The literature of J.R.R. Tolkien is characterised by utopianism as a form of literary thought. The ‘end of the frontier’ in the 19th century engendered a cultural shift towards imagining alternative worlds in science fiction and fantasy. Tolkien’s Middle-Earth was among the most widely received of these defamiliarised Ou-topias or ‘Nowhere-places’ in 20th-century popular fiction and culture. Yet a large part of Tolkien’s utopian thought was not constructed through building a ‘new continent’ but, rather, in re-constructing ‘an old continent’ — a form of ‘retrotopianism’, in which the classical world plays an essential role. Tolkien rewrites places from ancient, Graeco-Roman narratives in order to explore Middle-Earth as Eu-topia, a place for evaluating and expressing ideals.

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