

The Analysis of J.R.R. Tolken's Ecological Responsibility Consciousness in *The Lord of the Rings**

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Abstract—J.R.R. Tolken, a distinguished Oxford University professor who specialized in the study of language development and early medieval literature. He has written famous books like *The Hobbits* and *The Silmarillion*, but his literary reputation mainly rests upon his fantasy-romance novel, *The Lord of the Rings*. Since its publication, the novel has got great popularity among western countries. It was even selected as “the most popular book in history” on line. As Hollywood director Peter Jackson's film *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed, a zealous love for “the magic ring” has wiped throughout the world. No matter scholars or common enthusiasm readers both show great passion for this novel. Archetypal analysis and the origin of myth in Middle-earth, fantasy technique etc. have been widely used to review or interpret the text of this novel. Based on the intertextual interpretation of J.R.R. Tolken's life experience and the novel, and through the viewpoint of ecological responsibility consciousness this paper attempts to explore Tolken's seek of homeland, which reveals Tolken's country yearning and furthermore presents his ecological value.

Index Terms—ecological responsibility consciousness, homeland destruction, homeland redemption, ecological value, *The lord of the rings*

I. INTRODUCTION

J.R.R. Tolken, a distinguished Oxford University professor who specialized in the study of language development and early medieval literature. He has written famous books like *The Hobbits* and *The Silmarillion*, but his literary reputation mainly rests upon his fantasy-romance novel, *The Lord of the Rings*. Since its publication, the novel has got great popularity among western countries. It was even selected as “the most popular book in history” on line. As Hollywood director Peter Jackson's film *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed, a zealous love for “the magic ring” has wiped throughout the world. No matter scholars or common enthusiasm readers both show great passion for this novel. Archetypal analysis and the origin of myth in Middle-earth, fantasy technique etc. have been widely used to review or interpret the text of this novel. So far, not so much analysis has focus on the ecological viewpoint. Based on the intertextual interpretation of J. R. R. Tolken's life experience and the novel, and through the viewpoint of ecological responsibility consciousness this paper attempts to explore Tolken's seek of homeland, which reveals Tolken's deep introspection of the relationship between human and society, human and nature.

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF BLOODY WARS-HOMELAND DESTRUCTION

Ecocriticism, also called studies of literature and environment, is the abbreviation for literature and arts criticism or ecological literary criticism. This literary theory revolves around the relationship between literary works and natural physical environment. What's more, the theory endows the whole field with social and natural mission, namely, Dig and criticize the ideological and cultural roots of ecological crisis, and call on the literary critics to take the responsibility of reliving and eliminating ecological crisis.

J.R.R. Tolken was born in South Africa in 1892 since his father had to move there to follow the bank's arrangement. It is easy to imagine that the young Tolken must have enchanted with the splendor of diamonds. We can see many descriptions in his the other two famous books: “The Hobbits” and “The Silmarillion”. With humble salary, the family fell into a miserable living condition in South Africa. His mother had to take him and his young brother back to their hometown for family support. However, better life did not last for a long time, since their father died within a year after they came back. With little money, they had to live in rough place, however, the beautiful landscape there had a good and everlasting impact on Tolken's life. We can easily see his memories reflected in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, he created the dreaming land of Elves and described it from the mouth of Legolas that:

That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people. There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold. Not till the spring comes and the new green opens do they fall, and then the boughs are laden with yellow flowers; and the floor of the wood is golden, and golden is the roof,

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and its pillar are of silver, for the bark of the trees is smooth and grey.(Tolkien, 1999,P. 435)

Readers can easily see that Tolkien had a sweet memory about his country. However, the industrial revolution made his hometown restless. Then World War I broke out in his generation. He lost to the war almost all his friends. Before rolled in the army, he took an ideal and romantic attitude toward the war. From attending the battlefield to leave the war being hurt, three months was costed. During this period, all Tolkien saw was the war's cruelty: trench, body and stutted which was greatly different from Germanic culture and spirit he fancied. All battlefield presented to people were death and darkness. This pointless war turned Tolkien's idealism upside down. The acute change of modern society made people lose the sense of security and stability, since they've lost the homeland they live in. Likewise, Shire in the novel has similar experience. The Hobbits who live in Shire enjoy a peaceful life, handling the gardens or tasting delicious beer. However, the dark power 索隆 is creeping in from Mordor, the war is hanging over the peaceful Shire. In order to save their homeland, the four Hobbits embark on the mission of destroying the ring.

