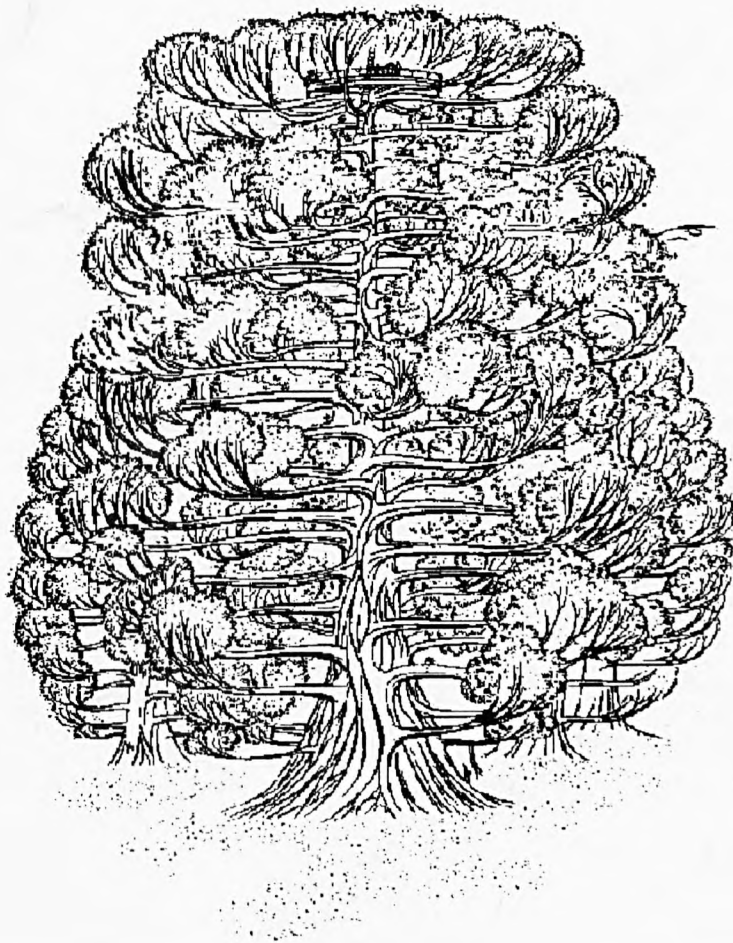


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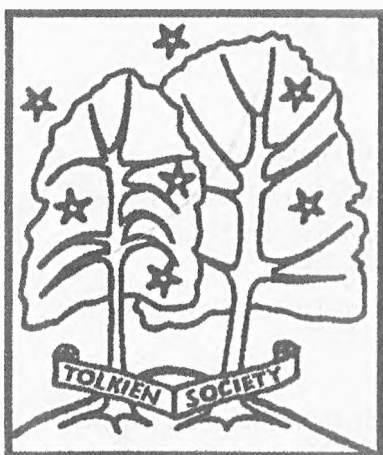
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December 1999

The Journal of the Tolkien Society



The Tolkien Society



Founded in London in 1969 the **Tolkien Society** is an international organization registered in the UK 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 annual national meetings: the A.G.M. and Dinner in the Spring, Summermoot and the Seminar in the Summer, and "Oxonmoot", a celebratory weekend held in Oxford in late September.

For further information about the society, please contact Sally Kennett, 210 Prestbury Rd, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 3ER or visit the Society's homepage: <http://www.tolkiensociety.org>.

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Prose items (including fiction) may be sent as a manuscript or on disk/by email in standard formats; if in hard copy form they should be typed double-spaced with margins and on one side of the paper only, with the author's name, the title and the page number at the top of each sheet. Contact the editor if in doubt about the acceptability of a digital submission.

In any case the definitive version must be in hard copy form. Take special care if the text includes any character which you think may not convert properly (for example, those with accents). Either write them in by hand, or enclose a table showing substitute characters (the printout should have the real characters, not the substitutions).

Similarly if your word-processor or typewriter cannot cope with characters which you wish to appear, draw our attention to this by marking them in by hand.

Handwritten contributions will be considered, but should be, please, extremely legible, and should in any case be in the format outlined above. The editors may, with regret, have to reject the less than completely legible. 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 asked to make cuts as necessary. Quotations should always be identified. Citation should be made in the numbered format, referenced to the explanatory line giving the author's surname, the date of publication, and the pages referred to. The references should be in the form Author, date, title (journal and page numbers), place of publication, publisher, and numbered in text order..

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 or a 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. Please write a few lines for the contributors' page. Contributions should be sent to: 92 Perrymans Farm Road, Ilford, Essex, IG2 7NN, email Leonard@sanfordts.freerve.co.uk

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John Ellison



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EDITORIAL

It's traditional for an editor to start his stewardship by telling the readers his wonderful plans for the future. He details the startling improvements he is going to make to a product which, to avoid criticising his predecessors, he must insist *always was* wonderful. But you will not find me in that uneasy position. *Mallorn* has always been written to a high standard, as high as the authors available in a talented and energetic membership could make it anyway, so I am promising nothing. If it continues to be good, I will be happy for all of us; if it gets better, I'll be delighted, but it will probably be by the workings of blind chance. And if it gets worse, I will kill myself.

I talk, of course, of quality rather than quantity. Editors have some control over quality, but they cannot hope to produce issues out of thin air. So please, those of you that can write, get writing, those that can paint and draw (oh, why do the words 'wilderness' and 'crying' keep popping into my head) get drawing; and those of you that can't do either - well, get back to teaching, I suppose.

One type of article we have managed to exclude this year, and which I hope always will exclude, is the type that (in my mind anyway) comes under the general heading of "What! Only one Sistine Chapel?" (Closely allied in type to the "Inexplicably, Tolkien didn't write about what I wanted him to write about - I will never forgive him" category). Criticising a writer for what he has *not* written figures large among the Great Time Wasters of The Age of Communication. It's very easy to do, since it follows that an author must have failed to write about a great deal more than he actually did cover, which probably accounts for much. Chance favours such critics - it is barely necessary actually to read the book. Why is it authors who are specially picked on in this way? Is it because everyone can write, and therefore everyone believes he is an author? (*PS - that's a grammatical 'he' not a gender-biased one*). Very easy until one tries it, but the credibility gap is evidently smaller with literary effort, and combines perhaps with a reduced sense of objectivity about one's own work, which is the only way I can account for the amount of nonsense that is offered for publication, and even occasionally published.

Or is it because authorship is essentially an intellectual process, and everyone has a mind, of sorts? Not everyone imagines that he is a worthwhile art critic, (except those that actually are, and they, of course, think they are God) and most folk of sense refrain from forcing their opinions on the rest of us on subjects about which they know nothing; but everyone is a literary critic, and has no shame about expressing his opinions, however silly. No one criticises Leonardo because he didn't include a naval battle and a Hershey bar in *La Gioconda*; no one complains because Michaelangelo only managed one Sistine Chapel, or that the lazy so and so left the outside completely unpainted. But that Tolkien bloke ...

Perhaps after all this isn't the best time to be soliciting contributions. But please bear this in mind - in this journal anything is forgivable if it is intelligent, and even intelligence is forgivable if it's funny.

The Great Mallorn Cover debate.

There isn't one, but I'm hoping to start one. What you think of the new front cover design - in fact, new design in general - probably depends on how resistant to change you are. For myself, I had doubts about the previous version. Hands up all those who think the Mallorn tree on the front cover looked a bit like Emily Bishop's hairdo. Hands up all those who are ashamed to admit they remember Emily Bishop. Thank you. I rest my case.

Tolkien and the Counties of England

David Bratman

This paper was originally delivered to an American audience, (*Mythcon 27, 1996*) so it began with the observation that the counties into which the states of the U.S. are divided are mostly squarish-shaped arbitrary territories of little antiquity and no particular emotional interest, although William Faulkner did his best to add literary resonance to his imaginary Yoknapatawpha County in Mississippi. But the idea of dividing a state into administrative units of that size and calling them 'counties' was brought by the British colonists from England, which historically was divided into 40 counties of irregular shape, profound antiquity, and great interest.

The word *county* was brought by the Normans from France, where a *conté* was the feudal domain of a *conte* or count. The divisions of England to which it was applied were far older than the Normans, however. They had a variety of origins. A few, such as Kent and Sussex (originally '[the kingdom of the] South Saxons') dated from earliest Anglo-Saxon times when they were separate kingdoms. Most, however, began as divisions of larger kingdoms, and the Anglo-Saxon term for such divisions was *scir*, in later English *shire*, a word which has immediate resonance for readers of Tolkien. (Tolkien, of course, intended the resonance to be the other way around.)

Because shires are so ubiquitous in England, for Tolkien to call his hobbits' territory '*The Shire*' gives it a kind of generic quality

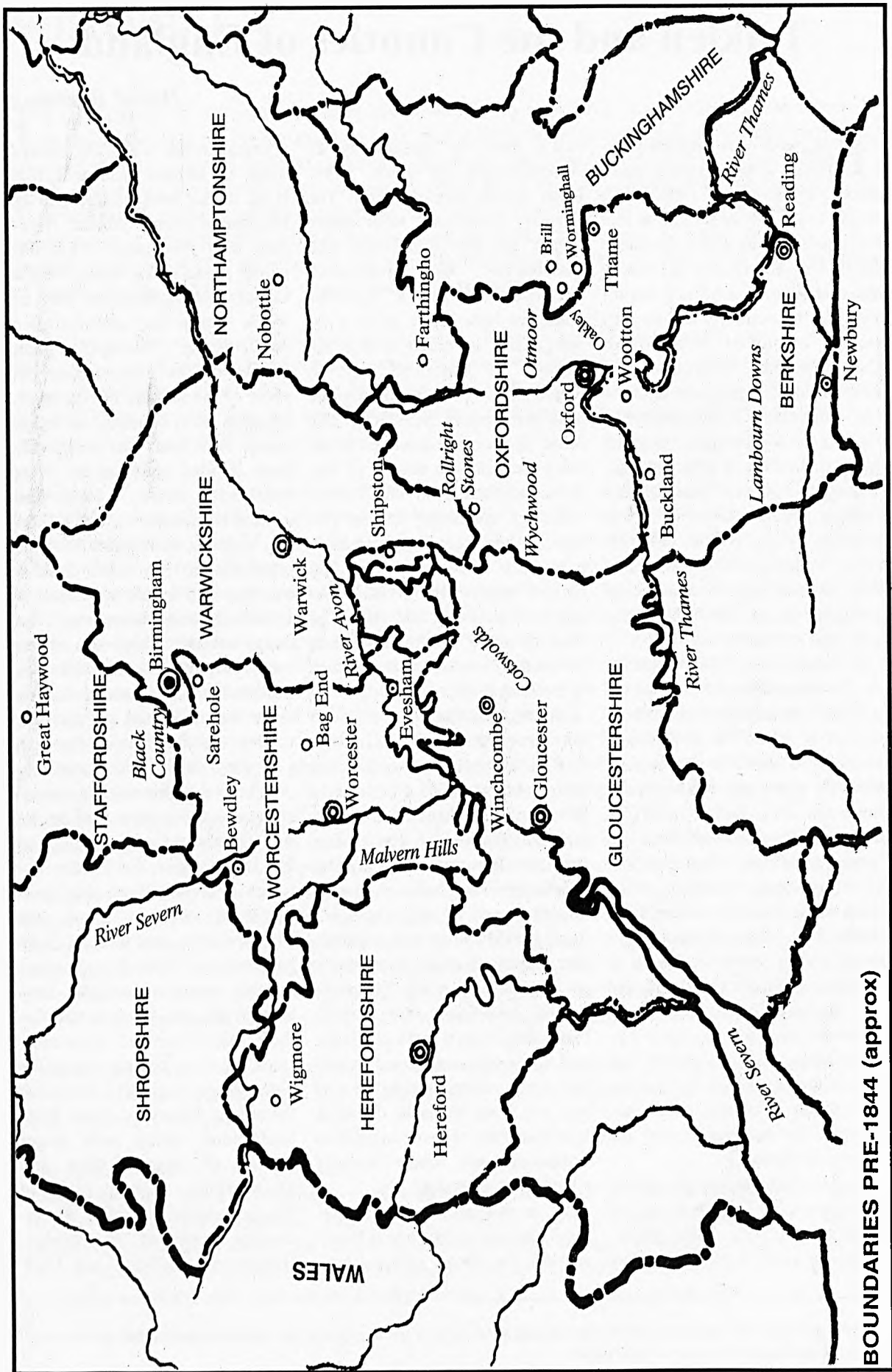
that's hard to capture by an American eye, for which 'Shire' is an exotic foreign word. The closest American equivalents might be the Smallville and Metropolis of Superman. Metropolis is not a fictitious name for New York, as in a *roman à clef*, as much as it is the essence of American city, in which New York is merely the principal element. Similarly, 'The Shire' is probably intended to remind the English reader of any shire, perhaps even one's own. Although appearing first in *The Lord of the Rings*, as a generic name it's more typical of *The Hobbit*, where Bilbo lives in *The Hill by The Water*, and visits *The Carrock* and *The Mountain*, than it is of the more developed names of the later book.

Tolkien identified himself with his mother's family, the Suffields, which originated around the town of Evesham in Worcestershire, and once wrote¹ that 'any corner of that county (however fair or squalid) is in an indefinable way "home" to me, as no other part of the world is.' Such identification with a particular county of origin is common in England, in much the same way as Americans often identify themselves with a particular state, and was even commoner in earlier times when people moved less and were closer to the land. It is therefore of great interest to Tolkienists to know exactly where Worcestershire lies.

This is not as easy as it may seem, though, unless one is familiar with the history of local gov-

ernment in the U.K. On current maps of Britain, you will find lying in the west middle part of England a county labeled *Hereford and Worcester*. This ungainly name is the legacy of the County Reorganization Act of 1973, which for administrative convenience wrought great change on the map, wiping out some of the smaller old counties, creating new counties in urban areas that had inconveniently been divided (such as the West Midlands county constructed around Birmingham), and tinkering with the boundaries in some other places.^A A closer look at the map will locate the towns of Hereford and Worcester, the *burgs* around which the shires were originally constructed in pre-Norman times; and as the one is in the west part of the new county and the other in the east, you may fairly and accurately conclude that the old Worcestershire was the eastern half of the new county. Maps predating the 1973 Act show the border between Worcestershire and Herefordshire running along the Malvern Hills, just west of Great Malvern, and from there heading roughly northwest towards Tenbury Wells, the town in the farthest fair corner of Worcestershire. A close comparison of the old and new maps will show that the urban county of West Midlands took, along with larger chunks of Warwickshire and Staffordshire, a small piece of Worcestershire, including the industrial towns of Stourbridge, Halesowen, Oldbury, and Dud-

A. Subsequent further reorganizations have dismantled some of the unpopular new urban counties, but at this writing the West Midlands county is still intact.



ley. In Tolkien's opinion this was undoubtedly the more squalid corner.

So far so good. But the Act of 1973 was far from the first time the boundaries of Worcestershire had been tinkered with. When the shires were new, in fact, their boundaries were quite fluid. Each shire in Anglo-Saxon times was the joint domain of two officers, the *ealdorman* and *shire-reeve* or *sheriff* (very roughly the equivalent of Tolkien's Thain and Mayor, respectively), who presided at a judicial assembly called the Shire-moot (a term also used by Tolkien), *moot* being an old word for any public meeting (hence also *entmoot*, a meeting of Ents). The first shires were in the kingdom of Wessex, in the southwest of England, and after Wessex annexed Mercia, the west middle kingdom, shires were established there also in the early tenth century. The old Mercian division of Hwicce (originally a minor kingdom itself) was the basis for all or most of three shires set up around the burghs of Worcester, Winchcombe, and Gloucester, and part of a fourth based on Warwick. Originally the Mercian shires were entirely artificial and arbitrary creations, bearing no necessary relation to older tribal boundaries (thus Warwickshire was part in Hwicce and part out of it), and were created by cutting up swathes of territory of fairly even taxable value and grouping them around defensible burghs. However, this simple pattern did not remain simple for long. Anglo-Saxon politicians were no less self-aggrandizing than modern ones. The eleventh century Gloucester-

shire ealdorman Eadric Streona, of whom it was said that he 'tore up shires as if they were paper', annexed all of Winchcombeshire and as many pieces of land belonging to Worcestershire as he could get title to.²

As with any ambitious property acquisition project, the result of this and similar activities was that by the time the Normans fixed the county lines in the form they retained for some 800 years the boundaries of the Mercian shires were a patchwork quilt, and Worcestershire was one of the worst, with boundaries weaving erratically, and nearly a dozen detached pieces of itself floating around, especially in the southeast around Evesham. For instance, the town of Shipston-on-Stour, now in Warwickshire, was part of a large enclave of Worcestershire ten miles away from the main body of the county, and other villages now in Gloucestershire formed their own tiny enclaves (too small to appear on the attached small-scale map). The situation in the northeast, near Birmingham, was quite as complex.³ Most importantly for the student of Tolkien, the entire southern half of what is now the city of Birmingham was part of Worcestershire. So Sarehole, King's Heath, Moseley, and all the adjacent suburb and countryside in which Tolkien grew up between 1895 and 1902, and which so richly fed his imagination, were in his beloved Worcestershire, not in Warwickshire as erroneously reported in many books on Tolkien (e.g. Carpenter⁴, Pearce⁵, Rosebury⁶). Rednal, where the Tolkiens spent the blissful summer of 1904 in a

country cottage now just over the county line, was deep into the county. Only after they moved to the Edgbaston district of Birmingham in 1902 did they leave Worcestershire and enter Warwickshire.^B

How, then, have scholars gained the false impression that Sarehole was in Warwickshire? Because in the 19th century the boundaries started to move again. Over the centuries between the Normans and the Victorians, the county borders had remained essentially unchanged, and thus the counties' antiquity was bolstered by their stability. With the Counties (Detached Parts) Act of 1844, the British government began to undo some of the administrative damage of the long-dead ealdermen, eliminating enclaves and straightening the boundaries in other places.⁷ This process continued in later years. Urban expansion and the growth of city government began to play a role. Over the years the British government established what were called *corporate counties* or *county boroughs* in a number of the larger cities. For administrative purposes these were entirely separate from the counties from which they had been taken, but for census purposes and on small-scale maps they remained part of what was called the geographical county. If the city expanded across county lines, it took its original county designation with it.^C This is what happened in Birmingham, a corporate county taken from Warwickshire. In 1911, the year that Tolkien went to Oxford University and left Birmingham for good, the city annexed over 30 square miles of

B. For the satisfaction of curious local residents - the exact original boundary between Warwickshire and Worcestershire in central Birmingham, from west to east, ran along the Bourn Brook just south of Birmingham University and the new site of King Edward's School, then along Highgate Street, Highgate Road, and Walford Road before passing down Spark Brook to the River Cole as far as Gressel Lane.

