Chapter IV: Construction of the world of the ‘para-real’ in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*

In this chapter I will concentrate chiefly on *The Fellowship of The Ring: Being the First Part of The Lord of the Rings* but also touch upon *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings* and *The Return of the King: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings*. This is significant because the three books constitute a simple story with the ring being at the centre of all events.

As we move from Hobbit to the trilogy we find a more complicated narrative with many characters and a complex plot and we can see from this statement by Ruth Naddelmann Lynn. I will also quote a small extract from a review in The New York Herald Tribune. It labeled *The Fellowship of The Ring, Being the First Part of The Lord of the Rings* as one which is “fitted with marvels and strange terrors … an extraordinary, a distinguished piece of work”. Tolkein stuffs the narrative with tropes and imagery of the non-real, & therefore those of shock, horror, suddenness, mystery and the wonder. The world of *The Fellowship of the Rings*, which is the first book of the trilogy, is constructed even more realistically. The marvels start to happen right at the beginning. Even before the novel starts, Tolkien’s language games begin their handiwork

1Ruth Naddelmann Lynn. *Fantasy Literature For Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography*, in *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt, London: Routledge; 1996. p 202, “Hobbit is a midwife to the birth of *Lord of the Rings* and these materials create *The Silmarillion*. All would agree that *Hobbit* cannot be taken by itself but with respect to the trilogy which is one of the most immense and satisfying imaginative creations of our times. The shift from the *Hobbit* to the *Trilogy* is a conscious one and the discerning reader can take in such an alternative very effectively. The reader who moves from a *Hobbit* to *The Lord of the Rings* moves from a novel with a single plot and a limited number of characters, from a novel which follows the folk tale format quite closely to a novel which has the folk tale format as its base but also contains much of its structure and content of legend as well as myth. In short *Lord of the Rings* is written for a more mature and experienced reader who can deal with its complex and tightly textured story.”

through a small lyric to introduce the theme. The foreword, a little later, serves to make things roll. The small lyric at the same time makes our imagination go places and also situates our minds on a real plane:

Three Rings for the Elven Kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for mortal men doomed to die,
One Ring to blind them all. One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.
In the hand of the Mordor where the shadows lie. *(The Fellowships of the Rings)*

Tolkien introduces the theme of the magical ring which has already been introduced in the Hobbit. The locale is thus created and the plot is initiated. Various questions flock to the mind and we ask questions to which we have no answers now, especially for those who are fresh readers of the *Hobbit* Series. But Tolkien makes things easier when he draws out for such readers a sort of a foreword and sums up the story of *Hobbit*. Thus it is quite desirable for the fresh reader to know and be prepared for the new adventures and for the reader, who has already read *The Hobbit*, has few doubts in his mind that there are endless adventures created realistically.

Tolkien employs the flashback technique here allows the child to identify with what might already have taken place. Probably the clearest application to a child's response to fantasy literature lies in the ability to process flashbacks so that the child recognizes that the order in
which events are described in a story is not necessarily the order in which they really occurred. We can interpret this from Piaget’s scheme of things.\(^3\)

Chapter One takes up certain propositions which have been initiated in the *Hobbit*. In the Second Age of the history of the hobbits, one Dark Lord Sauron created special rings to give them to leaders of all the kinds. He gave three rings to the Elves, seven rings to the Dwarfs, and nine rings to the Humans. However, Sauron also secretly created another ring, called the One-ring which allows him to control the carriers of the other Rings, and such, allowing him to conquer Middle-Earth using it. But, In a battle against Sauron, Prince Isildur cuts the Ring from Sauron’s hand, destroying his physical form. However, there is a catch; Sauron’s life force is bound to the Ring, allowing him to survive while the Ring also survives. Isildur, corrupted by the Ring’s power, refuses to destroy it. When Isildur is killed by Orcs, the Ring is lost in a river for 2,500 years. The Ring is found by Gollum, who has the ring for 500 years, allowing him to live for a very long time, but corrupting his mind, but one day, the Ring separates from Gollum, and remains that way until it is found by the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins.

The narrative kicks off all of a sudden, rather abruptly. This is not an accident but a conscious strategy; constructed realistically There is a long expected party here, as opposed to an unexpected party. This takes place sixty years after the Events depicted in the *Hobbit*.

When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag end announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 38)

The narrator is already at work, engaging the child reader in close confidence. Tolkien has already begun manipulating or distorting reality with tropes which are to characterize the entire text. Bilbo Baggins is now an aged man, and not the young hero we encountered in the *Hobbit*. The occasion is his ‘eleventy first’ birthday and it is also Frodo’s birthday. Tolkien casually uses a word ‘eleventy first.’ It has no etymological significance but it exists beyond the normal semantics. With such language games, Tolkien consciously transforms reality. The child will try to guess which birthday he was celebrating and will try to equate this to an actual digit. One hundred and eleven could be a possible option.

Bilbo appoints Frodo as his heir and hands over the ring to him before he leaves the place. The details in which the farewell is mentioned equals any ‘real’ farewell song. Epithets once more are transferred from a real world to the magical world created realistically. Bilbo sings while departing:

    The Road goes over on and on
    Down from the door where it began.
    Now far ahead the Road has gone;
    And I must follow, if I can,
    Pursuing it with eager feet,
    Until it joins some larger way.
    Where many paths and errands meet.
    And whither when? I cannot say. (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 48)

After the typical farewell song; and Gandalf ; ‘as old as the rocks’ settles down and passes on Bilbo’s mantle to Frodo, another Hamlet like nonchalant hero, not quite ready to take up the challenge, but has to do so nevertheless. The child reader can easily relate to this farewell song and from Piaget’s view point we can assert that the reader is all too ready to ‘assimilate’ such
reading to his own life or other texts with ‘real’ adventures. Upon learning the Ring belonged to Sauron, the Wizard Gandalf the Grey warns Frodo that Sauron's forces will come for him, and has Frodo leave the shire accompanied by his friend Samwise Gamgee.

