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Gandalf and Merlin, Aragorn and Arthur: Tolkien's Transmogrification of the Arthurian Tradition and Its Use as a Palimpsest for *The Lord of the Rings*

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Certainly J. R. R. Tolkien was very much aware of the Arthurian tradition that existed during the medieval period and even earlier, especially as depicted by Thomas Malory in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and Lazamon's *Brut*. The affinities of the characters of Aragorn and Gandalf with Arthur and Merlin are too obvious not to notice, yet transformed in such a way by Tolkien that they are infused with new meaning and purpose. It is this transmogrification that connects Tolkien's work with the past and provides the palimpsest for the world he creates in his epic adventure depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. An examination of the specific details of this process enlightens and invigorates the reader, and enlivens and exfoliates the text.

By examining *The Lord of the Rings* in light of the Arthurian tradition that Tolkien was immersed in, it becomes apparent how "texts produced by . . . precursors . . . often become palimpsests as they are appropriated by successive generations of authors" (Harrison 1). This appropriation of texts of one author by another, often called intertextuality, occurs for various reasons: to express admiration, to appeal to the writer as an authority figure, to engage the author in a debate of ideas, or to confront and even oppose the basic contentions of the earlier author (Harrison 1). Regarding intertextuality, Mikhail Bakhtin (1974) believes that a text can be understood only as the individual compares it with different texts; in other words, "the text lives only by coming into contact with another text (with

context). Only at the point of this contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue" (66). Thus, a text cannot stand alone. Since the author of the text is also a reader of texts, he or she brings to the created work numerous influences, and the reader as well brings to any text being read all of the other texts he or she has read before this one (Worton and Still, Introduction 1-2).

However, Tolkien's story differs from some of the conventional notions of intertextuality and seeks to transcend, transform, and transmogrify the texts of King Arthur and Merlin in such a way as to release new meaning and re-envision his ideas for subcreating the world of Middle Earth and staging the ultimate conflict between the forces of Power—good versus evil. The essence of the tale may be ancient, but the retelling is indeed new—one that is applicable for past, present, and future generations. In fact, during the Victorian era, Thomas Carlyle (1830) demanded that close attention be given to the past—to history. In his essay "On History" (1830), he says that meaning in the present and the future can be known only as the past is studied. He writes, "For though the whole meaning lies far beyond our ken; yet in that complex Manuscript covered over with formless inextricably-entangled unknown characters, — nay which is a *Palimpsest*, and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there,— some letters, some words, may be deciphered" (56, author's emphasis). Certainly

the Arthurian tradition is legible as an urtext in Tolkien's *magnum opus* *The Lord of the Rings*—one that can definitely be uncovered.

Claus Uhlig concurs with Carlyle and maintains that in the intertext, which he likens to the palimpsest, “historically conditioned tensions come to the fore: tensions not only between calendar time and intraliterary time but also between the author’s intention and the relative autonomy of a text, or between the old and the new in general (502). The presence of the past coexists with the text; thus, “any text will the more inevitably take on the characteristics of a palimpsest the more openly it allows the voices of the dead to speak, thus—in a literary transcription of our cultural heritage—bringing about a consciousness of the presentness of the past” (Uhlig 502). Uhlig thus concludes that the goal of the critic is to determine “to what extent the present is indeed based upon the past (palingenesis), nay up to a point even determined by it (ananke)—a dependence which is most clearly reflected in the multilayered structure of works or texts saturated with history (palimpsest)” (503). Deciphering the present moment of the text as it relates to many past moments reveals the intertextual meaning the text seeks to convey and the critic to uncover.¹ Thus, for the present study, the ancient personages of Arthur and Merlin and their literary, cultural, and religious background provide the palimpsest for much of the material that frames the characters of Aragorn and Gandalf in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

As a child, Tolkien learned to love myth and story, for his mother, who was his first teacher, began to assign him storybooks to read that included Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book*, where he learned to love dragons (“I desired dragons with a profound desire” [“On Fairy Stories” 63]) and George MacDonald's “Curdie” books that depicted evil goblins that lived under the mountains (Carpenter 22-23). Tolkien was also very enthusiastic about Arthurian myths (Carpenter 22), “devour[ing] Sir Thomas

