

5-2018

# The Medicine of Middle Earth: An Examination of the Parallels Between World War Medicine and Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

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## Recommended Citation

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Thesis

The Medicine of Middle Earth: An Examination of the Parallels Between World War Medicine  
and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of Honors

by

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to

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April 14, 2018

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## Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien was motivated throughout his life to create a comprehensive fictional world that could serve as a mythology for his beloved England. In attempting to do so he wrote what most argue is the pioneering work of fantasy fiction of the 20th century. *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) continues to hold its status as one of the best selling novels of all time and thus has engendered a great deal of praise, criticism, and analysis. Tolkien wrote the novel in a period of twelve years, starting in 1937 during World War II (WWII) and ending in 1949 a few years after the end of the war. Understandably, scholars have made parallels between the novel and the conflict of WWII. However, it was Tolkien's time in World War I (WWI) that had a more significant impact on his life. Tolkien fought in WWI as a second lieutenant of the Lancaster Fusiliers but was initially reluctant to go to war. It was not until he felt overwhelming pressure from his family and peers that he finally enlisted in July of 1915. He described his departure from his wife as being "like a death" because he was convinced he was going to die in combat (Garth, *Tolkien and War* 205). Tolkien survived the war despite his fears. He propitiously contracted an illness days before his battalion was almost entirely lost in a bombardment, and he was sent back to the UK to receive treatment. In fact, Tolkien was in and out of hospitals for the rest of the war, though he sought to re-enter combat on multiple occasions. In fact, according to Tolkien, his first tale of Middle Earth, titled "Fall of Gondolin," was "written in hospital and on leave after surviving the Battle of the Somme in 1916" (Garth, *Tolkien and War* 353).

Understandably, Tolkien's personal experiences in WWI and the contemporaneity of the publication of LOTR and the events of WWII led many fans and scholars to question to what extent Tolkien's war experiences influenced his works. In response to these queries Tolkien

adamantly denied any connection, stating in the forward to the second edition of LOTR that “The real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its conclusion” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* x). He further states that any attempts to make a connection between his works and the events of the early 1900s are “at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* x).

## Literature Review

Despite Tolkien's flat denial of any connection between his personal war experiences and his fictional world (referred to as Middle Earth), many critics have identified concrete similarities between LOTR and WWI. One of the greatest contributors to this effort is John Garth, author of a nearly 400-page *Tolkien and the Great War*, which identifies many parallels between Tolkien's experience in WWI and the events of LOTR. He has also written several articles on this subject and is author to the definitive study regarding Tolkien's undergraduate career. In one of his articles, he examines one of the few instances of a World War and LOTR parallel that was acknowledged by Tolkien himself. This connection comes in the form of Samwise Gamgee, a member of the fellowship of the ring in LOTR, whom Tolkien intended to represent the common English soldier. In "Sam Gamgee and Tolkien's Batmen," Garth cites a letter written by Tolkien in which he states, "My 'Sam Gamgee' is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognized as so far superior to myself" (Garth, "Sam Gamgee").

Other parallels which Garth identified include a comparison between symptoms of the "Black Breath," a serious and often fatal condition experienced by soldiers in LOTR, and shell shock. Many other Tolkien scholars have been quick to identify this as a defining analogy between the World Wars and the War of the Ring. For example, in an article titled "The shell-shocked hobbit: the First World War and Tolkien's trauma of the Ring," Dr. Michael Livingston examines this connection thoroughly, positing that, "To put a modern term to the transformation in Frodo's character at the end of *The Return of the King*, it appears that Frodo is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, more commonly known as 'shell-shock'"

(Livingston). In the introduction to this article Dr. Livingston also briefly addresses industrialization. He states, “Saruman's destruction of Fangorn, for example, has much in common with modern industrialization” (Livingston). This correlation is highlighted in *The J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* which acknowledges that “Many scholars see Tolkien’s concerns about the vanishing English countryside during an era of industrialization and urbanization, and his experiences personally in World War I and his son in World War II, reflected in his conception of the Machine” (Sturgis 389).

