

Transcript

00:00:01

Good afternoon, everybody. This is the second of the series of lunchtime presentations marking the 50th anniversary of the death of JRR Tolkien.

00:00:12

The first was last week and the 2nd is today. I'm Michael Ward. I'm an associate member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion. Most of my own work is studying the imaginative writings of CS Lewis, Tolkien and the Inklings, looking in particular how they present theological themes imaginatively.

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And today my topic is under the title peak, Middle Earth. Why Mount Doom is not the climax of the Lord of the Rings. I'll speak for about 45 minutes if there's time at the end, we'll have some Q&A. But if you need to shoot after a 2:00 lecture, I understand.

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The return of the king.

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As adapted for the cinema by Peter Jackson was a huge commercial and critical success, winning all 11 Academy Awards for which it was nominated.

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However, it was not immune from criticism, even as it received its bouquets.

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Billy Crystal, in his opening monologue at the 2004 Oscars, declared 11 nominations. Ladies and gentlemen, yes, 11 nominations won for each ending.

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Now I offer no opinion about Jackson's movie except to observe that its multiple endings, if that's the right term for them, are a feature of Tolkien's book. Two. Indeed, the book has more end matter than the movie because it contains a lengthy chapter, the scouring of the Shire. So we've got a very uncertain connection here. There's nothing I can do.

00:01:47

About it.

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It contains a lengthy chapter. The scouring of the Shire that didn't find its way into the film.

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The climax of told King's Story appears to have been reached with the destruction of the ring.

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But of the 9 chapters in book six of the Lord of the Rings 2/3 Deal with matters following the events on Mount Doom.

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After Gollum and the Precious have plunged into the fire, Frodo states the quest is achieved and now all is over. I'm glad you are here with me here at the end of all things Sam.

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So concludes Chapter 3 entitled Mount Doom, but all is far from over. There are another six chapters still to go.

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I make these observations to raise a question about the Lord of the Rings as a whole, which is this? Where does its rising action end, and where does its falling action start?

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In other words, what is the true narrative climax of Tolkien's epic, and what constitutes the aftermath?

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Or in other words, is Mount Doom really the high point of the tail? And we'll find an answer to these questions if we consult a letter Tolkien wrote to Milton Waldman where he explains.

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That the story reaches its end as a tale of hobbits in the celebration of victory.

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And this celebration of victory occurs in a chapter entitled the field of Corn Mallum, the chapter that immediately follows the destruction of the ring. It's this chapter that contains the stories end by the authors own reckoning, or at least it contains its end as a tale of hobbits, which allows for the fact that the stories.

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And the tale of men, Aragorn's coronation and so on, is.

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Yet to come.

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Still, given that the story as a whole is chiefly about hobbits, and given that a large amount of activity awaits even them, this statement is instructive. What Tolkien says in full is this.

00:03:54

The story reaches its end as a tale of hobbits in the celebration of victory.

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In the scene where all the hosts of the West Unite to do honour and praise to the two humble hobbits photos.

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We reached the eucatastrophe of the whole romance that is the sudden joyous turn and fulfilment of hope, the opposite of tragedy, that should be the hallmark of a fairy story of higher or lower tone. The resolution and justification of all that has gone before it brought tears to my eyes.

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To write it and still moves me and I cannot help believing that it is a supreme moment of its kind.

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But it is not the end of the sixth book of the Lord.

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Of the rings.

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As a whole, for various reasons, the chief artistic one, that the music cannot be cut off short at its peak.

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Also, the story began in the Simple Shire of the hobbits, and it must end there. Back to common life and Earth, the ultimate foundation again.

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Finally, and cogently, it's the function of the longish coder to show the cost of victory, as always.

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And to show that no victory, even on a world shaking scale, is final, the war will go on taking other modes.

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According to Tolkien's own analysis here, the fulfilment of the whole romance, the peak of the stories music is that scene where Frodo and Sam are praised at Cornell, and that's the climax of the Lord of the Rings that marks the Rising Action's highest point, the resolution and justification of everything that's gone before.

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Everything that comes after that scene comprises the coder, literally the tail Latin cowder.

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With the field of Comelin, which is the 57th of the stories, 62 chapters, Tolkien concludes the body of the.

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Till then comes the tail of the body.

