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'YE OLDE AUTHOUR':

TOLKIEN'S ANATOMY OF TRADITION IN *THE SILMARILLION*

PhD Dissertation

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

The Lord of the Rings was published nearly sixty years ago, but this is not the only thing why J.R.R. Tolkien and his work are often seen irreducibly 'old'. The very image of Tolkien most often appearing in the popular mind is that of a white-haired, pipe-smoking Oxford don with a pronunciation nearly as hard to decode as Ozzy Osbourne's. As a comparative philologist, a linguist and a medieval scholar, his areas of interest were old languages (especially Germanic) and literature; the sources and parallels that critics point out in his works are nearly always old (and to most readers, unknown) texts. The worldview his works sketch out is also more traditional (old) than new, contemporary, or modern. His emphatically devout Roman Catholic Christianity counts as an outdated (old) 'great narrative' under the postmodern condition. Yet Tolkien's works maintain a solid readership even to the point of *The Lord of the Rings* being named the most important book of the twentieth century,[1] and are celebrated as essentially connected with (even 'grounding') the present of popular literature.[2] His considered, ideological anti-modernity, however, still functions as a reminder that perhaps even he himsElf wanted to be seen as old.

But this emphasis on tradition, on the old world of languages and myths masks a deeper and more ambiguous concern: Tolkien is less interested in the world than in the *text*. The text as he thought of it is also something old today, when even printed books slowly give way to hypertextual representation, and even medievalist research makes use of CD-ROMs and online resources. As a philologist Tolkien was dealing only with texts: editing, translating, teaching them, studying their words in a historical, comparative framework, poring over the

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[1] See Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), xx-xxiv.
[2] Brian Attebery starts the argument of his book *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1992) by saying that "Tolkien's form of fantasy, for readers in English, is our mental template [for the whole genre]" (14).

unknown meaning of some of them.[3] As an author, he was always producing texts, first to supply some imaginative explanation for some of those unknown meanings in other texts, later to his own, then to his audience's satisfaction. The voluminous corpus of Tolkien's posthumous publications is less a body of *stories* (like *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*) than of *texts*, the same stories over and over again; critics and readers consequently have problems as to how exactly to place these. Are they 'literature' like the best-selling novels? Are they philological curiosities like Joyce's notebooks? Addenda and material to make use of in interpreting the novels, or to be read (perhaps enjoyed) in their own right?

Tolkien produced much more texts than stories. He evolved a number of what narratology would call 'stories' (sequences of fictional events, happening to fictitious characters, set in a made-up world), and then kept telling and retelling them in different ways, producing a huge corpus of texts that was only published after his death. This posthumously published corpus contains variants not even of the best-known texts (which we could put down as 'notes and drafts'), but of the other stories, only occasionally glanced in the books, but never put into final form: a context for and in some sense an explanation, a commentary on them. These stories first became accessible for readers in 1977, with the publication of *The Silmarillion*, edited by Tolkien's youngest son and literary executor, Christopher Tolkien, from the mass of (then not even fully processed) manuscripts. Despite the fact that the success of this book was nowhere near that of *The Lord of the Rings*, further volumes followed: *Unfinished Tales* (in 1980), the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth* (between 1984 and 1996), and then *The Children of Húrin* (2007). In these, Christopher Tolkien set out to represent his father's work in a more accurate light, making accessible the rhizomatically branching and merging versions and variants of every single story he had ever written about

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[3] A number of his scholarly publications are editions (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Ancrene Wisse*) or inquiries into textual details ('Sigelweara Land', 'Chaucer as Philologist', 'The Name Nodens').

his fictional world of Middle-earth. These do not explain anything to most readers of Tolkien; but for the critic, they contain centrally important considerations.

These considerations, however, do not always remain on the side of the 'old' and traditional: it is now easier and also more pressing to approach Tolkien from a more theoretical direction too. It is a *certain conception* of the text that Tolkien is concerned with, as he is concerned with a *certain type* of story – part of the reason his work is often termed 'mythopoeic'. The question of this 'mythopoeic' quality has also connected with fairy-stories and acquired a new dimension with the addition of innumerable variants and transformations to the corpus. It is now also possible to see how *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* on the one hand, and the 'Silmarillion' material[4] on the other, can offer a mutual commentary on each other. Tolkien's already complex fiction is endowed with a new complexity by the very special handling of textuality that we now see clearly, and the relationship of textuality, history and fiction in his work is a topic that cannot fail to resonate with theoretical overtones in the 21st century. With the posthumous corpus, new critical methods of looking at this textual complex were needed, new ways to make sense of Tolkien's overwhelming outpouring of text rather than story.

One way of looking at this has itsElf turned out to be 'historical' in focus, still linking to the 'old' and traditional. With the publication of the older texts, including the variants of *The Lord of the Rings* and more recently, of *The Hobbit*, new connections can be seen between the stories as written in different periods: typological uses of motifs or plotlines (like the role of light, or the relationship of Aragorn and Arwen replaying the story of Beren and Lúthien) can be investigated in a properly 'historical' framework even inside Tolkien's oeuvre. *The History*

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[4] Since the publication of this material, it has become a customary critical practice to refer to the text published in 1977 as *The Silmarillion*, while 'Silmarillion' marks the entirety of Tolkien's diachronically distributed materials, versions, texts that deal with these stories. It was from the 'Silmarillion' that Christopher Tolkien produced *The Silmarillion*, but while *The Silmarillion* can be considered to be a separate work (as it is a separare *text*), the other 'Silmarillion' cannot: it is a diachronic complex of texts, spanning more than fifty years in the making and never arriving at a final version.

of Middle-earth offers a tantalizing glimpse of the diachronic evolution of Tolkien's writing, conceptually as well as technically or narrative-wise: it has given rise to a real *Tolkien philology*, differently and more historically conceived than before.

Where critics initially pointed out only Tolkien's philological roots in the old languages and literatures of the world (primarily Germanic, but also Classical, Finnish, and Celtic), now they can study the relationships to his own 'old' texts and stories. The historical (and professional) drive that led Tolkien from language to stories, and then to texts, naturally offered philology as a method of approach. Tom Shippey's comprehensive and fundamental monograph, *The Road to Middle-earth*[5] outlined this most clearly: drawing on both biographical records and an astonishing command of even the obscurest details of the texts and their medieval sources, Shippey argued persuasively that the philological method, complete with mapping out Tolkien's sources (both linguistic and literary) is a worthwhile and productive interpretive choice. Humphrey Carpenter's 1977 *Biography* (to this day the standard Tolkien biography, supplemented by the selection of his letters Carpenter edited in 1981[6]) already discussed how two lines in Cynewulf's *Crist* became the catalyst in the 1910s for Tolkien's first creative attempts (long narrative or descriptive poems), because they held an Old English word ("Earendel") that was unclear in meaning: Tolkien supplied a meaning by placing it in a story, and making the story fictionally related to the Anglo-Saxon world.[7] As a scholar of Germanic languages, he used Gothic, Old and Middle English, and Old Norse as models for his famous invented languages, but the literary works he so admired (Old and Middle English poems, Eddic songs) also offered him linguistic points of departure,[8] and all

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[5] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (3rd, rev. ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003). The first edition of Shippey's book appeared in 1982, the second in 1992; I will be referring to the third, revised and expanded edition of 2003.

[6] Humphrey Carpenter, *Tolkien. A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977); *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (sel. and ed. Humphrey Carpenter, with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

[7] Carpenter, *Biography*, 64; see also 71, 75-77.

[8] Such point of departure was, for example, the differentiation of "light" and "dark Elves" in the Norse sources: see Shippey, 'Light-Elves, Dark-Elves, and Others: Tolkien's Elvish Problem' (*Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004): 1-15). The argument of *Road* is built on the examination of these linguistic details: see especially 55-65, 204-9, 244-47.

this inevitably bound his work not only to the languages themselves and their early literatures, but also to the historical discipline of philology. Now that his own philological corpus has become available, one can trace back passages in *The Silmarillion* to their 'sources' in the early writings: a definitely poetic passage, for example, to one of Tolkien's long narrative poems of the 1920s.

But 19th-century comparative philology, built on the concept of 'reconstruction', inevitably expanded out of the stricter linguistic domain. It was not only words and word forms it reconstructed but, based on a similar methodology, often also stories (e.g., the 'original' form of the *Nibelungenlied*), thereby creating what Shippey calls an "asterisk-reality" (from the practice of marking hypothetical forms with *, the asterisk).[9] Unattested words, reconstructed from cognate forms in related languages and the known sound changes have a curious status: they 'must have been' so, but this is impossible to verify, and if we apply the technique to stories (and in editorial work, to manuscripts), we carry this ontological uncertainty to another level. In Tolkien philology it might not be the point to 'reconstruct' anything, least of all 'lost Tolkien texts': it is, however, the very idea of this philological historicity and all that comes with it as applied to his own corpus that results from such an approach. Tolkien's stories create a fictional world where the very history, the layers and operations of culture, as well as its archeology, are produced in and by the text. Thus his 'literary' textuality connects with history in another, fictional way and emphasizes the similarity of methods.

When he first started writing poems, Tolkien saw 'historical' and 'fictional' as interconnected in the idea of 'mythology'. He could not help but wonder how exactly the Old English poems (his beloved *Beowulf*, for instance) related to Anglo-Saxon pagan mythology. The texts themselves are, naturally, preserved in manuscript copies written by much later

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[9] Shippey, *Road*, 19-23.

Christian scribes (from the late 10th or early 11th centuries[10]), but still contain relics of a Continental narrative tradition brought over to Britain by the invading Anglo-Saxons.[11] However late we consider the manuscript copies to be, and however early we place the actual composition of these poems (there is still no complete scholarly consensus on some of these questions), they are, explicitly or implicitly, Christian. The little we know about Anglo-Saxon paganism and mythology is thus mostly by way of comparative studies, and comes from better documented Germanic mythologies like Norse.[12] Tolkien had always registered disappointment with this, and in his early writing set out to provide a fictional substitute: most of the stories in the 'Silmarillion' were conceived of as parts of a fictitious 'English mythology'. He planned to present these as transcriptions of the 'Lost Tales' that the fairies (later: Elves) told to a fictional Anglo-Saxon mediator figure, gleaned or copied from the 'Golden Book', and together constituting the 'Book of Lost Tales'. Even though Tolkien's conceptions about this mythological link became clearer when a selection of his letters appeared in 1981, Carpenter's representation of his thought in his *Biography*, perhaps misguidedly, came to dominate criticism. What Tolkien actually wrote in a letter to publisher Milton Waldman in 1951 was that he initially wanted to create a "body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy-stories", that he could "dedicate" to his country.[13] Carpenter's phrasing that he wanted to write "a mythology for England"[14] led a number of authors to believe that Tolkien imagined

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[10] Stanley B. Greenfield and David G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York–London: New York UP, 1986), 130, 5, 71.

[11] On the source materials that the *Beowulf*-poet synthesizes, and his relation to them, see Fred C. Robinson, '*Beowulf*,' in Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 148-50, and Andy Orchard's concise survey in *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), ch.4, 'Myth and Legend' (98-129). Tolkien comments on this synthesis in the famous allegory of the tower in 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,' in Lewis E. Nicholson, ed., *An Anthology of Beoulf Criticism* (Notre Dame, In.: U of Notre Dame P, 1963), 54-55.

[12] Brian Branston's *The Lost Gods of England* (New York: Oxford UP, 1974) collects most of the materials pertaining to this; see also John D. Niles, 'Pagan Survivals and Popular Belief', in Godden and Lapidge, eds. *Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 126-41.

[13] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 144 (#131).

[14] Carpenter, *Biography*, 89.

his fiction as an 'English mythology'. In 1992, Anders Stenström showed conclusively[15] that even when writing the letter, Tolkien was not claiming a connection, and that his conceptions were rapidly changing all through his life. The complex of 'Silmarillion' stories and texts was associated both with 'mythology' and England, and as *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have little or no connection to England and only a hazily conceived 'mythopoeic' quality, the 'Silmarillion' material is central in looking at how this body of stories and texts is functioning in the corpus.

Since for most of Tolkien's lifetime the 'Silmarillion' remained invisible and it took nearly twenty years after its first appearance to contextualize it in a real Tolkien philology by *The History of Middle-earth*, it has always been and remains deeply problematic. Two shorter books anticipated its content shortly before its publication: Jim Allen's *An Extrapolation on* The Silmarillion[16] collected allusions and hints as well as some interview material, and Clyde S. Kilby's *Tolkien and* The Silmarillion[17] relied on Kilby's own experience while working with Tolkien in the 1960s. But even after the actual publication, it took nearly ten years to situate *The Silmarillion* in the framework which Tolkien might be thought to have intended for it, and the text's relation to other texts, to other stories, and to Tolkien's characteristic textual fiction had to wait until *The History of Middle-earth* came to its conclusion. The subject matter and style of *The Silmarillion* casts the question of mythology in a slightly different light, and the relationship of text, mythology, and fiction is therefore a pressing concern for a critical reading.

In a famous essay entitled 'On Fairy-stories', Tolkien expanded on the relationship of language, mythology, and fiction. Here he sketches a philologically (how else) based account

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[15] Anders Stenström, 'A Mythology? For England?', in Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight, eds. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference, 1992* (Milton Keynes and Altadena: Tolkien Society and Mythopoeic Press, 1995), 310-14.

[16] Jim Allen, *An Extrapolation on* The Silmarillion (Liverpool: Tolkien Society Publications, 1975).

[17] Clyde S. Kilby, *Tolkien and* The Silmarillion (n.p.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976).

of a traditional 'pool' of stories and elements, metaphorized as the 'Cauldron of Story'.[18] Fairy-stories come from this: the 'Cooks' (storytellers) serve them as individual 'platefuls'.[19] These are the two poles of the discussion: it is the material (what is in the pool) but also the way it is served (how the author presents it) that makes the attempt successful or not. With his characteristic mystification of the creative process, Tolkien states that the success of the presentation requires "a kind of elvish craft",[20] but offers more tangible answers too: it is language and its use, and the way the author constructs the fiction (the setting of his story) that matters. The traditional connections, the actual makeup, the structure of the fictional world, and the way this is presented together make a fairy-story. Thus he keeps close to history (cultural and linguistic), philology, but also places emphasis on the *individual* version, the one put forward by the storyteller,[21] and (very importantly) on interpretation, the reader's relationship to what he/she is presented with.

Fairy-stories, according to Tolkien, work if their stories and fictions produce a certain attitude in the reader. As philological reconstruction relies on stories and cultural phenomena to explain some of the language, fairy-stories need to be set in worlds where their specific events are 'believable' or even 'natural': a world with "the inner consistency of reality".[22] When talking about Proto-Germanic word forms, the background is a historically tenable world; when talking about Elves and their cultural divisions, however, the author is not restrained by historical facts. All that does restrain him is that inside the fiction, the story should "[accord] with the laws of that world",[23] so that the reader would be able to award

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[18] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tolkien on Fairy-stories* (expanded ed. with commentary and notes, ed. by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson, London: HarperCollins, 2008), 44-45. (Henceforward *OFS*.)

[19] Tolkien, *OFS*, 47.

[20] Tolkien, *OFS*, 61; see also 64.

[21] For Tolkien's conception of the author of each version as centrally important, see Iwan Rhys Morus, '"Uprooting the Golden Bough": J.R.R Tolkien's Response to Nineteenth-century Folklore and Comparative Mythology,' *Mallorn* 27 (1990), 8: "Tolkien took it for granted that any specific item of mythology would have an individual author."

[22] Tolkien, *OFS*, 59.

[23] Tolkien, *OFS*, 52.

"literary belief" to this "secondary world".[24] Fairy-stories need not be about the 'real' ("Primary") world; the human faculty of "Fantasy" allows the storyteller a "freedom from the domination of observed 'fact'", and produces the "fantastic".[25] In his own work, Tolkien uses the apparatus of philology and the connected concept of *textuality* to create such a "fantastic" but still "believable" context.

With the concept of the "secondary world", he also makes an important distinction between myths and fairy-stories, one based on cultural use and the attitudes of the receiver. Myths, in their original cultural context, command not "secondary" (/literary) but "primary" belief: they are sensed to be part of the world, explaining natural phenomena, social practices, offering foundation stories, providing models for praxis, everyday life as well as religious activities and rituals.[26] Mythology and mythic frameworks are used by ancient and medieval peoples as a "shared fund of motifs and ideas ordered into a shared repertoire of stories"[27] (very much like Tolkien's traditional pool of elements), and even fully 'literary' or 'historical' texts "employ mythic references systematically in their creation of fictional worlds."[28] Fairy-stories, even if they ultimately descend from such 'mythic' material, do not integrate into everyday or religious life, but they are employed in fiction and writing: they are sensed as a *certain kind of* fiction, however entertaining or instructive, offering (in Tolkien's opinion) "Recovery, Escape, Consolation".[29] The attitude to fiction is a complex cultural question for Tolkien, one he clearly differentiates from the question of mythology not only in his professional work but also in his literary writings. The question of the 'mythopoeic' quality

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[24] Tolkien, *OFS*, 52; later, Tolkien terms this attitude "Secondary Belief" (61).
[25] Tolkien, *OFS*, 60.
[26] See Jan M. Bremmer, *Greek Religion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 57-8. Ken Dowden, in *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), differentiates somewhat: "myths are believed, but not in the same way as history is" (2). See further, 44, 75. See also Peter Orton, 'Pagan Myth and Religion,' in Rory McTurk, ed., *A Companion to Old Norse–Icelandic Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 311-12.
[27] Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 6.
[28] Margaret Clunies Ross, 'The Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth in Medieval Icelandic Writings,' in Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 121.
[29] Tolkien, *OFS*, 66.

thus turns out to be closely related to the conception of the text and fiction, never more so than in *The Silmarillion*.

'Mythopoeic' is one term that is frequently applied to Tolkien; 'fantastic' is the other. The fantastic has been the dominant literary mode of the 20th century, as Tom Shippey claims:[30] Tolkien's work and the concepts of textuality and fictionality that emerge in it have found their place in the critical approach to the fantastic as well. While Tzvetan Todorov's now classical definition of the 'fantastic' was based on the points of the narrative and an uncertainty of their perception (by the characters or the reader),[31] more recent approaches tend to focus on the setting of the narrative, ultimately precisely its fictionality, or the mode of representation as related to mimetic realism. Todorov, as most theorists of the fantastic since, assumed the readers' own consensus reality as the point of reference to decide whether any plot event was "uncanny" or "marvelous"[32] – Tolkien's concept of the 'secondary world' saw the effect in the radical distinction that is made between the readers' "primary" reality and the "Secondary World" of fairy-stories. In such a sElf-consciously fictional world there is no hesitation whatever; but they certainly have the "inner consistency of reality". And while the theories of fantasy, to some extent, still revolve around mimesis and the subversion thereof,[33] Tolkien's idea for the fantastic effect is clear: a radically fictitious world is needed (that is, one that is not connected to the reader's reality by way of any specific "machinery"[34]) and

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[30] Shippey, *Author of the Century*, vii.

[31] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (transl. Richard Howard, Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973). Todorov's work does not say much about the Tolkienian fantastic, and can now safely dispensed with when examining the relationship of Tolkien and the "fantastic" Attebery's remark that "Todorov has confused matters greatly" (*Strategies of Fantasy*, 20) is entirely valid. (See further for other such approaches: Rosemary Jackson's and Christine Brooke-Rose's, 20-27.) See also Sara Upstone, 'Applicability and Truth in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*,' *Mythlore* 90 (2002), 151-52.

[32] Todorov, *Fantastic*, 25, 31-36, and further, ch.3, 'The Uncanny and the Marvelous,' 41-57.

[33] For a short but concise overview of theories of fantasy, see Greg Bechtel, '"There and Back Again": Progress in the Discourse of Todorovian, Tolkienian and Mystic Fantasy Theory,' *ESC* 30.4 (2004), 139-66. Clyde B. Northrup also reads *OFS*'s statements as a need for the fairy-story to distance itself from a mimetic representation of the 'primary world', with, however, some reference to it: 'The Qualities of the Tolkienian Fairy-Story,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 50.4 (2004), 814-18, 822-23, 825.

[34] Tolkien, *OFS*, 34-35, 36.

that its story "should be represented as 'true'".[35] This does not have a chance in a Todorovian scheme, but is nevertheless clearly perceived as 'fantastic' by an overwhelming number of readers (Shippey's point in *Author of the Century*).

Tolkien's way of providing the "inner consistency of reality" to the 'Silmarillion' material (indeed to all his Middle-earth writings) has always been metafictional, based on philological and textual considerations. He eventually distanced his stories not only from the Anglo-Saxon world, but from consensus reality in general, working out different frameworks in which to present them, at one stage making use of the Atlantis legend and time travel.[36] In the end, it was after *The Lord of the Rings* that he found the appropriate presentation frame. He kept the idea of the book[37] (as in the 'Golden Book' or the 'Book of Lost Tales'), but made it into a sElf-referential and emphatically textual one: *The Silmarillion* became a manuscript of compiled and translated texts from various historical periods of the fictional world, tied to a well-known character, Bilbo Baggins, hero of *The Hobbit* and uncle of Frodo, the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*. Thus, he created another philological (and necessarily historical) level inside his fiction: as opposed to 'Tolkien philology', dealing with relations of Tolkien texts in the real ('primary') world, I propose to call this 'secondary philology', the application of philological principles to the invented texts inside the fiction.[38] In retrospect, it is clear that after *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien already made advances towards this, but only with the publication of *The Silmarillion* and the posthumous corpus did it become fully

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[35] Tolkien, *OFS*, 35.

[36] On Tolkien's sliding conception about how to connect or disconnect his stories with/from the 'primary world', see Dimitra Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History. From Fairies to Hobbits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 123-27, 163-65; and William Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth. Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 69-83.

[37] Verlyn Flieger's 'Tolkien and the Idea of the Book' (in Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, eds., The Lord of the Rings, *1954-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Blackwelder* (Milwaukee: Marquette UP, 2006), 283-99) argues that the discovery and later fate of the Winchester MS of Malory's *Morte Darthur* might have served as a catalyst for Tolkien's ideas about using the idea of the (physical) book as a framework (Flieger later incorporated this train of thought into her third book on Tolkien, *Interrupted Music*.)

[38] Scholars dealing with Tolkien's invented languages work with the same differentiation in talking about "internal history" and "textual history": see Carl F. Hostetter, 'Languages invented by Tolkien', in Michael D.C. Drout, ed. *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (London–New York: Routledge, 2007), 334.

appreciable and workable. The importance of *The Silmarillion* is thus partly in allowing us to form a fuller image of Tolkien's changing concepts of textuality and fiction, and place those in a different historical context, work out a different 'historical' attitude to them.

The publication of *The History of Middle-earth* has, in a sense, already fundamentally 'rehistoricized' Tolkien, but in addition to the emerging new Tolkien philology, this 'new historicizing' by definition also needs to be theoretical. Shippey's discussion of the thin line between philological 'reconstruction' and creative 'invention', Tolkien's insistence on the radical fictionality of "Faërie", his practice of modeling history in an elaborate and emphatically textual construct, and 20th-century work on the problems of writing history all point to the conclusion that after all, it is all just text, where one discourse 'represents' while others 'create' worlds.[39] The privileges by which any writing is granted the status of 'historical objectivity' (despite the fact that structurally they are similar to fiction) are always ideological and are embedded in social-political practices, the operations of technologies of power, and institutions that define truth and canonicity.[40] History (even 'primary' history) is for a great extent itsElf fictitious, a specific representation: "both history and fiction are discourses, [and] both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past."[41] There are thus several directions this theoretically focused rehistoricizing of the Tolkien corpus can take, and *The Silmarillion* is definitely in the focal point of such aspirations.

One direction is to find a different literary historical context, not only that of medieval and Classical analogues. Already in 1992, Brian Rosebury placed *The Lord of the Rings*

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[39] Hayden White's *Metahistory* or Michel Foucault's inquiries into the 'histories' of different disciplines fit well with the status of history as another one of the 'great narratives' that the postmodern condition dispenses with. 20th-century metafiction ultimately also drives at conveying "not only that writing history is a fictional act…, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design" (Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (New Accents, London–New York: Methuen, 1984), 48-9). See also Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 87-101.

[40] See Waugh, *Metafiction*, 100-1.

[41] Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 89.

within the conventions of the 20th-century novel, producing a sensitive and appreciative reading.[42] Tom Shippey's second book on Tolkien, *J.R.R Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2001) also supplied a synchronic complement to the basically diachronic approach of *Road*: here Tolkien is situated among canonical 20th-century writers (like James Joyce or George Orwell) to show that his concern with power is intelligible only in a contemporary setting[43] – a theoretical point that can still be elaborated further. Dimitra Fimi recently argued that it was Tolkien's engagement with the genre of the novel that radically changed the direction of his writing, thereby reshaping his view of the earlier texts too.[44] Other literary historical recontextualizations have also been published.[45] Tolkien now figures in a less and less dismissive light in more theoretical and general investigations of the fantastic: where earlier scholars (like Christine Brooke-Rose or Rosemary Jackson) only mentioned him to disparage him,[46] Brian Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* (already in 1992) claims Tolkien as the central, definitive text of the "fuzzy set" of fantasy,[47] and in the process puts him in quite a different literary context than customary. Both the claim that Tolkien is excluded from the literary canon and the other one that he is now slowly being admitted to it have happily become commonplaces: while the growing interest in popular culture slowly eroded the distinction

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[42] Brian Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). He reissued this in 2003 as *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), which has the added value of raising a number of theoretical points that such a contextualization can easily highlight. (I will refer to Rosebury's arguments from *Cultural Phenomenon*.)

[43] Shippey, *Author*, xxx-xxxi, 115-17.

[44] Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 118-19.

[45] The authors in a collection of essays, edited by George Clark and Daniel Timmons (*J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances* (Westport, Conn–London: Greenwood Press, 2000) approached Tolkien in various literary historical contexts, bringing Sir Philip Sidney to the discussion of 'On Fairy-stories' and pointing out literary connections from Milton to H. Rider Haggard. In 'Greene, Tolkien, and the Mysterious Relations of Realism and Fantasy' (*Renascence* 55.1 (2002), 79-100) Thomas A. Wendorf, SM discusses the similarity of Graham Greene's and Tolkien'a relations to realism and mimesis, while Gray (*Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*) also places him in a (post)romantic historical context.

[46] See Attebery's and Upstone's treatments of Jackson's and Brooke-Rose's critical points, above, n.31.

[47] Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy,* 12-14.

between 'high' and 'popular' literature,[48] newer approaches to Tolkien's work have recently opened up the way towards explicitly theoretical conclusions.

Another possibility lies in examining how Tolkien's historical emphasis is itsElf embedded in the 20th century's ever more complex relations to history and historicity. When he talked, wrote, or thought about history, Tolkien had in mind an ultimately 19th-century, (post-)romantic idea of the past and mythology.[49] Shippey and Flieger have emphasized the model role he might have attributed to the great folklorists of the 19th century, to Grimm, Grundtvig and Lönnrot,[50] who, by unearthing (really constructing, as Lönnrot did) a national mythology, with more or less philological tools, managed to provide historically based national identities to their community. The writing of history and its use have been considerably rethought recently; but Tolkien's work can show a surprising relevance to these new considerations too. Approaches and relations to the past similar to those of our metahistories emerge in it, because these texts' (particularly *The Silmarillion*'s) commentary on the way the past is constructed in writing puts just as much emphasis on narrativity, ideologically determined linguistic discourses, and cultural determination as contemporary theory examining the operations of culture. Yet it is achieved without the least of a theoretical focus, simply with a sensitive representation of the historical methods Tolkien himsElf knew so much about. As we are reinterpreting the writing and the concept of history, along with the philological practice itsElf (in the 'New Philology'),[51] with the posthumous Tolkien corpus

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[48] See John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction* (5th ed., Harlow–London: Pearson Longman, 2009), 5-13 for recent definitions of popular culture, and 213-26 for an assessment of the field of study.

[49] See Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 28-39, and Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*, 61-64.

[50] Flieger, *Interrupted Music. The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (Kent and London: The Kent State UP, 2005), 7; see also Shippey, 'Grimm, Grundtvig, Tolkien: Nationalisms and the Invention of Mythologies', in *Roots and Branches: Selected Papers on Tolkien by Tom Shippey* (Berne: Walking Tree, 2007), 79-96. Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 40-61 discusses Tolkien's connection to (romantic) folklorist movements in England.

[51] In New Historicism, particularly in the metahistory of Hayden White or Foucault's 'fragmented' histories (a good overview of these is found in Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, 'Introduction,' in Wells, Burgess and Wymer, eds., *Neo-historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 13-20). The 'New Philology' also examines the ideological-epistemological

we have an opportunity to reinterpret his fiction, its emphatic textuality, and the way it represents history and culture.

Still another direction would place these elements into theoretical systems and contexts that are themselves historical in the sense of taking history and their own (retrospective) historical positions into account. H.R. Jauss's ideas of "reception history" and the "history of impact", the accumulated readings of a text that come to influence whatever meaning it takes on for a reader (or literary historian), is a case in point.[52] As Attebery remarked surveying Shippey's philological approach, for "[t]he nineteenth-century philologist… language [is] a treasury of words, each of which carries its history along with it".[53] Tolkien's philologically based fiction thus, as it were, precedes Jauss in placing interpretation into such a historical perspective. Yuri Lotman's typology of world models on the basis of different historical periods' relationship to the concept of the sign[54] is also eminently connected: in Tolkien's fiction (especially *The Silmarillion*) signs and texts as interpreted by different cultures are all-important, constitutive of not only the text and the narrative, but ultimately of the world itsElf. Classical scholars' examinations of mythological systems grounded in the results of recent cultural historical work on orality (Gregory Nagy's work on Homer, for instance, or Margaret Clunies Ross's on Norse mythology) can be profitably used on Tolkien's representation of cultural history, and illuminate ways in which his textual complex can acquire (or at least, model) the authenticating discourses of mythology. Michel Foucault's reinterpretations of various aspects of culture, bearing in mind the constitutive role of discourse and the inevitable relationship between discourse and power resonate easily with *The Lord of the Rings*, but all the more so with *The Silmarillion*, where the layering of different discourses in the textual

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presuppositions behind historical practices (philology itself this time), and as such rehistoricizes the way we look at both textual practice and the (pre-modern) text itself.

[52] 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory' (*New Literary History* 2.1 (1970): 7-37). For a concise summary of Jauss's position, see Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory. A Critical Introduction* (New Accents, London and New York: Methuen, 1984), 52-69.

[53] Attebery, *Strategies*, 28.

[54] Summarized in 'Problems in the Typology of Cultures,' in Daniel P. Lucid, ed., *Soviet Semiotics. An Anthology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977), 213-21.

representation always carries with it the determinations of power and knowledge. These approaches are all evidently 'contemporary' and go beyond 20th-century modernity; they throw some new light on the past, a light that enables us to see how the past in its past-ness becomes relevant for us, to understand how the past part of us is fertile ground for our own, present meanings. The point is not so much to claim Tolkien for postmodernity or for theory, or to 'appropriate' a text that in the intentions of its author has nothing to do with such considerations. It is rather to show how Tolkien's emphasis on history and philology leads to a literary corpus occupied with the ways cultures use their own past to produce new meaning.

The 1977 text of *The Silmarillion* is perfect for theorizing Tolkien for a variety of reasons. It is a continuous narrative, but its textual status is problematic: it is, in some sense, a text that Tolkien both did and did not write. Edited together from manuscript versions by Christopher Tolkien (with the assistance of Guy Kay), it serves as a focal point of what criticism has come to call the 'Silmarillion tradition', and can better represent Tolkien's specific brand of textuality than the manuscript corpus itsElf. Primary Tolkien philology and secondary philology come together here, and the 1977 text, problematic as it is, still helps to make some 'global' sense of the variant corpus. With John D. Rateliff's two-volume study of *The Hobbit* manuscripts (finally published in 2007),[55] we have a fairly comprehensive library of edited Tolkien manuscripts; *The Silmarillion* can be seen as the link between the finished texts and the fragmented, unfinished manuscript corpus, and its investigation can provide the much-needed critical push towards a comprehensive theoretical reading of Tolkien's complete works.

The tension between the 1977 *Silmarillion* text and the slowly proliferating manuscript corpus that progressively destabilized it was slow to produce explicit critical treatment. Monographs (like Shippey's *Road*) generally devoted a chapter to the book, and articles

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[55] John D. Rateliff, *Mr. Baggins* (The History of *The Hobbit*, Part One. Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007) and *The Return to Bag End* (The History of *The Hobbit*, Part Two. Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

mostly went no further than pointing out mythological parallels. The first book-length treatment, Flieger's *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (first published in 1983, but reissued in 2002[56]) understandably (as at the time of its writing *The History of Middle-earth* was not yet under way) treated it as a sElf-contained work, not in any variant context (Flieger's focus is the motif of light, as linked to Owen Barfield's highly speculative view of language and myth that Tolkien espoused). Flieger later rose admirably to the challenge in *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (2005), her third book on Tolkien, and to date the single most coherent and consistent discussion of Tolkien and the idea of the book. Here she placed *The Silmarillion* in the context of the manuscript corpus in an attempt at a diachronic examination of the 'evolution' of Tolkien's thought about creating a mythological complex. Elizabeth A. Whittingham's book *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology: A Study of* The History of Middle-earth (2007)[57] builds on *Interrupted Music* and compares variants to show how Tolkien's mythic (cosmogonical, cosmological, etc.) 'themes' changed significantly in the course of the reshaping of the 'Silmarillion' material. A number of essays in a collection Flieger co-edited with Carl F. Hostetter, *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on* The History of Middle-earth (2000)[58] also engaged with the question of how the 1977 text related to the corpus, offering conclusions about what was supposed to be in the book (Charles E. Noad), how to read and judge the *History* texts and their narrative voices (David Bratman), or about the fictional poetic traditions implicit in the texts (Patrick Wynne and Carl F. Hostetter). The definitive monograph about the primary philological construction of *The Silmarillion* came out in 2009: Douglas Charles Kane's *Arda Reconstructed: The*

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[56] Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983; rev. ed. Kent–London: The Kent State UP, 2002).

[57] Elizabeth A. Whittingham, *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology: A Study of* The History of Middle-earth (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008).

[58] Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter, eds. *Tolkien's* Legendarium: *Essays on* The History of Middle-earth (Westport–London: Greenwood Press, 2000).

Creation of the Published Silmarillion[59] relates the 1977 text meticulously to the variant corpus, pointing out the editorial decisions by which *The Silmarillion* became a patchwork of textual fragments frequently from very different manuscript versions. Kane's work, however, has the shortcoming of not going deep enough into the variants' history, but identifying the source of any passage in *The Silmarillion* in the latest version (and justifiably so, since clearly those were the texts Christopher Tolkien used) – while in a number of cases the history and sources of these variants themselves can be instructive.

At the same time, recent work also tends to be somewhat more theoretically focused, although more often in the approach to Tolkien's better-known texts. Most articles and monographs still treat *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*: *The Silmarillion* and the variant corpus remain the theme of much more specialized and rarer studies. Jane Chance's The Lord of the Rings: *The Mythology of Power* (first published in 1992, reissued in 2001)[60] already attempted to approach the novel with the critical vocabulary of difference, power and politics, making use of Foucault's concept of the panopticon to interpret the concept of power in the work. Patrick Curry's 1997 book *Defending Middle-earth – Tolkien: Myth and Modernity*[61] brought up questions of community, culture, and a more contemporary relation to tradition. To look at *The Silmarillion* in the focus of the variant corpus's network of differences, neither with a 'genetic' or an overall thematic interpretative concern, nor with a primary philological focus: the missing synthesis should set itsElf the task to see this specific Tolkienian textuality as emblematized in *The Silmarillion*, and offer the rehistoricization that not only enables but systematically makes use of theoretical directions – to read *The Silmarillion*, as it were, as a central *space*, where the philological constituents (both in a primary and secondary sense)

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[59] Douglas Charles Kane, *Arda Reconstructed: The Creation of the Published* Silmarillion (Bethlehem: Leigh UP, 2009).

[60] Jane Chance, The Lord of the Rings: *The Mythology of Power* (New York: Twayne, 1992, rev. ed. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

[61] Patrick Curry, *Defending Middle-earth. Tolkien: Myth and Modernity* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

meet and create an interaction of textual elements, meanings and conceptual frameworks that is not found anywhere else in the Tolkien corpus but can help in making (new) sense of it.

For *The Lord of the Rings*, steps have been taken in such a direction. *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* (2005)[62] brought terms and concepts like gender or race, and a decidedly more recent brand of historical scholarship to the reading of *The Lord of the Rings*, while *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages* (2005, edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers)[63] provided essays that placed Tolkien in exactly the sort of rehistoricizing context that I urged above, examining how modern ideologies and concerns appear in his works and what connecting points are available with the postmodern. The *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (2007),[64] edited by Michael D.C. Drout, was a laudable step in taking Tolkien studies towards a theoretical turn: here many articles applied concepts like gender or race, culture and its discourses. In the article on *The Silmarillion*,[65] I outlined a conception of the 1977 text that I will elaborate here. The thirtieth anniversary of the publication of *The Silmarillion* was celebrated by a volume of essays (The Silmarillion – *Thirty Years On*, 2007),[66] where Tolkien philology (Michael Devaux), questions of mythology/mythography (Jason Fisher) and secondary philological investigations (Nils Ivar Agøy) also find their place. Clearly the theoretical direction and vocabulary are starting to establish themselves as entirely legitimate in Tolkien studies: the field's leading annual journal, *Tolkien Studies*, publishes at least one theoretically focused article in every issue (ranging from postcolonial theory to metafiction).

What needs to be done is therefore to maintain a strict textual focus, and examine the 1977 *Silmarillion* text with a rigorous application of secondary philology, demonstrating how

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[62] Robert Eaglestone, ed. *Reading* The Lord of the Rings. *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* (London–New York: Continuum, 2005).

[63] Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers, eds. *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[64] Michael D.C. Drout, ed. *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (London–New York: Routledge, 2007).

[65] '*Silmarillion, The*' in Drout, ed. *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia*, 608-12.

[66] Allan G. Turner, ed. The Silmarillion – *Thirty Years On* (Zurich–Berne: Walking Tree Publishers, 2007).

this can uncover layers and discourses in the fictitious textual complex that make up Tolkien's (heavily historicized) representation of culture. The first part of the present dissertation will thus concentrate on the 1977 text as it is supposed to be inside the fiction: a manuscript, put together by an editor from a wealth of different sources. The problematics of the editorial text and the presentation frame, I will argue, along with Tolkien's characteristic insistence on 'duplicating' his texts, point to the direction of a secondary philological method: by following such metafictional leads, we are enabled to see how the fictitious manuscript opens up layers of the fiction that are otherwise invisible, becomes a transcript of fictitious texts, and creates a succession of authors, textual transformations and discourses. This tight and historically 'accurate' texture coheres into a quite realistic model of historical representation. Tom Shippey's explanation of the "depth effect" in Tolkien is thus supplemented: the "sense that the author knew more than he was telling, that behind his immediate story there was a coherent, consistent, deeply fascinating world about which he had no time (then) to speak"[67] is there, but this interrelated system of stories, an "imaginative space",[68] is paralleled by a network of interrelated *texts*. Fictional or actually there in some way in Tolkien philology, they form a specifically 'philological space', and a specifically 'philological depth'. In the first part, it will be my aim to examine how the *Silmarillion* text governs this special depth and what aspects of the representation of culture this makes possible.

This secondary philology is, of course, itsElf metaphorical. Although sometimes primary Tolkien philology, the actually existing texts in the manuscript corpus, can be helpful, the two corpora are not entirely isomorphous – Tolkien's earlier versions are *not* the 'fictional sources' of the fictional compilation. There is no codex volume, no handwriting (or hands) to examine in secondary philology: 'material philology' is impossible, since we only have the *text* (the "actual order of words and punctuation as contained in any one physical

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[67] Shippey, *Road*, 229; see also 308-17.
[68] Shippey, *Road*, 313.

form"[69]), and not the *document* ("the physical material, paper and ink, bearing the configuration of signs that represent a text".[70] One point, indeed, is that the documents themselves are fictionalized, and while this enables a certain 'metaphorical' philological practice, the strict editorial methodology of textual criticism is neither possible nor, indeed, productive (only of speculation). Medieval manuscript textuality and its underlying cultural conditions (like the culture of orality discernible behind some written traditions or the constitutive role of the textual variant)[71] supply cultural historical considerations. In addition to the concepts of authors and sources, various frameworks (like the oral and the written) and discourses (such as the historical and the poetic/'literary', the theological and the political) of cultural transmission are created; authorial roles, transmission lines and acts of textual transformation mediate between and collect these. Whole fictitious traditions and conventions highlight the role of transmission and interpretation: systems of differences and differentiations are maintained with the help of this emphatic textuality. The 'text' is therefore seen as a very effective (yet strictly textually structured) way to create and layer cultural representations, and ultimately produces an exceptionally sensitive fiction of culture.

History, theology, mythology all come into the foreground as this cultural fiction unfolds: following the philological discourse establishing the textual basis, it becomes possible to theorize its central terms, or to discern theoretical governing concepts that are not themselves philologically based or textually structured in the same way as the layers described above. The second part of the dissertation will consequently pursue this much-

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[69] Peter Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age* (Athens: U of Georgia Pr, 1986), 49, quoted in Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1994), 7.

[70] Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing*, 51, quoted in Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 7. 'Text' and 'document', as basic concepts of textual scholarship, are themselves ideologically charged, as Machan argues in *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 9-38. Nevertheless, they remain fundamental in any 'real' philological/textual critical practice.

[71] For orality as underlying and integrating into medieval English texts, see Mark C. Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition. Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, In: U of Notre Dame P, 2004). It was Bernard Cerquiglini's claim in *In Praise of the Variant. A Critical History of Philology* (transl. Betsy Wing, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1999) that "medieval writing does not produce variants; it *is* variance" (77-8), which highlighted the essential theoretical role the unfixed in medieval philology.

needed theoretical investigation. Authority is connected to a theological hierarchy and ideological operations that Tolkien presents not without reflection; the interrelation of knowledge and power is built on a theological basis; history and theology, discourses that represent the world are shown to refer back to variously integrated layers of the textual fiction. Authority and interpretation are here placed in a somewhat different context, and while medieval and antique cultural history (especially medieval textual/literary theory, or the relation to history, and the authenticating discourse of oral mythology)[72] can still be profitably employed, Foucault's examinations about the interrelationships of power and knowledge, authority and institutions of power, will here become more relevant. Current psychoanalytically oriented theories of the subject can be surprisingly applicable, even though *The Silmarillion* appears to work with a concept of the subject very different from *The Lord of the Rings*.[73] The role of light (examined by Flieger as early as 1983 in *Splintered Light*) can also be seen from a different direction, as a metaphorical extension of the authority–transmission–interpretation cluster. Language and the production of representations also foreground the question of the individual subject, both producing the representation and fundamentally determined by it.

It is at this stage that the problem of the 'mythopoeic' quality can be addressed again. As the complexity of the cultural fiction, the multiple embeddedness and ideological coding of the different discourses of representation make it increasingly evident, Tolkien is less concerned with constructing 'objective history' than with providing a certain anatomy of culture and tradition. It is the socio-cultural use of certain stories or networks of stories, the

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[72] A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship. Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (reissued 2nd ed., Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2010) is a fundamental monograph of the field; Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories. Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) is a thorough survey of relationships to historiography and the past.

[73] In 'The 'Lost' Subject of Middle-earth: The Constitution of the Subject in the Figure of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*' (*Tolkien Studies* 3 (2006): 57-79) I applied Lacan's concept of *desire* to explain how the Ring exerts its influence over signification and subjects. Valerie Rohy, in 'On Fairy Stories' (*Modern Fiction Studies* 50.4 (2004): 927-48) also brings Lacan into play, and interprets the Ring as the "*point de capiton*", the "authority to organize the system of signification" (931).

way these provide and guarantee authority and truth and ground meaning that make up what can be called 'mythological systems'. Gregory Nagy's interpretation of what *mythos* means in Homer (in *Homeric Questions*), or Eric A. Havelock's grand survey of the pre-Platonic oral culture of mythology that Plato was reacting against violently show that literate culture and a literate conception of work and story derive their authority from a framework where their meanings are determined that is radically different from mythology's original, archaic, oral context.[74] The work of Walter J. Ong generally in oral cultures,[75] or more specifically medieval applications by Michael Clanchy, Brian Stock or Michael Richter[76] show how these systems translate into the world of praxis and are later transformed into literary or philosophical reflection. The theological privileging of certain meanings and certain interpretive operations (themselves translated into praxis) construct a world with a fixed metaphysical background and a transcendental guarantee of meaning: mythology's shift into history in *The Silmarillion* shows the questioning of this guarantee, the uncertainty of the theological privilege. We will therefore get a much clearer view of what 'mythopoesis' means in Tolkien, and as *representation* and the privileging/non-privileging of the realistic are also central questions in the approaches to the fantastic, another theoretical result is to relate Tolkien's textually and historically structured fiction to theories of the fantastic.

The text of the 1977 *Silmarillion* will thus emerge as the focus through which the two distinct sides of Tolkien's literary work, the finished texts and the unfinished, fragmented manuscript corpus can be given a coherent interpretive model. The dissertation will also indicate some of the conclusions this reading holds for the approach of *The Lord of the Rings*.

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[74] Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1996), 113-46. Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1963).

[75] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologization of the Word* (New Accents, London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

[76] Stock's *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307* (2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), and Richter's *The Formation of the Medieval West. Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1994) all showed important transitions in various parts and discourses of the European Middle Ages between oral and literate conceptions and practices of authentication.

In an article in *Tolkien the Medievalist* (2003, edited by Jane Chance)[77] I outlined a model for looking at the textual complex that includes everything from *The Lord of the Rings* to the variants in the *History of Middle-earth*, using a thematic thread (the figure and story of the hero Túrin Turambar). But the systematic discussion of the textual model (the method of secondary philology) also enables us to draw further theorized conclusions, about the metafictional operations of *The Lord of the Rings*, its conception and presentation of the subject producing the representations, or the appearance of a contemporary concept of ideology and a poststructuralist treatment of power. It is partly a narratological and generic difference that opens up these further areas, since the novel employs a largely realistic strategy of representation (as opposed to the conscious and meaningful 'traditionalised' representation of *The Silmarillion*).[78] The conclusions about mythopoesis and ficitionality in the less known *Silmarillion* provide a framework that in fact integrates Tolkien's more popular works, and so can serve as a global approach to his fiction. The theorized concepts and rehistoricized frameworks offer points of connection that can ideally revitalize the approach to *The Lord of the Rings* as well.

Tolkien's emphasis on the old and traditional on the surface certainly seems to assign his work into the class of Roland Barthes's "readerly" texts.[79] Yet, since the death of this author and the publication of the plural, unfixed, unfinished manuscript corpus, his work came forth as one of the most decidedly 'open' oeuvres of the 20th century. *The Silmarillion*, in Barthes's terms, is the *work* that opens up the way to its own *text*-like reading, in yet another meaning of the term 'text'. *The Silmarillion* demands the reader's activity, interpretation (while these are, indeed, some of its most important themes too), escapes the strictly 'literary', and concentrates on meaning and the sign as mobile and effectively always

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[77] 'The Great Chain of Reading: (Inter-)textual Relations and the Technique of Mythopoesis in the Túrin Story', in Chance, ed., *Tolkien the Medievalist*, 239-58.

[78] Cf. Fimi's view that it was Tolkien's success with the genre of the novel that ultimately led to his inability to return to mythological narrative and complete the 'Silmarillion': *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 194.

[79] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (transl. Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), ch. 1.

defined inside culturally determined systems. It is "an *irreducible… plural*"[80], and deliberately distributes its positions of authority practically everywhere else but the 'biographical author'. It implies a play of interpretations and readings, a pleasure that is related to the reader's immersion in the fictional world, and to playing by the rules of that world. It is, to quote Barthes about the Text, "that space where no language has hold over any other, where languages circulate".[81] Paradoxically, Tolkien's traditionally 'readerly' Work can be seen as a perfectly 'writerly' Text.

In 20th-century literary theory, it was Paul de Man who famously advocated a "return to philology",[82] but Tolkien's works serve as a different way of return: by the fundamental role philology and the philological method play in his writing, he in fact problematizes much in his (supremely popular) fiction that other (supremely little read) criticism and cultural theory have examined in the 20th century. Tolkien's own resistance to all types of modern theory, coupled with the fact that 'mythopoesis', 'intention', and to some extent, Christianity, still seem to be the 'great narratives' of Tolkien criticism today, would make it appear that his return is in fact simple traditionalism.[83] Paradoxically, this is not the case. While Tolkien's avowed anti-modern sentiments guarantee he would not have appreciated Jean-François Lyotard's argument that 'the postmodern condition' involved the loss of faith in overarching explanatory narratives (this luckily appeared only in 1979, after his death, and even later, only in 1984, in English),[84] the case today is that theory is often seen just as inaccurately as philology itsElf. Tolkien spent much of his professional life battling what he sensed as a false

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[80] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image, Music, Text* (sel. and transl. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977), 159.

[81] Barthes, 'From Work to Text', 164.

[82] Paul de Man, 'The Return to Philology,' in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis P, 1986), 21-26.

[83] This is why Rosemary Jackson and Christine Brooke-Rose, most prominently, refuse to take him seriously.

[84] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge* (transl. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, foreword by Frederic Jameson, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984).

divide between 'lit.' and 'lang.' (broadly conceived, 'literary' and 'linguistic' studies),[85] and criticism cannot fall back on nostalgic (or even explicitly moralizing) stances believing (wrongly) that theory cannot meaningfully speak about history. All those historical and traditional aspects that *The Silmarillion* manifests are there in Tolkien's philological fiction: they can and need to be approached with care and respect in the language and context of theory. It seems sometimes that some of the more conventionalist Tolkien critics think theory is by nature cynical and drains the text of value: my task here will be to show how theory can uncover supremely interesting and critically important points about and of that value, and in the process to illustrate how *The Silmarillion*, while all that it contains is 'old', is also very meaningful.

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[85] See Shippey, *Road*, 332, 337-38. Tolkien's 'Valedictory Address to the University of Oxford', delivered on his retirement in 1959, voiced his sentiment clearly enough.

2. Tolkien and textuality: medieval and beyond

Occupied with language, stories and texts from early life, Tolkien gradually evolved a very characteristic relation to and concept of the text and the world created in it. He read and drew inspiration from Gothic already before he went to university,[86] was always taken with Old and Middle English, Finnish "set the rocket off in story",[87] and after World War I he worked for a while as a lexicologist of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.[88] He was closely acquainted with the principles and methods of comparative philology, and his earliest poems about fictitious lands and peoples are actually instigated by the method of reconstruction: words in Old English texts (like "Earendel" in Cynewulf's *Crist*), not attested anywhere else and unsatisfactorily glossed, generated for him a story. Shippey's dictum that "'[p]hilology' is indeed the only proper guide to Middle-earth 'of the sort which its author may be supposed to have desired'"[89] certainly seems to sound right. But for philologists, though they attribute a hypothetical status to reconstructed forms (marking them clearly with the asterisk, *), the ontological status of these forms is still closer to 'real', while Tolkien certainly did not assign this degree of reality to his stories. He always posited a difference between the 'primary world' (to anticipate the terms of 'On Fairy-stories') and the 'secondary' or *textual world*. This difference, however, was not always the clear-cut division, signaled by the metafictional devices of the later works.

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[86] Carpenter, *Biography*, 37.

[87] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 214 (#163); see also *Biography*, 49, 59, 75.

[88] On his work on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, see Peter Gilliver, 'At the Wordface: J.R.R. Tolkien's Work on the *Oxford English Dictionary*', in Reynolds and GoodKnight, eds. *Proceedings of the Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*, 173-86, and the book-length study by Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall and Edmund Weiner, *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the* Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). See also Carpenter, *Biography*, 100-102.

[89] Shippey, *Road*, 8.

2.1 Metatextuality: Tolkien's duplication of texts

Any literary work creates its fictional world: no written story ever takes place in 'the real world'. Points of connection might still be maintained, though, as in Tolkien's early work. In certain genres (as in the historical novel) the world of the story is as isomorphic with the reader's known reality as possible (so that readers clearly and easily recognize it as 'their own'),[90] and historical facts appear in all realist fiction "in order to grant to its fictive universe a sense of circumstantiality and specificity of detail as well as verifiability".[91] But Tolkien's reconstructively inspired early poems and stories produced a world which kept only the starting points (obscure words, concepts) as links. To these *thematic* links was added the emphasis on the textuality, the constructedness, writtenness or 'told-ness' of the text: a *structural* point of connection that went beyond the thematic, and anticipated the complex metafictional machinery of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*.[92] The 'Lost Tales' were supposed to be written down by a fictional Anglo-Saxon traveler, after having been told to him by the Elves (in later versions, he translated them from an account already written, the 'Golden Book').[93] Initially thus both thematic and structural connections were there, but parallel to the abandonment of the 'English mythology' conception, Tolkien (more and more ingeniously) built the thematic points into the structural. The themes that function as links themselves became textual: the obscure words became names (Eärendil), Old English words he used in *The Lord of the Rings* (Théoden, Orthanc, etc.) were integrated into the fiction of translation (where English translates the original language of the fictional document, and

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[90] Cf. Waugh, *Metafiction*, 86: "The language of realism is generally metonymic: descriptions are presented as a selection from a whole which is the real world'. See further, 86-90.

[91] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 77.

[92] On the construction of the text as one of the main themes of that text (a common metafictional device), see Waugh, *Metafiction*, 22.

[93] On the changes of the framing device and thus the loosening connection to the 'English mythology', see Charles Noad, 'On the Construction of *The Silmarillion*', in Flieger and Hostetter, eds., *Tolkien's* Legendarium, 38-48 (the pre-*Lord of the Rings* period) and 50-65; and Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, ch. 5, 'The Artifice', 87-118; Whittingham, *Evolution*, 49-57; and Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*, 69-83.

different varieties of English translate different varieties of this language, preserving the relation to the "Common tongue" in the way they themselves relate to (modern) English), and finally the only remaining links were the concept of the text (texts in Middle-earth are philologically exactly like texts in the real world, with scribes, copies, redactions, additions) and the bridging editor/translator persona.

