

Mallorn



44

August 2006

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.tolkiensociety.org>.

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Mallorn XLIV



C	About the Tolkien Society	IFC
	Editorial	2
D	<i>Middle-earth metaphysics</i> In the Shadow of the Tree <i>Michael Cunningham</i>	3
	<i>Analysis</i> Jewish influences in Middle-earth <i>Zak Cramer</i>	9
E	<i>Comparative topology</i> Tolkien-on-sea: the view from the shores of Middle-earth <i>John Ellison</i>	17
	<i>Sword and sorcery</i> Swords and Sky Stones: meteoric iron in <i>The Silmarillion</i> <i>Kristine Larsen</i>	22
F	“‘Queer, exciting and Debatable’”: Tolkien, and Shorthouse’s John Inglesant <i>Dale Nelson</i>	27
	Frodo as Beowulf: Tolkien reshapes the Anglo-Saxon Heroic Ideal <i>Robert Goldberg</i>	29
G	<i>Poetry</i> Jack in the Green <i>Anon</i>	35
	‘Not marching to the Gates of Gondolin’ <i>Poinsettia Took</i>	36
H	<i>Bombadil studies</i> The function of Tom Bombadil <i>Claus Jensen, Rhairidh MacDonald</i>	37
	‘I have looked the last on that which is fairest’: Elegy in <i>Beowulf</i> and Tolkien’s Lothlorien <i>Leigh Smith</i>	43
I	Aragorn: Tales of the Heir of Isildur <i>Haken Arvidsson</i>	47
	Letters	60
J	About the authors	IBC
	Artists	
K	<i>Pauline Baynes</i>	Front cover
	<i>Kay Woollard</i>	IFC, 1
L	<i>Mary Goulbourn</i>	2
	<i>Lorenzo Daniele</i>	32, back cover
M	<i>Jef Murray</i>	5, 13, 41
	<i>John Ellison</i>	19, 20, 36
N	<i>Jill Thwaites</i>	6
	<i>Jeffrey Macleod</i>	11, 25
O	<i>Bonnie E Robinson</i>	51
	<i>Neil Loughran</i>	53



Mallorn XLIV August 2006



Editorial

See you in copyright hell

First, I want to congratulate the authors, and particularly the artists, who have made such a fine showing in this issue. Luckily copyright law places far fewer restrictions on what we can publish in the way of Tolkien inspired art than it does in other areas.

I am sometimes asked why it is that stories about Middle-earth never appear in *Mallorn*, when they do in *Amon Hen*. The answer lies in the different nature of the two publications, but that isn't much of an answer. Unfortunately the full answer is, well, rather full.

There is a troubled and fearsomely complex relationship between art and the (much more densely populated) area of art criticism, discussion or fandom, and it becomes a really serious matter when it comes to copyright law. The practical bases of copyright law are that you cannot copyright an idea, but you can copyright an original artistic creation. In literary terms that means you can protect a sentence, paragraph or book, even a phrase if it is resounding enough. LOTR for example is a specific, artistically arranged collection of words and can be protected. It constitutes an intellectual property, and taking and driving it away is intellectual theft. Middle-earth with all its detail is an artistic creation, and can be protected. The notion of Middle-earth itself, in law, is an idea, and cannot. So if you use the term Middle-earth or the plot or the names of any of the places and characters in an article about fantasy, or refer to its details by name in a critical work, or a parody or an essay, you have merely identified the idea, and that's ok even if you earn your living selling that kind of thing. For the same purpose you can quote whole slabs of the artist, and that's ok too.

The trouble comes when an object has the properties both of a new artistic creation and of a copy, such as a new story about Gandalf and Frodo set in Middle-earth, or a painting of Middle-earth characters. Clearly, both the new and the original artist have had an input. In this case the notion of 'substantial' copying comes in. The law says that in the case of the painting, the weight of new creation lies with the new artist, so it's ok. But with a story the law says you have used more than just the idea, you have used the characters, the settings, the very aspects that constitute its artistic uniqueness, and as soon as such a story is offered up for sale, that is actionable.

Strictly speaking, all such stories published in *AH* or *Mallorn* would be intellectual theft, because although the story is not sold, the publication is, through the TS membership fee. In the case of publications sold directly, such as *Nigglings*, the case is even clearer. But in all these cases publishers tend to turn a blind eye, for several reasons: they don't want to alienate their best customers, the stories are usually only amateur grade, the circulation is small and the damages would not be worth the trouble of winning them.

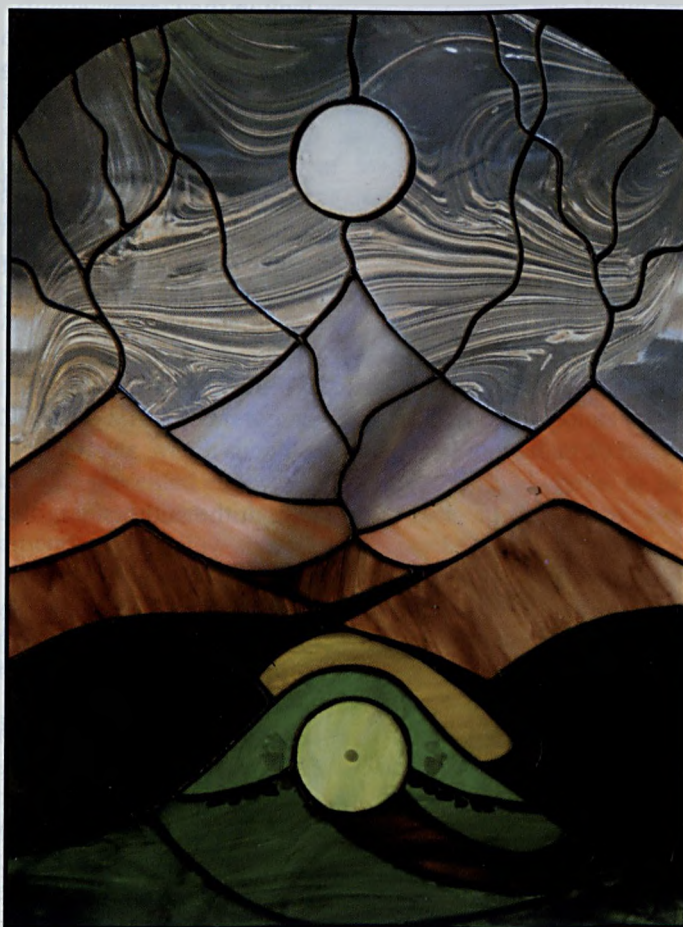
So why in *AH* but not in *Mallorn*? Because *Mallorn* is slightly different to *AH* in that it is more 'weighty' and is considered to circulate more widely. It appears for instance in many academic bibliographies. That slight difference tips the balance away from purely inward looking fan activity and uncomfortably close to the line that says 'don't step over this'. So I am afraid that while the present copyright law obtains, there will be no Middle-earth stories in *Mallorn*. Which is unfortunate, because we have at times been offered good fiction material, and have had to decline it.

And it does seem unfair that while books such as *Bored of the Rings* or *The Soddit*, which are lampoon and therefore not actionable, can be published and make money, the small amateur efforts of fans can be legally suppressed.

The Hobbit film

There have been endless blogs about the possibility of a Hobbit film, mostly centred around New Line (who have said that they want Peter Jackson to do it), a letter writing campaign aimed at New Line and a rogue internet trailer, that has fooled many fans, saying the film will come out in December 2006. The latest seems to be that the more or less indefinite wrangling between New Line and Sony MGM, each of which owns half the rights, could be settled soon enough for filming to start in a couple of years although New Line has denied that there is anything so 'crass' as wrangling going on. Jackson himself estimates 2008 or 9, as does Alan Lee. Not so Saul Zaentz, who in March confirmed the wrangling story and said the film could be made fairly soon. Myself, I am not so sanguine. Jackson is apparently suing New Line for \$100 million over unpaid DVD royalties, which must be putting a crimp in their relationship. What's more, so many of the main characters re-appear (or rather, pre-appear) there is scope for a great deal of interference with the story. Will the producer be able to resist putting in extravagant pyrotechnics from Legolas, who in principle at least could be in the story? How will they be able to keep Aragorn out of it, when he is such a hot property and would have been around, although a very young man, when Bilbo went off on his adventure with the dwarves?

The legal issues are apparently the only roadblock: the producer and the creative folk are willing, props have been stored away, the public are primed, and the cast is available. But they won't be available for ever. And neither will the audience.



Bag End

A study in stained glass by Mary Goulbourn

In the Shadow of the Tree

A study of the motif of the White Tree in the context of JRR Tolkien's Middle-earth

Michael Cunningham

In the pages of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* one finds the White Tree of Gondor standing withered and barren within the court of the fountain. The White Tree's renewal was to be preceded by the great flowering of its image at Harlond which rekindled the same flame of hope that grew dim both in Eómer's breast and that of the men of the West during their monumental struggle upon Pelennor. In the following I will argue that the White Tree was an enduring symbol of divine kingship and, as such, was possessed of an undeniable connection with the lineage of Númenórean Kings, their sacral-power, their peoples and the lands subject to them. This paper will outline these aspects within Tolkien's Middle-earth and reflect upon cultural resonance in European lore.

Literary origins

The origins of the White Tree can be found to stem from Yavanna, Giver of Fruits, whose voice first gave succour to the saplings that would soon rise as Telperion and Laurelin upon a hallowed mound: Ezellohar at the Western Gate of Valmar¹. Later Yavanna fashioned a tree in the image of Telperion for the Elves of Tirion upon Túna and it was given the name Galathilion and planted in the courts of the city where it produced many seedlings, one of which, named Celeborn, was planted in Tol Eresseä, The Lonely Isle.² It was from this offspring of Galathilion that a further seedling was produced and brought to Númenor by the Elves wherein it grew in the king's courts in Armenelos and was given the name Nimloth, White Blossom,³ and it was here, I propose, that an essence of Telperion, elder of the Two Trees of Valinor became intertwined with the fate of Men⁴. Such was borne out by Tar-Palantir, twenty-fourth king of Númenor, who foresaw that when "[Nimloth, the White Tree] perished, then also would the line of the kings come to its end".⁵ This prophecy followed Tar-Palantir's rekindling of the 'Hallow of Eru' upon the Menelartma. The White Tree had suffered at the whim of Tar-Palantir's predecessor, Ar-Gimilzôr under whose rule the White Tree "...was untended and began to decline..."⁶

Turning to European lore one may find explicit links with the concept of trees and kinship in the records of ancient Celtic lore. In the *Dindshenchas* of Loch Garnum there is an account of a young man of royal blood, Catháir, who dreams of a beautiful woman garbed in multi-coloured clothes and who is the daughter of a landowner, a 'hundreded-hospitaller' whose duty it was to supply food and lodging to travellers and members of the king's household. In the dream the woman is pregnant and subsequently gives birth to a baby boy who is

stronger than she is and soon overcomes her. In the background of this dream is a tall hill upon which is a shining tree, the leaves of which are melodious and the ground below the tree is covered with fruit. Catháir summons his druid who interprets the dream in the following manner:

This is the young woman, the river is called Slaney. These Are the colours of her raiment, artistry of every kind...This is the

Hundreded-hospitaller who was her father, the Earth, through which

Come a hundred of every kind. This is the son...the lake which will

Be born of the river Slaney, and in your time it will come forth...

This is the great hill above their heads, your power over all. This is the tree with colour of gold and with its fruits, you [king] over Banba with its sovereignty. This is the music that was in the tops of the tree, you eloquence in guarding and correcting the judgements of the Gaels. This is the wind that would tumble the fruit, you liberality in dispensing jewels and treasures.⁷

Banba is one of the names of Ireland and also a form of the 'sovereignty goddess'. Catháir may be seen as the very tree itself, that is to say this dream may be evocative of the sacred marriage of a human king to a goddess thereby crystallising the aspect of sacral-kingship whereby the king's rule and success may be determined by the fruition and prosperity of the fruits of his lands and, by extension, that of his subjects. So it may be seen that the health and longevity of a sacral-king's rule was directly proportional to that of the abundance of flora and fauna of his lands together with the peace and riches enjoyed by his subjects. Such may serve to illustrate somewhat the prophecy of Tar-Palantir in relation to the Númenórean kingship which found its fate bound with that of the White Tree. Sacral-kings were seen to have supplanted in themselves a function of 'magic sovereignty', that is to say one of their roles was sacerdotal - that of priest-king. Theocratic rule persisted for over a millennia in ancient Ireland and saw the Celts submit themselves to 'sacred monarchies' who acted as intermediaries between the gods and the people. Yet such sacral-kingships began to decline with the deterioration of druidic political powers. It was, after all, the druids who would examine the signs foretelling who would be chosen as sacral-king and their input into the inau-

1 *The Silmarillion*, 42-44. See also *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, p.81, 'In Valinor Yavanna hallowed the mould with mighty song, and Nienna watered it with tears.'

2 *Ibid*, 69

3 *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, 42-43 '...the Trees rose from the ground under the chanted spells of Yavanna. The silver undersides of the leaves of the White Tree now appear, and its flowers are likened to those of a cherry: Silpion (One of the names of Telperion) is translated 'Cherry-moon' in the name list to *The Fall of Gondolin*. Also page 81, '...and he bore white blossoms like the cherry...' It may be submitted that such characteristics would also be prevalent in Galathilion, which was the image of Telperion, and therefore also of its offspring. See also *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion*, 637 for further discussion.

4 *The Silmarillion*, 315-316

5 *Ibid*, 323

6 *Ibid*, 322

7 Stokes, W., *The Rennes Dindshenchas*, RC 15, 1894, 272-336.

guration rituals was paramount. A later instance may be found in the Old Norse Lay of Rígr⁸ wherein the young king, Rígr, is the zenith of a hierarchical structure, the ascension of which was through knowledge and use of the runes and being wholly conversant with a secret wisdom which is bestowed on him by a god and which allows access to supernatural gifts such as understanding animals, power over fire and the knowledge of healing. Professor Tolkien notes that, '...when the 'Kings' came to an end there was no equivalent to a 'Priesthood': the two being identical in Númenórean ideas.'⁹ On Númenor the White Tree resided in the 'Hallow of Eru' and Tolkien further elicits that, 'It is to be presumed that with the remembrance of the lineal priest kings [...] the worship of God would be renewed...'¹⁰ In antiquity Maximus of Tyre states that somewhere in Galatia the Celts worshipped a large oak as a symbol of Zeus although the Greeks and Romans also observed this tradition so it may be postulated that the interpretation may be tainted by Maximus' own indigenous practices. However the reference to the Celts' reverence of this particular oak is not disputed but whichever god they were venerating is not wholly established.

One does not imagine that Nimloth itself contained within it the suggestion of a divine presence rather, it may have been purely symbolic of a sacral conduit between such priest-kings and Eru as the very precinct containing the White Tree was hallowed to Eru. If one examines Hebrew Biblical accounts such as Abraham's association with the oak, for example, that of Moreh which grew in the ancient holy place at Shechem, one finds that it was under this oak that Abraham is said to have built an altar after the Lord appeared to him there.¹¹ Other Biblical examples are that of Gideon who meets an angel, makes offerings of food and builds an altar beneath the oak of Ophrah; Elijah who encounters an angel under a broom tree and Zechariah who encounters an angel among the myrtles. Of course, a well known example would be that Moses who witnesses a burning bush on the side of Mount Horeb. An occurrence involving a sacred fire and located on the side of 'the mountain of God' – a sacred site where Yahweh councils Moses through the form of an angel amongst the flames. Muirchú, in his seventh-century *Life of Patrick*, would have been familiar with this tale of Moses, among others, and he describes a similar happening by which an angel communicates with Patrick through a burning bush although in this version of the story the bush is not razed.¹² Here the priest-figure is without the context of sacral-king as his king is that of Heaven but the tree remains as an intercessory allowing a divine encounter through the medium of its form and presence. Such may be more representative of the White Tree, although any sacredness may be discerned not purely by association with the line of temporal kingship but by the White Tree's lineage to that of Galathilion, the image of Telperion. Both trees having been brought into existence by Yavanna.

The White Tree would, I submit, be understood to be a divine, physical link with Valinor and its attendant Valar and subsequently, Eru. It is a focal station encountered in the realm of men that provides a consecrated portal, the dynamism and activity of which is in proportion to the extent of veneration provided by the sacral-king.

Sacred Trees and their otherworldly counterparts

Yavanna created in Galathilion a sacred image of Telperion and in the Irish tale *Do Suidigud Tellaich Temra* (On the Settling of the Manor of Tara) one finds an account of the five *bileda*¹³ of Ireland all of which grew from the berries of the same Otherworld tree.¹⁴ A giant distributes the five berries and uses them to divide Ireland into five provinces with Tara being central. This division is more suggestive of the endorsement from a presumed divine authority in the delineation of five political zones pertinent to the time in which the tale was recorded which is believed to have been in the tenth or eleventh century. In fact those trees known as the five *bileda* all resided within the borders of Meath and Leinster.

One of the trees, the *Eó Mugna*,¹⁵ was a large oak which put forth an inexhaustible supply of hazelnuts, apples and acorns. It was said to cover an entire plain and would never shed its leaves. The *Eó Mugna* was believed to be 'Son of the tree from Paradise'.¹⁶ The presence of Otherworld trees is a common motif in the Irish journey tales such as *Immran Brain* (The Voyage of Bran) and *Navigatio Santi Brendani* (The Voyage of St. Brendan) wherein monks embark upon nautical journeys to fantastical islands of paradise that lie over the waves in the Otherworld. Here they bear witness to marvellous trees in ample foliage of silver and gold.¹⁷

Such trees may also be viewed in the context of Celtic scriptural texts that served to evoke the Biblical Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil or the Tree of Life as the scribes would have naturally been conversant with Semitic tradition and the importance of tree symbolism as a focal indicator of divine presence and counsel. The roots of *Eó Mugna* were said to reach to Connia's Well that was in the Otherworld. One may also find this trait mirrored in *Yggdrasil*, the Norse World Tree, which had three roots; one of which was among the *Æsir* (the Norse gods commonly associated with strife, power and conflict), a second was among the frost giants and the third lay in *Hvergelmir* (the source of all rivers). Certainly it may be posited that many Christians of medieval Ireland would have been captivated by images of paradisiacal vistas populated with a richness of golden woods filled with trees that were forever fruitful, fragrant and filled with '...flock(s) of glorious birds singing perfect lively music under the sacred trees of paradise.'¹⁸

Mounds and inauguration sites

Telperion and Laurelin both came to fruition upon a hallowed

8 *Ríg* is a borrowing of the Irish *rí(g)*: 'king'. The Lay is recognised as a genealogical poem extrapolating the origins of the three contemporary castes of the time: the serf, the farmer and the noble. Rígr is of the latter and is instructed by the god Heimdallr in wisdom, lore and the sacral facets of kingship. For further discussion see Dronke, 2000, 174 – 238. Also, Dumézil, 1973, 118 – 125. Also consider Bard the Bowman: a thrush counselled him as to how best to direct his arrow against Smaug, amongst other things. Under Bard Laketown was renewed and greatly prospered, *The Annotated Hobbit*, 261, 316 - 317

9 *Letters of JRR Tolkien*, 206 10 *Ibid* 11 Genesis 12, 6-7

12 Bieler, L. *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, Dublin, 1979

13 *Bile* is the principal term for a sacred tree in Irish texts with the plural being *Bileda*.

14 Hull, E. 'Fintan and the Hawk of Achill', *Folklore*, 1932, 386 - 409

15 *Eó* is most often used to indicate the yew but it may also be used in the context of other large tree species.

16 Vendryes, J., *Airne Fíngéin*, Dublin, 1953

17 cf *The Two Towers*, 443, 'Gondor! Gondor, between the Mountains and the Sea! / West Wind blew there; the light upon the Silver Tree'.

18 Greene, D. and O'Connor, F. and Murdoch, B., *The Irish Adam and Eve Story from Saltair na Rann*, 2 vols, Dublin, 1976.

19 *The Silmarillion*, 42 20 *Unfinished Tales*, 223

21 A defended settlement defined by a raised earthwork.

22 *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 368-369. Compare also with *The Dream of Cathair* cited in footnote 6.

In the shadow of the tree

mound.¹⁹ Nimloth grew in a hallowed space upon Meneltarma.²⁰ The offspring of Nimloth, the White Trees grew in the courts surrounded, I would venture, with great reverence and ceremony. Sacred trees in Ireland were usually found growing upon *raths*²¹ and forts, possibly within a ritual landscape. These trees played an important part in the inauguration of the sacral-king for under such trees the sacral-king would be ritually married to his respective goddess. This was symbolic of a marriage to the land made with a hope, rather than a promise, of abundant harvests, peace and good fortune for the subjects of the sacral-king; the ritual would also serve to underscore the ancestral connections of the tribe to that of their lands.

At Magh Adhair near Tulla in County Clare the Dál gCais tribe had their inauguration tree. Near Glenavy in County Antrim one finds *Craebh Tulcha* (Tree of the mound) and in Killeely, County Galway, is *Ruadh-bheitheach* (red birch). The surviving place-name of Lisnaskeagh (whitethorn fort) denotes a hill upon which once stood the sacred inauguration tree of the Maguire kings. The mound, hill or sacred enclosure reinforced the sanctity and importance of the particular tree in that it was set apart from temporal space being, to an extent removed, from the mundane world through a physical expression of sacral boundaries (possibly within a construct which hid internal ceremony from an external audience thereby reinforcing any mystery and awe held in association with the respective site). This was important to the sacral-king as it would convey to his subjects, during ceremony, that only he would have direct access to the precinct of the tree when it was 'ritually charged'. It was also a factor that the placement of the sacred tree, most commonly upon a raised feature, within the appropriate ritual landscape would create a primary

focal station for those within and without the respective tribe. Tolkien, I would hazard, was cognizant of this aspect of the locus and environment of a sacral tree. Another example from his literary output may be cited to illustrate this: when the company of the Ring find themselves guided, blindfold, into the heart of Lórien and when their eyes were eventually uncovered:

*'They were standing in an open space. To the left stood a great mound, covered with a sward of grass as green as Spring-time in the Elder Days. Upon it, as a double crown, grew two circles of trees: the outer had bark of snowy white, and were leafless but beautiful in their shapely nakedness; the inner were Mallorn-trees of great height, still arrayed in pale gold. High amid the branches of a towering tree that stood in the centre of all gleamed a white flet. At the feet of the trees, and all about the green hillsides the grass was studded with small golden flowers shaped like stars. Among them, nodding on slender stalks, were other flowers, white and palest green...'*²²

A description of an Otherworldly paradise? Certainly the sanctity and 'separateness' of Lórien is well attested to. The early Irish voyage tale *Immram Brain* (The Voyage of Bran) recounts that the mythical king Bran was once visited by a mysterious woman during an assembly at his courts where she describes to him her Otherworldly home, Emne, where there is a great sacred tree:

*'An ancient tree there is in bloom
On which birds call to the hours:
In harmony of song they all are wont*

Bag End

Jef Murray



Mallorn XLIV

To chant together every hour...

*Unknown is wailing or treachery
In the homely well-tilled land:
There is nothing rough or harsh
But sweet music striking the ear.*

*Without grief, without gloom, without death
Without any sickness of debility –
That is the sign of Evin
Uncommon is the like of such a marvel.²³*

There are further fragments of the Irish journey/voyage tradition that serve to convey the actual sacredness of the tree itself by which it becomes the very beacon of paradise, usually indicated by its girth and foliage that holds promise of riches beyond that of the temporal world. By contrast the *Eó Rossa* (The Yew of Ross), which was not an Otherworld tree, had a litany composed to honour it. Taking the form of *kennings*²⁴ the litany is mostly obscure in several of its references but its main theme may be succinctly recounted:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 <i>Tree of Ross</i> | 11 <i>The Trinity's mighty one...</i> |
| <i>a king's wheel</i> | <i>Mary's son</i> |
| <i>a prince's right...</i> | <i>a fruitful sea...</i> |
| <i>best of creatures</i> | <i>diadem of angels...</i> |
| 5 <i>a firm strong god</i> | 15 <i>might of victory</i> |
| <i>door of heaven</i> | <i>judicial doom...</i> |
| <i>strength of a building</i> | <i>glory of Leinster</i> |
| <i>good of a crew</i> | <i>vigour of life</i> |
| <i>a wood-pure man</i> | <i>spell of knowledge</i> |
| 10 <i>full of great bounty</i> | 20 <i>Tree of Ross</i> ²⁵ |

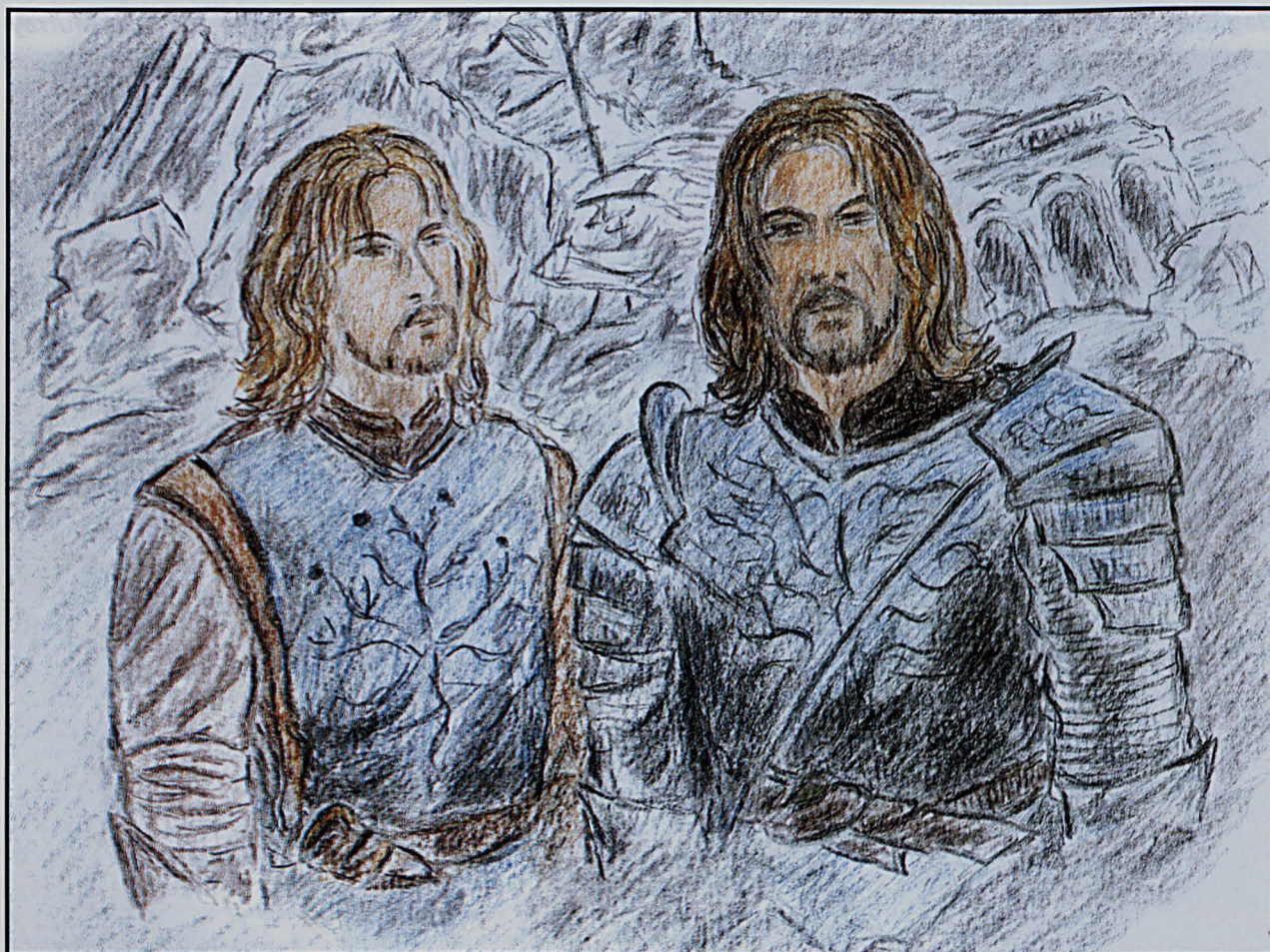
Contained within the litany of *Eó Rossa* are its numerous titles that reflect the mundane use of wood, reflected through the construction of conveyances such as chariots and ships. Other titles suggest a connection with fertility, territory and kingship as well as wisdom and judgement. Though, in general, the litany extrapolates the value ascribed to the tree during its lifetime, both temporal and sacred, I would submit that such a litany could also, with the appropriate contextual references transposed, describe the White Tree. Tolkien further links the White Tree to the renewal of a royal house through Faramir who voices his wish to see, '...the White Tree in flower again in the courts of the kings, and the Silver Crown return, and Minas Tirith in peace...'²⁶ Thus the sign of a new age is defined by circumstances whereby the return of an integral trinity of tree, crown and city is permitted. Without the presence of one the remaining two are redundant in the context of sacral rule.

Destruction of a Sacred Tree.

On Númenor the most hallowed site was Meneltarma where grew Nimloth. Sauron had subsequently ventured to Númenor and misled Ar-Pharazôn into believing that Eru was a deceit thrust upon men by the Valar. Now Nimloth was located in the Hallow of Eru and I would submit that it represented a powerful icon, not only of the Undying Lands but also of Eru. Sauron would naturally seek to destroy the tree and as he could not enter such a holy precinct he persuaded the king to act as his agent of destruction in felling Nimloth after which Sauron ritually cremated the Tree upon the altar of Armenelos the Golden; literally embodying a foundation-sacrifice pre-empting the temple's black function.²⁷ Thus, Nimloth may have also represented a potent sacral memory, the subjugation

Faramir and Boromir

Jill Thwaites



In the shadow of the tree

and passing of which allowed Sauron great sway with men and thus their devotion. In ancient Ireland there were few greater insults than the desecration of a sacred inauguration tree by an enemy. The destruction of the Eó Mugna is ascribed to Ninine the poet following the refusal of one of his demands by the king. At times it may have just been as likely to be a disenchanted member of the king's household venting his rage upon the sacred tree as that of the tribe's hostile neighbours. In the tenth to twelfth century *Annals* one finds several accounts of sacred inauguration trees being felled, uprooted or burned by rival tribes.²⁸

Association with people

When Isildur learned of the fate of Nimloth he used guise and stealth to secure a fruit from the Tree that contained a seed, but though he accomplished his mission he suffered grievous wounds by the weapons of the court's guards. The fruit was subsequently blessed and planted but it was not until the young shoot rose and opened its first leaves that Isildur was seen to make a full recovery.²⁹ Here Professor Tolkien is confirming and to an extent reinforcing the affinity between the royal lineage and the Tree. Again this finds resonance with European lore, for amongst the tales of ancient Ireland one finds that on the night Conn Cèthachach was born a marvellous tree was 'born' at the same time.³⁰ To give a more recent literary perspective – one reads in Shakespeare:

*'Tis thought the king is dead; we will not stay –
The bay trees in our country are all wither'd.'*³¹

A possible influence for Shakespeare may have been Camden who wrote the following ominous piece concerning the heirs of Brereton Hall, Cheshire:

*'A wonder it is that I shall tell you, and yet no other than I have heard verified upon the credit of many credible persons, and commonlie believed: That before any heire of this house of the Breretons dieth, there bee seene in a poole adjoining, bodies of trees swimming for certaine daies together.'*³²

Lupton writing somewhat earlier informs that 'If a fyre tree be touched, withered, or burned with lightning: it synifies, that the maister or mistresse therof shall shortly dye.'³³ Indeed, the belief that if one dreamed of a tree being uprooted in one's garden, then it was a portent of one's impending death, sur-

vived in West Sussex to the latter end of the nineteenth century. Harrison Ainsworth in his novel *Rookwood* borrows from the legend of the lime tree of Cuckfield Park, West Sussex, which preserved the tradition that when one of the lime trees shed a branch it signalled a death in the family.³⁴

A tree at Howth Castle in Ireland also shared the tradition for it was said to be bound with that of the St. Lawrences, Earls of Howth, and that when the tree falls the direct line of the family shall become extinct. In an effort to avert such a catastrophe, timber uprights were arranged to support the branches of the tree. Such instances may be survivals of the Guardian Tree, a tree that in ancient times may have been a living centre point around which a building was constructed³⁵ or would have been sited close to isolated dwellings for protection of the family. The rowan, for example, was planted close to such dwellings as it was believed that it held properties that would ward off witches. Other folk customs of northern Europe and Russia held that if a tree was planted at the birth of a child and nurtured it would grow in tandem with the child. In Aargau, Switzerland, an apple tree would have been planted at the birth of a boy and for a girl, a pear tree - it was believed that the state of the child's health would be reflected by that of the tree. Whereas in Mecklenburg the more direct method of throwing the afterbirth at the foot of a young tree was employed, and this may have instilled in the family concerned a more physically explicit link to the tree.³⁶

For sacral-kings the tree was a direct link to the land; a hal- lowed barometer that gauged the health of the soil, its fertility and thus the prosperity of the king's subjects.³⁷ If the land failed then the marriage between the land-goddess and the sacral-king was discerned to be weakened and in some instances placating the land-goddess was carried out through the sacrifice of the sacral-king. In Tolkien's canon the connection between king and Tree could, on occasion, be more cohesive: a plague took King Telemnar and the White Tree, and a White Tree died with Belector II. The Tree of the king, in the context of Middle-earth is, I suggest, strongly evocative of the fertility and health, not only of the royal-line and subsequent ruler-ships, but also of the land itself and the royal subjects who toil over it. The king's 'luck'³⁸ may derive not only from his person but also from the divinity that bestows fecundity and halcyon days upon his reign and thus that of his subjects. Homer tells us that 'when a blameless king fears the gods and upholds right judgement, then the dark earth yields wheat and barley, and the trees are laden with fruit, all from

23 Meyer, K., *Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry*, London, 1911, 3-4.

24 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

25 Stokes, W., *The Rennes Dindshenchas*, RC 16, 1895, 31-38

26 *The Two Towers*, 698.

27 *The Silmarillion*, 329.

