arda – that is, the Earth (*The Silmarillion* 12, 23-4, 26). Other Maiar present in *The Lord of the Rings* are Gandalf, Saruman, and the Balrog, but of these Sauron is by far the most powerful.

Each Maia is associated with one or a few of the Valar, from whom they derive their character and power. In the beginning, Sauron was a Maia of the Vala called Aulë, the craftsman of the Valar (*The Silmarillion* 26). From Aulë Sauron gained a love of making things, as well as the skill in smithing that enabled him to make powerful artifacts like the Rings of Power. However, Melkor, the most powerful of the Valar, revolted against Eru Ilúvatar, and in doing so he swayed many of the Maiar to follow him (*The Silmarillion* 25-26). Sauron was the greatest of these fallen Maiar, drawn by Melkor's own great skill in crafting, and driven on by his envy and lust for power, passions he shared with Melkor. After the Valar came to Arda to shape it and prepare it for the arrival of Elves and Men, Melkor went as well, seeking to thwart and ruin their work. Sauron went with him as his mightiest servant, and throughout the centuries

served Melkor (later named Morgoth by the Elves) in his wars in Middle-earth against the Valar, Men, and Elves (*The Silmarillion* 26). Eventually, Morgoth was completely defeated by the Valar, and cast out of Arda into the Void beyond the Walls of Night, never to return until the end of all things. After his master's exile, Sauron became the chief Enemy of the Free Peoples of the world, continuing Morgoth's work of destruction and slavery, until his own defeat in the War of the Ring, as told in *The Lord of the Rings.*

Sauron's Fall

The power of Sauron, like his master Melkor's, serves the purposes of dominating other wills and gaining power for himself, and is defined principally in the negative, in hatred and spiteful selfishness. Because the magic of the two Dark Lords is so similar, and because Sauron learned his evil ways from Melkor, it is worthwhile to study Melkor himself, particularly his initial fall during the Creation of Eä, which is the basis of both his and Sauron's machinations ever afterward.

Eru, also called Ilúvatar, is the Creator of all that is in Tolkien's world. He first brought into being spirits, called the Ainur, who became his instruments in the rest of the work of creation. Ilúvatar taught the Ainur various pieces of music, each a part of a great theme in his own mind. Through the singing of this music, the Ainur together brought the universe into being (*The Silmarillion* 3). However, Melkor, the most powerful of the Ainur, dissented, and began to make music of his own devising, not given to him by Ilúvatar. Melkor envied the Flame Imperishable, which is also called the Secret Fire, which is the power of Eru by which he creates life itself. Eru has not

given the Flame to any other, and when Melkor found that he could not create as Eru can, his envy and spite only became more intense (*The Silmarillion* 4).

Once the Music of the Ainur took form and the Earth was made, some of the Ainur entered into Arda to shape and govern it, and Melkor secretly went as well, along with those other spirits whom he had swayed in his rebellion, of whom Sauron was greatest. In entering Arda, Melkor's intent was to dominate and rule it, "to subdue to his will both Elves and Men, envying the gifts with which Ilúvatar promised to endow them; and he wished to have subjects and servants, and to be called Lord, and to be a master over other wills" (*The Silmarillion* 8). Like the other Ainur who came to Arda, Melkor took a physical body; however, his evil intent, his hate, and his spite shaped that form, and it was terrifying and dark. In this shape, as the Valar loyal to Eru worked to prepare Arda to be hospitable to the Elves and Men who were to be made there, Melkor worked always to destroy or corrupt what they made (*The Silmarillion* 12). Both Melkor and Sauron's power is always used in this way: motivated by envy and hatred, they seek to ruin the good works of others, and to increase their own power and glory.

The narcissism of Melkor becomes very clear through a contrast which *The Silmarillion* itself draws: of Melkor's power to that of Aulë, the Smith of the Valar. These two spirits were very similar in many ways, both in temperament and skill. In particular, both had a love of making new things, finding new uses for their skill in crafting, and both enjoyed praise from others of their creations and skill. The crucial difference between them is this: Aulë gave freely of what he made and did not hoard his creations for himself. He always submitted his work to Eru, and never intended to do anything against his will. He was also happy to help and teach others and did not take it

as a challenge or something to be envied if another made something great as well. Melkor, on the other hand, was consumed with jealousy for the creations of others (especially of Eru) and became more and more obsessed with increasing his own power. This fixation on others meant that, over time, Melkor's power changed, and he lost his faculty of invention and creativity which he had at the beginning. Instead, he could only create mockeries and corruptions of what others made (like the orcs, which are corrupted Elves), and his will was bent always towards the destruction of the craft of others, rather than the devising of new works of his own (*The Silmarillion* 20).

And so, Melkor, who was at first the greatest and most glorious of the Ainur, became consumed by envy and lust for power, and thus he became a creature defined by hatred, cruelty, perversion, and deception, and was named by the Elves "Morgoth," the Black Enemy. In this, Sauron followed him, leaving Aulë his former master, and became like Melkor in all things, though lesser. Sauron became the instrument of Melkor, sharing his work of destruction. After Morgoth was defeated and banished into the Void, Sauron took up the mantle of Dark Lord, and became the chief enemy of goodness and freedom in the world (*The Silmarillion* 25). We will shortly see how Sauron carried out this work in the time of his lordship in Middle-earth, but it is important to understand the foundation of his power in the deception and greed of Morgoth, because Sauron imitates him in all things. And though Sauron never attained the same extent of dominion or depth of wickedness as his master, he did become a great threat to all the Free Peoples of the world, and caused a great deal of grief, as is well-known to readers of *The Lord of the Rings*.

However, this story is one of hope, and it is always vital to remember the words of Eru Ilúvatar to Melkor at the time of creation, in which he revealed the ultimate place of Morgoth and his servants. Speaking of Melkor's discord in the Music, he says, "And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined" (*The Silmarillion* 6). It is precisely the failure of Morgoth and Sauron to recognize the order of things and the lordship of Ilúvatar, deluded in their pride and hatred, that ultimately undermines their power, though in the meantime they appear mighty. The power of Morgoth and Sauron alike is finally a vain struggle, while the power of those opposed to them is ultimately successful, however small it appears in the meantime. Sauron's fundamental disobedience makes his power "magic." It is founded on spite and jealousy, and by it Sauron seeks always to destroy the works of Eru, the Valar, and the Children of Eru, principally by dominating or fundamentally distorting them, whether by conquest or subtle deception.

The Rings of Power

In the crafting of the Rings, we can see that Sauron's magic is tied to technique and artifice, the crafting by his own hand of powerful items which extend and unnaturally enhance his dominating power. After the downfall of Morgoth, Sauron began his own assaults against the peoples of Middle-earth. Perhaps his greatest and most evil deed in that time was the forging of the Rings of Power, by which he deceived and enslaved many and became even more powerful. The Rings were primarily Sauron's attempt to ensnare the Elves, who were always more resistant to his advances,

both by force and subtlety, than were Men and Dwarves. Sauron took the form of an Elf-lord, and called himself Annatar, which means “Lord of Gifts,” and began to ingratiate himself in the communities of Elves. The Noldorin Elves, who had always been great craftsmen and builders, were taken in by this deception, and happily accepted Sauron’s teaching in the making of powerful artifacts (*The Silmarillion* 355-356). Sauron’s foothold in their hearts was the same passion which Melkor had exploited in Sauron himself: desire for power and mastery. Under Sauron’s guidance, the smiths of the Noldor made the greatest works of that age: the Rings of Power. However, Sauron was involved in their work, and he made One Ring to which he linked the power of all the other rings. He did this by imbuing the One Ring with his own strength and will, and he poured even his own being into it, so that his very existence was tied to that of the Ring. The magic he thereby laid on the Rings allowed Sauron, when he wore the One Ring, to perceive and even control the thoughts and wills of those wearing the other Rings (*The Silmarillion* 356). Sauron was eventually able to take for himself all but three Rings, and then distributed those sixteen Rings among powerful Dwarves and Men – those who “desired secret power beyond the measure of their kind” – and through them those races were deeply corrupted. This was especially true of Men, and the nine Men who accepted Rings from Sauron later became the Nine Ringwraiths, which are beings neither living nor dead, and are completely enslaved to Sauron’s will (*The Silmarillion* 357-358). The creation of the Ringwraiths thus followed precisely the same pattern as the corruption of Sauron himself, being based on the promise of power which is not given as a part of one’s natural being, but is gained unnaturally through artifice. After these victories, “Sauron’s lust and pride increased,

