

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SONGS IN THE MAKING OF HEROES AND THEIR IMPACT ON DIFFERENT MEDIA



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Translator

**Abstract:** This paper analyses the importance of songs in the making of heroes in Middle Earth, focusing both on how heroes lead to the making of songs and on how songs lead to the making of heroes. It shows how poems, meant as songs, apply specific linguistic mechanisms to cause an impact on the way we see those who are described in the songs, especially the elves. Moreover, it analyses how these songs are interpreted and transposed into different media, besides discussing whether they are chosen and adapted in such a way as to facilitate the subtitling task. The paper looks at how songs, related to the elvish world and actions, are valued and relevant in the construction of heroes in *The Lord of Rings*. Likewise, it reflects on how they were analysed, and which elements were given priority to during the translation process.

**Keywords:** Tolkien – Middle Earth – Song – Intermedial dynamics – Translation.

“[...] if there is no poet to sing them, heroes do vanish. The word and the writing, namely the gatekeepers of the past, offer the ultimate victory over oblivion and death.”

(Vincent Ferré, *Tolkien*)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Portuguese edition: “[...] se não houver um poeta para os cantar, os heróis desaparecem, a palavra e a escrita, guardiãs do passado, oferecem a derradeira vitória sobre o esquecimento e a morte.” (FERRÉ 2004: 284).

**Do heroes lead to the making of songs or rather, do songs lead to the making of heroes? Is it a brave and fearless character and the hardships of a long quest that determine what is heroic? Or then is it the way in which these deeds are perceived that showcases the heroic fragment? Who or what determines what is heroic or not? Is someone a hero because of what s/he does or is it how what is done is then perceived and remembered by others? These are some of the questions raised and discussed in this paper, even though there is probably no single true and definitive answer to all (or any) of them. These questions will be analysed from an internal and external point of view considering the characters and the readers. Moreover, these issues will be approached from a linguistic, literary, practical and even philosophical point of view. Nonetheless, we aim at no more than presenting a view on the relevance of songs in the making of heroes in Tolkien's work, especially *The Lord of the Rings*.**

### **1. Tolkien's heroes**

Heroes have been defined in many ways. Roughly, according to numerous dictionary definitions, a hero can generally be described as a person who is admired for great and brave acts or fine qualities. Nevertheless, we will try to prove that achieving brave acts or having fine qualities is not always enough to become a hero, or even to be perceived as one, since this is not enough to make sure one will be remembered. A hero can also just be a person who is greatly admired. But then again, being admired is no proof of accomplished heroic acts, so this is also not enough to define a hero. Some dictionaries also define a hero as the main male character in a story, play, movie, etc. Again, this definition raises several contradictory issues. Firstly, no leading male character is guaranteed to be heroic, and secondly, why should it be the chief *male* character and not just the main character, be it male or female? In fact, *The Lord of the Rings* portrays quite a few heroic female characters, such as Arwen and Éowin. Hence, one can conclude that there are many views on who (or even what) a hero is. It can

therefore be assumed that whoever is seen as a hero depends greatly on a personal definition and perception. One could even advocate that heroism is merely in the eye of the beholder.

This paper will nonetheless only consider heroes who manage to achieve something extraordinary, especially those who come from a common walk of life and who, through some out-of-the-ordinary chain of events, end up being faced with a quest, a *call to adventure*<sup>2</sup>. In fact, in most of Tolkien's work, one can only be a hero if one takes part in some kind of adventure. Hence, taking part in an adventure implies being *called* out of a common and ordinary life. As far as Tolkien is concerned, there are no tales or songs about ordinary people and ordinary lives, and that is why the first step to becoming a hero, who is worthy of a song, is the stepping out of the ordinary. This idea is clearly voiced by Sam when he sits down to rest with Frodo on their way up the stairs of Cirith Ungol:

"The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for [...]. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered are the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them [...]. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten." (TOLKIEN 1973b: 362)

Furthermore, it is interesting, though not surprising, to note that heroes are created during the journey, and not upon arrival at a specific destination. It is the journey that provides Tolkien's characters with the chance to become heroic. The heroic importance lies within the learning process, the bravery of character and courage shown throughout the journey. Tolkien's characters are not born heroes and they do not acquire this status overnight. They must prove themselves in the course of long, long journeys. In some senses, one might even say that the

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<sup>2</sup> Reference to Joseph Campbell's monomyth (*Hero With a Thousand Faces*), which analyses the patterns and paths of heroes in mythology.

character's journey somehow represents the inner journey of becoming a hero. In Tolkien's work, it seems that *becoming* a hero is rather more relevant than just *being* one.

