

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
Edmond, Oklahoma
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**From *Ainulindalë* to Valhalla
J. R. R. Tolkien's Musical Mythology and its Eddaic Influences**

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH
WITH A MAJOR IN 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY STUDIES: LITERATURE

By

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Edmond, Oklahoma

2013

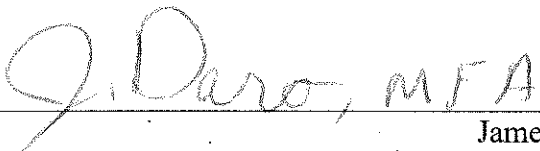
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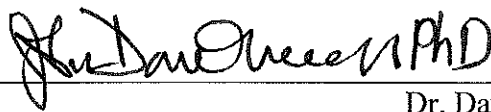
J. R. R. Tolkien's Musical Mythology and its Eddaic Influences

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

21 November 2013

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Acknowledgments

This project could never have come to light without the guidance and encouragement of Dr. Gladys Lewis who taught me that the realm of the fantastic was just as important of a subject as any other. Her inspiring courses led to the discovery of the topic and her impeccable advising led me to the committee best suited for the task of helping me through to completion.

I greatly appreciate and sincerely thank James Daro for agreeing to chair this project. He accepted not knowing he would be victim to the many panicked and often unnecessary emails and in office conversations he was subjected to through my research and writing, and was more than capable of calming me down and reassuring me through revision notes and research suggestions and this project was made better by his cool and collected manner.

I would also like to thank Drs. David Macey and Marilyn Govich who also sat on the committee and were willing to read through more than one draft and provide much needed guidance. Dr. Govich gladly introduced me to working with the language of music which I had never encountered before taking on this very musical project. Through the input and support of this committee I was able to produce something I am quite proud of.

I give a big thanks to Alisha Chambers who willing proofread the final draft before submission for binding. It was a task I know she would have rather left for someone, else but she gladly took upon herself.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank my husband Zane for his patience and understanding throughout the years of school and the painful year and half of relative neglect he suffered while I was working on this project. His support means everything to me and without it I never would have stayed sane enough to complete the task.

Contents

Abstract of Thesis	v
From <i>Ainulindalë</i> to Valhalla: J. R. R. Tolkien's Musical Mythology and its Eddaic Influences	
	1
Introduction	2
Chapter One: Eddaic Traditions	10
Chapter Two: The Poetics of Creation	25
Chapter Three: A Hierarchy of Music	49
Chapter Four: Preserving History by Music	68
Conclusion	85
Glossary of Names	89
Works Cited	94

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TITLE: From *Ainulindalë* to Valhalla: J. R. R. Tolkien's Musical Mythology and its Eddaic Influences

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: James Daro, M.F.A.

PAGES: 102

When designing his mythology for Middle-earth, J. R. R. Tolkien drew from his extensive knowledge of the numerous established mythologies of the ancient and contemporary world. However, his primary fascination and inspiration came from the tales of Asgard in Old Norse mythological texts such as the prose and poetic *Eddas*. Tolkien used the poetic style and oral storytelling traditions found with the Eddaic texts in order to ground his world of Middle-earth in ancient traditions to establish depth and historical perspective onto his new creation. The influences of the Eddaic texts come to life in the major facets of existence for the races of Middle-earth from the musical creation story, to the oral traditions, to hierarchy of being and musical aptitude within the races. By looking closely at the specific oral practices and the construction of poetry and the passing of history within the elder and younger *Eddas*, readers can see the mimicry of such art forms and practices within the pages of Tolkien's use of music in the numerous texts regarding the world of Middle-earth.

From *Ainulindalë* to Valhalla

J. R. R. Tolkien's Musical Mythology and its Eddaic Influences

Introduction

John Ronald Reuel (J. R. R.) Tolkien, master philologist and author of the beloved *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, spent his career studying language and culture and developing a heightened sense of adoration for all things northern. The language sounds and construction and unique mythology of the ancient civilizations in the northern British Isles and the Scandinavian countries— Sweden, Norway, Ireland—fascinated Tolkien. A philologist first and foremost in his interest, he valued the ways in which the languages of the Old Norse people and the means they used to preserve their culture and tradition, through poetry and oral storytelling, so much that his study of their craft and use of language would eventually heavily influence the way in which he put together his own mythology.

Scholars, poets, and philologists alike have studied the extensive use of poetry as a means of preserving the tales of Old Norse mythology in order to understand the complex nature of their specific poetic construction and the traditions of the culture. Estelle Jorgensen, scholar of mythology and Tolkien enthusiast, explains how “myths and songs are known in terms of particular peoples, places, sounds, and times, [and, therefore,] they need to be studied specifically” (13). Oral storytelling and poetry are universal traditions. Practically every culture and civilization, especially pre-literate societies, relied upon oral storytelling and oral poetry as means of preserving history and documenting the traditions of the culture. Jorgensen argues that a basic comprehension of oral traditions, in general, broadly conceptualizes a complex system of preservation without offering any real understanding of a specific culture. Scholars of poetry and oral

tradition must look specifically at individual cultures, peoples, sounds, and time periods, as all these factors influence the oral culture.

To refer to “Old Norse” mythological constructs as a whole, binding, and unchanging tradition would inaccurately define the true nature of oral tradition. The northern world—the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon civilizations—all fall under the category of Old Norse and share significant similarities in their development of poetry and traditions of gods, but this does not imply that all of the poetic constructs among these people, and over the centuries of their existence, all looked the same. The tradition of poetry grew within each culture and over time to reflect both their northern-ness and their individual cultures. This concept of distinctive traditions provides scholars with the means of not only identifying Old Norse poetic constructs as a whole but also of examining the ways in which each culture and civilization within that category adopted and cultivated its traditions to its needs and means.

With a more broad perspective of northern oral tradition, the constructs of Old Norse mythology and the heavy influence of oral tradition and poetic constructs as a belief system better aid the understanding of Tolkien’s mythological construction. Although identifying each, individualized culture within the Old Norse tradition and the specifications of their developed traditions is a noble cause, the most practical approach to a comparative study of Tolkien and Old Norse tradition employs the major, overarching constructions. In order to gain this more generalized view, the elder and younger, also known as the poetic and prose *Eddas*, will constitute of the primary, Old Norse texts analyzed because of their comprehensive view of Old Norse mythology and Tolkien’s adoration of these texts. The author of the elder or poetic *Edda* still remains

unknown due its ancient origins and, therefore, cannot be attributed to a single author accurately. Snorri Sturluson was an Icelandic chieftain who lived circa 1179-1241 and provided one the most comprehensive compilation of Old Norse mythological stories and poetic instructions, the younger or prose *Edda*.

Rudolf Schenda and Ruth Borringheimer, in their discussion of the connection between written and oral tradition, argue, “a mouth that prattles is not the same thing as a pen that scribbles . . . [but in] many ways Europe’s oral culture has been bound up with the written and printed word in the early modern period,” making the distinction between oral and literary tradition much less pronounced (128). From this point of view, it is important to understand that the poem and stories housed within the literary *Eddas* naturally differ from their oral counterparts—both in ancient tradition and contemporary scholarship—but this does not remove the merit of studying the tales and formulas of the Old Norse mythology. The “pens that scribbled” the prose and poetic *Eddas* vastly differed from the first “mouth that prattled” the tales of Asgard, but this does not detract from the authors’ intent to recreate the tradition and convey the critical message of the stories.

Their intensive knowledge of the stories and the poetic formulas of the Old Norse culture suggest that Snorri and the compiler of the prose *Edda* grew up around the telling of these tales and listening to their formulaic construction throughout the re-tellings.

Albert Lord, in *Oral Literature*, discusses how:

The fact of the matter is that the oral traditional style is easy to imitate by those who have heard much of it . . . [A] person who has been brought up in an area, or lived long in one, in which he has listened to the singing and found an interest in it can write verse using the general style and some of the formulas of the tradition. (18)

Immersion in a culture that heavily relies on poetry and song to preserve history and the morals and heroes of that culture enables a writer, such as Snorri and the compiler of the poetic *Edda*, to recreate the patterns the poems and songs follow. As heirs of this tradition, the composers of the *Eddas* took responsibility for the task of transcribing the intricate details of poetic construction and preserving the epics housed within the formulas in order to immortalize the process through which the stories were preserved and to preserve the stories themselves. Although Lord specifically discusses the passing of song, his argument also pertains to the poetry of Old Norse culture because poetry and song are tied together, connecting Old Norse poetic tradition to the musical tradition of Middle-earth created by Tolkien. If one understands the link between the art forms, Lord's assessment can relate to both the poetry of the *Eddas* and the music of Middle-earth.

Through discussing the Eddaic texts under this lens—the progression of oral storytelling into the written context—the patterns of Old Norse traditional tales and the importance of those entrusted with the knowledge of poetic constructs becomes apparent. In turn, applying the same analytical lens to Tolkien's use of music will illuminate his employment of the Old Norse construction in building the mythos for Middle-earth. The creation of formulas and formulaic expressions to immortalize the themes and morals of mythological tales—Old Norse and Middle-earth's alike—is of vital importance in a culture that relies heavily, if not entirely, on oral tradition to preserve the tales. A storyteller, whether poet or minstrel, will not memorize the exact wording of a tale in order to recreate it in full with each telling or singing; instead, he focuses on the primary

message and important phrases of the story and builds on the tales that came before to retell and preserve the story.

Francis Magoun examines oral storytelling, poetry, and finally music in his study of Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry. He explains, “[t]he oral singer does not memorize songs of singers from whom he learns nor does he memorize in our sense of the word songs of his own making.” In studying to become a bard, he instead learns the “thematic material, plots, proper names, and formulas,” which he can use to gradually compose songs of his own and make them reflect those he has heard in the past (Magoun 447). This progression will be discussed in detail in chapters one and four, binding the *Eddas* with the musical tradition of Middle-earth. The progression of oral prose and poetry to music follows this substantiated pattern of creating and recreating recurring themes, plots, and formulas in new ways to continue the story and enlighten listeners about the story’s contemporary relevance.

In contemporary culture and literature, song and story have separated from each other, becoming independent art forms and unrelated in quality. Songs may still engage in storytelling, but with widespread literacy, song no longer constitutes the main medium for storytelling. This distinction, however, formed entirely in the modern era: “songs are but poems set to music, and music and poetry did not become separate entities until the advent of sixteenth-century print culture” (Amendt-Raduege 117). Amy Amendt-Raduege explores in her study, “Worthy of a Song: Memory, Mortality, and Music,” the concept of immortalization through music and poetry in oral cultures and the way this art form was lost when print culture took hold and developed as the primary resource for documenting history and story. The distinction between literary story and stories in song

and poetry did not arise until the time when print and literacy became widespread and easily accessible.

Tolkien's vast use of music in the mythology of Middle-earth subverts the trend toward separating song and print culture and draws inspiration from the formulas, constructs of society, and passing of history in the Old Norse oral tradition and its transcription into print form. Because Tolkien uses a print medium—the novel—to tell the tales of Middle-earth, his emulation of oral tradition and Old Norse culture had to take form through his created world, cultures, and characters. His characters' adoration for oral tradition, poetry, and music and the calculated way in which the races of Middle-earth construct their own stories within the text embodies his love for all things northern. The poetry of Middle-earth—practiced through song—as well as those characters in control of it is distinctly reminiscent of the cultural and poetic constructs of the *Eddas*. Amendt-Raduege points out that even though the readers of Tolkien encounter the songs of Middle-earth as poetry, Tolkien carefully reminds his audience of the implied music (Amendt-Raduege 118). Similar to the audience of the *Eddas*, the readers of Tolkien's novels read the songs as written poetry, providing Tolkien with the means of alluding to the ancient forms of Old Norse culture while simultaneously separating them from the Asgardian myths by affirming his poetry as song.

Tolkien involves the Old Norse tradition of poetry while creating a product solely his by means of print media instead of oral culture. As a master of words and an enthusiast for Old Norse culture, he never recreates a myth in full. Instead, he borrows bits and pieces and assembles them to create something entirely unique. "Since he wrote as a modern novelist rather than an archaic bard, there is more room for, and also more

expectation of, personal artistic vision,” which gives Tolkien the artistic license to develop a mythology independent of the known, studied, and widely understood mythologies of the ancient and contemporary worlds (Jones 46).

Tolkien’s use of poetry to represent his songs plays with the Old Norse constructs while engaging in something new. Sidney Lanier, in her extensive study of the relationship between music and poetry, explains how, “music, freed from [the] stern exactions of the intellect, is also freed from the terrible responsibilities of realism,” making it the perfect medium to evoke all the great heroes and mythologies of Middle-earth (4). The music transforms the fantastic nature of the world of Middle-earth into a more realistic atmosphere because of the music’s capability to ground the readers in the cultures they are already familiar with. The tales of the Old Norse gods, though long since rejected as truth, were once accepted as historical accounts.

As this study progresses, the connections drawn between the two mythologies will surface as clear and distinct. An intensive look at the Eddaic texts will ground the argument in a basic understanding of the ancient construction before moving into a comparison of the two mythologies simultaneously. In Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion*, an analysis of the high beings, the creation stories, and the hierarchy of being makes clear the undertones of Old Norse mythos and its practices within the first age of Middle-earth. During the Third Age of Arda—in *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, another crucial connection between the Old Norse tales and the mythos of Middle-earth surfaces. Tolkien’s use of music and poetry as a means of exploring the past ages of Middle-earth for his readers, as well as for his characters, draws upon the ancient practices of Old Norse cultures described in the *Eddas*.

In her study of music and medievalism, Emma Dillion explored the dynamic interaction between spoken and written music, a concept most important in the documented histories of Middle-earth. Just as Snorri engages both poetry and prose in the younger *Edda* to demonstrate the necessity of both aspects of the tradition, so does Tolkien similarly arrange the composition of his texts. When combining prose and poetry, it is important to look at the “innovative and imaginative use of folio space, noting how the layout of music, image and text contributes to their meaning” (Dillion 216). The juxtaposition of poetry and music in the prose *Edda* and the tales of Middle-earth complement the stories they tell because they break up the page and the text in order to draw the audience—the reader as well as the character listening in the text—into something beyond the present moment. Pulling the reader into the verse of poetry or song allows them to step back from the immediate action of the tale and step into the second-handedness of the oral tradition. Snorri and Tolkien use these contrasting styles within their written works to visually illustrate the dynamics of oral storytelling and place the reader into the position of listener.

The extensive connections between the oral poetry of the Old Norse traditions and the music of Middle-earth reflect the heavy influence of the northern culture and mythology on Tolkien’s constructed world. Not only do the oral practices of Middle-earth reflect those of the Old Norse traditions, but the construction of the mythology in itself—the gods and races—draw a line of direct comparison between the two worlds. Tolkien uses the music of Middle-earth to allude and pay tribute to the poetic mythology of the northern civilizations.

Chapter One

The Eddaic Traditions

Exploring the intricacies of the prose and poetic *Eddas* aids in fully comprehending the connections between Old Norse literature and the Tolkienian world of Middle-earth. Acknowledging the parallels between the two mythologies without fully delving into the specifics of the connection and how it affects the way in which Tolkien created and sustained Middle-earth limits understanding for the reader—they must rely on basic knowledge instead of a full, working understanding. Examining the compilation processes of the *Eddas* in the written, printed forms scholars use today, the extensive use of oral storytelling by the characters of Old Norse mythology and the emphasis on the nearly inflexible rules of poetic construction—seen explicitly within the poetic *Edda*—makes the foundations for both mythologies clear and emphasizes their connection.

The prose and poetic *Eddas* constitute the most comprehensive collections of Old Norse traditions and mythological tales. Together, they outline the creation of Valhalla, Asgard, and Midgard; the destruction of the Ice Giants; and the rise of the Æsir, and they provide the reader with an extensive account of the legends of the pre-Christian, Scandinavian, and Anglo-Saxon countries. Similar to the Scandinavian sagas, a series of tales regarding the gods of Asgard and mortal heroes that followed the Eddaic legends, the stories in the *Eddas* originated as oral poetry, a practice outlined most vividly within the texts themselves. An in-depth analysis of the oral practices of the ancient Old Norse gods within the Eddaic texts and a discussion of the intricacies of the poetic format described and used throughout the prose and poetic *Eddas* will demonstrate the high

regard the culture held for oral storytelling and poetry as a means of preserving the histories of the Scandinavian peoples.

