

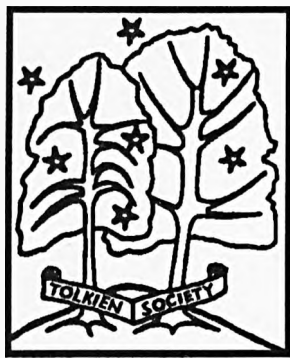
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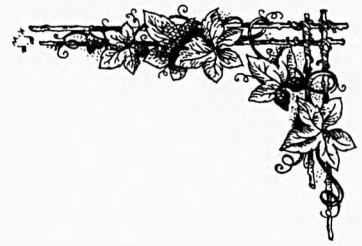
43

July 2005

The Journal of the Tolkien Society



The Tolkien Society



Founded in London in 1969 the Tolkien Society is an international organisation 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. As well as *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.tolkienociety.org>.

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Mallorn XLIII



C	About the Tolkien Society	IFC
	Editorial	2
D	<i>Virtual history</i> Arnor: the Numenorean inheritance <i>Marjorie Willetts</i>	3
	<i>Reviews</i> Traitors and translators”: three German versions of <i>LOR</i> <i>Susanne Stoppel</i>	11
R	<i>Analysis</i> The Road goes ever on ... The ‘Journey’ motive in <i>LOR</i> <i>John Ellison</i>	15
	<i>Virtual botany</i> Botanical notes on the Mallorn <i>Beth Russell</i>	20
T	<i>Analysis</i> Arthur and Aragorn: Arthurian influence in <i>LOR</i> <i>Richard J Finn</i>	23
	A history of song: transmission of memory in Middle-earth <i>Michael Cunningham</i>	27
E	<i>Social studies</i> Tolkien’s women (and men): the film and the book <i>Jane Chance</i>	30
	<i>Current affairs</i> Gandalf as torturer: the ticking bomb terrorist and due process in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> <i>Adam Rosman</i>	38
R	<i>Hobbit studies</i> Merry in focus: on Ring fever ... and being overlooked <i>Hilary Longstaff</i>	43
	<i>Middle-earth astronomy</i> Tolkien’s Burning Briar: an astronomical explanation <i>Kristine Larsen</i>	49
T	Perspectives on reality in <i>Lord of the Rings</i> <i>Gerardo Barajos Garrido</i>	53
	About the authors	60
S	Artists	
	<i>Pauline Baynes</i>	Front cover
	<i>Kay Woollard</i>	IFC, 1
	<i>Lorenzo Daniele</i>	9, 45
	<i>Jef Murray</i>	5, 13, 41,
	<i>John Ellison</i>	17, 50, back cover
<i>Jill Thwaites</i>	32,33	
<i>Karin Kunde</i>	55	

Mallorn XLIII July 2005



Editorial

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Return of the King*, and therefore of the trilogy entire, and we are celebrating it with gusto, mainly with the 'Tolkien 2005' Convention in August. And why should we not celebrate enthusiastically something that has become part of our lives in a way that no other work of art has?

People have loved the books and then the films. They have lived whole imaginary lives in Middle-earth, they have attended conventions, role-played, dressed up as elves and orcs and hobbits, met other hobbits, loved and lived and laughed; they have gone to Oxonmoots, and come away with a husband or wife, often their own. They have had children, named them Arwen and Aragorn, and for all I know, Gollum or Wormtongue; they have bought houses and named them Lothlorien or Bag End. There is no known limit to human bad taste. Long may it continue.

Size matters - the extended ROK

Director's cuts are intended to be, or at least imply, longer and better versions of the original, unsullied by the materialistic hand of the money-grubbing producers whose only concern is how best to maximise profits. (Actually, of course, it's a cynical exploitation of the public, who end up buying a video film all over again at its full price for the sake of ten minutes of extra footage.) But in 17 new scenes and 48 minutes of extra footage, there must surely be some benefit, I hear myself saying. And I hear myself saying right back - don't be too hasty.

Amazingly, the extra scenes do manage to add some width and depth to the film, slowing the frantic pace and adding much needed explanation at various points, but at a cost, mainly in the reinforcement of some of the worst and most unjustifiable meddlings with the original - Gandalf's increasing weakness and indecision, Sam and Frodo's increasingly childish and violent behaviour, and overblown emotionalism and infantile posturing on the part of some characters who up to now have been quite grown-up.

Things get off to a bad start in scenes 3, 4 and 5 where we learn how the palantir ended up in the water at the base of Orthanc, and see, for the first and last time in ROK, Gandalf revealed in his power as he breaks Saruman's staff. From this point on he is doomed by Jackson's peculiar direction to be shown as less powerful and more prone to mistakes than before his transformation, while inexplicably, everyone defers more and more to Aragorn, who has had the sense at least to steal most of Gandalf's best lines. In a risible scene with Saruman declaiming from the top of his tower he speaks in conversational tones to people hundreds of feet below and somehow they hear him clearly. Then we find out that we are not going to see any Scouring of the Shire because Saruman, the wizard, the demi-god, is stabbed by Wormtongue and falls to his death, impaled on one of his own machines. There is no explanation of how he can die so easily, but there is a crashingly subtle message here from our sponsor - he who lives by the evil machine dies by the evil machine. Wormtongue is simultaneously shot by Legolas, whose role as the infallible assassin of the party is now confirmed.

Then follow a series of new scenes that are mostly just pointless and sometimes silly (eg Legolas and the drinking game with Gimli) but the next new scene of note is 22, where this time Faramir gets Gandalf's dialogue (about Boromir - 'you would not know your son') and is sent off by a hate-obsessed Denethor to his death. This is followed closely by a madly

comic scene (scene 25) in which Pippin swears fealty etc to his new lord. In what is I suppose intended to be a burst of republican-ism we see the distaste of the otherwise class-ridden Pippin as he has to kiss Denethor's ring hand, and more of Denethor's crudeness and degradation as he talks of war and death while callously demolishing his lunch. This is a man, we are being told, who not only forgets to shave and has no idea where his knife and fork are, he calmly sends his subjects to their deaths as cruelly and thoughtlessly as he crushes the unfortunate comestibles on his plate. As the red tomato juice drips from his jewels, we think of Faramir and his men bleeding to death in Osgiliath. Subtle stuff.

Meanwhile Aragorn is organising the cavalry. From the banks of Anduin he challenges the Corsairs as they sail towards Minas Tirith. "You and whose army?" they cry, chuckling with the sheer fun of annexing not just Gondor but a slice of 20th century badinage too. "This one" says Aragorn snappily, as the Dead swarm aboard, proving that he can posture with the best of them.

Now the scene switches back to Minas Tirith. In a brief passing shot (scene 41) that has presumably been suggested by the entire section in the book where Aragorn finds the sapling of the White Tree (actually, of course, Gandalf finds it, but Aragorn is quick to claim the credit) a single white flower is seen inexplicably to be blooming on the extremely dead tree in the courtyard.

But the Witch King has come to the city, and in a scene that takes in two of the most important moments in the book he comes face to face with Gandalf, the most powerful wizard in the world: naturally he has him on the ground in a trice and is about to deliver the *coup de grace* when - Glory be! - the Horns of the Rohirrim sound. Presumably the Nazgûl thinks they have witch-seeking missiles because he rudely dashes off without even saying goodbye properly, to have a crack at Theoden. Well, we all know that that decision turns out not to be one of his brightest

So, the good guys win, and in this extended version we are allowed a lull while we visit the Houses of Healing where Eowyn is tending the sick and Faramir is looking on with a yearning look so overdone it's impossible to take him seriously. Here we learn once again from a film, that it is possible to cure injury and disease of every kind by simply mopping the patient's brow with a damp cloth.

But what of Frodo and Sam? This time, as in the book, they've fallen in with the orc detachment and (in a good scene) get away when a fight breaks out. But their orcs are less obliging than Tolkien's - F & S have to start the fight themselves.

But now we come to the last of the added scenes, and it's one of Jackson's best. Our heroes approach the Black Gate where they face the Mouth of Sauron. Actually not so much a mouth as a dentistry advert. All that can be seen of an otherwise undistinguished figure is his mouth - not even the eyes are visible - and it's horrible. But surely Gandalf will do his stuff this time? No, I'm afraid he fails again. Completely stunned by the apparition's bleeding gums and lack of oral hygiene he sits dumbfounded on his horse, leaving Aragorn to bring matters to a swift close by beheading the M of S with a single stroke.

The extra footage offered in 'the director's cut' is supposed to improve the film, and usually does. ROK (though not technically a director's cut, merely an extended version, and what, I wonder, is the difference) is an exception. After taking in the huge amount of extra material one is left concluding that for the most part the director made some wise decisions during his first crack at editing it.

Arnor: the Numenorean inheritance

Chapter 3: Nendor and the Enedre

Marjorie Willetts

The paradox that Nendor presented to the understanding of those who came to it after Third Age 3019 stemmed from two sources. The first was the expectation of the Southern Dunedain that their Northern kindred would resemble them more closely than they did (in outlook and habits of mind, rather than law or tradition, where the resemblance was, of course, pronounced.) The second was the unexpectedness of Nendor itself – as an entity, an enclave and a bastion (in any sense) of Numenorean culture.

Language and scholarship

Unlike Gondor, Nendor was essentially bilingual; that is, its Dunedain nobility used Sindarin as their 'birth tongue' (as had been done in Andunië and in the early days of the Realms-in-Exile), while feeling equally at home in Westron, the common speech of the western lands at that time. They also spoke Westron according to its separate and distinctive 'country' usages - ie, with whatever accent or idiom was usual in that part of Eriador where they were employed. As a language of academic (and aesthetic) interest, they studied Quenya; and those Rangers who travelled outside Eriador generally acquired some facility in other tongues, too, such as Rhûnnish, Rohirric or Umbarin: the latter being a polyglot affair which blended elements of Adunaic, Sindarin, Haradic and others. Inevitably, this gave such speakers a somewhat more cosmopolitan outlook and 'feel' than most men possessed at this time. All such knowledge as they acquired was passed on to the younger Dunedain as speedily as it could be. It was, therefore, feasible for a young Ranger to learn several languages before ever setting foot beyond the boundaries of Nendor. Thus, a wide-ranging repository of lore was gradually built up and systematised by the highly literate culture which acquired it. Since this lore was constantly available to the populace of Nendor, the emphasis of their learning tended to fall on contemporary and future possibilities; what we should now call the cultural history, politics and even sociology of the lands they knew. For most Dunedain, such knowledge, though interesting in itself, was of chiefly practical importance. Those who studied it on a different basis were commended but not, generally speaking, imitated to any striking degree.

This was natural enough. The often exhausting and usually arduous nature of the tasks in which the Dunedain were engaged prevented prolonged and detailed academic research, while not, of course, impeding intellectual curiosity or other speculations. Indeed, there was an active and long-standing tradition of scholarship, both formal and systematised, among the Dunedain, and this was cherished and fostered quite deliberately throughout the Enedre. Such private correspondence as

The following is understood to be part of a history textbook designed for use by students in their final year at school in the year F O 1176.

has survived the vicissitudes of time and chance – all too little, alas, for the convenience of later historians! – reveals a flourishing and sophisticated intellectual tradition, one both diverse and original in character and scope. Although a perfunctory or purely practical knowledge of numerous crafts and skills was taught to every Ranger, these letters show that, as individual liking or aptitude prompted, most Dunedain cultivated their particular interests and abilities far beyond the formalities of their schooling. In a very real sense, such an approach was an integral part of their Numenorean identity. Any Ranger could define a Numenorean not only as a man who was not what he seemed, but in a way that every other Ranger could acknowledge. Yet no one definition would have been exactly like any other. Where the material trappings of political (and national) identity are absent, a people will, insofar as it can and understands what it is about, cling the more fiercely to its language, customs and traditions. This the Dunedain of Nendor certainly did. Yet it is a truism that those who seek to define themselves with exactness frequently expand the definition in unforeseen ways – and this is exactly what happened in Nendor. Inevitably, therefore, the Northern Dunedain idea of what made a man into a Numenorean diverged, in the course of ten centuries, from that held by their southern kindred.

Growing cultural divergence

Numerous sea changes were apparent. The inwardness of Nendorin life on which so many observers commented was real enough, yet it was also misleading. The Northern Dunedain were outward-looking, and their historical and geographical perspectives were very large: the exact reverse of parochial, in fact. 'You know little of the wide lands beyond your bounds ...' as almost any Ranger could have said to almost any man of Gondor during this period. All human beings take soundings in terms of their own experience. The Northern Dunedain, even more than most, measured themselves and took their bearings by other peoples'. They were profoundly concerned to understand and define the differences between themselves and other men, and to explain them. This was not empathy, in what we might call the elvish sense, but it required something like it – a marriage of the intuitive and analytical aspects of the intellect. (Small wonder that psychology has so strong a hold on the imagination of the Northern Dunedain today). The 'wizard-like' power of projecting the mind and understanding – in a mode which rendered both capable of the extreme percipience and control demanded by the use of palantiri and similar means of perception – was not, of course, susceptible to formal logic or systematisation, but most Northern Dunedain trained themselves, as far as they

NB: The term Enedre refers to the period between c. TA 1976 and TA 3019/20. It was always used by the Northern Dunedain; less appropriately, perhaps, the term was later adopted by Gondorean scholars and historians too. FO refers to Fourth Age.

Mallorn XLIII

could in this regard, to concert pitch. 'Concert pitch'. is more apposite than most clichés here, for pitch is partly a question of timing and resonance and certainly of natural gifts or skills trained in some degree.

But this sensibility (as we may call it) had its drawbacks. If you feel for others' suffering and fear, you will eventually feel with them and share in that anguish. The 'weariness' of heart and will referred to by such princes as Elessar several times in the histories which concern us sprang no doubt from their immediate circumstances, but it is an apt adumbration of the state of fatigue and heart-sickness to which, at some stage in his existence, every Ranger became subject in some degree.

There seems to have been little or no overt hostility between Northern and Southern Dunedain at the time here described, though of course divergences in outlook and emphasis were a source of strain and disagreement for some. There was no clash of interests, nor indeed of strategies – it was in tactics that the two kindreds differed. Not wholly: not always: – but fairly frequently. Faramir's (the 27th Steward) thoughtful analysis of Gondor's moral landscape (as cited in L.o.T.R., Book 4) was accurate and just – her *beau idéal* was Boromir. Arnor's *beau idéal* (insofar as she had one – and in this, too, she differed from her southern counterpart) always more nearly approximated to Amandil Lindhir, whose strong, vivid and troubled personality and far greater complexity of character gave a breadth of outlook which either profoundly attracted or alienated others but certainly abolished indifference. One senses that in Nendor there were those who felt a slight resentment towards Gondor – though it is never expressed in such terms – and who were always quick to remind her that she had not appropriated 'their' king, nor had she annexed Arnor as part of Greater Gondor. More ominously and significantly, the incidence of intermarriage between north and south remained slight: the exception, rather than the rule. Nendor puzzled Gondor: Nendor remained suspicious of Gondor, even slightly mistrustful.

At the very highest and lowest levels of the realm this unhappy situation did not obtain. Faramir of Ithilien and Amandil of Tol Amrún were close friends; Elessar's second daughter, Celebrian, married Imrahil of Dol Amroth's grandson (Findegil), and *their* second daughter, Finduilas, fulfilled an ancient tradition by marrying Barahir of Ithilien (Faramir's grandson). To the ordinary folk of the realm, such dynastic considerations were more or less irrelevant; and it was rather in the middle echelons of society that the friction, such as it was, arose; chiefly among the career-minded younger and second sons of lesser lords and nobles, who had to make some sort of life for themselves beyond their families' ancestral *lhannir*. Since Arnor was growing in expanse and in prosperity, this was naturally the land of opportunity; but the northern Dunedain were not at all eager¹ to see interlopers from the south intruding into their ancestral domain; a reluctance which is more understandable, perhaps, when we remember that it had been guarded at high cost over the years in compliance with an ancient oath and promise quite unknown to Gondor.

Divisions

Ultimately, the two kindreds tended to divide according to occupation, the Southern Dunedain holding (more or less) military offices, the Northern Dunedain more of the administrative posts. By a curious paradox, only in the fleets did general amity and harmony prevail, perhaps because, as custom

had it, naval offices provided no direct access to places of power and influence at court. They remained entirely professional in character.

It is sometimes forgotten that the situation King Elessar faced in T A 3020 was unique. Though Andarthedain is often referred to as 'The Reunited Kingdom,' this was something of a misnomer – a legal fiction. There had always been two realms in exile, and though Isildur and Anarion referred, and deferred, to their father as High King, they were co-equal rulers, jointly responsible for the South Kingdom. Physically and geographically, their bounds were not and never had been contiguous: all Enedwaith lay between them, as its very name attests; an apt symbol of their separation. What Elessar ruled, therefore, was something entirely new: a tract of territory some 1450 miles long from north to south, and approximately some 200 to 300 miles wide. Although its northern regions were diversely peopled, its population was sparse and its resources largely untapped. Gondor, its southern *lhann*, was a more coherent whole, economically dense and much more populous. Nevertheless, both parts of the kingdom faced similar problems and difficulties. The difference was rather in scale than in character.

Baffled, bewildered, fascinated, furious: the observers of Nendor were all these by turns. But the major stumbling block was one of attitudes; attitudes to war, to women, to the meaning of the word *Dunadan*, to the world itself. It was a fractious circle. Cultural 'donnés' produced a characteristic response, which produced circumstances that often seemed to justify the response: which in turn set a pattern of responses. For example, guerrilla warfare was regarded as a necessary but lowly form of war in Gondor, the handmaid of a major campaign; hence, the natural province of younger sons. Without belittling the personal courage and endurance required of all its participants, public opinion in the south militated in favour of the set piece, showcase battle or campaign. Warfare in Gondor tended, therefore, to become static, pedestrian, indeed, literally so; cavalry remained an auxiliary unit in her armies for many years. It was costly in private and public terms (a knight was a rich man, and rich men were far fewer than poor ones) and also slow-moving. The tactics of the Wainriders showed up this weakness clearly enough; one reason for Earnil's slowness in sending help to Arthedain was his reluctance to risk valuable and almost irreplaceable cavalry (since Rohan did not then exist) which took so long to train.

Wartime strategies

But in Arnor conventional warfare of this kind had signally failed to avert disaster or to prevent crisis. The captains and princes of Arnor therefore concluded that any war they waged must be a war of movement. This was the essence of the Rangers' strategy throughout the Enedre, it was the course strongly urged to Ecthelion II by Thorongil, and it was the policy actively employed by Elessar in TA 3019. Better to challenge your enemy, seek him out, take war to him. Move, move, move your forces at speed wherever you can, remembering that ships lessen distance, being able to transport large bodies of men at any time to a given destination in a state of war-readiness. Men can eat, sleep and prepare to strike aboard a ship without the labour and time needed for camping, entrenching, and deploying; a fact often overlooked by Gondor's military commanders. This was, perhaps, because their enemy lived almost on their doorstep; hence, Thorongil's

1. Compare Butterbur's reaction to this prospect in RotK,6.



The storming of Valinor

Jef Murray

Mallorn XLIII

raid on Umbar was something new. Arnor, however, lay wide open to hostile incursions from the remoter north and east; to defend herself, her armies needed the power of rapid movement from place to place, and cavalry became her chief arm. Hence, for Arthedain, the Andram² was a political rather than a military boundary, remaining her supply base for military operations to eastwards rather than a forward line of defence. (This distinction has not always been properly understood by southern historians, whose thinking on this point long remained enmeshed in their very different circumstances.) The Kings of Arnor after Araphor allowed no salients; and their descendants were quick to observe this example. It was characteristic of this strategy that during the Second Rhûnnish war, Elessar should order the construction on the Sea of Rhûn of a temporary harbour to shelter the flotilla then building for the next spring's assault on Mech-a-tir (modern Mekatir.) Equally in keeping with northern tradition was his use of a 'pincer' cavalry attack timed to coincide with the assault on the haven of Mech-a-tir itself; and the guerrilla operations which cut off the withdrawal of the Easterling host to north and east of the city. The simple and quite ordinary expedient of training men to manage a system of signalling with fire beacons placed on the bare summits of the surrounding hills had been common practice in the days of Arthedain's wars with Angmar. It was also part of Gondor's own military lore, but it had not been applied in quite that way before.

Apart from these divergences in tactics, the question of attitudes remained. In general, the feeling of the Northern Dunedain was that war was disruptive, abnormal, a necessary evil, maybe, but also an evil necessity. In Gondor, however, war was regarded - almost - as an honour conferred by the enmity of Sauron: to be accepted proudly. Somewhat mockingly, an anonymous versifier summarised this difference in outlook in a brief stanza:

What did the lords of Gondor say, when time was, Doom should fall?

"Man the gates and the entries, ' look to the wall! "

What do the princes of Arnor say, those foes of Angmar's knowing?

"Let us walk into the garden and see how our roses are growing."

However, underlying this light-hearted and ostensibly dilettante view of life was the Northern Dunedain's implacable enmity towards Sauron and all his works. They took to themselves the words which, reportedly, Elendil had spoken in Armenelos of Elenya when he encountered his enemy there in the courts of Ar-Pharazôn;

'For this I know: though you be my death, I will be yours until world's end. And if ever blood of my house is shed by your ordering, my kindred and all that claim me for their forefather shall pursue you with hatred and enmity down all the years, until you or they are no more. For we also are accounted the children of Luthien'.³

Social mores

A further paradox, to the eye of a Gondorin observer, was the role of Dunadan womenfolk in Nendorin society. Inevitably, in a society from which the majority of the adult male

(Dunadan) population was absent much of the time, the managerial and administrative functions usually (and in Gondor almost invariably) performed by men were carried out by the womenfolk. It was their business to conduct daily life in an ordered and civilised fashion, and for this task they received the sort of practical training which was required. The wife of the Chieftain generally acted as his (civil) administrative deputy in his absence, such that her function resembled that of the Stewards of Gondor in the days of the Kings. By the time most Ladies of Arnor (as they were titled) became so, they were mature and experienced women whose children were adult or nearly so. When Dirhael initially refused to countenance his daughter's marriage to Arathorn, he did so partly on the grounds of the onerous duties this would entail for a lively and beautiful girl not yet three and twenty, whose chief ambition had always been to study the healer's art. Hers was certainly not an enviable situation.

There were, however, a good many years in which the daughters of a household were neither daughters-in-law nor indeed mistresses of households. What else could they do?

In effect, since no Dunadan woman could leave Nendor - except in cases of extreme necessity - they were limited to whatever occupations they could invent or make for themselves. They could study medicine in its various branches, but not all had the aptitude or the inclination. They could teach: formally, that is. They could pursue personal interests such as music or herblore or languages, crafts or jurisprudence. There were the artists and scholars, musicians and historians. But if they had no special gifts or preferences, they must indeed have been bored and largely without occupation, for Nendor was a small enclave, the merest rump of a state (however royal in origin) where scope for change was as limited as choice, and change itself purely gradual. Their dilemma was, in large measure, that of Eowyn in Edoras. Yet though there may have been casualties in this situation, they remain as invisible to history as their brothers and fathers: who faced a like predicament, which they were still less able to change.

Most non-Nendorin observers, however, understood little of this. They saw only that the womenfolk of the Northern Dunedain appeared to wield a remarkable degree of authority: not only in their own households, where that was to be expected, but elsewhere, too. In the absence of their husbands, or during the minority of their sons, they appeared at Council (as the princess of Emerch did in her widowhood, after F.O.21) and debated matters of importance with zest and intelligence. This shocked the more severe and old-fashioned of their critics, but by its infrequency this function was probably less significant than the invisible role common to all women with households or families; that of instilling from the first the attitudes, beliefs, practices, customs, principles and, so to speak, the folklore of their own civilisation. The Dunedain understood very well the enormous importance and influence of early teaching upon proper conduct, and of the degree to which nurture and upbringing could make or mar a child's prospects and temperament. Hence their insistence on the fostering of all their chieftains in Rivendell, and their keen interest in methods of teaching children, in which respect they showed considerable perception and originality.

In other ways, though insistent on a high standard of courtesy and discipline, they were more relaxed in their domestic

2. His 'Long Wall'. In some places, there really was a defensive structure, like Hadrian's wall; elsewhere, it was more notional.

3. *Annals* V.i (Ed Ruth Redarin)

Arnor: the Numenorean inheritance

relations than were the Dunedain of Gondor. Little boys and little girls alike everywhere used the diminutive forms *mamil*, *tatanya*, as endearments to their parents: but when they grew older they did not adopt their formal titles as modes of address. No Nendorin boy would have called his father 'sire' except in fun – (or, when in Gondor, to avoid causing offence.) 'Sir' was quite usual, but 'Father' was more commonly used by adult children: while *mamil* was a form of address employed as an endearment (intimately and within the family) by adult sons and daughters alike. Otherwise, *mamil* shaded gradually into *ladymother* as a proper compromise. Children bowed and curtsied on all formal (and less formal) occasions to senior relatives, family friends and all guests or invited strangers, but not to their parents, grandparents, or older siblings. Such formality would have indicated pure mockery, or even insult. This, too, puzzled outside observers.

The one exception to this, as to almost every other rule, was the House of Isildur. Since its head was *de jure* King and *de facto* the ruling prince, the sons and grandsons of the Chieftain treated him (their father or grandfather) with due deference on all formal occasions. Within the family, however, less formality obtained, at least in childhood. Adult children seem to have applied a certain amount of discretion, this being dependent on circumstances and temperament. Courtesy was highly prized, but over-formality was usually gently mocked, and its practitioner might well be saddled with a nickname like Tarcil-Man of Gondor: a purely Nendorin joke. Between friends of both sexes, whether relatives or not, (and in Nendor almost everybody was related, if only distantly, to everybody else) terms of endearment were frequently used (eg, *senya*, *onya*, *atarinya*), though the rules governing their application were subtle and not amenable to historical proofs. Endearments were almost always derived from Quenya or similar coinages. 'Atanya' meant close (male) friend or kinsman: '*heryndilie*' close (women) friends; between men and women, the use of *vanimelde* was regarded as a declaration of serious and acknowledged attachment. Other terms, such as *andil*, implied a longstanding intimacy and affection, such as that of marriage, and were rarely used outside it. (Aragorn (that is, Aragorn II) would not have called Arwen *andilie*, therefore, until some time after July 1st, TA 3019; the degree of intimacy implied was too great.) The joke implied by *palandil*⁴ was a purely Nendorin one.

The conflict between precedence and seniority was governed by a network of invisible rulings. The head of every great House was addressed as Prince - Ernil - and his wife as Heryn; the latter form corresponding to princess. The title Aranel or Arheryn was restricted to the Chieftain's wife alone; though if he was a widower, his daughter-in-law might be accorded this honorific, at least on formal occasions. Both Faramir and Imrahil were always addressed as Ernil in Nendor and are always so described. The sons of the King, however, were not so named: the apparent contradiction being explained by the fact that the term implied the head of a house (or household), which the prince would not be until he became king; after which the term no longer applied. He was therefore addressed as Lord So-and-So (his own name following). Other Dunedain of rank were similarly addressed as Lord Elendur or

Elatan/Amandil, etcetera. The heir of a great house was called (my) lord of such-and-such (name of *lhann* or *endorenke*) – but the title 'Heir of-' was confined to the House of Isildur: the only House to be named for its founder rather than the province ruled. It was not, however, a mode of address.

There was, nonetheless, no system of precedence between the princely Houses of Amor. In this respect, Nendorin practice differed from that of Gondor, where there was an established 'pecking order' (ie hierarchy) with Dol Amroth at the top. Yet another reason for Aragorn's investiture of Faramir the 27th Steward as Prince of Ithilien (not the original rank of the Stewards, who had been lords of Emyrn Arnen: Ithilien remained Isildur's own 'principality') was to establish formally and precisely his exact (and aggrandised) status in the eyes of Gondor and Arnor. A principedom carried with it very specific duties and prestige, being an inalienable 'endorenke' or *lhann held by*, not *of*, the King. Hitherto, though the Stewards had been *de facto* (and largely hereditary) rulers of Gondor, their rank had remained somewhat ambiguous. Imrahil would not actually have taken precedence of Denethor (or Ecthelion), but he was deemed to have waived this entitlement by virtue of his kinsman's office, not to have lost it: hence his command of Minas Tirith during Faramir's illness. But from the first Aragorn made it clear that he regarded his young Steward as his premier counsellor in Gondor. Youth was not of itself a disqualification for high office in the Nendorin view, nor was age a pre-requisite. Capacity – fitness for the duty – was what counted.

Political aspects

War, womenfolk, the world and Westergesse: the Northern Dunedain were well acquainted with the world – they were widely travelled, and their perspective was broad. The removal of Sauron's influence inevitably had its effect, but this was felt in Gondor rather in the form of political ambiguities in Umbar and dislocation in Dunland – the more so because at this time the latter was not a very advanced or sophisticated state – hence, unable to offer much direct threat to Gondor, nor even to Rohan, except in the form of tiresome cattle raids. The break-up of Mordor's empire, slave and otherwise, resulted in confused fighting – the seizure, by (effectively) brigand chiefs, of brief power and short-lived territorial gains which fell easily to assault from their like-minded neighbours -or sporadic and disorganised incursions into Harondor and the like. Over twenty years of this elapsed before Rhûn gathered sufficient force and unity to constitute a serious threat which had to be countered – and even then, it was the North Kingdom's remote and modest ally Dorwinion which attracted the hostile interest of her amorphous but powerful neighbour.

Umbar was a different matter. The peculiar and altogether unexpected situation which arose there in FO 8 with regard to the succession crystallised all Gondor's long-standing distrust and enmity towards that maritime state, so much nearer in time and distance than Rhûn. During Sauron's hegemony, this usually unstable and always politically explosive despotism had brooded and simmered under the rule of Harad – oriented potentates and puppet despots. With the removal of that iron control, Umbar was at leisure to shape her own destiny if she

4. Lit. 'loved from afar', a distance. [absence makes the heart ...etc]

Mallorn XLIII

could. In TA 3019, Umbar was a state in disarray: her navy was largely destroyed, most of her (legitimate) adult rulers dead or senile. In desperation and dread she submitted; '*kissed the ground before Gondor's feet*', as her annals said, and subscribed to a treaty of alliance which actually bound her to very little. Until the dynasty and authority of the Arakhans had reasserted some firm central control, Umbar could form no lasting policies and so execute no decisions. Meanwhile, in Gondor firm central control on the part of the new dynasty there consolidated, reformed and set in motion policies which clearly demonstrated a strong determination to keep control of the seas and coastlands, with a view to defending its own boundaries henceforth. The new King now concentrated on laying down a fleet and developing an effective cavalry arm in Anorien and further south. With Rohan to north and north east of her, Gondor could afford to 'neglect' her back, or northern flank. Umbar dared not. Abortive attempts on the part of Haradrim condottieri to seize power there had bred extreme resentment. The years of Haradrim (sc, Mordor) -dominated rule had only intensified this feeling. Nevertheless, Umbar remained economically dependent on Harad. The timber for her great ships came largely from the Harad coastlands, her only other source of supply being either Harondor, where earlier deforestation had laid waste much of the terrain, or Gondor itself – not a likely supplier! The new King had not chosen to replant or resettle Harondor – not yet. (Since Druadan Forest had become a self-governing protectorate within Gondor, he had had to look elsewhere for timber; but there were plenty of sources to choose from, apart from the hinterland of Dol Amroth.) Consequently, Umbar's relations with Harad, however uneasy, would remain vital to her – unless she could persuade Gondor of her good faith and goodwill for the future. That, inevitably, depended on the authority and character of her Arakhan. From FO 9, this was a part-Difnadan prince, Marachan, who succeeded in holding Umbar to a stable and indeed relatively neutral course for the next thirty six years. By then, Arthedain's two major campaigns against Rhun were over, and the chiefs of West Rhim at least had settled into a pattern of more or less peaceful coexistence with their neighbours which evolved, by FA65, into the federation of Western Rhûn – or Rhûn-next-the-Sea, as it was called in Gondor.

It has already been suggested that the situation faced by the kings of the new Telcontari dynasty was in itself something new. The policies which they developed also diverged from those of the past in a number of ways.

The effects of a protracted war (though flaring only briefly at wide intervals) were less disruptive of the economy than they would be now. Nevertheless, the loss first of Harondor and then of Ithilien had severely hampered Gondor's expansion. Industries and crafts alike need to be supported by a sizeable population, which in turn requires a highly efficient agriculture. The loss of Harondor crippled Gondor's naval capability; the comparatively recent loss of Ithilien was more generally felt. Concentrations of population resulted in those centres already quite densely occupied. When Angelnor of Dol Amroth removed with his family to Lossarnach, he may well have had other (and less) than purely aesthetic motives. He took with him a considerable number of citizens of the Belfalas and began the resettlement of an upland area (the licence is still extant) long deforested and deserted, the one as a consequence – we may suppose – of the other. By the time of the War of the Ring, this resource had come to maturity, but

in the haste and urgency of that time no ships could be built, and the timber of Lossarnach remained untouched; readily available, therefore, for use afterwards. That made it easily possible to repair the losses caused to Pelargir's shipping by the Corsair fleet within a very short period, therefore, without exhausting supplies. (The River Erui in winter spate was used to float logs down to the confluence with the Anduin.) With the removal of the Umbar threat off Tolfalas, coastwise traffic increased not only between Dol Amroth and Pelargir, but also between Cair Andros and Tolfalas; this being much the easiest way of transporting goods from the coast upriver to Ithilien or to the borders of Rohan: particularly goods in bulk or heavy wares. The Anduin was, of course, navigable far north of Rauros, and it was not long before the old portway which bypassed Sarn Gebir was reopened, thus affording a continuous channel of communication between the Ered Mithrin, Eryn Lasgalen, and the sea. The eastward road through Mirkwood to the River Running, Esgaroth, Dale and Erebor provided the final link in a triangle of roads joining Fornost and Annuminas, Tharbad, Edoras, Minas Tirith and Pelargir, with East Rohan and Ithilien. As the new King was well aware, such links meant not only greater ease and speed of travel and trade, but also the diffusion of ideas and influences. The merchants of Esgaroth would hear the news from the south within a month or less, and news from the west as soon. A thousand years of silence gave way to four weeks' travelling by road and river. The effects of peace, that is to say, were more far-reaching than those of war.

