

Saruman scene, Saruman mocks Gandalf for sending the Halfling to his doom, which suggests that Saruman knows the nature of Frodo's quest. As he is Sauron's slave, it would follow that Sauron would also know about Frodo's quest — which is nonsense, so here is an inconsistency caused by the desire to endow Saruman with more menace and pride before his fall.

Appendix 2 Tolkien's time-scheme suits both Shippey's interpretation and mine. Denethor consults his *palantír* late in the evening of 13 March. Sam sets out to rescue Frodo at noon on 14 March, a moment that Tolkien anchors by stating where Aragorn, Merry and Pippin were at the time. Sam rescues Frodo that evening, and the next morning the Darkness begins to clear for Frodo and Sam as well as Minas Tirith. The Battle of the Pelennor is fought and Frodo and Sam hear a Nazgûl-shriek, which tells us of the Witch-king's death.

Had Denethor looked again at Frodo's prison chamber before he went to the pyre, he might have seen Frodo and Sam together, or an empty chamber, the latter of which would not have given him comfort. However, it was good (in my reading) that Sauron did not pick up Frodo's image from Denethor, but kept him firmly focused on the west-facing view of the Stone, and on the black fleet.

Finally, I would like to refute any suggestion that the Stones had a 'flashback' or 'time-travel' function. They could see distant objects, and scenes from the past provided that that Stone had already viewed those scenes. Furthermore, a surveyor could see an object retained in the mind of the

surveyor with whom he was communicating. It was not, however, possible to require a Stone to show past events that it had not witnessed: otherwise the Quest would have failed as soon as Sauron learned of the escaped spies. He would simply have travelled back in time to find Frodo and Sam, and then move forward quickly to find them in 'real time'. Such a power would also have been useful to Saruman in his part of Middle-earth, sending news to Sauron beyond the reach of his (Sauron's) Stone. But obviously the Stones did not have that power. However, had Sauron encouraged Saruman to survey well north of Isengard, he might have been able to spy on the Fellowship before and after they came to Rivendell.

Jessica Yates is an independent scholar and longtime member of the Tolkien Society.

1. Shippey, T. A. J. R. R. *Tolkien: Author of the Century* (HarperCollins, 2000).
2. Shippey, T. A. 'Not worn lightly'. Review of *The Return of the King* (film version) *Times Literary Supplement* (9 January 2004).
3. Shippey, T. A. 'From page to screen: problems Tolkien left for Jackson'. Lecture at Hope College, Michigan, 1 April 2004, reported on theoneering.net (6 April 2004).
4. Shippey, T. A. 'Another Road to Middle-earth: Jackson's Movie Trilogy' in *Roots and Branches: Selected Papers on Tolkien* Cormarë series no. 11 (Walking Tree, 2007).
5. Hammond, W. G. & Scull, C. *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (HarperCollins, 2005).
6. Nored, G. *The Lord of the Rings — A Textual Inquiry* Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, vol. 68, First Quarter 1974 (on the difference between "known" and "guessed").
7. Noble, J. Conversation at Dragon*Con, posted on theoneering.net, 8 September 2005; *The Depths of Denethor* interview with John Noble on the official lordoftherings.net website.

The realm of Faërie, and the shadow of Homer in Narnia and Middle-earth

LOUIS MARKOS

"Me, sir!" cried Sam, springing up like a dog invited for a walk. "Me go and see Elves and all! Hooray!" he shouted, and then burst into tears. (*The Lord of the Rings*, Bk I, Ch. 2)

"This is the land of Narnia," said the Faun, "where we are now; all that lies between the lamp-post and the great castle of Cair Paravel on the eastern sea." (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Ch. 2)

Near the beginning of *On Fairy-stories*, J. R. R. Tolkien offers a provocative and helpful distinction as to the true nature of fairy stories:

... fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being. *Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or drag-

ons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted.

Fairy stories, that is to say, are not stories that necessarily revolve around small, winged creatures, but stories that transport us to Faërie, to what Tolkien later calls a "Perilous Realm". The exact nature of this realm "cannot be caught in a net of words", Tolkien tells us, "for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible". It can be imagined, if not always described, and it can, sometimes, be reached. The heroes of fairy stories have found their way to the Perilous Realm through a variety of different means: Jason and Odysseus aboard their ships, Alice down a rabbit hole, Dorothy on a tornado, and the Pevensie children through the back of an old wardrobe. Tolkien himself takes us there by turning back the clock to explore the mythic

(*not* a synonym for false) past of our own earth (for Middle-earth, as readers too often forget, is the earth in the years before God revealed himself to Abraham).