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its Worcestershire suburbs, placing them nominally within the geographical county of Warwickshire, and then into the West Midlands urban county when it was created in 1973.^D The city had good reason to take this step. Over twenty years later, on a visit home, Tolkien bemoaned the disappearance of his ‘beloved lanes of childhood ... in the midst of a sea of new red-brick’⁸, but the dismal suburbanization of the district had begun much earlier. The Worcestershire suburbs tripled in population from about 45,000 at the time of Tolkien’s birth in 1892 to about 140,000 at the time of the annexation.⁹ The visitor to Sarehole today need exercise less imagination to recall that it was in Worcestershire for a thousand years than to picture how bucolic its now-crowded lanes must have looked merely a hundred years ago.

Despite Tolkien’s enthusiasm for Worcestershire, the other counties of England were hardly alien to him. When he first planned to create his epic *legendarium* of Middle-earth, he intended to dedicate it ‘to England; to my country’¹⁰, not merely to his county. The coastal scenery of Cornwall and Dorset, in the southwest, appealed strongly to his visual imagination¹¹. And he bristled

with annoyance at the suggestion that his years teaching at Leeds, in the northern county of Yorkshire, were some kind of expedition into a foreign land¹². But some parts of England were more home to him than others. At a scale intermediate between the county and the country, the area he identified with was the West Midlands, a region not to be confused with the new urban county of the same name in its midst. This is the part of England essentially coterminous with the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia.^E

The boundaries of Mercia changed often during the several centuries of its existence. At its height in the 8th century Mercia controlled pretty much all of England south of the Humber and Mersey Rivers; more properly it was the 16 or 17 counties between those rivers and the Thames and Avon to the south, and excluding the ones touching the North Sea coast to the east and one or two around London. At its narrowest, defined by the victorious kings of Wessex as the part of England where Mercian laws applied, it was nine shires: Gloucester, Oxford, Hereford, Worcester, Warwick, Stafford, Shropshire, Cheshire, and (southern) Lancashire¹³. This

area was roughly the territory of the West Midland dialect of Middle English that became Tolkien’s special province as a philologist. He expressed the connection between his scholarly and personal interests very clearly: ‘I am a West-midlander by blood (and took to early west-midland Middle English as a known tongue as soon as I set eyes on it)’.¹⁴ The most important text in this dialect is the *Ancrene Wisse*, a book of instruction for a group of anchorites or religious hermits, and to this work Tolkien devoted a great deal of scholarly attention. His last major philological publication was a scholarly edition of a text of this work, and perhaps his greatest work in this field (as opposed to his more famous but more literarily-oriented essays on *Beowulf* and ‘On Fairy-Stories’) was his 1929 article on *Ancrene Wisse* and the homily *Hali Meiohad*. In this he argued passionately that the language preserved in these works is a rare instance of a pure dialect unmixed by copyists’ alterations or errors. He wrote¹⁵ of this dialect in strikingly poetic terms unusual in technical philology: ‘It is not a language long relegated to the “uplands” struggling once more for expression in apologetic emulation of its betters or out of com-

C. The exception to this was in London, where a full-fledged new county was created in 1885 in lieu of extending the borders of the corporation of London. The City, as it’s called for short, uniquely retains its original tiny Norman-era bounds, and is now little more than the financial district of London. It’s rather as if New York City had retained its original northern border at Wall Street, and ignored the urban expansion that blossomed all around it. D. Stephens, p 3 and pl. 2. Some sources, e.g. Reynolds, (1992, p 1) imply that the annexation did not take place until 1931, but this refers to a later annexation of other areas.

E. See Tolkien 1981, p 108. Here he informs his son Christopher that ‘barring the Tolkien (which must long ago have become a pretty thin strand) you are a Mercian or Hwiccian (of Wychwood) on both sides.’ Hwicce was the subkingdom of Mercia based on Worcester described above. Wychwood is, of several place names preserving the word ‘Hwicce’, the one nearest to Oxford, and was probably here cited by Tolkien for consequently being familiar to his family. Commentators have not taken him as meaning that his ancestors originated specifically in Wychwood. It was a forest on the edge of Hwiccian territory in the Evenlode vale of northwest Oxfordshire. Several villages there preserve ‘under [i.e. in] Wychwood’ in their names. A remnant of the forest still stands in the nearby hills.

F. Tolkien also had, of course, a professional interest in Anglo-Saxon or Old English, the ancestor of Middle English, and also had a special place in his heart for its West Midlands dialect, which he called Old Mercian (Tolkien 1981, p 65). Shippey notes that the Anglo-Saxon names of the Rohirrim are in Old Mercian, not in the standard Wessex dialect of the language (p 112n).

passion for the lewd, but rather one that has never fallen back into "lewdness", and has contrived in troublous times to maintain the air of a gentleman, if a country gentleman. It has traditions and some acquaintance with books and the pen, but it is also in close touch with a good living speech - a soil somewhere in England.'

Where in England? The manuscript Tolkien spoke of, and later edited, resides at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. But that says nothing of its origins. That the dialect showed that it came from the West Midlands was reasonably certain.^{16,17} But in Tolkien's time its precise origin was unknown. Later scholarship has established the place: in Herefordshire, the county recently attached to Worcestershire by Act of Parliament. E.J. Dobson¹⁸ in *The Origins of Ancrēne Wisse* has compiled a detailed chain of evidence to connect it with two monastic establishments, both now in ruins, in far northwestern Herefordshire, near the village of Wigmore. This area, then, can be considered the heartland of the dialect of which Tolkien wrote so lovingly.^f

When Tolkien was writing *The Book of Lost Tales*, he toyed with the idea of making his mythology, the one he was dedicating to England, actually a mythology for England, by hypothesizing that his elven isle Tol Eressëa was itself actually England at a remote period of prehistory. To this end he identified certain places in Tol Eressëa with certain places in England that were personally meaningful to him, and to an extent let the real places inspire the fictional ones. Thus the midmost region of Tol Eressëa, Alalminórë or 'The Land of Elms', was based on Warwickshire, and its chief town, Kor-

tirion, was based on the city of Warwick, which was particularly dear to Tolkien as the place of his marriage and of his wife's residence during most of their engagement. Here was located the Cottage of Lost Play to which Eriol comes and where he is told the tales of the Elves. The poem 'Kortirion Among the Trees' preserves Tolkien's attempt to idealize and etherealize the primary-world place. Tavrobel, another place in Tol Eressëa where Eriol lives and which inspired Tolkien to verse, is similarly based on Great Haywood, a village in Staffordshire (like Warwick it is in Mercia not far from Birmingham) where Tolkien lived during his recuperation from trench fever in 1916-17, while writing much of *The Book of Lost Tales*. The House of a Hundred Chimneys at Tavrobel was based on a house where the Tolkiens lodged in 1918, on the Teddesley estate about five miles from Great Haywood. Another place in Tol Eressëa, Taruithorn, is identified with Oxford but no tales are told of it. In one of the inset tales, 'The Tale of Tinúviel', the key scene, in which Beren sees Tinúviel dancing in a hemlock glade, was inspired by a walk the Tolkiens took to such a glade in the Humberside region of Yorkshire while he was stationed there in 1917-18. It is interesting to note that in this romantic period of Tolkien's writing he attached no special importance to Worcestershire, basing his mythology on places meaningful to his romance rather than to his ancestry.^{19,20,21}

In 1911 Tolkien left Birmingham and Worcestershire to go to Oxford, the city with which he is most associated, and where he spent most of the rest of his life. During early Anglo-Saxon times Oxford was in the midst of a debatable land between Wessex

to the southwest, Mercia to the north, and the small Saxon kingdoms to the east. Only when Wessex became pre-eminent in England did the counties in this area settle down. The boundaries of Oxfordshire and the surrounding counties were somewhat less convoluted than those in Mercia: Oxfordshire had three outlying enclaves, all in Buckinghamshire, and contained four enclaves of surrounding counties.²² Aside from eliminating these, virtually no changes were made in the area's county boundaries prior to the Reorganization Act of 1973, and only one major change in that Act: northwestern Berkshire between the Thames and the Lambourn Downs (including Faringdon, Abingdon, Wantage, Didcot, Wallingford, and the Vale of White Horse) was transferred to Oxfordshire, as it was directly adjacent to Oxford city and much farther from Berkshire's county town of Reading.

Tolkien settled happily in Oxford, and while he is most closely associated with the university, a setting he used to brilliant effect in *The Notion Club Papers*, he also explored the countryside, particularly during his student days and early years as a professor. (After that he preferred to dwell on his memories, for fear of finding the charming countryside spoiled by development.)^{23,24,25}

Two of his most colourful fictional characters were inspired directly by Oxford and the surrounding counties. Both were created in the 1930s, during the period he was most active in exploring the countryside. Tom Bombadil, though modelled in physical appearance after a Dutch doll, represented in his personality and his ties to a specific locality, 'the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside'.²⁶ Tom is as specific about

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the borders as his creator was: 'Tom's country ends here: he will not pass the borders.'²⁷ The mock-scholarly foreword to *Farmer Giles of Ham* is coy about the exact extent of the Little Kingdom, but as the author noted, 'This is a definitely located story ... The places in it are largely named, or fairly plainly indicated.'²⁸ The definite location is Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The three towns named in the story, Thame (alias Ham), Worminghall, and Oakley, are all on the border of those two counties immediately east of Oxford city. The Little Kingdom was evidently smaller than a modern county, as the Foreword notes that its northern edge was Otmoor, only six miles northeast of Oxford, but under Giles's son 'an outpost against the Middle Kingdom [i.e. Mercia] was maintained at Farthingho', considerably further north in southwestern Northamptonshire.²⁸ And the Standing Stones at which Garm first encountered the dragon are the Rollright Stones equally far to the northwest near the corner of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Gloucestershire.²⁹ So as 'its eastern borders are dubious', we can take them for the eastern borders of Buckinghamshire, and consider the territory covered by *Farmer Giles*, with the exception of the expedition to seek the dragon in the Welsh mountains, as being the two counties named by the author.⁶

'The Shire was divided into four quarters, the Farthings ... North, South, East, and West; and these again each into a number of folklands, which still bore the names

of some of the old leading families.'³⁰ The Farthings ('farthing' being an old formation meaning 'one-fourth', best known from pre-decimal British coinage) are directly equivalent to the Ridings (elided from 'thridings', ie thirdings) of the county of Yorkshire. Tolkien's folklands seem to bear no administrative relation to the small-scale divisions of the English counties, the medium-sized hundreds and the often very small parishes. However, the term 'folklands' does have resonance in England, as does the term Buckland: both were technical terms in land ownership and administration, and the latter also occurs as a placename³¹. The concept of folklands also appears in county names, as the kingdom of East Anglia was divided into two counties, those of the North Folk and South Folk, or Norfolk and Suffolk as they are spelled today.

The most striking difference between the hobbits' Shire and an English shire is that the former is very much larger. 'Forty leagues it stretched from the Far Downs to the Brandywine Bridge, and fifty from the northern moors to the marshes in the south.'³² Even considering that Tolkien originally wrote 'nearly fifty',³³ that is much larger than any English county, even Yorkshire, which measures 90 by 120 miles. A smaller county, such as Worcestershire, measures 30 by 35 miles. Converting leagues to miles at the traditional rate of 1 to 3, the Shire measures 120 by 150 (or nearly 150) miles. Superimpose that on central England, and one finds that the Shire covers, almost exactly, the same territory as Mercia

proper, as defined above. In area, then, the Shire is intended to evoke an English region rather than a county. Even the four Farthings are larger than most counties. From Hobbiton to Buckland is over 50 miles in a straight line. That's about the distance from London to Oxford, or from Oxford to Birmingham or Worcester city. Fifty miles west of Worcester, one has penetrated deep into Wales (here be dragons). It is hardly surprising, given these relatively vast distances in a rural culture, that hobbits of different Farthings are suspicious of each other's habits and customs. They're a queer breed in Buckland, agree Gaffer Gamgee and his cronies. Folk are queer up in Hobbiton, replies Farmer Maggot³⁴.

Administratively, however, the Shire evokes one county, not a region. There is a single Mayor (who is also First Shiriff), and a single Thain. Tolkien's phrasing³⁵, 'The Hobbits named it the Shire, as the region of the authority of their Thain, and a district of well-ordered business,' (italics mine) suggests that, as in England, a Shire is to the hobbits by definition a region with a single set of officials. Reference is made to the Shire's supplemental body of Shiriffs, the Bounders, who 'beat the bounds' of the Shire for security purposes³⁶. This evokes an English administrative custom of an area even smaller than a county. A ritual 'beating of the bounds' was of old, before the days of the Ordnance Survey, an annual custom of the parish, a constituent region of which each county had dozens or even hun-

G. For accurate maps and discussions of the locales in this story, see the forthcoming 50th anniversary edition of *Farmer Giles of Ham* edited by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, with map by Pauline Baynes; also Shippey (p 88-89), Doughan, and Urrutia; the map and article by Walker are inaccurate and poorly researched. H. Parishes are also evoked in 'Leaf by Niggle', where at the end of the story the Porter gives the punning name Niggle's Parish to the land where Mr Niggle and Mr Parish dwell.

dreds. The purpose of the ritual was not to keep out Outsiders, but to preserve an institutional memory of where the boundaries went.^{11.37}

'Tolkien took most of his Shire-names from his own near surroundings', writes Shippey,³¹ and these give a sense of specific location within England to the Shire and Bree. Most of these placenames are from near Oxford. Bree-hill derives from Brill, a hilltop town in Buckinghamshire very close to Oakley and Worminghall of *Farmer Giles* fame. Newbury is in Berkshire, and Nobottle (which means the same thing) is in Northamptonshire. Buckland is a common placename throughout England; there's a town by that name in the section of Berkshire annexed to Oxfordshire in 1973, very near Kingston Bagpuize, a town-name Tolkien once used as a pseudonym. Bag End was the name of Tolkien's Aunt Jane's Worcestershire farm³⁸. And so forth. A similar naming procedure pervades *Smith of Wootton Major*³⁹. One odder and more sinister probable name referent: The Black Country is both a Common Speech name for Mordor and a name for the grimy industrial region which abuts Birmingham to the west, including the more squalid corners of Worcestershire. This shared name suggests that Tolkien was, as often claimed, thinking of the more unlovely scenes of his childhood when he created the realm of Sauron.