28 Lucas, A.T., "Sacred trees of Ireland", *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 68, 16-54

29 *The Silmarillion*, 328 30 Vendryes, J., *Airne Fíngin*, Dublin, 1953 31 Richard III 32 Camden, *Britannia*

33 Lupton, T., *A Thousand Notable things, of sundries sortes*, London, 1579

34 Latham, C., *Some West Sussex superstitions lingering in 1868*, Folk-Lore Record I, London, 1878

35 See *The Saga of the Völsungs*, Branstock; 'And as in all other matters 'twas all earthly houses' crown / And the least of its wall-hung shields was a battle-world's renown / So therein withal was a marvel and a glorious thing to see / For amidst of its midmost hall-floor sprang up a mighty tree / That reared its blessings roofward and wreathed the roof-tree dear / With the glory of the summer and the garland of the year', Guerber, H.A., *The Norsemen*, Senate, London, 253

36 *The Golden Bough*, 682

37 See also Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology* Chapter 32, 'At the Kifhäuser in Thuringia sleeps Frederic Barbarossa: he sits at a round stone table, resting his head on his hand, nodding, with blinking eyes; his beard grows round the table, it has already made the circuit twice, and when it has grown round the third time, the king will awake. On coming out he will hang his shield on a withered tree, which will break into leaf, and a better time will dawn.'

38 A king's riches are a sign of his luck; in Anglo-Saxon the terms eadig and saelig are both used to mean 'lucky' and 'rich', and wealth is taken as a token of that quality on which the gods shower their blessings. Leisi, E., *Gold und Manneswert im 'Beowulf'*, Anglia, LXXI, 1953, 259 - 260

Mallorn XLIV

his good leading.³⁹

King Waldemar I of Denmark was said to possess a sacral hand whereby he 'touched the seed of the future harvest, as well as children and both sick and well among his folk.'⁴⁰ During the transition of the heathen religions to that of Christianity this virtue was, to an extent, retained as the priest-sacral-king became a saint-king 'He is a man of God,' sang Thorarain Praise-Tongue of King Olaf The Holy, 'and he can get good seasons and peace (*ar ok frid*) for every man of God himself, when though puttest forth thy prayers before the mighty pillar of the Scriptures.'⁴¹ The king possessed *mana* which was a power or force totally distinct from mere physical power or strength, the possession of which assures success, good fortune, and the like to its possessor.⁴² The king's ancestral lineage was steeped in this power and its origin was considered to originate with a deity setting apart the royal bloodline from that of common men as 'It was the virtue of their blood that lifted the sons of Woden, the Astings, the Amals, and so on, out of the ranks of the folk, though without bestowing upon any individual prince a right to the throne independent of the popular will'⁴³ To a certain degree the Tree encompasses the promise of regeneration and vigour – a reproduction of exact form and stasis – it symbolizes a sacred universal power which is recognized and revered not only by those who thrive off the land but also by those who would seek to rule over it.

Galathilion and its offspring, which are recorded, were planted and nurtured in sacral-zones within urban enclosures, thereby maintaining a continuity and affinity with the surrounding floescence and fauna. As the Tree may reside in a sacral-zone, which was fundamentally exclusive, the king would have been permitted due access to a sacrosanct propitiation through the figure of the Tree. A decline in the health of the tree would have been interpreted as a sickness in the land and a reflection of the king's failing authority. Tolkien expresses this motif, as noted above (more as a termination of reign rather than any sacral shortcomings on the part of the king), through the deaths of Galathilion's offspring and the subsequent effect on the respective kings. In Rome the fig tree that was believed to have sheltered Romulus and Remus when they were infants was known as Ruminalis, or the Ruminal fig, and there is one instance when the tree appeared to fail. Perturbation spread throughout Rome but the tree soon put forth new growth, much to Roman relief. Also in Rome one finds that a cornel tree that grew on the slope of the Palatine Hill was held to be one of the most sacred and revered objects in the city. If the tree were observed to exhibit a droop in its gait then passers-by would send up a cry and rush to the tree with buckets of water to revive it.⁴⁴

Pliny records that in front of the Temple of Quirinus in Rome grew two myrtle trees. One of these trees was called the Patrician Tree and the other was known as the Plebian Tree.

As the years passed and the Senate remained supreme in its authority the Patrician Tree thrived and grew while the Plebian Tree was meagre and shrivelled. When however the Senate's power began to fail the Patrician Tree began to deteriorate, losing its potency and falling into a state of decay. Upon this, the Plebian Tree increased in stature and girth, putting out new foliage until it had outgrown the Patrician Tree.⁴⁵ This is an allegorical narrative that no doubt served political rather than sacral ends. Yet even within such a tale the vitality of the tree is equated to that of human authority.

Conclusion

In summation one final, late medieval poem may be examined: 'The Harrowing of Hell' from the *Book of Fermoy*⁴⁶. The writing is based upon a Latin text, 'Christ's descent into Hell', and it is believed to have been known in Ireland as early as the eighth century. The poem incorporates a paradisiacal isle, 'Adam's Isle' and takes place on the morning of the resurrection with Jesus approaching the gates of Hell (Hell now resembles a fair plain). Adam, who is present, cries out that the following prophecy is being fulfilled and explains:

'One day', said Adam the noble scion, 'I sent my son to paradise of the fair-topped bright-stemmed apple trees which no man finds. He saw at a distance the withered tree at which I and my great seed fell: there he saw a child, comely, graceful, soft-eyed'.

Because of the child that bare tree had become covered with branches, leafy and bushy; his shapely fingers were shaking the apple tree, so that it became fresh.⁴⁷

The tree mentioned is the tree of the cross, here one of the trees of paradise. It was withered by sin and was revived by the hand of the Christ-child. In the renewal of the White Tree, following the defeat of Sauron, Tolkien discounts any miraculous reawakening by having King Elessar's cry of '*Yé utúvienyés!* I have found it', herald the discovery of a seedling of the White Tree flourishing on hallowed ground amongst Mindolluin's snows,⁴⁸ and it is with reverence that the Withered Tree was removed and placed in Rath Dínen⁴⁹ (in contrast to Sauron's treatment of Nimloth).

Throughout our history, both recorded and oral, the symbol of the tree has figured in numerous contexts – myth, cosmology, ritual, theology and folklore. A potent symbol of fecundity and regeneration of form it has long been associated with a perception of divinity and the riches lavished upon the rulers of men. It may be further posited that Aragorn was the dormant seed of the sacral line of Númenor, a lineage of kings here represented by the White Tree. A symbolic relationship crystallised as the Withered Tree was laid to rest and a new sapling rose in conjunction with a new age of men, as their king took the hand of his sublime, Otherworldly, bride.

39 *Odyssey*, XIX, II. 109 - 114

40 Holder, A., *Saxonis Grammatici Gesta Danorum*, Strassburg, 1886, 537.

41 *Glaelogns-Kvida*, II 36 - 39

42 de Vries, J., *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, Vol. XII:2, Berlin and Leipzig, 1937, 32 - 43

43 Kern, F., *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1939, 14

44 *The Golden Bough*, 111

45 Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, Book XV. C.35

46 Bergin, O.J., 'The Harrowing of Hell', *Ériu*, 4, 112 - 115

47 *Ibid*

48 *The Lord of the Rings*, 1008

49 *Ibid*, 858

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Jewish influences in Middle-earth

Zak Cramer

J.R.R. Tolkien's relationship with Jews and with Judaism is complex and intriguing. It is also, I hope to show, important for a complete understanding of the legendarium of Middle-earth. Midrash is at the very heart of the legendarium and there are Hebrew components in the languages not only of Dwarves and Men, but also of Elves. Tolkien's mythology has been shown to have Nordic and Anglo-Saxon roots,¹ Catholic themes,² even Persian influence³ – but there is also a Jewish presence in Middle-earth. Henry Gee has drawn attention to the influence of Hebrew on the languages of Middle-earth,⁴ and Howard Schwartz to Jewish influence on *The Silmarillion*.⁵ This paper will follow their suggestions and explore Middle-earth through Jewish eyes.

A personal grudge, a German Hobbit, and Jews

Before moving to the subject at hand, however, we must first consider the larger subject of anti-Semitism, which cannot, unfortunately, be entirely ignored in our context.

Tolkien made very clear statements against racism and anti-Semitism in letters from two different occasions. In a letter⁶ he wrote in 1941 to his son Michael, who was at that time still a cadet at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, he complains to Michael of a personal grudge against Hitler. He calls it a “burning private grudge” ...

...against that ruddy little ignoramus, Adolf Hitler ...Ruining, perverting, misapplying, and making forever accursed, that noble northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe, which I have ever loved, and tried to present in its true light.

Jews and Judaism are not mentioned directly in the 1941 letter, only implied. Jews are, however, directly mentioned in two earlier letters from 1938.⁷ Tolkien's publisher, Allen & Unwin, was planning a publication of a German translation of *The Hobbit* with Rutten & Loening of Potsdam. It seems that the German firm had asked for a statement of the author's Arisch (or Aryan) origins. Tolkien actually wrote three letters in response to this request, one to his own publisher, Stanley Unwin, and two to the German publisher. Only one of the letters written to the German publisher has been preserved, in Allen & Unwin's files along with the letter he wrote to Stanley Unwin. The third letter was sent to Germany. But Tolkien makes his views sufficiently clear in the two letters we have. In the letter to Stanley Unwin, Tolkien refers to Germany's “lunatic laws,” and he says that he is inclined to “let a German translation go hang,” going on to say:

I do not regard the (probable) absence of all Jewish blood as necessarily honourable; and I have many Jewish friends, and should regret giving any colour to the notion that I subscribed to the wholly pernicious and

unscientific race-doctrine.

In the letter to the German publisher he writes:
... if I am to understand that you are enquiring whether I am of Jewish origin, I can only reply that I regret that I appear to have no ancestors of that gifted people ...

And he later says:

I have become accustomed, nonetheless, to regard my German name with pride ... I cannot, however, forbear to comment that if impertinent and irrelevant inquiries of this sort are to become the rule in matters of literature, then the time is not far distant when a German name will no longer be a source of pride.

These statements are significant. They were not made casually. They were made in a context in which Tolkien had something to lose – at the very least, the income from a German publication.

These examples should dismiss any thought that Tolkien's love of northern literature, language, and myth should cause us to associate him with the racist and anti-Semitic movements of his time, in Germany or elsewhere. He spoke out against those movements, and against the use, or misuse, to which those movements put the literature he loved. This said, however, we shall see that Tolkien made a statement in one interview which can be said to be, at best, ambiguous. We cannot ignore it. It was occasioned by Tolkien's consideration of the Dwarves and the manner in which they reminded him of Jews.

Jewish Dwarves: with subtexts?

Khuzdul, the language of the Dwarves, mimics Hebrew, with its guttural consonants, trilateral roots, and typical constructions. To give but one example,⁸ Gimli's battle cry at the siege of the Hornberg is *Baruk Khazad!* (**Axes of the Dwarves!**). *Baruch* means **ble**ss in Hebrew and Gimli's war cry recapitulates the traditional form of a Jewish blessing – orthodox Jews can be heard saying *baruch HaShem* many, if not hundreds, of times a day. It means something like **ble**ss (or **thank**) **God**.

In an interview with the BBC in 1965,⁹ Tolkien clearly stated that Khuzdul is intended to sound Semitic, and that this language family was, in his mind, associated with Jews:

But the Dwarves are, of course, quite obviously, couldn't you say they remind you of the Jews? All their words are Semitic, obviously-constructed to be Semitic.

And in a letter to Naomi Mitchison in 1955,¹⁰ Tolkien wrote:

I do think of the 'Dwarves' like Jews: at once native and alien in their habitations, speaking the languages of the country, but with an accent due to their own private tongue ...

Mallorn XLIV

This reference to a private tongue describes Khuzdul, which the Dwarves spoke amongst themselves, but did not generally use with outsiders.¹¹ Similarly, the names by which the Dwarves were known to outsiders, the names by which we know the Dwarves in *The Lord of the Rings* and in *The Hobbit*, are not their true names. Their true names, which were from Khuzdul, were also private.¹²

These linguistic associations are both interesting and innocent, but Tolkien went further. The 1965 BBC interview was not broadcast until 1971 and it was broadcast in an edited version. In the original and unedited 1965 BBC interview,¹³ Tolkien did not confine himself to observing that Khuzdul contained Semitic constructions. He adds a description of what he thought were Jewish characteristics:

But the Dwarves are, of course, quite obviously, couldn't you say they remind you of the Jews? All their words are Semitic, obviously-constructed to be Semitic. There's a tremendous love of the artefact, and of course the immense warlike capacity of the Jews, which we tend to forget nowadays.

Even after Israel's 1967 war, which so impressed the world with Israeli "capacity," it is difficult to know, exactly, what Tolkien meant by "warlike," or whether we should understand this to have been, in his mind, a compliment or a slur. The reference to Jewish "love of the artefact" is no less uncertain. It may have been an entirely innocent remark. Because of our admiration for Tolkien as a scholar and a creative artist and as a deeply moral and religious thinker, and because of his stated opposition to anti-Semitism, we are inclined to dismiss it as such. Certainly, one would not indict a great man on the basis of only a few possibly misunderstood words.

On the other hand, it has to be faced that the phrase recalls anti-Semitic libel. It would seem to make the "desire of the hearts of dwarves"¹⁴ into something uniquely Jewish. Tom Shippey has pointed out that it is this desire that leads to Thorin's entanglement with the treacherous "bewilderment of the treasure"¹⁵ in *The Hobbit*. Did Tolkien, thus, think of Thorin as like a Jew?

The seductive power of bright objects is a central motif throughout the legendarium. Addiction to such power is the tragic flaw of Elves and Men, as well as Dwarves. It is the central sin upon which Morgoth and then Sauron build their kingdoms. The issue of whether Thorin reminded Tolkien of Jews is an important one. Did Tolkien consider the chief sin in his fantasy world as one that, in the real world, was especially associated with Jews? How much should we regard such suggestions? What weight should we give to that single 1965 statement, as versus Tolkien's categorical rejection of anti-Semitism in his 1938 letters to his publishers, or against his personal "grudge" with Hitler?

A full discussion of this problem in the context of the social background is beyond the scope of this paper. My purpose here is, for the sake of completeness, to ask what must be considered a reasonable question. But also, more importantly, I want to show that, whatever Tolkien's feelings may have been concerning Dwarves and Jews, the influence of the Hebrew language and of Jewish myth on his writing was not confined to Dwarves. In fact, that influence was pervasive and, for me at least, completely overwhelms any misgivings about Jewish-Dwarf equations. Let us then turn now to look further at that influence.

Numenor and Israel, Adunaic and Hebrew, echoes and intent
Khuzdul is not the only language spoken in Middle-earth that is inspired by Hebrew. There are Hebrew elements to be found in Adunaic, Sindarin, and even in Quenya. We will look first at Adunaic, the language of Numenor.

In the summer of 1966, Clyde Kilby worked with Tolkien, helping him with his correspondence and papers in the hopes of furthering *The Silmarillion* into publication. In his memoir,¹⁶ he says:

The Numenorean language, he informed me, is based on Hebrew.

As with Khuzdul, this statement refers, of course, to the language's internal structure and not to its semantic content. But there are semantic pointers: even the very name Adunaic is Hebraic. In Hebrew *adon* means **lord** and is used both as a divine title as well as a human honorific. The country name Numenor is Quenya, and means **the land of the west**, and Adunaic means, in Adunaic, **speech of the west**. But the resonance with Hebrew *adon* and the sense of Numenor as the land of lords cannot be ignored. The Numenoreans were the lords of Middle-earth in the second age. And their descendents were lords in at least the beginning of the third age and, through the line of Elessar (or Aragorn), in the fourth age as well.

Furthermore, the Numenorean civilization in the second age is a religious civilization, explicit religious ritual being otherwise very unusual in the legendarium. This religion was, like Judaism, monotheistic. In 1954 Tolkien composed a letter to Father Robert Murray¹⁷ in which the Numenoreans are, at least with respect to their religion, said to be "like" Jews. Tolkien writes:

The Numenoreans thus began a great new good, and as monotheists; but like the Jews (only more so) with only one physical centre of 'worship': the summit of the mountain Meneltarma ...

Both the religion and the language of Numenor are resonant with the flavour of the ancient Near East. They are, for the peoples of the third age of Middle-earth, the classical civilization forming the background of their historical consciousness. Perhaps more significantly for Tolkien's Christian beliefs, it was from the Numenoreans that the kings of Gondor and Arnor were descended and it was from that line of descent that the return of kingship was looked for.

However, in another letter composed in 1967,¹⁸ Tolkien writes about his knowledge and interest in ancient Near Eastern languages, but backs away from acknowledging any intentional relationship between Numenor and the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. This is the famous Drafts for a letter to 'Mr. Rang'. In it, he says:

I may mention two cases where I was not, at the time of making use of them, aware of 'borrowing', but where it is probable, but by no means certain, that the names were nonetheless 'echoes'. Erech, the place where Isildur set the covenant stone ... as one interested in antiquity and notably in the history of languages and 'writing', I knew and had read a good deal about Mesopotamia, I must have known Erech the name of that most ancient city ...

But:

In any case the fact that Erech is a famous name is of no



Smaug

Jeffrey Macleod

Mallorn XLIV

importance to The L.R. and no connexions in my mind or intention between Mesopotamia and the Numenoreans or their predecessors can be deduced.

Borrowing is contrasted with echoes, and unconscious use is contrasted with intention and meaning. I am inclined to regard Tolkien's dismissal of such intentions as disingenuous. That much of the infrastructure of world building, both linguistic and thematic, may come in the form of echoes and unconscious influence, I do not doubt. That these echoes are as often as not unintended – perhaps. But I cannot believe that they have no significance.

In this same letter (to Mr. Rang) Tolkien holds forth at length against those who, like the author of this paper, look for real world sources for his fictional languages. He describes such a search for sources as “private amusements” and “valueless for the elucidation or interpretation of my fiction.” They are “irrelevant” and betray “little understanding of how a philologist would go about it,” that is, about how a philologist would invent languages.

Indeed, any author wishes for his fiction to be taken for fact and does not like anyone to look too closely at anything else. What's more, Tolkien rightly directs our attention to the greatest aspect of his art: the internal (and fictional) histories, etymologies, and relationships of his various languages. The internal, fictional philology does deserve our attention – it is magnificent and I do not know of anything else quite like it – but it does not deserve our undivided attention.

Tolkien's acknowledgement of linguistic echoes in his work should encourage us to take them seriously, even if Tolkien himself did not. Whether or not this is anything more than a personal amusement, I will have to leave to other readers, both Tolkien's and mine, to decide. Tolkien says that the religion of Numenor is like Judaism, not that it *is* Judaism. Similarly, we should appreciate the fact that Adunaic is like the language of ancient Israel, not that it *is* the language of ancient Israel. Numenor has its own unique identity and character, but that character is formed out of an echo that has a referent in our world and history, an echo whose resonance adds a feeling of reality and significance to the fantasy landscape.

Elvish and Hebrew, Elves and Jews

Tolkien was a student of the history of the English language and, also, of what he called the “northern” languages, literatures, and mythologies. He particularly admired the Finnish language, which inspired Quenya, the language of the Noldorin Elves, and Welsh, which inspired Sindarin, the language of the Grey Elves.¹⁹ It is difficult to find a biography of Tolkien, however brief or in depth, which does not recite these facts. I do not contest them in any way, except to say that, when treated as a final statement of Tolkien's knowledge and interests, they do not do justice to his learning or his imagination. Tolkien's scholarship and art had a breadth and richness and depth of meaning that such limited descriptions leave unrecognized. Tolkien was a philologist and a linguist of the first rank, and his interests as such were not limited to the area of his immediate expertise. Nonetheless, the image persists of Tolkien as a scholar of northern literatures only. This approach to Tolkien has indeed been very useful and has produced a rich harvest of insights to be found in the works of many Tolkien scholars. But such a characterisation of the work and the man is not alone sufficient to exhaust the rich tapestry of language and meaning that is the legendarium of Middle-earth.

I have found that the recognition of Hebrew and pseudo-Hebraic forms in Khuzdul and Adunaic is acceptable in academic discourse. But the statement that there is also a significant Hebraic component in Elvish has been met with less agreement. Such a component is, indeed, surprising. It is one thing for Dwarves and Numenorean Men to speak Semitic languages, but the Elvish languages are the premier languages of Middle-earth. They are the sexy languages, the languages that in my day every college student tried to learn. To say that these also have significant Semitic components, deeply and skillfully interwoven with their other “northern” elements, comes as a surprise to many Tolkien readers.

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo and his companions attempt to cross the Misty Mountains over the Redhorn pass, under dread Caradhras. In the mountains, Gimli treats us to a recitation of place names in Khuzdul.²⁰ This eruption of Semitic sounds into the text of *The Lord of the Rings* initiates a pattern that only increases and intensifies as the fellowship crosses the mountains into the lands of the east. The place names all become, not surprisingly, eastern sounding. The casual reader might think that place names in Mordor like *Barad-dur*, *Gorgoroth*, and *Sammath Naur* are, like the place names mentioned by Gimli, names foreign to the Common Speech and to the west – in this case, names from the Black Speech. But they are not. Those are all the Elvish names for those places. *Barad-dur*, for instance, in the Black Speech is *Lugburz*.²¹ The feel of the east that one gets in names like *Harad* (and *Haradrim*), *Lebennin*, and *Rammas Echor* is real enough – these forms are all vaguely Semitic – but the language in every one of these cases is Sindarin.

The name *Rohirrim* clearly has Hebraic inspiration. While the language of Rohan, at least as presented in the “translated” text of *The Lord of the Rings*, is clearly inspired by Anglo-Saxon,²² the name *Rohirrim* is not native to that language – it is the Sindarin word for that people. In Hebrew, nouns and verbs are largely built up out of a system of three letter, or trilateral, roots. When *im* is added to a root of this kind, it is the standard way to make a plural or collective noun. *Rohirrim*, *Galadhrim*, and *Haradrim* are all typical of this very normal Hebrew construction.

Tolkien's fictional *Etymologies* divide words of this kind differently, seeing *rim* as a root suffix, rather than the Hebraic *im*.²³ But we should not confuse fictional etymologies with real world inspiration. Indeed, once again, Tolkien may have wanted us to take his fictional world with its fictional linguistic history for fact. But we are here nonetheless concerned with the real world inspiration of a literary creation. *The Etymologies* are fictional constructions of fictional histories of fictional words in a fictional world. Of more interest to us is the real world contention that the words discussed above are from languages inspired by Welsh or Finnish. Such a contention invites us to consider real world resonance, despite *The Etymologies*. Neither Welsh nor Finnish produces words of the *Rohirrim*, *Galadhrim*, or *Haradrim* type as regularly as Hebrew does.

Elvish Hebraisms are not limited to place names or collective nouns. *Galadriel*, *Tinuviel*, *Amroth*, *Gilthoniel*, *Iarwain Ben-Adar*, *Melkor*, and *Elessar* are only a few examples of Hebraic sounding personal names from Elvish languages.

Names like *Galadriel*, *Tinuviel*, and *Gilthoniel* are typical of Hebrew names that are constructed by adding the Hebrew word for **God**, *El*, as a suffix to a root word. *Michael*, *Gabriel*, *Raphael*, *Ariel*, and *Uriel* are all well known examples of this



War of Wrath

Jef Murray

Mallorn XLIV

naming tradition.

With the Sindarin name *Galadriel* and the name of the people she rules, the *Galadhrim*, despite the appearance of the one root as *galad*, with a *d*, and of the other as *galadh*, with a *dh*, we can clearly see the relationship between the two, with the addition of the *im* suffix to form the plural noun, and the addition of the theophorous suffix to form the name.

In a letter that Tolkien wrote to Sigrid Fowler, dated December 29, 1968,²⁴ preserved in the archives of Unwin & Allen, Tolkien talks about the relationship of his fictional vocabulary to William Blake's. Tolkien says that he had just been reading Blake's prophetic books and:

... discovered to my astonishment several similarities of nomenclature ... eg: *Tiriël, Vala, Orc* ... most of Blake's invented names are as alien to me as his 'mythology' ... nor due to any imitation on my part: his mind ... and art ... have no attraction for me at all. Invented names are likely to show chance similarities between writers familiar with Greek, Latin, and especially Hebrew nomenclature ...

Tolkien would seem to be saying, here, that "chance" similarities between Blakian names (like *Tiriël*) and Tolkienian names (like *Galdriel* and *Tinuviel*) are because both authors (Blake and himself) are familiar with classical languages – especially Hebrew!

The letter goes on to talk about how the word *orc* is, in any case, derived from Middle English. But is it really not obvious that the reference to Hebrew is about the name *Tiriël*?

Hebrew names such as *Gabriel* and *Raphael*, and their Sindarin echoes like *Galadriel* and *Tinuviel*, are examples of a naming tradition that has been used since ancient times for angels.²⁵ Medieval literature is filled with angels and, I suspect, it is in these Hebrew angel names that we should look for the origin of many of the traditions in the names of faerie and in modern fantasy and science fiction.

That the same sound is, with an entirely different history and unrelated etymology, found in the English word *elf*, should not blind us to the Hebraic nature of names like *Galadriel*. In fact, the coincidence of sound between English *elf* and Hebrew *El* seems to have been of great interest to Tolkien, as evidenced in the pseudo-autobiographical book *The Lost Road*. That book tells the story of a young man, who, like Tolkien, loved the study of northern languages more than Latin and who, also like Tolkien, "hears" in his head words from some long lost language of another time and place. The young man has a visionary experience of ancient Numenor and brings the knowledge of that land back to our world.

The young man's name was *Alboin*. In the story, his father explains to him that this is a Latin form of the Old English *Aelfwine*, which means **Elf Friend**. This is an important name. The king who begins the line of which Aragorn is born is named *Elendil*, again meaning **Elf Friend**.²⁶ And we see Frodo hailed as *elf friend* when he meets Gildor Inglorion in the Woody End of the Shire.²⁷

Tolkien's middle name was *Reuel*, a Hebrew name of the same type as *Galadriel*. *Reuel* means, in Hebrew, **God's Friend**, or, more to the point, **El's Friend**. It was a family name inherited from his father. Tolkien in turn gave it to each of his four children, who gave it to their children.²⁸ It is hard to imagine that Tolkien, so interested in language and names, would not take an interest in his own middle name, or that the coincidence in sound and meaning between his own name and

the name of a character in an autobiographical story is not intentional. This coincidence of names – *Reuel*, *Aelfwine*, *Elendil*, and *elf friend* – is like the proverbial chance-meeting that Gandalf refers to in *Unfinished Tales*.²⁹ That is, whatever providence guided the coincidence of sound in the English *elf* and the Hebrew *El*, it clearly delighted Tolkien and he made good use of it. I do not mean to suggest that *Elendil* should be thought of as meaning friend of God, but rather that there exists a powerful resonance and echo of the Hebrew meaning behind the fictional *Elvish*.

In the Hebrew cadence of the language and names of the Elves, I hear the voices of rabbis and Midrashim echoing across the divide that separates our world from Middle-earth. For me, the Elves often seem like some kind of fantastic woodland Jews. Their ancient culture, literature, and history, their sense of exile, their Biblical sounding names, and their Hebraic language, all combine to enormously echo the Jewish experience. If, instead of being a combination of Hebrew and German, Yiddish had been a combination of Hebrew and Finnish, then it might have looked something like Quenya. Or, if it had been a combination of Hebrew and Welsh, it might have resembled Sindarin.

Biblical and Midrashic themes: The Tzohar and the Silmarils

A paper on Jewish influences in Middle-earth would not be complete without some mention of the Biblical background for so much of what Tolkien accomplished. Much that might be said here is too obvious to belabor at any great length: the Biblical style of *The Silmarillion*, the echoing of Cain's murder of Abel³⁰ in Feanor's kinslaying³¹ and in Smeagol's murder of his friend Deagol,³² the two trees of Valinor³³ and the two trees of Eden,³⁴ and salvation on the back of eagle's wings.³⁵ All of these and many other Biblical echoes can be ascribed to Tolkien's Christianity, without reference to anything specifically Jewish. Not so with the *tzohar* and the *Silmarils*.

The word *tzohar* is what Biblical scholars call a hapax legomenon,³⁶ that is, a word that occurs only once in Biblical literature and whose meaning is obscure. It should not be confused with the word *zohar*, a word that means **light** or a **bright flash** and is the title of a famous kabbalistic book. The words *tzohar* and *zohar* may be related, but they are not the same.

The word *tzohar* occurs in the Book of Genesis³⁷ as part of the divine instructions given to Noah for the building of the arc. Noah is told to put a *tzohar* in the arc. Some Biblical scholars, associating *tzohar* with other words connected with light, like *zohar*, have suggested that it means **window**.³⁸ But rabbinic tradition gave the word a very different meaning. In the Talmud and in Midrashic tradition,³⁹ the *tzohar* is a jewel that contains a ray of magic light, often said to be the primordial light created on the first day of creation. Rabbinic tradition thus solved two problems at once: what happened to the primordial light, and what is the *tzohar*.

The Biblical text describes the creation of light on the first day,⁴⁰ but the creation of the sun and the moon on the fourth day.⁴¹ Like the difference between the light of the trees of Valinor and the later light of the sun and moon, so also in rabbinic tradition the light of the sun and moon is utterly different from the primordial light created on the first day.⁴² So, asked the rabbis, what happened to the primordial light? It was hidden away, says the Midrash, for the righteous in the world to come. But some of it reappeared in history in the

Jewish influences in Middle-earth

form of the *tzohar*, a magic stone that contained a ray of the first light. And Midrashic texts recount innumerable stories of what became of it. It was given to Noah to provide light during the forty days of the flood. It was the eternal light hanging in the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple. It had many adventures, passed down since that time secretly amongst the wise, and will no doubt come into the possession of the messiah – who, we pray, should come speedily in our time.

Did Tolkien know this Jewish legend? Are the Silmarils inspired by or an echo of the *tzohar*? Is Earendil, the mariner who carries a Silmaril over the sea, an echo of Noah, who carried the *tzohar* across a flooded world? Perhaps it is sufficient to say that great minds think alike. That is, both the rabbis and Tolkien confronted the Biblical mystery of the primordial light and what happened to it after the creation of the sun and the moon. And both the rabbis and Tolkien solved the problem in similar ways. Be this as it may, the Silmaril does nonetheless recall to anyone familiar with Jewish legend the stories of the *tzohar* and is just one more way in which the Elves, longing for the lost light of the west captured in the Silmarils, remind me of Jews, wandering through the long exile of the Children of Israel, telling of the magic stone that contained the first light of the world and of the world to come.

Mannish languages of the Third Age – linguistic reality or literary conceit?

In a letter that Tolkien wrote to Rhona Beare on October 14, 1958,⁴³ he talks about the five Istari. He tells us about three of them (Saruman, Gandalf, and Radagast), but he doesn't know what happened to the other two. Tolkien thinks maybe these other two went east or south. He even speculates (an attack on gnostic heresies?) that they there failed, as did Saruman, and established "secret cults and magic traditions." But what's interesting here is the way he says it:

I think they went as emissaries to distant regions, East and South, far out of Numenorean range ...

The West, the region of the Common Speech, is figured as the "Numenorean range", just as Westron, or the Common Speech, is derived from Adunaic, the language of Numenor. In Appendix F,⁴⁴ Tolkien tells the story of how Adunaic evolved into what became known in the Third Age as the Common Speech, and in a letter dated December 17, 1972, to Richard Jeffrey,⁴⁵ Tolkien describes Westron as:

... a language about as mixed as modern English, but basically derived from the native language of the Numenoreans ...

The language the hobbits spoke after coming to the Shire was the Common Speech,⁴⁶ although their calendar names and some of their personal names were preserved from older sources – sources that were, presumably, related to archaic Mannish languages.

The language spoken in Rohan was not Westron and, like the older sources of Hobbit calendar names, also came from "an archaic Mannish language".⁴⁷ But the Common Speech was spoken in Rohan also, and the lords of that people used

the Common Speech.⁴⁸

These other, archaic, Mannish languages, moreover, including both the speech of the Shire and of Rohan, are also in the same family of languages that includes Adunaic and Westron. In Appendix F to *The Lord of the Rings*,⁴⁹ the whole history of Mannish languages is recounted, from the tongue of the archaic "Fathers of Men", through Numenorean, to the Common Speech of the Third Age.

We have already seen that Tolkien stated that the Numenorean language, Adunaic, is based on Hebrew. The temptation is strong to say that all the languages of the West are Hebraic, one way or another. If these were real languages, such a revelation would be important. But Tolkien described at great length⁵⁰ how, for the purposes of *The Lord of the Rings*, he translated the languages of Rohan and the Shire and the Common Speech into English – various kinds of English – the various relationships of the different kinds of English mirroring the actual relationships of these three languages. Despite some very suggestive examples of words from these languages (*Banazir* for *Samwise*⁵¹), we do not really know very much about them. So far as the reader of *The Lord of the Rings* is concerned, there is certainly little or no experience of these languages. Here, again, we must remind ourselves that we are dealing with the literary analysis of a novel, not the linguistic analysis of real languages. The background existence of these languages is a literary conceit. Unlike Khuzdul and Sindarin and, for reader's of *The Silmarillion* at least, Adunaic and Quenya – the Mannish languages do not have real existence for the reader. Rather, it is the masterful juxtaposition of the various forms of English that, here, take centre stage. Although the Numenorean, and thus Hebraic, background of all these languages is suggestive, they do not have the literary force that Adunaic, Khuzdul, and the Elvish languages have. Whatever language the hobbits "really" spoke – my experience as a reader is that they are very English.

Conclusion:

The Jewish influences in Middle-earth that I have drawn attention to in this paper can be thought of as a kind of encyclopedia of traditional Western attitudes towards Jews. In the section on Dwarves, we have wrestled with questions of anti-Semitism. In the section on Numenor, we have thought about ancient Jewish civilization in its role as the classical source from which Tolkien's real-world religion, Catholicism, came. And in the section on Elves, we have considered the spiritual Yiddish culture of the Diaspora – a culture of memory, mysticism, and light. Did Tolkien actually intend such a catalogue? We cannot know, of course, but I think it unlikely. Rather, I suggest that part of the greatness of Tolkien's art is in its complexity – a complexity that mirrors Tolkien's own mind, interests, beliefs, and extensive knowledge. This is why narrow readings of Tolkien as Nordic, or as a mythology for England, or some such, are wanting. My offering here has been in an attempt to contribute to a much more complex view of Tolkien, as well as celebrating what I, as a Jew, have experienced in my own personal journey there and back again.

