

MARIA EDELSON

MECHANISMS OF ALLEGORICAL EVOCATION IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S
TRILOGY THE LORD OF THE RINGS

J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* is one of those literary works that elude easy classification and categorization. This can be seen in divergent critical approaches to the question as to whether the trilogy can be regarded allegorical or not.

Burton Raffel, for instance, believes that, "provided one takes allegory in its loose sense, *The Lord of the Rings* is indisputably allegorical".¹ Among the critics who go to the other extreme is Patricia Meyer Spacks maintaining that "*The Lord of the Rings* is by no means allegorical".² The majority of Tolkien critics, however, are much more cautious: they are inclined to accept the kind of view represented by Edmund Fuller when he writes:

rather than say it is an allegory... I will say it has allegorical possibilities and suggestions underlying the face value of the narrative.³

We can detect in this statement a rather vague feeling that, although one cannot pin it down, some allegorical element is present in the trilogy. A similar feeling makes Neil D. Isaacs speak of "the frequent and tantalizing clues for allegory"⁴ in Tolkien.

It will be my task in this paper to examine the nature of these elusive clues for allegory in *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the reasons why the trilogy assumes allegorical character.

On the surface, *The Lord of the Rings* is about elves, dwarfs, wizards, orcs, trolls, people, hobbits and other creatures. Hobbits look like people, only they are much smaller and have furry feet. They live uneventful but pleasant lives guided by common sense and

natural kindness. Yet it is some of these peaceloving hobbits /Frodo, Pip, Merry and Sam/ that get involved in most unusual adventures. Frodo comes into possession of the Ring of power which has been made by Sauron, the evil Lord of Mordor. The only way to prevent Sauron from recovering the Ring, and thus to save the inhabitants of the Middle-earth from the danger of his tyranny, is in destroying the Ring by casting it into the fire of Mount Doom. Frodo accepts the difficult task, and together with eight companions: one wizard Gandalf, two men Boromir and Aragorn, one elf Legolas, one dwarf Gimli, and the three other hobbits, he sets on a long and dangerous journey. In the meantime other inhabitants of the Middle-earth, people of Rohan and Gondor, fight battles against Sauron, who threatens to spread his evil influence beyond his realm. Occupied by the war, Sauron fails to find the Ring-bearer and Frodo succeeds in reaching Mount Doom and finally destroying the Ring.

The destruction of the Ring implies the destruction of Sauron. Peace and happiness are restored to the Middle-earth, for a time at least. Elves whose power has gone together with the disappearance of the one Ruling Ring, must leave the Middle-earth, as must the wizard and Frodo after completing their mission, but other hobbits can now go on living their peaceful simple lives in their beloved Shire. Men grow in power after the return of their exiled king Aragorn. It is to them that the fourth age of the history of the Middle-earth will belong. The Third Age is over.

Even this brief synopsis makes it clear that *The Lord of the Rings* is not merely a fantastic tale of adventure, but it is also what Tolkien himself calls a "good and evil story".

The eternal conflict between good and evil is one of the most fundamental concerns of all allegorical writing. The possibility of interpreting Tolkien's trilogy in terms

of allegory is reinforced by his frequent use of characters and objects that stand for something more than what they are in themselves. Thus the Ruling Ring is identified with powerful evil:

It belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone, and is altogether evil. Its strength... is too great for anyone to wield at will, save only those who have already a great power of their own. But for them it holds an even deadlier peril. The very desire of it corrupts the heart. If any of the Wise should with this Ring overthrow the Lord of Mordor, using his own arts, he would then set himself on Sauron's throne, and yet another Dark Lord would appear. And this is another reason why the Ring should be destroyed...⁵

Another example is provided by Tom Bombadil. Tom seems to be, at first, just a merry, pleasant fellow, but the four hobbits, who are his guests for a while, realise that there is more to Tom Bombadil than meets the eye. To Frodo's question about Tom, Goldberry, his lady, answers:

