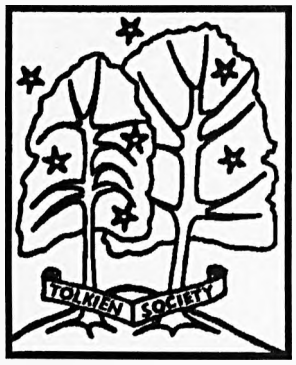
Mallorn

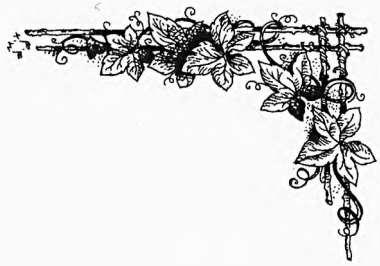
40

November 2002

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 AGM and Dinner in the spring, Summermoot and the Seminar in the summer, and "Oxonmoot", a celebratory weekend held in Oxford in late September.
For further information about the society, please contact Sally Kennett, 210 Prestbury Rd, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 3ER or visit the Society's homepage: http://www.tolkiensociety.org.

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Notes for Contributors

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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).

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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 colour or black and white, no larger than A4 size, and must be either the original or a high quality photocopy. The artist's name should be written clearly on the back in pencil.

General notes: Contributors who want their material returned should provide a self-addressed appropriately stamped envelope, or TWO IRCS. The editors reserve the right to reject any item, or to ask for changes to be made. Please write a few lines for the contributors' page. Contributions should be sent to: 92 Perrymans Farm Road, Ilford, Essex, IG2 7NN.
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Editorial

It was a damn good film. It just wasn't LOR. And since no possible LOR film could wholly please TS members, (who would then have to admit the unthinkable – that someone *not* in the Tolkien business understood Tolkien as well as we do) we got just what we wanted.

But the film is not faultless. It encourages popular misconceptions, such as Sauron's inability to take human form. There is internal inconsistency, too, and some interesting results deriving from the necessary compression. Missed out entirely were the 17 years between the party and Frodo's leaving. But the director felt it necessary to age Bilbo, in the few weeks he spent in Rivendell without the ring, from 50 to 111. Not much of a recommendation of Rivendell as 'a perfect place', especially since Gollum, as we see in Moria, is still perfectly well and vigorous after 60 years without the ring.

Again, because of the rearrangement of events at Amon Sul, Aragorn is made to give up on accompanying Frodo, to abandon him, not once but twice, when he has him right there in front of him. Very unlike Aragorn. Jackson has made an attempt at reconciling this by having Frodo tar Aragorn with the Boromir brush. "How will you protect me from yourself?" asks Frodo, presaging an obsession with doubts about self-knowledge that is in fact a hallmark of our own age, and even then, only among media folk, who simply can't leave the subject alone. Presumably it reflects their own self-obsession.

There are moments of high hilarity. Boromir jumps right out of his character and suddenly becomes a grief counsellor after Moria, pleading for the hobbits to be 'given a moment'. And in his death scene is twice shot in the shoulder, then in the chest, but ends up with an arrow in the midriff. And how did Gandalf get his staff back (in Rivendell) after Saruman stole it? Why on earth were Merry and Pippin stealing vegetables? Is there a black market in carrots? Presumably there has been a basic misunderstanding of the mushrooms thing; Frodo's antics have been credited to his cousins, and the fact that in the book he was just a boy at the time has been missed entirely. And I had hoped that they would manage to avoid that much lampooned cliché, where someone is killed and another member of the cast is seen to scream "NOOOOOooo...." in an agonised slow motion burst of pointless denial. But they didn't avoid it; Frodo did the honours.

The female side of the cast does well out of the revisions. Obviously the signposting of the Sam-Rosie romance is so that Rosie can be revealed later as the Mouth of Sauron. Arwen, though, is quite a gal. She is credited with bringing down the river on the Black Riders. And very generous with her favours. Only her first date with Frodo, and already she's giving him her life force. Admittedly it's surplus to requirements since she's going to lose it anyway – but suppose she changed her mind, or Aragorn was killed? As I say, very generous.

It seems generally agreed that its imagery was one of the film's strong points, and I can't disagree. Certainly its beauty owed a lot to Lee, Howe and Nasmith, directly or indirectly. And there were genuflections to Bakshi, too; the realisations of the scenes where the hobbits hide from the sniffing black rider, and at Bree where the riders attempt to kill the hobbits, were identical to Bakshi's version.

The selling of the image and the image-branded products that accompanied the film wasn't so happy. My favourite was the use of what became the most familiar image, reproduced here on page 26, the one used for the film, the CD, etc etc ... in Sainsbury's where I found it being used to sell a brand of cornflakes that was in any case on offer for 99p. Somehow it seemed to sum up the whole exercise. The professor would have been proud.

Most reviewers seem to agree that whatever the merits of the original book, or the faithfulness of the adaptation, Peter Jackson's film, in the words of Philip Matthews in his perceptive *Listener* review of the work as a fantasy action movie, leaves one 'overpowered, entranced, dazzled, exhausted'. Matthews points out the irony in the title of Lucas's 'Attack of the clones' and how weakly its portrayal of new worlds compares to its distant progenitor, LOR.

Notable among the millions of words of comment is a review by Robert W. Butler and John Mark Eberhart in the *Boston Globe* that applauds the 'smart' moviemakers that beefed up the female roles in the film, primarily, of course, Arwen's. Linda Voights (professor of Medieval and Old English literature at the University of Missouri-Kansas City) is quoted as asserting that LOR has few female characters because (a) Tolkien lived in a homosocial world, (b) Oxbridge was a boys' club where men and women lived separate lives, (c) that Tolkien admired literature such as *Beowulf* that was androcentric; and further that 'C S Lewis's problems with women derive from the same cause'. Quite apart from the stunning shallowness of this 3rd-form psychology, to state that something is true because it might be true is not scholarship, it is pyramid selling, and of merely accidental value to rational thought. And the last comment, which would probably be an actionable libel if CSL were still alive, is using a mere speculation about one man to implicate them both.

Let us hope these are misquotes. Ignorance on such a scale from a scholar is offensive. Guesses of this type may sometimes be right, but reflect no merit on the guesser.

Butler and Eberhart go on to say that Voigts' guess is supported by women such as Vera Chapman, the 'secretary and founder of the British Tolkien Society', whom they quote from Daniel Grotta's biography, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Architect of Middle-earth*. "Tolkien just wasn't interested in females. He had a story to tell and the female element just wasn't necessary, except towards the end when his children, for whom he was writing, were growing up." Did Vera Chapman *really* say that JRRT wrote everything for his children, and that he wrote in the female characters later because in their teenage years his children needed to see sexual, or at least female, content? I don't think so. In any case it doesn't support anything, except the growing conviction that the journalists involved were doing a hack job. Fortunately the sheer volume of new and recycled criticism has ensured that no one will ever take any notice of a single word of it.

I suppose it was inevitable that the film would provide the opportunity for tattered old themes to be re-examined, notably, Tolkien's supposed dislike of women. (For the benefit of anyone reading this in the year 2020, here in 2002 that's a capital offence, equivalent to saying that you dislike God.) Criticism of this kind has two objectives – to suggest that the artist's work is defective because of something it does not contain that the critic wants it to: and to suggest that the artist is himself defective because of what his art reveals about him. The first is easily dismissed – although that doesn't prevent it being often the subject of conference papers. The artist makes his own choices, then exposes what he has done to public judgement. To criticise him for what he has *not* presented to the public is as ludicrous as criticising The Virgin on the Rocks because it doesn't come with a musical accompaniment.

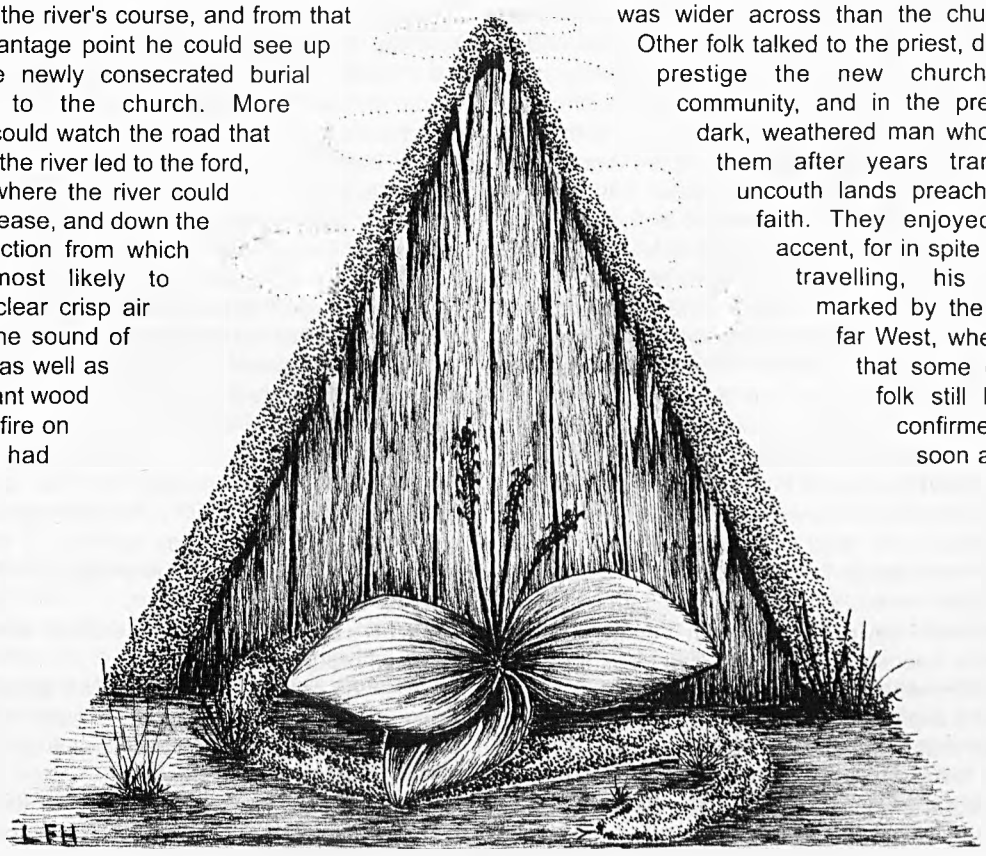
It is the second objective that is more insidious, and pretty well impossible to reverse. About the least damage one can hope for in this context is the consciously arrogant judgement summed up in the idea that JRRT was 'no more of a misogynist than was typical of the age'. This kind of history-patronising nonsense reveals the commentator's inability to understand the era he writes about, and engenders the rather queasy feeling that comes from recognising his complacent faith in the superiority of his own judgement, or the judgement of his age; and it's cowardly, because it is safe – the past cannot defend itself. Not one of these critics will ever have to be measured against the minds of the past that he passes judgement on and believes himself superior to.

The Nine Herbs Charm

Lynn Forest-Hill

'A furore normanorum libera nos domine!' [2]

... the words of the priest rang through cold air. Outside on the beacon hill the last wisps of smoke from the great fires of Yule, of Imbole, the old festival of midwinter and returning light, drifted in the clear ftosty morning light. In the church the priest's words hung over the congregation, a shield and protection. From all the surrounding countryside folk had come on Yuletide morning, that he called Christ's mass, to worship and take comfort. Farmers from outlying steadings and people from the little burgh by the river were gathered in the impressive space of the new stone minster which dominated the landscape between the burgh and the hill. The building of the church had been a labour of devotion for some of the folk, but not for all. There were still some who continued to reject what they spoke of as the new ways. To them the priest's rituals remained alien, and they clung to old traditions and beliefs. Nevertheless, at this time anything that might defended them from the attacks which had come upon other little towns and villages closer to the sea earned their participation. So it was not dislike of the new ways which prevented everyone from being in the congregation that day, for even the most reluctant were prepared to participate in rituals which might give protection. The only reason that one man was missing was the need the community felt, even in that cold dead season, to keep a watch on the river. Accordingly, one of the young men was at that moment standing with his hand resting on the mane of the horse he had been lent, looking across withered water- meadows on the other side of the river to the dense black wall of the great forest beyond. His watching place was a spit of land which formed part of a bow in the river's course, and from that slightly raised vantage point he could see up the river to the newly consecrated burial ground close to the church. More importantly, he could watch the road that on both sides of the river led to the ford, the only place where the river could be crossed with ease, and down the river in the direction from which danger was most likely to approach. The clear crisp air carried to him the sound of the church bell, as well as the smell of distant wood smoke from the fire on the hill which had blazed all night, to the delight of the folk, and the dismay of the priest. The bell signalled that the Yuletide devotion was ending, the smell of smoke - that Imbolc was over, and maybe the bell was signalling the end of the old festival too. For the whole morning Wulf, the ploughman's apprentice, had stood there by the river watching thoughtfully, and nothing had moved across the cold landscape except a few birds. Of course, everyone knew nothing would happen, the raiders did not come in the winter, but the fear was still there. So Wulf was on watch, but his thoughts were not on the dangers to his community from new faith or from Danish raiders, he was angry - the girl he loved, and who loved him, had been married to another man, and now they hardly dared glance at one another. Wulf wished seditiously that the raiders would come and kill Ea's new husband; he wished fruitlessly that the horse - whose mane he now twisted idly, the best horse in the burgh, did not belong to Ea's rich old merchant husband. The congregation in the stone minster began to move out under the great painted arch above the door. The colours over their heads were magnificent, so bright and new in the morning sun that one by one the folk stopped and looked round to admire again this addition to the status of their community. The great stone walls of the church were huge in comparison to the wooden walls of their own houses, modestly decorated now with shining green leaves and red berries of holly, and with garlands of ivy and fir. The priest disapproved of such heathen practices. Yet the trees surrounding the church towered over its roof, and it was remarked quietly, by a few, that the old sacred circle that had defined where the new burial ground should be, down by the river, was wider across than the church was long. Other folk talked to the priest, delighting in the prestige the new church gave their community, and in the presence of this dark, weathered man who had come to them after years tramping distant uncouth lands preaching the king's faith. They enjoyed his strange accent, for in spite of his years of travelling, his speech was marked by the dialect of the far West, where it was said that some of the ancient folk still lived. He had confirmed this himself soon after he arrived



when he laughed out loud as he heard the river named. It was called the Avon, "A river called 'river'!" he had chuckled, to the surprise of those who heard him. He told them then of the language of the ancient folk who lived in the mountains of the West, who had been in the land long ago, and whose language remained in the names of the landscape.

It was only slowly that the mood of festive complacency was interrupted. Folk farthest away from the church door and closest to the road heard it first, the thudding of hoof-beats, but not on the road, for the road was puddled and rutted, too uneven for any one to ride so fast. No-one who heard the sound was in any doubt about its source: the young watchman was riding back as fast as his borrowed horse would carry him, and no one was in any doubt that he rode so fast because he had seen danger approaching. Folk went running to meet him as he came pounding across the frosty pastures. They called to him 'What news, what news!' Wulf almost fell from his horse into the arms of those who surrounded him. 'Someone's coming!' he announced. 'How many?' one of the farmers asked. 'I saw someone coming!' Wulf repeated, breathlessly. 'Someone?' 'Only one?' the questions came back at him. 'Yes, yes!' he replied. In the background, close to the church, some of the women were clutching their children to them, beginning to weep, and getting close to panic, but the men closest to the pale, thin, breathless horseman began to curse him, and some even began to laugh at him. 'I told you we shouldn't send this fool.' said Fætels the shoewright. Others were more cautious, 'We must find out who is coming!' Thurspedig declared. He was Wulf's rival, Ea's husband, a well set up man, stocky and robust, and wealthy by virtue of his long years as a merchant. By this time Halig the priest had left the weeping women and joined the cluster of men standing round the panting horseman. 'What saw you, Wulf?' he asked. 'Father', Wulf replied, 'I saw someone coming, on foot, a boy, limping, coming towards the ford. Today is a feast day, no one will be coming or going on business, and I did not recognise the stranger coming up the road beside the river. If it is a runaway slave and it comes here then those from whom it flees may come here too!' The men who stood around murmured to each other but did not challenge the wise speech of the young man. In more peaceful times they would not have concerned themselves with the approach of a runaway slave, but in such troubled days harbouring the slaves of the invaders, who yearly established more winter camps and took more land, was sure to provoke raids sooner or later. No one in the crowd that had assembled around the priest and the horseman could account for the limping boy, and everyone was agreed that the leaders of the burgh should seek out this stranger and find out whether he posed any danger.

Folk from the outlying farms, fearing to be caught on their own and suspected of assisting a runaway captive of the raiders, followed the rest of the congregation back into the burgh. A moot was summoned. As the little bell rang out men disappeared into their homes and workshops, returning to the mote-stow[3] in the midst of the burgh with swords, and axes, pikes, and bows. The farmers were ready to participate, having carried with them the usual array of weapons needed to protect their families from the wolves and bears which would come out of the forest across the river if snow arrived before they got home. Boys with knives and a desire not to be left out fidgeted around the margins of the gathering and were told to go back to their mothers, but the young women who came from their houses carrying sickles and seaxes were not sent away. Not all of them were maidens. Some of those who had stood back by the church wall clutching their infants and toddlers now handed the children to older women, and took up weapons. Their eyes were no longer bright with tears of fear, but with detemiination. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, armed themselves to defend their homes and community. Meanwhile, Wulf was being listened to, because the priest had listened to him. He had got his breath back, had been given a drink, and was now part of the moot. It was agreed that while the defence of the burgh should be left to the burgh-wards Gedeorf the ploughman and Micel the smith, Wulf would ride with Wilddeor the hunter to seek out the stranger. But before they could find the source of their anxiety it found them.

Limping into the burgh past the great, unguarded, wooden gate came a small slight figure wrapped in a grimy cloak. It was impossible to say what colour the garment had been, it was so faded and covered in dirt, but it was thick and warm against the winter chill that even the noon sun could not dispel. The stranger's feet were protected from the cold by heavy leather boots but they flopped and scuffed in the mud at each step as if they were broken or too large for the feet inside and it was the sound of the boots that first alerted those standing on the outer edges of the gathering. A few heads turned together, a few pairs of eyes registering apprehension - until they registered the meagre presence of the newcomer.

'...we must send to tell the thegn,' said Treowyrtan. the carpenter, who was also the burgh-reeve. Sudden activity as the crowd parted drew his attention and halted the discussion.

'Wes *þu* hal', said the small stranger courteously, with greater confidence than might have been expected as many surrounding hands grasped weapons more tightly.[4] 'Who be you?' demanded several voices sharply. The customary hospitality of the community was overwhelmed by fear. 'My name is Seo the storyteller', said the newcomer, 'I bring tales old and new to entertain and celebrate the Yuletide, and I bring news of interest to all those who fear the invaders.' Those who heard laughed. 'What kind of a name is that?' someone shouted. The priest and the merchant came through the gathering to find out the cause of the merriment. 'It calls itself Seo!' a large, red-faced farmer laughed.

'What given name have you, wayfarer?' Halig asked more courteously, looking down at the stranger.

'That is all the name I have.' the stranger said mildly.

'Who be you? Where be you from, and why have you come here?' Thurspedig demanded briskly.

'I am a storyteller', Seofian repeated, pushing back her hood. Two long braids, shining ropes like twisted gold, fell over her shoulders. Murmurs of surprise ran back through the throng of onlookers - not that female storytellers were unknown, or even unusual, but the contrast between Seofian's wasted and filthy outward appearance and the brightness of her hair was startling. 'I bring stories this Yuletide, as I would do on any day, but I bring you a new story for this festive day.'

'Where be you from?' the merchant repeated, unused to being ignored.

'Will you hear my story?' Seofian asked back, 'It is high news and wonderful. I bring a story of the slaying of Waelgifre the leader of the sea-wolves which infest the lands to the south and west'.

Suddenly everyone wanted to hear the story. 'Is it true. Is it true?' ran the murmur round the gathering. The priest,

the merchant, the smith, and the carpenter, the leaders of the burgh, exchanged wary glances. 'How know you this?' asked Halig. 'Where heard you this news?'

'I was there.' Seofian replied. Although it was true it was not a good answer. 'You come from the sea-wolves camp?' Thurspedig demanded. 'Aye', she said. A gasp escaped the lips of all those who understood the significance of the news, and everyone had their own idea about the consequences: 'They will attack, they will come here' cried the fearful. 'We will kill them if they do!' exclaimed the more resolute.

'They will come down on us with a storm of berserkers!' the merchant cried in panic. 'Kill her and put her body on the south road so they will find her and turn back!' he added savagely.

Bystanders looked at him in astonishment. 'Calm yourself, in God's name!' protested Halig, on behalf of many.

'It is an old trick!' Thurspedig declared hotly. 'In the old time the first Anlaf dressed as a harper and went to King Athelstan's camp to kill him.' Seofian knew he was wrong, but had no the time to correct the misremembered story as the bystanders laughed now, and even Halig smiled. 'You do not think this half-starved woman has killed one of the sea-wolves, do you?' he asked.

'It doesn't matter!' Thurspedig insisted. 'If he's dead, they will want revenge and weregild. They will blame any Saxon. and we are close enough to their winter camp to be raided!'

'They come not in winter.' Halig reminded everyone loudly. 'You know that. To the thegn we will send and he will send his *fyrd*[5] to help us. By the time the sea-wolves emerge from their stinking dens at the end of the dying season we will be ready. All the men of the thegn's household together with our own force will withstand even berserkers! Do not be afraid, at this time of year they will not come.'

'They will not come - Halig has said so - and he speaks the charm that keeps them away!' cried the devout wife of the red-faced farmer fervently. Those who agreed with her began muttering: '*A furore normanorum* ...'. Before the priest could intervene Seofian raised her voice, quelling the rising commotion. 'The sea-wolves will not come! They will not seek vengeance or weregild, for the same reason that they did not kill me while I was still among them.' she declared firmly and loudly. 'Waelgifre's household is in turmoil, the *here* is fighting amongst itself for control, for the sea-wolves have declared that Waelgifre was killed by no man's hand. No signs of violence were found. He looked as though he had been poisoned but no poison could be found. He died suddenly, his body swollen and contorted but without sickness, as if bitten by a naedre,[6] but it is winter, there are no naedres abroad, and all Wotan's herbs were hung in Waelgifre's hall so naedres would not creep into the warmth.[7] Nevertheless, the sea-wolves have declared that he was killed by no man's hand but by the nine venoms!'

The panic subsided at Seofian's words, and astonished silence flowed out to the fringes of the crowd standing in the mote-stow, but not everyone was convinced. The moot began again: measures to be taken to increase the watch on the walls and on the river - the favoured route of the invaders. Somewhere close to Seofian an old woman's voice began softly muttering. Although it was constantly overwhelmed by the sound of the moot, the words she spoke were audible to Seofian because she recognised them:

'This is the herb that fought against the worm, these may defy venom, this may defy contagion ... Now may the nine herbs against nine flying evils, against nine venoms and against nine contagions ... mugwort oldest of herbs, waybread mother of herbs, camomile and nettle, thyme and fennel, lambscress and stune, with juice of crab-apple ... '[8]

'And sing this spell over each of the herbs before the salve is used.' Seofian added, finishing the charm. Heregyth, the old woman, stared at her. All around the clamour against Seofian was growing. There were calls now for her to be driven from the burgh to deflect the coming of the venoms. 'Hwæt!' cried the old woman. 'You superstitious fools! If the nine venoms come you will not be able to bargain with them as you might even with the demon-spawn sea-wolves. You will need all those who have herb-lore. I am old, Gænburga is with child, and Ea is not yet accomplished. This woman has the lore - she has the charm on her tongue. Ask her to stay!'

Heregyth's words swayed troubled minds. Every winter brought sickness, that was why years were reckoned in winters, but if the venoms were now abroad and came in force it would be worse. Many folk still looked on Seofian with suspicion, but a place was appointed for her in a corner of Heregyth's dwelling, among roots and leaves and berries, dried and hoarded against the dying season. She had felt more welcome in Waelgifre's noisy hall, and even in Werne's, but she was grateful for a bed out of the freezing night.

Seofian paid for that night's lodging with stories the folk in the burgh already knew. Seated round the fire in the burgh-reeve's substantial hall the great new story of the death of Waelgifre, Anlaf's evil lieutenant, also delighted them with images of destruction and strife among their enemies. But Seofian did not tell the folk of the fordingburgh about the single tiny red mark on Waelgifre's neck, under his mane of greying fair hair, that disclosed to her alone where poison had entered the drunken Dane. Nor did she mention the deft flick of a kindling stick that sent a small, black, curve-tailed creature tumbling unnoticed into the fire, to pass, like the sea-wolves themselves, through flame to a hero's reward.

Later, on her bed of dry heather, before the rush-lights were extinguished, she searched under her cloak, her pale mantle, and her frayed, faded gown for the small pouch that hung from a rope girdle about her waist. Her thin fingers checked its brief contents: her comb; and a piece of strange herb given to her by one of the Northmen on the ship that brought her back from the land of the Franks to the shores of the South Saxons. She had been very sick on the whale's road and one, laughing, gave her some of the herb they all used against sickness when rowing in rough weather.[9] Beneath that she found the slivers of willow bark she needed for the pain in her head. Under them the reason why she did not tell her name: a harp string, unneeded now, was tucked beside a small box of horn with a silver lid and clasp which lay on top of dried elder berries.[10] The box now held the two silver pennies given her by Waelgifre, Anlaf's cruel right hand whom she had encountered before, but while he had listened to the songs for which he paid so well the box had held the ugly, venomous means of his death.

As Halig the priest had said, the sea-wolves who lurked beyond the wooded southern hills did not come, but the fog came, dank and thick, hanging every cobweb and skeletal stem with tremulous gleaming drops. Then the rain came, sheeting down, hammering on thatch, and turning the ground to oozing mud. Within seven nights endless eaves-

drip congealed into icicles, puddles grew ice-glazed and the frost rope bound the river edges holding them still and white and treacherous. Then came snow, deep and silent, deadly as any of the venoms that came with it. Seofian stayed in the burgh through the cold grim months after Yule, tending the sick with Heregyth the cunning woman, love-lorn Ea, and Gænburga the fowler's wife, but their combined herb-lore was not enough against the flying venoms that came in force.

Spring came late that year. Seofian recited the journey charm[11] as she walked northwards from the fordingburgh on a warm spring morning, barefoot, carrying her heavy boots, through the lush grass beside the river called River in the old tongue. She remembered Halig, his learning and his ready laugh - and how his nails grew livid and his eyes watered continuously before he died of the water-elf disease;[12] and Ea - hands and feet blackened with frost-bite dying in Wulf's arms, and his face shining white, and stinking with the sudden eruption of leprosy. That caused Thurspedig's madness - he had killed Wulf for running off with Ea and bringing her back only to watch her die. Then he turned the seax on his own throat. Before that there had been Gænburga's festering thorn-prick that poisoned her blood and killed her, and her unborn baby; and all winter the red fever, that took Heregyth after taking many more; the sweating sickness, that took Treowyrtan, among others, as well as Fætels the shoewright, who had charged her a farthing to repair her boots; and the choking sickness that took most of the children. Eight, she murmured to herself, eight of nine, but then there was Waelgifre, killed by the venom of the small evil thing she had carried so carefully from the sunlit lands, intent on vengeance. Was that nine? She could not be sure, did it count if she had been the cause? 'Have I been the cause?' she wondered with a sigh. Deep in troubled contemplation she never saw the basking adder she kicked inadvertently.

Spring came and with it the sea-wolves. Flat-bottomed swan-breasted boats slid up the old river, rowed by strong arms through a warm windless morning. Near the fording place they found a burgh almost deserted and a burial ground with many new graves, but few grave goods. Young and old had been buried together. The women who had once borne arms and fought alongside their menfolk were buried, like the men, under heavy embossed shields, honoured for their youthful bravery. But the shields were only iron-bound, and there were no fine books in the church. So the invaders took what they could use and passed on heading northwards as the burgh began to fade from the memory of the land.

Three miles upstream lookouts in the prow of the leading boat suddenly saw a golden-haired woman lying by the river. Attorlaðe, Waelgrifre's successor, stopped the rowers and jumped onto the bank. Around a livid double puncture wound the woman's right ankle was so swollen she could not walk. Seofian tried to protest, put out her hands defensively, as Attorlaðe drew his plundered, silver-hilted scramasax. 'You should have stayed with us.' he remarked in his heavy accent, recognising her. The blade, so sharp it could have drawn blood from the wind, flashed above her.

'You are a good storyteller,' Attorlaðe told Seofian, after spitting out the bloody venom he had sucked from the adder-bite. 'We will take you with us' he went on as one of the others brought a poultice of bistort, woad, and sphagnum moss to dress her wound.

Seofian lay back in the boat watching the rowers. She had been grateful for the worm, having waited all winter for one of the venoms to release her. Now, after all the years, all the journeying, she was back where she started, helpless and surrounded by sea-wolves who sang and laughed, because the sun was shining, because their new leader was most eager for glory, because for now they believed in him, and so they too were not afraid, not even of the nine venoms.

References

1 The title *Nine Herbs Charm* is borrowed from an Anglo-Saxon charm in the collection known now as the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charms (Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems,* MS. Harley 585 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), pp. 119-121. The nine herbs charm tells of nine beneficial and protective herbs which oppose nine 'Venoms' or afflictions. These may be air-borne or terrestrial. The charm blends herb-lore with pagan and Christian mythology and the magic power of language. The charm's relevance to *The Lord of the Rings* seems obvious, and I have looked, without success so far, for evidence that it has been noted previously. The charm begins. 'Gemyne ðu, mucgwyrt, hwaet þu ameldodest,/ .... /Una þu hattest, yldost wyrta', and ends 'Sing þæt galdor on ælcre þara wyrta ...' Of special interest are the lines 'Nu magon þas VIIII wyrta wið nygon wuldorgeflogenum,/wið VIIII attrum and wið nygon onflygnum'. Unfortunately part of the text which follows is incomplete, but the context provided by the rest of the poem indicates that the nine herbs are able to do battle with nine flying demons, nine venoms, and nine contagions.

2 'From the fury of the Northmen deliver us 0 Lord'. This was the Anglo-Saxon prayer for protection.

3 A space in a burgh for holding assemblies.

4 'Wes pu hal' was the customary Anglo-Saxon greeting. For detailed insights into Anglo-Saxon language, its forms and uses, see Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, eds, *A Guide to Old English* (Oxford. Basil Blackwell, 1964)

5 The *fyrd* was the body of household retainers, hearth companions to a nobleman, while the *here* denoted the enemy army force.

6 The Anglo-Saxon spelling of 'adder'.

7 Wotan's use of herbs to slay the original serpent and keep out adders from houses is mentioned in the *Nine Herbs Charm*, 11. 32-5.

8 Mugwort is common in summer on rough ground and by roads. It belongs to the *artemisia* family. The Anglo-Saxon spelling of waybread is *wegbrade*. This is plantain or ribwort. 'Stune' has not been certainly identified.

9 Oswald Cockayne, ed., *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864), p. 57.

10 Elder was believed to be eficacious against scorpion venom. *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft*, p. 57.

11 This is conveniently translated in S.A.J. Bradley, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Everyman Classics (London: Dent, 1982), p. 548-9.

12 A charm for this disease is given in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*. It is mentioned also in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft,* p. xlvi, and in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 543.

J.R.R. Tolkien's Moral Imagination

Gary L. Willhite and John R.D. Bell

This paper like its subject (though less substantial) is, "a tale that grew in the telling." It grew from our discussions of what Tolkien was all about, but in fact its roots are far deeper, dating back to our separate childhoods when we both were enthralled by Tolkien's world and both weighed things in terms of the values of the Third Age of Middle Earth. It was an instrument of moral instruction for both of us, though we were perhaps unaware of that at the time.

In the field of moral education outcomes have received the most attention. As in most things, what you put into the process is directly related to what you get out of it. We would argue that an important way to introduce situations that promote non-actualized moral dilemmas and which encourage moral behaviors is the reading of fiction. This paper looks at not the fiction which we, as educators, deliver as a medium for the introduction of moral debate into the learning environment, but at the genesis of the material that we choose to use. Such an investigation poses questions about how a writer's moral views are filtered through the creative process and how these views reach us.

In this paper we consider Tolkien's moral imagination and how it shaped his writing in ways that even he could not control. The natural follow up to this, how our secondary creative process (in which we both as teenagers who first read the books on different continents and decades brought Tolkien's world to life for ourselves and how it has impacted others) shaped our individual moral outlook, is another tale. Tolkien (1980, p. 162) writes:

> "Dear Sir,' I said--'Although now long estranged,
> Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
> Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned,
> and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned;
> Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light
> through whom is splintered from a single White
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind.
> Though all the crannies of the world we filled
> with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build
> Gods and their houses out of dark and light,
> and sowed the seed of dragons--'twas our right
> (used or misused). That right has not decayed:
> we make still by the law in which we're made."

In its very nature creativity is a moral act. No-one can create, or 'sub-create', without drawing on what surrounds him/her. As a result, man's creations are always relative to the milieu that supported or surrounded their creation, or to the milieu that surrounds them and the audience of the product of the creative act. Even a decision to create something immoral, or something without reference to morals, is a moral act since it involves making a decision about values.

Morality is the value system by which an individual (or group of individuals) judges his own actions and those of his peers and by which he perceives order or pattern in his environment. Acknowledged or unacknowledged, this value system is expressed in an individual's every action, even in moments when he chooses--or believes he chooses--to act independently. Thus, a writer cannot escape what he believes, because even a conscious decision to deny it in his writing is in itself an admission of its existence.

For the purposes of this paper we shall only be concerned with positive moral values. Tolkien's imaginative writings as a creation, or as he might have it subcreation, are, by the definition above, a moral creation but they also illustrate many of the moral virtues. If we take a succinct definition of these virtues it is clear that Tolkien's writing embodies the six characteristics of a morally mature individual:

The Morally Mature Person: This person "has six major characteristics, which are derived from universal moral and democratic principles. . . .The morally mature person habitually:

1) Respects human dignity;
2) Cares about the welfare of others;
3) Integrates individual interest and social responsibilities;
4) Demonstrates integrity;
5) Reflects on moral choices; and
6) Seeks peaceful resolution to conflict. In general, then, the morally mature person understands moral principles and accepts responsibility for applying them" (ASCD Panel).

Limiting ourselves to one example for each of the above six characteristics of a morally mature person we shall illustrate the moral fabric of Tolkien's writing. They are, in order:

1) Saruman is offered the chance to regain his dignity before Gandalf casts him from the Istari (*The Two Towers*, Book III, ch. 10); respects human dignity.

2) Embodied in the nurturing and support evident in Sam's relationship with Frodo (*The Two Towers*, Book IV, ch. 1 & passim); cares about the welfare of others.

3) The entire mission for the destruction of the ring is for the good of all despite the high personal cost (*The Lord of the Rings*); integrates individual interest and social responsibilities.

4) Galadriel refuses the ring (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book II, ch. 7); demonstrates integrity.

5) The choices of Master Samwise (*The Two Towers,* Book IV, ch. 10); reflects on moral choices.

6) The actions of Frodo in the scouring of the Shire (Return of the King, Book VI, ch. 8); seeks peaceful resolution to conflict. In general, then, the morally mature person understands moral principles and accepts responsibility for applying them. It must be added that Tolkien doesn't support indiscriminate appeasement. Theoden is brought to realize that there comes a moment when you have to stand and fight for what is right (The Two Towers, Book III, ch. 6).