Trade routes

Such changes do not happen overnight, of course, but they happened with astonishing speed nonetheless. This was partly the result of a sharply increased demand for raw materials, as the economies of the south and west expanded into fresh fields; partly the ability of the south to export northwards both foodstuffs and luxury goods, for which the resources in time, labour and space were now available. This traffic moved in two directions: indeed, almost in a circle from the Iron Hills via Esgaroth to Gondor, and thence to Rohan and Esgaroth again.

In Arnor, the Ered Luin served a similar function as a westward boundary. Naturally enough, it was some time before the fragmented economy of the North Kingdom was drawn fully into the expanding circle of trade and commerce which flourished to the east along the Vales of Anduin. However, the contribution made by the Northern Dunedain to the prosperity of Andarthedain was great enough, though it was of a subtler kind. As men who were acquainted with the lands beyond Hithaiglin and south east of Anduin, they were inevitably employed on numerous trade missions and similar embassies in the years following the establishment of the Reunited Kingdom. Although Elessar made no attempts to influence Dale or Esgaroth directly, it was natural that both they and Dorwinion should find consultation with Gondor and Arnor a matter of course whenever issues of common interest or general moment arose. It was at the King's suggestion, however, that trade legations from all three powers were established in Fornost, Tharbad, Dol Amroth, Pelargir and Minas Tirith to serve the needs and interests of their merchants and visitors in Arnor and Gondor alike. The idea was soon reciprocated, and a system of mutual exchange grew up rapidly between these fledgling states and Rohan. The letters sent by these various ambassadors to their home governments provide the historian with a wealth of detailed information and numerous insights



The palantir

Lorenzo Daniele

Mallorn XLIII

into the workings of these countries during the reign of Elessar. It is in part from these letters that we derive our close knowledge of Nendor at this critical period of transition. Interestingly, the further afield the legation lay, the more likely it was to be staffed by Northern Dunedain, whose command of the languages and customs in alien lands was almost invariably greater than that of their southern counterparts.

If this had been consistently the case, we would need to look no further for an explanation of the friction which grew up between Gondor and Arnor thereafter. But it was not. All heads of legations were expected to train their successors, and their staffs were a fair mixture of Gondorin and Arnorean aspirants alike. All these young men acquired a knowledge of the customs and habits of the peoples amongst whom they lived, and carried that knowledge home with them in due time. Many developed an affection and respect for the countries where they served, extending far beyond mere courtesy and liking.

Ideas and techniques, manners and methods travelled too. Before the reign of Elessar ended, Western Rhûn and Umbar had been drawn into this circle of freer commerce and exchange as well; thereby giving them a stake in the continuing orderliness and peace of the regions where they traded, as in their own. Thus, the High King acquired a body of able and experienced advisors in matters of trade and foreign policy: men with first hand knowledge of the (sometimes) very distant lands with which, nevertheless, Gondor and Arnor were both involved. Such was, indeed, the eventual object of many of these ambassadors - and the system acquired all the sophistications of the culture from which it sprang. Arnorean diplomatic experience and practice influenced the development of many small states in the early years of the Fourth Age: and Westron became the *lingua franca* of numerous peoples far east and south of the Anduin. The Great River had become what the High King had once called it: 'the broad highway of Middle Earth.' The 'dynasty of trade' had replaced the isolationism of war, and Gondor's cultural boundaries were expanding far beyond her geographical limits. In Arnor, physical frontiers once more acquired significance, and the dynamism and vitality of her people sprang up afresh to match her natural resources. Shortly before his death, Amandil Lindhir remarked wryly in a letter to his close friend and colleague, the Prince of Ithilien: *'The White Tree is in business again and has branches in many lands. Soon, I suppose, even Erebor will be taking a leaf out of that book. Let us hope there are no envious wood-cutters eyeing the bole!*' Imperceptibly, however, Gondor came to expect that a degree of conformity would follow influence. It was partly to solve this difficulty that a systematic revision of monetary equivalents was instituted in FO 35, so that merchants and traders would know the approximate rate of exchange among say, Rohan, Gondor and Dale. One effect of this revision was to standardise coinage throughout the lands of the West. The artificiality of a too facile adoption of this measure had been pointed out by the Council of the North Kingdom when first considering the revision. After careful reflection, they fixed on a system whereby a coin should contain its face value's worth of metal, whether copper, silver or gold; this to be settled by assay. It was felt that this would allow each individual state to control its own economy (sophisticated or not) while minting coins of a denomination suited to the needs of its own people. By this system, one copper penny became the equivalent of two copper halfpence. There were five silver pennies to one gold piece, and one hundred copper pennies to one silver piece.

The adoption of this system inevitably led to more rigorous standards in those countries which belonged to the so-called League of Anduin, and this in its turn stimulated greater confidence among merchants everywhere. It was the object of all the states of the League to keep tolls down on goods leaving or entering the country, so that free passage obtained for most commodities en route to another market. All goods classified as 'necessaries' were exempt from toll; such that whoever imported or exported raw wool or wheat, for example, bought a five year licence from the prince in whose country he chiefly bought and sold, and proceeded from there.

There were also what we should now call international trade fairs twice yearly in Minas Tirith, Tharbad, Pelargir, Fornost and Annúminas, at which all the crafts and skills of the various countries were represented. Eventually, trade legations began to provide rudimentary banking facilities in the form of temporary loans and credits for the duration of these fairs. Naturally, Arnor and Gondor profited from these arrangements and began to offer like services themselves. The resulting economic pressures contributed to West Rhûn's capitulation in FO 62 and to Umbar's earlier secession from the Haradwaith League in FO 51. The latter state's dependence on a narrow range of (largely imported) commodities rendered her particularly vulnerable to such pressures, and these ultimately brought about her acceptance of tributary status in the reign of Elendur (Elessar's grandson).

Such movement in the world outside inevitably affected Rohan's hitherto largely pastoral economy. Throughout the reigns of Elessar and Eldarion, the kings of Rohan continued to make small gradual adjustments which were easily absorbed into the life of the realm; but during the reign of Eldamir of Arthedain (Elessar's great grandson), the pace of change increased. At that time, the men of Rohan began to ask how Arnor/Nendor had coped with the new rush of wealth and population experienced in the first half of Elessar's rule. But Nendor's way of life did not radically change; it merely diffused and prospered as a model (of sorts) for reconstituted Arnor. Thus, Annúminas grew. It was linked with Fornost and Bree by excellent roads, with the Shire and its southern lands by the Baranduin, and by FO 60 to Fornost and the east by the King's Channel (the Rant-Erain), which carried bulk goods and other heavy waterborne traffic between the marches of Rhudaur and Nenuial. Further, Arnor continued to be organised on a provincial basis - in *endorenke* - for many years, as a federation rather than as a homogenous unit, until long use eroded such notions of entity, except in purely geographical terms. The melting pot of Tharbad - which is what it became - was an apt symbol, in little, of Arnor's development over the last half century.

It will be the business of the next chapter to examine the reasons for the eventual schisms, which - to their contemporaries at least - seemed to destroy the careful and astute unification of the two realms and their re-creation as Andarthedain. 'Hindsight: as the proverb has it, 'is full wise in foretelling.' Yet from our still more distant perspective, it is clear that while there were and remained divisions between the two realms, these were by no means of a serious character until political ill-will and vested interests chose to make them so. In doing this, they created some very real differences in history and outlook with which we have yet to come to terms. Close scrutiny of the situation in FO 1, therefore, proves not only enlightening but actively beneficial. Let us hope that we will be better able to deal with the legacy of our more recent past in the light of that remoter success.

Traitors and translators:

three German versions of *The Lord of the Rings*

Susanne Stopfel

There is a short and devastating Italian proverb: *Traduttore traditore* – the translator is a traitor. While it may seem unfair to attach this unflattering label to an entire profession, whoever came up with it unfortunately had a point.

Translators *are* traitors. They betray authors, texts, audiences. They cannot help it as they invariably serve several masters – the original text as well as their own language with its unique set of capabilities and limitations, and possibly the publisher and the reading public too. Sometimes compromises are reached that satisfy the demands of all. Sometimes that is not the case, but nobody notices. Sometimes, when the text is a book read and loved by millions of people, the translator's choices and loyalties may become the focus of heated debates: Of course the translator has betrayed the book. But to what extent, and what were the reasons, and what was gained?

There are three German versions of *The Lord of the Rings*, two translations and a revised version of the first. The translations are quite different, and they “betray” different aspects by their choices. They also reflect their respective time of origin. And they have sparked a row of epic proportions. The following is an attempt at a brief overview, and at giving an idea of what the Great German LotR Translation Row is all about.

I Margaret Carroux (1969/70)

Finding a translator for LotR in the 1960s wasn't an easy task. By the time Margaret Carroux (1912-1991) agreed to take the job two translators of note had turned it down, one of them for ideological reasons. Apparently the publisher, the old-established house Klett-Cotta, was aware of the enormity of the task, and perhaps of the difficulty of finding a suitable translator: the fee Margaret Carroux asked for, and received, was well above average. A valued professional with a reputation for commitment and meticulousness, her portfolio would come to include translations of Nadine Gordimer, Edna O'Brien, Françoise Sagan and other “big names” – as well as Harvard Lampoon's *Bored of the Rings!* Delighted with the task and determined to do it justice, she dug herself in.

Even then things did not run smoothly. Carroux mistrusted her own ability to translate Tolkien's poems and songs, and they were turned over to another translator, Ebba-Margareta von Freymann. (When Carroux saw the results her comment was that she could have done as well as that herself.) There were battles with the editor in charge of the project, a man whose own command of English appears to have been somewhat sketchy and who ended up correcting a number of mistakes back into the text, against her fierce opposition. Questions went unanswered – Carroux managed to meet Tolkien once, travelling to Oxford for the purpose in the win-

ter of 1967, but the professor, nursing a severe cold and in a spectacularly ungracious mood, barely deigned to acknowledge her presence. For all that, when the German version of Fellowship appeared in 1969 the eminent critic Eugen Skasa-Weiß was positively elated at the “resonant, blissful clarity” of the translation.

Carroux did get details wrong, unavoidably. When she translated LotR there was no Silmarillion, and thus no way of checking or even recognizing Tolkien's allusions to his other tales. To all appearances Carroux made what she could of what she found. In her version, Tom Bombadil tells the hobbits that he has been there not “before the seas were bent” (I 142) but before the seas were “conquered” (I 166). The shining figure of Glorfindel “as he is upon the other side” (I 235) becomes “as he is seen by the other side” (I 271) – the dark side, presumably, – and the “Day before days” (I 257) becomes “time before time” (I 297).

Elsewhere there are blunders based on misunderstood English terms. The notorious mistranslation of Sam's “I must see it through, sir” when talking to Frodo about the journey before them (I 96) as the equivalent of “I must understand it” (I 115) was “corrected” in by Carroux' editor when the book was already out of her hands. There are others of a similar nature. Aragorn's remark to Gimli regarding the words of Malbeth the Seer, that he would ask him to come along “if you would understand them better” (III 55), became the equivalent of “if you understood them better” (III 57), and the “wild-goose chase” Gríma initiates when “the immediate peril was westward” (II 126) was translated literally (II 142): apparently somebody did not know the figurative meaning. Of course it is possible that Carroux was responsible for some of them, even though she was conscientious almost to a fault, and a missed pop culture reference could haunt her for years – but it does not appear very likely.

Very occasionally she digressed from the original on purpose. One much-discussed example is her name for the Shire, which became *Auenland* in German – not a translation at all but a name suggesting a peaceful, lush rural idyll. The correct translation of shire would have been *Gau* – a word recommended in Tolkien's notes for translators but rejected by Carroux because of the unpleasant associations it conjured up. Half-Jewish herself, Carroux had no problem whatsoever with the book's strong “Nordic” element, but she evidently drew the line where she considered a German word tainted beyond repair.

It is a very classy translation that treats its source with enormous respect. It stays close to the original wording, to the point of recreating it in German and in a way reinventing the language: sometimes it creates expressions modelled on those of the original rather than using existing German ones. It tends to tone down rather than exaggerate when faced with a choice between the two, and to go for the more old-fash-

Mallorn XLIII

ioned term rather than the more modern one. It is also very literate; Carroux never shies away from following Tolkien's lead and using fine old words like the very obscure *Anfurten* in "*Graue Anfurten*", Carroux' name for the Grey Havens, a word found in Martin Luther's Bible translation and very few other places – and one that may well have baffled some readers in much the same way that the vocabulary of Tolkien's original did.

What did happen was that the many voices and stylistic levels of Tolkien's book became somewhat blurred, partly owing to the workings of the German language and partly through the translator's choices. Characters in the German version sound more like one another than they do in the English original. While the difference between Sam Gamgee quoting his gaffer and Elrond at his most solemn is still unmistakable, it is less pronounced; Carroux' Sam, in fact, tends to speak a countrified but still rather literate German not too different from Frodo's, in part no doubt because there is no German equivalent for the "Sam-speak", or the things it tells us about the character. In cases like this Carroux went for compromise, for variations on an antique-flavoured and rather "high" tone. Along with Carroux' frequent choice to stick to the original phrasing even where the German would have permitted a freer treatment this gives the book a lyrical, faintly remote quality that is certainly more uniform, and possibly more bland, than the original's. But it has left its mark on millions of readers, and some of the terms coined by Carroux have become part of the German language as a whole.

II Roswith Krege-Mayer (1991)

In 1991 Klett-Cotta announced an anniversary edition of *LotR* for 1992, a one-volume illustrated deluxe edition, "revised and in part re-translated" – a term that was toned down to a more general "corrected and revised" in the imprint. This second version matches the facts much more closely: the percentage of text that was actually altered in this revised edition, by Klett-Cotta editor Roswith Krege-Mayer, is minimal.

Krege-Mayer did correct a small number of mistranslations, usually those on the dictionary level. Sam no longer tells Frodo that he must "understand" the quest but that he must finish it (101). The "wild-goose chase" has received a proper translation (524). Elsewhere slips of this type have survived. What is striking, however, is that the blunders based on an incomplete understanding of Tolkien's universe are still there – despite the fact that German versions of the *Silmarillion*, the *Unfinished Tales* and the *Book of Lost Tales* were all available from Klett-Cotta at the time the revised edition was published: the seas, according to Tom Bombadil, have still been "conquered".

Other changes made by Krege-Mayer seem arbitrary. Sometimes they come over as mildly absurd, as when she replaces one semicolon with a full stop in a long and otherwise unchanged paragraph. Occasionally what has been "corrected" is not just Carroux but Tolkien too, and the results are invariably disimprovements. Where Carroux had kept the wording of Frodo's introduction of his companions to Butterbur as "Mr Took", "Mr Brandybuck" and "Sam Gamgee" (I 165) – two gentlemen and one servant – Krege-Mayer makes Sam into yet another "Mister" (165). Aragorn's "Thus passes the heir of Denethor, Lord of the Tower of Guard!" (II 16) is retranslated by Krege-Mayer in a way that

makes Boromir, not Denethor, the Lord of the Tower of Guard (422) – for no discernible reason other than mistakenly reading 'heir of Denethor' in apposition with 'Lord of the Tower of Guard'. Éowyn's sudden switch from "you" to "thee" on asking Aragorn to take her along when he leaves Dunharrow (III 58) is reflected in Carroux by a corresponding change from the formal and archaic "*Ihr*" to the familiar "*du*" (III 61). Krege-Mayer eliminates this; in her version Éowyn uses "*Ihr*" throughout, robbing the passage of a telling and poignant element (792).

On the whole it is difficult to see what purpose Krege-Mayer's version was supposed to serve. As a revision it is useless – missing many of the things that might have justified revising the Carroux translation in the first place, adding new mistranslations instead and making barely an impact on the book as a whole. It is hard to avoid the impression that Krege-Mayer was unfamiliar with Tolkien's work, and picked out details to be corrected more or less at random.

The "revised and corrected" translation was around for a while, but it never replaced the original version. Today Roswith Krege-Mayer's version is out of print.

III Wolfgang Krege (2000)

In 2000 Klett-Cotta published yet another *Lord of the Rings* to replace the old – and, to some, dated – version. This time the translator was Wolfgang Krege (1939-2005), another seasoned professional and Klett-Cotta's Tolkien expert; his work includes, besides translations of Anthony Burgess and Joseph Conrad, Tolkien's essays and his *Letters* as well as Humphrey Carpenter's Tolkien biography – and an acclaimed German *Silmarillion*.

Unlike the Krege-Mayer revision, the new translation sparked a lively discussion that quickly turned sour. Veteran readers objected to what they considered the unacceptable liberties Krege's version takes with the original, and claimed that the book's unique atmosphere was being destroyed. The editor in charge lashed out at the critics, accusing them of gut-level reactions and suggesting that they simply lacked the literary experience to appreciate the new version. According to Klett-Cotta's website, Krege's *Lord of the Rings* is being "cheered" by "new readers, critics and those familiar with the English original". In actual fact the reviews were very mixed, with some reviewers pointedly preferring the old version, some the new, and some considering both of equal merit. After a brief interlude during which the Carroux translation went out of print, and Krege's was the only one available, the older version has now become available again although the publisher continues to promote the new one over the old.

Krege's version is not a revised edition but a wholly new translation – with a few exceptions. As Krege explains in a brief afterword, whenever he discovered that he knew passages of the first translation by heart he took that as a sign that Carroux had found the right words, and that there was no point trying to improve on them. "Those were the hardest moments. Having to copy – that hurts." His translation, Krege writes, "presumes to attempt to tell the story as Tolkien would tell it if he were to write today, in 1999, and if he were to translate it from the Westron directly into German."

Krege's translation finally eliminates the small misinterpretations that haunted the earlier versions. The seas are finally bent. The "Day before days" has become just that. At

Traitors and translators ...

the same time, though, new slips and mistranslations have crept in. Some are tiny oversights; others are not. There is a difference between “the Lord Celeborn and Galadriel the Lady of Lórien” (Tolkien, I 368) and Celeborn and Galadriel, “the Lord and Lady of Lórien” (Krege, 380).

Stylistically Krege’s translation is more “modern” than Carroux’ in more than one respect. For one thing staying close to the exact wording of the original is less of a concern; this version tends to make use of the different approaches offered by the German language instead, sometimes to striking effect. The result is varied, dynamic, of great range. Even its most severe critics usually concede that in its best moments Krege’s translation is both powerful and elegant, more so, perhaps, than Carroux’.

It is also much more modern in its general tone, which is where controversy sets in. Where Carroux went for a style of dialogue that tended towards the literary even in comparatively relaxed moments, Krege’s characters occasionally use a vocabulary reminiscent of teenagers on a bus. To some extent, especially where the hobbits are concerned, this could be said to follow the example Tolkien himself set; but Krege’s creative anachronisms go much further than Tolkien’s ever did, and involve more characters than just the hobbits. Thus Krege’s Butterbur calls Nob a woolly-footed “bum” (174) where the original has “slowcoach” (I 165) – a

word that does have the secondary meaning of “slowcoach” in very colloquial German but reeks of 1990s teen-speak. Possibly even more surprising is Saruman’s “filthy white logo” (475), the German term for what Grishnákh calls “filthy white badges” (II 49) in the original. And to quote one extreme example, the translation of “‘Like as not,’ said the Lady with a gentle laugh” (I 377) reads somewhat like “‘Sure!’ said the Lady, giggling softly” (389)._ Finally, Sam’s habit of calling Frodo the equivalent of “boss” where the original has “master” or “sir” has infuriated readers who claim that it distorts the entire picture, replacing the master/servant or officer/batman context with a rather flippant-sounding employer/employee relationship incapable of sustaining the plot and clashing badly with the story’s drama and atmosphere.

But then much of the dialogue has been drained of emotion – and this, too, is a conspicuous and continuous trait of Krege’s translation. Where Carroux translated Tolkien’s frequent uses of the words ‘love’ and ‘dear’ to describe relationships between characters as she found them, using their German equivalents without a sign of embarrassment, Krege’s vocabulary consistently eliminates anything suggesting strong emotion between males. Where Faramir tells Sam “It may even help the master that you love” (II 290) the German version has “It may even be to the advantage of the



The Tower Hills

Jef Murray

Mallorn XLIII

master you're so concerned for" (719). Where Gimli says to Pippin "I love you, if only because of the pains you have cost me" (III 234) the translation replaces "love" with "like" (1007). Sam's "I love him, whether or no" (II 260) has become something like "I'm attached to him" (689). And when Sam cries "O wake up, Frodo, me dear, me dear. Wake up!" (II 340) Krege substitutes "O wake up, Frodo, damn it all, wake up!" (771). Even Aragorn's answer when Frodo announces his intention of returning to the Shire – "Well, dearest friend..." (III 252) – has become the equivalent of "Well, my friend" (1025). And this pattern is no mere stylistic choice on the part of the translator but one that subtly affects the content as well, as it applies only where all the protagonists are male and no romance is implied. When Legolas says about Aragorn that "all those who come to know him come to love him... even the cold maiden of the Rohirrim" (III 150), the German version promptly mentions love too (922) – almost suggesting that love is unthinkable outside a romantic context. It is another example of just how far Krege's liberties with the text actually go. When a translator systematically alters an aspect of a book the translation comes dangerously close to being, in fact, an adaptation.

If the intention was to restore the multiple voices and stylistic levels of Tolkien's original that had become somewhat muted in Carroux' version, then the new translation achieves its aim – in a way. It does this, however, by fragmenting and redistributing those levels to the point of randomness. It might be argued that little is gained by making the hobbits

adopt a more "natural" tone compared to Carroux when Galadriel says things like "sure" as well, and that a giggling Galadriel is hardly more true to Tolkien's original than an over-literate Sam. To claim that the flippant, "cool" modern tone impairs the book's atmosphere and in places clashes with what the story tells us may be a gut-level reaction and could be hard to prove, but it is also hard to argue with. It is certainly difficult to imagine that the translator of "On Fairy-Stories" truly believed he was telling the story "as Tolkien would tell it if he were to write today".

But, as mentioned above, translators serve several masters whose demands are not always entirely compatible. Doing justice to one may mean betraying another. Wolfgang Krege's translation gives the impression of aiming to appeal to the audience implied by its tone and style: young, "cool", perhaps unfamiliar with archaic forms and unused to writing that does not reflect the reader's own everyday experiences, possibly uncomfortable with displays of emotion except between the sexes. Perhaps the true problem of this translation is its claim to present a version that is true to Tolkien's intentions specifically, more so than its predecessor was. Of all the claims it could have made this would be one of the hardest to support. If it hadn't been for this, Krege's *Lord of the Rings*, with all its merits and demerits, might still have sparked a discussion on the ethics of translation – but it might also have passed as containing no more than the amount of betrayal that can reasonably be expected from members of a traitorous profession.

Notes

As explained in a translator's footnote in the appendices, on p. 464 of Vol. 3, *Die Rückkehr des Königs*. – Gau is a word much used by the National Socialists, reminiscent as it is of a past of border wars and feudal duties.

The German version is even more startling than that because the translator's term for lady – "hohe Frau" – suggests an (untranslatable) joke of questionable taste. "Hohe Frau" is an old-fashioned term for a woman of exalted status – or simply a humorous way of describing a tall woman. As it happens, it is also a mock-reverent title bestowed at the time on the tall, blonde Winifred Wagner, one-time director of the Bayreuth festival and a notorious Hitler groupie, making fun both of her height and her airs and pretensions. Readers of Krege's generation are unlikely to miss the allusion; the readers Krege's vocabulary appears to be aiming at, on the other hand, are unlikely to get it.

It is tempting to speculate whether the publisher was thinking of the audience of Peter Jackson's movie in particular. This was looming increasingly large at the time Krege's translation was published, and large sales of the book could be expected once it was released, but as yet nobody knew what it would make of aspects like Tolkien's language or his openly emotional friendships. What was known beyond doubt was that it would be a huge film drawing the young, blockbuster-going public.

References

All quotes from *The Lord of the Rings* are from the three-volume set (George Allen & Unwin 1966); references are to volume number and page.

Quotes from *The Lord of the Rings* in the translation by Margaret Carroux have been translated back from the three-volume hardcover set: J. R. R. Tolkien, *Der Herr der Ringe*. Translated from the English by Margaret Carroux. Poems translated by E.-M. von Freyermann. Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1987 (3 vols). References are to volume number and page.

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Italics in the retranslated passages are mine.

For much of the background information about the elusive Margaret Carroux I am indebted to Ms. Ursula Brackmann, former Secretary of the "Verband deutscher Schriftsteller", the institution representing German authors and translators.

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The road goes ever on

Tolkien's use of the 'Journey' motive in constructing *The Lord of the Rings*

John Ellison

I recall a commentary or review of *The Lord of the Rings* which appeared a considerable time ago. In it the writer expressed surprise at finding so large a proportion of the book given over to simple descriptions of travel or journeyings, involving little, on the surface, in the way of events or action. If it is thought of in simplistic terms as a "tale of heroic adventure," then perhaps it is rather surprising how little actual action and incident it seems to contain in relation to its length, forceful and memorable though events are seen to be when eventually they occur. The apparent imbalance between those sections of the book which record events, action and incident, and the long intermediate sections, becomes easier to understand if it be thought of in terms of realism, if, in other words, one remembers that fantasy is only realism approached from another direction, Tolkien's own formulation of the content of the book as "a war the progress of which it was my task to report"¹ (my italics) is revealing here. In real life an individual's experience of active service in war (and Tolkien had all too immediate personal experience of it) tends to alternate between long periods of enforced inactivity fraught with tension, and very brief periods of violent and frenzied activity accompanied by extreme personal danger.

The Road Goes Ever On, therefore becomes, not so much a recurrent theme-song, as a principal motive woven into the structure of the book itself. Some years ago I carried out an inquiry which issued as an article² essaying to interpret the background structure of *The Hobbit*.

I have, since then, contemplated a parallel one essaying an interpretation of the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*, but I have never properly embarked on it. It would, without doubt, provide material impossible to confine within the limits of a single paper or article. This present one might be thought of appropriately enough as a 'journey' in that direction.

A journey, 'there and back again', of course represents the whole outline of *The Hobbit*. Actually, though, journeying, or travelling, plays a relatively minor part in its structure, and Tolkien does not allot very much space to description of it as such. The proportion of action and incident in relation to the length of the book is much greater than is the case with *The Lord of the Rings*, naturally, as *The Hobbit* stems from Tolkien's practice of oral storytelling to his own children, who of course demanded, like all children, plenty of action and incident for their attention to be held.

Like *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* at the simplest level is a story of a journey, 'there and back again'. It breaks down, however, into a considerable number of separate, if interdependent, journeys. These can be grouped into major, or principal ones, and minor, or intermediate ones. The alternation of the two is most evident in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, at the end of which the Fellowship itself is broken.

The four major journeys up to that point are as follows:

1) Hobbiton to Crickhollow.

2) Bree to Rivendell.

3) Rivendell to Khazad-dûm and Moria East-gate.

4) Lothlórien to Parth Galen.

The three (or perhaps two) minor ones are: 1) Crickhollow to chez Bombadil.

2) Chez Bombadil to Bree

3) Moria East-gate to Lothlórien (Caras Galadon)

(The first two perhaps as a pair.)

It is worth looking at the first of these journeys in some detail. It occupies thirty-one pages of the text³, and so represents a substantial slice of narrative. "We're off at last," says Frodo as it starts and indeed the preliminaries have taken up a long time, though necessarily so, Gandalf's exposition having set the tone and the entire agenda of all that is to follow. (The third element in the book's structure, of course, is that of exposition and discussion, as with Gandalf's narration, or with the Council of Elrond, but that is not our concern here.)

The delayed beginning of the principal narrative, with such an extended preparation preceding it, may help to explain the difficulty some people have, coming to *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time, in getting started at all. One has sometimes recommended such people to start some way into the book, and to return to the beginning subsequently.

The main narrative, as Frodo and the others leave Bag End, starts very quietly and simply. It is notable that four pages go by before any out-of-the-way event occurs. Tolkien takes his time over describing the walk, the view back over Hobbiton in its valley, the night under the fir tree, and so on, without the least feeling of hurry or urgency. The early drafts of the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*, published in volume VI of *The History of Middle-earth*, convey precisely this sense that the progress of the early stages of the journey is expanding into a far greater timescale than anything in *The Hobbit*. Perhaps it is this that first leads Tolkien to suspect that what he is now engaged on is something vastly different from a simple Hobbit Mark II. The disparity between the new, extended timescale and the crowded incidents of the first chapter may help to explain why the opening had to be redrafted so many times.

The first appearance of a Black Rider disturbs and unsettles the hobbits, but disturbs the reader even more. Two pages later the Rider appears again and the hobbits then fall in with a party of Elves with Gildor, who drops alarming information that the Riders are servants of the Enemy, but refuses to say more. We have now been effectively introduced to Tolkien's technique of creating increasing tension as the narrative proceeds by turning the screw. His quietly descriptive way of dealing with incidents of travel itself is ideally suited for this purpose. There is no hint of literary artifice about his descriptive writing; one can imagine him as actually present to report on the hobbits' travels from day to day, padding along behind them with notebook and camera at the ready. The appearances, and the behaviour of the Rider,

Mallorn XLIII

or Riders, are alarming just because of the normality of the setting in which their appearances take place, a point perfectly illustrated by the passage describing the hobbit's descent of the steep bank to reach a stream, after their night with the Elves, when they turn and see a Rider standing on the skyline above them. The hobbits continue their journey, still in the same state of apparent unconcern as though they were just out for a day's ramble ("a hobbit walking-party," as Gandalf later puts it), and are brought up short again, when they hear the answering cries of two Riders from two unseen points, nearer and further away. Tolkien's theatrical sense is spot-on here, much more so than that of the producer of the BBC radio serial, who missed the dramatic pause after the second cry.

This episode has given the screw another and sharper turn. The hobbits by now are genuinely scared, but their alarm still possibly falls short of the reader's. Tolkien continues in his straightforward narrative mode, as the journey goes forward to Maggot's farm and finally to Crickhollow, but the tension grows further with two more varied appearances of a Rider. The first one introduces actual words, but rather subtly, only in indirect speech as reported by Farmer Maggot, and the second, seen across the Brandywine river - the hobbits of course know nothing of the Rider's inability to cross water. The extent to which everyone's nerves have been stretched makes itself evident in the fright caused by the sound of Merry's approach on pony back; the sense of relief at his appearance is very short lived.

The climax to which all of this has been leading duly arrives, but turns out to be, not a confrontation with a Rider, or Riders - none of the hobbits are in the least degree ready for that - but the revelation of Frodo's friends' awareness of the purpose of his quest and of the appalling danger that it represents, and of their standing shoulder to shoulder with him. The effect produced is that of a great release of tension, and crisis passed: "I have dreaded this evening," as Frodo says; it is the result of all the long-drawn out preparation and accumulation of tension over the previous thirty-odd pages. It is as though the first supporting pillar of the construction of the whole book has now been set in place.

The first journey, then, displays, as clearly as any of those that are to follow, Tolkien's structural and narrative method. Not all of those to come are going to be equally prominent or significant, however, and there now follow a pair of intermediate ones, in both of which the hobbits, still quite inexperienced in the ways of the wide world, get themselves into serious trouble, and have to be rescued by Tom Bombadil. (This represents very much the same sort of character-developing process as takes place in *The Hobbit*, where Bilbo, largely a passive participant in the early stages, grows into maturity and independence later on). The Tom Bombadil digression (as some feel it to be) is nevertheless a valuable episode, or pair of episodes, in that it keeps the hobbits well away from the Riders, while they are still quite unprepared to face them.

All the same Tolkien is in no hurry. The journey through the Old Forest, the midday halt, and the sunlit late afternoon by the Witherwindle are all fully realised in a straightforwardly descriptive mode, and the leisurely pace is reflected in the behaviour of the hobbits themselves, who waste a lot of the middle of the day on the Barrow-downs and thus become entangled in the clutches of the Barrow-wight. These two

intermediate journeys therefore usefully demonstrate how far the hobbits are in need of experience and training, a point further underlined by the injudicious antics in which they indulge after they reach Bree itself, ("after all the absurd things you have done since you left home" as Gandalf drily comments as soon as he has the opportunity). They do, anyway, acquire a guide, Strider, without whose presence they would no doubt have stumbled into even worse disaster than the encounter at Weathertop.

The next journey, from Bree to the point where the Riders are overwhelmed at the Ford of Bruinen, is organised rather like an extended 'first act finale'. Try reading it aloud; you can almost hear the swish of the curtain falling as Frodo lapses into unconsciousness at the end.[†] It is built round two action climaxes, the first of which discharges much, but not quite all, of the accumulated tension of the preceding pages, which can then build up to an even higher level before curtain-fall. The action passages, though, are in themselves quite brief and the special interest in the present connection lies in the way they are prepared. Typical of this is the little episode of the distant flashes seen by Strider and Frodo from the direction of Weathertop two days before they reach the hills; unexplained until much later, this has an effect quite out of proportion to its brevity and apparent insignificance, the effect of course reinforced by the indications of burning later discovered on the summit of Weathertop itself.

The whole of the following section, set in Rivendell, and comprising the Council of Elrond, apart from its importance as regards the underlying argument and developing plot structure of *The Lord of the Rings*, provides necessary relaxation at the beginning and an intermission before the next great journey; it is of course constructed to lead to its own climax as Frodo undertakes to transport the Ring to its destruction.

The journey that follows is a huge section of some 52 pages[†], which ends with a tremendous dramatic crisis greater than anything that has been experienced so far, and is succeeded by a slow dying fall, beside the east gate of Moria. Read aloud, it can only be crammed into a single evening with difficulty; it is well worth trying.