Frodo realizes soon that, ‘uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.’ The narrative ceaselessly pave s way for more and more gripping adventures. The fantastic is created by distortion of the real. Real life adventures are replaced by realistically structured ones which comprise the fantasy. A little later when Frodo cannot read the ‘fiery letters’, Gandalf admits these are ‘elvish’ and of an ‘ancient mode’, and the language is ‘modern’ but he would translate the whole thing in ‘close enough’ to the original. So Tolkien makes the reader assume that both such languages exist. One can easily relate this to the gradual simplification of the English language. The common tongue of course makes it easy for Frodo:

“One Ring to Rule them all, one Ring to find them, 
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness find them” (The Fellowship of the Rings 50)

It is quite interesting to find the detailed list of ‘hobbit beings’ accumulated for the party:

There were many Bagginses and Boffuses and also many Tooksaand BrandyBucks, there were various Chubbs(conections of his Took Father and a selection of Burrowses, Bolgers, Bracegirdles, Goodbodies, Brockhouses, Homblurs and Proudfoots. Some of these were only very distantly connected with Bilbo. Some had hardly ever been in Hobbiton before as they lived in remote corners of the shire, The Sackville. (The Fellowship of the Rings 64)

There is indeed a Bakhtinian sense of the carnivalesque here as creatures of different hierarchies get incorporated here in a milieu which resembles the subversive power inherent in carnival festivals and in the carnivalized genre of the novel. We can suggest after Bakhtin that Tolkein
depicts “societies that are socially stratified and hierarchical.” Nonetheless, descriptions such as the ones I have discussed do encourage some reconsideration of Tolkien’s social values. Both Lewis and Tolkien do figure forth societies structured by class, and in the process of doing so continue to manipulate reality. A few lines following the above extract, the reader finds Gandalf warning Frodo, “It may have other powers than just making you vanish when you wish to” (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 64) Tolkien here uses the tropes of wonder, mystery and suddenness here in this very obvious warning leveled at Frodo.

Chapter 2 is titled, ‘The Shadow of the Past’. It infuses a sense of horror and awe in the child who reads. Unconsciously, the child has found an accomplice in his reading; the narrator of the novel. The aim of the narrator is achieved thereby. There is more horror and mystery when there are discussions of the second disappearance of Bilbo Baggins, “The Talk did not die down in nine or even ninety one days.”(*The Fellowships of the Rings* 80) There is a tone of seriousness in the entire matter as Gandalf surmises with the gravest of concern as there is a crisis embarking on the Hobbit world as there is the risk of the ring being usurped.

Gandalf looked at Frodo and his eyes glinted, “It is no laughing matter,” said Gandalf, “Not for you. It is the strangest event in the whole history of the ring, so far. Bilbo’s arrival just at that time and putting on his hand on it blindly in the dark” (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 81)

Which history is being referred to over here? There is reference to history of a place which has no physical existence but is being created realistically. I have already mentioned about that ‘history’ earlier. The world is the “other” world, one which we can call the ‘para-real’. There is a very interesting instance I would like to quote to show how Tolkien manipulates reality to great

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precision. When Gandalf talks of finding out a translation ‘close enough’ to the original, it is an instance of how detailed the efforts to place this narrative of fantasy on ‘real grounds’ could turn out to be. The problems that Tolkien initiates are all problems which are feasible in the real world but here they are made to fit in the world of the para real, that he seeks to construct.

Gandalf’s warnings get more specific as he advises Frodo:

“I shall come back immediately, or at least send word. In the meanwhile stick to your plan, but be more careful than ever, especially of the Ring. Let me impress on you once more “don’t use it”!” (The Fellowship of the Rings 94)

Such italicized portions serve a specific purpose in a narrative. They intend to inform the reader that such words are to be read with a higher intonation. Tolkien does this to create fantasy which operates as a manipulation of the real. These advices aid Frodo. Gandalf’s advice is very specific and it locates the problem as ‘real’ one. The confusion is realistically constructed as the child reader too is taken for a ride in ways more than one. He too tries to unravel the mysteries that face Frodo. Tolkien projects himself as an accomplice of the reader. The narrative is replete with attempts to work upon and manipulate the normative sense of reality.

Frodo and company seek to find out the Ring and later destroy it. Gandalf rides to Isengard to meet with the head of his order, Saruman the White, who reveals that Sauron’s servants, the Nazgûl, have been sent to capture the Ring. Saruman reveals himself to be in service to Sauron and imprisons Gandalf atop his tower. Saruman commands Sauron’s Orcs to construct weapons of war and produce a new breed of Orc fighters: the Uruk-hai.

