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LITERATURE

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The Shadow of the Past. *The Lord of the Rings* and the Gothic Novel

Abstract. The present paper is devoted to the question of the past in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in reference to the Gothic Novel and the way it approaches this subject. As an introduction I provide some background as to the definition and origins of both gothic and fantasy genres. I want to prove that they share many similarities and point out the connections between them. In the main part of my paper I present the creation of the past in the Gothic Novel and in *The Lord of the Rings*, showing that the past plays a very important role on both extratextual – as an inspiration for a writer – and intratextual levels – as a source of nostalgia, fascination and fear. This article was based on my bachelor's thesis *Elements of the Gothic convention in The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien.*

Keywords: Tolkien, Walpole, Gothic novel, fantasy, past, nostalgia

The Gothic convention in fiction

The eighteenth century in Europe was the era of the Enlightenment, an intellectual movement characterised by the rule of reason that stood in "opposition to sensation, feeling, desire"(Encyclopaedia Britannica). In literature these were the times that witnessed the rise of the realistic novel and the development of poetry limited by numerous rules of form and structure. However, there were some hidden forces within the dominant ideology, the so–called pre-Romantic movement that, by criticising rationalism and challenging the fixed rules of the Enlightenment, turned to novelty, individuality and imagination. One of the signs of these upcoming changes was the Gothic novel (Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk 2014, 15–23).

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Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto. A Gothic Story* (1765) is generally recognized as the first Gothic novel; however, Walpole cannot be recognized as the sole founder of the genre. The Gothic convention derives from literary genres developed in preceding centuries in which Gothic elements may be found, such as the violence of Elizabethan drama, the supernatural elements in legends and ballads, pagan Nordic and Celtic mythology, exoticism in oriental and eastern tales, and chivalric romances (Karl 1974, 236–237). Walpole, however, was the one who brought together the various elements and tendencies that were later identified as typical Gothic features.

In the Preface to the 1765 edition of *Otranto*, Walpole created the general rule for the Gothic convention, which is a blend of the aspects of ancient romance (the marvellous) with the modern novel (the realistic depiction of the characters.) A typical Gothic author is likely to conceal their identity or pretend to be a translator of an ancient manuscript found in mysterious circumstances. Action is set in medieval times, preferably in a European Catholic country. The atmosphere of mystery and terror is created by the setting: a distant, inaccessible and dark location of the ruins, abbeys, crypts, caves or forests; by weather conditions like fog, wind, thunderstorm; by all kinds of terrible events such as murders, rapes, incest, and conspiracy; and finally, by many kinds of supernatural phenomena ranging from bleeding portraits to demons. The characters involved in the Gothic plot include the villain, the damsel in distress, and a noble hero. Their feelings and emotions are overwhelmingly extreme, likely to be expressed in passionate speeches. The most popular motifs for the convention are dreams, omens, prophecies, revenge and madness (Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk 2014, 19–22).[1]

In Romanticism, there was a significant change in the form of the Gothic genre. The focus was put on the individual in relation to society. The feelings and motives of the villain were analysed, whereby the figure became more ambiguous. New types of heroes developed, inspired by such archetypical figures as Prometheus or Satan. The mysterious and dark scenery turned into a reflection of the inner emotional condition of the hero. The most recognizable author of the Gothic novel of the era is probably Mary Shelley (1797 – 1851), the author of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). Other writers who contributed to the development of the Gothic convention in Romanticism were, for

[1] Following *The Castle of Otranto*'s great popularity, many writers started to follow the its pattern and transformed it, contributing thereby to the development of the genre. In 1778 Clara Reeve published *The Old English Baron. A Gothic Story,* "a literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*" (Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk 2014, 23). She condemned Walpole's extensive use of the supernatural, claiming that this device should be used with moderation (Cooke 1951, 429). One of the most important supporters of that approach was Ann Radcliffe (*The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*), who developed the technique of the "explained supernatural" (Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk 2014, 24). In response to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Matthew Gregory Lewis wrote *The Monk. A Romance* (1796). In his work he incorporates many supernatural phenomena (mainly ghosts and demons), provides the reader with very naturalistic descriptions of violence, murders, death, rapes and corpses, and evinces strong anti-Catholicism tendencies (Sinko 1974, X).

instance, John Keats (1795–1821), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), George Gordon Lord Byron (1788–1824), and Charles R. Maturin (1782–1824) (Ibid., 28–35).

