2021

Stigma and the Social Function of Fate in the Story of Túrin Turambar

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Of the three 'great tales' of Middle-earth, *The Children of Húrin* is arguably the most tragic. It tells the story of Morgoth's curse on Húrin and his family and the sequence of events that befall Húrin's son Túrin, ultimately leading to his suicide and the deaths of many others. Tolkien entitled this tale 'Narn i Chîn Húrin,' translated as 'The Tale of the Children of Húrin,' but, as Christopher Tolkien notes, his father also proposed the title 'Narn e'Rach Morgoth,' or 'The Tale of the Curse of Morgoth,' because of the complex interplay between Morgoth's curse and Túrin's free will throughout the narrative (C. Tolkien, p. 18). This tension between fate and free will is present in much of Tolkien's work, but perhaps never as strongly presented as in this story.

While interpreting the balance between fate and free will in *The Children of Húrin* can be difficult, looking at the narrative through the lens of disability theory reveals the social function fate plays in *The Children of Húrin*. In particular, the application of Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, as laid out in his 1963 book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, reveals how Morgoth's curse affects Túrin's social interactions and the ramifications these interactions have on Túrin himself. Goffman's work on stigma would lay the foundation for the development of disability theory as its own field, particularly in regards to the social model of disability (Smith, p. 142), but analyzing social discrimination in terms of stigma and identity permits a wider application of social disability theory, allowing scholars and readers to consider the social ramifications of discrimination beyond categories such as blindness, paraplegia, autism, or other physical and mental disabilities. In retracing disability theory back to stigma, it becomes possible to study how a concept like fate can function like a disability in *The Children of Húrin*. Fate's social function as a stigma demonstrates that predetermined or not, the tragedy of Túrin's tale cannot fully rest with Túrin or Morgoth but must reside with every actor in the story. This neither exonerates nor accuses Túrin but deepens our understanding of society's role in the tragedy of *The Children of Húrin*.

There are four primary themes that emerge in Túrin scholarship: influences, naming, anti-heroism, and the tension between fate and free will. Gloriana St. Clair finds analogies in the *Volsunga Saga*, Verlyn Flieger in the medieval concept of 'wild men' ('Tolkien's Wild Men'), Philip J. Vogel and Kenton L. Sena in the tradition of the wilderness as a space of becoming, Julian Eilmann in Aristotelian tragedy, and – of course – multiple scholars have noted the relationship with the Finnish *Kalevala* (Flieger 'Introduction,' Shippey, West 'Setting the Rocket Off' and '*Ofermod*,' Helms, Fimi, and Tolkien himself[1]). Fimi also highlights the similarities with the story of Oedipus and analyzes the dichotomy of space in Túrin's story between the forest and the city.

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[1] In his letter to Milton Waldman in 1951, Tolkien notes the influences of Sigurd, Oedpius, and Kullervo in the story of Túrin (*Letters*, p. 150).

Elizabeth Broadwell, Janet Brennan Croft ('Noms de Guerre'), and Marie Nelson analyze the significance of Túrin's ever-growing list of names and identities, while Putri Prihatini draws parallels between Túrin and Javanese naming traditions. Phillip Fitzsimmons, Thomas Honegger, and West ('*Ofermod*') explore Túrin's role as hero (or anti-hero), and, in other scholarship, Gergely Nagy and Flieger (*Interrupted Music*) note Tolkien's use of inter-textuality in the story.

By far, however, the most common theme in scholarship on the story of *The Children of Húrin* is the tension between fate and free will. All scholars, as far as I am aware, recognize the coexistence of both fate and free will in Tolkien's work, though some tip the scale in favor of fate (Whitt) and others in favor of free will (Fornet-Ponse: 'Strange and free' and 'Freedom and Providence,' Mitchell, Fisher). Several scholars analyze this coexistence without tipping the scale either way (Shippey; Croft, 'Túrin and Aragorn'), and in Flieger's well-known essay 'The Music and the Task' she distinguishes a clear difference between the fate of the elves and the free will of men and the interplay of the two.

Interpreting the relationship between fate and free will in *The Children of Húrin* affects Túrin's own culpability for the tragic events in the narrative. If Túrin's fate is predetermined, he is a victim. If he is free to choose, he bears part if not all of the responsibility for the tragedies that befall him and those closest to him. Tolkien and his scholars seem to hold this question in tension as well, leaving it unresolved and open to interpretation – even if some scholars skew the balance one way or another. 'Free will' scholars will lay more responsibility on Túrin; 'fate' scholars will lessen that burden. Resolved or not, though, Túrin's culpability remains a central issue to the tension between fate and free will in his narrative.