Having established that Tolkien's writings have a moral dimension, the question arises: how did these values find their way into the work? Should we look at Tolkien and his imagination as being explicitly moral (the creator striving to communicate a particular view of the world) or are the morals implicit (those writings unconsciously shaped by the author's experiences--as Tennyson's Ulysses character states, "I am part of all that I have met" (*Ulysses*, line 18) and drawn into his world because of who he was and what had made him that way?

It is first of all important to recognize that Tolkien's first

excursions into the myths that we know as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* were private and grew, not out of a desire to proselytize, to 'justify the ways of God to man' or to entertain in the mead hall, but out of philological fascination. Kilby (1976, pp. 48-49) records:

At King Edward's School in Birmingham, which he entered in 1903 at the age of eleven, he was introduced to Chaucer and Anglo-Saxon. One reason he was not a top scholar there was because much of his time was spent in private investigations of Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Welsh as well as early attempts to invent a language of his own.

From childhood Tolkien had been intrigued by languages. The Welsh names on the coal trucks that rumbled past the garden of one of his childhood homes in King's Heath, Birmingham, captivated him. He claimed an instant kinship with dialects of Old English in the West Midlands.

Language clearly excited Tolkien and words had for him an aesthetic impact that might more usually be associated with painting or music. His encounter with the name Earandel, which would later be incorporated into his mythology illustrates this. Tolkien (Carpenter, 1977, p. 7) wrote of reading the lines

"Eala Earandel engelabearhast
Ofer middengeard monnum sended"

that:

> I felt a curious thrill, as if something had stirred within me, half wakened from sleep. There was something remote and strange and beautiful in those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond the ancient English.

This "curious thrill" was clearly something intensely personal to Tolkien. Anglo Saxon, especially its West Midland dialect had a hold on him that went beyond intellectual curiosity and directly engaged his emotions. Tolkien (Carpenter, 1981, p. 213) states:

> I am a West-midlander by blood (and took to early West-midland Middle English as a known tongue as soon as I set eyes on it.

It was a known tongue because it offered him a link with an ancestral memory. This comment paints a picture of a man whose whole professional and imaginative life was shaped by an instinctive love of words. It is as if for Tolkien language was an integral part of the way that he identified his place in the universe. It was something handed down to him as part of his inheritance from the past and something to cling to as his father's family cut ties with his mother over her conversion to Roman Catholicism and at the time of her death to which he attributed the qualities of martyrdom (Carpenter, 1981, p. 54).

These two themes, the strength of language as a cohesive force that makes sense of the imagined and an underlying dedication to what one perceives as the truth shape Tolkien as a creator. The latter was the force which implicitly underpinned his creativity, the former the building blocks from which Middle Earth was to evolve.

Language is not a moral creation - it is a means by which moral values and ideas may be communicated. Thus a world born of words comes to us without any explicit moral intention, or the impedimenta of preexisting values. Words do not begin life with moral value, they acquire that through use and experience.

We should pause here to review this difference between the explicit and implicit workings of the imagination with reference to moral values. The imagination is a powerful tool which works both consciously and unconsciously. Work like Lowe's The Road to Xanadu have laid to rest the idea that the imagination spontaneously generates ideas but shows that it does throw up startling transmutations of the things that have touched it. Tolkien himself acknowledges this process. Carpenter (1977, p. 126) quotes Tolkien:

> One writes such a story not out of the leaves of trees still to be observed, nor by means of botany and soil-science; but it grows like a seed in the dark out of the leaf-mould of the mind: out of all that has been seen or thought or read, that has long ago been forgotten, descending into the deeps. No doubt there is much selection, as with a gardener: what one throws on one's personal compost-heap; and my mould is evidently made largely of linguistic matter.

However, the imagination can be channeled into directions in which the ideas embedded in a work are explicit. Milton's epic similes in Paradise Lost illustrate this. For example: Milton never for one second allows his imagination to gain control of his reason (whatever Blake might have felt in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [Plate 6]). In fact Blake's comment says more about how he read Milton than what Milton believed. An aspect of a work's moral impact will be an important perspective presented later in this paper.

C.S. Lewis (Hooper, 1966, pp. 46-47) tells us that he wrote the 'Narnia' books, beginning from images, then came the form, then the story and finally he arrived at the 'message'/allegorical structure. Here Lewis indicates that, although the message/moral was not explicit when his imagination first touched on the idea, by the time it reached paper it was an integral or explicit part of his design.

Here lies an important difference - proselytizing and story telling are very different to myth making. Tolkien's writings began as myth making (which he would have defended as being an expression of truth). Building on an existing myth whether you are working in the manner of Milton or Lewis is embroidering a piece of cloth on which the basic design has already been imprinted. The decision to work within that framework means that you have adopted an explicit moral position.

Think back now to Tolkien working on his myth--one which sprang from philology. This represents a new beginning, one that is free of explicit patterning and which will be fashioned by the implicit pressures of his personal "leaf mould."

Besides the linguistic mode to his creativity, Tolkien also had a grand cultural vision of what he might achieve. This was evident as early as his undergraduate days when he commented, prompted from a study of the Finnish Kalevala, to "create a mythology for England." This vision reached grand and epic proportions until years later Tolkien (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 89-90), when recollecting it, expressed it as follows:

> Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogenic to the level of romantic fairy-story--the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendor from the vast backcloths--which I could dedicate simply: to England; to my country. It should posses the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our 'air' (the clime and soil of the

A journey in the dark *Lorenzo Daniele*

> North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe; not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East), and while possessing (if I could achieve it) the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic (though it is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things), it should be 'high', purged of the gross, and fit for the more adult mind of a land long steeped in poetry. I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. Absurd.

An ambition like this suggests that explicitly Christian ethics were not at the forefront of Tolkien's mind.

Before *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien had called into being a body of myths that explained and gave a loose and growing shape to a personal universe. However this world, created by a committed Christian, makes no explicit reference to Christianity. To understand this we must look both at Tolkien's thoughts on myth and his attitude to his creation.

The Tolkien myths were not merely decorative fancies: "lies breathed through silver", as Lewis (Carpenter, 1977, p. 147) called them. In *On Fairy Stories* Tolkien suggested that man might be directly inspired by God and given "a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 92). He wrote of the tales in *The Silmarillion* that:

> They arose in my mind as 'given' things and as they came, separately, so too the links grew.....I always had the sense of recording what was already 'there' somewhere, not of inventing.

A comment like this begs discussion. When Tolkien writes of "what was already there" he could mean either that he was writing of a place that had/has an independent existence or that he was writing of something that was true, though this might be better described as one of the infinite possible representations of the absolute truth. This much is clear from Tolkien's comments: his imagined world, his myths, are firmly founded on the truth as he experienced it - God as revealed to man through his creation. This belief provides the deep structure for Tolkien's creativity and forms the prism through which his imagination was refracted. As he wrote, creating a world in which his languages could exist, he could not avoid reproducing a pattern which reflected his beliefs because if he did not his world would lack the internal coherence that makes any creation comprehensible. It is not so much that he desired an explicitly Christian universe but that as a Christian subcreator bringing into being a world which could exist he had no option than to produce one that reflected the truth without which, to such a man, any existence would be unthinkable. At no point in his writing does Tolkien indicate that his world is dedicated to God, only that his relationship to God helped shape it. Had Tolkien produced an explicitly Christian world it would have no longer been 'his' because he would no longer have been its creator. In Middle Earth Tolkien was master although he acknowledged (Tolkien, 1980, p. 163) that his role was that of a steward rather than outright lord by the term 'subcreator'.

> We make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a maker.

By subcreation Tolkien was referring to the process by which man reflects the actions of God through the creation of a credible secondary world--a process of fantasy, which Tolkien claimed demanded "a kind of Elvish craft" (Tolkien, 1980, p. 157). Such an act of creation is inherently religious and therefore moral by definition. As man recreates the role of God ("through the mind of the maker") he creates something that is a reflection of truth. Thus Tolkien would argue, and indeed did, that myths so created are true but it must be remembered that whilst the truth might be absolute its representations are infinite.

Having talked so much about myth and the deep pattern that underlies Tolkien's world, or, indeed, the world of any creator whether he wills it or not, it is important to issue a caveat about Tolkien's world and how he viewed it. Clearly its mythological elements were important to him and he was philosophically aware of where his works stood in relation to God, but when one reads his writings, even those of an episodic nature like those that are woven together into The Silmarillion, the factor that always forcibly strikes the reader is his interest in the places themselves: what they are like, their landscape and (of course) what these places were called. Tolkien may have started from myth but when you factor in language and geography it seems as if his real interest had become the place itself. It had assumed a life of its own which fed off both his imagination and places that he loved. For example, The Shire embodies the countryside of Tolkien's youth or the woods of Doriath where Beren first beheld Luthien is a recreation of deeply personal memories of places associated with the early years of his marriage.

This latter shows another strand to Tolkien's mythology which is not within the scope of this paper and that is how his mythology is in part an expression of his own experience. He wrote (Carpenter, 1981, p. 420) of this side of his mythmaking to his son, Christopher:

> It seems probable that I shall never write any ordered biography - it is against my nature, which expresses itself about things deepest felt in tales and myths.

As his world assumed a life of its own Tolkien's involvement with it changed and he became more and more the historian of his world trying to draw disparate elements together to coherence and he began to try to discover why and how things had got the way they were. By this point it was not just that his world had the underlying sense of reflecting reality but it had become to him a real place.

When Tolkien moves from myth making to story-telling his myth rests on the foundation of his philology and his world is free of explicit value. The key that unlocks this deeply personal world to the public are hobbits. In them, for the first time in his mythology, Tolkien introduces creations that are closer to allegory than myth. They embody the virtues and values that Tolkien himself endorsed. They are (arguably) the greatest literary embodiment of the spirit of the English countryside, far better than the pastoral nymphs and fauns inherited from classical myth. They fulfill perfectly Tolkien's desire to dedicate something "to England, to my country".

Without Bilbo it is clear to all except the most devoted champions of Tolkien's myths that Middle Earth would have remained Tolkien's private world. It would have grown as he aged and never been known beyond a circle of intimates.

It is ironic that Tolkien's success with a wider audience is built upon something that is so close to allegory, despite Tolkien's frequent denial of any such element in his writing. Though perhaps not surprising given his desire to dedicate something to his country. Especially so since, as we have argued, his world WAS built upon an IMPLICITLY moral

vision.

At the beginning of this paper we demonstrated that Tolkien's writing might strike the reader as being infused with a moral vision. In the intervening sections we have attempted to show how Tolkien could produce a moral work without the explicit intention of doing so. The one dimension that remains untouched is the reception that these works received from those who read them. Amongst whom we must number Tolkien the reader as opposed to Tolkien the writer.

An author cannot control the response that he elicits from his readers, (viz Blake on Milton cited above). The implicit morality of a work or creation can only(?) be judged by what impacts its audience. When, after the publication of The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien became at least partially a member of the the work's audience, and, whilst he was quick to disclaim any allegorical significance he was also open to speculation on the implicit forces which shaped his world.

It was during this period that Tolkien (Tolkien, 1980) would explain his subcreation in terms of the greater truth, which he else where described as "the law in which we're made." Tolkien (Carpenter, 1981, p. 172) wrote to Robert Murray, S.J., that The Lord of The Rings was a "fundamentally religious and Catholic work, unconsciously so at first but consciously in revision". As we discussed earlier it was inevitable that any subcreated world which would satisfy Tolkien's passion for things being right would have been founded on the truth as he saw it, especially since the term subcreation implies the writer reflecting the role of God. Tolkien (Carpenter, 1981, pp. 201-207) claimed that at times he felt he was "given" things rather than "inventing" them and after the publication of The Lord of The Rings sought to explain the significance of what he had done. Examples of this tendency would include his discussion (Carpenter Letters 201-207) on the nature of Gandalf and his return from the dead after his struggle with the balrog. In this Tolkien makes clear that Gandalf really died. He is, Tolkien "would venture to say an incarnate angel." Gandalf alone of the Istari "passes the test", sacrificing himself on the bridge. His role is to teach rather than force or dominate wills. He emerges as a minister of grace, an indication of the divine forces that guide Tolkien's world, (the same forces that saved the world from Morgoroth at the end of The Silmarillion) although Tolkien also acknowledges that his return was a plot necessity. The overall effect of the letter is to leave one feeling that despite a willingness to lean towards an acknowledgement of the books' Christian roots Tolkien would not, perhaps could not, give his work explicit Christian correspondences. The overall effect of this letter and others on similar openly Christian readings is to leave one feeling that Tolkien would not explain the mystery of his world. Perhaps this should not surprise us since, if the world was real to him, the infinite mysteries of creation would defy explanation by his finite mind. This is neatly exemplified in the same letter (Carpenter, 1981, p. 207).

> Naked I was sent back - for a brief time until my time is done' Sent back by whom and whence? (Carpenter Letters 207).

Tolkien never answers his own question. He has become more than a subcreator; he is now an historian recording real events in a real world. However, it is clear that he did not intend that Gandalf should represent any form of divinity, Jesus figure or any such allegorical correspondence.

> Gandalf faced and suffered death and came back or was sent back.....with enhanced powers. But though this may remind one of the Gospels it is not really the same thing at all. The incarnation of God is a greater thing than I would desire to write (Carpenter, 1981, p. 237).

Even when he acknowledges a Christian or Catholic influence on his writing he immediately takes a kind of intellectual evasive action.

> I was particularly interested in your remarks about Galadriel.....I think that I owe much of this character to Christian and Catholic teaching and imagination about Mary but actually Galadriel was a penitent (Carpenter, 1981, p. 407).

He then goes on to establish Galadriel as a being with her own existence. He never seems comfortable admitting to more than an implicit link between his world and Christian teaching. He was probably well aware how allegorical overtones destroy the fantasy and creative coherence of an imaginary world: something any child who has ever felt cheated on discovering that Aslan in Lewis' Narnia books is not a real lion but a symbol, could tell you about.

Tolkien's hints of explicit Christian intention seem to smack of wisdom after the event. Tolkien had been busy in his own world for some forty years before the letters cited above were written. He was aware of the relationship between his creative impulse and God but was rather more involved in making sense of his own world than seeking direct correspondences. His obsessions were with the details of things temporal, like languages and geography, rather than things spiritual. The explicit links are those he made after the fact, and significantly after others had begun to find significances less to his liking and hence his frequent denunciations of allegory.

It might be helpful to see Tolkien's situation as analogous to Plato's Myth of the Cave. He was intellectually aware that the world he had created in painstaking detail was in fact merely a shadow of the true creation, but over the years he had become so captivated by the shadows that he had been more than satisfied with allowing them to run their own course, secure in the knowledge that they had a true foundation--because he had a true foundation. At the time of composition Tolkien was perhaps more caught up in being god in his own universe than modeling himself upon God's actions in this world. The latter informs the former but it is not explicit.

Tolkien's creative habits support the view that his imagination was not explicitly Christian. Despite his painstaking attitude to creating a coherent world, much of the coherence was the result of what might be termed retrospective creativity. He would follow an idea that had emerged from his leaf-mould, (although at times it's more fun to think of his mind as being like Barliman Butterbur's: "a lumber room: things wanted always buried"). Sometimes it would be a name, at others a plot device or new word and then he would stop all forward progress and try to validate, within his overall scheme of things, what he had just brought to life. Even with his early languages Tolkien (Carpenter, 1977, p. 37) worked backwards. He would:

> posit the hypothetical earlier words which he was finding necessary for invention by means of an organized historical system.

Carpenter charts this tendency to justify the present be

tinkering with the past through Tolkien's writing and shows how, as his world became more and more real to him, Tolkien would approach problems in the story or names which had suddenly come about because they sounded right "with the attitude, 'What does this mean? I must find out'" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 94).

Thus in a way Tolkien had no ultimate meaning or message to satisfy, only his own passion for a world that made sense. Of course to a Christian it only made sense if it reflected a Christian truth, but that was understood from the beginning and didn't need revalidation at every turn. Tolkien's passion for coherence is illustrated in writings like those published as Unfinished Tales. For example The Quest of Erebor shows him going to some length to explain away the apparent illogicalities of the plot of The Hobbit so that it would fit into the later structures that grew out of it. In fact, many of the pieces in Unfinished Tales have the quality of notes written by an 'omniscient Tolkien' to 'Tolkien the audience' or reader of his history.

In *The Lord of the Rings* Middle Earth grew to meet Tolkien's needs as narrator and creator rather than explicit moralist. "The tale that grew in the telling" (Prologue The Lord of the Rings) drew on his earlier work and threw up new surprises. In a letter to W H Auden Tolkien wrote:

> I met a lot of things along the way that astonished me. Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree. Strider sitting there in the corner at the inn was a shock and I had no more idea who he was than Frodo. The Mines of Moria had been a mere name; and of Lothlorien no word had reached my mortal ears until I came there. Far away I knew there were Horselords on the confines of an ancient kingdom of men, but Fangorn Forest was an unforeseen adventure. I had never heard of Eorl nor of the Stewards of Gondor. Most disquieting of all, Saruman had not been revealed to me, and I was as mystified as Frodo at Gandalf's failure to appear on September 22 (Quoted as epigraph to *The Return Of The Shadow).*

Although his work is not explicitly Christian, he was writing, as we observed at the beginning of this paper, a work with moral dimensions. As the seriousness of the work grew from Hobbit travelogue to heroic adventure the reader is presented, not with just incident and detail, but with a series of moral climaxes where one or another of the characters is faced by a moral decision. In many ways this is in keeping with the epic tone of the work after the journey to Rivendell. These dilemmas are, however, presented in secular form without reference to a divinely imposed code of conduct. The values by which the characters are judged by their peers and by the readers are clearly those of the Christian tradition. The book's moral centre is firmly established. When Eomer asks how a man is to judge in those difficult times Aragorn is unequivocal in his response.

> As he has ever judged. Good and evil have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another thing among men. It is a man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house (*The Two Towers*, 41).

It is the simplicity of doing what everyone from a Christian tradition or culture knows to be right that lies at the heart of *The Lord of The Rings* as a moral work. The work and world have an implicit moral centre that calls to the basic human desire to make order out of chaos (in the face of non-sentient nature which always moves towards entropy). This springs from the narrative. It doesn't come from a desire to point this truth out to us. As a subcreator, Tolkien is simply performing the task of holding a prism up to nature. What we see is a great educational quality: its importance is all "constructivist" in lesson designs. This is one of the fascinations of his mythmaking.

That it should seem familiar is inescapable - such is the nature of creativity - but this does not make *The Lord of The Rings* a religious work *per se*. In the end Tolkien's oeuvre says more about life than it does about God. It is very much a temporal work about failure and fading rather than triumph. All the great triumphant moments, the eucatastrophies, are preludes to the demise of the Elves, Tolkien's first born and most beloved creations. Unlike the Gospels, Tolkien's tales are, at their deepest level, lamenting the passing of an old order. Like the music of Mozart the surface is triumph and joy but beneath all this lies the sadness of existence. At the end of the Lord of The Rings triumph only further alienates man from those who know of bliss.

The sense of the losses induced by progress and victory bought at a high cost were clearly strong influences in Tolkien's life as a reading of his biography and letters reveal. These exert a strong influence on the work but like the religious content remain implicit. They lie beneath the account of a world which to Tolkien had become like Adam's dream in Eden: he awoke to find it real.

However once Tolkien's world had become a public one the minds of new creators could take over. The readers recreate Tolkien's world for themselves; if they never open the book, never crack the spine, it remains lifeless to them. They give the world life, bringing their leaf mould to Tolkien's and producing something that reflects their imaginations and leanings. To some readers their version of Tolkien's world may be explicitly Christian, however not to the author's of this paper. Once a book has been written it no longer belongs to the author but to each individual reader according to his or her perspective. As Tolkien states in a letter to Carole Batten-Phelps (Autumn 1971) when questioned about 'a sanity and sanctity' in *The Lord of The Rings:*

> If sanctity inhabits his [a writer's] world or as a pervading light illumines it then it does not come from him but through him. And neither of you would perceive it in these terms unless it was with you also. . . . Of course *The Lord of the Rings* does not belong to me. It has been brought forth and must now go its appointed way in the world. . .

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Tolkien's Marian vision of Middle-earth

Donald P. Richmond

"And now thy very face and form, dear Mother, speak to us of the Eternal...O harbinger of day! O hope of the pilgrim! Lead us still as thou hast led; in the dark night, across the bleak wilderness, guide us on to our Lord Jesus, guide us home."[1]

John Henry Newman

When the results of the 1997 Waterstone's poll determined J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to be the " greatest book of the century,"[2] it came as no surprise to its millions of devoted readers. Although the books do have some shortcomings, shortcomings that even C. S. Lewis (one of the *Rings* greatest advocates) acknowledged[3], they are highly readable and redemptive texts that bear repeated readings. They are, according to one commentator, " richer and deeper than many books more carefully crafted by shallow men."[4]

One shortcoming, either real or perceived, that might be observed by those who are more sensitive to feminist issues is that Tolkien's epic is dominated by masculine figures. Feminine figures rarely appear or play a critical role in the fortunes of Middle-earth. In contrast to this, my reflections upon Tolkien's life work[5] elicit an entirely different response. Instead of being dominantly masculine, I understand the text to have an almost permeable feminine vision which, when interpreted theologically, I deem to be a Marian vision. Like Sir Gawain who " on the inner side of his shield her image depainted, / that when he cast his eyes thither his courage never failed"[6], Tolkien was guided by Feminine/Marian inspiration. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has a creative and redemptive feminine perspective that must not be minimised or lost.

The feminine vision overlooking the entire corpus of the *Rings* trilogy becomes apparent when we appreciate the role that Beren and Luthien[7] played in the life of Tolkien himself, in *The Lord of the Rings* generally, and regarding certain characters within the text specifically. This position, although my emphasis differs from that of Caldecott[8], is reinforced by Tolkien when he writes " [Beren and Luthien are] at the very core of...*The Lord of the Rings*."[9] Luthien, like the Blessed Mother/Blessed Virgin for each one of us, represents the feminine – and, in fact, redemptive[10] – love and light inspiring Beren on his quest. The figures of Aragorn and Arwen, key figures in *The Lord of the Rings*, are similarly patterned.[11] Frodo, a crucial character in the Rings, finds similar, although non-romantic (in the current sense of the word "romantic"), inspiration in Galadriel (more later).

This concept of the feminine love and light is not exclusive to Tolkien's work. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where the parallels between the figure of Beatrice and the Blessed Virgin must not be underestimated, bear a like (albeit less subtle) vision. And, as shall be seen, Tolkien's subtler vision does not in any way diminish, but enhances, the hope and scope of his message. Does the lesser role of Our Lady in the plan of salvation in any way diminish her influence over the entire corpus of Roman Catholic theology?

Four events or orientations influenced the writing of the *Rings*. These are: the death of Tolkien's mother when he was very young; his devotion to Mother Church; his dedication to the Blessed Mother/Blessed Virgin and Tolkien's domestication by Edith, his wife and his Luthien.[12] Together, these constitute the sociopsycopneumatic underpinnings of the feminine vision inspiring and guiding Tolkien's texts.

Tolkien's mother died when he was very young.[13] Tolkien considered her death to be martyrdom for her Catholic faith, and a chief reason why he entered Mother Church.[14] Joseph Pearce, author of Tolkien: Man and Myth (among many other noteworthy texts about leading literary figures) writes " Tolkien's relationship with his mother was very important, potent if not omnipotent...she accompanied him from the cradle to the grave..." [15] It is in no way flippant to suggest that this death, and the sense of loss resulting from it, constitute the intrapersonal grist inspiring both the writing and subtle feminine flavor of Tolkien's texts.

The transfer of affection from his lost mother to the living arms of Mother Church is not easily missed. Pearce, quoting Tolkien's biographer Humphrey Carpenter, draws attention to this distinct possibility.[16] Having worked in the field of psychology and counselling for almost twenty years, I do not find such a suggestion to be either exaggerated or sacrilegious. Fathers and mothers do influence our impressions, for good and ill, of God and the Blessed Mother. Tolkien's dedication to the Roman Catholic Church cannot be underestimated.

Tolkien's dedication to Our Lady is also amply demonstrated. After the death of his beloved mother, Tolkien was raised by a priest who knew Cardinal John Henry Newman (quoted at the beginning of this article). Undoubtedly this priest, like Newman, shared a similar devotion to the Blessed Mother and communicated this devotion to his charge. Tolkien, in his *Letters*[17], suggested that all of his perceptions of beauty and majesty were rooted in Our Lady. George Sayer, in his chapter from Pearce's *Celebration*, writes that Tolkien "attributed anything that was good or beautiful in his writing to the influence of Our Lady."[18] The bridge between the affection that Tolkien had for his mother, Mother Church, and the Blessed Mother is critical to who Tolkien was, and what Tolkien wrote.

Tolkien was a very domesticated man. C.S. Lewis referred to Tolkien as the most married man that he knew.[19] Home was his haven and the source of his inspiration.[20] The place where Tolkien was " tamed" , where he truly " lived" , were the sociopsychopneumatically linked " homes" of mother-love, Mother Church, the Blessed Mother and Edith – his Luthien and the mother of their children. These constitute the feminine " compass" guiding the *Rings* in its writing as well as (through certain feminine characters within his texts) the entire landscape of Middle-earth. While, possibly, the characters

may indeed be dominantly masculine, the context – its writer, writing and ethos – is feminine in focus. One could say that Tolkien, using the literary genre of Epic Romance that is structurally masculine, nevertheless communicates a substantially feminine vision.

However, not withstanding this feminine emphasis, an emphasis that is profound in its subtlety, it can be appreciated how some readers might perceive Tolkien's Middle-earth as being dominantly masculine. It could be capably argued that feminine figures rarely appear in Tolkien's epic, and that the roles played by feminine figures are idealised and ethereal. While to some extent this may be an accurate evaluation, I would ask the reader to consider whether the ethereal and ideal do not constitute the essential and fundamental substance of our world. Does not " heaven" constitute the ideal structure of what " earth" should be? Is not the spiritual and social structure of humanity to reflect the nature of the Trinity? Are we not to aspire to the hailed grace of the Blessed Mother? Charles Williams, an acquaintance of Tolkien and friend of C.S. Lewis, suggested that flesh speaks as Spirit speaks, but Spirit knows of what it speaks[21]. The ideal and the ethereal are the substantial structures upon which our world, and Middle-earth, are constructed.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches, as well as advocates, the status of Our Lady as co-redeemer. It was She who gave us Our Lord – the Bread of Life and the Light of the World. She who was " full of grace" (in all that these words theologically and practically imply), the " Second Eve" , said the sub-ultimate " yes" to God[22] and by doing so gave us " Emmanuel" who is " God with us." [23] Can any other part, except that which was fulfilled by Our Lord, be conceived? Not likely! With this " yes" heaven and earth, temporal and eternal, God and humanity, ethereal and practical are forever joined. Apart from the King, only the Queen plays such a noble role.

This emphasis permeates Tolkien's world. Tolkien's feminine vision of Middle-earth mirrors the noble emphasis given Our Lady in Catholic theology. Consider the crucial feminine figures of Middle-earth. Galadriel first appears in The Fellowship of the Ring when she assists the company on their perilous journey. It is stated that " [t]here is in her...no evil." [24] Moreover she provides the fellowship with both light to combat the darkness[25] and a portion of her garden without stain[26] in order to renew the earth after the defeat of the great evil. This is beautifully described in Tolkien's final volume, *The Return of the King*.[27] Furthermore, apart from this, another woman (Eowyn) plays a critical role in the war of the ring when she slays " the great beast." [28]

Reviewing these details, we can readily appreciate the biblical/theological pattern of redemption. The connections between the feminine figures and Our Lady – of light with Christ, of the first earth (Eden/Lorien) with the renewed earth after the last great battle and the death of " the great beast" with the final victory over the Evil One as promised to Eve and (through her posterity) fulfilled through Our Lady[29] – easily fit the themes of creation, fall, redemption and consummation[30] as found in the bible. Our Lady gave us Our Lord, the Light of the world. She is the vision that has guided a multitude of weary souls through the purgatory of this earth. Unstained, through her Son, she defeats " the great beast" and returns us to the garden that was lost. The feminine in Middle-earth, from the creation of the company of the ring to the consummation of their dreams in *The Return of the King*, parallels the redemptive roles that Our Lady fulfilled in salvation history.

What are the practical implications of Tolkien's texts? Most immediately, at least from my perspective, they are not sexist texts. In fact, as has been hopefully demonstrated, they display a permeable feminine presence that demonstrates a very high, in fact salvific, estimation of women. But, more appropriate to the practical applications of Tolkien's world view, what can be suggested? Women have had, and currently do have, a critical role in salvation history. It is to such a high calling that women and men must equally aspire. Together, and only together in both the Church and the world, can we achieve the intention of God and return to the Garden of which Lorien is only a pale but beautiful shadow.

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21. Unfortunately I have forgotten the source for this concept except to say that it was by Williams
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The Hamletian Hobbit

Laura Marples

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In a letter to Father Robert Murray in 1953, Tolkien explained that *The Lord Of The Rings* was "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision." He also stressed that as a result "the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism" rather than manifested through "cults or practices", (one exception, of course, being the Standing Silence observed by Faramir and his men in Ithilien). This religious symbolism, though abundantly clear, is, however, remarkably subtle and specific. Whilst it would be difficult to imagine a clearer image of cross-carrying than the increasingly dolorous path of the Ringbearer towards Mount Doom, to think of Frodo as a Christ-figure is slightly misleading. Quite apart from the fact that, as Shippey points out, he is not the son of God, he is in no conceivable way a guru or a teacher of men, although he does display some qualities of quiet leadership and is a skilled and diplomatic speaker. I personally see Frodo's predicament, and in some ways also his character, as being far more Hamletian than Christlike. I say this not because I believe this was a conscious design on the part of Tolkien, but because I see striking similarities between the "quests" of both characters, and also because I feel that it emphasises just how much of an Everyman figure Frodo is. Indeed, what lies at the core of Frodo's special quality is that, as Verlyn Flieger has stated, he is "the most ordinary and the most extraordinary of the hobbits". To put it another way, Frodo, like Hamlet, is both an Everyman and a Prince. He is the quiet, diminutive and unassuming figure "expected to find a path where the great ones could not go, or dared not", yet at the same time he is a "jewel among hobbits" – the accomplished linguist immediately recognised by Gildor – the one singled out from all his people in the discernment of both Bilbo and Gandalf, and the one in whom Gandalf perceives the shining transparency (later also noticed by Sam) which causes him to muse that "he may become like a glass filled with a clear light for eyes to see that can." Frodo is perhaps a type of Christ, but no more so than Baldr or Prometheus. Perhaps the closest definition of him, in terms of saintliness, would be as an anticipation of a Christian knight – and a knight, one might say, beaten down and eventually 'reduced' to a mortified saint.

Clichés set aside, as well as both being 'scholars'", sacrificial figures, and heroic 'failures', both Frodo and Hamlet are called upon to 'save the world' since, broadly speaking, Elsinore is the world, as far as the play of *Hamlet* is concerned, and the eponymous Prince is commanded to cleanse it, just as the Ringbearer is 'commanded' to enter Mordor with the Ring. Crudely put, whilst Frodo must (attempt to) dispense with something, Hamlet must dispense with someone, – and the Ruling Ring and Claudius are each in some way personified as the immediate evil from which each 'world' must be delivered. Still more crucial, however, is the fact that, whilst Frodo goes on a journey in a much more literal sense than Hamlet does, like Hamlet, he is risking far more than his life; it is also his soul that is at stake. When Hamlet cries out against the burden which is laid upon him by his father's ghost, he utters the words "O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? And shall I couple hell?" – in other words, must he join himself to hell, become a murderer himself, in order to avenge his father's death. Frodo too makes a clear statement of his understanding of the situation he is in when he says to Gandalf "I suppose I must keep the Ring and guard it, at least for the moment, whatever it may do to me." Although it is a case in point when Frodo actually assumes the responsibility of bearing the Ring to its destruction, it seems quite clear that he really seals his fate before he leaves Bag End – his intimation that "I should like to save the Shire, if I could" has led to musings such as "[Bilbo] went to gain a treasure, but I go to lose one, and not to return, as far as I can see." Moreover, it seems highly unlikely that Frodo would go to the considerable trouble of selling his home if this were not also an act of renunciation and an acceptance of his vocation – in other words, a way of symbolically 'letting go' – just as Bilbo gave away many presents at his last birthday party in the Shire – primarily, by his own account, as a means of making it easier to give up the Ring itself.

Dover Wilson states that, in the case of *Hamlet*, "Shakespeare adds more to the burden that the hero has to bear, until we feel that he must break beneath it." If we expect Frodo to walk through ever-increasing torment to Mordor, with the Ring, yet without being broken and corrupted by it, is that not rather like the Ghost saying to Hamlet "Taint not thy mind" whilst simultaneously commanding him to commit murder? The Wise at Rivendell do not even appear to make such a stipulation. Elrond's words to the Company before they set out are "On [Frodo] alone is any charge laid: neither to cast away the Ring, nor to deliver it to any servant of the Enemy nor indeed to let any handle it, save members of the Company, and of the Council, and only then in gravest need." Do the Wise then know that wilful destruction of the Ring will be impossible for Frodo? Is this in part what Elrond intimates when he states that "how your task is to be achieved I do not know"? He has seen Isildur fail to destroy the Ring, or at least elect to do otherwise. Although they do not explicitly state this, it appears that they are relying on other forces than Frodo's will alone. And Frodo himself clearly doubts his own abilities to complete the task – although it is not always clear in which sense he doubts them. He calls the journey "hopeless" even in Rivendell, and verbally echoes this lack of 'hope' at many stages along the road. "If we can nurse our limbs to bring us to Mount Doom", he says to Sam, "that is all we can do." But by the time he and Sam have entered Mordor, it is clear from Frodo's speeches that he knows he is incapable of giving up the Ring, let alone destroying it, and the knowledge of this lies at the core of his despair. He never speaks to his servant of the actual destruction of the Ring, as Sam realises with sudden alarm when his master is on the verge of physical collapse. To state that "There's a divinity that shapes our ends/Rough-hew them how we will" is perhaps too obvious, but Frodo clearly perceives that, whatever his own personal input to the quest, the outcome is ultimately out of his hands. Although he does "fail" to destroy the Ring himself, at least in any direct sense, to write him off as a failure seems to me about as relevant as calling *The Silmarillion* 'unfinished'. "Failure", Oscar Wilde quoted in "De Profundis", "is the formation of habits". This is quite a different situation from that in which a

protagonist is obliged to walk into temptation and is broken after long resistance and finally raped of his innocence. As T S Eliot once wrote, "For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business."

The scene at Mount Doom is, however, remarkably ambiguous. Frodo states very clearly that he chooses to keep the Ring, but on the other hand Gandalf, when asked by Frodo why Gollum did not divest himself of the Ring if it was torturing him so much, gave the answer: "He had no will left in the matter. A Ring of Power looks after itself ... it was really the Ring that left him." Of course, the Ring has a way of playing cruel tricks on its bearers before it takes a new master – as we see in "The Hobbit" when it slips off Bilbo's finger and he can be seen by the orcs when trying to escape. Bilbo, of course, escapes Isildur's fate – but the malicious wiles of the Ring are all too apparent here, and are surely partially responsible for the final "breaking" of Frodo, too. On the other hand, is Frodo also a victim of theology, sacrificed to sin because to allow him to succeed would be to virtually equate him with Christ, and thus a blasphemy? In any case, the Ring does not, Gandalf states, have exclusive choice in the matter of its "owners", and neither does Sauron. "Bilbo was meant to have the Ring, and therefore you were meant to have it", he tells Frodo. The struggle and agony are absolutely necessary for the progress and success of the quest, but so is the inner acceptance that "The readiness is all".