Mallorn XLIV

Notes and references

- 1 Shippey, 2002, 2003
- 2 Birzer, 2003
- 3 Allen, 1985
- 4 Gee, 2004, 43-48
- 5 Schwartz, 88
- 6 Carpenter, 1981, 55-56
- 7 Carpenter, 1981, 37-38
- 8 *RK*, Appendix F, 411
- 9 Tolkien, 1965
- 10 Carpenter, 1981, 229
- 11 *RK*, Appendix F, 411
- 12 *RK*, Appendix F, 411
- 13 Tolkien, 1965
- 14 *The Hobbit*, 45
- 15 Shippey, 2002, 170
- 16 Kilbey, 24
- 17 Carpenter, 1981, 204
- 18 Carpenter, 1981, 384
- 19 Carpenter, 1977, 59, 94
- 20 *FR*, II, iii, 296
- 21 *TT*, III, iii, 49
- 22 Shippey, 2002, 91-93; and Carpenter, 1981, 381
- 23 *HoME*, V,428
- 24 Hammond & Scull, 25
- 25 Trachtenberg, 98-99
- 26 *The Silmarillion*, 280
- 27 *FR*, I, iii, 90
- 28 McClusky, 9
- 29 *Unfinished Tales*, 326
- 30 Genesis 4
- 31 *The Silmarillion*, 87
- 32 *FR*, I, ii, 62
- 33 *The Silmarillion*, 38-39
- 34 Genesis 2:9
- 35 Exodus 19:4; and *RK*, VI, iv, 229
- 36 Klein, 542
- 37 Genesis 6:16
- 38 Klein, 542
- 39 Schwartz, 85-88
- 40 Genesis 1:3
- 41 Genesis 1:14-19
- 42 Schwartz, 83
- 43 Carpenter, 1981, 280
- 44 *RK*, 406-407
- 45 Carpenter, 1981, 425
- 46 *RK*, Appendix F, 408
- 47 Carpenter, 1981, 175
- 48 *RK*, Appendix F, 407
- 49 *RK*, 406-407
- 50 *RK*, Appendix F, 411; and Carpenter, 1981, 175
- 51 *RK*, Appendix F, 414

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Tolkien-on-sea

The view from the shores of Middle-earth

John Ellison

“I do like to be beside the sea-side.” That traditional time-honoured lay used to typify much of the character of England and the English. It calls up, for those who experienced the reality, memories of the English people on holiday in the days before their habits were radically changed by charter air travel; images of muddy (Weston-Super-Mare), or shingly (Eastbourne) beaches; concerts or entertainments on piers or bandstands; sticks of rock (Blackpool or others), and, of course, seaside boarding houses and their formidable landladies. These traditional pleasures were very much part of Tolkien's own lifestyle, as a glance at the biography by Humphrey Carpenter (Carpenter, 1977), or at John and Priscilla Tolkien's memoir in photographs, *The Tolkien Family Album* (Tolkien & Tolkien, 1992), will confirm.

Note, however, that the song hymns the pleasure of being *beside* the sea, not *on* it. Indeed the expression, ‘all at sea’, signifies something very different. England, Scotland and Wales have always, it is true, been regarded as sea-faring nations *par excellence*, and they like to think of themselves as such. In reality, though, only a small minority of their populations, principally, of course, sailors by profession, have otherwise than in time of war regularly, “gone down to the sea in ships, and carried on their business in great waters.” Serious or extensive voyaging has always either been the prerogative of the wealthy, or has fallen to those whose employment or profession required them to travel far overseas. “Messing about in boats”, on lakes or rivers, is, and has been, the province of most of the ordinary people of this country; and one will recall that even this was too adventurous and dangerous a pastime for the majority of hobbits. The genre of ‘sea-stories’ on the other hand is a well established one, as represented, for instance, by the Captain Hornblower series, and has perhaps helped to foster a self-image of the English as natural sailors. Whether it was at all to Tolkien's taste, I don't know. He did make one long sea-voyage in his life, but as he was only three years old at the time it can hardly have represented a formative experience for the rest of his life. His subsequent sea-going experience seems to have been confined to occasional crossings of the English and Irish channels, either in the course of transport in the First World War, or made necessary in the course of holidays in Europe or Ireland. (As anyone who has experienced the old steamer trip from Fishguard to Rosslare - and the Holyhead-Dublin one wasn't all that much more enticing - could recall, it was anything but a romantic or life-enhancing sea-going experience.)

All this was natural enough for Tolkien; having, as he did, a large family to bring up and educate, he didn't have any opportunity of extensive sea travel in any case. In the easier circumstances of his retirement he could no doubt have afforded it, but he doesn't seem to have been in the least interested in the possibility of it as far as one can see.

The point I am trying to make is that, interpreting the sig-

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nificance that the lore, legend, and presence of the sea assumes in Tolkien's world, it is the seashore, the sea's margin, that represents reality; the sea itself is a symbol. The actual practice of seafaring, or sailing, and of life aboard ship, are not Tolkien's, or our, concern. Even the

exploits of the Numenoreans are seen from a distance, and largely in a critical, sometimes highly critical, spirit. The sea stands for everything that divides the real world from the unseen, imagination from reality, the unconscious, dreaming mind from waking experience, myth from history, and above all, this life from the hereafter. I want to consider how this crucially important image of “the sundering sea” arises and develops in the course of Tolkien's life and work, and also to set it somewhat in the context of romanticism, looked at more widely over the previous century.

It is not Tolkien's first writings, however, but his early drawings and paintings that provide a starting point. Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull, in their study of Tolkien's paintings and sketches, have shown how thoroughly his artistic work, as it developed during the course of his life, is bound up with his writings and his developing conceptions of his, ‘sub-created’, world. And in the beginning, his early art stands in front of the gateway which leads to that world. Seashore related subjects make an early appearance in the water colour of two boys on a beach (dated by Hammond and Scull to 1902), (1995, op cit. pl. 5) and of a ship at anchor, evidently produced somewhat later. (Hammond & Scull, 1992, op cit. pl. 6). More subjects, from Lyme Regis or Whitby, (Hammond & Scull, 1995, op cit. pls. 8 & 9) occupy him later on in his teens. There is nothing at all surprising about any of this while he is on holiday. But a highly significant stylistic change makes itself felt when, at the age of twenty-two, he tackles the Cornish coast instead.

At this time, his artistic output is beginning to comprise, besides topographical or realistic subjects, semi-abstract or imaginary scenes or ‘visions’, which he describes as “ish-nesses.” It is instructive to observe how the fantastic, sea-sculpted rock-scapes that provide the subject-matter of two of his topographical works of this period merge into and prepare one for some of the ‘visionary’ works of the same period, notably a ‘seashore’ type of vision like ‘Water, Wind and Sand’. (Hammond & Scull, 1995, op cit. pl. 42). This latter work is associated with the early poem “Sea Chant of an Elder Day,” written, according to Carpenter, (1977, p74) on December 4, 1914, and based on memories of the Cornish holiday of a few months earlier. The poem included the following lines:

*I sat on the ruined margin of the deep-voiced echoing sea
Whose roaring foaming music crashed in endless cadency.
On the land besieged for ever in an aeon of assaults
And torn in towers and pinnacles and caverned in
great vaults.*

Mallorn XLIV

These lines are interesting in that they introduce the motive of the sea as on impersonal force, alien and disruptive, and in doing so they provide a link with Tolkien's childhood dream image of "the great wave towering up and advancing ineluctably over the trees and green fields, poised to engulf him and all around him." This latter image will make its importance felt later on when the layer of the mythology first introducing Numenor comes to be laid down. At this stage in Tolkien's development, the imagery of the poem and the paintings just mentioned, is linked closely with *The Book of Lost Tales*, especially with the similar imagery which surrounds the 'Shoreland Pipers', the Solosimpi, the early counterpart of the Telerin Elves of the more developed mythology. The Solosimpi take up residence in Tol Eressea, once that "floating island" has been anchored to the sea bed by Osse (in defiance of Ulmo, his nominal superior).

In *The Book of Lost Tales*, considered as a whole (except the final Tale, which I shall come to in a moment), the sea does not carry any particular significance, beyond contributing to the whole scheme of mythological imagery; it does not, in effect, provide anything more than a picturesque part of the scenery. All three branches of the Elvish peoples, including the Solosimpi, are transported by "floating islands", the others to Valinor itself, by Ulmo, or in opposition by Osse, as above. The sea only represents a subordinate part of the mythic scheme at this stage, and to begin with the realism that would be aroused by references to actual ship-building or sea voyaging is quite absent. Nevertheless when the Solosimpi are settled in Tol Eressea they are instructed by Ulmo in the arts of shipbuilding and navigation, and they become distinguished by their skill in and mastery of them, especially when they also are transported to Valinor.

All the same, they don't appear to do very much in terms of seafaring or substantial voyaging; nor do their successors the Teleri: at any rate if they do we don't get to hear anything about it. Their delight in sailing perhaps merely expressed itself in what might a little frivolously be interpreted as a series of glorified pub-crawls around the coasts of Aman and the Lonely Isle; a sort of mythic ancestor of the sailing weekends that the Northfarthing Smial used to (and perhaps will again) enjoy about the Suffolk and Essex coasts.

It is with the last of the Lost Tales, which deals with the efforts of Eriol, now in his character of Ælfwine of England, whom we encountered at the very beginning, at 'The Cottage of Lost Play' in Tol Eressea itself, to reach the Lonely Isle, that the sea, and with it the seashore, begins to take on a significance transcending that of mere stage scenery.

He now appears in a new tale, as a voyager from a far distant land, Belerion (Britain), battered and frustrated the perils and setbacks of the journey. Belerion is overrun by the Forodwaith, the men from the north, who may be equated with the Vikings of historical record. Ælfwine takes ship from the far south-west - in other words, Cornwall. Even though all this is overlaid with layer upon layer of legend, there is underlying reality in the idea of Ælfwine as a migrant from our own world, as his Anglo-Saxon name makes clear. Therefore a structured contrast has been set up between 'our world' corresponding to Tolkien's in its guise as 'feigned history', and the mythology proper. It is hardly possible to overstate the importance of this stage in the evolution of the "legendarium" as a whole; that is actually an imprecise term because so much of it will eventually be presented in the guise of 'feigned history', the convention accepted by readers that the material simply represents a distillation of actual 'historical records',

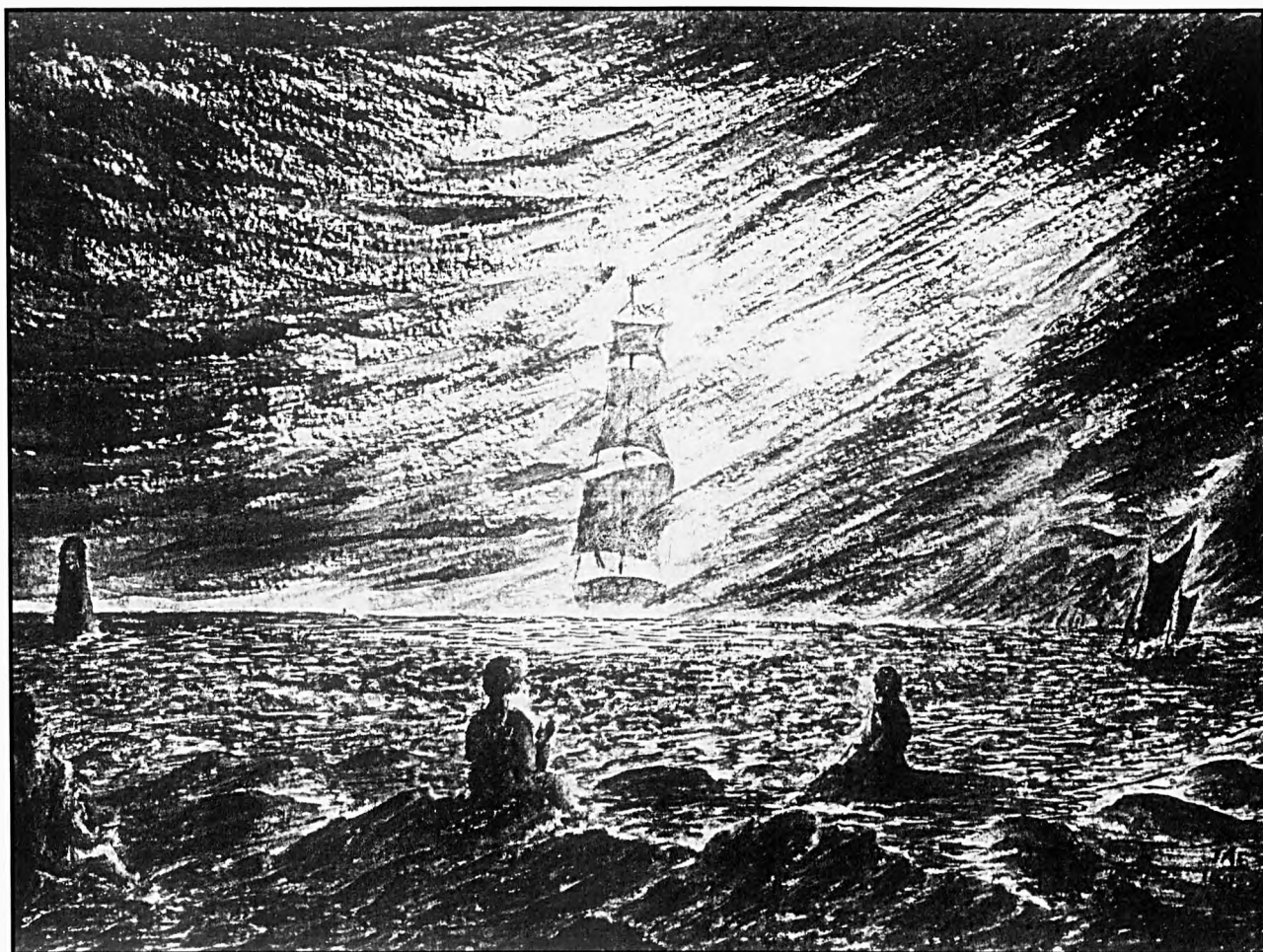
which by accident have been handed down to a later Age of the World. It is not too much to say that the confusion of 'myth' with 'history' is the driving force throughout Tolkien's 'sub'-creative life, and that the sea represents the boundary line dividing them.

In the last of the 'Lost Tales', therefore, the hostility of 'the cruel sea' has finally been awakened. Ælfwine only reaches Tol Eressea after protracted voyaging and repeated false landfalls. The sea separating Belerion from Tol Eressea and Valinor has become, very nearly, an impassable barrier. The pursuing Forodwaith, who have taken over Belerion, likewise experience shipwrecks and extreme perils. It is nevertheless a notable feature of the Tale that it contains the barest minimum of reference to the actual practice of sailing, its labours, dangers, and frequent disasters. There are descriptions of arrival or departure, but none of actual days at sea.

This will remain characteristic of Tolkien's writing throughout the remainder of his life; there is no single major scene in any of his writings actually set on board ship. The practice of seafaring is the mainstay of Aldarion's existence in the (unfInished) tale of the failed relationship with Erendis that provided a turning point in the history of Numenor. Yet while we are told about his long absences at sea, and his departures from and returns to Numenor, we hear nothing about his life as a sailor and sea-captain, or the lives of his crews. To the connoisseur of the genre of sea-stories, that would have been the most interesting thing about him.

The next major section of Tolkien's creative life represents the periods covered by volumes III and IV of Christopher Tolkien's *The History of Middle-earth*, namely *The Lays of Beleriand*, and *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. These display, conspicuously, a progressive weighting of the material in favour of the history of the Elves of Beleriand and, indeed, concentrate on an extremely limited span of time at the end of which nearly the whole of Beleriand has been overrun by Morgoth. This is reflected in the respective chronologies of Valinor and Beleriand; the former being given in multiples of years. Such events as the departure of the Elves from Valinor, their long march northwards, and their arrival and establishment on the far north-west of Middle-earth, though superficially appearing to occupy a relatively brief space of time, must correspond in mythic terms, to a *Volkwanderung* extending over perhaps several hundred years. Tolkien is being imperceptibly pulled away from his original understanding of his world purely and simply as mythology, towards something more complex and ambiguous.

Nevertheless, because so much of the *Quenta Silmarillion* is concerned with events and peoples within Beleriand itself, away from the sea, there is little opportunity for the sea, or the sea-longing, to develop as a motive in its own right, and likewise the *Lays of Beleriand* themselves do not provide anything in the way of subject-matter or scope. There are, however, two important instances where the sea does play, whether expressly or by implication, a major role; the episode of the Kinslaying and the subsequent theft of the ships of the Teleri, and that of the crossing of the Helcaraxë and the subsequent burning of the ships by order of Fëanor. These episodes are associated with the curse of the Noldorin exiles proclaimed in "The Prophecy of the North," which will resonate throughout the First Age. The Helcaraxë once crossed, the Noldor, unrepentant, are (until the eventual mission of Earendil to the Valar) excluded from returning to Aman. The sea that separates Aman from Middle-earth, from having been initially an impassable barrier, or virtually so, is in the process



John Ellison

Towards the Uttermost West (after Caspar David Friedrich)

of becoming an impermissible one.

The next stage in the sequence consists of the early account of the Fall of Numenor contained in volume V of the *History of Middle-earth* series, *The Lost Road*. (Tolkien, 1987). If one looks retrospectively at Tolkien's writing from beginning to end, this appears as a watershed in his creative life as much as *The Hobbit* does, written as it was at very much the same time as the latter was published. Christopher Tolkien has shown (Tolkien, 1997, pp 7-10) that the inception of the 'Numenorean' complex of tales arises directly from the agreement Tolkien made with C.S.Lewis that they would write, each respectively a story about time travel and space travel. The essentials of the story of Numenor and its fall of course are familiar. Those among Men who have aided the Elves and the Valar in the war against Morgoth are rewarded with "The Land of Gift", the island, Numenor, in the seas west of Middle-earth; they are forbidden to sail to the west, initially beyond Tol Eressea but finally, out of sight of their west coasts. After many generations they rebel against the ban, at the instigation of Sauron; in consequence Numenor is overwhelmed, and Tol Eressea and Valinor are removed from the circles of the world; sailors to the west can now only reach fresh lands and eventually return to their starting point; the world is 'made round' and the former 'straight road' to the uttermost West only remains in legend, permitted only to

those Elves who are leaving Middle-earth for ever. The sea, therefore, has become a total and impassable barrier between the seen and unseen worlds.

The successive texts embodying the legend, as we now have them laid out for us in *The History of Middle-earth*, reveal the remarkable series of changes and variants which Tolkien introduced into the outline of the story as it evolved, especially at a time, seemingly early in 1946, when *The Lord of the Rings* still lay unfinished, and *The Notion Club Papers* had been conceived. In the end, later on in his life, with the *Akallabeth*, Tolkien largely returns to the original conception of the Fall of Numenor but also incorporates the new and additional material that entered the story with the *Drowning of Andunie* texts of the period of *The Notion Club Papers*. Christopher Tolkien interprets (Tolkien, 1992, pp 505- 7) all the inconsistencies and contradictions between these successive rewritings of the basic story as indicating that Tolkien had come to regard them as co-existing in that they could represent varying traditions surviving in the Third Age, especially traditions among Men of varying groups and origins. A letter (quoted by Christopher Tolkien here), (Carpenter, 1981, No.151, p186) illustrates this position further.

"Middle-earth ... lay then just as it does. In fact, just as it does, round and inescapable. The new situation, established

Mallorn XLIV

at the beginning of the Third Age, leads on eventually and inevitably to ordinary History, and we here see the process culminating. If you or I or any of the mortal men (or Hobbits) of Frodo's day had set out-over sea, west, we should, as now, eventually have come back (as now) to our starting point. Gone was the 'mythological' time when Valinor ... existed physically in the Uttermost West, or the Eldaic (Elvish) immortal isle of Eressea; or the great Isle of Westernesse (Numenor-Atlantis) ... etc."

The especial significance of the passage, and the ultimate form of the Akallabeth, is that they complete the transition from mythology to history; 'feigned history', of course, but, as the passage indicates Tolkien thought of his 'History' as leading straight on towards 'real' history. We have, in the course of journeying through *The History of Middle-earth*, turned our stance through one hundred and eighty degrees; instead of regarding mythology as a prelude from which history will ultimately evolve, we are now, as it were from the other end, looking backwards through ages of history towards the distant prospect of myth. And the essential symbol of this is the sea, not the everyday sea which encircles the 'world made round', and which has no special significance, but the former sea, now "the sundering sea", which marks the boundary that separates us from myth, the attainable from the unattainable.

The time of writing of *The Notion Club Papers* is very much that of transition between the two extremes, and it has several interesting accompaniments:

a) Arundel Lowdham's description of his father Edwin

Lowdham's sailing away into the Atlantic in 1947 in his boat the "Earendel" and never returning. He had previously sailed extensively about the coasts of Ireland and north-west Europe, and had always been subject to restlessness and "the sea-longing."

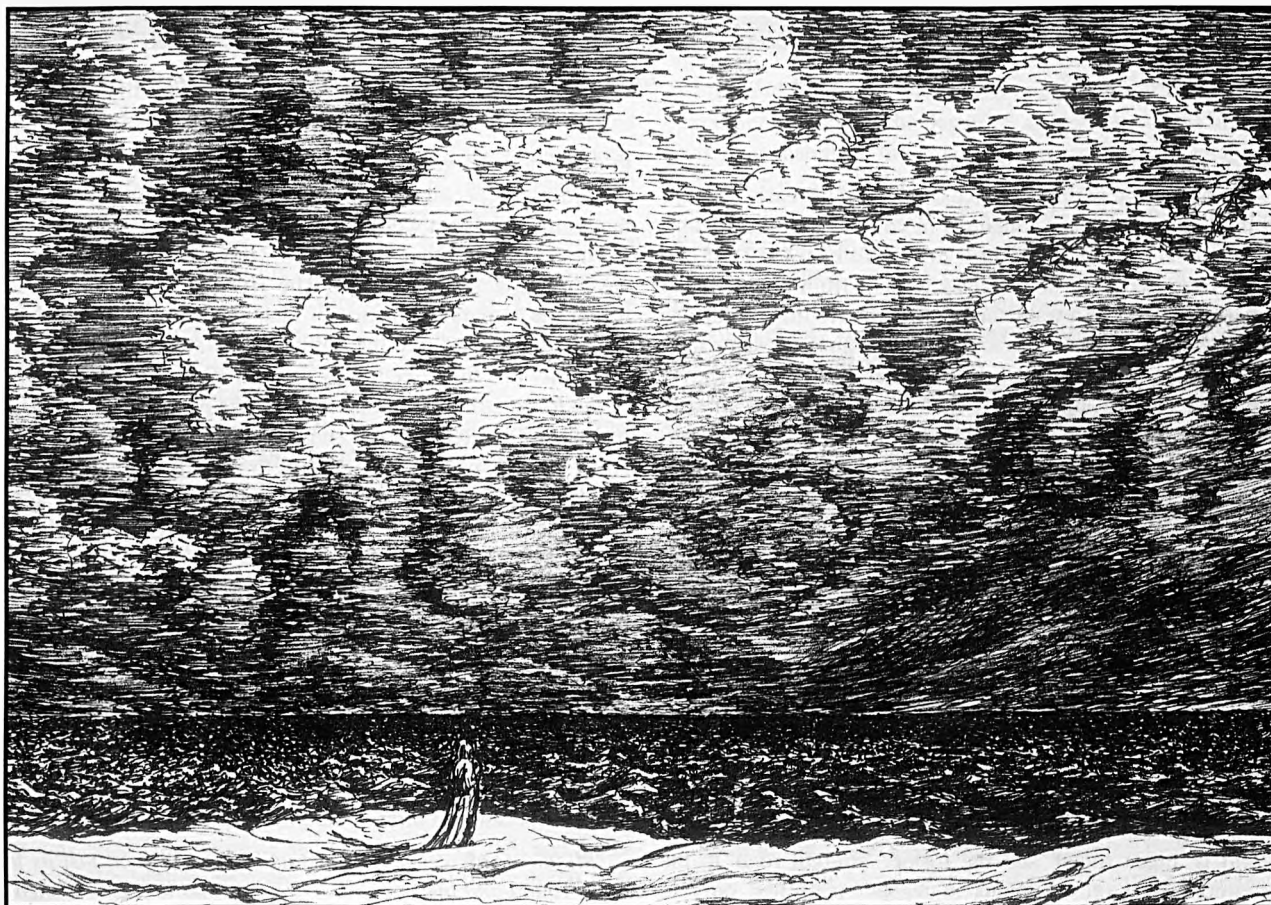
b) The great storm described as occurring in 1987, and the narrative of Lowdham and Jeremy, after their disappearance and return, of their travel around the west of Ireland and Scotland and ultimately, back to Porlock in Somerset; incidentally, they appear to have travelled on land for much of the time. The remarkable feature of their story is their description of the great waves, "high as hills", which rolled over the Aran Islands and well inland from Ireland's west coasts, and yet were like phantoms and did no material damage. We are faced with something of an inconsistency here, because while the sea at this point is clearly 'symbolic' and not of the real world, the storm that breaks over Oxford in the midst of which Lowdham and Jeremy disappear, although in one sense a symbolic counterpart of the cataclysm that overwhelms Numenor, is a real storm that does quite a lot of physical damage.

c) The poem *Inram*, and its predecessor, recounting the voyage of St Brendan from the west of Ireland to the far west and the visions he experiences. However, it is the latter, and not the voyage itself, which is the focus of interest, and the saint does not vanish out of sight and mind, but does return ultimately to Ireland, if only to die there.

The mature expression of the concept of the "sundering sea" finds itself most poignantly in the concluding scene of *The Lord of the Rings*,¹ with the image of the waves lap-

John Ellison

Maglor beside the waves (after Caspar David Friedrich)



ping on the shores of Middle-earth, in counterpoint with that of Frodo's departure for an inaccessible destination, along the unseen 'Straight Road'. Of course the body of narrative in *The Lord of the Rings* has not provided much opportunity for enlarging the imagery of the "sundering sea" beyond the occasional reference to the departure of the Elves "sailing, sailing," into the west, leaving Middle-earth for ever; or the dream visions of Frodo himself; conversely the very idea of the sea, real or symbolic, is anathema to ordinary hobbits, who turned their faces from the hills in the west. But this final scene with the poem subtitled "Frodo's Dreme", and "The Sea-Bell", completes the progress that had started out with Tolkien's water colours and drawings of his schooldays.

"The Sea-Bell" is the late, mature version of a poem originally entitled "Looney," that had appeared many years before²; it recounts the story of a wanderer who is drawn to voyage west over sea to a distant land of "Faerie", his inability to meet with or communicate with its inhabitants and his eventual return to his own world, where he finds himself still under an impalpable curse, unable to converse or communicate with those around him. The implication is that he has broken some indefinable ban (as the Numenoreans broke the ban of the Valar), in journeying to what seems to be, in retrospect a forbidden land; where its former beauty and inviting aspect turn on a sudden to wintry desolation. However, these overtones of loneliness, and guilt at succumbing to the sea-longing, and journeying to the forbidden land, only enter with the mature version of the poem, which accordingly, like the final scene of *The Lord of the Rings*, displays the development of Tolkien's thought over a long period.

The entire concept of "the sundering sea" a symbolic divide between this world and the hereafter, or, if you like, between reality and the imagination, is a profoundly Romantic one, and it may be of some interest to end by seeking some kind of a parallel within the context of nineteenth century Romanticism in general. Certainly it is very much in tune with the Romantic tendency to identify Nature in all its aspects, and the phenomena of Nature, with the emotions and aspirations of mankind, and in a religious sense, with man's relationship with the divine. Likewise, for instance, German romantic poetry is from time to time apt to celebrate the poet's

longing for some 'blessed realm', beyond the confines of the everyday world. It is, though, not very easy to find a close counterpart or parallel for Tolkien's concept of the sea as a purely symbolic barrier. The realities of seafaring, and the attendant dangers, tended to intrude themselves too insistently. J M W Turner painted the sea in its most hostile and disruptive aspects again and again, but he was brought up in London's dockland; his ships are real ships, and he knew what sailing was all about. It is, though, with the work of a contemporary of Turner, another artist, in a way his counterpart, that a kind of precedent can perhaps be found.

The painter in question is Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840)³ of whom Tolkien almost quite certainly never heard; he was almost unknown in this country until the early 1970s. He was born and brought up in Pomerania, on the Baltic coast, although he spent much of his life in Dresden, where he came into contact with many of the literary circles of the time. His drawings and paintings of the sea-shore, and of ships and shipping do start out realistically and straightforwardly; (as of course in their way do Tolkien's, in the art of his schooldays and up to his 'Cornish' period). He was deeply and profoundly religious and prone to read Christian symbolism into almost every feature or manifestation of Nature that he painted, the moon, rainbows, the seasons, and so forth. The seashore provided a considerable proportion of his subject matter; a famous instance is "A Monk by the Seashore", a strange and visionary conception in which a solitary figure placed on a wide strand stares out at a huge expanse of sea, seemingly into infinity⁴. Others show figures in the dress of the period (or old German costume), including the painter himself, sitting or standing on the seashore gazing on over the sea at spectral ships which advance towards the picture plane or recede from it, and which are thought to symbolise 'the stages of life'⁵ (the title of one such painting) (Borsch-Supan 1974, op. cit. illus. pl. 52) or man's relationship with death and the hereafter. I have tried to point the comparison by painting (and drawing) an evocation of the final scene of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam with Merry and Pippin by the Grey Havens, hearing the sound of the waves lapping "on the shores of Middle-earth," gazing out over the sea, as Frodo's ship, now spectral and removed from the world, bears him away along the straight road.

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1. See illustration, "Towards the Uttermost West", (after Caspar David Friedrich).
2. In 1934. (Flieger, 1997, pp 208 et.seq.)
3. As to Friedrich, see Helmut Borsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich* (English edition. Thames & Hudson 1974 - originally published in German; Prestel-Verlag, Munich).
4. See the illustration "after Friedrich", "Maglor beside the waves".
5. See also "Moonrise over the sea." (Borsch-Supan 1974, op. cit. illus. pl. 34).

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Swords and sky stones

Meteoric iron in *The Silmarillion*

Kristine Larsen

Meteorites, or “sky stones”, have a long tradition of inspiring worship and fear alike. One of the most curious weapons in Tolkien’s Middle-earth is the black sword Anglachel, forged from meteoritic iron by Eöl, the Dark Elf. Melian wisely warned that it contained “malice” and “the dark heart of the smith still dwells in it.” Given to Thingol by Eöl as payment for the privilege of dwelling in Nan Elmoth, the sword eventually made its way to the doomed hand of Túrin, and in its time drew much innocent blood. This paper explores the supernatural properties of Anglachel in comparison to similar legends of meteoritic iron, and suggest several real-world events which may have triggered Tolkien’s addition of the meteoritic origin of the sword to his legendarium circa 1930.

Among the many tales that form J.R.R. Tolkien’s legendarium, perhaps none is more tragic than that of Túrin Turambar. Filled with incest, murder, and suicide, the life of this largely flawed hero, Tolkien himself noted, draws from similar elements in the lives of the legendary “Sigurd the Volsung, Oedipus, and the Finnish Kullervo” (Carpenter, 2000: 150). One of the main characters in this tale is neither human nor elf, but instead an inanimate object, namely a curious talking sword named Anglachel, made from meteoritic iron. Interestingly, a survey of the *History of Middle-earth* volumes shows that the astronomical origin of Anglachel was not introduced into Tolkien’s legendarium until c.1930. This paper will trace the evolution of Anglachel in the *HoME* volumes, compare its properties to those of similar swords in legend and history, and posit that Tolkien’s decision to include such an origin for the sword was strongly influenced by real-world events in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

In the published form of *The Silmarillion*, Anglachel was forged by Eöl, the mysterious Dark Elf, husband of Aredhel, Turgon’s sister, and father of Maeglin. It was made of “iron that fell from heaven as a blazing star; it would cleave all earth-delved iron. One other sword only in Middle-earth was like to it. That sword does not enter into this tale, though it was made of the same ore by the same smith...” (Tolkien, 2001: 241). Eöl reluctantly gave Anglachel to Thingol, King of Doriath, for permission to live in Nan Elmoth, keeping Anguirel, the other meteoritic sword, for his own use until it was stolen by Maeglin. The subsequent fate of Anglachel is carefully laid out by Tolkien. Beleg, faithful friend of Túrin, chose the sword as payment for acting as a liason between the then outlaw and Thingol. But Melian, with the insight of one of the Maiar, warned that the sword had “malice” and that the “dark heart of the smith still dwells in it. It will not love the hand it serves; neither will it abide with you long” (Ibid.).

True to Melian’s ominous word, the sword betrayed Beleg by pricking an unconscious Túrin’s foot while its well-intentioned owner tried to cut Túrin’s bindings. Túrin was “aroused into a sudden wakefulness of rage and fear” and in his confusion killed Beleg with his own sword (Tolkien 2001: 248). After the death of its owner, Anglachel was said to be “black and dull and its edges blunt” and it was claimed that it “mourns for Beleg” (Tolkien 2001: 250). In Nargothrond it was reforged for Túrin, and “though ever black its edges shone with pale fire; and he named it Gurthang, Iron of Death” (Tolkien 2001: 251). Túrin became known as Mormegil (Black Sword), and after many adventures killed

Glaurung the dragon with the blade. Meanwhile, his pregnant wife learned that she was actually his sister and committed suicide, and when Túrin discovered the truth, killed Brandir, the innocent bearer of that most unpleasant news. Unable to live with all that he had done, Túrin finally asked the sword to take his life, to which it answered in a “cold voice... ‘I will drink thy blood gladly, that so I may forget the blood of Beleg my master, and the blood of Brandir slain unjustly. I will slay thee swiftly’” (Tolkien 2001: 271). Túrin then threw himself upon his sword, which broke beneath him, and both steel and soldier were buried together in a mound grave.

Although the concept of a sentient, talking sword might seem out of place in Tolkien’s mythology, its presence directly follows from the professor’s love for the *Kalevala*. By his own admission, he was “immensely attracted by something in the air” of it, to such an extent that the beginning of his tales of Middle-earth was “an attempt to reorganize some of the *Kalevala*, especially the tale of Kullervo the hapless into a form of my own” (Carpenter 2000: 214). In the classic story of Kullervo we also see accidental incest between the hero and his sister, and a sword is asked if he “was disposed to slay him.” In response, the sword answers

*Wherefore at thy heart’s desire
Should I not thy flesh devour;
And drink up thy blood so evil?
I who guiltless flesh have eaten,
Drunk the blood of those who sinned not?*

(Kjrby 1985: 481)

The origin of the other major property of Túrin’s sword, namely its material, is not so obvious. In fact, the first mention of this is an addition to “The Quenta”, where Tolkien explains that Beleg’s “renowned sword” with which he cut free Túrin was “made of iron that fell from heaven as a blazing star, and it would cut all earth-dolven iron” (Tolkien 1995: 150). In his commentary, Christopher Tolkien notes that this addition is “the first indication that [the sword] was of a strange nature” and that in the published *Silmarillion* the information is positioned in a different part of the story (Tolkien 1995: 221-2). Christopher Tolkien explains in the same volume that “the Quenta, or at any rate the greater part of it, was written in 1930” (Tolkien 1995: 92). It is therefore natural to ask what motivated Tolkien to make the addition, and why was the addition made at this particular time?