Most scholars predicate their analyses of the seemingly paradoxical relationship between fate and free will in Tolkien's work on Tolkien's Christian, specifically Catholic, philosophy (Fornet-Ponse, Fisher), or on a blend of Tolkien's theology and the Norse/Germanic conception of fate that appealed to him (Shippey, Whitt), or take a philological approach to words like 'fate' and 'doom' to further understand the concept at work in Tolkien's narratives (Shippey, Whitt, Tolkien himself – edited by Hostetter).

The application of Goffman's theory of stigma on Túrin's story does not seek to resolve the tension between fate and free will, nor does it attempt to define 'fate' or 'doom.' Rather, this paper offers a different paradigm to consider when seeking to understand the role fate plays in Túrin's life, separate from a theological, philosophical, or philological approach. Disability theory and the concept of stigma reveals the social aspect of fate and how these social interactions can affect individuals in drastic ways. This maintains Tolkien's tension between fate and free will while also introducing the culpability of society in the tragedy of *The Children of Húrin.*

In her essay 'Tolkien's Gimpy Heroes,' Victoria Holtz Wodzak analyzes how the disabilities of Sador, Gwindor, Brandir, and Frodo diminishes their social standing and influence in *The Children of Húrin* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Wodzak's essay introduces the social model of disability to Middle-earth, particularly as it relates to the visible physical disabilities of characters in *The Children of Húrin* and drawing on studies specifically related to World War I – including the social sidelining of veterans post-war, the effects of P.T.S.D., and disability resulting from injury. This essay seeks to build on Wodzak's use of the social model of disability by expanding the discussion of disability in Middle-earth to include invisible disabilities – other than P.T.S.D. – and broaden the context of disability in Tolkien beyond his experience of World War I.

As Flieger points out, Túrin's story is published in several versions: the poem 'The Lay of the Children of Húrin in *The Lays of Beleriand*, chapter twenty-one in *The Silmarillion*, and in longer prose in *Unfinished Tales* (*Interrupted Music*, p. 109). [2] Douglas Kane outlines the sources of chapter twenty-one of *The Silmarillion* in the corresponding chapter of his book *Arda Reconstructed*, which, as Kane points out, draws heavily from the 'Grey Annals' as well (pp. 193-206). In 2007, Christopher Tolkien published the standalone volume *The Children of Húrin*. Bancroft describes this volume as the most integrated version of the story ('Túrin and Aragorn,' p. 156), though other scholars such as Mitchell attribute the 'story' to Tolkien and the 'novel' to Christopher in thinking about editorial involvement (p. 88). Fimi, however, points out that this version allows readers the most continuous and uninterrupted version of the story, and the version written at Tolkien's most 'mature' writing phase (p. 43), and West notes that despite the complicated textual history the story remains 'remarkably consistent' in the different versions, the basic narrative more or less set by the middle of 1919 ('*Ofermod*,' p. 240). This paper will follow Bancroft and Fimi's example and make use of *The Children of Húrin* since it is the most complete singular text and the thesis of this paper is not concerned with questions of authorship, editorial influence, or authorial intent, but with interpreting the story as it is presented in its most complete form.

Essential to this task is the ability to interpret fate as a stigma. Goffman defines stigma as a perceived attribute that separates an individual from others in a way that reduces the individual to a 'tainted, discounted' being in the eyes of society (p. 3). In the story of Túrin, fate refers specifically to the Curse of Morgoth. Following the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, Morgoth captures Túrin's father Húrin, imprisons him, and lays this curse upon Húrin, his wife Morwen, and their offspring: 'Behold! The shadow of my thought shall lie upon them wherever they go, and my

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[2] West also offers a list of published versions: 'Turambar and the Foalókë' in *Lost Tales 2*, 'The Lay of the Children of Húrin' in *Lays of Beleriand*, 'Narn i Hîn Húrin' in *Unfinished Tales*, extra materials in *HoME* volumes, and chapter 21 of *The Silmarillion* ('*Ofermod*,' pp. 240-241).

hate shall pursue them to the ends of the world' (*COH*, p. 63), elaborating, 'upon all whom you love my thought shall weigh as a cloud of Doom, and it shall bring them down into darkness and despair. Wherever they go, evil shall arise. Whenever they speak, their words shall bring ill counsel. Whatsoever they do shall turn against them. They shall die without hope, cursing both life and death' (p. 64). Morgoth's curse separates Túrin and his family from other people by its very nature. It is the biggest difference between him and everyone he encounters in the narrative. If 'curse' is defined as an utterance intending to inflict harm or punish someone ('Curse'), then it is tainting by its nature as well.