The adventure is gripping and each chapter leads to another with a lot of unanswered questions and it keeps the suspense ticking on. Says Frodo, who is in the hiding as advised by Gandalf:
It is no good our starting to go in zigzags … That won’t mend matters, let us keep on as we are going. I am not sure that I want to come into the open as yet. (The Fellowship of the Rings 121)

The accomplice narrator continuously endeavours to engage the reader in the adventure and creates spaces for such interactions and the reader surely at most points tries to shape out what could happen next as we can see from Piaget’s suggestions.\(^5\)

The reader begins to entertain possibilities for the future and is fascinated with what they can be so the reader tries to participate in the narrative process. So when Tolkien distorts reality with certain recurrent tropes as I have been discussing he does it with the permission of the child reader as it were. If we note the descriptive nature of Tolkien’s narrative we can find it is a calculated strategy to manipulate reality. He tries repeatedly to distort reality through all such vivid descriptions. We know that he is describing beings or things which do not actually exist. Tolkien creates the world of the para-real through such descriptions. An example will suffice:

The Maggots and the Puddifoots of Stock, and most of the inhabitants of the Marish were house dwellers and his farm was stoutly built of brick and had a high wall round it. There was a wide wooden gate opening of the wall into the lane. (The Fellowship of the Rings 123)

Once more epithets that might be used in normal parlance are transferred to a non-real world. The description has a very distinct pictorial quality which engages the child reader even more as he can assimilate and relate to these as we can understand from Piaget’s notions of child

\(^5\)J. Piaget. *Studies in Reflecting Abstraction*, Hove, UK: Psychology Pres, 1967. p50, “The abstract quality of the adolescent's thought at the formal operational level is evident in the adolescent's verbal problem solving ability. The logical quality of the adolescent's thought is when children are more likely to solve problems in a trial-and-error fashion. Adolescents begin to think more as a scientist thinks, devising plans to solve problems and systematically testing solution. They use hypothetical-deductive reasoning, which means that they develop hypotheses or best guesses, and systematically deduce, or conclude, which is the best path to follow in solving the problem.”
learning which have been discussed earlier.\(^6\) Even a single line in the novel is not wasted. For example, a simple sentence while referring to the journey that Frodo undertakes; “As they walked up the green path from the gate, no light was visible.” \((\text{The Fellowships of the Rings} \ 133)\) generates a lot of interest and is indeed very significant in the narrative. Tolkien uses the tropes of horror, suspense, suddenness and suspense. There is a sense of unexpectedness that engages the reader making the narrator an accomplice of the child reader.

I will quote another such extract and then show effectively Tolkien substitutes real life situations with non real ones to create the fantastic world; “Frodo went in once, long ago. I have been in several times: when the trees are sleeping and fairly quiet.” \((\text{The Fellowships of the Rings} \ 141)\) The assertion is made with the supposed assumption that trees are awake for most of the time and they also make noise. The sentence, as usual is structured in such a way, it seems to the reader that what it states is perfectly normal that trees should be awake most of the time whereas we can understand that it is not so. In such narratives the normal world becomes alien and foreign; magic is the chief criterion. I would like to quote another sentence randomly which shows how Tolkien manipulates reality while depicting the arduous adventure, “Sam sat down and scratched his head and yawned like a cavern.” \((\text{The Fellowships of the Rings} \ 152)\) Tolkien uses the trope of transference of epithets. Here similes and epithets which are used in normal parlance are transferred to a world which does not exist but created realistically. The sixth chapter ends with the following lines, “And with that song the hobbits stood upon the threshold and a golden light was all about them”\((\text{The Fellowship of the Ring},158)\) There is preparation for

more ‘real’ adventures and there is, as it were, no fictional element about it. The continuum is maintained as the seventh chapter starts off where precisely the previous one had culminated:

The four hobbits stepped over the wide stone threshold, and stood still blinking. They were in a long low room, filled with the light of lamps swinging from the beams of the roof, and on the table of dark polished wood stood many candles, tall and yellow, burning brightly.” (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 159)

While travelling to Bree to meet with Gandalf, Frodo and Sam are joined by Merry and Pippin, who are stealing some local crops and are nearly captured by the Nazgûl. The four reach Bree. Tolkien carefully constructs the para real world in which the hobbits flourish. The details of the differences between the hobbits of the ‘Shire’ and ‘Bree’ are remarkable in their precision just as we would distinguish between two communities of human beings.:

The Shire hobbits referred to those of Bree, and to any others that lived beyond the barbers, as outsiders and took very little interests in them, considering them dull and uncouth. There were probably many more outsiders scattered about in the west of the world in those days that the people of the Shire imagined. (*The Fellowships of the Rings* 182)

Another very relevant term here is ‘outsiders,’ who are the ‘outsiders?’ Tolkien realistically creates such clans just as we would have in any real country or state which would not be too keen about each other’s affairs. In the Tolkien scheme of things the remarkable aspect rests in the fact that the is all but hobbits are ‘outsiders.’ Others can only sit and watch their activities is. Such differences are very intelligently and realistically constructed for the reader. The hobbit world continuously emerges as a ‘real’ world for the readers. The hobbits judge things from their own parameters and we just need to accept such parameters. Anyone ‘beyond the borders’ is ‘outsiders’ and humans are not an exception. The reader should never question these tenets and rules but dig deep into these events as they emerge from the pages of this amazing text. The
reader needs to understand that it is a world in which even the ‘Bree Hobbits’ are outsiders in the scheme of shire hobbits. The division is clear and intentional and impressive to say the least. The problems are projected in a very realistic manner.