The nineteenth century witnessed a decline in the popularity of the Gothic novel as a distinct genre. However, Gothic elements may be found in Victorian prose works, for example, in the works of Emily Brontë, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker. In the twentieth century the Gothic novel disappeared as a distinct genre almost entirely; however, gothic motifs and themes can be found in many different literary genres, for instance, in fantasy (Ibid., 28–37).

The literary genre of fantasy

The Middle English word *fantasye* was used to refer to the "strange and bizarre notions that had no basis in everyday experience" (Stableford 2009, xxxviii). Interestingly, the word carried pejorative implications: fantasy tended to be regarded as "self-indulgent folly," whether it was in the physiological or the literary aspect (Ibid.). At present, there is no consensus among the critics as to the legitimate, exhaustive definition of fantasy as a genre, as all the proposed characterizations seem be incomplete, arbitrary, or contradictory.

In his book *Fantasy. Ewolucja Gatunku*, Trębicki (2009) considers the creation of the exomimetic (imaginary and fully dissident) world as the main principle and essential feature of the genre. He stresses the importance of the authentication of the world by inventing rules that would make it fully autonomous, yet logical and consistent. Apart from being set in a secondary world, fantasy is characterised by the presence of some determining elements, three of which Trębicki (2009, 10) considers to be the most important: the presence of magic and the marvellous and its determining function in the plot; placing the action in quasi-medieval civilisation; and the telltale motifs of sword & sorcery: a quest, the initiation, and the primeval battle between good and evil.

The presence of the elements of fantasy in literature reaches back to the preliterate culture of storytelling. Myths, legends and fairy tales entered the literary field when they were written down after many years of being orally passed down from generation to generation. They gave rise to such works as Homeric epics, Aesop's fables, old Germanic myths, Icelandic sagas, *Beowulf* in Old English, or the Arthurian legends. We can retrace the presence of the fantasy elements in literature and find them in chivalric romances, Elizabethan drama, traveller's tales, the Gothic novel, and the works of romantic authors (Stableford 2009, xiv-xxiv, xxxviii).

However, even though fantasy elements had appeared from literature for ages, they only accompanied other genres. It took a long time for the distinct genre to develop gradually to the form it has today. Many critics claim that the founding father of the genre was William Morris (1834–1896), who was the first writer to fully abandon the realistic world and create "the romantic quest story laid in an imaginary medieval worldscape" full of supernatural events and magic, establishing thereby the connection

of the genre with the chivalric romance (Trębicki 2009, 28). There were many authors exploring the motif of the secondary world, and contributing to the genre; however, according to Trębicki, the most important are Lord Dunsany (1878–1958), Robert E. Howard (1906–1936) and Eric Rücker (1882–1945) (33, 41, 50). The breakthrough in the development of the fantasy genre occurred in 1954–1956, with the publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, which is perceived to be the first fully exomimetic and episodic fantasy novel.

The erudite character of the work and its place in the fantasy genre remained unnoticed by the early critics of Tolkien's work (Majkowski 2013, 114), as the focus was put on assessing the genre of the work[2] and its value and relevance to human life (Reilly 1971, 191). Regardless of the opinions on the practical value of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's work constitutes a capstone in an attempt of the fantasy writers to create a fully autonomous and consistent secondary world. It introduced to the genre many new elements and re-established its connection with the chivalric romance, fairy tale, mythology, religion and epic. With the tremendous success of *The Lord of the Rings,* the fantasy started to achieve a growing popularity among readers, critics and authors alike, causing the further revolution of the convention (Trębicki 2009, 54).

The parallelisms between the Gothic novel and fantasy can be found in the history of both genres and the elements of a represented world. Both Gothic novel and fantasy started with a text which acquired the status of a generic model, namely Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* for the Gothic novel, and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* for the fantasy genre (Groom 2012, 70–71; Trębicki 2009, 54), and that soon inspired other writers to develop and enrich the convention. Both authors created an illusion that their works were translations of ancient literary texts. Walpole claimed to find an old manuscript "in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the North of England" (Walpole 1769, V). Tolkien, instead, explained that his book was a translation of the Red Book of Westmarch, the chronicle of the Middle-earth (Tolkien 1981, 17). Finally, the creation of both works was inspired by a dream (Groom 2012, 70–71; Colbert 2003, 69–70).

