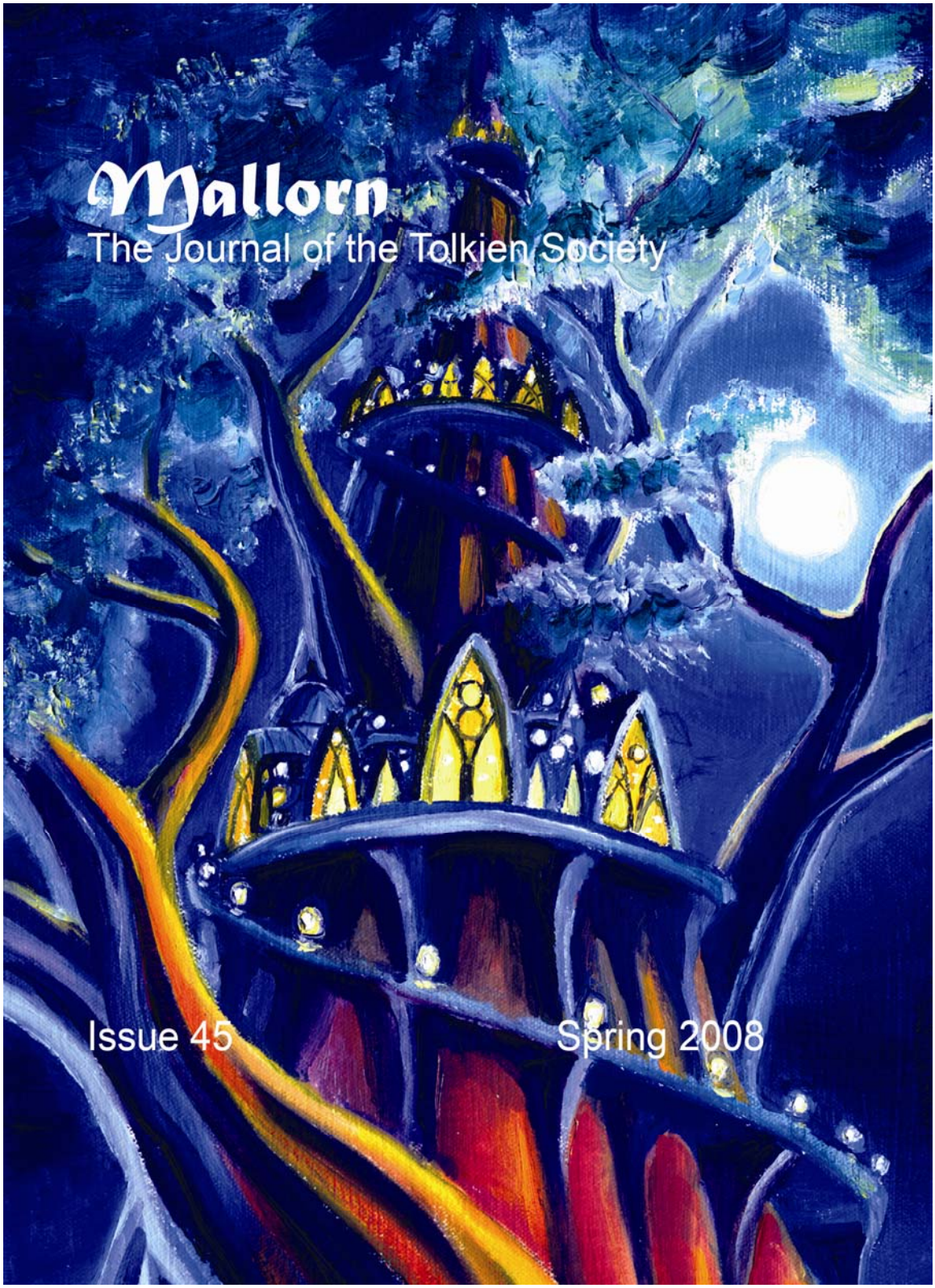
Mallorn
The Journal of the Tolkien Society
Issue 45
Spring 2008

# Mallorn

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Issue 45, Spring 2008.


***Editor*: Henry Gee**

***Cover Art*: Jef Murray  *Back Cover*: Colleen Doran**



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***Mallorn*** is the Journal of the Tolkien Society, and appears twice a year, in the Spring (copy deadline 25 December) and Autumn (21 June). It considers reviews, comment, scholarly articles and artwork but neither original poetry nor fan fiction. Unsolicited material is welcome, but contributors should decide **prior to submission** to which category their manuscript belongs. Full details on the preparation and submission to *Mallorn* are available on request from the Editor, **Henry Gee**, by email (mallorn@tolkiensociety.org) or by mail to 89 Connaught Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0DB, UK, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope (if in UK) or two International Reply Coupons (if outside the UK).



***The Tolkien Society***. Founded in London in 1969 the Tolkien Society is an international organization registered in the UK as a charity (No. 273809) dedicated to furthering interest in the life and works of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, CBE (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 Road, Cheltenham, Glos. GL52 3ER or visit http://www.tolkiensociety.org.

