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THE COMMON HUMANE SHARING IN DIFFERENT MYTHOLOGIES OF *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* AND *1984*¹

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Abstract

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's collection *The Silmarillion*, which is a utopic creation myth of Middle-earth, Valinor, Númenor and Beleriand, and his novel *The Lord of the Rings*, which is a saga taking place only in Middle-earth, seem to be completely irrelevant to George Orwell's dystopian world *1984* at first view but when they are examined in detail, two striking common points would be obvious that these myths support the idea of cultural variety's importance and they consist of a war against cultural dominance. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the battle and collaboration of cultures that makes sense in the mythological surrounding of the plot; the creatures come together to defend their cultural history against a single body; Sauron and the Orcs under his rule. As for *1984*, the reader is presented with the struggle of a couple, Winston and Julia, to continue their cultural heritage against the dictatorship of Ingsoc which offers the society with an artificial and prototypical culture.

Key Words: Cultural Variety, Cultural History, Mythology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since they are myths addressing different creatures, both The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings include men, elves, dwarves and eternal spirits, and could be of no importance without the existence of these various races. In my opinion the friendship and struggle of Frodo and Sam in The Lord of the Rings are in parallel with the experience of Winston and Julia; both couples are formed for the purpose of feeling cultural freedom and Eye of Sauron has a lot in common with Big Brother watching us.

So the coral paperweight of 1984 can well be interpreted as the One Ring of The Lord of the Rings imprisoned in a glass sphere, both of which are the ultimate symbols of humanity's cultural history.

2. THE COMMON POINTS OF THE SILMARILLION AND 1984

At the beginning of The Silmarillion, in the section "The Music of the Ainur" the first thing the reader encounters with is the war between Melkor and the other Valar, who are the greater Ainur created by Iluvatar, so-called Father of All or Eru. Melkor represents greed, dissatisfaction and monopolism, and he persuades some other Ainur, among whom Sauron and the Balrogs are, to support his ideas while the other Ainur oppose to him. Apparently he seems no different than Ingsoc of 1984 which presents the society with its one and only method of government, fascism. It may be excused both for Melkor and Ingsoc to have a desire to create their own systems as their figments since imagination is always appreciated on behalf of cultural wealth, but to impose these systems to other beings, which exceeds the level of creativity and gets involved in the restriction of others' freedom of cultural experience, cannot be appreciated as the reader will see when the Valar defeat Melkor in The Silmarillion and Winston and Julia revolt against Ingsoc. As stated in The Silmarillion, "Some of these thoughts he

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now wove into his music, and straightway discord arose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to his rather than to the thought which they had at first” (Tolkien WeNovel.com). Through the whole myth, Melkor’s disability to control his own desires and weakness in his willpower lead him to become a control freak which will turn into a fascist threat for Arda later on. In 1984, we see an advanced version of him as Ingsoc.

Both examples even come to the point of polytheism when “it seemed at last that there were two musics progressing at one time before the seat of Il vatar” and Ingsoc suggests the control of every single action and even feeling of the Oceania people (Tolkien WeNovel.com). Their absolute difference from the theme of god is their fascist ideals and they are indeed the embodiments of how creatures in different myths abuse this theme by applying the same method; through the misinterpretation of godly power and using this interpretation on their behalf, to have an absolute control over the beings of the same kind with them.

When the time comes for the Ainur to take the responsibility of the Children of Iluvatar, his cultural heritage, they are excited and contented about their encounter with a totally different culture. The reader can track a similar reflection in the eyes of Winston and Julia in 1984 when they see the Eurasian prisoners passing, but sadly, they also feel hopelessness different than what the Ainur do due to their being minority in such a dystopia where the majority of people regard cultural difference as monstrosity; “The prevailing emotion was simply curiosity. Foreigners, whether from Eurasia or from Eastasia, were a kind of strange animal” (Orwell 122).

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3. COMPARING THE LORD OF THE RINGS TO 1984

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the fact that Gandalf helps Frodo at the beginning of his journey by giving him courage and informing him about the dangers of the road is the first and the most powerful proof of cultural togetherness' benefit. Thanks to the same togetherness, Winston is somehow able to reveal a certain act of falsification; while he is working as an editor in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, he encounters a half page from the *Times* in which there is the confession of the Revolution's previous leaders about where they were on a certain date but the terrible truth was that Winston saw them in a totally different place, in the Chestnut Tree Café, on that very date. Therefore, both the *Times*, a newspaper, and a café's social environment help Winston to be sure of a cultural falsification.