It is not easy to identify Tolkien's relation to the war he used to take part in. He denied others' presumption that he got a close relationship with the war. He said the book was purely a "feigned" "history", "with ...varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers" (Bloom, 2008, P. 102). However, he hinted that it might have been generally influenced by his dreadful experience in the Great War, more than fifty years before- "by 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead"-and by an even earlier trauma: "the country in which I lived in childhood was being shabbily destroyed before I was ten"(Tolkien XV). Therefore, we can see from the text that the novel is filled with the laments for lost landscapes and departed glories, and it always focuses on the description of withered scenery.

Freud holds the view that, "the creation of literary fictions allows the writer to work his repressed desires out of his system by expressing them in a cloaked, socially acceptable form (without realizing that this is what he is doing)" (Berg, 2003, P. 84). In this sense, we can say that Tolkien's experience of attending the war has played a role in his focus on war description in the novel. Before involved in the cruel war, Tolkien used to be fascinated with the glorious heroes in his culture. While after witnessing the bloodless and cruelty of the war, Tolkien started to reflect on the meaning of life, war, homeland and human's destiny.

One of the incredible things about *The Lord of the Rings* is the splendid description of the great war. The readers witness the cruelty and bloodless of the war. Since Tolkien had experienced World War One in person, we can see the author's attitude toward war in the novel. Tolkien thinks that the human world should be peaceful, stable, and harmonious without any war and evils. Actually, in a letter dated September 25, 1954, Tolkien writes to Naomi Mitchinson about *The Lord of the Rings*:

But in any case this is a tale about war, and if war is allowed (at least as a topic and a setting) it is not much good complaining that all the people on one side are against those on the other. Not that I have made even this issue quite so simple: there are Saruman, and Denethor, and Boromir; and there are treacheries and strife even among the Orcs. (Humphrey, 1979, P. 196-99)

Tolkien responds in this letter to criticisms of portrayal of the fight between good and evil in *The Lord of the Rings* as "simple-minded"-as Tolkien phrases it, "just a plain fight between Good and Evil."Tolkien remarks that this reductive tendency is "pardonable, perhaps (though at least Boromir has been overlooked) in people in a hurry, and with only a fragment to read"(Tolkien,1999,P. 197). To reduce *The Lord of the Rings* to a "plain fight between Good and Evil" relies on a fragment of its narrative, a superficial shard, obscuring its depths, its intricately resolved forms of medievalism. It is a book about war; it is also a book about remembering.

Tolkien once stated, "One war is enough for any man"(Tolkien,1999,P.54). If this is the case, that to suffer war, with its waste, is enough, then why spend over a decade returning to the psychological situation of war by writing a book seared by its violence? And a book about war that speaks from the past to the present? *The Lord of the Rings* was written during World War Two, but is shadowed by the world-ending violence of World War One. In the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien famously denied that his massive, ambitious novel is an allegory of World War Two, telling his audience, who may have "forgotten," "that to be caught in youth" by the Great War was "hideous."This call to remember is followed by the well-known statement: "By all but one of my close friends were dead." We can view *The Lord of the Rings* as an allegory of the Great War, enacting a crude correlation between historical and artistic representation, but as a recollection of it-a literary work. Fantasy, conceived in Tolkien's novel as a dialogic process of invention and remembrance, allows for a return to the war that is not documentary or allegorical in approach but memorial.

In order to leave a deep impression on readers and impart his ideas, Tolkien creates an imaginary world by describing mainly the brutality of the wars in *The Lord of the Rings*, with a resounding forcefulness. Critical accounts of *The Lord of the Rings* that read its interest in the medieval as sentimental fail to recognize the complex treatment of war in both Tolkien's novel and its medieval influences and the conversation, vibrant, powerful, and political, that takes place between them. Tolkien interrogates the chivalric code in *The Lord of the Rings*, responding critically to strains of medieval-themed propaganda circulating in England during the Great War, including notion of chivalry displayed in the iconography of slaying the dragon. Allen Frantzen comments on the weird tranquility of this popular, seductive image "A massive bloody war is represented and glorified in single combat."