The composers of the older poetic and the younger prose *Eddas* compiled their respective works through cultural awareness and personal and social memory regarding the poetic constructs and traditional formulas of Scandinavian countries. In her essay “Narrative History,” Mary Chamberlain analyzes the processes of transcribing oral histories into written narratives. She argues, “The relationship between language and thought, language and experience, and, necessarily, language and memory has long been recognized as ethnographic and anthropological research” (152). This suggests that by studying the poetic constructs and oral histories of the *Eddas*, specifically the language used and the formulas that present themselves within the text, the reader can decipher the deeper importance of the stories told through poetry and prose. Measuring the value of the tales in the *Eddas* involves a process of discovering the patterns the stories portray and recognizing the emphasis within any given poem. The superficial plotline of any story does not contain the true meaning of the tale, but the distinctive qualities of poetic and prose construction speak volumes about purpose.

Constructing language depends on cultural tradition with written history merely the final step in immortalizing the oral epics that preceded it. Tom Shippey, author of “Tolkien and the Appeal of the Page,” refers specifically to Tolkien’s desire to continue to uphold Old Norse traditional construct of an oral foundation for storytelling and strict poetic rules. Shippey argues, “The work we know as the *Prose Edda* is essentially a handbook written by [Snorri] to instruct poets wishing to continue the complex tradition of Norse skaldic poetry, which Snorri evidently felt was slipping out of cognizance”

(149). Shippey's statement applies to Snorri's original purpose to transcribe these stories. Snorri and Tolkien's objectives align; the preservation of ancient Old Norse traditions to a contemporary world appealed to both artists.

The Christian doctrine that dominated the Thirteenth-Century—Snorri's time period—had long since discredited the ancient northern mythological stories as pagan practices. In her study of the Old Norse myths, Heather O'Donoghue discusses how, "it seems that unlike his European contemporaries [Snorri] was happy, indeed proud, to represent the page mythology of his ancestors without undue moralizing, mockery or allegorical interpretations" (16). Even if he inevitably interpreted such ancient texts through the lens of Christianity, his intentions arose from the need to preserve the Old Norse art of oral poetry and the formulas therein. By using the Eddaic texts in his creation of Middle-earth, Tolkien—a devout Christian himself—championed the same mission hundreds of years later.

The stories within the prose and poetic *Eddas*—and those within the tales of Middle-earth—appear extraordinarily formulaic because of their oral quality. The necessity to preserve history through oral storytelling disappeared with the widespread technology of print and predominance of literacy in the West and Britain in the modern era. Without the need for formulaic construction for the purpose of preservation, storytellers, artists, and authors no longer have to adhere to strict construction of formulas or general theme to keep a story alive. Once written down, a story, legend, or mythological construction prevails as long as the text survives. The need for formulas dies with the written word.

In pre-literate, oral culture, the formulas of poetry provided the means for the retelling of stories without a loss of purpose and emphasis. In his discussion of the construction of poetry and the formulas used in this process, Magoun argues, “Oral poetry . . . is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic, though lettered poets occasionally consciously repeat themselves or quote verbatim from other poets” (447). Print allowed poets to create their own formulas for construction with every poem because of the permanent state of written text. Once written, the fluidity of the poems structure as it moves through generations disappears because its form and language become defined and recorded. By constructing a reference text from the oral poetry and stories of Old Norse mythology, Snorri provided future generations access to the ancient formulas and traditions, giving them the means more easily to emulate the traditions based on a written, unchanging example. His purpose was not necessarily to make sure that the stories went unchanged—as naturally happened in the oral tradition—but to preserve the processes of passing the stories.

The poems and stories within the *Edda* are the product of generations upon generations of using the same formulas in order to recreate the ancient stories of gods and man. In his essay “Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature,” Robert Lord maps out the processes of creating written literature through oral tradition. He argues that from a rather narrow point of view each telling of a story, or poem, or song, represents a new version of the tale. “Because the story is being told again without memorization of a non-existent fixed text,” storytellers do not concern themselves with using the same words as long as the literal and symbolic meanings stay intact (Lord 16). Due to this refashioning of stories with every telling, the songs and poems and tales become warped slightly or

drastically with every recitation, but the development of formulas and formulaic expressions restrict the verse, and “there emerges a number of more or less fixed phrases, lines, or groups of lines”—the formulas and formulaic expressions—that help guide the telling of oral tales in order to preserve the focus and general moral of each tale. By tracing the significant alterations, specific tales and formulas can be attributed to specific cultures and geographic areas (17).

Lord goes on to explain the connection between formulas and expressions and the way they connect specifically to individual cultures. He argues,

There is a specific given body of formulas and formulaic expressions, not just any phrases, but traditional phrases tied to the traditional ideas and subjects of the songs. Indeed, a tradition can be defined as the body of formulas, themes, and songs that have existed in the repertoires of singers or story tellers in a given area over usually a long period of time. (17)

These formulas, formulaic expressions, and traditional phrases developed within certain cultures and in certain geographic areas. This means that the formulas used in Sweden and the formulaic expressions developed in Norway, though both are Scandinavian cultures and similar in nature, reflect emerging traditions and patterns independent of each other, even though the plotlines of stories of the gods remain similar.

Sveinbjorn Johnson, in his article “Old Norse and Ancient Greek Ideals,” compares this separate but equal development of traditional practices to the growth of plant life. He argues that the construction of tradition phrases and formulas demonstrates, “a homogeneous growth which correctly disclosed the thinking of the common people upon the deepest problems of life. It was a plant strictly of domestic birth and growth . . . [like] the country itself . . . the normal and inevitable fruition of native forces” (23). Over generations of tellings and retellings, stories and poems progress with the culture

and traditions of the contemporary society in which they appear, like a plant acclimating and evolving to equip itself to the ecosystem around it. Although the gods and stories across the Scandinavian countries share the same plots and morals, the narrative structure varies across borders because it has developed differently within each specific society. In order to make sense of the phenomena of growing and changing formulas and formulaic expressions, one must consider memory and the construction of memory in individuals as well as in larger societies.

Alice and Howard Hoffman discuss the creation and retention of memory at great length in their study “Memory Theory: Personal and Social,” which provides insight into the formation of social memory, which can in turn shed light on the creation of formulas and formulaic expression discussed by Lord. Hoffman and Hoffman stress, “it is important to recognize that memory is a complex personal experience,” which begins with the individual before branching out into the more complex concept of social memory (40). Personal memory varies from individual to individual. Even if two people experience the same event in exactly the same way, the storage process of their memories of that event can differ vastly. Through the telling and retelling of stories, the memories of individuals transform into social memories with certain factors specifically embraced as broad truths while smaller details continue to vary from person to person upon each performance.

Hoffman and Hoffman stress that once these oral stories took written form they had already passed through generations of personal and social memory construction as each individual and each generation remembered the details in variation. Recreating the stories with the help of formulas and formulaic expression helped to ensure the accuracy

of the “social memory truth” and theme and moral of the tale, but the personal memory always varies from individual to individual. “No oral history document is likely to be simply a reflection of a purely personal memory or a social memory,” Hoffman and Hoffman argue (50). They claim,

It will clearly contain both, in that it will draw from the narrator both episodic, purely personal descriptions . . . [and] information that is grounded in the social, conversational, and cultural styles of the informants’ backgrounds and memorial histories. (50)

This assessment indicates that the compilations known as the prose and poetic *Eddas* reflect not only the compilers’ sincere attempts to recreate and immortalize the formulas of Old Norse traditional poetry but also the social memories of the stories themselves. It also reflects the compiler’s personal memory of the telling and retelling of the stories.

The literary, written forms of the *Eddas* do not reflect some greater truth or even the most accurate accounting of the stories, they are only the attempts of the compilers to be accurate in recreating the stories and formulas that grew within the cultures, “For if there is one dominant trait in Old Norse literary tradition, to go by what we actually have and not by what we ought to have, it is the casual alteration of prose and poetry. *Edda* or saga, the prose alternates with poetry” (Wood 50). Cecil Wood, expert in Scandinavian studies, discusses the way in which prose and poetry continuously align in oral tradition. The oral told stories were comprised of a mixture of poetry and spoken prose, and the written stories naturally reflect that contrast of genre in order to accurately reflect the ancient art of storytelling and the intricate nature of Old Norse storytelling in particular.

Although the traditional oral tales mixed poetry and prose, the poetic portions of the tales housed the most crucial themes and critical morals and lessons. Writing history as prose instead of poetry creates more room for exaggeration and manipulation, until it

may no longer resemble the original tale due to the imprecision of personal and social memory. “Even with the best of intentions there is always an element of hypothesizing, reconstructing or imagining. In time, myths take on a life of their own . . .” and begin to transform into new stories (Bithell 5). Although obviously necessary in the development of a mythology, the transformation and subtle variation inherent in oral storytelling through prose causes room for greater manipulation. This occurs because of a lacking in formal regulation as found in poetic construction. Poetry demands structure and formula leaving less room for manipulation than prose storytelling through which the entire structure and nature of the story can change. Translating oral prose into written poetry makes the stories easier to remember through mnemonic devices, rhyme scheme, rhythm, and formulaic construction and leaves less room for manipulation because of inconsistent memory. This apparent consistency allows for the preservation of important aspects of the stories while the engaging superficial story changes with each telling to cater to the interest of the audience. The words may vary, but the themes and the structure remain intact, and “usefulness rather than mere repetition, is what makes a formula,” indicating the importance of looking at repeated formulas and identifying the patterns constructed within a given culture or mythology (Magoun 450).

All ancient cultures passed their histories orally prior to the invention of literacy, and each possesses distinctive methods for preserving its own history. Formulas, formulaic expressions, and use of language distinguish the various cultural moves and give us—as contemporary scholars—the opportunity to study the variations among them and their effects on modern art forms.

Magoun discusses the formulation of these poetic structures and their effect on written narrative within northern cultures in his article “Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry.” He argues, “at least fifteen percent of the verses of the poem are to all intents and purposes repeated,” and that this rarely ever occurs in lettered poetry, unless transcribed from oral poetry (Magoun 454). This repetition served dual purposes in oral history. Principally, it provided the listener the means of keeping track of the story. When engaging in a story as a listener, rather than a reader, keeping characters and events straight becomes challenging due to the lack of a physical written account to which to refer, so the storyteller must constantly remind the listener of the people, places, and events they encountered already. More important, repeating phrases within oral poetry solidifies the importance of the phrase or formula. The phrases that repeat indicate to the audience the crucial nature of that particular concept within the story and signal that they should take note of it. These repeated phrases get preserved by future bards and storytellers and constitute the formulas, formulaic constructions, and traditional phrases that make it possible to track the progression of the art form through the culture.

The formulas do not refer to the constructs and themes of the poems alone. According to Mary Chamberlain, “the symbolic structures integral to a culture are both reflected and embedded in the language used . . . Metaphors, rhetoric, [and] sayings that punctuate life-story narratives all signify values and priorities, [and] ways of looking at the world” (152). The *Æsir* focus on the concept of symbols and metaphors most prominently in “Skaldskaparmal,” the second chapter of the prose *Edda* in which the *Æsir* lay out the rules and intricacies of poetry directly to *Ægir*, their guest in Valhalla. *Ægir* asks about the grand art and how different beings such as gods and man, natural

occurrences, and intangible phenomena appear in poetry to convey their true meanings and purposes.

During their discussion of the sky, earth, and natural phenomena, Ægir asks, “How shall summer be referred to?” to which the Æsir replies, “By calling it son of Svasud and the comfort of snakes, growth of men” (Snorri 113). The Æsir do not literally mean that summer is the growth of men but that symbolically it represents the time in which men grow because the fresh, warm weather allows them to be out in the world instead of holed up indoors to escape the cold of winter. Summer brings growth and new life and provides warmth for cold-blooded creatures, like snakes, that can warm themselves in the sun and, therefore, receive relief from their natural state of a lower body temperature. By distinguishing the summer in this way, the Æsir circumvent alternative meanings that could emerge from a less tangible idea, like a season. Although seasons are often described in great detail in prose to demonstrate their qualities and significance, poetry uses symbolic and metaphoric means to represent the season and to save text because of limited line space.

Making specific distinctions, as the Æsir do, allows the audience to make instantaneous connections to familiar stories associated with the symbolic allusions. Odin and the Æsir work through several concepts—wind, fire, and man, among others—giving them poetic names and symbolic qualities to use in the creation of their poetry, which will immortalize their worlds. These basic symbolic distinctions make clear the meaning of concepts such as summer without the full, detailed explanation that would be found in prose. Using these signifiers aids in the fluidity of storytelling and marks the symbolism as distinctly Norse.

H. V. Routh in his book *God, Man, & Epic Poetry*, discusses the use of symbol and metaphor as markers of a culture. Various cultures use symbols as allusions, making it necessary to decipher the meaning of the metaphor to understand the true nature of the poem. He explains,

To be familiar with these allusions, we should have to stop and guess. That is to say, they contain the spirit of riddles. They have the quality to “surprise” and of “deception” . . . comparing metaphors with enigmas. In the *Skaldskaparmal* they are recognized as such. (4-5)

Some of the allusions and symbols used in “Skaldskaparmal” leave the riddle entangled for the reader to figure out, as in the case of the allusion to summer previously discussed. Others are discussed in length, such as the symbol for poetry itself: “Odin’s catch, find, drink or gift, as well as the drink of the Æsir” (Snorri 86). This declared allusion follows the extensive story about how the Æsir came to possess the knowledge of poetry in the first place when Odin triumphs over several other beings to retrieve the mead storing the knowledge of poetry from Gunnlod, who keeps it in three vats—Odrerir, Bodn, and Son.

Odin’s travels to find and steal away the mead involve taking several different forms, including that of a snake and an eagle, as well as taking on a new name—Bolverk—to deceive Baugi and his brother Suttang, whom he has convinced to help him steal away the mead. They helped him to discover Gunnlod, which shows poetry as Odin’s find or discovery: he had literally to track and find the keeper of the mead. Once he has stolen from Gunnlod, Odin gives the mead to Æsir, developing the symbol of Odin’s drink and Odin’s gift. Once in the vats of the Æsir, the knowledge of poetry became theirs to bestow on others, the drink of the Æsir. By providing such an intricate story to explain the origin of the metaphor for poetry, the Æsir provide the means for deciphering the other, less detailed metaphors they give to Ægir, such as the metaphor for

summer previously discussed. The symbolism and metaphors constructed by the Æsir and presented to Ægir help to preserve their stories in prose and poetic form more effectively. The less tangible ideas like summer and poetry become easily understood through metaphor and symbol. Equating an abstract idea with something tangible for the audience it allows the listener, or reader, access to concepts so well known by the Æsir.

The Æsir revere the intricate nature of the formation of poetry and the power that it holds to preserve history and define natural phenomena, and the Æsir's actions as individuals and as a group have highly symbolic results. This demonstrates that not only do they preserve history and speak in elegant poetry and symbolism, but they also perform the act of constructing poetry in order to create and destroy, adding a level of depth to the poetic significance.

After the sons of Bor destroy the Ice Giants, they use their victory over such a horrendous and violent race to create something beautiful to share with all the races of the world. The creation story within the prose *Edda* combines violence and atrocity with highly symbolic acts in order to put together the physical lands of Midgard, or Middle-earth, for the mortal races, such as Dwarves and the Men of the ancient northern countries. Instead of merely vanquishing their foes and leaving their bodies to rot within their own world, the sons of Bor turned their victory into a means of creation, using the body of Ymir—the king of the ice giants—to form Midgard.

This creation does not happen simply by placing the body under Asgard and the world taking over as it would, however. Each aspect of Ymir's physical form symbolically creates some aspect of the physical world. Snorri relates, "From his blood they [the sons of Bor] made the sea and the lakes. The earth was fashioned from the flesh

and the mountain cliffs from the bones” (Snorri 16). He goes on to describe how the rocks and small gravel for the ground came from Ymir’s teeth and broken bones, shattered into small pieces (16). The symbolic acts of the sons of Bor further demonstrate the reverence the Scandinavian countries had for poetry, as even their creation story demonstrates the importance of metaphor. Midgard’s creation, though not by poetry, comes to pass through the highly poetic act of symbolic creation.

A basic understanding of the method of memory, growth of formulas, formulaic expressions, and use of symbol and metaphor by Snorri and the compiler of the poetic *Edda* shows the importance poetry and storytelling within Old Norse culture. The *Eddas* demonstrate the influence that poetry had on Old Norse culture and tradition. Not only do the Æsir teach Ægir about symbol and metaphor, but they also teach him about the specific structure and language of poetry. In “Skaldskaparmal,” the Æsir explain the two categories of poetry—diction and metre—and the three categories of the diction of poetry to Ægir so that he may have a full understanding of the complex nature of such an art form (Snorri 108–109). By dedicating so much time to the specification of the poetic art form, Snorri makes it apparent that Old Norse culture treasured the complexity, precision, and symbolic nature of poetry.

