

An orc's-eye view of the history of Middle-earth

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I should begin with a brief introduction to this remarkable, perhaps unique, document, which represents an offshoot of *The Virtual History of Middle Earth*, an attempt at predicting how the course of events subsequent to the end of the Third Age might have unfolded had Sauron emerged victorious at that point. This was pictured in the form of an address given by a (presumably) eminent scholar in front of an audience of other (presumably also) eminent scholars at what was described as the inaugural conference of the historical associations of the Gondorian Federation*.

But as you probably all realise, behind the impressive façade that such events present to the outside world (our own not less than that of Middle-earth, actual or alternative), dark undercurrents are always stirring. Two of a trade, as is well known, seldom agree, and this has always applied with especial force to scholars, and, notably, to historians, (including virtual historians). So it would not be surprising if on such an occasion, rival points of view had proliferated, and dark mutterings heard over the (virtual) coffee break, to the effect that everything, for instance in the address which you, ladies and gentlemen, read with such excited attention in your copy of *Mallorn*, was to put it politely, a load of codswallop.

This paper, then, is a glimpse of such an underworld. It purports to give the substance of a lecture presented, not as part of the official Conference programme, but as a separate event, 'off-campus'. The speaker is a historian of radically revisionist, not to say iconoclastic, leanings. The view of Middle-earth's history that he puts forward is wholly materialist, deconstructivist and totally cynical; In its cynicism it perhaps has a little

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in common with another text emanating from the little-known underworld of Middle-earth, 'The letters of Celeborn to 'Dear Bil'' but the context is quite different. Celeborn, even if a reluctant semi-detached observer of the War of the Ring, at least was 'one of us', to quote his consort, the Lady Galadriel (aka Margaret Thatcher); our present contributor, on the other hand, is 'one of THEM', in other words, an Orc.

We have at this point to cast aside the traditional image of a misshapen creature with blood smeared fangs and gurgling utterance. In the years that have followed the collapse of the Sauronic Empire (Fourth Age circa 656-9) those orcs who managed to survive have had to adapt themselves to the norms of civilized society. We have to become accustomed to the idea of an Orc posing as a respectable citizen in a suit and a tie, obviously familiar with the ways of High Tables and senior common rooms. Not a David Irving type, at all - we cannot expect, for instance, any claim on Sauron's behalf that he knew nothing about the slave labour camps in the Nurnen district, or the atrocities committed there. On the other hand, we are going to be surprised to discover (as no doubt were a good many of the attendees at the Conference), that the name 'Sauron' doesn't in fact mean what we have all been brought up to think it does. "History is bunk", (a saying attributed to Henry T. Ford, but actually first uttered by Sauron) isn't, quite, our speaker's motto; but he clearly enjoys challenging accepted viewpoints and charging

full tilt at 'sacred cows' and he believes that good history (as he conceives it) loses nothing by being good entertainment as well. From his standpoint, much of Middle-earth's history as we have been brought up to view it is, not to put too fine a point on it, 'bunk', nothing more than a massive Gondorian public relations scam. Clearly this kind of attitude, even if his orcish nature wasn't responsible for his exclusion from the main conference programme, wasn't calculated to earn him 'Brownie points' with the organisers or the mainstream of the historian's profession.

So, even though he may not be trying to pull the wool over our eyes by attempting, or in any marked way, to exculpate Sauron (though clearly he admires, if not the policies themselves, the energy and commitment with which some of them were carried out), we have to treat everything he says with the utmost caution and circumspection. An Orc, in other words, will always be an Orc; as P G Wodehouse remarks apropos of aunts, "sooner or later out pops the cloven hoof". You may perhaps seek a parallel by comparing him with the typical kind of 'logical positivist' don satirised by C S Lewis in *That Hideous Strength*; Lord Feverstone and 'the progressive element in college'. At the same time, though, he is no crude 'Tolkien basher', as you will see, he actually quite likes *The Lord of the Rings*, though of course he represents just those values which JRRT and CSL most abhorred. Like lord Feverstone, he is adept at manipulating a sort of crude charm. Try to imagine a kind of lethal mixture of Ken Livingstone and A J P Taylor and you will have his measure. But it's time to wind up the preliminaries, and allow him to speak for himself.