until he knew no bounds, and he determined to make himself master of all things in Middle-earth… He brooked no freedom nor any rivalry, and he named himself Lord of the Earth" (*The Silmarillion* 358). This illustrates another crucial reality about magic such as Sauron's: the more his dominion grows and the more power he seems to gain, the more he wants and the more distorted with pride his vision of himself becomes. This leads to incredible arrogations, such as the claiming of a title like "Lord of the Earth," and an attitude of complete self-will, with no room for obedience to anyone, or acknowledgement of any power higher than himself. Sauron's power thus creates an endless cycle of conflict and hatred, because there will always be powers greater than he, and he can never achieve what he seeks, and so the power itself is ultimately futile and self-defeating.

One Ring to Rule Them All

All these qualities of Sauron's evil magic are most fully visible in the effects of One Ring on others, which, imbued with his own spirit, perfectly embodies his hatred, his lust for power, and the force of corruption and control by which he enslaves others. From the first, Gandalf warns Frodo that the Ring has a seductive power which "would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it." Instead, Gandalf says, the Ring would "possess" its owner (*The Lord of the Rings* 46). Through the Ring, Sauron makes others his servants, but more than that, he ultimately strips them of personhood, so that they literally become objects, "possessions," hardly having a mind of their own. A little later, Gandalf says that neither strength of will nor purity of intention is enough to resist the corruption of the Ring, and that eventually Sauron will "devour" the Ringbearer, a word which again emphasizes the destruction of the person which comes

about through contact with the Ring and the will of Sauron. For those like Gandalf himself who are very powerful already, the Ring is an even greater temptation, and "the very desire of it corrupts the heart" (*The Lord of the Rings* 267). Sauron strikes at the heart of Eru's creations, seeking to erase their freedom and their distinct personality, and make them instead to be empty shells, mere vessels for his own will. This is exactly what has happened to the Nazgûl, who serve as a constant threat and reminder of Sauron's intentions for all the Free People of Middle-earth.

As Frodo continues his journey, he comes to experience the truth of Gandalf's warnings as the Ring begins to exert more and more power over him the longer he has it, and the closer he gets to the Land of Shadow. Early on, while still in the Shire, Frodo, not yet understanding the nature of the Ring, suggests that they just destroy it. Gandalf asks him to go ahead and try, and as Frodo takes out the Ring he finds himself hesitating; "and then with an effort of will he made a movement, as if to cast it away – but he found that he had put it back in his pocket" (*The Lord of the Rings* 60). Already the Ring is exerting itself over Frodo's will, so that when he thinks he makes the choice to throw it away, he actually does the opposite. At this point, Frodo's desires are still clearly opposed to the will of the Ring, but as time goes on, that becomes less and less true. At Frodo's first encounter with a Nazgûl, as he and his companions are hiding from it alongside the road, Frodo feels "a sudden unreasoning fear of discovery," and his thoughts turn instantly to the Ring. It seems to him "that he had only to slip it on, and then he would be safe" (*The Lord of the Rings* 75). The Ring magically begins to make Frodo afraid, and exploits that fear to manipulate him. Motivated by fear, however artificial and "unreasoning," Frodo begins to struggle to differentiate between

the promptings of the Ring and those of his own conscience and will. Later in that scene, the desire for the Ring comes upon Frodo again, stronger this time, and now "almost before he realized what he was doing, his hand was groping in his pocket" (*The Lord of the Rings* 78). At this stage of the Ring's influence, it begins to separate action from intention, so that Frodo's body acts without the consent of his will, prompted instead by the intention of Sauron. However, Sauron desires a more complete destruction of his enemies; it is good if he can enslave them by force, but his victory is more complete if they serve him by their own choice. In other words, freedom is most completely destroyed when it is surrendered through a usurpation of freedom itself. Indeed, as the Ring's hold on Frodo continues to grow, it seems that his will itself, and not merely his actions, begin to be affected. In a later encounter with the Nazgûl, Frodo again experiences powerful fear and the temptation to put on the Ring. This time it is stronger than ever, and "he could think of nothing else… something seemed to be compelling him to disregard all warnings, and he longed to yield. Not with the hope of escape, or of doing anything, either good or bad: he simply felt that he must take the Ring and put it on his finger" (*The Lord of the Rings* 195). Frodo "longs" to comply with the will of the Ring. He begins to struggle, not so much against Sauron's will from without him, but rather against his own traitorous desires which undermine his resolve. The other important thing to note about these desires is that they are object-less; Frodo has no "hope" of anything in putting on the Ring, no goal in mind. The desire for the Ring is turned in on itself, a malicious desire for the sake of the desire itself. In this, we have an insight into the nature of Sauron's own power and the desires which motivate it: Sauron wants power for the sake of power, not for any higher goal. As the will of

Sauron becomes more and more dominant in Frodo, his own desires take on this self-consuming character as well. This is a key difference between Sauron's power and that of his enemies, who are defined by their obedience and their adoption of a goal which is not their own.

The Ring, infused with Sauron's malice and will to dominate, is the best example of the nature of "magical" power in Tolkien's world, which is motivated by hatred and lust for power, effected through artifice, and seeks domination over other wills. Opposed to the magic of Sauron is the power which Tolkien refers to as "enchantment," wielded by many of the characters working against the darkness of Sauron. In complete contrast to the spiteful narcissism and hunger for power of magic, the power of enchantment is defined by a subordination of one's will to a given purpose, and especially the choice in the face of opposition to continue to pursue that quest. Such choices have powerful effects in the world, overcoming evil, and it is exactly that power which is called enchantment: the power of obedience to the good despite evil. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the great eucatastrophe of the defeat of Sauron is brought about precisely by the series of lesser eucatastrophes which are each victory of enchantment over magic throughout the story, the enactment of the good will of Eru through the freedom of his loyal creations against the evil of his rebellious creation, Sauron. In examining how this comes about, we will begin with Gandalf, whose enchantment is the most dramatic and obvious, and which most readily might be called "magic" in a colloquial sense.

Chapter II: Gandalf

The wizard Gandalf, despite his initial appearance, is also a Maia, of the same class of spirit as Sauron, though of less strength. When Melkor fell before the creation of the world, Gandalf (whose ancient name is Olórin), the wisest of the Maiar, stayed faithful to the Valar and to Illuvátar's plan (*The Silmarillion* 24). Just as Sauron was associated with Aulë first, and Melkor later, Gandalf served Irmo, master of visions and dreams, and his spouse Estë, the healer, who gives rest. However, he also spent time with Varda, Lady of the Stars, and with Irmo's sister Nienna, who dwells alone and weeps for the injury done by Melkor to the world, and from her Gandalf learned pity and patience (*The Silmarillion* 25). Gandalf was sent into Middle-earth as one of the five Istari, the wizards, to guide Elves and Men in their struggle against Sauron. As Gandalf uses his power in the course of that mission, he is the most obvious example of how power works for those opposed to Melkor and his servant Sauron in Tolkien's world. Gandalf, alone among the wizards, remains faithful to his mission to the end, and he chooses to do so again and again in the face of terrible and deadly challenges. When he makes such a choice, continuing to oppose evil, he is choosing to align himself with the will and design of another, higher than he: the Valar he serves, most immediately, and ultimately Eru himself, their creator. When Gandalf uses his power, he does not make the mistake of thinking that his power is his own; rather, he recognizes that he has received it as a gift and for a specific purpose. His continual submission to that purpose distinguishes him fundamentally from Sauron, who, since the banishment of Melkor, acknowledges no authority but his own, and uses his power solely to torment others and increase his own dominion. Gandalf, and the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings*, make

themselves the instruments of higher powers, and become vessels, not of their own selfish will, but of Eru's.

