

AWAKENING A WORLD WITH WORDS: HOW J. R. R. TOLKIEN USES LINGUISTIC  
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES TO TAKE HIS READERS TO FAERY  
IN HIS SHORT STORY, *SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR*

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J.R.R. Tolkien uses specific linguistic narrative techniques in *Smith of Wootton Major* to make the world of Wootton Major and the nearby land of Faery come to life for his readers. In this thesis, I examine how Tolkien accomplishes this feat by presenting a linguistic analysis of some parts of the story. My analysis is also informed by Tolkien's own ideas of fairy-stories, and as such, it uniquely shows the symbiotic relationship between Tolkien's theories and his narrative art.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Linguist, the Critic, and the Story-teller

“There was a village once, not very long ago for those with long memories, nor very far away for those with long legs” (*Smith* 5). So begins J.R.R. Tolkien’s last venture into the world of fantasy literature, a short, beautiful, and somewhat simple fairy-story called *Smith of Wootton Major*. “Deceptively simple,” Verlyn Flieger calls it, for the story’s “transparent surface covers unexpected depths of suggested meaning” (*Question* 328, 330). The suggested meaning Flieger is referring to is a gestalt of the themes and theories Tolkien had worked on for his entire career, both as a scholar and as an author. Because of this, *Smith* is a bit like a shot of Everclear. On one hand it is story-telling in a very short, simple, and pure form. On the other, it is pretty potent. Brian Rosebury, sometimes critical of Tolkien, calls the story “arguably his best work, apart from *The Lord of the Rings*, and his most nearly perfect” (117). The quote on the dust-jacket of Flieger’s new edition of *Smith* (always a good source for an unbiased opinion) sums up the point nicely: “It may be compared to the most delicate miniature but it is one of a rare kind: The more closely it is examined the more it reveals the grandeur of its conception.”

It is not standard academic practice to take one’s thesis statement from the dust-jacket of the book one is proposing to study, but in this case, such a move is highly appropriate. In this thesis I will examine *Smith of Wootton Major*, this “delicate miniature,” closely in hope of revealing some of the “grandeur of its conception.” More specifically, I will examine Tolkien’s use of language and narrative techniques, and show how these themes merge with and reinforce the themes of the story, as well as that gestalt of themes and theories from his entire career that Tolkien worked into the story, one way or another.



I find such a linguistic read compelling because Tolkien himself was a philologist, a linguist, who taught at Oxford. But for Tolkien, the current distinction between linguistics and literature did not exist, though he saw the two disciplines sliding apart in the minds of his Oxford peers. Quipping on this fact, he once wrote, “the boundary line between linguistic and literary history is as imaginary as the equator—a certain heat is observable as either is approached” (qtd. in *Road* 24). But in Tolkien, what are now two hemispheres met and merged: Evidence exists that suggests that he understood plots and narrative as well as he understood dentals, fricatives, glides, and Grimm’s laws. Diana Jones, who studied under Tolkien as an undergraduate, recalls one of his lectures:

He started with the simplest possible story: a man (prince or woodcutter) going on a journey. He then gave the journey an aim, and we found that the simple picaresque plot had developed into a quest story. I am not quite sure what happened then, but I know that by the end he was discussing the peculiar adaptation of the quest-story which Chaucer made in his ‘Pardoner’s Tale.’ (87)

If Tolkien was proving anything by such lectures, it was that, as he put it, “the ‘pure philologist who cannot do literature’ . . . is as rare as the unicorn” (qtd. in *Road* 24).

Tolkien could “do literature” and he could do it well. His essay on *Beowulf*, to take a well-known example, is one of the main reasons most English Ph.D. students today still study the poem. Michael Drout calls the essay “the single most important critical essay ever written about *Beowulf*” (Introduction 1). Tolkien’s essay was important because in it he looked at the poem not against the background of the classical epic tradition, as was the critical bent at the time, but instead as a unique form of narrative art. That is, he took the poem on its own terms, and his knowledge of linguistics helped him to do that.

Not that Tolkien's contributions to linguistics itself have been minor. He invented languages to accompany his stories which are so realistic that they have received more attention from linguists than have some natural languages. And he went beyond merely creating languages; he also described the way those languages developed over time, as all natural languages do. The linguist David Salo, author of *A Gateway to Sindarin*, says that the historical development of one of Tolkien's languages is "comparable to the historical development of natural languages and, like them, can be usefully analyzed with the tools and techniques of historical linguistics" (xiii). A few miles south of where I write this thesis, at the University of Texas in Austin, whole classes introduce undergraduates to linguistics through Tolkien's created languages.

Tolkien was a brilliant linguist and an insightful critic—though he would not have separated the two—but his real gift was storytelling which was born of both these passions. Students would not be introduced to linguistics through Tolkien's created languages had he not woven around those languages stories that have inspired and captivated us for the last fifty years. My point, in this thesis, is to show Tolkien's skill at doing just that, at telling stories through narrative art. The linguist, the critic, and the story-teller were indistinguishable.

The tools I will use are primarily linguistic: William Labov's theory of evaluation and Susumu Kuno and Etsuko Kaburaki's theory of linguistic empathy. (I tweak both of these theories slightly to better suit them to the task of examining a literary narrative.) My hope is, through a linguistic read, to plunge below the "transparent surface" of the language of the story itself, and to show how that language reinforces, merges, and dances with the "depths" of the story's "suggested meaning."

## The Organization of this Thesis

The task of analyzing *Smith* this way is daunting for two reasons. First, because most of the ideas that Tolkien worked on throughout his career can be found in *Smith's* pages, knowledge of at least some of those ideas is essential to understanding the story. A consequence of this gestalt of ideas is that there has been a fundamental disagreement by Tolkien critics concerning what makes the story “bounce,” what makes it worth reading in the first place. Does it work as a story in its own right? Or was it just a way of cleverly allegorizing Tolkien’s career and reiterating his theories one last time? These questions I attempt to answer in Chapter 1: A Disagreement of “Bounce,” where I rehearse some of Tolkien’s theory as well as the literary criticism of *Smith*.

The second difficulty I have is in the tools I choose to use for my analysis, linguistic theories of narrative. How does one communicate fairly complex linguistic theories to readers who are not linguists, but are interested in Tolkien and his works? This task I undertake in Chapter 2: Linguistics and Faery, where I explain Labov’s and Kuno and Kaburaki’s theories—for the benefit of my (hopefully many) literary readers, I do this mostly through examples from *Smith* itself.

After this preparatory work, I begin my analysis of the story, which I separate into three chapters. In the first of these, Chapter 3: The Camera Makes the World, I discuss how Tolkien uses linguistic techniques to create the world in which the story will take place as a viable and real place which readers can imaginatively enter.

But after Tolkien creates this world, he looks at it mostly, for a while, through the perspective or perception of a certain group of characters, a fact which is very significant to the

overall effect of the story. I consider how Tolkien linguistically accomplishes this effect in Chapter 4: Whom the Narrative Chooses to Favor.

Finally, *Smith of Wootton Major* is a fairy-story, and its main purpose, according to Flieger, is to “give the reader a glimpse of the perilous realm that Tolkien called Faery” (Flieger and Shippey 187). In my final chapter, Chapter 5: Entering Faery, by building on my previous linguistic arguments, I show a few of the linguistic and narrative techniques that Tolkien uses to take his readers to Faery.

## CHAPTER 1

### A DISAGREEMENT OF “BOUNCE”

#### Introduction

When J.R.R. Tolkien wrote *Smith of Wootton Major* in 1964 much of his career as a writer and scholar was behind him. *The Lord of the Rings*, his mythic masterpiece, had been printed over ten years before and was already a major success. Five years before, he had given his Valedictory Address, resigning his position as Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford. *Smith* was Tolkien's last work that was published in his lifetime. The tale is a fairy-story. In it, the blacksmith of a little village named Wootton Major is given a passport to the land of Faery in the form of a small silver star. After a lifetime of journeying to and from Faery, seeing great wonders and learning many things, the blacksmith, whose name happens to be Smith, is asked to relinquish the star that it might pass to a member of the next generation. Critics have seen the story as Tolkien's swan song, the silver star as a symbol of Tolkien's artistic gift or vision, and Smith's bereavement at giving up the star as an expression of Tolkien's knowledge that his career as a writer and artist was coming to an end. “[A] time comes for writers and artists,” Tolkien wrote, reflecting on *Smith*, “when invention and vision cease and [artists] can only reflect on what they have seen and learned” (qtd. in *Question* 236). A time comes when those who have been given a key to Faery must relinquish it. In a letter to his friend Roger Green, he simply wrote, *Smith of Wootton Major* is an “old man's book, already weighted with the presage of bereavement” (*Letters* 389).

## Faery as Tolkien Saw It

It is both tempting and easy to read *Smith* through biographical lenses. Some of the most prominent in Tolkien scholarship have done so. But to read *Smith* only in this way would be to rob the story, and especially the vision of Faery put forth in it, of much of its richness and power. To understand *Smith*, one must first understand Faery.

Tolkien left us a *tour de force* essay on this subject entitled “On Fairy-stories.”<sup>1</sup> The essay itself is crucial to our understanding of Tolkien’s conception of Faery, and it is arguably one of the most significant works of fantasy criticism ever written. The essay is broad and sweeping, and though filled with analytical scholarship, its most forceful claim is its demonstration of the power of Tolkien’s imagination. It was written when he was about halfway through writing *The Lord of the Rings*. At that time, Tolkien was trying to prove creatively the ideas of fantasy and the fairy-story that he was arguing for analytically. But Tolkien did not approach the problem of explaining fairy-stories solely as an artist, a scholar, a twentieth-century man, or even as a Catholic, but all of these simultaneously. Thus, his conception of fairy-stories is not purely literary or even artistic. Tolkien’s thoughts on modern life and even insights from his Catholic faith interweave to support his vision of Faery. An outcome of this interweaving, the essay’s main fault is that in it Tolkien constantly oversteps the bounds of subject matter that can reasonably be discussed in an essay of only around 50 pages. In spite of this limitation, his arguments are potent not only because they are well-formed in themselves, but also because he has left us with examples of actualizing those arguments in his stories. He left us *The Lord of the Rings*. He left us *Smith*.

Tolkien's first insight, and a very important one it is, is that the word "fairy" should not refer to magical beings, but to the world from which they come. Thus, in Tolkien's words, Faery is

[t]he realm or state in which fairies have their being. Faerie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: It holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. ("Fairy-stories" 38)

Faery is a world, a realm. This world is not alien to our own world—it contains our entire world within its walls—but it also contains something that our world often lacks, which Tolkien sees as the quality by which we mortals are enchanted. Enchantment comes from what Tolkien tells us is "the primal desire at the heart of Faerie: the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder" ("Fairy-stories" 42). But enchantment is not an end in itself. According to Tolkien, "its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires. One of these desires is to survey the depths of space and time. Another is [...] to hold communion with other living things" ("Fairy-stories" 41). The desire to "survey the depths of space and time" is simply the desire to step, for a moment, outside of the limitations of a human body, a human mind, and a human lifetime; the desire to "hold communion with other living things" is the desire to communicate with beings other than ourselves, to see our familiar world through their eyes and thus to see it anew ourselves.

Both of these elements appear very conspicuously in *Smith*, as Margaret Sammons and others have pointed out. In fact, the similarities between *Smith* and "On Fairy-stories" are so strong, so pervasive, that one could easily read one work as an artistic, and one work as an

analytical, version of the other. In *Smith*, the boundless world of Faery satisfies the desire to throw off the bonds of space and time, a point that Tolkien is especially careful to make.

Readers are told:

When he [Smith] first began to walk far without a guide [in Faery] he thought he would discover the further bounds of the land; but great mountains rose before him, and going by long ways round about them he came at last to a desolate shore. He stood beside the Sea of Windless Storm where the blue waves like snow-clad hills roll silently out of Unlight to the long strand, bearing the white ships that return from battles on the Dark Marches of which men know nothing. (26)

Here Smith sets out to discover the limits of Faery. But seeing ships sailing in from the endless sea, he realizes that no matter how much he explores, no matter how much time he is allowed in Faery, there will always be some battle “on the Dark marches of which men know nothing.” His intention to “discover the further bounds of the land” is thwarted by the sheer size and otherness of Faery.

In *Smith*, the desire for communication and “communion” with other beings is satisfied by the Faerie Queen herself, a fact which Sammons also briefly points out in her essay “Tolkien on Fantasy in *Smith of Wootton Major*” (6). Two scenes show this most explicitly. In the first, the Queen speaks to Smith without words; in the second, the Queen blesses Smith, using much the same mannerisms as would a Catholic priest when administering communion, which results in Smith standing fully outside of his world and of the world of Faerie.

She [the Queen] smiled seeing his memory, and drew towards him; and they spoke long together, for the most part without words, and he learned many things in her thought, some of which gave him joy, and others filled him with grief. (37)



[...]

Then he knelt, and she stooped and laid her hand on his head, and a great stillness came upon him; and he seemed to be both in the World and in Faery, and also outside them and surveying them, so that he was at once in bereavement, and in ownership, and in peace. When after a while the stillness passed he raised his head and stood up. The dawn was in the sky and the stars were pale, and the Queen was gone. (*Smith* 38)

This communion with the Queen allows Smith to—for a brief moment—stand outside of space and time, outside of both the worlds of Wootton Major and of Faery. This gives Smith a view of some ultimate reality or truth, as when standing outside the worlds he is afforded some insight into how they truly work together and interact (Kocher 202). With this insight, Smith is able to return to the world with renewed vision. The first thing he notices<sup>2</sup> upon returning is the Great Hall where the Master Cook lives and the village feasts are held.

Smith notices that Alf, the Master Cook, has repainted the Hall, and the smith sees it for what it was intended to be, “and he stood and looked at the Hall in wonder” (46). Smith’s seeing the familiar surroundings of Wootton Major deeply, as if for the first time, is an example of the quality of Faery that Tolkien called “Recovery.” Recovery is the re-enchantment of simple, ordinary things in the primary world because of our experience with their grand and imaginative counterparts in the secondary world of Faery. Tolkien writes,

We should look at green again, and be startled anew (not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses—and

wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us to make. In that sense only taste for them may make us, or keep us, childish. (“Fairy-stories” 77)

Fairy-stories help us renew our familiar by placing it not against the fantastic, but inside the fantastic. “Fairy-stories deal largely,” Tolkien tells us, “with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting” (78). Faery rubs off on bread, cheese, and even wine. This recovery should not be mistaken for childish imagination, as I believe Tolkien’s friend C. S. Lewis did when he reviewed the *Lord of the Rings*. He wrote,

The value of myth [and subsequently the fairy-story] is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by ‘the veil of familiarity.’ The child enjoys his cold meat, otherwise dull to him, by pretending it is buffalo, just killed with his own bow and arrow. And the child is wise. The real meat comes back to him more savory for having been dipped in a story; you might say that only then is it real meat. (15)

The child who imagines that his meatloaf is buffalo is wise, but not as wise as a person of any age who sees the world both as it is and with a sense of Faerian wonder. To restate, recovery does not mean pretending the world is something that it is not, as Lewis thought, but seeing the world as it is with a sense of wonder. When Smith sees the Great Hall when returning from Faery, he does not imagine that it is a different color than it is, but sees its true color with a sense of awe, as if seeing it for the first time.

Faery, then, is not only concerned with the enchantment of men “in the perilous realm,” but also with the re-enchantment of the primary world. As R. J. Reilly says, “All things become blurred by familiarity; we come to possess them, to use them, to see them only in relation to

ourselves” (99). In *Smith*, this re-enchantment of the primary world, this cleared vision, is represented by Smith’s vision itself, which as Sammons points out, improves greatly after he receives the fay-star (6). In some places that Smith visits in Faery “the air is so lucid that eyes can see the red tongues of birds as they sing on the trees upon the far side of the valley, though that is very wide and the birds are no greater than wrens” (*Smith* 31). Some short journeys he spends “looking only at one tree or one flower,” which Kocher says accounts for his ability to “work iron into wonderful forms that looked as light and delicate as a spray of leaves and blossom” (*Smith* 24-26, 21; Kocher 198). Smith is able to bring the insight he has gained in Faery back to Wootton Major in the form of his metal-working art. Finally, when Smith gives up the star, his passport to Faery, and thus to a clearer view of the world, he cries, “I cannot see clearly” (47).

Acquiring a new point of view or way of looking at the world means replacing or modifying an old point of view. This is exactly what Tolkien wished would happen in early twentieth-century England. To Tolkien, who was opposed to the transition his homeland of England was making from a pre-industrial society to an industrial society, this new perception meant escape from the factories and pollutions of modern life. In “On Fairy-stories,” he particularly reacts to the attitude of an Oxford colleague who welcomed “the proximity of mass-production robot factories, and the roar of self-obstructive mechanical traffic, because it brought his university into ‘contact with real life’” (80). Tolkien thought that factories and the machines they make are not ‘real life’ at all. “The notion that motor-cars are more ‘real,’” he said, “than, say, centaurs or dragons is curious; that they are more real than horses is pathetically absurd” (81). Machines, in Tolkien’s view, were dead things to be manipulated for convenience or production. But fairy-stories, and the centaurs and dragons they contain, are not to be

manipulated but to be experienced. In this way they are real. Those who think otherwise, implies Tolkien, have simply lost touch with reality. Fairy-stories, then, offer escape not only from the horrors of industrial modern life, but from the views of those that hold modern life—and any other life devoid of the spark of imagination—in high regard.

In *Smith of Wootton Major* this lack of imagination, lack of insight, is most strongly symbolized by the character Nokes, “a solid sort of man with a wife and children, and careful with money” (9-10). Nokes is not the epitome of evil. He has a wife and family whom he presumably loves and treats well. Tolkien wrote an essay, recently published in Verlyn Flieger’s new edition of *Smith*, in which he discussed the story, its characters, and its presentation of Faery. In this essay, he points out that Nokes also “seems to have been generally fond of children” (97). His major fault (aside from dishonestly taking credit for much of Alf’s work) is a lack of imagination. Nokes has no sense that truth and beauty might lie outside of Wootton in the Wide World, or that perhaps Wootton is only a part of a much bigger picture. Such thoughts, he believes to be nonsense, fit only to please children, though at least he does not begrudge them that. The world of Faery offers Smith an escape, both from the familiar world of Wootton Major and from those like Nokes who think that life in Wootton Major—practical life, productive life, industrial life, “real life,” as Tolkien’s colleague mistakenly called it—is the only life there is.

#### The Criticism of *Smith*

We write and read fairy-stories, according to Tolkien, because we have a need for imagined wonder, because we wish to throw off the bonds of a human lifetime, because we wish to communicate with beings other than ourselves, and because we oftentimes need to see our world anew; to receive a clear vision of it; in Tolkien’s terms, to recover it. All of these ideas find a realization in *Smith* as I will show through some select scenes. These ideas of fairy-

stories, especially that of *Recovery*, also pertain to the way *Smith* has been analyzed by literary critics. Though *Smith* is infused with Tolkien's theories of the fairy-story, as I have shown above, some critics have argued that the vision of Faery in the story is *only* an allegory for Tolkien's own artistic wanderings in the world of imagination. Others have seen *Smith* only as an actualization of Tolkien's theory of fairy-stories; others that the elements of Faery in *Smith* are symbolic of Catholic concepts; others that Faery is what it is, and *Smith* should be taken on its own merits as a tale, specifically its power to take readers there.<sup>3</sup> Tolkien himself was aware of the story's ability to inspire many different interpretations, and by a particular stroke of genius, found a way to toss a stick in all their spokes. When a friend of his, Roger Green, reviewed the story and wrote, "to seek for the meaning is to cut open the ball in search of its bounce," Tolkien was so pleased that he wrote Green to thank him for the review, and "esp. for the comment on the search for the source of bounce!" (*Letters* 388). Tolkien, somewhat hypocritically, as we will see, did not want his little story dissected. If we take Tolkien's endorsement of Green's comment literally, then Tolkien thought that whatever made the story "bounce," would be wrecked by looking for it, by trying to discover its secrets. This essentially means that the story must work on its readers below consciousness, for once they are conscious of the way it works, it ceases to.

Such an attitude<sup>4</sup> would seem to discourage all criticism, for what criticism does not seek to define and identify a story's appeal to its audience—to look for its "bounce"? But in Tolkien's essay on *Smith*, he sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly discusses *Smith* from all of the critical angles stated above.<sup>5</sup> Because of Tolkien's apparent inconsistency and that *Smith* can be read—quite successfully—from many different angles, *Smith* is a tricky text for critics to work with. It is one of those critical conundrums that kill a lot of trees and use a lot of ink. I do

not hope to solve it with this thesis (one doesn't "solve" literature, anyway). Instead, I hope to add to the conversation (1) by presenting a way of thinking both about *Smith* and about its criticism, and (2) by taking a close look at the story's structure, specifically its linguistic structure.

The current disagreement in the critical literature on *Smith* is represented by the views of Tom Shippey and of Verlyn Flieger. Shippey and Flieger are currently two of the most prominent Tolkien critics. Their disagreement on the interpretation of *Smith*, I believe, is the first clue to understanding the criticism of the story and thus the story itself.