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The field of Comelin is a chapter with many different facets, but we only have time today to focus on.

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One of them.

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The topographical setting.

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Comelin itself.

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And as we'll see, I hope that this field in Ithilien is a place of tremendous significance which deserves and will repay our closest attention. We're told of the field of Comelin.

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That it was a wide green land.

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And beyond it was a broad river in a silver haze out of which rose a long wooded aisle and many ships lay by its shores.

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But on the field where they now stood, a great host was drawn up in ranks and companies glittering in the sun.

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Trees stands surrounding the field have fluttering leaves and after the celebrations are over and the glad day ends, Frodo and Sam sat under the whispering trees amid the fragrance of Fair Ithilien talking deep into the night with their friends.

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It's a lovely setting, appropriate for the mood of peace and fulfilment that marks this episode.

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Still, what Tolkien gives the reader is only a brief sketch. One doesn't get the sense either from the length of the description or its details that a place of especially profound importance is being depicted.

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It's hardly surprising that the field didn't appear in Peter Jackson's movie, and whereas his omission of the scouring of the Shire caused a great deal of consternation among admirers of the book, the absence of this scene went unremarked. As far as I could tell.

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Yeah, this is the setting Tolkien selects for the climactic celebrations, the scene that immediately precedes a coda of his epic. This is the place.

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Where the minstrel of Gondor begs leave to sing a Frodo of the nine fingers, and the Ring of Doom.

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And when Sam heard that, he laughed aloud for sheer delight, and he stood up and cried. Oh, great, glory and splendour. All my wishes have come true.

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And then he wept, and all the hosts laughed and wept. And in the midst of their merriment and tears, the clear voice of the minstrel rose like silver and gold, and all men were hushed.

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And he sang to them. Now, in the elven tongue. Now in the speech of the.

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West until their hearts wounded with sweet words overflowed and their joy was like swords and they passed in, thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together, and tears of the very whine of blessedness.

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In that letter to Milton Waldman that I just quoted, Tolkien admitted that writing this passage brought tears to his own eyes.

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In a letter to his aunt Jane Neeve, Tolkien was a little bit more Frank, disclosing that he didn't just well up, but actually wept.

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I remember blotting the pages which now represent the Welcome of Frodo and Sam on the field of Cornell, and with tears as I wrote, he said.

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This is one of the pages in question.

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And we can even identify where Tolkien's tears fell and blotted the.

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But why does Tolkin set that scene in this particular field?

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Unless he has abandoned the basic cannons of narrative art, such a climactic scene ought to be set in a place that resonates with and intensifies the significance of the action that it frames.

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King Lear rails against the storm while standing on a heath, not his hearth, Elizabeth Bennett awakens to Mr Darcy's true worth at Pemberley. Not netherfield.

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Plot and place comprise an integral hole, each intensifying the other emotionally, morally, symbolically, thematically.

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A fundamental principle of fictional narration is that what happens and where it happens are meaningfully related.

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Tolkien chooses to set the climax of his whole romance in a previously unvisited location. He has previously taken the reader to Ithilien, as I'll discuss further in a moment, but never before has even mentioned the field of comelin.

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Why not situate this episode in a place that has some pre-existing significance for the reader, such as Lothlorien or Rivendell, or even the Shire?

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Admittedly, these places are a long way.

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From Mount doom.

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But there's no reason why the Eagles couldn't have transported Fredo and.

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Sam that far?

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The hobbits have been asleep for about two weeks, we're told, since they were brought out of the fire, Tolkien could have whisked them away to any destination he liked.

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But he chose to bring them to this particular place.

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What was it about the field of comelin that made it suitable as the setting for this peak moment?

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I think we'll get an answer to that question if we examine the name called Melon.

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The philological origins of Middle Earth are well.

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Known Tolkien himself readily acknowledged them, discussing disclosing that my work is all of a.

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Piece and fundamentally linguistic and inspiration, his emphasis.

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The invention of languages is the foundation the stories were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse. To me, a name comes first and the story follows.

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If the name comes first, what does the name Cornelian mean?

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Fortunately, there's no doubt about that, because it's explained in an appendix to The Silmarillion and the definition provided there is highly suggestive. I'll unpack it slowly, taking it in three parts, the appendix to The Silmarillion reveals that the field of Comelin was named from the columella.