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The Change of Ages; a mythology demythologized

“Well, let me start by introducing myself. I’m a historian by profession, in my own estimation at least, and that of a few progressively minded colleagues, even though I may not be recognized as such by the academically chaste and conventionally minded people who constitute the bulk of that profession today. And, as I presume you will have been told, I’m an Orc by ancestry. I suppose I have to accept that that ancestry does carry with it a certain social stigma, even in these enlightened times. One of my distant forbears, a certain Shagrat, is even reputed to have played a minor role on the winning side in the so-called War of the Ring, eight and a half centuries ago. I don’t see why I need be ashamed of it; I dare say all of you could name several noble and aristocratic families which can trace their descent back to forbears who acquired power, wealth and status by way of plunder, rapine, corruption, extortion and other such skullduggery.

But enough of that. As the first holder of the Chair of Middle-earth History at the University of Minas Morgul my principal task at present is to organize a syllabus for the faculty of history in the University. A demanding responsibility but, I hope, a fulfilling one; you will of course all remember that a similar responsibility in respect of the faculty of Common Speech studies at another university led to all sorts of interesting consequences, and Middle-earth wide fame for the scholar who had assumed it. In this talk I shall be endeavouring to enunciate some of the basic principles along which historical discipline will be professed and taught in the university - critical method, and respect for clearly demonstrable facts, and strict faithfulness to the evidence. It will be an intellectually demanding course, but, I hope, both stimulating and wide-ranging, adjectives which I

am sorry to say cannot be confidently applied to most of what passes for historical scholarship at the present time.

I’ve called this talk “The Change of Ages” because I propose to offer you a very general kind of overview of the three contrasting completed Ages of Middle-earth’s history in terms of the differing relationship they bear towards the immemorial question of History versus Myth, or mythology. The scholar, professor, I mentioned just now, whose initial scholarly repute was subsequently overtaken by the fame he acquired through his authorship of a three volume fantasy saga which has outsold almost every other work of fiction ever published in Middle-earth, proclaimed that his initial plan

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had envisaged the creation (or ‘sub-creation’, as he somewhat portentously called it) of a “mythology for Middle-earth”. That, I would submit, is precisely what it turned out to be. Don’t misunderstand me; I enjoy *The Lord of the Rings* as much as anyone, but I don’t make the mistake of taking it seriously, as the members of the academic “establishment”, whom it infuriates like nothing else, invariably do. I think that that’s pretty generous of me, considering that it’s principally the author’s fault that we Orcs have always had to put up with such a slanderous press (“bred by Melkor in the dark years in Utumno”, and all that sort of rubbish). I don’t mind if his books sell like the proverbial hot cakes, but I don’t suppose he’s ever met a real

live orc in his life! The trouble was, I suppose, that Sauron, *the* Sauron I mean, Sauron the Great, was a bit of a paradox as regards public relations, which he dismissed as “a load of bullshit”, despite his unequalled mastery of propaganda in certain directions. But he never condescended to introducing people like my remote ancestor Shagrat as “your friendly neighbourhood orc”. How different from one’s bank manager!