Shippey's argument<sup>6</sup> in his books *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* is the interpretation of the story given at the beginning of this essay: that *Smith* is *essentially* an allegory of Tolkien's artistic inspiration and loss thereof, with other allegorical symbols that relate to Tolkien's life interspersed. Among his stronger points is his connection of the character named Alf with the Old English *ælf* (= "elf"), which, Shippey points out "is what Alf is" (*Road* 276).<sup>7</sup> But some of Shippey's readings, while holding interest for Tolkien biographers, do not serve to elucidate the story. Among these are his discussion of the name of the character Nokes, which Shippey hypothesizes comes from the Old English *ac* (= "oak") and is a professional reference to the "A scheme" literature curriculum at Oxford which Tolkien, the philologist, fought against all his professional life. In Tolkien's valedictory address, he blasts advocates of the "A scheme":

I have therefore felt it a grievance that certain professional persons should suppose their dullness and ignorance to be a human norm [...] and [I have] anger[ed] when they have sought to impose the limitation of their minds upon younger minds, dissuading those with philological curiosity from their bent,

encouraging those without this interest to believe that their lack marked them as minds of a superior order. (225, 226)

Shippey's comparison seems reasonable, judging from what Tolkien writes about Nokes in his essay on *Smith*: "The vulgarization of Wootton is indicated by Nokes" (*Smith* 93). Where Tolkien saw the "A" schemers as vulgarizing the Oxford English curriculum by forgetting the subject of philology, he saw Nokes and those like him as vulgarizing Wootton by forgetting about the element of reverence and wonder that flowed from the nearby land of Faery. In essence, the "A" schemers were too preoccupied with the superior intellectual activity of literature to be bothered with what they saw as the mere pedantry of philology, much as Nokes and his like were too preoccupied with the adult affairs of daily life to bother with what they see as the childish nonsense of Faery. This read is interesting if we are interested in Tolkien, but it does little for our understanding of the story as a story. Worse, it may distract us into seeing Nokes only as an allegorical personification of persons with whom Tolkien was professionally peeved. To see *Smith* this way, then, is to rob the story of much of its power and potency.

Flieger's read is in some ways the exact opposite of Shippey's. Taking her cue from Green and Tolkien, she asserts that "[t]he bounce is clearly there, but to search for it is to defeat its effect; to allegorize it is to deaden the bounce completely" (*Question* 233). She admits that "critics who see allegory [...] are responding to real signals," as can be seen from Tolkien's essay, but asserts that serious attention to these signals "tends to work against the 'Fairy Story' effect that Tolkien said he was striving for, and the application of too much specific meaning both burdens and crystallizes a story whose greatest charm lies in its unpretentious air, its effortless ability to imply without stating" (233). To show how allegorical criticism and "the hidden trap of autobiography" can never account for the "bounce," she reacts to Shippey's

reading of the scene in *Smith* where Smith visits the lake of tears, is chased by the Wild Wind, is protected by the birch tree, and then is told by the birch to leave because he does not belong there. Shippey saw this scene as a direct allegory of the language and literature departments at Oxford. Both departments were symbolized, for Tolkien, by trees—literature, as given above, by the oak, and language by the birch (hence, “B” scheme). As Shippey points out, Tolkien had even written “a poem in Gothic in praise of the birch in *Songs for the Philologists*, and another poem in that collection praises the birch and the ‘B-scheme’ together” (*Author* 302, 303). Reading the scene as an allegory, he attributes the birch’s rejection of Smith to Tolkien’s shame at having used his training in philology for his own pleasures, mining its depths for his stories, stripping away its bark, unable to offer any compensation. But Flieger responds that this read “does little to account for the effect of the episode *within the story itself*” (her italics *Question* 244). “The scene both invites and defeats attempts to interpret it,” she says, “for no interpretation can match the power of the scene itself” (245).

Shippey justifies his approach by pointing out that Tolkien himself found allegorical elements in *Smith*. Therefore, according to Shippey, though Tolkien approved Green’s comment, if we take this approval at face value we will be left with only part of the story. Shippey uses more pointed language when responding to Flieger’s criticism of his method. On March 22, 2001, at the ICFA conference in Florida, he cited Flieger’s criticism from her book *A Question of Time*, and then responded. I give the citation of *Question* below, followed by Shippey’s reaction.

Green observed that the effect of the story transcends any explicit reference and warned against looking too hard for a specific message. He wrote of it that “To seek for the meaning is to cut open the ball in search of the bounce.” This may



prove to be the best summation of the story's appeal. The bounce is clearly there, but to search for it is to defeat its effect; to allegorize it is to deaden the bounce completely. (*Question 233*)

I accept Flieger's paraphrase, but I reject Green's metaphor. More important, if "the bounce" here is "whatever it is that makes the story pleasurable," then I can testify that as far as I am concerned Flieger's last phrase, "to allegorize it is to deaden the bounce completely," is not true of my experience at all. Much of the pleasure I take in the story comes from searching out allegory. This does not go away, but increases with re-reading, and re-searching. Green's metaphor, to use another metaphor, seems to me like saying "put that ball on the mantelpiece, and for goodness' sake don't bounce it, it will break!" But it doesn't break—or not when I bounce it. (Flieger and Shippey 192)

Shippey is essentially proving something that John Timmerman is correct when he says that an allegorical reading of a fantasy work is a "matter [...] of puzzle-solving, of arranging pieces within its [the story's] narrative form. The reader, however, is completing someone else's puzzle. He may take a certain pleasure in the task, but allegory provides within its own framework its own solution" (6). The "bounce" for Shippey, the part of the story that brings him pleasure, is such allegorical inquiry, and here he is searching for what the author had already put in the story.

In contrast, for Flieger the "bounce" of *Smith* is the particular quality of the story which draws readers into the world of Faery. From this understanding of the bounce comes her critical views of the story, many of which have been put forth as a reaction to Shippey. In my opinion, Flieger understands what Tolkien was trying to do in *Smith* more than any other critic, but her

read can be enigmatic, and she contradicts herself in places (I might add, just like Tolkien himself did when he wrote about *Smith*). At first glance, especially if we are glancing at her response to Shippey at the ICFA conference in Florida, Flieger takes a stanch stance on the story. She says, “I yield to none in my admiration for Professor Shippey as a scholar, a critic, and a fellow lover of Tolkien. Nevertheless, with regard to *Smith*, I must respectfully disagree on all counts” (187). She disagrees with Shippey’s reading “Nokes as a ‘Critic-figure,’ and Smith himself as ‘a Tolkien figure,’” and goes on to explain four facts about *Smith* on which she bases her refutation of Shippey (186). These are:

(1). The story’s mode is fairy tale, not allegory, as Tolkien himself made clear.

[....]

(2). Its subject is the experience of a human in the Faery world, not “the author himself,” though the reader is free to speculate that Tolkien may have had such experience.

(3). The characters are believable in their own roles within the fiction and require no reference to philology, critics, or Tolkien’s supposed conflict between art and life in order to be understood.

(4). The purpose of fairy tales is not to make sense but to give the reader a glimpse of the perilous realm that Tolkien called Faery [...]. (187)

These four points are quite potent. They can be paraphrased: Critics who analyze *Smith* should stick to the story itself and the view of Faery it presents. Any criticism outside of these parameters is informed by an extra-literary agenda, bibliographical, philological, or otherwise.

The rub is that Flieger doesn’t stick to her hard-line critical framework for *Smith*, and some of her criticisms are very close indeed to Shippey’s, with whom she “respectfully disagrees

on all counts.” For example, she reads *Smith* through the lens of autobiographical allegory when she states in *Question* that *Smith* “was distilled out of Tolkien’s deepest memories of his own adventures in the perilous realm” (236). She describes *Smith* as “the wanderer, the restless, unquiet human traveler between the worlds,” and goes on to say that “much of what he wrote suggests that Tolkien felt himself to be such a one” (236). Such a statement is certainly at least a waver to the temptation “to see *Smith* himself as ‘a Tolkien figure.’” Now I would not disagree with this statement: However, not only is it in conflict her general disagreement with Shippey, it is in direct contradiction with point (3) of her refutation of Shippey’s approach, where she writes, “[t]he characters [in *Smith*] are believable in their own roles within the fiction and require no reference to philology, critics, or *Tolkien’s supposed conflict between art and life* in order to be understood” (my italics Flieger and Shippey 187). If the characters are believable in their own roles, then why draw attention to a potential autobiographical allegory at all?

Flieger also devotes much of her chapter on *Smith* in *Question* to the theoretical idea of fairy-story space and time, saying that when Tolkien wrote *Smith* he was “reaching for some definite and long-sought goals, goals at once artistic, theoretical, and technical,” (235). More disturbing yet, she goes on to evaluate how effectively Tolkien balances these artistic and theoretical goals, saying that “though he did not altogether succeed in reaching that balance, neither did he altogether fail” (252). Now I agree that Tolkien was struggling with artistic and theoretical goals when he wrote *Smith*.<sup>8</sup> I see nothing wrong with this type of criticism, but it does contradict Flieger’s point (4): “The purpose of fairy tales is not to make sense but to give the reader a glimpse of the perilous realm that Tolkien called Faery” (187). If the purpose of fairy tales is “not to make sense,” then why dedicate so much critical space to puzzling out Tolkien’s logical theories of fairy space and time, which effectively undercuts the author—and

more importantly, the story—by stating that he fails to meet some balance between personal artistic and theoretical goals?

If taken literally, Flieger's four statements effectively squash the possibility of any criticism of *Smith* at all. Flieger doesn't stick to them herself, of course, instead cutting the ball in a way which does not, for her, relieve it of its bounce. What, I would assume, she really objects to in Shippey's arguments is not that he is searching for meaning outside of the narrative of the story itself, but rather to some of his phrasing, which implies that his allegorical noticings (valid though they may be) account for the *whole* meaning of *Smith*: for example, the title of his chapter on *Smith*, "Autobiographical Allegory: 2 *Smith of Wootton Major*" and his statement "It is in the category of allegorical work that I would put *Smith*" (Flieger and Shippey 194). And if these really are her thoughts then I agree with her completely. *Smith* is much more than allegory, autobiographical or otherwise.

This brings us to Tolkien's ideas of allegory, and the appropriateness of allegorical criticism. His well-known maxim is, of course, that he "cordially dislike[s] allegory in all its manifestations" (*Fellowship* xv). But Tolkien also made<sup>9</sup> another statement which is highly applicable to this argument, though it is usually ignored or overlooked. It comes from the introduction to his translation of the Middle English poem "Pearl." Here he is writing on much the same topic as we are concerned with here: a debate between scholars as to whether "Pearl" is completely an allegorical piece or whether it is meant to be taken as a literal narrative, on its own terms. Tolkien writes:

Much space would be required to rehearse this debate, even in brief summary, and the labor would be unprofitable; but it has not all been entirely wasted, for much learning has gone into it, and study has deepened the appreciation of the poem

and brought out more clearly the allegorical and symbolical elements that it certainly includes. (*Sir Gawain* 8)

Here, we must note, Tolkien is not fobbing off allegorical criticism, but saying that its place is not to explicate ultimate meaning but to deepen our appreciation of works of literature containing “allegorical and symbolic elements,” which *Smith* certainly possesses. This statement by itself is enough to justify Shippey’s findings, if not his overall approach. In the same introduction, Tolkien does go on to point out that an allegorical interpretation is limited though, essentially applying what he says in the introduction to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*.

But the allegorical description of an event does not make that event itself allegorical. And this initial use is only one of the many applications of the pearl symbol, intelligible if the reference of the poem is personal, incoherent if one seeks for total allegory. For there are a number of precise details in *Pearl* that cannot be subordinated to any general allegorical interpretation [...]. (9)

Though allegorical criticism deepens our appreciation of stories which contain allegorical elements, it never fully satisfies because it can never give the entire picture. There is always something going on inside of the narrative and outside of the allegory that an allegorical reading simply cannot explain.

The issue cuts to the heart of fantasy, which is not to give readers a two-dimensional relationship between an allegorical world presented in a story to a readers’ normal reality, but to take the reader into a world of fantasy, and in the case of *Smith*, into the world of Faery. In the forward to the second edition to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien wrote that his prime motivation when writing the work was “the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them

or deeply move them” (*Fellowship* xiv). Where allegorical works of literature are concerned primarily with readers’ heads, their ability to figure out correlations between the world of the story and their own, works of fantasy concern themselves with readers’ hearts by engaging them and occasionally deeply moving them. According to Tolkien, fantasy seeks to fulfill some of our “primal desires” as human beings—to throw off our human limitations, and to engage in “the realization, independent of the conceiving mind of imagined wonder” (“Fairy-stories” 42).

These aspects of fantasy, which deeply move readers, are much more than the outline of a story’s plot, and that outline’s allegorical correlatives in the world outside of the story. These aspects, which are primarily found in a story’s narrative, include “the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details” that make each story unique and that inform each story “with life” (“Fairy-stories” 46). The heart of *Smith* does not lie in its allegory, but in its minute details, in the story’s narrative, “in Smith’s wanderings in Faery and in the reader’s participation in his enchantment, bewilderment, and acceptance of that which he cannot understand” (Flieger and Shippey 189). The narrative speaks of Smith’s introduction to and enchantment by the world of Faery, and if the narrative is effective, of the same process happening to the reader. Flieger’s attention to “the story in its own right” is well placed. Timmerman says,

By careful construction of the story the fantasy author suggests certain analogies. By repetition of pointing signals, or symbols, the author constructs a pattern which guides the interpretation. But in no sense does the writer force the pattern upon the reader. The reader, by following the pattern, claims the analogic insight as his own. The story becomes his own story to the extent that his imagination interpenetrates the framework of the story and lives for a time in the world of the story. (8)

In fantasy literature, readers must be drawn into that world. To accomplish this, authors construct a pattern “through repetition and pointing signals,” oftentimes in the narrative of the story itself. It is the story’s narrative to which we now turn—to the details which were so important to Tolkien—and to how those details take readers to Faery.

### Taking Readers to Faery

In “On Fairy-stories” we read that Faery is the “realm or state in which fairies have their being,” which contains elves, dwarves, giants, dragons, the sea, the sky, “and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted” (115). And above we saw that this enchantment involves fulfilling—at least in a literary sense—our inherent human desire to throw off the limitations of our human existence.

According to Tolkien, an author can create this type of enchantment or fantasy by creating a “secondary world which your mind can enter” (60). But to create such a world is difficult, for in doing so an author must actually make the reader believe in that world as a world. The world must have what Tolkien called the “inner consistency of reality”; the world must not contain internal contradictions which make it unbelievable (68). As Fitzgerald puts it, “What is important is the attempt to create a world where, if A equals B and B equals C, then A equals C is true, and consistently true even though in our world it would not only be untrue, it may be impossible” (28). “Either follow the beaten track,” says Horace, “or invent something that is consistent within itself” (83). If the author is consistent then the reader can enter a state of Secondary Belief, a belief in the Secondary World in the same way that one believes in the Primary World, unconsciously, taking the ground rules of that world for granted (“Fairy-stories” 70). But if readers detect inconsistency, Secondary Belief<sup>10</sup> is broken and readers are, in

Tolkien's words, "out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside" ("Fairy-stories" 60).

Many things are possible in a Secondary world—talking trees, ageless Elves, and Hobbits. And as has been stated, one of the keys to fantasy and Faery is the innate human desire for a world where we can throw off the limitations of our humanness. This gives us a clue not only into how fantasy works, but also into how it is created, and what makes it run. Todorov says that literature achieves enchantment or fantasy by presenting characters/readers with "something that appears to come from outside the character's/reader's normal reality" (qtd. in Northrup 814). Eric Rabkin notes what amounts to essentially the same point, but with a different emphasis: "The fantastic element occurs when 'the perspectives enforced by the ground rules of the narrative world must be diametrically contradicted'" (qtd. in Northrup 815). Rabkin's idea shifts from the emphasis on the "reader's normal reality" to what he calls the "ground rules of the narrative world." For fantasy to succeed, according to Todorov's definition, both reader and author must agree on some idea of "reality," and thus the fantastic element and the resulting enchantment will be a deviation from this reality or a fresh look at it. And this theory is a logical one. It has even prompted a recent dissertation by Charles Fitzgerald in which he claims that the essence of fantasy is dependent on the reader's idea of reality: "The essence of fantasy is found in our choice of belief—either in God or in man" (13). But Tolkien had a taste for tales that were good in and of themselves, whose literary effects did not depend on the reader's belief or disbelief in any certain doctrines.

To circumvent this snag Tolkien essentially puts Rabkin's idea to use by separating his stories in certain ways from the primary world and its definition of reality. Instead, he sets up a system of "ground rules" for his Secondary Worlds, therefore letting his readers experience



enchantment vicariously when his characters stumble beyond those rules. Shippey notes that in the beginning of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo is essentially a bourgeois Englishman, “full of nonsense, like modern English society as perceived by Tolkien” (72). The ground rules of Bilbo’s world, as Bilbo perceives it in the beginning of the story, include eating, sitting, and smoking, and do not include inconvenient things like adventures and dragons, which make one late for supper. But after being extracted from his “modern” world, Bilbo acclimates and even begins to sympathize with Middle-earth, which Shippey calls a “sort of ‘asterisk-world’ for the Norse *Elder Edda*,” (*Road* 72, 71). The rub of course is that readers are extracted along with Bilbo.

But *Smith* contains no immediately sympathetic character for the audience to identify with. Smith is never painted by the narrative with much detail at all. Readers are not even given Smith’s name at the feast when he receives the fay-star. The first mention of Smith’s name in the story (except for the title of course) comes on the fifteenth page of the story. Tolkien even withholds the fact that the first Master Cook who brought Alf to Wootton was Smith’s grandfather until near the end of the story, when Smith is leaving Faery for the last time. This presents a problem: how, without a strong lead character, to show two worlds (Wootton Major and Faery), which have diametrically opposed views of reality, while still maintaining the internal consistency of reality necessary for Secondary Belief and thus for fantasy. Tolkien solves the problem by using his narrative to help readers sympathize first with one view of reality (represented by Nokes and his like, in the story) and then with another view of reality (epitomized by Alf, the Prentice).

### Conclusion

Every critic who writes on *Smith* has to somehow justify or account for his or her reading of the story in view of Green’s point about bounce and Tolkien’s own apparently contradictory

self-critical practices. But the bounce is highly subjective. Shippey is the only one to attempt to define it as “whatever it is that makes the story pleasurable”—a subjective idea if ever there was one. As it negates them all, it is evident that “bounce” will not be much use to any particular critical approach to this story.

But the debate over “bounce” does have value, and this value is in its strong implication that the meaning of *Smith*, the bounce, like the realm of Faery, can never be nailed down, defined once and for all, “caught in a net of words” (“Fairy-stories” 39). This does not mean that any analytical approach to the story is in vain, but that critics (and those who read them) should simply realize the limitations of such an approach.

My read of *Smith* directly follows Flieger’s statement quoted above. For me, *Smith* was written to introduce, or re-introduce, readers to Faery vicariously through Smith’s wanderings. To some extent this is a highly allegorical read, as the story itself becomes an allegory of the process happening to its reader at the time of its reading. But any criticism of the story “in its own right” will support this claim, as I will show in subsequent chapters. The main mechanism which Tolkien uses to take his readers to Faery is a highly controlled, nuanced, and adept narrative. His narrative effectively controls his readers’ focus and thus, to some extent, their perceptions of the world of Wootton Major and then the world of Faery. To be clear then, I am not looking for the bounce, which is the world of Faery itself in all of its peril and power, but rather for the narrative techniques Tolkien uses to take us there.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The content of this essay first appeared in a lecture Tolkien gave on the fairy-story publisher Andrew Lang at the University of St. Andrews in 1938. It was later enlarged and published in a volume to honor C. S. Lewis and Tolkien's late friend, the author Charles Williams ("Fairy-stories" 31).

<sup>2</sup> This is the first time, aside from the waking trees on the morning of Smith's tenth birthday, when a character notices the scenery of Wootton Major.

<sup>3</sup> To name a few of them, the story's allegorical elements have been examined by Tom Shippey; autobiographical elements by Shippey, Verlyn Flieger, Paul Kocher, and Humphrey Carpenter; Christian elements by Shippey and Jane Chance; relationship to Fantasy by Margaret Sammons and Flieger; and on its own merits as a tale by all critics to one degree or another.

<sup>4</sup> Tolkien perhaps did not trust critics to look for the artist's intent, or to read the story on its own terms, and not against a background of the defining works of a particular genre to which the story supposedly belonged. In his criticism, Tolkien takes great pains to respect artists. Thus, Tolkien is not arguing against criticism in general, but only that which did not treat the story as a story in its own right.

<sup>5</sup> Whether any of these critics had read the essay (most criticism was published before the essay was made widely available by Fliegler's edited edition of *Smith*), they were struggling with the same issues the author himself was struggling with.

<sup>6</sup> Shippey's read of *Smith* is that the story is essentially an allegory. But he does, at times, read the story within its own context. One of his insights along these lines is that Alf is an agent for putting Smith, and his sorrow at losing the star, in a greater context than one human village and one human life: "that star, that inspiration, is only a fragment of a greater world, a world

outside the little clearing of Wootton “ (*Road* 277). Kocher makes the same point, but pertaining to Smith’s interaction with the Queen of Faery.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the story never says that Alf or the Queen of Faery are elves (though it implies it once), but it is still a safe assumption to make as Tolkien says this in his essay that he wrote about *Smith* (96).

<sup>8</sup> His essay on *Smith* definitely shows this. In one example, Flieger points out that the essay became “one more attempt on Tolkien’s part to evolve and codify a working theory of space-time” (*Question* 248). Tolkien also explicitly discusses the possible allegorical connections between the Great Hall in the story and a real village church (*Smith* 100).

<sup>9</sup> This excerpt comes from a collaboration of Tolkien and Professor E.V. Gordon. Christopher Tolkien, J.R.R. Tolkien’s son and literary executor, says, “that book was almost entirely the work of Professor Gordon alone, but my father’s contribution to it included a small part of the Introduction; and the essay is here reproduced in the form it finally took as a result of their collaboration” (*Sir Gawain* ix). Confusion over this essay’s authorship might be why it has been overlooked. At any rate, since Tolkien would have signed off on the project, we may assume that, in the worst case, he was not in conflict with these ideas.

