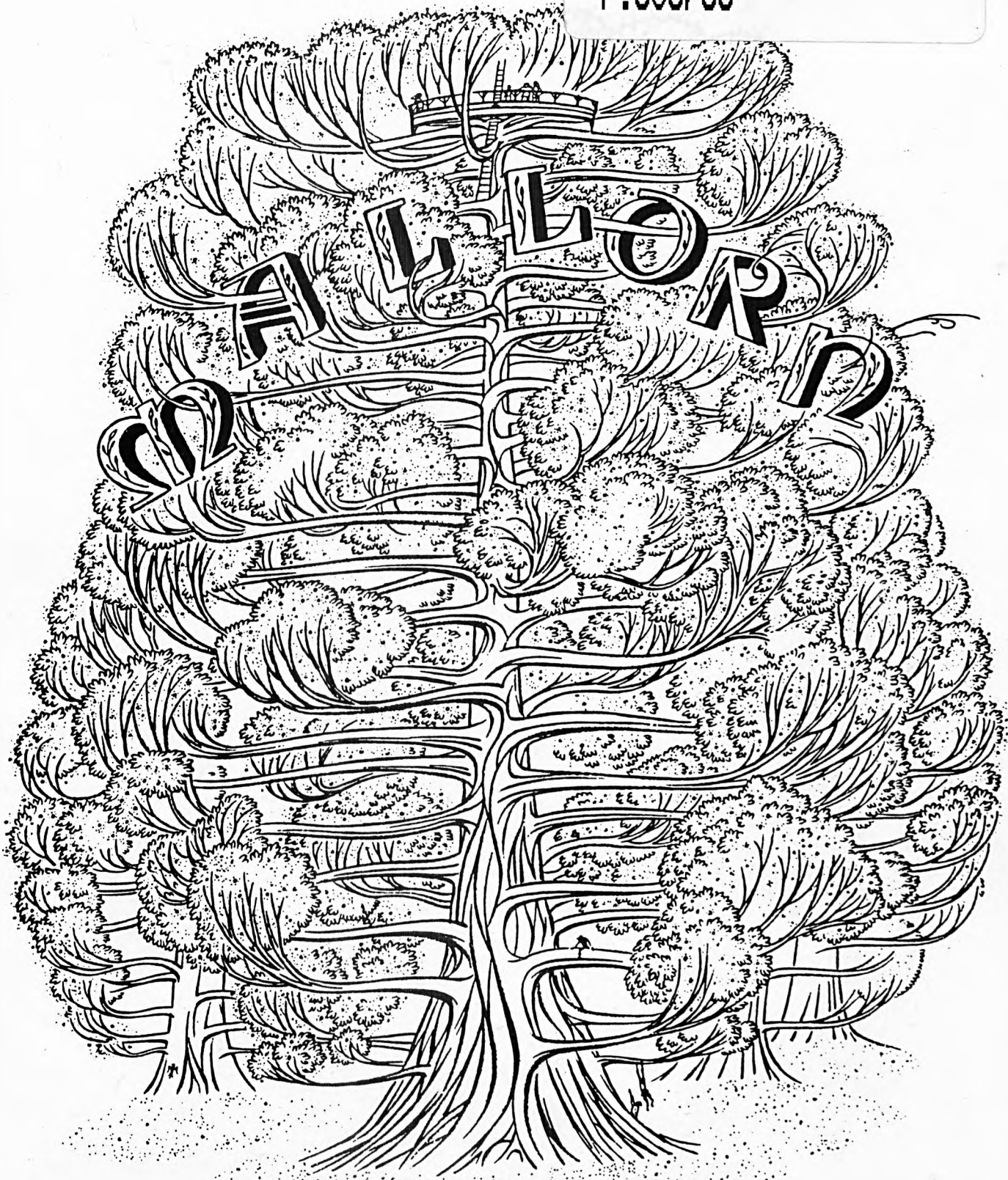


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## The Tolkien Society

Founded in London in 1969, the Tolkien Society is an international organization registered in the U.K. as a charity (No. 273809), dedicated to furthering interest in the life and works of the late Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, C.B.E. (1892-1973), who remains its President 'in perpetuo'. His daughter, Miss Priscilla Tolkien, became its Honorary Vice-President in 1986.

In addition to *Mallorn*, the Society publishes a bi-monthly bulletin, *Amon Hen*. In addition to local gatherings ("smials"), there are three annual national meetings: the A.G.M. and Dinner in the Spring, the Seminar in the Summer, and "Oxonmoot", a celebratory weekend held in Oxford in late September.

For further information about the Society, please contact the Secretary: Annie Haward, Flat 6, 8 Staveton Road, OXFORD, OX2 6XJ

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## Notes for Contributors

**PROSE ITEMS** (including fiction) should be typed, double-spaced with margins a minimum of 3cm wide, and on one side of the paper only, with your name, the title and page number at the top of *each* sheet. **Even more acceptable are computer discs:** 3¼" or 5" (IBM compatible); ASCII, word, wordstar, wordperfect, or any version of Locoscript - your disc must be accompanied by a legible print out. If your text includes any character which may not convert properly (including any with accents, as in, for example, "Manwë"), please substitute these with standard characters not used elsewhere in your text (e.g. %, \$, &), and enclose a table showing what they represent (the printout should have the *real* characters, not the substitutions). If your word-processor or typewriter cannot cope with characters which you wish to appear, please draw our attention to this.

Handwritten contributions will be considered **ONLY** if *extremely* legible, and should in any case be in the format outlined above. The editors reserve the right to reject the less than completely legible out of hand.

As a general rule, prose items should be between 1,000 and 5,000 words in length (including notes); authors of longer submissions may be required to do some drastic cutting.

Quotations should always be identified. Citation should be made in the Harvard format, and references (including the work's author, [and/or editor, translator, etc. if appropriate], title, place and date of publication, publisher's name, [part and volume number, pages, where appropriate].

**VERSE ITEMS**, which should not usually be more than 50 lines, may be presented either in the format indicated above, or in calligraphed form, in which case the specifications for artwork given below should be followed.

**ARTWORK** should be in black and white, no larger than A4 size, and either the original of the work or an exceptionally high quality photocopy. The artist's name should be written *clearly* on the back **IN PENCIL**.

**GENERAL NOTES:** Contributors who want their material returned should provide a self-addressed appropriately stamped envelope, or TWO IRCs.

The editors reserve the right to reject any item, or to ask for changes to be made.

Contributions should be sent to: Pat Reynolds at 16 Gibsons Green, Heelands, MILTON KEYNES, England, MK13 7NH (email [tolksoc@caerlas.demon.co.uk](mailto:tolksoc@caerlas.demon.co.uk)).

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Opinions expressed in individual articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the Tolkien Society.

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# Mallorn XXXI

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## Editorial

Although most issues of *Mallorn* feature articles which adopt the convention of treating Middle-earth as a “real” world, this one perhaps contains more than most. Readers will find one essay that attempts to construct a kind of archaeology in Middle-earth alongside another that examines the economic infrastructure of Gondor. It may seem as if the student’s proper concern, namely “Tolkien Studies”, has given rise to a derivative which threatens to outgrow and replace it, “Middle-earth Studies”.

The convention was one that Tolkien evolved and consistently employed, but he was a little disconcerted by some of its side effects. At quiet an early stage he wrote to Rayner Unwin indicating this; “I am not now at all sure that the tendency to treat the whole thing as a kind of vast game is really good – certainly not for me, who find that kind of thing only too fatally attractive”<sup>1</sup>. What ought the relationship of the two to be? Are we in danger, perhaps, of forgetting that the primary objective of all studies of Tolkien’s work is to enable us to understand and explain his significance as a creative artist and the qualities that make him significant?

Well, a vital quality is the mastery he shows in constructing a complete imagined world displaying “the inner consistency of reality”. This is demonstrated by its ability to absorb treatments as as diverse as, say, the “archaeological-historical” one adopted by the author of one of the articles in this issue, and the “Marxist-analytical” one of Edward Crawford, featured in the first of our published “Peter Roe memorial” booklets. So we hope that the “game” is worth playing; in the end it contributes to our understanding of Tolkien’s world as a created (or sub-created) whole, that is, as a work of art.

A game, however, must have rules, and as Tolkien’s world, through the convention he evolved to embody it, operates as *history*, the rules must be, in essence, those by which the historian lives and writes. That is to say that facts, once established, are inescapable, that

respect for the evidence to which those facts build is all-important, and that interpretation must not disregard any part of the evidence, or indulge in imaginative flights of fantasy away from it. In other words, applying these principles to “Middle-earth Studies”, you may try to illustrate or elaborate Tolkien’s world, but you cannot invent it, or any part of it; you must always derive your material and your conclusions from indications, however slight, actually present in Tolkien’s text, or texts.

As Tolkien developed his conception of his imagined world over many years, those texts may disagree with or contradict each other. The historian of Middle-earth, just like his colleague in our own “real” world, may be faced with conflicts of evidence requiring trained historians’ skills to determine where “historical” truth may lie. Tolkien’s very inconsistencies only serve to intensify the “reality” of Middle-earth.

The pitfall that the student of the history of Middle-earth may need to avoid is the same as that to which historians of the “real” world are sometimes prone; an over-concern with minutiae at the expense of the larger view. Studies of, say the rate of growth of the hair on hobbits feet perhaps reflects Kingsley Amis’ satirised title for an imaginary thesis; “The economic influence of the development of shipbuilding techniques 1468-1475” (or whatever the period was!)

But do corresponding principles apply, one may ask, to the would-be creative writer who wishes to follow in Tolkien’s foot-steps – a wholly understandable and laudable wish in itself? Is there a place for imaginative fiction set in Tolkien’s World?

There have been successful instances. Many will recall a moving tale, by Kay Woollard, which appeared in *Mallorn* some years ago<sup>2</sup>, and of the sad fate of two hobbits who had been present with the bowmen sent to the aid of the last king of the North-kingdom. The story here, though, was provided with a context in Middle-earth, but that was not its *raison d’être*. Its characters were products of the writer’s

<sup>1</sup> *Letters* no 160, pp. 209-10.

<sup>2</sup> Kay Woollard, “The Survivor” *Mallorn* 25 (September 1988), pp. 23-9

imagination; there was no attempt to write Tolkien's fiction for him. The story, in other words, would have been just as good had it been set in a different fantasy world, or in our own real one.

The essential principle is surely the same for the imaginative writer as it is for the historian of Middle-earth, namely that while you can aim to illustrate Tolkien's World, you cannot invent more of it, or add bits on to what Tolkien left obscure or unfinished. There is parody, of course, but this is not to be taken seriously as art, though it may entertain and amuse if affectionately conceived and carried out.

Nobody, though, can take over the sub-creation of another master, even of the recent past; there is always an unbridgedable gulf in attitudes and values. Characterisation is the clearest instance. Bilbo and Gandalf and Thorin, Aragorn and Theoden, Saruman and Gollum, are what they are because Tolkien, though speaking to future generations, was a man of his own time, a product of his own environment, unconsciously sharing in attitudes and habits of thought which have become more and more distant, if not remote, from those of the present time. This distinction may not be all that readily apparent, because Tolkien's "high" or archaic prose styles, as regards their externals, are fatally easy to imitate superficially.

Again, a comparison with "real" history is illuminating. There is a convention that if the author is to use the setting of, say, Britain in the 6th Century A.D., the setting and characters will behave as they are known to historically: no motor-cars, no mouth-to-mouth resuscitations, no potatoes. This is not to say that the author cannot invent a fantasy 6th-century setting where such things and activities are possible. But that is a fantasy, not a historical novel. Many a historical novel falls down because of the authors inability to write within the period, as is discussed above.

The way ahead for any writer who entertains ambitions to write "Tolkien-inspired", fiction presumably lies in striking out independently. The "influence" of Tolkien's writing will be inescapable, naturally, but the

object of the exercise has to be the expression of the writers own personality as an end in itself, not as an echo of the masters, to employ Tolkien as a springboard, not as a crutch. This will involve inventing an independent "fantasy" world, that will belong to the writer alone, even if it involves labouring over its construction as long and arduously as Tolkien did. In an issue of *Mallorn* published not long after the late Peter Roe's death, there appeared some extracts from a story which he had begun to write, which show him doing exactly that.

### Information - and an apology

This is a "late" volume of *Mallorn* because you should have received the first of two volumes of the *Proceedings of the 1992 Tolkien Centenary Conference* in September. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the *Proceedings* have been delayed. Since we had given an end of September deadline for contributions to this volume, it was not thought appropriate to bring it forwards.

The findings of the questionnaire on the future of *Amon Hen* and *Mallorn* will be fully published in *Amon Hen*, but we can tell you that a sizeable minority wanted to increase the frequency of *Mallorn*<sup>3</sup>, and a large majority wanted more articles, more artwork, and more fiction. Under 10% wanted more poetry. So please send contributions!

The deadline for contributions is 30th June 1995. In the event that the *Proceedings* form the next *Mallorn*, the deadline will be extended in order for letters of comment on them to be received: a note to this effect will appear in *Amon Hen*.

One interesting statistic thrown up by the questionnaire is the low contribution rate to *Mallorn* compared with *Amon Hen*. If you do not feel that you could write an entire paper, please contribute a paragraph or a page. Some "shorts" are included in this volume of *Mallorn*.

Finally, apologies to the student at DeMontfort University, whose letter Pat has lost. If she would forgive her enough to write again, we would be grateful.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Wells tells us that only once in the last 15 years has there been more than one *Mallorn* per year.

# Reappraising Gawain: Pagan Champion or Christian Knight?

John Matthews

I first discovered the work of J.R.R. Tolkien over thirty years ago. But it wasn't through the books for which he is justly famous, but through his scholarship that I first knew of him. I used his edition of the medieval poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1967) done in collaboration with E.V. Gordon, long before I learned, from a friend of "a rather odd book" called *The Lord of the Rings*. Once I had my hands on that my life was never quite the same again, and though I regret that he never seemed to set as much value on the Arthurian traditions of this country as in the *Tales of the North*, I have never forgotten that my interest in Gawain – the character whom I want to talk about today<sup>1</sup> – was awoken by my reading of Professor Tolkien's work, and I like to think that he would have approved of the subject at least – if not of its conclusions!

It's my personal belief, incidentally, that the character of the Green Knight – in both his otherworldly guise and as his alter ego Sir Bercelesak – of whom more in a moment – influenced Professor Tolkien in the creation of two characters in his own writings – those of Beorn in the *Hobbit* and Tom Bombadil in *The Lord of the Rings*. Though both these characters function very differently from the Green Knight, their power and larger-than-life characteristics seem to me to reflect those of the medieval characters very closely. This is of course only a personal opinion, and it awaits someone – perhaps one of you out there – to make a textual comparison between the two.

But now to Gawain – who is, in fact, probably the single most popular hero in the entire Arthurian cycle. He is the subject of some 40 texts, in four languages, and plays a major role in 95% of the rest of those great tales. Yet, despite this popularity, a curious contradiction exists concerning the way in which he is portrayed. In the Celtic texts which record his earliest exploits, Gawain is a hero of tremendous

stature and abilities. He "never came home without the Quest he had gone to seek" it says in the *Mabinogion* story of "Culhwch and Olwen". "He was the best of walkers and the best of riders. He was Arthur's nephew, his sister's son, and the first among his companions." (Gantz, 1976) Elsewhere, in that marvellous collection of Celtic story-themes known as the *Triads*, we are told that Gawain is among the "Three Fearless Men of the Island of Britain", and that he was "the most courteous to guests and strangers." (Bromwich, 1961) In a later text, he very nearly becomes the Emperor of Rome (Day, 1984).

And yet, in the Middle Ages, from the 13th century onwards with few exceptions, a very different image is projected. Here, in texts like the *Prose Tristan* (Curtis, 1963 & 1976) and the *Queste del Saint Grail* (Matarasso, 1969), Gawain is cowardly, discourteous, and something of a libertine. He is persistently criticised and unfavourably compared with other knights such as Lancelot and Percival. Finally, in Malory's great book *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Malory, 1966), he is portrayed as a murderer, capable of fanatical hatred leading to a bloody vendetta.

How did this come about, and more importantly, why did it happen at all? Of what crime, or association, was Gawain guilty in the eyes of the Medieval clerks and romancers, which called for this systematic blackening of his character?

The usual answer, from those who have noticed the phenomenon, is to say that Gawain was displaced from his position of superiority by other heroes – most notably Lancelot, who became the best of the Round Table Fellowship at the expense of earlier figures, such as Gawain. To a certain extent this is true, but I believe there is another reason, which I outlined in a book about Gawain in 1990.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was given at Oxonmoot 1994.

Put simply, I believe that Gawain was a unique figure within the Arthurian tradition, who represented the last dying strains of an ancient theme – one which dated back to the very earliest days of Celtic story-telling, and which incorporated even earlier religious beliefs. Gawain, I believe, was the Champion of the Goddess.

It is difficult to say with any degree of certainty just what the Celts understood by the term Goddess, or what, for that matter, it meant to people in general during the Middle Ages. Celtic religious beliefs are still little understood, though we do know that they worshipped deities of wood and water, sky and sea – indeed that each of the elements was of prime importance to them. So that when they spoke of “Goddesses” they were probably thinking of what we would call an abstract principle of nature, represented in the form of a woman.

The best example of this is the Goddess of Sovereignty, with whom Gawain, as we shall see, has a particular relationship. For the Celts, particularly the Irish, the concept of Sovereignty, as of Kingship, was of a unique kind of link with the earth itself. Thus the King was believed literally to mate with the Goddess of the Land – the otherworldly representative of the particular area over which he reigned. Without the sanction of Sovereignty thus gained he could not rule wisely or honestly, nor could the Kingdom remain strong or virile. This is all part and parcel of a much older idea concerning the sacredness of the land itself – which perhaps in some distant Foretime gave birth to the people who walked upon it – hence the concept of Mother Earth – or perhaps I should say, in this company “Mother Middle Earth”?

By the period of the Middle Ages much of this had been forgotten – or at least re-assimilated. The fact remains that it takes many hundreds of generations for a new set of religious beliefs to supersede an earlier stratum, and that while the process is taking place a situation exists in which the shadowy forms of earlier traditions mingle with those of the new.

This is the situation which existed during most of the time the Gawain romances were being composed, in the period between the beginning of the 12th and the end of the 14th centuries – and reactions to it came in two

distinct forms. There were those who took the stories that came to them, mostly from wandering singers and story-tellers, and who simply turned them into Medieval romances by dressing them in the fashions of the time. And there were those who saw these same stories as an opportunity to put forward the tenets of Christianity in a unique form, and who recognised the “pagan” origins of much of what they saw. It is to these writers that we owe the degraded view of Gawain, who saw in him a Champion of the old ways and therefore sought to discredit him in the eyes of the world.

In considering this view we must not allow ourselves to forget that the subject of belief, of faith and theological teaching, was much more to the fore in educated society than it is today. Yet it was among the so-called “ordinary” people that the stories that went into the making of the Matter of Britain originated. In the process of becoming literary creations, they underwent a considerable degree of change and adaptation – to suit both the era and the audience.

Thus, since the majority of that audience was made up of knightly or noble classes, who loved to hear about chivalrous deeds above everything, so the epics of the Middle Ages concerned themselves with battles and tournaments and single combats. And when later on the concept of Courtly Love appeared on the scene, so that element too was tossed into the melting pot to add its flavour to an already heady brew.

The final element was the religious one – evidenced by the sudden outbreak of interest in the Grail story, which until the beginning of the 12th century had existed as part of an obscure collection of Celtic tales and Christian apocrypha, but which by the end of the 14th Century had become one of the most important, most widely written about themes of the time.

I have gone into all this in some detail – though it is still only a generalisation – in order to lay the ground for what I want to say about Gawain. Because he seems to me to be a prime exemplar of the kind of thing I have been talking about. He began life as a simple Celtic hero, became one of the best loved and most complex figures in the Arthurian cycle, and ended up as a dark and negative character a world away from his origins. Even the authors who chose him for



their hero – or who found him almost forced upon them – did not wholly understand him. Hence their often ambiguous attitude to his character, which resulted in what becomes, at times, a misinterpretation of the facts.

Sometimes the treatment of Gawain is almost burlesque – as in the Medieval story of *Meraugis de la Portlesgues* (Busby, 1980). Here, Gawain is discovered, having defeated an earlier incumbent, as Champion to the Lady of the Castle. Meraugis, had he succeeded in defeating Gawain, would presumably have taken on the same role – since we are told that whoever becomes the champion must remain there until a better man appears.

This is a very ancient theme indeed. You'll find it summarised conveniently in Fraser's *Golden Bough* (1978) in the heading "Rex Nemorensis" or King of the Wood. It dates back to a time before history when the idea of annual kingship was still practised. In this, the chosen candidate, having undergone various tests and trials – including his mating with the reigning Queen – became king for a year. At the end of that time he had to battle with a new contender, a combat which he was not allowed to win. So a new King was appointed and the whole cycle began again.

Gradually, the period of rulership became extended. The Old King perhaps found substitutes who fought and died on his behalf. Only the Queen, the earthly representative of the Goddess, continued her uninterrupted reign, watching the cycle of champions come and go. Eventually, the role of the champion likewise became subtly altered, merging with that of the King himself and extending beyond the boundary of a single year. It is this role which I believe Gawain inherited from the many nameless heroes who had gone before. It was to ensure his continuing fame, and at the same time cause him to be steadily degraded into the unsympathetic figure we find in Malory and elsewhere.

\*

So much for the theory. What textual evidence can we find to support it? There is, in fact, a considerable amount, but before we look further

at this we should pause for a moment to reflect on Gawain's origins.

I have stated already that the earliest references are in a Celtic story and tradition. Here he is known as *Gwalchmai*, the Hawk of May, and earns a considerable reputation as a hero. However, it is his relationship to Arthur which is most often emphasised. He is generally described as being the son of Arthur's sister and King Lot of Orkney – the name of his mother being variously given as Anna, Gwyar, Morcades, and finally Morgause, which continues unchanged into the time of Malory.

Each of these ladies has an interesting history. Gwyar, whose name appears in several early texts, is believed to derive from an ancient Celtic word which has the meaning "to shed blood". The great Celtic scholar Sir John Rhys thought this probably meant that Gawain's mother had at one time been a Battle Goddess – and this is born out by the identification of Morcades/Morgause (Rhys, 1888). Both derive, by a complex series of mythic relationships, from the figure of the Irish War Goddess known as the Morrigan. She it was who became an implacable enemy of the hero Cuchulainn, eventually engineering his death where all others had failed. This in itself is significant because it can be proved that Gawain derives many of his heroic abilities from Cuchulainn: while the Morrigan has also metamorphosed into an even more famous character from the Arthurian legends – Morgan le Fay. This, as we shall see, is also significant.