The result of this process was that he increasingly started to distance his textual world from any (even 'reconstructed', hypothetical) reality, building up a more and more complex fiction, endowed with its own history through the texts. "[W]hile he explicitly and overtly severed the connections between real European history and Middle-earth, there remains a structural substratum of story-structure, names and parallels that links the early Anglo-Saxon and Germanic culture to Tolkien's imaginative creation."[94] However 'traditional' this world might seem in some of its (again, thematic) aspects, it slowly shifted to be a more or less sElf-enclosed fictional world radically different from any possible reader's everyday ('primary') reality: radically different, since some of its elements no reader today believes to be part of reality.[95] Tolkien was already drifting into what he later described as 'Faërie', the pool of more or less conventional elements that, however, outline a world of fairy-stories so sharply differentiated from 'primary reality' that in 'On Fairy-Stories' he would not even allow any machinery or frame to bridge the gap.[96]

But he kept the structural connection: the stories he wrote turned more and more into *texts* with a more and more accurately described and differentiated philological background. What his writings fictionalize (posit) is therefore primarily not a (fictional) 'world' or 'events

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[94] Michael D.C. Drout, 'A Mythology for Anglo-Saxon England,' in Jane Chance, ed., *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth. A Reader* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2004), 230.
[95] Tolkien never completely gave up the idea that "Middle-earth is not an imaginary world" (Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 239 (#183)): even in 1967, he explained the setting of *The Lord of the Rings* in terms of European geography (*Letters*, 376 (#294)). See Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 163-65.
[96] "Fairy-stories are 'stories about Fairy', that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being" (Tolkien, *OFS*, 32 and further for the exclusion of different techniques to bridge the gap: 34-37). In the section 'Origins' (38-49), Tolkien clarifies this with the metaphor of "the Cauldron of Story" (44), the pool of traditional elements from which individual storytellers draw the selection of their own stories.

in that world', but *texts* in that world, whereby his textual world becomes their natural context. And this eventually makes a difference: what we read as 'Tolkien texts' (texts in our 'primary reality', written by J.R.R. Tolkien, dealt with in 'Tolkien philology') in fact claim to be also texts inside the 'secondary', textual world, the material for what I have called 'secondary philology'. This fictionalizing of the text, a complex of metafictional devices that are, however, strictly philological, results from Tolkien's long road from wanting to create a "body of connected legend" to actually creating and presenting it (which Flieger analyses so well in *Interrupted Music*). The simple 'documentarism' of the narrative text is by no means unique in literary history. Early novels often claimed that the author is only 'editing and publishing' an obscure manuscript. *Robinson Crusoe* is supposed to be the main character's diary, Horace Walpole (in the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*) refers to a manuscript he translates.[97] A century and a half later Bram Stoker 'edits together' various sorts of writings attributed to his characters to make up *Dracula*, and even more recently Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* also purports to be based on a 'found manuscript'. Yet however strange and radically fictional events they describe (*Otranto* and *Dracula* frequently feature in discussions of the fantastic), these works never make a strict and radical differentiation between 'primary reality' and their textual world. Indeed, their effect (as even Todorov would agree) is based on the reader's *not* taking them as radical fictions.

Tolkien's narrator, however, not only disclaims originality and disavows control: he redistributes the texts' emphases and creates not only a world and a story, but also positions for the reader which by definition 'draw them in', involve them, and gloss over the fact that the text is, in effect, duplicated. First of all, this places a doubled emphasis on the 'textuality' of the text – it becomes an integral and meaningful part of the fiction itsElf. Further, Tolkien's

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[97] Sue Zlosnik notes the "practice… has been characteristic of Gothic texts since Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*" ('Gothic Echoes,' in Eaglestone, ed. *Reading* The Lord of the Rings, 49; see further, 48-50. See also Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings. Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2006), 195 (193-96 on Walpole more generally).

duplicated texts build up their world detail by detail: most of it will be 'new', surprising, unfamiliar to a reader, and thus the textual world (built up precisely in this process precisely by these texts) becomes a natural context, and silences its radical unfamiliarity, its radical fictionality. Mountains are mountains, but nothing in the reader's world corresponds to the "Misty Mountains". While *Otranto* and *Dracula* leave the reader as reader in his/her own world, in Tolkien the reader has to construct him/hersElf as a reader within the textual world, a different interpretive position. Texts within texts "draw out the paradoxical relationship of 'framed' and 'unframed'":[98] Tolkien, instead of the more familiar metafictional 'frame-breaking', doubles the frame, pointing attention to it by taking it entirely seriously.

A connected effect is the emphasis on anything related to texts: authors, manuscripts, transmissions and sources become essentially important, yet at the same time emphatically fictitious elements. The editor/translator's pose always defers authority: the origin of the account, its real (but really: fictional) author are always at least at one remove. Readers, thus situated in the fiction, have to figure out their own place in it, and that becomes possible by following the philological clues. They have to find their historical bearings, their cultural contexts, decide who is saying (/writing) this and how he came by the knowledge. When in the 1920s, Tolkien gave the 'Geste of Beren and Lúthien' to C.S. Lewis to read, Lewis (as it were, instinctively) sensed this, and offered his comments in the form of a mock-philological commentary (complete with fanciful German scholars' names and their suggested emendations): he took the reader positions the text prefigured for him.[99] The *meaning* of anything in the Tolkien text is always double-coded: once in the fiction (where a certain signifying system is at work) and once for the reader, but this first, fictional level of signification is part and parcel of the text's meaning for the reader. This is a strong and effective way of *marking* radical fictionality instead of covering a 'moderate' one. From

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[98] Waugh, *Metafiction*, 31 (see further, 28-34).
[99] Lewis's commentary is published in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lays of Beleriand* (vol. 3 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, New York: Ballantine, 1994), 374-92.

Coleridge on, the "willing suspension of disbelief" was taken as necessary for the fiction to be successful: Tolkien just pushes this further, when he, by the very framework of his stories, presents a position for the reader where 'disbelief' is not possible – "You… believe it, while you are, as it were, inside".[100] He relates to tradition, but pushes it forward in a very important aspect.

As he progressed in constructing his system of stories and the possible ways in which to present them, Tolkien went ever towards a more and more barely philological treatment of this fictitious metatext. Initially, the fictional Anglo-Saxon traveler's accounts of what he heard, or translations/transcripts of what he read were supposed to reach the 'editor' through and Old English text. In the 1930s, Tolkien even started to write actual Old English translations of some of his prose or annalistic accounts to 'stand in' for these.[101] Later on, however, he gradually de-emphasized the connection. *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* do not state how the 'original manuscript' reached the editor; in *The Silmarillion* as published, there is not even a clear editor persona. While *The Lord of the Rings*, with its ingenious note 'On translation', offers an explanation for even the most clearly 'primary' traditional thematic elements,[102] the 1977 *Silmarillion* stands alone. Its default metafictional frame, that it is a translation of Bilbo's "Translations from the Elvish", preserved in the "Red Book of Westmarch", is only implicit and never stated in the book itsElf. It is, as it were, a philological

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[100] Tolkien, *OFS*, 52.

[101] These can be found in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* (Vol. 4 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, New York: Ballantine, 1995), 251-61 ('Quenta Noldorinwa') and 334-48 ('Annals of Valinor'). Even some of his earlier poems, however, that were to go into the 'Book of Lost Tales', were supplied with Old English titles, possibly "to present [them] as fictional translations" (John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 46; see also Vladimir Brljak, 'The Book of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist' *Tolkien Studies* 7 (2010), 31 (n.23) and 18).

[102] For ease of reference, I will refer to *The Lord of the Rings* by the volume (*FR* for vol.1, *The Fellowship of the Ring*; *TT* for vol.2, *The Two Towers*; and *RK* for vol.3, *The Return of the King*) of the 1991 HarperCollins edition: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (3 vols., London: HarperCollins, 1991). But since this work has many other editions, I will, as customary, give also Book and Chapter numbers along with the page numbers of this edition. The note 'On Translation' is in *RK*, Appendix F, 1107-12. See Shippey for a clear outline of how details like the dwarf-names from *Völuspá* or the Old English culture and nomenclature of the Rohirrim fit this ingenious scheme: *Road*, 114-17.

task for the reader to solve; small wonder the readers never liked *The Silmarillion* quite as much as they did *The Lord of the Rings*.

With the manuscript itsElf and the editor/translator with it retiring into the fictional world, it is clear that Tolkien uses the idea of the manuscript in a *philological* sense, and not as a mere device of deferring authority.[103] It is to a large extent not only *what* happens in the *Silmarillion*, but how the account is made up that matters – because that says just as much about the world as the stories, and adds details to its complexity that no narrative could. It is this that offers the anatomy of culture the story creates. This implies a number of things about Tolkien's concerns further than thematic or narrative; and (along with the literary/cultural historical parallels) implies interpretive methods (just as it fictionalizes positions for the reader), governing concepts that cohere into rather systematic theoretical threads.

In terms of his main concerns, Tolkien thus goes beyond the traditional material of heroes and myths he is always credited with: he signals an interest in the cultural processes by which these work. The historical embeddedness and interrelatedness of stories and their systems, the necessary grounding of these in (systems of) texts are on the one hand ideas directly deriving from 19th-century comparative philology;[104] but on the other, they are also important for contemporary theory. The very materiality of the text (in its written format, as a veritable artifact) and of language (in its written or even performed, 'sounded' form) also play a role in more recent theories from deconstruction to textualism.[105] Inviting the reader to take

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[103] On the self-referential and metafictional nature of the Red Book frame (mostly in *The Lord of the Rings*, but extending it to *The Silmarillion*), see Mary R. Bowman, 'The Story Was Already Written: Narrative Theory in *The Lord of the Rings*' (*Narrative* 14.3 (2006)), 273-78.

[104] See Shippey, *Road*, 309-13 for the philological relationships between the versions of the *Völsunga saga*, which he then applies to the Beren and Lúthien story to show the analogue (313-17). In 'Great Chain', I also used such a system of stories and texts (this time from Tolkien, the story of Túrin Turambar) to illustrate how philological depth is created.

[105] In a recent thematic volume of *PMLA* ('The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature'), Leah Price sums up this emphatic materiality by saying that "a book is a 'material object' whereas a text is a 'sequence of words'" ('Introduction: Reading Matter' (*PMLA* 121.1 (2006), 10), a formulation, that is, significantly, quoted by an even more recent volume (on 'Textual Materialism')(Bill Brown, 'Introduction: Textual Materialism' (*PMLA* 125.1 (2010), 25). Brown goes further to identify medieval literature "in the most rigorously literal sense, [as] nothing but millions of stains on animal parts" (26), emphasizing the materiality of the *text* itself and allowing for its

interpretive stances plays out an interactivity that reader-response criticism seeks to understand in the reading process. By fictionalizing the text, Tolkien inscribes all these factors into the textual world, and thus makes philology into a structural (not only thematic or methodological) pillar, a method that his readers are also invited to follow. A 'heuristically philological' reading offers more details and more stories: more meanings. One could nearly treat this as the pedagogical aspect of Tolkien, and indeed the great number of medievalists attesting that their love of Tolkien's world drew them to medieval studies shows partly this to be the case.

But apart from showcasing the method and approach of philology, Tolkien (even if perhaps unwittingly) also brings them up for theoretical scrutiny. It almost seems as if his work was a weighty literary argument for theorized rereadings of history. The key points it highlights have a history now in theory: postmodernity rethought the idea of history and of writing it;[106] the New Philology engaged with the essential plurality and variance of medieval manuscript textuality and the problems of its editing,[107] while textual critics stood their ground concerning editorial practices.[108] The study of ideology and the discourses of culture looked at textual transformations, the privileging of certain discourses, and the assignment of

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endless variety. But the materiality of 'sounded' language was also argued as early as Walter J. Ong's exchange with Derrida, refuting the material primacy of the written sign: *Orality and Literacy*, 75-77 (see also 5-15).

[106] Most prominently in Hayden White's *Metahistory* (*Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore–London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973), but New Historicist critics also "[reject] the idea of 'History' as a directly accessible, unitary past" (Jeffrey Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, eds., *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993), 1). For a concise survey of the historical focuses of postmodernity (especially as related to fictionality), see Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 87-101.

[107] Partly triggered by Cerquiglini's claims in *In Praise of the Variant*, the New Philology's emphasis on the variance of medieval writing and the inherent problems of editing this are well summarized in Stephen G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture' (*Speculum* 65.1 (1990): 1-10), and it is the same considerations that inform Machan's inquiries into the ideology of Middle English editing (*Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*).

[108] After the New Bibliography of the 60s and what they then experienced as an outright attack from literary theory (like Stanley Fish's views about the "text in this class"), bibliographers and textual critics evolved a field of intense debates and exciting arguments. See, e.g., D.C. Greetham's article about the intersections/interrelations of the two theories: 'Textual and Literary Theory: Redrawing the Matrix' (*Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 2-25), and his later book, *Theories of the Text* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) for an in-depth exploration. G. Thomas Tanselle's summary that "deconstruction, the 'new historicism,' and reader-response theory – among other approaches – have supported a turn away from the authorial and the canonical" ('Textual Criticism and Literary Sociology' (*Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991), 85) very appropriately connects developments in textual criticism to those in literary theory, and offers a survey of the textual critics' stance.

truth-claims, the production of knowledge in quite a different light.[109] By stressing the centrality of the text, the subjects that produce texts and use them, then embedding these in a sensitive and elaborate cultural representation, Tolkien in fact achieves a very high degree of 'realism', and a very 'academically' based realism at that. In the Tolkien text, we necessarily only see (fictional) subjects interpret (read, write, rewrite, translate, summarize, expand, edit, etc.) a text, mostly based on other texts, and situated in a network of texts. This, paradoxically, is nearly the postmodern situation, where meaning proliferates in readings and versions, contexts and signifying practices.

The metatextual text is, therefore, a sort of theoretical 'middle point': it invites a traditional, medievalist stance, but its application raises questions and concepts that are evidently meaningful in theory, and on which a much-needed theoretical reading can be based. This theoretical middle point, however, appears only if we consider the 1977 *Silmarillion* text − otherwise the manuscript corpus, with its proliferation of versions, unfinished variants, inconclusive rewritings, and oscillating frames does not supply a necessary focus. But the presentation frame of Bilbo's manuscript makes retrospective medievalism of primary relevance. Manuscript textuality and its essential variation, the differences between author roles (based on medieval practices and theory) and cultural contexts (written or oral cultures), the relation and attitudes (mythological and mythographic, religious or 'scholarly' stances) to a certain sort of stories, the authority of any text and the signifying system that grounds that authority (pansemiotic models and the oral authentication of mythological systems) are all aspects well-known to editors and students of medieval texts and cultural history. But more explicitly theoretical and less clearly philological points also emerge. Plurality as meaning, fragmentation and the unfixed, unfinished aspect highlight the 'writerly' vs. 'readerly' distinction (as briefly treated in the Introduction); author roles

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[109] Michel Foucault's works, particularly *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Vintage Books, 2010) elaborated the way social and cultural discourses shape what can be conceived of as knowledge, and bring it into the orbit of political power.

become voices and points of view (however hazy and undefined), with their own representational strategies and ideological stances; the individual textual threads of the representation form larger discourses that go beyond the textual and imply conventions, strategies of signification linked with non-textual practices, cultural specificities and emphases. Everything in Tolkien's work is situated in the framework of somebody producing, transmitting, and interpreting texts.

Further conclusions might be drawn concerning the fantastic effect and mythopoesis in Tolkien's work. The radical fictionality that he requires of the textual world in a successful fairy-story here becomes equated with emphatic textuality, since the world of the text is created only inside texts – texts that are also supposed to be parts of the world. The fantastic, likewise, is increasingly sought in criticism in the fiction of the fantastic story, in its rhetorics of unreality and fictionality, the subversive attitude to the conventions of mimetic realism.[110] Interestingly, in mythology and its cultural historical presuppositions the polar opposite can be observed: mythology seems to function not 'textually', myths not being texts but rather (in narratological terms) *stories* generating innumerable *plots*, stories that the given culture uses in a specific way (among others, in making them into texts). "We access Greek mythology above all through text," as Dowden writes, adding: "[b]ut texts were not the only medium for mythology."[111] Clunies Ross even uses the term "mythological system" to describe myths' function "as both cognitive and communicative systems."[112] This network (and the collection of all textual versions of mythic stories) is termed 'mythology' – but, as Tolkien would have pointed out, the word etymologically refers to the *telling* (Gr. *legein*) of myths. In Classical Greece or early medieval Scandinavia, myths had as many tellings, versions, local variants, as tellers and communities: "Greek religion as a monolithic entity never existed," and

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[110] For a survey, see Bechtel, 'There and Back Again', 152-57.

[111] Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 5. See also Thomas Harrison, 'Greek Religion and Literature,' in Daniel Ogden, ed., *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 374: in Greek religion, there was "no discrete body of sacred texts".

[112] Clunies Ross, 'Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth,' 120.

"consequently, there was no one authoritative version of a myth."[113] Myths were used variously in producing literature, art, ritual, behavior "by being presented, reinterpreted."[114] In medieval paganism, religion essentially defined action, *practice*, and was closely connected to social and political institutions of culture.[115] The proliferation of variants but the absolute lack of a *standard*, an original, is the 'formal' link between mythology and manuscript textuality. At the same time, Tolkien's suggestion of this textual proliferation in the textual world and the philological evidence (twelve volumes of it) in the primary world come close to being a very accurate model, even to the treatment of authenticating mechanisms and the layers of cultural discourses.

The 1977 *Silmarillion* text can thus easily be considered as the focus of the corpus, and doing so offers great critical advantages. Philology (both thematically and structurally conceived) works on it both in a 'primary' and a 'secondary' sense, but (again, both 'primarily' and 'secondarily') theoretical readings also emerge. We see authors, stories, texts crossing lives and generations (indeed, whole ages of the world), coming to existence through different textual processes (authoring, copying, translation, compilation, selection, adaptation, etc.). These are necessarily *culturally* determined, and expand aspects of culture that are usually hidden in the narrative – cultures and even subjects are differentiated and assigned authority on the basis of how they relate to stories, words, language, texts, writing; on the basis of how they interpret. The *Silmarillion* text has its own parts and problems, but even these are meaningful; and it is to these that I turn now.

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[113] Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 1, 57 (respectively). See also Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 54 on local variation.
[114] Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 5.
[115] Richter, *Formation of the Medieval West*, 42, 30.

2.2 The problem of the Silmarils: *The Silmarillion* and its problematics

The 1977 *Silmarillion* text, at the center of this inquiry, nevertheless cannot be evaluated without some consideration of its context. It relates to the finished texts that Tolkien's popularity is built on, and it is also connected to the manuscript corpus made available in *The History of Middle-earth*. The writing of the 'Silmarillion' (texts treating the matter of the Elder Days (the early ages of Middle-earth) that Tolkien produced from the late 1910s to the end of his life in 1973) was historically cut in two by his work on *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and while in the later stages of writing *The Lord of the Rings* he already turned back to his mythology, he never achieved any one version that he could be satisfied with, and it was in 1977, after his death, that Christopher Tolkien published a volume edited from these manuscripts: *The Silmarillion*. The relation of these two 'Silmarillions' in primary Tolkien philology has enjoyed much critical attention, and in 2009 Douglas Charles Kane published a comprehensive monograph (*Arda Reconstructed: The Creation of the Published* Silmarillion) that discussed how exactly the 1977 text was put together. Kane goes through the text practically paragraph by paragraph, showing from which manuscript version Christopher Tolkien took the given sequence, and adding some critical commentary; but, as I remarked above, sometimes the immediate sources that he identifies are not enough.

The 1977 *Silmarillion* text is not one unified text, but has its own structural units and internal problematics. Charles Noad remarked that "to Tolkien, the nature of 'The Silmarillion' was highly distinctive: an assemblage of texts, each with its own history and provenance, and, by implication, a relationship between the world in which it is a text and the world of which the text itsElf speaks."[116] The constituent units in *The Silmarillion* embody this historicity in many different ways. Christopher Tolkien's editorial work resulted in the

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[116] Charles E. Noad, 'On the Construction', 32.

1977 *Silmarillion* canon: the 'Ainulindalë', the 'Valaquenta', the 'Quenta Silmarillion', the 'Akallabêth' and 'Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age' are the textual units that make up the volume.[117] These are clearly different texts,[118] also evidenced in their primary philological history; in the fiction, they also have different authors, provenances, sources. But criticism needs to address some problems of their history and the presentation of the 1977 edition: not the least concerning what this text is in the textual world.

When it appeared in 1977, the clearest relation of *The Silmarillion* was certainly to the fixed texts, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, since Tolkien's readership only knew these at the time. It functioned as their context, giving the solution to many obscure references. Even though the Appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* summarily gave an account of the most important events in the First and Second Ages of Middle-earth,[119] some allusions were still opaque, apparently empty (as some mentions of the name "Túrin", for example[120]). As devices of depth, suggesting untold stories and therefore a degree of historical reality in the background, they still worked; but *The Silmarillion* supplied a context that filled these with meaning and created large, overarching thematic patterns between the works. Part of the readership, however, and many critics were still disappointed, partly for reasons that Tolkien foresaw as difficulties in the presentation of this material: there were no mediating figures (like the hobbits) in *The Silmarillion*, and no frame at all in the 1977 book, no indication of what this is in the fictional world, how it came to be, and where it is situated. In *The Hobbit*

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[117] See Noad on a post-*History of Middle-earth* evaluation as to what Tolkien himself might have meant to form part of *The Silmarillion*. In some instances, however (as in the case of the Elvish Lexicons, the 'Ambarkanta', and some other shorter works) he does not really offer arguments as to why they "must be" considered as part of the canon (see especially 39, 44, 57).

[118] Henceforward, the constituent parts of *The Silmarillion* will be referred to by the following abbreviations: 'Ai' ('Ainulindalë'), 'Vq' ('Valaquenta'), 'QS' ('Quenta Silmarillion'), 'Ak' ('Akallabêth'), and 'RP' ('Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age'). I will refer to the second edition of the text: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (ed. by Christopher Tolkien, Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) – all unmarked page references in the text are to this edition.

[119] *RK,* 'Appendix A' 1008-32, and 'Appendix B', 1057-65.

[120] In 'Great Chain', I outlined the connectedness of the texts based on the notions of textual relations called 'context' (between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*) and 'retext' (between versions of stories within the 'Silmarillion')(243-44), and identified the two basic types of problems with these connections, 'readerly' and 'critical' (241).

and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien posed as 'translator/editor', just one remove from the supposed 'manuscript': here there is no clue as to what the narrator's position is. It was only later and partly by the work of some critics that the default presentation frame, that of Bilbo's compiled manuscript, was 'authorized' by Christopher Tolkien too in the 'Preface' to *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I*.[121] Even this came under some critical attack later, and in arguing the centrality of this *Silmarillion* text, I will attempt to answer these arguments below.

It appears that the very establishment of how to look at the *Silmarillion* text (the clarification of the frame) emerged from its connectedness to the manuscript corpus; but even *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are connected there, since Tolkien's obsessive rewriting habit also included them. He partly rewrote *The Hobbit* by necessity: he had to modify one of its chapters significantly when working on the conception of the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*. It was then unthinkable that Gollum would offer his ring as the prize of the riddle game, as he did in the first edition: the second edition of *The Hobbit* thus has a major (and many a minor) variant in its text.[122] Tolkien rightly saw that this was impossible to solve 'authorially': finally he decided to make use of the discrepancy as an integral part of the story itsElf.[123] He transformed the two versions into philological *variants*, not only in the real world but also in the textual world. "The story as a whole must take into account the existence of two versions and use it", he wrote in a letter to Stanley Unwin, his publisher.[124] The first edition's version became the story Bilbo told everyone and "set down in his memoirs",[125] while the second version was the true account known only to a few people (but as "many copies [of the Red Book, the fictional source of *The Lord of the Rings*] contain the true

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[121] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I* (vol. 1 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, New York: Ballantine, 1992), vii-xvii; see also Shippey, *Road*, 309-10.

[122] See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Annotated Hobbit* (ed. by Douglas A. Anderson, rev. and exp. ed., Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 128-31 (n.25), and Rateliff, *Return to Bag End*, 732-48, and 760-62 for a reconstruction of how the written chapter got into the 1947 edition of *The Hobbit*.

[123] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 141 (#128), where Tolkien writes he has "made up [his] mind to accept the change and its consequences".

[124] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 142 (#129). This is, by the way, a very explicit instance of Tolkien acknowledging the duplication of texts, making a philologically conceived textuality a structural device of his fiction.

[125] *FR*, 'Prologue', 12.

account… derived no doubt from notes by Frodo and Samwise",[126] the second edition of *The Hobbit* is also explained). "Not what he told the dwarves and put in his book… He told me the true story",[127] answers Frodo when Gandalf wonders which version he knows. Tolkien thus consciously highlighted (again) the metatextuality of his work, and even exploited it congenially to a dramatic effect. Rewriting, the oscillations of the text (and therefore of meaning) are thus not alien from the fixed texts either; these are, however (with a few exceptions) minor variations used for dramatic effect, characterization, or to make a point about the power of the Ring – and to consolidate metatextuality.

The relation between *The Silmarillion* and the posthumously published variant corpus is different. Out of the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*, a little more than three deal with the textual history of *The Lord of the Rings*; the rest is the 'Silmarillion' and related material (the manuscripts and variants of *The Hobbit* were published by John Rateliff in 2007, separate of the *History* series). These are more often than not unfinished texts; they are certainly less well-known and less interpreted (both by readers and by critics), and they make up the available part of the 'Silmarillion tradition', in their turn 'contextualising' (but in a more philological and less critical sense) the 1977 text. A short survey of the origin of these will help to explain why *The Silmarillion* is *different* from this corpus, yet at the same time *central* to it, while still remaining *problematic.*

2.2.1 Primary *Silmarillion*

Tolkien's first writings about an imagined past involving the 'Elves' or 'fairies' (the *Book of Lost Tales*) date from the late 1910s.[128] In this, he elaborated on the conceptions and mythological elements in his earlier poetry; the result was a more or less coherent storyline

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[126] *FR*, 'Prologue', 12-13.
[127] *FR*, I.i.39.
[128] The following paragraphs make use of material published in my article '*Silmarillion, The*' in Drout, ed., *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia*, 608-12.

that became the foundation of the later 'Silmarillion'. Even though he eventually abandoned the *Lost Tales*, the stories remained in their essential form when in the 1920s he began casting two of the most important into long narrative poems (the 'Children of Húrin', in alliterative verse, and the 'Lay of Leithian', in rhyming couplets); it was to contextualize these for his old schoolmaster, R.W. Reynolds that he wrote the first account of the full span of his "mythology" ('Sketch of the Mythology', 1926). Over the next fifteen years, Tolkien produced many versions of the mythological cycle in many different forms and conceptions, leading to the emergence of the 'Silmarillion' as a collection of the mythological stories. In 1930, he enlarged the 'Sketch' into the 'Quenta Noldorinwa', and in the 1930s he started two annalistic accounts of the history, the (earlier) 'Annals of Valinor' and the (earlier) 'Annals of Beleriand'. In the late 1930s, the compendious summary of the whole story was again revised (perhaps through a lost intermediary text) as the 'Quenta Silmarillion' (perhaps 1937, interrupted before the end, but concluded by a similar account of the eschatology that was present in the previous version), and both sets of 'Annals' were rewritten. The Lost Tale about the creation of the world around this time became the 'Ainulindalë', strictly speaking independent of the 'Silmarillion' proper (as the 'Quenta' tradition). The story of the Second Age of the world and the fall of the Mannish[129] kingdom of Númenor were also first written in the second half of the 1930s, and attached to the main mythology.

The writing of *The Lord of the Rings* affected the 'Silmarillion' complex in many ways. The themes and motifs that emerged in the *Hobbit* sequel made necessary the revision of earlier stories (such as the character of Galadriel, or the One Ring itsElf), and the novelistic convention of writing that Tolkien was now used to offered different problems and opportunities.[130] In the long period of writing, Tolkien occasionally took time to work on some of the 'Silmarillion' texts; versions of the 'Fall of Númenor' were written at this time,

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[129] "Men" and "Mannish" are Tolkien's usage, referring to the *humans* (as opposed to the *Elves*) of his fictional world. I will preserve his usage in this dissertation, and refrain from substituting "human".

[130] See Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 118, 119, 163.

and though the history of 'On the Rings of Power' is little known, it seems to have been in existence by 1948.[131]

After the completion of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien for a period wanted to publish it together with the 'Silmarillion'. Since after the success of *The Hobbit* the manuscripts belonging to the 'Silmarillion' complex that he sent as possible sequels were rejected (although without in-depth reading or consideration) by his publisher, Allan & Unwin, having made contact with Milton Waldman of Collins, for a time Tolkien considered Collins a more promising prospective publisher. His intention to bring the 'Silmarillion' into publishable form can be seen in his efforts on the texts in this period: he returned to the *Quenta Silmarillion* in 1951-2, having already produced a new version of the 'Ainulindalë' in the late 1940s, and evolving the first section of the *Quenta* into the independent 'Valaquenta' sometime in the early 1950s. However, when Collins turned down the publication of the two long books together, Tolkien finally re-established contact with Allan & Unwin, and published *The Lord of the Rings* with them in 1954-55.

In the late 1950s, after the unexpected success of the *Hobbit* sequel, Tolkien enthusiastically turned again to the mythology intending to finish and publish it. He realized that the legends had to be made consistent with *The Lord of the Rings*; he produced another version of the 'Quenta Silmarillion' (the 'Later Quenta', in about 1958), a new version of both sets of 'Annals' ('Annals of Aman' and the 'Grey Annals', both late 1950s), and a version of the 'Fall of Númenor' (by 1958) that finally became the 'Akallabêth'. He was by now considering the recasting of the entire mythology (the later revisions of the 'Silmarillion' narratives show him meditating on the very foundations of the cosmology), and gave much thought to the question of its presentation frame. In his last years, he wrote shorter essays on

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[131] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 248 brings together the scarce indications about this section.

problems he should have solved to continue work, and never managed to establish any finished variant or even an authorized 'canon' of what exactly belongs to the 'Silmarillion'.[132]

'Genetically', the 'Silmarillion' clearly occupies a privileged place in Tolkien's oeuvre; but in its published form, as *The Silmarillion*, it is still a text *different* from the whole of the corpus. It is, as Christopher Tolkien notes in the 'Foreword', welded into a continuous, "coherent and internally consistent" narrative (viii), following a more or less chronological sequence, spanning the three Ages of the textual world from creation (even 'pre-creation') to the end of the Third Age (with some hints at the eschatology too). The manuscript corpus, by contrast, is made up of summaries, scraps, unfinished versions of individual stories, "the same legends… retold in longer and shorter forms, and in different styles" (vii). It is certainly very far from the thematic *unity* of the fixed texts: *The Lord of the Rings* tells the story of the One Ring and of Frodo destroying it, using the hobbit (who, it turns out, is the fictional author) as a focus and mediating device. There are themes that could supply thematic unity in *The Silmarillion* (it gets its title from the crucially and metaphysically important shining jewels that drive some of the narrative), but their sphere of operation always remains limited (limited, furthermore in a philological sense, since these limits are imposed by the textual makeup, the structural parts of the book). The Silmarils function as central theme only in the 'Quenta Silmarillion' proper; overarching themes like power or knowledge are much too abstract for this function. Tolkien's concern to write schematic, summary historical overviews (in various forms, chronicle or annalistic) is indeed visible, as is the fact that the manuscript versions very often use roughly the same storylines (the 'Sketch of the Mythology', 'Quenta Noldorinwa', 'Quenta Silmarillion' or the various 'Annals'). These storylines are *traditionally* just as 'unified' as the units of the 1977 text, but they are nearly never as elaborated, put into different genres with different principles and rationales of unity. They are also compressed

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[132] Whittingham offers a useful scheme and a table on the stages of the writing of the 'Silmarillion' that helps place the individual texts: *Evolution*, 6-9.

accounts, not very enjoyable in themselves, and while one could argue that much of the 1977 *Silmarillion* does not make for entertaining reading either, this is missing the point. It is rather along the intersection of the criteria of 'literary' qualities (such as readability or even entertainment) and the philological factors of historicity and authority that we need to situate this unity. The 1977 text realizes this synthesis of unity criteria much more successfully than anything else in the variant corpus.

Even if this unity derives from the editors' work (and that too is a point worth considering), it also gives one of the reasons for the *centrality* of the *Silmarillion* text while others follow from the relation it bears to the variant corpus. *The Silmarillion* is, at least 'textually', unified. Unlike most of the variants, it presents a complete narrative from creation to the end of the Third Age. It is also the largest coherent and unified context that exists for the finished texts, and thus functions as a 'summary' of the textual world.[133] Add to this that *The Silmarillion* is evidently more readable than the fragments in the manuscript corpus, and its centrality, from two directions, is unquestionable. First, the contextualizing relations tie it both to the fixed texts and the manuscript versions (in the corpus of which the 1977 text is also 'contextualized', while also 'representing' it, but always maintaining a philological difference). Second, its literary qualities make it more available and accessible than any particular variant summary (even if, by some miracle, a finished account). One cannot understand every detail of *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* without *The Silmarillion*: these multiply contextualized texts work best if they can be situated in their proper framework. *The Silmarillion* makes best sense as the representative of the *tradition* that frames these stories.

It is, furthermore, traditional in more than one sense. As context to the fixed texts, it facilitates readerly or critical interpretation and evaluation: it is an *interpretive* tradition

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[133] See my 'Great Chain', 243.

within which Bilbo and Frodo, Gandalf and the other characters, along with the reader and the critic, are situated. In other words, it functions as the traditional background both in primary and secondary senses; but at the same time, it is also a *textual* tradition, and again so both in the primary and the textual worlds.[134] As Christopher Tolkien points out in his 'Foreword', "it became long ago a fixed tradition" (vii) for Tolkien: he accumulated enough textual variants to form a veritable philological tradition. The 1977 text itsElf *uses* the manuscript corpus like this, and gives an edition, so to speak, of how the editor supposed the author must have intended it to stand. Ultimately, as the presentation frame is clarified with time and more study of the available evidence, it turns out to be at the head of a textual tradition also in the textual world: conceived of "as a compilation, a compendious narrative, made long afterwards from sources of great diversity (poems, and annals, and oral tales) that had survived in agelong tradition" (viii). The edited *Silmarillion* is central because it is in some sense a metaphor, a stand-in, for the whole 'Silmarillion tradition'.

All this does not cancel the fact that it is a heavily *problematic* text. Its greatest problem is not that it is unfinished (like most manuscripts it draws on), but that it is editorial: it is, some would argue, not really a 'Tolkien text' in the same sense in which *The Lord of the Rings* is. Even though the different manuscript versions from which it is stitched together are genetically all traced back to the author, this particular patchwork of passages and sentences is undeniably something Tolkien never wrote in this form, resembling Cerquiglini's description of any edition of a medieval text as *rewriting*, "composed of bits and pieces borrowed from manuscripts of various periods".[135] Furthermore, Christopher Tolkien, in the later volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*, frequently turns back to his own editorial work on the 1977 text

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[134] See 'Great Chain', 242-43 on how a mere mention of Túrin's (unexplained) character functions in *The Lord of the Rings* traditionally. In 'Fictitious Fairy Tales: Writing a Fictitious Character in *The Lord of the Rings*' (in Anna Kérchy, ed., *Postmodern Representations of Fairy Tales. How Applying New Methods Generates New Meanings* (Lewiston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011), 367-82) I investigated further to see how the 'traditional' *Silmarillion* material defines and governs characters' and narrators' writing of the story in *The Lord of the Rings*.

[135] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 50.

when commenting on some later version of the *Quenta* tradition; in the course of this, he sometimes admits not being aware of this later version, or his father's latest intention concerning a given detail, when working on the *Silmarillion* prior to the 1977 publication.[136] So not only is the 1977 text a 'Frankenstein monster' of Tolkien philology, it might not even represent in all things the latest intentions of its author.

The question of the presentation frame is also problematic: while in the 1977 *Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien did not supply any such, later on, in *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I*[137] he authorized an inference drawn by Robert Foster in his *Complete Guide to Middle-earth*:[138] that *The Silmarillion* is to be equated with Bilbo's manuscript "Translations from the Elvish". In the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* (1966), Tolkien modified the text, apparently to make room for this conception: "some books" that Bilbo gave to Frodo at the end of the story in Rivendell became "three books of lore that he had made at various times, written in his spidery hand, and labeled on their red backs: *Translations from the Elvish, by B.B.*".[139] He also appended a 'Note on Shire Records' to the 'Prologue', in which he included most of the philological-metafictional information about the fictional source, the Red Book of Westmarch.[140] Some inconsistencies within this frame were pointed out in recent scholarship, along with Tolkien's later musings (in notes or letters), ideas that would have meant a radical recasting of the mythology and its possible presentation. Why, then, could the 1977 *Silmarillion* still be taken as the theoretical middle point in approaching both fixed texts and variant corpus, practically the whole of Tolkien's Middle-earth works; and why can the Bilbo frame (the idea of a manuscript that gathers all the philological strands) still be taken as the last authentic (and therefore by default *the single and valid*) presentation frame?

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[136] Kane's *Arda Reconstructed* conveniently collects and reflects on these in the discussion of each chapter.

[137] Tolkien, *Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I*, xiii.

[138] Robert Foster, *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth. From* The Hobbit *to* The Silmarillion (New York: Ballantine, 1978), 414.

[139] *RK*, VI.vi.964.

[140] See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (vol. 12 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, London: HarperCollins, 2002), 14; and Noad, 'On the Construction', 62.

The Silmarillion can be taken as such a middle point exactly in its problematic nature: because in this, Tolkien (even if through the mediation of his son's editing work) comes closest to the duplicated authenticity of a medieval compilation. "Until the arrival of the printing press, the medieval manuscript in form, and probably in function, was an anthology, a collection"[141] – not only that, but Tolkien's great models, preeminently the *Kalevala*, were also compilations.[142] Christopher Tolkien's words in his 'Foreword', quoted above, continue: "and this conception has indeed its parallel in the actual history of the book, for a great deal of earlier prose and poetry does underlie it, and it is to some extent a compendium in fact and not only in theory" (viii). The plurality of texts, the layering of versions is a part of the fiction of Middle-earth: inside it, *The Silmarillion* is also a mediator, the material collected, selected, translated and edited by Bilbo. This fictive book is a 'Frankenstein monster' in Middle-earth just as it is outside, the collection of fictitious traditions; but in this sense many medieval manuscripts are themselves 'monstrous'.[143] The 1977 text being an editorial text is exactly what makes it central, since it is with this last stroke that the verisimilitude of primary and secondary philology is achieved. With putting together and publishing *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien placed himsElf in Bilbo's functional role.

And it is as such a problematic but central, editorial text that *The Silmarillion* is able to function as a key entry point at all. In medieval philology, manuscripts that bring together related (or unrelated) texts from quite different sources are an everyday occurrence: some of their texts come from earlier versions, some from later, some full of interpolators' additions, some in skeletal summary, some replete with theologizing commentary, some very down-to-earth in their emphases. The rationale of the *Silmarillion* compilation, to follow through the (mythic) history of the world, is clear enough: for medieval compilers of manuscripts, this would have been an intelligible ordering principle, as opposed to our critical requirement of

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[141] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 28.

[142] Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*, 66, and Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 29.

[143] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 27 on the "essential plurality", and further, ch.3, 'The Joyful Excess'.

the author's 'latest intention'. Furthermore, when scholars take up the task of producing a critical edition of any medieval text with multiple manuscript versions, the resulting text is exactly like this: pasted together from bits and pieces of the different variants, with reference to and justification of the 'author's intention' (what the author can reasonably be thought to have written), but in fact giving a text that in this form is nowhere extant.[144]

   The Silmarillion is still mostly Tolkien's text. As Kane writes, "One of the most remarkable things [about *The Silmarillion*] is how much of the published text really does come from Tolkien's writings."[145] We should also note that even *The History of Middle-earth* is not equivalent to a facsimile edition of the corpus: we should not think that with it, we have all there is to have. Christopher Tolkien frequently prints only one version, one manuscript (or typescript) of several, marking only the significant differences in the apparatus, so that anyone really getting down to the manuscripts would encounter an even greater variety.[146] But even if we had all of Tolkien's innumerable, succeeding manuscripts and typescripts, emended in pencil and ink, we would certainly not have its central themes so effectively highlighted as we have them in the one 1977 text. The totality of problems and concepts that we see at work in the corpus (and also in the fixed texts for some extent) is, paradoxically, not this evident and concentrated, if we read through *The History of Middle-earth*; and those versions, taken together, cannot be inserted into the fictional place of the one 'Silmarillion'. The 1977 text can, however faulty it might be: the philological fiction allows for and justifies, even incorporates these flaws. It is for these reasons that I argue that *The Silmarillion* is a fair representation of Tolkien's overall intentions, and taking it as such allows much more significant advances in a theoretical approach to his work than cautionary warnings about it problematic nature.

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[144] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 50.
[145] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 24.
[146] So in a way, just as Cerquiglini claims editions of medieval texts do with "the surplus of text, language and meaning" (*In Praise of the Variant*, 45), and the process of compilation and rewriting itself does with its sources, the apparatus attempts to 'stand in for' what is silenced, but nevertheless excludes it from the text.

2.2.3 Secondary *Silmarillion*

Naturally, much depends on whether there really *is* something in the fictional world that this text can correspond to. Tolkien never reached a final decision as to how and in what frame to present the stories of the Elder Days: he preserved the original idea from the *Lost Tales* frame, that these were transcripts or translations of tales heard or seen by the fictional Anglo-Saxon traveler Eriol/Ælfwine, and go back to various named fictional authors or tellers (Pengoloð and Rúmil, or the 'Golden Book' as the manuscript repository). Even in the post-*Lord of the Rings* rewritings, some of the texts bore colophons mentioning Ælfwine and giving Rúmil (who, unlike Pengoloð, remains as a character in *The Silmarillion*) as original author.[147] In the famous letter to Milton Waldman (in 1951), Tolkien claimed that the point of view of "the whole cycle is the Elvish",[148] part of his doubts about the lack of mediation in *The Silmarillion*. By this he presumably meant that no hobbits or other reader-friendly devices enable the use of less 'lofty' diction, and no line of thematic unity (like the one story in *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*) runs through the stories. For a while in the 1940s, he also struggled with time-travel narratives as links (particularly with the material now in the 'Akallabêth', which makes use of the Atlantis legend) in two unfinished works, 'The Lost Road' and 'The Notion Club Papers'.[149] Eventually nothing came of these, and even though Tolkien was still undecided after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* about how to

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[147] See Noad, 'On the Construction', 53 ('Quenta' revision c.1951 attributed to Pengoloð, 'Annals' revisions to Rúmil), 57 ('Quenta' revisions in the later 1950s refer to Ælfwine's translator role), 54, 65; and Nils Ivar Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences and Lost Texts in *The Silmarillion*', in Turner, ed., The Silmarillion – *Thirty Years On*, 143-44.

[148] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 147 (#131).

[149] Flieger studied these in great detail, and her work (especially *Interrupted Music*) is central in showing the functional place of these two abortive attempts within Tolkien's oeuvre. See Flieger, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* (Kent–London: The Kent State UP, 1997). In '"Do the Atlantis Story and Abandon Eriol-Saga"' (*Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004): 43-68), which she later incorporated into *Interrupted Music*, Flieger traces the point of change where Tolkien decided in favor of one frame (the time-travel one) instead of the Eriol/Ælfwine version. However, this also came to nothing, and thus we arrive back at his meditations about the Bilbo frame. See also Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*, 69-80, on Tolkien's time-travel ideas.

present the 'Silmarillion' material (which he then saw as his next great publishing project), he never made a decision and never recast the entire cycle to conform to it.

What he did do, however, was include 'Note on the Shire Records' in the second edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1966, having earlier stated that "[i]t belongs to Preface to *The Silmarillion*", but apparently changing his mind[150]). Here the fictional source of the novel is given as the "Red Book of Westmarch", and it is stated that Bilbo's "translations from the Elvish" were "almost entirely concerned with the Elder Days".[151] In the mid-1960s, he did say in an interview that he was "considering making use of Bilbo again", and hinted that *The Silmarillion* "will appear as [Bilbo's] research in Rivendell".[152] After this, he did not come up with anything nearly as systematic or ingenious. He entertained the idea of changing the entire cosmology, and with it, the transmission of the legends (but apart from a few, again abortive attempts, did not rewrite the texts), and remarked many times how the works (customarily referred to as "*Silmarillion*") must ultimately come through 'Mannish' intermediaries, and thus not maintain the Elvish focus he planned earlier.[153]

It appears, then, that the last fictional place Tolkien did have in mind for the compendium of traditional stories *and* did something about textually was the framework of Bilbo's manuscript. "[T]he mythology finally devolved into the simple 'vehicle' of the Red Book. And since this was fixed in print in the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, it can hardly be called into question."[154] The references to "'Mannish' works" being the sources do not ultimately discredit such a conception, and the radical rehandling of the cosmology never

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[150] Tolkien, *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 14.

[151] *FR*, 'Prologue', 14.

[152] Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 155 (n.1); cf. Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 145.

[153] See Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 145-47 for an overview and a survey of Tolkien's remarks to this effect. See also Noad, 'On the Construction', 62-3.

[154] Noad, 'On the Construction', 65, and Flieger, 'Tolkien and the Idea of the Book,' 287-90. Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 147-48 raises the question of how the Red Book reaches the modern editor/translator persona; but this is, I think, missing the point. The editor/translator persona is the last link Tolkien left standing between the radically fictitious world of Middle-earth and the reader's reality – as both a convenient traditional device and the necessary cover for metatextuality. As such, it serves a function rather 'formal' than 'philological', and need not be taken this seriously. How the text reaches the editor/translator is not specified in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit* either.

took place. In the few instances when Tolkien did do some rewriting in this vein, as in producing MS C* of the 'Ainulindalë' (completed already by 1948[155]), he eventually abandoned it, and what can be considered the final (or at least latest) version (MS D) and even in its immediate precedents, he went back to the old cosmological principles.[156] However, *The Lord of the Rings* never actually says Bilbo's "Translations from the Elvish" *are* the 'Silmarillion' (and the *Silmarillion* as a title and a work comes up only in Appendix A[157]); this and his father's final uncertainty led Christopher Tolkien to let the 1977 text stand without any framework. But in *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I.*, he authorized Robert Forster's conjecture. The primary philological arguments thus do not have anything much against the Bilbo frame.

Further points are derived from secondary philology, and these partly constitute the same lines of reasoning that is sometimes used to cast doubt on the success of Tolkien's metafictional devices in *The Lord of the Rings*. Flieger sums these up well: "[t]oo many things will not fit comfortably into the concept – narrative voice, point of view, and the amount of knowledge each of [the] 'authors' could have had at any one time."[158] More recently, Vladimir Brljak argued that "unless… we are to imagine that Bilbo, Frodo, and Sam wrote of themselves in the third person", we have to posit an unknown 'literalizer' figure (or several, in the redaction of the Red Book), who is responsible for "the shift to third-person narration, addition of dialogue and various other narrative detail, careful handling of the plot, and so forth – anything, in short, that would be involved in the literalization of a non- or at best a semi-literary text."[159] But this only highlights how Tolkien makes use of the metafiction to enter into the question of how authors write any story: the bare information about any event

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[155] See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 33-34 and J.R.R. Tolkien, *Morgoth's Ring* (vol. 10 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, London: HarperCollins, 1994), 3-6, 39-44.
[156] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 33-34.
[157] *RK*, 'Appendix A', 1010.
[158] Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 79; see also 71-72.
[159] Brljak, 'The Book of Lost Tales', 11, 12 (respectively).

could have been passed on to Frodo easily, and by thematizing how authors write about things they cannot know (like other people's thoughts and feelings, or dialogue where they are not present) he is bringing the writing of (hi)story down to the very individual subject who is doing the writing. Further, what is 'literary' and what is not (especially in a fictional world, and especially to a hobbit) is difficult to say; and literary history easily supplies examples where authors (historians too) make up speeches, dialogue, and a third-person narration even in historiography.[160] However, even if we do not use Occam's razor to excise Brljak's unneeded fictitious literalizer, we are still faced with Tolkien's philological fiction: a manuscript whose text, written by someone, gets reworked and passed on. It remains inside the fictional world, subject to the same philological processes, governed by the same concepts of authors and transmission. Frodo, for example, is seen to write the figure of Sam to make him a parallel of heroes from the legendary past:[161] he is patterning the narrated figure of his friend on heroes from stories they both know and that function as fundamental narratives of cultures, repositories of meaning.

Somewhat similar to this, the 1977 *Silmarillion* is taken as not able to represent Bilbo's "Translations from the Elvish". Agøy draws attention to problems of the distribution of knowledge (and this is only partly a problem of fictional sources: some parts narrate events or impart thoughts than simply no one has a way to know); its narrative stances (sometimes the narrator appears to talk from or to the context of one culture, then another); and its differences

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[160] Brljak answers such objections in n.10 (26). Julius Caesar's third-person narration about his own *Gallic War* is here dismissed: "this would not account for much besides the third-person narration: a hobbit equivalent of the *Gallic War* would still be only raw material for *The Lord of the Rings*." Another note, n.17 (29) refers to Thucydides, who explicitly admitted to making up the speeches in his *Peloponnesian War*: "[t]his convention of premodern historiography," writes Brljak, "was restricted to *important* speeches – indeed primarily to *speeches* rather than just any dialogue", and goes on to say that this "surely… cannot have been the case with *all* of [the dialogue in *The Lord of the Rings*]." I do not see why it could not, as I do not see why these cultural historical parallels would not sweep aside the arguments: we do not expect a hobbit (however learned) to write in the vein of a Caesar, Herodotus, Thucydides, or Bede (in whose work we find excellent, yet obviously fictitious dialogues, like the famous comparison of life to a sparrow's flight through a hall (Bk II, ch. 13) or indeed Caedmon's conversation with the angel and later his fellows before his death (Bk. IV, ch. 24)), but we *can* expect him to be laxer, more colloquial (as hobbits indeed are generally). See also Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 298 (William of Malmesbury) and 306 (John of Salisbury).

[161] See my 'Fictitious Fairy-Tales'.

in theological-philosophical detail.[162] Brljak also transposes his literalizer figure to claim that "the Red Book of Westmarch contained *not* the texts translated as *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, but only the *main* and the *ultimate* sources from which these texts were, at some later point, 'drawn'."[163] It is easy to see that none of this is really relevant: all of it, however, goes to strengthen the effect of fictionalizing an editor who incorporates all sort of sources, traditions, interpretations (and with them, all sort of narrative stances, conjectural fictionalized accounts). It will be seen that no detail in the 1977 *Silmarillion* implies philological impossibilities for the conception of the Bilbo frame. Agøy's conclusion is that "read as 'lost texts', the 1977 *Silmarillion* seems to be a work meant for a Mannish audience with no previous 'true' information about either the Elves, the Valar, or the history of the Elder Days. This would fit in well enough with the old Ælfwine scheme, but hardly with *The Silmarillion* ever forming part of Bilbo's 'Translations from the Elvish'."[164] But since Bilbo's audience is, if anything, the hobbits of the Shire or Fourth Age Men, I do not see why this would not fit the scheme. Hobbits and Fourth Age Men are very well described by Agøy's words quoted above.

The all-purpose argument that Tolkien eventually 'intended' it otherwise only muddles the question. It is notoriously difficult to base criticism on the 'intentions' of the author (as extant in notes, jottings, letters, or revealed in conversation) as opposed to his works;[165] but since *The Silmarillion* is an editorial text in the production of which Tolkien's unrealized 'intentions' (or what was thought to be his 'intention') did play a large part, some engagement with them is certainly merited. Towards the end of his life, Tolkien did want to recast it

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[162] See Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 148-56.

[163] Brljak, 'The Book of Lost Tales', 13. See further, in n.16 (28-9), where the question of authenticity is brought up; but this still does not change the fact that 'literalized' or not (and *The Silmarillion* shows much less stylistic unity of the sort that Brljak attributes to the literalizer in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*), the philological fiction is there.

[164] Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 159.

[165] Even in textual criticism, where editors aim at recovering and representing the author's intended text, this intention is always sought in a textual format: see G. Thomas Tanselle, 'The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention,' *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 167-211.

significantly, as seen in the primary philological evidence. But the fact is he did not recast it. The last coherent conception for presenting the stories that we can see him working out and partly 'instituting' is still the Bilbo frame (putting in the reference to Bilbo's "translations" into the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*); his musings in letters and elsewhere about how these stories 'must have been preserved' and why they must represent a 'Mannish' tradition are to be considered pointers, perhaps, and useful interpretive points, but not of the same status as *the texts themselves*. In fact, if we look at some of the changes he also seems to have wanted to make, we cannot help feeling grateful he did not make them. The loss of the 'flat world made round by divine intervention' conception would have been a grievous blow and would have sacrificed a sort of 'cosmogonic beauty' on the altar of niggling philological precision.[166] Tolkien's 'intention' certainly seems to work like a 'great narrative' in some critics' relation to *The Silmarillion*. By calling it thus, it is not my purpose to discredit it, but to show its status in governing interpretations (and claiming to explain everything) – yet paradoxically, even if we allow this 'intention' to determine our assumptions about *The Silmarillion*, we end up with the variable, the multiple, and the unfinished. Even more paradoxically, *The Silmarillion* with the Bilbo frame represents that more accurately and accessibly than *The History of Middle-earth*. Flieger's words sum up the practical side of the problem very well: "without *The Silmarillion* as originally published, there would be no audience for its more detailed and comprehensive successor, the twelve-volume series, *The History of Middle-earth*, which provides exactly the framework its editor felt was lacking."[167] But the *History* does not present *that* framework at all: it presents the (real) manuscript

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[166] Tolkien came to the conclusion that wise Elvish traditions could not have included such cosmological impossibilities as even a mythic reference to a 'flat world'. On this, see Whittingham, *Evolution*, 116-22.

[167] Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 63.

context, the source material, and is not a 'work' in itsElf; it is more like a 'tradition',[168] an intangible object which criticism would have problems to handle (and audiences to read).

2.2.3 Critical *Silmarillion*

In addition to the philological arguments, there is also a considerable critical advantage in looking at *The Silmarillion* in the Bilbo frame. To see this, we need to pursue the frame's secondary philological questions. The original conception, where the fictional traveler Eriol/Ælfwine translated the stories he heard or read in the 'Golden Book' placed the fiction into the real (though unknown) past, and is essentially connected to the reader's world where Anglo-Saxons (even their belief in 'Elves') are a real item of history, situated the stories in the readers' world, and presented them as real fragments of 'lost tales' (England's 'lost' mythology, or an imaginative reconstruction). The relation to sources, the concern with authors or tellers (Rúmil or Pengoloð), the contexts of copying/translating (textual/written activities) and telling or noting down (centering on performative, oral uses of stories), the emerging idea of books and manuscripts (first Eriol/Ælfwine's 'Book of Lost Tales', then, as its source, the 'Golden Book') show that the idea of the (collection of) text(s) was there from the beginning. This conception would have emphasized *transmission*, and had only one stage of *translation* (in some cultural medium, across two cultures). The tales themselves would have been presented as unified and to some degree opaque. The reader's position would have been fixed in the 'real' world, as the endpoint of this relatively simple line of transmission.