Goffman offers three categories of stigma: physical deformities, blemishes of character, and tribal stigmas such as race or religion – though these three categories are not exhaustive (p. 4). The curse is, of course, not a visible physical stigma, but it can be interpreted as a tribal stigma because of its tie to Túrin's family. It can also be interpreted as a perceived character blemish because this stigma relies on the *perception* of the curse as a character flaw and not necessarily its true status as one. This kind of stigma can be inferred from a known record such as imprisonment or unemployment (Goffman, p. 4), or – in Túrin's case – the 'known record' of his family's curse.

The curse's connection to Túrin's family is also important in understanding its role as a stigma. It is a hallmark of stigma that stigmatized individuals are treated categorically rather than individually (Brown, p. 152). Túrin's fate causes people to treat him not as his own man but as a marked member of Húrin's cursed family. Gwindor identifies him in this way in Nargothrond to Finduilas: 'Though he be indeed *agarwaen* son of *úmarth*, his right name is Túrin son of Húrin, whom Morgoth holds in Angband, and has cursed all his kin. Doubt not the power of Morgoth Bauglir!' (*COH*, p. 168).

Once Túrin's fate can be interpreted as a stigma, its social implications become apparent in every important episode in Túrin's life. First, this paper will explore how Túrin's pattern of socialization in Doriath becomes a foundational social experience that influences his decision-making process afterwards. Then this paper will analyze Túrin's social movement throughout the story in order to understand the complex interplay between society's treatment of Túrin and Túrin's response to that treatment and how both sides influence the tragic outcome of the narrative.

Túrin's first experience of discrimination because of the stigma of his fate becomes a foundational moment in his life both because of the social interaction itself and how Túrin responds to it. The curse is laid on Húrin and his family when Túrin is eight years old, though his mother attempts to protect him by sending Túrin to live with Thingol, king of Doriath. Thingol welcomes Túrin into his home as a foster-son, and the text notes that those who witness Túrin's reception marvel because 'that was not at that time done by kings, nor ever again by Elf-lord to a

Man' (p. 77). Thingol speaks to Túrin, saying 'Here, son of Húrin, shall your home be; and in all your life you shall be held as my son…dwell now here in love' (p. 77). The elf king's words indicate the most intimate kind of belonging and acceptance, establishing the standard that the society of Doriath will (or should) treat Túrin as one of their own. Both Morwen and Thingol attempt to shield Túrin from his fate, which is one possible pattern of socialization for stigmatized individuals, but Goffman notes that this protection rarely lasts past childhood (p. 32-33). As he grows older in Doriath, Túrin's protective sphere is broken dramatically during a formative social experience.

Túrin's interactions with the elf Saeros is the foundational negative experience of his stigma. Saeros, an elf who dealt 'haughtily with those whom he deemed a lesser state of worth than himself,' believes Túrin to be a tainted, discounted being, because Saeros 'had no love for Men, and least of all for any kinsman of Beren One-hand' (COH, p. 82). This hatred is not explicitly connection to Morgoth's curse in the text, but Saeros' hatred for men and relations of Beren can be interpreted as a 'stigma-theory' – or an 'ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences' (Goffman, p. 5). This allows Saeros' hatred, based Túrin's mortality and relationship to Beren, to be a projection of his disdain for Túrin based on the stigma of Túrin's fate – whether Saeros is aware of this or not.

