

THE HEROIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS IN J.R.R.TOLKIEN'S
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Abstract: This article explores the heroic and philosophical dimensions of J.R.R. Tolkien's mythic vision, focusing on his iconic work *The Lord of the Rings* and its enduring impact on literature. It examines the multi-layered genre structure of Tolkien's writing, blending mythology, epic, and chivalric romance to address profound themes such as the struggle between Good and Evil. Through a comprehensive approach, the article discusses Tolkien's literary influences, including ancient myths and medieval romance, and how they contribute to the philosophical depth of his work. It also highlights the growing field of "Tolkien Studies" and the evolving understanding of his creative legacy.

Keywords: J.R.R. Tolkien, mythic vision, *The Lord of the Rings*, fantasy genre, heroism, philosophical dimensions, literary criticism, Middle-earth, mythology, epic narrative, allegory, Tolkien studies, hero's journey, Good and Evil, linguistic analysis.

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуются героические и философские аспекты мифического видения Дж. Р. Р. Толкина, с акцентом на его культовое произведение "Властелин колец" и его долговечное влияние на литературу. Рассматривается многослойная жанровая структура творчества Толкина, сочетающая мифологию, эпос и рыцарский роман для обсуждения глубоких тем, таких как борьба между Добром и Злом. В статье также анализируются литературные влияния Толкина, включая древние мифы и средневековые романы, и их вклад в философскую глубину его творчества. Подчеркивается развитие области "Толкеноведения" и эволюция понимания его творческого наследия.

Ключевые слова: Дж. Р. Р. Толкин, мифическое видение, Властелин колец, фэнтези, героизм, философские аспекты, литературная критика, Средиземье, мифология, эпический нарратив, аллегория, толкеноведение, путь героя, Добро и Зло, лингвистический анализ.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola J.R.R. Tolkienning mifologik qarashlarining qahramonlik va falsafiy o'lchamlarini o'rganadi, uning mashhur asari "Qo'ng'ir uzuklar"ga va uning adabiyotga bo'lgan doimiy ta'siriga e'tibor qaratadi. Tolkienning yozish uslubining ko'p qatlamli janr tuzilmasi, mifologiya, epik va ritsarlik romanini aralashtirib, Yaxshi va Yomon o'rtasidagi kurash kabi chuqur mavzularni yoritadi. Maqolada shuningdek, Tolkienning adabiy ta'sirlari, jumladan qadimiy miflar va o'rta asr romanlari va ularning uning asarining falsafiy chuqurligiga qo'shgan hissasi tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, "Tolkienshunoslik" sohasining rivojlanishi va uning ijodiy merosini tushunishning o'zgarib borayotganligi ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: J.R.R. Tolkien, mifologik qarash, Qo'ng'ir uzuklar, fantaziya janri, qahramonlik, falsafiy o'lchamlar, adabiy tanqid, O'rta Yer, mifologiya, epik naqqos, allegoriya, tolkienshunoslik, qahramonning sayohati, Yaxshi va Yomon, lingvistik tahlil.

INTRODUCTION

In the literary heritage of every nation, there are iconic figures—writers who have transcended national boundaries and made an invaluable contribution to the treasury of world literary art. In English literature, one of these key authors is undoubtedly J.R.R. Tolkien, a major theorist and creator of the fantasy genre.

The work of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892–1973) represents a phenomenon that holds a special place in modern literature. His writings have become cult classics for many generations of admirers around the world. For many years, the author's books—especially *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955)—have attracted the attention of a wide range of readers and scholars. Terms like “the Tolkien phenomenon” and “the phenomenon of *The Lord of the Rings*” filled critical reviews after the novel's release, all volumes of which totaled approximately fifteen hundred pages. Although the plot seemed to point directly to a children's audience, the book broke all popularity records among adults, with its circulation reaching astronomical numbers. It was read by children and academics, hippies and housewives; numerous “pirated” editions were published. A true “Tolkien boom” was underway. Today, it is one of the most famous books of the mid-20th century, with a firmly established reputation as a classic work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is difficult to provide an exact figure today, but according to some data, by the end of the 20th century, more than 50 million copies of *The Lord of the Rings* had been sold, making the book one of the best-selling of the century. In addition, approximately 40 million copies of *The Hobbit* and over two million copies of the posthumously published *The Silmarillion* were sold. Tolkien's works have been translated into more than 30 languages, including Japanese, Estonian, Greek, Finnish, Vietnamese, and others. Scholars of Tolkien's work have calculated that he is the author of more than 200 different publications (37 books, 63 articles, and 121 translations), as well as many works he considered incomplete and did not publish during his lifetime.