According to DURIEZ (2003), Tolkien did know that readers expected heroes in stories such as those of Middle Earth. However, heroes from *Beowulf* or *The Odyssey* are rather outdated and lack the appeal of reality. As such, Tolkien's heroes are more of a biblical type than of a superman nature<sup>3</sup>. The most relevant traits of his heroes are humility and imagination, and not strength and power. In fact, Duriez believes that "The World will be saved by humble and common people, and not by the powerful or the wise"<sup>4</sup>. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that a proper hero, according to Tolkien, will come from people who are as common as the hobbits. As such, it is amongst these "common" hobbits that one will find the humblest and legitimate hero, namely Sam. As Duriez states, service, loyalty and sacrifice are heroic qualities in Tolkien's world.<sup>5</sup>

"Sam, the hobbit, is the 'main hero' (as Tolkien calls him) in *The Lord of the Rings*. In a letter to his son Christopher, in 1944, the professor said that most certainly, 'Sam is a flawless character, Bilbo's successor, a true hobbit. Frodo is not as interesting since he has to think in noble terms and, one can say, he has a calling'. However, and despite

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<sup>3</sup> Portuguese edition: "O leitor espera heróis tradicionais como parte do género. Contudo, Tolkien conhecia os seus leitores e sabia que não podia escrever como o autor de *A Odisseia*, *A Morte de Artur* ou *Beowulf*. O público original destas obras acreditava que o mal podia ser vencido com um super-herói. Ora, actualmente, um herói assim seria uma figura de banda desenhada pouco convincente, como Indiana Jones ou James Bond, onde a crença depende da acção. [...] Foi capaz [...] de criar heróis convincentes mais bíblicos do que super-homens. Na Terra Média de Tolkien, em última instância, os humildes herdarão a Terra." (DURIEZ 2003: 199-200).

<sup>4</sup> Portuguese edition: "O mundo será salvo por gente humilde e comum e não pelos poderosos ou sábios."

<sup>5</sup> Portuguese edition: "A mordomia é uma qualidade heróica valorizada no mundo de Tolkien, e o sacrifício também. [...] Ser leal e serviçal também são qualidades heroicas" (DURIEZ 2003: 201).

this, Frodo is a key hero, even more so, due to his determination to fulfil the quest to Mordor.”<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, one can still find strong and virile heroes in Tolkien’s work, “a heroic hero, the sort we feel shy of identifying ourselves with” (Rogers *apud* LOBDELL 2003: 69).

“However, there are also ‘heroic’ heroes, with traits that can redefine greatness. Aragorn is a character who is able to match great legendary heroes, but he is characterised by gentleness, humility and the gift of healing. Even though he is pre-Christian, he is a hero and a Christic king. The noble quality, which is often attributed to the elves, is softened and humanised in him.”<sup>7</sup>

Still, throughout the whole story, this type of *hero* is still more interested in sharing songs than with being part of them, as stated by Vincent Ferré: “Without being certain that men will ever hear about his courage, Aragorn prepares himself for combat with no promise of fame”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Portuguese edition: “O hobbit Sam é o «herói principal» (como lhe chama Tolkien) de O Senhor dos Anéis. Numa carta ao filho Christopher, em 1944, o professor dizia que, certamente, «Sam é a personagem mais aperfeiçoada, o sucessor de Bilbo do primeiro livro, o hobbit genuíno. Frodo não é tão interessante porque tem de pensar em termos nobres e tem, digamos, uma vocação.». Frodo, contudo, e apesar desta explicação, é um herói central, tanto mais pela sua persistência em cumprir a demanda até Mordor” (DURIEZ 2003: 200).

<sup>7</sup> Portuguese edition: “Todavia, também existem heróis «heróicos» com qualidades que redefinem a grandeza. Aragorn é figura capaz de igualar os grandes heróis lendários, mas caracteriza-se pela docilidade, humildade e pelo dom da cura. Embora o centenário seja pré-cristão, ele é um herói e um rei crístico. As nobres qualidades frequentemente associadas aos elfos são neles suavizadas e humanizadas” (DURIEZ 2003: 201).