Even if Saeros has constructed a stigma-theory to justify his hatred of Túrin, the resulting tragedy of this episode – Saeros' death and Túrin's departure from Doriath, which has its own consequences later – is the result of a complex interplay between Saeros' actions, Túrin's response, and the stigma itself: Morgoth's curse. The curse hovers over Túrin and Saeros' interactions. Túrin responds to Saeros' insults by pursuing him to his – accidental – death (*COH*, p. 89-90), and when Mablung, one of the elf-captains of Doriath, finds Túrin in this moment, he remarks to Túrin, 'A shadow is over you' (p. 91). After hearing what occurred, Thingol concludes, 'Malice is at work here' (p. 92). Saeros, however, treated Túrin according to his own resolve, and Túrin responded of his own volition. This incident not only influences Túrin's actions toward Saeros, but also how he responds to the entire society of Doriath. Túrin becomes weary of the Elven-halls (*COH*, p. 91), the 'elven' specification contrasting sharply in this moment with Túrin's identity as human. His confidence in his foster-father is shaken, as he does not trust Thingol to rule in his favor, and he leaves Doriath.

This mistrust stays with Túrin as he moves through other societies, which becomes apparent when the locations of Túrin's narrative are analyzed according to Goffman's classification of spaces stigmatized individuals can occupy. The contradiction between Thingol's acceptance and Saeros' discrimination classifies Doriath as a civil space, a place where stigmatized individuals are treated as if they belong and presumably do not need to hide stigmas, though this may be different

in practice and in conception (Goffman, p. 81). Goffman identifies two other types of spaces: forbidden and back places. Forbidden spaces are places where stigma is not allowed and the discovery of stigma results in expulsion (Goffman, p. 81). Stigmas are truly accepted in back places and there is no need for an individual to mask their stigma or conform to a different way of being (p. 81). Túrin will experience all three of these kinds of spaces, but his formative experience of Doriath as a civil space will affect his perception of these spaces and influence how he acts in each society.

The forest of the outlaws, the elf-kingdom of Nargothrond, Brethil, and Mîm's home in Bar-en-Danwedh each seem to exist dually within Goffman's classifications because of the divide between each places' objective state and Túrin's experience of it. The forest, Nargothrond, Brethil, and Bar-en-Danwedh appear to exist objectively as back spaces where Túrin is welcomed as himself without concern for the stigma of his fate. In the forest, the outlaws are 'desperate men…driven into the wild for evil deeds' (*COH*, p. 98), but all of these men's crimes appear to be known and accepted by the group, and it can be assumed that Túrin would be accepted too if the group knew his true identity. Yet Túrin keeps his identity, and thus the stigma of his fate as a member of Húrin's family, a secret, offering only the name of 'Neithan, the Wronged' (p. 101). He acts as if the forest were a civil space, where he is not truly welcome. This is not surprising after his experience at the hands of Saeros. His fear of the discovery of his stigma is grounded in the 'realistic assessment of the negative social consequences of stigmatization' (Coleman Brown, p. 156). This fear will motivate him in most of the spaces he occupies.

Túrin likewise hides his true identity in Nargothrond, though there appears to need for this. He gives the name Agarwaen, son of Úmarth (Blood-stained, son of Ill-fate), after the death of Beleg (p. 159). Interestingly, though seeking to avoid the stigma of his fate, Túrin gives a name that still identifies his stigma ('Ill-fate'). This secrecy, however, proves unnecessary. Túrin finds favor with Orodreth, king of Nargothrond (p. 160), and when Finduilas, Orodreth's daughter, discovers Túrin's identity, it does not diminish her affection for him (p. 169). When two elves come to Nargothrond as emissaries from Círdan the Shipwright, they correctly identify him before Orodreth's court (p. 173-175). Presumably, at this point, everyone either already knew or learns Túrin's identity, but there is no change in his social status in Nargothrond, proving the elven stronghold to be a true back space even though Túrin behaves like he is inhabiting a civil or even forbidden space where he must keep his identity hidden. Especially considering that this is an elven space, Túrin's actions Nargothrond can be interpreted in light of his experience in Doriath.

Túrin behaves the same way in Brethil. When Túrin comes to Brethil, the community's leader Brandir recognizes his true identity and welcomes him as he

is, but Túrin again insists on a hidden identity, taking on the name Turambar and begging Brandir not to share his true identity with anyone (p. 196-197). Túrin's decision to keep his identity a secret is his own, but it is clearly based on past social experience. In Brethil, as in Nargothrond or with the outlaws, Túrin is allowed to 'pass' for someone without the stigma of fate. This may provide social acceptance, but in Brethil passing has dire consequences, which is most evident when Túrin unknowingly marries his sister. This incest is thus the result of Túrin's decision to keep his identity hidden, but this decision is in turned based on past social experiences.