The remarkable thing about it from our present point of view is the method by which Tolkien achieves its huge build-up of tension. If the incidents that it contains are examined, it can be seen that, not only are they evenly spaced out along the way, but that they are placed in ascending order of importance (and frightfulness). The overflight of the *crebain* is a mild disturbance - the atmosphere becomes slightly, but perceptibly tense. The snowstorm on Caradhras, although the party is not attacked by any overt enemy other than the weather, is more long-drawn-out; the atmosphere of unease is greatly intensified, and the hand of the Enemy is felt to be at work, "his hand has grown long indeed" as Gandalf says. Then they are attacked by wolves at night, although Gandalf repels the attack without too much difficulty. As the party prepares to enter the Mines of Moria they are attacked by the 'Watcher in the Water', emerging from the lake behind them. This is a far nastier experience than the attack by the wolves has been, and it is not surprising that everyone needs a good stiff drink afterwards, just as any member of The Tolkien Society would do in a similar situation. Actual fighting occurs, for the first time in *The Lord of the Rings*, with the assault by orcs on the chamber of Mazarbul, and the party's

[†]The two chapters concerned run to 40 pages (pp 188-227); the actual journey starts five pages into the first chapter. I have found 16 pages per hour to represent an average reading pace aloud: the journey should thus take about two hours.

The road goes ever on

flight from it. The sequence reaches its peak with the Balrog's appearance, the confrontation with Gandalf on the bridge of Khazad-dûm, and Gandalf's fall. Once again an apparently minor episode by the way, Pippin's stone dropped down the well in Moria, is used by Tolkien to create consequences on a much wider scale - an additional turn of the screw. It sets up a background rhythm that persists right to the end of the whole section, as the very Beethovenish disappearing drumbeats fade away as the curtain falls very slowly this time, on the sight of the Company mourning their leader's loss by Moria east gate.

The following journey, an intermediate one, provides the narrative with what it now needs, a passage of winding down, followed by a period of complete relaxation. (To continue with the analogy with 'real' warfare, a soldier requires periods of leave from time to time if he is to function efficiently). The earlier stages of the journey are still marked by a certain disquiet, evident in Gollum's approach to the flet, and the reported passage of the orcs across the stream north of Lorien. Once Lothlórien is reached the passage of time is entirely suspended.

This process of alternately raising and lowering tension in

relation to the passage of time is itself, of course, an important aspect of structure in *The Lord of the Rings*. Time begins to run again when the Company departs from Lothlórien, and the last journey in *The Fellowship of the Ring* starts.

As the party makes its way down Anduin tension gradually re-asserts itself. Tolkien mostly confines himself to describing the scenery on either bank of the river, but this in itself becomes steadily more impressive until the Argonath and the passage of the narrows to Nen Hithoel are reached. Incidents along the journey, Sam's awareness of Gollum trailing the boat's progress, and the exchange of fire across the river with Legolas' direct hit on the Nazgûl's undercarriage, contribute to the reader's sense of impending crisis. Ostensibly, this will be the dramatic sequence of events accompanying the breaking of the Fellowship and the death of Boromir. In reality it will be a personal one, like that which brought the first journey to its climax, but one of much greater importance - Frodo's decision to travel on to Mordor alone, if need be, followed by Samwise's to accompany him.* The reader's understanding of the crucial nature of this decision is enhanced by the long build-up that has

*The events themselves are consequently kept offstage.



The hobbits reach the Withywindle

John Ellison

Mallorn XLIII

preceded it; Frodo has been nerving himself to face the decision since the departure from Lothlórien, and Sam, half unconsciously, has been sharing his struggle.

Following the breaking of the Fellowship, with the third book, the first half of *The Two Towers*, the whole shape of the narrative changes. Or rather, it splits into two contrasting modes: the new one dominates the third book, ending as Gandalf rides away with Pippin at speed to Minas Tirith. Speed and variety of pace are now to be the keynotes; the various journeys overlap each other and reflect the increased pace of outside events. There are eight journeys in all, but the first and the last two, respectively those of The Three Hunters, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, and of Merry and Pippin with Saruman's orcs, take place in parallel, and at the fastest possible pace, emphasised by the moments of stasis occurring at the halts during them.

Two others are dramatically cut off in mid-stream, leaving the reader, as it were suspended in the air. These have the effect of two further variants of the curtain fall endings that have appeared in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Description of place and scene is still important, but tends to happen much more by the way: it continues its role of making the narrative vivid, but there is no longer the scope for employing it to build-up long periods of accumulating tension, as was the case in the earlier books. The proportion of action, discussion and incident, in relation to the space given over to the journeys themselves, is much greater than anywhere in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Curiously enough, the greatly increased pace of the narrative in the third book, and the more rapid sequence of events, does not result in the reader's sense of the developing shape of the whole work being lost. However important and interesting the content of Book III - the treachery of Saruman, the separate fortunes of Merry and Pippin and their meeting with Treebeard, the defence of Helm's Deep and the destruction of Isengard - all of these are still felt to be secondary to the central issue at stake - the slow, agonising progress of the Ring towards the fires of Orodruin. So it is with a sense both of shock and recognition that we return to Frodo and Samwise, now lost in the trackless hills of the Eryn Muil, and find ourselves plunged back into the original mode; journeying by slow and painful stages as the screw is slowly being turned once more. From this point to the hobbits' first sighting of Gollum descending the cliff-face at the end of the hill is a passage of ten pages. Is all this descriptive material relating to their passage through and escape from the hills really necessary? - one can imagine the uncommitted reader asking, when it is quite plain that the vital encounter is just about to happen. Of course, Tolkien needs the whole of it, these pages determining the scale of the whole of the fourth book, and setting a tone and a mood that will pervade the longest of all the journeys in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The whole of the fourth book might be thought of as representing one single journey, but divided into two sections with an interlude separating them, and mounting at the end to the greatest crisis in *The Lord of the Rings* so far, with the shattering series of events ending with the slamming of the rear entrance gate of Cirith Ungol with Samwise left apparently powerless outside. Each phase is built round a major scene of one person's reflection expressed as dialogue, in which an alternative choice is faced and taken; first of all Gollum's to lead the others on to Morgul Vale, and later on Samwise's, to take the Ring and to continue with the apparently hopeless quest on his own. (These

noticeable symmetries of event and incident are features of both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* itself, and themselves represent a notable aspect of the structure of each book.) At the climax of the first phase of the journey, as the three halt within sight of the Black Gate, the tension that has built up steadily through the passage of the Dead Marshes has reached a tremendously high level, but when they leave the Gate behind and move into Ithilien it drains away again, and the sequence of events and dialogue which involves the appearance of the Gondorians under Faramir, the stay at Henneth Annûn, and the episode of the Forbidden Pool, important as they are in themselves, do also provide relief and contrast, the value of which to the total scheme is immediately apparent when it is over and the journey restarts.

Many people may agree that Book Four contains the finest of all of Tolkien's descriptive writing in *The Lord of the Rings*. At the same time, if it is compared with the descriptive writing characteristic of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, a marked development of style becomes evident; the range of tone is much wider. That is to say, the range between the straightforwardly factual reporter's tone which was so convincing previously, and which still recurs (Tolkien has his feet still firmly on the ground) and these passages where the tone is elevated or emphasised. The daybreak revealing the slag-mounds of the Morannon, or the vision of Minas Morgul with its black windows looking into nothingness, for instance, are typical of the latter. In the passages describing the natural beauties of Ithilien there is a poetically lyrical tone that has not been in evidence previously, despite Tolkien's delight and skill, evident from the beginning, in the description of land and landscape. At the same time the note of underlying realism persists, and the longer the journey continues the more he continues to remind us of the basic essentials of life. The frequent meals, or halts for sustenance, that punctuate the narrative have come in for a certain amount of derision, but in a structural sense they perform a most important task. They highlight the reality underlying the increasingly bizarre and oppressive setting, and therefore one's sense of ever-present danger, and they mark out the passage of time, which contributes increasingly to rising tension and the turning of the screw. Book Four contains ten references to meals or food taken en route, and such references seem to increase in numbers as the hobbits' ordeal begins to seem more and more one of sheer physical endurance.

We first of all, says Tolkien at the start of Book Five, return to the fortunes of battle in the West. And with it we also return to the alternative mode characteristic of Book Three, as we take up Gandalf's journey with Pippin to Minas Tirith just where we left it. The furious haste of their progress comes with a similar sense of surprise and recognition as that produced by the corresponding transition back to the slow tempo of Frodo's and Sam's progress at the start of the previous Book. Haste becomes an all-important consideration in the narrative as events adapt to the pattern of a race against time. There are some half-dozen journeys contained in the fifth Book, the final one being the army's march from Minas Tirith to the final battle before the Black Gate. The two most prominent ones, that by way of the Paths of the Dead to Erech, and finally to Pelargir, and the Ride of the Rohirrim from Dunharrow, are both involved in the race, made in desperate haste in the extremity of the situation. Descriptive detail comes, if

The road goes ever on

it comes at all, in vivid flashes; action and incident, culminating in the Battle of the Pelennor and Denethor's madness and suicide, occupy the stage for most of the time. The final march of the host, ending with the confrontation with the Mouth of Sauron and the last, hopeless battle, builds up quickly to a brief climax, cut off in midstream in the same fashion as the ending of the third Book.

One more journey is left before the final denouement and the crisis for which all the previous ones have been a preparation. The last progress of Frodo and Samwise, from Cirith Ungol to the Sammath Naur, has turned into a struggle for bare existence, by ever more gradual stages, and dominated by the physical necessity of food and water; its position as the final journey to the Ring's destruction, lends it as much the significance of a race against time, as the desperate haste of the principal journeys in the preceding Book has done in relation to them. Contrasting episodes, the overheard quarrel of two orcs, or their temporary involvement with the marching column of orcs and their escape from it, only underlines the agonising slowness of the hobbits' progress as a whole. By now it seems that one can distinguish a vast underlying pattern in all this sequence of journeys, back to the original departure from the Shire and Hobbiton.

Frodo's journey, with his Companions, and then with Samwise only, is a vast main theme, with two variations, expanding with the utmost spaciousness at a broad, increasingly halting pace. It alternates with two contrasting episodes at a much faster tempo, the second of which is again a variation of the first: in the two episodes, contained in the third and fifth Books, the two principal journeyers, Frodo and Samwise, who have the longest road, take no part. (This pattern has parallels in other spheres, notably in music; for instance, in several of the slow movements of Beethoven's final period). Tolkien, naturally, could hardly have consciously intended such a scheme, or planned it in advance; that he possessed such an intuitive sense of formal design on the largest scale is one way in which his genius makes itself felt, and helps to explain why he outshines all his imitators. And so the grand design completes itself in a *Götterdämmerung* of fire and rainstorm, a cleansing and changing of the world through an ordeal of fire and water, corresponding to the personal ordeal of fire and water undergone by Gandalf in Moria.

Barad-dûr fallen and Sauron passed away, the epilogue and the return journey are left. There are three separate journeys (four if Bree to Brandywine Bridge ranks as a separate one), but these, unlike their predecessors, do little more than gradually restore the mood and scale of the opening, and so allow the hobbits to re-enter their own world (though it's not quite the world they expected). They provide an opportunity for the remainder of the 'cast' to leave the stage one after another; of the whole company that leaves Minas Tirith as the funeral train of Theoden, Eomer and the Riders remain behind at Edoras; Aragorn leaves the party west of the Gap of Rohan; Celeborn and Galadriel go their separate way over the Redhorn and so on until the hobbits alone are left to complete the journey

back again. There is no need for Tolkien to describe the journeys themselves, or the lands through which the travellers pass, (except for the odd reminiscence, like the glimpse of Weathertop in the rain as Frodo averts his eyes), or to break the journey up with incidents along the road, other than the brief falling-in with Saruman before the latter turns his steps towards the Shire.

The last journey and the ending; Frodo departs from the Shire and journeys with Bilbo and the Elves to the Havens; the return of the other Hobbits to their homes comes as a pendant. The end of the connecting thread running through the whole work is a double-branched one, that in conclusion unites the structure of *The Lord of the Rings* and its symbolism in one. Frodo's gradual and increasingly painful progress throughout his journey, (and in their separate ways those of his friends) stands for his and man's progress through life to maturity and wisdom, and his passage into the life to come; the return of the others to the Shire stands no less for the work's other great themes of fellowship and home. Tolkien in this way places himself firmly among the last of the Romantics, for nothing is more characteristic of Romanticism, in art, literature and music, than its tendency to identify physical appearances, the sights and sounds of Nature or the experience and concomitants of a journey, with the psychological or spiritual states which accompany them, and with which they are held to correspond. The image of a journey considered in this sense as a spiritual as well as a material pilgrimage, is a concept entirely typical of the Romantic age, nowhere better seen than in Schubert's great song cycle *Die Winterreise*, (The Winter Journey). Schubert's songs, and others of the nineteenth-century treasury of the German *Lied*, and the romantic poems that he and others set to music, constantly return to the theme of travel considered in this way. The *Traveller*, or *Wanderer*, becomes a generally understood symbol of the *Outsider*, the one set apart from society. This is very much the fate of Frodo (and also of Bilbo before him).

This is something that sets Tolkien quite apart from his many imitators; as does his use of 'the Journey' as the structural foundation and connecting thread of his tale. However conscientiously his successors have sought to re-employ the externals of his world, the many journeyings in their works do not seem to do much more than to provide a means of transporting the characters from one location to another. This is one means by which Tolkien's infinitely greater originality and creative power can be demonstrated.

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1. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Forword, p.6. 2nd edition (hardback), George Allen & Unwin, 1996 -all references are to this edition.
2. John Ellison, The Structure of *The Hobbit*, Mallorn 27. 1990, pp.29-32. The Tolkien Society.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien *The Fellowship of the Ring*, pp. 79-110.

Botanical notes on the Mallorn

Beth Russell

*"Lothlórien is beautiful because there
the trees were loved [. . .]"*¹

The great golden trees of Lothlórien had names in Sindarin (*mallorn*, pl. *mellyrn*²) and in Quenya (*malinornë*, pl. *malinorni*³), which are similar to one of the names of the Golden Tree, Malinalda⁴. The name is highly descriptive. The Quenya and Old Noldorin root "smal-" yielded both *malina*, yellow, and *malda*, gold⁵. "Ór-ni-" was the Quenya root for a tall tree⁶, and the word *orne* in Doriath was the name of the beech⁷. Thus, *malina* + *orne* = *malinornë*, a tall, yellow tree similar to a beech. No additional name in Westron was reported. Haldir said "mallorn-trees" to the Company⁸ and Sam's children called the tree in the Party Field a "Mallorn"⁹. The lack of a common-name in Westron reflects the restricted distribution of the species in Middle-earth, for mallorns grew only in a single river valley where Men rarely came. The fact that a Quenya name exists and is so close to a name of Laurelin the Golden suggests that the trees did indeed grow in Valinor even though Haldir did not know it¹⁰ and it is not recorded in Tolkien's published texts.

The trees were introduced to Middle-earth and flourished there only under the protection of Galadriel. They were the ultimate pass-along plants. Elves of Tol Eressëa brought gifts of many beautiful and fragrant species of plants to Númenor. The mallorns became naturalised only on the wetter western side of the island around the Bay of Eldanna, but there they flourished, growing nearly as tall as on Tol Eressëa¹¹. Tar-Aldarion was the great mariner-king of Númenor. He took his name from his interest in trees, for he made great plantations to furnish timber for shipbuilding. He sailed often to Middle-earth between Second Age 750 and 1000 and became a trusted friend of Gil-Galad¹² to whom he brought a gift of mallorn seeds from Númenor. They would not grow in Lindon and Gil-Galad gave some seeds to his cousin Galadriel¹³.

She could have planted them in Lórien either in the Second Age when she fled there after the rebellion of the Mirdain in Eregion¹⁴ or in the Third Age when she returned there after

the loss of Amroth¹⁵. There are two sound biological reasons that make the earlier date most likely.

First, seed viability: Galadriel obtained the seeds near the end of the first millennium of the Second Age, but she could not have planted them immediately. She made contact with Lorinand before Second Age 1200 and went to live there about Second Age 1400¹⁶. The seeds would have retained their ability to germinate for less than four hundred years. But if she planted the mallorns later when she returned to Lórien in Third Age 1981 the seeds would have had to remain viable for over 4,000 years.

Second, growth rate: mallorns took 500 years to mature¹⁷. The extent of the mallorn forest and the grandeur of the individual trees at the end of the Third Age could not have been attained in the mere thousand years after the death of Amroth. Furthermore, Amroth had a high flet on Cerin Amroth, which was built late in the Second Age or early in the Third Age, long before Galadriel's return to Lórien¹⁸. The Second Age planting date is significant. At that time Galadriel could not have used Ninya to establish her trees because Sauron wielded the Ruling Ring and the Three were hidden¹⁹. She grew the mallorn forest with her own innate power: "I sang of leaves, of leaves of gold, and leaves of gold there grew: [. . .]"²⁰

Noel suggested in 1974 that just as Yavanna's song produced the Two Trees, Galadriel's song produced the mallorns²¹. It was impossible for Noel to know when she was writing that mallorns were not endemic to Lórien. The fact that they came from Tol Eressëa and Númenor was published first in 1980 in *Unfinished Tales*²². Galadriel enhanced the mallorns' growth by her song, but she did not create a new species of tree.

Tolkien provided a remarkable amount of detail about the mallorn, enough to allow a sketchy botanical description, but it is scattered in six volumes²³. He even prepared a coloured drawing of a mallorn grove in spring²⁴. Comparisons to other trees mentioned by Tolkien, to the beech (trunk, branching pattern, and leaves), poplar (ever-moving leaves), and cherry (inflorescence type) are taken from standard botanical works about trees.²⁵

Footnotes

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| 1. <i>Letters</i> 419 | 10. <i>FR</i> 363 | 21. Noel 58 |
| 2. <i>Fellowship of the Ring</i> 356; <i>Treason</i> 233, 488 | 11. <i>UT</i> 167 | 22. <i>UT</i> 167-68 |
| 3. <i>Unfinished Tales</i> 167-68 | 12. <i>UT</i> 219 | 23. <i>FR</i> 349; 352-53; 355-57; 361; 366; 368-69; 387; <i>Two Towers</i> 92; <i>Return of the King</i> 302-03; 344; <i>UT</i> 167-68; <i>Treason of Isengard</i> 218; 245; 249; 251; 292; Sauron 108 |
| 4. <i>Silmarillion</i> 38; 340 | 13. <i>UT</i> 168 | 24. Hammond & Scull 162; Tolkien Calendar 2005. |
| 5. <i>Lost Road</i> 386 | 14. <i>UT</i> 237 | 25. Harrar and Harrar 164-66; 342; 347; Green 45, 118. |
| 6. <i>Lost Road</i> 379 | 15. <i>UT</i> 245 | |
| 7. <i>Lost Road</i> 379 | 16. <i>UT</i> 236-37 | |
| 8. <i>FR</i> 363 | 17. <i>UT</i> 167 | |
| 9. <i>Sauron Defeated</i> 116 | 18. <i>FR</i> 365; <i>UT</i> 246 | |
| | 19. <i>UT</i> 237 | |
| | 20. <i>FR</i> 388; <i>UT</i> 168 | |

Botanical notes on the Mallorn

Habit Large forest tree, to 200 feet tall, with a correspondingly great girth. Slow-growing, reaching full size in 500 years.

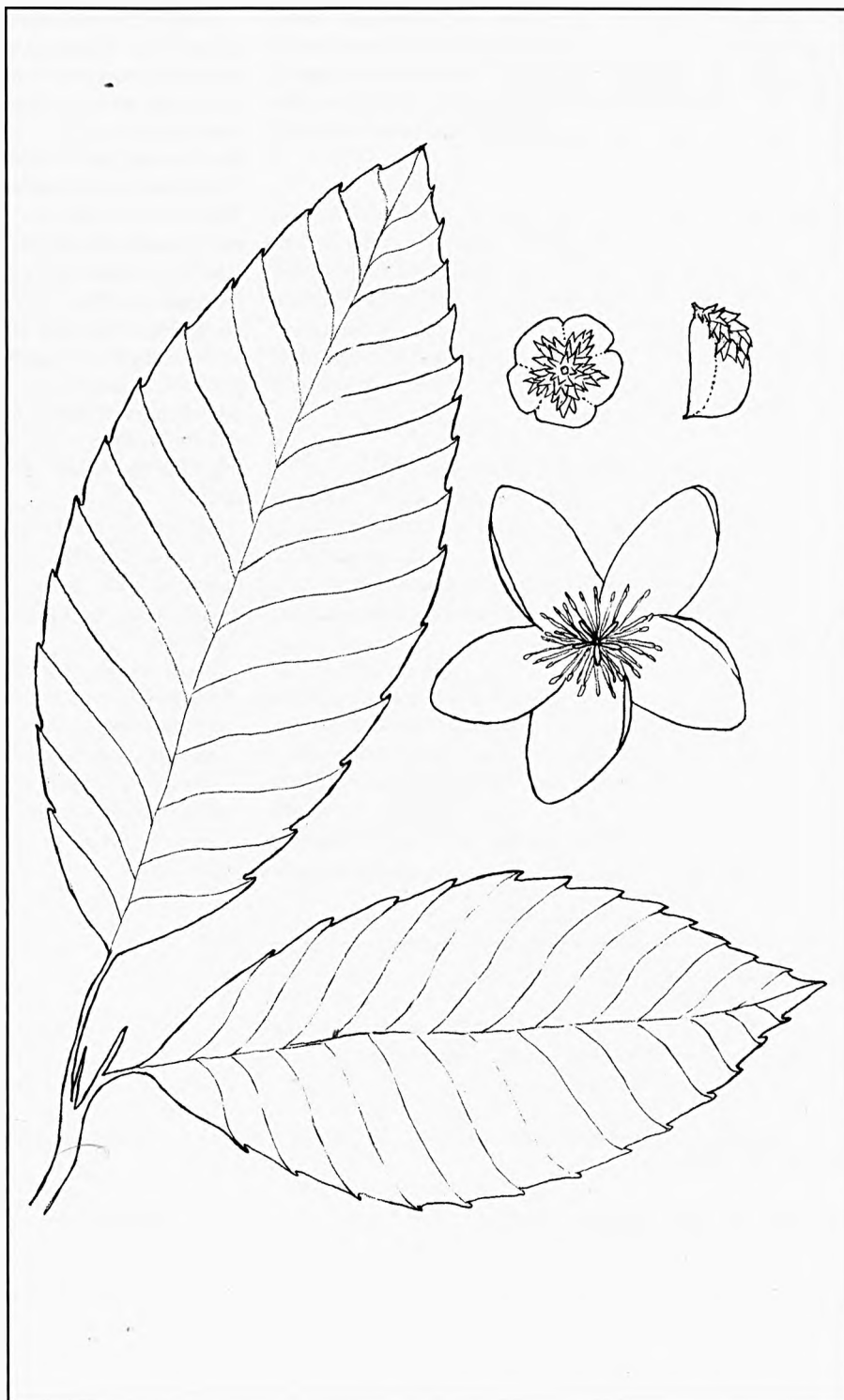
Stems Trunk always single, of great diameter at the base and tapering toward the top, where it divides into a many-branched crown. Branches in many tiers, growing straight out from the trunk and then sweeping upward. Lowest branches overhanging, originating far above the ground in mature trees, at least 18 feet up in smaller trees²⁶.

Bark Silver-grey, gleaming, with a smooth, silky texture.

Leaves Opposite, ovate to lanceolate, tapering gradually to a pointed tip and wedge-shaped base, edges serrated; probably greater than 6 inches long and 3 inches wide; new leaves pale green, maturing to green above and silver beneath, turning gold in autumn and tardily deciduous, persistent on the twigs until spring. Fallen leaves retain the gold colour for a time but eventually turn brown. Leaf-stems probably have zones of flattening in two planes, allowing the leaves move freely in light wind.

Inflorescences Numerous, borne in the angle between leaf and branch, with flowers single or a few together on short stalks from an unbranched stem.

Flowers. – Golden yellow, of great size; petals 4 or 5, stamens clustered in the center of the flower, darker gold than the petals. Other flower characteristics not known.



Footnotes

26. Legolas was able to jump up and grab a branch "high above his head" (FR 356), but in the earliest version of the story Boromir could not reach a limb so

they threw a rope around a branch and Legolas climbed up (Treason 292).

27. Foster derives the word *hithlain* as "mist-thread" (257). Mallorn bark was silver and looked silky, so its inner fibers

might well be so described. [Could the fabric of the cloaks given to the Company also have been woven of hithlain?]

28. Green 259; Harrar and Harrar 321.

Mallorn XLIII

Fruit. – Small golden-yellow nut like a dried berry, surrounded by silver scales.

Seasonal cycle. – Flowers from early spring into summer; old leaves fall when the first flowers open; new spring leaves develop during the flowering period. Fruiting season not known.

Habitat and Community. – Requires deep soils and warm, humid conditions of protected coastal and riverine forests. Gregarious, growing best in monospecific groves of trees of similar age, the young trees forming thickets, and the mature trees reaching their greatest size in the deepest part of the forest.

Distribution. – Native to Tol Eressëa and naturalized in Númenor, but established in Middle-earth only under protection, in Lothlórien and the Shire. In Númenor the trees grew nearly to the size of their ancestors in Tol Eressëa, but the mallorns of Lórien did not reach the size of those in Númenor. Mallorns grew up the valley of the Celebrant a mile west of its confluence with the Nimrodel but they did occur outside Lórien to the south or east.

Uses In Middle-earth primarily used as ornamentals in creating a landscape. Mallorns also provided places for dwellings and lookouts, on platforms built around the trunk, on branches, or at the crown. Leaves were used to wrap packages of *lembas*, which stayed fresh as long as it remained in its leaf-wrappings. Fibres of the underbark were called *hitlaine* and used to make the silver rope of Lórien²⁷.

It is helpful to visualise the mallorn by comparing it to trees we know in the primary world. Tolkien seems to have had the beech in mind when he imagined the trees, for they share characteristics of bark colour and texture, branching pattern, leaf shape, and persistence of the leaves in winter. However, the English beech is a far smaller tree. The largest trees now

living on earth are the Sequoias, which can reach 300 feet with a trunk diameter of 30 feet. However, they are conifers, with needles instead of leaves, they lack flowers, and the shape of their crown is quite different from the broad-leaved trees. A good comparison for the mallorn may be the American sycamore, which lives in floodplains and can reach 170 feet tall with a trunk diameter of 14 feet and a crown 100 feet wide²⁸.

Tolkien provided enough information to place the mallorn in the formal botanical classification only at the most general level. We know that is an angiosperm (it has flowers) and that it is a dicotyledon (broad leaves and four- or five-petalled flowers). The mallorn cannot be placed in a plant family without knowing the detailed structure of its flowers and fruits. The most unusual feature of the mallorn is the fact that it has showy flowers and yet produces a nut-like seed. In the primary world most nut-bearing trees have tiny wind-pollinated flowers, whereas trees that produce large, colourful flowers are animal-pollinated and have their seeds contained in various kinds of fruits but not in nuts. Wind pollination would not be possible for the mallorn because the old leaves from the previous season would block the air currents. This unusual combination of flower and fruit characteristics make it likely that the mallorn is not closely related to any plants living at this time and would probably be classified in a family of its own.

But pseudo-botany and primary world comparisons speak only to our heads. Nothing can picture the mallorn in our hearts as well as Legolas' description when the Company looked down on Lórien from the high upper valley of the Celebrant.

There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold. Not till the spring comes and the new green opens do they fall, and then the boughs are laden with yellow flowers; and the floor of the wood is golden, and golden is the roof, and its pillars are of silver, for the bark of the trees is smooth and grey. So still our songs in Mirkwood say²⁹

Footnote 29. FR 349.

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Arthur and Aragorn:

Arthurian influence in *The Lord of the Rings*

Richard J Finn

Along with the downfall of Sauron and the destruction of the One Ring in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* there is another great event: one of renewal that fills the vacuum of greatness and power. That event is the ascension of Aragorn, son of Arathorn, to the throne of Gondor and all the Dúnedain. In many ways this renewed king resembles another king of old lore – King Arthur. Tolkien viewed the evolution of mythologies in much the same way he viewed the evolution of languages. They were tied together and he regarded his work in language as applicable to mythology.¹ Part of his scholarly work as a philologist was to work his way back through related languages to their root. Likewise, of his fiction Tom Shippey noted in *The Author of the Century* that “he did not think that he was entirely making it up. He was ‘reconstructing’” as Tolkien put it.² What influence did King Arthur and the legends that surround him have on the story in *The Lord of the Rings* and this ‘reconstruction’? Despite Tolkien’s dismissal of the Arthurian Mythology in a letter to Milton Waldman as “imperfectly naturalised” with its ‘faerie’ “too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive”³ it has been argued that Tolkien actually used the Arthurian legends when he created his own body of legend. In her article, “J.R.R. Tolkien and the Matter of Britain”, Verlyn Flieger challenges Tolkien’s criticism of Arthur against his own work and finds many comparisons between Tolkien’s work and the Arthurian Legends, comparing Tolkien’s Frodo to the legendary King Arthur.⁴ In this essay we’ll look at how Tolkien more than borrowed from the legends, but actually retold them within his famous book, casting Gandalf as the archetypal wizard, Aragorn as his reinvented Arthur, the sword Narsil as the new Excalibur, and Avallónë along with Eressëa as the magical place akin to the Arthurian isle of Avalon. We’ll even look at how the Holy Grail fits into the story.

THE WIZARD

In drawing parallels between Arthurian Legends and *The Lord of the Rings* it is important to look at the source of the Arthurian Legends – starting in the Celtic and Welsh mythologies of ancient Britain. Introduced in these stories is the character of Myrddin, originally a bard and later becoming Merlin – the wizard who serves kings with prophecy and guidance. In the Celtic world, mentioned in a book by Charles Squire on Celtic mythology, Myrddin becomes the omnipotent being, the “Zeus” (as Squires puts it) of the Arthurian cycle⁵ and, in fact, (according to John Rhys) Britain in ancient times was called Clas Myrddin, or “Myrddin’s Enclosure.”⁶

In Tolkien’s own mythology there is a striking resemblance between the wizard Gandalf and Odin⁷. Odin was a great magician in addition to being the chief god of the Northmen. Also, interestingly, Odin had use of a fast running steed (with eight legs) named Sleipnir and Odin also commanded the berserkers into battle, where they would change into bear form (suggesting Beorn in *The Hobbit*) as well as the Valkyries (ditto the Battle of Pelennor Fields⁸). Tales of Odin would

later become those of Myrddin and later still of Merlin – all of which walked the earth in the guise of an old sage, disguising their true power and nature. Jones points out in her book, *Myth & Middle-Earth*, that the name “Myrddin” was very close to the French word *merde*, which likely accounts for the change under Norman scribes⁹.

The two characters of Merlin and Gandalf are wizards – feared and respected by all those around them. They are men of miraculous power, but a power used only at need, presenting themselves in humble raiment with a pointed hat, and acting as advisors to people in positions of power. Gandalf is instrumental in aiding Aragorn in his quest to claim the kingship of Gondor just as Merlin is in aiding Arthur with his ascension to the throne by means of prophecy and counsel. However, Gandalf “out-Merlins Merlin”⁴, as Flieger puts it, by being the wizard Merlin is thought of but doesn’t necessarily show up as in the older stories. By contrast, Gandalf is a larger part of the story, giving us a glimpse of his powers and the struggles he himself fears, pushing the story forward with action rather than simply cryptic guidance. By contrast, the older tales of Merlin merely hint at what he is capable of, leaving the definition of Merlin’s power to be made by later authors. Despite this, Merlin has become the quintessential wizard of mythology. His qualities set up the stereotypical idea of a wizard and Tolkien uses those qualities in his creation of Gandalf. By taking on some of the other qualities of Merlin, Gandalf gains a connection to existing Celtic and Norse mythology as well as the well known Arthurian legends.

Both Gandalf and Merlin allowed their kings be the heroes they were meant to be on their own and did not seek the power and glory of ruling themselves or even being the “power behind the throne” as evidenced by the stories of Merlin from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Regum Britanniae* written in the twelfth century. Once Gandalf’s task is done, that is, achieving the final destruction of Sauron, he leaves Middle-earth to be ruled by Men. Of this Gandalf says, “But in any case the time of my labours now draws to an end. The King has taken on the burden.”¹⁰ What Tolkien feels is missing in Merlin he bestows upon Gandalf – that which he feels the wizard needs to be – the divine emissary of the Celtic mystical spirits.

SWORD AND KING

In examining parallels between Arthur and the hobbit Frodo, Verlyn Flieger provides convincing evidence of Arthurian influence on *The Lord of the Rings* in the previously mentioned article. Elements of Arthurian mythology spread throughout *LOR* like loose threads. Flieger explains this by illustrating how Frodo’s wounding by Gollum “recalls Arthur’s wounding by his anti-self Mordred”, how his leaving “Middle-earth to be healed in Valinor explicitly echoes the wounded Arthur’s departure by barge to be healed in Avalon”, and that his exchanges with Sam about leaving “are reminiscent of the last exchange between the despairing Bedivere and his departing king.” She further points out the similarity

Mallorn XLIII

between the way Sting was given to Frodo by Bilbo's planting the sword in a wooden plank for Frodo to pull out and the act of Excalibur being pulled from the stone by Arthur⁴.

Jones, in her book, tends to draw parallels between Tristan and Aragorn. She uses Raglan's heroic guidelines to compare and contrast the two heroes, showing as many differences as similarities. Still, the similarities are there – particularly concerning Tristan's love with Isolde and Aragorn's love with Arwen. Isolde represents, like Arwen, a fairy-like beauty full of healing powers; kept from her lover by forces outside their control, but eventually rewarded with a union. Fortunately for Aragorn, his story does not follow the tragic pattern of most heroes and he eventually succumbs to old age rather than ill-luck or a malicious act¹¹. I also see many qualities of Arthur in Aragorn, including being more of a supporting role in the larger story, as Arthur often is, rather than the main character.

