

The above illustration does not depict any of the contributors to this column. Nor does it represent an emissary of the GPO. Though I have wondered at times about the scratches on the front door.... The editorial 'I' in this case belongs to Hartley Patterson, who henceforth appears in (( )).

BOB BORSLEY (Porth-y-Cwm, Cae Rhys, Cricieth, N Wales)

Congratulations to everyone involved in Mallorn 4. It gets better all the time. Bryan Talbot's artwork I thought was very nice, I look forward to seeing more of it.

Turning briefly to earlier Mallorns, I agree strongly with David Pearson's criticisms of Phil Spencer's remarks in Mallorn 2 on analysis. I just don't think Phil's point that analysis of Tolkien is likely to reveal faults and read too much into trivialities is born out by practice. His remarks related to my article in Mallorn 1 on the languages of Middle-earth. A study of these languages reveals, I think, not faults but an immense and fascinating attention to detail. It was this point I tried to bring out in the article. Furthermore it is clear that the languages were anything but a triviality to Tolkien's mind. In the foreward to LotR he talks of going on, after completing the Hobbit, to 'complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days'. He writes that he had 'little hope that other people would be interested in this work...since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of history for Elvish tongues.'

Finally a rather nice quotation from a Wintu (Californian) Indian which is extremely reminiscent of many of Treebeard's remarks:-

The white people never cared for land or deer or bear....We shake down acorns and pine-nuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plough up the ground, pull up the trees, kill everything. The tree says, "Don't. I am sore. Don't hurt me." But they chop it down and cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them.... The Indians never hurt anything, but the white people destroy all. They blast rocks and scatter them on the ground. The rock says "Don't! You are hurting me." But the white people pay no attention. When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cooking....How can the spirit of the earth like the white man? Everywhere the white man has touched it, it is sore.

(cited in Theodore Roszak, 'The Making of a Counter-Culture' P.245)

Perhaps the spirit of the earth is going to get it's own back before too long.

((Your quote reminds me of a novel I recently read about the Saxon settlement of Britain (Men went to Cattraeth/John James/Tandem 30p), where the Britons express much the same sentiments. The Saxons are destroying their forests and planting the hated wheat, rather than the oats which grow on uplands. The book is based on a contemporary poem - I reccomend it, as well as well as James' other novels.

WILL HAVEN (23 Teck St, Liverpool L7 8RR)

Lud-in-the-Mist sounds remarkably like an updated (ie charmless) version of Dunsany's "King of Elfland's Daughter", though perhaps the way it's written could be its redeeming feature, as the reviewer seems to suggest. But I don't think I'd buy it, simply because I couldn't help comparing it with the wonderful gentleness of Dunsany's book, to LitM's detriment.

Oops! Disagree with Rosie in the first sentence: how could you possibly compare the single-minded sadistically warped heroes of Moorcock's books with the wonderful variety of well-balanced gentle folk in Tolkien I really don't know. Admittedly the Elric books are his best (but only because of the dreadful ending of the "Runestaff"), but his heroes are invariably arrogant, ignorant, pawns-of-fate, torn by their own emotional conflicts, who lash out unpredictably and cruelly throughout his books, such as any hero of any half-hour Western ont'telly might.

Dreadful.

Oh, I disagree with Malcolm Edwards in Belladonna's Postbag. Surely when he says "nowhere else...(than LotR) is black so black" etc he forgets Tolkien's most important saying of all, that a story must be true unto itself - surely this cannot be if all is polarised into good and evil.

Perhaps it is because I could never bring myself to believe in objective (much less absolute) good/bad, and probably it was not the author's intention (Catholicism et al) but I have always regarded LotR as a story translated directly out of the 'Red Book', this, and a few Gondorian sources being all there was available at the time. Well then, its fairly obvious that these sources are somewhat biased (its like making a film of WWII using only Hollywood clippings as a source) - and that in fact, at the time, (though it probably didn't occur to the Hobbits) all that was going on was a simple struggle for power in Middle-earth. Doubtless, if Sauron had won two thousand years later when only a few scraps of his sources were available, and the author was of Mordorian stock, a good case could have been made for Sauron - his lands taken from him by grasping Numenorians; his heroism in going to the Black Isle of the Evil Sorcerors', his miraculous escaped; the way Saruman, true representative of the One, helped him win through, etc.

It seems obvious to me that, since LotR is based as a hobbit work, these biased factors give it more realism, for this is how it would appear to these rustic folk: yet there is no reason for us, as 'independent observers' to believe Sauron was evil (unless of course you take the point that Denethor and Gandalf were evil too, in which case, in their context, the arguement becomes meaningless).