In Brethil, Nargothrond, and the forest, Túrin behavior seems influenced by society's earlier treatment of him, and this internalization of his stigma is also apparent in Dor-lómin. Initially a back space but transformed into a forbidden space by the invasion of the Easterlings, Dor-lómin is dangerous for Túrin because he is the rightful heir, but also because he kills Brodda, and essentially starts a riot (p. 188-189). These are Túrin's own actions, but Túrin himself connects this episode to Morgoth's curse, declaring that his actions have gone awry, 'as crooked as Morgoth' (p. 188). Remembering the words of the curse – 'wherever they go, evil shall arise…whatsoever they do shall turn against them' (p. 64) – Túrin's language reveals his own perception of the connection between his actions, their outcome, and his stigma. At this point, Túrin seems to believe that not only will society treat him a certain way because of the perceived stigma of his fate, but that the stigma is real. Not only is Túrin developing an instinctual reaction to society based on past experience, but he is internalizing the stigma itself.

Mîm's home in Bar-en-Danwedh is a complicated space to classify because of an issue of textuality in the narrative. Mîm hates Túrin's companions, but he seems to respect Túrin, who makes no efforts to hide his identity and seems to feel safe in Bar-en-Danwedh – perhaps the only space that truly operates as a back place for him. Nonetheless, the text says that one day Mîm went foraging but 'his true purpose was to seek out the servants of Morgoth, and to lead them to Túrin's hiding-place' (p. 148). Mîm's betrayal suggests that Bar-en-Danwedh becomes a forbidden space where Túrin is no longer welcome. However, in *The Children of Húrin*, there is a footnote explaining that 'another tale is told' where Mîm does not mean to betray Túrin but gives away his hiding place after orcs threaten to kill his son (p. 148). To the extent that this absolves Mîm's deliberate betrayal, it also by extension preserves Bar-en-Danwedh as a back place. However, with both versions of the story validated through Tolkien's careful construction of a manuscript tradition,[3] it is impossible to promote one version to the complete exclusion of the other and both classifications of Bar-en-Danwedh remain viable. Bar-en-Danwedh is an

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[3] See Flieger's 'J.R.R. Tolkien and the Matter of Britain' for more on Tolkien's manuscript tradition.

extremely important space for Túrin, as I will discuss later, because it becomes central to the construction of his own community.

Brethil, Nargothrond, and the forest demonstrate that not all of Túrin's social experiences are negative. In each of these spaces, Túrin increases in social standing as he spends more time in each place. Túrin becomes the leader of the outlaws, Orodreth's right-hand man, and the eventual leader of the Brethil community. As Fimi notes, however, Túrin seems to thrive most in liminal spaces (p. 51). Though she is writing about his existence on the borders between civilization and the wilderness, her assessment is also true of Túrin's social movement. Never, though, does he ever return to his highest social position, that of heir to the House of Hador. This does, however, complicate the trend that stigmatized individuals usually experience a trend of downward mobility in the social hierarchy (Coleman Brown, p. 149), which suggests that both Túrin and the societies he engaged in are capable of positive decisions and outcomes. This reinforces the influence both Túrin and other people exert on the outcomes of the story as it progresses, suggesting a more 'free will' leaning interpretation of Túrin's stigma, but it is not quite that simple.

Several societies overlook both Túrin's stigma and his behavior when it is 'restricted within the ecological boundaries of their community' (Goffman, p. 145), or when the community has need of Túrin's other abilities. In Nargothrond the elves overlook Túrin's often harsh personality because of his military prowess. In Brethil, the community turns to Túrin because of his skill in battle, ignoring the counsel of their leader Brandir (COH, p. 233). Brandir, it is worth noting, is stigmatized because of a visible physical disability. The community's decision to support Túrin over Brandir even though they are both stigmatized is predicated on the invisibility of Túrin's stigma and the visibility of Brandir's.[4]

Túrin does experience notable downslides in the social hierarchy after his stigma comes to light, not because of the society itself but because of Morgoth. His standing in the eyes of Ordoreth and the elves of Nargothrond does not change after his identity becomes known, as I discussed earlier. However, when his identity becomes known, Morgoth learns of it and brings about the downfall of Nargothrond, after which Túrin finds himself a stranger in a new community again. The situation is similar in Brethil. When Brandir first explains both Túrin and Niënor's identities, which reveals their incest and introduces that new stigma, the people do not seem to fully comprehend the full scope of the situation (p. 247). The community does not reject Túrin during the dangerous and confusing time following the slaying of Glaurung, but these events bring to light his incest and precipitate his suicide, two grievous blows to anyone's social standing. Both of these social downslides are due

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[4] See Victoria Holtz Wodzak's 'Tolkien's Gimpy Heroes' for more on Brandir's social experience of disability.

in some part to Morgoth's intervention in the story, further complicating the idea of culpability for the tragic end to Túrin's narrative.

