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Phantasms of Hope: The Utopian Function of Fantasy Literature

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Abstract

Fantasy literature has long been considered an inherently conservative genre. However, Ernst Bloch's Marxist theory of a utopian anticipatory consciousness and his concept of nonsynchronism recognize a progressive, utopian function within the archetypes and allegories of fairy tales, a precursor to modern fantasy. Bloch argues that archetypes are not static entities and can be repurposed to critique the world contemporary to a text's production. Even archetypes produced under a past mode of production, like those used in fantasy, can therefore be anticipatory and utopian. By extending Bloch's utopian function to include fantasy and integrating his philosophy with the historical-materialist hermeneutic of Fredric Jameson's *Political Unconscious* (1981), I articulate a Marxist reading of the utopian function in the works of William Morris, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Ursula K. Le Guin, demonstrating how the archaic figures and motifs of fantasy texts convey anticipatory glimpses of a utopian future.

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

Since the nineteenth century, fantasy literature has been given short shrift. Scholars of "serious" literature and lay readers alike have accused it of being nothing more than escapist, retreating from reality, or immature, suitable only for young children and to be quickly outgrown. Not all imaginative forms of literature have been so poorly regarded: the imagined futures and technologies of science fiction, fantasy's sister genre, are routinely celebrated for their critiques of economic, social, and ecological problems we face today. Since the 1960s and 70s, Marxist literary scholars have been especially invested in science fiction as a medium of social critique and speculation, one that possesses a unique "utopian function" of imagining how we might create a better world. Their work has also perpetuated the prejudice against fantasy. Darko Suvin argues that the value of science fiction is its ability to induce "cognitive estrangement" in readers, a process of making their world appear new and strange through comparison with sf's imagined worlds. Suvin further argues that while fantasy texts are also estranging, their imagined worlds deviate too far from a rational-scientific view to provide real social critique. In this thesis I argue against such devaluation of fantasy through a Marxist lens. I draw on the utopian Marxist philosophy of Ernst Bloch to describe how fantasy articulates historically-situated social critiques and anticipations of a utopian future by repurposing archaic archetypes to speak to modern concerns. Combining Bloch's theory with the historical-materialist method of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, I illustrate how the fantasy worlds of William Morris, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Ursula K. Le Guin each articulate a critique of contemporary political conflicts and anticipate a utopian vision for the real world. Through my method of interpreting fantasy texts, I observe parallels between the literary theories of science fiction and fantasy and conclude that the estranging experience of fantasy shares the cognitive qualities of sf. Ultimately, fantasy, like sf, has a real utopian function; it provides meaningful social critiques of our contemporary world and invites us to imagine how we might improve our world by living differently.

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All of my work would be impossible without the love and support of my parents and my partner, Charlotte, who believe in me even when I do not. I don't know what I'd do without you guys.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Cecil Smith, who first taught me how words change the way we see the world when he read Tennyson's "Ulysses" to me: "Yet all experience is an arch wherethro' / Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades / For ever and forever when I move." Those words have stuck with me ever since. He would have been so damn proud.

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Introduction: Genre Politics and the Politics of Genres

Our motto must be: Reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but through analyzing the mystical consciousness, the consciousness which is unclear to itself, whether it appears in religious or political form. Then it will transpire that the world has long been dreaming of something it can acquire only if it becomes conscious of it.

Karl Marx, "Letter from Marx to Arnold Ruge," 1843

Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it.

J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories"

Childish. Escapist. Ahistorical. Reactionary. Irrelevant.

These words summarize the dismissive view of fantasy literature held by many scholars, writers, critics, as well as readers of "literary" fiction. At best, for such people, fantasy amounts to nothing more than idle daydreams, sentimental flights of fancy, and is, therefore (by way of reasoning that could only make sense through the Calvinist-inspired "ethic" of Capitalism), dangerous. At worst, the genre betrays an unconscious desire in its readers and writers to return to a pre-industrial "golden age" that never truly was, symptomatic of latent proto-fascistic tendencies.

From a historical-materialist perspective, however, no cultural artifact is free from the influence of the historical moment in which it is produced. (Nor is the interpretation of such an artifact ever disengaged from the historical context in which the critic critiques.) Even if fantasy were deliberately escapist, it could never succeed in fully extricating itself from worldly affairs. Whether one forays into the world of Narnia or Middle-earth, Earthsea or Westeros, the sociopolitical struggles one finds in these "Secondary Worlds," to use the widely-adopted term coined by Tolkien, are inspired by

the Primary World their writers inhabit ("On Fairy-Stories" 53). "The politics of fairyland," writes Ursula K. Le Guin, "are ours" ("Earthsea Revisioned").

To be sure, there are *some* reactionary, even outrightly fascistic, works of fantasy. Brian Attebery writes of his shock when a group of students in Italy informed him of "a neofascist press that publishes nothing but fantasy" ("The Politics of Fantasy" 7). From their observations, science fiction (sf) comes from the political left and fantasy from the right (7). There is, indeed, a great tradition of Marxist literary scholarship and criticism that celebrates sf and goes so far as to claim that utopian fiction is a subset of their chosen genre. The subtitle of Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), for example, "The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions," indicates as much.

The same tradition of Marxist science fiction studies that Jameson's text exemplifies, much like the Italian students Attebery encountered, holds that fantasy is inherently ahistorical, conservative, and reactionary. This position was popularized through the enthusiastic reception of Darko Suvin's ground-breaking text *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), one of the seminal works of science fiction scholarship, and which remains influential in the field to this day. Suvin defines sf as a literary genre that is uniquely characterized by its function of "cognitive estrangement" (15). By *cognitive* he means that a work of sf is "not only a reflection *of* but a reflecting *on* reality," which "implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than a toward a static mirroring of the author's environment" (22); he understands *estrangement* as a "manner in which men's relationships to other men and their surroundings are illuminated … by creating a radically or significantly different formal framework – a different space/time location or central figures for the fable, unverifiable by common sense" (31). Suvin argues that fantasy is estranging, like sf, but that it is "anti-cognitive," a "subliterature of mystification" that actively denies empirical realities in favour of sheer impossibilities—meaning that, in his estimation, it is not even a reflection *of* reality let alone a reflection *on* it (21).

Suvin's distinction continues to shape the discourse of genre studies today, so much so that the left-right binary of sf and fantasy his work establishes has become something of an academic orthodoxy. To argue for a progressive interpretation of fantasy literature is as unusual and outlandish as the worlds these works describe. The politics of fantasy, however, are ours. In stating this I mean that the genre is capable of carrying any ideology within one of its texts, including progressive and utopian ideas; its form cannot be reduced to a vehicle for a singular ideological position.[1] As Daniel Baker argues, "fantasy can use the genre's ubiquitous temporal dislocations to expose how history informs the present and future, rupturing reality to re-imagine the then for the benefit of the now and the nows yet to pass … a fantastic interruption of history can radically alter the reader's understanding of the then, the now, and after" (440).

Baker's description of how fantasy can embody progressive political ideals echoes Suvin's description of cognitive estrangement functions in sf, and this is no coincidence. A few left-leaning scholars and authors, such as China Miéville, have argued that cognitive estrangement is a function that operates in fantasy just as much as in sf. Miéville observes that "the putative 'scientific rigour' of much of sf, including many defining classics of the field, is entirely spurious," undermining the strict empirical, possible-impossible distinction between the equally estranging modes of fantasy (43-4). Furthermore, even when sf advocates, following in Suvin's footsteps, attempt to recover sf's claims to cognition by "acknowledging that unscientific but *internally*

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[1] One can consider the converse idea to demonstrate the absurdity of this association: is all sf truly progressive? Think, for instance, of the myriad of sf novels one might group into the sub-genre of "military science fiction." Here one finds the ideologies of European settler-colonialism, genocidal xenophobia, heterosexism, and male-centered machismo in wild abundance. As Aaron Santesso has recently argued, "sf as a whole (encompassing everything from cyberpunk to military science fiction, at the very least) is indeed hardly politically unified—can be recognized as anything but "naturally" progressive, instead being more strongly allied with fascist politics … certain foundational tropes and traditions of the genre carry the DNA of fascism, as it were, to the extent that even liberal, progressive authors working within the genre's more refined strains often (inadvertently) employ fascistic tropes and strategies" (139). Perhaps Attebery's Italian students would be as surprised as he was if they read certain works of American science fiction.

plausible/rigorous, estranging works share crucial qualities of cognitive serious," this argument cannot meaningfully separate a sf world of estrangement from a fantasy, but "becomes only one way of doing the fantastic—though one with a particularly strong set of conventions" (44). Thus, Miéville concludes, "if the predicates for a fantasy are clearly never-possible *but are treated systematically and coherently withing the fantastic work*, then its cognition effect is precisely that normally associated with sf" (45).

Arthur C. Clarke's Third Law famously states that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" ("Clarke's Third Law"). We might amend this to say: any sufficiently advanced *imaginary* technology *is* magic; it is only dressed-up differently, exchanging wizard robes and shining armour for lab coats and high-fashion jumpsuits. There is, for example, no serious difference between *Star Trek*'s transporter and *Harry Potter*'s apparition spell: both evoke, in impossible terms, the same dream of instantaneous travel. (Both also evoke the same fears of disfiguration and dismemberment, should the transporter malfunction or the spell go awry.)

Like Miéville, my aim in this thesis is to use the conceptual tools and traditions of Marxist science fiction scholars to demonstrate how fantasy functions in much the same way as its sister genre. Specifically, my aim is to articulate how fantasy, like sf, can (and does) express utopian desires; it embodies the same utopian function using a different symbolic register. To do so, I will return to the work of a Marxist philosopher that inspired the critical approaches of both Suvin and Jameson: Ernst Bloch.

Bloch's three-volume magnum opus, *The Principle of Hope* (1954-55, 1959) articulates a Marxist theory which locates utopian hopes and aspirations across a broad range of creative and artistic activity, including architecture, visual arts, music, performance, literature, and even advertising. Like the members of the Frankfurt School, with whom he was associated, Bloch synthesizes elements of Marxist materialism with psychoanalysis. He posits an unconscious apprehension of the "Not-Yet," a sense of the impending future latent within the materiality of the present moment. Whereas previous

psychoanalytic theories, such as those of Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung, had relegated the unconscious to the repression of the past, Bloch's thinking identifies a new frontier of the unconscious mind, one that is directed towards a future that exists only as potential in the present moment. This anticipatory part of the psyche is that which hopes, grasping at, however partially, visions of a better world yet to come.

But unlike Marxist sf scholars who cite *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch argues that "the groundwork for hope is partly done in the archaic frame" (1: 159). He gives much attention to the fairy tale, a precursor of modern fantasy, as one of many artistic forms imbricated with this anticipatory utopian function. It is so important for his thinking, in fact, that he begins his discussion of each different kind of utopian anticipation with a description of the kind of fairy tale that embodies that vision. He argues that many (but not all) of the archaic archetypes and allegories that are passed down through fairy tales have "unexpired and undischarged" utopian anticipations, residual traces of past social conflicts that remain unresolved to the present day (1: 162). How Bloch understands archetypes and allegories is essential here. Archetypes, according to Bloch, are not eternal categories with fixed, static meanings, like Platonic images, but "situational condensing categories" that convey socially- and historically-situated relations and are remoulded by each generation: "time and again a shoot has sprouted from them that augments the existing contents of the archetypes" (1: 159). Relatedly, Bloch understands allegory not in the contemporary sense of "concepts dressed up in sensory form" that are "frosty and abstract," but as "that which not only signifies its own matter, but also at the same time another matter within it" and "points further beyond itself" (1: 161, 175). Allegories are narrative sites that use archetypes to express that which cannot be expressed directly and concretely, like the utopian anticipation of the Not-Yet.

This archaic register of fluid archetypes and their allegorical use in fairy tales and myths, which is taken up by fantasy, has an enduring relevance due to what Bloch calls *nonsynchronism*, the survival of "unsurmounted remnants of older economic being and

consciousness" in the present moment ("Nonsynchronism," 29). The reuse and evolution of archetypal figures in fantasy, I argue, is an instance of what Bloch describes as an alliance "which liberates the still *possible future* from the *past* … by putting both in the present" (33). As an engagement with the utopian anticipations of the past, such engagement with archaic literary figures reveals "something new that the previous age had not yet noticed in them" (*The Principle of Hope* 1: 98).

My reading of fantasy parallels Tom Moylan's positioning of utopian literature within the sf tradition and his concept of a "critical utopia," which he develops in *Demand the Impossible* (1986). He argues that "utopias from 1850 on tended to adopt a stance more concerned with … exposing for the reader the still unrealized potential of the human project of consciously being in the world," citing William Morris's utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1890) as a key example (6). These "heuristic utopias," as opposed to the earlier "blueprint" models of utopian texts, "could no longer look to an alternative located in the present time," therefore displacing utopian narratives from their traditional setting of newly-discovered islands into imagined futures (6). Citing Bloch, he argues that "[t]he utopian moment can never be directly articulated … it must always speak in figures which call out structurally for completion and exegesis" (23). Like Moylan's critical utopia, the utopian function of fantasy I articulate "reject[s] utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream" (10). However, I differ from Moylan by arguing that, through Bloch's concept of nonsynchronism, heuristic utopianism can also involve a temporal displacement into an imagined past whose archaic symbolic register can allegorically and unconsciously figure desires and anticipations of the future.

In the following chapters I will employ both Bloch's utopian theory of archetypes and allegories used in fairy tales alongside Jameson's hermeneutic method detailed in *The Political Unconscious* (1981)—which Moylan uses for his reading of critical utopias (46-51) and which already incorporates Blochian nonsynchronism—to interpret the latent utopian anticipations of three major authors of modern fantasy: William Morris, J. R. R.

Tolkien, and Ursula K. Le Guin. The first chapter theorizes the utopian function of fantasy through Bloch's reading of the fairy tale and his location of utopian anticipation in its archetypes and allegories, which I then integrate with Jameson's method of reading the political unconscious of a text. I then use this modified Blochian-Jamesonian hermeneutic to argue that *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891), the first of the romances Morris publishes after *News from Nowhere*, serves as an addendum to *Nowhere*, an allegorical warning against visions of utopianism as a life of pure ease in favour of a future where labour is no longer alienated. In the second and third chapters I use this hermeneutic to locate the utopianism of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) and Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle (1969-2001), respectively. I argue that Tolkien's fantasy is imbricated with an environmental utopianism figured as a Celt-inspired marriage-to-the-land allegory, in which a neo-pagan concept of animism supersedes the ideology of Dominionism shared by industrial capitalism and Christianity. In the third chapter I read the six texts of Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle as two separate trilogies between which we can read her development as a feminist writer and her anticipation of a dismantled patriarchy. I correlate her figuration of the dragon as a symbol of freedom-that-is-feared (by men) to the historicity of witches' oppression in *Earthsea*. By tracing the historical connection between women and the dragon archetype in the Primary World, I argue that Le Guin subverts the traditional depiction of the dragon to symbolically represent the destigmatization and liberation of women in a non-patriarchal world. My interpretation of each author's work identifies a social conflict or contradiction which is contemporary to the production of their respective texts and demonstrates how they use the archaic archetypes and allegories of fantasy to allegorically present an anticipation of the world yet to come.

1 Theorizing Fantasy's Utopian Function: Bloch's Anticipatory Consciousness, Jameson's Political Unconscious, and the Socialist Fantasies of William Morris

1.1 The Once and Future Utopia: Daydreams, Fairytales, Allegories and Archetypes in Bloch's *Principle of Hope*

The object of this study is to demonstrate the real utopian function within the modern genre of fantasy literature, specifically, the contemporary form of fantasy that begins with the late romances of William Morris, in which "Secondary Worlds" make their first appearance (Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" 53). The connection between Ernst Bloch's utopian theory of anticipatory consciousnessbecau and fantasy literature may seem counterintuitive. Bloch is concerned with the apprehension of a looming, if somewhat hazy, manifestation of a real, concrete utopia, while fantasy tends to construct its imagined, magical (i.e. unreal) worlds from archaic archetypes and social modes (especially feudalism). Yet, in part four of *The Principle of Hope*, "Outlines of a Better World," Bloch begins his survey of each type of utopia (the medical utopia, the social, technological, etc.) with a passage on the fairy tales and adventure stories that prefigure, or anticipate, the concrete images of these utopias. In the prelude to medical utopias, for instance, Bloch states that "[t]he belief in magic herbs … is shared by fairytale [sic] and folklore alike: this same impatience for a sudden cure also characterizes the hope in medicinal herbs, the breakthrough which changes everything" (Bloch 2: 455). Speaking next of social utopias, he writes that "only the fairytale, which is always instructive, and the fairytale of an ideal state can tell us about … the Land of Cockaigne. Just as the fountain of youth reaches into medical wishful images, so the Land of Cockaigne reaches into social ones" (2: 472). And in the opening paragraphs of his discussion of technological utopias, Bloch refers to "Aladdin's lamps, divining rods … Medean cauldrons, caps of Fortunatus, Oberon's horns," and states that "all this sort of thing,

whether it is a crazy device, whether it is an even crazier success with it, is, as Baroque title-pages used to say, not only pleasant but useful to read. It is sometimes the future of human ability, asserted and described as if it already existed now" (2: 629).[2] Although Bloch does not take up fantasy directly, the genre's relationship to fairy tales and folklore, its shared archetypes, and especially the shared motif of magic suggest that we can position fantasy alongside these earlier genres of fantastical storytelling within Bloch's utopian scheme.

In order to fully understand how the fairy tale, and therefore fantasy, fits into Bloch's theory, one must first take into account the idiosyncratic psychoanalytic basis from which his concepts of the Not-Yet-Conscious and anticipatory consciousness emerge. From there, we can grasp the emergence of the utopian function within all forms of art and literature, including fantasy.[3]

Initially, Bloch takes up the established language of psychoanalytic theory developed in the work of Freud and his successors, including Alfred Alder and C. G. Jung. In particular, he adopts the discourse of unconscious "drives," such as the sex-drive, the death-drive, or Alder's power-drive. However, Bloch contends that these

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[2] Consider again Clarke's Third Law in relation to this statement. Technological devices whose operation we cannot understand appear to work by magic, and Bloch, in alignment with my own argument above, contends that magical devices fulfill technological wishes we cannot yet rationalize. (Many science fiction devices, like *Star Trek*'s transporter, are given the *appearance* of a rational explanation through scientific-sounding language, rhetorically obscuring the magical thinking by which they truly operate.)

[3] Bloch argues that "[e]very great work of art thus still remains … impelled towards the latency of the other side, i.e. toward the contents of a future which had not yet appeared in its own time, if not towards the contents of an as yet unknown final state. For this reason alone great works have something to say to all ages … which the previous age[s] had not yet noticed" (1: 127). What Bloch means by "great" isn't made explicit, but one can infer, based on his frequent references to fairytales, folklore, and "pulp" adventure stories, that his use of "great" here does not equate to an elitist notion of "high" art and literature, or the canon constructed from the tastes of the dominant class. From this observation, his use of the term more likely gestures towards broad popularity as an indicator of "greatness." As Miéville observes, "[a] brief survey of popular films, books, television, comics, video games etc. illustrates the extent to which the fantastic has become a default cultural vernacular" ("Editorial" 40). On this basis, then, I understand fantasy literature to be included, not excluded, in Bloch's idea of "great work[s] of art."

psychoanalytic theories, their proposed structures of the unconscious and their purportedly fundamental drives, are all deeply flawed. From its origins in the work of Freud, the tradition of psychoanalysis, he argues, has not identified a truly fundamental drive due to its focus on an exclusively petit bourgeois subjectivity. In a critique resembling Marx's critique of Hegelian idealism, Bloch argues that

> so far as the drive-theory under discussion here is concerned, the whole psychoanalytical school is connected in that it … lifts them in a conceptually mythical way out of the living body … Just as that which has been made absolute is lifted out of the living body … so too in Freud and Adler, and especially in Jung, it is never discussed as *a variable of socioeconomic conditions*. (1: 64)

The unconscious drives of psychoanalysis, like the form of consciousness in Marxism, are conditioned by particular material, sociohistorical circumstances, including the dominant mode of production and one's relation to that mode (i.e., one's class position). All the so-called fundamental drives proposed by Freud and his successors are "too partial" in Bloch's estimation: these drives "do not break through so unequivocally as say—hunger, the drive that is *always left out of psychoanalytic theory*" (1: 64). This is a "class-based limitation" of Freudian psychoanalysis, a consequence of the material fact that "it is always only the better class of sufferers who have been and are treated psychoanalytically … The psychoanalytical doctor and above all his patient come from a middle class which until recently had to worry little about its stomach" (1: 65-6). Only those who had reached a certain level of material comfort within capitalist society could afford psychoanalysis. The forms of the unconscious and its drives would have been entirely different, according to Bloch, had Freud studied the dreams and neuroses of the working class.

Hunger is a basic drive from which all appetites are formed and serves as the impetus for feelings of *desire*. By identifying the bodily, material ground of this "most

universal" (1: 67) appetitive drive,[4] Bloch places psychoanalysis on its feet rather than its

head, while at the same time establishing the unconscious source of all anticipatory

feelings. He also locates a source for "drive-feelings": like hunger, which manifests to the

conscious mind as a feeling that directs and propels desire, these emergent drive-feelings

are "the mental feelings or emotions" (1: 70). Bloch then distinguishes *filled* from

expectant emotions, based upon the temporal duration of their intention and the

existential status of their desired object:

> filled emotions (like envy, greed, admiration) are those whose drive-intention is
> short-term, whose drive-object lies ready, if not in respective individual
> attainability, then in the already available world. Expectant emotions (like
> anxiety, fear, hope, belief), on the other hand, are those whose drive-intention is
> long-term, whose drive-object does not yet lie ready, not just in respective
> individual attainability, but also in the already available world. (1: 74)

Expectant emotions are therefore characterized "by the *incomparably greater*

anticipatory character in their intention, their substance, and their object" (1: 74). This

anticipatory character is most distinct in terms of the ontological status of its drive-object,

which exists only as "the Not-Yet" or "what has objectively not yet been there" and "lies

beyond the available given world" (1: 75). On the basis of the hunger drive and expectant

feelings Bloch provides his own account of the unconscious mind and its anticipatory

character. Of the emotions named, Bloch identifies hope as "the most important expectant

emotion" because of its inherently positive quality—in contrast with anxiety and fear,

which, while expectant themselves, "are still completely suffering, oppressed, unfree, no

matter how strongly they reject" the object or reality that causes them to manifest (1: 75).

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[4] The qualifier "most" here is essential to Bloch's meaning: like "human nature," which in Marxist theories
is historically and materially conditioned, hunger, even as the most basic of drives, will manifest differently
at different historical moments. "Even for hunger," writes Bloch, "there is no 'natural' drive structure, for
the simple reason that the kind of perception assigned to it, and consequently to the stimulus-world, is also
historically variable … it interacts as socially developed and guided need with the other social, and
therefore historically varying needs which it underlies and with which, for this very reason, it is
transformed and causes transformation" (1: 69).

The positive longing of hope best embodies "that appetite in the mind which the subject not only has, but of which, as unfulfilled subject, it essentially consists" (1: 75). In other words, hope is the primary expectant emotion because it is most strongly aligned with the positive reaching-for, the wanting-of, by which the hunger-drive propels the subject forward towards its desire.

From the fundamental drive of hunger and the emotion of hope, Bloch describes the emergence of both wish-fulfillment and revolutionary interest. Both sentiments derive from an inflammation of the hunger-drive through sustained deprivation. Hunger is a continuous, essential experience for the unfulfilled subject, who is always longing for something. But if the subject is continually deprived, "satisfied by no certain bread," it no longer goes "in search of food merely within the old framework," but instead "seeks to change the situation which has caused its empty stomach, its hanging head" (1: 75). The subject experiences "[t]he No to the bad situation that exists," and combining it with "the Yes to the better life that hovers ahead, [it] is incorporated into *revolutionary interest*" (1: 75). Through this interest "hunger transforms itself, having been taught, into an explosive force against the prison of deprivation"[5] so that "self-preservation becomes self-extension" (1: 75). By desiring to break free from the "old framework," the subject projects its desires beyond itself, and by acting upon the world around itself imbricates itself in the texture of the world. Perhaps most importantly for my purpose, Bloch notes: "Long before this decision [i.e., to engage in revolutionary *praxis*], and for a long time during it, the drive towards satisfaction becomes a drive which *survives the available world in the imagination*" (1: 76, my emphasis). Thus it is as daydream, which first

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[5] This idea of a hunger that has been taught, what Ruth Levitas terms an education of desire, is a core concept guiding my case-study of the revolutionary interests and utopianism of William Morris's late romances at the end of this chapter.

"stimulates *the wishful element* in the expectant emotions" and, as Bloch shall argue, motivates all artistic expression, that revolutionary interest makes itself known (1: 76).