The boundaries and parameters of Faërie are, of course, as elusive and shifting as the winged fairies themselves, but there is one central element that must be present if Faërie is to be anything more than a name. Tolkien explains:

Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic — but it is a magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician. There is one proviso: if there is any satire present in the tale, one thing must not be made fun of, the magic itself. That must in that story be taken seriously, neither laughed at nor explained away.

If we drain Faërie of its magic, it ceases to be Faërie. If we include magic but then either ridicule it or offer a natural, ‘rational’ explanation for it, then we break the spell, and Faërie is reduced from a beautiful butterfly to a dead bug pinned on a laboratory wall. Worse yet, if we debase it to a sort of mystical technology, it risks becoming a danger: a weapon of mass destruction. Magic is serious business! It is neither to be misused nor trifled with.

In Chapter 3 of *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis echoes Tolkien’s warning that true Faërie magic must not be confused with “the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician”. Indeed, Lewis shows that there is a kind of magic that, in its nature and intent, comes far closer to science than religion:

For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead. If we compare the chief trumpeter of the new era [of science] (Bacon) with Marlowe’s Faustus, the similarity is striking. . . . The true object [of *both* Bacon and Faust] is to extend Man’s power to the performance of all things possible. [Bacon] rejects magic because it does not work, but his goal is that of the magician.

The voodoo of the witch doctor and the Latin spells of the Satanist both embody a type of ‘black’ magic that seeks power and control as its ends. In this, the magician stands hand in hand with the mad scientist: both lust after forbidden knowledge (whether of the natural or supernatural kind) and hope, through it, to attain control over the divine or human sphere.

In *The Lord of the Rings* and the Chronicles of Narnia we read a different incantation: a ‘white’ magic that yearns for a deeper harmony and beauty and that sweeps us away to places where that harmony and beauty do actually exist. Although the sources of this white magic are varied and wide, I would like in this essay to seek a groundwork for Tolkien and Lewis’s special blend of Faërie in the two great epics of Homer.

If Tolkien could have read the previous sentence, he would

no doubt have replied that it was *Beowulf* and the Norse Sagas, rather than the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, that were foremost in his mind when he fashioned his epic. And, of course, he would be right. Still, for all his love of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon cultures and for all the influence that they exerted on him, Tolkien and his work are nevertheless products of that Western world that was fashioned out of a fusion of the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian. Homer’s epics, that is to say, are finally as formative on the Western mind as the Bible; the tales of the Trojan War and of the returns of the Greek heroes are as interwoven into the soul of the West as the sacred narrative of the scriptures. The light from the beacons of Troy illuminates the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*, and although it is not as strong as that divine light that shineth in the darkness and can be neither overcome nor comprehended, it does cast its own shadow over the Faërie world of Middle-earth.

Echoes of Ancient Greece

Although he borrows neither names nor characters from *The Iliad*, Tolkien nevertheless presents us, in *The Lord of the Rings*, with a world that is as immense and richly layered as that of Homer. Cut into these two epics at any point, and you will be greeted with a world that opens out on a multitude of dimensions. Thus, while the narratives focus on a relatively short period in the midst of a massive and desperate war, they also find countless and creative ways to suggest a wider history. Homer achieves this primarily through the insertion of epic similes that transport us, suddenly and without transition, from the action of the battlefield to the surrounding countryside. Indeed, Homer rarely describes the death of a minor soldier without freezing his narrative and giving us a quick biography of this otherwise anonymous bit of cannon fodder: a biography that generally takes us away from the battlefield where men win glory to the Shire-like villages that exist on the margins of the war. The farmers and shepherds and craftsmen that crowd around the edges of Homer’s central conflict are like the Hobbits and Bree-folk who catch only fleeting glances of the gathering storm as they attend to their provincial lives. The very ordinariness of these onlookers intensifies the Faërie quality of the landscapes through which the warriors move and fight. Once again, we are dealing with an entire world, not just an isolated story, one that has length and width and depth. Something is happening in every corner of that world, even if we are not told about it directly.

And, as Homer and Tolkien hold in tension this simultaneous action, they also give us glimpses of the past. Like the War of the Ring, the Trojan War comes at the *end* of a long, heroic Golden Age: it is the last great expedition that will pave the way for the safer, if less glorious ages that will follow. To maintain this sense of an even greater past shrouded in the mist of time, Homer and Tolkien load every rift of their narrative with a wealth of genealogical ore. Their heroes are situated in a stream of heroic resistance against overwhelming odds, the struggle of the human against the bestial, hope against despair. Homer and Tolkien allow us to catch sight of this stream as we traverse the epic landscapes of their narra-

tives. Thus, in Book VI of *The Iliad*, two warriors, one Greek and one Trojan, pause before their fight to share their family histories and thus ensure that they are worthy to engage one another in battle. As it turns out, one of them is descended from Bellerophon, the legendary hero who rode Pegasus and defeated the Chimera; Homer pauses, like his soldiers, to tell the tale of this old, old hero. Again, in Book IX, as the Greeks try to convince Achilles to return to the battlefield and help them drive back the Trojans, one of them tells a story that parallels Achilles' own: that of Meleager, the hero of the Calydonian Boar Hunt who allowed anger to cloud his mind.

