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**"To find healing in my wounds": the transformation of memory
and trauma into art in J.R.R. Tolkien's The lord of the rings**

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“TO FIND HEALING IN MY WOUNDS”: THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEMORY AND TRAUMA INTO
ART IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN’S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

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Introduction

The Past is a Myth: Place Memory, Traumatic Embodiment, and the Function of Fantasy

When John Ronald Ruel (J.R.R.) Tolkien began writing *The Lord of the Rings* in 1937, he originally intended it not only as a sequel to his already famous children's novel, *The Hobbit*, but also as a continuation of a mythology he longed to write.¹ As part of this mythology, Tolkien created his most famous fantasy novels *The Lord of the Rings*, which he was encouraged to write by his publishers and fans. However, Tolkien hints that he created his fantasy for his own interest and benefit. Tolkien admits in the foreword to the second edition of the trilogy in 1965 that he "desired to do this for [his] own satisfaction, and [he] had little hope that other people would be interested in this work" (viii). Because fantasy is seen as a child's genre, Tolkien did not know if or how his trilogy would be received. His concern was further compounded by the knowledge that the dark and serious tone of *The Lord of the Rings* makes the story decidedly more adult than juvenile. Tolkien's trilogy evolves the typical fairytale into a fantasy encompassing the complexities and effects of memory, death, trauma, love, sacrifice, companionship, and bravery. His determination to complete the trilogy proves that Tolkien would complete it to satisfy himself more than his readers and may be one reason why he subconsciously incorporates memories of his childhood traumas into his writing.

The question remains why Tolkien would use fantasy to reflect his past instead of writing a typical memoir or autobiography. The answer comes in his belief in the function of fantasy itself. Tolkien argues in "On Fairy-Stories" that fantasy is the art of creation from the imagination that is influenced by reality. As such, fantasy reflects truth. Fantasy is not just the creation of worlds but the creation of a reality. Tolkien argues that it is the author's duty to

¹ Tolkien originally wrote *The Lord of the Rings* as one volume; however, they were split into three parts: *The Fellowship of the Ring (FotR)*, *The Two Towers (TTT)*, and *The Return of the King (RotK)*. They will be referred to hereafter by their parts unless in reference as a whole trilogy.

create a world that readers can realistically follow because “[a]nyone inheriting the fantastic device of human language can say the sun is green. Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough” (61). Readers must believe the world they are immersed in to connect with the story. They must see and feel that the fantasy is real. Tolkien fulfills this belief by creating in *The Lord the of the Rings* not just a fantasy, but one that reflects his memories.

By combining myth with fantasy, Tolkien creates a world, Middle-earth, from his imagination that reflects his personal truth. Tolkien believes that fantasy is derived from myth because fantasy is inspired by stories that are retold through time. These stories are changed as they are told, depending on what is remembered, which turns them into myth and means that myth is based in memory. He argues that myth is an allegory that convey truths that would otherwise be inexpressible. While myth may not necessarily be true, it reflects truth because it is grounded in reality. Tolkien uses his memories to provide a window into his reality. Examining *The Lord of the Rings* compared to Tolkien's life reveals how Tolkien is held by his past, specifically his traumatic past. Tolkien subconsciously integrates aspects of his past into his fiction to heal from his childhood traumas. Through *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien creates a fantasy where he uses his imagination to fictionally recreate memories of his childhood traumas—the death of his parents and the loss of his friends. His use of memory and imagination reveals how Tolkien reconstructs his childhood traumas and how that reconstruction allows him to reconcile and accept his traumatic past. By using fantasy, Tolkien creates a fantasy world in *The Lord of the Rings* to act as a window to his trauma as he writes.

The belief that Tolkien incorporates personal experiences into his writing is somewhat controversial. Though Tolkien's past has been studiously recorded, his writing is usually connected to the First World War in general rather than any specific personal experience. Amy Smol, Janet Brennan Croft, and Michael Livingston make valid assertions that Tolkien's writing

may be interpreted holistically or allegorically as a representation of World War One. A common element in their analyses is the tendency to interpret one character's experiences as representing a mass of people, such as seeing Frodo as an embodiment of all the traumatized soldiers returning from war. Others, Annika Röttinger and Tal Tovy, offer a formulaic interpretation where they correspond events of the war with events in *The Lord of the Rings*. Their arguments help explain many of the events in the novels and affirms some widely held beliefs about the experiences of war; however, these scholars do not consider how Tolkien's writing contributes to his understanding of trauma.

Tolkien argued against interpreting an association between his life and works. Though he admits he incorporated some of his experiences into his writing, Tolkien believed readers should view his experiences only as influence and not direct representation. Corey Olsen maintains in *The Tolkien Professor* his support for Tolkien's assertion, citing the foreword in the *Fellowship of the Ring* where Tolkien writes, "[t]he real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its conclusion" (x). The war Tolkien refers to is the Second World War; however, the fact that scholars compare *The Lord of the Rings* to both World War One and World War Two means the statement may extend to both. Olsen insists that reading the trilogy with biographical knowledge limits the insights readers may gain from the text (Olsen, 12:10). When Tolkien began *The Lord of the Rings*, his intention was not to tell a story that resembled either war or his earlier childhood, for that matter. Therefore, Olsen argues that any similarities between Tolkien's life and *The Lord of the Rings* is merely a coincidence.

Despite Tolkien's claims that *The Lord of the Rings* is pure fantasy, his constant contradictions leave room for the possibility that his experiences are more integrated into the trilogy than even he may realize. Tolkien's admission in the foreword, "[a]n author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience," acknowledges that the past continues to

impose on a person years after an event takes place (xi). His acknowledgement illustrates the connection between his life and the trilogy. Similarly, in a letter to an Oxford colleague named Roger Lancelyn Green in 1971, Tolkien writes, "one cannot exclude the possibility that buried childhood memories might suddenly rise to the surface," indicating that no author is exempt from their past (Letters 441). Even if Tolkien had not meant to incorporate his memories in *The Lord of the Rings*, there is little he could do to stop their influence because even repressed memories can unconsciously influence the imagination to manifest in fantasy.

Reading Tolkien with a biographical lens provides nuances into how *The Lord of the Rings* can be studied and read. John Rosegrant and Nancy Bunting argue that Tolkien drew inspiration for his work from his trauma. These scholars analyze similarities between aspects of Tolkien's childhood and *The Lord of the Rings* to show how Tolkien's trauma is represented. In "Fault Lines Beneath the Crack," John Rosegrant traces Tolkien's trauma through his life, starting with his illnesses and the death of his parents as a child and proceeding through his illnesses during and shortly after the war. He analyzes a timeline of Tolkien's mental and physical illnesses from his youth to adulthood to show how the illnesses affected his writing. Rosegrant compares Tolkien's life and works, revealing how tragedy and loss influenced Tolkien's literature, but Rosegrant's argument is limited by the scope of his analysis of Tolkien's work. The result is a survey of various protagonists that portray some similarities to Tolkien's traumas in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Nancy Bunting argues in "1904: Tolkien, Trauma, and its Anniversaries," Tolkien represents the trauma of the death of his mother Mabel Tolkien in his writing, indicating what Bunting alleges is a strained and abusive relationship. She analyzes the death of his mother to show how Tolkien represents the trauma of her death in his art and writing. Bunting examines Tolkien's paintings shortly after his mother's passing at the age of twelve as well as the poetry

he wrote on the anniversaries of her death to argue Tolkien's exorcism of pain through art. However, Bunting does not rely mainly on biographical evidence to support her argument. Bunting combines her interpretation of Tolkien's artwork with formerly acceptable child-rearing practices and with evidence of Mabel and Tolkien's relationship to prove that Mabel mistreated her sons.

Rosegrant and Bunting begin a conversation that explores aspects of Tolkien's life in his work in depth. Their analyses provide examples, so other scholars may continue to examine Tolkien's life in relation to *The Lord of the Rings*. Taking Tolkien's biography into account, specifically, his childhood traumas, when examining *The Lord of the Rings* creates an understanding of how fantasy allows Tolkien to articulate and reconcile his trauma. It is the representation of Tolkien's healing that is the goal of my research here. My analysis of Tolkien's trauma and how those traumas are represented in the trilogy shows how Tolkien uses fantasy and his imagination to restore his sense of self.

Evidence of the correlation between Tolkien's life and *The Lord of the Rings* comes in the form of what Tolkien calls his "Atlantis Complex." Tolkien's "Atlantis Complex" is a dream that began after his father's death. He first mentions his dream in his 1955 letter to W. H. Auden, a fellow poet and friend. Tolkien describes the dream as a "terrible recurrent dream (beginning with memory) of the Great Wave, towering up, and coming in ineluctably over the trees and green fields" (Letters 213). Tolkien would envision a wave climbing towards him, engulfing everything in its path until it reached him before he awoke gasping for air as if drowning. The wave that haunts his dreams first occurs after the loss of his father, then continues after the death of both his parents. Tolkien claimed in a letter to his friend Christopher Bretherton in 1964, the only way he could escape the dream was to "exorcize by writing about it" in his fantasy (Letters 347).

The imagery of the great wave appears several times across most of Tolkien's fantasy novels as a metaphoric image to represent tragic separation and isolation. Rosegrant, argues in "From the Ineluctable Wave to the Realization of Imagined Wonder," that integrating the dream allows Tolkien to control an otherwise "frozen symbol" that represents past traumas that he failed to master (137). While Rosegrant argues that Tolkien's dream represents Tolkien's struggle for control over his trauma, I would argue that over time Tolkien began to view the dream more as a metaphoric and artistic tool than as a traumatic memory. Tolkien's ability to transform his traumatic dream into art several times illustrates his ability to move forward from his trauma through artistic invention. His dream is recreated in the great floods that first sank Beleriand that separates the undying lands from Middle-earth at the end of the First Age, in the destruction of the isle home of the Númenóre at the end of the Second Age, and in a vision given to Faramir in *The Return of the King*.² Tolkien's dream illustrates how childhood emotions and experiences can still haunt a person over the years, and the dream's presence proves the influence of his personal life in his fiction.

Tolkien imbeds characteristics of himself into the race of hobbits. John Rosegrant claims in "Tolkien's Dialogue Between Enchantment and Loss" that Tolkien "entwined aspects of his own life with aspects of his created world. Sometimes he did this lightly: he considered himself to be a hobbit" (134). Rosegrant hints that Tolkien often compared himself to Frodo and that it is not unlikely that his inspiration for the creation of hobbits came from himself. Rosegrant's idea that Tolkien bears a likeness to Frodo is evident in Tolkien's letters. He likened hobbits to himself in his letter to fellow scholar Deborah Webster in 1958, illustrating Tolkien's biographical connection to the trilogy:

² Tolkien writes about the flooding of Beleriand and Númenór in *The Simarillion*. Despite Tolkien's constant work on *The Simarillion* and its posthumous publication in 1977, his letters indicate that he wrote the floods before and during writing *The Lord of the Rings*.

I am in fact a Hobbit (in all but size). I like gardens, trees and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field). (*Letters* 288)

Tolkien parallels his description of hobbits to that of himself. Hobbits are known to be quiet, reserved, agricultural beings who prefer to keep to themselves. They avoid adventures whenever possible, dress brightly, and prefer to relax while smoking pipeweed. Rosegrant's argument and Tolkien's admission prove Tolkien drew inspiration for hobbits from his own personality. However, Rosegrant's analysis seems to suggest that Tolkien did not just draw inspiration from himself when creating hobbits, but he deliberately wrote himself in *The Lord of the Rings* as a hobbit, which cannot be assumed. Corey Olsen argues in *The Tolkien Professor* against interpreting Tolkien's characters as literal representations of himself. Olsen maintains that claiming that Tolkien wrote himself into *The Lord of the Rings* assumes authorial intent or forces a reductionist view of the trilogy and characters. With this logic, the assumption is that a character or race, such as the hobbits or Frodo, is the same as Tolkien. This essentialism becomes problematic because it suggests that each action correlates with Tolkien's life. The conclusion then leaves little allowance for Tolkien's imagination to come through. Instead, I would argue that while Tolkien ascribes his attributes to characters in the trilogy, specifically Frodo, these characters are merely fictional representations of Tolkien.

There is a distinct likeness between Tolkien's life and the hobbit Frodo. Like Tolkien, Frodo is an orphan, is associated with three close friends in his youth, and his reason for leaving his home parallels Tolkien's. Frodo's rustic home of Hobbiton—a place of farmers, gardeners, and endless countryside—resembles Sarehole, the English countryside Tolkien so fondly remembers from his childhood as well. These correlations may be coincidental but the fact that

they exist means that an argument can be made for interpreting Frodo's experiences and Tolkien's in a similar manner. However, the similarities cannot be considered too literally. My argument is not that Frodo is Tolkien, but that Frodo represents certain aspects of Tolkien and his trauma. Frodo is a fictional representation of Tolkien. Someone who shares some main experiences as Tolkien but not his whole experience. My goal is to analyze Frodo to show how Tolkien uses Frodo as both a representation of Tolkien and a distinct and unique character. Through analyzing Frodo and how he represents Tolkien's trauma in the trilogy, readers see how Tolkien's creation of an external fictional character aids in his process of self-healing.

Tolkien's influence of memory is apparent in *The Lord of the Rings*. The significance of memory is that it guides the actions and thoughts of the characters and is necessary because memory inspires myth. Myth originates from stories people deem worth repeating. The purpose of myth is to help people remember what is important in the past. Tolkien contends in "On Fairy-Stories," "[h]istory often resembles 'Myth', because they are both ultimately of the same stuff" (47). Myth and history recall the past to make it relevant in the present. While history usually relates major historical events, it may pertain to individual experiences, as well. The fact that myths are about individuals means that myths can tell the history of individuals and groups of people. Myth allows Tolkien to bring attention to his past by drawing upon his personal history through the act of recollection.

