# "This Land Doesn't Die [...] It Lives on Like This. Like a Fairy-Tale": Topography, Identity and Recovery through the Fantastic in Elias Venezis's *Aeolian Earth*

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## Abstract

Elias Venezis's 1943 historical novel *Aeolian Earth (Αιολική Γη)* represents Kimintenia, an area in Ayvalik, Asia Minor, as it was before the forcible expulsion of its Greek populations in the early twentieth century through literary devices that stretch reality. While not a fantasy work as such, *Aeolian Earth* features numerous stories by and about characters that span the speculative spectrum, including folktales, a creation myth, and retold fairy-tales. As Alison Cadbury observes, many of these stories fall under "magic realist animist cosmology" (28). They are also associated with exile, foreshadowing the Greek populations' forcible relocation and allowing for the fantastic to be retrospectively interpreted as an attempt to recover the lost homeland (27). Throughout the narrative, Greece is both lovingly mythologised by locals and exoticized as a mythical land by non-Greek characters: these two fantasy discourses within the novel act as a counterpoint to one another, exploring how fantasy is used by Anglocentric and non-Anglocentric perspectives when applied to a country and culture that lies outside the Anglosphere. Using concepts from J. R. R. Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-Stories,* this paper studies manifestations of the fantastic in *Aeolian Earth,* considering the national identities and geopolitical conditions that created them. When analysing the novel's metatextual fantastic tales as fairy stories, trends begin to emerge regarding the extent to which these Greek tales function as Recovery, Escape, or Consolation—and for whom. While Tolkien's essay helps illuminate the ways in which the fantastic allows Greek characters in the novel to recover the lost homeland or cope with the harsh realities associated with life in the titular Aeolian Earth, Escape is not depicted as desirable for those who will eventually be exiled from their native home. Rather, Escape in fairy stories is mostly associated with non-Greek characters who consume, appropriate, or produce speculative metatexts about Greece, often ignoring the country's geopolitical nuances.

## Keywords

Greek literature, Elias Venezis, speculative fiction, JRR Tolkien, fairy stories, fantasy, Anglocentrism

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## Article

Elias Venezis's 1943 historical novel *Aeolian Earth* recounts the author's impressions of growing up in Kimintenia, his homeland in Asia Minor[1]. The novel involves his memories of summers spent in Kimintenia before World War I, the Greek genocide, and the Greco-Turkish War, and concludes with the violent expulsion of the Greek populations of Asia Minor from their homeland. Venezis explored these historical events in two previous novels, *Number 31328* (1931) and *Tranquillity* (1939), but *Aeolian Earth* is unique in its particular focus on the trauma of exile.

While not a fantasy work as such, *Aeolian Earth* features numerous stories by and about characters that span the speculative spectrum, including folktales, a creation myth, and retold fairy-tales. The novel also features the case of a British character, Sir Arthur, who escapes his life by reading about romanticised versions of Greece, which he describes as a country "[living] on […] like a fairy-tale" (Venezis 100). As Alison Cadbury observes, many of these stories are about exile: "Aeolia itself was created by the waves washing soil up from another place" (29), which is seen by Cadbury as foreshadowing the Greek populations' displacement. In light of that displacement, the tales can be retrospectively read as an attempt to reclaim the lost homeland, as the majority are linked to the geopolitical conditions and cultural identities that birthed them. This has been noted by critics such as Peter Mackridge:

> In *Aeolian Earth* Venezis shows us Sir Arthur Castibal sitting in his Scottish baronial castle on a harsh winter's night and dreaming of a Greece he has never seen; likewise, during the bleak winters of the German Occupation in Athens, Venezis himself dreamed of the Aeolia where he had lived his childhood and attempted to recall its sounds, sights, smells and tastes. "Now, the only thing that can lighten the winter hour of solitude and make it less painful is memory" (p. 146), he writes [...] (81)

What Mackridge identifies here is similar to the concept of Recovery as described in J. R. R. Tolkien's *On Fairy-Stories,* a useful text through which to analyse the metatextual fantastic in *Aeolian Earth.* Tolkien defines Recovery as the "regaining of a clear view" or "'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'—as things apart from ourselves" (67). Recovery, both as healing and as return, is a significant concept in many of *Aeolian Earth*'s speculative stories. These stories also offer other key functions recognised by Tolkien—Escape and Consolation—although the strong links to the homeland complicate such notions. Escape, which Tolkien identifies as a non-condemnable function of fairy-stories, akin to the "Escape of the Prisoner" rather than the "Flight of the Deserter," is rarely desired by Greek characters who produce and consume local speculative metatexts (69). If Escape has any value for these characters, it is as an Escape from exile itself, into

[1] Due to an inability to acquire a translated version of *Aeolian Earth*, all translations from Greek are my own. An English translation has been included in the biography.


