In this essay, I will attempt to identify and examine a range of approaches to the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, assessing their positive aspects, as well as commenting upon any limitations. To achieve this objective I will analyse the diversity of critical treatment Tolkienists have applied to the single syllable ‘warg’ and the implications surrounding it. A warg is a mythical creature of Tolkien’s own creation, which can be described in the simplest terms as ‘an evil breed of wolves’ (Day 2001, 246). The approaches I will examine in relation to wargs are: linguistic / philological, new critical / formalist, mythic / historic symbolist, and cultural criticism. I will also briefly discuss approaches that arise from the examination of the aforementioned. However, I must stress that these approaches are merely an outline, and there are no boundaries between them in the strictest sense. As this essay will reveal, elements of these approaches often crossover and merge.

Linguistic / Philological criticism purports to study a text’s lexis and diction, retracing linguistic changes back to the sources, and searching for the ‘root’ meanings. These meanings are then applied to the invention of the text, with the presumption that the author may have reflected on these earlier meanings. There is an element of 'Intentionalism' to this approach, an attempt to give a 'correct meaning' 'of the sort which its author may be supposed to have desired' (Shippey 1992, 7), as it suggests an intertwining of Tolkien's scholastic and creative pursuits, his scholarship being at the root of his invention. 'It was from this that he trained himself to see things,' states Shippey, 'from this too that he wrote his works of fiction' (1992, 7) Tolkien's scholarship is well-known and lends an element of truth to Shippey's approach and assertions. If we view how Shippey has used this approach in regards to 'warg', we see him split the word back to its originary roots (Shippey 2000, 30-31), before explaining how Tolkien restored the ancient meanings through a process of 'reconstruction' to form a 'creative anachronism' (Shippey 1992, 60), the wargs of Arda possessing all the qualities opined by the root words. Gilliver et al. give a similar analysis, although expressed in a more lexicographic method (2006, 206-207). In Old Norse, vargr means either outlaw or wolf, in Old English wearg is outlaw, felon, or villain, while Middle High German has the word warc, which means
monster. All of these meanings are apparent in the creation of the villainous wolves Tolkien calls wargs.

There are, however, limitations to the effectiveness of this approach. It over emphasises the importance of Tolkien's scholarship, which means it narrows the meaning and value of the work to specific conclusions. Tolkien recognises this restriction in his essay 'On Fairy Stories', in which he describes the story as the 'soup' and the source material as the 'bones' from which it is made, and claims that the latter should not be visible in the former (Tolkien 2001, 20). Indeed, Tolkien himself, though a philologist by calling, seems to be more sympathetic to modernist 'new critical' readings. His ‘Letters 213 and 329’, though written with more psychological readings in mind, further highlight Tolkien's distaste concerning deductions deemed via biographical means (Carpenter & Tolkien 1995, 288 & 414). Further to this theme is Rosebury's implication that this approach gives the impression that 'instruction in Tolkien's philological interests is actually a prerequisite for a full recognition of [his] literary merits' (Rosebury 2003, 7). Having said this though, in defence of philology, philological inquiry does lend itself to other approaches, and provides a solid basis from which to explore a text. Shippey's Tolkien: Author of the Century is exemplary of this fact, using philology to supplement his intellectual-historical approach of trying to affirm Tolkien's place in the 'history of ideas.' Green is another critic who uses philology to develop a psychoanalytical understanding of the importance of the word 'warg' (Green 1995, 118-119), as will be discussed later.

To this point, I have considered the linguistic / philological approach, the positive aspects of such a tool, as well as its limitations. From here, I will discuss the extent to which formalist / new critical readings can be applied, the advantages of such readings, and the drawbacks. Formalism/New criticism is a focus on 'the cultivation of artistic technique' rather than 'subject-matter' (Baldick 1996, 8 7) or, in more simplified terms, it is a study of structural design, patterning, and aesthetic value, in an attempt to understand how the formal features features of a text condition our response to it. The key principle behind this approach is the removal of context, the rejection of 'intentional' and 'biographical fallacies.'