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*,” especially the legend of the Holy Grail and the Knights of the Round Table (Grotta 65). Later, as a student at King Edward's, along with his brother Hilary, he “turned back to Middle English and discovered *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*” (Carpenter 35). According to Humphrey Carpenter, this “was another poem to fire his imagination: the medieval tale of an Arthurian knight and his search for the mysterious giant who is to deal him a terrible axe-blow. Tolkien was delighted by the poem and also by its language, for he realised that its dialect was approximately that which had been spoken by his mother's West Midland ancestors” (35). In 1925 Tolkien and E.V. Gordon published the text of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that became a standard in the field, and in 1967 Tolkien translated this particular edition of the poem into new English (Grotta 66).

During the 1930s, Tolkien began to write a non-rhyming alliterative poem entitled “The Fall of Arthur,” which Humphrey Carpenter describes as “Tolkien's only imaginative incursion into the Arthurian cycle, whose legends had pleased him since childhood” (168). In this work, “he did not touch on the Grail but began an individual rendering of the *Morte d'Arthur*, in which the king and Gawain go to war in ‘Saxon lands’ but are summoned home by news of Mordred's treachery” (168). Although Tolkien intended to finish the work as late as June 1955 (*Letters* 218-219), it exists only as a fragment. His fellow scholars, E. V. Gordon and R. W. Chambers, read the poem and praised it (Carpenter 168). His connection of Arthur and Merlin with the world of fairy is made clear in his 1939 essay “On Fairy Stories” when Tolkien writes that “the good and evil story of Arthur's court is a ‘fairy story’” (41), for “the land of Merlin and Arthur,” what Tolkien calls “an Other-world,” “was better than” his “relatively safe world,” the world without dragons (63).

T. A. Shippey points out that Tolkien was influenced by “*Brut*, an Arthurian Chronicle-epic by one Lázamon. Tolkien certainly valued this as a repository of past

tradition, borrowing from it, for instance, Éowyn's word 'dwimmerlaik'. At some stage he must also have noted that the stream by which the poet lived—it is a tributary of the Severn—was the River Gladdon" (*The Road to Middle-Earth* 348-349). Even C. S. Lewis in his review of *The Fellowship of the Ring* quotes Naomi Mitchison who makes the Arthurian connection: "One takes it as seriously as Malory" ("On Stories" 83), "but," Lewis observes, "then the ineluctable sense of reality which we feel in the *Morte d'Arthur* comes largely from the great weight of other men's work built up century by century, which has gone into it" (83); for Lewis, Tolkien's "book is like lightning from a clear sky. . . . To say that in it heroic romance, gorgeous, eloquent, and unashamed, has suddenly returned . . . is inadequate" (83). Continuing his praise, Lewis says, "The utterly new achievement of Professor Tolkien is that he carries a comparable sense of reality unaided" (83). Clearly, in Lewis' mind the Arthurian connection exists.

It is true that in a letter to Milton Waldmon, more than likely composed during the latter part of 1951, Tolkien asserts that the Arthurian myths are inadequate for the world he is making. He writes, "Of course there was and is all the Arthurian world, but powerful as it is, it is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not with English; and does not replace what I felt to be missing. For one thing its 'faerie' is too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive" (*Letters* 144). Perhaps surprisingly, the belief of Tolkien that the "incoherent and repetitive" "Arthurian world" was insufficient actually provides support for the assertion that the Celtic myth is a palimpsest for his subcreation. Tolkien's "dismissal of Arthur is negative evidence of its power, for it shows that Arthur was in his mind" (Flieger, "J. R. R. Tolkien" 48).