At the beginning of *The Two Towers*, the first thing reader encounters with is the end of a battle scene between Orcs and hobbits, humans, an elf and a dwarf. It is very meaningful and thought-provoking to see Orcs on one side and various other cultures on the other. As both the slaves and the soldiers of Sauron's cultural fascism, Orcs serve nothing but the purpose to make Sauron the only ruler in Middle-earth. In my opinion, the fellowship's struggle against Sauron's army and Winston and Julia's struggle to have their own private, backward, cultural lives have a lot in common in terms of friendship, defending cultural history and hoping for a better future. Each sword blow of Boromir to Orcs is like Winston and Julia's each attempt to meet in a private place. When the fellowship starts to search for Merry and Pippin, their lost hobbits, they seem to leave their cultural differences aside. Again this situation is like the fact that both Winston and Julia are aware of Eurasian and Eastasian people's existence under the same conditions with them and regardless of these people's coming from different cultures, they give importance only to the same fate that they have been sharing and they feel pity for all the common people of the world under various dictatorships.

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The Return of the King starts with Gandalf snatching Pippin far away to hide him from Eye of Sauron because his deep knowledge reveals the danger of touching the Palantir and trying to communicate through it. Although he is terribly angry with Pippin, he feels obliged to help him as the threat of the enemy becomes serious. This fact reminds me of Julia having more experience about the lacks of the system and thus helping Winston to find a bit more comfort, safety and luxury in Ingsoc fascism.

4. THE SIMILAR COUPLES IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* AND 1984

In order to examine the similarities between the two myths more closely, the reader could compare the two basic couples from them; Frodo and Sam on one side and Winston and Julia on the other. First of all, Frodo and Sam have a lot in common like the same culture, village, building and even the same fate and hope. Both of them are hobbits living on the Hill, which is just a small part of the Shire, and Sam works as a gardener in Bag End, where Frodo lives. Later on, when the One Ring comes to, or rather, chooses Frodo, Gandalf bids Sam to be Frodo's aide in his upcoming long journey and so binds their fates to each other. When Frodo attempts to leave everyone in the fellowship behind and decides to go on his journey alone, this time Sam chooses to be with him by his own will. Dating from this moment, they will cherish the same hope for a future without Sauron and his armies for six months. As for Winston and Julia, both of them work in the Ministry of Truth and soon they find out after hard and stressful moments of tacit agreement that they share the same hope first for each other and then for the corruption and disorganization of the Party. Of course they have some slight differences in their life philosophies; Winston thinks that hope lies in the proles since they constitute the majority in the system, or else he takes both

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himself and Julia dead, and Julia believes in the easiness of momentary escapes and concealment while waiting for the collapse of the government. When Winston feels desperate, Julia is there to carry a ray of hope in her heart:

“If they could make me stop loving you-that would be the real betrayal.”

She thought it over. “They can't do that,” she said finally. “It's the one thing they can't do. They can make you say anything-*anything*-but they can't make you believe it. They can't get inside you.”

“No,” he said a little more hopefully, “no; that's quite true. They can't get inside you. If you can *feel* that staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them.”
(Orwell 173-174)

A similar difference and influence could be traced as the change in moods when Frodo loses his hope and Sam encourages him from time to time; one of the most important examples of this is when “‘Come, Mr. Frodo!’ he cried. ‘I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride. Just tell him where to go, and he'll go.’” (Tolkien 940). Therefore both couples never give in; Frodo and Sam reach the Cracks of Doom as long as they know it still exists, and Winston and Julia meet in the little room of Mr. Charrington's shop as long as they are not caught by the Thought Police, and when O'Brien, of course in a pretended manner, reveals himself to Winston, they immediately choose to visit him at home and become militants of the Brotherhood.

5. THE COMPARISON OF EYE OF SAURON TO BIG BROTHER

Other than the similarities of these couples, in my opinion, there is also a surprising parallelism between Eye of Sauron and Big Brother. Both of them are ever watching, inspecting figures of fascism who become prominent by their “eye” and are fulfilled by their slaves like either Orcs or party members. Both overtake their victims and when the sufferers are hopeful for their future, these eyes are ready to drift them into a state of despair. Most importantly, both are the most dangerous and devastating for Frodo on one hand and for Winston on the other when they unconsciously begin to abuse or exaggerate their hopes. When Frodo encounters the Eye for the first time, it is shocking, strange and so paralysing for him that he does not know what to do. A similar effect and sense could be observed in Winston when he introduces Big Brother's poster; “It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move” (Orwell 3). He feels that the subhuman structure of the poster enables it to be more controlling exactly like the fact that Sauron becomes more potent in Middle-earth when he forsakes his body; it is almost like these two end up with having power which overflows their worldly bodies.