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Trees that grew there. This is the first thing to note about the field, but it's not just a large area of grass, but is home to a certain kind of.

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Tree and I'll examine that particular species, the columella in a moment. But first, let's think about trees more generally.

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Trees in general are, of course, hugely important to Tolkien, who went so far as to call the Lord of the Rings my own internal tree.

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The whole of his sub created world teams with our boreal characters and descriptions.

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Think of the party tree tree beard. The white Tree of Gondor, old Man Willow, lost Iorian.

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Those are three pictures by Tolkien himself.

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Here's a picture not by Tolkien, but this represents the the two trees of Valinor, deep in the mythological background of Middle Earth.

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Laurelin and Telperion, the great lamps that illumined day and night in Middle Earth.

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And here.

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Is the last photo ever taken of Tolkien in the month before his?

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Death, standing by his favourite black pine in the Botanic Gardens here in Oxford.

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He loved trees of all kinds and for all sorts of reasons.

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For their beauty, their ancientness, their different symbolic characters.

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As a Christian, he would have seen in them a reflection of the Cross of Christ, often figured in scripture as a tree and as a philologist, he would have known that in Old English tree had several meanings, not only the obvious tree, but also truth and trust.

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And by extension, fidelity or loyalty, as in the wedding vow, I plight thee my truth.

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Apparently the semantic overlap between tree and trust is a feature of many languages, based on the fact that great trees like oaks and Cedars are sturdy, long living and seemingly permanent.

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Called Mallon, signifying a place where trees grow is thus a name that reflects some of Tolkien's central aesthetic, religious, and moral preoccupations.

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Moreover, given that it's given its location in Ithilien.

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It's not just a field of trees, but is located within a land of trees. Because Ithilien as a whole is a fair country of climbing woods, we're first introduced to the Athleam region in the two towers. Many great trees grew there planted long ago falling into unattended.

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Age amid a riot of careless descendants and Groves and thickets, there were of tamarisk and pungent terrapins of olive and of Bay.

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And there were junipers and myrtles and times that grew in bushes or with their woody, creeping stems, mantled in deep tapestries, their hidden stones and many herbs of forms and scents beyond the guard and lore of San.

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The intensity and variety of the botanical descriptions here in book four is intended, I think, to establish aphelion in the reader's mind as a place of rare beauty, the memory of which will make the return there all the more engaging when we reach it in book 6.

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Almost all the trees and plants that the hobbits encounter in this earlier episode are heralds of the spring, and that's significant from the calendrical point of view.

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Tonkin paints athlean. That's very attractive. Here in the two towers, but keeps things expectant, gesturing to a spring that hasn't yet fully arrived. He must keep something back so that the second visit to Ithilien, following the cataclysm on Mount Doom, will synchronise with the full arrival of spring.

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And all the hopeful associations that accompany it.

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Sam and Frodo returned to Ithilien in.

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April and the fact that it's still spring then rather than summer is very intriguing. Why not coordinate the high point of the story with the high point of the year, seasonally speaking?

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This is something I'll return to at the end.

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Of the talk.

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But that's enough for now about the first aspect of the meaning of the word comelin. It's not just a field, it's a field of trees.

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What kind of trees?

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Callum Elder, we're told all right. But what are they?

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Column elder aren't just generic trees, but very significantly golden trees.

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According to Tolkien's unfinished index to the Lord of the Rings.

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Colon Elder was a tree with hanging yellow blossoms growing in athlean, especially at Cornelian.

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The presence of these yellow blossomed trees helps explain the the etymology of comelin, because the word Mal means gold and is found in various terms like Malin Elder, another name for Laurelin, and Mallon, A generally a generic term for a golden tree.

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The columella, however, aren't fictional golden trees, as the melons seemed to be they're they're not without an equivalent in the primary world, but represent a particular species known to real life. Botanists Tolkien defines commelin as a region in aphelion originally called.

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After the laburnum that grew there and Tolkien had had an interest in Laburnum since at least his student days.

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We know this from his admiration for the work of the poet Francis Thompson.

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An admiration that's worth exploring in a little detail.