The first Age, then, is what we know of pre-classical and early classical antiquity, embodied in the masterpieces of classical literature such as “The Lay of Leithian” which have come down to us and which I’m sure many of you had to translate at school. It’s still, of course, received opinion that the ability to do so without fault, and to write elegant Quenya and Sindarin prose or verse if required, qualifies a person for the highest flights in diplomacy, the civil service or other such elevated spheres. I was brought up on the Classics myself, so I am well aware of the advantages such an education can provide; it has enabled the so-called Numenoreans, by which I mean the Gondorians, obviously to continue advertising their self styled moral and intellectual superiority right up to the present time, emerging unscathed after all the vicissitudes that have intervened since the third age came to an end. You will no doubt all remember the Hobbit-inspired witticism, enshrined in that famous little volume, *Fourteen Twenty and All That*, “the Numenoreans who were then top nation owing to their classical education”. According to them, they still are!

Let’s get this straight. We Orcs have this terrible reputation as a horde of uncivilized barbarians, but it’s not true. Naturally there are many of us whose interests don’t extend beyond the traditional everyday ones - in other words,

An orcs'-eye view...

"birds,, booze, fags and football", but that's true of everyone else in Middle-earth isn't it? The reality is that many of us are just as capable as anyone else of appreciating the finer things of life, and the masterpieces of classical literature.

The First Age therefore because of the unparalleled richness and diversity of its literary legacy, is always thought of as the fountain-head of civilization in Middle-earth, and therefore, not surprisingly, seems populated by thoroughly uncivilized toughies like Feanor, Turin and others you can all think of; mythology always does seem to display this kind of inverse relationship between the power and poetry of the tales and the moral squalor, or intellectual nullity of the characters portrayed in them. And this is the mythological age *par excellence*; with the Second Age we emerge into the dawn of history so-called but it is still centred on and wrapped around by the Numenorean myth, or what I prefer to call "The Great Numenorean Cover-up", the myth which has been maintained and exploited by the Gondorians for their own purposes and to their own advantage ever since. Only with the Third Age can we say that we are concerned with history properly so-called, whose outlines, if not always its details, are recoverable by means of properly documented or scientifically excavated historical and archaeological evidence.

How have the Gondorians got away with maintaining their imposture for so long? Well, to start with, because even today there are still a good many educated and quite intelligent people who believe the Valar really exist! Does anyone here still cling to that belief?

"Hands up anyone who still claims to believe in the Valar, then" (*the speaker stands up, and pretends to count a show of hands*) "Oh, I see. Quite a number of you do, or seem to. Well, it's no skin off my nose. In that case you presumably believe in the existence during the First Age of a terrible ogre called Morgoth, who inhabited an impregnable fastness in the far north, and who among other things

was responsible for us Orcs populating large tracts of Middle-earth then and in subsequent ages. The mythical persona Melkor, who never quite made it as a Valar, and who the others blackballed for entry to the club ("not the right type", "not really officer material" you can pretty well hear them saying, can't you!) became subsumed into his terrestrial counterpart, Morgoth, Uncle Joe to all his subjects. As such he's just one element in the "mythic overlay", which you have to strip off before you can glimpse the underlying historical realities. I've no doubt that underneath the legendary great leader, Chairman Melkor, Comrade Morgoth, or whatever you like to call him, you can see a powerful warlord, or, rather, a succession of them, whose power base in the far north constituted a permanent threat to the stability of territories or states further south. And we can accept, I

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dare say, that it was fairly monolithic and primitive, politically speaking, and culturally more or less undeveloped. But the notion of a single evil empire radiating outwards from Angband, eventually strangling the whole of Beleriand in its remorseless iron grip, in prediluvian times, though unsupported by convincing historical, archaeological or scientific evidence, has a certain superficial romantic attractiveness about it. It isn't therefore surprising that it has been accepted as gospel by the overwhelming majority of historians. The real and tangible evidence, of course, is lying beneath thirty fathoms of water, having been obliterated by the catastrophic natural geographic upheavals with which the First Age is known to have come to an end! This has enabled the so-called history of the whole of the First Age to be written

entirely on the side of the survivors, described as the Elves and Men who had suffered or co-operated in the war against Morgoth. The Orcs, then as in subsequent ages, always come out as the hideously caricatured, impersonal villains of the piece. If you can discount this defamatory picture, we were then, no doubt, as we have been ever since, just a lot of ordinary blokes who got caught on the wrong side of the ideological divide, that's all.