So, we have, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, a character whose adventures were still only circulating orally, but who was soon to become a great literary hero, who derives many of his abilities from even earlier heroes, and whose mother may well be a Goddess of War.

With these elements in mind it is not really surprising that the first major appearances of Gawain in Arthurian literature, show him as a brilliant soldier, and a valiant knight – for as such he is portrayed in both Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1958), the *Bruts* of Wace and Layamon (1962), and the various anonymous Welsh chronicles which derive from them. The first signs we have of the direction which Gawain's career is about to take come in a much neglected Latin romance known

as *De Ortu Waluuanii nepotis Arthurii* or *The Rise of Gawain, Nephew of Arthur* (Day, 1984).

The title itself is important, because not only does it emphasise the importance now attached to the fact that Gawain is Arthur's nephew – rather than the son of Morgause, Morcades or Anna – thus indicating the failure of the later writer to recognise the importance of matrilinear descent – but also because it is also prophetic of the literary rise of Gawain.

*De Orto Waluuanii* tells a strange and extraordinary tale of Gawain's youthful exploits – how he was abandoned by his mother (here called Morcades) after she bore him illegitimately to Lot. Given into the care of some rich merchants, he is taken to Europe where a fisherman steals him again – along with a considerable treasure – and brings him up as his own son. After a few years the fisherman travels to Rome and sets himself up as a wealthy nobleman. He soon comes to the attention of the Emperor and becomes his close confidant. His son (Gawain) is enrolled in the Emperor's personal guard and rises quickly through the ranks, astonishing everyone with his grace, courtliness and bravery. Finally, the fisherman turned courtier falls ill and, near to death, confesses all, handing letters to the Emperor which prove that Gawain is the rightful nephew of King Arthur.

More adventures follow, as Gawain goes from strength to strength, being adopted by the Emperor, leading his armies against various enemies, defeating a pirate Queen, and finally, on the death of the Emperor, being offered the throne of the Empire. At this moment news comes from Britain of the Saxon invasion, and Gawain decides to lead a relief force to help Arthur. In Britain of course his real identity is revealed, and he decides to remain there, already beginning to prove himself a worthy knight.

This is an extraordinary story by any standard, and the brief summary given here scarcely does it justice. It shows to what extent writers at this point saw Gawain as an exemplary hero – and indeed there is a tradition which continued to see him in this light, despite an increasing number of texts which take a contrary view. It seems that the belief in Gawain as a representative of something important refused to die. In one version of the *Prose Tristan* (Curtis,

1976) – the most strongly anti-Gawain text of any – one reader or owner of the volume systematically crossed out the hero's name and substituted that of his less popular brother Gaheris! (An early form of censorship!)

Three texts which present Gawain in a wholly positive light – and which incidentally carry our argument to something like a triumphal conclusion, are:- the Middle-English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Tolkien & Gordon, 1967) – probably the most famous and well-known of his adventures – and of course edited by Professor Tolkien; the less well-known but no less remarkable poem *The Marriage of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnall* (Hall, 1976), and a Middle High German poem by Heinrich von dem Tulin called *Diu Crone* or 'The Crown' (1966).

The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is so familiar it scarcely needs summarising here. But just to recap briefly, you may remember that the Green Knight, a monstrous green skinned figure clad in green clothes and riding a green horse, rides into the hall at Camelot one Christmas and proposes a "game". He will submit to being struck a blow with his own huge axe on condition that he then be allowed to return the blow. At first no-one is prepared to take up the challenge, but when the Green Knight mocks the assembly and Arthur himself is preparing to go forward, Gawain requests that he be allowed to take the King's place. He strikes off the Green Knight's head, but sees him pick up the grisly object and hears him repeat his challenge – only that now it is to be postponed for a year. Gawain spends the time uneasily, then sets out, and after a long and arduous journey arrives at the castle of Sir Bercelak de Hautdesert, who makes him welcome and tells him that the Green Chapel, where his return meeting with the Green Knight is to take place, lies only a few miles distant.

For the three days which follow, the time leading up to the end of the old year, Gawain remains indoors, resting from his journey and reflecting on the coming encounter. He is entertained by Lady Bercelak, who while her husband goes every day to hunt game for the table, enters Gawain's bedroom and does her best to seduce him. Always in the most polite and courtly fashion, Gawain refuses her – until

on the last evening before he is due to leave he accepts a green baldric (or sash) which the Lady assures him will protect the wearer from any harm.

Next morning Gawain sets out for the Green Chapel and arrives to find the Green Knight whetting his axe. The “game” takes place, but after fainting twice the Green Knight only nicks Gawain’s neck with his axe. He then reveals that he is in fact Sir Bercelak, who had been enchanted into his monstrous shape by “Morgue the Goddess”, a hideously ugly hag whom Gawain had seen at the castle but failed to recognise as a danger. The two feints and the nicked neck are because Gawain accepted kisses from Lady Bercelak on two occasions and finally agreed to wear the green baldric. Returning to Camelot Gawain tells his story and the knights unanimously decide to wear green baldrics themselves, in token of Gawain’s courage!

Here, the Green Knight is clearly an otherworldly character, an elemental and magical being whose appearance at the Winter Festival marks him out as such – as do his colour and his ability to retrieve his head after Gawain’s blow. This theme, the Beheading Game, has been traced without much question, to Irish mythology. The nature of the “Game” itself, which is clearly a partially confused memory of the old annual kingship, and the presence of ‘Morgue’ the Goddess – or, as we know her better, Morgan le Fay, is also significant. That her real standing was recognised is made evident from this ascription, which is also repeated by Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Speculum Ecclesiae* (Baring-Gould, 1872). We have already seen that this same character, who is little more than a spiteful enchantress in most Arthurian literature, can be traced back to Morrigan the Battle Goddess. It is also more than likely that she was at one time Gawain’s mother – which gives one pause for thought, since the lovely Lady Bercelak is clearly also an aspect of the hideous Morgane in the poem. But let us leave that for a moment until we have looked at another text, *The Marriage of Gawain and Dame Ragnall*.

This poem, which dates from the 14th century but is probably based on a much earlier text, tells a remarkable tale of love and enchantment, in which Gawain is tested to the utmost and comes through with flying colours,

and in which he also establishes himself as the Champion of the Goddess.

There are two versions of the story, but the best known tells how, when Arthur was out hunting, he became separated from his companions in the magical woods around Tarn Watheling. There he encountered a powerful enchanter named Gromer Somer Jour, whose name is itself not without significance. Threatening to kill Arthur, Gromer gives him a chance to save his life by discovering the answer to a question: What is it that women most desire? He must return a year hence with the answer or face the consequences. Arthur returns to court and takes Gawain into his confidence. The two set out in search of answers, and in the year which follows collect sufficient to fill several books! Then, on his last journey before the year is up, Arthur encounters a monstrously ugly woman sitting by the roadside apparently waiting for him. She tells him that she knows the correct answer, but will only give it if Arthur promises to marry her to Gawain. Trusting in his nephew’s honour Arthur agrees and returns to the court with the hag, who is called Ragnall. Though clearly taken aback Gawain agrees to fulfil the bargain, and preparations for the wedding are put in motion. Guinevre tries to persuade Ragnall to have a quiet ceremony, but she insists on a full-scale celebration. The Court mourns Gawain as though he were about to go to his death, and Arthur sets off to keep his rendezvous with Gromer. There he gives the books of answers he and Gawain had collected but the enchanter throws them aside. Then Arthur gives Ragnall’s answer and with a cry of rage Gromer admits it is correct – though he curses his “sister”, who is the only one who could have told the King.

Back at the court the wedding of Gawain and Ragnall is celebrated, and after a dinner in which Ragnall astounds everyone by her appalling table manners, the couple are escorted to the bridal chamber and left alone. Gawain can scarcely bear to look at his bride, but when she demands a kiss he courteously and gently obliges – to find that he now hold in his arms a beautiful woman! She explains that she was enchanted into this shape by – yes, you guessed it – Morgan le Fay, and that Gawain must now make a further decision – whether he will have

her fair by night and foul by day, or vice versa. Struggling to envisage the outcome of either decision Gawain finally tells Ragnall that she must be the one to decide, since it affects her just as much as him. With a cry of joy Ragnall declares that the final part of the spell is now undone – for Gawain has, of course, given her the thing that women most want – sovereignty, which in this instance, as in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* (1912), which as you will have recognised tells much the same story – the sovereignty described is that of the woman over her husband (an important factor then as it maybe still is). The underlying meaning however, and of obvious importance to our theory, is the other sense of sovereignty, as something given by the Goddess of the land to her Kingly Champion.

Now in this story we have a similar situation to that which we found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. There is the otherworldly challenger who must be met with again in a year (and in the case of Gromer Somer Jour, whose name means Man of the Summer's Day, we are right back in the ancient myths of Seasonal battles for the Maiden of Spring). Then there is the ugly old hag, who is under the enchantment of Morgan. And the question of Gawain's fidelity, upon which the whole tale revolves. Also, I do not think we will be stretching matters too far if we see in the foul and fair aspects of Ragnall the foul and fair aspects of Lady Bercelak, who is, of course, also Morgue the Goddess.

So you will see the point we have arrived at. Within the structure of these two poems, both of which originated in a part of the country – the West Midlands – rich in ancient culture and Goddess lore, in which Gawain is rigorously tested by the earthly representatives of a Goddess. A test which involves the question of sovereignty in *Gawain and Ragnall*, and of the yearly test of the Beheading Game in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The combination of these two gives us a scenario in which Gawain is tested by the Goddess, passes her trial, and receives as his reward her favours – marrying or mating with her just as the ancient Year Kings once did in order to win their tenure as her Champion.

By extension this leads to a further understanding – that Gawain, as Arthur's closest relative, his sister's son (long recognised among the Celts and elsewhere in the ancient world as a most potent relationship), is standing in for Arthur himself as Champion of Britain's sovereignty! So whether we see Gawain as Morgan's son, as her Champion, or her lover – in each of which roles we have seen him, and which recur in other texts not discussed – he is still fulfilling the same ancient archetypal role, as the Kingly Champion of the Land.

Just how clearly the medieval authors recognised these facts we cannot say with any degree of certainty. That they knew something of the truth is indicated by the manner of Gawain's gradual descent from hero to murderer and libertine. Yet even in the latter case, where he is consistently portrayed as light of love, as being unable to remain faithful to any one woman for more than a day – even here we can see a reflection of his original role. He who was the servant and Champion of the Goddess of course loved all women, but as her earthly representatives. To the medieval, and especially the Christian interpreters of the story this could only be seen in the way it was, by making Gawain an opportunist who played upon his fame and good looks to enable him to bed as many women as possible. Only in a few romances, such as those we have examined here today, did a distant echo of his original role remain, embedded in the marvellous adventures of the Round Table knights.

In short, the answer to the question posed in the title of this talk: is Gawain a Pagan Champion or a Christian Knight? is that he is both, and that neither is mutually exclusive of the other since both roles are shown to overlap at almost every point.

One final thought. The greatest adventure open to the Round Table chivalry was the Quest for the Grail – itself a symbol which draws upon both Pagan and Christian imagery. In every single Arthurian text save one, where the details of this quest are related, Gawain is excluded from the final achievement, which is left to Percival or Galahad. The one exception, the *Diu Crone* of Heinrich von dem Tulin, makes Gawain the unequivocally successful candidate. Nor should we be surprised to discover that this

text, written in the 14th Century, contains some of the most primitive Grail material. The suggestion being, as far as I am concerned, that at one time this adventure also had Gawain as its hero, and that the symbolism was once again correct – for the Grail, whatever else it may have become, began life in the Celtic traditions as a Cauldron of Rebirth and Inspiration belonging to the Goddess. Surely proof enough of Gawain's original role, if more is needed.

I can think of no better way to end than by reading to you a version of an anonymous medieval poem translated by Professor Tolkien himself. He gave it the title "Gawain's Leave-Taking" and it was printed in the posthumous collection of modern English versions which include his own rendition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1975).

### Gawain's Leave-taking

Now Lords and Ladies blithe and bold,  
To bless you here now am I bound:  
I thank you all a thousand-fold,  
And pray God save you whole and sound;  
Wherever go you on grass or ground,  
May he you guide that nought you grieve,  
For friendship that I here have found  
Against my will I take my leave.

For friendship and for favours good,  
For meat and drink you heaped on me,  
The Lord that raised was on the Rood  
Now keep you comely company.  
On sea or land or where'er you be,  
May he you guide that nought you grieve.  
Such fair delight you laid on me  
Against my will I take my leave.

Against my will although I wend,  
I may not always tarry here;  
For everything must have an end,  
And even friends must part, I fear;  
Be we beloved however dear  
Out of this world death will us reave,  
And when we brought are to our bier  
Against our will we take our leave.

Now good day to you, goodmen all,  
And good day to you, young and old,  
And god day to you, great and small,  
And grammercy a thousand-fold!  
If ought there were that dear ye hold,  
Full fain I would the deed achieve—  
Now Christ you keep from sorrows cold  
For now at last I take my leave.

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## Bletchley Junction

"For my part, I cannot convince myself that the roof of Bletchley station is more 'real' than the clouds."

Some of us nowadays may find ourselves baffled by Tolkien's reference here, which occurs in the essay "On Fairy Stories". Why did he use this particular station as an example and not Oxford station, or Paddington, for the matter of that? The explanation is actually quite straightforward.

In the years between the two world wars, and also no doubt during and before the first one, the journey between Oxford and Cambridge was normally made by train. It apparently almost

always involved an interminable delay at Bletchley Junction. So much so, in fact, that "Bletchley Junction" became a standing joke, no doubt equally so at both universities, as representing a sort of limbo between the One Place and the Other. By the time *The Lord of the Rings* came to be completed, the day of the motorist was come, and eventually there was no train service of any kind provided between Oxford and Cambridge. But the legend lingered long afterwards.

John Ellison

# Bells and Bell-ringing in Middle-earth

## Martin Hardgrave

Some words and phrases in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1954) may strike the reader as somewhat incongruous when encountered for the first time, most notably the likening of the dragon firework in "A Long-expected Party" to an express train, or Peregrin Took's reference to chess in "Minas Tirith".

As someone who has taken up church-bell ringing in the last few years, I was surprised upon re-reading *The Lord of the Rings* to see many references to large bells, such as one might find in a contemporary church tower.

The uses that these bells were put to in *The Lord of the Rings* were traditionally the preserve of church-bells in Western Europe. Does this suggest some sort of religious or ritualistic rôle for Middle-earth bells? In two previous *Mallorn*

articles (1989 and 1990) Michael Hickman examined the religious ritual and practice of the Elves of Middle-earth at the time of the War of the Ring, and of the Dúnedain of Gondor, in which he quotes a letter by J.R.R. Tolkien in which it is stated that there was no religion in Middle-earth, which Mr Hickman understood to mean no *organized* religion. In either case it seemed to me surprising that Tolkien chose to include bells in Middle-earth (with all their religious connotations), and that Mr Hickman did not comment on their presence. This article seeks to examine the instances of bells used in *The Lord of the Rings* and see if any ritualistic rôle is indicated.

There are at least twenty-four references to bells in *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>1</sup>. If one eliminates references to door-bells (even

1

### *The Fellowship of the Ring*

a) Flight to the Ford, p. 221: "... a dim ringing, as of small bells tinkling".

b) Many Meetings, p. 238: "He had hardly finished speaking when they were summoned to the Hall by a ringing of many bells".

c) The Council of Elrond, p. 284: "The noon-bell rang"

### *The Two Towers*

d) Treebeard, p. 71: "And then there are some trees ... sound as a bell, and bad right through".

e) The Journey to the Crossroads, p. 305: "About them lay ... woodland hyacinths: already their sleek bell-stems were thrusting through the mould".

### *The Return of the King*

f) Minas Tirith, p. 23: "... and high and far he heard a clear ringing as of silver trumpets".

g) Minas Tirith, p. 30: "... as soon as maybe after the third hour has rung".

h) Minas Tirith, p. 32: "... there came the note of a clear sweet bell ringing in a tower in the citadel".

i) Minas Tirith, p. 39: "... the noon-bells were rung."

j) Minas Tirith, p. 44: "... if I have not returned before the sundown-bells..."

k) Minas Tirith, p. 44: "... all the bells in the towers tolled solemnly ... and from the houses and wards of the men at arms ... there came the sound of song."

l) The Passing of the Grey Company, p. 62: "Bells were ringing far below,"

m) The Siege of Gondor: "The bells of day had scarcely rung out again,"

n) The Battle of the Pelennor Fields, p. 122: "And some ... ran to the bells and tolled the alarm;"

o) The Battle of the Pelennor Fields, p. 123: "and the joy and wonder of the city was a music of trumpets and a ringing of bells".

p) The Tower of Cirith Ungol, p. 179: "Far up above ... a harsh bell clanged a single stroke".

q) The Tower of Cirith Ungol, p. 179: "Now I've rung the front-door bell!"

r) The Tower of Cirith Ungol, p. 182: "You heard the bell."

s) The Tower of Cirith Ungol, p. 192: "A bell clanged;"

t) The Land of Shadow, p. 193: "Suddenly its harsh bell clanged again, and then broke into a shattering peal."

u) Mount Doom, p. 214: "As if roused by a sudden bell".

v) The Steward and the King, p. 244: "all the bells rang,"

w) Homeward Bound, p. 269: "They rang the bell, and Nob came to the door,"

x) The Scouring of the Shire, p. 297: "... the bell-chain was dangling loose, and the bell would not ring".

Tolkien's drawing of Bilbo's door-bell in *The Hobbit* does not look like a traditional bell), the small bells worn by Asfaloth, and the description of hyacinths, one is left with eighteen references, of which seventeen refer to bells of Rivendell and Gondor (not unreasonably assuming that any bells in the tower of Cirith Ungol are of Gondorian origin, like the tower itself). The remaining reference (d) is surprising – what would Treebeard know about bells? If this is taken to be originally an Elvish expression it suggests that bells were commonplace enough for the expression to arise, though like the express train it may just be an artefact of the translation of the Red Book of Westmarch into English. It is perhaps worth noting that in *The Silmarillion* the city of the Valar is called “Valmar of many bells” (Tolkien, 1983, p. 89), suggesting an almost “mystical” nature of bells because this is before the awakening of the Elves. Given the existence of bells among the Valar before the coming of Elves and Men it is not surprising that bells might be used for ritualistic purposes such as those described by Michael Hickman. However, the seventeen Rivendell and Gondor references are apparently to do with indicating the time and with communication, though it will be seen later that some realistic uses are inferred.

## Time

Bells are used to indicate the time in both Rivendell and Gondor: in both noon is announced, with a single bell in Rivendell (c) and several in Minas Tirith (i). In Minas Tirith morning and sundown were marked by the ringing of bells (j, k, m), and the hours clocked: references (g and h) are to do with the third hour (nine o'clock, as Pippin puts it). Noon (the sixth hour) is apparently not clocked like the other hours, as several bells ring at noon. Reference (f) probably refers to the morning bells (m), as day is breaking as Gandalf and Pippin approach Minas Tirith.

## Other Uses of Bells

Bells were also used for other purposes than telling the time, most notably for raising an alarm and for celebration. The bells ringing in Rivendell to summon people to the Great Feast

(b) were probably ringing in celebration of the victory at the Ford of Bruinen, and at the recovery of Frodo.

The alarm was tolled in Minas Tirith as the ships of the Corsairs approached the city (n), but this quickly changed to celebration when the occupants proved to be reinforcements led by Aragorn, and not Corsairs (o).

Bells were rung in alarm (presumably in villages along the way) as the Grey Company passed through Lamedon and Lebennin on its way to Pelagir (l). (Incidentally, bells rang in Dale at the first appearance of Smaug, but I think that *The Hobbit* should not be scrutinised too closely.) Bells rang in celebration at the return of Aragorn after the fall of the Dark Lord (v). In the BBC Radio adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* bells peal when the eagle brings news of the Dark Lord's fall out of the East, though this does not occur in the text. There are also no bells mentioned in the brief description of the wedding of Aragorn and Arwen.

The bells in the tower of Cirith Ungol are alarm bells, rung by some unknown means involving the Silent Watchers. There may have been (at least) two bells here: the harsh bell (p, r, t) and another (s), as this latter is not referred to as *the* bell.

## Bell-ringing

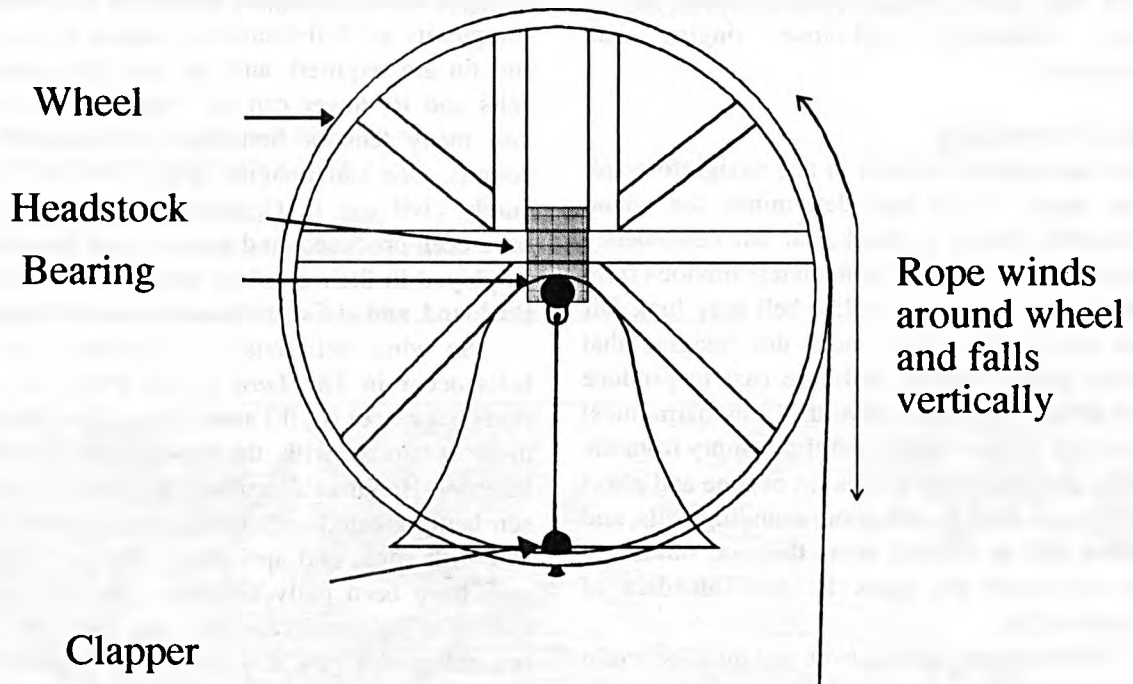
How would the Middle-earth bells be rung? The striking of hours would probably be carried out by striking the stationary bell with a hammer or its own clapper, and generally ringing would be performed by swinging the bell until the clapper struck the rim.