The oral traditions of Old Norse mythology, poetry, and prose form the foundation for keeping the histories and mythological stories of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon nations—the northern countries—alive. Through centuries of tellings the northern traditions developed formulas, expressions, phrases, metaphors, and symbols that preserved the themes and morals of the tales while individual poems and stories changed and grew with the culture. The critical nature of preserving the stories and the

emphasis on oral tradition becomes most clear when exploring the way in which Snorri chose to compose the poetic *Edda*.

The direct combination of poetry and prose within Snorri's prose *Edda* reflects the traditional means of storytelling in the northern countries, and it demonstrates a reverence for oral history more subtly through the characters themselves. For much of the prose *Edda*, Snorri, or the imagined narrator for the text, is not the one telling the stories. The characters themselves—the members of the Æsir—tell the guests of Valhalla of their own triumphs and deeds. The frame story told by Snorri revolves around the Æsir telling stories and reciting poetry. Snorri takes on the role of scribe instead of mediator, recording a conversation in which the Æsir explain the intricacies of Old Norse poetic constructs to Ægir as the reader watches. By engaging in this form of storytelling, Snorri creates a sense of second-handedness in the prose *Edda*, a technique Tolkien exhibits most explicitly in the *Lord of the Rings* series.

Among the other aspects of storytelling and poetic construction that Tolkien borrows from Old Norse construction, second-handed storytelling arises often throughout *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy when characters separated for extensive amounts of time reunite. Instead of tracking the stories in “real time” through all timelines, which could make the elaborate stories even more complex and confusing, jumping from one story to the next and crossing timelines and characters plots, Tolkien chooses to allow certain characters the opportunity to relay their stories themselves, just as Odin and the Æsir in do the *Edda*.

Tolkien uses this second-handed storytelling most frequently in *Two Towers*. In this second volume of the trilogy, the nine members of the Fellowship of the Ring split

into the four groups, each with its own plot line—Frodo and Sam; Merry and Pippin; Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli; and Gandalf—and rather than convoluting the story even more by focusing on all four storylines, Tolkien makes Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli as the auditors of Gandalf’s and Merry and Pippin’s stories.

In a narrative sequence that recalls the tale the Æsir tell regarding Odin and his brothers’ destruction of the ice-giants and the creation of Midgard, Tolkien uses Merry and Pippin to tell the story of the retaking of Isengard from Saruman by the Ents. Instead of presenting the action first-hand, as at the battle of Helm’s Deep only two chapters before, the Hobbits recount the action in great detail for the delight of their audience, allowing Tolkien’s readers to experience the event just as Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli do—as listeners, not participants.

Snorri and Tolkien create a loop of storytelling in which the text tells a story through others telling stories. Snorri employs this method of second-handed storytelling to reflect the way in which the tales would have sounded originally before he wrote them down. He creates the illusion of orality in a literary text by turning his readers into listeners so that they may comprehend the patterns and rhythms of this ancient art form of the north. Tolkien uses a literary representation of orality to reflect the Eddaic texts that he so valued and wished to honor through his own texts, creating the same reverence for storytelling in his characters as is found in the ancient traditions.

Chapter Two

The Poetics of Creation

An avid champion for all things northern, Tolkien naturally drew inspiration for the creation of his worlds from the tales of Old Norse mythology. Despite his devout Catholicism, the religious aspirations of Middle-earth reflect more of the Old Norse traditions than Tolkien's Christian ones. The known gods of Old Norse literature discussed in chapter one correspond quite directly to the high beings of Middle-earth—Ilúvatar and the Ainur. This distinct similarity between the mythologies allows readers to draw conclusions regarding inner workings of the creation of Arda and the way in which its inhabitants live through the ages. Although Tolkien used his vast knowledge of several ancient mythologies in creating the world of Middle-earth, by aligning his immortal realm with the Old Norse tradition, Tolkien provides his readers with the means to analyze the other aspects of the world itself, including its vast use of music and poetry.

By making the world of Middle-earth polytheistic rather than monotheistic, Tolkien automatically draws the audience away from reading through the Christian perception of the immortal realm and into one more foreign and ancient—adding depth to the world that he could not have accomplished had he aligned his mythology with the Christian mythos. Like the gods of Asgard, Tolkien's mythology possesses one highest being—Ilúvatar—who resembles Odin All-father as the leader of the immortal realm, and the secondary god-like characters—the Ainur—who possess qualities and characteristics similar to the Æsir. Both mythologies possess a pantheon of high beings, ranked in a hierarchy among themselves but still set firmly atop the grand racial hierarchy.

The contrast between monotheism—the belief in one all-powerful god who oversees and creates all life—and the complexities of polytheism, in which multiple gods share responsibility for the governing forces of the world, immediately draws the mythology of Middle-earth away from Christian beliefs and towards alternate religious practices. Marjorie Burns discusses the binary opposition of the Old Norse and Christian framework within Tolkien’s world in her essay in Jane Chance’s critical anthology, *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*. Burns says, “Like Snorri, Tolkien’s interrogatory framework introduces a pantheon,” or community of godly figures, automatically aligning his immortal realm with that of the *Edda* (165). The mythology of Arda consists of a multitude of gods, each commissioned to husband various aspect of the created world and oversee the prosperity of that natural phenomenon. Using the construct of the pantheon, Tolkien draws attention away from the Christian conception of the supernatural and focuses on the various polytheistic religions of the world—Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Old Norse, among others. However, Tolkien’s refusal to define the Ainur as gods separates them from the other ancient systems of belief and firmly alludes to Old Norse constructs.

After his created mythology drew critical attention, Tolkien denied that the Valar represented god-like individuals at all. “[Tolkien] plays on the misperception human ignorance brings,” meaning that though mortal men looked upon the beings of Asgard as gods they, the Æsir of the *Edda*, did not consider themselves as such (Burns 165). As the pinnacle of the hierarchy of being, the Ainur, like the Æsir, reap the benefits of possessing qualities that those below them do not have—the ability to create worlds, superior intellect, and immortality—but they differ from the all-seeing, all-knowing gods

of Christian or other religions because lower life forms revere them but do not worship or glorify them.

The hierarchy of being forms a crucial element in the creation of mythologies and the ways in which the races that inhabit them interact with one another and with the great ones. Though Odin and the Æsir hold higher places on the hierarchy and possess powers and abilities that the other races of their world may not possess, the lower races do not pray to or worship them as in the Christian tradition. Instead, men and beasts of the Old Norse tradition regard Odin and the Æsir in Valhalla as all knowing, highly respectable creators, whose favor one must strive to obtain in order to share in their knowledge. They often have guests in their great house, making Valhalla a physical place to which a person—or dwarf or elf—could venture. This construct directly contrasts the Christian concept of heavenly realm and afterlife, which a person only reaches through living a good and wholesome life and which lies specifically outside the physical realm and within the spiritual.

Even though Asgard sits above Midgard physically (as depicted in figure 1), the races of Old Norse mythology can travel between the realms by means of the rainbow bridge. The rainbow road, Bifrost or Birfrost, tangibly bridges the void between realms, allowing the races to pass from one world to the next without

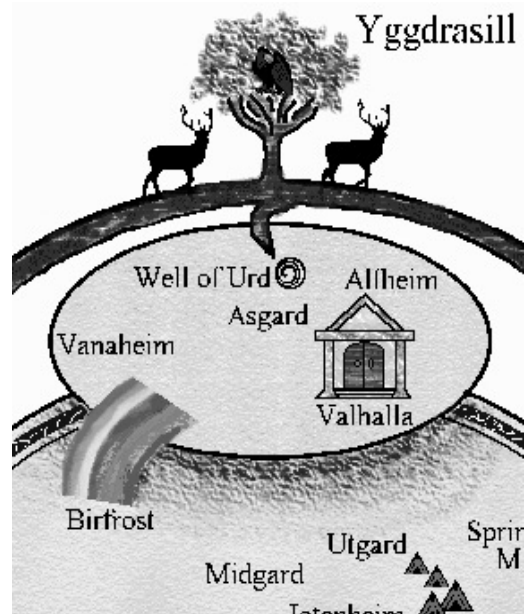


Fig. 1. Illustration of Yggdrasill, depicting the physical location of the realms with Asgard set in the heavens above Midgard, connected by the rainbow road Bifrost.

much hindrance. High—Odin—explains to his guest Gylfi that there is “a bridge from the earth to the sky and it is called Bifrost You will have seen it, and possibly you call it the rainbow. It has three colours and great strength, and it is made with more skill and knowledge than other constructions” (Snorri 21). Although few races have the capability to travel by means of Bifrost, it allows the Æsir quick and unhindered travels between the realms. Throughout the Eddaic texts, the reader encounters guests in Valhalla whom the Æsir welcome to feast and share in their vast knowledge before returning home.

In the first chapter of the prose *Edda*, “Gylfaginning (The Deluding of Gylfi),” Snorri describes how King Gylfi, who ruled over the lands that occupy present-day Sweden, ventured to meet the Æsir and learn from them. Not only did the Æsir invite Gylfi into their halls, but Odin shared the creation story with him. Odin, however, disguised himself as the three chieftains of the Æsir instead of revealing himself to Gylfi—purely for entertainment’s sake. This allowed Gylfi to experience a higher level of confidence when addressing Odin, not knowing his full influence in Valhalla, and to ask more probing and intricate questions.

Although physically capable of receiving guests in the hall, Odin and the Æsir do not often receive these guests in their actual physical form but instead disguise themselves in order to play tricks on lesser beings and for their entertainment. The power to project this kind of illusion, demonstrated by Odin presenting himself as three separate individuals rather than one, illustrates the extraordinary abilities of the Æsir, which no other race possesses, and places them high above the mortal King Gylfi in the hierarchy of being.

Similar to Odin and the Æsir, Ilúvatar, the great One, is the supreme presence and the pinnacle of the hierarchy in Middle-earth. He does not resemble the unreachable force worshipped by mortals, like the Christian God, even though he fathered the Elves and devotes himself to all life in the world he has created. He sits at the top of the hierarchy,



Fig. 2. A Map of Arda depicting the physical separation of Middle-earth from the Undying Lands and Valinor—the home of the Ainur.

but he does not oversee and dictate the lives of the lower being in his created world, contrasting the Christian God's rule over all life on Earth. Like Odin and the Æsir on Asgard, Ilúvatar and the Ainur live their lives apart from the rest of Middle-earth in Valinor in the Undying Lands, located across the sea from the main lands, to the west in Middle-earth (as seen in figure 2). The Ainur play an integral role in the dynamic of the world, oftentimes walking among the Elves and Men of Arda. In this respect, the high ones of Middle-earth and the hierarchy they fall into align with makeup of the Old Norse beings who reside on Asgard; because when the Ainur walk among the races on Middle-earth, they never appear in their true form, just as the Æsir disguise themselves from visitors to Valhalla.

Although the Elves, the race most often visited on Middle-earth by the Ainur, always know they are in the presence of one of the Holy Ones, the unimposing forms they take to walk among the Elves make it easier for the lower races to interact with them. Just as Gylfi speaks to Odin unknowingly, making him more confident in his hall, the Elves approach the Ainur in lesser form. This gives the Ainur a means to interact with the children of Ilúvatar without overly intimidating them.

Just as Odin reigns supreme in Valhalla and the Æsir fall in line respectively under him, among the Ainur a strict hierarchy exists with Ilúvatar firmly on top, Manwë and Melkor below him and so on. Burns describes in depth the correspondence between the Valar (the Ainur) and the Æsir within the two mythologies:

Though the matching of Tolkien's Valar to the Northern gods is by no means exact (there is too much Tolkien would wish to change), it is easy enough to pair certain Valar with certain Asgard gods. Among Tolkien's queens, gentle Estë is a clear version of Frigg, the Norse goddess of healing. Yavanna, giver of fruits, is an easy match for Asgard's Idun, whose apples keep the gods young... (168-69)

Burns continues her discussion of the Ainur by focusing on the differences between the Tolkienian mythology and Eddaic constructs by pointing out the simplicity of language that Tolkien uses to describe the "gods" of Middle-earth in contrast to the Snorri's Eddaic language. She claims that instead of using muddled and "unflattering material that clutters the beginning of Norse mythology," such as the account how Gylfi's introduction to the Æsir consisted of three different forms of Odin, Tolkien provides his readers with a single creative being who gives life to the Ainur (Burns 165-66). Instead of introducing all the high beings at once and giving them multiple names and faces from the start, Tolkien

simplifies the story to make it accessible to readers more familiar with, and highly devoted to, the Christian mythological construct.

As a unitary creative entity rather than the “all-father,” like Odin, Ilúvatar displays other qualities of the Christian God—omnipotence, compassion, enduring love for the creatures he has created—while the Ainur share a basic resemblance to the heavenly angels within the Christian hierarchy. The lack of divinity among these highest of creatures sets the mythos for the world of Middle-earth apart from Christianity. Burns claims that Tolkien uses these subtle similarities to create a dynamic and ancient mythological setting that can still “satisfy the religious beliefs of the modern [world]” (176). In doing so, Tolkien allows his readers to see that his constructed mythology alludes, even if only slightly, to their Christian beliefs as well as to one foreign to them, and this provides the means for accessibility to the masses.

Although Tolkien uses aspects of the Christian mythology to engage his readers, the predominant mythological model for Middle-earth does not depend on Christian sources. The lack of religious undertones in the mythos of Middle-earth mimics that in Old Norse mythology. The lower races of the respective worlds regard such high beings as Odin, the Æsir, Ilúvatar, and the Ainur as all-knowing and of elevated status, but their rank does not imply omnipotence or a dwelling set entirely apart from the “mortal” realm. They do not resemble the grand, petty gods of Greek and Roman mythologies or the one unknowable and omnipotent God in Christian beliefs. Ilúvatar and the Ainur, and Odin and the Æsir, rise and fall with the goings-on of their fellow races, and the races below them on the hierarchy of being admire and seek wisdom from them and aspire to their understanding of the worlds. The great ones may not resemble the all-powerful gods

of other mythologies, but they hold unending life and, therefore, watch the ages of Middle-earth and Midgard pass before them.

Understanding that Tolkien established the basic construct of his mythology using Old Norse mythological sources rather than a Christian one—the hierarchy of being and the divine but not god-like creatures that reside at the pinnacle—a more in-depth analysis of the creation story may take place. Although the creation of Middle-earth does not directly correspond to the creation myth described within the prose and poetic *Eddas*, the mimetic nature of Tolkien’s musical creation story for Middle-earth reflects the poetic and symbolic creation of Midgard. Tolkien might never have reached his goal of creating something predominantly new if he merely reproduced an established mythology. To create a unique and individualized story with subtle Norse influences, Tolkien identified key aspects of the creation of the human world as chronicled by Snorri in the *Edda* and enhanced them in order to build his own mythology. In the creation of Middle-earth, Tolkien not only aligns his mythology with that of the Old Norse tradition in order to imply a dynamic and ancient history, but he also establishes music as a predominant and crucial factor in the histories of Middle-earth.

Reflecting the Old Norse tradition of poetry and oral tradition and the poetically symbolic creation of Midgard in the *Edda*, Tolkien develops his mythology around the use of music in preserving the histories of the world—just as poetry immortalized Old Norse traditional tales—and he begins to do this during the first moments of Middle-earth. The grandest musical feat displayed in Middle-earth is the creation of the world itself, which establishes for the importance of music for the later ages of the world.

Before Middle-earth possessed races of Elves and Men and Dwarves to sing the tales of days of old, the land and skies and waters sprang from the void through song, establishing the literal history of Middle-earth in this musically oral tradition.

Middle-earth's great being, Ilúvatar, possessed a disposition as poetic and sonorous as Odin and all the gods of Asgard combined. Tolkien describes his voice in *The Silmarillion* as smooth and lyrical, and although he did not speak directly in song when the Ainur—the Holy Ones—came from him, their awakening and enlightenment progressed through the musical harmonies of Ilúvatar's thought. Tolkien's supreme being developed and ordered the world over, which he reigned through peaceful harmony and music, from the Ainur to the lower yet still musical races of Arda.