Tolkien seizes a hold of this Homeric technique and builds his epic around it. We cannot take a single step through Middle-earth without being faced by the ruins of a greater, lost civilization. The names and places that are tied up with that vanished glory — Beren and Luthien, Gondolin and Doriath, Fëanor and Túrin, the Noldor and the Númenoreans — weave their way through the narrative like snatches of old tunes we can barely remember but that speak to us of forsaken Edens and Paradises lost. They exert a weight on the central tale that is almost a felt presence. Here, we sense, is a real world that does not exist before or after our own, but alongside it: ever vital and contemporaneous. Homer's Troy exists in an absolute mythic past that is as far from (and close to) us as it was to the German Romantics or the British Elizabethans or the French Medievals or the Greeks of Periclean Athens. The same is true for Tolkien's Middle-earth; it lies, simultaneously, next door and a million miles away. Our reality does not diminish it; rather, its reality deepens and clarifies our own.

Sub-creation

Tolkien, in *On Fairy-stories*, refers to himself as a 'sub-creator', as one who builds a second world after the mode of, but not in contradiction to, our own God-fashioned world. He creates, not as an end in itself, but because he was created by a Creator. As such, he feels both liberated and compelled to create, to make, to fashion. "Fantasy remains a human right," he insists, "we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker." It is not enough for Tolkien (or Homer) simply to tell a tale; the tale must be set in a full world that has its own history and runs in accordance with its own laws. It was this same impulse that impelled the makers of all the great legends and fairy tales (from Ovid to the Brothers Grimm, from Malory to Spenser, from the anonymous mythologists of Ancient Greece to the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) to enlarge their creative vision to take in grander schemes and wider vistas. That is why the stories that really matter do not merely divert; they lift us bodily out of our mundane existence and draw us into the World of Faërie.

C. S. Lewis too felt the lure of Faërie and the compulsion to make in the image of his Maker, but his vision was slightly

less grand than that of Tolkien. True, the Chronicles of Narnia hint quite often at multiple layers of history and of past heroic ages, but here the layering is not so compelling or all-engrossing as it is in *The Iliad* or *The Lord of the Rings*. For his trek into the World of Faërie, Lewis would use as his guide Homer's second epic, rather than his first. It is the fantastical voyages of Odysseus, not the grim battlefield of Achilles, that give the Chronicles (particularly *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) their setting and their scope.

The Odyssey, though it is as much a masterpiece as *The Iliad*, is a simpler, and perhaps more human work. The canvas is reduced somewhat, and the focus rests on fewer characters and themes. The vision is more domestic than martial, more about getting home and setting things to right than about testing one's courage on the battlefield.

The raw power of the first epic gives way to the wonder and mystery of the second. The former offers us naked divinity (the gods in armour); the latter a land peopled with the supernatural (sirens and sea monsters and beautiful enchantresses). Tolkien, of course, was inspired by the shape of Odysseus' epic journey home, and he not only puts his trinity

of heroes (Frodo, Gandalf and Aragorn) through an Odyssean descent into the Underworld, but he gives us (in Books III/IV and V/VI) a type of parallel action whose ultimate source is, I would argue, *The Odyssey* (which presents parallel action in Books I–IV/V–VIII). Still, *The Lord of the Rings* remains more in the mode of *The Iliad*.

Not so the Chronicles, where Lewis allows his work to be infused (nay, infected) by the lighter but more pervasive magic of *The Odyssey*. For Lewis, sub-creation is not only about creating a layered world with multiples histories, languages and cultures, but about making that world come to shimmering life. Tolkien gives us talking Eagles and Trees, but Lewis populates wood, hill, and stream with a plentitude of living, breathing forms. In his greatest sermon, 'The Weight of Glory,' the author of the Chronicles shares with us (perhaps unwittingly) the yearning that impelled him (and others like him) to sub-create a Faërie world like Narnia:

We want so much more — something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about it. We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words — to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves — that, though we cannot, yet these projections can enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image. That is why the poets tell such lovely falsehoods.