<sup>10</sup> Secondary Belief goes beyond a mere suspension of disbelief—in which a reader would merely play along with the premises of the story in the same way that adults play along with the imaginative fantasies of children—to a state of a true Secondary Belief system for another world.

## CHAPTER 2

### LINGUISTICS AND FAERY

Furthermore, you will make an excellent impression if you use care and subtlety in placing your words... — Horace, “On the Art of Poetry”

#### Introduction

“I did not warn you of my talk on Wednesday night,” J.R.R. Tolkien began a letter to his grandson Michael, a graduate student at Oxford. “I thought you were too busy. I did not give a talk in fact, but read a short story recently written and yet unpublished; and that you can read if you have time: *Smith of Wootton Major*: if I have not already inflicted [it] on you” (*Letters* 370). One imagines a slight smile on Tolkien’s face as he writes the word “inflicted” of the same story he had elsewhere called an “old man’s book, already weighted with the presage of bereavement” (*Letters* 389). The night that the world first heard *Smith of Wootton Major* was not a pleasant one—“a nasty wet evening,” Tolkien called it (370). The event was held at the Prior of Black Friars in Oxford. Far too many people showed up, and Tolkien got a sore throat, which wouldn’t have been so bad had not all the people in the room upset the microphone he was speaking into by stepping on its cord (*Smith* 64). But no matter that the back of the room couldn’t hear him, Father Bailey, who had invited Tolkien to speak, wrote that his fans “sat quietly gazing at him as tho’ he was one of the apostles. To see him and look at him was enough” (64). They were there to see the professor who had given them Gandalf and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien was oblivious of, or purposefully ignored, such adoration, of course. His letter to his son Michael ends simply, the room “became very hot, and I think you were better away” (371).

Tolkien read *Smith of Wootton Major* at the Prior of Black Friars in October of 1966. Earlier that year, another conference took place, on the other side of the pond, as the saying goes.

The linguists Joshua Waletzky and William Labov presented a paper to the American Ethnological Society, entitled *Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience*, which promised to ascertain the basic elements of oral narrative on the linguistic level “[b]y studying the development of narrative technique from children to adults, and the range of narrative technique from lower class to middle class speakers (12). The theories presented in this paper became the basis for a new toolset for analyzing an oral narrative, sentence by sentence, clause by clause, word by word. Six years later, in 1972, Labov refined the original ideas in the 1966 paper in his study of African American Vernacular English, giving developed concepts of the basic elements of narrative and how and why narrators use them. Though Labov developed these concepts for use with oral narrative, they can be used with great success for literature<sup>1</sup> and especially such literature as is read to attentive fans on wet nights by apostle-like, though slightly under-the-weather, professors.

Labov’s theories of narrative provide us with a way of analyzing *Smith* while staying within the bounds of the story itself, as Flieger so passionately wants those who criticize *Smith* to do. When Labov and Waletzky looked at narrative on the linguistic level in 1966, staying within the bounds of the story was precisely what they were doing. They looked at the events which the narrator reports and the linguistic representations of those events in words, clauses, and sentences as being separate but related entities (Culler 101). One benefit of this approach: If one studies the language of a story itself, one can obtain insights into, for example, the way a narrator *portrays* particular narrated events, independently of what those events *are*. If we study the language of *Smith* in this way, then, we may not find the bounce, but we will gain insight into how Tolkien portrays the strange events that happen in the little village of Wootton Major and thus an understanding of the way that Tolkien takes his readers to Faery.

## Labov: A Linguistic Theory of Narrative

The OED gives the word “narrative” the definition “An account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them; a narration, a story, an account” (“Narrative,” def. 2a). Narrative studies tend to focus on how events or stories are represented in a particular medium, such as the spoken or written word or painting or film. A more precise definition of narrative is given by Gerald Prince in his book *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*. Prince defines narrative as “the representation of real or fictive events and situations *in a time sequence*” (my italics 1). Narrative, then, becomes not just the study of how events are represented, but also of how events that happen in a particular sequence are represented.

Labov further refines Prince’s definition, on the linguistic level. Narrative, according to Labov, can be defined on the level of clauses within sentences: “[W]e can define a minimal narrative as a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered: that is, a change in their order will result in a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation” (360). A narrative clause, then, is a clause which comes in a sequence of clauses that relate an ordered sequence of events. If the narrator changes the order of the clauses, this will result in a perceived change in the order of the events to which the clauses refer. For a concrete example, consider the sentences:

1. Bobby gave the man a dollar.
2. The man gave Bobby an ice-cream cone.

Given in the above order, these narrative clauses represent two events in a time sequence: First Bobby pays for his ice-cream, then the man gives him his ice-cream cone. But if we were to switch the order of these sentences, then the events which they represent would be seen as

occurring in the reverse order: That is, the man would first give Bobby the ice-cream cone, hoping that Bobby wouldn't run away with both cone and dollar clenched in his little fist. Then Bobby would give the man the dollar.

Real narratives aren't this simple, of course. But their basic building blocks are narrative clauses, as Labov defines them. To show how this works, I now consider a more complex narrative sequence from *Smith of Wootton Major*.

The scene begins near the end of the story, just after Smith has relinquished the fay-star to Alf in the village Kitchen.

1. The smith turned away without another word and groped his way to the door.
2. On the threshold he found that his sight had cleared again.
3. It was evening and the Even-star was shining in a luminous sky close to the Moon.
4. As he stood for a moment looking at their beauty, he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned. (47)

These lines contain five narrative clauses centering around the verbs “turned,” “groped,” “found,” “felt,” and “turned.” The clauses in which these verbs appear constitute an ordered sequence of events: Presumably first the smith “turned,” then he “groped,” then he “found,” and so on. And as we saw above, changing the order of the clauses as they appear on the page would result in a change in the order in which the events are seen to occur.

But not all clauses in this more complex example are narrative clauses. Though sentence 3 contains two verbs, it does not contain narrative clauses because it tells the audience the state of events *during which* the narrative action was taking place—the time of day and the continuous action of the star, “shining.” We could move sentence 3 to be the first sentence, and the sequence of events would not change. It being evening and the stars shining “in a luminous sky”



does not have any temporally sequential relationship to Smith's sequence of actions.

Presumably, it was evening and the Even-star was shining before Smith went to the door and after Alf put his hand on Smith's shoulder. The clauses in sentence 3, then, are not narrative clauses, but are what Labov calls "free clauses" since they are "not confined by any temporal junction," or are not part of a sequence of events (361).

Another example of a non-narrative clause comes in sentence 4. This sentence begins, "as he stood for a moment looking at their beauty." Unlike sentence 3, this clause in sentence 4 is not free. Instead, it is bound in temporal sequence to "he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned." That is, the initial clause in sentence 4 is seen as happening contemporaneously with the later clause. This clause is not a narrative clause, then, because it happens contemporaneously with "he felt a hand on his shoulder," and thus does not advance or reverse the sequence of events. The first clause of sentence 4 is a subordinate clause, and as Labov points out, "subordinate clauses do not serve as narrative clauses" (362). Put in a more positive way: "It is only independent clauses which can function as narrative clauses" (362).

I will give further explanation as to the specifics of narrative clauses as is needed. For now, I turn to one important result of their existence. Labov not only defined narrative on the syntactic level, he also placed those findings in a broader picture of stories as a whole, in order to see how those clauses function in a story. For Labov, fully-formed stories include the following elements:

1. Abstract.
2. Orientation.
3. Complicating Action.
4. Result or resolution.

5. Coda.

6. Evaluation.

Each of these parts of a story are defined based on what information they give the audience, essentially on their function in telling a series of events to an audience and making that telling enjoyable. I consider them in the above order.

#### *Abstract*

The abstract summarizes either the whole story or an episode within the story (*Language* 363). In *Smith*, after Tolkien relates the first Cook's surprising appointment of an apprentice, he states, "The next surprise came only three years later" (8). This is in fact the abstract for the next section, in which the narrator<sup>2</sup> will relate what that next surprise was and how those events unfolded.

#### *Orientation*

The orientation includes the setting or any background information that readers need to know in order to understand the story. Because of Labov's definition of narrative clauses, we are able to define orientation specifically in grammatical terms. "At the outset [of the story or episode]," says Labov, "it is necessary to identify in some way the time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation. This can be done in the course of several narrative clauses, but more commonly there is an orientation section composed of free clauses" (364). By "free clauses," Labov means clauses that are free of temporal sequence, as above. Orientation, then, is what sentence 3 in the example above turns out to be: "It was evening and the Even-star was shining in a luminous sky close to the Moon." That is, this sentence describes the situation or setting when Smith was leaving the Cook's house. Note that the orientation does not always come at the beginning of an

episode—though it often does. It may occur anywhere within an episode where extra information is needed.

### *Complicating Action and the Result or Resolution*

The complicating action (CA) and the result or resolution are exactly what their names suggest. They are formed of narrative clauses, though these narrative clauses may be interspersed with orientation and evaluative clauses, which I will discuss in depth below. Not all clauses are strictly definable as either the CA or result, because the result of one sequence of events may be the CA of another sequence of events. In one sense, the entire scene given above is the CA, because it tells what happens between when Smith gives up the fay-star and is asked to choose its next bearer. We may also read it as result, for it is the (at least initial) result of Smith's giving up the fay-star.

### *Coda*

The coda “returns the listener to the present time” by adding details that take place after the main action of the narrative (*Language* 369). The classic fairy-tale coda is “and they lived happily ever after.” The coda of *Smith* is embedded in the last paragraph of the story: “A few of his [Alf's] friends, especially Smith and Harper, grieved at his going, and they kept the Hall gilded and painted in memory of Alf” (62). This coda tells readers what happened in Wootton Major after the action of the story.

### Evaluation

The abstract, orientation, complicating action, result, and coda seem to form a complete picture of narrative's function of referencing events and relaying those events to readers. But “we would like to suggest,” write Labov and Waletzky in their 1966 paper, “that a narrative which contains [these elements] is not a complete narrative. It may carry out the referential function perfectly,

and yet seem difficult to understand. Such a narrative lacks significance; it has no point” (33). Labov’s greatest contribution to narrative studies was not a way of looking at the syntax of the narrative clauses, or even his method of considering those clauses within a broader picture of the way stories reference events. It was a way of using linguistic insights to ascertain a story’s significance, that is, a story’s “*raison d’être*: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at” (*Language* 366). To take a non-linguistic example of evaluation, one technique narrators use to evaluate events is “to introduce a third person who evaluates [an event or a character’s actions] for the narrator” (373).<sup>3</sup> Paul Hurtubise gives an example of this evaluation in which a young boy is telling the story of a fish he caught: “my father said it was the biggest fish he’d ever seen!” (32). The boy’s *raison d’être* for telling this story is to tell of a huge fish, and the father’s exclamation directly supports this *raison*.

The father’s words also focus readers on this event, because the event must be noteworthy if someone in the story has an opinion about it. This is the heart of what Labov meant by evaluation. He and Waletzky call evaluation “that part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative *by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others*” (my italics “Narrative Analysis” 37). Narrators give the significance of their narratives by emphasizing some parts of the narrative over others; this is how they tell their audiences why a story is worth reading.

The main evolution of Labov’s thought between his earlier paper with Waletzky and the scheme of narrative he lays out in *Studies in the Black English Vernacular* comes in the number of methods by which he hypothesizes narrators are able to evaluate their stories, to emphasize certain events over others. Most of these methods are linguistic in nature: All build off Labov’s basic idea of the narrative clause, and the structure of stories into which he incorporates that

basic idea. I give these methods below, adding my own and others' observances and additions where appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

### *Evaluative Action*

Narrators need to present their readers with a sequence of events, but they also need to give their readers a way of interpreting those events. One way narrators can accomplish this, as we saw above, is by introducing a character to tell the significance of an event. A more surreptitious way is what Labov calls **evaluative action**. Evaluative action occurs when the narrator tells what a character “*did* [as well as]<sup>6</sup> what they said” (his italics *Language* 373). These actions invariably belie a character's reaction to an event in the narrative world. In the example given above, Hurtubise shows evaluative action by comparing the sentence “my father said the fish I caught was the biggest fish he'd ever seen!” to the sentence “my father was hopping all over the bank, and he said that mine was the biggest fish he'd ever seen!” (32). The father “hopping all over the bank” in the second sentence is an evaluative because it emphasizes the *raison d'être* of the story, and it does this not only by telling what the father says, but also by telling how he acts.

Evaluative actions, however, are not always so obvious, nor is it always obvious the exact way that such evaluation relates to the story's reason for being told. A more subtle example of evaluative action from *Smith* occurs when the star is not found in the cake, and Nokes mocks Alf's notion that the star is from Faery: “He looked at Prentice with a *smirk*” (18). In this case, Nokes's smirk is an evaluative action, because it communicates Nokes's contempt for Prentice's opinions; that is, it interprets narrative events for readers. But the way this evaluative action supports the story's *raison d'être* is not immediately apparent. (We will find out how in the next few chapters.)

### *Evaluation by Suspension of Action*

If narrators can evaluate their stories by characters' actions, they can also evaluate them by what Labov calls a **suspension of action** (374). The emotions and interpretations of events expressed through evaluative action, according to Labov "may have been instantaneous or simultaneous with the action at the time, but when they are expressed in separate sentences the action stops. Stopping the action calls attention to that part of the narrative and indicates to the listener that this has some connection with the evaluative point. When this is done artfully the listener's attention is suspended, and the resolution comes with much greater force" (374). On the linguistic level, evaluation by suspension of action appears wherever narrative clauses are split up by other types of clauses. Such a suspension occurs in the example given near the beginning of this chapter:

The smith turned away without another word and groped his way to the door. On the threshold he found that his sight had cleared again. *It was evening and the Even-star was shining in a luminous sky close to the Moon. As he stood for a moment looking at their beauty,* he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned. (my italics 47)

As was noted above, the italicized clauses are not narrative clauses, and now we can see their purpose. They suspend the action between the time when Smith gives up the star and the time when Alf gives him the choice of its next bearer. Because of this suspension of action, Alf's offer carries greater force.

### *Evaluation by Suspension of Information*

It should be noted that suspension of action is closely related to the idea of a **suspension of information** in general. For example, a *hyperbaton*, in classical rhetoric, was the syntactic

separation of two words which agreed in Latin or Greek poetry: Oftentimes an adjective would be given at the beginning of a line and the noun it modified at the end of the line, thus suspending that knowledge in readers' minds and adding force to the resolution.<sup>5</sup> Such suspension of knowledge is also a form of what Labov would call evaluation. In *Smith*, when Alf surprises Nokes with a loud voice, the narrative reads: “‘No it isn’t!’ said a voice behind him [Nokes], so suddenly that he jumped. It was the voice of Prentice [...]” (12). Notice that the identification of the speaker is delayed or suspended, and because of this suspension, the revelation that it is Prentice’s voice arrives with much more force. Linguistically, this is done through the use of a metonymy, a way of referring to one entity by means of “another that is related to it.” In this case “voice” refers to “Prentice” (Lakoff and Johnson 35). (Also, Nokes evaluates the scene by jumping. If a Tolkien scene is evaluated at all, it is usually highly evaluated.)

### *Intensifiers*

Another way narrators may evaluate individual sentences in their stories is by using what Labov calls **intensifiers**. Intensifiers select one event in a series of narrative events and focus on it, making it appear more important to readers, signifying that in this event lies one of the reasons the story is being told (378). According to Labov, intensifiers can be *gestures*, *expressive phonology*, *quantifiers*, or almost any type of *repetition* (378-80). Labov includes *gestures*—hand gestures—because he was working with oral narrators. For literary purposes, Hurtubise points out that what is expressed by hand *gestures* in oral narrative “can appear in words such as ‘behold!’ ‘lo!’ ‘suddenly,’ and so on” (105). I would also add that “behold” (and one might argue, “lo”) is an imperative verb in which the narrator specifically tells readers: Pay attention! This scene is important!

### *Expressive Phonology*

The intensifier *expressive phonology* refers to all times that a specific event has some phonological element which draws attention to itself. From the oral narratives that he studied, Labov gives the example of characters who draw out their vowels, “And we were fighin’ for a lo-o-ong ti-i-me, buddy” (379). Hurtubise adds that in literature, *alliteration* and *assonance* play a role in *expressive phonology*, as they draw readers’ attention to a specific passage (105-106). Smith, for example, journeys to inner Faery on a “*day of days, greatly daring*” (my italics 30).

### *Quantifiers*

*Quantifiers* quantify a particular action and thus intensify it. For example Nokes “looked at Prentice with a smirk, and Prentice looked at him with dark eyes and did not smile *at all*” (my italics). “At all” quantifies the amount of Prentice’s smiling. Logically, it is redundant—if he didn’t smile, then of course he didn’t smile at all. There is no need to quantify something which did not happen. But this quantifier is not used for its surface purpose of quantifying, but as an intensifier to clue the reader in that something important is happening.

### *Repetition*

*Repetition* occurs when certain narrative elements are repeated, which “intensifies a particular action, and [...] suspends the action” (379). Labov is referring to repetition of clauses, and he gives the example of a narrator who uses repetition to emphasize an event: “You bleedin’, you bleedin’, Speedy, you bleedin’!” says one of his narrators (379). Whole clauses are not repeated in written narrative as often as they are in oral narrative; however, almost any type of repetition can be evaluative, as repetition draws readers’ attention to a particular event or character. Smith journeys to inner Faery on a “*day of days, greatly daring*” (30). Because of the



repetition of the word “day,” we may assume that this trip into Faery has special significance, and it does: It is on this trip that Smith first meets and dances with the Queen of Faery.

### *Comparators*

While intensifiers such as expressive phonology, quantifiers, and repetition evaluate by selecting one event in a series of events and drawing readers’ attention to it, **comparators**<sup>7</sup> compare one event to another event that is possible but unrealized. Syntactically, comparators include “negatives, futures, modals, quasimodals, questions, imperatives, *or*-clauses, superlatives, comparatives, [...] more or less in increasing order of syntactic complexity” (italics original *Language* 387). These types of clauses “provide a way of evaluating events by placing them against the background of other events which might have happened, but which did not” (381). One such comparator comes in the example we have already seen, where Prentice “did not smile at all.” Notice here that Prentice’s reaction to Nokes’s statements is placed against the background of a possible event which did not happen: Prentice smiling and thus showing his approval of Noke’s statement. Tolkien could have chosen to say “Prentice frowned,” but this does not carry the force that an evaluative comparator does. Thus, that Prentice “did not smile at all” carries the force of a double evaluation (remember the intensifier “at all”). Comparators may also come in the form of imperatives and questions because “all requests, even the most mitigated, are to be heard against an unrealized possibility of negative consequences if they are not answered” (*Language* 385). Similarly, the future tense speaks of events which have not yet happened and may not happen. Thus the future tense is also a type of comparator. Comparatives and superlatives, such as “more” and “most” are also comparators (*Language* 386). Referring to the near-sighted conception of Faery in Wootton Major, the Queen of Faery tells Smith, “*Better* a little doll, maybe, *than* no memory of Faery at all” (38). Finally, comparators appear “as the

grammatical comparative and superlative clauses with *as*, in prepositional phrases with *like*, in metaphors and similes” (386). Smith hears the dawn-song fly over him on the morning of his tenth birthday “*like a wave of music into the West*” (19).

### *Correlatives*

Where comparators move “away from the line of narrative events to consider unrealized possibilities and compare then with the events that did occur; **correlatives** bring together two events that *actually* occurred so that they are conjoined in a single independent clause” (my italics and bolding *Language* 387). Syntactically, correlatives may be marked by the progressive tense (BE verb + -ing) and by appended participles: These are participles which end in -ing, do not have a BE verb attached, and are seen as occurring contemporaneously with “the action of the main verb of the sentence” (387). In general, four situations<sup>8</sup> may occur:

1. a single progressive in narrative (John was fishing.)
2. a compound progressive (John was fishing, smoking, and humming.)
3. another verb tense with appended participles (The flowers folded their petals, bending to the ground, withering slightly, and fell.)
4. any verb tense with a correlative clause (“As he stood for a moment looking at their beauty, he felt a hand on his shoulder.”)

Labov stipulates that clauses in case 1 can either be narrative clauses or orientation clauses, depending on the context in which they occur (387 footnote). If temporal juncture occurs between these clauses and other narrative clauses, then progressives are narrative clauses. But most often, progressive clauses are free clauses which are seen as occurring continuously throughout an entire scene or episode. An example of this was given earlier: “[T]he Even-star *was shining* in a luminous sky.” Sentences falling under case 2 compare two or more actions

which are happening continuously and contemporaneously, such as “fishing, smoking, and humming” in my example sentence.

More interesting and more evaluative still are sentences such as those in case 3, for these appended participles are joined to a finite verb, in many cases to a narrative clause and thus a narrative event. Therefore, case 3 sentences may directly evaluate narrative events by presenting them in the company of other continuous events occurring contemporaneously. These correlatives “bring in a wide range of simultaneous events while the listener waits for the other shoe to fall,” or flower, in my example (Labov 388).