Túrin's suicide may bring an end to his social journey, but its conclusion is ambiguous. Túrin is, after his death, considered a hero[5] but he is also an incestual suicide and murderer – two things that coexist in Túrin's legacy in Middle-earth. And in the events leading up to Túrin's death, society, Túrin himself, and Morgoth all seem to play a part.

In response to the foundational incident with Saeros, as well as Túrin's experiences throughout the narrative, Túrin reacts to society in light of his stigmatization and a major part of this response is the construction of his own identity apart from societal norms. When Túrin hides his true identity, he must still provide some identification, or personal biography in Goffman's terminology (p. 78), to the society he is entering. Túrin passes through many different societies throughout the narrative and brings a new biography to each one, resulting in long string of ever-shifting identities. The need for this construction of identity reflects the discrimination society inflicts upon Túrin and his own response, and these interactions also plays a part in bringing about Túrin's tragic end.

Túrin's first construction of a 'man-made' identity is in response to the episode with Saeros. He takes on the identity an outlaw after the death of Saeros even before joining the outlaw band in the forest. When Mablung asks him to return to Thingol for judgment, Túrin replies, 'I abjure [Thingol's] law and his judgment' (*COH*, p. 91). By placing himself beyond the reach of the king and his law, Túrin places himself outside the normal social space in direct response to his own perception of his treatment. Indeed, as the text later reveals, Túrin's prediction regarding how Thingol will judge him for the death of Saeros proves to be wrong (p. 95), but Túrin assumes the identity of an outlaw because of how he believes society will respond to him. It is not a new identity but rather a confirmation of his self-imposed identity when he subsequently joins an outlaw band.

The constant flux of Túrin's shifting identity is tracked predominantly by his almost constantly changing name. Names are the most common marker are identity, though also the easiest to tamper with (Goffman, p. 58), which is evident in Túrin's ever-growing collection of names. The names Neithan and Agarwaen are of particular interest because they both reflect past events, an example of how personal biographies are often constructed retrospectively, which allows the stigmatized individual to account for his own beliefs and practices regarding his identity (Goffman, p. 62, p. 38). Neithan the Wronged reflects Túrin's perception of the Saeros episode, while Agarwaen son of Úmarth refers to his slaying of Beleg. Broadwell describes these retroactive namings as 'new readings' of Túrin's history (p. 35). In both of these instances, it is Túrin's new reading of his own history – his

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[5] Elrond lists Túrin among the 'elf-friends of old' in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (*FR*, II, ii).

own interpretation – but in response to the stigma of his fate. The negative connotation, particularly of Agarwaen, reflects an internalization of his stigma.

Each of these new identities, however, does not erase any previous ones. Broadwell writes that Túrin never manages to leave his old self, or biography, behind (p. 37). She argues that these differing identities fragment Túrin into a series of personae each signified by a different name (p. 42), or what Goffman would term a 'multiplicity of selves' (p. 63). Brancroft likewise argues for Túrin's 'multiplicity of selves,' writing that he remains 'fragmented and chaotic to the end' because he cannot incorporate all of his identities into an integrated self-image ('Noms de Guerre', p. 111). Túrin finds himself juggling multiple identities in an attempt to control who knows the truth about him and his stigma. This fragmentation is the result of Túrin's decision to continuously remake himself, but since one of the reasons why Túrin feels the need to do so is because of how society treats him some of the responsibility for Túrin's fragmentation should lie with the society that stigmatizes him.

These multiple biographies come to a head in Nargothrond, where Túrin's social network is divided into people who think they know the individual and those who 'really' do (Goffman, p. 77). Finduilas, who views Túrin as kingly and grows to love him, does not know his true identity at this point. Gwindor, however, who does know who Túrin is, reveals Túrin's identity to her in connection with the curse in order to both inform Finduilas of Túrin's stigma and to point out that when she grew to love him she did not truly known him (*COH*, p. 168). Túrin is furious that his true identity becomes known, even if just to Finduilas, and he confronts Gwindor in what Goffman terms a 'showdown' between the stigmatized individual and those who know his or her secret (p. 85). Túrin also demonstrates this hostility at the revealing of his true identity when Círdan sends messengers to Nargothrond when they identify him: 'A man's name is his own, and should the son of Húrin learn that you have betrayed him when he would be hid, then may Morgoth take you and burn out your tongue!' (*COH*, p. 174). Though spoken out of a history of trouble and danger, Túrin's violent anger brings to bear his own role in deciding how to respond to societies within which he resides, especially the ones prepared to deal peacefully with him.