It is certainly to be expected that the collision of worlds and texts (Tolkien's Middle-earth and the Arthurian legends) results in the elimination of some aspects of the tales, the incorporation of others, and the transformation of many, but it seems that the

"once prophetic writing [is] still dimly legible there,—some letters, some words, may be deciphered" (Carlyle 56). As Verlyn Flieger observes, "Although Tolkien made use of Arthurian motifs in *The Lord of the Rings* (the withdrawal of a sword, a tutelary wizard, the emergence of a hidden king, a ship departure to a myth-enshrined destination), these are reinvented to fit the context of his own story" ("Arthurian Romance" 35).

Nowhere does this seem clearer than "[i]n his portrait of Gandalf, [where] Tolkien has drawn on earlier texts and traditions, particularly those featuring Merlin, but he has not done so formulaically. On the contrary, Gandalf tests the limits and moves beyond the expectations raised by many previous Merlin figures, especially in his use of magic, his association with women, his relationship to power, and his pedagogical strategies" (Riga 21). Ruth Noel in her book *The Mythology of Middle Earth* argues that Gandalf and Merlin are clearly connected, for they are both "powerful, prophetic, inscrutable, and, suddenly, unexpectedly human"; they also have "the responsibility for the fortunes of a nation and its future king"; and both have "obscure beginnings and mysterious endings to their lives" (109).

The Merlin of Arthurian tradition is a figure who wields great power and is not unwilling or hesitant to use it to accomplish his purposes of preserving the kingdom or changing the future. He is responsible for the birth of King Arthur and his being crowned king of Camelot. Merlin is also the creator of the Round Table and guides the affairs of the kingdom with his advice and through his magic. In contrast, Gandalf adamantly refuses the absolute power offered to him by Frodo, for he fears he cannot control it. The ring Frodo is willing to give up can only bring evil, never good. Frodo says to Gandalf, "You are wise and powerful. Will you not take the Ring?" To which Gandalf emphatically replies, "No! . . . With that power I should have power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly. . . . Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord

himself" (*Fellowship of the Ring* 87). In a letter to Eileen Elgar (September 1963), Tolkien describes Gandalf had he possessed the ring: "Gandalf as Ring-Lord would have been far worse than Sauron. He would have remained 'righteous,' but self-righteous. . . . Gandalf would have made good detestable and seem evil" (*Letters* 332-333). According to Tolkien, he would control the wills of others, and they would no longer be free: "The supremely bad motive is (for this tale, since it is specially about it) domination of other 'free' wills." ("Letter to Naomi Mitchison," *Letters* 200). The act of domination of one human being over another—forcing individuals to do something they do not choose to do even if it is what they should do—corrupts the one who coerces (Riga 38). According to Tom Shippey, the evil of the ring is not just external; it reaches out to "echo in the hearts of the good," and therefore the bearer of the Ring cannot trust himself or his friends (*The Road to Middle-Earth* 145). The Gandalf who refuses to carry the ring of power is not the same as the Merlin of history. As Frank Riga observes, "Gandalf is quite unlike any other Merlin figure from the past. . . . Whereas previous Merlin figures embraced power, Gandalf recognizes its inherent and inescapable dangers and thus renounces it" (38). Hence, Tolkien's transmogrification of Merlin takes place. The wizard who craves power is transformed to become the wizard who rejects it.

Another point of divergence for Tolkien from the Arthurian tradition concerns Gandalf's and Merlin's relationship with women: he "critiques a longstanding tradition according to which Merlin's loss of power comes about through his love for a woman who becomes powerful by gaining access to his magic" (Riga 24). Thus, in the ancient tales, "Merlin's love is depicted as a weakness or obsession, leading to his unwilling—or willing—imprisonment or death" (Riga 24). For example, in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Malory relates the famous tragic tale of Merlin and Nimue, the Lady of the Lake:

[I]t fell so that Merlin fell in a dotage on the damosel that King Pellinore brought to court, and she was one of the damosels of the lake. . . . But Merlin would let her have no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner thing that she desired; and he was assotted upon her, that he might not be from her. . . .