Pridmore's application of formalist elements in her essay 'Evil Reputations: Images of
Wolves in Tolkien's Fiction' (2008) is to some extent disappointing, amounting to little more than an attempt to find binary opposites. The warg, the measure by which all approaches are to be judged, is made the binary opposite of first 'the eagles', and then 'the horses and men of Rohan' (Pridmore 2008, 199 & 202). Wolves in general find themselves in binary opposition to wolfhounds (Ibid, 196-198). Yet Cunningham in the same collection of essays, manages to merge formalist elements with a psychological / psychoanalytical approach quite successfully, showing how Tolkien creates 'zones' to allow 'structural progression' and character interaction with the landscape (Cunningham 2008, 119). This structuring of zones creates an 'outer' and 'inner'; in the warg attack on the Fellowship in The Lord of the Rings when the warg at the edge of the stones becomes a focus for fear, 'the other' about to cross the threshold between inside and out (Tolkien 1995, 290). 'As such,' Cunningham states, '[the wargs] are a device by which the narrative maintains or prolongs the horror of [the] supernatural' (2008, 127).

New criticism / Formalism also has its limitations, a fact that both Derrida and the post-structuralists, and Rosenblatt and the reader-response critics would attest to. For the meaning of a text to be known objectively, requires there to be a stability, which Derrida argues is impossible considering every signifier in the text is unstable because of the play of 'differance' (Selden 1997, 385-390). Similarly, reader-response critics would argue that meaning is either a function of 'each reader's experience or of the norms that govern a particular interpretive community' (Peterson 2003, 515), rather than existing solely in the text.

My purpose now, is to return to Green, and use his Jungian psychoanalytic reading of wargs to demonstrate how the aforementioned two approaches can be used alongside other approaches, and gradually to draw focus towards historic symbolism / myth criticism. In Green's reading of The Hobbit, and his appraisal of the 'warg' aspect, we see that he adopts a philological approach by emphasising the roots of the word 'warg', then uses those root meanings to assert that the 'word points toward a powerful archetype, werewolves', 'for the word means both “wolf” and “outlaw”, beast and man' (Green 1995, 118-119). At this point, Green moves from philological intentionalism towards the biographical, citing Tolkien's readings of 'horrific episodes' from the Volsungasaga to his friends (see Carpenter & Tolkien 1995, 54) as a source
of inspiration for the warg. As well as moving away from intentionalism, the citing of a particular episode from the *Volsungasaga* blurs the line between Jungian psychoanalysis and myth criticism, which I will be examining further on in its relation to the warg. Green's emphasis on the difference between wargs and ordinary wolves, and his highlighting of the wargs' use of language and 'political organisation' as marking them as being 'human enough to be morally evil' (Green 1995, 119), is similar to Cunningham's formalist / psychological reading, which pays particular attention to their supernaturalism: 'these were not common wolves', hinting that this makes their attack 'directed and determined' and thus increases their capacity as a narrative device used to prolong fear (Cunningham 2008, 127).

Historic symbolist/Myth criticism is an interpretive approach which attempts to identify 'expressions or embodiments of recurrent mythic patterns and structures, or 'timeless' archetypes' (Baldick, 1996:144) within a literary text. This approach is closely related to the Jungian approach to analysis (Green, 1995:30-34), except that it is more focussed on linking the text's narrative structure and symbolism with ancient religions and myths, rather than assessing the meaning of individual symbols and archetypes. Northrop Frye, who is perhaps the foremost practitioner of this approach, has developed a system by which the 'mythopoeic designs' of a text fit generically into a universal literary scheme (in Selden 1997, 355-359). This approach seems to sit at the opposite end of the scale to 'new criticism', focussing on the total order of literary forms and expressions instead of on the specific configurations of any one text, as Frye's own analogy of studying paintings and statues demonstrates (Selden 1997, 358-359). Inevitably, at this point the question of how this approach can be applied to wargs arises. Green's comparison of Tolkien's wargs with the skin-changers of the *Volsungasaga*, as mentioned earlier, forms a fine illustration of its use. However, further cases will serve to broaden our understanding of Tolkienists' application of this tool.