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Thompson's poetry is now largely forgotten, except possibly. You may know of the Hound of Heaven, a poem about God's untiring pursuit of a human soul. But Tolkien knew Thompson's work intimately. He owned the three volumes of the Collected works and gave a talk while still an undergraduate.

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At Exeter, in which he described Thompson as among the very greatest of all poets.

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Francis Thompson liked to provide precise botanical descriptions in his poetry. In one poem. He exclaims.

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Mark Yonder how the long laburnum drips its jock and spilt of fire, its honey of wild flame.

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The word Smith means, according to the OED, that which is spilled, the action or fact of spilling.

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And it's an apt term because the blossoms of the laburnum spill forth from its branches in such profusion that a mature, healthy specimen appears to be like a single large explosion of gold and yellow. The blossoms hang down in delicate pea like clusters.

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And that's why the tree is also known as golden Chain or golden rain.

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Tolkien was so impressed by Thompson's description of the laburnum that it informed the way he created his own mythological tree, laurelin.

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Whose fiery fruit was eventually formed into the sun's flowers, swung upon her branches in clusters of yellow flame, formed each to a glowing horn that spilled a golden rain upon the ground, and from the blossom of that tree there came forth warmth and a great light.

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Tolkien writes of how the spill of Laurelin is collected and kept in great vats like shining lakes that were to all the land as wells of water and of light. He says that his use of the word spilt is meant to indicate that Laurelin is founded on the the Laburnum and its jock and spilt.

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As described by Francis Thompson.

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Now, this mythological background to Middle-earth, not to mention Thompsons, influence upon it, may seem somewhat esoteric and irrelevant to the average reader, but we should note that Laurelin and her Luna partner tell Perion are a living presence in the mind of Frodo.

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In the two towers, when torn over which way to go in order to fulfil his quest.

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Frodo reflects upon his evil fate.

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Fate, which he'd taken on himself with gold in his own sitting room in the far offspring of.

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Another year.

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So remote now that it was like a chapter in a story.

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Of the world's.

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Youth. When the trees of silver and gold were still in bloom.

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So the trees of Valinor, though prehistoric from the ring bearers vantage point in time, have certainly not been forgotten. Their significant lingers.

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And the fact that one of those trees was a kind of laburnum is related to the fact that Frodo will eventually be praised at the climax of the tale in a field of laburnums. It's no accident his heroic achievement in helping to maintain light in the darkness is rooted deep in the origin story of his own world.

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And goes with the grain, we might say, of Middle Earth.

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Comelin then is a field where trees grow, yes, but not any old trees, golden trees and not any old golden trees either, but specifically laburnums, whose arboreal genealogy links them to the light of the world.

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Let's review the ground we've covered so far. We're examining the climax of the Lord of the Rings, which Tolkien himself says takes place on the field of come Allen, and we've seen that comelin contains trees that these trees are golden trees.

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We now come to the pattern that these trees form their arrangement on the field.

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They're not positioned on one side only. They are not banked on opposite sides. They are not dotted around at random.

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They form a ring, a ring of golden trees, the words core and coma mean ring in Sindarin and Quenya respectively.

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Other key terms show the same etymological root.

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The Kenya title it theoren komara means the Lord of the Rings. Frodo and Sam are Cormac Olindo ringbearers.

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Comelin means golden circle.

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Now the fact that Comelin is so-called for its circle or ring of golden trees immediately brings to mind that other ring.

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The Ring of power which Frodo has to destroy.

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Sauron, we're told, made the wondering himself. And as Gandalf informs Frodo.

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Sauron let a great part of his own former power pass into it.

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Sauron's power is thus concentrated into one particular golden object.

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Whereas the power of the other great evil figure in Middle Earth, Morgoth, is dispersed throughout gold in general, and therefore is found in all things made of that metal. Tolkien explains Sauron's power.

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Was not in gold as such, but in a particular form or shape, IE a ring made of a particular portion of total gold. Morgoth's power was disseminated throughout gold if nowhere absolute, for he did not create gold. It was nowhere absent. All gold in Middle Earth seems to have had a specially.

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Evil trend?

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Given that gold in general is nowhere free of Morgoth's influence, and given that rings of gold are particularly expressive of Sauron's power, we should note how Tolkien scatters various circles or bands of gold throughout the text as an indication of the pervasiveness of evil.

