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**Power in Jeopardy: A Poststructuralist Reading of the Arthurian Legend from Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

The days of the classical heroes are over, as the days of Romance or Chivalric Romance and Epic that depict the hero in quest of the ideal are. A typical Romance situates the hero in a succession of challenges, each of which is overcome by him, who finally defeats the dark, evil force and brings peace and order to his community, thus offering to it the opportunity of living in a system defined by the norms of universal morality and enlightenment. The hero becomes a model of universal justice and stability, and he towers above all of his fellow men as a symbol of perfection and endurance of will against the powers of darkness. This plot of one-man challenge and task has been much fruitful in the creation of the stories of the pre-Christian times, the times of the foundation and expansion of Christianity, and the Medieval Age. During these eras such legendary figures as Osiris, Prometheus, Moses, Jesus Christ, and King Arthur of England have emerged as representative perfect super heroes and as universal and absolute role models. Known as monomyths, such stories have shown parallelism regarding the character and plot structure, all yielding similarities as dictated by Romance; this is mostly obvious through the continuous clash of good and evil. The clash creates a sustained tension in the reader whose moral understanding and conscience are kept busy in wondering whether the hero will lose the battle of righteousness or win it, announcing that human dignity has once again been victorious over evil forces. As suggested above, the days of such heroes are over, together with their references to super human qualities which have long been referred to as universal symbols that stand for ideal models for humanity. Such symbols, signifiers, refer to a sign both in

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Semiotics and Linguistics. Simply, it can be defined as something which has a meaning other than itself. Therefore, conventionally, a sign is assumed to transmit information to the one who understands or deciphers it<sup>1</sup> and signified<sup>2</sup> elements. Signifieds intended or ultimate logos to be reflected through signifier have become clichés. Henceforth, this situation hinders the creativity of the contemporary writer, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, who has experienced both modernism and postmodernism. An updated deconstruction of Romance and Epic and their referents by J.R.R. Tolkien in his *The Lord of the Rings* is a strong anti-thesis of the old principles of authorship. The signifiers Tolkien uses do not yield a single conventional signified, although they refer to the sub-creation, in which unique characters and events were created in a peculiar world, that is, Middle-earth. Besides, Tolkien, inspired by Camelot and the Arthurian legends of both Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, deconstructs the conventional signifieds in his works.

**Keywords:** Mythos, Legends, Utopia, Dystopia, Order maintenance, Chivalric codes, Poststructuralism, Structuralism, Postmodernism, Modernism, Sir Thomas Malory, Lord Tennyson, J. R. R. Tolkien.

The days of the classical heroes are over, just as the days of romance or chivalric romance and epic that depict the hero in quest of the ideal have ended. A typical romance situates the hero in a succession of challenges which he overcomes, finally defeating the dark, evil force and bringing peace and order to his community, thus, offering the opportunity of living in a system defined by the norms of universal morality and enlightenment. The hero becomes a model of universal justice and stability, and he towers above all his fellow men as a symbol of perfection and endurance of will against the powers of darkness. This plot of one-man challenge and task was very fruitful in the creation of the stories in pre-Christian eras, during the foundation and expansion of Christianity and in the Medieval Age. During these eras such legendary figures as Osiris, Prometheus, Moses, Jesus Christ, and King Arthur of England have emerged as representative perfect super heroes as well as universal and absolute role models. Known as monomyths, such stories have shown parallelism regarding the character and plot structure, all yielding similarities as dictated by romance; mostly obviously, the continuous clash of good and evil. The clash creates a sustained tension in the reader whose moral understanding and conscience are kept busy wondering whether the hero will

lose the battle of righteousness or win it, announcing that human dignity has once again been victorious over evil forces.

As suggested above, the days of such heroes are over, together with their references to super human qualities which have long been referred to as universal symbols that stand for ideal models for humanity. Such symbols, signifiers, refer to a sign both in semiotics and linguistics. Simply, a “signifier” can be defined as something which has a meaning other than itself. Therefore, conventionally, a sign is assumed to transmit information to the one who understands or deciphers it and signified elements (Chandler, 2007). Signifieds intended or ultimate logos to be reflected through signifier have become cliché. In other words, authors use the same signifiers to reflect fixed signifieds. For example, white signifies purity, black signifies evil and so on. This situation hinders the creativity of the contemporary writer, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, who experienced both modernism and postmodernism. An updated deconstruction of romance and epic and their referents by J.R.R. Tolkien in his *The Lord of the Rings* is a strong anti-thesis of the old principles of authorship based on cliché binary oppositions. The signifiers Tolkien uses do not yield a single conventional signified, although they refer to the sub-creation, in which unique characters and events were created in a peculiar world, that is, Middle-earth. Tolkien, inspired by Camelot and the Arthurian legends of both Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* and Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, deconstructs conventional signifieds in his work.

In Middle-earth, Tolkien generally does not indicate an explicit belief in any modern religion. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about piety or impiety in an imaginary land, where there are no religious logos or codes to be followed—at least in a modern understanding of religious motives. Besides, the supernatural elements which could be considered magic or witchcraft in the primary world<sup>3</sup> are displayed as ordinary experiences in the Middle-earth. Finally, Middle-earth lacks a unifying king, yet the king is destined to reacquire the throne of Gondor. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about obedience or disobedience where there is no king. After all, if there is no king and no legitimate kingdom, then the meaning of loyalty and treachery become ambiguous.

Tolkien displays this turbulent social and political environment in a different world, under the theory of sub-creation. The theory of sub-creation can best be described as an invention of an imaginary secondary world, as indicated earlier. In the process of this invention, the author becomes the little creator of her/his own world as a division within the

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<sup>3</sup> According to Tolkien, the primary world is considered as the real world.

primary world that s/he lives in. Nevertheless, the sub-creation of a secondary world does not equate to the utilization of a signifier from the primary world to create several signified elements in Tolkien's sub-creation that are easily recognizable from the primary world. These elements can be considered parts of a fantastic world. Indeed, Tolkien clearly states that he uses fantasy in his sub-creation in a sense "which combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of imagination the derived notions of 'unreality' —that is, of unlikeness to the primary world— of freedom from the domination of observed 'fact,' in short of the fantastic" (Tolkien, 2013). For this reason, he says that he is "not only aware but glad of the etymological and semantic connexions of fantasy with fantastic: with images of things that are not only 'not actually present,' but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there" (Tolkien, 2013). Tolkien's sub-creation is freed from the primary world's facts and derived from the things that are 'not actually present.' In this way, the author's sub-creation of the secondary world in the text then becomes a unique world which is unrecognizable via the primary world but can only be understood through the text itself.

In this respect, Tolkien's authorial intent conforms with Foucault's description of author, since *The Lord of the Rings* can be read as a text which "refers only to itself; but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority," in which the "interplay of signs [is] arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier" (Foucault, 1977).

In addition to Tolkien's authorial intent, this essay also discusses why Tolkien's sub-creation and Camelot are alike, despite the lack of a common, permanent, verifiable reference point. For example, it is not precisely revealed how the ideals of Camelot or Middle-earth came to be. The real reasons why Merlin, Gandalf and Saruman came to existence are blurred. Similarly, Tolkien's purpose in creating Gandalf as Merlin's anti-form is not explicitly addressed. Therefore, as a secondary objective, it is crucial to illustrate that the origins of the selected works are as unclear as their endings. As the origins of the Arthurian legend and the hero's very existence are suspect, Tolkien deconstructs them to create a new legend for England. Furthermore, it can be argued that Tolkien's Middle-earth is as frenzied as Camelot because its origins are unclear.

It is stated in the Ecclesiastes as the following: Vanity of Vanities saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh:

but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose (Ecclesiastes, 2015).

The words of the preacher above refer to the fact that life is transitory and it is vain effort to claim for any worldly profit. Man understands it at the moment when he is about to pass away that each generation has to yield against the supreme power of death no matter how invincible they may seem while living. Time repeats itself with the same logic that there is nothing new under the sun. Life is a game of claim for power, which can never be absolutely attained. With the new sun that is set, the earlier generations are left speechless against the ultimate power of death. With the setting sun each day, with each generation, new claims for power, struggles to attain that power, efforts in establishing systems to preserve the power creating systems of power are repeated efforts all in vain. While King Arthur is about to die, he condemns Sir Bedevere, his last Knight, of betraying him for the sword and tells him that Sir Bedevere has put his life in great jeopardy by not returning the sword to its origin, the Lake. At the instant of his death when is growing cold he tells him that he would kill him if he ever did not obey his authority. This tragic moment is also an ironical moment at which a dying king still thinks about the sword the Excalibur, a signifier of his ultimate authority. He speaks as if death is his weakness with which he will disclaim his kingly authority with the loss of his sword to Sir Bedevere. He is afraid at the moment of his death that his power is in jeopardy.

Just like Arthur's fear of losing or disclaiming the power which he believes he holds in his hands forever, the fear has always been embedded within the medieval dark ages when heroism, chivalric romance and knightly grandeur were the dominant motives which overruled European Kingdoms, especially Britain. Among many strives and clashes, the British land witnessed power transfers, rise and fall of Kingdoms, violent and inhuman massacres as the reflections of sovereignty as an ultimate desire for each kingdom. Among them, one emerged either as a legend or as a fact and it became the basic reference point of the cause of Chivalry, absolute sovereignty, eternal order, and democracy. The kingdom, established by the almost invincible model, King Arthur, his Camelot became a continuous reminder of the Medieval expectation of a perfect city which embodies its inhabitants ruled by the ideals set according to egalitarianism. Beginning with his Knights of the Round Table, the Arthurian city state or his Kingdom was accepted as a symbol for a universal utopia. The utopian Arthurian territory ruled by its King's absolute authority and respect to equality seemed to last forever. However, as suggested in Ecclesiastics, the Sun sets and the Sun rises

as if nothing has changed in between. The fact turns out to be that from sun rise to sun set, kingdoms can collapse, kings could lose their absolute power, cities of perfection may end in sheer chaos, and their systems of perfection can prove to be invalid and nullified. Since no system is permanent and absolute, no sovereign, let him be even Arthur, can sustain his absolute control of his utopia. His ideal city falls apart by treachery, betrayal, inconsistency and human failure to keep up and to preserve the already established ideals. In time every utopian system is doomed to decompose into nothingness as the sun over its territory sets. Then another new day begins with the rising sun, trying to get its own principles to establish a new system. This evolutionary process appears to be valid only within the realm of the beginning and the end of the system. With each new day the same thing repeats itself, as it is repeated throughout centuries. Therefore, even though there seems to be an ongoing evolutionary process in time and in history, in fact systems repeat themselves as if being pastiches of previously established, formed and deformed systems.

Arthurian system like Arthur as the basic hero became monomyths, and they were always taken for granted to be signifying a decisive final victory, through an almost supernatural indulgence, they establish perfection in a world of ideals. The hero becomes an angelic figure while the city suggests an ideal compound. At this point the ideal hero and his ideal city bring forth two opposite theories continuously in clash with each other. One of the theories is Platonism which considers an axiom the hypothesis that this world lacks any utopias because it is only a shadow, a blurred and obscure image, dark in appearance of an ideal world: the world of ideas. For Plato, a utopian city or system and a perfect hero like Arthur cannot be in this world of fake appearances. They are there in an ideal world and it is man's duty to achieve as of mentality how that ideal world should be. This Platonic version, therefore, makes Arthur and ideal model, his city an ideal setting and his system an ideal way of organization. From the Platonic perspective, none of these can be found on earth because they are not existent on the worldly soil. This understanding makes all as abstractions set there as ideals that could guide people's on earth towards the ideal world by taking a step forward from the solid primary world.

The second theory, as set by Aristotle, suggests that this world is a solid proof of reality which cannot be denied. For him, every clue has to be looked into and scrutinized in this world which this essay calls the primary world. The substantial, solid earth leads one to the idea behind it, to the idea which has caused it to be. From this view point, Arthur has to be taken as a real, solid figure, whose being and characters are signifiers of the idea that has

caused them to be. Therefore, Arthur is a perfect human being like Jesus Christ, the son, who stands as a concrete reminder and clue for a supreme, divine intellect, God. Unlike the Platonic view, Arthur emerges as an earthly perfect model, as for Platonism he could only be an abstraction, a reflection of the ideal. It is because of these two conflicting perceptions, Arthur as the first King of England to unite all under his sovereignty is set to have either really existed or never existed on earth. A third theory could be that there was a real Arthur who was once a King but not a perfect model but turned into a flawless character via anachronism.

Platonic version of King Arthur is reflected in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Tennyson, pursuing a Platonic, metaphysical and ideal approach considers King Arthur an absolute model of abstracted perfection representing the mind and the morality of the Golden Ages of civilization. To him, Arthur is so much abstracted that he has been introduced as if he were God-like. Therefore, in *Idylls of the King*, Arthur is not a human hero but rather signified as if he would stand for God the Father. Like him, his queen, Guinevere, who has been, in fact, problematic to sustain for his absolute kingdom and principles, is also depicted as signifying sublime morality as if she were Virgin Mary. Tennyson's metaphysical medieval Camelot carries signifiers of the ideal world though to a certain extent they are distorted suggesting impurities and impieties of this primary moral. While reading Tennyson, one should be careful to follow implications beyond the physical to reach to the primary idea that stands for a divine perfection. Those impurities, such as the Queen's infidelity to and betrayal of the King are cleansed in terms of her dedication and commitment to a Nun-like submission against the sublime will of the creator. Then, she becomes an invaluable partner to her perfect King Arthur. They almost become inseparable as if they were one and complete. This is also a metaphysical notion which hints that perfect unity can be established on a higher transcendent plane of absolute and ideal world.

While Tennyson claimed a Platonic version, Malory follows an Aristotelian version of Arthur and his grandeur. To him, both Arthur and Guinevere are solid signifiers of human beings that can err. They may have flaws and they are apt to corruption. They are more human than Tennyson's version of characters, and they are more down to earth and credible. By following Malory's earthly models, still an evolved democratic city of Camelot can be accepted as a good model. In order to eliminate imperfection, especially, in the behavior of Guinevere, Malory puts forward Christian morality as the pathway to the idea of perfection. Malory is not interested much in Guinevere whom he may have considered to have some

allusion to Mary Magdalene, who was blamed of prostitution. The woman herself is not significant for Malory, but with her existence Arthur finds a way in which he could follow the path of righteousness, illuminated by Christianity. Guinevere stands for the opposite, her binary opposite, which is innocence. According to Malory, Magdalene's existence, like Guinevere's, can best be described as corrupted as the other women in the story, such as Morgan le Fay and Nyvene. Like the women, for Malory, Merlin, the sorcerer, serves to suggesting the binary opposite of Christian faith that follows the world of God not the practices of heathenism. Offering such characters, Malory shows worldly imperfections, errors and flaws in human characters, out of which one reaches at the idea that these imperfections are there as reminders that the primary world needs a reformer like Arthur who could restore and renovate the world to let it evolve towards its ideal model.

The essay has discussed Malory and Tennyson under the light of the Arthurian legacy, from both Platonic and Aristotelian approaches. Within this context, the main objective of the essay has been to establish a background to the formation of J.R.R. Tolkien's conception of the projection of the original Arthurian text being deconstructed out of which his *The Lord of the Rings* has come into being. Tolkien's approach is neither Aristotelian nor Platonic. To a great extent, his story telling deconstructs Malory's and Tennyson's versions of Arthur, Camelot and Arthurian Legacy. Being affected by postmodernist inclinations, Tolkien consorts to reconsider the Arthurian legend in order to create a new myth for England. Tolkien brings as new to the Arthurian Legacy is that he does not offer Arthurian ideals and Camelot as reflections of a universal logos, a universal truth which is permanent and absolute. For him, his truth and his myth are more important than any other truth, no matter how universal or ideal it may seem. His 'Camelot' is neither a representation of the primary Aristotelian world nor a Platonic version of the world of ideas completely: It is simply the Fairy. Tolkien juxtaposes the Middle-earth as his synthesis against the primary world, which is superficial and infected by modern realism by, thus, defying myth-making. Being a hater of capitalism, industrialism and any state power, he rejects Arthurian sovereignty that leads way to such hegemonic constructions of culture. His Middle-earth is an anti-form that has no binary opposite. It stands on its own and there are no binary opposites that end-up in chaos, because everything is embedded with absolute uncertainty and chaos. It is the product of Tolkien's pure fantasy which aspires to absolute free-will in the process of becoming. On this free-will no order can be imposed by any absolute sovereign, like God.



Assuredly, Tolkien was a Catholic, but as emphasized above, he wanted to create a world without a subjective or biased perspective. Thus, neutralizing the concept of God has nothing to do with his personal beliefs. Rather, it was his strategy to prompt the readers mind. In a way, “Tolkien raises the small person, the Hobbit, to the position of God, that is, he stands at the center of the universe God is absent from the Middle Earth. The spiritual world manifests itself through the actions of the redeemed small person” (Zipes, 2002). As a result, his Middle-earth is not the opposite of the primary world because the primary world does not have any referents to the objects there. They do not have their opposites there, either. Tolkien’s effort as a story teller is to liberate the individual mind so that each reader can pursue his way as he wills in the nowhere land of his Middle-earth. However, he still relies on the elements of Arthurian legacy. In his work, Arthur is reflected through Frodo with one difference. Arthur is the omnipotent King but Frodo is not a ruler but a mere quest-taker. In that way, it is observable that, once again, Tolkien rejects sovereignty. Frodo is the protagonist, because he has the mission to destroy the One Ring which has the power to rule all and whoever wears the One Ring becomes invincible. Likewise, the Excalibur has a similar power. Nevertheless, unlike Arthur who even in his death tries to preserve the Excalibur for the future generations as a power signifier, Frodo is determined to get away with it, since he does not want power to be held and monopolized by one person. In other words, through him, Tolkien deconstructs power signifiers and sustains a world where there is no one power that could establish one system with definite and absolute rules that are created to preserve the ego of the power holder. He implies that, with the deconstruction of power, he deconstructs hegemony of one being, God included, that could have superiority over the will of man. As long as no man can hold the power in his hand in the Middle-earth, no binary opposite can be established as it has been always established in the primary world which suffered from balance of powers and world wars.

Unless Tolkien’s perspective of power causing catastrophe is pursued, total annihilation of mankind cannot be prevented. He believes that if one superior power emerges, automatically and almost immediately its binary opposite establishes itself as the other camp to counterbalance it. If the other camp is unable to counterbalance the emerging force, a monstrous Nazi like formation claims absolute power, believing that it represents God’s will. If the other camp is able to counterbalance it, it is only through bloodshed and violence as it was in the First and the Second World Wars, that a new order can be established. Balance of power, therefore, is a reciprocal claim for one power, which is dangerous and must be avoided

by all means. This is what Tolkien suggests by creating an anti-form Middle-earth where there is no binary opposite for any power because there is no permanent power.

Power, to Tolkien, must be handed down to the individual himself, who is expected to re-create the world according to his own will. The Middle-earth, the anti-form of the primary world, is such a medium, which is full of creatures but which is fully emptied in terms of power. It is up to the reader to activate the creatures of the Middle-earth as he wills. Therefore, this approach enables Tolkien to get away with one omnipotent creator to monopolize the power. Since the power belongs to the individual reader, conventionally constructed meanings will eventually lose their significations and become anti-forms which could be loaded as of any meaning by the reader-interpreter. In simpler words, as Terry Eagleton suggests in *Culture and the Death of God* “built-in meanings must yield in his view to humanly manufactured ones” (Eagleton, 2014). While referring to Nietzsche’s concept of the superman, ‘*übermensch*,’<sup>4</sup> Eagleton believes that the individual who has will to power is “a mini creator”<sup>5</sup> who is the superman, the individual himself. The superman does not need a god, representing an unchanging permanent and absolute authority. He uses his imagination and goes beyond the limits of restrictions, reaching out full liberation from conventional logos. This is the freedom of the mind, which can be actualized only in a void medium which is the Middle-earth in this case. Eagleton also believes that “man can displace God only if he is self-creating, hence abolishing his dependency and contingency” (Eagleton, 2014). As soon as the reader is relieved from conventional limitations of meaning, he finds joy in a fantasy world like the Middle-earth which he considers as a vertex of possibilities. He approaches the vertex with the enthusiasm of participating in it, shaping and transforming it as he wills. He simply creates and re-creates his world by constructing and deconstructing it over and over again. In Tolkien’s words, the truth of such a fantasy world is unquestionable because it is the truth the individual reader attributes to it. He says, “if you have built your little world well, yes: It is true in that world” (Tolkien, 2013). To Tolkien, the reader is led to enter the fantastic fairy land of the Middle-earth, participate in any event, claim any role, follow any approach and come up with a synthesis of his own. This synthesis returns to the reader as the only power handed in to him to be the only person who could shape and re-shape like a play-doh<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche comments on man as standing somewhere between the primitive man and the superman. His conceptualizing for “an over man” signifies a person who overcomes the herd perspective and can create a new perspective without dogmatically forcing his perspective on others.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of “mini creator” is very similar to what Tolkien described as sub-creation

<sup>6</sup> Play-Doh is a modeling compound used by young children for art and craft projects at home and in school. “Play-Doh.” Wikipedia, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Play-Doh>.

that finds form as the child's will. When joy and pleasure is experienced by the reader, the sovereign power, he will never have the urge to go back to the primary world.

The primary world as expressed in *Idylls of the King* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* is definite and absolutely defined without any possibility for a change or transformation like the primary world in *The Lord of the Rings*. The primary world in these works signifies the reflections of the absolute that is defined without any discussion by universal moral codes of behavior. Such codes are supposed to bring ultimate order. The order is considered to guarantee the preservation of the system established in the primary world, and it is like the Christian God unquestionable. It resists, as God does, any other probability rather than its own being. The system, having been established on the so-called permanent truths, resists any revolutionary intrusion because its main logic is the ultimate. It is considered to be a perfect model which could not be changed into something else.

When there is threat that can revolutionize the system, the threat is eliminated in terms of the application of divine rules borrowed from Christianity, the word of God. The word is the security valve of the system because it is absolute, unquestionable, and it reflects a common sense opinion which follows it without any hesitation. In *Idylls of the King*, for instance, when the system is at stake due to adultery, hermits warn Lancelot and the other Knights, especially the ones who joined the Quest of the Grail. Another warning comes when the Holy Grail appears behind the clouds so that such a sign urges the knights to initiate and sustain the quest. Similar warnings appear in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Moreover, Christianity is offered to be an ultimate solution for the preservation of the Arthurian system while Merlin the sorcerer is reduced to an insignificant presence. As to be revealed, the system preserves itself against all odds. However, with the death of King Arthur it terminates itself because it has been identical with the King's character and being.

The Round Table also signifies the perfection of the system with its circular shape which is a reference to classical perfection. When the integrity of the Round Table is shattered, there emerges a potential jeopardy for the state power. Its structure signifies unity but when the structure is shattered in terms of personal human errors of the Knights, the system gets loose. At that moment an immediate recovery process is needed by the system. Such a recovery process is established on creating immediate binary opposites. For instance, against betrayal, fidelity is suggested. For evil intention, ultimate goodness is made apparent. Such 'fixed binary pairs' create a conflict that could only be solved through Christian conscience which takes its referents from the word of God.

Tolkien believes that permanent systems are fake representations of ultimate reality. They are constructed by the culture and presented as if they stand for the unquestionable. His primary world is the outcome of such a system, and it is both like the medieval utopian system and the modern system. The modern system, which Tolkien mostly defies, is like a modern machine with its regular components which are designed to function in harmony with each other. It is like a factory or a regular army that is expected to produce the same mentality as if it were a machine. Its functioning system, the logic behind it is all artificially constructed to serve for the modern expectations of consistency. However, the result of such modern systematization has been two world wars. Every camp, as of binary opposites has established its own unquestionable system and tried to impose it on the other. Tolkien has had his experience from the bitterness of the modern war machine in both world wars. Therefore, it is only logical for him to construct an alternative world as the Middle-earth where modernization and its evil machinery cannot and do not function. In Middle-earth, everything transforms, leaving their place to newer probabilities. Continuous transformation is the signification that everything is in a state of flux, evolution is inevitable, and it eventually leads to revolution and transformation is the ultimate fact. At the end of the novel, Frodo becomes eternal taking an 'odyssey' to the Valinor; Sam transform into a warrior hero; and even Shire is not the same as it has been. When the Hobbits turned to the Shire, "[t]hey had their first really painful shock. This was Frodo and Sam's own country, and they found out now that they cared about it more than any other place in the world" (Tolkien, 2005). Nevertheless, they saw that "[m]any of the houses that they had known were missing. Some seemed to have been burned down. The pleasant row of old hobbit-holes in the bank on the north side of the Pool were deserted" and the rest of the country seemed to them as if they had never been there before (Tolkien, 2005).

To Tolkien, Modernism represents 'rationality, science, universal truth and progress' initiated by them. The bases of the progress is considered to be as solid as rock. Therefore, there is no doubt for a modernist that any system established on these principles is unshakable. This means that modernism, no matter how inventive it may seem, in fact, it is as dogmatic as religious dogmas. To remember how the Christian Church was established, it is necessary to quote Jesus Christ's words "and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew, 2015). Like the modern dogma, the Christian dogma rejects the fact that they are liable to change and vanish. They are both established on the so-called permanent truths as the solid base of their philosophies of

existence. Likewise, the medieval kingdom as that of Arthur's, is also established on principles solid as rock. Such principles are the codes of chivalry. They are unquestionable and considered to represent the logos of ultimate morality. However, since every system is established for the human factor, there is always a possibility that the human factor will force to change it because man, as of his nature, cannot remain static, flat and inert. It is in human nature that man questions. That is what Tolkien makes when he shifts his story from the primary world to the Middle-earth.