Servant of the Secret Fire

The first true display of Gandalf's power in the *The Lord of the Rings* is his famous battle with the Balrog called Durin's Bane on the Bridge of Khazad-dûm. A Balrog, like Gandalf, is a Maia, a spirit of fire that came to Arda with Melkor and served him throughout his wars in Middle-earth. After the exile of Morgoth beyond the walls of the world, the remaining Balrogs hid themselves and awaited their master's return, which is where the Fellowship find the Balrog in Moria. In Gandalf's first exchange with the Balrog, before they reach the bridge itself, Gandalf places a "shutting-spell" on a door to keep the Balrog out, which the Balrog breaks with his own spell. This spell, along with the counter-spell of the Balrog, each seem to be a test of the other's power, and Gandalf here is not really displaying the proper qualities of enchantment as he will later on the bridge. However, in response to the Balrog's counter-spell, Gandalf says that he spoke "a word of Command" (*The Lord of the Rings* 327). The exact nature of this "word of Command" is mysterious, but it certainly implies an attempt by Gandalf to assert some kind of authority over the Balrog. This raises the question of what kind of authority Gandalf claims to have over the Balrog, and from where it comes. The answer to that question will be key in understanding the duel on the bridge.

When Gandalf faces down the Balrog on the bridge in Moria, the power he wields against it is explicitly the result of the wizard's invocation of spiritual powers higher than himself, of which he is a servant. As the Balrog stops at the bridge, Gandalf

commands it, “You cannot pass” (*The Lord of the Rings* 330). This may be something like the “word of Command” which Gandalf spoke earlier; even if not, it is an order, an assertion of authority by Gandalf against the spirit of evil. He issues this same command a number of times in this encounter, and he also makes other pronouncements which give insight into the nature of his authority. Gandalf cries, “I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor. You cannot pass. The dark fire will not avail you, flame of Udûn. Go back to the Shadow! You cannot pass” (*The Lord of the Rings* 330). These statements require some context to understand. The “Secret Fire” is a term from *The Silmarillion*, where it is also called the “Flame Imperishable.” The Secret Fire is the power of Eru Iluvátar which allows him create life. Eru alone possesses the Fire, and it is the ultimate object of the envy of both Morgoth and Sauron, who desire that power above all things. “Anor” is an Elvish word which means “Sun.” Again in *The Silmarillion*, there is told the story of how the Sun was made, how Arien the Maia was appointed its guardian, and how Morgoth and all his servants were immediately hurt by it and filled with hatred of its light. Finally, “Udûn” is another Elvish word, meaning “hell.” Putting all that together with the rest of Gandalf’s words, we can understand the nature of the power he is exerting here. First of all, Gandalf calls himself a “servant,” which makes it clear that he is not doing his own will or acting on his own authority. He serves the “Secret Fire,” Eru’s power to create life; which is to say, he serves Eru, and defends the life he has made. It is thus Eru’s ultimate authority which he invokes against the Balrog. In his service to Eru, Gandalf wields “the flame of Anor,” the fire of the Sun, which is a poetic way of saying that the power he puts forth is the power of the Valar who made the Sun, the power of light which Morgoth and all his servants have

always hated and sought to destroy. Against the bright fire of the Sun, Gandalf sets the "dark fire" of hell which the Balrog wields, the magic of the Dark Lords which seeks only to ruin, in rebellion against Eru.

In light of these opposed powers, which differ in source and object, Gandalf makes his statement about what will happen in their conflict: "You cannot pass." The Balrog then attacks Gandalf but fails: "From out of the shadow a red sword leaped flaming. Glamdring glittered white in answer. There was a ringing clash and a stab of white fire. The Balrog fell back, and its sword flew up in molten fragments. The wizard swayed on the bridge, stepped back a pace, and then again stood still" (*The Lord of the Rings* 330). Here we see the core dynamic of the power of enchantment; having made a choice by standing to fight the Balrog to continue in his quest to defeat Sauron and the powers of evil, Gandalf announces that choice by claiming aloud the source and nature of both his quest and power. Immediately afterwards, that claim expresses itself as the enchantment which allows Gandalf to withstand the Balrog. He follows the first clash by once again asserting to the Balrog, "You cannot pass!", and then the same pattern plays out:

> With a bound the Balrog leaped full upon the bridge. Its whip whirled and hissed… At that moment Gandalf lifted his staff, and crying aloud he smote the bridge before him. The staff broke asunder and fell from his hand. A blinding sheet of white flame sprang up. The bridge cracked. Right at the Balrog's feet it broke… With a terrible cry the Balrog fell forward, and its shadow plunged down and vanished. (*The Lord of the Rings* 330-331)

Gandalf is of course pulled down with the Balrog, but we discover later that he does defeat the Balrog, his bodily form being destroyed in the process, and is later returned to Middle-earth by the Valar in a state of heightened spiritual power as "Gandalf the White." From that outcome, it seems that the Balrog was naturally equal in power to Gandalf, if not stronger. However, Gandalf is distinguished by his submission to powers beyond himself, and in the end, he stands victorious, returned to corporeal life and spiritually magnified, while the Balrog remains defeated. Gandalf says later that he was "sent back" after his death, "until my task is done" (*The Lord of the Rings* 502). It was the Valar that gave him his task originally, and it seems that his victory over the Balrog comes about by the power of the Valar manifested through Gandalf by his free choice to obey their mission for him, rewarding his acceptance of their will. Because of Gandalf's semi-divine nature, his enchantment appears in striking and apparently "magical" (in the colloquial sense) ways, such as bursts and sheets of white fire, though it is clear from what Gandalf himself says and the ultimate outcome of his duel with the Balrog that the wizard's enchanting power is of a very different kind than that of his enemy, and that those differences lead to his victory.

The White Wizard

Another more subtle example of Gandalf using power as enchantment comes at his confrontation and defeat of Saruman after the conquest of Isengard by the Ents. This moment comes after Gandalf has returned from death, and it is important that we take some time to understand the mysterious new power and authority with which he seems to have returned. The first thing of note is Gandalf's effect on Aragorn, Legolas, and

Gimli when they first see him. They are transfixed in his presence, and we get this description of the wizard: “His hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand. Between wonder, joy, and fear they stood and found no words to say” (*The Lord of the Rings* 495). The majesty which before was concealed and the authority which Gandalf invoked before the Balrog he now holds openly and with ease. The “Flame of Anor,” the same holy light which he wielded against the Balrog, now blazes forth from him unrestrained in the brightness of his hair and eyes, both of which are explicitly compared to sunlight. This newly-visible nobility strikes others silent, and fills them with “wonder, joy, and fear.” The positive, though overwhelming, experience of Gandalf’s presence has the tenor of an encounter with divinity, and indeed it is something like a partial divinization which seems to have happened to Gandalf on the other side of death – or at least the veil between his true spiritual nature as a Maia and his physical form has lessened. Gandalf himself makes several interesting statements about his new state. First of all, he remarks to the three before him that “none of you have any weapon that could hurt me” (*The Lord of the Rings* 495). The wizard’s body, though still the shape of a mortal, seems to have risen above the possibility of death through violence by sword, axe, or arrow, taking on more fully the immortality of his true nature. He also says of himself to Gimli that he is “more dangerous than anything you will ever meet, unless you are brought alive before the seat of the Dark Lord’” (*The Lord of the Rings* 499). Gandalf is here making the extraordinary claim that he is more powerful than anything in Middle-earth save Sauron himself. It is clear then that the Gandalf who was destroyed by a Balrog is no longer the