Bells are usually attached to a headstock, which rests on bearings. Torque must be applied to the bell to make it swing, and this is best achieved by attaching a large wheel to the headstock, around which a rope winds. Pulling on the rope makes the bell swing, and the point at which the torque is applied is fixed above the ringer.

To give a loud strike by swing-chiming a bell, the bell must be swinging a great deal, and the momentum of any reasonably-sized bell is such that it cannot be stopped instantly, which means that more than the desired number of strikes could be produced. This is why this method of ringing would not be used to produce



**Bell hung for full-circle ringing (side-view)**



a given number of strikes, though it must also be said that excessive striking with a hammer can weaken and crack a bell.

Bells which are swing-chimed have a swing period which depends on the weight of the bell (the heavier the bell, the longer the period), so when several bells are rung (of different notes, therefore of different weights) the sound produced is a random clangour, with each bell ringing at its own weight. This style of ringing is very common in Europe, where the notes of the bells are often such that they are in harmony when they strike together.

The bells that Tolkien would have heard almost daily in Oxford<sup>2</sup> are mainly rung in the "English" style of full-circle ringing, which is a special form of swing-chiming. The bell is given sufficient impetus to travel right to the top of the swing, and then it swings backwards and forwards through 360°, striking once each swing. This method enables the bells to be controlled accurately, by virtue of the fact that they can (with skill) be balanced at the top of their swing,

allowing the lighter bells to wait for the heavier bells so that they can be pulled off the balance to strike the same time apart (about 0.25 seconds!). The order the bells ring in can be changed by one place each strike by waiting a little longer at balance (to hold up), or not letting the bell reach balance (to ring quicker). In this way six bells can ring as 123456214365241635 etc. in a uniform manner, producing something that can sound quite musical (depending on the abilities of the bell-ringers and the order in which the bells ring). Tunes cannot be played, as it takes about two seconds for a given bell to strike twice. This style of ringing, although now common in Britain, was only developed in the sixteenth century. The notes of the bells are usually in sequence, meaning that there are some bells which produce a not very pleasant sound if they strike at the same time, and bell-ringers try to avoid this at all times. In the BBC Radio adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* the bells which could be heard were swing-chimes which would seem more in keeping with the flavour of

<sup>2</sup> *The Bell-ringer's Guide to the Church-Bells of Britain* by R.H. Dove (H.H. Viggers and Severn Corners Press, 1988) lists over twenty Oxford churches and college chapels with rings of five or more bells.

the book, but as a bell-ringer I would like to think that over several thousand years the far more satisfactory full-circle ringing had developed.

### Bell-founding

The manufacture of bells is not straightforward. The shape of the bell determines the sound produced when it is struck, but this dependency is quite subtle and not immediately obvious from the appearance of the bell: a bell may look fair and sound foul! One could not imagine that contemporary church bells are cast to produce five notes (the main note and four harmonics) when the clapper strikes the rim, simply from the bell's appearance. It takes a lot of time and effort to discover how to cast good-sounding bells, and unlike skill in carving stone this was obviously not lost over the years by the Dúnedain of Gondor (f, h).

Bells do not last for ever and must be recast when worn and broken, which may explain the poor quality of the bell in the tower of Cirith Ungol (p): over the many hundreds of years of its existence it must have been recast by the smiths of the Dark Lord, who, having neither the time nor the inclination to find out how to cast fine bells simply produced something which looked like the original, but which sounded quite poor. Provided it continued to fulfil its function I doubt that they minded the poor quality.

### Are the Middle-earth bells ritualistic artefacts

It is tempting to equate the bells of Middle-earth with contemporary church-bells: traditionally church-bells told the time and were rung on public occasions (military victories, coronations, etc.) and in Britain they were silenced during the Second World War, only to be rung in the event of invasion, as the vast majority of the population lived within earshot. These public uses took place only because of the bells' existence as religious artefacts; if the bells did not exist some other means would have been employed to fulfil their function, but it would have been unlikely that bells would have been the end product.

An argument that the Middle-earth bells are simply the 'air-raid sirens' of their time (air-raid sirens could be found throughout Britain during

WW2, but no-one would argue that they were religious items) is negated in part by the cost and complexity of bell-founding: tonnes of copper and tin are required, and the cost of a ring of bells and its tower can (at today's prices) run into many tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds. One can imagine that if the bells had purely civil use in Gondor they would never have been produced, and horns would have been employed in their stead as they were in Rohan, Buckland, and at Esgaroth at the onset of Smaug.

So what 'religious' or ritualistic uses of bells occur in *The Lord of the Rings*? If one reads references (j), (k) and (m) one can compare these instances with the actions described in Michael Hickman's articles. He describes the sun being greeted with the blowing of trumpets and with song, and speculates that such rituals may have been daily activities. He also states that "For Númenóreans the sun signalled the beginning of a new day as she rose out of the eastern sea. There is no indication that the Dúnedain changed this practice and it must be presumed to have continued." It is not entirely clear if he is stating that the Númenóreans followed the Noldorian rituals, or whether the Númenóreans' sun-based calendar was continued by the Dúnedain. Either way, the sun played an important part in the Dúnedain ritual, which may be why sundown was greeted with the solemn tolling of all the bells of the city (the Tower of the Setting Sun) (k), and morning (sunrise) by "a clear ringing as of silver trumpets" (f). Only after the sundown bells had rung were lights lit in Minas Tirith, and songs sung, which would suggest some ritual significance in the action.

### Comment

The bells of Gondor seem to have been primarily used for ritual purposes connected with the sun, and served a civil purpose in the telling of time and other matters. The bells were well-maintained and widespread in a society which, on the whole, was in decline, which is understandable given their ritual function.

It seems likely that the bells of Rivendell would have had ritual uses, though there is no apparent evidence in *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed it would seem apparent that one finds bells in Rivendell and Gondor and not in, say,

Lothlórien, because the latter does not possess the stone structures needed to support the weight of

tonnes of bell-metal and to contain the forces produced by this metal swinging around.

### References

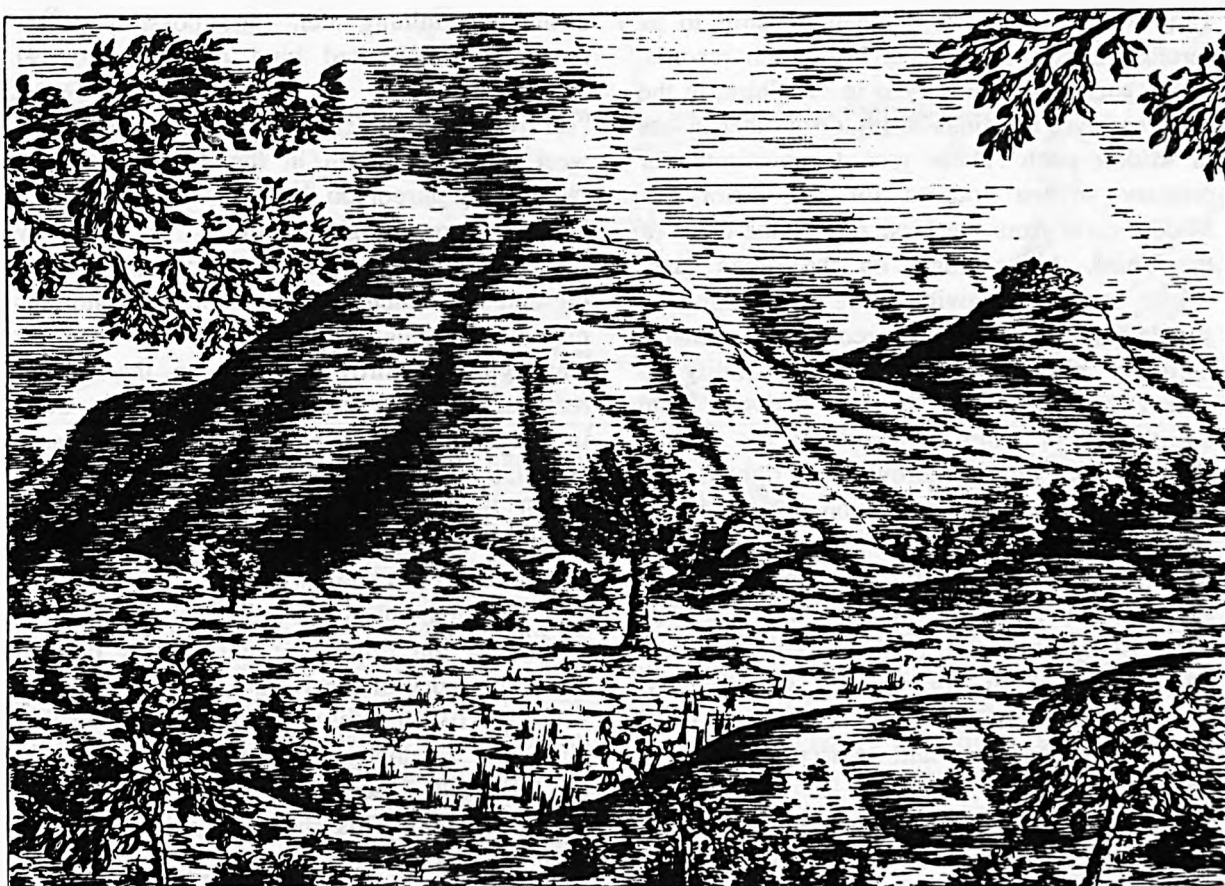
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FORNOST      ERAID

## “Before Defended Walls”: Hill-forts and Fortified Sites in northern Eriador in the Second and Third Ages

John Ellison

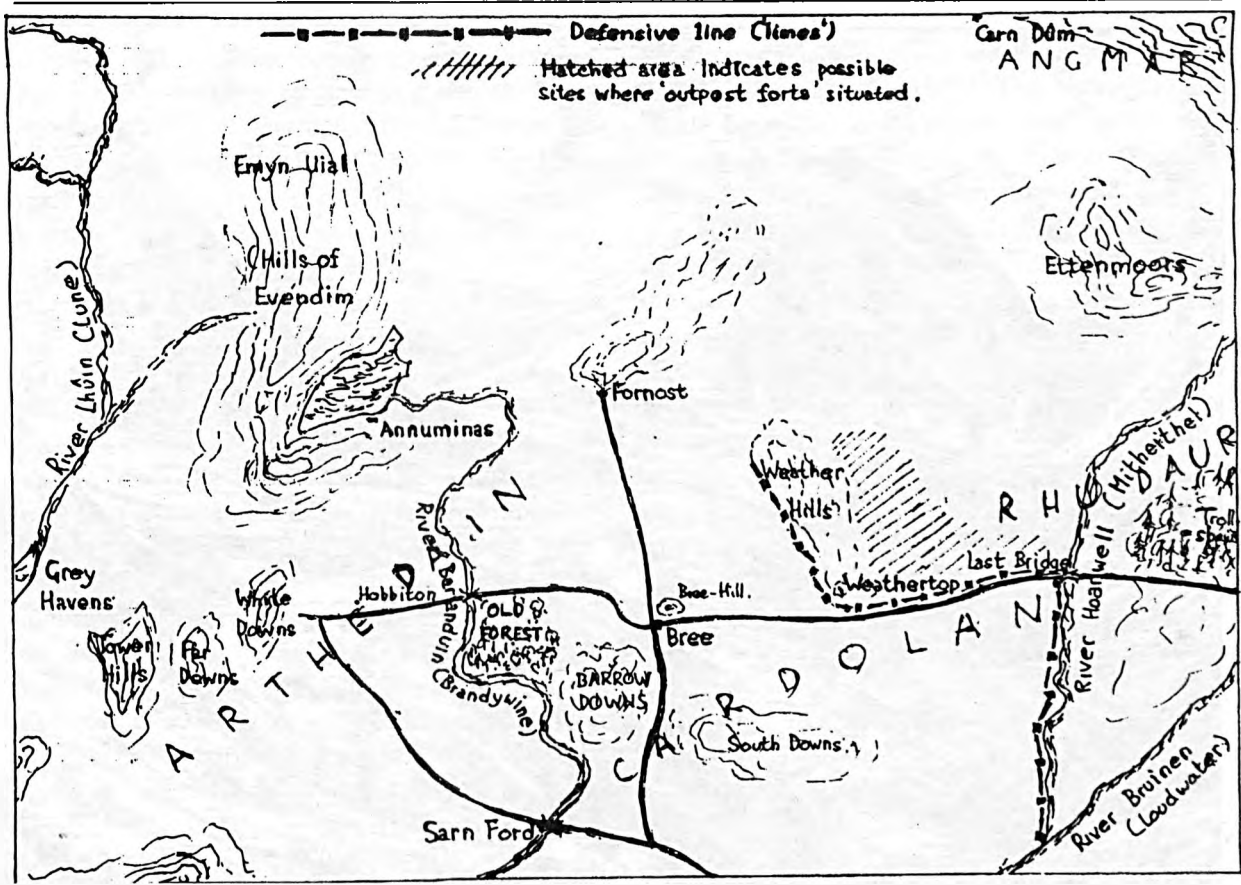
The writings of J.R.R. Tolkien transmit to us certain records, or extracts from such records, which survived as preserved in the Shire, in the royal archives in Minas Tirith, or in other places in Middle-earth. These records constitute our primary written sources for the history of Middle-earth from the First Age to the close of the Third. Archaeology, on the other hand, would seem to provide little or nothing to supplement the written records. It remains narrowly circumscribed by our inability to obtain and evaluate results derived from excavation, or from fieldwork in the normal sense. It can, though, throw some light on the historical record by derivation from another important source, namely the large corpus of illustrations, in many different media, that have accumulated around Tolkien's writings. The value of this material, considered as historical evidence, does of course vary very widely. Tolkien's own art, and that of such careful and industrious observers and transcribers as Ted Nasmith, may be presumed to embody the visions and intentions of the artists in Middle-earth who originally set them down, without avoidable distortion. Many of such illustrations, however, are affected by the degree of artistic licence permitted themselves by the individual artists of our own day, who produced them. Such licence, of course, is a wholly legitimate thing in itself. It nevertheless, because of the subjective element involved, hinders our perception of historical truth. The limitations of the pictorial record, and its variable level of authenticity, have also to be viewed in the context of the original source material, which would have been no less variable.

This paper concentrates on the implications of three such 'survivals' and tries to suggest that

through examining them, and possibly others like them, a limited kind of archaeological "fieldwork" can be carried out. These, "survivals", all depict fortified sites in the north-west of Middle-earth in the Third Ages, or, rather, they purport to do so. They all appear to derive from original works of roughly contemporary date. From the appearances presented by such sites as depicted historians may obtain clues which may assist them in amplifying or throwing light on the written records, brief as these normally are. Such investigation is bound to contain a large speculative element, but may open up some useful lines of enquiry. Perhaps it may be possible to study other important sites in Middle-earth in a similar fashion.

The three "survivals", reproduced here seem to portray the following: the site of Fornost Erain (Norbury of the Kings), viewed from the south (p. 19); the southern end of the Weather Hills with Weathertop itself on the extreme right (p. 22); and a scene from the "Journeys of Frodo" (p. 22). This shows "Strider" with the four hobbits making their way through the difficult and hilly country north of the Road, some days before the encounter with the stone-transformed trolls. The "originals" of these pictures are presumed to have been produced about the time of the War of the Ring, or shortly afterwards. They may even have been the work of Frodo himself, or of one of the other hobbits, although this is pure speculation, as none of them is known to have practised as an artist in any form. All of them show fortified hill-top sites, and two of them also show valley or low-level settlements and fortifications. The Fornost Erain picture especially bears witness to a long and complex archaeological sequence.

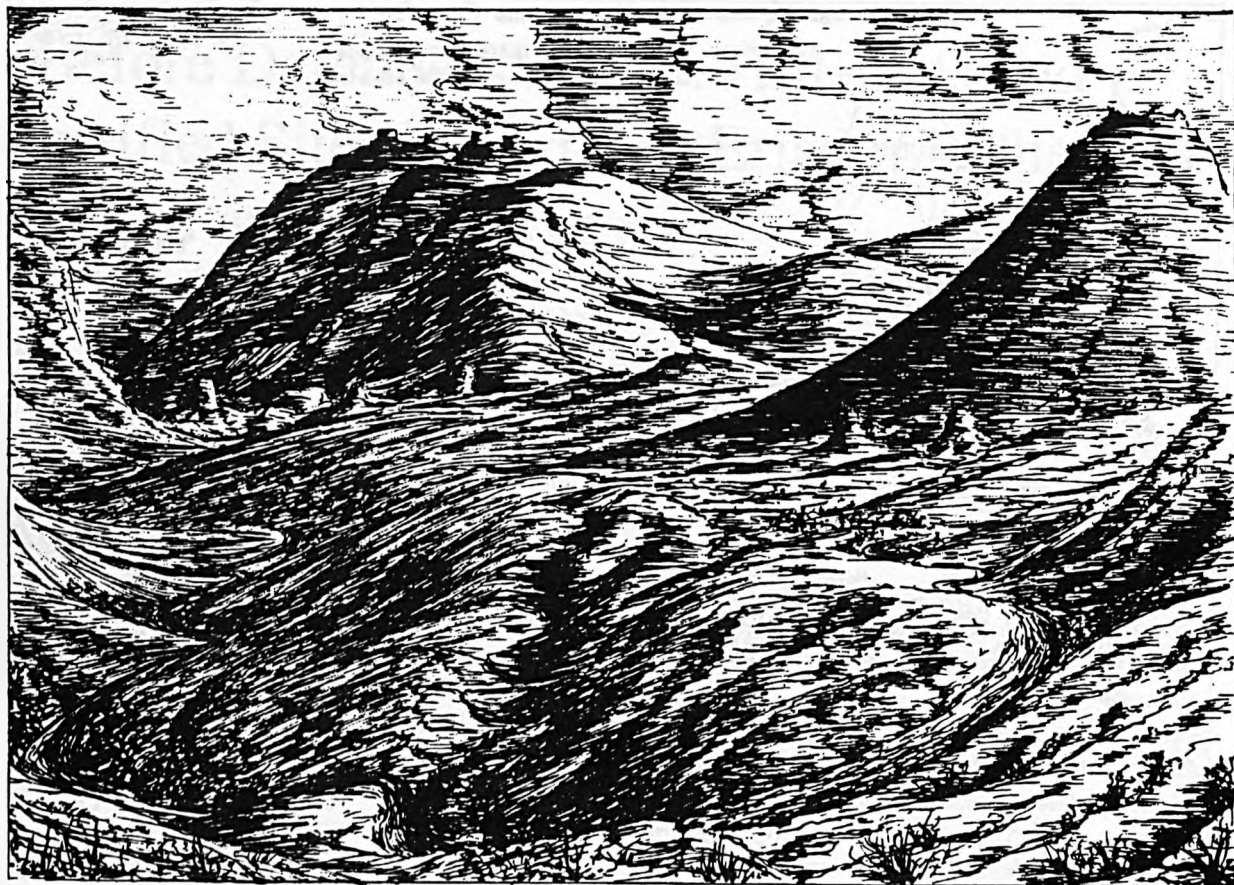
## “Before Defended Walls”



The event that did most to change the course of history, in these parts of Middle-earth no less than elsewhere, was of course the arrival of the Númenórean “Faithful” in the aftermath of the overthrow and drowning of Numénor, together with the formation of the two “realms in exile”, Arnor and Gondor (S.A. 3319-20). Could the new arrivals have brought the practice of hill-top fortification with them? From what we know of the social and political structure of Numénor this seems highly improbable. The practice of hill-top fortification implies the presence of localised centres of authority or commerce, making up a social structure of a tribal or feudalistic kind, with power divided up among tribal chiefs or territorial magnates. Numénor, on the other hand always appears as more or less centralised about the authority of the kings; power thus concentrated at the centre, in its latter days becomes increasingly autocratic and finally totalitarian. If the “hill-forts”, as we may call them, were not the consequence of importation from Numénor, they would have been evolved by the Men of these regions – the descendants of those who crossed into Beleriand during the First Age. Tolkien tells us (1981, p.

154 - no. 131) that in the Second Age these areas were inhabited by Men living a “heroic” tribal and patriarchal kind of existence. With one exception, but that a very important one, there is no written record of historical events throughout the Second Age relating to them. This exception of course is the war of the Elves with Sauron that broke out at the end of the 17th century (S.A.).

The main centre of military operations was Eregion, well away from the areas we are at present concerned with. The actual fighting was followed, however, by a harrying of the whole of Eriador by Sauron’s forces; this was halted with difficulty at the river Lune, west of which lay the realm of Gil-galad. Following this a Númenórean fleet was summoned, and with its appearance Sauron’s armies were routed and expelled from Eriador. We do not know for certain what was the extent of the area affected; it looks as if it was the southern parts of Eriador that suffered most. The likely consequences are worth considering. To begin with, population displacement would be certain to occur, resulting in the movement of fugitives or immigrant groups towards and into lands in the north and west. This would encourage competition, if not



THE WEATHER HILLS

WEATHERTOP.



conflict, for land suitable for settlement. So areas not actually invaded by Sauron's armies, or at any rate those less seriously affected, would all the same experience political anarchy, or at least insecurity; sporadic skirmishing, if not actual warfare between native and immigrant groups, would be a near certainty.

Such a sequence of events can be expected to have been accompanied by either the fortification of sites *de novo* or the refurbishment or elaboration of sites already existing. Two of the “pictures” reproduced here show elaborate “multivallate” earthworks crowning the hills. Here it is possible to compare a number of sites of the Iron Age in Britain; if these in Middle-earth developed in the same way they would have begun as single rampart-and-ditched enclosures, and acquired their ultimate form by a process aptly described by the late Dorothy L. Sayers as “onionisation”. The sequence of periods at Maiden Castle, Dorset, (which had Neolithic and Bronze Age predecessors (Wheeler, 1943)), is an example from a later Age of the world. All of this, of course, is necessarily speculative; given our very limited information as to the activities of Men in this part of Middle-earth in the Second Age; for the time being it may perhaps be treated as plausible.