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But also how he presents a number of more positive examples to suggest that evil doesn't have things all its own way.

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The South Ron Warriors, we're told all have gold rings in their ears and one of these southron warriors, the one whom Sam sees full dead in front of him, has even a golden collar around his neck.

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Suggestive, perhaps, that the slaves halter, and hence of the lies and threats, so Sam wonders that may have led him to his death.

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Boomers belt of gold is a slightly more ambiguous example that it's been given to Boromir by Galadriel implies that it probably is in itself innocent, but it's telling that Galadriel gives this gift to Boromir rather than to any other member of the Fellowship.

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Is she signalling to Boromir that that she perceives his morally compromised character and is symbolising it with this gift?

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Or does she intend the gift to serve as a kind of inoculation against temptation, almost as if it were a kind of chastity belt, thus helping to save Boromir from being permanently overtaken by the lust for power that besets him when he tries to take the ring from Friday?

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A third example is goldberry, Tom Bombadil's wife, who also wears a belt of gold.

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Goldberry, unlike Barmer, shows no sign of moral compromise. She's immune from gold's corrupting power, just as her husband is immune from the rings ability to render its wearer invisible.

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And the very name Gold Berry suggests that Sauron and Morgoth haven't completely succeeded in colonising and corrupting all things that are round and gold.

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And this reminds us that evil in Middle Earth isn't ontologically equivalent with and opposite to good.

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A moral framework of Tolkien's world isn't dualistic.

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Hence, L1 can say nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so.

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Likewise, Frodo can say of Gollum that he is not altogether wicked.

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Tolkien informed a correspondent in my story I do not deal with absolute evil. I do not think there is such a thing, since that is 0.

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I do not think that at any rate, any rational being is wholly evil.

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And that qualification there about rational being is important. Tolkien is covering his own back, as it were.

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Because the story reveals that Saul Ron's ring is indeed altogether evil.

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Which is why.

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It can't be redeemed and must be destroyed.

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The ring in this sense is a functional equivalent of the evil hand that in the teaching of Christ must be amputated.

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If your hand offend you, cut it off. It's better for you to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.

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Frodo can only be liberated from this wholly evil thing when it's literally bitten off his body.

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But rings and hands in general.

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Are not essentially or originally evil anymore than are Sauron and Morgoth.

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Tolkien following Saint Augustine.

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Believed that evil has no substantial reality in itself, at least not at the rational spiritual level, although at the physical level, evil may irremediably infect material things, which therefore have to be destroyed.

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This was Tolkien's belief as a Christian, and given that the Lord of the Rings is, by his own account a fundamentally religious and Catholic work, we naturally see this ethical structure reflected in Middle Earth. It's been created by Vol 1 Eru iluvatar.

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And is therefore fundamentally good.

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Evil people and evil things are only corruptions or parodies of what they were originally and what they still ought to be.

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It's therefore worth asking the question of what is the one ring, a parody or a distortion?

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At the mall level, the answer would be that the ring parodies the power of Eru, twisting that creative and liberating energy into a destructive and coercive force.

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At the physical level, the answer is a bit more complex. The ring is a parody of anything that is innocently gold and circular, such as goldberry's golden belt.

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Sauron's ring has no monopoly on Golden Ness and circularity.

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Rather, the ring of power is only a grossly, indeed, maximally distorted version of a good golden ring.

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Which in turn prompts the question where is the maximally good version of a golden ring in Middle Earth?

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And the answer to that I suggest.

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Is likely to be the circle of laburnums on the field of cornella, given that it is here that the climax of the entire epic is set.

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The high point of the story naturally occurs in a place of the highest appropriateness.

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Here is the good ring.

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The ring of Laburnums, the only such ring apparently in Middle Earth, the summit of its beauty.

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This ring and circles, not the finger of a solitary and invisible power addict, but a whole host of people gathered to praise 2 hobbits for their heroism.

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In having destroyed the prime tool of coercive force.

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Plot and place are mutually implicative. There's a meaningful relationship between what happens and where it happens.

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Yet only if we know the etymology of comedian can we grasp this meaning.

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Only if you've looked carefully at the unfinished index to The Silmarillion can you work out the implications we've been exploring.

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Nowhere in the Lord of the Rings itself are these links revealed.