Frodo's story is actually presented in rather a similar way to that of Hardy's Tess. Teresa Durbeyfield, Thomas Hardy insists, is "A Pure Woman Faithfully Portrayed." Whilst Tolkien does not, within the text of "The Lord of the Rings", either intervene or argue a case for Frodo's moral purity, he allows his story to speak for itself, and unfolds it in rather a similar way. The hard facts are as follows. Tess must be seduced by d'Urberville, lie to Angel and marry him, and subsequently murder Alec when driven to her breaking point. Frodo has to give in to temptation, or be overcome, and claim the One Ring for himself at Mount Doom. What each author does is to depict the poignancy of both their fates and the horrific nature of the trials they both face – Tess at Flintcomb-Ash, Frodo on the plain of Gorgoroth. What they both do can be brutally described as sin, yet in each case the author evokes and garners the reader's pity over the course of a long and powerful narrative, and shows us how the protagonist is finally broken. Whilst Tolkien steers clear in his narrative from making any judgement of Frodo's behaviour, he does state in one of his letters that Frodo's failure is not in his opinion a "moral" one. As Angel Clare and his wife survey each other across the balustrade at The Herons with "a joylessness pitiful to see", Clare experiences a "vague consciousness" of something which later becomes clear to him – that "his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers – allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will." Hardy indeed stated that at this point he saw Tess as having drifted so far that she was beyond moral culpability. Has not something similar happened regarding Frodo's will? Are not both body and will essential and linked components of a person's machine of resistance? Tolkien himself stated that in Frodo's utter extremity, the breaking of his will was in a moral sense no different from the breaking of his body. And therefore, is Frodo's assumption of the Ring as his own really any different from Tess finally breaking and murdering Alec, or Maggie Tulliver being momentarily overcome by suffering and temptation and allowing herself to float down the river with Stephen Guest?

Frodo is of course a tragic hero, but this analogy with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* highlights the fact that whilst his sufferings and (shall we say) 'breakdown' in some ways resemble hers, he is quite definitely not a tragic hero in the sense that some of Thomas Hardy's characters are. We never hear a pre-quest Frodo talking about the world he lives in as a "blighted star", and I personally see nothing in Frodo's character to suggest that he was in normal circumstances prone to depression or even to melancholy. Two things about him are strikingly apparent. One of them is of course his vulnerability, but this only becomes apparent due to the nature of his own personal quest – a quest very different from Bilbo's, and also from Sam's. The other is how remarkably well-balanced a person he is, in spite of being orphaned in infancy and being by nature thoughtful and sensitive. I would argue that this is why he is able to resist the Ring for so long, and why his final breakdown is so heartrending. Branagh's observation of Hamlet's crisis was that "he is going through something that would knock anyone sideways"; "he would not normally be like this", and "his natural character, described so often in the play", is vibrant and curious. The clearest manifestation of Frodo's 'natural character' probably occurs in the episode where he and his two companions meet Gildor in the woods of the Shire at the very beginning of their quest. "Frodo sat, eating, drinking, and talking with delight, but his mind was chiefly on the words spoken", states Tolkien. There is something here of the joy and abandon which Hamlet temporarily feels when he meets the Players and his love of the theatre is awakened, even in the midst of his fears, dread and apprehension.

If *Hamlet* is, as Dover Wilson asserts, "the tragedy of a genius caught fast in the toils of circumstance and unable to fling free", then *The Lord of the Rings* is the tragedy of a sensitive intellectual who reaches the height of his spiritual and mental powers only to be pushed over the edge and all but completely broken. It charts the development of a naïve halfling, unsure of his own strengths, healed by Elrond whilst helpless and unconscious and 'content to lean' on the guidance of Aragorn and Gandalf, to the Ringbearer who gently turns Galadriel's challenge of temptation around and offers it back to her. It is the tragedy of the person who was only days previously conversing with Faramir of Gondor as an equal in the beautiful, wounded land of Ithilien, on matters crucial to the future of Middle-Earth, suddenly reduced to a traumatised heap on the floor of an orc-tower, and to a state of total exposure from which he never truly recovers. Moreover, once Frodo loses the Ring – as he does, temporarily, in Cirith Ungol – he never truly finds himself again – in quite a similar way to that in whch Shakespeare's Richard II loses his entire identity when he is bereft of his crown. The stark brutality of the scene in the orc-tower in a sense calls to mind the murder-scene in Richard II, and the equally shocking reaction of Frodo to Sam's disclosure that he has the Ring is the reader's first preparation for the total deracination of Frodo from his former life, and a chilling indication of how completely he is now enslaved to the Ring. Frodo's behaviour to Sam at this point is perhaps so shocking because it is so totally out of character, and in a way it is more dreadful than the scene in *The Silmarillion* when Túrin Turambar kills his best friend, Beleg – even though the consequences of Frodo's act are far less grievous. The situations are remarkably similar; both heroes are asleep or half-asleep, in captivity and suffering from trauma; Túrin slew Beleg Cuthalion "because he thought it was orcs come to torment him again."

The scene in the Tower of Cirith Ungol contains the most

Christlike image in the entire work. The orcs do not only strip Frodo – they also fight over his garments and belongings (rather like the soldiers casting dice for Christ's robe), and one of them later attempts to scourge him. This is, however, symbolic, and not an attempt on the author's part to actually equate Frodo with Christ himself. Indeed, whilst the visual impact of this scene is intensely Christian in terms of what it evokes, Frodo's words: "They stripped me of everything" echo almost exactly the repeated assertions of Odysseus when he speaks of what the (pagan, classical) gods have seen fit to do to him. Of course, when Hamlet writes to Claudius: "High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on your kingdom", his meaning is literal, but only in the sense that he is without means or 'stripped of belongings', whereas Odysseus's meaning is both wider and more metaphysical. Frodo's is both literal and metaphysical, and prefigures his almost nihilistic speeches on the plain of Gorgoroth: "No taste of food, no feel of water, ... no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the Wheel of Fire."

Moreover, although the scene in the orc-tower is almost unbearably poignant, Frodo's apparent passivity at this point also requires closer analysis. If we consider Isabella's words from *Measure for Measure:* "th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies", "I'd strip myself for death as to a bed", we are surely reminded that Frodo's is not only an enforced 'martyrdom', but one against which he repeatedly rebels. What we actually observe in Frodo's tale is not the accepting sighs of a willing martyr – either perverse or otherwise – but the quiet though rebellious throes of a hero or knight being literally hammered into a sacrificial vocation. Each time Frodo attempts a deed which is heroic in the more traditional, aggressive sense, he is rebuffed and beaten down. At Amon Sul, he stabs at the Witch-King with his barrow-blade, but is immediately wounded himself, and it is the words he cries out that do most harm to the Ringwraith. Similarly, after he stabs the troll's foot in Moria, he is practically skewered against a wall by an orc-chieftain. Indeed, he is the only one of the four hobbits who never once takes a life. He wounds the troll, threatens Gollum, hurts the ghoulish Lord of the Nazgul by invoking Elbereth, and cuts off a hand in the Barrow – but there is no face here to give a human aspect to what Frodo does at this point in the defence of his friends.

Unlike the case with many Shakespearean heroes, Frodo's loss of innocence does not come from having to accept the fact that he has taken a life, and his downfall does not begin because he has killed somebody. Both Hamlet and Romeo begin the descent of the downward parts of their arcs when they have respectively killed Polonius and Tybalt. But in contrast, Frodo's doom is sealed, or at least his downfall begins, when he is first wounded – that is, not with the first blow he deals, but the first blow he is dealt. There is to be no complete recovery – at least, not in Middle-Earth, from the initial physical violation which he suffers at Weathertop, only two weeks after leaving home.

The early Frodo is very much an energiser, but this aspect of his personality remains with him much further into the quest than is often recognised. Acknowledged (at least in song) as leader or 'Captain' by his comrades, it is Frodo who urges his friends through the Old Forest, insisting that they "can't have a nap yet", and tries to sing a song to encourage his young companions – although he too eventually succumbs to sleep and has to be rescued by Sam. But it is also Frodo who insists that he and Sam descend the Emyn Muil before nightfall, vehemently grudging any delay, since it "plays into the enemy's hands". He does not have the shrewdness of Sam or the practicality of Merry, or the cheerful abandon of Pippin – but what he does clearly have, besides his growing spiritual strength and wisdom, is a remarkable ability to inspire devotion and love in other people.

If we ask ourselves at what point Frodo is really broken, we are perhaps asking ourselves two things – one, when does he lose the ability to give up the Ring, and two, when does he lose all hope of ever being able to go on living in Middle-Earth after the Quest. It is also clear that the two things are connected – but if there was indeed a point of no return, Tolkien stresses that "few others, possibly no others of his time, would have got so far." Christopher Tolkien spoke of the Ring as being "the ultimate machine, because it [was] made for coercion." What is interesting in Tolkien's own explanation of the Ring's increasing potency and inevitable effects on the Bearer as he nears Mount Doom is that he describes the force of the Ring in language very like that which one would use to describe a law of physics. "The pressure of the Ring would reach its maximum – impossible, I should say, for anyone to resist – certainly not after long possession, months of increasing torment, and when starved and exhausted." Similarly intractable are the words: "it exacts its purpose. You must either lose it, or yourself." Both Hamlet and Frodo are consumed by their quests, and of course, the Hamletian quote that screams to be recognised is: "[He] is of the faction that is wrong'd"! Frodo at Orodruin is, according to Tolkien's *Letters*, utterly incapable, either mentally or physically of a "purposed evil". Hamlet's apology to Laertes is far more self-justifying than Frodo's hints to Sam at the Havens of what he "might have had", but Frodo's "sore distraction" and madness under the duress of Ringbearing clearly has a Hamletian parallel, and a very poignant one: "If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,/And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,/Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it./Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,/Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;/His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy."

Of course, it is difficult to state at which point Marlowe's Faustus is 'damned'. Even after signing his soul away to the Devil in his own congealing blood, the Good Angel insists that he can still be saved, before he sleeps with a succuba who appears to him as Helen of Troy. Yet well before this irrevocably damning deed, the full complexity of the way back, if there still is one, is sounded in his all too poignant words: "My heart's so hardened I cannot repent." Something has clearly died in Frodo in his last days in Mordor – this time, when Gollum threatens to dispossess him, he is "untouchable by pity" – although it is maybe due to Frodo's own foresight that he is fortunately weaponless at this point. All the same, this quotation regarding the difficulty of repentance is maybe more applicable to Saruman, when he is faced with Gandalf's offer to him to leave Orthanc and chooses to remain. Pride is certainly operational here, but it may also be that Saruman feels the hardening of his heart and the impossibility of finding a way back to good. Perhaps the post-quest Frodo sees and fears this in the ruined wizard who has perpetrated the final insult upon him – not in attempting to take his life, but in destroying his home. Frodo, who has felt the full potency and temptation of the Ring, and only escaped because it was physically wrenched away from him, is able to feel pity for the fallen Maia and grief for his fall – but acknowledges himself impotent to save him. If Frodo's suffering process begins at Weathertop, surely the violation of Bag End is 'the last twist of the knife', or at least the final symbolic reminder that "There is no real going back."

The scene in Shelob's Lair is the reader's last sight of Frodo

as an active hero. He forces back the spider's eyes with Galadriel's phial, and is the closest he ever comes to being Bilbo's successor when he cuts her web and runs through the pass – just as Bilbo, many years before, ran singing through Mirkwood, slashing the spiders' webs. The Frodo who runs through the pass, shouting in joy to be free, is the last manifestation of his attempts to rebel in physical terms against the particular fate which is laid upon him. The leading character is cut down in flight, the active physical wounding of the ogress falls to Sam, and Frodo wakes up in the Tower of Cirith Ungol and is never the same again. Sam rises, in a sense, like a phoenix from his master's ashes.

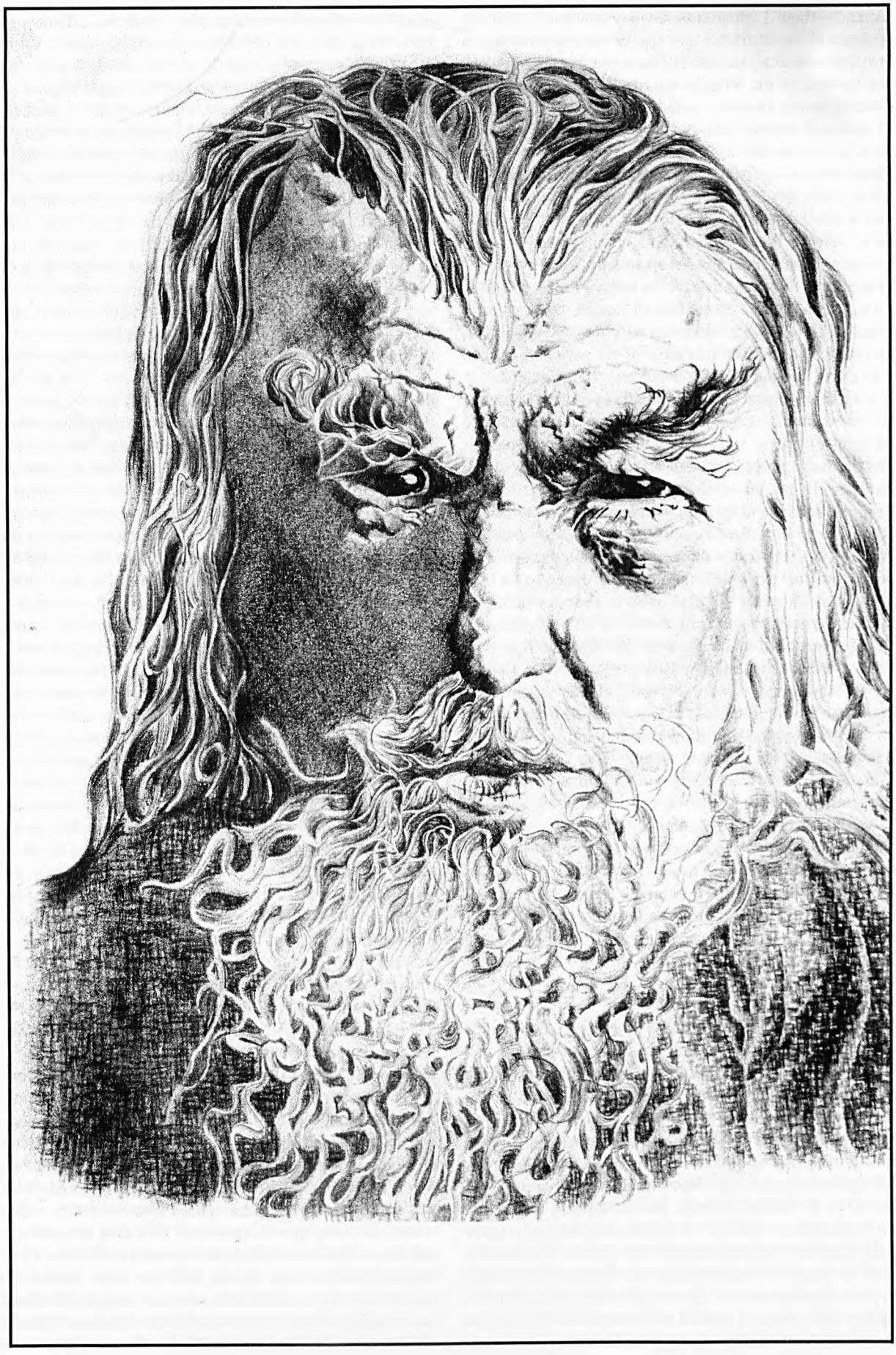
It is the very suddenness of this change in Frodo which is most striking. All that the reader has had to prepare him for the quivering wreck of a Ringbearer whom Sam finds in the Tower is his increasing sense of weariness, but Frodo is by nature fairly quiet, and has only rarely verbalised the pain and effort under which he is labouring. If we consider Frodo's state in Cirith Ungol, it is useful to remember that he was the only one of the four hobbits who did not lose his clothes in the Barrow, when he was more in control of the situation and his three companions were the helpless ones. The difference at this point brings home the complete reversal of physical power that has occurred. It also seems clear that when Faramir warns Frodo against taking the road to Cirith Ungol, he is thinking mainly of Frodo himself, and perhaps even prophetically – "I would not have you go to death or torment". This is very similar to the foresight which seems to be upon Aragorn when he says to the leader of the Fellowship: "It is not of the Ring, nor of the others, that I am thinking, but of you, Gandalf, and I say to you: "If you pass the doors of Moria, beware!" Moreover, the word used to describe Frodo's mood as he runs through the Haunted Pass is *fey* – and it seems highly unlikely that Tolkien would use such a word lightly. The original Frodo, who could have been healed in Middle-Earth, does actually die in that tunnel, and Frodo's real breaking-point occurs not at Mount Doom, but in Cirith Ungol.

"If it be now, 'tis not to come", are Hamlet's words, as he accepts and faces death. "Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be." Frodo accepts the command to enter Mordor with the words "What comes after must come" – although he does not enter it via the Black Gate, in the presence of which he utters these words. Hamlet himself is doomed – at least, once he has killed Polonius – and knows it – and, as Wilson points out, "Hamlet is fey, as heroes have been since the dawn of time." He is also solitary. Hamlet's quest, in the event, precludes any further involvement with Ophelia, and it turns out that he can trust no-one but Horatio. Frodo tries to save the Company from the Ring, and his friends from almost certain death, by absconding from Parth Galen and, of course, he is portrayed without ties either to parents, wife or betrothal, and for all Sam's care and love, Frodo is still ultimately – mentally – alone; the alienation effects of the Ring see to this. Neither is he aware of what efforts are being made – by the resurrected Gandalf and the Captains of the West, to keep the Eye away from Mordor and so aid him. Sam does not know of this either, but he is still able to draw hope from the "cry of woe and dismay" uttered by a Nazgûl as the Witch-King meets his doom, even if he does not know the precise cause of the Ringwraith's distress.

Mount Doom, at least from Frodo's point of view, is pure catharsis – and a catharsis accentuated by the fact that, for all the woundings and discomfort which he experiences throughout the saga, this is the only instance during the narrative when we actually see the hero bleed. No loss in terms of Frodo's blood has ever been reported up to now – in fact, as is so often the case with the protagonists of *Hamlet*, both his wounds have been by poison – of the Morgul knife-splinter and the bite of Shelob – and his other injuries – like the bruising after Moria – have been superficial, if painful. But Frodo's bleeding hand is accompanied by the eruption of Mount Doom, and with the free flowing of the red molten lava down the slopes of Orodruin, the reader feels a sense, albeit metaphorical, of a huge sacrificial outpouring, emblematic of a final release after months of restraint. Tectonics and geographical practicalities set aside, the flood in *The Mill On The Floss* serves a similar function metaphorically, when the heroine is finally – and temporarily – vanquished, after months of agonised temptation. Moroever – although this is an allusion to a polytheistic tradition – the image of Frodo's bleeding hand at the end of the Quest emphasises, both logically and metaphorically, what has been evident all along – that Frodo is not divine, that he is susceptible to sin, and that he is mortal and vulnerable.

As such, of course, he is believable and accessible. But he is also, for want of a better word, special, a jewel among his kind. Tolkien never tells us exactly how the Ring tempts Frodo, but Izz Huett and Marian's petition to Angel Clare on Tess's behalf should warn us against making too severe a judgement on lost battles against temptations we have never had to face: "HONOUR'D SIR – Look to your Wife if you do love her as much as she do love you. For she is sore put to by an Enemy in the shape of a Friend. Sir, there is one near her who ought to be Away. A woman should not be try'd beyond her Strength, and continual dropping will wear away a Stone – ay, more – a Diamond." And this vulnerability – the willingness, if necessary, not only to be hurt , but to fail personally for the greater good, is the core of Frodo's heroism.

What really differentiates Frodo's fate from Bilbo's or Sam's is the Norse element of *geifu* or luck. The cruelty of Fortune is well illustrated throughout world literature, and Frodo beholding the Ring as a wheel of fire during his last days in Mordor, as it almost engulfs him, might well have added "that mine own tears do scald like molten lead". It has been said of a prototype of Hamlet that "Had Fortune been as kind to him as nature", he would have rivalled the gods in deeds and wisdom. "Fortune or fate have helped you", says Gandalf to Frodo as he convalesces in Rivendell after his knife-wound – but Fortune appears to serve Frodo for as long as his Quest requires it to, and then drops him. Sam comes into contact with the Ring, and Bilbo possesses it far longer than Frodo in actual time – but neither of them is deprived – or at least not acutely – of health or longevity in the process. The real reason why Sam is Bilbo's literary successor is because, like Auoun, he is *inn mesti geifumaor* – a very lucky man – although this fact in no way diminishes either his courage or his loyalty. He wakes in Ithilien to what one critic has described as almost a vision of heaven – and to life and hope. He weeps and enthuses at the fact that "all [his] wishes have come true", and he insists that "I was born lucky, whatever my gaffer may say." This is, of course, to oversimplify Sam's story, but it is noticeable that we do not really hear of Frodo's reaction when he awakes after Mount Doom and realises that he is still alive. One of the clearest examples in world literature of the bond between the mediaeval *pegn* and *driht* or retainer and lord, it is perhaps one of the ironies of *The Lord of the Rings* that in the case of Frodo and Sam it is the retainer who inherits the earth – both in the box of Galadriel and the keys to Bag End, and the lord or master who becomes the exile – like one of the solitary figures of the Old English elegies whose tragedy is usually that of a retainer who



Gandalf *Natasha Gorton*

has lost his lord. The Seafarer remembers *hu ic geswincdagum oft prowade* – 'how I often suffered days of toil' – and the solitary figure of the Wanderer also speaks of sorrows which in some ways resemble the loneliness of the Ringbearer – trapped alone in the hell of the Ring in Mordor, and afterwards left bereft and grieving. Frodo's naturally balanced character - which I spoke of earlier – was, of course, nurtured by a certain security of social position.

When Frodo says goodbye to Sam at the Havens, his words hint at the complexity of his feelings. "I tried to save the Shire" is almost a silent appeal to Sam to 'tell my story'. Is Frodo anxious to have his tale set down, with nothing extenuated, as Othello put it? Although Frodo apparently undertakes the completion of the Red Book as a labour of love for Bilbo and as his final task upon Middle-Earth, it would appear that he is very clear in his mind as to what he intends to write in it. When Sam examines the book, he finds that most of the pages are written in "Frodo's firm flowing script" – a hand as strong as Gandalf's. This is more in the character of the quietly confident Frodo we knew at the beginning of the book - not overly confident, to be sure, in terms of taking on unknown dangers - he as much as describes himself to Gandalf as "I that am not shap'd for perilous quests" – but nonetheless calm and balanced. Perhaps Frodo's scholasticism and his skill with language are in the end all that remains to him. I here quote Wilson again, because he speaks so aptly of Hamlet in terms of his "tragic burden". He points out that the dying Hamlet has two concerns – both matters of great urgency to him. One is the succession in Denmark (in the event resolved by the arrival of Fortinbras and the "dying voice" of Hamlet), and the other is his own reputation – which, as Dover Wilson points out, "is all that remains to him in the ruin of his life". Frodo is similarly concerned with the completion of two tasks before he sails West – firstly, the securing of his legacy to Sam, and secondly, the labour of finishing – or almost finishing – the Red Book. "O God, Horatio – what a wounded name" – Frodo, unlike Tess, does not as such verbalise his feelings of unresolved guilt vis-à-vis the happenings at Mount Doom – that is to say, we never hear him exclaim anything like "How wickedly mad I was! Yet formerly I never could bear to hurt a fly or a worm", as Tess does after the murder of Alec – but on the other hand *The Lord of the Rings* is not a novel; its style and genre are, by Tolkien's assertion, those of the "heroic romance." Tolkien himself stated that Frodo's mental unrest and "unreasoning self-reproach" during his last days in Middle-Earth are quite clear to "the attentive reader".

Many critics and readers alike have pointed out that Frodo's survival is 'complicated' – as would Boromir's have been, had he not been sacrificed soon after falling prey to the lure of the Ring. Tolkien actually faces this complexity instead of killing Frodo off at Orodruin. Many critics applaud this decision, just as many disapprove, for instance, of what they term the "cop-out" ending of drowning Maggie Tulliver instead of having her face her society after having eloped – albeit subconsciously – with the lover of her own cousin. Hamlet himself dies – and after the deaths he has caused, both directly and indirectly, many would not consider it poetic justice for him to live – yet one also feels that he would no longer desire the throne of Denmark, since it is irrevocably defiled. Has Hamlet really had either the moral purity or the luck to cleanse it? Frodo does not appear to desire survival, but he is forced to face it. He in a sense returns to a defiled garden – the "rank and gross" may be weeded out of the wounded Shire, but not from Frodo's mind, and this is one reason why he has to sail – in order to be healed of such memories and for the burden of guilt to be lifted from him, as he comes on Eressea to understand – as Tolkien hinted in one of his letters – his place in the wider scheme of things.

Frodo's greatest moments are his quietest ones; not the instances when he strikes off the barrow-wight's hand, or stabs at the troll or the Nazgûl – but his times of painful resistance and his self-mastery on Amon Hen. The maturity of Tolkien's view of heroism becomes clear in *The Hobbit* when he states that the bravest thing Bilbo ever did was to walk down Smaug's tunnel alone. He also knew that being a hero could be miserable and degrading. Bilbo in the halls of the Elven-King feels the wretchedness of a burglar forced to furtively steal from the same house day after day, just as Frodo experiences the misery of "toiling and slinking", even though he possesses the courage and natural abilities to be a more traditional kind of hero. Frodo's equivalent moments are in his labours on the Stairs on the threshold of Mordor – unable as yet to encompass a concept so huge as actually reaching Mount Doom. I see no cause to doubt Frodo's characteristic sincerity when he says to the departing Faramir, called away to combat in Ithilien, "We would come with you … if my errand permitted it." Yet fate leads or drags him on a different sacrificial path, and the golden Ring which he bears illustrates how he is symbolically married to his vocation. The signs of bereavement and profound melancholy which he exhibits after the Ring's destruction are all too like what one might experience after the loss of a much beloved spouse. Moreover, as Frodo contemplates the peril of Faramir and the massacre of Osgiliath, weeping at the vainness of his mission and castigating himself once for having squandered time, he resembles the solitary Prince who rebukes himself for "a rogue and peasant slave" and envisages "The imminent death of twenty thousand men." But of course, a resolution like "My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth" would be of no use whatsoever to the Ringbearer, whose final, losing battle is, and has to be, entirely internal. In the end, he renounces the sword altogether, whereas Hamlet, 'in the last need', reclaims it, to accomplish the sacred filial duty of revenge. In the battle of the Pelennor Fields, with his barrow-blade, Merry, in a sense (and unconsciously) avenges Frodo's initial wounding by the Witch-King, as well as the death of Théoden. The role of physical leader indeed passes to him, as is seen very clearly in 'The Scouring of the Shire'; Frodo's leadership is increasingly of a purely spiritual nature.

One further point I would like to touch upon is Frodo's relationship with Sam. Although I would say that Sam's closest Shakespearean equivalent is the shrewd and faithful Kent of *King Lear*, the literary friendship which most resembles theirs is the one shared by Hamlet and Horatio. It seems strange to me that some people have difficulty in understanding Frodo and Sam's relationship, when the depth of devotion between them is far from unprecedented, either in life or literature. Sam, of course, reflects the batmen of the First World War, the heroism of which Tolkien was in awe of. But the whole poignancy of Frodo and Sam's relationship, as others have noted, lies in the fact that, like Horatio, Sam cannot save his prince, but has to watch him being slowly consumed by a kind of spiritual death and taken further and further from his aid. In Mordor, Frodo and Sam are both at their closest and their most distant. Horatio cannot bear to live when his friend dies – but, on the other hand, he is looking at the physical ruin of the dynasty of Elsinore and the imminence of foreign rule. Frodo does not have to dash a cup of poison from Sam's lips – Sam is far too much of a survivor for that – but his message at the Havens is clear and poignant – live for me, and "report my cause aright".

Kent's final, haunting words, though: "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go/My master calls me; I must not say no", could well be applied to Sam, years later, when his own time to sail West comes. The reason why the bittersweet passing of Frodo, the 'accidental' (although clearly destined) and self-reproaching hero, pierces is so deeply, is the same reason why our breath catches when, in Spielberg's film, Schindler drops his golden ring while trying to decipher the inscription inside it, and breaks down in Stern's arms, sobbing "I didn't do enough – I could have got more out – I threw away so much money; you have no idea."

My final point regarding Frodo is that, of all the characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, he is the one who most closely follows Gandalf. Although it takes various experiences to hammer Frodo into the role of the sacrificial pilgrim, his spiritual growth accelerates quite considerably after Moria, once Gandalf himself has set a precedent of self-sacrifice. It is the loss of Gandalf, and the acknowledgement that he gave himself freely, which causes Frodo to respect his counsels so deeply and to follow them with such humility, even amidst fear. Hence his almost pathological loyalty to the advice of Gandalf in his insistence, against the rationale of Sam, that they spare Gollum and pity him. Frodo cannot see the entire picture, but he knows that other forces are at work, outside the microcosm of the Ringbearer. He gives himself to the Quest as utterly as Gandalf gives up his life in Moria, and with an urgency that alarms both Sam and Gollum. United in purpose if not in motive, they do not need to utter "Let's follow, 'tis not fit thus to obey him" when, at the Black Gate, Frodo once again asserts an inclination to enter Mordor alone. "He waxes desperate with imagination", says Horatio to Marcellus as the Danish prince rushes after the ghost of his father. Sam's thoughts when Frodo, dragged by the Ring, runs towards Minas Morgul (from which the Lord of the Nazgul shortly issues) and collapses on the threshold of the bridge, are probably similar. Quite apart from the danger posed to their mission by Frodo's "sprint" towards the "luminous tower" of Minas Morgul, Sam's fears for what might be happening to Frodo's soul and sanity are perhaps paralleled by Horatio's frantic plea to his friend: "What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,/Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff … And there assume some other horrible form/Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason/And draw you into madness?" The Morgul-King, who tempts Frodo to put on the Ring, has not yet emerged from the city of the Ringwraiths, but his proximity to the Ringbearer is sufficient to parallel Horatio's fear that the "honest ghost" of *Hamlet* might be a 'devil', 'abusing' the Prince to 'damn' him. Like Horatio and Marcellus, both Gollum and Sam run after their 'master' to pull him back from what threatens him. Visually, the two scenes resemble one another; Branagh's film of *Hamlet* in particular portrays Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus at this point as a kind of 'trinity'.

Of course, Frodo to all intents and purposes joins the ranks of the Wise in the end, albeit without portfolio – although the acquisition of wisdom comes at a huge personal cost – the loss of his innocence and total exile from his own people and his former life. But his tragedy is akin to that of the elves – if they fade and pass away, so does he, as is symbolised by the increasing physical translucence which comes with his gradual ennoblement. And it is worth noting that Frodo's tragedy and loss are heightened, not undercut, by the passing of an entire Age and culture, as the most prominent figures amongst the remaining elves accompany him in the passage to the West and out of mortal spheres – just as the death of Hamlet is made more poignant, not less, by the fall of the entire house of Elsinore, in the "quarry" observed by Fortinbras.

For four hundred years, scholars have asked themselves why Hamlet delays in avenging his father's death, and even why Hamlet feigns madness, or whether or not he is indeed mad. But by the very ambiguity of his narration of the episode at Mount Doom, Tolkien has not so much betrayed Frodo to sin and failure as secured an almost comparable literary reputation for him. If Frodo's character has not simply been sacrificed at Mount Doom for the sake of plot and theological correctness, then why, ultimately, does he claim the Ring? Why, indeed, does anyone do anything? Is it for no apparent reason whatsoever, like the Ancient Mariner sealing his own lifelong guilt and remorse by senselessly killing the albatross? This, I think, was Sméagol's case, and Déagol was the bird in question, the sacrificial figure of Abel, strangled by Gollum as he joined the ranks of the Grendel-kin. But shocking as Frodo's transformation is under the power of the Ring, it is the corruption of a gentle soul pushed beyond the limits of its endurance. This is what makes him, if one feels compelled to so categorise, a tragic hero in the Greek sense rather than the Shakesperian, since his ultimate failure cannot really be pinned down to an individual character flaw. As Verlyn Flieger states in *Splintered Light*, "What has happened has happened." Perhaps Vyvyan Holland's final words from the Preface to Wilde's *De Profundis* would make an apt continuation of this: "Let us leave it at that." For Frodo's tale is not all doom and loss. This is the hobbit who stood hand in hand with Aragorn upon Cerin Amroth, sensed the blessedly pungent aura of Lothlórien, and mused that "he was in a timeless land that did not fade or change or fall into forgetfulness" and that "When he had gone and passed again into the outer world, still Frodo the wanderer from the Shire would walk there, upon the grass among elanor and niphredil". T S Eliot observed in *The Four Quartets* that "to apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time is an occupation for the saint." This is the person who looked upon Henneth Annun, "fairest of the falls of Ithilien, land of many fountains" and spoke with Faramir – a character who is in many ways his twin-soul. This was also the recovering halfling, barely saved from death or wraithdom, who looked in awe at a lady under a canopy and "saw her whom few mortals had yet seen; Arwen, daughter of Elrond, in whom it was said that the likeness of Lúthien had come on earth again." This same lady, offering him her jewel and a hope of healing, probably divines her own mother's tragedy in his eyes as she bestows her parting gifts upon him – the first person, as Tolkien pointed out, to notice the already apparent signs of post-quest unease in Frodo. She verbally encapsulates the abundant measures of joy and rare privilege and agony and pain in Frodo's life when she says to him: "wear this now in memory of Elfstone and Evenstar with whom your life has been woven!" And Arwen is right. Bilbo tells Thorin that to share in his adventures has been "more than any Baggins deserves", but Thorin's sublime benediction emphatically asserts otherwise: "No! You have more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West." Hamlet's tale shows in part the loneliness of royalty and the sacrificial responsibility of the true prince; Frodo attains wisdom, nobility and true greatness through weakness and through being broken and alienated by his duty. And Frodo's has been a mixed cup: one of pain but also of blessedness. He has been "broken by a burden of fear and horror", but, in Tolkien's own words, broken into something else – remade, as it were: a mediæval knight battered into the mould of a saint. True enough, he has "supp'd full with horrors". But he has also drunk the milk of Paradise.

The Film ... The Reviews

Jackson's Fellowship, not Tolkien's

Here it is at last. The much-heralded, much-trailed, much-anticipated, and, to some perhaps, much-apprehended Peter Jackson production of the first part of Tolkien's epic opened worldwide on December 19th, 2001, following a press preview and première in London on December 10th.

To put it at its briefest, there is a great deal that can be said about this film both for and against. There is much in it that all but the most jaded of palates would find at the least exciting and diverting; but there is also much that seems at odds with the kind of thing that Tolkien wrote. (This reflects a fundamental difficulty with a review of this kind: we each have our own 'vision' of Tolkien's invented world, and the temptation is to judge this film primarily in terms of how closely it matches that vision; yet if we each have a right to our own vision of Tolkien's world, then so does Peter Jackson, hence a critic mustn't become too subjective.) There are, then, two ways of looking at this film: first, purely as a film; second, as a filmed dramatisation of The Fellowship of the Ring by J.R.R. Tolkien. As regards the first, it is a cinematic spectacle the like of which this reviewer has never seen before: it is awesome. As regards the second, the answer has to be more complex.