Of course, if it helps you, if you want to be partisan, then there is no reason why you should not be (just don't expect everyone else to be, too). For me, that would ruin the book. Perhaps the true measure of the worth of LotR is that it is open to such a variety of interpretations.

The Rohan article was the most interesting for me. I don't see this bit about, on a battlefield, the first wave penetrating in wedges. Surely this would mean large gaps for the second wave to come through. Doesn't this strike you as a trifle dangerous? A well-trained enemy would simply overwhelm the first wave by placing soft troops in their path and then dashing out between the wedge gaps, holding up the second wave (possibly with their own cavalry) whilst outflanking the first wave and quickly destroying it.

((Sure, but such tactics as you say require training, which the enemies of Rohan do not seem to have had. The implication in LotR is that Sauron's forces had such numerical superiority that they were bound to win - so serious tactical planning was unnecessary))

ROGER JOHNSON (15 Berwick Ave, Chelmsford, Essex)

....Till recently I'd thought that JRRT himself (in his appendices) and the admirable Lin Carter (whose "Tolkien: a look behind the Lord of the Rings" should be enforced reading for all TSA members) had covered the ground almost entirely and that valid comment henceforth could only be covered in letter-length articles, or actual letters as per Belladonna's Postbag or Archie Mercer's excellent Middle Earthworm. Then the articles started appearing in Maliorn, and they've continued, and they're improving. Bob Borsley and Dave Welldrake's monographs in 4 are just this sort of informative and, if I may call it so, validly speculative article. I'm much more interested in Gollum's antecedents in literature or in what he had for dinner on such and such a date than in whether he represents the sublimation of a repressed sexual fantasy on JRRT's part. Keep it up!

((Don't agree with you over the Lin Carter book. It gives the impression of having been written on a rainy afternoon with no reference books handy - he wastes several chapters summarising the plot of LotR and makes several important errors therein. His pieces in antecedents and sources are so skethy and incomplete as to be laughable. Almost any TSA member could have done better))

I must echo Rosie Cotton's comments on the Elric/Stormbringer saga. Moorcock in this vein is magnificent; his sheer power as a storyteller & a creator of mood and character is staggering. May I put in a word for REHoward's Conan saga? Sheer rip-roaring, uninhibited healthy action, with a masterly command of macabre mood if necessary. And before someone sneers 'Pulp!' I'd remind you that JRRT has read and enjoyed much of the Conan saga. ((There seems to be some disagreement over Moorcock. Have you read any of his Jerry Cornelius stories?))

Alan Garner, despite JDCollins' censure seems to me again to be a masterly storyteller with a bright and powerful imagination - on occasion dark and powerful. The earlier books are way above the general run of fantasy -- perhaps the strong Tolkienesque influence in Weirdstone and Gomrath appeals to me here, but this is no mere imitation. The mere fact of Garner's elves, dwarfs, etc being placed so directly in contact with 20th century England calls for a different treatment, a challenge to which Garner rises admirably. His elves, by the bye, seem to me to be just what Tolkien's elves would have become after prolonged exposure to human pollution of their natural environment.

ARFallone is right, though: The Owl Service is Garner's chief work. To me it seems simply one of the best books I've read in the last few years. The action and the characterisation are inextricably intertwined; neither is a mere peg for the other.....

((I understand Garner's next book will not have any explicit mythological connections, but will continue his exploration of the basis behind myths))

I'm convinced, by the way, that the 'old tune' to which Sam sang his song of the Stone Troll was one of the English tunes to "Old Daddy Fox". The tune that Cyril Tawney and the Young Tradition use suits admirably....

Daddy Fox went out on a chilly night  
He prayed to the moon for to give him light  
For he'd many a long mile to go that night  
Before he came to his den - o  
Den-o, den-o  
He'd many a long mile to go that night  
Before he came to his den-o.

If you compare the above stanza with Sam's song you'll find that the scansion, rhyme-scheme, etc is almost exactly the same.....