Ilúvatar first created the Ainur with his thoughts and mental melodies. From the beginning, he communicated to them themes of music and asked them to sing for him and make him glad. Keith Jensen notes:

Ilúvatar's intent [was] to create a harmonious, in-sync music that would bring forth great beauty; however, he . . . already allowed for each member of the Ainur to bring his own 'spice' to the music, which would indicate that he is already allotting them free will. (104)

By giving the Ainur free will in their rein over the music of Middle-earth, Ilúvatar demonstrates his desire to share control over his created lands, establishing the hierarchy of being with himself and the Ainur firmly on top and in command of the creation of the world, like sons of Bor in the creation of Midgard.

Verlyn Flieger analyzes Tolkien's use of music and the concept of free will in her essay, "The Music and Task." She explains that by giving the Ainur rein over the music and by providing them each with the ability to contribute to the Divine Theme in various ways, Ilúvatar, "[r]ather than prescribing free will as a constant factor . . . simply allows

for its operation” (164). She alludes to the idea that Ilúvatar knowingly gave the Ainur free will to create Arda through music in the ways that they would, but that in giving them this gift, he also bestowed on them the consciousness he deemed necessary for creation.

Because of this gift of free will and consciousness, the divine theme belongs to the Ainur, but Ilúvatar devised and outlined it before bringing them into being. By providing the Ainur free will and the ability to construct a world through music, he gave them the sense of freedom that they needed for such a grand demonstration of creativity while predetermining the outcome of that free will. Although he did not design the specific creation himself, he bestowed upon the Ainur the means of creating the world he desired and destined. The Holy Ones held control over the creation of the lands themselves, but coming from the thoughts of Ilúvatar, they only enacted what he deemed necessary and had the free will to act as he designed them to act.

The descriptions that Tolkien gives his readers in the first lines of *The Silmarillion* set his musical theme. Tolkien establishes that Ilúvatar created the Ainur by and for the purpose of music. Ilúvatar brought them into existence through his musical thought and willed them to come together in a Great Harmony, using the free will he bestowed on them to create and bring life to Middle-earth from that harmony. Since Ilúvatar brought the Holy Ones into being through his harmonies, they possessed the capability of creating great harmonies and music themselves. Each of the Ainur possessed a different part of Ilúvatar’s consciousness and, therefore, presided over different aspects of the harmony of Middle-earth. Tolkien describes the results of Ilúvatar harkening unto the Ainur to create Middle-earth as follows:

Then the voices of the Ainur, like unto harps and lutes, and pipes and trumpets, and viols and organs, and like unto countless choirs singing with words, began to fashion the theme of Ilúvatar to a great music . . . and the music and the echo of the music went out into the Void, and it was not void. (*The Silmarillion* 3-4)

As the voices of the Ainur spread across the void, they gave birth to the lands, geographical landmarks, lush ecology, and flowing streams of Arda until they filled the void space with the world for Tolkien's mythology.

A philologist by primary vocation, Tolkien's use of a means of creation so void of language causes confusion among critics and scholars because of the inherent lack of language within the creation story. John Holmes discusses this apparent paradox in his essay "'Inside a Song': Tolkien's Phonaesthetics," by equating songs without words with language itself. He claims, "music conveys meaning (sometimes) without apparently engaging the semantic mechanism of the brain," indicating that music can convey messages and meaning without the direct influence of words within the song (Holmes 26). He continues, "the word is not a counter for the thing itself but somehow the essence of that thing in sound, is all the more credible because we know of a phenomenon that does something like that. That phenomenon is *music*" (26). The absence of words in the establishment of Middle-earth does not detract from the musical creation's meaning within the story or its connection to the songs and poems that would later be sung, spoken, and recorded in later ages of Middle-earth.

Although poetry and music constitute different art forms, a permanent bond exists between the two: music is lyrical, spoken (sung) poetry. Remove the instrument or rhythm of a song, and words with rhythm and a symbolic message remain, or take the words out of a song and the melody and harmonies continue, and a discernible tone and

theme still exist within the sound, as Holmes discusses. Songs constitute poetry taken to a new level that in essence continue to exemplify poetry. Peter Kreeft discusses the connections among music, poetry, and prose in *The Philosophy of Tolkien*. He argues, “music is not ornamented poetry, and poetry is not ornamented prose. Poetry is fallen music, and prose is fallen poetry,” which insinuates a set hierarchy within art forms (162). Music lords over poetry and poetry over prose, making music the highest and most influential artform according to Kreeft. Poetry, he goes on to say, “is music made speakable” (162). As Kreeft discusses, in the hierarchy of art, music is set on top with poetry and prose falling underneath it. This reflects Tolkien’s hierarchy of being, with Ilúvatar and the Ainur firmly on top as they command and possess the greatest talent for this highest form of art and manipulate it to perfection in order to create a world out of void space using it. In this respect, Tolkien elevated his mythology above that of the Old Norse tales, transforming the Eddaic reverence for poetic construct into an even higher artistic form—music—in his mythology.

Unlike the creation of Middle-earth, the creation of man’s earth in the *Edda* does not occur through music but through an act of violence. Odin’s highly symbolic description of the sons of Bor dismembering and crushing the King of the Ice-giants—Ymir—to create the landscape known as earth, Midgard, may not evoke musical qualities, but this hyper-violent creation contains certain poetic constructions of Old Norse mythology already demonstrated. It may seem tenuous to compare Tolkien’s musical mythology to the Old Norse creation story of Ymir’s body symbolically creating the earth, but Tolkien held no interest in simply following a formula. This poetic creation

and the ultimate ties of music to poetry connect the Norse creation story to that of Middle-earth. Since the sons of Bor's symbolic use of Ymir's body to create the earth embodies the poetic, the Old Norse cultures revered poetry as historical preservation, and lyrical, melodic poetry forms music, the connection between the creation stories becomes more clear. The somewhat logical progression through the stages of poetic construction—moving from the symbolic to the poetic to the musical—links the Old Norse tale to that of Middle-earth by. When Tolkien uses music to create Arda, he plays off the poetic nature of the creation of Midgard as an influencing force on his mythology.

Snorri describes in great detail the way in which the sons of Bor use the mutilated body of Ymir to form the geography of Midgard. “[O]ut of his blood the sea and the lakes” were made; they formed earth itself from Ymir's flesh and bones, the stones from his teeth and broken parts of the bone, and his skull was used to make the sky by setting it over the earth (Snorri 12). By making each piece of Ymir's body into a different aspect of Midgard, the sons of Bor demonstrate the magnanimous power of the symbolic: the ability to develop something from nothing, the literal building of worlds by means of symbolic representation. The poetic nature of such an act—using one object to take the place, or create, another—represents a kind of poetry in motion.

The waters of Midgard do not run red as blood because Ymir's blood, though used to create them, only did so symbolically. His life blood, the sustaining force of his body, brought life to Midgard. Mortal man and beast of earth cannot survive without water, and so, Ymir's sustaining lifeblood now sustains the races of Midgard. The sons of Bor may not have made the earth from music or poetry, but the poetic symbolism with which they made it ties this creation story to the high art forms. As various pieces of

Ymir's body symbolically construct the earth, its water, and its sky, it alludes to the highly symbolic nature of poetry. Each piece of the Ice Giant held a specific metaphorical purpose. The final product of the sons of Bor's actions emerges methodically and with exact precision, mimicking the formation of poetry. Poetry is not merely written or spoken at will but gets meticulously developed and constructed according to rigorous rules that define every aspect before the appearance of the final poetic product.

The poetic nature of the creation story demonstrates the reverence for the symbolic and for poetic construction in Old Norse traditions. In the poetic *Edda*, the poetry presents itself twofold:

From Ymir's flesh the earth was made,
and from his blood, the sea,
mountains from his bones, trees from his hair,
and from his skull, the sky.

And from his eyelashes the cheerful gods
made earth in the middle for men;
and from his brain were the hard-tempered clouds
all made. ("Grimnir's Sayings" 57)

The elder *Edda* sets the entirety of the poetic creation in poetic form, giving it the rhythm and metre of poetry to emphasize the symbolism of the act. Snorri quotes from the elder, poetic *Edda* in his prose *Edda* to provide his readers with the cadence of the creation, but the narrator conveys the majority of the story through prose. The two renditions give the reader the full sense of the use of poetry and oral tradition in Old Norse mythology—symbolism made the world, and the symbolic constructs and formulas aid in the creation and passing of poetry, which shapes the prose instruction about how to form the poetic constructs. The rhythm provided by the poetry in the Eddaic creation allows for Tolkien's progression to a musical creation.

Although the formation of Midgard itself and the telling of its story in the *Edda* does not happen musically, the poetry of the act and its retelling represent key aspects of northern tradition. A master such as J. R. R. Tolkien would never entirely duplicate an existing creation story formulaically to compose his own. Tolkien's genesis narrative does not constitute a major alteration of the Old Norse creation tale. Instead his process involves a logical progression from the highly symbolic tale of the *Eddas* through the poetic preservation of the story itself, and the understanding that music is lyrical poetry, to a final construction of Tolkien's own world through music.

As Tolkien notes in the passage from *The Silmarillion* describing the harmonies the Ainur, music rang out more dynamically than one singular, matched pitch or sound. It incorporated the most melodious of instruments and the most skillful of choruses. Each of the Ainur, who possessed various traits given to them by Ilúvatar—compassion, intelligence, craftsmanship, reasoning—produced a different aspect of Middle-earth. Collectively they made all the lands, but each individual influenced specific aspects of that land, depending on the gifts harmonized into the members of the Ainur by Ilúvatar. One of the Holy Ones created the great mountain ranges of Middle-earth, while the lands grew lush with trees and grass by the music of another, and the rivers and waters flowed strong by the song of yet another. Each component of the harmony of the Ainur proves crucial to the making of Middle-earth, and with Ilúvatar's guiding melody, the Ainur create Arda, the world for Ilúvatar's children, the Elves, and the other races of Middle-earth.

This aspect of the Middle-earth creation story recalls the individual symbolic creation of earth by Odin and the Æsir because the Ainur divided the tasks of creation

among themselves in a manner similar to the way in which each piece of Ymir's dismembered body represented a different aspect of the earth. Ilúvatar imposed different tasks upon Manwë, Melkor, and the other Ainur to create Middle-earth, and Tolkien crafted this division of labor for the Ainur to reflect the way the sons of Bor divided Ymir's body. The *Eddas* and Tolkien both mention the land, the trees and ecology, the rivers and the seas. Each aspect of nature is attributed to a part of Ymir or a specific member of the Ainur, demonstrating the connection between symbolic and musical creation. The two art forms connect in their representation of life and the world despite their differences. Kreeft states that "poetry is fallen music," which suggests why Tolkien's creation story may appear more elegant than the barbaric and violent creation of earth in the *Edda*. Poetry, as a lesser form of art than music, does not evoke the same emotional response from an audience as music does.

The melodies of creation within *The Silmarillion* create visions of beauty and harmony. Pure song bore the pure form of Middle-earth. *Grove's Dictionary of Music* defines the phenomenon achieved when two or more sounds come together to create one harmony as combination tones. It describes, "a curious aural phenomenon [that is] perceived when two pure tones of considerable intensity are sounded together" ("Combination tones"). The music of the Ainur represents a combination tone as it is "produced by pure tones. But [it is] also produced, in more complicated and less easily perceived form, by complex tones" ("Combination tones"). The musical dynamic of the Ainur, which brings together the harmonies of lutes and harps and countless choirs, creates this phenomenon of tones as the sounds of the Ainur's voices vary from one another and yet create such perfect harmonies they bring forth a world from void space.

Like the violent, symbolic creation of the *Edda*, Ilúvatar's instillation of free will amongst the Ainur allows the music in Middle-earth to be manipulated by any of the Holy Ones. Jensen explains, "Tolkien was a storyteller at heart, and stories need conflict, just as humanity does," so that the harmony of Middle-earth could not achieve perfection in its final form because that would create a world without conflict, a boring world in which nothing happens, one in which the races merely pace through their day-to-day lives without conflict or resolution, the complexities of life which make it worth living (Jensen 103).

Since Tolkien uses music as the creation of *all* things, he also uses it create the conflict needed to make the world engaging and real. Through the character of Melkor, Tolkien provides the conflict by adding dissonance to the creation music. *Grove's Dictionary of Music* explains, "[w]hen two musical tones are sounded at the same time, their united sound is generally disturbed by the beats of the upper partials," meaning that a part of the whole mass of sound, whether for the purpose of high impact or minute variance, weaves through and breaks "into pulses of tone, and the joint effect is rough. This relation is called *Dissonance*" ("Consonance and Dissonance"). Melkor weaves these pulses of tone into the Divine Theme to create corruption in Middle-earth, and though Ilúvatar ends and restarts the Divine Theme twice to put an end to the dissonance caused by Melkor, on the third ringing out of the Divine Theme, he allows the dissonance to resonate completely.

Pure harmony does not necessarily constitute "good" music. Like a perfect world without conflict, pure harmony in music can become stagnant and boring, leaving listeners distracted from the music as they search for something to grasp and retain their

attention. Adding dissonance to a piece of music makes it more dynamic and interesting.

Dissonance creates intrigue for the listener while enhancing the overall sound of the piece. A composer must use it carefully so as to not detract too much from the melody and harmony of the piece or to make it sound disjointed and off key. Too much or inappropriate dissonance can distract the listener and impair a piece of music by drawing attention away from the melodious sound and focusing attention on the discord.

Dissonance must resonate subtly enough to intrigue without getting in the way of the natural rhythm and melody of the song. This balance of consonance and dissonance makes the sound of the song the “spice” in the music to which Keith Jensen refers. It creates an interesting combination of sounds, and, in the creation of Middle-earth, a dynamic world in which the races must make choices and combat challenges to keep their lives impactful, complex, and worth living.

The ages of Arda, designed by Tolkien, reflect the conflict and resolution found within our own world. Tolkien created Middle-earth to fit squarely within the already known world and, therefore, could not create a world of bliss and complete harmony primarily because such a world would not reflect reality. Even though Arda possesses races unknown in the world of his readers, the conflict created among the races of Middle-earth distinctly reflects the trials between nations and races in the known world, and these trials make living significant to the races who must overcome the conflict and resolve the issues.

The races of Middle-earth would not possess anything worth fighting for without the discord Melkor sowed into the Divine Theme. The acknowledgment of forces outside of harmony provide the races of Middle-earth with the drive they need to conquer the

forces that threaten their safety, happiness, and prosperity. The life given to them by Eru could easily be taken for granted because a peaceful life leaves want for nothing, therefore giving them nothing to strive towards and hope for. The races of Middle-earth possess the same free will bestowed upon the Ainur, providing them the opportunity to enhance and hinder their lives and the lives of those around them. This free will and discord allow for the complexities of interaction and for individuals' ability to manipulate the world around them.

Melkor sows dissonance and intrigue of life into the music of Middle-earth maliciously. Ilúvatar bestowed on Melkor an elevated level of knowledge and power, and so, as “the theme progresse[d], it came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining” (*The Silmarillion* 4). Tolkien describes Melkor's dissatisfaction with the melody that Ilúvatar has chosen for the creation of Middle-earth. Having greater understanding and knowledge than the other, Ainur gives him the capability to discern melodies of his own, which he can weave into the harmonies of his brethren. His advanced understanding and need for power created an inharmonious or harsh sound—dissonance—in the song of the Ainur and the shadow of Middle-earth within the first moments of its existence.

Jensen views Melkor as, “an individual who makes a choice, and Ilúvatar sanctions his choice because [he] (or Tolkien) wants to make free will part of his world, to flesh it out, to make it interesting” (106). As mentioned before, without dissonance, music sounds tedious and uninteresting. By weaving the dissonance into the Divine Theme, Melkor sets conflict and struggle in motion. He sets the stage for other acts of free will to mold the histories of Middle-earth, for good or for evil. The music of the

Divine Theme, the harmony and the dissonance alike, establishes a world of joy, pain, euphoria, sorrow, and anguish, and it allows the inhabitants to decide what to do with those emotions and trials and provides them with the means for feeling hope—a crucial emotion for a living creature (110-11). Jensen claims, “the creation of dissonance is necessary for there to be the conflict needed to allow humans to learn from their mistakes and to grow” (103). Without the dissonance woven into the Divine Theme of the Ainur, the possibility of conflict disappears and with it the imperative need for the inhabitants of Middle-earth to use reason to solve problems and make decisions.