Taking *The Silmarillion* to be Bilbo's "translations from the Elvish" adds several significant layers to the representation of not only philological, but also to cultural variety. The compendium would then be selected and translated, edited together and integrated by

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[168] Brljak's observation that Flieger tends to look at the 'Silmarillion' (as opposed to the 1977 text) as itself a "work" is motivated by the same point: 'The Book of Lost Tales', 5; see further, n.3 (24).

one, this time entirely fictitious figure, who is already well contextualized and characterized by *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Bilbo is said to have "used all the sources available to him in Rivendell, both living and written",[169] and the material that made it into the compendium also have their distinct origins. In 'RP', Elrond's court in Rivendell is said to be "a treasury of good counsel and wise lore" (298), but even *The Lord of the Rings* mentions "the storied and figured maps and books of lore that were in the House of Elrond".[170] The variety of these sources is not only mirrored but constituted (substantiated) in *The Silmarillion*: texts from all Ages of the world, all significant cultures. The ambiguity of traditions and sources could account for all of the problems concerning the narrator's knowledge and viewpoint. The different theological standpoint of certain parts of the text can result from different traditions and cultures which had less authentic information about the theological hierarchy of Middle-earth. The proliferation of origins and traditions is tied up with the increase of cultural diversity in the stories and in the fiction of their transmission and collection; innumerable steps of transmission, several of translation, a permeation of cultural or linguistic boundaries are implied and fictionalized. By the very diverse author roles (related to the *production* of the texts and their *transmission*) reader positions are also created (connected to *reception* and *interpretation*): many acts of interpretation are shown and muted at the same time, erased in the text exactly by their inclusion, the implication of a previous author but the fact that his work is merely anthologized, translated, never given in full or original. Bilbo's interpretive choices, for example, are seen in what he takes to be important, significant, meaningful: what he includes in the selection, retains, translates. We can, furthermore, never be quite sure they are *his* choices – he may be simply transmitting a previous redactor's. This unfixable authority of the narrative position is also a philologically 'authentic' detail: medieval authors drawing on different sources in different parts of their

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[169] *FR*, 'Prologue', 14.
[170] *FR*, II.iii.270.

work often show a striking difference in narrative voice or position (as Sir Thomas Malory in 'The Tale of Arthur and Lucius', which he adopts from the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*). There are more interpretive choices, more transmission, more cultural detail implied in the Bilbo frame, which would certainly fit the diverse and fragmented nature of the source material (both primary and secondary) as well. The 'Book of Lost Tales' was supposed to be built on a roughly unified corpus (the oral tales told to Eriol/Ælfwine and/or the 'Golden Book'), while the Bilbo frame fictionalizes not only itsElf and its resultant text, but also its sources into a rhizomatically branching multitude of other texts, dispensing with the connection of primary and secondary worlds (something that, as we saw, Tolkien argued in 'On Fairy-stories' was necessary for success). It is another argument for the Bilbo frame that it preserves (and even deepens) the radical fictionality of the fiction, not only by holding metatextuality up to attention, but by placing philology, myse-en-abyme-like, into the fiction. The only connection (as in *The Lord of the Rings*) thus remains Tolkien's own tongue-in-cheek translator/editor persona.

The *Silmarillion* material and its presentation was, for Tolkien, clearly moving from the simple transmission model towards a rather chaotic one. Mirroring his production of more and more versions, more and more summaries and expansions, more and more translations, it is the unprecedented expansion of the fictional world (in space, but more importantly in time) that he needed for effectively contextualizing *The Lord of the Rings* (which itsElf, as Brian Rosebury argued, gains some of its effect from the hugely expansive nature of the narrative).[171] The more traditions, more cultures, more diversity of sources and authors, textual transformations and interpretive choices it can imply and fictionalize, the better it functions. The full philological and theoretical potential of *The Silmarillion* text is enabled only inside the Bilbo frame (as opposed to any other frames Tolkien toyed with in his life),

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[171] Rosebury, *Cultural Phenomenon*, 12-13 and 56. Rosebury calls attention to the "diversity and multiplicity of discourses, each of which has its place in a complex cultural-historical macrocosm" (23), pointing to the same effect in *The Lord of the Rings* that I am arguing drives *The Silmarillion*, although in a slightly different sense.

with Bilbo's role. It is the very haziness, imprecision of this frame that is the strongest argument for it.

Assigning the whole of this enormous and infinitely meaningful task to none other than a hobbit, showing the highest and most sublime of his mythology through the eye (and the interpretive choices) of Bilbo is an eminently meaningful choice for Tolkien. As Flieger persuasively argued, Bilbo is written into a succession of "Elf-friend" figures in Tolkien's work (along with Frodo and the original Ælfwine, whose very name means 'Elf-friend' in Old English), always associated with cultural transmission, intermediary functions, an insight that few have in Middle-earth.[172] He is no simple hobbit, but a veritable Victorian antiquarian (among others, Shippey draws attention to the fact that hobbit society seems to be a calque on the society of Victorian England[173]): his learning is universally appreciated by everyone, but he preserves an original Hobbitish common sense and colloquiality that is nearly always shown in hobbits in contrast with other characters. Nevertheless, the major variant in the text of *The Hobbit* and its discussions in *The Lord of the Rings* tell us that Bilbo is known to have actually lied in his original book: Tolkien attributes that to the effect of the Ring, but at the same time leaves no doubts that Bilbo is an author/narrator very consciously and explicitly created unreliable. The immediate context of the production of Bilbo's manuscript is also well-fitting to such a project, and can explain a number of things while still accommodating even Tolkien's later pronouncements about the stories. Elrond's court in Rivendell is one of the last cultural centers of the Elves in Middle-earth, and it is reasonable to expect all possible Elvish (and Númenorean) sources to be available here.[174] We know, however, that the "most important copy" of the Red Book, and the only one to contain Bilbo's "Translations from the

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[172] Flieger, 'The Footsteps of Ælfwine', in Flieger and Hostetter, eds. *Tolkien's* Legendarium, 193-94.

[173] Shippey, *Road*, 101-3.

[174] The evidence in *The Lord of the Rings*, according to Kristin Thompson, "implies that at Rivendell a complete knowledge of the past survives" ('*The Hobbit* as Part of the Red Book of Westmarch,' *Mythlore* 56 (1988), 14).

Elvish", was copied in the southern kingdom of Gondor:[175] this transmission can then explain how the Mannish points of view and emphases entered (after Bilbo's own editing/translating work). As authorial roles, reader/interpreter roles too build up in successive layers. The tongue-in-cheek editor/translator (Tolkien) who is the single connection to the 'real' world can then pass over how the manuscript reached him – the same unspecified way as the *Lord of the Rings* material did, which was also in the Red Book.

Primary and secondary philology, as we see, can both readily find a place for *The Silmarillion* conceived of as Bilbo's text; and the two are in fact closely parallel. *The Silmarillion* is really contextualized in Tolkien's manuscript corpus and being an editorial text, constitutes the tip of the philological iceberg; similarly, inside Middle-earth it is also an editorial text and represents a compendium of innumerable and unspecified narrative (and consequently textual) traditions, where authorial roles are deliberately distanced from the speaker (as they are in the real world by Tolkien's editor/translator persona). By stubbornly maintaining his texts to be texts also in the fictional world, just as they are, and working out relationships between them that go beyond the (secondary) philological (like Frodo's actual *use* of the 'Silmarillion' material to pattern the narrative of which he is the fictional author), Tolkien's metafictional frame effectively closes the fiction into itsElf, thereby illustrating his own semi-theoretical tenet that successful fairy-stories need a fiction radically separate from the reader's reality.

This duplication of the texts is nowhere more important than in approaching Tolkien's formidable variant corpus, to make coherent and consistent sense of which the 1977 *Silmarillion* text is a perfect device and entry point. Its connectedness to both sides, being a theoretical middle point between fixed texts and manuscript corpus makes it central, while at the same time, being an editorial text, it both maintains a difference in philological status from

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[175] *FR*, 'Prologue', 14.

both, and functions as a perfect duplication of its counterpart in Middle-earth. *The Silmarillion* is where the meanings and texts of the whole Tolkien corpus converge, the focus where meaning 'radiating' out into the fixed texts is produced and evolves. It is to this system of concepts and meanings that I now turn by entering into secondary philology, and showing exactly what factors and aspects of *The Silmarillion* text are constructed by taking it seriously as Bilbo's compendium.

3. Aspects of *The Silmarillion*: the manuscript analogue

When one takes the leap forward and indulges Tolkien's philological sElf to take his fiction of the manuscript compilation seriously, in *The Silmarillion* one is first faced with the parallel between primary and secondary aspects. The answer to the question 'Who writes this? Whose text are we reading?' is never unambiguous. In both cases, there is an editor who does, in a sense, parallel things. In the real world, it is Christopher Tolkien selecting and editing the fragmentary Tolkien manuscripts in various stages of revision and completion. In the textual world, it is Bilbo Baggins, drawing on his knowledge of old stories and traditions, as well as sources "both living and written" in Elrond's Rivendell. Both are faced with a mass of material, from which they aim to produce a "coherent and consistent narrative"; but their editing practices are different, as is the nature of the corpus they work with. The 'Silmarillion' material is a 'continuum' of 'traditional' texts, from which the task is to produce an 'eclectic edition' (an edition "incorporating readings from two or more documents"[176]), a text as Tolkien might have wanted to publish it. Bilbo, on the other hand, follows more in the footsteps of a medieval *compilator*, selecting and editing together the material to form a book. One works essentially with modern editing principles, while Bilbo is shown to take medieval stances and medieval author roles. One has real *documents*, not only texts; the other, only a fictitious tradition.

The Silmarillion, in editing terms, is an 'eclectic' text, based on an incomplete and limited recension. The manuscripts are there, and thus give an opportunity for an examination of both internal and external evidence. But as opposed to the later editorial practice followed in *The History of Middle-earth*, where more or less 'diplomatic' editions (editions that print

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[176] G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval Textual Criticism and Modern Editing,' *Studies in Bibliography* 36 (1983), 26.

the unaltered text of one document[177]) of the individual manuscripts were needed, which necessitated the definition of exactly what state of the text is being edited 'diplomatically' (Tolkien's emendations and rewritings very often obscured the evidence as to exactly which period of the work any particular manuscript belongs to), in the 1977 text, that was precisely the problem. One can, as Christopher Tolkien proved, more or less define what the 'Later Quenta' is – one cannot for sure say what the 'final' 'Silmarillion' text is. It is possible to look at the documents and sift the internal/external evidence they present (and thus construct divisions, deduce dates, and even clarify the stemma); it is only external and circumstantial evidence that one can use in deciding what is to go into the 'eclectic' text.[178] Christopher Tolkien is in the absolute losing position of a medievalist editor who is editing/reconstructing a text that never existed. His editorial choices, however faulty in the comfortable hindsight of 21st-century scholars, might be questioned for philological, methodological, or aesthetic reasons (as they frequently are in criticism, and often rightly so); but not for theoretical ones. As we have seen previously, theoretical, critical and aesthetic reasons can be brought forward to support them.

But in the textual world, Bilbo is not setting out to reconstruct anything. He is producing a compendium, transmitting texts and works that are themselves variable (being manuscripts or oral tellings). His book is fragmented, synthetic; and unlike in primary philology, there is no chance (and no point) in tracing (or 'reconstructing') the 'original' of the texts that appear in it. The texts Bilbo is working with are just as fictional as the documents, and we have no recension at all – all we can see is, thus, an 'edition' of a particular manuscript. It is not even Bilbo's original manuscript that is supposedly being edited in *The Silmarillion*, since "the original Red Book has not been preserved".[179] It is its "most important copy", kept in the

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[177] Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval,' 24.

[178] See Noad, 'On the Construction', on particular (and eminently informed) account of what Tolkien might have wanted to include.

[179] All quotations referring to the Red Book in the paragraph come from *FR*, 'Prologue', 14.

Shire but "written in Gondor" – only this copy "contains the whole of Bilbo's 'Translations from the Elvish'." Tolkien assigned to it an exact date ("S.R. 1592 (F.A. 172)"), which places it nearly two centuries after the events of *The Lord of the Rings* (and thus from the writing of Bilbo's text). Even the copyist's name is mentioned: "Findegil, King's Writer". It is said that the "Thain's Book" (the "first copy made of the Red Book"), its exemplar, "received much annotation and many corrections" in Minas Tirith; but mostly in the *Lord of the Rings* material. Bilbo's translations "were found to be a work of great skill and learning", but are not used in the novel. Our fictional manuscript is consequently at two removes from the original; but that still does not give us any information about its sources: those are created in the fictional world exactly by the fiction of the compendium. Even if this fictional manuscript suggests or implies philological characteristics and concepts, these will be limited and more 'metaphorical' than actual. Unless we try to equate the sources with actual variants that Tolkien wrote (in some cases, as we will see, this might be possible), we have no access at all to the texts that Bilbo uses, independently of Bilbo's text.

What we are considering, therefore, is the *fictional manuscript as it stands*, taken as a whole unit where the editor's particular decisions, the rationale of compilation, the visible textual transformations and the deducible philological-historical layering are in the focus. We need to handle the texts as *texts distinctive of this particular manuscript*, these particular variants (while better versions might be found elsewhere in Middle-earth, perhaps not available to or unknown to Bilbo; just as in some cases more satisfying versions are in fact there in the corpus, they are simply not selected for inclusion in the 1977 text or are suppressed by or unknown to Christopher Tolkien). *All* the evidence is fictitious: and it is to the system of differences that this fictional text creates that I turn now.

3.1 Bilbo as author

Bilbo's figure as editor is grounded in his already established image as an antiquarian, and an 'outsider' at that. He is out of place wherever he goes: in the hobbits' land, the Shire, his oddities impress the population so much that he eventually becomes "Mad Baggins", a folktale character.[180] But in the Elvish context, in Rivendell, he is just as out of place: he is, after all, a hobbit, even if a remarkable one interested in Elvish (and other) traditions. His liminal, mediatory role is emphasized by Flieger's commentary on the term "Elf-friend", applied also to Bilbo.[181] As compiler of *The Silmarillion*, Bilbo is yet again shown as a mediator between the past and the present, the different languages, cultures and ages. Historicity and the interaction (often the permeability) of cultures are indeed two great themes of *The Silmarillion*. A short look at the various authorial roles Bilbo is assigned fictionally simply by being made the editor will signal the variety of terms and concepts this fictional compendium offers for consideration.

Most of these authorial roles were well known and relatively well theorized in the Middle Ages. St. Bonaventure wrote in the 13th century that "[t]he method of making a book is fourfold":[182] in terms of the maker's own contribution, he can be called a *scriptor*, who does not add anything of his own; a *compilator*, who does add but not of his own; a *commentator*, who adds his own but only to clarify; and finally an *auctor*, who writes his own material and uses that of others for support. Clearly distinct activities are involved in these four authorial roles. *Authority,* to look at another term, resides in the *authentic* and

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[180] *FR*, I.ii.41.

[181] "The Elf-friend – not an Elf but a friend of Elves – is neither wholly outside nor completely inside but in between" (Flieger, 'Footsteps of Ælfwine', 186). On mediator hobbits, see further, 193-95.

[182] Prologue to the commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, written 1250-52; cited from Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 94.

authoritative sources (and is passed on by them to the maker's text).[183] We can add the role of the *translator* and the *adaptor* (also meaningful categories in the Middle Ages, indeed often going together as in the case of Chaucer or Malory), since medieval *translatio* is the "turning of a prior text into something more completely itsElf, or something more than what it *literally* is"[184] – a "textual intervention"[185] rather than a simple transformation. We can, further, consider the function of the *compilator* as *editor*, as one who determines not only the *ordinatio,* the structure and ordering of the compilation[186] but its constituents and the form in which those constituent parts will appear. Compiling was, in the phrase of A.J. Minnis, "a positive and important literary activity,"[187] and it often entailed the editing of texts; in the 13th century, it rose to prominence "both as a form of writing and as a means of making material easily accessible."[188] But authors cannot only write, they can also *perform*: in the Middle Ages, it was also a common a mode of reception to listen to the author (or someone else) reciting or reading out instead of reading the written text.[189] These categories, drawn from medieval textual and literary practices, can easily be used to describe Bilbo's activities.

More and more authorial roles appear in Bilbo's character as Tolkien makes him progressively more involved with text production, and as these became more differentiated, so did his relation to his own texts; and so is the status of the texts themselves. Bilbo is presented

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[183] See Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 93-7 for a more differentiated discussion of the circularity of authority: "Auctores were those known and named writers whose works had *auctoritas*, and *auctoritas* was identified as the characteristic quality of the work of an auctor" (97).

[184] Gerald L. Bruns, 'The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture,' *Comparative Literature* 32.2 (1980), 125.

[185] Bruns, 'Originality,' 122. See also Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 160-61, for an illustration of this on Chaucer's *Boece*.

[186] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 113, 145, 152-53, 155, 191-92.

[187] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 113.

[188] M.B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,' in J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson, eds., *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 127.

[189] On the romances and orality, see Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Orality and Performance in Early French Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999) and Dennis H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature, 800-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Amodio's *Writing the Oral Tradition* also stresses the importance of performance while pointing out remnants of oral/performative poetics in medieval English literature. Glending Olson's *Literature as Recreation in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1982), 77-90 shows that listening to literature was considered to be beneficent in medieval theories about human health. Chaucer gives us a very clear differentiation between oral tellings of a story (like what the Canterbury pilgrims do) and authoring a written work, based on sources.

as an *original author*: this role is constantly kept in the foreground by the persistent references to "his book" (equated with *The Hobbit*).[190] The *activity* of writing the book (Bilbo says he is "getting on with" it or "writing an ending for" it[191]) and aspects of this creative activity are also thematized: Bilbo is seen "writing up" notes and in a room "littered with papers and pens and pencils"[192] and subscribes to the principle that "books ought to have good endings."[193] This more or less fits into Bonaventure's *auctor* category: Bilbo is primarily writing his own material,[194] and is, as Bowman observes, very conscious, "almost obsessive" about it (particularly about completing it).[195] At the same time his writing from other people's accounts is different from his 'recorder function', and points on to his *compilator* role. Bilbo also reads aloud "passages from his book… or scraps of his verses",[196] highlighting the distinction of prose and poetry, and in Rivendell we see him recite a poem about a character in *The Silmarillion*, Eärendil (Elrond's father).[197] By preferring poetry later in life,[198] Bilbo clearly distinguishes between the activities that produce these two kinds of texts. The great variety in terms of function, use and social context, and originality (which will lead on to Bilbo's *adaptator* role) shape his poetic work as a sphere apart.

But most importantly, Bilbo is the *compilator* of *The Silmarillion*. Bonaventure's definition and other 13th century conceptions about the compiler's being responsible for the *ordinatio*, the structure of the work[199] resonate well here: Bilbo is seen incorporating different

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[190] *FR*, 'Prologue', 1, 12-13, I.i.39, I.v.102-3.

[191] *FR*, II.ii.263.

[192] *FR*, II.ii.243 and *RK*, VI.vi.963 (respectively). See also *RK*, VI.vi.964, 966. Bilbo apparently works only from 'eyewitness accounts' (*FR*, II.iii.274, *TT*, III.iii.448, *RK*, VI.iv.935), and considers this not as 'creative writing' but as a sort of historiography (Gandalf says to him his function is now only that of the 'recorder,' *FR*, II.ii.263), an attitude reminiscent of that of ancient and medieval historians, like Herodotus or Bede.

[193] This he seems to regard as a veritable 'axiom of composition': *FR*, II.iii.266.

[194] Methodologically, though, Bilbo's compositional models have connections towards historiography rather than theology, with which Bonaventure is involved.

[195] Bowman, 'The Story Was Already Written', 274.

[196] *FR*, II.iii.270.

[197] *FR*, II.i.227-30.

[198] *RK*, VI.vi.966. He did show some preference for it earlier on too: Elrond at the Council asks him as a matter of fact that if he "had not yet cast [his] story into verse, [he] could tell it in plain words" (*FR*, II.ii.242), suggesting that this is something possible and indeed probable.

[199] See Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 145, 152-55, 191-92.

texts in different styles and by different authors.[200] According to Murray J. Evans, in the 13th century, "[t]he essence of the role of the compilator was the freedom to rearrange,"[201] and Gray points out how Bilbo's role is quite similar to the medieval author compiling "much older pre-Christian oral sources – as in the case of *Beowulf*".[202] Bilbo almost certainly adds his own commentary as well and incorporates alternative/interpretive traditions, so the *commentator* role is to some extent also differentiated from the *compilator*. Juxtaposing different authorities on certain subjects was an attested medieval practice,[203] and *commentator*s are clearly present in Tolkien: "commentaries," "annotations," "corrections," and scribal functions[204] also appear.

Bilbo's activity as a *translator* is closely connected: the *Silmarillion* material is his "Translations from the Elvish."[205] Aragorn reflects on this role, hearing the fragment from the 'Fall of Gil-galad'[206] at Weathertop; but in the *Silmarillion* context, Bilbo's *compilator* role is thus modulated into a translator/editor position also familiar from medieval authors like Chaucer or Malory. The editor role functions, as it were, under the *compilator*'s sphere, carried out *in* the text and not conceived of only in terms of the whole compilation. Bilbo is thus also seen translating a number of different layers in the texts, different styles and modes of writing; if we keep in mind the parallel with Malory, this aspect links him to the *adaptator* function too.[207]

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[200] Cf. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 200 on the diversity of *materiae* in the major medieval compilations, and Sylvia Huot, 'The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance', in Roberta L. Krueger, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000), 63-68 on patterns of compilation in romance manuscripts.

[201] Murray J. Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance. Manuscript Layout, Decoration, and the Rhetoric of Composite Structure* (Montreal and Kingston–London–Buffalo: McGill-Queen's UP, 1995), 3.

[202] Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth*, 66.

[203] Even pagans and Christians were juxtaposed, which derived from the assignment of authority to pagans on matters which involved only human rationality and not revelation. See Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 166.

[204] *FR*, 'Prologue', 14.

[205] *FR*, 'Prologue', 14, *RK*, VI.vi.964.

[206] *FR*, I.xi.181-82. The three stanzas that Sam declaims constitute a fragment because the full text is never encountered, not even in *The Silmarillion*, and no mention is ever made of the *Fall of Gil-galad* text.

[207] Brljak allows that Bilbo be the "unknown literalizer" in *The Silmarillion* material; but adds that "even if *The Silmarillion* was presented as an exact translation of Bilbo's *Translations*, it would still be a translation of a

Bilbo adapts different texts to his own uses elsewhere in Tolkien, most notably in *The Lord of the Rings*. His songs and poems are frequently only new words for "tune[s] that [were] as old as the hills."[208] A poetic tradition is implied that finds continuity in Bilbo's work, and indeed Shippey emphasizes the timeless quality that this possibility of constant 'makeovers' imparts: Shire poetry "seems continuously variable,"[209] to be adapted to the immediate situation. Perhaps more importantly, this continuity with implied, fictitious poetic traditions is also seen in *The Silmarillion*, where we have curious primary and secondary evidence Bilbo might also adapt poetry to prose, or at least incorporate texts that are such adaptations. He is also seen to perform his verses, moving between different media and production/reception frameworks. His songs are by definition orally used, but in some cases (like the Eärendil poem) the complex form surely implies a written model.[210] Oral and written articulations of authorship are at issue here, and a different cultural/functional contextualization of the product; and this surely amounts to a differentiation of author roles involved.

These diversified author roles suggest more than roughly medieval modes of text and meaning production in Middle-earth; they show Bilbo at the traditional stages of editorial practice, quite parallel with Christopher Tolkien's efforts as real editor.[211] The *collection/selection* of the material, determining the relationship between the individual

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translation, at least once removed from the original" (Brljak, 'The Book of Lost Tales', 28, n.16). But the provenance given in the 'Note on the Shire Records' states that Findegil's copy was "an exact copy in all details of the Thain's Book in Minas Tirith", which in turn was "the first copy made of the Red Book" (*FR*, 'Prologue', 14), and thus the unknown literalizer would have to be either Findegil (who explicitly claims to be only a *scriptor*), or the hobbit copyist in the Shire, whom we thus have to suppose to be more literary-minded than Bilbo himself.

[208] *FR*, I.iii.76.

[209] Shippey, *Author of the Century,* 188. See also 189, 190-91, 195, 221.

[210] Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil,* 'Preface', 192 (in *The Tolkien Reader* (no ed., New York: Ballantine, 1966)), where the editor asserts that "probably […] Bilbo invented its metrical devices and was proud of them." Flieger discusses this pseudo-philological preface in *Interrupted Music*, 80-83.

[211] For a concise survey of these, see L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (3rd ed., Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 207-41 and Martin L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique applicable to Greek and Latin texts* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973), 47-70. For a more recent survey of editorial practices and a reflection on them, see Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval,' 26-30. Cerquiglini's critical survey of the models of textual criticism can be found in *In Praise of the Variant*, 48-70.

manuscripts (*recensio*) comes first.[212] This is a pre-requirement of Christopher Tolkien's work in the *History of Middle-earth* volumes (which he sometimes describes in the commentary and always clarifies before any presented text); Bilbo is similarly shown collecting his material in Rivendell, making notes, drawing on sources "both living and written". This differentiates his activities further, since oral versions need to be transcribed, in which case the original (as told) vs. imposed (the transcriber's) formats also need to be considered. Then "the transmitted text must be examined and the critic must decide whether it is authentic or not"[213] (the stage of *examinatio*). *Emendatio*, the restoration of a text not in any of the manuscripts but discoverable from the variants and reconstructible by editorial techniques follows.[214] Here Christopher Tolkien's editorial practice is motivated by reconstructing his father's 'latest intention', and the concerns that govern Bilbo's practice are created by these decisions: his following one source, addition of alternative interpretations, digressions, commentary all point to aspects of his (or the manuscript's) purpose or to fictional audiences. Finally the *presentation* of the work[215] brings us back full circle. The 1977 *Silmarillion* text functions as a "coherent and consistent" account, contextualized in the manuscript corpus (philologically) but itsElf functioning as a context for the fixed texts (critically). In the textual world, it is "a compilation, a compendious narrative, made long afterwards [the events] from sources of great diversity (poems, and annals, and oral tales)" (viii): it serves to represent and construct that variety, differentiates and creates more complex spaces than a unified text of one undifferentiated author or authorial persona. By conceiving of the compilation as the locus of historically emerging and changing meanings, here Tolkien

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[212] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 207-8; West, *Textual Criticism*, 29-47 (although West simply calls this "organizing the data" (29)), Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval,' 26-28.

[213] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 208; see also West, *Textual Criticism*, 29-47 (West calls this stage "Diagnosis", 47). Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval,' 26 (n.7) argues that this activity belongs to the next stage. This is perhaps not as applicable to Christopher Tolkien's work as the others, but Bilbo must (as we will see) certainly consider matters of authenticity (even if not strictly textual).

[214] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 208; see also West, *Textual Criticism*, 53-9.

[215] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 237-38, and West, *Textual Criticism*, 72-102 (dealing in detail with such matters, now heavily dated, as instructions for printers).

builds up a remarkably refined notion of the text and tradition as written. The fragmentation of the unified author figure shows that *The Silmarillion* is not a 'faulty novel' but something very different, where the interpretive paradigms in terms of authorship, carried over from *The Lord of the Rings,* open up layers of meaning that again show the text as meaningful basically in philological terms.

3.2 The layering of the *Silmarillion* text

The 'text' of Bilbo's fictitious compilation and 'the text' of the 1977 *Silmarillion* comprises more than one 'text'. As described above, *The Silmarillion* is made up of five well-distinguishable textual units, 'Ai', 'Vq', the eponymous 'QS', 'Ak', and 'RP'. Further, there are paratexts, but unlike in *The Lord of the Rings*, these are not conceived of as metatextual: Christopher Tolkien added the 'Genealogies', the 'Note on Pronunciation', the 'Index of Names' (which, surprisingly, contains information not found elsewhere in the book), and 'Elements of Quenya and Sindarin Names' (a short list of the most frequent Elvish elements in names, and the only one marked as an 'Appendix').

In a secondary philological examination of the text, Bilbo's book can be called a compendium, a manuscript containing different but related texts, although with a recognizable organizing principle. That principle is to collect texts that trace the history of the invented world of Middle-earth chronologically, from its beginning in the creation to the end of the Third Age, the ending of *The Lord of the Rings*. These texts evidently recount a well-known and well-defined line of narrative; but they are still different texts, by separate authors, in some cases themselves drawing on various other sources and treating a multitude of minor subject matters not always seamlessly integrated into the narrative thrust. They show differing linguistic characteristics, distinct literary styles. As in many real compendia, the distinction

between the constituent texts and the principle of inclusion, even of ordering (the *ordinatio*) is clear, and the contents present themselves for both individual attention and consideration as a whole. Tolkien models the function of compendia in "preserv[ing], even if at second-hand or in fragmentary form, a very considerable amount of literature and learning that would otherwise have perished"[216] – as Reynolds and Wilson put the advantage of late antique compilations.

It should then be possible to look at these texts more or less with the eye of the textual critic, the secondary philologist, and separate their layers on the basis of these (and more) characteristics. In actual medieval or classical manuscripts some of these layers and constituent elements (like poetic passages adapted to prose) would enable the critic to reconstruct lost texts or passages, establish contexts, date and localize the manuscript. In relation to the real variants in the Tolkien corpus, they sometimes indeed function like that. But in the textual world these layers are used to create further fictional texts (sources or in any case, conventions), cultural or historical contexts and processes: the whole fictional culture. Bilbo's manuscript, even at the first approximation, illustrates perfectly the division between philological 'reconstruction' and creative 'invention'.

3.2.1 Texts and styles

In his essay 'The Literary Value of *The History of Middle-earth*', David Bratman surveys the materials collected in this twelve-volume series with an eye to their readability.[217] Part of his evaluation is to distinguish Tolkien's three basic prose styles: the Annalistic, the Antique, and the Appendical style.[218] To these is added poetry as another distinct mode of writing.[219] As

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[216] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 33.
[217] David Bratman, 'The Literary Value of *The History of Middle-earth*', in Flieger and Hostetter, eds., *Tolkien's Legendarium*, 69-91.
[218] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 72, 73, 74.
[219] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 78.

can be anticipated, the 1977 text shows a great stylistic variation, even within its separate textual units (and their subunits, within the individual chapters of 'QS'): the styles are not always sharply separated (on a one text/unit – one style basis, as often in the individual versions in the manuscript corpus); but at the same time, stylistic differences come out much more sharply (when a decidedly poetic passage is inserted into the otherwise unadorned Annalistic prose). This is perhaps the most visible characteristic of the *Silmarillion* text, quite evident even to the reader not specifically interested in these details. Kane's primary Tolkien philology shows the origin of the passages; but what does this stylistic variation say about the secondary layers of the text?[220]

First and foremost, it tells us that the fictitious editor does not (always) 'normalize' or 'even out' the style of his compilation. In the textual world, the stylistic variety only underscores the difference of *The Silmarillion* and the fixed texts, but it also focuses attention on the different authorial role: here Bilbo is not an *auctor*, but a *compilator*, a *translator*. Both textually and thematically, there are indications that he freely adds, interpolates, summarizes, rephrases and condenses: in other words, he changes the text of his sources. This is not at all unknown or even surprising in a medieval context. Sir Thomas Malory constructed his *Morte Darthur* in a very similar way, and is still conceived of as the *author* of the *Morte* by modern editors, even if William Caxton, his publisher, only refers to him as the person who "reduced"

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[220] Tolkien's prose style has come under some academic investigation recently: Michael D.C. Drout had called for such studies in a summary review of Tolkien scholarship (Drout and Hilary Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien. Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982', *Envoi* 9.2 (2000), 123-24), and himself has been in the forefront of stylistic work (see his 'Tolkien's Prose Style and Its Literary and Rhetorical Effects', *Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004): 137-62). Brian Rosebury's *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (and its precursor, *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment* in 1992) already devoted some effort to style, and Tom Shippey's *Road* also makes points about Tolkien's style (*Road*, 117-22, for example, links the different styles of the speakers in *FR*, II.ii, 'The Council of Elrond', with the different cultures these speakers represent, a point directly relevant here). Most recently Robin Anne Reid's 'Mythology and History: A Stylistic Analysis of *The Lord of the Rings*' (*Style* 93.4 (2009): 517-38) examined Tolkien's style, with the tools of M.A.K. Halliday's terminology of "theme/subject/process" (see 521), and Steve Walker's book *The Power of Tolkien's Prose: Middle-earth's Magical Style* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) provided a book-length treatment; but such studies nearly always focus on *The Lord of the Rings*, and nearly never on *The Silmarillion*.

the matter from the French.[221] Malory sometimes preserves the stylistic differences of his sources in a similar way, but generally produces a stylistically much more unified and coherent work than the fictional editor of *The Silmarillion*. Stylistic difference is also how some interpolations stick out from the text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[222] Sharply different styles might also imply different sources with different authors, or different conventions for the stylistic handling of certain types of material. By these, Tolkien manages to inscribe this variety into the world of Middle-earth, successfully creating authors, sources, traditions and conventions, and a number of textual activities.

3.2.1.1 Authors: prose

Different styles in a compendium might be traces of different authors (of the sources), and the *Silmarillion* text often reinforces this conclusion. The natural assumption is that separate textual units with distinguishably different styles are originally by separate authors. The first two units, 'Ai' and 'Vq' seem to validate this. 'Ai' illustrates Bratman's point about the Antique style that here Tolkien "perhaps intended to add overlays of the King James Bible and Charles Williams", and 'Vq', restricted to a ceremonious though somewhat dry and factual description, is a good example of the Annalistic style, "plain and unelaborated… overly abbreviated".[223] Both are unified stylistically, but are clearly different from each other. In the Index (but not in the text) 'Ai' is assigned an author, the Elf-sage Rúmil (314, the entry for 'Ainulindalë', and 347, the entry for Rúmil); 'Vq' simply claims to be based on the "lore of the Eldar [Elves]" (25): its systematic description and frequent references to the Elvish "lore" grounding suggest that it might itsElf be a compilation or summary. (Bratman remarks that the Annalistic style often "give[s] the impression (correctly) of being twice-told, abridged

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[221] Sir Thomas Malory, *Works* (2nd, one-volume ed., ed. by Eugène Vinaver, Oxford–New York: Oxford UP, 1971), xv ('Caxton's Preface').
[222] Greenfield and Calder, *New Critical History*, 60.
[223] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 73, 72 (respectively).

from a larger work.")[224] Bilbo translates Rúmil's 'Ai', the actual work of a named *auctor*, and thus performs a transformation of a text from one language to another. Either he or an earlier redactor synthesizes Elvish "lore" into 'Vq', which (or the material he puts into it) Bilbo also translates: his translator function is now possibly coupled with that of the *compilator* (if he synthesizes the "lore"), or is just a further layer on top of the work of previous, unknown *compilator*(s), ultimately going back to (some sort of) sources. Not only Bilbo, but Rúmil and the unknown *compilator*s are assigned authorial roles, a philological history (and provenance) is created for these units, and two types of textual activity (translation and compiling) are distinguished, along with the differences in the status of sources (text vs. "lore").

There are parts in the long main text in *The Silmarillion*, 'QS' (which Noad says carries the "major textual burden"[225]) where the movements of style could also indicate the presence of other sources, and therefore of other authors. In ch.I, 'Of the Beginning of Days' (due to its mythological material, itsElf in an elevated, high style, closer to the Antique than the Annalistic), two sections stand out stylistically (and also thematically: style is often coupled with other considerations in establishing interpolation and different authorship). One of them (39-41, paragraphs 15-20) imports into the narrative of the early days of Middle-earth a relatively long descriptive section about some of the angelic/demiurgic powers, the Valar, and their later relations to the Elves. This, like 'Vq', gathers together thematically related information about the Valar, and it shifts clearly into the Annalistic style, its descriptive passages set against the narrative of the rest of the chapter. Since it also repeats some material in 'Vq', as the relation of one of the Valar, Aulë, to the thematically most important Elvish subgroup, the Noldor (27, 39), it would be appropriate to call it the 'Vq Supplement', perhaps an editor's interpolation into 'QS'. The primary philological background shows that this is indeed the case: most of it is taken from the D version of 'Ainulindalë', while the rest of the

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[224] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 72.
[225] Noad, 'On the Construction', 32.

chapter draws on the 'Later Quenta' and the 'Annals of Aman' (two later reworkings of the narrative).[226] Similarly, the other such 'stylistically marked' part (41-42, paragraphs 21-24) continues to use the Antique style of 'Ai' (for which reason I will call it the 'Ai Supplement'). This is a fascinating insight into the thoughts of Tolkien's creator, Ilúvatar, and cannot possibly have any real authority, since all those angelic beings, the Valar, who mediate the creator's deeds and words, have already entered the physical world. Again, Kane's primary comparison of the sources reveals that this too is taken from 'Ainulindalë' D.[227]

Primary philology thus supports that the two sections in 'QS' ch.I. are indeed distinct from the surrounding narrative, and can be connected to the previous two textual units ('Ai' and 'Vq'). The case of the 'Ai Supplement' is maybe clearer, since we see that is derived from an 'Ai' manuscript. 'Vq', however, itsElf broke off from 'QS', and went from being its first, descriptive chapter 'Of the Valar' to being a separate text.[228] The 'Vq Supplement', interpolated from the same 'Ai' manuscript, is not as unambiguous; but its difference from the 'QS' text can still be shown on both levels, implying editorial action. Either Bilbo interpolates these two passages into his 'QS' translation, or the source he is working from already had (in the fiction, not necessarily from an earlier 'Ai', though). In both cases, the focus is on editorial action, but possibly two other *auctor*s (and maybe a much longer provenance) are created by the interpolated passages. A different textual activity, interpolation, appears here: smaller texts are inserted into a subunit of a larger textual unit, where both their appearance at all and their placement are specific markers of someone's interpretive activity.

One general stylistic conclusion is that the textual units of *The Silmarillion* other than 'QS' are fairly unified stylistically. 'Ai', 'Ak' and 'RP' certainly read fluently and without major breaks; 'Vq' (with its Annalistic style) suggests compilation work, but then it is a primarily informative, synthetic text, and not concerned even with narrative (even less

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[226] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, Table 3, 50-51.
[227] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, Table 3, 51.
[228] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 40.

'literary style'). 'QS', however, is uneven, and that implies that style is a factor most invested with meaning in this unit. Since 'QS' recounts the main narrative of the book, and is by far the longest of the five units, it is very appropriate that it should be the site of the most differentiation in the fictitious culture – and that it should have the most sources. Interestingly enough, *The Silmarillion* practically never associates a named author (or a titled source) with any individual style. The case of 'Ai' might be unique, since that is linked with Rúmil (but only in the Index, which is not part of Bilbo's fictitious compilation) and is also mentioned by title once (74; only thematically, however), while it undoubtedly represents a very specific style (Bratman calls 'Ai' "the most profound and moving prose Tolkien ever wrote"[229]). Other named authors or titled sources (presumably all poetic) are generally used to refer to content ("as it is told/said in…"): the *Aldudénië* by Elemmírë (76), the *Noldolantë* of Maglor (87), and the unattributed titles, *Narsilion* (99), the *Fall of Gondolin* (242) or the *Lay of Eärendil* (246, 259) are only linked with subject matter. The exceptions are the *Lay of Leithian* (162, 165, 168, 171, 172, 186), since that is even quoted directly, embedding stretches of the 'original poetic text' into the prose (171, 178); and the *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, ascribed to a poet named Dírhavel (but again only in the Index: 342-43), where the prose frequently reads as if it was adapted from poetry. Stylistic differences thus create authors only in very specific cases; what they do help construct is an ambiguous provenance with uncertain authorial roles at its stages, and those characteristic textual activities (translation, compilation, interpolation) that do different things with texts.

3.2.1.2 Authors: poems

Often when the reader has the feeling the *Silmarillion* prose reads as if it was adapted from poetry, primary philology reinforces the implication. The poetic passage inserted into ch.XIX,

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[229] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 74.

'Of Beren and Lúthien' (where the editor claims the *Lay of Leithian* as his source (171), but adds that "here the tale is told in fewer words and without song" (162)) indeed comes from Tolkien's verse handling of the story (Canto VII, lines 2173-2205 of the text indeed entitled the *Lay of Leithian*).[230] There is another poetic quote, attributed to one of the main characters, Beren, but evidently also part of the source (a fragment from Beren's 'Song of Parting', 178): this passage also comes from Tolkien's poem (Canto XI, lines 3322-3333).[231] The chapter, however, specifically signals at the beginning that the story is rewritten in prose, and later an inserted quotation reinforces this effect. A good number of phrases and sentences in this chapter also give the impression that they are poetry adapted to prose, thereby giving this important chapter a faintly poetic style, clearly consistent with the prose summary of a poetic text. Another textual transformation appears here: the rewriting of a poetic text in prose, and either Bilbo is assigned the role of the *adaptor*, or another indefinite provenance is constructed with an *auctor* (of the *Lay*), an *adaptor* (of the *Lay* into prose) and a translator (Bilbo), with an uncertain number of intermediate stages. The hobbits did hear "told in full the lay of Beren and Lúthien and the winning of the Great Jewel" in Elrond's house,[232] so at least an oral version of the full poetic work must have been available to Bilbo (this implies another possible transformation, transcription from an oral performance). At least one of the titled sources of 'QS' becomes philologically meaningful in a number of ways.

There are no poetic quotations in ch.XXI, 'Of Túrin Turambar', but style is differentiated with a great number of decidedly poetic phrases and sentences. These often show a characteristic rhythm and frequently, alliterating patterns. A few examples will illustrate the point: after accidentally killing his best friend, the hero "stood stonestill and silent, staring on that dreadful death, knowing what he had done" (208), and he is

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[230] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, Table 19, 176-77, but cf. 178: this passage was indeed inserted by the editors. The poem is published in Tolkien, *Lays of Beleriand*, 276.
[231] Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 178, and Tolkien, *Lays of Beleriand*, 330. Unlike the other, this was in the source.
[232] *FR*, II.iii.270.

consequently so shocked that even later he "walked as one without wish or purpose" (209). Although Kane's study does not elaborate this, in these specific instances (and in many more) the prose texts which Christopher Tolkien used in putting together this admittedly most complicated chapter of 'QS' incorporate reminiscences from Tolkien's own poetic handling of the story. This he wrote in alliterative verse, hence the rhythm and the alliterations. A clear source for both the above examples can be found in the poem: "stone-faced he stood standing frozen / on that dreadful death   his deed knowing" (lines 1273-74), and "wandered without wish or purpose" (line 1422).[233] While thus even primary philology confirms the poetic origin of the fragments, the fictitious editor also offers an explanation: the material is taken from a lay entitled "*Narn i Hîn Húrin*, the Tale of the Children of Húrin", although here again it is "told in brief" (198-99). The Index entry for this title asserts the poem is "ascribed to the poet Dírhavel" (342). Thus, as in the case of the *Lay of Leithian*, we have a distinct poetic style (distinct from the *Leithian* because it is always heavily alliterative, whereas *Leithian* is in rhyming couplets), associated with a titled source work and the claim of rewriting; but the poetic fragments mark out the style and therefore its author (named only in the Index). Original *auctor*s, editorial action, and/or a redaction history are created, with the same textual activities that we saw in *Leithian*. Unless we would like to equate Tolkien's poems with the poetic compositions in the textual world that are referred to,[234] it is clearly not the point to work out accurate philological relations between such identifiable source texts as can be found; neither is it to postulate as many fictional lost sources as we can. It is rather to see what kind of details the philologically approachable variety of the *Silmarillion* text produces, and how those details operate further in the philological fiction of the compilation. The details

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[233] Tolkien, *Lays of Beleriand,* 53 and 68 (respectively). The image of Túrin turning as if to stone goes back to the earlier, summary prose tradition: 'Sketch', 12 ("he is turned to stone"), 'Quenta Noldorinwa' §12 ("he is turned as to stone"). Both these texts were made available in *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. As is the general practice in referring to texts in the *History* volumes, wherever there is an internal division in the text (line, paragraph or chapter numbers), I will key my references to those; in their absence, I will use page numbers.
[234] See my 'Great Chain', 246, for a demonstration why this is often not possible.

of authors and styles, and the corresponding textual relations draw guidelines of (literary) history from the fictitious First Age of Middle-earth to Bilbo; guidelines that, in addition to pointing at origins, also highlight the role of transmission.

3.2.1.3 Transmission: interpolation vs. compilation

Transmission that is at once certain (since it certainly happened) and uncertain (since these details tell us nothing about its stages and methods) is clearly one of the most important themes of *The Silmarillion*. Further textual activities are made possible through this: the creation of *editor/compilator* roles along the line (as we have seen in 'Vq') construct further varieties of manipulation. Titled sources are only cited for narrative matter and are practically never associated clearly with style: they might have been adapted (like *Leithian* and *Narn*) by earlier editors, and only these prose redactions might have been available as sources; it is also possible only a few particular details came from them and the reference is triggered by the subject matter. This can easily lead to pointless (if interesting) speculation, but the points it raises have a function: to highlight the way different author roles and their textual activities along the line of the fictitious transmission construct an unquestionable history through ages and cultures (and with it, aspects of those ages and cultures) that the narrative cannot construct.

Differences in style also signal the compilation of passages and sections to form larger units, chapters. In the 'Ai' and 'Vq Supplements', we saw how sections clearly connected to other units and source texts become attached to the end of a 'QS' chapter. In this case, the editor is seen to complement the 'QS' narrative from other sources. In the real world, Christopher Tolkien complemented it from the 'Ainulindalë' D manuscript; in the fictional world, either Bilbo's editorial function is shown (in his supplementing the main text) or (an)other editor(s) is (are) constructed down the transmission line. Such interpolation into

individual chapters is one thing: other chapters, however, are clearly editorial collages in their entirety. Ch.V ('Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalie'), ch.X ('Of the Sindar'), ch.XIV ('Of Beleriand and Its Realms') are descriptive 'survey of background' chapters inserted into the main narrative – in terms of the whole 'QS', interpolations, but in themselves, showing the same systematic treatment and textual markers as 'Vq' (put together from Elvish "lore"). As Kane's work shows, these were indeed put together from more than one source, usually a *Quenta* version and an *Annals* text, often supplemented by shorter interpolations from other works. 'Of the Sindar' and 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms' even have short introductions and closures, clearly marking the systematic nature (91, 97, 118), and 'Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië' also inserts an introduction before its systematic listing of the members of the Noldorin dynasty (60). Description and systematic lists (most prominently in 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms') shift into the Annalistic style, so that their method of treatment and style function as markers of their differentiation. The fictitious editor here pastes together thematically different parts from (presumably) different sources (perhaps some other non-narrative "lore"): these chapters, while usually halting the narrative, always contribute to the setting of the scene for the next stage of the story, and to the expansion of the fictional world. Various maps of Middle-earth (geographical, political, linguistic, ethnographic, etc.) are laid on top of each other, creating a vast and many-layered backcloth for the narrative. The difference of style (together with that of theme) and therefore of composition is often also signaled by the editor with cross-references bridging the narrative gaps ("Now as has been told" (in reference to earlier matter), 91, 94, 95, etc.) or announcements of the difference ("may here be told", 60, "Here must be told" 61), which thus call attention to their specific textual status. Occasionally, as in 'Of the Sindar', we again see passages with a definitely poetic style, which (even though here no primary Tolkien poem stands behind them) widen

the stylistic variety even more (95).[235] Such chapters thematize further the *compilator* function and the conception of the whole 'QS': from various perspectives, interpolations (into a continuous stretch of text) and compilation (of various texts into new units and *ordinatio*s) are different textual activities, and highlight the status of the text as well as the authorial roles and activities that create them. Bilbo's compilation and the styles varying in it therefore open up not only as text and the site of meaning, but as a text specifically related to other texts and the site of a historical negotiation between meanings.

3.2.1.4 Transmission: internal vs. external

Stylistic variation in any given text might indicate a different author; it might also not. It is not only imaginable but well-attested in medieval scholarship that parts of the same text (written by the same author, or adapted/summarized by the same redactor) exhibit striking stylistic differences. Such *internal* variation of the style can be the author's own embellishment (as in some places in Layamon, for example[236]), but can also derive from his preservation of the style of the original, in some places more than in others. This can, then, be equally supposed of earlier redactors and authors too: in the actual dynamic of the narrative, style is more likely to become an important aspect for both authors and redactors. In important and climactic scenes, dealing with memorable or especially noted events and characters, authors might be more likely to employ a different style, while redactors might be expected to interfere less with it. That is to say, the changes of style might themselves originate at earlier points of the chain of textual transformations (either *auctor*s or redactors), and thus be *internal* variation, not *external*, inflicted by the editor. Who and at what point is

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[235] On these specific poetic fragments, see my 'The Adapted Text: The Lost Poetry of Beleriand', *Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004), 34-5.

[236] On Layamon's (stylistic) elaborations, see R.S. Loomis, 'Layamon's *Brut*,' in R.S. Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), 105-7.

responsible for a textual activity is important, because it places a meaningful action at different depth in the text's fictitious history.

Many of the passages that stand out from the stylistic register do so by virtue of their rhetorics, their stricter syntactic patterns.[237] This is in some cases underlined by the use of rhythm, alliteration, and rhymes. While it is possible to see poetic sources behind these too (as in *Leithian* and *Narn*, above), it is not necessarily poetry that is invoked here, rather a specifically different style, which can have associations within *The Silmarillion* itsElf – to the 'mythological' material (the Antique style of 'Ai'); or wider cultural implications too (these devices are connected to the cultural context of orality, as mnemotechnical elements of the discourse). Some examples will show how these passages are 'marked' stylistically.[238]

1.   **and** they built lands **and** <u>Melkor destroyed them</u>;
   valleys they delved **and** <u>Melkor raised them up</u>;
   mountains they carved **and** <u>Melkor threw them down</u>;
   seas they hollowed **and** <u>Melkor spilled them</u>;
5   **and** nought might have peace or come to lasting growth,
   for as surely as the Valar began a labour <u>so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it</u>. (22)

2.   Then he <u>looked upon </u>their glory and their bliss,
   and <u>envy was in his heart</u>;
   he <u>looked upon </u>the Children of Ilúvatar that sat at the feet of the Mighty,
   and <u>hatred filled him</u>;
5   he <u>looked upon </u>the wealth of bright gems,
   and <u>he lusted for them</u>;
   but he hid his thoughts, and postponed his vengeance. (65)

3.   **and** <u>they came </u>to the Enchanted Isles
   and <u>escaped their enchantment</u>;
   and <u>they came </u>into the Shadowy Seas
   and <u>passed their shadows</u>,
5   **and** <u>they looked </u>upon Tol Eressëa the Lonely Isle,
   but <u>tarried not</u>;
   and at the last they cast anchor in the Bay of Eldamar. (248)

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[237] The following pages make use of material published in my article 'Adapted Text'.

[238] In the quotations from *The Silmarillion* in this section, the changed typography of the text and all emphases are mine, which I will not be indicating separately. I introduce the lineation of the texts because it helps to show the rhetorical (occasionally poetical) structure that grounds the stylistic difference.

These passages show a conscious use of the syntactic structure of parataxis and balanced clauses – their authors were clearly good rhetoricians. They all share a repeated pattern: two clauses connected with a simple conjunctive "and" (in boldface; occasionally with "but", recalling Old English "ac", with a similar double meaning), the first and second clauses bearing a structural and thematic similarity to each other (in italics; e.g., in ex. 1: "they built lands", "valleys they delved", "mountains they carved", and "seas they hollowed", the inversion adding a further stylistic overtone to the parallel); a clever utilization of polysyndeton and parallel syntactical structures. Further devices are to be observed in other examples:

4.   and the House of Fëanor hastened before them along the coast of Elendë:
        <u>not once did they turn their eyes back </u>to Tirion on the green hill of Túna.
        ...
        but at the rear went Finarfin and Finrod, and many of the noblest and wisest of the
        Noldor;
        <u>and often they looked behind them </u>to see their fair city (85)

5.   I would not have any say that Túrin was driven forth unjustly into the wild,
        and gladly would I welcome him back;
        for I loved him well.
        ...
        I will seek Túrin until I find him,
        and I will bring him back to Menegroth, if I can;
        for I love him also. (200)

In these, parallel structures are not confined to clauses only. Ex. 4 uses antithesis in parallel structures (very appropriate for the thematic contrast); while in 5 we see tripartite parallel sentences (except for one short conditional clause), concluding on the same thematic note (and nearly the same words). The structures in exx. 1-5 are all syntactically grounded stylistic devices, making use of parallel clauses, parataxis, and repetition.

        Sometimes stylistic difference goes further, and makes use of more specifically poetic devices. The following passages will be sufficient to demonstrate them:

6.   But now upon the mountain-top dark Ungoliant lay;
        and she made a ladder of woven ropes **and c**ast it down,

        and Melkor **c**limbed up**o**n it
        and came to that high place,
5   **and s**tood be**s**ide her, looking down upon the Guarded Realm. (74)

7.   Then **F**inrod was **f**illed **w**ith **w**onder
        at the strength and **m**ajesty of **M**enegroth,
        its <u>treasuries</u> and <u>armouries</u>
        and its [many-pillared halls of stone];
5   and it came into **h**is **h**eart
        that he **w**ould build **w**ide **h**alls
        behind ever-**g**uarded **g**ates
        in some deep and secret <u>place</u>
        beneath the hills. (114)

8.   The light <u>of the</u> drawing <u>of the</u> swords <u>of the</u> Noldor
        was like a **f**ire in a **f**ield of reeds. (191)

Ex. 6 uses paratactic structures very similar to those seen in 1-3, while also occasionally taking in alliteration (boldface) and starting with a line whose rhythm definitely stands out from the context.[239] Ex. 7 makes much more of alliteration, and further introduces rhymes (underlined; both internal, as in line 3, and end-rhyme, as in lines 7-8). The whole of the passage is strongly rhythmical (the last line can be a shorter 'coda', a closure to the 'stanza'; and line 4 is in fact a verse line from one of Tolkien's other poems[240]). Finally, ex. 8 again exhibits a very interesting regularity of beat. This is partly again syntactical, since the pattern of multiple genitives determines the first line, but it goes on to the second, where the alliteration underscores the effect.

These passages all come from the 'prose Silmarillion tradition', so in Tolkien philology, they have been present in the textual history.[241] They are nearly all present in

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[239] Further examples can be seen in my 'Adapted Text', 37, n.6.

[240] Most readers know this line from Gimli's song in Moria (*FR*, II.iv.308); it originally stood in the *Lay of Leithian*, line 14, though it seems (see n. to lines 14-18, which are the lines that appear in Gimli's song: Tolkien, *Lays of Beleriand*, 193) that the "many-pillared halls of stone" ultimately derive from C. S. Lewis's commentary on the poem. See further in *Lays of Beleriand*, 375-76.