Less study has been given to the localizing effect of hobbit surnames. The connection of the families of Gamgee and Cotton is a joke derived from *gamgee*, in

Tolkien's youth a local Birmingham name for cotton-wool, being derived from a type of wound-dressing invented by a local surgeon named Gamgee⁴⁰. Perusal of British telephone directories reveals that some hobbit surnames, notably Boffin and Brockhouse, are particularly characteristic of humans of the West Midlands. Others, such as Puddifoot, which in the Shire is an Eastfarthing name⁴¹, are found mostly in the far south-east of England. Tolkien's sojourn in Leeds also left its mark on the Shire, if only by way of contrast. The name Thistlewood (thus in the *LotR* index, III:428; apparently incorrectly Thistlewool on I:167), marked by the travelling hobbits as a 'rather odd' surname found among Men of Bree, is in England primarily a Yorkshire name. Gaukroger, a name highly localized in Halifax, near Leeds, appeared on early drafts of the Shire-hobbit family trees: perhaps significantly, it was later replaced by the southeast-England name Goodbody.^{42.1}

The work of Tolkien's that contains more open references to British places than any other is *The Notion Club Papers*. But the geographical references are all focused dynamically outwards, towards lost Númenor, rather than ruminatively inwards as in the Shire. Oxford is depicted as a rock against which the storms of the West crash. Edwin Lowdham, the Amandil of the story, lived at an unidentified locale in Pembrokeshire, Wales, when not sailing about incessantly⁴³. Tolkien is probably not expressing any interest in Pembrokeshire as a geographic entity here, the way he does for Worcestershire, War-

wickshire, and Oxfordshire. The counties of Wales are of comparatively recent origin and have little resonance for the Welsh. Most of them, including Pembrokeshire, were created in 1536 as part of a law which eliminated the political entity of Wales and imposed the English language on its government. Recent reorganizations, beginning in the 1960s, have begun to undo those Anglicizing changes. Many of the alien counties have been entirely dismantled or their names retranslated back into Welsh.

Nor may Pembrokeshire be seen as a Celtic redoubt, as it was conquered by the Normans by 1100, nearly 200 years before the last native princes were subdued in the fastnesses of Snowdonia. Even today fewer people there speak Welsh than anywhere else in western Wales. Tolkien's use of it as a base for Edwin Lowdham probably derives from its situation at the tip of the westernmost peninsula of Wales. The great harbour of Milford Haven makes Pembrokeshire an ideal starting point for an expedition to discover lost or sunken mythical lands. Such countries are common in Celtic mythology: the Irish mythical isles which Brendan finds in Frankley's poem⁴⁴ presumably lie somewhere west of Galway; Lyonesse is a legendary sunken land off Cornwall, the south-western tip of England; and Cantref Gwaelod lies in Cardigan Bay not far north of Pembrokeshire. There is surely room for Tolkien to add to their number. In any event, Jeremy and the younger Lowdham travel about the entire west coast of Britain, hunting for a scent of Númenor, and have their greatest

1. Following Allen Barnett (*Davenport*, p 337), some have concluded that the hobbits' names, not to mention their shoeless feet, come from Kentucky country folk. But even if it is true that they came to Tolkien in this manner, a perusal of Internet telephone directories shows that hobbit surnames are neither characteristic of nor distinctive to Kentucky.

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success at Porlock, in Somerset near the base of the peninsula of which Cornwall forms the tip, on the coast facing South Wales.⁴⁵

Having explored the English geography of Tolkien's works, we may conclude by saying a little about what home counties meant to him, and to some of his compatriots, by way of a few quotations. The scene in *The Lord of the Rings* most evocative of a sensitive feeling for landscape is perhaps the following:

For a short way they followed the lane westwards. Then leaving it they turned left and took quietly to the fields again. They went in single file along hedgerows and the borders of coppices, and night fell dark about them. ... After some time they crossed the Water, west of Hobbiton, by a narrow plank-bridge. The stream was there no more than a winding black ribbon, bordered with leaning alder-trees. A mile or two further south they hastily crossed the great road from the Brandywine Bridge; they were now in the Tookland and bending south-eastwards they made for the Green Hill Country. As they began to climb its first slopes they looked back and saw the lamps in Hobbiton far off twinkling in the gentle valley of the Water. Soon it disappeared in the folds of the darkened land, and was followed by Bywater beside its grey pool. When the light of the last farm was far behind, peeping among the trees, Frodo turned and waved a hand in farewell. 'I wonder if I shall ever look down into that valley again,' he said quietly.⁴⁶

Frodo is later ridiculed by Pippin for these melancholy thoughts⁴⁷, but scenes like this one play an important part in establishing in the reader's mind the love for the Shire which grounds the book, making the journeys into far lands and Frodo's unresolved homecoming the more poignant.

Stanley Baldwin, who was Prime Minister of Great Britain at the time that Tolkien completed *The Hobbit*, was like Tolkien a Worcestershire lad, hailing from Bewdley in the northwest of the county. Although a fourth-generation ironworks owner and a canny, formidable politician, Baldwin liked to picture himself as a simple country squire, and always maintained a spiritual connection with his home county and region. His biographer⁴⁸ put it like this:

'[Baldwin's] feeling for the triangle bounded by the Black Country, the Cotswolds and the Welsh hills was intense. He loved wide landscape and changing light, and it is very good country for that. ... His agricultural knowledge was very limited. He could not have milked a cow, and he poked pigs much more often in cartoons than in the farmyard. But he was a genuine West Worcestershire man, and the City of Worcester with its tall cathedral tower, its county cricket ground beside the steep-banked Severn, and its chocolate and cream Great Western trains arriving at Shrub Hill Station from Paddington, was the centre of some substantial part of his life.'

For a last moving tribute to an English county, one which

Tolkien visited and appreciated though he never lived near there, here is the testimony⁴⁹ of one of Tolkien's fellow Inklings, Lord David Cecil.

'Very few people respond to a particular landscape for purely aesthetic reasons; pleasure in its beauty is generally mixed with and intensified by associations. Myself I realize that the Cotswolds and the Yorkshire Dales are as beautiful, perhaps even more beautiful, than Dorset. But they do not move me so deeply. For I have known Dorset ever since I can remember and its downs and woods, its chalky sea-coast and dark stretches of heathland, its beech groves and clumps of immemorial yew trees are inextricably intertwined with memories of childhood, of youth, of middle age; and saturated with the sentiment awoken in me by these memories. Now in old age the sight of them stirs me as no other landscape does. It is lucky for me that Dorset has produced Thomas Hardy who, since he is one of the greatest of authors that ever lived, does it justice'.

Then follow several long quotes from Hardy's novels which present pictorial images of Dorset. Cecil's key point is that familiarity and association count for more in the eyes of a lover of landscape than does sheer beauty. What he says about Dorset applies even more to Worcestershire. Though nestled between two attractive ranges of hills, the Malverns and the Cotswolds, most of Worcestershire is flat and agricultural. The Vale of Evesham, the native area of the Suffields, is a particu-

J. It was here that Tolkien's brother Hilary kept his plum orchard, and there is an oblique tribute to the region's agricultural produce in *Roverandom*: 'They say [Artaxerxes] is a nimble plum-gatherer for an old man ... and extremely fond of cider. But that's neither here nor there' (p 14).

larly rich fruit and vegetable district.¹ There is little about the region to attract a non-native eye. But the point is that Tolkien's eye was a native one, not just by upbringing but by heredity. 'To my mind,' he wrote, 'being what it is ... it is the things of racial and linguistic significance that attract me and stick in my memory.'⁵⁰ It is this combination of 'tastes, talents, and upbringing' that made Worcestershire 'in an indefinable way' "home" to him⁵¹. So in looking for a specific location for Tolkien, a local area of England that was particularly special and meaningful for him, we can fix definitely on seven adjoining counties in the West Midlands of England: Worcestershire, flanked by Herefordshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire (including the West Midlands urban county) for his ancestry and childhood, and Oxfordshire flanked by Berkshire and Buckinghamshire for his adulthood. This is an area roughly equivalent to, though not identical to, Mercia. He visited and even lived in other parts of Britain, and the whole country was his native land, but these counties were the ones to which his life's work was devoted.

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"Edda" myths from medieval Iceland.

The "Sequentia" Ensemble.

John Ellison

The music on this disc represents an effort at reconstructing the sounds of the poems of the Edda, as they might have been heard in performance by singers and minstrels. No traces exist, of course, of the music itself as written notations or text. The very full notes to this CD give an outline of the methods employed to reconstruct it, based on observation and understanding of oral and folk traditions going back to the thirteenth century, the period of Snorri Snurluson and the time when the poems were first written down. The authors of the musical realizations admit that it is not possible to go back beyond this, with any certainty, to what could have been heard in the pre-Christian milieu of the poems themselves. The results all the same may be of much interest to scholars and those concerned with Old Norse language and cul-

ture, including aficionados of Tolkien.

Among the poems performed on this disc the most substantial is *Voluspa* (The Prophecy of the Seeress) which is divided and interspersed with the other pieces: it includes of course the list of elf- and dwarf- names that Tolkien drew on for the names of Gandalf, Thorin, and the other dwarves in *The Hobbit*. Full texts and translations (English, French and German) are provided in the large booklet that comes with the disc, together with essays on the poems and their background, and the likely or possible nature of their performance in ritual or other contexts. This was probably highly dramatic in its intended effect; the singers all "act with their voices" to a remarkable extent, and one, "The Tale of Thrymir" - a sustained, intense piece of dramatic declamation or

"sprechgesang" - almost might come from a 20th century opera such as "Wozzeck" or "Moses and Aaron".

It would need a specialist in musicological research in this field to comment on the success or otherwise of the "reconstruction" of Eddic performance on this disc. However many of us can perhaps appreciate it in the sense of "soaking up the atmosphere" of the sagas and of the "heroic" age of the far North, and may find it another way of responding to *LotR*, or, still more, to *The Silmarillion*. Certainly the clear delight of the singers in responding to the sounds of the words and language of the poems is something which would have gained Tolkien's approval. Performance and recording are both of the highest quality.

The "Sequentia" Ensemble: Barbara Thornton and Lena Susanne Norih (singers) Elizabeth Gaver (5-string and 3-string fiddles), Benjamin Bagby (singer and lyres). Deutsches Harmonia Mundi - B.M.G. (One CD). Cat. No. 05472 77381-2.



"GOOD PEOPLE, DON'T KILL ME! I AM VERY RICH."

FARMER SILES OF HAM.

Tom Bombadil's Biblical Connections

Ron Pirson

In the month of September in the year 1954 Tolkien answered a letter he had received from Peter Hastings.¹ The latter had asked some questions because – in his opinion – Tolkien might have ‘over-stepped the mark in metaphysical matters’. One of his points was that Tolkien implied that Tom Bombadil is God. He was brought to this conclusion because of Frodo’s question ‘Who is Tom Bombadil?’, to which Goldberry replies ‘He is’. Hastings here discerns an allusion to the biblical book of Exodus, chapter 3, verse 14. In the story told in that chapter God reveals himself to Moses, to whom he gives the assignment to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses, not being too pleased with this task, tries to hold it off. God, however, is relentless, so Moses has to accept his mission. He subsequently asks what might be God’s name. God answers: ‘I am that I am’,² and – so the verse continues – ‘This is what you are to say to the Israelites: “I am has sent me to you”’ (New International Version).

To begin with I would like to consider this allusion from *The Lord of the Rings* to Exodus 3:14. In a subsequent section, by fo-

cusssing on the New Testament, I will illustrate that Peter Hastings’ remark is not the only possible connection between Tom and the Bible.

TOM BOMBADIL AND EXODUS

It is hardly possible for anyone who is acquainted with the Bible to fail to notice what Hastings is hinting at. It *really* is remarkable for Goldberry to refer to Tom by means of the verb ‘to be’ without adding a predicate; because in the biblical text God uses the same construction. Moreover, it is quite exceptional to use the verb ‘to be’ this way. Whenever one refers to one’s name or one’s nature ‘to be’ functions as a copula (like ‘He is Tom Bombadil’, or ‘He is a Vala’). Hastings’ idea of a possible connexion between both characters is by all means warranted.

However, in his reply Tolkien writes ‘As for Tom Bombadil, I really do think you are being too serious, besides missing the point. (Again the words are used by Goldberry and Tom not by me as a commentator) ... But Tom and Goldberry are referring to the mystery of *names*. Read and ponder Tom’s words in *LotR* Vol. 1³ ... Frodo has asked not “what is Tom Bombadil” but “Who is he”.

We and he no doubt often laxly confuse the questions. Goldberry gives what I think is the correct answer. We need not go into the sublimities of ‘I am that am’ – which is quite different from *he is*’ (*Letters*, 191-192)¹.

This fragment illustrates Tolkien’s rejection of any relationship whatsoever between Tom Bombadil and God. Nevertheless it is interesting to look whether on the basis of ‘He is’ we could find some intertextual relations between Tom Bombadil and several biblical texts. In the next sections I will discuss several biblical texts and relate those to the Tom Bombadil episode in *The Lord of the Rings*. Yet, before doing so, I have to make another remark concerning the text of Exodus 3:14.

Although Tolkien in his letter writes that Goldberry is focussing on the *mystery of names* (‘who is’), and not on Tom’s nature (‘what is’), and by means of this suggests that one cannot link Goldberry’s statement to God’s, the Exodus-text appears to be concerned with the very same question. Moses asks for God’s name, not for his nature. Not until after the verse in which God reveals his name (Exodus 3:14) does he make a statement on his

1. *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (ed. by H. Carpenter), London: George Allen & Unwin 1981, no. 153, 187.

2. ‘I am who I am’, or ‘I am that I am’ is an English rendering of the Hebrew *ehyè asher ehyè*; *ehyè* is a verbal form of the verb *hayah*, ‘to be’, and might as well be translated ‘I am that I will be’, or ‘I will be that I am’; the clause can be translated in various ways. The authors of Exodus thought the Hebrew name of God, YHWH , to be derived from the verb *hayah*, ‘to be’. So, ‘I am who I am’ is a non-scientific explanation for the Hebrew name of God. One writes YHWH since in Hebrew only the consonants are written. No one knows how God’s name ought to be pronounced. The most commonly known pronunciations are Jehova (which is completely wrong) and Yahweh (which *might* be correct).

3. ‘Don’t you know my name yet? That’s the only answer. Tell me, who are you, alone, yourself and nameless?’ *LotR*, p 146; I refer to the ‘de luxe edition’ of *LotR*, published by Unwin and Hyman, London 1990).

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divine nature: ‘God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, The Lord (YHWH), the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you. This (YHWH) is my name for ever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation”’ (New International Version). So, not until here does God say that he is a member of the species, the class of ‘gods’. The name, however, is closely connected with God’s being.

TOM BOMBADIL AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this section I will focus upon four elements in which we find Tom involved with the New Testament in one way or another.

1. *I am*

The authors of the New Testament depict Jesus as the son of God. One of these authors is the writer of the Gospel according to John. This author makes Jesus frequently use the designation ‘I am’, when the latter is engaged in conversation with his fellow Jewish discussion partners. In most cases ‘I am’ is followed by a predicate, e.g. ‘I am the bread of life’ (6:37), ‘I am the good shepherd’ (10:11), ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life’ (14:6). Apart from ‘I am-’ texts like these, ‘I am’ is encountered several times *without* a predicate. Whilst speaking to Jesus a Samaritan woman says: ‘I know that the messiah is coming’ (4:25), to which Jesus reacts ‘I am’ (4:26). In another episode, when he is arguing with his countrymen, Jesus says: ‘Very truly, I

tell you, before Abraham was, I am’ (8:58). And towards the end of the gospel several servants of the law come to arrest Jesus:

So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, ‘Whom are you looking for?’ They answered, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus replied, ‘I am’. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, ‘I am’, they stepped back and fell to the ground.

I am mainly interested in these three last mentioned cases. Here Jesus uses ‘I am’ in the same syntactic (though not semantic) way as does Goldberry when she answers Frodo with ‘He is’. Apart from this similarity between Jesus and Tom Bombadil, there are another two things that may establish a relationship between the man and the character. Firstly, from Jesus’ words ‘before Abraham was, I am’ we can infer that Jesus claims to have existed before Abraham was born. According to biblical chronology this might have been more than 1800 years before Jesus made his statement.⁴ The author of the gospel has Jesus express his pre-existence. The author claims that Jesus existed before the world came into being, as can be seen in the prologue to his gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the

Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it’ (John 1:1-5). In other words, since Jesus existed before the creation of the world, he is the oldest living being on earth. So, this bears quite a resemblance to Tom’s words³ that he is the oldest creature in Middle-earth (‘Eldest, that’s what I am’,) – and besides, there are some substantial arguments to ascribe Tom’s existence prior to the creation of Arda.⁵

A second similarity can be discerned when Jesus is arrested. As soon as he says ‘I am’, his adversaries recoil. His words overcome his enemies (just as in the gospels according to Mark, Matthew and Luke, when he silences the storm on the lake, or exorcizes evil spirits). In Tom’s case we also find that his words have authority over hostile powers: ‘You let them out again, Old Man Willow’, he said. ‘What be you a-thinking of? You should not be waking. Eat earth. Dig deep. Drink water! Bombadil is talking!’⁶ And also we find him at the Barrow-downs⁷ expelling the Barrow-wight by using nothing but his words: ‘Tom stooped, removed his hat, and came into the dark chamber, singing:

*Get out you old
Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!
Shrivel like the
cold mist,*

4. I here refer to the literary world of the Bible. Whether the Abraham of the Bible ever really lived does not matter here, although it is highly questionable.