The races of Arda have to live with the decision Melkor made, and it is up to them—the races—to employ the free will given to them. By allowing free will and giving Melkor the means to sow dissention into the land of Middle-earth, Ilúvatar provided his people with the power to make what they would of their own lives. The Divine Theme brought good as well as evil into Arda, and the races must determine what to do with the decisions and capabilities endowed upon them. After bestowing free will on his people, Ilúvatar steps back from his children—the Ainur, the Elves, and the other races of Middle-earth—and gives them the freedom to do what they will with the world he has created for them (105).

Unlike the Christian mythos in which mortal man draws his strength and courage from an understanding that an omnipotent God forever watches and guides his actions and decisions, instilling in him the knowledge that if he makes correct decisions the eternal kingdom of heaven awaits him in the afterlife, “Norse mythology was unique in confronting certain and ultimate defeat” (Shippey 152). Because of the dissonance sowed into the Divine Theme, evil inevitably will present itself to every man, woman, elf,

dwarf, and hobbit in Middle-earth. It is unavoidable. But unlike the Christian God who promises ultimate good rising above the ashes and always coming out victorious, Old Norse mythology and the dissonance of the Divine Theme in Middle-earth demonstrates that, “[e]vil will triumph, but it will still be evil; those killed resisting it, even those killed beyond death... will still be in the right” (152).

In Middle-earth, as Old Norse mythology, evil may reign victorious, but those who chose good instead of evil receive the blessing of the journey to Valinor—as the Elves—or the peace of death. In the tales of Old Norse mythology, evil reigned for long spans of time, primarily seen in the havoc caused by the Ice Giants. They destroyed worlds and races through their strength and evil spiritedness, but this does not set them above those they conquered morally. Their victory was still evil, and therefore, those they felled held the moral high ground even if they did not come out victorious in battle. Tolkien reflects this in Middle-earth. Despite their extensive persistence and reign in Middle-earth, Morgoth and Sauron never receive any kind of reprieve from their lives there. Their perceived destruction is never solidified as final; pieces of their malice continue to thrive throughout Middle-earth and never gives them contentment or rest. The morally good willed characters, however, sustain happy and fruitful lives and peaceful ends. The Elves travel to Valinor to live eternally with the Ainur, and the lower races pass into death with strong hearts untainted by evil even if evil forces caused their deaths.

The capability for evil created by Melkor during the first moments of Middle-earth riddle the ages of Arda that follow the creation with trials and tribulations to overcome. Although Tolkien demonstrates in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy that good can win at times, the mere fact that Sauron continues to live and “thrive” in the last years of

the Third Age in Middle-earth validates Shippey's theory regarding Old Norse mythology, the prevalence of evil, and its impact on Tolkien's mythology. Sauron, as a follower of Melkor during the First Age, always returns to do more damage and break down the lives the races of Middle-earth have built. His heart corrupted by the original dissonant sound of the Divine Theme, he and Melkor affect the lives of all the races of Middle-earth through every age.

Free will and the capacity for evil define a major theme throughout the stories of Middle-earth, and they begin within the first seconds of the creation of Middle-earth. The music corrupted by the free will and greediness of Melkor affects all the ages of Middle-earth, making the lives of the races that follow dependent on the choices they make instead of on the harmonies that created them, originally pure and without stain but corrupted by Melkor's need to create something solely of his own.

Tolkien not only gives his readers faërie stories of great men and beasts, but he also depicts, in great detail, the way in which their world came into being. Like all mythologies, the creation story of Middle-earth provides necessary background information for the readership. Not only does knowledge of the creation story allow readers to understand the world they travel through in *The Hobbit* and the trilogy better, but it also establishes the importance of the high beings and contextualizes the use of music and poetry within the entire mythology. By Tolkien's design, the burden of a full, working knowledge of the mythology of Middle-earth is not necessary for a reader to enjoy the *Lord of the Rings*. The experience of reading and engaging in the story of the War of the Ring, however, is enhanced by prior knowledge and understanding of the

creation story. Although readers still understand the history of Middle-earth without reading *The Silmarillion*, this additional knowledge gives them a greater comprehension of Tolkien's mastery of oral tradition, poetry, and music.

Tolkien's intricate detail in describing the first moments of Middle-earth and his heavy reliance on music to bring his world into existence establishes the importance of music throughout the tales of Arda. The importance of oral history, storytelling through poetry and music in the first and third ages of Middle-earth, and the knowledge that the Ainur sowed the seeds of music from the beginning of Arda's creation make these art forms crucial elements in the history of Arda. The races of Middle-earth preserve their history through music, poetry, and song because their history developed from literal song.

The traditions of oral storytelling and the importance of the poetry found within the *Edda* heavily influenced the way in which Tolkien created the mythos of Middle-earth. The Æsir's reliance on storytelling and poetry to preserve their history and tales of great deeds, as well as the symbolic and poetic creation of Midgard through the dismembering of Ymir's body, resonate through the creation of Middle-earth and provides the means through which its races preserve their history and praise their great heroes.

The following chapters will explore the first instance of the power of music in Arda after its creation, from its use in winning battles to its value among the races in preserving history, and the reverence all the races have for this art form. Although the racial hierarchy allows for some races to create music more easily and "better" than others, the musical traditions of Middle-earth's great entities, such as the Ainur and the Elves, does not get lost on its smallest and most simple of creatures, like Hobbits, who

may be small and have no real talent for the creation of great music themselves, but who possess a reverence for the art rivaled by no other race in Middle-earth.

Chapter Three

The Hierarchy of Music

After establishing the critical importance of music and linking the creation of Middle-earth with the creation story of the *Edda*, Tolkien uses the musical establishment of life to effect the most crucial of moments of interaction among the races of Middle-earth. Although Middle-earth possesses a hierarchy of being in which certain races have a greater capacity for music making than others, music's universality—in the sense that almost all the races possess the ability to create or at least revere music—gives it the power to bridge gaps between the various creatures of Arda and sway hearts as a most moving form of persuasion. The hierarchy of musical capability in Middle-earth mirrors the racial hierarchy and the affinity for poetic constructs in Old Norse mythology, with the Æsir possessing the greatest talents for and knowledge of poetry while the lower races' abilities depend on how far below the Holy Ones they reside on the chain. Within the hierarchical construct in Middle-earth, those at the top possess the greatest abilities for creating music, demonstrated through the Ainur's creation of Arda through music, while those at the lower end, such as Hobbits, who have little musical ability themselves, possess the gift of appreciation for music rather than any grand capability to compose.

The distribution of inclinations towards music-making and the ability of producing great music echoes the poetical hierarchy found within the *Eddas*. Snorri's *Edda* explores how the knowledge of poetry came into the possession of the Æsir. It involves generations of the knowledge changing hands—from a single person, Kvasir, who has it all residing in a vat of mead consumed by any person deemed worthy of it by its keeper, Gunnlod, to Odin, who steals the mead and shares to with the Æsir (Snorri 83-

85). By drinking the mead, Odin controls the intricate knowledge of creating poetry and brings it back to Asgard to share with the Æsir and select men chosen for their capacity of making poetry.

In the shape of an eagle, and with all the mead in his stomach ready, “Odin entered Asgard [and] spat the mead into the vats,” so that the Æsir could share in the knowledge and bestow it on others as they saw fit. However, because Suttung—one of his cohorts in his plan to steal the mead, whom he has double-crossed—chases Odin in an attempt to regain the mead, “it was such a close call, with Suttung almost catching him, that [Odin] blew some of the mead out of his rear” (Snorri 86). The Æsir offered this tainted mead to anyone who wanted it and deemed it “the bad poet’s portion”; only a select few could drink from the pure mead expelled from Odin’s mouth (86). These varying classifications of the mead established the hierarchy of poetic creation in Asgard and the surrounding realms.

The Æsir did not drink the impure mead. Instead, they drank the mead Odin had intended to spit into the vats, and therefore, they possess the highest knowledge of poetic ability and sit at the pinnacle of the pyramid of being and poetic construction. The Æsir also allowed the wisest of men to drink the mead from the vats, bestowing upon them the knowledge of poetry possessed by the Æsir, although they do not possess the same capacity for creating poetry. This elevates specific men in the hierarchy while leaving others below. Those who drink from the tainted mead make up the lowest rung on the poetic ladder. The Æsir give this mead to anyone because it does not convey the same knowledge as the vats containing the pure, untainted mead.

Similarly, Ilúvatar and the Ainur, residing at the pinnacle of the hierarchy in Arda, possess the greatest capacity for making music in Middle-earth. From the harmonies of the Ainur an entire world comes to life, and as the races of Middle-earth fall in line underneath them, so does the musical ability of each race as a whole. Tolkien would never simply recreate a story in order to allude to it; instead he employs the concept of mimesis to draw on the tales he adores to pay tribute to them and to develop an original story of his own.

Erich Auerbach discusses the use of mimicry in Western literature a great deal in *Mimesis*. Throughout this text, he provides ancient and contemporary examples of texts using not only previous texts but the physical objects to glimpse visions of reality within fiction. He claims that mimesis is “[t]he interpretation of reality through representation or ‘imitation,’” indicating that artists and authors develop their own worlds with the help of others and of the “real” to better grasp the chaos of reality (Auerbach 489). Tolkien’s mimetic representation of the Old Norse tradition of hierarchical poetic constructs reflects the ways in which the ancient culture, and Tolkien’s contemporary one, views the construction of art and society. As Auerbach explains, mimetic representation does not include direct or distinctive relationship between reality and the fictive. It subtly draws inspiration from reality to further develop the culture of the fictive.

In Middle-earth, no vat of mead exists for the races to drink from in order to get their musical ability. Instead, Tolkien imbued each of the races in the hierarchy of being with musical ability equal to its rank.

Elves

As the children of Ilúvatar himself, loved even more than the Ainur by Him, the Elves create music and poetry that is considered the greatest and most moving of all the races of Middle-earth. Tolkien makes it apparent throughout the *Lord of the Rings* that the music and voices of the Elves ring superior to all other races. They hold this honor because their birth came directly from the harmony of Ilúvatar, which gave them the ability to recreate the music that brought them to life. As the first entities besides the Holy Ones to inhabit Middle-earth, they not only enjoy premier placement in the hierarchy of being but receive the reverence of the other races for their abilities to compose songs and make music.

The story of Beren and Lúthien within *The Silmarillion*—the original story of the complicated love between Man and Elf echoed in the trilogy by Aragorn and Arwen—demonstrates the power of Elven music in the first age of Middle-earth. Lúthien’s initial appearance in Tolkien’s mythos depicts the power of her song. Tolkien describes how:

Keen, heart-piercing was her song as the song of the lark that rises from the gates of night and pours its voice among the dying stars, seeing the sun behind the walls of the world; and the song of Lúthien released the bonds of winter, and the frozen waters spoke, and flowers sprang from the cold earth where her feet had passed. (*The Silmarillion* 194)

The power of Lúthien’s song banished the winter around her and brought life to spring. Mirroring the way in which Tolkien describes the music of the Ainur during the creation story, he likens Lúthien’s voice to a lark—something with which his audience can identify—so that the readers fully understand the glory and beauty of the sound. The strength of term Tolkien uses to describe Lúthien’s voice—“heart piercing”—grounds the

reader in the magnitude of the song she creates, illustrating the vitality and life-bringing nature of Elven music.

By comparing the music of the Ainur to instruments and countless choirs singing, Tolkien places them above Lúthien in sound and might in the minds of the readers. The sound of the lark is undeniably beautiful, and the image that Tolkien paints by describing the magnificent bird taking flight through the night among dying stars and the rising sun shows the reader the passion with which Lúthien composes her song. The reader also understands, however, that the sound of a single majestic bird cannot compare to that of the purest of musical instruments and countless voices rising at once in perfect harmony like the Divine Theme. Lúthien brings spring from the dead winter; the Ainur bring land and life from void space.

The imagery in this passage from *The Silmarillion* demonstrates the power of song within Middle-earth and the ways in which the Elves can manipulate it. As one of the first and most beloved children of Ilúvatar, Lúthien sings a song that has more strength than even those of her own kinsmen. The capability to bring life from barrenness by the power of her song is not a common trait among the Elves. She could not create a world from a void as the Ainur had done, but because she resides only a couple of levels below the Ainur on the hierarchy, she has the power to reestablish life.

In his discussion of the dissonance sung into the Divine Theme by Melkor, Jensen also discusses the significance of Lúthien's song and her manipulation of the product of free will from that dissonance. By the time of Beren and Lúthien, the Ainur had imprisoned Melkor, he served his sentence, and the Ainur released him on the promise that he would not use his ill will to cause strife in Middle-earth again. However, when he

betrayed this promise, Ilúvatar revoked the name he had given to him and made him take one given to him by the lower races of Middle-earth—Morgoth. H. V. Routh discusses the avoidance of name—as demonstrated when the lower races of Middle-earth give Melkor a different name—in his study, *God, Man, & Epic Poetry*, explaining how, “Primitive men refused to give certain things their direct name, either to avoid attracting their attention, or to protect them from exposure to the power of witchcraft” (3). The suffering Melkor caused in Middle-earth through his corruption and ill will instilled fear in the hearts of the first races, so the avoidance of the name creates a sense, albeit perhaps a false sense, of security against the evil power it invokes.

Beren and Lúthien come before him in this form—Morgoth rather than Melkor, and using the free will bestowed on her by Melkor’s own dissonance, Lúthien sings Morgoth and the rest of his court to sleep. Tolkien writes, “out of the shadows [she] began a song of such surpassing loveliness, and such blinding power, that he listened perforce...All his court were cast down in slumber, and all the fires faded and were quenched” (*The Silmarillion* 213). Possessing a song more powerful than the dissonance sowed by Melkor in the Divine Theme because it is more pure and true, Lúthien overcomes the wrath of Morgoth—Melkor—in the quest for the stolen Silmarils.

Jensen uses this triumph, as well as the instance in which “Lúthien willingly dies and goes to the halls of Mandos [where] she sings of her sorrow to the Keeper of the Houses of the Dead, and for the first time in the Arda’s history, he is moved to pity,” to illustrate how the musical ability of the Elves, particularly Lúthien, contains a power only slightly less formidable than that of the Ainur themselves (Jensen 108). In fact, because Lúthien’s songs embody the pure and majestic qualities of Middle-earth, they overwhelm

the dissonance of Melkor and the hardened heart of the Keeper of the Dead. In creating the dissonance, Tolkien allowed for the races of Middle-earth to make decisions in favor of good or evil to keep the world of Arda engaging and dynamic. Because Lúthien chooses the path of beauty and righteousness, she possesses a power greater than that of evil—a theme that will span all three written ages of Middle-earth.

Elves do not hold a monopoly over all musical capability in the mortal realm of Middle-earth, however, but as the races travel down the hierarchy of being so does their capability to create and manipulate music. The Ainur can create entire worlds, Lúthien and the other great Elves of the first age of Middle-earth could manipulate emotions and the minds of other men and life-forms as well as sing a frozen, barren world back to life, and Dwarves, Men, and Hobbits all possess certain, more limited degrees of musical abilities and appreciations as well.

Dwarves

The exact placement of the Dwarves on the hierarchy of music is difficult to pinpoint due to their unorthodox creation. Tolkien describes in *The Silmarillion* how Aulë desired the coming of the Children so greatly in order “to have learners to whom he could teach his lore and his crafts,” that he forged the Dwarves in secret and in darkness due to his impatience in waiting for the designs of Ilúvatar (37). In his haste, he not only created the first races of Middle-earth, but also doomed the Dwarves forever to living in the shadow of the actual children of Ilúvatar—the Elves.

This small rebellion by Aulë caused the dwarves to hold themselves in very high regard when it comes to the hierarchy of being in Middle-earth, but the other races—

primarily the Elves—look upon them as lesser beings because of the unorthodox and unsolicited nature of their creation. The Dwarves benefit from, in addition to suffering for, Aulë overwhelming impatience. Like the Elves, the Dwarves have a certain affinity for music, though not to the same extent. Where the Elves received an elevated capability to make music and can use it to manipulate and sway those around them and pass down the great histories of Middle-earth, the Dwarves’ musical talents come in the form of imparting knowledge, inspiring great deeds, and spurring merry-making in a moment of quiet or reflection.