[241] See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*: for ex.1, Table 2, 35 ('Ai', MS D); ex.2, Table 7, 78 ('Later Quenta' §47 2nd phase); ex.3, Table 24, 230 ('Quenta Silmarillion' (Conc) §4); ex.4, Table 10, 104 ('Annals of Aman' §143); ex. 5, Table 21, 195 (*Narn* and related texts); ex.6, Table 9, 94 ('Annals of Aman' §108 and first sentence 'Later Quenta' §57); ex.7, Table 14, 137 ('Later Quenta' §101); ex.8, Table 20, 185 (*Narn*).

comparable form in some earlier version (except 1, for which I have found no source,[242] and 5, which emerged in the more or less independent 'Túrin tradition'[243]). They evolved sometimes suddenly,[244] sometimes by slow steps of refinement,[245] sometimes obviously by editorial action.[246] Slow shifts of structure and wording produced these texts (occasionally with the discarding of versions which would perhaps have done better[247]), and a detailed collation can reveal much about how Tolkien reformulated his sentences and worked step by step in shaping the language of his text. Much of the text had really become 'traditional', where the work with time incorporated many layers and changes, preserved or discarded according to the needs of the actual version worked on. Christopher Tolkien's editorial practice is also partly responsible for the form as they appear in *The Silmarillion*.

In the secondary history, the point is rather what position these passages occupy in the fictitious provenance. The authorial roles and associated textual activities produce different meanings depending on this position. The passages stand out from their context by their marked language use: certain narrative situations (they all mark central scenes, climaxes, or privileged points in the narrative) are coupled with these stylistic elements in the textual world. Thus, such use of the 'traditional language' of the primary 'Silmarillion' material can

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[242] Perhaps a sentence in the 'Quenta Silmarillion' §11 ("they laboured at their first tasks in the ordering of the World and Morgoth contested with them, and made war") could be considered the ultimate source; but I found no intermediate stages in the stylistic evolution.

[243] This is found word for word in the *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, published in J.R.R. Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* (ed. by Christopher Tolkien, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 85. Christopher Tolkien's later edition of the Túrin story, however, has only the first part; Beleg's reply is not cast in the answering parallel form. See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Children of Húrin* (ed. by Christopher Tolkien, London: HarperCollins, 2008), 96.

[244] Ex. 4 appeared out of the blue in the 'Quenta Silmarillion' §69 in substantially the same form. Ex. 8 also emerged in the 'Quenta Silmarillion', in chapter 16 §11: the difference is only two words which later on fell out of the text.

[245] Exx. 2, 3, 6 derive in some embryonic but recognizable form from the 1926 'Sketch of the Mythology', and made it through the 'Quenta Noldorinwa' and the 'Quenta Silmarillion' (sometimes modified between the two versions). Exx. 2 and 6 were further refined in the *Later Quenta*.

[246] Ex. 6 had always been bipartite, its first line (or its source) separated from the rest by several sentences (they were in different paragraphs in the 'Quenta Silmarillion' and the first version of the 'Later Quenta' (§§56-7)); it was in the second version of the 'Later Quenta' that the first line in this form emerged (§57), but the rest disappeared there, and was put there I assume editorially, from the 'Annals of Aman' §§107-8, where it occurs (although in slightly different form). Interpolation from the 'Annals of Aman' was a frequent editorial practice in the construction of the 1977 *Silmarillion* (for this case, see Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 96).

[247] Like the inversions in the 'Quenta Noldorinwa' version of ex. 2, line 7: "his thoughts he hid and his vengeance he postponed".

fictionalize the *internal* movements of style, assigned to the fictitious authors in the textual world; but the contrast between these and their contexts construct textual activities assigned to redactor positions in the transmission of the texts. It is, however, equally possible that these passages stand out because of a certain 'stylistic leveling', carried out by the scribes or adapters (or perhaps editors) transmitting the texts. Marked style in central scenes and climactic parts is more likely to be preserved in redaction than in cases where the redactor does not sense the importance of the scene. No amount of speculation will tell us what happened in the fictitious provenance; the text, however, has a way with style to suggest that a lot did.

None of the major styles on *The Silmarillion* is very much fitted to dialogue, and the *Silmarillion* emulates mythological/historiographical writing in handling direct speech with a certain rigidity. Depending on the unit we are looking at, characters speak generally in a way that also signals something about the overall stylistic register of the unit. Ilúvatar's speeches in 'Ai' (and the 'Ai Supplement') are clear examples of the Antique style, while the exchanges of Túrin and his fellow characters in ch.XXI of 'QS' show a looser, sometimes even colloquial style that is also moulded to the speaker (suggesting a source that has a different conception of character). Three examples will show how dialogues/exchanges are stylistically different in *The Silmarillion,* and thereby produce an oscillation that can, again, construct both internal and external positions. In ch.IX, 'Of the Flight of the Noldor', a highly rhetorical exchange is reported between the Valar and the rebellious Fëanor (78-79). Here direct speech is nearly invariably introduced by formulaic phrases like "Then Manwë spoke and said", "Then Tulkas cried", "But Aulë the Maker said", "But Fëanor spoke then, and cried bitterly" (78), "Then he cried aloud", "Then Mandos said" (79). While the actual words of the characters are not at all different in style from the narrative surrounding them (here, mostly the Antique style), these introductions make the handling of the exchange marked stylistically

and lend a high and ceremonious air to the scene as well as a gravity that the conversation itsElf requires thematically. By contrast, the seemingly polite but really rather tense conversations of the Dark Elf Eöl with Curufin (135-36) and with King Turgon (136-38) in ch.XVI, 'Of Maeglin', while still using the device of introducing the speaker beforehand ("Then Curufin said to Eöl", "And Eöl answered", 135; "Then Aredhel said", "and [Turgon] in stern voice spoke", 137; "but at the last Eöl cried out", 138), also make use of the "x said" formula, inserted after the first sentence or clause of the quoted speech (135, 136, 137, two occurrences each). This makes the dialogues much more fluent, but what is said still retains the seriousness, insulting intent or irony appropriate to the speakers and situations. The speakers also seem to have a more individual style (since this way of handling speeches is more characteristic of the post-Valinor Noldorin part of the narrative, and Maeglin's story is largely a sElf-contained episode inserted between two chapters of that narrative, the stylistic affinity can also say something about its authenticity, or position, in the compilation), although the text does not entirely dispense with decorous inversions and the vocabulary of kings and lords talking. There are, however, no "thou"s or archaizing verbal forms ("hearest", "wilt", "knowest", 78; "hast spoken", 79), no "yea or nay"; instead, lightly veiled or pure contempt and insult enter the rhetorics. In another instance, in ch.XVII, 'Of the Coming of Men into the West', Men debate how to take stances in the political situation of their new homes. Though the speeches are again nearly always introduced ("they said openly", "answered Bereg, saying", "Bereg answered", 144; "Then the Elf-friends said", "But some still answered", "But Amlach repented, saying", 145), and no trace is found of the more direct and fluid dialogue that had already been introduced, the exchange again leaves a different impression. Many of the speakers are not individuals: "they", "the Elf-friends", "some" said things, and the only speaker whose style is distinctive ironically turns out to have been impersonated by an evil power (145). The rest of the human speakers are given words not at

all different from the style of the surrounding narrative. Dialogue is used for dramatic effect, and to some extent for characterization in *The Silmarillion*, but in different units it is used thus differently; in climactic scenes, like the debate of the Valar and Fëanor, style is much more marked than in other instances, while in certain parts of the Noldor narrative direct speech is a much less formal matter. Since such variation is also closely linked to the subject matter of the given textual unit, more will be said about it later; what needs to be noted here is that the differences in style reinforce the earlier suggestions about the differentiation of the transmission aspect and the various authorial/redactorial activities in it.

Such internal oscillations in style clearly do not preclude *external* intervention, when the editor or someone else along the earlier transmission line meddles with the text, and the change of style is left as a trace of that intervention. Three distinct areas of interest are highlighted for secondary philology: original/authorial roles, transmission processes, and editorial/redactorial activity. We see indications of real *auctor* roles, and the text names some original authors well-known for their compositions (Dírhavel or the poet of the *Lay of Leithian*, who do not simply collect or arrange "lore"). Transmission processes are admittedly rather speculative, and other factors (like linguistic considerations) will specify them later: but the *adaptator* and activities appearing in the preservation of poetic styles or distinct rhetorical-stylistical ways of handling dialogues have also emerged from the examples. Finally, the layers of possible provenances and the production from them of *this particular text* place the role of the *editor* in the center, and leave clues as to how he handles the texts he is working with. As in Tolkien's beloved *Beowulf,* the original place or even shape of the stones of the tower cannot be determined, but they do make a tower in the end. These aspects can all be examined as conventions or as individual/idiosyncratic actions: Bilbo might easily work with different and rather idiosyncratic principles in adapting or translating texts than earlier Elvish or Mannish redactors did, while the poetic fragments embedded in the text

imply general lines of poetic convention rather than individual poetic practice. But the point remains that in the context of the metatextual philological fiction, the variations in style can suggest numerous things about the text, and can thus make the text mean different things.

3.2.2 Texts and structure

The 1977 *Silmarillion* is, appropriately, anything but a unified text. In the framework of Bilbo's compilation, the very non-unity of the style is alone suggestive of details that deepen the philological fiction by creating distinct and well-distinguished author roles along with a provenance which becomes a site of various textual activities, putting a history behind the fictitious compilation. Thematically, too, its wide historical focus supplies one sort of unity: Bilbo is evidently compiling the history of specific areas and socio-cultural groups of Middle-earth from creation to the end of his own Age. His work still produces not one, but several texts (the clearly separated textual units of *The Silmarillion*), and even the one carrying the "major textual burden",[248] 'QS', has an internal division into chapters. The way these textual units (both the parts of *The Silmarillion* and the chapters of 'QS') refer to themselves reflect a *textual* (as vs. thematic) unity, and the way these define their own focus, structure and theme allows further differentiations to be seen in the (secondary) compilation of the text. 'QS' is apparently itsElf a more or less traditional work in the textual world, and it is by no means Bilbo who puts it together.

The structural makeup of manuscript compilations is always of interest to philologists. Medieval works rarely survive in isolation: generally they are part of a manuscript that contains a number of more or less different other texts.[249] By what rationale texts are collected

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[248] Noad, 'On the Construction', 32.
[249] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 28. Both this well-known medieval phenomenon and the fact that Tolkien's favorite model works, among them the *Kalevala*, were themselves such compilations, could have been important factors in why he found the form appealing. The work on medieval compilations is of course very voluminous: Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance* examines manuscripts containing romance texts for

in any given codex and how larger-scale works, themselves drawing on more sources, conceptualize and define themselves, can reveal much about the texts' and the manuscript's cultural 'use' context, how the people who wrote and read them thought about these texts, and how they used them. In a medieval manuscript context, it is by no means surprising to find a romance inserted into an otherwise largely historical text (as the Anglo-Norman *Lai d'Haveloc* in Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* in MS Arundel XIV[250]); four of the seven manuscripts of the annalistic *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* have long historical narrative poems under some significant years (e.g., the 'Battle of Brunanburh' for 937[251]); and sometimes it is only a shared theme that holds together the contents of a manuscript so various as to include *Beowulf* and a sermon on St. Christopher (the famous *Beowulf* Manuscript, BL Cotton Vitellius A xv) or *Sir Orfeo* and 'The Legend of Pope Gregory' (the equally famous Auchinleck Manuscript, NLS Adv. MS 19.2.1). In addition to this, the texts' own internal divisions, sometimes marked only obliquely (by new lines or larger capitals, as in *Beowulf*), by colophons (as in the Winchester MS, the only manuscript of Malory's work), or by other graphic or textual means (miniatures, ornamental graphics, the use of rubrication or presentation script[252]) can offer insight into how the authors or compilers (or scribes) perceived the structure of the texts.

Since we do not have the *documents*, only the text of Bilbo's compilation, we cannot import all these considerations into secondary philology; but the terms and thematic content of sElf-reference, the divisions supported by this, introductory and closing remarks at such divisions, and the implied editorial actions can still lead to some conclusions about the fictional editor's activities. These are also, in Linda Hutcheon's words, the "paratextual conventions of historiography", which certain postmodern texts (which she calls

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versions, other graphic/visual clues (a material philology that is impossible for *The Silmarillion*) to gain insights into the principles and process of compilation.

[250] See Judith Weiss, *The Birth of Romance. An Anthology* (London: Dent, 1992), xxviii.

[251] See Greenfield and Calder, *New Critical History*, 61.

[252] Evans, in *Rereading Middle English Romance*, points out these aspects as graphic clues: see 19-39.

"historiographic metafictions") also utilize to "both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations".[253] All units of the *Silmarillion* text have internal divisions; and since these sometimes correspond to thematic/stylistic boundaries, their workings could also be suggestive of further details. Ultimately, structure transforms the shapeless material of the past into narratives: it "implies meaning as well as order", and constructs what is termed "a mode of 'totalizing' representation",[254] because in the act of narrating (and thereby structuring), it aims at establishing its *control* over the material, the text, and its meanings. The medieval compilation and Bilbo's text modeled on it both employ and evade this strategy: the very act of compiling such a wide-focus text is a 'totalizing' act, but its fragmented, many-sourced nature also sidesteps the question of the compiler's total control. The structure of the *Silmarillion* text indicates the workings of the fictional compiler, and therefore the attempts, failed or successful, at controlling both the content and the very textuality of the material.

3.2.2.1 SElf-reference

Of the five sub-units of the *Silmarillion* text, only three are referred to in the text by title: 'QS', 'Ai', and 'Ak'. Of the remaining two, 'Vq' is itsElf compendious: its style, its systematic treatment of the Valar, and its heading mentioning "the lore of the Eldar" (25) (a term that, as we will see, is associated with organized, written but non-narrative knowledge) and the colophon at the end of 'Of the Valar' (29) suggest careful planning and several sources of information. The 'Of the Valar' colophon points to a much later date of composition: "if little is here said of all that the Eldar *once* knew" (29, my italics) indicates a great distance in time between the writer's present and the "once" he is referring to. The other

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[253] Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 123. See also her *Politics of Postmodernism*, 82.
[254] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 62.

unmentioned text, 'RP' is problematic in the frame of Bilbo's compilation anyway, since it incorporates material that Bilbo certainly could not write: at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, we see him bequeath all his "notes and papers" to Frodo, and entrusts him with the "selection and the arrangement".[255] He does not even see the end of the Third Age, and thus cannot write it. 'RP', however, also starts with a recapitulation of Second Age history (285-6) and thus positions itsElf in relation to the other units of *The Silmarillion,* to which it refers frequently ('QS', 286; 'Ak', 290; 'QS'(?), 285). The shorter units of *The Silmarillion* are both thematically and stylistically rather unified: our main concern in structural matters should be 'QS'.

'QS' is undoubtedly a composite text even in the textual world. Going back further in the provenance beyond Kane's collation of the primary materials, one can (as shown) reach such sources as Tolkien's 1920s poetic texts, clearly embedded into the prose and descended through the prose tradition into *The Silmarillion*. 'QS', however, never refers to itsElf by its title. There are only two occurrences of the title "Quenta Silmarillion": one is in 'Vq' ("of Melian much is told in the *Quenta Silmarillion*" (31)), and another in 'RP' (where it is cited as having already told how Celebrimbor was eventually estranged from his kin (286)). In individual chapters of 'QS', some other titled sources are mentioned that seem to supply the given chapter's material and unity: 'Of Beren and Lúthien' refers to the *Lay of Leithian*, 'Of Túrin Turambar' to the *Narn i Hîn Húrin*; ch.XXIII, 'Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin' refers to 'The Fall of Gondolin', and ch.XXIV, 'Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath' mentions a *Lay of Eärendil*. While two whole chapters are based on the two poems *Leithian* and the *Narn*, and so form unified and sElf-contained structural parts, the other three titles apparently only serve as sources for a part of the given chapters, and therefore do not correspond to them on a structural basis. The *Lay of Eärendil* is then referred to again at the

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[255] *RK*, VI.vi.966, implying that these are the actions that he would perform, or perhaps had already performed, on (some of) his "Translations from the Elvish" which "he had made at various times" (*RK*, VI.vi.964).

beginning of 'Ak', as a source that tells the story of Eärendil's quest ('QS' 246-51, the first division of the Eärendil chapter in 'QS'), which itsElf includes a reference to the 'Lay'. Three more titles are also mentioned in somewhat similar ways: the *Aldudénië* of Elemmírë (76), Maglor's *Noldolantë* (87), and the unattributed *Narsilion* (99). In each case, the reader is referred to these specifically for "more" or "much" of what happened; is it not suggested that the chapters follow the poems. 'QS', thus, comes out as an unambiguously multiple and unified text that also never refers to itsElf as unambiguously unified, and implies various (textual) relations to its (titled) sources in various parts.

In 'QS' itsElf, sElf-reference most often takes a plural form. Although after 'Vq' mentioned the title, it once again refers to "that tale" (31) (which does not speak of Olórin as it does of Melian), this would only suggest that the 'Vq' author (or the editor who places the remark) thinks of 'QS' as *one tale*, one work. 'QS', however, very rarely does that, and that raises the question whether the 'QS' the 'Vq' author refers to is actually the same 'QS' we read in *The Silmarillion*. On the few occasions when 'QS' does seem to refer to itsElf, it nearly invariably uses the plural: it mentions the "histories of the Elder Days" (30), "the tales of the Elder Days" (38), "the tales of the Noldor" (63), "these tales" (103), and so on. Examples like this last one are particularly relevant, since they are the most clearly sElf-reflexive: the others could be conceived of as meaning *other* texts or works (possibly those the editor is drawing on). A mention apparently implying unity appears, however, in ch.V, 'Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië' (a composite, descriptive chapter already mentioned as an example of editorial activity): the introduction of the list of members of the Noldorin dynasty says that "this tale tells mostly of [the Noldor's] deeds" (60). The one other singular instance concerns the disappearance of Melian (whom 'Vq' connected with 'QS' as a separate work): "*this tale* speaks of her no more" (234, my italics; cf. 'Vq' 31: "that tale" not speaking about Olórin). Apparently 'QS' is difficult to present as *one* work, and this is perhaps a

problem of terminology too: "tale" in *The Silmarillion* means the same as in the title of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, "a story or narrative… to preserve the history of a fact or incident",[256] a word descended from Old English *talu*. "Tale" is a story here, not a text (although the *OED* definition also lists "a literary composition cast in narrative form"): a story, not a plot, and therefore even when it is used for the whole construction, it rather means the 'account of all the events' and not a 'plot of the whole narrative'. Whenever the singular "this tale" comes up, it always signifies the actual story being told: when a certain sword is said not to "enter into this tale" (201), for example, the term clearly means the tale (story, or even chapter) of Túrin (which had, by the way, also been called a "tale", 198-99). The only singular appearance, thus, that gives "the deeds of the Noldor" (mostly) (60) as the focus of 'QS', could be taken to be indicative; but as it is in a composite, editorial chapter, it is again uncertain whose conception of the work that is. The authorial roles and the provenance created for them could accommodate this at any point; but both if it appears in the provenance (some earlier redactor's view, transmitted through the redactions) and if it is Bilbo's impression of the material, it is strong evidence that at some (or all) points of its history, the text is taken to be largely unified and dealing with the Noldor.

Other declarations of thematic focus in 'QS' are at least nominally in agreement with this. In ch.XII, 'Of Men', it is said that "Of Men little is told in these tales, *which concern the Eldest Days before the waxing of mortals and the waning of the Elves*" (103, my italics); later, that "only a part is *here* told of the deeds of those days, *and most is said of the Noldor, and the Silmarils*, and the mortals that became entangled in their fate" (104, my italics). 'Of Men' is also an interpolated chapter where the figure of the editor (Bilbo or earlier) is prominent: these instances would support that 'QS' was conceived of as dealing with the deeds of the Elves, *especially of the Noldor*, in the First Age of Middle-earth, with special emphasis on the

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[256] This is definition 4 in the *OED*; cf. definition 5c, "a thing now existing only in story; a mere matter of history or tradition; a thing of the past".

story of the Silmarils. (In 'Of Men', this is emphasized to create a contrast and explain why no more is written about Men). This focus would certainly seem to be corroborated by the title. On the 'QS' title page (33) and the Index (346), the Elvish title is translated as "The History of the Silmarils", and the linguistic entry in the Appendix derives the word *quenta* from the root *quen- (quet-)*, "say, speak" (363). Perhaps 'The Account/Tale of the Silmarils' might be a closer translation. The 'QS' text refers to itsElf in terms of plural "tales" (also "histories", "songs"), defined further by either historical ("of the Elder Days") or thematic/cultural ("of the Noldor") qualifiers. The singular instances, however, and with them the concept of 'QS' as *one*, unified work, nearly always come in editorial interpolated chapters which halt the movement of the narrative to supply systematic, concise background information (either about the important personages of Noldorin history, or about the rise of Men). It is tempting to suppose that unity is also something the editor supplies to the *whole* of his compilation (interpolated chapters included) – a very clear instance when the editor role produces a meaning by way of commentary on the material he has put together, this would be a very characteristic interpretive (as vs. textual) activity, but on a theoretical level it can also be seen as 'textual': it makes the compilation into 'one text'.

'QS' thus seems to be the work treating (mostly) the deeds of the Noldor and the history of the Silmarils, put together and handled as one work by its editor (Bilbo or earlier). In Tolkien philology, the title goes back at least to the 1930s, where the first 'Quenta Silmarillion' version was written (preceded by the 'Quenta Noldorinwa', which makes it even more explicit that the original idea must have been the history *of the Noldor*), and in a note to a late linguistic essay, Tolkien also claims that *The Silmarillion* is "not an Eldarin [Elvish] title or work. It is a compilation, probably made in Númenor, which includes (in prose) the four great tales or lays of the heroes of the Atani [Men], of which 'The Children of Húrin' was probably composed already in Beleriand in the First Age, but necessarily is preceded by

an account of Fëanor and his making of the Silmarils. All, however are 'Mannish' works."[257]

But this means nothing in the textual world; in the frame of Bilbo translating and compiling texts, it is much more probable that he preserves original units and works even when he freely adds material to them, rather than construct great narratives of the Elvish First Age. Chapters whose sElf-references single them out as both structural *and* thematic units ('Of Beren and Lúthien' and 'Of Túrin Turambar') are, according to Tolkien's note, parts of the original compilation (already in prose), but other chapters partly based on titled sources represent another level, the provenance of which is uncertain.

3.2.2.2 Cross-reference

Multi-layer editorial activity can be seen in other structural characteristics too. Relations are clearly established between parts of 'QS': frequent anticipations and recapitulation remind us of the large-scale medieval historical or romance compilations (like Geoffrey of Monmouth's synchronizing the British events with the chronology of other places,[258] or the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*'s "careful time-scheme"[259]). Such connectives can be *textual* or *thematic*. They are textual when the link refers the reader explicitly to another text or another part of the text (which need not be titled or otherwise identified): "(as) it has been told" (55, 91, 94, 95, 106, 118, 121, 125, 126, 162, 183, 238, 242) relates backward, while "as is told hereafter" (55, 81, 161) forward. Some such links establish beginnings, others clearly point out endings: "here must/will be told" (29, 61, 118, 230) are of the first type, while endings are signaled in various ways: "now all is said" (41), "so ended the tale" (227). (Still others occur in 'Ak' and 'RP': "now is all told" (281), "these tales come to their end" (285), "the Tales of the Eldar in

[257] Tolkien, *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 357, n.17; see Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 146-47.
[258] J.J. Parry and Robert A. Caldwell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth', in Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, 82.
[259] Jean Frappier, 'The Vulgate Cycle,' in Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, 299. See also 315.

Middle-earth draw to their close" (299), at once testifying that the term "these tales" can refer to the whole compilation, and is not even restricted to 'QS'.) Occasionally, unspecified 'other places' are referenced: "as is elsewhere told" (59) occurs once in 'QS' (where the 'other' place is in fact 'Ak'), but in 'Ak' (267) it is used to refer to 'RP'. In that last unit, "[the witnesses] have elsewhere told the tale of the War of the Ring" (303) clearly refers to *The Lord of the Rings* (one more reason for Bilbo not to have written this last part: he never saw the completion of the textual world counterpart of that text). *Thematic* anticipations or recapitulations refer to details of the story repeated or foreshadowed, and are pervasively present in the 'QS' text: some of them are simple enough, but others become associated with the structures of the text, and will be treated shortly. These links establish relations between the chapters of 'QS' and segments of the story. Their distribution is, however, also instructive.

Textual connectives tend to bridge editorial and narrative chapters, and function to provide cohesion over interpolated matter. Of the 14 backward references in 'QS', 6 are in composite/editorial chapters (4 in 'Of the Sindar', 2 in 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms'), and all of them refer to chapters within the main narrative thrust of the story of the Elves and the Noldor. In an overwhelming number of the cases (in 11 out of 14), the backward reference is made to such chapters ('Of the Flight of the Noldor' and 'Of the Return of the Noldor' being the most frequently referenced at 4 and 2 instances, respectively). Only one "as has been told" is an internal reference (in 'Of Beren and Lúthien', 183); and even when they occur in chapters that are themselves part of the main narrative thrust ('Of the Return of the Noldor', 'Of the Noldor in Beleriand', 'Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin'), there is always at least some editorial material intervening between the reference and its subject. In 4 cases, the reference stands at the head of the chapter, as if taking up the narrative at an earlier point (91, 106, 125, 162). (The system of sElf-references, references to titled sources, and textual cross-references is set out below in Table 1.)

BACK/ENDING	UNIT	FORWARD/BEGINNING	SELF/TITLED/OBLIQUE
	Ai		
29# (# 'Of the Valar')	**Vq**		*Quenta Silmarillion* (31) **"that tale"** [='QS'] (31)
	[**QS** title page]		*Quenta Silmarillion* (33)
41# (but *'Ai Suppl')	**I** 'Of the Beginning of Days'		
	II 'Of Aulë and Yavanna'		
	III 'Of the Coming of Elves and the Captivity of Melkor'		
55 **III**	**IV** 'Of Thingol and Melian'	**V** 55	
	V 'Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië'	61* ["elsewhere"] **Ak** 59	**"this tale"** [?='QS'] (60)
	VI 'Of Feanor and the Unchaining of Melkor'		
	VII 'Of the Silmarils and the Unrest of the Noldor'		
	VIII 'Of the Darkening of Valinor'		*Aldudénië* (Elemmírë) (76)
	IX 'Of the Flight of the Noldor'	**general** 81	*Noldolantë* (Maglor) (87)
91* **IV** 94 **III** 95 **VIII** 95 **IX**	**X** 'Of the Sindar'		
	XI 'Of the Sun and Moon and the Hiding of Valinor'		*Narsilion* (99)
	XII 'Of Men'		**"these tales"** [?='QS'] (103)
106* **IX**	**XIII** 'Of the Return of the Noldor'		
118 **IX** 121 **IX**	**XIV** 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms'	118* (introduction)	
125* **XIII** 126 **XIII**	**XV** 'Of the Noldor in Beleriand'		
	XVI 'Of Maeglin'		
	XVII 'Of the Coming of Men into the West'		
	XVIII 'Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin'	**XIX** 161	**"this tale"** [?='QS'] (234)
162* **XVIII** (183 **internal**)	**XIX** 'Of Beren and Lúthien'		*Lay of Leithian* (162, 165, 168, 171, 172, 186)
	XX 'Of the Fifth Battle: Nirnaeth Arnoediad'		
	XXI 'Of Túrin Turambar'		*Narn i Hîn Húrin* (198)
227# **XXI** (but *XXI)	**XXII** 'Of the Ruin of Doriath'	230*	"tale of Túrin Turambar" (#227) [Glirhuin's] "song" (230)
238 **XX** 242 **XVI**	**XXIII** 'Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin'		*Fall of Gondolin* (242)
	XXIV 'Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath'		*Lay of Eärendil* (246)
281#	**Ak**	["elsewhere"] **RP?** 267	*Lay of Eärendil* (259)
(292 **internal**) 285# (but *'RP', introduction) 299#	**RP**		**"these tales"** [?='QS'/RP] (285) *Quenta Silmarillion* (286) *Akallabêth* [2] (290) **"these tales"** [?=RP] (300)
		["elsewhere"] 303	"tale of the War of the Ring" [=*LR*] (303)

Table 1: references by title, sElf-references, and cross-references in *The Silmarillion*.[260]

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[260] In the left column, * marks a backward reference standing at the head of the chapter (or, in the case of 162, after the first, introductory paragraph), while # marks references that function as closures. In the right column, it marks a reference announcing the immediate start of a new account of something. References are followed by the number of the 'QS' chapter (or other textual unit) to which they refer back/forward.

Based on the supposition that the intervening matter *is* editorial (by Bilbo or an earlier redactor), this practice of providing links establishes connections, both to make the story easier to follow, and perhaps to compensate for the long stretches of interpolated, systematic background-setting descriptions. But they also highlight the editor's main concerns: to keep the main narrative theme of "these tales", the deeds of the Noldor and the Silmarils in the focus, since most such references are directed to the main 'Noldor material'. It also helps define exactly what parts (chapters) of the 'QS' text the editor considers to be the 'main thrust', the 'Noldor material' (the chapters highlighted in table 1). These textual means of providing and maintaining structure, the makeup of a compendium, despite that fact that the editor often intrudes supplementary material implies that whoever is inserting these markers (either Bilbo or an earlier redactor) wishes to keep the focus of 'QS' on the Noldor narrative, but at the same time finds it important to supply background (even at the price of interpolating units). The textual activities of the editors/redactors are here supplemented by clearly interpretively motivated ones, which aim at the construction of a *certain sort* of text (unified and focused on a certain theme). It is also significant that two chapters (ch.IV, 'Of Thingol and Melian', and ch.XVI, 'Of Maeglin') present virtually sElf-contained episodes with essential connections to the main 'QS' narrative (very much like the Túrin or the Beren and Lúthien chapters, which rely on their own, structurally separate sources). These also partake of the scheme of cross-references, and are also thematically linked (e.g., Thingol's meeting with Melian (55) is told in much the same terms as Beren's with Lúthien (165); and Maeglin's welcome in Gondolin might also anticipate/counterpoint Beren's in Doriath). Taken together with the thematic points (*what* is interpolated) and the cultural context (what use and audience are suggested by the intervening material, what point of view is taken there, etc.), the editor's structuring activity is also instructive in terms of the creation of not only the philological depth of the *Silmarillion* text, but also in constructing more specifically cultural points: the

views of the text and audience, and the movement of material not only through textual activities, but activities specifically linked with culture.

3.2.2.3 Internal structure

These cultural implications also stand out if we consider the internal structure of the *Silmarillion*'s textual units. Stylistic variation was seen to produce implied sources (texts), authorial roles (*auctor*s, adapters and redactors), distinct traditions (e.g., a poetically charged register that cannot safely be associated with authors or texts), and structural considerations drew attention to those textual activities that are based on interpretation (the ordering of parts, interpolation). But as in actual medieval manuscripts, the internal divisions can also mark how the authors (redactors, even scribes) thought of the text. Caxton's redividing Malory's text in his 1485 first edition radically changed the conception of the work itsElf: the different divisions of the Winchester MS led Vinaver to conceptualize the *Morte* as not one book but a series of separate romances.[261] Since the *Silmarillion* does not show any of the graphic clues (larger capitals, miniatures, rubrication, presentation script) that in such manuscripts it is customary to examine, we can only use its breaks (units are divided by empty lines); but even that yields conclusions. Kane's primary philological collation shows that the overwhelming majority of these divisions does not indicate a change of source: apart from a few very special chapters, most of 'QS' are put together from various versions of the prose material (the 'Annals of Aman', the 'Later Quenta', the 'Quenta Silmarillion' and the 'Grey Annals' being the most important of these). Only in the case of the 'Ai' and 'Vq Supplements' can we show a definite linking of a chapter's internal division with a change of primary manuscripts that went into its making. As other cases, like 'QS' ch.II or XVI (both mostly sElf-contained

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[261] See Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (3 vols., 2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), vol. 1, xxxv-lvi.

stories), show, it is rather the chapter division that corresponds to such a change of source,[262] and the chapters that give the impression of being compound editorial surveys of background, using many sources, are in fact no more edited together than the chapters of the Noldorin story.[263] In terms of Tolkien philology this means that the 'edited effect' is in some sense 'native' to the 'Silmarillion' material, and thus an integral part of its overall aesthetics: Tolkien's shift between a more coherent narrative and a less narrative, less unified background survey (constituting the two discourses of the 'Silmarillion' material) is doubtless an intended difference, aimed at least partly at producing the sense of exactly the philological variety. The internal divisions of *The Silmarillion* text thus work nearly entirely on the secondary level, as (primary) editorial devices constructing another sort of (secondary) editorial activity.

Firstly, these divisions witness how people in different authorial positions in different points in the redaction see the parts of the material. What belongs together and what does not is certainly shown textually in what is written together; the breaks are not only textual markers, but also exhibit the authors' (redactors') sense of narrative sElf-containment. The conception of the whole work as mostly 'plural' ("these tales"), but on a more abstract level as unified around a definite focus (the Noldor and the Silmarils) is thus mirrored in both the divergence inscribed in the interpolated, composite 'background' chapters, and the division of the chapters themselves. Even the chapters that the most frequent cross-references have highlighted as definitely part of the main Noldor material are variously divided: some of them (like ch.IV, VIII, XII, XVI) have only one or two subunits (which could be associated with a more 'unified' conception), while others (ch.III, IX, XVIII, XX) are composed of anything

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[262] See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 54-55 (for ch.II) and 155 (for ch.XVI).

[263] See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, table 6, 69-71 (ch.V: the 'Later Quenta', the 'Annals of Aman', and the 'Grey Annals' are alternating as sources here); table 11, 118-19 (ch.X: here, in fact, the 'Gray Annals' serve as the major source for most of the chapter, with only a short interpolations from the 'Later Quenta' (118), and the use of some other minor sources); table 13, 130 (ch.XII: the alternating 'Later Quenta/Quenta Silmarillion' and the 'Grey Annals' are here supplemented with very little from other texts); table 15, 146-48 (ch.XIV: here indeed there is constant switching to and fro between the 'Grey Annals', the 'Later Quenta/Quenta Silmarillion', and at least one paragraph with heavy editorial presence (see 147)).

from three to five such divisions (maybe suggesting editorial 'lumping' of material). But when the narrative is logical, coherent and continuous, division (ch.III, 5 units; ch.IX, 3 units; ch.XIII, 5 units) might also simply reflect how the author measures the treatment of his material into different part (and not compounds them from different sources). The different ways of handling the text at various points in the transmission chain is thematized here again in textual/philological details.

The division of parts can also function to signal order, the author's (redactor's) *ordinatio* of the material, and the way of treating the narrative. The connections that are employed to bridge over the gaps are in many cases the actual cross-references seen earlier (see Table 1 and 3.2.2.2), but how the individual units are linked to each other are also instructive, and also offer conclusions about the mode of presentation. When all parts (and many of the individual paragraphs within those parts too) are linked by "now" (as ch.I, VI or IX), the clear narrative connection is seen as still rather indefinite; to contrast, the linking to actual events or to exact periods of time would suggest a more accurately 'historical' strategy. The two are actually mixed in many cases (ch.XIII, XVII, XVIII, XX), a practice that shows the mixing of the different modes of the narrative (indefinite/direct linking vs. exact historical representation).

Ordinatio is also signaled by the overall strategy applied within the chapters too. The material in the Noldorin chapters (ch.III, IX, XIII, XVI, XVIII, XX) and others too connected to it (ch.XVII, 'Of the Coming of Men into the West', and XXII, 'Of the Ruin of Doriath') is ordered primarily along the chronological lines of the narrative, the divisions marking the stages of the story as the editor senses them to belong together. The Elves' journey West or their stay in Beleriand (ch.III, units 4 and 5), a famous battle (Dagor Aglareb, ch.XIII, unit 4), the council of Men where policy is made (ch.XVII, unit 4), or the story of a partisan Mannish group (ch.XVIII, unit 3) are examples of what the editor senses to be sElf-contained enough

to justify division; but there are other principles at work too. The two divisions of ch.VI ('Of Fëanor and the Unchaining of Melkor') are predicated on a distinctly historiographic, retrospective evaluation of periods: while the first explains that "[t]his was the Noontide of the Blessed Realm" (63), the second one starts by saying that "the Noontide of Valinor was drawing to its close" (65), thus explaining the division. The sense of tragedy lends cohesion to the second unit of ch.XVIII ('Of the Ruin of Beleriand'), in which a disastrous defeat, Dagor Bragollach, and the Elvish High King's tragic death are narrated together (while the chapter's first division simply describes the king's rule). In other cases, however, the narrative lumps together elements which could arguably have merited division. The first units of chs.VIII and IX contain elements about both the Valar/Elves and about Melkor's dealing with Ungoliant (which might be of doubtful authority, since it is very difficult to imagine anyone in the fictional world obtaining authentic information about this), while the fourth unit of ch.XVIII ('Of the Ruin of Beleriand') contains at least three different topics (Sauron in Minas Tirith, the Swarthy Men, Húrin and Huor in Gondolin). It is generally chronology that keeps these together, even when some of the contents (like the story of Húrin and Huor in Gondolin) thematically belong to another story, unified by its main characters: the story of the children of Húrin, parts of which also appear embedded in the 'historical' chapters, framing ch.XXI, the unit that deals explicitly with the story of Túrin (the fourth unit of ch.XX and the first two of ch.XXII).[264] This shows that material belonging to thematically sElf-contained stories (the Túrin or the Beren and Lúthien story) is sometimes treated by the editor(s) from another perspective, that of the more general historical thrust of the *Silmarillion*. These points of view (handling stories as thematically sElf-contained vs. handling (some parts of) them as minor

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[264] In this case, Kane's study verifies that these parts are indeed integrated from another source in ch.XVIII (paragraphs 20-24 in unit 4: see *Arda Reconstructed*, table 18, 164) and XXII (paragraphs 1-16 of unit 1: see *Arda Reconstructed*, table 22, 209), while some sections (the rest of unit 1 and unit 2 in ch.XXII) are editorial (in some cases with some secondary sources: *Arda Reconstructed*, table 22, 209-10).

details in a more general story) might, again, indicate different editors/authors, but they certainly represent different relationships to story and text, visible in the internal divisions.

While some internal divisions can be connected to the variation of style (the 'Ai' and 'Vq Supplements' in most particular), the chapters whose material and non-narrative focus single them out as composite/editorial chapters do not necessarily show their synthetic nature in the division. However, the internal divisions and the strategy of systematic presentation employed in the construction of these chapters still supply evidence for their (fictional) editorial nature. All such chapters (Vq, 'QS' chs.V, X, XIV, and 'Ak') show a distinct use of internal divisions to treat their material systematically, and this is often reinforced by some other textual elements suggesting a systematic synthesis. 'Vq' has a separate introduction (unit 1), and its three other subunits have their own subtitles; the longest of these, unit 2 ('Of the Valar') has its own internal structure with a paragraph of introduction and one of closure framing its list of the Valar. The first unit of Ch.X ('Of the Sindar') recapitulates the story of Thingol and Melian (told in ch.IV), and its fifth unit is a one-paragraph conclusion that supplies a connection with the story of the Noldor (97). 'Ak' starts with a similar recapitulation (here run together with the first unit of the narrative), and after the chronological narrative, closes with a curious and typographically differentiated 'Ak Supplement' (281-2) that explicitly summarizes the knowledge of "loremasters" (281) about the Straight Road to Valinor. 'QS' ch.XIV also has an introductory paragraph as its first division, and proceeds from there to treat the political and cultural relations in Beleriand through precise geographic detail (complete with an illustrative map, between pages 120 and 121). The divisions of ch.V reflect the stages of the story, but at the same time they also show a systematic treatment of Elvish groups (unit 1: the Teleri, unit 2: Elves in Valinor, unit 3: Teleri in Valinor, unit 4: Vanyar and Noldor in Valinor), while its longest unit (the second, paragraphs 7-16) itsElf contains both some narrative and a systematic treatment of the

affiliation of Elvish groups, their historical import, and of course the familial connections of the Noldorin dynasty. In these chapters internal division and the units it creates serve to reinforce the effect of 'editedness', the (fictionally) synthetic nature of these chapters.

The internal structure of individual textual units, therefore, adds important refinements to aspects of the authorial activities already noted. While divisions can signal importing of material, they can also be simple devices of *order* (what is sensed as coherent units, and how these are linked together), and as definite authorial decisions, these add to the types of activities the text implies. If Bilbo performs these actions, it is his conception of the whole work (as unified but still plural, having one main thrust but still needing a variety of background) and of order that these construct: his interpretive choices. If he functions only as a translator, these decisions and interpretive factors are inscribed into a much deeper chain of successive authorial roles. But since these authorial/redactorial positions (as will be seen) are necessarily linked to different cultures (and with them, distinct values of authority), they, along with the textual transformations effected by them (division, compounding, interpolation), construct underlying stories, interpretive traditions that enrich the philological fiction and specify earlier editorial choices. The themes of the narrative itsElf (as opposed to the style, structural units, and order in which they are presented) become much more important as subunits are connected to specific subjects, and the makeup of editorial composite chapters (chs.V, X, XII, XIV) systematically introduces different topics and discourses that become instrumental in producing a multilayer map of Beleriand, fertile ground for both narrative and theory.

3.2.2.4 Narrative as structure

Other types of textual details also function to provide or elucidate structure. Certain narrative parts or motifs, devices of narrative/thematic coherence are systematically repeated or

distributed in the chapters and thereby contribute to an emerging structure, that of the whole 'QS' (or at least the strictly Noldorin story). Such returning themes are prophecies and oaths: the "oath of Fëanor" (83) is not only referred to frequently as a fundamental principle driving the plot of the Noldor narrative, but is on one occasion practically repeated (169), at another time nearly parodied (166), which in turn gives rise to another reversal of its theme (167), leading to further plot ramifications. Similarly, the "Prophecy of the North" or the "Doom of the Noldor" (88) returns many times and many phrasings to explain the devastation following the Noldor (79, 87 (both), 90, 129, 148, 167, 176). The prophecy is pronounced by the Valar, and works in the Noldor narrative as the curse of Morgoth ("a *doom…* of darkness and sorrow", 197, my italics) on Húrin in the tale of the hapless hero Túrin, his son. This indeed serves as the main thematic line of ch.XXI, 'Of Túrin Turambar'.[265] Dreams or warnings likewise function in their repetition: Ulmo's warning against overconfidence and a lack of faith in the Valar is such a recurring detail (originally spoken at 125, repeated as Turgon remembers it on 240;[266] Ulmo sends a similar warning to Túrin too, 212), and so is the often stated idea that Ulmo, the Lord of Waters maintains some guardianship over the Noldor through the rivers and waters of their land (40, 103, 114-15, 123, 125, 155, 158, 209, 212, 243). Hidden and guarded kings and kingdoms (Thingol, Finrod, Turgon; Doriath, Nargothrond, Gondolin), their establishment and their undoing also runs through 'QS'. Although these are thematic or plot motifs, they serve to keep or impose structure. Through them, the editor infuses principles of coherence other than the narrative: most of these are clearly connected to the Valar, thus showing a specific theological point of view and suggesting that the theological discourse determines history for the editor (or for his sources).

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[265] On the role of doom in the Túrin story, see Shippey, *Road*, 261-68, but for a preliminary (etymological) discussion, 253-56.

[266] It is interesting to note that the actual words attributed to Ulmo, "love not too well the work of thy hands and the devices of thy heart" (125, repeated on 240), are in fact editorial: Kane shows that the source text Christopher Tolkien was following here has only "love it not too well" (*Arda Reconstructed*, 151). He then brings up a possible distant source from the 'Quenta Noldorinwa', a much older Tolkien text (*Arda Reconstructed*, 154), but admittedly that is still a far cry from Ulmo's (or the editor's) majestic words.

This mirrors not only how the editor(s) interpret(s) the different texts they are faced with: it indicates how they interpret history itsElf.

The thematic unity of the narrative is visibly one of the main concerns of the editor(s); but their narrative technique is itsElf something that provides structure and unity. Tolkien's work relies on medieval literature not only in its themes and the centrality of manuscripts, texts, and philology: it often appropriates medieval storytelling techniques such as *interlacement* from medieval romance. Tom Shippey has demonstrated this in the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Two Towers*.[267] *The Silmarillion* and 'QS' come nowhere near this, but nevertheless make use of this technique, first developed by French romancers in the 12th century[268] but less popular in England (Malory, for example, heavily reduced the intricacy of the interlaced narrative in adapting the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* and the *Prose Tristan*[269]). The gist of the technique, the abandoning and then taking up again of different plotlines after a while of treating another one often comes with exactly the same forward-backward markers that we have seen in 'QS': with "And now woll we to oure mater of sir Launcelot",[270] Malory signals a break in the story and relocation of the focus. "Here endyth the secunde boke of syr Trystram de Lyones… but here ys no rehersall of the thirde booke"[271] marks the end of a long structural part, and all through the 'Tale of the Sankgreal', divisions are fragments marked by recurring "No turnyth thys tale unto"'s. In cutting up the Noldor material and inserting descriptive chapters between its parts, some with their own stories inside them, the editor comes close to this narrative technique; but at the same time

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[267] Shippey, *Road*, 160-67. The first account of Tolkien's use of interlace was Richard C. West, 'The Interlace Structure of *The Lord of the Rings*,' in Jared Lobdell, ed., *A Tolkien Compass* (LaSalle, Il.: Open Court, 1975): 77-94.
[268] See Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, vol. 1, lxiv-lxv (Shippey quotes from here in *Road*, 161). Vinaver later expanded what he wrote on the technique in his introduction to Malory's *Works* into a separate book: *The Rise of Romance* (Cambridge–Totowa: Brewer and Barnes & Noble, 1984). See especially 76-90.
[269] Eugène Vinaver, 'Sir Thomas Malory,' in Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages,* 545-46 and Elizabeth Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's* Morte Darthur (Arthurian Studies XLIII, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 122-3.
[270] Malory, *Works*, 505.1, XII.9 (in addition to the page and line numbers of the one-volume edition, I also give Caxton's book and chapter numbers, as customary).
[271] Malory, *Works*, 511.1, 4, XII.14.

shows a wider interest than the "tales" that would properly (traditionally?) belong to 'QS'. The activities that produce the internal divisions and the order of the material can thus be seen as properly *authorial* actions (as Malory is regarded as an author), and need not be relegated to redactorial levels. In any case, not only *order of presentation* but the *order of the narrative* is emphasized, and these orderings can later be associated with cultural spheres to show how the philological aspect grounds aspects of the fiction of cultures. The interlacement of several narrative lines is rare in 'QS': it is most apparent in 'Of Beren and Lúthien' and 'Of Túrin Turambar' (based on individual poetic sources). Especially in the Túrin chapter, the jumps between plotlines create irony in the tragic situations, since it allows the reader essential knowledge that the unhappy hero does not have.[272] While this undoubtedly results from the real editorial nature of the *Silmarillion* text (Kane's study of its composition shows instructively how often two or three different sources are drawn on not merely in one episode, but in one single paragraph), it also consolidates the fiction of editorial activity and inscribes it with motivations that make sense only in the fiction. A 'cut up' and interlaced subplot shows an editor consciously planning the handling of his subplots and distributing their interlaced episodes according to a design.

Hidden kingdoms are a recurring element in 'QS': the two such Noldorin realms (Nargothrond and Gondolin) have a shared foundation story that well illustrates this point. In ch.XIII, 'Of the Return of the Noldor', it is told how two Noldorin princes, Finrod and Turgon are visited by dreams sent by the Vala Ulmo, and both contrive to build hidden fortresses that stand for a long time and become famous (113-14). Finrod receives help from Thingol (himsElf a hidden king), and establishes Nargothrond practically right away (114); but Turgon takes further guidance from Ulmo to plan and build his city of Gondolin. The stages of Turgon's work (dream, discovery of the place, remembrance of the place and planning, the

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[272] This is reminiscent of what Shippey detects in *The Two Towers* as the effect of interlacement: *Road*, 160-67.

long building, finally removing with his people to the completed city) are presented in three distinct episodes (although the second comes right after the completion of Finrod's fortress, Nargothrond, and thus in the same subunit that contains the original dream too (115)). But the next unit is separated from this by an entire composite/editorial chapter: 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms'. At the head of the next chapter ('Of the Noldor in Beleriand'), however, the story is taken up with an "It has been told" (125) – the sign of the editor establishing connections backwards (here not only between chapters but also units of the narrative that appear as the subunits of chapters). The following narrative of how the city is planned, executed, and finally peopled includes Ulmo's warning and anticipations of a number of later episodes. Kane's collation shows how this distribution arises in the compositional logic of the 1977 text;[273] but in secondary philology, the intervening of the long composite chapter (and after the first part of Turgon's story, two shorter but separate sections before the chapter runs out: 123-24) and the recapitulating backward reference also suggest editorial patterning, the interweaving of this particular strand of the narrative with completely different matters.

Considerations of structure show a clear idea of editorial effort. Far from merely mirroring Christopher Tolkien's work, this is evidently meaningful in secondary philology, since it is exactly this effect that constructs the editorial effort and its different aspects, methods, terms and purposes. The separation of large structural units, their sElf-contained, unified status and their references to each other is clear; but the only longer, more complex unit, 'QS' is decidedly a different case. Its internal divisions and the terms that are used to refer to these or to the whole, the thematic considerations that these usages bring to bear, the linking devices that establish connections over thematically different chapters which break the (thematically predicated) unity of the main narrative are all signals that 'QS' underwent heavy editorial activity. From these same signals it is possible, as we have seen, to extrapolate the

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[273] See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 141, 142-43, 151, 154.

editor's methods and purposes, and something about the rationale of his compilation. The final work is, despite these differences, a grand and comprehensive survey of the history of the First Age of Middle-earth, unified in quite a different way than its constituent parts (and, presumably, its fictitious sources). But these considerations of structure have shown that thematic factors cannot be left out of the examinations: it is to these, the subject matter of the various parts of the *Silmarillion* (as related to style and structure) that I will turn now.

3.2.3 Texts and subjects

In his later years, Tolkien always worried about how to present the shift of mythology into history in *The Silmarillion*. When writing the second version of the 'Fall of Númenor' (which eventually became 'Ak'), he was, as Flieger writes, concerned about "the transmission of myth over time and the changes that would inevitably occur as the story was passed down."[274] In the 'Foreword' to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, he wrote he "much prefer[red] history, true or feigned",[275] and although he was comparing it to allegory in this context, the remark reflects his emphasis on history. The 'feigned history' of *The Silmarillion*, however, starts with the creation and includes such evidently mythological and non-historical themes that the movement between these different modes of talking about the past (true or feigned) necessarily has to appear in any form in which the legends finally come to be published. While that discrepancy between a scientific and a mythical explanation of the world (the round world vs. flat world problem, for instance) so took up Tolkien that he never actually solved it, "in editing *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien rightly did not attempt to reconcile the contradiction, letting the sub-creation's story begin with what we call mythology and develop into history."[276] Tolkien's endless recastings of the entire 'QS' material show

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[274] Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 125.
[275] *FR*, 'Foreword to the 2nd edition', xv.
[276] Bratman, 'Literary Value', 77.

leanings towards historical genres: he tried an annalistic form, he tried the chronicle form that 'QS' eventually preserved to some extent, and before all, he tried the mode of the 'mythological tale' in the *Book of Lost Tales*.

The published *Silmarillion* still had to take some definite, "coherent and consistent" form. The chronicle and the annalistic writings (the most prominent being the 'Later Quenta', the 'Annals of Aman', and the 'Grey Annals', Tolkien's late but incomplete revisions of the two traditions), which finally gave most of the material for the published text simply let secondary philology and its implications do the work. We have seen how the styles of the constituent texts say much about the fictitious sources, set up authorial roles and transmission chains, imply textual activities that necessarily mean interpretive stances. These implied, fictionalized contexts and interpretive frameworks produce stylistically-thematically coherent *discourses* (such as a distinct *theological* and *historical* way of writing) that add up to a fictitious cultural history where the shift from mythology to history is not at all problematic. It is less a question of whether theological creation myths can actually coexist with the strictly historical: it is rather the point that cultures (and their texts) produce their characteristic representations and assign to them authority based on different factors. Even though in Middle-earth "the myth is not just believed to be true, it *is* true: it is both the mythology and the history of Middle-earth at the same time",[277] in the fictitious cultural history this still amounts not simply to the equation of the two, but an emphasis on representation. Coupled with thematic considerations, which prepare the ground for other, more theoretical points, stylistic differences offer a good starting point for mapping out more complex relations on the 1977 text, and thereby the representation of layers of discourses about the world and its history.

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[277] Margaret Hiley, 'Stolen Language, Cosmic Models: Myth and Mythology in Tolkien,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 50.4 (2004), 844.

The 'Matters of Middle-earth' also offer further parallels with medieval practices. Medieval poets (and readers) of romance customarily categorized romance narratives by their subject matter.[278] The 'Matter of Rome the Great' comprised stories of antiquity (the romances of Thebes and of Alexander, for instance); compositions about partly historical, more contemporary material (like Charlemagne or the Crusades) made up the 'Matter of France', while the Arthurian world was the 'Matter of Britain'.[279] A fourth Matter, the 'Matter of England' is used to designate those romances that deal with specifically English stories (Beves of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, Havelok).[280] Even if not comprehensive (a number of romances do not fit in any categories), such Matters combine historical factors (*when* the story takes place) with geographical (*where* the story is set) and cultural ones (*which culture* the heroes come from): it is this correlation of factors that we can also detect in the thematic examination of the *Silmarillion* texts. But as in the cyclification of romances (like the 13th-century *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, or Malory's comprehensive and many-sourced treatment) or their compilation into romance manuscripts,[281] we also observe the double focus on *authorship* and *transmission*, something we have seen the *Silmarillion* text emphasize and differentiate in various ways. Based on the purposes of the *compilator*s or scribes, collections always have their own overriding rationales. Eddic poetry was also written down "mostly [as] part of larger compilations", and the editors'/compilers' activity can be seen in specifically philological details: in addition to providing an order and a hierarchy, they also supply

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[278] W.R.J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London–New York: Longman, 1987), 59-60, 63. For an overview of other categorizations, see Derek Pearsall, 'The Development of Middle English Romance,' *Medieval Studies* 27 (1965): 91-116.

[279] Barron, *English Medieval Romance*, ibid.

[280] Barron, *Medieval English Romance*, 63.

