

# MAKING THE WHOLE WORLD ENGLAND

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Peter Jackson, director of the rapturously received *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, has quipped that the project amounted to “a bunch of Kiwis using American money to make a very English film.” To be more exact, the *Fellowship of the Ring* was impersonated by four Brits, three Yanks, a Scot, and a Welshman. The Elves were mostly Aussies, as were Eomer and Eowyn, the lord and lady of Rohan. Luminous faces all. Dear old Bilbo Baggins was a Brit, as were the noble Theoden, the evil wizard Saruman, and the beastly Gollum. Behind the scenes, the director, screenwriters, costumers, special effects gurus, and such (the “Cultural Fighting Styles Designer,” for example) were indeed mostly Kiwis (New Zealanders). The Oscar-winning score was written by a Canadian and an Irishwoman; the Oscar-winning song by the same Canadian and a Scotswoman. The art direction was in the hands of a Yank and a Brit, and so on—a veritable “gorgeous mosaic” of Albion’s far-flung seed.

On November 22, 1963, the Beatles’ first album was released in the U.K. Within weeks, the phenomenon of Beatlemania had spread like a healing balm across an America wounded by the Kennedy assassination. Rooted as much in the English music-hall tradition and folk harmony as in American R&B, the Beatles’ music charmed young and old and led to a massive outpouring of creativity and idealism on the part of millions. On December 18, 2001, only weeks after America was again wounded by the attacks of September 11, *The Fellowship of the Ring* opened in theaters to similar rousing, cheering, inspirational effect. A “special relationship,” indeed. But although England seemed to be salving the particular wounds of America at these times, the appeal of the Beatles and Tolkien was and remains a worldwide phenomenon; no other nation has produced cultural symbols of remotely comparable potency.<sup>1</sup> As the prime meridian of the whole world runs through Greenwich, so too does much of the planet’s psyche.

As a race the British are considered neither the most intellectual nor the most artistic, Britain’s role in the invention of modern physics (Newton) and modern painting (Turner) notwithstanding. Yet their ability to forge cultural icons of near-universal popular appeal and resonance is second to none. Quite apart from the philosophical contributions of Locke, Burke, Hume, or Mill, apart from the breakthroughs of Faraday or Jenner or Rutherford, apart from the human liberation presaged by Magna Carta or the Glorious Revolution or William Wilberforce, the British people have shown a genius for touching and

stirring the hearts of millions in a way no other nation has managed since the impact of Greek and Roman imagery on the (much smaller) then-known world. A perfectly delightful *whimsy*, an eccentricity that concentrates the mind wonderfully, and a deep-archetypal imagination combine to make them the world's premier storytellers, masters of the common touch. Consider: The King James Bible, rendering into majestic, sonorous Anglo-Saxon prose the chauvinistic rantings of the Old Testament and the tenuous tautologies of Paul. The immortal legends of King Arthur, the Round Table, and Robin Hood. The Jack tales. Shakespeare and Marlowe. Milton. John Bunyan. Daniel Defoe. Jonathan Swift. William Blake. The Romantic poets.<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen. Mary Shelley. The Brontës. Sir Walter Scott. Charles Dickens. J.G. Frazer. Bram Stoker. Robert Louis Stevenson. Anna Sewell.<sup>3</sup> The great explorers, discoverers, and adventurers like Speke and Livingstone and Burton and Shackleton and Scott. H. Rider Haggard, John Buchan, and James Hilton. Lewis Carroll. Rudyard Kipling. J.M. Barrie. Arthur Conan Doyle. Kenneth Grahame, A.A. Milne, and P.L. Travers. J.R.R. Tolkien. James Joyce. H.G. Wells, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley. Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. Moving from the sublime to the contemporary: Alfred Hitchcock, Ian Fleming, the Goon Show and its influential spawn Monty Python, the Beatles and Sex Pistols, and on down to J.K. Rowling of Harry Potter fame.<sup>4</sup>