<sup>8</sup> Portuguese edition: “Sem certezas de que os homens venham a ouvir falar da sua coragem, Aragorn prepara-se para o combate sem promessa de fama” (FERRÉ 2003: 286).

## 2. The favouring and flavouring of songs

“Ultimately, in Tolkien’s world, music is the organizing principle behind all creation. Tolkien’s mystical conception of the World as a manifestation of great musical composition, seems to presuppose a musical cosmos that is an eternally harmonious system created by a Supreme Intelligence. It also presupposes that encoded within the “Great Music” and the “Spheres of the World” is all that was, is, and will be, including the fate of every man and every living thing in creation.” (DAY 2003: 20)

Not only in *The Lord of the Rings*, but also in several mythological stories, such as *Beowulf*, are songs a crucial part of the story<sup>9</sup>. It is through songs that we learn about past deeds, history and heroes. It is also through songs that we get to know the heroes, adventures, dangers they underwent and overcame, as well as how what they did changed everything. This is probably why songs, written as poems, were always given a special stand in Tolkien’s work. Namely, in *J. R. R. Tolkien reads The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings*, when during the 1950s he recorded some parts of the books and all his main characters were to recite songs (FERRÉ 2004: 285).

There are seven ‘speaking races’ in Tolkien’s world, each of them somehow representing a different feature of humankind. And, if some are well aware of others and they represent no wonder or mystery at all (such as men and elves are aware of mostly everything), there are other races who live rather ‘boxed’ within their lands and everything that goes beyond borders is somehow mysterious, out of their range of knowledge and understanding; this outside world is ‘fantastic’ and gives way to the making of songs, which is what happens with hobbits and their views on elves, ents or pretty much anything besides their own kind. In fact, this is quite easy to explain. Just as during the Discoveries people would make up myths of monsters to explain what they could not understand, or

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<sup>9</sup> Portuguese edition: “Ele cantava a glória de Segismundo e dos seus grandes feitos [...]”, *Beowulf*, org. de J. Queval, op. cit., p. 95 (v. 874 in Swanton’s edition, op. cit., 77).

even songs about the heroic deeds of their sailors, so too the people of Middle Earth compose songs to remember and explain extraordinary deeds.

Going through the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*, or any of Tolkien's work set in Middle Earth, one will quickly realise these are filled with songs written in verse. In fact, the very creation of Middle Earth happens with a song. The Ainur, divine creatures of Eä, create the world with *Ainunlindalë*<sup>10</sup>, a song that constitutes the first part of *The Silmarillion*. As Duriez puts it, "The power of the song is the magical power behind creation [...]", or rather, songs are so powerful as to enable the very creation of Middle Earth<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Duriez believes that this was C. S. Lewis' inspiration for the creation of Narnia.

### 3. How heroes lead to the making of songs

Despite usually being overlooked by readers, who tend to jump these verses, songs are crucial to several aspects of the storyline. In fact, it is through these songs that characters, places, deeds and quests are put into context. More often than not, heroic and other relevant characters and places are introduced by others who sing about their endeavours. This is especially evident when the Company is exploring Moria and Sam wonders "Why did they [dwarves] do it all for? They didn't live in these darksome holes surely?" (TOLKIEN 1973a: 354) to which Gimli quickly replies:

"These are not holes,' said Gimli. 'This is the great realm and city of the Dwarrowdelf. And of old it was not darksome, but full of light and splendour, as is still remembered in our songs.' He rose and standing in the dark he began to chant in a deep voice, while the echoes ran away into the roof." (TOLKIEN 1973a: 354)

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<sup>10</sup> *Ainunlindalë* in Quenya, one the languages of elves, means "Music of the Ainur".

<sup>11</sup> Portuguese edition: "O poder da canção é o poder mágico que subjaz a criação [...]" (DURIEZ 2003: 221).

This proves that the song is one (or maybe the only) way of preserving greatness in one's memory. The actual verses that he sings support this idea further by describing how mighty the Durin people were in building something that, no matter what may come, "There shone for ever fair and bright":

*"[...] A king he was on carven throne  
In many-pillared halls of stone  
With golden roof and silver floor,  
And runes of power upon the door.  
The light of sun and star and moon  
In shining lamps of crystal hewn  
Undimmed by cloud or shade of night  
There shone for ever fair and bright.[...]"*  
(TOLKIEN 1973a)

And despite all the work these dwarves had, as described in Sam's words – "every one of them busier than badgers for five hundred years to make all this, and most in hard rock too!" (TOLKIEN 1973a: 354), the song then goes on to portray them.