# Guest Editorial: An Encyclopedia of Ignorance

A colleague once remarked to me how useful it would be to have an Encyclopedia of Ignorance. Encyclopedias are expected to be full of what is already known, the knowledge of the past. But what is sometimes more interesting is what is *not* yet known, the knowledge of the future, and a list of 'undiscoveries' would help to concentrate the mind. This thought often came back to me as I wrote entries for the recent *Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, edited by Michael Drout (New York: Routledge, 2007). Not that I mean to depreciate that work in any way, for it is full of information, much of which will be unknown even to the most devoted Tolkien reader. One of its potentially most useful features, though, is the list of recommended 'further reading' at the end of every entry, and compiling these was what often gave me the most trouble.

No problem in some cases, of course. At the end of the entry on C.S. Lewis I could recommend books by Colin Duriez and Humphrey Carpenter, an especially trenchant article by John Rateliff, and much besides. At the end of 'Germanic mythology' I could suggest tightly-focused works by Marjorie Burns and edited by Jane Chance, as well as standard references. But when it came to Walter E. Haigh's *New Glossary of the Dialect of the Huddersfield District*, to which Tolkien wrote a foreword in 1928, I could find nothing to recommend, and I see that Drout, learned and well-read though he is, couldn't find anything either. But Haigh and Tolkien clearly had some kind of relationship, for Haigh's book follows the layout of the glossary in Tolkien and Gordon's *Sir Gawain* edition, and Tolkien read Haigh's entries in the *Glossary* carefully and with close attention, drawing from it (I think) not only names like *Butterbur* – which in Huddersfield does not mean what you might think it does – but also Sam Gamgee's expressive cry of "Noodles!", a word which in the sense intended has defeated the compilers of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the Wise Clerks of Oxenford themselves. At the end of my entry on John Buchan, a writer we know Tolkien admired, I did manage to scratch together two works to mention, but one of them – the book by Giddings and Holland, which I shall not honour with a full reference here – is as misguided about Tolkien and Buchan as about pretty well everything else, and the other is just the standard Buchan biography, with nothing in it about Tolkien at all.

My point is that there is a great deal of Tolkien criticism and commentary, as one can see from the successive bibliographies of Judith Johnston, Richard C. West and Michael Drout once again, but that it is bunched. People write about the same topics again and again – the problem of evil, mythical sources, the issue of faith, ecology and Green politics – and good luck to them. But among the areas not considered are: (1) many of Tolkien's minor works, including his editions and glossaries, but also his poems; (2) the influences on him of writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so often now deeply unfashionable, forgotten and out of print, unless rescued by initiatives like Douglas Anderson's republication of Edward Wyke-Smith's *The Marvelous Land of Snergs* (Baltimore, MD: Old Earth Books, 1996); and (3) Tolkien's effects on modern fantasy, so powerful, so long-lasting, and often so generously admitted by major contemporary authors of fantasy (for which see Karen Haber's compilation *Meditations on Middle-earth*, New York: St Martin's, 2001).

Mention of this last reminds me of another gap, and an astonishingly effective put-down by yet another major modern writer of fantasy. The gap remains Tolkien's acceptance into the major critical canon. Some time ago Richard West and I were on a panel discussing responses to Tolkien, and Richard read out a long list of journals which had published work on Tolkien, claiming that this showed that he was beginning to receive official critical approval. I countered with a list of journals which had *never* published work on Tolkien, and which I thought really represented the views of the educational Establishment. When Tolkien does get into such outlets, the results rather prove my point. *Modern Fiction Studies* had a special issue on Tolkien in 2004, but not one of the contributors had a good word to say for him. They contented themselves with proving irrefutably that he would never have made it in the modern academy, and that he definitely was not a twenty-first century pseudo-liberal academic living in a white-flight American suburb, with all the prejudices and hypocrisies normal to that class: in which, of course, they were perfectly correct. This leads me to the put-down. In a radio talk-show in the USA I found myself on air along with Ursula Le Guin, whose *Earthsea* sequence is one of the great modern fantasies, as well as an academic of the type mentioned above. After Le Guin had spoken about Tolkien for a few minutes, the compère called on the academic, and he launched into the familiar unanalyzed spiel about how "Tolkien just couldn't *write*, couldn't write *sentences* (etc.)". Once he'd done, the compère went back to Le Guin, and asked if she had anything to say to contest that. "Oh no", she replied, in a tone of total dismissal. "You can't *argue* with *incapacity*". So the authors are all for Tolkien – and I'd add to my list above Diana Wynne Jones, whose very illuminating piece about him was trapped in another disappointing anthology, edited by Robert Giddings. But the professional critics are nearly all still solidly against.