While Freud reduces the daydream to a "stepping-stone" towards the sleeper's dreams (Bloch 1: 87), Bloch argues that the difference between daydreams and night-dreams is not a matter of *degree* but of entirely different *kinds* of psychic experience. Traditional Freudian or Jungian theories consider "all dreams only as roads to what has been repressed" (1: 87). But Bloch contends that only night-dreams "feed on past if not archaic image-material," while daydreams are future-oriented "presentiments of the imagination which from time immemorial have of course been called dreams but also forerunners and anticipations" (1: 87). Several characteristics distinguish daydreams from their somnambulant counterpart. First, the ego is not repressed (or dissolved) in a daydream as it is in sleep: "the ego starts out on a journey into the blue, but ends whenever it wants" (1: 88). Expectant emotions are driven by intentionality and desire, "whereas the sleeper never knows what is awaiting him beyond the threshold of the subconscious" (1: 88). The ego's stronger presence exerts in the daydream a clarity and control lacking in the "sinking" submission of the ego to the chaos of the night-dream (1: 88).

Secondly, because daydreams originate from the deprivation of the hunger-drive and therefore have a share of revolutionary interest, they have a broader "human breadth" and are *world-improving*, and "may become so extensive that [the ego] represents others along with it" and "wants to improve publicly" (1: 91-2). Because of this expansive property the daydream serves as a "stepping-stone to art" (1: 87), as Freud also notes in "Creative Writers and Daydreaming." Yet while "Freud has touched on the truth of utopian creativity," his concept of sublimation obscures the daydream's anticipatory quality and makes "the psychology of the New once more unrecognizable" (1: 94). The daydream is not a sublimation of what is repressed, an effervescent emergence of the

unconscious past, but a desire for what has not yet been, a yearning for the "New." Thus, for Bloch,

> Art contains [its] utopianizing character by virtue of the daydream … It posits all figures of venturing beyond, from the noble robber to Faust, all the wishful situations and wishful landscapes … by making known through fantasy, a fantasy which is concretely related and hurries on ahead. (1: 94-5)

Intimately related to the daydream and its manifestation in art, fantasy least encumbers the daydreamer's wish and art lays bare their desire. Bloch's emphasis on the concreteness of fantasy is important to note here as well, since Bloch also distinguishes between abstract and concrete utopias. While fantasy's description of other worlds and materially impossible phenomena appears to be the least concrete kind of literary production, Fredric Jameson, as we shall see in the following section, argues that all texts are imbued with layers of unconscious political and social motivations derived from the historical circumstances of their production. Moreover, Bloch's distinction between concrete and abstract is not without its own problems. As Ruth Levitas observes, Bloch's distinction is an ideal one, and in practice these categories overlap; the goal of a utopian hermeneutic is "extracting concrete utopia from its abstract trappings" ("Educated Hope" 17). Insofar as the genre of fantasy "contains the intention towards a better life," i.e. as it is *world-improving*, it "contains, if only vestigially, the utopian function" ("Educated Hope" 19). The hermeneutic I use to analyze fantasy, then, locates the concrete utopian kernel that resides within the fantasy texts of Morris, Tolkien and Le Guin.

Bloch's final defining characteristic of the daydream is what he calls its *journey to the end*. The night-dream never seems to conclude; one always awakes from it in *medias res*, ripped away from its chaotic sequence of events. "The day-fantasy begins like the night-dream with wishes," but "carries them radically to their conclusion, wants to get to the place of their fulfillment" (1: 95). This characteristic makes the daydream suitable as the stepping-stone to art, especially narrative art. The coherence, control, and closure of the daydream make possible the articulation of the daydream as narrative plot,

which has a beginning, middle, and—most importantly—end. The motif of the journey, too, is essential to modern fantasy: in most (if not all) fantasy, the protagonist undertakes a journey through unknown and perilous lands in pursuit of their goal. At the same time, they journey inward, facing the inner perils of their flawed character.[6] Modern fantasy is openly structured after the daydream that motivates its creation, while its concrete relations to the material world of its production are veiled through symbolism and allegory. Additionally, the journey to the end reiterates the daydream's future-orientation. "Even the transferral of such fairytale images into Once-upon-a-time," writes Bloch, "always allows One Day as something coming to shimmer through the One Day as something past" (1: 98). Through its journey to the end the work of art born from daydreaming internalizes a future played out through the dreamer's desires. But beyond its conscious manifestation of desire the daydream represents the desire for a concrete future that is not yet concretely representable through the work of art. Bloch describes this as the "*latency of its coming side*," through which it contains "the contents of a future which had not yet appeared in its time" (1: 98). This latent unconscious content has a profound consequence for the practice of literary interpretation and criticism: "great works of every age have something to say, and indeed something new that the previous age had not yet noticed in them; for this reason alone, the fairytale Magic Flute, but also the historically rigidly fixed Divine Comedy have their 'eternal youth'" (1: 98). Works of

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[6] Fantasy inherits this motif of the journey, or the quest, from the medieval romance, or *romaunt*. William Morris's passion for history, and medievalism in particular, is a major reason for this inheritance and the development of the genre as we know it today. "The key central theme of romance," according to Amy Burge, "is the narrative journey of human life," and they are "[f]illed with the imagery of daily life" (186). While some thought that Morris's turn to writing romances at the end of his life was a symptom of increasing senility, a sign of the old socialist's waning grip on reality (cf. Hodgson 158), one can appeal to his choice of inspiration to make the opposite case. Since "[t]he word *romance* derives from the Old French phrase 'mettre en romanz,' meaning to translate into the vernacular" (186), and its journeys are littered with imagery of everyday life, Morris deliberately chooses the genre as a form of popular rather than elite storytelling. In his final romances, which I take as my basis for the establishment of modern fantasy, Morris is cleverly translating his political and philosophical ideas into the vernacular, expressing socialist and utopian ideas in a form that has appealed to the lower classes for centuries.

art are historically situated not only in their production but in that of the critic who finds new meaning for them in his or her own time.

The art of the fantasy genre adds another layer to this play between past and future: by consciously returning to the setting of the medieval past, as Morris and those who followed in his footsteps do, fantasy both rekindles and reshapes the latent futures of medieval social relations to serve the political daydreams of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus it becomes important to ask: what motivates fantasy's imagination of the medieval past, and how does this nostalgic return, like the "Once upon a time" of the fairy tale, articulate the desire of "One Day" in the future? In *News from Nowhere* (1890), in which a man from the nineteenth century visits a twenty-first century pastoral utopia, one observes a desire to dismantle the alienating division of labour that arose from industrialism in the nineteenth century. The same anti-industrial, anti-capitalist themes hold true for his late romances written after *News from Nowhere*,[7] which derive a new meaning—freedom from alienation—from the feudal settings of earlier medieval romances. Fantasy, like the fairy tale, conjures a journey into the past that is, at the same time, a journey forward for desire as daydream, one whose meaning can be clarified or its figural meanings renewed under new historical and political conditions in the future.

The distinction between daydreams and night-dreams foregrounds Bloch's most important distinction between the No-Longer-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Conscious. Prior to his own work, Bloch contends that Freud conceived of the unconscious "merely as something that lies beneath consciousness and has dropped out of it," merely a sediment of what has been repressed and forgotten (1: 115). He writes:

> The night-dream may refer to the No-Longer-Conscious, it regresses towards it. But the daydream is carried on to something which is new at least for the dreamer,

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[7]*The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891), *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *Child Christopher and Gondilind the Fair* (1895), *The Well at World's End* (1896), or *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* and *The Sundering Flood* (1897; both published posthumously).

and probably even on to something in itself new, in its objective content. Thus in the daydream the crucial definition of a *Not-Yet-Conscious* reveals itself, as the class to which this daydream belongs … it represents the actual space of receptivity of the New and production of the New. The Not-Yet-Conscious is admittedly just as much a preconscious as is the unconscious of repressedness and forgottenness. In its way it is even an unconscious which is just as difficult and resistant as that of repressedness. (1: 116)

Within this psychic space of the New the resistance to its content becoming conscious is equal to that of repression, but of an entirely different character. The resistance of repression is the resistance of subconscious material, sedimented and subterraneous, to being re-exposed to the daylight of the conscious mind; this form of resistance within the No-Longer-Conscious is experienced as a "reluctance to unpack repressed material again" (1: 128). The psychic resistance associated with the Not-Yet-Conscious, on the other hand, is of a more social nature, and reveals a notable feature of his idiosyncratic materialism: it is not the "self-blocking" of repression but rather a "blocking [of] *receptivity* … it is to be found instead in the matter treated by the subject and is only mirrored in the specific difficulties of explication," which arises from "the still inchoate, utterly habit-free character of the *new material*" and "a disinclination towards the difficulty of the factually New" (1: 129).

Two facets of the subject's relation to the Not-Yet-Conscious help explain this blocked receptivity. First, when the subject apprehends the Not-Yet beyond the Front (the boundary between the conscious mind and the Not-Yet-Conscious), "what is happening psychologically is *not very lucid*," which is to say that what the mind anticipates is not yet fully, concretely apprehended (1: 115, emphasis added). Secondly, this imperfect grasp of what is anticipated by the Not-Yet-Conscious, producing this psychological resistance through its lack of clarity, "is ultimately founded solely in the historical state of the *material*, above all in its own processive, unfinished state, itself existing in difficulty … and fragments" (1: 130). It is important to recognize the ontology of Bloch's

materialism in this statement: matter itself is in a state of *process*;[8] it is fundamentally

unfinished and in a state of becoming, teleologically oriented within a historical process

towards what Bloch refers to as the *Totum*. The Totum "does not represent the isolated

whole of a respective section of [matter's] process, but the whole of the subject-matter

pending in process overall, hence still tendential and latent. This alone is realism, it is of

course inaccessible to that schematism which knows everything in advance, which

considers its uniform, in fact even formalistic, stencil to be reality" (1: 223). Bloch's

concept of the Totum is a terminus for matter's immanent, teleological development, the

historical point at which all its latent potential has become actual. What precisely this

end-state is cannot be clearly formulated, and so there is, in effect, a processual evolution

of the end of this teleology itself. Only by appealing to the concept of the Totum and his

own prescription of a "militant optimism" can Bloch argue that "*Concrete utopia stands*

on the horizon of every reality" (1: 146, 223).

Some commentators, such as Terry Eagleton and Levitas, argue that the Totum,

while necessary for Bloch's distinction between abstract and concrete utopia, undermines

itself. "The past may be diverse," writes Eagleton, "but it has a single destination,"

making Bloch's theory, taken as a whole, "the mother of all metanarratives" (94). From

this point of view, the Totum is the very kind of schematism of history that it claims to

supersede. Similarly, Levitas argues that Bloch's notion of *docta spes* ("educated hope")

is predicated on the "teleological closure" of the Totum in order to distinguish concrete

utopia from abstract utopia, making this form of hope ideologically narrow and untenable

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[8] Bloch's materialism is not only processual: it is also a *vitalist* materialism, as he articulates more directly in a later work, *Aristotle and the Aristotelian Left* (1963). For Bloch, matter is a growing, living thing, and it is this liveliness that motivates (in the most literal, etymological sense of the word) the historical, processual development of matter. I will relate this vitalist component of Bloch's materialism to the animistic elements of Tolkien's world of Middle-earth in my second chapter.

("Educated Hope" 24).[9] Levitas thus amends Bloch's utopian theory by considering a broader utopian notion of the "education of desire," drawn from E.P. Thompson's and Miguel Abensour's studies of Morris's *News From Nowhere* ("Educated Hope" 13).[10] Through Levitas' example, we can not only use Bloch's Marxist utopianism to interpret the fantasy writing of Morris, Tolkien, or Le Guin but use their works in turn dialectically to refine his utopian theory. The theoretical tension between the education of desire and educated hope will be explored more thoroughly in the case study of William Morris's late romances at the end of this chapter.

Furthermore, the fact that "what is happening psychologically is not very lucid" within the anticipatory consciousness is also important to understanding the relation of fantasy to the utopian function Bloch identifies within great works of art. Rooting this function through (and manifesting it as) the archetypes, symbols, and allegories of modern fantasy, one begins to understand Bloch's complex understanding of the

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[9] The "teleological closure" of Bloch's materialism with respect to the Totum is complex. Eagleton's reading clearly overlooks some of Bloch's closing remarks in volume three of *The Principle of Hope*, in which he describes the "unguaranteedness" of history's trajectory: "the unfinished world can be brought to its end, the process pending in it can be brought to a result," however, "there is in the dialectical tendency-latency … no *pre-ordered*, i.e. … finally posited purpose in the style of the old teleology" (3: 1373). Bloch is not adopting the classical teleology of Aristotle, which leads to easy accusations of "closure," but he is engaging directly with Aristotle's metaphysics, specifically, with Aristotle's idea of an "unfinished entelechy." As Loren Goldman explains: "For Aristotle, unfinished entelechy describes progress in motion: the entelechy of a train approaching Philadelphia, for example," but "Bloch interprets unfinished entelechy as being related not only to motion but also to ends themselves" ("Introduction" xix). Indeed, as Bloch states in the final pages of *The Principle of Hope*, "the *truth* of teleology never consists of purposes already existing in finished form, but rather of those which are only just forming in active process, always arising anew within it and enriching themselves" (3: 1374). While there is indeed a teleological end to Bloch's materialism and its historical development of matter, it is, however paradoxically, an open-ended one. There is a goal, but we may not reach it; there is a purpose, but we cannot make any fixed statement about it with absolute certainty. Whereas Bloch does posit the existence of an end, critiques of closure are justified. That end, however, and the boundaries it encloses us within, are not fixed in the traditional teleological sense.

[10] See Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* and Abensour's essay "William Morris: The Politics of Romance." The education of desire, according to Thompson, "is not the same as 'a moral education' towards a given end: it is, rather, to open a way to aspiration … [it] liberates desire to an uninterrupted interrogation of our values and also its own self-interrogation" ("Postscript: 1976").

relationship between antiquity and futurity. Through art's utopian function "hope … no longer just appears as a merely self-based feeling." The apprehension of the Not-Yet-Conscious is "first represented in ideas," more specifically "imaginative ideas, as opposed to those remembered ones which merely reproduce past perceptions and thereby shade off more and more into the past" (1: 144). Bloch adds to this that "the utopian function is distinguished from mere fantasizing precisely by the fact that only the former has in its favour a Not-Yet-Being of an expectable kind, i.e. does not play around and get lost in an Empty-Possible, but psychologically anticipates a Real-Possible" (1: 144).

Little wonder, then, that other Marxist critics such as Darko Suvin, inspired by Bloch's work, have previously celebrated the utopian and cognitive functions of science fiction while dismissing the possibility of its presence within fantasy, quickly equating these imagined worlds with the Empty-Possible.[11] This interpretation, however, is oversimplified. In the "Encounter of the utopian function with archetypes," for instance, Bloch states that "there is also a depth upwards and forwards which takes up into itself profound material from below," meaning that, in the case of archetypal figuration in a work of art, "the groundwork for hope is partly done in the archaic frame" (1: 159). *Partly* is key here: for "archetypes merely held back in regression transform utopia into a backward-looking, reactionary" expression of desire—nostalgia in its most negative and dangerous sense, as the desire for a return to an imagined past (1: 162).[12] Indeed, "only

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[11] In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), for instance, Darko Suvin claims that fantasy "does not use imagination as a means of of understanding the tendencies latent in reality, but as an end sufficient unto itself and cut off from the real contingencies … It simply posits another world beside yours where some carpets do, magically, fly, and some paupers do, magically, become princes … Anything is possible in a [fantasy], because a [fantasy] is manifestly impossible" (20). Much more recently, Suvin has retracted this "blanket rejection of fantastic fiction," conceding that "[t]he divide between cognitive (pleasantly useful) and non-cognitive (useless) does not run between SF and fantastic fiction but inside each—though in rather different ways and in different proportions, for there are more obstacles to liberating cognition in the latter" ("Considering the Sense of Fantasy or Fantastic Fiction" 211). Even so, the "anti-cognitive" stigma against fantasy endures.

[12] As Brian Attebery recalls from a discussion he had with some Italian students: "I was giving my usual heated defense of fantasy as an art form when I was interrupted by a comment from the students. 'Here in

those archetypes in which something not worked out, relatively unexpired and

undischarged still circulates are capable of utopian treatment" (1: 162). Archetypes, for

Bloch, are not "hypostasized" primeval ideals of the Platonic variety, but are instead

"situational condensing categories," epistemically dense figures conveying a set of

socially- and historically-established relations. Consequently, the anticipation of, and

hope for, futurity is not simply a question of what lies ahead for one in the present

historical moment, not merely looking forward, but includes within itself the

undischarged contents received from a Not-Yet-Conscious of the past. It is for this reason

that Bloch argues that "[r]eal depth always occurs in double-edged movement" between

the past and future—or, more properly, the anticipated futures of both the past and

present (1: 158). Elsewhere Bloch describes this double-movement of the past and

present in the utopian function as *nonsynchronism*, the new life and real influence of old

ideas within a later social and historical circumstance.[13]

The archetypes of fantasy literature walk a fine line, since "it [is] precisely

expired feudal archetypes that were most popular in the regression which correspond[s]

to political reaction," a particular danger given that modern fantasy takes as its basis the

medievalism of William Morris (1: 162). Even so, not all of fantasy (or the entirety of the

genre's return to a feudal setting through medievalism) is of this expired kind. Bloch

suggests that there is still something "undischarged" about the figures and motifs of

fantasy:

> But clearly, existing archetypes of the situation of freedom or of luminous
> happiness are not bound to this sort of past material, they have escaped it and are

Italy,' they said, 'fantasy is something that comes from the far right, and science fiction from the left.' They said that there is even a neofascist press that publishes nothing but fantasy. The thought stopped me cold. Is fantasy somehow suited to fascism? Is that its hidden political content—hidden from me, anyway, but maybe obvious to others?" ("The Politics (If Any) of Fantasy" 7-8). This may very well be part of what Suvin means when he states that fantasy has "more obstacles" to achieving cognitive value (see footnote 2).

[13]As we shall see *nonsynchronism* is a key concept informing Fredric Jameson's hermeneutic in *The Political Unconscious*.

at least extra-territorial to it …They are to be found, as we have seen, in all great literary works, myths, religions, and in fact: they belong by virtue of their undischarged part alone to truth, to a cloaking depiction of *utopian tendency-contents in the real*. An archetype with undischarged tendency-latency beneath the cloak of fantasy is the Land of Cockaigne, is the fight with the dragon (St George, Apollo, St Michael), is the winter demon who tries to kill the young sun (Fenriswolf, Pharaoh, Herod, Gessler). A related archetype is the liberation of the virgin (innocence in general) whom the dragon holds captive (Perseus and Andromeda), is the time of dragons, the dragon-land itself, when it appears as the necessary space which precedes the final triumph. (1: 162-3)

The utopian function of literature clearly remains in operation within certain medieval motifs and imaginings. What's more, dragons, demons, and lands where it rains cheese embody this function, i.e. they are not so easily dismissed and relegated to the ineffectual category of the Empty-Possible. Despite their apparent unreality, these medieval (and, in a modern context, fantastic) archetypes are, for Bloch, imbricated with the utopian function of hope. They are not "mere" fantasy but contain some element of the Real-Possible beneath their veneer of impossibility.

For archetypes with some undischarged, latent utopian element, an indicator of their progressive potential is their innovation, their re-tooling and re-use for a new historical milieu. While all archetypes function as condensing categories of the imagination, "not all archetypes are *merely condensed images of archaic experience*; time and again a shoot has sprouted from them that augments the existing contents of the archetypes" (1: 163, my emphasis). It is their new development and their dynamism which allows for "the refunctioning which is *expert at liberating archetypally encapsulated hope*" (1: 164). By taking up medievalism, myth, and the magic of fairy-tales, modern fantasy repurposes the utopian function latent within these archaic archetypes, specifically through their allegorical use in literature, as it is "in the allegory that the wealth of poetically working archetypes first opens up, of those which still lie in the *Alteritas* of worldly life" (1: 161). Fantasy allegorizes this *Alteritas* or otherness of

worldly life as a worldly *Alteritas* in its own right, an other-world through which our own reality is allegorically encoded.[14]

In the third part of *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch details how the utopian function of fantastic archetypes and their allegories operate in fairy tales and adventure stories, both of which are precursors to modern fantasy: "Once upon a time: in the fairytale [sic] that does not only mean something past, but a more colourful or lighter Elsewhere" (1: 353). Bloch's idea of nonsynchronism is at play in the fairy tale, mutually invoking the What Has Been and the Not-Yet. Like daydreams, fairy tales "always turn golden in the end … It is always the little heroes and the poor folk here who manage to reach the place where life has become good"; moreover, these characters refuse "just to wait for this goodness," but "go out in search of their happiness … Courage and cunning are their shield, their spear is reason" (1: 353-4). However, "the fairytale [sic] does not pretend to be a substitute for action" (1: 355). Fantastic narratives such as these are not a substitution. Those who would denounce fantasy as "escapist" are quick to judge it, rightly, as a poor substitute; but that is not its intent. Rather, its purpose is as an allegorical simulation of action, a source of motivation or inspiration, a narrative infusion of hope through its utopian function, through its allegory and its archetypes.

Bloch adds that "there is … a kind of fairytale [sic] which is seldom regarded as such," namely the adventure story, what Bloch refers to as *colportage*, yet another crucial precursor of modern fantasy. From a critical and scholarly perspective, the adventure

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[14] The connection with *Alteritas* helps to refine what Bloch means when he refers to allegory. Writing of the apocalyptic character of science fiction, Michah Donohue notes the etymological connection between "alterity" and "the *allos* in allegory" (133). The term allegory etymologically derives from the Greek *allogoria*, literally rendered as "other speaking," or, more liberally, "speaking otherwise," hence the meaning of allegory as "[t]he use of symbols in a story … to convey a hidden or ulterior meaning, usually a spiritual or political one" ("allegory, n."). The *allos* of science fiction and fantasy is therefore the "contrast [of] other worlds with this one … in order to prompt apocalypse, that is, an 'uncovering,' a 'disclosing,' a 'revelation'—all translations of ἀποκάλυψις, *apokalypsis*—in the reader" (Donohue 133). For Bloch, then, allegory is a vehicle for revealing the as-yet unclear vision of an anticipated future, or, in Moylan's words, as a site for "preconceptual figures of that which is not yet attained" (24).

story "has been little regarded," in part "because it so easily descends into trash" (1: 367).[15] This lack of refinement is the product of a regressive or reactionary outlook that celebrates rather than reinterprets and repurposes expired archetypal representations with a view towards the future. These regressive representations instead uphold a fascistic worldview that dreams of a return to a past Golden Age. Like the adventure story, so many pulp "sword and sorcery" novels of the twentieth century easily fall into this unfortunate trash heap. But for those works which separate the utopian wheat from the archaic chaff, hope of a Real-Possible kind awaits interpretation:

> Klu Klux Klan and fascism simply turn into life the criminal abbreviation and the wilderness of the colportage. Whereas the uncommon goal in the wilderness: imprisonment and liberation, stunning the dragon, rescuing the damsel, cleverness, breakthrough, revenge—all these pieces belong to freedom and to the brilliant light behind it. Not Fascism, but the revolutionary act in its Romantic age is this kind of chap-book come to life. (1: 368)

In other words, the adventure story shares the fairy tale's use of an archaic archetypal register and the corresponding utopian function therein. Like the fairy tale, the adventure story's hero "does not wait … for happiness to fall into his lap"; there is "a courage about the hero, which, usually like its reader, has nothing to lose" (1: 367). Like the fairy tale, the adventure story stands in close proximity to the raw daydream, a rejection of the badly-existing reality: "The dream of the colportage is: never again the everyday," and, as with the fairy tale, "at the end stands: happiness, love, victory" (1: 367). These stories contain the "still recognizable gleam from the romance of chivalry" (1: 367) that Morris takes up through the adventures of his late romances. He taps into this utopianism, at once archaic and revolutionary, when he imagines a secondary world entirely separate from our own through a lens of medieval romance. Bloch thus calls for the "need for re-

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[15] An adventure story "without literary refinement," argues Bloch, has a "foul stench": "It is ambivalent, can point to Klu Kluxers and fascists, even be a special stimulant for them" (1: 368). Bloch recognizes here the same ambiguous possibilities of fantasy's political uses as Attebery acknowledges in the introductory anecdote of "The Politics (If Any) of Fantasy." See footnote 3.

evaluation of [the adventure story], by virtue of the highly legitimate wishful image in its mirror … At all points here lost meanings are fresh, awaiting meaning which have not been lost, as in the fairy tale" (1: 368-9). As we shall see in the works of Morris, Tolkien, and Le Guin, the motifs of fantasy, as they take up the archetypes and utopian functions of adventure stories and fairy tales, similarly articulate a real wishful image, a real anticipatory hope.