The first major settlement that appears in the historical record after the founding of Arnor is represented by a lakeside site; Annúminas by Lake Evendim. This area, at an earlier time, had provided an abode for Celeborn and Galadriel, before they moved eastwards, so perhaps it already had some reputation as an “upmarket”, residential district; (Middle-earth's answer to Hampstead Garden Suburb, or perhaps North Oxford!) The site seems to have been something approaching a town or city, and we hear nothing at all about any defences. Its foundation by the Númenóreans might have been an event comparable to the foundation of a Roman *colonia*, in native territory, though presumably without local opposition and possibly with the full co-operation of surrounding inhabitants. If this was the case, a parallel can be drawn from a later Age of the world; the co-operative stance of the Regnenses tribe of west Sussex following Claudius' invasion of Britain in 43 AD, and the subsequent rapid Romanization of this part of

Britain reflected in a site such as the villa at Fishbourne (Cunliffe, 1971). The Númenóreans would have had to intermarry very extensively with the native population for their civilization to survive for more than a limited period.

Over a period of some hundreds of years the capital at Annúminas is replaced by Fornost at the south end of the North Downs. The sources do not give any special reason, or reasons, for the change, but an important one is, surely, the more defensible nature of the latter site. The eventual replacement, by the eminently defensible site of Minas Tirith, (whose circles themselves suggest its possible origin as a multivallate hill-fort), of the “open”, riverside site at Osgiliath looks like a very similar process. The sequence of periods at Fornost itself, as it seems to present itself in the illustration we have of it here (see p. 19), consists of the following elements (not necessarily in chronological order, but probably so).

(a) A very large multi-rampart hill-fort. There seems to be another one behind, but that may be a subsidiary of the same fortified enclosure. The hill fort most probably represents, as suggested above, several periods of construction. It presumably gave rise to the references in the sources to Fornost as being, “on the North Downs”.

(b) A settlement below the hill, whose most prominent feature, close to the viewpoint, appears to be part of a system of defensive dykes. In this connection, it can be recalled that at the end of the Third Age the deserted site had become known as “Dead-men's Dyke”. There is a seeming parallel to this kind of defence to be drawn from the final, “Belgic”, or “C”, phase of the Iron Age in South-eastern Britain, represented by the sites of Wheathampstead, (Wheeler & Wheeler, 1936) (the capital of Cassivellaunus), pre-Roman Verulamium, (Wheeler & Wheeler, 1936, and Frere 1978) and Camulodunum, (Hawkes & Hull, 1947) (pre-Roman Colchester). This is a type of defence wholly different and distinct from the hill-fort defences which had come to proliferate in southern and western Britain before then.

(c) A heavily occupied area in the middle distance, probably indicative of buried foundations of stone or timber. Apparently overlying this there seems to be a rampart-and-

ditch defence which from its appearance evidently was stone walled. This could represent a sequence of periods of construction, rather than a single one.

(d) Stone fortifications on the hill-top which are surely not contemporary with the earthwork banks and ditches, but represent a subsequent refortification.

The foundation of the North Kingdom, and of Gondor, were followed within a few years by the campaign of the Last Alliance, with its aftermath at the Gladden Fields. As far as Arnor was concerned, the outcome of the crisis was the depletion of the Dúnedain, who nevertheless managed to retain control or suzerainty over the greater part of Eriador for another eight hundred years. The settlement of Fornost seems to have gone hand-in-hand with Annúminas, and developed, perhaps, at a similar pace, but the title taken by the eleventh king, Amlaith of Fornost (TA 861-946) suggests that it may have been during his reign that Fornost's capital status was formalized. The geographical importance of the site, at the south end of the North Downs commanding routes north to south and east to west, besides its defensible nature, is obvious. This would have applied in pre-Númenórean times no less, and is reflected in the size and strength of the earthwork defences on the hill-top, commanding the hills behind and a wide spread of lowland on three sides. How far the earthwork defences had evolved, if at all, at the time of Sauron's invasion of Eriador, is, of course, not known.

The first question is whether the first Númenórean defences can be identified and placed in a historical context. There is no evidence for any such context for the eight centuries following Elendil, and perhaps the settlement expanded peacefully and uninterruptedly. Despite the losses resulting from the war of the "Last Alliance", a considerable degree of prosperity must have existed and been enjoyed for a long period for we know that in the region that later became "the Shire", the king had had "many farms, cornlands, vineyards, and woods." (Tolkien, 1966a, p. 14) It is interesting, though, and perhaps significant, that it is Amlaith's reign, perhaps when Fornost's status as capital becomes formalized,

that serious internal, and later external problems start to develop.

As a result of dissension between the sons of Amlaith's predecessor as king, Eärendur, the sources tell us, Arnor was divided, like all Gaul, into three parts – Arthedain, where the line of Isildur continued, and Cardolan and Rhudaur, where it failed. "There was often strife between the three kingdoms", the sources say, "which hastened the waning of the Dúnedain" (Tolkien, 1966d, p. 320). The principal bone of contention was Weathertop, lying on the borders of all three of the new, divided, provinces, but even before it became so the successful rejection of centralized control from Fornost by two of them can hardly have been accomplished by peaceful means. So it is possible that the provision of the dykes at Fornost (the "first-period" defences, as they might be called, although they may have had predecessors, and were not necessarily all of the same date), was associated with a political, and possibly also a military crisis occurring at this time. In this context there may also be a place for the defence or border which was crossed by the hobbits with Tom Bombadil, after leaving the Barrow-downs on the way to Bree. This apparently represented the frontier between the provinces of Arthedain and Cardolan, and very possibly was marked out or established at the same period. The dyke here was associated with a wall running alongside it, but the two were not necessarily of the same date. This period would also seem to have seen the beginnings of economic decline and a fall in population, as we know that the lands that became the Shire, at the time of settlement by Hobbits in TA 1601, had by then, "long been deserted." (Tolkien, 1966a, p. 14)

All the same, five more centuries were to pass before the whole region experienced a serious crisis again, whatever had been the events that had accompanied the original division of Arnor. The crisis developed quickly over a period of about sixty years, consequent on the establishment of the realm of Angmar as the base of the evil power of the Witch-King. The power of Angmar and its effect on the whole of Eriador, operated through its influence on and eventual control of, Rhudaur, the most degenerate of the Dúnedain states which had succeeded the North-kingdom. The crisis was



focused on the area about Weathertop: the defensive line which had been established to the east of it from Weathertop itself to the last Bridge and the lower Hoarwell (see map, p. 21), collapsed in 1409 under the pressure of a full-scale assault launched from Angmar by way of Rhudaur; Amon Sûl was razed and the *palantir* carried back in the retreat to Fornost. The historical sources make all this seem like a single major campaign, but in reality the crisis must have followed a long period of minor incursions, raids, and the like. It probably reflected the formation, at least temporarily, of a confederacy of hostile tribes in Rhudaur and east of the Weather Hills. One can compare, perhaps, a similar “barbarica conspiratio”, in the combined overrunning of Roman Britain south of Hadrian’s Wall by Picts, Scots and Saxons in 367 A.D. Much of Eriador north of the Great Road was laid waste, but the assault fell short of taking Fornost itself.

At the site of Fornost itself, if the “picture” we have of it can be relied on at least to a certain extent, the dyke system seems to have been replaced by a narrower defensive circuit, apparently stone-walled, though the wall could of course have been an insertion in front of an earlier earth or earth-and-timber rampart. These defences, as they appear in the illustration here, raise a further problem in that they appear to overly buried features which seem to represent earlier buildings. This would suggest that the inhabited area had been larger at an earlier period in the site’s history, and had contracted; this would be a natural outcome of the economic decline noted above. It is a hypothesis of course, but, it may be thought a reasonable one on the limited evidence we have, to attribute this “reorganization of the defences” of Fornost to the crisis period, covering approximately the years 1356-1409. These defences could, of course, like the dykes have had a considerably longer history, and could reflect a much longer period of insecurity. (This period also sees the establishment of a defensive *limes* in the Weather Hills and further east, as referred to below). There is an alternative possibility to consider, namely that the provision of stone wall defences at Fornost represented a reaction to events not before, but after the crisis had passed. This would parallel the situation in Roman Gaul

in the late third century A.D., when such town walls were provided at a number of towns following sackings and destruction that had taken place in the course of a major defensive collapse and of barbarian incursions occurring just previously (Butler, 1959).

There is a further interesting point in the written sources. Araphor, the son of Arveleg (who was killed in the campaign of 1409) “with the aid of Círdan ... repelled the enemy from Fornost and the North Downs.” (Tolkien, 1966d, p. 321) This implies that the hills themselves, as well as the city site, were held in defence, and that provides a possible context for the reoccupation of the hill-fort site, and others which must have existed further north, and may explain the presence of stone fortifications the remains of which are clearly visible in the illustration. Further confirmation is provided when the chronicler goes on to say, “A remnant of the faithful among the Dúnedain of Cardolan also held out in Tyrn Gorthad [the Barrow-downs], or took refuge in the forest behind” (Tolkien, 1966d, p. 321). Clearly there was a stronghold of some kind in the Barrow-downs (and most probably also on Bree-hill) the exact site of which has not been identified; it was very likely, a reoccupied hill fort like that at Fornost. It will be remembered that the last prince of Cardolan, who was likewise killed in 1409, was said to have been interred in the very barrow in which the hobbits were imprisoned in the aftermath of their sojourn with Tom Bombadil; “the men of Carn Dûm came on us at night, and we were worsted” (Tolkien, 1966a, p154). The fort site was probably not far away.

After the crisis was over, order was restored in the north-west of Middle-earth. This was achieved, it seems, largely with Elvish assistance, both from Lindon, and from Elrond bringing help across the Misty Mountains from Lórien. The great plague of 1636, which devastated Gondor, is said to have spent most of its force by the time it reached the north-west, and its impact may have been relatively small. The Hobbits, who were fairly recent arrivals at that time, suffered greatly, as it is recorded, but possibly had lower resistance to disease than Men had. It may seem surprising at first that five centuries and a half passed before the final act took place – the sudden onset of Angmar in

1974, when Fornost fell at last. In fact it is clear that, as in 1409, there had been a long period of raiding and insecurity before the final assault, as the sources state that Angmar renewed its attacks at the same time as the Wainriders renewed theirs on Gondor, some thirty years before then. However there were some four hundred miles of open and seemingly barren territory separating Carn Dûm from Fornost, and a major direct assault may have been impractical before then owing to the impossibility of maintaining supply lines for such a large force over such a distance. It may not have been till the 1900's T.A. that orc-training techniques were developed that made it possible to move large detachments of troops, and war material, with the speed and tirelessness that we know of from the description in *The Two Towers*, of the forced march across Rohan; Saruman looks like an innovator in this connection<sup>1</sup>. Once again there is reference in the source to the king (Arvedui), holding out, "upon the North Downs", after Fornost itself had been overrun; it would seem that the hill-top sites were still in a condition in which they could, at least to some extent, be defended. The loss of Fornost was followed by a short occupation of whatever was left of it by the Witch-King and the armies of Angmar, before they were routed by the combined forces of Elves and Men of the North-kingdom and of Gondor, in the year following. Whether they left traces in the archaeological record, and to what extent, and whether there was any further occupation of the site subsequently, are questions that must remain open in view of the impossibility of testing them by means of actual excavation.

The "old castles with an evil look", which struck Bilbo Baggins' attention with such force shortly before his encounter with the trolls, as recorded in *The Hobbit*, are not necessarily the same as those encountered by Strider and the four hobbits when they recalled Bilbo's experiences seventy-seven years later. They do, however, no doubt represent the same kind of site, and provide an opportunity to look at the history of the North-kingdom, "from the opposite side of the fence", the predominantly hostile province of Rhudaur, which fell under the shadow of Angmar, and through which, in the

earlier crisis at the end of the 14th century TA, Angmar operated, The "picture" we have reproduced here shows two such "castles", sited on prominent crags or hill-tops; each such stronghold was presumably placed to dominate a particular slice of territory. No doubt earthwork camps or hill-forts in the western parts of Eriador would have been similarly placed; here though, the nature of the terrain and the available building materials dictated stone fortifications, probably from the first. We have no actual dating evidence, but sites such as these may reflect a social and political structure in this corner of Middle-earth that had probably changed very little over a period that had already lasted for centuries before the arrival of the Númenórean exiles. Rhudaur, after its separation from Arthedain, was always the most backward of the Dúnedain states, and the least susceptible to "western" influences. The local geography, have assisted the formation and subsequent flourishing of a congeries of local tribes, ruled by petty chieftains whose main concerns would have lain in such pursuits as cattle-raiding and in feuding with or terrorising their neighbours. The task of persuading this rabble to give up internecine strife and combine against a common enemy in the west, must at most times have been an impossible one for the evil power in Angband to deal with successfully, dependent as it was on its allies in Rhudaur. However the circumstances of the crisis of 1356-1409 are interesting; the sources tell us (Tolkien, 1966d, p. 320) that at that time power in the whole region "had been seized by an evil lord of the Hillmen, who was in secret league with Angmar." At this time, the sources also say, "the kings of Arthedain again claimed the lordship of all Arnor. The claim was resisted by Rhudaur", where the Dúnedain were few. The political situation seems to have been exceptional; two major invasions occurred over a period of more than one thousand years after the division of Arnor; at this period and finally in 1974 TA, but during the remainder of those years Arthedain, even in its weakened state, seems to have enjoyed relative peace. Probably the politically fragmented state of Rhudaur explains why; it only presented a serious military threat if a single personality or authority arose

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<sup>1</sup>In this connection note the contemptuous taunting of the Northern orcs by those of Isengard (Tolkien, 1966b, p. 56), "Maggots! You're cooked." etc. Had Saruman managed to improve on earlier training methods?

powerful enough to make a united front possible, at least temporarily. It also provides an interesting and perhaps revealing commentary on the failure of Sauron’s strategy at the time of the War of the Ring. The orcs, evil Men and other creatures making up his armies seem to have been equally prone to internal disputes; to take a tiny but illuminating example, the orcs’ quarrel overheard by Frodo and Samwise in the Morgai, “If this nice friendliness would spread about in Mordor, half our trouble would be over”, as the latter says (Tolkien, 1966c, p. 203). Perhaps, after all, it was; the fissiparous nature of the societies under his sway may well have hindered Sauron from delivering the devastating stroke he essayed to deliver at the time of the final battles, much earlier than he did.

The remaining picture comprises an area on the west side of the Weather Hills, close to Weathertop itself. There is a brief description in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, referring to the “walls and dykes”, seen by Frodo, Strider and the others prior to their ascent of Weathertop itself; had they been field archaeologists we might have had a more detailed account. The importance of this area is greatest in relation to the years 1356 to 1409, when the power of Angmar first arose, and the Weather Hills, for long disputed between the three states, became the centre of conflict. As with the Fornost site, there are indications of a long sequence of occupations, visible on Weathertop itself, and on the hills to the north and east. (It is possible that the conical shape of Weathertop itself has been somewhat over-emphasised, for pictorial effect, either by the original artist or his present-day successor). As at Fornost itself, the multiple rampart-and-ditched enclosures crowning the hills probably belong to pre-Númenórean times, when Weathertop and the nearby hills would no doubt have been as important strategically as they were to become later on. The watchtower raised to hold the palantir of Amon Sûl represented by the “wide ring of ancient stonework”, found by the hobbits and Strider as described in the account in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Tolkien, 1966a, p. 198), can be clearly seen above the earlier banks and ditches.

Argeleb I (1349-56), “fortified the Weather Hills”, before being killed in battle against Rhudaur. Under Arveleg, his successor, “Arthedain and Cardolan held in force a frontier along the Weather Hills, the Great Road, and the lower Hoarwell.” (Tolkien, 1966d, p. 320). This line is described in *The Fellowship*, the account in which mentions the path that pursues a course (seen in the illustration), as far as possible hidden from the west and from the hills themselves, “made to serve the forts along the walls”, as Strider says. Two of these forts are visible in the illustration, below the hills. They have much the sort of appearance one would expect; rectangular stone structures with corner towers, perhaps contemporary with the stone town walls at Fornost. The written source suggests that they were part of a defensive *limes* of considerable length, sited so as to control approach from Rhudaur along its frontier, as marked on the map. There should therefore have been a series of such forts strung out along the Road as far as the Last Bridge (where there must have been a major troop concentration), and then down to the confluence of the Hoarwell and the Loudwater.

This raises a whole series of questions and problems, of which the first one is, why was the line of defence situated *behind* the Weather Hills, and not in front of them, directly facing Rhudaur?<sup>2</sup> Possibly the intention was to employ it as a “fall-back” in association with outposts on the far side of the hills to the east, and to the north of the Road; there would have been provision for rapid communication between these and the principal line of defence itself, to give warning of any signs of trouble, and of any likelihood of the outposts being overrun. (There is perhaps a parallel to be found in the “advance outpost”, forts to the north of Hadrian’s Wall, represented by sites such as High Rochester, Risingham, or Netherby (Frere, 1978)). Then there are further, related, problems; how many forts were there along the Road? Were they isolated, or supported by intermediate features or by a wall or vallum? How far north along the Weather Hills did they extend? And, how were they garrisoned, and by whom? And finally, did they, or some of them, continue in occupation

<sup>2</sup>The author of this article is indebted to Ms Anne Haward for suggesting the possibility outlined in this paragraph.

and use after the crisis of 1409 and the restoration of order with the help of Elrond? These queries seem to echo quite a lot of both what is known and what is speculative about the defensive system, or succession of systems, in northern Britain from the second to the fourth centuries AD.

The stone fortification which crowns the hill in the rear of the picture, and which no doubt represents a reoccupation of the hill-fort at some subsequent period, raises further questions. The principal defensive scheme is clearly that in the foreground and middle distance, below the hills, the "forts along the walls", and the connecting trackway. The siting of this trackway, and the effort which is described in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Tolkien, 1966a, p.197), to conceal it with lines of boulders where it crosses open ground, imply that it was not expected that the hills themselves would be held, at least for any length of time. That would also mean that the outpost forts to the east of the hills, if they existed, had been destroyed or overrun. There are a number of possibilities; it may have been the case, for instance that the forts to the east were indeed overrun, and that the stone fortification represents possession of the hills by Rhudaur, either temporarily or for a longer period or periods. However it could just as well represent a reoccupation under Argeleb, when the Weather Hills were fortified, according to the sources; in that case the subsequent abandonment of the hill

summits would indicate a change of plan. Or it could represent a reoccupation of the hill-fort, and possibly others, by Arthedain, after the crisis of 1409 was over, and order had been restored in the West.

Almost any archaeological investigation, even one as limited in scope and inadequate in means as the present one, is liable to raise fresh problems, rather than to solve existing ones. More orthodox methods would involve, say, surveying to identify, if possible, the sites of forts along the Great Road and the river Hoarwell, (there must have been an important one close to the Last Bridge), followed by excavation within them with a view to determining the sequence and dating of their occupations. But if there were such sources as *The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Gondor*, or *The Transactions of the Shire Field Club*, they have, sadly, not come down to us. But by collation of the written sources with the indications we have, in the text of *The Hobbit*, or of *The Lord of the Rings*, of actual field monuments, and also, where appropriate, by analogies with comparable historical processes and physical remains in the world as we know it, we may be led to conclusions which, tentative though they may be, may illuminate and enrich that peculiar interaction of myth and legend with language, history and landscape that determines the special appeal that Tolkien's world makes to us today.

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# Túrin Turambar and the Tale of the Fosterling

Marie Barnfield

## Introduction

It will be well known to many readers that the story of the children of Húrin was based on the tale of Kullervo in the Finnish *Kalevala* “wholly changed except in its tragic ending”, for this information comes from Tolkien’s own letters (1981, p. 345). It might be assumed that the changes Tolkien referred to arose freely from the storehouse of his imagination were it not for his comment in an earlier letter that “the beginning of the legendarium... was in an attempt to reorganise some of the *Kalevala*, especially the tale of Kullervo the hapless, into a form of my own” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 214). He set out, in other words, with a plan to alter the story, though why he did not say.

As regards the whole *Silmarillion* project, it is worth bearing in mind that Lönnrot, the compiler of the *Kalevala*, found it necessary to tamper with his collected material in order to fuse it into a mythological cycle; even with his alterations, the effect is still very disjointed. It is quite credible that Tolkien wished either to make his own attempt at synthesis and rationalisation or to return to a purer form: he may, indeed, not have seen these two aims as incompatible. I am reminded of T A Shippey’s observation in the *Road to Middle-earth* that many of Tolkien’s “invented” words and poems were in fact “asterisk forms” or reconstructions of the lost ancestors of surviving words and rhymes: even the role of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* is a reconstruction of the tale of Froda alluded to in *Beowulf*. Perhaps, then, the object of Tolkien’s reorganisation of *Kullervo* was to reconstruct an earlier form, possibly with the help of related tales from other lands. Lisa Hopkins in *Mallorn* 29 pointed out similarities between the story of Túrin and that of Oedipus; I shall confine myself here to the territory of north-west Europe.

## Túrin and Kullervo

Kullervo and Túrin both lost their fathers in battle against evil forces when they were too young to fight. Túrin was eight years old at the time of the Nirmaeth, Kullervo still in his mother’s womb when his father and brothers were slain by the men of his wicked uncle Untamo. Untamo, a combined Morgoth and Brodda figure, seems to have provided Tolkien with the name of Morgoth’s first fortress: *Utumno*.

Kullervo’s pregnant mother was spared but carried away to work for Untamo in his cabins, where Kullervo grew up as a serf. This serfdom of a single family Tolkien transmuted by degrees into the thralldom of the Men of Hithlum under the Easterlings.

Kullervo was sold on to the smith Ilmarinen, where he was badly treated by Ilmarinen’s wife. One day she baked him a loaf so hard that it broke the knife that was his only heirloom from his father. Dreadfully sensitive where such matters were concerned, Kullervo took revenge by killing Ilmarinen’s wife. In *Túrin* this incident was turned into the taunts of Saeros and Túrin’s retaliation, which resulted, albeit accidentally, in Saeros’ death.

Like Túrin, Kullervo responded by taking flight, and wandered, bereft of home and family, brooding on his ill fortune. And, like Túrin, he decided to avenge the past: “to/ go to Untamo’s village/ and avenge his father’s knocks/ father’s knocks and mamma’s tears/ his own ill-treatment” (*Kalevala*, p. 470).