[281] On patterns of romance compilation, see Huot, 'Manuscript Context,' 63-68. "Chronological progression" is indeed one of the principles Huot lists as a "recurring pattern in French romance manuscripts" (63-64), and she cites the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle as "[p]erhaps the most impressive example of collaboration and compilation": a "series of closely associated texts by various anonymous authors, and their assemblage and emendation by scribal editors and compilers" (67). On the genesis of the cycle see also Elspeth Kennedy, 'The Making of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*,' in Carol Dover, ed., *A Companion to the* Lancelot-Grail Cycle (Arthurian Studies LIV, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 13-22.

prefaces, bridges, colophons.[282] The *Codex Regius*, the oldest manuscript of the *Elder Edda* carefully arranges the poems according to their subject matter.[283] Even though these latter do not emphasize the *authors*, they do highlight the role of the *compilator* and his activity.

The rationale of Bilbo's compilation is to present a comprehensive history of specific areas and cultural groups of Middle-earth. In 'QS', the focus is closer (the Noldor and the Silmarils), and naturally only what fulfills certain criteria of authenticity can be used. Authenticity, in its turn, is connected (partly) with different matters: some are not open to certain authors to write with any degree of authenticity. Men cannot be authentic *auctor*s in mythological matters (as Geoffrey of Monmouth was criticized even by contemporaries when he passed off his *Historia Regum Brittanniae* as history[284]), leaving only the *redactor* and *compilator* roles for them. Certain Matters also function as daters: as no-one can write about Godfrey of Bouillon before the First Crusade, no-one before the end of the First Age can assert that "at no time ever did Morgoth essay to build ships or to make war by sea" (120) or that "it was not [the Elves'] fate that they should ever dwell [in the last refuge prepared on the Isle of Balar]" (121). The second example also points attention to how uncertain even these can be: after a disastrous defeat, some Elves in fact use the refuge later (196): the assertion is thus either a slip, or derives from the faulty knowledge of the editor, or points to an author *after* the given period, but *before* the actual use of the refuge.[285] In 'QS', more than one Matters of Middle-earth are collected, and these always have a connection to other textual units of *The Silmarillion* too.

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[282] Clunies Ross, 'Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth,' 124-25 (the quote is from 124).

[283] See Terry Gunnell, 'Eddic Poetry,' in McTurk, ed., *Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture,* 83, and Orton, 'Pagan Myth and Religion,' 307.

[284] William of Newburgh and Giraldus Cambriensis both made it clear (with varying degrees of humor) that they did not believe Geoffrey's stories: Parry and Caldwell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth', 87-88. See also Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 321-22.

[285] The first detail is introduced into the editorially highly complex paragraph from the 'Quenta Silmarillion' §120 (Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, Table 15, 147 and see 149), while the second comes from the 'Grey Annals' §257 (Table 20, 187), so Tolkien philology can really explain the discrepancy with the use of two sources.

There are several ways to describe and interpret the Matters appearing in 'QS'. The most visible divisions can be based on the stylistic variation too: mythological/cosmological narrative turns into a historical account, interspersed with descriptive interpolations, and finally to the heroic narratives (distinct from the simple historical account in several ways). The narrative, however, returns to the mythological at the end of 'QS', when the war determining the history of the Noldor is decided by divine intervention (ch.XXIV). The divisions and distributions of this material, the order and the connections the editor establishes between the distinct parts, and the relation these have to their sources (implying different editorial actions) offer several interpretive approaches assigned to the editor(s), and inscribe into the textual world a diversity of historical conceptions that contribute greatly to its effect.

While the explicitly 'mythological' material is placed in separate textual units ('Ai' and 'Vq'), it inevitably forms part of 'QS' too. Before the arrival (awakening) of the Elves, the Valar exert their demiurgic power to shape the created raw material of the world into the substrate for the history they foresaw. This, however, shows a preoccupation with less cosmogonic and more 'earthbound' actions: both the emphasis on the physical nature of the Valar's actions and the stress that the counting of time receives suggest a more 'historical' focus. History (even cosmogony) is now enclosed in the physical world and subject to its 'historical' nature. The integration of mythical material continues; several founding stories, aetiological myths are found later too (primarily in the first part of 'QS', before ch.VI) connected to places, names, objects of the fictional world. The origin of the stars (48) or the Misty Mountains (54), or islands (the Isle of Balar, 57, Tol Eressëa, 59) shows a familiar pattern in using mythical stories to explain natural phenomena. Melian teaching song to nightingales (55) is more poetic and linked to the story, and different Elvish groups' relation to the sea is also explained thus (57, 58). These form smaller units in the narrative where the

mythical again and again penetrates into history. It also testifies that (like in primary world cultures) the mythical has specific uses in culture.[286]

It is, however, undoubtable that the first two chapters of 'QS', 'Of the Beginning of Days' and 'Of Aulë and Yavanna', or ch.XI, 'Of the Sun and Moon and the Hiding of Valinor' present material that can be classified as 'mythological' in the same sense that the creation story in 'Ai' can. It concerns the divine beings who are responsible for the physical reality of the world as it is seen by the characters of history and as it serves as background for that history itsElf. The mythological material is never entirely excluded from history: after all, the great war at the centre of 'QS' is between the Noldor and a renegade Vala (a constant reminder that history is viewed as an interaction with mythology or, on another level, that the theological discourse is never excluded from the representation and interpretation of history), and is ultimately decided by the intervention of the other Valar. Epiphanies or personal interventions, like those of Ulmo, are also present (if not very frequent). But generally speaking, the units treating these matters always bring up the same problems of authority and authenticity, and can be considered a separate Matter of Middle-earth, especially since later historical cultures are characteristically differentiated on the basis of their relation to it.

The texts or units treating the mythological aspects of Middle-earth highlight the problems of authenticity and of transmission in a very special way. The 'Ai' material claims to "come from the Valar themselves, with whom the Eldalië spoke in the land of Valinor, and by whom they were instructed" (22); but there is no authentication given for the 'Ai Supplement' in the first chapter of 'QS', and none is possible at all, since even the Valar cannot possibly know what happened (and what Ilúvatar thought) after they had already entered the created world. We either attribute this to revelation (and even in that case, the question of who receives revelation would still remain and complicate the transmission

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[286] See Dowden's summary of uses in *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 120-21, and Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 58.

history) or consider it as of very problematic authorship.[287] The intrusion of mythological material into history is also problematic: the founding of Gondolin is structured around the visitations of Ulmo to Turgon, and is distributed to different structural (and thematic) units for effect. This would seem to suggest that even when there is an account of the 'mythological' invading history, the editor uses it to his own ends in placing it at structural points of his own devising, in the service of his own idea of the presentation of history. The mythological matter of Middle-earth is thus present throughout 'QS' as a substrate layer, further than which it is not possible to go in search of meanings and origins; and when such reference points are needed (foundations, explanations, ultimate reasons), authors/editors are inclined to rely on them and the theological discourse they construct.

The historical material in 'QS' is predominantly narrative, and is the successor of Tolkien's two (mostly) narrative handlings of the story, the annalistic (the various 'Annals') and the chronicle (the 'Quenta' tradition). If the Valar and their actions to shape the world are the matter of mythology, it is (generally) the Elves and their attempts to shape history that the 'historical matter of Middle-earth' is occupied with. The story of the Elves, especially of the Noldor, provides the real thematic skeleton of 'QS' (as seen in its sElf-definition), complemented with various additional flesh: editorial intrusions of background recourses to the mythological are used to supply the solidity of the backcloth and to explain some of the events. While the mythological material remains unified (the Valar remain unchanged), the historical narrative proliferates rhizomatically as newer and newer divisions of the Elvish groups break off and move back and forth on the map of Middle-earth, interacting with each other, the Valar, the environment, and finally with the enemies. This differentiation of cultural groups is distinct from the systematic descriptions of the interpolated descriptive matter, since

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[287] See Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 148-51, for a somewhat simplistic and literal survey of the problems. It is obviously not a question whether Manwë's or Morgoth's mind was really "known" (152) – it is a theologization of the authors/editors that surface here, and to take it literally is to take Homer to task for his anthropomorphic gods: it misses the point entirely.

this is part of the narrative; but at the same time it anticipates some of the functions of the descriptions, like the multiplication of viewpoints and overlays (linguistic, political, cultural, etc.) on the map that the descriptive chapters then detail. Despite this *thematic fragmentation* (the metaphorical aspect of which was studied so well by Flieger in *Splintered Light*, through the image of light and the concept of knowledge), the basic historical narrative keeps together: its differentiation of cultures and increase of transmission layers that define the authenticity of any account serve well to model the ambiguities and the problems of the writing of history.

It is, however, interesting to note how the mythological material and a theologically based interpretation are inscribed into history from the beginning, and determine the very way history is conceptualized. In 'Ai', the creation proceeds by distinct steps, corresponding to the three distinct sections of the text: first, the Ainur (the first "offspring" of the creator's "thought", 15) make a great music based on his instruction, which (predictably) becomes the site of conflict (15-17); Ilúvatar then shows them a vision of the world and its history, and reveals that this was in fact the subject matter of their musical efforts (17-19). When the world is made real, however, those Ainur who descend into it (thus becoming the Valar) find that the history they had seen is yet to be achieved (19-22): "and the Valar perceived that the World had been foreshadowed and foresung, and they must achieve it" (20). This conceptualizes the narrative of history in terms of a theological representation; but it also means a crux for critics of *The Silmarillion*, since its interpretation can approach dangerously close to determinism.[288] Mythical and historical are also intertwined because all possibility of the measuring of time is explained mythically: first, the Two Trees of Valinor and their

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[288] This is also bound up with the question of the concept of fate and free will in Tolkien's mythology: Elves and Men are said to be different in their relations to these. The Great Music in 'Ai' is "as fate to all things else" (41), *except for Men*; and this sometimes leads to critics denying Elvish free will. But this statement is, significantly, given to Ilúvatar in the 'Ai Supplement', which cannot possibly be authenticated: it is clearly a theologically conceived solution of one culture (the Elves) to what they sense as another culture's (Men's) ultimate existential problem. To take it literally is to ignore that this is not 'objectively' part of the fictional world, but part of a culturally very specific (Elvish) *representation* of that world. Most recently on the topic of fate and Elvish free will, see Flieger, 'The Music and the Task. Fate and Free Will in Middle-earth', *Tolkien Studies* 6 (2009): 151-81.

periodic light supply "the Count of Time" (39), and then the Sun and Moon (made from the last fruits of the perished Trees): "therefore by the coming and going of Anar [the Sun] the Valar reckoned the days thereafter" (101). One of the basic principles of history, the exact measurement of time and the keeping of record, as well as the concept of history itsElf, are grounded by the discourse of the mythological, elements from a different Matter.

But within the historical Matter, another possible grouping presents itsElf. If mythology is about the Valar and their quest to shape the world and history, history itsElf is about the *creatures'* quest at the same task; and even though 'QS' (and the editor(s)) supplies a focus specifically on one subgroup of Elves, the Noldor, another possible approach is to consider the wider Elvish contexts, and thus to divide the 'Matter of Valinor' from the 'Matter of Beleriand'. That the text makes a distinction between these is seen in the fact that the Noldorin focus places the Noldor into a position of authority in the 'Matter of Valinor' – of all the Elves in Middle-earth, they alone actually witnessed what happened there and have had relations with the Valar, the sources of ultimate (and theologically conceived) knowledge (and power). Conversely, everything that happened in Beleriand before the return of the Noldor from Valinor is remembered more authentically by the Sindar, the Elves who stayed there; and after the Noldor return, despite the fact that they become the new focus of the 'Matter of Beleriand', the text in many details still stays on Sindarin grounds.

First and foremost, it stays there linguistically. The Index tells the reader that even the names of the main Noldorin characters are used in their Sindarin form (e.g., the emblematic Noldorin leader, Fëanor, whose name "was given in the Sindarin form", 330). The text contains other Sindarin determinations too, implying a Sindarin audience even in the parts about the 'Matter of Valinor'. The highest mountain of Valinor, the seat of the chief Vala Manwë, is given a name in Sindarin, although the Sindar never actually saw or needed a name for it (37); even more, the Tree in Tirion (the Noldor's city in Valinor), made in the image of

one of the original Two Trees, is given a name *in no other language* but Sindarin (59). Even the longest-standing hidden city, Gondolin (a Noldorin foundation) bears a Sindarin name (despite the fact that its founder, Turgon first named it in Quenya, the language of the Noldor: 125). King Thingol's outlawing the use of Noldorin Quenya at one point partly explains this; Quenya lived on only "as a language of lore" (129) from there on; but this rather shows how the suggested audience of the text is a mixed Elvish one at best, and not a specifically Noldorin one. It also places at least some of the textual activities of the authors/editors in Sindarin Beleriand, refining the historical depth behind the compilation.

Yet another differentiation of subject matters would be based on the divisions of the creatures: the 'Matter of the Noldor', the 'Matter of the Sindar', and the 'Matter of Men'. But in fact in 'QS' these are very much integrated – while 'Ak' could be taken as a continuation (with a nearly exclusively 'Mannish' focus) of the 'Matter of Men' in the First Age, the Sindar and Men material in 'QS' is really presented in relation to the story of the Noldor and the Silmarils. From here, it might be the story of Túrin that could still defend its position as a great 'Matter of Men'-story (even its author is a Man),[289] but even that is drawn into the general pattern of Elvish resistance to Morgoth, and thus of the Noldor narrative. King Thingol's misguided attempt to get rid of the Mannish suitor of his daughter (the 'Beren and Lúthien' story) "ensnared [him] within the curse of the Noldor" (167), and thus the 'Matter of the Sindar' to all intents and purposes is absorbed into that of the Noldor. Earlier it was very explicitly claimed that Men are represented in 'QS' only as far as they "became entangled in [the fate of the Noldor and the Silmarils]" (104). These three Matters, therefore, cannot possibly be separated on a structural or even thematic basis, and all form part of the 'Matter of Beleriand' – but textually, these details still point to Sindarin sources and an audience that contains a significant Sindarin (cultural) element. Even the textual/philological considerations

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[289] See Agøy, 'Viewpoints and Audiences', 151, also noting an anomaly.

have started to expand into the cultural background, and not only construct but localize and define the stages of the fictitious provenance more closely.

It is interesting to note, further, that the theological discourse is woven into the thematic material of the 'Matter of the Sindar' too. The theological has a distinctly Sindarin connection through King Thingol and his wife, Melian. While Thingol is the only one of the Sindar who himsElf had spoken with the Valar (as one of the original Elvish messengers to Valinor, 52), and thus represents authenticity and true knowledge among them (56), his queen, Melian is in fact a lesser Vala (a Maia: 'Vq', 31), whom 'Vq' associates explicitly with 'QS' (31). Through them, the connection to the theological is firmly maintained in the 'Matter of the Sindar' too, and authenticity (though of another sort) is conferred upon them.

Systematic, descriptive composite chapters also present a more or less coherent subject group. Based on structural considerations these can mostly be taken as editorial interpolations, but they are related to the historical narrative in no less organic and logical way than the mythological intrusions. Chapters like 'Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië', 'Of the Sindar', 'Of Men, 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms' complement the fragmentation of narrative and produce different groups and cultures, consolidate and elaborate the various modes of difference these groups create, and usually tie them closely to the map of Beleriand. Geographical descriptions are not unknown in primary world historical sources: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* starts with a description of Britain, and so does Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but one can go back as far as Nennius or Gildas for such descriptive parts, in British historiography alone.[290] More or less systematic ethnographical surveys are found as early as Herodotus' work, whose use of the word for his 'research', *historiai*, gives history its name and associates this sort of storytelling with a rigorous and

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[290] Geoffrey's opening description (I.2) shows remarkable similarity to Bede's initial description (I.1), but also to Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* §§7-9, and even further back, §3 of Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*. The fact that Geoffrey did make use of all three of these sources (whether acknowledged or not) has long been known: see Parry and Caldwell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth,' 81.

systematic collection and processing of material. Herodotus' example also shows that such surveys do not necessarily derive from a different author.[291]

The various networks of differences that the thematic considerations evolve around the already fragmenting narrative further refine the concepts of authorship and transmission, primarily by assigning more exact cultural/linguistic positions to the uncertain stages of the fictitious provenance and supplying details about the textual activities performed at some of its points. When the name of a mountain that the Sindar had never seen is given in Sindarin, either the text's authoring or its editing must have passed through a Sindarin authorial figure (and more later, who maintained the reading), but its origin (because of its thematic content) must nevertheless stretch back to Noldorin sources. The descriptive chapters realize here the "complex, and to an extent systematic, elaboration of an imaginary world" that Brian Rosebury argued was part of the effect of *The Lord of the Rings.*[292] This expansion gets a definitely philological dimension by the aspects and differentiation of transmission and authorship that the compilation creates. The elaboration and definition of the point of view (in linguistic, theological, or political terms) is the most important achievement of these chapters.

In the later parts of 'QS', the historical narrative is often challenged by another type of narrative text: the matter of individual heroes, integrated into the narrative but in a way still outside its scope. The chapters 'Of Beren and Lúthien' and 'Of Túrin Turambar' are the prime examples of this, because these are arguably based on independent sources, not part of 'QS', only attached to it and pasted into its chronology.[293] As recastings of clearly separate texts, even supplied with a title and (in the case of the *Narn*, although only in the Index) an author, they are the closest point the *Silmarillion* text approaches to making the *auctor* visible; but

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[291] On Herodotus' ethnographical descriptions, see the chapters on 'Egypt', 'Scythians', 'The Ethnography of the Fringes', and 'Babylon' in Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J.F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees, eds., *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 2002).
[292] Rosebury, *Cultural Phenomenon*, 25; see also 12-34.
[293] A few other, mostly self-contained episode-chapters have already been mentioned: 'Of Maeglin', or (even earlier) 'Of Thingol and Melian'. The common point is that all these contain cross-cultural conflict.

even here, further positions are constructed by the text's claims to be the result of a clearly stated textual activity (adapting verse to prose), and the two tales' extreme emphasis on the concept of fate provides a point of view that again specifies the sphere of origin. This focus, however, is integrated to the entire 'QS's preoccupation with the "Doom of the Noldor". In the chapter following Túrin, 'Of the Ruin of Doriath', it is voiced that king Thingol gravitated, in more ways than one, towards being implicated in this great narrative of Noldorin (and thus Elvish) history. These two are also stylistically different from the usual prose of the historical matter (containing by far the most 'poetic' fragments, but also the most outstanding colloquialisms too), making it clear we are dealing with a distinct category of 'QS' constituent texts.

After the two "longest of the songs concerning the world of old" (162) two other works are referred to, the *Fall of Gondolin* (242) and the *Lay of Eärendil* (246; also in 'Ak', 259). The chapters in which these references appear are, however, wider in scope than (presumably) these works themselves, and are stylistically not so clearly marked out as the previous two. Ch.XXIV, 'Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath' contains a remarkable number of poetic fragments, and these mostly appear in its first subunit: but the chapter goes on to tell of the Valar rising against Morgoth, and ending the First Age of Middle-earth in a clear mythological intervention into history. While these cannot be taken to represent the same case as *Leithian* and the *Narn*, they still might indicate specific editorial positions and activities. The first subunit of ch.XXIV, for example, might be conceived of as based on the *Lay of Eärendil*; but its inclusion in a longer unit indicates the importance assigned to it by the editor. The *Leithian* and *Narn* material might already be part of the compilation's tradition, inclusions linked to earlier authorial positions than Bilbo's, but still meaningful details of transmission and redaction. The rest (along with other titles mentioned, the *Aldudénië*, the

Noldolantë, and the *Narsilion*) are mentioned as incidental sources, from which a few details (but little or no actual text) comes or used for better authentication.

Based on the correlation of subject matter and some previously examined factors, it is thus possible to identify sections in 'QS' that are unified or composite, and evaluate the logic by which they are put together. The four Matters are linked to each other in a variety of ways: mythological and historical matter are connected by the theologically determined idea of history, the mythologically supplied principle of the measurement of time, and the constant (though limited) presence of the Valar in history. Historical matter and descriptive background can be viewed as two modalities of the same extensional, fragmenting logic that spreads across the map of Middle-earth in a proliferation of stories and of background systems. The transmission from the 'Matter of Valinor' to the 'Matter of Beleriand' gives place to further diversity, and points of view proliferate as the 'Matter of the Noldor' is connected to and subsumes the 'Matter of the Sindar'. The order (*ordinatio*) of the compilation, for which the editor-compiler is responsible, naturally looks to be basically historical (chronological): but the interpolated descriptive matter, and, on one occasion, mythological material, sometimes disrupt the chronology, and the editor makes use of the structural device of interlacement and cross-references to jump back and forth among the storylines. (Table 2 illustrates how the chapters of 'QS' are distributed among the matters, necessarily disregarding the minor intrusions of one matter into another: here chapters are placed on the basis of their major matters).

Table 2 clearly shows where the editor's *ordinatio* breaks the chronology. By interposing of either mythological matter (ch. XI) or descriptive chapters (ch. X and XII), he produces three major breaks in the main narrative of the Noldor. As Table 1 showed, most of the explicit backward links are concentrated around these breaks. Altogether 6 of them are in the descriptive chapters (ch.X and XIV, 4 and 2, respectively) and refer to chapters of the

MYTHOLOGICAL	HISTORICAL	DESCRIPTIVE	HEROIC/INDIVIDUAL
I 'Of the Beginning of Days'			
II 'Of Aule and Yavanna'			
[Captivity of Melkor]	**III** 'Of the Coming of Elves and the Captivity of Melkor'		
	IV 'Of Thingol and Melian'		
		V 'Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalie'	
[Unchaining of Melkor]	**VI** 'Of Feanor and the Unchaining of Melkor'		
	VII 'Of the Silmarils and the Unrest of the Noldor'		
	VIII 'Of the Darkening of Valinor'		
	IX 'Of the Flight of the Noldor'		
		X 'Of the Sindar'	
XI 'Of the Sun and Moon and the Hiding of Valinor'			
		XII 'Of Men'	
	XIII 'Of the Return of the Noldor'		
		XIV 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms'	
	XV 'Of the Noldor in Beleriand'		
			XVI 'Of Maeglin'
	XVII 'Of the Coming of Men into the West'		
	XVIII 'Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin'		
			XIX 'Of Beren and Lúthien'
	XX 'Of the Fifth Battle: Nirnaeth Arnoediad'		
			XXI 'Of Túrin Turambar'
	XXII 'Of the Ruin of Doriath'		
	XXIII 'Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin'		
[War of Wrath]	**XXIV** 'Of the Voyage of Earendil and the War of Wrath'		

Table 2. The distribution of 'Matters' in the chapters of 'QS'[294]

main narrative; another 3 are in the main narrative line (ch.XIII and XV, 1 and 2, respectively) and refer across the gaps created by the interpolations.

The 'Matters of Middle-earth', the thematic considerations about the textual units of *The Silmarillion* thus elaborate the aspects of *authorship* and *transmission*, and refine the picture of how the editor and previous redactors handle texts and matters. The *ordinatio*, the specific makeup of the compilation is definitely the editor's responsibility (it had also been attributed to him in the medieval theories); but primary Tolkien philology can also help to support the conclusions. Kane's collation of the source texts shows that the main narrative line is

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[294] In Table 2, the Matters are represented by the different background patterns: downward slanting lines show the 'Matter of Valinor', upward slanting lines the 'Matter of the Noldor', and grey the 'Matter of the Sindar'.

generally based on the 'Later Quenta', the 'Annals of Aman' and the 'Grey Annals', but the parts secondary philology handles as interpolation are not in fact material imported from other sources (like the 'Annals') into the narrative (the chronicle tradition) any more than the narrative itsElf is a composite text made (mostly) from the same sources. The differences thus form part of Tolkien's constituent texts too. Secondary philology, where the textual relations are different, can describe and differentiate the types of relations and the types of texts that the fiction represents, thereby clarifying the types of authorial/redactorial activities, and place them in the expanding fiction of culture, created exactly by this text.

3.2.4 Texts and sources

The secondary philological examination of the styles, structures, and the Matters of the 1977 *Silmarillion* text all pointed out the concepts of authorship/authority and of transmission. These can be viewed from the direction of the compilation itsElf: a differentiated system of author roles (*auctor*, *redactor*, *compilator*, *translator*) emerges, opening up the field of the text for a wider range of philological detail; but considerations of the activities linked to those roles (summarizing, adaptation, *ordinatio*) also appear as aspects of (fictitious) textual transformations pointing further to the cultural context, the *use* of the text by the fictitious cultures. From the opposite direction, however, the (fictitious) source of these translated, transmitted, adapted and ordered textual units, and the way these are operated in the fiction should also be considered, because these define what exactly the fictitious cultures use. The *Silmarillion* text constantly makes references to sources: in addition to providing information, the textual relations (real or fictitious) between the editor's text and its source play a large part in authenticating the account given in any 'Matter' of Middle-earth. In Tolkien philology, this means that the text's relation to the actual Tolkien manuscripts from which it is pieced together also authenticates *The Silmarillion* as a 'Tolkien text'. It is an important detail,

though, that the manuscripts the 1977 text relies on are all actual *texts*, and the editorial action thus most of the time shows a text–text relation (except for the editorial links[295]). In the textual world, however, the sources that the text claims (as opposed to the sources that it only implies) further elaborate the philological properties of the fictional compilation, and lead the reader on towards a larger cultural context that envelops the internal questions of this composite manuscript. The sources of Bilbo's fictitious compilation are fictitious texts, constructed exactly by the relation that is claimed between them and Bilbo's text. The terms of reference to these sources are not unambiguous and hint that not all sources are texts, not all information comes from sources that are 'works' at all. More generally defined "lore" or (perhaps orally transmitted) "songs" also appear and serve as starting points for a more expanded examination of the fictitious cultural context. *What* the *Silmarillion* text claims to use is instructive as to what exists in the fictional world of Middle-earth.

3.2.4.1 Source as text or composition

In the most visible and evident case, source use in the *Silmarillion* text is marked by explicit mentions, sometimes together with title or even author references. The question here is exactly *how* that source text is used by the editor: in the case of the *Lay of Leithian* or the *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, the relation was seen as that of a poetic original to a compressed prose summary, with some residual poetic language, sometimes amounting to actual quotation (twice in 'Of Beren and Lúthien'). But with the other titled sources, the relation is never so unambiguous. These works are always referred to for further information on some particular matter; and while in the *Leithian* or *Narn*, the editor recasts the entire text, here his action is restricted to *extracting* information, or simply naming the place where the reader might find

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[295] It is especially towards the end of 'QS' that we find explicitly editorial passages: see Kane, *Arda Reconstructed*, 197-98 (in table 21: three paragraphs of text are marked out as coming from "unknown" sources), 209-11 (table 22), 221-22 (table 23), and 231-32 (table 24).

more on any specific event. The *Aldudénië* of Elemmírë, Maglor's *Noldolantë*, the *Narsilion*, the *Fall of Gondolin*, the *Lay of Eärendil*, or the untitled song of the poet Glirhuin are clearly not sources for the whole unit which refers to them (although the *Lay of Eärendil*, as we have seen, might function like that for the first section of its chapter). There are two distinct modes of transmission here, constructing *Leithian* and the *Narn* in detail and leaving the rest unconstructed *except for* some detail or general thematic and generic definition.

It is perhaps significant that these sources are referred to nearly exclusively as *poetic* works, "songs". The *Aldudénië* and the *Noldolantë* are classified as "lament" (Index, 314, 326; 87), the *Lay of Leithian*, the *Narn*, and the *Lay of Eärendil* as "lays" (*Leithian*: 162, 165, 168, 171, 172; *Narn*: 198; *Eärendil*: 246), the *Narsilion* and Glirhuin's untitled composition as "songs" (99; 230). Only the *Fall of Gondolin* is not given any generic description. Their material is usually said to be "told" in the source (*Leithian*: 165, 168, 171, 172; *Aldudénië*: 76; *Noldolantë*: 87; *Gondolin*: 242; "said": *Narsilion*: 99; Glirhuin's composition: 230), only the *Lay of Eärendil* cites its material as "sung" (246, but also 247). However, *Leithian* gives a quotation from the poetic original introduced by "told" (171), so we can safely assume "telling" to be a neutral term, meaning simply the recounting of events, in whatever form. It seems that, apart from the units of the *Silmarillion* itsElf, the editor refers *only* to poetic works by title (and sometimes author), indicating that they constitute the most important corpus of poetic tradition in the textual world (Tolkien is said to have conceived *The Silmarillion* as based on "poems, and annals, and oral tales", viii). But the fact that he only rarely relies on them *for the actual narrative*, referring the reader to them for more details in specific cases suggests that for some reason they are untenable as sources for the *entire section*. Primary Tolkien philology (taking into account Tolkien's notes and letters) suggests that the editor inherited these references (along with the prose retellings) from the sources:[296] Tolkien's

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[296] Although Kane does not comment on any of these, an examination of the sources of the given passages shows that the references were indeed without exception in the source. See Kane, *Arda Reconstructed,* Table 9, 95

highly compressed prose accounts use these for the construction of the background, and most of them had never been conceived any clearer than these references.[297]

Secondary philology can offer several explanations for this phenomenon: these poetic works might not be available to the editor, or available only in fragments (references in other works, summaries); most of their contents might be deemed irrelevant or too divergent by him; they might contain material or interpretations he wants to suppress, and so on. Either textual activities (adaptation, extracting, rewriting) or interpretive functions (the material is irrelevant, its focus is inappropriate, its audience/cultural context is too far removed from the editor's intended ones) are created. The contrast between the case of *Leithian* and the *Narn*, given as sources for entire units, might also suggest that the use of these two 'classics' cannot be avoided (a comment on their status in the textual world), but generally poetic works, as opposed to their prose summaries or prose accounts of the same events from other traditions are easier to work with (practical considerations). Even the *Leithian* or the *Narn* sections can be conceived of as based on already existing prose retellings: all this projects differentiated fictitious traditions behind the *Silmarillion* text, where the degree and number of redactions is uncertain, but still highlights two distinct activities. One is the *transformation* of the original poetic work into a compressed prose narrative (which might or might not be performed by the editor himsElf), and the other the *use* of such accounts in other textual complexes (like the *Silmarillion* compilation). Relying on a source for individual details or for expansion of certain episodes is not the same thing as relying on a source for an entire narrative: taken

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(*Aldudénië*), Table 10, 105 (*Noldolantë*), Table 24, 230 (*Lay of Eärendil*), Table 12, 125 (*Narsilion*), Table 23, 222 (*Fall of Gondolin*), Table 22, 209 (Glirhuin).

[297] The 'Fall of Gondolin' was one of the first written at the 'Lost Tales' stage (Carpenter, *Biography*, 92, but cf. Christopher Tolkien's remarks on the manuscript history in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. II* (vol. 2 of *The History of Middle-earth*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, New York: Ballantine, 1992), 148-50), so it definitely existed as a composition; and probably as "the first versification of matter from the *Lost Tales*" (Tolkien, *Lays*, 176), Tolkien also started a poetic 'Lay of the Fall of Gondolin' (which did not get very far). *Lays* also contains early abandoned fragments of an alliterative 'Lay of Eärendel' (*Lays*, 170-75) and an alliterative 'Flight of the Noldoli' (from around 1925, *Lays*, 158). It is, however, clearly not these *texts* that are referred to, and as there is no sign of the rest, one can safely assume these texts had always been fictional.

together with the poetic remnants in the text (see below), these indications definitely contribute to expanding the fiction.

The text constantly brings up other, less closely defined sources too. The generic terms applied to these are "lore", "history", "tale" and "song" – these untitled, undefined sources (as well as the sElf-references to the *Silmarillion* text's constituent parts) are nearly always clearly prose texts or accounts. These terms specify the variety of fictional sources, sometimes explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, by more or less consistent use and their qualifications. The 'poetic vs. prose' distinction is here supplemented by the 'oral vs. written', 'accumulated vs. single' binarities, and the origin or date is also often mentioned. They are sometimes connected to well-defined places, or institutions, groups: taken together, these features elaborate the concepts of authorship and transmission, but they (again) point towards the cultural context, and authors' and transmitters' relations to knowledge.

"Songs" are the only sElf-evidently poetic category (all except one of the titled sources are explicitly placed here). They are often qualified with something: the "most *ancient* songs *of the Elves*" (49, my italics) gives both a (very) rough date and a cultural sphere where the songs originate. The rest of the sentence, "of which *echoes* are remembered *still in the West*" (49-50, my italics) suggests a transformation (actually, corruption) in transmission ("echoes"), a date of writing emphatically different from the date of composition ("most ancient"–"still"), and the place of preservation ("in the West"), constructing the West as not only the site of theologically defined knowledge, but also as the place where actual compositions, sources might be found about the past, where knowledge comes together with record. In the light of the great narrative of 'QS', this also means that the editor (and everyone else in Middle-earth) necessarily learnt about these songs and their contents from Noldorin sources, since the Noldor, the only Elves who came back from the West, are the only possible transmitters. The point of view this implies is consistent with the sElf-definition of 'QS' as a "tale tell[ing]

mostly of [the Noldor's] deeds" (60). Another reference to a song "*of Valinor* that the *Noldor* made *of old*" (110, my italics) also gives the Noldor as cultural origin and an undefined past time ("of old") as the date, but it also adds something about the theme of the work ("of Valinor")(note that here the song is used 'thematically' and not as a source: Fingon's singing it is part of the story). The "songs *of the Noldor*" (155, my italics) or songs "concerning the world of old" (162) are mentioned elsewhere too. There is even a detail about poetic vocabulary: we are told the Hiding of Valinor "songs call *Nurtalë Valinóreva*" (102). Another 'thematic' occurrence shows another Noldorin king, Finrod, sing to the newly discovered Men "of the making of Arda, and the bliss of Aman beyond the shadows of the Sea" (141), and even if this song, again, is not mentioned as a source but as part of the story, it contributes to constructing a body of Noldorin poetry in the fictional world which transmits information about otherwise unknowable matters back to Middle-earth (and to Men). The concept of (true) knowledge, linked to the West (and therefore, in Middle-earth, to the Noldor) here receives a literary (not to say philological) dimension. The death of the Two Trees and the deeds of Beren and Lúthien are likewise said to be "sung in many songs" (95, 188), and in 'Ak', we learn that "much story and song" was preserved in the Noldorin language, Quenya (262).

The other term that "song" is most frequently coupled or contrasted with is "lore". As its etymology shows, this term is connected to 'learning' (from OE *lár*, related to the verb *learnian*), and thus marks an accumulative body of knowledge rather than individual works. (The *OED*'s definition 5, "learning, scholarship", or a "body of traditional facts, anecdotes, beliefs related to some particular subject" would perhaps be the most appropriate.[298]) Since "lore" is frequently coupled with the idea of being 'written', it also has relevance as source and itsElf implies some sort of philological (textual) genesis and makeup. In most cases, "lore" is also defined more closely: we hear of Melkor's, Melian's and Mîm's lore (66, 113,

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[298] But cf. 5b, "a body of knowledge, a science".

204, although these are certainly not written), Elvish lore (147, 148, 158), the "lore of the exiled Elves [the Noldor]" (241), the "lore of the Rings of Power" (300, 301, 302) or the "treasury of … wise lore" in Rivendell (298), whose master, Elrond, is said to be "wise in all lore" even by Sauron (287, although possibly in unserious flattery). Its association with persons (even of the higher hierarchy, like Melkor or Melian) suggests it denotes someone's metaphysical or accumulated personal knowledge. But when it is not *personal* knowledge that is referred to, often even the method of its accumulation is given: writing. The death of the Two Trees is "written in lore" (95), and the Noldor in peacetime produce "poems and histories and *books of lore*" (117, my italics). In Númenor the "loremasters" learn the "High Eldarin tongue, in which much *story* and *song* was preserved *from the beginning of the world*" (262, my italics) – and make "letters and scrolls and books" (262). Some of the "scrolls of lore written in scarlet and black" (276) were preserved when the "wisdom and lore" (279) of Númenor perished at the end of the Second Age. Quenya (the High Eldarin tongue, the language of the Noldor) was already said to become the "language of lore" (129) in 'QS', and the various forms of written documents mentioned (note that the Noldor make "books" while the Númenoreans "scrolls" and "books", hinting at the cultural history of document formats[299]) again paint a fairly differentiated picture of what sort of sources these might be. We even learn the Númenoreans possibly produced rubricated manuscripts ("in scarlet and black", referring to the medieval practice of writing some important words, especially names, in red ink[300]), a detail highlighting the materiality of "lore". Thematically, this hoarded and probably systematized knowledge apparently concerns less story than technical-reflexive treatments: we repeatedly hear, for example, about Elvish "lore" about Men ("in Valinor", 145, "all their lore [concerning Men]", 149), implying a theological account rather than narratives. The 'QS' text often incorporates passages that seem to illustrate this (e.g., 42, 103,

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[299] See Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 34-6 on the cultural change between document formats.

[300] Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007), 24.

104-5, 141-42). The theme of the death of the Two Trees, however, "written in lore" (but also "sung in many songs", 95) includes narrative too in the sphere of lore. The coupling of "written"/"lore" "sung"/"songs" might hint at a written/oral binarity, the medium of transmission of knowledge.

Written material with explicitly narrative (and often 'historical') contents is referred to as "histories". We have already seen the Noldor produce "poems and *histories* and books of lore" (117, my italics); but the very title of 'QS' is translated on the title page as "The History of the Silmarils" (33), while an earlier reference in 'Vq' to 'QS' is by title and as "that tale" (31) practically equates this with "the histories *of the Elder Days*" (30, my italics), again narrowing the time period of the works. This appears once again (242), and another instance gives a thematic narrowing: "histories *of the Kings of old*" (148, my italics). Transmission explicitly comes into the focus with "histories of those days that still are known" (251): further, this passage explains the relative lack of information about the 'War of Wrath' (the Valar taking action at the end of the First Age) by the lack of authors: those who wrote the histories were not there, and "only learned long afterwards from their kinsfolk in Aman" (251). This is why "little is said in any tale" (251) about this. The "tales of sorrow" (162) among which the heroic stories of Beren and Túrin belong are also termed "histories" once (162). 'History', therefore, seems to be a rarely used but fairly uniform term for written narrative material of a specific period, about specific topics (mostly what could be classified as the matter of 'historical narrative'), connected to both 'QS' material (and with the Noldor) and the heroic matters (like Beren's story) that evidence says are available in writing (even though they are poetic in form and also termed "lays" and "songs").

The last term referring to untitled and undefined sources is "tale", and this is by far the most frequently used one. It is also the least clearly defined: its use more or less overlaps with all of the other terms, making it a general marker of 'narrative account' (either written or

spoken, but mostly not in poetic form). This is also the most often used term for the sElf-reference of the textual units of the *Silmarillion*, but even here, it is usually qualified in some way: "this tale tells mostly of [the Noldor's] deeds" (60) and "concern[] the Eldest Days" (103). Such closer definition is not restricted to the reflective uses: the "tales *of the Elder Days*" (38, my italics), "all the tales *of the Noldor*" (63, my italics), the "tale *of those days*" (180, my italics) all give period or thematic markers we have already met. But closer thematic clues are given too: from the remark that the hunting of the wolf Carcharoth was "of all pursuits of beasts whereof tales tell the most perilous" (185), we can extrapolate a thematic tradition (the "pursuits of beasts", not mentioned otherwise, but a genre well known from Greek or Irish mythology). In another thematic approach, the "*ancient* tales *of Doriath and Nargothrond*" (204, my italics) about the Petty-Dwarves give thematic focus (the Petty-Dwarves), period ("ancient") and cultural sphere (more exact and defined than before: not mostly broad Elvish groups, but a Noldorin and Sindarin center, bringing together the two great cultural spheres). 'Ak' refers to the tale of "the Trees of Valinor" (272, whose death was "written in lore and sung in many songs", 95), and is itsElf called the "tale of the Drowning of Númenor, which is now all told" (281; with an end marker, see Table 1). 'RP' mentions the "Tales *of the Eldar in Middle-earth* draw[ing] to their close" (299, my italics) as well as the "tale of the War of the Ring" (303, a reference to *The Lord of the Rings*). Only in the reflective uses is it certain that written accounts are meant: the rest might just as well be oral. Amandil, for example, "*spoke* to Elendil and the sons of Elendil, *recalling* the *tale* of the Trees of Valinor" (272, my italics), and while the fall of the High King Fingolfin is not sung by the Elves, "the tale of it is remembered still" (154), implying no (poetic) *composition* is made of the story, but it is remembered (and 'recalled' orally). As a contrast, when "no song or tale" (76) is made, when "no tale tells" (81) or "there is little tale" (95) of something (see also 106, 192, 237, 276), it seems to mean no narrative tradition is extant about the subject, as

well as indicating an 'exclusionary' act of *not narrating* something. 'Tale', thus, invariably means (individual) narrative, of whatever kind: mostly historical, it is also applied to the heroic narratives of Beren and Túrin (whose "tales" are "told in fewer words" or "in brief" in 'QS', 162, 199), but to the textual units of the whole *Silmarillion* as well.

This multitude of sources, "both living and written", truly creates an antiquity (and diversity) of story and text behind the *Silmarillion*. Tolkien's prized "depth effect" here definitely receives an explicit philological dimension. Not only a network of stories, a network of texts (and other sources *incorporated into texts*) is inscribed into the background, and even when those texts do not actually become visible, some of their details and features are certainly 'knowable'. The editor's text gives the impression it is merely the tip of a philological iceberg: generally he gives, as it were, a *transcript* of his source, but the constant references to other sources, differentiated by time period, form, cultural sphere of origin and cultural use construct them as in some (more or less specified) textual relation with the main text, and thus again highlight the figures and outputs of different authors (often not seen at all, and preserved solely in the editor's *silencing* them) and the ways of transmission through which the sources reach him. The *textuality* of Tolkien's fiction comes out in very strong terms especially in the philological network inevitably expanding into the thematic. It is by no means *merely* texts that he plays with: his whole fictional world is structured around texts and the relationship to them, either philologically or in more widely cultural terms. But the emphatic *plurality* of both his text and the textual system behind it, the stubborn refusal to name more than a handful sources implies, further, that the sources themselves are composite: the editor is, in many places, not talking about individual texts, songs or narratives, but about narrative and poetic *tradition* as a whole, with their characteristic conventions and themes.

3.2.4.2 Source as convention

These narrative and poetic traditions, however, are not simply implied and projected into the background. They can be seen as sources in a very real philological sense, because they can be detected in the text, over and above the explicit references to the unnamed and undefined sources (still conceptualized as texts, compositions, or at least narratives). The variations of style in the *Silmarillion* text (which results from Christopher Tolkien's piecing together parts from different manuscripts, different 'traditions' of evolution in Tolkien's manuscript corpus), some narrative or structural peculiarities, and the poetic fragments embedded in the text not only underscore this depth of traditions, but actually give some of their form (if not their content). These, then, also function as a different sort of fictional source: not only periods or cultural spheres of origin, thematic considerations or their channel of transmission can be determined, but sometimes their actual wording too. As opposed to fully fictional, 'absent' texts, we have them as partially available, but (again) only through the fiction of the editor, who transmits them even as he mutes and silences them, by transforming them from their original form (poetic composition) into his prose account. Their traces are different and more substantial: in a significant sense (certainly from the point of view of the reader), they are nothing but traces.

'QS' pervasively implies the presence of such a poetic convention. While references to 'tales' and 'histories' (or 'lore') distribute among themselves various properties of narratives (written, individual, accumulated, non-poetic), poetic tradition is often mentioned in a more general way, suggesting this to be the default form of record: when one of the Two Trees of Valinor is said to be called "many [other] names in song beside" (38), or certain objects, places, persons to be "*renowned* in song" (the Noldor, 53; Dagor-nuin-Giliath, a great battle, 106; the River Sirion, 120; my italics), the "*mightiest mariner* of song" (Eärendil, although he is not named here, 102, my italics), the "*fairest of the ships* of song" (Vingilot, Eärendil's

ship, 246, my italics), or of glory "mightiest in song" (the city of Gondolin, 239), it is clear that it is not necessarily *individual* poetic compositions are meant but a traditional body of poetry, the collective remembrance of the past. The italicized qualifications add thematic considerations: other mariners, other ships, other cities are sung about too; other Elvish groups, other battles, and other rivers are perhaps less "renowned" but there nevertheless. We can extrapolate some central topics of "song" in Middle-earth, and sometimes glean their words: the Hiding of Valinor, for example, "songs call *Nurtalë Valinóreva*" (102), which at the same time also gives the language of at least some of these (Quenya, the "language of lore"). When the tale of Beren and Lúthien is told "without song" (162), this means it is adapted to prose from poetry: "song", therefore, can denote the technical, formal side of the poetic tradition (its meter and other formal characteristics[301]). While this tradition is evidently venerable, in 'QS' it is possible to move in or out of it: Lúthien's beauty becomes "only a memory in song" (187), Fëanor prophesies the Noldor's deeds will be the "matter of songs" (88, as indeed they will), and Beren's had "become song even among the Elves" (166) already in his lifetime. Conversely, Bereg's people "passed out of the songs of those days" (145), a way of saying not only that there is nothing known about them, but also that they did nothing of note (at least relating to the central concerns of 'QS'). It is a demanding business to enter the poetic tradition: Manwë, reacting to Fëanor's prophecy, declares those songs to be "dear-bought… and yet shall be well-bought" (98). Fëanor does not promise anything but blood, toil, tears and sweat; the highest Vala in Middle-earth says it is worth it.

But, as previous stylistic examinations showed, the passages accumulating the use of poetic devices are sometimes justifiably 'adapted' from poetry. Justifiably, either because they can be traced back to Tolkien's poetic texts through primary philology, or because, despite the fact that they cannot, they concentrate the poetic devices so much that they

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[301] On these, see Patrick Wynne and Carl F. Hostetter, 'Three Elvish Verse Modes: *Ann-thennath, Minlamad thent/estent*, and *Linnod*', in Flieger and Hostetter, eds., *Tolkien's* Legendarium, 113-39.

practically do not differ from the other category – but differ characteristically and perceptibly from their textual context. In secondary philology, tracing back to Tolkien's poems means nothing: these texts cannot be equated with the poetic sources in the textual world. Those passages that cannot be derived from Tolkien's poems do not indicate 'lost Tolkien texts': they point to poetic works in the textual world.[302] In the manuscript context and the provenance of texts, this is in no way unusual: verse adapted to prose is frequently found in medieval manuscripts and is equally easy to pick out. Malory's 'Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius' is "stylistically very different from the rest of the work" and betrays its source, the alliterative *Morte Arthur* in a similar way.[303] Had this vanished (as it nearly has, except for the single remaining manuscript), Malory's text would be an indication that it had once existed. The adapted texts in *The Silmarillion* not only indicate poetic tradition in the textual world, but also offer fragments of the *actual text* of these lost poetic works. The devices of style we have already seen are sometimes shown in such density that, especially with the rhythmic qualities (the *form* of poetry, called "song", see above), they give a fair impression of poetry embedded in the prose. One example will illustrate this:

9.   **and** even as the Noldor **s**et foot upon the **s**trand
          their cries were taken up into the hills and **m**ultiplied,
          so that a **c**lamour as of **c**ountless **m**ighty voices
          filled all the **c**oasts of the North;
5   **and** the noise of the burning of the ships at Losgar
          went down the **w**inds of the sea as a tumult of great **w**rath,
          and far away [all **wh**o **h**eard that sound **w**ere filled **w**ith **w**onder]. (106)

Here we have parataxis (though somewhat looser than previously, in 3.2.1.2), alliterative patterns bridging the lines, the rhythm of the genitives (their quick pace even suggesting the crackling of the fire?) and of the final line (the part of which I enclosed in square brackets is a perfect blank verse line), uniting into an effect the reader cannot miss. Tolkien once started an

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[302] The following pages make use of material published in my article 'The Adapted Text'.
[303] Helen Cooper, 'The *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England: Malory and his Predecessors,' in Dover, ed., *A Companion to the* Lancelot-Grail Cycle, 156. Cooper mentions Malory's "northernisms" and the "alliterative structure of the original" as signals (ibid.).

alliterative poem on 'The Flight of the Noldoli',[304] though it never reached this scene; but the *Silmarillion*, as we saw, mentions Maglor's *Noldolantë*, about the Fall of the Noldor, and that could easily incorporate this.

The 'traditionality' of the poetic devices used in such passages is clearest when they find a foundation in Tolkien's own verse, but come from a story which is not treated in those poetic works. Often they are only short textual bits agreeing with the poetic corpus (sometimes even against the prose). One such case is "he piled the **th**underous towers of **Th**angorodrim" (118). This occurs in the 'Quenta Silmarillion' (§105; late 1930s); but before that, the prose tradition invariably spoke only of the "towers of Thangorodrim", never supplemented with the alliterating epithet. The "thunderous towers", however, can be seen in more than one places in both the verse *Túrin* (lines 714 and 951) and the *Lay of Leithian* (lines 2051 and 3281).[305] Both poems preceded the writing of the 'Quenta' in the late 30s, and the epithet evidently came to the prose tradition from the poetic one – a corroborated case of adaptation where the fragment of poetry embedded in the prose points justifiably to the poetic use. Another such detail is the curious imagery which accompanies Lúthien's learning about Beren's captivity: "[a] dark shadow fell upon her and it **s**eemed to her that the **s**un had **s**ickened and turned black" (185). The alliterative line hiding in this is unattested; but the image of the "sickening sun" is paralleled in the verse *Túrin*,[306] again pointing to a use of the image in the poetic tradition. Epithets are apparently used in it;[307] alliteration is a structural as well as a euphony device (otherwise alliterating phrases would not travel together).

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[304] See Tolkien, *Lays of Beleriand*, 158-70 (with Christopher Tolkien's commentary).

[305] In referring to Tolkien's long narrative poems, I will refer by the line numbers of the first version, unless otherwise noted.

[306] Second version, line 492: "and the stars were hid and the **s**un **s**ickened". See also *Children of Húrin*, 209: "it **s**eemed to her [Nienor] that the **s**un **s**ickened and became dim about her". This instance shows the connectedness of the two great poetic traditions, the Túrin and the Beren stories; the affinity, it appears, remains even in their later prose redactions (as the prose 'Narn' in *Unfinished Tales*).

[307] The use of epithets (in many cases alliterating) is a standard practice both in the prose tradition (e.g., the relatively stable epithets of Fëanor's sons, introduced at 60) and in the poetic one (e.g., Húrin's and Túrin's epithets in the verse *Túrin*, or those of Fëanor's sons in *Leithian*, passim).

There is no reason to disregard the implications in secondary philology, with necessary caution. Perhaps the most easily accessible part of the implied poetic convention is its forms; alliteration and rhyme, certain rhythms (iambic?) have already been seen as the most important formal features.[308] Easily scanning rhythms and rather conventional-looking phrasing often marks the *Silmarillion* text as 'poetic', and the formal characteristics of the poetic traditions can be collected and described. Wynne and Hostetter ('Three Elvish Verse Modes') treat these formal and linguistic features only, but do not discuss thematic aspects and implications of the cultural context. Yet this context might also be important, since we cannot be sure that *only* Elvish poetic tradition went into Bilbo's *Silmarillion* manuscript: he is, after all, an expert in versifying even First Age stories (witness his Eärendil poem in *The Lord of the Rings*). Some longer stretches and numerous smaller examples in stories that Tolkien had actually written in poetry earlier allow a useful glimpse of the process of Tolkien really adapting from his own verse. In the secondary layer, these suggest cultural practices which integrate into the contexts seen in *The Silmarillion*, practices that seem to appear as 'narrated', described. Most of such actually adapted texts come from the verse *Túrin*, but the *Lay of Leithian* is also a source. Only a few of them longer than a phrase or a few lines, they corroborate the theory of poetic style and its conventions inside the textual world.

A relatively great number of lines go back explicitly to the verse *Túrin*, while other such lines derive from the prose texts. In one certainly adapted line, "**b**earing a **b**urden heavier than their **b**onds" (208)[309] we can see how the adapter straightens out the syntax of the line, and makes a perfectly regular clause out of exactly the same phrases (still betrayed by its rhythm and alliterations). Other such lines are "that **gr**ief was **gr**aven on the **f**ace of Túrin and never

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[308] Cf. Wynne and Hostetter, 'Three Elvish Verse Modes', 116, 118-20, 122. See more such examples in my 'Adapted Text', 27-28.

[309] Cf. the verse *Túrin*, line 1336: "a **b**urden **b**ore he than their **b**onds heavier".

faded" (208),[310] and "he **w**alked as **o**ne **w**ithout **w**ish or purpose" (ibid).[311] "[**S**]et a **d**oom upon them of **d**arkness and **s**orrow" (197), though it has parallels in the verse *Túrin*,[312] is really closer to the wording of the 'Quenta Silmarillion' (ch. 16 §22), as is "during that time his **gr**ief **gr**ew less" (199)[313] to 'Quenta Silmarillion' ch. 17 §34.[314] Saeros's taunt with its firm three-line structure also comes ultimately from there (ch. 17 §39 = *Children of Húrin*, 87), while the line "he was **s**enseless in a **s**leep of great weariness" (207) from the 'Quenta Noldorinwa' (§12, with minor variation). The dying Glaurung's slandering of Túrin to Nienor (223), with its perceivable line structure and alliterations, has a source in the *Unfinished Tales* 'Narn',[315] and Túrin's plea to his sword to "**s**lay me **s**wiftly" (225) also derives from there.[316] These fragments reinforce the formal features already deduced, and fill the bare suggestions of conventional poetic forms with content – here we have scraps from the poetic handling of the Túrin story, both primary and secondary, both extant and lost. Perhaps a source reference in the vicinity or thematic sphere of such passages can be used as complimentary evidence that the *Silmarillion* text is building on the poetic tradition: some examples treated above (exx. 4, 8 in 3.2.1.2), as well as ex. 9 here, all relating to the Noldor, could then be linked to the *Noldolantë*, mentioned earlier (87). Not only do such instances strengthen the connection between style and source, and the implied poetic conventions and practices, they would also establish adaptation practices and point to philological features of the fictitious compilation. The textual activities of the adaptators/redactors would then be pointed out: rewriting a poetic text in prose, with a remnant of poetic phrases or passages, and placing source references.

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[310] Cf. the verse *Túrin*, lines 1419-20: "That **gr**ief was **gr**aven with **gr**im token / on his **f**ace and **f**orm nor **f**aded ever".

[311] Cf. the verse *Túrin*, line 1422: "Thence he **w**andered **w**ithout **w**ish or purpose". See further in my 'Adapted Text', 29.

[312] First version, lines 99-100; second version, lines 240-42.

[313] Cf. the verse *Túrin*, line 334: "his **l**ot was **l**ightened".

[314] Cf. also §30, and *Children of Húrin*, 80.

[315] Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*, 138. In *Children of Húrin*, Christopher Tolkien removes the dragon's ceremonial archaisms: "thou" and "thee", "hast", "shalt", "thyself" are substituted with regular forms.