As a spectacle, the film is astounding. Whereas the printed text can rely on the imagination of the reader to elaborate the often generalised descriptions of creatures or artefacts or locations, a film must have everything – clothing, weapons, buildings, landscapes, creatures, and so forth – articulated and modelled in minute detail. This necessity has here been made into a virtue, and it is certainly one area where the film scores heavily. The accumulation of special effects, especially digital and prosthetic, and the way in which they (mostly) flawlessly merge, create a whole imagined world. The result is to overpower, to 'immerse', the viewer. It's easy to see where the hundreds of millions of dollars that this production cost have gone.

But for those who are already well acquainted with the book, this film may present some problems. Fundamental to the film's approach is that the narrative line has been severely condensed – 'filleted', as one reviewer put it. A vast amount of the detail in Tolkien's stately prose has been – perhaps inevitably – dispensed with, with the result that the film sometimes seems hardly more than a headlong succession of action-sequences. This makes for compulsive viewing, but the tenor of the book is transformed. The remaining set-pieces that constitute the film's story-line tend to be considerably 'hyped-up' compared with their originals. Examples: in the book, the four hobbits cross the Brandywine by means of the Bucklebury Ferry, only to look back to see a dark shape snuffling at the far bank: in the film, they barely escape from the Black Riders, who chase them right up to the Ferry, Frodo having to jump on to the moving boat; at the Council of Elrond in the book, Frodo's offer to take the Ring to the Fire is spoken into a pregnant silence after a long discussion: in the film he has to cry it loudly to be heard above the shouting match that the Council has very quickly become; in the book, the Council of Elrond is attended by a few travellers who have met by chance (or Providence) to decide the fate of the world: in the film, it appears to be a kind of summit-meeting, attended by several representatives of Elves, Dwarves and Men apparently summoned for the purpose; in the book, Gandalf is merely 'taken and set on the pinnacle of Orthanc': in the film, he and Saruman have a sort of telekinetic fight before he is swiftly levitated in a dizzying flight up the inside of the tower of Orthanc to be imprisoned at its top; before the Door into Moria, Frodo is pulled towards the lake by a single tentacle of the Watcher in the Water before Sam severs it: in the film, Frodo is seized bodily and held aloft by the Watcher's tentacles before a furious fight by the other members of the company rescues him; the cave-troll with the party of orcs that invade the Chamber of Mazarbul in the book is stopped when Frodo stabs its foot with Sting: in the film, there is a (another) furious fight with all the company before it is killed (and besides, the film troll seems a bit large, even for a troll: in both size and looks it resembles rather the 'rancor' in 'Return of the Jedi'); the film complicates the escape from Moria by introducing much in the way of crumbling stone-work as well as an extraordinary scene where the Company are surrounded by hundreds of orcs, only for them all to flee in terror at the coming of the Balrog; in the book – but you get the picture.

The general effect is that of the book's narrative having been reduced to an episodic series of incidents, and then those incidents greatly intensified by the introduction of 'business' which was never there in the original. This appears to have been fundamental to the adaptation of the book to a film format, a matter to which we shall return.

As for the characterisation: casting 'The Lord of the Rings' has been a game played by Tolkien fans for decades and it is interesting to see how it has at last been done for real. We all, doubtless, have our own more or less detailed mental images of what Tolkien's characters should look like, and it would be quite unfair to complain about Peter Jackson's versions not being the same as one's own. But (you knew there was a 'but' coming, didn't you?) some observations may, I think, still be made. I feel that Frodo isn't quite right: Elijah Woods' performance is not unaffecting (though fairly monotone) but, at 19 to 20, surely he is too young for the part (the 'real' Frodo is just settling into comfortable middle age). The other hobbits seem even remoter from how the book (as I read it) depicts them. I have a problem, too, with Vigo Mortenssen's Aragorn: shouldn't he be distinctively taller and leaner, for a start? Elves were always going to be a problem, one which Jackson has tackled by

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The first film: a personal impression

Forty years ago, a friend told me I ought to read a book called 'The Lord of the Rings'. I did, and it changed my life; certainly I have done many things that I never would have, if I had not taken that friend's advice.

I like films as well as books, but for a long time I believed that a good film representation of Tolkien's masterpiece could never be made – probably not in my lifetime, at least. Then, at the end of the last millennium, it appeared that computer technology had at last produced the opportunity to create Middle-earth; and that someone was actually prepared to take a shot at it.

At that point I had never heard of the director (Peter Jackson), and when I learned what his previous films had been I was not exactly reassured. It was at this point that I began to haunt the fan websites, concerned to find out the worst; it was a roller-coaster ride, often exhilarating, but with ups and downs I will not go into here. Suffice to say that I was reassured on many points, chiefly because of the obvious dedication of the director, cast and crew; I might not agree with them on all points, but the film was at least being made with conviction and love.

On the eve of the performance, though, I was by no means sure what I was about to see. A good effort, presumably, some spectacular effects, an attempt to capture the essence of what Tolkien gave us. But would it? I kept telling myself not to expect too much. How could anything ever compare with the discovery and delight of that first reading, or the later pleasure of revisiting known scenes and characters? I had better not hope for great things, for then I was sure to be disappointed, and so fail to enjoy the experience at all.

Looking back now on my reaction to the film, I wonder if 'enjoy' is quite the right word. Certainly I was swept into Middle-earth immediately, with the impressive battles of the Last Alliance in the prologue,

What our own Tolkien experts thought of the film...

giving male elves a distinctive kind of hairstyle, roughly, long hair brushed back from a widow's peak at the front, with braids coming down in front of the shoulders. It serves to distinguish them from humans, but I don't know that it's an experiment which works. (Best not to pass judgement on the marvellously pointy ears of the film's hobbits and elves.)

However, much of the casting is fine. Ian Holm makes an excellent Bilbo, Ian McKellen a memorable Gandalf (although I have always imagined someone a bit stouter: Finlay Currie would have been ideal), and Christopher Lee makes a very acceptable Saruman. Sean Bean does a reasonable job of Boromir, and John Rhys-Davies makes an excellent Gimli. Orlando Bloom, given the above strictures, is good enough as Legolas. There are perhaps certain insoluble difficulties in casting what are intended as two of the most beautiful women to tread the surface of the Earth – ever – but the very presentable Liv Tyler and Cate Blanchett are not unacceptable attempts at Arwen and Galadriel. (Mind you, Jeri Ryan might do well in the latter part.... just a thought.) As we all know by now, Arwen is given a more active role than in the book, here taking over Glorfindel's task of escorting Aragorn and the hobbits to Rivendell. But I suggest that Elrond has much the same interest in his daughter's welfare as Thingol did in that of his daughter, Luthien: Arwen would never be allowed to put herself in such danger, least of all by Elrond.

Much of what this reviewer finds memorable in Tolkien's epic is the nuancing of historical detail that provides such a real-seeming perspective on the ancient past of that world, a good deal of which is lost in the film. Gone are the several poems which illuminate that past (admittedly, they would hold up they action), as well as the more specific references, for example to Morgoth: the Balrog is 'a demon of the ancient world' only, and Saruman declares the Orcs to have been derived from Elves only from unnamed 'Dark Powers'. True, there are occasional references to events in the distant past in the history of the Ring, not to mention the spectacular Prologue (spoken by Galadriel) giving the background history of the Rings of Power, but they do not have the cumulative resonance of the literary narrative. (A niggle: the Prologue gives the impression that Sauron – here, a huge, armoured figure – was defeated only by Isildur's cutting off his fingers, one bearing the Great Ring, with the hilt-shard of Narsil. Wrong. As Elrond recalls in the book, 'Sauron himself was overthrown and Isildur cut the Ring from his hand....' – i.e., Sauron was defeated first, then the Ring-finger cut off.)

The question remains, given that the decision was taken to make a film of *The Lord of the Rings* lasting eight to nine hours in total (for all three parts together), is the approach taken by Peter Jackson valid? In any event, a book as long and detailed as *The Fellowship of the Ring* would have to undergo a considerable degree of compression to fit into three hours. A more relevant question, then, would be, is such a degree of compression, whoever did it, however it was done, a valid proposition for this particular book? The answer to that must depend on what is judged more generally acceptable in the matter of transforming books into films. From the point of view of the more film-oriented among us, the answer will almost certainly be 'yes'; from the point of view of those who think that a film should exactly reflect a book, the answer will be somewhere between 'no' and 'maybe'. The difficulty with the way that Peter Jackson has done it is, I think, that too much has been taken out, and that what is left has been unnecessarily changed, so the answer to the question with which we started must, in this reviewer's opinion, I fear, be 'no'.

This is not the pedantry of a purist (a sneer term useful for dismissing objections without bothering to examine them), but I think that too much has been changed or left out to make this film a satisfactory rendition of Tolkien's epic. It's an enthralling adventure, but I don't think it's the one I first read rather longer ago now than I care to remember. Plaudits, however, must go to Peter Jackson and his crew for the obvious dedication with which they have approached their task. Their interpretation of Tolkien is sincere, and there is much that comes off well. The emphasis has been on presenting the tale as history rather than fantasy *per se*. People get properly grimy. Darkness is more convincingly presented than light – Jackson's past films might lead us to expect that in any case, but I think there is a validity to this in that Tolkien's world really does contain a good deal of darkness, deeply implicit and not readily apparent on a first reading, but there all the same.

There are still a good few niggles that this reviewer could make: there are problems with the continuity (the Great Ring seems to be on or off its chain inconsistently); Bree is far too dark and forbidding a place than can be justified; the Orcs are much larger than they should be, ditto the Balrog; it is incorrect to say that Sauron exists only as a spirit at the time the story takes place; the 'real' Aragorn would never calmly face two or three dozen Uruk-hai coming in his direction, as in the fight at the end of the film, but would get out of their way post haste.

But I would not wish to end on a negative note. This film is still an enormous achievement and, at the very least, contains much that is of the greatest interest to anyone wishing to see an incarnation, as it were, of Tolkien's text. The narrative sweep is overwhelming, and you would have to be in a semi-comatose state not to be moved by it. Much more could be said (and, I'm sure, will be by *Mallorn* readers) about it, both for and against. But ultimately this has to be seen as a film of Jackson's Fellowship rather than Tolkien's.

Charles Noad

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an immersion that continued with only a few blips until the end. By the time we reached Rivendell the spell was complete. I knew my hopes had been fulfilled when, as the end titles began to roll, I found myself on the edge of my seat, realising I now had to come back to the world I lived in. I had been somewhere else for the past three hours, a long way off, somewhere wonderful, dangerous, that plumbed the depths of fear, sorrow, courage and sacrifice. Enjoy? Hardly. But— it was terrific.

Of course the realisation is not perfect; nothing made by man is ever perfect, nor does one man's imagination ever mirror another's. I have found, though, that what may jar for one is quite acceptable to another. Much is left out, inevitably, and there are changes, most of them made to cover the omissions . But it works, magnificently. The acting of all the cast is above excellent, and equal credit must go to the director for the way he has captured it on camera. The New Zealand landscape is ideal as a base for the vistas of Middle-earth, and where reality ends and computer generation begins I am quite unable to tell. The animations are not incredible, but believable, culminating in a breathtaking Balrog that should end the 'wings' argument once for all! In all the effects are seamless and brilliantly understated; I barely noticed, for example, the hobbits' hairy feet, despite all the hours that must have been spent in making and fitting them. They simply seemed natural, as did (almost) everything else. But I am not going to start nit-picking here. Flaws can be found in anything, including the original (as the author stated himself), and to seek them out in order to damn an otherwise excellent work is the mark of a small mind.

Peter Jackson and his dedicated crew have given us an interpretation of *The Fellowship of the Ring* that does Tolkien's unique vision more than justice. And the best is, parts 2 and 3 are yet to come.

Christine Davidson

Mallorn XL

Back to Beowulf: reflections on Jackson's Fellowship of the Ring

Any serious look at the long awaited (or by some dreaded) motion picture adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* must take into account a number of factors, not the least the nature of the medium the filmmaker has to deal with. Another major concern is the vision a particular filmmaker brings to the task. His or her achievement must be measured in part according to the justice the finished work does to the original, but also to the power of its vision.

Examining the question of film as a medium, the most obvious concern is the visual nature of film, another is the time element, since most feature films run about two hours. The problem with adapting Tolkien's opus visually is the interplay between the fantasy on the one hand, and the naturalistic descriptions of Middle-earth on the other: 'realistic fantasy' as the combination has been called. The all important fantasy element is the reason that in his adaptation of 1978 Ralf Bakshi resorted to animation to convey this aspect of the tale; among other means, through rotoscopy – a technique wherein live actors were filmed and then drawn over for a number of sequences - he tried to convey the naturalistic feel of Tolkien's world. With greater means at his disposal due to advances in film art, Jackson has the obvious advantage now of being able to use live actors and real landscapes together with special effects in his film to impart a more vivid impression of Middle-earth.

Another problem in a film adaptation is the time limit imposed upon the medium. Here Jackson has another advantage over Bakshi: through the marketing means of a trilogy – an oddly familiar device – the New Zealander was able to wrest one-hundred-eighty minutes for one third of *The Lord of the Rings* in comparison to the latter's one-hundred-thirty for over half the material. In effect we will receive an approximately nine hour adaptation of the novel. Not to mention the director's cut on video or DVD will likely be longer. Even with this extra time the material is obviously condensed and required many difficult choices. Fairly typical in Jackson's adaptation are devices often utilised in such cases: important characters and events are eliminated, while other minor characters are combined: the omission of Bombadil and the combination of Glorfindel(!) with Arwen are major examples of these. I wonder whether the time aspect does not affect the whole spacial dimension of Middle-earth; Tolkien with his leisurely pace could create the sense of concrete geography, whereas Jackson gives us a collection of landscapes and habitats, and I seriously doubt it could be otherwise.

Every worth-while adaptation constitutes a reading of a work: a reading which brings to bear a particular focus and idiosyncratic – if not personal – vision (an example of a relevant idiosyncratic, but 'impersonal' vision is MGM's 'The Wizard of Oz' of 1939, where the studio imparted its style to the adaptation). One of the film's reviewers complained that it is better when a work is not adapted by an auteur. An auteur is a filmmaker with a distinct artistic style. The genuine concern behind this bit of wishful

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Tangential relationship

First of all, a preliminary grouse, one that has nothing to do with the quality of the film as such.

In a smallish cinema, equipped with surround-sound, the result is overpoweringly loud and confusing. I emerged feeling quite bruised and battered. I was all too strongly reminded of Wieland Wagner's immortal comment regarding the difficulty of performing his grandfather's works. "If you don't find me a conductor soon, Walter, I shall be reduced to Solti and his orgasms in every second bar."

That the film bears only a tangential relationship to *LOTR* itself was to be expected, and, of course, unavoidable. Essentially it is the action, event, and incident, that has been preserved; the passages of discussion, narration, comment and day-to-day journeying have, in general, been cut or omitted. The problems of selection or rejection of the material were beyond the director's or anyone else's power to solve, but I am inclined to join issue with him on two fronts.

The first is that the film concentrated on Saruman's activities, and portrayed them in spectacular fashion, in such a way as to 'upstage' Sauron, and almost, after the impressive opening sequence, to elbow him out of the way. Saruman's stronghold, and his 'establishment', is after all only a small

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A breath-taking Middle-earth

Let's get it out of the way first, shall we? This, my friends, is Not The Book. It is not the animated picture book some people seem to have been hoping for either. This is a movie – and what a movie.

I went in there with a lot of misgivings. Unfilmable was the term I would have used to describe *The Lord of the Rings*, for about a dozen reasons, and I was happy enough with that notion. If I expected anything it was a visually ambitious movie that wouldn't stir a heartbeat, something along the lines of Phantom Menace perhaps – and even that would have been preferable to any of the ways it could have gone really, wrenchingly wrong. Well, I was mistaken. And don't expect me to be aloof about this.

This movie wasn't made by sticking to the text. More than once it takes ruthless short cuts right through the middle of it. Scenes have been amalgamated, quotes redistributed, minor characters lost in the translation – as has much of the background information. Yes, the book has been turned inside out. And for all that my impression is, overwhelmingly, that Peter Jackson has changed everything so everything would remain the same. As movies go, this is it – this is *The Lord of the Rings*. It's all there – the epic sweep, the filigree detail, the deep roots and grand gestures and rampant emotion and the feel of a world right on the brink of darkness, and it fits together seamlessly. Perhaps this is simply what can happen when a great film maker and a great book come together under the best possible circumstances (New Zealand not the least of them – what a beautiful, breathtaking Middle-Earth!). But somebody there knew and loved his material, and somebody took what he was doing very, very seriously.

Jackson has filmed his tale as if *Lord of the Rings* were the first fantasy film in history – both with complete disregard for the conventions of a frequently tacky and lowbrow genre and without engaging in semi-embarrassed post-modern antics. Instead there's a grand vision, a joyful obsessiveness and an integrity I have rarely seen in a movie before. From those vast landscapes to the sausages dangling from Sam's pack and from Elrond's memories of the Last Alliance to Aragorn's bleeding knuckles the sense of depth and reality is staggering. A lot of the background that was cut from the tale quietly re-enters it by way of the design – the architecture, the clothing, the weaponry and fighting styles. The cultural history of Middle-Earth is right there; all you have to do is look. I don't know when exactly I fell for this film, but it may just have been at the gates of Bree with their two peepholes for hobbits and men respectively. There is a feeling of solid historical truth to it all that I missed sorely in many an ambitious historical movie. And it certainly helps that for all its sheer splendour the movie treats its stunning sets and costumes and props the way they should be treated – as backdrop and enhancement, serving the plot and the characters, never a substitute for them.

For this movie, thankfully, isn't about design; it's about people. No, I wasn't happy when I saw the trailers – an ethereal, desperately young Frodo; a too archetypically romantic Aragorn; a robust sandy-haired Boromir. These weren't the characters I knew. They still aren't the characters I knew. But seeing them in action, in this film, won me over – completely. And it's not just that these people can act. It's the way the actors simply disappear into their roles, the way they, too, treat this as if it were Shakespeare – a tale calling for utter commitment rather than noisy posing. Amid all the blood and thunder the heart of the movie is its sheer, naked emotional honesty, the things going on in the characters' faces. These people are real, and

thinking is that such a style can easily jar with one's own vision of the literary work, whereas a filmmaker who completely subordinates his vision to the author's might give a more 'faithful' adaptation. This, I dare say, is hardly possible with a work like *The Lord of the Rings*. Not to mention that the most faithful adaptations are not rarely unsatisfying, since they are seldom very good as films.

Whether or not one agrees with his vision, I think it can be safely said that Jackson does have a definite sense of where he wants to take us in Middle-earth. His is a grim vision of Tolkien's tale. I'm sure like many readers of *Mallorn*, I've been going over the Allan Lee illustrations ever since I learned Jackson hired the illustrator as one of his artistic consultants, and it's easy to see where part of this grimness originates. Jackson's film has many of the strengths and weaknesses of Lee's vision – not to mention a few of his own. John Howe's artwork is more dynamic, and has helped Jackson in some of the action sequences, but also maintains a rather sombre note.

Both Tolkien's and Jackson's works are well described as 'tales', i.e. they have an oral structure that stresses episode over mere plot. I can't help thinking about Tolkien's two great essays that have helped many to better understand the source of his mythopoeic art: *On Fairy-Stories* and *Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics*. The first emphasises the significance of eucatastrophe for fantasy, while the second stresses the importance of the monster and how the latter is a deeply symbolic (not to be mistaken with allegorical) foil for the hero. It is fairly clear that the director of 'Brain Dead' would be inclined to focus on the monster in Middle-earth: both at the literal and the symbolic level. To my mind this does not bring out the best in 'The Lord of the Rings', but it is a legitimate reading. I think in some ways it might also be the best choice for a film adaptation of the novel:

One of the key elements to the attainment of eucatastrophe in The Lord of the Rings is the representation of the elves and their realms. Off hand I can't think of any illustrations of Lothlorien that are satisfactory, a good indication that film would not be capable of accomplishing the feat either. Certainly one of Lee's weaknesses is in his representation of Galadriel, which Jackson has followed rather closely (I shudder to think of Treebeard in this light). Whereas Jackson is forceful in imparting the threat hanging over Middle-earth and the trials its heroes face.

So if Jackson has apparently chosen to go back to *Beowulf*, so be it! All power to him.

The first instalment of Jackson's trilogy is on the whole rather satisfactory – why, there are even moments of brilliance in 'The Fellowship of the Ring'. In hindsight it seems obvious that no matter how good the first film turned out it could not satisfy every one. However, the film was certainly successful to the extent of creating high enough expectations for the last two films to make it no mean feat to meet them. Any serious look at Jackson's adaptation, of course, will have to wait till all the films are complete. In Middle-earth years that will be fairly soon.

Christopher Garbowski

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model of Sauron's vastly greater resources, and it may be a problem for the director to cut the former down to size and convey the far more terrifying reality of Sauron's power and his unseen presence, in the films to come. It is worth remembering that in Tolkien's drafts Saruman only made his appearance at quite a late stage, after the Company had emerged from Moria in fact.

The second is the omission of the Crickhollow episode. This is the climax of the whole first section of the book – the moment when the theme of Fellowship is first brought out fully into the open, and Frodo realises that his friends stand with him, "we are horribly frightened but we are coming with you, or following you like hounds". Some means should have been found of incorporating this vitally important passage, particularly as time is wasted at points like the scuffle in the chamber of Mazurbul, which is impossibly over-extended. The omission of the Amon Hen episode, Frodo's agonised self-doubts and subsequent fatal resolve, together with the above means that crucial stages in the development of his personality are left out, and this, I suspect, is in large part the reason why many unfavourable opinions have been expressed regarding Elijah Wood's performance in the role.

John Ellison

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they break my heart. Holm's charming, touching, frightening, unforgettable Bilbo; or Bean's magnificent Boromir, all drive and tormented humanity, bluster and repentance; or Mortensen's reluctant, torn, introvert king-to-be; or Astin's wonderful Sam – quiet strength and stubbornness and love and a fine dose of aggressiveness to back them up. And Wood's sweet, fey Frodo, going from his first scenes in the Shire to that moment of silent despair on the river bank – why have I never seen *Fellowship* as a coming-of-age story?

Having said all that: I was utterly delighted to find that for all the changes made in the transition to the screen the movie remains firmly rooted in the book – much more firmly and extensively than large parts of the audience are likely to appreciate. There is the way Tolkien's own drawings keep turning up – lovely moment, that, when Frodo turns a page in Bilbo's book to reveal the map of the Shire. There are the small asides – the tiny smoke ship Gandalf sends off into the sunset; Sam's comment on kingsfoil – "It's a weed!"; the nightingale singing when Arwen talks about sacrificing her immortality. There is a script that made me blink when I realized just how close some of the lines are to the rhythm and spirit of Tolkien's own text – I had to go and look up a few just to make sure they're not Tolkien. If that doesn't imply respect for one's source material I don't know what it implies.

And is there nothing in there I don't like, then? Yes, there is, actually. Just occasionally the movie tries too hard to make its point. That wizards' duel is overdone and a little silly. I don't much like Galadriel's CGI-enhanced banshee act – Blanchett would have done better by herself. I am not entirely happy with Arwen – not because they extended her part but because she has to be too many things in too little time, and doesn't gain much of a personality. And I don't believe orcs can run up and down pillars, and I am distinctly unimpressed with the Elvish taste in interior decoration. There may be a few more things of similar weightiness. So what? So nothing. They pale into insignificance set against what the movie does pull off.

Because it does. It made me laugh, it made me cry, it took my breath away in more places than it had any right to. It never, ever insulted my intelligence. And it did something no movie should be able to do – it reminded me of how first reading *The Lord of the Rings* felt more than twenty years ago. Perhaps familiarity does breed... well, neglect. I remember things now – things I really shouldn't have forgotten. The sheer awe at the scope of it, the delight at the countless small discoveries, the wonder that tales like this could exist. The kick-in-the-stomach feeling at the grandeur and beauty and the wrenching tragedy of it all. I don't like to work out what the chances were of this happening, of the movie actually capturing the essence, rather than the letter, of the book – but Jackson, incredibly, got it right.

So, will I re-read the book? You bet. But judging a movie on the grounds of whether or not it will make anybody read the book would really be missing the point. It would be a joyless, limiting, paltry view of what is first and foremost a magnificent movie.

Fellowship is a very literate film, which in itself might make us all happy. It is also a fierce, passionate, hauntingly beautiful film, a great work of art in its own right, and it made this reviewer happier than she ever expected she would be. Like the book all those years ago, it's been a gift, the more wonderful for being unexpected.

Nine and a half out of ten, then – after all, I have to leave myself some leeway for Parts II and III.

Suzanne Stopfel

The Film ... the alternative reviews

Members comments

General impressions

"I can't wait to see it again as I know that I'll pick up a great deal that I missed the first time. In this way, the film is very like the book - not a "once is enough' experience' I loved the jokes put there for readers of the book".*Pat Reynolds.*

'Parts of the film were really moving, and certain aspects followed the book in detail. Overall, I think it rates a three star out of 5. Though I will look forward to the second and third releases, before making my final judgement. I had not read the book, then I would probably think it a better film. But I was dissapointed that it ended, and the three hours-plus did not drag". *Graeme Yates*

Scenery and effects

"Hobbiton was rightly depicted by French and Saunders as Tellytubbyland. But Bag End was good Rivendell should be a 'Last Homely House" not a palace; the Moria Gate and the watcher in the water were effective; All the fights were muddled and too fast. The Balrog seemed rather impressive and I did like the cave troll." *Rikki Breem*

"Good special effects, a fair amount of action. The fight with the Balrog was far too short, and the battles between Gandalf and Saruman also a bit disappointing". *Graeme Yates*

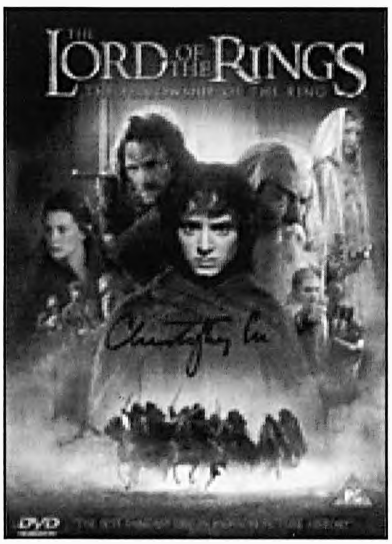
Characterisations

"Bilbo excellent, Gollum good, Sam tiresome as usual, Merry and Pippin were virtually indistinguishable except that one of them sounded Scottish. Frodo was apparently about fourteen yrears old and a complete disaster. Boromir was a scruffy and inarticulate yob, not what is expected of the heir of Gondor...Gandalf and Saruman were excellent and totally convincing, Arwen may improve when she stops playing at Galadriel, Galadriel looked and sounded as if she'd been left out int he rain for a fortnight. The Black riders were effective." *Rikki Breem.*

"Frodo appears to have been given a more prominent role than Gandalf (eg Frodo rather than Gandalf works out the solution to the doors of Moria)." *Graeme Yates*

Deviations

"Boromir NEVER handled the Ring. When was Sam told not to leave Frodo? Where was Bill acquired?" *Rikki Breem*



Urban myth

In a *Guardian* piece on the eve of the release entitled 'Unworldly' Tolkien's ring of gold' arts correspondent Fiachra Gibbons revealed that the tale of Tolkien's signing away the rights to LOR for a handful of beans is just a myth. In fact Tolkien got $250,000 (then worth about £102,500) and a percentage of the royalties, rather than the £10,000 of legend. The estate will get more royalties if the film takes two and a half times its costs.when he finally sold the movie rights to the *Ring* in 1969.

So, would Tolkien have liked the film?

John Ezard, who knew Tolkien in the 1960s, writing in *The Guardian* on what JRRT would have made of *The Lord of the Rings* on the big screen.

"I always knew that it would go - and it did," Tolkien said to me 36 years ago. He was talking then about Sarehole, the pastoral West Midlands village in which he grew up in the late 1890s, the emotional heartland from which he took both the hobbits and the Shire. But he felt the same about his whole *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, 'written in my life's blood' as he put it. He was convinced that the spreading machine culture he so abhorred would win in the end; that it would get control of his work, 'confuse and degrade' its narrative, wrench it from its roots and turn it into a travesty of a popular film, cartoon or comic book.

Tolkien was too pessimistic. In fact, Sarehole never did go. Someone wrongly told him in old age that Birmingham had swallowed it and he died believing this. But the core of the village, including the water mill he cherished above all, was preserved because the suburbanites who moved in after him liked it too.

Lord of the Rings hasn't gone either - at least not entirely. On the evidence of the first film instalment, 'The Fellowship of the Ring', the inner spirit of the story has survived all the machineries, compromises, sensationalisms and hype that go with a £210m movie juggernaut. At a preview the other night, I tried, as honestly as possible, to see the film through the eyes of the man and through the lens of his writing. He wrote in agony to his son Christopher, who was fighting in that war: "There seem no bowels of mercy or compassion, no imagination left in this dark diabolic hour... The Machines are going to be enormously more powerful. What's their next move?" He relished acting and enjoyed other people's talents. My sense of him is that he would have felt straightforwardly honoured by the mastery of Ian McKellen and Ian Holm as his wizard Gandalf and old hobbit Bilbo. McKellen, while more furrowed and less broad-shouldered than Tolkien envisaged, has a voice and presence as broad as Middle Earth. Holm finds a depth of poignancy in Bilbo beyond anything the character's creator dreamed of. Finally, I think he would have been glad to hear so much elvish spoken (with English subtitles) and to listen to his elf princess Arwen saying, as she renounces immortality to marry Aragorn, future king of men: "I would rather share one mortal life with you than the eternal years alone." That is not quite what he wrote. But it is what he meant. Death, and our ambiguous desire for deathlessness, were his most profound heart-mystery.

How Elijah Wood learnt Elvish

An article in *Linguist,* the magazine of the Institute of Linguists in London, described how the cast spent months learning Sindarin, employing voice coaches and experts in Elvish.

Arwen and Aragorn, meeting in Rivendell, speak in dulcet Elvish tones – a conversation unintelligible to the audience (but for the subtitles) and 'all the more romantic for it'.

The poetic nature of Elvish created its own problems, making it difficult for the actors to find the appropriate rhythm of speech. So that the actors would know exactly what their script meant, the production team had to find out the direct translation, as well as the poetic translation. Some 'very spooky things happened', apparently. On one occasion Orlando Bloom fluffed his line, only to discover later that there was a mistake in the script and he had inadvertently used the correct word, giving rise to a 'Hand of Tolkien' theory. But it's somewhat unlikely. Tokien famously hated Hollywood. When he received a film proposal in 1958 he condemned the script for deviating from the original book and 'only sold the film rights to pay off a bad debt'.

Scant creativity

From BBC News Online's Darren Waters reporting the world premiere in London. 'Amid all the hype, the celebrity guests and the press photographers, it was easy to forget that *The Lord of the Rings* was originally a series of books. None of the stars, the photographers, the VIP guests, nor the film itself would exist without the imagination of JRR Tolkien. But there was scant evidence of that creativity at the world première.'

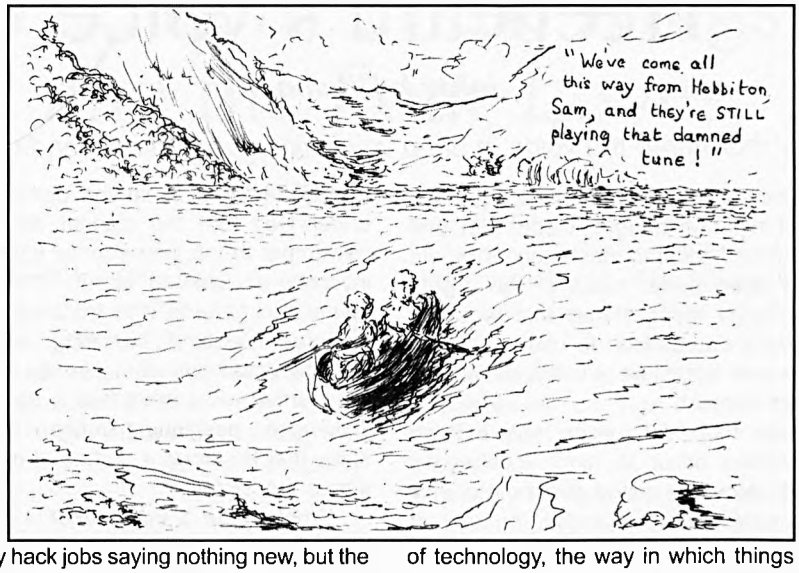
LOR is sacred

Tolkien scholar Daniel Timmons, after first seeing the film.

'For many Tolkien enthuasists, *The Lord of the Rings* is like a sacred text: you modify it at your peril. It remains to be seen if some changed scenes, such as the attack of the Ringwraiths at the edge of Rivendell or the Gandalf and Saruman confrontation, will upset Tolkien fans. When Tolkien's own wordings essentially remain, such as in the Gandalf - Balrog battle or in the Aragorn and Boromir scene near the end, they come across exceedingly well.

Anyone can find flaws and quibbles with any film, great or

otherwise. Given the monumental task of bringing to the screen Tolkien's vast epic masterpiece, New Line Cinema and Peter Jackson have done an amazing and admirable feat. The film does display the lofty and serious tone of the books of *The Lord of the Rings* and honours its subject matter. Some people may quarrel with certain scene changes and dialogue choices. Still, the look, the feel, the overall impression is Tolkienian. And for that, this Tolkien admirer is grateful.'



Modern barbarians

The film also sparked off re-evaluations of the book, mostly hack jobs saying nothing new, but the following, from *Tolkien, Hitler, and Nordic Heroism* (J.P. Zmirak on FrontPageMagazine.com) was interesting.

'A shadowy, evil overlord hides himself amid an unmapped mountain range. There he wields absolute power over fanatics and slaves, scheming for domination over the free peoples of the world. He sends forth assassins into peaceful lands and cities, spreading terror among civilians.

'We see in Tolkien's life, opinions, and work an enduring rebuff to the totalitarian evils of his century. The moral key to *The Lord of the Rings* is the refusal of ruthlessness and the immutability of the moral law. The Ring is a mighty weapon of war – but profoundly tinged with evil. The Ring may not be used, even against the Dark Lord himself, lest its user be corrupted and become what he hates. Some means are so evil that no end can justify them. Some laws are so sacred that we must willingly die rather than violate them. We may never target the innocent in order to weaken the guilty. These lessons, which Tolkien drew from the Christian, heroic sagas of the North, should linger in our minds and restrain our passions – especially in time of war.'

Elsewhere, Jamie Allen of CNN quoted a comment from Tom Shippey (these days he holds the Walter J. Ong Chair of Humanities at St. Louis University) about why Tolkien's work still has an audience today. "More than the adventures of hobbits and elves and wizards and other creatures who delve into a war over ultimate power in Middle-earth", Shippey said "Tolkien's imaginings are a reflection of the 20th century's turbulent history. My colleagues in the literary department say it's all very escapist stuff. I think, 'No, no, no.' It's actually all about what happened in the 20th century. The 20th century has basically been industrialised warfare, Tolkien went through it himself in World War I. But it just got worse in his lifetime. I think he was very pre-occupied with the nature of evil, the nature of technology, the way in which things could be abused, the way good intentions are subverted."