5. Cf. my contribution in the annual of the Dutch Tolkienengootschap Unquendor “Who are you, Master? On the Nature and Identity of Tom Bombadil” (*Lembas Extra 1996*, 25-47).

6,7. *LotR 1990*, p135, pp 157-8. The spelling in the text differs from that on the map of Middle-earth, where it is ‘Barrow Downs’.

like the winds
go wailing,
Out into the
barren lands far beyond the
mountains!
Come never
here again! Leave your bar-
row empty!
Lost and forgot-
ten be, darker than the dark-
ness,
Where gates
stand for ever shut, till the
world is mended.

At these words there was a cry and part of the inner end of the chamber fell in with a crash.'

Whereas, according to Peter Hastings Goldberry's words to Frodo appeared to suggest that Tom was God, now – after considering a few parts of the Gospel according to John – we can also discern several relationships between Tom Bombadil and Jesus. Yet I will draw attention to some more connections between Tom and the biblical son of God.

2. Who are you?

In the New Testament book 'The Acts of the Apostles' Tom and Jesus seem to be related as well. In this book the author presents the narration of Jesus' initial followers, and how they proclaim the word of Jesus and spread the gospel during the second half of the first century AD all over the Roman Empire. The author also emphasizes the difficulties and resistance these people had to face. One of the worst opponents of the early Christians was Saul of Tarsis, who prosecuted them with great zeal. One day Saul is on his way from Jerusalem to

Damascus to arrest people who adhere to Jesus' teaching.

'Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:3-9).'⁸

Of course, there are obvious differences between this episode and episodes from *The Lord of the Rings*, yet we can detect a number of similarities. Most remarkable is Saul's exclamation 'Who are you, Lord?', to which Frodo's question to Tom 'Who are you, Master?'³ is an obvious allusion.⁹ Seen from a wider perspective one might say that both Saul and Frodo are heading for an important place in their respective worlds, Damascus and Rivendell – no matter how different the reasons why they go there. If then we take the events described in 'A knife in the dark' into consideration it is clear that something happens to Frodo that cannot be seen by his friends, viz.

his being wounded by the lord of the Nazgûl. Something analogous happens to Saul. What befell him is invisible to his fellow travellers ('they heard the voice but saw no one'). Finally, both Saul and Frodo are unable to reach their destiny on their own – they need the aid of others to get there.

3. The dead and the living

According to Christian tradition Jesus by his crucifixion, death and rising from the dead has conquered death: death is not final. This is, among other things, illustrated by the stories at the ends of the gospels that are set in the vicinity of Jesus' grave (which was not a grave in the ground, as we are used to nowadays, it was a grave in a wall of rock, that was closed by placing a large stone in front of its entrance). The story I would like to draw attention to is in the Gospel according to Mark (16:1-8). When early in the morning of the third day after Jesus' crucifixion and death, some female disciples – being quite troubled about who is going to help them to remove the stone before the entrance – are on their way to the grave to embalm Jesus' body, they discover the stone already gone, and the tomb empty. Yet, they meet a young man, clothed in white¹⁰, who tells them that Jesus is no longer there.

In this narration from the Gospel according to Mark we also come across several connections with an episode from *LotR* in which Tom Bombadil is involved. After the hobbits have taken their leave of Goldberry and Tom on the third (!) day of their acquaintance, they arrive at the Barrow-

8. Saul (Paul) twice relates this event in his own words (Acts 22:6-11 and 26:13-16).

9. In Greek Saul's question is 'tis ei, kurie;'. The word 'Master' is a good English equivalent of the Greek word *kurios*, which in translations of the New Testament is mostly translated by 'lord'.

10. According to the author of the Gospel according to Matthew, there is an angel in white; in the Gospel according to Luke (the same author who wrote the Acts of the Apostles), there are two young people, and in the Gospel according to John we read that Jesus' linen wrappings are the only things left in the grave.

downs, where they are overcome with fatigue and fall asleep. Frodo awakes inside a barrow, and discovers that it is ruled by death. Pippin, Merry and Sam 'were on their back, and their faces looked deathly pale; and they were clad in white'.¹¹ An arm is approaching to terminate their lives. Luckily Frodo remembers the song Tom taught them: if they might be in trouble, they only had to sing it and Tom would be there to help them. As soon as Frodo has finished the song Tom is on the spot already: 'There was a loud rumbling sound, as of stones rolling and falling, and suddenly light streamed in, real light, the plain light of day.' He saves them from death's door.

It is clear that there is no one-to-one relation between the story of Mark 16 and the episode on the Barrow-downs. Nevertheless the features that both stories have in common cannot be neglected:

1) three days; 2) a grave/barrow; 3) the rolling away of the stone before the grave/Tom's rolling away the stones; 4) the events told occur early in the morning¹²; 5) both the young man and the hobbits are clad in white; and 6) it is a tale about salvation from death.

Especially this latter element is of importance: in Christianity it is Jesus who saves people from death; in the first part of *LotR* Tom Bombadil appears to be the saviour.

4. Prior versions

A further interesting issue to mention here with regard to the adventures of the hobbits when they find themselves near Tom Bombadil on the one hand, and the New Testament on the other is the following. Since Christopher Tolkien's publication of Tolkien's writings on Middle-earth the readers of Tolkien's fiction get an idea of the way in which Tolkien composed his stories.¹³ The initial drafts of the account of the hobbits' stay with Tom Bombadil and the Barrow-downs episode are to be found in *The Return of the Shadow*. When the hobbits have broke their fasts together with Tom, he accompanies them to the East Road, so that they will safely reach Bree by nightfall. Tom's advice is to stay at 'The Prancing Pony', where 'Barliman Butterbur is the worthy keeper'.¹⁴ In an earlier version Tom's words run like this: 'Barnabas Butterbur is the worthy keeper: he knows Tom Bombadil, and Tom's name will help you'.¹⁵ This Barnabas Butterbur did have another name in a still earlier version: Timothy Titus.¹⁶ Both Barnabas Butterbur and Timothy Titus were, by the way, hobbits. The remarkable thing when we have a look at the relationships between Tom Bombadil and the Bible is the name, or rather the names, of Barliman Butterbur's predecessors.

Above I tried to show that it is possible to find various connec-

tions between episodes in which we meet Tom Bombadil and several texts from the New Testament. The resemblances were in most cases rather implicit. Now, when coming across the names Barnabas Butterbur and Timothy Titus, their relation to the New Testament become quite explicit. Not only do we encounter a letter to Titus, and two letters to Timothy in the New Testament, we also meet both Barnabas and Timothy in the already mentioned book 'The Acts of the Apostles'. Barnabas is a prominent character who is a fellow traveller of Paul (the name of Saul after the incident near Damascus); Timothy is one of Paul's important assistants. Moreover, both are frequently mentioned in New Testament letters.

CONCLUSION

It is striking – and it can hardly be coincidental – that as soon as Tom Bombadil enters, we find various implicit and explicit connections with events from the New Testament. There may be more intertextual relationships than Tolkien was aware of or wished to acknowledge. However, questioning the intentions of an author is venturing onto thin ice – for with regard to intent there is more at work than a writer's conscience. Therefore I will not tackle the issue of Tolkien's awareness of the above indicated similarities between his novel and the Bible.¹⁷

11, 14. *LotR*, 1991 edition. p156, p 163.

12. 'It was still fairly early by the sun, something between nine and ten...' (*LotR*, 1991 edition, p 160).

13. As for *The Lord of the Rings*, there are four volumes from the 'The History of Middle-earth' to be considered, viz. *The Return of the Shadow*, *The Treason of Isengard*, *The War of the Ring* and *Sauron Defeated*.

15,16. *The Return of the Shadow*. p 329, also cf. p 130; p 140, note 3

17. Relations between Tolkien's fiction and the Bible are among others mentioned by Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1982, Richard Purtill, *J.R.R. Tolkien. Myth, Morality and Religion*, San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers 1984, and Randel Helms, *Tolkien and the Silmarils*, London: Thames and Hudson 1981. In "The Elder Days: The Primeval History and *The Silmarillion*" (*Lembas Extra 1998: Proceedings of Unquendor's Third Lustrum Conference held in Delft, 25 May 1996*, 56-72) I showed that the composition of *The Silmarillion* appears to be based upon the composition of Genesis 1-11.

'Tolkien: Man and Myth. A Literary Life' Joseph Pearce.

Harper Collins, 1998. ISBN 0-00-274018-4

Michael Tolkien

Dust jacket browsers might wonder whether this 'original', 'major new study' of Tolkien's life, character and work, launched in the wake of Book of the Century controversies, is a reconstruction of well-worn materials on the relatively safe territory of 'traditional religious faith' to assure us that myth is 'real'.

For Pearce the ullulations of establishment literati and 'educational' axe-grinders are more than an incentive: they make for a structural tactic to juxtapose assumptions and prejudice with analysis, and to suggest that the modes and means of attack have changed little since the first appearance of *The Lord of the Rings*, while positive criticism has matured into the open-minded and scholarly standards he emulates. Qualities evident where the biographical narrative or the discussion of intellectual influences follows or admits Carpenter on the life and 'The Inklings', weighing this 'established' authority against later, subtler interpretations from a surprising range of sources and his own quietly interposed perceptions. Carpenter's¹ gloss on the tenacity of Tolkien's faith and allegiance to the Catholic Church in relation to Mabel Tolkien's death is incisively quelled, and Tolkien's approach to his own Mount Doom in the 1970s, in contrast to the 'official' biography, penetrates the joys, conflicts and bereavements in terms of the writer's imaginative and spiritual

aptitudes. The relationship with Edith for example has been throughout a carefully considered thread and foil, and citing a letter reflecting on her role and influence after her death, Pearce comments illuminatingly that it is written 'in the way he had always expressed himself when he had something to say beyond the power of mere facts. He reverted to the language of myth and more specifically to the language of myth she had inspired...' Instances among many where new perspectives, including a shrewd reappraisal of Tolkien/Lewis relations, signal the need for a more comprehensive critical biography beyond the purpose but on the lines of this book.

'... an irony aimed at those who reject myth as unreal or escapist while inventing proofs of what they have set out to discover.'

'If one is to understand the man behind the myth', it contends, challenging its own process, 'one must first avoid turning the man into myth.' No facile maxim but an irony aimed at those who reject myth as unreal or escapist while inventing proofs of what they have set out to discover. Eulogisers and debunkers alike should not look for pseudo-psychological or ethical keys in

the man, his formative influences, and for good measure in the works. Typically in one of several balanced and contextually appropriate surveys of Tolkien's marriage and family life there's well-documented discussion of extremes like John Cary's² schematic sexual decoding of the life and work. Here again the eloquent but practical wisdom of the author's letters quiets the storm. Pearce clearly appreciates how these articulate in response to queries or anxieties nuances of feeling and belief subconsciously implied rather than imposed in the fictional and even the academic writing, though these are scavenged 'for tantalising titbits'. A rapacity demonstrated in a well-placed chapter about misconceptions that stem from attitudes to myth, examining among other critical ingenuities Brenda Partridge's³ Freudian fantasy over the hobbits' encounter with Shelob, from which it is refreshing to return to Pearce's own cogent account of an episode whose controversial aspects Tolkien took very seriously, namely the struggles of Frodo and Sam on Mount Doom seen in terms of sublimated orthodox Christian preoccupations with sacrifice, free will, the conflict of good and evil and what they signify in the light of eternity or a greater reality beyond the hints and shadows of this perplexing world.

The central thesis of the book is that such moral and 'mystical' concerns are 'at the core of all

(Tolkien's) work'. Showing *how* and suggesting that these are integral with the inspiration responsible for the quality and uniqueness of the work, evokes an imaginative and far-reaching reappraisal of the creation myth in *The Silmarillion* to demonstrate that Tolkien 'did not consider his sub-created myth as fiction, as popularly understood, but as a figment of truth.' And to substantiate the argument that 'if Tolkien was the man behind the myth, its sub-creator, *The Silmarillion* was also the myth behind the man, moulding his creative vision', a letter recounting a mystical experience of angelic orders is compellingly aligned with the principles of world-fashioning in the legends. Pearce is adept at this kind of fusing and paralleling of primary and secondary materials, and it adds conviction to an adjacent chapter illustrating the paradox that while it is possible to enjoy the work without sharing the beliefs, one cannot ignore the positive and aesthetic effects of Christian Orthodoxy and the appropriateness of Tolkien's coherent myth for expressing these. Moreover, the complex matter and significance of there being no sub-created theology for the creation and destinies of creatures other than humankind, is deftly explored with regard to how it both facilitates and debilitates the machinations of evil.

My enthusiasm for Pearce's lucid presentation was tempered by a chapter that sets out to show the

indispensable Englishness of the hobbitical Tolkien behind the myth, returns to materials in Tolkien's shorter experiments with Faërie vital to an earlier chapter on *The Truth behind the Myth*, then expatiates on Chestertonian analogues not all clearly related to the purpose of a chapter belatedly orientated by reflections on English ale.

A more serious matter, though, for a book subtitled '*A Literary Life*', is Pearce's deference to the availability of specialised studies by Shippey and Fliieger⁴ which preclude direct examination of Tolkien's academic and philological career in an account of his Christianity and its connection with the 'philosophy of myth that underpins his sub-creation.' But since the formative linguistic and literary interests are part of the

'... predating the rationalist subdivision of 'real' and 'imaginary' that gave rise to fiction where the journey of the soul becomes the struggle of the psyche.'

equation, the general reader, at whom the book is aimed and whom I don't want to deter, suffers a certain loss of perspective.

Even if *On Fairy Stories*,⁶ the minor fiction, and many enlightened commentaries are correlated and examined fruitfully to show the nature of Tolkien's myth-

making, one cannot ignore Shippey's⁵ concern that OFS is equivocal and 'circular', and how he attributes this to 'its lack of a philological core or kernel', a reminder of Tolkien's⁷ recollection that he 'began with language' and 'invented legends of the same taste.'

So it is worth noting by way of extension to the book's coverage of adverse responses that Tolkien's professional immersion in pre-Reformation English and its cultural and literary antecedents, as the lectures of the 1930s indicate, nurtured a penchant for kinds of narrative and ambience (beyond the scope of Grimm, Andersen, Lang, or even Macdonald) and predating the rationalist subdivision of 'real' and 'imaginary' that gave rise to fiction where the journey of the soul becomes the struggle of the psyche. Therefore much misapprehension and even conscientious criticism like Auden's published⁸ doubts over quest derives not only from failure to appreciate Christianised myth-making but from the way the familiar and perhaps delusive trappings of the novel (dialogue, character conflict, careful chronology, geographical consistency) are blended with a now unpalatable wholeness of vision. To this the Ego is ultimately subject, implying, as Pearce aptly says, that 'truth ... is ultimately metaphysical in nature; the physical universe ... a reflection of some greater metaphysical purpose...'

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Analysis

The History of Middle-earth: from a Mythology for England to a Recovery of the Real Earth

Christopher Garbowski

One of J.R.R. Tolkien's great ambitions was to have *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* published together. This in fact delayed the publication of the former, since Allen & Unwin, who had originally instigated the trilogy and were willing to risk the publication of this unusual book, were not surprisingly unprepared for the additional publication of what seemed to be an altogether obscure work. In an undated letter (probably from late 1951) to Milton Waldman, a different potential publisher, the author presented a vision of his mythology.

Tolkien starts by stating his original motivation of creating a large mythology dedicated to England, which he felt to be missing in the tradition of his beloved country. The cosmogonical myth, he continues, introduces God and the Valar, the latter as "beings of the same order of beauty, power and majesty as the 'gods' of higher mythology."¹ The cycle then proceeds to the history of the elves, "or *The Silmarillion* proper," and the latter's great accomplishments and travails. Slowly men are introduced in the First Age of the Sun, wherein 'history', as such, or a regular chronology begins, and together through the agency of Earendil, who represents both 'races', they induce the assistance of the Valar to cast out the fallen Vala Morgoth, the perpetrator of the major woes of both races, into the Void.

The next cycle, or 'Second Age,' deals with the history of the 'Atlantis' isle of *Numenore* where the men who helped in the

Parallels with the process of myth creation found in the work of contemporary philosophers

conflagration with Morgoth are rewarded with an Eden-like island residence set between the "uttermost West" - Valinor, the residence of the Valar - and Middle-earth, while the elves who do not leave Middle-earth exercise a kind of 'antiquarian custodian function' in the lands they control. Meanwhile the former vassal of Morgoth, Sauron, grows in power, finding ways of undermining first the strength of the elves in Middle-earth and finally the nearly invincible men of the West. Tempting them with immortality Sauron convinces the Númenóreans to break the ban of the Valar and the latter tragically assault Valinor, the forbidden realm. Númenor is destroyed by direct intervention of Iluvatar, the one God (aside from the original creation of the world and the subsequent creation of his children, the Elves and Humans, this is the only such miracle in the mythology) who changes the shape of the world to a globe and "[t]hereafter there is no visible dwelling of the divine or immortal on earth. Valinor (i.e. paradise) and even Eressëa are removed, remaining only in the memory of the earth."² A few castaway Númenóreans make their way to Middle-earth, setting up kingdoms, and their history is

joined with the fortunes and misfortunes of the elves, in their combined struggle with Sauron, for the remainder of the Second Age. After their costly self-satisfaction with apparent victory, the struggle resumes for the full extent of the Third Age, wherein are set *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The former was independently conceived, but turned out to be essential in the history of Middle-earth:

*As the high Legends of the beginning are supposed to look at things through Elvish minds, so the middle tale of the Hobbits takes a virtually human point of view - and the last tale binds them.*³

The vision Tolkien cogently set out in the letter is basically the story that readers of *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and the trilogy will recognize. For those who take this as the whole story, there is a major flaw: the former was and remained to the end of the author's life a great, unfulfilled project. As is fairly well known, *The Silmarillion* as it was published constituted an edited compilation from different versions of the myths of the 'Elder Days' (as they came to be known upon the publication of LOTR. Moreover, the letter gives the false impression that each phase has been given equal treatment in the legendarium.