What could be the genesis of the character of Aragorn? One could certainly draw some conclusions based on the name alone since naming is so important to Tolkien¹² as he said in several letters. In Tolkien's Elven language of Sindarin, the name "Aragorn" means something like "King-Tree."¹³ The prefix, "Ar" (meaning "King" or "Royal"), is used throughout Númenórean history in the names of kings into the third age, down to Aragorn himself. Arthur is a prominent king of legend who shares this prefix, giving his name royal significance in the language Tolkien himself developed. "Arthur" is also the name of Tolkien's own father whom he never really knew in life. Perhaps the prefix entered Tolkien's mind as a symbol of a ruler or a patriarch (even a far off one) or perhaps it was his homage to his own father. Though, the early drafts of *The Lord of the Rings* published by his son Christopher Tolkien, in *The History of the Lord of the Rings*, do not tell us much about who or what Aragorn is. Even the personality of Strider does not exist in the early manuscripts, but was rather Trotter – a hobbit of relation to Bilbo. In revision Tolkien would write in the margin, "Correct this. Only Trotter is of ancient race." Tolkien also scribbled in the margins "Trotter will also be essential" and "Trotter is connected with the Ring."¹⁴ Beyond this Tolkien seems silent on the origin of Aragorn, allowing for speculation. Christopher Tolkien remarks that "he had been potentially Aragorn for a long time" and that "a great deal of the 'indivisible' Trotter remained in Aragorn and determined his nature."¹⁵ Arthur is surely in Tolkien's subconscious, and could have affected the creation of Aragorn. Quite likely, however, is that Tolkien knew he was going to use Arthur as the model for a new king before he ever got to writing about Aragorn.

As in the coming of Arthur, a wizard heralds Aragorn's 'arrival'. Fulfilling prophecy, he comes bearing a sword of legend, and he is victorious in uniting the lands around him. According to Layamon, and quoting Eugene Mason's translation, after Arthur was born he was taken by the elves and they "enchanted the child with magic most strong" among other blessings, including "prince virtues most good."¹⁶ This certainly brings to mind the upbringing of Aragorn among the elves of Rivendell and Lothlórien. In fact, Aragorn exemplifies elven virtues and beliefs by respecting and admiring nature, the ancient traditions of elves and men, the elven language, and healing lore.

Important to this new king is his sense of duty, symbolised by the sword that he carries which further symbolises the history of his line. Looking again at the Arthurian legends there is another similarity here, although it is doubtful if Tolkien would admit to borrowing from the 'French tainted' story of Arthur. In the fifteenth century, Sir Thomas Malory would

write down the collective romances of Arthur's mythology in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. By this time an integral part of the story is the sword Excalibur (it is present as *Caledfwlch* in the *Mabinogion* and as *Caliburen* in Layamon's *de Brut* while Wace named it Excalibur in his *de Brut*¹⁷). This sword became a symbol of the kingship, for written on the anvil that held it in the great churchyard is the prophetic "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England."¹⁸ Arthur not only pulls the sword from the anvil, but it is revealed that he is actually the son of Uther Pendragon and thus, very much the "rightwise" king of England.

Similar to Excalibur in *The Lord of the Rings* is the sword Andúril - "Flame of the West" (also known as Narsil - "Red and White Flame", the Sword that was Broken, and later the Sword Reforged)¹⁹. This ancient sword is the very sword used by Isildur to strike Sauron and cause him to lose the One Ring. It is this sword, unlike any other blade in Middle-earth, that Sauron fears because it caused him to lose the One Ring before and because of what it heralds for the future. Like Excalibur, it is a symbol of the king and his return. Tolkien wrote in the prophetic poem about Aragorn:

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadow shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.²⁰*

Aragorn is, of course, the king that will rise from the ashes of the Northern Kingdom, Arnor. Likewise, Arthur rises from the ashes of the royal line of Uther Pendragon to reassert its dominance. Arthur's claim, like Aragorn's, is increased by the owning of such a sword. The sword in *The Lord of the Rings*, Narsil, is indeed "renewed", as the poem predicts, just as the "Sword that was Broken" in the tales of the Holy Grail must be remade in order to prove the worth of the hero²¹. Aragorn bears this burden proudly – "Here is the Sword that was Broken and is forged again"²². When he returns to Minas Tirith after being victorious over his enemies, he is hailed by Faramir, the Steward in the name of the king. Faramir proclaims to the people of the City how Aragorn fits all the prophecies of his coming, for he is the "bearer of the Star of the North, wielder of the Sword Reforged, victorious in battle, whose hands bring healing"²³. Faramir is clearly alluding to the prophecies and legends known to the people concerning the king that would return to rule them and usher in an age of renewal and victory over oppression. Likewise, Arthur would turn the tides drowning his country and bring victory where defeat had been known.

RE-INVENTING ARTHUR

The legends of Arthur certainly seem, to many people, to be an important (if not the) mythology of England. His story has been as much a part of English history as any historical king or queen. As for Arthurian faerie, Flieger asks in her article: "how lavish is too lavish?" and "who decides?" She then takes on Tolkien's criticism of Arthur and concludes that it is Tolkien's own *Silmarillion*, seemingly concerned with a place and history not of England, that would have to "be naturalised" - not the cycles of Arthur. She does, however, concede that Arthur's legends are irretrievably tied up with Christianity while Tolkien's own work "has no explicit Christianity" nor

Arthur and Aragorn

miracles, “holy hermits”, or Grail²⁴.

However, *The Lord of the Rings* does contain more subtle Christian influence. Tolkien referred to it as “a fundamentally religious and Catholic work” in a letter to Fr. Robert Murray²⁵. Arthur is not just part of his English heritage, but his Catholic heritage as well. Charles Coulombe remarks in his essay ‘The Lord of the Rings - a Catholic View’, “the Catholic imagination was also haunted by the image of great kings, like Arthur, St Ferdinand III, and St Louis IX.” These kings are “held to have been the ideal prototype for rulers: pious, brave, wonderful in a manner unapproachable for those of later times.”²⁶ Aragorn, to be a genuine king of mythology that the reader would love, needs to have these qualities as well. In achieving that Aragorn becomes the completed version of Arthur.

Going back into the past far enough it could also be said that the original myth of Arthur is pre-Christian. The first image of the Grail was not the cup that once caught the blood of Christ, but (according to Malcolm Godwin in his book on the Grail) a “mysterious otherworldly object” perhaps a dish, platter, cauldron, or chalice. It would not take on its Christian significance until later. There is no Grail in *The Lord of the Rings*, but there is the Ring. More importantly, there is the essence of the Grail. It has been said that in the Arthurian Grail cycles “there exists a direct casual relationship between the well-being and health of the king/hero [Fisher King/Perceval/King Arthur/Galahad] and the fertility of his realm”²⁷, which echoes the relationship Galadriel has through her Ring of Power, Narya, with the forest of Lothlórien in which she resides. The desolation of the land and spirit of the people around the riddermark of Rohan and kingdom of Gondor further echoes the state of the land around the castle of the Fisher King of the Grail legend. This state is rectified by the renewal of the kingship of the land by Aragorn, resembling the tie between the renewal of the king and the renewal of the land in the Grail legends. In Galadriel’s case the pastoral relationship with the land is about to vanish with the diminishing of the magic of her ring and her own return into the West, the coming wasteland (as compared to its current state) further echoing the power of the ruler with the health of the land but as inverse to the legends of the Grail.

Tolkien had a complex relationship with Arthur. As mentioned earlier, Tolkien did not feel that Arthur’s story represented the natural mythology of England³. Shippey also notes that “As for King Arthur, Tolkien might well have seen him as a symptom of English vagueness.”²⁸ However, in his essay “On Fairy Stories” he does credit the Arthurian legends as a fairy-story, telling his audience that “the good and evil story of Arthur’s court is a ‘fairy-story’²⁹. Humphrey Carpenter wrote in his biography of Tolkien that the “cycles had pleased him since childhood.” Shippey, still discussing Tolkien’s feelings on Arthur, would write “Still, the fact remains that Tolkien did produce a narrative of *entrelacement*. He had read a good deal of French romance for his *Sir Gawain* edition, and may have reflected further that even *Beowulf* has a kind of ‘interlace’ technique.”²⁸ Later in life, while working on *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien had criticised the Arthurian scholarship of fellow Inkling, Charles Williams, referring to it as “wholly alien, and sometimes very distasteful.”³⁰ The social dynamics of the Inklings most likely played a role in Tolkien’s feelings about Williams’ work, but to what degree it’s hard to say. Although, according to both C.S. Lewis and Carpenter they both read their own work to each other on

many occasions in group meetings with other Inklings. Those reading sessions likely resembled the sessions laid out in *The Notion Club Papers* (published as part of *The History of the Lord of the Rings*). In the *Papers* a kind of time travel is discussed around the idea of King Arthur and Camelot. Tolkien would later start writing his own version of the Arthurian myth itself: *The Fall of Arthur*, which was a great work according to his colleagues³⁰. It was a work, however, he would never finish. Perhaps he wanted to outdo Williams in creating a better take on the Arthurian legends when he set out to write *The Fall of Arthur*. Perhaps he had already done so when he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*. Also from *The Notion Club Papers*, Tolkien writes, “if one could go back, one would find not myth dissolving into history, but rather the reverse: real history becoming more mythical – more shapely, simple, discernibly significant, even seen at close quarters. More poetical, and less prosaic, if you like.”³¹

LAND OF SUMMER

The final parallel from the two bodies of legend is the mythical location of Avalon. The links between Atlantis and Númenór are already well known and discussed³². I believe a link to the legendary locale of Avalon also exists. At the end of his life Aragorn, unlike Arthur, does not go to an Avalon, but instead goes to sleep in the House of the King.³³ For Aragorn there is no return from the grave like Arthur’s predicted return. Tolkien wrote in a letter to Naomi Mitchison “in this setting the return of Arthur would be quite impossible”³². From Celtic mythology we have Avilion: “called Ynys Avallon, ‘Avallon’s Island’.” This island is the “Isle of Apples”³⁴ and “in the earliest myth, signified Hades”.³⁵ It is also worth noting here that Galadriel bears some resemblance to the Arthurian character of Morgan le Fay, one of the queens who bears Arthur away to Avalon and, in some versions, a villainess of the story. “Few escape her nets” it is said of the Lady of the Golden Wood, Galadriel.³⁶ “Land of Summer” and the “Isle of Apples” – echoes the “Golden Wood” name of Lórien. There is a better example in Middle-earth – a place called “Avallónë” and its description is not too dissimilar from the Avalon of the Arthurian legend. For Merlin, his final dwelling and imprisonment “is a tomb of airy enchantment”:

*Encircled, shielded, and made splendid by his atmosphere of living light, the Lord of Heaven moves slowly towards the west, to disappear at last into the sea (as one local version of the myth puts it), or on to a far-off island (as another says), or into a dark forest (the choice of a third). When myth became finally fixed, it was Bardsey Island, off the extreme westernmost point of Caernarvonshire, that was selected as his last abode. Into it he went with nine attendant bards, taking with him the “Thirteen Treasures of Britain”, thenceforth lost to men.*³⁷

In Middle-earth Avallónë is a haven on the Isle of Eressëa so named “for it is of all cities the nearest to Valinor”. Its tower “is the first sight that the mariner beholds when at last he draws nigh to the Undying Lands”.³⁸

*Thus in after days, what by the voyages of ships, what by lore and star-craft, the kings of Men knew that the world was indeed made round, and yet the Eldar were permitted still to depart and to come to the Ancient West and to Avallónë, if they would. Therefore the loremasters of Men said that a Straight Road must still be, for those that were permitted to find it.*³⁹

Mallorn XLIII

It is into the West that Gandalf journeys at the end of the story. He remarks to his companions that are not accompanying him, "Well, here at last, dear friends, on the shores of the Sea comes the end of our fellowship in Middle-earth."⁴⁰ With that Gandalf takes to the Sea by ship and takes, not the material treasures of Middle-earth, but moral ones – the last elves to return and the Ring-bearers. He finally comes back to the "land of summer" away from Middle-earth. Avallónë and Avalon are never to be found again by mortal man. Lothlórien remains an empty golden forest long after the elves have left and becomes the final resting place for one queen herself – Arwen.

CONNECTING THREADS

The Arthurian influence on this tale is "applicable", if nothing else. The character of Aragorn is very much cut from the same cloth as Arthur. Likewise, Gandalf represents much of the same symbolism and the role of Merlin from the Arthurian legends. Tolkien himself was influenced by his country and his religious culture as well as the mythology he studied pro-

fessionally in such a way that he took in elements of the Arthurian Legend and filled in what he believed to "be missing" – recasting the Arthurian myths in his own way. *The Lord of the Rings* becomes the rediscovered (or 'reconstructed') ancient source of the Arthurian legends rather than the result of the influence of the legends. He taps into the emotions Arthur stirs while reinventing the very cycle he feels is imperfect for England. Aragorn (and Frodo) become the new Arthur heroes, or maybe the old.

*'Quite so!' said Ramer. 'I don't think you realize, I don't think any of us realize, the force, the daimonic force that the great myths and legends have. From the profundity of the emotions and perception that begot them, and from the multiplication of them in many minds – and each mine, mark you, an engine of obscured but unmeasured energy. They are like an explosive: it may slowly yield a steady warmth to living mind, but if suddenly detonated, it might of off with a crash: yes: might produce a disturbance in the real primary world.'*⁴¹

Notes

1. Reader. p. 48.
2. Author of the Century. p. xv.
3. Letters. #131.
4. Flieger. p. 50.
5. Squire. p. 323.
6. Rhys. p. 168.
7. Burns. p. 221.
8. Jones. p. 71.
9. Ibid. p. 73.
10. LOTR. VI, p. 961.
11. Jones. pp. 115-6
12. Letters. #165.
13. Aragorn ['ara,gorn'] nm. pers. 'King-tree' ??? III:318 See -horn, -orn

- from Alan. p. 72.
14. History. p. 414.
15. Ibid. p. 431.
16. Layamon. p. 117.
17. Mabinogion. p. 84 and Wace. p. 41.
18. Mallory. Ch. V.
19. Allan. pp. 28, 35.
20. LOTR. I, p. 167.
21. Godwin. p. 47.
22. LOTR. III, p. 423.
23. Ibid. VI, p. 946.
24. Flieger. p. 51.
25. Letters. #142.
26. Coulombe. p. 61.

27. Godwin. pp. 16-7.
28. Road. p. 160.
29. Reader. p.36.
30. Carpenter. p. 168.
31. Sauron Defeated. p. 227.
32. Letters. #154.
33. LOTR. Appendix A, p. 1037
34. Translation given to me by Verlyn Flieger
35. Squire. p. 329.
36. LOTR. III, p. 422
37. Squire. pp. 325-6.
38. Silmarillion. p. 320.
39. Silmarillion. pp. 348-9.
40. LOTR. VI, p. 1007.
41. Sauron Defeated. p. 228.

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A history of song:

The transmission of memory in Middle-earth

Michael Cunningham

Simbelymynë foams about the greening barrows; beacons ablaze with the preservation of memories brought ever to mind when one's gaze falls upon their form while the distant sound of hoof-falls carry through tall grasses which sway hither and thither; moved a wind that blows down over the green, rolling landscape of Rohan. A wind upon which one may discern the far sound of steel crashing and a rage of horses. Such winds echo the oral tradition¹ and the continuity of memory. In the following I will examine the memory of the Rohirrim within the context of *The Lay of the Rohirrim*; constructed to commemorate Eorl the Young, First King of the Mark.

'Where now the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?

Where is the helm and the hauberk, and the bright hair flowing?

Where is the hand on the harpstring, and the red fire glowing?

Where is the spring and the harvest and the tall corn growing?

They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow;

The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.

Who shall gather the smoke of the dead wood burning.

Or behold the flowing years from the sea returning?''²

One is immediately aware of a similarity of *The Lament of the Rohirrim* in its opening strophe to that of strophe 92 of the Anglo-Saxon prose piece 'The Wanderer'

''Where has gone the steed? Where has gone the man? Where has gone the giver of treasure? Where has gone the place of the banquets? Where are the pleasures of the hall? Alas, the gleaming chalice; alas, the armoured warrior; alas, the majesty of the prince! Truly, that time has passed away, has grown dark under the helm of night as though it had never been...''³

On first reading of *The Lament of the Rohirrim* one finds that it appears to reflect a past wherein lay a fruitful and glorious time. The 'forgotten poet' has constructed a lament in such a manner that its first four strophes form questions which

are then in turn followed by a strophe which appears to answer the preceding by the employment of natural and familiar occurrences which are fleeting; quickly passing into memory. The sixth strophe is more of a statement, yet again using allegory which, I submit, may allow the preceding strophes to allude to sun at its zenith under which the Mark prospered and flourished but now that sun has set into the ever encroaching menace of a darker present and on into the shadow of the past.

The final strophe, 'Who shall gather the smoke of the dead wood burning...' may be seen, if I may be allowed to tempt conjecture, as representative of the pyres of the fallen Horse Lords. Although this is only, tentatively, viewed if one allows Aragorn's translation of the Lament of the Rohirrim into the common speech not to be wholly accurate in its morphology to that of the native tongue wherein the Lament of the Rohirrim was formed. If such was the case then the term 'dead wood' may have been a kenning⁴ for a warrior. Conversely the poet may simply be alluding to the poverty of the Mark's flora itself – upon which roofs were raised and gates constructed; here there is an image of a dearth of healthy, vibrant vegetation. Of a land that can no longer support its people. Yet if one were to permit the former it may permit one other aspect of a people passing into the mist of time – the dereliction of their religion. One is aware that Professor Tolkien shunned explicit references to religion in *The Lord of the Rings*⁵, yet the line, 'Who shall gather the smoke of the dead wood burning...' may resonate as one imagines the smoke from the pyres rising heavenwards and into the arms of some celestial being.

The poet leaves one to ponder upon the present as, I feel, the lines opening the Lament of the Rohirrim were constructed to speak directly to a people living in the present rather than merely relate a formative event which resides in the past. This is the transmission of a memory conveyed in prose which carries to the present, in its form, faintly glowing embers of the tale-fires of times past.

Folk memory

In the context of Rohan the Lament of the Rohirrim signals a desire for a return to the years of strength and prosperity in a manner that is steeped in a symbolic well, the waters of which would be immediately recognisable and relative to a native of Rohan. This motif is a vehicle for the onward transmission of

Mallorn XLIII

folk memory in a form that relates, through question, idiom and image a strong resonance in the present even though they were sounded in a dim past. Within the Lament of the Rohirrim one finds not only the apparel of war and strife but also the associated comforts of the hall such as a gentle music ebbing through curling tails of smoke from a great fire, above which great spits slowly rotate and the essences of victory linger. A further aspect of the Lament, which is also found in physical form carved upon the great pillars of Meduseld,⁶ is that of '[T]he bright hair blowing...' which not only evokes the youthful Eorl but has echoes in more contemporary lore where one finds that long, fair locks which remained unchecked and free-flowing served as symbol of health, a vigorous soul and happiness – a symbol of Kings.⁷

The Lament of the Rohirrim, I feel, forms a collective memory which, when voiced before an audience, will allow those listeners to, in a sense, collectively participate by their realisation of images compounded within the prose; an affinity of imagery kindled in minds which, though sundered from one another, become joined by a cultural template upon which those words feed and transform into important, self-defining images representing a continuity of motifs which are in turn prevalent and very evocative to the cultural descendant who now receives such voices from his past. The first four strophes serve to flesh out the warrior society of Rohan in a concise and direct manner that also mourns the passing of each defining attribute in turn.

Within the Lament one hears, I feel, of the inevitable passing, or final breaths, of a noble society. In the context of 'The Wanderer' the voice yearns for such a passing while, it would appear, coming to terms with the mutability and ephemeral nature of man's designs all of which are destined to fall and fade into night; that the immutable resides only in Heaven. The Lament of the Rohirrim, in isolation, possesses no such revelation. Indeed it may bring the thought 'What a dreadful, fear-darkened, sorrow-laden world we live in...'⁸ Yet The Lament is in itself a vehicle wherein those living are given the prospect of keeping the memories, or mind-hoards, of the past alive by the sombre celebration of those times through prose. This aspect is reinforced by the assumption that although such glorious times may be perceived to be beyond reach they are not wholly extinct.

Such times however may be recognised as ephemeral, to an extent, as are the lives of the men who move through them. What may be evinced from the Lament of the Rohirrim is that there is a separation of the past from the present – a break in continuity that the Lament may serve tenuously to bridge – a loss of Rohirric attributes and comforts not only in a material context but also in an accompanying residual spiritual balance. Such a displacement of characteristics allows for the realisation in terms of memory rather than actuality. Such nobility and times may only be recovered when there rings forth a voice to answer the Lament of the Rohirrim both by word and deed.

In context

The positioning within the context of *The Lord of the Rings* of the Lament, through its oration by Aragorn, serves to introduce the reader to the Horse Lords of Rohan. Framed by a sea of greensward washing towards Edoras and buttressed by mountains, nonetheless it is a land of plight, barren of the cohesive elements of kingship and order unfolds before the travellers. I would hazard that the Lament of the Rohirrim would

have conveyed to those Horse Lords gathered in audience, not only a renewal and transmission of memory but the questions that form part of the Lament of the Rohirrim may, through the orator, speak to each Horse Lord present in such a manner which compels him to introspectively digest and, in turn, answer each of the respective questions in relation to his own individuality, aspirations, personal status and self-reflection all within the context of peerage and social stresses. Indeed, one can almost discern the orator through the heady air of a crowded longhouse pause deliberately after each strophe; letting the sting of each edged question rest in the wound awhile before slowly withdrawing it.

The Lament of the Rohirrim, I would posit, is a plea to action – a call to arms. While it acknowledges the passage of time the Lament also seeks within its phraseology for a new dawn. As each member of the audience absorbs the words so his or her mind is filled with the sobering realisation that 'Just so, this Middle-earth each and every day declines and decays'.⁹ A fleeting, fragmenting struggle upon the road of life ere folk pass into shade. Yet this passing may not always be forgotten, for the memories of great deeds and courage may linger in word, stone or the rising of earth, thereby enabling a preservation of ideals, of reputation and fame. And expressed in heroic terms, although the warrior may be seen as simply fulfilling an appointed task through mettle and main. Glory will find the hero through his deeds rather than the hero actively seeking glory.

'From dark Dunharrow in the dim morning
with thane and Captain rode Thengil's son:
to Edoras he came, the ancient halls
of the Mark-wardens mist enshrouded;
golden timbers were in gloom mantled.
Farewell he bade to his free people,
hearth and high-seat, and the hallowed places,
were long he had feasted ere the light faded.
Forth rode the king, fear behind him,
fate before him, Fealty kept he;
oaths he had taken, all fulfilled them.
Forth rode Théoden. Five nights and days
east and onward rode the Eorlingas
through Folde and Fenmarch and the Firewood
six thousand spears to Sunlending,
Mundburg the mighty under Mindolluin,
Sea-Kings' city in the South-Kingdom
foe-beleaguered, fire-circled.
Doom drove them on, Darkness took them,
horse and horseman; hoofbeats afar
sank into silence: so the song tells us.'¹⁰

Such stirring prose encapsulates not only the deed but a great conflagration and the atmosphere wherein it unfolded. Here Théoden has left the fear of his fate behind him and accepts that he is riding towards a seemingly inevitable destruction. A journey into the web of fate and the doom of men; all about the creeping dusk threatens to fog such deeds but for the voice of men that may ever carry such tales from one generation to another. Thereby the roots may be driven deep enabling the new shoots to ever strive towards the rising sun:

'Out of doubt, out of dark to the day's rising
I came singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.

A history of song

To hope's end I rode and to heart's breaking;
Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!'¹¹

To return to the context of the Lament, there is no extinction of its subject matter but that '...they have passed...' such things are perceived not to be beyond recovery as long as their memory survives. The warrior class who defended the borders and thereby maintained a degree of order where-in the society prospered have faded into night until a new dawn which will see their descendants ride forth; 'Out of doubt, out of dark to the day's rising'. The dawn within the context of the Lament is anticipated, not dismissed. So within the prose one finds not merely the lamentation for better times but a spur to the ragged flanks of dread-night, a last sounding of the horn and a hope for a new day's sun. Such prose retains and relates a corpus of memory in a fashion that celebrates as it mourns, thus preserving as it heralds a passing. Just as the great barrows swelled upon Middle-earth creating a memorial (may I infer sacred?) landscape they were markers denoting an ancestral bloodline which, through spectacle, was intertwined with not only the folk of Rohan but the very land itself. A tradition of claim to inherited land conjoined with the language of an oral tradition

that also captured and conveyed its history.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with Professor Tolkien's final thoughts at his Valedictory Address to the University of Oxford¹² (in which he also included extracts from the Anglo-Saxon prose pieces *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*). Tolkien muses on people and aspects from his past but after recalling those fading faces he '...survey[s] with eye or mind those who may be called my pupils (though rather in the sense 'the apples of my eyes'): those who have taught me much (not least *trawpe*, that is fidelity), who have gone on to a learning to which I have attained; or when I see how many scholars could more than worthily have succeeded me; then I perceive with gladness that the *duguð* has not yet fallen by the wall, and the *dréam* is not yet silenced.'¹³

In a sense the questions posited in the Lament of the Rohirrim may only be answered by those who come after, for it is they who will rein the horse and gather the smoke of a new wood burning. The memory of their forefathers passed to them, and in the retaining providing a social continuity, an important dimension, and one that echoed throughout Middle-earth.

References

1. For prose to survive in the context of oral tradition, whereby it is communicated through oration rather than literary forms, it must have a value cognizant to its audience – a purpose or association to ensure the longevity of its subject matter. A philosophical value, the containment of historical information or possess an association with the poet or an event for example.
2. *The Two Towers*, Tolkien J.R.R., p136-137
3. *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Bradley SAJ, page 324
4. The simple definition of a *kenning* implies that, in the basic word, the person or thing to which the poet alludes must be called something which it is not, although it must in some way resemble it. The basic words in kennings for men and women are often words for trees or poles; tree of battle a kenning for warrior for example. See *Scaldic Poetry*: Turville-Petre, p.xlv-p.xlvii
5. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Carpenter, p.172, also p.368
6. *The Two Towers*, p.142
7. *Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, Polomé, p. 85
8. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Carpenter, p. 400
9. *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Bradley SAJ, p. 324
10. *The Return of the King*, p.87
11. *ibid*, p.145
12. *The Monsters and the Critics*, Tolkien J.R.R., pp. 239-240
13. *ibid*, p.240.
(footnote 7: *duguð*: the noble company (in a king's hall).
dréam: the sound of their glad voices and the music of their feasts.)

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Tolkien's women (and men): the films and the book

Jane Chance

J. R. R. Tolkien's epic fantasy, *The Lord of the Rings*, is now beginning to be accepted by the academic world as canonical in the literature of the twentieth century, in part because of the BBC/Waterstone Bookstore's book poll in Britain in the 'nineties (Shippey, *Author of the Century* xxi), but more importantly because of the three recent films by New Zealand director Peter Jackson for New Line Cinema, in 2001, 2002, and 2003.¹ The films' popularity has prompted Tolkien fans, readers, and scholars to ask how clearly and well Jackson has adapted to film medium this important modern classic, and what in particular he has left out or changed (and to what purpose).

These questions bear a certain importance for scholars, in particular, who know something about the medieval genre of *The Lord of the Rings* – epic and romance – given Tolkien's own postmodern understanding in his book, of epic as "anti-epic." Certainly Oxford medievalist Tolkien, stirred by the heroic exploits of Beowulf and The Battle of Maldon, Old Norse sagas, Welsh romances, and the Finnish epic, *Kalevala*, re-created his own version of the Middle Ages in the world of Middle-earth (Chance, *Tolkien's Art*; Chance, *Tolkien the Medievalist*; Chance, *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*). However, wounded spiritually by his own participation in the Battle of the Somme during World War I – a battle in which he lost important school friends (Garth) – Tolkien recast the medieval hero in this world in new, unlikely, and multiple forms. These forms include small hobbits, suspiciously dark Rangers like Strider, sisters and sister-daughters (nieces) like Éowyn, sister of Éomer and niece to King Théoden, and second sons like Faramir, younger brother of Boromir². Tolkien chose as the heroic adversary not the Vikings or a monster like Grendel or the dragon, but the antiheroic and formless tyrant Sauron, a fallen tyrannical Maia who longs for power. Most importantly, Tolkien changed the nature of the epic quest from a journey to join in the war of nations to an anti-quest, a non-battle, and a lonely trip to run an errand – to throw something away – across the margins of the battlefield.

What has Jackson done to Tolkien's anti-epic? First and most obviously, he returns it to the film genre of the Hollywood epic by transforming *The Lord of the Rings* into a high-tech CGI adventure. The never-ending scenes with goblins, orcs, the cave troll, and the winged balrog, or with wargs, oliphaunts, ents, men, and nazgûl, flash by so indiscriminately that the eye cannot focus on a single unifying thread, although in Tolkien's book such battling occurs offstage and in relatively little narrative space. Most unaccountably, there are few quiet moments in these films, despite Tolkien's penchant for the moving intimate exchange between two characters or for dramatic inner revelation. Even in the few scenes of anger, love, and grief, Jackson pushes the envelope.³

Such rewriting is not wholly unexpected on the part of horror-film-specialist Jackson. The dead bodies and severed heads littering the floor of the Mines of Moria constitute the same kind of Jacksonian grotesquerie found in his film *The Frighteners* (1996). But this is an inexplicable step backward from his fine, critically acclaimed film *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), which dealt with the murder of a mother by her fourteen-year-old daughter and her daughter's best friend, Juliet Hulme (later to earn fame as Anne Perry, detective-story writer). The sensitivity shown in this film would have enhanced his treatment of the quieter scenes in *The Lord of the Rings*.

If Jackson's film adaptation of Tolkien may more precisely be designated as just one interpretation, or "translation" – to borrow a term from some of the Oxford don's most important scholarly articles about the necessity for literal accuracy in any scholarly rendition of a work in a different language⁴ – then how has Jackson interpreted Tolkien? What has Jackson omitted from, added to, and changed in Tolkien's text in a way that distorts the meaning of epic (or anti-epic)?

To answer these questions it is necessary to explain, first, the screenwriter's tight focus on selected, representative incidents and his or her omission of the didactic and non-dramatic – non-visual – portions of a text. Jackson has had to reduce *The Lord of the Rings* to three relatively spare action films. This demand results from the nature of the medium: if in a screenplay one page counts as one minute of film time, the screenplay for each four-hour film must be about 240 pages long – but Tolkien's single-spaced, crammed pages in *The Fellowship of the Ring* alone amount to 479 pages, or the equivalent of about 960 double-spaced screenplay pages. Further, each film is not divided into two consecutive books, as are *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. The first half of *The Fellowship of the Ring* film – the first twenty-seven scenes of the extended version – is equivalent to the twelve chapters of the first book, which ends with the Flight to the Ford. In the second half – another twenty-one scenes – the film compresses ten chapters. Deleted from the first film are central episodes primarily from the first book, such as Tom Bombadil's rescue of the hobbits from the Old Forest and the Barrow-downs. Although these omitted episodes may not seem so crucial to the dramatic narrative, they (and others that precede them) constitute about seven of the twelve chapters in the first book of *The Fellowship of the Ring* alone.

By changing the focus from Frodo's hero-journey in the book to the love story of Arwen and Aragorn in the film, Jackson subordinates and devalues (or at least defers) Tolkien's key theme of the ennoblement of the ordinary to the more ordinary marriage of the nobility. In the first film, in the

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Tolkien's women ...

"Flight to the Ford," Jackson substitutes Arwen (Liv Tyler), daughter of Elrond (Hugo Weaving), for Frodo's rescuer, the Elf-lord Glorfindel on his horse, Asfaloth (Fellowship, scene 21). Although Jackson makes other changes to Tolkien's text in all of the films, the emphasis on Arwen as a feminised Amazon/Valkyrie warrior astride her own white horse, along with what might be termed an infantilisation of Frodo and the hobbits, represents his most egregious refiguration of Tolkien's epic. In the first film, Jackson dilutes the heroic development of Frodo and the other hobbits, just as he similarly weakens the role of Aragorn to bolster Arwen. In the second film, under the director's even freer hand, Aragorn becomes stronger and more decisive, while a fight seems to be shaping up on his account between Arwen and Éowyn. The hobbits are lost in the narrative amid the thunderous battles, despite moments of heroism by Merry and Pippin and Frodo and Sam. In the third film, Arwen finally chooses her own destiny because of a vision of her future child and at the end marries Aragorn, while the hobbits, whose heroism saves the day in many ways, accomplish much of their action through unseemly violence against adversaries and companions. At the same time, the hobbits' loyalty and love for one another contrast starkly with the murder of Déagol by Sméagol after he finds the Ring, in a scene that Jackson pulls from the first volume and inserts as an overarching theme at the beginning of the third film. Why has Jackson infantilised Frodo and the hobbits, reduced the manliness of Aragorn, and enhanced the power of Arwen in all three films?

What Tolkien has to say about the role of Arwen and Aragorn and the journey of the hobbits, in a draft of a letter to Michael Straight written in January or February 1956, is most important for understanding Tolkien's postmodern anti-epic of *The Lord of the Rings*:

I regard the role of Arwen and Aragorn as the most important of the Appendices; it is part of the essential story, and is only placed so, because it could not be worked into the main narrative without destroying its structure: which is planned to be "hobbito-centric," that is, primarily a study of the ennoblement (or sanctification) of the humble. (Letters, 237)

Tolkien speaks, surprisingly, about the importance of Arwen and Aragorn to the story. But it is a story he has for the most part placed, not in the narrative of the epic (or anti-epic) fantasy, where his primary concern is to ennoble the hobbits, but in the back, in the appendices.