Henry James and T.S. Eliot, while American, made Britain their creative home. Joseph Conrad, Isak Dinesen, Rafael Sabatini, Baroness Orczy, Hillaire Belloc, and Vladimir Nabokov *chose* to compose their works in English rather than their native tongues. Agatha Christie even donated a master detective to the Belgians. Compared to Peter Pan crowing "To die will be an awfully big adventure!" St. Exupery's *Little Prince* is a preachy, stiff-necked creature. And Inspecteur Maigret hasn't the vividness of Dr. Watson, much less of Mr. Holmes. Only Jules Verne—whose literary heroes were Defoe, Scott, Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe—has wielded an imagination surpassing that of H.G. Wells.<sup>5</sup>

This list leaves out scores of great authors, of course, intending only to mention those whose creations—Miss Marple, *Oliver Twist*, Long John Silver, Captain Hook, Alice, Peter Rabbit, 007, Mary Poppins, *Jane Eyre*, Shangri-La, Count Dracula, Sherlock Holmes, *Lear*, *She Who Must Be Obeyed*, Mowgli, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Emma*, *Hamlet*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Gulliver, Winnie the Pooh, Dr. Frankenstein, Gandalf, Lord Peter, *Ivanhoe*, and *Big Brother*, to name a few—have captured the whole world's imagination, as the number of translations, worldwide book sales, and shameless imitations all attest. *Beowulf* need not be mentioned, for example, because all nations possess warrior sagas bulging with monsters. Chaucer derived most of his tales from existing classical and continental lore, although he did pioneer the daring innovation of using the English language in its own native land. *Vanity Fair* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are great novels but not on the archetypal scale of *Wuthering*

*Heights*. Lyric poetry tends to lose too much in translation. C.S. Lewis had the right idea, but Narnia has made nowhere near the lasting impression of Middle-earth as *a place in the mind*.

One might argue that the English-speaking world would naturally be enthralled by English-language artifacts. But English-speakers don't care about the provenance of imaginative fare so long as it be succulent, and in our insatiable appetite for a good story we have scoured the globe for centuries in quest of translatable delicacies. We have taken to our hearts Heidi, Bambi, Babar, Pinocchio, Pippi Longstocking and Pelle the Conqueror, Swann, Camille, Peer Gynt, Hedda Gabler, the Ugly Duckling, Cyrano, Jean Valjean, Pantagruel, Rama, the Cid, Joan of Arc, William Tell, *Metropolis*, Aladdin, Sindbad, Captain Nemo, Peter and the Wolf, Godzilla of 1955 (though he's a clone of *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* of 1952)<sup>6</sup>, Faust, Coyote, Anansi, Natasha, Clara, Madame Bovary, Brer Rabbit, Don Quixote, Young Werther, the Cunning Little Vixen, even the Forty-Seven Ronin. It's just that other peoples have not added to the global store of fantasy nearly as voluminously as have the British.

This British preeminence was also amplified worldwide during the golden age of the Disney studio. Walt Disney's fantasy empire also drew on many other traditions (now, of course, his posthumous outfit specializes in everything *but* Anglo icons), but Disney personally was a devoted Anglophile and an important part of the process whereby America became Britain's heir as storyteller to the world. Who but Disney would have seen the potential of Dodie Smith's little story *101 Dalmatians*? This inheritance process is reinforced by the providential fact— noted gratefully by Winston Churchill in the aftermath of World War II— that North America speaks *English*.

The power of the British imagination plays a major role in the hegemony of English today as the global language: to really savor that imagination, get lost in that movie, get down with that rock'n'roll, one is lured into learning English. For instance, the bait of *Anne of Green Gables* (written by the very Anglo-Canadian Lucy Maud Montgomery) created such a cult in Japan that a virtual tourist invasion of Prince Edward Island ensued, at least until the yen faltered too badly against the Canadian dollar.

For all their supposed reserve, the British have never been loath to tout their language and culture. Of course they're fond of denying any knack for self-marketing, but that too is part of their genius; to "make the whole world England" has always meant conquest not just of territory, but of fancy. They also have a genius for reinventing themselves as needed: the New Rome, the New Jerusalem, Her Majesty's Empire on its "civilizing mission," the brave besieged little Shire, Angry Young Men, Licenced to Kill, Swinging London, "Cool Britannia."