Other wanderers were rare, and of evil sort: trolls might stay down at times out of the northern valleys of the Misty Mountains. (The Fellowship of the Rings 181) The possibilities of imminent dangers are etched out in real graphic details. Frodo and company discuss how long the food might last. They pass their time sharing anecdotes of ‘Middle Earth’. Middle Earth proves to be more and fascinating and more and more real. The details tend to be very specific which make the events resemble the real. I need to chip in with another example; “The Inn of Bree was still there and the innkeeper was an impatient person.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 182) The suspense is maintained all through. A new character introduces himself, “I am called Strider,” he sid in a low voice. “I am very pleased to meet you, Master Underchill, if Old Butterbur got your name correct.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 195)

Tolkien craftily engages in the imagery of the non-real, mystery and wonder. Strider surmises a little later, “Too much, too many dark things”, said Stider grimly. (The Fellowship of the Rings 205) Here we find the tropes of horror and mystery perfectly imbued in the fabric of fantasy. The group rests at Weathertop where they are attacked by the Nazgûl, and Frodo is wounded by a Morgul blade, but Aragorn arrives and scares off the Nazgûl. Frodo is saved by the Elf Arwen, who uses her magic to summon a surge of water that sweeps away the pursuing Nazgûl. Arwen takes Frodo to Rivendell where her father, Elrond, heals him.

Tolkien enhances the narrative pace with calculated strategies as he would try to close upon the first book of The Fellowship of the Rings. I will quote an extract from the last chapter
to demonstrate that Tolkien creates his world of the ‘para-real’ by employing a narrative stance that it is only obvious that such things should happen.

There Brandybucks were blowing the horn-call of Buckland, that had not been sounded for a while, not since the white wolves came in the fell winter, when the Brandywine was frozen over.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 245)

Tolkien manipulates reality to act as an accomplice of the reader. There is in the narrative a Bakhtinian sense of heteroglotic language and carnivalized action which creates polyphonic exchanges in which power relations between characters are negotiated.7 The Ring tends to corrupt its bearers. Frodo escapes by the Ring's power of invisibility and decides to continue his journey alone.

Book II opens in Rivendell at the house of Elrond. Frodo is healed by Elrond and discovers that Bilbo has been residing there. Bilbo asks to see the Ring again, but Frodo resists because of the ring’s power, which leads Bilbo to understand at last. If we take up an extract from the first chapter of Book II it seems we can sum up what we are trying to posit so far:

“Then the enchantment became more dreamlike, until he felt that an endless river of swelling gold and silver was flowing over him, too multitudinous for its pattern to be comprehended; it became part of the throbbing air about him, and it drenched and drowned him. Swiftly he sank under its shining weight into a deep realm of sleep.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 265)

Tolkien freely transfers epithets from the real world to try and evoke a sense of reality which exists beyond our normal parameters of reality but something which a child can assimilate to.⁸ There are songs put in intermittently to further intensify the mystery.

Seek for the Sword that was broken

In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur’s Bane shall waken.
And the Halfling forth shall stand.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 269)

Such songs are not superfluous but intricately linked to the subject of the novel. The author here uses names which are supposed to be obvious in the hobbit world but actually have no existence, so such place names are portrayed realistically through this song to create fantasy. The accomplice narrator is very much at work here. All this paves way to what can be called the climactic part of the text and there is that declaration which can be at once be identified with the The Fellowship of the Rings; “One ring to rule them all/ one ring to find them/ one ring to bring them/ and in the darkness find them.” (The Fellowship of the Rings 286) This is the focal theme of the text, the search for ring which is the driving motive. As the adventure becomes more and more gripping we find the narrator picking up more and more epithets from the real world and transfix these realistically into the world of fantasy. Even simple descriptions are artistically planned:

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Silence fell again. Frodo, even in that fair house, looking out upon a sunlit valley filled with the noise of the clear waters, felt a dead darkness in his heart. Boromir stirred, and Frodo looked at him. He was fingerling his great horn and frowning.

(\textit{The Fellowship of the Rings} 292)

The story line is very tersely maintained. Gandalf escapes Saruman's tower with the aid of Gwaihir the eagle and travels to Rivendell. Elrond calls a council of the races still loyal to Middle-earth to decide what should be done with the Ring. He reveals that the Ring can only be destroyed by throwing it into the fires of Mount Doom in Mordor, where it was forged, as he himself tried to get Isildur to destroy it. Frodo volunteers to take the Ring to Mordor, accompanied by Sam, Merry, Pippin, Gandalf, and Aragorn. They are joined by the Elf Legolas, the Dwarf Gimli, and Boromir, a man of Gondor, to form the Fellowship of the Ring. Hindered by Saruman's magic, the Fellowship are forced to travel through the abandoned underground Dwarf city of Moria. Inside, the Fellowship is ambushed by Orcs and a Balrog, an ancient demon of fire and shadow. Gandalf confronts the Balrog, allowing the others to escape, but both Gandalf and the Balrog fall into an abyss. Mourning Gandalf's apparent death, the group flees to the forest of Lothlórien, where they are sheltered by its rulers, the Elves Galadriel and Celeborn. That night, Galadriel informs Frodo that it is his destiny to destroy the Ring. Meanwhile, Saruman assembles a force of Uruk-hai to hunt the Fellowship.

I will quote two extracts from their text to demonstrate how these take after the normal patterns of adventure only to transport these in the realms of fantasy.

1. "'The orcs will not, maybe, come out till after dusk, but we must be far away before nightfall.'" (\textit{The Fellowship of the Rings} 336)
2. "The chasm was long and dark, and filled with the noise of wind and rushing water and echoing stone. It bent somewhat towards the west so that at first all was dark ahead; but soon Frodo saw a tall gap of light before him, ever growing. Swiftly it drew near, and suddenly the boats shot through, out into a wide clear light." *(The Fellowship of the Rings* 366)

I have carefully selected these extracts to serve two purposes. First, I would like to show how progressively; all throughout the story, Tolkien maintains a very innocuous kind of narrative stance; every time suggesting to the reader that the incidents they are reading are absolutely normal and such events actually occur. Secondly, if we make a quick glance at these extracts we can understand that Tolkien creates fantasy by substituting reality, acting as an accomplice narrator; by replacing the real for a distorted version of it. Frodo’s nonchalance remains as “he wished with all his heart that he was back there, and in those days, moving the lawn, or pottering among the flowers, and that he had never heard of Moria, or Mithril – or the Ring” *(The Fellowships of the Rings* 378.) This can easily be compared to the nonchalance of a real life hero; a hero who has to fight but does not feel like doing so, a sort of Hamlet like figure who has to ‘set things right.’ he has no option but to do it. The Runes which Gandalf decode a little later prove once more how deftly Tolkien substitutes the real for a distorted version of it.

“There are Daeron’s Runes, such as were used of old in Moria’ said Gandalf. Here is written in the tongues of Men and Dwarves

*BALIN SON OF FUNDIN*,

*LORD OF MORIA*(The Fellowship of the Ring,380)

The details that are provided a little later about Southern Mirkwood for instance create a space and a realistic locale, which the reader can visualize. As Frodo tries to decide the future course of
the Fellowship, Boromir tries to take the Ring for himself, and Frodo ends up putting on the Ring to escape from Boromir. While the rest of the Fellowship scatters to hunt for Frodo, Frodo decides the Fellowship has to be broken, and he must depart secretly for Mordor. Sam insists on coming along, however, and they set off together to Mordor. The Fellowship is thus broken.

The fellowship of the ring is ‘broken’ as it were as we reach the end of the novel and the reader needs to wait to know what happens next. The Two Towers can provide the reader with the answers to these questions as it continues the story forward and the reader is eager to know more. The story is so gripping and the adventure so realistically constructed that we cannot wait to know what happens next. The Providence Sunday Journal had this to say of it,

“Brilliant in its telling as it is broad in its scope an excitingly good book, and far more than fantasy to us, who have come into possession of the Great Ring of Power and have turned back one assault of the shadow only to see it, as Gandalf warned, take another shape and grow again.”

The ‘telling’, actually is unparalleled in its approach, and we need to be a part of it as it were, Auden in The New York Timer Review, had this to suggests on the book.

For any one who likes the genre to which it belongs, the Heroic Quest, I cannot imagine a more wonderful Christmas present. No fiction I have read in the last five years has given me more joy than The Fellowship of the Ring.

Though these reviews are very sketchy, they do not forget to highlight that these texts are framed on fantasy which borders reality. The narrator is with the magic wand so to speak. The world is the “other” world. The narrator evokes such a world by manipulating the sense of reality by calculated strategies, which is peculiar to such texts, the normal world becomes alien and foreign. The narrator carries the story forward by means of substitution of the real for a distorted version ‘para-real’. There is more joy and quest, waiting for the child reader in the second book of the trilogy.

*The Two Towers*

*The Two Towers* starts off exactly where we had left off in Part(I) of the trilogy and we can start by quoting Julien Forest:

> This book, Mr Tolkien continues the great romance which began with *The Fellowships of this Ring*. Prophecy is a dangerous business but I should not be surprised if we turned out to be new classic on our hands… If you know great book when you see one, you will want all of there.¹¹

Once more Tolkien draws out the ‘history’ as it has been so far and the reader who reads *The Two Towers* before anything else knows what regions he is to tread into, and there is even a synopsis of Book II and a glimpse at what is waiting in Book III. This of course is a conscious and strategic narrative ploy. We are reminded that the ring needs to be destroyed. Chapter I starts off with Aragon’s search for Frodo and once more the details start flowing.

> “Aragon sped on up the hill. Every now and again he bent to the ground. Hobbits go light, and their footprints are not easy, even for a Ranger to read, but not far from the spring crossed the path, and in the wet earth he saw what he was seeking” (*The Two Towers* 17)

There is more information on hobbits, this time on hobbit footprints. The word ‘even’ is of primary importance as it is a conscious language game that Tolkien employs to place the

situation in a realistic framework. It serves as an index for creating with a greater finesse the world of the ‘para real’. Also, ‘hobbits go light’ create a very realistic effect. As Tolkien has done so many times in the texts previously discussed, he transfers epithets which would have otherwise been used to depict the normal world. The difficulty level that faces the mission is also quite obvious here and Aragon surely has a task on the cards, and the task is certainly not an enviable one. Orcs sent by Saruman and Sauron kill Boromir and kidnap Merry and Pippin. After agonizing over which pair of hobbits to follow, Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas pursue the orcs bearing Merry and Pippin to Saruman. The narrative posits such problems in a very realistic mode. Particulars are once more made to flow. An example would suffice, “Na! said Legolas,” Sauron does not use the Elf runes.” (The Two Towers 21) More details flow suffuse the text with information on what Sauron uses and he does not use. Almost as in a detective novel, bits and pieces are joined together to find solutions. Chapter I ends in this fashion, “Dusk came. They passed away, grey shades in a stony land” (The Two Towers 26). Chapter 2 commences precisely where the first chapter had ended:

Dusk deepened, mist lay behind them among the trees below, and brooded on the pale margins of the Auduin, but the sky was clear. Stars came out. The waxing moon was riding in the west, and the shadows of the rocks were black” (The Two Towers, 27).

The continuum is remarkable in the truest sense, the dusk deepens and events take a shape in accordance to the weather and the time of the day is an index also. Such indices recur all through out in the narrative of the second part of the trilogy. The details furnished and the logic supplied for such details are at times so vividly presented that the reader might be tempted to ask a few questions, doubting whether this is fiction after all! The conversation provided is a case in point:
“Then you do not pay tribute to Sauron?” said Gimli  “We do not and we never have,” said Eomer with a flash of his eyes, though it comes to my ears that lie has been told. Some years ago the Lord of the Black Land wished to purchase horses of us at a great price, but we refused him, far he puts beasts to evil use. Then he sent plundering Orcs, and they carry off what they can, choosing always the black horses, few of these are now left. For that reason our feud with the orcs is bitter.

(*The Two Towers 47*)

Graphic details each and every one of these; we have our queries answered, the argument is well made, and the narrative is built upon a logical framework, and the narrative also provides us with the game plan of the opponents, the followers of Sauron and Saruman, and that adds to the realistic framework of the novel. Frodo and company are befriended by Treebeard, the oldest of the tree-like Ents who contribute to the enchantment. At every instance Tolkien acts as an accomplice narrator. There is room for looking back at older days and the narrative takes the traditional flashback techniques. Probably the clearest application to a child's response to fantasy literature like Tolkien’s works lies in the ability to process flashbacks so that the child recognizes that the order in which events are described in a story is not necessarily the order in which they really occurred.12

The description of journeys play a stellar role in Tolkien’s scheme of constructing the fantastic. The descriptions are very vivid and particular and there is the feeling of oneness with the journey patterns. I quote:

They rode on through sunset, and slow dunk and gathering night. When at last they halted and dismounted even Aragon was stiff and weary. Gandalf only allowed them a few hour’s rest. The night was barred with long clouds, fleeting on a chill wind, when they rose again. Under the cold moon they went on once

more, as swift as by the light of day. Hours passed and still they rode on. Gimli nodded and would have fallen from his seat, if Gandalf had not clutched and shaken him. A bitter chill came into the air. Slowly in the East the dark faded to a cold grey (The Two Towers 141)

Such a passage can vouch to tell how precise the details are and how ‘real’ the atmosphere they resemble a real journey. Frodo, Sam and Gollum traverse the Dead Marshes, evading a Nazgûl. The army of Saruman seeks the ring to rebuild their power.

Tolkien ceaselessly transfers epithets which would otherwise have been used in normal parlance but here used as a tool of fantasy. ‘The hobbits lead the way, all through and stay at the forefront. The adventure intensifies as the narrative goes forward in a rapid pace, hardly providing the reader with a breathing space and there is a sense of urgency, “Must get up, yes they must! Long ways to go still, south and east. Hobbits must make haste!” (The Two Towers 387) and the tension reaches its acme and the urgency to kill Gollum gains top priority in the mind of Sam. The last line of the chapter entitled Shelob’s Lair goes like this, “So far Gollum’s plot had succeeded” (The Two Towers 427). The catch, of course, is in the phrase ‘so far’. There is more to come. Fantasy and magic are embedded in the realistic framework. The narrative creates for itself solutions as it goes ahead and at the same time raises questions. And when we reach the end of the book, we are in for more adventures that will be really constructed in the third part. Frodo and Sam capture Gollum, who had been following them from Moria, and force him to guide them to Mordor. Finding Mordor’s Black Gate too well guarded to attempt, they travel instead to a secret passage Gollum knows. Torn between his loyalty to Frodo and his desire for the Ring, Gollum eventually betrays Frodo by leading him to the great spider Shelob in the tunnels of Cirith Ungol. Frodo is felled by Shelob’s bite, but Sam fights her off. Sam takes
the Ring and leaves Frodo, believing him to be dead. When orcs find Frodo, Sam overhears them say that Frodo is only unconscious, and chases after them.

There is that inevitable climactic ending which leaves so many queries unanswered and the wait for the next book should ideally not be a long one:

The gate was shut, Sam hurled himself against the fritted frogen plates and fell senseless to the ground. He was out in the darkness. Frodo was alive but taken by the enemy.

*Here ends the second part of the history of the War of the Ring. The third part tells of the last defence against the shadow, and the end of the mission of the Ring-bearer in THE RETURN OF THE KING.* (The Two Towers 447).

Tolkien keeps the doors open for a fantasy sequel which will solve the mystery that has been brewing in the first two parts. We can pass on to some aspects of the third part after having quoted from *The New York Times Book Review*;

“*It is an extraordinary work - pure excitement, unencumbered narrative, moral warmth, bare-faced rejoicing in beauty, but excitement most of all*”\(^\text{13}\)

*The Return of the King.*

The narrative takes up issues which were left unsolved in the previous part. *Book V: The War of the Ring* begins with Pippin and Gandalf together. When the narrator says, “This was the second, no, the third night since he had looked in the stone, *(The Return of the King)*, we are clear about the narratorial intentions. He wants to present before us some problems which seem very realistic in nature, yet we know that the Hobbit World is only an imaginary world. This is

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\(^{13}\) *The New York Tribune; The Two Towers,*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1965, (back cover)
the world of the Para-real we are trying to look into. The reader is reminded of Frodo in the second page itself.

He[Pippin] wondered where Frodo was, and if he was already in Mordor, or if he was dead; and he did not know that Frodo from far away looked on the same moon as it set beyond Gondor ere the comes of the day. *(The Return of the King 20)*

The narrator goes on furnishing details; as, for instance when he introduces a place called Minas Tirith which is of great importance in this novel:

“For the fashion of Minas Tirith was such that it was built on seven levels, each delved into the hill, and about each was set a wall, and in each wall was a gate” *(The Return of the King 24)*.

Minas Tirith appears as a ‘real’ city in front of us and we can visualize it as it were. Sauron unleashes a heavy assault upon Gondor. The pace of the narrative is maintained with remarkable poise as we go from chapter to chapter keeping the inevitable question of what happens next intact in our minds. , “Where in Middle Earth are we?” *(The Return of the King 67)* is not a rhetoric question that Gimli puts to Elladan but a very relevant one to Gimli and the reader. Tolkien constructs fantasy by adopting language games that distort the sense of reality. The reader however is transported to Middle Earth which has more to offer and more surprises to dash out and the tension never ends.Gandalf rides with Pippin to find Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, to whom Pippin swears his service.on the way thet get tired but feel the necessity to go on.

“But the Sun not risen, yet”, said Merry “No, and will not rise today. Master Holbytia moreover again, one would think under this cloud. But time does not stand still, though the Sun be lost. Make haste!” *(The Return of the King 80)*.
The essence of drama is very strong here. The narrative stance very deftly creates the world of the para-real. Theoden has to escape from Minas Tirith as it has been besieged by Suron’s orcs:

And so King Theoden departed from his own realm, and mile by mile the long road wound away and the beacon hills marched past Calenhad, Min-Rimmon, Erelas, Nardol. But their fires were quenched. All the lands were gray and still, and over the shadow deepened before them and hope waned in every heart. (*The Return of the King* 85).

Everything in this secondary world is fascinating; dialogues, serious ones at that are initiated. The dialogues are constructed realistically so as to replace such situations in real life. Fantasy is constructed to look like the real.

On all occasions events are presented in a very realistic framework as in this instance, “So at last Faramir and Eroyn and Meriadoc were laid in beds in the Houses of Healing and there they were tended well” (*The Return of the King* 149). They talk of ‘days that were’ and of ‘set trends. And there is the typical Tolkienesque rejoinder at times: “The hands of the king are the hands of a healer. And so the rightful king could ever be known” *(The Return of the King* 150). Even the titles of chapters are so well wrought well thought of. *The Last Debate* (*Ch 9*) of the *The Return of the King* is a case in point. The title at once engages the reader in a attempt to unravel certain nuances of the debate, and the reader is eager to know why how the adjective ‘last’ is apt, more so as almost half of the book remains to be perused. All such language games in the narrative help to create this fabulous world of fantasy, as Gimli chips in;

“There are countless things still to see in Middle Earth and great works to do. But of all the fair folk take to the Heavens, it will be a duller world for those who are doomed to stay.” *(The Return of the King* 165)
At this point the forces of ‘good’ decide that the ring needs to be destroyed, Tolkien does not miss even a single opportunity to furnish details whether it concerns the plot, the events or the characters. This comment on Sauron is a case in point:

Other evils there are that may come, for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary. Yet it is not one part to do what is in us, for the succour of those years wherein we are yet uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule. (The Return of the King 171)

Knowing that it is only a matter of time before Sauron rebuilds his forces for another attack, Gandalf and Aragorn decide to draw out the hosts of Mordor with an assault on the Black Gate, providing a distraction so that Frodo and Sam may have a chance of reaching Mount Doom and destroy the One Ring, unseen by the Eye of Sauron.

Sauron emerges as a villain personified. The readers can visualize the entire scenario that is to come, and try to guess what is in store and what other evil deeds Sauron still has up his sleeve. The details just do not stop cropping up. If it is the detailed description of the Black Gate (Pg 181) or the conditions that the messenger conveys (Pg 184) it is all the same. The adventure gets so intense that at times the persons involved lose count of days, as does Sam:

Somewhere between one day and the next, he supposed; but even of the days he had quite lost count. He was in a land of darkness where the days of the world seemed forgotten and where all who entered were forgotten too (The Return of the King 191).

The descriptions resemble ‘a real’ adventure. The details of the place for example, are so intricately designed that the place which actually has no existence seems so real. All moods, disgust, weariness, fatigue and joy get coalesced as are the ‘realistic’ problems as evident in this conversation; “And the Ring is so heavy, Sam and I began to see it in my mind all the time, like
a great wheel of fire" (*The Return of the King* 217), or when the narrator intervenes; “It was perilous for the hobbits to use such a path, but they needed speed” (*The Return of the King* 219)
All the time the details are factual and very “real”. Page after page of gripping adventure lies in store; “Once more they started crawling from hollow to hollow, flitting behind such covers as they could find, but moving always in a slant towards the foothills of the northern range” (*The Return of the King* 235).