Bits we never saw

On an American website, a reporter called (I think) "Tookish" notes that collecting Merlin stickers has shown up some scenes cut from the film, notably, "...a sticker of Pippin and Sam stuck in a swamp... Pippin is up to his neck in mud and Sam is trying to free him. The caption reads, "Strider takes the group through Chetwood Forest and across Midgewater Moors.'Where is he leading us?' askes Sam. 'To Rivendell Master Gamgee – to the house of Elrond,' replies Strider. 'We're going to see Elves!!' says Sam excitedly. They stop at Weathertop 'No fire tonight!' orders Strider.

There is a number of photos of Elrond and Arwen talking and embracing in the middle of the Lothlorien scene. Again in Lothlorien there is a scene of elves lining the river bank as the fellowship set sail, and again a scene of elves lining a bridge as the Fellowship travel underneath them. There is also a shot of Galadriel handing things to the Fellowship, presumably the elven cloaks the whole cast are wearing after meeting the elves (notice the Lothlorien emblem on the clasps).

There is a piece of dialogue as the Fellowship leave Rivendell. Gandalf is leaning on his staff saying, 'Why did the Valar send me here in this old man's body? To teach me humility no doubt. It is not the strength of the body that matters but the strength of the spirit.'"

And finally, the Prallop review ...

After all the years of hype, the constant ads on tv, toys in the shops etc, I was very keen to see the film and whether it lived up to the advertising, and above all, the book. So I queued up for days, along with Mrs Prallop and hundreds of other besotted geek-like fans, most of them wearing glasses and duffel coats.

I must say I was astonished by the result. To say that the film departed from Tolkien's text is the understatement of the year. The wizard's fight was amazing, and seemed to last for ever. What were the sticks for? Why did they keep flying everywhere? I certainly don't remember anything about that in FOR. Then there was this gigantic cartoon-like character who bursts into a dark, far from tasteful interior, intending to drag away our hero, and attacks everyone in sight. I can only assume it was meant to be the cave troll in Moria. Speaking of Moria, I found it utterly convincing, and the nasty little goblins were universally excellent, and great actors, although they looked a bit too similar to muppet-like Zurich gnomes for my taste. Though they were more than made up for by the tall elves, who were distinguished by their long hair and definitely, shall we say, effeminate manners.

Then there was Rivendell, reconstructed as a kind of oldy worldy place where nothing is quite what it seems and the masonry is definitely strange. Bilbo's birthday party too was very understated, the cake almost makeshift – but the dragon was a delight, if rather small. And Arwen, though satisfactorily masculine and bossy in the modern style that Tolkien would so have approved of, was far younger than she should have been, almost a schoolgirl, as her strange language and girlish voice attested. (But then there were also several other female roles that I am sure are not in the book). And her role was expanded enormously, she practically took over the film, and very obviously had a far from chaste interest in the speccy character Harry, who was a complete puzzle to me. Why didn't they just call him Frodo? Or Aragorn? Then again, some of the other characters were puzzling too, although I found the idea of relocating Hobbiton as a Milton Keynes-style housing estate completely convincing, and using dozens of owls as stand-ins for the eagles was inspired, as was the casting of wise old Gandalf, reinvented as a sort of gruff but kindly headmaster type, and of course replacing the Mirror of Galadriel with a 50s MFI style wardrobe.

But although, presumably, this film was a deeply symbolic treatment, for the most part a successful evocation of the trials of the hobbits as they journey through a fantastical other-worldly Middle-earth oddly reminiscent of lower-middle-class England, I really couldn't see why they chose to set the story in a fusty old school, full of wizards, weird effeminate characters making spells, hundreds of nasty little hobbits, magic wands, a talking hat and moving staircases. Faithfully reproduced though, were Tolkien's own invented creatures – the centaur, unicorn, three headed giant dog and baby dragon.

I have to say that all in all the film was bloody good, and an improvement on the book, according to all my friends. One day I must get round to reading it.

Kensington Prallop, Sinnisthûr Smial

"Treebeard's voice"

John A Ellison

"'Hrum, Hoom' murmured the voice, a deep voice like a very deep woodwind instrument."

I have always been particularly struck with this comparison of Treebeard's voice. It might be thought, to start with, that the natural simile that would occur to most authors, would be that provided by the deep pedal notes of the organ. Tolkien might, perhaps, have thought that this was too obvious, or too hackneyed a comparison to use , or that it woudl suggest the presence of a building or buildings, and so be inappropriate in a forest context.

What kind of instrument, then, did Tolkien have in mind and how did the comparison occur to him? Treebeard's characteristic "hoom, hom" provides a kind of onomatopoeic impression of the instrumental sound suggested; the nearest equivalent that I can think of is the lower compass of the clarinet, sometimes called its 'chalumeau'[1] register, and still more, of the bass clarinet. The normal bass of the woodwind section of the orchestra is provided by bassoons (sometimes with the addition of a double bassoon) but the characteristic bassoon sound is something else (more of a 'honk' than a 'hoom' to put it crudely - I hope any bassoonist readers will forgive me!).

Tolkien was presumably thinking in terms of his recollection of music to which he had actually listened, and notably, he did express a particular liking for the music of Carl Maria von Weber. Now Weber (1786 to 1826 - a younger contemporary of Beethoven) coming a quarter of a century or so after Mozart had provided the clarinet with the two most familiar and often played items in its repertory,[2] was a major contributor to that repertory; as a result of his friendship with an early virtuoso of the instrument, Heinrich Bärmann, he wrote a number of works, including two concertos for it, and its characteristic tone-colour suffuses much of his music in general. This is especially so in *Der Freischütz* (1821), the most famous of Weber's operas, and the only one (apart from the overtures) that Tolkien is likely to have had the opportunity of hearing complete[3]. In the introduction of the overture there occurs a celebrated passage where the tone-colour of clarinets at the bottom of their range, surrounded by a haze of tremolando strings evokes the depths of the forest that forms the opera's setting, and frames the motive of Samiel, the Demon Huntsman who haunts the forest. Just before this, at the start of the overture, the peaceful landscape bordering on the forest is suggested by the rich sound of four horns - another favourite tone colour of Weber's, and another instrumental counterpart of Tolkien's imaginative world with its constant references to the sound of horns. Boromir's horn could claim an ancestor in the knight Huon's horn in Weber's last opera *Oberon*, which has a similar power of sounding over vast distances, and which starts off, and is prominent in, the overture, a well known piece which Tolkien probably knew.

The reference in the opening chapter of *The Hobbit* to 'clarinets' brought and played by two of the dwarves, (Bifur and Bofur) is rather remarkable. It does not seem to have attracted comment up to now, but the appearance of 'clarinets' here is something of an anachronism, just as the 'cold chicken and tomatoes' was before it was changed. The ensemble is clearly meant to be one of 'old' instruments, judging by the reference to 'little fiddles'[4] and 'viols as big as themselves' (the bass viol is the ancestor of the modern double-bass). Tolkien of course was writing long before the revival of interest in old and 'period' instruments generally got under way, but the clarinet as we know it is a relative newcomer to the instrumental scene; it seems to have been invented or 'evolved' about 1710, and was only starting to come into general and frequent use near the end of the eighteenth century[5]; Mozart himself was only able to write for it on the occasions when players were available. It looks as if the clarinet must have had a special sort of resonance for Tolkien; its positioning in the 'Hobbit' ensemble seems to show that he thought of it as of middle-to-low compass, just above the 'viols'.

What is true of the clarinet in this context, is still more so of the bass clarinet[6], which came into regular use later in the nineteenth century, for instance in Wagner's schemes of orchestral tonepainting, in *The Ring*, where a number of passages feature it prominently, and most famously in *Tristan und Isolde* in the accompaniment to King Marke's long monologue in the second act. It is known that Tolkien did attend (with C S Lewis) a performance (possibly more than one) of one or other of the Ring operas at Covent Garden; there is no evidence that he heard *Tristan und Isolde* or knew the passage mentioned above, but it is just possible[7]. Of course in the Treebeard reference he was no doubt harking back to a collective memory of various works or passages from them that he had heard at various times, rather than thinking of any one individual piece or passage. The appropriate counterpart of Treebeard's voice might really be an instrument of even lower compass, a contrabass clarinet, in other words. Such an instrument does in fact exist, though its use is extremely rare. It might indeed have developed, says Mr del Mar[8], as the bass of the woodwind section of the orchestra as a whole, although in the event it did not. But if one may be permitted, in conclusion, to pass in imagination beyond this earthly sphere , and speculate on the possibility of a great cycle of LOTR operas, (dwarfing Wagner's *Ring Cycle*), libretti by J R R Tolkien, music by Weber, a contrabass clarinet, or even two or three of the monsters, would come in very handy. And not for Treebeard only; the traversals of Moria and Khazad-dum, and the pass of Cirith Ungol, and many other episodes, are clearly going to require all the resources of the vast orchestra that presumably will be available.

Notes

1. The 'chalumeau' was an instrument akin to the clarinet, but of lower compass; it evolved about the same time, but the development of the clarinet superseded it. See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. ed. S Sadie (MacMillan 1980 vol. 4 pp 1112.
2. The Clarinet Quintet K581 and the Clarinet Concerto K622.
3. It was given in Oxford in circa 1927 as the first production of the Oxford University Opera Club. Another performance (concert) was given in Oxford in 1953 when the conductor was a then unknown young man called Colin Davis. The present writer attended it.
4. Gypsy fiddles, perhaps. 'Fiedel' is the German equivalent; the usual German word for an orchestral violin is 'Geige'. In Mahler's 4th symphony (second movement) the leader (principal first violin) is directed to tune his instrument up a tone so as to produce a thin 'scratchy' sound, "wie ein Fiedel".
5. 'The New Grove' dictionary, vol.4 pp 429-42.
6. For the use of the clarinet and bass clarinet in the orchestra in general, see Norman del Mar *Anatomy of the Orchestra* (Faber and Faber, paperback ed. 1983) pp 145-53 & 173-6.
7. There is a curious echo of the text of Isolde's 'Liebestod' (the conclusion of *Tristan und Isolde*) in the description of Frodo at Rivendell listening to the Elvish singers and musicians and feeling that "an endless river of swelling gold and silver was flowing over him", and that "it drenched and drowned him".
8. del Mar, op cit p 153.

The Lord of the Rings and the Four Loves

Dale Nelson

A tombstone in Oxford's Wolvercote cemetery is inscribed 'John Ronald Reuel Tolkien / Beren and Edith Mary Tolkien / Lúthien'. Because these are the names of husband and wife, lovers, in Tolkien's writings, and because their equation here with Tolkien himself and his wife is firmly founded on his own conception of the man who married the daughter of an Elf-King and a goddess, as a parallel to his own romance, his inscription hints an answer, differing from the usual ones, to the question of why *The Lord of the Rings* has been such a meaningful novel for innumerable readers for nearly half a century: it and the invented mythology from which it was developed are permeated by love. Readers of a 1960 book by C. S. Lewis will remember that the Greeks discerned four loves: *storge, philia, eros,* and *agape.* Each and all of the four loves are integral in the created world as Tolkien understood it and in the "subcreated" world of his imaginative work.

To the authors of a newspaper profile on himself, Tolkien maintained that Middle-earth originated in his love of language. He liked to invent new languages – but they required people to speak them – indeed, required a world. He would make that world. But attributing the origin of Middle-earth to the love of languages linked it to his public life, as a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. The Wolvercote monument, and remarks in Tolkien's letters, show that Middle-earth originated also in his private life – specifically in *eros*, the passionate love of man for woman or woman for man.

Beren and Lúthien

The earliest surviving written account of Beren and Lúthien dates as far back as 1917, when Tolkien had only just entered upon his vocation as storyteller. In fact, he laboured on the story all his life: it appeared, incomplete, in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), as a narrative poem, but it was not until after his death, with the publication of *The Silmarillion* in 1977, that a more complete telling was given to the world. "I met the Lúthien Tinúviel of my own personal 'romance' with her long dark hair, fair face and starry eyes, and beautiful voice" (when he was 16 and she was 19) in 1908. In the myth, Beren falls in love at first sight with the slender Tinúviel as she dances in the wood. This story was first conceived by Tolkien, then an officer in the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, "in a woodland glade filled with hemlocks" in Yorkshire where, a year after their wedding in 1916, he strolled with Edith under the shadow of possible death in the Great War. I have quoted from two letters of 1972 that Tolkien wrote, recently bereaved, to his sons. He said he would not give the world an autobiography. His nature expressed itself "about things deepest felt in tales and myths." And the story of Beren and Lúthien, and their trials even unto death, was among the very earliest of those myths. He identified it as "the kernel of the mythology," of his imaginary world, in a 1955 letter to his American publishers (but he didn't tell them about his romance). To change the metaphor – when Tolkien began *The Lord of the Rings* twenty years later, he had an incredibly rich compost of myth and legend upon which to nourish it.

The role of friendship in creating LOR

We owe the existence of *The Lord of the Rings* not only to the eros of Ronald and Edith Tolkien, but to *philia.* The writing of its three volumes, which commenced in December 1937, took twelve years. If not for the friendship of C. S. "Jack" Lewis, Tolkien said ten years after the *Rings* final volume was published, "I do not think that I should ever have completed [it] or offered [it] for publication." Having finished reading the completed typescript, Lewis wrote to Tolkien, "All the long years you have spent on it are justified." Those words apply to Lewis himself, who encouraged, criticized, prodded, and kept at the perfectionistic Tolkien till the book was done; one may say, awkwardly but with some truth, that if love for Edith and for languages begot the mythology, Lewis was the midwife who brought the mythology's most massive embodiment into the world. The interest of Tolkien's son Christopher and of other members of the Inklings circle, and the patience of publishers, was of immense importance, of course, but, Tolkien confessed, "[Lewis] was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my 'stuff' could be more than a private hobby." The friendship of the two men aptly conforms to Lewis's account of *philia* – the companionship, esteem, and loyalty of two persons united by a shared enthusiasm (and by opposition to certain foes). By the way, if not for Tolkien, we would not have had Lewis's own *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first volume of his remarkable "space trilogy".

Love, then, brought *The Lord of the Rings* into being. Most of its readers will not be aware of the facts of Tolkien's life, however. But integral to *The Lord of the Rings* itself are the Four Loves. Tolkien did not use the searching psychological realism of, say, Tolstoy's account of the loves in Anna Karenina, rather presenting them with an iconic clarity of outline in his accounts of characters in the book.

Father figure

Storge is the first of the four loves discussed in Lewis's book – "the humblest and most widely diffused of loves," the love of familiar faces because they are familiar, for this is "the least discriminating of loves." It's the fondness of parents for children, the fondness of pet owners for their pets. The wizard Gandalf exhibits *storge* towards hobbits – Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit,* and Frodo, Samwise, Pippin and Merry in the Lord. He is often exasperated by them, but, even though hobbits do not seem to be promising

participants in a tremendous war of good against evil, Gandalf defends them against their detractors, like a parent who keeps his or her children on their toes but stands up for them when others criticize them unfairly. Samwise exhibits storge in his turn. When the fellowship of the Ring arrives at the portal of the subterranean realm of Moria, Sam is bitterly sorrowful about abandoning Bill, a pony abused by his former owner but much invigorated by Sam's attention and a stay in the Elves' hidden refuge of Rivendell.

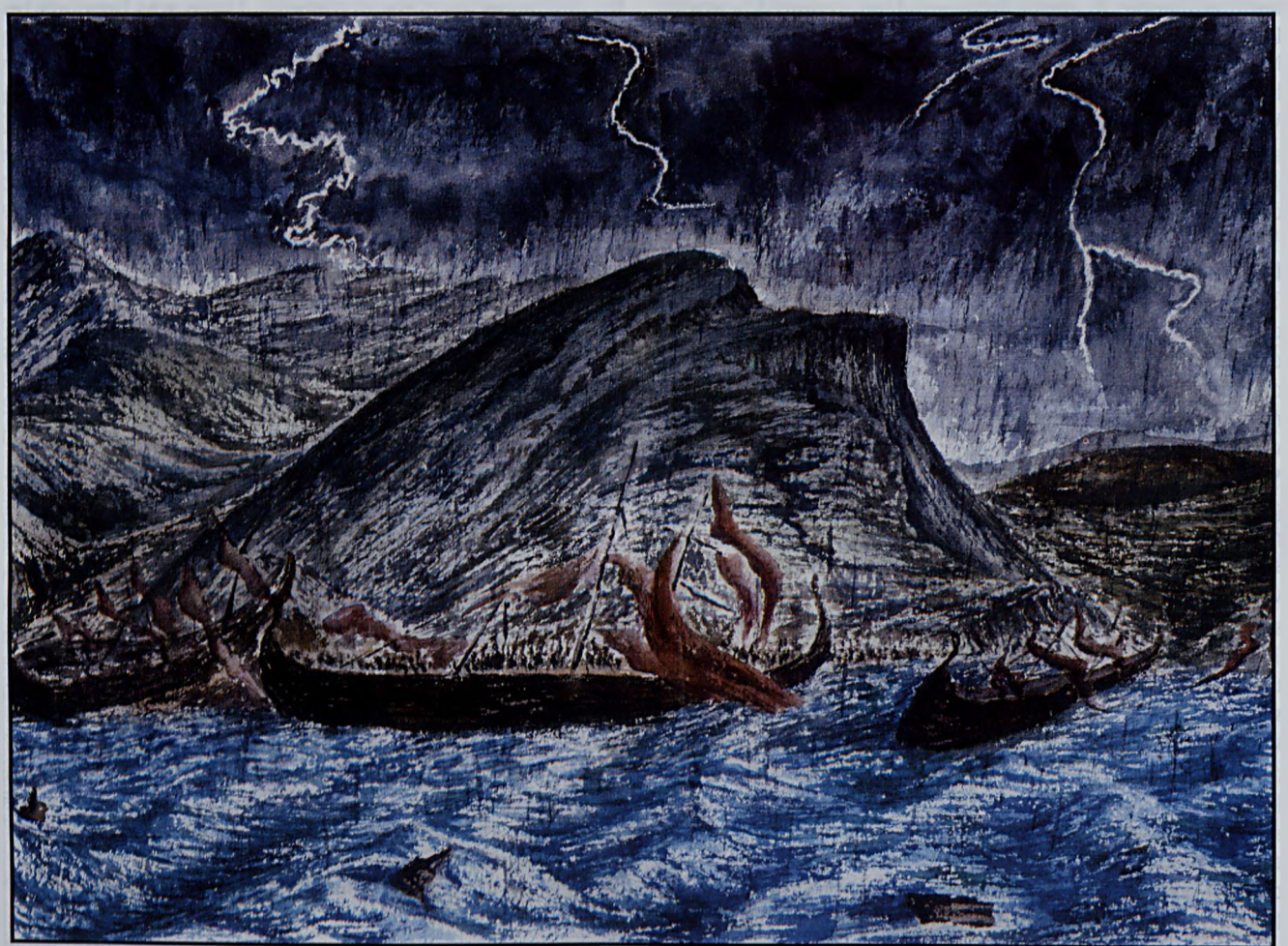
The power of comradeship

Philia is everywhere in *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, the world is saved because of friendship, in that Sam's refusal to be parted from Frodo at the banks of the Anduin makes possible Frodo's arrival, many weary leagues later, at the fiery Cracks of Doom, where alone Sauron's ring can be destroyed. Critics often focus on Frodo in examining the climax of the novel, as he and the ruined creature Gollum struggle on the brink of the fire; but Frodo never would have got so far without Sam.

The love between Frodo and Sam was probably, originally, a matter of *storge*, since Sam is Frodo's deferential social inferior. Because they committed themselves to a task, they became comrades. Both, eventually, endured the burden of the Ring. When Mount Doom is convulsing, after the Ring falls into the fire, and the two hobbits must expect death at any moment, Frodo's last words in the climactic chapter are, "The Quest is achieved, and now all is over." They have fulfilled their common task. "I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam."

Lewis might have said that, if we stick strictly to his account, Frodo and Sam were comrades rather than friends. "Friendship arises out of mere Companionship," Lewis wrote, "when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure." Tolkien offers a variant on this, in which two initially antagonistic and touchy persons, brought together by a common necessity and the vocation of warrior, grow in appreciation not so much of one another as of aspects of the world new to them. The Dwarf Gimli learns to love the Elvish woodland kingdom of Lórien and its Lady, and not just the beauty of well-made things such as typically obsesses the Dwarves. The Elf Legolas becomes willing to reconsider his abhorrence of caverns, and promises to tour Aglarond or Helm's Deep with Gimli someday.

One is reminded of Lewis's friendship with Arthur Greeves, which began in youth and lasted till Lewis's death. Everyone who has read *Surprised by Joy* remembers Lewis's account of his and Arthur's almost alarmed delight when they discovered each loved the Norse myths. But they learned from one another, also, like Gimli and Legolas. Lewis was much more at home than Greeves was in the worlds of poetry and scholarship, but he credited Greeves with teaching him to love the Homely. "He taught me to



The ships of the Faithful wrecked on the shores of Middle-earth *John Ellison*

feel with him," Lewis wrote, "at once a human affection and a rich aesthetic relish for his antediluvian aunts, his mill-owning uncles, his mother's servants, the postman on our roads, and the cottagers whom we met in our walks. What he called the 'Homely' was the natural food both of his heart and his imagination. A bright hearth seen through an open door as we passed, a train of ducks following a brawny farmer's wife, a drill of cabbages in a suburban garden – these were things that never failed to move him, even to an ecstasy." Lewis, like Gimli and Legolas, received an enhancement of his ability to receive with delight some quality in the world that he felt he formerly had not given its due meed. That, as well as the discovery that one is not alone in the world with his love of some special insight, interest, or taste, is a typical blessing of *philia*.

Passion in LOR

The romantic passion of Beren and Lúthien is matter of legend by the time of the Third Age, the era of *The Lord of the Rings* in Tolkien's chronology, and for Tolkien's most developed presentation of their story we must turn to *The Silmarillion*; but *eros*, the third of the four loves described by Lewis, is not absent from *The Lord of the Rings*. There is the almost entirely offstage romance of Aragorn and Arwen, as one subplot. My guess is that the films will bring forward this love story, as well as a subplot that is developed with much care by Tolkien, the unrequited love of the shield-maiden Éowyn of Rohan for Aragorn. The understated quality of Tolkien's account of this love story, and the turmoil of the war of the Ring, sometimes cause the Éowyn - Aragorn story to be almost forgotten by readers. In fact, though, Tolkien wrote with much sensitivity, of the sorrowful passion of a young woman who, despairing first of her homeland and then of the man she longs for, desperately longs to die in battle; of her near approach to death; and of her gradual opening to a new and deeper love. If it is not too grotesque, one could suggest that elements of this plot are strangely akin to the experiences of some women who, when young, had had a "phase" of bitter dissatisfaction with American society as well as anguished disappointment with their fathers and/or men for whom they felt sexual passion, and who then threw themselves into nihilistic political radicalism or feminism. (We must remember that Éowyn had had to watch her father, the king, decline into ignobility under the deplorable influence of his advisor, Wormtongue, the tool of Saruman. Éowyn was ashamed of him and of her country. She witnessed the renewal that Gandalf brought, but was forbidden to accompany her father into war, and by that time, she was suffering from her passion for Aragorn.) This is not the sort of thing that happens in medieval romances or in modern fantasy novels, and perhaps not often in purportedly realistic ones, but Tolkien included it, and it's a real accomplishment – a tale of baffled love, hurt love, and then a new, healing love.

Two other instances of *eros* in *Lord of the Rings* may be mentioned: Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, and the Ents and the Entwives. Some readers have objected to the nonsensical endearments – "Hey come derry dol! merry dol! my darling!" – that pour from Tom's lips as he bustles about, bringing flowers to lay before his "pretty lady." Why, isn't it obvious that Tom and Goldberry are perpetual newlyweds? Tom has the giddy happiness of a young man who's just married his sweetheart. That's why they don't have any children! They've been together from time immemorial -- yet it's as if he's just brought her home. The title poem in the collection *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* confirms this, telling of Tom catching the River-woman's daughter and taking her home with him. "Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding; / in the bright honey-moon badger-folk came treading," these last being members of Tom's little kingdom. The poem ends with the image of "fair Goldberry comb[ing] her tresses yellow" – and perhaps the reader has seen a sheet of sketches drawn by Tolkien with coloured pencils, printed in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator*, that includes the slender young Edith, seen from behind, wearing just a petticoat and arranging her hair as she looks in a mirror. The Ents love the Entwives, but have lost them, preferring their gardens to the Ents' wandering lives among the wild forests. Always the Ents hope for news of their mates; and they hope for a day – one might say an eschatological day – of reconciliation.

Love as charity

"Frodo undertook his quest" to destroy Sauron's perilous Ring "out of love – to save the world he knew from disaster at his own expense, if he could; and also in complete humility, acknowledging that he was wholly inadequate to the task," Tolkien wrote in a reflective letter of 1963. In the book itself, Frodo has faced the stark fact: "'It must often be so [...], when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.'" This self-surrender costs Frodo dearly, although Tolkien, in the same letter, states explicitly what is implicit in the novel, that "Frodo was given 'grace': first to answer the call (at the end of the Council [of Elrond, in which representatives of the free peoples confer about the terrible danger of the Ring]) after long resisting a complete surrender; and later in his resistance to the temptation of the Ring... and in his endurance of fear and suffering." Frodo crawling up Mount Doom inevitably recalls the ascent of Jesus bearing the burden laid on Him. Frodo is, necessarily, the book's pre-eminent image of *agape* or charity, the fourth of Lewis's four loves. Frodo bears an evil load not of his own making to the place where it was forged and can be destroyed. Christ bore the burden of mankind's sin to the place of the cross, which was, many Christians have believed, the same place where grew that Tree whose fruit was sinfully plucked, long before. The scene of primordial evil becomes the place of the great sacrifice for the deliverance of others.

Especially for those rereading it, who know already what is going to happen, the reading of The Lord of the Rings can become a sort of ritual of the "Stations" not of the Cross, but of the Four Loves, which refreshes them. Many (re)readers probably think they are simply reading the most captivating fantasy of them all. But Fantasy, Tolkien said in *On Fairy-Stories*, can "recover" for us the reality of "common" things such as fire, bread, tree, iron – freeing them from the "drab blur of triteness or familiarity – from possessiveness." Such stories take "simplicities," "fundamental things," and make them luminous for us. He does this for no lesser matters than the Four Loves themselves, in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Binary issues and feminist issues in LOTR

David Pretorius

Even the most perfunctory glance through existing criticism on the work of J.R.R. Tolkien can highlight the fierceness of the debate that still rages, especially over his perhaps most widely read book, *The Lord of the Rings*. On one side are the critics who, like the masses of adoring fans, consider Tolkien a genius and feel that *The Lord of the Rings* can (and should) be studied as a serious work of literature. They feel that the text has an enormous amount to offer any reader or critic. On the other side are those who consider Tolkien's work to be laughable, and completely devoid of any real literary value. The splitting of Tolkien criticism into two such opposed camps is fitting in the light of the subject matter of *The Lord of the Rings,* which is essentially concerned with the war fought between the opposed forces of Good and Evil.

Among the issues under debate is the question of the form of the work; whether it is a novel or a romance. The first part of this essay will thus examine this question, arguing that it should be read as a romance, much the same as those written in the early Grail tradition. From here, the focus will fall on binary opposition as it appears in *The Lord of the Rings*. Finally, I will examine certain feminist issues as they appear in the text.

Novel or romance?

Roger Sale has made an interesting remark on the range of influences at work in the text. He says:

> [I]n Tolkien's Middle-earth lie the riders of Rohan, Beowulf-like in their love of lore, their simple and great strength, and their belief that brave men die well in defense of their lord and their honour; Aragorn, half-elven figure of romance, the wandering ranger who becomes King Elessar of Gondor; gigantic Wordsworthian tree-like Ents who swoop down in revenge on the man who treated them wantonly; Sam Gamgee, the namesake of Pickwick's servant, staunch in his servility and love of domesticity; Sam's master, Frodo Baggins, the real hero in this book where all must be heroic, who acts like any modern alienated man but who also is Tolkien's affirmation of possibility in a world where all old and other heroic types are by themselves inadequate. It is, thus, epic and romance and novel by turns, held together by a central myth that manages to partake of all the myths of all the heroes of the past without ever ceasing to be a myth of Tolkien's own devising (1968: 248).

This certainly is quite a list of influences. To say that Tolkien has managed to squeeze into his text "all the myths of all the heroes of the past" while remaining essentially original in his writing, certainly seems to be over-zealous adulation. Sale does, however, make some important points. The text has epic and novelistic elements, but remains mostly influenced by the romantic tradition. He correctly sees the main characters as being, for the most part, character types. He also mentions the text's similarities with Beowulf, in particular the connection to the riders of Rohan. John Tinkler has taken an extensive look at the use of Old English in Rohan. He mentions the use of, among other things, Old English in the naming of people. He points out that in the text, many people in Rohan have names beginning with Eo-, and explains that "[a]n Old English word for horse is *eoh*; and eo- appears as a combining form in *eored*, 'cavalry'. Hence, Eo- in the names of men of Rohan alludes to their fondness for, association with, and dependence upon horses" (1968: 165). He further points out that "[t]he great golden hall of Theoden is called Meduseld, and Meduseld, "mead-house, a house where feasting takes place," appears in *Beowulf*" (167). Tinkler shows that Tolkien not only uses Old English to name his Rohan characters, but even uses Old English when depicting speech in their native language. When Theoden, the king of Rohan, recovers from his languor brought about by the malevolent advisor Wormtongue, his nephew Eomer cries out, "*Westu Theoden hal!*" (1995: 506). Tinkler says, "This part of Eomer's speech is italicized in the text, indicating that he is speaking the language of Rohan, which here, is simply Old English. Eomer has said, 'Be thou healthy, Theoden'" (1968: 169). So here, one can see a very strong link between Rohan, Old English, and the most famous tale written in Old English, *Beowulf*.

Derek S. Brewer unhesitatingly classifies *The Lord of the Rings* as a romance (1979: 249), and says that the archetypal romance theme is that of the Quest (255). Using as a point of reference the romance written after the Dark Ages (especially the work of Chretien de Troyes), he considers the theme of romance to be that of transition, "the literary equivalent of what the anthropologists call rites de passage". This idea of transition will be returned to later. He further states that "the natural subject matter of romance, especially at this period, is adventure and love" (251). Love is a recurring theme in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as Aragorn's love for the Lady Arwen, Sam's love for Rose Cotton, and perhaps most important of all (because it is central to the plot) Sam's love for Frodo. Brewer has likened this relationship to that between the biblical David and Jonathan, and adds that "those who have not lived in warrior societies ... may easily underestimate the deep attachment that may exist between comrades in arms" (251-2). Upon Boromir's death, Aragorn kneels beside the body and weeps openly. Legolas the Elf and even the usually stern Dwarf Gimli are said to bow their heads in grief (1995: 404). Before casting his body adrift on the river Anduin, Aragorn and Legolas compose a song of farewell (407-8). The three companions then pursue Merry and Pippin, who have been captured by the evil orcs, with Aragorn saying, "The thought of those merry young folk driven like cattle burns my heart" (414). This is just one episode which serves to highlight Brewer's point of the love which exists between comrades in arms.

Hugh T. Keenan comments on Tolkien's use of 'the Wasted-Land-and-the-Wounded-King theme' when Gandalf "comes to Theoden's court, rouses the old king from illness, drives out Wormtongue, and thus restores the leader to his people and the land to its former vigor" (1968: 72-3). The central quest, that of Frodo to the Cracks of Doom to destroy the Ruling Ring, can also be seen to have elements of the Grail Quest. Traditional Grail quests involve a decaying of the land, corresponding with an illness of the king. The only answer is to find the Holy Grail, return with it, use it to heal the king and subsequently heal the land. *The Lord of the Rings* has an interesting variation to the traditional theme. The Grail object is an evil artefact that has to be destroyed before the land can be healed. Aragorn, the king who needs to be returned to his rightful throne, is also a questor. He journeys with Frodo and the rest of the fellowship for the first part of the quest. He does not immediately enter Gondor as the king, but first undergoes many battles and tasks. Perhaps the most interesting inversion is that, instead of assuming the role of Fisher King who needs to be healed, Aragorn is shown to be a natural healer. After Frodo is wounded by one of the wraiths, the Nazgûl,

Aragorn acts almost as a shaman. He sings over the remains of the knife that was used to stab Frodo and uses the plant 'athelas' to heal him (1995:193). Aragorn shows even greater natural healing abilities by being able to heal Faramir, the Lady Eowyn and Merry from a supernatural ailment brought about by close encounters with the Nazgûl (848-850). By doing so, he fulfils a prophecy of which Ioreth, an old woman who works in the Houses of Healing, reminds everyone in attendance: "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer" (945).

Thomas J. Gasque quotes Tolkien, who was giving a lecture defending the use of monsters in traditional northern mythology. Gasque comments on Tolkien's "own use of the northern imagination" in *The Lord of the Rings*, and considers the lecture to be "slanted toward a defense of his own work as well as of the genre" (1968: 151). Tolkien said that it is "the strength of the northern mythological imagination that ... put the monsters in the centre, gave them victory but no honour, and found a potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage" (151). It is not difficult to see how this can be applied to *The Lord of the Rings*. Monsters, or creatures of the imagination, play a central role in the text. All through the text, the forces of evil are represented by orcs, who do seem on many occasions to be victorious. They succeed in killing Boromir and sundering the fellowship of the ring. Much later, they succeed in capturing Frodo, the text's central quest hero. Beyond this, merely by force of numbers do they seem to hold the promise of victory over the forces of good. At the siege of Gondor, the scene is described as such:

> The numbers that had already passed over the River could not be guessed in the darkness, but when morning, or its dim shadow, stole over the plain, it was seen that even fear by night had scarcely over-counted them. The plain was dark with their marching companies, and as far as eyes could strain in the mirk there sprouted, like a foul fungus-growth, all about the beleaguered city great camps of tents, black or sombre red (1995: 803-4).

The central evil character, Sauron, is never seen but is always present. His presence is felt most tangibly through his captains, the Nazgûl. He very nearly gains victory over Gondor through the despair and fear alone, which his Nazgûl are able to inflict upon the men of the city. True to Tolkien's quote, though, these evil creatures have no honour, and in the end even have the victory taken from them. The orcs are constantly in-fighting. Sam is able to rescue Frodo because two groups of orcs, lead by their respective leaders Shagrat and Gorbag, kill each other in an argument over Frodo's spoils. On his way to rescue Frodo, Sam comments, "[I]t looks as if Shagrat, Gorbag and company have done nearly all my job for me" (884).

The section of the text that concerns Frodo and Sam's journey through the land of Mordor to destroy the Ring, is precisely that of a "potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage". The destruction of the Ring is a truly potent solution. When it finally falls into the Cracks of Doom, the results, seen through Sam's eyes, are positively cataclysmic:

> There was a roar and a great confusion of noise. Fires leapt up and licked the roof. The throbbing grew to a great tumult, and the Mountain shook ... A brief vision he had of swirling cloud, and in the midst of it towers and battlements, tall as hills, founded upon a mighty mountain-throne above immeasurable pits; great courts and dungeons, eyeless prisons sheer as cliffs, and gaping gates of steel and adamant: and then all passed. Towers fell and mountains slid; walls crumbled and melted, crashing down; vast spires of smoke and spouting steams went billowing up, up, until they toppled like an overwhelming wave, and its wild crest curled and came foaming down upon the land (1995: 925-6).

