

One World to Rule Them All: How J.R.R. Tolkien used Original Intertext to Create Middle-earth

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J.R.R. Tolkien is well known today as a beloved and skillful fantasy author. He is best known for his novels set in the mythical world called Middle-earth, a realm that, although fictitious, has been fascinating and enchanting readers for many years. This essay argues that the rhetorical element which made (and continues to make) Tolkien's novels so popular and successful was his skillful use of intertextuality—specifically, his use of “original intertext,” a concept unique to this paper. Original intertext is a type of intertextuality that draws on original content created by the same author who is using the intertext. By examining three key elements of Tolkien's original intertext—legend, landscape, and language—this paper demonstrates how he employed intertextual rhetoric to make Middle-earth seem like a real place to his readers, and thereby shows how modern creative writers can emulate his use of rhetoric to make their own fantasy worlds just as powerful and enduring.

Millions of people have visited a world that does not exist. They have heard the tales of Beren and Lúthien, Girion of Dale, and a hundred other ancient heroes and heroines. They have wandered the paths of Imladris and passed through the depths of Khazad Dûm. They have spoken with elves and dwarves in their native languages. In other words, they have visited Middle-earth.

Middle-earth is a fantasy world created by J.R.R. Tolkien. It forms the environment for his bestselling novels, the most well-known of which are *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. But there is something that makes Middle-earth more than a colorful backdrop for a few enjoyable stories. Even today, more than seventy years after the first of these books was published, Middle-earth continues to enchant and captivate readers. What has made Middle-earth so enduring? Why, in spite of the

modern profusion of fantasy realms—in both books and film—has Middle-earth yet remained one of the most widely-recognized and favored fantasy worlds?

Unlike many authors, J.R.R. Tolkien did not create his fantasy world merely as a context for his novels. In fact, the opposite is true: he created his novels as a context for his fantasy world. In creating his world of Middle-earth, Tolkien masterfully implemented rhetorical strategies by crafting a network of intertextual references that found their origin, primarily, in his own imaginings, not in the work of others. By skillfully using this “original intertext,” Tolkien made his world become a reality in the minds of his readers, implementing three key intertextual elements that people use to connect themselves to the real world.

Exploring Intertextuality

“Original intertext” is a sub-concept, unique to this paper, of the larger rhetorical theory known as intertextuality. Intertextuality is a concept that states that all writing is built upon and connected to previous writing. Or, in the more eloquent words of Charles Bazerman, “We create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us, the sea of language we live in. And we understand the texts of others within that same sea” (83-84). Thus, authors, instead of creating original works, find an original way to draw together previous pieces of writing, history, and so on. As James E. Porter wrote in “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community,” “The writer in this image is a collector of fragments, an archaeologist creating an order, building a framework, from remnants of the past” (34).

Upon first examination, intertextuality may seem to be a discouraging proposition. Is all the loving struggle of the writer merely a regurgitation of what has been written before? Not at all. Rather, the picture that intertextuality paints is of a master craftsman and rhetorician, painstakingly selecting threads of previous works and weaving these together, along with threads of his own, into a new masterpiece. “Not infrequently,” Porter writes, “and perhaps ever and always, texts refer to other texts and in fact rely on them for their meaning. All texts are interdependent: We understand a text only insofar as we understand its precursors” (34). The beauty of the masterpiece comes from the united network of all the threads. Far from a mere repetition, this masterpiece is a new thing that can be understood by others because it relates to previous works. Intertextuality gives new works both influence and power.

By drawing on existing “threads” of rhetoric, intertextuality allows writers to connect

to their readers. Bazerman admonishes that “[Writers] always need to rely on the common stock of language we share with others. If we did not share the language, how would others understand us?” (83). This is why intertextuality is such a useful and powerful tool for rhetoricians. It allows writers to draw on common knowledge, accepted beliefs, or recognizable events in order to lend credibility and familiarity to their writing—which, in turn, allows them to connect with their readers.

This connection is possible because people are rhetorically associated with each other through their familiarity with elements of intertextuality in the world around them. Intertextuality creates both rhetorical inclusion and rhetorical exclusion, binding together those who share common intertextual references and separating those who do not. This is why intertextuality is so vital to the creation and use of effective rhetoric: rhetoric can only be properly understood by an audience if both the creator and the recipients are connected to the intertextual background from which the rhetoric was formed.