Having constructed his own identity apart from society, Túrin also creates a community separate from the ones that rejects him. He finds individuals who are sympathetic, in Goffman's terms (p. 19). With the outlaws Túrin finds a community of 'the own,' or people who share in the experience of being stigmatized (Goffman, p. 20). As Túrin tells Beleg, 'The grace of Thingol will not stretch to receive these companions of my fall, I think; but I will not part with them now, if they do not wish to part with me. I love them in my way, even the worst a little. They are of my own kind' (*COH*, p. 116). By 'own kind' I believe Túrin means much more than being human. Even though these outlaws do not share in Túrin's specific stigma,

they are all stigmatized individuals, and it is with them that Túrin finds his strongest sense of belonging. Even when he settles down in Brethil, his ties to the community are not as strong as the kinship Túrin feels with the outlaws. It is with the outlaws that 'the thought came to Túrin that from this small band he might rise to build himself a free lordship of his own' (p. 106-107). This society of Túrin's making comes to fruition after Túrin and his band come to stay with Mîm and after Beleg has joined them, 'for Túrin now gave the name of Dor-Cúarthol to all the land between Teiglin and the west march of Doriath; and claiming lordship of it he named himself anew, Gorthol, the Dread Helm' (p. 146). Though it does not last, Túrin constructs his own society free of stigma.

Túrin also finds community with 'the wise,' or 'persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan' (Goffman, p. 28). Beleg embodies this role most prominently in the story as Túrin's closest friend. He is normal in that he is a member of an established social order (Doriath), but he is intimately familiar with Túrin's identity and history and always sympathetic to Túrin's plight. Even from Túrin's time in Doriath, 'Beleg and Túrin were companions in every peril, and walked far and wide in the wild woods together' (*COH*, p. 86). After Túrin has fled Doriath, Beleg defends him before Thingol, bringing in the elf-maiden Nellas as a witness in Túrin's favor, which results in Thingol reversing his judgment regarding the death of Saeros (p. 93-95). He seeks out Túrin in the wilderness to tell him of Thingol's judgment (p. 96), and even continues his search through winter when other elves give up (p. 107). He stays with Túrin in Bar-en-Danwedh against his better judgment, even after the maltreatment and torture he suffered at the hands of Túrin's companions (p. 139). Beleg also experiences at least partial courtesy membership in Túrin's clan when he decides to stay with Túrin and the outlaws. He 'laboured much for the good of the Company,' fighting alongside the bandits and healing their injuries (p. 141). Perhaps the strongest signal of Beleg's membership among the stigmatized is that, after his harsh treatment at the hands of Andróg earlier, Andróg saves Beleg's life when the outlaws are attacked by orcs in Bar-en-Danwedh (p. 150).

Despite their deep friendship, Beleg dies tragically at Túrin's hand, one of the many woes that seem to haunt Túrin's life. By the end of the story, it does seem like some dark doom follows Túrin wherever he goes. But even if we cannot say for certain that doom follows Túrin, we can conclude that the stigma of his fate does haunt his steps. This perceived stigma affects how societies respond to Túrin, which, in turn, affect Túrin's own actions and perception himself. Society's role in the tragedy of Túrin's story is something we must consider alongside the part played by Túrin, Morgoth, and the notion of a predetermined doom if we are to look at the larger picture Tolkien is painting in *The Children of Húrin*. Fate's social

role does not answer the question of culpability in the tragedy but it does deepen our understanding of society's responsibility. Within the social framework of stigma, the question of fate and free will still remains to be answered, but perhaps that question will never be resolved; perhaps it should not be.

    The Children of Húrin contains more disability representation than any other of Tolkien's stories (see Wodzak), and I believe there is much waiting to be written about disability in Tolkien. The work of Goffman and others can only deepen our understanding of Tolkien's nuanced portrayal of disability and humanity in Middle-earth.

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