[316] Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*, 145. As in the previous example, in *Children of Húrin* the regular forms can be found in the whole speech. Cf. also the verse *Túrin*, line 1363: "and **sl**ay me swift, O **sl**eep-giver".

In the image of Túrin turning "stone-still and silent" (208), we have already seen how the *Túrin* poem's style is preserved in the prose; more such instances yield conclusions about the interrelation of the prose and verse traditions, the stylistic conventions for central/climactic scenes, and even something about the compositional principles and methods. Eventually, some of the implied cultural context of the poetry can also be recovered. Perhaps the best example for such a process is the scene of Fingolfin's duel with Morgoth:

10.   for the **r**ocks **r**ang with the shrill musi**c** of Fingolfin's horn,
and his voice **c**ame **k**een and **c**lear
down into the **d**epths of Angband;
...
Therefore Morgoth **c**ame, **c**limbing **s**lowly
from his **s**ubterranean **th**rone,
and the rumour of his feet was like <u>thunder</u> <u>under</u>ground. (153)

The passage, as the stone image, is extant in the prose tradition,[317] but very close similarities exist between it and a part in the *Lay of Leithian* (lines 3545-47 and 3558-62):

while endless fastnesses of stone
engulfed the thin **c**lear ringing **k**een
of silver horn on baldric green.
...
The Morgoth came. For the last time
in these great wars he dared to climb
from subterranean throne profound
the **r**umour of his feet a sound
of **r**umbling earthquake underground.

This tragic climax keeps its poetic form in the prose redaction despite the fact that the surrounding text is not particularly poetic. But with this, the actual *poetic text* is glimpsed again, which might serve as source in other places in the narrative. The actually adapted texts do more than *imply* an underlying tradition in verse: they in fact *preserve* it, and had Christopher Tolkien not decided to publish *The Lays of Beleriand*, these instances would be

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[317] In fact, it derives with very minor variations from the 'Quenta Silmarillion' §144. One phrase also seems to have a parallel in the 'Sketch', 8: "The North shakes with the *thunder under* the earth". In *The Hobbit*, the phrase "roaring like thunder underground" is applied to Smaug when he discovers the theft of the cup by Bilbo (Tolkien, *Annotated Hobbit*, 273), and in outline V to 'The Story of Frodo and Sam in Mordor', Orodruin produces a "constant rumble underground like a war of thunder" (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The End of the Third Age* (The History of *The Lord of the Rings,* Part 4, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 11). In *The Lord of the Rings*, this becomes "a deep remote rumble as of thunder imprisoned under the earth" (*RK*, V.iii.918). The image, as can be seen, was very appealing to Tolkien and his fictitious authors.

the only traces of it left (compare the case of Malory and the nearly vanished *Morte Arthur*). 'QS' comprises stories centrally important to the fictitious cultures in the textual world. One cultural *use* of the poetic tradition, consistent with the use of "song" to mark 'tradition', is to create heroic narrative poems of these central stories. It is then perfectly natural that prose adaptations from these high-prestige poetic compositions stay closer to the texts of the poems: again, not only origin but also transmission details are implied.[318]

As it turns out, the 'adapted texts' can even lead to conjectures about the wholly 'absent text'. The fragments that might be thematically connected to the *Noldolantë* and show the poetic devices associated with certainly 'adapted' passages are admittedly not 'high poetry': but that too can be conceived of as the effect of a succession of redactors, starting with Maglor (the *auctor* of the "lament") and the first adapter of his poem to prose. Judging by the amount of 'prosifying' in the fragments (compared to other instances where practically whole lines are preserved nearly unchanged), more than one stage intrudes between the *auctor* and Bilbo's immediate source: the *Silmarillion* text again problematizes the authorship, the transmission, and the text itsElf from which its passages come. Instead of remaining speculation about the textual world, these conclusions point to aspects of textuality inscribed into special cultural positions in the text, the philological properties of the compendium, and historical processes the differences in the composite text imply.

3.2.4.3 Source and authority

The concept of authority is in many ways central to the secondary philological conception of sources and traditions. *The Silmarillion*, partly by its editorial synthesis, and partly by virtue of its presentation framework, manages to fictionalize not only the original authors of the

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[318] Further examples, including strikingly well-structured, stanzaic instances, are to be found in my article 'The Adapted Text', 32-36.

sources of its text (and sometimes even some of their words), but also the intermediate stages of textual transmission. These elaborate distinctions between the textual transformations and the authorial roles inscribed into the fictional past naturally foreground the historicity of the text, and create the effect of 'philological depth', introduced above; but they also problematize another aspect that leads us towards larger cultural and theoretical issues: that of authority. Just how 'authentic' is an account that somebody (however learned in the Third Age) selects for translation from a line of summaries and extractions, drawing on the work of a series of redactors (or at least scribes), based on the work of an adapter who summarized in prose the poetic work of an original author about events about which the author himsElf might not have had certain knowledge?

The Túrin story is a perfect example to illustrate the problems of authority in such a chain of transmission. The supposed poetic source of 'QS' chapter, the *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, is said to be written by a Man, Dírhavel (Index, 342-43), who lived towards the end of the same century at the beginning of which Túrin died. The chapter gives little indication as to how much of the hero's deeds were actually known and connected into the epic narrative,[319] but at Túrin's death Mablung would certainly have taken the knowledge back with him to Doriath; thence, with the death of Thingol and the ruin of Doriath, it would have found some way to the Havens of Sirion, where Dírhavel was supposed to have lived. It is, however, said earlier that "much that was held in memory perished in the ruins of Doriath" since "until the days of the War" (95), the Sindar did not keep much written record. Túrin's story happened long after the first days of the Wars with Morgoth; but it is not said that the remnant of the Doriath Sindar, fleeing to the Havens of Sirion, brought with them any written records. They were, at

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[319] The "fame" of Túrin's deeds (as the Black Sword of Nargothrond) is said to come to Doriath (211), and later on it becomes clear to the Elves that he was the Black Sword (217). Mablung appears at the very end of Túrin's story, referring to the "report" he heard that the Black Sword was now in Brethil (225). But since all through his life Túrin left annihilated partisan groups and sacked cities behind him, with practically no survivors, it is difficult to imagine exactly how 'true' details of his story ever reached even Doriath, not to mention Dírhavel half a century later.

the least, Elves, who did not necessarily have to learn the story from written sources: being immortal, they could easily have been contemporaries. We thus know nothing about the form of the Túrin *vita* for much of the century, towards the end of which Dírhavel produced the *Narn*. If he died in the attack of the sons of Fëanor towards the end of the 6<th> century of the First Age, he could technically have written the *Narn* any time in the second half of the century, which would place the composition roughly within 50 years of Túrin's death. The *Narn* would therefore be authentic in the sense that it was produced relatively soon after the actual events, and the author had the opportunity to talk to some of the people who might actually have seen some of them or remember more contemporary accounts and details. But since much of Túrin's life story did not leave any survivors, a certain amount of poetic license would have to be expected. Be that as it may, Dírhavel's work would then either have to be 'reduced' into prose and copied time after time, or itsElf be transmitted in some form to Bilbo, who would then function as the adapter. This latter case seems unlikely: the Túrin chapter contains much less poetic fragments than we would expect from a 'first-generation adaptation', and if it preserves anything closer from the poem, it is probably its structure, the winding narrative following Túrin's difficult life. With the interposing redactions from the original to Bilbo's time, the authenticity of the story is diminishing. The poetic fragments are important, because (as traces of the 'original') they are textual markers of authenticity; but in this, they stand in contrast with the rest of the text, which lacks this kind of authentication and remains of uncertain authenticity.

Transmission, as we saw in the Túrin example, happens not only between manuscripts and certainly not in a vacuum: it happens between genres (poem to prose), languages (Elvish accounts to Mannish poem to Bilbo's Common Tongue translation), and cultural contexts (the story of a Man among Elves, reported by Elves to a Man, transmitted my uncertain intermediaries and included in the compendium by a hobbit, living among Elves). A hierarchy

of authority is built up, both culturally and textually. Elves are more authentic sources for First Age events than anyone else, the Noldor the only authentic sources for the 'Matter of Valinor'. Everything that is available to Bilbo must have passed through either Elvish or Númenorean channels of transmission: Círdan, Gil-galad and Elrond are the links of Elvish culture with later ages, while Mannish tradition (and necessarily some Elvish too) is more accurate in the Númenorean point of view (while not necessarily being more 'true', since Mannish interpretation, as we will see, depends on another sort of knowledge in which the Númenoreans are apparently somewhat deficient). Written sources are easier to deal with (at the same time, with the introduction of immortal Elves, whose memory is a repository of much more extensive accumulated "lore" than anyone else's, they might ironically be less authentic), but Elves' oral accounts might preserve information closer to 'historical truth'. Stories and texts that go into Bilbo's compendium cross linguistic, cultural, and generic boundaries, subject at all points to change and interpretation, and in the process construct around themselves a huge fictitious network of aspects that qualify their meaning, invisible if not highlighted philologically. It is, then, less a question of what exactly 'history' is (what exactly happened, especially in cases when clearly no-one could possibly know what happened) than a question of whose representation of history it is.

The *Silmarillion* text very often makes clear that it relies on sources of some sort, and at least some of those are necessarily textual. The philological background thus projected is, as we have seen, anything but a two-dimensional, roughly painted backcloth: it includes history and an awareness of the historicity of stories and texts. Philologically speaking, this creates a series of authors with different authorial roles and different textual activities, and an indeterminate but nevertheless certain transmission sequence. One of the most important points the *Silmarillion* is making is that texts, like Great Rings, travel across anything: time,

space, cultures, and end up in the most unlikely places, in the hands of a hobbit. The main aspects of the textual fiction that this chapter was examining, authorship, transmission and interpretation, and all the particular conclusions inscribe basic philological-historical processes and phenomena into the textual world, and they do it much more subtly and extensively than a simple description could. Tolkien once worried about "destroy[ing] the magic"[320] of the unseen sights, the implied underlying stories of *The Lord of the Rings*, if one goes too near and actually tells them: but what the *Silmarillion* does is not this, and it does not destroy the magic. For one unseen sight (explanatory story) it creates countless possible, unknown variants that remain just as unseen, and even the one it shows it frequently questions. The conclusions lead towards the larger cultural contexts, and ultimately towards a theoretical reading of *The Silmarillion*.

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[320] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 333 (#247).

4. Aspects of culture: the cultural context and its use in *The Silmarillion*

The secondary philology of *The Silmarillion* inevitably leads the reader towards the cultural contexts of the fictive compilation and its constituents (whether texts, stories, or traditions and conventions more generally), thereby qualifying the role of authors, their textual activities, and their interpretive choices. The philological fiction creates the subjects of history: both in the sense of 'subject matter' (as we saw in the 'Matters of Middle-earth'), characters, narratives and cultural overlays, and in the sense of the producers of language, the writers and users of history. As opposed to discrete and individual roles (*auctor*s, redactors, translators), now it is the community appearing by implication in the texts that becomes important, since the actions of those individual authorial subjects are necessarily embedded in the layers and institutions of culture. The variation recovered by secondary philology finds an analogue in primary cultural history: cross-cultural transmission, or the permeability of 'mythic' and 'historical' in oral cultures decidedly play a role in the operation of *The Silmarillion* compilation. Both history and fiction, as discourses, "inscribe social and ideological contexts":[321] the cultural contexts encoded in the philological details of the text are thus the next step towards a wider, (cultural) historical and ultimately theoretical reading.

The variation, transformation, and interpretation of texts, determined by these cultural contexts, will thus have to be placed in a theoretical framework. Recent approaches to the essential variation of medieval manuscript culture, and its special concepts of author, work, and text point towards a plurality that interrogates conceptions of authority and meaning. Both Cerquiglini and Machan argue that the 'author' in today's sense is not a medieval category,[322] and 'work' and 'text' (terms familiar from Barthes's essay) can also be used only with a

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[321] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 67.

[322] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 8, Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 93-97. Cerquiglini, indeed, shifts the emphasis from "author" to "writing" entirely, and Machan goes on to refine what authorship, text and work mean in the Middle English literary field (98-131, 160-75). For a basic description of authority in the medieval literary theoretical framework, see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 10-15.

significant difference. Machan argues that in the Middle Ages the idea of the text itsElf "included interpretations that literally and traditionally accrued to it";[323] these newer approaches thus present a set of interconnected and interdependent (even interactive) representations that in turn reinterpret the more conventional philological concept of tradition. The proliferation of texts and authors, already seen, projects a distinctively philological depth into the textual world but continuously puts authority up for debate; seen in their diverse cultural contexts, these various representations of the world are to a large extent of unknown origin, used and reused in other contexts their original authors might have had no idea about and would possibly not even have approved of (quite as Tolkien himsElf might not have been satisfied with the 1977 *Silmarillion* text). Texts and representations are shaped by a host of unknown, forgotten, hypothetical figures, performing different functions in establishing the representation, or contributing to a description of the world or its history. The textual transformations and the act of compiling are seen as acts of knowledge production; but these acts can be radically different from the authorial acts of the original writers. Indications of the contexts can help establish what interpretations are encoded in the texts in the first place, and how they are upheld, silenced or changed in the compilation context: how the ideological operations of this textual collection affect the individual discourses of culture appearing in it.

Clearly, *The Silmarillion* is not only structurally analogous to a medieval manuscript: it models its function too, and thus creates its context. By expanding the horizon of secondary philological inquiries to the cultural contexts and their implications, I am now looking for philological traces of interpretations and traditions of reading that shape texts. Tolkien faces the reader with the way manuscript texts work, in the process 'defamiliarizing' their operations, questioning or problematizing their representations about culture and the past. But

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[323] Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 144; see further, 142-45. Bruns ('Originality,' 120-25) also regards writing as "textual intervention" (122).

he primarily does that with a sensitive creation of detail about what texts contain or imply, how they refer to or preserve their cultural connections; and these are still philological details.

4.1 Cultural contexts

Secondary philology looks at the *Silmarillion* text as if it was a manuscript: its textual clues signal how the cultural contexts contributed to the production of this fictional compilation. Textual markers of the traditions of different cultures are part of the fiction of the text here, and help produce elaborated and differentiated ways of representing how cultures and individuals use texts. The individual textual units of *The Silmarillion* naturally define different stances and contexts of these: none of them, however, are as clearly composite as 'QS', the one that implies the greatest variety. The indications of the cultural context in the *Silmarillion* text point in three directions: towards the *origin* of the text, its *author*, and its *audience*. These are contexts of *production* and *reception* at the same time: who the text (section) was originally produced by/for. The fiction of the manuscript blurs these because the stages of the transmission chain are mostly indeterminate and invisible. In 'QS', these details are different in the main thrust of the narrative, intertwining the matters of the Noldor, Sindar, Men or Dwarves, and in the descriptive composite chapters, which expand the background (cultural and otherwise) of the narrative of the Noldor, contextualizing the embedded narratives of the Sindar, Men, or Dwarves. References to language, cultural horizons (the origin and use of any given detail), and instances constructing specific points of view are especially useful in examining how the text creates its cultural context.

4.1.1 Languages, horizons, shifts

While mentioning languages constructs them in the fiction, actual words in those languages substantiate them. While 'Ai' declares that Eru "in Arda is called Ilúvatar" (15), 'Vq' specifies further: Eru "in the *Elvish tongue* is named Ilúvatar" (25, my italics), and this illustrates how the language becomes indicative of the cultural context of a textual detail. "In Arda" includes all in the created world, but "in the Elvish tongue" implies Elvish culture(s) and its (their) knowledge of the creator. Whenever a name is provided in any other language than that of the text, it constructs the given culture's knowledge of the item and the value assigned to it. The text at these points explicitly incorporates this specificity, and thereby constructs (inside the fiction: preserves) what cultures know and value. This also has philological implications: at least one author along the transmission chain felt it important to include the detail (and the rest felt it important to preserve it). Their reasons are uncertain: they could themselves belong to the given culture (in this example, the Elves), be writing for an audience in it (the difference of production/reception contexts), or to another (e.g., Mannish) audience *about it*, or simply required to preserve the detail for some cultural reason (e.g., the prestige of Elvish names that is important for any author and any audience). When names in one language displace others in another one, or when the values assigned to them are problematic (their meaning is unexplained or taken for granted; some are preferred or excluded), the text advances to constructing relationships between cultures. Names and their meanings, knowledge, the importance assigned to certain points, the points of view the text takes on certain matters (such as Ilúvatar's or the Valar's influence on history) invest the previously seen author positions with actual acts and decisions, while the juxtaposition, oscillation or suppression of points of view supply not only cultural context but cultural content as well. Agøy's objection that a non-unified point of view in *The Silmarillion* works

against the textual conception of the work[324] could not be further from the truth: it is *exactly* this that constructs both the fictional world and the text as surprisingly 'authentic' representations of culture. The incorporation of any such detail into the compendium is an act of interpretation: but what they show is also *how cultures interpret*. Tolkien's focus on textuality is expanding into a more general depiction of cultural representation – metatextuality gives rise to meta-representation.

The shorter units of *The Silmarillion* are easiest to place in this respect. 'Ai' is clearly Elvish: although there is only one explicit linguistic reference in it ("which the Elves call Arda, the Earth", 19), it claims that its information ("what has here been declared") "is come from the Valar themselves" (22), and for this only the Elves (those who had been to Valinor) could have served as transmitters. The knowledge/non-knowledge of the Elves/Eldar is invoked on three other occasions as well (19, 22 (twice)), while other cultures only appear thematically, in comments and explanations (e.g., Men in a passage about the Children of Ilúvatar, 18), or implicitly (Eru "in Arda is called Ilúvatar", 15). All this firmly places 'Ai' within the Elvish horizon, and together with the Index entry assigning its authorship to Rúmil, sketches a line of transmission stretching through the entire history of *The Silmarillion*. The theologizing commentaries or explanations inserted into the narrative on ten occasions can come from any stage in this transmission process; one of these, however (on the physical shape of the Valar and their relation to the body), might still be interesting, because it is one of the few cases in *The Silmarillion* when the author (either of the whole text or just the inserted explanatory passage) refers to "us" and "we" (21), thereby implying a position within Middle-earth – so general, however, that neither author or audience can be certainly extrapolated from it.

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[324] Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 155, 159-61.

'Vq' is somewhat more complicated. Its thematic focus is the Valar, and its explicit source "the lore of the Eldar" (25), but it obviously adds some other material to this. Names are given "in the Elvish tongue as it was spoken in Valinor", "the speech of the Elves in Middle-earth", and as they appear "among Men" (25); other "tongues of the Children of Ilúvatar" (30) are also mentioned. References to the Elves (25, 26, 27, 30) or Eldar (25, 29, 32), the Noldor (31), the Sindar (29) and Men (26), as well as its coupling "Elves and Men" (25, 26, 27) and references to the "Children of Ilúvatar" in general (29, 30, 31, of Eru, 269) imply a predominantly Elvish cultural context, but still support the conclusion that 'Vq' is itsElf a compilation, where information from many sources and cultures is gathered together. Since in the description of the Maiar and the Enemies 'Vq' incorporates some Third Age material (Olórin: 31, Sauron: 32), and it also mentions the Númenóreans (30), it is clearly produced in its current form late in the Third Age or after that. The differentiated view of Elvish (in Valinor, in Middle-earth, Noldor, Sindar) and Mannish cultures (Men, Númenóreans) implies a certain cross-cultural and therefore ambiguous position for this text, making its history more complex: the "lore of the Eldar" (25) that it claims to be based on is clearly supplemented here with other, often much later information. The different authorial/redactorial positions in its transmission are thus seen to produce a text from various sources over time: in addition to effectively historicizing the text, their textual activities are also highlighted. They introduce details that relate the text not only to the "histories of the Elder Days" (30), but also to more contemporary audiences, and use unnamed, uncredited sources too ("some there are…" (27), "it is said" (30)). Further, 'Vq' is full of markers of a work conceived in a systematic, textual format (title stating source, titled sections, a distinct introductory and closing paragraph in the longest subunit, and an *explicit* at the end), the (written) work of a line of authors, presumably from different cultures. Agøy's commentary points out that its audience is "clearly not" Elvish, but that is neither necessarily true or of real

importance:[325] it is easy to see that the construction of the compiled text thematizes here exactly the cross-cultural transmission of knowledge that is authorized in a certain way and transformed in another (additions, accumulation of detail, etc.) by the textual activities of the following authorial figures.

In 'Ak' and 'RP', due to the nature of the material, it is the Mannish context that dominates. This focus is evident in 'Ak' in more ways than one: it is naturally the Númenóreans (most probably the Exiles who survive the cataclysmic end of the Second Age) who write and preserve the story, and the text consequently marks only those linguistic and contextual details that do not belong to this sphere. Elvish presence is nevertheless felt: the Sindarin/Grey-elven (259, 261) and the High Eldarin (Quenya) tongues (261, 262), as well as the "Elven-tongue" generally (262, 269) are mentioned (indeed, "Grey-elven" and "High Eldarin" are terms that only appear in texts associated with Mannish culture and tradition), and the Elves' knowledge is referred to elsewhere too (Eldar (259, 264)). But otherwise 'Ak' makes most use of local knowledge: "it is said" (267, 276, 279, 281) is a frequently used introductory formula, but the "loremasters" (262, 281 (twice)), the "wise among *them*" (262, my italics), the "Exiles" (281), the "Dúnedain" (281), the "kings of Men" (281) are also invoked, giving the dominant cultural context as unmistakably Númenórean. Since the work could only have been written after the Downfall, it is clear that the Exiles, who were also the ones faithful to the friendship of (and the knowledge inherited from) the Elves, are responsible for its production. The name for the entire culture, "the Númenóreans" is also given "in the Grey-elven tongue" (261), and the name of their home island in several different

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[325] Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 150. The arguments that the audience clearly knows nothing about the Valar (which cannot apply to the Elves) and that Elves are referred to as "they" (other than the author's own culture) are not substantial: such a systematizing text could have been compiled even for an Elvish audience as record, and then taken over by some other editor (or just Bilbo), while the third person references to Elves (if not simply marking an Elvish author's wish to keep some distance from the material and mark non-involvement) could have entered the text with any non-Elvish editor/redactor. Bilbo's text is not *for* Elves but *from* the Elvish.

forms, complete with translations,[326] marking the influence of Elvish culture. 'RP' does not show such a unified perspective: for details of naming or knowledge it refers to the Elves (286, 289, 292, 298, 300) or specifically the Sindar or Noldor (285), but also to Men (286, 288, 291, 296, 299) and the Númenóreans (293), and in conjunction as "Elves and… Men" (303), indicating that at least terminologically it handles these cultures on the same footing (and not speaking from the position of one of them, as 'Ak', to which it refers twice, 290). Changes of names indicate the shifting balance: the mountain Elves named Orodruin (292) the Númenóreans renamed as "Amon Amarth, which is Mount Doom" (293: still Elvish words, though). Indefinite sources are present too: "it is said" still introduces a good number of details (289, 292, 293, 303), and similar attributions to unspecified sources or authorities also appear (285, 291, 292, 293, 297, 300). This unit is also essentially problematic in the context of Bilbo's compendium: Bilbo did not even see the end of the story, let alone write (even less *translate*) it, but most likely this work is not even written in Elvish to begin with. Both 'Ak' and 'RP' show a layering of cultural and linguistic details; but while 'Ak' firmly places itsElf into a Númenórean context, 'RP' illustrates the changing historical/cultural conditions of the Third Age by not showing such a clear-cut focus. 'Ak' is a Númenórean work incorporating Elvish elements; 'RP' is a Third Age compilation (we could even risk localizing it to Elrond's court in Rivendell, where he "gathered… many Elves, and other folk of wisdom and power from among all the kindreds of Middle-earth" (298)) with primarily a Mannish-Elvish perspective. Two different methods of construction, and therefore different textual activities, different types of authorial attitudes are created.

Most of the longest and most complex section, 'QS', is linguistically overwhelmingly Elvish, more specifically Sindarin. When the text gives names and meanings, language and cultural context, it predominantly signals the Sindar (in various phrasings) as origin (37, 40,

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[326] Andor: "the Land of Gift" (260), the name the Valar gave it (interestingly, an Elvish word); Elenna: "Starwards" (261); Anadûnê: "Westernesse" (261); Númenórë means the same "in the High Eldarin tongue" (261), and in its worn-down form gives the customary Mannish term, Númenor.

56, 59, 60, 91, 118, 119, 122, 124, 133, 143, 155, 165, 204). Even the names of the Noldorin dynasty are given "in that form which these names later bore in the tongue of the Elves of Beleriand" (60). This, however, is only one aspect of the Elvish focus: other such references mention the language of the Noldor (Quenya, 49, 63, 79, 91, 99, 118, 119, 123, 124, 217), the Vanyar (99) and even a smaller group, the Falathrim (58). Over and above this, other terms appear to mark Elvish, sometimes more ambiguously: Elvish/Elves (37, 48, 49, 54, 143), Eldarin/Eldar[327] (79, 91, 103, 188), and Calaquendi[328] (53). Most of the names that are given a meaning but not any specific language or culture are also Elvish, either Quenya or Sindarin (such are the names of the Elvish divisions themselves, the Vanyar, Noldor, and Teleri: 53; the Index and the Appendix, with its 'Elements of Quenya and Sindarin Names', help decide most of these). Since Bilbo's text is a translation, what this nomenclatural Elvishness suggests is that most of the sources are in Elvish, more specifically probably Sindarin. That, however, does not mean that all the authorial positions from which the text originates are Sindarin: in the context of Sindarin language policy, the Noldor "took the Sindarin tongue in all their daily uses" (129), and even though Quenya lived on as "a language of lore" (129) and thus appears in the sphere of the unspecified sources, Sindarin can be safely assumed to be the default language of Elvish sources, and the default cultural context of the whole 'QS'.

Considering the thematic focus of 'QS' (the Noldor) and some cultural factors (the outlawing of Quenya), this Elvish presence is not surprising, and after all, Bilbo is said to translate "from the Elvish". But this Elvish substratum is nevertheless important, because it has its own layers. The names of the Elvish divisions, for example, are obviously in their

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[327] 'Eldar' is itself an Elvish name, but given them "in their own tongue" by a Vala, Oromë (49); the Index specifies that in references to the "Eldarin" language, Quenya is meant (326), which in 'QS' is associated with the Noldor.

[328] This term is also Elvish, meaning the "Elves of Light" (53); it is of unspecified origin, but since the Elvish languages were not yet developed into dialects at the point when the term is invented, it can be assumed to be 'Original Elvish' or simply Quenya.

original (Quenya) form, even if this goes unexplained:[329] this early part of the story of the

Elves is exactly the one where such cultural (and linguistic) divisions start to emerge, pointing

to a 'unified' Elvish tradition underlying all the others, incorporated into the 'QS' tradition

(cf. later, but still in the Valinor part of the story, where even the names of Noldorin princes

are given in Sindarin). A place name in Beleriand, however, is instructive: Morgoth's cry is

said to echo here in the mountains, and "*therefore* the region was called Lammoth; for the

echoes of his voice dwelt there ever after" (80, my italics). The text gives no real logical

connection between name and aetiological myth; *lóm-*, however, actually means "echo"

(Appendix, 361), and supplies it. We also do not see why one of the Dwarvish cities,

Hadhodrond "in the Elvish tongue", was "afterwards in the days of its darkness called Moria"

(91) – until the Appendix gives us *mor*, "dark" (362) and *iâ*, "void, abyss" (360; Moria is

cited as an example at both). The connection between name and translation can be tentative

(unexplained) in the 'QS' text, but where a logical/linguistic connection is implied, the

cultural context is inevitably brought into play: the 'original', unified Elvish culture, or the

one in Beleriand giving (and explaining) names on the common understanding of Elvish

words and roots. All the names treated above are naturally comprehensible and require no

explanation if the text surrounding them is Elvish, and the audience is supposed to be

proficient in the language.

But other contexts are also implied by the references to language. Sindarin is only

termed "Grey-elven"[330] and Quenya "High-elven" in Mannish texts. Tinúviel, the improvised

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[329] For these, the Index and the Appendix can be instructive. The Vanyar are in the 'QS' text called "the Fair Elves" (53), and only their Index entry specifies this refers to their blonde hair (354); and why the Noldor is a "name of wisdom" (53) is never explained. The name of the Teleri is given the explanation "for they tarried on the road" (53): this makes sense only together with the detail in the Appendix that *tel-* means "finish, end, be last" (364). The Úmanyar are so named because they "came never to the land of Aman"; their Index entry, however, gives a closer linguistic explanation ("not of Aman", contrasting it with "Amanyar", 353), while the Avari, "the Unwilling" (52) never receive even this much. The naming of the Falmari is connected to the fact that "they made music beside the breaking waves" (53): but even if we know that "falma" is a word meaning "(crested) wave" (Appendix, 358), its connection to music is still very oblique (it must be based in the association of the sea and the Music of the Ainur: 19).

[330] Even though the Sindar are called "Grey-Elves" without restriction in other parts as well.

name Beren gives to Lúthien, is marked as being "in the Grey-elven tongue" (165; the Index specifies further that this is a poetic word, 351), while Túrin's adopted name Turambar "in the High-elven speech signified" Master of Doom (217). The only other occurrences of these linguistic terms are in ch.XVII ('Of the Coming of Men into the West', a chapter dealing with Mannish traditions; 147) and 'Ak' (a 'genetically' Mannish text, 261, 267): together with the two 'heroic' chapters of 'QS', these indicate a Mannish origin that again suggests authors (contextualized in different cultures) whose work is incorporated and transformed at the different authorial positions in the transmission chain. Dwarvish traditions are included as well: both their own origin and beliefs (44) and the original names of some of their centers (91) are cited, including traditions that go back to one of the Valar, Aulë ("he declared to their fathers of old…", 44). These underlying cultural strata and integrated cultural details help construct the 'QS' text as a fictional compilation, the collection of various different sources in one work; exactly by the way these philological details expand into the cultural, they also substantiate those cultures and add new functions to the authorial roles and transmission activities implied.

The balance of Elvish/Sindarin cultural focus and other cultural contexts is refined in other ways too. When a holy mountain in Valinor, Taniquetil, is assigned a Sindarin name too ("but the Sindar spoke of it in their later tongue as Amon Uilos", 37), a natural cultural process is invoked: even though the Sindar never actually went to Valinor and thus never needed a name to refer to the mountain itsElf there, the Noldor later brought back stories to Beleriand in which Taniquetil figured, and which, therefore, the Sindar took over (promptly supplying a Sindarin name too). But when the image of one of the Trees of Valinor, planted in the city of Tirion in Valinor, is given a name *only* "in the Sindarin tongue" (59), a different sort of process is seen. Here the Sindarin layer *overwrites* the original (Vanyarin or Noldorin: these two groups live in the city, 59) while still constructing it in the background (the Sindar

could only learn about these details from the Noldor, so the absent original is still constructed by the thematic content), and implicitly signals another tradition exactly at the moment of suppressing it (the original name of the tree). This is a very well-defined textual activity by one of the authors/redactors somewhere along the transmission chain, and especially if we consider that in the same paragraph a landmark in the city of Tirion is given an explicitly inaccurate translation (Mindon Eldaliéva, which the Index translates as "Lofty Tower of the Eldalië" (341), is glossed in the text as the "Tower of Ingwë (59), clearly not an exact translation), the effect is only strengthened. Changes of names frequently get attention in the later parts of 'QS' too, showing either the layering of the cultures (and history) on the landscape (place names such as the Dwarvish cities (91), Hithlum (< Quenya Hisilómë, 118), Anfauglith (< Ard-galen, 151)) or the shifts of cultural horizons. The name of the Noldorin king Finrod, for example, is changed to Felagund after his establishment of the subterranean city of Nargothrond (61, 114; his new name derives from the Dwarves working for him: 'felak-gundu', cave-hewer (Index, 330)).[331] Another culturally conditioned change is in some way related: King Turgon, after establishing his own hidden city, "appointed its name to be Ondolindë in the speech of the Elves in Valinor, … but in the Sindarin tongue the name was changed, and it became Gondolin" (125). Even though this is introduced by "It is said", a marker of unknown (maybe unreliable) sources, the fact that the official Quenya name (it is "appointed" by the king himsElf) of a Noldorin city is "changed" to Sindarin is telling. Whether the change affected the inhabitants of the city and their daily usage or only the record of events, this implies either an overpowering Sindarin cultural presence (a cultural context prevalent in actual history) or the Sindarin construction of record (the cultural horizon implied by the text). Men figure in these changes too: even though "the name given to Men *in*

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[331] Interestingly, when first mentioned, the meaning of the name is inaccurately given (as in the case of Mindon Eldaliéva, above): "afterwards named Felagund, Lord of Caves" (61). The second occurrence of the change is the part that actually gives the origin: "he was named in the tongue of the Dwarves Felagund, Hewer of Caves" (114).

Valinor in the *lore* that told of their coming" was "Atani" (143, my italics),[332] "in the speech

of Beleriand that name became Edain" (143). On top of the diversity of languages and

cultures, these suggest the permeability of cultural boundaries: cultures are shown as dynamic

and interacting with each other (relating to the other, taking over names, assigning status and

authority), but a distinct Sindarin bias is nevertheless seen to develop: this is partly politically

conditioned (by Thingol's language policy), but since the focus of 'QS' is the Noldor and

their deeds, the Sindarin bias of the text can be construed as 'ideological', belonging to the

text itsElf. While the story (and Doom) of the Noldor subsumes the Sindar, the Sindar take

over the recording, transmitting, or compiling of the story, and are slowly established as the

dominant Elvish culture in the text.

The 'QS' text also explains this by 'naturalizing' Sindarin. While mentioning a language

constructs it, names and words substantiate it, reflection historicizes it, and Tolkien also pays

attention to project a history behind his languages and explain their relationships. The origin

of Elvish languages is seen as unified: "all of the languages of the Quendi were of one origin"

(141). Physical distance "caused the sundering of the [Teleri's] speech from that of the

Vanyar and the Noldor" (59), and this also explains why "the tongues of the Calaquendi in

Valinor and of the Moriquendi in Beleriand had drawn far apart" (108). At the point when the

Matter of Valinor turns into the Matter of Beleriand, Noldor and Sindar start to live next to

each other, and the latter start to implicate themselves in the overarching story of 'QS', their

linguistic differences are thus both emphasized and depicted as a result of a natural process.

Tolkien's attention to linguistic change and history is understandable (he frequently remarked

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[332] "Atani" (as well as "Quendi") appears in the 'Ai Supplement' at the end of ch.I of 'QS', a clearly interpolated
unit that is impossible to authenticate; it is Ilúvatar himself who uses the name (41). The doubtful authority of
the passage is highlighted by Ilúvatar referring to the Elves with an Elvish word, "Quendi" (further, one that the
Elves give to *themselves* only much later, 49); unless this is meant to suggest Ilúvatar's omniscience, it clearly
points to an Elvish author, who supplies a theologizing explanation for the differences of Elves and Men, and
assigns his theology to the godhead, incorporating it into 'QS'. If this is the "lore" meant in ch.XVII of 'QS', this
makes a clear distinction between its own material and that of ch.I (or the 'Ai Supplement'), again creating a
separate layer of the 'QS' text.

that his stories were only settings for his languages[333]), but in the text this also serves to throw the differentiation of Elvish groups into greater relief, creating cultures that are more characteristically different from each other (in their language as well as in their attitudes and temperament).[334] But with this, Tolkien also defines and differentiates (fictional) texts, the origins of the components of Bilbo's compendium. The 'naturalization' of Sindarin is only partly a political fact of Beleriand: even before King Thingol's outlawing Noldorin Quenya, the Noldor are said to "[learn] swiftly the speech of Beleriand, whereas the Sindar were slow to master to tongue of Valinor" (113). The Noldor had already been noted earlier for "delighting in tongues and scripts" (39), so this linguistic adaptation is not surprising: the result is that "in many parts of the land the Noldor and the Sindar became welded into one people and spoke the same tongue" (117). King Thingol's decision therefore only affects the *prestige* of Noldorin Quenya (which turns into a "language of lore" (129)), not necessarily its daily use. The apparent Sindarin bias of the 'QS' text is therefore also an aspect with its own history, and the cultural relationships constructed this way again enrich the fictional genesis of Bilbo's sources.

We have seen examples of linguistic variety in 'QS' where several names were provided for individual things (places, cities, etc.); but while these cases always exhibit priorities (as the Gondolin example), in others genuine alternatives are presented. In a chapter where the mythological again intrudes into history, the Valar's creation of the Sun and the Moon, we are told about the names "the Vanyar of old" give the new heavenly bodies (Isil and Anar, complete with translation: 99). Beside the fact that the information places the composition of this part of the text definitely after the end of the First Age (what the Vanyar called anything after the Noldor had departed from Valinor could only be learned in Beleriand at the very end

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[333] "My work… is all of a piece, and *fundamentally linguistic* in inspiration. … The 'stories' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse." (Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 219 (#165)). See on this Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 63-67, and 99-115.

[334] Flieger, in *Splintered Light*, chs.10-11 (81-95) interprets the divisions of Elvish languages in their relation to Light, the motif metaphorically standing for a fullness of meaning.

of the First Age, when the Vanyar took part in the war with Morgoth), the Noldorin names that are then supplied (Rána and Vása, also with translation: 99), establish two traditions of naming. Since these two are not placed in the Noldorin–Sindarin matrix (where one of them would be culturally dominant), they stand as real alternatives, recorded in a text that collects old tradition. Later, after a catastrophic defeat, the Elves build a hill of the dead bodies, and name it "Haudh-en-Ndengin…, the Hill of Slain, and Haudh-en-Nirnaeth, the Hill of Tears" (197). Here the language of the two names is clearly the same, and lacking any priority, they stand as true alternatives (as well as showing the cultural attitudes involved in the naming). The act of naming itsElf is problematized in the two heroic narratives, especially Túrin's story: Túrin keeps renaming himsElf to mark new phases of his life, and even though most of his names are in Sindarin, one (Turambar) is in the "High-elven speech" (217).[335] In 'QS', language is seen as a basically constitutive aspect of cultures and subjects: especially since all the cultures, subjects, and stories are told in the text, in language.

4.1.2 Points of view

The details of language and cultural context also construct definite points of view in the text, along the lines of the Sindarin ideology outlined above. The cultural context of production as well as one of reception is constructed, but the fiction of the manuscript with its indeterminate stages of transmission and possible rewriting blurs these lines. Audiences are nevertheless there in the layers of the fiction: while explanations about the Elves (such as their relation to Mannish speech, 141) might point towards non-Elvish audiences, such details could have been added at any point in the fictional transmission of the text and suggest an editor who sees his audience as different from the text's previous audience. How such textual details can

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[335] For a very detailed and thorough interpretation of Túrin's self-renamings (primarily in terms of the dramaturgy of his story), see Elizabeth Broadwell, 'Esse and Narn: Name, Identity and Narrative in the 'Tale of Túrin Turambar'," *Mythlore* 17.2 (1990): 34-44.

define the author or the point of view can be instructive, because that fleshes out the cultural contexts built up by linguistic and cultural references, and helps clarify some of the authorial positions.

It is, again, predominantly Elvish authors whom secondary philology can thus detect, but in some cases the text is suggestive of more than this. In the 'Ai Supplement', when Ilúvatar is said to use "Quendi" and "Atani" (41-2), the obviously unauthorizable text betrays the Elvish author by the use of these Elvish words. The same happens in ch.II of 'QS', when Aulë and Yavanna use the words "kelvar" and "olvar" (45-46) before the Elves even wake up: this again suggests that an Elvish author imports his/her own culture (and language) into the mythological material. The wistful description of "the beaches of Elendë in those days" (61) reflects both a nostalgic attitude and a suggestion of an eyewitness account that might also construct the author as Elvish. The terminology of Elvish subgroups (52-3, 54) and the preoccupation with divisions and names are part of an unreflected Elvish substratum in the 'QS' text (see above, 4.1.1), but alongside its probable Elvish authorship it might also point to an audience for whom the information would be useful (and who are themselves not Elvish). The statement that Lenwë and his group "passed out of the knowledge of their kin" (54), coupled with the text's silence about them, again defines the author as somehow related to "their kin".[336] In the chapter 'Of Men', the collection of (not very flattering) names Men are called and the summary judgment that "of Men little is told in *these tales*, which concern the Eldest Days before the waxing of mortals and the waning of the Elves" (103, my italics) imply a (not very sympathetic) Elvish author (and a conception of the work itsElf), just as the remark about the treacherous Men in the final battles of the First Age ("and the Elves do not forget it", 251) betray a grudge-bearing Elvish author (or alternatively, a Man stressing this as ominous). More specific than this, the remark that the internal struggles of Finwë's house are

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[336] Lenwë and the Nandor appear once again in the composite editorial chapter 'Of the Sindar', but even there it is declared that "little is known about [their] wanderings" (94), and the interim between their departure and their return is narrated by reference to uncertain sources: "it is said" (94).

"graven in the memory of the Noldorin Elves" (65) at the end of a longer comment about the Noldor and some speculation about the historical events can perhaps be indicative both in its attitude and its usage: "Noldorin" is never used anywhere else in 'QS' (only in 'RP', once: 286), and could possibly indicate a non-Noldorin tradition (for the speculation) or author. The short prologue of another composite chapter, 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms' announces a concise description: "This is the fashion of the lands into which the Noldor came" (118), and this could cover two possible points of view: a non-Noldorin one (where "the Noldor" are the Other of the author's or systematizer's culture), and (conversely) a Noldorin one, where a Noldorin author assumes the position inherent in the third person to supply the systematizing distance from which the description can proceed.[337] The same chapter once calls Círdan the "shipbuilder" (120), while the text everywhere else refers to him as the "shipwright": perhaps the different term indicates the material comes from a different author (and since the Sindar had been living with Círdan through all the time the Noldor spent in Valinor, perhaps a Noldorin author would be more likely to miss the usual appellation). But Sindarin points of view also surface: when Ulmo, the Vala who suggested to Turgon the building of a hidden city, appears to the king and tells him to "go at last to Gondolin" (125), the use of the Sindarin name (the change to which was explained a few lines before) attributed to the Vala might indicate a Sindarin author putting words into the divinity's mouth. The author of the chapter on Beren and Lúthien speaks about a "shining light" on the face of Lúthien (165): but her mother, the Maia Melian is earlier said to have "the light of Aman… in her face" (55), and perhaps it is yet another sign of the Mannish authorship of the chapter that the author cannot readily associate this light with her status. These details deepen the fiction of cultures by showing how their authors handle stories and texts, indicate their own or their intended audience's positions. The fact that these positions crop up here and there in the text, then,

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[337] This distance of the third person was previously seen in 'Vq' (see above, n.325), and a similar double perspective can be seen in a short comment tag in 'Ak', "and the lot of Men was unhappy" (260).

refine the conception of the fictional chain of transmission, which compounds many author's different texts, and blurs any fixed frame of reference or privileged narrative position. The variety of such cultural implications is a very effective way of representing the production and transmission of a manuscript compilation, and thereby of the culture(s) that contextualize this.

In some few cases, not only the fact but the actual content of a cultural/authorial point of view can be gleaned. These are mostly instances when one culture's (mainly the Elves') attitudes about another (mainly Men) intrude into the text in the form of small, explanatory commentary, or when relationships to Middle-earth's theological system are expounded. The 'Ai Supplement', as we saw, the theologizing work of an Elvish author to explain the differences of Elves and Men, is very explicit in its views: "the Elves believe that Men are often a grief to Manwë…; for it seems to the Elves that Men resemble Melkor most of all the Ainur" (42). These strong words, in addition to being one of the few occasions 'QS' uses the term 'Ainur', indicate a deep Elvish mistrust and deprecation of Men, maybe somewhat softened by another reference to the Valar, who "declared to the Elves in Valinor that Men shall join in the Second Music of the Ainur" (42).[338] Later, Melkor's lies about the Valar's purpose to dominate Men are exposed with a comment in the same somewhat bitter tone: "small truth was there in this, and little have the Valar ever prevailed to sway the wills of Men" (68), and the systematic, synthesizing chapter 'Of Men' shows itsElf to be Elvish by saying that "the fate of Men after death, maybe, is not in the hands of the Valar, nor was all foretold in the Music of the Ainur" (105). Since the 'Ai Supplement' explicitly says Men can shape their lives "beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else" (41), the author of 'Of Men' probably does not know this tradition (since he registers uncertainty),

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[338] The anomaly of using "Ainur" and "Valar" within a few lines of each other shows very well the composite nature of the 'Ai Supplement' where this can be found. It is easy to see there is no overwhelming theological need to use "Ainur" in the first instance: to compare Men to Melkor from among all the Ainur does not make any better sense than comparing them to Melkor from among the Valar. "Ainur" is a term used mainly in 'Ai' and 'Vq', and in chs.I and II of 'QS' (the mythological material); of the handful of other usages, two are related to Thingol and Melian (56, 233), one to a curious theologizing paragraph inserted into the Túrin story (205), and another one to the same topic we see here: Elvish uncertainty about Men (105).

showing that concerning Men even the Elves themselves possess a variety of traditions and views. One of these is predicated on the authority of the Valar ("the Valar declared…"), but as the 'QS' story goes on, the point of view steadily shifts towards more and more uncertainty even concerning the Valar themselves. 'Of Men' shows Mannish attitudes towards them ("Men have feared the Valar, rather than loved them, and have not understood the purposes of the Powers, being at variance with them", 103), but its introductory paragraph claims that the Valar "left [Middle-earth] for long untended" (103): the same sense of uncertainty that the passage quoted above exhibits. The returning Noldor are interpreted by some of the Sindar as "emissaries of the Valar" (108), but King Thingol's reaction to this view highlights how the uncertainty is a more general and received Sindarin theological opinion: "those that remain in Middle-earth the Valar leave to their own devices," says the king (to none other than his Maia queen, Melian: 128). The attitude is apparently so common that it is shared even by Morgoth, who came to believe that the "Valar would heed no more his kingdom in the world without" (251), and later, in the Second Age, by Sauron, who "said in his heart that the Valar… had again forgotten Middle-earth" (286). The author of 'Ak' concurs, and states factually that "the Valar forsook for a time the Men of Middle-earth who had refused their summons and had taken the friends of Morgoth to be their masters" (259-60). Such culturally specific relationships to some specially important matters (the theological and other cultures) distinguishes Tolkien's fictional cultures even further, giving the textually/philologically defined frameworks some actual content (very much like the adapted poetic fragments the actual wording of the incorporated fictitious poetic traditions), and offering specific instances where the textual activities, interpretive stances of the fictitious, invisible authors and redactors of Bilbo's sources can be pinpointed.

4.2 Authority and its hierarchies

The sources of the *Silmarillion* text (even those conceived of as non-textual, or more generally 'cultural') are also differentiated according to their degree of authority. The transmission line of any unit of text, constructed in the secondary philology of *The Silmarillion*, necessarily includes this aspect, and the text has its ways to mark this authority. One such way is to include the name of the author (like Maglor) or the title of the source text (like the *Lay of Leithian*), but the most common is a reference to specific cultures. In some special cases, we saw how the Elvish author of 'Ai Supplement' appropriated authority for his theologizing explanation of the differences between Elves and Men by assigning it to Ilúvatar and attaching it to a textual unit of 'QS' that treats the mythological material. Much as in the Middle Ages,[339] authority here is a function of origin, and the aspects of that origin (source author, culture, text type, title, the source of the author's information, etc.) are marked in the text, eventually building up a distinct hierarchy of sources, and thus of authority. Even if *The Silmarillion* does not show as much concern with the act of authorization as real medieval writers (sElf-conscious fiction-writers such as Chaucer or Malory just as much as sElf-proclaimed historiographers like Geoffrey of Monmouth), the question "Upon what extratextual authority does this text speak?"[340] remains legitimate and relevant to it.

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[339] In Minnis's summary, in the Middle Ages "To be old was to be good" (*Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 9): the authority of a text depends on how deep in the past it originates.

[340] Elizabeth Scala, *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 3. Scala goes on to assert that "the utterance of a medieval text always recalls for us other texts," since "originality" in this context means "a clear documentation of textual origin" (ibid.) – the *Silmarillion* text does not show such an anxiety with documentation, but the sense of its being a 'transcript' of "absent" texts is very similar to what Scala detects in medieval literature.

4.2.1 *Diadoche* and its stages

This *diadoche* of authenticity naturally starts with the Valar, and stretches through Men and Númenóreans into the Second and Third Ages, in the end reaching Bilbo himsElf. It is *traditio,* 'handing down' in the etymological sense of the word, and has to do both with knowledge and with conceptions of representation. Of all possible sources, the Valar are the highest, followed by the descending degrees of Elvish groups (Vanyar, Noldor, Sindar) and Men (primarily the Edain, who are connected to the Elves). One of the great problems of the Second Age is that the Elves and the Númenóreans start to constitute two separate authentication spheres (the Númenórean being 'corrupted' by the machinations of Sauron); and the Third Age sees a multitude of authority positions in a relatively confused relationship: here Gondor (a Mannish culture heir to the best in Númenor) can indeed be higher in the hierarchy than the Silvan Elves of Mirkwood. Tolkien's late note that the legends necessarily come to Bilbo through Mannish intermediaries[341] partly defines the transmission line; at the same time, it is quite obvious that in Elrond's court not only Mannish but Elvish traditions (sources) are to be found ("both living and written"). This hierarchy of authority is also thematically differentiated: the Valar are no authorities on specific matters of Sindarin history, as the Noldor are not any more authoritative than the Sindar about the creation of the Sun and the Moon. This system of authority, however, partly relies on a metaphysical hierarchy (the idea of the Valar's 'absolute true knowledge', which descends in degrees to those to whom the Valar "declare" it), and its philological dimension can also give way to a more generally conceived 'cultural' one.

The authority of any account, therefore, in the transmission chain stretching to Bilbo's actual sources, depends (as it did in the Middle Ages) on where it takes its information from:

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[341] Tolkien, *Morgoth's Ring*, 373. See Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 145-47 for a survey of Tolkien's such remarks.

authority is produced by reference to source.[342] The account of 'Ai Supplement', for example, cannot be authoritative because there is no possible narrator in a position to report those events and word 'authoritatively' (even if they did happen) and thus produce an authoritative source. But interpretation as an aspect of handing on tradition and of constructing authority is also highlighted thus: 'Ai Supplement' is an attempt at a (theologizing) interpretation of the difference between Elves and Men, as its inclusion by the editor/redactor is also an act of interpretation. In a philological model, however, these acts and the resulting authority are figured by the relation of texts to other texts: the Beren and Lúthien or the Túrin chapters of 'QS' embody a rather closely defined textual relation to their claimed (textual) sources, the *Lay of Leithian* and the *Narn* (that of prose summary with residual poetic language). A simple reference to the place of the source in the hierarchy, the source culture can also work to confer a degree of authority. 'Vq', constructed from "lore of the Eldar" (25), might have written sources behind it, but it does not name those; it only specifies the source culture ("Eldar") and the type of source ("lore"), constructing itsElf as compendious, but at the same time as authorized by the knowledge of the Elves. A variant of this is saying that the information comes from "the wise" (35, 49, 50, 236, 244, 248, 262, 295), which again authorizes in relation to source material. "The wise" can then be specified further ("of Eresseä", 50, "among [the Númenóreans]", 262), and their authority is sometimes also explained ("by after-knowledge the wise declare", 49). In 'Ak', Númenórean "loremasters" are also mentioned (281), who are explicitly connected to Elvish culture and the stages of transmission: they "learned also the High Eldarin tongue…, in which much story and song was preserved from the beginning of the world; and they made letters and scrolls and books, and wrote in them many things of wisdom and wonder…, of which all is now forgot" (262). In these cases,

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[342] See Scala, *Absent Narratives*, 2-4.

authority is not the result of a textual relation, but is produced by the position of the source in this hierarchy of knowledge, ultimately the tradition itsElf.

Although Tolkien's philological fiction is structured around texts and their relations, these devices necessarily imply cultural applications, and thus build up a cultural space that refines and specifies those philological relations. In philological terms, authority is the function of origin and transmission: the better a copy, the more authoritative it is. The above examples, however, are not 'philologically' conceived: there is no indication that "the wise" say what is attributed to them in their writings (although at least in some cases they necessarily do). In addition to constructing the network of textual relations, the chain of transmission and various authorial roles, the philological fiction assigns them cultural contexts and implies processes, and situates textual activities in a wider cultural space, complementing the concepts of transmission, authority, and variance in a remarkably sensitive representation of how cultures produce and preserve knowledge.

The cultures taking part in the construction of Bilbo's compilation (and of course the history of Middle-earth) are established and elaborated separately in the course of the narrative. They all get their introductions: Elves and Men are even treated with theological reflection in 'Ai' and 'Ai Supplement'; the Elves, their history and divisions receive attention in shorter passages in chs.III, V, X, XIV. Men are treated to a short survey chapter of their own (ch.XII, like the Sindar, ch.X), and their history, complete with divisions, is given in ch.XVII. Even Dwarves are described in terms of their history and theological position (ch.II), what is more, Orcs get their own explanation in relation to Elves (50). Indeed, up until the end of ch.XVII, 'QS' seems to be all about the proliferation of cultural groups and their various descriptions: the text evolves distinct discourses for this purpose. The theological discourse (already there in 'QS' since the first chapters) is used to invest Elves and Men with an inherent value in the metaphysical framework of the fictional world (as the "Children of

Ilúvatar"; the Dwarves are, somewhat reluctantly, also adapted here); the differentiation of Elvish groups in ch.III, their description in chs.V (Calaquendi, with a stress on the Noldor) and X (Sindar) adds details of temperament, preferences, language, theological associations (like the connection of certain Elvish groups to certain Valar, already there in 'Vq' and 'Vq Supplement'). Geographical (place of habitation), ethnographical (preferences and customs), political discourses are formed as the focus returns to Beleriand with the Noldor (the power relations between Noldorin princes and the Sindarin king, and the ways of exerting political power). These discourses are formed partly by the passages (or chapters) of description and comment interrupting the actual narrative; but in terms of Tolkien's fiction, they are just as important, because these construct the 'cultural depth' beneath the philological relations structuring the fiction of the manuscript. Authority, thus, is evolved through origin, but also by the position in these various discourses and frameworks, in the relatedness to other cultures.