It would be interesting to know more about the fantasy authors who have followed Tolkien, and a model for this type of investigation remains W.A. Senior's *Stephen R. Donaldson's Chronicles of Thomas Covenant: Variations on the Fantasy Tradition* (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1995). Dimitra Fimi has meanwhile given a lead to studies of the kind indicated in item (2) above, with her articles on the Victorian fairy-tradition, with which Tolkien clearly had something of a love-hate relationship: see

Drout's *Encyclopedia* under "Victorian Fairyology". As an aside here I would add that even in the 1990s the materials most commonly requested by the public in the Special Collections Room of the Brotherton Library at Leeds were *still* the photos of "the Cottingley fairies", though these are now *known* to have been faked by two naughty little girls back in 1917. If the photos were there in Tolkien's time at Leeds, this may help to explain why he soon became sensitive about the very word "fairy". Another suggestive pointer comes from the recent posthumously-published work by R.G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism and Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004). Collingwood and Tolkien were both Fellows of Pembroke College for nearly a decade till 1934, when Collingwood took up a Chair at C.S. Lewis's college, Magdalen. Did the three of them ever talk about folk tales, on which Collingwood was working and publicly lecturing in the 1930s? Verlyn Flieger has discussed 'the Folklore Controversy' in Jane Chance's collection *Tolkien the Medievalist* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), but it remains a big subject, dear to Tolkien's heart. Tolkien was furthermore surely aware of W.G. Collingwood, R.G.'s father, who not only helped to found the Viking Society and wrote influential works on Icelandic sagas, early English inscribed stones, and the 'historical' King Arthur, but also published several historical novels set in Dark-Age England of a kind which (I think) Tolkien would have liked. Oxford is a place constantly abuzz with gossip (as Tolkien hints in "Leaf by Niggle"), and several of Tolkien's contemporary colleagues might well repay investigation: they knew about him and no doubt he knew about them.

This may be true not only of Oxford. Birmingham has consistently had a bad press in writings about Tolkien: dirty, noisy, industrial, and full of vulgar people, especially when viewed from Oxford. This view is beginning to be challenged, for instance by Robert Blackham's charming *The Roots of Tolkien's Middle Earth* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), with some support from Mathew Lyons's *There and Back Again: in the footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien* (London: Cadogan, 2004). Meanwhile Maggie Burns, not to be confused with Marjorie above, has done a great deal of work on the Tolkien and Suffield families, pointing out that they in fact came from a civilized and self-confident provincial society, in which Tolkien's Aunt Jane Neave, the inspirer of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, comes across as an especially formidable and distinguished personage, possibly rather like Belladonna Took. One further curiosity is this. At the Aston conference of 2005 Franco Manni bravely spoke up about the influence on Tolkien not of World War I but of World War II. The one of course does not exclude the other, but it is an odd thing that as far as I can see Tolkien was at school with and an exact contemporary of none other than Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Viscount Slim of Burma, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Governor General of Australia, Knight of the Garter, and much else, the most successful British or Allied commander of that second conflict. Old Edwardians always know about each other, and Tolkien probably followed Slim's career with some interest. Slim was a good writer too, his *Defeat into Victory* being far and away the best (and the most modest) general's memoir of the century. Shot five times himself, and three of those times after he became a general – something which considerably enhanced his popularity with the troops, as did his casual dress and remains of a 'Brummy' accent – Slim had a good deal to say about heroism and courage, which forms a useful corrective to the fashionably ironic views of World War I. I do not think Tolkien himself subscribed to the 'Blackadder' school of military history, so often repeated by the BBC: it's time we got away from it.

I turn finally to my item (1) in the list of potentially curable ignorances given above: the poems, the editions, and the glossaries, and will once again take these three in reverse order. The glossaries: Tolkien's work on the first of these, the one he did for Kenneth Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Reader* has recently been praised by Peter Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall and Edmund Weiner in *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary* (London: Oxford UP, 2006), and I have mentioned his *Sir Gawain* glossary and Haigh's work above, so all I need say here is that Tolkien was deeply interested in words – by themselves, one at a time, not necessarily linked together. He found inspiration in rare or even non-existent hypothetical items like *eaueres* in *Ancrene Wisse* or *sigelhearwan* in Old English or, of course, the mangled and garbled items which became Éowyn's 'dwimmerlaik'. I commented on that word, and on Sam Gamgee's 'noodles', in a piece given at the Marquette conference, updated the latter in reprinted form in my recent collection from Walking Tree Press, *Roots and Branches*, got a long reply to the former from Mark Hooker in Indiana, wrote a further long reply to Mark – we must now have several thousand words on the etymology and meaning of 'dwimmerlaik', which is still by no means certain, and the fact that I had to update even 'noodles' suggests that this kind of enquiry can go a long way.

