

least two specific instances. With the First World War raging, Lewis's father suggested to his son that he try to join the ranks of the artillery specialists (assumed to be a safer position within the military than in the infantry). Despite his father's apparent persistence, Lewis explained in three separate letters that "only those cadets who can be shown to have some special knowledge of mathematics" would be recommended for such a position<sup>8</sup>. Lewis's aborted story *The Dark Tower* relied on engineer J. W. Dunne's theory of 'serial time', and included a mind-numbing paraphrasing of Dunne's ideas in the last completed section of the tale. Walter Hooper suggests that because Lewis was "weak in mathematics, he may have been unable to imagine a convincing method" of tying up the strands in the story and bringing it to a reasonable conclusion<sup>9</sup>. Interestingly, as Verlyn Flieger explains in *A Question of Time* (1997), Tolkien himself used Dunne's model of time in writing *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*, and although neither tale was completed, a lack of understanding of mathematics does not seem to be the reason. In fact, in part 2 of *The Notion Club Papers*<sup>16</sup> the character Lowdham calls the two distinct Númenórean languages A and B, to which fellow character Stainer complains "I find this rather hard to follow, or even to swallow. Couldn't you give us something a bit clearer, something better to bite on than this algebra of A and B?" Although Tolkien himself thought that the character of Franks was more closely aligned with Lewis<sup>10</sup>, perhaps Stainer's complaint owes its genesis in Tolkien's knowledge of Lewis's attitudes towards mathematics.

Although it is tempting to simply blame a late Victorian version of the infamous American educational policy called 'No Child Left Behind' for Tolkien's and Lewis's self-described childhood difficulties with maths, it seems that at least Tolkien vastly underestimated his eventual mathematical abilities. For as he noted somewhat smugly in a 1955 letter to Naomi Mitchison, "I am sorry about my childish amusement with arithmetic; but there it is: the Númenórean calendar was just a bit better than the Gregorian: the latter being on average 26 seconds fast [per annum], and the N[úmenórean] 17.2 sec[onds] slow" (*Letters* 176). Not bad for a 'fairy story' written by a mathphobic English professor!

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## Inscriptions and insertions in a first edition of *The Lord of the Rings*

JAMES BLAKE

To the bibliographer, provenance means the ownership history of individual copies of books. The study of provenance is generally extended to include examination of physical evidence, such as inscriptions or annotations, which show how readers interacted with books. Such studies play a part in illuminating the role particular books played in the social, cultural or intellectual lives of their owners. Here I look at a first edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, which, being rich in inscriptions and insertions and of known provenance, provides a case study showing how the work was received by two early readers.

The three volumes, the first of which is a second impression, were originally owned by the English painter George Dannatt (1915–2009) and his wife Anne. The books remained with the Dannatts until sold to the booksellers Paul and Barbara Heatley in 2002. The inscriptions and insertions, which according to the Heatleys all date from

the time of the Dannatts' ownership, can be summarized as follows: pencilled ownership inscriptions in the front of all three volumes, with dates of acquisition appended to two of these; dates of reading pencilled in the back of all three volumes; various cuttings, principally from *The Times* and *The Listener*, inserted in all three volumes, with some annotation. As described below, one cutting is pasted in.

Comparison with correspondence sent to the Heatleys allows most of the handwritten annotations to be ascribed to George, and many of the rest to Anne; there is uncertainty over a few examples as, to a non-expert eye, the Dannatts' handwriting is rather similar.

The inscriptions and insertions allow us to reconstruct much of the history of the Dannatts' interaction with *The Lord of the Rings* over a period of more than 40 years. The pencilled inscription in *The Fellowship of the Ring* shows that they bought it in December 1954, some five months



after its first publication. Although generally meticulous about recording everything to do with these volumes, they did not date the ownership inscription in *The Two Towers*, which had been published in November. Conceivably they bought both these volumes at the same time: Anne was certainly reading *The Two Towers* before the end of December. Their reasons for buying the two volumes at this point are unknown, though possibly they were influenced by W. H. Auden's positive review, published in November; as we shall see below, George certainly took note of it.

The dates pencilled into the back of the three volumes each have "AD" or "GD" appended to them, and are clearly dates of reading. However it is unclear if they are dates when a volume was started or finished. According to the dates given, Anne was reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* on 28 December 1954, and *The Two Towers* the day after. Possibly this means that she finished one volume on 28 December and started the next the following day. George was reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* on 10 January 1955, but apparently did not get round to *The Two Towers* until 21 May.

Although rather slow in acquiring the first two volumes, the Dannatts bought *The Return of the King* the day after publication, as shown by a very precise inscription: "George and Anne Dannatt Oct 21 1955". Anne was reading it on 21 November: even if this represents the date she finished the volume, she was not then particularly quick to do so, considering how promptly it had been bought. Just possibly she wrote "21.11.55" in error for "21.10.55." George was reading it on 21 January 1956.

An anonymous review from *The Listener* from 1955 is

pasted inside the back cover of *The Return of the King*. Next to it a pencilled note in George's handwriting reads:

This would seem to be the best brief summing up of the 3 books — Listener Dec 8. 1955 — that I have seen. See also Auden's enthusiastic article in "Encounter", November 1954. (Vol 3 No 15).