Tolkien implies that memory is an important aspect of fantasy because myth is the foundation of fantasy. Tolkien explains to publisher Milton Waldman in 1951 that myth is an important element of fantasy because "legends and myths are largely made of 'truth', and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear" (*Letters* 147). Myth reveals

truths that are repeatedly retold. Tolkien's assertion that "truth" must always reappear requires a degree of history, which, in turn, entails memory. By grounding his fantasy in myth, Tolkien bases *The Lord of the Rings* in a sense of reality. Not just any reality, but Tolkien's reality.

Tolkien's fantasy allows him to create fictional characters that represent his parents and himself through memory. Through applying phenomenologist Dylan Trigg's concepts of place memory, trauma, and traumatic embodiment to *The Lord of the Rings*, readers understand how Tolkien uses fantasy to represent his childhood traumas—the death of his parents and the loss of his friends in World War One—through fictional characters and events to heal his trauma through writing.

Dylan Trigg is fundamental in understanding *The Lord of the Rings* because he demonstrates how memory influences identity. In *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Trigg outlines the importance of memory and how people relate to their experiences through their memories. Trigg states:

Each of us is held captive by a series of memories, which in their intensity and depth return us to a specific place and time. Consciously or otherwise, the places we inhabit and pass through come back to us in the present, sometimes affording a sense of familiarity in the midst of uncertainty. At other times, disturbing the course of everyday existence. (xv)

Memory brings a person's mind to their past. It shapes and defines a person through bridging previous experience and place with the present. Memory allows a person to understand their environment, their decisions, their relationships with other people, and their place in the world. Past experiences guide current and future behavior so that if a person changes, the change is understood as personal growth that results in new perspectives on the self. Memory allows a person to maintain a sense of continuity of identity as a person progressively changes, so they

feel they are the same in their past, present, and future. Memory is not linear either. Recalling the past means the mind extends to different memories at various points in time. The past's non-spatiotemporality means that memories may be conjured at any point and even involuntarily. Memories are always present in some form of time, meaning a person is never free of their past.

Trigg's theory of place memory illustrates how memory persists through environment. Trigg defines place memory as the remembrance that "forces us to return to the immediacy of our environment and to all that is absorbed, both familiar and strange, within that environment" (xvi). Place memory forces an individual to mentally return to an environment in their past and relive their experience there. That experience defines a person and shows how that environment changes, shapes, defines, and constitutes one's sense of self. Place memory entails that place, not content, is privileged, so the environment in a memory becomes more important than the content of the memory itself. Place becomes what the mind connects memory to. As a result, the place is what defines and shapes the memory.

Imagination is privileged through place memory. Place memory's reliance on the imagination makes place memory conducive in fantasy. According to Trigg, memories are "reworked, reconstituted, and reconfigured to suit the constantly changing self that exists temporally. This relationship between the flux of time and the work of imagination points to the significance preservation plays in our experience of places" (67). The more significant the memory, the more likely a person will attempt to recall it and the place that is the focus of the memory. Frequent recollection of a memory, especially place memory, even as it is altered by the imagination years later signifies its importance to a person's identity. Memories change as a person grows to accommodate for changing perspectives. Recollection causes memory to become fragmented, so imagination is required to complete the memory. Imagination allows an

individual to fill the memory gaps, so the memory remains preserved in the mind while altered simultaneously. Trigg maintains that creatively altering place memory transforms memory so that the mind creates new versions with each recollection. As a person matures, the same memories are prone to be recalled over again, necessitating the imagination to reconstruct them each time. Each memory in place memory contains elements of the true memory, but details are forgotten and must be filled in with the imagination. With each alteration, place memory is renewed by creative imagination, marking the preservation of memory and place, and their persistence.

Trauma complicates the persistence of memory. While memory affords an individual a sense of comfort, it may, as in the case of trauma, disrupt the security of the self. When an individual experiences trauma, it disrupts their orientation. Trigg defines trauma using Cathy Caruth's explanation as an "unclaimed experience" because trauma is not understood wholly at the time of the event but is only recognized after the event is over (236). The belated experience of trauma, Trigg argues, causes memories to become fragmented "because traumatic memory is at odds with the idea that human identity strives toward temporal continuity . . . the memory of trauma 'gives' itself to consciousness only through paradoxically not giving itself to consciousness" (xxiv). Trauma disrupts the continuity of the self because trauma is both present and absent. Trauma causes a void in memory that is difficult for an individual to overcome because it cannot be consciously represented. Only in trauma's delayed recognition is an individual able to heal. The deferral of traumatic memory causes an unconscious self-shielding of trauma. The continuity of the self is then fragmented because the present self allows an individual to see the self who endured the trauma as another person, distancing the trauma.

Trigg's theory of traumatic embodiment illustrates how trauma affects the sense of self through the body. Trigg characterizes embodiment as how the body processes information

separate from the mind based on the body's sensations, emotions, and physical being at a given time, present or past. The body stores the history of a person's experience, which orients them in their present. In other words, embodiment influences how a person thinks and feels in the world. By carrying the past within oneself, that past continually acts on the body and affects the sense of self. Traumatic embodiment then is how the sense of self is ruptured, so a person loses their orientation and connection to their body. Trigg states that because of traumatic embodiment, "we feel tremors of past places with greater intensity as they are repeated annually. In this way, the body becomes its own memorial to past events, its own haunting ground for creating smoke signals to previous episodes" (206). When the body processes trauma, the body stores and remembers the trauma even in instances when the mind cannot directly remember or express that it does. Effects of these traumas can be felt for years after the event, so the body is always carrying remnants of the past. The body carries its own memories.

When trauma ruptures self-consciousness, the self divides into two. The division of trauma forces a discontinuity that allows an individual to see themselves as two people; one who lives in the present as the present self and another who will be termed hereafter as the "other self" that experienced trauma in the past and is dissociated from the present self (240). The two selves coexist despite the cognitive discontinuity between them, causing what Trigg calls "a 'detached portrait' of the past," where the present self has difficulty reconciling with the "other self" (241). The result is that individuals consider the self that endured their traumatic past separately from their present self; the traumatic self becomes "other." To recover from their trauma and regain a whole sense of selfhood, an individual must reconcile their present self with their "other self." Only after reconciliation can the traumatic memories become integrated into the mind and the pain lessened.

The presence and absence of trauma mean that traumatic memories are best expressed indirectly through creative imagination. Traumatic memories are difficult to ascribe meaning to because they reside between the past and present as they simultaneously reveal and conceal themselves. Normally individuals have difficulty expressing trauma because traumatic memories are emotionally straining, highly sensory, fragmented, and incoherent. These characteristics of traumatic memory cause the mind to reject the memory of the traumatic experience. Because the mind attempts to reject the traumatic memory, an individual cannot express their trauma directly by recounting their experience. However, traumatic memories are involuntary, meaning that traumatic memory hides within the self who is never free of their trauma. The only way to express traumatic memory and heal from trauma is to indirectly represent trauma creatively through the imagination.

Tolkien artistically expresses his trauma through his writing. Treatment for trauma recovery has historically taken the form of writing narratives, specifically ones with autobiographical elements. Glenda R. Balas claims in "Stories to Live by and Get Through: The Healing Fiction of Autobiography" that narrative "is seen as a means of bringing order to disorder, making sense of our experiences, and producing a framework through which we can understand and come to terms with the psychological stress and emotional pain in our lives" (185). When Tolkien writes about his childhood trauma, he is attempting to provide some meaning to his experiences. Through writing fantasy, Tolkien may attempt to make sense of what is happening within himself. He can surpass writing a realistic account of his traumas, allowing him to articulate his childhood traumas artistically. Fantasy offers Tolkien a way to indirectly write about his childhood traumas, so fantasy becomes window where he can articulate his traumatic past through *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien expresses his traumatic memories in by creating a character to fictionally represent his traumatic self. According to Trigg, the trauma a person undergoes remains part of the body's experience and disrupts a person's selfhood by splitting their self-consciousness, so a person views themselves as two people—the present self and "other self" that endured the trauma (240). The "other self" lives within the body as a separate person, incompatible, yet bound to the present self because of the body. Tolkien subconsciously creates his "other self" in *The Lord of the Rings*, which allows him to fictionally recreate his trauma and view it through his writing. By including autobiographical elements, Tolkien can contemplate and represent his childhood traumas through his writing. Tolkien is free to write unhindered to subconsciously represent himself and reflect on his experiences. Anything Tolkien includes in *The Lord of the Rings* may possess meaning whether or he consciously intends to or not. Tolkien's unconscious inclusion of his traumas allows him to see the world he creates and his traumas as if for the first time as he writes.

Tolkien's argument in "On Fairy-Stories" that fantasy achieves "recovery," "escape," and "consolation" pervades his fantasy works and provides context for the function of his writing as a method of healing from his childhood traumas (59). Tolkien argues that fantasy must achieve recovery, escape, and consolation or it becomes a "dramatised [*sic*] fairy-story" that is "counterfeit" and "pantomime" ("OFS" 61). Recovery in fantasy entails integrating imagination and reality to create something new from that which already exists. Tolkien maintains that recovery requires looking to the past to connect memory to the future and "to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness" ("OFS" 67). Recovery reminds authors like Tolkien to see something from another perspective as if for the first time. More importantly, recovery is a rebirth that requires reconstructing an object, person, or memory through imagination. Tolkien

describes recovery as a "return and renewal of health" because one begins to see the world anew ("OFS" 67). Fantasy allows glimpses of what is really beneath the surface of the familiar world. Recovery gives meaning, or rather, gives meaning once again, to objects and events through imaginative creation. By altering the object, person, or memory, recovery in fantasy calls attention to its existence in reality. Recovery allows Tolkien to take what he knows to be true about his world and transform it through reimagining to bring attention to his childhood traumas.

Recovery in Tolkien's writing must be considered in relation to his concept of escapism. Tolkien views escapism, not as a flight from reality but, as he claims in "On Fairy-Stories," a pause "from our present time and self-made misery" (72). Escapism permits authors like Tolkien to imagine another life and experiences for themselves. These experiences, though imagined, must be realistic to the fantasy world regardless of whether they are realistically true or accurate. Fantasy removes one from the world through their imagination. When one imagines a different life, they engage in an alternate reality and create alternate memories that linger. Tolkien likens escapism to a prisoner escaping jail by imagining themselves outside their cell. The prisoner may not know what lies beyond their confinement, but that does not stop them from envisioning the experience. Whatever life they imagine outside is dictated by their past recollection, and what they believe to be true of a world they cannot engage. Their memory of the past collides with the present to create a new reality in their imagination. Escapism then allows for a continuity between an alternate world and the present. Similarly, *The Lord of the Rings* allows Tolkien to mentally occupy another point in his life while he physically remains in the present. More importantly, escapism allows Tolkien to enter a reality where he may understand his trauma through the scenes and characters he creates. Escapism allows Tolkien to

create a world that includes a representation of his “other self” while he remains as his present self.

Recovery and escapism must be considered in relation to each other in fantasy to understand their roles in healing trauma. Both recovery and escapism entail creativity to construct worlds, and to revisit memories. As Tolkien explains in “On Fairy-Stories,” “fairy-stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are all the more luminous by their setting” (68). Fantasy helps in understanding fundamental aspects of life, such as trauma, and how to overcome them. The presence of recovery and escapism in fantasy and their connection to memory means that writing and creating worlds provides a space where the past can be rewritten in unconventional ways. Tolkien may explore what could be in his life without the constraints of absolute reality. Fantasy affords Tolkien the freedom to escape to his Middle-earth while acting as a spectator as he fictionalizes his trauma.

Recovery and escapism combine to lead to the consolation at the end of the trilogy. Tolkien defines consolation in “On Fairy-Stories” as “the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe” (75). Consolation is the emotion felt at a satisfactory ending and the fulfillment of desire that reminds readers not to lose hope because evil can be conquered. Tolkien contends that consolation is the “sudden and miraculous grace” that comprises of the sudden turn at the end of a story towards a joyous resolution (“OFS” 75). It is an inexplicable restoration. Fantasy attempts to recover what is lost. In Tolkien's case, he attempts to recover his sense of self that is fractured by trauma. Through *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's past becomes accessible because he begins to recognize himself as part of a lived experience. The portrayal of these experiences calls attention to the losses he represents, allowing for mourning and the chance for rebirth. By writing *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien has

the chance to achieve recovery, escape, and consolation for himself. Through his imagination, Tolkien recovers his memories and uses the trilogy as the means by which he may see his memories revived to heal his childhood traumas.

Chapter One explores the death of Tolkien's parents using Trigg's concept of place memory. Trauma and place memory combine in *The Lord of the Rings* to represent traumatic memories of the death of Tolkien's parents. The fact that Tolkien's father Arthur died miles away from his family in South Africa meant Tolkien's father would forever be a distant memory in a distant world. Tolkien represents his father by creating an absent father archetype. This archetype is represented in the dead or missing fathers of his characters. Stories of their lives and deaths are retold numerous times, so their deaths transform into a legendary version of the original story. Tolkien attaches each legend only to a distant past, signifying the importance of place in memory through the absence of place. This absence represents the distance between Tolkien and his father at the time of Arthur's death. Tolkien recreates his father's memory despite the memory itself being bound to a specific place. His constant reconstruction of his father as a legendary figure symbolizes Tolkien's view of his father a myth in his own life.

Much like the memory of Tolkien's father, Arthur, the memory of Mabel is associated with a specific place. Tolkien associates his mother with nature, and his childhood home of Sarehole coincides with place memory. However, Tolkien takes Mabel's memory a step further by representing her through Galadriel and Middle-earth's elves. He reflects the association between his mother and nature in Galadriel and the elven homes in the trilogy, symbolizing a place of home and a place where his childhood persists. At the same time, Tolkien's childhood is ruptured by Mabel's death, which mutilates his sense of being. This mutilation is represented in the dualism of the existence and absence of Galadriel and the elves, so they embody trauma by enacting the void of absence. Tolkien represents his self that is fractured by his mother's death

as his representation of Mabel is portrayed in the uncanny memory of Galadriel. By representing his parents as mythical figures, Tolkien represents the persistence of their memory despite the presence of trauma. His representation of memory through imagination reveals how Tolkien reconstructs his trauma and how his memory persists through the trilogy.

