

THE USE OF PROVERBS IN THE LORD OF THE RING BY TOLKIEN

Niyazova M. Kh.

PhD in Philological Sciences, Bukhara State University
mokhiniyazova87@gmail.com

Tuxtayeva M. A.

2nd Course Master Student Bukhara State University
ahmadovnamohinur@gmail.com

Abstract:

Proverbs are an important part of the complex language Tolkien created for Middle-earth: Tolkien as the narrator/author and many of his characters use them. This article discusses Tolkien's use of proverbs and includes the question of how and why he used proverbs when writing the novel.

Keywords: proverbs, The Lord of the Ring, J.R.Tolkien, proverbs in literature, traditional proverbs, Middle Earth.

Introduction

Professor of Anglo-Saxon and English language and literature at Oxford University, Tolkien's interest in Anglo-Saxon literature and speech is evident in the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Tolkien worked for many years as a research assistant, analyzing and expanding the explanations of the Oxford English Dictionary. The quality of this work demonstrates Tolkien's knowledge and understanding of the finer points and broader concepts that go beyond words. The rich language of Tolkien's beloved book, The Lord of the Rings, helped create the sense that Middle-earth really existed, giving readers a sense of leadership about the history, culture, and civilization of Middle-earth.

The Lord of the Rings— an epic novel of English writer J. R. R. Tolkien, is one of the most famous works of the fantasy genre. This novel was written as a single book, but due to its large size, the first edition had to be divided into three parts: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, The Return of the King. So far it is published as a trilogy, although very often in a single volume. The Lord of the Rings is one of the most famous and popular books of XX century. This novel has been translated into at least 38 languages. This book has had a strong influence on literary works in the fantasy genre, on board and computer games, cinematography, as well as the world culture. Proverbs are an important part of the complex language Tolkien created for Middle-Earth. Tolkien's use of proverbs is particularly rich. Many characters even use anti proverbs which is a speaker/writer's reworking of traditional proverbs and there are a lot of dialogues where the characters talk about their future choices often by exchanging proverbs.

Tolkien's use of proverbs always presents the reader linguistic and social models of proverb structure. Tolkien sometimes uses traditional proverbs to make it easier for readers to identify sentences as proverbs. Some examples are classics such as "All's well as ends well", which is said by Farmer Maggot to Merry. At the end of the book series, Tolkien uses this proverb again; after the Gaffer (Sam's grandfather) has returned to his home, he continuously says, "It's an ill wind as



blows nobody any good, as I always tell. And All's well as ends Better!'" In fact, The Gaffer uses two proverbs in these sentences: "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good" and "All's well as ends well." We can see that he changes the proverbs a bit as well – instead of "All's well that ends well," we can read the stronger "All's well as ends better" (Boswell 1969, 63; Stanton 1996, 344). One can also notice the more colloquial and archaic "as" which is used instead of "that". The use of this proverb by The Gaffer is applied to remind the audience of his lower socio-economic status and traditional values.

Another real-world proverb which is used in Middle Earth is an older version of the familiar "When it rains it pours". When Frodo and his friends inquire about beds at the Prancing Pony Inn in Bree, the innkeeper Barliman Butterbur indicates that they have a lot of guests by saying, "It never rains but it pours,' as we say in Bree" (FR, I, ix, 150)

Tolkien repeatedly depicts that a phrase is used as a proverb or proverbial by writing introductory sentences (linguistic devices which are intended to draw attention to the proverb), such as "As we used to say..." This frame draws the reader's attention to the fact that a proverb follows just like the phrase "Once upon a time" alerts the reader that a wonder tale is following. One has already seen a few examples of these kind of frames used by Tolkien ("as my father used to say," "as my old gaffer used to say). The use of these tying phrases reflects the use of proverbs in real life interaction; in order to show the traditional wisdom and use of a proverb, speakers often use these kind of tying phrases to describe that they are using a proverb.

In conclusion, Tolkien, who is a master of Anglo Saxon and English language, applied his keen interest and skill in his The Lord of the Rings trilogy by using different stylistic devices and namely proverbs. He used proverbs in the speech of his characters for different purposes such as to deliver the audience a Middle Earth atmosphere while reading the trilogy.

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