Tolkien creates paradoxes from the view point of postmodernism as a criticism for medieval and modernist paradoxes. While medieval and modernist paradoxes are established on clear-cut opposites, Tolkien's paradoxes do not yield necessarily the formation of conventional opposites. Medieval mentality is conditioned to work in terms of absolute definitions which cannot be changed and questioned. Against bravery, cowardice, against good, evil, against fidelity, betrayal are offered with precise definitions, all of which intersect at the point which define the king and the god while their opposites are associated with negative denotations. Modern outlook works in a similar manner. It functions as thesis/anti-thesis mentality of Hegelian dialectic. Out of the clash of these two opposites, a synthesis is reached, which is regarded to be absolutely correct. However, this creates a vicious circle in its formation because ultimately Hegelian dialectics are isolated within the logic of science and rationality.

However, science or scientific laws are only valid at a specific time and specific place at a standard temperature. When they change, the scientific fact and rationality completely change. Tolkien, therefore, avoids both. His postmodern paradoxes do not define opposites. For instance, the opposite of the men are the Orcs but the reader does not have any knowledge about who the Orcs really are. The reader cannot find a reference point in the Orcs in the primary world to juxtapose them against the men. The Orcs are deliberately emptied by Tolkien so that every reader can fill in them. The readers cannot contrast the Ents, the race of trees with other living things. Nor do the readers find a contrasting race for the Wargs, the canine beasts of the Misty Mountains and so on.

The reason why Tolkien rejects binary opposites is due to the fact that he believes every system establishes its own opposites in order to define itself. If there is no other, the system cannot prove its existence with clarity of definition. It deliberately creates opposite factors. If there are no such factors it constructs them artificially. As long as systems construct the opposites, it declares its supremacy over them. It isolates them, overpowers them and tries

to regulate them so that they can be preserved as a proof and excuse for its own existence. It creates them as negative denotations which have negative connotations as well. This is how systems claim power and abuse it as a form of oppressing the binary opposites because as long as it does not oppress them, it may fall into a state of anarchy. The result of anarchy is confusion and chaos which ends the system by a revolutionary attempt. In order to eliminate anarchy, therefore, each system holds on to its own power which is magnified by the potential threat offered by the binary opposite. The ultimate opposite of power is weakness, so the system considers weakness as the basic threat to itself. However, it also knows that weakness can be rehabilitated by means of knowledge. As long as knowledge is attained by those who are referred to as those who are weak, weakness is substituted by knowledge. Thus, the opposite of power turns out to be knowledge which has the potential to move people, activate them in revolt and upheaval. Therefore, any powerful system considers knowledge to be an ultimate enemy which must be isolated by all means. For instance, Merlin, who represents knowledge and wisdom, is blamed as a sorcerer implicitly, and he is isolated by both Malory and Tennyson. Although Merlin is not a threat to Arthurian system with his knowledge of Pagan origins, the writers deliberately passivize him because their major expectation is that the Arthurian system should pursue the knowledge offered by Christianity rather than paganism. In fact, Arthur's system is of Pagan origins and Merlin is the person whose knowledge has enabled Arthur to found his kingdom and authority. Pagan knowledge supports Arthurian power. This way, Arthurian power is left without a binary opposite so it cannot be defined as some earthly system. Rather, it can be associated with God who does not have any binary opposite.

To conclude, J.R.R. Tolkien forms his Middle-earth by deconstructing the ruins of the Arthurian legacy, which is based on the signifiers of power, to maintain the ultimate logos of God and the authority of the state. Tolkien shows that the fixed and pre-loaded conventional signifiers applied by Malory and Tennyson are no longer valid. Thus, the signifieds of the Arthurian legacy preserved through these works are not compatible with the contemporary state of Britain, since they are too biased and prejudiced. As a result, *The Lord of the Rings* can be taken as the new myth of England, because the work itself has been freed from the primary world. Therefore, it is unique and writerly based, so the readers can take an active role in the formation of meaning.

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