Gandalf standing before them. The Valar have not only sent him back to Middle-earth, but have given him new gifts. What gifts exactly those are, Gandalf gives a hint, again remarking to Gimli: “Indeed I *am* Saruman, one might almost say, Saruman as he should have been” (*The Lord of the Rings* 495). Saruman had been given leadership of the wizards sent into Middle-earth against Sauron, but by allying himself with Sauron he forfeited that position as well as the blessing of the Valar who sent him. In contrast, Gandalf, by laying down his life to protect Frodo and the Fellowship, proved his obedience to his quest. Gandalf, obedient to the Valar and having been given the authority and power which was stripped from Saruman, can be seen almost as the judgment of the Valar sent against Saruman, a judgment which he pronounces when he meets Saruman in the ruins of Isengard.

Gandalf’s confrontation with Saruman begins with Saruman exerting what power he has left against King Théoden and his people who came with Gandalf, weaving spells with words that have an entrancing effect on those who hear them. Théoden and Éomer manage with difficulty to resist Saruman’s power, and venomously reject his offers. Saruman’s last effort, then, is to invite Gandalf himself into alliance with deceptive offers of forbearance and forgiveness, appealing to Gandalf’s pride as a spirit high and holy, tempting him with the great deeds which the two wizards might accomplish together. The words of this spell held such force that everyone who hears them, except Gandalf, is swayed, and doubt and fear begin to overshadow their minds (*The Lord of the Rings* 578-582). Saruman’s power here has many of the characteristics of magic identified above with regard to Sauron’s power; through the crafting of pleasing words, Saruman exerts his power for the purpose of domination, seeking to

enthrall others into his service, just as he had already done with Gríma Wormtongue. However, Gandalf is now beyond such magic, and in the face of the darkness of Saruman which creeps over the others, Gandalf laughs. Instantly, the effect of Saruman's words on Théoden and his men "vanished like a puff of smoke," and, after controlling his mirth, Gandalf warns Saruman, "I fear I am beyond your comprehension" (*The Lord of the Rings* 582). He then offers Saruman mercy and redemption, inviting him to aid them in their fight against Sauron, but Saruman, proving that he indeed does not comprehend what Gandalf has become, spits on this proffered hand and scornfully rejects Gandalf. As Saruman turns to leave, however, Gandalf reveals himself. Speaking with "a commanding voice," Gandalf says, "Come back, Saruman!". Despite his scorn, and indeed "as if dragged against his will," Saruman returns to the balcony to face Gandalf (*The Lord of the Rings* 583). Saruman is under Gandalf's authority now, and Gandalf has the power to command, apparently, even Saruman's will. This may appear magical, a kind of Sauronic domination of Saruman, though in fact it is fundamentally different. The distinction is twofold; first, while Sauron enslaves others to himself, Gandalf here is acting only as an instrument of the authority of others. Gandalf explicitly claims power over Saruman on the basis of Gandalf's return from death, and his new color (*The Lord of the Rings* 583). Both of these were gifts to Gandalf from the Valar, gifts which he earlier acknowledged to be for the purpose of completing the mission which he likewise received from them. With that power, and in service of that mission, Gandalf is not seeking to make Saruman his own servant, but only to restore him to his proper and natural service to the Valar. Secondly, Gandalf only commands Saruman with such force as to compel him because

of Saruman's obstinacy. About this incident, Gandalf later tells Pippin, "I will do nothing to him. I do not wish for mastery" (*The Lord of the Rings* 585). Gandalf is not overthrowing Saruman for his own gain; rather, having been offered mercy, Saruman continues in his rebellion against goodness, and so Gandalf acts in the interest of justice, not out of greed or a desire to dominate. Gandalf is always a servant, even in victory, and it is that obedient service that fundamentally distinguishes him from Saruman.

It is even as a servant that Gandalf then powerfully pronounces the judgment of the Valar against Saruman. Gandalf's voice swells, growing "in power and authority," and he exclaims, "Behold, I am not Gandalf the Grey, whom you betrayed. I am Gandalf the White, who has returned from death. You have no color now, and I cast you from the order and from the Council" (*The Lord of the Rings* 583). The "color" of each wizard signifies their position; Saruman was White while he led the wizards, but now Gandalf has been made White, and Saruman has no place anymore among the wizards of the Valar. Then, Gandalf raises a hand, and solemnly says, "Saruman, your staff is broken." Then we hear that "there was a crack, and the staff split asunder in Saruman's hand, and the head of it fell down at Gandalf's feet" (*The Lord of the Rings* 583). This is a moment of true enchantment. As we have seen, Gandalf has been "sent back" to fulfill his task, and here, as against the Balrog, he chooses again to fulfill that mission against the opposition of the traitor Saruman. Because of that, his words spoken against Saruman have a kind of efficacy in themselves. Gandalf says, in the present tense, "your staff is broken," and as he does so, the staff breaks. With the staff-breaking as a model, we can infer that when Gandalf says, "I cast you from the order," it is likewise at that very moment that Saruman is stripped of his power and station. The words themselves

(the “spell” or the “enchantment”) are only an outward manifestation of the power of Gandalf’s acceptance of his given quest, just as his words “you cannot pass” to the Balrog were. Gandalf’s power always flows from obedience, and manifests as enchanting statements of command through which the defeat of evil is brought about.

The Black Captain

A final, more harrowing example is Gandalf’s short encounter with the Witch-King, the leader and most powerful of the Ringwraiths, at the Gates of Minas Tirith during Mordor’s assault on the City. At a pivotal moment, after a huge battering-ram fails to breach the strong Gate of the White City, the Witch-King himself destroys the Gate with a flash of magic. He rides into the city and finds Gandalf there to oppose him. This encounter begins in much the same way as the fight against the Balrog in Moria did; Gandalf begins with a powerful command: “You cannot enter here… Go back to the abyss prepared for you! Go back! Fall into the nothingness that awaits you and your Master. Go!” (*The Lord of the Rings* 829). Just as he did with the Balrog, Gandalf asserts the supremacy of the powers he serves against the servant of Sauron, in this case by invoking the ultimate end which Eru and the Valar plan for Morgoth, Sauron, and all their allies: their final defeat and exile into the Void; that is, he uses the will of Eru as a threat through which he asserts his own alliegiance. This plainly has an effect on the Nazgûl, who stops. However, unlike the Balrog, the Witch-King issues a counter-challenge to Gandalf, laughing and saying, “Old fool! This is my hour. Do you not know Death when you see it? Die now and curse in vain!” (*The Lord of the Rings* 829). Against Gandalf the Lord of the Nazgûl invokes the power of Death, and commands Gandalf himself to die. Gandalf stands firm, unmoving, but before the two can clash,

the horn of the Rohirrim sounds, announcing the arrival of Théoden's reinforcements that would turn the tide of the battle. This new threat draws the Witch-King away, and he goes no further into the city. A short time later he would be killed by Éowyn and Merry on the Pelennor Fields. The arrival of the Rohirrim may seem a coincidence that saves Gandalf here, but coincidences are a hard thing to pin down in Tolkien's work (as they are perhaps in the real world). As will certainly be the case with Frodo, and to a lesser extent with Aragorn, the power of enchantment which manifests in the world through these characters is not always as spectacular as it was in Moria. What is sure is that enchantment brings about the defeat of evil; in this case, Gandalf claims that the Witch-King cannot enter the city and commands him to be destroyed, and then the Witch-King leaves the city and is destroyed. No, Gandalf was not the direct instrument of his destruction, but that may actually be the point: the power of characters like Gandalf doesn't require him to be the source of the victorious strength. He merely obeys the One who is, and through Gandalf's influence in the world as an instrument, evil is defeated.