Part of the problem is that “the development of the legend of Túrin Turambar is in some respects the most tangled and

Sky stones

complex of all the narrative elements in the story of the First Age” (Tolkien 1988: 6). In “Turambar and the Foalókë” (c.1919) Túrin received the sword from Orodreth in Nargothrond, where it was “made by magic to be utterly black save at its edges, and those were shining bright and sharp as but Gnome-steel may be” (Tolkien 1992: 84). The basic concept of a magical sword of mysterious origin (and cursed fate) is a common archetype in North European mythology (Gansum 2004; Malone 1925). However, here there is no mention of the sword being made of meteoritic iron, nor is Beleg’s sword (a separate weapon) given any special properties. It should also be noted that in this original tale there is no suggestion that the sword broke upon Túrin’s death. It is certain, however, that Túrin’s sword is to be considered to have mystical properties, as it already possesses the power of speech in this early version. We find additional evidence of the sword’s supernatural powers in the “Earliest Silmarillion” (c.1926-30), where the so-called Second Prophecy of Mandos states:

*When the world is much older, and the Gods weary,
Morgoth will come back through the Door [of Night], and the
last battle of all will be fought. Fionwë will fight Morgoth on
the plain of Valinor, and the spirit of Túrin shall be beside
him; it shall be Túrin who with his black sword will slay
Morgoth, and thus the children of Húrin shall be avenged.*
(Tolkien 1995: 46)

Christopher Tolkien (1993: 203-4) notes that this problematic plotline (namely of a mortal returning from death at the End of Days) is phased out by the time of the writing of the “Later Quenta Silmarillion” (c. late 1950s).

In “The Earliest Silmarillion” we also have the suggestion that Túrin’s sword is Beleg’s weapon, which has been reforged. Such an act is highly symbolic (as in the case of the shards of Narsil); since the otherworldly nature of Túrin’s sword had already been established in the legendarium, it now fell to Tolkien to explain how Beleg’s blade was special on its own side. As described earlier, the first mention of the meteoritic nature of Beleg’s sword appeared c.1930 in “The Quenta.” Unlike many of the fine nuances of Middle-earth, this change appears to have been an important and permanent one, as it remains largely unaltered through Tolkien’s wholesale rewriting of the tale of Túrin, the “Narn i Hîn Húrin” (c.1951) (Tolkien 1988: 155; Tolkien 1994: 321). Therefore it is instructional to explore any other references to meteorites and related phenomenon in Tolkien’s writings.

Meaning of the terms

Although often used interchangeably, the terms “meteor” and “meteorite” refer to related but technically distinct phenomena. A natural piece of debris in space is termed a meteoroid. This may be shed from a comet (composed of ices and dust) or an asteroid (made of metal and rock), or may simply be a chunk of material smaller than approximately 100 m across left over from the early days of the solar system. When a meteoroid enters the earth’s atmosphere, it burns up due to friction, generating a streak of light called a meteor (more colloquially called a “shooting star” or “falling star”). If a piece survives to hit the ground, it becomes known as a meteorite. The origin (parent bodies) of individual meteorites have been extensively studied and debated: the only certainty is that small objects in the solar system form a continuum of com-

positions, of which comets and asteroids are loosely defined examples (McSween, Jr 1999: 85). Astronomers divide meteorites into “falls” and “finds,” depending on whether the object was seen to fall to earth, or accidentally recovered at a much later date. In terms of composition, meteorites are divisible into three main categories: irons (siderites) which are composed mainly of iron alloys, with 8-10% nickel content; stones (aerolites), comprised of rocky materials; and stony-irons (siderolites), which feature rocky minerals embedded in an iron-nickel matrix. During their fiery descent through the atmosphere, they may acquire a blackish outer coating, called a fusion crust, although the meteorite as a whole is usually either grayish or metallic in appearance. Tolkien may have erroneously thought the fusion crust to be a bulk property of meteorites, and used it to tie in the already-established black colour of the sword to its newly-suggested meteoritic origin. In fact, the shining edges of the sword are also reminiscent of a meteor streaking through the air.

Meteors in the canon

Meteors make limited appearances in Tolkien’s legendarium, possibly because the professor was not exactly sure how to account for them (in contrast to solar eclipses and lunar phases, for which he formulated a poetic explanation in “Of the Sun and Moon” which nicely matched observed phenomena). The first mention of meteors appears to be in the poem “Habbanan beneath the stars” (1915-16):

*A globe of dark glass faceted with light
Wherein the splendid winds have dusky flight;
Untrodden spaces of an odorous plain
That watches for the moon that long has lain
And caught the meteors’ fiery rain –
Such there is night.”* (Tolkien 1984: 92)

As for the main legendarium, the first mention is in “The Hiding of Valinor” (early 1920s), where it is said that stars that have fallen (i.e. meteors) return to the sky by passing through the Door of Night following the sun, and are able to “leap back and rush up into the sky again, or flee across its spaces; and this is a very beautiful thing to see – the Fountains of the Stars” (Tolkien 1984: 216). As vivid as this description may be, it is curiously nonscientific, as meteors are not seen to move upward into the sky from the ground. In “The History of Eriol” (c.1925-6), Tolkien explains that “Melko stalks high above the air seeking ever to do hurt to the Sun and Moon and stars (eclipses, meteors).” He then adds that “Varda immediately replaces any stars that Melko loosens and casts down” (Tolkien 1992: 286). In this circumstance, Tolkien appears to once again take the concept of “falling stars” quite literally. His explanation of meteors changed in the late 1930s with “The Quenta Silmarillion”, where they became stars hidden in the “roots of the earth” that fled before Tilion, the driver of the moon, “into the upper air” (Tolkien 1996: 265). This concept was eventually dropped from the canon, and by the “Annals of Aman” (1958) was no longer part of the tale (Tolkien 1993: 136).

Although there is no one consistent (or successful) explanation for meteors in Tolkien’s main writings, the phenomenon is generally seen in them in an unfavourable light (in all but “The Hiding of Valinor” they are connected with fear or outright violence). Likewise, in many ancient and modern cultures, meteors have been considered an evil omen. Shakespeare

utilised them in this very way in several of his plays. For example, in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* (Act II Scene IV), it is written that “meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven... [and] forerun the death or fall of kings.”

Meteorites have had a more complex interpretation among various cultures. Some worshipped specific meteorites, such as the Needle of Cybele in Rome, and the Pallas meteorite revered by the Tartars (Farrington 1900). Other peoples considered meteorites to be evil omens. For example, among the Swiss a fall of meteorites was thought to be an omen of impending war (Burke 1986: 218). Meteorite showers also appear in the Old and New Testament. In the Book of Joshua (10:2), “the Lord cast down great stones from Heaven” upon the Amorites, killing many of them. Although sometimes translated as “hailstones,” at least one astronomical author of Tolkien’s time, William Pickering of Harvard, openly interpreted this event as caused by a meteorite storm (1919: 206). Similarly, in Revelation 6:13 “the stars of heaven fell unto earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.” In a later verse (8:10), “there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of rivers.” It is reasonable to assume that Tolkien was aware of most if not all of these references to meteors and meteorites as ill-omens. But is it natural to assume that he would have made the connection between meteorites and their use in sword blades?

In a 1923 article in *Scientific Monthly*, Arthur M. Miller asserted that there “is little doubt but that the human race first learned the use of iron from sideritic masses of celestial origin” – in other words, iron meteorites (438). Meteoritic iron has been found in numerous ancient archaeological sites, ranging from Sumerian artifacts dating back more than 4500 years, to the tomb of Tutankhamen (Bevan and De Laeter 2002: 12). It was alleged that Attila the Hun “and other devastating conquerors had swords from heaven.” According to “Averrhoes, an Arab philosopher of the twelfth century... excellent swords were made from a meteor weighing 100 lb that fell near Cordoba, in Spain” (Rickard 1941: 55). The Prambanian meteorite of Indonesia was used to manufacture a number of blades circa 1800, including “superbly fashioned kris daggers” (Bevan and De Laeter 2002: 17). A decade later, James Sowerby forged a sword from a meteorite taken from Cape of Good Hope, which was presented to Czar Alexander of Russia (Burke 1986: 232-3). The famed Damascus blades (made of patterned steel) have alternately been claimed to have originally been made of meteorites or merely made in mimicry of distinctive pattern found in meteoritic iron. Such blades were said to have the ability to slay dragons (Cashen 1998).

There is also a deep connection between legends of dragons and meteors. In medieval and renaissance European literature, meteors are frequently referred to as dragons (Dall’Olmo 1978). In his 1741 account of several meteors, Thomas Short described them as a “frightful fiery Dragon” and a “frightful Glade of Fire, or ‘Draco Volans’” (627-9). This connection between dragons and meteors can even be found in Revelation 12:3-4, where “there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth....”

Therefore, given Tolkien’s probable familiarity with references to meteors and meteorites in literature, Biblical scripture, and European folklore, and the presumed connection between Gurthang’s black color and flaming edges and the appearance of a falling meteorite, it is not surprising that he

would have been motivated to openly define the cursed sword Anglachel as having a meteoritic origin. But what motivated Tolkien to make this change as an addition to “The Quenta” circa 1930?

An increasing number of meteorite “falls” and “finds” were reported around the world in the early twentieth century (e.g. Ward 1917; Quirke 1919). Interestingly, a meteorite was observed to fall in Scotland on the afternoon of December 3, 1917. It was accompanied by a “startling flash and a series of thunder-like detonations” and three fragments were recovered, one after passing through the roof of a cottage (Denning, 1918: 129; Anon. 1918: 105). It is most unlikely that Tolkien would not have heard about this event through the popular press. There was also a flurry of research identifying ancient meteorite craters in the 1920s and 1930s.

Without a doubt the most widely-publicised meteorite-related story in the early twentieth century was the so-called “Tunguska Incident.” At 11:30 A.M. on June 30, 1908, a meteoroid, probably of stony composition and approximately 200 ft across, exploded five miles above the remote forests of the Tunguska River in Siberia. The energy released is estimated to have been “roughly fifteen million tons of TNT – a thousand times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb and matching a large hydrogen bomb” (Schaefer 1998: 74). Due to the remoteness of the area (and the distractions of World War I and the Russian Revolution), Russian scientists did not investigate the event until 1921, and the scene itself was only thoroughly explored in 1927-1930. What they found was out of a modern-day disaster movie. The team, led by Leonid Kulik, curator of the Meteorite Department of the Mineralogical Museum at Leningrad, was greeted by the charred corpses of millions of trees laid out in a radial pattern for about twenty five miles in all directions, pointing away from the blast site (Anon. 1929: 34). Eyewitnesses spoke of heat so intense that “my shirt nearly caught fire” and “I felt as if I were enveloped in flame” (Whipple 1930: 290-1). Kulik reported that the traumatic event had “caused the evolution of a new tribal religion” which said the blast was sent by “a God named Agdy (meaning Fire) to punish the wicked.” The blast site itself was considered to be “accursed” by the natives of the area (Crowther 1931: 316).

Reaction in Britain

In 1930, British scientists drew two very important connections between the Tunguska incident and curious events that had been noticed in Great Britain around the time of the explosion. While reading an account of Kulik’s research, meteorologist C.J.P. Cave connected the date of the event to a series of strange and previously inexplicable pressure change readings that had been recorded by sensitive microbarographs in London, Petersfield, Cambridge, and other locations in England. Several months later, comet expert F.J.W. Whipple presented a paper to the Royal Meteorological Society in which he directly linked the strange signals to the Tunguska event and explained the mechanism of their formation as shock waves in the atmosphere. This link between the “great aerial disturbance” in Tunguska and “a remarkable series of pressure waves” recorded in England was reported in numerous places, including *The Geographical Journal* (Anon. 1930: 176). Immediately following Whipple’s presentation, several British scientists connected the Tunguska incident to other strange atmospheric effects that had been noted in late June-early July 1908, when it “failed to get dark at all in the south of England” for several nights and it was bright enough at midnight that “a game of cricket was played on Durdham Down, Clifton” (Denning 1930: 178; Whipple 1930: 301). It

is highly possible that Tolkien himself may have observed the strange twilights of 1908, especially given his penchant for noting strange weather (as reflected in his published letters), and it is highly likely that he would have read at least one of the flurry of published articles on the Tunguska event appearing between 1928-30.

There is one further connection to meteorites and their lore that must be explored as a possible source of inspiration for the sudden appearance of meteoritic iron in the *legendarium* circa 1930. In the July 1928 issue of *Scientific American* there appeared a popular-level article on the Tunguska incident authored by comet specialist C.P. Olivier. On the page directly following Olivier's article is another entitled "A Miniature Meteor Crater," by famed amateur telescope maker A.G. Ingalls. In this brief work he described a meteorite crater near the village of Kaali in Estonia. Its true nature was originally described in 1922, when J. Kalkun drew comparisons between this structure and Arizona's Meteor crater. Detailed geological studies, beginning in 1927 and 1929, found evidence that the Kaali crater and eight smaller craters on the island of Saaremaa were caused by the fall of iron meteorites totaling a thousand tons (Spencer 1933: 233; Veski et al. 2001: 1368). Modern analysis places the power of the explosion as between that of the Hiroshima bomb and the Tunguska event, and suggests that the Kaali crater was formed roughly 2400-

2800 years ago. Research by Veski *et al* posits that it created an "ecological catastrophe," resulting in widespread wildfires. They estimate that "farming, cultivation and possibly human habitation in the region" was interrupted for a century (2001: 1367).

As was the case in the tribal religion of the Tungus natives, it is reasonable to expect that the record of such an event might be found in the mythology of the peoples affected. For example, a 1500-1600 year old meteorite impact in Abruzzo, Italy has been connected with a legend that the local tribe's conversion to Christianity was motivated by "a new star fall[ing] to earth during a pagan festival (Santilli et al. 2003: 313). Similarly, a mythological description of a brilliant meteor appears among the tales of the natives of the Chaco region of Argentina, apparently derivative from the formation of a local cluster of meteorite craters four thousand years ago (Santilli et al. 2003: 319). In *Höbevalge* (Silverwhite), his 1976 exploration of the legends and history of the Finno-Ugrians and Baltic countries, Estonian politician Lennart Meri made the claim that runo 47 of the *Kalevala* contains a description of the meteorite impact at Kaali (Kaali Meteorite Craters n.d.). In the poem, a stray red spark escapes from the heavens and wreaks havoc upon the earth below. In runo 47, lines 103-120 it is said:

Luthien

Jeffrey Macleod



Mallorn XLIV

*Then the sky was cleft asunder,
All the air was filled with windows,
Burst asunder by the fire-sparks,
As the red drop quick descended,
And a gap gleamed forth in heaven,
As it through the clouds dropped downward...
Said the aged Väinämöinen,
"Smith and brother, Ilmarinen!
Let us go and gaze around us,
And the cause perchance discover,
What the fire that just descended
What the strange flame that has fallen
From the lofty height of heaven,
And to earth beneath descended.
Of the moon 'tis perhaps a fragment,
Of the sun perchance a segment!"* (Kirby 1985: 601)

Given Tolkien's love of the *Kalevala*, it is not unreasonable to posit that perhaps he came to the same conclusion as Meri, several decades before the latter's book. Even if he was unaware of the existence of the Kaali crater itself, it is certainly possible that he made the connection between these lines of the poem and a meteorite fall. After all, Tolkien conceded that "in the matters of myth and fairy-story... I have

always been seeking material, things of a certain tone and air, and not simple knowledge" (Carpenter 2000: 144). Indeed, the suggested connection between the sun, moon, and meteors in the *Kalevala* may be echoed in Tolkien's abandoned theories of meteors in "The Hiding of Valinor" and "The Quenta Silmarillion."

Conclusion

The meteoritic origin of the sword Anglachel (and its mate Anguirel) is not inconsistent with Tolkien's earlier writings, as he was aware of meteors and meteoritic phenomena. Given his presumed knowledge of medieval and renaissance literature, European mythology, and Biblical scripture, it is reasonable that he would attach a nefarious personality to a sword so made, and connect it to the slaying of a dragon. Most interestingly, there exists at least circumstantial evidence to suggest that the apparently sudden introduction of the meteoritic nature of these swords may have been motivated by real-world events circa 1930 with which Tolkien would have been familiar. However, in the end, only the good professor knows for sure the identity of the muse that motivated him to make this fascinating (and enduring) addition to his legendarium.

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“Queer, exciting and debatable”

Tolkien and Shorthouse’s John Inglesant

Dale Nelson

Writing to Christopher Bretherton in 1964, Tolkien remembered living, as a teenager, in the Edgbaston, Birmingham, neighbourhood where Joseph Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903) had once resided. Tolkien saw something of himself in the author of *John Inglesant* that

went well beyond the circumstance of neighbourhood. Shorthouse, Tolkien noted, was by vocation “a manufacturer of acids,” and so, as regards literature, not a professional but “a mere amateur (like myself).” *John Inglesant*, his “long book”, Tolkien commented, “was queer, exciting, and debatable” (Tolkien *Letters* 348) – sentiments that might have been entertained by some of the early reviewers of Tolkien’s own “long book.”

In an article published in 1975, Norman Power said he’d “had a year, now, to reflect on Tolkien’s last letter” to him, and that “it must have been one of the last he ever wrote, if not the last” (1247). With it, Tolkien had enclosed a book with an essay, by Morchard Bishop, on Shorthouse and *John Inglesant*.

In addition to the matter of neighbourhood and “amateur” authorship, Tolkien could have seen other resemblances between Shorthouse and himself. Tolkien was conscious of the fact that his own “swift speech,” which he believed was “congenital and incurable,” caused difficulty for listeners at times (Tolkien *Letters* 372), so perhaps the fact that Shorthouse had a “dreadful stammer” would have intrigued him (Bishop 73). Bishop suggests that Inglesant is an idealised self-portrait of the author (82), while Tolkien wrote on one occasion, “I am in fact a Hobbit” (Tolkien *Letters* 288).

In writing *Inglesant* Shorthouse had been gratifying a private interest that, Bishop surmises, was endured by a “patient and seemingly quite uncritical wife” (78). Tolkien, similarly, could refer to his passion for invented languages as his “secret vice,” and, according to Carpenter’s biography, Edith Tolkien was supportive of her husband’s imaginative writing, but without finding the books absorbingly interesting (158).

John Inglesant and *The Lord of the Rings* were the products of years of labour that was sometimes stymied for a time. While Tolkien would recall being stuck in his writing, with the Fellowship at Moria (Tolkien, *LOR* xv), Bishop relates that there was “one period of nearly two years” in which Shorthouse gave up work on the book (77). If Tolkien ever looked into Shorthouse’s biography, he could have seen that Shorthouse “was long delayed in *John Inglesant*,” as a friend recalled him saying, “by his characters having ‘got into a castle

A memorandum on the rarely noted relationship between Tolkien and the Victorian novelist J H Shorthouse, author of John Inglesant.

and absolutely refusing to come out” (vol. 1 p. 405)

Morchard Bishop argues (77) that *John Inglesant*, which took its author, in fact, “ten years of evening toil” to complete (about the same time as *The Lord of the Rings* took Tolkien), is the “creation of a new world” (82) – words

especially applicable, of course, to Tolkien’s achievement. The pages of *Inglesant*, Bishop says, contain “triumphant evocations” of a Gothic-romantic seventeenth-century Italy that – like the locales of Tolkien’s Middle-earth – are “utterly consistent with themselves” (81). Shorthouse’s imagination provided for its author a “refuge” from the banal and tedious routine of chemical manufacture, and may be called self-indulgent (79). Tolkien’s “On Fairy-Stories” responds to the charge, to which the writer of faerian fantasy is liable, of unwholesome escapism (*The Tolkien Reader*, 79), and discusses the “kind of elvish craft” that will be necessary if a “Secondary World” is to be convincing (70). Bishop points out that Shorthouse’s imagination was a disciplined one, and was much nourished by immersion in seventeenth-century sources such as John Evelyn’s diary (85). Tolkien’s imagination, similarly, was nourished by the medieval literature of Northern Europe and disciplined by the habits of scholarship. It’s likely that Tolkien consciously considered the long works of Shorthouse and himself to be expressions, wrought by much labour, of their love and knowledge of English literature of former times.

Tolkien would have been interested in the account, in Bishop’s essay, of how Shorthouse did not, himself, find a publisher. (F. J. Wagner’s 1979 study would have it that Shorthouse decided to print the book for private circulation without having even tried to interest a publisher [52].) Shorthouse had one hundred copies of *John Inglesant* printed solely for personal distribution, in 1880. Without Shorthouse’s knowledge, one of these copies was shown to the publisher Macmillan, which was willing to take it on under its imprint despite doubts about its popularity (Bishop 74). In the same letter to Christopher Bretherton in which Tolkien commented on Shorthouse, he told the story of how the manuscript of *The Hobbit*, which he had lent to a nun, was taken at the initiative of a “young woman” to the office of Allen and Unwin (Tolkien *Letters* 346). Just as Macmillan had been doubtful about *John Inglesant* as a financial investment, Allen and Unwin, as Tolkien knew, had been doubtful that *The Lord of the Rings* would sell well (Tolkien *Letters* 140). Shorthouse agreed that Macmillan should

Mallorn XLIV

publish his book only if it were published “‘exactly as it had been written’” (Bishop 74), while Tolkien’s anxieties about the texts of his books (and the illustrations for *The Hobbit* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*) are evident in numerous letters (for example, that of 30 December 1961 to Rayner Unwin).

Unexpectedly, *John Inglesant* became a surprise best-seller in its day. Shorthouse sometimes found the correspondence from admirers of the book and autograph seekers, “very tiresome,” according to his wife, and declined to give interviews: “he could never see why a man should cease to retain the privacy of his home because he had written a good book” (*Life* 110). Writing in 1964, Tolkien didn’t know that his own masterpiece was just on the verge of becoming enormously popular and would provoke overwhelming correspondence and annoying attention from the popular press. Tolkien had already identified with Shorthouse in 1964, but he could not have known yet that a further parallel was going to develop. *John Inglesant*, first launched publically in 1881, was reprinted many times in the succeeding fifty years: it would be misleading to dismiss it as a peculiarly Victorian literary sensation. (In fact, an allusion to Shorthouse’s book, by way of Thomas Hardy, seems to appear in poet Philip Larkin’s 1974 collection *High Windows* [Jackson 15].)

Expressly regarded by Shorthouse as a “Philosophical Romance” akin to the tales of Hawthorne (Shorthouse vii), *Inglesant* has an idealised hero who, after a precocious boyhood among teachers with Platonist, Rosicrucian, or mystical Roman Catholic leanings, becomes a political agent for Jesuitical intrigue in England at the time of Charles I. The schemes of Father Sancta Clara come undone thanks to the English civil war, in which Inglesant serves as a soldier on the royalist side at the Battle of Edgehill (1642) at about twenty years of age. Inglesant encounters materialist philosopher Thomas Hobbes, visits Nicholar Farrar’s “Protestant nunnery” at Little Gidding in one of the book’s most-praised episodes, and falls in love with one of the residents, Mary Collet, who dies young. His brother, the more worldly of the two, is murdered by a rather operative character, the wicked Malvolti. Inglesant seeks vengeance on the Continent – intermittently; he also has leisure to consider the attractions of Renaissance neopaganism and of the quietism of Molinos. The crass politicking during a papal election that Inglesant observes in Italy discourages his Romeward inclinations. He marries

an alluring woman, Laretta, but she and their son die in an epidemic, and Inglesant eventually returns to England, to become a contented latitudinarian communicant of the Anglican Church. Before his return to England, he has come upon Malvolti and forgiven him, and Malvolti in turn has forgiven his own enemy, Guardino. Shorthouse regarded the scene in which Inglesant refrains from killing Malvolti and instead places his sword upon the altar, leaving judgment to God, as the chief incident of the book.

Shorthouse, then, wrote a tale that exhibits moral seriousness, as does *The Lord of the Rings*. The religious beliefs of the two authors were very different, but their respective major works tempted readers to allegorical interpretations. Tolkien’s 1964 letter reproaches Shorthouse for wasting time “trying to explain what he had and what he had not meant in *John Inglesant*”. Hence, Tolkien added, he has “always tried to take him as a melancholy warning”: it was all too easy for Tolkien to write long letters – like this very one to Bretherton, he might have added! – to inquirers who had read *The Lord of the Rings* when he might have been working on *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien Letters 348).

A few possible connections between elements of the content of *Inglesant* and Tolkien’s fiction may be mentioned. In chapter 15, an astrologer invites Inglesant to look into a stone of divination, and he sees a murdered figure – that of his brother or himself. This incident might have influenced Tolkien’s scene with the Mirror of Galadriel, and/or the conception of the palantír. One of the two chief villains of Shorthouse’s novel, the Cavaliere di Guardino, only “very imperfectly” grasps the character of Inglesant, although the latter is an intimate of the family and in love with Guardino’s sister (328); perhaps Shorthouse, like Tolkien, held that minds given over to evil, such as that of Sauron, cannot really understand the possibilities of the good. Norman Power records Tolkien’s gift to him of the volume of *Essays by Divers Hands* quoted above, and suggests that the theme of renunciation that he perceives in *Inglesant* – the hero forgives his brother’s killer when the latter is unexpectedly wholly in his power – influenced Tolkien’s account of Frodo’s renunciation of the Ring of Power. However, whatever we might say of the authors, there is little resemblance between *Inglesant*, a story of religious and political intrigue, and Tolkien’s fictional canon.

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Frodo as Beowulf

Tolkien reshapes the Anglo-Saxon Heroic Ideal

Robert Goldberg

What do Beowulf and Frodo have in common? At first glance, very little. Beowulf is human; though fictional, he comes from a real place, and his story is intertwined with historical facts, but he is a character of mythical proportion, with near super-human strength. He is a hero. Frodo Baggins, on the other hand, is a creature of fantasy, not quite human, though with very human features and characteristics. Frodo lives in a world not our own. Yet, he is also a hero.

But the fact that Beowulf and Frodo are heroes is not their common bond. Their common bond is the type of hero they are, and the characteristics they share. Beowulf is the depiction of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. Though clearly not Anglo-Saxon, Frodo represents the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal portrayed in Beowulf. Tolkien, consciously or not, took the heroic characteristics of Beowulf and transferred them into the character of Frodo. In some cases, these characteristics closely follow the model of the Anglo-Saxon ideal; in others, however, Tolkien tweaks the ideal, reworking the heroic for a different time and place. In his essay on 'Tolkien and Frodo Baggins', Sale states, 'Frodo is, unlike a great deal else in the trilogy, modern' (199). While being a modern hero, Frodo is also very clearly a 're-shaped' version of Beowulf, the very embodiment of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

Background

Some scholars may argue that Beowulf is not an Anglo-Saxon hero but a Scandinavian or Germanic hero. Beowulf is a Geat. Others, such as Klaeber and McNamee, argue quite eloquently that Beowulf is a Christian hero. He may well be. Elements of the poem have clear Judeo-Christian overtones, although it has no direct references to the Christian New Testament. However, my intention is not to argue these points. Whether he is a Geat or a Christianised hero, Beowulf is the main character in the oldest extant piece of English poetry, the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*. Whatever else he might be, he is still a portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, which is how an Anglo-Saxon audience listening to the poem would have viewed him. And, that is how we must also see him.

What, then, do we make of Frodo? If we are talking about him being a 'reshaped' version of the Anglo-Saxon hero, we must understand as clearly as possible what that hero is. First, we must ask, 'What is a hero?' According to Lubin, 'the hero is a 'man admired and emulated for his achievements and qualities'' (3). In general, Lubin continues, the hero 'is consumed by some kind of ambition, some dream of glory' (12).

Joseph Campbell says of the hero: 'A hero ventures forth from the world of common clay into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive

Does Frodo have a literary ancestor in Beowulf? Robert Goldberg makes what is, on the face of it, an unlikely sounding case.

victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.' (from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, qtd. in Lubin, 7)

We will return to Campbell's description to see if, indeed, each of our heroes really is a hero. More to

our point, though, is to determine if Frodo is an Anglo-Saxon hero.

Beowulf is an Anglo-Saxon poem, and its hero is an Anglo-Saxon hero. Tolkien, Frodo's creator, says,

'An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous' (LotR, 'Foreword' 10-11).

Tolkien's experience included a deeply embedded knowledge and understanding of *Beowulf*. His paper, *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, is one of the most pivotal works in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, and in particular the study of *Beowulf*. Whether intended or not, in many regards Tolkien grounded *LotR* in *Beowulf*. Others have discussed the relationships between *LotR* and *Beowulf*, but here we address their relationship only in terms of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

What, then, is this Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal? What are the its characteristics? According to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume 2, the heroic ideal was 'simply...excellence' (2). This notion of excellence was originally associated with kings, or tribal chiefs. In its essence, the leader of the group 'strove to do better than anyone else the things that an essentially migratory life demanded: to sail a ship through a storm, to swim a river or bay, to tame a horse...but always and above all, to fight' (2). Three key qualities displayed in the successful king are courage, generosity (the successful king was a giver of gifts, a ring-giver), and loyalty (which worked in both directions). While achieving the heroic ideal had practical implications for the successful king, it would also result in something more permanent: enduring fame, a sense of immortality.

These three traits are clearly visible in some key Anglo-Saxon poetic texts, in addition to *Beowulf*. These poems include 'The Wanderer,' 'The Dream of the Rood,' 'The Battle of Maldon,' and 'Caedmon's Hymn.'

The Norton Anthology implies, and these poems demonstrate, that the Anglo-Saxon hero was first, and foremost, a warrior. And, these characteristics of courage, generosity, and loyalty stem from the role of warrior. The warrior who was 'most excellent' would ascend to the position of chief through his demonstration of near super-human courage and through his generous giving of gifts. In this manner, he would gain unswerving loyalty from his thanes, while also displaying his

References to Beowulf are generally from Robert Goldberg's translation, based on the Fr. Klaeber edition, 1950.

Mallorn XLIV

loyalty to them (this is the idea of the *comitatus*). We must first demonstrate that Beowulf does have these characteristics. To accomplish this, we will also discover additional traits of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, namely:

The Boast (the ‘*gilpcwilde*’)
Strength
Appearance
Heroic quest

The characteristic of the ‘boast’ is, more accurately, a ‘sub-trait’ of the characteristic of ‘courage,’ while the traits of ‘strength’ and ‘appearance’ are ‘physical characteristics.’ The ‘heroic quest’ is the purpose of the hero. Although I list these as ‘additional traits,’ they still play a vital role in defining the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, and in portraying Frodo as Tolkien’s version of the Beowulfian hero.

Findings

Beowulf, our Anglo-Saxon hero, clearly fills the roles of the hero-warrior and the hero-king. In roughly the first 2000 lines of the poem, the poet introduces us to a warrior. In the final nearly 1200 lines, we see Beowulf as a king. As we will see, in both cases he clearly displays the three primary traits of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal: courage, generosity, and loyalty.

Our primary focus, though, is not to determine if Beowulf fits the mould of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal; rather, it is to see if Frodo also fits this mould. If he does, in what respects do the characteristics differ from those seen in Beowulf? In other words, how, and to what extent, has Tolkien reshaped the traits within the character of Frodo? Why has Tolkien reshaped these characteristics? The answers to these questions may offer us a glimpse of Tolkien’s rationale for writing *LotR*. For our immediate purpose, though, we will see his indebtedness to and love for Beowulf and Anglo-Saxon literature.

In speaking of the task for Frodo, Sale notes, ‘it will take heroism of some kind...to hold onto the Ring, to take it to Mordor, to give it up there’ (204). Clearly, it will take a Beowulfian type of heroism. Frodo will show himself to be this type of hero by displaying extreme, near super-human courage, by inspiring and showing loyalty, and by being generous with gifts both physical and intangible.

Before showing how our heroes fulfill the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, we shall see some basic comparisons. Obviously, both Beowulf and Frodo set out on an improbable, if not impossible, heroic quest to save a land from a great terror. How they set out, however, is different. Beowulf sets out in splendour, with fanfare, in broad daylight. He knows where he is going, and into what danger he is leading his men. On the other hand, Frodo ‘leaves stealthily, keeping away from the high road when he can’ (Sale 204). Frodo knows that he ‘is in danger and must go on a long journey’ (205), but that is all he knows. He knows he must take the Ring away from the Shire, but he does not know where to go. Only on the advice of Gandalf does he set out towards Rivendell. It will not be until he arrives there will he find out the true nature of his quest, and just how perilous it will be. Finally, in the battles with Grendel and Grendel’s dam, Beowulf alone can be victorious. Similarly, only Frodo can ultimately see the Ring destroyed. In neither case can their companions help them, though fate may intervene to provide some assistance.

Courage

Lubin says, ‘courage is the victory of will – of self-control –

over normal (or natural) responses, particularly the self-control of the hero when confronting dangers and, the ultimate danger, death’ (10). Writing about the poem Beowulf, Tolkien says we see ‘something more significant than a standard hero, a man faced with a foe more evil than any human enemy of house or realm’ (Beowulf: Monsters). Beowulf must be courageous to perform all of his feats, from the swimming contest with Brecca to fighting Grendel and Grendel’s dam and to confronting his final challenge, the dragon.

Beowulf consistently demonstrates an overwhelming self-confidence, which can first be seen in his ‘decision, preparation, and setting out’ on his voyage to Heorot to challenge Grendel (Beowulf, Chapter 3, p. 8). Before Beowulf is to set out, the elders of the tribe must read the omens, but Beowulf does not wait; in his confidence, he and his thanes set out while the elders are still reading the omens. Others see his courage, and speak of it. When Beowulf initially enters Heorot, Wulfgar notes, ‘*Wen’ ic pæt gefor wlenco, nalles for wræcsidum, / ac for higeprymum Hroðgar sohton*’ (‘I think that for your daring courage you have sought Hrothgar, not because of exile, but because of your greatness of heart.’) (ll. 338-39).