And so, soon after, the lady and Merlin departed, and by the way Merlin showed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And always Merlin lay about the lady to have her maidenhood, and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeard of him because he was a devil's son, and she could not beskift him by no mean. And so on a time it happed that Merlin showed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there; but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin. (bk. 4, ch. 1)

In this story, Merlin is beguiled by a woman who desires to discover his esoteric knowledge. He, a willing victim with ulterior motives of his own, is outmaneuvered and trapped helplessly under a rock, and according to this tradition, there he died—deceived and alone.

In contrast, Tolkien's wizard Gandalf finds "forceful women with supernatural powers . . . [as his] source of strength, protection, and healing, not instruments of temptation and destruction" (Riga 24). For example, after Gandalf defeats the Balrog ("I threw down my enemy, and he fell from the high place and broke the mountainside where he smote it in the rain" [*Two Towers* 125]), Galadriel sends Gwaihir the Windlord to bear Gandalf to Lothlórien where she brings him healing, clothes him in white, and apparently

gives him a new staff. He becomes Gandalf the White (*Two Towers* 126). So, although the character Merlin seems to clearly function as a palimpsest for the Gandalf Tolkien creates, demonstrating the presence of the past coexisting with the text and acquiring "the characteristics of a palimpsest the more openly it allows the voices of the dead to speak" (Uhlrig 502), Tolkien transmogrifies the Arthurian figure and enlivens his character Gandalf with a proper motivation for his magic and a right relationship with women.

Both Merlin and Gandalf are instrumental in the success of their respective kings, Arthur and Aragorn, exhibiting great devotion and loyalty. Gandalf is responsible for Aragon becoming King of Gondor, while Merlin aids Arthur in being crowned King of Camelot. Both wizards put aside their own ambitions to promote their hero-kings (Finn 23). Richard Finn observes, "As in the coming of Arthur, a wizard heralds Aragorn's 'arrival.' Fulfilling prophecy, he comes bearing a sword of legend, and he is victorious in uniting the lands around him" (24). In *The Lord of the Rings*, once Sauron is destroyed, Gandalf proclaims to Aragorn that "my work is finished. I shall go soon. The burden must lie now upon you and your kindred" (*Return of the King* 278). Thus, he leaves Middle-earth to be ruled by men. He tells Saruman, "[T]he time of my labours now draws to an end. The King has taken on the burden" (*Return of the King* 291).

Even the childhoods of Arthur and Aragorn are similar, for they are both raised among elves. Lazamon in his *Brut* describes the childhood of King Arthur: "So soon as he came on earth, elves took him; they enchanted the child with magic most strong, they gave him might to be the best of all knights; they gave him another thing, that he should be a rich king; they gave him the third, that he should live long; they gave to him the prince virtues most good, so that he was most generous of all men alive." In like manner, Aragorn was raised by the Elves who lived in Rivendell and Lothlórien. Finn points out, "Aragorn exemplifies elven virtues and beliefs

by respecting and admiring nature, the ancient traditions of elves and men, the elven language, and healing lore" (24). Aragorn, like Arthur, is given long life, for he is one of the Numenoreans, and they, according to Tolkien, are "rewarded by a triple, or more than a triple, span of years." (*Letters* 154).

Key to the stories of Arthur and Aragorn are the swords they both carry: Excalibur (also known as Caledfwich and Caliburen) and Andúril (which means "Flame of the West," also called Narsil, Red and White Flame, or the Sword that was Broken, and subsequently renamed the Sword Re-forged), respectively. They are both symbols of their kingships (Finn 24), and according to María José Álvarez-Faedo, "the connection [of Aragon's sword] with Excalibur is unquestionable" (196). How Arthur became king is related in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and very much involves a sword:

How gat ye this sword? said Sir Ector to Arthur.

Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home to deliver me his sword; and so I thought my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless, and so I came hither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without any pain.

Found ye any knights about this sword? said Sir Ector.

Nay, said Arthur.

Now, said Sir Ector to Arthur, I understand ye must be king of this land.

Wherefore I, said Arthur, and for what cause?

Sir, said Ector, for God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword, but he that shall be rightful king of this land. (bk, 1, ch. 5)

Arthur is the only one able to remove the sword from the stone and is therefore crowned the ruler of the land.