Unlike the Elves and other races of Middle-earth who toil over the creation of their music and poetry so that it can be made and perfected before performed, the Dwarves have the ability to create song in the moment. This talent allows them to raise spirits in whatever situation they encounter by mocking and making light of that situation when tension may be high. *The Hobbit* specifically displays this when Bilbo Baggins’s quiet shire home gets invaded by a band of unexpected Dwarves. In his anxiety regarding his home and possessions as the Dwarves tear through Bag End demanding food and drink, Bilbo is unable to partake in the elation the Dwarves experience in each other’s presence. Bilbo’s anxiousness eventually spurs the dwarves to song:

*Chip the glasses and crack the plates!
Blunt the knives and bend the forks!
That’s what Bilbo Baggins hates—
Smash the bottles and burn the corks!*

*Cut the cloth and tread on the fat!
Pour the milk on the pantry floor!
Leave the bones on the bedroom mat!
Splash the wine on every door!*

...

*That's what Bilbo Baggins hates!
So, carefully! Carefully with the plates! (The Hobbit 12)*

Even though they had neither seen nor met Bilbo before that time and, therefore, could not have been prepared for his reaction to the ruckus they cause in his home, the Dwarves ready a song out of thin air to aid in the grueling task of washing the dishes. The band of Dwarves' ability to rise together in song to lighten a monotonous task epitomizes their place on the hierarchical ladder. Through the tales of the third age of Middle-earth, the reader rarely encounters such spur-of-the-moment composition. The majority of the songs with ancient origins are passed down for ages through generations to incite the merriment, but this talent on the Dwarves' part illustrates their elevated place on the hierarchy of being.

The Dwarves fall under the Elves in terms of the musical hierarchy because of their inability to bring life in the way that Lúthien could in *The Silmarillion*, but they reside above most of the races of Middle-earth because of their ability to create great song in groups at a moment's notice in order to bring merriment to situation. Their songs also inspire within their listeners, as chapter four discusses. When the Dwarves come down from their dishwashing-induced high and settle into the task at hand—the journey to reclaim the Lonely Mountain—the song that they sing encourages Bilbo to rethink the journey he had already dismissed out of hand. In this sense, they possess the same kind of strength of song as the Elves, only to a slightly lesser degree. Influencing a Hobbit through song is not as dramatic as moving the Keeper of the Dead to pity as Lúthien had done, but Dwarf music deserves admiration nonetheless.

Men

Although the Elves and Dwarves, as the first races of Middle-earth, have the highest capacity for music-making and the greatest gifts of persuasion and mood elevation through music and poetry, the other races of Middle-earth also partake in the high art form. Almost all of the races of Middle-earth have songs in their histories and, like the Elves and Dwarves, their music falls in line with the overall hierarchy of the races.

The music of Men in Arda does not possess the same qualities as the music of Elves and Dwarves. The songs of the Rohirim and the Men of Gondor more closely align with the ways in which Men have used song in the known world, the world in which Tolkien lived—not the one that he invented. By providing a race of Men to whom the reader can relate, Tolkien drew more readers in because they found a piece of their known world within Middle-earth. Like the stories of Odin, Beowulf, King Arthur, and the other great heroes and villains told within our world, the Men of Middle-earth glorify their own heroes and their triumphs over their enemies.

In his discussion of developing society and cultures Routh describes how, “as the different individuals of a community conform to the same customs and cultivate the same manners, . . . the characters which they severally admire, and which appear to belong to the same epoch, are often representative of widely different stages of development” (6). Just as we admire the heroes of the *Edda* and the other great epics of our world, the Men of Middle-earth revere the stories of their ancestors and align themselves with the customs and traditions of the men who came before them. In doing this, Men create a

way of preserving the tales of their ancestors so that they can learn from them more easily in the coming ages.

The primary function of the music of Men is to engage the listener in past events, a concept and practice widely used throughout the races of Middle-earth, but used most predominately among the races of Men. Although their music does not have the appearance of magical power that Elven music does, and they do not rise up in newly created merry songs, such as the Dwarves do, the songs of Men last generations through the constant passing of stories. The songs do not pass from one bard to the next unchanging in their entirety, but the sounds and themes of the ancient bards get borrowed and reused from one generation to the next. By using the same formulas to tell specific stories, the history of the people and culture is preserved, mimicking the practices of Old Norse oral tradition (Magoun 461). The poetry and music of the days of old cannot be recreated in full from one generation to the next but, instead, is played upon by each generation so that the exact words of the song or poem itself may not be the same as before, but the theme, tone, and general attitude of the piece remains intact and preserve the moments held in high regard.

In *The Two Towers*, Tolkien demonstrates this after Gandalf has released King Théoden from the grips of Wormtongue and Saruman. He writes:

[Théoden's] voice rang clear as he chanted in the tongue of Rohan a call to arms.

Arise now, arise, Riders of Théoden!

Dire deed awake, dark is it eastward.

Let horses be bridled, horn be sounded!

Forth Eorlingas! (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 2: 506)

This call to arms, though not music, contains the poetry of the Men of Rohan. The design of the music and poetry of Men engages them in the turmoil of the time and inspires them

to take up arms in the coming battle for the love of their country and their kindred of old. By using the qualifier ‘a’ to set up Théoden’s cry instead of ‘the,’ ‘their,’ and ‘Rohan’s’ Tolkien creates the understanding that this chant is not a specific call to arms that would pass, intact, from one king to the next. Instead it calls on the past and the present simultaneously to incite the necessary excitement and determination in his men.

By calling Théoden’s cry “a call to arms” instead of “the call to arms” Tolkien implies the distinctive lack of progression and preservation over and throughout the history of Rohan. King Théoden calls upon the same themes of the kings of old and of the culture of his people, such as the allusion to the horses and the direct reference to his men as the Riders of Rohan, to incite a passionate response from his men. In calling them the Riders of Rohan, he reminds them of the ancient order of men who first protected the city, and he allows them to align themselves with such a distinguished and honored past and encourages them to be great soldiers of Rohan themselves so that they may become the great soldiers alluded to in the ages of men to come.

Tolkien designed the music of Men to excite in listeners a desire to participate in the music. It encourages great deeds that will lead future generations to compose songs about them and never let their stories die. The men whom Théoden inspired through his call to arms defeat the overwhelming army of Orcs at the battle of Helms Deep and again at the gates of Minas Tirith at the end of the War of the Ring. Because of the great deeds displayed by these Men and Elves and Dwarves, the Men of Gondor and Rohan call the people to rejoice through song in their victory:

*Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor,
For the Realm of Sauron is ended forever,
and the Dark Tower is thrown down.*

...

*Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West,
For your King shall come again,
And he shall dwell among you
all the days of your life.*

...

Sing all ye people! (Lord of the Rings 3: 942)

The songs of Men play a large role in their culture and tradition. They cannot have the impact on other races the way Elvish and Dwarvish music can, but among the races of Men, music excites extraordinarily moving and inspiring actions. The music and poetry of the Men of Middle-earth recalls the mead Odin bestowed upon the worthy men of Midgard when he returned from his exploits. Tolkien's Men do not possess a grand knowledge of music and poetry like the Æsir had, but their gifts exceed those only allowed to drink from the tainted mead expelled from Odin's rear—the lesser poet's mead.

Positioned lower on the hierarchy of being than Elves and Dwarves, Men and their music naturally would not hold the same power or significance as those above them. But they are a privileged race in Middle-earth—given the gift of death by Ilúvatar and loved dearly by him—and so their music and poetry plays an important role in Arda alongside that of the Elves and Dwarves. In fact, after the third age of Middle-earth, in which Sauron is defeated, the Elves retreat to the Grey Havens and the age of Men in Middle-earth begins, elevating them in the hierarchy among the races, as well as opening the door for the power of their music to sweep over Middle-earth and gain more strength and significance than it had prior.

Hobbits

Not all of the music in Middle-earth comes from the great races—Elves and Dwarves and Men. Tolkien relegates Hobbit music, though important within the culture of the Shire, to a relatively insignificant point in the musical hierarchy in the grand scheme of Middle-earth. This does not mean, however, that it holds no prestige in the workings of Arda or the histories of the ages. Just as the lesser poets of the *Edda*, those whom Odin and the Æsir decreed could drink from the tainted mead in order to gain a small semblance of poetic knowledge, so are the Hobbits and other lesser races of Middle-earth.

Although Hobbits hold no great capacity for composing music and poetry, they do possess a sincere reverence for the craft. In fact, few races in Middle-earth admire these art forms more than the Hobbits. So, despite their low rung in the hierarchy and their limited abilities in music making, the Hobbits find great joy in listening to, singing, and attempting to compose great music. The unrivaled reverence the Hobbits have for music enables the Dwarves to woo Bilbo to join their aiding party through song. Bilbo had remained un-persuaded to run off into the countryside in search of gold and riches until the Dwarves took up the ancient tale of the Lonely Mountain and the treasures that lie within. The Hobbit's rapture at the Dwarves' music brought out "something Tookish" in him, convincing him that the journey was worthy of embarking upon (Tolkien *The Hobbit* 15).

Bilbo does not have a love of just listening to music. The unlikely burglar particularly loves making up songs and singing for the joy of it, like the Elves and Dwarves. He keeps the “Red Book of the Shire” in which he transcribed all of his own songs as well as some of his favorite songs that he heard through his travels, including those of Tom Bombadil and the Elves. The reader does not encounter Bilbo singing very often throughout *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*; instead, Tolkien uses Frodo and Sam as the voices through which the audience hears Bilbo’s songs—yet another example of songs passing from one generation to the next to preserve the culture of Middle-earth and, in this case, of the Shire in particular.

Within the first few chapters of the trilogy, the reader experiences the vast difference between Hobbit and Elvish music as Frodo and Sam set off on their journey to meet Gandalf in Bree. As they meander along, as any good Hobbit would do, Frodo breaks into one of the many walking songs Bilbo devised for such a purpose:

*Home is behind, the world ahead,
And there are many paths to tread
Through shadows to the edge of night,
Until the stars are all alight.
Then world behind and home ahead,
We'll wander back to home and bed. (The Lord of the Rings 1: 76)*

The lightness of the poem mimics the frivolity with which the Hobbits live, undaunted by the trouble of the outside world. The rhythm of the song is chipper and light, with rhyming couplets instead of a more complex construction. Rather than the cryptic and solemn mood of most of the songs of the Elves and Dwarves, with intensive and encoded messages one must muse over and fight through to analyze, the meanings within Hobbit music reside for the most part on the surface, designed to keep their hearts light and their parties happy.

Tolkien purposefully follows this chipper song of Hobbits with Sam and Frodo's first introduction to the Elves. This was the song as Frodo heard it:

*Snow-white! Snow-white! O Lady clear!
O Queen beyond the Western Seas!
O Light to us that wander here
Amid the world of woven trees*

...

*O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!
We still remember, we who dwell
In this far land beneath the trees,
Thy starlight on the Western Seas. (78)*

The theme of the Elf song differs significantly from that of Frodo's. The Elves incorporate the intricacies of substantial poetry outlined by the Æsir, such as meter, rhythm, imagery, and symbolism. The Elves use the many facets of poetic technique in order to build a song worthy of the great lady about whom they sing. The allusions to her give the clues to her identity, instead of stating her name from the beginning. This complexity sets it in stark contrast to the easily understood, decipherable, and straightforward Hobbit song.

Though he did not begin his musical career as a great poet and composer like so many of the Elves, Bilbo's dedication to the craft and love of the art pay him in due time, at the house of Elrond. After years of separation, when Bilbo and Frodo get reunited in Rivendell before the creation of the Fellowship, their first meeting occurs over a new song composed by Bilbo. To see the many Elves seated around Bilbo listening intently to his song, an honor for a Hobbit in itself enchants Frodo. But the true honor comes at the end when the Elves wish to hear to song a second time and admit they cannot tell the difference between the parts written by Bilbo and the ones written by Dúnadan—

Aragorn. Not only do the Elves enjoy his song so much that they desire to experience it a second time, but they also compared his composition to that of the rightful King of Gondor, a Man of Middle-earth set much higher upon the hierarchy of being and of music than the Hobbit. Even though he resides so low on the hierarchy, Bilbo receives great praise from the Elves, which elevates the music of the Hobbits on the hierarchy ever so slightly through his efforts.

The musical hierarchy spans all lengths, from Ilúvatar creating the divine beings of the Ainur from his thoughtful melodies, to the Ainur creating Middle-earth out of void space with their songs, to the races of Arda and their respective musical talents. However, certain races within Middle-earth possess no musical talent whatsoever and no desire to engage in the music of Middle-earth in the slightest. The races brought to life through Melkor's wrath or Sauron's desire for power reside on the lowest rung of the musical and racial hierarchy. These races cannot be counted among the natural races of Middle-earth.

Sidney Lanier, author of *Music and Poetry*, argues, "the artist loves beauty supremely; because the good is beautiful, he will clamber continuously towards it, through all possible sloughs, over all possible obstacles, in spite of all possible falls" (21). This assumption solidifies the concept of the musical hierarchy within Middle-earth—those most pure and good possess the highest capacity for the creation of music and the farther down the hierarchical ladder one climbs the less pure the music becomes. This does not mean, because of their lesser ability for music compared to the Elves, that Hobbits' purity and goodness are in question, but as the Children of Ilúvatar, the Elves, constitute the most pure race within Middle-earth and have the greatest capacity for overcoming, thus creating the most melodious of harmonies from strife.

Orcs

The bastardization of Elves, which Sauron created—Orcs—have no musical ability or any reverence for music and poetry whatsoever. Their sole desire revolves around destruction and wreaking havoc, causing mayhem and decay. “The artist loves beauty supremely,” Lanier claims, and Orcs love only death. For this reason, they reside on the lowest rung of the hierarchy of being—lower even than the cave dwellers and demons. Orcs also appear to have no capacity for music making. They cannot create life themselves because they epitomize death, and death defines their purpose in Middle-earth. Music itself comprises an act of creation, and since they cannot create life, in the sense that they cannot create more Orcs through their relations with each other, they do not have the capacity to create music either.

Those races with a reverence for life and with the capacity to see and appreciate music possess the ability to create. The poetry, or even just words, forged in Mordor sound so unclean that Elrond forbids them from being spoken within the borders of Rivendell. Not only do they not have the capacity for musical construct, but the Orcs’ language also repulses the other races so much that the semblance of poetry they have—the inscription on the ring of power—disgusts the higher races of Middle-earth.

Those at the pinnacle of the racial ladder within the poetry of the *Edda*—the gods of Asgard—and those they deem worthy of poetic knowledge possess the highest understanding of the poetic intricacies of meter and language and the capacity to use that knowledge. Estelle Jorgensen describes how, “Tolkien’s association of singing with the

forces of good suggests that singing can benefit society as it transforms those who undertake and undergo it, and its effects can likewise ripple outwards to benefit the wider society” (16). This assessment parallels the hierarchy of music, as those higher in the hierarchy embody the pureness of the Divine Theme more fully than those on the lower rungs, and they, therefore, have a greater capacity for music and a greater influence over others through their music. If singing coincides with the forces of good in the world of Tolkien, it is not surprising that the Ainur and the Elves have such elevated musical abilities and the races of Orcs possess none whatsoever.

Despite the fact that the various races of Middle-earth fall in varying ranges of musical capability, those who possess an affinity for music, no matter where they fall in the hierarchy, use the music to contain and preserve the history of their people, culture, and significant members of their race. Although the Elven songs are older and more intricately composed than those of Men and Hobbits, the goal remains the same. Tolkien reflects the oral traditions of the Old Norse mythologies and cultural histories in order to give depth to his created mythology through music.

Chapter Four

Historical Preservation by Music

Novice readers, primarily those who approach Tolkien's works as pure adventure and fantasy fare instead of intensively researched and influential works of literature, may see the pages upon pages of lyrical passages in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* as mere trifles whose purpose lies in breaking up long and complex stories with moments of frivolity, but in Tolkien's stories of Middle-earth, the musical interludes are of the utmost importance in understanding the world he has created. The descriptions found in *The Silmarillion* of the first age of Middle-earth set the groundwork for the running metaphor of music as the essence of creation, and they illustrate the general importance of music in Middle-earth. The Ainur created Middle-earth through music, and music has driven all subsequent creation and inspiration throughout every age, making it the basis for the construction of Tolkien's mythology. Moving past the creation story, readers continue to encounter the overwhelming influence of music upon Tolkien's created world. Tolkien used music not only to create the land of Arda, but also to illustrate the long history of Middle-earth to his readers, providing them with the background information they need to put the pieces of the story together as it progresses, directly linking the mythos of Middle-earth to the oral tradition and poetic values and formulas of Old Norse mythology.