Most prominently, Beowulf’s displays his confidence in a speech act that seems to be a requirement of the Anglo-Saxon hero. One scholar notes, ‘Germanic warriors of the early Middle Ages commonly took an oath to avenge their leader or die in the attempt’ (Renoir, 237). ‘The Battle of Maldon’ demonstrates ‘the importance of formal, public promises to perform heroic actions, to fulfill the obligation of membership in a heroic society’ (Clark). After their lord had fallen in battle, warrior after warrior made a boast to avenge his lord, or die in the attempt. The first to speak was Ælfwine, who said, ‘Remember the speeches we have spoken so often over our mead, when we raised boast on the bench, heroes in the hall, about hard fighting. Now may the man who is bold prove that he is’ (ll. 212-15) (translation, Norton Anthology, 85).

Beowulf makes a formal speech, or boast, called the ‘*gilpcwilde*,’ three times prior to his fight with Grendel. In his first boast, Beowulf keeps things relatively simply, when he says ‘*Ac ic him Gêat sceal / eafod and ellen ... ungeara nu, / gupe gebeodan*’ (‘But soon now I shall show him the strength and courage of the Geats in battle’) (ll. 601-03). Next, he shows his resolve, and the depth to which his courage will lead him:

<i>‘Ic pæt hogode,</i>	<i>Pa on holm gestah,</i>
<i>sebat gesæt</i>	<i>mid minra secga gedright,</i>
<i>pæt ic anunga</i>	<i>eowra leoda</i>
<i>willan gewirhte,</i>	<i>opðe on wæl crunge</i>
<i>feondgrapum fæst.</i>	<i>Ic gefremman sceal</i>
<i>eorlic ellen,</i>	<i>opðe endedæg</i>
<i>on pisse meoduhealle</i>	<i>minne gebidan!’</i> (632-38)

(I was resolved when I set out on the sea, sat down in the sea-boat with my band of men, that I should entirely fulfill your people’s will, or else in death fall, fast in the fiend’s grasp. I shall perform a manly deed of valor, or I have lived to see my last day in this mead hall.)

In his final boast, Beowulf says:

<i>No ic me an herewæsmun</i>	<i>hnagran talige</i>
<i>gupfeorca,</i>	<i>ponne Grendel hine;</i>
<i>forpan ic hine sweorde</i>	<i>swebban nelle,</i>
<i>alder beneotan,</i>	<i>peah ic eal mæge;</i>
<i>nat he para goda,</i>	<i>pæt he me ongean slea,</i>
<i>rand geheawe,</i>	<i>peah ðe he rof sie</i>

Frodo as Beowulf

*nipgeweorca; ac wit on niht sculon
secge ofersittan, gif he gesecean dear
wig ofer wæpen, ond sipðan witiġ God
on swa hwæpere hond halig Dryhten
mærdο deme, swa him gemet pince. (677-87)*

(I claim myself no poorer in warlike stature, of warlike deeds, than Grendel himself claims; therefore I will not put him to sleep with a sword, deprive him of life, though I surely may; he knows no good tools with which he might strike against me, hew my shield, though he is strong in fight; but in night we shall forego the sword, if he dare seeks war without weapon, and then may wise God, the Holy Lord, on whichever hand assigns glory, as it seems proper.)

An important characteristic of this type of vow is that, prior to making these final boasts, Beowulf says he is 'wæltrow' and 'gupe gefysed' (ll. 629, 620), 'slaughter-fierce' and 'impelled toward battle.' In his initial boast, he appears calm and in control, but in the last boast his attitude or mental state seems to have changed, as he appears now to be a bloodthirsty savage. With this view of Beowulf's 'courage,' we must now ask, 'How will Frodo approach his 'battle'? Can a meek, mild hobbit evolve into a warrior with a lust for blood? Does he need to evolve to this degree to demonstrate his courage?

As with Beowulf, Frodo must also be 'something more significant than a standard hero' (Tolkien, *Beowulf: Monsters*), since he must face an evil far greater even than the evils Beowulf faces; he must face the ultimate evil of Sauron, and to do that, Frodo must confront his own inner demon, the power of the Ring. Does Frodo have the necessary courage? Recall Lubin's definition, which states, 'courage is the victory of will – of self-control...when confronting dangers and, the ultimate danger, death' (10). An article published on mythome.org website describes Frodo, along with Uncle Bilbo, as 'ordinary in every sense of the word.' But, Frodo is far from ordinary, even among hobbits.

Throughout *LotR*, and most notably in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo displays both courage and fear, characteristics that would be familiar to humans. When Gandalf tells Frodo that the Ring must be destroyed, Frodo reacts: "I do really wish to destroy it!" cried Frodo. "Or, well, to have it destroyed. I am not made for perilous quests" (I.94-95). Yet, in face of acknowledging the quest he must undertake, Frodo responds, 'I should like to save the Shire....But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me....But I feel very small' (I.96). Despite his fears, Frodo is determined to set out on his own, to save his home, his people. This seems to begin to fulfill Lubin's definition of courage as 'the victory of will.' And, Frodo's courage is put to the test repeatedly.

While Beowulf fearlessly faces all manner of evil, Frodo shows an all too mortal fear. He does not appear to have the necessary courage to be a hero, let alone a version of an Anglo-Saxon hero. In their first real battle with the Black Riders, fear overcomes the Hobbits. Pippin and Merry fall to the ground; Sam shrinks to Frodo's side; and 'Frodo was hardly less terrified than his companions; he was quaking as if he was bitter cold' (I.262). Despite his fear, though, and giving into the temptation to put on the Ring, 'Frodo threw himself forward on the ground, and he heard himself crying aloud: *O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!* At the same time he struck at

the feet of his enemy' (I.263). Frodo overcame his will to cower in fear, and he struck a blow at the enemy.

As with Beowulf, in keeping with the heroic ideal, Frodo also makes his formal vow, or boast, to perform a heroic deed. The Council of Elrond determines that the only course of action is to take the Ring to Mount Doom, to cast it into the Crack of Doom, thereby destroying it by the very fire in which it was forged. Frodo's vow, unlike Beowulf's, is simple. Frodo is not 'slaughter-fierce' or 'impelled to battle.' He simply says, 'I will take the ring, though I do not know the way.' Yet, in the ears of those at the council, particularly Elrond, this boast had as much power and force behind it as did Beowulf's boast.

In Frodo's physical acts of courage and his boast, we have examples of Tolkien reshaping the heroic ideal, taking the larger than life Beowulf, and creating a hero who is more normal, from a human perspective. While Beowulf impresses us with his strength, his fearlessness, and his confidence, Frodo impresses by being relatively normal, quiet, and frightened, yet a hero through and through. And though he is a hobbit, a creature of fantasy, he is as normal as people who understand their own mortality. While Beowulf is not afraid to die, most humans have an innate fear of death. However, we do not need to be overly concerned with Frodo's apparent weaknesses. As Strider says to Sam, 'Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed' (I.265).

Much more could be said of Frodo's courage, particularly as he approaches Mount Doom, and the trials he faces along the way, from members of the fellowship as well as enemies, from his confrontation with Boromir to his confrontation with Shelob. Yet, it is at the end of Frodo's journey, at the Crack of Doom, where we must rethink our view of his courage. Yes, he goes into the Crack of Doom to cast the Ring into the only fire that can destroy it. But, does he do it? Does he have the strength of will, the courage? In the end, is it not simply a matter of fate? The only way the Ring ends up in the fire of Mount Doom is when Gollum bites off Frodo's ring finger, and falls into the fiery pit. Is this courage? Yet again, it may be another element of Tolkien's reshaping of this aspect of the heroic ideal. While Beowulf sticks to his decisions to confront first Grendel, then Grendel's dam, and finally the dragon, Frodo seems to back down from his vow. Perhaps fate is part of the reshaping of the heroic ideal; perhaps fate creates true heroes.

Generosity

Generosity is an important trait for the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. The king or tribal chief is a ring-giver, and the best of ring-givers inspires the greatest loyalty in his thanes. The *Beowulf* poet admonishes young listeners, as lines 20-23 can be translated, 'So ought a young man to bring it about by good and ready gifts of treasure, while he is young, that willing companions will stand by him in aftertimes when war comes and help their chief' (Garmonsway, 141). Furthermore, 'generosity is the condition of success in every community' (141). In these verses, the *Beowulf* poet says it is important to be generous, and though he says to be generous with the giving of gifts, he may also mean to be generous in other ways.

When Beowulf defeats Grendel's dam, the only things he takes with him back to Heorot are the head of the monster and the hilt of the sword with which he slew her, because the blade



The field of Cormallen

Lorenzo Daniele

Frodo as Beowulf

melted (l. 1614). The poem states that Beowulf saw many other treasures (ll. 1612-13), but he may not have been able to swim if he had too many treasures. Yet, we could argue that Beowulf was generous in giving of himself. He came to Heorot to kill Grendel; Grendel's dam was an added bonus. But, in the greatness of his heart, he slew the mother after she sought revenge for Grendel's death. And, before Beowulf leaves Heorot, he promises Hrothgar that he will be ready at once to aid him if ever Hrothgar needs him (ll. 1822-30).

Beowulf is, of course, a generous ring-giver, as well. Upon his return to his lord, Hygelac, Beowulf shares the story of his battle with Grendel, and tells how Hrothgar, a very generous gift-giver, rewarded Beowulf with gold-plated objects and many treasures (ll. 2101-03). After recounting the battle with Grendel's dam, Beowulf announces that he will give the treasure to his lord, his only close relative (ll. 2148-49). After Hygelac's death in battle, the poem only says that Beowulf 'ruled well for fifty winters – he was a wise king' (l. 2208-09). The poet says little more of Beowulf's generosity, except when Wiglaf, a loyal thane, reminds the other warriors of 'he who gave us rings' (l. 2635). This is at the point where Beowulf is about to be killed by the dragon. In one final display of ultimate generosity, after the dragon mortally wounds him, Beowulf gives Wiglaf a gold neck ring, apparently naming Wiglaf his heir and successor, as Wiglaf is now the last of the Wægmundings (ll. 2809-14).

Frodo must also be seen as generous, in order to be viewed as fulfilling the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. To honor Bilbo's hundred and twelfth birthday, Frodo gave a party. He invited twenty guests, and 'there were several meals at which it snowed food and rained drink, as hobbits say' (I.70). Of course, at all hobbit birthdays, the one celebrating gives gifts to all in attendance. At the end of the tale, Frodo was also quite generous. When Sam marries Rose, Frodo invites them to live at Bag End (III.377). A generous notion by itself, but Frodo will go further by giving Bag End, and all its possessions, to Sam, as something of an inheritance, much like Beowulf with Wiglaf.

Showing again how Tolkien tweaks the heroic ideal, one source says, 'Frodo's greatest strength is generosity of spirit and power of forgiveness' (Monkeynotes). His most remarkable display of generosity is not the giving of gifts or money. It is the giving of forgiveness, and freedom. On more than one occasion, he saved Gollum from being killed. As Frodo and Sam were making their way toward the Black Gate, with Gollum as their guide, Faramir and his men captured the hobbits, while Gollum avoided the men. That night, Gollum was fishing in the 'Forbidden Pool.' With Faramir's men training their arrows on Gollum, Frodo intervenes, offering his own life to allow Gollum to go free. Frodo asks permission to go down to the pool to get Gollum, and says, 'You may keep your bows bent, and shoot me at least, if I fail. I shall not run away' (II.374). Although Frodo will certainly need Gollum to guide him to Mordor, he demonstrates his generous spirit by volunteering his own life to spare Gollum's.

Frodo also showed trust toward Gollum, by removing the elven rope from his ankle, after Sam tied him up to keep him from running away. Interestingly, at the beginning of the tale, Frodo told Gandalf that he could not even consider Gollum, or Sméagol, to be a hobbit. Frodo hated, despised Gollum, and thought Bilbo should have killed Gollum when he had the

chance. Then, when the opportunity came to Frodo, he demonstrated the same generosity of spirit, the same pity, as Bilbo demonstrated so many years before. Frodo demonstrated the same greatness of spirit toward Saruman, letting him go even though Saruman nearly destroyed the Shire (III.369). Frodo is clearly generous, though not necessarily in the way Beowulf is generous.

Loyalty

The poem 'The Battle of Maldon,' shows the importance of loyalty as it displays 'a powerful record of heroism – of unwavering loyalty and dedication' (Irmo). We need only go back to the discussion of the oath, and read the oath spoken by Byrhtwold at the very end of the poem: 'From here I will not leave / but by the side of my lord / by the man so loved I intend to lie' (ll. 317-19).

Beowulf inspired loyalty in his thanes. He accomplished this first by his impressive feats of strength and courage, such as the swimming contest with Brecca. It is likely that he fought and won numerous battles, winning bounty that he shared with his men. As noted earlier, lines 20-23 indicate that a young man should give 'good and ready gifts of treasure, while he is young, that willing companions will stand by him in aftertimes when war comes and help their chief.' We see that Beowulf commanded a degree of loyalty in the fifteen warriors who sailed with him to Heorot, willing to die in battle against an unknown foe. At the end of Beowulf's life, and near the end of the story, we see a more vivid picture of this loyalty through Wiglaf, the only thane who stood with Beowulf against the dragon, and who became Beowulf's only heir (I.2635).

But, loyalty must extend in both directions. In order for a hero to earn loyalty from others, the hero must first show loyalty to others. Beowulf was loyal to his uncle, Hygelac, who was the leader of his tribe. Though he is now a leader of men, Beowulf is clearly a loyal thane to his lord, Hygelac (l. 2170). He demonstrates this by giving the gifts he received from Hrothgar to Hygelac: as the poet says, 'so should a kinsman act' (l. 2166).

As Beowulf with his uncle, Frodo was immensely loyal to his uncle, Bilbo. Even after Bilbo left the Shire forever, Frodo continued to celebrate Bilbo's birthday, remembering Bilbo's final night in the Shire, the day he turned 'eleventy one.' Though others believed Bilbo to be dead, Frodo loyally and faithfully trusted that he was not yet dead.

Frodo also inspires great loyalty in others, as seen especially in Sam, Pippin, and Merry, but also in the other members of the fellowship. It is not through the giving of gifts or great victories in battle that he inspires such loyalty, but in the greatness of his spirit, in his determination to do whatever he must to see the Ring destroyed. Gandalf instructs Frodo to take with him such companions that he can trust, those he 'would be willing to take into unknown perils' (I.97). Sam, like Beowulf's Wiglaf, is one such companion. He has no desire to face perils, but he will not allow Frodo to be alone (I.126). Sam demonstrates this loyalty after Boromir confronts Frodo about the Ring. Frodo, wearing the Ring, flees, and only Sam figures out what has happened. Sam, who does not swim, jumps in the river to try to reach Frodo, to be with him.

Of course, both Beowulf and Frodo are loyal to their quests. Beowulf makes an oath to rid Heorot of the monster, Grendel.

Mallorn XLIV

He is loyal to his oath. He goes beyond that oath, though, and slays Grendel's dam. After returning home and becoming king upon his uncle's death, a dragon ravages the land. Beowulf, as is the right thing for a hero to do, vows to slay the dragon. He perishes, but stays loyal to his mission to the end. Frodo is also loyal to his quest to deliver the Ring of Power into the Crack of Doom, to destroy it in the fire by which it was forged. In spite of all the obstacles, and with Sam as his only companion, he reaches the Crack of Doom. Fate, in the form of Gollum, helps him to complete his quest.

Additional traits

Is strength a requirement for the Anglo-Saxon hero? Beowulf has near super-human strength. Beowulf is described as '*se wæs moncynnes, mægenes strengest*' ('the strongest man alive') (line 196). In fact, the poet tells us he has the 'strength of thirty men in his grip' (ll. 379-80). His strength allows him to perform incredible feats, such as his swimming contest with Brecca, where he endures days in the ocean, confronting sea monsters. Of course, he demonstrates his strength most vividly by fighting Grendel hand to hand, rather than with a weapon, and in the process tearing off Grendel's arm, dealing the monster a mortal blow.

In addition to strength, the Anglo-Saxon hero has an appearance that sets him apart from other warriors. Beowulf's appearance alone is enough to convince others of his courage. As he and his thanes approach the Danish coast, the coast guard says, 'may his look, his matchless appearance, never belie him' (ll. 250-51).

Frodo Baggins was merely a hobbit of the shire. From the perspective of the race of Man, Frodo was small, seemingly insignificant. Yet, among his own kind, Frodo stood out. At 'The Prancing Pony' in Bree, Mr. Butterbur recounts Gandalf's description of Frodo: 'But this one is taller than some and fairer than most, and he has a cleft in his chin: perky chap with a bright eye' (Tolkien, I. 227). During the early stages after setting out from the Shire, Pippin 'declared that Frodo was looking twice the hobbit that he had been' (I.249). As for his strength, (though it cannot compare to the strength of Beowulf) recall Strider's words to Sam: 'Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed' (I.265), referring to both his physical strength and his strength of spirit to withstand the poison of the Ring Wraith's knife. This seems to be another reshaping by Tolkien, taking a character that may not physically fit the description of a great hero-warrior, and showing that a hero is not one simply by virtue of size and physical strength.

Conclusion

Frodo demonstrates that he possesses the qualities of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, though Tolkien reshaped some of those qualities to fit a different time and a different place. This being so, both stories conclude in a similar, yet different fashion. Beowulf sought and found honour, glory, and fame, and will be forever remembered in song. The poem ends with Beowulf's elegy:

'of world-kings he was the mildest and the gentlest, kindest to his people, and most eager for fame' (ll. 3180-82).

Frodo will also be forever remembered throughout Middle-earth; however, his parting had much less fanfare. He does not die at the end of the story; he is permitted to leave Middle-earth with the elves, and sail across the sea. This is the final reshaping of the heroic

ideal by Tolkien: Frodo is not eager for fame, yet he will still attract fame for the deeds he performed.

It is my contention that both Frodo and Beowulf are heroes in Joseph Campbell's terms. Each 'ventures forth from the world of common clay into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man' (from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, qtd. in Lubin, 7). Yet, they are both more specifically models of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

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Jack-in-the-Green

Jack-in-the-Green was seldom seen;
He hid from eye of all
And lurked in coombe and verdant gloom
Beneath the trees so tall.
He spoke with none under the Sun;
But he would sometimes hail
Tom Bombadil from over-hill
If chance-met in the vale.

In Dingle dale where mists rise pale
Jack long had dwelt apart,
By glancing ghyll and roiling rill
Where fishers dive and dart,
And cloaking cloud gives shade and shroud
To Witherwindle-bourne
And wind through boughs oft sighs and soughs
In willows grey and thrawn.

Now Jack, poor lad, he was not bad,
Nor one who ill conceives.
He was but shy of open sky
Beyond the forest eaves,
And yet, poor Jack – alas! alack!
Misfortune him befell
When by sad chance he stole a glance
At fair Ithiliel.

One moonlit night when stars were bright
Jack's shallow sleep was broke
By music's sound from under ground
Which softly him awoke.
He crept through leaf, and to his grief
Was caught as in a trance –
An Elven-maid in hidden glade
To faërie pipe did dance.

The maid was fair; her raven hair
Flew dark upon the breeze;
Her jewelled feet were white and fleet
Beneath the dreaming trees.
Her mantle green with silken sheen
'Neath dappled moonlight gleamed;
Her shining eyes were starry skies
Which like low heavens beamed.

Jack stood amazed; but as he gazed
His senses him forsook:
He stepped from shade quite unafraid –
And doom him overtook.
In dreadful ire, eyes now of fire,
The Elf-maid him espied,
And down fell Jack upon his back
As if in sooth he'd died.

“Don't take alarm! I meant no harm!”
He cried – to no avail:
For all around up from the ground
Had sprung a barbèd pale.
Though hemmed in fold, Jack ventured bold,
And leapt to climb the fence;
His only thought not to be caught –
He must get free from thence!

But in his ear resounded clear
A dread uncanny shout,
And deadly foes with Elven-bows
Stood sternly all about!
Those archers fell did fill the dell;
Jack cursed his hapless fate.
He bowed his head and sorry said –
But it was said too late.

A white-browed Lord with gleaming sword
And starlight in his hair,
His robe alight with jewels of night,
So terrible and fair,
Stood in the glen: in tongue of Men
He spoke words hard and grim,
And as he drew his sword, Jack knew
It would go ill with him.

“O mortal wight! You'll rue the night
(And you shall rue it well!)
You peeped and pried, and sneaked and spied
On fair Ithiliel!”
His doom so near, Jack shook with fear.
“Your pardon, Lord!” he wept,
“That I did dare to stand and stare –
I wish I still had slept!”

But mercy kind was far from mind
Of Woodland-folk that night.
Jack got short shrift; his end was swift
And sure as arrow's flight.
Those archers fierce, they him did pierce
With fatal shafts and true,
And his quick heart full many a dart
Prick'd cruelly through and through.

As night did close with stain of rose
In east, old Tom came by.
He laid the knave in shallow grave
Then stood and piped his eye.
“He's peeped his last; his doom was cast,”
He sighed; “Poor Jack hath learned
That those who fly to flame anigh
Most likely will be burned.

“He meant no wrong! I'll make a song
In honour of his name –
As years advance, so one shall dance
To keep alive his fame.
He'll clothe his grief in twig and leaf
From branch and bough and bole,
So Jack will not be soon forgot
While Windle's withies thole.”

Tom louted low and swore “From now,
When May comes fair and sweet,
And in a ring folk dance and sing
On swiftly flying feet,
Then one will leap from thicket deep
As if from darkest dene,
And him 'neath pall of leaves they'll call
Their poor Jack-in-the-Green.”

Anon

‘Not marching to the gates of Gondolin ...’

A Possible Prologue for “The Lord of the Rings”

*“Not marching in the fields of Thrasimene,
Where Mars did mate the warlike Carthagens ...”*

*Not marching to the gates of Gondolin
Which Eol’s son betrayed to Enemy spies
Nor penetrating dark Thangorodrim
Where still Melkor himself was hatching lies.
Nor in the courts of proud, hubristic Elves
Intends this Muse to vaunt his heavenly verse;
Only this, Gentles, must you judge yourselves:
The Tale of Sauron’s Fall, from bad to worse.
And now to humble natures we appeal
In speaking of our hero’s infant state
Currents most dread an orphanhood him deal
Adoption follows – and an irksome fate.
At riper years a Ring does he acquire
From his adoptive kinsman, who departs
Again upon his travels; but so dire
A peril never tempted mortal hearts.*

*A scholar is he, graced with gentle speech
This child unparented by th’Brandywine
Whose quick, inquisitive young soul does reach
Towards elvish lore, and delves the linguist’s mine.
The first Dark Lord by Pride was overthrown
Cast out in chains, but his apprentice fell
Lord Sauron the Abhorred, in strength had grown
And wrought his Ring in Orodruin’s hell.
But Frodo still in bless’d oblivion lives,
His mind absorbed with Elvish ablatives!
Sindarin Philology is his chiefest bliss –
And this the chap that in his study sits.*

Poinsettia Took

A parody of the opening chorus from Christopher Marlowe’s “Dr Faustus”

The Prophecy of the North

John Ellison



On Tom Bombadil

The function of Tom Bombadil

Klaus Jensen, Ruairidh MacDonald

On their last night with Tom Bombadil in the Old Forest, Frodo, stirred by an ancient mood of wonder, asks their host, 'who are you'? This question, even if the wonder prompting it has at times been less reverent, is echoed in many critics', 'what are you doing in the story?' We can hardly blame anyone asking this question. The adventure in the Old Forest can only be described as a fairy-tale within a fairy-tale, demanding an almost impossible double suspension of disbelief.

The problem is not limited to narrative style. Even in terms of plot, the detour seems rather odd: an unexpected departure from the orderly progression of the story, whose winds and turns we follow only to end up where we started - or so it seems anyway. Those, therefore, who, like Peter Jackson, prefer the straight road to Bree shall be excused while we go revisit old Tom.

There is, however, another company which should perhaps also skip the Old Forest this time around. It would consist of those who seem to expect that Frodo's question to Tom can be adequately answered by the name of some other known character in or outside of Middle-Earth, or even that of the author or the reader. Such an approach inevitably leads away from the question of Bombadil as he appears in this story.

During the course of this essay, we shall, by way of comparison, have occasion to call Tom Bombadil by many other names from the worlds of myth and archetypes, for our claim is that he is not one but many depending on perspective. This it seems to us we have on good authority as Tolkien himself calls him many things ranging from 'nature spirit', to 'moral comment'. We do not mean, however, to pin him to any name, or replace the one(s) he is called in the story. In so far as naming goes, we declare ourselves satisfied by Bombadil's answer to Frodo:

Don't you know my name yet? That's the only answer.
(I, p. 173)

Of course we do, and it is the name(s) he is called in this story that ultimately concerns us.

Bombadil's function, however, is a different matter. Perhaps the closest Tolkien ever gets is to say Bombadil 'represents something that otherwise would have been left out.'¹ Following on this lead, our exploration of various motifs and constellations (all contact, however slight) with other characters aims to show how he, through this complementary function, embodies the central theme of redemption running through the work on every level as a hidden, transformative presence.

We, thus, conceive of Tom as very definitely analogous to the *Spiritus Mercurius*, the ennobling spirit in matter, which acts both as that which has to be set free within and as that which sets free from without. In this capacity, his primary function is to be the guide (much wiser than that selfish brat, Peter Pan) who initiates Frodo into the triune worlds of faerie, childhood and myth as an indispensable prerequisite for fulfilling the Ring mission.

But since we have already begun the name calling, perhaps we should get started, from the beginning.

The Trickster and the Fool

We called the adventure in the Old Forest a 'fairy-tale within a fairy-tale'. The sudden regression to a more traditional fairy-tale form is not an easy pill to swallow for the adult reader. It signals a descend deep into the realm of faerie, where characters like Tom Bombadil and Goldberry can no longer be equated with human persons like the hobbits or even Gandalf the Maiar. Rather they must be understood as primal forces of nature - or the deep unconscious if one prefers the language of psychoanalysis.

However, to merely identify Tom and Goldberry as forces, or spirits, of nature is hardly a novel observation and does in any event not amount to much. If we want to understand their function in the story, we must place them within the overall pattern of significance in *LotR*.

Jungians habitually identify Tom Bombadil with the Trickster archetype. We consider this the most useful of all the identification attempts because it seeks to understand Bombadil as a type rather than an entity, while it explains plausibly why he appears in the story when he does.

From the psychoanalytic perspective, we find the Trickster in the borderland between conscious and unconscious, specifically that part of the unconscious called 'instinct'. His function is to facilitate psychological transitions by breaking down old barriers and outdated conscious attitudes through his irrational behaviour and shameless pranks.

Since the Trickster provides a link between the limited everyday ego-personality and that totality of the psyche which includes its unconscious aspects, it is not strange at all (for a fairy-tale) that a Trickster-like figure should appear at the point when the hobbits are forced to leave the Shire and confront a larger world requiring a more differentiated consciousness.

Difficulties arise, however, when we try to account for the Trickster's darker side. C.G Jung summarises the Trickster in these words:

*[The Trickster archetype] represents an earlier rudimentary stage of consciousness that stands in complementary relation to the ego-personality. It is a personification of traits of character which are sometimes worse, sometimes better than those the ego-personality possesses.*²

In myth and folklore the Trickster is often at the mercy of unconscious, and therefore uncontrollable, impulses. He is by definition mischievous, a cheat and a liar; although the results are usually (but not always) more humorous than harmful. He is as such a shadow figure better represented in our mythological hemisphere by, for instance, the god Loki than by Tom Bombadil.

The primitive, 'sometimes worse, sometimes better', Trickster aspect, is entirely missing in Bombadil; in fact it hardly applies. Even if we accept the premise that Bombadil represents only the positive, or suprahuman aspects of the Trickster and none of the subhuman, the comparison still traps us in a discourse dominated by the conscious-unconscious opposition, which may or may not be useful in the description of the effect he produces upon the hobbits, but

Mallorn XLIV

certainly not in describing Tom himself. We trust, therefore, that the reader will agree there is something in the *flavour* of Bombadil and his world which would be better described by another, merrier name.

Bombadil's characteristics, the gay colours in his clothes, his feathered hat, his slight size, his voluntary seclusion in a rather bizarre personal realm, his happy go lucky manner, the mode of his connection with nature and, through Goldberry, the element of water, and a score others are all attributes of the Trickster's close cousin, the 'Fool', more specifically the character sometimes distinguished as the 'Wise Fool'.³

We call Bombadil a fool because he appears a fool by our everyday standards, and because to him everything is simple. We call him 'wise', however, because he never really makes a fool of himself – or others, although he may let others make fools of themselves. He does in fact not play any low pranks (not in this story at least); his step is sure and his tongue never slips. He desires nothing and thus he has everything; he claims ownership to nothing and thus becomes master of all. He is, linguistic pun intended, the master without subject or object.

We recognize with Goldberry that Tom simply 'is' in harmony with Being itself, the same way he *is* in perfect harmony with her who herself represents the changing seasons of the riverlands; an image of the rhythmic flow of all things.⁴

Accordingly, when Tom comes to the hobbits' rescue, it is neither through any design of his, nor due to an 'impulse'. It was simply time to pick flowers for Goldberry; that is, it was in the flow of things, a 'meaningful coincidence' as it were, that he should arrive when most needed.

When Tom cannot come to the rescue, the explanation remains the same. The real reason, for instance, why Elrond's council cannot trust him with the safe keeping of the Ring is not that he is forgetful, or irresponsible, but because it is not in the order of things that the Ring should be disposed of in this way: Sooner or later the Ring will leave Bombadil simply because it is the affair of elves and men (and hobbits), and must be resolved by them

The Divine Child

The larger world the hobbits first encounter on their journey extends in the dimension of time rather than space. Tom's elvish name is 'Eldest'. He is the master Story-Teller who recounts the history of bygone days as witnessed by the hills and the stars. His tales of trees and sprites and the lives and battles of long forgotten peoples fill the hobbits with new reverence, and for the first time they begin to get a sense of the ancient story they are part of. But when they ask of Tom how he has come by his knowledge, they learn that he himself is older even than any of his stories:

Eldest, that's what I am. Mark my words my friends: Tom was here before the river and the trees. (. . .) He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless – before the Dark Lord came from Outside (I, p. 173)

The elvish name meaning 'Eldest', which also translates into 'Fatherless', is now part of Tom's riddle. But in ancient Greece, there was a whole host of figures who shared with him miraculous beginnings that made them in a sense 'fatherless', 'self-begotten' and so forth. These were the child gods of the classical pantheon, counting among their number Dionysus, Hermes and Zeus.

Very little has hitherto been made of this obvious parallel, perhaps because 'fatherless' has been understood too literally, or perhaps because of Tolkien's distaste for attempts to identify parts of his unique conception with other (hi)stories and mythologies – or perhaps because it is not easy to imagine what business Dionysus could have in the old Forest as an aside to the central story of the wonderful Ring,

Although we do not claim identity between Tom and the Greek gods, we do interpret the epithet 'fatherless' mythologically and in a classical sense. Hence, if we view the child aspect of the Greek gods as representations of a single Child archetype, it will soon be clear what business the Divine Child, has in the story about the Ring.

In his classic essay on the Greek child gods, "The Primordial Child in Primordial Times", C.G. Kerenyi says of the symbolic significance of the Primordial Child:

*A "symbol" is not an "allegory," not just another way of speaking: it is an image presented by the world itself. In the image of the Primordial Child the world tells of its own childhood.*⁵

How better to describe Tom Bombadil, who spends a long day half singing to the hobbits the story they are part of, which is the story of Middle-Earth itself?

In his "Psychological Commentary on The Primordial Child in Primordial Times", a companion essay to Kerenyi's study, Jung speaks directly to the questions of plot and significance:

*[In the phenomenology of the psyche] the occurrence of the child motif ... signifies as a rule an anticipation of future developments, even though at first sight it may seem like a retrospective configuration.*⁶

*[The occurrence of the child motif is] conditional on a dissociation having previously taken place between past and present (. . .) a man's present state may have come into conflict with his childhood state, or he may have violently sundered oneself from his original character . . . he has thus become unchildlike and artificial and has lost his roots. All this presents a favourable opportunity for an equally vehement confrontation with the primary truth. (. . .) the retelling and ritual repetition of the mythical event (. . .) serve the purpose of bringing the image of childhood and everything connected with it, again and again before the eyes of the conscious mind so that the link with the original condition may not be broken.*⁷

The hobbits have in a very literal sense just been 'violently sundered' from their child(hood) world in the Shire. But it is Frodo who, because he must carry the corrupting Ring, has been torn up by his roots and desperately needs to retain 'the link with the original condition' if he and Middle-earth are to survive.

Frodo cannot throw off the burden he is carrying without dooming everything, but neither can he carry it. The task as Ring bearer is too great for him, and he will inevitably fail. Traditionally the Ring mission is the task of a semi-divine (or at least semi-elven) hero like Gandalf or Aragorn, for on it turn the wheels of world individuation. But Frodo is not himself the type of the Divine Child in the classical sense. He foreshadows the coming Age where beings divine no longer interfere directly with the business of Man – and indeed, in his own way, so does Bombadil, who chooses to stay within the remnants of a more ancient world.

Frodo, therefore, must travel into the 'other' world of

On Tom Bombadil

faerie, there to experience the original miracle if he is to renew the link with the roots of his being, the childhood condition of himself and his people and the childhood condition of the world about to be reborn.

In the Old Forest Bombadil heeds Frodo's call for help (for it is Fodo who calls him by Withywindle and in the Barrow Downs). He appears to Frodo as the Divine Child representing the link with everything which is original, whole and truly 'hobbit like'. In him the characteristics which are later to distinguish the hobbits in the Ring War, life affirming gaiety, 'earthiness', and literal selflessness, are shown forth as a pure (arche)type.

Or in classical terms: if the hobbits were to introduce a god, a 'primordial hobbit' created in their own ideal image, that god, we suspect, would look and behave very much like Tom Bombadil.

The Ring journey confronts Frodo with the question how to transcend himself and partake of the divine while remaining a mere mortal. Bombadil offers the solution to that dilemma by showing that the condition of Grace is to become once more a child in accordance with the gospel, 'Whosoever receiveth not the Kingdom of God as a child, he shall not enter therein'. His answer to Frodo's call is that on the threshold of the Age of Man, it is only through Grace a mere hobbit can hope to be touched by the divine and fulfil his destiny.