There are more parallelisms to be found between the two genres. They are concerned, to a large extent, with the elements of the marvellous, including exotic and oriental elements, and the supernatural, with motifs such as revenge, dreams and omens, and ancient prophecy, conventions, and characters. Finally, both genres were at first regarded as inferior to other genres, and their names carried pejorative implications (Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk 2014, 15; Stableford 2009, xxxviii).

The influence of the past in the Gothic novel plays a significant role in a creation of a genre on both intratextual and extratextual level. Not only did the past serve as a source of inspiration for writers, but it also became an important element of the plot

[2] According to Reilly, it was considered to be "the Heroic Quest," "a philological game," "a heroic romance," "traditional epic," and "folk-tale, fiction and saga" or "the last masterpiece of the Middle Ages" (Reilly 1971, 193).

– it constructs the setting of the deteriorated world imbued in ancient history (Groom 2012, 8), and it is the source of terror and haunting (Botting 2007, 32, 124). Similarly, in the fantasy genre secondary worlds are made realistic by creating a history and mythology behind them, and the plots are determined by the past that holds the motives for the characters and sources of further affairs. Thus, in both genres the past constitutes a key aspect, as it structures the form of the represented world and the plot.

Although there is no direct evidence that Tolkien drew inspiration from the Gothic, some critics claim that the popularity of the Gothic novel and Tolkien's profession made it impossible for the author to not be familiar with the genre and be inspired by it (Rayan 2013, 107–121). In this paper, I intend to focus on the creation of the past in the Gothic novel and *The Lord of the Ring* so as to prove that Tolkien's novel shares a lot of resemblances with the Gothic novel in its treatment of this aspect. Thus, I am going to present how the treatment of time and the past influenced those two genres on both extratextual and intratextual levels.

Extratextual

The middle of the eighteenth century witnessed a growth of interest in medieval architecture, literary genres and folklore, aiming at reviving the heritage of the past and restoring the legacy of forgotten authors. Horace Walpole, apart from being a writer, was primarily a historian, collector of antiquarian objects, and a Middle Ages enthusiast, who devoted his life to the renovation of his villa, Strawberry Hills, and decorating it in a Gothic style. The fascination of the Gothic authors had a huge influence on the surfacing and the final form of the whole genre as the authors derived inspiration from the history and works of preceding epochs. In turn, Tolkien's fascination with British history and literature is reflected by the numerous references to many different texts of culture and conventions he employs in his work (Groom 2012, 70–79; Majkowski 2013, 114–162).

The Lord of the Rings evinces very strong fairy-tale influences in the characters, motifs, and the world creation. Tolkien himself would probably assess his work as a fairy tale in the sense presented in his essay *On Fairy Stories,* in which he describes a fairy-tale as a story that touches on Faerie, the Perilous Realm "and the air that blows in that country"(Tolkien 1947, 1–2). The magical universe of Tolkien's work bears a lot of resemblance to a fairy-tale one – it is inhabited by all kinds of supernatural creatures and ruled by mysticism and magic. There is a strong and clear division between good and evil that is represented by traditional images and metaphors such as beauty, light, up for good and ugly, dark, night and down for evil. Moreover, Tolkien employs many fairy-tale motifs, such as a prince in a peasant's garb, who tries to win the heart of his beloved lady of noble origin, a king that heals people by touching them, and the magic door that can be opened only with a passphrase (Zgorzelski 1975, 52).

However, apart from the fairy-tale conventions, Tolkien includes numerous references to many different texts of culture: mythology, legends, religion, culture, rituals, history and different literary texts ranging from ancient texts and chivalric romance to memoirs (Swift, Dafoe) and realistic prose (Majkowski 2012, 123). Tolkien's work employs various aspects of chivalric romance, which are made evident in the presence of the mediaeval feudal system in Middle Earth and corresponding technological development, the background of some of the characters, especially those of noble origins such as Galadriel or Elrond, as well as the motif of a quest and the elements of courtly love in the relationship between Aragorn and Arwen. Another important extratextual element is the epic convention, exemplified by the motif of a battle between the forces of light and darkness on a cosmological scale, which is to decide the fate of the whole universe. Many characters and places in Middle-Earth were inspired by historical characters; the Rohhirim, for instance, resemble Anglo-Saxons. This analogy is enhanced by Old English names and the symbol of the Rohhirim – a white horse on a green field. This is a reference to the White Horse of Uffington, the prehistoric hill figure located in England (Zgorzelski 1975, 54–59; Majkowski 2012, 131–135, 146–155).

Finally, Tolkien's work consists of a mixture of motifs taken from different mythological and religious systems; for instance the motif of a descent to the underworld as a purification process may be found not only in mythology but also in Christianity. The downfall of the great island of Númenor is a repetition of the myth of Atlantis. Many godlike creatures of Tolkien's world seem to be inspired by Nordic and Celtic gods and goddesses. Zgorzelski also points at the biblical symbolism in the numbers and prophecies (54–55).[3]

Intratextual

According to Groom, the early Gothic novel mood can be described as a "mediaeval [one] infused with ancient spirits," as this genre is usually set in mediaeval times and has "muted yet insistent supernaturalism" expressed in the setting and plot (Groom 2012, 81). Tolkien adopts the same kind of setting in *The Lord of the Rings,* where the world of pseudo-mediaeval reality is, in fact, defined by its ancient past: the time span of the book covers only about twenty out of nine thousand years of the elaborate, detailed history of the Middle-earth created by Tolkien (Zgorzelski 1975, 57).[4]

Indeed, the pseudo-mediaeval reality of *The Lord of the Rings* is full of dim echoes of the ancient past, the old glorious days remembered and praised by many of the inhabitants of the Middle-earth. The past haunts the characters' thoughts and influences their

[3] All these references are described in detail in many publications devoted to Tolkien's work e.g. in Majkowski 2013, 114–162.

[4] This "history" may be found in the appendices or in the books edited and published by his son Christopher.

actions. On their journey, the Fellowship constantly encounters the relicts of the past, as they travel through long–forgotten countries, the ruins of old cities, fortresses and watchtowers, forests and rivers that once witnessed important historical events. In their dialogues they constantly refer to legends, they sing or recite old ballads and poems, and they narrate stories whenever there is an opportunity. "As night f[alls] and the light of the fire beg[ins] to shine out brightly" they listen to the "histories and legends of long ago, of Elves and Men and the good and evil deeds of the Elder Days" (I, 256). Those numerous references create the striking impression of the depth of time, which makes the character seem to be moving on the surface of the history like little "specks of dust."

There is a constant presence of the relicts of the past in the Gothic novel. Their dilapidated condition is an indication of the deterioration of the world, which, deprived of all optimism, slides into melancholy, anxiety and horror, and changes in the "shadowy world of ruins and twilit scenery" (Howells 2013, 5). The shadow and darkness threatening the civilization of light, reason and order is "among the foremost characteristics of Gothic works" (Botting 2007, 32).

The great historical perspective provided by Tolkien allows us to observe the fall of the world of Middle-earth during the nine-thousand-year time span. The history of Tolkien's universe consists of a number of repeating cycles, each beginning with the false assumption, made by given epoch's representatives, that Evil was ultimately defeated. This, as a matter of fact, allows Evil to be reborn. Each time Evil is defeated, it may reappear as being weaker; however, the powers of Good also dwindle. As a result, over its long history, the world is continually decaying, sliding into greyness and mediocrity, with each cycle losing a part of its former glory (Majkowski 2013, 167).

The end of the Third Age Middle-earth, depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*, is the world of shadows, a poor reflection of its glorious past. Civilization is declining, since, as a result of numerous battles with evil forces, once noble races such as the people of Gondor, the Dúnedain, and Elves have lost much of their knowledge and power. "They [the people living in Gondor] were reckoned men of Gondor, yet their blood was mingled, and there were short and swarthy folk among them whose sires came more from the forgotten men who housed in the shadow of the hills in the Dark Years ere the coming of the kings" (III,19). It is also the time when Sauron, the embodiment of Evil, returns to the Middle-earth and begins to regain his lost power, which poses supreme danger to the whole world. The most powerful of the wizards, Saruman, betrays the powers of good, and turns his residence, Isengard, a valley that "once (...) had been green and filled with avenues, and groves of fruitful trees, watered by streams that flowed from the mountains to a lake" (II,197), into a fortress.

In fact, the past is the source of the deterioration of the world and the problems the characters have to face, as "those in the past with an opportunity to prevent current problems failed" (Garbowski 2000, 111). The first owner of the Ring, Isildur, could have destroyed it, but instead he chose to keep it. The Wizards failed to notice Saruman's betrayal, and because of a series of wrong decisions, they did not manage to prevent Sauron from rising.

The deterioration of the world in the Gothic novel is a reflection of the anxieties and traumas of the present. According to Zlosnik, Tolkien, just like in the Gothic convention, in the prospect of "Shadow" engulfing the Middle-earth expresses his anxiety about the "shrinking world in which there are no hiding places, not only from the ravages of war but also from the evil effects of corrupt power" (118).

As Howells explains, the breakdown of the stability of the external world has its consequences in a change of the private, internal world of an individual. In the falling world, nothing is constant or safe, as even a familiar space can be threatened by the forces of evil and "suddenly transformed into nightmare," "where the stone walls are no longer solid, but full of secret doorways and sliding panels, and the passages in the castle are transformed into endless labyrinths" (26). What individuals see is first the gradual loss of stability of their own world, and an upcoming danger they find too powerful to counter. In Tolkien's narratives it first comes as echoes of certain "strange things happening in the world outside" (I, 68):

> Elves, who seldom walked in the Shire, could now be seen passing westward through the woods in the evening, passing and not returning; but they were leaving Middle-earth and were no longer concerned with its troubles. There were, however, dwarves on the road in unusual numbers. (...) They were *troubled*, and some *spoke in whispers* of the Enemy and of the Land of Mordor. That name the hobbits only knew in *legends of the dark past*, like a *shadow in the background* of their memories; but it was *ominous* and *disquieting*. (I,68) (emphasis added)

When Frodo, the key character, starts his dangerous quest, he exposes himself to constant peril, which makes him question everything he considered stable in the old order of the world. He and his travelling companions develop a kind of a persecution mania: they feel as if they had "enemies all round" (I, 235). Even when they sleep in the safe house of their most powerful friend, Tom Bombadil, they have nightmares. Pippin dreams that their room changes into a trap, and its walls into the inside of a willow tree trying to consume him.

History and the past play a very important part as the sources of terror in the Gothic: bad memories or supernatural forces haunting the characters often have their origin in past criminal horrors or concealed family secrets (Botting 2007, 124). The evil in *The Lord of the Rings* also has a very strong connection with the past, since its presence originates from terrible events from a distant past. The haunting aspect of the past in *The Lord of the Rings* adopts a physical form of monstrous and ghostly figures the Gothic abounds with. Sauron, the Dark Lord, adopts the figure of the red, burning Eye on the top of Barad-dûr, the fortress of Mordor, which keeps restless watch over Middle-earth. The characters constantly feel that the Eye seems "to stare at them" (III,318), regardless of their distance and location. It would appear even in their dreams or visions:

> But suddenly the Mirror went altogether dark, as dark as if a hole had been opened in the world of sight... In the abyss there appeared a single Eye that slowly grew, until it filled nearly

> all the Mirror. So terrible was it that Frodo stood rooted, unable to cry out or to withdraw his gaze. The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat's, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing. (I,472)

Other enemies that haunt and torment the characters during their journey are the Black Riders, a.k.a. the Ringwraiths or Nazg**û**ls. They were once great kings of man who had been given the Rings of Power. Over time, the terrible mental connection with the Dark Lord and the One Ring enslaved the kings and left them spectral. However, in order to evoke fear Nazg**û**ls adopted the physical form of tall men riding black horses. As the narrator describes one of them, he was "wrapped in a great black cloak and hood, so that only his boots in the high stirrups showed below; his face was shadowed and invisible" (I,108–109). The fate of the Ringwraiths' victims is worse than death: the Ringwraiths "will bear thee away to the houses of lamentation, beyond all darkness, where thy flesh shall be devoured, and thy shrivelled mind be left naked to the Lidless Eye" (III,136).

