

Galadriel and Wyrđ: Interlace, *Exempla* and the Passing of Northern Courage in the History of the Eldar

Tungol sceal on heofenum
Beorhte scinan, swa him bebead meotud.
God sceal wið yfele, geogoð sceal wið ylđo,
Lif sceal wið deape, leoht sceal wið þystrum,¹
 (Maxims II, lines 48b-51b)

Galadriel is no doubt an important character in the *Legendarium* of J. R. R. Tolkien; not only important but also pivotable. Fëanor pivoted the narrative of the Eldar to one resembling the Germanic heroic epic by invoking a *wyrđ*, through his free choice, against himself and the Noldor who followed him, which leads to their doom. Galadriel, on the other side, as the last of the Noldorin rebels and a penitent, pivots the fatalistic and heroic Elvish narrative to eucatastrophe through her free will and choice.

The questions this article poses, however, is whether the “Doom of the Noldor” is really final? Is there room for grace and redemption? The poet of the Old English *The Wanderer* poignantly tells us on line 5b, *Wyrđ bið ful aræd!*² but is it really so? If free will can invite fate, can free will also break free from it?

An answer may be suggested by examining Fëanor’s choice to possess the Silmarils that invoked the Noldor’s *wyrđ* and Galadriel’s test of her heart, that results in a renunciation of wrongful desire, corrects Fëanor’s *wyrđ* in an instantaneous moment of eucatastrophe. Galadriel’s choice to refuse the One Ring gains greater significance in the context of the events of the First Age. Through spatial imagery, tonality and character action, First Age themes of free will, banishment and exile, doom and providence all interweave together to form a rich tapestry.

1. Ideology of the Fëanorians and Fingolfians: Aspects of Northern Courage and Wyrđ

The stories of the First Age are illustrative narratives (*exempla*) told by intradiegetic (secondary world) Elvish narrators to an intradiegetic audience, in which the theme of Northern courage is expressed by two registers of Elvish

¹ A star shall be in the heavens / shining brightly as the Lord commanded / Good must fight with evil, youth with age / life with death, light with darkness.

² “Fate is very inflexible” Trans. Elaine Treharne, *Old and Middle English c. 890—c. 1400: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 45. But see Tom Shippey’s statement below.

norms and values (ideologies³). *Exemplum* is a traditional classical and medieval device that uses illustrative narrative to confirm a moral point (Davenport 2004, 11). The moral point, the narrative's *sententia*, is directly contrasted to the protagonist's actions (either those to be shunned or those to be emulated). The narrative, therefore "... reenacts the actual, historical embodiment of communal value in a protagonist or an event, and then, in its moral, effects the value's reemergence with the obligatory force of moral law" (Scanlon 1994, 34). This discussion posits Galadriel, and the choice she makes in her narrative, as *ad bonum exemplum* juxtaposed to Fëanor, and his unwise choice in his narrative, as *ad malum exemplum* reenacts (secondary) historical embodiment of the communal Eldarin moral values and breaks with them allowing for new communal values. That is, the Germanic narrative of Northern courage is rejected allowing for a new communal value of heroism to replace it (Gallant 2020a).

The norms and values (ideologies) of the House of Fëanor and the House of Fingolfin represent the vices and virtues, respectfully, of the Germanic ethos and its tensions in which the communities of the Fëanorians and Fingolfins operate.⁴ The Fëanorian ideology is explicitly expressed in their oath to regain the Silmarils at any and all costs (*MR*, "The Annals of Aman", §134, 112). The Fingolfian ideology is explained by Finrod Felagund to the wise Edain-woman Andreth:

‘To overthrow the Shadow, or if that may not be, to keep it from spreading once more over all Middle-earth – to defend the Children of Eru, Andreth, all the Children and not the proud Eldar only!’ (*MR*, 310-11)

The actions of the *dramatis personae* find their motivations within the Northern courage framework of these two ideologies: either in possessiveness or stopping the spread of the Shadow and preserving what may be saved.

The theory of Northern courage is the Germanic warrior “ethic of endurance and resistance” (Scull and Hammond 2006, 413), which has an “emphasis on the comitatus, the duty of revenge” and the “function of *wyrd*” (Benson 1967; Gallant 2020b, 306). The function of *wyrd* and the Germanic heroic ethic defines the Germanic narrative of the Eldar and ‘the long defeat’.

³ Ideology is understood here as that which “gives voice to the foundational beliefs on which an individual subject’s normative commitment to the social order is based” (Ando 2000, 24); that is, the norms and values of the community.

⁴ For further discussion on the Fëanorian – Fingolfian ideologies and their *exempla*, see Richard Z. Gallant, "The 'Wyrdrwīteras' of Elvish History: Northern Courage, Historical Bias, and Literary Artifact as Illustrative Narrative." *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoetic Literature* 38 (2 (#136) 2020): 25-44. Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol38/iss2/2>.

This ethic of Northern courage, as a thematic pattern, unifies the *Legendarium* through its tone and mood: a “common underlying tone ... one of defeat and loss” of a “dominant style appropriate for the elegiac and slightly melancholic lays of Elvish origin...” (Vanderbeke 2012, 14; 4). The mood of this spirit of the north may be said to be “optimistic only in as far as it asserted the possibility of heroism” (Hatto 1980, 166). The history of the Eldar is not optimistic, indeed they expect and eventual defeat in their struggle against the evil of Morgoth. The Eldarin ethic of endurance and fatalistic resistance often portrays “... the actions of heroes caught in circumstances that conformed more or less to the varied but fundamentally simple recipe for an heroic situation” (*BMC*, 18). The First Age privileges such recipes of heroic action in its narratives, such as Barahir’s shield wall or Turin’s dragon fight and death. And while the last stand of the *comitatus* defending its lord is certainly an epitome of this ethos, it is not the only aspect of it.