*The Listener* review finds both "merits and limitations" in the work, and opines: "It is impossible to decide what will be the judgement of posterity on *The Lord of the Rings*." Tolkien criticism refers to Auden's review frequently; here is evidence that the piece also caught the attention of at least one reader who was not professionally involved with literature.

Anne was again reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* on 2 June 1964, but may have decided not to continue with the whole work, as no more dates of reading appear in any of the volumes, for either her or George. Whether or not they did read any part of *The Lord of the Rings* again, their interest in it remained active: between 1973 and 1997 they inserted a small, eclectic collection of press cuttings into the three volumes. In order of publication, these are as follows:

**8 November 1973:** the article "Tolkien lives?" by J. W. Burrows, published in *The Listener*, inserted inside the front cover of *The Two Towers*.

**22 November 1973:** a letter by Tom Davis of the University of Birmingham, published in *The Listener*, folded with the Burrows piece. Although Burrows is generally positive about Tolkien, Davis is critical of both Tolkien's work and Burrows's analysis.

**12 May 1977:** John Carey's review of *J. R. R. Tolkien: a*

*Biography* by Humphrey Carter, published in *The Listener*, inserted inside the front cover of *The Return of the King*. The review is entitled 'Hobbit-forming' and is mildly critical of Tolkien's work.

**3 January 1992:** the anonymous piece 'Early Reading Hobbits' from *The Times*, inserted inside the front cover of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The piece briefly recounts how as a boy Rayner Unwin "reviewed" *The Hobbit*. The exact date has been marked on the cutting in pen.

**20 January 1997:** the article 'Waterstone Book Survey: Tolkien Wins Title Lord of the Books by Popular Acclaim' by Dayla Alberge and Erica Wagner, from *The Times*, inserted inside the front cover of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The date has been pencilled on the cutting.

It is not obvious how these pieces were chosen. Why, for instance, did the Dannatts not include Tolkien's obituary from *The Times*, published on 3 September 1973, in their collection of cuttings? It is equally unclear whether any method lay behind the distribution of the cuttings across the three volumes. Possibly during these years they were collecting and storing cuttings rather at random. This contrasts with the very deliberate choice of the 1955 review pasted into *The Return of the King*: here George selected a review he felt to be of particular value, underlined his choice by physically attaching it to the book, and placed it at the very end of the three volumes, as if to provide a concluding summary of the whole work.


By 1982, the Dannatts were also aware of the monetary value of these volumes. A cutting from a catalogue issued by the second-hand bookseller Michael Cole of York from this year is inserted inside the front cover of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The cutting, which has the date and the bookseller's name and address marked on it in pen, lists a first edition of *The Lord of the Rings* for sale for £320.

There are no annotations to the text itself in any of the three volumes, which is not unusual: in general, only

teachers and students add marginalia to works of fiction.

The Dannatts sold the three volumes in 2002.

To conclude, examination of these volumes shows how two early readers interacted with *The Lord of the Rings* over a period of decades. Two aspects of this interaction are worth highlighting. First, the novel seems to have engaged them even when not being read. For many years they were apparently more interested in following the debate about its merits, and in tracking its popularity and influence, than in returning to the text itself. Second, it was not uncritical admiration of Tolkien's work that drove this long, if intermittent, engagement with the novel. In 1955–6 George found himself agreeing with a review which found both "merits and limitations" in *The Lord of the Rings*; in 1964 Anne seems to have abandoned her rereading; and in later years they collected cuttings characterized by a wide range of opinions. In George's case, his work as a music critic in 1944–56 may explain some of his interest in a text that from the beginning divided both critical and popular opinion.

As is the case here, examination of individual copies of books generally yields insights that although valuable are relatively modest, not least because aspects of the evidence are inevitably hard to interpret. The uncertainty surrounding why the Dannatts chose the particular cuttings listed here is an example. However, provenance evidence gains in value if multiple copies of the same work can be studied. To this end, I would encourage anyone with access to early editions of Tolkien's works to examine them for inscriptions, annotations, insertions or other marks of ownership, and to publicize anything of interest they find. In this way studies of provenance may help us to document how Tolkien's works were received by his earliest readers. 

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## Orcs and Tolkien's treatment of evil

DAVID TNEH

Tolkien's world is inhabited by a multiplicity of creatures. Although the labyrinthine topography, fascinating languages and ancient history of Middle-earth dazzle many a reader, it is Tolkien's creation of elves, orcs, balrogs, ents, hobbits and dwarves that makes the lure of Middle-earth hard to resist.

Treebeard speaks to Merry and Pippin of the 'free peoples' of Middle-earth. In his citation of the 'free peoples', the elves were the first to settle on the realm followed by a catalogue of the free-living creatures from the elves to a selection of animals. The race of the orcs does not exist in Treebeard's list of 'free peoples' and, compared with the

other more illustrious characters in the novel, the orcs have long been considered secondary images of evil in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Just who are the orcs and what role do they play in the legendarium? To most readers, they are the embodiment of evil; malignant creatures of terror and destruction. Their origin predates a time even before any battle took place in Middle-earth, when Melkor, the greatest of the Valar, became corrupt and evil and desired to have his own way. He disrupted the Music of Creation, sowing hatred and distrust among all his creations. His vilest 'creation' was the orcs.