But this victory has not been easy to accomplish. From the beginning of the quest, it has been made known to Frodo that this is to be a terrible ordeal and a great risk. At the council of Elrond, where the decision is made to destroy the Ring by casting it into the fires of the Cracks of Doom, the journey is described as "a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril – to Mordor" (260). Later, Elrond says of the quest and the Ring, "...it is a heavy burden. So heavy that none could lay it on another" (264). At the last stages of their quest, especially, Sam and Frodo manage to pull themselves along solely with "naked will and courage". At one point in the text, Sam seems to undergo a transformation, as he faces the prospect of not surviving after completion of the quest:

> But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue" (913).

At many points in the text, Frodo is seen as struggling under the great burden of the Ring that he has agreed to carry, and still striving on regardless. Nearing the end of the quest, Sam says to Frodo, "There's nothing on the roads, and we'd best be getting away while there's a chance. Can you manage it?" Exhausted, malnourished and tormented by the magical weight of the Ring, Frodo answers, "I can manage it ... I must" (913).

The Lord of the Rings has many points at which one can trace connections to traditional mythology. But beyond this, the text is richly laden with imagery and style that would further suggest its classification not as a novel, but as a romance. The fight against Sauron is romantically epic in the face of the great adversity faced by the heroes. The very background of the action recalls Arthurian romance, with knights in armour, wielding magical weaponry and composing rousing and moving poetry at poignant moments. The siege of Gondor recalls the great Trojan siege, which was itself an extremely popular subject of romantic poetry, a wonderful example being Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. So Tolkien's work can confidently be called a romance written in the Quest tradition.

Binary opposition

Anne C. Petty raises the point that "[t]he key to mythic structure ... in the words of Claude Levi-Strauss, is 'binary opposition'" (1979: 78). Petty goes on to give a short explanation of the term binary opposition, using as an illustration the symbol for the yinyang. She highlights the important fact that "both opposing elements are necessary for wholeness, making them paradoxically complementary as well". *The Lord of the Rings* is rife with examples of binary opposition, and an understanding of some of these can add a new and important dimension to his work, which has been thought by some to be childish and of little literary value. Three very important and interrelated sequences of binary opposition are life versus death; the natural versus the unnatural; and good versus evil (at times in a very biblical sense). The following part of this essay will examine this notion.

Hugh T. Keenan has commented on *The Lord of the Rings*' "underlying and pervasive presentation of the basic struggle of Life against Death" (1968: 62). This is a very important observation, and it is certainly not difficult to find examples of such presentation in the text.

Brewer has highlighted the importance of the theme of transition in romance, specifically the passage into adulthood and death, suggesting "that whatever else *The Lord of the Rings* is ultimately 'about', it is certainly 'about' death (1979: 252). I would like to stretch this observation a little further, and suggest that it can be understood to be 'about' the confrontation of death

by the living. Death is a constant reality. Wars rage and all are in danger of being slain. The hobbits have an encounter with a Wight soon after parting company with Tom Bombadil. Tom can be seen as a symbol of the life element, in as much as he can be seen as a symbol of the earth itself. At the Council of Elrond, Tom is equated with the earth in the words of Galdor. In a discussion on the possibility of entrusting Tom with guarding the Ring, it is said of him, "Power to defy our Enemy is not in him, unless some power is in the earth itself" (259). Thus, Tom is the perfect character to rescue the hobbits from the Wight, a symbol of death.

Aragorn also must face death, when he rides through the Paths of the Dead, to enlist the help of the Oath-Breakers, a ghostly army of dead soldiers who cannot rest until they have fulfilled their oath to fight on the side of the King (758). Aragorn musters them and calls them to his aid.

The main heroes, and more importantly the focalisers, of the text are the hobbits. They are physically the size of human children, and can certainly be said to act in childlike ways. At Frodo's new home at Crickhollow, Pippin (the youngest and certainly the least mature of the hobbits) is shown playfully splashing his bath water all over the bathroom floor (1995: 99). They are constantly questioning the wise, such as during one exchange between Merry and Gandalf after the confrontation with Saruman. Gandalf laughs at all the questioning, and says, "A most unquenchable hobbit! All Wizards should have a hobbit or two in their care – to teach them the meaning of the word, and to correct them" (574). Later, Pippin is shown muttering like a spoiled child about not being allowed to have a closer look at the Palantir, the magical crystal ball thrown out of Saruman's window by his minion, Wormtongue. He says, "That – glass ball now. He seemed mighty pleased with it. He knows or guesses something about it. But does he tell us what? No, not a word. Yet I picked it up, and I saved it from rolling into a pool. Here, I'll take that, my lad – that's all" (576). Yet, like all children, the hobbits must grow up. As Brewer puts it:

> It is very significant that the Hobbits, who are at the centre of consciousness of *The Lord of the Rings* are Halflings, half as high as men ... Imaginatively they represent the emergence of the individual from childhood into realms of responsibility and danger. The cosy domesticity of the Shire ... is absolutely vital as representing the comfortable childish home from which everyone must be forced out (1979: 261).

The four leave the comfort of the Shire to embark upon a dangerous quest. They all pass through dangerous trials, and manage to return relatively unharmed. The effect that the quest has on each of the hobbits is symbolic of the transition to adulthood. This is most obviously apparent in Pippin and Merry. During their stay with the Ents, they partake of their Ent-drink. This has a permanent change on them, making them grow much bigger than any other hobbits ever before (with the possible exception of the legendary Bandobras 'Bullroarer' Took). They show the physical signs of the growth of the hobbits.

Of all the hobbits, Sam is the only one who marries. From the beginning of the quest, his devotion is always solely to Frodo. However, at the end of the quest, he marries Rose Cotton and has children with her (the only hint of sex in the entire text). He is also elected mayor of the Shire for many years. He thus moves from a position of servility to one of leadership. Sam is representative of the child growing up and entering the world of adult responsibilities.

Of the hobbits, Frodo is the unfortunate one who comes to represent the transition not only from childhood to adulthood, but from adulthood into death. Frodo experiences constant pain from his wounds. He says to Sam, "I am wounded ... wounded; it will never really heal" (1002). Frodo decides to journey with Bilbo and the elves to the mystical land to the west over the sea, which can be equated to the Arthurian Avalon. This is symbolic of Frodo's death, and admittance into heaven as a reward for his toils in the destruction of the Ring.

Frodo's 'death', however, occurs long before he is finally allowed to enter the western heaven. This death occurs in the demise of Gollum, who is Frodo's binary opposite. Part of the binary opposition is the recognition of the self in the other. Both Frodo and Gollum are obsessed with the Ring; Frodo is obsessed with destroying it, Gollum with the recovery of it. Frodo grows steadily weaker the closer he gets to Morder, itself an image of death, desolation and possibly even a symbol of hell itself. Conversely, Gollum becomes stronger and more in control as they enter the dead land of Morder. He is able to assume a kind of leadership in his role as guide. On one occasion, Frodo is glimpsed as almost another Gollum. After being rescued by Sam from the clutches of the orcs, Sam prepares to give Frodo the Ring back:

> Then quickly and strangely his tone changed. 'Give it to me!' he cried, standing up, holding out a trembling hand. 'Give it me at once! You can't have it!'
>
> 'All right, Mr. Frodo,' said Sam, rather startled. 'Here it is! ... You'll find the Ring very dangerous now, and very hard to bear. If it's too hard a job, I could share it with you, maybe?'
>
> No, no!' cried Frodo, snatching the Ring and chain from Sam's hands. 'No you won't, you thief!' He panted, staring at Sam with eyes wide with fear and enmity (890-1).

Brewer says of the relationship between Gollum and Frodo, "He is especially Frodo's alter ego, Frodo's own doubt, fear, suspicion, greediness, selfishness, cowardice ... Gollum is always being suppressed and rejected, but always there" (1979: 262). It is because Gollum and Frodo are so essentially linked that, after Gollum has died, Frodo lives on in a state of being only half alive, and it is only a matter of time before he gives up his mortal life in the Shire and sails away to the west over the sea. A part of him has died, and the rest cannot live on as it has for much longer. So Frodo, then, represents the transition from life to death.

After his death at the hands of the Balrog, Gandalf returns to life more powerful than ever before, and becomes something of a symbol of life. He is in direct opposition to the Nazgûl, who conversely stand as symbols of death. They have a piercing cry, which causes men to become petrified with fear. At the fiercest moments of fighting in the defence of Gondor, it is Gandalf who always runs to the aid of the soldiers when their hearts are about to give in, giving them new hope and courage.

Another theme of binary opposition is that of the natural (and literally, nature) as opposed to the unnatural. This is closely related to the opposition of life against death, with nature representing life.

Part of the evil envisioned under the rule of Sauron is the destruction of nature. It is this destruction on the part of evil that prompts the Ents to take up arms against this evil. Under Saruman's authority, orcs have been felling trees in the forest of Fangorn (462). In a conversation with Merry and Pippin, the Ent Treebeard notes a great difference between Gandalf and Saruman. He says of Gandalf, "Yes, I do know him: the only wizard that really cares about trees" (455). Saruman, on the other hand, is described as having "a mind of metal and wheels" (462). The orcs, at the siege of Gondor, make use of machines of war, while the men defending the city use old-fashioned weaponry and valour. One has a vision of the earth if it ever was to fall under the rule of Sauron in the descriptions of Mordor. Surveying it for the first time, this is the hobbits' first impression:

> The hobbits stood now on the brink of a tall cliff, bare and bleak, its feet wrapped in mist; and behind them rose the broken highlands crowned with drifting cloud. A chill wind blew from the East . Night was gathering over the shapeless

The White Rider *Lorenzo Daniele*

lands before them; the sickly green of them was fading to a sullen brown (589).

In contrast, the land of Lothlorien is alive and vibrant. Frodo is struck with wonder at his first sight of it:

> It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful (341).

The landscape itself becomes a symbol of life, just as the landscape of Morder is a symbol of decay. The importance of nature is, however, not just that it sustains and symbolises life, but it has a deeper, more religious meaning to it. The Lord of the Rings has a conspicuous lack of any sort of religion or deity. However, as William Dowie says:

> The religiosity of Tolkien's trilogy is neither conceptalised nor dogmatised within the story. Yet the sense of the sacred is present in blood and symbol and theme. It is the unvocalised religion of man in touch with nature and the cosmos (1979: 266-7).

Nature stands as a religious image itself, which is why Tolkien spends so much time on descriptions of the land, and on the importance of preserving nature. Dowie quotes Mircea Eliade, who says, "For religious man, nature is never only 'natural'; it is always fraught with a religious value. This is easy to understand, for the cosmos is a divine creation; coming from the hands of the gods, the world is impregnated with sacredness" (267). For this reason, all the heroic characters are shown to have a love of nature. Frodo is struck speechless at his first sight of Lothlorien. Sam is heartbroken at the destruction of the natural beauty of the Shire. Aragorn is also known as Strider, a Ranger who knows the land well, with knowledge of herbs and medicinal plants. His standard is a white tree, representing the white tree that his ancestor, Isildur, brought from over the seas. It has always stood in the courtyard of the king, but with the passing of years and the growing of evil it withered. Aragorn's discovery of the new sapling after his victory over Sauron and the reclaiming of his throne, is symbolic of the new life that now can grow in peace. These special trees are highly personified. Looking at the new sapling, Gandalf says, "Verily this is a sapling of the line of Nimloth the fair; and that was the seedling of Galathilion, and that a fruit of Telperion of many names, Eldest of Trees" (950). The old tree that is replaced is treated almost as a dead human: "Then the withered tree was uprooted, but with reverence; and they did not burn it, but laid it to rest in the silence of Rath Dinen [the tomb]" (950-1). As a further symbol of the renewal of life, the discovery of the new sapling heralds the arrival of Aragorn's betrothed, the Lady Arwen (951). They are married as the tree is in full blossom. Even the dwarf, Gimli, who prefers caves to trees, agrees to accompany Legolas the Elf on a journey to Fangorn.

While there is no overt religion in *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a lot of religious symbolism, which goes beyond the symbols of nature as sacred in itself. While not an allegory as such (or, at least, Tolkien himself would deny that it is so), the text has allegorical implications. It forms the basis of another binary opposition, that of Good versus Evil in the truly Biblical sense. Edmund Fuller says, "In Tolkien's Third Age an Ultimate Power is implicit" (1968: 29). Both the forces of Good and Evil are driven by higher powers. Gandalf says of Sauron, "Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary" (1995: 50). Even the 'Dark Lord', who has many minions working for him, is not the ultimate force of evil. Two other unmistakably evil characters, the Balrog and Shelob, are practically unaware of Sauron and are not his minions just because they are also evil.

The forces of Good are also guided by higher, unseen powers that remain essentially nameless in the actual story. As Dowie points out:

> In the appendix there is a reference to the 'One' ..., explanation of the Valar as 'the Guardians of the World' ... and of the word 'vala' as meaning 'angelic powers' ... However, next to nothing is made of these figures in the story itself. There are also many songs and invocations to Elbereth as a special intercessor for Elves and their friends. However, her power is not out of continuity with the many other powers in and about Middle-Earth, such as that of wizards and spells (1979: 266 footnote).

Yet the power is constantly present. There are two points in the text where characters are shown to recognise that they have been called upon to perform a certain task in the destruction of the Ring. Right at the beginning of the story when Gandalf explains to Frodo the nature of the quest that awaits him, Frodo complains, "I am not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring! Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?" Gandalf answers, "You may be sure that it was not for any merit that others do not possess; not for power or wisdom at any rate. But you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have" (1995: 60).

At the Council of Elrond, Elrond himself makes the following observation while discussing what is to be done with the Ring:

> That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find council for the peril of the world (236).

Elrond uses words such as 'called' and 'ordered', showing that another power is at work ordering the actions of others. Later, at the same council, Frodo volunteers to bear the Ring to the Cracks of Doom: "At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. 'I will take the Ring," he said, "though I do not know the way" (264). Here, again, is an example of a greater power using others to fulfil its purposes. This may seem very deterministic, making Frodo's heroism seem a great deal diminished, but as Dowie points out, "Frodo, Sam and the whole company overcome mountainous difficulties and finally reflect that splendour of courage through hardship. But up until the end, the possibility of turning back, giving up and keeping the Ring remains open. Freedom of will is a constantly affirmed theme" (1979: 276).

With Frodo's decision to remain Ring-bearer, the symbolism is more overtly Christian. Dowie has commented on the fact that the suffering of Frodo (and, less directly, Sam) under the weight of the Ring is like the metaphorical suffering of the human being under his "cross" (275). Frodo bears the Ring with very few complaints, and Sam suffers as he acts as companion to Frodo. On one occasion when he does complain, he says to Sam, "I can't manage it Sam ... It is such a weight to carry, such a weight" (1995: 916). Yet, almost immediately, he carries on planning the best way to reach Mount Doom, wherein they will find the Cracks of Doom. This is reminiscent of Christ's prayer to have the ordeal of the cross taken away, but still presenting himself as a sacrifice, anyway. Fuller mentions the role of Christ-figures in The Lord of

the Rings, saying:

> [I]t is possible to say that both Gandalf and Frodo, each in his way, appear not as Christ equivalents, but as partial anticipations of the Christ. With Frodo ... it lies in his vain wish that the cup might be taken away from him, and since it may not, he goes his long, dolorous way as Ring-bearer – a type of the Cross-bearer to come. More mystically with Gandalf, indicative of the operation of an unexpressed power behind the events, the wizard undergoes a harrowing prefiguring of the death, descent into Hell, and rising again from the dead (1968: 35).

Gandalf has two other roles which serve to highlight the strong Christian symbolism in the text. Fuller quotes from an interview with Tolkien, in which Tolkien has said, "Gandalf is an angel", and goes on to explain that, "Gandalf the Grey does indeed die in the mortal flesh in the encounter with the Balrog in the mines of Moria. Gandalf the White, who returns, is the angel in the incorruptible body of resurrection" (35). Gandalf, the angel figure, stands in direct opposition to the Balrog, which can certainly then be seen as a demon. This episode serves not only to prove that Gandalf is an angelic figure of great goodness and power, but also serves to show that Goodness is more powerful that Evil. Although both Gandalf and the Balrog perish in the battle on the mountaintop, it is Gandalf who casts the Balrog from the heights (another Biblical image, reminiscent of God casting Satan from the heavens). More importantly, only Gandalf is brought back to life, and as a more powerful entity. The forces of evil have no such power to resurrect the Balrog.

Gandalf's other role, before his transfiguration, is that of a pilgrim and wanderer. The elves of Lothlorien refer to Gandalf as 'Pilgrim Grey' (1995: 350) and the men of Gondor call him 'the Grey Wanderer' (809). Dowie quotes Mircea Eliade, who says pilgrims "proclaim by their 'walking', by their constant movement, their desire to leave the world" and that they "devote themselves wholly to 'walking' toward the supreme truth, which, in highly evolved religions, is synonymous with the Hidden God" (1979: 270). Christians often refer to themselves as pilgrims in the world, and say that they are "in the world, not of it". Gandalf, then, serves as a reminder that the physical world does not encapsulate the entirety of existence; there is a force and existence beyond the mortal realm. Sam has a thought that echoes this notion, while still in the land of Mordor "where the shadows lie" (1995:49) (a symbol of the "valley of the shadow of death", it can be argued):

> Far above the Ephel Duath in the West the night-sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach (901).

The East is constantly equated with evil. As has already been shown, the land of Mordor can be equated with the valley of the shadow of death. It is the seat of Sauron's power. The men who side with Sauron are called Easterlings, and are easily corrupted by evil. In contrast, the West is seen as the seat of goodness. The heaven-like haven the Elves sail away to lies over the sea to the West. When Saruman is killed, the scene is described as such:

> To the dismay of those that stood by, about the body of Saruman a grey mist gathered, and rising slowly to a great height like smoke from a fire, as a pale shrouded figure it loomed over the Hill. For a moment it wavered, looking to the West; but out of the West came a cold wind, and it bent away, and with a sigh dissolved into nothing (996-7).

The grey mist can be seen as Saruman's soul. For a moment it wavers, looking wistfully toward the Western 'heaven'; however, for his crimes (sin) he is denied access, and a wind, notably from the West, blows him away into nothingness.

Feminist issues

Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* shows nature to be sacred in itself. He also uses a lot of tradition Christian imagery in the text. In the character, these elements come together. Petty (1979: 49) comments on the fellowship of the Ring's meeting with the Elf Galadriel, saying that this is the Mythic "meeting with the goddess". She goes on to quote Joseph Campbell, "who has this to say about the goddess of the quest myth: 'she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection'". She is the powerful protector of the timeless land of Lorien, which itself is so vibrant, it seems to be alive. However, she is more than just a mythological goddess figure and protector of nature. Dowie quotes from a letter, written by Tolkien in response to a friend's letter:

> In a letter to his friend, Robert Murray, S.J., who had read the unpublished manuscript and commented how "without a word about religion, the book is all about grace," Tolkien answered,
>
> I think I know exactly what you mean by the order of grace; and of course by your references to Our Lady [Mary], upon which all my own small perception of beauty both in majesty and simplicity is founded. *The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision (1979: 284).

Galadriel, the most beautiful, gracious and powerful female any of the members of the fellowship have ever met, can be seen as a Mary-figure. She is able to see into the hearts of the travellers and probes their deepest desires (1995: 348). The Elves living in Lorien refer to her as "The Lady" (361), a title that recalls Mary's title as used by Tolkien, 'Our Lady'. She provides Frodo with a phial of liquid that glows brightly in the dark (367). This is symbolic of Mary's task of bringing light to mortals, in her position as mediator between them and God. Similarly, she gives to Sam a box containing soil. Again, this is a Biblical image, reminiscent of the parable of the good and bad seeds. When Sam uses the soil, it causes the trees in the Shire to re-grow very quickly, and contains a seed of the mallorn tree, which grows only in Lothlorien. This is symbolic of the gospel 'taking root' in people's hearts.

Petty states that Galadriel and Shelob are "binary opposites in Tolkien's conception" (1979: 81). She also points out that "Shelob is actually a reverse meeting with the goddess, in evil terms with disastrous results, directly opposed to the episode with Galadriel" (53). Galadriel can be seen as a symbol of goodness; the angel, opposed to Shelob as symbol of the devil. *In The Lord of the Rings*, these are the only female types that are used. Gilbert and Gubar (1980: 29) have commented on the phenomenon of the female devil-figure in male texts: "Emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts". They also note how this symbol is "incarnate [of] ... male scorn of female creativity". Shelob's monstrous deformity is shown in the following description: "Bloated and grown fat with endless brooding on her feasts, weaving webs of shadow; for all living things were her food, and her vomit darkness" (1995: 707). Her eyes also betray her monstrousness: "Monstrous and abominable eyes they were, bestial and yet filled with purpose and with hideous delight" (704). Her power is so

great that the words uttered by Frodo, a calling upon great holy figures of Elven history, which previously had the power to defeat one of the Nazgûl, have no effect on her (704).

The characterisation of Shelob highlights the point made by Gilbert and Gubar that the female devil-figure is symbolic of the male scorn of female creativity. Gilbert and Gubar (1995: 4) comment on "the patriarchal notion that the writer 'fathers' his text just as God fathered the world" (This could be a possible reason for the remarkably absent sexual element in the text). Shelob is described as slaying her mates and her own offspring. In light of the notion of male scorn of female creativity, Shelob's slaying of her offspring can be seen as the failure of female creativity, with women destroying literature just as Shelob destroys her brood. It is also a further way of highlighting her freakishness, as the killing of her own brood is something that should be unthinkable to any female.

The figure of Shelob, however, is more than just a binary opposite to Galadriel, or a manifestation of Tolkien's possible bias against female creativity. She also stands as a symbol of the frightening power of the female. In a patriarchal world, she stands opposed to the norm of being dominated by males. Even Galadriel, who is a powerful figure and who holds sway over lesser beings of both sexes, has a husband and lord, Celeborn. Shelob, quite literally, inhabits the place of female power in the symbolism of the text, not even paying heed to Sauron, the foremost figure of evil in the text.. Gilbert and Gubar have written an essay that takes a new look at Plato's famous *Parable of the Cave*. According to this parable, in which life is comparable to prisoners locked up in a dark cave, caves are symbols of entrapment and fear for males. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, "In this prison the slave is immured, the virgin sacrificed, the priestess abandoned" (93). However, "Plato does not seem to have thought much about this point, a cave is – as Freud pointed out – a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure ... the womb-shaped cave is ... the place of female power" (93 / 95). Shelob dwells in a cave that the hobbits can barely stand to enter. Even the mines of Moria, male-created, are not as oppressive, "Not since the lightless passages of Moria had Frodo or Sam known such darkness, and if possible here it was deeper and denser. There, there were airs moving, and echoes, and a sense of space. Here the air was still, stagnant , heavy, and sound fell dead" (1995: 701). The mines of Moria, although also essentially caves and therefore symbolic of femaleness, have been mined by the Dwarves. Therefore, even though also filled with terror and danger, they are easier to bear, because mines are caves that have been conquered and used by males.

Gilbert and Gubar comment on the male "dread" of the female, and on the desire of men to figuratively kill the female (14). Shelob's lair is a place of unimaginable terror for Sam and Frodo. Passing by the entrance to her inner chamber, the effect is powerful: "Here was some opening in the rock far wider than any they had yet passed; and out of it came a reek so foul, and a sense of lurking malice so intense, that Frodo reeled. And at that moment Sam too lurched and fell forwards" (1995:703). Shelob attacks and wounds Frodo, champion of the Age and its accompanying patriarchal order. Sam in his turn wounds Shelob with an appropriately phallic symbol: the Elven sword, Sting (719).

The image of the cave as place of female power can also be explored where it concerns the Dwarves, who are natural miners. They delve deep into the earth, claiming dominion over that which is supposed to be the realm of the female. However, they do not go unpunished. Delving too deep, they awake the Balrog, who drives the Dwarves out of their magnificent underground kingdom. The male miners have encroached too far into the realm of female power, and have been subsequently punished for it.

So it can be seen that in *The Lord of the Rings*, nature is an entity sacred in itself, but that Middle-Earth is not completely free of religious imagery. Galadriel is representative of the meeting point of nature's sacredness and religion. True to the nature of the text, she has her binary opposite in the figure of Shelob. Tolkien uses binary images liberally. Tolkien seems to have no hesitation in affirming that there very definitely is such a thing as evil, and its opposite, good. Dowie points out that,

> [t]he men of the West can go to battle with such fierce intensity against the orcs and the winged Nazgûl because while they are set in their course of power and destruction, they are wholly evil ... War in Faerie [the realm of magic inhabited by the characters in a quest romance], unlike war in reality, possesses no ambiguous shades of grey ... Neither values nor morality are relative in Middle-Earth (276).

Aragorn's words to Eomer, in response to his question, "How shall a man judge what to do in such times", are quoted. He answers, "As he ever has judged ... Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men" (1995: 427-8). This seems to be the crux of Tolkien's own moral thought: that evil and good are essentially unchanging, and people's morals should consequently remain unchanged.

The Lord of the Rings, a modern quest romance, has more literary worth than some literary critics would give it credit for. Tolkien has used binary oppositions to highlight many issues that are of extreme importance to him, most notably issues of morality and the striving of good against evil. As a product of his time and culture, he betrays some attitudes that, by today's standards can be seen as questionable. However, this has done little to curb the popularity of the book. This popularity, which in previous years hampered serious literary criticism, will hopefully in the years to come cause critics to look at *The Lord of the Rings* as serious and worthwhile literary work.

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J.R.R. Tolkien's use of an Old English charm

Edward Pettit

J.R.R. Tolkien wanted to create – or, as he saw it, rediscover – a mythology for England, its native heathen tales having been almost entirely lost due to the country's relatively early conversion to Christianity and the cultural and linguistic transformation initiated by the Norman Conquest.[1,2] Apart from the English treatment of the Scandinavian pagan past in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, scraps of lore in other Anglo-Saxon heroic poems, chronicles and Latin histories; 'impoverished chap-book stuff' from centuries later;[3] and inferences Tolkien could make using his philological expertise and knowledge of Old Norse literature, he had little other than his imagination to go on – barely more than the names of a few gods, mythical creatures and heroic ancestors.[4]

However, a few Anglo-Saxon charms do provide tantalising glimpses of something more. This article explores the use that Tolkien may have made of one of these: an Old English charm in alliterative verse against a sudden stabbing pain.

The Charm

The charm is found only in the late-tenth or early-eleventh Anglo-Saxon medical collection known as the *Lacnunga* ('Remedies'). It is usually thought to comprise a prose recipe ('Against a sudden stabbing pain ...'), words for recitation ('They were loud ...'), and finally a line of prose ('Then take the knife ...'). The text of the charm has been published many times, most recently by myself.[5] However, at the time Tolkien was writing and teaching, the edition most commonly used was that in Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, first published in 1876 but still the standard text-book in Oxford in the 1950s.[6] The following translation uses the text in the 1908 edition of Sweet, but is slightly repunctuated.[7]

'Against a sudden pain: take feverfew and the red nettle that grows in through a house and dock; boil them in butter.

They were loud, lo, loud, when they rode over the hill (*hlæw*),
They were resolute[8] (*anmode*) when they rode over the land.
Shield yourself now, so that you can survive this violence!
Out, little spear (*spere*), if you are in here!
I stood under a lime-wood shield, under a light shield,
Where the mighty women deliberated upon their power,
And they sent yelling spears (*garas*).
I will send another back to them,
A flying dart from the front in return.
Out, little spear, if it is in here!
A smith sat, forged a little knife (*seax*),
Badly wounded by iron.
Out, little spear, if you are in here!
Six smiths sat, made war-spears.
Out, spear! Not in spear!
If a piece of iron (*isenes dæl*) is in here,
The work of a witch (*hægtessan*), heat shall melt (*gemyltan*) it!
If you were shot in the skin, or were shot in the flesh,
Or were shot in the blood,
Or were shot in the limb, never may your life be injured.
If it were shot of gods (*esa*), or if it were shot of elves (*ylfa*),
Or if it were shot of witch (*hægtessan*), now I will help you.
This is your cure for shot of gods, this is your cure for shot of elves,
This is your cure for shot of a witch; I will help you.
Flee onto the mountain-top!
Be well! May the Lord help you.
Then take the knife. Put it in liquid.'

Interpreting the Charm

Our ignorance of Anglo-Saxon myth and folklore makes interpretation of many of the charm's details fraught with uncertainty; but, although this is frustrating for the probing scholar, it affords plenty of scope for imaginative interpretation by a myth-maker.

What seems clear is that the charm is spoken by a healer to help someone suffering from an acute stabbing pain of sudden and mysterious origin. He attributes the pain to a small piece of metal, imagined as a spear and, arguably, a knife; it has been shot into the victim by malicious riders, mighty women, gods, elves or a witch. The healer, who has apparently been attacked himself in the past and wants to retaliate, tries to extract the metal by commanding it to come out; he also tries to melt it, and perhaps to send it far away onto a mountain-top. These apparently different methods of cure — the melting seems to interrupt an otherwise logical sequence of extraction and banishment — might result from interpolation. Alternatively, they might exemplify, like the naming of various aggressors and body parts, the common tendency in charms towards universality of reference and defence — whatever the cause it will have been named, and whatever the cure the healer will work it.

The concept of attack by the projectiles of supernatural beings,

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1. All quotations from The Lord of the Rings are from the seven-volume Millennium Edition published in 1999. References are to book number and page.
I thank Professors Janet Bately and Jane Roberts for their comments on an earlier version of this paper; however, the ideas and any errors are mine alone.
2. See Tolkien (1981: letter 131), on which see Tolkien (1983: 22). Also relevant are Shippey (1992), Anna (1993), Agøy (1995), Hostetter and Smith (1995), Stenström (1995), Crashaw (2000) and Chance (2001). For what remains of Anglo-Saxon paganism see Wilson (1992), Page (1995), and North (1997).
3. The quotation is from Tolkien (1981: letter 131).
4. Principally, the gods Woden, *p*unor, Tiw, the goddess Frig, and the semi-mythical Ing; the elves, giants/trolls (including ents), 'night-walkers', and a creature called the mare (as in modern English 'nightmare'); and the heroes Hengest and Horsa. Of these, elves, ents and trolls feature prominently in Tolkien's works; the gods figure only briefly in the development of The Book of Lost Tales (see Tolkien [1983: 23] and [1984: 290]); Hengest and Horsa also feature in The Book of Lost Tales (see Tolkien [1983: 23] and [1984: 290-4, 304, 323]); 'night-walkers' are mentioned in The Lord of the Rings (V, 189). On Tolkien's use of Ing and related matters see Hostetter and Smith (1995).
5. The most important editions are by Cockayne (1864-6: III, 1-80), Wülcker (1883), Grendon (1909), Dobbie (1942), Storms (1948), Grattan and Singer (1952), and Pettit (2001).
6. According to Martsch (1995: 294-5), The Lord of the Rings was 'finished' in 1948, but Tolkien kept revising the first volume until April 1953.
7. Sweet (1908: XIX. II., 104-5); similarly Sweet (1922: 105); these texts differ slightly from that found in the current edition of Sweet's Reader, Whitelock (1967: 100-1). In my translation, Old English words of particular importance are italicised in parenthesis. My edition of the Lacnunga contains a better text and translation, and a full commentary; see Pettit (2001: Entry CXXVII).
8. Literally 'of one mind.'
9. Or 'malice', 'malicious (attack).'
10. A difficult passage, often thought to be textually corrupt, and which has been interpreted in various ways down the years. Cockayne (1864-6) has 'Sat the smith; he sledged a sword. / Little iron, wound sharp.' I present a new reading in my edition.
11. Or 'it shall melt!'

particularly elves, is common in European folklore; many other instances of charms to combat it exist – in Tolkien's beloved Finnish, for example – but none I think has quite the dramatic intensity or imaginative appeal of this Old English example. It certainly impressed the American poet Ezra Pound, who with regard to the first two verse lines said: 'For twenty years thereabouts I have had in my head a few fragments of Anglo-Saxon.' He also translated it, 'made it anew.'[12]

Tolkien did not, as far as I know, formally translate the charm, but I think some aspects of it settled among 'the leaf-mould of [his] mind',[13] to surface years later in a new context and form. As one student of Tolkien's use of other northern sources has said: 'His pattern of borrowing was unpredictable and elements borrowed were changed to meet his own purposes ... Tolkien's own imagination and creativity moulded, shaped, and sculpted elements from earlier stories to fit the needs of his own tales.'[14]

I hope to show how the charm may have informed Tolkien's conception of the Black Riders, their attack on Weathertop, and Elrond's cure of Frodo in chapters eleven ('A Knife in the Dark') and twelve ('Flight to the Ford') of the first book of The Lord of the Rings and the first chapter ('Many Meetings') of the second book. I do so not as a sterile, reductive exercise in literary dissection, but to enrich our sense of the work's 'rootedness' in the old Germanic world, to feel the reassuringly ancient bedrock from which much of its power derives.[15]

Tolkien's Use of the Charm in *The Lost Road* and *Quenta Silmarillion*

Before considering *The Lord of the Rings*, however, an instance of Tolkien's use of the charm in *The Lost Road* and the *Quenta Silmarillion* should be noted:

> *Thus cwæth Ælfwine Widlast:*
> *Fela bith on Westwegum werum uncuthra*
> *wundra and wihta, wlitescene land,*
> *eardgeard elfa, and esa bliss.*
> *Lyt ænig wat hwylc his longath sie*
> *tham the eftsithes eldo getwæfeth*[16]

"Thus said Ælfwine the far-travelled: 'There is many a thing in the West-regions unknown to men, marvels and strange beings, a land fair and lovely, the homeland of the Elves, and the bliss of the Gods. Little doth any man know what longing is his whom old age cutteth off from return.'"

Here the alliterative pairing *elfa ... esa*, an exact cognate of which is well attested in Old Norse poetry, corresponds to the charm's *esa ... ylfa* 'of gods ... of elves', with the elements reversed (as at least once in Old Norse).[17] That Tolkien is not simply translating the commoner Old Norse collocation is shown by the form *esa*; this form is phonologically unusual — one would expect *osa* in Old English — and is attested only in this charm.[18]

Tolkien's Use of the Charm in The Lord of the Rings

The Black Riders: Sound and Fury

Tolkien's concept of nine Black Riders (Ringwraiths/Nazgûl) was inspired, I believe, partly by Germanic myth and legend, not just by the Biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.[19] The riders in the first two lines of the Old English charm seem particularly suggestive of the Black Riders. Here, I propose, we find their loudness – be it their thundering hooves or piercing cry – and their single-minded determination in scouring the land.

The charm's riders are also 'shadowy' survivors of the Dark Ages; for we know no more about them than is told in the first two lines of the charm, and never shall – all else is supposition.[20] However, the reader naturally associates them with the mighty women, the witch, gods or elves mentioned later in the charm as the agents of harm.

Several of these associations raise others suggestive of the Black Riders, and can account for many of their characteristics:

1) Association with the gods (*esas*) and the hill (or burial mound) leads the Anglo-Saxon scholar to thoughts of the deified spirits of the ancestral dead, this being the first attested meaning of the earlier, cognate word *anses*.[21] The Black Riders, we may recall, were originally men of the Second Age and so also ought, by rights, to be dead.

