

full grown. She was standing... with her hand upon the neck of a milk-white rabbit from which she had apparently just alighted" (P.189).

Yet it is just this tradition which appeared in Tolkien's first work, the poem *Goblin Feet*, (*Oxford Poetry* 1915). In *The Book of Lost Tales Part One* (P.262) Christopher Tolkien explained that in the earliest entry in that work 'gnome' is an emendation of 'goblin' so it would appear that the beings referred to in this poem are the predecessors not of the Orcs but of the Noldor.

Although there is no direct mention of the Goblins' size it is implied by "the tiny horns of enchanted leprechauns", "the little tinkly sounds", "noiseless little robes" and "happy little feet". Humphrey Carpenter says in the Biography that Tolkien wrote it to please his wife Edith, who said that she liked "spring and flowers and trees, and little elfin people" (P.74). Carpenter also implies that its acceptance by Blackwell for *Oxford Poetry* led Tolkien to hope to get some income for his poetry and was thus one of the factors which encouraged him to marry Edith in 1916. It was quite successful in its time and appeared in several anthologies the first being five years later in 1920 when it was included in *The Book of Oxford Poetry*, edited by Dora Owen and published by Longmans. This is a beautiful luxury volume with 16 coloured plates by Warwick Goble and cost 21 shillings when published. It is a fine anthology beginning with the ballads of *Thomas the Rhymer* and *Tamlane* - and one might note in passing that in these early works there is no suggestion of the inhabitants of Faery being of diminutive size; among the authors whose works are included in the anthology are Shakespeare, Marvell, Milton, Keats, Scott, Tennyson, Yeats and de la Mare. Tolkien was in distinguished company and *Goblin Feet* must have made quite an impression to be included in such a prestige book. At the time Tolkien was

probably pleased and flattered.

The Anthology is of particular interest because one of the plates illustrates *Goblin feet*. According to Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien began illustrating his own poems as an undergraduate but none of the illustrations have yet been published. *The Book of Fairy Poetry* was published in October 1920 and this is probably the first published illustration of a work by Tolkien. It does not follow Tolkien's poem too closely: it does show the "swinging lamps in little starlit globes" and the creature in the foreground could be a "beetle-thing" or less likely

a "golden honey-fly", and there is certainly an attempt to suggest "dancing goblin feet" but I cannot see any musical horns and Tolkien made no mention of his goblins having animal heads. (I suspect that in this Gable was influenced by Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* - also in the anthology - where animal-headed goblins occur). It is true that one of the heads is that of a "coney-rabbit", which is mentioned in *Goblin Feet*. It is possible that the rabbits used as steeds by the fairies in *Stories for My Children* brought them into *Goblin feet* where their inclusion is surprising but would make more sense if one assumed that some of the Goblins rode on them.

As late as 1971 there was a request for *Goblin Feet* to appear in an anthology and on this occasion Tolkien wrote: "I wish the unhappy little thing, representing all that I came (so soon after) to fervently dislike could be buried forever." (*The Book of Lost Tales, Part One, P.32*).

goblin feet



I AM off down the road
Where the fairy lanterns glowed
And the little pretty flittermice are flying:
A slender band of grey
It runs creepily away
And the hedges and the grasses are a-sighing.
The air is full of wings,
And of blundering beetle-things
That warn you with their whirring and their humming.
O! I hear the tiny horns
Of enchanted leprechauns
And the padding feet of many gnomes a-coming!

O! the lights: O! the gleams: O! the little tinkly sounds:
O! the rustle of their noiseless little robes:
O! the echo of their feet—of their little happy feet:
O! their swinging lamps in little starlit globes.

I must follow in their train
Down the crooked fairy lane
Where the coney-rabbits long ago have gone,
And where silverly they sing
in a moving moonlit ring
All a-twinkle with the jewels they have on.
They are fading round the turn
Where the glow-worms palely burn
And the echo of their padding feet is dying!
O! it's knocking at my heart—
Let me go! O! let me start!
For the little magic hours are all a-flying.

O! the warmth! O! the hum! O! the colours in the dark!
O! the gauzy wings of golden honey-flies!
O! the music of their feet—of their dancing goblin feet!
O! the magic! O! the sorrow when it dies.

J.R.R. tolkien

We can trace some of the changes in Tolkien's conception of Fairies/Elves in the early versions of his Mythology which are now appearing, edited by Christopher Tolkien as "*The History of Middle-earth*". If he felt like that about *Goblin Feet* he may well have been horrified to know that these early versions would be published, but I certainly do not regret their publication for we are given a fascinating insight into the evolution of his Mythology, and