However, the writer became widely known as the author of *The Lord of the Rings* [16], which was written in the 1940s as a continuation of *The Hobbit*. The work on the piece took twelve years. Another two years were spent negotiating with publishers. Finally, in the first half of 1954, the first part of the book was released, followed by the second. The release of the final part was delayed because Tolkien wanted to include additional notes and a glossary for the trilogy. *The Return of the King* (the third part) was published in the fall of 1955, and the triumphant march of *The Lord of the Rings* across the planet began.

Everything in this work was unusual: the characters, the events, the plot, and the philosophy. Both readers and scholars unanimously noted the astonishing diversity and concreteness of Tolkien's world, which had its own everyday life, culture, geography, and history. It dealt with the completion of a certain “Third Age of existence” and the transition to the “Fourth Age,” where humanity was given a central role. But the “Third Age” also had its own past, with numerous references to it (scholars count about 600) scattered throughout the pages of the work. Moreover, the problems of this age were resolved through the roots of issues that originated in “previous times.” In this way, the boundaries of the narrative expanded significantly, becoming multidimensional.

However, Tolkien's work attracts the attention of researchers not only because of its astounding popularity and uniqueness but also due to its genre distinctiveness, which continues to spark ongoing debates among scholars.

It is important to note that both in the Western and Russian cultural spheres, a so-called "Tolkien Studies" has emerged. In both the West and in our country, the works of J.R.R. Tolkien are analyzed not only within the framework of various literary schools but are also occasionally examined through theories from other fields of knowledge. However, despite the diversity and individuality of the existing approaches, they can be subjected to a certain systematization.

This primarily refers to the "historical-geographical" direction of Tolkien Studies [23], [25] which interprets Tolkien's books as historical documents, miraculously preserved over the centuries, describing events from a distant past. This category also includes a series of so-called "guides to the world of Tolkien," which provide details on the geographical and historical features of Middle-earth, describe its countries and peoples, and retell various plot twists [2].

Representatives of the "psychological" direction [29], [20] view Tolkien's works as products of the subconscious mental activity of the writer, manifestations of his unconscious impulses. Within the framework of the "esoteric" direction [1] it is suggested that the information contained in Tolkien's works was given to him by some external force. In this view, the writer is seen as a mediator between worlds.

The "theological" approach [14], [21] considers Tolkien's books to be sacred texts, in which the foundations of new religions are embedded.

No less interesting are the works of representatives of the "linguistic" direction [3], [5], [22], [8], [13], which provide an analysis of Tolkien's original texts and their translations into other languages. The foundation here is Tolkien's research as a linguist, his love for ancient languages, and his encyclopedic knowledge in this area, which served as the basis for the languages he created. Scholars analyze Tolkien's neologisms, decode his names and geographical locations, and so on.

And finally, the literary-critical approach itself. Here, too, we see a diverse picture. First and foremost, we can talk about the concept of "allegorism" that has emerged in literary studies, primarily in the West [27], [30], [26], [24]. Representatives of this approach find allusions to fascism in the depiction of Sauron's forces, Christian motifs in the characters of Frodo and Gandalf, the idea of the corrupting power of authority (Denethor, Saruman), symbolism in names (Sauron – "saurian" – reptile), the allegory of natural forces in the character of Tom Bombadil, and so on.

However, this concept contradicts the position of the author himself. Of course, the will of the author is not a law for critics. It is known that the listener can often understand better than the speaker what is hidden behind a word, and the reader can grasp the idea of the work better than the artist himself.