2) Association with the spear-throwing women suggests the Old Norse valkyries, themselves servants of a sinister lord, for whom they flew to battlefields in search of new warriors.[22] Furthermore, valkyries are often thought to have flown through the air on steeds (compare 'rode over' in the charm?), like the Nazgûl later in *The Lord of the Rings*.

3) Association with the witch suggests the leader of the Black Riders, the Witch-King of Angmar.

4) Scholars also often connect the charm's riders with the Wild

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12 See Robinson (1982 [1993]: 243-5). For another literary recreation see Brooke (1892: 159-61).
13. Tolkien's expression, quoted in Carpenter (1977: 182).
14. St. Clair (1995b: 70, 72).
15. I agree with Orchard (1993: 84) that 'we might well inquire after the ingredients, without wishing to see them whole, if only the better to savour the soup.' Bibire (1993: 125), with whom Tolkien would probably have agreed, takes the opposite view: 'This informing power of the Old English text ranges from trivially comic quotation, to the elegiac resignation of the end of The Lord of the Rings. We should not look for, and in general we do not find, specific narrative or motivic relationships. Nor are they usually interesting when they can be found. The endless search for sources illuminates neither the original texts nor Tolkien's work, but (even if successful) reduces these great structures only to the constituent elements of which they may be made.'
16. Tolkien (1987: 44, 103, 203). These lines are also found in The Notion Club Papers; see Tolkien (1992: 244).
17. Stanza 17 of one manuscript of the Eddic poem Skírnismál ('Lay of Skírnir'); see Dronke (1997: 380, 407). For this poem's influence on Tolkien see also Shippey (2000a: 32-3). The Old English form of the word for 'god' is also found heading a list of the Valar in Tolkien (1986: 208): 'The chief gods are Fréan. ós (ése)'; and the charm's genitive plural form is seen in Esa-eard in Tolkien (1986: 283).
Another alliterative pairing — that of 'light' and 'linden' in Tolkien's poem 'Light as Leaf on Lindentree' — might also suggest use of the charm. This pairing is found in Old English only in this charm and in Maxims B ('light linden shield', ed. Shippey [1976: 68]). For Tolkien's poem, which was first published in 1925, and its textual history, see Tolkien (1985: 108-10, 120-3) and Tolkien (1988: 179-82, 187); the version in the Lord of the Rings (I, 252-4), told just before the attack on Weathertop, contains the line 'Of feet as light as linden-leaves.'
18. Tolkien's knowledge of Old English charms and remedies is also shown by his use of Lacnunga's term smeah wyrm 'penetrating worm.' This contributed to his conception of Smaug in The Hobbit; see Shippey (1992: 82). It also partly inspired Smeagol/Gollum; see Pettit (2001: II, 34-5). Tom Bombadil's exorcism of the Barrow-wight in 'Fog on the Barrow-Downs' (I, 188) has, for me, a flavour of the Old English metrical charm 'against a wen'; see the edition by Dobbie (1942: 128).
Tolkien's interest in charms is also indicated by his repeated use of galdor, the Old English word for them. It is the name of a man in The Silmarillion, of an elf in The Lord of the Rings, and renders Gondolin (Stangaldor(burg), Galdorfæsten) and Nargothrond (Stangaldor(burg)) in a list of names in Tolkien (1986: 210). Tolkien also wrote a poem entitled 'Iumonna Gold Galdre Bewunden', based on a line about a galdor in Beowulf; see Carpenter (1977: 270) and Shippey (2000a: 278).
19. For one reader's association of the Black Riders with the Four Horsemen see Amon Hen 173 (January 2002), 31. This accords with the apocalyptic nature of the war against Sauron. Note also that the Black Riders' chief identifies himself as Death in V, 113.
For analysis of the Black Riders as wraiths see Shippey (2000a: 119-28) and Shippey (2000b). Their 'sniffing' in search of Frodo recalls that of the dragon in Beowulf, which 'sniffed along the stone' (l. 2288) and discovered a thief's footprints.
20. Consequently it is, at least for me, hard to imagine them other than as dark.
21. See Bosworth (1898: sv. ós) and North (1997: 136-7).
22. Cf. the Eddic poem Völuspá, in which the valkyries are said to be *görvar at ríða grund* ('ready to ride the ground'); Dronke (1997: 15). See further Simek (1993: art. 'valkyries').

Hunt. This was a band of ghostly huntsmen, sometimes led by the god Odin, that, like the Black Riders — 'hunters' (II, 60) who 'rode like a gale' (I, 233) and 'seemed ... to run like the wind' (I, 281)[23] – was associated with howling winds and storms.[24]

For the number of Black Riders, Tolkien chose the commonest 'mystic' number in Germanic lore. The number nine's importance in England, and its applicability to evil creatures, is evident elsewhere in the *Lacnunga*; for example, from its prominence in the Old English Nine Herbs Charm, which the first and best-known early translation says avails 'against venom and vile things / And all the loathly ones, / That through the land rove,'[25] and 'against nine fugitives from glory, / Against nine poisons and against nine flying diseases.'[26]

For the Riders' blackness and that of their horses, Tolkien may have drawn – although a single 'source' hardly seems necessary here – on a similar account from early England: an eerie entry for the year 1127 in a manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It is often thought to describe the Wild Hunt. In translation it reads as follows:

> 'Nor shall it be thought strange what we say as truth, for it was fully known over all the land ... it was heard and seen by many men: many hunters hunting. The hunters were black, and great and loathly, and their hounds all black, and wide-eyed and loathly, and they rode on black horses and black he-goats. This was seen in the very deer-park in the town of Peterborough, and in all the woods from the same town to Stamford; and the monks heard the horns blowing that they blew at night. Truthful men who kept watch at night said that it seemed to them that there might well be about twenty or thirty horn-blowers.'[27]

The Attack on Weathertop: A Cold Knife/Spear

Just as the charm's riders ride over, and arguably attack on, a hill, so Tolkien's Black Riders attack the Fellowship in a dell on the hill Weathertop.[28] This might be coincidental, but other details of the attack seem to echo the charm too.[29]

Frodo is attacked by the Witch-King of Angmar ('Iron-Home'). He stabs Frodo with a knife that we later learn is a Morgul-knife ('black-magic knife'), so that Frodo feels 'a pain like a dart of poisoned ice pierce his left shoulder' (I, 258). Its point breaks off within him. All this finds parallel in the charm: there too we find both spear/dart and knife, and the embedded 'piece of iron' is specifically attributed to the 'work of a witch.'

Furthermore, when Tolkien writes of a 'pain like a dart of poisoned ice', of a 'thin, piercing chill' (I, 257), and of 'a breath of deadly cold [that] pierced him like a spear' (I, 281),[30] he may be drawing on a figurative use of *gar*, a common Old English word for 'spear' used in the charm. This use is found only once in Old English, in a description of the torments of Hell in the poem *Genesis B*:

> 'Then an eastern wind comes in the very early morning,
> intensely cold frost, always fire or *gar*.'[31]

Rightly or wrongly, *gar* was here interpreted early on as meaning 'piercing cold' rather than literally 'spear.'[32]

The Morgul-Knife: A Herb for the Wound

After the attack on Frodo, Strider finds the Morgul-knife minus its point:

> He stooped again and lifted up a long thin knife. There was a cold gleam in it. As Strider raised it they saw that near the end its edge was notched and the point was broken off. But even as he held it up in the growing light, they gazed in astonishment, for the blade seemed to melt, and vanished like a smoke in the air, leaving only the hilt in Strider's hand. (I, 260-61)

Although the charm also speaks of metal melting, Tolkien here drew on another Old English poem. Readers of *Beowulf* will recall the melting of the giant sword with which the hero kills the monster Grendel's mother:

> 'Then, because of the battle-gore, that sword, the fighting blade, began to dwindle into icicles of war. It was a marvel of marvels how it all melted away, just like the ice when the Father, he who has power over times and seasons, loosens the fetters of frost, unbinds the water's bonds.[33]

That *Beowulf* is Tolkien's inspiration here becomes even clearer when, later in the chapter, Strider shows the hilt to Glorfindel, who studies it and declares (I, 277): 'There are evil things written on this hilt.' Just so, Beowulf shows the hilt to the Danish king Hroðgar, who examines it and sees engraved, either in pictures or runes, the story of the Flood's destruction of giants.[34]

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23. Similarly I, 276, and I, 280 ('a rushing noise as if a wind were rising'). Note also Frodo's dream (I, 167): "There was a noise like a strong wind blowing, and on it was borne the sound of hoofs, galloping, galloping, galloping from the East. 'Black Riders!' thought Frodo as he wakened, with the sound of the hoofs still echoing in his mind."
24. On the Wild Hunt see de Vries (1956-7: Index under 'Wilde Jagd'), Briggs (1976: art. 'Wild Hunt, the'), Simek (1993: art. 'Wild Hunt'), Orchard (1997: art. 'wild hunt'), Jones and Pennick (1995: 160), and Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain (p. 105). That the Wild Hunt is behind the depiction of the Black Riders is suggested by the similarity of their demise. Just as the Black Riders' horses were drowned in the Ford of Bruinen so, according to a late-twelfth-century account by Walter Map, the ghostly hunt of the British King Herla was drowned in the river Wye; see Briggs (1976: art. 'King Herla'). Tolkien doubtless knew Map's account at first hand. It is analogous to the Fairy Hunt of the Middle English poem Sir Orfeo, the standard edition of which is indebted to Tolkien's scholarship. For the original text and Tolkien's translation of the Fairy Hunt in this poem see, respectively, Bliss (1966: 26) and Tolkien (1975: 122). Tolkien's early, in-depth study of Sir Orfeo is evident from his glossary thereto in Sisam (1921).
Aragorn's leading of the Dead into battle is probably also indebted to the Wild Hunt. Note especially (V, 61): "... folk that were afield cried in terror and ran like hunted deer. Ever there rose the same cry in the gathering night: 'The King of the Dead! The King of the Dead is come upon us!' ... the Grey Company in their haste rode like hunters..."
25. Cockayne (1864-6: III, 33).
26. Pettit (2001: I, 65). The numeric balance determined by Elrond before the Fellowship leaves Rivendell ('The Company of the Ring shall be Nine; and the Nine Walkers shall be set against the Nine Riders that are evil', II, 80) may recall the Nine Herbs Charm's 'These nine (?)fight against nine poisons.' The same charm includes at least one fighting plant ('This is the herb which fought against the snake'), a concept that might have made a small contribution to Tolkien's Ents.
27. Savage (1983: 261); see also Swanton (2000: 258). For the original text see Plummer (1892, 1899: I, 258, 304) or Clark (1970: 50). Tolkien, whether consciously or not, may have transferred the horn-blowing of these twelfth-century hunters to that of the hobbits, because other elements of the account — the monks listening and the night watchmen — find parallel in Frodo and Strider (I, 233-4):
In the early light Frodo woke from deep sleep, suddenly, as if some sound or presence had disturbed him. He saw that Strider was sitting alert in his chair ... Frodo soon went to sleep again; but his dreams were again troubled with the noise of wind and galloping hoofs. The wind seemed to be curling round the house and shaking it; and far off he heard a horn blowing wildly.
28. Cf. the description in 'Flight to the Ford' later (I, 280): 'At the same moment the black horses leaped down the hill in pursuit, and from the Riders came a terrible cry, such as Frodo had heard filling the woods with horror in the Eastfarthing far away.'
29. For earlier versions of this scene see Tolkien (1988: chap. X).
30. Note also the description of a Nazgul's cry in IV, 11: '... it pierced them with cold blades of horror and despair...'
31. My translation. The original text is in Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader and in Doane (1991).
32. See Doane (1991: 265). Cf. the association of spears and cold in Beowulf: 'many a morning-cold spear (gar)'; ed. Swanton (1978), lines 3021-2.
33. Swanton (1978: 111).
34. I wonder whether it is mere coincidence, then, that the Black Riders are drowned in a flood — as in the account by Walter Map mentioned above — but, like the giants of Beowulf, not annihilated thereby (II, 11-12).

However, Strider's actions immediately after finding the knife recall the world of charms and herbal remedies:

> He sat down on the ground, and taking the dagger-hilt laid it on his knees, and he sang over it a slow song in a strange tongue. Then setting it aside, he turned to Frodo and in a soft tone spoke words the others could not catch. From the pouch at his belt he drew out the long leaves of a plant. ... He threw the leaves into boiling water and bathed Frodo's shoulder.' (I, 261)

The Cure: 'It Shall Melt'

Frodo's life is saved by the Elven lord Elrond, but details of how the cure was effected are given only afterwards at second-hand. We do not know what, if any, healing words Elrond spoke, but the charm's influence can, I think, be detected from Gandalf's description of the cure to Frodo:

> 'Elrond is a master of healing, but the weapons of our Enemy are deadly. To tell you the truth, I had very little hope; for I suspected that there was some fragment of the blade still in the closed wound. But it could not be found until last night. Then Elrond removed a splinter. It was deeply buried, and it was working inwards.'
> Frodo shuddered, remembering the cruel knife with notched blade that had vanished in Strider's hands. 'Don't be alarmed!' said Gandalf. 'It is gone now. It has been melted.' (II, 8-9)

Elrond, then, apparently had to search hard for the sliver[35] – just like, it may be thought, the charm's healer with his repeated 'if you are in here' and 'if you were shot in the skin ... flesh ... blood ... limb.' Having found it, Elrond extracted it – compare the charm's repeated command 'Out!' He then melted it, as in the charm's 'heat shall melt it!'[36]

Conclusion

Only in this Old English charm, I believe, do we find brought together so many of the ideas evident in the attack on Weathertop and its aftermath in *The Lord of the Rings*: mysterious riders attacking on a hill; a stabbing by a witch-figure associated with iron; an embedded shard of metal causing pain likened to that of a spear or knife; and an experienced healer who extracts and melts the shard. On this basis, I submit that this humble literary artefact caught the imagination, 'came like native air to the mind',[37] of the writer of one of the greatest works of imaginative fiction.

Note on Letter 236

Tolkien discusses matters touching on this Old English charm in a postscript to a letter written in December 1961.[38] He observes how little is known about the Anglo-Saxon elf, and says that it was associated with rheumatism, toothache and nightmares. He states that "there are no songs or stories preserved about Elves or Dwarfs in ancient English, and little enough in any other Germanic language. Words, a few names, that is about all. I do not recall any Dwarf or Elf that plays an actual part in any story save Andvari in the Norse versions of the Nibelung matter. There is no story attached to Eikinskjaldi, save the one that I invented for Thorin Oakenshield ... In all Old English poetry 'elves' (*ylfe*) occurs once only, in *Beowulf*."

Although rheumatism was an affliction early scholars often identified with the charm's 'stabbing pain', Tolkien here overlooks the charm's two instances of *ylfa*.[39] However, little should be made of this, because he certainly *did* know the charm. Indeed, his whole statement shows a serious lapse of memory. For in it he not only overlooks the charm, but also well-known stories in the Old Norse *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda* that he had read and used.[40]

The *Poetic Edda* includes three poems in which dwarves or elves play a major part: *Völuspá* ('Prophecy of the Seeress'), which gives not just many of their names, but also details of their creation, migration and reaction to Ragnarok; *Völundarkviða* ('Lay of Völundr'), about the elf-smith Völundr (Old English Weland); and *Alvíssmál* ('Words of Alvíss), about the dwarf Alvíss. The *Prose Edda* tells of the origin of dwarves (drawing upon *Völuspá*), of the dwarves East, West, North and South who support the sky, of two dwarves' creation and loss of the mead of poetry, and of how the 'black-elves' Brokk and Eitri forged wondrous gifts for the gods.[41]

Tolkien's knowledge of these works is obvious from his writings: for example, he took the names of Gandalf and the dwarves in *The Hobbit* from *Völuspá* (which is also found in *The Prose Edda*);[42] the conversation with Smaug is indebted to the Eddic *Fáfnismál* ('Lay of Fáfnir'); the Misty Mountains and tribes or orcs probably have origins in the *Eddic Skírnismál* ('Lay of Skírnir'); the Eddic *Helgakviða Hiörvarðssonar* ('Lay of Helgi Hiörvarðssonr') – or *Alvíssmál* – is the likely inspiration for the story told in *The Hobbit* of the trolls who turn into stone because they are kept talking until dawn;[43] and *Alvíssmál* might also be a source for the notion that gods, elves, dwarves and giants have different languages.

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35. We know from earlier in the story that Frodo's 'wound was small, and ... already closed' (I, 268).
36. In an earlier version of the wound's cure, published in Tolkien (1988: 207), Gandalf says merely: 'Elrond bathed and doctored it for hours last night after you were brought in. He has great power and skill, but I was very anxious, for the craft and malice of the Enemy is very great.'
37. The quotation is from Briggs (1976: art. 'Tolkien, J.R.R.').
38. Tolkien (1981: letter 236).
39. He might have been misled by the standard dictionary of Old English (Bosworth 1898: sv. ælf). If he were quickly consulting this work, he might have deduced that Beowulf's was the only poetic instance of the word, because it gives the charm's instances of *ylfa* under a different headword (ilf, e), to which the entry for ælf lacks an accurate cross-reference.
40. Tolkien was, of course, expert in Old Norse, and makes detailed reference to Eddic poems in his scholarly writings; see, for example, Tolkien (1936) and (1982). On Tolkien's knowledge of these and other sources see Shippey (1992: Appendix A), Heinemann (1993), St. Clair (1995a), and Day (1994: chap. 3). Tolkien read the Norse myths not only privately, but also with 'The Coalbiters' — the informal Old Norse reading group at Oxford which, according to Humphrey Carpenter (1977: 152) (see also [1978: 56]), fulfilled its aim of 'reading all the principal Icelandic sagas and finally the Elder Edda.' Tolkien composed an Eddic poem, Völsungakviða En Nyja ('New Lay of the Volsungs'), to fill a gap in the Poetic Edda; see Tolkien (1981: letter 295, and p. 452). According to Bibire (1993: 124), he also translated the Eddic poem Atlamál ('Lay of Atli') into Old English.
41. For a full edition of the Poetic Edda see Neckel and Kuhn (1983). Translations include Bellows (1923) and Larrington (1996). The Prose Edda is edited by Faulkes (1982) and (1998), and translated by Faulkes (1987). Other well-known Old Norse stories about dwarves could be mentioned.
42. See Allan (1978: 220-6).
43. Tolkien (1937: chap. 2); also referred to in The Lord of the Rings (I, 271). The trolls and their dwarf-filled sacks doubtless derive from Beowulf's Grendel and the use to which he puts his glove.

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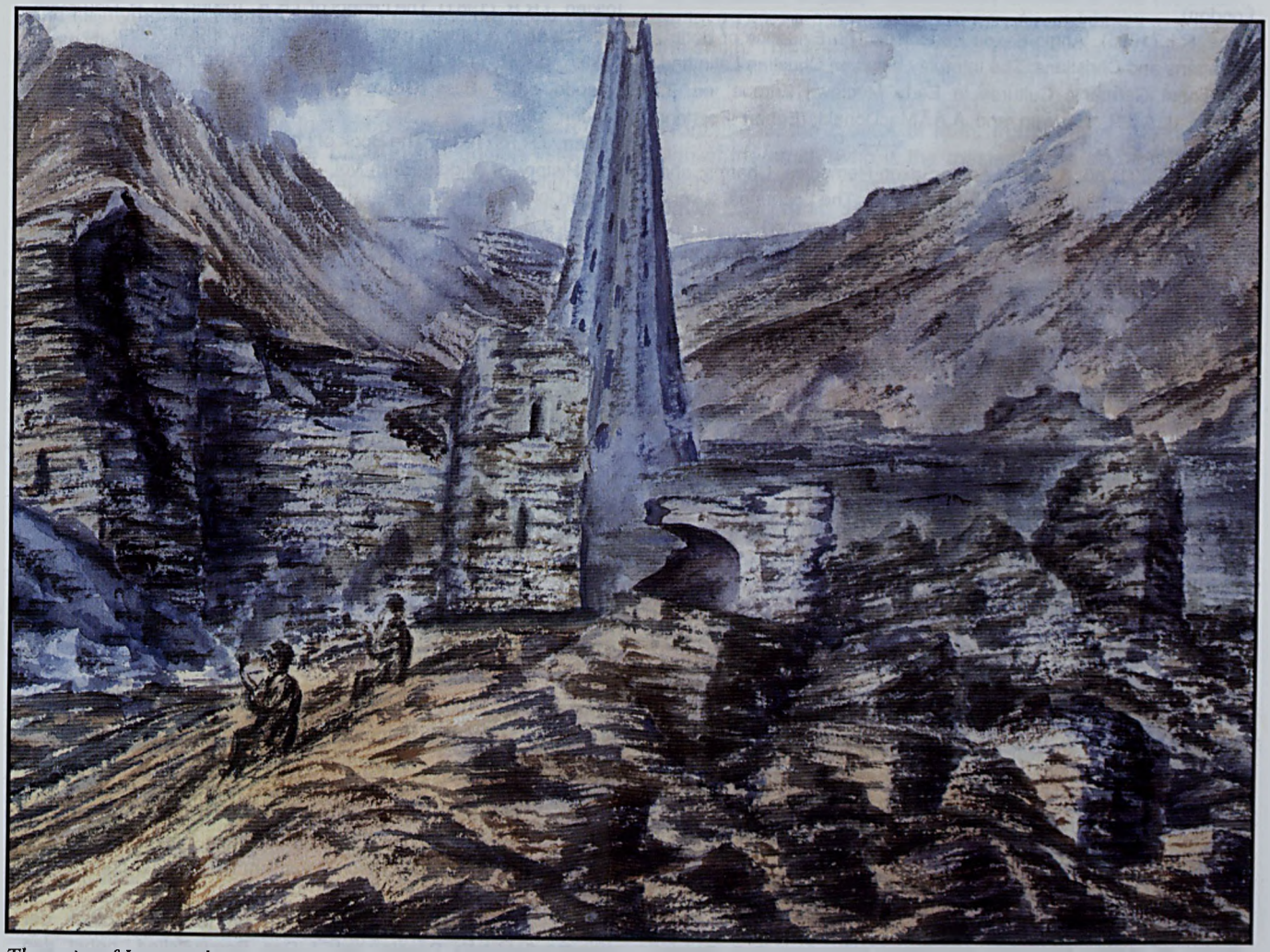

The ruin of Isengard

John Ellison

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The Ring
An essay on Tolkien's mythology

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J.R.R. Tolkien thought it unfortunate and dismal that England was one of the few places in northern Europe without a proper mythical background. He sought to recreate a mythical world that should have been created by the Anglo-Saxons between the time of the Roman retreat in AD 419 and the Norman Conquest in AD 1066. He found inspiration for his undertaking in many mythological manuscripts. His chief sources of inspiration came from Norse mythology, Celtic mythology, and the scraps of Anglo-Saxon mythology at hand.

My aim is to show how these different sources inspired Tolkien when writing *The Lord of the Rings*. More specifically, I will deal with Tolkien's use of the ring as a symbol. The ring is an ancient symbol with great importance in Northern European myths and history. Tolkien claims that the One Ring is archetypical. This is true for all the mythological content in his writings. His faerie should be read as the primary source for all mythologies dating back almost forty thousand years. In dealing with the One Ring (henceforth referred to as O), and its mythological ancestors, I will discuss the roles of the smith, the magician, the alchemist, and the shaman.

The reader of this essay should be familiar with *The Lord of the Rings* (hereafter referred to as LotR; pages as e.g. 1:25, where 1 is Book One [not to be confused with part one of the trilogy.] and 25 is the page in the edition listed as primary source in the bibliography), as well as with *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion*, and *Unfinished Tales*. Having read "The monsters and the critics", and "On Fairy-Stories" is also helpful. Works by Tolkien, other than LotR, will be referred to by its title, and where relevant with page(s). My chief source for the myths is David Day's *Tolkien's Ring*. In the cases of the *Volsunga Saga*, *Beowulf*, and Celtic myths, I have managed to find other translations into English. In other cases, I have had to rely on Day's retelling of the myths, with one eye in *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*.

To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. Few attempt such difficult tasks. But when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 49)

Forging of Rings

Tolkien's mythology of Middle-earth is intentionally rooted in northern European mythic traditions. There are, however, aspects of the Greco-Roman tradition evident in Tolkien's tales. The first European myth featuring a ring is probably the Greek myth about the Titan Prometheus. This myth links the ring to many images of power, which later emerge in the ring quest tradition.

The Titans, the giant sons and daughters of Gaea, was a race that ruled the earth before the Olympian gods. Prometheus, a smith and magician, prophesises the coming of the Olympian gods and the Titans' downfall. Although he grieves for his people, he decides to befriend and help the new gods, rather than fight them and perish with the rest of his race. Prometheus gives the Olympian gods gifts of wisdom and knowledge. The crippled god Hephaestos is taught the skill of forging metals. Prometheus loves the earth and his great curiosity leads to the discovery of the secret of life. He uses this knowledge in the creation of man. Furthermore, he gives man the gift of fire, the light of wisdom, and the heat of unquenchable desire. The Olympian gods think that Prometheus made man in order to overthrow them, and therefore Zeus swears to chain Prometheus to the Caucasian Mountain for all eternity with chains forged out of adamantine by Hephaestos. As further punishment, Zeus sends a great eagle and a huge vulture to hack out Prometheus' liver every day. Every night, the liver grows back again. Prometheus thus suffers a similar fate to the other Titans. Later the gods find pleasure in the mortals created by Prometheus, Zeus regrets his harsh treatment of Prometheus, and sends his son Heracles (the result of Zeus' union with a mortal woman) to break the chains. However, as he had sworn to keep Prometheus chained to the Mountain, he takes a rock fragment and magically attaches it to a link of the chain. This link he then closes around one of Prometheus fingers (Day, 1994, 115-118; Gray, 1999, 12ff).

Man can therefore be said to wear rings to honour Prometheus, the creator of man. Furthermore, the ring is a sign of the smith, who is the master of fire and forging, and the magician, the master of the secret of life. According to David Day (1994, 151), Sauron, in the disguise of Annatar (the Lord of Gifts) mirrors Prometheus in giving gifts of knowledge and skill to the Elven smiths. Sauron, however, really betrays the elves. He tricks them into forging the Rings of Power, with which they can create magical wonders, and secretly forges O to control them all (*The Silmarillion*, 287f).

Tolkien's Vala Aulë the Smith is much more like Prometheus than Sauron, who is a Maia; i.e. a lesser god. Since the Olympian gods are lesser gods than the Titans are, this places Sauron in Hephaestos' position. Sauron is originally a servant of the Vala Aulë, the creator (*The Silmarillion*, 27), but turns away from creation when he starts serving the Vala Melkor, the destructor (*The Silmarillion*, 16ff). In fact, the one mirrored by Sauron is Aulë, who originally gives the gift of alchemy to the Elves.

The Alchemist

The Alchemist is a magician and a smith, and the symbol for the alchemist is a gold ring in the form of an Ouroboros. The Ouroboros is present in the Babylonian serpent called Ed, the Greek Ophion, the Hindu Sheshna, the Chinese Naga, and the Norse Jormangand. The Alchemist's ring represents universal knowledge and eternity. Dactylomancy, or the use of rings for divination and magic, has been practised throughout history. The Alchemist has the power to transform the world using both physical and magical fire. Prometheus could be said to be the first Alchemist. The good alchemist is the scientist, who wishes to study nature, maintain order, and perform small wonders within the boundaries of his art and the natural (or magical) world. The evil alchemist is a mad engineer, who wants to transform the world and ultimately destroy it. In LotR, Melkor and Sauron are evil alchemists,

reforging the creations of the Valar and the Elves into vile creatures (*The Silmarillion*, 50), ravaged land, and ultimate darkness (Day, 1994, 147-150).

The nine human kings rewarded with Power Rings succumb quickly to Sauron, and most human races fall under his spell (*The Silmarillion*, 289). These nine human kings are the Ring-wraiths, Sauron's most dreaded servants. The enemies of Sauron who are resilient possess alchemical power of their own. These are the Noldor Elves, the Dwarves, and the Númenoreans.

Greatest of the Noldor Elves is Fëanor, who in *The Silmarillion* (67) combine elvish spells and the smith's skills to forge the Silmarils. These are stolen by Sauron's master, Melkor, and this results in the wars of the First Age. Fëanor's grandson is the Noldor prince Celebrimbor, the Lord of the Elven-smiths of Eregion, who forges the Rings of Power (*The Silmarillion*, 286ff), over which the wars of the Second and Third Ages are fought.

The Dwarves are tough opponents (*The Silmarillion*, 288f), for they are shaped by Aulë the Smith. They are resistant to both physical and magical fire. Telchar the Smith (3:533; *The Silmarillion*, 94, 177) forges the knife Angrist, which is used to cut a Silmaril from Melkor's iron crown (*The Silmarillion*, 181), and the sword Narsil, which is used to cut O from Sauron's hand (*The Silmarillion*, 294).

The Númenoreans and their Dúnedain descendants on Middle-earth learn their alchemical skills from the Noldor Elves and the Dwarves. The Dúnedain are not given Rings of power. Instead, Isildur, the High King of the United Kingdom of Gondor and Arnor, cuts O from Sauron's hand, ending the Second Age. During the Third Age, the kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor are the chief obstacles to Sauron's domination of Middle-earth. Isildur is killed and O falls into the river Anduin. Arnor is lost to the Witch-king of Angmar, the lord of the Nazgûl (the Ring-wraiths), and Gondor is ruled by a steward. With the help of the Rohirrim and the exiled Dúnedain, Gondor is left to fight Sauron (*The Silmarillion*, 294ff).

In addition, there are the five Istari, Maias who were sent by the Valar to Middle-earth to fight Sauron (*The Silmarillion*, 299ff). The three mentioned in LotR are Radagast, Saruman, and Gandalf. Radagast, who is chosen by Yavanna, is chiefly concerned with small animals and birds. Saruman (chosen by Aulë) is corrupted by the power of O, and tries to capture it for himself (2:276f). Only Gandalf (chosen by Manwë, the king of Arda [the World]) seems to understand the alchemical nature of the problem. He also wears one of the three Elven Power Rings, Narya, which makes him Sauron's most powerful opponent. Without Narya, Gandalf would probably have perished in his battle with the Balrog of Moria (a Maia in the form of a mighty demon, see 3:348f). Gandalf understands that ultimately the only way to defeat Sauron and his evil ring is to undo the alchemical process by which it was made (See also *Unfinished Tales*, 436-459, 502-520)

There is one more race to consider. The Hobbits appear about the same time as Sauron reappears in the Third Age. It is my theory that they are created by Aulë for his pleasure as well as a last defence against Sauron. The strength of the Hobbits lies in their nature, which is the opposite of Sauron's essence. The Hobbits love the natural world and have no wish to dominate it or the creatures in it. They are very curious about the world, but they would rather keep a safe distance from magic and other dangers than go on quests to the Cracks of Doom. Yet, that is exactly what they eventually do. Throughout LotR and *The Hobbit*, nearly all the great deeds are achieved, or are caused to be accomplished, by hobbits (Sale, 1969). Bilbo's adventures result in the death of Smaug the Dragon (*The Hobbit*, 262) and he finds O (*The Hobbit, 79*). Meriadoc assists in the termination of the Witch-king of Morgul (5:875), and with Peregrin motivate the Ents to destroy Saruman's Tower (3:507). Sam mortally wounds the giant Shelob the Spider (4:755) and, most important of all, Frodo (with Gollum) destroys Sauron and O in Mordor (6:982).

Language of Rings

The Anglo-Saxon *Exeter Book*, which was compiled and written circa AD 1000, tells of a precious ring that speaks without words to people who understand its magic speech. Talking rings appear in many myths, but mostly it is a spirit, demon, or something similar, that is trapped in the ring and speaks to its owner. Alchemists and other scholars have used rings as a means of gaining knowledge and power through memory systems based on rings. The knowledge preserved by the rings was heathen arcane lore, and therefore evil; at least according to the Christian Churches, who persecuted heathen practices, including the mystic usage of rings, throughout the Middle Ages. Another way that rings might speak is through fortune telling such as is performed by Lapp shamans. They place a ring on a drum, watch it dance around while tapping the sides of the drum, and then interpret the movements (Day, 1994, 12, 23, 154-157).

In LotR O speaks to the ones who come close enough and become interesting to its purpose, which is to seek a way back to its creator Sauron. Gollum (Smeagol the hobbit) wears O for centuries, and in his dialogues with himself, it is possible that he is actually talking to O and it to him. Gandalf, and others, say that O speaks to them, giving them visions of what they might do if they chose to wield it (See e.g. 1:75). O promises the type of power that would interest the person in question. Sam Gamgi, Frodo's gardener, has visions of a flowering Mordor and envisions himself as a great Elf-warrior (6:935), while Boromir sees himself crushing Sauron's forces and saving Gondor (3:418). Galadriel wields the Power Ring Nenya, with which she keeps Lothlórien evergreen, and defends its borders against Sauron. Nenya allows her to perform a kind of fortune telling in the Mirror of Galadriel (2:381ff), and both Frodo and Sam look in the mirror, and they see things they do not understand, but what they see later comes to pass.

The magic speech of the ring and the secret language of alchemy are one. The dominance of the symbol of the ring in pagan religions, and in shamanistic tribal cultures that use metal, is related to the ring's alchemical origins and the secret of the smelting and forging of iron, which was discovered around 1000 BC in the region of the Caucasian Mountains. The Iron Age transformed timid shepherds and farmers into ferocious warriors. The hero who won the alchemist's ring in the form of the secret of iron-smelting literally saved his nation. The symbolic language of the ring quest, at its most profound, is concerned with the spiritual consequences of the Bronze and Iron Ages, which changed forever the human conditions and perception of the world. Ultimately, the ring quest is concerned with the battle between Order and Chaos, and the eternal cycle of life (Day, 1994, 25-27).

The Ring Quest

Of all mythologies available to him, Tolkien was most inspired by Norse mythology, in which rings are of utmost importance. The greatest power is in the ring on the hand of Odin, the Magician-King of the gods. Odin is the Allfather, Lord of Victories, Wisdom, Poetry, Love, and Sorcery. He is Master of the Nine Worlds of the Norse universe, and through the magical power of his ring, he is the Lord of Rings. The Vikings were ruled by mortal ring lords. Their longship's figureheads were the ring and the dragon. Odin is the ring-giver, who controls the nine worlds by distributing eight rings every nine

days. Viking lords controlled their realms by rewarding their warriors finger rings, arm rings, and neck rings, all forged from the gold they had gained in trade, in raiding, and in war. A Viking lord's power could be judged by his ring-hoard, i.e. the rings he distributed. Among the Vikings, the gold ring was a form of currency, a gift of honour, and sometimes an heirloom of heroes and kings (Day, 1994, 29ff). The Appendix contains a short historical overview, mostly concerned with the Vikings and the British Islands.

Tolkien's preference towards Norse Mythology, rather than Roman-Greek Mythology, can be explained by the less idealised ruling gods, and their battle against Chaos; a struggle that eventually will be their doom: "It is the strength of the northern mythological imagination that it faced this problem, put the monsters in the centre, gave them victory but no honour, and found a potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage" (*The Monsters and the Critics*, 25-26).