1.2 New Horizons: Jameson's Hermeneutic of *The Political Unconscious* and its Debts to Blochian Nonsynchronism

Having identified a legitimate position for modern fantasy as an analogue to fairy tales and adventure stories within Bloch's utopian theory, I would like to turn now to the related hermeneutic method developed in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981). I first follow the work of Patrick Burger in *The Political Unconscious of the Fantasy Sub-Genre of Romance* (2001), which applies to modern fantasy Jameson's hermeneutic of relating the operations of the unconscious to the historical-material circumstances of the text. Second, I use Bloch's detailed account of anticipatory consciousness to shed a crucial light on the third and final stage of Jameson's hermeneutic, which relates the text to the entire scope of human history. Finally, I use Jameson's reference to Bloch's concept of nonsynchronism in this third stage of interpretation to shed further light on Bloch's understanding of how the past and future coexist within a historical moment, an essential element of fantasy's engagement with the literary forms and motifs of the past as more than nostalgia.

Jameson's hermeneutic is comprised of three levels of interpretation, which he refers to as "horizons"—a core metaphor which his method shares with Bloch's philosophy. The first horizon treats an individual literary text as a *symbolic act* carried out within "political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chronicle

sequence of happenings in time" (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 60). Adapted from the

anthropological work of Claude Levi-Strauss, a symbolic act is a social act such that "real

social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution

in the aesthetic realm … the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an

ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal

"solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions" (*Political Unconscious* 64). The text

under interpretation in this first horizon, then, unconsciously embodies the social

contradictions surrounding the historical circumstances immediately contemporary to its

production.

Jameson's second horizon broadens the text's interpretation to "that of the social"

(68). Whereas in the first horizon the text is examined as a "univocal" set of symbolic

contradictions and "a purely individual symbolic resolution" thereof, in the second

horizon these contradictions are read *dialogically* (*Political Unconscious* 70). This

dialogic reading reconstructs, via the text itself and a broad set of historical works and

materials contemporary to its production, "the irreconcilable demands and positions of

antagonistic classes," that is, as an "antagonistic dialogue of class voices" (*Political

Unconscious* 70). This interpretive procedure is

> a rather different operation from the one … ascribed to [the] first horizon. Now
> the individual text will be refocused as a *parole*, or individual utterance, of that
> vaster system, or *langue*, of class discourse … the illusion or appearance of
> isolation or autonomy which a printed text projects must now be systematically
> undermined. Indeed, since by definition the cultural monuments and masterworks
> that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class
> dialogue, the voice of the hegemonic class, they cannot be properly assigned their
> relational place in a dialogical system without the restoration or artificial
> reconstruction of the voice to which they were initially opposed.
> (*Political Unconscious* 70-1)

In other words, a conflicting (typically counter-hegemonic) voice must be recovered from

historical materials contemporary to the text, "most notably," Jameson adds, "from the

fragments of essentially peasant cultures: folk songs, fairy tales, popular festivals, occult

or oppositional systems of belief such as magic and witchcraft" (*Political Unconscious*

71). In fact, Jameson cites Bloch's interpretation of fairy tales[16] as an example of how this dialogue of class voices can be achieved: "Bloch's reading of the fairy tale, with its magical wish-fulfillments and its Utopian fantasies of plenty and the *pays de Cocagne*, restores the dialogical and antagonistic content of this "form" by exhibiting it as a systematic deconstruction and undermining of the hegemonic aristocratic form of the epic, with its somber ideology of heroism and baleful destiny" (*Political Unconscious* 71). Fantasy already assumes a dialogical position mediating between the hegemonic epic and counter-hegemonic folk- or fairy-tale within the archaic form of the medieval romance, the adventure into the unknown. Fantasy, then, typically conceived as a less "literary" genre, is already working to undermine the univocal quality through which social contradictions are symbolically encoded and acted-out within the text.[17] This interpretive process[18] corroborates fantasy's reformulation of the archaic register of archetypes within fairy tales and adventure stories. It thus suggests the same literary play and conscientious re-tooling of archetypal images that Bloch describes in *The Principle of Hope*.

A core concept within Jameson's second horizon of interpretation is the *ideologeme*, which he describes as "an amphibious formation," straddling the boundary between "ideology as abstract opinion, class value, and the like, and the narrative materials" located within the interpreted text (*Political Unconscious* 73). Ideologemes can appear "as a pseudoidea—a conceptual belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or

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[16] In an essay titled "Zerstörung, Rettung des Mythos durch Licht" ("Destruction, Salvation of Myths through Light"; my translation).

[17] This formal quality of fantasy, in terms of its presentation of disparate voices meeting in the production of a single text, is reminiscent of the dialogic character that Mikhail Bakhtin attributes to the form of the novel (314).

[18] See also Brian Attebery's recognition of fantasy's metafictional qualities, insofar as the genre "displays and even celebrates its structure" ("Structuralism" 83).

prejudice—or as a protonarrative, a kind of ultimate class fantasy about the 'collective characters' which are the classes in opposition" within the text and the dialogic space surrounding its production (*Political Unconscious* 73). One of the key endeavours at this level of literary interpretation is "the identification of the ideologeme, and in many cases, of its initial naming in instances where for whatever reason it had not yet been registered as such" (*Political Unconscious* 73). Burger identifies socialism, medievalism, and neo-paganism (29) as key ideologemes of modern fantasy, to which I add Christianity and feminism.[19] At the end of this chapter I will examine socialism and medievalism in my analysis of Morris's critique of utopianism in *The Story of the Glittering Plain*. Neo-paganism and Christianity will provide the framework for my reading of Tolkien's environmental concerns in chapter two, and feminism informs my reading of the ideological evolution and historicity of Le Guin's Secondary World in her *Earthsea* cycle.

Jameson's final hermeneutic horizon cites Bloch's concept of *nonsynchronism*. In this third horizon, "History itself becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular" (*Political Unconscious* 86). By "History" Jameson means an interpretation which takes *modes of production*, rather than historically-situated class conflict, as in the second horizon, for its basis (*Political Unconscious* 74). This is not so simple as associating a text with the dominant mode of production under which it was produced,

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[19]Burger specifically examines two of Morris's late romances, *The Story of the Glittering Plain* and *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894). I'll return to Burger's Jamesonian reading in my final section.

insofar as any categorically "pure" mode of production is an abstraction from real historical conditions.[20]

The reality of History is much more complex than any such oversimplified association, as "no historical society has ever 'embodied' a mode of production in any pure state" (*Political Unconscious* 80). Any interpretation within this third horizon, then, must recognize that

> every social formation or historically existing society has in fact consisted in the overlay and structural coexistence of *several* modes of production all at once, *including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production … as well as anticipatory tendencies* which are potentially inconsistent with the existing system but have not yet generated an autonomous space of their own. (*Political Unconscious* 80, my emphasis)

Consequently, to interpret a text at the level of History, through the lens of modes of production, requires one to recognize that text's production "to be crisscrossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of cultural production all at once … in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic" (*Political Unconscious* 81). This antagonism is most easily recognized in moments of cultural revolution and transition from one dominant mode to another. But just as any clear-cut diachronic movement from mode to mode is an abstraction of the real movements of History, so too is a clear delineation and temporal localization of definite cultural revolutions.[21]

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[20]Such a clearly categorized, linear notion of economic and historical development only encourages what Jameson describes as sterile "classificatory procedures," such as trying to decide "whether Milton is to be read within a 'precapitalist' or a nascent capitalist context" (*Political Unconscious* 79).

[21] Jameson argues that

> the overtly "transitional" moments of cultural revolution are themselves but the passage to the surface of a permanent process in human societies, of a permanent struggle between various coexisting modes of production. The triumphant moment in which a new systemic dominant gains ascendancy is therefore only the diachronic manifestation of a constant struggle for the perpetuation and production of its dominance, a struggle which must continue throughout its life course, accompanied at all moments by the systemic or structural antagonism of those older and newer modes of production that resist assimilation or seek deliverance from it … Cultural

In his earlier essay "Nonsynchronism and Dialectics," Bloch describes nonsynchronism as the "unsurmounted remnants of older economic being and consciousness" (29). This includes the antagonisms and contradictions of these previous modes of production and the consciousness they produce:

> the nonsynchronous contradiction, as that of merely declining pasts, which themselves are not completed, cannot precipitate a change into a new quality, no matter how great its quantity … Even the possible late ripening of what is actually incompleted in this past can never turn into a new quality of its own accord. That end could be served at best by an alliance, which liberates the still *possible future* from the *past* only by putting both in the present. (33)

In other words, one can interpret the re-tooling of archaic motifs, archetypes, allegories, such as those of fantasy, as this nonsynchronous alliance between past and future within the historical moment of a text's production. Jameson's concluding remarks on the hermeneutic of his third horizon recognize this nonsynchronous function of symbolism and allegory: "the individual text … is here restructured as a field of force in which the dynamics of sign systems of several distinct modes of production can be registered and apprehended," which in turn produce "a host of distinct generic messages—some of them objectified survivals from older modes of cultural production, some anticipatory, but all together projecting a formal conjuncture through which the 'conjuncture' of coexisting modes of production at a given historical moment can be detected and allegorically articulated" (*Political Unconscious* 84-5). It is precisely this conjuncture of nonsynchronous modes of production within a given historical moment which fantasy, as a genre, most explicitly articulates, its worlds as allegories for the latent condition of our own, marrying, as Bloch says, the unfinished past with the anticipations of the future. This allegorical articulation of the nonsynchronous conjuncture is most readily identified

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revolution thus conceived may be said to be beyond the opposition between synchrony and diachrony, and to correspond roughly to what Ernst Bloch has called the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (or "nonsynchronous development" of cultural and social life. (*Political Unconscious* 83)

in fantasy's narrative motif of the journey, which, as we shall see in Morris, Tolkien, and Le Guin, carries its protagonists through multiple co-existing modes of production, serving as just one horizon of fantasy's social critique and forming part of its utopian function.

1.3 "I seek no dream … but rather the end of dreams": William Morris's *The Story of the Glittering Plain* as a Case Study of the Utopian Function of Fantasy

The intersection of the thought of Bloch and Jameson, then, offers a method of reading fantasy as distinctly utopian. The key to this interpretation is the utopian functions of archetype and allegory, which are not merely archaic but made anticipatory in their renewed use as part of the nonsynchronous, undischarged hope-content that lies latent within the moment of a fantasy world's production. In the final part of this chapter I deploy this method in a case study of William Morris's *The Story of the Glittering Plain*. *Glittering Plain* is the first of Morris's late romances he began publishing only a year after the appearance of his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, in which the narrator, "William Guest," is transported in his sleep to the twenty-first century, touring the idyllic agrarian society that has emerged since his own time and learning the customs and "history" of its people. While there are other, earlier "fantastic" works of literature in the nineteenth century[22], critics such as Burger (47) and Matthews (*Worlds* 3) consider Morris's late romances as the first works of modern fantasy because they embody the

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[22] See the work of George MacDonald (1824-1905), a Scottish writer and Christian priest. He is largely remembered as an author of fantasies for children, such as the tales collected in *Dealings with the Fairies* (1867), including "The Golden Key," and *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872). However, he also wrote fantasy for adults, such as *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lillith* (1895). Despite their common interest in writing romances, there appears to be little literary contact or influence shared between MacDonald and Morris. The only direct correspondence between the two men appears to be a brief exchange of letters concerning MacDonald's house in Hammersmith, London, named "The Retreat." Morris rented the house from MacDonald and renamed it Kelmscott House (Morris, "To George Macdonald" 465-6; MacCarthy ch. 12).

first instances of Secondary Worlds in Tolkien's sense ("On Fairy-Stories" 53). Fantasy in this tradition therefore exhibits a level of defamiliarization and uncanniness which engenders a cognitive estrangement comparable to that which Suvin attributes to science fiction (*Metamorphoses* 15). Matthews argues that "[b]y showing us a glimpse of unrealized possibilities, the fantasy writer sheds a wondrous, glowing light on the known world, helping us to see the familiar with new clarity" (*Worlds* 3). He adds that "[a]ll of his work is utopian in at least one dimension, in that it seeks to ennoble the thoughts, sentiments, and aspirations of men" (*Worlds* 3). The following discussion of Morris, then, will align the estranging, wondrous light of his new worlds with the anticipatory dawn of Bloch's Not-Yet-Conscious, and draw out the utopian function of its nonsynchronous archetypes and allegories.

Morris's *Glittering Plain* tells the story of a young man, Hallblithe, who sets out to sea to rescue his bride-to-be (who is only referred to throughout the text as "the Hostage") from a rival tribe known as the Ravagers. His search takes him to the idyllic land of the Glittering Plain, also called the Land of the Undying, where people live forever, without want of anything and without the need to work. Hallblithe eventually discovers that the Hostage is not in the Land of the Undying; the King does not forbid him to depart but refuses to help him leave, wanting Hallblithe to marry the King's daughter and give up his quest. Instead, Hallblithe retreats from the idyllic pleasures of the Plain and spends long days building a boat so that he can return to the Isle of the Ravagers and find his beloved.[23]

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[23] *The Wood Beyond the World* also involves a nautical journey: Golden Walter sets out on a merchant ship owned by his father to escape his unfaithful wife. When he learns that her family has killed his father, he attempts to return home, but a storm takes his ship off course and leads him to a strange land. His travels lead him to a strange land, where he encounters a maiden, a dwarf, and a lady he had previously had visions of. The lady is a witch who has enthralled the Maid, and she also puts Walter under her spell. Walter and the maiden help each other escape her magic. As they continue the journey together, they meet a tribe known as the Bear People, who identify the Maid as the reincarnation of their goddess. They then reach the

Burger's reading of Morris's text within the Jameson's second horizon, which

positions the text within the social circumstances of its cultural production, helpfully

identifies ideologemes that characterize and define Morris's romances. Yet he tends to

intertwine the first and third horizons. For example, when reading *Glittering Plain*

through Jameson's first horizon, he asserts that the text "approaches its formal resolution

of the social contradictions of Morris's time by presenting settings that are clearly set off

from one another and are identifiable as one or another mode of production," which are

variously explored by the protagonist, Hallblithe, through the romance motif of the quest

(57). Hallblithe leaves his home, the kin-based society of the Houses of the Rose and the

Raven, to seek out his kidnapped betrothed, the Hostage. He travels to the Isle of

Ransom, peopled by the piratic House of the Ravagers, and from there to the Land of the

Glittering Plain, ruled by the Undying King, under whose rule all desires are effortlessly

fulfilled and no one grows old. Burger classifies these three social configurations as

instances of the gens mode of production,[24] (proto)capitalist mode, and feudal mode,

respectively. Hallblithe rejects the eternal life of ease offered by the Undying King and

returns to the Isle of Ransom, where he forms an alliance between the House of the

Ravagers and his own people and recovers his bride-to-be, then returns home with the

Hostage and a host of their new allies. From this journey, "which foregrounds an

investigation of modes of production," concludes Burger, "Morris's formal resolution of

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kingdom of Stark-Wall, where, when no king sits upon the throne, the first visitor to arrive is crowned. Walter becomes king, and the Maid becomes his queen.

[24] This term derives from Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), in which social groups first begin to organize around ideas of heredity, and the taboo of incest is established: "Once the proscription of sexual intercourse between all brothers and sisters , including even the most remote collateral relations on the mother's side, becomes established, the above group … is transformed into a gens – that is, constitutes itself as a rigidly limited circle of blood relatives in the female line, who are not allowed to marry one another, from now on it increasingly consolidates itself by other common institutions of a social and religious character, and differentiates itself from the other gentes of the same tribe" (qtd. in Burger 36).

the social contradictions of 1890s England is clear. The gens mode of production is brought out as a social option, and is favoured by Morris" (63). Burger reiterates this primacy of the gens mode in his analysis of the third horizon, which he understands to be "asking what role the text plays in the cultural revolution within a particular mode of production." Since for Burger the text "seems to be a suggestion that an investigation of the gens mode of production, with the object of yielding organizational principles and social values, can be of some value in resolving the impasse as to how a classless society can be achieved," he concludes that such an investigation amounts to "a profound contribution to the cultural revolution that will be necessary to either overthrow the capitalistic mode of production, or else reform it" (64-5).

Yet while Burger emphasizes fantasy's use of the quest to explore various modes of production within a Secondary World, his analysis deviates from Jameson's method in several problematic ways, leading to equally problematic conclusions. First and foremost of these issues, as I have previously noted, is understanding how multiple intersecting modes of production and their sign systems in Jameson's *third* horizon, that of History, allows us to interpret their interlocking antagonisms at the moment of the text's cultural production. The first horizon concerns the symbolic resolution of social contradictions particular to the moment of a text's cultural production internalized within the text itself. Yet Burger's emphasis on the priority of the gens mode of production within the first horizon, without any clarification as to how this mode of production persists as an underlying antagonism to capitalism in late nineteenth-century England, seems anachronistic and ahistorical. Without understanding how the gens mode persists nonsynchronously within industrial capitalism, and how this past mode is directed towards liberating an impeded future, Burger's approach seems, at best, regressive.

To identify the utopian function within *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, the social contradiction internal to the text must first be identified. I take this contradiction to be that between 1) the wish-fulfilling promises that the Glittering Plain itself and its

Undying King purport to provide Hallblithe and 2) Hallblithe's crushing dissatisfaction and emotional suffering during his time spent there. Morris figures the Glittering Plain as a folk utopia where the old become young again and never die, and are entirely without labour and toil, not unlike the Land of Cockaigne. As the King says, "no man hath a lack which he may not satisfy without taking aught from any other" (261). For Hallblithe, however, it is a land of illusion and deceit, leaving him perpetually unsatisfied. Hallblithe entreats the King to help him find his beloved, to which the King answers, "Thy desire shall be satisfied; thou shalt have the woman who would have thee, and whom thou shouldst have" (262). However, the King tricks Hallblithe, directing him not to the Hostage, but to the King's daughter, who wishes to marry him (265-6). He returns to the King, pleading for aid, only for the King to reply: "How can I help thee … thou who wilt not help thyself" (269). Realizing that the King will not fulfill his wish, Hallblithe becomes despondent and asks to leave the Glittering Plain. Sea-eagle, who sails with Hallblithe from Ransom to the Glittering Plain, is perplexed by his friend's refusal to partake of the land's delights, and asks him, "Art thou still seeking a dream?", to which Hallblithe replies, "I seek no dream … but rather the end of dreams" (273). It is only by his own labour—by building himself a boat—that Hallblithe is able to return to the Isle of Ransom, where he is finally reunited with the Hostage.

According to Carole G. Silver, Morris's late romances internalize socialism partly through their celebration of labour (124-5), which symbolically resolves the contradiction between the Glittering Plain's easy promises of fulfillment and Hallblithe's unfulfilled desire. It is only when, as the King says, Hallblithe helps himself, that the end he desires can be achieved. The contradiction here clearly bears on the question of imagining utopic spaces in Morris's own time. This contradiction therefore positions the text within a second-horizon dialogical social space in which it is only one voice among many, and the ideologeme operating here is clearly that of socialism. For instance, *News from Nowhere* was published directly as a response to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888),

which depicts a centralized, technologically-oriented socialist utopia. In his review of Bellamy, Morris argues, "I believe that the ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of labour to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of *pain in labour* to a minimum … the true incentive to useful and happy labour is and must be pleasure in the work itself" (qtd. in Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* 108).[25]

The false utopia of the Glittering Plain offers a similar critique of ease, of release from labour to the utmost extent. Interestingly, Morris's subtitle for his utopian response to Bellamy is "An Epoch of Rest," and he "was aware that his vision of a Utopian paradise was subject to the same criticisms as he had once levelled at escapist fantasies" (Hodgson 155). *Glittering Plain*, then, may serve "as a caution against trusting too deeply in the Utopia Morris was creating. One of the unsolved problems of Morris's Nowhere is that the people have nothing left to hope for, and must fear change because it could only be change for the worse" (155). For Silver such an assessment applies to not only *The Story of the Glittering Plain* but all of Morris's subsequent romances. She argues that after *News from Nowhere* "Morris himself writes romances that Nowherians would enjoy. He chooses a 'truthful' genre that is popular, rooted in folklore, 'typical' content, rich in incident, and free of middle-class conventions and ideologies" (121). The "utopian and romantic fantasies" of Morris's final years, then, are a direct extension of his more obvious utopian work and are "completely consistent with his revolutionary social vision" (Matthews, *Worlds* 39). In the case of *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, in particular, it appears to serve as a corrective response to criticism of Nowhere: as a tale imagined for Nowherians themselves, it serves as a didactic warning against a life of pure

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[25] As Levitas observes, this "counterview of socialism set out here must be read as the underlying intention of *News from Nowhere*" (*The Concept of Utopia* 108).

ease, and against a society that is stagnant, unchanging. In doing so, Morris is taking up the old folktale of the Land of Cockaigne and repurposing the archaic utopian vision through the Glittering Plain as a corrective measure for his own vision of utopia, subverting the folktale's original purpose and using it to question how leisurely a just society of the future should truly be.

As a repurposed and troubled Land of Cockaigne, the Glittering Plain also suggests a rich account of nonsynchronous modes of production, bringing us to the third of Jameson's horizons. Morris's romance is eminently suitable for such a nonsynchronous reading: "though its plot is set beyond fixed historical reality, [it] does not abandon the value of collective history or consciousness" (Matthews, *Worlds* 37). Within this world beyond, the Glittering Plain itself is a land outside of time, where people return to the prime of their youth and do not age, an ideal allegorical space in which to critique the coexisting nonsynchronous modes of production of Morris's time, the most obvious being feudalism: the Glittering Plain is governed by an Undying King whose political power is absolute. While the King does not actively exert the powers of his monarchical position, they are implicitly given through Hallblithe's request for the King to grant him leave from the Glittering Plain. The King's response—"I hinder not thy departure, nor will any of my folk … I will not hinder; I will not help. Depart in peace!" (Morris 272)—suggests that he exerts the unilateral power of a feudal lord within his lands.

However, the King's *laissez-faire* attitude also resembles that of a capitalist politician promoting a free-market ideology, a capitalist consciousness that extends to all inhabitants of the Glittering Plain through their overwhelming sense of individualism. For example, Sea-eagle's reason for travelling to the Glittering Plain is "the preservation of his own ego," an "absorption of self [that] is seen as a prerequisite for a happy residence in this odd land of immortality" (Matthews, *Worlds* 36-7). Apart from Hallblithe, everyone comes to the Glittering Plain to indulge in their desires. Since nothing impedes

their selfishness, they also exhibit a distinctly socialist attitude when they freely offer to Hallblithe the materials he needs to build his boat (294). However, they do not lend their labour to his toil but merely observe his work until they grow uninterested. Their socialist attitude is therefore only a result of their limitless abundance. In short, facets of feudal, capitalist, and socialist organization and consciousness together present themselves within the Glittering Plain. As Bloch indicates, nonsynchronous modes of organization and consciousness and their contradictions must be brought to the fore, must be made relevant, through a synchronous contradiction. I contend that the false utopia of Morris's Glittering Plain melds the nonsynchronous modes of feudalism, capitalism, and socialism as his response (conscious or otherwise) to the Decadent movement, a synchronous contradiction that mirrors the aesthetic and political contradictions of cultural production in the late nineteenth century. As Matthews remarks,

> The Undying King is a nearly perfect figure for the Decadents who followed Morris, and who accepted part, but not the most important part, of his ideas concerning art … Both the King's lavish ornament, and his own appearance ("his face shone like a star … when he spoke his voice was so sweet that all hearts were ravished"), describe a character who might have stepped out of a fairy tale by the arch-decadent Oscar Wilde. The King's premise is also that of the decadent—the fulfillment of every desire. (*Worlds* 37-8)

The people of the Glittering Plain also appear decadent, bearing an aristocratic love of leisure and aversion to labour, as well as an emphasis on individual desire and experience. It seems fitting, then, that Hallblithe's departure from this land of desire echoes Wilde's statement that "when Humanity lands there [i.e., utopia], it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail," serving at once as an agreement with, and rebuke to, Wilde's ideas ("The Soul of Man Under Socialism"). Hallblithe's rejection of the individualistic pleasures of the Glittering Plain, the peace he makes between his people and the House of the Ravagers, and his return home with the Hostage "[affirm] the socially-oriented mode of the fantasy genre that Morris invented and designed" (Matthews, *Worlds* 38).

As I mentioned earlier, Ruth Levitas describes Morris's utopianism as an "education of desire," which she compares to Bloch's concept of *docta spes* or "educated hope" (20). Of Morris's education of desire, Levitas writes:

> the function of utopian speculation in Morris's work, and specifically his utopian fiction, is neither escape and compensation, nor the description of a plan for the future. It is not didactic, but exploratory and educative, emphasizing both the necessity of social transformation and the centrality of human imagination and will in effecting that transformation … The vision set out in the dream is thus not a literal goal … but an exploration of the values on which a socialist society should be based. ("Educated Hope" 22)

Docta spes, according to Bloch, is what remains of the utopian function "with knowledge and removal of the finished *utopistic element*, with knowledge and removal of *abstract utopia*" (1: 157). In other words, *Docta spes* is what drives one from *abstract utopia* towards a *concrete utopia*: it "represents the transformation of wishful thinking into will-full and effective acting" (Levitas, "Educated Hope" 20). However, it is also dependent on Bloch's teleological closure. As Eagleton explains, "in Bloch's view [hope] is an ontological affair … It is not just that one must have material grounds for hope, but that hope for Bloch is in some sense an objective dynamic in the world" (95), and so the road towards Bloch's concrete utopia "has a single destination" (94): the Totum.