These interrelated, interdependent cultures feed back into the philological side of the fiction, because they (and their network) function as the background for the transmission of texts and knowledge. The association of layers and details of the *Silmarillion* text with specific cultures points attention to the origin of textual constituents (what went into Bilbo's compendium) and the way they reach Bilbo (transmission). Not only insubstantial, hazy author/redactor positions, but the cultures themselves that transmit texts are invested with textual activities: indeed, cultures in Middle-earth are very effectively distinguished from each other on the basis of how they relate to texts and textual activities. But the interconnectedness, the permeability of cultures is also an important point. The way the Noldorin focus of the 'QS' narrative is transposed onto the story of the Sindar in Beleriand and finally draws the Sindar (as a culture) into its own orbit shows that while descriptive discourses map out cultures and their relationships, the narrative supplies the dynamic side of

their connections (interactivity as opposed to static interconnectedness). Cultures manifest their own interpretive activities: one prominent example would be the Númenórean attempts to interpret death, about which they possess perfectly authoritative but not very appealing or comprehensible metaphysical knowledge (see the clash of these two positions in the debate of the Númenóreans and Manwë's messengers, 264-65). The added details and bits of information that the editor inserts into the narrative construct still other, tentative, less authoritative interpretations (along with the editor's own interpretive/evaluative act of including the given detail). This representation of cultures depicts them as an interrelated framework, where degrees of authority are determined by whom they are connected to and at what remove.

In the context of the hierarchy of authorities, the references that in fact create cultural contexts double as markers of authority too. These do not indicate textual relations: they refer to the knowledge (or beliefs) of a given cultural group, thus assigning authority. Naturally, the most frequently used of these is the references to Elves (/Eldar), which are found pervasively in 'Ai', 'Vq' and 'QS'. Some cases clarify when something is known to "all the Eldar" (76) or to "many among Elves and Men" (231); more closely defined Elvish groups, such as the Vanyar (98) and the Noldor (155) also figure occasionally. Dwarves (44) and Petty-Dwarves (204) appear too, and in 'Ak', such references are nearly exclusively made to the Númenóreans (Dúneadain, 281; "wise among the Númenóreans", 262; the Exiles, 281, "kings" or "loremasters of Men", 281). In a few cases even the Valar become such points of reference (22, 42; Aulë 44), but the culture serving as the mediator of this information is always specified (Elves, 22, 42; Dwarves, 44).[343] What is brought into play in these occasions is a body of (probably) unwritten knowledge in these cultures, available to wider or narrower

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[343] Contrast the single reference to Melkor as source: when the text reports something that "Melkor indeed declared afterwards", it also hastens to add that "he lied in his lust and his envy" (66), carefully denying the authority that would be attached to this information because of Melkor's theological status.

groups: this differentiation is another step towards a very complex representation of how cultures use and preserve stories.

4.2.2 Knowledge and its technologies

Another aspect of the assignment of authority to any account and culture is seen in the text's use of different terms of knowledge, because this links tradition with various epistemological constructions. In the network of cultures that Tolkien's fiction builds up, there is a distinct epistemological discourse bound up with the question of authority, centered on way of constituting and transmitting knowledge. As the hierarchy of authority is based on the proximity to the theological center (the Valar) on the one hand, and the events themselves on the other, knowledge is also constituted based on the position of the subject culture to the center: the "true knowledge" that Felagund teaches the newly arrived Men (141) derives from the king's position as one of the Noldor, the mediator culture between Valinor and Beleriand (and thus, Men). The Sindar, consequently, are "less in skill and knowledge" (205). Similarly, "wisdom" is a term that is exclusively associated with the top of the hierarchy (Elves/Eldar, 104, 105, 140; Sindar, 205; Melian, 115), and only once does it stand without such specification (maybe significantly, in 'Ak', 261). Explicit acts of transmission go with these usages: some Men "*learned* the wisdom of the Eldar" (105, my italics), and Galadriel "great lore and wisdom" from Melian (115), while Felagund "*taught* [Men] true knowledge" (141, my italics). The idea of increasing/decreasing knowledge also appears: the Elves' "wisdom *waxed* from age to age" (104, my italics), the Sindar "were *less* in skill and knowledge than the Exiles" (205, my italics), and while the Dúnedain prosper in Númenor, back in Middle-earth "light and wisdom *faded*" (261, my italics). The construction and maintenance of knowledge are historically dynamic processes. While these types of knowledge are evidently not conceived as part of the philological structure, as compositions or as contributing to

compositions, they still establish Elvish culture as the top of the hierarchy of authority, by relating some of its epistemological modes not to the production and preservation of knowledge in the network of texts and textual relations, but to a more general, metaphysically determined epistemological framework. They also enter the arena of transmission, however, since they *are* transmitted, always as undoubtable and fully authoritative.

Opposed to such epistemological forms is unauthorized knowledge (frequently thematized), either assigned to lower stages in the hierarchy, or to parts where authority depends on proximity to events. Such uncertain, unauthoritative information is marked as "rumour" in the *Silmarillion* text, and signals a distance from the truth, a gap in transmission or corrupted authority. The Battle of the Powers, the Trees of Valinor, the Valar, Beleriand or the light in the West are nothing but "rumour" to some Elves and Men (51, 52, 104, 141, 157, 259), showing that the point is not whether the content of rumour is true or not: its authority is questionable, and thus its very status as 'knowledge' for these groups. Elves possess no authoritative knowledge about the Battle of the Powers, fought before their awakening (51), just as for the Teleri the Trees of Valinor are only something they only heard about (if that, 52) and the Dark Elves "know of the Valar only as a rumour and a distant name" (104). These three examples illustrate well that knowledge and authority are concentric and depend on transmission: these Elvish groups are positioned lower and lower in the hierarchy of authority (the Dark Elves just above Men, since it must be from them that Men receive the "rumour" of the Valar, Beleriand, or the light in the West). Rumour highlights transmission processes within the fictional world and stresses that transmission comes with a loss of authority (but not necessarily of truth). This is, however, not related to the philological structure: rumour is never text or composition, and is indeed also related to news and hearsay (with which it is sometimes used synonymously, 71, 93, 160, 180, 211, 220, 236, 303). The same hierarchy of

authorities, the same epistemological conceptions, and the same lines of transmission driving the philological structure appear here in operation in cultural processes.

The actual sources of the fictional compilation fit in between "rumour" and "knowledge/wisdom". Lore, songs, tales, histories, all that the text refers to as sources and assigns varying degrees of authority (depending on their transmission and cultural associations) are at the same time constructed as forms of knowledge, defined more closely by certain aspects like their systematic or narrative nature (lore, history vs. song, tale, lay), their medium (written lore, history vs. perhaps oral songs, lays vs. tales in unspecified media), their form (poetic songs, lays vs. prose histories), or their attachment to persons or cultures (lore to the Elves, Melian, Melkor). These take part in the philological structure of the fiction too, and tie both authority and epistemological considerations to the network of texts and their relations in the fictional manuscript.

The forms and concepts of knowledge thus construct various applications in the fictional cultural space. Stories are seen to be conceived and executed, to circulate and travel (finally to reach the author or editor) in various ways. These cultural technologies of story and memory show how individual cultures in *The Silmarillion* are differentiated on the basis of how they relate to texts and textual activities: the preferred forms, the most common genres associated with a culture cover interpretive activities (not necessarily and strictly textual, but incorporated in textual form in the compendium). Despite the fact that Elvish immortality implies a specifically Elvish (cultural) memory, writing as a technology is emphatically present among Elves. In Valinor, it is Rúmil "who first achieved fitting signs for the recording of speech and song" (63), and later Fëanor improved upon this, "devis[ing] those letters which bear his name, and which the Eldar used ever after" (64). Among the Sindar, Daeron is "said" to have "devised his Runes" (95) which, however, "were little used by the Sindar for the keeping of records, until the days of the War, and much that was held in memory perished in

the ruins of Doriath" (95).[344] While the Noldorin invention story suggests there *were* "songs" to "record" (and a willingness to record them), the Sindar shun this technology of "record", preferring memory (oral forms?). In 'Ak', Númenórean "loremasters" are said to have "learned also the High Eldarin tongue of the Blessed Realm, in which much story and song was preserved from the beginning of the world; and they made letters and scrolls and books, and wrote in them many things of wisdom and wonder" (262). This passage specifies sources (story, song), the forms of Númenórean output (letters, scrolls, books) and its content ("things of wisdom and wonder"): distinct textual transformations (note that all forms of output are written, while the sources are at least ambiguous). 'RP' shows Elrond "gather[ing in Imladris] many Elves, and other folk of wisdom and power from among all the kindreds of Middle-earth, and he preserved through many lives of Men the memory of all that had been fair; and the house of Elrond was… a treasury of good counsel and wise lore" (297-8). Here only the activity is mentioned (preservation, as in 'Ak') and a hazy subject (which could easily include stories), in the end still associating Elrond's house with "wise lore". Writing and the genres executed in it are shown as the primary vehicle of story and knowledge. They are (much like language) connected to the Elves, the culture highest on Tolkien's hierarchy of authority, but even if Elvish culture as such is not a primarily (or even predominantly) written culture, the emphatic textuality of the compilation (and therefore *all the knowledge* that the *Silmarillion* text constructs) privileges writing: story becomes mainly fixed and recorded, and knowledge tied to the *document*. As in 12th-century medieval Europe, the past is "observed as fixed in a text whose interpretation in the present brought to light discontinuities between how it is now and how it was then";[345] an emphatically interpretive attitude is evolved to the historical differences accessible through writing, and knowledge is seen to be produced from this

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[344] A further piece of evidence that "lore" is conceived of as written is the fact that both Rúmil and Daeron, the two inventors, are termed "loremaster" (Rúmil, 64; Daeron is called "chief loremaster of the kingdom of Thingol", 95).

[345] Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 287.

standpoint. The historian's task is "to order [the past's] fragmented experience into knowledge"[346] – what we see in *The Silmarillion* is both this and its next level, the compiling and ordering of knowledge-producing texts into a knowledge-preserving corpus.

There are also other ways of relating to the past and signification. In the ruin of Doriath, "much that was held in memory" (95) was destroyed: memory is a special form of preservation in a culture where subjects do not die in the natural course of events, and eyewitnesses of the earliest times (such as Círdan) can be accessible even after three Ages of the world. Shippey even says about the Elves that their "highest function is memory".[347] But even if Elves normally do not die, new Elves are still born for whom tradition has to be mediated: and if not in writing, preservation necessarily happens in oral form. The genesis of both Elvish writing systems (cited above) imply that even before their invention, "songs" and minstrels existed (e.g., "Daeron the Minstrel", 95), both among the Sindar and the Noldor (one such is a son of Fëanor himsElf, Maglor, author of the *Noldolantë*: 87).[348] "Song and poetry" is said to be given to the Elves by Manwë (a mythological story of origin; 'Vq Supplement', 40), and secondary philology could recover a distinct poetic convention in the *Silmarillion* text (see above, 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.4.2). The Elvish poetic genres that the text mentions (songs, heroic lays, laments) are all handled not as 'literary' but as performed:[349] to new generations and to members of other social/linguistic groups. They also must have been transferred to different linguistic media (e.g., from Quenya to Sindarin) and different storytelling customs; they also must have made use of mnemonic devices. We saw that parataxis, the existence of epithets, the use of euphony devices (mainly alliteration, but also rhymes) as structural are recognizable traits of the poetic traditions embedded in the

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[346] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 71.
[347] Shippey, *Road,* 189.
[348] Maglor is noted as a "mighty singer" in the systematic description of the Noldorin dynasty in ch.V (60); later he is said to have been "named only after Daeron of Doriath" (254). Daeron emerges from the scattered remarks as a kind of 'Elvish Homer', greatest of storytellers.
[349] Wynne and Hostetter, 'Three Elvish Verse Modes', 124-30 discuss one named genre, *minlamad thent/estent* (the mode of the *Narn*), indicating a parallel with Old English alliterative poetry and its performance matrix.

Silmarillion text (see 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.4.2): oral cultures routinely make use of these to preserve culturally important information.[350] The beginning of a new subunit of the composite ch.X explicitly mentions the difference of (written) lore and (oral) song: "as has been told and as is known to all, being *written in lore* and *sung* in many *songs*" (a recapitulating backward reference, 95; my italics), and 'RP' closes with stating that "an end was come for the Eldar of *story* and of *song*" (304, my italics). Orality is an active and productive technology of preservation and transmission, setting the living, performed story against the one fixed in a document: knowledge as connected to *memory* is shown as a distinct mode of tradition. Since these oral/performed attitudes are only available through and constructed in the text, the written handling of oral compositions, the ways literate cultures appropriate the performativity of orality[351] are also inscribed into the fiction of the *Silmarillion* text.

The technologies of knowledge and story are not merely aspects of Tolkien's fiction of culture. While they certainly contribute to a very refined construction of the fictional cultural groups, they also define relations to and types of knowledge that stand behind attitudes to stories and the past, and even their textual handling. Written record and oral preservation of information determine a historical discourse and another, orally authenticated one, where the unbroken chain of transmission assigns authority. Both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, oral and written authentication existed for a time side by side, and considerable transitional periods were needed for a written conception of authority to completely displace the earlier oral system of authentication.[352] Transposed into Tolkien's fictional world, the juxtaposition

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[350] See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 33-36 (and further, 36-57 for a concise survey of "further characteristics of orally based thought and expression"). See also Richter, *Formation of the Medieval West*, 93 (on the singers' function to maintain tradition), 96 (the role of performance), and 231 (general characteristics of oral culture among medieval 'barbarians').

[351] Amodio, in *Writing the Oral Tradition*, shows how the compositional framework of orality can be seen and recovered in written Old and Middle English literature: the *Silmarillion* text fictionalizes similar traces and constructs not only an underlying orality, but also its cultural appropriation, another process of cultural history that is explicitly philological.

[352] See Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 61-73 and 77 (n.5 for medieval applications), 88-100, and Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 93-101. Brian Stock's important *Implications* discusses ways in which, as Coleman puts it, "texts increasingly served as a reference system for

of oral vs. written authorities, on the one hand, stresses the importance of the undetermined individual authorial positions in the transmission chain (the written aspect); on the other, it creates a different, oral type of authentication as underlying the historical discourse of the written tradition. This is important for Tolkien, since it is partly with reference to the more fluid, less controlled authenticity of orality that he can tap into the mythical: as Michael Clanchy writes, "beyond the brief span of human memory in an illiterate society lies the realm, not of history, but of myth".[353] Even making allowances for the Elves, whose memory is anything but "brief", the text makes a distinction between "the keeping of records" and information "held in memory" (95). These two signal two epistemological modalities, and imply institutions as well as technologies of knowledge. Tolkien's Elves function as living memory to authenticate myth and anchor it into history: to authenticate both discourses at the same time.

4.3 Authors and their acts

The privileging of some forms of knowledge and some cultures are inevitably ideological operations. The metaphysical background of the epistemology on which the hierarchy of authority is constructed is itsElf partly the product of textual operations: the distinct theological discourse, best visible in 'Ai', 'Vq' and the mythological parts of 'QS' not only tells the story of the Valar, but also associates them with the Elves, and defines the "lore" of the Elves as authoritative source. Men, on the other hand, it clearly excludes and leaves to Elvish mediation. Elves trace their origins back to light (either starlight at the place of their awakening, or that of the Trees of Valinor), while Men can only say about their origin that "a

everyday activities outside the monastic community" (*Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 285; see Stock, *Implications*, 42-59, 59-87 for an overview). Michael Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record*, 294-99 surveys the transition in medieval England.
[353] Michael Clanchy, 'Remembering the Past and the Good Old Law,' *History* 55 (1970), 167.

darkness lies behind" them: "the fathers of [Bëor's] people had told few tales of their past and a silence had fallen upon their memory" (141). Coupled with the thematic considerations of authority (the authentic knowledge of events and stories is the one based on proximity), this works to produce distinct traditions, mirrored in the text by stylistic considerations like the coherent poetic conventions/language, and by the differentiation of thematic content in the Matters of the *Silmarillion* text. Bilbo's compilation inevitably preserves the overall ideological bias of its sources (the Elvish tradition); but at certain points, it also functions to provide a more variable focus, and introduce others.

As a compilation, the *Silmarillion* incorporates not only many sources and several points of view, but also signals the uncertainty, the degrees of authority assigned to some of its material. It is the compiler's responsibility what he includes and how he orders the material;[354] the text's fictional authors/editors are seen to make an effort to include minor, divergent, alternative traditions too (but also, by the same token, to exclude, silence, and privilege some). Thus Bilbo's work, just as a medieval *compilatio*, "derives its value from the authenticity of the *auctoritates* employed, but it derives its usefulness from the *ordo* in which the *auctoritates* are arranged."[355] All points which are included despite their uncertain authority constitute interpretive/evaluative actions by the editor (either Bilbo or someone before him in the transmission chain), and an act of conferring (a limited degree of) authority, thereby embodying definite ideological positions.

The Silmarillion makes numerous references to source material that sidestep the question of authority. Most such details are introduced with a simple "it is said" (signaling a lack of source or authority), but there are a number of others that attribute the information to "some" or "others". Even the simplest instances, however, are differentiated: in a few cases, the unspecified source of information is revealed to be a song ("it is sung": 36, 247), and

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[354] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 97-98, 101, 113.
[355] M.B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*,' 128.

sometimes even further information is added ("in *after days* it was sung", 245, my italics; "it is said and sung", 235), emphasizing the distance between the events and the interpretation embodied in the elusive 'song', or the consonance of "sung" and "said" traditions. It is, however, difficult to assess the authority of the information: the wedding of Tulkas and Nessa (36) was certainly not witnessed by any Elves, and it is even more difficult to account for anyone's knowledge of Elwing coming to Eärendel's ship in the form of a bird (247). As opposed to this, the beauty of Lúthien, wearing the Nauglamír set with the Silmaril ("said and sung", 235) could easily have been common knowledge. Emphasis is sometimes added to such instances with "it is said *indeed*" (99, 112, my italics) or with the specific term "it is believed" (292), and the contrast to the general non-knowledge and non-availability of authoritative information is marked by "*yet* it is told/said" (104, 250). The inclusion of these last seem to be concessions made despite the authority of the information (especially since one is basically speculation about what Morgoth did or did not anticipate). What author figures do here is exert their own judgment about what is appropriate to include and what is not: these are acts of interpretation appearing in the very text of *The Silmarillion*, associated with an unspecified authorial position on the transmission chain. It is thus emphatically the author (at whichever stage of the composition of the text) who is responsible for granting authority to uncertain or unauthorizable assertions and speculation, to the extent that he represents these (inserts them or lets them stand) in his text.

When the text attributes its information to "some" or "others", it is again this function, the collection of (even doubtfully authoritative) traditions that is stressed. What these signal is the existence of *other* traditions, perhaps multiple ones, and the author's/editor's interpretive act of including them as choosing between them (in distinguishing emphases or priorities). Some add curious details: 'Vq' (a visibly compiled text) claims "some there are who have seen [Yavanna] standing like a tree under heaven" (27-8), and the following, very evocative

passage builds up a little allegory of three important Valar (Manwë, Ulmo, Yavanna) in the image. Reliance on the opinion of "some" happens earlier in the mythological material too: according to "some", the reason why even the Valar have no certain knowledge about the end of the world is that "the vision ceased ere the fulfilment of the Dominion of Men and the fading of the Firstborn" (20). 'Ai' is frequently interrupted by such explanatory details, all evidencing an Elvish cultural context; this helps place the "some" of this reference, and contributes to the content of the Elvish theological position. Elvish uncertainty about Men surfaces again in the 'QS' 'Of Men' (a compiled background chapter reflecting Elvish views about Men): the idea that after their death, they "too go to the halls of Mandos", but to a separate place than the Elves, is again attributed to "some" (104) – clearly Elves again. In another chapter dealing with Men, an Elvish belief about Men hearing "rumour" about the Valar and starting to migrate West is presented thus (141). But their own history is also fraught with lack of authoritative knowledge: it is only the "after-knowledge" of the "wise" (49) that suggests that Melkor was aware of Elves before the Valar, and the traditions (now sourceless) offer two alternatives about his actions, presented in an "either… or" structure (50). The monster Ungoliant, whose origin "the Eldar knew not" (73), also gives occasion for theological commentary: the tag "some have said" introduces the curious idea that she "descended from the darkness that lies about Arda" (73), placing the unknown monster in an unexpectedly primal metaphysical position. How serious some of these traditions are is well illustrated in the discussion of the monster's death (about which, again, "no tale tells"): "some have said that… in her uttermost famine she devoured hersElf" (81). The recapitulative introduction of 'RP' again invokes specific theological positions when it mention the opinion of "some", according to whom Sauron's repentance at the end of the First Age "was not at first falsely done" (285). These are all details of some importance (especially since they all concern theology), but diverging opinions on minor matters are also collected with the device:

in the Túrin chapter, the "some said… but others" formula introduces alternative news about the fate of the city and of Túrin himsElf after the sack of Nargothrond (217). Beside indicating the existence of alternative traditions, these theological points are themselves interpretations, and their inclusion (even with the marker of uncertain authority) is a clear sign of the author/editor himsElf interpreting, selecting material for his text from perhaps a host of alternatives.

In other cases, such points are shown as clearly interpretations, aimed at making sense of history. They are found in more local contexts, as the political geography of Beleriand, where it is a question of opinions where exactly Nevrast belongs (119), or the specific questions of tactics in the catastrophic battle Nirnaeth Arnoediad (where "some have said that even then the Eldar might have won the day", 192). But the most important case is connected to the history of the Noldor. In the "breach within the house of Finwë", "many saw" the reason for "those unhappy things which later came to pass" (65): even though the main tradition of the narrative evidently derives from a Noldorin account, the (unauthorized) voice of the "many" still makes it into the compilation, perhaps indicating a later, non-Noldorin editor's (or Bilbo's) inclination towards a wider perspective than the Noldorin one. The interpretation articulated here thus offers clarification as to the possible original authorship of the story (Noldorin), and the existence (and later incorporation) of other views of the events (a textual activity at one point in the transmission). The Doom of the Noldor, the important prophecy that serves to structurally unify much of the Noldorin story, also involves one such detail: "some say that [the dark figure on the cliff] was Mandos himsElf, and no lesser herald of Manwë" (87). By connecting (even through uncertain authority) the prophecy to Mandos himsElf, the text assigns it a greater value in the theologically coded system of authority, illustrating how the philological discourse can make up for its deficiencies by relying on the theological. In these instances, implicit points of view are constructed: as the explicit ones

(see above, 4.1.2) these too offer insights into how the diversified fictional cultures see the world and its events, and how they produce patterns (and texts) that make sense (meaning) of them. History here is no mere record: it is (as in medieval Europe) a "discourse rather than a revelation of the past", and includes a definite element of interpretive activity.[356]

At other times, the text shifts authority into its own hand, and offers substantial explanation or comment without reference to anyone at all. 'Ai' is a good example of this: here the narrative of the creation of the world is stopped by nine such passages (16, 17, 18 (twice), 19, 20 (twice), 21 (twice)), and 'Ai Supplement', tagged on to the end of 'QS' ch.I also serves this purpose. Often the author adds his own summary comment or interpretation after the indication of alternative traditions, as in the above example about the historical consequences of the breach in the house of Finwë. After recounting what "many" said and how they "judg[ed]" (a speculative interpretation constructed retrospectively), the text articulates another historical evaluation: "but the children of Indis [Fëanor's half-brothers] were great and glorious…; and if they had not lived the history of the Eldar would have been diminished" (65). Contrasting the view of the "many" (bringing up the "unhappy things which later came to pass"), the text argues with a conception of "the history of the Eldar". It is, however, clearly the Noldor's deeds that are valued thus, so the text's ideological bias towards the Noldor is again laid bare. On occasion, authorial statements become rather categorical: Melkor "lied in his lust and his envy" (66, an explanation follows), and there was "small truth" in his words that the Valar wanted to dominate Men: "little have the Valar ever prevailed to sway the will of Men" (68). These claims are all authoritative as interpretations from a later vantage point, in the knowledge of historical patterns not clear at the time of events. The author evidently pronounces his own well-grounded opinion in them, quite

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[356] Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 318.

independent of any source, suggesting perhaps that these are points where no special source or authorization is needed. The Elvish point of view is still well discernible behind them.

Other authorial statements and opinions are much less categorical, and reflect how even historical hindsight cannot eliminate all uncertainty from interpretation. The fate of Men has already come up as a primary field of Elvish interpretations and uncertainty: the author's comment that "the fate of Men after death, *maybe*, is not in the hands of the Valar, nor was all foretold in the Music of the Ainur" (105, my italics) not only connects this tentatively with a theological point (the Valar's ultimate powerlessness over Man, suggested elsewhere too) but also speculates about the relation of the Music and the world. 'Ai Supplement' (itsElf an unauthorizable interpretation) declares the Music to be "as fate to all things" (41): what we see here is not only an authorial comment on Men (a standard theme of Elvish asides), but a tentative theological position that contradicts the one defined in ch.I of 'QS'. Morgoth's thoughts and attitudes also become the subject of speculation: "it *may be* that he feared [Fëanor] little" (although "no tale has told" what he really thought: 106, my italics), and Agøy lists numerous passages where Morgoth's mind and attitudes are reported.[357] The most important authorial pronouncements, however, are related to historical patterns, interpretations common enough to be integrated regardless of their lack of definite source or authority. The Doom of the Noldor is invoked by the text even before anything sinister happens: "[o]r it *may be* that some shadow of foreknowledge came to [Fëanor] of the *doom* that drew near" (67, my italics), and made him create the Silmarils. This is closely followed by a passage with strong poetic associations, maybe suggesting that the author follows a source here.[358] This is the first anticipation of the Doom of the Noldor, presented by the text

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[357] Agøy, 'Viewpoints, Audiences', 151-53. Even Agøy, who tends to take a far too literal approach, comes to the conclusion that "late speculation" (152) must be involved, and that "poetic license is frequently used to introduce extrapolation, conjecture, and guesswork, with a corresponding loss of textual authority" (153).

[358] On this passage, see my 'Adapted Text,' 33-4. Fëanor's "lore" is, significantly, said to be an important component in his work, maybe suggesting that the term "lore" is used even in the sources behind the *Silmarillion* text.

as clearly a speculative point: the author here sees Fëanor's motivation in terms of the later emerging pattern that unifies the Matter of the Noldor in 'QS'. Similarly, while others have speculated about the effects of the breach within the house of Finwë (and the author added his own comment there too), when Fëanor fails to give up the Silmarils to Yavanna, it is the author's own position that makes it into the text: "yet had he said yea at the first,… it *may be* that his after deeds would have been other than they were. But now the *doom of the Noldor* drew near" (79, my italics). Again, the term is used not in referring to the actual prophecy, but the historical pattern: the prophecy itsElf only serves to give it a textual (and a theologically backed) form. At other times, shorter reflective tags like "and the Elves do not forget it" (about the treachery of some Men, 251) or "and the lot of Men was unhappy" (a summary judgment in 'Ak', 260) add compressed authorial points of view that puncture the conception of the text as merely transmitted and translated, and pinpoint (uncertain) positions in that transmission chain where the authors/editors voice their own concerns and interpretations.

What these instances emphasize about the fictional compilation is its diversity, the plurality of interpretations and opinions, and the acts of the individual subjects that make these. They show relations to history and to its textual/remembered forms that are closely tied to cultural contexts and points of view, and illustrate that the discourses of culture, constructed by the various layers of the text, are in fact never homogenous: even the Elvish theological discourse (with its central questions of Elvish–Mannish relationships and fate) is divided, as far as there are at least two (possibly three) positions discernible in it. They connect cultural memory (either written or oral) to forms of knowledge and authority, thereby building up a philological discourse that matches the solidly established philological depth in the text. The plurality that emerges as the editorially controlled supplement around the central thrust of narrative and interpretation is, however, highly significant, since it does more than suggest a cultural plurality and variety to enrich the fiction. The expansion of the fictional

space (both literal and metaphorical) assumes through these a theoretical dimension: the concepts arrived at with the use of secondary philology are useful because with their help the whole fiction and its metatextual frame and form can be approached, uncovering Tolkien's perhaps surprisingly postmodern representation of culture and its operations. It is to this theoretical application that I turn now, to offer another justification why Tolkien's enormous game of weaving a web of texts and the critics' game of playing along with him are worthwhile in producing a new approach to his fiction.

5. Metarepresentation: theories of culture and fiction in *The Silmarillion*

It took more authors than one to produce the *Silmarillion* text, and in the event, that text proved to be much more beyond any of those authors' thought. J.R.R. Tolkien could not finish it alone: his son, Christopher was needed to construct a publishable text in 1977, years after his death. But (literary) history repeats itsElf even within the covers of the book: Tolkien's final device for the presentation of his legends, Bilbo, translates and edits together the huge corpus of lore about the Three Ages of Middle-earth, making use of the work of innumerable others like him. Just as Tolkien's text is a representation of the fictional world he painstakingly refined all his life, an editor's Frankenstein monster of patched-together manuscript parts, Bilbo's work is also a many-layered, many-voiced collage of everything that came before him. By the device of the fictional compilation, the concept of the text always remains central. Texts and the various modes of knowledge and narrative that they mirror offer a sensitive model of how the stories preserved in culture are in fact themselves representations.

Tolkien's metatextual duplicating of the text, as we saw, constructed an elaborate, fictional web of indeterminate sources, authors, transmission processes and more or less clear textual activities through which the text of Bilbo's fictional compilation is created. At the same time, textual and thematic details expanded the cultural space, and distinct discourses formed various aspects of representation of the fictional world's cultures, their relations to the world and the knowledge about it. These discourses highlight the status of ultimately all knowledge as (linguistic) representation, complete with the cultural contexts, institutions, ideologies that privilege some of these; additionally, the subjects that serve as authors who produce the texts and therefore the representations are also thrown into relief are also thrown

into relief. In Tolkien, it is all language at every point, in its various uses and contexts, that constitutes the world. We therefore need to place the governing concepts of the philological fiction in a theoretical framework, and see how plurality, representation, and textuality function as guidelines to specify the ways Tolkien's text operates.

5.1 The great chain of knowledge and authority

As we have seen, the hierarchy of authority (of sources, of texts) that the *Silmarillion*'s philological fiction creates gives rise to an epistemological discourse, turning this hierarchy into a theologically grounded system of authorization. The theological is seen at the center of authority and knowledge: all authority and all knowledge receive their ultimate legitimization by its relation to and distance from the theological center. This, of course, privileges a specific culture, the Elves, and since this is undoubtedly an Elvish discourse, this is not surprising. But this concentric system that disseminates knowledge and authority naturally has its own applications, most prominently in grounding power relations (and thus, again, a cultural superiority that in turn can ground the cultural privileging of the status quo). A theoretical reading of 'Ai' will illustrate how the concepts of meaning, interpretation, and communication lie at the heart of the Elvish theological system, and lead us on to a world model where (much like in the Middle Ages) meaning is ultimately both guaranteed and inherent in the created world. The operation of authority in both the philological fiction and thematically in the narrative can also be illustrated with the help of Tolkien's central image for meaning, knowledge and power: light.

5.1.1 Meaning and interpreting: a reading of the 'Ainulindalë'

Tolkien's creation story pays close attention to acts of communication and interpretation (and consequently, to what is communicated and interpreted) from the beginning. Ilúvatar "spoke" to the Ainur, "propounding to them themes of music" (15); later, he "declared to them a mighty theme", in which he "revealed" "things greater and more wonderful" (15). The Ainur's performance of Ilúvatar's themes, however, is hampered by their limited understanding, both of "the mind of Ilúvatar" and "of their brethren" (15). "Deeper understanding" comes with listening, and even before the Great Music, Tolkien thus establishes the theme of Ilúvatar communicating knowledge to the Ainur, whose turning it into something explicitly aesthetic (characterized by "unison and harmony", 15) is clearly an act of interpretation, determined and enabled by understanding. The Great Music, in turn, only emphasizes these aspects: Ilúvatar's "mighty theme" at first leaves the Ainur speechless (15), and the creator stresses the aesthetic nature of their prospective production ("great beauty… wakened into song", 15) and the interpretive activities needed for this. As Robert A. Collins writes, "Tolkien approaches the essential nature of being in aesthetic terms," articulating creation as that of an "art object".[359] The Ainur are asked to "show forth [their] powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices" (15). They then "fashion" a performance that becomes the site of conflict: Melkor, one of the greatest "in power and knowledge", introduces discord into the music by "interweave[ing] matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar" (16). Eventually harmonious and discordant are perceived as "utterly at variance" (16), and Ilúvatar stops the performance, only to comment that "no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me" and to "show … forth" the Music in a "vision" (17).

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[359] Robert A. Collins, '"Ainulindale": Tolkien's Commitment to an Aesthetic Ontology,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 11.2 (2001), 257.

This visual representation of the previous musical performance is again bound up with questions of understanding and knowledge. It also demonstrates Ilúvatar's absolute power: he "command[s] that a representation of the Great Music become visible,"[360] thus making a *sign* for the immaterial Music. In it, the Ainur see both "the design that [Ilúvatar] set before" them and what they themselves "devised or added" to it (17): an evocative image of a collectively created work of art[361] the meaning of which, however, is controlled by the figure of the ultimate author, Ilúvatar. The Ainur's knowledge of "much of what was, and is, and is to come" (17-8) is explained by their knowledge of their part in the Music, and the "many other things" of which Ilúvatar also "spoke to the Ainur at that time" (17). "A little more of his wisdom" (18)[362] is learnt by looking at the elements of the vision that did not derive from Ilúvatar's original theme. Even the Valar, the highest authorities in the Middle-earth hierarchy of knowledge, are invested with only partial and imperfect knowledge, and Ilúvatar is thus constructed as a totality: both ontological and epistemological. From this totality of meaning, it is natural that any limited being will only grasp a part, and that anyone's interpretation of his intentions will necessarily be limited, but ultimately contained within the totality. Even Melkor's discordant performance, stemming from his "desire" for "bring[ing] into Being things of his own" (16), is really not new: it is contained in the totality, and Ilúvatar warns him that "no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me" (17). Yet Melkor's "desire" is significant, since it shows an important distinction: while the other Ainur are content with interpretation of the creator's themes (an epistemological act), Melkor's impatience with "the Void" (16) betrays an ontologically directed approach. Melkor wishes to

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[360] Elizabeth A. Whittingham, 'The Mythology of the 'Ainulindalë': Tolkien's Creation of Hope,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 9.3 (1998), 216.

[361] See Collins's discussion of the collective musical performance in terms of the three movements of the sonata form: ''Ainulindale'', 259-60.

[362] It is perhaps significant that the term "wisdom" is here associated with Ilúvatar's ultimate knowledge, thereby grounding its later usages in *The Silmarillion* as knowledge of the highest authority (see above, 4.2.2).

forego interpretation, and produce his own meaning; but since Ilúvatar is the totality of meaning, this is simply not possible.

In the third stage of creation, interpretation only receives a further embedded level. The vision arouses a "desire" in some of the Ainur (including Melkor, 18), and they become "enamoured of [its] beauty" (20): perceiving their desire, Ilúvatar actualizes the vision into "Eä, the World that Is" (20). Those Ainur who descend into the newly made world are the Valar, and they find the world "foreshadowed and foresung," "on point to begin and yet unshaped" (20). Consequently, both in the rest of 'Ai' and ch.I of 'QS', their work on the physical world is always referred to as "shaping", "fashioning" ('Ai': 18, 22; 'QS': 37). It is Ilúvatar who is credited with "ma[king] a new thing" (20), the World: the part of the Valar, again, is to *interpret*. Their acts of fashioning and shaping are parallel to their performance of the musical themes. The act of creation, however, is intimately connected with what the text refers to as the "Flame Imperishable" (20): the Ainur themselves are "kindled" with this (15), and the realization of the vision also happens by Ilúvatar "send[ing it] forth into the Void" to be "at the heart of the World" (20). Melkor, on the other hand, "found not the Fire" when he sought for it in the Void, "for it is with Ilúvatar" (16). It appears that the Flame is the metaphorical ground for the ontological and epistemological significance of light in the *Silmarillion*: in 'Ai', it is evidently something with which Ilúvatar confers an independent ontological status ("verily be", 20) – a theological metaphor. It supplies the ontological (in the case of the World, material) ground for interpretation, metaphorically representing Ilúvatar's act of infusing (producing) meaning. Melkor, lacking this, cannot help but interpret: but instead of "fashioning" and "shaping", he "meddle[s] in all that was done, turning it… to his own desires and purposes" (20), "undo[es]" and "corrupt[s]" (22).[363]

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[363] It might again be significant that a passage with remarkable rhetorical and perhaps even poetic devices (discussed above, as ex.1 in 3.2.1.2) stands at the end of 'Ai' (22), contrasting the actions of the Valar ("built lands", "valleys they delved", "mountains they carved", "seas they hallowed") with those of Melkor ("destroyed

Linking the creation story with the Elves and Elvish culture establishes a further circle of interpretation, this time complete with transmission. "[W]hat has here been declared is come from the Valar themselves" (22), at the end of 'Ai', is one of the earliest authenticating passages in *The Silmarillion*, and linking the 'Ai' account (this time as a text, a composition) with the Noldorin loremaster Rúmil (Index, 347) conceptualizes the story as a text, to be transmitted, interpreted, assigned authority. 'Ai' and 'Vq' are the prime sources of information about Ilúvatar and the Valar, and the bases for the theological discourse in *The Silmarillion*: since both are clearly Elvish, the whole theological discourse and its interpretations are also attached to the Elves, and thus this culture provides the entry point into the metaphysical levels of Tolkien's world. The Valar interpret Ilúvatar's themes (both metaphorically, in the Music, and materially, in shaping the world); the Elves interpret and textualize the Valar's account of this, preserve and mediate it towards other Elves and Men, and in turn provide the basis for further interpretations of the genesis of Arda. This means that the account in 'Ai' is already an interpretation, with which the complex metaphysical relations and the model of pre-creation and creation as acts of communication and interpretation are themselves interpreted, necessarily reflecting Elvish points of view: interpretation as part of the theological discourse is an ideological construct. Ilúvatar's role as not only theological but epistemological center is used in establishing and fixing the hierarchy of authorities in the text (and by extension, the construction of a world model based on it), and also in the motivic use of light as an illustration and justification for this in the narrative. It is to these, as illustrations of the Great Chain of Authority and Knowledge that I turn now.

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them", "raised them up", "threw them down", "spilled them"). On this passage, see further my 'Adapted Text', 23.

5.1.2 Pervasive meaning

Tolkien's world is thus defined by a theological conception of meaning and authority, one which determines interpretive actions in the fictional world and assigns authority to accounts about that world based on a hierarchical system. Ilúvatar's intention is interpreted countless times before it reaches the authors of the texts Bilbo works with; the meaning of any item, any sign, the ground of any (authoritative) knowledge about the world is firmly claimed to be a divinity who only intervenes in history on very few occasions (such as the adoption of the Dwarves and Ents into his plan and the cataclysmic reshaping of the world at the end of the Second Age). The ontological foundation of the world, however, and the ultimate epistemological certainty ("wisdom", "true knowledge") are seen to derive from Ilúvatar, and this creates a world model where signification is remarkably similar to the medieval period.

The medieval author also saw his own authorial activity and the world in the transcendent light of such a totality of meaning. God was seen not only as the ultimate source of all things in the world (and therefore, of all meaning), but also the source of *all auctoritas*,[364] the guarantor of truth.[365] In some conceptions of the hierarchy of authorship, *auctoritas* was thought to be handed down in just such a chain, with the Holy Spirit taken as the moving efficient cause and the human author as the operating efficient cause.[366] Lotman's typology of cultures describes this medieval world model as one of "high semioticity"[367] for exactly this reason. As every detail of the created world functions as a sign for the Creator, their 'meaning' is ultimately guaranteed: "meaning is the index of existence: nothing is culturally meaningless".[368] Since Middle-earth is essentially infused not only with existence but also with intention, meaning by Ilúvatar, the divinity functions similarly as the ultimate guarantee: a signified that is not at the same time a signifier, to which all chains of signifiers

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[364] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 95.
[365] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 111.
[366] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 79, on the context, see 75-84.
[367] Lotman, 'Problems in the Typology of Cultures,' 216.
[368] Lotman, 'Problems in the Typology of Cultures,' 217.

lead back. This investing of meaning into the world is articulated in two, surprisingly different (even opposing) images: the idea of fragmentation (of light, knowledge, meaning) and of enclosure.

In *Splintered Light*, Flieger uses Owen Barfield's conception of language and its changes to elucidate Tolkien's practice of sub-creation in *The Silmarillion*. Even though Barfield's theory about an "ancient semantic unity"[369] and the claim that originally "all diction was literal, giving direct voice to the perception of phenomena and humanity's intuitive mythic participation in them",[370] while later stages saw the "fragmentation of perception and of the vocabulary with which it is expressed"[371] cannot be seriously defended today, it does offer a workable guideline to Tolkien's use of light as a metaphor of knowledge and the specifications of meaning that are illustrated in the concentric hierarchy of authority. "True knowledge", the original unified (total, undifferentiated) meaning that Ilúvatar intends is in the history of the physical world refracted like light through a prism, and reaches the lower end of the hierarchy (like Men or hobbits) only in fragments, traces. There is, as we have seen, an explicitly philological dimension to this: Tolkien's representation of knowledge as embodied in a culturally circumscribed conception of authority and the corresponding textual forms create an actual philological transmission chain to mirror this metaphysical process. To Men, the Valar are only a "rumour" (141), unauthorized knowledge, and light only reaches them in an adulterated form, that of the Sun and Moon, "mere reminders of the light that is gone."[372] Flieger detects a "pattern of fragmentation and diminution" in the sequence of the Lamps, Trees, Stars and finally the Sun and Moon (sources of light in the fictional world);[373] and she traces the corresponding differentiation of both culture and language. The separation of Elvish groups, breaking the original unity and situating some

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[369] Barfield's theory is briefly summarized in Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 35-9.
[370] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 38.
[371] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 39.
[372] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 121.
[373] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 62-64 (the quote is found on 63).

closer to the Valar (the center, light, knowledge) than others offers a chance to show differing attitudes and relationships to light,[374] while in the narrative this also grounds the change of languages that necessarily mirrors the authenticity of perception and knowledge.[375] Languages here "reflect[] the changing consciousness and worldview of those who speak [them], … the grades and shades of changing perceptions,"[376] and thus associate cultures and groups with the degrees of authenticity and authority the relationship to the light imparts. *The Silmarillion* uses the metaphor of light for signifying the original totality of Ilúvatar's intention which he infuses in the physical world (already seen in the creation of the Ainur), where it is handed on and assigned various functions in the world in the physical forms it takes, serving as a symbol for the center of the theological hierarchy which its corresponding discourse raises to the level of metaphysics and epistemology. It is in this central image of light that Tolkien condenses a literal and metaphorical representation of a principle granting both "speech [the medium of knowledge and communication] and sElf-consciousness [subjectivity]"[377] in the fictional world: the things that make knowledge possible.

This 'infusion' of meaning (and even existence), however, highlights another conception, and this is the idea of enclosure and limitation. Even in 'Ai', spatial metaphors (the Outside, the "Void", or the "depth" and "heights" (15)) point attention to how each step of the interpretive process outlined above is in fact an act of enclosing. Ilúvatar's halls are "filled to overflowing" by the Music (15), which therefore cannot be contained without his intervention. The Music and then the Vision enclose the Valar metaphysically, by the interpretations they contribute ("each of you shall find *contained* herein… those things which it may seem that himsElf devised or added" (17, my italics)), then emotionally ("they had become… *engrossed* in the unfolding of the World" (20, my italics)), and finally physically

[374] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 76, 83-5.
[375] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 70-75.
[376] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 70.
[377] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 76.

("their power should thenceforward be *contained* and *bounded* in the World" (20, my italics). The Vision itsElf is also "*globed amid* the Void, and … *sustained* therein" (Ilúvatar's way of containing the Music: 17, my italics), and the Flame Imperishable to be enclosed, to "be" (20) or to "burn at the heart of the World" ('Vq' introduction, 25). The Flame Imperishable as the physical, visual metaphor of the totality of meaning, is repeated in the Lamps, and then the Two Trees of Valinor.[378] The concern with the preservation of light and meaning is seen in making the Silmarils: Fëanor ponders "how the light of the Trees… might be preserved imperishable" (67). The Silmarils, then, are little replicas of the world: at their heart there is an "inner fire" "made of the blended light of the Trees" (67), a physical connection with the Flame Imperishable (note the term in Fëanor's ponderings). Light is captured: as a metaphor of meaning, it is sent to the world to be at its heart; in its physical form, it is blended in the Silmarils. After the destruction of the Trees, the Silmarils and the Sun and Moon, artfully made "vessels to *hold* [the last fruits] and preserve their radiance" (99, my italics), are the "reminders" of light,[379] the most concentrated signs making light into a signified, connected with the theological center. Through the Silmaril of Eärendil, this light is indeed preserved, and in another act of enclosing comes down to Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*: in Galadriel's Phial is "*caught* the light of Eärendil's star, set amid the waters of [Galadriel's] fountain."[380]

Enclosing also appears in the most literally spatial meaning too, and the philological discourse also takes it as a governing image. There is the important theme of hidden kingdoms (Gondolin "behind the circle of the mountains", 126; Doriath "fenced… round about with an unseen wall of shadow and bewilderment", 97),[381] while the siege of Angband is never complete, and Morgoth is never "wholly encircled" (116). This is an inverted image

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[378] For this, see Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 62-4.

[379] Flieger calls both the Silmarils (*Splintered Light*, 98) and the Sun and Moon "reminders" (*Splintered Light*, 121).

[380] *FR*, II.viii.367, my italics. For a discussion, see Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 159-60.

[381] Both are warned against the danger of final closure, not coming forth, not being open towards the West, where the true hope of the Noldor lies (the Valar significantly leave open the Calacirya, so that Valinor is never entirely closed: 102).

of other confinements which also do not succeed: Maedhros' by Morgoth, Beren's and Finrod's by Sauron, Lúthien's by his father. Breaking these confinements supplies the momentum of history, and also suggests that enclosing can be too limiting. Verbal art is also said to enclose events and the history of the world. Arda itsElf is the playing out, the literalizing of an artistic creation;[382] the history of the world has to be achieved, and of course written. Still, in *The Silmarillion*, it is repeatedly said that "no song or tale could contain all the grief and terror that then befell" (76, see also 192). Songs do contain, but not all: grief and terror (reality, as experienced) overflow their capacities. History also encloses time and events into periods, Ages; the *Silmarillion* text evolves a variety of clearly historical terms to refer to periods of time from the backward, evaluative, meaning-investing 'totalizing' perspective of the historiographer. The First Age is generally called the "Elder Days" (30, 114, 208, 231, 304; "Eldest", 294), while significantly the term "Third Age (of the World)" only appears in 'RP' (294, 297; however, the same period had already been referred to as the "Dominion of Men" in 'Ai', 20, and the term comes back in 'RP', 299). The "Noontide of Valinor/the Blessed Realm" (63, 65, 95) or the "Days of Bliss (in Valinor)" (39, 63, 244) mark particularly happy periods for the Elves, while the "Spring (of Arda)" (36, 37, 47) for the whole creation in general; opposed to such are negative evaluations like the "Black Years" (289, 294), the "Dark Years of Men" (263), or the "Fading Years" (299). The narrative of the whole *Silmarillion* also uses these terms to achieve partial and general closures: "the noontide of Valinor", the "Tales of the Eldar in Middle-earth" "draw to a close" (65, 299). These are, however, specifically textual closures, signaling the limiting of history in texts and stories which 'contain' (in fact represent) what happened, and themselves form an unclosed system, like medieval textual complexes. The unclosed traditions, where stories or texts can be used, reinterpreted, demonstrate this aptly. Events cannot be closed in texts; but texts are,

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[382] See Collins, '"Ainulindale",'260-61.

paradoxically, still the only way to preserve history, the only place where it exists as a narrative.

In Tolkien's fictional world, the authentication of any knowledge goes back to the Valar, and ultimately, to Ilúvatar; but the metatextual framework adds another layer, and turns even the theological discourse and its center into no more than a linguistic sign. Knowledge is authenticated by the Elves, and through them, the Valar might be seen as facts by subjects in those actual cultures (to Círdan, Elrond, even Bilbo himsElf), because those subjects personally stand for the authority with which they speak; but in the context of Bilbo's compilation, the very cultures and the theological discourse is shown to be exclusively a linguistic construction, itsElf a discourse (of history). Within the fiction, Ilúvatar might be the metaphysical center, the signified that is not at the same time a signifier; but even within the fiction, readers only see this through a text, where Ilúvatar himsElf is only a linguistic sign, part of the text which has no tangible way of demonstrating this. The text can refer to the authenticating cultures, but still remains a text, read and interpreted in different cultures, and thus the theological remains nothing more than a (perhaps arbitrarily) privileged discourse. *The Silmarillion* claims that the world is based on a theological hierarchy, but at the same time it also claims that this is only available through language, text, through the Elvish theological discourse that structures the ontological and epistemological system of the fictional world. Within the narrative, it is exactly this non-tangible nature of the Elvish authentication that evil powers utilize to deceive Men: impersonating Amlach at a council of Men, a (presumably evil) person says that "All this is but Elvish lore, tales… Which of you has seen the least of the Gods?... Those who seek the dominion of Middle-earth are the Eldar" (145), just as Sauron in Númenor claims Ilúvatar to be "a phantom devised in the folly of [the Valar's] hearts… speak[ing] only what they will" (271-72). Tolkien thus thematizes the ideological nature of representation, the authentication of knowledge, and in fact does not

show a wistfully medieval world: he shows an interactive, interdependent system of cultures, whose representations of the world construct it as a pansemiotic, medieval-type structure – but still very emphatically remain (textual) representations.

5.1.3 Knowledge/Power

This ideological operation of the discourses of knowledge also points out that the question of power (over representations, for one thing) is also inevitably bound up with the hierarchy of knowledge and its theological grounding. The accessibility of knowledge signals power relations encoded in the very fabric of the fictional world: the closer one is to the center, the more inherent power is assigned to him/her. Jane Chance's discussion of *The Lord of the Rings* in terms of the Foucauldian connection of power and knowledge[383] is in fact applicable to *The Silmarillion* as well, with the necessary changes. In *The Silmarillion*, the representation of power is primarily mythological, and then politicized (while *The Lord of the Rings* presents a conflict played out primarily on a military and political scene, with a mythological background as its ultimate explanation). Here Ilúvatar's totality of meaning is at the same time a totality of power too, the power to create; Melkor is said to have "the greatest gifts of power and knowledge" (16), and even 'QS' calls him "the mightiest of all the dwellers of Eä" (72), while the very name of the Valar is translated as "the Powers of Arda" (25). Power here is conceived as theological-ontological, but in no sense political: that enters the narrative partly when Melkor claims Arda as his "own kingdom" (21), which the other Valar oppose; but much more with the appearance, division, and actions of the Elvish groups, which happen in terms of their relations to the Valar and the light,[384] and is mirrored in the levels of authority and knowledge the narrative assigns them. The ambiguous political situation in

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[383] *Mythology of Power*, 20-25.
[384] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 76, 83-5.

Valinor, for example, is highlighted when Fëanor's father, king Finwë, goes into exile with his son (71), ironically bringing about exactly what Melkor's lies threatened Fëanor originally: "Fingolfin [Fëanor's half-brother] ruled the Noldor in Tirion" (71). The actual political power of the Sindarin King Thingol is grounded in the fact that "he alone of all the Sindar had seen with his own eyes the Trees": he is numbered among the "Elves of Light, mighty upon Middle-earth" (56). His Maia queen, Melian, who has "the light of Aman… in her face" (55) and thus actually "represents light"[385] also lends him "[g]reat power" (56). The Númenóreans receive "wisdom and power" (260) from the teaching of Eönwë, herald of the Valar, thereby establishing their own direct contact with the theological center. The connections to, and the distance from, "true knowledge" define power positions in Middle-earth that serve as the basis of further, more specific power structures.

These structures appear both in the narrative and its background, the field of cultural discourses created by the detailed, systematizing background chapters. The 'theological power' deriving from one's (or a culture's or cultural group's) position in the metaphysical hierarchy is one thing; but in 'QS', these positions are translated to the actual pragmatic discourses of the narrative, and become positions of political, military, cultural power, with the corresponding assignment of authority as well. The relation of Calaquendi and Moriquendi remain relatively theoretical; but the Noldorin military action against the Teleri (the "Kinslaying", 87), while mirroring the superiority of the Noldor, is also presented as deeply and tragically wrong. In Beleriand, political relations between Noldor and Sindar are somewhat strained, and Fëanor's sons often come up against the power of King Thingol (see Thingol's decree about where and how they are to settle, 111-12, and Maedhros' pragmatic discussion of what this means in real political terms, 112). Nevertheless, ch.XIV of 'QS', 'Of Beleriand and Its Realms', presents a more or less balanced and peaceful picture of political

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[385] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 93.

relations after the Noldor's return. This balance is only shaken by Thingol's explicit display of power in outlawing Quenya (129); but this act is motivated by the evil of the Kinslaying that one group of the Noldor is guilty of. Ch.X, 'Of the Sindar', already outlined the relations of the Sindar and the Dwarves (91-4), and the arrival of Men later puts another layer on top of the complex cultural, political, ethnographic, and linguistic map serving as the backdrop of the 'QS' narrative. Men, unlike the Dwarves, relate to Elves (mostly the Noldor) politically, becoming their vassals (142, 147), and are (significantly) "eager to learn the lore of the Elves" (147), whom they initially named "Nómin, the Wise" (141), taking up the knowledge term most clearly associated with metaphysical, theological knowledge in *The Silmarillion*.

The end of the First Age, the intervention of the Valar in history not only wipes the geographical scene clean, and does away with much of the previously established power structures (which Morgoth's invasions had eroded significantly even before that), but also reinforces the primacy of the Valar and the Elves connected to them. Even though Númenóreans at first receive knowledge and legitimation both from the Valar and the Elves, their fall is a clear consequence of hybris, their not being content with their assigned place in the hierarchy (and the loss of the connection with the Elves and the true tradition about their existential questions). In the Second and Third Ages the clear-cut power relations, the unambiguous hierarchies are disrupted; in both Ages, Sauron arises to contest the power of the Valar, Elves, and Númenóreans with his own. This, significantly, involves the communication of his "knowledge" (287), enabling the Elvish smiths to produce the Rings of Power. The two Sauron-dominated Ages deal more explicitly and less elaborately with power than did 'QS'; but this again is another aspect of the philological fiction. While 'QS' is a detailed, many-sourced narrative, a compilation in its own right, 'Ak' and 'RP' are shorter, unified works, which therefore do not contain such a degree of differentiation and complex plotting.