But at that point Kullervo came upon a hag who informed him that his father and mother were still alive, living in a fish-hut on the border of Lapland. This can best be compared to

Glaurung's lying words to Túrin in Nargothrond that his mother and sister were destitute in Hithlum.

However, the hag was speaking the truth to Kullervo, though he came back to an incomplete family, one of his two sisters having been lost in the forest. One day, when returning from an errand in his sleigh he encountered a golden-haired girl skiing on the heaths; he pulled her in with him and seduced her. In the morning he told her his identity, whereupon she realised that she had had intercourse with her own brother. In despair, she "tumbled out of the sledge/ then ran into a river/ into a rapid's steep foam/ into a smoking whirlpool." (*Kalevala*, p. 482). This was the original inspiration for the motif of unwitting incest between Túrin and Nienor, and the sister's means of suicide is identical in each case. Further on in the text of *Kullervo* it is said that "no young grass sprang/ no heather flower grew/ came up in the place/ on that evil spot/ where he had ravished the wench/ and spoilt her his mother bore" (*Kalevala*, p. 495). Similarly, of the spot where Níniel threw herself into Teiglin, Tolkien wrote that "no deer would ever leap there again, and all living things shunned it, and no man would walk upon its shore" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 138).

Kullervo, however, did not yet decide to slay himself, but revived his earlier plan to seek vengeance on Untamo. Of all his family, only his mother still loved him and cared that he was risking his life. Single-minded, Kullervo set off and, though news came to him of the death of each member of his family in turn, he would not turn round to bury or to pay his last respects to any of them, not even his mother. These passages seem to echo Túrin's failure to seek Finduilas when he ran on his false errand towards Hithlum mesmerised by the dragon's lies.

Before reaching Untamo's cabins, Kullervo received a sword from the sky god. Túrin's Black Sword also came from the sky, for according to all versions of the tale it was forged of meteoric iron "that fell from heaven as a blazing star" (Tolkien, 1988a, p. 125, note 10). In the original *Turambar and the Foalókë* it was a new sword made for him in Nargothrond. Some time between 1926 and 1930, however, Tolkien revised the tale of Túrin. The fullest

expression of these revisions was to have been in the *Lay of the Children of Húrin*, of which two versions were begun. Neither of these, unfortunately, reached the interlude in Nargothrond, though the prose sketch that Tolkien wrote as background to the *Lays* (contained in the earliest *Silmarillion* – see *Shaping of Middle-earth*) shows that it was at this time that he reinterpreted "Gurtholfin" as Beleg's fateful sword reforged.

Kullervo succeeded in slaying Untamo and his people and laying waste to his cabins, just as Túrin slew Brodda in his hall and later Glaurung; but both heroes found their victories hollow. Túrin learned of his sister's death and his own incest, and realised that he had slain Brandir unjustly; Kullervo, with the battle-lust sated, returned to his father's empty hut and mourned for his sister and the mother he had failed. He took out his sword and asked it would it eat his guilty flesh. Then he "pressed the butt into the heath/ turned the point towards his breast/ rammed himself upon the point/ and on it he brought about/ his doom.../ death/ for the ill-fated" (*Kalevala*, p. 495). In exactly this fashion did Túrin slay himself at the end of his tale.

## The Orphans of the Battle

Though each incident in *Kullervo* can be related to a stage in Túrin's history, the details of the events in the two tales are very different. In addition, many motifs in Túrin's history are altogether missing from *Kullervo*, which has, for instance, no dwarves, no dragon, no time spent at a king's court, no faithful friend, no lover other than the sister, and no period of marriage. If we are to argue for any additional sources, then these are the themes that we must seek in them.

Sigurd in the Norse tradition had a start in life very similar to Kullervo's, for his father was killed in battle before he was born and his mother took flight into the wild. This same story is told in Ireland of Finn Mac Cumail; it is told in Wales also of Peredur (the Arthurian Sir Perceval) with the only difference that he, like Túrin, was a young boy at the time of the battle. All these heroes went on, like Túrin, to be fostered and spend time in youth at the court of a king. They all received wonderful swords. Sigurd's was, like Túrin's, an old sword reforged

(his father's), and both his sword and Peredur's were able, like Gurthang, to cleave ordinary iron; Finn Mac Cumail's sword (or perhaps spear) had its own links with the heavens, for its Danaan – i.e. fairy – smith “beat into it the fire of the sun and the potency of the moon” (Sutcliff, 1968, p. 21); it was a fey weapon like Anglachel/Gurthang, bloodthirsty and wayward. Sigurd and Finn both received their swords from the king before setting out on their adventures, and in *The Silmarillion* Anglachel was in a similar fashion bestowed upon Beleg by Thingol; here it is said to have been forged, like the weapon of Finn, by a dark-hearted elven smith (Eöl).

Both Sigurd and Peredur killed a man before leaving the King's court, and afterwards loved two women, like Túrin abandoning the first in utter forgetfulness. Sigurd's marriage to his second lady, the witch's daughter Gudrun, was like Túrin's brought about with the aid of an enchanted forgetfulness and caused his downfall, for the betrayed Brynhild slew Sigurd in her despair and then killed herself. Peredur's betrayal of his first love is unexplained in the text but his subsequent encounter with Angharad Goldenhand was, perhaps significantly, preceded by a sojourn with a coven of witches. A motif of dumbness is attached to the relationship with the Níniel-figure in both *Peredur* and *Finn*. In *Peredur* it was he himself who took a vow of silence; in *Finn* it was the child of the marriage who was dumb.

Sigurd and Peredur both defeated dragons, and Finn slew an Otherworld creature which, though humanoid enough to play the harp, had fiery breath and the power of putting men into an enchanted sleep. The figure of Beleg as the best friend and companion-in-arms is fulfilled to some extent by Gwalchmei (Gawain) in *Peredur*.

These are the bald motifs that these stories share with each other and with Túrin. However, there are also motifs common to these three tales that Tolkien rejected. The most important of these is the “gift of wisdom”. Sigurd obtained all wisdom, and the understanding of the tongues of birds, by tasting of the dragon's heart that he was cooking for his tutor Regin; in an almost identical story, Finn tasted of the Salmon of Wisdom whilst cooking it for his druid tutor.

And according to Chrétien de Troyes Perceval was vouch-safed a vision of the Grail. Túrin, however, is allowed no gift of enlightenment: he is as wrongheaded and blind to his fate as Kullervo.

In *Turambar and the Foalókë* Tolkien did allude to the supposed properties of the dragon's heat, but commented: “Few have there been that ever achieved. . . the slaying of a drake, nor might any even of such doughty ones taste their blood and live, for it is as a poison of fires. . .” (Tolkien, 1986, p. 85). Tolkien has, however, allowed each source to contribute particular details of its own, and these I shall now discuss.

## Sigurd

Sigurd's dragon Fafnir was the brother of his tutor Regin the smith, and lay upon a hoard that Regin coveted. This hoard had originally belonged to the dwarf Andvari, but when Odin and Loki had killed Otter, brother of Regin and Fafnir, they had wrested it from Andvari in order to pay Otter's ransom to his father. Andvari had cursed the treasure as it was taken from him, in particular one ring which he had begged to keep. This fore-tale was incorporated into the history of Túrin at a late stage in its development, becoming transformed in the *Narn* and *The Silmarillion* into the interlude with Mîm in the House of Ransom<sup>1</sup> (in early versions Mîm was simply the dwarf whom Glórund used to guard his treasure while he was away).

The curse of Andvari's treasure had set to work at once, Fafnir slaying his own father to have it; at the time that Sigurd came to manhood Fafnir lay upon his hoard at the door of his father's ruined hall surrounded by the blasted plain of Gnita Heath. The similarity to the picture of Glaurung at the doors of Nargothrond is very striking.

Regin suggested to Sigurd that the boy might win the treasure for himself. The method of despatch Sigurd used is the same as that employed by Túrin; for he crawled down into the giant rut created by the dragon's passage “and the track was as if a great river had rolled along and left a deep valley” (Lang, 1950, p. 356).

<sup>1</sup>Note Túrin's promise to Mîm: “... and if ever I come to any wealth, I will pay you a ransom of heavy gold for your son...” (Tolkien, 1980, p. 101).

When the dragon crawled over the “valley” to the water, Sigurd drove his sword into his heart.

He took from the hoard a magic *aegishjalm* or ‘Helm of Dread’, prototype of Túrin’s dragonhelm. With his dragon-gold, he was now every bit as cursed as Túrin, and by leaving her Andvari’s ring as a love token he brought Brynhild also under the curse.

### Peredur Son of Efracw

In *Peredur*, as in *Sigurd*, the battle was a personal one between the child’s father and an enemy lord, and there is no suggestion that a whole people was involved. Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval*, on the other hand, mentions no battle as such but does paint a picture of a country oppressed by evildoers. Peredur’s mother, not willing to lose her last son in warfare, brought him up in the wild ignorant of weapons. However, when he was grown, he ignored his mother’s pleas and travelled to King Arthur’s court. Here a strange knight insulted Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere), upsetting her goblet of wine over her head and boxing her ear; then Cei (Sir Kay) taunted Peredur himself for his rustic appearance, and a dwarf couple who hailed Peredur he boxed and kicked for their discourtesy in having until that day pretended to be dumb. Peredur slew the knight who had assaulted Gwynhwyfar and then left Arthur’s court to prove himself, vowing that he would return to meet Cei and avenge the injury to the dwarfs.

Here we have the ingredients of Túrin’s killing of Saeros. Saeros aroused Túrin’s wrath by taunting him for his rustic appearance and, in the early texts, died when Túrin, unaware of his own strength, thrust his wine cup in his face and broke his head. Even in the *Narn* the wine cup is thrown at Saeros, though it is no longer the cause of his death.

Peredur travelled on and at the edge of a forest found the court of the Lame King (alias the Fisher King), surrounded by a rampart. In the story of Túrin a lame woodman has figured from the first. Originally he was called Tamar, then this was changed to Brandir; in *The Silmarillion*

and the *Narn* he finally acquired his ramparted hillfort. Robert de Boron named the Fisher King as *Bron*, which is believed by mythologists to be a corruption of *Bran*, name of a Celtic god. Tolkien’s alteration of *Tamar* to *Brandir* may therefore be intended as a direct reference to the Lame King of *Peredur*. However, Brandir is a young man where the Lame King is “hoary headed”, and in the *Narn* a second lame figure is introduced, old Sador “Labadal”, the maimed woodcutter.<sup>2</sup>

When the monster-slaying Peredur finally returned to Arthur’s court, a black maiden (Welsh “morwyn du”) came to berate him for failing his family, using words that Finduilas might have applied to Túrin: “Blind was fate when she bestowed favour and fame upon thee... henceforth strife and battle, and the loss of knights, and women left widowed, and maidens without succour, and that all because of thee.” (*Mabinogion*, p. 218). The “morwyn du” is not, of course, Peredur’s mother (she is unnamed). Nevertheless, it is curious that *Morwen* both sounds like Welsh *morwyn* ‘maiden’ and has the same meaning as ‘morwyn du’. Tolkien originally gave Túrin’s mother the name of *Mavwin*, but this was altered at the time of writing the *Lays*. It may be significant that *Morwen* was briefly preceded by *Morwin* of unexplained meaning.<sup>3</sup>

### Finn Mac Cumail

It is the stories of Perceval and Finn Mac Cumail that may have helped Tolkien transmute the oppression of Húrin’s family into the thralldom of the people of Hador, for after the fateful battle not only were Finn’s immediate family killed but his father’s whole clan was broken and reduced to outlawry and servitude. His mother Morna Munchaem fled into the wild to give birth, and then departed, leaving Finn in the care of two Danaan foster-mothers. After long wanderings, she eventually found refuge with a chieftain in Kerry.

The similarity of form of *Morna* and *Morwen* may explain Tolkien’s transference of the name *morwyn du* to the wife of Húrin.

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<sup>2</sup>The name *Labadal* suggests *Labdacus*, grandfather of the lamed Oedipus.

<sup>3</sup>*Morwen* is suggestive of the Cornish girl’s name Morwenna, also thought to be derived from *morwyn* ‘maiden’.



*Munchaem* means 'Fair Neck' or 'Radiant Neck' and suggests Morwen's epithet *Eledhwen*, 'Elvenfair' or 'Elfsheen', the latest part of her name to be introduced into the texts.

Finn was raised secretly in the hidden glens of Slieve Bloom until he was old enough to go to the court of the High King Cormac and claim his rights. Cormac made him the leader of the standing army known as the Fianna, and from then on Finn spent his summers in a manner not dissimilar to Túrin, as captain of a war-band, living in the open by hunting, fighting to protect the country at need.

One day Finn was hunting deer when he realised that the hind he was pursuing was making for his own fort on the Hill of Allen. Eventually she dropped down exhausted, but his hounds did not attack, but licked her trembling limbs. He allowed her to enter the stockade with the Fianna, and in the night woke to find himself face to face with a beautiful golden-haired woman. She told him that her name was Sadb and that her deer-form had been due to a spell placed upon her by a dark druid whom she had refused to take as her husband. She had been told that could she reach the fort of Allen her right shape would return to her. Finn fell in love with her, and after a time they were married.

Sadb conceived, but word came to Finn of an invading party of Lochlannaigh (Vikings). Sadb pleaded with him to stay, and grew pale and ill at the prospect of his going out into danger. Finn, however, gently set aside his wife's entreaties and set out, warning Sadb on no account to leave the stockade. She, however, was tricked by what she believed to be the sound of Finn's hunting horn and ran through the gateway, only to encounter the dark druid, who turned her once more into a hind and spirited her away. Long though he searched, Finn was never to find her again.

The story of Finn and Sadb is so similar to that of Túrin and Níniel as expressed in the *Narn* and *The Silmarillion* that only conscious influence can account for it. Those details that link the stories most closely do not appear in any of the early texts. In these Túrin and his band encountered Nienor running from Orcs, but it is only in the final versions that she had discarded her clothing and collapsed. Also, in the early versions, the woodmen with whom Túrin lived

had no hillfort, but only an undefended village in a clearing. The earliest draft was first written with no reference to Níniel's pregnancy: this detail was added to it afterwards. And in none of the early versions was Níniel left behind when the menfolk set out.

In the two final texts Tolkien also introduced a frequent use of deer imagery with regard to Nienor after her enchantment. First, there is Saeros' taunt regarding the women of Hithlum, which foreshadows Nienor's naked flight: "Do they run like deer clad only in their hair?" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 80). This is a change from earlier versions of his insult to Túrin's womenfolk, and was first introduced in the unfinished *Quenta Silmarillion* (see *Lost Road*), the text that immediately preceded *The Silmarillion* and the *Narn*. In the final texts, of course, Saeros himself was killed by being hounded into a ravine that "was wide enough for a deer leap" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 82), and Nienor fled towards Brethil "in a madness of fear, swifter than a deer". The next day she went on "warily as a hunted beast", and lay down on Haudh-en-Elleth "like a wild beast that is dying" (Tolkien, 1977, p. 219). In the *Narn* the spot where she leapt into Teiglin is even called by the name of "the Deer's Leap".

Níniel's dumbness also appeared for the first time in the final drafts. Sadb herself was only dumb while in her deer-shape, but the story of her coming to the fort was repeated seven years later in Finn's finding of a dumb child – their son. Since his mother had raised him alone in the form of a hind he had never acquired human speech and had, like Níniel, to learn it slowly in his new home.

Yet why should Tolkien have identified Sadb, Finn's first wife, as an inappropriate bride? The marriage was not incestuous but exogamous in the extreme, being a union of mortal and fairy-woman; however, there are at least two stories that suggest that Finn's fairy wife may once have been identified as his own sister. The first is a Scottish folktale in which "Finlay the Hunter" went out from his home, warning his sister not to open the window to the north side of the hut and not to let the fire go out. She did both, and was spirited away by giants of the north wind. The second is the tale of Finn's sister Tuireann, who was turned into a bitch by

her husband's druid mistress; the Early Irish word for 'bitch', *sad*, is so close to *Sadb* that a common source for the two tales seems all but certain (cf. the interesting parallel between English *bitch* and French *biche* 'hind').

Finn's next adventure centres upon the *sidhe* or fairy hill of Slieve Gallion, which was the abode of Culann the Smith. Finn was lured to the *sidhe* by Culann's scheming daughter Milucra, who had him dive into the little lake that lay upon the crest of the hill to fetch for her a ring that she said had dropped in the water. But Finn found when he retrieved it that he had turned into a doddering old man. Milucra vanished, and Finn's men had to dig their way into the fairy hill to bring her sister out to cure him.

It seems that the *sidhe* of Culann the fairy smith contributed to the hill dwelling of Tolkien's dwarves. In the *Narn* he specifically described "a clear pool in a rock-hewn basin" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 100) that lay before the door of Bar-en-Danwedh and in which Túrin and his outlaws used to wash; and in outlines for the unfinished sections appears mention of a second hidden entrance passage discovered by the outlaws. The story of Finn and Milucra does indeed share with *Otter's Ransom* a cursed ring, though what probably clinched the identification of the two tales for Tolkien was the fact that Culann, like Sigurd's smith Regin, was associated with a famous tale of "ransom". Long before Finn's time the boy-prodigy Sétanta had been forced to kill Culann's guard dog and had vowed to make reparation by taking the hound's place and guarding Culann's cattle himself; thus he became known from that time on as *Cúchulainn* or 'the hound of Culann'. In the *Narn* and *Silmarillion* Tolkien gave Beleg for the first time the epithet of *Cúthalion*.

*Cúchulainn* is a sort of reverse Beleg in having unwillingly killed two people very dear to him, his own son and his foster-brother Ferdia. *Cúchulainn's* verses of lament for Ferdia may even have suggested to Tolkien the *Laer Cú Beleg*.

## Other Fosterlings

There are a few fosterling stories that do not perfectly fit the pattern described above but that do seem to have been included by Tolkien in his tree of Túrin-tales. The chief of these is the legend of King Arthur. The Emperor Arthur of medieval fancy is clearly a long way removed from the outlaw figure of Túrin but has some very recognisable "Túrin" motifs attaching to him. Firstly there is the matter of his birth, for his apparent father was killed in battle against Uther Pendragon (his real father) on the night he was conceived.

The name *Uther Pendragon* (Welsh *Uthr Bendragon*) has been interpreted in various ways. Geoffrey of Monmouth, however, translated *Pendragon* literally as "dragon head", explaining that Uther had been given this name because he was wont to carry into war with him the figure of a golden dragon (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1966, p. 202). It is notable that the helm of Túrin in the earliest versions of the tale was neither a family heirloom nor crested with a dragon's head. By the *Narn*, however, it had become the Helm of Hador and "the dragonhead of the North" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 76).

Arthur, like Túrin and the other heroes, was fostered, but his was a more complicated fostering than theirs. Firstly, we may count the marriage of his mother to King Uther Pendragon during her pregnancy. His first true foster-father, however, was Merlin, who took the newborn Arthur from the castle gates for Sir Ector's wife to nurse.

The strange figure of Merlin, foster-father of Arthur and guardian of his realm during his kingship, may perhaps be compared to Melian, foster-mother of Túrin whose magic girdle guarded the realm of Thingol. The name *Melian* itself comes from Chrétien's *Perceval*, where "Mélian de Lis" is a knight of Tintagel.<sup>4</sup> In the earliest texts, Thingol's<sup>5</sup> wife was called Wendelin > Gwendeling > Gwedheling; this was probably suggested by *Gwendolen* or "Guendoloena", which according to Geoffrey of Monmouth was the name of Merlin's wife.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The name *Mélian* may originally have been only a corruption of *Merlin* which was often written *Merlion*.

<sup>5</sup>Thingol himself was originally named *Linwë Tinto*.

<sup>6</sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Life of Merlin*. Tolkien may have abandoned this name because of its lack of authenticity, for Geoffrey fancifully based his "Gwendolens" on a misreading of the Welsh masculine name *Gwendoleu*.

One thing that all our heroes have in common so far is the gift of a sword that is said to have come from the skies or to be able to cleave ordinary iron. Arthur is no exception. It was by drawing a sword from a steel anvil that he won the kingship. And the name *Excalibur* is a corruption of the Welsh *Caledwylch* comprising *caled* 'hard' and *bwlch* 'flash'. O'Rahilly interprets it as a lightning sword but it might as easily have been forged of the iron from a shooting star.

Arthur, unlike Túrin, had three sisters, Morgause, Elayne and Morgan le Fay, but these are almost certainly the vestiges of a Celtic trinity, the triplication of a single entity like the three sisters Brigid of Irish myth. The incident that links Arthur most closely with Túrin is his incest with Morgause. Having been brought up apart from her, when they first met he did not know who she was, but "cast grete love unto hir and desired to ly by her. And so they were agreed, and [he] begate upon hir sir Mordred. And she was syster on the modirs syde Igrayne unto Arthure. So there she rested hir a monthe, and at the last she departed."

"Than the kynge dremed a mervaylous dreme whereof he was sore adrad... But thus was the dreme of Arthure: hym thought there was com into hys londe gryffens and serpentes, and hym thought they brente and slowghe all the people in the londe; and than he thought he fought with them and they dud hym grete harme and wounded hym full sore, but at the last he slew hem." (Malory, p. 27-28).

Morgause performs the function of Níniel, though the name *Níniel* is suggestive rather of Elayne. Their necromantic sister Morgan le Fay, however, has more in common with Morgoth. The names *Morgause*, *Morgan* and *Mordred* all resemble *Morgoth*, and *Morgan le Fay* is suggestive also of *Morwen Eledhwen*, for *eledhwen* could as well mean "elfmaid" as "elfsheen".<sup>7</sup> In the later drafts of *Túrin* Morwen was credited by the Easterlings with being, like Morgan, a witch.

None of the heroes discussed so far have, however, been outlaws. Medieval English literature abounds in tales of outlaws – Robin Hood, Hereward the Wake, etc. – but it seems

that for this aspect of Túrin's history Tolkien drew chiefly upon a lesser-known fourteenth-century poem the *Tale of Gamelyn*. Gamelyn was early left fatherless and in the care of a wicked elder brother who wasted his lands and withheld them when Gamelyn came of age. This brother is analogous to Brodda in the tale of Túrin, and, like Túrin, Gamelyn sought vengeance on him by physical attack. However, the wicked brother succeeded in getting Gamelyn under control by fettering him to a post in the dining hall where, chained hand and foot, he was left without food or drink. This incident reflects Beleg's capture by the outlaws who, as we are told in the *Narn*, left "Beleg tied to a tree without food or water..." (Tolkien, 1980, p. 93). Gamelyn was rescued by an old servant named Adam, and took revenge by mounting a second attack in his brother's hall and breaking his brother's back. He was now declared an outlaw and "his wolf's head was cried"; for the price on an outlaw's head was the same as that upon a wolf. With his faithful Adam, he was forced to flee into the forest.