Later, Arthur fights Pellinore, a knight who knocks him off of his horse, with this same sword. *Le Morte d'Arthur* relates the event:

And there began a strong battle with many great strokes, and so hewed with their swords that the cantels flew in the fields, and much blood they bled both, that all the place there as they fought was overbled with blood, and thus they fought long and rested them, and then they went to the battle again, and so hurtled together like two rams that either fell to the earth. So at the last they smote together that both their swords met even together. But the sword of the knight smote King Arthur's sword in two pieces, wherefore he was heavy. (bk. 1, ch. 23)

The sword was no longer of one piece but rent in twain. Merlin later takes Arthur to the Lady of the Lake and receives from her hand the reforged Excalibur (at least that is implied in Malory's account): "So Sir Arthur and Merlin alighted and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went under the water" (bk.1, ch. 25).

Aragorn's sword is essential to his restored kingship. In the past it was wielded by Isildur who struck Sauron with it, resulting in the loss of the One Ring and the breaking of Narsil:

From the ruin of the Gladden Fields, where Isildur perished, three men only came ever back over the mountains after long wandering. One of these was Ohtar, the esquire of Isildur, who bore the shards of the sword of Elendil; and he brought them to Valandil, the heir of Isildur, who being but a child had remained here in Rivendell. But Narsil was broken and its light extinguished, and it has not yet been forged again. (*Fellowship of the Ring* 293)

While journeying through Middle-earth, Aragorn carried the shards of his sword in a sheath. After Frodo meets Aragorn at Bree, Frodo opens a letter that Gandalf had left for him that contained a poem mentioning the reforging of Aragorn's sword and the return of the king.

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king. (*Fellowship of the Ring* 212)

Aragorn reveals the worthless sword: "'But I am Aragorn, and those verses go with that name.' He drew out his sword, and they saw that the blade was indeed broken a foot below the hilt. 'Not much use is it, Sam?' said Strider. 'But the time is near when it shall be forged anew'" (*Fellowship of the Ring* 214). The prophecy says that the sword originally named Narsil, broken in two pieces, will be renewed, and it is indeed fulfilled, for the elves repair the sword before Aragorn and the Fellowship of the Ring leave Rivendell:

The Sword of Elendil was forged anew by Elvish smiths, and on its blade was traced a device of seven stars set between the crescent Moon and the rayed Sun, and about them was written many runes; for Aragorn son of Arathorn was going to war upon the marches of Mordor. Very bright was that sword when it was made whole again; the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold, and its edge was hard and keen. And Aragorn gave it a new name and called it Andúril, Flame of the West. (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 331)

The sword is very much connected to the one who wields it. Aragorn makes this very clear when he removes it before entering the house of Theoden.

Slowly Aragorn unbuckled his belt and himself set his sword upright against the wall. "Here I set it," he said; "but I command you not to touch it, nor to permit any other to lay hand on it. In this elvish sheath dwells the Blade that was Broken and has been made again. Telchar first wrought it in the deeps of time. Death shall come to any man that draws Elendil's sword save Elendil's heir" (*Two Towers* 136).

The swords of the kings are instrumental in the acquisition and the preservation of their kingdoms, for "the best swords break so that no one else can wield them until a worthy successor appears. The restored sword is both the signal and the means by which a rightful dynasty is restored" (Colbert 149). Tolkien is especially interested in the symbolism and significance of the "blade that was broken" (*Fellowship of the Ring* 212) and its renewal. As he re-imagines Excalibur in his work, "historically conditioned tensions come to the fore" (Uhlig 502). Tolkien's Excalibur—Aragorn's Andúril—is re-envisioned and recast into one of the mightiest swords of Middle-earth, forged by one of its greatest smiths, Telchar, a dwarf (*Silmarillion* 85-86), and later reforged by the elves of Rivendell. Not only do the restored swords signal the return of the rightful heirs to their respective thrones, but their sheaths are wrought with magical power. Merlin emphatically tells Arthur of the power that resides in the scabbard of Excalibur:

Then Sir Arthur looked on the sword, and liked it passing well. Whether liketh you better, said Merlin, the sword or the scabbard? Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the swords, for whiles ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded; therefore keep well the scabbard always with you. (bk. 1, ch. 25)

This is also true with Andúril, for when Aragorn leaves Lothlórien, Galadriel gives him a most special gift.