Chapter Two explores Tolkien's portrayal of traumatic embodiment of the death of his young friends as it is represented by Frodo's body, and how Tolkien uses *The Lord of the Rings* to heal from that trauma. Tolkien's childhood friends— Christopher Wiseman, Rob Gilson, and Geoffrey Smith—were involved in World War One where each was either killed or estranged from Tolkien. This trauma had a significant impact on Tolkien as the loss of his friends further split his sense of self. Tolkien uses the body of Frodo to portray his "other" self who endured the trauma of losing his adolescent friends and Tolkien's self that suffered from trench fever in the war. By analyzing Frodo's wounds, readers understand how Frodo is a projection of Tolkien's traumas and how Tolkien reconciles his traumas through Frodo's apparent death. In Frodo's leaving of Middle-earth, Tolkien subconsciously represents his own healing as well as Frodo's. By restoring Frodo's selfhood at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien subconsciously restores his own.

Remember When?: Place Memory and Tolkien's Mythological Remembrance of Arthur
and Mabel Tolkien

When J.R.R Tolkien incorporates memory in his writing, it illustrates the idea that he cannot escape the influence of his personal experiences. However, readers may not realize how Tolkien fictionalizes these memories in *The Lord of the Rings* and the purpose they serve. Tolkien's fictional representation of his trauma illustrates the preservation, value, and persistence of those memories and how they influence Tolkien's writing. Memory preservation in Tolkien's case is complicated in that many of his memories are traumatic, and traumatic memory—memories of an event that cause overwhelming emotional or physical stress that contend with a person's temporal continuity—is symptomatic, fragmented, and deferred. These characteristics allow traumatic memory to be analyzed in terms of the interaction between place and imagination. By examining Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* through Dylan Trigg's concepts of place memory and imagination, where trauma is a void and persists into the present, how Tolkien represents the loss of his father and mother who died when Tolkien was a child becomes apparent.³

Readers can apply place memory to Tolkien to understand how he subconsciously uses place and time to represent recollections from his memory in *The Lord of the Rings*. Trigg argues that through place memory, the events a person remembers forever lives in the places they are associated with. Place memory gains value as it becomes meaningful through recollection. The more meaningful the memory, the more likely the memory will persist and, if so, the

³ Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa. At three years old, his father, Arthur Tolkien, died of rheumatic fever in Bloemfontein. Tolkien and the rest of his family were in England when Arthur passed, so he was buried in South Africa. Tolkien's mother, Mabel Tolkien, died when Tolkien was twelve years old from complications due to diabetes. Before her death, Mabel entrusted Father Francis Morgan with the custody of Tolkien and his brother. Father Francis moved the boys to Birmingham from Sarehole to live with an aunt after Mabel passed.

environment where the event took place is preserved in the memory as well. Tolkien associates his parents with places from his past that were significant to each parent. These places are the ones where Tolkien came to know his parents best, but Tolkien's memories of the places are disrupted by their relation and identification with the trauma of each of his parents' deaths. As a result, place memory is essential in understanding Tolkien's childhood traumas and how they are fictionalized because place defines his identity as much as his memory's content.

Tolkien incorporates his childhood traumas in his writing to represent the loss of his father and mother, Arthur and Mabel Tolkien, through the absence and appearance of specific characters and how they relate to places in the trilogy. Tolkien reconstructs his childhood memories through these characters and scenes though much of the details are crafted by his imagination. The result is his fictionalization and mythologization of his parents and the trauma of their loss. The fact that the memory endures into the present means trauma is both absent and present simultaneously. Tolkien represents the concept of trauma by incorporating his memories of his father and mother, showing how Tolkien's memory of his parents are preserved and persist in their absence through his imagination. By creating mythical figures in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien fictionally represents his father Arthur in the form of the absent father archetype—represented in three different forms—and the memory of his mother Mabel through the creation of the elves—specifically Galadriel and the uncanny nature of her home in the wood—to subconsciously represent the persistence of his memory of them and the trauma of their loss.

Memories of Tolkien's father become significant when analyzed in the context of Trigg's concept of place memory because Tolkien establishes Arthur Tolkien as a mythical figure. Tolkien's biographer Humphrey Carpenter recounts that before moving to England, Tolkien "watched his father painting A.R. Tolkien on the lid of a family trunk. It was the only clear

memory of him that the boy retained" (23). This last memory of Tolkien's father firmly places Arthur in South Africa in Tolkien's mind because it is the only place where he remembers Arthur. Thus, the recollection of Tolkien's father will always be associated with South Africa. As such, Arthur lives in the past where Tolkien can reside as well because place memory returns the mind to the environment of the memory event. The physical and psychological distance between Tolkien and his father is perhaps why Carpenter states Tolkien regards his father "as belonging to an almost legendary past" (25). As time passes, Tolkien's memory constructs his father as if he were a character in a myth. The greater the temporal distance between Tolkien and his memory of Arthur, the more Tolkien must use his imagination in his recollection, especially considering Tolkien only has one clear memory of Arthur. To remember his father, Tolkien must conjure Arthur's image and the place, time, and event to complete the recollection. Each of these elements has the potential for details to become lost over time, necessitating more of the imagination to preserve the memory each time. By constantly using his imagination to reconstruct his memory of Arthur, Tolkien recounts his memory of Arthur in various ways, altering the memory each time and giving Arthur a legendary quality.

Tolkien represents his father in *The Lord of the Rings* through the absent father archetype. Each form of the archetype—"missing," "surrogate," and "reclaimed"—serves a different purpose in the trilogy by affecting their offspring with their presence or absence. The archetype illustrates a character's past and positions the memory of the father in a specific point in time where their offspring's memory of them is scarce due to the father's death. Many of the fathers represented in the trilogy are presented as mythical figures. For example, characters such as Drogo and Arathorn are fathers who are dead and perceived as part of a distant past. They are absent and hardly mentioned as ever existing except in instances of identification as in a surname. The archetype mimics Tolkien's own memory of his father because the archetype

possesses the same mythical status he associates with his father. The absent father archetype in *The Lord of the Rings* exists as something in the past that continues into the present through recollection. The absent father is likened to a distant memory, something that both exists and is absent, while their death becomes legendary, likening them to mythical figures. Contrary to expectation, Tolkien mirrors his absent fathers with his memory of Arthur through their obscure association with place. Although the absent father archetype does not allow Tolkien to directly associate his fictionalized fathers with a specific place, it is the lack of place that makes Tolkien's representation possible. By not always binding his absent fathers to a place, Tolkien more freely represents his memory of Arthur because Tolkien's fictionalization reflects the distant nature of his memories.

As the name suggests, the "missing" absent father occurs when a father dies or vanishes when his offspring are too young to remember. Tolkien mainly uses the "missing" absent father to represent the beginning of a lifelong struggle because his absence forces his offspring to undergo the trauma of a forced rather than consensual separation. Tolkien represents a "missing" absent father archetype in Frodo's deceased father Drogo. Tolkien presents Drogo's death as a myth told through the perspective of the Gaffer, a prominent hobbit. The Gaffer recounts the story, of which the other hobbits have heard "darker rumours before, of course; but hobbits have a passion for family history, and they were ready to hear it again" (FotR 23). The tale is well-known as reflected in the Gaffer's telling:

"You see: Mr. Drogo, he married poor Miss Primula Brandybuck. She was our Mr. Bilbo's first cousin on the mother's side (her mother being the youngest of the Old Took's daughters); and Mr. Drogo was his second cousin. So Mr. Frodo is his first *and* second cousin, once removed either way, as the saying is, if you follow me. And Mr. Drogo was staying at Brandy Hall with his father-in-law, old

Master Gorbado, as he often did after his marriage (him being partial to his vittles, and old Gorbado keeping a mighty generous table); and he went out *boating* on the Brandywine River; and he and his wife were drowned, and poor Mr. Frodo only a child and all." (*FotR* 23)

Tolkien's story of Drogo's death portrays him as a local legend among his people. Drogo is a faint memory whose tale the other hobbits repeat. The matter-of-fact tone and brief recount indicate what is known for sure or act as an admission that the audience may know more than what is stated. Immediately following the Gaffer's tale, other hobbits begin to share rumors that slightly alter the story, both adding to and contradicting the tale. Tolkien writes just before Gaffer speaks, "there was never much to tell of him, till he drowned" and "So they say," to indicate that the tale told is not the complete truth (*FotR* 23). By introducing Frodo's father as a myth, Tolkien enforces his absence. As the "missing" absent father, Tolkien conveys that Drogo's death exposes Frodo to trauma early in his childhood, which parallels Tolkien's experience. By reconstructing the "missing" absent father in Drogo, Tolkien reconstructs the memory of his own father. Drogo is portrayed as part of some mythical past and place. While the details are not the same, there are commonalities: the child's age, the spatial distance between the father and child at the time of death, and the father's description as a legend appear in Tolkien's recollection and writing. As a result, Tolkien preserves his memory of Arthur Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* through the "missing" absent father.

Tolkien introduces the "surrogate" absent father to replace the "missing" absent father and act as the father figure who guides the progeny of the "missing" absent father. Tolkien includes the "surrogate" absent father to frame his surrogate offspring's journey with his guidance then with his eventual death. In this way, the "surrogate" absent father parallels characteristics of the "missing" absent father; Tolkien portrays both as honorable men, except

the "surrogate" absent father is alive when mythologized. For instance, Tolkien writes Bilbo in *The Fellowship of the Ring* as a "very rich and very peculiar" hobbit compared to his neighbors and "had been the wonder of the Shire for sixty years, ever since his remarkable disappearance and unexpected return" because he ventured beyond to confines of the Shire (*FotR* 35). Bilbo's sudden vanishing from Hobbiton to undertake a journey hundreds of miles away makes him an object of peculiarity, fascination, and reproach to his peers. Persistent rumors of Bilbo's treasure and how the journey changes him continue sixty years after its undertaking. These rumors become attached to Bilbo's home Bag End due to the belief that he has hidden treasure there, and eventually to Frodo because he is taken in by Bilbo. When Bilbo disappears for the last time, the rumors become even more myth-like because he uses the ring to become invisible and stages his escape in front of the entire village. His actions instantly mythologize Bilbo in the eyes of his peers, starting even more rumors than before.

The portrayal of the "surrogate" absent father complicates Tolkien's representation of his own father because the archetype further demonstrates Tolkien's tendency to mythologize his fictional father characters with their substitution. Constructing a "surrogate" absent father archetype allows Tolkien to use his imagination to recreate a father figure, one that remains long enough to rear his surrogate offspring before vanishing. Much like the "missing" absent father archetype, the surrogate crucially affects his progeny. First, the "surrogate" absent father directs his surrogate offspring and creates the conditions that force them to begin their quest. Second, the "surrogate" absent father dies or disappears once the surrogate offspring accomplishes their goal. The archetype suggests that Tolkien designed his father figures to serve the strict purpose of influencing characters who undertake a quest. In Bilbo's case, Frodo acquires some of Bilbo's eccentric characteristics after being adopted. Bilbo's direct influence, along with the passing of the ring, encourages Frodo to journey outside the Shire. Without Bilbo,

the ring of power would not have surfaced, causing Frodo to undertake the journey to destroy it. After Frodo completes his quest, Bilbo remains in Rivendell rather than returning to Hobbiton with Frodo. When Bilbo declines to return, he allows Frodo to become independent and signals Frodo's coming of age and emergence into maturity. The "surrogate" absent father illustrates that even in substitution, Tolkien cannot escape the memory or influence of his father. By creating the "surrogate" absent father, Tolkien ascribes more value to the memory of Arthur and demonstrates the effects of losing a father. Tolkien uses the life and disappearance of his "surrogate" absent fathers to represent the persistence of the memory of his father.

The final form of the absent father archetype is the "reclaimed" absent father, who emphasizes how the father influences identity through lineage. The "reclaimed" absent father reveals a character's ancestry to them, and they gain a father figure that was previously absent. This type of absent father is the rarest form, and yet, the archetype is prevalent throughout all of the trilogy through Aragorn. Tolkien uses the "reclaimed" absent father to symbolize Aragorn's lineage. Aragorn's father, Arathorn, is known in Middle-earth as the rightful king of Gondor, who is murdered when Aragorn is two years old. Tolkien writes that Arathorn's sudden death affected Aragorn's upbringing because "his true name and lineage were kept secret at the bidding of Elrond; for the Wise then knew that the Enemy was seeking to discover the Heir of Isildur, if any remained upon earth" (*RotK* 1032). Aragorn's obliviousness of his past means that while he may know of Arathorn, Aragorn does not know Arathorn is his father and cannot fully remember him. As a result, Arathorn becomes a legend associated with Arnor and Gondor. The passing of Arathorn seems to affect Aragorn very little. However, Arathorn's death creates the first tragedy Aragorn navigates and adds to the circumstances that affect his journey. Arathorn's untimely death displaces Aragorn at an early age, so he has little recollection of his original home in Arnor as a child. These characteristics mimic Tolkien's memory of life in South Africa.

Arthur Tolkien died when Tolkien was a toddler. Tolkien's memory of Arthur began to fade as Tolkien grew up in England until his life in South Africa was almost forgotten (Carpenter 25). Nevertheless, including Tolkien's father as a legend revives and preserves the memory of Arthur because Tolkien subconsciously mirrors the spatial expanse between himself and Arthur at Arthur's death. The spatial expanse Tolkien mirrors in the trilogy reinforces a distance between Aragorn and his memory of his father that is further apparent with the revelation of Aragorn's identity because until then, the significance of Aragorn's father is unknown to him.

Tolkien's "reclaimed" absent father archetype emphasizes a reclamation of lineage in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien writes that Elrond does not reveal Aragorn's identity as the heir of Gondor until he is twenty to ensure Aragorn is ready to seek the throne successfully. The significance of Aragorn discovering his father is the reclamation of his ancestry that is rooted in legend and memory. Once Aragorn's identity is discovered, he "gains" his own father, and his ancestral fathers he never knew he had. Though Aragorn may have known of Arathorn, Aragorn does not know the significance of his connection to Arathorn or Gondor until Aragorn is twenty. Aragorn "gains" Arathorn as a father, and his line of fathers extends to Isildur, the last known ruler of Gondor. Although Isildur dies long before Aragorn is born, Tolkien refers to Aragorn as "Isildur's heir" throughout the trilogy, reminding Aragorn of Isildur and his significance (*FotR* 282). As the last reigning king, the memory of Isildur is bound to Gondor because the place is part of his identity as king; he is remembered in a specific context. By binding Isildur to Gondor, Tolkien links his ancestors to the place as well. The "reclaimed" absent fathers connect Aragorn to his ancestors and his true homeland of Gondor. Even when Aragorn is not aware of his identity, the connection between Aragorn and Gondor exists because of Isildur; the legends of his lineage haunt Aragorn. By highlighting Aragorn's lineage, Tolkien shows how Aragorn's ancestors' choices and the memory of them affect his decisions.

Tolkien's representation of each of the archetypes—the "missing" absent father, "surrogate" absent father, and "reclaimed" absent father—illustrates the past's persistence on the self. Each form of the absent father archetype connects the character to a specific place, much like how Tolkien remembers his own father. They illustrate how place and imagination come together through memory. By creating archetypes based on father figures, Tolkien preserves the distant memories of his father Arthur in a specific place and time in Tolkien's past through his imagination. The absent father archetype illustrates how Tolkien revitalizes his memory of his father through the trilogy in different ways. Tolkien fictionalizes his memory of Arthur Tolkien, illustrating the impact of Arthur Tolkien's death in Tolkien's life through the absent father's impact on his offspring. By altering his father's memory in different ways, the effects of Arthur's death become apparent, showing that Tolkien's past may be gone, but the memory of Arthur lives on through Tolkien's trilogy.

According to Trigg, using creativity to alter a memory shows the past's influence and a person's reluctance to remove the memory from themselves. Trigg states that the value ascribed to the memory is what allows it to persist into the present and future as the "relationship between the flux of time and the work of imagination points to the significance preservation plays in our experience of places" (67). Memories require more imagination for completion as time passes. The more value the memory has, the greater the likelihood an individual is willing to use their imagination to reconstruct the memory. Despite the four decades between the death of Tolkien's father and when he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, the recollection of Tolkien's father and the place Tolkien knew him in still influences Tolkien. Tolkien mythologizes his recollection of South Africa by viewing his father as a myth because the two are bound together within place memory. Tolkien would likely associate South Africa with his father because his final memory of Arthur resides in that place. Part of Tolkien is absorbed in a

point that attaches the memory to his identity through his father. Attaching the memory to Tolkien's identity means that the memory is constantly with him. The memory remains a part of and haunts him.

A significant aspect of Trigg's place memory is that memory reconstruction and persistence highlight its uncanny nature. The absence and persistence of memory means a place risks becoming strange despite its familiarity, which leads to uncanniness. An uncanny place is both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. Trigg states that the "uncanny is to be understood fundamentally as an effect, a felt experience that disturbs the body, resulting in a departure from the everyday" (27). Uncanniness disrupts the continuity of the self because the uncanny significantly effects the places that are the most comforting. The uncanny aligns with the nature of trauma because the uncanny makes the familiar decidedly unfamiliar simultaneously. Trauma establishes conditions that allow an individual to view themselves as a stranger in a traumatic experience, which enhances the unnerving and strangeness of the memory. In this sense, a person who experiences trauma is split because the self who undergoes the trauma is both present and absent.

Trigg terms the process of when trauma ruptures and transforms the familiar into the uncanny the "mutilation of being" (234). When the actual object or place does not meet the individual's expectations and becomes mutilated in the mind. Mutilation brings tension to the memory and forces the content (in this case place) into otherness that excludes an individual from truly experiencing the memory because the memory is both concealed and visible. Trigg implies the same might be true of the uncanny and place memory, stating, "The uncanny's dual nature of being hidden and familiar concurrently points to the singularly peculiar quality of the memory of place in particular" (34). A familiar object or place is transformed into something or someplace alien when a place becomes uncanny due to memory. The duality of uncanniness

makes the memory of a place both different and opposed to remembering because the difference may make an individual feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.

Tolkien's subconscious use of traumatic memory to bring attention to the void left by his mother Mabel Tolkien's death parallels Trigg's conception of trauma. Mabel's death drastically changed Tolkien's personality and lifelong perspective. Carpenter explains that her death transformed him into a pessimist and seemed to split him into two people. According to Carpenter, Tolkien was a "cheerful almost irreprehensible person with a great zest for life" one minute but then would later be "capable of bouts of profound despair...when he was in this mood he had a deep sense of impending loss. Nothing was safe. Nothing would last. No battle would be won forever" (39). Once orphaned, Tolkien attempted to remain optimistic, but efforts to emotionally progress did not stop him from grieving his mother. The separation at the time became critical for Tolkien's identity. The trauma of Mabel's death split his personality and his perspective on life. After her death, Tolkien began to associate nature with his childhood and with innocence and to associate industry with maturity. His move to Birmingham is an emergence into adulthood.

By representing Mabel as a fictional character, Tolkien attempts to capture aspects of his childhood, much like how he represents Arthur in mythical form. A significant difference being Tolkien represents Mabel as a much more concrete figure, unlike the representation of his father that he likens to a myth. The reason for Tolkien's associations is because Mabel lived longer, so Tolkien's memories of her were more substantial. Though Tolkien may parallel his fictionalization of Mabel to a nature-like figure, it is his extensive memory of her that allows him to create a more tangible character. Thus, Tolkien represents Mabel more concretely than Arthur. Carpenter's observation of how Tolkien associates his mother with nature coincides with place memory; however, Mabel's representation progresses substantially beyond place memory

into the uncanny and, as such, represents Tolkien's discontinuity. By recreating Mabel as the elf Galadriel and connecting his memory of Mabel to the elven forest home Lothlorien, Tolkien represents her as a fictional figure who is both familiar and unknown to him, which mirrors the effects of the trauma of her death.⁴

Tolkien represents the trauma from Mabel's death largely in his fictionalization of his mother as Galadriel. Trigg claims that memory gains value through its persistence. Only after an event happens can a person truly know, consciously or not, how that event affects them and whether it will be remembered. Tolkien illustrates the importance and impact of his memory of Mabel by representing his mother through Galadriel. Nancy Bunting affirms in "1904: Tolkien, Trauma, and its Anniversaries" that Tolkien paralleled many similarities between Mabel and his character Galadriel, an elven queen. Bunting claims, "Fairy or elven queens are associated with Mabel Tolkien. She was called Mab by her husband and signed her name as 'Mab'" (61). Tolkien's remembrance of his mother as a fairy associates her with fantastical attributes. He associated his mother with Mab, his father's nickname for Mabel and the queen of the fairies from a young age. The connection of Mabel as a fairy or elf directly correlates to Tolkien's representation of her as the elven queen Galadriel.

Tolkien mirrors in Galadriel the reverence he showed towards Mabel. Although Bunting argues that Tolkien deliberately incorporated attributes of Mabel as a sign of forgiveness for their contentious relationship, John Garth makes evident in *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* Tolkien's admiration of Mabel by recalling her controversial conversion to Catholicism. Garth recounts Tolkien's observation of Mabel as one who "martyred herself raising her boys in the faith" to indicate her worthiness for profound respect (12).

⁴ Galadriel's elven forest home Lothlorien has many names in *The Lord of the Rings*, but I will call the forest Lothlorien or Lorien for this document.

Tolkien and his brother admired Mabel for remaining steadfast in her faith despite outraging her extended family by converting shortly before her death. The result left Mabel, Tolkien, and his brother cut off from support income from their Protestant family members. Tolkien saw the family's reaction as a test of Mabel's faith, which may have inspired Galadriel's test where she refuses the ring and is finally allowed passage back to Valinor. Tolkien further describes Galadriel as the "White Lady" (*TTT* 664). He associates her with purity, innocence, and light and often relates Galadriel to a spiritual, angelic being whose purpose is to protect Middle-earth. These descriptions compare to similar associations Tolkien makes about Mabel's spirituality because Tolkien remembers Mabel as one who endured great pains but retained her angelic likeness and died in sainthood.

Galadriel as a character is particularly powerful and independent. She is the wisest of the female elves, is a descendant of rulers, is the last elf in Middle-earth to have seen the sacred trees of Valinor, and is in possession of a ring of power of her own. These attributes make her a prominent figure in the elven culture. Only she can directly stand against Sauron. Nancy Enright argues in "Tolkien's Females and the Defining of Power" that although Galadriel lives in a world defined by male dominance, she "is a stronger embodiment of this power than her husband, Celeborn. It is she who is the wiser and more powerful" (99). Galadriel's capability of harnessing male power as a woman allows her to surpass her male equals. Tolkien evidences her superiority by describing her as "no less tall" than her husband with a voice that is "deeper than a woman's wont" and with her position as a ruler rather than the daughter of a powerful ruler, contrary to Tolkien's other females (*FotR* 398). Galadriel's somewhat masculine description portrays her with strength and independence. Her autonomy is reflective of Tolkien's perspective of Mabel during the last years of her life. In the absence of Arthur and her extended family, Mabel was forced to assume the role of the head of the family. Carpenter notes that

Tolkien's perception as a young boy of his single mother as a teacher, a supporter, and a religious figure influenced his memory of her for years after her death (39). Tolkien's last memories of Mabel were of her independence as a single mother, which he reflects in Galadriel, who subverts male dominance by using her power for healing instead of domination.

Tolkien represents the persistence of his memory of Mabel in Galadriel's portrayal as both a protector and a danger. Tolkien portrays Galadriel as an elf who commands respect as a bearer of *Nenya*, a ring of power, which she uses to protect and preserve the woods of *Lothlorien*. Enright describes Galadriel as a "mover and planner of the great things in Middle-earth" (99). She is involved in or knows many of the dealings in Middle-earth despite her solidarity in *Lothlorien*. Galadriel aids the fellowship in their quest to destroy the ring by offering advice and providing gifts and tools, much like a mother guiding and doting on her children. She uses her magic to influence the fellowship as they continue their journey, giving aid and reminders of hope when needed. Her assistance appears in different forms but most significantly calls elvish spells to Sam and Frodo, symbolizing her presence as a teacher like Tolkien's mother, who homeschooled him as a young boy.

At the same time, Tolkien portrays Galadriel as a mythical figure who exists to much of Middle-earth as somewhat of a conundrum. Tolkien describes her as dangerous to some and beautiful to others. Suspicions on the nature of her character are seen especially in Gimli, who associates her with darkness and evil, and Boromir's questioning of Galadriel's motives in sheltering the fellowship. These representations construct Galadriel in various, and notably contrasting, ways. Her portrayal mirrors the perception of Tolkien's mother by her family after her conversion to Catholicism in that Galadriel is beneficial one moment and dangerous the next. However, all doubts about her integrity are quickly disputed by Aragorn and Legolas, followed by the rest of the fellowship after their meeting, making readers believe that Galadriel

is ultimately benevolent. By representing Mabel as the mythical figure of Galadriel, Tolkien represents how he perceived her by writing Mabel as a mother and protector figure for Middle-earth.

Tolkien binds Mabel's fictional representation of Galadriel to Lorien as a mother-nature-like figure. Galadriel's power from her ring allows her to create in Lorien a place that mimics her original home of Valinor. Once the fellowship enters Lothlorien, Tolkien describes the group feeling as though they had "stepped over a bridge of time into a corner of the Elder Days, and was now walking in a world that was no more" (*FotR* 392). Tolkien likens the fellowship's entrance into Lorien to traveling back to a past that is long forgotten. He constructs Lorien as a replication of Galadriel's home of Valinor. Galadriel is the last elf in Middle-earth that is born in Valinor. Her preservation of a place like Lorien that reflects her former home illustrates her connection to the past as she attempts to recreate the forest where she grew up. The preservation of Lothlorien highlights the significance of nature to Galadriel as a representation of life. Galadriel's protection of Lorien and its inhabitants from evil portrays her as a keeper of nature and life. She gives Sam the seeds from her wood, symbolizing a passing of the gift of life. More importantly, her gift represents the last remaining memory of the elves once she is gone. The silver nut Sam plants from Galadriel's seeds grows into a mallorn tree, the last of its kind and the only one to grow outside of Lothlorien. By giving Sam the seed to plant the tree, Galadriel bestows on him the power of fertility she held that serves as a reminder of the memory of herself and of her kind.

Tolkien illustrates the connection between Galadriel and nature through her association with her forest home Lothlorien. Tolkien's characters speak about Galadriel and Lothlorien in the same breath and almost synonymously. For instance, Tolkien writes in an exchange between Faramir and Sam, that Faramir views Galadriel as "Perilously fair," to which Sam responds, "I

don't know about perilous . . . It strikes me that folk takes their peril with them into Lorien, and finds it there because they've brought it" (*TTT* 664). Although Faramir uses the word "perilous" in reference to Galadriel, Sam shifts the conversation to refer to Lorien, symbolizing their connection. Thus, they use the word "perilous" in the context of Galadriel and Lorien simultaneously. The association between Galadriel and her woodland home illustrates how the two cannot be separated. When Galadriel is mentioned, her forest home is simultaneously referenced. Her association with Lorien and nature illustrates that Galadriel is always thought of in terms of her home and in reference to the nature she surrounds herself with.

Tolkien's inspiration for Galadriel's connection to nature is drawn from his association of Mabel to his childhood home Sarehole. His last memories of Mabel are of their life at Sarehole outside of Birmingham where Tolkien and his brother spent their time in farm fields, hunting for mushrooms, picking flowers, or climbing trees next to the river where they waded. Because of these final memories, Tolkien associates his mother with nature and the pastoral, especially since he and his brother were forced to live in the city directly succeeding her death. Carpenter recounts how her passing "severed him from the open, from Lickey Hill where he had gathered bilberries, and from the Rednal cottage where they had been so happy. And because it was the loss of his mother that had taken him away from all these things, he came to associate them with her" (40). The uprooting caused him to idealize the country that he reflects in *The Lord of the Rings* in the elven woods. Bunting observes that the trees in Lothlorien parallel those Tolkien knew growing up, stating, "Galadriel, the Lady of the Galadrim, lives within a great circle hedge or 'korin' of golden mallorn trees with a lawn watered by a stream. These tall trees may recall the sycamore of 1904, as sycamores are noted for their height" (61). Thus, Tolkien surrounds Galadriel in a similar landscape from the era of his life that held his last memories of Mabel, meaning that Tolkien fictionalizes his memory of Mabel and his memory of his childhood home

where she resides. Similarities between Mabel and Galadriel suggest that the memory of Tolkien's mother and his childhood home possess enough value to persist in Tolkien's mind long after their absence. More significantly, they are part of the same memory event. Tolkien associates Mabel with a specific place in his past, meaning Tolkien will forever construct his memory of his mother with where he remembers her the most.

Although Tolkien fictionalizes Mabel by representing her as a mother nature-like figure through Galadriel, Tolkien contrasts his mythologizing of Mabel with Arthur in that Tolkien does not represent Mabel as an archetype. The reason for this difference in representation is Tolkien's capacity to remember Arthur and Mabel. Tolkien's age at the time of Mabel's death means that he could clearly remember and retain more memories of Mabel than Arthur. Mabel was a more significant part of Tolkien's life and her association with nature because of their life in Sarehole remained closer in Tolkien's recollection. His concrete memories of Mabel and their life in the British countryside is why Tolkien fictionalizes her as one figure rather than an archetype that may be represented by multiple characters. Unlike Arthur, Tolkien's memories of Mabel are substantial enough to be represented by a single character. Whereas Arthur could only be a distant memory of a person that Tolkien did not substantially know, allowing Tolkien the freedom to constantly remake his character, Tolkien's memories of Mabel are concrete enough that he may directly fictionalize her as a specific character. Tolkien does not have to recreate Mabel's fictionalization more than once because he clearly remembers her personality and does not have to speculate about her character. By writing Galadriel as a character connected to nature, Tolkien fictionalizes Mabel as the mother, nurturer, and protector he knew. He may echo characteristics of Mabel in the other elves, but his memories of Mabel and his memory of her in Sarehole are adequate enough to fictionally represent her as an established character.

Tolkien's memories of Mabel Tolkien are represented in his mother's association to Galadriel and Lothlorien through an alteration of the memory Trigg calls the "mutilation of being." Trigg argues that despite a feeling of familiarity in an object or memory, the more one interacts with it, the more pronounced its differences and unfamiliarity become, causing mutilation. The "mutilation of being" occurs in *The Lord of the Rings* in the presence and eventual absence of the elves and their home. Lothlorien appears to be a forest until one enters and sees its hidden power. Tolkien constructs the wood as a paradise from the "Elder Days" where "ancient things still lived on in the waking world," but no evil entered (*FotR* 392). The description hints at an attempt to preserve a past place that is no longer present. Galadriel recreates Valinor in Middle-earth, but Lorien is not the same as Valinor. Instead, Lorien is a mimic of Galadriel's memory of Valinor. The constant threat of enemies outside of Lorien remind Galadriel that Lorien exists as a replication and not her real home. Lothlorien's description hints at a supernatural power that is illustrated in the interactions of the fellowship before and after their contact with the wood. Tolkien shows the effects of residing in Lorien in the fellowship when Boromir attempts to deter the group from entering the wood by warning them that those who enter never leave "*unscathed*" (*FotR* 379). Aragorn corrects his statement, however, suggesting instead that they rarely leave "*unchanged*" (*FotR* 379). Aragorn's statement foreshadows the later observation of optimism between the comrades after leaving Lothlorien, whose effects linger with the fellowship for a time.

The impact of the split between the elves and their homes and the rest of Middle-earth reflects Tolkien's trauma from his mother's death on a much larger scale. Carpenter notes that his mother's passing split Tolkien's personality and the perception of his environment in two, with nature, his childhood, and his mother as one association, and with cities and adulthood as another. Carpenter's observation of Tolkien's memory of his mother and the depiction of elves

and nature in his novels parallel each other. While in their homes, the elves are safe and powerful. They can protect themselves from harm and sustain themselves in the nature around them that they preserve. Tolkien uses places where the elves reside, such as Lothlorien, as respite locations because they are fertile and protected by magic. The slowing of time in Lothlorien allows the fellowship to remain for a month though they notice it passing in only a few short days. Tolkien writes that only Legolas notices, "time does not tarry ever...but change and growth is not in all places alike. For the Elves, the world moves, and it moves very swift and very slow" (*FotR* 437). Legolas's statement serves not only as an explanation of the formation of time and its understanding to the elves, but also a possible direct reference to the representation of Tolkien's trauma from his mother's death. The temporal difference between Lothlorien and the rest of the earth allows for the possibility that the forest exists on a separate plane. Lorien's disconnection from the rest of the world places the forest in conjunction with the traumatic void because the forest exists and is absent. Lorien is a void within Middle-earth that later begins to fill as the elves leave, and their effects are not present anymore.

Tolkien further represents the trauma of the death of his mother as a void with the departure of Galadriel and the elves from Middle-earth. The elves' immortality keeps them from death but does not prevent those around them, or indeed Middle-earth itself, from grieving their departure and the loss of Galadriel's magic and fertility with nature. These sentiments are consistent with Tolkien's view of his mother's death, evident in a letter to his son Michael in 1972, where he recalls his emotions after Mabel's death, "I feel like a lost survivor into a new alien world after the real world has passed away" (455). Mabel's passing creates in Tolkien a void as he is left alone to navigate the world. In his letter, the empty world he describes presents a feeling of abandonment and isolation that Tolkien fictionally mimics when Galadriel

leaves Middle-earth. Her departure is considered a sacrifice that Tolkien uses to represent his trauma through the absence of the elves.

The departure of Galadriel and the other elves as a sacrifice is similar to Tolkien's view of his mother as a martyr. Tolkien's representation of his mother's sacrifice further alters the representation of his trauma through the absence of the elves. When they leave Middle-earth, their absence causes the decay of the places they once inhabited, despite the fact they are not dead but moving on to their original home. Their passing mirrors Mabel's death in that it seems to resemble a passing into Heaven and causes the land to fracture. When Galadriel leaves Middle-earth, the magic that protected Lothlorien disappears with her, so the land falls into decay. Lorien becomes a shadow of what it once was. The distinction between the former and later appearances demonstrates the breaking of unity the body experiences during trauma. Though the forest aligns itself with its external environment and eventually becomes temporally one with its surroundings, its so-called unity alters the site's fabric until it is unrecognizable. Its mutilation creates a space absent of all known experience and thus, represents the uncanny.

Tolkien represents the trauma of the loss of Galadriel and her uncanny memory in Arwen, Galadriel's granddaughter. Arwen chooses to stay in Middle-earth after the other elves depart to become human, and she chooses to marry Aragorn. When he dies, Arwen searches in vain for traces of her ancestors. Tolkien writes that as she leaves Minas Tirith overcome with grief from Aragorn's death, Arwen travels to what once was "Lorien, and dwelt there alone under the fading trees until winter came. Galadriel had passed away, and Celeborn also was gone, and the land was silent" (*RotK* 1038). Now silent and barren, the once lush land mirrors the alteration Carpenter describes in Tolkien's personality as a young boy. Arwen feels isolated in a place that was formerly welcoming and familiar to her. Instead of feeling at home, her return to Lorien is marred by strangeness and mutilation.

The loss Tolkien expresses through Arwen echoes his own psychological change. Arwen travels in Lorien and feels the disappearance and absence of her family, which mimics Tolkien's isolation as an orphan after the death of both his parents. In describing Arwen, Tolkien states, "the light of her eyes was quenched, and it seemed to her people that she had become cold and grey as nightfall in winter that comes without a star" (1038). Tolkien portrays Arwen in her loneliness and loss as a representation of himself in his early childhood loss. The memory of her family haunts Arwen as she travels the land they once lived. Representing himself through Arwen and her loss reflects Trigg's concept of the uncanny by making Tolkien's memory both familiar and distanced. The portrayal of Arwen represents how the memory of Tolkien's mother haunts him and becomes apparent in Carpenter's description of Tolkien's split personality after his mother's death. Tolkien represents the duality of his personality caused by this trauma in the uncanny of the elven woods that are associated with a dual existence of presence and absence.

Tolkien's representation of the discontinuity of Lorien and of Arwen due to Galadriel's leaving reflects his own discontinuity after his mother's death. According to Trigg, hopelessness and impending loss illustrate a void or the "absence of being" that gives way to the haunting of memory (234). The haunting of memory leads to the uncanny where something is both present and familiar, yet absent and different. Carpenter and Garth observe that after Mabel's death, Tolkien was changed and forever haunted by the trauma of her death. Garth notes that Mabel's death created in Tolkien an endless void manifesting in "fits of profound melancholy, even despair...though he kept them to himself" (48). Tolkien developed two personalities: one content and optimistic, and the other deeply depressed. The shift between the two temperaments illustrates a literal haunting of his past catalyzed by his mother's death. Tolkien's personality was metaphorically split in two. Even as he attempted to remain happy, he was

always haunted by the memory and trauma of losing his mother. His loss draws attention to the beginning of a psychic fracture that would persist and widen through his life.

Tolkien's fractured personality after his mother's death represents this haunting and is reflected in *The Lord of the Rings* in Galadriel and the absence and presence of the elves and their home. Tolkien recreates his childhood home and mother in the trilogy, which allows him to re-experience his past, one where he is under the protection and guidance of his mother through the elves. When the elves leave, the magic that gave Lorien prolonged time and its protection against decay in Middle-earth fractures. The withdrawal of the elves that results in the separation of magic from the forest represents Tolkien's psychological fracture after the death of his mother. He reflects his emotional state in the trilogy through the elves' demise that alters the state of Middle-earth. The continual haunting of Tolkien's mother and childhood home through his fractured self means that Tolkien likely embedded memories of his mother in *The Lord of the Rings* subconsciously. As a result, Tolkien's memory of his mother and his own identity are bound in the trilogy. Tolkien incorporating his haunting memory in his writing allows him to disconnect from his past, so he may experience it as another self. By reflecting his split self in the trilogy, Tolkien may begin to heal by creating a world that bridges the two halves of himself.

Tolkien represents each parent differently within the same concept of place memory. While both of Tolkien's parents influenced his life with the trauma of their deaths, how he subconsciously represents each differently in *The Lord of the Rings* is significant. Tolkien reconstructs his childhood memories and traumas through fictionalizing the memories of his parents. Tolkien constructs the memories of his parents repeatedly, which shows how these memories persist in his mind throughout his life. By including memory and trauma in the trilogy, Tolkien subconsciously indicates that they are part of his identity. He illustrates that he was

impacted by the death of both of his parents. Neither death had a greater effect than the other, and both contributed to Tolkien's sense of self. The memories of the death of his parents acted on his identity, solidifying their constant presence in his mind.

While Tolkien may directly represent Mabel and Sarehole in Galadriel and Lothlorien, the absence of an association with place Arthur is significant for Tolkien's memory of Arthur. Tolkien associates Arthur with South Africa, but Tolkien's memory of the place is near non-existent. The place Tolkien associates Arthur with is so distant that it makes Arthur a more legendary and abstruse figure. Because of the spatial and temporal distance between Tolkien and Arthur, Tolkien only sees his father as part of a distant past. The result is that Tolkien may see his father as part of a life in South America but also associates him with absence itself. For this reason, the absent father archetypes are not connected to a specific place but to the distant past. By connecting them to an immaterial past, Tolkien demonstrates how their absence affects the identity of their children. The obscurity of Arthur Tolkien as a father allows Tolkien to fictionalize him multiple times and in different ways that he cannot parallel with Mabel.

Tolkien represents Mabel as a definite character because she died when Tolkien was older, so he has a clearer vision of her. Tolkien remembers who she was before she died. By representing his mother as a specific character, Tolkien illustrates his memory of her. He sees her as a tangible person, connected to the home he knew while she was alive. Tolkien cannot make Mabel into an archetype because it would defeat the purpose of preserving her memory as he saw her. He sees her, not as an abstract and distant memory like his father, but as a clear and potent memory. By fictionalizing the memory of Arthur and Mabel Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien preserves their memory while using his imagination to create something new. He reconstructs the traumas of his childhood, and how they affected his identity, and reclaims the memories of his parents in the process. Tolkien fills the void of his trauma by using his

imagination to transform his memories of Arthur and Mabel Tolkien, preserving them in Tolkien's mind and in his trilogy.

“Something Has Gone Crack”: Traumatic Embodiment and Death in the Pursuit of
Healing

In the final chapters of J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo begins the journey home after destroying the ring. He is noticeably jaded and dejected due to the injuries he accumulated along the way when Gandalf confronts him about his wounds. Though it is a short conversation, Tolkien's dialogue between Gandalf and Frodo intimates the extent of Frodo's injuries that he endured to achieve the quest. Frodo realizes because of his quest that "There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?" (*RotK* 967). Frodo's statement specifically highlights the traumas he sustained while on the quest. These injuries irrevocably change Frodo, so his perspective and attitude towards life are altered.