Inextricably linked to the Germanic ethos of endurance and resistance is the other aspect of Northern courage, its *wyrđ*. *Wyrđ* is the Germanic concept of ‘final event, final fate, doom, death’ (Stanley 2000, 86). In Old English (from OE *weorþan* ‘to become’) *wyrđ* also “means ‘what has become, what’s over’” (Shippey 2002, 145). In the Old English *De Consolatione Philosophiae* associated with King Alfred (ADCP), *wyrđ* is subordinate to God and only “designates the temporal, material aspects of divine providence” and is simply the “manifestation of the divine plan in the affairs of men, i.e. that which takes place in the world” (Frakes 1988, 99, 95). “To me,” writes Tom Shippey, “*wyrđ* is subordinate to providence for the obvious reason that providence is before things happen, and *wyrđ* is after: *wyrđ biþ ful aræd* does not mean ‘fate is inexorable’ (as it is generally translated) but ‘what’s done is done’, with which there’s no arguing.”⁵ Tolkien seems to acknowledge this definition of *wyrđ* when Finrod Felagund states “— for Eru never merely undoes the past, but brings into being something new, richer than the ‘first design’” (*MR*, 333).

Wyrđ, in the world, serves a judicial and penitentiary function (although it is not simply wanton and arbitrary). This is a corrective and punishing force, which reacts to perversions of the divine plan (Frakes 1988, 98). F. Ann Payne (1974, 18) remarks on the Alfredian interpretation of *wyrđ*:

Man in his right to choose, to dislocate the texture of things because he lacks omniscience, performs acts which require the direct attention of God. This attention Alfred calls *Wyrđ*, the work that God does every day (128.18-20) ... Since, in the same passage, Alfred makes it clear that all

⁵ Personal correspondence 19 Feb 2020, quoted from Tom Shippey’s review of “The Dance of Authority in Arda: *Wyrđ*, Fate and Providence in the Elder Days of Middle-earth.” Forthcoming in *Hither Shore* 17, 2021.

other events in the universe are set by natural law from the beginning of time, the work of God can be drawn forth only by those beings free to disrupt the perfect pattern of things. Wyrđ is the balance that keeps the free choices of men from rending the universe astray. The universe must operate in terms of an order of its own and if men's choices threaten it, deliberately evil or merely humanly inadequate, Wyrđ comes against them.

Simply put, if the hero, through their own inherent free will, chooses to act in a manner contrary to God's plan (such as, but not limited to, misusing worldly goods (*woruldsælða*)), *wyrđ* is invoked against him or her. *Wyrđ* is what happens to the hero, Northern courage is how the hero, often defiantly, faces his or her *wyrđ*. The hero endures in his or her resistance until, at last, they fail to stave off the oppressive judicial force of *wyrđ*. Both are inextricably linked as two sides of the same coin and contribute to the intensely melancholy and despairing mood of the theme.

This discussion focuses on this abstract, thematic mood that is more prevalent in the scenes where Fëanor and Galadriel make their fateful choices and encompasses the situations that Tolkien (*BMC*, 23) describes as: "... that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die... the shadow of its [the theme's] despair, if only as a mood, as an intense emotion of regret, is still there. The worth of defeated valour in this world is deeply felt." Tolkien ensures that his First Age reflects this mood and tenor. It is an abstract mood, a tone, a tenor of "despair of the event, combined with faith in the value of doomed resistance" (*ibid.*). In the history of the Elves, the event is 'the long defeat' that they have spent tens of thousands of years resisting, doomed that they are.

The theme of the long defeat is interlaced throughout the *Legendarium*. This Germanic-Elvish narrative concludes with 'The Mirror of Galadriel' and 'Farewell to Lórien'.⁶ Interlace is "the device of interweaving of a number of different *themes* ... all distinct and yet inseparable (Vinaver 1971, 71; emphasis mine). The device is thought to have originated with Ovid. Denis Feeny (2004, xxi) in his introduction to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, notes that the "haphazard chain of association is entertaining, but it also reinforces the Ovidian theme of the very contingency of connectedness." For C. S. Lewis, who called the device "polyphonic," the contingency of connectedness provides a

Depth, or thickness, or density. Because the (improbable) adventure which we are following is liable at any moment to be interrupted by some quite different (improbable) adventure, there steals upon us unawares the

⁶ Chapters seven and eight, book two of the *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

conviction that adventures of this sort are going on all around us, that in this vast forest (we are nearly always in a forest) this is the sort of thing that goes on all the time, that it was going on before we arrived and will continue after we have left. (Lewis 1954, 98)

The interweaving of Vinaver's distinct but inseparable themes, that remind us of other stories in a seemingly haphazard chain of association, gives us a sense of connectedness that there are other stories happening (or happened), which affect the one that we are reading. Through interlace, Galadriel's refusal of the One Ring gains deeper significance from the themes of other stories (such as Fëanor's refusal) interweaving throughout the scene.

2. Fëanor's Choice: Possessiveness, *Wyrđ*, Doom, Exile and Banishment

The context of Galadriel's choice to resist the Ring and its significance for the Eldar's banishment and redemption begins with Fëanor's actions that first invoked this *wyrđ*: his unwise choice to refuse the Silmarils to the Vala Yavanna (Gallant 2021, forthcoming). Yavanna had requested Fëanor's Silmarils after the darkening of the trees

'The Light of the Trees has passed away, and lives now only in the Silmarils of Fëanor. Foresighted was he! Even for those who are mightiest under Ilúvatar there is some work that they may accomplish once, and once only. The Light of the Trees I brought into being, and within Eä I can do so never again. Yet had I but a little of that light I could recall life to the Trees, ere their roots decay; and our hurt should be healed, and the malice of Melkor be confounded.' (S, 82)

The refusal was made of Fëanor's own free will ('This thing I will not do of free will.') (S, 83). The motivation for Fëanor's refusal was his wrongful desire, which consequently invoked *wyrđ* upon the Noldor, or at least initially, upon Fëanor. His Silmarils, although holy and divine, are nonetheless constructed within the confines of Arda with materials also created within Arda⁷. In this sense we may consider the Silmarils "worldly goods" that are gifts from the Creator.

⁷ "And they watched, upon the mound there came forth two slender shoots; and silence was over all the world in that hour, nor was there any other sound save the chanting of Yavanna. Under her song the saplings grew and became fair and tall, and came to flower; and thus there awoke in the world the Two Trees of Valinor. Of all things which Yavanna made they have the most renown, and about their fate all the tales of the Elder Days are woven" (S, 31).