*"[...] Unwearied then were Durin's folk;  
Beneath the mountains music woke:  
The harpers harped, the minstrels sang,  
And at the gates the trumpets rang. [...]"*  
(TOLKIEN 1973a)

Nonetheless, the song does not go as far as not acknowledging that the world had changed:

*"[...] The world is grey, the mountains old,  
The forge's fire is ashen-cold;"*  
(TOLKIEN, 1973a)

Still, it is clear that glory and mightiness do not die, not the kind that finds their way into a song. All the people and deeds that find their way into a song tend to be never-dying and somehow everlasting. As such,

“[...] But still the sunken stars appear  
In dark and windless Mirrormere;  
There lies his crown in water deep,  
Till Durin wakes again from sleep.”  
(TOLKIEN 1973a: 354-356)

By using a distinct rhythm, pace, choice of words and way of portraying people and deeds, these songs, or poems, say it as no piece of prose ever could. Only subtleness and specificities of language and imagery found in poetry say it all. As such, after this almost solemn moment, “Gimli was silent. Having sung his song he would say no more”, is almost as if anything one could ever add would just ruin it (TOLKIEN 1973a: 356).

Another example of how relevant songs are to the understanding of history, deeds, people and places worth knowing and remembering is the *Song of Beren and Lúthien*, which is sung, remembered and somehow relived by Aragorn. Again, the solemnity of the moment is clearly conveyed by the silence and softness surrounding this moment.

“‘I will tell you the tale of Tinúviel,’ said Strider, ‘in brief – for it is a long tale of which the end is not known; and there are none now, except Elrond, that remember it aright as it was told of old. It is a fairy tale, though it is sad, as are all the tales of Middle-earth, and yet it may lift up your hearts.’ He was silent for some time, and then he began not to speak, but to chant softly [...]” (TOLKIEN 1973a: 216)

Again, the same softness and solemnity is present when Legolas sings about Nimrodel, “In a soft voice hardly to be heard amid the rustle of the leaves above them he began” (TOLKIEN 1973a: 380).

Relevant arguments come to mind when thinking of the reasons why prose is put aside in favour of songs, whenever the topic is something extraordinary, be it place, heroic deed or character. One could say that songs are easier to learn and remember and that is probably why a lot of common knowledge is passed on from one generation to the other by the use of songs and poems. If there is some heroic deed that should be remembered, people pass it on in such a way as to make it interesting enough to keep it moving from one generation to the other. Songs are used to teach children a myriad of things, as happens in the case of nursery rhymes. This ‘teaching method’ works because songs and rhymes are different, fun and memorable. Thus, if they help teach children, why not adults too? As David Day mentions, “In most ancient civilizations, the study of music was recognized as the primary means of understanding the universe” (DAY 2003: 20). Furthermore, when writing, songs can be a fun way of telling stories, instead of using *old boring narratives*. This change of rhythm and pace from the prose of the narrative is needed to highlight the extraordinary aspect of some tales, and help the reader learn more about the hero.

On the one hand, this may imply that songs are a good media for remembering and passing on heroic tales. On the other hand, it may also mean these songs or poems are somehow embellished to make things interesting for the listeners. In fact, this makes one wonder whether the heroic nature comes from the deed, the perception of the deed or the song itself. Even if sometimes a heroic action may arise from a stroke of luck, most of the time someone does something which is at least a bit heroic. Nevertheless, *a tale never loses in the telling*, and as time goes by, heroes tend to grow more heroic as their story is further spread and as more people and generations perceive them as heroes. This idea might lead us to the conclusion that, in fact, songs – and all the inherent literary structures that make them poetic and memorable – are crucial to the construction of heroes or, more accurately, the way of perceiving heroes.

#### 4. How songs lead to the making of heroes

Sometimes, the song behind a hero is a force that is more relevant than the hero *per se* and his/her deeds. Sometimes, it is the song that makes readers perceive certain characters as heroes, long before any other literary structure has the chance to do so. At times, the song, or the *possibility* of a future song is what promotes a character into becoming a hero.