A direct contradiction with the author's position is not the only weakness of the "allegorism" concept. A more significant flaw is found in the results of the analysis itself, in the conclusions drawn by the researchers. Very often, the final interpretation offered is either superficial or simply obviously incorrect; many of the comparisons made in such works are essentially unfounded. For example, the allegorical identification of Frodo, who is heading to Mount Doom, with Christ ascending Golgotha. The outward effectiveness of such a comparison lacks internal justification. Frodo sacrifices himself, and of course, this evokes thoughts of Christ—just as any sacrifice made for the good of others might. However, Frodo is neither a Teacher, nor a saint, nor the Son of God. Through his actions, he destroys Sauron's world and is saved, not killed. And most importantly, he fails to accomplish what he

set out to do: he declares himself the master of the Ring. In the end, he rejects the final sacrifice. Gimli, Legolas, Aragorn, Gandalf can hardly be considered Frodo's apostles. And the fallen Boromir is not Judas, as is clearly shown in the scene of his death and the farewell ritual. Even less convincing is the comparison of the Ring with the Bomb.

Tolkien's world is far more unified and interconnected than is typical in philosophical-allegorical works. "An allegorical image," writes A. F. Losev, "points to some abstract idea, from which it not only sharply differs but with which it has nothing in common, and this allegorical image can be replaced by any other, because it is merely an illustration of some general and abstract idea. Something entirely different happens in myth" [9, p. 167]. Tolkien's imagery cannot be regarded as simple illustrations of ideas; even proponents of the "allegorism" concept would likely agree with this. For instance, Tom Bombadil does not represent any abstraction; he is a living part of the living nature that exists eternally.

Another major direction in the literary analysis of the writer's work can be called the mythological approach [28], [31], [4], [10]. However, proponents of the "mythological" approach in Tolkien Studies limit The Lord of the Rings to mythological frameworks, occasionally identifying "heroic elements" without attempting to analyze the essence of heroism in Tolkien's work.

It is also important to note another, "religious" direction in literary Tolkien Studies [11], [12] within which the religious roots of the writer's creativity, Christian motifs, symbols, and images in his works are analyzed. The validity of this approach is supported by the author's repeated statements that The Lord of the Rings is, at its core, a religious and Catholic work. However, even here, only one aspect of the writer's creativity is considered.

New opportunities for studying the works of J.R.R. Tolkien emerged with a series of publications in the late 1970s and early 1980s, carried out by his biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, and his son, Christopher. Prior to this period, Tolkien was regarded as the author of two works: the children's tale The Hobbit and the three-volume epic The Lord of the Rings. The evolution of his creativity was seen as a path from youthful attempts at writing to his first success—the children's book (1939), the development of his own aesthetic program in articles like "Beowulf: Monsters and Critics" (1937) and "On Fairy-Stories" (1939), and finally, to the pinnacle of his career with The Lord of the Rings (1954-55). Literary scholars typically concluded their studies by examining Tolkien's smaller tales and parables (Leaf by Niggle, Farmer Giles of Ham, The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son, etc.). This framework was followed in the works of P. Kocher, R. Helms, J.C. Rateliff, the Australian anthology edited by J. Rian, and several other studies.

To some extent, this framework was challenged by the documentary biography of Humphrey Carpenter [6]. The statements from the author, excerpts from letters, and the detailed chronology of his creative output unexpectedly brought to the forefront not The Lord of the Rings, which earned Tolkien worldwide fame, but the unfinished The Silmarillion [19], a book about the creation and early ages of the mythological Middle-earth. It was created over the course of nearly sixty years: the first drafts were made in 1916, and the final additions were made shortly before his death in 1973.

In 1977, part of The Silmarillion, the most complete section, was published under the editorship of Christopher Tolkien. In 1980, two more books followed—Poems and Stories and Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth, which can be considered supplements to The Silmarillion. The publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's letters (1981) introduced a large amount of material into scholarly discourse concerning the evolution of his work and the history of

the creation of individual works. Finally, in 1983, *The Book of Lost Tales* was published in two volumes. These new editions, containing extensive and previously unknown information, help us gain a deeper understanding of the overall picture of the writer's creativity.

Thus, the late 1980s marked the beginning of a new phase in the study of the writer's artistic world. A holistic approach to his work became possible. It is clear that a thorough analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* should now be combined with the study of *The Silmarillion*. The concept of "allegorism" was also shaken: the inclusion of Tolkien's work in a unified chain of myths and legends further complicated the search for direct parallels with the modern world. At the same time, it became absolutely clear that we are dealing with a new genre system, created in the mid-20th century, that is, with a unique artistic experience in modern literature. The study of this experience requires a comprehensive approach that does not disrupt the integrity of the work. In our view, such an approach is possible within the context of Western European literary traditions.