The name *Gamelyn* was preserved in the early drafts of *Túrin* as *Gumlin* > *Gamling*, initially given to one of Túrin's escorts into Doriath and then transferred to Húrin's father. According to the *Narn*, the outlaws of Beleriand were known as the *Gaurwaith* or "wolfmen".

## Conclusion

Much more might be written on the subject of *Túrin's* relationship to this family of fosterling tales; I have, however, dealt with the major themes, which are enough to demonstrate that the influence of these additional sources was both strong and deliberate. Indeed, from c.1926 onwards the drafts show an increasing tendency for Tolkien to draw in nomenclature and details from these tales, almost as if laying clues.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that even these stories number all the strands in Túrin's mythological web. Many of the minor figures in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, for instance, are from the same general mould, and details from their stories have been drawn into the tale

<sup>7</sup>Christopher Tolkien notes: "In the narrative texts... the name *Eledhwen* was interpreted as 'Elfsheen'...; on the other hand under ELED the translation was changed from 'Elf-fair' to 'Elf-maid'" (Tolkien, 1988b, p. 398).

of Túrin. In addition, Túrin seems to owe a debt to tales of doomed siblings such as the Irish *Fate of the Children of Tuireann* and *Children of Lir*; it is this Tuireann (alias Tuirill), rather than Finn's sister, who was probably the original source of Túrin's name.<sup>8</sup>

This deliberate reinforcement of the links with traditional tales forces me to the conclusion that Tolkien's dislike of the search for his sources was not as wholehearted as has at times

been assumed. After all, identification of these does provide us with an insight into Tolkien's own interpretation of European myth. From our study of *Túrin* we perceive connections between a whole group of European tales, and are directed towards the link between Finn's sister and his first wife. It may not be going too far to suggest that theories that Tolkien failed to express in learned papers may lie buried in these tales.

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<sup>8</sup>Finnguala (from earlier \*Findgúala), daughter of Lir, seems to have provided Tolkien with the name *Finduilas*, first introduced in the *Lays* (in *Turambar and the Foalókë* her name was simply "Failivrin"). The probable logic was: enchanted swan-maiden Finnguala = enchanted swan-maiden Brynhild = Túrin's first love. Finduilas was herself the grand-daughter of the swan-maiden of Alqualondë. The story of Tristan and Isolde also has a bearing on *Túrin*, as do the French tale of Melusine and some of the Robin Hood legends.

# The Economy and Economic History of Gondor

Ruth Lacon

Reconstructing ancient economies of any kind is an enterprise fraught with difficulty. Firstly (and very importantly) no ancient government had an idea of 'the economy' in the modern sense: the sum of 'economic' activity did add up to a whole, but it was undirected and largely accidental. Those trying to study it are faced with an almost complete absence of statistics, and with a world so different to our own, that many basic ideas are irrelevant (Salway, 1981). Since we have such problems dealing with even relatively well-known periods, what can we say about Gondor where documentation is virtually non-existent and archaeological discovery impossible? I intend to make some suggestions – if only to provoke discussion!

Comparison with real-world events and structures is a time-honoured method of solving problems about Middle-earth: the resulting similarities and differences can be equally instructive. For Gondor's economy and economic history the best comparison is with the classical world. Fortunately this is an area on which a great deal of work has been done and some useful general premises have been established. It is generally accepted that the classical world was basically an agrarian society in which towns were not centres of industrial production and in which notions of 'economics' were comparatively undeveloped though markets and trade had some importance. It is also held that the wealth of the Roman Empire came largely from its land which also provided the bulk of the state's revenues: that the army, or at least the defences generally, constituted by far the biggest part of the state budget; and that other state expenditure was extremely limited by comparison with that of modern states (Cameron, 1993a). How far does this model hold good for Gondor?

Despite the lack of evidence it must be almost certain that the basis of society and wealth in Gondor was the land. The great majority of the population are likely to have been employed in agriculture. This produced not only food but also raw materials for craft production: wool and plant fibres (and also dye plants) for textiles, hides and skins for leather-working and, above all, wood products. Timber was used for houses and ships, bark for tanning leather, wood for a multitude of domestic uses and as fuel for the furnaces and kilns of many other crafts. It is highly unlikely that any type of non-agricultural production in Gondor approached the scale of a true industry in the modern sense in terms of scale and organisation of production. Craft production would typically be a small scale affair restricted by available techniques and markets in a country which even at its richest was unquestionably poor and under-developed by modern standards.

These small scale 'industries' were probably mainly to be found in towns. Some, such as leather tanneries, dye-works and brewhouses, were likely to be found mainly on the outskirts of towns, being malodorous and posing a threat to supplies of clean drinking water. Others such as iron working and potteries might as well be rural as urban, access to resources being vitally important, though they might act as foci for the development of small specialised villages.

Trade was probably more important in Gondor than in the classical world. The relatively small size of the country at most periods, combined with the high environmental diversity suggested by our sources, would encourage regional specialisation and internal trade. Beyond this, Gondor lay astride the lower course of the Anduin, one of the major natural routeways of north-western Middle-earth and

probably a focus of long-distance trade, much like the Rhône in European history. The fact that even orcs understood coinage well enough to use it with deadly accuracy in an insult (Tolkien, 1954 v. 3 pp. 319-324) suggests a fairly high level of trade and monetization of economies in the Anduin valley and related areas, presumably including Gondor.

For its time and place Gondor was a sophisticated state: revenue collection and expenditure would be of vital importance in maintaining the state and its structures. It is very difficult to say quite what these were and how they *were* maintained as the surviving evidence is so slim. From the description of Númenor in *Unfinished Tales* (Tolkien, 1980, pp. 165-172), we may conclude that towns and cities were not important in Númenórean culture. It is likely that towns in Gondor were centres of craft production and distribution of goods, working up the products of the countryside into goods for resale and supplying the country with wares which could not be produced locally. They were important for transport, serving as a link between the local district and the outside world through their merchants and markets, and were also the usual seat of public administration and justice. Towns were not, however, regarded as the centre and summit of civilisation and culture, and the natural focus of politics and loyalty, as in the Hellenistic and, to some extent, the Roman world.

Following on from this, it is likely that the lowest unit of Gondorian local government was a territorial unit similar to the *pagus* of Roman Britain and Gaul. Such units would contain one or more towns but would not necessarily hold or be dependent on a city proper. Their 'capital' would be wherever the local administration happened to be. Tax collection was probably organised at this level, but how much control the central government had over it is doubtful and probably varied widely at different periods in the Kingdom's history. Prior to the Downfall of Númenor, 'Gondor' most likely was a loose federation of Faithful colonies. Parts of that structure persisted until the end of the Third Age causing recurrent social, political and economic problems for the state. Strong rulers could keep the provincial lords in check, ensuring an adequate flow of revenue to the centre and co-

ordinating state expenditure. At other times, most clearly under the later Stewards, Gondor tended to fragment, with effective power (and control of revenues) devolving upon the provincial lords and only lip-service paid to the notional ruler.

Taxes themselves probably followed the Roman model, the possibilities being severely restricted by the administrative capability of the state. District taxation might take the form of a levy on landowners, or a poll tax: indirect taxation might consist of customs dues, inheritance taxes and the like (Grant, 1979). Some revenue might also come from monopolies on certain industries. At the other end of the Eurasian continent, successive Chinese governments found salt and iron monopolies to be highly profitable (Gernet, 1982). If Gondor's government *did* operate a salt monopoly, it may have been one of the rare cases where *external* trade had a major part to play in the economy. We tend to forget how scarce and vitally necessary salt was in pre-modern times, and how important trade in it was. Gondor was well placed to supply salt to the whole Anduin valley, and could have profited considerably by that.

Having gathered in its revenues, what was Gondor doing with them? Major areas of expenditure were probably the upkeep of the Court and the administration of the country. This probably included tax collection, census taking, provision of justice and management of state property. The latter might conceivably include major roads and important constructions such as the seaway through the Ethir Anduin. Extensive archives were maintained, though they have, alas, not survived. There may also have been state involvement in the supply of food and water to some of the major cities such as Osgiliath and Pelargir, though it must be very doubtful that even Osgiliath at its peak was anywhere near the size of classical Rome. Many of the functions such as education, health care and social security which we now associate with government to some extent (though state involvement in them is very recent) would be dealt with at local level by private individuals or groups such as trade guilds.

By far the greatest part of state expenditure would be on the military. For most of its history Gondor appears to have had a standing army and

navy. These are complex and expensive institutions: the men who form them have to be paid and require supplies of all sorts from ships and fortifications to crockery and food. Some things may have been made in state factories, others by contractors. Food would have to be bought from farmers and/or merchants. The presence of troops in an area could indeed be a considerable economic opportunity. They would have cash in their pockets to spend; roads improved for military purposes would also speed civilian transport; they would need to buy food, offering a guaranteed market to local farmers; contracts for other supplies might be awarded locally to cut transport costs (Cameron, 1993a). Important as the military sector was though, it is not likely to have played much part in the economy at large. One area in which the state could have considerable effect on the economy was the coinage. This must certainly have been controlled by the central government and much would depend on their ability to maintain a solid currency which people were confident about. In late Roman times, progressive decline in the quality of the silver coinage led to galloping inflation and near breakdown of the currency and of taxation (Cameron, 1993a and 1993b). Gondor never seems to have suffered from this particular problem. In the later part of the Third Age when the country was under most stress it was also relatively small and so not subject to the difficulties of scale that plagued late Antique rulers. It is reasonable to assume that Gondor maintained a stable currency until the end of the Third Age – it may have been the only central function over which the Stewards kept exclusive control. Its place in the wider economy of north-west Middle-earth had probably long since been taken by coins issued by Dorwinion and by the Dwarves.

If evidence is slim for the role of the state in Gondor's economy, that for the private sector is non-existent. Yet this was probably by far the more important of the two, with most production both in agriculture and crafts lying in private hands (Clarkson, 1971). The structure of land ownership in Gondor is obscure beyond reconstruction and the range of possibilities is too wide for speculation. All that can safely be said is that until well into the last millennium of the Third Age, and perhaps not even then,

Gondor was not a feudal country: land ownership and military service were not connected. As far as craft production goes, there is no direct evidence but it is very likely that trade guild existed. The place name Rath Celerdain (Lampwrights' Street) in Minas Tirith, strongly suggests that tradesmen practising a particular craft were clustered together and such clustering is often associated with the existence of guilds. These were corporations of tradesmen authorised by a charter from the town or from the monarch – possibly also, in Gondor, from the great provincial lords. In the larger towns most crafts would have their own guild but, in smaller places, kindred occupations often shared a common organisation. The guilds regulated all activities relating to their craft or crafts in their area of authority, including supervising standards of workmanship, controlling admissions to the guild and conditions of apprenticeship, and regulating trade in raw materials and finished products. They were strongly monopolistic, preserving trade for themselves, slow to admit new members and quick to harrÿ non-members poaching on their preserve. Guilds also provided social and financial services to their members, supporting schools and hospitals and lending money. This latter was particularly important for guilds of merchants, especially those engaged in long distance trade, providing capital for ventures and voyages which could not be supported by one merchant alone. It is quite possible that there were specialist merchant guilds, Companies of Venturers, dealing in particular aspects of Gondor's external trade, especially the maritime trade to Harad. Guilds were also important in local government; their wealthier members often served on councils, and officials enforcing guild labour statutes and market regulations were appointed from their ranks. Though the basis of wealth was land, that was largely capital rather than working cash. A sizeable fraction of mobile wealth in Gondor probably rested with rich guildsmen.

Within Gondor it is probable that internal trade played a very definite part in the economy. The country encompassed a very wide variety of environments, each with its own set of potential resources (Tolkien, 1954, map). In the relatively developed society established by the

Númenórean colonists, each area probably concentrated on its own specialities, exporting them and importing what it lacked. The hills around Dol Amroth, for example, might be better suited to vine and olive growing, whereas the plains of south Lebennin were perhaps suited to wheat growing and cattle grazing. Other natural resources must have been widely and irregularly scattered, such as iron ore or good potting clay. Every area must have had practitioners of necessary crafts, such as blacksmithing, but there must also have been centres of excellence dictated both by resources and the presence of a clientele. Along the coast anchors must have been a regular part of smithy production, for instance, but only Pelargir might have craftsmen who could make anchors for the biggest warships and transports in the Royal fleet, or for the largest merchantmen. Many of Gondor's rivers could probably be used by barges, and the Dúnedain in general built excellent roads. Such relative ease of transport would certainly facilitate trade. It is impossible to say whether or not the rigid horse-collar was known in Gondor. This would affect haulage but even without it we should not underestimate the possibilities. Oyster shells are found in large quantities on Romano-British sites all over England. They must have been shipped either at very high speed or in heavy barrels of sea water for them to arrive edible. The sites on which the shells are found vary widely from the villas of the wealthy to around town squares. Despite the cost of transport, oysters were not food for the elite only in Roman Britain (Salway, 1981). It is likely that transport of goods in Gondor was at this level of efficiency, giving considerable impetus to internal trade. We should also remember, however, that concepts of free markets and fair or unfair competition were probably quite unknown (Salway, 1981). As in most pre-modern societies, protectionism, restrictive practices and commercial skulduggery would be routine hazards of business.

External trade was probably more important to Gondor than to the Roman Empire due to the location of the country. Sited where it was on the coast of Belfalas yet also extending inland beyond the White Mountains along Anduin, Gondor was well placed to take part in long distance trade in many directions. To the north,

traffic along Anduin was extensive enough for portage-ways to be built around major obstacles, such as Sarn Gebir and Rauros (Tolkien, 1954, v. 1, pp. 396-410), and there was probably also contact with Arnor via Tharbad. Eastward we know that Dorwinion (possibly on the Sea of Rhûn) was active in trade (Tolkien, 1937, pp. 176-194), and it is likely that it had links to Gondor and also to areas further east and south, at least at some periods. South of Gondor possible sea routes led to Umbar and beyond into Far Harad. Patterns of trade around the Mediterranean give some insight into commodities which may have been on the move (Cunliffe, 1988).

Gondor itself was probably a major producer of salt, wine and olive oil, may have had fine woollens (much as Spain developed the Merino sheep – the mainstay of our classy woollens and knits), and perhaps had minerals such as copper and tin from the White Mountains. It was also well placed for its merchants to act as middlemen. From the north may have come furs, honey, wax, amber, woollens and other minerals. There was gold in the Grey Mountains (Tolkien, 1954 v. 3 pp. 319-324) – though the presence of dragons would make mining hazardous – and there must have been deposits of tin, copper and silver at various points in the Grey and Misty Mountains. Jet is another possibility together with precious stones such as beryl and semi-precious ones like rock crystal. North of Gondor also lay Khazad-Dûm which had a monopoly on mithril and was very likely a major producer of jewellery, objets d'art and high quality arms. To the east Dorwinion was a major producer of wine and certainly involved in trade (Tolkien, 1937, pp. 176-207), perhaps on a very large scale at certain periods. It probably had links to Gondor, trading in wine, minerals from the enclosed Sea of Rhûn such as alum (very important in dyeing cloth) and products from further afield. Dorwinion's known trade was with the north but it could well also have been the terminus of a 'Silk Road' leading to the Far East. Along this might come fine silk and cotton cloths, carpets, spices, pottery and thoroughbred horses. Southward we read mostly of conflict with Harad but sanctions are a modern idea. In the ancient world even serious political and religious differences usually failed



to prevent trade (Salway, 1981). Gondor's maritime capacity was such that her merchants could even have bypassed the trouble spots to deal with realms further south and unaffected by the territorial ambitions of the Kings. Likely southern products include gold, ivory, gemstones, pearls, ebony and other exotic timbers, dyes and cotton cloth.

All of this makes enticing reading even as a simple list of possibilities and might have had a special niche in Gondor's culture. Just as the voyages of Muslim merchants to the Indian Ocean and Far East inspired the tales of Sinbad the Sailor, so voyages to Farthest Harad or caravans beyond Dorwinion may have inspired adventure tales in Gondor. The truth is, however, that glamorous as long-distance external trade was, it was insignificant next to internal trade, crafts and agriculture in economic terms.

Having considered the general picture, how is it likely to have changed over time? Can we apply concepts of growth and recession to such a confused and undirected economic scene? Although no commentator at the time would have recognised them for what they were, it is likely that fluctuations in the economy did take place. They may have had some impact on the history of Gondor by affecting state revenues and thus the capacity of the government to deal with external threats. In discussions of the ancient economy of Europe certain factors are considered to have allowed growth. These include an increased amount of land being brought under cultivation; a greater population size, with more division of labour and growth in non-agricultural production; higher productivity per head (including the 'peace dividend' of labour available for other purposes which had been directed to the military in wartime). Further, increased government exactions may (within limits) have stimulated productivity, and government expenditure of the money raised by taxation in turn would benefit the economy (Cameron, 1993a). Equally the reverse of these conditions would lead to economic decline.

Can we trace the operation of any of these factors in Gondor? Here we are hampered not only by the sparseness but also by the nature of our evidence. Most of it consists of chronicles and the small remainder is works of history. These focus on politics, mentioning economic

and social matters only in passing, if at all. Interpretation of events, carried out with all due caution, does suggest that Gondor experienced two periods of definite economic growth and two of decline, one far more serious than the other.

The first possible episode of growth lies in the early period, from the foundation of the colonies to the end of the Second Age. The early colonies of the Faithful in this area were on the previously largely uninhabited coast between the mouth of the Morthond and the Ethir Anduin (Tolkien, 1980, pp. 261-265). Quite why this coast was so barren is not at all obvious. The only native tribe we know anything about is that of the Dead Men of Dunharrow. They appear to have had a broadly Iron Age culture with an agricultural base sufficient to support a warrior class and monarchy, and specialist craftsmen. There appears to be no reason why they could not also have occupied the coast. Perhaps differences in soil type, invisible on our maps, combined with constraints of agricultural technique and available crops, prevented permanent settlement on much of the coast. These same areas attracted incoming Númenóreans. Their agriculture was probably rather more advanced than that of the natives, and they may also have relied more on fishing, coming as they did from a nation with a magnificent maritime tradition. The colonies themselves expanded in both territory and population, and may be said to have experienced economic growth. With the appearance of large towns or cities such as Pelargir, it is likely that the population was still increasing and also that there was more craft production and greater division of labour, further pointers to growth in the economy of the colonists. At the same time it is probable that a transformation was occurring within the economies of the native tribes, from a situation where most economic activity was embedded in the social system to one more market-orientated, where coins were used for economic rather than military or political purposes. There may have been a considerable knock-on effect further into the hinterland as these developments interacted with established patterns of trade along Anduin, much as the establishment of Greek colonies affected the Rhône Corridor during our Iron Age (Cunliffe,

1988). Some native tribes may eventually have been subsumed into the Númenórean economic, cultural and even racial sphere: others, like the Dead Men of Dunharrow, remained independent and probably opposed these developments (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 283-304). By the time of the Downfall of Númenor, it is probable that the 'colonial' economy around Belfalas was no longer based on the coast but inland around centres like Pelargir. The natural disasters associated with the Downfall (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 257-282), though doubtless damaging, were therefore not fatal. Shortly afterward the newly founded Kingdom of Gondor was able to undertake a number of large projects such as the construction of Osgiliath, Minas Anor and Minas Ithil, the construction of the road to Arnor (and probably of a seaway through the Ethir Anduin), and also undertook a major series of exploratory voyages. All of this suggests that the economy was healthy and capable of providing considerable tax returns. The various projects may also have acted as stimuli to internal and external trade, and to craft production. Some degree of economic growth may have continued during this period, being stopped only by the War of the Last Alliance.

That conflict ushered in Gondor's first period of economic decline, and was probably one of its major causes. The rich province of Ithilien was lost to Sauron's forces in the early stages of the war, cutting production and revenues of all sorts, and imposing a burden of refugees on the rest of the country at a time of unprecedented needs for labour and supplies for defence.

In all the War of the Last Alliance lasted for thirteen years (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). Gondor had first to defend itself against Sauron's might and then to supply the Host of the Last Alliance. This, one of the largest war hosts ever seen in Middle-earth, was operating in the barren country of Dagorlad and North Mordor and its supplies had to come from Gondor, other lands being too distant. The enormous effort Gondor made in this war seems to have comprehensively disrupted the country in general and must have done serious damage to the economy largely through state intervention in an unfamiliar and inadequately understood area of life. Stagnation at least, and perhaps

actual decline, would result. In stark contrast to the achievements of the last century of the Second Age, nothing worth recording in the chronicles happened in the first four centuries of the Third Age.

The second period of probable economic growth in Gondor is clearer in its effects than the first but more obscure in its causes. After the four blank centuries, Gondor had regained sufficient strength to weather Easterling invasions between 490 and 667 T.A. (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). About a century later the country began to a period of territorial expansion and military activity under the Ship Kings, who reigned between 748 and 1149 T.A. By the end of this period Gondor was at the zenith of its power and had become fabulously wealthy. How did this come about?

It is likely that Gondor's population had been increasing for some time before the beginning of the Ship-King era, and that this was one reason why expansion was seen as desirable at that point in time. The earliest conquests, especially those west of Anduin, were fully integrated into the Kingdom and settled by people of Gondorian blood. At first the new territories would require economic support, perhaps even state sponsorship, but eventually they would become areas of expanding agricultural and craft production. All these factors would promote economic growth. It is possible that if the population had increased to the point that a need for expansion was felt, certain sections of the people might then have been forced to the margins of the traditional economy, resulting in under-employment, poverty and unrest. This problem would be alleviated not only by the settlement of the new territories but by the expansion of the armed forces and the craft production necessary to support them. The resultant higher productivity would also tend to promote growth in the economy, as would demand for increased state revenues to support expanding state activity, as long as this was kept within reasonable bounds. Even external trade may have increased during this period, despite Gondor's attempts at conquest in Harad. The Southron state of Umbar, like its Númenórean predecessor, appears to have been coastal with strong maritime bias, and regarded Gondor with disfavour. Its break-up

would allow Gondor, in the considerable intervals between campaigns, to extend trade routes to areas probably formerly monopolised by merchants of Umbar.