Without *The Silmarillion*, readers of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* do not know the intricate history and impact of music in Middle-earth. But contained within the epics of the War of the Ring and the Third Age of Middle-earth, Tolkien continuously stresses the importance of music and glorifies the past ages of Arda through the music of

the respective races. Even without exposure to the extensive accounts of the First and Second Ages of Middle-earth, “One has a sense here, both narratively and poetically, of entering and leaving the story in the midst of something ongoing that stretches back to a distant past and forward to a time in the future” (Jorgensen 4). Jorgensen discusses Tolkien’s use of music in order to progress through the ages of Middle-earth in her article, “Myth, Song and Music Education,” in which she explains, “Tolkien leaves the impression that there is more to tell that has not been told,” implying that the musical interludes woven throughout the *Lord of the Rings* immerse the reader in a world that was created and extensively developed long before they encountered it and that will continue on for ages after they have put the book aside (4).

This phenomenon, creating depth and time within a narrative, drives Tolkien’s mythology forward into the next age in order to engage his readers in something greater than themselves. Mary Chamberlain explains, “[a]ll notions of time involve narrative as their primary descriptor, for narrative necessarily involves tense; narratives look not only backward but forward, locate the self in the present, and pivot the focus through time and space” (146). The musical practices of the races of Middle-earth use this concept of tense and narrative to provide the illusion of “something ongoing,” as Jorgensen describes. By providing narrative within the text, Tolkien explores all the ages of Middle-earth within the text of a single novel or a trilogy of novels.

Music, naturally, does not convey the whole of the histories of Middle-earth. Like any culture or civilization, designated keepers of historical records exist within Arda. The eldest of the races—Elves, Dwarves, and Wizards—witnessed, participated in, and recorded the events of all the ages of Middle-earth in order to preserve the magnanimous

events of the years in heavy detail. In his study *God, Man, & Epic Poetry*, Routh discusses the pattern of human progress in regard to culture and tradition and the challenges of preserving the history and traditions of a culture. He argues, “One of the most besetting weaknesses of civilized man . . . is the inevitable tendency to let our vision be narrowed by the vastness of our experiences” (1). In this sense, the keepers of history in the Middle-earth could not possibly hold all the absolute truths of Arda despite their possession of the greatest amount of information regarding its origins and happenings.

Tolkien charges characters such as Gandalf, Galadriel, Elrond, and Saruman with the possession of the vast histories of Middle-earth. As a few of the eldest of all living creatures of Middle-earth, not only do they possess the written histories of Arda, but they experienced many historical events first-hand. Routh claims, “our mental horizon is becoming so large that we have not time or ability to see more of it than concerns our own difficulties and failures” (1). In this vast knowledge, the elders become blinded by the woes of the past and focus on the details of this wealth of knowledge in order to connect all the pieces and proclaim some great truth about the present and future. They treasure the history and the music but seem to look past the smaller intricacies of each race, and the histories that they pass from one generation to the next, in order to see the greater picture of Arda as a whole.

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, at the Council of Elrond, readers experience this vast knowledge in a concentrated area. Leading to this point, Gandalf spent a great deal of time in the Shire and elsewhere, gathering tidbits of knowledge and passing them on. But at the Council, the bigger picture comes into focus and entire histories of Middle-earth get strung together. The tales connect quite easily and naturally, as Tolkien

designed them to do. To simplify the entire histories of Middle-earth in to one unfortunate stream of events in a matter of hours, however, seems misguided and somewhat dangerous. The heart of the matter of the Council of Elrond boils down to a few lines of poetry, “*One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the Darkness bind them*” (*The Lord of the Rings* 1: 248).

Since the entire premise of the trilogy revolves around these lines, it would be false to claim that they hold no importance to the story because the poem lies outside of the musical history of Middle-earth. By focusing so acutely on the doom and the grand picture of the histories instead of investigating the smaller, more specific histories and songs dispersed throughout the races of Middle-earth, the elders and grand keepers of history allow their concentration to become overly centralized. This tunnel vision may cause the council members to overlook something quite crucial. Moments before the recitation of the inscription on the Ring, Bilbo had broken into some of his own poetry, exclaiming:

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

*From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken:
The crownless again shall be king. (241)*

Bilbo’s poem, although it is only that of a Hobbit, carries great weight in the histories of Middle-earth. Even though the council seems to disregard it during the meeting as merely a whim of fancy, it proves an important prophecy for the coming year in Middle-earth, when Aragorn regains Minas Tirith and takes his rightful place on the throne of Gondor.

This poem seems insignificant at the moment of the council meeting, but, as Routh explains, “Such, in its simplest form, was the episode which one story-teller handed on to the next, each adding the tone and spirit of his own age” (Routh 12). After the War of the Ring, Bilbo’s small, insignificant poem carries more weight and adds to the overwhelming knowledge that the elders package and store for the future. He contributes to the growing tone and spirit of the Third Age of Middle-earth by expressing his own renditions of the more minor histories without detracting from—but, in fact, adding to—the grand historical context.

Unlike the council members, Tolkien and his readers know and understand the significance of Bilbo’s poem. The placement of the poem in such a significant context indicates its weight within the scheme of the storyline. If Tolkien meant the poem as a mere trifle, a smaller, less important audience would be given to Bilbo. Instead he situates the poem during a pivotal moment in the trilogy—at the Council of Elrond during the debate regarding the fate of the Ring of Power. To clarify, the poem appears miniscule in the eyes of the great keepers of the histories—Gandalf and Elrond—because they possess the knowledge and ability to grasp the full extent of the histories of Middle-earth and, therefore, do not take much stock in the poetry of Hobbits. This disregard stems from the low rank of Hobbits in the hierarchy of music. Even though the poem seems insignificant to the Council at the time, the reader can discern its importance by identifying and analyzing Tolkien’s specific placement of it. If Tolkien did not intend for the audience to stop and take notice, he would not point it out with such great emphasis—making Bilbo the center of attention for even just a moment at the council—suggesting

that the music and poetry of Middle-earth, no matter which race or entity presents the song is vital to the histories the reader experiences.

Thomas Carlton and his co-editors of *Thinking about Oral Histories* transmits the concept of ancient, oral histories into the contemporary world, characterized not only by the wide availability of the written word but also by the recording of the specific sounds that oral histories produce in the moment of oral performance. They look at the proper forms of recording oral histories as well as the nature of oral histories in general. In their introduction, the editors claim, “Oral histories are born to fly, to shine, to shout, to provoke. We do not go to all this trouble to hide history in the dark security of an archive” (6). They examine the way in which future generations can, should, and will consult oral histories to learn about the past cultures, politics, economics, and relations, and “we accept the fact that they will revise our interpretations to fit their own moments in time” (6). Tolkien, like the ancient cultures before him, understood this principle of learning from the oral histories because of the ways in which they meld to fit the time and place of each rendition, making them much more accessible and, to an extent, more valid sources of knowledge and morality than those housed in volumes of text.

As the Old Norse mythological tales transformed through generations of tellings, keeping the same basic theme and morals through formulas, so do the songs and orally told stories of Middle-earth progress. The elders keep records and consult texts to learn the recorded history of Middle-earth, but the songs and stories of the ancestors of the respective races makes the histories of each race more easily accessible to all. And the poetic and lyric representations of history, in a way, present a more accurate account than

the volumes of text, because they grow with the culture, which makes them pertinent to the contemporary society.

By providing his readers with the knowledge that characters, such as Gandalf and Elrond—figures wise enough to preserve the history of Middle-earth within their own minds—exist in Middle-earth, Tolkien gives his readers the means of receiving a condensed understanding of the history of Arda. Tolkien’s use of music throughout his mythology of Middle-earth allows readers to see into and experience the past of all the races and the lands they traverse. Like their Old Norse predecessors, the music and poetry of Middle-earth give vicarious thrills and incite emotional responses to the tales of old, enabling the listener to participate in the grand adventure.

The music of Middle-earth develops scenes of great Men and Elves and Dwarves and creates visions of glorious days of old and days that have yet to come. The music preserves the deeds of the past for future generations to draw inspiration and learn from as they embark on their own great journeys. This practice of remembering the past through music mimics the means by which the tales of Old Norse mythology remained preserved and came to be so revered within the *Edda*.

Amy Amendt-Raduege’s essay in *Middle-earth Minstrel* provides an interesting perspective on Tolkien’s use of music and how art commemorates the past. She claims that some scholars have “argued that all literature is commemorative, recording the memory of departed heroes, lost cultures, and eras of human history that have otherwise faded into oblivion” (115). This argument supports the idea that in recording the history of Middle-earth the way Tolkien does, he commemorates the heroes he has created in a

twofold manner: the annals of Middle-earth commemorate the world he created, and within that world, he composes songs and poems for his characters to recite and learn from. This recalls Snorri's composition of the *Edda* to commemorate the heroes and great beings of Old Norse mythology while preserving the oral tradition within the tales themselves, as most of the stories in the *Edda* are records of the Æsir telling stories.

Amendt-Raduege goes on to say, "songs and stories of the past, especially in pre-literate cultures, keep the dead always present, always available, always living" (115). The Eddaic texts demonstrate the Scandinavian reverence for poetry and its use in glorifying their high beings in Asgard and the ages past. Without the passing down of orally told stories and spoken poetry, the tales within the *Eddas* would be lost. One of the first steps in creating a thriving culture lies in the development of the means with which to preserve the history of that culture. Without knowledge of the past, tradition gets lost due to the disappearance of the knowledge and specific practices of each generation. Spoken stories and oral poetry provided the means of passing the histories and mythologies within cultures that had yet to become literate and, therefore, could not solidify the tales with the written word.

Without great heroes and deeds worth singing about, the means of preserving history through poetry and music becomes irrelevant. The establishment of oral tradition in order to preserve the history of a people leads to the invention of the "other"—a people or race outside of the defined culture—who, simply by taking the role of "other," challenge the integrity of the lifestyle and mythos of the primary culture. Routh explains that after this creation of the "other," "the next step in human progress was to invent heroes worthy to give battle to these pests...they were not likely to picture their

forefathers as cowed and rejected by them” (30). For the *Eddas*, the immortals of Asgard represent the heroic figures. Their foes take form in the Ice Giants and the other creatures that threatened the realm of the Æsir and human world. In terms of Middle-earth, Melkor and Sauron represent the great foes of the many races of Middle-earth, but the readers encounter smaller foes such as Smaug in *The Hobbit*, whose treachery also inspires songs of great heroes and tales of woe. These tales of heroes and foes, from the *Edda* to Middle-earth, mean to inspire and drive forward the traditions of the culture and engage the current generations in the triumphs of the past. The higher races, more talented in the art of music making, demonstrate this concept most explicitly in the tales of Middle-earth.

As one of the eldest races within Middle-earth, Dwarves have a particular adeptness in creating and manipulating music and storytelling to elicit responses from their audience. Although not considered the greatest of all music makers in Middle-earth—a title reserved for the eldest races of Elves—Dwarves have history almost as ancient as the Children of Ilúvatar and have preserved it. Early in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien introduces readers to this fact when the Dwarves arrive at Bag End to entice Bilbo into joining their raiding party:

*The dwarves of yore made mighty spells,
While hammers fell like ringing bells
In places deep, where dark things sleep,
In hollow halls beneath the fells.*

*For ancient king and elvish lord
There many a gleaming golden hoard
They shaped and wrought, and light they caught
To hide in gems on hilt of sword.*

...

*Far over the misty mountains grim
To dungeons deep and caverns dim
We must away, ere break of day,
To win our harps and gold from him!* (Tolkien *The Hobbit* 14)

Although this is only a portion of the song sung in Bilbo's kitchen, a reader can glean an image of past, present, and future within these lines. A song in Middle-earth has not one purpose but several, and the great poets and songwriters convey a multifaceted message and excite action within a few short verses.

A song such as the Dwarves' demonstrates the poetic ability to remind someone of the past—as seen by calling on the ancient kings and the Dwarves of yore—while depicting great images of the future, such as winning back harps and gold from the dragon Smaug. By calling on past and present, the songs and poetry of Middle-earth entice the present characters to some kind of action. Caroline Bithell, a scholar of musicology, explains, “[m]usic can both reference the past and carry it forward in numerous ways. The frequent association of music with tradition or ritual naturally ensures some degree of continuity with the past,” and, therefore, has the ability to evoke great memories of the past as well as drive a story into the future (Bithell 7). The Dwarves in *The Hobbit* employ this mechanism to pique the interest of Bilbo as well as to raise their own spirits and determination for their adventure.

The Dwarves call for action through their song. They desire to take back the mountain and the hoard the dragon Smaug stole from their ancestors by venturing out on their own quest, which offers them the opportunity for inclusion in the great lyrical histories of Tolkien's world.

As Verlyn Flieger discusses in her article, “The Fate and the Task,” [t]he singing out of Men for something extra is explicit and must be deliberate. Men can transcend the

Music. Their gift is free will, and their task is through the exercise thereof to ‘complete’ and ‘Fulfill’ there heretofore unfinished Music (162). Although the Dwarves of Middle-earth obviously are not of the race of Men, the Dwarf raiding party of *The Hobbit* demonstrates this concept of unfinished music most explicitly. They seek glory and riches and venture against Smaug to regain the mountain and what, they believe, rightfully belongs to them, and they aspire to immortality through songs of their great deeds.

Knowing that Odin and the Holy Ones verbally introduced such an art form to others allows a reader to understand the complex and ancient use of poetic constructs. Oral tradition kept these stories alive, and the characters within them practice oral storytelling as well. Although contemporary scholars may understand that Valhalla and Asgard reside strictly within the realm of the mythological, this does not diminish the significance of the knowledge and practices found within the Eddaic texts. Odin and the Æsir orally demonstrate and explain the concept and intricacies of poetry. The prose *Edda* chronicles the exchange of stories. The Æsir invited Ægir to the halls of as a revered guest and call upon him to share wisdom through conversation and not in the form of a gift of the written word.

Naturally, the oral traditions of Old Norse culture inspired the tradition of oral storytelling in Tolkien. Northrop Frye outlined the pattern of created mythologies through which Tolkien developed his mythos for Middle-earth while drawing upon Old Norse cultures. Frye states, “[m]yths of gods merge into legends of heroes” (51). This basic outline, which describes how legends develop into tragedies and comedies and then into

plots of more realistic fiction, gave Tolkien the groundwork for developing the stories of Middle-earth through oral tradition. The myths of the Old Norse gods merged into the tales of great warriors, such as Beowulf, and then reverted back to mythology in the creation of Middle-earth.

Through poetry and music, cultures and civilizations preserve and manipulate their histories to serve purposes beyond the aesthetic. Lanier argues that music lies outside of the “burden of realism,” and relieves humanity (and Elves, Dwarves, and Hobbits) of the pressures of the present age and time (16). Music, she continues, represents the human cry for salvation from the ordinary to step into a world, or time, less known and more intensely experienced because of its foreign quality (Lanier 16). She argues that exaggerating tales, even slightly, and endowing them with qualities that challenge reality allows them to take on mystical and revered properties.

The music of Middle-earth demonstrates this concept distinctly in the accounts of the mystic and ancient histories of Arda. Unlike many fantasy novels, Tolkien’s obviously fantastic world does not rely heavily on the direct use of magic to advance the story or aid its characters. Only a select few characters possess contemporary notions of magic—particularly Gandalf and Saruman—and they use it only in times of the greatest need. Due to this, many of the younger races of Middle-earth reject many of the dramatically magical songs and histories. By the third age of Middle-earth, the mythology of Arda has progressed through the time of gods—Ilúvatar and the Ainur—to the legends of heroes—the Maiar and the Elves of the first age—to rest upon the comedies and tragedies in the time of Men, which Frye described as the route all mythologies take.

When Aragorn decides to leave the company of the Riders of Rohan to seek further help to battle the siege of Gondor, Tolkien gives the reader this song:

*Over the land there lies a long shadow,
westward reaching wings of darkness.
The Tower trembles; to the tombs of kings
Doom approaches. The Dead awaken;
For the hour has come for the oathbreakers:*

...

*The heir of him to whom the oath they swore.
From the North shall he come, need shall drive him:
He shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead. (Lord of the Rings 2: 764)*

Out of loyalty to Aragorn and the cause they fight for, Gimli and Legolas willingly travel into the Paths of the Dead with Aragorn but not without slight hesitation in their hearts. Gimli particularly, who is younger than Legolas and therefore less knowledgeable of the great and deep magic of Arda, fears what awaits them in the mountain because he does not know what to expect from a song such as this. Although the song speaks plainly about what lies in wait—the undead souls of Men who swore allegiance to Isildur during the earliest days of the Third Age, the Oath Breakers—Gimli cannot fathom an army of the dead residing deep in the mountain waiting for the heir of Isildur to call upon them to fulfill their oath. Magic of this sort possesses ancient and unknown origins completely foreign to the young Dwarf, who knows of dragons and hoards but not of magic powerful enough to freeze an army of men for centuries.