Truly, this theme of ennoblement of the humble is the heart of the narrative in Tolkien's book. *The Lord of the Rings* is not about large battles and the killing of the enemy by the aristocracy of Middle-earth, be they regal men or reigning elves and wizards. Instead, this anti-epic is about the way that the humble – the hobbits – come to be ennobled, empowered as heroes, and how they earn their place in an epic narrative in which the background of the battle scenes and the clash of metal on metal have become, strangely, the foreground. What is lacking in the films is depth of characterisation, and therefore the acting is offset by the fellowship of the ensemble. However, just as the first film presents Frodo, Merry, Pippin, and Sam as childish hobbits and the rightful king, Aragorn, as passive, the second and third films compensate by tracing their growing maturation.

Having criticised Jackson's treatment as being unreflective of Tolkien's intentions, I will seem to contradict myself by now suggesting that Jackson's changes are truer to Tolkien's overarching drama, the story of Middle-earth and its four ages, in which *The Lord of the Rings* portrays the transition from the Third Age, of Elves, to the Fourth Age, of Man. Jackson's most important changes in all three films, which generally appear to give women – in particular, Arwen – a greater role than that found in Tolkien's anti-epic, are actually intrinsic to Tolkien's larger contextualising mythology, which features Arwen's great sacrifice of her elven immortality. Less justifiably in Jackson's version, a puerile Frodo and Sam demonstrate the effect of the Ring through violence, at least in the third film, which exaggerates the heroic change in their characters at the end by means of dramatic contrast, as does the establishing shot in the third film, in which a more hobbit-like Sméagol murders Déagol because of the Ring. I will first examine Jackson's changes in the hobbits before returning to his emphasis on the story of Arwen and Aragorn.

Hobbit children

Of the changes most important in the first film, the infantilisation of the hobbits (in part to appeal to the nineteen- to twenty-six-year-old male youth market) stands out most glaringly⁵. Frodo diminishes from a fifty-year-old hobbit to the boyish (even childlike) Elijah Wood in the central role as he begins the quest. Even if it is argued that Frodo, at thirty-three, is in fact just coming out of his "tweens" at his coming-of-age party in the text of *The Fellowship of the Ring* – a "Long Expected Party" like Bilbo's own birthday party in the text – he does not leave on the quest for some fifteen to twenty years after that party, at a "sober" age that Tolkien describes as "significant": "So it went on, until his forties were running out, and his fiftieth birthday was drawing near; fifty was a number that he felt was somehow significant (or ominous); it was at any rate at that age that adventure had suddenly befallen Bilbo" (FR, 66). Tolkien himself would have been nearing fifty in the late 1930s when he began *The Lord of the Rings*, and he was into his sixties at the time that it was first published, in 1953. It seems unlikely that Tolkien intended Frodo to resemble a teenager, especially taking into consideration Tolkien's remark to Deborah Webster, in Letter 213, that "I am myself a hobbit" (Letters, 288). Further, the films' logic about the reason for the hobbit's youthfulness is inconsistent. Although Frodo appears young because of Elijah Wood's own youth during this period of passage while Bilbo still possesses the Ring – which according to Tolkien's text preserves youthfulness – Bilbo (as portrayed by Ian Holm) always appears extremely old, even at the moment he gives up the Ring to Gandalf.

That literal childishness we see in Frodo is characteristic of all the hobbits of the Fellowship and not just the Ringbearer. For example, in the first film, when Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd) burst forth exuberantly from the cornfield with some carrots and other vegetables stolen from Farmer Maggot's garden, they literally bump into Frodo and Sam (Sean Astin). This encounter conflates episodes from the book's Farmer Maggot chapter ("A Short Cut to Mushrooms," FR, chapter 4), in which it was Frodo in particular who as a child used to steal mushrooms from the farmer. And in the film at the Inn of the Prancing Pony (FR,

Mallorn XLIII

chapter 9), the hobbits, like typical university students, all want a pint of beer (*FR*, 240). In the film Pippin is criticised by Gandalf at the Mines of Moria when he terms the hobbit's deed of knocking a dead man into the well "stupidity" ("Fool of a Took!" is the wizard's response to this "nuisance" in *Fellowship* [*FR*, 373]). Certainly it is stupid, for in the film Pippin thereby awakens malice in the persons of the orcs; simple Pippin, also always hungry, elsewhere in Tolkien's book and in the film wants second breakfasts, elevenses, lunch, tea, and dinner. But in the text, it is not a hobbit alone who awakens the orcs or the balrog: it is the man, Boromir, whose stone first causes trouble before they enter Moria by alerting the Watcher in the Water – and there are no dead orcs or dwarves perched on the well [*FR*, 366-67]).

Jackson de-emphasizes the hobbits and Aragorn in the first film so that he can empower and ennoble them in the later films. In support, Jackson emphasises male bonding at the end of the first film in an understanding of Tolkien's own interest throughout his life and works in male camaraderie and heroic friendship and service: mainly through showing Aragorn (Viggo Mortenson), Gimli (John Rhys-Davies), and Legolas (Orlando Bloom) – as man, dwarf, and elf – committing themselves to the pursuit of the captured Merry and Pippin. Accompanying this male camaraderie in the film is Boromir's redemptive confession to Aragorn at the moment of his death and his formal submission as guardian of Gondor to his king, just as Sam is also rescued from drowning by his master, Frodo, in the boat and expresses his love for him (*Fellowship*, scenes 45 and 46, "The Departure of Boromir" and "The Road Goes Ever On"). These are all rich, masculinised, Tolkienian

moments, true to the text in a figurative sense.

Expanding Arwen

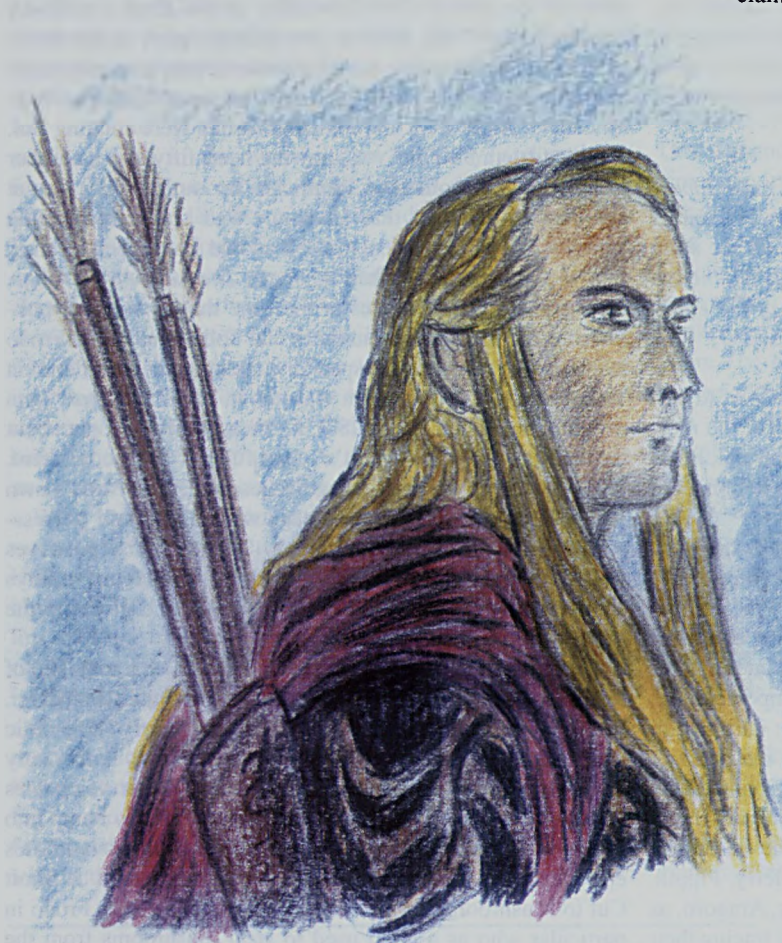
As Frodo and the other hobbits diminish into naughty children in the film of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, so also is Arwen made into a hero, chiefly in the Flight to the Ford scene (*Fellowship*, scene 21). Arwen's beefed-up role in the film creates a female presence where there was none in Tolkien's text. In the film the Black Riders pursue Arwen, who carries Frodo protectively on her white horse like a mother clutching her baby (*Fellowship*, scene 21). Arwen takes Frodo herself because she can ride faster than Aragorn – a characterisation wholly missing in Tolkien's book. In fact, when Arwen first appears in the scene, she has been out looking for Aragorn, as Glorfindel was looking for Frodo in the book. She herself carries Frodo to Rivendell on her white horse rather than permit him to ride Asfaloth alone and confront the Black Riders at the Ford.

Second, in the film Arwen tells Aragorn she will forsake immortality (in a scene that jumps ahead to the third volume of the trilogy) – reminding us of her role in and importance to Tolkien's mythology as revealed in the appendices and *The Silmarillion*, which depends upon her uniting of elf with man to bring about the peaceful transition to the Fourth Age, of Man.

Third, in the film, at the Ford itself, Arwen rescues Frodo from the Black Riders, as an overpowering *dea ex machina* in the guise of an Amazon warrior, an event absent from Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring* (and from either of the other two volumes, for that matter). "If you want him, come and claim him" is the challenge she hurls at them, while

the passive and drooling Frodo gazes blankly into the sky. Jackson, by stripping Tolkien's text of early episodes in which the hobbits play key roles, reduces Frodo to a two-dimensional hero whose supposed courage as a hobbit is only rather suddenly and abruptly acknowledged by Elrond at Rivendell.

In the text of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, in contrast to its visualisation, Frodo demonstrates his heroism through his bold oath to Varda and Lúthien: "By Elbereth and Lúthien the Fair," said Frodo with a last effort, lifting up his sword, "You shall have neither the Ring nor me!" (*FR*, 262). With this action Tolkien provides the climax of Frodo's physical evolution as a hero in the first book of *The Fellowship*: the hobbit is torn, on the one hand, between the Ring demanding that he put it on as the nine Black Riders call him back and, on the other, the goal of reaching safety at Elrond's Rivendell house on the opposite side (repre-



Haldir

Jill Thwaites

senting elven goodness and security and power). Further, Elrond, not Arwen, commands the flood, and Gandalf, through the encouragement of Glorfindel – as we learn later – adds to its tumultuous power the marvellous white water horses (see *FR*, 271).

In contrast to the dominant Valkyrie Arwen, in the first film Aragorn is strangely deflated in some ways, in other ways pumped up. In scene 25, “The Sword That was Broken,” as if in symbolic agreement with his missing virility, the blade that cut off the Ring lies broken, its shards posed as if a relic passively stored in a museum. In the book the sword is reforged and raised up by Aragorn’s hand after the Council of Elrond, before the Fellowship departs. At the end of the first film a regretful Aragorn appears, to tell Frodo “I would have gone all the way to the end – to Mordor,” he says to the hobbit, then telling him to “Run!” (Fellowship, scene 43, “Parth Galen”). Indeed, it is Boromir and not the sentimental Aragorn who shines most brightly at the end of the first film: Boromir seems to be picking up firewood and not deliberately following Frodo (as he is in Tolkien’s book) when he makes his grab for the Ring (Fellowship, scene 43, “Parth Galen”). When Jackson’s Boromir later compensates for his deed by bravely protecting the Merry and Pippin, the Man from Gondor is slain in a very long death scene in which he is pierced by many arrows (Fellowship, scene 44, “The Breaking of the Fellowship”). Further, Boromir also quite movingly confesses his guilt and, after Aragorn refers to “our people,” pledges his support to Aragorn and then dies (Fellowship, scene 45, “The Departure of Boromir”). It is curious that Jackson has tacked on here the beginning of book 3, even if with an eye to a “happy ending” that will satisfy viewers and impel them to see the second instalment. Jackson will similarly defer the unhappy ending of *The Two Towers* – the encounter with Shelob – until the third film, *The Return of the King*.

Creating Éowyn

The second film also changes central features of Tolkien’s epic, adds material not found in the text of *The Lord of the Rings*, and omits other material.⁶ In one of the most important additions, as we shall see in returning to Jackson’s emphasis on Arwen and Aragorn, Éowyn, sister-daughter of the king of Rohan, epitomises the female stereotype of caretaker for the children and aged of the kingdom and the eroticised object of



Gríma’s desire. Note that she is perceived as “fair and cold” when he attempts to intimidate her over the dead body of King Théoden’s son Théodred (*Towers*, scene 20, “The King of the Golden Hall”).

Éowyn’s role in Tolkien’s *Two Towers*, however, is fuller and more balanced in terms of her social and political role as shield-maiden, leader, and future ruler. There she also assists her uncle, King Théoden, at the meeting with Gandalf and the company, and, though “stern as steel” and the “daughter of kings,” appears to Aragorn incomplete, or at least immature – “like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood” (*TT*, 141). Like the Old English queen Wealhtheow in *Beowulf*, wife of Danish king Hrothgar, Éowyn in Tolkien’s text passes the cup at a hall ceremony to knit up peace after feasting in a joyful gift-giving – specifically, the shining mail and round shields bestowed upon Aragorn and Legolas and the cap of iron and leather chosen by Gimli from the king’s hoard. In Tolkien’s text, “The king now rose, and at once Éowyn came forward bearing wine. ‘Ferthu Théoden hál!’ she said. ‘Receive now this cup and drink in happy hour. Health be with thee at thy going and coming!’” The Rohirrim (modelled on Old English) means “Fare well [hale] Théoden!”⁷ In the text she also passes the cup to Aragorn (but trembles as she does so to show her infatuation).

Although in the text of *Two Towers* Théoden names Éomer as his heir, upon the suggestion of Háma the hall-guardian (who has released Éomer from prison), it is to Éowyn that Théoden entrusts his people – no mean responsibility – when

Mallorn XLIII

he and the Company depart for battle. In the film, in contrast, Éomer is banished by Gríma-Wormtongue (Towers, scene 8, “The Banishment of Éomer”) and Éowyn appears to be primarily a nurturing caregiver to her uncle (and king) and her people (Towers, scenes 27 and 35, “Exodus from Edoras” and “Helm’s Deep”). In Tolkien’s book, Théoden is not thinking of Éowyn when he asks Háma for someone in whom “my people trust.” For Théoden, Éomer is he whom he is unable to spare or leave behind, “the last of that House” (of Eorl). Háma corrects him: “I said not Éomer And he is not the last. There is Éowyn, daughter of Éomund, his sister. She is fearless and high-hearted. All love her. Let her be as lord to the Eorlingas, while we are gone” (TT, 151). In Théoden’s absence, as lord she will lead the folk of the Golden Hall. Thus, in the text, as the splinter Fellowship departs, Éowyn stands dressed in mail and lays her hands upon the hilt of a sword. We will not see her again until the third volume. But in the film, she seems to be herding her people in an exodus to Dunharrow – in advance of their flight in volume three. And in the film, like the shield maiden she will become only in the third volume of the text, she attempts swordplay with Aragorn, who offers in defense a knife – a scene of sexual symbolism nowhere found in Tolkien’s text – and speaks of her caretaking role as a “cage” (Towers, scene 26, “A Daughter of Kings”).

Arwen’s choice

In the second (and third) films the figure we see more of than in Tolkien’s narrative is, of course, Arwen, Elven beloved of Aragorn and symbol of wisdom who will be, apparently, lost to Men after the passing of the Elves. Initially, her importance in the film of *The Two Towers* is not entirely clear. Her providential role is underscored in Aragorn’s two dreams. First, after Aragorn smokes, she visualizes before him to tell him to sleep, that this is a dream, and to kiss him; she also instructs him to follow the path, not to falter (Towers, scene 33, “The Evenstar”). Second, Arwen appears in a scene that does not exist in the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* but instead only in the appendices: she is told by her father, Elrond, that her time on Middle-earth is ending and that she must sail with her kin to the Undying Lands – although she will ultimately decide to stay with Aragorn (Towers, scene 38, “Arwen’s Fate”). In fact, in the text, at the end of the trilogy, it is Galadriel and her elves and not Arwen who must depart for the Undying Lands when the Third Age dissolves into the Fourth; Arwen gives away her passage to Frodo (RK, 282). This departure, earned by Galadriel’s rejection of Frodo’s proffered Ring, represents forgiveness for Galadriel’s own role as half-niece to Fëanor and participant in the revolt of the Noldor (described in *The Silmarillion*). Because of her disobedience, she was banned from joining the other Elves in Valinor for long years.⁸ This fact’s importance for Tolkien, if not for *The Two Towers* or even *The Lord of the Rings*, cannot be underestimated, for the harmony that will exist at the beginning of the Fourth Age, of Man, following the ending of the bellicose Third Age, of Elves, will be symbolised by the marriage between the Man Aragorn and Half-elf Arwen.

The endpoint toward which much of the film narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* has been moving rests upon Arwen’s decision to stay behind in Middle-earth with Aragorn and thereby sacrifice her immortality out of love for a human. This final decision of Arwen is anticipated in the film (but not the book) of *The Two Towers*, when Aragorn is injured in a battle with Wargs prior to the battle of Helm’s Deep and floats away.

Aragorn seems to be nearing his own end although he is watched over by natural and supernatural forces – for example, a vision of Arwen kisses him while his horse awakens him and kneels for him to mount (Towers, scene 35, “The Grace of the Valar”). Indeed, to the choice that Arwen’s father, Elrond, offers Arwen – death with Aragorn or life in the Undying Lands – Arwen replies, “You have my love, father,” and is shown departing Middle-earth with the other elves of Rivendell (Towers, scene 38, “Arwen’s Fate”). As if this ominous sign were not enough, Galadriel offers Legolas an analogous choice when she notes that “the time of the elves is over. Do we leave Middle-earth to its fate?” (Towers, scene 39, “The Story Foreseen from Lórien”). Clearly man is in danger: Galadriel declares prophetically in the film that “Sauron will try to destroy Rohan. The Eye turns to Gondor, the last free city of men,” and she predicts that the Quest will claim the Ringbearer’s life and that “the Ring is close to achieving its goal.” The end of the second film, however, leaves the audience with the impression that Arwen and Aragorn will never marry, in spite of her promise to relinquish her immortality for Aragorn’s sake in the first film.

The heroism and loyalty of hobbits

In the third film, two scenes at the beginning serve as establishing shots – frames for the final film that help to unify it thematically as well as mark its importance as the endpoint in the trilogy. The first reveals Sméagol’s murder of his cousin Déagol in order to obtain the Ring that the latter has found on Sméagol’s birthday, a scene that should have been part of Gandalf’s explanation to Frodo of the history of the Ring in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, as that is where it is found in Tolkien’s book. The second offers a vision of the child Arwen ought to have had with Aragorn and her confrontation with her father, Elrond: in a moment of transcendent love for a being of different kindred she says to him, “You saw my son – it is not lost. Some things are certain – if I leave him, I will regret it forever. . . . Reforge the sword!” (Return, scene 7, “Arwen’s Vision”). This latter theme unifies all three films and explains all the individual films’ emphases, on hobbits as halflings, on diminished man, and, most importantly, on Arwen as a half-elf.

The first establishing shot in *The Return of the King*, the kin-killing by Sméagol, signifies in halfling fashion the equivalent of Fëanor’s kinslaying in *The Silmarillion* and is similarly followed with consequences grim and terrible. Sméagol’s physical degeneration into Gollum, a being set apart from his kind both physically and spiritually, provides obvious evidence of his descent into evil. As a theme it anticipates the division, discord, and disloyalty that arise between Frodo and Sam, as the Ring’s influence becomes more pronounced as they near Mount Doom. The theme also anticipates the self-division and discord within Gollum himself, as he debates the pros and cons of whether he should betray his master, Frodo, to win the Ring (a more powerful master still). In general, the increasing violence by Frodo and Sam in the film graphically represents the effects of greed and pride on the hobbits.

In the text, of course, neither hobbit displays the physical violence exhibited in the film. In the film Sam attacks Gollum just as Gollum – Narcissus-like looking into a pool – debates whether he should let Shelob have Frodo; Sam’s actions tip the balance toward Shelob. In the text, Gollum shows concern and love for his sleeping master by almost touching his knee, which Sam mistakes for a threat. Sam’s chastisement for

Tolkien's women ...

Gollum's one kind gesture unfortunately compels Gollum's betrayal of them to Shelob. But Jackson adds Gollum's unlikely staged set-up of Sam as a greedy thief of lembas: the degenerate hobbit sprinkles crumbs on Sam. This malicious sprinkling leads in the film to Sam's attack on Gollum and Frodo's suspicions of Sam, suspicions sufficiently keen to arouse Frodo's demand that his friend and servant go home. Later in the film, Gollum himself will attack Frodo in a manner very un-Tolkienian in nature: in the text, Tolkien clearly marks Gollum's faithfulness to his master by having Frodo make him swear a feudal oath of fealty to "Master," a rite ambiguous in nature because it is unclear whether it is Frodo to whom he is swearing or to the Ring (TT, 265-66). Further, in the film Sam never deliberates the ethical issue of bearing of the Ring to Mordor to complete the quest as he does in the text when he thinks his master, Frodo, is dead and the mission must continue; he merely tells Frodo when he presents it that he took it for "safekeeping".

Jackson, in his preference for graphic violence, may ignore the subtleties of the master-servant/knight-squire relationship that Tolkien has so carefully developed in *The Return of the King*. Nevertheless, in the third film, by means of several visual markers of separation and connection, Jackson truly renders the bond of friendship and caring between Frodo and Sam and among the three hobbits whom Frodo leaves behind in the Shire at the end. These visual markers contrast with the unlikely violence that has continued to take centre stage in all three films in a way not present in the anti-epic. In the film of *The Return of the King*, just as Gandalf beats up Denethor and then participates vigorously in battle, including the attack of the Nazgûl, Sam kills orcs, Sam fights Gollum, the eagles fight the Nazgûl, and Frodo battles Gollum. The visual markers that Jackson provides to counter the violence are equally stunning. In Jackson's depiction, Frodo perilously hangs from the edge of Mount Doom as Sam, like Michelangelo's God touching Adam's finger at the moment of creation, reaches out to grasp him and thereby return Frodo to Middle-earth and safety. Literally, Sam saves Frodo; figuratively, love and friendship and loyalty – the glue of Middle-earth – save the hobbit hero. Later, Arwen joins Aragorn in a scene of spring blossoms and song to usher in the Fourth Age, of man – and the end of the Third Age, with the departure of the elves, the Three Rings, and Arwen's father and their people. Finally, Frodo and the elves accompany the decrepit Bilbo to the boat to ferry him over to Valinor; the other hobbits have to bid goodbye to their beloved Frodo in a wrenching end-scene – that finishes, curiously, with Frodo's smile of acceptance. If the opening scene of Smeagol's murder of his cousin in the film of *The Return of the King* provides a clear definition of evil as greed, pride, and selfishness at the expense of the Other, then at the end the rectification of that crime is the love that binds the Fellowship.

Of Beren and Lúthien

What Jackson sees in the heroism and loyalty of the hobbits in this third film is linked to the loving union between the Valkyrie-like Arwen, half-elf, and Aragorn, man, the theme that for Jackson unifies all three films—clarified by what I have called the second establishing shot in *The Return of the King*, "Arwen's Vision." It seems equally clear in the film that

Jackson's invented scenes concerning Aragorn and Arwen are meant to mirror the pattern of the quest of their ancestors Beren and Lúthien. This love story of two kindreds in *The Lord of the Rings* echoes that told in *The Silmarillion* (and in the appendices to the trilogy) of the man Beren and the half elf /half maia Lúthien. Aragorn and Arwen must overcome the obstacle set by Elrond that Aragorn must be worthy of marrying his daughter, which he does by being crowned king. Beren and Lúthien are essentially prohibited from marriage by her father, Thingol, when he demands an extraordinary boon of Beren in return for his daughter's hand – the retrieval of one of Fëanor's captured jewels, the Silmarils, from Morgoth's crown.

In *The Silmarillion*, during Beren's quest for the Silmaril, Lúthien, like Jackson's Arwen, functions as hero equally with her male lover, in fact transcending him in her artistic and heroic roles (*Silmarillion*, chapter 19). For example, Rapunzel-like, Lúthien escapes imprisonment by her father by braiding her hair into a rope; further, her singing has a power that stuns her adversaries. Indeed, through her efforts and those of her maian wolfhound, Huan, she escapes capture by Celegorm, conquers Sauron (whose form is wrested from him in combat with Huan), and rescues Beren from imprisonment. Further, like Elrond to his daughter, Arwen, in the film, loyal Lúthien offers Beren the choice either of relinquishing the quest and wandering the earth or of challenging the power of darkness, although she promises that "on either road I shall go with you, and our doom shall be alike" (*Silmarillion*, 214). Lúthien matches in knowledge or artistry whatever Beren accomplishes in brave feats: for example, when Curufin, brother of Celegorm, tries to shoot her with an arrow, Beren steps in front and is himself wounded – but then Lúthien heals him. She sings for Morgoth, blinding him, so that Beren can steal the Silmaril. Lúthien sucks out the venom from Beren after the wolf Carcharoth has bitten off Beren's hand holding the Silmaril (*Silm*, 182). Although Beren also dies upon the successful completion of the quest, Lúthien sings to him and they meet again "beyond the Western Sea," where she is offered the choice of mortal life with Beren without certainty of joy, which she accepts.

But Beren and Lúthien are not only romantic paradigms and antecedents for Aragorn and Arwen; they are also their ancestors. Significant in this respect is the ennoblement of the man Aragorn through his elven-maian blood and also the fact that he is related as cousin to half-elf Arwen, who herself mixes the blood of different branches of elves. Aragorn descends ultimately from Elros, the brother of Arwen's father, Elrond; both of these elves are the children of Eärendil and Elwing and – not surprisingly – the great-grandchildren of Lúthien and Beren. Arwen is the daughter of Celebrían and Elrond and granddaughter of Galadriel and Celeborn (a connection that explains why the filmic Arwen might meet for advice with her grandmother Galadriel in Lothlórien). Certainly in the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings* Arwen is described as having spent time in Lothlórien both before she meets Aragorn and then after he dies.

The family backgrounds of Arwen, Galadriel, and Lúthien are important to Tolkien's mythology and also explain Jackson's filmic emphasis on the Arwen-Aragorn story. All three family lines mix the blood of different kindreds or tribes,

Mallorn XLIII

symbolic of Tolkien's appropriation of the ideal of peace-weaving pursued by Anglo-Saxon noblewomen⁹ and the utopian goal of the unification of differing cultures. Arwen is half-elf and granddaughter of Galadriel, who herself unites the Noldorin-Vanyarin elves with the Teleri through her mother, Eärwen, daughter of the Teleri's Olwë of Alqualondë. That is, through Galadriel's father, Finarfin, the half brother of the important *Silmarillion* anti-hero Feanor, Arwen is connected to both the Noldor and the Vanyar. Finarfin's mother, Indis of the Vanyar, was the second wife of the Noldo Finwë.

But Lúthien's ancestry is even more impressive in its symbolic uniting of differing peoples: Lúthien's mother was Melian the maia (servant to the Valar), and her father was Thingol (or Elwë), the brother of Olwë of the Teleri. The linking of all families of elves with the progeny of different kinds, maia, elf, and man, for Tolkien suggests the harmonious reconciliation of all social differences through peace and harmony in marriage. Modelling these intermarriages and mixed-blood progeny on the classical prototype of the hero as half god, half human, Tolkien finds his ideal union in the coupling of Beren and Lúthien, ancestors of Aragorn and Arwen. Their ideal union is mirrored in that of Aragorn and Arwen, the ideal character of which is merely hinted at in the third volume (and film) of *The Lord of the Rings*.

In the appendices Tolkien explains that only three such unions of Eldar and Edain have existed in the history of Middle-earth – Beren and Lúthien, Tuor and Idril, and Aragorn and Arwen. All three couples, but especially Aragorn and Arwen, are important because of their symbolic role in unifying alienated, diverse, or separated peoples: “By the last the long-sundered branches of the half-elven were reunited and their line was restored” (*RK*, app. A (i), 350). The long history of the elves dramatises the division of the three branches, the Noldor (joined by men), the Teleri, and the Vanyar, at various times alienated or geographically separated from each other. Specifically, in *The Silmarillion* the Noldor, headed by Feanor, are exiled from the Blessed Realm because of the Kinslaying; from them and their alliance with the Edain – men of the Three Houses of the Elf-friends who came to the West because they were attracted to the light and joined the Eldar against Morgoth – descends Tolkien's ultimate hero, Eärendil the Mariner. As the son of the man Tuor and the elf Idril (the third important union in Tolkien's mythology), Eärendil the Mariner represents both the Elves and the Men.¹⁰ From him spring the half-elven sons Elros and Elrond – father of Arwen.

The unification of man, elf (all the branches), and maia through the marriage of Aragorn and Arwen comes about only through the sacrifice and suffering of the lovers, chiefly because of the Doom of Men (Tolkien's euphemism for mor-

tality, also called a “Gift”). In the appendices (A 5) – which form a part of the tale of Aragorn and Arwen – after the death of his own father, Arathorn, the mother of two-year-old Aragorn takes him to live in the House of Elrond, where he is called Estel, “Hope,” to disguise his true identity from the Enemy. On the very next day after Aragorn's foster father, Elrond, reveals Aragorn's true identity as the Heir of Isildur – when he turns twenty – Aragorn first sees Arwen (who has been living in Lothlórien with her mother's kin) and, thinking she is Tinúviel (Lúthien), falls in love with her. He does so even though his mother, Gilraen, warns him that “it is not fit that mortal should wed with the elf-kin” (*RK*, app. A 5, 384) and, additionally, even though Elrond informs Aragorn that Aragorn will not have any bride until he is found worthy (Aragorn will be at least fifty years old when he earns that honour) (*RK*, app. A 5, 385). In these relatively mild twin obstacles we can see a parallel to those to the marriage of Beren and Lúthien. Further, there is an additional “doom” laid upon Elrond and Arwen (exile, because of the Kinslaying) to remain with the youth of the Eldar until Elrond must depart, when Arwen can choose to accompany him or not. Although Arwen accepts human mortality in order to marry Aragorn, she must also accept parting from her father and her people – and, along with that parting, the demise of Aragorn before her.

Thus, while Jackson does not finally follow the literal line of Tolkien's narrative in his films, the director appears to be establishing this central concern of the overarching mythology through Tolkien's focus on the relationship between Aragorn and Arwen that appears in the appendices. For this mythological reason also, Jackson brings into the forefront the epic battles in the War of the Ring that Tolkien, for the most part, uses only as background to the drama of the ennoblement of the hobbits, through their quest to return the Ring to its source. Within a filmic context, both of these mythological events – the union of Aragorn and Arwen and the War of the Ring – as dramatic narratives may be visually superior to that of the psychological journey of the Company – and the halflings in particular – and their saving of Middle-earth.

But these are not the themes Tolkien chose to emphasise in his anti-epic. Within the literary masterpiece and the medium of print, the journey and the knitting together of a peaceful end are of paramount importance to Tolkien. It is at the expense of Frodo's character, who, unlike Arwen's, does cross over to Valinor, that the aims of the film are achieved. We ought to remember that Frodo's dilemmas, not Aragorn's or Arwen's, are most important in the story Tolkien told and provide a paradigm in the text for the ennoblement of the ordinary, today and always.

Notes

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I am grateful to have had the benefit of the audiences' questions and points in revising this essay for publication. My thanks also go to Teresa Munisteri, editorial assistant for the Rice English department, for advice on styling this essay for publication.

Tolkien's women ...

References

1. All references are to the scene numbers in the extended versions of the three films on DVD, where available at the time of publication.
2. Eowyn is niece to Théoden, brother of her mother, Théodwyn. In the medieval romance the quest-hero frequently appears as the nephew to the king – the son of the king's sister, or "sister-son" – as was Gawain, nephew to King Arthur in the fourteenth-century *Gawain and the Green Knight* and son of Morgan la Fay and her half-brother, Arthur, in the fifteenth-century Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*. To my knowledge no woman has played this role in a medieval romance or epic.
3. For example, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, when Jackson's Gimli, who has imagined that Dwarf hospitality would be extended to the Fellowship by his kinsman Balin as a respite from the rigors of the journey (although Dwarves are not known for their hospitality elsewhere in Tolkien's work), finally finds the tomb of Balin, he sobs horribly in a most un-Tolkienian moment of grief. In Tolkien's text Gimli merely "cast his hood over his face" (FR, 380).
4. See my discussion of Tolkien's various comments about the translator's obligation to provide a faithful rendering of the text in Chance, Tolkien's Art, 26-28, which assimilates comments from the preface to Tolkien and E. V. Gordon's *Gawain* edition; the preface to Tolkien's translation of *Sir Gawain, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*; and the 1940 prefatory remarks to the John Clark-Hall translation of *Beowulf*, among other works of which Tolkien taught and was fond.
5. Aspects of the respite in Lothlórien are also changed or omitted in the first film, but in line with the general patterns we have detected. Only Frodo, not Sam, looks into Galadriel's mirror. Gifts from Galadriel are not given out to all three Hobbits (except in the extended version) (*Fellowship*, scene 41, "Farewell to Lórien"). Nor, looking ahead, does Jackson plan to return us to the Shire to see it scoured, as it is at the end of book 6 of *The Lord of the Rings*. Galadriel -- played admirably by Cate Blanchett as simultaneously regal and ethereal -- does not explain any of her history: why she might be expected to want the Ring (which we learn in the chapter on Galadriel in *Unfinished Tales*) and why Galadriel's refusal means she has, in fact, won while seemingly losing power and being diminished (which means, that is, she must cross over to the West and give up rule of Lórien). Her mate, Celeborn, seems to have been erased in importance completely, although intermarriage of different branches of the Elf family (Telerin, Noldorin, Sindarin), as in the marriage of Celeborn and Galadriel -- or of different kindreds, Maia and Elf, Elf and Man -- looms throughout Tolkien's mythology as an important theme. In the extended version of the film, in this same scene, Celeborn does address Aragorn as the heir to the throne.
6. For example, one of the most crucial changes--and a distortion of Tolkien's text--is the continuing notion (picked up from the first film) that Saruman and Sauron are in league together: Saruman says, close to the beginning of the film version of *Two Towers*, "Together we shall rule Middle-earth" (*Towers*, scene 4, "The Uruk-Hai"). At no time, however, does Sauron in Tolkien's book imagine he needs Saruman as an ally, although the Dark Lord uses those times when Saruman peers into the palantír to obtain information and thereby help subvert him. Certainly Saruman never imagines that he is using Sauron -- in fact, he breeds a new species of Orc that can function during the day in order to wrest power from Sauron.
7. See T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v.
8. See the different unused texts that appear in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*, ed. Christopher Tolkien.
9. See the discussion of Anglo-Saxon gender roles in Chance Nitzsche, "The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother," 287-303, and also "Peace-Weaver, Peace Pledge: The Conventional Queen and Ides," chapter I of *Chance, Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*, 1-12. Tolkien was familiar with *Beowulf* and with the symbolic importance of the monsters and the failure of heroes: see his important essay: J. R. R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 245-95; reprinted in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, 5-34.
10. Idril, an Elda and daughter of Turgon, king of Gondolin, marries Tuor, human son of Huor of the House of Hador (Third House of the Edain) and gives birth to Eärendil the Mariner. Through this special position of mariner, ideal hero Eärendil sails to the Uttermost West as "ambassador of both Elves and Men" to obtain the help that will defeat Morgoth. His ship is thereafter transformed into a star to provide hope to voyagers (RK, app. A 1 (i), 351).