Further comparisons are revealed in the minute details of LOTR. For example, the cries of the Nazgul (evil, dragon-like creatures) are akin to the sounds of dive bombers in WWII and possibly the sounds that shells make as they scream and wail when tearing through the sky. Kenneth Payne pointed out this comparison in his article entitled “Eagles and Airpower: The Lord of the Rings as Doctrine” in which he states that one “need only squint a little” to notice the comparison between the actions of the nazgul and “the sinister gull-winged dive bombers, their sirens howling to terrify those below” (Payne 70). Janet Croft’s *War and the Works of Tolkien* identifies further comparisons, specifically focusing on tactics, training, and battlefield strategy in LOTR and its similarity to WWI. Finally, scholars have even made comparisons between specific battles of the War of the Ring and those of WWI. The most notable example is the resemblance between the Battle of the Somme, in which Tolkien fought, and the ancient battlefield of the Dead Marshes. In her article “‘Tricksy Lights’: Literary and Folkloric Elements in Tolkien’s Passage of the Dead Marshes,” Margaret Sinex concludes that “Recent scholarship has probed the biographical inspiration for the Dead Marshes, that is, the rich parallels they share

with the topography of northern France in World War I where Tolkien himself served for some months in 1916” (Sinex 93).

### **Question**

Clearly, the correlation between LOTR and the World Wars has been well researched and thoroughly discussed. Yet, it is my belief that there exists a substantial and entirely ignored connection between Tolkien’s battlefield experience and his writings. To date, no significant study exists examining the connection between Tolkien’s depictions of medical treatments in LOTR and his own experiences with wartime medicine. A close examination reveals that there are substantial similarities that strongly link the influential events of Tolkien’s experiences with medical treatment to the events of LOTR. Tolkien’s descriptions of medical remedies are richly detailed and significant to the plot. Examining each of these remedies within LOTR and linking them to medical practices used in WWI reveals strong, previously unidentified points of correlation.

## Chapter 1 - Tolkien and Frodo: Reluctant Recruits

As previously discussed, Tolkien was a reluctant soldier from the start. And after spending four gruelling months in the trenches Tolkien contracted a lice transmitted, typhus-like condition known as “trench fever” and was subsequently removed from combat. He spent a brief two days in an army field hospital referred to as a “casualty clearing station” and then was sent home to the UK to receive further treatment (Garth 205). After months of toil, fear, and discomfort participating in a war that he had no desire to be a part of, Tolkien was sent to his hometown hospital in Birmingham, England. Tolkien’s biographer Humphrey Carpenter describes this experience thus: “In a matter of days he found himself transported from the horror of the trenches to white sheets and a view of the city he knew so well” (Carpenter, *Biography* 93). From this point forward Tolkien spent the remainder of the war in and out of hospitals as he recovered from his illness. These experiences gave him an intimate firsthand knowledge of both field medicine and rehabilitative medicine practiced during WWI.

Tolkien’s experience with trench fever finds a strong parallel in Frodo’s experiences in the first half of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Frodo suffers his first truly traumatic event through his encounter with the Black Riders on Weathertop on his journey towards Rivendell. Here he is stabbed by a “morgul blade” which possesses an intangible, poisonous quality that leaves Frodo permanently scarred both mentally and physically. This is his first brush with the enemy in combat and, in a way that parallels Tolkien’s experience, it results in a quickly administered field treatment at the hands of Aragorn and then a subsequent removal to Rivendell. In many ways, Aragorn’s treatment of Frodo can be thought of as an example of battlefield medicine where



Aragorn functions as a traditional “medic” figure. Aragorn must make do with few resources in order to stabilize Frodo enough for him to be removed to a more adequate medical facility. Indeed, Rivendell itself functions as a hospital and Elrond, the master of Rivendell, is noted as a great healer throughout LOTR. At one point Gandalf even refers to Elrond as “a master of healing” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 248).