The Child and the Willow

Traditionally the natural world of the Divine Child is perilous to the newborn. The Old Forest likewise is animated by an alien consciousness, older than Man and hostile to the newcomer who in his arrogance has forgotten that he was not the first and shall not be the last.

The Willow Man represents Nature's negative aspect. He hates progress and evolution, symbolised by fire which is light and warmth in the night, steel which cuts and divides, and legs, which give Man freedom to roam the world. His song is ancient and powerful, for it is his will to ensnare everything that moves freely, and to put asleep once more all that is awakening to new life. He wants to swallow up the Divine Child, and by extension Frodo because he is, 'an anticipation of future developments': a new birth and a new freedom.

The Divine Child, however, is always stronger than the regressive impulse. Like Bombadil, he is older even than the ancient Willow because he represents the primordial impulse arising from the primordial waters of non-Being – yet another layer in the water symbolism associated with Bombadil.

In this sense the Child is necessarily prior to the impulse to swallow him up again. But more importantly, in arising at all; that is, by introducing the very possibility of Being, he has already won a victory over the state of non-Being, or status quo, which is the goal of the regressive impulse.

From the perspective of the teleology of the Self, Jung explains the invincibility of the Divine Child in this way:

The "child" is born out of the womb of the unconscious, begotten out of the depths of nature, or rather out of living Nature herself (. . .) It represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself (. . .) The urge and compulsion to self-realization is a

*law of nature and thus of invincible power, even though its effects, at the start are insignificant.*⁸

Since the Divine Child represents birth and re-birth, he also represents the triumph over Death. His role as resurrector and light-bringer is illustrated by the adventure in the Barrow Downs where the stranglehold of Death and cold despair is broken by the song of Tom Bombadil:

There was a loud rumbling sound as of stones rolling and falling, and suddenly light streamed in, real light of day. A low door-like opening appeared at the end of the chamber beyond Fodo's feet; and there was Tom's head (hat, feather, and all) framed against the light of the sun rising red behind him. (I, pp. 187-188)

The death and rebirth imagery is powerful and triumphant: Tom arrives with the rising sun newly reborn from the watery grave in which it has passed the night, in time to raise the hobbits from the earthy mound where they have lain and shared with the dead their cold dreams.

Significantly Bombadil's arrival is preceded by the first (arguably only) instance where Frodo rises up unaided to strike at the barrow wight in pure defiance of Death and despair. There are many more instances in the book of despair overcome by late kindled courage and inextinguishable will to live, but nowhere is the triumph of life more complete than in the kingdom of Tom Bombadil.

Tom and Goldberry

We said earlier that the harmonic relationship between Tom and Goldberry River-Daughter is symbolic of Tom's harmony with the 'flow of things'. The comparison with the Divine Child enlarges that image. 'Tom is the Master', as Goldberry puts it, of re-birth as well as birth because through her he is wed to the cycles of sun and moon through all seasons.

In the Tarot, the Fool, carrying the number 0, can appear as the last as well as the first of the trumps, signifying that he is both beginning and end, or the end which is a new beginning. In this sense the Fool, like the Divine Child really is 'fatherless' or 'selfbegotten'.⁹ He can also, symbolically at any rate, diminish or die towards the end of an Age as Elrond's Council speculates. But his death is only seeming because it always contains the promise of rebirth.

As forces inherent in earth itself, Tom and Goldberry form a juxtaposition to the heavenly Light represented by Gandalf and Galadriel both white. The latter love Middle-Earth deeply, but they are not of the earth. Though touched by the world's transient beauty, their perspective partakes of eternity and their inmost yearnings are for the blessed lands beyond the circles of the world. Hence in Galadriel's Lothlorien, time itself – and with it the progressive cycles of nature – is suspended by her will.

Tom Bombadil and Goldberry function as counterbalance to this tendency towards otherworldliness. They delight in the waxing and waning of seasons and the change wrought by the passing years. In their joy of life, they show forth the wind and the rain and all things growing in the earth as Spirit, for their home is the riverlands where the old year must die for the new to begin, even as timeless, changeless Lothlorien must vanish to overcome Death itself.

Mallorn XLIV

Death and immortality are supreme poetic themes in *LotR* and poetically speaking Tolkien already gave us Bombadil's real origin, as well as his dearest name, in an early letter to his publisher:

*Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story?*¹⁰

Tom of course could not be made the hero of such a story as *LotR*, for he and Goldberry are not human. But they are still very much its spirit and its poetic subject-matter.

The Fool and the Wizards

If Gandalf is the high purpose, Tom is the deep beginning of the individuating spiritual principle. Gandalf's elements are Wind and Fire, for he rides Manwe's eagles and the horse Shadowfax, 'swift as the flowing wind'; and he fights the Enemy with fiery thunderbolts and the fire of hope and inspiration. Bombadil's elements are, as we have seen, Water and Earth. He travels on foot by choice (but is never late for that), and he rescues the hobbits out of the bowels of the Willow by the river, and out of the bowels of the hills of the dead. Thus we perceive that the opposition is only seeming, for they both bring life and light of a new day to dark places.

Even the colours of Bombadil and Goldberry complement Gandalf's white. Theirs are the colours of nature's moods and seasons, but in Gandalf, who comes to represent the spiritual principle reincarnated and whole, the colours of Bombadil are integrated harmoniously to reappear as unbroken white. This again is contrasted with the fallen Saruman, whom Gandalf must replace, once white but now turned many coloured:

"White, [Saruman] sneered. "It serves as a beginning . . . the white light can be broken". "In which case it is no longer white", said [Gandalf]. "And he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (I, p. 338)

Saruman, regressively breaks the Light of Nature when he turns his knowledge of its secrets to genetic experiments and production of machines – only to become Sauron's fool. But Tom complements the Gandalf-Saruman opposition by showing that one can delight in the manifold colours of creation for its own sake, and thus be a Fool without leaving the path of wisdom.¹¹

Saruman himself calls Gandalf a fool in the tower Orthanc, and this is no coincidence, for he is named so by all who imagine they can use the Ring themselves to defeat Sauron. In his eloquent answer to Erestor at Elrond's council, Gandalf reveals that he is very aware of the accusation but also the hope it conceals:

Well, let folly be our cloak, a veil before the eyes of the Enemy! For he is very wise, and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice. But the only measure that he knows is the desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, shall put him out of reckoning. (I, p. 353)

Thus we learn that at the heart of the calculated strategy to destroy the Ring lies the teaching of the Fool, that to let go of personal desire is to serve All.

Gandalf and Bombadil are essentially representative of the same principle only seen from different perspectives, like beginning and end. In the story of the Ring, the most impor-

tant difference between them is determined by the conditions governing the role each plays. The Ring War is Gandalf's chosen mission, thus he must appear a human self which pities, hopes, fears, doubts and aspires; a corruptible self as it were, in constant danger from the Ring which suggests itself to his ambition even through his pity for others. Bombadil on the other hand remains (a) pure Spirit with no human weaknesses. This means, however, that he cannot act directly within ordinary space-time.

The Ring conflict is symbolic of a state in which all things are in conflict, broken, sundered or estranged. This is true even of the spiritual principle so Gandalf must leave behind the state of original harmony, represented by Bombadil and Goldberry, to fight the Ring War. But once the task is complete, beginning and end, height and depth can meet anew and become One. That is the reason for Gandalf's rather sudden announcement on the way back to the Shire:

'I am turning aside soon. I am going to have a long talk with Bombadil: such a talk as I have not had in all my time. He is a moss-gatherer, and I have been a stone doomed to rolling. But my rolling days are ending, and now we shall have much to say to one another.' (III, p. 298)

Gandalf has rolled full circle and stands once more in ideal relation to the original Spirit.

The Divine Jester

Gandalf's role relative to Frodo is that of the archetypal 'Wise Old Man'. He represents the spiritual principle as it appears to the apprentice hero. He knows or senses the unusual fate awaiting the hero, and in the common guise of teacher he will often act as a deliberate agent of that fate.

Gandalf's most important teaching is pity and mercy for their own sake. Frodo learns from Gandalf that it was Bilbo's initial act of mercy towards Gollum which helped him withstand the Ring's corrupting influence over the years. (I pp. 78-79) That same mercy repeated by Frodo later wins the Ring War.

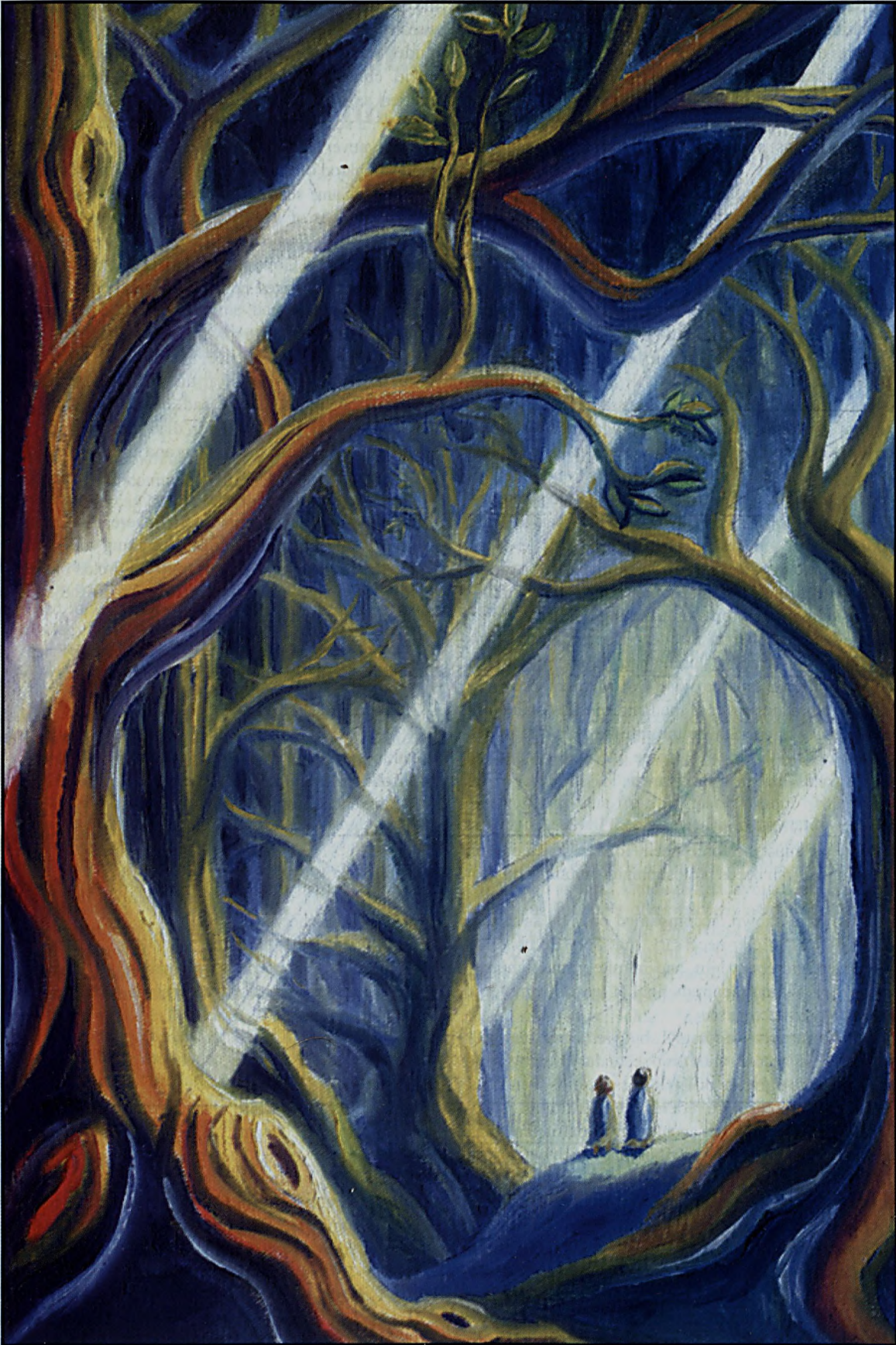
However, when we understand the difference between Gandalf and Bombadil, indeed between Bombadil and all the other characters in the book, we also understand why it is only he who can teach the profoundest lesson of all. On the hobbits' second night in Bombadil's house, Tom asks to see the Ring.

'Then suddenly he put it to his eye and laughed. For a second the hobbits had a vision, both comical and alarming, of his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold. Then Tom put the Ring round the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. There was no sign of Tom disappearing.'

Tom laughed again, and then he spun the Ring in the air – and it vanished with a flash. Frodo gave a cry – and Tom leaned forward and handed it back to him with a smile.' (I, p. 175)

To make light of the Ring in this manner is beyond even Gandalf, but to the Fool nothing is taboo: In this truly 'alarming vision', Bombadil sheds at last his human cloak to become the Divine Jester mocking all men, elves, wizards and hobbits who make evil real through their belief in Sauron's illusion.

The theatrics, of course, are those of the archetypal 'Magician', who dazzles the spectator with his wonderful



Into the woods

Jef Murray

Mallorn XLIV

tricks, cheap or profound who knows?¹² But we only grasp the extent of the mockery when we realize that Bombadil is imitating Sauron no less; putting himself in Sauron's place and performing his darkest tricks with the real Ring! This is the very thing the mere thought of which has all 'the Wise' trembling with fear of eternal damnation.

It is, however not one of the Wise but old Tom Fool in the role as the Black Magician; and as such it is only to be expected that things soon get turned on their head and become ridiculous.

Under the subverting influence of the Fool, the Magician's trick is now to expose the trick; to break the illusion rather than create one, and show forth the thing as it is, not as we are manipulated to see it: When Tom holds up the Ring, it is his own sky-blue eye, not the Enemy's hell-red, which winks at the Ring bearer through the emptiness it encircles. This is but what every stage magician would do to show us that there are no hidden objects, no clever mirrors, no false bottoms, and... no Ring Lord?

Tom puts the worthless trinket where it belongs, on the smallest joint of his smallest finger. And again the result is... nothing. What else could we reasonably expect?

Since the power of the Ring is thus proved to not be, logically the only trick left for it is to vanish itself; and so it does. Indeed, were it not so alarming, it would be the greatest comedy imaginable.

This is of course the gift only Tom can give. Although the fallible Frodo immediately demonstrates he has learned nothing when he subsequently puts on the Ring and tries to fool Tom, still a seed is sown in the deep hopelessness of his plight: an image of a straight, shining path to redemption. For the Fool exemplifies what the Wise Old Man could convey only indirectly, that the power of the Ring consists in the limited self's illusory opposition to the infinite All: 'Transcend your self', says Tom to Frodo. Become one with All and the precious Ring will disappear on its own.

The Function Of Tom Bombadil

At this point we must perforce heed Tolkien's admonition that 'I don't think Tom needs philosophizing about, and is not improved by it.'¹³

We hope to have shown, accompanied only by such philosophizing as was strictly necessary, that Tom Bombadil is all Tolkien ever said about him, and infinitely much more – and that he is so without contradiction, at least by any logic Tom himself would recognise.

He remains a narrative 'anomaly', but we understand why it must be so. In accord with its 'secondary reality', the Romantic fairy-tale universe of LotR possesses its own inner level of faerie, where the pure redemptive Spirit of all (proper) fairy-tales is personified. In an autumn world of vanishing beauty, Bombadil is the lasting spirit of that which we mourn, calling on us to celebrate life as we find it.

Bombadil is the embodiment of the resolution to the conflict which drives the (hi)story. That conflict is ultimately the Fall of Man and his artificial separation from All. The resolution, as we have seen, is to become once more like children.

Tolkien's treatment of the child motif remains sublime throughout. *LotR* is written largely from the perspective of the children (hobbits) among the protagonists, who are also its ultimate heroes. Even the simple naivete of the style asks us to forget our adult cynicism and become children once more. But it is with Bombadil the mythical image of child-

hood is evoked in its purest form. Both as a character and as renewing spiritual current, he functions as a living symbol of the original event; a *psykopompos*, who pointing that way forward which stretches from the bridge to the past, initiates and guides the reader as well the hobbits, into the triune worlds of faerie, childhood and myth. In the introduction we quoted Tolkien saying Bombadil represents 'something otherwise left out', a sort of 'moral comment.' In fact this 'moral comment' is never left out, only henceforth it is dressed in the flesh and blood of human characters. We find it in the selfless actions of Sam, servant of Frodo, and Faramir, servant of Gondor, neither of whom are corrupted by the Ring when they hold it; in Frodo's pity which proves greater than his hate and fear of Gollum; in Gandalf's sacrifice in Moria, when he readily gives up his own ambition to save those depending on him.

These (non)actions are nowhere calculated or thought of in terms of morality or prudence, but carry out the Fool's example in letting go of oneself at the point where deliberations over final outcome, good or bad, have no meaning. Each of these instances, translate into that moment of Grace on Mount Doom, where the human and the divine intersect to make the impossible possible.

It is here Bombadil ceases to be a 'moral comment' to become instead a spiritual force inherent in myth which resolves the human dilemma by inviting us into a world where the original state of harmony still holds out the promise of final Grace. Such is his function in the story about Frodo and the wonderful Ring

Notes

1. Tolkien, 1981, p. 192.
2. Jung, 1968, p. 261
3. The Fool as archetype in his own right is most famously found in the Tarot
4. Tolkien, 1981, p. 272
5. Jung and Kerenyi, 1951, p. 45
6. *Ibid.* p. 83
7. *Ibid.* p. 81
8. *Ibid.* pp. 89-90
9. The Fool is the closest equivalent in the Tarot to the Divine Child archetype
10. Tolkien, 1981, No 19.
11. Tolkien, 1981, p. 192 for Bombadil as natural scientist.
12. The Magician as archetype is seen on the Tarot Trump no. 1
13. Tolkien, 1981, p. 191

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‘I have looked the last on that which is fairest’

Elegy in *Beowulf* and Tolkien’s Lothlórien

- Leigh Smith

In his British Academy lecture “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics,” J.R.R. Tolkien memorably asserted that *Beowulf* was not an epic and that critics had often found it wanting because they judged it as something it never tried to be.¹ Ironically, the same has often been true of Tolkien’s own work. Edmund Wilson, in his sneering attack on *Lord of the Rings*, “Oo, those awful orcs!” mistook *LOTR* for a romance and critiqued it as one.² Being a wry and often scathing critic of the critics, Tolkien might well have taken some satisfaction in finding *LOTR* criticism suffering from the same misapprehension as *Beowulf* criticism. He certainly expresses the same doubt about his own reviewers as he does about some *Beowulf* commentators, that is, whether they have been “so diligent...as duly to read the book”³; he declares himself unmoved by the negative evaluations of many who have read *LOTR* “or at any rate have reviewed it.”⁴ Douglass Parker, who had read it, suggests in his 1956 review the same answer to the genre problem for *LOTR* that Tolkien had earlier suggested for *Beowulf*: if we must assign it a genre, let us call it an elegy. Specifically, Parker uses the same term for *LOTR* that Tolkien uses for *Beowulf*: “heroic-elegiac.”⁵ In doing so, Parker compares Tolkien’s work specifically with *Beowulf*: “Like the kingdom of the Geats, Tolkien’s whole marvellous, intricate structure has been reared to be destroyed, that we may regret it.”⁶ As many scholars have since then shown, the transitory nature of happiness was a preoccupation Tolkien shared with the Anglo-Saxon literature he loved.⁷ His Lothlórien, in particular, where Galadriel and Celeborn have, “through ages of the world...fought the long defeat,”⁸ contains images and rituals that seem to come directly from *Beowulf*. Tolkien’s use of *Beowulf* to create parts of his fictional world has been well-documented, especially as regards the dragon in *The Hobbit* and the Meduseld scene in *LOTR*.⁹ However, considering how often the connections between the two works have been examined, it is especially surprising that the sheer number of elements in the Lothlórien section that imitate and evoke *Beowulf* has yet to be explained. Their effect and, I would argue, their purpose, is to create the same elegiac tone that makes *Beowulf* so emotionally powerful, leaving the reader with the same noble sorrow Gimli feels at looking “the last on that which was fairest.”¹⁰

First, though Tolkien says Celeborn and Galadriel welcome their guests “courteously by name,”¹¹ one might also say “by

lineage.” They greet “Aragorn son of Arathorn,” “Gimli son of Gloin,” and the “son of Thranduil,”¹² not even mentioning Legolas’s own name. The *Beowulf* poet also frequently refers to warriors by their father’s names, as is conventional in Anglo-Saxon poetry. But he does so most tellingly in the scene where the coast guard questions Beowulf before allowing the Geats ashore. He asks specifically for their lineage, not their names:

...Nu ic eower sceal
frum-cyn witan...¹³

[...Now I must your
lineage know...]¹⁴

Beowulf accordingly answers that his lord is Hygelac, and his father was Ecgtheow (261-3). At the entrance to Heorot, he gives Wulfgar both his name and his lord Hygelac’s name, but Hrothgar makes clear that the stranger may enter because Hrothgar knew his father and therefore knows that the son has come as a friend:

...is his eafora nu
heard her cumen, sohte holdne wine.¹⁵

[...his hardy offspring has now
come here, sought a fast friend.]

Of course, as *Beowulf* well understands, his name is of no consequence: it does not tell the hall guard whether he may safely let a group of armed strangers into the throne room. Only *Beowulf*’s descent from Ecgtheow, whom Hrothgar helped in his youth, can tell the Danes what to expect of the son.

What, then, may Galadriel and Celeborn expect of their guests? As Legolas is a kinsman, his descent from Thranduil marks him as safe. Although kinslaying is not unknown in the history of Tolkien’s elves (as it is not in *Beowulf*), relations between Lothlórien and Mirkwood are cordial. Thus, Legolas is easily admitted. Aragorn, descended from the Númenorean kings and reared at Rivendell, is also a known quantity. Lineage, however, presents a problem for Gimli. The elves of Lothlórien, says Haldir, “have not had dealings with the Dwarves since the Dark Days”¹⁶ and are therefore suspicious of Gimli. Then, as Celeborn points out, Gimli’s kindred “stirred up this evil [the balrog] in Moria again.”¹⁷

The far-seeing Galadriel solves this problem by invoking something more basic than the particulars of one’s ancestry:

1 J.R.R. Tolkien, “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics,” *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 7.

2 Edmund Wilson, “Oo, Those Awful Orcs.” *The Nation* April 14, 1956: 312-314.

3 Tolkien, “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics” 5.

4 J.R.R. Tolkien, Forward, *The Lord of the Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991) 10.

5 Douglass Parker, “Hwaet we Holbytla...,” *Hudson Review* 9 (1956): 609; Tolkien, “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics” 31.

6 Parker 609.

7 See esp. Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light*, Rev. ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2002) 3-10.

8 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991) 376.

9 See, for example, Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth*, Rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003) 87, 124.

10 Tolkien, *LOTR* 398.

11 Tolkien, *LOTR* 374.

12 Tolkien, *LOTR* 374.

13 Friedrich Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburgh*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936) 251-2.

14 Translations are mine except where otherwise indicated.

15 Klaeber 375-6.

16 Tolkien, *LOTR* 362.

17 Tolkien, *LOTR* 375.

Mallorn XLIV

the longing to return to one's ancestral halls, to feel connected with one's ancestors, a desire that is treated elegiacally in both *LOTR* and *Beowulf*. Galadriel realises that respect for lineage, which makes Gimli an object of suspicion among the elves, is exactly what drove his people back to Moria. If the Galadhrim had been long away from Lothlórien, she rhetorically asks Celeborn, who among them "would pass nigh and would not wish to look upon their ancient home, though it had become an abode of dragons?"¹⁸ This question is especially poignant because Galadriel herself will not be in Lothlórien much longer, and her sympathy with Gimli suggests a kinship perhaps as important as the one created by blood: they are about to be fellow-exiles, mourning an equivalent loss.

In the heroic past, as the *Beowulf* poet imagines it, the social bond remains strong while the structures that symbolize it remain intact. As Heorot is repaired after the defeat of Grendel, the fellowship and social order he threatened is also restored. However, by the end of the poem, Beowulf is less fortunate than Hrothgar: his own fellowship is destroyed along with the structure that represents it. When Beowulf fights the dragon, the ultimate anti-social force for the Anglo-Saxons, embodying, as Tolkien says, "the evil side of heroic life,"¹⁹ only one of his hand-picked warriors, Wiglaf, has the nerve to fight by his side, a decision which makes victory over the dragon possible but fails ultimately to benefit the Geats. Beowulf's death leaves Geatland open to its enemies. Even if Wiglaf is ready to assume the *drihten's* (lord's) role, why would he rebuild the meadhall, to sit on the gift-throne and distribute treasures to warriors who run when he needs them most? In essence, the heroic code which Beowulf personified, in which fellow warriors and kinsmen could count on each other, burns along with Beowulf's hall. The loyalty of Wiglaf, last of Beowulf's blood kin, already seems outdated. At least for the Geats, there will be no returning to the dependable fellowship of the *driht* (the lord's warrior band). Indeed, the poet has alluded to this loss of the old customs by his earlier dark references to strife between kinsmen and a final destruction of Heorot.

Thus, the respect for lineage that links Tolkien's Lothlórien with the world of *Beowulf* serves to highlight the loss of connection with one's ancestors. As, at the end of *Beowulf*, there is no young hero to pay a father's debt by saving the Geats from the dragon, so the Galadhrim's ancient home may indeed become an abode of dragons.

Second, the "Farewell to Lórien" scene, with its cup-passing and gift-giving, is much like the halls scenes in *Beowulf*. All appreciative readers of *Beowulf* recall the riveting majesty of Wealhtheow, as she makes her grand entrance into the hall, selects the order in which the heroes will drink, and interprets the experience for them. She brings the cup first to Hrothgar, urging him to enjoy the happiness of the moment, but admonishing him at some length not to forget their children in his gratitude to Beowulf:

*Onfoh pissum fulle, freodrihten min,
sinces brytta! pu on sælum wes,
goldwine gumena, ond to Geatum spræc
mildum wordum, swa sceal man dōn!
Beo wid Geatas glæd, geofena gemyndig,
...bruc, penden pu mote,
manigra medo, ond pinum magum læf
folc ond rice ...*²⁰

[Take this cup, my noble lord,

giver of treasure; be joyful,
gold-friend of warriors, and to the Geats speak
mild words, as a man should do;
be with the Geats gracious, mindful of gifts
...enjoy, while you may,
many rewards, and to your sons leave
folk and kingdom...]

Beowulf gets the mead-cup next, along with sumptuous gifts and a lecture on remembering the generosity of Hrothgar when he deals with their children:

*...Beo pu sun minum
dædum gedefe, dreamhealdende!
her is æghwylc eorl oprum getrywe,
modes milde, mandrihtne hol[d];
pegnas syndon gepwære, peod ealgearo,
druncne dryhtguman dod swa ic bidde.*²¹

[...Be to my sons
kind in deeds, holder of joy!
Here is each earl true to the other
in heart mild, to his man-lord loyal;
the thanes are united, the people prepared,
the warriors, having drunk, do as I bid.]

Neither Hrothgar nor Beowulf ventures a word in reply. Though both are usually courteous and engaging talkers, they now sit tongue-tied until the queen resumes her seat.

Galadriel's quiet control of the departure scene certainly seems modelled on Wealhtheow's control of the hall scene. When Galadriel fills the cup with mead and gives it to Celeborn, saying, "Drink, Lord of the Galadhrim!"²² he is likely to do as she bids. After passing the cup to the rest of the fellowship, Galadriel "commanded them to sit again on the grass," while she and Celeborn sit on chairs. Thus, each member of the fellowship must approach the lord and lady to receive his gift, as a Danish warrior would approach the gift-throne. Although she has referred to Celeborn as a "giver of gifts,"²³ Galadriel actually does the gift-giving and, like Wealhtheow, the talking, mostly about proper use of the gifts. Even the Elfstone brooch that Galadriel gives Aragorn²⁴ is reminiscent of the jeweled torque that Wealhtheow gives Beowulf. The traditions and manners of Lothlórien, including the cup-passing and gift-giving, are among the "ancient things" that Frodo senses "lived on in the waking world,"²⁵ as if he had stumbled upon an old society preserved in amber, its inhabitants frozen in the commission of their now- quaint customs. Lothlórien looks anachronistic not only to Frodo, but also to the English reader, who may have read *Beowulf* and will, on some level, recall the outmoded courtesies described in it.²⁶ In fact, Tolkien reminds his readers in "The Monsters and the Critics" that the *Beowulf* poet "was telling of things already old and weighted with regret."²⁷

In both texts, this nostalgia is expressed most eloquently in the songs. The Lothlórien section of *LOTR* has three songs, all of which (like most songs in Tolkien) are elegiac²⁸ and evoke songs from *Beowulf*, as well as other parts of the text. Of course, Tolkien, who is meticulously precise in his details when he chooses to be, provides only tantalising hints about

18 Tolkien, *LOTR* 375.

19 Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" 17

20 Klaeber, 1169-73, 1177-79.

21 Klaeber, 1226-31.

22 Tolkien, *LOTR* 394.

23 Tolkien, *LOTR* 376.

24 Tolkien, *LOTR* 395.

25 Tolkien, *LOTR* 368.

26 Indeed, the parallels between early England and Tolkien's Lothlórien have been well established. See esp. Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) 199.

27 Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" 33.

28 Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* 97.

I have looked the last ...

the elven lament for the Grey Pilgrim. We should notice, however, that the *Beowulf* poet does the same with the Geatish woman's song at Beowulf's funeral. Both are reported in paraphrase, as Tolkien, like the *Beowulf* poet, often alludes to the lost details of old stories. Such allusions, as Tom Shippey has shown, form an important part of Tolkien's strategy for making his newly-invented stories appear old and "rooted" in the past.²⁹ In the case of an elegiac song, such reference to details now lost seems especially appropriate. Even the song that Frodo composes for Gandalf nearly vanishes before he can recite it, so that "only snatches remained."³⁰ What does remain seems influenced by Wiglaf's speech following the death of Beowulf. According to Wiglaf, Beowulf's individual will caused him to attack the dragon:

*Oft sceall earl monig anes willan
wraec adreogan, swa us geworden is.*³¹

[Often must many an earl for one's will
suffer ruin, as has happened to us.]

Gandalf, according to Frodo, "through dragon-lair and hidden door/and darkling woods...walked at will."³² Further, Frodo's song evokes the *Beowulf* poet's own elegiac commentary on Beowulf. The mourners at Beowulf's funeral, his "hearth-companions" and followers, celebrate their lord's kindness and gentleness, but also his eagerness for fame:

*cwædon þæt he wære wyruldcyning[a],
manne mildest ond mon[dw]ærust,
leodum lidost ond lofgeornost. (3180-2)*

[they said that he was of kings in the world,
the mildest man and the most gentle,
kindest to his people and most eager for fame.]

Similarly, Frodo recalls a complex hero: a "lord of wisdom" with "[a] deadly sword" and "a healing hand," who is "swift in anger," yet "quick to laugh."³³ Frodo now laments the fallen leader who "defied" the "fire and shadow" of the balrog,³⁴ much as Beowulf does when he faces the dragon alone. The companions in *LOTR* have also lost their leader, and they all wonder how much hope they have without him. This concern also recalls Beowulf's funeral, where the Geatish woman voices fears that the great man's death will plunge all of his people into defeat, humiliation, and captivity:

*swylce giomorgyd (s)io g(eo) meowle
(æfter Biowulfe b)undenheorde
(song) sorgcearig, sæde geneahhe,
þæt hio hyre (hearmda)gas hearde (ondre)de,
wælfylla worn, (wigen)des egesan,
hy[n]do (ond) h(æftny)d... (3150-5)*

[also an old woman with her hair bound up
sang a sorrowful song, because of Beowulf
she said frequently,
that she sorely dreaded for herself evil days
many slaughters, terror of warriors,
humiliation and captivity...]

Both texts lament their fallen heroes not only because of their admirable qualities, but because their people may not now be able to defend themselves against a looming attack.

The second song, which Galadriel sings just prior to the gift-giving, is, like so much in the Lothlórien section, about beauty and loss. Here, she mourns the golden tree in Eldamar, whose "golden leaves have grown upon the branching years,/While here beyond the Sundering Seas now fall the Elven-tears" (393). This song is especially poignant if we remember the leading role Galadriel played in the departure of her folk from Valinor. As the *Silmarillion* recounts, the elves, of whom Galadriel led one contingent, walked away from Aman and the golden tree. As when Beowulf insists on fighting the dragon alone, for which even the loyal Wiglaf comes close to blaming him, many often suffer from the willfulness of one. If we connect the golden tree with the golden hoard at the end of *Beowulf*, we find both the Galadhrim and the Geats, as Wiglaf's messenger says, "troubled in mind, gold-bereft tread[ing] foreign lands." Therefore, like Wiglaf, his messenger, and the unknown Geatish woman, Galadriel knows that the land she loves is doomed. If Frodo's mission fails, Sauron, like the Swedes in *Beowulf*, will attack, and Lothlórien will be as defenceless as Geatland after the death of its leader. If he succeeds, of course, the very flow of time that makes a relic of Beowulf's pagan virtue (and sends no young hero to replace him) will sweep away Lothlórien. As Galadriel explains, "We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten."³⁵ The only question is: will it be a quick defeat or a long defeat, the forces of Sauron or of history? In his essay "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien unabashedly defends archaism, insisting that the preservation and even recreation of the past can mean the salvaging of antique beauty, which one need not be ashamed of preferring to modern ugliness.³⁶ Galadriel's (and therefore Tolkien's) preservation of "ancient things" in Lórien³⁷ parallels the *Beowulf* poet's preservation of the past.

The third song, which Galadriel sings as the fellowship departs (by water, like Beowulf and his Geats) is suffused with the same *ubi sunt* wistfulness as we find in many parts of *Beowulf*, most obviously the Lay of the Last Survivor. Galadriel's image of the years passing "like swift draughts of the sweet mead in lofty halls beyond the West"³⁸ recalls the Last Survivor's mourning for fallen comrades with whom *þe* once made merry in the hall. Both songs use not only the hall, but the drinking-cup itself to symbolise joy and fellowship, which are now lost. Galadriel wonders "Who now shall refill the cup?" as the Last Survivor laments those who have lost both life and "hall-joy," leaving no one to "clean the golden cup,/the precious drinking-vessel."³⁹ And Galadriel's song, like the Last Survivor's, is in an "ancient tongue" that no one speaks anymore, appropriate for speaking of "things little known on Middle-Earth."⁴⁰ Of course, the *Beowulf* poet cannot be imagining his own Anglo-Saxon English as a dead language (any more than we imagine our own going the way of all languages), but Tolkien, as an imaginative philologist, must have seen an added layer of *pathos* in an elegy to glories no one remembers being written in a tongue no one understands.