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Gandalf as torturer:

the ticking bomb terrorist and due process

in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

Adam Rosman

Even readers who believe that Professor Tolkien's books should never have made it to the big screen will grudgingly admit that director Peter Jackson skillfully adapted *The Lord of the Rings* to the cinema. Finding both critical acclaim and popular appeal, the films have grossed over one billion dollars, captured several Academy Awards and packed theatres worldwide. Even those undevoted to the lore of Middle-earth were drawn to the films, apparently in large part because of the story's moral clarity -- the uplifting triumph of good over evil. When the first movie opened only three months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that message could not have been more timely. "Lest we have any doubts," one commentator wrote, "we can see the poisonous fruit produced by the forces of Mordor in the rubble of the World Trade Center."¹

Central to these themes and to the films' popularity is the heroic multi-race Fellowship of the Ring: four hobbits, two men, one elf, one dwarf and one wizard. Their mission is clear. Deliver the Ring to Mordor, destroy it and save civilization. The Fellowship represented the "Free peoples of the World,"² arrayed against Sauron and his evil forces. Although Tolkien says little explicitly about the governing systems of the Free Peoples, we assume from what we read that their societies were based on natural rights and the law of free will, and that their political systems adhered to the principle that government could not infringe upon the rights of the people without due process of law. This, after all, was what they were fighting for.

But what happens when these societies face a threat like Sauron? Tolkien's broad answer, unfolding throughout the trilogy, is to fight with all possible means but fight with honour, upholding the laws and morals that Sauron seeks to crush. Compare Eomer burning the slain orcs on the plains of Rohan (a crude burial, perhaps, but at least dignified) with Sauron's army flinging the decapitated heads of Gondor's soldiers over the walls of Minas Tirith. It is a familiar theme in heroic literature: when good races struggle against ruthless evil, they fight with honour and integrity because to do otherwise would be to become that which they fight against. "If any of the Wise should with this Ring overthrow the Lord of Mordor," says Elrond at the Council, "he would then set himself on Sauron's throne, and yet another Dark Lord would appear."³

But the good-versus-evil dichotomy is less clearly defined than Tolkien or Peter Jackson would have their readers or moviegoers believe. A closer look at the text shows the leaders of the West acting in ways entirely adverse to the central

tenets of their societies. They may abridge their values only in the face of Sauron's imminent threat, but we should not blithely accept such justifications without closer inspection. And that examination forces us to confront a disquieting question, particularly apt in our modern day struggle against global terror: Can a moral society justifiably defend itself by arguably violating the very principles that it seeks to uphold?

Who violates the values of the Free Peoples? None other than Gandalf himself, by torturing the one creature in Middle-earth that everyone loves to hate: Gollum.

The torture of Gollum

Gollum, whose real name was Smeagol, was born in approximately 2430 (Tolkien does not provide the exact date), along the banks of the Anduin River, about 500 miles east of Hobbiton. In 2463, when he was 33 years-old⁴, Smeagol was playing along the banks of the Anduin when his cousin, Deagol, found the Ring in the riverbed. Already ensnared by the Ring's influence, Smeagol strangled Deagol to death and took the Ring. Under the Ring's power, and weak-willed, Smeagol became crooked and malicious. His fellow hobbits called him Gollum because of a gurgling sound he made in this throat. He was banished from the clan and exiled himself deep in the Misty Mountains, vanishing from knowledge for hundreds of years.

Gollum survived for centuries because the Ring greatly extended his life. But in 2941, almost 500 years after he murdered Deagol, Gollum lost the Ring deep inside the tunnels of the Misty Mountains. There it was recovered, quite by accident, by Bilbo Baggins, who then "won" the Riddle Game and made off with the Ring. "Thief!, thief! Baggins!" Gollum cried, "We hates it forever!" The rest of Gollum's life became a quest to recover the Ring. For the next 75 years, he travelled across Middle-earth, hunting for Baggins.

As Gollum searched, key events were unfolding in Middle-earth. In 3001, Bilbo turned 111 and, after his long-expected party, reluctantly surrendered the Ring to Frodo. Gandalf, meanwhile, was becoming increasingly concerned about the Ring and was determined to learn its history. He enlisted Aragorn's aid and gave him specific orders: find Gollum, question him about the Ring and bring him to the elves of Mirkwood.

Sometime between 3009-3017 Gollum was captured by Sauron⁵. In Mordor's dungeons he was tortured mercilessly, until, under duress, he told Sauron's servants that the Ring was held by "Baggins" in a place called the "Shire." In 3017,

1. John G. West, THE LORD OF THE RINGS AS A DEFENSE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION in CELEBRATING MIDDLE EARTH 27 (John G. West Jr., Ed., 2003).

2. J.R.R. TOLKIEN, THE LORD OF THE RINGS 268 (Harper Collins Publishers 1994) (1954) (hereafter "TOLKIEN").

3. Id. at 261.

4. Id. at 1062 (Appendix B, "The Tale of Years") (hereinafter "Tale of Years"). Unless cited otherwise, all dates are drawn from the Tale of Years.

5. Id. at 1065.

Gandalf as torturer

Sauron released Gollum with a specific order: find the Ring and return it to Mordor.

Enter Aragorn, who had been searching in vain for Gollum for years. He captured him in the Dead Marshes outside of Mordor shortly after his release by Sauron. Not surprisingly, Gollum would say nothing to Aragorn – a perfect stranger who attacked and bound him without cause – so Aragorn put a halter on his neck, gagged him, “tamed him by lack of food and drink,” and marched him to Mirkwood Forest, 600 miles to the north. The journey lasted at least several months across Middle-earth’s roughest terrain. Reaching northern Mirkwood toward the end of 3017, Aragorn delivered Gollum to King Thranduil, who agreed to imprison him. For Gollum, a better prison than Mordor perhaps, but prison still⁶.

As Aragorn marched Gollum north, Gandalf was in Minas Tirith reading Isildur’s scrolls hoping to learn more about the Ring. His research convinced him of his long-held hunch: Frodo possessed the One Ring. He left Minas Tirith, riding north, presumably to the Shire. But while en route he received word that Aragorn had captured Gollum and had delivered him to the Wood Elves, so he changed course immediately and made for Mirkwood.

Once there he finally questioned Gollum, who had now been imprisoned for at least several months by that time. Predictably, Gollum balked at revealing anything, let alone his knowledge of the Ring. This went on for some time – exactly how long, days, weeks or months, Tolkien does not say -- until, as Gandalf described it:

*I endured him for as long as I could, but the truth was desperately important, and in the end I had to be harsh. I put the fear of fire on him, and wrung the true story out of him, bit by bit, together with much sniveling and snarling.*⁷

Exactly what it meant to put the “the fear of fire on” Gollum, we do not know. But we know, at least, that Gandalf was “harsh,” that he “wrung” information out of him “bit by bit,” until at last, after “sniveling and snarling,” Gollum told the whole story. We know also that Gandalf was one of the most powerful figures in Middle-earth, and his adversary was small, wretched and powerless. Gandalf needed information. He was going to get it.⁸

Whatever the technique, the interrogation proved fruitful because Gandalf learned about Gollum’s role in the Ring’s

legacy, and that Sauron knew that the Ring had been found and was held by a hobbit named “Baggins” in the Shire.

Gandalf left Gollum festering in prison and hurried to the Shire, arriving at Bag End on April 12, 3018. There he told Frodo of Sauron’s growing strength, confirmed that Frodo’s ring was the One Ring by tossing it into the fireplace and reading the inscription, and then put into motion events that would lead to the Fellowship of the Ring and the quest for Mount Doom.

Gollum, meanwhile, escaped from the Wood Elves and made his way west, again searching for the Ring. In January, 3019, he picked up the Fellowship’s trail just outside Moria. For the next six weeks he shadowed them from a distance, until the Fellowship was broken at the Falls of Rauros, where Gollum followed Frodo and Sam across the river and into Eryn Muil. He attacked Frodo to get the Ring, but the hobbits overpowered him and made him swear by the Ring to guide them into Mordor itself.

One month later, inside the Cracks of Doom, the very heart of Sauron’s realm, Gollum finally seized the Ring from Frodo. Holding it aloft, he danced wildly on the edge of the abyss and then “stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell. Out of the depths came his last wail Precious, and he was gone.”⁹

It was March 25, 3019. Gollum was 589-years old.

The torture debate

The debate about the use of torture goes back centuries. Immanuel Kant opposed it as part of his categorical imperative against improperly using people as a means for achieving noble ends, Voltaire generally opposed it except in some cases and Jeremy Bentham supported it in some instances.¹⁰ Though long an issue debated among philosophers and practiced only in the shadows, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the events at Abu Ghraib prison brought the issue to the forefront for western democracies and forced a difficult question: can a rights-based society ever use torture to protect itself from attack?

In the sixteenth century, Anglo-Saxon law allowed the limited use of non-lethal torture, supervised by judges, in order to secure “the evidence necessary to obtain guilty verdicts under the rigorous criteria for conviction at the time”¹¹. But as the legal system relaxed its requirement of proof, torture was no longer sanctioned by the state and, over time, liberal societies prohibited it, at least in name, because it was morally indefen-

6. Id. at 247. Although both Aragorn’s “arrest” and harsh treatment of Gollum, and King Thranduil’s imprisonment of Gollum without cause (he had broken no Elvish law), are concerning, I have focused on Gandalf alone in this essay.

7. Id. at 55.

8. Gandalf was one of the Istari, or Wizards, sent to Middle Earths to unite and counsel the Free Peoples in their struggle against Sauron. See ROBERT FOSTER, THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MIDDLE EARTH 273-74 (1971). The Istari “possessed great skill of body and mind; their powers were focused through their staffs.” Id. at 274.

9. TOLKIEN, *supra*, at 925.

10. See IMMANUEL KANT, CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON AND OTHER WORKS ON THE THEORY OF ETHICS 46 (Thomas Kingsmill Abbot trans., 6th Ed. 1909); JOHN LANGBEIN, TORTURE AND THE LAW OF PROOF 68 (1977) (discussing Voltaire);

11. ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ, WHY TERRORISM WORKS 149-150 (2002) (discussing Kant, Voltaire and Bentham).

DERSHOWITZ, *supra* note 11, at 156. In the sixteenth century a conviction required either the testimony of two eyewitnesses or the confession of the accused himself. Circumstantial evidence, no matter how compelling would not do. Id.

12. DERSHOWITZ, *supra* note 11, at 124.

13. Id. at 140.

14. Id. at 155; see also Chanterelle Sung, Torturing the Ticking Bomb Terrorist: An Analysis of Judicially Sanctioned Torture in the Context of Terrorism, B. C. Third World L. J. 199 (2003) (book review) (arguing against use of torture because, among other reasons, it violates the nature of human dignity).

sible. "Most civilized people do not even want to think about torture as a matter of degree," writes Alan Dershowitz in his book *Why Terrorism Works*, "[t]orture is torture, and it is an unspeakable evil, regardless of its specific nature or precise meaning."¹² For rights-based nations, torture is a "violation of core civil liberties and human rights,"¹³ the "very idea of deliberately subjecting a captive human being to excruciating pain violates our sense of what is acceptable."¹⁴

Giving these sentiments the force of international law, the United Nations General Assembly, in 1984, adopted the Geneva Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Without exception, it outlawed all forms of torture, which it defines as:

*[A]ny act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes of obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession.*¹⁵

But the signatories to the U.N. convention must also face today's very real threat of catastrophic nuclear, biological or chemical terrorism. Surely, we ask, even rights-based societies may defend themselves against such extreme threats, even if they must resort to extreme means.

Officially, at least, western democracies do not forthrightly answer the question. But the September 11 attacks might have produced a consensus about when torture is morally justified: the so-called "ticking bomb" terrorist case.

In the "ticking bomb" scenario, the government has captured a terrorist who knows that a nuclear bomb is set to explode in a major city. The terrorist knows the location of the bomb and how to defuse it. In such an extreme case, many agree that the government is justified in torturing the terrorist to force him to talk. The argument is utilitarian: the benefits that flow from the limited use of torture far outweigh its costs. One terrorist will feel pain, it is acknowledged, but millions of innocent lives will be saved. In that case, and that case alone, most would agree that non-lethal torture is justified.¹⁶

This hypothetical is not so far-fetched. On September 11, 2001 President Bush (or, more accurately perhaps, Vice President Cheney) faced an analogous situation when he ordered the Air Force to shoot down the 4th hijacked airplane, which was apparently heading for Washington, D.C. Although the order was not carried out, it was issued on a similarly utilitarian principle – we would knowingly accept the deaths of the passengers to save many more people on the ground – a strategy that was almost universally supported.¹⁷

Thus our framework for evaluating Gandalf's treatment of Gollum. The Free Peoples, like western society today, should not permit torture except in the most extreme cases, a so-called "ticking bomb" scenario for the Free Peoples of Middle-earth.

Was Gandalf's torture of Gollum justified?

Measured against the standards of the U.N. Convention, there can be little doubt that Gandalf tortured Gollum. By his own admission he intentionally inflicted "severe pain or suffering" to "obtain[] from [Gollum] information or a confession."¹⁸ Although Tolkien glides over the details of what actually happened inside Gollum's prison cell, Gandalf's own choice of words -- "fear of fire," "harsh," "wrung the true story out of him," "bit by bit," "sniveling and snarling" -- make a compelling case. Indeed, when Gandalf described his interrogation of Gollum to Frodo and the Council he likely minimized the severity of his treatment his captive, both out of self-interest and because there were more pressing matters on the Council's agenda. Still, one has little difficulty imagining the scene: The tall wizard descending down the prison's dark halls towards Gollum's cell. The Elvish guards snapping to attention as he approaches and opening the cell's heavy wooden door. Gollum covering his eyes from the light and then springing to the far corner on all fours. Gandalf slowly stepping in, caped, dark and menacing. And the interrogation begins.

The question then is not whether Gandalf tortured Gollum; the question is whether that torture was justified given that Gandalf was leading a fellowship of societies that should prohibit torture except in the most extreme cases. Did Gandalf face a "ticking bomb" scenario where many would perish imminently if he did not extract from Gollum the fact that Sauron knew the Ring was in the Shire?

Certainly if the Ring fell into Sauron's hands the result would be catastrophic. Empowered by the Ring he would soon dominate Middle-earth and hundreds of thousands would perish or be enslaved. But was the threat imminent? Consider first the timeline. Gandalf tortured Gollum in 3017, likely toward the end of the year. He then traveled immediately to the Shire, arriving in Hobbiton on April 12, 3018. There he confirmed with direct evidence what he had long known through circumstantial evidence: that Frodo possessed the One Ring. He counseled Frodo to take the Ring expeditiously to Rivendell and, although he prodded him to leave ("we must do something, soon"), he did not press him to leave immediately. Indeed, when Frodo proposed departing in the fall of that year, Gandalf easily acquiesced ("Very well . . . I think

15. "Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," ("Convention Against Torture") adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, December 10, 1984, and in effect since June 26, 1987, after it was ratified by twenty nations, including the United States.

16. DERSHOWITZ, *supra* note 10, at 142-149. Dershowitz argues that the "ticking bomb" terrorist should be tortured, but that the process should be governed by a "torture warrant" authorized by a judge. Although I argue that the September 11 attacks may have produced a consensus, I am well aware that the issue is controversial and complicated. Many argue that to allow torture even in the "ticking bomb" case begins a slide down the slippery slope where lines become very difficult to draw. How catastrophic must the threat be to justify torture? 1 million lives? 100,000? 1,000? How much pain is justified? May we torture the terrorist's mother in order to elicit information? His children? The questions are many, valid and beyond the scope of this essay. beyond my ability to answer. For purposes of this essay, I assume only a general consensus in the "ticking bomb" scenario outlined above.

17. An interesting contrast is the recent case of an American officer in Iraq who used non-lethal torture against an Iraqi detainee to foil a planned attack against American soldiers. The officer twice fired his gun away from the detainee to intimidate him into talking. The tactic worked and the plan was foiled. But the Army took a dim view of the officer's actions and filed criminal charges against him. Rowan Scarborough, *Army Files Charges in Combat Tactic*, WASH. TIMES, October 29, 2003. The decision was apparently based on the Army's perception of the risk – a handful of Army officers – versus its policy against torture. But what if the detainee had had information regarding an attack on 100 officers? 1,000? Presumably the Army at some point would have argued that the officer's tactic was justified.

18. Convention Against Torture, *supra* note 15.

Armenelos the Golden

Jef Murray



that will do – but it must not be any later”) even though he knew that Sauron would soon send his servants to the Shire to search for the Ring. And it was not until September 25, 3018 – almost six months later, and perhaps close to a year following the torture of Gollum -- that Frodo actually set off from Bag End.¹⁹

The argument will certainly be made that “imminence” is a relative concept. A year in Shire may translate to a month in our world. But even assuming that Gandalf’s time frame represented an imminent danger to Middle-earth, a more fundamental principle compels us to conclude that Gandalf did not face a “ticking bomb” scenario that would justify torturing Gollum.

The “ticking bomb” scenario, on which justifiable torture is

based, presumes two prerequisites: (1) the likelihood of a catastrophic event – like Sauron regaining the Ring and slaughtering the Free Peoples of Middle-earth; and (2) that event will occur quickly unless something is done to stop it. But there is a third prerequisite, so implicit that it is taken for granted: The torturer has no less intrusive means of gaining the information. When the FBI agent is about to inject a needle into a terrorist’s neck to get him to talk, for example, we assume that the agent does not have another way to find the bomb and defuse it in time. If he did, the torture would obviously be unjustified and morally repugnant.

In this case, as Gandalf walked down the dark hallways towards Gollum’s prison cell, he not only had other means of getting the information he sought, *he already knew the infor-*

19. To be fair, when Gandalf acquiesced to Frodo’s proposed fall departure, he did not yet know that the Nazgul had in fact already left Mordor and were moving west. This he learned in late June from Radagast the Brown on the borders of the Shire. Gandalf was greatly concerned, and sent a letter to Frodo (which reached him months late because of Butterbur’s incompetence) advising him to “leave Bag End soon, and get out of the Shire before the end of July at the latest.” TOLKIEN, *supra*, at 166. (emphasis added). Again, even knowing that the Nazgul were headed for the Shire did not cause Gandalf to advise Frodo to leave immediately; he still thought Frodo had at least one month (until the end of July) before he needed to set out.

Mallorn XLIII

mation he sought before the torturing began. In fact, Gandalf was merely seeking confirmation that Frodo possessed the One Ring (information which, it should be pointed out, Gollum could not actually provide). But by the time the torture of Gollum was underway, Gandalf's circumstantial knowledge of the Ring's whereabouts was overwhelming. He knew the other Rings of Power were accounted for: the Nazgul kept the nine for the men; the Seven were taken or destroyed by the Dwarves; and the three were held by the elves.²⁰ Moreover, he knew the One Ring's distinctive characteristics: Frodo's ring looked like the Ring as described by Saruman ("round and unadorned, as it were one of the lesser rings"); it had the power to make its wearer invisible and the usually generous Bilbo was unusually reluctant – even angrily so – to release it.

But most importantly, Gandalf's own investigation had confirmed it to a certainty. Remember, as Gandalf and Aragorn were searching for Gollum, the wizard "thought again of a test that might make finding Gollum unneeded. The ring itself might tell if it were the one."²¹ Recognising that Isildur's scrolls might hold the key, he raced to Minas Tirith and started to research. Even as Aragorn was marching Gollum north to Mirkwood, Gandalf unearthed the key scroll, upon which Isildur had described the Ring as "precious" to him and had copied the words inscribed on the Ring itself:

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the Darkness bind them.

As Gandalf himself said, "When I read these words, my quest was ended."²² He now *knew* that Frodo possessed the One Ring and that all Middle-earth was in peril. He would certainly make one final test – tossing the Ring into Frodo's fireplace to read the inscription – but the conclusion was foregone.

Not surprisingly, Gandalf immediately left Minas Tirith²³ and headed north, presumably to the Shire to make the final test and counsel Frodo. But, as the facts show, Gandalf, informed that Aragorn had captured Gollum and was being detained by the Wood Elves, detoured to Gollum's prison to being his inquisition.

Would the Fellowship's ultimate triumph have concluded in any other way had the torture of Gollum not taken place?

Assume, for a moment, that either that Aragorn had not captured Gollum or that Gandalf chose, perhaps in a moment of conscience, not to "wring the true story out of" Gollum. In either case, Gandalf still would have ended up at Bag End counseling Frodo. And, although his knowledge of the Ring would have been less complete -- he would not have known, for example, how Gollum came to possess it -- he almost certainly would have counseled Frodo exactly the same way he did in 'A Shadow of the Past' (the second chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring*).

Gandalf, even without the intelligence he gleaned from

Gollum, would have told Frodo that his was the One Ring; that it could not stay in the Shire; and that he should make for Rivendell soon. Remember, by this time Sauron had openly declared himself in Mordor and would soon attack Osgiliath. Gandalf certainly knew that Sauron's offensive was close at hand and that the Ring needed to be dealt with quickly. In short, Gandalf's diversion to Mirkwood and torture of Gollum changed nothing. Indeed, it could be argued that Gandalf's actions actually delayed the beginning of the quest by several months. Absent the torture, Gandalf still would have rushed to the Shire and put into motion what would become the Fellowship of the Ring, the quest for Mount Doom and the victory of the West.

Sceptics will point out that Gollum did provide Gandalf with a crucial piece of information: Sauron knew that the Ring was in the Shire and had dispatched the Nazgul to Frodo's doorstep. But as we have seen above, even with that knowledge, Gandalf did not press Frodo to leave the Shire immediately. And in any case, years before he tortured Gollum, Gandalf knew that Sauron was searching for the Ring. When the White Council met for the last time in 2953 – sixty four years before the torture – the gathered wizards "learned that [Sauron] was seeking ever more eagerly for the One."²⁴ While it is true that Sauron did not know exactly where it was, surely his web of spies (Saruman, who knew about Gandalf's interest in the Shire, chief among them) made that only a matter of time. Gandalf's concern about the Ring began as soon as Bilbo found it in 2941: that it was the One Ring, that Sauron would seek it and that he could not be allowed to find it.²⁵

Remember too that even before the Council of Elrond, Gandalf knew that the Ring would have to be destroyed in Mordor itself. "It may be your task to find the Cracks of Doom," he told Frodo in Bag End, "but that quest may be for others: I do not know."²⁶ In short, Gollum's information was helpful, but only marginally so.

Conclusion

We ought to conclude that Gandalf the Grey or Gandalf the White was also, once, Gandalf the Torturer. A harsh conclusion to be sure, particularly for the leader of the Free Peoples against Sauron, but facts are stubborn things. The facts make clear that when Gandalf opened Gollum's cell, the wizard did not face a "ticking bomb" scenario either because the threat was not imminent or, more fundamentally, because he already knew enough to set the Fellowship into motion. He knew where the "ticking bomb" was and how to defuse it without Gollum's involuntary aid.

Does this diminish Gandalf and his comrades' lifelong struggle and ultimate victory against Mordor? Perhaps not. But it makes us all subtler analysts about the lines between good and evil and forces us, as September 11, 2001 and the 'War on Terror' has, to think more carefully about how we may uphold our values as a society and still justifiably protect ourselves from catastrophic threat.

20. TOLKIEN, *supra*, at 243-44.

21. *Id.* at 245.

22. *Id.* at 246.

23. *Id.* at 247. 24. *Id.* at 244.

25. See *Id.* at 13 (Gandalf "thought it important, and disturbing, to find that the good hobbit had not told the truth [about how he came to possess the Ring] from the first: quite contrary to his habit."); *id.* at 245 (Gandalf describing his growing concern about the Ring in 3001, seventeen years before the Fellowship was formed: "Whence came the hobbit's ring? What, if my fear was true, should be done with it.")

26. *Id.* at 65.

Merry in focus

On Ring fever, having adventures, being overlooked, and not getting left behind

Hilary Longstaff

To the casual reader of *The Lord of the Rings*, Meriadoc Brandybuck makes little impression as an individual. A lot of the time he forms one half of the 'younger hobbits' pair with Pippin; otherwise, apart from a brief moment of glory on the Pelennor Fields, he is just one of Frodo's friends – a handy person to have around if you want help throwing unwanted intruders out of Bag End after a party, or getting into the Old Forest, or putting things straight if you come home to find the Shire in a bit of a shambles. Even Tolkien himself sometimes seems to overlook this character, and he only tells the story from Merry's point of view when there are no other hobbits around to serve this purpose. Merry himself says less than any other hobbit in the book. But he has his own story, half hidden among its pages, and we can find it out if we trouble to look hard enough – a story which turns out in places to have echoes of Tolkien's own life.

Ring fever

The first time we meet Merry, he is helping Frodo during the aftermath of the famous Party in S.R. 1401. According to the Brandybuck family tree (Appendix C of LOTR), he was born in 1382 so is now around 19 years old; hobbits, who mature slowly, don't come of age until they are 33, so in human terms he will be roughly equivalent to a 12- or 13-year-old. No more than a boy then, but already a capable, dependable boy – Frodo leaves him in sole charge for a while. (I wonder whether it was he who tipped Frodo off as to what Lobelia Sackville-Baggins was dropping into her umbrella. As he was to demonstrate several times during his career, Merry was rather good at keeping an eye on people without being noticed!) Presumably Frodo coached him to announce, rather precociously, "He is indisposed" (p38) when the Sackville-Bagginses arrived. But why was Merry at Bag End in the first place? Obviously, to help, and Frodo made good use of him. But as he explained to Frodo years later, in Book 1 Chapter 5, 'A Conspiracy Unmasked', there was more than just friendship to his contact with the Baggins family. The previous year, he had actually seen Bilbo put on the Ring and disappear – and ever since, he had been unable to get it out of his head.

To quote his own, tantalisingly brief account on p. 102, "I kept my eyes open ...I spied." We are given no details, apart from his 'one rapid glance' (p. 102-3) at Bilbo's account of his own adventures. But by the time Bilbo and Frodo celebrated their joint birthdays in September 1401, Merry would have known that Uncle Bilbo had a magic ring that could make him invisible – and would have been the only person in the pavilion (apart from Frodo) who knew exactly what had happened when his host suddenly departed in such a singular fashion. Doubtless he got away at the first opportunity to continue

'He knows not to what end he rides; yet if he knew, he still would go on.'

Aragorn, of Merry, The Lord of the Rings, p. 762.

'spying' at Bag End, probably following Gandalf up the Hill and eavesdropping on his conversations with Frodo and Bilbo, and certainly turning up the next day in order to find out more. If he hoped to see Frodo using the Ring he was disappointed. However, he will have had another chance to eavesdrop when, later on, Gandalf returned, and apparently did not notice that Merry was still there. Not for the first time in his life, Merry may well have

reflected that 'It's not always a misfortune being overlooked'! (p. 841).

Then Gandalf departed, Merry went home, and life continued apparently as normal – except that Merry continued to spy on Frodo and the Ring, on his own, without telling a soul, for seventeen years.

Merry was not a typical hobbit. He was one of the 'descendants of the Old Took ...who had as children been fond of Bilbo and often in and out of Bag End' (p. 41). (In Merry's case this was quite a long way to pop, Brandy Hall being over 40 miles from Bag End; doubtless the fact that Merry's family had cared for Frodo during much of his boyhood helped to encourage frequent visits by them while Merry was still too young to come on his own). He seems to have had even more Took in him than Pippin did; according to the Brandybuck family tree (Appendix C, p. 1076), both his mother and his paternal great-grandmother were Took. Perhaps this is why he thought little of the dangers of the Old Forest (a view he was later to revise) and 'loved the thought of [mountains] marching on the edge of stories brought from far away' (p. 774), and remarked to his frightened friends at Crickhollow, "I guess that you have been having adventures, which was not quite fair without me." (p. 100). But a Tookish longing for adventure does not alone explain his dogged pursuit of the Ring, throughout his tweens and well into adult life, with no idea what, if anything, it would ever lead to.

I think there were three reasons why he kept it up for so long. The first must have been concern for Frodo; it would be clear to Merry from his investigations that the Ring was not quite canny, and he was very fond of his friend. The second was undoubtedly sheer curiosity. He was always keen to learn about anything new to him, as he demonstrated, for instance, by asking Strider about the old road and trying to get Sam to continue the Gilgalad poem (p.181), or learning the geography of the south-lands while at Rivendell (p.448). But the third reason for his persistence, I am convinced, has to do with the nature of the Ring itself. Any contact with it could affect a person. "The very desire of it corrupts the heart," says Elrond (p. 261). Merry did not, it seems, consciously desire it for himself, and he certainly shows no sign of a corrupted heart. But he did see the Ring, probably more than once – Gandalf's admonition to Frodo, 'Do NOT use It again,' in his

Mallorn XLIII

letter (p. 167), implies that previously Frodo had indeed used it, and Merry could well have seen him do so. His remark on Amon Hen, "He wouldn't keep it on ... when he had escaped the unwelcome visitor" (p. 395), suggests as much, though he covers himself by adding "like Bilbo used to." However that may be, the Ring was exerting its pull on him. The very fact of his pursuing it for so long indicates that, in the most nearly innocent way possible, he was hooked, and the most significant clue is his sudden cry in the midst of the discussion (p. 394), "It would be mad and cruel to let Frodo go to Mordor. Why can't we stop him?"

It is his only contribution to the discussion, and it makes no sense. He knew as well as anyone that the Ring had to be taken to Mordor for destruction, and that Frodo was the appointed bearer. (It is true that Pippin, in his own dismay, echoes "We must stop him", but Pippin often speaks without thinking, and in fact collects himself and goes on to say, "if we can't stop him, we shan't leave him".) Of course Merry is very concerned for Frodo – but so is Sam, probably even more than Merry, and he can still see that the task cannot be avoided. I feel that at this point, possibly without Merry's even being consciously aware of it, something inside him is crying out, "Don't do it! Don't let the Ring be destroyed!" If so, this is the last hint that Merry had a case of Ring fever, however mild. But perhaps it was just as well, for his sake and possibly Frodo's, that a distance of many miles was about to be put between him and that seductive gleam of remembered gold.

Merry takes charge

"This Spring, when things got serious...we formed our conspiracy," Merry tells Frodo at Crickhollow (p. 103). 'When things got serious' cannot refer primarily to Gandalf's conversation with Frodo which forms the bulk of Book I Chapter 2; by then Sam was a full member of the investigating team and in place under the study window. Probably Merry is speaking of the ominous rumours from Outside noted earlier in that chapter (pp. 42-3), and also Frodo's increasing restlessness. Exactly how the 'conspiracy' was formed, and what careful sounding-out of his friends and relatives Merry had to do before settling on Sam, Pippin and Fatty as his partners in crime, is left to our imagination. One problem which may well have reared its head is that Pippin had not yet come of age. Unless we are to believe he simply vanished without a word to his family – something the sensible and caring Merry is not likely to have countenanced – it seems likely that some kind of guardianship arrangement was made. Hobbits were sticklers for correct legal procedure; witness the 'seven signatures of witnesses in red ink' on Bilbo's will (p. 38), and Sam's approval of the formal business between Faramir and Frodo (p. 675), which 'in the Shire would have required a great many more words and bows'. I reckon that Pippin was probably signed over, for the duration of the 'adventure', to the care of an adult hobbit – i.e. Merry, since Frodo, the nominal leader of the expedition, would not at this stage know of Pippin's involvement. Apparently it was not considered unusual for Took's to 'go and have adventures' occasionally; according to *The Hobbit* (p.14), 'they discreetly disappeared, and the family hushed it up.' I imagine that, in keeping with this tradition, Pippin's parents would be given the impression that he and Merry were doing no more than seeking a little travel and excitement. The direction of their journey and the name of Baggins would certainly not be mentioned – Merry did assure Frodo, at Crickhollow, that he could keep his

secrets, and he did not, at this stage, know for sure what form the 'adventure' would take.

Apart from the above speculations – nonetheless based on the known customs of hobbits – we have evidence from the narrative itself that, in addition to strong ties of kinship and affection with Pippin, Merry felt responsible for his young cousin. For instance, when separated from all his other friends and riding with Theoden's people, Merry thinks first of Pippin, and only belatedly (with a guilty start) of Frodo and Sam (p. 775), and later, even more tellingly, he pictures 'Poor Pippin, shut up in the great city of stone, lonely and afraid. Merry wished...he could blow a horn or something and go galloping to his rescue' (p. 813). And later still, 'he thought of Pippin and the flames in Minas Tirith and thrust down his own dread' (p. 815). So far all this may indicate nothing more than close and protective friendship, but in Moria there is a clue that Aragorn himself knew Merry had a special role where Pippin was concerned. After both of them try to push into the guard chamber, Aragorn specifically rebukes only Merry (p. 305), which seems to imply that he saw Merry as being responsible for taking care of Pippin and keeping him out of trouble.