He is as you have seen him.... He is the Master of wood, water, hill.⁶

and Tom Bombadil himself says:

Don't you know my name yet? That's the only answer. Tell me, who are you, alone, yourself and nameless? But you are young and I am old. Eldest, that's what I am. Mark my words, my friends: Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the Big People, and saw the little People arriving... Tom was here before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless - before the Dark Lord came from the outside.⁷

Tom is the only character in the book on whom the Ring has no effect whatsoever: it cannot make him invisible and he can see Frodo when the hobbit puts it on his finger and becomes unseen by all the others. Tom Bombadil is beyond all moral problems of good and evil in the same way in which

nature, which he stands for, is beyond morality.

It is in the passages like the ones quoted above that Tolkien most directly speaks about the implications of his story. The hidden meanings are suggested also by the usual devices employed in allegorical writing: the plot steered towards significant solutions, characters drawn in such a way as to emphasize the phenomena or ideas they represent, and the setting endowed with spiritual as well as material qualities. However, it would, perhaps, be possible to explain all these devices on the level of a fantastic adventure story /with occasional symbolical implications/, were it not for the complex patterns of the construction of the trilogy, which, in my opinion, greatly contributes to the allegorical character of *The Lord of the Rings*. I would like to examine these patterns of construction more closely now.

The Lord of the Rings can be discussed in terms of various literary genres and modes. It is, as has been made clear by the posthumous publication of *The Silmarillion*, a part and parcel of Tolkien's private cosmology and myth of creation. However, the trilogy is basically a fairy-story, in the sense that Tolkien himself gives to it. He insists in his essay in *Tree and Leaf* that "a fairy-story is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic - but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific magician,"⁸ which, as he adds further on, is a kind of Enchantment.

The magic or the enchantment of *The Lord of the Rings* emanates from mysterious, wise and beautiful elves; magic is present in the old forest with its wicked trees, the Murky Wood, in the dark passages of Moria, the ancient dwelling of dwarfs; there is enchantment in wizards and in people, who are often like knights and princes of old

songs. To the four hobbits this world seems to be a wonderland in which they are the only accountable ordinary creatures. Tolkien writes about them in such a way that the reader takes for granted and tends, paradoxically, to identify his attitudes with theirs rather than with those of the people described in the trilogy. The people, on the other hand are filled with wonder when they see the hobbits. One of the riders of Rohan exclaims in amazement when he hears Gimli and Eomer talk about them:

Halflings! But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?
to which Aragorn replies:

A man may do both, ... For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time. The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day.⁹

Remarks like this, apart from creating a sense of wonder, seem to imply that fairy-tales are far more concerned with reality than is commonly believed and that it is a gross mistake to relegate them to children's rooms only. Tolkien believes that fairy-stories should be read seriously by adults as "a natural branch of literature" and, accordingly, he warns the reader in the preface to *The Lord of the Rings*:

It is, in fact, not a book written for children at all; although many children will, of course, be interested in it, or parts of it, as they still are in the histories and legends of other times /especially in those not specially written for them/.¹⁰

Most fairy-tales, in fact, originate in stories for grown-up people: they usually contain, apart from fantasy and adventure, also a moral conclusion, or teaching. Characters presented in fairy stories tend to be schematic types: we all have read or heard numerous stories of wicked step-mothers, cruel witches, beautiful princesses kept prisoners by sorcerers, brave

knights who free them, win their favours and marry them, the poor youngest brothers who seem to be simpletons, but turn out to be very clever and, in due time, become successful and rich.