Editions: very little notice has been taken, either by fans or by scholars, of Tolkien's two posthumously-published editions, of the Old English *Exodus* and of *Finn and Hengest*, i.e. the two versions we have in Old English of 'the Fight at Finnsburh'. Scholars have ignored them because, by the time they came out in the 1980s, the kind of approach Tolkien took had gone out of fashion. Fans have ignored them, I think, because they can't see what they have to do with Tolkien's fiction. But the detailed notes are often suggestive about what Tolkien thought about Old-English superstition and military practice, and you can see some of them – as well as some of the notes in Ida Gordon's edition

of the Middle English *Pearl*, to which Tolkien certainly contributed – absorbed into the habits of the Riders or the beliefs of the hobbits. I commented on a few instances of this in a review written for Beregond's *Arda*, and reprinted in *Roots and Branches*, but that was just a short review, not a full study. It's also a strange thing that Tolkien's 1936 study of *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics* was accepted gratefully and enthusiastically on all sides, and created what has remained the dominant paradigm of *Beowulf*-studies ever since. But when Tolkien appeared to change his mind, in *Finn and Hengest* – the darned poem can be seen historically after all – no-one ever took the slightest notice! Maybe Tolkien's second thoughts were wiser, or maybe he needed to make his first point before he could go on to his second. But that needs further thought as well.

Finally, poems: compiling the entries for the Drout *Encyclopedia* on 'Alliterative Verse by Tolkien', 'Poems in Other Languages', and 'Uncollected Poems', made me realize first, what a lot of poems there are extant – and other hands wrote several other entries for the *Encyclopedia* in this area – how complex is the history of some of them, and how comparatively little they have been studied, something which applies also to the tradition from which many of them originate, the strongly regional tradition of the West Midlands to which Tolkien remained fiercely loyal. The alliterative verse strikes me as the most potentially productive area, for there is such a lot of it – more than three thousand lines in *The Lays of Beleriand* – and Tolkien kept working at it, and markedly improving his technique, for such a long time, while his poem of *King Sheave* in *The Lost Road* gives especially suggestive hints as to how that story might have developed. No-one has paid much heed to *Songs for the Philologists* either, and since they are mostly in other languages, a simple translation of many of them would be quite useful. Individual studies of the way in which single poems were changed could be a good idea as well, and another thought is that there is considerable overlap with C.S. Lewis's equally little-studied corpus of poetry: Lewis wrote alliterative verse as well, and the poems predictably share several themes.

Reverting to images from World War I, much of the above must sound like *château* generalship, with the old guy well to the rear urging young enthusiasts forward to do something he does not care to try in person. If all these are such good ideas, why not use them myself? The answer is, and I will say it in Latin to elevate the tone of this piece, *non possumus omnia omnes*, and in English to make sure everyone gets it — we can't all do everything. There just isn't time. I look forward to pursuing some of these thoughts, I hope for quite a long way, but I would be very pleased as well if someone else would get there first. There is, after all, a great deal of juice in Tolkien, more than enough to go round.

**Tom Shippey**

*Tom Shippey's essay collection* Roots and Branches *is reviewed in this issue*.

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## Letters to the Editor: Please, No — Not The Comfy Chair

**SIR** —Adam Rosman's article *Gandalf as Torturer* (*Mallorn* **43**, 38-42) raises a number of interesting issues. To begin, let's look at a selection of Rosman's general claims about Tolkien's Middle-earth and its relationship to the modern world.

First, any message in Peter Jackson's films was hardly "timely" given that terrorism existed before 9/11. Tolkien himself referred to "whiskered men with bombs" back in 1943.[1] To continue this theme, Rosman quotes (with seeming approval) the equation of "the forces of Mordor" with those who destroyed the World Trade Centre. But according to Tolkien, the modern-day equivalents of Mordor are those spewing out vast amounts of filth into the air and water. Moreover terrorists are not supernatural beings, nor under the control of any such being.

Second, Rosman asserts that "Gandalf was leading a fellowship of societies that should prohibit torture except in the most extreme cases". However there is no evidence that any of the Free Peoples permitted torture in *any* circumstances. Indeed their Law held that even Orcs "must not be tormented, not even to discover information for the defence of the homes of Elves and Men".[2] On the other hand there are many examples of torture being perpetrated by the forces of Darkness. Tolkien himself condemned torture[3] and thought it "absolutely unthinkable".[4] It would therefore be unthinkable for Tolkien to have Gandalf commit torture, for he considered that this wizard was "an angel …who alone passes the tests, on a moral plane".[5]

Now to Rosman's claims about Gandalf's interrogation of Gollum and its aftermath. In contrast to Rosman's speculation that the questioning could have gone on for "months", it appears that it took no more than a week, in March 3018, although the precise dates are uncertain.[6] However long it took, Rosman notes that information was "wrung" from Gollum, "bit by bit". But the only thing this definitely confirms is that the interrogation was a drawn-out process – there's no evidence of any limb-twisting. Despite this, Rosman is convinced that when "Gandalf described his interrogation of Gollum … he likely minimised the severity". But the wizard would not lie to his friends, and it's curious that Rosman contemplated understatement by the wizard without considering the possibility of

distortion in the opposite direction, for Gandalf is certainly known to exaggerate on occasions (for example his threat to "roast" Barliman Butterbur).