Following the publication of *The History of Middle-earth* series by Christopher Tolkien, we have a detailed record of the creative process by which this mythical world arose. Since there is no definitive version of the mythol-

ogy of Middle-earth, in a sense each part belongs to the corpus, with all its strengths and weaknesses. It might also be argued that for many the sum is worth more than the total of the literary merit of its parts. Especially if we look at the question from a Franklian perspective. According to Viktor E. Frankl⁴, "each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life, by answering for his own life."

A major part of the artist's response to life is his creativity. The passion with which Tolkien responded to his creative need and the perfection he demanded of himself demonstrates to what a great extent he "answered for his life" through his art. Indeed, the author⁵ claimed of his major effort *The Lord of the Rings*, "[i]t is written in my life-blood, such as it is, thick or thin; and I can no other."

The earliest version of the Silmarillion mythology - started shortly after the author's experiences in the trenches of the First World War arose from a number of kernel stories which were originally loosely sutured together. The earliest component story itself permitted such a construction; a mortal sailor named Eriol - roughly from Beowulfian times - reaches an enchanted island of elves (which in one of the author's conceptions is eventually to become England), where through a succession of tales recounted to him he learns the complicated history of Middle-earth. Thus the history, eventually published in two volumes as *The Book of Lost Tales* grows out of an oral tradition which naturally enough focuses on certain high points, or 'tales'. The *Tales*, however, although worked upon extensively, as each new tale required some integration into the whole and affected the latter cor-

respondingly - were never actually completed and fizzle out toward an earlier poetic core.

Around 1931 a major narrative change took place in the *Silmarillion* mythology. While 'Tales', are oral, 'Quenta Noldoriwa' - the only complete version of the Silmarillion mythology - is rather like a medieval chronicle. As an immediate consequence, the mythology acquires the elf-centred perspective Tolkien refers to, as opposed to tales recounted to a human listener contemporary with Arthur. Conceptually, this is a move away from - though not a complete sundering with 'a mythology for England.' Józef Lichański suggests it is not a coincidence that the author had more or less simultaneously com-

'... for many the sum is worth more than the total of the literary merit of its parts.'

pleted the first version of *Mythopœia*, Tolkien's philosophical poem concerning the "subcreative" urge of humanity. In other words, the author becomes more interested in the cosmological aspect of his mythology;⁶ approximately a movement from the particular (national), to the universal.

Almost at the very end of his creative life, Tolkien wrote fictional essays that in theory were to help him rewrite the entire opus. Sometimes these reflections if taken seriously change the sense of completed works. Consider the nature of Aman (the geographical location of Valinor) where the immortal Valar and Eldar, or high elves, live: Tolkien reflected on what a mortal would feel if he happened to live in this blessed realm. The problem he

'foresaw' was that a person would achieve nothing upon gaining, access to Aman since his own mortality would not be changed, indeed

*he would become filled with envy, deeming himself a victim, denied the graces given to all other things. (...) He would not escape the fear and sorrow of his swift mortality that is his lot upon Earth, in Arda Marred, but would be burdened by it unbearably to the loss of all delight.*⁷

Hardly the best place for Frodo and eventually Sam, who make their way there at the conclusion of the trilogy, to have gained a rest from their psychological burdens as Ring bearers.

Out of the welter of texts - often fragmentary and of very mixed literary worth - arises at once an alternative world and one that is very much our own. A new or revised geography and imaginary history grows with practically each version. Over the years Middle-earth undergoes a growth in almost all fields of human thought and perception: geographical, historical, philosophical and aesthetic. At the very least, with the number of genres that are explored to convey it (novel, verse, fictional essay, etc., with a children's story to boot!), to the chagrin of the traditional literary critic, this world has broken out of the convention of the closed text.

Lichański gives the writing of *Mythopœia* as the turning point in the development of Silmarillion mythology. A serious examination of Middle-earth must include a look at the author's concept of myth. Maria Kuteeva observes of Tolkien's thinking as to the origin of myth, that "he generally relates it to the origins of language and the human mind," which brings him into line with some of Ernst Cassirer's ideas,

for whom...

*Language and myth stand in an indissoluble correlation with one another, from which both emerge but gradually as independent elements. They are two diverse shoots from the same parent stem, the same impulse of symbolic formation, springing from the same mental activity, a concentration and heightening of simple sensory experience.*⁸

As Tolkien⁹ phrases it, "The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our world coeval." Thus if you have a habit of creating languages, one of the earliest passions of this author, naturally enough "your language construction will breed a mythology."¹⁰ Tolkien's dominant artistic concept, which he largely inherited from the Romantic tradition, is that which he called sub-creation. According to the concept the religious artist imitates his Creator by imagining his own world. According to the author¹¹ "God is the Lord, of Angels, and of Men - and of elves" i.e. of the author's art. Thus at one level the act of creating is an invitation to an I-Thou relationship with the most enriching *Other*.

Hardly surprising in this process is the modern mentality clashing in the artist with cultural tradition. For instance, by his own admission¹² he describes the transition from a flat world to a globe in his mythology, as "an inevitable transition, I suppose to a modern 'myth-maker' with a mind subjected to the same 'appearances' as ancient men, and partly fed on their myths, but taught that the Earth was round from the earliest years."

In Tolkien's analysis, the major elements which go into the creation of fairy stories are independent invention, inheritance and diffusion.¹³ Although diffusion is not absent in his Middle-earth,

most interesting is his creative use of inheritance at virtually every step of its creation: e.g. elves, dwarves, etc. Tom Shippey, who has done the most significant research on this facet of the author's work, says¹⁴ in regard to the elves of Middle-earth, "the strong point in Tolkien's 're-creations' [is] that they take in all available evidence, trying to explain both good and bad sides of popular story; the sense of inquiry, prejudice, heresay and conflicting opinion often give the elves (and other races) depth."

There is, however, a hierarchy the elements. Tolkien stresses that diffusion (borrowing in space) and *inheritance* (borrowing in time) are in the end dependent on *invention*. Invention is largely dependant on the imagination. For Tolkien the imagination of the artist is only different in degree to that of another person; it is the faculty of imagination in itself that is really

'... it is the faculty of imagination in itself that is really amazing.'

amazing. Not many clues are given as to how imagination works. Among the few hints that he gives, it seems that for the author "the invention of the adjective was a great step in the evolution of mythical grammar."¹⁵ In Tolkien's words¹⁵, "The mind that thought of *light, heavy, grey, yellow, swift*, also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into a swift water".

Yet in practice the three elements are not simply separated, but are combined for a specific purpose. Tolkien pointedly argues this in

his elegant allegory concerning the Beowulf poet and the latter's use of older traditions to create a 'tower'. "[F]rom the top of that tower," Tolkien informs us, "the man had been able to look out upon the sea."¹⁶

The question arises - what did Tolkien see from the top of *his* tower? We might start by considering in turn the higher and lower aspects of myth for the author. There is something of Keats' "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty" in Tolkien's thinking. Recognising that beauty gave no guarantee of truth, he nonetheless felt it to be "concomitant of truth."¹⁷ Although he knew beauty could be connected with evil, he also stated,¹⁸ rather enigmatically, that presently "goodness is itself bereft rather of its proper beauty." One aspect of his mature art that he felt was an expression of beauty aiming at truth was the happy ending, or 'eucatastrophe'. Eucatastrophe is indicative of a desire for the 'good', which is itself a fact even if it proves unattainable. Much as Tolkien writes¹⁹ concerning 'inward peace' to his son during world war II: 'If you cannot achieve inward peace, and it is given to few to do so (least of all to me) in tribulation, do not forget that the inspiration it is not a vanity, but a concrete act.'

At the of lower level, myth gains relevance by facing the question of the "monster", connected intimately, although not solely, to the problem of evil. Surprisingly after the experiences of Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipalago, evil is not rarely rationalized and treated as if it were a human invention or construct, the subsequent intellectual attitude being: 'monsters are made, not given. And if monsters are made, they can be unmade, too.'²⁰ Nor was Tolkien free of this temptation; in

Farmer Giles of Ham the dragon is finally tamed by Giles. The story tends towards a rather typical contemporary children's story where the monster is eventually mollified.

Obviously Tolkien does not offer a solution to the problem of evil, a task beyond the scope of any art. The point is in his not relativising it. Although identifying the monster in Middle-earth is not that simple, undoubtedly a vital element is the evil of war. One of the few personal experiences Tolkien admitted to having affected his most important work was the horror of the First World War. Not without reason Brian Rosebury²¹ claims of the trilogy that "[i]t might indeed be seen in certain respects as the last work of first world War literature, published almost forty years after the war ended."

Moreover, Tolkien never forgot what he called the 'animal horror' of trench warfare. A number of the *Lost Tales* were written shortly after his experiences on the front and seem to bear the freshest traces of his impressions. One of the key scenes in "Turambar and the Foaloke" (later Turin Turambar) portrays the confrontation of a select band of warrior elves, together with Turin's mother and sister, with the dragon Foaloke. Some of the passages, although brief, are quite telling: "Now was the band aghast as they looked upon the region from afar, yet they prepared for battle." The dragon comes out to meet the attackers, but instead of doing battle another tactic is used:

Straightway great fog and steams leapt up and and a stench was mingled therein, so that that band was whelmed in vapours and well-nigh stifled, and they crying to one another in the mist displayed their

*presence to the worm; and he laughed aloud*²²

Although nothing in the description goes against mythic sources, the two main elements here could almost be taken as a stenographic short-hand from memories or perhaps nightmares of the war recently experienced, the defoliated wasteland and the panic caused by a gas attack. These elements are expanded in reworkings of the Turin story. Here, shortly after the fact, it is almost as if the trauma they remind him of is too close to be treated in greater detail. The theme of the story of Turin likewise matches the internecine nature and moral ambiguity of the first world war.

'The Fall of Gondolin' presents a different aspect of the war. On the one hand, quite against the spirit of trench warfare, we have

'The theme of the story of Turin likewise matches the internecine nature and moral ambiguity of the first world war.'

human bravery brought to the fore (cf. Shippey), on the other hand, a sophisticated war machine appears. In retrospect the episode seems almost like a nightmarish prophesy of world war II. Some of the weapons involved are reminiscent of tanks, which is quite interesting since tanks were actually used by the Allies in WWI: proof that the horror of war had greater impact on the sensitive artist than being on the right side. This is confirmed in a letter to his son during WWII, one that casts a good deal of light on *The Lord of the Rings*, where Tolkien²³ writes:

Well, the War of the Machines seems to be drawing to its final inconclusive chapter - leaving,

alas, everyone the poorer, many bereaved or maimed and millions dead, and only one thing triumphant: the Machines.

In LOR itself ancient literary sources merge with modern experience. For instance, an echo of Beowulf can be surmised in a particular incident from the siege of Minis Tirith where the enemy flings captured heads over the walls of the besieged city in order to dishearten its defenders:

*They were grim to look on (...). But marred and dishonoured as they were, it often chanced that thus a man would see again the face of someone that he had known, who had walked proudly once in arms, or tilled the fields, or ridden upon a holiday from the green vales in the hills.*²⁴

In the Anglo-Saxon epic²⁵ the company with Beowulf on the trail of Grendel's mother comes across a grisly sight on a sea-cliff "Of slaughtered Æschere's severed head." The source seems clear enough, yet the differences are striking. The head from the epic is Hrothgar's good friend, an identifiable person of high status. The twentieth century novel presents numerous all but anonymous disfigured visages which have met their postmortem fate through mechanical means. The resultant effects from the catapults of the orcs require little imagination to transform into the shrapnel or any number of mauling tools of total warfare.

Where is the embodiment of the war monster in Tolkien's mature art? Although there are many terror inspiring creatures in *The Lord of the Rings*, the ones most suitable for such a role in the 'War of the Machines' of modern warfare are the more mundane orcs. Rather than some impressive creature, the orcs represent the horde, or collective monster of total warfare; wielders of the

catapults, they themselves were cogs in the machine. Critics have pointed to the orcs as the weak point of Tolkien's mythology and the author himself toiled over rationalizing their existence in Middle-earth, but if the elves are the embodiment of certain positive human characteristics, orcs are symbolic of the process of dehumanization - dehumanization in the direction of the Machine.

Rosebury²¹ has written fairly accurately of *The Silmarillion* that "[t]he earlier mythical writings have (...) an insistent, almost pagan, pessimism, and a surprisingly grim level of violence, which darken, indeed come close to undermining, the affirmative theistic universe they postulate." Many factors, biographical and otherwise, may have contributed to such a tone in his earlier work. Tolkien was, after all, orphaned early in life. Nonetheless the mark of the war experience, still evident in the trilogy so many years after the event, seems unmistakable.

Yet if the malice of war is one of the primary monsters of the Middle-earth mythology, it is not necessarily the main concern. Moreover, as mentioned, a different concept makes itself felt in LOR - eucatastrophe, "the sudden joyous turn"²⁶ rescues optimism from an undercurrent of pessimism in the novel.

The concept is introduced theoretically in the lecture of 1939 *On Fairy Stories*. No doubt there is a connection - suggested already by Rosebury - between the theory and the earlier practice in *The Hobbit*, which was written with children in mind. What marks this story off from other children's stories Tolkien had written earlier was its greater inclusion of elements of the *Silmarillion* mythology. The story reciprocated: aside

from introducing the hobbits, the book changed the tone of the mythology; it seems Tolkien had gained enough inner strength to listen to the child within. This contributed to his overcoming his longstanding artistic pessimism.

Artistic optimism requires existential support to avoid sentimentality. At the very core of our existence we feel the unique quality of our own life. Frankl⁴ acknowledges this intuition, stressing its task-oriented nature. "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated."

However that may be, much in our own experience tends to deny the feeling of this exceptional

'...the earlier mythical writings have an insistent, almost pagan, pessimism, and a surprisingly grim level of violence...'

characteristic of life. For instance, people in known circumstances are often (though not always) all too predictable. W. H. Auden²⁷ similarly claims that most lives are usually static:

If I (...) try to look at the world as if I were the lens of a camera, I observe that the vast majority of people have to earn their living in a fixed place, and that journeys are confined to people on holiday or with independent means.

Certainly people are more mobile now than when Auden wrote his observation, but the gist of the argument remains valid. It is in response to just this criticism that Tolkien²⁸ himself plausibly replied: "That is another reason

for sending 'hobbits' - a vision of a simple and calculable people in simple and long-settled circumstances - on a *journey* far from settled home into strange lands and dangers."

There is an axiological significance to the unexplored vistas which the prose of the trilogy constantly suggests. Different vistas suggest that whichever way you go, there are subsequently many roads you will not take, many things you will not see. The problem arises: which road do you take?

The gravity of the decision is all the more important in that the journey thus understood suggests the course of self-transcendence. Treebeard says of the Ents that they "are more like Elves: less interested in themselves than Men are, and better at getting inside other things."²⁹ Similarly, self-transcendence is propelled less by greater self-awareness than by more profound external-awareness. Too much self-awareness can even be a hindrance; according to Frankl³⁰ the self should be like an eye, an organ that is only aware of itself when suffering a visual defect and "[t]he more the eye sees itself, the less the world and its objects are visible to it."

This is one of the reasons Tolkien's heroes seem so simple (although they are more complex than meets the eye). The hobbits, for instance, display a number of characteristics, such as curiosity, which help them get "inside other things" From the Franklian perspective one might risk saying these heroes are not traditional pre-, but rather post-psychanalytical characters. The profoundest meaning of quest can only be understood by relating it to the individual protagonist. According to Frankl,³¹ the prime motivation a person possesses,

above that of his instincts or a desire to control his/her environment, is the will to meaning. And in finding meaning "we are perceiving a possibility embedded in reality." Tolkien's protagonists demonstrate three major roads to discovering sense: purposeful action, service, and suffering, embodied primarily by Aragorn, Sam Gamgee and Frodo.