Tolkien's trilogy has a lot in common with such folk fairy-tales, not only because it makes use of its creations such as elves, dwarfs, wizards, dragons etc., but also because it uses its patterns of construction: it emphasizes the plot /which is extremely rich and has numerous ramifications in *The Lord of the Rings* /, and describes rather simplified characters and because it contains moral implications. Tolkien himself points out that fantastic tales are usually built on certain truths. "The peculiar quality of the joy in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth."¹¹ he says. He also says that "Faerie contains many things besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky, and the earth and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men..."¹²

In literary fairy-stories philosophical and moral possibilities are used much more consciously and the stories often become quite clearly allegorical in character. It is true about a great number of fairy-stories by Andersen of whom Louis MacNeice says in *Varieties of Parable* that "many of his stories are more patently allegorical than almost any writing of the time".¹³ It is also true about many other stories written ostensibly for children: for example the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis or A de Saint-Exupery's *Le Petit Prince* which, like most fantasy produced in our times, contain some serious thought and truths. And, finally, it is true about J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as well.

Being a fairy-story the trilogy has little in common

with realistic novels except the fact that it uses their methods of presentation. But character drawing, although convincing within the limits set by the logic of the fantastic world, is severely limited and psychological analysis almost non-existent. If one does interpret the trilogy in terms of a sequence of regular novels, as some critics not only readers, are apt to do, one cannot fail to notice these limitations which serve to shift the emphasis from the analysis of character onto the situation presented and its significance. Thus the connections between *The Lord of the Rings* and realistic novels /as regards the methods and use of the basic elements of construction/ only help to stress the fact that the trilogy contains certain philosophical and moral statements.

Rather than with a realistic novel *The Lord of the Rings* can be compared with a medieval romance, a lay, since it is largely a story of heroism and chivalry. One could, of course, talk of Frodo in terms of heroism, but it is the figure of Aragorn, much greater in stature both physically and spiritually, that dominates in the romance of trilogy. When we first meet him, he is a strange-looking, weather-beaten man called Strider by some and Ranger by others, and there is nothing to suggest that he is also Elessar, Isildur's heir of Gondor, the rightful king in exile, except a certain feeling of mystery that one gets from his description. Gradually we discover more about Aragorn. He turns out to be a great warrior and leader when he leads his terrifying host of dead oath-breakers to join the battle of Pelennor Fields. When Sauron is finally defeated, Aragorn may at last be crowned as King of Gondor. Here he is at the crowning ceremony:

... when Aragorn rose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; wisdom

sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. And then Faramir said:

'Behold the King!'

And in that moment all the trumpets were blown, and the king Elessar went forth and came to the barrier, and Húrin of the Keys thrust it back; and amid the music of harp and viol and of flute and the singing of clear voices the King passed through the flower-laden streets, and came to the Citadel, and entered in...¹⁴

As King of Gondor Aragorn rules justly, wisely and long.

The story of Aragorn is enriched by certain associations with the 'courtly love' motif, in which the lover has to undergo various ordeals and prove his valour in order to win the favour of his lady. And so Aragorn fights against Sauron not only because Sauron represents evil and not only because he wishes to regain Gondor and Arnor, but also because he loves Arwen, daughter of Elrond, ruler of elves in Rivendell. Arwen will become a mortal woman if she marries a man, but she will gladly pay the price if the man deserves it. Her father says to Aragorn:

... though I love you, I say to you: Arwen Undómiel shall not diminish her life's grace for less cause. She shall not be a bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor.¹⁵

Aragorn has to prove he is worthy of Arwen and when he fights in the battle of Pelennor Fields he unfurls the standard of Arwen.

The trilogy abounds in descriptions of battles and fighting, such as this:

Great was the clash of their meeting. But the white fury of the North-men burned the hotter, and more skilled was their knighthood with long spears and bitter. Fewer were they but they clove

through the Southrons like a fire-bolt in a forest. Right through the press drove Théoden Thengel's son, and his spear was shivered as he threw down their chieftain. Out swept his sword, and he spurred to the standard, hewed staff and bearer; and the black serpent floundered. Then all that was left unslain of their cavalry turned and fled far away.¹⁶

The description, like many others in Tolkien, has a flavour of medieval narrative, Layamon's *B r u t*, for example:

The troops came together;
Raised their royal standards;
Rushed there together;
Long swords locked they,
Laying blows on helmets;
Sparks they struck out,
Spears did rattle;
Shields were a-shaking,
Shafts were a-breaking.¹⁷

Tolkien's descriptions of battles remind also of Old English and Norse epics. Battles occupy a large portion of the third part of the trilogy /the very titles of some of its chapters suggest this; they are about: "The Muster of Rohan", "The Siege of Gondor", "The Ride of the Rohirrim", "The Battle of the Pelennor Fields"/. And, like in most Old English and Norse epics, few women appear in the trilogy. Of the few, Arwen and Galadriel - the elf queen belong to the world of romance, but Eowyn, the proud and stern lady of Rohan, is of the world of Norse sagas. Characteristically, she dreams of great heroic deeds:

... I am of the House of Eorl and not a serving-woman. I can ride and wield blade, and I do not fear either pain or death.
'What do you fear, lady?' he /Aragorn/ asked.
'A cage,' she said. 'To stay behind bars, until

use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire.¹⁸

Eowyn disguises herself as Dernhelm and fights valiantly in the battle of Pelennor; she destroys Nazgûl, but is, herself, wounded badly.

The similarity between the description of battle scenes in Tolkien's trilogy and those in Anglo-Saxon and Norse epics is to be found not only in the kind of scenery chosen, or its paraphernalia /swords, spears, horses etc./, but also in the stern, noble, dignified tone of the language, which often has the simplicity and vividness of *B e o w u l f*, for instance. Stylistic devices such as the frequent use of repetitions and cataloguing names and rhythm also bear resemblance to Old English poetry. We can observe this in the following example: The sentence from Tolkien:

The king mounted his horse, Snowmane, and Merry sat beside him on his pony: Stybba was his name.¹⁹

echoes the lines from *D e o r ' s L a m e n t* :

Erwhile I was Scop of the Heodenings,
Dear to my lord. Deor my name was.²⁰

/...ic hwile was Heodeninga scop,
dryhtne dyre; me was Deor noma/²¹

Another example of literary devices which help to create the tone and atmosphere of Old English narratives is provided by Tolkien's habit of referring to horses and weapons, to which his warriors are greatly attached, by their proper names. Thus, King Théoden's horse is Snowmane, Gandalf rides Shadowfax, Aragorn's sword is Anduril, Fordo fights with his Sting /by comparison, Beorulf's sword is called Hrunting/.

To make the affinity even more apparent the names of people and the vocabulary of Rohan are based on Old English. In the language of this country of horsemen many words begin with éo - /"eoh" in Old English is "horse"/. "Eowyn" stands

for "delight in horses. The name of Eomer is a combination of "ech" and "mere" /"horse and "mere"/, There is also "Théoden" /"eoden" means "king" or "prince" in OE/, there are geographical names such as "Riddermark" /OE "rida" is "rider" in modern English and OE "mearc" means "boundary" "Isengard" /OE "isen" means "iron" and "geard" - "court", "dwelling" and many other examples. Occasionally we hear the Rohirrim use their language and, as John Tinkler argues "the language of Rohan not only "resembles" Old English, it is Old English."²²

The analogy between Tolkien's trilogy and OE and Norse epics lies also in the use of certain motifs. In Beowulf, for example, we find the following reference to fantastic creatures not unlike those in *The Lord of the Rings*:

Thence monstrous births all woke into being
jotuns and elves, and orken-creatures,
likewise the giants who for a long space
warred against God...²³

Another similarity of motif, of a rather different nature, is the ceremonial giving of gifts to deserving knights, servants, or vassals. In the trilogy it is the gifts of Tom Bombadil, Galadriel and Elrond that are to aid or to reward the brave and the deserving.