To be fair, as Rosman points out, Gandalf himself describes his treatment of Gollum as "harsh". But we note that at the Council of Elrond, the Black Speech is described as so "harsh" that the Elves stop their ears. In other words, Tolkien's use of the word "harsh" can mean "quite unpleasant" rather than "brutal" or "cruel". Therefore in the interrogation scene, it may mean no more than a contrast to the "pleasant" feelings that Gandalf managed to revive in Gollum. Or it may merely mean that the Sneak put his hands over his ears!

Rosman states, "Exactly what is meant to put the 'fear of fire on' Gollum, we do not know". However one can make some educated guesses. I note here in particular that Gandalf's eyes "were set like coals that could leap suddenly into fire",[7] for these were used on another occasion where the wizard interrogated a halfling:–

> Eventually he got the true tale out of Bilbo after much questioning… but the wizard seemed to think the truth important… Gandalf's eyes flashed… He took a step towards the hobbit, and he seemed to grow tall and menacing; his shadow filled the little room. Bilbo backed away to the wall, breathing hard, his hand clutching his pocket. They stood facing one another, and the air of the room tingled. Gandalf's eyes remained bent on the hobbit… he began to tremble.[8]

This confrontation parallels the encounter with Gollum: the information being sought is important; Gandalf uses the power of his voice; there is fire (in his eyes); and the interviewee feels fear. The parallel continues with the interrogations' longer-term effects. In Bilbo's case, it "for a while strained their friendship", but there was no lasting resentment. Likewise Gollum didn't blink when Frodo mentioned the wizard's name: "a thousand oliphaunts with Gandalf on a white one at their head".[9] In other words, there is certainly no evidence (except of a very circumstantial type) that Gandalf inflicted "severe" or "excruciating" pain or suffering in either case. However if one concludes that the wizard committed torture on Gollum, then the same assessment must apply to Bilbo.

Rosman claims that Gandalf already knew all about the halflings' ring, and therefore didn't need to interrogate Gollum. This would indeed mean the wizard had no motive, and sadistically tortured Gollum for the sake of it. However, even after interviewing Gollum, Gandalf admitted; "I still do not know … about this ring. There is a last test to make. But I no longer doubt my guess". Therefore when the wizard proclaimed "my quest was ended" upon reading Isildur's scroll, he only meant insofar as his search for detailed information about inscriptions on the Ring, not (*contra* Rosman) his mission to identify the ring *per se*.

Gandalf of course was not merely interested in the identity of the Ring. Indeed he said, "Know also, my friends, that I learned more yet from Gollum". (Rosman at one point describes Gollum's information as "fruitful", but later dismisses it as "only marginally" helpful). But were I in Gandalf's large boots, I would want to know more details. Why had Gollum been lurking near Mordor? What information had Gollum disclosed to the Enemy? What other useful knowledge might Gollum have, or might be gained from personally observing him? For example, what are the longer-term effects of bearing the One Ring, and what are the effects of losing possession? This is all clearly useful information in deciding what to do about the Ring, or rather, how to achieve such a quest – for example, would a Halfling be up to the task, and what would happen to Frodo if he fulfilled it?

Rosman asks the important question of whether "the Fellowship's ultimate triumph have concluded in any other way had the [interrogation] of Gollum … not taken place?" Contrary to Rosman, I believe the answer is almost certainly "yes". If Gandalf hadn't met Gollum, then he wouldn't have advised Frodo to treat Gollum with pity; the confrontation between Frodo and Gollum would then have had a very different outcome. If they had killed the "vile creature" (Frodo's first instinct) they would never have made it out of the Dead Marshes, and Sauron's servants would've eventually found the Ring.

Finally, Rosman refers to a legal definition of torture, namely that of the United Nations convention of 1984. The problem with legal definitions is that they are rarely retrospective, and are in any case not applicable to the denizens of fictional places. What then is the "due process" applicable in Gandalf's case? Rosman has overlooked a little incident that occurred some months after the "torture" episode. After duelling with the Balrog, the wizard died; and then, more importantly, he was *sent back* from death. Gandalf was judged by the highest court in Tolkien's World, and was exonerated for anything he may have done. **Jeff Stevenson**

1. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien,* no. 52 (p. 63).
2. *HoME* vol. X: *Morgoth's Ring*, part 5 'Myths Transformed', Text X, § 'Orcs', p. 419
3. Christopher Tolkien, *HoME,* vol. V: *The Lost Road & Other Writings*, part 1 'The Fall of Númenor', ch. III (ii), editorial endnotes, p. 77.
4. Tom Shippey, *Road to Middle-earth* (revised edition), ch. 9 'The Course of Actual Composition', § 'Mere "Escapism" in Literature', pp. 324-325
5. *Letters* N$^{O}$. 156 (p. 202)
6. *Unfinished Tales*, part 3 'The Third Age', ch. IV 'The Hunt for the Ring', §(ii), p. 345. *The Lord of the Rings: a Reader's Companion* [Wayne G. Hammond & Christina Scull, p. 717, 'Appendix B', ref. 1090 (III:371)] notes

that Tolkien was considering another chronology where Aragorn captured Gollum in January, but the length of Gollum's interrogation by Gandalf is still only a matter of days – "say 5".
7. *FotR*, book II, ch. 1 'Many Meetings', p. 239
8. *FotR*, Prologue, § 4 'Of the Finding of the Ring', p. 22; & book I, ch. 1 'A Long-Expected Party', p. 42. One observes that Tolkien's Gandalf only "seemed" to grow menacing (and tall), and then only for a brief period.
9. *Two Towers*, book IV, ch. 3 'The Black Gate is Closed', p. 255. One compares the reaction Gollum has to any reminder of Elves.