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a fondly remembered past. This latter reading, of course, would be a retrospective one rather than a part of the narrative present, as the characters only leave Kimintenia in the novel's very last pages, intimately mingling any such Escape with retrospective Recovery. Escape is only claimed uncritically by non-Greek characters who are ignorant of Greece's geopolitical nuances. On the other hand, the "Consolation of the Happy Ending," which does not deny the existence of sorrow and failure but rather of "a universal final defeat," is often sought by Greek characters through these metatexts (75). Indeed, when Venezis's characters are thwarted by geopolitical and socioeconomic conditions beyond their control, their fantastic stories about the homeland help them adjust to the harsh realities of their life.

In his essay, Tolkien mentions that fairy-stories are not only about fairies but also about "the earth and all the things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread and ourselves […] when we are enchanted" (32). This rings true for Venezis's novel, in which any story about the homeland that contains fantastic elements can be read as a fairy-story, even if the subject matter is mundane. In *Aeolian Earth,* the land, its everyday occurrences, and its people are presented as enchanted on several occasions. Uncle Joseph, whose tale is analysed below, comes to completely identify with the land's talking trees. The grandparents' retold "Little Red Riding Hood" features a girl who is enchanted by Kimintenia, and so stays forever. Meanwhile, the creation of the land itself is presented using speculative discourse. The above tales all perform key fairy-story functions.

One manifestation of the fantastic within the text is what Cadbury describes as "a magic realist animistic cosmology," which does not contradict the characters' Eastern Orthodox Christian beliefs but instead co-exists with them (28). An example can be traced in the narrator's grandmother's relationship with the weather. Her insistence on making the children pray for rain or its absence, according to the family's needs, is something she truly believes in, as becomes apparent in her stoic acceptance of dry weather when the children accidentally pray for sun despite her instructions. "'How could rain have come…' she murmured. 'What could God have done, since the children begged him not to send water…'" (Venezis 46). An impartial reader would likely consider this a coincidence, but for the characters, such occurrences assign their hopes and prayers magical agency. This magical thinking is often presented as a way to cope with life in a country that is harsh and inhospitable, and to initiate the youngest members of the community into this life. This acceptance is similar to the Consolation Tolkien recognises in *On Fairy-Stories*: that is, the rejection of "universal final defeat" that can provide "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (75). Indeed, in-universe, the magical thinking and folklore beliefs about the land equip the inhabitants with courage and keep them from giving in to despair.

The magic realist animist cosmology that permeates the novel is not limited to such small-scale, everyday occurrences, but is present in the very foundation of life in Kimintenia. The literary devices that stretch reality strengthen the reading of *Aeolian Earth'*s fantastic tales as Recovery.


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The very birth of the area where the novel unfolds is presented as a creation myth. In the novel's first paragraphs, natural elements are personified. The mountains of the Greek island Lesvos "surprise" the waves when they emerge, and the latter regard the island as their "new friend." The waves subsequently inform Kimintenia (mountains in Asia Minor), who in their turn decide to "set themselves aside and pull themselves deeper [into the East]," leaving space for the titular Aeolian Earth (Venezis 12). With this myth, the narrator achieves two things. First, he sets the scene for a story that bends reality and is firmly rooted in a land that used to be inhabited by Greek people. Second, he recovers an image of the homeland already lost by the time the novel was written. By mythologising a part of Greek history that has not been commonly associated with the fantastic or appropriated by Western readers, the narrator's act of reclamation—as a Greek person recovering the homeland for himself and those who share his experiences—becomes stronger and more invocative than the claims non-Greek characters make to a land they have never known when evoking ancient mythologies.

Throughout the novel, Recovery is the aim of the narrator's and characters' interactions with the fantastic. While the creation myth tradition is too old to be deemed fantasy in the contemporary sense, it can be considered a taproot text containing fantastic elements, not unlike the case of fairy-tales. When discussing the Recovery offered by fairy-stories, Tolkien argues, "We should look […] and be startled anew […] we should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold […] sheep and dogs and horses—and wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us to make" (67). While fairy-stories might well be about magical creatures, their truest function is to help us see the real world in a new way. It is precisely this Recovery, this seeing the world with new eyes, that this passage achieves. The personification of the mountains, waves, and wind gives the text a magical quality, allowing the reader to see the land with new eyes: the eyes of the people who created the myth—that is, people who lived in Kimintenia and are now exiled. This is supported by the very last scene of the novel after the main characters have become refugees. The narrator's grandfather shows him a pouch of dirt from the now lost homeland that he managed to retrieve. While not fantastic, the novel's final image affirms the novel's desire to recover the land.

Studying this creation myth and other metatextual stories in the novel also reveals *Aeolian Earth's* connection with Consolation. The Greek characters' fates are inextricably linked with their homeland or, in the case of exiled characters, the land they have found themselves in, with dangers such as harsh weather conditions, jackals, thieves, and socioeconomic problems complicating their lives (Venezis 26-46). Even so, their land is dear to them. This is best illuminated in the tale of Uncle Joseph, an elderly servant in the narrator's house. When he was young, Joseph used to reside in a poor, dry Greek island and moved east to Kimintenia in hopes of making a fortune. However, despite his initial wishes, Joseph "did not go back. Kimintenia kept him" (Venezis 35). The land is once again personified and established as a force that wields power over its people's lives. From

then on, Joseph becomes one of the many characters implicated in speculative metatexts about exile.

Joseph's plan was to return to his island, purchase his own boat, and marry his fiancée. Faced with robbery, floods, and a long illness, he fails to do so. Ashamed, and knowing that the socioeconomic structures of the time would prevent him from marrying his beloved, he grows old in Kimintenia and tends to trees with whom he develops a supernatural relationship (Venezis 37). The reader is not explicitly told whether the trees are truly sentient. The juxtaposition between Joseph's reveries about what could have been, which are clearly wistful thinking, and his more ambiguous relationship with the trees, which he claims he can hear speaking—a fact never outright denied by the narrative—allows for the trees' personification to be read either as a literal occurrence, or as a fairy-story Joseph tells himself about the land he found himself in. In either reading, the metatextual fantastic in Joseph's tale is one of Consolation, and a Recovery of a new image of the world.

Initially, Joseph names the trees after his lost fiancée, the boat he never managed to buy, and the children he never had: tangible losses associated with the life he cannot get back. In doing so, he initially attempts to recover a former life that was never to be, as the reader is informed that Joseph's fiancée is married off to a richer man after his departure. This attempt causes him to project his own human logic onto the trees, humanising them and essentially becoming trapped in "the drab blur of triteness or familiarity" or "possessiveness," which Tolkien describes as factors that prevent the individual from regaining a clear view (67). Joseph acts this way in the hopes of escaping his failure and returning to a home now lost forever.

While Joseph's insistence that he can listen to the trees speaking might be wishful thinking rather than a supernatural occurrence, the narrative does not confirm this, instead suggesting a more ambiguous, complicated case. There is an element of hesitation as described by Todorov: this incident can be considered fantastic because there is uncertainty between a natural and supernatural explanation, and this ambiguity remains until the end (25). It should be noted that while the trees' supposed sentience remains ambiguous, Joseph's reveries about the sirens, the sea, and his island (to which he never returns) are much more clearly described as simple dreams.

Joseph's reveries about the sea are specifically described as "distant memories" or a fading "vision" (Venezis 37-8). This is not the case with trees. His dream of the sea goes away and becomes blurry, so that the more ambiguous trees are the final image readers are left with:

> Ah, yes, there come the waves again, the shadows slowly come out trembling […] they flap their wings to try and fly away, but they can't. They just become more defined, taking

> shape as time goes by, they become trunks and leaves, trees that bloom inside the waves. (38)

The above is an in-universe example of a speculative story that offers not Escape but Consolation. Cadbury observes that Joseph "converts his longing to return to his own homeland in a dream, much like the narrator, Petros, will later convert his own need to recover the homeland into a novel" (36). While the dream of the sea—a clear reverie—indeed demonstrates longing, when the trees and their fantastic properties are read as a fairy-story that Joseph either experiences or tells himself, they offer a chance to come to terms with one's fate rather than escape it. This is highlighted by his near-total identification with the trees by the end of his story, essentially an acceptance of the necessity to grow roots away from home.

This first attempt at Escape, however, fails to offer long-term Consolation. It is only once Joseph stops naming the trees, and the speculative elements surrounding them become stronger and more profound as a result, that he is offered a different, purer form of Recovery. In seeing the trees as they are, as a potentially magical part of his new home rather than fragments of his unfulfilled dream, he recovers a clear vision of the land, akin to the function Tolkien describes:

> So, he gave up on names. And when the trees he had raised became nameless, he learnt to experience them more deeply, not as desires that remained unfulfilled. He became their true friend, he knew them one by one […] Studying them thus, watching them rise in the world, experiencing them like this, little by little, he found purpose in life. He grew apart from other humans, he became one with the trees. He became one of them, a big, old tree who blessed and protected its little friends. (Venezis 37)

Until the novel's very last moment when the Greek populations of Aeolia are uprooted, a large part of what constitutes Escape within the speculative metatexts of *Aeolian Earth* reads as Escape *to* rather than *from* grounds inhabited by Greek populations. This Escape, analysed by Tolkien as a key function of fairy-stories, seems applicable to non-Greek characters who consume or create stories about Greece. Meanwhile, for those who inhabit the titular Aeolian Earth, fairy-stories are about coming to terms with the land, knowing it intimately, achieving Consolation from its harsh realities, and retrospectively Recovering it.

This Consolation and Recovery of the land are achieved not only through uncategorisable speculative tales like Joseph's but also through more straightforward metatextual fairy-tales. Early on, the narrator's grandparents tell a localised version of "Little Red Riding Hood," making the question of fairy-stories and their function in *Aeolian Earth* central. Rather than focusing on the cautionary aspect of the story, the grandparents speak of a girl "who got lost in Kimintenia and returned [to the world outside of it] no more" (47). In *Aeolian Earth,* the grandparents' retelling of


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this global fairy tale can be read as a story to entertain the children but, more importantly, as an age-appropriate way to enhance the children's relationship with the land. The grandparents' Little Red Riding Hood character is "enchanted" by Kimintenia to the point that she turns into a deer and stays in the land forever (Venezis 48). Despite this, Kimintenia is portrayed in this instance as a safe haven, especially compared to the outside world that is inhabited by wolves and humans, both of whom want to consume the girl.

As Jack Zipes points out, throughout the existence of variations of the tale, Little Red Riding Hood has been rescued by "an assortment of well-meaning hunters, gamekeepers, woodcutters, fathers, grandmothers, and fairies" (17). It is particularly poignant that in the fairy-tale metatext of *Aeolian Earth,* the girl is rescued by an oak tree, who beckons her to stay in Kimintenia forever. Oak trees constitute a core part of the land where the retelling unfolds, and are a nod to Joseph's talking trees. Little Red Riding Hood, who is not native in Kimintenia, might thus escape into a Greek-inhabited land in Asia Minor. Meanwhile, for the children listening to the fairy-tale, her adventure cannot be said to function as Escape; it is a fairy-story about the land they inhabit and, retrospectively, the land they wish to return to. Through such a fairy-story and examples like Joseph's, the children are reared into the "magical thinking" mentioned above and grow to love their homeland, viewing it as beautiful and even enchanted despite the hardships they experience in it.

Ultimately, due to the novel's tragic conclusion and the particularities of the Greek national identity, the stories that Greek characters tell or hear about the land have an additional practical function. Rather than being read through the lenses of nationalism simply because they are culturally specific and glorify the land, these stories help the characters cope with the ultimate test of exile. Because of this, the tales they tell themselves and one another in order to make sense of their lives do not necessarily offer Escape as described by Tolkien; at times, they serve quite the opposite function. In analysing the narrator and his role in preserving and recovering these stories, Cadbury observes:

> [The narrator] is on his way to taking up his own mythic role, the "Keeper of the Keys," but his "kingdom" is a humanitarian consciousness higher than tradition-bound nationalism. At the very end, all the stories of his childhood are now understood as lessons, as preparations for the test—exile now at hand. (36)

By recounting these stories, collecting them in a novel, and making them widely available, the author helps those with similar experiences recover the homeland and, perhaps, some of the solace the tales had offered them when still in Aeolia.


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The above examples demonstrate ways in which speculative stories about the homeland help those within them cope with various challenges and retain hope. Consolation, as a function of fairy-stories that does not deny the existence of sorrow and failure but rejects utmost despair (Tolkien 75), is encountered several times in the novel. The fantastic elements offer hope and prevent us from ever considering the unfolding events in an entirely negative light. However, when those who have never inhabited either Greece or Kimintenia are the consumers of speculative stories about the Aeolian Earth, or Greece more generally, the case of their reception becomes more complicated.

The difference in reception and function when non-Greek characters interact with speculative discourse about the land is better illuminated in the second part of the book. In the opening of Part 2, the narrative briefly moves from Asia Minor to Loch Lomond where Sir Arthur, a Scottish noble, reads about Greece. Due to health problems, Sir Arthur has never been able to travel. At a first glance, tales about Greece offer him at least one of the key functions Tolkien recognises in fairy-stories, as becomes evident through the narrator's chosen diction. "Having no other means of escape," Sir Arthur finds solace in books (Venezis 100).

Escaping through books in and of itself is not necessarily an in-universe example of escaping through fairy-stories, especially as the books initially read by Sir Arthur are non-fictional travellers' accounts. However, after listing the places to which the character travelled through reading, the narrator concludes:

> After all [the adventures] he had experienced, after all these fateful oceans, [the Mediterranean Sea] was a mere lake to him: a game. He wanted to breathe in its air for a while without truly concerning himself with it. But mixed winds blow in the Mediterranean, strong currents. Those pulled him lower [South], then lower still. Until they brought him to Aeolian earth, the land of myth. (Venezis 100)

Once again, natural elements are personified, literally pulling a character towards the land that is time and again mythologised in the novel. A marked difference, however, is that the diction is initially more condescending, trivialising topography and reducing it to a game—a stark contrast to what has already been depicted as the land's ability to rule its inhabitants' lives in tangible and often painful ways.

Sir Arthur's relationship with speculative stories about Greece can be problematic compared to the ones discussed previously; so far, this paper has considered a creation myth, a character communicating with the trees of Aeolia, and a fairy-story retold to characters. These provided in-universe Consolation and Recovery, rather than Escape. This was not because Escape is


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condemnable, but rather because the inhabitants' strong bonds with the land meant that Escape from life in Aeolia did not constitute the ultimate goal of their fantasies.

Tolkien does not condemn the need to escape through fairy-stories, or even the archaism sometimes associated with such stories, which is often favoured when compared to the harsh modern reality (71). Initially, this seems to be the case with Sir Arthur, as his readings of ancient Greek plays and myths give him purpose in life. Getting to know places one can never visit by reading relevant stories, including fantastic ones, is not in itself reprehensible. In defence of fairy-stories, Tolkien mentions that those who find themselves imprisoned in a painful reality should not be scorned if they "[think] and [talk] about other topics than jailers and prison-walls" (69). However, in *Aeolian Earth,* the distinctive topography complicates matters; while assigning fantastic elements to the land provides solace to those living in it and a new perspective to those who can never return, it can be problematic when done by a character who has in no way experienced this land and is unaware of its geopolitical nuances. Notably, prior to travelling to Greece through reading, Sir Arthur is described as "perfectly communicating with Magellan, Marco Polo, Bering and Vasco da Gama" (Venezis 100). These figures are known not only for their explorations, but also for possible exaggerations, omissions, and colonialist attitudes towards the lands they explored. This reference to them foreshadows the attitude of non-Greek characters towards Greece.

A colonialist mindset becomes increasingly evident when Sir Arthur teaches his nephew, Robert, about Greece, which can be juxtaposed with the way the narrator and his sisters are taught about the Aeolian Earth through fairy-stories. The imagery Sir Arthur uses to describe Greece similarly illustrates the country as beautiful and enchanting. But he and his nephew mainly read ancient Greek texts that do not adequately reflect the experiences of the Greek populations of Asia Minor in the early twentieth century, which include natural disasters, socioeconomic problems, violent conflicts, and eventually exile. The boy's questions and the uncle's answers reveal a romanticisation of a real country, rather than a fairy land:

> "How strange these things are," the boy whispered. "What strange fairy-tales..." […] "Is... is this country still alive?" he asked about Greece.
> […]
> "It is alive, child […] This land doesn't die."
> "It lives on... like a fairy-tale?"
> "Like this. Like a fairy-tale." (Venezis 102)

As has been analysed above, the narrator and his sisters also get to know their homeland through speculative metatexts. In their case, however, the land itself is not associated with words such as "myth" or "fairy-tale." While the locals do mythologise the Aeolian Earth, the belief that their


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thoughts, wishes, or actions can influence the course of events in the physical world is often prevalent, as is the case with the narrator's grandmother. Meanwhile, when Greek characters consciously create speculative metatexts, they do not use them to dissociate from their material reality. For instance, the creation myth that opens the novel is presented in a factual if whimsical tone, and immediately followed by an account of the hardship experienced by the narrator's grandparents and other family members who "worked hard in the land underneath Kimintenia" (Venezis 12). The myth is therefore grounded in a lived reality, making the supernatural elements more realistic rather than less so. Joseph's tale is similarly linked with both the joys and the sorrows of inhabiting the Aeolian Earth, while the grandparents' narration of a Little Red Riding Hood who escapes into Kimintenia is tellingly followed by a short passage describing a real catastrophe brought about by rain, which the characters stoically accept as God's will (49). The fantastic stories that precede tragedies or become interlaced with them still have the land as their focus and portray it in a loving way, strengthening the idea that Consolation, rather than Escape, is the stories' ultimate function for Greek characters. Losing this land forever is experienced by them as a tragedy, justifying the additional reading of *Aeolian Earth* as retrospective Recovery of the lost land and showing that Escape is undesirable.

In comparison, Sir Arthur and Robert's escape to a mythologised Greece, experienced as fairy tale, becomes increasingly problematic when diction associated with the fantastic is used to justify exoticisation and an overly romanticised attitude towards a land they cannot fully comprehend. While it might seem innocent enough when confined to reading, Robert later visits Greece as an adult. There, he falls in love with a Greek woman whom he marries and brings to Scotland. While he is pursuing her, there are several references to Zeus and the women he pursued, creating a violent subtext. Sitting on a rock in Mykonos, Robert regards Delos and recalls the mythology associated with it: "Hera, full of rage, was going after Leto, whom Zeus had become infatuated with, and who was to become a mother from this illicit affair […] So, Zeus thought 'what if I found a small, unknown island? Just for this purpose, so that […] my illegitimate children can be born there" (Venezis 104). Other fantastic metatexts discussed in this paper rely on well-known and well-worn taproot text traditions including myths, fairy-tales, gothic tales, demotic songs, and epic romances. These, however, are used in original ways to reflect the characters' needs and personal experiences within specific geopolitical conditions. More often than not, they are adapted to the particularities of the land where the tale unfolds. The myth of Zeus and the women he violently pursued has little to do with the experiences of the novel's main characters, foreshadowing Robert's attitude towards his future wife and towards Greece, which he regards as little more than a means of escape towards the most problematic aspects of mythologized antiquity.

The discourse used to describe the love story also contains speculative language that is heavily exoticizing and offers none of the practical functions discussed elsewhere in the paper. Though their love becomes "legend" in Loch Lomond, at least suggesting mutual affection, Robert


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nevertheless treats his wife as a romanticized other. "He never [teaches] her letters or anything from the foreign world" for her to remain "simple and natural" as she came from the Aegean (Venezis 106). The woman herself—tellingly nameless—is described using language often encountered in fairy-stories; she is referred to as "so incredibly beautiful" that she "asserted herself to everyone, like magic. They embraced her like a deity coming from the land of Myth" (106). This woman, who is the grandmother of a character who will later move to Kimintenia, joins a long list of characters removed from their land. However, as the dominant point of view in this side story is that of a foreign character with romanticised ideas about Greece, the woman's relocation—and the speculative language used to describe it—lacks the nuance found in the treatment of other characters' exile. Greece in this metatext is portrayed as a mythical land that offers pure escapism to characters who lack the lived experiences of the narrator and those around him. The association of only non-Greek characters with Escape when it comes to fairy-stories about Greece suggests that cultural and local specificity is an important factor to consider when discussing the functions of fairy-stories. While escaping through the fantastic is not negative in itself, culturally-specific stories consumed uncritically can often be appropriated and misread by those without relevant experiences.

*Aeolian Earth* uses metatexts with speculative elements and fantastic affordances in an attempt to recover the homeland. When Greek characters still inhabited the titular land, such stories offered Consolation to those who created and consumed them, enhancing their relationship with the homeland and helping them retain hope during times of hardship. Analysing these stories through Tolkien's lenses proves enriching, as it illuminates what making sense of the world through fantastic stories can offer to those who create them. This reading, however, is not without limitations; when fairy-stories are inextricably linked with specific lands, geopolitical conditions, and national identities, they can be harder to classify. When the land itself is mythologised, the stories of its inhabitants will often be associated with lived experiences, helping those who create and consume them adjust in the land rather than escape it. In this case, an outsider's Escape into such stories will inevitably contain some degree of exoticisation. More scholarship on non-Anglocentric, locally-specific speculative stories is needed in order to illustrate how such stories have functioned historically, depending on the topography, key historical events, and identities they are associated with.

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