A further analogy is seen in the documentation of the books: Tolkien often identifies his characters by naming their parents and sometimes older ancestors, as is done in Norse sagas and Old English epics, and he also provides his trilogy with outlines of history of the Middle-earth, tables of chronological dates, family trees, geographical maps. Partly this documentation is due to a sheer delight in making a fantastic world seem real, but to some extent it imitates the detailed descriptions of places, characters, family trees and accounts of historical events that are so typical of Norse epics.

It is also the pagan ethos that brings *The Lord*

o f t h e R i n g s close to the Norse sagas in which the "hero operates under the shadow of fate; his struggle is doomed to find failure - the dragon at last in some encounter will win. His courage and will alone oppose the dark forces of the universe; they represent his triumphal assertion as man, his insistence on human importance, despite human weakness."²⁴

The third age the history of the Middle-earth ends in victory and hope apparently - and yet, when Gandalf says that after the Ring is destroyed, Sauron will be "put out of reckoning", Elrond observes wistfully that it will only be so for a while. Elsewhere Gandalf remarks:

Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary.²⁵

His awareness of how impossible it is to defeat evil and do away with it once for ever is clear when he says:

We should seek a final end of this menace, even if we do not hope to make one.²⁶

The sense of futility of man's struggle emerges from Gimli's conversation with Legolas:

'...The deeds of Men will outlast us, Gimli'

'And yet come to naught in the end but might-have-beens, I guess,' said the Dwarf.

'To that the Elves know not the answer,' said Legolas.²⁷

Norse sagas are often concerned with mythology expressing the gloomy belief that the world is doomed to a final catastrophe.

As has been pointed out above, The Lord of the Rings is both a myth of creation and a fairy-story at the same time. This fact goes well with Tolkien's belief that there are close connections between mythology and fairy-stories; he writes about "...the Norse god Thórr. His name is Thunder, of which Thórr is the Norse form; and it is not difficult to interpret his hammer, Miöllnir, as lightning..." and he ponders: "Which came first, nature-allegories about

personalized thunder in the mountains, splitting rocks and trees; or stories about an irascible, not very clever, red-beard farmer... very like the Northern farmers..?" Tolkien concludes that "the tale that is told of him in *Thrymskvitha* /in the Elder Edda/ is certainly just a fairy-story."²⁸

Tolkien himself uses the word "allegory" when he talks of nature-myths and Norse sagas. This view of the allegorical character of Norse sagas is supported by Louis MacNeice who includes them among examples of parable writing.²⁹ Being similar, in some respects, to Norse sagas, *The Lord of the Rings* also possesses allegorical features.

Like many scandinavian and Old English epics *The Lord of the Rings* combines the pagan ethos with a Christian outlook. Tolkien never even mentions the name of God in his trilogy and yet he gives the reader to understand that it is a divine power to be identified with good that controls the fate of the Middle-earth creatures in the way that God controls the lives of people according to Christian beliefs. This is Gandalf's comment on Bilbo's finding the Ring:

'Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer that by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you Frodo also were meant to have it.'³⁰

Gandalf and other wizards know more about this controlling powerful Will than any other creature, because the wizards "came out of the Far West and were messengers sent to contest the power of Sauron, and to unite all those who had the will to resist him."³¹

Whatever the mythological explanation that Tolkien offers in his *Simarillion* the reader of *The Lord of the Rings* tends to associate the opposing power of evil represented by Sauron with the Christian notion of

evil, all the more so since it is often referred to as the "Enemy" which, as is commonly known, is one of the names of the devil.

There is no strict connection between the Bible and the trilogy; there are, however, certain analogies, of which the most apparent is the one between Frodo's plight and Christ's suffering. When Frodo is presented to us as the Ring-bearer, who undergoes physical pain as well as spiritual torment and temptation before he finally fulfils his mission on Mount Doom, we are reminded of the Cross-bearer and his torment; as he progresses towards the mountain Frodo becomes more and more like a disembodied spirit, he seems to grow almost transparent and there is a strange light about him.