The British have long been well aware of their own mythos; one good reason the Labour Party hesitates to "finish off" the monarchy, for example, is the realization of how central Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London's Crown Jewels, the Changing of the Guard, and so on are to the attraction of tourists

to the country. In his 1932 novel *The Gap in the Curtain*, John Buchan showed just how self-conscious his countrymen are, in the course of a tale about the unintended consequences of clairvoyance. Buchan introduces us to Reggie Daker, a young man whose

purpose was to make an art of English life. The ritual of that life had been badly dislocated by the War, but enough remained to fascinate Reggie. He adored London in all her moods—the snugness of her winters, new faces at dinner parties, the constant meetings of friends, plays and books, glossy ponies and green turf at Roehampton, cricket matches and race meetings, the view over Saint James’s Park in May, Piccadilly in summer, Kensington Gardens in their October russet. Nor did he appreciate less the rural background to London’s life—riverside lawns, a cutter on the Solent in a fresh breeze, smoky brown coverts in the December dusks, purple Scots twilights when the guns moved homeward from the high moors.

Reggie’s fate is to be taken up by Verona, a “marmoreal blonde”: “Reggie had never met anyone, certainly no woman, who seemed to savour so intelligently the manifold delights of English life, as he understood them.” But Verona’s businesslike nature intends to commercially exploit the culturally adept Reggie, this “artist in life” and “connoisseur of evasive sensations” who “would have blushed to say the things which Verona was always saying.”

Verona’s scheme is to aggressively market England to the world, particularly to America, beginning with an old-book brokerage firm designed to be

a purveyor of English traditions, a discreet merchant of English charm. It would guide strangers of leisure into paths where they could savor fully the magic of an ancient society. It would provide seekers with a background which, unless they were born to it, they could never find. It would be a clearinghouse for delicate and subtle and indefinable things. In a word, it would “rationalize” and make available to the public the antique glamour of these islands.

Buchan describes the brokerage firm’s statement of aims:

In every sentence it bore the mark of Verona’s fine Roman hand. No man could have written it. There was an indecency about its candour and its flat-footed clarity from which the most pachydermatous male would have recoiled. [Granted that “pachydermatous” is not a reference to Republicanism, still this paragraph instantly calls to mind Hillary Rodham Clinton.] In its way it was horribly well done. It was a kind of Stores List of the varieties of English charm and the easiest way to get hold of them. Merlin’s Isle of Gramarye had at last got its auctioneer’s catalogue...Relentlessly it set down in black and white all the delicate, half-formed sentiments we cherish in our innermost hearts, and dare not talk about. It was so cursedly explicit that it brushed the bloom off whatever it touched...It was a kind of simony, a trafficking in sacred things...There could be no doubt about its effectiveness. I could see the shoddy culture of two continents seizing upon it joyously as a final statement of the “English proposition.”

In the nick of time Reggie backs out of the proposition, denouncing its “succulent beastliness”: “Do you grasp the perfect hell of it? I’m to spend my days with the things I thought I cared about, but the gloss is rubbed off every one of them. I’m to be a sort of Cook’s Guide to culture on a sound commercial basis. Damn it, I’d rather clean out drains in Chicago, for then I should know that there was a jolly world to which I might some day return.”

This “jolly world” is thus well known to and appreciated by both its producers and its eager consumers.

In light of all this British brilliance, though, it is strange to realize that J.R.R. Tolkien was moved to write his fantasy masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings* because

I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own, not of the quality that I sought and found in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish; but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff... I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story... which I could dedicate simply: to England, to my country.<sup>7</sup>

His country has rewarded him by voting *The Lord of the Rings* the “greatest book of the century” – and in some polls, of the millennium – with George Orwell’s *1984* right behind it.

“No stories of its own”: so much for Beowulf and Grendel, Arthur and Guinevere, Robin and Marian, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Piers Plowman and the Bard of Avon. Britain’s rich fusion of the Celtic, Viking, Germanic, and Norman/Romance, which occurred in post-epic historical time, apparently robbed the island nation of its own mythic identity. But Tolkien was above all reacting to the heightened and desperately competitive nationalism of the interwar period. In particular he was distressed by the hijacking, as he saw it, of European mythology in the service of totalitarian states. In Germany the process had begun before Wagner and had only intensified; the National Socialists drew fervently upon Friedrich Barbarossa, the Ring, Graal quest, and other legends. As for France, the fifteenth-century Maid of Orleans was only canonized in 1920. The Soviets resurrected Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible. And what was the pageantry of Mussolini’s Italy but a desire to bask in ancient Rome’s pagan glow?

The question of how to define England in contradistinction to these rival states absorbed not only Tolkien but other cultural warriors such as Orwell. These two, looking with their hearts, came up with strikingly similar portraits of the English people. Orwell’s 1944 essay sounds just like Tolkien describing hobbits:

[T]he working classes, as a rule, are rather small, with short limbs and brisk movements... The masses still more or less assume that “against the law” means “wrong.”... [T]hey will refuse even to sample a foreign dish, they regard such

things as garlic and olive oil with disgust, life is unliveable to them unless they have tea and puddings...gentle-mannered, undemonstrative, law-abiding...Traditionally the Englishman is phlegmatic, unimaginative, not easily rattled...Dislike of hysteria and "fuss," admiration for stubbornness, are all but universal in England...One of the basic folk-tales of the English-speaking peoples is Jack the Giant-Killer – the little man against the big man...Not merely a hatred of bullying, but a tendency to support the weaker side merely because it is weaker, are almost general in England...The motto of the English people might be..."A little of what you fancy does you good." They are not vicious, not even lazy, but they will have their bit of fun, whatever the higher-ups may say...The outstanding and – by contemporary standards – highly original quality of the English is their habit of *not killing one another*.<sup>8</sup>...The English are great lovers of flowers, gardening and "nature" ...The English will always prefer instinct to logic, and character to intelligence.

Orwell goes on to say goodbye to the British Empire and welcome the return to true nationhood:

The world is sick of chaos and it is sick of dictatorship. Of all peoples the English are likeliest to find a way of avoiding both...They have known for forty years...something that the Russians and the Americans have yet to learn: they know that it is not possible for any one nation to rule the earth.<sup>9</sup>

As a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, Tolkien's first love was language; he often recounted how "I began with language, and found myself inventing legends of the same taste." All the races that inhabit Middle-earth have their own tongues (see the Ardalambion site on the Web for a mind-boggling exploration into the grammars and possibilities of each) which, characteristically, were worked out by Tolkien long before his story took shape. Language in his view is not simply a means of communication but the living repository of racial memory, history, poetry, and wisdom: language *is* culture, in essence. Tolkien tended to reject the Arthur cycle on linguistic grounds as a medievalized Norman transplant, for all that Arthur himself had been a Dark Age Briton; and since almost every Latinate word in English also arrived via the Norman Conquest, his books lovingly choose Anglo-Saxon – burn, gore, coomb, down, deep, dale, rill, sward, fell, fen, tussock, wythe, wold, barrow, mead, sedge, shingle, fastness, eyot, rick, cot, furlong, helm, brand, kindle, hew, delve, swart, girt, cloven – wherever possible, which gives them a wonderfully spare, grave, timeless air.

Reckless [the orcs] sprang into the pools and waded across, bellowing as they came. Like a storm they broke upon the line of the men of Gondor, and beat upon helm and head, and arm and shield, as smiths hewing the hot bending iron ... "So it ends as I guessed it would," [Pippin's] thought said, even as it fluttered away; and it laughed a little within him ere it fled, almost gay it seemed to be casting off at last all doubt and care and fear.<sup>10</sup>

*The Hobbit* and its epic sequel *The Lord of the Rings* are set in Iron Age, pre-Christian Europe, a time when the ring myths of many cultures were born. During this crucial period in history, revolutionized by the discovery of

metallurgy and the spread of edged weapons, the forging of a “ring of power” or a “magic sword” became symbolic of jealously guarded chemical – virtually alchemical – knowledge. As David Day writes in *Tolkien’s Ring*, iron smelting “was the atomic secret of its day ... Those who possessed the secret conquered and often exterminated those who did not.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet the Ring quest that Tolkien depicts is the exact opposite of the Greek, Roman, Celtic, Viking, Carolingian, Saxon, German, Finnish, and other myths that treat of heroes seeking a magically powerful ring to assure their peoples’ ascendancy. Tolkien’s is a universe informed by the terrible abuses of power mankind has endured in the millennia since knights first rode out in symbolic quest of it. The wizard Saruman, seduced by a vision of possessing the One Ring “for that good which only the Wise can see” (a fine Bolshevik formulation), is doomed to “the inevitable fate that waits for all attempts to defeat evil power BY power.” The wizard Gandalf refuses to let himself even be tempted, for although “pity for weakness and the desire of strength to *do good*” [emphasis added] would be his motives initially, he knows well he would end “like the Dark Lord himself.”<sup>12</sup>

The hobbits with their simple, robust good sense and love of creature comforts are of course practically immune to temptation by the Ring. When Sam Gamgee gets a taste of the Ring’s power and is plagued by visions of himself as the world’s Master Gardener:

[D]eep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense: he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden, even if such visions were not a mere cheat to betray him. The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command.<sup>13</sup>

Tolkien, like Orwell, rejected Britain’s imperial role and understood that the First and even the Second World Wars had been unprincipled clashes between empires. But he also understood that allegory is far less powerful than symbolism, and rejected one-to-one allegorical correspondences between his War of the Ring and the world at war:

The real war does not represent the legendary war in its process or its conclusion. If it had inspired or directed the development of the legend, then certainly the Ring would have been seized and used against Sauron; he would not have been annihilated but enslaved, and Barad-dur would not have been destroyed but occupied. Saruman, failing to get possession of the Ring, would in the confusion and treacheries of the time have found in Mordor the missing links in his own researches into Ring-lore, and before long he would have made a Great Ring of his own with which to challenge the self-styled Ruler of Middle-earth. In that conflict both sides would have held hobbits in hatred and contempt: they would not long have survived even as slaves.<sup>14</sup>

With Orwell one sees a high order of self-consciousness regarding the nature of the English people; a recent book, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* by Peter Ackroyd, adds very little to Orwell’s self-portrait when it

lists as classically English characteristics individualism, eccentricity, pragmatism, innate egalitarianism, understatement, plainness of speech, antiquarianism, irony, bawdy comedy, an obsession with death and decay, a preference for amateurism over professionalism, worrying about the weather, literary sentimentality, love of gardening, a tendency to “consider matters in sequence rather than in a system,” a “synthetic” rather than an analytic imagination, and, in religion, a fondness for instruction over theology.<sup>15</sup>

Orwell of course wrote not only about British life and politics but about the English language itself, and here again he is in deep agreement with Tolkien. From his essay “Politics and the English Language” (1946):

Bad writers, and especially scientific, political and sociological writers, are nearly always haunted by the notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones, and unnecessary words like *expedite*, *ameliorate*, *predict*, *extraneous*, *deracinated*, *clandestine*, *subaqueous* and hundreds of others constantly gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers. The jargon peculiar to Marxist writing (*hyena*, *hangman*, *cannibal*, *petty bourgeois*, *these gentry*, *lackey*, *flunkey*, *mad dog*, *white guard*, etc.) consists largely of words and phrases translated from Russian, German or French; but the normal way of coining a new word is to use a Latin or Greek root with the appropriate affix and, where necessary, the -ize formation. It is often easier to make up words of this kind (*de-regionalize*, *impermissible*, *extramarital*, *non-fragmentary* and so forth) than to think up the English words that will cover one’s meaning.... The inflated style is itself a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns, as it were instinctively, to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.