The varieties of utopianism championed by Morris, and its education of desire, can serve as a remedy to the problematic teleological singularity of Bloch's utopian theory. As Levitas argues,

> the process of education implied in both the education of hope and the education of desire must be recognized as one which involved explicit value-based choices, not one in which the end is, as Bloch argues, somehow objectively given as the end of a teleological unfolding of what we have all "really" wanted since time immemorial. (25)

These value-based choices *can* be found in Bloch's utopian theory, precisely where his abstract, early visions of utopia in fairy tales and adventure stories meet with those of Morris's utopian fantasy, his folktales and fables for Nowhere. Through the re-use and re-imagining of archetypes and allegories—as in Morris's recreation of the Land of

Cockaigne in *The Story of the Glittering Plain*—new values are inscribed upon old images, and archaisms are used to articulate present hopes for the future through the inheritance of the past. As Bloch's introduction to each kind of utopia suggests, utopia begins hazily within the imagination, within fairy tales and fantasy, a beginning of utopian thought that does not require Bloch's sense of teleology. This utopian reading shares certain qualities with Tom Moylan's concept of a "critical utopia," specifically that "these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream" (10), a dream that educates desire and propels one, like Hallblithe, to seek the end of dreams.

In the following chapters, I will employ this Blochian-Jamesonian hermeneutic to situate the works of Tolkien and Le Guin in the historical-material moment of their production while demonstrating how they take up literary archetypes and allegories of the past and, reworking them for the present, express utopian desires that anticipate the future.

2 "Uprooting the evil from the fields that we know": Spirituality, Social Revolt, and the Anticipatory Environmentalism of *The Lord of the Rings*

Since its publication, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) has become the standard by which all works of fantasy are measured.[26, 27] While most readers will be familiar with the story, I will provide a brief synopsis of the text before I discuss its critical reception and position it within my methodology. The novel, published in three volumes, chronicles the journey of Frodo Baggins, a hobbit of the Shire, to destroy the Ring of Power forged by the Dark Lord Sauron as a means of dominating all the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. The Ring has a will of its own and corrupts those who wear it to carry out its wishes. The Ring is intoxicating, addictive: there are few who can resist its influence. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the wizard Gandalf, noting Frodo's relative

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[26] A brief discussion of the novel's original publication history and its relation to Tolkien's other works may be helpful for some readers. The three volumes of the novel were first published in England by George Allen & Unwin in 1954 and 1955: the first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring* was published on July 29th, 1954; the next volume, *The Two Towers*, was published on November 11th of the same year; and the final volume, *The Return of the King*, was published on October 20th, 1955 (Anderson, "Note on the Text" ix). Originally conceived as a sequel to *The Hobbit* (1937), Tolkien began drafting *The Lord of the Rings* before *The Hobbit* was published (Tolkien, *Fellowship* xiii). He put down the project for several years to work on *The Silmarillion*, his "mythology and legends of the Elder Days" (xiii), which would later be edited by his son, Christopher Tolkien, and published posthumously in 1977. He began drafting the novel again in 1939, working on it intermittently until 1949. Tolkien was searching for a publisher as early as 1950 (Carpenter, ch. 6), hoping to publish *The Lord of the Rings* and the mythology of *The Silmarillion* together "as one long Saga of the Jewels and the Rings" (qtd. in Tolkien, Christopher, "Preface to the Second Edition" viii). After angrily refusing Allen & Unwin's offer to publish *The Lord of the Rings* separately from *The Silmarillion*, in 1952 Tolkien wrote a letter to the publisher stating he would accept publishing just *The Lord of the Rings* (Carpenter ch. 6).

[27] While it is worth noting that Peter Jackson's adaptation of Tolkien's novel into a trilogy of films (2001-2003) certainly revived and reinvigorated interest in fantasy, I will not be discussing the films nor their reception. The reason for this decision is twofold. First, the majority of the examples of activism that I note in the final section of the chapter all occur prior to the release of the first of Jackson's movies; they are strictly influenced by the novel, not the film adaptation. Second, the films' omission of the events in the penultimate chapter of the novel, "The Scouring of the Shire," deprive the narrative of its real political thrust, in my opinion. Their absence in the films is a symptom of capital working to co-opt fantasy and reduce it to ideological apparatus that only serves to legitimate the status-quo, stripping it of whatever revolutionary or counterhegemonic possibilities it may suggest.

immunity to the Ring's powers, tasks him with carrying the Ring to Rivendell, where a council of the races of Middle-earth will decide what to do with it. Ultimately, Frodo volunteers to take the Ring the rest of the way to Mordor to destroy it.   Frodo's quest takes him across Middle-earth, from Hobbiton to Mount Doom in Mordor, where the Ring was made and the only place where it can be destroyed. He is joined by eight allies representing the races of the Free Peoples—dwarves, elves, hobbits and men—forming the Fellowship of the Ring. No oath binds the Fellowship to remain with Frodo, and their paths eventually diverge. A band of orcs raids their camp as they travel towards Gondor along the Anduin river, killing Boromir and kidnapping Merry and Pippin, two of the hobbits who set out from the Shire with Frodo. Frodo, joined by Sam, slips away during the battle to protect the others from the temptation of stealing the Ring. Aragorn, the estranged heir to the throne of Gondor, along with Gimli the dwarf and Legolas the elf, task themselves with rescuing the kidnapped hobbits.

In the second and third volumes, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, the narrative is divided into two parallel plotlines. The first follows Frodo and Sam on their treacherous journey to the Cracks of Doom with their dubious guide, Gollum, who once possessed the Ring for centuries and conspires to take it for himself once again. The second follows Aragorn and the rest of the Fellowship as they fight against Sauron's forces and Aragorn claims the throne of Gondor, which has been empty for generations. In a final struggle for the Ring above the Cracks of Doom Gollum claims the Ring from Frodo, but tumbles off the edge, killing himself and destroying the Ring. Sauron and his armies fall, and Aragorn, who led the armies of Middle-earth to Mordor in a last-ditch effort to misdirect Sauron's attention from Frodo, is crowned King of Gondor.

That would be a reasonable place for the story to end, but there is a final conflict following the denouement of Aragorn's coronation and wedding in *The Return of the King*. In the penultimate chapter, "The Scouring of the Shire," the hobbits finally return to the Shire and find its lumber mill industrialized and all of its production monopolized;

the land is polluted, the forests decimated, and the hobbits of the Shire live miserably

under the control of Sharkey (an alias of the wizard Saruman, who had allied himself

with Sauron) and his band of brigands. Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin organize an

uprising among the hobbits and take back the Shire. Afterwards, Frodo, still suffering the

traumas of his quest, departs Middle-earth on the last ship to Valinor with Gandalf and

the elves, leaving his home, Bag-End, to Sam (now mayor of Hobbiton) and his family.

It may seem strange, initially, to include J. R. R. Tolkien's novels amongst works

exhibiting a progressive, utopian function within the fantasy genre, given the all-too-

common assertion among literary scholars that he (and therefore his writing) embraces a

regressive—or worse, reactionary—form of political conservativism. In *Fantasy: The

Literature of Subversion* (1981) Rosemary Jackson explicitly excludes much of what one

typically thinks of as "fantasy," including Tolkien's work, from her analysis, arguing that

such "faery, or romance literature … [moves] away from the unsettling implications

which are found at the centre of the purely 'fantastic' … and [retreats] from any profound

confrontation with existential dis-ease" (9).[28] However, there is a growing counterpoint

to this traditional, dismissive, and overly simplistic assessment of Tolkien's work,

especially as it relates to environmental themes. Patrick Curry, for example, argues that

Tolkien's "implicit diagnosis of modernity was prescient; and his version of an

alternative, progressive" (25). Likewise, Liam Campbell locates a form of "ecological

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[28] It's worth noting—as so few scholars who rely on her work do—that Jackson's theory of fantasy is wholly dependent on Tzvetan Todorov's concept of the fantastic, and this concept does not align with the genre named "fantasy" in the English-speaking world. Todorov distinguishes the *fantastic* from the *uncanny* and the *marvelous*: for him, the fantastic is a liminal space defined by a specific kind of narrative indeterminacy in which either the perspective character or the reader (or both) cannot determine whether an event should be explained by natural or supernatural causes, which evoke the uncanny or the marvelous, respectively (41). The character (or reader) is therefore suspended from making any certain rationalization about the cause of the event(s) in question. Thus, narratives which rely on supernatural explanations, what one calls "fantasy" in the Anglosphere, is, in a Todorovian analysis, termed marvelous. This dismissal on Jackson's part is therefore unsurprising, but it is also a parallel to Suvin's argument in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* that fantasy, with its mythological basis and supernatural causes, is anti-cognitive (21).

augury" in Tolkien's fiction *and* his literary theory (as laid out in the essay "On Fairy-Stories"), which "calls for a recovery of environmental values and a reconnection with nature in the hope that the modern world … may turn away from a path that may ultimately lead to a planetary home more akin to Mordor than Lothlórien" (21). Richard Matthews also describes the politics of *The Lord of the Rings* as "Tolkien's utopian vision" (*Fantasy* 78). Matthews acknowledges the "politically anachronistic" features of Tolkien's work, namely, the re-establishment of Gondor's monarchy under Aragorn, but he argues that "[Aragorn's] ascension is a matter of affirming form and structure rather than of rewarding a hero. His position as ruler promotes himself far less than it does the restitution of order, which has been accomplished through the convergence of all the eccentric individuals of the Free Peoples." Thus, he argues that while "Tolkien's ideal society is not egalitarian, it is free" (*Fantasy* 78).[29] Indeed, Tolkien's presentation of monarchy as a part of the formal device known as the "sacred marriage to the land" in which political and ecological health are tied together forms, as I will argue in this chapter, an essential part of his environmental utopian vision.

Despite Tolkien's conscious political conservatism, his ideas concerning history and allegory share important (and frequently overlooked) similarities with both Ernst Bloch and Frederic Jameson. Campbell's use of the word *augury* to describe the environmental concerns of Tolkien's literary work, for example, gestures toward the very kind of anticipatory utopian function described by Bloch. Moreover, Jack Zipes observes that, while "Tolkien had very little in common with his contemporary Ernst Bloch," one crucial thing that they *do* have in common is that both "employed the fairy tale to articulate deeply felt philosophies and to project utopian visions of better worlds which

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[29] A very minor note, linking Matthews's reading of Tolkien's utopianism to the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, is his observation that "[Aragorn's] childhood name, Estel, is translated in Tolkien's appendix as 'hope'" (*Fantasy* 78).

human beings are capable of realizing with their own powers" (122). Responding to scholars and critics hostile to Tolkien's work and his politics, such as Jackson, Zipes adds that

> it could be argued that Tolkien's other world, his utopia, appears to be a romantic regression to a legendary past, and escape from the brutalities of modern-day conditions. Yet, Bloch, if he had ever written about Tolkien, might have been the first to point out that the return to the past is also part of the way to the future, that Tolkien unearths buried and repressed "non-synchronic" elements of unfulfilled wishes and dreams which cannot be left unfulfilled if the potential of human beings to bring about a millennium on earth is to be achieved. (122)

This argument aligns exactly with my earlier analysis of Bloch's utopian function of the fairy tale and adventure story. From a Blochian perspective, then, Tolkien's fiction ought to be categorized as one of those "works of art that employ fantasy to offset instrumental rationalization and call forth our authentic utopian impulses" (122).

Like Zipes's identification of the parallels between Tolkien and Bloch, Ishay Landa observes that "Tolkien's own theoretical take on the question of literary interpretation exhibits some surprising and rather profound affinities with Jameson's," specifically, with regards to the importance both place on historicity (114). In defense of this unlikely affiliation, she cites both Tolkien's foreword to the second edition of *Lord of the Rings* as well as his notes on W. H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King*. In the foreword to the second edition, following from the widespread speculation that the war between Sauron and the Free Peoples of Middle-earth was an allegory for WWI, in which Tolkien served, he responds that "I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers" (*Fellowship* xv). In his notes on Auden's review, Tolkien states, "I am historically minded. Middle-earth is not an imaginary world … The theatre of my tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary" ("Notes on W. H. Auden's Review"). These comments challenge Jameson's assertion that "it

would seem to be the absence of any sense of history that most sharply differentiates fantasy from Science Fiction," and that Tolkien's fantasy "breathes a purer and more conventional medieval atmosphere, and dreams this non-historical vision along certain sharply articulated lines" (*Archaeologies* 61).[30] If one accepts the historicity of Tolkien's worldbuilding (which, given its meticulous historical depth and detail, would be hard to deny), then, as Landa argues, "despite their antagonistic political outlooks, conservative writer and radical theorist share a view of literature as solely meaningful within this world and its history, rather than as a purely fantastic sanctuary" (115).

A further point of congruence between Tolkien, Bloch, and Jameson concerns Tolkien's frequently noted distaste for allegory. It is on this basis that certain scholars of Tolkien's work, such as Curry, have denounced any kind of theoretical interpretation of Tolkien's texts, whether "Freudian, feminist, structuralist, Jungian, anthroposophical [or] Marxist," as "single-minded reductionism that sees everything in such a story as 'representing' something else," such that "the meaning of the whole is tacitly assumed to be exhausted" (16-17). Also referring to Tolkien's foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings,* Curry concludes that in any such approach "lies a woeful blindness to the power, here and now, of the myths and folk- and fairy-tales themselves" (17). Curry's issue, it would seem, is with any form of interpretation that involves claims of this or that

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[30] Jameson does make some exceptions to this assessment of fantasy, including Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle (*Archaeologies* 67); I will delve further into his reading of *Earthsea* in my final chapter. It is also interesting to note that, whereas Jameson judges fantasy to be a generally ahistorical genre, a variation of the all too common critique of fantasy as "escapist" literature, Tolkien turns this accusation on its head, criticizing science fiction as "that most escapist of all literatures" in which "prophets often foretell (and many seem to yearn for) a world like one big glass-roofed railway station. But for them it is as a rule very hard to gather what men in such a world-town will *do*. They may abandon the 'full Victorian panoply' for loose garments (with zip-fasteners), but will use this freedom mainly, it would appear, in order to play with mechanical toys in the soon-cloying game of moving at high speed. To judge by some of these tales they will be as lustful, vengeful, and greedy as ever; and their ideals of their idealists hardly reach farther than the splendid notion of building more towns of the same sort on other planets" ("On Fairy-Stories" 65).

element of a Secondary World being understood as "representing" something else in the Primary World.

However, to understand Tolkien's comment here as a dismissal of any and all allegorical interpretations of his work is to focus upon a leaf at the expense of the tree: it is, ironically, a reductionist interpretation of Tolkien on Curry's part. Tolkien's letters convey a more detailed and nuanced understanding of what he means by "allegory." In a 1947 letter to Sir Stanley Unwin, Tolkien writes:

> Of course, Allegory and Story converge, meeting somewhere in Truth. So that the only perfectly consistent allegory is real life; and the only fully intelligible story is an allegory. And one finds, even in imperfect human 'literature', that the better and more consistent an allegory is the more easily it can be read 'just as a story'; *and the better and more closely woven a story is the more easily can those so minded find allegory in it*. But the two start out from opposite ends. You can make the Ring into an allegory of our own time, if you like: an allegory of the inevitable fate that wait for all attempts to defeat evil power by power. ("To Sir Stanley Unwin," my emphasis)

Several years later, in a letter to Milton Waldman (c. 1951), Tolkien further clarifies his position on allegory:

> I dislike Allegory—*the conscious and intentional allegory*—yet any attempt to explain the myth or fairytale [sic] *must use allegorical language*. (And, of course, the more 'life' a story has the more readily it will be susceptible of allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made the more readily it will be acceptable just as a story.) ("To Milton Waldman," my emphasis)

Tolkien is not averse to allegorical *explanations* or *readings* of his work.[31] He protests, not against allegories readers interpret from a text, but rather against those fabricated by authors themselves. The allegory C. S. Lewis constructed in his children's fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), for which Tolkien criticized Lewis's writing, is a perfect example. The next sentence in Tolkien's foreword to the second edition of *The*

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[31] While allegory may seem beside the point for Tolkien—what truly interests him is an engrossing story—the growing number of interpretations and meanings that his readers have drawn from his work would, at the very least, please him insofar as it confirms that he had indeed imbued his stories of Middle-earth with "life."

Lord of the Rings explains why Tolkien's displeasure only extends to allegory as authorial intention: "I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author" (*Fellowship* xv). Thus, what Curry condemns other scholars for is not what Tolkien himself condemns when he speaks of allegory. Furthermore, Curry's contention that such an analysis "recognizes only the first world as important, and dismisses or belittles the second" fails to recognize, even according to Tolkien's own theory of fantasy, that one of the genre's key functions—Recovery—pertains to a story's ability to aid its reader to re-engage with the Primary World and see it with a new understanding (Curry 18). "Recovery," writes Tolkien, "is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view … so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity." Additionally, such stories "deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by the setting" ("On Fairy-Stories" 57-8, 59).[32]

By this reading, Tolkien's position on allegory aligns with Bloch's own, as I explore in my introduction and first chapter. Both Tolkien and Bloch have a poor opinion of the rigid, abstract and conceptual allegories of the modern era. However, by emphasizing allegory as that of antiquity and medieval eras, as "other speaking," Tolkien's Secondary Worlds and their relation to the Primary World through the function of Recovery speak to the same revelatory (or apocalyptic) sense of allegory in Bloch's thinking.[33]

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[32] Note the similarity between Tolkien's function of Recovery and Darko Suvin's concept of cognitive estrangement (despite Suvin's original denial of any such function in fantasy literature). Both describe a process of defamiliarization for their readers, such that they gain fresh insight and clarity to the world around them.

[33] See note 10 above for my discussion of the relation between allegory and alterity in Bloch.

One final word on Tolkien's critique of allegory. From the drafts of a letter written to Michael Straight, then-editor of the *New Republic* who was preparing to write a review of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien adds that "something of the teller's own reflections and 'values' will inevitably get worked in. This is not the same as allegory. We all, in groups or as individuals, *exemplify* general principles; but we do not *represent* them" ("To Michael Straight"). Not only is "Fantasy made out of the Primary World" (Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" 59), but Tolkien acknowledges that, apart from any intentions of the author, unconscious processes shape a text, shape fantasy's Secondary Worlds. Tolkien, Bloch, and Jameson not only align in their emphasis on historicity, then, but also in their mutual acknowledgement of the unconscious influences that undergird a text, inviting the kind of analysis I will develop in the rest of this chapter.

Like Tolkien, I am interested in how the Secondary Worlds of fantasy can exemplify, clarify, and affect the Primary World through their reception and interpretation by readers. The Blochian-Jamesonian approach I've adopted hardly claims to exhaust a text's meaning—in fact, it denies the possibility of an exhaustive interpretation—nor is its historical consideration reductive to the biographical life-events and experiences of its author, as previous interpretive approaches that read a text allegorically may have been. I shall frame my discussion of *The Lord of the Rings* using Jameson's three horizons, and, within that framework, identify the text's archetypes and allegories that exhibit a utopian function through Blochian nonsynchronism.

2.1 Destruction in the Name of Preservation: A Paradoxical Allegory of the Ring as Capital

My analysis of the first horizon of *The Lord of the Rings* begins with Landa, who offers perhaps the most compelling grounds for a real contradiction that is symbolically resolved within the text:

the "real contradiction" underlying Tolkien's fiction is the crisis of capitalist property relations at the beginning of the twentieth century … his stories dialectically oscillate between a utopian renunciation of private property and its ideological vindication. The Ring of Power and the quest for its destruction reflect and negotiate this historical subtext … it could be said that, for Tolkien, property must be abolished in order for it to persist. (117-18)

The Ring, as a locus of Sauron's power and will, can be interpreted (although neither exclusively nor exhaustively, of course,) as a symbol of both capital itself and the capitalist's drive for endless accumulation and, through it, domination. As Gandalf tells Frodo before tasking him with bringing the Ring to Rivendell, it is the "one thing to give [Sauron] strength and knowledge to beat down all resistance, break the last defenses, and cover all the lands in a second darkness" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 50). This one unassuming artifact, the property of the dark lord and the means by which he can appropriate all other property, must be destroyed, so that property—such as Frodo's inheritance of Bag End, and all other claims of ownership—can be preserved. "The Ring's essence," therefore, "is that of global expansion, of unlimited monopoly, of the unquenchable thirst for surplus-value" (Landa 124).

The paradox of destroying property in order to preserve it is therefore at the crux of Frodo's journey to destroy the ring. This conflict reaches its tragic, apparently irresolvable climax when Frodo and Sam finally arrive at the Cracks of Doom after their journey through the desolate lands of Mordor, a desolation which foreshadows the possible future of Middle-earth under the tyranny (i.e., monopoly) of Sauron. When Frodo finally enters Mount Doom and stands in the very place where the Ring was made—the only place where it can be destroyed—he succumbs to its will and cannot follow through with its destruction, succumbing to the "peril of inner colonisation" of the Ring, i.e., of capitalism itself (Landa 126). As a hobbit (and, moreover, as a Baggins), Frodo exemplifies the bourgeois middle class, and yet his task is to destroy that which symbolizes the inevitable outcome of a bourgeois social order. As Landa observes, "in the face of such outer and inner enslavement, the bourgeois may realise the need for a

radical change—may even be willing to undertake it—but actually to carry it through will remain finally beyond his reach" (Landa 126). This, indeed, is Frodo's failure: as a bourgeois figure he cannot destroy the darker half of the mode of production he exemplifies. The symbolic contradiction is now twofold: to preserve property one must destroy it; and even if a bourgeois agent recognizes the need for such change, his or her will can never overcome their bourgeois consciousness to achieve it. The symbolic resolution of this real contradiction is achieved through Gollum's final intervention, finally wresting the Ring from Frodo's grip and leading to its (and his own) destruction (*Return* 924-5).

While Landa suggests that Gollum's final act as a symbolic resolution is "a surrogate for the revolution" of an "orcish proletariat" which "is precisely what the narrative *cannot* admit" (126), I believe that Gollum's actions, read and interpreted through allegorical language (as Tolkien himself admits, one cannot help but do), actually fits within Marx's pattern of dialectical history as laid out in the first chapter of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848). Just as "the means of production and exchange" characteristic of capitalism "were generated in feudal society," and "burst asunder" the old mode of production so that the new could emerge, a similar course of events unfolds within the productive relations of capitalism such that "[t]he weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself" (ch.1). In other words, "the rule of the bourgeois … will carry within it the seeds of its own destruction" (Marx & Engels, "Address to the Central Committee" par. 11). Whereas Sauron once used the Ring to subjugate all other races to his will, the Ring "creates" Gollum on its millennia-long journey "trying to get back to its master" (*Fellowship* 54). Just as Marx describes the historical emergence of each mode of production from the dying husk of its predecessor, the Ring (and by extension, Sauron) sows the seed of its own destruction through its manipulation and corruption of Gollum.

Interestingly, Marx's choice of metaphor for this process of historical progress could very well be read as a summary of how Sauron sows his own downfall through the Ring's machinations:

> Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, *is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells*. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt … against the property relations that are the conditions of existence of the bourgeois and its rule. (Marx & Engels, *Manifesto* ch. 1, my emphasis)

As part of the Ring's history—as one of the means to its ends—Gollum is at once a product of the Ring and a producer of the Ring's sway over the historical course of Middle-earth's Third Age. While Frodo, as a figure of the petty-bourgeois middle class, is unable to carry out the destruction of property he has rationally acknowledged as necessary, his consciousness, warped by the Ring's influence, cannot possibly carry out the act in the final moment; the self-interest of his false consciousness wins out. Gollum, whose identity is shaped almost entirely by his relation to the Ring, unwittingly brings about its destruction through his attempt to claim it as his own property. The final struggle at the Cracks of Doom can therefore be read as an uprising in miniature, one that is not necessarily conscious on the part of the upriser but is, like Marx's account of the transition from one mode of production to the next, a necessary feature of such a mode's self-destruction.