In a similar way Gandalf partakes of the Christ figure, especially when he fights the deadly fight against Barlog and is pulled by him into the abyss of Khazad-Dûm. It seems he has gone for ever and yet he emerges from it after a long time. His return is like rising from the dead:

There he stood, grown suddenly tall, towering above them... His white garments shone...

... They all gazed at him. His hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand. Between wonder, joy, and fear they stood and found no words to say.

At last Aragorn stirred. "Gandalf!" he said. "Beyond all hope you return to us in our need!..."

"Gandalf," the old man repeated, as if recalling from old memory a long disused word. "Yes, that was the name. I was Gandalf."³²

Aragorn is another character that points to analogies with Christ. A great lord and a king, he first appears as an ordinary man, who suffers a great deal more than is the

share of an ordinary man. Before Saruman is overthrown and his, Aragorn's, kingdom is restored, he has to descend into the hell of the oath-breakers: he bids the dead to follow him in order to fight against Sauron. Aragorn is also a healer: he alone can cure Eowyn and Faramir of their mortal wounds. When the Enemy is defeated Aragorn Elessar sits on his throne in glory.

Neither Aragorn, nor Gandalf, nor Frodo are to be identified with Christ, of course, but all the analogies give the three characters new dimensions. They are related to the biblical themes of good, grace, and redemption, which helps towards the final interpretation of the trilogy; in view of the fact that the Bible abounds in varieties of allegory³³, it is not surprising that the interpretation of the trilogy with its biblical analogies tends to be allegorical as well.

One of the most frequent devices employed to suggest the hidden meaning in allegorical writing /especially that of the Middle Ages/ is the use of dream vision. Tolkien often mentions both visions and dreams in *The Lord of the Rings*. Hobbits, who are ordinary creatures with no supernatural potency at all, usually experience prophetic dreams and visions by the agency of those who possess magic power, elves and Tom Bombadil notably. Tom Bombadil, who, in a mysterious way, seems to contain in himself both the future and the past, gives a vision of remote past times to four hobbits - his guests:

The hobbits did not understand his words, but as he spoke they had a vision as it were of a great expanse of years behind them, like a vast shadowy plain over which there strode shapes of Men, tall and grim, with bright swords, and last came one with a star on his brow. Then the vision faded, and they were back in the sunlit worlds.³⁴

During the night spent in the house of Tom Bombadil Frodo has a dream vision of what is going to happen in the future:



In the dead night, Frodo lay in a dream without light. Then he saw the young moon rising; under its thin light there loomed before him a black wall of rock, pierced by a dark arch like a great gate. It seemed to Frodo that he was lifted up, and passing over he saw that the rock-wall was a circle of hills, and that within it was a plain, and in the midst of the plain stood a pinnacle of stone, like a vast tower but not made by hands. On its top stood a figure of man.³⁵

Such allusions to the past and the future make the present more meaningful as it comes to be seen in the context of the otherness beyond hobbit /human/ grasp. In a way similar to that of medieval dream-vision allegories, visions presented in the trilogy help its characters to discover certain truths and meanings; they also help the reader to understand the idea of the trilogy.

Also various magic objects have the power to enable those who wield them to see things hidden from ordinary eyes. When Frodo puts the Ring on his finger, he is able to see what is distant in place as well as in time. He sees glimpses of the past and the future in the mirror of Galadriel. The crystal ball, Palantir shows things that are remote and it enables those who gaze into it to communicate with Sauron and learn his mind. It is in this way that the reader, too, gains a deeper and a vaster insight /in space and in time/ into the world presented in the trilogy.

"In journey as in dream-vision, the traveller is an instrument whereby systems can be explored",³⁶ says Gay Clifford in *The Transformations of Allegory*. The trilogy makes the motif of Quest journey a pivot of its narrative. This motif provides the scaffolding for the construction of allegories by Dante, Langland, Bunyan, Spenser, numerous fairy tales and other works.