It may be the lesser evil for Frodo not to be exposed to the Eye during The Two Towers, but when he and Sam recognize it while they are in Gorgoroth, it has the same terror in it as before only with a slight difference that it does not look directly toward Frodo. Although it seems unimportant, this distinction is what enables Frodo and Sam to get closer to Mount Doom. So it means that the Eye has some lack of control as a system, it makes miscalculations; “The Dark Power was deep in thought, and the Eye turned inward, pondering tidings of doubt and danger: a bright sword, and a stern and kingly face it saw, and for a while it gave little thought to other things;” (Tolkien 923). The same kind of a deficiency could be traced in the positioning of the telescreen, which serves Big Brother's purpose of guarding people, in Winston's house as it has left some private place for him to act freely:

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For some reason the telescreen in the living room was in an unusual position. Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where it could command the whole room, it was in the longer wall, opposite the window. To one side of it there was a shallow alcove in which Winston was now sitting, and which, when the flats were built, had probably been intended to hold bookshelves. By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went. He could be heard, of course, but so long as he stayed in his present position he could not be seen. (Orwell 7)

6. THE COMMON HUMANE SHARING OF THE ONE RING AND THE CORAL PAPERWEIGHT

The last striking common point of these myths is the resemblance of the One Ring to the coral paperweight, their two basic symbols of hope, cultural history and a dangerous captivation. Both of them prove to have a long history before their bearers, thus adding mystery to their appearance. Both trigger hope in the souls of their temporary owners by becoming symbols of a future without fascism in their subconscious. However, they turn out to be completely dangerous as they are bound to where they come from and are tracked by their first or previous owners. Therefore, they bring trouble on their owners by revealing them to the servants of dictatorship or to dictators themselves. Frodo manages to destroy the One Ring with the help of Sam and Gollum but Winston is apparently destroyed before his coral paperweight, it is smashed to pieces by the police after he is caught by them.

The effect of these objects on their owners is so alike that it is depicted almost with the same words; for instance, when Frodo looks at the Mirror of Galadriel and understands that the Eye searches for him and the Ring, he feels that “The Ring that hung upon its chain about his neck grew heavy, heavier than a great stone,” (Tolkien 364). Similarly, when Winston buys the coral paperweight from Mr. Charrington's shop, he depicts it as “It was very heavy in

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his pocket,” (Orwell 99). In addition, the One Ring is also called the Great Ring by many characters in the myth and named as “Precious” by Gollum like both Winston and Mr. Charrington share the same idea about the coral paperweight; “‘It’s a beautiful thing,’ said Winston. ‘It’s a beautiful thing,’ said the other appreciatively” (Orwell 99). Then the turn comes to their cultural history. There are lots of direct references about the long past of the One Ring in The Lord of the Rings; the first certain mention is when “Elrond in his clear voice spoke of Sauron and the Rings of Power, and their forging in the Second Age of the world long ago,” in his council hold in The Fellowship of the Ring (Tolkien 242). As for the paperweight in 1984, Mr. Charrington talks about its coral with the words; “‘It must have come from the Indian Ocean. They used to kind of embed it in the glass. That wasn’t made less than a hundred years ago,’” and Winston’s reason for being fascinated with the object is explained as “‘What appealed to him about it was not so much its beauty as the air it seemed to possess of belonging to an age quite different from the present one’” (Orwell 99). Another mutuality of them is their being too small to have such an amazing influence on their owners, carriers or observers. Boromir puts forward this idea openly when he says “‘The Ring! Is it not a strange fate that we should suffer so much fear and doubt for so small a thing? So small a thing!’” (Tolkien 397-398). A shockingly similar opinion comes from Winston after the glass paperweight is smashed to pieces by the police; “‘The fragment of coral, a tiny crinkle of pink like a sugar rosebud from a cake, rolled across the mat. How small, thought Winston, how small it always was!’” (Orwell 232).

7. CONCLUSION

The Silmarillion, The Lord of the Rings and 1984 have certain boundaries around their genres. However, creating a myth necessitates recognizing some certain commonalities of different cultures, conditions and times, and for the reason that the commonalities lie in the same culture, conditions and time in the case of these two myths that this paper is about, it is not surprising that these

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myths have been smoothly made across their generic boundaries. Both John Ronald Reuel Tolkien and George Orwell experienced the First and Second World Wars from the perspective of England, thus the different genres of their literary works have not created such a big difference as they were supposed to do. Although the members of the fellowship seem to live happily ever after but Winston and Julia are modified to love Big Brother heartily, both the fellowship and the couple in 1984 have struggled against cultural fascism and protected their cultural history whether in the long or short term.

What matters most in these two myths is the humane sharing in the process of maintaining cultural freedom. The overriding motivation of the protagonists is their final deeds but these deeds are already certain, what should be done is done. On the other hand, Frodo and Sam show a perfect and true friendship on their journey, and Winston and Julia share a long lost humanity together. These two myths definitely cross each other's boundaries, which are not the result of their authors' ethnic origin or life experiences but of their opposite genres, in terms of appreciating cultural variety.

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Aslı Bülbul Candaş's Short Biography

I was born in 11 April 1988 in İstanbul. I went to Yeşilköy Anatolian High School in 2001 and after completing my education there in 2004, I became entitled to

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have education in İstanbul University English Language and Literature department. I graduated from university in 2009 and worked as a translator, sales manager deputy, elementary school teacher and course teacher in various companies and schools all of which required a high level of English. In August 2013 I started to work in İstanbul Aydın University as an English lecturer and at the same time began to have my masters education.

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