The ring quest was born in Norse mythology; the first being the one about Odin's quest for the ring Draupnir. Odin was not always almighty and his quest for power and his magical ring is long. Odin travels the Nine Worlds asking questions of Giants, Elves, Dwarfs, the trees, plants, and stones. He appears mostly as an old bearded wanderer with one eye, wearing a grey or blue cloak and a traveller's broad-brimmed slouch hat, carrying only a staff. Odin, the Wanderer, is the archetype for the travelling Wizard, but more importantly, he is the ultimate Shaman. The Shaman travels between the worlds of men and the worlds of spirits and animals, and to the land of the dead. In his trance-like state his spirit may become a bird, or it may ride on the back of a magical horse, and reaches the other worlds by climbing a cosmic tree: Yggdrasil, the great ash tree, whose mighty limbs support the Nine Worlds. It is on Yggdrasil that Odin is pierced by a spear, from which he then hangs for nine days and nine nights. By the ninth night, Odin deciphers the markings cut in the stone by Yggdrasil's roots, and discovers the secret of the magical alphabet known as Runes. By the power of the Runes, he resurrects himself. He then cuts the limb he hung from, and makes his magician's staff. By the magic of the Runes, Odin can cure, make the dead speak, render weapons powerless, gain women's love, and calm storms by land and sea. Odin then goes to drink from the Fountain of Wisdom at the foot of Yggdrasil. To drink, Odin must sacrifice an eye, but he gains great wisdom. Back in Asgard, the other gods recognise him as their Lord. Odin's staff is used in the making of the spear Gungnir. The Elfs Sindri and Brok, the greatest smiths in the Nine Worlds, forge the ring Draupnir, which contain all the wisdom of Odin. Draupnir means "the dripper", for this magical golden ring has the power to drip eight other rings of equal size every nine days, and with these gifts, he dominates the other eight worlds. Just as Sauron loses O, Odin loses Draupnir. Loki, the god of mischief, manages to get the blind god Honir to kill Odin's son Balder with a twig of mistletoe. Balder is placed in the huge funeral ship called Ringhorn and all the gods gather to pay homage. Odin's grief is so great that he places Draupnir on his son's breast. Without Draupnir, Odin's mastery of the Nine Worlds is in danger of being challenged by the Giants. Odin mounts his magical eight-legged steed Sleipnir and rides down into the deepest realm of Hel. Sleipnir leaps over the chained Hound of Hel, Odin seizes Draupnir, and peace and order are restored to the Nine Worlds (Cherry, 2001; Day, 1994, 38-43; Grey, 1999, 176ff).

The spirits of slain warriors gather in Valhalla in Asgard, where they remain, waiting for the time when they are called to participate in the cataclysm called Ragnarok. Tolkien envisioned a similar fate for his world. However, a better and more peaceful world is to be reborn from the old violent one. The fundamental difference between the Norse Midgard and Tolkien's Middle-earth is that the Norse mythic world is essentially amoral (the absence of both Good and Evil, rather than the absence of a Christian God), while Tolkien's World, although not exactly moral, is consumed by the great struggle between the forces of Good and Evil. The struggle between these forces is essentially the same as the struggle of Norse mythology, i.e. the struggle between Order and Chaos.

Tolkien declares that power corrupts; something that the Vikings would have found inconceivable. It is not Sauron, but the corruption by power that constitutes the real evil. Sauron represents Chaos, while O represents evil: the force that promotes Chaos. When O (Evil) is destroyed, Sauron (Chaos) is defeated. The forces of Good try to uphold Order, but will have to give way to Chaos eventually. However, when Evil is successful it effectively destroys Chaos with the creation of a new world.

Although, strictly speaking, Evil does not exist in our world, it is very real in Tolkien's World, and there is no need to tell us that Evil is bad. As Eliade (1963, 144f) writes, "Myth, in itself, is not a guarantee of 'goodness' or morality. Its function is to reveal models and, in so doing, to give a meaning to the World and to human life. This is why its role in the constitution of man is immense." Tolkien understood the power of the myth, not only as a way of explaining, or re-enacting the mythological past, but also as a literary form.

The Volsunga Saga

The most famous Norse ring legend is the *Volsunga Saga*, perhaps the greatest literary work to survive the Viking civilisation. It has become the archetypal ring legend, and is primarily concerned with the life and death of the greatest of all Norse heroes, Sigurd the Dragonslayer, a magical ring called Andvarinaut, and a curse that dictates the fates of the Volsung and the Nibelung. The chaotic fifth and sixth centuries, the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire, was a mythical age for Germanic and Norse people, from which they drew the stuff to create legends. *The Volsunga Saga* is based on historical events surrounding the annihilation of the Burgundians in AD 436 by Attila the Hun (Day, 1994, 45, 96).

There can be no doubt that this legend is the chief source of inspiration for Tolkien's Mythology, and I will therefore take pains to retell it as briefly as possible without omitting anything of consequence. My sources are the translation by R.G. Finch (1965), Day's somewhat flawed interpretation (1994, 45-59), and *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology* (Gray, 1999, 176ff).

The *Volsunga Saga* begins with the tale of Sigi, the mortal son of Odin and King of the Huns. King Sigi's son, Rerir, cannot make his queen with child, so the gods send a Valkyrie with an apple, and somehow Rerir's wife becomes pregnant. After six years in his mother's womb, Volsung is delivered by caesarean. The eldest of Volsung's children are the twins Sigmund and Signy. On the day of Signy's wedding, Odin appears in the great hall of the Volsungs, draws a brilliant sword (Gram), drives it up to its hilt in a tree trunk, and declares that it belongs to the one who manages to pull it out. Only Sigmund has the strength to extract Gram. Signy's husband, Siggeir, kills Volsung, and puts Volsung's ten sons in stocks in the woods. Each night a she-wolf comes and devours one of the brothers. On the tenth night, Sigmund tears out the she-wolf's tongue with his teeth, and together with Signy and her son, Sinfjotli, they kill Siggeir. Signy takes her life after revealing that Sinfjotli is the son of Sigmund. Sigmund returns home with his son, and claims his father's throne. He marries Borghild, who is pregnant when Sigmund falls, his sword shattered after fighting Odin on the battlefield.

The dying Sigmund urges his wife to take the shards of Odin's sword. The exiled queen gives birth to Sigurd, and raises him in secret under the protection of the Danes. On one of his journeys, Sigurd meets Odin, who gives him Grani, offspring of Sleipnir. Shortly after, Regin, Sigurd's friend and teacher, reveals himself as an ancient magician, and tells him his story.

The gods Odin, Honir, and Loki travel through the land of Regin's father, Hreidmar, the greatest magician of the Nine Worlds, when Loki kills an otter, which turns out to be one of Regin's brothers. Hreidmar tells his third son, Fafnir, to chain the gods with Regin's unbreakable iron chains. In order to compensate Hreidmar's loss, Loki is sent out to find a treasure, and he finds the gold of Andvari the Dwarf. Andvari pleads with Loki to let him keep the ring on his finger, but Loki guesses its worth and takes it as well. At this point, Andvari spits out a curse that will destroy all who possess the ring. Hreidmar receives the treasure and the ring Andvarinaut. The curse works quickly, and soon Fafnir has murdered his father and sent Regin on his way. Fafnir broods on the treasure for a long time, and eventually turns into a dragon.

Sigurd is urged to help Regin kill Fafnir the dragon, and is offered Andvarinaut and part of the treasure. Regin reforges the blade of Sigurd's father, and together they set out to reclaim the ring-hoard. At dusk, Fafnir goes to drink from a foul pool. Regin tells Sigurd to dig a hole in the dragon's path, hide in it, and kill the dragon with his sword when it comes down to drink. Once again, Odin appears and tells Sigurd to dig another hole, or else the boiling blood of the dragon will undo him. Fafnir is in this manner slayed, and Sigurd survives. Regin comes forth and tells Sigurd to roast the dragon's heart and give it to him. In order to see if the heart is properly roasted, Sigurd tastes its juice, and suddenly he understands the language of birds. They tell him that Regin is plotting to kill him, and so he slays Regin. He seeks and achieves further honour, for he makes war on all the kings and princes who murdered his kinsmen, and slays every one of them. Furthermore, he breaks into a fort where he finds Brynhild the shield maiden, whom he awakens from the sleep Odin has laid upon her for killing a favoured warrior of his. She shares her great wisdom with him and they swear to marry each other and no one else. Before he leaves her he gives her Andvarinaut, and so the curse is on Brynhild.

Sigurd ventures on and enters the realm of the Nibelungs. He befriends the king's three sons, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm. The queen of the Nibelungs gives Sigurd a magical potion that makes him forget Brynhild, and makes him fall in love with queen Grimhild's daughter Gudrun. Sigurd and Gudrun are soon wed. Sigurd wins Brynhild on Gunnar's behalf, but takes Andvarinaut and gives it to Gudrun. Sigurd's memory returns on the night of the wedding, but then it is too late to do anything about it. Brynhild feels betrayed by Sigurd and boasts that her husband, Gunnar, is mightier than Sigurd. Gudrun cannot hold her tongue and tells Brynhild how she was betrayed. Brynhild makes her husband and his brothers promise to slay Sigurd. One night Guttorm attacks the sleeping Sigurd. As Sigurd is about to die, he hurls Gram after the fleeing assassin, who is severed in half. Brynhild's sorrow is so great that she mounts Sigurd's funeral pyre.

Gudrun still has Andvarinaut, while Gunnar and Hogni hides the ring-hoard of Andvari in a secret cavern in the River Rhine. Against Gudrun's will, Grimhild arranges a marriage between Gudrun and Atli, king of the Huns. Atli covets the hidden treasure, and since attack is the best defence, the brothers assail Atli. After killing many of Atli's champions, and with Gudrun fighting alongside with them, they are finally defeated. Gunnar says he will only reveal the location of the treasure if Atli kills Hogni. When Hogni is dead, Gunnar says that he would never tell, but was afraid his brother would. Atli kills Gunnar and Andvari's treasure is lost in the Rhine. Gudrun feigns reconciliation and later murders her sons, and slays Atli in his sleep.

With Andvarinaut still on her hand, she walks into the sea with the intention of drowning herself. The waves carry her away, and she lands near the castle of King Jonakr. Their daughter, Svanhild, is promised to King Jormunrek, but falls in love with Jormunek's son. King Jormunrek kills them both. Gudrun gives two of her sons armour that no weapons can pierce, and urges them to slay Jormunrek, but warns them not to do damage to stones or the earth. On the road, they encounter their brother, whom they kill and stain the ground with his blood. They find and slay Jormunrek. One last time Odin appears. He tells Jormunek's people that the only way to kill the brothers is to stone them to death. This is possible because they violated the earth when they shed their brother's blood. The *Volsunga Saga* ends with the stoning of Gudrun's last kindred.

The influence of Norse mythology cannot be understated. The evil in O is the same as the evil spell that comes with the Ring of Andvari. Evil corrupts and destroys. The difference between the Volsunga Saga and LotR is that the risk of owning, and using the ring, the Norse considered worth taking, while Tolkien did not. There are of course characters, such as Boromir, Denethor, Saruman, and Gollum, who think they can wield O, but we know better. Odin's ring Draupnir is in its power more akin to O, but its power is neither good nor evil; though in mortal hands, it would soon become one or the other. As power corrupts, Tolkien would say that the wielder would turn evil, but the Norse had no such thoughts. Still, they would have brought about the world's destruction with Draupnir in their hands as sure as anyone with power enough to wield O would have become Sauron, and inevitably would have wreaked havoc on Middle-earth.

Of Elves & Men

The most important manuscript in Celtic Mythology is the *Red Book of Hergest*. It contains *The Mabinogion*, a collection of stories, in which there is told of magic rings and invisibility in many forms. The main influence of Celtic Mythology is manifest in Tolkien's Elves, who are largely based on Tuatha Dé Danann. This mythological people lived on Ireland before the humans arrived, and just as Tolkien's Elves, they went into hiding and faded away. While studying various Celtic myths, some of which are truly fascinating, it becomes painfully obvious that Tolkien used little of the stuff that these legends are made of. Tolkien has left the action where he found it, and extracted ideas such as the nature of Elves. While the Celts have given Tolkien mythical Elves, the Anglo-Saxons have given him Man. As a professor of Anglo-Saxon, it must have felt quite natural to model the human races on the Anglo-Saxon, as one of Tolkien's goals was to create a mythological world worthy of this people (Day, 1994, 79-83; Guest,1906, 13ff; Gray,1999, 94ff; Rolleston, 1911, 103ff; Ross, 1996, 16ff).

The tale of Beowulf, composed as early as 700 AD, is an Anglo-Saxon stab at the *Volsunga Saga*. It actually begins by telling of Sigurd Fafnirsbane, but the story that later unfolds is very different from the *Volsunga Saga*. Beowulf is a great hero, who saves the Danes from the monster Grendel and the monster's mother, who is an even more terrifying apparition than her son is. Many years pass, and Beowulf eventually becomes King of the Danes. As a last hurrah, Beowulf goes away to slay a dragon, a guardian of a huge ring-hoard. In this last battle he kills the dragon, but is fatally wounded, and dies shortly after he has seen the gold. There is something of Beowulf in Boromir, and other elements

echoed by Tolkien are the Rohirrim, Théoden, and their golden hall (3:529ff). The slaying of a dragon theme is used in *The Hobbit* (Day, 1994, 84-85; Swanton, 1978, 35ff).

Another Anglo-Saxon tale of import is the ring legend of the Saxon hero Wayland the Smith (the Norse Volund). Wayland made the sword Gram in the *Volsunga Saga,* and is said to have made many other swords used by heroes in countless other legends. In Wayland the Smith, we have the figure of the gifted, but cursed smith, who is manifest in the Noldor King Fëanor. He is also comparable to Telchar the Smith, and Celebrimbor, Lord of the Elven smiths of Eregion, who forges the Rings of Power. The tale of the Ring of Volund is written down in the long Icelandic narrative poem, the *Völundarkvitha*. It begins with Volund capturing a Valkyrie, whom he takes as his wife. Nine years later, she escapes him, but leaves him a magical ring of gold. The ring gives Volund the power to forge magical weapons. It also allows him to hammer out seven hundred identical gold rings from its shape. This ring is no other than the ring Andvarinaut. Nidud, the King of Sweden, imprisons Volund in a fortress on an island, where he is forced to forge whatever the King demands. Volund eventually gets his revenge, and escapes his prison, stealing away with his ring and his best sword. He forges wings, with which he flies to Alfheim, where the Elven smiths welcome him. The ring is stolen by Soté the Outlaw, who becomes obsessed with it. Soté, like Gollum (1:67ff), seeks out a place where nobody can find him and steal his precious ring. He finds shelter in a barrow grave, where he turns into a kind of Ring-wraith. Völund's Ring is the object of the quest of the hero Thorsten. Thorsten enters the barrow grave where Soté the Outlaw is hiding. The screams of a Soté mix with the cries of Thorsten. Steel strikes against stone and bone, and Thorsten emerges victorious, with Völund's Ring in his hand. Clearly, the hobbits' adventure with the Barrow-wights (1:153ff) is inspired from this tale. More important is the similar effect the rings have on Soté and Gollum (Day, 1994, 85-89; Gray, 1999, 176ff).

Tom Bombadil

There is a character in LotR who is frequently misinterpreted by the critics, and probably by most readers. Helms (1974) understands Tom Bombadil as some kind of spirit of nature, a whimsical creature, representing the moral neutrality of nature to Middle-earth's implicit malice. Since Tom is considered unimportant, adaptations of LotR tend to cut Tom out. I will show that Tom Bombadil is the most important character of all. For reference, see 1:134-163. If Tom is acting whimsically, it is because he chooses to. The reason we find him odd, childish, and carefree is simply his inability to separate song from his other activities. He constantly sings nonsensical ditties. Song is fundamental to his being, suggesting he might cease to exist if he stops singing, though it is more likely that Tom's singing creates and sustains the world within the boundaries he has set for himself. Within these boundaries lies the Shire, which would mean that the hobbits are created by Tom. Hobbits are in many ways like Tom, suggesting that Tom does not change his appearance to be like the hobbits, but rather that he created them in his image. There is certainly power in Tom's song. His song controls the elements, creatures, and plants in the forest. He even possesses power of the dead, as is shown when he saves the hobbits from the Barrow-wights. In his letters, as quoted by Hargrove, Tolkien expresses the idea that Tom embodies pure science, i.e. he is curiosity personified. Tom delights in things as they are, and has no wish to dominate and control them, unless necessary to protect his creation. Tom has no desire to possess anything but knowledge. So, who is Tom?

> Eldest, that's what I am. Mark my words: Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the Big People, and saw the little People arriving. He was here before the Kings and the graves and the Barrow-wights. When the Elves passed westward, Tom was here already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless – before the Dark Lord came from outside. (1:146)

This statement can mean nothing but that Tom is one of the Ainur, one of the gods who created the world by singing, and who later, as Valar, descended to Middle-earth to wonder at the creation, shaping it further, and populate it with all kinds of creatures (*The Silmarillion*, 15ff). Hargrove (2001) writes, "Someone might, of course, want to object that Tom Bombadil really doesn't look or act like a Vala or a Maia, appearing and behaving instead more like an overgrown Hobbit". Hargrove's explanation for this is that Tom simply has the ability to change his appearance to make him congenial to creatures he encounters. According to Hargrove, this ability supports the theory that Tom is a Vala. I, however, do not agree. A chameleon act is not what makes a Vala. As Hargrove admits, a Maia could have pulled that off just as easily. The Maia are created by Eru, the One (out of whose thoughts the Ainur are formed), to help the Valar shape Middle-earth after the creation of the world. Since Tom existed before Melkor, the Dark Lord, and the other Valar descended to Middle-earth, he can be nothing less than a Vala. The question is which Vala Tom is. I have already expressed the idea that Aulë created the hobbits, which would have to mean that Tom is Aulë. This can be verified in many ways. Hargrove chooses to determine Tom's identity by comparing Tom's wife, Goldberry, with the wives of the Valar, and finds that Yavanna fits Goldberry's description, "for she is responsible for all living things, with a special preference for plants. Since she is Queen of the Earth, it is easy to imagine her watering the forest with special care, as Goldberry does during the Hobbits' visit" (Hargrove, 2001). Goldberry's appearance also closely resembles Tolkien's description of Yavanna in The Silmarillion (27f). Yavanna's husband is no other than Aulë. Tom's mastery of O can only be explained by him being Aulë the smith, who is the maker of all the substances of the earth. In the creation of Middle-earth, Aulë is involved in nearly every aspect of its making. Of all the Valar, Aulë has the greatest interest in the Children of Ilúvatar (Eru). Aulë has the power to dominate and control, but he does not choose to possess anything but knowledge, something he gladly shares with others.

Since Tom is Aulë, he has no fear of O. All other creatures who possess knowledge enough to understand what O represents are afraid to even touch it, fearing that the power of O will overcome them. O has no power over Tom Bombadil, and while it makes all others think of it as precious, Tom is not impressed. When Tom calls O "precious" he is clearly ironic. Tom delights in studying the craftsmanship involved in its making, and knowing what evil power lies in it, he disrespectfully puts it on his finger, and does not disappear. Furthermore, when Frodo puts it on his finger, Tom is still able to see Frodo. In addition, Tom makes O itself disappear (1:148).

Since Tom possesses such mastery over O, why does he not take it, reshape it, or destroy it? I suggest that he could do it, but he would still have to go to the Cracks of Doom, and this he clearly has no intention of doing, since he created the hobbits to run his errands. Hargrove proposes that Aulë is limited by the Music of the Ainur. He is bound by what he sang and he cannot go beyond those limits, nor can he

change his part in the play. Tom Bombadil takes the ultimate moral stand against power and possession, denounces and dethrones the evil power of O, and sends it out into the world again, trusting in the naked will and courage of his hobbits.

The One Ring

When Sauron puts O on his finger, his evil power is recognized by the Elves (*The Silmarillion*, 288). They realize that he can control their thoughts, and they decide to remove their rings and not use them. After the death of Isildur, O falls into the river Anduin, but is found by the hobbit Deagol, who is promptly murdered by his friend Smeagol. Smeagol does not possess the power to wield O, and so it uses him to try to get back to Sauron. Smeagol turns slowly into a kind of Ring-wraith (although still alive), who hates everything, including himself and his precious ring; a ring that he cannot get rid of until the moment comes when it opts to leave him to be found by Bilbo. Just like Smeagol, Bilbo finds O's invisibility spell very useful. Under the influence of Gandalf, Bilbo finally escapes O by giving it to Frodo. The way Frodo acquired O is important. This is the first time since Isildur cut it off Sauron's hand, that it has not decided its own course. Whenever Frodo is tempted to use O, or actually uses it, O has a chance to work corruption on him. Gandalf advises Frodo to use it seldom, if at all (1:66-80).

Unfortunately, the power of O increases with the presence of Evil. On Weathertop, the presence of the Lord of the Nazgûl gives O the power to convince Frodo to put it on his finger, and so he enters the dimension of the Nazgûl. They see him as clearly as he sees them and the Lord of the Nazgûl deals Frodo a blow with a cursed dagger (1:212). This wound works its way inward, and would have killed Frodo had it not been for Elrond's healing powers (boosted by one of the Elven Rings of Power). Since Frodo possessed O, he would not have died as such. He would have become one of the Ring-wraiths, deprived of free will and life, but not of existence. Frodo recovers, but is never free from the ache of the scar. Boromir is also affected by O. In him, O probably sees a faster way to reach Sauron, since Boromir would wield O to muster and command an army against Sauron; a war he has no realistic hope of winning. Boromir tries to take O from Frodo, and forces Frodo to put O on in order to escape. This is the point when Frodo decides to leave the others and embark on the perilous direct course into Mordor and Mount Doom (2:421f).

Although Frodo does not use O again, it works on him, breaking him down, and finally breaks him at the Cracks of Doom. In Frodo's flight, he does not manage to get away from Sam, who also possesses O for a while, and uses it to save Frodo form the clutches of orcs (6:937ff). If Frodo had not already been under the spell of O, Sam would probably have kept it, and perhaps the ending would have been different. However, O's power over Frodo is so great that Sam cannot refuse to give it back (6:946).

At the Cracks of Doom Frodo claims O, puts it on his finger, and challenges Sauron for power over Middle-earth. This is the moment Gollum completes his ring quest. Gollum bites off Frodo's finger and goes mad with excitement. Finally, he has his precious back. Now everybody will pay. Fortunately, Gollum slips and falls into the Cracks of Doom, and O is destroyed, completing Frodo's backwards ring quest (6:981f). Why did not Sauron stop these puny hobbits from destroying his ring? The answer to this question is that Sauron could never imagine anybody ever wanting to destroy O. In his mind, the only two possible explanations for the O to close on him are: Either O's will has moved it closer to its maker by the way of commanding the minds of feeble creatures, or a powerful spirit has claimed it and is now marching against him. This is why he fears the inferior army, lead by Gandalf, which march up to his gates to challenge him. Sauron must think Gandalf or Aragorn possesses O, and therefore he attacks them with the whole of his force (6:921ff). As Auden (1969, 56-60) remarks, Evil's greatest disadvantage is that it cannot imagine what it is like to be good, while the Good can imagine what it is like to be evil. This leads inevitably to the conclusion that using Sauron's inability to understand that someone might try to destroy O is not only the key to Sauron's ultimate destruction, but also the only way of destroying him (compare Gandalf's reasoning in 2:286f).

In one of his letters ("From a letter by J.R.R. Tolkien to Milton Waldman, 1951", 22), Tolkien says that the chief power of all the Rings of Power is the prevention/slowing of decay. Certainly, the Elven Rings are made to help craft and preserve the beautiful creations of the Elves. However, the conservation of the physical appearance of Bilbo is only skin deep. As long as one possesses O, one is preserved from without, but at the same time corruption works from the inside. Eventually, all life leaves the body, and one enters fully the "invisible world" of the Ring-wraiths. Gollum is an example of what may happen if one is exposed to the power of O for a long time. It is possible that the three Elven Rings can keep up appearance without any ill effects, but since Elves do not grow old, they would have little personal use for this ability, and therefore I conclude that the Elven Rings probably would not have this effect on the bearer. Beauty is a necessary alchemical quality of the Elven Rings, but in O it is only feigned beauty. The Elven Rings' beauty lies in the creation and preservation of beautiful things in nature, while O's beauty is essentially superficial and useless.

Further, Tolkien says that the Rings of Power can make the bearer invisible, and make the "invisible world" visible to the bearer. There is no evidence to support that this applies to others than the less alchemically adept species, such as humans and hobbits. The powerful Elves are not invisible when they wear their rings. Instead, they are able, as is Tom Bombadil, to make the rings invisible. Sam never sees Galadriel's ring, although she shows it to Frodo, who can see it because of the sharpening of the senses that he gains from O (2:385f). O lets the bearer enter another dimension, rather than just making him invisible. This other dimension is most probably the land of the dead; to which the Shaman travels. It is not likely that the Elven Rings would have this effect, and there is no account of an Elven Ring ever being on the hand of a mortal, but Gandalf says:

> A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself invisible, he fades: he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings. (1:60)

The invisibility in *The Hobbit* was invented by Tolkien without any thought as to what Bilbo's magic ring later came to represent in LotR. It is typical of Tolkien that he would write something, and only later try to explain it. A spelling mistake would generate a new dialect and a discrepancy in the story line would be explained by the existence of different narrators. There is no such thing as a reliable narrator in Tolkien's Middle-earth. Most of *The Hobbit* and LotR are supposed to be compiled from manuscripts written by Bilbo and Frodo (The Red Book of Westmarch). It is because of their limited vision, that it is, in order to understand the symbolism of the ring quest and its spiritual context,

necessary to read *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*, which are compilations of Tolkien's other writings about Middle-earth, but mythologically supposedly traceable to other manuscripts from Middle-earth.

The really important function of O is that it is evil. O introduces Evil into Tolkien's Norse universe, filling an amoral world with morality. The introduction of Evil means that the opposing power may be termed the Good, and this transports the struggle between Order and Chaos to a different plane, a more human plane. Order and Chaos are natural components of any world. The battle between Good and Evil only exists in mythology and in the minds of people who believe in the existence of these opposing powers, for example in the form of God and the Devil. It can readily be argued that, in real life, Evil is only the absence of Good, although the concept of Good does not exist without its counterpart. Order is only a construction of our brains, and therefore more akin to Evil than to Good, while Chaos makes up the very structure of the universe. It seems the only certainty is the existence of Chaos. This is why Tolkien, just as the Norse, chose to put the monsters in the centre, trusting in the naked will and courage of the hobbits.

Conclusion

J.R.R. Tolkien is successful in his attempt to create a consistent and believable mythical world. In Norse mythology, he found the raw material for his creation. He shaped a world, tempered by Celtic and Anglo-Saxon mythology, with the monsters in the centre. He understood the significance of the symbolic value of the ring, and chose to write a ring quest with many levels.

Early critics either tended to see nothing but the surface, or in an attempt to allegorise it, quickly lost track of what is important. It was not until the publication of *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* that the keys to understanding LotR were presented to us. Still, many critics endeavour to make LotR fit the mould of their expectations. For example, just because Tolkien was a Catholic and LotR tells of the struggle between Good and Evil, LotR is not necessarily a deeply Christian piece of literature. The only single idea in LotR that could be construed as Christian is the existence of Evil, but Tolkien's Evil is fundamentally of Norse nature. Evil is Chaos, or rather the force that promotes Chaos. Chaos cannot be defeated, since it is intrinsic to the structure of the universe. However, Order cannot be defeated by Chaos, since a new Order takes shape from the debris of the cataclysm. The Christian universe is linear, while Tolkien's universe is cyclic.

The functions of the smith, the magician, the alchemist, and the shaman are interconnected and bound up with the ring symbolism. Several of these functions are often present in one single character, such as Prometheus, Odin, Aulë, and Sauron. It is hard to pick one function that is more important in general than the others are, but in Tolkien's World the smith seems to be attached with superior importance. Tom Bombadil (Aulë) is therefore the most important character in LotR. He is the supreme smith and the creator of the hobbits, with whom we are supposed to identify ourselves. Tom is to the hobbits what Prometheus is to us. Prometheus' ring is not wrought by him, but forced upon him by a lesser god (Zeus), just as O is not forged by Aulë, but by the lesser god Sauron. Tom and Prometheus have little interest in the rings. The rings' importance lies elsewhere.

Tolkien's claim that his ring is archetypical can be defended by showing how all the aspects of the rings in Northern European mythology and history are manifest in O. The most evident and perhaps the most important aspect is that of immense power. Tolkien disliked power, or rather the use of power. The power of O is truly terrible, and has been compared with the power of the atom bomb. Wielding O, one can make great magic and, like the shaman, enter the land of the dead. However, the alchemical nature of O cannot be escaped, and in the end, its magic will turn against its owner and trap him in the land of the dead forever. Like Faust, one receives power at the cost of one's soul. Power corrupts; promising control it brings Chaos, and the end of this world.

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Appendix

(Adapted from Cherry)

100 Tacitus writes Germanica.
200 Migration Period begins.
300 Earliest runic inscriptions in Denmark.
375 Ermenrichus king of the Goths dies. He is the basis for Jormunrek of the Volsunga Saga.
436 Huns battle Burgundians.
437 Burgundian King Gundaharius dies. He is the basis for the fictional Gunnar of the Volsunga Saga.
449 Angles, Saxons, and Jutes migrate to Britain.
453 Attila the Hun dies, possibly at the hands of his new wife the Germanic Hildico. Attila is the basis for the fictional Atli of the Volsunga Saga.
500 Migration Period ends.
528 Hygelac, king of the Geats, raids Frisia and the Rhine.
550 Jordanes writes History of the Goths.
570 Danes raid Frisia.
597 St. Augustine begins conversion of Anglo-Saxons.
600 Uppsala established.
700 Frank's casket made in Anglo-Saxon England depicting Wayland (Volund).
700 Eggjum rune stone in Sogn Norway created. Its diction foreshadowing skaldic poetry.
700 Beowulf thought to have been composed. It contains references to the Volsung legend, the Brisingmen, and Wayland (Volund) the smith.
705 Foundation of Ribe on the Jutland peninsula.
715 Willibrord leads first Christian mission to Scandinavia. His attempt to convert the Danes is unsuccessful.
750 Foundation of Birka in Svealand (now Sweden).
770 Waldere composed. It contains reference to Wayland (Volund).
786 Paul the Deacon begins work on Historia Langobardorum, which contains a legend about Woden and Freia.
789 Norwegians Vikings attack Portland England, the first attack on England.
793 Vikings raid Lindisfarne.
795 First recorded Viking attacks on Ireland and Scotland.
800 Earliest Skaldic poetry.
808 The Danish king Godfred sacks the trading centre of Reric and moves all of its traders to Hedeby on the Jutland peninsula.
810 Danish attack Frisia and impose tribute.
826 Danish King Harald Klak converted to Christianity. He is baptised at Mainz and is accompanied by Anskar on his return to Denmark.
827 Harald Klak expelled from Denmark.
829 Anskar's first mission to Birka.
839 Swedish Vikings reach Constantinople.
839 Vikings attack the Picts.
841 Viking base Dublin established.
843 Frisia comes under Viking control.
844 First Viking raid on Spain.
845 Pagan uprising causes missionaries to leave Birka.
850 The Danish king Horik I allows Anskar to build churches at Ribe and Hedeby.
860 Swedish Vikings, the Rus, attack Constantinople.
862 Rurik becomes ruler of Novgorod.
862 Finns and Slavs invite Rurik and the Rus to rule over them.
865 Anskar dies.
866 Danes occupy York.
866 Vikings from Ireland and Scotland make Picts pay tribute.
869 Edmund, king of East Anglia is killed by Vikings.
870 Vikings begin settling Iceland.
896 Viking army in England breaks up with some members staying in England to live.
900 Time of Thjodolf of Hvinir a poet of King Harald Finehair. He composed the Ynglinga Tale and Haustlong.
902 Vikings expelled from Dublin.
917 Vikings recapture Dublin.
919 Ragnald, grandson of Ivar of Dublin, gains control of York.
930 Eyvind Skaldaspillir, skald to Norwegian kings Harald Fairhair and Hakon the Good.
937 English defeat Norse-Scottish alliance at battle of Brunanburh.
944 The Irish sack Dublin.
954 End of Viking kingdom of York when Erik Bloodaxe is killed.
961 Viking raids in Wales begin.
965 Harald Bluetooth converts Danes to Christianity.
970 Norway falls under Danish rule.
974 Hedeby comes under German occupation until 983.
975 Exeter Book copied. It contains the poem Deor, which has a reference to Wayland (Volund) the smith.
985 Erik the Red sails from Iceland with a group of settlers headed to Greenland.
990 Einar Skalaglamm was a skald of Earl Hakon of Hladir who ruled Norway until 995. Einar was a friend of Egil Skallagrimsson.
991 Olaf Tryggvason defeats English at Maldon.
1000 Conversion of Iceland to Christianity.
1000 Earliest Swedish runic inscriptions.
1000 The Exeter Book is written.
1000 Rune stone in Sweden depicts Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart.
1014 Brian Boru defeats the Norse.
1016 King Cnut the Great's rules England.
1035 Earl Thorfinn of Orkney wins control over most of Northern Scotland.
1042 End of Danish rule in England.
1052 Diarmait takes Dublin.
1066 The Battle of Hastings.
1075 Adam of Bremen writes Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum, which includes description of the rituals performed at Uppsala.
1080 Pagan ceremonies at Uppsala end.
1100 Welsh poetry with close parallels to skaldic lines.
1125 Icelandic Book of Settlements written.
1169 Danes expand into Baltic.
1185 The Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus written
1195 Nibelungenlied written.
1200 Saga of the Volsungs written down. The only manuscript in existence dates from ca 1400.
1210 Oldest Icelandic family sagas written.
1220 Prose Edda written.
1230 Egil's Saga written possibly by Snorri Sturluson.
1240 Heimskringla written by Snorri Sturluson.
1240 Codex Regius manuscript of the Poetic Edda written.
1245 Kormaks Saga written.
1245 Laxdaela Saga written.
1250 Swedish Lawbooks written down in alliterative form.
1261 Greenland comes under Norwegian rule.
1263 Iceland comes under Norwegian rule.
1266 Norway cedes Isle of Man and Hebrides to Scotland.
1271 End of the Rus Rurik dynasty.
1300 Grettir's Saga and Sturlunga Saga created.
1350 Red Book of Hergest composed.
1370 Flateyjabok written.
1469 Denmark cedes Orkney and Shetland to Scotland.
1480 Last Norse Greenland colony becomes extinct.

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Håken Arvidsson lives in Lund, Sweden and has recently completed a course of study in English Literature at Lund University. His paper is predicated on the idea of a more scholarly approach to the subject matter of David Day's *Tolkien's Ring*. The result is an essay that outlines the mythologies that Tolkien was inspired by, presents and questions some ideas from various authors and investigates the true nature of The One Ring. He is currently studying Christopher Tolkien's *The History of The Lord of the Rings*, and is contemplating writing a Masters thesis based on it.

Kensington Prallop lives on the Isle of Langerhans in a time-share flat he bought from the proceeds of his US best-seller *Inter-gender sex - a new idea whose time has come* and its budget price running mate, *Sex between men and women - don't knock it till you've tried it.* His teaching style, mixing irrepressibly shallow insights with complete freedom from the encumbrances of knowledge has won him a wide following among students everywhere. His love-affair with Tolkien started when in 1948 he was sold a signed copy of *LOR* by a bloke in a pub. His ambition is someday to read it.