I would add to Labov’s definition of correlatives case 4, which are dependent clauses beginning with “as,” “while,” and “just as,” as in our earlier example from *Smith*: “*as he stood for a moment looking at their beauty, he felt a hand on his shoulder*” (my italics *Smith* 47). According to Labov’s theory of evaluation in narrative, then, there is an evaluative connection between the smith admiring the beauty of the Even-star and Alf putting his hand on the smith’s shoulder; that is, their meanings are somehow connected and this connection gives us an insight as to why the story is tellable. In this case, we might even be able to articulate these meanings. The smith, after selflessly relinquishing the fay-star, his passport to Faery, is looking at the world with renewed or recovered sight. His journeying into Faery has been successful, for even though he is no longer about to return there, he has come back to the world of Wootton Major, seeing it anew, admiring its beauty, which Tolkien called “Recovery” in his lecture “On Fairy-stories” (146). Alf’s hand placed on the blacksmith’s shoulder is a gesture of respect, friendship, and acceptance, which Alf will soon show by giving the choice of the star’s successor to the smith. This choice of temporally juxtaposing the smith’s looking at the beauty of the star and moon and Alf’s hand being placed on his shoulder is a narrative one, but it is not one where the narrator

overtly shows personality by speaking directly to the audience. Instead, on the syntactic level, the narrator reinforces the goals and themes of the work—Faery and its place in human life—which was at least one reason why Tolkien wrote the story.

These are the main forms of evaluation<sup>9</sup> as Labov defines them. There are others, which have not been discussed, as both Labov and Hurtubise stipulate (392; 114). But these that have been discussed give a strong foundation with which to analyze what the author of a narrative is getting at, what is his or her story's *raison d'être*.

#### *Two Additions to Labov's Evaluation*

There are some instances which appear in *Smith*, though, which the techniques so far discussed cannot explain. Upon introducing Alf the apprentice, *Smith's* narrator tells readers that he “was more lithe than the Wootton lads and quicker, soft-spoken and very polite, but *ridiculously* young for the work [of being the apprentice of the Master Cook], *barely* in his teens by the look of him” (my italics 8). In the structure of stories given above, this statement is orientation—it tells readers who Alf is and what his circumstances are. But we may also notice that these lines are telling us why this part of the story is of interest, its *raison d'être*. It is of interest because it involves a scandal, the appointment of an apprentice who is “ridiculously” young for the job. These lines are evaluation, then, but how might we account for them in terms of Labov's ideas of evaluation?

#### *Evaluation by Perception*

As we saw above, some evaluation techniques use the actions or words of characters to evaluate certain events. The essential force of both of these arguments, though, is that one way for narrators to effectively interpret events for their audiences is through the perspective of a character. Though this can be done by a character's actions or words, sometimes perspectives

clearly associated with certain characters or groups of characters can be taken up into narrative or orientation clauses themselves. This method can most clearly be detected by words which semantically imply a particular perception of or judgment of a narrated event. In the example we are considering, the narrator of *Smith* tells his readers that Alf was “*ridiculously* young for the work [of being apprentice to the Master Cook], *barely* in his teens by the *look* of him” (my italics 8). The italicized words, “*ridiculously*,” “*barely*,” and “*look*,” all imply a perception of Alf’s youthful characteristics set against the event of his becoming the Cook’s apprentice. This perception is not and cannot be Tolkien’s, who is the narrator and thus knows that Alf is the King of Faery, and probably the oldest character in the story. Instead, it is the perception of the villagers, as we learn a few sentences later: “People soon became used to *seeing* him about, and he made a few friends” (my italics 8). I then propose to call the general principle from which Labov’s ideas derive **evaluation by perception**, a technique by which narrators evaluate their works by interpreting events through the perceptions of one or more of their characters, however that may be accomplished linguistically.

Another instance in *Smith* which is surely evaluated, but which is problematic, is the example given several times above, when the star is not found in the cake: “He [Nokes] looked at Prentice with a smirk, and Prentice looked at him with dark eyes and did not smile at all” (18). The sentence is highly evaluated and from different perspectives. Noke’s smile is an evaluative action, interpreting the scene for readers from his perspective. But then, Prentice’s not smiling (a comparator) and “at all” (a qualifier), as we saw above, are also evaluative, and they evaluate the story from Prentice’s perspective. As I said in the first chapter, much of *Smith* is a battle of the perspectives of those who believe in Faery (like Alf) and those who don’t (like Nokes). And in this sense, we can see how these conflicting perspectives support the story’s *raison d’être*. But

in each scene the narrator will be closer to one perspective or the other. We need a linguistic way of ascertaining this, and such a way is provided by Kuno and Kaburaki's idea of empathy (or camera angle) in syntax.

### Camera Angle

"In describing an event," Kuno and Kaburaki say, "the speaker can represent his attitude toward its participants in numerous, though sometimes very subtle ways" (627). This attitude, according to Kuno and Kaburaki, is the speaker's identification with one of the participants in the event, which they call empathy (627). Empathy "is the speaker's identification, *with varying degrees* [...], with a person who participates in the event that he describes in a sentence" say Kuno and Kaburaki (italics original 628). Two simple example sentences that Kuno and Kaburaki give to illustrate their point are "John hit his wife" and "Mary's husband hit her" (627). These sentences "are identical in their logical content [or semantic], but they differ with each other with respect to 'camera angles'" (627). In the first sentence, the camera angle is closer to John than to Mary, even defining Mary in terms of her relationship to John ("John's wife"). In the second sentence, camera angle is closest to Mary, using the same technique, which Kuno and Kaburaki term "choice of descriptors" (627).

Kuno and Kaburaki's term for this phenomenon, "empathy," and even the term "camera angle" are somewhat misleading for my purposes. These terms focus one on the speaker's or narrator's point of view. But my purpose is to tell how narrators interpret and evaluate events for their readers. Therefore, I will use what Kuno and Kaburaki call "empathy" or "camera angle" as a linguistic tool that narrators can use to show readers that the relationship of a particular event to one character or entity is more important than that same event's relationship to another character or entity. In the first example that Kuno and Kaburaki give, "John hit his wife," this

event is presented as it relates to John, and thus we may expect readers or listeners to interpret it as such. We might expect them to respond: “What a creep!” or something of the sort. This sentence thus invokes disgust in the listener because the speaker puts the camera angle<sup>10</sup> closer to John. In the second example, “Mary’s husband hit her,” pity for Mary will be invoked, as the narrator here places the camera angle closer to Mary than to John. We might expect a response from listeners or readers such as: “She should leave him.”

### *Camera Angle in Detail*

These examples can be put into more technical techniques, which Kuno and Kaburaki give in their article “Empathy and Syntax.” These techniques fall under the general categories of *choice of descriptor* and *syntax*. I explain them below, and then will explain how this understanding of camera angle in narrative will help us with our dilemma in the sentence: “He [Nokes] looked at Prentice with a smirk, and Prentice looked at him with dark eyes and did not smile at all.”

### *Choice of Descriptor*

Kuno and Kaburaki elaborate some distinct techniques for seeing to whom the camera angle of a narrative lies closest. One way, which we have seen above, they call a narrator’s “choice of descriptor.” By choosing what descriptor is used for a certain character in a scenario, a narrator may point out that an event is more important to one character over another. In the example sentence, “I talked to John’s wife about him,” the camera angle is closest to John because the speaker chooses a descriptor for Mary (John’s wife) that defines her in terms of her relationship to John (629). Kuno and Kaburaki use the following notation to describe this relationship: *John* > *Mary* (629).<sup>11</sup>

Not all descriptors are as clear-cut as the preceding example. The greatest generalization that we might make about descriptors is that unless an entity is described by its own name, then that entity will be given in terms of another entity. One technique, particularly applicable in our study, is metonymy, as this appears in several places in *Smith*. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson say that a metonymy<sup>12</sup> is the use of “one entity to refer to another that is related to it” (35). They go on to define several types of metonymic relationships such as OBJECT USED FOR USER giving the example sentence “the *sax* has the flu today” (their italics 38). In this sentence, “the *sax*” is not a saxophone, but a person who plays the saxophone. However, this sentence would only be spoken when referring to that person in relation to his or her capacity as a sax player. That is, we employ metonymy not only to use one entity to refer to another, but also as a means of projecting our particular thoughts, feelings, and attitudes concerning one entity onto another entity. Metonymies project a perspective.

When narrators then choose to describe characters or events with metonymy, they are not necessarily placing the camera closest to the metonymic referent, as they are in the simpler referents given above of “John” and “John’s wife.” A speaker who says, “the sax has the flu today,” is not placing the camera angle closest to the instrument Bill Clinton jived on during his inaugural party, but closest to the idea or concept of the band as an entity. Thus we might write the camera angle relationship as: *Band as an Entity* > *Saxophone Position in Band* > *Charlie the Saxophone Player* > *Charlie’s Instrument*. Thus, metonymy is a very useful descriptor by which a narrator can place the camera angle of the narrative close to a certain entity, whether that entity be a band or a little village “a few miles away deep in the forest,” as we will see in the next chapter (*Smith* 5).



## *Syntax*

Kuno and Kaburaki suggest a syntactic way of placing the camera as well, which I call the *Surface Structure Camera Angle Hierarchy*<sup>13</sup> (647). “It is easiest,” say Kuno and Kaburaki, “for the speaker to empathize with [place the camera angle closest to] the referent of the subject [of a sentence]; it is next easiest for him to empathize with the referent of the object;... It is next to impossible for the speaker to empathize with the referent of the *by*-passive agentive: Subject  $\geq$  Object  $\geq$  *By*-passive Agentive” (647-8). To put this into a concrete example, in the sentence “the dog ate the cat,” according to the *Surface Structure Camera Angle Hierarchy*, the speaker is placing the camera closest to the dog and next closest to the cat: *Dog* > *Cat*. This relationship can be reversed by applying a passive transformation to the sentence: “The cat was eaten by the dog.” Since “the dog” is now in a *by*-passive agentive phrase, it moves to the lowest position on the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, and thus the relationship of the passive sentence is *Cat* > *Dog*. That is, in the first sentence, we must assign a event/character relationship based on syntax, with the dog at the top of the list; in the second sentence, the unfortunate cat is at the top. Thus, the passive transformation may be used in narrative as a technique for shifting the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, or prominence of the relationship of one character to an event of a given sentence over to the relationships of other characters to that same event.

The above examples of camera angle relationships are for transitive or non-transitive clauses. Narrators can also use clauses centering around BE verbs to place their narrative camera angle. Their main verbs are the BE verbs. To oversimplify matters, BE verb clauses usually<sup>14</sup> either (1) attach qualities to a given noun phrase<sup>15</sup> by means of a predicate adjective phrase or (2) give a type or category to a given noun phrase by means of a predicate noun phrase (Morenberg 8). An example of the former is: “[I]t [Wootton Major] was *larger* than Wootton Minor” (my

italics 5). In this case, the predicate adjective phrase is comparative as well. An example of a BE verb assigning type or category to a noun phrase is “a chicken is a bird.” In either case, it seems evident to me that the subjects of these sentences are at the top of the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, as the point of these sentences is to define and clarify these subjects. The only special case we run into in the story is, “[t]here *was* a village once,” the story’s first line which begins with a place-holder subject. Here I would argue that the camera angle is closest to the village, Wootton Major, the first entity of which the narrator speaks.

#### *Camera Angle and Evaluation*

Let us now return to our sentence, “He [Nokes] looked at Prentice with a smirk, and Prentice looked at him with dark eyes and did not smile at all.” This sentence is evaluated from the perspective of both Nokes and Alf. But now, in terms provided by the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, we can say that Tolkien is placing the camera angle closest to Nokes for two reasons. First, Nokes is the grammatical subject of the first independent clause. Second, the name “Prentice” is a metonymy, defining Alf in terms of his apprenticeship, and thus his relationship to Nokes, who is the Master Cook. Therefore, we may give the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* for this sentence as: *Nokes > Alf*. Nokes’ relationship to the event being described (the fay-star disappearing) is thus more important than Alf’s, at least in this part of the story. This is so because, as I will argue in detail in chapter 4, in this part of the story, Tolkien initially shows the world of Wootton Major in relation to those like Nokes who do not believe in Faery. To do so is this scene’s *raison d’être*.

#### Conclusion

Labov defines evaluation, the method by which authors tell us the point of a tale, on the clausal level. As we have seen, this means that we are able to linguistically distinguish those

sentences, clauses, words, even phonetic segments, which show us why the narrator thinks the story is worth telling. To look at *Smith* in terms of Labov's ideas of evaluation, then, is to take the story on its own and, therefore, the author's terms, not looking outside of the narrative (in a general sense), but looking closely at the very language that Tolkien used to tell the story, at the narrative itself.

To recall the literary theories concerning *Smith* which were presented in chapter 1, this approach is not the same as Shippey's definition of taking the story on its own terms. In his section of the "Bounce" article, Shippey says that "things like names," from which he draws his allegorical read of *Smith*, "are for me quite literally the story's carefully-selected own terms" (197). But he is reading these terms against an allegorical background outside of the narrative. As Flieger tells us, "to assume that Tolkien intended the Faery of the story to stand for something outside itself would subordinate that very richness and strangeness to some extra-literary agenda" (Flieger and Shippey 189). Labov's idea of evaluation in narrative (in a specific sense) provides a way of reading the story on the narrator's terms—taking the story on its own terms and reading those terms against the background of the narrative itself. The application of this approach will show why "the heart of *Smith of Wootton Major* lies not so much in the [allegorical] machinery of Great Hall, Cook, and Parson, as in Smith's wanderings in Faery and in the reader's participation in his enchantment, bewilderment, and acceptance of that which he cannot understand" (Flieger and Shippey 189).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> At least Paul Hurtubise has also pointed this out (25-33).

<sup>2</sup> The term “narrator” can be problematic in literary studies, as it may refer either to the actual teller of the story or to a narrative personality within the narrative of the story, such as is outlined in Wayne Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. In an essay called “Some of Tolkien’s Narrators,” Paul Thomas uses Booth’s theories quite profitably to evaluate the narrators of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and the stages in-between. However, this is not what I mean by the narrator here. In this paper, the narrator should be assumed to be the author, Tolkien. This is one of the underlying assumptions of linguistics, that every linguistic technique for making a story interesting and readable is placed there by the author or the narrator. Labov made this assumption because his research was with oral narrators, who were using linguistic techniques to make their stories interesting.

<sup>3</sup> Labov’s original sentence reads that one technique narrators use is “to introduce a third person who evaluates the antagonist’s actions for the narrator.” Labov was studying oral narrator’s who were telling stories from their own lives. Therefore, they were usually the antagonists. The same point, though, holds equally well for written narratives, for the narrator or author of a story controls what his or her characters say in order to evaluate and interpret events in a story from some point of view.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the additions come from Paul Hurtubise’s wonderful thesis *A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Passages in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings*. In his thesis, Hurtubise applies Labov’s ideas to Tolkien’s works, and part of this job included adapting Labov’s ideas, which originated in oral narrative, to written narrative. When explaining Labov, I give Hurtubise’s additions as well as some of my own.

<sup>5</sup> Labov's original statement reads, "A further step of dramatizing the evaluation of a narrative is to tell what people did rather than what they said." But narrators need not do one or the other; they can do both, or neither as far as that goes.

<sup>6</sup> An example of this is the last line of Catullus' poem 13, usually called "Invitation." The lines read: *deos rogabis/ totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum*. The two words in hyperbaton are *totum* ("whole") and *nasum* ("nose"). Catullus wrote this poem as an invitation to a dinner party, with one stipulation—that the guest brings the food, the wine, the witty conversation, and a fair-skinned girl for entertainment. Catullus urges his guest to come in spite of this, saying that in exchange he will give his guest such a lovely smelling perfume that he will "ask the gods to turn you into (*totum*) one big...(nasum) nose!" (Garrison 13, my translation).

<sup>7</sup> For a more in-depth explanation of comparators in literary narrative, with a thorough example from *The Lord of the Rings*, see Hurtubise pages 106-110.

<sup>8</sup> Labov discusses two cases, which are equivalent to my case 1 and a merging of my cases 2 and 3. Case 4 is my own idea. I feel that my separation is informative for reasons which should be apparent in my text.

<sup>9</sup> One form that Labov and Hurtubise briefly discuss are **explicatives**. Explicatives are not "restricted to a certain time frame" as are correlatives (Hurtubise 114). They give information about the past, present, or future sometimes to evaluate action, sometimes to orient readers. Explicative clauses are types of dependent clauses that are not covered in other types of evaluation, and they may begin with qualifiers ("while," "although," "since") and casuals ("because"). They may also be relative clauses (beginning with "that" or "which") and be embedded either in one clause, in a clause already embedded in another clause, or "embedded at the same point in a matrix clause" (390). Explicatives differ from correlatives in that they "do

not necessarily serve the evaluative function of bringing several actions together. The action of the narrative is suspended, but the attention of the listener is not maintained at that point in time—it may be transferred backward or forward, or into a realm of abstract speculation wholly unrelated to the narrative” (Labov 392). Thus explicatives join events from almost any time other than the current narrative time to narrative clauses as a means of evaluating the narrative. Explicatives, though, are not always used for evaluation, and Labov says that they may be used “only to describe action and events that are not entirely familiar to the listener” (392).

<sup>10</sup>For the rest of this paper I will refer to Kuno and Kaburaki’s idea of “empathy” as “camera angle,” a term they use themselves. Empathy is not a useful term for two reasons. (1) It is easy to confuse “empathy” and “sympathy,” as Kuno and Kaburaki themselves point out. A speaker may empathize with some character, in this technical sense, without sympathizing with them (629). (2) The term empathy also implies to me that the speaker must be empathizing with an animate being. Even when used technically, it sounds funny to say one is empathizing with a couch, for instance. But in the linguistic techniques that I will define in this chapter, one can empathize with any entity in a story, and the fact will be very important to my argument in the next chapter. Therefore, in this paper I will use the term “camera angle” instead of “empathy.”

<sup>11</sup>This is an adaptation of their notation which includes the speaker: Speaker > John > Mary.

<sup>12</sup>Metonymy, metaphor, and synecdoche should not be confused. In this paper I am using metonymy in Lakoff and Johnson’s definition, which agrees with the OED description of this word as being the substitution “for a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or phrase denoting a property or something associated with it” (meaning a).

Metaphor, on the other hand is a “figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase

is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable” (OED meaning a.). Thus, when one uses metonymy, one describes one word or phrase by another word or phrase referent is related to the original word or phrase. When one uses metaphor, one describes one word or phrase by another word or phrase whose referent is analogous to the original word or phrase. Synecdoche is more precise still, giving the particular relationship between the original word or phrase and the word or phrase which is used in its place: such relationships include “whole for part or part for whole, genus for species or species for genus” (OED meaning a.). Thus a synecdoche is also a metonymy. Thus, in this paper, I will define all such uses of synecdoche and uses of metonymy as “metonymies”.

<sup>13</sup> Kuno and Kaburaki call it the Surface Structure Empathy Hierarchy.

<sup>14</sup> I will not exhaustively consider every case or transformation of BE verb clauses, as my examples in *Smith* which I hope to study by this theory do not require this.

<sup>15</sup> NP is linguistics notation for a Noun Phrase. A Noun Phrase is a phrase centered around a noun. Some examples of Noun Phrases are: *a tiny bicycle*, *Mrs. Marple*, or *those run pantyhose*.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CAMERA MAKES THE WORLD

#### Introduction

Before there may come the excitement, wonder, and adventure of Faery, J.R.R. Tolkien's task in writing *Smith of Wootton Major* was first to create the little "village in a clearing," Wootton Major, as a real and viable place in readers' minds; a place consistent within itself; a place readers could imaginatively enter; to use Tolkien's phrasing, a place commanding "Secondary Belief" ("Fairy-stories" 70). In this chapter, I hope to show how he accomplishes this feat: first by giving a brief background of Wootton Major, according to what Tolkien and others have said about the village and its place in the story; and next by giving a detailed linguistic analysis of the way Tolkien introduces Wootton Major to his readers, specifically using Labov's and Kuno and Kaburaki's theories, which I presented in the last chapter.

#### Of Wootton Major

"There was a village once, not very long ago for those with long memories, nor very far away for those with long legs" (5). Thus we are introduced to Wootton Major, the quaint quasi-medieval English village where a blacksmith is given a fay-star that will take him to the land of Faery. The village "seems very British [though] the time and location are fairly vague," says Margaret Sammons (3). But it is untouched by any medieval feudal system or conquests, and is not known for its politics but instead for "the skill of its workers in various crafts, but most of all for its cooking" (5). Tolkien describes it in his essay<sup>1</sup> on *Smith*: "Wootton thus represents an earlier intrusion of men's settlements into the foreign country of Forest; Wootton Minor is [s]till a village in a clearing. The forest is still close to the western edge of Wootton Major" (*Smith*



85). Wootton, or at least this tale of it, is not concerned with the politics of the outside world, but with its own artesian and craftsman type of provincial life. As such, it is the perfect setting for a fairy-tale.

But if Wootton Major represents a prototypical English village “in a clearing”; it is set apart from all such historical villages by its somewhat peculiar customs.<sup>3</sup> Wootton “had a large Kitchen which belonged to the Village Council, and the Master Cook was an important person. The Cook’s House and the kitchen,” readers are told, “adjoined the Great Hall” where the villagers held debates, meetings, and feasts (5). The Great Hall was the center of social life, much as a village church might be in a prototypical English village,<sup>2</sup> a point Tolkien even makes himself in his essay (100). This symbolism is taken up into the story by the fact that the Great Hall serves as a sort of reference point to the influence of the nearby land of Faery, much as early English villagers believed churches stood as a reference point between heaven and earth.

But at the time the story takes place, Wootton Major’s connection to Faery has dwindled. Faery has gone out of style. The Great Hall, “the oldest building in the place and the most beautiful,” being the once-upon-a-time connection to Faery, is “no longer painted or gilded as it had been once upon a time” (6). The feasts held in the Great Hall “are becoming, or have already become, mere occasions for eating and drinking,” instead of being expressions of community art, so closely associated with Faery—“songs, tales music art” (*Smith* 93).