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Why work in this way? What end is served by bearing the implication so deep?

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Six possible answers present themselves for consideration. First philology. Tolkien viewed the creation of Middle Earth as continuous with his academic interests in language writing. The Lord of the Rings was not, he said, an aberration of an elderly professor of philology.

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Nor was it something quite different from one's work. Rather, it was, he said.

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Largely an essay in linguistic aesthetic, as I sometimes say to people who ask me what is it all about?

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One feature of that linguistic aesthetic is linguistic archaeology. It's an essay, among other things, in the importance of semantic origins.

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That the significance of the name Comelin can't be grasped except by careful attention to etymology, provides a fictional analogue to and indirect validation of Tolkien's professional scholarship.

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Second, freedom.

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Tolkien viewed the Lord of the Rings not as a work of allegory, in which the authors purpose is dominate, but as a work of applicability, which he said resides in the freedom of the reader.

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If he'd made the significance of Comelin clearer, the story might have begun to look.

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Like a cypher with one set, meaning by keeping things unspecified, Tolkien leaves run for his readers to investigate connections or not as they choose. It's an authorial strategy, similar to the Socratic method of teaching.

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In which the mentor asks questions that provoke thought rather than dispensing answers that induce passivity.

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Also, similar to more contemporaneous Easter Eggs in computer software and DVD's where they create a deliberately leaves bonus features undocumented so that serendipitous discoveries can be made by their users.

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Philology freedom. Thirdly, tone.

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Tolkien once remarked that as a Christian, he did not expect the history of the primary world to be anything but a long defeat.

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Even though it may contain, he said, some samples or glimpses of final victory.

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The third age of Middle Earth has a similar quality of gradual descent and transients.

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And if the implications of the scene at Comelin, which is already a celebratory scene, had been made more plainly positive, here is the good ring.

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Perhaps talking for the overall tonal balance of the work would have been impaired. It would have become too bright, in other words.

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Fourthly, Englishness.

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Holly Audrey in her excellent book, *Tolkien's Modern Reading* has helpfully pointed out that Tolkien had a typically English habit of understating what mattered to him most.

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Though he could be hyperbolic about those things he rejected or denied.

00:34:52

He tended to soft pedal whatever he affirmed or claimed.

00:34:57

So quite apart from the scholarly and artistic reasons he had for downplaying the significance of Comelin, he had a native temperamental instinct for covering his top notes. As musicians say he was an Englishman born in the time of Queen Victoria.

00:35:15

And an academic Englishman at that. He wasn't going to wear his heart on his sleeve. That would have been quite foreign to his character.

00:35:26

5th humility, Frodo. It must be remembered, fails in his quest.

00:35:33

Frodo finds himself unable to yield up the ring at the last.

00:35:38

He only succeeds by virtue of the pity he had earlier shown to Gollum, sparing Gollum when he might have killed him.

00:35:48

And it's because Gollum is still present on Mount Doom and over reaches himself at the final moment that the ring is indeed destroyed. So the moment of truth that makes Frodo truly heroic, in other words, the mercy shown to Gollum.

00:36:02

Had passed him by at the time without his being aware of its significance at all.

00:36:08

His own heroism is effectively invisible to Frodo.

00:36:13

He therefore blushes when he's praised at Cornelian.

00:36:17

And in the same spirit or in a similar spirit, at any rate, Tolkien makes effectively invisible to the reader. The inner meaning of this climactic scene, the mysteries of Providence, are on display and a mystery if it's to be depicted accurately, must by definition.

00:36:37

The unobvious.

00:36:41

6th latency.

00:36:45

I here return to the point made earlier about the Cormell and scene being set in early April because the timing is foundational to the scene's obviousness.

00:36:55

Laburnum's flower in May not April.

00:37:01

So Frodo and Sam are praised amid a circle of trees that are only beginning to bud with gold and blooms. Their full glory has yet to be revealed.

00:37:12

Tolkien paid minute attention to the chronology of his story, ensuring, for instance, that all the phases of the moon were consistent and he can't have been unaware of the botanical calendar as it pertained to Laburnums.

00:37:27

Why date this scene to spring and not summer?

00:37:32

If it's the high point of the year, why not have it? The high point of the year?

00:37:36

Because I suggest of the importance of latency, latency is an essential feature of Middle-earth.