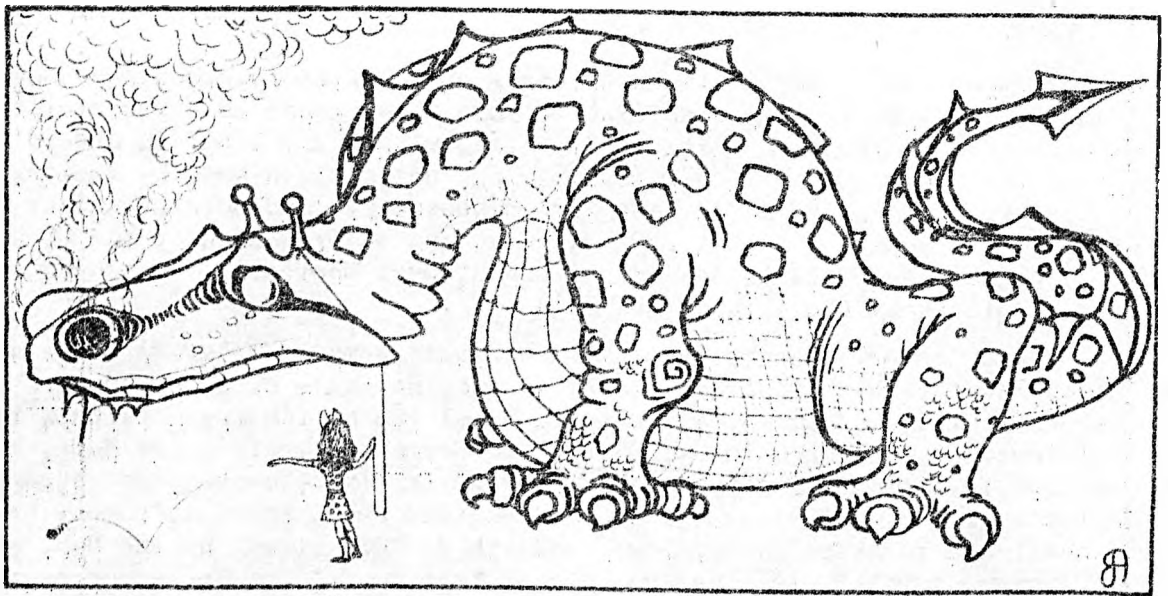
TONY FALLONE (7 Broxburn Rd, Broadway Estate, Warminster, Wilts)  
Arthur Cruttenden: I agree about the printing of my Dead King, some of the more delicate details, especially around the hand holding the sword, were dark and blurred. I always did like his thumb and that faded into nothing! As to his inspiration it was more to do with the corpses in the Barrow where Frodo fought the Wight; although they seem to be described as untouched by corruption, I felt that the worm should have had full play, to be more realistic. Tolkien seems reluctant to allow such grimness to appear in his pages. It appears that I have turned a few stomachs with this aggressive old stiff (Su, Helen, Belladonna etc) and for that I am sorry, but give him a chance, he grows on one...

((I think Belladonna said it was nice and unpleasant, but wondered if it gave quite the right impression of the contents of the magazine!))

Articles: Dave Welldrake on Fairies - very good indeed...Bob Borsley - brilliant! I spent almost an hour engrossed in this article, and afterwards I felt that I had actually learnt something from it. Peter Burley was also good but short, but of course there was not much to go on in LotR about Rohan. All these analytical articles are a symptom of our universal desire for more from Tolkien, a hunger for detail, even richer and deeper than in LotR, new tales to make Middle Earth more real, give it solid foundations.

Reviews: If it could be managed I think this number of reviews each issue should be maintained.

((I believe Anduril, the TS News Bulletin edited by John Martin, will also be doing reviews. I'm not sure at present how the two will be divided - perhaps the longer and more Tolkien-orientated reviews will go into Mallorn.)



"Fetch it, boy."

JOHN ABBOTT (Rowans, 18 Eden Avenue, Dewsbury Rd, Wakefield, Yorks WF2 9DJ)  
 The illustrations were pleasant, tho' rather few in number. Roger Nixon's warrior (p 27) seems to have found his sea-legs judging by the fish-scales on them!

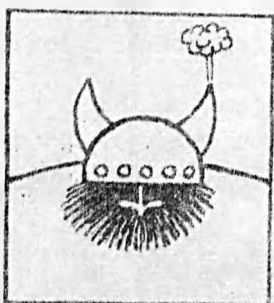
((The illos this issue are mostly by John himself, who responded nobly to my plea for artwork. Mallorn will probably be turning to outside sources soon, if the members themselves can't produce enough.))

/Poems/ are largely beyond me I'm afraid. In fact, I am still finding out about words. My present favourite ten would be:- pavilion, quince, crystal, falcon, leaf, turquoise, sky, alembic, rowan, glow. To these perhaps add:- astrolabe, enchantment. And Orion. So what? you say. Indeed, so what?. It's just that these words appeal because of their sounds (as well as their associations). Anyway, who's writing this letter? One wonders what others might choose (say from LotR).