In spite of this loss of Faery, Wootton Major is still prosperous. What the current villagers do not realize is that their prosperity is due to the village’s past connection with Faery. Tolkien says in his essay, “The crafts of Wootton, on which their present prosperity was based, actually owed their fame and commercial success in the beginning to a special skill and ‘artistic’

quality which contact with Faery had given them. But commercial success had for some time begun to have effect. The village had become comfortable and satisfied” (92).

It is to this “comfortable and satisfied” village that Tolkien needed to introduce his readers. His task was to create it as a real and viable place in their minds, create it as a Secondary World so that readers could enter it: enter it and then go beyond it.

#### Creating Wootton Major as a Viable Secondary World

As Tolkien himself saw, though such tasks are extremely rewarding when accomplished—“story-making in its primary and most potent form,” he called them—they are difficult, for the author who attempts such tasks must not only create such a world, but must also bring readers into that world, make readers feel comfortable with that world, and translate that world into terms modern readers can understand (“Fairy-stories” 70). In his longer works, as Shippey has showed, Tolkien did this through introducing that other world through the perspectives of characters with whom modern readers could identify (72). But *Smith* has no hobbits: no Bilbos (“full of nonsense, like modern English society as perceived by Tolkien”), no Frodos, no Sams (*Road* 72). Smith himself is not up to the task, as he does not even appear by name until the sixteenth page, almost one third of the way through the fifty-seven page text, and long after the narrative world has been set in readers’ minds. When Smith enters the narrative, he enters a world that, for readers, already exists.

Though it has not yet been recognized in criticism of the work, the way Tolkien solves this problem is a credit to his narrative genius. Instead of using a character, he deftly controls the camera angle and evaluation in his narrative, so that the narrative has the effect of building the world of Wootton Major as a viable place which “your mind can enter” (“Fairy-stories” 60). First he places the camera angle closest to Wootton Major, effectively setting up a terminology which

will frame the rest of the orientation in terms of Wootton Major. Then, whenever the narrative moves to different topics, Tolkien puts the camera angle of the narrative closest to a word or phrase which references this original frame of Wootton Major. To accomplish this task, he sometimes using syntax, and often uses some type of what Kuno and Kaburaki term “descriptors.” Cooking, for instance, is introduced in the narrative as being “its [Wootton Major’s] way” of being a remarkable village, which frames cooking in terms of Wootton Major. In this way, each new topic discussed refers back to Wootton Major, adding to the village’s complexity and vitality, making its existence and life an assumption in readers’ minds: making it a place they “can enter.”

#### Camera Angle and Evaluation in the Orientation of *Smith*

In Labov’s scheme of narrative, the first elements of a story are traditionally the story’s abstract and orientation. A story’s abstract summarizes the whole story or a particular episode, while an orientation provides necessary details of “the time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation” which the story will focus on (364). For reasons which I will discuss later, *Smith* does not have an abstract. Instead it opens with an orientation, telling readers, sometimes in narrative clauses, sometimes in free clauses, Wootton’s location in time and space and the persons and activities with which the story will be concerned.

Conveniently, Tolkien took the guesswork out of defining where *Smith*’s orientation begins and where it ends by typographically separating his text with double line breaks which correspond very nicely to shifts in theme, scene, situation, or narrative focus. I will consider the first three of these sections to be *Smith*’s orientation, as they bring readers up-to-date for the beginning of the narrative action, which I take to begin with the first Twenty-four Feast that Nokes and Alf prepare. Respectfully, in these sections Tolkien describes: (1) the village of

Wootton Major and its customs; (2) the unusual events surrounding the appointment of an apprentice by the former Master Cook; and (3) the vacancy of the position of Master Cook and the appointment of Nokes, instead of the apprentice. These sections are quite complex, so to make my analysis of them more digestible, I will consider them according to the narrative functions of three different types of verbs: BE verbs, passive verbs, and active verbs.

#### BE Verbs and Evaluation in the First Orientation Section

“There *was* a village once,” “it *was* larger than Wootton Minor, a few miles away deep in the trees” “but it *was* not very large,” and “it *was* at that time prosperous” (my italics 5). Thus readers are introduced to Wootton Major. These sentences come from the first two paragraphs, of *Smith of Wootton Major*. Their italicized verbs are BE verbs, and thus these are free clauses—clauses with no temporal juncture—which are the most common clauses in orientation material (Labov 364). According to my argument in the last chapter, syntactically these BE verbs place the narrative camera angle closest to their grammatical subject. Thus, the narrative camera angle is closest to the noun, Wootton Major in these clauses. Readers are oriented to this noun as a viable place they can imaginatively enter in terms of its type (“a village”), size (“larger than Wootton Minor” but “not very large”), location (a “few miles away” from Wootton Minor, but not quite so “deep in the trees”), and economic status (“at that time prosperous”).

More details of Wootton Major come in the next paragraph: “It was a remarkable village in its way, being well known in the country round about for the skill of its workers in various crafts but most of all for its cooking” (5). Said simply, this sentence functions in the narrative to transition the topic of discourse to the role of cooking in Wootton Major, including the place the cooking is done, the person who does the cooking, and the role that feasts (the results of much cooking) have in village life—all of which are vital parts of the story as a whole. At first glance

this sentence may seem simple, but it is highly nuanced and evaluated. In it a transition of topic occurs, but Tolkien still keeps the camera angle firmly with Wootton Major. Tolkien also highly evaluates it, leaving no doubt in readers' minds that Wootton Major and the culture of cooking are vital to the story's *raison d'être*.

The main clause of this sentence, "It was remarkable," follows the pattern above, telling readers of Wootton Major in terms of its remarkableness. However, the word "remarkable" is an evaluation because, though it is close in meaning to "unique," "remarkable" implies a perspective in a way that the word "unique" does not. That is, its uniqueness is worthy of being remarked upon. Tolkien, then, is evaluating the story by saying that Wootton Major is "remarkable," a case of what Labov called external evaluation, a statement by an author indicates that a certain element in the story will be important to the story's *rainson d'etre* (371).

Wootton Major is "remarkable in its way, being well known in the country round about for the skill of its workers in various crafts, but most of all for its cooking." The simple phrase "in its way" is a key ingredient in the way that Tolkien transitions to talking about Wootton Major's cooking because this phrase places the narrative camera angle closest to Wootton Major, thus framing cooking in terms of Wootton Major. The phrase "in its way" is a hedge saying that the village Wootton Major is remarkable in a unique way—a redundancy, as we have already seen, because being remarkable implies being unique. More importantly, in Labov's theory of evaluation "its way" is a comparator, though it does not compare narrative events "by placing them against the background of other events which might have happened, but which did not" (381). Instead, this phrase subtly compares a quality of Wootton Major, the way in which *this* little village is unique, to (assumedly) the ways that other little villages *might be* unique.

This phrase also places the camera angle closest to the concept of Wootton Major as a village by what Kuno and Kaburaki call “a choice of descriptor” (627). Similarly to the example sentence in chapter 2, “John hit *his wife*,” which places the camera angle closest to John by defining Mary (John’s wife) in terms of John, the phrase, “its way,” places the camera angle closest to Wootton Major by defining the way Wootton Major is remarkable in terms of Wootton Major itself through the pronoun “its.”

The phrase that follows further evaluates and places the camera angle closest to Wootton Major. Wootton Major is “well known in the country round about for the skill of its workers in various crafts but most of all for its cooking.” The first part of this phrase, “being well known in the country round about” is an evaluation by perspective. This perspective, that of the folks who live in the country around Wootton Major, lends credibility to the author’s assertion that the village is remarkable. One evaluation lends credibility and force to another. People in surrounding villages know Wootton Major for the skill of “its workers” a descriptor which places the camera angle, once again, back with Wootton Major through the pronoun “its.”

But “most of all” Wootton Major is remarkable for and known for “its cooking.” “Most of all” is another evaluative comparator (this time in the form of a comparative) comparing “cooking” to all the other things that Wootton Major could be known for. It supports the earlier evaluative comparator “in its way,” which functions the exact same way—another case of one evaluation reiterating and adding force to another. Finally, “its cooking” is also a descriptor, placing the camera angle nearest to Wootton Major in the same way that both the descriptors “its way” and “its workers” do.

In this single sentence, then, evaluation and camera angle work seamlessly together, sometimes even in the same words. The topic switches to cooking in Wootton Major, with two

evaluations that indicate that this cooking is remarkable compared to all the ways other villages are remarkable, and two evaluations that indicate that this cooking is remarkable compared to all the ways that Wootton Major is remarkable. At the same time, the camera angle of the narrative remains closest to Wootton Major not only because Wootton Major is the subject of the sentence, but also because three descriptors explicitly define the next topic to be discussed in terms of Wootton Major. After this sentence, everything Tolkien tells readers concerning cooking—the role of the Master Cook, the custom of the Twenty-four Feast, the appointment of a new Master Cook—will not only be important to the story’s *raison d’être*, it will reflect back on Wootton Major, building this village as a viable and believable place in readers’ minds, worthy of Secondary Belief.

#### Passive Verbs and Camera Angle in the Orientation Sections

One way to represent what the primacy of Wootton Major concerning camera angle is by the following notation: *Wootton Major > its way (of being remarkable) > its cooking > the role of Master Cook*; *Wootton Major > its way (of being remarkable) > its cooking > the Great Hall*; *Wootton Major > its way (of being remarkable) > its cooking > the Twenty-four Feast*; and so on. Essentially, no matter how cooking or concepts connected with cooking are presented in the narrative, they will ultimately reflect on Wootton Major.

But Tolkien also uses other verb forms to create Wootton Major as viable place in the minds of his readers. One such verb form is the passive, which Tolkien uses to place the camera angle back on Wootton Major, especially when he informs readers of the Twenty-four Feast which is held once every twenty-four years in Wootton Major to honor good children. Passives, say Kuno and Kaburaki, “elevat<sup>4</sup>e the referent of the object to the most prominent position in the Surface Structure Camera Angle Hierarchy, and to defocalize the referent of the subject to the

position that cannot receive the speaker's empathy" (648). That is, narrator's passivize sentences to place the camera angle of their narratives closer to the semantic patient, the receiver of the action, and farther away from the semantic agent, the performer of the action. For example, Tolkien tells his readers that the Feast "*was only held once in twenty-four years, and only twenty-four children were invited*" (6). In this sentence, the villagers who perform the actions of holding the feasts and inviting the children have been demoted in terms of camera angle, and in fact have been erased from the sentence entirely. Thus, the camera angle of the sentence, syntactically, lies with the Twenty-four Feast, which is its subject; but by the argument given above, the camera angle ultimately reflects back on Wootton Major as given by: *Wootton Major > its way (of being remarkable) > its cooking > the Twenty-four Feast*.

Tolkien's use of passives to perform this function is unique because of the strong pattern that emerges concerning the frequency in which they occur in the three orientation sections I have proposed to consider. Respectfully, 35%, 4%, and 0% of total verbs in these orientation sections are passive. The dramatic drop from the first orientation section to subsequent orientation sections implies that Tolkien is using passives for some specific purpose in the first orientation section. This purpose, as I have said, is to demote the agents in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* in these sentences so that the narrative camera is placed closest to the Twenty-four Feast itself, and other concepts closely associated with it.

But who are these agents who are being demoted, who are being removed from the camera angle? With only two exceptions,<sup>5</sup> the agent for every passive verb in all orientation sections is the inhabitants of Wootton Major, the villagers. After all, this is their feast, so they are the ones holding it and inviting the children. Tolkien syntactically suppresses the inhabitants of Wootton Major so that the camera angle of the narrative is closest to their custom of holding



the Feast and the expectations, opinions, and values attached to that custom. This custom, then, becomes attached not to the villagers, but to Wootton Major itself, fortifying it as a real place in readers' minds.

As strong an argument as the numbers alone make for the validity of this claim concerning Tolkien's use of the passive, the full effects of this technique are best seen by comparing a passage in which it is used to one in which it is not. The first two paragraphs below are Tolkien's original paragraphs, taken from the first orientation section, with the passive verbs italicized. I have rewritten the second two paragraphs, changing the passive verbs to their active counterparts and giving them their implied subject, either "the villagers" or a pronoun referring back to "the villagers."

In the Hall the villagers held their meetings and debates, and their public feasts, and their family gatherings. So the Cook *was kept* busy, since for all these occasions he had to provide suitable fare. For the festivals, of which there were many in the course of the year, the fare that *was thought* suitable was plentiful and rich.

There was one festival to which all looked forward, for it was the only one *held* in winter. It went on for a week, and on its last day at sundown there was a merrymaking *called* The Feast of Good Children, to which not many *were invited*. No doubt some who deserved to *be asked were overlooked*, and some who did not *were invited* by mistake; for that is the way of things, however careful those who arrange such matters may try to be. In any case it was largely by chance of birthday that any child came in for the Twenty-four Feast, since that *was only held* once in twenty-four years, and only twenty-four children *were invited*. For that occasion the Master Cook *was expected* to do his best, and in addition to many other good things it was custom for him to make the Great Cake. By the excellence (or otherwise) of this his name *was chiefly remembered*, for a Master Cook seldom if ever lasted long enough in office to make a second Great Cake. (6-7)

In the Hall the villagers held their meetings and debates, and their public feasts, and their family gatherings. So they kept the Cook busy, since for all these occasions he had to provide suitable fare. For the festivals, of which there were many in the course of the year, the fare that the villagers thought suitable was plentiful and rich.

There was one festival to which all looked forward, for it was the only one they held in winter. It went on for a week, and on its last day at sundown there was a merrymaking which the villagers called The Feast of Good Children, to which they invited not many. No doubt the villagers overlooked some who deserved for the villagers to ask them, and they invited some who did not by mistake; for that is the way of things, however careful those who arrange such matters may try to be. In any case it was largely by chance of birthday that any child came in for the Twenty-four Feast, since the villagers only held it once in twenty-four years, and they invited only twenty-four children. For that occasion they expected the Master Cook to do his best, and in addition to many other good things it was custom for him to make the Great Cake. They chiefly remembered his name by the excellence (or otherwise) of this, for a Master Cook seldom if ever lasted long enough in office to make a second Great Cake. (my rewrite)

The camera angle of my rewrite is closest to “the villagers.” If we were given the second paragraphs alone, we might easily conclude that this story was about this group of villagers and their customs, that is, that the events conveyed through the narrative concerned them most closely. But by reconfiguring the villager’s place in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* by means of the passive, Tolkien focuses his readers on the village of Wootton Major itself, and thus the customs and actions of the villagers are seen as an extension of the character of that village. Wootton Major becomes a Secondary World with its own concerns, a world which readers can enter through Secondary Belief. And after readers enter Wootton Major, they may go beyond the by now familiar customs, gossips, and opinions of its parish and find themselves in the Wide World or even in Faery.

#### Active Verbs in the Orientation Sections

While passives employ a grammatical transformation to change the position of an event or constituent in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* of a particular sentence, active verbs do not. The camera angle of an active sentence, at least syntactically, is closest to the subject, which is seen as performing the action. To show that Tolkien places the camera angle closest to Wootton Major throughout the orientation sections, I will now examine the subjects of active sentences.

Respectfully, 28%, 72%, and 82% of the verbs in the three orientation sections are active. (The percentage of active clauses increases as the story progresses, which is what might be expected: As the plot progresses, the narrator tells readers more about the actions of the characters, and that requires active verbs.) To study the camera angle relationships of active clauses requires looking at their subjects. I break their subjects into three categories: “Customs/Cooking,” “Villagers,” and “Main Characters.” The first category, “Customs/Cooking” includes sentences whose subjects are Wootton Major itself, the Great Hall,

the Master Cook (not a particular Master Cook, but rather sentences explaining the role of Master Cook in general), and a number of other placeholder subjects. An example of the role of Master Cook as subject is: “*The Master* chose one [an apprentice] in due time, and *he* taught him all that *he* could; and as *they* both grew older *the apprentice* took on more of the important work, so that when *the Master* retired or died there *he* was, ready to take over the office and become Master Cook in his turn” (7). An example of a place holder subject is: “[*I*]t was custom for him [the Master Cook] to make the Great Cake” (7). The second category, “Villagers,” is self explanatory. Finally, the category “Main Characters” refers to the times when either the first Master Cook (Grandfather Rider), Nokes, or Alf is mentioned.

I give the frequency in Figure 1 that each of these types of subjects appears.

Fig. 1. The Frequency of Subjects of Active Verbs

Active Verb Grammatical Subject	Orientation Section 1	Orientation Section 2	Orientation Section 3
<i>Customs/Cooking</i>	77%	30%	<1%
<i>Villagers</i>	23%	18%	29%
<i>Main Characters</i>	0%	56%	71%

The subjects from the “Customs/Cooking” category appear often in the first orientation section, but dwindle in the following sections. This pattern is what may be expected though, as the function of the first orientation section, as I show above through BE verbs, is to introduce Wootton Major and its customs. The subjects from the category “Main Characters” also appear as may be expected, for after readers are introduced to the situation of Wootton Major, the narrative turns more and more to advancing the plot, which requires main characters.

The only category of subjects which appear fairly consistently across all orientation sections is “Villagers.” My argument above concerning Tolkien’s use of passives to demote the

villagers on the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* strongly implies that he was aware of the threat that these volitional agents, performing so many actions, pose to his so carefully constructed hierarchy of camera angles. Tolkien may be suppressing the villagers in nearly every passive sentence, but he is quite consistently allowing them to be the subjects of active clauses, and thus placing the camera angle closest to them, on average in a little over 20% of these clauses. But, as he does with passives, Tolkien is here using a little bit of narrative sleight-of-hand to place the camera angle closer to Wootton Major than to its inhabitants. As I will show momentarily, this occurs by a metonymy.

Most often, when Tolkien refers to the inhabitants of Wootton Major in the Orientation paragraphs, he uses pronouns such as “some,” “all,” “everyone,” and “no one’s.” These are types of descriptors to be sure, but, at least upon first consideration, they do not appear to point the camera either at Wootton Major or its inhabitants. They are not descriptors such as “John’s wife” in previous examples—their referent does not strongly receive a promotion in terms of camera angle. However, in one case, as I show above, the narrator does refer to the villagers with a “John’s wife” type of descriptor, calling the villagers “its workers”—“its” referring of course to Wootton Major. But more valuable to our discussion here are the times when Tolkien chooses metonymy for his descriptor, which Lakoff and Johnson define as having “a referential function, that is, it allows one entity to *stand for* another” (their italics 36).

In fairy-stories there is a metonymy that can be labeled as THE PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS.<sup>6</sup> THE PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS is a commonly used metonymy outside of fairy-stories. For example, in the sentence “Europe thinks the USA is stuck up,” both “Europe” and “the USA” are metonymies for the inhabitants of Europe and those of the USA. The result of these metonymies is that they make the reader feel that Europe as a whole thinks

the USA as a whole is stuck up. That is, they project the feelings of a few inhabitants (or whatever the case may be) on the whole place. In Kuno and Kaburaki's terms, they place the camera angle closer to the place than to its inhabitants.

In *Smith* Tolkien usually refers to the inhabitants of Wootton Major in the orientation sections by pronouns such as "some," "all," "everyone," and "no one's." But when he does not refer to them by pronouns, he uses variations of THE PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS, "the villagers" and "the village." "The village," used in the sentence "he brought back with him an apprentice; and that astounded the Village," is an example of a pure THE PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS metonym (7). As did Tolkien's use of passivization, his use of metonymies, then, has the effect of placing the camera angle back on Wootton Major, allowing readers to project the inhabitants' customs and feelings onto Wootton Major, to set the village up as a real place in the Secondary World. This may seem a stretch, but we often overlook the most subtle tools of art. Also, that this technique is not unique to Tolkien (I would imagine that most fairy-stories have some villagers in them) does not make it less effective. On the contrary, these techniques become attached to genres such as the fairy-story because of their effectiveness. Furthermore, even the pronouns "some," "all," "everyone," and "no one's," by which the narrator also refers to the villagers place the camera angle at least weakly closest to Wootton Major, because they refer to metonyms which in turn refer to that village. We might represent this as: *Wootton Major* > *Villagers* > *various pronouns*.

There are two ways that Tolkien refers to the inhabitants of Wootton Major using neither pronouns nor metonyms, but neither effectively counters the argument made above. The first of these comes in the first paragraph of the story: "[A] fair number of *folk* lived in it [Wootton Major], good, bad, and mixed, as is usual" and several uses of the word "people." In the case of

“folk,” I would argue that the word, much like “villagers,” has become a part of a sort of fairy-story vocabulary. That is, this word signals to the reader that the story in which it appears will be a fairy-story or will be some type of story to deal with antiquated times. As such, though it may not focus readers’ attention back on Wootton Major, it gives readers a clue as to what they should expect from the story, what they should be ready for.

The other way that Tolkien refers to the villagers is by the word “people,” which he uses three times in these orientation sections. But in the orientation sections “people” is never used for habitual events concerning the whole village of Wootton Major or its customs, the type of events to which Tolkien wanted to move the narrative camera angle. Tolkien would not say, “In the Hall *the people* held their meetings and debates, and their public feasts, and their family gatherings,” but instead would use the metonym “In the Hall *the villagers* held their meetings and debates, and their public feasts, and their family gathering” to place the camera angle closer to Wootton Major (my italics 6). Tolkien only uses “people” when referring to events concerning the interactions of the main characters with the inhabitants of Wootton Major. The first Master Cook, who readers will later learn to be Grandfather Rider, is described: “He had been a kind man who liked to see other *people* enjoying themselves, but he was himself serious, and said very little” (my italics 7). In this sentence, the camera angle is placed closest to Grandfather Rider (and indirectly to WM as Grandfather Rider is always referred to with the metonym Master Cook in the orientation). The second use of the word “people” comes in the sentence, “There was quite a stir in the village when Prentice gave this message to people who came to the Kitchen” (9). In this case, “people” is referring to a subset of the villagers, the gossipy ones “who came to the Kitchen.” Finally, When Alf/Prentice is introduced to the village, we are told that “People soon became used to seeing him about, and he made a few

friends. *They* and the Cook called him Alf, but to *the rest* he was just Prentice” (my italics 8). This sentence is performing another function, vital to the way Tolkien takes readers to Faery, as it effectively sets up a division of perspectives in the story among the villagers. But this is my next chapter’s topic.

