

**WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMIȘOARA DOCTORAL SCHOOL
OF HUMANITIES PHILOLOGY**

DOCTORAL THESIS

**OUTSIDE OR INSIDE THE REALISTIC FRAMEWORK
IN POST-WAR BRITISH FICTION.
FROM J.R.R. TOLKIEN TO GRAHAM GREENE**

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ARGUMENT

My thesis compares two British authors who, despite a considerable number of apparent differences, reveal important similarities, which reflect the way in which they reacted to the social, political, cultural and aesthetic reality of their age. The period in which they wrote is one marked by the direct impact and the aftermath of the two most devastating wars humanity witnessed, which succeeded each other with a speed nobody had anticipated or desired, leaving fears that a third such event was unavoidable. If, in geopolitical and military terms, the time span between the 1930s and the 1950s was so filled with radical transformations, in cultural and aesthetic terms, new movements reflected the changing reality, under the encompassing influence of modernism and postmodernism. But, at the limit of experimentation, many authors chose to return to established writing modes and genres, since they considered that these tools responded successfully and convincingly to reality and reached not only an elitist segment of the public, but a wider audience, belonging not only to a variety of social or educational backgrounds, but also to different age groups. This is not to say that these authors' response was identical; on the contrary: the examples I chose in my thesis can be placed, as the title anticipates, at the opposite ends of the spectrum, at the outskirts or at the heart of the realistic aesthetic and intellectual framework.

If, in a canonical description of J.R.R. Tolkien and Graham Greene, the differences are immediately apparent, the similarities are more rewarding to discover. Born in an age of tranquility, when the British Empire was at its peak, they both witnessed and participated actively in one or the two World Wars, they were prolific authors, who embraced genres that were considered popular rather than highbrow, many of their writings being also imbued by their Catholic faith, this happening in a society which had almost completed the process of secularization initiated in the 18th century. The two writers' Catholicism has been a constant preoccupation for critics, both Tolkien and Greene appealing to this keyword when characterizing their work. While Tolkien described his books as being "profoundly Catholic", Greene argued that, rather than being a Catholic writer as such, he was a writer "who happened to be Catholic". However, explicit references to faith are absent from Tolkien's work, while being quite abundant in a part of Greene's work. Finally, the lasting popularity of both writers is indebted to the adaptation of their work to the newer media of expression, mainly the cinema.