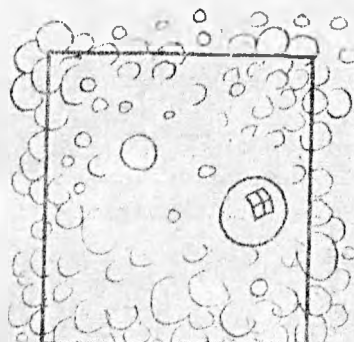
JAMES EAD (29 Uttoxeter Rd, Little Stoke, Stone, Staffs)  
 Lave Weldrake was interesting, though no doubt some of my piskie friends down thar in Cornwall would not be too pleased to find themselves associated with the commoner pixie. In fact not all "piskies" are small and "gossamer-winged", some are of normal human stature and in days gone by practised the art of "baby-snatching" and replacing them with their own kin. Still the less said about that the better!

((For more details see Poul Anderson's novel 'The Broken Sword', which I believe is at last back in print in paperback. I have a cartoon version of this drawn as a serial in Trumpet by George Barr that is quite superb. The hero of the story is one of these changelings, or rather the reverse - a human child brought up by elves.))

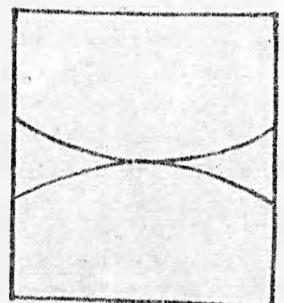
In answer to a request by John Abbott here is a short biography of Professor Tolkien taken from some notes made after the talk the 'Star Brows' had with his son Father C.J.R.Tolkien.



Boromir blowing his horn.



The Scouring of the Swift



Troll sitting on a rock.



Professor Tolkien was born in South Africa, the younger of two sons. His father was working as a bank official for Lloyds when he died of typhoid fever. This was before Tolkien was four.

Mrs Tolkien returned with her two sons to England and lived in a poor part of Birmingham. She died while her sons were still at school of starvation and diabetes because she couldn't afford medical assistance. Tolkien attended St Philips Grammar School in Birmingham from which he was expelled at the age of 12 or 13...He then attended another school in Birmingham from which he went to Oxford. He became Professor of Anglo-Saxon Studies there and later of Philology studying Germanic languages.

Professor Tolkien wrote stories for his children. This was one of their favorite entertainments. "The Hobbit" was reserved for a Christmas Treat and was written mainly for his eldest children. Other stories not recorded were of Tom Bombadil who later appeared in LotR, and who actually existed in the form of a dutch doll who wore the same bizarre clothing as mentioned in the text. Another story which the children enjoyed was the tale of the little lead dog which was lost when the Tolkien family were on holiday in Filey in Yorkshire. The story told of how the dog was found by a seagull who took him to the moon, where several exciting adventures befell him.

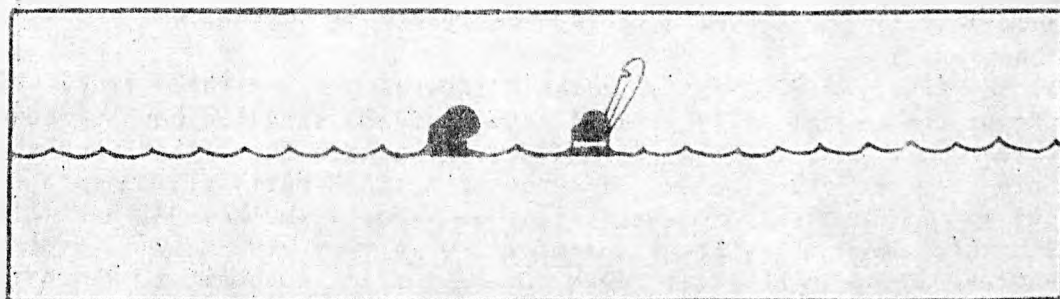
Farmer Giles of Ham was told to them when they returned from a picnic, as they were forced to take shelter under a bridge, where Chrysophylax was supposed to live. Both Ham and Hobbiton have actual geographical locations, somewhere in Oxfordshire.

Professor Tolkien inherited from his mother his great love of the country and Nature and from her he learnt much. The Professor knows the "language" of trees as the wind sighs through their branches and the noises they make when moved by wind. From this came the language of the Ents.

In his earliest years, he was influenced by George McDonald and Andrew Lang - "On Fairy Stories" was later written as an Andrew Lang Lecture delivered by the Professor.

I hope all that I have written above echoes Fr. Tolkien's words.