In his active quest Aragorn demonstrates that freedom means accepting responsibility. He accepts Elrond's task in regard to Arwen his love, a task unreasonable at one level, yet which ultimately requires him to become fully himself. Throughout his quest Aragorn shows the different qualities of emotional intelligence needed to do what is humanly possible under the circumstances.

Jane Nitzche³² suggestively compares the 'gold' of Bilbo's poem - i.e. Aragorn - to the false gold of the Ring. Throughout the trilogy Sauron is never in possession of the Ring while Aragorn has it within his reach for lengthy periods; Aragorn becomes the true Lord of the Ring by rejecting it. Through what Frankl calls paradoxical intention, he becomes 'true' gold.

There is a relatively clear relationship between service and self-transcendence. Needless to say, service must be voluntary. The glaring contrast of Sam's service with that of Gollum's illustrates this: the latter also enters Frodo's service, but on the basis of an oath. This particular oath depended on power. Gollum swears by the Ring, the embodiment of power in the trilogy. Frodo and Gollum have an uncanny understanding of each other; this understanding is partially positive (both have suffered on account of the Ring) yet primarily based on their common relationship to

power, i.e. to the factor that annihilates their individuality and makes them uniform; even Frodo eventually calls the Ring 'precious'.

Conversely, Sam serves his master even when he ostensibly betrays him. Faramir, to whom this 'betrayal' was made, comforts the servant: "Your heart is shrewd as well as faithful, and saw clearer than your eyes."³³ This way he wins him unlooked for, but crucial assistance. Ultimately, Sam's deep empathy with his master allows him to get inside the *other*, and thus enlarge himself.

Gollum has been called Frodo's alter ego; more accurately, the

'Myth is not entertainment, but rather the crystallization of experience, and far from being escapist literature, fantasy is an intensification of reality.'

characters illustrate the difference between suffering which eventually leads to meaning and the existential vacuum which denies it. There are roughly three major phases to Frodo's suffering. The first is after experiencing the wound on Weathertop, when he suffers in the manner of those with an illness. Further on, when Frodo enters Mordor and his burden is heaviest, his road is largely patterned on the *Via Dolorosa* (Sam takes the part of Simon the Cyrenean at times). The last phase of his suffering, where any semblance of a quest is gone, is more subtle: after his traumatic experiences Frodo realizes that he can never be like other people. On his return journey he complains:

"There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same, for I

will not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?"³⁴

Gandalf, to whom the question was addressed, does not answer because he seems to realize that no one else can provide the sense in suffering for you: you must find your own sense. Eventually Frodo does find meaning in his suffering. He realizes the sacrifice of his personal happiness has helped others, moreover, he devotes his time to writing (perhaps an autobiographical element can be detected here).

Of the three roads to meaning, suffering provides the greatest challenge. Nonetheless, if it is not possible to attain, then meaning is lost in the other roads as well. Frankl³⁵ validates the meaning Frodo has found for himself: *The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances - to add a deeper meaning to his life.*

The arguments presented to this point have hopefully given some credence to Alan Garner's³⁶ assertion, that "the elements of myth work deeply and are powerful tools. Myth is not entertainment, but rather the crystallization of experience, and far from being escapist literature, fantasy is an intensification of reality".

This intensification of reality is more than a little related to its defamiliarization; the alternative world reflects back on the well known one. "The elvishness of the elves," Tom Shippey³⁷ so aptly phrases it, "is meant to reflect back on the humanity of man."

Tolkien's art, however, differs from the avante-garde artist's concept of making the familiar strange, since the latter tends to

view reality as a construct, whereas Tolkien is inclined to treat the world as real. The author makes the point in *On Fairy Stories* that fantasy, which for him is virtually synonymous with art, depends on the reader's possessing a clear cognition of the difference between the created and the real world.

Yet this 'real' world must be seen for the amazing creation it is. A sceptic of Rohan says to Aragorn: "Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?" To which the Ranger replies: "(...) The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day."³⁸

Tolkien³⁹ called this aim of art 'recovery'. That basically means not simply assisting in 'seeing things as they are', but rather in 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them.' There is then a dynamic aspect to recovery: we do well to remember Goethe's

words "If I take man as he is, I make him worse; if I take him as he ought to be, I make him become what he can be."⁴⁰ Tolkien's concept, however, is not purely anthropocentric, so that it includes implications for ecological awareness.

Much of my analysis of Tolkien's fantasy has been based on concepts taken from Viktor E. Frankl's existential analysis. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that some of the ideas of the latter resonate so strongly in the art of the former: if *The Lord of the Rings* is virtually the last work of world war I literature, Frankl's psychology has emerged from the crucible of his years spent in WW II concentration camps.

In Tolkien's trilogy there is a passage⁴¹ where in the depths of Mordor Sam sights a star and *The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft clear and*

cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.

At this juncture fantasy and concentration camp literature briefly meet. The above passage is reminiscent of those in Frankl's memoirs "Experiences in a Concentration Camp" (in his *Man's Search for Meaning*) where he speaks of the hope prisoners gained from the beauty of the sunset, the sound of a bird singing or the memory of a loved one. What's more, at some level, at least, one detects a commonality of experience here in what Tolkien must have similarly felt during the nightmare of trench warfare. In the art of one and the psychology of the other simple truths are wrested from the cataclysms of the twentieth century. It would be a pity if these truths were lost on those of us not so profoundly tried.

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The Virtual History of Middle-earth

John Ellison

This little 'jeu d'esprit' was suggested to me by a recently published book with the title "Virtual History". It consisted of contributions by a group of professional historians, each of whom selected a particular turning point in history at which events, hypothetically speaking, could have turned out otherwise than as they actually did. Each one of them constructed a "counter-factual" as they called it, charting the course which events might have taken subsequently; they relied on their understanding, as historians, of the patterns by which historical events and processes tend to shape themselves. Among the selected examples were:-

What if:

Charles I had avoided the Civil War

England had not lost the American Colonies

Britain had not gone to war in 1914

Churchill had made peace with Hitler in 1940 - as John Charmley and one or two other 'revisionist' historians have argued he should have done. (They are rather 'shot down' in this book).

It struck me that it could be entertaining, and perhaps even instructive, to apply this exercise to the history of Middle-earth. There are many possible scenarios, but perhaps the most obvious is the one I have chosen.

"What if Sauron had won the war of the Ring?"

Now, when one reads LotR the dominant impression one receives is that the inevitable outcome will be that Middle-earth will be plunged into a second Dark Age; slavery and barbarism will endure without any foresee-

able end, and that life for all the inhabitants Middle-earth thereafter will be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. That is what everyone who knows of this situation, including the relatively few persons who are actually aware of the existence of the Ring, appears to believe.

But as soon as one begins to look at the possible outcomes, or outcome, in the light of the evidence, it begins to seem that this was not the foreordained result of a victory for Sauron and the forces of darkness, or even the likeliest one. It was believed at the time, of course, but that was because it was what Sauron wanted people to believe; in the dissemination of propaganda he was Joseph Goebbels' natural ancestor, and although he was expecting to proclaim the equivalent of a "Thousand year Reich", it does not mean that one was inevitably going to follow and endure.

In spite of the terrifying and maleficent powers assumed to be inherent in it, and to be conferred on its possessor, there is surprisingly little actual evidence of how the Ring was supposed to operate, especially as regards what might be called the 'nuts and bolts' of administering a world empire, however brutally and tyrannically.

Tolkien never really explains (after all should he?) how Sauron was going to organize, so as to hold his vastly increased dominions together, security, administration, finance, transport and other such mundane matters. That even Sauron realized that world dominion was a long term goal rather than immediately his for the taking, is evident from the list of the Mouth of Sauron's demands before the last battle, which defines the area to be "tributary to Mordor", as the ar-

east west of the Anduin as far as the Misty Mountains and the Gap of Rohan. At least for the time being, that was as far as his grasp was likely to be able to reach.

In order to present this alternative scenario or "counter-factual", I have presumed a historian actually alive in Middle Earth some eight and a half centuries after the end of the War of the Ring; a historian who looks back at the intervening period. It is important to keep in mind that the evidence available to such a one would be limited and unsatisfactory in all sorts of ways. Written records would be scarce and fragmentary, and much would have been suppressed or distorted by Sauron or his agents. By that time, too, many events, persons or things, which we know as reality from the history of the Third Age, would have faded into the realm of myth and legend. No one, by then, would be likely to believe that Elves once lived and walked in Middle-earth; they would have become victims of history's tendency to turn itself into myth as it recedes into the distant past.

At the same time many events or motives in this imaginary "counter-factual" history will carry resonances of counterparts in the contemporary or recent history of our own world; just as many have found to be suggested by a reading of LotR itself. This need not arouse surprise; history, as de Tocqueville said, is rather like a picture gallery in which there are few originals but a great many copies. Therefore I make no apology for the use of occasional, seemingly anachronistic "contemporary" expressions in "translating" my imaginary historian's text. Apart from these, the shortcomings or omissions in the "translation" are entirely my own.

As we now look back from the relative peace and prosperity of Middle-earth in our own time, (though social and economic problems abound and we must at all costs avoid complacency) we find it difficult to realise and appreciate the mood of panic, terror and sheer despair that gripped it following the disastrous outcome of the Battle of the Morannon that brought the Third Age to an end. The combined armies of the West had been annihilated, and the principal captains, including Aragorn the claimant to the dual kingship of Gondor and Arnor, together with Mithrandir, his chief civilian adviser, had perished. Although fighting on other fronts to the west and in the north was still continuing, in Mirkwood and notably about Dale and Erebor, the position of military superiority in which Sauron's forces found themselves as a result of the battle was so overwhelming that these other campaigns soon assumed the character of "mopping up operations". Rohan was overrun; other areas, notably the district of Lothlorien, had been deserted by their inhabitants in haste, and finally the city and citadel of Minas Tirith was surrendered in the name of Denethor, the presumed Ruling Steward. The news and details of his self-immolation during the earlier siege of the city was suppressed at that time, having previously been censored by Mithrandir and the other leaders of the Gondorian forces as 'bad for morale'. It is now of course generally accepted by historians as having a basis in fact.

The war was of course formally ended by the Treaty of Osgiliath, Fourth Age 1, which embodied Sauron's terms as transmitted by his Lieutenant of the Tower, the "Mouth of Sauron", in the abortive negotiations that had

The Decline and Fall of the Sauronic empire: its lessons for us today

Opening address delivered at the Inaugural Conference of the Historical Association of the Gondorian Federation, Minas Tirith, Fourth Age 755

preceded the last battle. All lands east of Anduin were to be 'Sauron's, solely, for ever'. West of the Anduin as far as the Misty Mountains and the Gap of Rohan was to be 'tributary to Mordor', and 'Men there were to bear no weapons', but were to 'have leave to govern their own affairs'. Not surprisingly this last proviso did not mean in practice what it appeared to say. Its true implication was that all districts as far as was indicated were to be reduced

"Plans are known to have been drawn up for the forcible deportation to the east of the entire population of Southern Gondor"

to the equivalents of satellite or puppet states, ruled by satrap, or quisling, governors taking their orders directly from Barad-dûr. Control from the centre was exercised, not by means of full scale military occupation, (an impossibility given the immense areas required to be assimilated) but by military "advisers", reinforced by security detachments of armed Uruks stationed in all centres of population. These arrangements were set up in all the states concerned, but in Gondor itself an attempt was made to lend an appearance of acceptability to the

new regime, and to provide a semblance of continuity with the old order, by Denethor's being permitted to retain the title of Ruling Steward, ostensibly of course.

As Ms Natasha Beregondova has shown in her recent important paper, this had in fact been agreed in consideration of the surrender of Minas Tirith, in the course of secret negotiations "in palantir", as the old expression has it, just prior to the final conflict. The district of Lothlorien, deserted by the time it was occupied by units of Sauron's forces, supposedly as a result of the legendary "Flight of the Elves from Middle-earth", became a reserved area under special administration; as had indeed been the case before the War, entry was strictly forbidden to anyone except "authorized personnel". It appears to have been used, at least for the next three or four hundred years, as a military training area.

The importance of the citadel of Minas Tirith as the principal regional centre of the newly occupied territories was recognised by the establishment of administration there in the hands of Khamûl, the senior Nazgûl, nominally as a "special adviser" to Denethor.

It soon became apparent that the control and pacification of Gondor was going to provide a major challenge to the authority of the satellite government; in the end it

confronted it with problems that proved insurmountable. A resistance movement quickly came into being, initially inspired, organized and led by Faramir, the second son of Denethor, who had survived the war. Armed bands of guerrillas were able to commence and continue their operations because the hilly and broken-up nature of the countryside of South Gondor enabled them to establish pockets of resistance and to raid and subsequently disappear into the landscape at will, unhindered by the security forces, even when these were reinforced by evil Men and a few renegade Gondorians.

Reprisals were of course taken, notably the razing of Pinnath Gelin and the horrific massacre of its unprotected inhabitants in Fourth Age 7, but the guerrilla war continued, and frequently the inhabitants of populated centres could be warned and effectively dispersed in advance. Plans are known to have been drawn up for the forcible deportation to the east of the entire population of Southern Gondor, but consideration of the economic consequences seems to have prompted their abandonment. In any event the occupation forces were frequently tied down for lengthy periods, and this proved very damaging for Sauron and the government because of the enormous expenditure of man- and orc-power involved, and came to be a permanent drain on finance and resources generally. The situation proved to be, in the words of a curious and hard-to-translate contemporary expression, a "Vietnam" for Sauron while his rule lasted.

Further north the establishment of control under the new regime also encountered difficulties which had not been anticipated. The Treaty of Osgiliath provided

for the Tower of Orthanc and the surrounding *eincente* of Isengard to be taken over and the latter to be re-erected with forced labour from the surrounding countryside and further afield. It was to serve as a military and administrative centre for a widespread region, controlling all lands north of the White Mountains as far as the Anduin and the southern fringes of Mirkwood. The horses of the Rohirrim were, in theory at least, all confiscated and the inhabitants were to be reduced to a kind of nomad pastoralism. The prior occupant of Isengard had been the warlord and principal local chieftain Saruman, whose not inconsiderable personal power and following was by the end of the war

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in complete dissolution; he was prudent or fortunate enough to elude capture by the occupation forces on their arrival in the area, make his escape north-westwards into Eriador and prolong his career in those territories.

The reconstruction of Isengard did not proceed swiftly or smoothly. Despite the number of slave labourers employed on the project, sabotage proved a constant thorn in the side of the occupying authorities, but mere serious than this was the constant threat provided by the attentions of a local militia originally from the forest district of Fangorn to the north and east, which from time to time attacked or invested the site of operations, assisting the imprisoned workers to escape

from captivity, liquidating or eliminating their orcish guards, and destroying or wrecking such works as had been erected or renewed. As reliable documentary evidence is non-existent or has been destroyed, our knowledge of the nature and composition of this *soi-disant* private army, the "Ents and Huorns" of popular legend, rests only on one or two highly sensationalised contemporary accounts, and the whole subject remains frustratingly confused and obscure. The activities of the Ents and Huorns did not of course cease with the completion, many years later than intended, of the restoration works, and the effectiveness of the site as a centre of control and repression was further diminished by the operations of guerrilla units from Edoras and the northern flanks of the White Mountains further to the east, who were able to harass Isengard's supply routes from Mordor and subsequently disappear all into South Gondor via "The Paths of the Dead", an escape route which the occupation forces never succeeded in blocking permanently, as the forts securing the tunnel entrances were repeatedly attacked and burnt or overrun.

Sauron's principal military and strategic concerns, however, lay in the north and west. He had proclaimed himself "Lord of Middle-earth" and its sole invincible master, but of course he was, practically, fully alive to the geographical limitations which the barrier of the Misty Mountains imposed on the extent of his operations for the time being. The terms of the Treaty of Osgiliath, quoting the words of The Mouth of Sauron before the Black Gate, clearly indicate that he was prepared, for the immediate future, to attempt a temporary status quo; total con-

trol of Middle-earth could come later. Saruman, following his abandonment of Isengard, had meanwhile retreated to the distant north-west, and established an economic and political power-base in the remote district of "The Shire", which he developed as a centre of commercial and industrial activity on a large scale, encouraging the influx of Dunlendings and other immigrants displaced or alarmed by the new order of things and its effects being felt in the southeastern portion of Arnor. The hobbits, the native inhabitants of the Shire, dwindled correspondingly in numbers, but eventually preserved their identity and their polity by closer ties and eventual union with their cousins settled around Bree which had increased notably in size and importance in this period. They regained some portion of their old status and prosperity, especially after the assassination of Saruman not far from Bree itself, Fourth Age 596. They have attracted little attention from historians to date, other than in the matter of the supposed participation of several of their number in the War of the Ring itself, and of course no serious scholar accepts the famous and tragic tale of the heroic journey of Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee to Mordor, and their lamentable fate, as more than picturesque and evocative storytelling. At present the Hobbits are of course negotiating to join the Gondorian Federation and adopt the new common currency of Middle-earth[†]; you will recall the interest and curiosity aroused recently when they sent a football team to represent them in the Middle-earth Cup.

