

Reflections on Tolkien Bibliography

by Wayne G. Hammond

Hobbit-lore, said Gandalf, is an obscure branch of knowledge, but full of surprises. Descriptive bibliography is of the same sort: (seemingly) obscure, with its cancels and collations, issues and states, rectos and versos, cross-references and quasi-facsimile transcriptions; and sometimes surprisingly revealing, when the physical structure of a book is closely examined, or printing records are interpreted, or multiple copies of a book are compared. Readers of *Mallorn* are familiar with examples of *enumerative* bibliography - checklists and catalogues. Among these are Appendix C to Humphrey Carpenter's *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography* (revised in the 1987 Unwin Paperbacks edition principally by Tolkien Society Bibliographer Charles Noad), *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist*, by Richard West, and Åke Bertensam's excellent *En Tolkienbibliografi 1911-1980* and its supplements in *Arda*. Useful lists have appeared recently in *Beyond Bree*, and Gary Hunnewell in Missouri is preparing what will surely be the definitive bibliography of Tolkien fanzines. Johan Vanhecke's catalogue for the Tolkien exhibition in Antwerp is also to be commended. *Descriptive* bibliography employs the same methods of list-making and annotation found in enumerative bibliography; it is concerned, however, especially with the description of the physical characteristics of books and other published materials - title pages, order of contents, bindings, dust-jackets - the distinguishing of variations (if any) within an edition or impression, and the description and explanation of their printing and textual history.

J.R.R. Tolkien: a descriptive bibliography, written by myself with the assistance of Douglas A. Anderson, will be published at last in late 1992, by St. Paul's Bibliographies of Winchester. Like *The Lord of the Rings*, it was written between interruptions over many years, and it "grew in the telling". In 1979, I optimistically thought that a

descriptive bibliography of Tolkien could be completed by 1982. The magnitude of the job became apparent only when it was well under way. Even in (early) 1979, *The Silmarillion* seemed to be the conclusion of Tolkien's works, and Humphrey Carpenter seemed to have provided a complete checklist of the canon in Appendix C of his *Biography*. The identification of additional early works by Tolkien, and the posthumous publication of so many of his manuscripts, was at the time merely to be wished, and not (at least by me) expected. All praise to Christopher Tolkien's labours, but they have added considerably to mine! The Tolkien Centenary has provided a catalyst to bring my work to a close, if not to absolute completion, for new works or editions by Tolkien continue to appear, and there remain a few dust-jackets and significant impressions that I have not been able to see (among the latter, the 1966 Allen and Unwin "fifteenth impression" *Hobbit*, i.e. the first impression of the third hardcover edition, and the possibly reset twenty-fourth impression of the Houghton Mifflin *Hobbit*, 1967).

The *Bibliography* is arranged in seven sections: books written entirely or principally by Tolkien, including separate publications of works (such as "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics") first published in periodicals or collections; books edited, translated, or with contributions by Tolkien; Tolkien's contributions to periodicals; his published letters and extracts from letters; his separately published art; miscellanea, including interviews and recordings; and translations of Tolkien's works. The last five sections for the most part are checklists, though with annotations. Full bibliographical descriptions are given in the first two sections. Here, for example, is the description of the first edition of *The Hobbit*. ↓

The Hobbit; or, There and Back; Again; by J.R.R. Tolkien;
London; George Allen and Unwin Ltd; Museum Street

312 pp. + 1 plate. Collation: (A)BB-TBU4. 19.0 x 13.5 cm.

(1-2) blank; (3) "The Hobbit"; (4) illustration; (5) title; (6) "FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1937 / All rights reserved / PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY, UNWIN BROTHERS LTD., WOKING"; (7) table of contents; (8) blank; (11)-310 text and illustrations; (311)"OVERLEAF; particulars of publications; of similar interest; issued by; (publisher's square 'St. George' device with lettered border); GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD; (7 addresses, London to Sydney)" (312) publisher's advertisement of *Čapek, Fairy Tales and Dashaenka*, and Huxley, *At the Zoo*.

Black and white illustrations, by Tolkien: *The Hill Hobbiton across the Water*, p. (4); *The Trolls*, p.49; *The Mountain-path*, p.68; *The Misty Mountains Looking West from the Eyrie towards Goblin Gate*, p.117; *Beorn's Hall*, p.126; *Mirkwood*, half tone plate facing p. 146; *The Elvenking's Gate*, p.177; *Lake Town*, p.196; *The Front Gate*, p.209; *The Hall at Bag End, Residence of B.Baggins Esquire*, p.307. Maps, by Tolkien, in black and red: *Thror's Map*, front endsheet; *Wilderland*, back endsheet.