The focal point of this symbolic portrayal of a real social contradiction—the Ring itself—has a long history as an archetypal motif of social power and the accumulation of wealth. One of the earliest examples of a ring of power that makes its wearer invisible is the ring of Gyges, alluded to by Socrates in the second chapter of Plato's *Republic*. Gyges discovered the ring by chance (not unlike Gollum's own discovery), and "he chanced to turn the collet of the ring to himself, towards the inside of his hand; when he did this, he became invisible to those sitting by him" (359e-360b). According to

Socrates's version of the tale, Gyges, a simple shepherd, uses the ring to assassinate the king and claim the throne for himself. Socrates presents the ring of Gyges as a thought experiment about morality and justice: "if there were two such rings," argues Socrates,

> and the just man would put one on, and the unjust man the other, no one, as it would seem, would be so adamant as to stick by justice and bring himself to keep away from what belongs to others and not lay hold of it … and to slay or release from bonds whomever he wanted, and to do other things as an equal to a god among humans. (360b-c)

The thought experiment of the ring contends, like the actions of Gyges himself, that such a power compels one to injustice, in particular the unjust accumulation of wealth and power over the lives of others. Gyges's ring, like Tolkien's Ring of Power, connects the notion of invisibility with tyrannical power and the accumulation of wealth. The difference is that Gyges's ring does not have a will of its own; it simply enables one to succumb to one's most selfish impulses through freedom from retribution. As a symbol for capital itself, Tolkien's Ring and its will exemplify the ideological pressures which capitalism impresses upon those under its influence. It is not simply a passive thing which allows one to operate in utter individualistic freedom, but conditions one's consciousness.

While a direct connection between Tolkien's Ring and the ring of Gyges is contentious,[34] Tolkien was familiar with later examples of magical rings as symbols of social power and moral responsibility towards others, particularly in myths and legends of the Celtic and Norse traditions. For instance, there are several magical rings, including

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[34] Scholars differ over the extent of Plato's influence on Tolkien, especially where it concerns the Ring. Gary B. Herbert argues that the similarities between Plato's ring and Tolkien's are "close enough to be suggestive and probably too close to have been coincidental" (155). On the other hand, Gergely Nagy's entry on Plato in the *J. R. R Tolkien Encyclopedia* (2007) argues that "as a parallel to Tolkien's One Ring, [the ring of Gyges] is … superficial, since Gyges's ring only works to make him invisible and his evil is achieved by the power offered in the knowledge he thus gains" (513). Tolkien was familiar with Plato's work: as David Day notes, Plato's *Timaeus* serves as the basis for Tolkien's "Akallabêth" in *The Silmarillion*, which tells the story of how Númenor, like Atlantis, sank into the sea (Day ch. 11).

a ring of invisibility, in the tales collected in the Welsh *Mabinogion* (Day ch. 8). In the

Norse mythological tradition, which Tolkien was most familiar with, there are two

notable rings of power, Draupnir and Andvarinaut. Draupnir is a magical ring acquired

by Odin, which "had the power to drip eight other rings of equal size every nine days,"

and was "not only emblematic of his dominion of the Nine Worlds but consolidated his

accumulated powers by giving him a source of infinite wealth" (Day ch. 4). While

Draupnir does not give its wearer the power of invisibility, it does share the One Ring's

symbolic position as a signification of total power and, much like my own interpretation

of Tolkien's Ring above, it also signifies an endless accumulation of wealth (i.e., capital

accumulation). Andvarinaut, on the other hand, is the ring described in the Norse

Volsunga Saga, which was "brought into the popular European imagination of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries" through works including William Morris's translation

of the *Volsunga Saga* into English and Richard Wagner's opera cycle *Der Ring des

Nibelung* (Day Ch. 5).[35, 36] Andvarinaut means "Andvari's loom," named after the dwarf

who crafted it, and "because it 'wove' its owner a fortune of gold; and with that wealth

went power and fame" (Ch. 5). Like Draupnir (and, arguably, the ring of Gyges),

Andvarinaut furnishes its wearer with wealth and power

When once asked by the Swedish translator of *The Lord of the Rings* about a

possible connection with, or inspiration by, Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

(1876), Tolkien famously responded that "[b]oth rings were round, and there the

resemblance ceases" ("From a letter to Allen & Unwin"). But despite Tolkien's

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[35] Morris not only translated the original Icelandic text of the *Volsunga Saga* into English; he also wrote his own literary adaptation of the saga in English verse. Both of these texts were known to Tolkien and Humphrey Carpenter identifies them as inspirations for Tolkien's own literary work (Day ch. 5; Carpenter ch. 3).

[36] While the title of Wagner's opera cycle points to the High Germanic epic *Nibelungenlied*, which is another telling of the same legend, Wagner drew heavily from the earlier Norse sources of the legend such as the *Volsunga Saga* (Björnsson 7).

conscious rejection of any tie between his and Wagner's works, they clearly share a similar source of inspiration in the *Volsunga Saga*. Furthermore, Tolkien had in fact seen a production of Wagner's opera cycle in London with C.S. Lewis. He also "studied Wagner with the other members of the academic Kólbitar Club" in the 1920s, and "began to translate the libretto of *Die Walküre* [i.e., *The Valkyrie*, the second part of Wagner's cycle]" with Lewis in the 1930s (Arvidsson [2]). Given Tolkien's own acknowledgement of unconscious inspiration in good storytelling, and his clear interest in Wagner's work, it is reasonable to assert that Tolkien's Ring has more in common with Wagner's than simple geometry.[37] One can read Wagner's ring, like Tolkien's, as a symbol of capital "mythically grasped" (Landa 124).[38]

Consciously or not, Tolkien's tale takes up the Ring as a non-synchronic symbol of power and wealth. Like Wagner's ring, it becomes a figuration of capital and a critique of the harmful costs of unchecked capitalist accumulation, the human cost and the cost paid by Nature herself. The Ring itself, while clearly a non-synchronous literary device in a work of twentieth-century fiction, is not a vessel for unresolved utopian hope, but is positioned in the text to evoke such hopes through juxtaposition. Tolkien "[turns] the ring

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[37] There are, however, clear political reasons why Tolkien would desire to distance his work from Wagner's in the aftermath of WWII. Wagner was revered by Adolf Hitler, and "[t]he imagery of the sword-wielding, dragon-slaying Siegfried was exploited in war propaganda, and the *Ring* as a whole was cited by Nazi critics for glorifying the preservation of a pure and noble Germanic race," as well as the fact that "after the war, unsubstantiated claims that Wagner's music accompanied Jews to their death took on momentum, probably as a response to the new, broader public awareness of Wagner's anti-Semitic writings, of the Wagner family's relationship to Hitler, and of the exploitation of Wagner's legacy in the Third Reich" (Potter 243-4). Tolkien detested what he viewed as the Nazi regime's propagandistic corruption of Norse mythology, and openly admitting to any influence Wagner may have had on him would have been tantamount to admitting ideological guilt-by-association in the decades following the war.

[38] George Bernard Shaw, for instance, describes Wagner's opera cycle as "a poetic vision of unregulated industrial capitalism as it was made known in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century" ("Preface to the Second Edition," par. 2).

quest on its head,"[39] thereby creating a "reversal of the traditional ring quest in a moral sense," and rejecting "That Iron Age mentality of 'might equals right', which made the ring quest for power so important" (Day, Ch. 16). By positioning the Ring and its creator as global antagonists in Middle-earth, rather than as heroic figures (as they are in Norse mythology), Tolkien's Ring is anti-utopian, and the resistance of Frodo and the Fellowship is therefore anti-anti-utopian. As Kim Stanley Robinson writes, "[o]ne way of being anti-anti-utopian is to be utopian … The situation is bad, yes, okay, enough of that; we know that already. Dystopia has done its job … Next thought: utopia. Realistic or not, and perhaps especially if not" (par. 9).

2.2   Grace and Fallen Angels in an Animistic World: The Religious Landscape of Middle-earth

For the analysis of the second horizon of *The Lord of the Rings*, I want to break from the consideration of capitalism and private property established in the first horizon in order to introduce another important and thoroughly-debated aspect of Tolkien's work, namely its religious dimension. Tolkien's complex and conflicting spiritual convictions within his text must be unpacked in order to understand the ontology of Middle-earth and what is therefore at stake under the threat of Sauron's (i.e., Capitalism's) domination. Furthermore, in the third horizon, Western Christianity and Capitalism will converge as interrelated historical causes of the environmental crisis Tolkien anticipates.

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[39] David Day's turn of phrase here unwittingly evokes a common rhetorical move frequently used by Marx, the idea of *inversion*. In the afterword of the second German edition of *Capital*, Marx critiques the idealist philosophy of Hegel as "standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell" (par. 24). One could say that same thing of Tolkien's use of the ring quest: by inverting it, he is not so much turning it on its head as placing it back on its feet, showing the real horrors of unmitigated power and the necessity of resistance against those who seek such domination, rather than revering them.

The religious ideology within the text is neither singular nor straightforward. Critics have argued for both a strictly Christian or neo-pagan reading of Middle-earth's spiritual forms and figures.[40] But as Verlyn Flieger has argued, one cannot view Tolkien's world as a work that is purely of one kind: "[Tolkien] was neither the Christian mythmaker that some would like, or the literary spokesman for a neopagan world that others would make him" (30). Instead he "tried to harmonize his work's originality and his own imagination with Christian orthodoxy, and to situate his often unorthodox views within the narrower confines of his religion without abandoning either" (30). In order to appreciate the full religious-ideological valence of *The Lord of the Rings*, then, we must consider the contradictions and tensions between the ideologemes of neo-paganism and Christianity as a part of one voice, if a paradoxical and bifurcated one. I will cover this complex ideological terrain by identifying some of the ways in which figures such as Frodo and Sam, Sauron and Gandalf, Treebeard, and the White Tree of Gondor exemplify Christian or pagan ideologies. I will also identify how the nonsynchronous archetypes and allegories these figures exemplify are reshaped in Tolkien's work to address his environmental anxieties and hopes.

There has been no shortage of scholarship discussing the Christian elements of Tolkien's work. These interpretations emphasize, for example, Frodo's (or Sam's) exemplification of Christian ethical values, such as forgiveness and pity, compassion for the unfortunate (think: Gollum), and self-sacrifice (Agøy 81; Heckman 583-4). Were it not for Frodo's pity for Gollum, and his compassion for his suffering (which Frodo knows from his own experience as the Ringbearer), the warped, hobbit-like creature would not have been there to wrangle the Ring from Frodo and, in so doing, bring about

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[40] See the debate between Ronald Hutton and Nils Ivar Agøy, collected in *The Ring and the Cross* (2011).

its destruction (and his own).[41] As for Sam, his compassion and devotion to Frodo, and his forgiveness for Frodo's cruelties as he falls farther and farther under the shadow of the Ring's influence, also demonstrate a Christian ethos.

Scholars also identify parallels between the figures of Christ and Gandalf, the wizard who brings together the Fellowship and unites the peoples of Middle-earth in their final stand against the armies of Mordor. The most obvious parallel, of course, is Gandalf's resurrection in *The Two Towers* following his demise fighting the Balrog in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Gandalf's "second coming" arrives, in his own words, "[a]t the turn of the tide" (*Two Towers* 484). Not unlike the second coming of Christ in the Book of Revelation, Gandalf returns to oversee the "doom" of Middle-earth.[42] If one opens up the consideration of Gandalf's being to include Tolkien's other writings, such as *The Silmarillion* (1977), one observes another striking parallel: as one of the five Istari wizards, Gandalf is a divine being made incarnate. He is a Maia, one of the vassals of the Valar, known in that form as Olórin; he and the other Maia-made-Istari are incarnated in order to aid the Children of Ilúvatar (Men and Elves) in their struggles against Sauron throughout the Third Age of Middle-earth (22, 360). Like Christ, then, Gandalf is a divinity made flesh and blood.

Sauron, interestingly, was also originally one of the Maiar. Once known as Mairon, meaning "the admirable," his name "was altered after he was suborned by

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[41] This observation also highlights the Christian notion of Providence that appears to shape the narrative from its very outset in *The Fellowship of the Ring*: not only does Gandalf suspect that a Higher Power has shaped the course of History in such a way that Frodo was "*meant* to have [the Ring]" (55), but, in this very same passage, Gandalf also speculates that Gollum "has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end" (58).

[42] The word "doom" is used with incredible frequency in *The Lord of the Rings*, not only as a proper noun (e.g., "Mount Doom,") but also as an ordinary noun. Moreover, given the word's Germanic origin, Tolkien was well aware of its etymological meaning, which differs from contemporary usage: "doom" in Old English meant "judgement" ("doom, n."); Gandalf, then, like the prophecy of Christ's second coming, has come to oversee the Judgement of Middle-earth.

Melkor," one of the Valar who became Morgoth, the first Dark Lord (Tolkien, *Words, Phrases, and Passages*, 183, italics original). According to *The Silmarillion*, originally Sauron "was of the Maiar of Aulë [the Valar of earth and craftsmanship], and he remained mighty in the lore of that people," but like many others he was "drawn to [Melkor/Morgoth's] splendour in the days of his greatness, and remained in that allegiance down into his darkness" (23). Sauron, then, has both Luciferian and Adamic elements in his origins. He resembles the fallen angel Lucifer insofar as he, like Morgoth, "began with the desire of Light, but when he could not possess it for himself alone, he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness" (23). But he is not a perfect imitation of Lucifer, since he is not the first to succumb to the sins of pride and selfishness—that position belongs to Morgoth. Since he is led into temptation by Morgoth to follow him on this "ruinous path into the Void," Sauron is, in another way, like the biblical figure of Adam or Eve, deceived and manipulated into his fallen state. There is, however, no *felix culpa* or salvation for Sauron. Once a heavenly shaper of earthly things—an inventor, or a technologist (loosely conceived)—he turns his creative powers towards the single-minded monopoly of all creation, creating the One Ring and deceiving the other Ringmakers in the Second Age (344).

Invoking *The Silmarillion*, one must acknowledge that Tolkien's cosmic order is not, evidently, wholly Christian. There is an absolute God—Eru, or Iluvatar—who sings the universe into being (akin to the Judeo-Christian God's performative utterance "let there be light" in *Genesis* 1:3). But beneath this supreme deity there is an entire pantheon who are delegated to care for specific domains of Arda, the world of Middle-earth, which more closely resembles Greco-Roman polytheism or Norse mythology. As Liam Campbell contends, "Tolkien's myth offers a coming together of disparate faiths and religious understandings and is not governed by, or delivered from any fixed creed" (115). A great example of this "coming together" are the pagan, specifically Norse aspects of Gandalf's characterization that mingle with his messianic qualities. Known as

the "grey wanderer," he visibly resembles one of the common appearances of Odin when he would secretly walk among men. Similarly, before he was incarnated as Gandalf, Olórin "walked among [the elves] unseen, or in form as one of them" (*Silmarillion* 22).

One of the most crucial neo-pagan aspects of Tolkien's secondary world is the spiritual importance and spiritedness of trees. "Tolkien's fiction," writes Campbell, "hint[s] very plainly at animism," a key component of pagan cosmologies including the Greek, Norse, and Celtic traditions (115). One of the most obvious ways Tolkien incorporates the pagan vitality of trees in *The Lord of the Rings* is through the Ents, such as Treebeard, self-described "tree-herds": animated, tree-like beings who care for the forests of Middle-earth (*Two Towers* 457). This Pagan emphasis on trees and their divine, animistic qualities is also depicted through the White Tree of Gondor, the allegorical importance of which will be central to my analysis of the text according to the third horizon of History at the end of this chapter. The White Tree is a symbol of Gondor's vitality that is tied to its kingship, a metonym for the political and ecological health of Gondor and, by extension, all of Middle-earth. Throughout the history of Middle-earth, the White Trees, descendants of Nimloth, blossomed and withered alongside the kings of Nùmenor and their descendants, the kings of Gondor.[43] According to Michael Cunningham, in "European lore one may find explicit links with the concept of trees and kinship in the records of ancient Celtic lore," with which Tolkien was also acquainted (Cunningham 3; Day Ch. 8). One of these links was through the concept of "the sacred marriage to the land":

> the sacred marriage of a human king to a goddess … whereby the king's rule and success may be determined by the fruition and prosperity of the fruits of his lands and, by extension, that of his subjects … the health and longevity of a sacral-king's rule was directly proportional to that of the abundance of flora and fauna of his lands together with the peace and riches enjoyed by his subjects. (3)

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[43] See *Return of the King*, Appendices A and B.

The connection between the political condition of the land and the health of the landscape itself is symbolized by the White Tree, whose sapling Aragon discovers in the mountains above Minas Tirith and "planted … in the court by the fountain, and swiftly and gladly it began to grow; and when the month of June entered in it was laden with blossom" (*Return* 951). The allegory and symbolism of the marriage to the land is also demonstrated in the negative, through the barren wastes of the lands under Sauron's rule, such as Mordor and Minas Morgul, as well as the environmental devastation surrounding Isengard after Saruman allies himself with the Dark Lord.

The animism of Tolkien's world, combined with the marriage to the land allegory, demonstrates an important parallel to Bloch's vitalist materialism which, drawing on Aristotle's concept of *dynamei on* (roughly translated: "what-is-in-possibility"), holds that matter is alive insofar as it is in a continuous state of becoming. "The human and physical world," writes Bloch, "effects itself … in the way that maturation, realization, and dispersal perpetually interact. Its matter is that which further and further shapes itself and can be shaped … and the fulfilled Totum of this form of existence may yet become a real possibility" (*Avicenna* 38). Bloch understands that the development of the material world is, in part, "human agency, itself rooted in openness by dint of the human capacity for freedom" (Goldman xix). The hope and uncertainty of Bloch's utopian project, and the tie between the healthy development of the physical and human worlds, is contingent on the same idea of freedom by which Matthews, as mentioned earlier, characterizes Tolkien's utopianism. As Matthews argues, the monarchal structure of Tolkien's vision is less about a return to the medieval past than it is about the signification of a politics by which both the human and physical world both flourish together.

2.3 "Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?": Capitalism, Christianity, and Gaia's Salvation

While Tolkien's nonsynchronous archetypes and allegories motivate readings of *The Lord of the Rings* as both a capitalist and theological critique, I want to argue that both of these readings converge within the utopian anticipations of the text's ecological concerns, which I read as its third horizon of History. Both of these critiques, considered together, point not only to a recognition of capitalism's inevitable environmental devastation, but also to an implicit recognition that the ideology of a Western Christian worldview partly legitimates this desolation. The language of Tolkien's text, its implicit theological critique, and its multiple portrayals of resistance against monopolization all serve as a prelude to environmentalism and environmental resistance against those, like Saruman, who have "mind[s] of metal and wheels" (*Towers* 462). In fact, Tolkien's mythopoetic texts would help inspire a future range of environmental activisms, some of them radical. Tolkien's Secondary World anticipates the utopian fight to preserve biodiversity and create a lush, verdant future. His anti-industrial sentiments are well known, and cited by some as a reason to position him as not only conservative but *reactionary*.[44] Tolkien was, by his own word, politically conservative. As one who had a particular care with the meaning of words, however, he was true to its meaning in the etymological sense of *conserving*. Insofar as Tolkien's conservatism relates to the conservation of the natural world, of flora and fauna and the wild places which remain, his "position … has acquired a new and distinctly radical meaning—or at the very least, potential meaning—as the crisis which partly motivated its writing has deepened and widened," and its "human

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[44] See, for example, Jameson (*Archaeologies* 60-1) and Moorcock (11), both of whom relate Tolkien's anti-modern, anti-industrial stance to reactionary politics.

cost, both physical and spiritual, is plainly implicit in his chronicle of the Third Age"

(Curry 90, 83).

As I have argued within the scope of the second horizon above, the expository

language of Tolkien's text creates a living, breathing character of Middle-earth itself. But

the description of regions under Sauron's sway, especially Mordor itself, foresees the

reckless environmental decay caused by capitalist industry. His description of the barren,

blighted lands of Mordor is so prescient of our environmental catastrophe that its

language mirrors that used by some of the earliest nonfiction works that helped launch

the environmental movement in the decades after his work. Consider the following

passages from *The Return of the King*, as Frodo and Sam take the final, harrowing leg of

their journey across the plains of Mordor towards Mount Doom:

> Day was coming again in the world outside, and far beyond the glooms of Mordor
> the Sun was climbing over the eastern rim of Middle-earth; but here all was still
> dark as night. The Mountain smouldered and its fires went out. The glare faded
> from the cliffs. The easterly wind that had been blowing ever since they left
> Ithilien now seemed dead. Slowly and painfully they clambered down, groping,
> stumbling, scrambling among rock and briar and dead wood in the blind shadows,
> down and down until they could go no further. (896)

And, as they reach the fields of Gorgoroth,

> There smokes trailed out of the ground and lurked in hollows, and fumes leaked
> from fissures in the earth … they saw Mount Doom, its feet founded in ashen
> ruin, its huge cone rising to a great height, where its reeking head was swathed in
> cloud … Frodo and Sam gazed out in mingled loathing and wonder on this hateful
> land. Between them and the smoking mountain, and about it north and south, all
> seemed ruinous and dead, a desert burned and choked. (902)

Note the frequency of the word "dead": the winds, the wood, and the land itself are all

"ruinous" or "dead," and the description of Mount Doom belching smoke into the sky

from its "reeking" head could easily be the description of any industrial smokestack.

More importantly, consider the rhetorical parallels to Rachel Carson's description of a

lifeless, polluted American town at the beginning of *Silent Spring*:

> There was a strange *stillness*. The birds, for example—where had they gone?
> Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the

> backyards were *deserted*. The few birds seen anywhere were *moribund*; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices … only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh … The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with *browned and withered* vegetation *as though swept by fire*. These, too, were silent, *deserted by all living things*. Even the streams were now *lifeless*. Anglers no longer visited them, for all the fish had *died*. (ch. 1)

Both Tolkien's and Carson's descriptions of the state of an atrophying landscape evoke the same set of images: stillness, death, desertion, and fire. The only difference, one could say, is that whereas Tolkien describes a Secondary World removed from our own, Carson describes the Primary World. However, Carson admits shortly afterwards that the place she describes "does not actually exist, but it might easily have counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world … A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we shall know" (ch. 1). These same words could readily describe the truth of Tolkien's fictional place just as well as Carson's own—both are constructed as warnings against a grim, possible future at the end of our present road.

The two descriptions arguably serve the same function, and Tolkien foresaw the looming problem of environmental destruction in the name of industry and profit decades before Carson's own clarion call. Tolkien's work has become so widely recognized for its proto-environmental critique that the word "Mordor" itself has become something of a short-hand for the hellscapes of industrial production and pollution. Isaac Asimov, for instance, writes of one such moment:

> one day, Janet and I were driving along the New Jersey Turnpike, and we passed a section given over to oil refineries. It was a blasted region in which nothing was growing and which was filled with ugly, pipelike structures, which refineries must have. Waste oil was burning at the top of tall chimneys and the smell of petroleum products filled the air.
>
> Janet looked at the prospect with troubled eyes and said, "There's Mordor." ("On Tolkien" 155)

Janet Asimov's remark bears a startling parallel to the Frodo and Sam's commentary on the state of the Shire when they return at the end of *The Return of the King*. Looking

upon Bag End's state of disrepair, Sam exclaims "This is worse than Mordor! … Much worse, in a way. It comes home to you, as they say"; "This is Mordor," agrees Frodo, "Just one of its works" (*Return* 994). Earlier, when the four hobbits were approaching the borders of the Shire, Merry comments that they "have left all the rest behind … It seems almost like a dream that has slowly faded" (974). Indeed, the state of the Shire appears to be a mirror of the distant realms they have just left, closer to our Primary world than the medieval, mythical lands of Gondor, Rohan, Mordor. They see, amongst other atrocities of so many fallen trees and fallow fields, "a tall chimney of brick in the distance … pouring black smoke into the evening air" (981), echoing the desolate image of Mount Doom's polluting presence. One has woken up only to find the nightmare unfolding still.

Tolkien once expressed his wish to create, through his works of fantasy, a fitting mythology for England (Carpenter, ch. 1). But his mythopoetic sub-creation created a mythos that spoke to people of a present moment well beyond England's shores, and of the future that could await them. Indeed, Tolkien railed against utilitarian and instrumental abuses of nature long before the problem came to the forefront of the collective consciousness of the Western world. Moreover, he was quite vocal about it. He wrote public and private letters condemning the barbarity of the treatment of trees and forestry practices generally, accusing technological progressives and the industrially-minded—who so often are the same people who dismiss fantasy and fairy tales as childish nonsense—of having their own warped view of what is "real." Consider this anecdote from "On Fairy-Stories":

> Not long ago—incredible as it may seem—I heard a clerk of Oxenford declare that he "welcomed" the proximity of mass-production robot factories, and the roar of self-obstructive mechanical traffic, because it brought the university into "contact with real life." He may have meant that the way men were living and working in the twentieth century was increasing in barbarity at an alarming rate, and that the loud demonstration of this in the streets of Oxford might serve as a warning that it is not possible to preserve for long an oasis of sanity in a desert of unreason by mere fences, without actual offensive action (practical and intellectual). I fear he did not. (62)

Whether the conservative Oxford don intended it or not, *The Lord of the Rings* did inspire

"actual offensive action" of a practical kind. Tolkien's Middle-earth was in the minds of

the founders and early activists of Greenpeace, for instance. As Curry writes,

> In 1972, David Taggart sailed into a French nuclear testing area, an action which led directly to the founding of Greenpeace. His journal records that "I had been reading *The Lord of the Rings*. I could not avoid thinking of the parallels between our own little fellowship and the long journey of the Hobbits into the volcano-haunted land of Mordor…" (Curry 55)

David Day also indicates that Robert Hunter, writing of the first Greenpeace mission "to

stop American nuclear testing on Amchitka Island in Alaska," makes an identical

connection between him and his fellow activists and Tolkien's Fellowship:

> Hunter tells how they had arrived at a point where even the stout hearts of his shipmates saw their task as rather comically hopeless. "There was something superbly comical about it: here we were, eight green-clad amateur seamen, on our way to confront the deadliest fire of the age, like Hobbits bearing the ring towards the volcano of Mordor." … At one point the valves and the pistons of the old engine of their rather battered vessel required such coaxing and constant care on their long voyage along the north Pacific coast that the activists dubbed themselves the "Fellowship of the Piston Rings." (Day, Ch. 16)[45]

The above examples demonstrate how the vision of Tolkien's Secondary World has

inspired much of the activism that works towards a utopian vision of ecological harmony

between human civilization and the natural world, in opposition to the existing capitalist

mode which views the natural world as mere "resources" to be exploited for whatever

instrumental whims provide the greatest increase in shareholder profits.