In fact, throughout all the hardships and pains of his journey with the Company and especially with Frodo, Sam kept wishing that someday, somehow, it would all be worth it if people would just sing about them, as he states in *The Two Towers*:

“Still, I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We’re in one, of course; but I mean: put into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards. And people will say: ‘Let’s hear about Frodo and the Ring!’” (TOLKIEN 1973b: 363)

And eventually their deeds are acknowledged, in Gondor, after their quest is properly concluded, “[...] they were surprised to see knights in bright mail and tall guards in silver and black standing there, who greeted them with and bowed before them.” As it should be, their extraordinary journey and accomplishments do get them a place in songs:

“And as the Hobbits approached swords were unsheathed, and spears were shaken, and horns and trumpets sang, and men cried with many voices and in many tongues:

‘Long live the Halflings! Praise them with great praise! [...]

To Sam’s final and complete satisfaction and pure joy, a minstrel of Gondor stood forth, and knelt, and begged leave to sing. And behold! he said:

‘Lo! lords and knights and men of valour unashamed, kings and princes, and fair people of Gondor, and Riders of Rohan, and ye sons of Elrond, and Dúnedain of the North, and Elf and Dwarf, and greathearts of the Shire, and all free folk of the West, now

listen to my lay. For I will sing to you of Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom.”  
(TOLKIEN 1973c: 248-249)

Alternatively, songs can also lead to the making of heroes, or then at least play some role in doing so. For Sam, the promise or possibility of being part of a song – of achieving glory and being part of one of those *great tales*, of being kept alive in history for generations to come – is sometimes the source of strength that he needs to carry on. Somehow, it is the possibility of becoming a hero that allows him to carry on and become one. Holding on to the idea that he *could* become one makes him go ahead and does what it takes. Of course, Sam is also greatly pushed by his loyalty and love for Frodo, since he is not capable of abandoning him for any reason whatsoever.

## **5. Impact on different media**

Translating is never an easy or immediate task. As Paul Valéry said, “Fidelity to meaning alone in translation is a kind of betrayal”. When one tries to add the translation of poetry and spice it up with different media, then one faces a far greater challenge. Conveying all the meanings, beauty, solemnity and everything that is present in these songs – be it in another language or another media – is close to an impossible mission worthy of looking at.

Given the time and space constraints, this paper will consider rather superficially just a few examples. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the linguistic and poetic mechanisms of songs and their impact on one’s perception of the characters in different media.

The first relevant aspect that has an impact on this translation or transposition is how songs are analysed in the process of conveying them into another language or media. Thus, one could ask which elements are given priority to during the translation process? Considering the constraints of translating poetry – the choice

between focusing on metrics, rhyme, rhythm, semantics, or figures of speech, amongst others – one can find different solutions to this challenge, as the goals of each of these features and their order of relevance varies according to the person or the media in question.

When looking at the translation of some of the songs/poems of *The Lord of the Rings*, one would say that, more than pace, rhyme or rhythm, the Portuguese versions privilege the words and the raw meaning of the poems<sup>12</sup>. Here, it should be added that this is just a personal interpretation and opinion with no deep knowledge of the context and conditions under which the translations were carried out.

When looking at the verses Gimli sings in Moria about Durin, the immediate meaning is clearly preserved in the Portuguese translation.

However, reading the verses out loud, one realises the rhythm and melody, which is created by the rhyme present in the word choice and order of the original song, are not present in the translation.

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<sup>12</sup> In relation to the Portuguese versions, this paper will look solely at the Portuguese edition by Edições Europa América (1981).

<p><i>But still the sunken stars appear In dark and windless Mirrormere; There lies his crown in water deep, Till Durin wakes again from sleep.</i> (TOLKIEN 1973a: 356)</p>	<p><i>Mas as estrelas submersas ainda aparecem No negro e parado Lago do Espelho; Lá jaz a sua coroa na água funda, Até Durin despertar de novo.</i> (TOLKIEN 1981a: 364).</p>
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Again, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, when Aragorn sings the *Song of Beren and Lúthien*, the original version and the translation share a very similar meaning but make use of rather different styles. Nevertheless, in this case, the Portuguese verses show some concern in conveying some of the literary stylistic traits besides the meaning. This is made clear by the anastrophe and the omission of the verb in the second verse (“*Altas e graciosas as umbelas da cicuta*” rather than “*As umbelas da cicuta eram altas e graciosas*”).