"Here is the gift of Celeborn and Galadriel to the leader of your Company," she said to Aragorn, and she gave him a sheath that had been made to fit his sword. It was overlaid with a tracery of flowers and leaves wrought of silver and gold, and on it were set in elven runes formed of many gems the name Andúril and the lineage of the sword.

"The blade that is drawn from this sheath shall not be stained or broken even in defeat," she said. (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 442)

Galadriel's sheath protects Andúril from destruction; it will never be broken again.

For Tolkien, consciously or unconsciously, the light that shines from Excalibur in the Arthurian textual tradition serves as a palimpsest for the brilliance of Andúril, a mighty weapon of Middle-earth. Ironically, when the two textual traditions (Arthurian legend and Middle-earth myth) contact or collide, flashes of meaning emerge and result in an intensity of light in Tolkien's work. Colin Duriez asserts, "Light, and its contrast with darkness, is a key motif in Tolkien's mythology of Middle-earth" (157). In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, as Arthur wields Excalibur, the sword dazzles his enemies and paves the way for victory in battle. Thomas Malory relates the story:

Then King Lot brake out on the back side, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and King Carados, and set on Arthur fiercely behind him. With that Sir Arthur turned with his knights, and smote behind and before, and ever Sir Arthur was in the foremost press till his horse was slain underneath him. And therewith King Lot smote down King Arthur. With that his four knights received him and set him on horseback. Then he drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes,

that it gave light like thirty torches. And therewith he put them a-back, and slew much people. (bk. 1, ch. 9)

Like Excalibur, Narsil is very much connected to light. In a letter to Richard Jeffrey (Dec. 12, 1972), Tolkien describes the meaning of the name of the sword: "Narsil is a name composed of 2 basic stems without variation or adjuncts: √NAR 'fire', & √THIL 'white light'. It thus symbolised the chief heavenly lights, as enemies of darkness, Sun (*Anar*) and Moon (in Q) Isil. Andúril means Flame of the West (as a region) not of the Sunset" (*Letters* 425).

Both Excalibur and Andúril lead their kings to a conquest of their enemies. King Arthur "slew much people," and Aragorn returns victorious from Minas Tirath and is welcomed by Faramir, the Steward of Gondor, who introduced him to his people as the rightful heir to the throne: "Here is Aragorn son of Arathorn, chieftain of the Dúnedain of Arnor, Captain of the Host of the West, bearer of the Star of the North, wielder of the Sword Reforged, victorious in battle, whose hands bring healing. . . . Shall he be king and enter into the City and dwell there?'And all the host and all the people cried *yea* with one voice" (*Return of the King* 273). The wielders of Excalibur and the Sword Reforged arise as victorious warriors ready to rule their kingdoms justly and in peace; they have proven their kingship. Their futures are forged by their swords.

The juxtaposition of the Arthurian tradition with Tolkien's Middle-earth creation certainly provides flashes of meaning, enlightening the texts, "illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue" (Bakhtin 66). This exploration and exfoliation of the works provide glimpses into connections not always obvious, but nevertheless meaningful and elucidating. For just as Tolkien never stopped revising (which frustrated his publishers greatly), the consummate scholar and dedicated reader will continue to plumb the depths of his works. Intertextual relationships between texts and the palimpsests that function as

urtexts may be one of the most effective ways to do just that, and perhaps through this effort, all who explore Middle-earth can grasp in their hands "a little of the gold" that Tolkien once held ("On Fairy Stories" 38).

Note

1. Much of the information in this paper concerning intertextuality and palimpsests has been taken directly from chapter 1 of my dissertation entitled "The Function of Intertextuality in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and George Herbert: Catching a Glimpse of Christ" (University of Tulsa, 2000).

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