While the precise technique that Elrond used to heal Frodo is unclear (it was likely a combination of herbal and magical remedies) we do know from the text that Frodo was ultimately saved from turning into a Ring Wraith upon the removal of a piece of the Morgul Blade. One only has to squint a little to see the likeness between this tangible and a piece of artillery shrapnel. But perhaps more important than his initial healing is the lifelong recovery Frodo undergoes as a result of this wound. John Garth and many others have highlighted the parallel between wounds from the Ring Wraiths and symptoms of shell-shock (PTSD). This topic will be addressed further in a later chapter, but for the purposes of the present discussion it is important to note that the events on Weathertop mark the first portrayal of what will later be referred to as “The Black Breath.”

After being stabbed, treated briefly by Aragorn, and suffering through a brutal ride of many leagues to Rivendell, Frodo passes out just before he reaches safety. Luckily, Glorfindel’s horse dutifully deposits him safely in Rivendell. Frodo wakes up weeks later, on October 24th to be exact, lying in a comfortable and safe bed being watched over by Gandalf and Elrond. He has arrived at “the last homely house.” This quick field treatment, rapid removal from battle and sudden arrival in a homely place very closely mirrors Tolkien’s experience as a young soldier. Mentally, Frodo and Tolkien would have been in the same headspace after such events.

## Chapter 2 - Athelas as Anesthesia

In his field treatment of Frodo, Aragorn uses “athelas” which is significant as the first example of any sort of medical treatment that Tolkien incorporates into Middle Earth. It is described as “a healing plant that the Men of the West brought to Middle-earth. *Athelas* they named it, and it grows now sparsely and only near places where they dwelt or camped of old” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 224). Aragorn’s attempt to use this plant as a temporary remedy is an example of field medicine. Field medicine is essentially any sort of medical treatment given on or near an area where combat is currently or has recently taken place. Often, field medicine is simply a temporary measure used to stabilize a patient until the patient can be removed to a more stable and comprehensive medical facility. Frodo receives medical attention in the field and is subsequently removed to Rivendell, “The last Homely House,” where Elrond is able to more adequately assess and care for his wounds. He is able to save Frodo once he removes a piece of the blade from his shoulder. As mentioned earlier, the similarities between the piece of blade and shrapnel are easy to see.

Linguistically, the word “athelas” is similar to the word “ethyl” and the two substances are similar in properties as well. Ethyl chloride was one of the most commonly used anesthetic substances used during WWI (Kovac 8). I find it very likely that Tolkien gained his inspiration for athelas from general anesthetic practices and quite possible ethyl chloride itself. As a philologist Tolkien placed a heavy emphasis on the construction of his fantasy languages so it’s not a stretch to wonder if the word “ethyl” influenced his choice for the word “athelas.” Regardless, the parallels between athelas and anesthetic methods during WWI are highly similar.

Ether, chloroform, and ethyl chloride were commonly administered to soldiers via inhalation. Heavy emphasis is given to inhalation in the administration of athelas in LOTR. Many of the descriptions of the plant emphasize the smell of the vapor released from burning it. In fact when Aragorn prepares the mixture after Frodo is stabbed at Weathertop, he throws the leaves into boiling water and “the fragrance of the steam was refreshing, and those that were unhurt felt their minds calmed and cleared” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 224). Later he uses the leaves again in the mines of Moria, where “The pungent fragrance filled the dell, and all those who stooped over the steaming water felt refreshed and strengthened. Soon Frodo felt the pain leave him, and his breath grew easy: though he was stiff and sore to the touch for many days” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 224). Here the fragrance of the plant acts much like an anesthetic as it eases the pain and calms the mind.

Aragorn again uses athelas near the end of *The Return of the King* as he attempts to heal Merry and Eowyn from wounds sustained during their fight with the Witch King of Angmar. These wounds are both mental and physical and are often referred to as “the Black Breath.” This malady will be discussed more thoroughly in a later chapter, but for now it is important to note that “the Black Breath” has been likened to “shell-shock” (a form of PTSD) by many Tolkien scholars. Merry and Eowyn suffer these wounds during *The Return of the King*, and the events of their battle with the Witch King of Angmar coincides with Aragorn’s return to his kingdom of Gondor. As Aragorn seeks to heal his friends from their wounds, he searches for athelas in the Houses of Healing, Gondor’s “Hospital” so to speak. The nurses at the hospital are initially unsure of what “athelas” is until Aragorn states, “It is also called Kingsfoil...and maybe you

know it by that name” (Tolkien, *Return* 263). Recognition dawns on the nurses, but one of the physicians states,

We do not keep this thing in the Houses of Healing, where only the gravely hurt or sick are tended. For it has no virtue that we know of, save perhaps to sweeten a fouled air, or to drive away some passing heaviness. Unless, of course, you give heed to rhymes of old days which women such as our good Ioreth still repeat without understanding (Tolkien, *Return* 265).