Some activist groups, such as those who rebel against development projects that

threaten local ecologies, actively identify themselves as fantastical creatures popularized

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[45] These examples of Tolkien's influence are not reserved for international anti-nuclear activists in the 60s and 70s. One can find more mundane examples of people defending their homelands from industrial recklessness in the decades since. Patrick Curry also mentions that "there are (mainly) young people trying, as I write, to defend the remaining countryside outside Newbury, Berkshire, against yet another destructive, expensive and futile bypass," most of whom "hadn't just read *The Lord of the Rings* but know it, so to speak, inside out." Even "an early supporter of one such bypass, running through Dartmoor, slammed his opponents as 'Middle Earth Hobbits'!" (54).

through Tolkien's work. Andy Letcher, for example, describes the "eco-pagan" culture of British environmental protesters in the 1990s who self-identify as "fairies." By "romanticising themselves as 'the little people,' protesters were invoking the age-old myth of a downtrodden minority able to defeat their oppressors," much like the hobbits of Tolkien's tales (153). Furthermore, Letcher indicates that Tolkien's own view of fairies, a "more noble vision of proud and powerful, if elusive inhabitants of the twilight and fringes of the world" in the words of Graham Harvey (qtd. in Letcher 159), are also "the qualities that protesters attribute to fairies, and therefore to themselves," and in so doing "have changed public opinion" and "overturned government policy" (Letcher 159).

Another, even more radical example of this association would be the American activist network known as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). If the name alone were not enough to indicate an inspired association between these radical activists (who have a notorious reputation for eco-sabotage) and Tolkien's nature-loving race of immortals, their own publications explicitly allude to *The Lord of the Rings* in celebrating their successful destruction of capitalist property. In a 2006 edition of *Earth First!*, for example, one "Bregalad" (the name of one of the younger Ents that attend the Ent Moot in *The Two Towers*) reports that "the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) struck at a housing development construction site in Hagerstown, Maryland. The ELF set four separate fires, damaging three townhouses and burning one entirely to the ground"; additionally, ELF "claimed the action in a communiqué sent from an email address containing the name 'Treebeard'," done "in honour of everyone who has felt helpless to sprawl and development, everyone who feels [that] their rural lifestyles are being threatened by these mass-produced, designer communities" (Bregalad 8). The pseudonymous author of the article concludes with the hope that, "like the Ents in *The Lord of the Rings*, the people of Maryland will heed the call to war put forth in the Treebeard communiqué: 'We encourage all who watch with sadness while developers sell out the future of us and our children to join us in resisting them in any and every possible way'" (8). The neo-pagan

aspects of Tolkien's Middle-earth anticipate—and in many cases, inspired—these radical, direct actions against the capitalist mode of production that aims, like Sauron, to "beat down all resistance" and "rule all the others" (*Fellowship* 50). The revival of these animist perspectives is motivated by a utopian hope that is conveyed non-synchronously in *The Lord of the Rings* through the marriage to the land allegory: it recognizes the renewed urgency of the ancient pagan belief that a truly just way of organizing human society is not merely beneficial for human flourishing, but the flourishing of *all life*. There cannot be a healthy society for humanity that does not value, or attend to, the symbiotic harmony encapsulated in the complex interrelations of all life.

Insofar as Sauron is first and foremost a figure of order who becomes corrupted into a will for absolute power and total domination, he problematizes a core tenet of the Christian faith, namely, the dominion of human beings over nature. Years after Tolkien's publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, Lynn White Jr. identified this aspect of Christianity in his influential essay "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis." White argues that "science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature," originating in the Judeo-Christian myth of Genesis when Adam "named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes" (1206, 1205). This Christian relationship between human beings and nature overwrote all pagan ontologies, which were, in contradiction to this basic tenet, animistic:

> every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. (1205)

Christian dominion over nature effaced and overwrote pagan beliefs in animism, and evolved in the Medieval era into beliefs such as the "Great Chain of Being," which reiterated the belief that human beings were superior to all other animals (although inferior to divine figures such as angels), and that this perspective influenced many of the early modern scientific thinkers, such as Francis Bacon (Campbell 160).

Matthew Dickerson and Johnathan Evans argue for a view of Tolkien as "a responsible Catholic whose Christianity helped shape his fundamental perspectives," and that "[f]ar from bearing most of the blame for environmental abuses … ideas which are central to the Christian tradition deserve at least some credit for providing plausible and reasonable foundations for a responsible environmentalism" (xix). I think it is more plausible, however, to argue that Tolkien developed his environmental views *in spite of his Christianity*, through his deep familiarity with pagan perspectives through his work as a philologist. Campbell similarly contends that through the "presentation of a secondary world and a fictional past that foregrounds a nonhuman perspective," Tolkien "challenges conventional ideologies and doctrines which view humanity as being the focus of all creation" (160). But I would disagree that White Jr. "lays a little too much blame at the doorstep of religion and fails to take sufficient account of environmentally damaging policies and regimes that derive from purely business-driven or secular philosophies" (166-7). White Jr. did not lay blame on religion *tout court* but specifically on the ontology and resulting ethics of Christianity.[46] Moreover, the idea of "purely business-

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[46] While Dickerson and Evans, as well as Campbell (although to a lesser degree), try to maintain a "greening of religion hypothesis" with respect to Tolkien's work and its Catholic elements, downplaying White Jr.'s argument, a recent review of over 700 surveys concerning faith groups and their levels of environmental concern "indicates that White's critique continues to have explanatory power even though he did not identify all the themes and dynamics that hinder Christian environmentalism. Christians may agree that they should be good environmental stewards, but such concerns are often obviated by other variables" (Taylor et al. 1006). In other words, while one can make the case from Christian scripture and other writings that environmental stewardship, rather than domination, *could* be supported on theological grounds, this has not been the case in practice.

driven or secular philosophies" ignores the enduring influence of Christianity on the

"secular" political and economic ideologies of Western democracy and capitalism.

Marcel Gauchet addresses the continued influence of Christianity in the secularized West,

expanding on Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).

Gauchet argues that

> [t]he true significance of the link between Protestantism and capitalism lies not in the influence of spiritual norms on worldly behaviour, but in our … investment in the here-below. Entrepreneurial asceticism is thus more an early indication of this movement than its exclusive expression. This perspective takes us far beyond capitalism and leads us to recognize Christianity's specificity as a major factor in our relations with nature, our forms of thought, mode of human coexistence and political organization … For this reason, Christianity remains the most relevant religion in a postreligious society. (3-4)

Thus, so-called secular philosophies perpetuate Christianity's anthropocentric cosmology

and its rejection of pagan animism, even if they doubt or dismiss Christian doctrine; they

maintain a Christian perspective of the human-nature relationship. Moreover, their

secularity arguably makes the problem worse. Western secularism has essentially

beheaded the "Great Chain of Being" of medieval Christendom, thus giving humanity

absolute authority at the top of the hierarchy. This re-alignment of power runs parallel to

Sauron's own seduction into darkness: his goal, ultimately, is to displace all divine

influence upon Middle-earth, and subject everything else to his will. Sauron is not merely

a fallen angel, but a personification exemplifying the harmful vestiges of Christianity that

shape capitalism's ethos of domination. Like Sauron's minion Saruman and his host of

orcs, "[f]or nearly 2 millennia Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred

groves, which are idolatrous because they assume spirit in nature," and this careless

"gnawing, breaking, biting, hacking, burning," in the words of Tom Bombadil, continues

in Christianity's wake (White Jr. 1206; *Fellowship* 127); as White Jr. argues, for anyone

who uncritically absorbs this lasting Christian influence "a tree can be no more than a

physical fact" (1206). But this was not the ideological position of Tolkien, because his

position was not wholly informed by his Christian faith.

What really propels the environmental hopes and fears of *The Lord of the Rings* is the renewal of pagan animism that Tolkien embraces in spite of his Catholic faith. It is worth noting, as Campbell does, that the animist notion of "genius loci" is exactly how Tolkien scholars such as Curry and T. A. Shippey describe many of Tolkien's nature-related beings, such as the Ents, Tom Bombadil, and Goldberry (Campbell 75). By drawing on non-Christian cosmologies, Tolkien's text recovers a utopian hope-content that was never realized in the moments of its historical production and is now urgently required. The elves' harmony with the living world, the life given to the land itself through the Ents and Hurons, and the hobbits' love of "all things that grow"—and their collective resistance against those who would subdue and decimate nature for the sake of accumulating absolute power—anticipate White Jr.'s call to "find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (1206).

The hobbits' final struggle in "The Scouring of the Shire" anticipates the resistance and utopian aspirations of environmental activists Tolkien never lived to see, but also demonstrates Tolkien's concept of Recovery put into action through the hobbits themselves. As mentioned previously, Recovery is "a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view"—but is also a "return and renewal of health": "We should meet the centaur and the dragon," writes Tolkien, "and perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horse – and wolves" ("On Fairy-Stories" 57). Upon their return to the Shire, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin's organize an uprising against those who have brought Mordor to their doorstep. Their newfound clarity and character, acquired from the experience of their adventure across Middle-earth to carry out this resistance, exemplifies Tolkienian Recovery in that they—very literally—hope to renew the health of the Shire and its people, their people. The entire journey leading to this penultimate chapter of the text is a fantasy meant to affect the four hobbits in preparation for this moment, to teach them what was important, to help them see what is and what must be done with new eyes and a new fire in their hearts. Like so many of Tolkien's readers,

when they return home from their journey, be it a journey across mountains and rivers or pages and paragraphs, they find the essence of Mordor had been lurking there all along, and has now become more clearly visible, much as Asimov and his wife Janet saw Mordor while driving down the New Jersey Turnpike. Having learned to see clearly, the hobbits overthrow Sharkey and his Ruffians and renew the health of the Shire; having learned to see clearly, Tolkien's readers resist the capitalists' usurpation and exploitation of their homes and of their planet. Like the hobbits' return home, Tolkien's readers regain a clear sight of their "own country, and they [find] out now that they cared about it more than any other place" (*Return* 981).

This revelation and the way that "The Scouring of the Shire" incorporates Tolkien's theory of fantasy into his own fantasy text, combining the experience of Recovery with the motif of the return journey, resonates with Bloch's idea of *Heimat* ("homeland"), with which he concludes the final volume of *The Principle of Hope* (3: 1375-6). Tom Moylan describes Bloch's concept of Heimat very succinctly, explaining that

> the romance or the fantastic, including utopia, focuses on a quest for what has been repressed or denied, for *Heimat* … that sense of *home* which includes happiness and fulfillment and which the human collectivity has never known. The uncanny, the *unheimlich*, makes possible a regained sense of the familiar, *heimlich*, but also of that second meaning of *heimlich*, home. The operation of the uncanny, of estrangement, in the fantastic genres opens readers up to … envisioning an alternative society to the present one. (34-5)

The experience of the uncanny or estranging induces Tolkienian Recovery, which not only allows one to see the Primary World more clearly as it is, but "which is capable of revolutionary awareness and which can enter the activity of history" (35), just as the influence of Tolkien's writing has had on environmental activism for decades.

At the close of his novel, Tolkien's hobbits and readers both acquire the utopian hope latent in the marriage to the land, the deep ecological recognition of Barry Commoner's first law of ecology that "everything is connected to everything else" (Qtd.

in Campbell 33). They have experienced the education of desire through their parallel

journeys, returning with a renewed desire, having learned, in the words of Gandalf, that

> it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years in which we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that whose who live after may have clean earth to till.
> (*Return* 861)

3   Re-visioning the World: The Re-Writing of Fantasy's Metaphysics and Gender Politics in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* Trilogies

In the previous chapter, I explored some of the theological and spiritual underpinnings of Tolkien's work, both Christian and pagan, conscious and unconscious. Originating as a response to what sociologist Max Weber refers to as "the disenchantment of the world" (30), fantasy and its Secondary Worlds can be understood as a secular response to the loss of otherworldly wonder in the Primary World around us. Tolkien indicates this himself by identifying "enchantment" as an essential component of fantasy, the element which "produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter," and by relating the powers of fantastic literature to those of the Christian gospel ("On Fairy-Stories," 53, 71-2).

Fredric Jameson also notes this connection between (dis)enchantment and fantasy in his praise for Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle:[47] the stories of *Earthsea*, according to Jameson, "begin in ethics and end up in history" (*Archaeologies* 67). A brief summary

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[47] The publication of Le Guin's *Earthsea* books was an irregular process; for the sake of clarity, I will briefly outline the series' publication history. Originally, Le Guin published *A Wizard of Earthsea* in 1969 as a standalone novel (*Tombs*, "Afterword" 181-2). However, after the publication of *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), two more *Earthsea* novels, *The Tombs of Atuan* and *The Farthest Shore*, followed in 1970 and 1972, respectively. These three books formed the original "Earthsea Trilogy." Following this initial conclusion of the *Earthsea* series, Le Guin wrote and published numerous short stories and several novels, including her utopian novels *The Dispossessed* (1974) and *Always Coming Home* (1985). The next installment of *Earthsea*, *Tehanu*, was published in 1990, and was followed by two more volumes in 2001, *Tales from Earthsea*, a collection of short stories, and *The Other Wind*, the final novel. As a result of this irregular and inconsistent publishing history, *Earthsea* is variously referred to in the scholarship as a trilogy, a quartet, a sextet, and a cycle, depending upon the year the work was written (and the tastes of the scholar, in the case of the latter two terms). In the afterword of *The Other Wind* Le Guin, acknowledging the inconsistent terminology used to refer to *Earthsea*, playfully suggests that "[i]f we must have technicalities, and if fantasy must come in threes, could we call it the Earthsea Trilogies, in the plural?" More seriously, she points out that this framing of the texts "at least acknowledges the difference between the first three books and the last three books" (*The Other Wind*, "Afterword"). Given that my chapter will focus on the thematic and ideological differences between the first three books of *Earthsea* and the final three, I follow Le Guin's suggestion here and refer to *Wizard*, *Tombs*, and *Shore* as the first trilogy, and *Tehanu*, *Tales*, and *Wind* as the second trilogy; when referring to all six texts, I use the term *Earthsea* cycle, as I have above.

of a few of the texts demonstrates what he means. The first novel, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1969), is a bildungsroman that recounts the adolescence and education of Ged, who in his later years will become the Archmage, the greatest wizard of his time. Young Ged unleashes a deadly shadow upon the Archipelago through a rash, proud display of magical power; it is only by recognizing the shadow as part of himself, and naming it as such, that he is able to reconcile with it and restore the magical "Equilibrium" of the world that he had disturbed. In *The Farthest Shore* (1972), the third novel and the original ending of the *Earthsea* "trilogy," the potency of magic, and its practitioner's knowledge of the language that governs it, the Old Speech,[48] is decaying, sending the whole Archipelago into social and ecological disarray. Ged, now the elderly Archmage alluded to in the first novel, discovers that this disruption has been caused by the wizard Cob's attempts to use magic to achieve immortality, threatening the balance between the Archipelago and the Dry Lands (the realms of the living and the dead, respectively). He vanquishes this threat to the Equilibrium, but at the expense of his own magical abilities.

A similar crisis occurs at the end of the second trilogy in *The Other Wind* (2001). Dragons, believed by wizards to be the first speakers of the Language of the Making, have begun attacking human settlements at the heart of the Archipelago. By piecing together disparate, fragmentary histories from races and cultures throughout the Archipelago, the leaders of these peoples—both human and dragon—discover that they were once of the same species. At the time of their divergence, they agreed that those who would become human would abandon the Language of the Making and their knowledge of the True Names. Some of these human ancestors broke that pact, becoming

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[48] The terms "Old Speech," "True Speech," and "Language of the Naming" are names for the same language that Le Guin uses interchangeably. It is the language of "True Names" by which magic is performed by wizards (and, to a lesser extent, witches and sorcerers), and the language spoken by dragons in *Earthsea*.

the first wizards, and worse, they stole part of the dragons' domain to create the Dry Lands and preserve human souls after death.

Here Le Guin troubles the "Equilibrium" of the first novel and the knowledge of the True Speech itself; an immortal afterlife of the soul and the power of Naming are not things that human beings were meant to possess at all. Le Guin's world, like Tolkien's Middle-earth, is experiencing a historical transition that involves the loss or decline of magic (in Tolkien's case, through the departure of the Elves). The difference between the narratives of Earthsea and Middle-earth, however, is not only that the decline of magic is simply saddening, but also that Le Guin complicates its existence, making it a focal point of the narrative conflict. By way of this "deeper rhythm of history" Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle "ostensibly [registers] the secularization and literal *Entzauberung* ["Disenchantment"] of an older world by modernity" (*Archaeologies* 67). Like Jameson, T. A Shippey emphasizes Le Guin's capacity "to comment on the real world" through her Secondary World's "covert comparisons between 'fantastic' and 'familiar'" (100). "A reader may start on *A Wizard of Earthsea* for its spells and dragons," writes Shippey, but that reader "would be imperceptive, however, if he failed to realize before long … that he was reading not just a parable, but a parable for our times" (117). The Archipelago's historical moments of declining magic, literalizing the "disenchantment of the world," create many of the same social conflicts and psychic distresses evoked by the rise of modernity and capitalism: alienation and the destruction of traditional lifeways and communities, leading to depression, despair, and drug abuse.

Furthermore, according to Jameson, Le Guin's "deployment of the paradigm of the struggle between good and evil becomes socialized and historicized by way of feminism" (67). This is best demonstrated through *The Tombs of Atuan* (1970), *Tehanu* (1990), and *Tales of Earthsea*. *Tombs*, the second novel of *Earthsea*, is a coming-of-age

story of a young girl,[49] Tenar, who grows up within an all-female religious order that worships beings known only as the Nameless Ones, the reincarnation of their high-priestess. This cultish institution is not free of men, however, but forcibly controlled by them, intentionally isolated from society in a lifeless, barren land; all possibility of their power and influence is nullified by their segregation. Tenar wrests free of the cult's influence and oppression with the help of Ged, who comes to their temple in search of a legendary magical artifact. *Tehanu* takes place only a few days after the events of the third novel, *Shore*, and is also told from Tenar's point of view. The novel marks a dramatic shift in tone from the traditional heroism of fantasy: she, like Ged, has grown old; unlike Ged, her life since her escape from the cult of the Nameless Ones and her resettlement on the isle of Gont has been, by most standards, ordinary. She married a farmer and became a housewife and mother. The action of the novel revolves around her adoption of a young girl, Therru/Tehanu, who was raped and burned and left for dead by her family, and Tenar's efforts to raise and nurture her. In its focus on the everyday lives of women and girls, the novel depicts both the casual disregard and callous misogyny of Earthsea's patriarchal cultures and institutions. Through conversations between Tenar and other women, like the witch Moss, it explores and celebrates the sources and powers of women's wisdom. *Tales*, unlike the other books of *Earthsea*, is a collection of short stories that span centuries of the Archipelago's history and challenge the received history of the previous novels in the cycle. "The Finder," for example, probably the most important story of the collection, details the founding of the School on Roke island, an effort which was shared by male and female practitioners of magic alike (in contradistinction to the story told by the all-male wizards of Ged's days). It also tells of the beginnings of the misogynist faction that would come to dominate the School,

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[49] A parallel to *Wizard*, which recounts Ged's coming-of-age.

dispelling and denigrating witches for centuries to come. These stories, as Jameson argues, "truly resituate[ ] us in the concrete social world of alienation and class struggle, of subalternity and oppression," and "demonstrate[ ] that fantasy can also have critical and even demystificatory power" (*Archaeologies* 67).

Like fantasy writers before her, such as Tolkien and Lewis, Le Guin provides her own theorization of fantasy's powers and purpose and in so doing provides helpful commentary on both the genre as a whole and her own work. Essays collected in *The Language of the Night* (1979), such as "Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" and "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie," as well as direct commentary on *Earthsea*, like her essay "Earthsea Revisioned," demonstrate the depth of Le Guin's conscious (and conscientious) thinking about fantasy literature. In "Elfland," Le Guin discusses the functions of fantasy's Secondary Worlds in much the same way Tolkien did in "On Fairy-Stories," substituting the name Faërie for Elfland. "[T]he point about Elfland," she writes,

> is that you are not at home there … It is a different approach to reality, an alternative technique for apprehending and coping with existence. It is not antirational, but pararational; not realistic, but surrealistic, superrealistic, a heightening of reality … It employs archetypes, which, as Jung warned us, are dangerous things. Dragons are more dangerous, and a good deal commoner, than bears … [Elfland] is a real wilderness, and those who go there should not feel too safe. (84)[50]

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[50] Jung, speaking to the relationship between neuroses and archetypes, states that "[s]o far as a neurosis is really only a private affair … archetypes play no role at all. But if it is a question of a general incompatibility or an otherwise injurious condition productive of neuroses in relatively large numbers of individuals, then we must assume some presence of constellated archetypes … The archetype corresponding to the situation is activated, and as a result those explosive and dangerous forces hidden in the archetype come into action, frequently with unpredictable consequences" (47). In the context of a collective political unconscious and nonsynchronous, latent hope-content articulated by a literary text's archetype, this "explosive" reaction he describes can be understood as a reaction to Tolkienian Recovery, as discussed in the previous chapter. Le Guin's commentary on the dangerous quality of archetypes, in this context, can thus be understood as the "danger" of a political awakening, an impetus to revolutionary, utopian action.

This last sentence echoes Tolkien's own warning about the "perilous" nature of Faërie. Le Guin's denial of fantasy as antirational seems to directly address Suvin's criticism of fantasy.[51] Most importantly for this chapter, this passage is also one of the earliest moments where Le Guin's theorization of fantasy associates dragons as archetypes with wilderness.

In "Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" Le Guin identifies what makes fantasy important by examining why so many of her fellow Americans disparage the genre. The issue, in her opinion, is the hypermasculine disregard for the faculty of the imagination in general (41). By imagination Le Guin means "the free play of the mind, both intellectual and sensory. By 'play' I mean recreation, re-creation, the recombination for what is known into what is new" (41). Here, as with Le Guin's statement above from "Elfland," one apprehends the similarity of Le Guin's thought to Bloch's idea of how archetypes and allegories are reworked and refashioned to suit the utopian longings of the present through the literary forms and figures of the past. The uses of this kind of imagination, according to Le Guin, are firstly to provide "pleasure and delight," but more importantly "to deepen[ ] your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings" (43). The imagination that (re)generates fantasy is not, as its skeptics claim, "childish, or unmanly, or untrue":

> Fantasy is true, of course. It isn't factual, but it is true. Children know that. Adults know it too, and that is precisely why many of them are afraid of fantasy. They know that *its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, all that is phony, unnecessary, and trivial* in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. *They are afraid of dragons, because they are afraid of freedom*. (44, my emphasis)

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[51] Which is entirely possible: Suvin and Le Guin maintained a friendly, decades-long correspondence, although they did not agree with one another about fantasy's usefulness. It is quite likely that Le Guin's thinking about fantasy literature, over those decades, influenced Suvin's own; she may be partially responsible for the change in his position on fantasy that occurs between *Metamorphoses* in 1979 and "Considering the Sense of Fantasy" in 2000.

We have here the reasons for why Faërie/Elfland is dangerous, unsettling. As an estranged, otherworldly representation of our own world, it provides not only "Recovery," as Tolkien describes, but also a *critique* of the reality it reveals to its reader. And whereas in "Elfland" Le Guin describes dragons as wild, here she describes them as *free*. This combination of wildness and freedom, through the figure of the dragon, is, I shall argue, the archetype through which Le Guin presents her most powerful critique of modernity in the Secondary World of *Earthsea*.