The motif of the fragmentation of light and the dispersal of knowledge that Flieger examined in *Splintered Light* can be seen as another aspect of this representation. Light is literally a problem in history: it is needed for subjects in Middle-earth simply in order to *see* and thus *know* the world. All forms of light in the Third Age are ultimately traced back to the Valar, but this connection becomes more and more opaque. The Sun, Moon and Eärendil's star all derive their light from the Two Trees of Valinor. While the Sun and Moon are made by the Valar from the last fruit of the Trees, the source of the light in Eärendil's star is a Silmaril, which contains the "blended light of the Trees" (67) in their original form. These are all "hallowed" (the Silmarils by Varda, 67, the Sun and Moon by Manwë, 99, and Eärendil's ship by the Valar generally, 250), invested with power beyond the mere presence of light, and in a sense define history: the Sun and Moon through their serving as the basis for a new reckoning of time (103), and the Silmarils thematically, by becoming the main motif of the Noldorin narrative. But their thematic role is also governed by their function and meaning, and thus the literal role of light is complemented by a metaphorical (within the fictional world's discourses, metaphysical) dimension. The Silmarils are not Rings of Power: they do not 'empower' their possessors like the Rings do. They do not even offer invisibility (if anything, radiating light, they offer *better visibility*). Their power is seen exactly in how concentrated their meaning is: Flieger's discussion of how the exclusive "hoarding" and "possessing" of light (and all that it means) inevitably leads to corruption[386] is a good example for the theologically coded conception of meaning and power in Tolkien's fictitious world. Melkor cannot produce meaning without interpretation in 'Ai': similarly, the desire to "own" or control meaning (the meaning concentrated in the Silmarils), the refusal of Ilúvatar's directive to interpret, always results in moral evil. It is this commandment of interpretation that is metaphorized by light belonging to everyone in Middle-earth: meaning is not to be

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[386] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 107-17.

controlled, but only used, adapted, interpreted, an evocative image of which is the desire to make light available to everyone, to light the world and make it visible, knowable. Power as abstracted from its practical (political, military, cultural) applications is thus seen as a specifically ideological operation, the control over meanings and interpretation.[387] Morgoth's acquiring the Silmarils is rather symbolic than practical: it never does him any tangible good that he has them (being hallowed, they even burn him if he touches them: 81), but enclosing them in his iron crown, he symbolically establishes his control over their meaning (note that this is again an act of literal and metaphorical enclosure). Elvish history is a struggle to regain meaning, to reestablish the connection with the theological, the metaphysical guarantee.

What Tolkien's intertwined presentation of ontology, epistemology, theology, and philology create is an extreme emphasis on interpretation. The philological fiction stressed this through the construction of sources, authors, the interpretive choices of redactors and cultural contexts, as indeed also in the emphases allotted to specific spheres and aspects of the history, to certain groups or persons. As we have seen, the 'QS' text evidently has its own agenda and focus (the "deeds of the Noldor"), but even within this, it tends to concentrate more on some people or groups and less on others.[388] A theoretical reading can now concentrate on what the uncertainties and gaps, the undefined, hazy aspects of this philological structure and historical representation imply. Secondary philology can only go so far: instead of speculating about possible alternative transmission processes, criticism has to concentrate on what those uncertainties mean in the context of an explicitly and conclusively textual fiction. The primary characteristic of Tolkien's oeuvre is its variety, its inability (or refusal) to produce definitive versions, closures on both the level of the individual story or

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[387] In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron's power is presented in exactly these terms, as a monolithic, hegemonical discourse that seeks to rob its subjects of their interpretive choices and meanings. See my 'Lost Subject', 61.

[388] Alex Lewis, in 'Historical Bias in the Making of *The Silmarillion*' (in Reynolds and GoodKnight, eds. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference, 1992*, 158-66) discusses these anomalies, but connects them to the (obviously faulty) presupposition that Bilbo's sources were only living persons in Rivendell. Lewis nevertheless points out the fact that "*The Silmarillion* as we receive it is at least third-hand information" (159), which is factually perhaps wrong (most of the text must have gone through much more stages than that), but highlights the radical indirectness and mediatedness of all information in the compendium.

text, and on that of his complex corpus; and this is not a marginal but an essential and meaningful feature. Clive Tolley calls Tolkien "the great unfinisher", whose desire "to complete the unfinished, to remove the anomalies," proved to be so ironically "sElf-defeating".[389] But this can ow be seen as partly the point; Tolkien's work is much the better for not having been finished. He found few convenient endpoints in the storytelling, the 'plotting' of the denouements of stories, and in the whole oeuvre, the constant rewriting of stories and texts, the fluctuations of the 'Silmarillion' tradition highlight an *open* space where the motif of enclosing becomes the ultimate threat: the solidification of something not into a living tradition, but into untouchable classic.

5.2 A plural space

What Tolkien's fiction thus defines is an essentially open and plural space: part of the importance of the 1977 *Silmarillion* is exactly that it manages to contain (again, *enclose*) this radical plurality within the covers of one book, in however problematic a form. Indeed, it is probably this problematic nature that manages to open it up at the same time, define it as in a relation with the fluid manuscript corpus and the texts of *The History of Middle-earth*. But even without the critical consideration of the variants (which noticeably played little part in the above critical inquiries), *The Silmarillion* clearly offers among its main themes several aspects of plurality that serve as theoretical keys to the philological fiction. *Textual* plurality and variance is the most visible of these, but through secondary philology, the textual field could be extended to suggest a plurality of *cultures and discourses* (not 'texts' but rather 'clusters' of certain textual functions that cohere into representations of cultural horizons,

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[389] Clive Tolley, 'Tolkien and the Unfinished,' in K.J. Battarbee, ed., *Scholarship and Fantasy. Proceedings of The Tolkien Phenomenon, May 1992, Turku, Finland* (Turku: U of Turku, 1993), 163.

points of view, ideological operations). Though the emphasis on the authoring and transmission of constituent texts in most cases cannot be personalized, thus creating author *positions* generally and very rarely actual author *figures*, the role of the *writing subject*, those who produce and transmit texts and thus make up the layer through which the entire fictional world is presented (and created), is essential. All these considerations, as we saw, play a part in an appreciation of *The Silmarillion* as ultimately a field of various coexisting representations, linked to their authors (however indefinite), textual manifestations (however tentative), cultural contexts, ideological positions, and authenticities. Tolkien's fictional world might be radical in the sense that it is handled as independent and separate from the reader's reality, and the logic of its construction is thus not one of 'mimetic' realism; but at the same time this intricately woven system is a surprisingly adequate image of how traditions and representations work in (and in between) cultures. The plurality of representations therefore offer a further level, where the stories, the narrative content of culture are handled as patterns and stories in the background, generating an endless variety of plots and tellings in texts. Through his plural, elaborately layered fiction of culture, Tolkien manages to write even the unwritable, and model the cultural function and operation of myths and mythological systems. It is, I suggest, this effect that *mythopoesis* really means (or should mean) in Tolkien.

5.2.1 Textual plurality: acts of interpretation

The very first thing we learn about *The Silmarillion* is that it is put together from a manuscript corpus. This is true in both primary and secondary philology: Christopher Tolkien worked from the multitude of manuscripts J.R.R. Tolkien left at his death, while Bilbo Baggins from the sources "both living and written" he found in Elrond's Rivendell. The book is an editorial compilation, and thus contains (primarily) and constructs (secondarily) the essential variance and plurality of manuscript textuality. As Cerquiglini claims, this variance is not a problem

that philology has to deal with: it is a historical, cultural *condition*, an episteme of manuscript culture that leads further away, into questions of signification and meaning.[390] The specific conceptions of author and work pertaining under such circumstances, rather than remaining strictly and narrowly the problems of how to produce a 'good text' from the variant corpus, point towards a closer understanding of both medieval textual and literary theory and of our own (post-)humanist ways of conceptualizing this cultural historical field. Cerquiglini's "critical history of philology" (the subtitle of *In Praise of the Variant*) has since led to more detailed work, such as Machan's on Middle English literature, which defined the "work" as a growing and expanding field around the *lexis* of the text, where translation, glosses, and several layers of commentary are integrated in the conception of the work, since these only elucidate and therefore leave unchanged the *meaning* of the words.[391] But at the same time, editorial and textual theory also had its own turn towards the cultural contextualization of texts and how they are enabled and legitimized.[392]

What Tolkien's text models very sensitively is this peculiar and essential plurality. Through the indeterminate transmission lines, the uncertain authorial/editorial interventions, and the explicitly signaled textual transformations *The Silmarillion* constructs a field of mock manuscript textuality where the uncertainty and indeterminacy do not mean a problem but actually make sense – because they are seen to produce the framework within which meaning is made. One theoretically stressed central theme of the book has turned out to be interpretation in culture: this fictional manuscript textuality creates ways and patterns of signification and interpretation in Middle-earth. Bilbo himsElf works as a medieval editor, translating, adapting, commenting and compiling, and through these textual activities he contributes to the fiction's renegotiation of what it means to make meaning. Bilbo inherits

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[390] Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, 33-38.
[391] Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, 141-45.
[392] See Peter L. Shillingsburg's summary of (some of) the reactions to a socially contextualized textual criticism: 'An Inquiry into the Social Status of Texts and Modes of Textual Criticism,' *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), 55-79.

meaning, but by his *compilator* activity shapes it into a comprehensive body of text that necessarily changes it, even as it relates any piece of text to its many sources and authorizes them with their origins. The emphasis on the textual plurality, variety, instability in the fictional world serves to query texts and their uses in culture, the origin and use of representations, and the contexts around acts of writing and reading (two aspects of interpretation) that define and govern them.

How this works on both motivic and theoretical levels is well illustrated in the relations of the Tolkien corpus to *The Silmarillion*. Its problematic status aside for a moment (the average Tolkien reader does not much care about it anyway), the content it makes available (the characters and stories it contains) really does make meaning when it is related to *The Lord of the Rings* in an act of interpretation, be that readerly or critical,[393] and ultimately leads the critical considerations towards the variants and the necessary recourse to just such a plural and fluid framework of texts and stories, textual and traditional relations. But the use of the stories (and texts) of *The Silmarillion* within the metafictional workings of *The Lord of the Rings* also shows a deep interconnectedness. In some chapters of *The Return of the King*, we see Frodo (the fictional writer of the text) paralyzed and unconscious, while Sam takes over not only the action, but also the task of ringbearing. The ways Frodo's text constructs the figure of Sam here show clear influences from exactly those stories of *The Silmarillion* that the hobbits are well known to be interested in, highlighting, firstly, that Tolkien really handled the 'Silmarillion' corpus and tradition as the 'matter of course' background for his new story, incorporating patterns from it and constructing subtle subtexts when he (at the time) had no hope that any of his readers would be able to see this; and secondly, that these stories serve as interpretive patterns *within* the fictional world, thus themselves becoming themes in their own right (once they were made visible by the publication of *The Silmarillion*) about how cultures

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[393] See my 'Great Chain', 241-2.

preserve and use their past.[394] Plurality thus very naturally points towards culture as its place of operation.

5.2.2 Cultural plurality: discourses and ideologies

As we have seen, the *Silmarillion* text very consistently plays on the creation and expansion, then the manifold differentiation of a cultural space that contextualizes the production and transmission of texts (which seems to be Tolkien's primary interest). This cultural space, which Shippey already showed to be a primarily important framework of Tolkien's philological fiction,[395] is itsElf emphatically plural. Indeed, its 'pluralizing' is part of the narrative of *The Silmarillion*, and is clearly mirrored in details of secondary philology. In 'QS', we see a slow differentiation of the ways of writing about Middle-earth: the original 'unitary' discourse, inherited by the Elves from the Valar, gives way to the discourse of (and about) the various fragmenting groups of the Elves and other Children of Ilúvatar (whether by "adoption" or by "choice", 44). It is not only the narrative that is refracted here (to use the metaphor of light), but the text as well, since it is exactly these proliferating groups and discourses that appear in clearly composite, editorial background chapters inserted into the narrative, making divisions, surfacing in various styles, containing various points of view. 'QS' is about the limitation of viewpoints in an expanding cultural space: even its thematic focus, the deeds of the Noldor (especially as related to the Silmarils), is about a partial (and partisan) group and how its deeds feed back into the highest levels of story and culture. The Noldor and the Sindar might be merely specific Elvish cultures; but the Silmarils are signs for

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[394] For more detail and evidence on the use of *Silmarillion* motifs to construct the figure of Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, see my 'Fictitious Fairy Tales'.

[395] Shippey, *Road*, 309-13. Although he talks about the philological relations between the versions of 'The Legend of Brynhild', Shippey concludes that these create an "imaginative space in which later authors can work" (313), and since Tolkien's texts, as looked at in the context of (primary) Tolkien philology, lead to something similar (Shippey later summarizes the significance of Tolkien's variants by saying that these "[built] up a corpus of texts like those he was professionally used to", 317), and on the fictional, metatextual level, it is precisely this imaginative space between the fictionalized texts that accommodate culture and its operations.

the most important theoretical and theological meanings in Tolkien's fictional world, and the war the Noldor and Sindar fight against Morgoth (partly for the Silmarils) proves the extreme importance of this theoretical-theological center to mediate between and keep together the various differentiated cultures and their representations.

This plurality of cultures also becomes important in the metatextual fiction because this is what creates both the variety and the instability that this fiction is most notable for. There is a proliferation of sources, texts, author figures, audiences and viewpoints (creating interpretive communities which illustrate the use of meanings, the interpretive stances taken towards tradition); but these are never quite permitted to show in just enough detail (comparable to, say, Frodo's way of writing Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, or even Aragorn's recourse to the Beren and Lúthien story), thereby keeping them (the sources, texts, authors, audiences) always indeterminate, uncertain, hazy – but unquestionably *there*, as part of the fiction. The narrative voice of *The Silmarillion* thus becomes a voice we can identify with no one in particular: the layering of the fictional authors and the general uncertainty of their textual activities result in an effect that we can never be sure who is narrating, who is writing this. While a multiplicity of voices might create the effect of Bakhtinian polyphony, the textual strategies that aim precisely at covering up this multiplicity highlight that this is probably not the point here. Shippey's remark that *The Silmarillion* "refus[es] to accept novelistic convention",[396] and thus negotiates between the novel and other modes of writing (which makes it much less popular and easily accessible than Tolkien's finished texts) is telling, since the generic uncertainty is surely part of the instability of *The Silmarillion*; but it is also one of the main points it is making about culture. Clear-cut genres and easily classifiable modes of writing are reflective categories of criticism, and are imposed on historical material partly in comfortable hindsight. It is the *historical function* of texts and

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[396] Shippey, *Road*, 268. See also Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History,* 190-94, for an argument that it was exactly this that made the 'Silmarillion' unfinishable for Tolkien: the old material he had been writing and rewriting for decades just did not lend itself to the mode of writing he found to be so popular and accessible.

stories within their own cultural contexts that Tolkien is interested in here, and not how these same texts and stories appear to a comfortable 20th-century reader (or critic). This argument, familiar from his famous essay on *Beowulf* (where he argued that the poem needs to be read and interpreted as a poem, and not as a source of cultural history, ethnography, or archeology), still includes an awareness and understanding of the metatextual level: the historical functions *and* the text showing fictional cultures as they use texts and stories in their historical functions are both the point of Tolkien's fiction of culture.

While this cultural plurality doubtless holds its own biases, imbalances and privileged positions, these are all presented as part of how cultures operate. The theological discourse of the Elves, the historical-political primacy of the Noldor, which provides the narrative focus, contribute to a noticeable one-sidedness in much of *The Silmarillion*: this Tolkien warned about as the "Elvish focus" of the work.[397] Since it is this Elvish point of reference, particularly the theologically grounded epistemology of one fictitious culture that fundamentally determines the hierarchy of knowledge and thus, projected onto the philological domain, of textual authority as well, the *Silmarillion* is also sensitive to the meta-level of narratives and discourses, and shows the ideological workings of cultures. The way the characters move in the plural cultural field of Tolkien's Middle-earth, the relationships they assume towards each other, is generally encoded in the Elvish account about the 'order' of the world; but since the Elvish account itsElf is presented emphatically as a (transmitted) text, the metatextual strategy lays bare the ultimate lack at the center of such textual authentication, and presents even privileged discourses as merely interpretations (even if culturally dominant or hegemonical).

The later units of *The Silmarillion*, 'Ak' and 'RP', even thematize what happens with a loss of such a privileged position and explanatory narrative. Númenor falls because its

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[397] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 147 (#131).

inhabitants fail to accept a gradually less and less clearly legitimated discourse; in the absence of Elvish culture, it is not only the interpretation of traditionally inherited knowledge that becomes problematic (the understanding of death), but its very authority, legitimacy is also queried, thus making Númenor susceptible for Sauron's offer of an alternative theology (271-72). The 'great narrative' of Elvish theology is forgotten or opposed: with the loss of privileged points in the cultural field, cultures are not able to interpret correctly (or, at any rate, in a way expected of them by the normative systems created by those discarded discourses) and even confuse interpretation (the free production of meaning) with the control over meaning as such. Reminiscent of Melkor's and Sauron's ultimate purposes (to deny subjects their own interpretation and meaning, assigning theirs in its place), the Númenórean hybris (partly engineered by Sauron himsElf) finally necessitates the intervention of Ilúvatar himsElf, notably not destroying the openness and plurality of the cultural space, but only that particular culture and field where these subversive actions took place. If anything, the Third Age of 'RP' is an even more expansive field with even more positions and points of view, where knowledge is as rare and exotic as the Elves, and where signification is seen to be largely independent of its earlier rules and strategies. The cultural space of the Third Age is inhabited by many more groups that have no connection with the Elves, have no idea about the theological, and thus construct meaning and knowledge along entirely different lines. Sauron's pretensions at world dominance are again shown as seriously limiting this variance, and thus limiting meanings and interpretive choices for both cultures and individual subjects. 'RP' is the only unit of *The Silmarillion* text that cannot with any ingenuity be attributed to Bilbo: the account of the Third Age, the textual manifestation of this unprecedented cultural plurality becomes problematic, because it breaks the framework of the textual fiction of Bilbo's compendium, and points in a direction of a context even around that. There is a new author figure here, another writing subject that performs the function of collection and record:

as in *The Lord of the Rings* (to which 'RP' refers: 303), the author-hero, the one who collects and interprets, is subtly pushed into the foreground.

The individual textual units of *The Silmarillion* are constructed to convey the idea that they are different texts with different origins and backgrounds. The discourses and ideological operations arising from those textual functions responsible for this construct a cultural space that is emphatically plural – plural in different ways depending on the textual unit and its fictional origin. While again modeling cultural history and its shifts, this practice at every point presupposes and sometimes also thematizes what it incorporates: cultures become visible through representations worked out and transmitted by authors, and are substantiated by the indications of audiences. The cultural space is represented as an even more irreducible plurality because it holds innumerable individual subjects, some of whom take part in the production of the text, but all of whom take part in signification, the production of meaning. It is indeed this role, the freedom and the ability to interpret, that evil is constantly trying to take away from them. Tolkien's emphasis that any text, any version of an anonymous fairy story necessarily has an individual author[398] signals that his representation of culture always includes the variety of the individual subjects. It is always *someone* who writes (and reads) a text.

5.2.3 Subjects of culture: defining and defined

Even though the individual writing subjects of *The Silmarillion* are very different from those of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's emphasis on the producers of text (and linguistic utterance) is persistently there in his depiction of stories and cultures as available through the individual subject's text. The author positions and the textual activities associated with them, as we have seen, form one of the most important part of the *Silmarillion*'s philological fiction:

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[398] Tolkien, *OFS*, 40, and Morus, '"Uprooting the Golden Bough",' 8.

after the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, when Tolkien instituted Bilbo as the compiler and translator of the First Age material, he transposed one of his most popular books' characteristic hero figures, the author-hero, onto the 'Silmarillion' corpus, and made it the keystone of the presentation frame. *The Lord of the Rings* definitely evolves the figure of the hero as scholar and author, and places Bilbo in the position of the 'arch-author'. All hobbit characters of the Fellowship inherit his deep infatuation with the writing down (or up) of what happened, to the point where sometimes the whole plot seems to be only an excuse for Bilbo to have something to write up. Bilbo, with the exception of 'RP', seems to be at the top of the authorial hierarchy of *The Silmarillion* too, since it is only through his translation and compilation that we know the texts of those earlier, hypothetical, fictional others; but those others are necessarily there, in their succession shifting the emphasis from simple writing (the production of text) towards reading and reception in general (the reading and interpreting of texts, the production of additional meaning). Any authorial action presupposes readerly actions, acts of interpretation: we have seen how the collection of different, alternative traditions, opinions and interpretations in the *compilator*'s text (be that Bilbo or any earlier editor before him) itsElf reflects interpretive action. The *Silmarillion* text's plurality extends to the construction of multiple subject positions, in the narrative and in its textual frame, subjects that are endowed with their own actions of signification and inevitably become bound with the cultural discourses that they mediate through their text.

Due to the difference between the novelistic discourse of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Silmarillion*'s peculiar mix of myth, history and romance, these two texts create very different subjects. The hobbit mediation of the finished texts enabled an essentially modern, psychological approach to character which constructed figures much easier to comprehend and identify with for the reader: the weighty, nearly sublime characters of *The Silmarillion* sometimes remind us of the outsized, heavy characters of oral narratives, not 'round' but

'flat', sparsely described and motivated.[399] While Frodo's fictional text can be taken to mirror a hobbit's unorthodox sense of how to write an account of what happened, Bilbo is working with inherited material. It is the sources and their original cultures which determine the depiction of characters and the conception of the subject that appears in the text.

The emphasis on the reading/writing subject and the plurality of such subjects (even if not personalized) in the cultural space of *The Silmarillion* work in the metatextual fiction to provide internal positions for the reader to see and interpret the text from. These positions are illustrated by the activity (productive and receptive) of the author figures in the fictional transmission of texts, and also point attention to the difference of primary and secondary layers. Within the fiction, the implied audiences are more or less visible in the texts, while the metatextual strategy successfully creates inside positions even for the primary reader of Tolkien's text. Walter Ong's discussion of the 'fictionalizing' of the audience[400] highlights the curious effect of *The Silmarillion* that draws the audience into the fiction, seeing the fictional texts as forming a tradition with its own dynamics and interpretive strategies. The constant emphasis on acts and patterns of interpretation (something that appeared in *The Lord of the Rings* too) makes these reader/interpreter positions particularly important, and reception theory particularly applicable. Iser's 'implied reader'[401] can be identified as someone impossibly engaged with Tolkien's tangled web of writing (primary), but more importantly, itsElf becomes fictionalized (secondary). This is why *The Silmarillion*, if anything, fostered a reader involvement in the textual world even to a greater extent than *The Lord of the Rings* did, instead of eliciting (at least initially) much critical attention. These inside positions, as indicated, offer a specific reading, because they make the reader aware of the history of

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[399] See Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 70-71, 151-55. Christopher Tolkien reports one reader's reaction to *The Silmarillion* in the Foreword to *The Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I*: "It's like the *Old Testament*!" (Tolkien, *Book of Lost Tales, Vol. I.,* ix), further linking the characters and the narrative with old and (for most readers) inaccessible modes of writing.

[400] Walter J. Ong, 'The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction', *PMLA* 90.1 (1975): 9-21.

[401] For a concise survey of this term in reception theory, see Holub, *Reception Theory*, 84-85.

Tolkien's fictionalized texts in their own, fictional context, and allow one to see them as operating within their own (again, fictional) tradition, their meaning always partly defined and produced by their previous forms, uses and interpretations, very much in the vein of Jauss's literary history as "the history of impact".[402] The accumulated meanings and interpretations of the fictional texts of *The Silmarillion* are seen to surface in *The Lord of the Rings* in ways we have already seen (in Aragorn's thematizing the story of Beren and Lúthien, Frodo's writing of the figure of Sam in Mordor,[403] or the text's use of legendary figures like Túrin to achieve more subtle meanings[404]).

The plurality of subjects in a text that evolves its various discourses also highlights that those very discourses conceptualize subjects in very different ways. Talking about theology, the text constructs subjects earthly and unearthly: Ilúvatar, Valar, Maiar on the one hand, and Elves, Men, Dwarves (and the rest) on the other. In politically focused parts, Elves and Men, faithful and renegade Númenóreans appear very different. The relation of figures like Beren and Lúthien, Túrin, Tuor or Eärendil towards the order of the world (and therefore signification) depends for a large extent on the type of story they appear in and the type of role they are assigned (by the authors, by their historical circumstances and personal stories, or in the context of the theological discourse, by the Valar). Romance creates Beren as a heroic figure who actually achieves meaning both in a literal sense (because he manages to get a Silmaril back) and metaphorically, becoming part of the tradition that is seen to govern the terms in which Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings* interprets his own story. But meaning always escapes Túrin, despite his attempts to control his story (significantly, with always giving himsElf new names, attempting to turn himsElf into someone not 'subject' to Morgoth's curse) but reaches only a heroic status the mention of which creates subtle irony in

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[402] Jauss, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,' 20-23.
[403] See my 'Fictitious Fairy Tales'.
[404] See my 'Great Chain', 242-43.

The Lord of the Rings.[405] The ideas of desire, hybris, heroism, love or service that lie at the heart of the stories in *The Silmarillion* are seen to be very different in *The Lord of the Rings*, where (in the psychologized depiction of character and the novelistic discourse) they construct subjects easily theorizable;[406] in *The Silmarillion* these concepts form part of a mode of representation which resists the same theorization by its very 'oldness', but still function to ground the usages of *The Lord of the Rings*. The discourses created in the text of *The Silmarillion* evolve primarily the subjects of story and legend (to be used later), not the speaking subject, the center of signification that we see in *The Lord of the Rings*.

As the 'earthly' subjects are seen to make meaning and sense on the basis of their integration to or separation from the hierarchy of knowledge, the subjects on the 'unearthly' side of that hierarchy definitely pose a problem for the representation.[407] They are perhaps not as problematic as in *The Lord of the Rings*, where the theological is a definitely missing discourse and the 'mythological evil' of Sauron needs to be represented despite never actually appearing (and is indeed at variance entirely with the life-world of the characters), but the plurality of subject positions in *The Silmarillion* certainly includes that of the 'mythological subjects'. The 'old' mythological discourses of 'Ai' and 'Vq', and even the mixed style of 'QS' incorporate these more easily, but since these subjects (among them, Ilúvatar, the creator, and Melkor, the primary antagonist) are the ones who define the theological structure of the world and the basic conflicts shaping the narrative, they are clearly separated from the type of subjects the creatures are. Most such characters are shown to enter the human world from a 'supernatural' sphere (e.g., the Ainur entering Eä in 'Ai', becoming the Valar); they are 'mythological' not simply because of their prevailing representation as 'above (physical) nature,' but also because they function as metaphysical centers and generators of both

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[405] See my 'Great Chain', 242.
[406] See my ''Lost' Subject' and Rohy's 'On Fairy Stories'.
[407] The following paragraphs use some material from my article 'A Body of Myth: Representing Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*,' in Christopher Vaccaro, ed., *Bodies of Light and Shadow* (forthcoming).

subjects and the subject matter of stories. They create a frame for stories with their own story, open a space where mythology can operate; they assign (stories about) themselves special cultural functions.

In depicting the different sorts of subjects his fiction creates, Tolkien never questioned the traditional soul/body dichotomy of Western Christianity. In his fiction, corporeality is always an essential aspect of the individual's existence: a resource of meaning and a drawback at the same time, and means limitations, narrowing, and controlled readings, but it also signals the individual's (at least potential) integrity. This is consistent with the motif of 'enclosing' and the divine infusion of meaning into creatures; but corporeality also forms an aspect of the representation of the mythological figures. Their mythological status is associated with images of that corporeality, represented in terms of the physical/spiritual divide, and their activities involve not only the influencing of others, but also playing out their power on their own body. Strictly speaking, though, they do not have a physical body: they take "shape[s which] come[…] of their knowledge of the visible World, rather than of the World itsElf; and they need it not, save only as we use raiment" (21). Since these forms are determined by their knowledge of the creator's intention (the 'master meaning'), their bodies are the result of interpretation: a representation (of what they understand of Ilúvatar's totality), mirroring their spheres of action, attitudes and relationships to the world. Yavanna's avatar as a monumental tree has reportedly been seen by "some" (27-8), and Ulmo also "arose in majesty" (239) for Tuor.[408] Melkor's impatience with the creator's plans (16) in the end causes him to revert to the form of "a dark Lord, tall and terrible. In that form he remained ever after" (73, cf. 21). This fixation of physical form (uncharacteristic of the Valar) clearly underlines his loss of some of his native power, but also his moral failure: he becomes more and more 'of the world,' and cannot (or will not) change his form. Sauron suffers the same

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[408] The description of Ulmo's epiphany to Tuor is much more detailed in the version published in *Unfinished Tales* (28). At the end, however, is added: "[i]n this manner [Ulmo] showed himself to Tuor" (28), suggesting that every detail of the physical form is variable.

fate. Instead of the completely controlled and intentional representation, after the destruction of Númenor he "could never again appear fair to the eyes of Men," having been "robbed […] of that shape in which he had wrought so great an evil" (280), even though earlier, going by the name Annatar, he could still take up a shape "of one both fair and wise" (287). The materiality of the body means both a guarantee (of meaning) and a representational problem in Tolkien, even though *The Silmarillion* context is not as sensitive to this as *The Lord of the Rings*. Nevertheless, the difference of 'creating/shaping' and 'created' subjects is already grounded in Bilbo's fictional compilation.

The multiplicity of subject positions, the acts of interpretation, reading and writing assigned to them, and the expansive cultural sphere these collectively construct make *The Silmarillion* a multi-layered, extremely complex and sensitive model of how cultural history is reflected in texts. This textually conceived corpus is thus able not only to suggest all this variance to the philologically receptive (interested) reader, but also to function as the context and framework within which the quite different representative strategy of *The Lord of the Rings* can be seen to make elaborate and subtle sense. Ultimately, it is this difference in representative strategy, and the function of the *Silmarillion* construct from which, I will argue, Tolkien's mythopoeic effect emerges, illustrating that this effect lies in the complex relationships between texts, the functional relations of fictional systems of stories and texts.

5.2.4 Myth and representation

Critics have always associated Tolkien's work with myth and mythology, and 'mythopoeic' is still one of the most generally used (if also one of the haziest) terms to describe it. Tolkien himsElf liked to point out this connection with myth and mythology in his letters, and his literary historical sources and influences testify how important the great mythologies of antiquity and the legendary material of the Middle Ages were for his creative mind. But his

relation to the mythological tradition is a two-sided one.[409] Firstly, he relates to the stories that make up Germanic mythology, a system he loved instinctively better than the Greek. His philological work led him naturally to the larger frameworks of these traditions: the reconstructive method produced more or less coherent systems of stories and conceptions from corpora of texts.[410] Tolkien was interested in these stories and their uses in texts, as his articles on the Sigelhearwan and on *Beowulf* suggest; and he was primarily interested because these texts show how language is adapted to conveying new meaning while preserving traces of its old context. The word with the forgotten, old reference coming out of the shadows is a frequent motif of his writing.[411] It is possible to go back and find the original meanings, and to see the original stories again. Germanic and Greek myth are background systems one finds surfacing in texts like the *Edda*s or the Homeric epics, which themselves partly go back to an essentially oral phase. The Germanic material was further transformed and preserved in medieval orality and written literature. But philology as a critical discipline is basically textual, and, as Shippey has shown, Tolkien's work and his relation to myth are also heavily determined by its writing-controlled assumptions and methods: the other side of his involvement with the tradition.[412] His linking of specific versions of story with specific authors in the 'Silmarillion' corpus shows that he was primarily thinking in terms of text and its textual source: his mythological stories are presented as texts, written accounts, translations and redactions of other texts. One point he was making is about the essential *continuity* of tradition: that traditions are an integral part of the present, and that old stories lie

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[409] The following section uses material published in my 'Saving the Myths: The Re-creation of Mythology in Plato and Tolkien,' in Jane Chance, ed., *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth. A Reader* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2004), 81-100.

[410] See Shippey, *Road*, 19-23.

[411] E.g., the reappearance of the Ents, explaining the word and the stories for the riders of Rohan and Théoden: *TT*, III.viii.536-37.

[412] Shippey, *Road*, 28-54.

behind our new ones.[413] Mythology is suggested to be the effect of this interconnected system of traditions.

What the *Silmarillion* text achieves with its multiple pluralities (of texts, cultures, subjects) is a fictional field that can function as a historically accurate representation for a context for the operation of mythological systems in some sense very much like Tolkien's antique and medieval models. Oral and written are intricately interwoven layers in the history of mythologies: but since nearly all that we know about these religions we know from written sources,[414] the concept of myth in its 'original' (oral) context seems to be rather elusive. It can be thought of as an underlying generative force, a traditional and culturally central narrative, which determines the community's relation to the world through its religious application, and is preserved (as all important information) in the performance of the singer. In the words of Gregory Nagy, myths are "traditional narratives that convey a given society's truth-values."[415] This form of discourse is essentially mobile, plural, and this is underscored by considerations of the very cultural/communicational context it is transmitted in: myth is embedded (in culture), public, and communal.[416] As each performance, even of the same narrative, even by the same singer, will be different, this concept of myth accommodates the quality of variance as a fundamental definitive factor,[417] and thus "creativity is a matter of applying, to the present occasion, mythology that already exists."[418] This myth is not textual, having no real author and no canon.[419] Formulaic diction and other mnemotechnical characteristics determine the linguistic manifestations of the stories, as well as the whole framework of

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[413] See Shippey, *Author*, 21-29, especially 26; and Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*,' 111-13.

[414] See Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 11-13 and Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 65.

[415] Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 130 (see also 116, where Nagy adapts Burkert's description of myth as "a traditional narrative that is used as a designation of reality"; and Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 57-8).

[416] Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 2-3.

[417] See Kathryn A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20-21, especially as she interprets poetic excellence as "the ability to generate superior versions of any story" (21).

[418] Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 115

[419] Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 57.

thought in which culture exists.[420] Performance, the dynamics of the singer–audience direct relationship, and the social space in which the singer performs shape each retelling from the outside,[421] and make it a public act of remembering, "a speech-act endowed with a distinctly authoritative and authorizing force."[422] Myth, as its tellings, is a very emphatically *public* and *common* discourse, a unifying ideology.[423]

The spread of literacy started the textualization of poetic and mythological tradition, which resulted in different *uses* of myth. In Greece, epic texts formed the canon of Homer as the *didaskalos Hellados*, the teacher of Greece; written accounts of stories could be compared and analyzed by historians. Stories *in texts* became reference points: they could now be criticized, examined, and this led to a completely new way of defining knowledge and the authority of any narrative.[424] The essential fluidity and variance of myth is lost when cultures start to use myths as texts and relate to them that way (just as the essential variance of medieval manuscript textuality is lost in edition). In Greece, critique, rationalization, and the emergence of allegorical interpretation were parts of the same process,[425] leading up to Plato's well-known critique that occasions Havelock's very detailed elucidation of Homeric oral culture in *Preface to Plato*. The textual corpora that grow up around the original mythological systems are not *the* myths: but they are still the closest we can get to them.

Tolkien cannot but see myth as reconstruction, to start at the philological level. The English and Norse texts he studied were produced much later than the original use of myths (since they all come through Christian scribes and editors), and by the time they were collected and written down, the stories did not function in their religious determining role which would have made them all-pervasive in culture. In the 12th century when they were

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[420] See Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 33-36.
[421] Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy,* 22.
[422] Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 127.
[423] Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 2-3. Havelock, in his *Preface to Plato*, calls the Homeric education "indoctrination" for this reason (27).
[424] Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 24-30, 63.
[425] Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 24.

written (or at least when the first extant manuscript fragments of the *Elder Edda* were written down[426]), the *Edda*s definitely did not carry a 'religious' meaning – certainly not for people like Snorri Sturluson, who nevertheless collected and wrote down the *Prose Edda.* It is possible that Snorri was, as Clunies Ross puts it, attempting to "place the native Icelandic poetic tradition, indebted as it was to its oral inheritance and pagan in origin, on a par with the inherited pagan literature of Greece and Rome and its *interpretation christiana.*"[427] If we are to make anything of this material from much later record, the *original* state has to be reconstructed to look at English and Norse mythology, and as philology works backward to the original, Tolkien also creates myth backwards in his fiction. *The Silmarillion*, as an account going back to sources, is only a starting point for reconstruction. The philologist's (both primary and secondary) reconstruction brings us closer to the *past*, irrevocably gone but appearing in traces and determining the extant stories through participation in the tradition. The stories that make up the mythical history of the Elves all go back to previous recountings: the mythical past itsElf, the *original story*, is always hiding behind these accounts. In a very real sense, Tolkien does not write myth but leaves it to be reconstructed: it is not only the *texts*, not only *in* the texts, but for a large extent in the *system* of texts, the various interconnected layers of the plurality of the corpus. As Greek mythology is "an 'intertext', because it is constituted by all the representations of myths ever experienced by its audience, and because every new representation gains its sense from how it is positioned in relation to this totality of previous presentations",[428] the fictional texts of Middle-earth's mythic history are made to relate to absent originals, placing the stories in an absent (textually constructed) relation to something that lends the whole system its specific (and special) authority. Clunies Ross also claims that the "context of the whole complex of myths that society gives

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[426] See Gunell, 'Eddic Poetry,' 82-4, 93-97, and Clunies Ross, 'Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth,' 124, 128.

[427] Clunies Ross, 'Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth,' 130.

[428] Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, 6.

expression to" needs to be considered when dealing with the actual "Old Norse texts with a mythic dimension".[429] When we speak about 'Tolkien's mythology', therefore, we should properly understand the whole corpus, the fixed and finished texts together with the unfinished ones and the variants; *and* the theoretical framework of variance, unfixedness, and plurality which they produce. It is this that the *Silmarillion* text emblematizes and presents in a metatextual framework, within the covers of one book.

Tolkien records the reconstructive process, working towards the past, in writing, in the metatextual interlinking of fictional texts. But this is at the same time the *creation* of a context for the implied mythology, since metatextuality, after all, is only a way of stressing the roles of fictionality and textuality. The content of myth is *actually the past* (as in *The Silmarillion* the mythical stories are presented as history and as Homeric *mythos* is "the speech-act of actually narrating from memory an authoritative myth from the past"[430]), and the reconstructive process leads to knowledge in various senses. Both inside and outside the textual world, this is primarily the knowledge of the 'originals' (the languages and stories) which determine what we started with, what we have now. It is also the knowledge of history and origins *inside* the texts, while it is the knowledge of and the access to *meanings* for the outside interpreter. Creating myth is entirely carried out in writing: the result is itsElf a *philological corpus*, from which the philological method 'backtracks' to the 'originals', and in the process, much as Plato's own myths, appropriate its authority.[431] In writing the texts, Tolkien writes their background: he creates not only texts but also a *tradition* in which those texts stand.

Tolkien uses a traditional discourse and a traditional conceptual framework to create what is basically a new phenomenon in contemporary literature. His use utilizes both the old and the new frameworks, and criticizes the contemporary context not only from a literary

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[429] Clunies Ross, 'Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth,' 120.
[430] Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 127.
[431] See my 'Saving the Myths,' 92-95.

standpoint but also from a cultural one. At the same time, it asserts *continuity*, and makes use of it: this is a *restoration* of a functional place to mythology. The function of *recovery* which Tolkien attributes to the fairy-story in 'On Fairy-Stories' illustrates this very well: "Recovery … is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view. I do not say 'seeing things as they are' and involve mysElf with the philosophers",[432] though he does not venture closer to a philosophical discourse to define the effect. He uses stories recounted in texts to create a system, to make a background, and to insert these texts into that background. Myth is a culturally privileged story, and you have to have a culture for it to privilege anything; but once the context has been created, stories in the text which created it can be reinterpreted and can function in a privileged way.

The privileges that the discourses of the *Silmarillion* text evolve into a hierarchy of authority and knowledge are a functional part of how this is done. Mythical discourse does not participate in the legitimation of written systems, of written authority: it is authentic because it is *true*, true because it has always been told that way, because there is a *tradition* behind it. Something which had been known to be that way for generations simply *is* that way for subjects in that culture. Authority is not generated by sources, since myth is in an authorizing system completely disjointed from the textual conceptions of authority and truth value.[433] Inside the fictional world, the Elvish account of the Valar and the epistemological hierarchy are authorized by the Elves themselves, their cultural or personal authority: in Bilbo's compilation, however, these accounts are just texts, what is more, merely translations and/or reworkings of other texts, and therefore inevitably textually authenticated. If there is no culture or person to authenticate Ilúvatar, Ilúvatar does not function as the center, the ultimate signified: he will be only a signifier, and the slide along the chain of signification will

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[432] Tolkien, *OFS*, 67.

[433] See Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 22-24, for the Greek situation and Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 122-28 for a discussion of the connection between *mythos* and *aletheia* (truth) on the one hand, and *mythos* and *mne-* (remembrance) on the other. Myth is a public, rhetorical act of remembering, telling a true tale from memory. See also Richter, *Formation of the Medieval West*, 30, 93 (the bard as an "imaginative trustee of historic truth").

continue. It is not the texts alone, and not even the corpus alone, that produces the theoretical effect: myth is only, and can only be, *implied,* and works as a lacking 'metaphysical signified'.

The 'mythopoeic effect' is thus seen as primarily produced through the metatextual representation of essentially plural contexts and cultural contents. Metatextuality provides the fictionalized philological corpus; the cultural contexts and discourses which this expands into then contextualize the (fictional) texts themselves, and assign a functional place for them within the fictional world. Tolkien writes that cultural space where mythology is and generates meaning; he metaphorizes it with an exceptionally complex system of texts and shows it as the space where subjects perform their signifying acts within the traditions, interpretive conventions of different cultures. Myth itsElf cannot be written or 'produced', but the way in which myths live in subjects and function in cultures can. Tolkien's fiction sets out (even if at the creative start, unwittingly) to produce such a complex (and historically accurate) representation of culture that is able to represent the function of myth itsElf: because ultimately it is only the function that makes a myth.

With the exploration of the various different horizons expanding from the secondary philological considerations, Tolkien's emphasis on the (irreducible) plurality in every layer of his fiction is readily visible. From texts to cultures, discourses to authorities, he always keeps his eye on the multitude of subjects and groups of subjects that produce representations, narratives and texts, and on the activities of production, reception, interpretation that these are used for. The textual complex that he kept evolving all through his life (and a substantial insight into which was allowed to the readers with *The History of Middle-earth*) eventually brought into being a fictional cultural complex, which he separated more and more from historical, contemporary reality as he grew older. Parallel to this, the proliferation of texts and

versions, their relationships, and the possible alternative frames of presentation added a rather emphatic metafictional aspect to the whole, which served to highlight the (radical) fictionality of his world and stories. It was, I would argue, this accumulated effect that really conferred the 'mythopoeic' effect on Tolkien's writing.

The dominant literary mode of the 20th century, the fantastic, has by today grown into a variable, many-sided, plural mode that incorporates many fields its early proponents in the mid-20th century (Tolkien and Lewis, for instance) could not have possibly foreseen. The detailed construction and representation of "secondary worlds", sElf-contained fictions that serve as the setting of stories, is now coupled with reader (user) involvement to drive one of the most dynamic fields of contemporary popular culture, computer games.[434] In the film industry, technological advances made it possible to rise to the challenge and bring stories about such "secondary worlds" to the big and the little screen. Maybe Peter Jackson's three-part film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* divided fans and critics as to its accuracy and artistic liberties,[435] but the forthcoming two-part adaptation of *The Hobbit* shows there is plenty of popular interest and artistic ambition left in attempting to present the readers' favorite fictional worlds (and the stories set in them) visually. Tolkien's dislike of (or inability to achieve) closure is replicated as a structural principle of current popular cultural trends, television series, where the background world and the characters become more and more detailed, better and better known, but the stories (and with them, the narrative) never end – at least until the contract is renewed for another season. Franchises of serial fantastic productions (from George Lucas's classic *Star Wars* through the *Alien* franchise or *Battlestar Galactica*) produce new and interesting developments every year; *Star Wars* and Frank

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[434] See Péter Kristóf Makai, 'Faërian Cyberdrama: When Fantasy Becomes Virtual Reality' (*Tolkien Studies* 7 (2010): 35-53) on how Tolkien's criteria in 'On Fairy-stories' are in fact best fulfilled by the fiction offering involvement and immersion available in computer games.

[435] In fact, the films outright scandalized most Tolkien critics and many fans (while at the same time recruiting many other new readers): see the essays in Janet Brennan Croft's *Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings* (Altadena, Ca.: The Mythopoeic Press, 2004).

Herbert's *Dune* do well in book format as well. Tolkien's own brand of semi-medieval fantasy also hit this sphere with the success of the serial adaptation of George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*. But the governing concepts and even some theoretical considerations shared by all of these corpora are already there in Tolkien's fiction and his essay 'On Fairy-stories'. The fantastic in the late 20th, early 21st centuries definitely followed where Tolkien's work had led the way: into clearly fictional, extremely detailed secondary worlds with a strong emphasis on the plurality of cultures, subjects, discourses.

6. Conclusions: Tolkien and the fiction of culture

20th-21st-century popular culture has a founding figure for (and in) all its most important fields. There is Elvis Presley and rock'n'roll; there are Frank Herbert, Isaac Asimov and *Star Wars* and contemporary science fiction; and there is J.R.R. Tolkien, whose influence on not only later 'fantasy' but generally on critical thinking about the fantastic is well evidenced in Brian Attebery's handling of his fiction as the model by which we perceive and evaluate the "fuzzy set" of fantasy.[436] Tolkien's status as such a pop cultural 'founding father' is certainly one which even accents his oldness, but at the same time revitalizes him and makes him relevant today. Even though it seems to be the critical fate of classics to be venerated but not read, Tolkien is now still an immensely popular author, both with the general reader and the critics. After more than 50 years of more and more serious critical engagement with his writing, we are now in a better position to map out this relevance and its reasons than ever. The completion of *The History of Middle-earth* and the publication of the *Hobbit* manuscript material by Rateliff places an essential (and substantial) corpus of posthumously published material at the critics' hand, and the availability of this necessarily brings us closer to a better view of what Tolkien's fiction is about.

By the very proportions of Tolkien's oeuvre (much more unfinished and unpublished texts than finished and published ones) the first general conclusion should be that it is an even more complex one than is generally thought. The innumerable rewritten, unfinished variants do more than supply interesting curiosities for critics (and some readers): they point attention to the fact that along the well-established philological lines, there are concepts and principles coded deep into this textual complex that enable a strikingly 'new' (as opposed to traditional and old) reading. Shippey's suggestion that philology should be the guiding principle of

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[436] Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, 12-14.

interpretation in Tolkien was first made more than 30 years ago; my examination of the *Silmarillion* text showed that philology is instrumental in uncovering layers of the fiction that in turn contribute to more contemporary, more theoretical readings. The complexity of Tolkien's corpus works not towards telling stories, but rather towards constructing an elaborate, sensitive and historically accurate model of tradition and culture within which the telling of stories itsElf can be understood differently. His own theoretical essay, 'On Fairy-stories' already made it very clear that Tolkien held both (a very sElf-conscious) fictionality and tradition to be centrally important in this peculiar kind of literature. What *The Silmarillion*, being a fair (even if editorial) representation of this life's work, shows is how even his failure to finish it contributed to its success.

The complexity of Tolkien's fiction is, as we have seen, no mere mock-philological tangle but an intelligible, intelligent system constantly playing with and thematizing the role and function of texts and narratives in culture. How a story is told depends to a very large extent on how it reaches the teller and what meanings the teller assigns to it, whether he/she believes it, what form he/she finds it in, and what form he/she is expected (or wants) to produce: meaning is always a function of multiple contexts, expectations and signifying actions, which ultimately all cover acts of interpretation (individual, institutional, traditional, ideological, and determined in various other ways). It is never cultures who 'write' texts but always individuals, but those individuals are in their turn inevitably immersed in culture (its epistemological presuppositions, dominant ideological discourses, histories and conflicts) and reproduce (or subvert) its main concerns. This is one way of claiming Tolkien's relevance too, since his fiction has been seen as clearly relevant to the questions of power and evil that the 20th century evolved,[437] but it is equally true of the cultures and subjects he writes about. The fictitious world of Middle-earth is mediated to both its internal (fictional) and external (real)

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[437] Shippey's *Author of the Century* takes up this line of defense against the accusations of escapism.

readers as a complex cultural representation, and the very fact that the mode of presentation not only presupposes but also uses the internal reader positions (to suggest transmission, interpretation, use) means that Tolkien's fiction pays an especial attention to the operations of culture, those discourses that shape the production and transmission of representation, and build them into the fabric of the text. We see ideologies in the making (the attempt to authenticate the obviously unauthorizable account of what Ilúvatar thought after the Valar's departure in 'Ai Supplement') and in full operation (the Elvish point of view concerning Men, or the Sindarin one concerning the Valar); some privileged discourses rise to be all-explaining 'great narratives' of the fictitious cultures of Middle-earth (history as the 'working out' of the Valar's task of shaping the world, ultimately of Ilúvatar's intention or 'master meaning'), while some other cultures query or deny them (Númenor, leading to divine punishment). The use of such historically accurate elements can nevertheless not divert attention from the fact that all this has an evident theoretical aspect: Tolkien's fiction thematizes these modes of the (sElf-)representations of cultures in ways contemporary theory finds very acceptable and intelligible. Once again, it is exactly Tolkien's emphatic 'oldness' that can (and should) be approached with 'new' methods.

Apart from Tolkien's 'intention' with *The Silmarillion*, the concept of 'mythopoesis' is perhaps the single greatest great narrative of Tolkien criticism. The complexity of the *Silmarillion* frame also means that the question of where myth is and how Tolkien's work produces it can be approached with the tools of cultural history and the history of religions. The philological discourse and the emphatic metatextuality of *The Silmarillion*, as we have seen, provide a complex cultural context, entirely in writing, in which the unwritten, the missing, the fluid and the variable can be inscribed into a cultural position, and function as myths do for religions without codified textual centers. Formal similarities between primary mythological material and Tolkien's narratives, or simple thematic parallels (the gods, heroes,

creation and foundation stories, etc.) are not sufficient to explain how any Tolkien text could 'produce' myth; but the many-layered cultural contexts of *The Silmarillion* (and the sprawling variant space of the manuscript corpus) can offer a more appropriate interpretation, more appropriately grounded in cultural history.

While in fact writing very accurately historical and theoretically very relevant fiction, Tolkien is both popularly and critically connected to the fantastic, a mode that is generally thought of as neither especially 'historical' nor critically very 'relevant'. Recently more and more attention was paid to this mode of cultural production (since the fantastic has expanded out of the strictly literary), and instead of the Todorovian uncertainty, the critique and subversion of mimetic realism became the most important factor in interpreting its operations. Tolkien already theorized this in 'On Fairy-stories', claiming that a radically fictitious "secondary world", with its inner rules and consistent representation, set apart from and separately from the readers' consensus reality, was what produced the effect. Even though he was writing about what he termed "fairy-stories" and stressed the importance of a common pool of traditional elements, his conception of the "secondary world" anticipated the theory of "possible worlds" and the metafictional preoccupation with "alternative worlds"[438] in fiction. Tolkien's theory (and example) reinforces the claim that the representational strategy of realism is what makes the fantastic possible in the first place because it is the principles and privileges of mimetic realism that this mode of writing has consistently contested.[439] But it also draws attention to the fact that this is because realism builds up a discourse that privileges consensus reality as its default fictional world (or at least presupposes a great degree of isomorphy between the textual world and the real one). It is not the mode of representation that matters: *The Lord of the Rings* (and much fantastic literature) offers a radically different fictional space (both spatial and temporal), but proceeds to narrate and

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[438] See Waugh, *Metafiction*, 100-114.
[439] See Bechtel, "'There and Back Again",'153-57.

describe in largely the tradition of the realist novel. *The Silmarillion*'s mix of 'old' discourses, its metatextual presentation framework and its refusal to accept the conventions of the novel point the reader to earlier literary conventions. But both construct the fictional world as radically different from the reader's reality, thus highlighting that the most substantial subversion of the strategy of mimetic realism lies in the sElf-conscious fictionality of these texts.

Tolkien's "vast game" (as he once called his writing in a letter[440]) of writing is, further, significant and relevant exactly for its unfinished, uncertain, plural qualities. His endless outpouring of text and story, the repeated rewriting of texts and rearrangement of storylines, the jungle of actual, physical manuscripts emblematize what the posthumously published corpus has made visible in criticism: that the text for Tolkien is an open, plural, unfixed space − as it is to Roland Barthes. It is the manifestation of a story that exists in numerous other manifestations (sometimes both synchronously and diachronously), is enveloped in various contexts, and signifies only (or at least, *better*) in relation to these. Writing, signification, is an ongoing activity, a process, rarely achieving the closure of the realist novel, because there are no such closures in the stuff that history is made on.[441] Texts, just as stories, always come from somewhere and mean something to specific people: Tolkien's historicized model of cultural transmission offers not only an imitation, but a rather reflexive anatomy of tradition. Culture and mythology are necessarily and always historical processes: interpretation, whatever context it is performed in, always works with previously produced signifiers and always relates to previous interpretive choices, because those become attached to those signifiers, texts, works or stories. While Barthes's concept of the "text" (a similarly open and plural space for the interaction of discourses, signifiers, interpretation) might easily be called to mind, Tolkien's constant use of metafictional devices also places this writing firmly within

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[440] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 210 (#160).
[441] See Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 62, 71.

the compass of contemporary theory's potential interests. *The Silmarillion* showed that the metatextual emphasis on the method of compilation and the philological traditions behind that construct this text as exactly this sort of plural space, and enrich its fiction considerably.

All that would not matter if Tolkien's oldness eventually gave way to the fate that ultimately awaits 'classics'. When art is canonized, routinely appreciated, not debated over, and, what is more, not received, not read any more, it renders the whole work, to all intents and purposes, dead (along with the author, in both a Barthes-ian and a non-Barthes-ian sense). There is plenty of evidence to suggest that this is not happening with Tolkien. While his work still incites heated emotions in readers and critics alike, it has definitely not reached the status of the great canonical modernist or even the great (pre-)canonical postmodernists. It is a good thing Tolkien is not canonical: the debates that this generate continue to produce newer and newer readings, both of readers who appreciate the literary enjoyment the texts offer them, and of critics who grapple with what exactly and how Tolkien is doing. The fantastic, the mythical, the serial and the unfinished are notions that do not seem to go out of fashion in the 21st century; the theoretical concepts that Tolkien's corpus raises are also very much relevant and meaningful today. As Attebery writes, "Tolkien is not a Postmodernist;"[442] but in line with Barthes's well-known argument, one is tempted to disregard what Tolkien is or isn't as long as his works integrate and use that 'oldness' he personally seems to have liked very much and cultivated. As I hope to have shown, it is exactly the exquisitely crafted oldness of *The Silmarillion* that makes it a very timely and fresh representation of culture and its stories.

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[442] Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, 41.

7. Abbreviations

The Silmarillion

'Ai'   'Ainulindalë'

'Vq'   'Valaquenta'

'QS'   'Quenta Silmarillion'

'Ak'   'Akallabêth'

'RP'   'Of the Ring of Power and the Third Age'

The Lord of the Rings

FR   *The Fellowship of the Ring*

TT   *The Two Towers*

RK   *The Return of the King*

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