**SIR** — It can happen that an author's words, because of a shift in intellectual or moral assumptions, are read by a later generation in a sense he never intended. A meaning that was unthinkable and therefore not guarded against becomes thinkable.

In 'Gandalf as torturer: the ticking bomb terrorist and due process in *The Lord of the Rings*' (*Mallorn* **43**, 38-42) Adam Rosman looks at the book in the context of the question: 'Can a moral society justifiably defend itself by arguably violating the very principles that it seeks to uphold?' A disquieting one, as he says, and particularly apt today. And he finds that the opponents of Sauron are not as moral as we had supposed. As an example, he suggests that Gandalf tortured Gollum to find out how he came by the Ring.

One's first reaction to this is that the idea is obviously absurd. It makes nonsense of Gandalf's character, of his words elsewhere (for instance to Frodo about Gollum or in his debates with Saruman) and of the whole structure of assumptions behind Tolkien's work. But this is to avoid the very issue Rosman means to raise. As he shows, the permissibility of torture is nowadays being discussed, as a few years ago it would not have been. It is not enough simply to dismiss the idea; we need to take 'a closer look' at the passage concerned.

Rosman quotes the sentence in 'The Shadow Of The Past' where Gandalf is telling Frodo how he questioned Gollum in the prison of the Wood Elves to find out how he came by the Ring:

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

He takes this to mean that Gandalf got the story from Gollum by torture. He goes on to discuss the justification sometimes advanced for the use of torture in extreme cases, the 'ticking bomb': that your prisoner alone knows where the bomb is that will in a short time if not defused kill a large number of people. He concludes quite rightly that this justification (even if one accepts it) would not apply here, as the situation though urgent was not *that* urgent, and in any case Gandalf already had all the information he really needed. In fact what Gandalf needed at that point was to confirm that Gollum's ring was the One, and for that it was certainly relevant to know that Gollum had found it in the Anduin, where it had been lost long before, and not anywhere else. So Gollum's story was not so unimportant. However Gandalf still did not need to get at it within minutes.

But this argument presupposes that we have been told that Gandalf tortures Gollum. I do not think we have been told any such thing. 'I put the *fear* of fire on him' (my emphasis) could mean 'I threatened to burn him' or ' I lit a sudden blaze of fire, which jolted him out of his endless round of complaint and self-justification'. I would guess the latter, though in fact fire would naturally be experienced by Gollum as a threat, a fact which has always troubled me a little. However it obviously does not mean 'I burnt him'.

'Wrung' is a harsh word, and certainly indicates extracting something from an unwilling person by interrogation, but not necessarily by physical pain. Getting information or confessions from people *without* torturing them is after all what we expect our police to do, and we assume it can be done, even if we recognise how strong the temptation to overstep the boundary must sometimes be. 'Snivelling and snarling' is not what a person in acute pain does, but it is definitely what a frightened, angry and resentful person would do.

Gandalf's account goes on: "But when he had at last told me his history, as far as the end of the Riddle-game and Bilbo's escape, he would to say no more except in dark hints. Some other fear was on him, greater than mine". In other words the mere memory of what had been done to him in the Dark Tower was worse than the actuality of what was happening in the Wood Elves' dungeons. Since when is the memory of past pain worse than the experience of present (even if lesser) pain? And is not this just where a real torturer would pile on more?

The conclusion is clear: Gandalf did not torture Gollum, he scared him. One may not like his doing it – Gandalf evidently didn't like it ('I was compelled to be harsh') but it is far from being the same thing as torture.

Tolkien might have been more careful of his words if it had occurred to him that they might be interpreted in this way. That may now be becoming possible, as Rosman's article warns. These changes happen; after all, when Tolkien was young it was supposed to be unthinkable that 'we' should bomb civilians. It didn't take us long to learn. Still, I hope that nobody will connect *The Lord of the*

*Rings* with any justification of torture, under whatever name. 'I have heard speeches of this kind before, but only in the mouths of emissaries sent from Mordor'. **Virginia Luling**

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## Reviews: You Get What You Pay For

*Tolkien Studies: an Annual Scholarly Review, Vol. IV. West Virginia University Press, 2007. 365pp. ISSN 1547-3155; ISBN 978 1 933202 26 6, $60.00*

*Tolkien Studies* was started in 2004, and describes itself as 'the first scholarly journal published by an academic press for the purpose of presenting and reviewing the growing body of critical commentary and scholarship about Tolkien's writings.' Scholarly it certainly is. The editors are Doug Anderson, Michael Drout and Verlyn Flieger, with an editorial board consisting of David Bratman, Marjorie Burns, Carl Hostetter, Gergely Nagy, Tom Shippey and Richard West –all justly renowned for their learning. It is clearly printed on good quality paper and the binding is hard (though with a reasonably flexible spine), and the front cover sports a reproduction of a Tolkien manuscript of a partial Sindarin translation of the Lord's Prayer.