And that is why readers return to the Chronicles again and again. For that giddy awe and childlike wonder that we experience at Rivendell and Lórien (but rarely elsewhere in

**We cannot take
a single step
through Middle-
earth without
being faced
by the ruins of
a greater, lost
civilization**

The Lord of the Rings) is broadcast all over Narnia. It meets us in the rivers and on the plains and laughs in the hollows and on the hills. 'I am alive,' it seems to say, 'and I am calling you home.'


The Lord of the Rings is an autumnal, elegiac work; the Chronicles (excepting *The Last Battle*) are works of spring and summer. They both resonate with magic, but the former's is older, greyer, more restrained, whereas the latter's is younger, fresher, more exuberant. Lucy and Susan's wild romp with Aslan and their even wilder ride on his back in Chapter XV of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; the dancing fawns and Bacchic revellers in Chapters VI and XIV of *Prince Caspian*; Reepicheep's unwavering desire to reach Aslan's country in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*; the fiery land of Bism in Chapter XIV of *The Silver Chair*, where diamonds can be drunk as though they were wine; Shasta's night meeting with the numinous Aslan in Chapter XI of *The Horse and His Boy*; the hauntingly beautiful Song of Creation that Aslan sings in Chapter IX of *The Magician's Nephew*: all speak alike of a vigorous, energetic world of endless possibilities for adventure, growth and discovery. Here is a world where beauty, grace and power can be felt, touched, known.

Soon, Gandalf and the Elves will leave Middle-earth and soon the staffs will be broken, the rings will disappear, and the seeing stones will go dark, but the magic presence of Aslan will ever remain, just on the other side of a river or just behind a tree. In the last chapter of *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan returns Polly and Digory to the Wood between the Worlds, where he gives them a stern warning before sending them back to London. "Both the children," Lewis writes,

were looking up into the Lion's face as he spoke these words. And all at once (they never knew exactly how it happened) the face

seemed to be a sea of tossing gold in which they were floating, and such a sweetness and power rolled about them and over them and entered into them that they felt they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before. And the memory of that moment stayed with them always, so that as long as they both lived, if ever they were sad or afraid or angry, the thought of all that golden goodness, and the feeling that it was still there, quite close, just round some corner or just behind some door, would come back and make them sure, deep down inside, that all was well.

I can think of no passage in the Chronicles that more perfectly captures the unique nature of Lewis's Faërie magic. For the memory that remains with Digory and Polly is like the memory that remains in our own minds when we put down the Chronicles. Just as Odysseus, returned to Ithaca, must have felt, still, around him the glory of those wonders he had encountered in his travels, so we (like Polly and Digory) feel all about us the ever-present nearness of Aslan. Our brain may tell us that this is 'only' fantasy, but our heart and soul ache to turn that corner, to open that door, to awaken, finally, from our cold and lonely slumber.

The mythic vein tapped by Tolkien lends his Faërie World an almost concrete reality, but the one tapped by Lewis lends his Faërie world something different: an incarnated Beauty that is at once the source and goal of all our deepest yearnings and desires. 

Louis Markos is a Professor in English at Houston Baptist University; he is the author of *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians should Read the Pagan Classics* (IVP, 2007), *Pressing Forward: Alfred, Lord Tennyson and the Victorian Age* (Sapientia), and *Lewis Agonistes: How C. S. Lewis can train us to Wrestle with the Modern & Postmodern World* (Broadman & Holman, 2003). His webpage is <http://fc.hbu.edu/~lmarkos>.

Real and imaginary history in *The Lord of the Rings*

FRANCO MANNI

Reading and re-reading *The Lord of the Rings*, I feel immersed in a world that differs from that of my normal daily experience. This would in some measure be true, of course, for any interesting novel: the events are experienced by other people (the characters) and theirs are the decisions, the joys and the perils. Furthermore, in *The Lord of the Rings* I feel immersed in the Middle Ages. When I read books about medieval history, though, my mind resists this sensation; if I were to be transported in my imagination to any century of the Middle Ages, it would never be the same as the world of *The Lord of the Rings*, which is much wider than the medieval period, more

complex, more idealized and closer to me and my experience (although not, of course, the greater part of it).

Tolkien wanted to talk about *our* world, and to do so he used that which he loved and which constituted his work: archaeological and philological evidence concerning the Middle Ages, especially the early medieval period. Tolkien said that the events recounted in *The Lord of the Rings* took place in Middle-earth — at latitudes corresponding to the Atlantic coast of Europe, down to the northern Mediterranean lands — in an epoch that resembles that which saw the struggles between late-Roman/barbarian kingdoms that led to the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire with