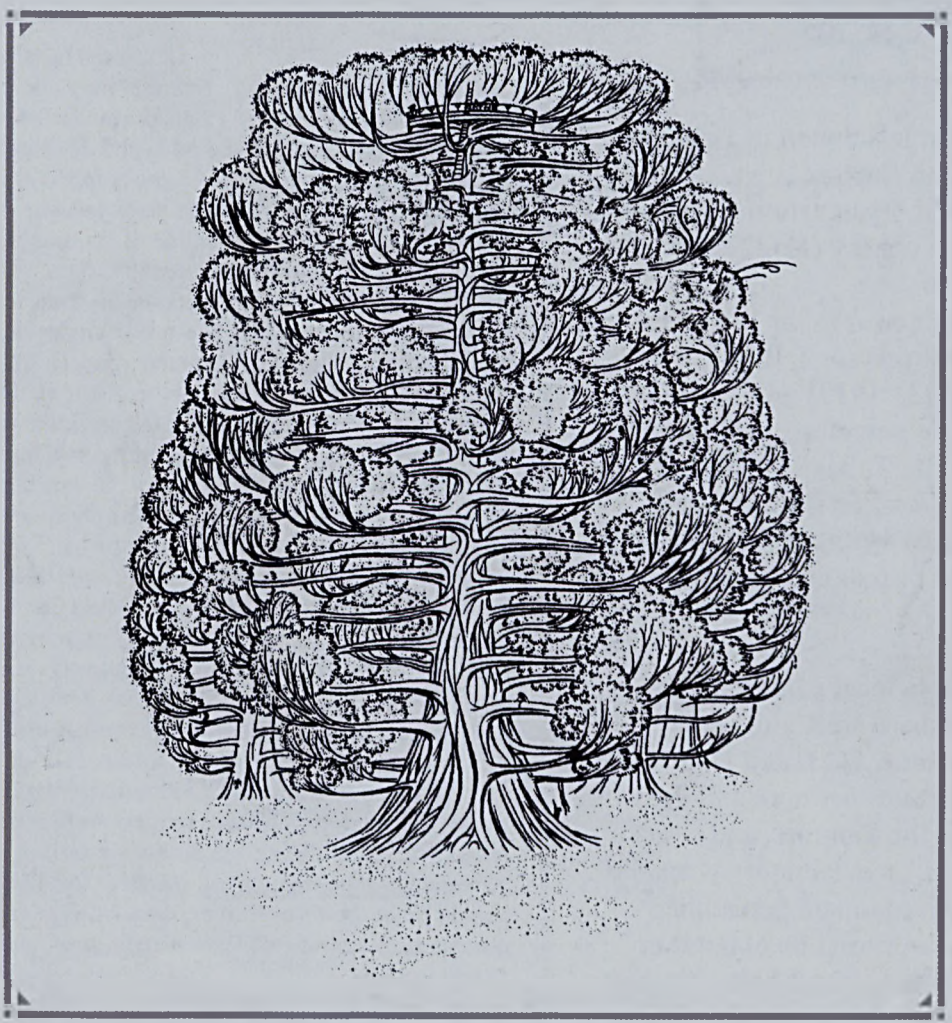
Mallorn



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September 2001

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.

Editor L Sanford
Consultant editor J Ellison

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Notes for Contributors

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 (joumal 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 may be in black and white or colour, 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, llford, Essex, IG2 7NN.email Leonard@sanfordts.

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EDITORIAL

The good news is, *Mallorn* is back on track. After a couple of lean years when material was hard to come by, we are back to our traditional September publication date, and, thanks to the efforts of many, with a larger content than we have had for several years.

In this issue you will find included, for the first time, papers that have already been published by the Society. I feel that some explanation may be required. We are not plundering thoughtlessly the archive of the past. Articles reproduced here but originally presented elsewhere in the TS have either gone out of print (as for instance in the case of the Peter Roe booklets) or have been presented to a limited audience but never published to the wider membership. The benefits to *Mallorn* readers are that those members who have never come across, or been able to find copies will have the opportunity to do so; members who didn't attend the seminars have a chance to find out what they missed; and new members may read the best articles and papers of the past that otherwise would be difficult to gain access to. As for *Mallorn* itself, the direction of *Mallorn*, that is to say its purpose, that has already been decided, at least for this age of the world; it is the method of implementation that has been under discussion, by the editors, and some readers. The burden of opinion is that people rather like it the way it is, I'm pleased to say.

Just to answer some of the points brought up. The typesetting problems on some of the pages came about from the use of a scanner coupled with insufficient time for proofreading. Even spellchecking takes time, assuming one has a spellchecker, and sight reading is still necessary. The efficiency of proofreading comes down to the time available and the hard fact of diminishing returns.

The size of type crops up quite often, but there is no conflict here between the editor and the readers. I want the type as large as is sensible and practical. But physical facts come into it. Setting the article in the size one wants inevitably brings it *just* over to another page by a few lines. In addition, one has to work in sets of four pages. If there are, for example, 42 pages, one has to go to 40 (which is cramping) or 44 (which is more expensive).

Paper for colour printing is *necessarily* different, unless one can afford to use glazed paper throughout. Colour looks terrible unless glazed paper is used.

Comments about instructions for contributors have puzzled me greatly. I inherited a set that have been used for years, and nobody complained before, so I carried on using them. I admit that the business of black and white artwork slipped by me, but since several recent issues have carried colour there would seem to be a bit of a clue there. One suspects that such complaints are made for the sake of complaining.

One final word. Complaining about work that is done voluntarily is a chancy business, some would say unjustified. One ought always to remember that such complaints - and I distinguish here between fair, thoughtful criticism and mere carping - are always being made by people who are *not* doing the work, against people who *are*.

Tom Bombadil *Geof Jordan*

Legendary and historical time in *The Lord of the Rings*

Allan Turner

This paper was first presented at the Tolkien Society Seminar, June 2000

The concept of the Ages of the World is clearly a significant one for students of Tolkien. The topic of the 2000 seminar where this paper was first presented was The Change of Ages, while an earlier workshop was devoted to the First and Second Ages. It is based on the idea that there have been certain nodal points in history when trains of events that have apparently been following their own course come together at a critical point to cause a cataclysm, followed by a new beginning. The changes from one Age to another reflect the move from myth to legend to romance, from the flat earth to the world made round, and finally to the beginnings of the historical period.

This generally accepted interpretation is based on a collation of the posthumous publications: *The Silmarillion*, the *Unfinished Tales* and various volumes of the *History of Middle-earth*. The first published reference to the Ages, however, appears in the Appendices to The Lord of the Rings, particularly Appendix B, the Tale of the Years, which contains fairly detailed chronologies for the Second and Third Ages.

By contrast, in the main narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* we find a different usage. The Ages as chronological divisions are not mentioned at all, except for two references almost at the very end. On one occasion the term is used by Gandalf, who has a broader view than most: "The Third Age was my age. I was the Enemy of Sauron." The other occasion is when the narrator as 'editor' is looking at events from a perspective outside that of the immediate narrative, almost as an intrusion from the future:

Then Elrond and Galadriel rode on; for the Third Age was over, and the Days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times.

It is notable that a line or two before this last example, in a conversation between Frodo and Sam that is firmly within the framework of the narrative, such a view of a clear historical hiatus is implicitly contradicted:

"[..] and you will read things out of the Red Book, and keep alive the memory of the age that is gone so that people will remember the Great Danger and so love their beloved land all the more. And that will keep you as busy and as happy as anyone can be, as long as your part of the Story goes on."

Although Frodo is clearly aware that things have changed, and that the age, (with a small 'a'), in which he was an active participant has come to an end, nevertheless the capitals stress experience and continuity. There seems to be a difference between ages and Ages.

So where did the idea of Ages originate? To go back to The Hobbit, Smaug, thinking that Bilbo must have some connexion with the Lake-Men, says: "I haven't been down that way for an age and an age". Logic suggests that two singulars make a plural, so that all Smaug means is " for ages" , yet somehow the dragon's formulation seems more appropriate in the heroic world of longevity where dwarves don't see as well as they used to a hundred years ago, and suggests that there may be something more to it.

Gandalf seems to have a similar conception of time when he says to Elrond about the Necromancer:

"The North is freed from that horror for many an age. Yet I wish he were banished from the world!"

"It would be well indeed," said Elrond; "but I fear that will not come about in this age of the world, or for many after."

It appears that Gandalf is still talking in impressionistic, legendary time, while Elrondís ages are drawing closer to historical Ages. It is not surprising that in the 1966 Edition, Gandalf's words were altered to "for many long years". After the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien must have felt the distinction to be important, and anyway he had a chronology to stick to..

But even at this stage it could be seen as something of an afterthought, since even in *The Lord of the Rings* the distinction is not always clear, and there are a good half dozen instances of " age" or "ages" without a precise chronological reference. A striking example appears in " The Shadow of the Past", where Gandalf can still say to Frodo:

" This is the One Ring that he lost many ages ago, to the great weakening of his power" .

The conception of " ages" here in the narrative is still wholly impressionistic, evoking a time of legend, in spite of the presence of annals in the Appendices which

show clearly from a historical perspective that the event in question happened in the year 3441 of the Second Age and precipitated the change to the Third Age, the Age in which both the characters are actually living.

This distinction between ages and Ages may appear on the surface to be trivial, but it does raise the underlying question of whether there is a potentially damaging contradiction between the impressionistic, suggestive depiction of time within the narrative, which we may call legendary time, and the cut-and-dried presentation of (fictional) history in the Appendices. Does Tolkien's tendency to rationalise detract here from his skill as a teller of tales?

Here is an example of what I mean. How old is Gollum? According to the annal for Third Age 2463 in Appendix B, "The White Council is formed. About this time Deagol the Stoor finds the One Ring, and is murdered by Smeagol" . If we assume that the event happened precisely in this year, and that Smeagol was young at the time, letís say 29, the same age as Pippin at the Siege of Gondor, then in 3019 he is 585 years old; that is, he has lived more than four times as long as Bilbo. Is this credible, or should we imagine that he is either older or younger?

Tolkien himself was not sure. According to The Peoples of Middle-earth, he had a number of changes of mind. His first note states:

So Smeagol and Deagol's finding occurred about 600 years after Isildur's death. Gollum therefore had the Ring nearly 2400 years.

His next version gave the entry:

c. 1100 Deagol finds the One Ring and is slain by Smeagol.

A subsequent change to the chronology alters this to "c. 2000" , involving the addition of considerable detail about the movement of the Stoors before and after the foundation of the Shire in an attempt to make their historical position clear. But all this effort only exacerbates the contradiction between Gandalf's impressionistic assertion that Gollum's people were " akin to the fathers of the fathers of the Stoors" and the historical 'fact' that Smeagol and Deagol found the Ring over a century after Gorhendad Oldbuck started building Brandy Hall. Tolkien@s shifts of chronology only underline the point that in the legendary time of the narrative Gollum's exact age is unimportant, but as soon as precise dating is introduced he has to be old enough to be wondrous, though not so old as to be completely incredible.

This is only one of the chronological conundrums which exist within *The Lord of the Rings*, and probably each Tolkien enthusiast has his or her own pet examples of slight inconsistencies. Ultimately, of course, it doesn't really matter, because the telling of the story is skilful enough for us not to notice while we are inside the Secondary World, that is while we are actually reading the tale. That in itself may be sufficient explanation for some. However, we can take the rationalisation further if we wish, and on two separate levels.

For the first, simpler level we need to see the whole sweep of the story as through a wide-angle lens. From this perspective, the growth of the historical background forms a part of the development of the narrative. The first two chapters form a transition from *The Hobbit*, in which both history and geography are vague - although the important thing is that we are aware of a wide world outside the parts that are shown to us, and we are aware of a significant past, even if the vast distance of time and space between Gondolin and the Mines of Moria is not made clear at the time. But at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings* we have no clearer idea of this world than has Frodo, so that in the first two Books we discover more about it through the eyes of the Hobbits as they pass through a series of marvels: the Old Forest, the Barrow Downs, Moria, Lorien, and so on. The background is built up until with the arrival in Rohan, and later in Gondor with its ancient tradition and its archives, we are located firmly in ëhistoryí.

From this perspective, the accumulating details make the transition from legend to history, from the tale to the Appendices, smooth and indeed almost inevitable, for the Appendices are in literary terms just as much a part of the text as is the tale itself, although this fact is sometimes overlooked. They are not just a lumber room for accumulated information that will not fit in anywhere else, but are skilfully crafted to give a changing point of view which heightens the impression that we are dealing with 'facts'. Whereas in the main narrative the action is recounted by the narrator through the eyes of different characters, in the Appendices the perspective changes from that of the 'editor' to the inserted extracts from old 'documents', often said to be written or commissioned by characters from the story, which in their turn have " insertions of later date" in brackets, as is explained at the beginning of Appendix A.

For the other level of explanation, we need to zoom in and look at individual instances. In the main tale, as opposed to the Appendices, the location in time of past events always comes about through the eyes of individual characters, or occasionally of whole societies. As an example of the latter, the distant threat of Mordor is first introduced as a part of Hobbit tradition:

That name the hobbits only knew in legends of the dark past, like a shadow in the background of their memories[.]

However, if "history" and "geography" were words not used very much in the Bree dialect, it seems that these subjects were not widely studied in the Shire either, or at least not the former, since for most Hobbits Gandalf's firework displays already "belonged to a

legendary past" . If happenings that are still within living memory for some belong to the same area of experience as folk traditions dating back at least two thousand years, then it appears that the Hobbits remembered events but not chronologies.

However, in contrast to these two examples, the majority of references to the past occur within dialogue rather than in the narrative framework, and therefore they represent the outlook and understanding not only of the speaker, but also of his audience. So it may be seen that both Aragorn and Gandalf adapt their accounts of history to Hobbit understanding, as the following examples suggest (with emphasis added in all three quotations to show the similarity). When Aragorn tells the tale of Beren and Luthien from the First Age, "when the world was young" , he says that " they passed, long ago, beyond the confines of this world." Before this, in Chapter 2, Gandalf has already located the making of the Rings, a good millennium and a half later in the middle of the Second Age, as "in Eregion long ago". Shortly after, after telling about Isildur, he goes on: "Long after, but still very long ago, there lived on the banks of the Great River in Wilderland [...]". So here we are with Gollum again, and this time we see that his story is adapted to Frodo's limited grasp of chronology.

The concept of time as relative to people's understanding is

Blue Wizard. *Lorenzo Daniele*

underlined in "The King of the Golden Hall", where on their approach to Edoras Legolas and Aragorn comment on the barrows which ground the Rohirrim at once in their home and in their history. Aragorn, notwithstanding his knowledge of lore obtained at Rivendell, identifies with the transience of human memory, while Legolas cannot help but interpret time as an immortal Elf, using the imagery of nature:

'Seven mounds upon the left, and nine upon the right,' said Aragorn. 'Many long lives of men it is since the golden hall was built.'

'Five hundred times have the red leaves fallen in Mirkwood in my home since then,' said Legolas, 'and but a little while does that seem to us.'

'But to the Riders of the Mark it seems so long ago,' said Aragorn, 'that the raising of this house is but a memory of song, and the years before are lost in the mist of time.'

The Rohirrim have a rough guide to chronology in the burial places of their kings, but like the Hobbits they depend on tradition and story rather than the history of the book-learned. The nearest thing to a history lesson comes from Faramir - " in the days of Cirion the Twelfth Steward (and my father is the six and twentieth)" - but even here he relates past events to the doings of his own ancestors. His system of reference is similar to the English style of dating statutes by the years of a monarchís reign, while his lesson seems to descend from the not-so-distant days when school history in this country meant learning about kings and queens.

Given the fact of the great longevity of some of Middle-earth's inhabitants, it cannot fail to make an impression on the reader (as well as the other characters) when one of them recounts events long past through his personal experience. Treebeard is unconsciously humorous in this respect, referring to "young Saruman down at Isengard" . (For TV addicts, this may recall the ancient " young Mr Grace" in the comedy series 'Are You Being Served'.) He is, however, well aware that other people may have a different view of time:

He gave up wandering about and minding the affairs of Men and Elves, some time ago - you would call it a very long time ago.

Elrond is much more impressive. I am still amazed and thrilled, just like Frodo, when I hear him reminiscing about the defeat of Morgoth at the end of the First Age. I recall feeling something of the same *frisson* when I heard the parliamentary veteran Lord Shinwell declare in a debate that he had started smoking in 1895 and had no intention of giving up - the striking incongruity of a continuous link over what for the younger person seems a great gulf of time.

I am sure that we can all think of examples of periods or events which seem to us to be cut off by such a gulf, and therefore the stuff of legends as much as history, even if the events were not as cataclysmic as those which produced a change of Age in Middle-earth. It will depend to a large extent, of course, on our own reading and life experience. For example, I have great difficuly in imagining pre-revolutionary France, although I can form a fairly clear picture of Mozart's no less absolutist Vienna, or of Handel's London. Another such period, much closer to our own time, is the Nazi era in Germany for me, and I suspect for many other people too, since adventure thrillers like Dennis Wheatley's *They Used Dark Forces* depend on Germany between 1933 and 1945 seeming so completely 'other' that no devilry or black magic would be beyond belief. It is not just a matter of chronological time, since I have no problem with the preceding period, that of Auden and Isherwood, which seems almost modern in comparion. This intrusion into our century of " legendary time" probably also accounts for the eerie fascination of the recently discovered colour film of the Nazi period which was shown on television earlier this year; much more than the old black and white footage, it shocks through the sheer ordinariness of such sights as the legendary monster Hitler playing with a dog on his balcony.

Which, of course, is the point that Tolkien continually underlines: " For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time" . On the stairs of Cirith Ungol, he lets Frodo and Sam speculate on how stories crystallise out of the actions of individuals. Every once in a while he affords us a glimpse of the events of the narrative seen through the eyes of future generations, such as the later tales of "Mad Baggins" , or the Song of the Mounds of Mundburg, composed long afterwards by a " maker of Rohan" whose name in turn has vanished into obscurity. Even if we had this man's dates, as we have for Virgil (approximately) or Wordsworth (exactly), although not for Homer or the Beowulf poet, it would not make any difference: he and his story belong to legendary time.

The important thing is that the two kinds of time can exist side by side in our awareness. One of the most memorable dates in English history is 1066. For most English people (although perhaps not Scots or Welsh) the number itself has almost ceased to have any relative significance such as 66 years after the millennium or 935 years before the present day; it exists rather as an absolute, since the Battle of Hastings has come to be seen as a major turning point, a symbolic event which transcends chronology. Some may happen to know that it it took place on 14th October, and that William was 38 years old at the time, but in spite of the existence of such clear dating, I suspect that even experts in medieval history, familiar as they are with the recorded details, are just as struck by its iconicity outside precise time. This is, as it were, the flexible interface between our sense of chronological and legendary time, which we bring to bear as much on our own real history as on the tale of *The Lord of the Rings* and its fictional-historical Appendices.

Ytenelinga Saga

Lynn Forest-Hill

The grey winter's day was dying like a beggar at the wayside. Under knots of naked trees Night, ancient accomplished ghoul, lurked, groping out with sable fingers. The skyward gaze of puddles in the wain ruts glazed with horror at his imminence, turned ice-pale, cracked like brittle bones under a weary footfall. 'Ill-shod I am for such nail-blackening weather' the traveller muttered, stepping carefully in worn-out boots to avoid the puddles, wrapping a thick, dirty cloak closer, pulling down the hood a little further, keeping one hand hidden, holding something, then winding the other into the outer edge of the cloak so that both were kept a mite warmer. Cold hands would mean no supper.

Surely there would be a village soon, a hamlet, a farm with a fire in the hearth and a bowl of pottage to spare. There had been many such winter evenings when the traveller's courage had dwindled with the light; when Night's old familiar - Loneliness - had crept close at heel whispering of cold death in the lee of a hedge. 'They said in the inn last night - a day's walk to the steading of the newcomer from the south, Wernë!', and the traveller's heart trembled.

The road began to climb a long slow slope. On either side of the ridge the land fell away into deep coombs and small valleys, where night's long fingers were also drawing close a cloak, a shroud of blackness, up from the low ground towards the ridge. The coming frost was holding air and earth in a mail-fist grip, not a sound or movement broke the brooding stillness. The sly whispers of Loneliness grew louder: *you will shrivel like the grass. Stiff as the stark trees you will grow, but the Spring sun will not bring life seeping back into your blackened limbs. Not that it matters, who will miss you? Who sits by the frost-bright fire waiting for your return?* 'It matters! It matters!' the traveller exclaimed aloud, and resurging determination warmed and quickened the ill-shod feet.

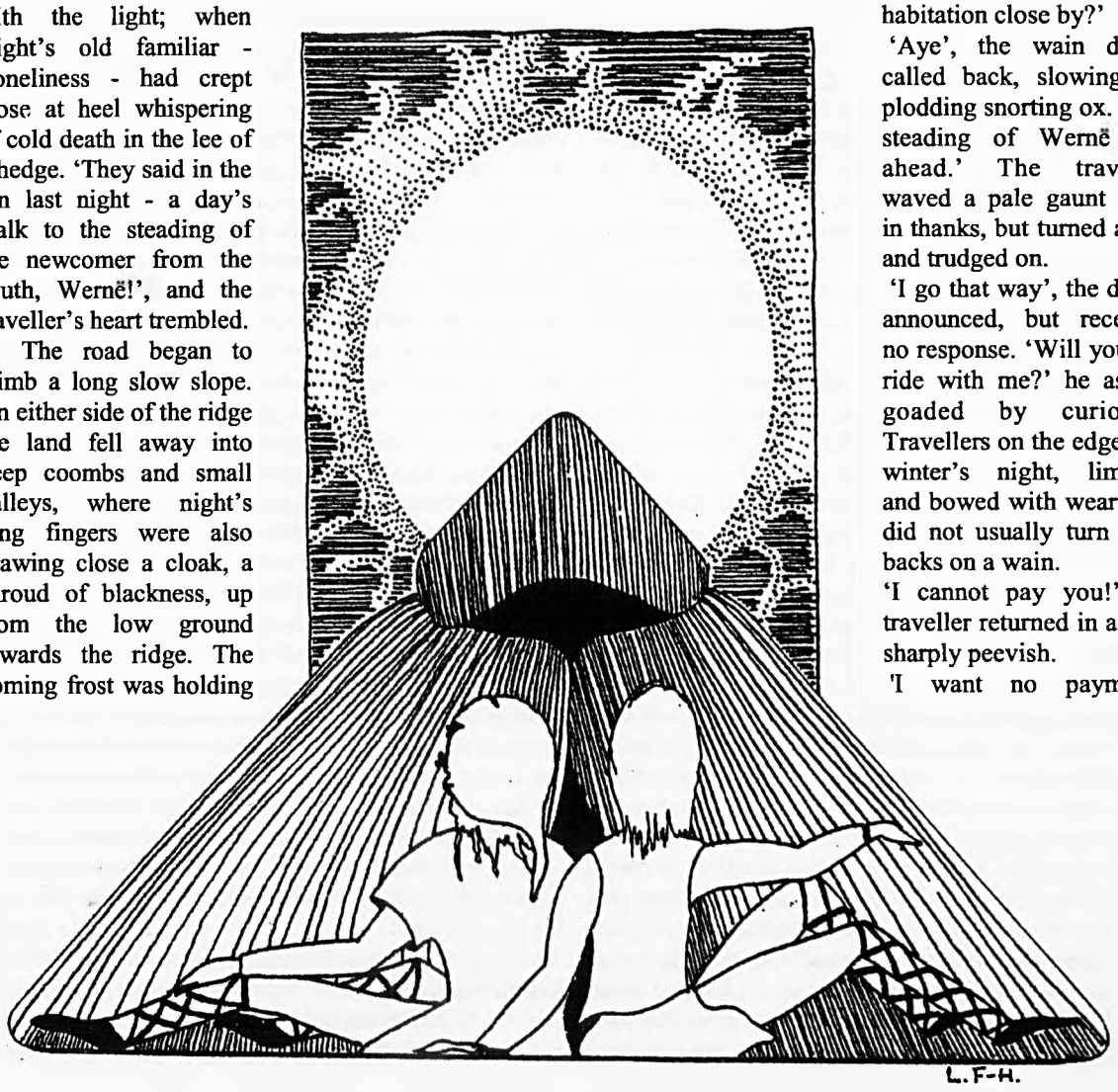
Deep preoccupation may render sharp eyes blind and keen ears deaf, and so it was that a laden wain came creaking and rumbling round the hinder curve of the road and up the slope to within hailing distance before the traveller became aware of it. Then, half-turning, with a hand raised hopefully and yet without slowing the footsore, weary tread, thin-voiced came the call: 'Can you tell me good master, is there habitation close by?'

'Aye', the wain driver called back, slowing his plodding snorting ox. 'The steading of Wernë lies ahead.' The traveller waved a pale gaunt hand in thanks, but turned away and trudged on.

'I go that way', the driver announced, but received no response. 'Will you not ride with me?' he asked, goaded by curiosity. Travellers on the edge of a winter's night, limping and bowed with weariness did not usually turn their backs on a wain.

'I cannot pay you!' the traveller returned in a tone sharply peevish.

'I want no payment!'



objected the driver, slighted by the curt reply. 'I offer in Christian charity!'

The traveller stopped, turning again towards the wain as it kept pace. The driver, clad in a woollen hood, a sheepskin jerkin, and well muffled overall in a rough blanket, looked down and saw the faint glint of dark eyes hidden deep within the hood, but the face of the traveller was quite obscured, though a sense of wariness and distrust ebbed about the figure. Then.the shoulders under the dirty cloak sagged. 'God bless you, master.' The voice was hoarse now with relief, the hand cold that accepted the driver's, outstretched and work stained, and the movements stiff and awkward climbing up onto the plank seat.

'You've come far?' asked the russet-faced driver as the ox lumbered on.

'Aye.'

'It is cruel weather to be on the road, and so near darkness. You must have urgent business' he went on, displaying a rustic inquisitiveness.

'I have my bread to earn', said the traveller.

'And what might be your trade then, friend?'

'I am a scop, a gleeman.'

'A gleeman, a storyteller!' the driver exclaimed merrily. 'I do love a good story, heroes and monsters, and the tales of old. What might be your name, master storyteller?'

'Folk call me Seofian the Sagasinger.'

'A strange name indeed, but memorable!' laughed the driver. 'And I am Cnapa, of the household of Wernë. It is long since we had a storyteller at the fireside. You will be welcome in the master's hall.'

'The hall of Wernë the southerner?' Seofian asked.

'Aye, so he is called by many, and indeed his speech has the sound of the south folk, but say you not so in his presence if you seek his hospitality this night for he mislikes it greatly.'

'Know you any reason for this aversion?'

"Tis said', Cnapa confided, 'that he has no close kin; surely none dwell with him, nor close by; and more: 'tis said all his kin were slain by Danes in the south and ever since he shuns remembrance of that dreadful deed. It is believed that he came north, and that not long ago, with only such wealth as would purchase him companions, flatterers who cling and sap his substance like dodder on peas. These casks of ale behind us are for the master's store, they all have powerful thirsts!'

Deep inside the enveloping hood Seofian nodded.

'Yonder lies the steading', said the driver a while later, waving his goad at a cluster of buildings only dimly visible in a coomb on the right, below the road. From a great roof a pale thin column of smoke went a-spiring up to meet clouds that would not keep the frost at bay. The wain came to rest in a wide yard where the mud was frozen hard already. All around were low-thatched barns and small dwellings. On the right stood the master's hall, from which the smoke issued, from which also there came the sound of loud voices and shafts of light as the door swung open. The master's household were gathering for the evening meal.

Cnapa hailed a passing serving woman. 'Hoy! See what I bring to cheer the long evening.' he called.

The woman, supporting a huge wooden platter on one arm and one hip, paused. 'Another beggar?' she complained.

'A gleeman, a storyteller! Master Seofian the Sagasinger', the wain driver announced loudly.

'A storyteller!' the woman exclaimed and her sour countenance cracked into a welcoming black-toothed smile. 'Come in, master', she told Seofian, beckoning with her free hand.

The threshold of the hall was a deep step downwards so that the rush-strewn floor was below ground level and the outward appearance of the building belied the height and space inside. So large was the hall in fact that two fires burned in two great stone hearths set beneath smoke holes in the roof. Between them was a long table, already laden with food, other tables set at right angles to it were being prepared.

Seofian noted the chief features of the hall with a practiced eye, noted the great bar for the door laid aside supporting a cask of ale - not readily placed beside the door in case of trouble, noted the absence of weapons on the walls, the fleece laid upon the master's finely carved chair, the plentiful supply of food, the lazy hunting dogs that did not bark at strangers but lolled beside the hearths waiting for their share of the coming meal. A comfortable hall, that of a complacent man with pretensions to grandeur, not the hall of a warrior.

Cnapa the wain driver, divested of his blanket and knitted hood, appeared at the sagasinger's side. 'The master will be here shortly, so come and take your ease, no need to huddle in your cloak.'

Seofian moved aside. 'I'll keep my cloak about me... by your leave!' The sharp tone offended the good-natured driver once again. 'By the Cross! Cnapa knows when his company's unwelcome!' he declared. 'But if you think to ingratiate yourself with the master you'll need better manners!' and he stalked off to warm his hands and talk to those who were standing by the nearest fire. The hall grew crowded, labourers and artisans, apprentices, cooks, women and children, all chattering - a gathering that witnessed the prosperity of the master of the hall and enhanced his local reputation. To supplement the light of the huge log fires now brightly blazing, torches were kindled and propped in iron sconces. Seofian sat on a barrel-top by the door, would not be drawn to the storyteller's place of honour close to the fire. Then the door flew open. Two boys, less than apprentice age, entered, each bearing on his arm a lanner, and behind them came the master of the household, Wernë the Southerner, and his hangers-on.

Tall, broad as a hogshead, black-bearded, black-haired Wernë allowed himself a moment's haughty perusal of his household. Seofian observed the silver girdle about his fine woollen kirtle, the heavy bearskin

cloak across his shoulders fastened with a brooch of lapis lazuli. His glance fixed on the stranger by the door and strutting pride clouded with suspicion as Seofian rose from the barrel top, bowed and began with customary courtesy, 'By your leave, lord, Seofian the Sagasinger brings songs and stories to entertain a noble hall'. Pride shone out again like August sun from behind dark thoughts. 'Welcome to the hall of Wernë, good storyteller. Entertain us well and I shall be generous'. The tone was condescending, the accent clearly southern. 'Ah well,' thought the sagasinger resignedly, 'Some give you supper for a song, others make you sing for your supper.'

The master of the hall was seated. To his right sat a thin-faced, lean-limbed man. 'Lank as dodder', thought Seofian, remembering the wain driver's description with the ease of a practiced memory. To Wernë's left a younger, sturdier man laughed lustily at something murmured to him by a bright-eyed girl who was pouring ale into his drinking horn. Moving to the centre of the space between the tables where one of the young hawk- bearers had placed a stool, the sagasinger sat down and from beneath the grimy and concealing cloak produced that which one hand had kept so close and safe: a small harp, most necessary to a singer of stories, although this harp was of a design not often seen in those parts. Only warm and supple fingers made sweet music, hence Seofian's care to keep them covered ftom the frosty air. Now from the strings those fingers wove a web of soft sounds across chanted words:

'For the good master's pleasure,
From the horde pluck a treasure.
Saga or lay the master shall say.'

At once a clamour went up, among the gathering it seemed that no two voices called for the same song or story. Wernë's great voice silenced the din. 'Know you The Battle of Maldon?'

'Aye.' replied Seofian.

'Give us that!' cried the southerner, to shouts of agreement, approval and delight, 'and throw back your hood, let us hear you!' came the demand to more shouts of agreement.

'By your leave, lord,' Seofian responded, mastering a tremor of fear, 'I have taken a vow to seek no recognition for myself, to earn my bread in humility in expiation of my sins. Wernë and his companions laughed loudly, 'Tell us that story!' shouted the lusty one. Seofian rose and began to wrap the harp inside the cloak once more. A murmur of anxiety ran through the gathering. 'Sit again, storyteller', Wernë cried, 'no insult is intended. Your sins do not concern us unless we suffer because of them.' There were murmurs now of approval. 'Lord,' began Seofian, 'I swear, you will not suffer because of my sins'. The tension in the hall abated.

Throughout the meal the sagasinger played and sang as the master of the hall steadily drowned his dignity in ale, and his sharp glance, which in his arrogance had not attempted to penetrate the shade of the storyteller's hood, dulled to a curious stare. The noble Wyrtgeorn's Dirge ended on a high, sweet note, extended and counterpoised against the last low sibilant chord from the harp. A slow inclination of the hooded head again acknowledged the increasingly rowdy applause, drumming of ale horns on tables, and shouts for another song.

'An it please you, lord,' the sagasinger called out above the noise, 'I would offer a new tale for your pleasure and interest: a tale of treachery and suffering!' Wernë was distracted, finding better entertainment in grappling with a serving girl. Seofian strummed the harp lightly, the noise in the hall subsided a little and the sagasinger's clear ringing voice lifted:

'Ytenelinga saga, of all songs most sorrowful.
Song of the south folk, dwellers by seashores.
Ballad of brothers burdened by birthright:
Mægan the mighty, master of many,
Lofgeornost, lurking, greedy for glory -
The glory of gaining birthright of his brother.

Many hands were heaving the harvest home,
When Lofgeornost foreswore his filial fealty.
To treacherous treaties with sea-tyrants swore troth.
Mægan's folk made merry, for the months of marauders
Sped into September and season of tempests;
Thus summer's speeding spoke to them of safety,

So they rejoiced, recking no rebellion.
Then came to Mægan a message momentous:
'Make haste, with many men, come to your monarch:
Come to the king caught in Winchester castle,
Lift the leaguer that Anlaf has set round your liege lord'
Then of his brother Mægan a bond begged,
Committing to his care his churls and his children,
Golden-haired Cwen the goodwife he cherished,
And all his chattels in Lofgeornost's charge laid ...

'Be silent, storyteller!' Wernë roared, and he heaved himself drunkenly from his great chair, knocking over the ale horns of those who sat by him. 'Say, storyteller,' he bellowed, steadying himself with one hand on the shoulder of his thin companion. Seofian fell silent, and all the rowdy company; all eyes looked towards the cross table.

'Say!' Wernë went on when all had become silent, 'What manner of storyteller, hooded and cloaked, sings with the voice of a woman? What hide you under that garb - a runaway prentice - or a runaway priest who has renounced his canticles? What is it you are so concerned to hide?' This last question was almost drowned in the guffaws of coarse laughter that pealed round the hall.

Seofian rose from the stool, still clutching the harp, and spoke in tones ringing with undaunted pride:

Mallorn XXXVIIII

'Overthwart and endlong have I tramped this bitter land. In the fine halls of stalwart warriors and in the draughty cots of poor farmers, by inn hearths and castle watch-fires have I sung my songs, for a crust of bread or sops in wine, and many have wondered at my voice, questioning me, but lord or lurden, none till now has forgotten the courtesy of hospitality.'

An expectant watchfulness strung the hall with the tension of harp strings; the meagre shape of Seofian stood alone facing the bear-like bulk of Wernë supported by his henchmen, but it was the sagasinger, using the tension as descant and counterpoint who spoke again: 'Sorry I am my new song does not please you, but I do not deserve your insults for this. Neither priest nor prentice am I, but freeborn, and free once more after years in heathen slavery. Know you not that the heathens have cruel ways with captives? Does it please you to hold me up to ridicule?'

'The slave of a heathen, you say?' Wernë smirked.

'Tell us! Tell us!' bawled the rabble, eager for vicarious terrors; yet another frightful story of the Northmen, such as they often heard from other storytellers, would add spice to the evening.

'This only will I tell you, household of Wernë the Southerner!' Seofian cried loudly and boldly, turning to left and right, quelling the crowd, 'Such treatment as this I might have expected from this southerner, and I say to you that to strangers the heathens show more courtesy than you to your own. You are infected with the manners of the south!' There rose an angry growl from many throats. Wernë picked up a drinking horn and hurled it with vicious force at the sagasinger. 'Go, eunuch!' he roared. 'Set the dogs on him!' he ordered those who sat closest to the scavenging animals. But Seofian was already heading for the door, not hurrying, but with determined steps, unintimidated as the noise in the hall grew. Some would have assaulted the storyteller for insulting their master, and them; others took the stranger's part, deploring their master's discourtesy, voices were raised, knives were drawn out of meat and a brawl scattered horns and trenchers, women and children.

Seofian stepped up and out into freezing blackness. The clouds had cleared, and cold, after the seething warmth of the hall, bit quickly through the cloak, but it was not a penance for plain speaking, rather it was a fair price, though cold feet would be hard to bear again so soon. Without looking back the sagasinger tucked the small harp closer under the cloak and walked away across the unsure footing of the frozen yard. But barely had Scofian's feet reached the top of the slope that climbed up to the ridge road before running feet came pounding behind and young voices shouting: 'Stay a moment, master sagasinger! The master sends to ask that you return!' Seofian halted, turned, under the hard glittering gaze of frozen stars watched the two young hawk bearers run up, and asked as they approached: 'What has your master to say?'

'That the night is bitter cold for sleeping in a ditch.' said one. His panting breath came in pale clouds, like ash in a bellows-draught.

'You left without payment.' said the other, resting his hands on his knees while he caught his breath, taken, like his companion's, more by the coldness of the air than their exertions. 'A whole rabbit was set aside for the end of your performance, and bread and pounded hazelnuts in honey, and mead enough to slake a blacksmith's thirst. Do you come back and feast your fill. Then, an it so please you, the master would hear more of your time among the heathens.'

I do not doubt it, thought the sagasinger, but replied: 'Tell your master, this far will I ease his conscience, a night's rest in his byre and such fare as is my due for service given, this only will I accept. But into that sty he calls his hall I will not go again! If this likes him not, I will go on, and in every place of habitation spread the word that the hall of Wernë the Southerner is a den of dishonour!'

Under the starlight the boys' eyes widened with dismay as they stared vainly into the storyteller's deep hood, hoping at last to see the face of the defiant stranger; and they hesitated, not daring to go back with the message, nor without the storyteller. Then Seofian, seeing their uncertainty, hidden inside the hood smiled and began to walk back down to the steading. When they came again into the wide yard between the buildings the boys ran to throw open the door of the hall, but Seofian called to them: 'Into that hall I will not go again, as I have said. Tell your master - that I fear to return. You may leave the insults to me if he troubles me again!' and the sagasinger turned aside and entered a byre on the far side of the yard from which the snorting of a pair of restless oxen came intermittently. Seofian settled into a pile of deep straw in a dark corner beyond the oxen and listened to the commotion that arose from the hall and echoed through the freezing night.

In a little while the boys, each carrying a jug and a trencher of bread came peering in at the door of the byre, two small black shapes against the starlight sky, calling softly, diffidently, 'Master storyteller?' called one, 'Master Sagasinger, are you there? Called the other. 'I am.' came the reply. They came in, carefully, so that nothing should be spilled. 'We bring food', the first said unnecessarily as the aroma made the famished storyteller's mouth water. 'And a hot posset to warm you and clean water to wash down the meal.'

Seofian silenced them with a raised hand, a gaunt hand that went out to seize and wrench a leg of the rabbit laid on a trencher that was still grasped by the nearest boy who was bending forward offering the food. He jumped nevertheless, startled by the sudden movement. Their eyes grew accustomed to the dark in the byre as the boys stood and watched the storyteller devour the flesh. After the first onslaught Seofian looked up at them, standing on either side still holding their burdens of food and drink. 'As I recall, boys have appetites that grow faster even than they.' It was a lighthearted remark, almost a question. The boys

nodded, and received large chunks of trencher bread, moist with the juices of the roasted rabbit. They set down the food and drink, received the bread, gnawing at it like young curs, mumbling their thanks.

With the meal Seofian drank all the warm posset but supped nothing from the jug of clean water. The boys licked the crumbs from their greasy fingers before wiping them on their mole-skin jerkins, but when Seofian had scraped the last smears of hazelnuts and honey from the bowl, the harp-wise fingers, warmed once more, dipped down into the jug of freezing water, bore some up, disappeared into the hood, to wipe the hidden face, and the boys were amazed.

'It is a custom of the heathens.' Scofian explained, 'And pleasanter than most. I commend it to you.' The boys shook their heads as the jug was offered to them and the storyteller laughed, sweet and melodious, reminding the boys of the confrontation in the hall. 'Master Sagasinger, will you sing us the rest of the song of the southern people?' asked one.

'It is a sad song to hear in the cold darkness.' the storyteller replied.

'Please?' they both entreated, and it seemed to them that the faint starlight coming through the open doorway shone briefly on eyes that smiled, wistfully.

'Very well, But I will not sing. The song is overlong for those who have endured a long cold day. I will tell you the tale plainly, as I might have told another to my own sons.' It was Seofian's excuse, knowing how singing would echo across the night. The boys shuffled nearer, made themselves snug at the feet of the storyteller by burrowing into the straw.

'It was the end of summer', Seofian began, 'The fields were being reaped in the south, near the sea, in the land of the Ytene. In that land there were two brothers, the elder Mægan, was a lord of renown, master of wide lands and many good folk, a strong protector of his people, a faithful ally to his own lord. His hair was as dark as this winter's night and his eyes as black as the sea beneath a moonless sky, but his heart was fair and good and generous as summer. The younger brother too was dark-haired and dark-eyed, broad as an ox, strong as a bear, but he was a jealous angry man who coveted his brother's birthright, yet he had not the daring to contend openly for that which he desired, so he feigned loyalty, drank immoderately and conceived an evil plan. All along that coast the Danes, the Northmen, were accustomed to come raiding in the summer months. They pillaged and took captives, but they did not settle, not then. It was also rumoured that in some places they had been bought off. At this time, Lofgeornost - he who desired glory - the glory of dispossessing his brother, saw his wicked chance. By devious and unknown means he made a treaty with Anlaf the leader of the sea-wolves.' Seofian paused, the melodious storyteller's voice had grown hard and tense. The boys were unaware of the change, seeing in their minds the summer lands of the Ytene and the battle-axes of the sea-wolves.

The sagasinger went on: 'Messengers came to Mægan in the late summer bidding him lead the men of his household with all speed to the relief of the king at Winchester, where he was beleaguered by a great force of Danes. Now Mægan was troubled. Though his lands had remained safe all summer from the raiders there was yet time for them to descend upon his land before the autumn storms set in, but he must answer the king's urgent summons. In that time he turned to his brother Lofgeornost unsuspecting, and charged him, as he loved him, to care for and defend the people he left behind. To his special protection he committed Cwen the Golden-haired, the wife he loved, and their three young sons. In the mist of early morning Mægan and his household men bade farewell and left that peaceful land. That same night the sea-wolves fell upon the undefended people, called up by Lofgeornost the Accursed.

Dreadful was the slaughter of those few who were left to oppose the destruction and violation. Homes were utterly despoiled, not even the church escaped. Every building burned, and morning dawned upon a scene of such horror as Hell itself could not rival. Yet this was not the worst!' Seofian's voice wavered with the emotion of the story that was to come and the boys edged closer. 'In the hall of Mægan, unbumed alone among the devastation, his lady and his sons were held captive, hearing the anguish of the folk, wrung with mortal terror. There they remained until the time when the noonday bell should have rung, but the priest was slain and only the sounds of weeping disturbed the silence, for the sea-wolves were weary from the night's exertions and those left on guard had fallen quiet. Then came the sound of many tramping feet and shouts from the invaders. For a while the heart of Cwen was uplifted. It seemed that a fleeing churl must have reached her lord, only a day's march distant, and now help was at hand! But it was not so! Danes led out the lady and the lordlings into the bright afternoon, into the wreckage and the carnage, to see the hoped for men of the household returning not as deliverers but as captives in chains.' The boys gasped, living out the horror. 'Face to face, held by rough hands, the lord and the lady were brought. Lofgeornost stood beside them gloating, his plan had worked perfectly. While one part of Anlaf s summer army sacked the village another had fallen upon the lord and his men, for the messengers who had come to Mægan and lured him away were traitors in the pay of Lofgeornost!

Now Lofgeornost spoke so that all the folk who had been herded into the open place between the lord's hall and the church could hear: "Brother", he cried, addressing Maegan proudly, "It seems to me that you are unable to defend your lands and people, will you then relinquish your birthright and the lands of our father freely to me?"

"Indeed, no!" cried Mægan. "Nor will I forget this betrayal. These heathens boast of your treachery and the payment they expect to receive for their part in this treachery. Our folk lie dead all about, old men, boys,

and women trying to defend their homes; my household, ambushed, slain, wounded, set in chains; and my beloved wife and sons are rudely handled. God's justice will not tolerate these monstrous acts!"

Then Lofgeornost laughed and turned to the lady. "Look on your lord, Cwen Goldenhair, your husband stands before you, in chains, bloodied and defeated. He cannot defend you, or your people, or his lands, or himself now. Anlaf my ally waits for my word before he puts the household and its lord to the sword. For the women and children slavery awaits. You may save them by your example. Swear obedience to me as your lord and all who follow your example shall go free as long as you and they remain obedient to my lordship."

At once Mægan fought against those holding his chains and he cried out in anger, but Cwen herself withstood the traitor. "Do you think, Lofgeornost, that I am so foolish as to trust any word of yours, who are already foresworn. The power of many swords cannot defend you forever, not even darkness as black as your heart could conceal from God and man the abomination you have become. I swear nothing to you but vengeance!"

The traitor scowled. Cwen's obedience to his lordship would have been an example to the people which would have secured his rule, and her own betrayal of her husband would have satisfied his desire to see the absolute humiliation of his brother. Now her words rekindled his long-smouldering and vicious anger. In a loud voice he gave the command to Anlaf's sea-wolves: "Let Mægan bear the blood eagle!"

Cries of dismay rose from even the most stalwart in that place. The weaker begged mercy for their lord, falling on their knees. Cwen gazed in disbelief that any man could pronounce such a doom upon his brother, but Lofgeornost knew no pity and to the Danes such torment is sport. One last time, in helpless anguish, Cwen looked up into Mægan's steadfast eyes. "Be comforted, alderliefest," he said softly, "What shepherd would not sacrifice his dog to save the flock?"

"Then who shall defend the flock?" asked Cwen.

"The Good Shepherd." Mægan answered.

Cwen wept and clasped the children to her so they would not see their father's suffering, while Mægan's captors stretched him out on the dusty ground. The drove stakes through the links of his chains into the warm earth with the flats of their battle axes, ripped off his mail and shirt to lay bare his broad back. Anlaf's lieutenant took his seax and sliced open that fine flesh, and Mægan bore his agony without a sound, for the sake of his children. From his body the sea-wolves drew his vital organs, while Cwen, almost fainting, prayed to see her husband die and all around the folk fell to their knees praying and crying for pity. So Mægan ended, riven by sea-wolves.

Then Lofgeornost spoke again to Cwen the Golden-haired, who barely stood now, clutching on to her sobbing sons, wavering between her heathen guards: "I give you this last chance, Goldenhair, to avert more suffering. Yield up the birthright of your sons to me, here before these witnesses, and swear obedience, and those who do likewise shall remain in these lands."

"Foul and wicked man, oathbreaker, traitor, murderer, the adder underfoot would be ashamed to call you brother!" she railed against him, but his malice was not yet exhausted and his lust for power became a lust for blood. At his word those who guarded Cwen tore from her the fearful wailing children. Three boys, golden-haired like their mother. The youngest had scarcely six winters, the eldest no more than nine when they were mown down like the ripe corn.' Scofian paused abruptly, passed a hand inside the hood before continuing. 'Lofgeornost, that brave warrior slew them, slit the tender throats one by one himself; their lifeblood lapped around his feet and drowned their mother's senses in its flow.'

An awestruck 'Oh!' broke involuntarily from the lips of both the young listeners, and one stoked his own throat unconsciously. 'The rest is not important.' Seofian said dismissively. The tension snapped, the spell broke. Telling it without the discipline of verse and music made it harder. 'But what happened to the people?' asked one of the boys. The storyteller noticed for the first time the paleness of his face. 'And the lady?' asked the other, who had a mass of tousled hair that he pushed out of his eyes now and again.

'The people swore obedience to Lofgeornost, of course.' Seofian replied tersely. 'They were very afraid. But later he gave some of them in payment to the Danes anyway. They became slaves. After an evil time that was the lady's fate also.'

'Did she swear too?'

'Never.' Seofian's growled assertion subsided into explanation: 'That was why she was given to the sea-wolves.'

'She should be avenged, and the traitor made to pay!' cried the tousle-headed boy with all the valour of untried youth.

'I would do it!' his companion declared boldly. 'An I were older, I would go south and find the traitor and kill him! I am learning to use a sword!'

'And I!' cried the first.

'He is no longer in the south.' Seofian interrupted, quelling their bloody enthusiasm. 'The man called Lofgeornost will not be found by anyone, that is not his baptised name, that I do not tell, nor those of Mægan and Cwen the Golden-haired.'

'The story is true, then?' asked the pale-faced boy, astonished.

'It is true.' said Seofian and the boys whispered between them as the storyteller went on: 'And true it is that God's justice is swift. The Danes broke their alliance with Lofgeornost the next summer. They returned not for trade, but to settle the lands themselves. Those they had not already taken as slaves went then, except for Lofgeornost who fled for his life.'

'Do you know what happened to the Lady?' asked

the pale boy.

'She is free.' The storyteller replied. 'Freedom was her reward for saving the life of the heathen man to whom she had been sold. After a time as slave to Danes, she was sold to a merchant man from a distant land where the sun shines in winter as hot as it shines here in summer. During that time she learned many new things. One day, as her master feasted with other merchants she noticed, crawling on his on back a scorpion. This is a small but deadly brute that carries venom in its upraised tail. The slave-lady swept the vile thing aside with her hand and she was stung almost to death, but she did not die, although she longed to join her beloved husband and sons. The merchant and all who knew of this event believed God had healed her because she had been faithful to her master and saved his life. But when her master freed her, out of gratitude, she knew why these things had happened.' The storyteller fell silent.

'What happened to her after that?' the pale boy asked.

'It is late.' said the sagasinger firmly, 'You will be missed.'

The boys would have argued but the storyteller would not listen and sent them away with warnings of beatings if they fell asleep at their work next day. Reluctantly they left, bearing the empty jug and honey bowl, leaving the jug of water, and leaving Seofian alone with the drowsy, snuffling oxen and the starlight.

Chilled fingers had lost some of their earlier dexterity as they handled the harp again, taking it from under the cloak not to play, but to unravel the longest strings and knot them. All noise died away. Intense silence settled over the steading. 'The song is sung' the sagasinger thought, gazing through the doorway. Across the wide yard glittering with frost, a shape broad as a bear moved clumsily but purposefully.

The early morning was brilliant as a jewel. Night had drawn aside revealing the empty sapphire splendour of the sky, frost had decked the landscape in virgin white and hung pendant crystal from every twig and weather-writhen blade of grass. Along the high ridge road a woman walked, clad in a heavy cloak. Its outer fabric was of fine dense fur, the lining, exposed briefly as she walked seemed somewhat besmirched with travel. In spite of the bitter cold she had thrown back her hood and an abundance of golden hair flowed down upon her shoulders, unrestrained by veil or wimple. Her fade was calm and peaceful, her grey eyes looked upon the morning with serenity.

On the still air, suddenly, there came a sound of running boots and hoofbeats. Horns were being blown. The woman halted, stepped aside onto the crunching grass to let pass those who hastened along the road, but as they drew near they began to call out to her, and to call their hunting dogs.

'Hoy, good mistress! Tell us, has any man passed you by this early morning?' The speaker was thin-faced, lean-limbed, riding a big roan. A sheathed sword hung at his side.

'No, indeed.' she answered, drawing her cloak close about her. 'Why seek you any man in such great haste?'

'We hunt the slayer of our master.' replied a man on foot, a russet-faced churl in a sheepskin jerkin and knitted hood, who bore a stout stave in his work-stained hand. 'We seek the slayer of Wernë our good master.'

'Know you then what manner of man slew your good master?' the woman asked anxiously, 'for I am alone and travel on foot.'

'An itinerant gleeman, one Seofian the Sagasinger, a storyteller hitherto unknown to us, who earned a night's lodging in the master's byre and by some guile lured him there and cut his throat.' replied the lean rider.

'Most hideous it was to see', put in a panting foot-man as he leant on a scythe. 'With strings taken from his harp and knotted the storyteller throttled and severed the master's gorge.'

'But that was not the end', another with a bow slung across his shoulder broke in. 'With the master's own seax, the scoundrel then slit open his back, ripping aside rairnent and flesh and laid over his shoulder the blood eagle!'

'Spare me these tales!' the woman cried, shaking her head. 'Surely the doer of these deeds cannot go far. All will mark him for such a welter of blood must have soaked him to the elbows.'

'Crafty in the ways of the heathens he was', a second rider told her. He bore one of the horns that had sounded their approach. 'Among the provender sent to the byre by the master there was a jug of water, it was left there overnight, at least half full, but this morning it was all poured out upon the straw and bloodied, used to wash away signs of the slaughter. But maybe the garments will still be gore-stained.'

'I beg you, good masters, spare me one or two of your company, just to the nearest habitation. Your tale fills me with terror, and this road is lonely' pleaded the woman.

'Fair mistress,' the swordsman replied, disregarding her obvious apprehension, 'Your safety lies in our hunting down this heathen-handed wretch with all speed. In our scouring we shall clear your way. Be not afraid!' With a loud shout of encouragement to those who followed on foot, he and his companion urged their mounts forward and galloped away, heading in the direction of a knot of trees that stood in a hollow beside the road a little distance ahead. The foot-men ran behind, spreading out, calling to each other.

The golden-haired woman watched them go, and a smile, small and secret, stole across her mouth and into her shining eyes. She let go the edges of her cloak, till then held so tightly about her meagre frame with gaunt hands, and she lifted one thin-booted foot, rubbed the toes and instep, chafing some poor warmth into them, and rejoicing, she sighed to herself.

'Ill-shod I am for such nail-blackening weather.' □

Beren fights against spiders in Dungortheb *Lorenzo Daniele*

COMING OF AGE: CHANGES OF HEART

Growth and enlightenment in *The Lord of the Rings*

Christine Davidson

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Thinking about this year's Seminar subject, [*the year was 2000, the theme The Change of Ages. Ed*] and also about Patrick Curry's excellent speech at the AGM, it occurred to me that we all encounter changes as we go through our lives, either significant or subtle; and so do many of the characters in the Lord of the Rings. I thought it might be interesting to look at some of these - and I hope you think so too.

I propose to cover the nine characters of the Fellowship, some more briefly than others. Of course there are other major characters whose lives change profoundly as a result of the War of the Ring: for example both Eowyn and Arwen have their lives irrevocably changed when they marry, and the Elves, Galadriel and Elrond, leave Middle-earth behind them for ever when they cross the Sea.[1] But for now I will confine myself to the Fellowship, trying to hold back on my tendency to run on at far too much length when discussing Tolkien's work. I shall look at each of these characters in turn, noting some of the external changes they encounter, and examining how these serve to develop their characters. For many, one particular change will mark a " coming of age" where they attain their mature powers. Some, without such a watershed, learn to modify their beliefs; while for others, the "coming of age" is twisted into evil, or too late.

Gandalf, *de facto* the leader of the Fellowship, is not human; he is a *maia*, an angelic spirit sent to Middle-earth to aid its peoples against the Enemy. For many authors, this would go far to circumscribe, even prohibit character development. Gandalf, however, while certainly possessedof supernatural powers, is at first all too human in many ways, since he is incarnated in human form in order to understand the hearts and minds of those with whom he must deal. Though his outward appearance of age is in many ways deceptive, the weariness of his long labours has brought him many of the faults of old age: irascibility, impatience, forgetfulness. He does his best, but he works almost alone at a monumental task; not for him the luxury of quiet contemplation in an ivory (or basalt) tower, with minions to do his bidding and bring tidings from every quarter. Gandalf, like Saruman, might have had these things, if he had been prepared to give a little flattery and service to powerful rulers. But 'Gandalf Stormcrow'[2] these call him, as he goes about the business of learning and telling what they are loth to hear. Prepared to give pleasure to simple folk with his fireworks, he has no time to spend massaging the egos of such as Denethor. Gandalf may be pardoned for leaving this to Saruman, obviously far more suited to the task, since he believes Saruman to be working on his side. After narrowly escaping the traitor's clutches, he knows he must work by himself: two Istari are lost in the East, one become an enemy, and the remaining one withdrawn into the Wild, reclusive and virtually useless in the struggle. It is, frankly, rather too much for Gandalf alone to cope with, and he is lucky not to lose the Ringbearer before he reaches Rivendell.

It is at Khazad-dûm that Gandalf reaches his consuming change: he dies. Standing alone before the Balrog, his strength fails; not his mental power, which is enough to cast down his supernatural foe, but his human vigour. ìI am spent,î he says, after his efforts to close the door of the Chamber of Mazarbul, vying even then with the Balrog, although he did not know it. Not strong enough either to leap back in time or to resist the pull of the Balrog's whip, he falls and is lost in the abyss.

Later we learn that he continues to pursue the Balrog throughout the mountain, hanging on by will alone through thick and thin, and slays it at last. But with that final effort his frail mortal body is broken, and his spirit leaves it to fly back whence he came.

But Gandalf is not human, and those even more powerful than he decide to send him back. Presumably they give him another body, similar yet not exactly like his former one; a reason why even his good friends do not at first recognise him. It seems, in Fangorn, as though Gandalf himself has some trouble adjusting, finding difficulty even in remembering his name; like someone waking from amnesia or coma, he is at this point truly ëborn againí. And while still the same old wizard in many ways, for example his abrupt methods and caustic speech, he is changed. Merry says, " He has grown, or something" ,[3] and he does possess more authority, more power, more compassion even. We do not learn if the Valar have given him these things in some way, or if they are entirely the product of his mortal struggle with the Balrog. There is a hint that some of Sarumanís attributes have become his, but whether because he has

literally taken them over, or simply that, growing in stature himself, he is worthy of Saruman's former place, is not clear. If he were human, it could be explained thus: he has been through the fire, facing death, and seemed to die. Such an experience often changes a person, and gives them greater insight and purpose in life. Then he is given the accolade of heading the White Council in Sarumanís place; despite all his mistakes, those in authority over him recognise his efforts and his worth. He is sent back with enormous responsibilities, and no assurances, yet he carries the trust and belief of the great. No wonder he rises to greater heights, no wonder he is now able to challenge the Witch-King himself. But Gandalf, even resurrected, is no *deus ex machina.* His powers have been won by his own supreme efforts, and though enlarged sufficiently to complete his task, the quintessential Gandalf remains the same.

BOROMIR'S PRIDE

Boromir is stiff and proud, arrogant even, and change does not come to him easily. He needs to change, however, for the sake of the Fellowship and for his own soul, and in the end he does, though he has fought so long against it that the consequences are dire, most of all for himself. There are, however, several landmarks along the road to his final change of heart. He begins as a man who knows his own prowess, believes his own worth as heir to Minas Tirith, the last bastion of an ancient and honourable race against darkness and chaos. But at Rivendell he discovers he must be subordinate to another heir with higher claims. Not unnaturally, he needs to be convinced that these claims are not false, and even when his intellect is satisfied he finds the fact difficult to accept. Struggling to come to terms with this change in his circumstances, he is then faced with Galadriel, who looks into his heart and creates further disturbance. Boromir blames her for this, though what she has done, as with the other member of the Fellowship, is simply to bring to his conscious attention thoughts and desires that were already there. Boromir desires power, and this is something he now finds incompatible with his position. Believing Galadriel has tempted him with the Ring, he rejects the thought. Again, it is his upbringing which prompts him to the right course, not his own inner conscience. Instead of recognising his temptation and striving in humility to overcome it, as the others do, he refuses to acknowledge it until, matured and armed with plausible arguments, it conquers him utterly.

It takes peril and the loss of the Ringbearer to bring him understanding of what he has done. His defence of the other hobbits, leading to his death, springs this time from true selflessness rather than his hitherto somewhat superficial 'honour'. Up to now, all Boromir's actions have been something of a sham, starting with the journey to Rivendell itself; his brother, a more suitable candidate for a mission to the House of Elrond in many ways, had the prompting dream three times, Boromir himself only once. The reader is strongly tempted to wonder if Boromir in fact had the dream at all, but lied in order to go, feeling it was due his position as the Steward's heir. I think that here we should give Boromir the benefit of the doubt; his honour, that he sets great store by, would forbid him to stoop to such a lie. There is good in Boromir, attested by his having the dream once at least, though it is Faramir who has more comprehension of the spiritual realm of the Elves, and so has it three times. Through shame and remorse Boromir learns the true meaning of honour at last, though his change of heart has for him dire consequences: the Heir of Minas Tirith gives his life—many, such as his father, would judge he throws it away—to save two apparently inconsequential members of the Fellowship, and he does not even succeed. Yet his action is crucial to victory at Isengard, and even though Merry and Pippin are captured, the very fact of their defence to the death by a man of stature no doubt impresses the Uruk-hai with their importance, and helps to keep them alive.

Boromir's final scene contains much of the penitence, confession and final absolution found in the Roman Catholic faith, Aragorn acting in the role of priest. The changes that this incident promotes have ripples that spread far, certainly to every later turn of the story, and it is Boromir's own change of heart that prompts one of the most major. Aragorn has been uncertain of his path, torn between further assisting the Ringbearer and going to Minas Tirith, where lies his power and his inheritance. Boromirís last example of sacrifice shows him his way and he does neither, but chooses similarly to protect the weak, to 'do the right thing' rather than the strategically obvious one. Aragorn himself has learned to think of Middle-earth in its entirety, not only of his own lands and people.

ARAGORN'S ACCESSION

The chief change that comes to mind when considering Aragorn is his accession to the Kingship, which naturally alters his life for ever; from wandering, unacknowledged Ranger to supreme ruler of an ancient and powerful kingdom, and in addition changing his lonely single state to that of husband and father. Such radical changes of circumstance might well overwhelm a man, except that Aragorn has been preparing for them all his long life. Nevertheless he does change when his goal is achieved, gaining in power—the right kind—and fitting himself to the mantle of kingship. He daunts with his authority when necessary, in order to save Merry and the others wounded by the Black Breath; and he surrounds his coronation with dazzling pomp, because he knows his people need such symbolic panoply to mark their hopes of a new beginning. Yet he is still, as the hobbits divine, still the old Strider at heart. Never puffed up by riches or power, he appreciates the simple fundamentals of life, and

this is perhaps something his hobbit friends have helped to teach him.

Though his accession is his greatest change, Aragorn comes to it by way of many lesser, but important, milestones along his path. All his adult life he has been honing himself, pitting his skills and his courage against his enemies, but until he meets Frodo Baggins all this has been essentially repetitive; probably the only major landmark of this period has been the winning of Arwen, something he has also been striving for all his adult life. At Cerin Amroth he wins her pledge, and so knows that if he succeeds in his ordained task he will gain not only his inheritance, but also the most fervent wish of his heart. If ever a man had an incentive to do well, it was Aragorn Elessar.

But the event which marks the beginning of the final stage of Aragornís road to the Kingship, is his meeting with the hobbits at Bree; because here he comes into contact with the Ring. Strider, as he names himself there, could easily take the Ring from Frodo. He seems never to be tempted, unlike Boromir, no doubt because he has learned all that Elrond and Gandalf had to teach of Sauron, the Ring and its perils, and has also taken to heart lessons of humility and service, many of them from Gandalf's example. But he knows that this marks the crucial period of his life, and while confident in his own abilities, he does not find the task an easy one. From the first, when they are unable to slip away from the inn because the ponies have been stolen and they need to find a replacement, he is forced to take decisions that could make or break the success of his mission. At the summit of Weathertop, surrounded by Nazgûl, it surely must seem to him that his path has been wrong. Yet he does what he can, defending the terrified hobbits with fair odds that they will all die, and is quite puzzled afterwards that their unbeatable enemies have withdrawn. So he learns more of the Nazgûl: that terrible as they are, invoking the power of the Valar brings fear to them. Certain of their eventual superiority, they are not prepared, as he was, to risk all, and so for the time being, he conquered. Their confidence is misplaced; not knowing who Aragorn is, they have left him to counteract the expected effects of Frodo's poisoned wound, and left Isildur's true heir alive. Had they been less arrogant, more prepared to endure an unpleasant conflict, they could have put an end to him then and there, and made sure of Frodoís compliance by taking him prisoner. The Nazgûl are at one and the same time contemptuous of their foes, and too careful of their own incorporeal existence; mistakes their royal but unassuming adversary has learned not to make.

So it continues, Aragorn coming step by step to ever greater

'A king both represents his people, and sacrifices himself for their benefit'

commands, always leading from the front, as at Helm's Deep, the Paths of the Dead, the expedition to the Black Gate; and his decisions likewise become ever harder. Could he have chosen the last wild throw of the Black Gate, without the vindication of his other seemingly hazardous decisions behind him? With each victory, his strength and stature grow. Yet the greatest change within him comes in Lórien, again.[4] Gandalf has been lost, who led the company, and has been Aragornís mentor since he first left Elrondís care and began his task. In Lórien, under Galadriel's penetrating eye, he has to come to terms with that loss, and realise that now he stands alone to lead, not only the Fellowship, but all men of Middle-earth in the conflict against Sauron. This is Aragorn's final 'Coming of Age'. So before they leave, he walks again on Cerin Amroth, remembering his joy with Arwen, and bids a final farewell to all that went before. "He... never again came there as living man", the narrative tells us.[5] Aragorn came to Lórien still in part Estel, a Ranger, Hope of the Dunedain. He leaves it Isildur's heir, to rally all who will follow him against the darkness that seeks to swallow Middle-earth, or else to fight alone; victory may bring him his inheritance, but that is not the chief reason he seeks victory. A king both represents his people, and sacrifices himself for their weal. Aragorn leaves Lórien in the knowledge he may have to do both.

LEGOLAS AND GIMLI

Legolas and Gimli are the two characters for whom change is least likely, given that one is an Elf, whose very nature is unchanging, and the other a Dwarf, his being crafted from enduring stone. Nevertheless, without infringing these concepts, it is these two characters who perhaps change most radically, due to their friendship with one another. The first manifestation of this is at Helm's deep, when each learns to respect the otherís prowess at killing Orcs, finding common ground in defeating their common enemy, and turning their previous racial dislike to a more friendly rivalry. But the seeds of this have been planted already; in the reminder (in Moria) that Elves and dwarves once were friends, in the comradeship of their hard road. One cannot live day and night for weeks in the company of others without coming to know them intimately, as people rather than racial, or other, stereotypes. This can lead to fiercer hatred, since there is nothing worse than having to endure the company of one whose habits or attitudes are abhorrent. But Legolas and Gimli both discover that these are not so bad, and begin at least to respect one another.

Galadriel is the catalyst that speeds and fuses their friendship. Before they enter Lórien, there is

still enough antagonism between them for both to stand on their dignity over the blindfolding of Gimli, Legolas even becoming angry with Aragorn over the suggestion that he, too, should have his eyes covered. Later, it would be he who would vouch with his life for the dwarf; but they still have a long way to go. Gimli's eyes are opened, however, by the compassion of Galadriel, and by his request for her golden hair he shows that he has come to value personal interaction over the cold metal normally dearest to Dwarvish hearts. This in turn shows Legolas a new side to Gimli, and Galadriel's sympathy for the beauty of underground treasures comes home to him after Helmís Deep,[6] when he listens, sympathetically, to Gimli's lyrical description of the caves. From this point on their friendship can only grow. After the war, like the rest of the Company, they have their homes and tasks to return to; but their friendship endures, and leads at last to the unprecedented event of their leaving Middle-earth together. The gulls woke sea-longing in Legolas; but this is only a symptom of his need. Content for aeons in his life in Mirkwood, after the things he has learned outside he can be no longer satisfied with his former existence. Truly, the Elves of Mirkwood are as narrow and intolerant as hobbits. He seeks for higher things, and Gimli, perhaps the only Dwarf ever to understand, chooses to go with him; wrench though it must be for one who still must love the things of Earth, he chooses in the end not to be parted from the two souls he most loves, Legolas and Galadriel. These are changes indeed, and the wonder and the telling of them yeast to leaven the understanding of their respective peoples.

PIPPIN'S JOURNEY

Of all the hobbits, Pippin is the most irresponsible. When they begin their journey from the Shire none of them understand the true magnitude of their task, but Pippin, the youngest, least of all; it is he who, their second morning on the road, runs singing on the grass, despite the already encountered threat of the Black Rider. His very presence as Frodo's companion lacks responsibility, since he is in effect the Crown Prince of the Shire; this does not prevent him 'running away' as many of Tookish blood have done before him. At first, of course, it is simply seen as a not particularly dangerous adventure, an excursion to see Bilbo at Rivendell. Once the task has been explained, and the deadly dangers, it might be expected that the Thain's heir would see his place was back in the Shire. Not a bit of it, of course.[7] Such a thing never occurs to Pippin, filled as he is with a restless desire for travel, and to prove himself as equal to the other hobbits who are going on the quest. No doubt Pippin himself would say, and genuinely believe it, that he only wishes to go in order to assist Frodo. Certainly his friendship is real, and this is a part of his reason. But Pippin is not Fredegar Bolger, and his desire for the quest is largely prompted by typical—though less so among hobbits—youthful exuberance and wanderlust, or else he would never consider it.

Pippin is really something of a spoilt child, always getting his own way. As heir to the richest and most influential hobbit clan, he has plainly been allowed to do pretty much as he liked. This has not apparently led to any bad consequences, due to his generally pleasant and sunny personality; masked by this, the effects are more insidious. Pippin shows lack of self-restraint more than once, as when he drops a stone down the well in Moria. Perhaps not chastened enough for this, he appears to have learned no lesson from it. He does not begin to recognise his fault, and so mend it, until his attempt to look in the stolen *palantir*. The encounter with Sauron rocks him to his furry toes, but as with many self-willed folk, it takes this near-disaster to effect any change, and he is lucky to survive it. Gandalf, who with all his many cares may be forgiven for not having taken the headstrong youngster in hand before, wisely whisks him away to the one place where a high-born hobbit can be shown his place, the court at Minas Tirith. *Ernil i Pheriannath* the citizens call him, Prince of Halflings, and so indeed he is, but it is here among both the ancient aristocracy and the more common folk that Peregrine Took comes to understand his own worth. For the first time he sees how much smaller is the Shire, and his place in it, than the ancient civilisation of the Numenoreans. But having been humbled, though not daunted, he also learns that even here pride and pettiness can lead to downfall, and finds reserves within himself to save the day. The experience of the pyre of Denethor, and his part in saving Faramir, do not restore his former unthinking arrogance. Though he seems much the same, for hobbits keep their surface calm even when their depths have been stirred, he has truly 'come of age'. His treatment of Merry, suffering from the Black Breath of the Nazg˚l Lord, is sensitive and just right. Of course he would always have wanted to help his friend, but he can do it better now he has gone through emotional turmoil himself. (At the inn in Bree, Merry had a very nasty encounter with a Black Rider. Granted he prefers not to talk about it, but the Pippin of Minas Tirith would surely have given his friend more support and sympathy, rather than totally ignoring the matter as he does at the time.)

MERRY MATURES

Merry, having attained his majority and thus several years older than Pippin, is from the beginning a more mature character. This makes him an ideal companion for Frodo, who has retained his own youthful zest and attitudes to a remarkable degree. Frodo does indeed depend greatly on Merry, who organises the move from Bag End for him, and incidentally masterminds the

conspiracy that uncovers his plans to leave the Shire.[8] Merry is in many ways the most capable of the hobbits, taking charge when he meets the others at the Ferry after their encounters with the Black Riders. At this point, of course, he has not felt the horror of their emanations for himself, and it is interesting that it is in fact Merry who later has the definitive encounter with the Witch-King. This is something he is marked out for early on; from the beginning his experiences with the Nazg˚l are different from those of the others. He is not with them when they are pursued by Black Riders within the Shire, and catches only one brief glimpse across water which does not affect him; it is the " queer sound" in Farmer Maggot's voice,[9] and the assurances of the others, that convince him the Riders are perilous. (It is another interesting twist that at one point the others mistake Merry for a Black Rider himself.) It would seem that the young Master Brandybuck has a certain resistance to the Riders, through his affinity with the Old Forest. This place is also perilous, but holds no terrors for Merry who has grown up in its shadow, and he instinctively leads the others into its shade knowing that no other power will trouble them there. They do get into trouble, so Merry has perhaps been over-confident, yet his instincts have in the end been sound, and Tom Bombadil whose domain this is comes to rescue them.

If Merry's confidence is shaken by this, it is further shaken by what happens on the Barrow Downs, and at Bree. On the Barrow-downs he is last in line, and so probably first to be taken by the Barrow-wight, thus remaining longest in his clutches. After their rescue, it is Merry who has most trouble coming to himself, plagued by memories belonging to the prince originally buried in the tomb: " The men of Carn Dum came on us by night." [10] From this moment he carries within him a knowledge of the Witch-King no other living being can match. It must be this that prompts him, at Bree, first to go out of the inn for a walk, and then to follow the Nazgûl searching for Frodo. "I seemed to be drawn somehow," he says[11]. Was it in part the desire of the dead prince for vengeance, working within him? But the experience is a terrible one for Merry, overcome as he is by the Black Breath, and extremely lucky to be rescued. He tries to make light of it at the time, but this second failure in the face of paralysing fear has left its mark. Normally the organiser among the hobbits, when in the morning they discover their ponies stolen Merry is the only one who makes no contribution to the discussion of what is to be done, except to voice his pleasure at the prospect of a more substantial breakfast. Merry is trying to banish his fear and disorientation in the best way a hobbit knows, with food.

The summoning of the Dead. *John Ellison*

Many times after, Merry's courage is severely tested. But he comes through each event, brave and resourceful, perhaps because he has already faced the Ultimate beside which nothing is as bad. In Fangorn Forest his encounter with its Master Ent has a far different conclusion from the fiasco in the Old Forest. There, he was over-confident in his ability to defy the trees. In Fangorn he treads warily and is courteous, thankful to be among the living trees after his captivity by Orcs, sensing their "otherness" and respecting it. By the end of the destruction of Isengard Merry has thoroughly learned the lesson of working with nature, rather than against it; and it is the power of the earth come to full flower within himself that finally enables him to defeat the Witch-King, enemy of Life. It is fertility that defeats the Nazgûl Lord: in a woman, young, her senses just awakened; and in a hobbit, simple child of Earth.

This is the most profound change for Merry. Wounded severely by the Black Breath, the powers of nature invoked by Aragorn restore him, and it is Merry who takes command for Frodo at the Scouring of the Shire. His confidence is no longer the over-confidence of youth, but the self-assurance of a battle-hardened man. " Lordly" the Shire-folk call him, "meaning nothing but good" [12]; both he and Pippin have grown into their positions as heads of their respective folk-groups within the Shire. Merry moreover has learned to be less insular, concerned with all the Shire-folk rather than just the Buckland group to which he belongs. Much of this learning must stem from his time with Theoden, King of the Mark. " As a father you shall be to me," [13] Merry says, and so it is, the old King being revered by the hobbit possibly more than his true father. Merry's final "coming of age" occurs when Theoden dies, and from then on he does his best to emulate the mentor who won both his respect and affection.

SAM'S STEADFASTNESS

Sam is probably the character who, of all the fellowship, changes least. Beginning with the sterling values of friendship, work and service, he returns with these unaltered, only deepened, by his journey. Among the hobbits he always appears the most 'grown up', always practical and sensible (except for moments like the one where he shies an apple at Bill Ferny)[14]. This maturity is quite surprising considering he is far closer in age to the young hobbits, Merry and Pippin, than he is to Frodo, and he looks after his master quite paternally from the beginning. This suggests a certain kind of arrested development in Frodo, due perhaps in part to his aristocracy—i.e. he is a hobbit of high status who does not have to work for his living; but also a mark of his early possession of (even by) the Ring, which has held him within the stage of life at which he got it, without the natural progression of a healthy hobbit to marriage and family life. Sam's brief assumption of the ring does not have these dire effects, in fact it would seem to have had no real effect at all. Perhaps this is because, though he took it and even wore it, he did not do so from any desire but still to serve his beloved master and do what he wished. Sam never has the slightest desire for personal power, except in the cause of others; witness his anger when he looks in the Mirror of Galadriel, and sees the devastation of the Shire. Service is Sam's temptation, and so he takes the Ring; but fortunately he learns in time that Frodo is not dead, and having rescued him, hands back the burden willingly. One wonders how many hundred years it would take with the Ring, for Sam to learn to enjoy dominion over others. Perhaps the greatest change we see in him, is that he has learned to fight; Farmer Cotton dislikes his 'ironmongery', and Sam can certainly give a good account of himself with his sword. But even this is not a substantial change in the old Samwise. Before leaving the Shire he was a normal, down-to-earth, male hobbit, with the characteristics this implies: earthy, strong, given to pleasures such as drinking with his mates and not above getting belligerent with them if he thinks they are trying to push him around.[15] Sam is even more capable and mature when he returns, yet not appreciably different.

Merry ... has learned to be less insular, concerned with all the Shire-folk rather than just the Buckland [people]'

"You were meant to be solid and whole, Sam," [16] Frodo says to him at Bag End, realising now that he himself never will be, and hoping the same will not be true for his faithful companion. Sam is indeed whole, and this is quite a feat considering the contradiction that lies at the heart of his nature. For he does love the Shire and the ordinary life with Rose he leads in it, something he put on hold to go with Frodo. And why did he go? To see Elves. Deep within Sam Gamgee is a romantic soul. He did see Elves, and was not disappointed. His deep attachment to Frodo has something of that enchantment in it, for Frodo almost becomes Elvish himself as the Ring works on his nature. For a few years Sam has the best of both worlds, settling down with Rose at Bag End, and still looking after the master he loves. But Frodo leaves, and so Sam is indeed 'torn in two'[17]. Yet it is told, that when his other loves and responsibilities are dead, or can do without him, he too crosses the Sea. For Frodo, and Bilbo, are over there, still alive; and it is his last chance to see Elves. Sam Gamgee has scarcely changed at all.

FRODO'S TRANSFORMATION

Frodo is the character who experiences the greatest change:

from plain hobbit to selfless hero; from a well-meaning man with unplumbed depths of courage and strength of will, to one overborne at last by temptation, yet saved at the brink, and allowed to return. "There and Back Again" in truth. Such a gamut of transformation is to be expected, since it is Frodo who, as Bearer, has closest contact with the Ring. Yet at first, the Ring would seem to prevent change. Bilbo is reckoned "well-preserved" and the same would appear to be true of Frodo after he has inherited the ring: at 50 he retains all the youthful appearance and zest of a hobbit on the brink of manhood at 33. Some of the changes wrought in Frodo are similar to those experienced by the other hobbits, as he meets and overcomes the hardships and challenges of his quest. Yet for Frodo there is another dimension. He has always been in a position of authority; he is leader among his friends, while to Sam, his servant, he is master. Possession of the Ring itself puts him in a unique position, recognised by others: "On [the Ringbearer] alone is any charge laid"[18], Elrond says at the Company's setting forth. Boromir tries to coerce him, but even so early in the quest Frodo is more than a match for him, escaping by means of his hobbit skills of stealth and by using the Ring. But Boromir has precipitated the very thing Frodo needs to avoid, use of the Ring's power, which little by little corrupts all, even, at last, a truly decent hobbit like Frodo.

There is a foreshadowing of this at Rivendell, when Bilbo asks Frodo if he may see the Ring. But Frodo is reluctant, and suddenly sees Bilbo as "a little wrinkled creature with a hungry face and bony groping hands"[19]. The vision distresses Frodo, he puts the Ring away and it passes. But there is truth in it. Bilbo is some way down the road to becoming what Gollum has become, a hollow creature possessed by craving for the Ring; and Frodo is now the Ring's master. Hobbits are a people whose concerns are of the earth, their desire only for peace and the good things of life, not domination over others, and so Frodo, best of hobbits, is as the Wise see, slow to be corrupted. But hobbits are not angels, as Tolkien shows us[20]. They can be petty, intolerant, even grasping and arrogant like Lobelia and her son. Domination is forced upon Frodo by Gollum, whom he has to master by any means he can; and only his command of the Ring will serve his turn "We can bide our time... deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose"[21], Saruman says to Gandalf, who fiercely rejects the principle. Yet Frodo has in the end to use doubtful means to accomplish his ends, and pays the price. As he crawls up Mount Doom he too has become like Gollum, consumed and beaten down by the Ring, except that he keeps still a small tenacious flame of will alive to achieve his purpose. Until he stands by the Cracks of Doom, and conceives that all he was and could be lies now within the Ring, and if he casts it away, he casts himself with it. In that moment of final temptation he falls and fails. It is Gollum who saves Middle-earth, and seems to have saved Frodo. But it is not so: "Here [we stand] at the end of all things, Sam,"[22] Frodo says thankfully to his faithful servant. Sam is as glad to see his dear master restored, as he believes, as to be rescued. But for Frodo, it is indeed the end of all things. The Ring took from him at last everything, every scrap of courage, decency, determination, the tiny remaining piece of what he had believed to be his true self, and Frodo is not, as the innocent Sam believes, healed; he is broken, broken beyond even Aragorn fully to mend.

Why does Frodo take no part in leading the Scouring of the Shire? What holds him back is fear, fear of himself. His young colleagues have grown into self-assurance; 'lordly', the Shire-folk later call them, but it is a genial, caring lordliness. Frodo has been to the darker side of power, understands and loathes what he found lurking in the depths of his own hobbit nature. He dares not command with such ruthlessness as his still innocent friends, lest he unleash the fiend that almost possessed him by the edge of the Cracks of Doom. His sorrow is not only for the oppressed Shire-folk, but for those hobbits, and men, seduced by power over their fellows: They know not what they do[23]. And 'There but for the grace of the Valar go I', is in his mind. A saint is seldom a good ruler, too concerned for his own soul, too compassionate of the sins of others to do what needs to be done.

But if Frodo is a saint, it is not by choice. Up until his assumption of the Ring Frodo has been a perfectly normal young hobbit—any anomalies, the Shire-folk no doubt would say, could be laid fairly and squarely at his adopted uncle Bilbo's door. In this they would be quite right, though less because Bilbo stirred him up with strange tales, than because he gave him the Ring. After this, as already mentioned, Frodo suffers from arrested development. This is manifest particularly in the fact that, at the age of fifty, he is still unmarried[24]. But he is not, as Bilbo apparently is, immune to the attractions of women, and one imagines that his wistful visions of home include the normal hobbit pattern of family life. When he takes on the burden of the Quest he does not realise that the dangers are not all of death and capture; the final peril, which he does not escape, is the leaching away of all that made him truly human. Mirorring Gollum, he has come to care for nothing that once meant so much to him. In all his journey, he held to the simple hope that when his task was done, he might go home; but when at long last he does so, he finds no joy, only emptiness. His comfortable home, his good-hearted neighbours, the fields and trees he once loved—all have lost their savour[25]. So has the thought of wife and family, though he clutches at Sam in an effort to experience these at second hand.

But it is not enough. His dream, the impossible dream that he clung to under the horror of Sauron, has proved false, and for Frodo, "thin and stretched"[26] by the devouring Ring, wracked with guilt, robbed of the warm emotions once so much a part of him, it is too much. He cannot change, he cannot grow, or only so slowly that it cannot be in this world. He goes to the haven of the Elves, who know much of Healing, but he takes his pain with him. Spiritual contemplation may help him; it is all he has left. Frodo is not going, as the Elves are, home. Frodo is going to where they can help him to die.

All the characters of the Fellowship in LotR change and grow as a result of their experience with the Ring. Even Sam Gamgee, whose essential sturdiness and loyalty does not change, attains the position of master rather than that of servant when Frodo leaves him Bag End; though his later position of Mayor remains, as he operates it, still one of service to his community.

The other young hobbits grow up, grow into self-awareness and into their positions as responsible leaders of their people. Aragorn comes into his kingship. Legolas and Gimli grow away from the prejudices of their past and into friendship with one another. Boromir learns that his place in the world is not as he perceived it, but acceptance of his true rôle comes too late to prevent his death. Death, with resurrection, also figures in the growth encompassed by the two chief protagonists in the War of the Ring. Gandalf and Frodo are both Christ-figures; but it is Frodo who most embodies the Lamb of Christian myth. For others to gain Middle-earth, he must lose it; for his people to live, he must die. And yet he does not die, but is condemned to everlasting life.

REFERENCES

Note: all references except no. 17 are from The Lord of the Rings *by J.R.R.Tolkien, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1966*

[1] Saruman goes through an even more profound change; the subject of another paper, perhaps?
[2] TT 117
[3] TT 195
[4] The first change there being his pledge with Arwen.
[5] FotR 367
[6] TT 152
[7] Merry is not quite in the same position as the Brandybuck heir, since his father is not titular head of the whole Shire, and Brandybucks are generally less conservative, more adventurous and more tolerant than most hobbits. Even so, one wonders whether the Shire might have fared better under Sharkey's men if these two young men of courage, intelligence and status had stayed at home.
[8] FotR 114: "We can usually guess what you are thinking... To tell you the truth, I had been watching you rather closely... I thought you would go after [Bilbo] sooner or later." It is Merry who is the perspicacious and sensitive one.
[9] FotR 112
[10] FotR 154
[11] FotR 185
[12] RotK 305
[13] TT 51
[14] FotR 193
[15] e.g. FotR 378: "I wish I could get at Ted, and I'd fell *him*!"
[16] RotK 306
[17] ibid.
[18] FotR 294
[19] FotR 244
[20] See FotR 31,39,46-48,77-78.
[21] FotR272
[22] RotK 225
[23] The Bible, Gospel According to Saint Luke, Ch 23 v 34
[24] So of course was Bilbo, but Bilbo is not a similar case; Frodo does not at any time exhibit the fussy, almost womanish ways of the confirmed bachelor, as Bilbo does. No, he is a convivial young fellow, approved of by the other hobbits, and once he inherited Bag End would inevitably be the target of a bevy of hopeful mothers and their marriageable daughters. This in itself might be enough to put off a sensitive young man whose dreams were probably of Elf-maidens; but that in almost twenty years he would fail to succumb to natural desires is incredible, without the influence of the Ring. After all, his two young kinsmen, Merry and Pippin, very similar to Frodo in many ways, settle down with suitable wives on returning from their adventures—no doubt the pick of their respective neighbourhoods, but one suspects that Merry at least may have had his eye on his future wife before he left the Shire. Much younger than Frodo, he simply was not ready, at that point, to be courting seriously.

But Frodo, nearly twenty years older, seems to be stuck at an even earlier stage of adolescence—and now comes the point at which I air one of my pet theories, namely that Frodo falls in love with Goldberry. "' Fair lady Goldberry!' said Frodo at last, feeling his heart moved with a joy that he did not understand. ...the spell that was now laid on him was different; less keen and lofty was the delight, but deeper and nearer to mortal heart"'. Then, when he has been hurried off on his journey, he is devastated when he remembers he has not said goodbye to her. Nor has he said goodbye to Tom, who has been of much greater service to him; but does he cry, 'Good gracious! We never said goodbye to good old Tom'? No, what he exclaims is 'Goldberry!... My fair lady!' I rest my case. Of course this is all quite hopeless, since she is married to Tom Bombadil, and this is really the point. Frodo is ready for romance, but it still needs to be of the adolescent kind where the object is unattainable. He shows similar yearnings later toward Arwen. Freed of the Ring at this point, he might well have come in a few more years to a satisfying relationship with a real, down-to-earth hobbit woman.
[25] He has lost his belief in the unalloyed goodness of people, even his own Shire-folk, but this is not the chief reason for his disillusion. To see that humanity is imperfect is a mark of maturity, and a further mark is to accept it. Surely Frodo has seen enough of the sterling qualities of his fellow-hobbits to forgive some lapses in his frightened and bewildered countrymen, and indeed he does forgive, even Lotho.
[26] FotR 56: what Bilbo said of the effect of the Ring on himself.

An orc's-eye view of the history of Middle-earth

John Ellison

This paper was first presented at the Tolkien Society Seminar, April 2000

I should begin with a brief introduction to this remarkable, perhaps unique, document, which represents an offshoot of *The Virtual History of Middle Earth,* an attempt at predicting how the course of events subsequent to the end of the Third Age might have unfolded had Sauron emerged victorious at that point. This was pictured in the form of an address given by a (presumably) eminent scholar in front of an audience of other (presumably also) eminent scholars at what was described as the inaugural conference of the historical associations of the Gondorian Federation*.

But as you probably all realise, behind the impressive façade that such events present to the outside world (our own not less than that of Middle-earth, actual or alternative), dark undercurrents are always stirring. Two of a trade, as is well known, seldom agree, and this has always applied with especial force to scholars, and, notably, to historians, (including virtual historians). So it would not be surprising if on such an occasion, rival points of view had proliferated, and dark mutterings heard over the (virtual) coffee break, to the effect that everything, for instance in the address which you, ladies and gentlemen, read with such excited attention in your copy of *Mallorn*, was to put it politely, a load of codswallop.

This paper, then, is a glimpse of such an underworld. It purports to give the substance of a lecture presented, not as part of the official Conference programme, but as a separate event, 'off-campus'. The speaker is a historian of radically revisionist, not to say iconoclastic, leanings. The view of Middle-earth's history that he puts forward is wholly materialist, deconstructivist and totally cynical; In its cynicism it perhaps has a little in common with another text emanating from the little-known underworld of Middle-earth, 'The letters of Celeborn to 'Dear Bil'' but the context is quite different. Celeborn, even if a reluctant semi-detached observer of the War of the Ring, at least was 'one of us', to quote his consort, the Lady Galadriel (aka Margaret Thatcher); our present contributor, on the other hand, is 'one of THEM', in other words, an Orc.

We have at this point to cast aside the traditional image of a mis-shapen creature with blood smeared fangs and gurgling utterance. In the years that have followed the collapse of the Sauronic Empire (Fourth Age circa 656-9) those orcs who managed to survive have had to adapt themselves to the norms of civilized society. We have to become accustomed to the idea of an Orc posing as a respectable citizen in a suit and a tie, obviously familiar with the ways of High Tables and senior common rooms. Not a David Irving type, at all - we cannot expect, for instance, any claim on Sauron's behalf that he knew nothing about the slave labour camps in the Nurnen district, or the atrocities committed there. On the other hand, we are going to be surprised to discover (as no doubt were a good many of the attendees at the Conference), that the name 'Sauron' doesn't in fact mean what we have all been brought up to think it does. "History is bunk", (a saying attrributed to Henry T. Ford, but actually first uttered by Sauron) isn't, quite, our speaker's motto; but he clearly enjoys challenging accepted viewpoints and charging full tilt at 'sacred cows' and he believes that good history (as he conceives it) loses nothing by being good entertainment as well. From his standpoint, much of Middle-earth's history as we have been brought up to view it is, not to put too fine a point on it, 'bunk', nothing more than a massive Gondorian public relations scam. Clearly this kind of attitude, even if his orcish nature wasn't responsible for his exclusion from the main conference programme, wasn't calculated to earn him 'Brownie points' with the organisers or the mainstream of the historian's profession.

So, even though he may not be trying to pull the wool over our eyes by attempting, or in any marked way, to exculpate Sauron (though clearly he admires, if not the policies themselves, the energy and commitment with which some of them were carried out), we have to treat everything he says with the utmost caution and circumspection. An Orc, in other words, will always be an Orc; as P G Wodehouse remarks apropos of aunts, "sooner or later out pops the cloven hoof". You may perhaps seek a parallel by comparing him with the typical kind of 'logical positivist' don satirised by C S Lewis in *That Hideous Strength*; Lord Feverstone and 'the progressive element in college'. At the same time, though, he is no crude 'Tolkien basher', as you will see, he actually quite likes *The Lord of the Rings*, though of course he represents just those values which JRRT and CSL most abhorred. Like lord Feverstone, he is adept at manipulating a sort of crude charm. Try to imagine a kind of lethal mixture of Ken Livingstone and A J P Taylor and you will have his measure. But it's time to wind up the preliminaries, and allow him to speak for himself.

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Mallorn XXXVIIII

The Change of Ages; a mythology demythologized

"Well, let me start by introducing myself. I'm a historian by profession, in my own estimation at least, and that of a few progressively minded colleagues, even though I may not be recognized as such by the academically chaste and conventionally minded people who constitute the bulk of that profession today. And, as I presume you will have been told, I'm an Orc by ancestry. I suppose I have to accept that that ancestry does carry with it a certain social stigma, even in these enlightened times. One of my distant forbears, a certain Shagrat, is even reputed to have played a minor role on the winning side in the so-called War of the Ring, eight and a half centuries ago. I don't see why I need be ashamed of it; I dare say all of you could name several noble and aristocratic families which can trace their descent back to forbears who acquired power, wealth and status by way of plunder, rapine, corruption, extortion and other such skullduggery.

But enough of that. As the first holder of the Chair of Middle-earth History at the University of Minas Morgul my principal task at present is to organize a syllabus for the faculty of history in the University. A demanding responsibility but, I hope, a fulfilling one; you will of course all remember that a similar responsiblity in respect of the faculty of Common Speech studies at another university led to all sorts of interesting consequences, and Middle-earth wide fame for the scholar who had assumed it. In this talk I shall be endeavouring to enunciate some of the basic principles along which historical discipline will be professed and taught in the university - critical method, and respect for clearly demonstrable facts, and strict faithfulness to the evidence. It will be an intellectually demanding course, but, I hope, both stimulating and wide-ranging, adjectives which I am sorry to say cannot be confidently applied to most of what passes for historical scholarship at the present time.

I've called this talk "The Change of Ages" because I propose to offer you a very general kind of overview of the three contrasting completed Ages of Middle-earth's history in terms of the differing relationship they bear towards the immemorial question of History versus Myth, or mythology. The scholar, professor, I mentioned just now, whose initial scholarly repute was subsequnrtly overtaken by the fame he acquired through his authorship of a three volume fantasy saga which has outsold almost every other work of fiction ever published in Middle-earth, proclaimed that his initial plan had envisaged the creation (or 'sub-creation', as he somewhat portentouly called it) of a "mythology for Middle-earth". That, I would submit, is precisely what it turned out to be. Don't misunderstand me; I enjoy *The Lord of the Rings* as much as anyone, but I don't make the mistake of taking it seriously, as the members of the academic "establishment", whom it infuriates like nothing else, invariably do. I think that that's pretty generous of me, considering that it's principally the author's fault that we Orcs have always had to put up with such a slanderous press ("bred by Melkor in the dark years in Utumno", and all that sort of rubbish). I don't mind if his books sell like the proverbial hot cakes, but I don't suppose he's ever met a real live orc in his life! The trouble was, I suppose, that Sauron, *the* Sauron I mean, Sauron the Great, was a bit of a paradox as regards public relations, which he dismissed as "a load of bullshit", despite his unequalled mastery of propoganda in certain directions. But he never condescended to introducing people like my remote ancestor Shagrat as "your friendly neighbourhood orc". How different from one's bank manager!

> '... *according to* Fourteen Twenty and All That, *"the Numenoreans ... were then top nation owing to their classical education".*

The first Age, then, is what we know of pre-classical and early classical antiquity, embodied in the masterpieces of classical literature such as "The Lay of Leithian" which have come down to us and which I'm sure many of you had to translate at school. It's still, of course, received opinion that the ability to do so without fault, and to write elegant Quenya and Sindarin prose or verse if required, qualifies a person for the highest flights in diplomacy, the civil service or other such elevated spheres. I was brought up on the Classics myself, so I am well aware of the advantages such an education can provide; it has enabled the so-called Numenoreans, by which I mean the Gondorians, obviously to continue advertising their self styled moral and intellectual superiority right up to the present time, emerging unscathed after all the vicissitudes that have intervened since the third age came to an end. You will no doubt all remember the Hobbit-inspired witticism, enshrined in that famous little volume, *Fourteen Twenty and All That*, "the Numenoreans who were then top nation owing to their classical education". According to them, they still are!

Let's get this straight. we Orcs have this terrible reputation as a horde of uncivilized barbarians, but it's not true. Naturally there are many of us whose interests don't extend beyond the traditional everyday ones - in other words,

"birds,, booze, fags and football", but that's true of everyone else in Middle-earth isn't it? The reality is that many of us are just as capable as anyone else of appreciating the finer things of life, and the masterpieces of classical literature.

The First Age therefore because of the unparalleled richness and diversity of its literary legacy, is always thought of as the fountain-head of civilization in Middle-earth, and therefore, not surprisingly, seems populated by thoroughly uncivilized toughies like Feanor, Turin and others you can all think of; mythology always does seem to display this kind of inverse relationship between the power and poetry of the tales and the moral squalor, or intellectual nullity of the characters portrayed in them. And this is the mythological age *par excellence*; with the Second Age we emerge into the dawn of history so-called but it is still centred on and wrapped around by the Numenorean myth, or what I prefer to call "The Great Numenorean Cover-up", the myth which has been maintained and exploited by the Gondorians for their own purposes and to their own advantage ever since. Only with the Third Age can we say that we are concerned with history properly so-called, whose outlines, if not always its details, are recoverable by means of properly documented or scientifically excavated historical and archaeological evidence.

How have the Gondorians got away with maintaining their imposture for so long? Well, to start with, because even today there are still a good many educated and quite intelligent people who believe the Valar really exist! Does anyone here still cling to that belief?

"Hands up anyone who still claims to believe in the Valar, then" *(the speaker stands up, and pretends to count a show of hands)* "Oh, I see. Quite a number of you do, or seem to. Well, it's no skin off my nose. In that case you presumably believe in the existence during the First Age of a terrible ogre called Morgoth, who inhabited an impregnable fastness in the far north, and who among other things was responsible for us Orcs populating large tracts of Middle-earth then and in subsequent ages. The mythical persona Melkor, who never quite made it as a Valar, and who the others blackballed for entry to the club ("not the right type", "not really officer material" you can pretty well hear them saying, can't you!) became subsumed into his terrestrial counterpart, Morgoth, Uncle Joe to all his subjects. As such he's just one element in the "mythic overlay", which you have to strip off before you can glimpse the underlying historical realities. I've no doubt that underneath the legendary great leader, Chairman Melkor, Comrade Morgoth, or whatever you like to call him, you can see a powerful warlord, or, rather, a succession of them, whose power base in the far north constituted a permanent threat to the stability of territories or states further south. And we can accept, I dare say, that it was fairly monolithic and primitive, politically speaking, and culturally more or less undeveloped. But the notion of a single evil empire radiating outwards from Angband, eventually strangling the whole of Beleriand in its remorseless iron grip, in prediluvian times, though unsuported by convincing historical, archaeological or scientific evidence, has a certain superficial romantic attractiveness about it. It isn't therefore surprising that it has been accepted as gospel by the overwhelming majority of historians. The real and tangible evidence, of course, is lying beneath thirty fathoms of water, having been obliterated by the catastrophic natural geographic upheavals with which the First Age is known to have come to an end! This has enabled the so-called history of the whole of the First Age to be written entirely on the side of the survivors, described as the Elves and Men who had suffered or co-operated in the war against Morgoth. The Orcs, then as in subsequent ages, always come out as the hideously caricatured, impersonal villains of the piece. If you can discount this defamatory picture, we were then, no doubt, as we have been ever since, just a lot of ordinary blokes who got caught on the wrong side of the ideological divide, that's all.

'I've always thought ... [the Numenoreans] a particularly unsavoury crew ...'

For a divide, ideological or otherwise, there certainly was. It lay between a single political entity in the north, firmly governed, efficiently administered, and centrally controlled, and a group of separate individual tribes further south, all of them displaying the emergence and dominance of a warrior aristocracy, but being to a certain extent capable of sinking their mutual rivalries and animosities in the face of what was perceived as a common threat. These aristocracies arrogated to themselves the style, status and earthly immortality of "Elves", a term that, in reality, above all defined class and status; like all indicators of class and status it was infinitely divisible, with all kinds of subtle, intra-elvish distinctions. For example, take the "Feanorians", the sons and descendants of the original Feanor, and their adherents. I've always thought them a particularly unsavoury crew - the treatment of poor old Eol, both by them and that crowd over in Gondolin, was especially discreditable - and of course you've also got Thingol of Doriath, who so obviously considered himself a cut above everyone else that he treated his own special territory as inviolate, and instituted and operated the quite brutal frontier policy known as "The Girdle of Melian". As I've said, I'm simply defining "the Elves" as a clannish and self appointed warrior caste, not as a separate race of earthly immortals (I don't suppose that anyone, even of you lot believes in that sort of thing any more - I should hope not!). The groups of "Men" (so-called) in Beleriand simply represented the balance of the population, whom the warrior

aristocracies regarded as their racial and social inferiors. The attitude that Thingol adopts towards Beren when his own daughter looks like contracting a *mésalliance* is typical; "he comes from the wrong side of the tracks, my dear" more or less expresses it. To put it bluntly, the Elves, (to stick to that term) look like practitioners of out-and-out racism, and even more so as regards the Dwarves; at least Thingol's lot got their comeuppance eventually.

I'm not of course trying to demonstrate that either side, the Morgoth lot "oop north", or the so-called Elves and their allies "down South", was either better or worse than the other one. I'm merely trying to emphasise the point that mythic tales and literary artifice, however picturesque and poetic and evocative in themselves, have combined to present us with a wholly one-sided view of the set up as it must have been in reality. The picture we have is slanted one-sidedly in favour of "the chaps down south". The hobbit satirist I mentioned a bit earlier, the author of F*ourteen Twenty and All That*, put it in a nutshell when he described the Elves and men in Beleriand as "rong but wromantic" and their opposite numbers in the north as "Right but Repulsive". There's many a true word spoken in jest! And of course the unfair distortion of the whole picture has been hugely helped, not to say enabled, by subsequent implosion of the forces of nature.

This is nowhere clearer than in regard to the so-called "War of the Silmarils" (the jewels that studded the "Iron Crown", the symbolic badge of office of dynastic succession of rulers of the north, handed down from one to the next - which the Elves pretended had been stolen from them in remote antiquity). This has been portrayed, as of course you all know, as a heroic "long-defeat", sustained by long-suffering elves, assisted by some helpful "Men" (other ranks, in other words, the poor bloody infantry) against the all-conquering northern war machine. At least, even as the "Tales" tell it, it wasn't all-conquering to start with, and we hear of several serious reverses suffered by the northern side preceding the apparent crushing defeat at the field of "Unnumbered Tears". Obviously the military and economic resources of the north did increase over the centuries (we can of course disregard its mythic components, such as dragons, winged or unwinged!), and early defeats may well reflect, for instance, dynastic troubles with the succession in Angband. And equally a major victory, or a series of victories, no doubt had its consequences in the withering away of the southern warrior states as a whole - ditto the overthrow of Doriath by the dwarves. Incidentally I've always felt rather sorry that dwarves and we Orcs have never really got on with each other; indeed from time to time have resorted to fighting and beating the sh...t out of each other. We're both proletarian peoples in essence - on the side of the workers against the bosses really, though I admit it didn't look like that at the end of the Third Age when Sauron I was getting ready to lord it over the whole show - but I'll be coming back to that.

'[Turin's] ... utter incompetence and his capacity for treading on every banana skin lying in his path has many a time had me in stitches!'

The point I'm making is that because the myths and the tales have highlighted the so-called "heroic" aspect of events in Beleriand, the battles and such like, over everything else, the economic side of the picture has become blurred and indistinct. In fact the gradual absorption of the southern part of Beleriand by the north may in reality well be explainable in terms of economic expansion and consequent colonization, as much as, or more than, in terms of military success and dominance. You get a hint of this in the constant references in the *Tales* to the multiplying of orcs from Angband. What does this suggest? Simply that the north was more efficiently administered and that the population rose because of better working conditions, health provision, housing and so on; a stable economic framework. There could well have been a powerful motive for southward expansion, in the form of population pressure in the north. To put it crudely, those in charge at Thangorodrim were increasingly capable of forceful and effective government, whereas their counterparts, the warrior aristocrats down south, hadn't the first clue about anything beyond a good scrap. Just stand back and look with an unbiassed eye at those heroes whose doings fill up so much of the *Quenta Silmarillion*! Turin's my favourite, of course. His utter incompetence and his capacity for treading on every banana skin lying in his path has many a time had me in stitches!

Of course, if you believe the *Tales,* all the success the north claimed in unifying Beleriand under a single authority was simply the work of a few control freaks, or a single control freak in Thangorodrim. They, or he, have to be taught a stiff lesson, so "the Valar" are invoked and persuaded to pull the plug on the whole set up, or, to remind ourselves of what really happened, mother nature takes a hand and in consequence all the lands are drowned or rearranged. This of course doesn't happen overnight, as you would think from the legend; over a long extended period of time, climatic change, coastal erosion, and a sudden intensity of volcanic activity in the far north producing a significant rise in sea level combine to produce the dramatic changes in Middle-earth's geography that leave its shores more or less in the form we know them today. Similarly, whereas in legend most of the quote 'elves' unquote bugger off back to Valinor or Tol Eressea, from where they are supposed to have come in the first place, actually there could have been massive migration south and eastwards, with men tending to settle in greatest numbers on the most fertile areas round the river mouths and around the south and east coasts

as far as what is now South Gondor and towards Pelargir. At the same time colonies of Elves hole up in individual select residential areas like the Grey Havens, Lorien or Rivendell. The settlements along coast at centres like Vinyalonde enable the new arrivals to colonize inland, and later on to dominate, and, perhaps to oppress and terrorize the backward native populations further into the interior, as indeed the Numenorean myth suggests. You eventually get a powerful and dominant civilization along the coastline whose principal basis is maritime power; it flourishes for centuries, but eventually decline sets in and districts like the low lying marshy areas around Tharbad may become flooded because drainage is neglected and dykes are allowed to silt up. Clear indications of a civilization in decline, I think you'll agree. But means have to be found of ensuring the survival, at least in theory, of the areas of colonial expansion to the north and east of the coastal districts, and these were ultimately preserved at the end of the Second Age by being presented to the world as "the Numenorean realms in exile", Arnor and Gondor. And in this way was that monumental imposture, of which those realms were the beneficiaries, foisted on Middle-earth by means of what I like to refer to, as I said before, as "the great Numenorean cover-up".

You're all familiar with the essentials of the mythical narrative of course. The earth was originally flat (well, most people around then thought it was anyway), and if you sailed West out of the sight of land you would come upon various interesting territories known as The Blessed Realm, the Lonely Isle, Valinor, Tol Eressea, and so on. The better classes of Elf, with a few exceptions, have all returned there. After the "War against Morgoth" was over the men who had been on the right, ie anti-Morgoth, side were rewarded by being given this marvellous island called 'Numenor' to dwell in, and were powered by regular injections of elvish culture and technological know-how. And so they became so noble, so wise and so long-lived that all of us peasants and slobs in Middle-earth itself stood in awe of them, and got down on our knees before them whenever they appeared. But the authorities over in the Blessed Realm and the far West didn't want them sailing over there, and finding out too much, and asking awkward questions when they arrived; consequently they instituted a ban on sailing west out of sight of "Numenor". Of course the whole set up was bound to turn sour in the end; ultimately the wrong elements in society got the upper hand, and did precisely what they were forbidden to do. Whereupon the island of Numenor conveniently blew up and sank beneath the waves, and it was then proclaimed that the world was, indubitably and officially, round (it always was, of course). The old Numenorean aristocrats, "The Faithful", as they styled themselves, meaning the chaps who represented the old values of class and kow-towing to the Elves and the Valar, having been tipped off in advance about the coming holocaust, packed themselves and their belongings into nine ships and sailed off to Middle-earth to found the Numenorean realms in exile.

'Numenor ... was powered by regular injections of elvish culture and technological know-how'

Well, you've only got to sit and consider it quietly for a couple of minutes to realise that the whole story is a load of mythical tosh. The passengers in nine ships (I wouldn't have liked to have been below decks!) - about enough to populate two or three good sized villages, I'd say - there's your realms in exile! Over the course of the Third Age the northern one, Arnor of course, declines and eventually goes into abeyance, while the southern one, politely declining any suggestion of a merging of ruling houses, to create a super-state west of the Anduin, (the Arnorphobes outnumbered the Arnophiles at that time) survived to proclaim itself the divinely appointed centre of civilization in Middle-earth (all roads lead to Minas Tirith, of course) and themselves, the Gondorians, the chaps who keep the "Numenoean spirit" alive, as the divinely appointed saviours of all that's worth preserving in it. No one will ever know, of course, how the Numenorean racket ever got started, whether it was the product of a single genius, or whether it was collectively hatched, a committee decision in fact. I'm inclined to favour the latter view. (The Royal Archives at Minas Tirith might have told us much, but as you all know they mostly perished or were dispersed at the debacle of the West at the end of the Third Age). Equally, no one is ever likely to know, or find any real evidence, to demonstrate whether there ever was anything like a lost isle of "Numenor", now sunk beneath the waves. If there ever was, of course, it cannot have represented anything more than a minor colonial outpost of the powerful maritime trading and commercial empire extending along the shores of Middle-earth itself. And of course there must be a substratum of historical truth behind the mythical persona of "Ar-Pharazon the Golden" proclaiming "the divine right of Numenorean kings" (how many of you have had to write essays about that at school, I wonder), though of course the "drowning of Numenor", really must represent a natural catastrophe, or series of them, combining to overwhelm the centres of population of on the coasts of Middle-earth itself. (I dare say essential precautions for coastal defence were neglected too). But you have to admire the sheer chutzpah with which the Gondorians have managed to shrug off these and other temporary little local difficulties and maintain the

fiction that they are a permanent ruling elite, surviving even the end of the "War of the Ring" and the period of Sauronic rule to re-emerge as the "Gondorian Federation" with tranquillity, law and order imposed from Minas Tirith on all the rest of us.

You also have to accept the accounts in contemporary chronicles of Sauron's making war on the newly arrived "Dunedain" as we now have to call them before they had fairly got the "realms in exile" fairly going. Well, if he'd done that he'd have swept them off the face of Middle-earth! These "edit-Numenoreans", meaning the few that had managed to wangle a passage on one of the nine ships, teamed up with a handful of elves from Lindon and elsewhere, Gil-galad and that lot, route marched their way over to Mordor, and there, pretty well on the slopes of Mount Doom and in sight of Barad-dur, managed to inflict a crushing defeat on Sauron that rendered him a spent force for centuries after. They also succeeded, by the way, in saddling him with responsibility for the original Numenorean cock-up, by putting it about that sometime previously he'd been captured and taken to Numenor as a prisoner; while there he'd infected the last king Ar-Pharazon with delusions of grandeur, and that the whole scheme of sailing west and dropping in on the Valar for afternoon tea was his idea! Well, it's an inventive tale, but it's no doubt now been doing the rounds on the basis that the more blatant the nonsense you can put into circulation, the more people you can get to believe in it. Sauron the Great (*the* Sauron I mean) always treated it as one of the chief ingredients of political success, and frankly I think sometimes that there was not all that much to choose, morally speaking, between him and those stiff-upper-lip types on the top decks of Minas Tirith in the Third Age.

Mind you, the Sauron of the time (the one in office at the end of the Second Age, I mean) might well have been a pretty feeble specimen - remember that story about the invincible Ring which he let them cut off him and get away with? Equally, the quality of his armies was probably pretty second rate, even by our standards. We orcs never have been the terrifying fearless hordes you've all been brought up to think we are; even in such Gondorian sources as we have (not to mention *LOTR* of course). You can see we're not fighters or heroes by nature, and when we're conscripted and sent into battle we always get slaughtered in our thousands. The only way the officers can get any results out of us is by constant threats and harsh discipline, "where there's a whip there's a will, my slugs! Don't you know we're at war?" - that sort of thing. Left to ourselves we can hardly manage to do even the most straightforward things - how many orcs does it take to change a lightbulb? - answer, no one's ever counted. (That's why, of course, Sauron is called the Lord of Darkness , really, and Mordor the Blacked-out Country - the lights never work!) Even your typical Nazgul-lord couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery - look at the time when the Sauron of the day (I forget whether it was number XXIV or XXV) tried to sugar up the election of the most unsuitable candidate for the newly created post of Mayor of Minas Tirith! But I digress.

'... your typical Nazgul-lord couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery'

Let us go back to the beginning of the Second Age for a moment or two and just briefly sketch in what happened to our lot "on the wrong side of the tracks". Quite a number of us escaped in time when the deluge of quote "the breaking of Thangorodrim" unquote happened, and we made our way eastward like everybody else. Being among the more enterprising of the emigrant groups , we penetrated futher east than most, and holed up in various desirable or less desirable locations in the Misty Mountains or down south in Mordor. Another characteristic we share with Dwarves - we both like mountain living. The scenery's better and once you're underground you're out of the weather. We Orcs feel the cold terribly!

Well, we've had various leaders at that time and afterwards and one of the principal ones took over the concept of a dynastic title for the succession. The old one of "Morgoth" had got a bit shopsoiled over the centuries, so he decided to use the one that had always attached to the 2IC - Sauron - as being less calculated to create suspicion, alarm and despondency and lead to violence along the banks of the Anduin. And that's how it's been ever since. There've been other chieftains - the far north area round Angmar and Carn Dum has always been inclined to plough its own furrow independently under separate command - that of the so-called Witch-king, as hostile chroniclers have usually referred to the current holder of the office - once again there has been a dynastic succession of them. For most of the Second Age the current Sauron, as we may call the current ruler of the eastern confederation at any one time, has been content to keep a pretty low profile.* Certainly there was an incursion, or a series of incursions, into Eriador in the seventeenth century of the Second Age, but Gil-galad and his chaps from Lindon way in the following year seem to have coped with it without much trouble, and we were booted out more or less permanently. The scale of the whole episode has been much exaggerated.

What is more remarkable about this period is the relationship, a short time before this, between Sauron and a few so-called Elves who had holed up in the Eregion

* *See Note on page 29*

district - Hollin they called it. They proposed to build it up as a craft centre and establish a metal working industry. The Sauron of the time was quite a whizz, technologically speaking, (very much "on-line" as we say in Minas Morgul nowadays - you really should see our new department of computer studies). He told us orcs to give these elves a helping hand while he got on with his own research studies. And that's how that ridiculous tale about "the elven-smiths, instructed by Sauron, forging the Rings of power" arose, if you please. Precious. little thanks we got for it, I must say! It does show that these so-called Elves weren't really the geniuses they claimed to be, doesn't it?

Well, time's running out and I'll have to cut this a bit short. I'll finish by trying to outline the significance of what is usually referred to as "the arising of Sauron at the end of the Third Age". As I mentioned a little while ago the eclipse of Sauronic power at the end of the Second Age was much more a reflection of the military weakness and general incompetence of Sauronic rule at that particular time than an endorsement of the military might and valour of the West. These Gondorians are always bragging about their valour and Numenorean ancestry of course. For much of the Third Age you get the not uncommon set up of a titular ruler with a limited power base (Dol Guldur) having to contend with a ring or much more powerful vassals, the Nazgul lords, who in practice can do more or less as they please, including the fortification of Minas Morgul (the ruins of the fortress, tarted up and refurbished of course, now serves as the main block of the university buildings today!). We rank and file orcs, of course, just follow and take orders from our immediate uperiors - it's just a question of who's in a position to kick us hardest. And so all that stuff about "dark things stirring in Middle-earth while Sauron still slept" really just mplies that such activity as there was was was localized and peripheral - central control was, for long periods, simply unenforceable. But of course as always tends to happen, the titular rulers little by little gain greater resources and more control, until you get the exceptional personality who can turn everything o his advantage and bring all his dominions together under his own humb. And this was of course Sauron the Great, the so-called "Dark Lord".

'It does show that these so-called Elves weren't really the geniuses they claimed to be, doesn't it?'

Well, as I hope I've made clear, there isn't and never has been, any supposedly immortal evil ogre intent on seizing world power, neither in Thangorodrim once upon a time, nor in Mordor since. There's simply been a dynastic succession of rulers of variable efficiency and competence. But when Sauron the Great wound up the Dol Guldur end and transferred his HQ back to Barad-dur of course it suited his plans to induce everyone in Middle-earth to believe in the myth of his original immortality and indestructibility, and likewise to believe in corresponding attributes for his immediate subordinates. And of course all this went with the military and administrative genius that enabled him to bring discipline and order to the ramshackle military structure of the Mordovian high command, with the rapidity with which he was able to assemble the orcpower and material resources required to win the War of the Ring and establish and maintain control of a vastly extended empire thereafter. It was not Sauron the Great, but his successors, who, if you'll excuse the expression, ballsed it all up again over the succeeding centuries, and allowed the Gondorians, still trumpeting their mythical Numenorean moral and intellectual superiority, to take over control of Middle-earth again, and to propagate the mythology of Valar, Elves and Numenorean superiority, that still frustrates our best efforts to achieve a rational and truthful outline and interpretation of Middle-earth's history today."

Notes endorsed on the above script, which seem to have been assembled from notes taken down at the lecture in question.

"I've heard of Tolkien-based fiction, but this is ridiculous."

"Please see the enclosed. All I need say is: the Valar help Middle-earth if the atheistical rubbish now being peddled about as "the new history", ever becomes accepted in intellectual and scholarly circles. The danger we have to face is that what is heresy in one Age may turn into recognized orthodoxy in the next. I always said that the polytechnic at Minas Morgul should never have been elevated to university status, and I shall be recommending to the authorities in Minas Tirith that they freeze its grants and excercise strict control over its admission procedures."

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* "Incidentally, it was in those so-called "Dark years" that Sauron was supposed to have devised the Black Speech. There's an amusing story to the effect that in reality he didn't do any such thing. His laptop (a pretty early model, of course) went on the blink one day and printed out a lot of incomprehensible nonsense. It occurred to him that he might kid his high officials into believing that this was a new official means of interdepartmental communication, so he insisted that the Nazgul and all other members of his government learn it and use it for all official transactions. Thus they would never be able to understand each other, and consequently be deprived of any means of plotting against him. And that's why we orcs have to use the Common speech to communicate with each other. A tall tale, but worth keeping in circulation, I always feel."

ICONS OF JESUS CHRIST IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

Jean Chausse

Professor Tolkien once said about *The Lord of the Rings* that he had written a book about God but without mentioning him. I long took this assertion for granted because I could intuitively feel the spiritual background of the book. But when I first told my 12 year old son about this J.R.R. Tolkien's intention, he immediately challenged me. According to him there was nothing religious in the book but only adventures and suspense. This assertion led to numerous discussions between us and it rapidly became clear that a whole book would be necessary to deal with such a vast subject. But in this article I will try to show that some of the main characters of *The Lord of the Rings* are indeed icons of Jesus Christ.

The word icon comes from a Greek word which meant "who looks like". In the Catholic tradition three different facets of the personality of Jesus are commonly accepted and worshipped. First, there is Jesus at work preaching in the world to preach the coming of his kingdom, during his public life at the beginning, and through his Church since the Ascension. Secondly there is Jesus suffering his Passion to redeem the world. Lastly, we have Christ as the king of the universe reigning in heaven. I shall try to demonstrate that we can find an "icon" of each of those facets in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Gandalf the Grey is the first candidate we will study. He dies fighting and overcoming the fallen maïa (angel) embodied in the balrog in the abyss under Durin's Bridge "far under living earth, where time is not counted " (LOTR, page 490). It is easy to make a parallel with the Christian credo *"mortuus [.]descendit ad inferos"*. The "Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church" (Idem 631 and following) teaches us that during this descent to the Hebrew's Sheol Jesus defeated the angel of death, vassal of the Devil, and broke free the door of Hell for the souls of the righteous who were waiting for his salvation.

The credo then continue with; *"tertia die resurrexit a mortuis"*. Gandalf too experienced death and resurrection in this way. The text in the "White Rider" (LOTR page 491) is a little vague about the exact nature of this death and resurrection and some could argue that it was only a sort of coma. But appendix B of The Tale of years (LOTR page 1067) is perfectly clear:

"- 25 He cast down the Balrog, and passes away[.]
- 14 [.] Gandalf returns to life, and lies in trance"

This experience of death, struggle with a dark angel and resurrection is enough to designate Gandalf as a strong Christ-like figure. But even if this passage through death and resurrection is central in Gandalf's character, it is not enough to make of him the image of a redeeming Christ. His death happens nearly by surprise without the long announcement that we have in the gospel. More precisely Jesus Christ during his trial and passion never challenges his judges or his tormentors. On the contrary his passiveness surprises them. Gandalf in Moria on the other hand fights back and retaliates against the Balrog. He is, more generally, noticeably active during the whole of *Lord of the Rings*, travelling all over Middle Earth and combining the forces of the enemies of Darkness. He very often himself insists on calling this the "time of his labour". Even when his endeavour is finished he says just before he leaves the Hobbits and goes to talk with Tom Bombadil "He is a moss-gatherer, and I have been a stone doomed to rolling. But my rolling days are ending" (LOTR page 974). This sentence describing a man always on the road can be compared with Matthew 8, 20 "foxes have their holes and birds their nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head". For that reason I think that we can identify Gandalf with Jesus Christ labouring in the world.

But there is more to say on that subject. Tolkien was a devout Christian and according to the tenets of Christian faith, the Lord is still at work in our world. This belief comes from the last sentence of the Gospel according to Matthew. "I will be with you always, to the end of time" Matthew 28,20. For a catholic, as JRR Tolkien was, things are even more precise, Jesus intervenes mainly, though not exclusively, through the Holy Church and the head of this Church is the pope. For a catholic the pope is not "god on earth" as it is sometimes written, this would be on the edge of blasphemy, but it is true that he has a special position. He can be considered as the true "authorised representative" of Jesus Christ. This belief is founded on several verses of the Gospel, especially on two of them.

In Mark 12,10 Jesus says speaking of himself "the stone which the builders rejected has become the main corner stone. This is the Lord's doing". Afterward he said to Peter in Matthew 16,18 "and I say to thee, thou art Peter , the stone, ["rock" in the authorized Version] and on this Rock I will build my Church". The Catholics believe that by naming Peter "the [corner] stone" he delegates his dignity and power to the first pope

and through him to his successors. This interpretation is reinforced by the following verse "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, what you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in Heaven, and what you allow on earth shall be allowed in Heaven" (Matthew 16,19.)

In the same way, in John 10,11 and 10, 14, Jesus says "I am the good shepherd". Later, after his resurrection he says three times to Peter "feed my lambs" (John 21, 15-17). Again, Catholics believe that by transferring his role of shepherd to Peter, Jesus invests him with his very power and dignity.

With reference to those passages of the Gospel, the Catholics consider the pope as the Vicar of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to consider that the pope is the only person in the Roman Catholic Church who is strictly clad in white. A man so fond of tradition and liturgy as Tolkien was no doubt aware of this. Therefore it cannot be a simple coincidence if Gandalf after his resurrection becomes "the white" and is clad in immaculate clothing.

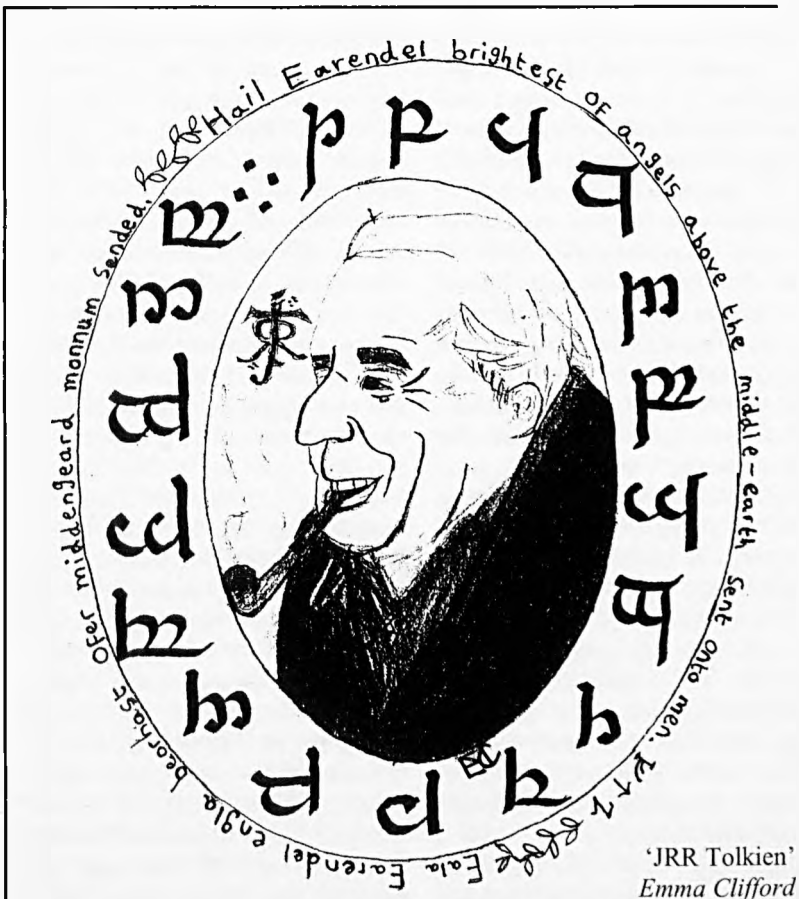
It is also striking to see that John Paul II has been nicknamed by the media "the white pilgrim" in reference to all his travelling around the world. I am well aware that when Tolkien wrote the *Lord of the Rings* the council of Vatican II had not yet occurred and that at that time the pope was still voluntarily locked up in the Vatican. But C S Lewis once said about the *Lord of the Rings*: "these things were not devised to reflect any particular situation in the real world. It was the other way round; real events began, horribly, to conform to the pattern he had freely invented". By saying this he was referring to the Nazi concentration camps or the Soviet gulags that were unknown to Tolkien when he began his book, but proved so similar to his creation Mordor. But if this sentence can be applied to horror it can also be used for success and hope. Everybody agrees that the pope played a major part in the unexpected and pacific fall of communism, exactly in teh way that Gandalf played a major part in the collapse of Barad-dûr.

For all those reasons I think that we can say that Gandalf-Mithrandir is at the same time an icon of Jesus Christ at work in the world and at the head of the Church.

The icon of Jesus Christ suffering his Passion has to be found in another character of *The Lord of the Rings* and I think that that person is Frodo. All through the book the "Ring bearer" is like the Cross bearer. The first similarity begins during the council of Elrond. Tolkien writes - "a great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken" (LOTR page 263). This dread in the face of of a terrifying fate and its free acceptance, can be compared to the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane "Father, if it be thy will, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22, 42).

Later, during the breaking of the fellowship in his dialogue with Sam, Frodo tries to explain to Sam that he will die if he follows him in Mordor. Then Sam answers, "I know that well enough, Mr Frodo [..] and I am coming with you." From my point of view, this decision taken by Sam is not the manifestation of an homosexual love which dare not speak its name, as was speculated in Mallorn 38 [*"Queer Lodgings" by David Craig]*. For me, it is plainly the love of a worshipper for his God, ready to suffer martyrdom. We have one example in the Gospel when Jesus decides to return to Jerusalem where everybody knows that he is under threat of death. "Let us also go and die with him" (John 11-16) is the response of Thomas.

Later Frodo is stripped of his clothes, whipped and mocked in the tower of Cirith Ungol in the same way that Jesus Christ is in the palace of Pilate before his crucifixion. Later the description of his suffering under the burden of the One Ring while climbing the Orodruin, strikingly reminds one of Jesus carrying his cross when climbing the Golgotha.



'JRR Tolkien'
Emma Clifford
The words are from 'Crist of Cynewul' a story Tolkien sudied while at Oxford.

"Among all their pains [Frodo] bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind" (LOR page 914) and also - "I can't manage it, Sam. It is such a weight to carry, such a weight" (LOTR page 916). He then stumbles and falls and is unable to fulfil his task without the help of Sam. Exactly as Jesus cannot manage to carry his cross to the end and needs the help of Simon from Cyrene (Matthew 27, 32).

Frodo also undergoes an experience of death and resurrection when he is stung by Shelob. The appearance of death is so authentic that even Sam, the person who knows Frodo best, is convinced by it. "No stir of life could he finds, nor feel the faintest flutter of the heart. Often he chaffed his master's hands and feet, and touch his brow, but all were cold - 'he is dead'" he said (LOR page 713). This apparently cold, inglorious and hopeless death followed by a "resurrection" and the salvation of the world is the most convincing piece of evidence that Frodo is an icon of the suffering Christ.

To reinforce this identification, Tolkien takes care to point out precisely the date of the destruction of the Ring by Frodo through Gandalf's voice on the field of the Cormallen. "In Gondor the new year will always now begin upon the twenty-fifth of March when Sauron fell"(LOTR page 931). This very date is, according to the tradition (though not a dogma), the date of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the day of the first new Easter.

Lastly we may observe that the acclamation which greets Frodo, soon after, on the field of the Cormallen is very similar in style to several psalms, and especially psalms 148 and 150. But those psalms are prayers to praise the glory of the Lord, not to underline his sufferings. In fact on the Cormallen field Frodo is associated with Aragorn; and Aragorn is the icon of the Christ King of the universe.

In contrast to the two previous characters, Aragorn does not undergo an experience of death and resurrection. This is not surprising, Jesus as the King of the universe has already overcome his enemies and is now untouchable by any kind of evil. So is Aragorn. In the whole book he does not suffer from any taint of the evil forces. On the physical level he never knows even a simple scratch but more strikingly he is also untouchable on the spiritual level. He never lusts for the One Ring, whereas even Galadriel and Gandalf *are* tempted. He is able to take the Paths of the Dead without feeling any fear. He is, also able to look in the palantir and defeat Sauron in this duel of will though even Saruman and Denethor have been trapped.

This incorruptibility even extends to his body which does not rot away but, on the contrary, lies for a long time in great beauty (Appendix A, the tale of Aragorn and Arwen). We should remember that in the Roman Catholic Church the incorruptibility of the body has always been, and is still, considered as a proof of sainthood. There is, therefore, no doubt that Tolkien made of Aragorn a saint. But in fact he did more than that; Aragorn is not only a saint, he is an image of *the* saint.

It is commonly accepted by most Christian theologians that death is a consequence of the fall of Adam and Eve. As a consequence of this, many of them believe that without this original sin, Men would not have known death but would have passed peacefully and by his free will from this world to heaven. That is the reason why Catholics believe in the dogma of the Assumption, and the orthodox in the idea of the Dormition. To explain the differences between those two dogmas is beyond the scope of this paper and is anyway not unnecessary. It is enough to say that both of them concern the Virgin Mary because she was preserved from any kind of sin, including the original one.

The description of Aragorn's death in Appendix A is very close to the theory of Dormition as mentioned above. For a writer as aware of Christian theology as Tolkien was, this cannot be by chance. This means that Tolkien accepted the idea that Aragorn also had been preserved from any kind of sin. And the only man in the whole universe to have this privilege in the Christian faith, is Jesus Christ himself.

Not surprisingly, on several occasions Aragorn gives a glimpse of the majesty of the Lord. When he first meets Eomer he is subjected to a kind of transfiguration which reminds us of Jesus Christ as described in Matthew 17,2 or Mark 9,2. "Gimli and Legolas looked at their companion in amazement ... He seemed to have grown in stature while Eomer had shrunk, and in his living face they caught a brief glimpse of the power and majesty of the kings of stone. For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn." (LOTR, page 423).

Another time, during the ride after having taken the Paths of the Dead with the host of wraiths following him, Legolas wonders, "even the shades of Men are obedient to his will" (LOTR page 857). This can be compared with the reflections of the disciples who ask themselves in surprise "What is this? - he speaks with authority. When he gives orders, even the unclean spirits obey." (Mark 1-27).

Aragorn also has the ability to cure wounds merely by his touch, as is shown when he cures Faramir, Merry and Eowin. In the Gospel too Jesus makes numerous healings by laying his hands on invalids. This is especially the case when he granted the prayer of Jairus to save his daughter "I beg thee to come and lay thy hands on her so that her life may be saved." (Mark 5-23).

I think that, at this juncture, it is clear that the three main characters of *The Lord of the Rings* are directly inspired by the figure of Jesus Christ. One might wonder therefore why the book is frequently considered a pagan one, even among Christians.

REFERENCES

All quotation are from the one volume edition of LOTR published by Harper Collins.

THE SHIRE: ITS BOUNDS, FOOD AND FARMING

William A.S. Sarjeant

The hobbits are a people loving 'peace and quiet and good tilled earth,' their favourite haunt 'a well-ordered and well farmed countryside' (I, p. 11). In this paper, I shall endeavour to consider their habitation and the good food that caused them to be 'inclined to be fat' (idem).

Chronicler J.R.R. Tolkien tells us, in the reconstruction of early hobbit history presented as preamble to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, that they dwelt originally in the upper vales of the great River Anduin. This region gains little mention in the chronicles but, on Christopher Tolkien's authoritative map, it is named Hithaiglin. It lies between the northern Misty Mountains and the forest that was originally Greenwood the Great, later Mirkwood (I, p. 13). The progressive darkening of the forest, and the multiplying of men in that region, seem to have been the causes for the hobbits' westward migration over the Misty Mountains into Eriador. Of the three breeds of hobbits, it was the Harfoots 'the most normal and representative type of hobbit' (I, p. 13) - who moved westward earliest. They had lived in the Mountains' eastern foothills. They seem to have crossed the Mountains south of Rivendell and had travelled as far as Weathertop before the others made that perilous crossing. We may infer that the third group of hobbits, the Stoors, lived formerly in the most southerly regions of Hithaiglin, their ancestors being a 'cleverhanded and quiet footed little people' who resided just north of the Gladden Fields, loved the Great River and made reed boats from which to catch fish (I, p. 62). When the Stoors also moved west, they followed the path of the Harfoots but lingered longer in Wilderland 'between Tharbad and the borders of Dunland' (idem) - the region later called Eregion or Hollin. It was probably the increase of men in that region also which caused both these groups of hobbits to move on westwards.

The third and most adventurous breed, the Fallohides, had lived farthest north in Hithaiglin. They made an independent crossing of the mountains, north of Rivendell, and travelled southward down the River Hoarwell to join up with the Harfoots and Stoors in a region surely erroneously named as 'the Westlands of Eriador' (I, p. 14). It should have been the Eastlands, for Eriador extended to the Ered Luin, the Blue Mountains, close to the ocean, while these lands lay far from the ocean. They centred on Bree-hill, 'tall and brown' (I, p. 193), an isolated hill east of The Greenway that then linked Tharbad with Fornost. Bree-land was 'a small inhabited region, like an island in the empty lands round about' (I, p. 160); it was comprised of Bree itself and the nearby villages of Staddle, Combe and Archet, with the Chetwood to the east. Here men still lived, 'the descendants of the first Men that ever wandered into the West of the Middle-world' (idem). Fortunately the Men of Bree welcomed the hobbits; Bree-land became the one region of Middle-earth where men and hobbits learned happily to co-exist. However, it seems Bree-land became rather too crowded for comfort. Consequently, from Bree 'in the one thousand six hundred and first year of the Third Age' the brothers Marcho and Blanco Fallohide set out 'with a great following of hobbits' (idem) to find a fresh place to dwell. This was done with the permission of Argeleb II, twentieth of the Kings of the fading realm of Eriador - a lineage destined to end three hundred years later. King Argeleb had allocated to that peaceful people an extensive, but by then unoccupied, tract of land west of the 'brown River Baranduin' (idem). To reach it, they crossed the ancient Bridge of Stonebows, whose repair was thereafter placed in their charge.

The hobbits who followed the brothers must have consisted only of their own Fallohide breed and Harfoots. The Stoors, we are told, came 'later into the Shire up from southaway' and, because of their longer lingering elsewhere, retained 'many peculiar names and strange words not found elsewhere in the Shire' (I, p. 16).

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE SHIRE

The land allocated to the hobbits extended 'for fifty leagues, from the Westmarch under the Tower Hills to the Brandywine Bridge' - the hobbits' name for the Bridge of Stonebows - 'and nearly fifty from the northern moors to the marshes in the south' (I, p. 15), Its limits were never shown on the Tolkiens' maps; the one detailed map of the Shire which we have (I, facing p. 24) does not purport to show it all. The length of a league is usually taken as equal to roughly three miles, but it varies. I have striven to plot The Shire on the map of Middle-earth (Fig. 1), but the distance from the Westmarch to the Brandywine has forced me to adjudge that an Eriadorian league was longer than three miles. My extending of the boundaries of the four Farthings echoes the separation of the North and South Farthings by westward and eastward extensions of the two other Farthings close to Bywater, as shown on Christopher Tolkien's map (I, facing p. 24), but is otherwise arbitrary.

When the hobbits arrived they found a land that 'was rich and kindly. and, though it had been long deserted when they entered it, it had before been well tilled.' Indeed, there had been many 'farms, cornlands, vineyards and woods' (I, p. 15). It was 'a pleasant corner of the world,' where they

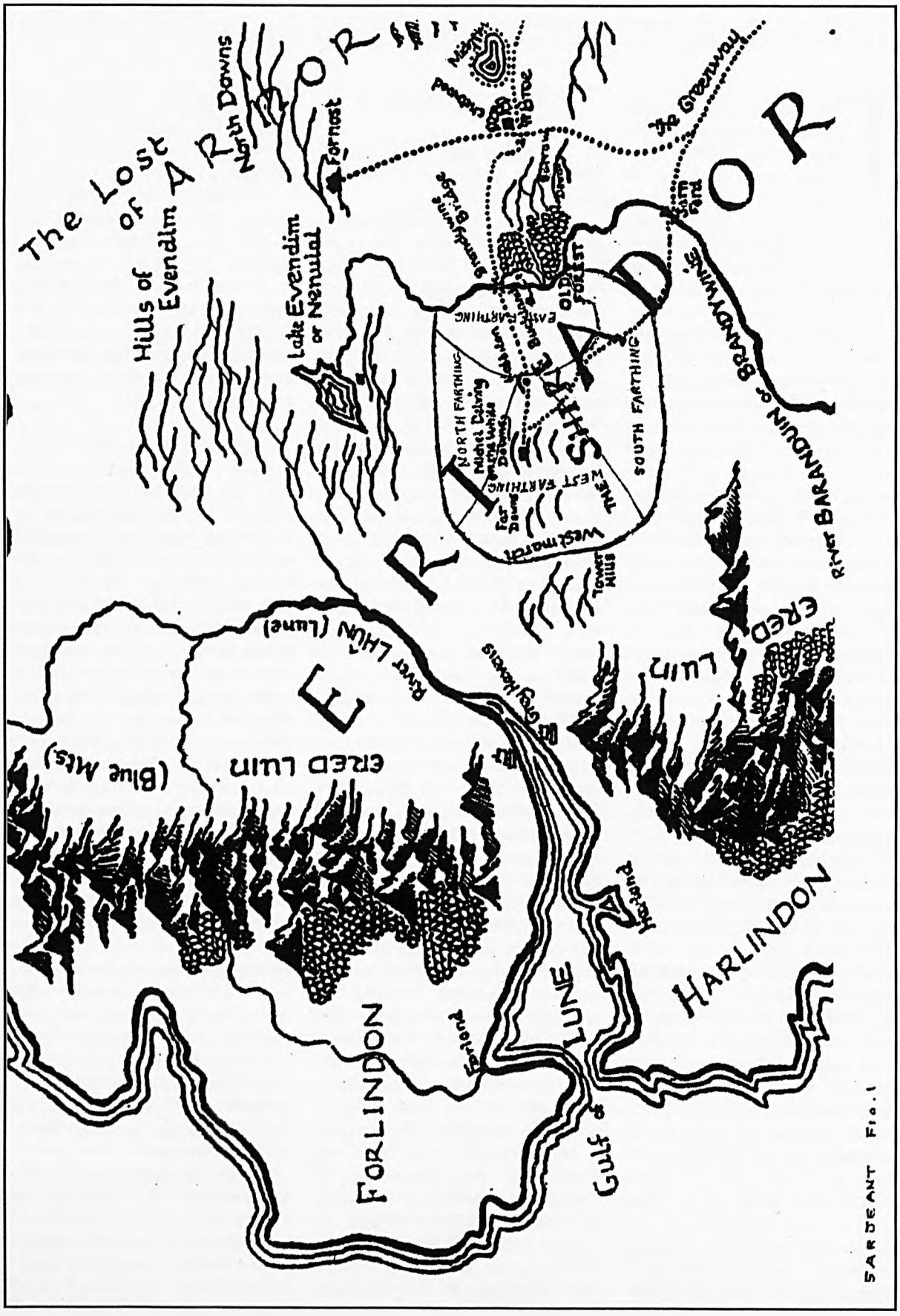


FIGURE 1. Suggested boundaries of The Shire and its four Farthings, superimposed upon Christopher Tolkien's map of Eriador.

could ply their 'well-ordered business of living' (idem).

Topographically, it embraced three highland regions. East of the Tower Hills that lay beyond the limits of the Shire, there were what the hobbits, in their parochial fashion, called the Far Downs. Eastward of these were the White Downs, with the village of Michel Delving. An unnamed extension of those downs, of lesser altitude, lay north of Scary. Southeastward from the White Downs was a further range of lower hills - the Green Hill Country, with Tuckborough embowered amid the western uplands and the eastern end so cloaked with trees that it was named Woody End.

Between the Green Hill Country and the White Downs, there meandered a tributary of the Brandywine which the hobbits named simply The Water. South of the Green Hill Country, a second stream, the Shirebourn, flowed eastward to join the Brandywine just north of the Overbourn Marshes. The low-lying lands north of these marshes were named the Marish and populated mostly by Stoors.

The bounds of the Shire were widened when, at an unspecified date, Gorhendad Oldbuck of the Marish crossed the Brandywine to found Buckland, 'a thickly inhabited strip between the river and the Old Forest, a sort of colony of the Shire' (I, p. 108). Since this seems to have been done without any seeking for royal permission, it probably took place around the two thousandth year of the Third Age, after the fall of King Argeleb's house. Buckland was centred on Bucklebury and protected on its eastern side by a thick, twenty mile long hedge, the High Hay (I, p. 109).

ITS GEOLOGY

In an earlier paper (1995), I endeavoured to reconstruct the geology of Middle-earth. On my reconstruction, the Shire lies between two great faultlines, the Evendim Fault to the north and the Minhiriath Fault to the south. The separation of the Far and White Downs, and the upper course of the Brandywine, surely reflect the lines of lesser normal faults: these are shown, and named, on Fig. 2, along with other lesser faults.

Concerning the strata cropping out in the Shire, we have little information. The White Downs were surely of chalk and there was - at least, under Sharkey's malign regime - a sandpit close to Hobbiton (III, 302). Moreover, as I have shown earlier (1992), there was coal to be mined somewhere in the Shire, perhaps in quarries in those unnamed hills north of Scary (III, 302). The paintings of Tolkien depict a topography very like that of the southern English Midlands - so like, indeed, that I am, tempted to think that the greater part of the Shire was likewise made up of Jurassic and Cretaceous strata, such as nowadays crop out widely in northwest Europe. These strata vary from clays, through brown or green sandstones and sandy limestones, to limestones of higher purity, culminating in the chalk itself.

Such a variety of strata would sustain the whole range of wild plants, and permit the variety of crops, that we know the Shire supported. It would account for the low hills and broad vales, for the marshes and the woodlands. As for the coals - well, though there are no Mesozoic bituminous coals, brown coals (lignites) are widely present in Jurassic strata (for example, in Alberta). They would be cleaner-burning, less likely to pollute the pleasant airs of the Shire.

ITS PLANTS

We are told that 'growing food and eating it' occupied most of the time of the hobbits (I, p. 19) and that 'they laughed, ate and drank often and heartily' (I, p. 12). Indeed, the rich Shire soils and the variety of slopes, some sunny, some shaded, allowed the hobbits to enjoy a wide range of fruits and vegetables. Root crops flourished - was not Gaffer Gamgee especially knowledgeable about their nurture? We have mention of potatoes (I, p. 30) and of turnips and carrots (II, p. 262). Then there were cabbages (I, p. 32), tomatoes (H, p. 21) and a variety of herbs (l, p. 135); from the list of those recognized by Sam Gamgee in fragrant Ithilien, we know that these included thyme, sage, parsley and marjoram (II, p. 258). Of grain crops, there was wheat to be ground in Ted Sandyman's original mill (I, p. 15) and, in the North Farthing at least, barley for beermaking (III, p. 304). In the South Farthing around Longbottom, there were vines (I, p. 46; III, p. 304) and, in warm, sheltered places, there grew sweet galenas, the pipeweed that was the hobbits' particular contribution to the wellbeing of humanity at large (I, p. 18, III, p. 304).

The hobbits planted, tended and harvested apple, plum and chestnut trees (I, p. 92; II, p. 83; III, pp. 303, 296). Hazel nuts also were available from 'hazel thickets' (III, p. 308). The various berries they ate - blackberries, raspberries and strawberries (I, pp. 98, 166; H, p. 21, III, p. 303) - were seemingly both harvested in the wild and grown in their gardens. This is implicit in Pippin's reaction to elf-fare, where he savours 'fruit sweet as wildberries and richer than the tended fruit of gardens' (I, p. 91). Some of these fruits were dried, for consumption while travelling or during the long months of winter (II, p. 285). Mushrooms, of course, were cultivated in the Marish and elsewhere, being a particular passion, not just of Frodo and his companions but of all hobbits - a passion 'surpassing even the greediest likings of the Big Folk' (I, pp. 101, 105, 112).

All these gain direct mention, but we may infer three further crops. Since Bilbo made seedcake (albeit unwittingly) for the dwarves to eat (H, p. 18), there must have been caraways. The fact that some hobbits were ropers (I, p. 16) suggests the growing of hemp; but, of course, some other material might have been employed for rope-making. Bilbo's and Frodo's library (I, p. 46) implies paper-making, perhaps from wood pulp,

more likely from reeds - and maybe Bilbo's waste-paper basket (I, p. 46) was also woven from reeds.

Though vegetables and fruits were the hobbits prime concerns, they grew flowers also in their gardens. We learn of lilies, snapdragons, nasturtiums, sunflowers and daffodils (H, p. 5; I, p. 33; II, p. 288) while the names of certain hobbits - Primula Brandybuck (I, p. 31), Rosie Cotton and the egregious Lobelia Sackville-Baggins - tell us obliquely of three others.

Flowering shrubs were present (I, p. 45); these are not named, but the Shire's shrubs likely included tamarisks, 'pungent terebinth', junipers, myrtles and bays, since these seem to have been recognized in Ithilien by Frodo and Sam (II, p. 258). We do not know which shrub made the hedge at Bag End, so assiduously trimmed by Sam (I, p. 45), but its lawns were certainly of grass (I, pp. 56, 72).

The trees of the Shire were important to the hobbits; did not Sam, following the return from Mordor, concern himself with forestry? They included a variety of deciduous trees - willow, elm, ash, chestnut, rowan, linden, alder, birch and that flowering tree anciently called the auburn, nowadays the laburnum (H, p. 15; I, pp. 52, 80; II, pp. 83, 84, 86), along with conifers such as the fir (I, p. 81) and, at least in the uplands of the North Farthing, the pine (II, p. 257). Rather surprisingly, the party tree (I, p. 34), so soon to fall victim to Saruman's wickedness, is not identified; and, of courses the mallorn came much later.

ITS PASTORAL FARMING

Concerning pastoral farming in the Shire, we have remarkably little information We learn a little about the ponies ridden by the hobbits - their own particular breed, small and sturdy, slow but enduring (I, p. 84). However, the ponies ridden by Bilbo and the dwarves and by Frodo and his companions fared ill, being either taken by goblins (H) or driven away by Sauruman's minions (I). Perhaps Sam's pony, Bill, was also of hobbit breed but, since he was bought in Bree from one of the Big Folk - the unsavoury Bill Ferny - that is not certain. Horses, it seems, were brought into the Shire rarely and only by

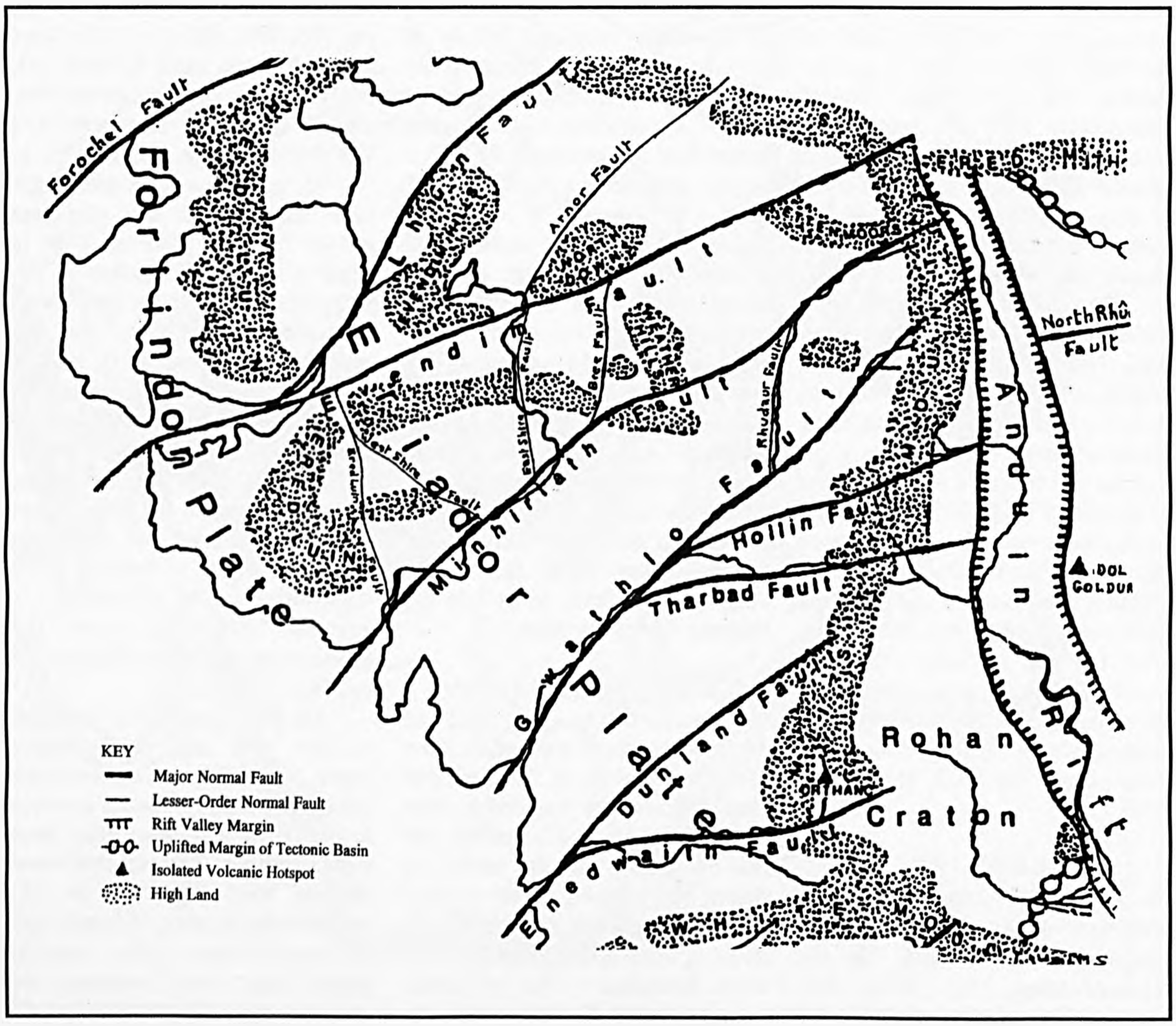


FIGURE 2. Tectonic elements of the geology of The Shire, based upon the reconstruction by Sarjeant (1995).

strangers. There is no mention of donkeys or mules anywhere in Middle-earth.

The hobbits kept bees and happily ate honey and honeycombs (I, p. 135), while the Stoors, at least, had large, fierce dogs (I, p. 101). After that, it is hard to know what creatures the hobbits domesticated. Were there cattle? Well, since the hobbits consumed yellow cream, milk, butter and cheese (I, pp. 58, 135; III, p. 303), this may seem likely. That the hobbits knew of cattle is certain; did not Frodo's cheerful, if unfortunate, party-piece at the Prancing Pony concern itself with a cow that jumped over the moon (I, pp. 170, 172) and was not Pippin able mentally to contrast 'an old cow sitting and thoughtfully chewing' with 'a bull charging'? (II, p. 85). One might imagine such cattle to be of a small breed, like the Shire's ponies. However, their presence in the Shire is by no means certain; all those products could have been made from the milk of goats or even sheep. Equally, though the hobbits ate bacon (I, p. 105), we cannot be sure that there were pigs; bacon can be made from mutton also. Yet pigs do seem likely, perhaps finding pannage in Bradbole Wood in the North Farthing or in the woods near Woody End.

Evidently rabbits were eaten at home in the Shire, as well as in the wilds of Ithilien, for Sam Gamgee was skilled in their skinning and preparation (II, p.261). In all probability, though, the Shire rabbits ran wild and were snared at need, not kept. Eggs? Yes, the hobbits - and the dwarves! - ate them in quantity (H, p.21). The mention of 'fowls chattering in a yard' at Crickhollow (I. p. 120) could refer to any domesticated egg laying bird; it is highly unlikely that the hobbits kept hens, since those birds were confined to distant tropical lands until relatively modern times. Instead the bobbits might have eaten eggs of quails, plovers or some other bird, harvested in the wild, or conceivably of ducks, wild or tame. There were geese in Bree (I, p. 180), but the small hobbits would surely have found such large and aggressive birds too difficult to handle.

We know that the hobbit-like ancestors of the Stoors fished in the River Anduin (I, p. 62). It is surely likely that the hobbits - the Stoors, at least - fished in the Brandywine quite regularly and that all the hobbits enjoyed eating fish: was not the inn at Stock, with its excellent beer, called the Golden Perch? (I, p. 97).

The hobbits wore warm clothing, in part of leather but surely mostly made from wool. That again suggests, possibly, goats, more probably, sheep. It is tempting to imagine sheep being pastured on the short grasses of the White Downs around Michel Delving, furnishing the hobbits not only with wool, but perhaps also milk and meat. Certainly, when Bilbo crept up to the feasting trolls, he found the odour of the roasting mutton 'a fine toothsome smell'! (H, p. 44). However, with the trolls turned to stone it is not clear whether Gandalf, the dwarves and he ate any of that mutton. So, once again, we cannot be sure. As for goats, the only oblique reference is in the name of one of the Big Folk of Bree, Goatleaf (I, p. 167); perhaps they were kept in Breeland but not in the Shire.

When Bilbo travelled eastward with the dwarves, in quest of the Lonely Mountain's treasure, and when Frodo and Sam, Merry and Pippin travelled southeastwards and eastwards through the Green Hill Country to the Marish, they saw no domesticated animals - or so it seems, from the published records. The extent of pastoral farming, then, in the Shire must remain an unresolved question.

Acknowledgments

This paper was first presented at Breemoot IV/Mythcon XXX at Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1999 and, in a revised version, at Breemoot V in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2001. Helpful comments by the auditors of these papers drew my attention to certain references I had missed. I am grateful for these, and for the help of Trent Mitchell and Jason Sharp in the production of the paper.

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Tolkien - why is he important today?

Earlier in the year we issued a general invitation to members to let us know their feelings about Tolkien's works, and the influence they had had, if any, on their lives. The following is your response.

THE TOLKIEN EFFECT By Valerie Anand

The Hobbit and *The Lord of the Rings*, like so much of Tolkien's work, are fiction. Sometimes it's necessary to remember this! It may be amusing to speculate on who grew and imported Bilbo's tea, or how and where, in the non-industrial hobbit society, Lobelia's brollies were manufactured, but it misses the point. The answer is that Tolkien didn't worry about these things. He was too busy doing something else: writing a superb story which can be read on several levels and is infused with such power that it can affect the lives of its readers.

It has certainly affected mine and I am sure I'm not alone in this.

I read *The Fellowship of the Ring* when it first came out in the 'fifties. I was then about sixteen (I didn't catch up with *The Hobbit* until much later). Then, still half a child, I read it simply as an exciting adventure in a fantasy world, eager for the narrative to get to Mordor and confront Sauron, and accordingly impatient for the next volume to come out. By the time the entire trilogy was out, I had grown up a little more, but I was still young enough to see the book simply as a story. The battles were exhilarating; Shelob was terrifying; I wanted to urge the eagles on as they flew into the chaos of disintegrating Mordor to bring Sam and Frodo home.

Without knowing it, though, I must have been growing aware of the deeper levels of the tale, for when I needed them, I called on them instinctively. Adult life brought its troubles. No need to describe them; they happened, that's all. In the early seventies in particular, I experienced a time of great doubt and anxiety and it was to *The Lord of the Rings* that I turned, first for a distraction and then for encouragement.

For here it was, just what I needed: a story of small, unimportant folk with little power who nevertheless shoulder a great responsibility, set out on a perilous quest and succeed in the face of all probability. I read the trilogy through, every word, taking heart from it. As Frodo and Sam plodded across Mordor, I took them for an example. I didn't give up hope and I continued with determination to plod across my own personal landscape of trouble – and in time, came safely to the other side.

During those months, the images and atmosphere of LoTR became deeply entangled in my physical surroundings. I had bought the recording *The Poems and Songs of Middle Earth*, and I used to play it while I worked on knotting a rug which I was then making. The rug is now a hearthrug and every time I look at it, it reminds me of that time, but it is the music of Donald Swan and William Elvin and the voice of Tolkien, reading his poems that I remember; not the worries. Somehow, LoTR has transmuted the memories from miserable to happy.

The record also had a cover design showing a landscape of mountains with Orodruin in the far distance and a dramatic castle as a landmark in the middle distance, leading the eye onwards, as it were. It happened that the window of the kitchen in the small attic flat where we then lived, looked out across Streatham towards the Surrey hills and had a view which in general shape had some similarities to that cover design. At least, it had landmarks sticking up in roughly the right places: St Helier Hospital looking impressive and remote, and a factory chimney (demolished later) jutting out midway.

We left that flat long ago but there is a public garden in Streatham which looks out on almost the same view, and to this day, I never go there without recalling, very vividly, certain parts of LOTR. I half expect to meet Galadriel by the fountain among the lawns and flowerbeds and a certain sweeping rise of grass reminds me irresistibly of Cerin Amroth. The entire area has, for me, a secret extra dimension.

Since then, I have often turned to LOTR in times of worry or difficulty, or simple tedium. It has amused me on intercontinental flights and cheered me up in hospital; it has steadied me through bouts of physical pain, through the wait for the outcome of someone else's dangerous operation; through the bleak emptiness which follows a loved one's funeral.

I actually had Bilbo's poem, *I Sit Beside the Fire and Think* read at my mother's funeral because it is a such a subtle and moving expression of old age, and my mother was in her nineties when she died. That night, I read the last chapter of *The Return of the King*. Sam, looking at the grey sea when Frodo's ship has sailed out of sight, was an echo of my own feelings, and a way of understanding them.

Curiously enough, the fact that the ending of the book is not totally happy, adds to its power of giving comfort, because it is more truthful. It does not pretend. Frodo is changed and damaged by his adventures; he can never return to life as it was, and eventually he leaves Middle Earth for a voyage to the West. He has been promised peace and happiness - but it is also a voyage into the unknown, which is of course the case at the end of everyone's life.

I would say that I owe Tolkien a good deal. LOTR has been valuable to me as a help, even as a guide, in many situations. I think that if I had never read it, I would be to some extent a different person, and perhaps a shallower one. I can think of no books

which have affected me so much, except possibly some of the works of Arthur C. Clarke, which were mind-broadening in a completely different way. It was because I had at last recognised the true importance of LOTR in my life that I joined The Tolkien Society.

As I grow older, I find that the characters with whom I identify, have changed. I understand now (as I could not at sixteen) the sorrow of the elves as they face the fact that all they have wrought in Middle Earth must pass away. After all, like most people as they age, I sometimes regret the passing of my youth. The dignity of the elves in a similar situation is impressive, rather like a set of instructions for coping as the aches and twinges increase and the years ahead grow fewer.

My favourite parts of LoTR, however, have remained largely unchanged since the time I first read them. For instance, the Scouring of the Shire has always struck me as exhilarating, such a splendid clearing up of unfinished business. Few people in real life ever have the chance to do it so thoroughly and probably wouldn't if they could.

Sometimes I think that even now, I would like to Say A Few Words to that teacher (no doubt long deceased) who bullied me when I was five, but if I got the chance, I don't suppose I'd take it and why bother, anyway, when Tolkien has done it for me, vicariously but with such completeness?

Also right from the first, I loved the start of the adventure, when the four hobbits set out from Bag End, walking under the stars, while the thin-clad birches make a black net against the sky. When I read that passage now, I am at once sixteen again, in the morning of the world, at the beginning of my own life's adventure.

I hope to have a good many years yet in which to read and enjoy Tolkien's work and to deepen my understanding of it. However, I think that when at last I do set out on my own voyage to the unknown, I shall leave instructions for a LOTR poem to be read at my own obsequies. It will be the poem from *The Return of the King,* the verses which Sam sings in the Orcs' stronghold when he is searching for Frodo.

I am an agnostic but, encouraged by Tolkien, I propose at the last to throw my lot in with the optimists. The closing lines of that poem are: *I will not say the day is done, nor bid the stars farewell.*

Dale Nelson

One reason that Tolkien is important is that his stories of Middle-earth provide an encounter, which can stir heart and mind, with perennial tradition. By "perennial tradition" I mean an outlook common to most people at most times and places, an outlook which contrasts with many characteristic values of our own civilization. The responsive reader of Tolkien probably is better able than many of his/her modern peers to read authors from Homer to Jane Austen with an enhanced receptiveness to values they all have in common - over against those characteristic of our own time. At the least, even if he/she rejects the perennial outlook in whole or in part, the fact that he/she has read Tolkien can help someone to appreciate, in the classic works, many matters that Tolkien presents so accessibly. Here are some examples of this shared outlook.

1. Beauty is a category of the real world. In the traditional and Tolkienian view, beauty does not resolve into a mere cultural or evolutionary preference; discerning and cherishing beauty is incumbent on everyone according to his/her ability. It is hardly too much to say that *The Lord of the Rings* is about preserving and protecting beauty. Beautiful things made by created beings is of great importance in Tolkien's myth of the Elves, and so on. This view obviously has more in common with, for example, a medieval European esteem for beauty - in clothing, stained glass windows, and more - than with modernity, wherein "the shock of the new" is needed if an artist or musician is to draw attention to his/her work.

2. Hierarchy is a category of reality and not a mere social construction, that is, the oppression of some by others. This example will be more controversial than #1 and this is not the place to debate it; but I will assert that traditional societies recognize a hierarchy of being. Reality exhibits qualitative levels. In Tolkien, Elves are nobler than Hobbits. In traditional Eastern thought, humans are nobler than animals and *yidags* (tormented ghosts). And so on. Still more controversially, in Tolkien some "blood" is nobler than others - Aragorn's stock is inherently nobler than that of, say, Bill Ferny. Whether we believe this idea is wholesome or not, it is a traditional one. (It didn't have to wait for modernity to be criticized: the concept is criticized in the Bible, for example.)

3. Life is not "a bitch and then you die" (as American bumper stickers proclaim), but a journey, perhaps a quest. Traditional literary and religious examples will be obvious to many readers. A sour attitude is not characteristic even of the "pessimistic" East, but it is characteristic of (for example) modern pop music.

4. Part of one's identity is his/her *land* and home. But in modernity, members of the workforce shuffle between offices and prize their mobility. So ponder this: "Unlike a life at home, which makes ever more particular and precious the places and creatures of this world, the careerist's life generalizes the world,

reducing its abundant and comely diversity to 'raw material'." (Wendell Berry)

In Tolkien: consider the importance of Numenor, even centuries later, for those descended therefrom, who have founded a new realm without forgetting their origins. (Cf. the *Aeneid.*) Or take Farmer Giles, defending his farm and, eventually, establishing a kingdom at Worminghall!

5. The universe is teeming with life; it is not (mostly) empty and dead. Tolkien's tales and *Black Elk Speaks* are one one side of a chasm, with modernity on the other.

6. In traditional civilizations and in Tolkien, one learns - ideally, anyway - from wise elders. In modernity, the elderly are marginal, "out of it," and it is necessary to drum up sentiment for them in order to prevent their being neglected or abused; they certainly are not seriously regarded as needed for the sake of the community's wellbeing.

The elderly, such as Dante's Virgil, often know more than the younger in large part because they have suffered more. And think of how Tolkien emphasizes how careworn Gandalf is - rather than "he still looks pretty *good* [not "young"] for an old guy." Modernity makes escape from suffering one of the highest priorities of the state - which, by the way, is immense as compared with the effective reach of kingdoms of the *Morte d'Arthur* or of Middle-earth. Lore matters in the traditional and Tolkienian worlds. But modernity delights to find irrational superstition as the legacy of the past, science, it is assumed, being there to lead us, somehow, to wisdom in the future.

7. In traditional thought and in Tolkien, one looks back to a Golden Age. In modernity one conjectures earlier subhumanity, and prior to that, insentience - mindless chemicals. In perennial thought, language - speech - is an endowment from the highest. In modernity, language is presumed to originate in animality.

Perennial thought thinks of song and of the greatest poetry when it addresses the topic of language and its origin (and see *The Silmarillion*); modernity thinks of utilitarian signifiers concernedwith basic everyday wants. Language is there at the beginning in perennial thought, and Tolkien, because mind is prior to matter - the reverse of characteristic modern thought.

8. Related to #7: in Tolkien and in the perennial view, one explains the lesser in terms of the higher. In LOTR there are poignant allusions to what was "meant" to be; in *The Silmarillion* the providence of Iluvatar is more explicit. Perennial thought refers what happens here below to the purposes of gods or God, or, if nothing better, then inevitable karma. In perennial thought and in Tolkien, events and persons sometimes or always are ascertainable manifestations of a higher order of things, in which those events and persons participate. (This is sometimes loosely called a "sacramental" view.) However, in modernity one explains the "higher" - quotation marks become necessary - in terms of the "lower." Love is biology; altruism, if it exists, is adaptive, etc. Modernity is *reductive*. "Really nothing but" is a characteristic phrase. Children are encouraged to see a continuity, not between themselves and a higher order of being - such as one's clan or a noble ancestor; or angels; or gods - but between themselves and an ontologically lower order of being, such as primates or rats. Again, the modern view rejects hierarchy of being.

9. Where modernity is sceptical, and university literature students are taught the hermeneutics of suspicion, contrastingly Tolkien/perennial thought conveys that the human person needs to receive beauty, truth, and goodness that are real qualities which are at first "beyond" himself/herself. Reading literary texts often plays a major role in such acquisition. Samwise is ennobled by his yearning for, and then contact with, the Elves, the great poets. In modernity, though, "Teachers and students read the great songs and stories to learn *about* them, not to learn *from* them." (Wendell Berry)

With his slippery tongue, his deft way with language and "truth", Saruman today would be, like Jacques Derrida, an academic superstar.

Continuing the theme of "non-scepticism" - there is the sense, in Tolkien and perennial thought, of what may be called simply "the normal" and of the rites that exhibit and the duties that maintain it. It might be the Confucian '*li*' or the Western '*duty*' - but a lot of energy is expended in the transmission of these attitudes and ways. A moment's thought will furnish abundant examples of situations in which duty - one wants to capitalize it - is prominent in Tolkien's tales. In modernity, however, one has, on the one hand, an emphasis on individualism, "being oneself," etc. and, on the other, on the enforcement of written codes - the ""ob description," for example. The assumption is that a person is a free agent who, in return for a salary, surrenders some of his/her autonomy in order to do a job. But how often in modernity does someone unself-consciously require of another person that he or she do his or her *duty*?

10. Finally, and so obvious is this that it is anticlimactic, perennial thought and Tolkien's outlook have a different attitude towards machines than that of modernity. Wendell Berry said something that (on the evidence of his letters especially) I think Tolkien would approve: "I would argue that it is not human fecundity that is overcrowding the world so much as technological multipliers of the power of individual humans." These are just some examples of matters wherein Tolkien and what I have called the perennial tradition converge, and contrast with assumptions of modernity. People wanting to explore this topic could consult books such as:

C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*

Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*

Wendell Berry, *Home Economics [and other essay collections]*.

Letters

How it's done

Sir,

I felt that Ruth Lacon's letter* in Amon Hen 168 raised some necessary points about Mallorn, but was rather swamped by a page or so about the Information to Contributors, which raises other points that I may be able to shed some light on.

Alas! In publishing, as in everything else, the instructions are not always complete. There is a standard advice, which is "if in doubt, ask". Write. Phone. Include an SAE. Can enquirers to the editorial departments of publishers expect a reply? Often enough. There may be waiting, possibly indefinite (it will be if you don't include an SAE). That's normal. You have to work really hard just to get an artistic disappointment in the outside world. Mallorn is usually kindlier.

Anyway, our editors, bless them, did rather leave evidence about colour printing lying around as far back as December 1999. Having to do a bit of detective work may be irritating, but it is pretty much par for the course. Certainly anyone hoping to publish professionally should prepare themselves for levels of frustration that will make superannuated contribs' info seem like a dear old friend.

Ref Len's asides in Mallorn 38, I'm broadly in agreement with Ruth, but still, it is good practice to clarify any connection between a commenter and a commentee. Not everyone knows that Alex is a friend of Ruth's and a fellow writer. This may be what was in Len's mind. However, as Alex only mentioned Ruth's Mallorn 37 article in passing, I did feel that Len's response lacked the god-like detachment of an editor who isn't seeking follow-up correspondence.

Ref contributions to Mallorn by its editors, that perplexed me greatly. It is perfectly normal and proper practice for editors to contribute fully to publications they edit, and it is often specifically part of their job. As for the Tolkien Society, as far as I know its editors have always been free to contribute if they chose. John Ellison as a speaker and illustrator has consistently worked away at his own interests like the rest of us, but has made his efforts available to the Society, its smials and its publications freely, and plugged many shortages. Editors of publications representing a group, as do Mallorn and Amon Hen, obviously don't have such a free hand as those handling their own publications, but not making use of editors as contributors would just be wasteful. If there are any criticisms to be made, let them be levelled frankly at individual articles. In general, I don't personally recall any editor of Mallorn whose contributions I did not wish to read or view.

It is also the editors' job to send things back for revision from time to time. Mallorn contributors get a great deal of freedom by comparison with many journals. Actually submitting something - or just an enquiry - is a useful first step to publication.

I have personally had contributions mangled and artwork lost (once) and even been infuriated by incorrect instructions, since round about 1976, and sometimes been discouraged for periods of time - but Mallorn in general is a readable and reliable outlet for our shared interest, no worse than many another journal and better than some. If it sometimes requires persistence, that goes with the territory. Trust me on this.

PS Len knows what my current gripe is, so I will just hint that it involves fewer little characters on the page and more space between them.

Helen Armstrong

**Broadly, the letter published in Amon Hen (a) criticised the Contributors Notes as inaccurate because they specified B & W pix, and (b) accused the editors of favouring their own material and that of their friends ahead of other, perhaps better, contributions.*

In praise of Mallorn

Sir,

Mallorn 38 arrived recently, and I was intrigued by the amount of criticism of the cover and layout, so I dug out issues 36 and 37 to compare.

To cheer the Editor up, I would like to say that, even though I admire Pauline Baynes' artwork, I thought the new style of cover looked more professional. The blurry picture has been rectified in issue 38. The title font does look rather Teutonic, but the green colour on issue 38 softens it, and I was not offended by the varying fonts on the Editorial and Contents pages. I also would like titles for the artwork, but the use of different paper for colour pictures didn't bother me.

However, I must echo Wayne Hammond's plea for a return to only two columns of text. Three columns, each 3-7 words wide, is eye-splitting to read. When the article is also long and difficult to comprehend, the physical strain of reading it makes me feel like giving up. Please change it back.

cont'd

Mallorn XXXVIIII

Unlike Andrew Wells, I enjoyed Kensington Prallop's letter in issue 37 as a tongue-in-cheek appreciation of the scholarly articles published in Mallorn, and a jibe at those who prefer "a good hack in the park". Andrew says the letter is out of place, as Mallorn is a serious academic journal, but does that mean we have to abandon our sense of humour? Don't academics like to laugh once in a while? I must say, I was taken in briefly, even though the name is ridiculous, but "Forrminit Smial" gave it away. Do I detect the hand of our editor, writing funny letters to himself under a pseudonym?

Turning to Mallorn 38, my gold star goes to Mary Dickerson's poem, which I really enjoyed. One small quibble is the number of unnecessary commas in John Ellison's article, particularly just before a word in quotes. A small type-setting mistake, perhaps, but it made reading quite tricky. Another quibble is a problem that seems to occur with fonts with a serif. If you look at the top paragraph, third column, of David Doughan's book review, you'll find that "post-modern" has become "post-modem" and "pick'n'mix" has become "pick'n'rnix". This happened in many other places as well. Perhaps a spell-check is needed, or a non-serif font.

I'm afraid I found some of David Craig's essay "Queer Lodgings" objectionable, but then I'm a woman, and I don't see sex in everything. (I'm sorry, but anyone who can see Shelob's attack on Frodo, and Sam's attack on Shelob, as sexual, would probably find a doughnut sexual. It has a hole in it, after all.) I will take issue with just two points: Craig starts off by saying "My argument looks both at the conscious intentions of Tolkien, but also at some of the more unintentional meanings in the text..... meanings have a habit of slipping in through the back door." These sexual meanings are quite subjective and Craig should introduce them as solely his own ideas, and not in any way impute them to Tolkien, or imply that the story somehow holds these meanings in any objective sense. Given Tolkien's old-fashioned views on sex, as expressed in the letter to his son (partially quoted), I don't imagine he would be impressed by them.

The second point is Craig's last sentence, which says the love that binds Frodo and Sam is "the love that cannot speak its name". It is a punchy last line, but not necessarily true, as it contradicts two earlier statements: "But if any critic .. had asked if the book contained homosexuals, Tolkien would have certainly answered ... that it did not." and (on p 16) "... Tolkien is not suggesting that the hobbits are homosexual..." . So Craig's conclusion is not borne out by what he believes Tolkien's intentions were, and although it sounds like a good line to finish on, it doesn't follow from his arguments.

Indeed, the whole summary is flawed. You cannot say "Ultimately it is a book about the religious ideal of love... [which we see] most of all ... between Frodo and Sam." and then go on to say their love is homosexual. This flies in the face of Tolkien's ideas of religious love, as expressed in the letter quoted from, and I believe he would have most strenuously denied it. The only irony I can see is that Craig insists on his version of their relationship, despite acknowledging that Tolkien would disagree. After all, who wrote the book?

Personally, I see Bilbo's and Frodo's batchelor-hood as nothing more than a necessary plot device to enable them to go away on long perilous adventures, hardly something a hobbit with a wife and children could do. Why drag sex into it?.

Finally, I realise that Mallorn is a scholarly magazine, but I found much of Patrick Curry's article on "Magic vs Enchantment" quite incomprehensible. I realise he has probably studied Eng. Lit. and Lit. Crit., whereas I haven't, but I think authors should write in a style that is understandable to the average intelligent reader. I grasp the distinction he is making, and agree with his concerns about "The Triumph of Magic". However, the second of the "Three signs of wonder" is stunningly obscure, and I would appreciate an English translation so I can recognise them if I see them. I am sure Kensington Prallop would agree with me.

Donella Peters

Beautiful work

Sir,

On receiving my first ever copy of *Mallorn* yesterday, I must say it is refreshing, rewarding, amusing and confusing. The front cover is great! (Has anyone written less than five words on this matter? - or should I say five hundred and five!?). 'Aragorn' by Mary Dickerson is wonderful. 'Queer lodgings', as with all things that dissect, however unintentional and well meaning, in part, for me, takes away the innocence and natural beauty from a creation that comes in our time from a world before time where Angels surely did sing for the greater glory of God; where passion, respect, courtesy and high standards shine back at us from every page - small wonder we are drawn to such beautiful work.

Craig Rayner

The Invisible Shire: a response

Sir,

I have some comment's on Ruth Lacon's article "The Invisible Shire" in *Mallorn* 37.

First, I am wholly in agreement with Ruth when she says that, "... detailed analysis of the available material will show a world much more complex than we tend to think." I also agree with her methods; as she says, "If we wish to play the game of 'Middle-earth studies' and treat Professor Tolkien's works as 'real' records of a 'real' time and place, it must surely be obligatory to apply the same principles of textual criticism to them as are employed by historians dealing with records of our own past."

Looking at the theoretical side of Ruth's article, I am fascinated by the detail of her work, and can find little to argue with. However, there is one point where I disagree. She says that, "for printing did not exist as far as we can tell." While it is true that there is no definite evidence for printing, there is some indirect evidence, particularly the fact that in the guard-house the hobbits use in "The Scouring of the Shire", "on every wall there was a notice and a list of Rules." To put a standard list of rules on every wall of every guard-house in the Shire implies printing. It also implies at least some level of literacy among the rank and file of hobbits.

Next, I would like to consider Ruth's statements:

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 agricultural, industrial and commercial activities.

I think that it would be safer not to think of a world where most people were engaged in a particular occupation. Instead, I envisage the Shire as a region where most people grew enough basic foodstuffs for themselves (with a little over to sell) and relied on themselves for all but the most specialist of services. All but the most specialised of craftsman would also have been smallholders, producing at least some of their own food.

I agree with many of Ruth's conclusions about the Gamgees. However, they did not routinely put their children through school (or at least, not school as we understand it). The Gaffer says of Sam, "Mr Bilbo has learned him his letters – meaning no harm, mark you, and I hope no harm will come of it."

On communications, I think that the most we can say is that no canals are shown on the extant maps, although it is likely that none existed. It is also possible that express trains were known!

Finally, I move on to the list of objects to be found in Bilbo's hallway, and the list of craftsmen necessary to produce them, I think that we just *have* to assume that some of the objects are "fictional". Maybe the translator or illustrator made an error? If 96% of the population of the Shire was basically engaged in farmwork, and if the total population was around 300,000 (as postulated by Ted Crawford), then we are left with only around 240 workers (and their families) who were not farmers or farmhands. Most of these would have been smiths or carpenters, and most of the rest innkeepers, small shopkeepers, postmen or shirrifs, leaving the number of craftsmen at no more than fifty. Excluding the carpenter, smith and associated trades, Ruth has listed seventeen!

Andrew Wells

My own feeling is that both the article and this response demonstrate how difficult it is to speculate satisfactorily about times of which one knows almost nothing, and about which one's guesses are inevitably filtered through, and heavily biassed by, a familiarity with one's own time. Faulty arithmetic doesn't help. Ed

Sir,

You asked for suggestions and criticisms about Mallorn, so here are my demands. I want more articles, and I want them in bigger printing. Personally, I loved the new front cover, so I want more front covers. Is three per issue really too much to ask?

I don't want less of anything but I do want more fiction, more non-fiction, poetry, paintings, one-act plays, radio serials and all-action filmic versions of LOTR. Is that really too much to expect of Mallorn bloody editors?, after all you've only got to produce one rag a year, piece of cake.

As for your current typefaces, the magazine looks like it's been put together by a demented librarian. The type is bigger in some places, and smaller in others. Or you turn the page and it's a different typeface. Sometimes it goes only a third of the way across, sometimes it goes right across the page (*those are the headlines - Ed*). Can't you make up your bloody mind? You read a line, then you read another one and it says something completely different! Is consistency a completely closed book to you lot? Do everything in the same typeface, the same size, preferably saying the same kind of thing. Why don't you try having everything in the mag written by the same person, maybe this Ellison geezer? Now that's what I *call* consistency. That's what *I* call uniformity.

And more birds.

Kensington Prallop
Gārstlič Smial

About the Authors

Allan Turner burst on the scene at the Cambridge seminar. He has presented papers at the two most recent seminars, to wide acclaim.

Lynn Forest-Hill is a Fellow of the Wessex Medieval Centre at the University of Southampton, specialising in medieval drama, and a Tolkien enthusiast of many years' standing. In her spare time she is a scholar of Anglo-Saxon.

Christine Davidson has served as Booking Officer on the TS Committee for many years and has been a regular and valued contributor to the Society's seminars.

John Ellison is an author (*The Dear Bil Letters, Stiff upper lip, Bilbo!*), Oxford alumnus, opera buff, artist and genuine eccentric whose lifelong interest in Tolkien and Wagner has resulted in an unparalleled output of learned commentary, humorous lampoonery and trips to Covent Garden. Much of his material appears in this journal, to universal approval. He is also the consultant editor on *Mallorn*.

Jean Chausse is a graduate of H.E.C business school and lives in Brest. He has been a keen Tolkien enthusiast for ten years; his favourite episode is the passage where Frodo claims the Ring and thereby fails in his mission, a climax which he believes underlines the spiritual depth of *LOTR*.

William Sarjeant Dr. William Antony Swithin Sarjeant is a Professor of Geological Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He has written, or contributed to, some forty books and over 450 papers on microfossil and related themes. He is the co-author of three books about the history of Saskatoon and edits the annual *Saskatoon History Review*. In the field of fantasy, he has published three earlier articles on Tolkien's writings and, under the pen-name Antony Swithin, has published four novels in a series entitled *The Perilous Quest for Lyonesse*; four others are ready for publication.

The departure of the Noldor from Alqualondë *John Ellison*