An interesting study of Frodo as a quest has been produced by W.H. Auden. In it, Frodo is represented as similar to the fairy-story hero with a mission to fulfil. On his way to Mount Doom, Frodo gets to know about wonders of the Middle-earth, he discovers truths about the world and about himself; his journey is a journey into the heart of darkness not only in the literal physical sense, but also, inevitably, spiritual.

There are other analogies to be found in J.R.R.Tolkien's books apart from the ones which have been discussed here; one could, for example, talk about the parallels between *The Lord of the Rings* and Kipling's *Puck of the Pook's Hill* and make an interesting analysis of other literary influences. However, this paper is focused on the basic sources of inspiration which are capable of allegorization and thus contribute to the allegorical character of the trilogy itself, and help to convey its inner meaning.

In most general terms, the inner meaning of the trilogy carried by its allegorical elements is centred upon the conflict between good and evil and upon various attitudes and aspects of human nature involved in the conflict. *The Lord of the Rings* is not, most certainly, the kind of allegory which was written in the Middle Ages, and which was strict, limiting, and limited to its system of symbols which excluded the possibility of developing the surface story independently of the system. *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered an allegory only in the 'loose sense' of the modern open allegory which allows of multiple interpretation and is less strict about the subordination of the literal level to the ideas contained in the story. There may be critics who would not be willing to consider Tolkien's trilogy an allegory also in this 'loose sense,' but even they cannot deny its allegorical character. J.R.R.Tolkien himself does. He says of *The Lord of the Rings* :

It is not about anything but itself. Certainly it has no allegorical intentions, general, particular or topical, moral, religious or political.³⁷

However, it must have been that strict medieval kind of allegory that Tolkien had in his mind when he made this categorical statement. Otherwise, it would be difficult to reconcile it with numerous other remarks by Tolkien himself; the categorical denial is contradicted by the author's own account of the nature of fairy stories and myths as well as about some of the characters in his books. It is contradicted by his inclination to write clearly allegorical stories /T h e L e a f/. And, finally, it is contradicted by the internal evidence of the trilogy itself. The evidence is provided not only by the relations of characters to one another, the plot and the setting, but also by the complex form of the three books, its complexity being derived from analogies with other literary works, the Bible, the oral tradition.

The similarities, parallels, and analogies have been hinted at by Tolkien critics who consider his trilogy to be an allegory, but, somehow, one of the most important effects of their presence in the books has been missed by the critics, they look for allegory in the construction of the plot, the setting, and the characters, but not in the general composition of T h e L o r d o f t h e R i n g s. And that is precisely why they find it difficult to explain "the tantalizing clues for allegory". This paper, therefore, is an attempt to examine how the literary analogies help to create the allegorical character of the trilogy.

In many cases the references to other works/the Bible, Norse sagas, OE epics etc./ do not constitute a consistent system of analogies; T h e L o r d o f t h e R i n g s is not patterned on any of these in the way that, for example, U l y s s e s by Joyce is patterned on the O d y s s e y. But still, analogies are there. The very

fact that a book is patterned /even in a limited way/ on another book or story gives it a field of reference. It shows how certain types of situations are repeated and, in this way, adds new layers of meaning to the book; makes it more general in appeal. *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll provide examples of how a sense of presence of hidden meanings is achieved by giving the form of game of cards or of chess and dream to the stories.

In *The Lord of the Rings* it is not only the very presence of the patterns of analogies, but also the kind of patterns that decide about the meaning: the models, nearly all, are, to a smaller or greater extent, allegorical in nature and so in this way, too, *The Lord of the Rings* itself acquires its allegorical character. The trilogy becomes a perfect demonstration of how the form creates the meaning.