The preservation of this tale through the poetry of the song allows the preservation of the oath-breakers' memory and the Paths of the Dead. Without the song, the oath would have gone unfulfilled, and the siege of Gondor would never have been lifted. In this sense, even the smallest trifle of song and of history become imperative to

contemporary races of Middle-earth. Through the insights gained from histories and songs, the great Men of the Third Age of Middle-earth combat the ancient foe that has emerged again—Sauron. The contemporary heroes can call upon images and tales of the past, when Sauron first arose to take Middle-earth for himself, and learn from them the tactics implemented in his original defeat. By remembering these tales and strategies, Aragorn and the other members of the “contemporary” resistance to Sauron possess an advantage over him by knowing his weaknesses and battle strategies preserved through the storytelling practices.

The music and poetry within Middle-earth not only give the reader a sense of depth and history by referencing the past and calling for action for the future, as the Dwarves’ song does in *The Hobbit*, or by giving rise to mythological construct that transform the realm of reality into something more fantastic, as demonstrated through Gimli’s distrust of the tales of the Paths of the Dead, it also exemplifies the ancient art of glorifying the heroes of the world through immortal song. The heroes of Middle-earth learn from the music of the past as they strive for the immortality that comes with inclusion in the great songs of Middle-earth that will be sung for ages to come.

The music of Middle-earth is cyclical. It reminds hearers of the past, and it draws us forward into the future, as Caroline Bithell explains. John Holmes analyzes Tolkien’s use of music from a philological point of reference, discussing how, “[w]hat fascinated Tolkien was the historical development of letters and words. . . . if we remember that what that sequence of letters represents is a change in *sounds*, we’re back on the trail of music again” (28). From this perspective, the development of music and history follows a

logical pattern of recurring sounds with corresponding written symbols. The language may change over time, but the meanings and the rhythm of the words remains. The songs merge and blend to create the latest and most useful version of the words and sounds to meet the current need. By glorifying the heroes of old in the ancient and the contemporary languages, music inspires future heroes to perform even greater deeds to be added to hymns of the world.

Tolkien demonstrates the importance of oral tradition and music most explicitly in *The Return of the King* as Frodo and Sam trek through Mordor to Mount Doom, and again after they complete their quest. As discussed in chapter three, Hobbits possess lesser abilities to write and compose great songs compared to the other races of Middle-earth, but they have a love for the historical tradition matched by no race. Sam, like Bilbo, holds a particular fascination with the great songs of old describing the histories of Middle-earth and greatly desires inclusion in them one day. Samwise Gamgee, throughout the trilogy, remains constantly in awe of his master Frodo. Sam expresses his desire to experience future songs telling of Frodo's bravery and resilience during the trials of his task—the destruction of the One Ring.

Sam knows that his master's quest entails the stuff of legends and would love nothing more than hear the songs of his tales likened to the other great heroes of Middle-earth. Frodo follows the same paths of the epic heroes discussed by Routh in *God, Man, & Epic Poetry*. In this study he describes how, "a stranger who has traveled from a distant land to accomplish a service for another," epitomizes the qualities of a true epic hero: the type who typically receives immortalization through poetry or song (50). As a citizen of the Shire, Frodo grew up believing the business of the world outside Bag End

did not concern him or the Hobbits around him. He knew Bilbo's great stories of adventure but never desired to partake in them himself. When it became apparent that the task of the destruction of the Ring fell to him and him alone, however, he willingly stepped into the role without complaint or hesitation. The gentle nature of Hobbits has no place in a land like Mordor. When Sauron forged the rings of power the race of Hobbits did not yet exist in Middle-earth, and yet the task of the One Ring's destruction rests on a Hobbit's small shoulders. Racially and individually a stranger to the culture of the rings of power, Frodo nevertheless travels to a distant land in service of the peoples of Middle-earth, embodying everything Routh argues an epic hero must represent.

Tolkien's obvious demonstration of the power of song comes through Sam's reaction to having his dream of Frodo's immortalization being realized. His emotions solidify his admiration of the craft and underscore the importance of the musical preservation of history in Middle-earth. Once the War of the Ring ends and Frodo and Sam sit safely within the walls of Minas Tirith, Sam witnesses his wish granted, and his reaction in the grand hall of Minas Tirith illustrates, in a most obvious fashion, the emphasis Tolkien places on the power of oral storytelling and song. Upon hearing the minstrels desire to sing about "Frodo Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom," Sam "laughed aloud . . . and cried 'O great glory and splendor! And all my wishes have come true!' And then he wept" (*Lord of the Rings* 3: 933). Sam's overwhelmingly emotional response to the news that Frodo's great trial and victory have been immortalized in song for generations to come exemplifies the importance of music in Arda.

By using exemplary characters to display the traditions of oral storytelling and the importance of music and poetry in the preservation of history, Tolkien alludes to the oral

practices demonstrated in the *Edda*. He enhances the concepts introduced in the Eddaic texts to create a world and a culture of his own—completely unclassifiable as a mirror image of any mythological text that came before it. His unique take on the preservation of history through song, though different from the oral traditions found within the *Edda*, echos the ancient crafts of poetic creation and oral history found within the Old Norse tales and establish a connection between ancient Anglo-Saxon mythology and Tolkien’s contemporary mythology for England.

Conclusion

Throughout the stories of Middle-earth, Tolkien alludes to and borrows from larger, more ancient mythologies to create his mythos for Arda. Tolkien would never recreate known stories and call them his own simply by giving the characters and places new names; instead, he presents a somewhat familiar world of faërie and then develops a truly unique mythos based on those already in place. This strategy “was designed to assure that his mythology be taken on its own terms for the imaginative creation that it was” instead of regarded as a mirror image of the works that preceded it (Flieger 153). Tolkien’s purpose resided in developing a mythology for Britain, independent from the ancient systems of belief that came before him, which influenced his study and composition so heavily.

In an overwhelmingly Christian society, which dismisses out-of-hand any religious inclination that does not align with its own, Tolkien had a difficult time convincing readers that a world outside the Christian realm had any kind of merit. In order to create intrigue for his audience and believability around his world, he borrowed from several mythologies in order to create his world apart from the realm of reality while subjecting it to incredibly realistic and believable constructions in order for his readers to become attached and invested in his characters and races.

Flieger argues, “[b]y establishing and following his own rules Tolkien has succeeded in giving his invented world the inner consistency of reality he insisted was essential” (175). This enabled him to provide his readers with a means of engaging with a world of faërie they might otherwise discount as children’s fantasy. The complexities and interwoven mythologies provide an understandable foundation for this foreign world.

Routh describes this process as, “not so much a matter of ‘influences’ as of seeing the thing in its entirety, as it really is” (vi). This expresses the shortcomings of looking solely at the mythologies and processes borrowed from and alluded to within the stories, and it emphasizes the discovery of the mythology of Middle-earth as its own, independent mythos.

As this study has explored, the fact that Tolkien composed a unique and singular mythology does not mean that his influences are not dispersed or identifiable throughout the stories. Knowing the myths that inspired Middle-earth allows a reader and scholar better to understand the complexities of Arda in all their history and glory.

Tolkien’s adoration of Old Norse mythology and all things northern naturally played a part in his imagining of the construction of Middle-earth. He held the poetic tradition and oral storytelling of the northern cultures, to which the efforts of Snorri Sturluson and the compiler of the poetic *Edda* allowed contemporary scholars access, in high regard because of his avid study of the development and uses of language. By using music as the basis for his mythology, Tolkien assured the uniqueness of his mythology and allowed it to “be taken on its own terms for the imaginative creation that it was, without being boxed in by any mythological, philosophical or literary look-alike” (Flieger 153). This also allowed readers to connect the two mythologies and thereby cling to something they knew while exploring a world wholly foreign to them.

Music plays an important role in the histories of Middle-earth, just as poetry does in Old Norse texts and mythos. The sons of Bor created the earth in symbolic acts, the Æsir revere poetry as one of the greatest gifts a being could possess, and the histories and story of the culture get preserved by means of poetry. The oral tradition of poetry in Old

Norse mythos follows a cyclical pattern, with spoken poetry telling stories not only about the great deeds of the northern realm but also about the ways in which one composes poetry. Likewise, all Middle-earth's living things and the driving forces of the land arise from music. Ilúvatar created the Ainur from his melodious thought; the Ainur created Middle-earth through their song; the Elves create melodies that in turn elicit responses and fantastic tales in the minds of the other races of Middle-earth. The extensive circle of melody in Middle-earth encompasses sharp and flat points, the occasional addition of dissonance, and the strong resounding resolution before the melody begins all over again.

The oral traditions of poetry and music in these two mythologies hold vital importance to the cultures that practice them. The hierarchy of being also outlines the poetic and musical abilities of the races, with those races considered the most powerful possessing the greatest ability to produce an art. Even the races that have little to no musical ability feel the effect of the movement of music and its purposeful manipulation in Middle-earth. Jorgensen describes the use of music in reference to everyday life:

The song texts also serve didactic purposes; texts are evocative of the benefits of living in harmony with the environment, the pleasures of home life, and a sense of wonder, mystery, and awe as one sings the songs transmitted from the past. Since many of these song texts are intimately interconnected with life, they support the idea of the arts as likewise interwoven with the rest of life. (15)

Music and poetry reflect the culture and histories of a given civilization or race. The way in which Men (or Elves or Hobbits) live their lives affects the music and, conversely, the music affects lives of Men and Elves.

The emphasis that the tales of Old Norse mythology place on poetry and the power of music in Middle-earth bind the two mythologies together. The oral traditions and intricate construction of poetry drive the mythologies and the ability of poetry and

song to preserve histories and moral lessons future generations. Tolkien's adoration for northern culture led him to fashion aspects of his mythology for England around the great traditions of Norse culture. The tradition of oral storytelling, poetry, and song greatly influence the development of Middle-earth and the cultures of its various races. The creation of the world through the song of the Ainur and the characters' reliance on song and poetry to preserve their history in a much more significant way than merely writing annals demonstrates Tolkien's reverence for the Old Norse oral tradition. Poetry and song are prominent aspects of Old Norse culture and a tradition beloved by Tolkien from the Æsir's introduction of poetry to Ægir, to the oral tradition that produced great heroes and immortalized them in song even within his own tales, to the great songs of Men and Elves and Dwarves in Middle-earth, .

Glossary of Names

Ægir: Resident of the Hlesey; visits Asgard and receives knowledge of poetry

Æsir: The gods of Old Norse mythology, resident in Valhalla on Asgard, keepers of the knowledge of poetic creation

Ainur: The Holy Ones of Middle-earth, created by Ilúvatar to craft the land and ecosystems of Middle-earth; live in Valinor

Aragorn: Son of Arathorn, heir to the throne of Gondor, lover of Arwen. Possess many names in Middle-earth— Dúnedain, Strider, Aragorn

Arda: Tolkien's world, physical land-mass encompassing Middle-earth, Valinor, Numenor, and the other realms of Tolkien's creation

Arwen: She-elf, daughter of Elrond, love of Aragorn

Asgard: Realm of the Æsir

Aulë: Member of the Valar, creator of the Dwarves, concerned with the substance of Arda during creation and having command over rocks and metal works

Baugi: Member of the Æsir, brother of Suttung

Beren: Lord of Men, lover of Lúthien, great hero of the first age who aided Lúthien in regaining a Silmaril from Morgoth

Bilbo Baggins: Hobbit, burglar of the Dwarf raiding party to the Lonely Mountain, possessor of the One Ring of Power for many years, resides in Bag End in the Shire, uncle of Frodo Baggins

Bifrost: The rainbow bridge between Asgard and Midgard, physical connection between the realms

Bolverk: The name Odin took on his journey to seek out and capture the poetic mead in the hands of Suttang

Bor: Odin's father; the sons of Bor destroyed the Ice Giants and created Midgard from Ymir's dismembered body

Dúnedain: Elvish term for the free-men of Middle-earth. *See also* Aragorn

Elrond: Elf Lord, Master of Rivendell, Arwen's father, held the Council of Elrond to determine the fate of the One Ring

Eru: *See* Ilúvatar

Frodo Baggins: Hobbit, Bilbo Baggin's nephew, volunteer at the Council of Elrond for the task of destroying the One Ring of Power

Galadriel: Elf Lord, known as the Lady of Lórien, one of the greatest of all the Eldar

Gandalf: Wizard, member of the Fellowship of the Ring, keeper of the histories of Arda, destroyed the last Balrog of Middle-earth

Gimli: Dwarf, son of Gloin, member of the Fellowship of the ring

Gondor: South-kingdom of Men, founded by Elendil, run by the stewards until the return of the king at the end of the third age

Gunnlod: Giantess, Suttang's daughter, guardian of the poetic mead

Gylfi: The King of Sweden, visits Asgard and the Æsir

Holy Ones: The Ainur

Ilúvatar: The one, All-father, Eru, the highest being of Middle-earth, creator of the Ainur and Middle-earth

Isildur: The last king of Gondor, responsible for the destruction of Sauron during the first war of the Ring, corrupted by the power of the one Ring

Kvair: The mead of poetry was made from Kvair's blood

Legolas: Representative of the Elves in the Fellowship of the Ring, wood Elf, master archer

Lúthien: Fairest elf ever to have lived, love of Beren, possesses great power over music

Manwë: Greatest and strongest of the Valar and King of Arda

Melkor: Considered the mightiest dweller of Arda, brother of Manwë and equal in power, given the power of elevated thought and reason by Ilúvatar, sung dissonance into the Divine Theme, creating the capacity for free will among the races of Middle-earth and also the capacity for corruption and evil. *See also* Morgoth

Middle-earth: Tolkien-created world, designed to fit into the known world though completely fantastic in nature. The middle kingdom of Arda

Midgard: Also known as Middle-earth or Middle Enclosure, the realm of Men, created from Ymir's body by the Æsir

Minas Tirith: Seven-tiered citadel of Gondor, under the rule of the stewards for hundreds of years until the return of the king—Aragorn—in the third and final installment of the *Lord of the Rings*

Morgoth: Melkor. The name used for Melkor by the Elves after he was tried and found guilty by the Ainur of the darkening Middle-earth with his selfishness and malice. *See also* Melkor

Odin: All-father, the leader of the Æsir in the *Edda* and other Old Norse mythological tales, resides in Valhalla on Asgard, defeated Ymir.

Odrerir, Bodn, and Son: Three kettles containing the mead of poetry

Orc: One of several races created by Sauron from corrupted Elves, divided between those who serve Sauron and those who serve Saruman

Rivendell: City of the Elves, home of Elrond and Arwen, located in the foothills of the Misty Mountains, site of the council of Elrond, where the fellowship of the Ring was formed

Rohan: Originally a province of Gondor, known as the wide land of the Rohirrim, land north of the White Mountains; the Riders of Rohan are known for their great horses and powerful arm in battle

Rohirrim: The people of Rohan

Samwise Gamgee: Hobbit, Frodo Baggins's gardener and loyal friend, member of the Fellowship of the Ring

Saruman: The White Wizard, highest of the order of Wizards, advisor of Gandalf, corrupted by Sauron and turned against the races of Middle-earth, inhabits Isengard

Sauron: Lord of the Ring, corrupted follower of Melkor, originally of the race of Maiar, resides in Mordor and Mount Doom

“Skaldskaparmal”: Chapter of the prose *Edda* in which the intricacies of poetic formulas and construction are described in full to Ægir

Silmarils: Three great jewels made by Feanor, in which he locked the light from the Two Trees, stolen by Melkor; one was recovered by Beren and Lúthien

Suttang: Giant, owner of the mead of poetry until it is stolen by Odin

Svasud: Summer's father

Théodin: Seventh King of Rohan, son of Thengel, led his men into battle to defend Minas Tirith, lost his life to the Lord of the Nazgûl

Valar: Members of the Ainur who took physical form and entered Arda after its creation to bring order and fight the evils of Melkor; includes Manwë and Aulë

Valhalla: Also called Hall of the Slain, Odin's hall, home of the Æsir

Wormtongue: Servant of Saruman the White, advisor to King Théoden of Rohan

Ymir: King of the Ice Giants, defeated by Odin and the Æsir, carcass used to create the world of Men. *See* Midgard

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