Chapter III: Aragorn

Gandalf is the most obvious subject of this discussion of enchantment, as his power most often appears supernatural and "magical" as that word would commonly be used. However, the principles by which his power operates are shared by all who align themselves against the evil of Sauron. Aragorn, as he comes into his inheritance as King, is another excellent example. Like Gandalf, Aragorn has been given a purpose in his life by forces higher than he; in his case, he is to become the King of Gondor and Arnor, a position which is his by right of birth. The inheritance of this kingship is also to inherit the legacy of Númenor and the many graces given to Aragorn's noble ancestors as reward for their part in the final overthrow of Melkor; by accepting his royal birthright, in other words, Aragorn takes up the long fight of Men against evil, embracing the will of the Eru for his race (*The Silmarillion* 320-321). Aragorn's power of "enchantment" is shown when, in the course of the story, he claims his birthright of kingship as his true identity in the face of evil powers which seek to prevent him from fulfilling his destiny. In doing so, he obediently accepts his mission, and this choice of obedience manifests in the world as power – in Aragorn's case, power especially to inspire, to command, and to heal. While Aragorn is no wizard, his power still sometimes seems supernatural, especially his healing power, by which he is able to heal spiritual wounds as well as physical ones. Additionally, in a few instances Aragorn seems to undergo a kind of transfiguration, whereby his exterior appearance is changed to reflect the majesty of his lineage. This often happens as he rises against evil opposition to claim his kingly identity, and has a powerful effect on those around him, uplifting the good and terrifying the wicked.

The Pillars of the Kings

One of the earliest examples of Aragorn's power acting as enchantment comes as the Fellowship sails down the River Anduin, heading south towards Mordor after leaving the Elven realm of Lothlórien, when they pass the Argonath, the Gate of Kings. The Argonath is a pair of massive statues on either side of the River, marking the old border of the Kingdom of Gondor. The statues depict Isildur and Anárion, the sons of Elendil, first King of Gondor, and Aragorn's ancestors. As the Fellowship approaches the ancient figures, Frodo sees that "great power and majesty they still wore," and as they loom over his small boat, "awe and fear fell upon Frodo, and he cowered down, shutting his eyes and not daring to look up as the boat drew near" (*The Lord of the Rings* 392-393). The ancient and imposing statues frighten Frodo, a hobbit of the Shire who is totally unfamiliar with such things. They have a very different effect on Aragorn, however. From behind him, Frodo hears a voice he doesn't recognize cry, "Fear not!" Frodo turns to look, "and saw Strider, and yet not Strider; for the weatherworn Ranger was no longer there. In the stern sat Aragorn son of Arathorn, proud and erect, guiding the boat with skillful strokes; his hood was cast back, and his dark hair was blowing in the wind, a light was in his eyes: a king returning from exile to his own land" (*The Lord of the Rings* 393). In the presence of his royal ancestors, Aragorn seems to be transfigured, shedding for a moment the persona of his exile in the Northern wildernesses, and appearing as he truly is, the scion of ancient kings. Aragorn then repeats his exhortation to Frodo, and explicitly claims his lineage and his birthright: "'Fear not!' he said. 'Long have I desired to look upon the likenesses of Isildur and Anárion, my sires of old. Under their shadow Elessar, the Elfstone son of Arathorn of

the House of Valandil Isildur's son, heir of Elendil, has naught to dread!'" (*The Lord of the Rings* 393). Aragorn identifies himself by what will become his royal name ("Elessar") and by his lineage, and in light of that claim, he rebukes and dispels the fear that overshadows Frodo. Aragorn's assertion of royal lineage against fear here is analogous to Gandalf's claims of authority against both the Balrog and Saruman; in the same way, by claiming his ancestry, Aragorn is assenting to his own appointed quest to become the King. The enchantment that radiates from him as a result of that choice transfigures his aspect to show forth the majesty befitting the Heir of Isildur, and it inspires and uplifts those around him, like Frodo, who are overtaken by fear and doubt, which are the tools of Sauron.

The Paths of the Dead

Aragorn again shows his power when he descends into the Paths of the Dead to command the spirits of the oathbreakers there to fight for him. Aragorn's decision to go to the Dwimorberg itself is an embrace of his kingly lineage, because only an heir of Isildur can call the dead to fulfill their oath. Aragorn is aware of this, and when Eowyn tells him that what he is doing is madness, he responds, "It is not madness, lady… for I go on a path appointed" (*The Lord of the Rings* 783). In calling his course of action "appointed," Aragorn shows that he is aware of the existence of a higher purpose, that there are certain things which he alone can and should do. It is also clear that he is specifically choosing to cooperate with that purpose despite great danger. A company of Rangers from the North accompany Aragorn, along with Legolas and Gimli, though he makes it clear that he does not expect any of these to follow him against their will and would go alone if necessary. As this company approaches the Paths, a powerful sense of

supernatural dread and foreboding begins to creep over everyone. When they finally reach the door that leads into the mountain, “there was not a heart among them that did not quail,” and the horses refuse to go further. This fear is the fear of death – Halbarad, one of the Rangers, says, “This is an evil door… and my death lies beyond it.” Their fearful paralysis is broken by the powerful voice of Aragorn who announces, “Follow me!” and then leads the way himself into the darkness of the mountain. This act of courage and hope dispels the power of fear over the Company: “such was the strength of his will in that hour that all the Dúnedain and their horses followed him” (*The Lord of the Rings* 786). This inspiration is the power of Aragorn’s unshakable commitment to his mission manifesting in the world. It is an enchanting power radiating through the holy bloodline of the Kings into Aragorn which undoes evil and enacts a victory of good.

Throughout the passage through the Dwimorberg, the threat of fear and despair follows Aragorn’s companions, but he remains a beacon of hope for them in the dark, and it is only because of his presence and power that they are able to continue on. When at last they reach their destination, Aragorn’s task in the Paths of the Dead is fulfilled, again by means of the enchantment of his claimed destiny. Aragorn challenges the spirits of the dead that stalk him, crying, “Oathbreakers, why have ye come?” They respond, “To fulfill our oath and have peace.” Aragorn then commands them to follow him to war, after which their oath shall be fulfilled and they be released from the world. He bases both the command and the promise on his own authority, declaring, “For I am Elassar, Isildur’s heir of Gondor.” He then unfurls his standard, which bears the emblem of the royal house of Gondor (*The Lord of the Rings* 789-790). Once again, Aragorn

here acknowledges and claims both his lineage and the mission which that ancestry entails. In doing so, he has power both to break the power of fear with which the wraiths of the oathbreakers oppress his men, and to command the dead to obey him. Because his power and lordship are rooted in an act of acceptance and submission with regard to his inheritance, they are fundamentally distinguished from the selfish, vicious, and dominating magic of Sauron and other servants of evil and prevail over that power.