<p><i>The leaves were long, the grass was green, The hemlock-umbels tall and fair, And in the glade a light was seen Of stars in shadow shimmering.</i> (TOLKIEN 1973a: 216).</p>	<p><i>As folhas eram compridas, a erva verde, Altas e graciosas as umbelas da cicuta E na clareira via-se um luzeiro De estrelas a brilhar na sombra.</i> (TOLKIEN 1981a: 228).</p>
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In translation, and especially in literary translation, there is often the need to compromise insofar as different languages have different stylistic and semantic mechanisms which, most of the time, are rather unique and do not resemble those of other languages. In this specific case, one could say that meaning and semantics were the priorities of the translator of this Portuguese version of *The Lord of the Rings*.

When considering another media – *The Lord of the Rings* movies – songs are not as present as they are in the books, rather far from so. One could think of many reasons for this, be it the need to create harmonies for written songs and all the challenges that this might bring, the need to find a way to ‘pause’ the action and create the right mood for a song, as well as the challenges for the actors, amongst many other possible reasons. At this point, this paper will only look at

two examples illustrating two different solutions for this matter: the *Song of Beren and Lúthien* and the moment when Frodo and Sam are presented with their own song about their deeds in Gondor.

In the first case, the extended version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* offers us a small preview of Aragorn singing. One could argue that, despite all the challenges and constraints, the film is able to convey the solemnity of the moment by giving priority to the content of the song, rather than its harmony.

As for the second example, in relation to Frodo and Sam's song, the third movie of the trilogy provides one with a different view. Leaving the song aside, the film tries to convey the same degree of relevance conveyed in the book by having the newly crowned king bow before the four hobbits, as well the whole city of Gondor. In this way, the honour and acknowledgment represented by Frodo and Sam having their own song is transposed to the honour it would be to have a king bow before mere hobbits. This is a rather interesting strategy which proves how relevant the song is, when one looks at what it is replaced by in the movie. One should remember that the song itself is a reference to all the heroic deeds achieved throughout most of their journey.

## **Conclusion**

Should one, for a moment, leave Tolkien's world aside and think of one's own world, it would be possible to realise that today's heroes are the people about whom we also 'sing' about. If one takes 'songs' as metaphors for media coverage, as relevant stances in socialisation, culture and history, then, heroes can only be heroes if people want them to be, no matter what they have achieved. How relevant are metaphoric songs in the making of today's heroes? One could say quite a lot. As Vergil put it in *The Aeneid*, "If aught I sing / have lasting music, no remotest age / shall blot your names from honor's storied scroll" (VERGIL 1910, Book IX, verse 446).

There are really not many other ways of learning about heroes which can provide them with such a solemn character. How relevant are deeds and achievements, in other words, how relevant are heroes to the making of songs? Actually, not so much anymore. In fact, there are many reasons for this, such as the (lack of) relevance of good character traits, or the (lack of) importance of selfless achievements, amongst many other reasons. This corresponds to the way in which we assess people and what we value in heroes nowadays – these, unfortunately (or maybe not), tend to be (in)famous rather than heroic. If in Tolkien's world and work heroes seem to lead to the making of songs more often than the opposite, in today's non-epic real world, one could say that it is less so.

Nevertheless, it seems that Tolkien's heroes do get the privilege of being 'sung' if they are brave enough to step out of their common world, evolve and show their heroic character during the course of the journey. They end up being able to do what is extraordinary in order to preserve the ordinary world, as it were, free from whatever evil they are fighting.

In Tolkien's work, poems and songs provide a magic or extraordinary character, almost like a *spell* that, in Ferré's (2003: 286) words, gives the characters their heroic nature:

"[...] the Rohan's guard's remark towards Strider – 'It seems like you came on the wings of a song, from forgotten times' – could also be addressed to all the characters, appointing them as story heroes. Hence, we are compelled to consider this work as a 'spell', a magic formula, given that this term refers to those who have been quoted and to the quotation itself, 'it simultaneously stands for a story that is told and a power formula over the living.'"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Portuguese edition: "[...] o reparo do guarda de Rohan a Passo de Gigante – «Parece que vieste nas asas da canção, dos tempos esquecidos» – poderia também aplicar-se também a todas as personagens, designando-as como heróis de relatos. Somos assim impelidos a considerar esta obra como um «spell», uma fórmula mágica, já que este termo designa o enunciado e a enunciação, «significa em simultâneo uma história contada e uma fórmula de poder sobre os vivos» (FERRÉ 2003: 286).

Just as Sam did, one could also wonder: “Don’t the great tales never end?” (TOLKIEN 1973b: 363).

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