For a divide, ideological or otherwise, there certainly was. It lay between a single political entity in the north, firmly governed, efficiently administered, and centrally controlled, and a group of separate individual tribes further south, all of them displaying the emergence and dominance of a warrior aristocracy, but being to a certain extent capable of sinking their mutual rivalries and animosities in the face of what was perceived as a common threat. These aristocracies arrogated to themselves the style, status and earthly immortality of "Elves", a term that, in reality, above all defined class and status; like all indicators of class and status it was infinitely divisible, with all kinds of subtle, intra-elvish distinctions. For example, take the "Feanorians", the sons and descendants of the original Feanor, and their adherents. I've always thought them a particularly unsavoury crew - the treatment of poor old Eol, both by them and that crowd over in Gondolin, was especially discreditable - and of course you've also got Thingol of Doriath, who so obviously considered himself a cut above everyone else that he treated his own special territory as inviolate, and instituted and operated the quite brutal frontier policy known as "The Girdle of Melian". As I've said, I'm simply defining "the Elves" as a clannish and self appointed warrior caste, not as a separate race of earthly immortals (I don't suppose that anyone, even of you lot believes in that sort of thing any more - I should hope not!). The groups of "Men" (so-called) in Beleriand simply represented the balance of the population, whom the warrior

Mallorn XXXVIII

aristocracies regarded as their racial and social inferiors. The attitude that Thingol adopts towards Beren when his own daughter looks like contracting a *mésalliance* is typical; "he comes from the wrong side of the tracks, my dear" more or less expresses it. To put it bluntly, the Elves, (to stick to that term) look like practitioners of out-and-out racism, and even more so as regards the Dwarves; at least Thingol's lot got their comeuppance eventually.

I'm not of course trying to demonstrate that either side, the Morgoth lot "oop north", or the so-called Elves and their allies "down South", was either better or worse than the other one. I'm merely trying to emphasise the point that mythic tales and literary artifice, however picturesque and poetic and evocative in themselves, have combined to present us with a wholly one-sided view of the set up as it must have been in reality. The picture we have is slanted one-sidedly in favour of "the chaps down south". The hobbit satirist I mentioned a bit earlier, the author of *Fourteen Twenty and All That*, put it in a nutshell when he described the Elves and men in Beleriand as "rong but wromantic" and their opposite numbers in the north as "Right but Repulsive". There's many a true word spoken in jest! And of course the unfair distortion of the whole picture has been hugely helped, not to say enabled, by subsequent implosion of the forces of nature.

This is nowhere clearer than in regard to the so-called "War of the Silmarils" (the jewels that studded the "Iron Crown", the symbolic badge of office of dynastic succession of rulers of the north, handed down from one to the next - which the Elves pretended had been stolen from them in remote antiquity). This has been portrayed, as of course you all know, as a heroic "long-defeat", sustained by long-suffering elves, assisted by some helpful "Men" (other ranks, in other words, the poor bloody infantry) against the all-conquering northern war machine. At least, even as the "Tales" tell it, it wasn't all-conquering to start with, and we hear

of several serious reverses suffered by the northern side preceding the apparent crushing defeat at the field of "Unnumbered Tears". Obviously the military and economic resources of the north did increase over the centuries (we can of course disregard its mythic components, such as dragons, winged or unwinged!), and early defeats may well reflect, for instance, dynastic troubles with the succession in Angband. And equally a major victory, or a series of victories, no doubt had its consequences in the withering away of the southern warrior states as a whole - ditto the overthrow of Doriath by the dwarves. Incidentally I've always felt rather sorry that dwarves and we Orcs have never really got on with each other; indeed from time to time have resorted to fighting and beating the sh...t out of each other. We're both proletarian peoples in essence - on the side of

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the workers against the bosses really, though I admit it didn't look like that at the end of the Third Age when Sauron I was getting ready to lord it over the whole show - but I'll be coming back to that.