The Hands of the King

Perhaps Aragorn's most powerful exercise of his kingly power is his work in the Houses of Healing after the Battle of Pelennor Fields, in which he again takes upon himself the identity and destiny of the King, and through that choice manifests unique powers of healing and restoration. Aragorn's entry into the Houses of Healing is a moment of culmination, his last major act of preparation before openly declaring himself as the King of Gondor – in fact, Aragorn's healings are themselves the beginning of that declaration. As Ioreth, a woman who works in the Houses, observes, "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer. And so the rightful king could ever be known" (*The Lord of the Rings* 860). By healing Faramir, Éowyn, and Merry after battle, Aragorn begins to fulfill the prophecies about him, and to complete the mission of his life. As such, these healings require more from him than any of his feats up to this point; as he himself says after seeing the condition of the wounded, "Here must I put forth all such power and skill as is given to me" (*The Lord of the Rings* 863). Faramir, Éowyn, and Merry suffer not only from physical wounds, but also from the shadowy effects of Sauron's magic, exerted especially through the Nazgûl. This is a spiritual darkness that descended on many of those who fought against Sauron's armies, a

malaise which drags one down into despair, sapping their will and desire to live. Conventional methods of healing have no effect against this sorcery, unless enhanced by an opposing enchantment, a power of hope, renewal, and life. This is precisely the power which Aragorn summons in these moments.

Coming to Faramir first, Aragorn begins by placing a hand on the prince's head and calling his name. Those watching "felt that some great struggle was going on. For Aragorn's face grew grey with weariness; and ever and anon he called the name of Faramir, but each time more faintly to their hearing, as if Aragorn himself was removed from them, and walked afar in some dark vale, calling for one that was lost" (*The Lord of the Rings* 865). Aragorn is locked in a spiritual struggle against the shadow that infects Faramir, and to oppose it he calls to him. This calling is a summons as issued by the King to subject, but as will be seen, it is more than that; it is a summons of life, a command to live, and a declaration of hope issued with the King's authority. Aragorn then makes a warm tonic of *athelas*, a healing herb long associated with the kings. The scent of the leaves is described as "living," and "like a memory of dewy mornings of unshadowed sun in some land of which the fair world in spring is itself but a fleeting memory" (*The Lord of the Rings* 865). This revitalizing smell is a support and enhancement of the call to life which Aragorn is issuing to Faramir, and it is successful. Faramir awakes, and says softly, "My lord, you called me. I come. What does the king command?" confirming that it was indeed Aragorn as Lord and King who rescued him from darkness and death. Aragorn's instruction to him then: "Walk no more in the shadows, but awake!" (*The Lord of the Rings* 866) encapsulates the hope with which Aragorn, as the King, heals those afflicted by the dark magic of the Enemy.

Aragorn goes next to Éowyn, who is severely wounded both physically and spiritually after her defeat of the Lord of the Nazgûl. His healing of her follows the same principles as that of Faramir; he kisses her forehead, and calls to her, saying, "Éowyn Éomund's daughter, awake! For your enemy has passed away!" (*The Lord of the Rings* 867). This again is a call to life, but for Éowyn it is also especially a call to peace and hope for the future, away from the false despair of the darkness of Sauron. Aragorn uses the scent of *athelas* again as well, to similar effect; this time the smell is like "an air wholly fresh and clean and young, as if it had not before been breathed by any living thing and came new-made from snowy mountains high beneath a dome of stars, or from shore so silver far away washed by seas of foam" (*The Lord of the Rings* 868). This description highlights the renewing of Aragorn's healing, the purifying transformation that prepares one for the hope of greater blessings to come. This is especially appropriate with regard to Éowyn, as she, through her experience of war and glory, will come to turn away from the life of a warrior and embrace peace together with Faramir, with whom she falls in love as the two of them recover. In anticipation of this, after he feels warmth and life in her body again, Aragorn lays her hand in Faramir's, and lets him continue to call her as she awakens (*The Lord of the Rings* 868). By humbly allowing Faramir to complete the healing process, Aragorn shows his understanding that his power, in healing as in all else, is not for himself but is meant for the service of others and the good of his kingdom. In this he shows the subordination of oneself in power and purpose to greater goods and higher purposes that is a central hallmark of enchantment as distinct from magic.

Finally, Aragorn visits Merry the hobbit, who participated in the destruction of the Witch-King and thus is under the same shadow as Éowyn. Aragorn's power remains the same here, being made manifest through the calling of Merry's name and the virtue of *athelas*. Aragorn mentions that Merry's "strong and gay" spirit was instrumental in his recovery. Like his inclusion of Faramir in Éowyn's healing, this observation is emblematic of Aragorn's understanding that a king's power is rightly used to draw out the good which is natural to his subjects; his quest is to guide and bring to fruition the good purposes of others. The scent of the *athelas*, as with the other two healings, seems to subtly shift to fit the one to whom it is being applied. In Merry's case, the odor is "like the scent of orchards, and of heather in the sunshine full of bees" (*The Lord of the Rings* 868-869), images which immediately evoke the pastoral tranquility of the Shire, the simple and homely peace which all hobbits love. That evocation is part of what brings Merry, in his turn, back to life and light by Aragorn's hand.

After these healings, Aragorn leaves the Houses of Healing and encounters crowds of people who had heard that a man with the King's powers of healing had come to the city. These implore Aragorn to heal them and their loved ones of their injuries, hurts which are again both bodily and spiritual. Aragorn works all night to heal as many people as he can, and the people of the city begin to say to each other that the King has at last returned, and they begin calling him "Elfstone," which in Elvish would become his regnal name, "Elessar" (*The Lord of the Rings* 871). Thus, Aragorn's power of healing comes to be an acceptance of the destiny of kingship set for him by his blood, as well as the means by which that destiny begins to be accomplished and Aragorn's kingship is realized. In none of this does Aragorn show the slightest sign of greed for

the position of ruler, nor does he take selfish satisfaction in his power to inspire, to command, or to heal, but in all things he acts in cooperation with the good of others. In opposition and direct contrast to Sauron, this marks him as a good Lord, one who is himself an image of the Lords of the West, the Valar, and ultimately of Eru Iluvátar, Lord and Creator of the world.

Chapter IV: Frodo

Last to be considered here is Frodo the hobbit, which may seem an odd choice. Frodo is even less a wizard than Aragorn, and hardly seems to have any power to be called either “magic” or “enchantment.” However, like Gandalf and Aragorn, Frodo also has a quest; indeed, in many ways the greatest and most challenging quest of all characters in the story. Frodo too must struggle with accepting his mission and obediently choosing to pursue it against the resistance of great evil. In so doing, we see that Frodo too wields power according to the same principles as both Gandalf and Aragorn, though perhaps of less degree. It is in Frodo, however, that those principles become in some ways most clear, and the meaning of power in Tolkien’s work is fully revealed. Frodo, having absolutely no pretensions or delusions about his own abilities, and being in fact quite weak by most standards, has recourse very quickly and obviously to a kind of prayer, the invocation of high and holy powers to come to his aid. In doing so he finds himself to be the instrument and vessel of those powers, accomplishing acts of great significance by his obedience to them and the quest he has received.