This passage reveals that athelas is largely underutilized by healers who are not familiar with the same lore as Aragorn. In fact the physician remarks to Aragorn that, “I see you are a lore-master, not merely a captain of war” (Tolkien, *Return* 265). Aragorn’s ability to use athelas grants him distinction from simply being a soldier. Rather, his use of athelas reveals that he has specialized knowledge as a healer. This is very similar to medics during the World Wars who would often both fight and heal. Further, the fact that the use of athelas requires a specialized knowledge strengthens the parallel between athelas and anesthesia as it emphasizes that the administration of the remedy is vital to its proper functioning.

### Chapter 3 - Hostess Houses and Houses of Healing

Healing in LOTR takes place in three main places: Rivendell (as seen in *The Fellowship* after Frodo's first wounding), on the field (as seen throughout the series), and in the Houses of Healing which will be the subject of this chapter. The Houses of Healing appear in *The Return of the King* in Minas Tirith, the capital of Gondor. Essentially the houses are an infirmary staffed by a full time team of healers and nurses. In fact, when the city is emptied of women and children in preparation for the Battle of Pelennor Fields, the few women allowed to stay in Minas Tirith are those who staff the houses. This is because "they were skilled in healing or in the service of the healers" (Tolkien, *Return* 247). The houses are initially described as being "fair houses set apart, for the care of those who were grievously sick," but as Sauron's army encroaches on Minas Tirith "they were prepared for the tending of men hurt in battle or dying" (Tolkien, *Return* 247). After the War of the Ring ends, the houses are essentially converted to a rehabilitation center for soldiers suffering from the black breath (which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4). The houses are located near the main Citadel of the city and are set apart from the rest of Minas Tirith because "about them was a garden and a greensward with trees, the only such place in the City" (Tolkien, *Return* 247). Essentially, the Houses of Healing are a multi-functional infirmary that adapt to the medical needs of the community and rely on the expertise of experienced healers and nurses.

The Houses of Healing have their WWI counterpart in the Hostess Houses that were established by Americans in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Aside from

their similar alliterative monikers, Hostess Houses and the Houses of Healing had many functional similarities:

During World War I the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) established fifty hostess houses at thirty-seven military camps, and it employed more than a thousand women as hostesses... The women who staffed them came from all parts of the country and kept the houses open twenty-four hours a day. ... Originally designed to accommodate women visitors to the camps, the hostess houses steadily expanded their services. (Brandimarte 201)

These Hostess Houses were used less as centers of medical healing and more as places for families to visit American soldiers and for soldiers to enjoy some rest and relaxation with access to food and communal spaces. However, the emphasis on female staffers and R&R strongly mirrors the function of the Houses of Healing after the War ends in *The Return of the King*. When the final battle ends and the Gondorian soldiers return home, the Houses operate as a place for soldiers to recuperate mentally, receive regular meals and spend time with loved ones.

The Houses of Healing also find a parallel in the London hospitals that were converted during the war to accommodate the massive amount of civilian and military casualties. Both London and Minas Tirith suffered heavy attacks during their respective wars as they were highly targeted due to their status as capitals. As previously mentioned, the Houses of Healing originally functioned as a place for the grievously sick but were later converted to accommodate the military casualties. London hospitals went through a similar transformation as did many country estates, known as "great houses," throughout England. The city was massively unprepared for the amount of patients they had to take in once the fighting began. In fact, "The