Within the framework of the *Consolatione* attributed to Alfred,⁸ Fëanor's free choice was a misuse of worldly goods by perverting their use for his own covetousness. And while the goods are worldly, they ultimately have a divine origin and "this perversion of them by human greed is an attack on the natural, divine order of the cosmos" (Frakes 1988, 105). Echoes of the Alfredian *Consolatione* resound in Fëanor if we pause to consider why the felicities (*woruldsælða*) reprimand Mind (*mōd*):⁹

Now you are guiltier than we are, because of your own wrongful desires and also because we are not permitted on account of you to perform our maker's will. He lent us to you to use according to his directions, not to satisfy the appetite of your wrongful desires. (*ADCP*, II, prs. 5, xiii, 45)

Fëanor's wrongful desires, like *mōd*'s, is a "greedy love" in which he forgets that he is merely their *sub-creator* and that the actual Creator merely lent them to him to use wisely according to his (Ilúvatar's) directions. Yet Fëanor "seldom remembered now that the light within them was not his own" (*S*, 70). Fëanor's own *mōd*, or spirit, through its pride and covetousness, draws the Silmarils away from Ilúvatar's purpose. Fëanor thereby perverts the divine order and prevents the Silmarils from performing their duties (Frakes 1988, 110). When this happens, in the Alfredian framework, *wyrd* is invoked.

The narrative of the *Legendarium* up to this point is one more reminiscent of a mythological golden age. Fëanor pivots the former narrative to a more heroic one with the invocation of *wyrd*, toward a narrative of the 'long defeat'. *Wyrd* is required to 'correct' Fëanor's wrongful desire to possess that which is not really his and deny the Silmarils' light to Yavanna, and subsequently to the *summum bonum* of Arda. Verlyn Flieger (2009, 167) may have been the first to note this passage within the context of doom and freedom of choice when she writes

Free will can apparently invite fate. As noted earlier, *doom* is derived from Anglo-Saxon *dòm*. While its primary meaning is: "I. judgement, decree, ordinance, law," it has also a rare usage listed as IV. "Will, free will,

⁸ The Old English *De Consolatione Philosophiae* may be the most relevant source as Gerald Hynes suggests "[M]ore important, however, than direct exposure to Boethius' Latin text may be Tolkien's familiarity with the Old English version traditionally attributed to King Alfred" therefore it is the version used in this discussion. Gerald Hynes, 'Tolkien's Boethius, Alfred's Boethius' in *The Return of the Ring: Proceedings of the Tolkien Society Conference 2012*, vol. 1, ed. Lynn Forest-Hill (Edinburgh: Luna Press), 133.

⁹ OE *heart, mind, spirit, 'mood,' temper* also *courage, arrogance, pride, power, violence*. Cf. J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: Toronto University Press 2007), s.v. *mōd*.

choice, option” (Bosworth-Toller). Thus, Fëanor’s impractical choice to deny Yavanna the Silmarils, and his consequent oath to pursue Morgoth bring on the choice of the Noldor to follow him, which leads to their Doom. Though that doom is spoken in the voice of Mandos, it is the Noldor who in effect doom themselves.

Following Flieger, the argument begins at this point where the Noldor invoked this *wyrđ* themselves. Specifically, Fëanor invoked *wyrđ* by his own wrongful desire over the *summum bonum*, thereby perverting worldly goods. This *wyrđ* likewise instigated a series of cause-and-effect events (invocation-doom-banishment-exile) with the purpose of “correcting” Fëanor’s choice and returning to the providential divine plan. This “correcting” function of *wyrđ*, and the various heroes’ endurance and resistance to *wyrđ*’s oppressive machinations, is what contributes to the theme of Northern courage.

Furthermore, the Germanic conflict-situations of the Fëanorians and those that they ensnare, are governed by the Fëanorian ideology of the oath with the sole purpose of recovering the Silmarils at all costs and this Fëanorian behaviour is presented by the intradiegetic Fingolfian narrators as *exempla* of behaviour to be shunned – *ad malum exemplum* (Gallant 2020c, 31). Their doom is pronounced to the Noldor, in great detail, by the Herald of Manwë (perhaps Mandos himself) and likewise known in the *Legendarium* as *The Prophecy of the North* and the *Doom of Mandos* (S, 94-95). This doom, however, is not a curse but a judgement and a final fate in Alfred’s Boethian tradition (Gallant 2019).¹⁰ The Noldor are banished and exiled according to divine law, punished by *wyrđ*. The main host of the Noldor take flight from Valinor as exiles and Galadriel is among them.

The Noldor’s banishment, it should be noted, is one of dual exile; one of free choice both before the event and afterwards. An example of banishment as dual-exile – as a banishment of oppositions – may be found in the Anglo-Saxon poem ‘The Seafarer’ in which Stanley Greenfield observes: “we are confronted with a dual exile: enforced and desired” (Greenfield 1972, 222). In the *Legendarium*, the Noldor desire exile to retrieve the Silmarils and shortly thereafter their exile is enforced by “The Doom of Mandos.” Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings* attests that: “[A]gainst the will of the Valar Fëanor forsook the Blessed Realm and went into exile to Middle-earth, leading with him a great part of his people...” (RK, Appendix A, 314). Note that Galadriel, according to her story in *The Silmarillion*, left Valinor not to recover the Silmarils (the Fëanorian motivation) but rather because “she yearned to see the wide unguarded lands and to rule there a realm at her own will” (S, 89, emphasis mine): a fine detail that gains greater significance in her choice to resist the One Ring.

¹⁰ Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, s.v. “doom,” print.

For Galadriel and the remnant Noldor in the Third Age, the banishment encompasses all of Middle-earth ('... these lands of exile...' (*FR*, II, viii, 394)). In their exile, they struggle to preserve what can be preserved and act within the Fingolfian ideology of containing the Shadow and preventing it from engulfing Middle-earth. Slowly, bit by bit, they lose ground in the struggle while resisting heroically. The losing struggle is the basis for recurring theme of the "sad light of fatalism" (Stanley 2000, 94) of the long defeat that is characterized with an *ubi sunt* emotional symbolism of nostalgia and an omnipresent sense of fate and doom. It is an atmosphere just below the surface even in Galadriel's garden and it is particularly salient in the following chapter as the Elves say farewell.