Tolkien was marked indelibly by the Great War, as he witnessed the Battle of the Somme. The Somme remained a lingering memory for Tolkien, a memory brought to life in *The Lord of the Rings* in a chapter entitled "The Passage of

the Marshes.” in this chapter, Frodo the Ringbearer, his friend Sam Gamgee, and Gollum make their way across the Dead Marshes, the site of a long-past battle, on the way to Mordor. In Dead Marshes refuse to be frozen into patriotic memories; instead, vacant faces linger in dark pools of water. Tolkien states that Frodo’s description of the marshes owed something to the battle of Somme, its landscape of endless disruption, bodies reemerging perpetually from the earth: “they lie in all the pools, pale faces, deep under the dark water. I saw them: grim faces and evil, and noble faces and sad. Many faces proud and fair and weeds in their silver hair. But all foul, all rotting, all dead. A fell light is in them”(Tolkien,1999,P.2614).The Dead Marshes act as a sort of war memorial, as a textual actualization of the processes of memory, in which the dead refuse to be resolved into statuelike icons, idealized narratives of victory or defeat traced across their frozen surfaces. Instead, the dead accuse. Tolkien scholars have known that the landscape of the marshes was influence by the torn earth, mud, and blood of the Somme, but would like to extend our reading of it past this analogy to consider how, and what, this textual moment asks us to recall.

In the Dead Marshes, the dead demand recognition, not for what was accomplished, but because they suffered. The dead have been forgotten, their suffering discounted, and they have been reduced to unnamed participants in a battle of the Second Age that has fallen out of memory. There is a sameness in suffering and death, “Elves and Men and Orcs” as Gollum says, distinctions eroded by the conjunctions. In Middle-Earth, acts of remembrance are always foregrounded; here the dead demand the release of commemoration, but not the static tribute of a standard memorial. Black and gray, like the collodion plate images that depicted scenes from the physically defies attempts to shape war’s ruptures into confined single-thread narratives. As witnesses to the marshes, we ask: who sees? Who will speak of it?

Here and elsewhere in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien refuses to treat war as something-to-be-viewed, as a play of spectral knights assembled from assorted pieces of ghostly longings. It is, instead, a volcanic conversation in which myriad voices take part, uttering memories, mercy, rage, and, above all, grief. In this attention to the verbal-visual presentation of war inheres an interesting correspondence between *The Lord of the Rings* and one of its possible influences, Chaucer’s “Knight’s Tale”. Frodo hides his eyes in his hands, turning away from the pale, pleading faces of the ghosts in the mashes, as the secrets these shifting phantasms reveal-sad stories of war that remain strangely unpunctuated, incapable of-nearly overwhelm. Meeting the gaze of the marshes’ undead entails recognition, and this moment of recognition, this flash of sympathy, shatters, and converts.

Frodo covers his eyes; however, his view gradually changes, voiced finally in his urgent wish for “no killing” in the book’s bitter second-to-last chapter, “The Scouring of the Shire”: “All the same,” said Frodo to all those who stood near, “I wish for no killing; not even of the ruffians, unless it must be done, to prevent them from hurting hobbits”(Tolkien, 1999,P986-987). With its image of a spoiled Shire and murdered Hobbits, “The scouring of the Shire” has a lasting sadness and a narrative resignation that makes its pretty injustice seem excessively cruel. As readers, we long for respite after the War of the Ring with its desperate denouement, yet here we discover not rest but the novel’s starkest explorations of violence, which approach us that unexpectedly and without the clink of medieval warfare. Tolkien tells us that Hobbits have never been warlike; therefore, pictures that Hobbits being killing and killing, pictures made vivid through the wordplay of aggressive verbs(“hew,” for example)that ring out oddly in the verbal topography of the Shire, seem incongruous and jarring, rough tears in the novel’s aesthetic integration.

Tom Shippey raises the point that “one night wonder again about the ‘applicability’” of ‘the scouring of the shire,’ nothing Tolkien’s denial that the chapter is an allegory of postwar industrialization. Tolkien claimed that the chapter had been “foreseen from the outset,” Shippey recounts, rooted in Tolkien’s early personal history. even so, it underwent a series of revisions, as Christopher Tolkien details, most conspicuously marked in Frodo’s change from a figure “warlike and resolute in action” to a figure whose relationship to “weapons was personal.” it is in this chapter that war wrenches from medieval history-the linguistic parameters of war’s violence broaden again to spill into this last enclave, into the readers’ presence.