existing military hospitals, which included Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, Millbank, and the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich, could provide only 9,000 beds dispersed throughout the country” (“London Hospitals in the Great War”). To deal with this deficit “the major London voluntary hospitals increased their beds from a total of 9,766 in 1913 to 11,406 in 1916. One in four of the beds previously available for the civilian population were now used by service patients” (“London Hospitals in the Great War”). Tolkien spent the majority of the war in and out of hospitals, all the while seeking to rejoin his battalion, but he ultimately failed to re-enter combat due to gastritis. Upon his initial return after the battle of the Somme, Tolkien was brought home to Birmingham. He was treated at Birmingham University which had been partially converted into a military hospital. Later he would be admitted on two separate occasions in 1917 and 1918 to the Brooklands Officers’ Hospital. The majority of Tolkien’s war experience was actually hospital experience so it’s highly likely, especially given the similarities, that the Houses of Healing were inspired by his own experiences.

## Chapter 4 - “Black Breath” and “Shell-Shock”: Recovery

Many critics have noted the similarity between the Black Breath in LOTR and the shell shock experienced by World War soldiers. The Black Breath is a malady experienced by those who come in contact with Sauron’s Ring Wraiths (undead former Kings of Gondor). In its mildest form, it is characterized by a brief period of unconsciousness, bad dreams, and agitation upon waking. However, severe cases can lead to long-lasting depression, phantom pains, paralysis, and death. Eowyn suffers from the Black Breath after destroying the leader of the Ring Wraiths. Initially, she enters into a state of paralysis that lasts many days, and Aragorn fears he will not be able to restore her, declaring, “Alas! For she was pitted against a foe beyond the strength of her mind or body. And those who will take a weapon to such an enemy must be sterner than steel, if the very shock shall not destroy them” (Tolkien, *Return* 268). Even the language Tolkien employs here reminds the reader of “shell shock.” Shell shock, sometimes referred to as combat fatigue, was a widespread problem in the aftermath of WWI. In fact, “By the end of World War One the British Army had dealt with 80,000 cases of shell shock” (Bourke). The problem continued to escalate after WWII and

“By the 1950s the VA system operated 109 general hospitals and thirty eight neuropsychiatric hospitals. There are estimates that psychiatric cases accounted for half of veterans’ hospitalizations in VA facilities in the fifties, according to the Committee on Veterans Compensation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in PTSD Compensation and Military Service” (Vento).



Many conflate shell shock and PTSD; however, it's important to recognize that while shell shock is a form of PTSD they are not one and the same. Shell shock is specifically characterized by a state of panic experienced by returning soldiers that is often accompanied by an inability to sleep, reason, walk or talk. The similarities between these two maladies is what led scholars like Livingston to believe that the Black Breath is essentially the Middle Earth version of shell shock.

PTSD was not a clinical diagnosis until 1980. However, many terms existed to describe the phenomenon. According to an article by Carol Vento entitled "Treatment of War Related Psychiatric Injuries Post-World War II,"

Prior DSM editions had no specific classification for postwar trauma. Terms like stress response syndrome, gross stress reaction, psychoneurotic disorder, anxiety neurosis, character disorder, and adjustment reaction to adult life were all diagnostic phrases utilized by the Veterans Administration (VA) to describe the World War II combat veterans who applied to the agency for help because they could not leave the war behind (Vento).

Veterans who experienced these disorders faced differing levels of severity and thus experienced a range of treatment options. For example, "World War II veterans who exhibited severe mental and behavioral problems were often institutionalized in Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals" (Vento). Others adapted back into civilian life after brief periods of rest, but, unfortunately, many believed that "once a soldier was removed from combat and provided with time for rest and relaxation, his war trauma would disappear" (Vento). However, many of these men continued to suffer in silence and without aid for the rest of their lives. Tragically, many soldiers resorted to suicide in the years after the wars. For example, in Canada in 1919 "nearly 40% of reported

suicides involved veterans. Moreover, if only the suicides of men aged 18-39 (those most likely to serve) are considered, then the percentage of reported veteran suicides doubles to nearly 80%” (Scotland).