Treating the *Earthsea* cycles as two trilogies, as Le Guin does in the afterword to *The Other Wind*, I argue that both trilogies intervene in the genre of modern fantasy by taking up its traditional archetypes and allegories, like the dragon and the battle between Good and Evil in order to evoke new Utopian aspirations that challenge the genre's prevailing spiritual and gendered dynamics of the genre. By drawing on Taoism rather than Christianity for the metaphysics of Earthsea, for instance, Le Guin transforms the ethics and politics inscribed in the metaphysics of the Good/Evil dichotomy. Her idea of a cosmic "Equilibrium," cited in every volume of *Earthsea*, reinvents the way actors in her fantastic Secondary World confront their conflicts and oppositions, and replaces rigid, hierarchical moral categories with a fluid and unfixed dynamic in which no choice or action is absolutely "good" or "right," and in which what one has fought to preserve may become that which one fights to dismantle. This philosophical shift through the introduction of Taoism is what I take to be the first trilogy's major innovation of the fantasy genre's traditional forms and figurations. The second trilogy, comprised of *Tehanu*, *Tales From Earthsea*, and *The Other Wind*, upends the traditional male-centred fantasy of the hero's journey by "revisioning" Earthsea's history and the role of women within that history through their centrality to the narratives of these texts ("Earthsea

Revisioned").[52] In the midst of political awakenings and social transformations, "Visions," such as the conventions that construct fantasy's Secondary Worlds, "must be re-visioned" ("Earthsea Revisioned"). What Le Guin means by "revisioning" is signaled by the hyphenated form of the word: she is invoking feminist poet Adrienne Rich's concept of re-vision, which Rich defines as

> the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction … A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see—and therefore live—afresh. (18)

Through Rich's concept of re-vision, Le Guin amends the gendered political equilibrium of *Earthsea* as a text through a critical re-writing of its own Taoist inspired metaphysical principle of the Equilibrium.

Le Guin's parallel explorations of the deep history shared by dragons and humans in her secondary world are inextricably intertwined with the narrative elevation of women and historical revelation of their effaced role in the history of the Archipelago's male institutions of magic. The traditional archetype of the dragon, and witches' parallel struggle with the patriarchal institutions of male wizardry, ties the feminist project of the later trilogy to the nonsynchronous utopian hopes that Le Guin herself locates in the mythical figure of the dragon. I argue that Le Guin's texts subvert the traditional symbolism of the dragon as destructive, evil, and sinful as a means of representing the hoped-for feminist subversion of patriarchal systems of value and meaning, which denigrate both dragon and woman (and women's autonomy) on similar grounds: as a

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[52] While one could argue that *The Tombs of Atuan*, the second novel of the original trilogy, is a breakaway from the traditionally male-centred heroic journeys of fantasy, I submit that it only anticipates the more fully-fledged feminism of the later trilogy. While it does indeed take Tenar, a young girl, as the perspective character of the novel, and its narrative events lead to her liberation from an oppressive religious order, one can argue her liberation—both in mind and body—is made possible only through the arrival of Ged. At this point in development of *Earthsea*, then, its women are still dependent on a male figure for their freedom, and the magical hegemony held by male wizards—among Earthsea's other male-dominated institutions— has not yet been challenged.

threat to "Civilization" (as defined and constructed by men) and as inherently sinful and untrustworthy, needing to be subdued. While Le Guin argues that her depiction of dragons is genderless ("Earthsea Revisioned"), I illustrate a semantic constellation of meanings shared between women, dragons, and darkness (as related to women as witches, the concept of dragon-as-Satan, and the Taoist idea of yin as both the "feminine" principle and the principle of darkness). [53] Le Guin's reformation of the dragon archetype "is wildness seen not only as dangerous beauty but as dangerous anger … the dragon is subversion, revolution, change—a going beyond the old order in which men were taught to own and dominate, and women were taught to collude with them: the order of oppression" ("Earthsea Revisioned").

3.1 "Weak as Women's Magic, Wicked as Women's Magic": The Momentum of Tradition and the First *Earthsea* Trilogy

My first-horizon analysis of *Earthsea* identifies two interrelated real contradictions symbolically resolved through the text. The first is rooted in the construction of Le Guin's Secondary World within the first trilogy, while the second is a contradiction between the ideology of magic pervading the first trilogy and the real conditions of its production. Both contradictions are worth noting, since their symbolic resolution within the texts of *Earthsea* are the same, namely, the revisioning of Earthsea.

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[53] I understand Le Guin's assertion that her dragons "do not know gender" as the apprehended *telos* of the utopian hope-content she identifies within the dragon archetype. At the end of *The Other Wind*, Tehanu changes into her dragon-form and her transformed body no longer bears the disfiguring burn scars from the rape and abuse she experienced as a child. Her transformation thus symbolizes a hoped-for freedom from gendered violence and oppression, i.e., an abolition of the structures of gender itself. Nonetheless, within the historical moment of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, this anticipated abolition is most urgent for *women*, whom are most directly harmed and oppressed by it. Thus, despite Le Guin's anticipated genderless society figured by her dragons, they remain closely associated with women and the feminine in her writing.

The first contradiction concerns the culturally heterogenous nature of the wizardry. Conceptually, wizardry is grounded in the metaphysical principles of Naming—having power over a thing by knowing its True Name in the Old Speech—and the Equilibrium, a cosmological notion which mandates the preservation of a dynamic and fluid balance between the binary opposites that compose the universe. The importance of maintaining the Equilibrium is impressed upon all young men studying to become wizards on Roke Island. It motivates their ethos to use their magic only when utterly necessary; otherwise, their actions may provoke a catastrophic imbalance in Nature's order. This ethic is demonstrated early in *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ged's first mentor, Ogion, and afterwards by Ged himself in *The Farthest Shore*. The concept of the Equilibrium, as well as the ethos of minimal action that derives from it, are inspired by Taoist philosophy. The *Tao Te Ching* states, for example, that a wise person "[s]ettles into his job of Not Doing / carries on his teaching done without talking," and that "[working runs, grasping loses," so a wise person "[d]oes not work, so does not ruin / does not grasp, so does not lose" (Laozi and LaFargue 92, 156). Such prescriptions describe Ogion's non-intervention and silence, as well as the peripatetic patterns of Ged's journeys throughout his life. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, for example, Ged's prideful summoning of Elfarran disrupts the balance between the living and the dead and brings a deadly shadow into the world. He first flees from the shadow, known as a gebbeth, as if clinging to life. After seeking the wisdom of Ogion, Ged then reverses the course of this pursuit and seeks the gebbeth instead. And "yet," he says, "when I held it with all the strength I had, it became mere vapor, and escaped from me" (188). In their final confrontation, Ged does not seek to hold power over the shadow, but names it with his own True Name so that when he "took hold of his shadow," the shadow also "reached out to him": "Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one" (212). Without grasping, Ged holds onto the gebbeth, "the shadow of his death," and in so doing "made himself whole." The reciprocal movement of his journey, the anti-climactic passivity of his

quest's resolution, and the symbolism of light and darkness (i.e., yin and yang) all speak to the Taoist ethics that shape Le Guin's Secondary World.

Similarly, in *The Farthest Shore* Ged, now the Archmage of Roke, undertakes a nonlinear (one might even say meandering) journey across the waters and islands of the Archipelago to discover the reason why magic is waning across all of Earthsea. He has become much wiser than the rash young wizard of the first novel: like Ogion, he is often silent, and he seldom uses magic, despite being the most powerful wizard in the Archipelago, saving magic for dire circumstances only. He also does not seek to define the path of his journey. When he and Arren, a nobleman's son, set out on this journey together, Arren asks:

> "My lord, what—" His voice stuck a moment. "What is it you seek?"
>
> "I don't know, Arren."
>
> "Then—"
>
> "Then how shall I seek it? Neither do I know that. Maybe it will seek me." (*Farthest* 33)

Ged's approach to the quest, like his approach to magic, now embodies the ethos of Taoism: he sets out seeking no destination, and so he finds the destination he seeks.

Le Guin thus substitutes the more traditional Christian metaphysics of an absolute Good and Evil found in fantasy, such as Tolkien's juxtaposition of Gandalf and Sauron, for a Tao-inspired metaphysics. However, while the metaphysics of Earthsea's cosmology and its magic have departed from Fantasy's Christian roots—Le Guin herself consciously declares herself a "congenital non-Christian" ("Dreams Must Explain Themselves" 50)—the material culture of Christian monasticism and asceticism remains in the behaviours and practices of Earthsea's wizards. As Laura B. Comoletti and Michael D. C. Drout argue,

> the mages of Earthsea assume the social and cultural roles and powers of medieval Christian priests, celibate males, trained in a textualized lore managed in a central location, holders of specific ranks in a centrally managed hierarchy, and (often) wanderers who depend on the charity of local people. Most significant,

> wizards and priests alike are able to perform speech-acts by which they can change … the physical world … Using words, a wizard can transform a pebble into a diamond or a person into a bird; using words, a priest can transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. (114)

Thus, despite Le Guin's personal beliefs and conscious efforts to separate her work from Christianity, its pervasive influence within Western culture and the traditions of fantasy makes itself known nonetheless.

Compared with the all-male wizards of Roke, the female practitioners of magic—witches—are given short shrift. Their denigrated status is established from the very first chapter of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, through a saying repeated throughout the texts: "*Weak as woman's magic … Wicked as woman's magic*" (6). Despite the cosmological principle of Equilibrium, then, there is, from the start, a serious imbalance established between men and women when it comes to the use of magic, and the value ascribed to the kinds of magic that they wield, as a result of the persistence of Christian cultural forms. In his discussion of fantasy, Jameson describes the device of magic as "a celebration of human creative power and freedom," which "may be read, not as some facile plot device … but rather as a figure for the enlargement of human powers and their passage to the limit, their actualization of everything latent and virtual in the stunted human organism of the present" (*Archaeologies* 66). Le Guin says much the same of her own work: "The [first] trilogy is, in one aspect, about the artist. The artist as magician. The Trickster. Prospero … Wizardry is artistry. The trilogy is then, in this sense, about art, the creative experience, the creative process" ("Dreams" 53).

This account of magic in turn leads to the second contradiction: the gendered institution of magic within the text and the material conditions of the text's own production. If magic is artistry most closely resembling writing (shaping and transforming the world through words), within the text of the first trilogy, women are largely denied this artistry. Yet it was a woman's artistry by which the world of the first trilogy was made! There is, then, something unconsciously self-effacing about the

original trilogy in light of the one allegorical element of her text that Le Guin consciously recognizes. Despite her conscious efforts to break away from the Eurocentric tropes of fantasy, for example, making the people of the Archipelago dark-skinned and their barbaric neighbours, the Kargs, pale, blue-eyed and blonde ("Earthsea Revisioned"), or writing *Tombs* from the perspective of Tenar, Le Guin's worldbuilding and storytelling retain traces of European, male-centered virtues and ideologies.[54]

3.2 Breaking the World to Make it Whole: Feminist Critiques of Le Guin's Early Writing and the Historical (R)Evolution of Earthsea

The resolution of the above contradictions within Earthsea only manifests after an eighteen-year silence, when a new spell[55] begins to set right the disequilibrium within Earthsea's Equilibrium: the second trilogy of *Earthsea*, beginning with *Tehanu* and concluding with *The Other Wind*. As if to play upon Le Guin's Tao-inspired penchant for paradox, the "silence" of nearly two decades between the first and second trilogies of *Earthsea* was a loud one, filled with words about other Secondary Worlds, like Le Guin's Orsinia and the Hainish universe, scholarly analysis of her writing, and Le Guin's own essays, but nothing within the world of *Earthsea* itself. In order to understand the symbolic resolution of Earthsea's contradictions within the second trilogy, one must examine Le Guin's artistic and philosophical development during this period of her life.

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[54] Just as the female perspective of Tenar in *Tombs* doesn't succeed in subverting the masculinist ideologies that shape Le Guin's early writing, her decision to reverse the skin tones of those deemed "civilized" and "uncivilized" at the start of the first *Earthsea* trilogy doesn't succeed in seriously challenging or interrogating white supremacy through her Secondary World. The fact that readers "will not see that dark man [i.e., Ged] on most of the covers of the Earthsea books" because "publishers insist that jackets showing black people 'kill sales' and forbid their artists to color a hero darker than tan" confirms the failure of this overly simple attempt to challenge white supremacy; as Le Guin admits, the whitewashing of her books' cover art "has affected many readers' perceptions of Ged" despite her written descriptions of him ("Earthsea Revisioned").

[55] I use the word "spell" here in its Old English sense, to mean a narrative, a tale told ("spell, n.," *OED*).

The ideologeme that I will use to frame the discourse surrounding Le Guin and her work is *feminism*. In order to document this ideological engagement and evolution, I survey the critical assessment of the first trilogy's ideological conservatism and the feminist critiques of Le Guin's other texts, such as the science fiction novels *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974), during the period between the conclusion of the first trilogy and the publication of *Tehanu*.

Scholarship has examined the first *Earthsea* trilogy from multiple theoretical points of view. Douglas Barbour (1974) and George Slusser (1976) were some of the first critics to highlight the Taoist influence of Le Guin's writing (White 18); Margaret P. Esmonde (1979) was the first scholar to provide a psychoanalytic approach, arguing that "the basic pattern of the trilogy is Jungian" (27); and T. A. Shippey (1977) argued for a historical-allegorical reading of the trilogy that "concerned … the changing historical perception of science, magic, and religion" (21). The *Earthsea* novels did not gain much attention from feminist critics in the 1970s, who largely engaged with Le Guin's science fiction, especially *The Left Hand of Darkness*. That novel attracted (and continues to attract) scholarly attention because of its depiction of a human species that has no stable sexual identity: the people of the planet Gethen (also known as "Winter") are not permanently sexed, but have an oestrus cycle known as kemmering in which a Gethenian may become either male or female during the active phase of their reproductive cycle. Yet despite the arguably progressive motivations of Le Guin's self-styled "thought experiment" that the novel's worldbuilding embodies—and despite her self-professed identity as a feminist—the text was critiqued for its enduring masculine focus. For example, feminist scholar and science fiction author Joanna Russ writes that, while *The Left Hand* is "written by a woman and is about sex … what sexual identity means to people," it is largely written from the perspectives of "a human observer on Winter and he is male; and … a native hero and *he* is male—at least 'he' is *masculine in gender, if not in sex*" (215). Writing in 1970 and accepting the prevailing grammarian orthodoxy of

English pronouns, Russ concedes that "it is … a deficiency in the English language that these people must be called "he" throughout, but put that together with the native hero's personal encounters in the book, the absolute lack of interest in child-raising, the concentration on work, and what you have is a world of men" (215).[56] In *Feminism and Science Fiction* (1988), Sarah Lefanu writes: "In the *Earthsea* trilogy women feature first as witches or enchantresses who are either wicked or ignorant—or, like Elfarran, dead (and still a bundle of trouble). Or they are absent: not a girl to be seen amongst the 'hundred or more boys and young men' of the wizard school. In *The Tombs of Atuan* girls get a rather better deal, even if they do need rescuing, but in the third novel of the trilogy … they are relegated again to a minor role" (132-3).

Since the first and third novels are blatantly masculinist in their perspective, the question of women's representation in the first trilogy thus focuses largely on *Tombs*, which, like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, endeavours to challenge the gendered norms of its genre. Noting a parallelism between Le Guin's science fiction and fantasy, some critics transfer their critique of the former onto the latter. For instance, as Donna R. White notes, Barbara J. Bucknall, the first scholar to publish a book-length work on Le Guin's writing,

> points out that *The Left Hand of Darkness* is basically the same story as *The Tombs of Atuan* but is told with more complexity … Bucknall sees Estraven relating to Genly the same way Tenar relates to Ged in *Tombs*: the female or seemingly female member of each pair rescues the male, but there is no happily ever after. Both novels are concerned with fidelity and betrayal. (White 66-7)

Like *Left Hand*, then, *Tombs* can be (and has been) challenged as a spirited but unsuccessful attempt to eschew the patriarchal ideology of its genre. Indeed, like Russ

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[56] Russ's critique exemplifies the feminist commentary of Le Guin's early works, including *The Dispossessed*, *Rocannon's World* (1966), and the first *Earthsea* trilogy.

and Lefanu, some scholars of children's literature were critical of the novel on feminist grounds, according to White.[57] Similarly, Cordelia Sherman "compar[es] the vibrant life of the school for (male) wizards to the stagnant female cult of the Nameless Ones," concluding that "[t]he subliminal message of *The Tombs of Atuan* seems to be that women living without men must become twisted and purposeless, while men living without women can be productive and strong" (qtd. in White 38). Even later critics like Holly Littlefield, who argues against the interpretation of Tenar as depending on a man (Ged) for her rescue, acknowledges that while the priestesses of the Nameless Ones "are isolated from men," their entire lives are "still carefully controlled by them" (248). While Littlefield is correct that Tenar is "not a simpering, helpless female needing some knight in shining armor to rescue her" since she recues Ged just as much as he "serves as a catalyst for [her] escape" (248), it is this systemic element of Le Guin's early worldbuilding that fails on feminist grounds. Ged helps Tenar escape the death cult controlled at arm's length by Kargish men, but there is nowhere she can escape to in the Archipelago where men will not dictate the shape of her life, be it Havnor or Ogion's hut.

C. N. Manlove similarly and more generally argues that the first *Earthsea* trilogy is fundamentally conservative. "The trilogy," writes Manlove, is "informed with the ethic of accepting or of keeping things as they are" (36). This ethic is implicated in the metaphysics of the Equilibrium and the use of magic. "The accent is on magic not changing the nature of the world, except in cases of real need" (39), resulting in a balance that is exclusively measured according to the past and tradition: "Keeping things as they are means keeping them essentially as they always have been: the past is central. Yet only *essentially*, for each age alters the factors in the Balance, or sees different threats to it, or

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[57] White notes Lois Kuznets's argument that "*Tombs* is not particularly feminist, in that it becomes the story of a maiden in distress and depicts the suppression of a female cult" (38).

recovers more of the past than was previously known" (37). Thus, while Le Guin was contending with the feminist critiques of her science fiction, parallel accusations were also being made against *Earthsea*. The problems of the Hainish universe and Earthsea were, as far as gendered dynamics are concerned, very much the same.

While Le Guin was silent as the storyteller of *Earthsea*, she was not silent altogether. During this period she engaged her critics through essays and lectures (and of course kept writing fiction and poetry, just not of Earthsea). One of the clearest gauges of Le Guin's response to her fellow feminists, and the development of her thought between the publication of *The Farthest Shore* and *Tehanu*, is the re-publication of her 1976 essay "Is Gender Necessary?" as "Is Gender Necessary? Redux" (1988), in which she responds both to feminist criticism of *Left Hand* and to her own original essay. She formats this second version, published in the second edition of her essay collection *The Language of the Night* (1989), in two separate columns, presenting the original "Is Gender Necessary?" in the left column alongside the "Redux" of the right column, which comments on and corrects, but does not efface, the original. In 1976 Le Guin writes:

> The fact is that the real subject of [*The Left Hand of Darkness*] is not feminism or sex or gender or anything of the sort; as far as I can see, it is a book about betrayal and fidelity … The rest of this discussion will concern only half, the lesser half, of this book. (157)

Her assertion of what her writing is or is not about is an unusual one for Le Guin, as a writer who often insists that the meaning of a book is for its readers to decide. In a "Redux" comment running alongside, she confesses:

> I was feeling defensive, and resentful that critics of the book insisted upon talking only about its "gender problems," as if it were an essay not a novel … I opened a can of worms, and was trying hard to shut it. "The fact is," however, that there are other aspects to the book, which are involved with its sex/gender aspects quite inextricably. (157)

Notable in this commentary is not so much the emotional confession of her reaction to her critics, but how she now sees gender as interrelated within and integrated into all other dimensions of social life: one cannot speak of "gender problems" without

considering other social dimensions, nor can other social dimensions be fully considered apart from their implication in the construction of gender roles. Moreover, while speaking both to and against herself, she preserves her previous thinking in one column while drawing from it, and modifying it, in the other. This new manner of engaging with her past, motivated by her continued engagement with feminist critics, philosophers, historians, and readers, thus models, I would argue, how she engages with Earthsea's history when she returns to writing of that world.

Le Guin continues engaging with her past self in this manner, especially around the matter of using "he" as a generic pronoun. In 1976, similar to Joanna Russ's lament of the novel's use of "he," albeit far more defensive and frustrated, Le Guin writes:

> I call the Gethenians "he" because I utterly refuse to mangle English by inventing a pronoun for "he/she."
>
> "He is the generic pronoun, damn it, in English. (I envy the Japanese, who, I am told, do have a he/she pronoun.) But I do not consider this really very important.
>
> The pronouns wouldn't matter at all if I had been cleverer at *showing* the "female component of the Gethenian characters in *action*. (169-70)

To each of these sentences Le Guin appends a footnote connecting them to a comment or correction in the 1988 "Redux" column. To the first sentence, she comments:

> This "utter refusal" of 1968 restated in 1976 collapsed, utterly, within a couple of years more. I still dislike invented pronouns, but now dislike them less than the so-called generic pronoun he/him/his, which does in fact exclude women from discourse; and which was an invention of male grammarians, for until the sixteenth century the English generic singular pronoun was they/them/their, as it still is in English and American colloquial speech. It should be restored to the written language. (169-70)

To the second, she adds: "I now consider this [difference in pronouns] very important." And to the third: "If I had realized how the pronouns I used shaped, directed, controlled my own thinking, I might have been 'cleverer'" (170). Such revisions demonstrate Le Guin's newfound awareness of how the formal aspects of language and of writing, such as the institutionalization and standardization of he/him/his as the generic pronoun, affect how one can think, the ideas one can express, which can marginalize an entire group—

especially one that comprises half of all people. Particularly interesting about this development in Le Guin's thought is the argument from history. By the uncovering, or revelation, of a previously unknown part of one's history, one's understanding of the material conditions of the present is transformed—and new ideas about a way forward emerge. This, as we shall see in the next section, is how Le Guin handles her "revision" of *Earthsea* through the second triology.

Another essay, "The Fisherwoman's Daughter," written in the same year as "Redux," shows how Le Guin's thoughts on writing as a woman—and writing about women—evolved through the 1970s and 1980s and influenced her return to Earthsea in particular. While she had known since the conclusion of the third novel that she would write another book set in Earthsea (*Tehanu* 271-2), she was finally working towards the completion of that fourth novel around the same time that she was responding to feminist critiques of her writing.[58] One notable aspect of this essay is its mixture of several revisions of a much earlier essay, "A Woman Writing," and combines the multiple versions as well as the myriad responses of her audiences. "What pleases me most about this piece," writes Le Guin, "is that I can look on it at last as a collaboration":

> The responses from various audiences I read it to, both questions in the lecture hall and letters afterward, guided and clarified my thinking and saved me from many follies and omissions. The present re-collation and editing has given me back the whole thing—not shapely and elegant, but a big crazy quilt … I pieced together the works and words of so many other writers—ancestors, strangers, friends. ("The Fisherwoman's Daughter")

This idea of collaboration, of combined perspectives and the image of a whole created from many parts, shapes the form of *Tales of Earthsea*, a collection of short stories rather than a novel, which follows *Tehanu* in the second trilogy. *Tales* presents a patchwork

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[58] In "Earthsea Revisioned," Le Guin writes that "From 1972 on, I knew there should be a fourth book of Earthsea, but it was sixteen years before I could write it," i.e., 1988, the same year that "Is Gender Necessary? Redux" and "The Fisherwoman's Daughter" were first published.

quilt, as it were, of the Archipelago's history and is arguably the text which most re-envisions Le Guin's Secondary World. Plurality of perspective, not a major device in the first three novels, is thus part of the feminist reformation of her Secondary World.

Towards the end of "The Fisherwoman's Daughter," when Le Guin shifts from a general discussion of women writers and the cultural "you-can't-create-if-you-procreate" myth to her own experience, she writes:

> I have flagrantly disobeyed the either-books-or-babies rule, having had three kids and written about twenty books … By the luck of race, class, money, and health, I could manage the double-tightrope trick … for years that personal freedom allowed me to ignore the degree to which my writing was controlled and constrained by the judgements and assumptions which I thought were my own, but which were the internalized ideology of a male supremacist society … until the mid-seventies I wrote fiction about heroic adventures, high-tech futures, men in the halls of power, men—men were the central characters, the women were peripheral, secondary … I did not know how to write about women—very few of us did—because I thought that what men had written about women was the truth, was the true way to write about women. ("The Fisherwoman's Daughter")

This passage admits, much more explicitly than the "Redux" commentary, what Le Guin learned about her own writing after completing *The Farthest Shore* and before (or while) working on *Tehanu*. The centering of women as characters, the focus on their experiences, and the movement away from heroism (an ideological device that glorifies traditionally masculine values) indicates that the critiques of her earlier work, and her engagement with them, were essential to a developing perspective that makes the second *Earthsea* trilogy notably different in tone, style, and structure when compared to the first.