The point I'm making is that because the myths and the tales have highlighted the so-called "heroic" aspect of events in Beleriand, the battles and such like, over everything else, the economic side of the picture has become blurred and indistinct. In fact the gradual absorption of the southern part of Beleriand by the north may in reality well be explainable in terms of economic expansion and consequent colonization, as much as, or more than, in terms of military success and dominance. You get a hint of this in the constant references in the *Tales* to the multiplying of orcs from Angband. What does this suggest?

Simply that the north was more efficiently administered and that the population rose because of better working conditions, health provision, housing and so on; a stable economic framework. There could well have been a powerful motive for southward expansion, in the form of population pressure in the north. To put it crudely, those in charge at Thangorodrim were increasingly capable of forceful and effective government, whereas their counterparts, the warrior aristocrats down south, hadn't the first clue about anything beyond a good scrap. Just stand back and look with an unbiassed eye at those heroes whose doings fill up so much of the *Quenta Silmarillion*! Turin's my favourite, of course. His utter incompetence and his capacity for treading on every banana skin lying in his path has many a time had me in stitches!

Of course, if you believe the *Tales*, all the success the north claimed in unifying Beleriand under a single authority was simply the work of a few control freaks, or a single control freak in Thangorodrim. They, or he, have to be taught a stiff lesson, so "the Valar" are invoked and persuaded to pull the plug on the whole set up, or, to remind ourselves of what really happened, mother nature takes a hand and in consequence all the lands are drowned or rearranged. This of course doesn't happen overnight, as you would think from the legend; over a long extended period of time, climatic change, coastal erosion, and a sudden intensity of volcanic activity in the far north producing a significant rise in sea level combine to produce the dramatic changes in Middle-earth's geography that leave its shores more or less in the form we know them today. Similarly, whereas in legend most of the quote 'elves' unquote bugger off back to Valinor or Tol Eressea, from where they are supposed to have come in the first place, actually there could have been massive migration south and eastwards, with men tending to settle in greatest numbers on the most fertile areas round the river mouths and around the south and east coasts

as far as what is now South Gondor and towards Pelargir. At the same time colonies of Elves hole up in individual select residential areas like the Grey Havens, Lorien or Rivendell. The settlements along coast at centres like Vinyalonde enable the new arrivals to colonize inland, and later on to dominate, and, perhaps to oppress and terrorize the backward native populations further into the interior, as indeed the Numenorean myth suggests. You eventually get a powerful and dominant civilization along the coastline whose principal basis is maritime power; it flourishes for centuries, but eventually decline sets in and districts like the low lying marshy areas around Tharbad may become flooded because drainage is neglected and dykes are allowed to silt up. Clear indications of a civilization in decline, I think you'll agree. But means have to be found of ensuring the survival, at least in theory, of the areas of colonial expansion to the north and east of the coastal districts, and these were ultimately preserved at the end of the Second Age by being presented to the world as "the Numenorean realms in exile", Arnor and Gondor. And in this way was that monumental imposture, of which those realms were the beneficiaries, foisted on Middle-earth by means of what I like to refer to, as I said before, as "the great Numenorean cover-up".

You're all familiar with the essentials of the mythical narrative of course. The earth was originally flat (well, most people around then thought it was anyway), and if you sailed West out of the sight of land you would come upon various interesting territories known as The Blessed Realm, the Lonely Isle, Valinor, Tol Eressea, and so on. The better classes of Elf, with a few exceptions, have all returned there. After the "War against Morgoth" was over the men who had been on the right, ie anti-Morgoth, side were rewarded by being given this marvellous island called 'Numenor' to dwell in, and were powered by regular injections

of elvish culture and technological know-how. And so they became so noble, so wise and so long-lived that all of us peasants and slobs in Middle-earth itself stood in awe of them, and got down on our knees before them whenever they appeared. But the authorities over in the Blessed Realm and the far West didn't want them sailing over there, and finding out too much, and asking awkward questions when they arrived; consequently they instituted a ban on sailing west out of sight of "Numenor". Of course the whole set up was bound to turn sour in the end; ultimately the wrong elements in society got the upper hand, and did precisely what they were forbidden to do. Whereupon the island of Numenor conveniently blew up and sank beneath the waves, and it was then proclaimed that the world was, indubitably and officially, round (it always was, of course). The old Numenorean aristocrats, "The

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Faithful", as they styled themselves, meaning the chaps who represented the old values of class and kow-towing to the Elves and the Valar, having been tipped off in advance about the coming holocaust, packed themselves and their belongings into nine ships and sailed off to Middle-earth to found the Numenorean realms in exile.

Well, you've only got to sit and consider it quietly for a couple of minutes to realise that the whole story is a load of mythical tosh. The passengers in nine ships (I wouldn't have liked to have been below decks!) - about enough to populate two or three good sized villages, I'd say - there's your realms in exile! Over the course of the Third Age the northern one, Arnor of course, declines and eventually goes into abeyance,

while the southern one, politely declining any suggestion of a merging of ruling houses, to create a super-state west of the Anduin, (the Arnorphobes outnumbered the Arnophiles at that time) survived to proclaim itself the divinely appointed centre of civilization in Middle-earth (all roads lead to Minas Tirith, of course) and themselves, the Gondorians, the chaps who keep the "Numenorean spirit" alive, as the divinely appointed saviours of all that's worth preserving in it. No one will ever know, of course, how the Numenorean racket ever got started, whether it was the product of a single genius, or whether it was collectively hatched, a committee decision in fact. I'm inclined to favour the latter view. (The Royal Archives at Minas Tirith might have told us much, but as you all know they mostly perished or were dispersed at the debacle of the West at the end of the Third Age). Equally, no one is ever likely to know, or find any real evidence, to demonstrate whether there ever was anything like a lost isle of "Numenor", now sunk beneath the waves. If there ever was, of course, it cannot have represented anything more than a minor colonial outpost of the powerful maritime trading and commercial empire extending along the shores of Middle-earth itself. And of course there must be a substratum of historical truth behind the mythical persona of "Ar-Pharazon the Golden" proclaiming "the divine right of Numenorean kings" (how many of you have had to write essays about that at school, I wonder), though of course the "drowning of Numenor", really must represent a natural catastrophe, or series of them, combining to overwhelm the centres of population of on the coasts of Middle-earth itself. (I dare say essential precautions for coastal defence were neglected too). But you have to admire the sheer chutzpah with which the Gondorians have managed to shrug off these and other temporary little local difficulties and maintain the

Mallorn XXXVIII

fiction that they are a permanent ruling elite, surviving even the end of the "War of the Ring" and the period of Sauronic rule to re-emerge as the "Gondorian Federation" with tranquillity, law and order imposed from Minas Tirith on all the rest of us.

You also have to accept the accounts in contemporary chronicles of Sauron's making war on the newly arrived "Dunedain" as we now have to call them before they had fairly got the "realms in exile" fairly going. Well, if he'd done that he'd have swept them off the face of Middle-earth! These "edit-Numenoreans", meaning the few that had managed to wangle a passage on one of the nine ships, teamed up with a handful of elves from Lindon and elsewhere, Gil-galad and that lot, route marched their way over to Mordor, and there, pretty well on the slopes of Mount Doom and in sight of Barad-dur, managed to inflict a crushing defeat on Sauron that rendered him a spent force for centuries after. They also succeeded, by the way, in saddling him with responsibility for the original Numenorean cock-up, by putting it about that sometime previously he'd been captured and taken to Numenor as a prisoner; while there he'd infected the last king Ar-Pharazon with delusions of grandeur, and that the whole scheme of sailing west and dropping in on the Valar for afternoon tea was his idea! Well, it's an inventive tale, but it's no doubt now been doing the rounds on the basis that the more blatant the nonsense you can put into circulation, the more people you can get to believe in it. Sauron the Great (*the* Sauron I mean) always treated it as one of the chief ingredients of political success, and frankly I think sometimes that there was not all that much to choose, morally speaking, between him and those stiff-upper-lip types on the top decks of Minas Tirith in the Third Age.

Mind you, the Sauron of the time (the one in office at the end of

the Second Age, I mean) might well have been a pretty feeble specimen - remember that story about the invincible Ring which he let them cut off him and get away with? Equally, the quality of his armies was probably pretty second rate, even by our standards. We orcs never have been the terrifying fearless hordes you've all been brought up to think we are; even in such Gondorian sources as we have (not to mention *LOTR* of course). You can see we're not fighters or heroes by nature, and when we're conscripted and sent into battle we always get slaughtered in our thousands. The only way the officers can get any results out of us is by constant threats and harsh discipline, "where there's a whip there's a will, my slugs! Don't you know we're at war?" - that sort of thing. Left to ourselves we can

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hardly manage to do even the most straightforward things - how many orcs does it take to change a lightbulb? - answer, no one's ever counted. (That's why, of course, Sauron is called the Lord of Darkness, really, and Mordor the Blacked-out Country - the lights never work!) Even your typical Nazgul-lord couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery - look at the time when the Sauron of the day (I forget whether it was number XXIV or XXV) tried to sugar up the election of the most unsuitable candidate for the newly created post of Mayor of Minas Tirith! But I digress.

Let us go back to the beginning of the Second Age for a moment or two and just briefly sketch in what happened to our lot "on the wrong side of the tracks". Quite a number of us escaped in time when the deluge of quote "the breaking of Thangorodrim" unquote happened,

and we made our way eastward like everybody else. Being among the more enterprising of the emigrant groups, we penetrated further east than most, and holed up in various desirable or less desirable locations in the Misty Mountains or down south in Mordor. Another characteristic we share with Dwarves - we both like mountain living. The scenery's better and once you're underground you're out of the weather. We Orcs feel the cold terribly!

Well, we've had various leaders at that time and afterwards and one of the principal ones took over the concept of a dynastic title for the succession. The old one of "Morgoth" had got a bit shopsoiled over the centuries, so he decided to use the one that had always attached to the 2IC - Sauron - as being less calculated to create suspicion, alarm and despondency and lead to violence along the banks of the Anduin. And that's how it's been ever since. There've been other chieftains - the far north area round Angmar and Carn Dum has always been inclined to plough its own furrow independently under separate command - that of the so-called Witch-king, as hostile chroniclers have usually referred to the current holder of the office - once again there has been a dynastic succession of them. For most of the Second Age the current Sauron, as we may call the current ruler of the eastern confederation at any one time, has been content to keep a pretty low profile.* Certainly there was an incursion, or a series of incursions, into Eriador in the seventeenth century of the Second Age, but Gil-galad and his chaps from Lindon way in the following year seem to have coped with it without much trouble, and we were booted out more or less permanently. The scale of the whole episode has been much exaggerated.

What is more remarkable about this period is the relationship, a short time before this, between Sauron and a few so-called Elves who had holed up in the Eregion

* See Note on page 29

An orcs'-eye view...

district - Hollin they called it. They proposed to build it up as a craft centre and establish a metal working industry. The Sauron of the time was quite a whizz, technologically speaking, (very much "on-line" as we say in Minas Morgul nowadays - you really should see our new department of computer studies). He told us orcs to give these elves a helping hand while he got on with his own research studies. And that's how that ridiculous tale about "the elven-smiths, instructed by Sauron, forging the Rings of power" arose, if you please. Precious little thanks we got for it, I must say! It does show that these so-called Elves weren't really the geniuses they claimed to be, doesn't it?