Stevenson uses historic symbolism/myth criticism to discuss the way in which Tolkien works pre-Christian archetypes into his very Christian exploration of the notion of evil. Wargs then, in Stevenson's understanding, are the symbol of a 'primitive fear' of the 'constant, elusive danger' that wild animals represent, an ancient fear that we have ourselves inherited through fairy tales (Stevenson 2008, 103). On
the other hand, if we follow Green's example and conclude that wargs are a variation of the werewolf archetype, we can trace the recurrence of ancient mythologies in Tolkien's works and, like Shippey (1992, 230) and Pridmore (2008, 216), find in them echoes of the *Prose Edda*, the *Volsungasaga*, and the *Mabinogion*. A further example of this approach is Dimond's essay, 'The Twilight of The Elves', in which he compares the events of *The Lord of the Rings* to the Norse Armageddon myth, the Ragnarok. Dimond notes the symbolic similarities of characters and events, stating that 'as in Norse myth, wolves play a part for evil - Tolkien's intelligent wolflike wargs, this time, instead of the Old Norse Fenriswulf' (Dimond 2004, 182). Obviously, his argument stretches farther than merely matching devices, but the example of the wargs will suffice for this essay.

Moving on to the limitations of the mythic approach, we can clearly see that such an approach is susceptible to the accusation of reductionism, of collapsing complexities into a reduced simplicity. In addition, this approach tends to draw attention away from the work itself, and undervalues the artist by insinuating that he/she borrowed everything from elsewhere, something that Tolkien was aware of and strongly disapproved (Shippey 1992, 298). When considered from a 'Tolkien Studies' perspective, we also have Shippey's recent lamentation that too much focus has been placed on myths, sagas, and medieval texts, and his calling for a shift in focus towards 'later influences on Tolkien's fantasy writing, particularly nineteenth century literature' (Forest-Hill 2008, 229). The following section will study the final approach of this essay, cultural/meta-criticism.

Cultural / Meta criticism is an approach that examines the cultural effects and phenomena that surround a work or arise because of it, ranging from criticism to fan fiction, and covering everything in between. The most notable contributions to this field of criticism, or at least those available to me, are the final chapters of *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* respectively, as well as the collected volumes of *Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review*. However, as far as wargs are concerned, these texts give us nothing more than Rosebury's suggestion that the warg attack in the movie version of *The Two Towers* was merely fodder to fatten the content of a tie-in computer game (Rosebury, 2003:211). Pridmore, however, dedicates her entire final paragraph to the depiction of
wargs on the cinema screen. She begins with the conclusion that their transfer from text to screen has not been successful, citing the fact that they more closely resemble 'African hyenas than wolves' (Pridmore 2008, 219-220). Chance gives a more positive appraisal of the wargs, as being important to the film's structure, helping 'to reinforce the film narrative's specific endpoint' (ibid, 220).

Having followed the warg from its linguistic roots in Old Norse and Old English to its current incarnations in film, we finally reach our conclusion. While acknowledging the limitations brought on by narrowing my focus to a study of wargs, it is hoped that my discussion has shown there to be a vibrant and varied spectrum of approaches, some of which exist independently of Tolkien while others have evolved with him in mind, by which Tolkien's works can be analysed. The diversity of approaches already employed by critics in examining Tolkien's art is a testament to the diversity of English Literature studies and the applicability of Tolkien's work. With the recent increase of interest in Tolkien studies (Forest-Hill 2008, 229), the scope and depth of Tolkienist discussion can only increase as well.

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