### Conclusion

The three orientation sections of the story primarily place the camera angle close to Wootton Major. A full chart of verb types is given in Figure 2.

Fig. 2. The Frequency of Verb Types

Verb Type	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
<i>BE verbs</i>	37%	23%	18%
<i>Active verbs</i>	28%	72%	82%
<i>Passive Verbs</i>	35%	4%*	0%

\*discrepancy due to rounding

Recall that BE verbs function in the first orientation section to place Wootton Major at the top of the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, which can be represented by the notation: *Wootton Major > its way (of being remarkable) > its cooking > (anything related to cooking)*. Passives function much the same way in this section, demoting the villagers in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*, and promoting those villager’s customs, which center around cooking. Considering the data concerning active sentences, a complete picture of Tolkien’s control of the narrative camera angle emerges. The highest percentage (77%) of subjects of active verbs in the first orientation section by far are from the category “Customs/Cooking,” exactly what passive verbs have promoted and what BE verbs have insured point back to Wootton Major in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*. Even when “Villagers” are the subjects of sentences, in all orientation sections,

Tolkien has defined them by a metonymy (“villagers”) which also promotes Wootton Major in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy*.

In the second and third sections main characters and active verbs become a higher and higher percentage of the overall verbs, as the plot of the story advances. But the ground rules by which readers must interpret the story have been set in the first orientation section. There was a saying in antiquity that “all roads lead to Rome.” In *Smith*, at least in the orientation sections, I am tempted to quip: “all camera angles lead to Wootton Major.” Thus Wootton Major becomes a Secondary World in readers’ minds, familiar and worthy of Secondary Belief.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This essay should not be confused with Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-stories."

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the reasons that Shippey says the story must be an allegory. Shippey says, "What the account of the Great Hall and its festivals told me was that I was reading an allegory of some kind: Social behavior in Wootton major was too far removed from real-life behavior at any period in English history for me to accept it as just surface narrative" (Flieger and Shippey 194-5).

<sup>3</sup> I am comparing the Great Hall to a church to explain the Hall's role in the story, not to say it is an allegory.

<sup>4</sup> We could read this through theories other than Kuno and Kaburaki's empathy. For example, in *Syntax an Introduction*, Talmy Givon claims that "the prototypical passive voice is used primarily for agent suppression or de-topicalization" (125). Therefore, we might assume that Tolkien wishes to strongly suppress some agent(s) in the first orientation section, suppressing them from being the topic or theme of the discourse. Kuno and Kaburaki address the issue of empathy verses theme in their article. They say, "Constituents whose referents the speaker empathizes with have a great deal in common with constituents that represent the theme of sentences because in many cases, what the speaker is talking about (i.e. these) is also what he is empathizing with, and what he is empathizing with is what he is talking about" (656). They go on to note that if a speaker chooses a descriptor not in empathy with the theme of a sentence, then the empathy and the theme may be different (656). I have chosen to use Kuno and Kaburaki's idea of empathy instead of ideas of theme, topicalization, and focus because of their flexible definition of "choice of descriptor," into which I can incorporate ideas such as Lakoff's and Johnson's metonymy.

<sup>5</sup> In the first exception, Wootton Major was in the state of “*being well known* in the country round about for the skill of its workers in various crafts” (my italics 5). The agents in this sentence are the people in the surrounding countryside. The second exception is the sentence, “Wootton Major it was called,” where, assumedly, everyone both from Wootton Major and from the surrounding areas would call the town “Wootton Major” (5). Logically, these sentences reflect the point of view of the people from the surrounding countryside and from the villagers of WM. But the narrator frames the sentences so that our empathy lies with WM as a viable place.

<sup>6</sup> This metonymy is similar to Lakoff’s and Johnson’s INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE and THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION.

## CHAPTER 4

### WHOM THE NARRATIVE CHOOSES TO FAVOR

#### Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien builds Wootton Major as a viable place in readers' minds by placing the camera angle of his narrative closest to it in his orientation of the story. But the Wootton Major that readers imaginatively enter in *Smith* is village with an all-but-severed relationship with Faery. Its feasts "are becoming, or have already become, mere occasions for eating and drinking," instead of being the expressions of community art they were when the village maintained a relationship with Faery—times of "songs, tales music art" (*Smith* 93). But that relationship is not completely severed, for shortly after readers enter Wootton so does Alf the apprentice, who readers later learn to be the King of Faery. In this chapter, I will show this tension in Wootton Major between those who understand the village's relationship to Faery and those who do not. I will do this by specifically focusing on the characters of Nokes, the solid if somewhat inept man elected Master Cook, and Alf, the apprentice who is so much more than he first appears. First, I apply the insights of evaluation and camera angle from chapter 3 to the presentation of Wootton Major as a village that has lost touch with Faery. Next, I linguistically analyze Alf's introduction into the story. Finally, I will linguistically analyze the first conversation between Nokes and Alf concerning the fay-star, which will become Smith's passport to Faery.

#### Whom the Narrative Chooses to Favor

In chapter 3 I show that Tolkien places the camera angle of his narrative closest to Wootton Major through BE verbs, passive verbs, and active verbs. In the case of BE verbs,

Tolkien introduces the villager's custom of cooking and all that is associated with it in such a way that whenever the custom of cooking is discussed in the story, it will reflect back on Wootton Major, building it as a viable place in readers minds. One of the places that cooking is mentioned is as the subject of passive sentences, where it has been promoted in the *Camera Angle Hierarchy* at the expense of the villagers. And when the villagers themselves are mentioned, they are done so through a metonymy, which once again places the camera angle closest to Wootton Major, making it real for readers.

But these techniques do more than build Wootton Major as a viable place in readers' minds. They also project the villager's perspective of the narrative events onto Wootton Major. That is, these techniques do more than just build Wootton Major in readers' minds; they also evaluate the story through an evaluative perspective.

One place this can be clearly seen is in use of the metonym "the villagers." "The villagers" is a case of PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS, as in the example sentence "Europe thinks the US is stuck up." This metonym projects the opinions and characteristics of a few inhabitants on the whole place. In the example sentence, what is being said on the surface is that Europe as whole thinks that the US as a whole is stuck up. But in reality, only a select amount of people in Europe think that the US is stuck up, and this impression is based not on their judgment of every single person in the US, but on their judgment of a few individuals. That is, PLACE FOR THE INHABITANTS projects the actions or values of a few people on the whole place. "The villagers" projects the customs, opinions, predispositions, and actions of a select number of villagers on the whole place of Wootton Major. The villager's opinions, predispositions, and actions are most apparent when they interact with main characters, and

especially with main characters who come from Faery. What follows is one example of such a case.

### Introducing Alf the Apprentice

One way to ascertain the villager's opinions and predispositions is by examining what shocks or astonishes them, and the appointment of Alf to the apprenticeship to the Master Cook does just that. It is not surprising that Alf's appointment shocks them because, as Tolkien says elsewhere, this was an "attempt to rescue Wootton from its decline[:] the Elves reverse the situation, and the king of Faery himself comes and serves as apprentice in the village" (*Smith* 94). Strong medicine was needed, and that came in the form of the King of Faery himself, though he appeared as a nimble little boy from another village. When he is introduced into the narrative, this is also how he appears to readers, who will not learn his true identity until much later in the story. Thus, at this point, readers can only interpret his situation through the opinions of the villagers, and these opinions are directly projected onto Wootton Major as a whole, and thus have at least a certain level of credibility. I give the passage in which this all happens below.

Also he brought back with him an apprentice; and that astounded the village.

It was not astonishing for the Master Cook to have an apprentice. It was usual. The Master chose one in due time, and he taught him all that he could; and as they both grew older the apprentice took on more of the important work, so that when the Master retired or died there he was, ready to take over the office and become Master Cook in his turn. But this Master had never chosen an apprentice. He had always said "time enough yet," or "I'm keeping my eyes open and I'll choose one when I find one to suit me." But now he brought with him a mere boy, and not one from the village. He was more lithe than the Wootton lads and quicker, soft-spoken and very polite, but ridiculously young for the work, barely in his teens by the look of him. Still, choosing his apprentice was the Master Cook's affair, and no one had the right to interfere in it; so the boy remained and stayed in the Cook's House until he was old enough to find lodgings for himself. People soon became used to seeing him about, and he made a few friends. They and the Cook called him Alf, but to the rest he was just Prentice. (7-8)

Tolkien begins this scene by a strong evaluation by suspension of action. The phrase "and that astonished the village" appears at the end of the preceding paragraph, emphasizing<sup>1</sup> this information and forecasting that the next paragraph will be about why the Cook bringing

back an apprentice astonished the village. As such, this sentence is really what Labov calls an abstract; it summarizes the episode, or better put, summarizes the evaluation which comes from the villagers' perspective. But the next paragraph does not begin by telling why this apprentice astonished; instead, it begins with an evaluative negative comparator, "It was not astonishing for the Master Cook to have an apprentice." The next sentence—"it was usual"—tells us in no uncertain terms that having an apprentice is quite ordinary, which is followed by what Labov would call orientation material, informing readers of the exact customs of taking apprentices, but still not telling exactly why this apprentice was astonishing. Labov says, "the most interesting thing about orientation is its placement. It is theoretically possible for all free orientation clauses to be placed at the beginning of the narrative, but in practice, we find much of this material is placed at strategic points later on" (364-5). It is placed at strategic points to evaluate a narrative by suspending its action, and this is what is happening in these lines.

This orientation itself also contains evaluation, once again comparing the villager's expectations and predispositions to what actually happened. "The master chose one [an apprentice] in due time," which is what the villagers expect, but by an evaluative negative comparator, "this Master had never<sup>2</sup> chosen an apprentice." The next sentences are direct quotes from the current Master, explaining why he has not chosen an apprentice, giving his perspective on the narrated events. But within the greater context of the scene, for his perception of the events to hold readers' attention it must, at least in part, be supported by the perception inherent in the narrative. It is not. Instead, the following sentence finally tells why Alf astonished the villager and does so in terms that strongly evaluate the story from the villager's perspective: "But now he [the Master Cook] brought with him a *mere* boy, and *not one from the village*" (my italics).

This evaluation is Tolkien's way of telling readers that this break from custom concerning Alf is a key to the story's *raison d'être*, the story's reason for being told. The realization of why Alf astonished the village has also come after a long evaluation by suspension of action: There are five and a half sentences, twelve lines (in Flieger's edition), and one hundred and nine words between the narrator's abstract of the scene, "and that astonished the village" and the reason they were astonished, because Alf is a "mere boy, and not one from the village."

When Tolkien finally relates the cause of the village's surprise he does so in highly evaluative terms, using evaluations by perception, calling Alf a "*mere* boy" and that he is "*ridiculously* young for the work of an apprentice." "Mere" and "ridiculously" strongly evaluate Alf's situation from the point of view of the villagers. In fact, the point of view in these words is so strong that the narrative itself seems at this point to even be empathizing<sup>3</sup> with the villagers. The next word further proves the point. "Still," the sentence begins, "choosing his apprentice was the Master Cook's affair, and no one had the right to interfere in it." The OED says that "still" is a "quasi-*conj.* [meaning] In spite of what has been stated or conceded" ("Still," def. 6b). Whose perspective the sentence belongs to (who is saying "still") is ambiguous, as one could easily imagine this sentence being spoken by one villager to another in consolation. As such this sentence is also an evaluation by perception, that of the villagers.

"People soon became used to seeing him about," the penultimate sentence in this episode reads, "and he made a few friends. They and the Cook called him Alf, but to the rest he was just Prentice." The narrator referring to the villagers as "people" inevitably means that there will be an interaction with a major character, as I said in the last chapter. That evaluative of perception comes in the form of what a certain set of the people (those who are not his friends) call Alf: "Prentice." "Prentice" is a type of metonymy based on the word "apprentice," which of course is

what Alf is in relation to the Master Cook, to cooking in Wootton Major, and to Wootton Major as a whole. The villagers are defining Alf by a title based on his job in relation to the Master Cook, and therefore by extension, as I showed in chapter 3, to Wootton Major as a whole.

But Alf's friends and the Cook "*call*" him Alf, implying that perhaps they know that Alf as a person (or elf) is more than just his name (my italics). The villagers, though, are unable to see Alf in any way other than through his relationship to their village. They are unable to see Alf as anything but the Master Cook's apprentice, and by defining him in those terms, the narrator tells us that to them "he *was* just Prentice."

This scene introducing Alf the apprentice demonstrates Tolkien's skill carefully controlling the evaluative perspective of his narrative. First he begins with an abstract—"that astonished the village"—which is essentially an abstract of the scene's evaluative perspective, then he allows the Master Cook only to speak for himself, not giving his perspective any narrative or evaluative support, and finally he concludes this episode with a strong metonymy, "Prentice," effectively pulling the evaluative perspective of the entire scene into one word.

I should mention that these evaluations may not cause readers to *sympathize* with the villager's perspective of events. The opposite perspective, here embodied by the first Master Cook, has earlier been lent some credibility by the narrative. The narrative presents the Master Cook in the paragraph before this scene as taking some good from his journeying, as after he came back he was "merrier, and often said and did most laughable things" (7). Nevertheless, these evaluations show readers that the dominant and defining perspective in Wootton Major is that of those who dislike changes in custom, those who turn up their noses at breaches of the *status quo*, those who think the first Master Cook was a little batty and that of Alf as nothing more than "Prentice."



## Alf and Nokes as Representatives of Different Perspectives

The scene given above does more than just evaluate the story from one perspective. It overtly splits the inhabitants of Wootton Major into two groups, those who understand and respect Alf (“his friends”), and those who do not (“the rest”). This attitude toward Alf represents these two groups’ attitude toward Faery as well, for that is where Alf really comes from, though no one in the village knows it. Tolkien not only splits the perspectives of the inhabitants of the village concerning Faery, he also places characters in his story who represent each perspective: Alf and Nokes.

In his essay on *Smith*, Tolkien says, “The vulgarization of Wootton is indicated by Nokes. He is obviously a somewhat extreme case, but clearly represents an attitude fast spreading in the village and growing in weight. The festivals are becoming, or have already become, mere occasions for eating and drinking. Songs, tales music dancing no longer play a part [...]” (93). This, then is Nokes’ role in the story as Tolkien saw it, though Tolkien does admit that Nokes had one virtue: “He seems to have been generally fond of children” and his placement of the fairy-queen on the top of the cake was “probably based on his kindness to children” (97, 98). This is the author’s view of Nokes, but important also is how Nokes is represented in the story itself.

Nokes is introduced as “a solid sort of man with a wife and children, and careful with money” (10). He had helped the former Master Cook from time to time, but “the Master had never taken to him and would not have him as apprentice” (9). Yet, when the first Master Cook retires, the villagers, valuing Nokes’ steadiness and age over Alf’s youth and skill, chose Nokes as the new Master Cook. “Nokes [...] was very pleased with the turn things had taken” for when

he was younger he used to “put on the tall white hat [of the Master Cook] and look at himself in a polished frying pan,” dreaming of someday being Master Cook himself (10).

The villager’s choice of Nokes over Alf is interesting, because in some ways it wasn’t a choice at all. “[N]o one ever thought of making young Prentice into Cook,” the narrator tells us, and “[i]n the end for lack of anyone better they appointed” Nokes (9). The narrative in the story makes the villagers lack of confidence in Nokes’s cooking ability clear: “‘At any rate he won’t go off without notice,’ they say, ‘and poor cooking is better than none’” (10). The villagers value age and predictability over skill. Nokes does have Alf there to help him, though, so things do not go as bad as they might have: Nokes “learned a lot from him [Prentice] by watching him slyly, though that Nokes never admitted” (10).

#### Alf and Nokes’s Conversation Concerning the Fay-star

Alf and Nokes represent different perspectives within Wootton Major on Faery, and the narrative does not privilege each perspective the same. Within the narrative itself, the story is consistently evaluated from the perspective of Nokes and those who think like him, as I showed above in the Alf’s introduction to the story. One simple way to show this is the use of the metonym “Prentice” to refer to Alf. For the first thirty-one pages of the text (in Flieger’s edition) the word “Alf” appears only twice. Once it is used in a direct quotation of the first Master Cook (9). The other time, and the only time that “Alf” appears in the narrative itself, is in the sentence: His friends “and the Cook called him Alf, but to the rest he was just Prentice.” Aside from these cases, the narrator refers to Alf as “Prentice” and “the apprentice,” respectfully, seventeen times and three times. To “the rest,” Alf was just “Prentice,” and for the first thirty-one pages of the story the perspective of “the rest” evaluates the story.

This evaluation and tension between these two perspectives comes to a head like a storm-cloud when Nokes finds the fay-star, and thinks it is odd or funny. Prentice confronts him, telling him that the star is from Faery, which Nokes thinks is laughable. I give the passage below followed by a linguist analysis of evaluation in it.

He [Nokes] took [a black box] down and blew the dust off the lid; but when he opened it he found that very little of the spices was left, and they were dry and musty. But in one compartment in the corner he discovered a small star, hardly as big as one of our sixpence, black-looking as if it was made of silver but was tarnished. "That's funny!" he said as he held it up to the light.

"No, it isn't!" said a voice behind him, so suddenly that he jumped. It was the voice of Prentice, and he had never spoken to the Master in that tone before. Indeed he seldom spoke to Nokes at all unless he was spoken to first. Very right and proper in a youngster; he might be clever with icing but he had a lot to learn yet: that was Nokes's opinion.

"What do you mean, young fellow?" he said, not much pleased. "if it isn't funny what is it?"

"It is *fáy*," said Prentice. "It comes from Faery."

Then the Cook laughed. "All right, all right," he said. "It means much the same; but call it that if you like. You'll grow up some day. Now you can get on with stoning the raisins. If you notice any funny fairy ones, tell me."

"What are you going to do with the star, Master?" said Prentice.

"Put it in the Cake, of course," said the Cook. "Just the thing, especially if it's *fairy*," he sniggered. "I daresay you've been to children's parties yourself, and not so long ago either, where little trinkets like this were stirred into the mixture, and little coins and what not. Anyway we do that in this village: it amuses the children."

"But this isn't a trinket, Master, it's a fay-star," said Prentice.

"So you've said already," snapped the Cook. "Very well, I'll tell the children. It'll make them laugh."

"I don't think it will, Master," said Prentice. "But it's the right thing to do, quite right."

"Who do you think you're talking to?" said Nokes. (12-14)

The fay-star itself receives a strong evaluation in this scene, and for good reason: It is at the heart of *Smith's* *raison d'être*. The star is evaluated by a double appositive, which Labov classifies a type of correlative. The fay-star is small, "hardly as big as one of our sixpence, black-looking as if it was made of silver but was tarnished." Double appositives are "used to heighten or deepen the effect of a particular description," according to Labov (388). This example of evaluation also involves what Labov calls the left-handed participle, "black-looking," which he says is often associated with double appositives (389). Left-handed participles, as Labov points out, are highly embedded syntactically,<sup>4</sup> and they imply a strong evaluation from whoever's perspective they come from (389-90). And "it is not accidental," Labov says, "that some of the most

complex syntax is used in describing the principal antagonist, who is the chief justification for the claim that the narrative is reportable” (389-90). In the case of our sentence, the left-handed participles are not evaluating the chief antagonist, but something as important to why the story is tellable or reportable—his means of traveling to the world of Faery.

This participle, “black-looking,” is also important to Tolkien’s so carefully maintained evaluative perspective, for it implies a point of view, that of Nokes, as it centers around the verb of seeing, “look.” This verb of seeing is from Nokes’s perspective because his evaluation of the star, “that’s funny,” would not make sense if it was not. However, the double appositive is not only from Nokes’s perspective, as the phrase “hardly as big as one of our sixpence” shows. This phrase is clearly from the perspective of a modern person who might be examining the star, it speaks directly to readers, putting the size of the fay-star in terms of an object from their own world, a six-pence. So this double-appositive evaluation of the fay-star is evaluated by two distinct perspectives, that of Nokes and that of modern readers. Such evaluation by perspective virtually has the effect of blurring the line between Nokes’s perspective and a modern perspective, lending Nokes credibility and connecting him and his perspective to modern readers.

The paragraph we are considering ends with Nokes’s statement that the fay-star is funny—“That’s funny”—as he holds it up to the light. We might expect, then, the next paragraph<sup>5</sup> to contain an explanation as to why the star is funny, but this is not the case. Instead, a voice says, “No, it isn’t,” which shocks readers as much as it shocks Nokes. What follows is a dialogue and narrative between Nokes and Prentice which is highly evaluated. In the following analysis, I will consider this scene sentence by sentence which will be incredibly rewarding in our understanding of Tolkien as a narrator and his story, *Smith of Wootton Major*.