Well, time's running out and I'll have to cut this a bit short. I'll finish by trying to outline the significance of what is usually referred to as "the arising of Sauron at the end of the Third Age". As I mentioned a little while ago the eclipse of Sauronic power at the end of the Second Age was much more a reflection of the military weakness and general incompetence of Sauronic rule at that particular time than an endorsement of the military might and valour of the West. These Gondorians are always bragging about their valour and Numenorean ancestry of course. For much of the Third Age you get the not uncommon set up of a titular ruler with a limited power base (Dol Guldur) having to contend with a

ring or much more powerful vassals, the Nazgul lords, who in practice can do more or less as they please, including the fortification of Minas Morgul (the ruins of the fortress, tarted up and refurbished of course, now serves as the main block of the university buildings today!). We rank and file orcs, of course, just follow and take orders from our immediate superiors - it's just a question of who's in a position to kick us hardest. And so all that stuff about "dark things stirring in Middle-earth while Sauron still slept" really just implies that such activity as there was was localized and

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peripheral - central control was, for long periods, simply unenforceable. But of course as always tends to happen, the titular rulers little by little gain greater resources and more control, until you get the exceptional personality who can turn everything to his advantage and bring all his dominions together under his own thumb. And this was of course Sauron the Great, the so-called "Dark Lord".

Well, as I hope I've made clear, there isn't and never has been, any supposedly immortal evil ogre intent

on seizing world power, neither in Thangorodrim once upon a time, nor in Mordor since. There's simply been a dynastic succession of rulers of variable efficiency and competence. But when Sauron the Great wound up the Dol Guldur end and transferred his HQ back to Barad-dur of course it suited his plans to induce everyone in Middle-earth to believe in the myth of his original immortality and indestructibility, and likewise to believe in corresponding attributes for his immediate subordinates. And of course all this went with the military and administrative genius that enabled him to bring discipline and order to the ramshackle military structure of the Mordorian high command, with the rapidity with which he was able to assemble the orcpower and material resources required to win the War of the Ring and establish and maintain control of a vastly extended empire thereafter. It was not Sauron the Great, but his successors, who, if you'll excuse the expression, ballsed it all up again over the succeeding centuries, and allowed the Gondorians, still trumpeting their mythical Numenorean moral and intellectual superiority, to take over control of Middle-earth again, and to propagate the mythology of Valar, Elves and Numenorean superiority, that still frustrates our best efforts to achieve a rational and truthful outline and interpretation of Middle-earth's history today."

Notes endorsed on the above script, which seem to have been assembled from notes taken down at the lecture in question.

"I've heard of Tolkien-based fiction, but this is ridiculous."

"Please see the enclosed. All I need say is: the Valar help Middle-earth if the atheistical rubbish now being peddled about as "the new history", ever becomes accepted in intellectual and scholarly circles. The danger we have to face is that what is heresy in one Age may turn into recognized orthodoxy in the next. I always said that the polytechnic at Minas Morgul should never have been elevated to university status, and I shall be recommending to the authorities in Minas Tirith that they freeze its grants and exercise strict control over its admission procedures."

* "Incidentally, it was in those so-called "Dark years" that Sauron was supposed to have devised the Black Speech. There's an amusing story to the effect that in reality he didn't do any such thing. His laptop (a pretty early model, of course) went on the blink one day and printed out a lot of incomprehensible nonsense. It occurred to him that he might kid his high officials into believing that this was a new official means of interdepartmental communication, so he insisted that the Nazgul and all other members of his government learn it and use it for all official transactions. Thus they would never be able to understand each other, and consequently be deprived of any means of plotting against him. And that's why we orcs have to use the Common speech to communicate with each other. A tall tale, but worth keeping in circulation, I always feel."