A crucial part of Le Guin's resolution of *Earthsea*'s conservative, masculinist contradictions appears to use Manlove's critique of conservatism as part of its feminist resolution, namely, the recovery (and challenging) of historical narratives. By writing an alternative—or, as Le Guin herself might say, discovering more—history of Earthsea, which challenges the received wisdom of its traditional origin story and the founding of the Roke School, Le Guin reconfigures her world's past in a Blochian manner in order to identify unresolved and latent conflicts between different groups (wizards, witches, and

dragons) and thus to envision and approach a better future. As I shall show in the next section, in so doing she preserves the Taoist elements of the original trilogy by changing the emphasis from a synonymy between Equilibrium and a static "Balance" to a greater focus on its Heraclitan dynamism, the continual change that is involved in the maintenance of a true equilibrium.[59] In other words, it is through Le Guin's introduction of a flexible Taoist ontology in the first trilogy that she is able to both preserve and transform Earthsea according to the feminist principles she implements in her writing following the critical discourse around the texts that brought her to prominence.

3.3 Why Are ~~Americans~~ Men Afraid of Dragons?: The Reappropriation of an Archetype as a Figure of Freedom

Weaving a new spell of Earthsea between 1992 and 2001, Le Guin brings into being a world that is, when compared to the first three novels, the same and not the same. Her "revisioning" of *Earthsea* through *Tehanu*, *Tales from Earthsea*, and *The Other Wind* is not the clumsy kind of worldbuilding erasure one witnesses in recent Marvel, Star Wars, or Star Trek productions, where "alternate universes," "reboots" and "retcons" are used to avoid any conflicts with previous narratives or ideologies. Instead, Le Guin leaves the first trilogy and its worldbuilding firmly intact, but completely alters its meaning by

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[59] As a former student of chemistry, this shift in the nuance of *Earthsea*'s concept of Equilibrium has always impressed me: it aligns with the concept of chemical equilibria articulated by Le Chatelier's Principle. According to this understanding of equilibria, there is nothing static about it; a state of equilibrium is simply a condition in which opposite processes occur at the same rate, giving the appearance of a changeless state. When something is added or subtracted from a system in equilibrium, however, that system will find a new equilibrium state, a new condition in which its opposing processes are balanced. Nothing stays still, and a rigorous concept of equilibrium is not the same as the conservative nostalgia for the harmony of a past "Golden Age"; the equilibrium of today need not be the same equilibrium as yesterday, nor the equilibrium of tomorrow. Le Guin demonstrates this change in her Taoist ideas of balance and equilibrium in "Is Gender Necessary? Redux" when, discussing the political state of Gethen in *Left Hand*, she amends her original statement that "balance is a precarious state, and at the moment of the novel the balance, which had leaned toward the 'feminine,' is tipping the other way" to instead read "it is not a motionless balance, there being no such thing in life, and at the moment of the novel, it is wobbling perilously" (164-5).

writing *around* it, expanding upon its history and mythos, and changing the way

Earthsea's stories are told. Through the narratives of the second *Earthsea* trilogy,

especially the short story "The Finder," *The Other Wind*, and the peripheral historical

documentation provided in "A Description of Earthsea," Le Guin uses the past to

transform the relationships between wizards, witches, and dragons to unsettle the

sedimented, centuries-old cultural assumptions of her world. By exploring the history of

the school of Roke and its relationship with women in "The Finder" and "A Description

of Earthsea," as well as the historical connection between humans and dragons

throughout each text of her second trilogy, I read the historicity of Le Guin's changing

world in *Earthsea* as an allegory (or, in Shippey's terms, a parable) that parallels the

historicity of feminist recognition and empowerment of women in the Primary World.

Within that estranged, allegorical parallel of our world, the dragon archetype expresses

the anticipated hope for a future free from the oppressive structures of patriarchy.

The idea of the dragon as a utopian archetype may seem counterintuitive. The

dragon, in much of Western folklore and mythology—and of which modern fantasy is an

inheritor—is a threatening figure: an ill omen, a defiler, an Adversary.[60] The celebrated

myth of St. George and the dragon is but one example; and even as recently as Tolkien's

The Hobbit (1937), the dragon Smaug, the chief antagonist of Bilbo and Thorin's

company of dwarves, is depicted as not only powerful, but merciless, greedy, cruel, and

cunning.[61] Bloch, however, explicitly identifies the dragon as an archetype that possesses

latent utopian hope:

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[60] The Dragon has often, in a Christian context, been associated with Satan, whose name derives from the Hebrew word meaning "accuser" or "adversary". The *OED* notes that "the Dragon" was used by writers for centuries as an epithet for Satan—including by Milton in *Paradise Lost* ("dragon, n.1").

[61] The oldest example I can find of a sympathetic rendering of dragons is Naomi Mitchison's *Travel Light* (1952), where, in a rather entertaining subversion of fairytale form, the abandoned child-protagonist Halla is raised for a time among dragons; she comes to consider herself one of their kind, and learns their enmity towards the barbaric, self-aggrandizing group of people known as "heroes." Given the text's female

> An archetype with undischarged tendency-latency beneath the cloak of fantasy …
> is the fight with the dragon … A related archetype is the liberation of the virgin
> (innocence in general) whom the dragon holds captive … is the time of dragons,
> the dragon-land itself, when it appears as a necessary space which precedes the
> final triumph. (*The Principle of Hope* 1: 163)

Le Guin's Earthsea, I argue, becomes this figural space which conveys the anticipated,
utopian "final triumph" of feminism over patriarchal institutions and cultural
conditioning. To this end, she activates the utopian latency of the dragon by repurposing
the dragon as a figure of Otherness to exemplify liberation from entrenched patriarchal
institutions. Interestingly, Le Guin's second trilogy manipulates both archetypes through
the figure of Therru/Tehanu. Tehanu is deprived of her childhood innocence through the
traumatic experience of her rape and, rather than being held captive by a dragon, she *is*
the dragon: the alienated, wild Other, ostracized for the signs of her difference and her
oppression. Her part in the restoration of "the dragon-land," colonized by human wizards,
inverts the fight *with* the dragon into a fight *for* the dragon, the fight for the Other; the
other wind on which the dragons fly comes to exemplify the "necessary space" needed
for the anticipated "final triumph" over gendered discrimination.

Le Guin argues that her figuration of the dragon archetype "rejects" or "defies"
gender entirely" ("Earthsea Revisioned"). I am not so sure that her conscious beliefs in
the case apprehend the ways in which her revisioning draws on some of the clear
parallels between the mythological fear of dragons and the historical fear of powerful
women—in many if not most pre-modern cases, those one would deem "witches." There
is, most immediately, a lexical connection between women and dragons registered
through derogatory terms such as "dragon lady," a twentieth-century American
stereotype "defined as a strong, deceitful, authoritarian, or mysterious woman of Asian
descent," who are "calculating, clever, and sexually alluring," which may have originated

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protagonist and her association with dragons, it seems a likely precursor to Le Guin's figuration of dragons
and their association with fierce, independent women in the second *Earthsea* trilogy.

in the racism of the nineteenth-century "Yellow Peril" ("Dragon Lady Stereotype" 229). If Le Guin's dragons are indeed truly "American," as opposed to European or Asian ("Earthsea Revisioned"), then this particular stereotypical figure, whose name derives from an antagonist in 1930s American comic strip *Terry and the Pirates* and was portrayed by Asian actresses in Hollywood films for decades, is a clear source for Le Guin's fiction.

The lexical relationship between dragons and women is not uniquely American, however, and can also be traced farther back in the English language in European contexts where the motifs of modern fantasy have their roots, through the word "dragoness." Defined as a literal or figurative "she-dragon," its use goes back several centuries. The English poet Thomas Gray, for example, once wrote in a letter "will no one kill me that dragoness?" ("dragoness, n.1"). Moreover, the *Oxford English Dictionary* makes note of the association in the entry "dragon" itself, absent the feminizing suffix: "a fierce or violent person; *esp. a fiercely or aggressively watchful woman*; a duenna," and appends to this definition the phrase "dragon of virtue," meaning "a woman of austere and aggressive virtue," citing British author William Thackeray as one of its earliest uses ("dragon, n.1," my emphasis). The *OED* also notes a mythological connection through the dragons which "drew the chariot of Cynthia or the moon" in the Greco-Roman tradition ("dragon, n.1").[62] The final association between women and dragons I note comes from Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* (1955). Referring to the Gilgamesh tablets, which describe how "Marduk, the Babylonian city-god, eventually defeats the [creator] goddess in the person of Tiamat the Sea-serpent," Graves interprets the tablets as "a revolt against her [i.e., the creator goddess'] matriarchal order … by the god of the new patriarchal order" (§4). While Graves's interpretations of classical myths

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[62] "Cynthia" was another name for Artemis, Greek goddess of the hunt, and later identified with the Roman goddess Diana.

and culture have been widely criticized and discredited, the point here is not so much his idea's veracity but his use of a dragon-goddess as a metonym for a widely popular anthropological theory of the mid-twentieth century: that the earliest human societies had not only been more egalitarian, but were largely matriarchal, and only later overwritten by patriarchal institutions. Le Guin draws a very similar symbolic pattern between dragons, women's power, and the erasure of their roles throughout history by men.

Keeping these dragon-woman associations in mind, the major "revision" that Le Guin performs with respect to Earthsea's dragons is the revelation that humans and dragons were once the same species but diverged because of differing values and pursuits. The first revelation of this history occurs in *Tehanu*. Before his death, Ogion tells Tenar the story of his encounter with "the Woman of Kemay," from whom he learns this lost history from and who he learns is one of those who are both human and dragon (*Tehanu* 11-6). In fact, in all three books of the second trilogy, every human-dragon is actually a woman-dragon: the Woman of Kemay, Therru/Tehanu, and Dragonfly/Orm Irian.[63] Thus, while in Le Guin's world there may indeed be theoretical space for the existence of male human-dragons, none of them figure in the stories and histories that Le Guin tells of Earthsea. Like the mythological and cultural associations identified above, then, Le Guin's depictions of the human-dragon unity within the text is a dragon-woman, each of whom is marginalized as a human being, and most often by the patriarchal institution of Roke's all-male wizardry.

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[63] Orm Irian is the ambassador for dragonkind in their negotiations with human beings during the events of *The Other Wind*. However, she was first introduced in the final story of *Tales from Earthsea*, "Dragonfly." The story follows a young girl from a declining noble family, Dragonfly, as she attempts to join the School of Roke to learn magic. A middling wizard employed by her uncle deceives her into believing she will be accepted at Roke in an attempt to manipulate her into sleeping with him (he does not succeed). She is admitted into the School by the Master Doorkeeper, but the other Master refuse to let her study there on the grounds of their centuries-long tradition of training only men to become wizards. When she confronts the Master Summoner on Roke Knoll, a place which reveals one's true being, she transforms into a dragon. Her story serves as an immediate connection between the structural discrimination against women under patriarchal systems and the archetype of the dragon understood as a figure of both the Other and liberation.

The association between woman and dragon is strengthened through the revelation of how this all-male wizarding class has distorted history to marginalize and vilify witches and dragons alike. "The Finder," for example, the longest (and perhaps most important) of Le Guin's "revisions" of Earthsea's history in *Tales*, tells how the School on Roke Island was founded during the "Dark Times" of Earthsea, an era of political turmoil on Havnor due to the power vacuum of an empty, heirless throne, a story that runs completely contrary to the culture and beliefs of Roke's wizards in the time of Ged, Tenar, Irian and Tehanu. The narration of the story openly acknowledges its challenge to the dominant narrative:

> This is a tale of those times. Some of its is taken from the *Book of the Dark*, and some comes from Havnor, from the upland farms of Onn and the woodlands of Faliern. A story may be pieced together from such scraps and fragments, and thought it will be an airy quilt, half made of hearsay and half of guesswork … if the Masters of Roke say it didn't happen so, let them tell us how it happened otherwise. For a cloud hangs over the time when Roke first became the Isle of the Wise, and it may be that the wise men put it there. (*Tales,* "The Finder" ch. 1)

The narrative also acknowledges its own fragmentary and collaborative origins, much like "The Fisherwoman's Daughter." Furthermore, the text from which this collaborative history draws, the *Book of the Dark*, is itself "a compilation of self-contradictory histories, partial biographies, and garbled legends," while also being "the best of the records that survived," since "the warlords burnt the books in which the poor and powerless might learn what power is" (*Tales,* "The Finder" ch. 1). The collaborative, quilt-like quality of the narrative is thus multilayered, historically situated and rooted in both received records (however partial) as well as generationally-transmitted oral traditions. It is a story shaped by a teller who is not (masculinely) heroic but a participant in the telling, a quality that Le Guin associates with women's writing as opposed to men's ("The Fisherwoman's Daughter").

The Dark Times were a period when magic of all kinds—wizardry, sorcery, witchery—was stigmatized, and magical training largely unorganized; the only training

one could hope for at this time in Earthsea's history was to apprentice oneself to another, more experienced practitioner. An underground organization known as "the women of the Hand," loosely connected through their philosophy that "nobody can be wise alone," tell Otter, a young wizard who escapes enslavement, that there is a group of witches (and wizards) among their membership living on a hidden island in the seas south of Havnor who "have kept the old arts" of magic, and "teach them, not keeping them secret each to himself, as the wizards do" (*Tale*s, "The Finder" ch. 2). This magically-obscured island is Roke. While the School was, originally, an egalitarian establishment that welcomed both witches and wizards, this gendered equilibrium is threatened within its first generation. An all-male faction within the School begins to espouse the patriarchal beliefs that will, eventually, become the hegemonic culture of the school in Ged's time. They are led by a wizard named Waris, "and they *are* men," says Elehal the first Master Patterner, and a witch:

> they make that important beyond anything else. To them, the Old Powers are abominable. And women's power's are suspect, because they supposed them all connected with the Old Powers. As if those Powers were to be controlled or used by any mortal soul! But they put men where we put the world. And so they hold that a true wizard must be a man. And celibate … They want the Rule of Roke to separate men from women, and they want men to make decisions for all. (*Tales*, "The Finder" ch. 3)

This group is not immediately successful; but their beliefs are made into policy by the first Archmage, Halkel, nearly a century later ("A Description of Earthsea"). It was also Halkel who changed the "roughly descriptive words *witch*, *sorcerer*, *wizard*," into "a strict hierarchy"; as a result of this ideology's hegemonic dominance, whereas once all magic-users of the Archipelago were discriminated against, for centuries afterwards "wizardry was an honoured art, conferring status and power, while witchery was an unclean and ignorant superstition, practiced by women, paid for by peasants" ("A Description").

The institutionalization of these patriarchal practices aligns the fear and distrust of women with that of the dragon. These early chauvinistic wizards fear witches through their supposed association with the "Old Powers of the earth," which, as Elehal implies, are not powers that *any* human being can control. By this fearful association and the first Archmage's imposition of a hierarchy among magic-users, one can relate wizards and witches to the binary value sets ascribed to the Taoist concepts of *yin* and *yang*, respectively. *Yang* is not only considered the "masculine" principle, but is also associated with order and light; *Yin*, the "feminine" principle is associated with chaos and darkness. Considered this way, it is unsurprising that the masculinist wizards hierarchize the different kinds of magic users, and that they shun and denigrate any powers that they cannot control, like the Old Powers and, by extension, witches who work with them. Through the *yin* associations of darkness and chaos, one can also see how witches and dragons relate: through the association with "dark" powers, one is reminded of the associations of witches in the Primary world with Satan and Satanism in the Christian West—an association that, as I mention above, is imparted to the dragon. Secondly, if one considers "chaos" and "wildness" to share roughly similar meanings, then this, too, is a value linked to both witches and dragons.

Le Guin associates women in general with wildness, as she does dragons, in her essay "Woman / Wilderness." That essay's depiction of gender politics aligns exactly with the actions and attitudes of wizards, both in Roke's early days and centuries later, in Ged and Tenar's time. The essay begins with a characterization of the patriarchal "Civilized Man":

> I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is Other—outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what matter is for. I am that I am, and the rest is women and the wilderness, to be used as I see fit. ("Woman / Wilderness")

This, in my opinion, neatly conveys the attitude of wizards like Waris and Halkel, as well as some of the Masters of Roke in "contemporary" Earthsea. Consider the speech of

Brand, the Master Summoner of Roke, during the council held to discuss the changing

Equilibrium between life and death in *The Other Wind*:

> That there is a disturbance of the deepest boundaries between life and death—transgression of those boundaries, and the threat of worse—we confirm. But that these disturbances can be understood or controlled by any but the masters of the art magic, we doubt. And very deeply do we doubt that dragons, whose lives and death are wholly different from that of man, can ever be trusted to submit their wild wrath and jealousy to serve human good … the dragons have nothing to do with this crisis that is upon us. Nor have the eastern peoples, who foreswore their immortal souls when they forgot the Language of the Making. (*The Other Wind* ch. 5).

The subtext of Brand's patronizing speech screams: *don't worry, let the men deal with*

this. The otherness and wildness he attributes to dragons is also captured by Le Guin's

essay in her description of men's ignorance of women's lived experience:

> the experience of women as women, their experience unshared with men, that experience is *the wilderness or wildness that is utterly other*—that is, in fact, to Man, unnatural. That is what civilization has left out, what culture excludes, what the Dominants call animal, *bestial, primitive*, undeveloped, unauthentic … their fear of it is ancient, profound, and violent. The misogyny that shapes every aspect of our civilization is the institutionalized form of male fear and hatred of *what they have denied and therefore cannot know*, cannot share: that wild country, the being of women. ("Woman / Wilderness," my emphasis)

Thus, like their fear of witches, wizards also fear the dragons as powers beyond

their control (like the Old Powers) and not to be trusted since they can lie while speaking

in the Language of the Making, unlike human beings. Furthermore, like the historical

(and suppressed) betrayal of witches by the male wizards of Roke, the very first wizards

also broke the *Verw Nadan*, a covenant between dragons and humans (which, in turn,

makes the speech of the Master Summoner quoted above not only arrogant, but painfully

ironic and ignorant). This history of humans, dragons, and their common origins in a

single ancestor-species is uncovered in the final novel, *The Other Wind*. The discovery of

this lost history is, like the narrative of "The Finder," a collaborative, participatory effort

of individuals from the different races of Earthsea, both men and women. Myths and

histories from the dragons, the Kargish and Hardic peoples all contain fragments of the

true story, and it is only through their collective sharing and stitching together (one might even say, with Le Guin, quilting together) of these disparate pieces that they can uncover the past cause of their present crisis. In other words, the characters engage in their own revision and recombination of old stories, ancient histories, to reveal a fictionalized nonsynchronicity that shapes their present moment of crisis. Their apprehension of how the past has shaped the present, and how it continues to reside there as an unresolved conflict, an unfulfilled desire, orients them towards a path whose horizons intimate a more just future, a truer Equilibrium. That is to say: their movement towards their own future closely models Bloch's idea of latent utopian anticipations within myths and fairy tales.

What these stories reveal, when recombined, is that the first human wizards were those who broke the covenant agreed upon by their human-dragon ancestors at the moment of their species' divergence: humans were to abandon both immortality and the Language of the Making, in exchange for a life of materiality, of making with one's hands instead of words, of living with (and through) the earth. They also agreed that humans would take the lands of the East, while dragons would go into the West. These wizards did not only break the *Verw nadan* by reappropriating True Speech: they used it to appropriate part of the dragons' lands in the West to create a place where human souls could reside eternally, i.e., the Dry Lands. This roundabout way of achieving immortality not only deprived dragons of their territory but upset the Equilibrium: humans were meant to return to the earth, body *and* soul, in a process of eternal becoming, constant change. Their use of magic disturbed the Equilibrium of Earthsea, choked it off by cutting off the true cycle of life and death.

By revealing an Equilibrium hidden beneath the Equilibrium espoused by the wizards of Roke, like the histories revealed beneath the sanctioned histories of their founding and relationship to dragons, Le Guin uses the same historiographic technique— a notably feminist one—to alter (but not overwrite) the Secondary World of Earthsea.

The change in Earthsea's metaphysics, while remaining true to its Taoist motivations, (re)creates a Secondary World that can be, per Ogion's final words: "All changed!" (*Tehanu* 28). In true Taoist fashion, the balance that can be named is not the true balance. The nuanced dynamic of Earthsea's new metaphysical structure opens the way towards a new future, where men no longer colonize the dragons' territories or dominate the use of magic at the expense of women.

The negative connotation of the dragon exists because, within the patriarchal tradition, it stood for the fear of Otherness—often, as I have shown, the Otherness of women. Le Guin's repurposing of the archetype follows the same pattern of inversion by which patriarchal systems of value, along with their cultural and institutional embeddedness, must be overturned in order for a truly just and equitable world for women to broach our horizons. That which has traditionally been denigrated, dismissed, distrusted, and feared, must be integrated, celebrated. We must, in Ged's words, "[break] the world to make it whole" again (*The Other Wind*, ch. 5). Like Shippey's interpretation of the first *Earthsea* trilogy, there are many parallels between the changing Equilibrium of Earthsea and the gendered politics of our own modernity: the admission of women into the halls of elite universities; the challenging and dismantling of Eurocentric and patriarchal histories by collaborative, recuperative acts of historical research and storytelling; and the still-shifting divisions of domestic labour between men and women. To wit, *The Other Wind* ends with the vision of an everyday, domestic utopian vision of gender in equilibrium (as opposed to the highflying heroic vision of perfect order—a heroic fantasy of another kind). Tenar returns home to find Ged, the former hero of *Earthsea*'s story, tending to their crop of cabbages:

> "Tell me," she said, "tell me what you did while I was gone."

> "Kept the house." (ch.5)

Conclusion: Always Coming Home; or, The "Back" in "There and Back Again"

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx argues that

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. (595)

The same recognition motivates Bloch's concept of nonsynchronism. But, unlike Marx, Bloch finds daydreams weighing upon our brains alongside the nightmares, hopeful images of the future inherited through the unresolved contradictions of the past. By returning to the work of Bloch, who inspired the progressive and utopian theories of sf articulated by Suvin, Jameson and Moylan, among others, I have articulated a utopian function of fantasy that undermines their distinction between sf and fantasy. Throughout my analysis of the fantasies of Morris, Tolkien and Le Guin, I have used their theories and hermeneutical approaches related to sf to illustrate an equally compelling strain of utopian anticipation within fantasy literature.

As Moylan notes, fantasy, sf, and utopia all draw from the tradition of the medieval romance and are imbricated with the motif of the journey. Whether that journey takes its readers to new planets or other worlds or distant futures, those readers find themselves estranged, like visitors landing on the shores of Utopia. What is essential, however, is the return journey, the re-turn to the present. Then, to paraphrase Descartes, one finds oneself a stranger in one's own world. In this way, the narrative journeys of fantasy often allegorize the cognitive process of estrangement by which readers Recover a clear view and Re-vision their own world. Hallblithe's journey in *Glittering Plain* only comes to its happy end when he turns his back on the Undying Lands. Likewise, in *Lord*

of the Rings the Shire is only liberated from the monopoly of Sharkey and his Ruffians when Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin return home trained in the arts of war, and with a strength of character they did not have when they first set out.

To return to traditional literary symbols and archetypes in the way that fantasy does is not inherently regressive or ahistorical; it is only so if the archetypes an author draws upon are not repurposed for their present moment. "Every great idea may already have been though seven times," writes Bloch, but "when it is thought again, in other times and places, it is never the same … The great idea has to prove itself again both in its own right and as something new" (*Avicenna* 1). This, I have argued, is how Morris takes up the Land of Cockaigne to imagine freedom from alienation; how Tolkien's use of the marriage to the land warns against the ecological threat of capitalism's exploitation of nature; and how Le Guin's dragons anticipate the dismantling of patriarchal traditions. In each case, the author does not simply reiterate the images of the past, but reformulates them for the present, and in so doing speaks allegorically of that which is Not-Yet.

The allegorical anticipations of fantasy may be the most fitting manner to articulate the utopian hopes of Bloch's unfinished entelechy of the material world. Like Bloch's conception of a vitalist, processual materialism in which the future exists latently in the present, Le Guin indicates that "the utopianism [she is] trying to describe is such that if it is to come, it must exist already" ("A Non-Euclidian View"). Le Guin defends such an approach to utopianism by arguing that, under capitalism, "the utopian imagination is trapped … in a one-way future consisting only of growth," and adds that, in her opinion, we can no longer "get to utopia … by going forward, but only roundabout or sideways" ("A Non-Euclidian View"). The way we can achieve this is to "[g]o

backward. Turn and return" ("A Non-Euclidian View"). By writing about the world elliptically, using Secondary Worlds to engage with the Primary one, we avoid the "Euclidean" forward march of instrumental reason that inhibits the unconscious processes of anticipation. And if, when expressed allegorically by way of archaic archetypes, the anticipated vision is not as clear as a "straightforward" vision of a rationally plausible future, that only makes it more suitable for the anticipation of a future whose realization is not guaranteed.

"In short," writes Bloch, "it's good to think in stories too" (*Traces* 6). And if a fantasy story is a good one, as Tolkien says, it compels its readers to seek the *allegoria* in *Alteritas*.

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