NOTES

- 1 Burton Raffel, "The Lord of the Rings as Literature in ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, London 1968, p. 244.
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MECHANISMEN DER ALLEGORISCHEN EVOKATION IN J.R.R.TOLKIENS
TRILOGIE

Zusammenfassung

Die Meinungen der Kritiker, die sich mit dem allegorischen Charakter des Werkes *The Lord of the Rings* befassen, sind oft extrem unterschiedlich. Der Artikel unternimmt den Versuch den allegorischen Charakter der Trilogie zu ergründen und die Mechanismen der Evokation, die über diesen Charakter Aufschluß geben, zu bestimmen.

Die Arbeit bespricht nur flüchtig die allgemein bekannten, Allegorie-Techniken, die in der Konstruktion der wichtigsten kompositorischen Elemente eines Werkes enthalten sind; sie konzentriert sich mehr auf Analogien, die man finden kann, wenn man *The Lord of the Rings* mit anderen literarischen und außerliterarischen Werken vergleicht, weil diese Analogien nach Auffassung der Verfasserin über die Spezifik des Allegorischen des Werkes von Tolkien entscheiden. Die Verfasserin bespricht also die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen *The Lord of the Rings* und dem Märchen, den mittelalterlichen epischen und den lyrischen Werken, den altenglischen Epen und den Skandinavischen Sagen, den biblischen Motiven, und den allegorischen Traumvisionen, den Erzählungen über den Helden, der auf der Suche ist, seine Mission zu erfüllen.

Der Artikel verdeutlicht die Tatsache, daß ein größerer Teil der Werke, auf die sich die Trilogie beruft, im kleineren oder größeren Grad allegorischen Charakter hat. Daraus resultiert u.a. die Anwesenheit der allegorischen Elemente in Tolkien's Werk.

Außerdem kommt dem Werk, selbst durch die Tatsache, daß man sich bei dem nächsten Werk an das andere hält - wenn auch im sehr beschränkten Maße eine zusätzliche Bedeutung hinzu, die nicht direkt ausgedrückt wird. Auch auf diese Weise wird dem Werk *The Lord of the Rings* der allegorische Charakter verliehen, und die Trilogie selbst ist ein beispielhaftes Muster eines Werkes, dessen Form über seine Aussagekraft entscheidet.

MECHANIZMY EWOKACJI ALEGORYCZNEJ W TRYLOGII THE LORD
OF THE RINGS J.R.R.TOLKIENA

Streszczenie

Opinie krytyków zastanawiających się nad alegorycznością *The Lord of the Rings* J.R.R.Tolkiena często są krańcowo różne. Artykuł jest próbą określenia alegorycznego charakteru trylogii oraz zbadania mechanizmów ewokacji, które o tym charakterze decydują. Autorka omawia tylko pobieżnie ogólnie znane techniki alegoryczne zawarte

w konstrukcji podstawowych elementów dzieła, a koncentruje się na analogiach, jakie można znaleźć porównując *The Lord of the Rings* z innymi utworami literackimi, a także poza literackimi, analogie te bowiem, zdaniem autorki, stanowią o specyfice alegoryczności trylogii Tolkiena. Autorka omawia więc zbieżności między *The Lord of the Rings* a baśnią, średniowiecznymi utworami epickimi i lirycznymi, eposami staroangielskimi i sagami skandynawskimi, wątkami biblijnymi, alegorycznymi wizjami sennymi, opowieściami o bohaterze poszukującym spełnienia swojej misji.

Artykuł wskazuje na fakt, że większość dzieł, do których odwołuje się trylogia ma, w mniejszym lub większym stopniu, charakter alegoryczny i stąd, między innymi, wynika obecność elementów alegorii w utworze Tolkiena. Ponadto sam fakt budowania utworu na modelu innego dzieła /nawet w ograniczonym zakresie/ nadaje mu dodatkowe znaczenia, które nie są wyrażone w sposób bezpośredni. Również i w ten to sposób *The Lord of the Rings* zyskuje charakter alegoryczny i staje się doskonałym przykładem dzieła, którego forma decyduje o wymowie jego treści.