Tolkien fundamentally rethinks the representation of violence in *The Lord of the Rings*, transforming it out of frameworks that seal bloodshed into a phantasmic and unreal chivalric history, through an innovative medievalism rooted in the novel’s syntax and semantics, in the songs of the Rohirrim and the echoes of medieval elegy that haunt Lorien’s verbal landscape. The Shire, our territory as readers, has been, at last, crippled by a language of violence that floats eerily into our consciousness, waking us, like a dimly tolling bell, from our dream. While the chapter laments industrialization, its aggression is not only directed internally at the fictional landscape; it lashes out, prompting us to look within. If we think that once cleansed of Sharkey and his suffians the Shire will wash its hands of the spot of ,we learn instead that war has become uncomfortably, insistently personal on both the level of narrative and in the chapter’s aesthetics-we feel exposed and apprehensive as its violence shadows us in our dream. “At last all over,” but we are haunted.

The Lord of the Rings understands the violence of war as a confrontation in words, one that asks to acknowledge its diverse repercussion by rejecting the distorting lenses of ideologies, which used simplified narratives decorated with medieval iconography as persuasive propaganda during the Great War. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell writes that Tolkien and his contemporaries were raised on “Victorian pseudo-medieval romance” and brought these dreams of war into the trenches, while the language of euphemism obscured the actualities of the war. In reaction to this euphemism, Tolkien in his fiction, like Jones in his poetry, searches for a new language of violence, and this language is set in the terms of an involved recovery(not evacuation) recent John Garth, in his resent biography of

Tolkien's World War One experiences, hopes we may someday see Tolkien as the epic poet of the Great War. He elaborates, "Middle-earth...looks so familiar to us and speaks to us so eloquently because it was born with the modern world and marked by the same terrible birth pangs." Concerned with imbuing forgotten poetic forms and languages with new life, Tolkien wrought his romance out of the past and turned its words into an account of the misery of war.

"I think that 'victor' can never enjoy 'victory'--not in the terms that they envisaged," Tolkien wrote in a letter dated 1956. The experience of war calls for a fundamental transformation of literary representation. That effects results in a consciousness of the limited depth and reach of terms not interrogated before the disruption of the battlefield.

III. THE GLORY RECURRENCE--HOMELAND REDEMPTION

Through the biography of J.R.R. Tolkien, we can learn that Tolkien is a active environmentalist. He insists on living a traditional life without the effect of modern machines. We can see that he never bought a car in his entire life. Actually, in *The Lord of the Rings*, we can see his conscious aim of calling on the readers to protect nature by get rid of modern techniques.

Apart from ideas like ecological philosophy; ecological aesthetics, and theory of literature and art, ecocriticism also endows literary criticism with natural and social mission, namely digging and criticizing mind and cultural roots of ecological crisis, calling on critics to take the responsibility of diminishing and erasing ecological crisis.

Since Peter Jackson's trilogy film has portrayed Saruman's Isengard as a forest-consuming industrial hellhole which is busy with genetic engineering to produce "warriors", "green" or anti-modernist readings of Tolkien's novel in different cultural communities have occurred in literary field. The wasteland of Isengard, as portrayed by director Peter Jackson, and the even more desolate volcanic wasteland of militarism and black magic that is Mordor, stand out in bold relief for a new generation of Tolkien fans against the greenways of the Shire, elven realms, and tree-shepherd Ents. Indeed, an ecocentric theme is even more pronounced in the book's accounts of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, the Old Forest, Radagast the brown, and a large number of scenes and details down to the point of view of a fox in the Shire observing Hobbits traveling-features left out of the movies. One of the most-noted connections between films and text was Jackson's use of New Zealand's stunning landscape to match Tolkien's scenery.