It will be seen from the foregoing that many of the factors we have described as being likely to promote economic growth were active during the Ship-King era. This growth probably continued beyond the end of the period, perhaps by as much as two and a half centuries. The decline in military activity might actually have stimulated the economy by freeing labour for other purposes. It must be said, however, that the chronicles for the reigns following those of the Ship-Kings are particularly contentious, and the 'peace dividend' may well not have been as large as might be suggested at first reading. Nor was this period of growth destined to continue for Gondor stood on the brink of events which would lead to her second and far more serious decline.

The Kinstrife, Gondor's only civil war, officially lasted from 1432-1448 T.A. but discontent had been increasing for some time before hostilities broke out. This must have affected all sectors of the economy: internal trade would be hit by the growing split between rebel-held and loyal provinces: agriculture would suffer from the uncertainties of internal trade, vital in a situation of high regional specialisation: craft production might well increase as supplies were stockpiled for the impending war but any economic benefit from this would be offset by the decline in other areas and disturbances in the taxation system. External trade would be hurt by the general uncertainty and the consequent reluctance of merchants to undertake ventures they might not benefit from. With the outbreak of war the already damaged economy was most probably shattered. The first phase of the conflict lasted five years and was very hard fought as the rightful King, Eldacar, resisted the rebels 'to the end of his strength' (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 324-337). Large parts of Gondor were probably devastated and their population driven to flee, arriving as penniless refugees to strain as yet untouched areas. Internal trade must have been reduced to a meagre trickle, bringing poverty not only to merchants but also to farmers and craftspeople forced to depend only on the most local of markets. With

the country in such a state there would also be a threat of famine and plague.

It would have been difficult for any economy to recover from such a blow. That of Gondor seems to have suffered further from the disinterest of the usurping King who is not recorded as having done anything to mend matters during his ten year reign. Obviously some rebuilding must have taken place or Gondor would simply not have survived. Restoration does not however appear to have been on the scale required to restore the country to its prewar state, let alone its peak. Even the overthrow of the rebels caused further problems. Forced to flee the country, they escaped in numbers (and with the whole of the navy) and were able to take Umbar and the adjacent conquered areas for themselves. Gondor faced an unprecedented threat from the South at the very time when the country could least afford to increase defence spending. Over the following reigns Gondor regained a good deal of strength but it is likely that economic recovery lagged behind political recovery. It is probable also that the country was in a very fragile state, vulnerable to further blows. There were to be plenty of these in store.

Umbar remained a menace no matter what was done, draining money and manpower as the state fought to destroy the Corsairs – or at least hold them off. The threat to the south coast may have led to an absolute decrease in cultivated land and a still larger drop in agricultural productivity, as land use was altered to reduce the risk of possible loss of life and liberty from pirate attacks. Craft production may also have been affected, particularly in the salt industry while the loss of Gondor's command of the sea would hit both internal and external trade. There was at least one major epidemic, the Great Plague of 1636 TA which must have had a considerable (if perhaps temporary) effect. All of these factors strongly suggest that whatever economic growth had taken place after the Kinstrife would eventually slow, stop, and turn into decline. Whenever it started, this decline lasted for the rest of the Third Age.

During the last millennium of the Third Age, Gondor's population was falling in numbers for reasons now inexplicable (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 324-337), leading to a drop in

productivity, trade and revenues. The country suffered actual losses of territory: Calenardhon was ceded to the Eötheod by treaty in 2510 TA, becoming Rohan, while Ithilien was gradually abandoned (though still officially Gondorian land) in the face of the mounting threat from Mordor (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). External trade probably declined almost to nothing in the face of continued upheavals in the lands beyond Gondor. Internal trade probably fared much better, but must eventually have suffered. The decline also seems to have led to the gradual loss of knowledge in certain areas of craft production as no-one could pay for expensive techniques any more. None of this would do anything but encourage continuing decline. It is very doubtful that the state could have done anything about this at all, but the failure of the Line of Anárion and its replacement by the compromise of the Stewardship may not have helped matters. The effectiveness of the Stewards varied wildly. Under an ever weakening central authority Gondor, while officially one nation, slid towards becoming a federation of provinces whose Lords probably had less understanding of the situation and less ability to do anything about it than their nominal ruler. Though deeply in trouble, Gondor survived to the end of the Third Age, and may

just have begun to recover in the early Fourth. The restoration of the Kingship, the reunification with Arnor and the general political change brought about by Sauron's fall, could have allowed the decline to bottom out and have provided the necessary stimulus to promote growth.

Comparison of what we know of Gondor with the models used for the ancient (or classical period) European economy makes it very probable that Gondor did have an economy of similar type. It also suggests where some differences may lie, relative to the importance of trade in the two situations. The models are moreover useful since they can be applied to known events to produce a picture of Gondor's economic state at one time and can produce reasonable economic explanations for the causes of subsequent events. Economic history does not give us a whole picture, any more than any other kind does, but it gives us a different view of Gondor and takes us a little way behind the chronicles and King-lists into everyday life. My version is plausible but is it accurate? That, alas, we shall never know. Someone else could reconstruct matters a different way – and I would enjoy their article just as much as I hope they have enjoyed this one.

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## John Ellison

The publications of Tolkien-based organizations outside Britain display, at their best, a seriousness of approach and a sense of identification with the scholarly and creative aims of Tolkien himself, which it is not always easy to find at home, unless a special event or an anniversary, such as the Tolkien Centenary Conference of 1992, occurs to act as an inspiration for and concentration of, contributors' efforts. The itimes reviewed here do indeed stem from events of such special nature, and bear witness to the forethought and thoroughness of the organizers. This is notably so with *Scholarship and Fantasy*, the proceedings of the centenary *conversazione* held at Turku, Finland, in May 1992, under the title of "The Tolkien Phenomenon". The fifteen papers presented comprise a wide variety of ways of approach to "The Phenomenon", and generally, though not invariably, succeed in tempering scholarship with readability.

The symposium opens, appropriately, with two papers devoted to Tolkien's interest in, and relationship with, Finnish language and literature, the latter as represented by "The Kalevala", the first (Luigi de Anna) in fairly general terms, the second (Helena Rautala) examining the relationship of Quenya with Finnish itself. If the detailed evidence presented here is matter for linguists, the main conclusion, that the relationship of the two languages is one borne of similarity of sound and Tolkien's delight in playing with the actual sound of words

rather than of familiarity with spoken Finnish, has wide implications in relation to his employment of both real and invented language in the colour and texture of his narrative. "We have to be glad," the author drily observes, "that Tolkien probably never heard Finnish spoken." If the evidence for a close relationship of Quenya with Finnish is slight, she concludes, it is at least possible that a "Finnish" language actually existed in Middle-earth in some region before Elves settled it, and contributed to the evolution of Quenya itself in the region where it was spoken. So one more distant, unexplored "vista" is opened at the outer fringes of Tolkien's world.

From Linguistics to archaeology, and the Tolkien Society itself goes in to bat as Christina Scull citing numerous and varied examples in our own world, discusses ways in which places and sites in Middle-earth recall sites and monuments in Britain, and in Europe, and most particularly in Egypt (of which Tolkien clearly had considerable knowledge, though he seems never to have visited it). Influences and reminiscences such as these, and the sense of the familiar that the descriptions of the comparable sites in Middle-earth set up in the mind of the reader contribute powerfully to the solidity and realism in depth which Middle-earth presents to us.

Anders Stenström (alias Beregon) follows with an analysis of the references to "giants" in Tolkien's works, and ends by putting up an interesting case for regarding Giants as real

inhabitants of his world, and not just as a figure of speech adopted by him in describing the storm encountered by Bilbo, Gandalf and the dwarves in their passage of the Misty Mountains. The appearance seen by Hal Gamgee, as discussed by Samwise at "The Ivy Bush" was thus a "giant", properly so called. Verlyn Flieger continues on a related theme in tracing the origin of the Ents, and Treebeard, from the Old English word for "giant" via *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* whose description in the poem has echoes of Tolkien's description of Treebeard, and also via the Green Man, "Jack in the Green", of medieval folklore and art.

Flieger subtitles her paper "Scholarship and Invention in Tolkien's Fiction", and the relationship of Tolkien's imaginative fiction to his scholarship is a major recurrent theme binding together a number of papers in this collection. A central one is "Tolkien as Anglo-Saxonist" (Paul Bibire), which examines in detail the process through which his scholarly and philological interests became transmuted into the language of story. This is an important paper, and its author's skill as expounder enables him to make his argument and conclusion readable and appreciable by such a non-linguist and non-specialist as the present writer. The same author contributes a rather less rewarding analysis of "Recurrent Imagery and Narrative Pattern in *The Hobbit*"; of course these are present, but over-elaboration has perhaps obscured the point at issue.

A different aspect of Tolkien's approach to his sources is explored by Clive Tolley in "Tolkien and the Unfinished", which argues from three instances – the name Eärendel, the character of Unferth in *Beowulf*, and character and plot development in the novels of Rider Haggard – that an essential part of Tolkien's method is to derive and develop character and situation from models that in themselves seem unexplained or incomplete. The concluding thought here, that Tolkien's fascination with the fragmentary, and the unexplained is reflected in the unfinished state of many of his own works, might well provide material for many a late-night debate.

Quite clearly it is not possible to summarise or indicate the content and conclusions of every one of the papers printed here, and one or two of

them, of a specialist, for instance a sociological, bent (V. Viemerö) on "Violence and Fantasy", may strike most interested readers of Tolkien as somewhat peripheral. However, the breadth and variety of the content of this symposium will be evident from the above. The final paper will "need no introduction", for those who attended the Oxford Centenary Conference, for it is Tom Shippey's paper on "Tolkien as a Post-War Writer", that was such a key event then. It will be appearing, in any case, in the *Proceedings* of that conference to be issued under the joint auspices of our Society and the Mythopoeic Society, and so it need only be said that in its relating Tolkien's writing to the events of his time, and to those of his contemporaries who, like him derived their own conceptions of good and evil from their experience of those events, it proves to be the most original and thought-provoking piece of Tolkien criticism to appear for quite a number of years.

*A Tribute to J.R.R. Tolkien*, published by the Medieval Association of the University of South Africa, likewise presents the proceedings of a centenary conference, although one organized on a more intimate, perhaps less ambitious scale. There are seven papers, together with a documentary transcript, of a broadcast from South African Radio, and a panel discussion. The content of the papers leans very much towards the "literary" rather than the "linguistic" aspect of Tolkien's writings, and leaves a generally slighter impression; they are all worth reading to some extent, but at times seem to traverse ground already well covered in the Tolkien Society's and other publications. An essay on Old and Middle English alliterative metre as the foundation of Tolkien's "high" prose style (or are there more than one?) (Elizabeth Burroughs), argues its case closely, but perhaps could have carried more conviction if more specific examples had been quoted. It is of the essence of the author's case that the "alliterative metre" of Tolkien's prose is most apparent when it is read aloud, but I am not sure (as having read the whole of *The Lord of the Rings* aloud) that the instance chiefly relied on, Gandalf's confrontation of the Lord of the Nazgûl at the gate of Minas Tirith, is sufficiently convincing on its own.

A central place in this collection is taken by Galadriel, as represented by Lesley Marx "The Mirror of Galadriel – Some Reflections". The starting point here is the author's concern to rebut criticism to the effect that Galadriel, as a piece of characterization, is not readily believable, but the essay veers off into a discussion of Galadriel's symbolic and universal attributes, which, although the author does not say it, in effect makes her into a personification of Goethe's "the eternal feminine". The charge that Galadriel is not established clearly enough as a character is not squarely faced. However, there are some useful insights here, if the reader can restrain irritation at the author's habit (infuriatingly common in scholarly papers) of quoting obscure references as though everyone should recognise them. "As Josephine Bloggs says in her important and seminal paper on . . .," is the kind of gambit that lead the cynical reader to suspect that an authorial "fast one" is being pulled.

Arthur Morgan in "Medieval, Victorian, and Modern; Tolkien, Wagner and the Ring" attempts to revive a relationship that most people see as tenuous or non-existent. It isn't a rewarding field, certainly if one persists in regarding the libretti, the texts of Wagner's operas, as self-contained wholes, as those who mention or write about Wagner in relation to Tolkien generally seem to do, and as the author does here. There are the likenesses arising from common subject-matter, of course, but the resemblances between the two Rings, in their symbolism and modes of operation, really spring from Tolkien and Wagner sharing themes, such as "all power tehts to corrupt", which were very much of their own time. Tolkien went to performances occasionally; what were his reactions to the music?, that is what it would really be interesting to know. The same author contributes a rather more rewarding essay on the significance of the "voyage over sea" in Tolkien's writings, and rightly stresses the ambiguity of the ending in relation to it. It is an interesting point that while the voyage *westwards*, symbolising transcendence of time and death, is a familiar concept in Tolkien's world, the voyage *eastwards*, as with Fëanor returning to Middle-earth from the Undying Lands, and ever more so with the Númenóreans,

especially Aldarion, exploring and later dominating the coasts of Middle-earth, corresponds to it in symbolising the desire for worldly empire and economic and political success.

This collection also comprises an introductory essay summarising Tolkien's place in the literature of fantasy and the particular nature of his appeal within that tradition, and two others, respectively on "*Smith of Wootton Mayor* in its relationship to the "folk-fairytale", and on "*Leaf by Niggle*". Finally, besides the radio script and panel discussion already mentioned, there is a particular pleasure in a foreword by Priscilla Tolkien which says a great deal within a small compass.

The last of these collections differs from the others in that it does not stand on its own, but represents a single volume in an ongoing series; the tenth already of "Inklings", the principal German literary society devoted, not only to Tolkien but also to C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and other related figures, together with forerunners such as George Macdonald or G.K. Chesterton. This particular volume is a specialist Tolkien production, however, in that it consists, essentially, of the proceedings of the centenary conference of "Inklings", held at Aachen in January 1992. These are bilingual, the content of the papers in German being briefly summarised in English and vice versa; post-paper discussions are also briefly reported. In fact well over half the material is in English; this reviewer's German is unequal to the task of elucidating the content of the rest of it in detail, though he may sometimes catch the general drift.

Some of the papers in this collection suffer from the failing, not at all uncommon in academic publications of the "heavier sort", of pretentiousness. The large spaces of every academic publication have to be filled up somehow or other, and it often seems that there is more vacant space to be occupied than there is, at any one time, enough genuinely original and important work to fill it. A paper enticingly titled "Bilbo Baggins as a Burglar" quite reasonably infers that Bilbo's usefulness to the dwarves was not really that of a "burglar" but as a "decoder of signs", i.e. an interpreter of evidence (for instance, Thorin's map, and the discovery of the

secret entrance to the mountain). Fine, but this really just amounts to saying that Bilbo is much more intelligent than the dwarves – which is obvious enough anyway. D.L. Dodds “Magic in the Myths of J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams” discusses the relationship of magic and technology in Tolkien’s world, and the limitations placed by him on the former, and contrasts the respective attitudes of Tolkien and Williams to ritual “magic” in their personal lives – total rejection by the former, welcoming by the latter. The reported discussion following this paper amplifies it usefully.

The collection is worth seeking out for the papers by Verlyn Fliieger and Clive Tolley. The former in “Time and Dream”, analyses Tolkien’s treatment of dream as a structural principle, first of all in *The Lost Road* and then on a fully worked out basis in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien rejected the use of dream simply as a “framing device” (as in *Alice in Wonderland*; for him its essence lay outside physical time, and its significance lay in its enabling Audoin, Alboin, and most of all Frodo, to look backwards, forwards, and at the present, in one view, as with the visions in the Mirror of Galadriel, and as we do ourselves when we reread *The Lord of the Rings*. The author may be read as implying that the readers power of simultaneous vision, explains, at least partly, how one can read and reread it and always experience it anew. Tolley in “Tolkien’s ‘Essay on Man’; a look at ‘Mythopoeia’” looks at the sources of Tolkien’s thought in that poem, an important one being, at first surprisingly, Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man*, the former, it seems, contributing not merely to the thought, but also to the phraseology of “Mythopoeia”. Once again we catch a glimpse of Tolkien reading intensely, if critically, in a field in which he is assumed to have no interest. Tolley’s essay concludes with a consideration of the influence of the ideas of Owen Barfield, much better known as embodied in the latter’s *Poetic Diction*, on the poem “Mythopoeia”.

Amid the somewhat rarefied atmosphere of this collection as a whole Alex Lewis strikes a refreshingly down-to-earth note with “Boromir’s Journey”, an enterprising piece of detective work in which he looks for a convincing explanation for Boromir’s loss of his horse at Tharbad, on his way to Rivendell; Éomer later reported that the horse, lent to Boromir in Rohan, subsequently returned riderless. The suggested solution is that Saruman, having been “tipped off” by Wormtongue, who had just heard the prophesy “Seek for the Sword that was broken” related by Boromir during the latter’s stay at Edoras, followed after Boromir and “spooked” (or as P.G. Wodehouse would have put it, “nobbled”) the horse when he came within range (as he may have done with Arod and Hasufel by the camp on the edge of Fangorn).

Most ingenious. But there are some questions that suggest themselves. How did Saruman catch up with Boromir, and hadn’t he taken quite a risk in venturing so far from home? And if he did possess this remarkable power, why did he not make more extensive use of it, say, to immobilise any Riders of Rohan that he could get within his range? The striking aspect of Alex Lewis’s essay is the contrast it presents not merely with the other papers in this collection, but with almost all of those in the other two reviewed here. It is, in other words, a typical example of the “Middle-earth-treated-as-a-real-world” type of approach. The three conferences concerned all took place outside the British Isles; the great majority, if not all, of the papers presented were the work of non-British scholars. The immediate explanation might seem to lie in the anti-Tolkien bias of the intellectual “establishment” in this country; but is it an entirely complete or satisfactory one? Might there not be something specifically British about the tendency of so many of us to adopt and exploit the “real-world” convention? A preference, perhaps, for the practical and concrete over the theoretical and speculative which Tolkien would have understood, and of which he might even have approved?



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## *Tolkien's Ring* by David Day

Illustrated by Alan Lee HarperCollins, 1994, £17.99

Reviewed by Rikki Breem

It was once said that there are no new tales, and that all have grown from earlier ones. Such tales also appear to know no frontiers or distances, as study of Lang's *Fairy Books* clearly illustrates. Although names and situations are altered between countries and regions the basics are clearly recognisable: thus parts of the history of Siegfried and Brünnhilde appear in *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, while their daughter Aslauga's story becomes that of *Donkey Skin* and *Cinderella*.

Since the first appearance of *The Lord of the Rings* readers have been happily exercised in the process of recognition of various elements – mostly for their own private interest, but occasionally for discussion or publication. The latest offering is David Day's *Tolkien's Ring* – an attractively packaged book, illustrated by Alan Lee, which the author describes as 'a kind of literary detective's casebook that amounts to an investigation of the imagination of J.R.R. Tolkien' in which 'the symbol of the Ring is of primary importance'. A mighty and challenging task, indeed!

The opening chapters present references to various appearances of Rings throughout history and mythology, in addition to the known reasons why Tolkien embarked upon his monumental task, and a discussion of his intentions regarding 'a mythology for England', a premise which, I confess, has always slightly baffled me. Subsequently we are offered a quick canter through a number of the better known myths and legends of Europe, the Classical and Biblical lands, and the Orient, plus a brief survey of Alchemy, and Wagner's great music drama.

Most of these involve a Ring or Rings, at some stage, but I feel that few merit the constant appellation of 'Ring Quest', which suggests a dominant theme throughout a given work. Spasmodically references are made to *The Lord of the Rings*, and possible inspiration for individual characters and events, but frequently the author indulges in a simple re-telling of the story in hand. The final chapter discusses the thorny questions of allegory and contemporary influences, particularly in relation to the works of Tolkien and Wagner, and draws a few brief conclusions to this very uneven study.

I observed a number of errors and omissions scattered throughout. Gudrun's attempted suicide in the *Volsungasaga* is left as apparently successful, whereas she survived to marry again, which resulted in further disasters. It is possible that 'Weiland', 'Reisenheim' and 'Woten' are versions of these names that I have not previously encountered, or they may be printer's errors, but the son of Sigmund and Signy was named Sinfjotli and not 'Sifjolti'.

Alan Lee's unlisted illustrations, both coloured and black-and-white, are, for the most part, extremely evocative, and occasionally, perhaps inevitably, they present pleasant reminders of Arthur Rackham and Fritz Lang.

It is undeniably useful to have these tales and themes grouped together for quick reference but, even though this work is obviously aimed at a popular market, a basic list of sources would not come amiss, and an index should have been regarded as a necessity. A really scholarly study in this field is sadly lacking, and I view this publication as a woefully missed opportunity.

## *The War of the Jewels* J. R. R. Tolkien

The Later Silmarillion Part Two:  
The Legends of Beleriand.  
(The History of Middle-earth XI)

Edited by Christopher Tolkien. HarperCollins, 1994. £25.

Reviewed by Charles Noad

The latest volume of the "History of Middle-earth" is complementary to its predecessor, *Morgoth's Ring*: whereas that dealt mainly with the part of the Mythology set in the Far West, in Valinor, the present one concentrates on the later part of the history of the Elder Days as it passed in Beleriand. This difference in setting marks a more profound contrast: the former volume, being much involved with the nature of the Valar and of their (sub)creations, reflected Tolkien's attempts, having written *The Lord of the Rings* and been prompted by that experience to look at much of his mythological invention from a new angle, to make of his Mythology a coherent whole, and so had much "deep" matter in it; the present volume, however, being mainly concerned with the history of Elves and Men in Beleriand, is set on a much more down-to-earth level, altogether on a more human scale. Since at least one item here, "The Wanderings of Húrin", could be considered as a heroic legend written in a much more contemporary style than that kind of thing usually was, it may well be that another reaction to having written *The Lord of the Rings* was for Tolkien to try his hand at telling some of the *legendarium* in a direct third-person way rather than as an oft-told saga; but we shall come back to the "Wanderings".