The Black Breath is treated in a similar fashion throughout LOTR. Both Eowyn and Faramir suffer from the Black Breath in the aftermath of the Battle of Pelennor Fields. Both are sent to the Houses of Healing where their physical injuries are treated. Eowyn is brought out of a brief paralysis and her arm injury is treated and Faramir gets treatment for several arrow piercings in his torso as well as a high fever. While these physical ailments are in remission the pair remain in the Houses and are unable to serve in the final battle in The War of the Ring which takes place in Mordor. In regards to Faramir’s mental state, Aragorn says “Weariness, grief for his father’s mood, a wound, and over all the Black Breath. ... He is a man of staunch will, for already he had come close under the Shadow before ever he rode to battle on the out-walls. Slowly the dark must have crept on him, even as he fought and strove to hold his outpost” (Tolkien, *Return* 264). Both Faramir and Eowyn remain in the Houses for some time after their physical wounds heal. They are both still suffering from the mental impact of the Black Breath and Eowyn describes how it affects her dreams and her general outlook on life. Ultimately, though, both Eowyn and Faramir recover and are sent to the Ithilien to resume “normal life.”

Frodo isn’t nearly as lucky in his recovery. Upon observing Frodo’s symptoms, Gandalf states, “Alas! there are some wounds that cannot be wholly cured” (Tolkien, *Return* 521). Frodo responds, “I fear it may be so with mine. ... There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting,

and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?" (Tolkien, *Return* 521). Frodo remains unable to reintegrate into civilian life. One day Sam observes Frodo "looking very strange. He was very pale and his eyes seemed to see things far away" (Tolkien, *Return* 596). Later Sam recalls that "the date was October the sixth," which marks the two-year anniversary of the day Frodo was wounded by the Ring Wraiths (Tolkien, *Return* 596). Ultimately, Frodo's inability to mentally return from war leads to his departure from the Shire. When Sam questions his decision to leave, Frodo responds, "I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (Tolkien, *Return* 603). Frodo departs with many elves and others who bore rings of power including Elrond and Gandalf. They leave for what is simply referred to as "The West," which many scholars view as a metaphor for suicide. Regardless of whether or not this comparison is accurate, it is clear that like many of the returning soldiers in the aftermath of WWI, Frodo is unable to escape from the mental trauma of the war and thus decides to leave society forever.

## Conclusion

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss fully, a brief mention of authorial intent and literary theory seems pertinent to conclude this paper. Practitioners of New Criticism would argue that the biography and intentions of the author are irrelevant to judging the success of a literary work. LOTR certainly stands on its own as a work that can be appreciated both by the casual first-time reader with no prior knowledge of Tolkien and also by the die-hard Tolkien fan who cross-references their fifth reading of the series with a Tolkien biography. However, I think it is safe to say that an understanding of Tolkien's own experiences can enrich our understanding of several of the novel's themes and motifs. Tolkien himself seems conflicted regarding how he wishes his works to be interpreted. Yes, he clearly states that "the real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its conclusion" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* x), but he was also known to compare himself to a hobbit: "I am in fact a hobbit in all but size" (Carpenter, *Letters* 288). Tolkien both resists and encourages the psychoanalytic criticism that would seek to contextualize his writings.

Whether fully acknowledged by Tolkien or not, a large amount of criticism has been devoted to establishing the parallels between Tolkien's own life and the events of LOTR. This paper has sought to add to that discussion by examining medical similarities between WWII Medicine and the Medicine of Middle Earth. Whether it is Hostess Houses and Houses of Healing, athelas and anesthesia, or shell-shock and Black Breath, it's clear that Tolkien's experiences had, at minimum, an unconscious impact on the rich and textured world he created.

As a young boy, Tolkien was stung by a tarantula, which many speculate was the inspiration behind the giant spider named Shelob who appears in *The Return of the King*. In response to this speculation Tolkien stated, “And if that [Shelob] has anything to do with my being stung by a tarantula when a small child, people are welcome to the notion (supposing the improbable, that any one is interested)” (Carpenter, *Letters* 217). Tolkien’s comment on the improbability of anyone’s interest in his inspirations seems comical now in comparison to the body of work dedicated to analyzing the biography, career, writings and thoughts of this literary giant. But at the end of the day, perhaps Tolkien was also just a man fighting his fears with his pen.

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