The orcs of Moria, and the Misty Mountains to the north of it, con-

stituted a major threat to the stability of the Empire, the majority of them having opted for Saruman following the War and the latter's establishment of a power base in Eriador. Sauron was compelled to undertake military operations on an extensive scale and to dispatch large armies from time to time in order to maintain control of this vital strategic area. The situation was finally stabilised following a tremendous battle of orcs on both sides, fought at a site whose location has never been precisely established, but which apparently lay some leagues west of Erebor and the Lonely Mountain, and to the north of Mirkwood. Little is known about details of the conflict, owing to the measures taken

"... no serious scholar accepts the famous and tragic tale of the heroic journey of Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee to Mordor ..."

by Sauron to suppress the knowledge of it elsewhere in Middle-earth at the time; rumours and one or two (probably unreliable) "eye witness accounts" inevitably surfaced not long after the supposed date of Fourth Age 120. The battle appears to have been followed by a series of "orcic cleansing" campaigns initiated by Sauron himself, extending from Moria northwards to Angmar and Carn Dum the result of which was that the whole area emerged as a frontier line garrisoned exclusively by Uruks from Mordor whose personal obedience to Sauron's orders exclusively could be guaranteed (and who in any case could always be frightened into toeing

the line by tales of "the legend of the Balrog" supposedly inhabiting the lowest depths of the mines throughout the region). The military significance of the area declined following the signing of the Pact of Rivendell, Fourth Age 419, at which Sauron and Saruman each agreed to recognize and respect the other's "sphere of influence". It is known for certain that Sauron had no intention of keeping his part of the bargain longer than he found necessary, and that he intended to launch a full scale invasion of Eriador as soon as the opportunity presented itself. The murder of Saruman certainly provided such an occasion, and plans are thought to have been drawn up at this time, but little written evidence survives, and it would appear likely that the increasing difficulties Sauron was facing east of the Anduin and at home, at about this time, prevented their implementation.

For it was these more than anything else that proved to be his undoing. In theory, he wielded power total and absolute in Middle-earth; the concept in practice remained illusory, both militarily and politically. The terms of the Treaty of Osgiliath had provided that all lands east of the Anduin were to be Sauron's, solely and for over; but in spite of the terms it was here, "in his own back yard" as the saying goes, that the principal challenges to his authority emerged. These took several forms, of which the most immediately important was the threat posed by a number of the Easterling tribes and confederations north of Mordor and around the Sea of Rhûn, who were not slow to assert their independence. A series of rebellions ensued, and Sauron was forced to

[†] The idea of a common currency in Middle-earth is something we actually owe to Sauron, who had proposed to call it "the orcu".

expend a considerable portion of his military and economic might in suppressing them. By the time of his fall and passing this whole area had largely seceded; subsequently many of the Easterling tribes went over to the Western side in the disorder and confusion that followed.

The Corsairs of Umbar had nourished, in the period immediately following Sauron's triumph, ex-

"... it is only a small minority of scholars, of course, who now maintain that such an artefact as an all-powerful 'Ruling Ring' ... ever existed ..."

pectations of rich plunder and favourable economic benefits and concessions along the Gondorian coasts. They were disappointed and infuriated by his refusal to allow them to raid, or to permit them more profit than could be obtained from authorized trading contacts with Mordor itself, and retaliated by invading the lands to the south of Morder, even at times venturing into actual Mordovian territory. They acted in support of the great revolt of the slave workers of the Núrmen district in Fourth Age 453, and although this was eventually suppressed with the utmost ferocity and brutality the industrial and productive capacity of the region was permanently weakened.

All of this contributed to keeping Sauron well tied down at home, but the difficulties of his position were aggravated by treachery and disloyalty within his own administration. Within any despotic tyranny, factions will develop within the government, each aim-

ing to reserve a slice of power and authority for itself. The eight Nazgûl, despite their subordinate (in theory) status as "slaves of the Ring", displayed a tendency, which grew more and more pronounced with the passage of time, to act independently of orders from the central authority in Barad-dur (it is only a small minority of scholars, of course, who now maintain that such an artefact as an all powerful "ruling Ring", by means of which Sauron ensured total compliance with his orders and directions, ever existed). Without overt insubordination or opposition on their part, the Nazgûl as time went on allowed the administrative provinces or military districts for which they were responsible to degenerate into inefficiency, indiscipline and finally, chaos. That this centrifugal process began and grew to unmanageable proportions in the final years of the empire perhaps explains why no *coup d'état* appears ever to have been mounted in opposition to Sauron's authority, or at least, that no clear evidence of one has come to light; the disunity of the opposition prevented any combination or effective show of force in the open. Some historians have, of course, argued in favour of the occurrence of such a coup preceding the final disaster of Fourth Age 656, which they suggest could only have been precipitated by a political upheaval of this kind.

I will not venture an opinion on this controversial topic now, as you will shortly be listening to the views of a number of my colleagues in the papers to be presented today. As you know the generally accepted position among those of us, the majority of historians who reject the

"historical" existence of a "ruling Ring", is that the myth surrounding it and its supposed immeasurable powers reflect progress Sauron had made in accomplishing the revolution in technology by which he hoped to complete the absorption of Middle-earth and even, as he is thought to have contemplated, 'to issue a challenge to the Valar'. It is at least well known that in the final years of the empire he had been expending a high proportion of his resources, in finance, orcpower and otherwise, on research and experimentation. It may well have been that it was a malfunction or a miscalculation by him or his scientists and technicians that triggered the disaster itself, the explosion or eruption of Mount Doom and with it the obliteration of Barad-dûr, Fourth Age 656, in which Sauron is presumed to have perished. Such a miscalculation, the proponents of the "coup" theory argue, could hardly have occurred unless Sauron had previously been assassinated or rendered powerless by some means or other, and could only have been the result of

"Those whom the Ring wishes to destroy, it first makes mad"

the folly or incompetence of those that succeeded him. Be that as it may, the diffusion of radiation or some deadly infection released by the explosion rendered the interior of Mordor uninhabitable, and the popular legend, with which you all, I am sure, are familiar, relates that Shelob the Great, the "monstrous grauniad"[‡], of the pass of Cirith Ungol, succumbed to its effects. We may no

‡ This would appear to represent an intentional pun by the speaker. It presumably got a good laugh from the assembled scholars.

doubt discard as romantic fantasy the notion that it was Sauron himself who, in a fury of impotence provoked by the continuing erosion of his authority and the supremacy of Barad-dur, unleashed the Ring's ultimate destructive force, casting it into the fires of Orodruin that nothing might survive his passing and no one inherit the remnants of his empire. "Those whom the Ring wishes to destroy, it first makes mad".

The removal of Sauron from the scene of course put an end to any pretence of centralized control of the empire from Mordor; the task of the security forces in maintaining order in the satellite territories was rendered impossible, and total chaos and confusion ensued both east and west of the Anduin. As so often appears to be the case with the affairs of Dwarves and Men, the crisis brought forth the leader of genius and vision the hour demanded. Faramir V, the head of the Gondorian resistance movement, was able to unite all such movements, and the hopes and efforts of all peoples west of the Anduin, for the future freedom and peace of all lands, under his leadership, and to establish a single chain of command. In a series of campaigns, with the alliance of a number of the Easterling peoples who had "come over" to the West, he succeeded in clearing all the lands outside Mordor of orcs, trolls, evil Men and other dissident elements. Mordor itself of course remained desolate, a place of sickness and death for any who ventured into it; only in the last few years has it become possible to set up a chain of experimental stations there.

From the alliance of the various peoples involved in the campaigns that followed the death of Sauron there has evolved the peaceful cooperation of these

peoples, the Gondorians, the descendants of the Rohirrim, the Beornings, the Men of Dale and the Dwarves of Erebor and others beside them, in the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction that have followed. The fulfilment has come with the setting up, as envisaged and proclaimed at the Lothlorien Conference, Fourth Age 699, of the free association of the peoples of the Gondorian Federation, symbolized by the Freedom Stone set up at Cerin Amroth. Lothlorien, as you all know, has since that time returned to its former role as a special conservation area and nature reserve.

We perhaps need to ask the question, not why Sauron's empire collapsed in the end, but why, riven as it was by all its internal conflicts and contradictions, it succeeded in lasting as long as it

'Lothlorien, ... has returned to its former role as a special conservation area and nature reserve.'

did. The answer lies, I would suggest, in considering Sauron's mastery of the arts of propaganda and public relations, and the ways in which he thereby induced the vast majority of the inhabitants of the lands under his sway to tolerate the conditions of existence he imposed on them. He had, after all, displayed it similarly during the Second Age and in the Númenorean crisis that occurred near its conclusion. It was, of course, as he saw it, an irrelevant concept that dictated that anything approaching reasonable conditions of existence ought to be provided for the subject races of his imperium. But to convince and assure them that they enjoyed such conditions was and re-

mained an important policy objective. If this could be achieved, despite the torments, sorrows and frustrations of everyday existence, toleration if not acceptance of control and repression would follow, and law and order (as he, Sauron, conceived them) could be maintained over the occupied territories, if not totally, at least extensively and for long periods.

The economic basis of life had been reduced to a bare subsistence level for almost every inhabitant of the empire, but after a period of years few of those who survived retained any notion that this was not the natural order of things. What was needed, additionally, was some collective form of distraction from the humiliations and discomforts of everyday existence. Strangely enough, the means of providing this appeared from an unexpected source, and in a novel and unlooked for guise; that of sport. It is generally agreed among scholars and aficionados of "footie", that the game of football is no invention or discovery of Sauron's, and did not originate in Mordor, or among orcs in general. It seems, in fact, to have developed among the Easterling peoples east of the Sea of Rhûn, and to have spread westwards and to have been imported into Mordor, perhaps at some time prior to the War of the Ring. Sauron's interest in it as an instrument of social policy and political persuasion arose from two factors.

In the first place the mock rivalry engendered among different racial, social and geographic groups could be made a substitute for the fighting instincts which might issue in would-be resistance-related or revolutionary activity. This was of great value from a military-political standpoint, and enabled the peace to be kept in the far flung territo-

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ries under Mordor's sway to a considerably greater extent than otherwise would have been likely. The periodic unleashing of bands of orcish "football hooligans", as they were termed, to create havoc in Minas Tirith and elsewhere represented a small price to pay for the military and financial benefits involved, and the authorities turned a blind eye to these periodic reminders of the essential barbarism of the colonial rule under which all the peoples of the empire lived. Secondly, the diffusion of the sport among the subject peoples west of the Anduin enabled many among them to invest their emotional capital in the success or failure of their respective favoured teams, and view it as a distraction and escape from the inevitable humiliations and frustrations of daily life under Mor-

dovian control; 'Football is the opiate of the people' (a saying attributed to Khamûl, chief Nazgûl, following the first occasion an important match was played on the newly opened Minas Tirith ground).

Nowadays when the long drawn out twilight of the empire has faded and vanished, the rule of Barad-dûr is no mere than an evil memory, and prosperity, peace and mutual friendship are the general, if regrettably not the universal rule among the peoples of Middle-earth. the sporting spirit of mutual contest in friendly rivalry, represented by the Middle-earth Cup which we have recently seen staged in Minas Tirith, perhaps constitutes Sauron's only permanent legacy to our history, even though, in the form in which we see it today, it does not represent any kind of social model as

seen in his eyes. It may be that it still serves to contain or redirect the aggressive and dangerous forms of nationalism or inter-regional rivalry which otherwise might reveal themselves in more dangerous aspects. It is for all of us to remain on guard lest such rivalries degenerate into inter-tribal unrest or conflict among peoples or groups, the prelude to warfare itself on a wider scale. We have to remember that, as historians of all persuasions now accept, the triumph of Sauron at the end of the Third Age, and the inperium that succeeded it, arose out of the negligence of the West which allowed the watch on Mordor to slacken, and Sauron to regroup his resources, repopulate Mordor, and rebuild the Barad-dûr. The price of liberty, as has so often been said, is eternal vigilance.



John Ellison

The Invisible Shire

Ruth Lacon

At the Leicester Seminar in 1995 R.T. Allen presented a paper entitled 'Who Mends the Roads? Superstructures without Substructures'. His point was that from a purely practical view, the populations and economic structures which we see in Middle-earth are inadequate to sustain the societies described.

In this paper I wish to argue the contrary view, suggesting that detailed analysis of the available material will show a world much more complex than we tend to think.

If we wish to play the game of 'Middle-earth Studies' and treat Professor Tolkien's works as 'real' records of a 'real' place and time, it must surely be obligatory to apply the same principles of textual criticism to them as are employed by historians in dealing with records of our own past. Any document has its own agenda, its own biases and selectivities, its own intended audience. No work is ever a simple, transparent reflection of its time and place; things which we, the later reader, might love to know more of, may be left out because they are too obvious to bother mentioning, not interesting to the author and the intended audience, or just not relevant to a narrative in progress. Conversely, things may be put in which are not nearly as commonplace or important as the author makes them out to be, if that author is trying to make a point or (in the case of fiction) use those things as a plot device. This process of selection results in any

Speculations on the hidden infrastructure of The Shire - its commerce, industry, culture and demography

one document giving us only a partial view of the world its author lived in. To take a real-world example, Jane Austen's novels present a very selective view indeed of eighteenth-century England; yet, firstly, the society portrayed in those novels is a segment of the whole, from which their intended readers were largely drawn and to which those readers could relate, and secondly, that segment could not have existed without the underlying totality of society and economy that is not presented in detail in the books. In the case of Middle-earth we do not have the external documentation that allows us to reconstruct that totality, or something like it, for eighteenth century England. What we can do is to bear in mind the likely biases within the Red Book of Westmarch and then say, 'if this existed, then by all we know of historical societies which are reasonably similar, that must also have been present whether or not it is referred to'.

Let us look, then, at the Red Book of Westmarch, to consider exactly what sort of text we are dealing with and what biases it

may contain. Firstly and most importantly, its authors were hobbits, writing for other hobbits. That one copy was subsequently made (and expanded) outside the Shire was not, so far as can be seen, any part of the authors' intention, and further transmission - by hand-copying, which lends itself to alteration of the text - was in the hands of hobbits. All the internal references to later readers or hearers of the tale picture them as hobbits. This has certain implications. For one thing, many matters within the Shire are liable to be passed over as being too commonplace to mention; why waste ink on what everyone knows anyway? For another, the picture of the world beyond the Shire is likely to be limited by hobbit interest or lack of it. Following on from this point, we are told that relatively few hobbits were literate, and fewer still took any interest in scholarship, though admittedly Sam Gamgee does think of the Red Book being read for entertainment, which would widen its potential audience. Nevertheless, it could only be read in households rich enough to afford a manuscript, however simply produced, for printing did not exist so far as we can tell. That potential audience, then, consists largely of middle to upper class hobbits who can afford to buy books - very much the same sort of hobbits as the authors and their friends and companions.

The possibility of a second-hand book trade extends the range somewhat, but, equally, lower-

class hobbits would be less likely to be literate. We should be aware that the concerns and interests of such middle to upper class hobbits may well be involved in the presentation of events and their background.

Secondly, the Red Book may be described as being a work of contemporary history, an account of events by persons involved in them. As is not unusual in such works, it also incorporates ele-

'... the populations and economic structures which we see in Middle-earth are inadequate to sustain the societies described.'

ments of travel-tale and the novel. Books like this often have a strong narrative drive and tight focus, assuming that the reader knows much of the background which therefore need not be elaborated on, and will understand very brief references. Again, therefore, the commonplace and that which is irrelevant to the narrative is omitted. Later readers, no longer familiar with the cultural context, have to attempt to decode brief sidelong references (or have it done for them by an editor, in footnotes) and, if interested, refer to other works on the time, place and subject concerned. These of course are exactly what we do not have in the case of Middle-earth, and so it is necessary to argue backwards by analogy in any attempt to explain such things.

Beyond this, the 'tight focus' of the Red Book is very noticeable, and extends even to its maps. In fact, the maps are one of the clearest examples of what is hap-

pening, and well worth considering in this regard. If we look at the south, we find that not a single place in Gondor is marked that is not mentioned in the narrative, even though it is quite clear that others must have existed. We are told that the three thousand men who came to aid in the defence of Minas Tirith were a tithe of what was expected, and it must be unlikely in the extreme that that would be the full muster. Even Steward Denethor could not expect the south to leave itself wholly undefended on his behalf, after all. The map, as we have it, flatly does not account for a society and economy that could produce an army well over thirty thousand strong. Equally seriously, such a major physical feature as the fens around Tharbad are not marked, and this on a Fourth Age map drawn at a time when the Greenway must have come back into use, to some extent at least. It would probably not be wrong to suggest the maps are accurate concerning areas important to the tale, but that over large stretches the hobbit copyist might as well have written 'Here be Dragons'; they would after all have stood more chance of being right than most people who use that phrase! Areas external to the tale were simply not of interest to hobbit readers, and so are not presented in any detail.