Tolkien writes Frodo's statement so that it has two implications. First, Tolkien contrasts Frodo's new self after the quest with his old self from before, giving a sense of longing for his old life. Frodo realizes that he does not know how to live with his new self. His trauma reminds him of the hobbit he was before embarking on his journey and signifies the figurative end of his life in his childhood home. Second, Tolkien writes Frodo's statement so that his words call attention to more than just his physical injuries. Frodo's words reveal that his mental and bodily wounds are connected. Tolkien inserts mentions of Frodo's physical wounds between statements concerning what might be his mental health, hinting that the hobbit accumulated both physical and psychological trauma from the quest. By mentioning his bodily wounds along with the mental distress of "a long burden" and "finding peace," Tolkien highlights how physical and mental trauma are connected (*RotK* 967).

Dylan Trigg's theory of traumatic embodiment is essential in understanding how Tolkien represents his trauma through *The Lord of the Rings*. Trigg characterizes traumatic embodiment as a traumatic experience that undermines a person's conception of self, so it becomes disconnected. As a result, Trigg claims that a person's selfhood becomes split between the traumatic past self, or "other self" that experienced the trauma and lives in the body, and the present self that can perform day-to-day activities and reflect on their experiences (240). The disconnect between the two selves is further complicated by the presence of traumatic body memory, a component of traumatic embodiment where the body is believed to store and remember trauma. Traumatic body memory means that the body has its own history of felt experience separate from the mind. The body remembers traumatic events because the memory of the pain from the experience is embedded in the body's cells. The body remembers trauma through the senses, allowing traumatic body memory to be transferred to cognitive memory.

While Trigg only analyzes traumatic embodiment as it involves real-world experience, its application can extend to literary artistic works through authors such as Tolkien. Trigg argues that body memory's cognitive manifestation means that body's memory waits in the space between the physical world and the imagination. In other words, body memory hides in the body until it is unconsciously brought to the mind where it acts with the imagination to recreate a memory. Through body memory, Tolkien reimagines the traumas he suffered from World War One at the loss of his friends to reconcile his sense of self and heal from his past in the trilogy. How Tolkien represents memory and trauma in the trilogy is important for understanding their significance because Tolkien recreates his own traumas, representing the presence and persistence of the memory of his youth. Tolkien portrays traumatic embodiment in his writing by fictionalizing his own experience and memories. He uses his imagination to

fictionalize his childhood traumas and represent them through traumatic embodiment and body memory. Tolkien represents his traumatic embodiment most explicitly in the character of Frodo. By portraying Frodo as a fictionalized version of his traumatic past self, Tolkien subconsciously illustrates the effect that the loss of his adolescent friends—Rob Gilson, G.B. Smith, and Christopher Wiseman—has on his writing. Through analyzing *The Lord of the Rings* using Trigg's theory of traumatic embodiment, readers understand how Tolkien projects his traumatic past in Frodo to represent Tolkien's trauma and how representing his trauma through Frodo's body leads to Frodo's ultimate death while allowing Tolkien to heal himself.

To understand how Tolkien represents his trauma in *The Lord of the Rings* and its significance, readers must first understand some of the trauma Tolkien endured in World War One. Tolkien grew up with his friends, Christopher Wiseman, Rob Gilson, and Geoffrey Smith. These friends had been with Tolkien since just after the death of his mother when he was twelve years old, and, together, they formed The Tea Club, Barrovian Society (TCBS)—a name chosen for their afternoon excursions in the library when they would brew and drink tea in a closet. When World War One erupted, all enlisted close after one another. Each were college graduates and could join as officers, Tolkien, Gilson, and Smith in the infantry and Wiseman in The Royal Navy. What is significant about their friendship is reflected in John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth*, where he observes Smith's nickname for the group in a 1916 letter to Tolkien on the battlefield. Garth writes that Smith calls the quartet the "Immortal Four," symbolizing their affiliation before World War One and their aspirations to be immortalized through their individual work (177). The name also inadvertently suggests the hope that each member would survive the war, though that may simply be speculation.

On the battlefield, Tolkien, Smith, and Gilson were disturbed by the horror of the trenches and firsthand combat. No Man's Land beyond the trenches was a devastating place of

death. Around the barbed wire lay corpses from previous attacks. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell describes that looking out into the field, soldiers could see "the various battles amongst the hundreds of skulls, bones and remains scattered thickly about" (54). Bodies lay everywhere, most in pieces, and many were left from previous battles months beforehand. Crossing No Man's Land space meant almost certain death. Garth states that as soldiers climbed over the trenches, "[b]ullets spun men around and dropped them in strangely awkward postures...The enemy's shells dealt with those bullets missed" (155). Allied and German forces alike were subject to fierce torrential fire from the opposing side, resulting in immediate death. Those who did not die right away, according to Fussell, were "beyond the reach of friend and foe alike, and destined to remain there between the trenches till one side or the other advanced" (262). Those trapped in No Man's Land typically had to wait days or weeks before being rescued, which at that point meant they likely had been left for dead among their enemies.

Most horrific of all was the Battle of the Somme beginning July 1, 1916. The fight was one of the defining moments for the "Immortal Four" because the battle claimed Gilson's life on the first day. In a letter to Smith and Wiseman after Gilson's death, Tolkien contemplates the future of the TCBS and conveys uncertainty about his own state and emotions. His letters express bereavement and isolation at the loss of his friend, which could only be compounded later with Smith's death in December. The death of one member of the TCBS was enough to devastate Tolkien, and his grief only intensified with the sudden passing of another member. The result of their deaths gradually estranged Tolkien and Wiseman because they could not reconcile with each other how to handle the loss of their friends, nor their differing experience of the war. Though Wiseman saw combat in the navy, his experience differed significantly from the rest of the group. Carpenter indicates that six years after the war, Tolkien and Wiseman

began to discover they had very little in common though the two men still occasionally met and wrote letters (147). The experience of war and death, combined with the alienation from Wiseman, shows the psychological distress Tolkien endured during the war. These traumas and memories symbolically manifest in *The Lord of the Rings*, so readers see remnants of the traumatic memories of Tolkien's past manifested in his writing.

Tolkien represents his psychological traumas in relation to Gilson, Smith, and Wiseman by relating them to his body, revealing how trauma is sedimented in traumatic body memory. Trigg states that "the body memory of trauma occupies a liminal realm, both revealing and concealing itself simultaneously" (236). While trauma may not be recognized cognitively, the body stores the memory of trauma, causing a symptomatic emergence of traumatic memory over time. The body then becomes a witness to its own survival and can endure trauma despite itself because the body can register trauma when the mind cannot. The body's survival is what causes the consciousness to fracture because the present self detects the underlying layer of a surviving traumatic self. However, Trigg contends that the body acts as the vessel that allows for the unity of identity, so the body preserves both a traumatized self and a non-traumatized self within. The fragmented self Trigg refers to is reminiscent of Tolkien's own state after Gilson's death. Tolkien conveys in his letter to Smith and Wiseman that he is contending with his grief and his sense of being. The result is that he absorbs the TCBS as part of his body. Tolkien declares in a letter directed to Smith and Wiseman upon finding out about Gilson's death in August of 1916:

something has gone crack. I feel just the same to both of you – nearer if
 anything and very much in need of you – I am hungry and lonely of course – but
 I don't feel a member of a little complete body now. I honestly feel that the

TCBS has ended . . . I feel a mere individual at present – with intense feelings more than ideas but very powerless. (*Letters* 10)

Tolkien implies that his trauma fragments his sense of self, so he no longer feels whole; his consciousness becomes split. What is more significant is Tolkien's use of language. While Tolkien could have used words such as 'companions' or 'group,' his use of the word 'body' instead indicates his view of the TCBS as part of a "body," or more specifically, his body. Tolkien constructs the TCBS as a single entity, one with an amputated limb after Gilson's death. Tolkien's words highlight the body's ability to receive and store trauma physically. Because the body is the receptacle that receives and retains the past, its function as a vessel and proximity to the material world makes it capable of accessing trauma. Tolkien's words symbolize the function of the body itself. By constructing the TCBS as his body, Tolkien can briefly confront his trauma by referring to it as a physical break and stressing the body's primacy.

Through his recognition of a fractured self, Tolkien exemplifies traumatic embodiment. He unknowingly demonstrates the rupture of his consciousness by highlighting his mental state with his body. Whether subconscious or deliberate, Tolkien's use of the body to illustrate psychological distress became a regular occurrence in his letters. John Rosegrant argues in "Fault Lines Beneath the Crack" that after the war, Tolkien "developed a propensity to express trauma through his body, that this propensity was kindled to much greater strength by war trauma" (109). Tolkien began to view his emotional trauma as bodily impairments that afflicted his physical self. He saw the body as a means to express what his mind could not at the time. Though Tolkien could feel the trauma, his mind could not directly articulate it, so it became physical. The awareness of his physical trauma in his letter to Smith and Wiseman is evidenced even in his privileging of physical over emotional imagery when the two do intermingle. Tolkien's psychological reaction of "something has gone crack" illustrates the loss as both an

emotional and physical tragedy and a blow to his psyche and is evocative of a physical break (*Letters* 10).

Tolkien's contemplation of his psychological state is reminiscent of his state of selfhood after his mother Mabel's death. The "crack" Tolkien mentions is indicative of the trauma he experienced after his mother's death. Speaking of the memory and trauma of Mabel's death decades later in 1972, Tolkien writes in a letter to his son Michael that he sometimes recalls "vainly waving a hand at the sky saying 'it is so empty and cold'" at the age of thirteen (*Letters* 416). Much like his later letter to Smith and Wiseman, Tolkien draws attention to his physical being with the sensation of flailing hands and being uncomfortably cold. His explanations highlight the body's ability to confront the world and its role as a narrative defined by memory. Tolkien similarly speaks of his trauma in each letter, which demonstrates the implication of traumatic body memory and its propensity to reoccur even after extended periods of apparent dormancy. He parallels the two incidents by describing his grief of Gilson's death using similar body-driven language as that which he expresses the death of his mother.

However, Tolkien's development from expressing trauma by describing the body to using the body as the mode of expression illustrates an evolution of expression between the death of his parents to the war. His reactions suggest that Tolkien's traumas become more intensified with each loss. While referring to his body may emphasize the connection between physical and mental trauma, Tolkien's choice to privilege the body illustrates Trigg's idea that the body is a dualistic plane of experience that has access to both material and immaterial experience. Gilson's death shows that trauma further ruptures Tolkien's sense of sense between the mind and body and how the two must be reconciled.

Through the application of Trigg's concept of traumatic body memory to *The Lord of the Rings*, how Tolkien creates Frodo as his "other self" to represent his traumatic past in World War

One is apparent. In the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954, Tolkien writes:

One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now often forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my friends were dead.

(*FotR* xi)

While Tolkien's words are a reminder that growing up during any war is difficult, the way he constructs his response demonstrates the war's effect on his mental state because Tolkien focuses on the experience of war. He highlights trauma and hints that while others may have forgotten the war after nearly three decades, he has not. Mark Heberle explains in "The Shadow of War: Tolkien, Trauma, Childhood, Fantasy" that Tolkien's comment in the foreword contains hints of post-traumatic writing because "he uses indefinite pronouns and passive constructions to generalize rather than particularize what happened to him. Rather than directly describe those effects, Tolkien recalls the deaths of others in the startling final sentence" (129). Tolkien's impersonal language acts as a shield to repress emotion and distance himself from the trauma he experienced so many years ago. In doing so, Tolkien attempts to contain the war to the past. His comment brings to attention a disconnect between his past and present, or more specifically, the presence of a traumatic "other self" and a present self.

Tolkien began writing fantasy during the war as an escape from the reality around him. It provided a means for him to remove himself from the war and, subconsciously, from the "other self" that experienced it. Heberle claims that Tolkien "began to write his way out of the war," during and after, to recover from his trauma (133). By using his writing as an escape from the war, Tolkien can distance himself from the trauma of the war to keep his trauma in the past

and his selfhood intact. The result is in *The Lord of the Rings*, where after two decades, Tolkien separates himself into the present self of the author and the traumatic "other self" of the character Frodo. Tolkien incorporates events from the Great War into *The Lord of the Rings* and, by doing so, associates Frodo's quest with his own experience of war. By projecting his trauma into Frodo, Tolkien can view his trauma as part of a distant past that happened to another person, providing him more agency to write. Thus, Tolkien subconsciously creates Frodo to help bridge the gap between the inaccessible trauma in the past and the self in the present. Tolkien does so by creating in Frodo a character who reflects attributes of himself, so Frodo becomes a fictional representation of Tolkien.

Tolkien uses Frodo to portray his "other self" to articulate his trauma while viewing Frodo as a separate being. Verlyn Flieger comments in "Gilson, Smith, and Baggins" that Tolkien feels "the severance that so permanently and irrevocably divides the dead from the living . . . Tolkien recreated that 'little complete' body in *The Lord of the Rings*, but then deliberately made it go crack again" (92). Flieger is referring to Frodo. She argues that Tolkien seeks to commemorate Gilson by reincarnating him as Frodo, but her analysis does not account for the whole of the TCBS. Though Tolkien writes his infamous "something has gone crack" only after Gilson's death, the nickname of the group, the "Immortal Four," suggests that Tolkien's grief would not have been less with Smith's passing or Wiseman's estrangement (Letters 10). In fact, it may have only grown. Flieger states that Frodo "is not meant to be an 'interesting' personality . . . Frodo has no outstanding skills or talents except perhaps that of 'Friendship to the Nth power'" (91-92). Flieger's argument that Frodo's greatest achievement is friendship reflects Tolkien's own emphasis on friendship. By fictionalizing his trauma in Frodo, Tolkien subconsciously illustrates the extent that the severance of that friendship affected him and how

he attempts to recover his past. Through representing his traumas, Frodo's physical wounds show how Tolkien can articulate his trauma to consolidate his past.