The Deadly Name

Being a hobbit, Frodo frequently finds himself overpowered and seemingly defenseless as he follows the very dangerous road to Mordor. These moments of weakness are often the occasion for Frodo’s most potent choices to persevere, and those choices, just as with Aragorn and Gandalf, make him a channel of the power that allows him to overcome evil and complete his quest. One of the earliest such moments comes

before the Fellowship is even formed, when Frodo, Aragorn, and the other hobbits are attacked by the Nazgûl on the road to Rivendell. As Frodo finds himself menaced by three of the wraiths, he is overwhelmed by a dark desire to put on the Ring of Power. He gives in, and he sees the wraiths as they really are: white, ghostly figures with burning eyes, reaching with spectral blades to take the ring and kill Frodo. At this last moment, with no other defense, Frodo simply flings himself to the ground, and the cry, "O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!" bursts from him as he strikes desperately with his own small sword at the feet of the phantoms before him, striking one of them (*The Lord of the Rings* 195-196). Frodo passes out, but later learns that the Nazgûl was hurt by this last effort, and then driven off by Aragorn. However, it was not the sword-stroke that hurt him; as Aragorn tells Frodo, "it is unharmed, but all blades perish that pierce that dreadful King. More deadly to him was the name of Elbereth" (*The Lord of the Rings* 198). The name "Elbereth" is an Elvish title for Varda, the Queen of the Valar and one of the most powerful of them. "Gilthoniel" is another title for her, alluding to her creation of the stars, for which the Elves especially love her. Frodo heard these names earlier in the story when the hobbits had a chance encounter with a group of Elves traveling through the Shire who were singing a hymn to Varda which included these titles (*The Lord of the Rings* 79). It is unlikely that Frodo, though he has some knowledge of Elves and their language, fully understood what they were singing, nor even really knows who Varda is. The names seem to spring from him, almost unintentionally – the text says that Frodo "heard himself say" them. Faced with overwhelming evil which threatens him with death, Frodo spontaneously turns to the best and most beautiful things he has experienced, which are the Elves and their works.

Repeating this Elvish prayer, with faith only in its beauty, marks an important moment for Frodo, in which he entrusts his quest to save the world from Sauron to the Dark Lord's true enemies, and in particular to Varda, who was always most hated by Morgoth and his servants for her unsurpassed beauty. In doing so, Frodo accepts that he is not determining the purpose of his own life, but instead throws himself on the mercy of what is to him only a beautiful name drifting out of mystery and legend, for the bearer of that name to do with him what she will. Frodo's faith is rewarded, as the holy name of Elbereth contains the power to save him. Frodo's invocation of Varda is thus a kind of enchantment, and perhaps even a purer kind than Gandalf's or Aragorn's, because of the complete trust which Frodo is forced by his weakness to adopt.

Frodo does something very similar only a little while later, when the Nazgûl again catch up to the travelers and attack them. Once again, Frodo finds himself isolated and trapped by the dark spirits, and again he begins to be overwhelmed by the magical aura of fear and despair with which the Ringwraiths are always wreathed (*The Lord of the Rings* 213). Frodo, having learned from his previous encounter, does not succumb to the desire to put on or surrender the Ring, but rather takes heart, lifts his sword, and cries: "By Elbereth and Lúthien the Fair… you shall have neither the Ring nor me!" (*The Lord of the Rings* 214). To his prayer he adds this time the name of Lúthien, a semi-divine Elf-maiden of legend and an ancestor of Aragorn. These beautiful and holy names seem again to hurt and enrage the Nazgûl, who halt, stand up in their stirrups, and smite Frodo with magic of such hatred that he cannot speak, and his sword breaks and falls as he trembles in fear. Nevertheless, as the Nazgûl do so, they are overwhelmed by an enchanted flood which sweeps down the River, sent by Elrond and

Gandalf, and so again Frodo's self-entrustment to the beauty and grace which he senses in these holy names is fulfilled in a manifestation of enchantment which overcomes the wicked powers arrayed against him and his quest. Like Gandalf's indirect defeat of the Witch-King, this seems to be an example of so-called "coincidence" working providentially for the victory of the good.

Brightest of Stars

Much later in his quest, when Frodo is on the very edge of Mordor itself, he again finds himself faced with an overwhelming darkness in the form of Shelob, the spider-abomination that lurks in the mountains which guard the Black Land, and again Frodo is able to confront it with powerful enchantment by invoking and entrusting himself to greater powers. As Frodo and Sam wander deeper into the tunnels of Cirith Ungol, Shelob's lair, they begin to realize that Gollum has led them into a trap. Not yet sure of the exact nature of their danger, but increasingly aware of some horrific evil thing stalking them, Frodo and Sam begin to be overcome by fear, but Sam suddenly has a vision of Galadriel and the gifts she gave when the Fellowship departed Lothlórien. He quickly reminds Frodo of the phial of light which he had been given, and Frodo holds it aloft in the heavy shadows. As the star-glass begins to blaze with silver light, the darkness is driven away, and hope returns to Frodo and Sam's hearts. Frodo looks with awe at the phial, and as he does so he spontaneously cries, "*Aiya Eärendil Elenion Ancalima!*" not understanding or knowing what he is saying, "for it seemed that another voice spoke through his, clear, untroubled by the foul air of the pit" (*The Lord of the Rings* 720). This inspired cry is Quenya, the language of Galadriel's kindred of Elves, and means, "Hail Eärendil, brightest of stars!" The story of Eärendil is too long

to tell here, but to briefly summarize: Eärendil was a half-Elven hero who, because of his devotion to the Valar and his love for his people, was blessed, and now sails the sky in an enchanted ship, with a Silmaril (a holy and very powerful gemstone) mounted on his brow. The light of the Silmaril is so great that to those on Middle-earth, Eärendil and his ship appear as a star, and that star is particularly beloved by the elves. The power of the phial of Galadriel which Frodo does not realize is that it contains something of the light of Eärendil's Silmaril. By invoking Eärendil and shining his light into the shadows of Cirith Ungol, Frodo invokes the power of the Elves who made the Silmarils and the Valar who hallowed them, and these strengthen him in the face of fear and death. Worthy of note here also is the fact that Frodo experiences this invocation almost as spoken by someone else through him, and that he does not even know the words he says. This emphasizes that, in this moment, Frodo is trusting not in himself or his own power, but instead is almost unconsciously opening himself through an act of trust to whatever power unknown to him that lies in the gift of Galadriel. Frodo trusts in the promise Galadriel made to him, that this glass would be "a light to him when all other lights go out," and that faith is rewarded with power.

This initial invocation, however, is not enough to drive Shelob away, and as she continues to pursue the hobbits, Frodo has a much more direct confrontation with her. Her stench and aura of evil and death oppress him, and Frodo realizes that he won't be able to escape her by running. He turns to face the spider with the phial in hand, and calls Galadriel's name aloud. With her power to strengthen him, he draws his sword, and then, "holding the star aloft and the bright sword advanced, Frodo, hobbit of the Shire, walked steadily down to meet the eyes. They wavered. Doubt came into them as

the light approached. One by one they dimmed, and slowly they drew back" (*The Lord of the Rings* 721). The text itself sounds a little astonished here – an appropriate reaction, certainly, as Frodo does something which is completely beyond his natural strength. There is no reason that Shelob should fear a hobbit, but Frodo, because of his ability to recognize goodness and his willingness to trust great powers because he senses them to be good, comes to Shelob with more than a hobbit's strength, and Shelob is driven back, filled with doubt and fear. Frodo knows his own limits, and so in choosing to continue his quest he must learn to readily trust in greater powers than himself to accomplish it.

The Scouring of the Shire

Throughout his journey to Mordor, Frodo is willing to entrust himself and his quest to higher powers of good in the face of evil which he cannot overcome. This constant faith bears fruit in Frodo himself over time, transforming him so that, by the end of the story, he has learned what true enchanting power is and is able to deal with some evils himself. This ultimate fulfillment is shown through the events which take place in the Shire after Frodo and the other hobbits return there after their quest is done and Sauron destroyed. To give some brief context: after Saruman was defeated by Gandalf as described above, he was left in his tower Orthanc under the guard of the Ents. Later, however, he manages to escape, and makes his way with Gríma Wormtongue to the Shire, where, under the name "Sharkey," he institutes the closest thing to an authoritarian police state that hobbits are capable of. Saruman, however, is much diminished after being stripped of his power by Gandalf, and he has no real potency left to him beyond basic intimidation. Additionally, as one would imagine,

hobbits are pretty laughable as goose-stepping enforcers of a dictator. The four hobbits, under Frodo's leadership, proceed to dismantle Saruman's control over the Shire, and the manner in which they do so reveals that the real power of enchantment that they have all gained actually surpasses whatever little magic is left to Saruman.