What Merry said to his own family before setting off is unrecorded (given the amount of four-footed transport he was taking, he could well have passed the whole thing off as a pony-trading venture). What is certain is that, whether or not he was officially in charge of Pippin, he lost no time in taking charge of the entire expedition with impressive thoroughness. He had already helped Frodo to find, and move into, a suitable house in Buckland; he now shows himself to be a hobbit of very extensive resources, not only of courage and loyalty ("We are your friends, Frodo...We are horribly afraid – but we are coming with you" – p. 103), and efficiency ("we could get off in an hour. I have prepared practically everything" – p. 104), but also as regards finance. His father, the Master of Buckland, Saradoc 'Scattergold' (see Appendix C), must already have scattered a fair amount of gold in his only son's direction; Merry has provided "stores and tackle...and...perishable food" for four, plus a total of five ponies, out of his own pocket (p. 104 – the sixth pony mentioned must belong to Fatty Bolger, who had come from the Eastfarthing and would accompany them as far as the Hedge). Frodo, Pippin and Sam have nothing but what they have carried on their backs, and in Bree Frodo reflects that 'he had...only a little money with him' (p.160); goodness knows how far they would have got without Merry's careful planning.

There is some justification for a certain cocksureness in Merry's attitude as they set off into the Old Forest. Eighteen years' assiduous observation of the Ring and its owners, and several months' careful preparation, have finally paid off. However, one class of items is conspicuously absent from Merry's expedition kit. He has clearly not realised the implications of all those nasty rumours from the world beyond the Shire (and neither have the others), because the hobbits haven't a weapon between them.

For all the talk of 'Captain Frodo' (p. 103), it is Merry who personally takes the lead into the Old Forest. This is ostensibly because he knows the place, but it is clear from the way he organises everybody (including Frodo) at Crickhollow that he has effectively taken charge of the expedition, and feels more than competent to do so. We have already seen this side of his character at Bag End, but another factor that undoubtedly comes into play here is that Merry, as the heir of the

Brandybucks on his own side of the river, would socially outrank everyone else in the party. Pippin, though son of the Took and Thain, is off his home turf and still a juvenile; Frodo is a Baggins, respectable but not aristocratic; and Sam of course defers to everyone. Under these circumstances, and also as the expedition's chief financial backer, naturally Merry takes the lead. But as it turns out, he is no more able than the rest of them to resist the Forest's efforts to draw them into the Withywindle valley, and when real danger comes, he is, quite literally, caught napping. Demoted to rear-guard in the Barrow-downs fog, he fares no better, and needs rescuing once again. By the time Bree is reached, there is little left of the self-confident and organising Mr Brandybuck. Small wonder that when the others propose a visit to the common room, all he wants to do is "sit [in the parlour] quietly for a bit, and perhaps go out later for a sniff of the air" (p. 151). But he still grossly underestimates the danger – perhaps because of the homely atmosphere of the inn – and this leads to his next and nearly his most disastrous misadventure; he narrowly escapes being carried off by Black Riders. And as if to rub salt in the wound, the following morning he discovers that the whole of his splendid cavalcade of ponies has vanished.

Any naïve and inexperienced person can make a fool of himself. The question is, did Merry learn from his personal Valley of Humiliation? The answer is that he did. Nowhere, after Bree, could he possibly be described as foolhardy. The next time he enters a forest with a dangerous reputation – Fangorn – he does so with clear-headed caution, and although he knows the geography of the area and Pippin, his only companion, does not, there is no self-importance in his manner. But he does not over-react to his reverses by losing confidence altogether; far from it. On several occasions he shows that he can still, when appropriate, take a leading role,



but now with much more discernment and maturity. After Frodo is wounded on Weathertop, he again acts as senior hobbit, gravely informing Strider at one point that "We cannot go any further...I am afraid this has been too much for Frodo" (p. 198) a judgement with which Strider concurs, and on the following page we are told, 'Strider took Merry with him...to survey the country', as if he was his lieutenant or aide. Aragorn's response to his slip-up in Moria has already been mentioned; in fact Aragorn uses the occasion to drive home

Mallorn XLIII

some good general advice – “Let the guide go first, while you still have one” (p. 305) – and it seems to me quite possible that Aragorn was seeing potential in Merry and, was actually training him (as he may have trained many a young Ranger), wanting him to be as well prepared as possible for whatever lay ahead.

As well as his natural qualities of leadership, commitment and teachability, Merry has another outstanding attribute – he is, as Gandalf says on the road from Isengard, “A most unquenchable hobbit” (p. 574). Nothing gets him down for long. Soon after his experience with the Black Riders, he is chuckling over the report of Frodo’s antics in the Common Room. His remarks about breakfast the following day are obviously meant as a crumb of comfort (p. 174) to the others, who are thoroughly dismayed by events, as well as to himself. He may miss Pippin’s ‘unquenchable cheerfulness’ (p. 762) at the Hornburg, but he has quite a fund of his own, as he showed particularly after his escape from the Uruk-hai. “I shall have to brush up my toes, if I am to get level with you,” he jokes to Pippin, under the eaves of Fangorn, battered, dispossessed, and with ‘little chance of ever finding friend or safety again’ (p. 448), and tells him, “You will get almost a chapter in old Bilbo’s book”. As the author comments ‘No listener would have guessed that [he and Pippin] had suffered cruelly’.

The true depths of his resilience, loyalty and courage were still to be tested, however, and for this Merry the cheery, affectionate and nobly born hobbit, with all his potential for leadership, would need to be transformed further, into Merry the warrior.

Boromir

There may again be some speculation involved here, but I believe the roots of this transformation may go back to Rivendell and Merry’s and Pippin’s meeting up with Boromir. All we are told of their first impressions of him are that Pippin ‘had liked [him] from the first, admiring the great man’s lordly but kindly manner’ (p. 792) – a feeling that Merry presumably shared. But the Steward’s son of Gondor and the Thain’s and Master’s sons of the Shire could well have had a great deal in common. Differences of culture aside, they were from much the same social background – all three were heirs of local leaders, although admittedly leaders different in degree. Boromir was only four years older than Merry; the slowness of hobbits to mature would widen the gap somewhat, but Boromir and the hobbits were still basically in the same age group, in contrast to Aragorn, who was 87, and in even greater contrast to Gimli the long-lived Dwarf, Legolas the immortal Elf, and Gandalf, who as the Maia Olorin may have been present at the Creation. Another thing that Merry in particular seems to have had in common with Boromir was a fascination with the Ring itself, although neither of them had done more than glimpse it in Frodo’s or Bilbo’s hand. Almost certainly they would not be consciously aware of this in each other, but it could have strengthened the bond between them nonetheless.

After the Council of Elrond, when Aragorn and a good many of Elrond’s people were searching out the countryside, and Frodo and Bilbo, accompanied by Sam, spent at least some of their time putting their heads together over Bilbo’s book, Boromir and the two younger hobbits may well have been at a loose end, and naturally gravitated together. Boromir would probably have been a mine of stories about the wars of

Gondor, in which he had served with such distinction, and would doubtless have been interested in the hobbits’ ancient swords, which had come from the barrows of the lost North-kingdom whose princes were his distant kin. Aragorn may well have begun to show the swords’ new owners how to use them; I think it is highly likely that if so Boromir continued the process. Merry in particular, always eager to learn, would not pass up the chance of tuition in swordsmanship from a master of the craft, especially as he must now have been convinced of the real dangers of their undertaking and had no more intention than Pippin of being left behind (on this or any other occasion). Certainly by the time there is real fighting to be done, Merry and Pippin know how to handle their weapons, a skill they would definitely not have picked up in the Shire. Equally certainly, by the time the Fellowship leaves Lorien – so probably long before that in reality – Merry, Pippin and Boromir are a team. Galadriel acknowledges this when she gives them near-identical gifts; the two hobbits’ silver belts are miniatures of Boromir’s gold one. All the way down the Great River they share a boat. And on Amon Hen, as the Fellowship is scattered, Aragorn sees Merry and Pippin as Boromir’s responsibility – which coincides with the necessity of keeping Boromir away from Frodo – and sends him to find and protect them, which he does, sacrificing his own life in their defence.

From Amon Hen to Bywater

If Boromir did play a part in teaching Merry and Pippin to use their swords, he would have the satisfaction of seeing that, in Merry’s case at least, it had paid off. According to Pippin’s recollection of events (at the beginning of Book 3 Chapter 3, ‘The Uruk-hai’), Boromir arrived at the scene of the hobbits’ attempted capture by a party of Orcs to discover Merry holding them off single-handed. The courageous and determined hobbit had already removed ‘several of their arms and hands’ (p. 434); no mean feat of strength and skill, although he had apparently not yet the ability – or perhaps the nerve – to get in under their guard for a killing blow.

Certainly Merry does not relish the thought of killing, or indeed of fighting at all. He is extremely nervous about going into battle, and very relieved when he finds that the horsemen approaching Theoden’s column near the Fords of Isen are Rangers of the North and not enemies. But even there, he was preparing himself ‘to die in the King’s defence’ (p. 757), not for glory but out of sheer loyalty towards his friends. Unlike Sam (in the Pass of Cirith Ungol, p.718), Merry does not even fleetingly dream of doing glorious deeds to be commemorated in song; it will be enough for him if he can escape disgrace, and “not have it said of [him] in song only that [he] was always left behind!” (p. 786). In fact his strongest motivation towards courage, in this or any other context, is simply love. At Crickhollow he tells Frodo, “You cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone . . . We are your friends” (p. 103). Even after his (fairly rapid) demotion from expedition leader he seems the sort of person who feels responsible for others; on p 552 he describes some Men of Isengard as being like “that Southerner at Bree”, whom he could not have seen unless he had put his head round the door of the common room to check up on his companions on his way out of the inn. His close, protective bond with Pippin (whether officially sanctioned or not) is obvious throughout the story, probably spurs him on to greater efforts against the orcs on Amon Hen, and, as mentioned above, helps him to keep up what courage he has left

Merry in focus

on the way to the beleaguered Minas Tirith. And his gratitude for Theoden's kindness to him at the Hornburg (the old king is apparently the only person in the entire party who has noticed that he is missing Pippin) prompts him to offer his service to him. Feeling completely useless, but 'filled suddenly with love for this old man' (p. 760), he pledges himself and his little sword, and Theoden, so recently bereaved of his own son, receives him gladly. (I wonder if it is possible that Theoden reminded Merry of another warm-hearted and redoubtable old aristocrat, who had died eleven years previously and was probably much missed – his own grandfather, 'Old Rory' Brandybuck. "As a [grand] father you shall be to me"...? Just a thought.)

Merry, esquire of Rohan, devoted to the King, just manages not to be left behind, thanks to the machinations of one 'Dernhelm'. (Did Aragorn really, with uncanny but not unprecedented foresight, order that Merry should be equipped for battle (p. 784)? Or was it Eowyn's idea all along? We'll never know.) Still feeling totally unheroic, he struggles with fear and despair all along the Southward road, until under the walls of Minas Tirith he faces the greatest test of his career – and at first, he fails. In vain he tries to rouse his courage: "King's man! ... You must stay by him" (p. 822). It is no use. Sick with horror, he cannot even raise his eyes to the dreadful presence before him – and small blame to him; very few could face the Witch-king revealed in his power. But then something happens that changes everything; he hears Eowyn declare herself, and 'the slow-kindled courage of his race' is roused at last (p. 823), roused, as so often in Merry, by love for someone else who needs him. And Merry, who has secretly spied on Bilbo and Frodo for eighteen years without being found out, uses his native hobbit stealth and experience in concealing himself to creep into position unnoticed, chooses his target, and strikes. Only once; but once is enough, and the Ringwraith falls, as Merry's final shout rouses the wounded Eowyn to deliver the *coup de grace*.

Then off the battlefield he stumbles into Pippin's arms, to receive peace and healing under Aragorn's hand. Briefly, in the Houses of Healing, we are given a vivid picture of him as he recovers. His grief (and other experiences) do indeed "teach him wisdom" as Aragorn says (p. 851). To be sure, he is the old "unquenchable" Merry still, waking up to announce, "I am hungry," and wanting his pipe (p. 851), but he has been deeply affected by all that he has seen, and almost embarrassed at being a hobbit, a member of a race who "use light words at such times and say less than they mean" (p.852). And after the great ones leave he is not quite so keen as Pippin to "be easy for a bit". He is glad to have glimpsed the "things deeper and higher"; he does not want to forget them. And his new maturity is evident in his actions during the rest of the story.

For a while after this, however, we lose sight of him almost completely. To his shame, he cannot march to the Black Gate with the host; like Tolkien himself, invalided out of the First World War with trench fever, he must remain behind in pain and weakness while others return to battle and danger of death. Shut up in the Houses of Healing, in a city torn between hope and despair, what did he make of the Eagle's tidings? He would gather that 'Strider' had survived, but there is no hint of any personal message for Merry about his friends, even

though one of them was the Ring-bearer himself. In the midst of all the rejoicing, there must have been one stunned little hobbit, relieved and glad that the Quest had succeeded, but steeling himself for the possibility that he was the only one of the original four to survive the War of the Ring. He was probably sure that Frodo and Sam, at least, were dead; the physical effects of the overthrow of Sauron were clearly seen (and felt) in Minas Tirith, and he knew nothing of Gandalf's rescue operation. He must have passed a couple of distressing days before the errand-riders arrived with more detailed news and he realised that his friends were still alive. (Tolkien was not so lucky. Of his boyhood group of friends the TCBS, the 'immortal four' (Garth, p. 177), only he and one other made it through the War.) Then Merry 'was summoned' (by Eomer, his own commander? Or Aragorn, as captain of the host?) and came to Ithilien – exactly when, we are not told. Nor do we know at what point he learned that Frodo and Sam had barely escaped with their lives – they may still have been in grave danger of death when he arrived – and that Pippin, who he had tried to protect and for whom he may have been officially responsible, was lying badly injured after being crushed by a falling Troll. All in all, the fortnight or so following the destruction of the Ring must have been rather harrowing for Merry. There was one crumb of comfort (as he himself might have put it); he and Pippin were no longer mere esquires, but had been promoted. As Pippin proudly announces to Frodo and Sam at Cormallen, they are 'knights of the city and of the Mark' (p. 934), doubtless as a reward for their deeds. And that gives us another clue as to Merry's life behind the scenes at this stage of the story.

We may have little actual information on Merry's doings between the Pelennor and the coronation, but as a knight of Rohan he will now have been officially part of Eomer's entourage in Ithilien (a rather select body – only 1000 of the Rohirrim had set out for the Black Gate, and some had been sent to Cair Andros and many more had fallen in battle, so probably only a few hundred now remained), and maybe he now acted as Eomer's esquire, having been Theoden's. Whatever his exact position, he must have had ample opportunity to observe at least some of the business of ordering the host and seeing to the mopping-up operations as 'some...laboured and fought much with the remnants of the Easterlings and Southrons, until all were subdued' (p. 936). Just as he had learned all he could about the South-lands while in Rivendell, so he might have taken advantage of this chance to absorb the principles of military strategy and tactics, and a few months later the knowledge was to come in very useful indeed.

The 'Scouring of the Shire' (Book 6 Chapter 8) is Merry's crowning achievement. As the travellers approach the borders, with Butterbur's hints about trouble on their minds, Merry remarks to Gandalf, "Well, we've got you with us...so things will soon be cleared up," and Gandalf tells him, "I am not coming to the Shire. You must settle its affairs yourselves; that is what you have been trained for." And trained Merry certainly has been, not just in wisdom and maturity but in the specific military and leadership skills which the situation demands. A little extra height and strength will come in handy too; as Gandalf once remarked, "The Ents pay attention to every detail!" (p. 574) – or rather, the unseen Providence

Mallorn XLIII

does, the One who throughout the story ensures that those on the side of Right get what they really need!

Merry supports Frodo's leadership for a while, but it is increasingly Merry who acts and speaks. When Frodo fails to respond to his admonition, "You won't rescue Lotho, or the Shire, just by being shocked and sad, my dear Frodo" (p. 983), Merry takes up again the air of authority that he shed back in the Old Forest, and this time he knows exactly what he is doing. "Raise the Shire!" he declares, and a little later explains to Frodo, "I've got a plan," and Frodo, saying "Very good... You make the arrangements," places the whole affair in his hands (p. 987). In contrast to the ruffians, who had 'no leader among them who understood warfare' (p. 991), Merry makes his dispositions like a seasoned general.

Sam and Pippin carry the two surviving Barrow-blades, and Merry, who lost his to the Nazgûl-lord, will have been given a new one as a knight of Rohan. So the blades of Westeros and the Mark go to war in the Shire, and after all the separations and heartbreak of their adventures, it must have been deeply satisfying for Merry and Pippin to charge down to battle together at last, wielding their swords side by side, and win a great victory for their own people.

Afterwards

With the Ring adventure finally over, Merry once again goes into the background of the main story, appearing simply as a 'lordly' figure riding by with Pippin, enjoying popular acclaim, and entertaining everyone with 'songs ...tales ...and ...wonderful parties' (p. 1002). In sharp contrast, 'Frodo dropped quietly out of all the doings of the Shire, and Sam was pained to notice how little honour he had in his own country.' (p. 2002). We are not told if Merry was unaware of this, or did he not care, but I cannot believe it of him. He had been keeping an eye on Frodo for at least half a lifetime and knew him extremely well. He could hardly have failed to notice how wounded he was in body, soul and spirit. The 'coming and going between Buckland and Bag End' (p.2002) must surely have included concerned observation of his condition. I think it quite likely that he saw Frodo's need for privacy and peace and deliberately encouraged the drawing of public attention towards himself and Pippin and away from his troubled and ailing friend. Certainly when the time comes for Frodo's departure, the bond between the four friends is clearly as strong as ever. Having arrived in a fearful hurry just in time to see Frodo before he leaves, Merry, it seems, is too upset even to speak, and all the way back to the borders of the Shire – at least a three days' journey, as the entire trip from the Grey Havens to Bag End takes seven days (p 1071) – he, Sam and Pippin ride without words, in the silence of heartfelt grief.

Merry, his life, and his creator

Appendices B and C, and the later part of the Prologue, give us the rest of Merry's career, including his marriage to

Fredegar Bolger's sister Estella (Tolkien's fellow TCBSite, Rob Gilson, was unofficially engaged before his death to an Estelle King (Garth, p. 115)), and his becoming Master of Buckland. He seems to have travelled a good deal (p. 14-15), keeping up the links forged during his great adventure and also continuing to gratify that thirst for knowledge and learning that must once have helped to fuel his own quest for the Ring. His love and loyalty towards his friends in the South finally lead him in his old age to the deathbed of Eomer, his adopted lord, and to his own long rest among the great of Gondor in Minas Tirith.

Merry may, so to speak, have branched out a fair amount, but his roots were deep in the Shire, among the people and places he loved, as he indicated to Pippin in the Houses of Healing (p. 852). The desire that Galadriel divined in him was, he said, very similar to Sam's: to return in peace to home and garden (p. 348). (Was the part he did not wish to confess in Lorien perhaps a longing for Estella, as Tolkien on active service thought of his Edith?) He loved things that grow; for Merry, the scent of athelas was 'orchards, and...heather in the sunshine full of bees' (p. 851), and he wrote a whole book on 'The Herblore of the Shire' (p. 14), not all of which will have been devoted to his beloved pipeweed! He was thrilled by the sound of the tongue of Rohan, spoken and sung on the way to Dunharrow (p. 775) – another of his works explored the links between it and the old words of his own land (pp. 14-15) – and he assiduously collected and wrote up historical information – in fact he was a born scholar, with a tendency to give little lectures. We have one on the Old Forest (p. 108), one on Ents and Huorns, mixed in with his account of the storming of Isengard (p. 550-3), and the start of one on pipeweed (p. 544 – interrupted by Gandalf, and relegated to pp. 8-9 of the Prologue).

The comparisons between Merry and his creator are plain. Tolkien was a soldier who was invalided out of active service, having lost several people he dearly loved, and went on to settle down contentedly with his wife and family; he was a gifted scholar, lecturer and author, who loved plants, trees and unspoiled countryside, was fascinated by history (both real and imagined), and specialised in the study of languages; he was a devoted and loyal friend, to whom the companionship of like-minded people was very special; he was fond of good food, good pipe-tobacco, and the simple pleasures of life. He himself said (*Letters*, p. 232, footnote): 'As far as any character is "like me" it is Faramir' – the gentle soldier-scholar of Ithilien who shared Merry's exile from the battlefield in the Houses of Healing. But it seems to me that Merry has been overlooked again, and that in him we may well have (by chance or design) as good a portrait of the author himself as in any character he ever created. Perhaps this is not surprising. After all, Tolkien did say (*Letters*, p. 288), 'I am in fact a Hobbit (in all but size).'

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Tolkien's Burning Briar – an astronomical explanation

Kristine Larsen

In his process of "sub-creation" Tolkien included an origin for the stars as part of his mythology. Certain groupings were clearly identified by Tolkien himself (or Tolkien scholars) as corresponding to real constellations and asterisms. Chief among these was the Big Dipper, or the Plough, which played an important role in the eschatological myths of Middle-earth and the prophesied defeat of Melkor (Morgoth). Among the various names Tolkien gave to this asterism was the "Burning Briar," an obscure epithet which Christopher Tolkien admitted he could not explain. This paper postulates an explanation for the name which draws upon astronomical phenomena with which Tolkien would have been familiar, and is in keeping with the symbolic importance of the asterism in his mythology.

The depth and breadth of detail in Tolkien's Middle-earth sets it apart from similar fictional "sub-creations." Cultural nuances, such as languages and customs, as well as "physical" details, such as geography, were worked, reworked, and elucidated in a web of unrivalled intricacy. The basis for Tolkien's attention to detail began in childhood, along with his interest in constructing languages. He approached this as a self-described "scientific philologist" and his main interest in the topic was, as he noted, "largely scientific."¹ As a child, his interests were varied, including "history, astronomy, botany, grammar, and etymology."² All these were later to play a vital role in making Middle-earth such a lush playground for the casual reader and the academic alike. We witness Tolkien's attention to detail (and mastery of the poetic description of nature) in a letter to his son, Christopher, from 1944:

Here I am again at the best end of the day again. The most marvellous sunset I have seen for years: a remote pale green-blue sea just above the horizon, and above it a towering shore of bank upon bank of flaming cherubim of gold and fire, crossed here and there by misting blurs like purple rain. It may portend some celestial merriment in the morn, as the glass is rising.³

Chief among the sciences, astronomy played a pivotal role in the "fleshing out" of Middle-earth. Quiñonez and Raggett report that Priscilla Tolkien affirmed that her father "had a general interest in astronomy" and that "Tolkien had enough interest in and knowledge of astronomy to use it convincingly and to lend believability to his stories."⁴ Tolkien himself noted in a letter to Naomi Mitchinson concerning the transition of a "flat earth" to a "round earth" after the great changing of the world that "so deep was the impression made by 'astronomy' on me that I do not think I could deal with or imaginatively conceive a flat world, though a world of static Earth with a Sun going round it seems easy (to fancy if not to reason.)"⁵ Indeed, the importance of astronomical consistency to Tolkien's process of sub-creation is demonstrated by the lunar chronology of *The Lord of the Rings*. In a letter to son Christopher from 1944, Tolkien admitted that his writing was hindered by "trouble with the moon. By which I mean that I found my moons in the crucial days between Frodo's flight and the present situation (arrival at Minas Morghul [*sic*]) were doing impossible things, rising in one part of the country and

setting simultaneously in another."⁶

Among the astronomical creations and devices in Tolkien's universe we find named stars and constellations. Quiñonez and Raggett explain that these serve the same functions as their real-world counterparts: "besides regulating the heavens, they represent events and persons in the beliefs of the native cultures."⁷ Varda, Queen of the Valar, also known as Elbereth Gilthoniel (star-queen, star-kindler) by the elves, is said to have created the stars and their patterns in the time before the coming of the First Born (elves). As Tolkien described in the essay "Myths Transformed," Varda was

Concerned not only with the great stars themselves, but also in their relations to Arda, and their appearance therefrom (and their effect upon the Children to come). Such forms and major patterns, therefore we call (for instance) the Plough, or Orion, were said to be her designs. Thus the Valacirca or 'Sickle of the Gods', which was one of the Eldarin names for the Plough, was, it was said, intended later to be a sign of menace and threat of vengeance over the North in which Melkor took up his abode...⁸

The Plough is, of course, the Big Dipper, to give it its American name, referred to here by its common English nickname. We see clear signs of this "legend" in "The Annals of Aman"⁹ (among other writings), where it is said that "Last of all Varda made the sign of bright stars that is called the Valakirka, the Sickle of the Gods, and this she hung about the North as a threat unto Utumno and a token of the doom of Melkor."⁹ Also, *The Silmarillion* recounts that Beren "sang a song of challenge that he had made in praise of the Seven Stars, the Sickle of the Valar that Varda hung above the North as a sign for the fall of Morgoth."¹⁰ Other names for the Sickle can be found in commentary by Christopher Tolkien on "The Coming of the Elves," where he cited one of his father's notebooks in naming this constellation "the Silver Sickle" and "the Seven Butterflies."¹¹ This latter name refers to the seven bright stars which make up the handle and bowl of the Big Dipper. For example, Chaucer named it "the sterres seven."¹²

Another interesting moniker appears in "The Later Quenta Silmarillion," where it is said that "[m]any names have these stars been given; but in the North in the Elder Days Men called them the Burning Briar: quoth Pengolod..."¹³ This name does not appear in *The Silmarillion* as published, but does appear in several earlier versions of the same legend.

Mallorn XLIII

Version II of the Old English work “The Earliest Annals of Valinor” in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* contains the corresponding antiquated name Brynebrér in line 78. In his notes to the work, Christopher Tolkien directly translated this as ‘Burning Briar’.¹⁴ “The Later Annals of Beleriand” note that “by the men of the ancient North it was named the Burning Briar, and by later men it has been given many names beside.”¹⁵ The version of “The Quenta Silmarillion” published in *The Lost Road* states that “in the old days of the North both elves and men called them the Burning Briar, and some the Sickle of the Gods.” [16] Likewise, “The Quenta” of *The Shaping of Middle-earth* contains the same line. The only other references to “Burning Briar” are contained in “The Lay of Leithian”:

“The stars that burn
About the North with silver fire
In frosty airs, the Burning Briar
That Men did name in days long gone”
(version B, lines 376-379)¹⁷

“The Northern stars, whose silver fire
of Old Men named the Burning Briar,
were set behind his back, and shone
o’er land forsaken: he was gone”
(version C, lines 567-570)¹⁸

and

“and over all the silver fire
that once Men named the Burning Briar,
the Seven Stars that Varda sat
about the North were burning yet,
a light in darkness, hope in woe,
the emblem vast of Morgoth’s foe.”
(version B, lines 2666-2671)¹⁹

This curious name might not be given a second thought, except that Christopher Tolkien admitted in his commentary to “The Lay of Leithian” that “I can cast no light at all on the name Burning Briar...”²⁰ This elevates the name from a simple curiosity to a puzzle to be solved. Given the astronomical detail that Tolkien wove into his mythos, it is within that field that the mystery is most likely to be solved. The remainder of this paper seeks to do exactly that.

The astronomy

The most obvious angle from which to approach this puzzle is the astronomical fact and legend surrounding the Plough/Big Dipper. Strictly speaking it is not one of the eighty-eight official constellations recognized by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), but is instead an asterism which makes up the brightest portion of Ursa Major, the Great Bear. The declination of the stars of the Big Dipper range from approximately forty-six to sixty-three degrees, making the entire asterism circumpolar (always visible) as seen from Oxford. As it circles Polaris it spends a portion of each day or night (depending on the season) lying a mere ten to fifteen degrees above the northern horizon. Given the brightness of its stars and its prominent location in the sky, it is not surprising that it has a rich lore from many northern cultures. For example, it is known in parts of Europe as the Wagon or Wain, sometimes referred to specifically as Charles’ Wain, as well as the Plough.

A rather different interpretation is found in Arabic cultures, where the four stars of the “bowl” are known as The Bier and The Great Coffin. According to Allen²¹, the famed astronomer Flammarion attributed these names “to the slow and solemn motion of the figure around the pole.” Is it possible that the name “Burning Briar” (i.e. burning bush) used by Tolkien was merely a play on the words “Burning Bier”? It would not be unlike Tolkien to do so. For example, in a 1938 letter to the editor of *The Observer*, he explained that Smaug’s name is “the past tense of the primitive Germani verb *smugan*, to squeeze through a hole: a low philological jest.”²² While this is certainly a possibility, a more likely explanation can be found by combining the northern placement of this asterism with another astronomically related phenomenon visible in the same region of the sky – the *aurora borealis*.

In the early seventeenth century, Galileo gave the name *boreale aurora*, or northern dawn, to this interaction between the Earth’s atmosphere and the solar wind. The name took its current form in 1621 at the suggestion of French astronomer Pierre Gassendi. The name derives from the reddish-pink appearance of the aurora in lower latitudes, reminiscent of the dawn sky.²³ Aurora can be quiescent in form (appearing as a glow or arc in the sky) or active (in the form of bands, rays, or flickering curtains). They can take on nearly any colour of the rainbow, depending on the specific emission lines involved. Different colours are produced at different altitudes in the atmosphere, which leads to latitudinal differences in color as well. Red emissions are due to oxygen (at a wavelength of 630.0 nanometers), and occur more than twice as high in the atmosphere as the common green oxygen emissions (577.7 nanometers), namely above 250 km.²⁴

Legendary derivations

As might be expected, there is a rich treasury of myth and legend surrounding the aurora, especially in the northern cultures whose languages Tolkien studied. For example, in Finland the phenomenon was said to be the torches of warring angels. Similarly, in Estonia the aurora was thought to be caused by heavenly battles.²⁵ A proverb from Lista in Norway warns that if the “northern light is red, then it is an omen of coming war.”²⁶ The relative rarity of aurora at more southern latitudes, and their commonly reddish appearance at the same locations, has led to a general belief in Southern Europe that the aurora was fires in the North. This has led to widespread fear and awe, reflected in the literary record. For example, the aurora is described in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, and *The Irish Chronicles*, works with which Tolkien is likely to have been familiar.²⁷ The *King’s Mirror*, a Norse work dating from the thirteenth century, compared the appearance of aurora to that of a “vast flame viewed from a great distance” and as appearing to “blaze like a living flame.”²⁸

This fiery appearance has led to a number of historical instances of mistaken identity. In Copenhagen, 1709, townsfolk prepared to fight a fire they were sure was approaching from the North.²⁹ On September 15, 1839, a magnificent display of a red aurora in London led to a general panic and the large-scale dispatching of the city’s fire-fighting resources to the north.³⁰ Another display viewed from London on January 25, 1938 was described by the press as leading “many to think half the city was on fire. The Windsor fire department was called out in the belief that Windsor Castle was afire.” Similar mistaken actions were reported in Austria and Switzerland.³¹

The two ideas that red aurora are signs of “warring angels”



Luthien at the bridge of Tol-in-Gaurhoth

John Ellison

and “fires in the heavens” lead us to investigate whether or not we can find evidence of such references in Tolkien’s work. Two such instances have been identified by the author of this paper. Shortly after the awakening of the Elves (the Quendi), the Valar attacked Melkor’s stronghold in the North in order to protect the First Born, and it is written that “the Quendi knew nothing of the great Battle of the Powers, save that the earth shook and groaned beneath them, and the waters moved, and in the north there were lights as of mighty fires.”³² This description clearly parallels the actual myths described above. The second instance of likely auroral reference is in the two accounts of the Fall of Gondolin. In the briefer version (*The Silmarillion*), it is said

The host of Morgoth came over the northern hills where the height was greatest and the watch least vigilant, and it came at night upon a time of festival, when all the people of Gondolin were upon the walls to await the rising sun, and sing their songs at its uplifting; for the morrow was the great feast that they named the Gates of Summer. But the red light mounted the hills in the north and not in the east; and there was no stay in the advance of the foe until they were beneath the very walls of Gondolin, and the city was beleaguered without hope.³³

The longer version of the fall of the elvish city (*The Book of Lost Tales 2*) explains that

The sun had sunk beyond the hills and folk array them for the festival very gladly and eagerly – glancing in expectation to the East. Lo! even when she had gone and all was dark, a new light suddenly began, and a glow there was,

but it was beyond the northward heights, and men marveled and there was a thronging of the walls and battlements. Then wonder grew to doubt to dread as men saw the snow upon the mountains dyed as it were with blood. And thus it was that the fire serpents of Melko came upon Gondolin.³⁴

Again, these accounts closely mirror actual European myths concerning aurora, and it is not unreasonable to posit their connection, or at least inspiration.

The author now makes the following hypothesis – that the name “Burning Briar” used by Tolkien to explain the Plough/Big Dipper, especially in its eschatological role as an omen of the foretold downfall of Melkor/Morgoth in the final War of the Powers, was based on its appearance within a display of the aurora borealis. Such a display was witnessed by the author in September 2003, and it painted an unforgettable image.

The burning bush

One further mythological aspect of the name and its meaning should be explored. The classic reference of the burning briar (burning bush) is, of course, from Exodus 3:2: “There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within the bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.” Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of the famed historian Josephus, wrote an extensive work on the life of Moses in which he included a classic analysis of the symbolism of the burning bush. He noted that it “was a symbol of the oppressed people, and the burning fire was a symbol of the oppressors; and the circumstance of the burning bush not being consumed was an emblem of the fact that the people thus oppressed

Mallorn XLIII

would not be destroyed by those who were attacking them, but that their hostilities would be unsuccessful and fruitless to the one party, and the fact of their being plotted against would fail to be injurious to others.”³⁵ An obvious parallel can be drawn to Varda’s promise (through the Valakirka) of the eventual overthrow of Morgoth and the final liberation of Arda from his evil deeds and oppression. One may ask if such a literal Biblical interpretation is justified. Despite Tolkien’s detailed explanation in a letter dating from 1967 that the name Eärendil borrowed merely the sound of an Anglo-Saxon reference to John the Baptist³⁶, in a letter written fourteen years earlier he flatly stated that “*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision...”³⁷

An alternate usage of ‘briar’, also in keeping with the main thesis of this paper, has been suggested by Sanford³⁸. He notes

that the term is commonly used in England to refer to a wooden tobacco pipe. Given the shape of the Big Dipper, and Tolkien’s penchant for smoking, this interpretation is certainly worthy of serious consideration, although a ‘burning pipe’ rather downplays the eschatological meaning Tolkien ascribed to the asterism.