29 Shippey, J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century 86-88; *The Road to Middle earth* 87, 309.

30 Tolkien, *LOTR* 378.

31 Klaeber, 3077-8.

32 Tolkien, *LOTR* 378.

33 Tolkien, *LOTR* 379.

34 Tolkien, *LOTR* 379.

35 Tolkien, *LOTR* 384.

36 J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 150.

37 Tolkien, *LOTR* 368.

38 Tolkien, *LOTR* 398.

39 Klaeber 2252-4.

40 Tolkien, *LOTR* 397.

Mallorn XLIV

Tolkien shows himself especially sensitive to the elegiac tone of *Beowulf* in his translation of the Finn and Hengest episode. While Friedrich Klaeber's definitive edition was available at the time, he prefers for *Finn and Hengest* R.W. Chambers's edition.⁴¹ Klaeber and Chambers are very much alike, but there are differences which make Chambers a better choice for an author who is interested in elegy. In Chambers's edition, lines 1076-1081 read:

*Nalles holinga Hoces dohtor
meotodsceaft bemern, syndan morgen com,
da heo under swegle geseon meahthe
morporbealo maga. Pær he ær mæste heold
worolde wynne, wig ealle fornam
Finnes pegas, nemne feanum anum...* (emphasis mine)

Tolkien translates these lines as follows:

Not without cause did Hoc's daughter lament her destined lot when morning came, and she then beneath the light of heaven could see the **murderous evil among kinsfolk. Where he aforetime had possessed** the greatest of earthly bliss, there war swept away all the knights of Finn, save few alone...

In Chambers's version, the highlighted sentence ends after *maga* or *kin*. However, in Klaeber's version, the same lines appear this way:

*Nalles holinga Hoces dohtor
meotodsceaft bemern, syndan morgen com,
da heo under swegle geseon meahthe
morporbealo maga, pær he[fo] ær mæste heold
worolde wynne. Wig ealle fornam
Finnes pegas, nemne feanum anum...*

Here, *maga* is followed by a comma. Therefore translations which rely on Klaeber's version treat the next phrase, with its reference to *worolde wynne* or *earthly joy*, as connected to the previous one. If it is connected to the previous phrase, it must refer to Hildeburh's joy, not Finn's, and the pronoun that follows must therefore be, as in Klaeber's version, the feminine *heo*, not the masculine *he*. Thus, Roy Liuzza renders the same lines:

Not without cause did she mourn fate's decrees,
the daughter of Hoc, after daybreak came
and she could see the **slaughter of her kin
under the very skies where once she held**
the greatest of worldly joys. War took away
all of the thanes of Finn, except a few...⁴²

Thus, in translations that rely on Klaeber for the original, we find Hildeburh's sorrow at seeing her slaughtered kin contrasted with her former joy. This image is emotionally powerful, even heartbreaking, but not exactly elegiac. However, in Chambers's version, *maga* is followed by a full stop. While the manuscript gives no punctuation after *maga*, the pronoun that follows is clearly *he*, and Tolkien himself insists that "we must certainly disallow the emendation of *he* to *heo*, and put a full stop at *maga*."⁴³ This way, the reference to earthly joy belongs to the next sentence and therefore is Finn's joy. The resulting contrast between his former hall-joy and the now-empty hall, from which his warriors have been swept away,

connects the Finn and Hengest episode not only with the Lay of the Last Survivor, but with many other Anglo-Saxon elegies, such as *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*, on which Tolkien might also have drawn as he composed Galadriel's songs.

In his scholarship, Tolkien emphasised that *Beowulf* depicts an admirable but irrecoverable past. Tolkien's Lothlórien, like *Beowulf*, preserves the Eldar Days with long-faded images and rituals which remind the English reader of his own brave ancestors. As Tolkien is creating, in his own words, a "secondary world,"⁴⁴ he could depict any set of practices and identify them as part of this secondary world's past. However, by taking the gift-giving, cup-passing, and other Anglo-Saxon rituals from *Beowulf*, from the primary world's past, he eliminates the need to tell his readers what they are seeing and how they should feel about it. Without being told, his readers (even those who are cultural rather than physical descendants of the Saxons) feel what Gimli feels. Furthermore, the past for which Tolkien creates such noble regret offers an ideal voice for elegy, as the Anglo-Saxons themselves excelled at this type of expression. As Tolkien argues, elegy appears so often in their literature because it expresses their outlook on life, an outlook which Tolkien sums up as a "despair of the event, combined with a faith in the value of the doomed resistance."⁴⁵ In describing this "theory of courage," as he called it, he could just as easily be speaking of his own Lothlórien. Everything fades eventually, but one fights the "long defeat" regardless. Nowhere does Tolkien present that "theory of courage" more clearly than in the Lothlórien section. We should recognise in the "long defeat" of Lórien the doomed heroism of *Beowulf*, who knows before he attacks the dragon that he is going to his last battle.

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44 Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" 140.

45 Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" 23.

Aragorn

Tales of the heir of Isildur. Part 1 – the evolution of the man

Håken Arvidsson

Ever since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* commentators and critics have neglected Aragorn. Many studies are concerned with Frodo, Gandalf, and Gollum, but few are chiefly concerned with the Heir of Isildur. Some interest has been shown in mythological comparisons, eg comparisons between Aragorn and King Arthur or Sigurd Fafnirsbane. In the opening paragraph in Kocher's chapter on Aragorn he states that "Aragorn is unquestionably the leading man in *The Lord of the Rings*, ... yet he is probably the least written about, least valued, and most misunderstood of all its major characters" (Kocher, 130). As noted by Kocher, Aragorn may appear to remain something of a mystery to the reader. The reasons for his actions are usually not divulged until much later, and for all those who do not bother with the appendices he may very well remain a complete mystery. This mystery is largely responsible for the critics' neglect, dismissal and general dislike of this 'too good to be true' character. And Kocher's analysis of Aragorn is handicapped by the fact that in 1972 *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* had yet to be published. His chapter on Aragorn provides no more than can be revealed by an attentive reading of *LotR* and its appendices.

Today, more than twenty years after the publication of *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* and with the completion of Christopher Tolkien's monumental *History of Middle-earth*, the situation has not changed. Aragorn's appearance on the silver screen in the guise of Viggo Mortensen has attracted more attention to this character, but it has also cast another veil over our eyes. If at all obtainable, the true nature of Aragorn can only be reached by reading everything that Tolkien has ever written about Middle-earth. In order to understand Aragorn, we need to understand Middle-earth. A comprehensive study that examines Aragorn thoroughly has yet to be undertaken. Most critics seem to consider the heir of Isildur dispensable, therefore the hypothesis to be tested is: the heir of Isildur is an indispensable character in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

Aragorn's importance may vary depending on how one reads the novel, but can anyone imagine *LotR* without Strider/Aragorn? What are the effects of Aragorn's development into the Heir of Isildur in the manuscripts, and how does Tolkien integrate Aragorn into Middle-earth? What is Aragorn's significance in Middle-earth, and how does he contribute to the overall effect of the work? How great is Aragorn's importance to Tolkien's writings, to the reader of these writings, and to Tolkien himself?

The hypothesis that the heir of Isildur is an indispensable character may be tested in various ways. One way would be to try to demonstrate that Aragorn has little or no importance

This paper is the first part of an MA thesis presented by the author in July 2004.

This section traces the history of Aragorn's as Trotter through all his evolutionary changes. Part two (Mallorn 45) will describe his family history, his transformation into Strider, and discuss the ramifications of his evolution.

for the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, Middle-earth, and Tolkien's creative process. In order to do this, I will first study the process of Tolkien's writing of *LotR* by going through his manuscripts (in the form they are presented by Christopher Tolkien in *The History of The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth referred to as *HLoTR*). The manuscripts make it possible to evaluate the impor-

tance of Aragorn in the creation of the novel. I will try to determine to what degree the character of Aragorn influences the development of the narrative through successive drafts. Thereafter, I will attempt to puzzle together the 'final' version of Aragorn's life and ancestral history. In doing so, I will be able to assess whether this character is important to Middle-earth. The process of questioning the character's integration into Tolkien's world strikes at the very core of the problem. The main source for tracing Aragorn's ancestry is *The Silmarillion*, while other parts are to be found in *Unfinished Tales* and, of course, in *The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth referred to respectively as *S*, *UT* and *LotR*).

The information that has to be presented for such a discussion to be meaningful is enormous. I have decided to present that information in this first part. Part two discusses this material, as well as material from other sources.

In the discussion, I will question the significance of the character of Aragorn in relation to the major themes of the novel, and determine whether the character helps to shape and sustain these themes mythologically, philosophically, ideologically, and technically; i.e. through representation of archetypes and images in the myths that inspired Tolkien; by being connected to questions about existentialism and essentialism; via the representation of a moral ideal; and by its importance as a narrative device.

Trotter's Tale

Reading *The History of the Lord of the Rings*, one cannot help being amazed by the brilliance of J.R.R. Tolkien, but one must also marvel at the dedication of Christopher Tolkien, Taum Santoski, and others that have assisted in assembling and untangling the creation history of *LotR*. It provides a truly unique opportunity to see a great author at work. In addition to the manuscripts, the extensive commentary helps the reader to understand the drafts in relation to *LotR* and Tolkien's life. Christopher Tolkien has taken pains to describe the development of the geography of Middle-earth and the difficulties his father had with chronology (often a consequence of having multiple storylines). Much of the commentary is concerned with Tolkien's quest for artistic and aesthetic perfection.

In tracking the movements and development of the heir of Isildur, the main sources are the manuscripts presented in

Mallorn XLIV

HLoTR, supplemented by Christopher Tolkien's comments, and a paper by Gloriana St. Clair. In dealing with Aragorn, it is necessary to involve some other major characters, e.g. Boromir, Éowyn, and Gandalf. As the development of characters is closely related to the construction of plot, almost every aspect of *LoTR* will be touched upon in this analysis. Two central plot tools are of particular interest: The Rings of Power, especially the One Ring and the Rings of the Elves, and the Palantíri, the seeing stones of Gondor and Arnor.

In *HLoTR*, the character that becomes Aragorn goes by many names. When he first appears he is named Trotter. Later he receives the names Aragorn, Elfstone, Ingold, and finally Strider. Mostly he is referred to as Trotter or Elfstone. In this paper I have followed the convention of using the name Aragorn when speaking of the character in a general sense, and Strider when speaking of the character in *LoTR*. Other characters will be referred to by a similar convention. (This may get confusing, especially when it comes to the hobbits. Names of characters are circumstantial, and most of the time, it does not matter whether one can identify a character in *HLoTR* with a character in *LoTR*. Dialogue, for instance, is often not just different from the final version in *LoTR*, but who is speaking and whom is addressed is repeatedly changed. It is almost as if Tolkien has overheard the dialogue, and afterwards had to figure out who said what to whom.)

Trotter the Hobbit

As this paper is primarily concerned with Aragorn, I will indulge myself a little and present his first appearance in full:

Suddenly Bingo noticed that a queer-looking, brown-faced hobbit, sitting in the shadows behind the others, was also listening intently. He had an enormous mug (more like a jug) in front of him, and was smoking a broken-stemmed pipe right under his rather long nose. He was dressed in dark rough brown cloth, and had a hood on, in spite of the warmth, – and, very remarkably, he had wooden shoes! Bingo could see them sticking out under the table in front of him.

'Who is that over there?' said Bingo, when he got a chance to whisper to Mr Butterbur. 'I don't think you introduced him.'

'Him?' said Barnabas, cocking an eye without turning his head. 'O! that is one of the wild folk – rangers we call 'em. He has been coming in now and again (in autumn and winter mostly) the last few years; but he seldom talks. Not but what he can tell some rare tales when he has a mind, you take my word. What his right name is I never heard, but he's known round here as Trotter. You can hear him coming along the road in those shoes: clitter-clap – when he walks on a path, which isn't often. Why does he wear 'em? Well, that I can't say. But there ain't no accounting for East or West, as we say here, meaning the Rangers and the Shire-folk, begging your pardon.' Mr Butterbur was called away at that moment, or he might have whispered on in that fashion indefinitely.

Bingo found Trotter looking at him, as if he had heard or guessed all that was said. Presently the Ranger, with a click and a jerk of his hand, invited Bingo to come over to him; and as Bingo sat down beside him he threw back his hood, showing a long shaggy head of hair, some of which hung over his forehead. But it did not hide a pair of keen dark eyes. 'I'm Trotter,' he said in a low voice. 'I am very pleased to meet you, Mr – Hill, if old Barnabas had your name right?' 'He had,' said Bingo, rather stiffly: he was feeling far from comfortable under the stare of those dark eyes.

'Well, Mr Hill,' said Trotter, 'if I were you, I should stop your young friends from talking too much. Drink, fire, and chance meetings are well enough, but – well, this is not the Shire. There are queer folk about – though I say it as shouldn't,' he added with a grin, seeing Bingo's look. 'And there have been queer travellers through Bree not long back,' he went on, peering at Bingo's face. (I, 137f)

This passage differs little from its final form in *LoTR*. It is more comical, and Trotter is less intimidating than Strider because of his smallness and wooden shoes, but the chain of events and the dialogue is similar to *LoTR*. Trotter has knowledge of the Ring, knows Bingo's real name, and asks for a quiet word. Trotter follows the hobbits to their room (without them noticing), and asks them to take him with them in exchange for information. He reveals that he knows of them from overhearing Gandalf talking to dwarves and elves on the Road, and he advises them that more people might have figured out Bingo's real identity (I, 140ff). So far, it is all rather mock-heroic in style. However, in addition, he tells them of the Black Riders and warns them of Bill Ferny (I, 153).

'You must do what you like about my 'reward'. But as for my coming with you, I will say just this: I know all the lands between the Shire and the Mountains, for I've wandered over most of them in the course of my life; and I'm older now than I look. I might prove useful. For I fancy you'll have to leave the open Road after tonight's accident. I don't think somehow that you will be wanting to meet any of these Black-riders, if you can help it. They give me the creeps.' He shuddered, and they saw with surprise that he had drawn his hood over his face which was buried in his hands. (I, 153)

The theme darkens, but the language is still that of a sequel to *The Hobbit*. Bingo cannot decide whether to let Trotter join them or not. He seems friendly, but his looks are against him, and at the same time, there is something strangely familiar about him. This familiarity caused Tolkien a lot of trouble in subsequent drafts. Frodo (another of the hobbits) remarks that Trotter could follow them even if they refuse to take him (I, 154). Trotter presents a letter from Gandalf that ends like this:

I am giving this to a ranger (wild hobbit) known as Trotter: he is dark, long-haired, has wooden shoes! You can trust him. He is an old friend of mine and knows a great deal. He will guide you to Weathertop and further if necessary. Push along! Yours Gandalf (I, 154)

Gandalf's letter corroborates Butterbur's description of Trotter as a wild hobbit. Trotter reprimands Bingo for not being suspicious enough, and says that he had to make sure they were who he thought they were before giving them Gandalf's letter. Making them suspicious of everything, he assures them that Barnabas Butterbur can be trusted. He also tells them of an encounter with black riders. He was offered silver and gold for information about a party of hobbits, and was told to look out for a certain Bolger-Baggins (I, 155ff).

Tolkien formulated the idea that Trotter would lead the party to a wild hobbit hole to get the help of a friend (I, 162). With lots of ranger hobbits running about, Middle-earth would surely have been a very different place. On leaving Bree, Trotter flicks an apple that hits Bill Ferny square on the nose (I, 165). Apparently, Tolkien thought this a hobbitish act, and in *LoTR*, Sam throws the apple.

On the way to Weathertop, Trotter warns them that not all

Aragorn – tales of the heir ...

rangers can be trusted (I, 167), and it is made clear that he knows some of the history of Middle-earth. He speaks of Gilgalad and Valandil (I, 169); later renamed Elendil, King of Western Men (I, 192). Elendil was invented before Tolkien had even thought of Aragorn as the Heir of Isildur. At Weathertop, they find a message from Gandalf on a piece of paper. He is sending them help from Rivendell (I, 170). In the earliest version, Gandalf does not know that the Riders are hunting for Bingo, and only later learns about it from Trotter (I, 211f). Trotter tells the tale of Tinúviel (I, 179), which is interesting, as the romance with Arwen had not yet materialised.

Trotter reveals that the source of much of his knowledge is Rivendell. He is often in Rivendell, but for some reason he is destined to be a wanderer. Trotter knows the names of the trolls from *The Hobbit* (I, 193), which makes it likely that he knows Bilbo. They are met by Glorfindel, who calls Trotter 'Padathir', are beset by Black Riders, and Bingo is saved by Trotter and the others rushing the Riders with flaming brands, pushing the Riders into the river, where they are carried away by Gandalf's magic flood (I, 193ff). In *LotR*, Elrond is the master of the river, and he causes the flood.

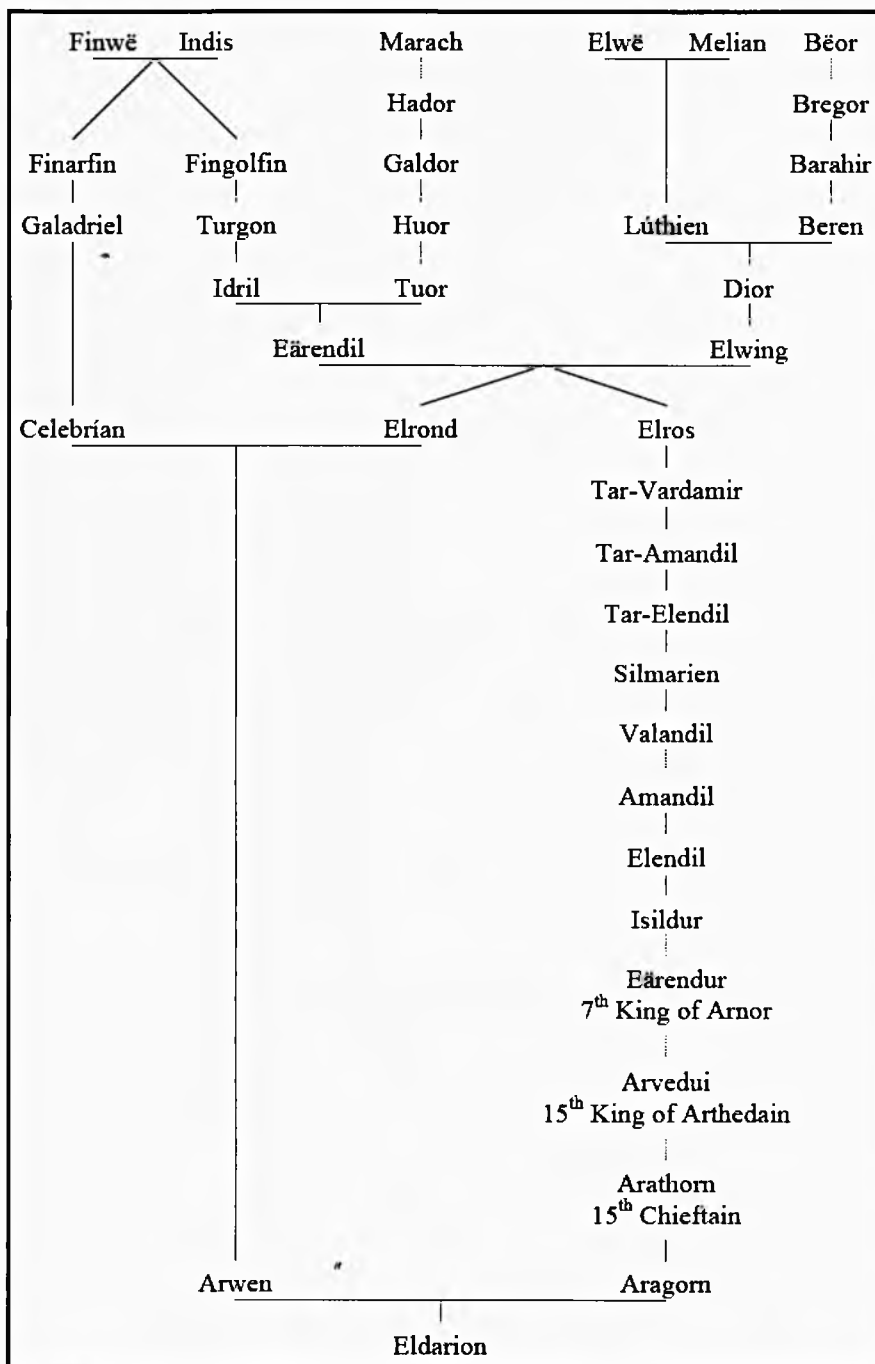
Gandalf calls Trotter 'Rimbedir' (I, 207), which is what he is called in Rivendell. Bingo tells Gandalf of his feeling that he has seen Trotter somewhere before, and Gandalf answers that it is probably due to the extraordinary similarity in appearance of all hobbits; a statement that Bingo dismisses as nonsense (I, 208). Tolkien was at this point forced to seriously think about establishing Trotter's identity. A connected problem was that he had created too many hobbits, and that they were much too similar (I, 221).

The people of Bree are changed to primarily Men. It is decided that the Rangers are men, but if Trotter is a hobbit, he had better be someone well known. Tolkien thought of making him Bilbo, or Bilbo's first cousin, Fosco Took, who vanishes in his youth because of Gandalf (I, 223). That Gandalf causes the disappearance of young hobbits is an idea from *The Hobbit* (The Hobbit, 14).

In the next draft, Tolkien attempted to explain why Trotter is a hobbit, despite the fact that the Rangers are men. In the wild lands east of Bree, a few unsettled folk (men and hobbits) roam the country. The people of Bree-land call them Rangers. The Rangers are said to be the last remnant of the

kingly people from beyond the Seas. Butterbur says Trotter is one of the Rangers, but not really a Ranger, though he behaves like one. He seems to be a hobbit of some kind (I, 331f). The connection between the Rangers and the Númenóreans has been thought of, but it has yet to be firmly established.

The story is refashioned from the very beginning. The reason Gandalf is delayed (why he is not with the hobbits) is that he has been caught in Fangorn by the giant Treebeard (I, 363). Fangorn did not only have a bad reputation, but in this draft is actually evil. When Gandalf reaches the Shire, Bingo has already left. Gandalf tries to draw away attention from the Ringbearer by taking a hobbit (Odo) with him from the Shire (I, 337). Trotter suspects that the Riders have divided their



Aragorn's line of descent

Mallorn XLIV

number to go hunting for both parties (I, 341f). The attack on Weathertop is explained by Trotter to be an indication that Odo has been captured by the Riders (I, 359). They are no longer hunting Gandalf, as they now know who has the One Ring. Odo is later saved and taken to Rivendell (I, 365). Odo eventually turns into Fredegar Bolger, the hobbit that in *LotR* stays in Frodo's new house in Crickhollow, which is attacked by Black Riders at the same time as the inn at Bree is raided.

In an attempt to establish an identity for Trotter, Tolkien started another major rewrite. In this new version, Bilbo has two favourite 'nephews', Peregrin Boffin and Folco Baggins. Peregrin disappears first, and Folco vanishes at the birthday party. Trotter turns out to be Peregrin, who has been to Mordor. Peregrin is the grandson of the sister of Bilbo's mother. He is only five years old when Bilbo comes back from his journey. As a lad, he is frequently visiting Bilbo, until his father becomes alarmed by Peregrin's talk about mountains, forests, dwarves, and wolves. Peregrin is then forbidden to visit Bilbo. He runs away from home, but is found wandering on the moors, and on the day after he comes of age he disappears for good (I, 371ff). After creating Peregrin Boffin, Tolkien contemplated making Trotter a descendant of Western men, but Trotter remains a hobbit in draft form until Moria. To peregrinate means to travel or wander, and the peregrine is a pilgrim falcon. It is a name that is much more appropriate for Aragorn (in any form), than for the silly Pippin in *LotR*.

In Rivendell, Gandalf contemplates going back to consult Tom Bombadil. He speculates that they will need his aid, and that Tom will have to start taking an interest in things outside his own country, as the hobbits have had to (I, 213f). But in the event, Tolkien decided to give the mysterious Tom a more passive role. It would have been interesting to know who Tolkien meant Tom to be.

Elrond tells of the exiled Númenóreans and their king Elendil, the Elf-friend, and the alliance with Gilgalad. He tells how they died destroying Sauron (I, 215f). Gilgalad takes Sauron's Ring, but an Elf carrying it is slain by goblins, and the One Ring is lost (I, 78, 226).

Tolkien discussed the nature of the rings. Maybe the dwarves need rings to found colonies (I, 210). Either the dwarves want Bilbo's ring to start a colony, or they are concerned because Sauron suspects them of having the ring as foundation of one of their hoards. The reason Sauron desires the One Ring is that if he had it he would be the master of all the Rings of Power (I, 226). In the earliest writings, the Rings of Power are fashioned in Valinor by Fëanor with Morgoth's help. Morgoth then steals the Rings; just as he steals the Silmarils (II, 256). Sauron replaces Morgoth, and the creation of the Rings of Power is moved to Middle-earth. The One Ring is still forged by the Elves, but Tolkien decided that The One was Sauron's not only by right, but also by his own making (II, 259).

The reason for Trotter's absence at the feast in Rivendell is explained by his being needed in the kitchens (I, 392). In *LotR*, Strider's reason for not being at the feast is that Elladan and Elrohir have news for him. Boromir is introduced as a man from far away in the South, and he proposes that the Great Ring shall be used to fight Sauron. Elrond says that the rings of the Elves are kept safe, but they cannot be used for war, and they will lose their power if the One Ring is destroyed (I, 395ff).

Trotter describes his search for Gollum, and tells of his perilous adventures in Mordor. Tracking Gollum, Trotter was

caught and imprisoned by Sauron: "'Ever since, I have worn shoes,' said Trotter with a shudder, and though he said no more Frodo knew that he had been tortured and his feet hurt in some way. But he had been rescued by Gandalf and saved from death" (I, 401). Tolkien even formulated the idea that Trotter's feet were of wood (I, 413). He seems to have been reluctant to let go of the idea of the wooden shoes.

Tolkien had great difficulties in deciding who should make up the Fellowship. In the first draft for the Council of Elrond (I, 397), the Company were to consist of Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Folco, Odo, Glorfindel, and Burin son of Balin. Next, the Company becomes: Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Faramond, and Glorfindel (I, 406). The first grouping to journey southward is Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Faramond, and Boromir (I, 410).

The reason given for not crossing the mountains further south (into the land of Rohan) is that the horse-lords have long been in the service of Sauron. Trotter suggests that they could go through Moria, but Gandalf would rather try the high pass (I, 422). Trotter has been to Moria before "and the memory is evil" (I, 430), but he still favours that way. They are caught in a snowstorm, and when the snow ceases to fall the situation is quite different from the *LotR* version, as Trotter in this scene is just as helpless as the other hobbits. Boromir has to clear the way all on his own (I, 423ff), and says that a dragon would have been more useful than a wizard (I, 426). In *LotR*, Legolas banters with Gandalf, and Gandalf is more humorous about it.

Planning ahead, Tolkien proposes that Ond (Gondor) is to be besieged and that Trotter and three or four others are to be held captive there. The tree-giants will assail the besiegers, rescue Trotter and the others, and raise the siege. Frodo and Sam are in this scenario with the tree-giants, and Treebeard is no longer an evil creature (I, 410). Trotter is doomed to be just one of the hobbits. I believe that Tolkien's writing of scenes like the snowstorm and his budding ideas for later parts of the novel led to the demise of Trotter the Hobbit.

Tolkien put forth the idea that Trotter could be a friend of Bilbo's, who pretends to be a ranger, but is really an Elf scout out of Rivendell. He goes on to write that Trotter is a man of Elrond's race, the descendant of the ancient Men of the North, and one of Elrond's household. He is a hunter and wanderer, and he knows Bilbo and Gandalf. He captures Gollum, and hangs around Bree at Gandalf's request. His real name is Aragorn son of Aramir. Alternatively, Trotter is Peregrin Boffin. The cache of food at Weathertop is Trotter's. He goes to Weathertop because it is a good lookout post, or because he is to meet Gandalf there (II, 6f). As Tolkien wrote down idea after idea, discarding some and building on others, the character of Aragorn was formed through a combination of ideas preserved from his different possible identities.

Finally, Tolkien decided that Trotter would be a real ranger, a descendant of Elendil. The Elves call him Tarkil, which means high follower and mortal man (II, 8). Trotter has previously been to Mordor, where he was caught and tortured. According to Christopher Tolkien (I, 431), Trotter had potentially been Aragorn for a long time, and after the transformation, a great deal of Trotter's initial qualities remained and determined Aragorn's nature. The hobbit Trotter lives on in Aragorn, but part of him makes up some of the personality of Peregrin Took, a character with a complex background, being a blend of the original Frodo, Odo, and Trotter (II, 32). The description of Trotter in Bree is not changed much, which shows that race has



Beren comes upon Luthien dancing by moonlight

Bonnie E Robinson

less to do with looks than ranger status (II, 42).

Trotter the Dúnedain

As observed by St. Clair, a “general darkening of the work occurs through the addition of key descriptions and actions”:

Thus, in the course of the chapter “Strider,” Tolkien moves the reader from the amusing antics of Frodo’s rendition of “The Cat and the Fiddle” in the Prancing Pony chapter to Merry’s frightening account of seeing the Black Riders just outside the inn. Changes in Strider’s nature, in plot incidents, in speech, and in descriptions, all darken. (St. Clair, 1995, 146)

Gandalf leaves Hobbiton in June, and goes south-east.

towards Rohan. Gandalf knows that the Black Riders are too powerful for him to face alone, and so he goes to seek the help of Saramund. Saramund betrays him by telling Gandalf false news of the Black Riders, and having them pursue Gandalf to the top of a mountain, where he is kept prisoner by an army of wolves and orcs. Alternatively, Tolkien thought that Saramund could hand Gandalf over to the evil giant Treebeard (II, 70).

As in *LotR*, Trotter does not eavesdrop on Gandalf, but hears the hobbits talking with Bombadil (II, 42). With Trotter as a man, Frodo seems to be less inclined to trust him, and he no longer finds him strangely familiar (II, 46). Gandalf’s letter (via Butterbur) is changed, and here is some of it:

Mallorn XLIV

Try and find Trotter the ranger. He will be looking out for you: a lean, dark, weatherbeaten fellow, but one of my greatest friends. He knows our business. He will see you through, if any one can. Make for Rivendell as fast as possible. There I hope we may meet again. If not, Elrond will advise you. Yours Gandalf

PS. You can trust Barnabas Butterbur and Trotter. But make sure it is really Trotter. The real Trotter will have a sealed letter from me with these words in it

*All that is gold does not glitter, all that is long does not last,
All that is old does not wither, not all that is over is past.*

PPS. It would be worse than useless to try and go beyond Bree on your own. If Trotter does not turn up, you must try and get Butterbur to hide you somewhere, and hope that I shall come. (II, 49)

The letter is read out aloud, whereafter Trotter is asked to show his letter, but as Trotter remarks, the letter should not have been read aloud if they did not trust him already. Sam is annoyed, and Trotter threatens the hobbits with his hidden sword, but does not mention the Ring. Trotter's letter recites the verses and states that "This is to certify that the bearer is Aragorn son of Celegorn, of the line of Isildur Elendil's son, known in Bree as Trotter, enemy of the Nine, and friend of Gandalf" (II, 50). Frodo understands who Trotter is, and is ready to give him the Ring, but Trotter says that it does not belong to either of them, but that it is ordained that Frodo should keep it for a while. Trotter's words are later given to Gandalf, and then again to Trotter at Elrond's Council (II, 50ff).

A later version of Gandalf's letter introduces the idea that Trotter knows the rhyme, but retains the idea of a second letter. There is no mention of Elendil or Isildur in Trotter's letter. The rhyme goes through several revisions (presented here in order of conception):

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those that wander are lost;

All that is old does not wither, and fire may burn bright in the frost;

Not all that have fallen are vanquished, not only the crowned is a king;

Let blade that was broken be brandished, and Fire be the Doom of the Ring! (II, 77)

All that is gold does not glitter; not all those that wander are lost.

All that grows old does not wither; not every leaf falls in the frost.

Not all that have fallen are vanquished; a king may yet be without crown,

A blade that was broken be brandished; And towers that were strong may fall down. (II, 80)

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those that wander are lost;

All that is old does not wither, and bright may be fire in the frost.

The fire that was low may be woken; and sharp in the sheath is the sting;

Forged may be blade that was broken; the crownless again may be king. (II, 78)

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 shadows shall spring,

Renewed shall be blade that was broken: The crownless again shall be king. (LotR, 186, 265)

The first line is identical in all four versions. The second line shifts the emphasis from the old to the strong, and the vegetation theme wins over the elemental theme; deep roots instead of fire. The third line changes dramatically from talking about the fallen and crownless to be about fire and hope. The fourth line changes from being about war to being about renewed stability.

The Black Riders fear Trotter, and have Bill Ferney and the Southerner burgle the inn for them. The 'King' (of the Riders) who has been getting information from his Riders and Ferney's crew is not sure now whether his captive Ham Bolger (who had remained at Crickhollow) or 'Mr. Green' (Frodo's assumed name at Bree) is the real Baggins. Taking Ham with him, he sets out after Mr. Green. Gandalf attacks the two black riders who are carrying Ham, and rescues him (II, 71f). At Weathertop, Trotter finds boot tracks and hobbit tracks. Gandalf and Ham have been there (II, 57f).

In Rivendell, Frodo learns who Trotter really is from Gandalf and/or Bilbo, who explains why Trotter is called Tarkil (II, 82ff). At the Council, Elrond states that the Three Rings have been taken over the Sea, and says that the party should be limited to seven. Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Trotter, Boromir, Galdor, and Gimli are the seven chosen. Meriadoc and Peregrin must return to the Shire (II, 112ff). Trotter is upset by Gollum's escape, and exclaims: "I judge that to be ill news, and you may mark my words: we shall regret this" (II, 118). In *LotR*, Strider is even more confident that Gollum's escape will bring evil.