00:37:45

All that is gold does not glitter, as Gandalf writes of Aragorn, who, early in the story has travelled under the name Strider, using many disguises so as to hide his true shape.

00:38:01

Frodo demonstrates perceptiveness when he says to this unknown Ranger. I think you are not really as you choose to look.

00:38:10

And overtime, of course, Aragorn's identity is revealed as he comes into his own.

00:38:17

The ability to see beyond appearances is crucial in Middle Earth as it was for Tolkien in the primary world.

00:38:25

Gandalf is a secret, is a servant of the secret fire.

00:38:31

He's a servant of the flame, imperishable that burns at the heart of the world. It can't be seen, but nonetheless it fires all things in Middle Earth.

00:38:44

Tolkien once disclosed to Clyde Kelby that this secret fire was his way of depicting the Holy Spirit. That spirit, which to quote the Bible bloweth where it listed, and thou hearest the sound thereof, that canst not tell whence it cometh.

00:39:03

Unless we're attuned to the secret qualities of Tolkien's sub created world, we'll be missing half the picture. Much of its true nature is hidden.

00:39:12

Because Hiddenness is in the nature of the deepest realities.

00:39:17

The beauty of this golden ring of trees doesn't mean it must be portrayed in full summer time obviousness.

00:39:25

On the field of Cornelian, interestingly, we are shown ranks and companies glittering in the sun.

00:39:33

But the laburnums are not shown glittering with gold and flowers. All that is gold does not glitter.

00:39:39

The trees will come into their glory in due time, but only after the hobbits have left and once summer has indeed arrived. The start of summer is May Day, the date on which Aragon will be crowned king, and the date which one year hence will Mark Sam's wedding to Rosie.

00:40:00

Every summer, the circle of trees will show its Golden Ness.

00:40:05

Recognising that fact and acknowledging its significance is immeasurably more important than witnessing it first hand, immediate sensory data aren't the only or ultimate factors in perception. Seeing with the mind seeing with the heart is even more.

00:40:24

Crucial, perhaps, than seeing with the eye to put it in religious terms, blessed are those who believe without having seen.

00:40:35

We've examined 6 possible reasons why Tolkien depicted the field of comelin in such an understated fashion. Despite its importance as the site of the story's climax, philology.

00:40:48

Respecting the freedom of the reader.

00:40:50

Maintaining the restrained tone of the work.

00:40:53

English understatement.

00:40:56

The intersection of humility with Providence and the essential role of latency in Middle East.

00:41:03

The number six, however, is not a number on which to end. We must say one more thing. Following the example of Tolkien himself, who often selected the number seven when he wished to portray completion. Sam, for instance, is elected mayor of the Shire seven times.

00:41:21

And each time for a 7 year period in office.

00:41:26

It's symbolically apt, and indeed sinisterly apt that Frodo puts on the ring of power a total of 6 times.

00:41:37

1st in Tom Bombadil's House, then at the Prancing Pony, then on weather top twice on Almond hen and lastly on Mount Doom.

00:41:47

In Biblical numerology 6 symbolises evil because it falls just short of the perfect 7.

00:41:56

666 is the preeminently evil number the number.

00:42:01

Of the beast.

00:42:03

Because it falls short of seven three times over, it's a blasphemous parody of the Holy Trinity.

00:42:12

Is it too fanciful to suggest that when he walks into the circle of laburnums at Comelin, Frodo puts on the ring, so to speak, the 7th time? Except that this time it is the good ring, the true ring of which soul wrongs ring was but apart.

00:42:30

Daddy's photo now has only nine fingers and couldn't wear the pressures even if he wanted to. The finger on the hand that offended him has been cut off by gollum's teeth and cast away to be burnt.

00:42:44

But as a result of that loss, Fredo has been freed to have his whole being surrounded by beauty and life and fragrance by jock and spilt of yellow fire.

00:42:59

Be that as it may, Frodo and Sam between them certainly lose 1 ring and find another. What they helped destroy was inert and hollow.

00:43:11

Addictive. Treacherous.

00:43:14

What they enjoy as a result is a ring of golden trees ready to spill forth light upon a field in ithilien.

00:43:25

At the Maytime return of the king.

00:43:29

Thank you very much.