This observation leads directly to Orwell’s famous rule, “Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.” He promised, “If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself.”<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere Orwell often remarks upon the incompatibility of plain “ordinary, slipshod, colloquial English” and the “inflated bombastic style” peculiar to propaganda, that “Marxist dialect which makes use of phrases like ‘objectively counter-revolutionary left-deviationism’ or ‘drastic liquidation of petit-bourgeois elements.’” Supposedly the “language of the proletariat,” it is of course anything but. “Nearly all English people,” he wrote, “dislike anything that sounds high-flown and boastful.”<sup>17</sup> English is a fluid, pragmatic, democratic tongue that may even be said to mirror the societies its speakers have created.

With J.R.R. Tolkien one also sees a high order of self-consciousness regarding the role of the English language in the shaping and expression of national character. Tolkien was a master philologist adept at applying Grimm’s Law, the wondrously regular “sound shifting” that occurs as

languages evolve from one another, and wrote such essays as “Continental Affinities of the English People” when still a student at Oxford. While his classmates looked to the Greeks and Romans, Tolkien gazed back yearningly toward the silenced ballads and sagas of ancient northern Europe.

In his own words, “I am indeed in English terms a West-midlander at home only in the counties upon the Welsh Marches; and it is, I believe, as much due to descent as to opportunity that Anglo-Saxon and Western Middle English and alliterative verse have been both a childhood attraction and my main professional sphere.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, his almost mystical affinity for “right English goodness of speechcraft” (i.e., English purged of Norman additives) was inborn, fixed in him by blood and birthplace.

John Garth in his recent book on the effect of World War I on the creation of Middle-earth points out that “in 1914, J.R.R. Tolkien was being asked to fight soldiers whose home was the land of his own paternal ancestors.”

There had been Tolkiens in England in the early nineteenth century, but the line (as *Tolkien*) went back to Saxony ... [Tolkien] was drawn powerfully to “the ‘Germanic’ ideal,” which [he] was to describe even in 1941 (despite its exploitation by Adolf Hitler) as “that noble northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe.”<sup>19</sup>

Tolkien, as his intimates put it, was “*inside* language.” For him, language was the living medium through which a people expressed its inner being and preserved its history. Garth has painstakingly traced the correspondences between Tolkien’s fascination with mysterious names and places that appear in obscure epics—“Earendel” the celestial mariner, “Irminsul” the forgotten Germanic totem, “Kor” the deserted white city upon a dark rock—and his construction of a sort of proto-mythology that might somehow explain the origin of these tantalizing words. The War of the Ring and other histories of Middle-earth are thus “lost tales” that Tolkien has “reconstructed” by working backwards from the traces they left behind.

Orwell said the English had learned “that it is not possible for any one nation to rule the earth.” Yet one nation may colonize the earth’s fantasy life. Tolkien’s saga is a distillate, for the whole modern world, of “the noble northern spirit.” But we cannot leave Tolkien, the “author of the century,” without acknowledging the paradoxically Catholic imagination that conceived Middle-earth, paradoxical since one thinks of Britain as a Protestant nation to the core. Tolkien wrote that “*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work: unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision.”<sup>20</sup> The “pity” shown Gollum—the ultimate slave to the Ring’s fleshly, temporal temptations—and the sacrifice of Frodo, who saves the Shire but loses it for himself, serve to fuse the heroic traditions of the pagan North with the message of Christianity, as the Celtic Cross crosses the Viking Ring of Power—a ring thrust through the noses of the vanquished—with the Christian “Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love,” to use Blake’s words.

Myth—story—is the first form of history. Tolkien’s achievement, his life’s work over roughly forty years, is to have fully integrated and reconciled the story of the West’s peoples with the Greatest Story Ever Told. It is not far-fetched to argue that Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* would not have the impact it is having without the spiritual preparation laid down by the filmed trilogy of the *Rings*. *The Return of the King*, indeed.

As the Fox counseled the Little Prince, *on ne voit bien qu’avec le coeur*—One sees clearly only with the heart. To believe in God is to believe in yourself and in your kind: God, for the English, truly *is* an Englishman. And when they cease believing it, they effectively cease belief in any higher form of being. Losing one’s god not only makes a people worse than they should be but demoralizes and saps their very will to survive. Whether Peter Jackson and company realize it consciously or not, their recreation of the Ring story has imparted profound, contagious love for “the noble northern spirit,” elated our people, and brought us a new, renewed, and everlasting message of strength and hope when we most need it.