So much for its academic credentials and its presentation – impressive indeed, but what is actually in it? The main body is taken up with solid articles, but the section entitled 'Notes and Documents' is at least as significant. There is a substantial section of book reviews; an account of the year's work in Tolkien studies; and a bibliography (in this instance for 2005). The articles in this issue begin with a 50-year overview of Tolkienian linguistics by Carl Hostetter, whose knowledge and experience of this field are immense, and some of which I can vouch for at first hand (having been part of it). Substantial articles continue with Dimitra Fimi on Tolkien's 'Celtic' type of legends, with special reference to matters Arthurian; Miriam Librán-Moreno on the surprising connection between Greek and Latin love poetry and the portrayal of Éowyn (I had never before thought of a connection between Sappho or Catullus and the shield-maiden of the Rohirrim); Verlyn Flieger being intriguing on the dream at the Barrow – does it imply reincarnation? Or what? — and Michael Drout (who better?) on Tolkien's medieval scholarship, performing a detailed study of Tolkien's academic output, confirming Shippey's conclusion: "Primary citations: low. Secondary citations: amazingly high."

The 'Notes and Documents' section picks up immediately on this with a real plum: the full text of Tolkien's 1932 contribution to the report of the Romano-British excavations at Lydney, on 'The name *Nodens*', going in considerable detail into the possible etymology of the name of this enigmatic British deity. Pre-medieval, but an authentic treasure nonetheless, and for many people it alone will be worth the 60 bucks. However, the 'Notes and Documents' don't stop there. The byways explored in this section are an article on the author of the Huddersfield dialect dictionary; Beorhtnoth and philology; the pre-Shire (and pre-Tolkien) hobbit; the Sun as 'she', and Tolkien's influence on modern scientific nomenclature, with special reference to Elvish moths.

What else can one say? The reviews are full, numerous, by respected hands and informative. The 'Year's Work' is necessary documentation for serious researchers, as is the bibliography. In all, another magisterial addition to the growing corpus of Tolkienian scholarship.

But is it worth the money? If it's speculation on balrogs' wings you're after, this is almost certainly not for you. However, if you want something a bit meatier, but are put off by the cost, I sympathise – even for British Tolkienians favoured by the dollar-sterling exchange rate, it's still not cheap. All I can say is that it depends how deeply you are interested in Tolkien studies. After all, it's the equivalent of not much more than a pint of bitter a month, for the decadent among you, and those seriously concerned with Tolkien will definitely want it, as well as the earlier issues (2004-2006). **David Doughan**

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## Reviews: Beowulf, The Real Story

*Beowulf: a film directed by Robert Zemeckis, screenplay by Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary, starring Ray Winstone, Anthony Hopkins, Angelina Jolie, John Malkovich and Robin Wright Penn.*

*Hwaet*! Many tales have been told of the exploits of the brave, six-packed hero Gee as he journeyed through wind and storm over the whale road to the coin-operated magic lantern to see the Beowulf movie and was entirely blown away. No, not by the wonderment of the *smithes orthancum*, which was wonderful enough, but by the cleverness of the adaptation.

The week before, I'd re-read the poem itself — a bilingual version, with the Old English text on one side and the Modern English on the other. The latter was by Seamus Heaney. Now, I am no more expert in King Alfred's *Englisc* than most other cinema-goers, but I knew enough to tell that Heaney's translation, while rumbustious, plays somewhat fast and loose with the original.

It was with justification that Tom Shippey referred to the Irish poet, in my hearing (it was at the 2005 Aston meeting), as 'Shameless' Heaney.

The story, though, is clear enough. As every schoolboy knows, Good King Hrothgar of Denmark has built a fine mead hall, but festivities are episodically interrupted by the monster, Grendel, who invades the hall and consumes the revelers. Enter Beowulf, warrior-prince of the Geats, who kills Grendel by ripping off his arm. The monster crawls back to his mother's cave and dies. The mother, a water-demon, is even more ferocious than her son, and seeks revenge, but Beowulf dispatches her too: in single combat, deep in her watery lair. Heroic Beowulf returns to his own land where he rules wisely for fifty years, until he faces a dragon single-handed and dies in the attempt. So much is clear.

What the film does is very clever: it assumes that the poem that has come down to us is a bowdlerized propaganda version (which it assuredly is, having been through several scribal hands since its original composition) - and proceeds to tell us *what really happened*. In so doing the script exploits all sorts of odd foibles in the text, showing that Gaiman and Avary well those passions read, stamped on those lifeless things.