Furthermore, in the Middle-earth "there are older and fouler things (...) in the deep places of the world" (I,402) – the relicts of dark epochs, the offspring of the monstrous creatures of old days hidden in the darkness of time, sleeping under the mountains, who were "there before Sauron, and before the first stone of Barad-dûr" (II,418). Among them were Balrogs, demons in a burning body, the Watcher in the Water, a mysterious beast with many tentacles, watching the entrance to the Mines of Moria, Fell creatures, the "shadow" that "descended like a falling cloud" (III,135), Wargs and Orks bred by Sauron, and monstrous spiders which remained in Middle-earth as the offspring of the terrible creatures of the Dark Years.

Finally, even though the past in the Gothic convention may be the source of the supernatural haunting of the characters, "Gothic novels seem to sustain a nostalgic relish for a lost era of romance and adventure" (Botting 2007, 5), and "a nostalgic appeal to a long-dead world, a disappeared past imagined as noble, strong and purposeful" (Ibid., 153). In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings,* the Elder Days, the era of heroic deeds, noble races and great knowledge, are constantly referred to with a feeling of nostalgia. In numerous conversations the characters refer to old legends and history, sometimes directly, but more often such references are hidden between the lines and only with some knowledge of Tolkien's legendarium can one recognize them. In fact, every historical place the characters pass is described by one of them, and a corresponding legend is evoked:

> Here is Nimrodel! ' said Legolas. 'Of this stream the Silvan Elves made many songs long ago, and still we sing them in the North, remembering the rainbow on its falls, and the golden flowers that floated in its foam. All is dark now and the Bridge of Nimrodel is broken down. I will bathe my feet, for it is said that the water is healing to the weary. (I,439–440)

In the Middle Earth the order of the past prevailed unchanged in places that can withstand the unstoppable flow of time and serve as a link with the Elder Days (Maj-

kowski 2013, 138). Those places where the past is still present and which belong to a different order of things are heavenly places where the glory of the Elder Days remained. The most prominent example of the place reflecting the alluring and fascinating aspect is the forest of Lothlórien, the realm of the Elves:

> As soon as he set foot upon the far bank of Silverlode a *strange feeling* had come upon him, and it deepened as he walked on into the Naith: it seemed to him that he 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. In Rivendell there was memory of ancient things; in Lórien the ancient things still lived on in the waking world. Evil had been seen and heard there, sorrow had been known; the Elves feared and distrusted the world outside: wolves were howling on the wood's borders: but on the land of Lórien *no shadow lay*.' (I,453) (emphasis added)

The glory of the Elder Days has remained in this place and it is shared by every guest, who can find there a safe haven from the toils of the journey, the dangers of the outside world, and the flow of time that remains unnoticed during their rest there.

Conclusion

Placing the action in the imaginary world allows Tolkien to make his statements about reality more forceful (Reilly 1971, 198). As there are many interpretations of the message of *The Lord of the* Rings, some critics claim that Tolkien's work is "above all else a moral construct" (Ibid., 197). Many of the suggested moral messages are in fact closely connected with the construction of time and its Gothic features. According to Zgorzelski, Tolkien's book is about the transience and the fall of the world, as it is brimful of the nostalgia and grief for the passing epoch, and, more importantly, the way the past influences the present and the pressure it exerts on reality (61). The past is not only present in its endless relicts but it is also needed to solve the problems of the present, as both danger and solution lie in the past. The characters search for solutions in the past – in history, tradition and literature, as the patterns provided there are constantly repeating.

The past in *The Lord of the Rings* must therefore be treated reasonably. On the one hand, it cannot be forgotten or neglected; however, on the other, it cannot be sanctified. Hobbits in the Shire cut themselves off from their history, infantilized it, and as a result, in the consciousness of other races they changed into a legend, which excluded them from history and prevented them from maturing. The downfall of Gondor was caused by the exaggerated focus its people put on the past. The inability to change and conform precluded them from saving their future and entering the new era (Majewski 2013, 167).

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