Elrond's tale of Elendil and his sons states that Osgiliath is founded by Elendil, and there is no mention of the Northern Kingdom. Minas Ithil and Minas Anor are ruled by Isildur and Anárion. There is also an idea of a third son, Ilmandur, as the ruler of Osgiliath. Elendil's sons did not return from the war against Sauron, and only one of the smaller cities survived, ruled by the son of Isildur or Anárion. The servants of Sauron take Minas Anor, and it becomes a place of dread, and thereafter called Minas Morgol. Trotter is presented by Elrond as Aragorn, son of Celegorn, descendant of Isildur, and the rightful ruler of Minas Ithil (II, 119f).

Tolkien suggested several different reasons for the exile of the line of Isildur. Trotter's ancestors were driven out by a rebellion, instigated by Sauron, and/or they were expelled by the Wizard King (II, 116). Aragorn speaks thus to Boromir:

'And the Men of Minas Tirith drove out my fathers,' said Aragorn. 'Is not that remembered, Boromir? The men of that town have never ceased to wage war on Sauron, but they have listened not seldom to counsels that came from him. In the days of Valandur they murmured against the Men of the West, and rose against them, and when they came back from battle with Sauron they refused them entry into the city.' Then Valandur broke his sword before the city gates and went away north; and for long the heirs of Elendil dwelt at Osford the Northburg in slowly waning glory and darkening days. But all the Northland has now long been waste; and all that are left



Cerin Amroth

Neil Loughran

of Elendil's folk few.

'What do the men of Minas Tirith want with me – to return to aid [them] in the war and then reject me at the gates again?' (II, 120f)

Aragorn is rather harsh here, showing himself as unforgiving, and as someone who should be obeyed. Boromir will not ask for help, but states only that he fears that Minas Tirith will fall if they are not relieved. Aragorn says he will come to aid them. Valandil becomes the son of Isildur, and is kept safe in Imladris, and later dwells in Annúminas, re-establishing the idea of the Northern Kingdom, as founded by Elendil, rather than merely being a refuge for the heirs of Isildur. The sword that is broken becomes Elendil's (II, 121f). A later version, however, states that Valandil is the brother of Elendil, and that Valandil is the founder of the Southern Kingdom (II, 123). Isildur takes the Ring, but is slain, and the Ring is lost. Osgiliath falls into ruin, Minas Ithil becomes Minas-Morgol, and Minas Anor is renamed Minas Tirith (II, 127). Boromir's verse is composed:

*Seek for the Sword that was broken:
in Imlad-rist it dwells,
and there shall words be spoken
stronger than Morgol-spells.
And this shall be your token:
when the half-high leave their land,
then many bonds shall be broken,
and Days of Fire at hand.*

(II, 128)

*Seek for the Sword that was broken:
In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
And the Halfling forth shall stand. (LotR, 263)*

These lines did not change much from the initial draft to the final version. The main difference in the final version is the mention of Isildur's Bane. In addition, the meaning of the words is less obscure.

Aragorn tells Boromir that he has been in Minas Tirith, Osgiliath, and even Minas Morgol, and beyond. Further, he tells of Valandil son of Isildur, who goes to dwell in Osford, the North-burg. Again, it is uncertain who founded the Northern Kingdom (II, 128f). Elrond's tale finally reaches the form where Elendil establishes the North Kingdom, and his sons establish the Southern Kingdom. Elendil's capital is first named Tarkilmar/Westermanton, but later becomes Annúminas (II, 144f).

It remains unclear what happens to Minas Ithil, and even in *LotR*, it is not quite clear. Some versions have Minas Ithil captured by Sauron before the War of the Last Alliance, prompting Isildur to seek his father's help, while other versions have the city captured later. In either case, Isildur does not return to Minas Ithil after Sauron's fall. The real mystery is what happens to the city after the fall of Sauron. There is one mention

Mallorn XLIV

of its recapture, but only in draft form. There is no account of the city's history for the more than 1600 years that pass between the fall of Sauron and the Great Plague. Evil men repossess Minas Ithil, and some hundred years later the city is renamed Minas Morgul (II, 145f; *LotR*, 1078; S, 296).

In a new draft, Aragorn tells of his hunt for Gollum, and when he hears of Gollum's escape he is very angry: "Then all my pains are brought to nothing! I judge that to be evil news indeed. You may mark my words: we shall all rue this bitterly" (II, 148). This time Aragorn is more forceful than he is in *LotR*. This may be a function of his 'growing into' the role of rightful ruler of a major kingdom. In Moria, when Frodo stabs the cave-troll and Trotter compliments him, Sam looks at Aragorn with approval for the first time (II, 193). Aragorn's importance is increasing for now, but will lessen gradually.

In early drafts, the party is led by Gandalf and Trotter jointly. In *LotR*, Gandalf has been given some lines that originally are Trotter's, establishing Gandalf as the leader. Boromir also benefits from Trotter's reduced authority (II, 194ff). The transferring of lines, without changing the phrases much, or at all, could be thought of as strange, as it blends different characters' ways of expressing themselves, and makes it difficult to tell them apart. In early drafts, Tolkien concentrates on the story, i.e. he is mostly concerned with the action and the plot. While revising, Tolkien is more concerned with what the characters say, and how they say it. Rather than rewriting a line, he gives it to someone who would be more likely to deliver the line in question, so making the characters more consistent and more clearly distinguishable for the reader.

From Moria to Minas Tirith

Gandalf wrestles with the Balrog on the Bridge, and Trotter hurries back to assist him, but a troll that leaps onto the bridge makes it crack and break. Gandalf is lost, and Trotter takes command (II, 198). The earliest outlines have Gandalf fight a Black Rider on the bridge (I, 462), and later Tolkien contemplates making him fight Saruman (II, 236).

Trotter does not know of the elves in Lothlórien. Legolas says that some elves may dwell deep in the woods (II, 222). Keleborn calls Aragorn Ingold son of Ingrim, and says that he is known to him, although they have never met. Trotter does not know Galadriel either, and has no knowledge of her existence, which shows that Gandalf is more secretive than in *LotR* (II, 252ff).

Keleborn says that he thinks the balrog must have been sent to Moria by Sauron (II, 247). In the next version, he says he knew that a balrog slept under Caradras, and feared that it had been awakened by the Dwarves (II, 257). In yet another version, Galadriel asserts that no balrog has lain hidden in the Misty Mountains since the fall of Thangorodrim, and therefore it must have been sent there by Sauron (II, 262).

Gimli asks Galadriel for nothing but the memory of their meeting. Galadriel gives Gimli an emerald brooch she is wearing, and Gimli names it/himself Elfstone (II, 275). The manuscript breaks off, Tolkien realizes that Elfstone is Aragorn's 'true' name, and when he begins again Galadriel is addressing Trotter: "'Hail, Elfstone,'" she said. "It is a fair name that merits a gift to match'" (II, 276).

Aragorn had previously been called Elfstone, but at the time of the writing of the scene above Aragorn's name was Ingold (II, 277). The names of Aragorn went through many changes, and many alternatives popped up along the way, but roughly, the changes can be described as:

Aragorn (or Trotter) > Elfstone > Ingold > Elfstone (>

Trotter) > Aragorn (II, 278)

While the name Trotter is later to be replaced by Strider, Elfstone (Elessar) remains Aragorn's true name. Ingold disappears completely, except for making up part of the name given to Narsil reforged, i.e. Branding; a name that actually emerges with the sheath that Galadriel originally gives to Ingold (II, 274, 290). In *LotR*, the reforged sword is called Andúril, Flame of the West, and the sheath is given no name. Ingold becomes the name of the leader of the guards outside the northern gates of Minas Tirith.

Passing the Pillars of the Kings, Aragorn says that he is Eldamar son of Eldakar son of Valandil, which makes him the great-grandson of Isildur. Another generation is added later, but it is still far from the long history of Aragorn's ancestry that has yet to be created, and that has been hinted at by Gandalf and Elrond in earlier drafts (II, 105ff, 361f). This history will be shown in Part II.

The idea of Boromir's secret plan to use the Ring is formulated, and his confrontation with Frodo is devised. Frodo's disappearance is not discovered until he is far away from the company, which is caused by Boromir's secrecy regarding Frodo's whereabouts and their quarrel. Aragorn notices a change in Boromir. Sam tries to track Frodo, but finds Gollum instead, and Gollum leads him to Frodo. Frodo is attacked by Gollum, and is saved by Sam. Frodo uses the ring to get power over Gollum, but this use of the ring is perhaps more harmful than using it for invisibility, and so the idea that Frodo cannot willingly part with the ring (at the Cracks of Doom) makes its first appearance (II, 207f).

One of the reasons for going to Amon Hen is to make use of the lookout at the top of the hill. In *LotR*, Aragorn does not go up to the lookout, but there is a version where he does. Aragorn, without the aid of the One Ring, has a vision of orcs, an eagle, and Gandalf, although he does not recognize him. (II, 379f)

Merry and Pippin get lost and wander into Fangorn forest. Legolas and Gimli go north together, where they are first to be captured by Saruman, but later to meet Gandalf. Boromir and Aragorn travel to Minas Tirith, which is besieged by Sauron and Saruman. The Lord of Minas Tirith is slain, and the people of Minas Tirith choose Aragorn to be their new Lord. Boromir is jealous of Aragorn, and sneaks off to join Saruman. The siege is broken by Gandalf, Legolas, Gimli, and Treebeard (and his kin). Tolkien considered a contest between Gandalf and Saruman, whereafter Saruman would shut himself up in Isengard. Boromir was to be slain by Aragorn (II, 210ff).

When it is decided that Boromir dies on Amon Hen, Trotter puts his plans to go to Minas Tirith on hold, and goes hunting for Merry and Pippin with Gimli and Legolas. At this point, Trotter reverts to a ranger, and perhaps to a more sympathetic character than he is in the continuation of earlier versions. The evil that grew in Boromir may be said to have infected earlier versions, and perhaps Trotter as well (II, 378). He becomes less kingly, but more heroic. An effect of his being a plainer man is that Trotter tells Legolas and Gimli that Boromir tried to take the ring from Frodo (II, 385). In *LotR*, he does not divulge this information. Aragorn's verse about Ondor changed little from its initial conception. It is, however, the first mention of the Tree of Minas Tirith.

*Ondor! Ondor! Between the Mountains and the Sea
Wind blows, moon rides, and the light upon the Silver Tree
Falls like rain there in gardens of the King of old.*

Aragorn – tales of the heir ...

*O white walls, towers fair, and many-footed throne of gold!
O Ondor, Ondor! Shall Men behold the Silver Tree
Or West Wind blow again between the Mountain[s] and the
Sea?* (II, 395)

*Gondor! Gondor, between the Mountains and the Sea!
West Wind blew there; the light upon the Silver Tree
Fell like bright rain in gardens of the Kings of old.
O proud walls! White towers! O wingéd crown and throne
of gold!
O Gondor, Gondor! Shall Men behold the Silver Tree,
Or West Wind blow again between the Mountains and the
Sea?* (LotR, 443)

The eagle that Trotter saw on Amon Hen is now seen by Legolas, and Tolkien had several theories about the eagle's significance. One idea he had was to have the eagle bear Gandalf from Tol Brandir, where he had resisted the Eye and saved Frodo on Amon Hen (II, 396).

An alternative to Gandalf's comeback was to have him enter Minas Tirith anonymously, and reveal himself when the outer wall falls. Another idea was to let Gandalf find Sam, and have them go to Minas Tirith together. The most radically different idea was perhaps to have Trotter send Boromir, Gimli, and Legolas to Minas Tirith, forsake his ambition, search for the hobbits alone, and then meet Gandalf. Another extraordinary idea at this time was to have the Elves responsible for the creation of the Ents in order to understand trees (II, 411f).

Before the meeting with the Riders of Rohan, Tolkien thought that Trotter should know Éomer, and this may be the germ of Aragorn's earlier service in Rohan. First, however, Trotter presents himself as Aragorn Elessar son of Arathorn (first mention of Arathorn), but this is immediately replaced with the covert 'Trotter out of the North'. There is no indication that Trotter knows Éomer, who is on his way to aid Eowin hunt down the orc-host. Trotter, Gimli, and Legolas ride on with the Rohiroth (II, 390ff). The message that Gandalf bears from Galadriel to Aragorn is very different from that in *LotR*:

*Elfstone, Elfstone, bearer of my green stone,
In the south under snow a green stone thou shalt see.
Look well, Elfstone! In the shadow of the dark throne
Then the hour is at hand that long hath awaited thee.
(II, 431)
Where now are the Dúnedain, Elessar, Elessar?
Why do thy kinsfolk wander afar?
Near is the hour when the Lost should come forth,
And the Grey Company ride from the North.
But dark is the path appointed for thee:
The Dead watch the road that leads to the Sea.* (LotR, 524)

The green stone in the south was to be borne on Théoden's brow, and Éowyn would stand in the shadow of his dark throne. Aragorn was to wed Éowyn, and possibly be the successor of Théoden (II, 448). In *LotR*, the message is completely changed, and becomes one of the portents for Aragorn's choice to take the Path of the Dead.

In Théoden's hall, a messenger from Gondor tells that Minas Tirith is sorely pressed and in need of assistance. Théoden's people are under attack, and cannot spare any men. Gandalf insists on attacking Isengard, and so they ride out. Before they reach Isengard, the Ents have already defeated its defences,

and there is little more to do. They return to Eodoras. A messenger from Minas Tirith comes again to request help, and Théoden says that he owes fealty to no one but the heirs of Elendil, but he will aid Minas Tirith now that Saruman is defeated. At this stage, Eorl the Young was thought of as having taken part in the great battle where Sauron was overthrown. This means that Théoden's allegiance is with Aragorn, rather than with the Lord of Minas Tirith. They ride to Minas Tirith, and Éowyn rides with them without disguise (434ff).

Before riding to Minas Tirith, Aragorn says to Éowyn: "If I live, I will come, Lady Éowyn, and then maybe we will ride together" (II, 447). Tolkien decided however that Aragorn was too old, lordly, and grim for Éowyn, and thought maybe that she should die defending Théoden. Aragorn was still to love Éowyn, and after her death not to wed another (II, 448). It is curious that Tolkien decided that Aragorn was too old for Éowyn, considering that Arwen is almost 3,000 years older than Aragorn.

In the earliest drafts, the battle between the forces of Saruman and the Rohirrim at Helm's Deep is not yet conceived, and its conception is a long and difficult one. It is Aragorn's advice that they drive the enemy before them and head for the Nerwet Gate, where they can set up a first defence. He warns them of retreating to the caves, for Saruman may have set traps for them there, and at any rate probably knows them well. The King arrives late, and is brought to safety by Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli. While tending to the wounds of Snowmane, Théoden's horse, Aragorn wonders about Frodo, and he wishes that Frodo were where he could keep an eye on him. Later, Aragorn leads an attack against a company of wild men, who are trying to break the Gate with a tree trunk. Running back from this attack Aragorn is overtaken by orcs, who nearly finish him off. Éomer regrets that he is not by Aragorn's side when 'Branding' goes to war. Éomer's regret turned out to be Tolkien's as well, and Tolkien changed the story so that, in *LotR*, they draw blades together, and Éomer is nearly killed (III, 10ff).

Gamling the Westmarcher translates the cries of the human enemies to Aragorn, and surmises that Saruman has inflamed their hatred of the Rohirrim on the grounds of what happened 500 years ago, when Gondor gave the Mark to Eorl the Young as a reward for his service to Elendil and Isildur. The 'parley' between Aragorn and the enemy is in its earliest form an actual parley. The Dunlendings are here called Westfolders, and a Westfold captain demands that their land be given back to them, and says that if Théoden is surrendered to them, all may depart in peace. Aragorn scolds him for aiding Saruman and the orcs, and makes it clear that Saruman would hold no such promise. An orc captain cries: "We are the Uruk-hai, we slay!" (III, 22). An orc shoots an arrow at Aragorn, and is promptly hewed down by the Westfold captain (III, 21f). In *LotR*, the orcs are more numerous, and the Dunlendings would hardly dare kill an orc for shooting an arrow at Aragorn. In fact, Aragorn is subjected to a shower of arrows in *LotR*.

At Isengard, when tobacco is discussed, Aragorn says that the Rangers brought the plant (and the art of smoking) to the North from regions in the South, where it grows wild. Tolkien quickly changed the origin of smoking to be an invention of the hobbits (III, 38). This could be seen as the last glimpse of Trotter the hobbit.

As Saruman leaves the balcony, a large ball of dark shining crystal comes hurtling down from above, narrowly missing



The Argonath

Davide Cattaneo

Aragorn – tales of the heir ...

Gandalf, and splinters on the rock beside the stair. In a letter to W.H Auden, which is mentioned by Christopher Tolkien (III, 65), Tolkien writes that this crystal ball must be one of the seven stones in a rhyme of lore that he had been thinking about for a while: “seven stars and seven stones and one white tree” (III, 65).

*Tall ships and tall kings Three times three,
What brought they from the foundered land Over the flowing sea?
Seven stars and seven stones And one white tree.*

(LotR, 620)

It was clear at this point that Saruman had some way of communicating with Sauron. The Orthanc stone is here destroyed, but later survives as one of the palantíri. The palantír is looked in by Gandalf. He sees stars, small batlike shapes, a river, and the moon. The palantír is gazing towards Osgiliath (III, 64ff).

They ride to Dunharrow, and then on to Eodoras. Aragorn rides with Éowyn. At Eodoras, Gandalf looks in the palantír again. He turns its gaze in many directions and sees many things. He has not fully understood that Saruman used the palantír not only to survey the lands, but also to communicate with Sauron. Gandalf, however, speaks with Sauron, telling of Saruman’s defeat, and taunting him. Later, Gandalf is not able to change the direction of the palantír’s gaze, and does not try to communicate with Sauron. When it is Pippin who first looks in the stone, it does not prompt Gandalf to ride in haste to Minas Tirith. After Pippin has looked in the palantír, Aragorn is entrusted with keeping and guarding it, but not using it. Aragorn does not claim it, as he does in *LotR*. Aragorn says: “I know the danger. I will not uncover it, or handle it” (III, 75). The history of the palantíri is developed, and the idea that Sauron has the Osgiliath stone is formed. The stones may have been forged by Fëanor, and are part of the heirlooms of the heirs of Elendil. News comes to Eodoras of the siege of Minas Tirith by the Haradwaith, and the Rohirrim ride to their aid. Aragorn drives away the enemy and enters Minas Tirith as the King returning. They take back Elostirion (Osgiliath), and Gandalf defeats the Nazgûl (III, 70ff, 229).

The Paths of the Dead

The feast at Eodoras now takes place at Dunharrow. Gandalf is mustering an army there. In addition to the Rohirrim, Rangers out of the north, the defeated Dunlanders, woodmen of Mirkwood, and many others have come (III, 242). At the King’s return to Dunharrow, Éowyn says:

Now I will admit, Théoden, brother of my mother, that it is beyond any hope I had when you rode away. This is a glad hour. Hail, Lord of the Mark, may I never again be taken from your side while you live still and rule the Eorlingas. Father you are to me since Éothain my father fell at Osgiliath far away. Come now – all is prepared for you. And though Dunharrow is a dark place, full of sad shadow, tonight it shall be filled with lights. (III, 247)

These words of Éowyn’s did not make it into the final draft of *LotR*, but they clarify Éowyn’s relation to Théoden, and explain her actions in *LotR*. The returning king is Théoden, and not Aragorn.

It is possible that the title of the third part of the trilogy derives from Théoden’s return. If that is the case, Tolkien’s decision to keep that title is a deliberate attempt to throw the reader off the right track, as the return of a king happens at the beginning of that part of the trilogy. If Aragorn also is the returning king, then the proper title should be ‘The Return(s) of the Kings’. On the other hand, Tolkien did not wish to have *LotR* published as a trilogy. *LotR* consists of six books, meant to be published separately, or in one volume. However, his publishers had other ideas.

A messenger from Minas Tirith arrives at the feast. He asks for ten thousand spears. The Swertings have come, and the forces of Sauron have crossed the Nargul Pass. The men of Harad constitute part of Sauron’s forces, and a fleet from Umbar has reached Anárion. The defences at Osgiliath have failed. A company of Rohirrim, led by Éomer, set out for Minas Tirith, crossing the mountains. This is the germ of “The Passing of the Grey Company” (III, 242ff).

New drafting has Gandalf and the palantír go to Minas Tirith, where he looks into the stone, sees Frodo captured, and is revealed to Sauron. He subsequently hurls the palantír from the battlements, and rides forth. Éowyn rides (openly) to Minas Tirith with Éomer and Théoden. News comes from the South that a great king has descended out of the mountains where he had been entombed. The rumoured entombed king is the first step towards the narrative that evolved into “The Passing of the Grey Company”. Aragorn arrives (having crossed the mountains with his rangers, and defeated the Southrons), and enters Minas Tirith, where he meets Denethor and Faramir (III, 260ff).

Tolkien went back to the idea that Aragorn has the palantír. Aragorn looks into it before Dunharrow, and sees the Black Fleet coming up the Anduin. He speaks to Legolas and Gimli:

‘What did I tell him?’ said Aragorn sternly, and his eyes glinted. ‘That I had a rascal of a rebel dwarf here that I would exchange for a couple of good orcs, thank you! I thought I had the strength, and the strength I had. I said naught to him and wrenched the Stone from him to my own purpose. But he saw me, yes and he saw me in other guise maybe than you see me. If I have done ill I have done ill. But I do not think so. To know that I lived and walked the earth was something of a blow to his heart, and certainly he will now hasten all his strokes – but they will be the less ripe. And then I learned much. For one thing, that there are yet other Stones. One is at Erech and that is where we are going. [Struck out: At the Stone of Erech Men shall ... be seen.] Halbarad bears this message:

*Out of the mountain shall they come their tryst keeping; at the Stone of Erech their horn shall blow,
when hope is dead and the kings are sleeping and darkness lies on the world below:*

*Three lords shall come from the three kindreds from the North at need by the paths of the dead
elflord, dwarflord, and lord forwandréd, and one shall wear a crown on head.*

And that is an old rhyme of Gondor which none have understood; but I think I perceive somewhat of its sense now. To the Stone of Erech by the paths of the Dead!’ he said rising. ‘Who will come with me?’ (III, 300)

Elrond’s message is at first only: “Bid Aragorn remember the Paths of the Dead.” (III, 305), but later is added:

Mallorn XLIV

For thus spoke Malbeth the Seer:

When the land is dark where the kings sleep And long the Shadow in the East is grown,

The oathbreakers their tryst shall keep, At the Stone of Erech shall a horn be blown:

The forgotten people shall their oath fulfill. Who shall summon them, whose be the horn?

For none may come there against their will. The heir of him to whom the oath was sworn;

Out of the North shall he come, dark ways shall he tread; He shall come to Erech by the Paths of the Dead. (III, 307)

'Thus spoke Malbeth the Seer, in the days of Arvedui, last king at Fornost,' said Aragorn:

Over the land there lies a long shadow, westward reaching wings of darkness.

The Tower trembles; to the tombs of kings doom approaches. The Dead awaken:

for the hour is come for the oathbreakers: at the Stone of Erech they shall stand again

and hear there a horn in the hills ringing. Whose shall the horn be? Who shall call them

from the grey twilight, the forgotten people? The heir of him to whom the oath they swore.

From the North shall he come, need shall drive him: he shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead." (LotR, 812)

The draft versions of Malbeth's prophecy have simple rhyme schemes, while the final version is almost prose. The final version is more complex, and the interpretation of it is more difficult. The content is, however, very similar, except for the mention of the three lords in the first version.

Éowyn is upset by Aragorn's departure, and Théoden tries to comfort her by saying that his heart tells him that Aragorn is a kingly man of high destiny. At Aragorn's request, Meriadoc is geared up to go with the Rohirrim to Minas Tirith. Éowyn dies trying to save Théoden. When Aragorn arrives at the battle on Pelennor Fields, he wears a helmet and a crown. In *LotR*, this heirloom is last worn by Eärnur, and is therefore not in Aragorn's possession at this time. In *LotR*, Aragorn wears the Star of Elendil, the mark of the High King of Arnor and Gondor. Denethor greets the victors, but will not yield to Aragorn until the war is over. Denethor says that his only living son is dying, and that Gondor may take what lord it likes after him, since he is then without an heir. Aragorn replies that he will not be taken, but he will take. Aragorn subsequently heals Faramir. Denethor's use of a palantír explains his attitude towards Aragorn, and later his despair and suicide. Sauron's might is overwhelming, and Gandalf is planning to replace him with some upstart from the North. At first, Denethor had only used the stone after the wounding of Faramir, but Denethor's despair led Tolkien to conclude that Denethor must have looked in the stone long before then. In *LotR*, Denethor's suspicions of Aragorn are solely based on his conversation with Pippin (III, 316f, 360ff).

With the death of Denethor, Aragorn humbles himself, and enters Minas Tirith as a plain man. Éowyn and Faramir are brought back to life, and Aragorn labours all through the night, healing many sick and wounded (III, 385). It is here that Aragorn's moral character finds its final form. Many readers find the character of Strider/Aragorn rigid, but this is

far from the truth. The development from Ranger to King may be subtle, but it is none the less profound. The smooth transition is due to the pains Tolkien's took in portraying Aragorn as a well-balanced man, who thinks before he acts, and who slowly grows into the role of the rightful ruler of Gondor and Arnor. He does not act out of character, because Tolkien weeded out the storylines and scenes where this happened. However, Aragorn may still surprise the reader, e.g. his decision to look in the palantír, his choice to take the Paths of the Dead, and his arrival at the battle on Pelennor Fields in the ships of the enemy. In addition, there is one scene where he does act slightly out of character (see p. 50 & 54).

Aragorn says that as King, he will be Elessar, Elfstone, the renewer, and his house will be named Tarkil, which here is supposed to mean Trotter. Earlier, Tarkil meant high follower and mortal man, a symbolic meaning close to what Dúnedain means in *LotR*. The name Tarkil goes through many changes, and eventually becomes Telcontar. In this name, Trotter may be said to have survived into *LotR* (III, 390).

In a new draft, Tolkien rewrites the story from Dunharrow, where Éowyn weeps at Aragorn's going. She embraces him, imploring him not to take the Paths of the Dead, and when Aragorn does not yield, she humbles herself to kneel in the dust. Aragorn is deeply grieved and embarks on the Paths of the Dead as a man who has lost everything and fears nothing. In *LotR*, Éowyn is perhaps more proud and stern, while Aragorn is softer, but unyielding all the same (III, 406).

Aragorn names the dead warrior at the door:

'Here lies Baldor son of Brego, [...] first heir of that Golden Hall to which he never returned. He should be lying now under the flowers of Evermind in the Third Mound of the Mark; but now there are nine mounds and seven green with grass, and through all the long years he has lain here at the door he could not open. But whither that door led, and why he wished to pass, none now shall ever know.' (III, 407)

In *LotR*, it is clear that Aragorn knows who the dead warrior is, but he remains unnamed. In the draft, Aragorn's naming of the dead warrior shows that he knows the history of the Eorlingas well. It also means that, at this time, Eorl the Young was still meant to have been present at the defeat of Sauron. The Stone of Erech is first envisioned as a black stone, marking the meeting place of Isildur and Anárion with the last king of the dark Men of the Mountains. There they swear allegiance to the sons of Elendil, vowing to aid them and their kin forever, "even though Death should take us" (III, 397). Isildur subsequently curses them to "rest never till your oath is fulfilled" (III, 410). Aragorn reaches Erech at midnight, where he blows horns and unfurls his banner. He finds another palantír buried in a vault. The Great Host of the Dead gather round Aragorn's company, and Aragorn speaks to them (III, 411): "The hour is come at last, and the oath shall be fulfilled. I go to Pelargir, and ye shall come behind me. And when all this land is clean, return, and be at peace! For I am Elessar, Isildur's heir of Gondor" (III, 397ff).

In *LotR*, the rumour that runs through the land is that the King of the Dead has come. In the earliest drafts, they say that Isildur has come back from the dead, and that The Lord of the Ring(s) has arisen (III, 412). On the same page, Tolkien has Gimli and Merry discuss why Aragorn would be called 'The Ring Lord':

'Indeed all the folk of Lebennin call Aragorn that.'

Aragorn – tales of the heir ...

'I wonder why?' said Merry. 'I suppose it is some device to draw the eyes of Mordor that way, to Aragorn, and keep them from Frodo'; and he looked east and shuddered. 'Do you think all his great labour and deeds will be in vain and too late in the end?' he said.

'I know not,' said Gimli. 'But one thing I know, and that is, not for any device of policy would Aragorn set abroad a false tale. Then either it is true and he has a ring, or it is a false tale invented by someone else. But Elrohir and Elladan have called him by that name. So it must be true. But what it means we do not know.' (III, 425)

Elsewhere, Tolkien has written that Galadriel must give her ring to Aragorn, maybe as a wedding gift. This would explain his strength, but Tolkien thought it better not to endow Aragorn with an Elven Ring of Power. It would leave Lórien defenceless, and although he had imagined the destruction of

Lothlórien already (III, 256), he was not ready to strip it of its defences (III, 425). Would Narya have made Aragorn too mighty? It would increase his power, but decrease his legendary stature. The strength and appeal of Aragorn is that he is just a man, albeit with a glorious ancestral history, who struggles against the monsters and the darkness. If he has any magical powers, they lie in the healing of the sick. Giving him a Ring of Power would associate him with the Elves, and perhaps the Ringwraiths. He would be too Elf-like, and at the same time too susceptible to corruption. Another concern might be the lingering of Rings of Power in Middle-earth. The new Age belongs to man, and the Elves and their magics are passing out of memory. If Aragorn is given Narya, he would either have to give it back before Galadriel leaves Middle-earth, or leave Middle-earth himself. This would change the fate of Arwen as well, but *LotR* is not a fairytale, and there is no happy ending.

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Letters

Praise for Mallorn

Sir,
Congratulations on a thought-provoking issue. (*Mallorn* 43)

However, I must take exception to Jef Murray's illustration of the storming of Valinor on page 5.

These craft are completely unseaworthy! A Viking style shallow hull could not support such a weight of canvas and mast from a 19th century clipper, but would capsize like the *Mary Rose* did.

Fantasy illustrators and film-makers persist in these anomalies, steering Roman galleys with 19th Century spoked wheels, etc.

Adrian Tucker
Mortimer.

Hmmm. Good point, well made. Thank goodness it's just a painting of a vessel and doesn't have to actually sail anywhere. Then again, maybe the elves had magical powers when it came to sailing. And it is a rather beautiful image, don't you think? Ed.

More praise for Mallorn

Sir,
Please find enclosed for your attention a copy of a letter sent to Andrew Butler on 20/03/2006, after I had received legal advice on the editorial of *Amon Hen* no.198 and related matters. As the editors of the second official publication of The Tolkien Society, I do think that you should be made aware of this situation in case any similar requests to print statements breaching confidence should be made to you. If any such breach of confidence or other unwarranted and insulting material regarding myself and Mr Alex Lewis appears in *Mallorn*, I will be exceedingly angry. This situation needs to be resolved for the good of the Society, rather than made worse.

Ruth Lacon

Miss Lacon is referring to the confidential information that she and Alex Lewis are a couple (made public at Oxonmoot 2003 in the form of photographs of their Rivendell style bedchamber) and that she and author Elizabeth Currie are the same person (made public at Oxonmoot 2005). This quite accidentally became an issue when Ruth heavily praised Ms Currie's (ie, her own) book in AH197 and Alex powerfully

endorsed Ruth's art show and art book in the same issue. But the information about the connections among these folk was unaccountably left out, by some freak editorial accident, no doubt.

As Ruth quite correctly points out, it is for the good of the society that such things are cleared up, especially where artwork and books are being sold to members, and we are glad to have provided this platform to do so. Ed.



Merry and Pippin in Fangorn

John Ellison

About the authors

Michael Cunningham is a TS member and a student of archaeology with an interest in aspects of the Viking age and its impact upon his homeland, Ireland. His interest in Tolkien was first awakened twenty years ago by reading *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*. Many wanderings in Middle-earth followed; he is particularly interested in Tolkien-influenced music

Zak Cramer is a member of the Tolkien Society, but not a professional scholar. He is a retired interlibrary loan librarian (Harvard Medical School Library) and is currently pursuing his own reading interests. His email address is: zcramer@earthlink.net

John Ellison is an author well known in TS circles (*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 one remaining ambition is to write a Tolkien opera in the style of Wagner, but set to music.

Kristine Larsen, whose work has appeared previously in *Mallorn*, is professor of astronomy and physics and director of the honours programme at Central Connecticut State University. As a high school student in the late 1970s reading Tolkien for the first time, she was struck by the astronomical references contained in his mythology. She now utilises these references in her college classes, demonstrating the close connections between science and culture.

Dale Nelson is associate professor of English at Mayville State University in North Dakota, USA. He has contributed papers to *Mallorn* and *Tolkien Studies*, and his articles appear frequently in *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society*. His other publications include papers on George MacDonald, Arthur Machen, John Meade Falkner, Arvo Pärt, and others, and several works of fiction.

Robert Goldberg teaches English at Prince George's Community College in Maryland (USA). He received his M.A. in English from Florida State University, and did postgraduate work in Medieval British Literature at the University of Rhode Island. His interest in Tolkien began during his undergraduate studies, after taking a course on Tolkien at FSU. His graduate studies in Old and Middle English increased his fascination with everything Hobbit.

'**Poinsettia**' **Took** is famous for having imported the first of these flower-like bracts from Far Harads in an attempt to further exoticise the botanical nomenclatures available to the Took of Great Smials.

Claus Jensen has a BA in Comparative Literature and an MA in English and Philosophy. His co-author **Ruairidh MacDonald** has an MA in English and History. Both live and work in the USA.

Leigh Smith is an assistant professor of English at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. Her recent work focuses on Thomas Malory's Arthurian tales as prison literature and the influences of medieval and Renaissance literature on Tolkien's fiction. Her book *Middle English Hagiography and Romance in Fifteenth-Century England: From Competition to Critique* was published by Mellen Press in 2002.

Her interest in Tolkien began when, as a graduate student working on a PhD in medieval literature, she became acquainted with his scholarship and was quickened by her admiration for his British Academy lecture "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" and for the creative use Tolkien made of Anglo-Saxon and other medieval literature.

Håken Arvidsson is a past *Mallorn* author who currently lives in Sydney, Australia, temporarily exiled from his native Sweden, where recently he completed a course of study in English Literature at Lund University. His paper in this edition is based on his MA thesis

Jef Murray is a professional artist whose vibrant output has appeared regularly in *Mallorn*. His work is for sale and can be viewed on his website at www.jefmurray.com.



The battle of Pelennor Fields

Lorenzo Daniele