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And here it is time to give the floor to the author himself, who explains to the reader the specifics of his creativity. In 1938, at the University of St. Andrews, he gave a lecture titled "On Fairy Stories" [17], which became the basis for the eponymous essay. The feature of fairy tales he emphasized was the creation of a secondary world through imagination. A secondary world, a magical land, possesses concrete, materialized specificity. This is an absolute condition; otherwise, the fairy story ("fantasy") could turn into a parable or a philosophical allegory, meaning it would belong to a different genre. Tolkien defends the genre independence of fantasy as a literary phenomenon. He identified three main functions of fantasy: the restoration of mental balance, the escape from mechanical civilization, and a happy ending (consolation).

The restoration of mental balance helps a person rid themselves of the stereotypes of societal thinking and see the things around them as they truly are. In fact, this is a return to the clarity of vision and the integrated consciousness of the individual. Following this is the escape from mechanical civilization, a return to naturalness, poetry, and fairy tales. The happy ending refers to the ability to bring enlightenment to the human soul, its purification through contact

with a fairy tale and participation in fantasy. After outlining the foundations of his artistic position in the essay, Tolkien then implemented his own ideas in practice through his creative work.

What, then, are the structural components of this new genre, and why exactly does Tolkien use them in his work? It is impossible to present all the stages and details of the analysis in one article. We will limit ourselves to its main conclusions.

Our research shows that J.R.R. Tolkien's work *The Lord of the Rings*, written in the fantasy genre, is a complex, multifaceted, and multidimensional work, unique in modern literature. It consistently attracts the close attention of a wide range of readers and literary critics. Contemporary "Tolkien studies" have accumulated a wealth of experience in analyzing the writer's works. However, there arises a need to overcome the one-dimensionality and narrow focus of research, which typically concentrates on just one aspect of the problem. A qualitative rethinking of the accumulated material is necessary within the framework of a comprehensive approach, one that does not disrupt the integrity of the work and allows for an analysis of the specifics of fantasy as a literary genre.

The comprehensive approach we propose for analyzing *The Lord of the Rings* within the context of Western European literary traditions leads to the conclusion that this work is characterized by a complex, multi-layered genre structure. The primary genre-forming component of Tolkien's fantasy is the heroic epic. The author constructs his work according to the laws of this ancient genre. At the same time, following historical tradition, the writer traces the roots of his epic to mythology, while also embedding basic motifs from the next literary genre in chronological order—the medieval chivalric romance—into its framework.

The analysis shows that the writer actively develops mythological themes, plots, motifs, symbols, and images, constructing his myth about his own world based on the fundamental principles and functions of mythology. On this foundation, Tolkien builds his epic, guiding it along the traditional path from archaic to heroic, widely and productively using typical elements of ancient epic, helping the reader to delve deeper into his philosophical intent—the depiction of the conflict between Good and Evil. At the same time, the plot structure of the work is built on the archetypal motif of the "quest," a perilous journey that underlies the medieval chivalric romance. In Tolkien's work, it begins as an adventure and evolves into a moral search, culminating in a Holy war against the forces of evil.

This close intertwining of basic elements of myth, epic, and chivalric romance creates the distinctiveness of Tolkien's world and the specificity of the fantasy genre, of which he is the creator.

It should be noted that J.R.R. Tolkien's work is not an eclectic mixture, but a system within which borrowed motifs and trends were assimilated and transformed. The author does not merely follow the ancient tradition, but rather revives and creatively reinterprets it, recreating it by combining archaic elements with later narrative techniques.

However, while acknowledging the significant and multifaceted influence of ancient culture on Tolkien's work, one cannot agree with those scholars who consider this influence to be the only important aspect and see Tolkien merely as a skilled stylist and interpreter of ancient legends. By using ancient literary motifs, images, and symbols in his works, the writer creates a unique associative framework that allows the reader to delve deeper into the philosophical meaning of his work. Ancient myth, epic, and chivalric romance are traditionally associated in the minds of readers with global philosophical issues. These forms

allow the philosophical content of the work—the eternal struggle between Good and Evil, with man at its center—to be more clearly revealed.

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