Ecocritic Lawrence Buell concluded that one of the goals of literary studies in an era of massive environmental degradation should be to seek to counter such trends from within the structure of culture, "to take stock of the resources within our traditions of thought" for developing more ecologically centered narratives of the world. Tolkien's fantasy is in fact a textbook case of adapting ecocentric literary traditions from the past as a basis for cultural restoration in the present. The effort parallels another modern literary project of cultural recovery: William Butler Yeats's effort to draw on early Irish mythology for texts that he hoped would be the basis for fashioning a new national culture for Ireland, bridging social divisions. Thought Tolkien's effort by his own account was not so intentional, his foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* suggests that the industrialization and development of the English countryside were on his mind while writing what could be read in part as a on purpose literary intervention in that process (as in "The Scouring of the Shire")

For Tolkien. indeed, the fantasy realm of Middle-earth was the real earth of England. His term relates to the Old Icelandic or Old Norse term, part of a belief system involving a sense of multiple worlds with our Earth in the center, terminology from an Old Norse culture whose worldview Tolkien felt was analogous in important ways to that of the Anglo-Saxons. (and Anglo-Saxons literature is the novel's literary background). "The name could be read in both pagan and Christian terms ("middle"Earth being also between chaos and the realm of the gods, or Hades and heaven in later medieval Christian cosmology)" (Chance and K. Siewers 142). Like Tolkien's favorite Old English poem, *Beowulf*. In Tolkien's perspective, Middle earth is a unique place that combines the mythical or spiritual and physical factors together. This view is implied in a passage from *The Lord of the Rings* that illuminate the text's ecocentricity:

"Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?"

"A man may do both," Aragorn said, "For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time.

The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you read it under the light of day!"

(Tolkien ,1999, P577)

Tolkien's sense of the integral interrelationship of our Middle-earth (in a pre-Ice Age European past) and spiritual or mythical realms is glimpsed in the reconstruction of a famous "real world" conversation between C.S. Lewis and himself:

Myths are "lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver." No, said Tolkien. They are not lies... You look at trees, he said, and call them "trees," and probably you do not drink twice about the word.... To you, a tree is simply a vegetable organism, and a star simply a ball of intimate matter moving along a mathematical course. But the first men to talk of "trees" and "stars" saw things very differently. To them, the world was alive with mythological beings... Christianity (he said) is exactly the same thing- with the enormous difference that the poet who invented it was God Himself, and the images He used were real men and actual history. (Carpenter ,1979, P.43-44)

There is implied relationship (and potential engagement) here between the realm of imagination/language and the physical world, and thus between the spiritual and the physical, in Tolkien's cosmic philology, exemplified in the Incarnation but present in various religions and mythologies. No matter in what kind of pattern Tolkien conveyed his ideas, we can see his purpose of preserving the earth.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although Tolkien insisted that the novel has nothing to do with reality, there is no doubt that when creating *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien showed great respect for the middle ages. The Oxford linguistic professor with a medieval mind, in order to restore the native England myth and legend. When *The Lord of The Rings* was created, the international status and cultural influence of England had gradually diminished, and American culture had gradually eroded the country that used to be proud of Shakespeare and Dickens. When the process of industrialization will not cease; the beautiful landscape of countryside has been taken place by the grey factories, Tolkien clearly knew that an age has been over forever. The elves set out for the west, taking their elegant, free, and peaceful life style. In this sense, *The Lord of the Rings* was Tolkien's last memory of the pastoral beautiful life.

Defined as a modern work, this novel is endowed with Tolkien's reflection for modernity. In the 20th century during which the process of industrialization and urbanization has steadily moved up, environment pollution got worse, the war in *The Lord of the Rings* was not only treated as the war between the kind and the evil, but also between nature and resource. The Shire was a beautiful place and people here do not like any modern things. They do not have any modern machines. They like parties and delicious food, a true fan of beer and tobacco pipe. They are happy, and ambitious, rejecting any industrial change. On the contrary, the evil Modor is filled with factories and pits. The shy was endowed with dark poisonous smoke, and the ground has no grass. Dark riders and Orcs, followers of Sauron have already rendered their soul, turning into robots without any feeling. We can see that Tolkien shows a hatred attitude toward modernization. As for this reason, some radical environmentalists regard it as a bible to fight against pollution the industrialization brings for human beings.

Of course, there are more interpretations than these aspects. The Ring was used to symbolize the lust of material world. Frodo is a strong-minded peace supporter, also a hero who resists the material world. All these interpretations are based on the novel's introspection toward modern civilization. We can not confine the novel to a specific point, since it seems that the novel is rush and shallow.

On the fellowship's journey of chasing the happy life, the cruelty of the war, the destroy of landscape, the humble people's power of pushing the wheel of history all present. Through interpretation, we can see Tolkien's ecological ideas that people should live in a peaceful world without too much pollution, and common people can have great power as long as they deal well with themselves and the outside world, which can be regarded as ecological responsibility consciousness transmitted to the modern people.

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