Trigg's concept of traumatic embodiment combined with creative imagination reveals how Tolkien uses his imagination to recreate fictional versions of his traumas in the body of Frodo. The question of Frodo's body reflects Tolkien's question of whether his "body" of the TCBS will survive. Much like the TCBS, Frodo's fate becomes more uncertain with each trauma. Anna Smol claims in "Frodo's Body: Liminality and the Experience of War" that Frodo's body becomes "the territory on which he battles to maintain his physical and psychological integrity. As a liminal figure . . . Frodo struggles to resist the disintegration of other boundaries that shore up his sense of self" (39). Tolkien highlights Frodo's body as the means by which he maintains a sense of self. However, with each trauma, that self is constantly under question and constantly seeking restoration. Each time Frodo appears to restore some of himself, he is broken once more, and each pain becomes a greater battle than the one before. Ironically, the wounds that affect Frodo are not meant to kill him, further hinting at Tolkien's perception that while Frodo's, and by extension his own, traumas are substantial, they are not mortal, and there is the chance he may overcome them. Frodo's body is an essential aspect of each injury he receives because, with each wound, Frodo's fate falls further and further into question. With each physical barrier, Frodo becomes more psychologically broken, much like how Tolkien's psychological trauma must have intensified with the loss of each of his friends.

Tolkien mirrors the persistence and absence of his trauma in the body of Frodo, who is wounded three times throughout the novels. He is stabbed by a Morgul blade, stung by Shelob's stinger, and has a finger bitten off by Gollum. Each of these experiences maims Frodo for the rest of his life, so the pain recurs on the anniversaries he received them. The nature of Frodo's wounds is analogous to Tolkien's psychological injuries and physical illnesses he received during

the war. Six weeks after Gilson's death, Tolkien contracted trench fever that dissipated and returned for the remainder of the war. Rosegrant claims that the trauma of Gilson's death may have triggered a chain of physical illnesses over the next two years, indicating that "Tolkien's physical suffering was in part caused by traumatic emotions expressed via the body" (103). Tolkien's documented recurring physical traumas illustrate the body's primacy in determining selfhood. Though it may be argued that Tolkien's illnesses were simply because of the conditions of war, Rosegrant's research indicates that Tolkien became most sick when he was to be approved for active duty. The timing of his illnesses shows how Tolkien's psychological distress manifests physically. Like Frodo's wounds, Tolkien's physical and psychological trauma disorient him as they continue to recur. By attributing similar traumas to Frodo as himself, Tolkien highlights his own trauma while projecting himself on another, representing the discontinuity of his selfhood.

The disconnection between Frodo's body and mind accentuated in his first two injuries is symbolic of Tolkien's many illnesses during the war. Frodo's first two injuries illustrate how the body acts as a plane of experience where body memory both conceals and reveals itself. Tolkien separates Frodo's psychological and physical acuity, so his body remains in the present to receive the trauma while his mind cannot confront it, so his body memory is concealed from his mind. Though Frodo's wounds are physical, they affect him more psychologically where they can be revealed. When the Witch-King pierces Frodo with a Morgul-blade—a knife only carried by the Witch-King and bears a poison that targets its victim's heart to transform them into a Nazgul—he begins to slip between the physical and psychological realm. Verlyn Flieger notes in "The Body in Question: The Unhealed Wounds of Frodo Baggins," that enduring the wound causes the physical world around him to fade further beyond his perception while the wraith world becomes more apparent. She argues that the result of Frodo's wound is both

psychological and physical, “making the real world appear to his eyes ‘shadowy and dim,’ while allowing the shapes of the Black Riders at the Ford (no longer dream shapes but actual) to be ‘dark and solid’ so that he can see them clearly” (14). The wound from the Morgul-blade places Frodo in a dream-like state, illustrating that Frodo's wound is of both the body and the mind. However, when Frodo is initially injured, his body and mind remain separated. As Frodo slips between the wraith and physical world, his body only feels pain when he mentally returns to the physical world. Likewise, when Frodo is stung by Shelob, he falls into a death-like sleep. In each instance, Frodo is placed in a state where his mind begins to reject his reality, so his body must face the trauma alone. Frodo's struggle symbolizes the body as a vehicle of trauma for and because of the mind. As a result, Frodo wavers in a world in between the material and psychological realm. His consciousness fractures as he wrestles between fading and returning to the material world.

Frodo's psychological circumstance is much like one who fades in and out of sleep during a grave sickness, such as when Tolkien contracted trench fever in October 1916. Tolkien's constant illness beginning in 1916 and lasting periodically until the war's end would undoubtedly have added stress to his body. Tolkien uses his imagination to express his own body memory through Frodo's body. Because of these moments of illness, Tolkien emphasizes Frodo's senses in the trilogy. When Frodo seems to be the most overwhelmed, Tolkien reminds Frodo of the sensations of the world around him. As Frodo faces the Black Riders at the ford and he feels uncontrollable fear, he closes his eyes to feel the wind in his ears, to hear the jingle of the horse's bells, and to feel the cold air on his face (*FotR* 241). Likewise, in the Tower of Cirith Ungol, Frodo does not question what his body feels as he wakes yet cannot believe what he sees. The images he seems to remember are the claws and eyes of the orcs, which provide a sharp contrast to Sam's hobbit body. The features Frodo notices most in his captors are the

primary senses used to navigate the physical world. Tolkien's emphasis on them highlights Frodo's situation by reminding readers of Frodo's physical and psychological frailty.

Frodo's third and final injury parallels Tolkien's psychological trauma of the war the most prevalently. In the climax of *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam arrive at Mt. Doom, where Frodo puts the ring on and becomes invisible. Gollum then attacks him and, during the struggle, bites off Frodo's finger on which the ring is placed and claims the ring for himself. In his brief celebration, Gollum falls over the ledge and destroys the ring. After the struggle, Frodo's wound becomes apparent and, as Sam holds him at the mountain door, Frodo indicates he has no strength or will left to live. Frodo is consumed, physically and psychologically, by his quest. Unlike Frodo's previous injuries, this last wound is not just an affront to his psyche but also directly to his body. Tolkien focuses primarily on how Frodo's psychological state is affected in his first two wounds. However, Tolkien shifts the focus at Frodo's amputation to illustrate how the physical severing of part of Frodo's body directly causes a psychological break. Thus, Tolkien combines Frodo's psychological and physical state in his final injury to show that Frodo is both physically and mentally broken. Frodo's psychological state represents his physical state because his final injury literally and symbolically claims a piece of him. The amputated finger physically symbolizes the trauma that will forever remain part of his mind. For Tolkien, the break in Frodo's psyche is representative of a point of no return. Frodo's final injury, like his others, is not enough to kill him but acts as the point where he deems his trauma too much to manage. Tolkien projects the death of Gilson, and the subsequent loss of Tolkien's friends, in Frodo in the scene to represent a point in Tolkien's life that changes him forever. Through the injury, Tolkien represents the culmination of all of his traumas.

The effects of Frodo's traumatic injuries highlight the persistence of body memory after an event occurs. Smol goes so far as to claim that Frodo "becomes a picture of the 'damaged

man" epitomized in World War One portrayals (56). Smol commonly sees Frodo as the character that embodies many of the symptoms of shell-shock, including "sudden blindness, the loss of other senses, uncontrollable twitching or trembling, recurrent dreams and visions," as well as an aversion to violence and drastic change in demeanor (56). The fact that Frodo experiences lingering effects from his journey on the anniversaries of his wounds is likewise consistent with trauma and illustrates its persistence. Smol's analysis of Frodo as one who endures significant trauma before returning home is evocative of Tolkien's own experience of war. Tolkien experienced the death of his friends and his regiment and continual illness throughout the war. By projecting these traumas onto Frodo, Tolkien shows that each trauma intensifies the next and how some traumas are too great to be healed immediately.

Tolkien represents the discontinuity of Frodo's psyche in his drastic change of character by the end of the trilogy. When Frodo is about to return to the Shire after his quest, he speaks to Gandalf about his trauma. In their conversation, Frodo realizes that his life in the Shire will not be the same because he is too changed. Frodo solemnly declares, "There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?" (*RotK* 967). He realizes that he is not the same hobbit who started the quest, and he likely will never be again. He may go back to his home but not the life he knew. In "The Shell-Shocked Hobbit: The First World War and Tolkien's Trauma of the Ring," Michael Livingston argues that Frodo's inability to find peace is similar to the experience of homecoming World War One soldiers suffering from shell-shock. Livingston further likens Frodo's coming home to that of World War One soldiers, stating, "[l]ike veterans returning to England, Frodo finds that he is a stranger in the land that he fought so long and hard to save" (88). Frodo saved Middle-earth, but in doing so, he sacrificed his selfhood and, therefore, lost his ability to enjoy what he saved. Livingston

further argues that symptoms of shell-shock in returning soldiers could be prolonged between months or years “and that the cause of the condition, not surprisingly, was the experience of a disturbing trauma that led to persisting recollections of that trauma over long periods of time” (83). For Frodo, the experience of this trauma and his recollections is evident in his physical and psychological wounds. His trauma affects him so greatly that he is not the same and cannot find joy in his former life. Frodo's question of where he may rest points to his peace before the quest and the fact that it is no longer apparent in his home. He feels as though he is a stranger.

Frodo's physical injuries that pain him on each anniversary reflect his perilous journey and act as milestones of the quest that highlight his mental distress. These traumas alter Frodo's character, creating a stark contrast between the beginning of the trilogy when he is a cheerful, unassuming hobbit and the quest's end when he becomes sullen, refusing to wear ceremonial weapons to kill his enemy in defense of his home, or to participate in regular events in the Shire. Frodo's traumas continue to persist long past the end of his quest, and he notes the permanency of the changes and questions his ability to truly overcome his injuries through his lament, "I shall not be the same," which echoes Tolkien's assertion of his fractured self (*RotK* 967). The permanence of Frodo's trauma illustrates the fact that the body feels its own history that conceals the trauma within in the reoccurrence of a forgotten past. Frodo's acknowledgment to Sam that his wounds will never "really" heal if he stays in Middle-earth reflect the fracture of his selfhood and is reminiscent of Tolkien's "something has gone crack" (*RotK* 1002; *Letters* 10). Tolkien repeatedly calls attention to Frodo's broken self, which evokes Tolkien's own accumulated traumas. Tolkien portrays his traumas as seemingly too great to heal by portraying Frodo with the same sense of hopelessness that Tolkien conveys in his letter to Smith and Wiseman at Gilson's death.

To heal from his traumas, Tolkien reconciles with his traumatic "other self" through the symbolic death of Frodo. Just as Tolkien projects his trauma through Frodo, he uses the hobbit to convey his healing. By staying in Middle-earth, Frodo's wounds will forever haunt him, and his self will remain broken. He bears no chance of becoming whole because there is no power there that can heal him. That power alone remains with the immortal elves across the sea. The only option for Frodo then is to leave. However, his departure to the Undying Lands of Valinor implies Frodo's death. Frodo is forbidden to return to Middle-earth when he leaves, so his true fate is unknown. What is known can be interpreted from how Tolkien portrays Frodo's final scene in the trilogy where, as he sails, "the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise" (*RotK* 1007). Such an idyllic pastoral scene is evocative of Heaven, with the grey curtain serving as the barrier between life and death. When Frodo crosses the barrier, he no longer inhabits the living world but crosses into the land of the immortals who dwell in Valinor. These beings are elves who possess magic gifted to them from their god-like figures, making them similar to angels who protect the innocent. With this magic, they have the power to restore Frodo's sense of self and, by lessening his pain, make him whole again. As a representation of Tolkien's "other self," Frodo's healing extends to Tolkien through his writing. Frodo fictionally endures Tolkien's trauma from the Great War as Tolkien relives those traumas through his writing. When Frodo symbolically dies at the trilogy's end, his traumas are reduced so Frodo may finally live in peace. Frodo's ability to rest at last symbolizes Tolkien's ability to reconcile with his trauma and find peace of his own. Tolkien's portrayal of Frodo as his traumatic "other self" from the war and the journey Frodo undergoes to the afterlife allows Tolkien to reclaim his whole self.

Tolkien's representation of traumatic embodiment illustrates how Tolkien transforms his childhood psychological trauma from World War One into art. Tolkien represents his trauma through the body of Frodo, who he fictionally represents as his "other self." Tolkien subconsciously embeds Frodo with Tolkien's past traumas from the Great War and the death of his friends, Rob Gilson, G.B. Smith, and Christopher Wiseman. Through traumatic embodiment, Tolkien highlights the body's function as a sensory vessel that may bridge the gap between the world and the mind. As such, the body acts as a physical vessel while connecting the senses and imagination. Tolkien uses his imagination then to symbolize and provide a creative outlet to portray his trauma from the war and heal his traumas. By portraying Frodo as a fictional representation of Tolkien's "other self," Tolkien can not only portray his trauma but also restore his selfhood through his imagination. Tolkien's detachment from his trauma means that while Frodo represents Tolkien's past childhood traumas, Tolkien can remain in the present and view Frodo as someone outside of himself. As his "other self," Frodo symbolizes the discontinuity of Tolkien's self that is split in two and the need to reconcile his past and present selves. Tolkien's fictional portrayal of Frodo as his "other self" that makes the journey toward healing symbolizes his own healing from the trauma of the war and the reconciliation of his selfhood. By restoring Frodo's selfhood then, Tolkien can restore his own selfhood because the two are connected. For Tolkien, creating Frodo may have been the key to his peace after a life of trauma.