As with the previous volume, the actual writing took place over two periods: the early 1950s, when *The Lord of the Rings* had been completed but not yet published, and the late 1950s (although some of the latest writings, on Maeglin, are as late as the early 1970s – just

about the time, in fact, when the Tolkien Society was getting under way). As Christopher Tolkien notes, the early 1950s saw Tolkien embark upon an astonishing number of new works – embark, but mostly fail to complete. One feels that his creative energies began to desert him just at the time when they were most needed if *The Silmarillion*, at least on the scale envisioned, were ever to be completed. One might go further: that work could have best been brought to completion just at the time when *The Lord of the Rings* itself was taking up Tolkien's energies. Maybe in some hypothetical "parallel world", readers of Tolkien concentrate most of their attention on the magnificent achievement of *The Silmarillion*, published by George Allen & Unwin in the mid-fifties after they had asked Tolkien to complete it instead of a *Hobbit*-sequel in the late 1930s, and are only just now coming to grips with the uncompleted but highly interesting attempts at the sequel that he spent his latter years on... Perhaps the creation of a great work was a deed that, like Fëanor, he could "accomplish but once only"; and having made the one he had not enough energy left for the other. Perhaps.

Part One of *The War of the Jewels* consists of *The Grey Annals*, the counterpart of *The Annals of Aman*, and the final elaboration of *The Annals of Beleriand*. As with the other work, these Annals begin in an annalistic enough way but soon work themselves into the style of the *Quenta Silmarillion* proper. They end with the death of Túrin. The account of Túrin in the *Annals* is actually based on the latter part of the

*Narn i Chîn Húrin*, albeit fairly compressed. As Christopher Tolkien points out, and as is indeed apparent from the material written at the time, the fates of Húrin and his wife and children came to occupy a central place in Tolkien's thoughts, and became a subject on which he wrote at considerable length: witness the number of references in the present volume to "the vast assembly of the *Narn* papers". The many changes in names, motive, geography and chronology in *The Grey Annals*, so inevitable a part of Tolkien's revised or rewritten texts, are traced in detail.

Part Two, containing *The Later Quenta Silmarillion*, largely consists of notes showing alterations from the version given in Volume V of the "History" rather than a complete text. The second map of Beleriand is again reproduced, this time with Tolkien's later alterations, together with a detailed commentary on the significance of those changes.

One part of the text of the latest version of *QS* which is given in full is "Of the Naugrim and the Edain", which provides much new information concerning the Dwarves, for example, the remarkable fact that both male and female Dwarves are bearded from the beginning of their lives. This leads to some interesting speculations. Given that Aulë made the Dwarves, beards and all, the way he did, "after the pattern of the designs of Ilúvatar" [for the Children], and that the Valar themselves were self-incarnated after these same patterns, one begins to wonder just what the Valar, including the female ones, really looked like at first: the implications are alarming...

Also given in full is "Of the Coming of Men into the West", which is accompanied by detailed genealogical tables of the Houses of Men. The later chapters of *QS*, from the story of Beren and Lúthien, had virtually no more work done on them at all, so leaving uncompleted and unknown Tolkien's final intentions about the end of the Elder Days. And, of course, this latest version retains the Pengolod/Ælfwine framing device.

Part Three contains the long and hitherto unknown narrative, "The Wanderings of Húrin", together with a few other pieces which, in

varying degrees, went to form part of the published *Silmarillion* or *Unfinished Tales*.

"The Wanderings of Húrin", which had started as a continuation of *The Grey Annals* following the death of Túrin, marks a new departure for Tolkien, in that it is for the most part written as a direct third-person narrative in a "non-epic" style. As might be expected, it ends in ruin and bloodshed, but that is not the main point. It is a new departure not only in that it is not written in his characteristic "high" style (the example *par excellence* of a narrative written in just such a style is "Of Tuor and his Coming to Gondolin" given in *Unfinished Tales* – this reviewer could wish that Tolkien had spent rather more time on Tuor than on Túrin), but neither is it quite the kind of narrative in which much of *The Lord of the Rings* is written, which is ostensibly third-person, but drawing its perspective from the fact that most of its scenes are witnessed through the eyes of one or another hobbit. (For that matter, even *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers* have such autobiographical overtones as to make them virtually first-person, certainly not the objective third-person of the "Wanderings".) Undoubtedly the experience of writing the sustained, close narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* had suggested the possibility of reworking some of the First-Age material into a similar form, and "Wanderings", so far as it goes, is the result. But, in this reviewer's opinion, the result is of questionable value. There are certainly some very fine moments, such as the reunion of Húrin and Eðelwen, but because it is neither epic, nor quasi-first-person, the narrative seems somehow to lack a real focus, and probably represents a direction which it would scarcely have been profitable for Tolkien (or his readers) to pursue.

"Ælfwine and Dírhaval", intended as an introductory note to the *Narn*, is a discussion of that work's authorship and transmission. Apart from being a useful reminder that Tolkien's creative activity was not simply a matter of telling tales but of the production of the *texts* of those tales, with all that is implied about their origin and transmission and so forth, it also shows that he was very much aware of the fact that any scene or piece of narrative must, ultimately, have been witnessed by a person who

was there at the time – although, of course, it can be a long trail from witness to first text (“This is the account of the Battle of Bywater as it was seen in his youth by Hildegrim Goatleaf, who told it in his age to his grandson Saradoc, who recounted it for his nephew Halfred, who devoted some pages to recording this recollection in his private diary, which volume was passed on to Mardil the King’s Scribe, who made use of it in his *History of the Halflings...*”). Someone has to have been there.

“Maeglin” discusses the late texts from which the chapter in the published *Silmarillion* was derived. Here, as elsewhere, as one reads of the numerous editorial decisions as to what to leave in or out of the published work, or what to change slightly, one becomes conscious of the sometimes synthetic nature of parts of that work. Given the aim of producing a single, coherent chronicle out of a multiplicity of largely unfinished and often inconsistent texts, then an editorial synthesis is the inevitable result; but, given such a state of the texts, the validity of such an undertaking may well be questioned. We shall return to this subject.

“The Tale of Years” reviews the short chronologies Tolkien made for the events of the Elder Days. Where these extend to its end they give what turns out to be the sole indication of his thoughts on the detailed history of the very last years of the First Age. In an accompanying note, the making of *The Silmarillion* is again brought into question, as here Christopher Tolkien reviews the problems – due mainly to having to bring together a number of different and irreconcilable accounts – of constructing the chapter “Of the Ruin of Doriath”, and considers that the difficulties he found could have been overcome “without so far overstepping the bounds of the editorial function” that he believes he did at the time.

Part Four, *Quendi and Eldar*, a detailed linguistic analysis of the names for the different types of Elves in the various Elven languages, may well lie outside the range of most readers of this book, but even if, like the present reviewer, your bent is not towards the technical analysis of Tolkien’s languages, this essay presents proof enough of the depth and intensity of the linguistic fundamentals that underpinned the

Mythology from the earliest times – in a way, what it is really all about. Even for nonlinguists, it helps makes the Mythology just that bit more real: for example, the variety of the ancient Elvish words for fear and horror that were inspired by the dreadful shapes that haunted their earliest habitations near Cuiviénen lends a kind of chilling reality to the historical experience of the Elves hardly possible to appreciate through narrative alone. Not just the Elves: when we learn here of the sign-language of the Dwarves as well as their short-sightedness (has Dwarvish myopia ever been mentioned before?), we know them just that bit better than hitherto. But it is important to appreciate, too, that Tolkien was almost certainly not striving for such an effect when he wrote this: the “effect” was already there in the linguistics, and he was simply objectively recording it.

Tolkien’s linguistic invention at this stage took a new turn in that he now considered the language of the Valar, formerly taken to be the root and ultimate ancestor of all other tongues, to be something wholly distinct. In a “Note on the ‘Language of the Valar’”, Tolkien comments on what scant information Pengolodh was able to gather on it. To the Eldar, it sounded like “the glitter of swords, like the rush of leaves in a great wind or the fall of stones in the mountains.” To Elvish ears the effect was “not pleasing”, and remained something wholly alien to their own speech. “Valarin” had its origins when the Valar became self-incarnated in Arda: they still retained their ability to communicate by thought alone, but now that they had taken on organic, physical form they decided to adopt methods of communication more natural for such creatures: in taking on matter they took on language, a process which leads one to the conclusion that language is itself but a substitute for direct mind-to-mind communication, and approaches excellence only in so far as it approaches that original communion of thought. One would like to know a good deal more about this most primal of Tolkienian tongues. The *Lambengolmor* will love all this.

Also in this part is an interesting note to the effect that the *Ainulindalë* is what might be termed an anthropomorphic account of the Creation. Just as the angel Raphael, in *Paradise Lost*, tells Adam that his account of the war in

Heaven will be in terms he can understand and much removed from the celestial reality (“. . . what surmounts the reach/ Of human sense, I shall delineate so/ By lik’ning spiritual to corporal forms,/ As may express them best...”), thus the account of the Creation (and before) furnished by the Valar to the Elves is translated from the scarcely-imaginable truth into more familiar terms, “according to our modes of thought and our imagination of the visible world, in symbols that were intelligible to us.” After all, neither the Valar nor Eru himself could really be thought to have had eyes or bodies or limbs or mouths and so forth; but there was no other way that the Valar could get across to the Eldar even a faint idea of what had really happened; and indeed, one could speculate that having taken on organic form, perhaps even the Valar themselves were no longer quite able to grasp what they had once experienced. Again, too, this is an instance of the fact that any scene or action, even if it took place before the world began, must have had its witnesses.

Finally, as an appendix to *Quendi and Eldar*, there is the fascinating legend of “The Awakening of the Quendi”. Here we see the first leaders of the three Elven kindreds awaken, along with their spouses, in a green dell, then encountering other groups of Elves awakening in groves and dells round about, and choosing which ones they want as their followers. It is not readily ascertainable that the first Three, Imin, Tata and Enel can be identified with Ingwë, Finwë and Elwë, but that probably is not the intention, as the idea is that the story is more to do with the origin of Elvish numerals than an attempt at serious history. Even so, it remains the only direct glimpse we have of the very beginning of the Elves.

One of the recurrent themes in the editorial matter of this book, one which has figured largely in both this and the previous volume, has been the reservations expressed by Christopher Tolkien over the compilation of the published *Silmarillion*. The implication (to this reviewer) is that so many editorial decisions had to be made, and so much textual reconstruction for the sake of consistency carried out, sometimes with material whose significance was not fully

understood at the time, that the resulting text was in some places little more than an artificial construct, possibly having little to do with Tolkien’s (albeit often enough unformulated) intentions. Yet *any* kind of “reconstruction” of the text of *The Silmarillion* must pose extraordinarily difficult problems. If it had been published as originally intended, that is, each section or chapter given in its latest form, but with notes and commentary describing its history and evolution, then we should have had a single, very thick volume, with no further likelihood of a fuller exposition on a larger scale, i.e., the “History”. Given that the choice was made to present an edited single-text version with no editorial apparatus, then it was inevitable that some extremely difficult and uncertain decisions should have had to be made at the time; and given several years’ further acquaintance with what by any standards is a massive and complex accumulation of textual remnants, then it is hardly surprising that there should be second thoughts, however carefully and competently the task was carried out the first time. Yet the question remains, just what should have been done with the “Silmarillion” material following Tolkien’s death? Without question, something had to be published sometime. The present reviewer is old enough, and has been a Tolkien-fan long enough, to remember well the excruciating anticipation with which *The Silmarillion* was awaited during Tolkien’s latter years, by which time it had become widely known that he was indeed working (and had been for a long time) on the high matter of the Elder Days. So when he died leaving it uncompleted (and, as we now know, very far from completion), something had to be done.

At the time then, although a large “historical” presentation was initially contemplated, nothing on the scale or level of detail of “The History of Middle-earth” was (it is presumed) envisaged. And therein, perhaps, lies the problem. Now that so much of the “History” has been brought out, it is quite obvious that only publication on that kind of scale can do justice to Tolkien’s mythological invention, given the absence of his arriving at a final fixed form; one can, indeed, go just a bit further and say that the form of the “History” is the only way that such material can be presented in any

case. For that matter, now that we have to hand most of the “Silmarillion” material available, it should not be beyond the power of more devoted readers to construct their own version.

One thing which this reviewer believes that the “History” has accomplished to a far greater extent than would have been possible with a single-volume *Silmarillion* is the alteration in perspective on Tolkien’s creation. Before the “History”, the view probably of most of his readers was very much (and quite properly and understandably) *Lord of the Rings*-centred. But for anyone who has ploughed through (not said disparagingly; but the “History” can hardly be

described as “light reading”) the “History”, that perspective must be altered: *The Silmarillion* was always at the heart of the *legendarium*, and any true understanding of Tolkien must begin with that; “the Silmarils are in my heart.”

Christopher Tolkien has, as with all the previous volumes in the series, carried out the task of bringing order and coherence to the constituent texts with an unfailing attention to detail, and an outstanding ability to render the complex textual and narrational evolution of those texts with as much clarity as can well be done. We are all, once more, greatly in his debt.

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## J.I.M. Stewart, J.B. Timbermill and J.R.R. Tolkien

Jessica Yates

It was in 1976 that, scanning the *Times Literary Supplement*, my eye was caught by the name ‘Tolkien’ in a book review which otherwise might still have interested me, as it was a novel set in Oxford, *A Memorial Service*. The eye-catching sentence was:

Back in Oxford, Pattullo is among old friends, among them his former tutor J.B. Timbermill, a Tolkien-like figure, more isolated than ever, a nocturnal wanderer of Oxford’s lanes .....

I set off to the library for the book, third in what would become a sequence of five books by J.I.M. Stewart, who died on Saturday 12th November 1994.

The main story, told in the first person, is about Duncan Pattullo, who went up to Oxford in the 1940s just after World War II, and then became a playwright. He returns to his old college (never named, but modelled on Christ Church) 25 years after going down, for a Gaudy, or reunion of former students, meets his former fellow-undergraduates and tutors, and is offered

a five-year fellowship to lecture on Modern Drama – the chance to return to university life.

In *Pattullo*, Stewart has varied the facts, and chronology of his own life. Both are Scottish, and like *Pattullo*, Stewart went up to Oxford from school in Edinburgh, but as he was born in 1906 (one generation after Tolkien) he would have gone up to Oxford in 1924 or 1925 in order to gain his first-class degree in English in 1928. *Pattullo* also reads English, at an unnamed college modelled on Christ Church. Stewart, however went up to Oriel College, and became a Student (i.e. Fellow) of Christ Church in 1949, with posts in other universities, both after his graduation and appointment as Student, and also subsequently. So his close association with Christ Church came about shortly after *Pattullo* is supposed to have gone up as an undergraduate in about 1946. Was Stewart actually tutored by Tolkien as an undergraduate between 1925 and 1928? Although the dates are not impossible, there is no evidence for this in Stewart’s autobiography *Myself and Michael Innes*, and correspondence with Stewart’s family confirms

this. However, their time at Oxford did overlap. Tolkien came back from Leeds in 1925-6 to take up his professorship in Oxford; Stewart's first academic job was to lecture – in Leeds! – from 1930 to 1935, from whence he moved to Adelaide and Belfast, returning to Oxford in 1949 – in time to witness the academic furore over the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* by his colleague.

At least one other (minor) character is based upon a real person. Without inside knowledge I cannot determine whether any of the other characters are; since several of them are guilty of idiocy or immorality, probably not. If the originals were still alive they might recognise themselves! Stewart is quite clearly in sympathy with Tolkien – the real Tolkien – but deploys a caricature of Tolkien as one of a group of eccentric Oxford dons who range through his novel sequence. All are fairly obsessive and neglect “real” life and take leave of common sense in order to pursue their academic careers and/or hobby-horses.

The tale of how the friendships and enmities made in youth are resolved in middle-age is fascinating, but we must here concentrate on the character of J.B. Timbermill, whose name must immediately suggest “J.R.R. Tolkien” (the lover of trees and old mills). This character, however, is deliberately at variance with many facts of Tolkien's life, with significant differences chosen on purpose to prove that Timbermill is not Tolkien under a pseudonym, and Stewart is not satirising the real Tolkien, but perhaps ridi-culing those who imagine that the real Tolkien was an absent-minded bachelor who lived in an attic surrounded by thousands of books and a collection of Anglo-Saxon potsherds. Until the publication of Carpenter's *Biography* in 1977, most of Tolkien's readers knew little of his life, but Stewart as an Oxford don himself, knew more than most. This, after all, is the J.I.M Stewart quoted in Carpenter's *Biography* (from an early newspaper interview) as saying “He could turn a lecture room into a

mead hall in which he was the bard and we were the feasting, listening guests”.

In the first book of the sequence, *The Gaudy*, Pattullo recalls his encounters with Timbermill:

I myself ... had for a time absorbed myself in the pursuit of mere-dragons, marsh-steppers, eldritch wives, whales, whales, loathly worms and argumentative nightingales and owls.

In the second book, *Young Pattullo*, he describes his first year at Oxford. When Pattullo meets Timbermill<sup>1</sup> face to face he feels that there is something “preternatural” about him and that he

might be in the presence of a mage or wizard in disguise ... The posts which in a prosaic and utilitarian way held up the roof might have been dead timber in some sacred grove which a magic stronger than its own had blasted; the tunnel-like openings beneath the eaves and gables of the big house were as glades and ridings in a forest haunted by trolls and norms ...

Pattullo begins to call him “the Wizard of the North” (a title I think which originates with Sir Walter Scott), and discovers that when he gets his essays back, Timbermill had been doodling on them. Years later, an American university offers to buy them from Pattullo “for a large sum of money”, an offer he declines. “I was witnessing the birth, or the first dim movement in the night of their forbeing, of the presence one day to haunt *The Magic Quest*.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the matter of *The Silmarillion* would have been in existence in the late 1920s, but Stewart wouldn't have known about it then; however, *The Magic Quest* is clearly meant to represent *The Lord of the Rings* which hadn't been thought of at that time.

In the third book, *A Memorial Service*, Pattullo meets Timbermill again, now about 75, “an authority of the first eminence in his field”, and the author of the famed *Magic Quest*. Pattullo informs us that Timbermill has private

<sup>1</sup> From the university directory Pattullo learns that Timbermill is “M.A., D.Litt., F.B.A., (Balliol, New College, Merton), 20 Linton Road”. Interesting: Tolkien didn't obtain a D.Litt by study, but was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1972; his *Beowulf* lecture was given to the British Academy, but he wasn't a member. He did have an Oxford M.A., and of course Merton was one of his colleges, while Linton Road is very close to Northmoor Road in North Oxford where Tolkien lived, first at no. 22 and then at no 20.

<sup>2</sup> I should also mention that in *Young Pattullo* we find reference to a don at Magdalen who has written “a book about a chap called John. It's one of those pilgrimage fables of an edifying sort.”

means, so doesn't have to earn his living by tutoring, taking only a few pupils "to lighten his solitude"; another deliberate contrast with Tolkien, who had no private funds and took on extra marking in the vacations to help support his family.

At a party, a Professor gives Pattullo his opinion of Timbermill: "A sad case ... A notable scholar, it seems. Unchallenged in his field – a kind of apocalyptic romance." Does this, maybe, sound familiar? Another character, a creative writer, prefers *The Magic Quest* to works of scholarship:

It kept him from completing some enormous academic labour or other, and now he regrets having been lured away by it ... It mayn't be a work of the most enduring quality, but it's miles ahead of conservative scholarship. So what the old man has is a false conscience.

In the fourth book, *The Madonna of the Astrolabe*, Timbermill declines yet further. Walking with an elderly don, Duncan discovers Timbermill seated in peace, just resting a while, among a group of hippies at the church of St. Michael-at-the-North-Gate. Duncan's companion scorns the scene, but Duncan defends Timbermill: "He wrote a very remarkable book. Not about Angles and Saxons, but about some sort of imaginary heroic age." He also defends Timbermill's qualities as a tutor. Later, Duncan hunts for Timbermill's relatives, recording that "his father had been a merchant banker".

As we see by the dates of first publication, the series was mainly written between Tolkien's death and the publication of Carpenter's Biography. Stewart was free to use the concept of a don who writes a heroic romance and is distrusted by his peers, without fear of Tolkien actually reading the books. In the fifth book there are a few references to Timbermill.

## References

- Humphrey Carpenter *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*  
 T.S. Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth*  
 J.I.M. Stewart, *The Gaudy*  
     *Young Pattullo*  
     *A Memorial Service*  
     *The Madonna of the Astrolabe*  
     *Full Term*  
 1987. *Myself and Michael Innes* Gollanz 1987

In Stewart's autobiography *Myself and Michael Innes* (1987) there are, alas, few references to Tolkien. He is recorded as one of the examiners for Stewart's "viva" in 1928. This was the oral examination held to verify a candidates claim to be awarded a First-class degree. Later he recalls his landlady in Leeds:

Miss Rowe's connection with the university was old-established, particularly with former members of my own department. Ronald Tolkien is, I suppose, the only one of them to have entered the halls of fame, but to a fledgling like myself the roll was impressive.

Also of interest to Tolkienians is the reference to Stewart's former home near Oxford, Fawler Copse<sup>3</sup> which is, Stewart wrote

probably on the site of a Romano-British homestead running to one or two mosaic floors ... Philologists tell me that the very name of my house attests to the fact; my Saxon predecessors murmured it wonderingly to one another as they peered at the mosaic pavement from which a spade may still turn up the tesserae.

The philologists who connected the name Fawler with the Old English *fag flor* – "coloured floor", were of course Tolkien and Shippey (see *The Road to Middle Earth*, chapter 2).

J.I.M. Stewart has also experienced the tension between academic scholarship and genre fiction being the successful author, as Michael Innes, of the Appleby series of detective fiction, though detective stories are traditionally accorded academic respectability.

It is ironic, that the Oxford Quintet, a series of mainstream novels which Stewart was very proud, as representing "with the possible exception of my volume in the Oxford History of English Literature ... my most sustained single effort as a writer", may be remembered chiefly for its portrait of Tolkien.

<sup>3</sup> According to *Who's Who* 1982, the address was "Fawler Copse, Fawler, Wantage, Oxon."



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## Contributors

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**Jessica Yates** has contributed to and edited books on many areas of fantasy. She works as a school librarian.

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## Another New World Anomaly?

Christina Scull has identified another new-world plant in *The Lord of the Rings*, among the blooms in Bilbo's garden: (*Fellowship of the Ring*, Chapter 1):

The flowers glowed red and golden: snapdragons and sunflowers, and nasturtians trailing all over the turf walls and peeping in at the round windows.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) are a native of North America. The O.E.D. records their first mention in 1597. So it would appear

that, like Gaffer Gamgee's potatoes, they are something of an anachronism.

However, an earlier usage is also recorded (1562), meaning the heliotrope (*Heliotropium*). And marigold, rock-rose, scarlet pimpernel and star-of-Bethlehem are also quoted among the meanings of 'sunflower'.

Pat Reynolds