3. Galadriel's Choice: Themes of High Hope and Redemption

The struggles of the First Age are made implicit through the interlacing of themes and the spatial imagery in Galadriel's garden. Maud Bodkin in her *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* both provide the basis for examination of thematic spatial imagery. For example, Bodkin's work on the emotional symbolism of earthly surroundings shows their relationship to the idea of death. The banishment 'in these lands of exile' is one in which the Elves are "trapped in earthly, cultural surroundings" (Bjork 2002, 324). For the Elves, Middle-earth itself is presented as a place of constraint and death. Dwindling 'to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten' (*FR*, II, vii, 380) takes the form of death¹¹ for the once noble and mighty Noldor.

Even the strongholds of Rivendell and Lothlórien, while pockets of Elvish eternity, are haunted with the mood of death and decay: by doom and the long defeat which will eventually intrude from outside. When Galdor asks Elrond during the Council, '... But have they [Imladris, the Havens, Lórien] the strength, have we the strength to withstand the Enemy, the coming of Sauron at the last, when all else is overthrown?' Elrond replies 'I have not the strength, neither have they...' (*FR*, II, ii, 279). That Elrond admits he doesn't have the strength to hold off the coming intrusion and the doom further reflects Tolkien's mood of the

¹¹ Tolkien tells us that those who linger and fade "wander houseless [unbodied] in the world, unwilling to leave it and *unable to inhabit it, haunting trees or springs or hidden places* they once knew" (*MR*, 223, emphasis mine). From the perspective of the Noldor, they generally '... spoke of death as being a division of the united...' (*MR*, 319). The "Unbodied, wandering in the world, are those who at the least have *refused the door of life...*" (ibid. 224, emphasis mine). The faded Elves are spirits of the wood and ghosts in the mists haunting the cold and constraining places of Bodkin's theory. Ghosts, Galadriel implies, who are 'slowly to forget and to be forgotten'. Therefore, for the purposes of this argument, fading may be considered death.

“shadow of despair” and “intense emotion of regret” in which the “worth of defeated valour in this world is deeply felt.” Galadriel further echoes Elrond,

‘Do you not see now wherefore your coming is to us as the footstep of Doom? For if you fail, then we are laid bare to the Enemy. Yet if you succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten.’ (*FR*, II, vii, 380)

There is an “ambiguous fate: which threatens disaster but may yield to courage and determination” (Gilbert 1992, 1) in Frodo’s quest. Galadriel stresses to Frodo that his courage and determination will decide the fate of the war with Sauron. Nevertheless, for the Elves there is still the atmosphere, mood, and tenor of no escape from the doom of the long defeat — even in Imladris and Lothlórien.

The immediate setting of Galadriel’s garden in Lothlórien emphasizes the context for the interlacing of spatial imagery and abstract themes of mood, coupled with concrete themes of past events in which the consequences of doom and banishment intersect with High Hope. In Galadriel’s garden we are inundated with imagery which is in opposition to the emotional symbolism of coldness, darkness, death. It is, following Frye, Arcadian imagery of paradise and apocalyptic imagery of eternal stars. Throughout the chapter (‘The Mirror of Galadriel’), is the eternal Evening Star: “The Evening Star had risen and was shining with white fire above the western woods” (*ibid.*, 361).

The context of the Evening Star also derives from the First Age when Elrond’s father, Eärendil, sailed in his ship Vingilot to Valinor with the Silmaril retrieved by Beren. His purpose was to sue for pity and assistance in the war against the Shadow from the Valar. The Valar then granted his request and set Eärendil in the heavens with the Silmaril as the Evening Star. Its purpose was to provide a symbol of “High Hope” to the denizens of Middle-earth. We are told the significance of Eärendil’s Silmaril explicitly in *The Silmarillion*:

Now when Vingilot was set to sail in the seas of heaven, it rose unlooked for, glittering and bright, and the people of Middle-earth beheld it from afar and wondered, and they took it for a sign, and called it Gil-Estel, the Star of High Hope. And when this new Star was seen at Evening, Maedros spoke to Maglor his brother, and he said: ‘Surely that is a Silmaril that shines in the West?’ (1999, 300-301)

The Evening Star is therefore a symbol of High Hope, a light to dispel the encroaching darkness of Morgoth’s Shadow and herald the War of Wrath at the

end of the First Age. Likewise, it is emphasized as a sign of High Hope on the eve of the War of the Ring.

The salient imagery is striking because it is not the focus of our attention which is, firstly, the characters and, secondly, the One Ring, but neither is it fully backgrounded. The Evening Star's repetition in this scene implies a greater significance; otherwise the text may have simply stated that the Evening Star rose in the sky and left it at that. Instead we are reminded of hope, which is,

... as always, merely implicit; but once the two events [or themes] become simultaneously present in our minds, each acquires an added depth through the other and their interaction brings to the fore, as no other device could have done, the underlying tragic theme. (Vinaver 1971, 85)

The implicit theme of High Hope adds a depth and significance, which is woven into the current narrative and its setting. The intertextuality¹² of Tolkien's works, from where he may draw upon past events, adds another cyclic¹³ layer of which this is a prime example. The juxtaposition of Eärendil's Silmaril and Sauron's Eye in Galadriel's garden provides repetitive heavenly imagery throughout the scene in the garden.¹⁴

There is a dialectical element in that these oppositions require an implication, or need to contain a germ of, each other. The threat of the Shadow lends significance to the light. The Silmaril of heaven is still salient in the literal and figurative background as Frodo peers into the mirror and perceives The Eye; a trace of darkness in opposition to the Evening Star. The darkness is grounded, appropriately, closer to earth and the "death and decay" atmosphere. It seems to appear from somewhere below, out of the depths of an abyss: a contrast to the Evening Star's dazzling brilliance. At this moment Frodo is frightened and overwhelmed; he feels this quest is beyond his capabilities, and he freely and humbly offers Galadriel the One Ring, 'You are wise and fearless and fair, Lady Galadriel, ... I will give you the One Ring, if you ask for it. It is too great a matter for me' (*FR*, II, vii, 380-81).

While acknowledging that Galadriel from *The Silmarillion* is a post-*LotR* development, the fact does not affect this argument and one may look at this scene

¹² "... intertextuality – a text's dependence on prior words, concepts, connotations, codes, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts." Vincent B. Leitch, ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 21.

¹³ "... no single section of the Cycle is self-contained: earlier or later adventures are recalled or announced, as the case may be, in any given part of the work. To achieve this, or authors, had recourse to a narrative device known to earlier writers, including Ovid, but never before used on so vast a scale, namely the device of interweaving a number of separate themes." Eugène Vinaver. *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 71.

¹⁴ And the scene may remind the reader of the Biblical motif of evil and temptation in the garden.

from a Noldorin point of view. Here is a nobody from an insignificant village holding the fate of Arda literally in his hands and giving that fate freely to a rebel Noldorin princess who witnessed the Day before Days. Galadriel is, after all these ages, finally offered what the dark whispers of Melkor (now Morgoth) sparked and Fëanor (despite being her ‘unfriend’) kindled:

...but Galadriel, the only woman of the Noldor to stand that day tall and valiant among the contending princes, was eager to be gone. No oaths she swore, but the words of Fëanor concerning Middle-earth had kindled in her heart, *for she yearned to see the wide unguarded lands and to rule there a realm at her own will.*” (S, 89, emphasis mine)

It seems, if Galadriel had possessed the Ring, this is exactly what she would have done – fulfil the Melkor-inspired dream. Tolkien (*Letters*, 332) writes “In any case Elrond or Galadriel would have proceeded in the policy now adopted by Sauron: they would have built up an empire with great and absolutely subservient generals and armies and engines of war, until they could challenge Sauron and destroy him by force.” This would be a wrongful desire to rule a realm in Middle-earth against the divine plan for the Eldar to return into the West. The result would not be the overthrowing, or halting, the spread of the Shadow (MR, 311) per Fingolfian ideology (Gallant 2020b), but rather simply replacing the agents of that Shadow (the Eldar for Sauron). This is the test of Galadriel’s heart.

Frodo’s act of offering, although seemingly born out of terror rather than generosity, is not lost on Galadriel: she suddenly and clearly laughs, ‘[G]ently are you revenged for my testing *your* heart’ (FR, II, vii, 381; itlaics mine). The significance of Frodo’s humbling gesture must deeply sway the aristocratic Noldo from the heroic First Age: after all, “[H]umility is not seen as a manly virtue in Germanic tradition, as can be seen, for example, in *Beowulf*. Seeking fame on earth is virtuous instead” (Murphy 1995, 83). Note that Frodo’s act is extremely important precisely because it is *not* a Germanic act: a Germanic hero would not have doubts that he is up to the task, he would not think that the task is too big for him, nor would he be frightened of Sauron in the mirror (consider, by contrast, Aragorn’s confrontation with Sauron in the palantír).

Although Frodo is the main protagonist in *The Lord of the Rings* it can’t be helped but noticed that he is acting as a helper agent in the structure of Galadriel’s story. That is, in the narrative of Galadriel’s and the Eldar’s *wyrð*. Frodo’s offer reveals to Galadriel that she must also succeed with an equally almost impossible task: to willingly choose to sacrifice herself (and her people), everything she has built and preserved, and refuse the One Ring. Nonetheless, this is an odd action on Frodo’s part, and may indicate a purpose behind such a spontaneous, and difficult, chance event. Providence, or ‘Authority’ in Tolkien’s

words (*Letters*, 235), always acts in a manner that is veiled by a reasonable explanation (i.e. Frodo is too frightened to bear the Ring). Yet it always works in situations of critical significance and with only a hint that providence is working through disguise. Tolkien has continuously emphasized this by a motif threaded throughout the work (West 2003, 86): Frodo was *meant* to have the Ring, he *just happened* to have pity at the right moment. It works by chance, ‘if chance is what you call it,’ as Gandalf is fond of saying.

Therefore, it is not outside the internal rules of Tolkien’s sub-created Middle-earth for Frodo to also act as a helper-agent, on the behalf of providence, to help Galadriel choose wisely and reject temptation and a spiritual death. That the ‘mannish-Hobbit’ delivers Galadriel is not alien to Tolkien’s thought either, if we remember Finrod Felagund’s conversation with the Edain wise-woman Andreth

‘I was thinking that by the Second Children we might have been *delivered from death* for ever as we spoke of death being a division of the united, I thought in my heart of a death that is not so: but the ending together of both. For that is what lies before us, so far as our reason could see: the completion of Arda and its end, and therefore also of us the children of Arda: the end when all the long lives of the Elves shall be wholly in the past.’¹⁵ (MR, 319, emphasis mine)

Finrod’s vision may be a foreshadowing of what is to come, but not with a noble and high mimetic hero, rather an ordinary and humble low mimetic hero.

Frodo’s spontaneous offer and the imagery of the Evening Star sets up the tension for Galadriel’s test of heart. Immediately prior to the temptation Eärendil is especially salient and embodied in the text from the spatial perspective of Galadriel. The Elves have a word for hope that is an expectation of something good, which is *Amdir*, literally ‘looking up’ (MR, 320). From a spatial perspective, Galadriel may look up at the *Amdir* represented by the Silmaril. The Silmaril shines from above as she spreads out her hand towards the east in a gesture of rejection and denial. The reader “can see things virtually from the perspective of the character ... inside the text world, and construct a rich context by resolving deistic expressions from that viewpoint” (Stockwell 2002, 47; cf. Tsur 2003, 41-54). From the perspective of Frodo, the Silmaril blends with a Ring of Power through an “as if” construction: “Its rays glanced upon a ring about her finger; it glittered like polished gold overlaid with silver light, and a white stone in it twinkled *as if* the Even-Star had come down to rest upon her hand. Frodo gazed at the ring in awe; for suddenly it seemed to him that he

¹⁵ Finrod also sees another, happier vision, but only *after* Arda is remade.

understood” (*FR*, II, vii, 380 italics mine). The weaving of Silmaril/Ring imagery on Galadriel’s finger as she stretches her hand toward the east in rejection and denial thematically reinforces the rejection of the wrongful desire / Ring of Power construal. The Silmaril, the sign of “High Hope,” is interlaced in the scene with the encroaching Shadow, doom, and the long defeat.

Yet, in this scene, Galadriel gives us a verbal cue when she says a very curious thing: ‘[T]he evil that was devised long ago works on in many ways, whether Sauron himself stands or falls’ (*FR*, II, vii, 381). The Ring, of course, is symbiotic with Sauron. Sauron cannot exist without the Ring. If the Ring is destroyed and Sauron falls, what is the evil devised long ago that works on regardless of Sauron? The refusal is especially poignant when we consider what is intertextually backgrounded and interwoven into the scene: the One Ring is a device that would allow Galadriel to actualise Fëanor’s Melkor-inspired words that at one time kindled her heart. Galadriel’s curious statement may invoke that “merely implicit” reminder, consisting of rebellion, the oath and banishment as well as the Silmarils.

The moment has potentially tragic consequences and it seems to “move up to an *Augenblick* (or crucial moment) from which point the road to what might have been and the road to what will be can simultaneously be seen” (Frye 2000, 213). Tolkien (*FR*, II, vii, 381) captures this *Augenblick* thusly:

‘And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and Lightening! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!’

Much is happening here within a split second. Galadriel is put to the test in that (metaphorical) moment of death and must choose with immediacy whether she becomes the ruler of all Middle-earth (*In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen*), or she sacrifices everything, including the “abnegation of pride and trust in her own powers” (Fisher 2007, 228) and the loss of all ‘Elvendom’. This adds another layer to the temptation and is doubly dangerous. Seen through the lens of the *Legendarium*, her sacrifice is tremendous.¹⁶ As with other characters, the

¹⁶ Matthew Dickerson explains exactly what is at stake: “As we consider Galadriel’s temptation, we must do so in light of what we have previously seen: that if the Ring-bearer even *attempts* the Quest, then whether he succeeds *or* fails it will mark the end of Lothlórien. Thus, his coming to Lothlórien truly is, as she said, the coming of “the footstep of Doom.” What the Ring offers to Galadriel is a way out of this doom: a third alternative to having Frodo either fail or succeed. To preserve that land and those works, she would need both to keep the Ring from Sauron and also keep it from being destroyed. It is an alternative she has long pondered, and even greatly desired,

Ring deceitfully inspires visions of ultimate personal power tailored to the person it is trying to influence. If the Ring was able to tempt Sam with a vision of becoming an omnipotent gardener, it must surely sense Galadriel's ancient desire to rule a kingdom of her own, perhaps to rule Elvendom and more. Therefore, the Ring made the attempt:

In the 'Mirror of Galadriel', I 381, it appears that Galadriel conceived of herself as capable of wielding the Ring and supplanting the Dark Lord. If so, so also were the other guardians of the Three, especially Elrond. But this is another matter. It was part of the essential deceit of the Ring to fill minds with imaginations of supreme power. But this the Great had well considered and had rejected, as is seen in Elrond's words at the Council. Galadriel's rejection of the temptation was founded upon previous thought and resolve (*Letters*, 332).

Spatial imagery continues its work during the temptation as Galadriel lifts her arms *up*, and great *light illuminates* her while leaving all else *dark*. Her outburst is one of the emotional symbolisms associated with hell "craving sensuous form for its expression" and engaging in ambiguity and oppositions ('terrible as the Morning and the Night', 'Dreadful as the Storm and Lightening', 'stronger' than earthly 'foundations', 'love me and despair!' (cf. Bodkin 1934, 53-54)). This is immediately followed by an emotional release resulting in: 'shrunken', 'slender', 'gentle voice', 'soft and sad'. There is an intense internal struggle as Galadriel's reaction shows, but her endurance, resistance, and resolve to choose wisely in the end won out (according to Tolkien above). Of her own free will she chooses sacrifice and is humbled:

Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! She was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.

'I pass the test,' she said. 'I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel.' (*FR*, II, vii, 381).

as she admits to Frodo. It is a two-fold temptation. Part of her desire for power is, as with Gandalf, the desire to defeat Sauron. It is the desire to do good and to prevent evil. As Sam puts it, she would "make some folk pay for their dirty work." (*FR*, II, vii, 382) Yet unlike with Gandalf, there is the added dimension of her great desire to take the Ring simply to save her kingdom and all she has worked for from an otherwise sure demise." Matthew Dickerson, *Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in The Lord of the Rings* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 80.

This is the moment of eucatastrophe. Her choice, clearly, is “a transition toward reintegration and life-renewal” (Bodkin 1934, 54) but it is also in direct opposition to Fëanor’s choice to deny Yavanna that invoked the *wyrđ* upon the Noldor in the first place. Her decision may still be motivated by the Fingolfian ideology of constraining the Shadow, but Galadriel realizes that the Eldar remaining in Middle-earth is not the *summum bonum*. It is only their departure that attains the Alfredian ‘corrective action’ of *wyrđ*, bringing the universe (or at least the fate of the Noldor) back into alignment with the divine plan. Galadriel has spiritually won and the Eldar will all leave Middle-earth and reintegrate with their brethren on the Lonely Isle. There, their lives will be renewed rather than the slow, metaphorical death of Elvish fading in Middle-earth. It is the eucatastrophe of the Eldar.

4. Exemplum of Redemption

Recall that “Not all of the Eldalië were willing to forsake the Hither Lands” (S, 305-6), which may suggest that the effects, or at least a taint, of the oath lingered with them when they refused the Valar’s summons. Maedhros himself seems to believe that the oath would linger even if the Noldor submitted and returned to Aman, if they did not gain the favour of the Valar, “their oath would still remain, but its fulfilment be beyond hope...” (ibid., 304). We may regard this as an evil, as alluded to above, devised long ago that is not of Sauron’s making and does not depend on his rise or fall. The Noldor who remained behind could never fully wash themselves of their particular original sin and the oath, as evidenced by their *wyrđ*. In a sense, Fëanor’s choice and the Doom of Mandos lingers into the Third Age. After the War of Wrath, Maedhros asks his brother Maglor

‘But how shall our voices reach to Ilúvatar beyond the Circles of the World? And by Ilúvatar we swore in our madness, and called the Everlasting Darkness upon us, if we not keep our word. *Who shall release us?*’

‘If none can release us,’ said Maglor, ‘then indeed the Everlasting Darkness shall be our lot, whether we keep our oath or break it; but less evil shall we do in the breaking’ (ibid. emphasis mine).

This question, ‘who shall release us’, like the Eldar’s *wyrđ*, slumbers and lingers. Because she is the last of the Noldorin rebel leaders, Galadriel’s choice therefore plays an additional synecdochical function relative to the release, or redemption, of the remnant Noldor.

Galadriel is a penitent. In 1971, Tolkien (*Letters*, 407) wrote to Ruth Austin that

... actually Galadriel was a penitent: in her youth a leader in the rebellion against the Valar (the angelic guardians). At the end of the First Age she proudly refused forgiveness or permission to return. She was pardoned because of her resistance to the final and overwhelming temptation to take the Ring for herself.

Galadriel, from this particular letter at least, was not only a leader in the rebellion but also seems to exhibit a degree of *ofermōd*, one of the vices of Northern courage Tolkien criticised (*TL*, 144). Additionally, Galadriel, through her choice to resist the Ring at the end of the Elvish history, is thematically juxtaposed to Fëanor's choice to refuse Yavanna at the beginning: *ad bonum exemplum* and *ad malum exemplum*, respectively. There is a trace of the penitential tradition at work here especially if one recalls that *wyrd* also serves a penitential function.

The penitential tale, as *exemplum*, has a long history in medieval literature, where it was used to present a specific form of clerical authority to elicit the voice of the laity (Scanlon 1994, 12). The subject of the *exemplum*, the 'confessional subject'

... confronts Christian authority in an individuated, secularized, and most importantly, eminently secularizable form. Christian authority as an ideal is simple, total, and unchanging; it resides in the ultimate *auctor*, God. But by its very nature it is also an ideal which demands to be put into practice. (ibid.)

Galadriel, the 'confessional subject' of her narrative, also confronts 'Authority' – a metaphor for Eru Ilúvatar within the *Legendarium*, in a highly individualized and secularized form. She doesn't 'confess' as one would in a confessional, Galadriel acts her confession out, 'puts it into practice'. It is dramatized in the scene in much the same way that the theory of Northern courage is dramatized in the tales of the *Legendarium* (Gallant 2020c, 42), in the manner of an illustrative narrative, or *exemplum*.

Galadriel's task, in her role as the last of the rebellious Eldalië rulers, is to lead her people: either into salvation or into shadow. If we accept that firstly, Frodo's example of humility and *caritas* (Chance 2004, 213), perhaps through the work of providence, demonstrates to Galadriel that the way to redemption is renunciation through his offer of the Ring. And secondly, if we accept that the Silmaril serves as a thematic reminder of High Hope to Galadriel to strengthen her

resolve, then through her rejection, ‘confession’ and absolution (diminishing and passing into the West) she is herself acting like Eärendil in the role of a redeemer or saviour for the remnant Noldor. Eric Schweicher (1992, 169) also notes that for the Noldor “[T]o achieve some sort of Redemption, the Elves need to overcome their pride and to be able to surrender the object of their pride to the Valar, namely the Silmarils.” Galadriel’s act of contrition and renunciation, therefore, is vital for Elvish redemption as “. . . the oath of Fëanor perhaps even Manwë could not loose, until it found its end, and the sons of Fëanor relinquished the Silmarils, upon which they had laid their ruthless claim” (S, 293). ‘*Who shall release us?*’ resembles an ancient prayer that has now been answered: Galadriel does. She will not, as so many of her royal house, be defined by demise and defeat like the Germanic hero but rather by grace and humility. Thus, the oath comes to rest with Galadriel’s refusal of wrongful desire and her redemption.¹⁷

Galadriel is now operating outside the framework of Northern courage. She begins the scene with the endurance and resistance of Northern courage, but the pivotal actions are not of a Germanic character. Within the framework of Northern courage, the hero,

... in a moment of crises, has to resolve the ambiguous tensions in such invariable fortune [*wyrð*]. His task is to transform the uncertainties of fate and fortune (which are never clearly distinguished from each other in the Germanic tradition) into good fortune, fame, and enduring glory for himself. For a time, at least, he is able to achieve this, but eventually he succumbs to the ill fortune that threatens in all tests of his courage. He is at last unable to impose his will on events, and becomes the prisoner of a malignant fate which allows him only a choice between two evils by dying an honourable death, and inflicting dishonour upon his enemies: but before that final catastrophe, other options are open to him. (Gilbert 1992, 1)

While it may be superficially unsurprising that Galadriel refuses the Ring and operates in this scene outside the Germanic ethos, the significance of her decision is much deeper than it appears on its surface. It follows that if Galadriel had chosen within the Northern courage framework, she would have chosen between the two evil choices of either refusing the One Ring and dooming Elvendom to the machinations of Sauron or accepting it and ensuring a (malignant) glory for herself and Elvendom. However, as Gilbert notes, there are other choices before catastrophe and Galadriel makes a choice outside of the heroic ethos that results in

¹⁷ Galadriel never had a claim to the Silmarils as she was not a Fëanorian nor had she sworn the oath. Nevertheless, at this point in Tolkien’s Middle-earth narrative, all the sons of Fëanor have already perished, therefore it falls upon Galadriel, the last Noldor leader under the Doom, to relinquish. It seems significant to me that although Manwë cannot “undo” the Doom, Frodo Baggins of the Shire can – and does.

eucatastrophe. That is, she accepts the corrective and penitential function of the Eldar's *wyrd* and forsakes any stake or claim in Middle-earth (i.e. her kingdom and the preservation of Elvendom). She chooses to lead her people, as a penitent and not a Germanic hero, into the West according to the divine plan, which seems to be one of change rather than static preservation of what once was.

5. Hail and Farewell

With the tension released in the previous chapter, we now come to a closure of the Germanic narrative of the Elves in the chapter, titled appropriately, 'Farewell to Lórien'. Elvish history, the Germanic narrative that has shifted, leaves us with the intense emotion of regret: "[T]hemes of a golden or heroic age in the past, ... of the wheel of fortune in social affairs, of the *ubi sunt* elegy, of mediations over ruins, of nostalgia for a lost pastoral simplicity, or regret or exultation over the collapse of an empire..." (Frye 2000, 160). This is a scene of Autumn: of myth conceptually linked to tragedy and elegy (Meletinsky 2000, 82-3). It is death (in Middle-earth), a passage over the western ocean, and rebirth (in Aman). The narrative is closed by ritual, in this case with elegy, a farewell feast and gift-giving (*woruldsælða*) that emphasizes Tolkien's 'mood' of intense sadness for the imminent departure of the Elves from Middle-earth.

As the Fellowship begins to paddle away from Lórien and turns a sharp bend, a boat in the shape of a large swan appears with Galadriel and Celeborn on board. Galadriel sings, sad and sweet, the *Namárië*. The lament expresses the *ubi sunt* motif, a melancholy of kings, glories, and a world gone by (*Ai! láurië lántar lássi sūrinèn, yēni ūnōtime ve aldaron rāmar* Ah! like gold leaves fall on the wind, long years numberless as the wings of trees!) and of a lost paradise (*lumbule undulāve ilye tiër* all paths are drowned deep in shadow) (lines 1-2, 11). Particularly poignant is the eighth line sung by Galadriel '*Sī man i yulma nin enquantuva?*' ('Who now shall refill the cup for me?'). Here a ritualistic and ceremonial cup-bearer role, a tradition of Germanic halls, becomes prominent and its theme potentially reminds us of the similar lamentation in 'The Wanderer'.¹⁸ A Germanic past, a time of horses, mead halls, treasure-givers and gleaming chalices, that "grows dark under the helm of night" with no more cupbearers to serve their lord. Tolkien (*BMC*, 23) wrote "[A]s the poet looks back into the past, surveying the history of kings and warriors in the old traditions, he sees that all glory (or as we might say 'culture' or 'civilization') ends in night." The 'Namárië' looks back at this glorious past of the Eldar with its 'intense emotion of regret'

¹⁸ *Where has the horse gone? Where has the man gone? Where have the treasure-givers gone?/Alas the gleaming cup! Alas the armoured warrior! Alas the prince's glory! How the time passed away, grown dark under the helm of night, as if it never were. (The Wanderer 92-96) Translation Treharne 2006, 46-47.*

and its imagery reinforces the concept of an end of heroic Northern courage, the Germanic narrative of the Elves and its defining *wyrð*.

The ritual of gift-giving, which can be found in a plethora of heroic epics including *Beowulf*¹⁹ helps reinforce the Silmaril metaphor discussed above. It also, in this context, reinforces the wise use of gifts (again, in opposition to Fëanor's unwise use – his possessiveness). In the Alfredian *Consolatione*, Wisdom states

But though it may be good and precious, one who gives it is more renowned and popular than one who gathers it and plunders it from others. And also riches are more renowned and pleasing when they are given than they are gathered and kept. Indeed, avarice makes coveters hateful to God and mortals, and generosity makes those who love it always more popular and renowned and honoured by both God and mortals. (*ADCP*, II, prs. 7, ii, 67)

Galadriel, of course, is renowned for her wisdom. In light of Wisdom's words, the giving of the light of Eärendil, rather than coveting and hoarding it in her mirror, emphasizes Galadriel, as *ad bonum exemplum* to Fëanor's *ad malum exemplum*. The wisdom of choosing and giving this gift becomes apparent later in the story as it also allows for providential intervention (Frodo's sudden use of Quenya in Shelob's Lair). The phial is not the Silmaril, *per se*, it is merely a reflection of its holy light. Nevertheless, the reflection of holy light captured in a glass phial, (echoes of Fëanor capturing the light of the Trees in jewels) is still holy enough to repel evil:

... and *hope* grew in Frodo's mind, it began to burn, and kindled to a silvery flame, a minute heart of dazzling light, *as though* Eärendil had himself come down from the high sunset paths with the last Silmaril upon his brow" (*TT*, IV, ix, 329 italics mine).

The imagery of Galadriel's gift further reinforces the interlacing of the Silmaril/Evening Star theme; this time interwoven with the phial not only as a weapon but also again as a sign of High Hope.

Secondly, the gift-giving ritual interlaces yet another, perhaps final, instance of the Fëanor/Galadriel *exempla* juxtaposition. We may recall that in the *Legendarium*, Fëanor begged Galadriel "*three times* for a tress, but Galadriel would not give him *one* hair. These two kinsfolk, the greatest of the Eldar of Valinor, were unfriends forever" (*UT*, 296, emphasis mine). Yet in this scene,

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of the Queen's role of cup-bearing, gift-giving and the farewell feast, see Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, Orchard 2003) 219-222.

Gimli courteously asks for “‘a *single* strand of your hair...’ [T]hen the Lady unbraided one of her long tresses, and cut off *three* golden hairs, and laid them in Gimli’s hand...” While witnessing this exchange “[T]he Elves stirred and murmured with astonishment, and Celeborn gazed at the dwarf in wonder, but the Lady smiled...” (*FR*, II, viii, 392, emphasis mine). Recognizing the interlacing theme, it is no wonder that the Elves were astonished and, in a clear rebuke to Galadriel’s former ‘unfriend’, the number of hairs is reversed, and Gimli receives three rather than one strand of hair. It is a closure, of sorts, in the Germanic gift-giving ritual of the Fëanor /Galadriel opposition, a closure of the Elvish *ad malum exemplum* – *ad bonum exemplum*.

6. Conclusion

Galadriel is a pivotal character firstly in *The Lord of the Rings* and secondly in the overall *Legendarium* as she (not always consistently) developed further. Like Fëanor before her, she is faced with literally a fateful decision. Galadriel’s choice to refuse the One Ring gains greater significance in the context of the events of the First Age. Through spatial imagery, tonality and character action, First Age themes of free will, banishment and exile, doom and providence all interweave together to form a rich tapestry. Galadriel redeems herself and the remnant Noldor in Middle-earth in an instantaneous moment of eucatastrophe.

In her wisdom, with the help of Frodo (and perhaps providence) and the salient symbol of high hope, her choice of free will ‘corrects’ the *wyrd* invoked by Fëanor’s similar, but unwise choice to refuse Yavanna. *Wyrd* is indeed conjured by the Noldor through Fëanor’s choice, and it seems that “what is done is done, with which there is no arguing.” Unless, as Galadriel has shown, “one should discover the way out of the exile of this world and into eternal life” (Haug 2006, 53). The way out of exile, of course, was another choice of free will that corrected and satisfied the Germanic *wyrd*. Galadriel, with her own redemption and consequently the redemption of the remnant Noldor, ends that Germanic narrative in the *Lord of the Rings*. On the cusp of the Fourth Age, the fatalistic Germanic ethos of Northern courage and the Germanic narrative that began with the Noldo prince Fëanor fades into the mist with the Noldor’s redemption and emancipation from exile. No one character personifies this transition more than the Elven Lady Galadriel.

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