Conclusion

“Someone Else Always has to Carry on the Story”: The Persistence of Memory In and After *The Lord of the Rings*

Before officially beginning his quest in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo arrives at Rivendell with the ring. He sees Bilbo for the first time after Bilbo disappeared from their birthday party in Hobbiton seventeen years earlier. As Frodo shows Bilbo the ring, a sudden change envelopes Bilbo. His actions, at first aggressive, quickly turn apologetic as he averts his eyes and exclaims, "I am sorry: sorry you have to come in for this burden: sorry about everything. Don't adventures ever have an end? I suppose not. Someone else always has to carry on the story" (*FotR* 260). Though Bilbo's words appear to only relate to Frodo's burden of the ring, his statement may account for Tolkien's perspective on the motivation behind his trilogy. Tolkien admits in a letter to W.H. Auden in 1955 that he continued to write the trilogy because he gained a sense of "personal satisfaction" from completing it that outweighed his obligation to his publishers and fans to write a sequel (*Letters* 211). Tolkien's sense of personal benefit from writing is evident in the healing of his traumas through *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien creates a fantasy by using his memories to base the trilogy in a sense of realism, so readers connect with the trilogy. Tolkien describes fantasy in "On Fairy-Stories" as "the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds," or the means of creating another world from the already existing primary world (55). Fantasy is created when the mind uses images from the imagination inspired by the natural world and turns them into art, so the imagination manifests in physical form. Tolkien's focus on fantasy as an inspiration from the real world explains how his memories are the basis for his trilogy. When examining *The Lord of the Rings* compared to Tolkien's life, readers understand how Tolkien is subconsciously inspired by and integrates memories of his past to heal from his trauma. When readers understand *The Lord of the Rings* as a window to

Tolkien's trauma, they see how Tolkien constructs his past self to reconnect it with his present self. His example shows readers how he heals from his childhood trauma through his imagination.

The Lord of the Rings, when analyzed through Dylan Trigg's theories of place memory and traumatic embodiment, reveals how the imagination is necessary for not only preserving memory but also healing trauma. Trigg emphasizes that imagination is necessary for memory because imagination determines how a person experiences their past. Identity relies on how the past is remembered and how memories are reconstructed in the mind, meaning memory and imagination uphold the past together. Place memory illustrates how a time and place are so sedimented in the mind that place becomes part of a lived past and holds the memory's significance. Memory and imagination overlap as the past and present blend, blurring the boundary between imagination and memory. The imagination then becomes necessary in preserving the past, especially as memories decay over time. Traumatic embodiment illustrates how trauma is stored in the body and involuntarily resurfaces through the imagination. In traumatic embodiment, memory is held within a person's body, illustrating the body's inability to escape trauma as the mind escapes through the imagination by conceiving of themselves as another person.

Trigg's theories make apparent that as Tolkien reaches to the past through memory, his imagination propels him toward the future. Trigg shows that imagination is the true driving force of memory. Memory is the core of identity because recollections shape individuals to form an embodied experience. Imagination is necessary for memory to function because recollections of the past are constantly decaying or changing. The influence of memory in Tolkien's writing illustrates the inescapability of the past and the ever-constant presence of the imagination that transforms memory. By transforming his memories in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien uses his

imagination to preserve and revive his memories while healing from his childhood traumas. Trigg's theories illustrate how Tolkien combines his memory and imagination in *The Lord of the Rings* to preserve the past while simultaneously moving forward. By fictionalizing his memories, Tolkien's imagination gives him control of his memories and allows him to transform his memories into characters and scenes that he may change. In other words, he gains the agency to reimagine his past by creating something new that will go on into the future. These recreations enable Tolkien's self-healing. The past may have a hold on Tolkien through his memory, but his imagination allows him to overcome his past through the art of creation.

Readers who know Tolkien's biography and understand Dylan Trigg's concepts of place memory and traumatic embodiment understand how Tolkien reconstructs his memories to transform and heal his trauma. Tolkien fictionalizes and mythologizes his memories of his parents through the portrayal of place memory. Tolkien represents his memory of Arthur by creating the absent father archetypes with myths of their own. Each myth about the absent father is different. Its many iterations, especially Frodo's father Drogo, represent how Tolkien uses his imagination to reconstruct the memory of his father in different forms. By creating the absent father, Tolkien represents their distant relationship because Tolkien associates Arthur with absence more than a specific place. Arthur's absence is what compels Tolkien to create absent fathers with their own legendary past. By not knowing his father, Tolkien can fictionalize his memory of Arthur in *The Lord of the Rings* repeatedly to represent him differently.

Comparatively, Tolkien's vivid memories of his mother Mabel and her association with nature mean that he can represent her memory as a more concrete figure. By connecting his mother with nature, Tolkien places his memory of his mother in a particular time and place in his life. The representations of Tolkien's mother in the trilogy provide a space for Tolkien to represent himself before and after Mabel's death. Her portrayal represents Tolkien's life before

Mabel's death in terms of both the environment Tolkien grew up in and his sense of self when he is whole. He attempts to preserve his memory of her so that he may return to that past by fictionalizing his mother and the place with which he connects her. Through place memory, it becomes apparent that Tolkien uses his imagination to preserve and revive his memories of his parents in the places he remembers them most.

Tolkien represents the persistence of psychological trauma through the portrayal of traumatic embodiment. Tolkien's fictionalized self-character in Frodo allows him to subconsciously represent his traumatic "other self" who endures trauma without too literal of an attachment to the story. The existence of an "other self" in the trilogy highlights the fracture in Tolkien's psyche expanded by the loss of his friends during World War One. By representing his younger projected self in Frodo, Tolkien bridges the gap between his "other self," who the story portrays as enduring trauma, and his present self who is older, and writing the story and reflecting on the past. The similarities between Frodo and Tolkien suggests a connection between the figurative and literal self that points to retrospective truth about Tolkien's trauma as he writes. Thus, Tolkien creates an invented self through his imagination that preserves his childhood memories from before the war.

Tolkien's use of imagination and memory in *The Lord of the Rings* allows him to achieve recovery, escape, and consolation for himself. Tolkien achieves recovery by using his imagination to revive and transform his past while calling attention to how his past has affected his present. The memories he reconstructs in the trilogy call attention to his past and his present. When Tolkien mythologizes his parents and projects his "other self" onto Frodo by reconstructing his memories, he subconsciously brings attention to the absences in his life. More importantly, Tolkien's transformation of his memories renews them, signifying a gradual acceptance of his trauma. Tolkien recognizes a part of his personal history he otherwise could

not consciously access in his life. The trilogy becomes the window by which Tolkien may view his trauma through preserving his memories. The trilogy contains elements of his life, but at the same time, the story is new. He must use his imagination to fill in the gaps to fictionalize his memory. Through his imagination, Tolkien gives new life to the memories of his parents and friends to reclaim his memory of them. Tolkien prevents the memory of his parents and friends from fading through time and preserves what he knows to be true of them. Tolkien achieves escapism by reviving these memories to escape into his fantasy and relive his past while remaining in his present. He transports himself into *The Lord of the Rings* to fill the void left by his childhood traumas to heal from those experiences. When Tolkien incorporates his traumas into *The Lord of the Rings*, he renews the experiences to give them new meaning and new life. He alters the past via the imagination, which renews the memory through creative imagination.

Tolkien achieves consolation in writing about his childhood traumas and connecting to his "other self" in Frodo and his symbolic fate. Tolkien reconstructs and fictionalizes his past to reclaim the experience of his trauma. Though Frodo's departure to the Undying Lands seems to be a dismal ending, it represents Tolkien's consolation and healing from his childhood traumas. Rather than seeing Frodo's death as the disappearance of Tolkien's trauma, readers should view his leaving as Tolkien's reconciliation between his past and present. Tolkien writes that Frodo leaves Middle-earth with Galadriel and Bilbo. Both these characters represent Tolkien's memories and the trauma of his parent's deaths. Through the symbolic conjoined deaths of Galadriel, Bilbo, and Frodo, Tolkien symbolizes an acceptance of his childhood traumas. He symbolically connects his traumas to heal from them at the same time. Tolkien represents in these deaths how he makes sense of his experiences. By using his imagination, he articulates his childhood traumas in an otherwise too difficult way and enacts the very function of consolation by inadvertently fulfilling his desire for healing. By combining his imagination and memory,

Tolkien demonstrates the imagination's influence on the present and its ability to transform the past. Tolkien fictionalizes his childhood traumas to restore his sense of self and heal. Only through articulating his experiences, albeit indirectly, is Tolkien able to find closure and heal from his past. He transports himself into *The Lord of the Rings* to fill the void left by his trauma and heal from those experiences, which pushes him toward the future.

Tolkien connects himself and readers through the trilogy by turning his memory into art. *The Lord of the Rings* provides Tolkien with the means to heal from his trauma, which he does while simultaneously conveying that process to his readers. By transforming his memory, the trilogy becomes the vehicle by which Tolkien may accept his trauma. This understanding is shared with readers as they vicariously experience Tolkien's trauma and process of healing as they read *The Lord of the Rings*. Throughout the trilogy, Tolkien subjects his readers to his childhood traumas and memories. Readers encounter the absent fathers, witness the departure and diminishment of Galadriel and her home, and bear with Frodo as he endures the physical and psychological traumas of a war-stricken soldier. Then, when readers expect a reprieve, they watch Frodo struggle with the psychological repercussions of his quest and must journey with him as he symbolically dies to heal. Thus, readers are drawn through the trilogy, experiencing Tolkien's traumas as they do so. As a result, readers experience recovery, escape, and consolation as Tolkien does because experiencing his memories of his trauma causes them to evaluate their own memories and traumas and how they are affected by them. By enduring Tolkien's traumatic process, readers understand that although Tolkien writes for his own satisfaction, he shows that they too may heal from their own traumas.

How Tolkien uses fantasy to convey his trauma allows readers to understand some of his motives for writing *The Lord of the Rings*. While Tolkien claims there is a need for mythology for England, he hints at a more personal, promissory need for himself and his adolescent friends.

From a young age, Tolkien and his friends of the TCBS dreamed of achieving greatness and making themselves immortal through their work. However, the death of Gilson and Smith caused Tolkien to question the group's destiny of changing the world. Losing Smith and Gilson was a severe blow to Tolkien, who expressed mixed feelings between commemorating his friends and lamenting about the group's dissolution. In a letter to Smith after Gilson's death in August 1916, Tolkien ponders the future of the "Immortal Four," concluding, "[o]f course the TCBS may have been all we dreamt – and its work, in the end, be done by three or two or one survivors and the part of the others be trusted by God to that of the inspiration which we do know we all got and get from one another. To this I now pin my hopes" (*Letters* 10). Tolkien's statement symbolizes the commitment vowed by all members of the TCBS to achieve their own renown, but it hints at a new promise made by Tolkien as well. Tolkien states that the work of the group will be done regardless of how many survive. He claims that even if only one of the "Immortal Four" is alive by the end of the war, it is their responsibility to continue the group's work. In Tolkien's mind, the inspiration from each member is enough to carry into each other's work, so whoever achieves greatness does so for the entire group.

Tolkien's decision to carry on the legacy of the "Immortal Four" illustrates the same commitment and solemn dedication as Bilbo's realization, "Someone else always has to carry on the story" (*FotR* 260). Bilbo's statement illustrates the persistence of story and memory and the infinite cycle of storytelling involved in fantasy. Tolkien demonstrates this cycle in the passing of the ring and stories from Bilbo to Frodo and finally to Sam. Bilbo is the bearer of the ring before Frodo begins his quest. Bilbo finds the ring on his journey and, once he returns home, begins to write his story. Once the ring passes to Frodo, another story begins. The cycle continues when Sam must carry the ring for a short time and continue the story that Bilbo began. Each character inherits the story from the previous character as each story begins, ends, or begins again.

Tolkien parallels this continuation of the story in the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*. The trilogy begins with Bilbo at his home, Bag End, in Hobbiton and gradually progresses into Frodo's quest before concluding with Sam back home at Bag End. Once Bilbo records and reaches the end of his story, he passes his book on to Frodo so he may recite his quest before, in turn, handing the parchment down to Sam, whose story never receives an ending. Tolkien does not give a definitive end to the cycle, implying that there may never be an end and that the story passes from one to another as each ends and begins.

Each character's story passes down in an infinite cycle, which bears significance in the meaning of *The Lord of the Rings*. Bilbo's statement and the cycle it evokes show the persistence of memory, including traumatic memory. Tolkien's proclamation through Bilbo, "Someone else always has to carry on the story," illustrates not just Bilbo's passing of stories, but also Tolkien's (*FotR* 260). Bilbo is an old hobbit whose time for adventure is over. He is quietly settled in a life of relaxation and has left adventure to younger and more abled beings such as Frodo. By retiring, Bilbo passes on the story. His is complete and now someone new must write their chapter. The same is true of Tolkien's trilogy. At first glance, *The Lord of the Rings* consists of small tales that contribute to one larger story. However, when readers consider the trilogy as a representation of Tolkien's trauma and memories, they realize that *The Lord of the Rings* is not one story made of smaller tales but one small tale representing a larger story. The tale comes full circle to end on Sam's doorstep, symbolizing that, though *The Lord of the Rings* is finished and Tolkien's story is over, the larger story is not, just as Sam's story is not done. By leaving the tale unended, Tolkien allows readers to see how their own story is unfinished.

Though Smith and Gilson had died, Tolkien's promise to continue the group's work compelled him to work towards the greatness they strove to achieve. Bilbo's words serve as a reminder that the work of the author is never-ending. If Tolkien were not to continue the work

of the "Immortal Four," the responsibility would fall to someone else. Though Tolkien is gone now, the work does not cease. The legacy is now in the hands of readers. However, Tolkien's legacy does not mean readers must become authors and write fantasy to continue the story. If literally carrying on the work of his friends was the only way to continue their legacy, Tolkien would have become a musician and an architect in addition to an author and a teacher. Readers must find their way of achieving greatness, of becoming immortal, so to speak. As Tolkien wrote to his friend Sir Unwin in 1947, "It [*The Lord of the Rings*] is written in my life-blood, such as that is, thick or thin; and I can no other" (*Letters* 122). In some cases, no matter how that story manifests, carrying on the story is what a person is born to do. By carrying on the legacy of his friends, Tolkien continues the story he inherited from them in his own way. Now that Tolkien is gone, the task remains for readers to continue the cycle and determine how their stories end.

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