Besides these primary layers of hobbitocentric bias, in the map and in the Appendices dealing with the rest of Middle-earth there is a second layer. The Red Book as we have it derives partly from a copy made in Gondor, and the 'historical' Appendices display signs of having either been added at that time, or drawn from material assembled in Gondor. Beyond hobbitic general disinterest, these sections carry the distinct imprint of Gondorian biases

and selectivity. These are enough in some cases to drive later scholarly readers to pencil-gnawing fury, as they try to get past what can only be described as toffee-nosed indifference to the Rest of the World. Anything which does not involve the Dúnedain is very likely indeed to be slighted, inaccurately recorded, or just missed out. How accurate many statements are is a very debatable question, and there is no solid rule; each has to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Even where matters impinge on the main narrative and we think we can be fairly certain, it may be well worth double-checking sources and statements as best we can. This applies to the map as well. In so far as it is accurate, that accuracy probably derives from a Gondorian source; the coastline, for instance, may have been drawn after charts preserved in some Southern archive. However, firstly, Gondor's cartography is unlikely to have been any

'... contemporary history ... incorporates elements of travel-tale and the novel.'

more advanced than that of 18th-century Britain, if that; and secondly, over vast areas there may have been little accurate, contemporary information for the mapmaker to use - even in the unlikely event that they cared to do so! Expecting a cartographer in early Fourth Age Gondor to produce a wholly accurate map of the rest of Middle-earth is like asking a Byzantine cartographer to produce an accurate map of Dark Age Europe. Neither the information nor inclination required were

present, and end result has to be handled with care.

Enough of theory; let me proceed, along the lines I have described, to look at the Shire as a particularly good example. Most of us, I think, will feel that the Shire is in many ways familiar, a 'little England' out of older and better days. Yet arguments have raged over hobbit population sizes and whether the Shire could in fact support the sort of society we see. To me, this puts the cart before the horse. A segment of society is presented in a text, which has very good reasons for not going into great detail about the background. Rather than saying 'A is not mentioned so B should not exist', we should pose the question 'B is there; A must in consequence exist, so where might A be?' Such a procedure will throw light on the 'Invisible Shire' of my title - and could readily be extended to other parts of Middle-earth.

The Shire is quite clearly a pre-industrial society; but just exactly what does that imply? The usual comparison is with pre-modern England, often the eighteenth century. We are therefore, looking at a land which might well be underdeveloped by modern standards, but which to its contemporaries was sophisticated and well-off. Assuming that the comparison holds, certain statements can be made;

1. That agriculture was the single most important activity, in which 96% or more of the population was engaged.

2. That there was relatively little occupational specialisation, many people combining agriculture with industrial and commercial activities.

3. That economic and technological change was extremely slow.

4. That by modern expectations, most people were and remained

poor, and had a low standard of living.

5. That the economy was of a market type, but hampered by poor communications, bad currency and the poverty of potential consumers.

Most people would I think readily agree with points 1 and 3; point 2 is one of our 'invisibles' which I mean to investigate later in this paper; 4 and 5 may come as more of a surprise. I will look at each of these points in turn.

Taking point 4 first, the existence of widespread and persis-

'...landless labourers, a class as invisible in works of those times comparable in intent to the Red Book of Westmarch as they are in that work itself.'

tent poverty by modern standards, let us stop to think what sort of hobbits we actually see in the Red Book. Bilbo Baggins is, by the best definition, a gentleman; he does not work to support himself. Exactly where the Baggins fortune was hiding is not obvious, but the most likely possibility is that it had been invested in property around Hobbiton and the Hill, on the rent from which Mr B. Baggins could live in the style to which he was accustomed. His heir Frodo was likewise comfortably situated. Merry and Pippin were both able to take off into the blue at the drop of a hat, without any sign of having to make excuses to anyone; they both came from ancient and important families, and by the definition I have used were indeed gentlehobbits. Farmers Maggot and Cotton were either owner-occupiers or yeoman tenants; the Sandyman were

millers - skilled craftsmen, in business on their own account.

The Gamgees are not in the same league, but, judging by the standards of my own grandparents' day on the Scottish Borders, a gardener working for a rich family was unlikely to be poor. He was regarded by others as being at a similar level in the community as a skilled workman, was likely to have a house and a decent wage, perhaps land for his own use, or other perks, and might well be able to put his children through school. All of these points could be applied to the Gamgees.

The real agricultural poor of my grandparents' day - and the eighteenth century - were landless labourers, a class as invisible in works of those times comparable in intent to the Red Book of Westmarch as they are in that work itself. At that time farming was a labour-intensive business - the family farm is a very recent development, one reliant on mechanisation and still not complete. With the best will in the world, Farmer Maggot and Farmer Cotton would not have been able to rely on their own immediate kinsfolk for all the labour they needed. Equally, they were not farming within an open-field system where they could readily draw on mutual help. The pictures we have of the Shire make that quite clear, in their labyrinth of field boundaries. The answer has to be that behind the likes of Farmers Maggot and Cotton stood a number of employed farmworkers, ranging from skilled hands who might be given a cottage and land as part of the deal, to unskilled labourers hired at harvest and other busy times. It was also common for people with a little land, smallholders or small farmers, to practice another occupation, if their land was insuffi-

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cient to provide enough income to keep themselves and their families, and this pattern very likely held for the Shire too. Such hobbies as these, though, were unlikely to buy books and even less likely to have adventures. Their interests played no part in shaping the Red Book, and they are invisible within its covers.

This leads us back to point 1, that the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture, and to the vexed question of population sizes. Both the farms we actually see, those of Farmers Maggot and Cotton, are sited outside villages on the land which is worked from them. If this pattern holds good for the majority of hobbit farms then, given the need for labour on each of those farms and the probability that most farmworkers lived where they worked, a large part of the population of the Shire may have lived in the countryside rather than in villages or the few larger settlements. The paucity of even villages, compared to the number and apparent sophistication of craft products in the Shire (as witness the contents of Bag End) also suggests that the agricultural population was dispersed, and the villages functioned as centres for craft production, administration and social life. Certain things in Bag End must have been imports; many more are highly unlikely to have been, so we have to find a place for local manufacture and hobbits to carry it out. Even allowing that the map of the Shire as we have it is accurate in terms of number and placing of villages, which is not necessarily so, the necessary population base to sustain the likes of the Bagginses and the Tooks could have been present. But those hobbits could easily have existed invisibly, such a commonplace feature of life and the countryside that no native

work like the Red Book would have any need to consider who or where they were.

Turning to point 5, it is quite clear that the Shire and its adjacent areas had an economy based upon the market. Bilbo Baggins bought his meat from the butcher, Bill Ferny sold a pony and Barliman Butterbur paid compensation for ponies lost while in his care. An agreed amount, a price, was paid in negotiable currency (silver pennies) for an object or a service, and no further relationship between buyer and seller needed to exist beyond that moment; some of the essential features of a market economy. Another feature of such an economy, private property, was clearly present in the Shire. Auctioneers and auctions, wills and solicitors do not exist outside the framework of private property and a market economy. However, it is equally clear that the 'market' was severely hampered compared to today's.

Firstly, transport and communications were poor. Both relied upon humans or animals, travelling over roads of uncertain quality; the Shire has no canals, let alone railways, and even if any of its rivers (other than the Brandywine, which largely marked the border) had been large enough to carry barges, hobbits had a cultural prejudice against waterways and water transport. Long-distance transport, then, must have been time-consuming and expensive. To quote a Roman figure, it was cheaper to ship grain from one end of the Mediterranean to the other than it was to cart it fifty miles inland, and that principle held until the Industrial Revolution. If transport is expensive and communications are poor and uncertain, markets are restricted in area and vulnerable to local events, and competition

is either slight or even non-existent. Most goods will move only short distances; there is a strong tendency for long-distance trading to be restricted to essentials unavailable in the immediate area and luxuries worth the expense of transport. Mercantile wealth in 18th century Britain did not come from dealing in grain or cattle. The rich merchant was typically engaged in overseas trade, bringing in items which were seen as luxuries and commanded high prices; tea, sugar, wine, spices and fine fabrics. At the same time, (outside the orbit of London which as a large and growing city distorted trade in the Home Counties), most people dressed in locally produced cloth and ate bread baked from grain grown locally. There was already a fair degree of specialisation divided among areas suited to grazing and areas suited to crop-growing, but it was very far from what we see today. Nothing else was possible under the conditions of the time, and much the same conditions apply to the late Third and early Fourth Age Shire. The White Downs might have been noted for wool and the Southfarthing for wheat, but a grain shortage at Bree would not mean better prices for Shire farmers.

Secondly, local markets are small in terms of numbers of consumers as well as in area. On the one hand, this restricts competition, because very few merchants can hope to make a living, like fish in a small pond with no access to a river. As a result, prices tend to stay high and there is little scope for entrepreneurship. The impossibility of making economies of scale in a small market also tends to keep prices up. On the other hand, in a setting such as the Shire, most of those consumers will be poor so there will be very little 'give' in the market.

If prices do become lower, it may not result in increased demand for the product if people either simply cannot afford it anyway, do not have the ready cash to take advantage, or are already buying as much as they need regardless of the price - all problems of small, poor markets.

Thirdly, the absolute value of silver pennies at Bree makes it clear that hard cash was in very short supply, and it is unlikely that the situation in the Shire was much better. Indeed, it is not at all clear who may have been responsible for minting coins in the area. If cash - especially small coins - is in short supply, most people most of the time have to rely on short-term credit until they can pay the baker or the butcher. In turn, with their capital effectively tied up in a multitude of tiny loans, tradesmen and merchants are reluctant to make larger investments or undertake risks. It is not by any standard a good climate for business, and it does not help the customer either.

Lastly, let me turn to point 2, occupational diversity. Limited as our view of the Shire is, the existence of a vast number of crafts can be inferred. It is sometimes suggested that much of what appears in descriptions of Bilbo's residence at Bag End could have been imported, but that really only pushes the problem back a stage. Imports have to be paid for, and transported to where they are found. It is much more likely that the cups and plates and furniture in Bag End were locally made, along with a host of other objects. A run through the illustration of the hall at Bag End (*The Hobbit*) produces the following list; *carpenter* (the door, beams) and therefore *forester* producing timber and *carter* bringing it to site; *cabinetmaker* (chairs, table, dresser and therefore *smith*, pro-

ducing iron or steel tools for all these workers, and heavy iron-mongery such as the door-hinge; *spinner*, *weaver*, producing cloth for - the *upholsterer* (chairs), and *tailor* (Bilbo's clothes); *button-maker* (clothes); *rugmaker*, flat-weave or possibly knotted (the carpet); *bellmaker and rope-maker* (doorbell); *glazier and whitesmith, candlemaker or oil-producer* (lantern); *mirror-maker; umbrella-maker; tile-maker* (floor); *pipe-maker* and *leaf-curer* (smoking pipe). Only the barometer and the clock are truly likely to be imports, though the carpet might be one.

All these crafts and occupations have therefore to be accounted for within the hobbit population, together with a multitude of others. Some crafts and trades, such as that of blacksmith, are full-

'The curse of the pre-modern economy was not unemployment but underemployment'

time occupations. Others, like those of the tailor and whitesmith are full-time but may be practised by travelling tradesmen. Yet others again, such as weaving and wood-turning, may be full-time but can equally well be practiced by people who engage in other occupations besides. The curse of the pre-modern economy was not unemployment but underemployment, owing to the strongly seasonal nature of work on the land. A multiplicity of hands might be needed at harvest - but what were those people going to do for the rest of the year? One solution was to use the families of farmworkers as extra labour at the busiest times; another was for those with very little land or none to engage in occupations other than those of farm labourer when work was

slack. In the Shire as in pre-modern Britain, such rural part-time industry would be very dependant on local resources, and on small-scale traders who could gather and sell on the products.

Middlemen are a necessary part of this process. The rural weaver aiming at the market rather than home consumption depended on the wool-merchant who gathered wool from farmers, graded it, and put it out in small parcels to the spinners and weavers, before selling on the cloth to be finished and made into goods. Within a pre-modern, non-industrial society, such a system makes fuller use of the available labour, and allows far more craft/industrial production to go on than the obvious activities of villages and small towns might suggest. It does fit the model thus far suggested for the Shire, and is exactly the sort of economic activity which to the likes of Bilbo Baggins would be quite invisible, something so commonplace as to be not worthy of mention - especially when writing for other hobbits. Yet without such an underpinning, Bag End and its master simply could not exist as we know them.

I hope that this exposition of matters relating to the Shire has shown, firstly, the nature of my method and, secondly, the results it can yield. Argument from analogy is a time-honoured resort of 'Middle-earth Studies'; all I have really done is to suggest that, combined with a solid appreciation of historical possibility and a degree of source criticism, it can yield better results than expected. For myself, within its limits I do not think the method or the effort inappropriate. It is a mark of the depth of Tolkien's achievement that we can play this strange game, and find that his creation is at once so far from reality and so solidly rooted in it.

letters

Dear Sir,

I was most interested in some of the points made by Margarita Carretero González in her excellent article ('The Lord of the Rings: a myth for modern Englishmen', *Mallorn* 36). I was saddened, though not surprised, to learn that female admirers of J. R. R. Tolkien are in a minority. As one of these, I should like to make a few comments.

I have never, personally, found any difficulty with stories that might be labelled 'Boys Only Clubs'. For me, a good story is a good story, and the sex of the protagonists is not something that concerns me very much. (Or even the species - what about the *Jungle Book*?) I admit I do like a love-interest, but Tolkien comes through in this; in fact the only human-male characters in *LotR* who show no signs of hankering after women are Pippin (too young), Theoden (too old) and Boromir (draw your own conclusions).

I read a remark in a review of the recent *Hornblower* dramatisation: "What! A whole two hours, and no women!" Any female character would have been quite superfluous in this story, which was a thoroughly well-made, exciting and fine example of TV historical drama. Women don't figure prominently in the *Hornblower* books, either, but these were some of my favourites as an adolescent. No women - so what? I don't need a female character in order to 'identify'. I'm quite happy admiring a male hero or two, thank you very much; or identifying with one, in situations women meet just as much as men. I can identify with hobbits in particular, small, vulnerable folk in a big, hard world, struggling to meet desperate challenges. All you need to be to identify with that is human.

Nor do I think it at all strange, that even women readers of *LotR* do not necessarily choose a female as their favourite character; I would find a view that we 'ought to' sexist and insulting. It is not a fault in Tolkien that he has not made any of his female characters a main protagonist. Why should he? Let authors write about the characters that appeal to them, and be bother political correctness. As it happens, Galadriel is one of my personal favourites, but so are Frodo, Aragorn and Merry. And Legolas. And Sam. And ...

If a woman only likes books with women in them, she's not a feminist, she's a female chauvinist sow. As a thoroughly liberated woman myself, I not only enjoy reading about men, I even tend to prefer writing about male characters. After all, the male psyche (etc.) will always be of interest to a real woman.

Yours in equality,
Christine Davidson

Dear Sir,

My copy of *Mallorn* has just arrived and I felt that I had to write straight away to express my disappointment at its contents. Imagine my surprise when I found it full from end to end with learned boring stuff about elves and philology and wizards, and other boring so-called "intellectual" so-called drivel about precise syllabic interpretations among the early Noldor of Westermesse-on-bloody-Supermare. What on earth has philology got to do with Tolkien, that's what I'd like to know.

Am I the only person in the Society that prefers a good hack in the park, followed by a rewarding booze-up, to almost anything else? Is there no one else who likes dressing up as a hobbit and going down to the local MacDonalds and ordering a bucketfull of well fried mushrooms, *à la Crickhollow*? (Imagine how stupid they look when they can't fill the order!)

I think not. Let's get back to basics, shall we, and as tout de suite as possible. Let's have loads more of that stuff about what a rubbish writer Tolkien was because he didn't write about women, or about loads of strong women, or armies composed entirely of roller-skating women or (*that's enough women, Ed.*) or nuclear bombs or real issues of, like, the real world today we actually really live in, not some nancy parlour for people who think they have elves at the bottom of their garden.

I can remember the days when you could pick up a copy at random and find six straight pages just about horse harness, for Iluvatar's sake, or interesting speculations, backed up with all kinds of tightly argued *facts* straight from the Books themselves, about whether Melkor the Evil One, the Lord of the Dead and the Undead, was a Vegan or merely a common or garden veggie. So come on, Mister so-called editor, get your finger out and rustle up a few more chunks of matchless prose about the kinds of stuff that real members really want. I am sure that at least one of your erstwhile contributors would find the 'Unnumbered' bit from 'Battle of Unnumbered Tears' a personal challenge. Shouldn't be too difficult to work it out.

Yours
Kensington Prallop
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In answer to your first question, a quick survey of the entire membership has revealed that you are right - you are indeed the only person who likes doing the things you say you do, except for the bit about dressing up in public. As for the kinds of articles you evidently prefer, it seems that, sadly, others prefer them too. We'll just have to try harder in future. Ed.





Sue Large