((There are certainly some bits I was not aware of myself. To bring this up to date, as most of you will know Professor Tolkien's wife died last year, and we understand from Allen & Unwin that he is travelling around the country visiting his children. Following his retirement he moved from Oxford to a secret residence on the South Coast.))



The Fallohide brothers, Marcho and Blanco, crossing the Baranduin in T.A. 1601.

HAL BROOME (2002 Adeline St, Hattiesburg, Miss 39401)

Dave Weldrake's article was especially good, he seems very learned in lore, and has a way with telling Whuppity Stories. If reaction is favourable towards the music of mine, perhaps more of it could be arranged to other poems.

In the book review ((see later)) I forgot to mention that the hardback is available in a limited edition from Donald M Grant, Publishers, West Kingston, Rhode Island USA. It is also coming out from them in four separate paperbacks at 75c. All have excellent Jeff Jones illos.

CATHERINE MCEVOY (Box 268, East Lansing, Michigan 48823)

I would be interested in exchanging tunes with people who have written them, by way of cassette tapes if possible. I have several tunes of my own, and the Michigan State University Tolkien Fellowship has some interesting ones as well. Is the second tune from Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on Greensleeves used in England for A Elbereth Gilthoniel? It seems to have sprung up simultaneously in several places here.

((Er...excuse me while I hum it over...yes, it does fit doesn't it. On the record though it isn't sung but spoken by JRRT, and I would imagine that's what he intended.

Exchanging tapes was originally proposed by Hal Broome I think. If anyone is interested perhaps they could let me (Hartley Patterson) know and I'll try and get something going.))

DAVE WELDRAKE (9 South View Terrace, Hill Head, Halifax Rd, Dewsbury, Yorks)

I like Tony Fallone's poem. It reminds me rather of some of Thomas Hardy's poems in subject and mood through and of the few poems I've read by Walter de la Mere.

I'm not so sure that the Elric Sagas are the best of Moorcock's work. 'Stormbringer' is certainly the best of his fantasy works which I've read. The review gives no idea of the power of the ending.

But there are other Moorcock books which in my opinion at least are as good as Stormbringer. One is 'Final Programme' which chronicles the history of Jerry Cornelius - a 'swinger' if I ever saw one. Also very good is 'Behold the Man', which takes the hackneyed SF theme of someone going back in time to visit Jesus of Nazareth and turns it into a powerful psychological story.

((Moorcock now dislikes 'Behold the Man' - it lacks humour he says. He also considers anyone who raves over Elric as probably pretty sick in the head. I agree with you though Dave, his SF is generally better than his S&S))

Bob Borsley's article: I know nothing about Anglo-Saxon but for once it's not going to stop me commenting. First I must say that I found it interesting and well written and that any comments I make don't imply the contrary....

1. Shadowfax is certainly not like Odin's Sleipnir. Maybe both were 'the fastest horse in the world' but Sleipnir had eight legs. There are other places Bob could have looked - fairy horses are pretty fast too. Michael Scot, a Scottish wizard, astrologer and alchemist once needed to make a journey to Rome so he borrowed a fairy horse. While he was there he visited the Pope who was astounded to note that the Scot had travelled so quickly that the snow on his ear had not yet melted.

2. I wish I could have found some of those quotes he uses when talking of the passing of time for elves. It's strange that both of us should pick on the same idea and try to show that it comes from different sources. It just proves how ridiculous this critic business is.

3. About the 'fairy story hero'. Auden's remarks are generally true. Often it's the youngest son or the maltreated stepdaughter who wins the day but sometimes the fairy story hero wins through skill and courage as did fair Janet when she rescued Tam Lin from the elven Queen. I agree that the Hobbits fit Auden's definition but someone who fits it even better is Manuel, the hero of Cabell's 'Figures of Earth'. Manuel may be an idiot or a very very wise man. I suspect the former but whatever happens he still comes out on top so you begin to wonder.

((A number of Cabell's novels are now in paperback, forming part of the twenty volume 'History of Manuel' tracing the adventures of his descendants. There is, by the way, a James Branch Cabell Society who have their own magazine 'Kalki'. James Blish is the British representative.))

4. While we're on the subject of heroes which class of hero is Gollum? I reckon this is a valid question since in the end it is he who destroys the Ring yet he hardly fits into either category ie fairy tale or epic hero.

((I would have said Gollum fits into a fairly standard category. He's the good villain, the baddie who always wishes he wasn't. There's a good example in 'The Worm Ourobours' but I can't recall his name at the moment...))

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Many thanks to those who wrote in, even if there wasn't room for you here. Please note the address for LoCs on this issue which appears elsewhere.