“I don’t know whether you have ever seen a map of a person’s mind,” wrote J.M. Barrie in *Peter Pan*.

Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child’s mind. There are zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and these are probably roads in the island, for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of color here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose. On these magic shores children at play are forever beaching their coracles. We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf, though we shall land no more.

But we have been to the Neverland, and now we shall always believe. The world speaks many languages, but it dreams in English.

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## ENDNOTES

1. This “imaginary” trade deficit is noted sadly by many nationalities. Faced with *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance, South Korean fans commiserated with each other over their country’s inability thus far, despite all its technical know-how, to command such astounding power over the mass imagination.
2. The power of lyric poetry is usually confined to its own language, but Romanticism was one of the first transnational movements in nineteenth-century Europe. European poets energetically translated one another, and the striving of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats for greater naturalism, psychological realism, “sublimity,” and democracy in verse affected poetry beyond the borders of Britain.

3. Anna Sewell was a Quaker whose *Black Beauty*, published in 1877, is credited with revolutionizing the public's attitude toward and treatment of work animals.
4. Chinese children are so mad for Harry that several fake Harry Potter books have been produced by enterprising Chinese hacks during the long waits for the various genuine volumes to appear.
5. Verne's mother was of Scottish descent, and it was on a visit to one of Scotland's great shipyards that the seed of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* was planted in his imagination.
6. See David Kyle, *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*, The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1976.
7. From a letter to one of his readers. Much of what Tolkien divulged about his saga is found in such letters, particularly those to his sons and fellow writers.
8. This characteristic jibes with the chapter of Tolkien's *The Return of the King* called "The Scouring of the Shire," in which the hobbits return from their adventures in the *War of the Ring* only to find that Saruman, having escaped imprisonment in the tower of Orthanc, has begun to wreck and desecrate their own "home counties." Murder has been done there by evil Men and a few treacherous hobbits, but Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin forebear to kill any of their fellows.  
As Frodo says, "there is to be no slaying of hobbits, not even if they have gone over to the other side.... No hobbit has ever killed another on purpose in the Shire, and it is not to begin now."
9. From "The English People," included in *As I Please 1943-1945: The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1968.
10. From the chapter "The Black Gate Opens" in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*.
11. David Day, *Tolkien's Ring*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1994. This is a beautiful book, illustrated by the brilliant Alan Lee, which compares Tolkien's Ring of Power to all other rings in the mythologies of mankind. If only it had footnotes!
12. From J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*.
13. From *The Return of the King*. This quotation is reminiscent of Voltaire's conclusion in *Candide* — "il faut cultiver votre propre jardin" — and also of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier "Garden of the World" thesis that "democracy is born of free land."
14. From the "Foreword to the Second Edition," found in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
15. Quoted from Derek Turner's review in *Chronicles Magazine*, March 2004. Other critics have located the genius of British literature in its evocation of and dependency upon *place*. But this is hardly unique to British writing: The great literature of all lands is bound to the soil of each, to the point where the work becomes inseparable from the landscape in which it plays out.
16. This essay should be regularly reread by all Anglophones. It is available on the Internet at several sites.
17. From Orwell's 1944 essay "Propaganda and Demotic Speech," *As I Please 1943-1945*.
18. From *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, George Allen & Unwin, 1981.
19. John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-Earth*, Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

20. See Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth*, Ignatius Press, 1998. The interwar period (1919-1939) brought despair, nihilism, or a spirit of revolt to many of the spiritually susceptible. Some embraced Bolshevism and rushed off to fight in Spain, some embraced Fascism, some pure aestheticism, some the Church of Rome. An inordinate number of British writers of the century just past have been Catholics or converts to Catholicism: Gerard Manley Hopkins, G.K. Chesterton, Hillaire Belloc, Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene. The subject has received much deserved attention, e.g. by Joseph Pearce in *Literary Converts*. (C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot converted to Anglicanism.)