Tolkien structures his narrative so that readers share the shock and exasperation of Nokes, or in other words, the narrative empathizes with Nokes and in ways that go beyond the syntactic theories so far discussed. “‘No it isn’t,’ said a voice behind him, so suddenly that he jumped. It was the voice of Prentice, and he had never spoken to the Master in that tone before.” In the first sentence, the offending comment is said by a voice—both readers and Nokes do not know whose yet—and Nokes jumps, an evaluative action according to Labov’s theory. Nokes does not know whose voice it is—he does not expect the apprentice to speak to him like that because it has never happened before—and he must turn around before he finds out. By delaying the readers’ knowledge of to whom the voice belongs, the narrator is making the reader empathize with Nokes’s perspective of events. Readers share Nokes’s level of knowledge and delay in learning whose voice it is, and they share Nokes’s shock. Also notice, that when the narrator gives the name of the speaker, he does not use the apprentice’s name, but rather the metonymy Prentice, which frames the apprentice’s insolent statement in terms of his position, and thus his relationship to the Master Cook and thus to Nokes. The independent clause at the end of this sentence, “and he had never spoken to the Master in that tone before,” is a comparative evaluation, employing the use of a negative, comparing the apprentice’s current statement to all his past actions, further evaluating the inappropriateness of the apprentice’s statement from Nokes’s perspective. Note also that Nokes is referred to as “Master,” a metonym meant to further condemn Prentice’s upishness by bringing to readers’ attention his relationship to Nokes. That is, his comment is not only out of character, but also highly inappropriate because he is an apprentice and Nokes is the Master Cook.

In the next sentence, Tolkien uses the same narrative technique he does with the villagers. “Very right and proper in a youngster; he might be clever with icing but he had a lot to learn yet”

reads as if it is the narrator is giving an evaluation of the situation, until the last constituent of the sentence, “that was Nokes's opinion.” Before the final clause, the narrator’s and Nokes’s opinion meet and almost merge. This technique would not be possible if the narrator was not already highly evaluating the story through Nokes’s perspective. The rest of the scene is carried almost exclusively with dialogue. As I will show, Tolkien frames almost every sentence of Nokes’s dialogue to undermine Prentice’s credibility either because of his age or because of his not being from Wootton Major.

“‘What do you mean, young fellow?’ he [Nokes] said, not much pleased. ‘If it isn’t funny what is it?’” Nokes’s response recalls the perspective reflected in the previous narrative sentence. In the words, “young fellow,” this perspective also recalls the same sentiment and evaluation stated in the narrative given above, that Alf is “a mere boy” and “ridiculously young for the work” (8). Thus Nokes’s question, “If it isn’t funny what is it?” is not one of sincere inquiry. He is playing the part of an older (supposedly informed) person putting a younger (supposedly uninformed) person on the spot, so to speak.

The problem for Nokes is that it doesn’t work. Prentice answers him in starkly unevaluated terms that couldn’t be more simple: “It is *faery*” and “It comes from Faery.” Nokes laughs at the notion, telling Prentice that “It means much the same; but call it that if you like.” Nokes is essentially saying that the terms, the very words, in which Prentice understands the star are not important, that “Faery” and funny mean the same thing because they mean the same thing to Nokes. But they do not mean the same thing. This point is so important, in fact, that Tolkien differentiates Nokes’s idea of “fairy” from Prentice’s idea of “Faery” by their spellings. The two words are homophones, nothing more. After telling Prentice that his terms are meaningless, Nokes attempts to discredit Alf by his age and then gives him a duty, thus further emphasizing

Nokes's position of authority over him: "You'll grow up someday. Now you can get on with stoning the raisins. If you notice any funny fairy ones, tell me" (13). Nokes means this statement to end the conversation. But it doesn't.

Prentice still wants to know what is going to happen to the star, and he asks Nokes about this. "Put it into the Cake, of course," Nokes replies. The words "of course" have special significance here, which is not apparent until the last line of this speech, "we do that in this village: it amuses the children" (13). As established earlier in the story, Prentice is not from Wootton Major, "this village," so it is unlikely that he would be aware of this custom. Nokes says "of course" to point this fact out; to try to make Alf feel uncomfortable for not being in-the-know. (This would certainly make Nokes feel uncomfortable, which is why he never admits how much he learns from watching Alf.) From Nokes perspective, and the perspective of the villagers, Prentice's non-native status also is one reason he is not seen as fit for the job of apprentice: To them, Prentice was "a mere boy, and *not one from the village*" (my italics 8). Thus Nokes's statement further undermines Prentice's credibility, as does his, by now, habitual rag on Prentice's age, "you've been to children's parties yourself, and not so long ago either." The last clause of this sentence is highly evaluated from Nokes's perspective. In the phrase "not so long ago either," the negative "not" and the comparative "either" makes the sentence a comparator, evaluating the idea that Nokes is trying to convey (that Prentice has been to children's parties recently, and is thus young) by comparing it to an event that is not the case (that it has been a long time since Alf went to a children's party). Furthermore, the words "so long" quantify ago, and thus are evaluative intensifiers.

But despite this strong evaluation allowed Nokes, Prentice's response finally unsettles him.

"But this isn't a trinket, Master, it's a fay-star," said Prentice.

"So you've said already," snapped the Cook. "Very well, I'll tell the children. It'll make them laugh."

Perhaps the most important thing to notice about this dialogue is that once again, Prentice's dialogue is stark, bare, and virtually unevaluated (only by a single negative comparator), while Nokes's is highly evaluated. Nokes even pretends to know the perspective of children at the party to make his case, a future comparator, in Labov's terms, and an evaluation of perspective. Their perspective, according to Nokes, is that they will think the star is funny as well, lending credibility to Nokes's perspective. Once again, by this statement Nokes means to end the conversation, and he does in Tolkien's original draft. But upon revision, Tolkien must have thought there was an important point to this scene that had not yet been made.

The first of the lines Tolkien added in his revision is "I don't think it will, Master," said Prentice. "But it's the right thing to do, quite right." By saying this, Prentice is openly undermining Nokes's, the Master's, authority. Nokes is baffled—we must assume because the narrative does not evaluate Nokes's actions on this point—by Prentice's insolence and lack of social awareness. In a final attempt to make Prentice acknowledge his authority, he simply asks, "Who do you think you're talking to?" We do not hear if Prentice does or doesn't, because the scene ends.

Above, I have tried to put this scene and its dialogue in terms that have been given in the narrative up to the point at which the scene appears in the story. Those who have read the story know of course that this scene is ironic, because Prentice is really Alf, the King of Faery, and is both far older and far wiser than Nokes. But important to my concern here is Tolkien's narrative to this point and what Tolkien is doing with evaluation by perspective to create a specific effect. As I show above, the scene certainly begins by strongly empathizing with Nokes, even being structured such that the audience shares his knowledge and reactions. Nokes's speech is also



highly evaluated, while Alf's is far less so. Another way that this scene is evaluated by Nokes's perspective is by evaluative action every time Nokes speaks, except for the last time: First he is "not much pleased," then he "laughed," then he "sniggered," and finally when Prentice contradicts him for the second time he "snapped." No such evaluative actions exist to present us with the Prentice's perspective of the events in the story. Furthermore, in every speech act except for the last two, Nokes undermines Prentice's credibility either because of his age, his non-native status, or both. Prentice never undermines Nokes in this way, instead consistently referring to him by the metonym "Master," which emphasizes Nokes's authority, in every sentence except for his initial cry ("No it isn't!") and explanation of the star ("It comes from Faery"). Furthermore, Tolkien uses the metonymies "Prentice" and "Master" to consistently evaluate the events through Nokes's and the villagers' perspective. Once Prentice answers that the star "comes from Faery," the narrator consistently refers to Alf as Prentice and to Nokes as "the Cook," with one exception—Nokes's final statement. Taking all of this evidence into consideration—all these ways that the narrative is evaluated by Nokes's perspective—one might imagine that the effect of the scene is to build Nokes's authority and credibility while stripping the Prentice of the same. The effect of the scene, one might imagine, is to take the reader to a point of empathy with Nokes and the villagers who think like him. And it might have, if Tolkien had not written the last two lines when he revised the story.

As it stands now, the scene has the opposite effect because in it the narrator does not stick to his pattern<sup>6</sup> of empathizing with and evaluating events from Nokes's perspective. Prentice's last speech act is highly evaluated: "But it's the right thing to do, quite right." It is evaluated by repetition of the word "right," intensifying this concept. It is also evaluated by the quantifier "quite," which intensifies this same concept. And in fact, this highly evaluated and intensified

statement, Prentice's judgment of what is the right thing to do, is the most offensive to Nokes because in it Prentice undermines his credibility as Master, the person who should make decisions on such matters. Who does he think he is talking to anyway? Furthermore, in the last line of the scene, ("Who do you think you're talking to?" said Nokes.") the narrator abandons the metonymy "the Cook," instead referring to Nokes by his own name. Since this statement by Prentice is perhaps the most offensive to Nokes because it undermines his authority, we would expect to see Nokes's reaction, or evaluative action from Nokes's perspective. But the narrator leaves it out. It is easiest to see the change by making a hypothetical rewrite of the last lines of the scene:

"I don't think it will, Master," said Prentice. "But it's the right thing to do [...]."  
"Who do you think you're talking to?" *challenged the Master.* (italics my revision)

In the scene as Tolkien wrote it, we are left with a deflated Nokes, robbed of the power of his title and his evaluative reactions, and an inflated Prentice, finally given a strong evaluation from his perspective. This break in the pattern of empathy and evaluation casts doubt on Nokes's credibility. Prentice does not alleviate the doubt by answering Nokes's final question, "Who do you think you're talking to?" Instead, the scene ends which in effect leaves the question up to the readers.

### In-grouping

I have demonstrated in the above scene that Tolkien, the narrator, walks a fine line between empathizing with and evaluating by the contradictory perspectives of two different characters who have different levels of insight into the world of Faery. One conclusion that we can draw from the above discussion is that this level of knowledge of Faery is an integral part of the tension and purpose in these scenes, as Tolkien's evaluations in the scenes show. Another is that the reader's level of knowledge of Faery at a given point in the story is of paramount

importance, as the effect of these scenes depends highly on this knowledge. If the reader had already known that Alf was the King of Faery in the scene analyzed above, the scene would have the effect of making Nokes look like an ignoramus. And in fact, Tolkien writes a scene at the end of the story, when readers know that Faery is real, which has this very effect (53-59). So a particular character's knowledge of Faery, the readers' knowledge of Faery, and the narrative technique used at a given place in the story, then, are highly interconnected in *Smith*. In this section, I will further elaborate on this conclusion, especially concerning the narrator's splitting characters and readers into two groups, based on their knowledge of Faery.

The first case of this grouping of characters and readers comes at the first line of the story, "There was a village once, not very long ago for *those with long memories*, nor very far away for *those with long legs*" (5). The reader may very well ask just who are "those with long legs" and "those with long memories." Tolkien, at least at this point of the story, is silent about the answer. But I will make some observations and guesses. First, "not very long ago" and "not very far away" are comparators by negation, and thus are evaluative in Labov's sense. They give their intended meaning—that for those with long memories and legs Wootton Major is near both in time and space—by comparing it with something that is not the case. They also imply the converse statement, that Wootton Major *is* very far away for those poor persons with short memories and legs. What Tolkien is really doing, then, is establishing "long legs" and "long memories" as leitmotifs, running metaphors. The narrator uses these leitmotifs to separate those who understand the world of Faery from those who do not.

Long legs are not mentioned in the story after this point, but a result of being long-legged is: When Alf is introduced into Wootton as the apprentice, the narrator tells us that he "was more lithe than the Wootton lads and *quicker*" (my italics 8). The point is so important that Tolkien

places it as the last line of the story, having Nokes say of Alf, “I never liked him. He was artful. Too *nimble*, you might say” (62). Alf is, as we learn later in the story, the King of Faery, and thus it is appropriate that he be in the group that understands Faery.

The idea of memory also plays an important role in *Smith*. Some form of the word “memory” as a noun appears in the text eight times, according to my count, while the verbs “remember,” “recall,” and “remind” appear, respectively, eleven times, twice, and twice, and the opposite verb, “forget,” appears seven times.<sup>7</sup> The first time memory appears, after the initial sentence given above, comes when Nokes begins “preparing the materials for the cake-making[, and] he found that he had only *dim memories* of what should go inside a Great Cake” (my italics 11-2). In the story, the cake is a direct reflection of Nokes’s conception of Faery. The cake is made, at Nokes’s bidding, “with a pretty little fairy on top,” a doll, a childish and narrow-minded mockery of the real Queen of Faery (Sammons 3). Smith will remember this doll when he meets and recognizes the real Faery Queen later in the story. And the Queen will put the point succinctly to Smith: “Better a little doll, maybe, than no *memory of Faery* at all” (my italics 38).

Thus, the leitmotifs of “long legs” and “long memories” play a vital part in clueing readers in as to what level of knowledge characters have of Faery. But the opening line to *Smith* cannot logically apply to these characters, as they are already in Wootton Major. The line is purposefully ambiguous as to whom it applies, but a reasonable guess is that it applies to readers. It is, after all, orientation, which does the job of locating the story for readers in time and place. Read this way, Wootton Major is located in reference to the length of readers’ memories (perhaps of Faery or of imagined wonder) and in reference to the length of their legs—by a metaphor, their travels (perhaps in literature or in fairy-stories or in the world of imagination itself).<sup>8</sup> If this interpretation is correct, then these lines frame the story in terms of readers

empathy either with Alf's group of characters (who are nimble and have a long memories of Faery) or with Nokes group (who are not so nimble and have forgotten Faery). The lines engage readers, drawing them into the world of Wootton Major. The line's logic is both circular and charming: Those readers with "long memories" and "long legs" are not so far from Wootton Major, and Wootton Major is not so far from Faery.

### Conclusion

The same narrative techniques that Tolkien uses to place the camera angle close to Wootton Major, creating it as a Secondary World in readers' minds, also serve to evaluate that world according to the perspective of the villagers. But there is another perspective, that of those who are familiar with Faery. The narrative is framed by the tension between these perspectives by the leitmotif "longs legs" and "long memories," which correlate, respectfully, to the characters Alf and Nokes. Though most evaluations come from Nokes's and the villager's perspective, Nokes's ineptness at cooking, which is such an important part of the village and the story, and Alf's aptness at the same leave room for doubt in readers' minds. More doubt is created by inconsistencies in the evaluative perspective, as in the end of Nokes's and Alf's conversation concerning the fay-star. Thus, readers are forced by the narrative most often to empathize with the villagers and Nokes's perspective, though they are given just enough insight to know that they are really not being given the whole picture. There may be more to this world of Wootton Major which they have entered than first meets the eye. The star may come from Faery after all.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more on emphasis and style see Joseph Williams's *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*.

<sup>2</sup> Note also that the verb in this sentence is a past perfect, which places the point of reference for narrative clauses sometime before the time of the present sequence.

<sup>3</sup> I am using this word in its standard sense, not in Kuno and Kaburaki's sense. For their theory I use the term "camera angle" in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> They are far more embedded than right-handed participles, as a kernel sentence must go through more transformations to end up as a left-handed participle than as a right-handed participle. In his studies, Labov found that such highly embedded syntactic evaluations were more prominent in older, more mature, narrators, while simpler embedding, such as right-handed participles, was present in in-experienced younger narrators (390).

<sup>5</sup> In Tolkien's original draft, a new paragraph does not begin at this point (107). Tolkien certainly split the original paragraph for this dramatic effect.

<sup>6</sup> I am especially indebted to my professor, Haj Ross, for this idea. Haj's as yet unpublished paper, "Structural Prosody," discusses some of the ways that authors of poetry establish and thwart readers' expectations along certain semantic and grammatical dimensions. Here, I have simply applied this basic idea to that of empathy, and hence point of view or perspective in narrative. Haj's paper is listed in my bibliography, and those interested, I am sure, may obtain it from Haj.

<sup>7</sup> These are the type of amazing facts that may be obtained after typing the entire story into a spreadsheet.

<sup>8</sup> Such a read also explains many of Tolkien's asides in the story that seem to assume prior knowledge on the part of the reader, such as "and a fair number of folk lived in [Wootton Major], good, bad, and mixed, *as is usual*" (5). For those familiar with fairy-stories (and even with real life), this would be usual. Another example comes when the narrator is describing the children who are invited to the Twenty-four Feast, "No doubt some who deserved to be asked were overlooked, and some who did not were invited by mistake; *for that is the way of things*, however careful those who arrange *such matters* may try to be" (6). Though more subtle, this narrative device is akin in some ways to the one Shippey describes in *Author of the Century*, "the trick of suddenly producing a piece of totally unexpected and unpredictable information from the heart of the fairy-tale world, and pretending it is common knowledge" (19). Shippey's hallmark example comes from the scene in *The Hobbit*, when Bilbo and the Dwarves run into some nasty trolls and only get out of the scrape by Gandalf tricking them into broad daylight and turning them to stone, "for trolls *as you probably know*, must be underground before dawn, or they go back to the stuff of the mountain they are made of" (his italics qtd. in Shippey 19-20). The key difference between this technique and the one present in *Smith*, is that while the technique used in *The Hobbit* expects readers to know things that they have no way of knowing, the technique used in *Smith* expects readers to know things they should, at least when discussing situations that are akin to real-life situation, as in the examples above. This knowledge should not be confused with a knowledge of the world of Faery presented in *Smith*, for readers have no way of knowing of that until the narrator reveals it on page 18.

## CHAPTER 5

### ENTERING FAERY

...the beginning and end of a story is to it like the edges of the canvas or an added frame to a picture, say a landscape. It concentrates the tellers [*sic*] attention, and yours on one small part of the country. But there are of course no real limits: under the earth, and in the sky above, and in the remote and faintly glimpsed distance, and in the unrevealed regions on either side... – J.R.R. Tolkien, essay on *Smith of Wootton Major*

#### Introduction

Readers of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Smith of Wootton Major* find themselves in a rather awkward spot, at least for the first thirteen pages of the story or so. For the most part, they are forced to evaluate the events taking place in Wootton Major from the perspective of the short-legged and short-sighted Nokes and Co., the "vulgarized" element of the village that has forgotten about Faery. But the narrative also contains hints that another perspective, Alf's, may have more insight into the way those events should be evaluated. On the thirteenth page of the story, these hints are confirmed: "All the same, the silver star was indeed a fay-star: the apprentice was not one to make mistakes about things of that sort" (18). The line may as well say, "you've been seeing only part of the story; now it's time to see the rest." As Tom Shippey puts it, "that star, that [fay-star which takes Smith to Faery], is only a fragment of a greater world, a world outside the little clearing of Wootton" (*Road* 277). In this final chapter, I hope to show the narrative techniques that Tolkien uses to take his readers into that "greater world," into Faery. I will do this by first taking a closer look at Eric Rabkin's ideas of the fantastic in literature, which I discussed briefly in chapter 1. After considering how Rabkin's ideas apply to *Smith*, I will linguistically analyze the scene in *Smith* where the transition to Faery occurs, the morning of Smith's tenth birthday when he awakes to a waking world, filled with a life and beauty readers have not yet seen in Wootton Major.



## Rabkin's Ground Rules

In *Smith*, as I have shown in previous chapters, the perspective on and evaluation of the narrative world for the most part comes from Nokes and the villagers. This perspective builds Wootton Major as a viable world in readers' minds, but it also forces readers to focus on some elements of the story while diverting them others. One downplayed element is exactly where the first Master Cook goes off to at the beginning of the story. "[N]o one [from the village] knew where," the narrator tells readers, so of course readers don't find out either (6). What is important to the villagers is not where the Cook went, but the fact that his departure was unexpected. This fact is mentioned in the narrative twice more—the Master's second unexpected departure causes "quite a stir in the village," so much of a stir that the villagers elect a Master Cook who is a crummy cook just because they think he will be predictable. "At any rate he won't go off without notice," say the villagers (10).

Where the first Master Cook goes is not important to the villagers, but it is important to the story, because of course he goes to Faery. But Faery has been ignored by the narrative, and thus it is what Rabkin calls "the *dis-expected*, those elements which the text had diverted one from thinking about but which, it later turns out, are in perfect keeping with the ground rules of the narrative world" (Rabkin 8). Faery is possible in the narrative world of the first thirteen pages of *Smith*; no statement by the narrator disallows its existence. But it is downplayed, ignored. Taking readers to Faery, then, is possible, but it requires the narrator to realign the evaluative perspective of the narrative world to a perspective which values Faery and all that it stands for. According to Rabkin, that realignment of perspectives is one of the distinguishing features of fantasy literature:

One of the key distinguishing marks of the fantastic is that the perspectives enforced by the ground rules of the narrative world must be diametrically contradicted. [...] The fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180°. We recognize this reversal in the reactions of characters, the statements of narrators, and the implications of structure, all playing on and against our whole experience as people and readers. (8, 41)

One conclusion that may be drawn from these ideas is that the dominance of Nokes's and the villager's perspective in the beginning of the story is essential to the effect of the fantastic the story later produces. This effect, according to Rabkin's theory, would not occur without the dominant perspective of Nokes and Co. being "diametrically contradicted." Proof exists that Tolkien, at least intuitively, realized this fact. In an earlier draft of *Smith*, Wootton Major is introduced as being "large, and a fair number of folk lived in it, good bad and mixed, as is usual, *and some were a bit elvish, as was at that time still common though people of that land were not well thought-of*" (my italics 103). Tolkien removed the italicized clauses in a revision, as this information would frame the narrative to undercut the dominance of Nokes's and the villager's perspective of the narrative world. This is also why, *Smith*, as a whole, does not have an abstract—something along the lines of, "once there was a boy who ate a piece of cake containing a fay-star, and the star took him to Faery." It would answer too many questions that need to be left unanswered for the narrative to have the effect it does. Instead, subtle narrative devices such as the leitmotif "long legs" and "long memories" remain in the story to clue the reader in to the fact that there may be a perspective beyond that which they are given.