But intertextuality can become a problem for fantasy fiction writers for this very reason. When writing in the fantasy genre, the writer must create a story-world that feels unfamiliar to the reader—otherwise, the world would be merely a slight alteration of the world readers experience every day, thereby defeating the purpose of the genre. But how can fantasy writers connect intertextually with their readers if they must create a world in which familiar, common connections do not exist?

Introducing Original Intertext

This paradox is the reason why original intertext is so important—to fantasy writers specifically and to rhetoric in general. As

mentioned, I am theorizing “original intertext” as a new aspect of intertextuality. Whereas intertextuality speaks to the relationship among the works of various authors, spanning both time and space, original intertext states that a similar relationship exists among works *by the same author*. Consider, for example, Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The second novel builds upon and expands on the contents of the first novel, and the third novel does the same for both the first and second novels, creating a network of intertextuality that is confined to Tolkien’s works alone. To use original intertext is to draw on one’s own creations—whether published or not—to give intertextual support to another of one’s creations. These connections among works by one author lend depth and context to each individual work, making them stronger and more complex than they would be on their own.

For evidence of original intertext in ordinary life, one need not look any farther than the “inside joke.” Typically an inside joke is “co-authored,” that is, created by two close friends. Sometimes inside jokes refer to events the authors shared together; other times they might reference a comment one author said to the other. The end result is that, upon mentioning the event or comment, the authors will laugh, but everyone else around them will simply watch in confusion. This is because the two authors drew on original content that they had created, *not* content from previous authors, speakers, and so on that other members of society would be privy to. This is not to say that original intertext will never be understood by anyone apart from the creators. But because the content is original to the authors, some explanation will often be required before others can understand the intertext that is being used.

Original intertext is a vital component of fantasy fiction writing such as Tolkien’s. When fantasy writers create their story-worlds, they are creating the very content that will be connected intertextually to the plotlines of their books, whether explicitly stated or not, because every fantasy novel must refer back to the context of the world in which it is set. But herein lies the challenge (and this is where Tolkien shines as an author): The breadth and depth of the fantasy world must be vast enough to support the creation of an original, intertextual network within the novel. If the sum total of the author’s fantasy “world” is a mere handful of historical events, three cities, and a language that looks remarkably like English, the reader is not going to be transported anywhere—beyond the trash can, where he will likely dispose of such a novel.

When used properly, original intertext gives credibility to a novel and makes a fantasy world come to life in the mind of a reader. Why? Because when a fantasy novel has a deep, rich story-world to support it, the rest of the plotline becomes more believable. Moreover, when a story-world is sufficiently vast, readers recognize elements in the novel—even if they are not expressly stated—that imply that an entire realm exists beyond the book, a realm that is always supporting the book even when it is not explicitly acknowledged. Truly masterful fantasy novels always give the reader a sense of a vast world behind the words of the book.

But in order for original intertext to work in a novel, the author does have to incorporate elements of intertextuality from the real world—not in the form of content but by playing off the *expectations* people have for the intertextuality that should exist. History, for example, is an element that people expect any world to have (assuming the

novel is not about the world's beginning). In this way, original intertext is incorporated with a very abstract version of intertextuality that plays off, not common knowledge or experiences, but common instinct.

There are three key elements of intertextuality that, arguably, are the most vital for any fantasy world to have, based on people's expectations and interpretations of the real world: legend, landscape, and language. In essence, fantasy authors are transporting their readers from the real world and dropping them in the middle of a completely foreign world. If this happened literally, what would the person be expected to do in an attempt to understand his new environment? He would have to find out why he was in this strange place, where he was exactly, and how to communicate with the natives. In other words, he would be searching to understand how legend/history had a bearing on his present situation, what the landscape of the new world was, and what the native language was.

These are precisely the three elements of intertextuality that J.R.R. Tolkien employs in his novels. Tolkien was a masterful creator and user of original intertext. In fact, the element that made his novels so powerful and his world of Middle-earth so enduring was his extensive use of intertextuality. He understood his readers' need to experience intertextuality in his novels in order to sense depth in the fantasy world, and he also knew the intertextuality must be unlike the intertextuality of the real world. Therefore, he used original intertext but orchestrated it in a way that played off his readers' instincts for grounding themselves in an environment. In his novels, he constantly drew on historical events, geographic locations, and foreign languages in order to make Middle-earth a tangible place for his readers.

Tolkien's work shows that intertextuality does not have to be limited to the works of others; rather, references can be drawn to one's own works in order to make a new work stronger or more realistic, as long as those references correspond to the ways that intertextuality is used to bring understanding and context in the real world. This paper seeks to explore how Tolkien used three key elements of original intertext—legend, landscape, and language—as powerful rhetorical tools to give his readers a sense of history, a sense of place, and a sense of culture. Tolkien used elements of intertextuality that his readers would recognize and that people commonly use to orient themselves in the real world, thereby crafting a fantasy world that, in many ways, feels as deep and tangible as the real one.

Legend

“There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 15). Reminiscent of Genesis 1:1, this cryptic sentence serves the same function as that biblical verse: to describe the very beginning of a world. In this case, however, Tolkien wrote the sentence to explain the beginning of a world that does not physically exist.

A stunning aspect of Tolkien's fantasy world is its vastness. Tolkien's devised history for Middle-earth runs literally from the world's beginning through several ages of events, people, and cultures and fills up more than a dozen supplementary books, in addition to his four main novels. This extensive history forms the backbone for Tolkien's novels because the events in the novels continually refer to aspects of an earlier time. By drawing on relevant pieces of

original intertext, Tolkien gives his readers a sense of the history behind his novels.

In the real world, history enables people to understand why things are the way they are. For example, people are able to talk across long distances because Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Australian accents sound something like British accents because Australia was colonized by the British. The Sunni and Shi'ite factions of the Muslim faith exist because of a schism that occurred right after the death of Mohammed. The list goes on and on, but the point is, people understand why things are the way they are because they have an understanding of history, of the past events that led to a present situation.

But more than just bringing understanding, history functions intertextually. Even common phrases such as “These aren’t the Dark Ages” or “He’s an Einstein” are intertextual references to people or events in history; they can be fully understood only by those who know the history to which they refer. History as intertext is integral to rhetoric and plays a big part in making rhetoric effective. In the real world, shared history unites people because they have a common understanding of what came before them, and if rhetoric is channeled along these lines of unity, it becomes much more effective and relevant than otherwise. History also lends realism to a place because it consists of a strong network of intertextual references, all weaving together to help modern people understand the world they live in every day.

Tolkien provided original-intertext history for Middle-earth in his novels, and this history serves the same functions as history does in real life. Tolkien used this fabricated history in his novels to help his readers understand why things are the way they are.

Moreover, the beauty of using original intertext for Middle-earth’s historical connections is that it provides the reader with both a sense of realism and a sense of unfamiliarity. The complex network of historical, original intertext that Tolkien used makes Middle-earth realistic and believable because the history is so vast and interconnected. But the fact that the intertext used to create this feeling of reality is original means that the world of Middle-earth simultaneously feels unfamiliar to the reader, just as any foreign land should feel to a visitor.

In order to create these desired effects on the reader, Tolkien orchestrated the original intertext history in his novels in three notable ways. First, the way Tolkien wrote his novels often makes the stories feel more like nonfiction accounts than fantasy books. He used fictitious legends and histories to provide context for the stories, giving the reader the impression of reading a historical account that simply takes place in another world.

The prologues, for example, in *The Hobbit* and *The Fellowship of the Ring* (the first book in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy) are written as if providing the reader with actual historical facts necessary to understanding the following story. Consider the opening sentences of the prologue from the latter book:

This book is largely concerned with Hobbits, and from its pages a reader may discover much of their character and a little of their history. Further information will also be found in the selection from the Red Book of Westmarch that has already been published, under the title of *The Hobbit*. That story was derived from the earlier chapters of the Red Book, composed by Bilbo himself, the first Hobbit to become famous in the world at large, and called by him *There and Back Again*, since they told of his journey into the East and

his return: an adventure which later involved all the Hobbits in the great events of that Age that are here related. (1)

This documentary-like writing extends far beyond the books' prologues, however. Even the microstructure of the sentences in Tolkien's novels makes them sound more like historical accounts than fairy tales: "[The archers'] captain was Bard... a descendant in long line of Girion, Lord of Dale, whose wife and child had escaped down the Running River from the ruin long ago" (*Hobbit* 228).

In addition to writing his books as historical stories, Tolkien employed two other strategies for incorporating original, historical intertext into his novels, both of which have to do with the ways he chose to introduce the history of Middle-earth into the books. Sometimes, Tolkien explicitly explained the history that he drew into his novels, and sometimes he merely incorporated threads of historical intertext without explaining them.

When Tolkien clearly explained the history, he did so to give greater meaning to the events described in the books, allowing the readers to see that Middle-earth's past has a bearing on the plotline, just as real history has an intertextual effect on current events. A good example of this strategy is found in *Fellowship*. Here, the wizard Gandalf is explaining to Frodo how the One Ring is related to the other rings of power and why the One is so dangerous:

"The Enemy still lacks one thing to give him strength and knowledge to beat down all resistance, break the last defences, and cover all the lands in a second darkness. He lacks the One Ring. The Three, fairest of all, the Elf-lords hid from him... Seven the Dwarf-kings possessed, but three he has recovered, and the others the dragons have consumed. Nine he gave

to Mortal Men, proud and great, and so ensnared them." (50)

This explanation and elaboration on an important part of Middle-earth's history adds much to the storyline of *Fellowship*. In fact, it forms the major basis for the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, since the characters' main goal is to destroy the One Ring to prevent the Enemy from drawing the entire world under his dominion.

Because readers understand that past events impact current realities in the real world, they grasp the full impact of this passage as they read, realizing that Middle-earth's history has created a current, and troublesome, reality for the characters. Tolkien's explanation, through Gandalf's character, of the significance of the rings' history makes his readers feel that the story they are reading is just one part of a much larger world history, validating the idea in their minds that Middle-earth is a real world with real people and real problems. This sense of reality enables readers to feel the full weight of the situation when, finally, one character decides: "We must take a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril—to Mordor. We must send the Ring to the Fire [to destroy it]" (*Fellowship* 260).

However, Tolkien's more common method of incorporating history into his novels was to weave in threads of original intertext that, although present, go *unexplained*. This method reveals part of his genius as a writer because, in some ways, the subtle references are more powerful in creating an intertextual reality for the reader than the well-explained portions of Middle-earth's history. They give the reader a sense that there is more history beyond the scope of the story, shaping the world in which the story takes place even if it does not directly affect the tale.

Consider this example from *The Hobbit*, in which the elf Elrond is explaining the history of two ancient swords: “These are not troll-make. They are old swords, very old swords of the High Elves of the West, my kin. They were made in Gondolin for the Goblin-wars” (49). No explanation exists in the surrounding text to explain why the High Elves were important, where or what Gondolin was, or when the Goblin-wars occurred. If the reader wishes to know more about these particular facts, he must do what people do in our own world: read a history book. *The Silmarillion* is the best-known of Tolkien’s history books about Middle-earth, although several others were edited by his son and published after Tolkien’s death.

Just as many pieces of intertext in the real world can only be understood by knowledgeable inhabitants of this world, much of the intertext in Tolkien’s novels is designed to be fully understood only by an inhabitant of Middle-earth. His readers, as foreigners to Middle-earth, are forced either to delve into Tolkien’s contrived history for answers or to continue wondering about the intertext they do not understand.

The fact that so much of Tolkien’s intertext cannot be immediately understood by the readers makes Middle-earth a very real place for them. If the world inside Tolkien’s novels could fit neatly inside their imaginations, it would seem very one-dimensional. But a world so big, so historically rich, seems just too real not to be real.

Landscape

One of the most common ways that people “ground” themselves in the real world is through their surroundings. Visual references, directional signs, and particularly maps help people get a feel for the world around them. It comes as no surprise, then, that one characteristic that lends depth to any fantasy novel is the presence of a map of the fantasy world.



Figure 1. Middle-earth Map (Kilbeth)

In his novels, Tolkien used landscape to his full advantage. Not only is a relevant map typically printed inside his books (see Figure 1), but specific places are frequently referenced during the stories. By drawing on the content of his maps in the context of his novels, Tolkien used a form of original intertext that gives his readers a sense of location and, as a result, a sense of reality. Interestingly, this original intertext also gives readers a way to interpret the landscape of the real world.

In the real world, monuments and plaques are often placed on important historical sites to make people remember certain events that occurred in that location. They function as a kind of “silent rhetoric,”

communicating—sometimes more eloquently than words—to the people of today about what happened in the past. The monuments link the historical events to real locations, making the events much more tangible to people who did not personally experience them. By referencing specific locations during his novels, Tolkien creates mental “monuments” in his readers’ minds that make the events he describes seem all the more real.

One example from *The Hobbit* skillfully illustrates this strategy:

“Is that The Mountain?” asked Bilbo in a solemn voice. He had never seen a thing that looked so big before.

“Of course not!” said Balin. “That is only the beginning of the Misty Mountains, and we have got to get through, or over, or under those somehow, before we can come into Wilderland beyond. And it is a deal of a way even from the other side of them to the Lonely Mountain in the East where Smaug lies on our treasure.” (43)

Balin’s outline of the journey ahead has an important bearing on the story, allowing the reader to sympathize with Bilbo because of the long road he has ahead of him. But this explanation also serves a greater purpose. It provides the reader with landmarks and a sense of distance between the landmarks. It mentions a specific direction, a destination toward which the characters are moving. In this way, Tolkien treats the fantastical quest of Bilbo like a journey in our world. Because Tolkien presents the journey this way, it makes Middle-earth and its places seem even more tangible to the reader. In fact, both of Tolkien’s major stories—told in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy—describe very long journeys that cause the characters to pass through many different realms within Middle-earth. By consistently

referring to the landscape of Middle-earth during these stories—both to places directly relevant to the journey and to places in the surrounding area—Tolkien causes his readers to feel, by the end of the books, as if they themselves have passed through those places with the characters and become familiar with the layout of Middle-earth.

Below are some examples of Tolkien’s “referring back” to the landscape of his fantasy world, as written in *Fellowship*:

- “They lived on the Hill itself, in Number 3 Bagshot Row just below Bag End” (22).
- “A little house at Crickhollow in the country beyond Bucklebury” (66).
- “Northward beyond the dwindling downs the land ran away in flats and swellings of grey and green and pale earth-colours, until it faded into a featureless and shadowy distance” (133).
- “The Road bent right and ran down towards the bottom of the valley, now making straight for the Bruinen” (206).
- ““The way to Minas Tirith lies upon this side, upon the west; but the straight road of the Quest lies east of the River, upon the darker shore” (358).

By making his readers feel as though they are experiencing the landscape with the characters, Tolkien caused his world to become as real to the readers as it is to the characters within the stories.

Interestingly, the original intertext of Middle-earth’s landscape works beyond just the pages of Tolkien’s novels. Like history, landscape has an intertextual function in the real world. Although many people appreciate the outdoors for its own sake, they are also prone to interpreting the landscape through intertextuality. One researcher, investigating this phenomenon, relates,

and because the intertextuality of language creates both inclusion and exclusion among people, rhetoric can be effective, relevant, and persuasive only if the language is used appropriately and intertextually. Consider one person who says to her English-speaking friend, “I love that book.” The friend has no problem understanding the words because both people share the intertextual reference of a common language. However, if the person says, “Mi piace quel libro,” her friend will probably be very confused (unless the friend also happens to speak Italian).

As another example, consider idioms and common sayings. These are some of the most difficult elements to learn when trying to understand a new language because, when taken literally, these sayings make very little sense. English speakers often say “break a leg” as a way of wishing someone good luck, even though it sounds somewhat malevolent in its literal translation. Italian speakers have a similar saying, “in bocca al lupo,” which is also used to wish someone good luck. Its literal translation, however, is, “in the mouth of the wolf.” Both of these sayings must be understood through intertext, not literal translation, in order for their true meaning to be grasped.

Each time one of Tolkien’s characters periodically slips from the “Common Tongue” into his native language, readers are reminded that they have entered a new, foreign culture. Just as in the real world, the languages of Middle-earth function rhetorically to distinguish a culture and to connect the members of that culture. The languages connect the characters in the novels but exclude, to a point, the reader, because the reader is not connected to the intertextual reference point of the languages (unless the words are specifically translated). This exclusion reinforces the idea of a real world in the

reader’s mind, because the reader experiences the same sensation that he would feel if he traveled to a foreign culture in the real world.

Tolkien primarily wrote his novels in English, of course, but phrases and sentences in the foreign languages of Middle-earth are nevertheless sprinkled throughout the novels, as Tolkien used the original intertext of his languages to create this “foreign culture” impression on the reader. For example, one character in *Fellowship* “call[s] to [his] horse in the elf-tongue: *noro lim, noro lim, Asfaloth!*” (208). Some characters, such as the wizard Gandalf, have names in multiple languages. At one point, the elves lament over Gandalf’s death using his elven name, “*Mithrandir*” (*Fellowship* 350). In yet another place, the novel’s characters find a door carved with elven letters and words, shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Moria Gate Image (Loiceo)

In *The Return of the King*, there is even a short song written in one of Tolkien's languages:

*A! Elbereth Gilthoniel!
siliuren penna míriel
o menel aglar elenath,
Gilthoniel, A! Elbereth!* (1005)

The use of foreign languages in Tolkien's novels reinforces the reader's idea of the vastness of Middle-earth. When a character speaks in Quenya or Khuzdul, the reader feels the weight of an entire culture lurking behind the individual, a culture that is hinted at by the language. In this way, Tolkien's stories and characters become multi-dimensional through their original intertext. The reader senses that the characters exist in cultures beyond his experience, lending a solidity and reality to Middle-earth.

Ironically, the languages that lend so much depth and color to Tolkien's books were not created for Middle-earth. Middle-earth was created for them. Tolkien said of his novels, "The 'stories' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse" ("Languages Constructed"). Thus, in a way, Tolkien's novels were designed from the beginning as a source for intertext. From their inception, Tolkien intended for the stories to refer back to the languages he had created.

Because the original intertext of Middle-earth was the reason for the world's creation, Tolkien's fantasy world can be called the "ultimate intertext." Unlike many fantasy worlds, which are created solely for the purpose of writing a novel, Tolkien's novels were written to provide an outlet for the languages and world he had already created. In them, readers get a constant sense of the world beyond the books' pages, a world that cannot be fully encompassed between the covers of those books.

Conclusion

Across multiple countries and decades, Tolkien is renowned for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. His fantasy world of Middle-earth continues to capture the imaginations of new fans and never fails to enchant long-time enthusiasts. But Tolkien's real talent was as a master rhetorician, one who not only used intertext with admirable skill but also created the very intertext he needed for his purposes. By using intertextual references to Middle-earth's legends, landscape, and languages, Tolkien gave his readers a sense of history, a sense of location, and a sense of culture that made Middle-earth a tangible place in their minds. He stands out among fantasy authors because he understood two critical points: Intertextuality in a fantasy novel must be primarily original for the fantasy world to be believable, *and*, for the fantasy world to be relatable, the original intertext must coordinate with the kinds of intertextuality that people look for and use in the real world to relate to their surroundings.

However, original intertext is not unique to Tolkien—although he may be one of the best users of it. Other books, movies, and television shows in modern pop culture make use of this concept to strengthen the realism of their fantasy worlds and immerse readers or viewers in that world. The creators of these fantasy worlds understand that the more they use intertext from their fantasy worlds to validate those same fantasy worlds, the more tangible they will make them. Only a very weak, unrealistic world has to exclusively use intertext from another world in order to validate its realism.

The beauty of original intertext is not in relating one author's piece of rhetoric to another author's piece of rhetoric. Its beauty is in strengthening a single author's work through intertextual connections to that

same author's other works. Thus, the search for an effective, modern example of original intertext need not be confined to texts that are intertextually related to Tolkien's. In fact, one of the best modern-day examples of original intertext does not come from literature but from popular television.

Doctor Who, a well-known BBC science fiction television show, makes consistent and masterful use of original intertext. Practically every episode—if not every one—of *Doctor Who* is filled with intertextual references to the content of previous episodes. In fact, many of the most heartbreaking and the most hilarious moments in that show are emotionally strong because they connect to past occurrences in the show. For instance, the episode “The Empty Child” features “monsters” in the form of humans wearing gas masks. These monsters (diseased humans) wander around saying, “Are you my mummy?” Seasons later in the same show, the Doctor is given a gas mask to wear, and after pulling it on, promptly quips, “are you my mummy?” This line would make no sense to someone who had not seen the

previous episode, but to anyone who had, this small piece of original intertext made the Doctor's question a joke.

Clearly, original intertext is a way for anyone creating a fantasy world to make the world more rich and real, as Tolkien did with Middle-earth. However, although fantasy novels today are plentiful, fantasy worlds as deep and rich as Middle-earth are rare. Many writers focus on the novel and treat the fantasy world as an afterthought. But as Tolkien showed, the most realistic fantasy worlds are the starting places for the best novels. The world has to be big enough for intertextual references to be made within the novel, and once it is, readers will begin to feel the depth of the fantasy realm they have entered upon opening the book. By employing original intertext, fantasy writers can create worlds as realistic and enduring as Middle-earth, worlds that will be treasured forever in the minds of those in the real world who have been fortunate enough to learn their secrets, tread their paths, and speak their languages.

Acknowledgements

This essay is dedicated in love to my God and Father—of Thine own have I given Thee. Special thanks and acknowledgment to Dr. Angela Rounsaville—your encouragement and patient guidance were indispensable to the growth of this paper and to my growth as a writer. Love and thanks also to Mrs. Maureen Eha, my amazing mom and copyeditor.

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