Wove paper. Bound in light green cloth over boards. Wraparound decoration by Tolkien (mountains, moon and sun) stamped at top of covers and spine in dark blue. Decorations by Tolkien stamped at foot of upper (dragon looking left) and lower (dragon looking right) covers in dark blue. Stamped on upper cover, between the wraparound decoration and dragon, in dark blue: "The; Hobbit". Stamped on spine, below the decoration, in dark blue: "The; Hobbit; by; J.R.R.Tolkien;

(TH rune) ; (D rune) ; (TH rune) ; George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Wave endpapers (maps). No headbands. All edges trimmed, top edge stained light green. The publisher's cost book records 152 copies in "paper cover binding", i.e. wrappers (not seen), presumably for distribution to reviewers.

Dust-jacket, wave paper. Wraparound illustration by Tolkien, in black, green and blue, of the Lonely Mountain and neighboring mountains and forest, with a dragon flying near a crescent moon on the lower cover, eagles and the sun in the sky on the upper cover, the whole bordered by an inscription in runes read anticlockwise from lower left: "THE HOBBIT OR THERE AND BACK AGAIN BEING THE RECORD OF A YEARS JOURNEY MADE BY BILBO BAGGINS OF HOBBITON COMPILED FROM HIS MEMOIRS BY J.R.R.TOLKIEN AND PUBLISHED BY GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN LTD". Lettered by Tolkien on upper cover: "(in white) THE HOBBIT; by; (in black) J.R.R.Tolkien". Lettered by Tolkien on spine: "(in black) THE; (in white) HOBBIT; (in black) TOLKIEN; (against a white panel outlined in black and shadowed at bottom) GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN". Printed on front flap: "(in black) THIS COVER AND THE DRAWINGS: IN THE BOOK ARE BY THE AUTHOR: 7s.6d." Blurb printed on back flap, "Dodgson" misspelled "Dodgeson".

Published 21 September 1937 at 7s.6d.; 1,500 copies printed. Bound in lots through December? 1937.

The advantages to collectors, librarians and booksellers of such detailed information will be readily apparent. But this entry for *The Hobbit*, and others like it, does not end with a physical description and publication figures. Much is also said about the history of the production of Tolkien's books, about his relationship with his publishers, about subsequent printings, and about the illustration of his books, by Tolkien himself and other artists - even about illustrations that never appeared. (Maurice Sendak was once to illustrate *The Hobbit*, but produced only one sketch. Trina Schart Hyman was suggested by a publisher to illustrate *Mr. Baggins*, but Tolkien's own illustrations prevailed.) The description printed above is followed in the bibliography by extensive notes, including (if the Tolkien Estate permits) previously unpublished extracts from Tolkien's letters with Allen and Unwin. *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and other works are also textually analysed. For example, the texts of "On Fairy-stories" as they appeared in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* and in *Tree and Leaf* are compared and their many differences noted. Scholars will be guided thereby to the most authoritative texts for their research.

In the course of writing *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*, many interesting features of Tolkien's books have come to light. Some are minutiae, interesting only to bibliographers, but others are of greater moment:

▷ Why, collectors have wondered, is the first impression of the first three-volume Unwin paperbacks edition of *The Lord of the Rings* (1974) so difficult to find? Publisher's records revealed that the entire first impression was sent outside of Britain, to other parts of the Commonwealth. Only a few copies have returned, secondhand, to the country of their making. And by the time the second impression was issued domestically in Britain, the rising cost of paper had made necessary an increase in the cover price of the books.

▷ Why are there two first American editions of *The Book of Lost Tales Part I*? Both have the Houghton Mifflin

imprint, and were issued simultaneously; but one was printed in Great Britain, and the other in the United States, the latter with corrections. The answer to this question helps us to gauge the level of interest in J.R.R. Tolkien in America, greater than his American publisher expected. The Houghton Mifflin Co. originally ordered a modest 4,000 copies of *The Book of Lost Tales Part I* imported from Allen and Unwin, then received advance orders exceeding 18,500 and quickly printed 30,000 copies domestically, using for their reproduction copy a now corrected version for the Allen and Unwin third impression.

A much more significant discovery is that the first impression of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, published on 29 July 1954, and the second impression, published in December 1954, are two completely different settings of type. The "second impression", actually a new edition, on the one hand corrected a few errors of the original (single) impression, but also introduced new errors, some of which have not yet been corrected in the standard British and American hardcover editions. For example, this is where the infamous "bride-piece" misprint, for "bride-price" (of Lúthien), entered Book I Chapter II. Recently I spent hours comparing the two impressions, documenting their differences if not (yet) fully explaining the circumstances under which they occurred. I did so, however, only after fellow Tolkien Society member Eric Thompson noticed some minute variations in the typesettings (the printer, Jarrold and Sons, very nearly matched the two settings line for line) and mentioned them to Christina Scull, who brought them to my attention. My friend John Rateliff (now hard at work writing the history of *The Hobbit*) then lent me his copy of the first impression of *The Fellowship* to place alongside my copy of the second impression. Thus *The Fellowship*, one might say, gave up its secrets because of fellowship.