The text sums up the problems that encounter Frodo and Sam and the arduous task that lies ahead, figuring out once more that majestic world of the para real. It is magic, but not outlandish or isolated from the real. The ‘accursed Ring’ must be disposed of. The evil powers would otherwise misuse it and to prevent that the fight has to be put up. The inevitability of the triumph of ‘Good’ over ‘Evil’ is there, but still there is no heart who will not sympathize with a bleeding Sam (p248) or rejoice with the declaration of Gandalf, “The realm of Sauron ended. The Ring bearer has fulfilled his quest.” (*The Return of the King* 219). Bearing the One Ring in Frodo's place, Sam rescues his master from torture and death by Orcs. Gandalf's plan to distract Sauron from the Ring is successful. The Ring is finally destroyed, freeing Middle-earth from Sauron's power. Mount Doom erupts violently, trapping Frodo and Sam among the lava flows until the Great Eagles rescue them. Frodo and Sam are saved from the lava, meet again with the other surviving members of the Fellowship, and then honoured.

There is more in store of course as the return journey is still to be made and once the journey culminates; it is time to ruminate and to look back and ahead. After a series of goodbyes, the Hobbits finally return home to the Shire, only to find that the Shire were in ruins, its inhabitants oppressed by Lotho Sackville-Baggins (usually called "The Chief" or "The Boss") who is in reality controlled by a shadowy figure called "Sharkey". Sharkey has taken complete
control of the Shire using corrupt Men, and begins felling trees in a gratuitous programme of industrialization (which actually produces nothing except destruction and misery for the locals).

So I thought too, once But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger. Some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them. But you are my heir… And that will keep you as busy and as happy as any one can be as long as your part of the story goes on (The Return of the King 347)

And so Sam is left as the legitimate heir and then surmised, “He drew a deep breath, well I am back.” (The Return of the King 349 )

The New York Herald Tribune Book Week has this to say;

The great tale of wonder, like the great novel, is not a pre-occupation of children. In the The Lord of the Rings, a whole secondary world is created and successfully sustained through three large volumes. There are sure to remain Tolkien’s life work, and are certainly destined to outlast our time” ¹⁴

There are a few more issues to dig into, but it is desirable to go back to the structures framed by Vladimir Propp. Propp’s polarities fit well in the scheme of Tolkien’s world of the para real.his real fantastic world. The polarities in his functions about the hero and the villain, fall well in line with Tolkien’s hero and his arch enemy Sauron, and although it does not once make us feel uneasy about the victors, but the functions are so gripping that one has to go through every line and every word to unravel the enigma of the world of the para real. A chart will elucidate.

The Chart:  
Frodo and his friends  |  Sauron and his allies  
---|---
cooperate  |  versus  |  compete  
help  |  versus  |  hinder  
escape  |  versus  |  imprison  
defend  |  versus  |  attack  
initiate  |  versus  |  respond  
disguise  |  versus  |  respond  
pretend  |  versus  |  reveal  
love  |  versus  |  hate  
unravel  |  versus  |  mystify  
pursue  |  versus  |  evade  
search for  |  versus  |  evade  
tell truth  |  versus  |  lie  
allow  |  versus  |  prohibit  
question  |  versus  |  answer  
rescue  |  versus  |  endanger  
protect  |  versus  |  threaten  
suffer  |  versus  |  punish  
dispatch  |  versus  |  summon  
allow  |  versus  |  interdict  
retain  |  versus  |  lose  

The chart also elucidates the moral fabric of the story. Tolkien’s Middle Earth is not a mere locale, it has a physical as well as a psychological landscape, utopian up to a certain extent, but all is not right on the middle Earth, things have to be set right, and the pursuit of power will go on, and power may change hands but the good will always win. There is as explained earlier a Bakhtinian sense of the carnivalesque. I quote,

"The hobbits with their modest abilities, self doubts, and preference for the practical over the ‘heroic’, provided him [Tolkien] with the means to make his heroic characters and events and to make his heroic characters and events plausible within the confines of the narrative."\(^{16}\)

It is true that Tolkien suffuses the narrative with realistic descriptions of an adventure which does not happen in reality. The appendices he provides at the end of the *The Return of the King* cater to every issue that comes up in these texts and they further help in creating this world of the ‘para real’ *Quenta Silmarillon* takes up more such issues. There is a historical structure maintained, a sort of pseudo reality, this looks back at earlier hobbits. I would like to quote two observations (though not theoretical) by critics to elaborate a few points.

1. The magnificent world that is created is real, it is fantastic, it is some place where one would love to visit at least for once.\(^{17}\)
2. The impulse is being called reactionary now, but lovers of Middle Earth want to go there, I would myself like a shot. He is a great enough


magician to tap our most common nightmares, day dreams and twilight fancies. He found them a place to live, green alternative to each day’s madness in a poisoned world. Let us at last praise the colonizer of dreams.\textsuperscript{18}

So we will certainly, and get engrossed in this scintillating world of the para real world where fantasy is being churned out by distorting the real. The magical elements operate the fantasy and provides Tolkien with his narrative device to create the world of the ‘para real’. Tolkien distorts reality and manipulates reality by calculated strategies as I have tried to show in this chapter. He is the accomplice narrator, accomplice to the child’s thinking faculty which possesses a different sense of reasoning and imagination than that of an adult. Reality gets distorted in the world of fantasy in the Hogwarts School where the enigma called Harry Potter calls the shots. In the next two chapters we will try to show how Rowling figures such magical worlds in a realistic manner. Once more the narrative is carried forward by magic and tropes which construct the world of fantasy. The world of the ‘para-real’ beckons the reader with open arms, but more of that in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{18} P.S. Beagle.\textit{Introduction to the Fantasy Writings}, New York: Ballantine, 1979. p 12