When Frodo and the other three hobbits first encounter Saruman's agents in the Shire, they treat their attempts to enforce Saruman's new rules with dismissive scorn. They do so because they recognize the nature of the evil in the Shire: it is empty, based only on threats, and perpetrated by scared hobbits who don't know what they're doing. As such, the way to defeat it is to expose Saruman as impotent rather than engage in any kind of conflict with the hobbits working for him. And so, when some hobbit Shirriffs try to arrest Frodo, he just laughs at them, and says, "'Don't be absurd!… I am going where I please, and in my own time. I happen to be going to Bag End on business, but if you insist on going too, well that is your affair" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1001). By completely dismissing the arrest, Frodo effectively robs it of all its power, revealing the baselessness of "the Rules," as the Shirriffs call them. When the Shirriffs insist on the pretense, telling Frodo not to forget that he's been arrested, he assures them that he will not forget; however, he says, "I may forgive you" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1001). Frodo's mocking of the Shirriffs is not motivated by feelings of superiority or any ill-will towards anyone. He mocks them because they are acting against their own nature and that of the Shire, and Frodo's mission in the Shire is one of healing and restoration, not of domination or any kind of conquest. He laughs at them to try to jar them out of the ideological delusion that has led them to accept Saruman's new order for the Shire, and return to their old lives of peace.

Frodo's entire mission of liberation in the Shire maintains this same character of righteousness and mercy, taking evil only as seriously as it deserves, and seeking the good of Saruman and those serving him in the hope of healing the Shire and restoring its former way of life. To that end, as he begins to organize a resistance campaign, he is very clear that fighting is to be avoided if possible, and that if it is not possible, no hobbits are to be killed, no matter how much they have devoted themselves to Saruman. As Frodo says, "No hobbit has ever killed another on purpose in the Shire, and it is not to begin now" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1006). Violence, and especially violence among hobbits, would be a fundamental corruption of the society of the Shire, and would in fact constitute a victory for Saruman whether he remained in power or not. Frodo has learned that recourse to violence and one's own power to dominate others is a path to evil. Violent domination is not how he was successful against the Ringwraiths or Shelob, and when he eventually confronts Saruman, it is not how he defeats him either.

When Frodo's forces have been victorious and ride to Saruman's house, many of the other hobbits murmur of their desire to kill him. Hearing this, Saruman threatens them, saying, "Do not think that when I lost all my goods I lost all my power! Whoever strikes me shall be accursed. And if my blood stains the Shire, it shall wither and never be healed" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1019). These words scare the hobbits, but Frodo, knowing that Gandalf has reduced Saruman far below his former strength, sees that this is an empty threat. He responds as he did with the Shirriffs before, identifying the impotence of the evil before him, and offering mercy in return: "Do not believe him! He has lost all power, save his voice that can still daunt you and deceive you, if you let it. But I will not have him slain. It is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal

nothing. Go, Saruman, by the speediest way!" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1019). Frodo refuses to participate with the base struggles of power with which Saruman has infected the Shire.

Frodo's mercy is tested one last time, however, when Saruman attempts to stab Frodo while passing him to leave. The knife breaks on Frodo's *mithril* mail, worn under his shirt, but several hobbits seize Saruman and Sam raises a sword to kill him for assaulting his master. Again, however, Frodo spares him, stopping Sam and saying "'Do not kill him even now. For he has not hurt me. And in any case I do not wish him to be slain in this evil mood. He was great once, of a noble kind that we should not dare to raise our hands against. He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1019). Frodo proves beyond doubt here that, despite all the destruction and ruin that Saruman has brought to Frodo's home, he still loves Saruman, insofar as he wants what is good for him. He also shows that he has come to understand something of the spiritual order of the world and the powers that have directed his life and which he has learned to call upon, as it is partially out of reverence for Saruman's original holy nature that Frodo refuses to allow harm to come to him. Frodo's mercy has a powerful effect on Saruman; we hear that he "rose to his feet, and stared at Frodo. There was a strange look in his eyes of mingled wonder and respect and hatred. 'You are wise, and cruel. You have robbed my revenge of sweetness, and now I must go hence in bitterness, in debt to your mercy. I hate it and you! Well, I go and I will trouble you no more'" (*The Lord of the Rings* 1019). Saruman is left empty, with hatred that gains him nothing. As Frodo says earlier, Saruman would still have had power if the hobbits allowed themselves to be frightened by his voice.

Frodo was not frightened, and because of that he avoided the trap of engaging with Saruman at his lower, “magical” level of conflict, where power comes from force and the will to dominate. Instead, free from fear and ambition, seeking only to restore and heal the Shire, the hobbits, and Saruman himself, Frodo can meet him with the “enchantment” which comes from the acceptance of higher designs than his own, designs which are based on mercy, not on competitive domination. This obedience, manifested as righteous and merciful conviction, is the root of the power of Gandalf, Aragorn, and Frodo alike, along with those of all the truly heroic characters in the story, and it is what makes the deeds of those characters truly heroic and worthy of emulation.

Conclusion

The idea of magic, supernatural power which human beings can master or channel to influence the world around them is among our most ancient ideas, and it suffuses the traditions of mythology and language which Tolkien knew and loved so much. By including it in his fantasy, Tolkien made it a staple of the genre which derives so many of its basic elements and tropes from his work. However, I think the analysis here undertaken elucidates a distinction among forms of magic which is not really found in most subsequent fantasy. Magic is commonly understood as a morally neutral instrument, to be used for good or evil according to the will of the wielder, much like a technology. For Tolkien though, that understanding aligns more with what he calls "magic" in the particular sense in which I've used it here, denoting the power of darkness. The power of Gandalf, Aragorn, Frodo, and all heroes is fundamentally different, because it doesn't focus on gaining the ability to control reality; rather, it arises from a disposition in the wielder of subordination to higher powers, and acceptance of mission from them. The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* reveals that these are not merely two different but equal sources of power or modes of its exercise. Instead, because of the eucatastrophic structure which defines Tolkien's story (and which he thinks defines the reality of our lives), the enchanting power of the heroes will always – inevitably – defeat the magic of the Dark Lord and his servants. Enchantment, in fact, is in a sense nothing but an acceptance of and participation in the coming final victory over evil, making its wielder an instrumental cause of that victory itself, and allowing them to share in its joy.

The impossibility of the victory of evil, however, far from making the story boring or banal, electrifies it with incredible hope. Likewise, the stark distinction between good and evil power present in Tolkien's work is not indicative of moral naïveté, but rather can have a clarifying effect on our ethical vision in the real world, exemplifying the fundamental principles which underlie ethical action, and playing out their consequences. This is an icon of the benefit which human beings derive from fantasy, even the basic need that is met by it. The point of fantasy is to create a Secondary World into which we can immerse ourselves, and in it encounter truth in other guises than we see it in everyday life. Returning from the fantasy into the Primary World, we discover that it is enchanted with wonder and hope, and that truth is revealed to us in ways that we had not seen before. For this reason, Tolkien calls fantasy a "human right," an exercise which fulfills our highest capacities of creation, participating subordinately in the work of our own Creator (Flieger and Anderson 66). Works of sub-creation like *The Lord of the Rings* thus remain vital in human formation, illuminating our understanding of righteousness and wickedness, hope and despair, weakness and strength. We see ourselves reflected and corrected in them, and are directed by their very form to our true ends, the real eucatastrophes of our own history and lives – and that, as Gandalf would say, is an encouraging thought.

Bibliography

Flieger, Verlyn, and Douglas A. Anderson, editors. *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories*. HarperCollinsPublishers, 2014.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. 50th Anniversary Edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion*. 4th ed., Ballantine Books, 1983.