To take readers to Faery, then, the narrator of *Smith* must “diametrically contradict” “the ground rules of the narrative world.” He must do this not only by telling readers that Faery is real and Alf was right about the fay-star, but by also evaluating those aspects of Wootton Major that the narrative had theretofore ignored. As I will show, this is exactly what Tolkien does. By focusing on elements of the narrative world which were not important to the villagers, but which are important to Faery, “wide and deep and high and filled with many things,” he gives readers a “clear view” of Wootton Major (“Fairy-stories” 33, 77). He takes them to Faery.

#### Taking Readers to Faery

On page 18 of *Smith of Wootton Major*, the evaluative perspective of the Nokes and the villagers is “diametrically contradicted.” “All the same,” Tolkien tells his readers, “the silver star was indeed a fay-star: the apprentice was not one to make mistakes about things of that sort.” “All the same,” is a discourse marker which tells readers that assumptions made beforehand are about to be contradicted. Those assumptions are that the silver star is not a fay-star and that Alf, the apprentice, is too young and inexperienced to know what he is talking about, concerning such matters. When readers realize these assumptions are invalid, they must reevaluate the entire story up to this point. They must begin to focus on what is truly important in the story, and that is the world of Faery.

A full analysis of every aspect of Faery which contradicts the initially dominant perspective in the story is not necessary to make my point, not to mention being beyond the scope of this thesis or perhaps any thesis. Instead, I will examine one scene, Smith’s and readers’ first introduction to Faery on the morning of Smith’s tenth birthday. In this scene, readers are given Smith’s perspective of Wootton Major enhanced by the Faerian perspective he

receives from the fay-star. The narrative is evaluated from this new perspective. I give the scene below.

The Feast had been in mid-winter, but it was now June, and the night was hardly dark at all. The boy got up before dawn, for he did not wish to sleep: it was his tenth birthday. He looked out the window, and the world seemed quiet and expectant. A little breeze, cool and fragrant, stirred the waking trees. Then the dawn came, and far away he heard the dawn-song of the birds beginning, growing as it came towards him, until it rushed over him, filling all the land round the house, and passed on like a wave of music into the West, as the sun rose above the rim of the world.

'It reminds me of Faery', he heard himself say; 'but in Faery the people sing too'. Then he began to sing, high and clear, in strange words that he seemed to know by heart; and in that moment the star fell out of his mouth and he caught it in his open hand. It was bright silver now, glistening in the sunlight; but it quivered and rose a little, as if it was about to fly away. Without thinking he clapped his hand to his head, and there the star stayed in the middle of his forehead, and he wore it for many years.

Few people in the village noticed it though it was not invisible to attentive eyes; but it became part of his face, and it did not usually shine at all. Some of its light passed into his eyes... (19-20)

This scene contains many elements "which the text had diverted one from thinking about but which, it later turns out, are in perfect keeping with the ground rules of the narrative world."

The natural environment, how light it is outside, what the trees are doing, the presence of a breeze, and what happens at dawn in Wootton Major—all these appear for the first time. As I will show, these elements are strongly evaluated in Labov's sense, indicating that they are closely related to the story's *raison d'être*.

"The Feast had been in midwinter, but it was now June, and the night was hardly dark at all." The first two clauses of this sentence orient readers to the time in the story when the scene occurs, but the third clause, "the night was *hardly* dark *at all*," is evaluated by the intensifying quantifiers "hardly" and "at all." This clause negates the readers' expectations which had been established by the word "night" earlier in the sentence. Nights are usually dark, but not this one. If the night is "hardly dark," a reasonable assumption is that it is slightly light, and much like "long legs" and "long memories," "light" is a running leitmotif in *Smith*. It is a symbol of that clearer vision which comes from knowledge of Faery, a fact which is almost overemphasized a few sentences later: The star "was *bright* silver now, *glistening* in the *sunlight*" and when Smith

clapped it to his forehead “some of its *light* passed into his eyes.” This lietmotif is also established earlier in the narrative as being directly connected with Alf, the representative of the Faerian perspective. When Nokes holds the fay-star “up to the *light*” and says “that’s funny,” Alf sheds light on the statement, so to speak, by saying “No it isn’t!” (12). And Alf’s eyes, normally full of light, go dark when Nokes belittles “Fairyland” at the first Twenty-four feast (18). Light reveals what it shines on; it is a physical symbol of a clearer vision or perception. The night before Smith’s tenth birthday, a faint light shines down on the land of Wootton Major, darkened by those like Nokes who have forgotten imagination and Faery, giving Smith a clearer vision of his world. This is why Tolkien draws attention to night’s level of darkness through an evaluative intensifier: because this light, and the clearer vision it brings, is at the heart of the purpose of Faery in the story.

After Smith gets up before dawn on this light night, we read, “[h]e looked out the window, and the world seemed quiet and expectant.” The verbs “looked” and “seemed,” are both verbs of perception, indicating that the scene is now being evaluated from Smith’s perspective. And Smith perceives the world itself as being “quiet and expectant” (19). Now anything might be “quiet,” but to be “expectant” requires animacy and consciousness. By saying the world is expectant, Smith perceives the world as being capable of expecting, thus implying that the world has consciousness and memory: that it is alive. This statement is nothing like anything that appears in the narrative before this point. The natural world of Wootton Major from Nokes’s and the villager’s perspective is a dead place, so dead that it is not even mentioned. But from Smith’s perspective, enhanced by a Faerian influence, it is “quiet and expectant”: It is alive.

The next line only reinforces the world's life and consciousness, applying anamorphisms to both the wind and the trees: "A little breeze, cool and fragrant, *stirred* the *waking* trees" (19). The verb "stir" can mean simply "to give a slight or tremulous movement to," but it can also mean "[t]o rouse from rest or inaction" ("Stir," defs. 1a and 5a). An initial read through the sentence might lead readers to believe that the narrator intends the first of these definitions, that the wind is stirring the trees in the sense of simply giving "a slight or tremulous movement to" their branches. But the trees are described by the participle "waking," a verb implying not only life, but also consciousness. Thus the verb "stir" does double duty, so to speak, allowing readers to interpret it first in the sense of "to give a slight or tremulous movement to," but then, once the trees are framed as being awakened, to backtrack and reinterpret "stir" as "[t]o rouse from rest." This single sentence, in miniature, encapsulates the "reconfiguration of meanings," which Rabkin proposes is necessary for fantasy or the fantastic (8). The reconfiguration of meaning" in this sentence reflects the reconfiguration of meanings happening within the story; the waking of the trees reflects the waking of Smith (and of readers) to the world of Faery.

The sentence that follows is perhaps one of the most complex and beautiful in *Smith*, and as an aspiring linguist, it is my favorite. "Then the dawn came, and far away he heard the dawn-song of the birds beginning, growing as it came towards him, until it rushed over him, filling all the land round the house, and passed on like a wave of music into the West, as the sun rose above the rim of the world."

Smith hears the dawn-song, and it begins, grows, and rushes over him like music as the sun rises. What he hears is not unordinary—it is the sound of birds chirping and growing louder at sunrise. But seen through the eyes of one who has a pass to Faery, as evaluated from that perspective, the chirping of the birds at dawn becomes "the dawn-song," an entity with meaning

and purpose, which acts like a wave, sweeping over the world as does the new morning's light, and filling the land.

This sentence is has the strongest evaluations of any sentence in this section and perhaps in the story. This is because in this sentence Tolkien uses evaluative techniques to engage his readers in this sentence in ways he has not used up to this point in the story, as I will show. Not only is this sentence highly evaluated, but in it a strange fusion occurs between its structure and its semantics, between its melody and its meaning. It is highly poetic, in some sense of that word, which is always somewhat vague. My analysis of this sentence will begin by showing how the sentence is evaluated in linguistic terms. But I will also try to show how the sentence through its structure engages readers to experience Tolkien's idea of the world of Faery.

The first lines of the sentence, “[t]hen the dawn came, and far away he heard the dawn-song,” are intensified with expressive phonology: [ðɛn ðə dan keɪm ænd fɑr əweɪ hi hɜrd ðə dɑnsɑŋ]. The main repeated phone, in my Central Texas dialect, is the mid back lax rounded vowel (which I am representing as [ɑ]) which occurs three times in this section of the sentence, in “dawn” [dan] and “dawn-song” [dɑnsɑŋ]. The dawn is the topic of this sentence, that element of the event to which the narrative camera is closest, and even the song of the birds is defined in terms of it. Thus, Tolkien's repetition of the vowel [ɑ] not only enforces this concept's prominence in the sentence, but also points readers to the fact that this is not only a literal “dawn,” but also the metaphorical “dawn” of Smith's initiation into Faery.

Also, the line given above alliterates twice, on the words “then the” [ðɛn ðə] and “he heard” [hi hɜrd]. Three of these—“then,” “the,” and “he”—are grammatical function words, and thus their alliteration is not as significant as the vowel rhymes of “dawn” and “dawn-song,” which are content words (though looking a little further in the sentence, we find “birds

beginning” and “rose above the rim”). But the fact that they are placed together and that they alliterate makes the sentence stand out. They evaluate the sentence, in Labov’s terms. Taken as a whole, this expressive phonology is unlike anything which appears in the narrative before. It supports the placement of the camera angle closest to the “dawn” by phonetically connecting the “dawn” to “dawn-song” by means of the low back rounded lax vowel. It further changes the mood of the story, by introducing poetry into prose, a technique new to the narrative at this point. It forecasts that the ideas in this sentence contain a point vital to the story’s *raison d’être*.

Readers are prepared for this to be an important sentence by the expressive phonology in the first eleven words, but the most complex and important way this sentence is evaluated is with respect to what Labov called temporal junction: That is, the relationship between the linguistic representations of narrative events and the time sequence in which those events are seen as taking place. This sentence has a high number of what Labov calls correlatives—a method of evaluating by portraying two narrative events as occurring contemporaneously. The sentence has five correlatives: the appended participles “beginning,” “growing,” and “filling” and the correlative conjunctions “as [...] came” and “as [...] rose.” In each case, “the action described [by such correlatives] is heard as occurring simultaneously with the action of the main verb of the sentence,” or of the verb which governs that particular correlative clause (*Language* 387-8). The rub is that these correlatives do not correspond to the same main verb, but to different main verbs. But though in this sentence the narrator merely portray *some* events as moving in a time sequence, he also masks the temporal juncture of those events through some clever syntactic trickery. As I will show, this is done deliberately, and has important implications for the story’s *raison d’être*.





to miss the fact that “rushed” is in temporal junction with “heard” and “passed” because of the way the sentence is syntactically structured. The clause containing the finite verb “rushed” is an exact syntactic replica of the clause containing the infinite correlative “as it came over him.” These clauses are word-for-word syntactically parallel: “beginning, growing *as it came towards him, until it rushed over him, filling...*” They are constructed as follows: as/until (conjunctions), it/it (pronouns), came/rushed (preterit verbs of motion), towards/over (prepositions of direction), him/him (pronouns). The key difference between these clauses is in their conjunctions. “As” is a correlative conjunction, indicating that the verb in its clause will be seen as happening contemporaneously with the main verb of the sentence, or the finite verb which governs its clause. On the other hand, “until” is a conjunction that implies a change in a narrative event, and thus a change in temporality. With “until,” narrative event time progresses and thus temporal juncture occurs. But such tight syntactic similarities seem to imply semantic similarities; and thus, the temporal junction between “rushed” and “heard” is easy to miss, at least consciously, because the syntactic structure of the sentence focuses readers on the relationship between “as...came” and “until...rushed.” Readers can miss that the relationship between “heard” and “rushed” is as important, for in it temporal juncture occurs.

This syntactic parallelism between “as...came” and “until...rushed” was intentional on Tolkien’s part. Thanks to Flieger’s new edition of *Smith*, which contains some of Tolkien’s original drafts of the story, one can see that this sentence was changed in this way to reflect the exact parallel syntax I have described above. The original sentence reads: “Then the dawn came, and far away he heard the dawn-song of the birds beginning, *and coming towards him*, until it rushed over him, filling all the land round the house, and passed on like a wave of music into the West; and the sun rose above the trees” (my italics 113). In this sentence, the progression of the

sequence of events between “heard” and “rushed” is much easier to see. “And coming towards him” was changed to “growing, as it came towards him” to reflect the syntax<sup>1</sup> of “until it rushed over him,” and thus to mask the temporal juncture between “heard” and “rushed.”

There is another way that the temporal juncture of “rushed” is masked, and this way concerns the appended participle “filling” which occurs contemporaneously with “rushed.” In the whole sentence, there are three appended participles, all describing the actions of the dawn-song, “beginning,” “growing,” and “filling.” These participles proceed down a single semantic dimension, describing the creation, growth, and action of the dawn-song. Because of their similarities in both form and meaning, their repetitions seem to strike a poetic note in the sentence: “he heard the dawn-song of the birds *beginning, growing* as it came towards him, until it rushed over him, *filling* all the land round the house...” Their similarities are many: They are all appended participles used by the narrator to evaluate this section by setting simultaneous events against each other; they all have the same referent (the dawn-song); and they proceed down a similar semantic dimension. Given these similarities (not to mention such groupings always seem to come in sets of three<sup>2</sup>), it seems reasonable to me that readers would assume that these participles, or more correctly, the events to which they refer, occur contemporaneously with each other, but of course this is not the case. “Beginning” and “growing” occur contemporaneously with “heard,” while “filling” occurs contemporaneously with “rushed.” Thus, these appended participles also mask the temporal juncture between “heard” and “rushed” because of their structural and semantic connections.

But why mask the temporal juncture between “heard” and “rushed”? What effect does this have on this sentence, and what does it say concerning this sentence’s place in the story? How does this help Tolkien take readers to Faery? One somewhat obvious answer is that this

masking has the effect of creating a greater correlative evaluation of the sentence, at least as perceived by readers. By making the entire sentence *seem* to occur contemporaneously, Tolkien is evaluating it very strongly in Labov's sense. A correlative evaluation so thorough has not yet appeared in the narrative, so this sentence is certainly diametrically contradicting the narrative perspective of the story so far, or the story's narrative ground rules. That is, presenting all of these actions, these verbs, as occurring contemporaneously draws readers into one single moment in the story in a way that was not possible when the story was evaluated from the perspective of Nokes and the villagers. As Smith spends some of his visits to Faery "looking only at one tree or one flower," something Nokes and Co. would surely laugh at, this sentence by, its structure, invites readers to spend time looking at a single moment, that moment in which the dawn-song begins, grows, and fills the land of Wootton Major as the sun rises "above the rim of the world."

These lines, then, become experiential for readers, not just informative. In these lines the form of expression and that which is expressed fuse and merge. One of my professors and friends, Haj Ross, once wrote, "The difference between a word and an idea is that in the former, but not in the latter, there must be a phonetic event, a melodic and rhythmic happening. To write with words, then, we must know how to balance the conceptual or imagistic with the musical. Melody and meaning must interpenetrate, must dance with each other" ("Fusion" 2). When Tolkien's sentence is read aloud, we feel a sense of continuity and rhythm because of the expressive phonology. The participles "beginning," "growing," and "filling" ring on our ears like bells, or notes in a song, giving us the sense of the dawn's coming poetically. We hear the sentence build and flow, much as Smith sees the light and hears the dawn-song build and flow.

In technical terms, the structure of the sentence mimics the content. In Ross's terms, which I prefer, melody and meaning dance.

To create a greater correlative evaluation is one answer to the question of why Tolkien masks the temporal juncture between "heard" and "rushed." Another is that this masking also obscures a subtle shift in camera angle which occurs between the verbs "heard" and "rushed." The camera angle, as I have adapted the term from Kuno and Kaburaki, is a narrative technique by which an author may show an event as it relates to some entity participating in that event. This is sometimes shown by syntax, the subject of sentences being the constituent to which the narrative camera is closest. Other times, it is shown by a choice of descriptor, a word or phrase which defines one constituent in terms of another. Both of these ways of manipulating narrative camera angle occur in this sentence. The sentence begins: "Then the dawn came, and far away he heard..." According to syntax, in the first independent clause in this sentence, the camera angle is closest to "the dawn." But in the second clause, the camera angle syntactically switches to the Smith, who is referenced by the pronoun "he." In the next narrative clause, headed by the verb "rushed," the empathy switches again to "the dawn-song," a metonymy for the song of the birds that places the camera angle closest to the "dawn." Thus, the sentence begins with its narrative camera closest to the dawn, briefly draws near to Smith, and then returns to the dawn. From this fact, and the fact that the correlative evaluations of this sentence all reference the dawn or the dawn-song, we may conclude that overall the camera angle is closest to the dawn, as this is what Tolkien wishes readers to experience.

The masking of the transition between the verbs "heard" and "rushed" then serves to obscure the camera angle shift from Smith to the dawn-song in order to allow readers to focus on the dawn as Smith focuses on a flower in Faery. For this reason, Smith is present in the sentence

*only* as a perceiver. This point is further made in the next sentence. “‘It reminds me of Faery,’ *he heard himself say...*” (my italics 20). Even though Smith is performing the action (speaking) in this sentence, because of the verb of perception “heard,” he is present in the sentence only as a perceiver, not as a volitional agent.

This introduction to a Faerian view of Wootton Major and to Faery itself, then, diametrically contradicts the dominant perspective in the first thirteen pages of the story. Tolkien accomplishes this by evaluating this scene through Smith’s perception. But Smith exists in the scene only as a perceiver, as verbs of perception throughout the scene show: “looked,” “seemed,” “heard,” and “heard.” The camera angle in this scene is ultimately closest to the dawn and the dawn-song, symbols of the waking and living world which readers are being shown for the first time. And by its structure, the main sentence in this scene invites readers to experience that waking and awakening poetically.

#### Conclusion: Awakening a World with Words

Labov says that narrators can evaluate their stories by either making characters speak or showing their actions (373). In chapter 2, I argue that both of these techniques can be seen as cases of evaluation by perspective. Every subsequent chapter in this thesis argues either directly or indirectly that perspective is the fundamental way in which *Smith* is evaluated—the perspectives of those who know Faery and those who don’t frame the story and are at constant variance. Those with “long legs” and those without are constantly vying for readers’ empathy. The Great Hall, Wootton Major’s once-upon-a-time connection to Faery, is made of “good stone and good oak,” a funny thing to say about rock and wood, until we remember that the folk of Wootton are themselves “good, bad, and mixed, as is usual” (6, 5).

Even at the end of *Smith*, after Smith has retired from his wanderings in Faery, the technique of evaluation by perspective is present. At Alf and Nokes's final meeting, they discuss the cake which contained the fay-star all those years ago. "Well, I've a long memory," Nokes says ironically, "and that day sticks in it somehow" (54). As Nokes explains to Alf, he has been wondering what happened to that star. For it to just disappear does not fit in with his practical perspective of the way the world works: He had told the children at the time that it had just melted, but "Of course it wouldn't melt. I only said that to stop the children being frightened" (54). Surprisingly, Nokes does have a long memory; he recalls the children who were at the feast, giving arguments why each one might have eaten the star. He says that Cooper's Harry was a "barrel of a boy with a big mouth like a frog," as a good reason as any. But while Nokes's memory is surprisingly good, his perspective is still lacking. Alf corrects the interpretation of what Nokes remembers, not the facts: "I should have said, Master, that he [Harry] was a nice boy with a large friendly grin" (55).

Though this perspective is on the surface of so many scenes in *Smith*, such as this one, it is also taken up into the linguistic structure of the narrative, where it affects readers' perceptions of the narrative world far more dramatically. In some way, this invites readers to *experience* the change in perspective that happens throughout the story. Tolkien says that such a change in perception is often what readers need ("Fairy-stories" 77). He says that, like Smith, we too need to re-see our familiar world with a fresh perspective. We need to close our laptops, walk outside, and feel the dawn-song beginning, growing, and filling our own world. This is at the heart of why we read fairy-stories in the first place, according to Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-stories." In this essay he calls this change in perspective "Recovery," saying that through fairy-stories

We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses—and wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us to make. (76-77)

At the start of this chapter, I outlined Rabkin's idea of fantasy, which is produced by setting a certain perspective on narrative events, and then diametrically contradicting that perspective, causing readers to re-interpret the story from the new perspective. Tolkien saw the creation and enjoyment of fairy-stories as a means to the end of the same process happening to us in our own world.

I began the first chapter of this thesis by giving specific examples of how Tolkien's theories of Faery are present in *Smith*. But now I can go one step further, for by carefully and skillfully using camera angle and evaluation, Tolkien builds Recovery—a Recovery of a clearer vision—into the very structure of the story itself. Tom Shippey once said of *The Lord of the Rings* that if one was to look for a work of literature in which “world-view and narrative were identical, he could not have found a clearer example!” (*Road* 334). The same can be said of *Smith of Wootton Major*. Tolkien the critic, the storyteller, and the linguist are identical. He has awoken a world with words. Looking closely at the language of *Smith* is in many ways like looking at a snowflake under a magnifying glass. The grandeur of its conception and the care of its maker are most evident in its tiniest details.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tolkien's ability to replicate syntax for narrative effects has been studied before in at least two places. Paul Hurtubise finds that Tolkien uses parallel syntax for Labovian evaluation in *The Lord of the Rings*'s chapter "The Ride of the Rohirrim" (123). Michael Drout, in his article "Tolkien's Prose Style and its Literary and Rhetorical Effects" finds that Tolkien has used the syntax of a sentence in Shakespeare's "King Lear" for the narrative effects he wished to achieve (149-154). Drout concludes that "Tolkien has created precisely controlled stylistic and grammatical effects, with a rigorously maintained point of view that not only frames the scene in terms of Merry's presence but also links it, grammatically, metonymically, and lexically, with the rest of the world he has built and with the wider intertextual culture of which *The Lord of the Rings* is a part (154).

<sup>2</sup> Haj Ross has pointed this out to me on several occasions.

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