In the end, only the good professor knows for certain the motivations and inspirations for the details of his sub-creation. The author hopes that the proposed explanation for a minor portion of that rich tapestry will prove thought-provoking among the many admirers of Middle-earth. As Tolkien himself said, the success of Middle-earth as a “reality” is demonstrated by analysis such as that offered here, in which one suspends disbelief for the moment and treats the sub-creation “as if it were a report of ‘real’ times and places...”³⁹

Notes

- [1] Carpenter, 1981, 345
- [2] Tolkien, 1966, 64
- [3] Carpenter, 1981, 92
- [4] Quiñonez and Raggett, 1990, 5
- [5] Carpenter, 1981, 197
- [6] Carpenter, 1981, 80
- [7] Quiñonez and Raggett, 1990, 9
- [8] Tolkien, 1993, 387-8
- [9] Tolkien, 1993, 71
- [10] Tolkien, 2001, 205
- [11] Tolkien, 1984, 133
- [12] Allen, 1963, 424
- [13] Tolkien, 1993, 160
- [14] Tolkien, 1995, 345
- [15] Tolkien, 1996, 125
- [16] Tolkien, 1996, 233
- [17] Tolkien, 1994, 204
- [18] Tolkien, 1994, 410
- [19] Tolkien, 1994, 300
- [20] Tolkien, 1994, 207
- [21] Allen, 1963, 433
- [22] Carpenter, 1981, 31
- [23] Jago, 2001, 18-19
- [24] Blanc and Mäkinen, 1994, 599-601
- [25] Brekke and Egeland, 1983, 2-4
- [26] Brekke and Egeland, 1983, 6
- [27] Eather, 1980, 41
- [28] Brekke and Egeland, 1983, 35-6
- [29] Eather, 1980, 92
- [30] Brekke and Egeland, 1983, 7
- [31] Eather, 1980, 92
- [32] Tolkien, 2001, 48
- [33] Tolkien, 2001, 290-1
- [34] Tolkien, 1992, 173
- [35] Yonge, 1993, XII (67)
- [36] Carpenter, 1981, 385-387
- [37] Carpenter, 1981, 172
- [38] Sanford, 2005
- [39] Carpenter, 1981, 188

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Perspectives on reality

in *The Lord of the Rings*

Part II – Nature, beauty, and death

Gerardo Barajas Garrido

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*
(JRR Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)

In *The Lord of the Rings*, nature and beauty fuse themselves many times. For Tolkien, beautiful places are always those close to nature, an unspoiled and healthy nature. For, of course, nature can be ugly too. For Tolkien, when evil has corrupted nature, it becomes ugly. Mirkwood, the forest of *The Hobbit* where Bilbo fights some giant spiders, is ugly because evil has corrupted it. Its contrast, Lothlórien, is beautiful because there is goodness in it. Shelob's lair is ugly while Bag End is beautiful. Those areas where nature has been destroyed are, obviously, ugly: Mordor, and the Shire while it was corrupted by Saruman's doings.

Nature is everything that God has created, not only our planet and its creatures but everything that exists. Our world is part of the universe. As Saint Francis of Assisi states, nature is alive and "all creatures, separate in functions, worth, desires, and beauty, are bound together in a harmonious interdependence ensured and presided over by the just and benevolent eye of God" (Sorrell 133). St Francis has such a "deep acceptance of the natural world" (141) that he accepts "the creatures into his spiritual family as brothers and sisters" (127). Though, his "conceptions of them were rooted soundly in Christian doctrine" (128), which means that humans are at the top of the list of species of the world and that the pagan animistic view is avoided. St. Francis wants people to appreciate all the creatures that God has created, and to "feel their kinship with them" (128).

Even when, as in St. Francis' *Canticle of Brother Sun*, he seems to provide each creature with a soul, the Church's official view argues that he is not doing so. The Bible says that only humans are made "in the image of God. Man and Woman both, he created them" (Genesis 1:27), which implies that nature and its creatures do not possess souls. The Roman Catholic doctrine says that soul "signifies the *spiritual principle in man*" (*Catechism* 83). Despite all this, Tolkien does present us with an animistic nature, "a natural world that is literally alive. ... For example Caradhras shows his displeasure by snowing heavily to block the Company's way; the herb *athelas* makes the air sparkle with joy (Curry 110); Frodo feels "the delight of the living tree itself" (*LOR-I* 455);

Legolas hears the stones lamenting the elves departure: "deep they delved us, fair they wrought us" (371).

Tolkien's view of nature is similar to that of St. Francis', but perhaps more tinged with paganism. Nature is alive, but despite its animism humans and other sentient creatures are the most valuable part of creation. The different Orders of Beings are part of the nature of Middle-earth but they are superior to it. What sets "people apart from nature? . . . for Christians it has traditionally been spirit" (Coates 7). Tolkien believes that because each Level of Being – spirits, humans, elves, dwarves and so on – has been created by Eru, then they are at the top of the hierarchical system of Middle-earth. Nature was created for "the Children of Ilúvatar" (*Silmarillion* 18). Middle-earth is "the habitation that was prepared for them" (18). Elves and humans are Eru's children, but the other Levels of Being share their place in the hierarchy of Middle-earth. They all use nature in order to build their abodes, get food and clothing, and fulfill all their needs. This is why Yavanna – Aulë's wife and "the Giver of Fruits – the lover of all things that grow in the earth" (27) – protests against this hierarchy: "Shall nothing that I have devised be free from the dominion of others?" (45). She knows that her beautiful creatures are helpless.

Nature can be very beautiful but to have common meaning for us beauty must be defined. The philosopher David Hume defined it as "such an order and construction of parts, as either by the *primary constitution* of our nature, by *custom*, or by *caprice*, is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul" (299). Nevertheless, it is necessary to have an ideal beauty in order to be able to have a notion of beauty. Plato, talking about art and measurement, says that "the greater and less are not only to be measured with one another, but also have to do with the production of the mean" (6). The mean is the "ideal standard" (6). As "arts are on the watch against excess and defect ... the excellence of beauty of every work of art is due to this observance of measure" (6). So, "the very existence of the arts must be held to depend on the possibility of measuring more or less, not only with one another, but also with a view to the attainment of the mean" (7).

Beauty exists only when something derives from or takes its formal order from the Ideal. Those who are close to the Ideal will be called "beautiful" and those who are far from it will be called "ugly". How does that something become established as beautiful? People will name as beautiful that which pleases them.

As Hume and the moderns state, beauty is subjective. That which can give pleasure to one may provide no satisfaction to another. Besides, standards of beauty depend on cultural – sometimes personal – views, so that they emerge from custom or caprice. However, the philosopher Plotinus talks about an objective ideal beauty. He says that beauty comes

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Mallorn XLIII

from a “Primal Good”:

What is beyond the Intellectual-Principle we affirm to be the nature of Good radiating Beauty before it. So that, treating the Intellectual cosmos as one, the first is the Beautiful: if we make distinction there, the Realm of Ideas constitutes the Beauty of the Intellectual Sphere; and the Good that lies beyond, is the Fountain at once and Principle of Beauty: the Primal Good and the Primal Beauty have the one dwelling-place and, thus, always, Beauty’s seat is There. (150)

Plotinus explains that there is a “Principle that bestows beauty on material things” (142). This Principle of beauty is governed by an Ideal-Form: “all the loveliness of this world comes by communion in Ideal-Form” (143). This Ideal-Form, which is beautiful because it conveys unity (143), is patterned by Reason: “an ugly thing is something that has not been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by Reason, the Matter not yielding at all points and in all respects to Ideal-Form” (143). And, finally, Idea and Reason are found within the Intellectual-Principle – what frees the soul from the body (147) – which is derived from The Good (147). This Good is beauty because what is evil is ugly; and as a consequence what is good is beautiful (147). As evil is a corruption of good, ugliness is a corruption of beauty. Such a notion exists in *LOR*. An orc’s delight is to “slash and beat down growing things that are not even in their way” (*LOR-II* 20). Orcs corrupt the statue near the cross-roads: its “head was gone, and in its place was set in mockery a round rough-hewn stone, rudely painted by savage hands in the likeness of a grinning face with one large red eye in the midst of its forehead” (390).

Plotinus tells us that we can recognise the ideal beauty because the soul affirms “the Beautiful where it finds something accordant with the Ideal-Form within itself, using this idea as a canon of accuracy in its decision” (143). But this ideal beauty can be seen only by those who are worthy: “never can the Soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful” (150), which means to “become godlike ... so, mounting, the Soul will come first to the Intellectual-Principle and survey all the beautiful Ideas in the Supreme and will avow that this is Beauty, that the Ideas are Beauty” (150). Obviously, orcs – due to their corrupted origins – are unable to perceive real beauty, its Ideal-Form, and, therefore, unhesitatingly spoil that which other races may consider beautiful. Tolkien bases his notion of beauty on the Virgin Mary because she is very close to the Ideal-Form of beauty – which is goodness – but she is humble too. It follows then, that the more a person approaches the good and humble, the more one casts off arrogance, the more beautiful that person will be. Galadriel is beautiful because she is good and humble. She is proud but not arrogant. Saruman, by contrast, is simply arrogant.

Elves can see beauty’s Ideal-Form because they are close to *Eru, who is The Good*. Therefore, they are Tolkien’s symbol of beauty and goodness. If Elves acknowledge something as beautiful, then it is beautiful. Their perception of nature is alike to a Greek one; they think that it is a living being – in an animistic way – and that it can be very beautiful. Elves are always close to it because their perception of beauty allows them to realize that what is close to nature is beautiful. They weave their beauty together with nature’s beauty. Inevitably they see it as something that should be permanent, something that should not change. Rivendell and Lothlórien are perfect

examples of the elves’ views of beauty and nature. Through the elves’ art, enchantment, both spots are kept unchanged, in their state of beauty, as long as the elven rings have power, but when the One Ring is destroyed Rivendell and Lothlórien are left to the action of time. The elves are unable to prevent change and decay, which are what they regret most: “They wanted the peace and bliss and perfect memory of ‘The West’, and yet to remain on the ordinary earth where their prestige as the highest people, above wild elves, dwarves and men, was greater than at the bottom of the hierarchy of Valinor. They thus became obsessed with ‘fading’” (*Letters* 151).

Elves possess such a deep perception of nature’s life that they teach ents to talk, and not just between themselves; ents “learned of the elves and spoke with the trees” (*LOR-II* 93). Why do elves use enchantment rather than magic in order to preserve their abodes? First of all, they do not think of ‘magic’ in the same way that other peoples use the term, for as Galadriel tells Sam: “For this is what your folk call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem also to use the same words for the deceits of the Enemy” (*LOR-I* 468). Their perception of nature is such that they see their own “magic”, or qualities, as normal. Their “‘magic’ is Art, delivered from many of its human limitations ... And its object is Art not Power, sub-creation not domination and tyrannous re-forming of Creation” (*Letters* 146).

Secondly, to work magic is to impose one’s power on the “primary world”, but elves use their power to create a “secondary world” through enchantment. ‘Magic’ implies a certain kind of domination, thus elves would not use it; that would mean to modify nature too much. Elves do not want to modify nature except in what is necessary: building their homes, making food and clothes.

Lothlórien is not a garden but a forest, a place that has not been artificially shaped. The elves perceive reality as something outside them – as Locke argues – from which they can learn. If they modify nature they would be destroying its beauty and the opportunity to learn from it. In Lothlórien Frodo can have a communion with the tree because elvish enchantment has not modified the tree but created a link with it. Elves perceive nature’s own beauty; and because their perception of beauty is to appreciate the world as it is, when they create something beautiful they blend their beauty of art with the beauty of nature. By blending art and nature they create a symbiotic relationship on an artistic level between themselves and nature. The result is: ‘enchantment’.

On the contrary, magic *imposes* its form on nature. That is why Legolas tells Gimli that dwarves would spoil the caverns of Helm’s Deep. Dwarves impose their perception of beauty on nature: “we should open up new ways, and display far chambers that are still dark, glimpsed only as a void beyond fissures in the rock” (*LOR-II* 189). Elves respect nature’s free creation. Dwarves and elves can build homes or carve rock, but only elves will respect the rock’s ‘will’, its natural beauty – according to Middle-earth’s hierarchy. Elves love nature’s beauty as much as they love the beauty that they create. Dwarves love far more and “first the things made by their own hands” (*Silmarillion* 45).

For those Levels of Beings which are human-like, there is an Ideal-Form of beauty that is shared by all, the elves are closest to this Ideal-Form. They, and all they do, are beautiful. Their closeness to God, the Fountain of Beauty – The Good – bestows on them such a skill in their crafts that when they blend their perception of beauty with nature’s beauty the

Perspectives on reality



The End Of All Things

Karin Kunde

result is the closest one gets to beauty's Ideal-Form. In Middle-earth, when humans blend the beauty of art and nature, or enter into nature in spirit, the result is not as beautiful as that which elves achieve. Even if dwarves love their own crafts more than nature, still they recognise the elves' proximity to the Ideal-Form of beauty. Gimli admits it: "'Yet more fair is the living land of Lórien, and the Lady Galadriel is above all the jewels that lie beneath the earth!'" (LOR-I 461). He will even fight to defend this claim.

I have hoped to show how elves hold a particular perspective on reality which no other Level of Being shares. The elvish power of enchantment modifies only the "secondary world". They create something artistic by linking nature's beauty with theirs, but they never modify their "primary world". What they do is a kind of tangible illusion. If the enchantment is taken off, then the "primary world" remains untouched. In contrast, Tom Bombadil's "earth magic is part of the very fabric of Nature" (Jeffs 27). Instead of modifying the "secondary world" he modifies the "primary world". The Orders of Beings have such distinct perspectives on reality because they "are inextricably in and of their geographical locales: the elves and 'their' woods and forests, the dwarves and mountains, hobbits and the domesticated nature of field and garden" (Curry 28).

Those Orders of Beings that are human-like perceive an Ideal-Form of beauty, but the ents' perception of beauty is very

different. Ents do not share this sense of connection with beauty's Ideal-Form. For example, their perspective on physical beauty is so distinct that Treebeard, while Merry and Pippin are enjoying the sun on a hill, mistakes the hobbits for orcs: "if I had seen you before I heard you, I should have just trodden on you, taking you for little orcs, and found my mistake afterwards" (LOR-II 78). How could this be? Physically, orcs are very different from hobbits. Orcs are far uglier!

Orcs are a corrupted form of elves. Can we accuse Tolkien of racism for saying that there are no good orcs? Of course not! Orcs are similar to demons, who are angels that decided to follow Satan and abandon God. These angels fell, ie corrupted themselves, and became demons. The tragedy is that orcs, and trolls, did not decide to be evil, Melkor forced them to become so.

Hume's definition of beauty fits the ents in that their perception of beauty is compared to that of the human-like races. Treebeard likes the hobbits' voices: "I heard your voices – I liked them: nice little voices; they reminded me of ... something I cannot remember" (78). However, if he can mistake a hobbit for an orc, it is probable that all human-like creatures are very alike for him. He can distinguish an elf from a human or dwarf, but that is because he has prior knowledge of them and has learned their differences. Nevertheless, these differences for ents are so vague that instead of thinking that the hobbits are dwarves, Treebeard thinks they are orcs. This

Mallorn XLIII

points to the possibility that Ents cannot find pleasure in the physical beauty of the Ideal-Form of human-like races in the same way these human-like races do, even in the case of Galadriel.

Ents perceive beauty in a distinct way. If ents accepted the Ideal-Form of the body's beauty as it appears in human-like species, then ents would not be able to find entwines beautiful other than in the way an elf, or any person, feels when he or she sees, for example, a tree. In order to find entwines beautiful, ents need to perceive entwines according to an ent view of beauty: "desire came over me to see Fimbrethil again. Very fair she was still in my eyes, when I had last seen her, though little like the entmaiden of old. . . . We crossed over Anduin and came to their land; but we found a desert" (94)

For ents, nature is a living being which should be free. Ents rebel against the hierarchical order that exists in nature. The only change that ents like is the normal mutability of nature, free from any intervention by any of the Levels of Beings. That is why, in Fangorn, Gimli says: "I will keep my axe loose in my belt. Not for use on trees," he added hastily, looking up at the tree under which they stood" (114). Moreover, Treebeard explains this rebellious view: "I am not altogether on anybody's *side*, because nobody is altogether on my *side*, if you understand me: nobody cares for the woods as I care for them, not even elves nowadays" (89). Treebeard is the voice of Yavanna's protest against the hierarchy of Middle-earth.

How will people get wood for their fires if they cannot cut trees? Where will everybody live if they cannot build houses? Despite nature's precious being, Eru has decreed that people may use it in order to fulfill their needs. Nature, then, has to agree to be used by people. Yavanna loves her works, all the creatures she helped Ilúvatar to create, and although she tries to protect them ("Would that the trees may speak on behalf of all things that have roots, and punish those that wrong them!" (*Silmarillion* 45)) she has to accept the hierarchical order of Middle-earth: "'Eru is bountiful,' she said. 'Now let thy children beware! For there shall walk a power in the forests whose wrath they will arouse at their peril.' / 'Nonetheless they will have need of wood,' said Aulë" (46). Yavanna's 'power' is the ents, who are obliged to accept Middle-earth's hierarchy even if they do not agree with it.

Treebeard is angry that trees have been cut: "Down on the borders they are felling trees – good trees. ... There is always a smoke rising from Isengard these days" (*LOR-II* 91). Nevertheless, Saruman needs wood. Even Elves needed wood to construct Lothlórien and Rivendell. According to Middle-earth's hierarchy, people are allowed to cut trees and use their wood, despite the fact that this kills trees. So, when Treebeard curses Saruman he is also raising his voice against this established order of Middle-earth:

'Curse him, root and branch! Many of those trees were my friends, creatures I had known from nut and acorn; many had voices of their own that are lost for ever now. And there are wastes of stump and bramble where once there were singing groves. I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop!'

Treebeard raised himself from his bed with a jerk, stood up, and thumped his hand on the table. The vessels of light trembled and sent up two jets of flame. There was a flicker like green fire in his eyes, and his beard stood out stiff as a great besom. (91)

It is not only Treebeard who rebels against Middle-earth's hierarchy. In *The Hobbit*, Beorn – a human who can change himself into a bear – does the same. He treats his animals as his equals; they are his sons and daughters: "he keeps cattle and horses. ... They work for him and talk to him. He does not eat them; neither does he hunt or eat wild animals" (116). As a human, Beorn has the possibility of eating cattle but he does not; yet, Beorn is not a simple vegetarian. He "loves his animals as his children" (135), and he would kill anyone who would try to eat any of them, despite Middle-earth's hierarchy that allows people to eat animals. As we can see, Beorn and Treebeard do not share exactly the same view towards nature. Beorn cares for animals, not trees. In contrast, although trees are Treebeard's main concern, he cares for all nature. He cannot keep Saruman captive because he cares for all beings' freedom. His and Beorn's disagreements with Middle-earth's hierarchy once again suggest the polyphonic character of Tolkien's text.

The nature of death

I hope to have demonstrated in the text so far Tolkien's polyphonic grasp of power, beauty and nature. It is time now to consider the idea of death. Thus, we ask ourselves: what is death? Death is change, whether toward enlightenment, truth, freedom, extinction, or something else, whether part of life or its continuation, death is always an irreversible change in the person, isolating him or her from all those who are alive.

Tolkien's Roman Catholic ideas about death influence *LOR*. As a Catholic, he believed that when someone dies he or she goes to heaven, purgatory or hell. The Bible states that the moment people die, they are judged and if they are judged good they go to heaven: "the kingdom which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). If they are judged evil they go to hell: "that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (25:41). Or else they go to purgatory. This takes place if they are judged good but they still have some sins to expiate: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (*Catechism* 221).

For Christians, as the Bible explains, death exists because humans sinned: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). Before death came everything was perfect and eternal. However, humans sinned and fell from that condition; then death appeared. After death there comes resurrection. Catholic belief holds that the soul is eternal but also that the body "will come to life again" (*Catechism* 212), a perfect body: when "the dead rise again ... they are as the angels in heaven are" (Matthew 22:30).

These notions of the spirit as something immortal that carries on, as well as that of the fear of a place of torment, probably inhabited by evil spirits, impinge on the *LOR* when Legolas, Aragorn and the humans with them follow the Paths of the Dead. To lead an immortal life in Middle-earth means that the elves perceive ghosts – the spirits of those who have died – differently to humans. For "the elves . . . the ghosts of men have no terror" (*LOR-III* 70), but humans are terrified of phantoms. When the dead appeared, humans "cried in terror and ran wild 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!'" (73). These dead scare humans because instead of abiding in a peaceful place with their loved

Perspectives on reality

ones they are trapped within the world, suffering and not at peace at all. Echoes of the purgatory run through this place where souls cannot find bliss after death, but they are not condemned either. These ghosts remind the living humans of the possibility of finding affliction after dying, after the travail that they will have to undergo. As Lovecraft states: "uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities" (349). The mystery of death, with its possible malign implications, horrifies humans, in part because there is no way back. The longing for heaven and its promises of rest and bliss, as well as the possibility to lose it and go to hell, definitely influence the kind of fear these humans show. Moreover, Théoden reveals, while dying, the human desire to die and join the ancestors in a blissful place (*LOR-III* 143). While humans fear ghosts, elves, who do not die, are not afraid of them at all. Phantoms cannot scare elves because they do not have any relation with them and cannot kill them. The polyphony in the text is evident.

Humans, elves and each Level of Being experience death, but while it can give comfort to humans it does not give any to elves. Humans may perceive death as a sorrowful, frightening event that throws them onto a path towards the unknown – it is the gate to another level of existence – but there they have the opportunity to find peace and their loved ones who have died already. The ghosts of the Paths of the Dead who follow Aragorn do it because they cannot get the ease that death offers. They want to "fulfill their oath and have *peace*" (74; my italics). For those humans who remain alive, death can be a sad event too, but they also know it can be a relief from old age and sickness. In sharp contrast, elves perceive death as a regretful event which will never provide them with comfort. Those elves who are dead did not escape old age's burdens or the pain of sickness, they were killed. Only in such a way can an elf die. Those who still linger in Middle-earth must remain alive and unable to join their loved ones who have been slain. The only way to see them again is to forsake Middle-earth and sail to the Undying Lands. But how to do this while Middle-earth is still so beautiful and they have not the burdens of illness or old age? Death and life offer elves only different ways of being parted from their loved ones for a very, very long time – either those in the Undying Lands or those that remain in Middle-earth. On the other hand, death offers humans the possibility to leave Middle-earth, but completely restored: illness and old age's pains are left behind, while those left behind in Middle-earth will join them after some years, and meanwhile they will see join their friends and family who have died before them. No wonder Tolkien considers death a "special gift from God" (*Letters*, footnote 189).

If elves are immortal, how can they be killed? When elves are slain they come to life again. They keep their memories and are granted a new body, identical to the one they had before, although they must dwell in the Undying Lands (Tolkien, *Morgoth's Ring* 365). Nevertheless, Tolkien specifies that elves are immortal within "the limits of the world (in space and time)" (*Letters* 325). As we can see, the elves' resurrection of the body is an echo of Catholicism. Moreover, elves do not die within the world because they are not fallen beings. Death is a consequence of sin, a consequence of the fall, "not a punishment for a Fall" (*Letters*, footnote 189) and

elves do not have to bear it. Their immortality is another sign of their closeness to God. Humans fell much lower than elves, and humans have to suffer death within the world.

The other Levels of Beings see elves as immortal because elves live far longer than they do. Thus, Tolkien tells us that for elves, the knowledge that they could remain in Arda, the Undying Lands, and "continue their experience of Arda, made death to the elves a totally different thing from death as it appeared to Men" (*Morgoth's Ring* 365). When compared to the creatures of the world, elves feel the burden of an almost immortal life: "For the elves the world moves, and it moves both very swift and very slow. Swift, because they themselves change little, and all else fleets by: it is a grief to them. Slow, because ... The passing seasons are but ripples ever repeated in the long long stream" (*LOR-I* 503). The sorrow of loss is a continuous and heavy burden to elves, and is behind their desire to keep things unchanged. Elves have to bear the sorrow of death without being able to reach it and find consolation. This makes them "so old and young, and so gay and sad" (127). Even if Elrond dies, he will come back to life. He will miss Aragorn and Arwen, his own daughter. The place where they will go is unreachable for him. Though, perhaps after the world ends, he will see them again.

When Théoden dies, despite his sadness for leaving what he has in Middle-earth, he finds ease at the moment of his death: "My body is broken. I go to my fathers. And even in their mighty company I shall not now be ashamed" (*LOR-III* 143). He is certain that he will join his ancestors, and that he will see again all those whom he loves, when they in their turn die. All of them will go to heaven, where peace reigns.

Conclusions and criticisms

With Tolkien's ideology in view, we can examine what his critics have said about aspects of good and evil in Middle-earth and in his work in general. Brian W. Aldiss, for example, accuses Tolkien of simplifying the relation between good and evil, making his heroes good and denying that evil can exist even within a good person (262). To say this is to call *LOR* a monophonic work where all different Levels of Beings are very alike. This is not so. Each Level of Being deals with evil in a different way and evil is always potential. Each must deal with temptation in a distinct manner.

Michael Moorcock agrees with Fritz Leiber's notion that Tolkien does not have any interest in exploring the minds of his principal villains (45). Again this is doubtful. Tolkien does do so, but in Sauron's case he does it through other characters. Moorcock implies that all Tolkien's evil characters can be labelled as 'bad guys' and can be all treated in the same way because readers do not know their thinking process (125). However, the villains in the *LOR* are, in fact, understood polyphonically. Each one has a different way of behaving and his or her actions depend on his or her personal perspective on reality.

Catharine Stimpson also argues that Tolkien simplifies things into good and evil, that what is good cannot be tinged by evil and vice versa. She says that he 'divides the ambiguous world into two unambiguous halves: good and evil, nice and nasty' (18). However, Tolkien's 'good' characters can do evil deeds and vice versa. The voice of the corrupted Saruman can be amazingly seductive; the beautiful forest of Fangorn

Mallorn XLIII

can be deadly. Robert Giddings says that evil for Tolkien is 'evil, pure and simple' (13) and it cannot be fought, then, 'there is no need for change ... all ... things which make up the very fabric of a society, are perceived by Tolkien as totally beyond any need or possibility of change' (13). Nevertheless, evil is fought in *LOR* and changes are made. The point is that Tolkien knows that evil is within each Being and despite social or political changes it will always exist. All 'one can do is combat evil when and where one is, and there is no permanent solution' (Curry 101).

These attempts to make *LOR* monophonic do not stand up to a careful reading of the text. Gollum, Denethor and Saruman, for example, are not the same. Tolkien is aware that corruption and temptation vary for each being and will be conditioned both by the nature of the individual and the individual's personal experiences.

In fact, Tolkien shows us a polyphonic world, where each race conceives reality in a particular way, which is always changing.

One of Giddings' accusations is that, in *LOR*, it is pointless to fight evil and that it is pure malevolence. By saying this he implies that evil in *LOR* cannot be fought because what is utterly malignant cannot be changed and, as it will be always coming back, in *LOR* there is no hope to win the final battle against it. This means that he desires malevolence to be completely overthrown and destroyed. Now a problem arises. We live in a fallen world, not Paradise. A solution for evil will be found and it will be driven out, but only for a while. Then, a new solution will have to be found. The world behaves like this, and Tolkien is writing about an imaginary past of this world we live in; therefore, evil in *LOR* behaves as it does in this world. If Giddings says it is pointless to fight malevolence in *LOR*, then he is saying that same thing to all the people of the real world fighting evil in their own lands.

Furthermore, wickedness in the *LOR* is not pure and simple. Gollum is not completely evil; he has traits of goodness and undergoes an inner battle when tempted to break his promise and take the Ring from Frodo (*LOR-II* 298-99), whom he even calls "nice" and starts to like: "We hates Bagginses." / "No, not this Baggins'" (298). The troops of Sauron are not purely evil either. They join Sauron due to an old hate against Gondor and the whole West – and very probably a promise of wealth too, which all mercenaries look for – not just because they wish to hurt and kill (*LOR-III* 280). Hate is not a defining characteristic of the purely evil. When those who hate the West, the people from "Rhûn and Harad, Easterling and Southron" (280), give themselves up Aragorn releases them and makes peace with them (305). He knows that in spite of their hate they are not purely evil beings, that the relation between his kingdom and theirs can be amended and become a good one. Orcs, on the other hand, are always malevolent because they are corrupted elves, which means that they had goodness in them but it was perverted. Trolls have no option to change either. Nonetheless, the evil in both is not pure but a corruption of a former good.

Giddings' next accusation is tied to his first one. Thinking of evil as a changeless thing in *LOR*, he argues that Tolkien regards the elements of a society as "totally beyond any need or possibility of change" (13). This is a mistaken notion; Aragorn is able to make peace with his former enemies because they can change. Tolkien is so aware that the elements forming a society must change in order to achieve certain goals that he dedicates a full chapter, the Scouring of the

Shire, to talk about changes in precisely those elements that form a society. Hobbits want their Shire back to how it was before and to reach such a goal they have to change the social, political and economical elements of the Shire.

One of Tolkien's chief interests is precisely this kind of change. *LOR* recounts only a segment of the full history of Middle-earth taking place during the third age, which finishes at the Grey Havens when the carriers of the three elven rings – Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond – depart from Middle-earth, as Tolkien records in Appendix A of the third part of *LOR* (387). Since Eru created existence there has never been a fixed order in Middle-earth. Peoples and kingdoms have come and gone, good and bad kings have ruled, heroes have struggled for peace and justice, and it will be always so. Gildor explains it to Frodo: others "dwelt here before Hobbits were; and others will dwell here again when hobbits are no more. The wide world is all about you; you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot forever fence it out" (*LOR-I* 123). An attained peace will not remain as it is. On the contrary, change is inevitable.

Along with these historical changes there come social changes as well. If history moves on, societies in the *LOR* must change too, reshaping those elements that construct society. Accusing Tolkien of pessimism, arguing that he sees change as pointless and denies the possibility of a better society, is an error. The Shire is the best example of this. In order to expunge the evil Saruman had made grow in the hobbits' society hobbits must change their social, political and economical practices. Before Saruman started altering the Shire – manipulating Lotho – hobbits lived in a pastoral world, taking care of their own needs and almost isolated from the outside world. In Frodo's times, after Bilbo's departure, their main sources "of news from distant parts—if they wanted any" (72) were migrating dwarves crossing the Shire in their way to the Blue Mountains. The situation changed radically when Lotho, or Pimple, started to trade with the outside world, in the shape of Isengard – Saruman bought the pipe-weed from the Shire (*LOR-II* 207). Lotho increased his wealth and introduced humans into the Shire until he took control of it and imposed a dictatorship on his fellow hobbits. Then he was murdered and Saruman took control of the hobbits' country, initiating an industrial development that damaged The Shire (*LOR-III* 360-61).

The three aforementioned aspects of The Shire undergo a deep alteration under Lotho and Saruman's imposition of an evil regime. Even hobbits change. Instead of being the merry folk of old times, now they are afraid and follow orders they do not like. Ted Sandyman becomes very corrupted, taking advantage of the situation: "A laugh put an end to them. There was a surly hobbit lounging over the low wall of the mill-yard. 'Don't 'ee like it, Sam? ... We've work to do in the Shire now.' ... 'You can't touch me. I'm a friend o' the Boss's. But he'll touch you all right'" (366). Frodo and his friends do not stay idle but decide to fight back against evil, realising that this must be done by changing back the social, political and economical elements in their society. They make a revolution. Frodo knows this change must be complete, at outer and inner levels: "'I hope there are not many more hobbits that have become like this. It would be a worse trouble than all the damage the men have done'" (366). He is worried about Sandyman because he knows that the only way to find a solution against evil is through change, but a social change takes longer than a material one. If there are others who think as Sandyman does, hobbits will have to work hard for effective social change in

Perspectives on reality

order to fight that evil.

In this essay I have argued that in Tolkien's world each Order of Being has his or her own perspective on reality. This is not mere accident or a device to make a better plot in the *LOR*. The author, in fact, is deeply committed to a polyphonic view of reality. What is more, he is conscious

of the implications of such a view. Tolkien does not deserve the strictures of his hostile critics that he is monophonic. His works show a universe of "God's plenty" but it is also a universe of mystery, diversity and transformation, a universe where change is inevitable and progress sometimes necessary.

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Beth Russell is a retired botanist. While working on a study of Galadriel, in putting together the section on Lothlorien she discovered that Tolkien had written quite a lot about the appearance of mallorns, scattered in several books, and amused herself with assembling this material into a note that would be suitable for publication in a regional botanical journal. *Mallorn* was the obvious choice.

John Ellison is an established author (*The Dear Bil Letters, Stiff upper lip, Bilbo!*), consultant editor of *Mallorn*, Oxford alumnus, opera buff, artist and genuine eccentric whose lifelong interest in Tolkien and Wagner and a formidable talent for satire has resulted in an unparalleled output of learned commentary, humorous lampoonery and trips to Covent Garden. Many of his works have appeared in this journal, to universal approval. His only remaining unfulfilled ambition is to complete his collection of Wagner recordings made under the baton of Georg Solti.

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The hobbits come to Minas Morgul

John Ellison