First, to show us that the scriptwriters knew their hauberks from their byrnies, the film establishes its integrity by following the story almost line for line (allowing for the usual compressions of adaptation) right up until the point at which Beowulf has to go looking for Grendel's mother. This is shown by the film's inclusion of an extended by-play in the poem, in which Beowulf is upbraided by Hrothgar's advisor Unferth for being not quite the hero he claims to be, having lost an epic oceanic swimming race with another hero, Breca. Beowulf responds by saying that he only lost because he had to slay several sea-monsters along the way. This is the sort of episode which any conventional script would have cut. But the film has it, note for note.

It's when Beowulf enters the subterranean world of Grendel's mother that the plot of poem and script diverge. Rather than being a monster of conventional stripe, Grendel's mother is a slinky seductress: Angelina Jolie, even more pneumatic than usual, if such is possible, whose long plait of hair slithers around like a serpent, of its own volition. She proves indestructible, and Beowulf can only escape by making a faustian pact in which she will grant him, in effect, eternal life.

When I saw the trailer I was inclined to dismiss this as bunk. But a closer reading of the poem revealed two crucial things. The first is that there is no clear physical description of Grendel's mother in the text, a fact which allows any scriptwriter considerable licence. The second is that *only Beowulf was witness to her slaying*. He returns to the upper world with the head of Grendel, *not* that of his mother. The world hails Beowulf a hero, both in poem and film. Only in the film is Beowulf forced to live with his guilty secret.

But if pumped-up Angelina doesn't look like a ferocious monster, what *does* she look like? Even here, the writers cleave close to ancient sources. Grendel's mother is a lamia: a creature with the face or torso of a woman, the tail of a snake, a creature who exists to ensnare hapless men. A lamia is irresistably gorgeous, as Keats notes in his poem of the same name. But Grendel's Mother has even older parallels in literature, in which a lamia-like creature is placed in a cave or similar subterranean lair. One thinks of Echidna, the cave-dwelling, half-woman, half-serpent of Hesiod's *Theogony*; or the beast slain by the brave knight in Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* (Book I, Canto I, stanzas 14-15), which is not only a sharp description of the movie version of Grendel's mother, but a portrait of the hapless hero's encounter with her, and, importantly, an allegory. The monster stands for sin or *errour*, and occupies the same place in Spenser's moral universe as Angelina's character does in that of the cinematic Beowulf.

It is after this morally ambiguous encounter that the world hails Beowulf as a hero —but only in the much-scamped version that comes down to us. The movie script gives us a version of what might really have happened, continuing the story with Beowulf as a hero under false pretences. Importantly for his self-esteem, he knows he cannot be slain, and so the risks of battle, and the attendant acts of courage, are denied him. This is why, late in life, he feels he must slay the dragon and die in the attempt, which he can only do because the dragon turns out to be one of Angelina's avatars. Only ... well, I'll be telling you the plot.

The script is so intelligent that it not only plays with the text at a respectfully intellectual level: it also nods to the religious ambiguities thrown up by its darksome editorial history. When *Beowulf* was composed in the mists of the dark ages, the ethics of the societies it described were based on what Tolkien called a 'theory of courage' - that it was right for men to die in battle, even when they knew their cause was lost. Notably, in the Last Battle of Norse mythology, between the Gods and the Monsters, it is the Gods that lose. This ethic is profoundly antithetical to the Christian message of hope and salvation.

However, the only copy of *Beowulf* known to have survived was made in the 13th century, when England had been Christian for half a millennium, and the poem is overlain with many Biblical references. The film plays up to this aspect nicely. When Hrothgar, Beowulf and Unferth are wondering which Gods to propitiate, Unferth wonders whether they should offer prayers to Christ, the 'New Roman God'. The response is characteristically Norse— that the Gods will not help men who do

not take responsibility for their own actions. But as the film closes, Unferth has become a priest, and brings warning of the ravages of the dragon.

The technical brilliance of the film is a fine thing, but one should not be distracted by this from the story and the excellence with which Gaiman and Avary have adapted it. As Tolkien wrote in his groundbreaking 1936 essay *Beowulf: The Monsters And The Critics*, scholars had spent too long admiring the poem as an archaeological or linguistic relic rather than as a ripping yarn. What we should be looking at, said Tolkien, was the monsters. Advice that Gaiman, Avary and Zemeckis have taken great pains to follow. **Henry Gee**

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## Reviews: The Wonderbra Of Lothlórien

*The Lord of the Rings: the Stage Musical*

Happy is the hobbit who lives a mere tube's ride from Drury Lane. I have seen this show many times now and could happily keep watching it until my eyeballs fall out and I am evicted for rent arrears. Indiscriminating? Not so. Elrond is a bit peculiar and sometimes comes across as a slightly lecherous drunk. Gandalf is too snappy ... but he grows on you. My sole gripe, really, is that Pippin should be a little more serious, especially towards the end, and that Aragorn says some rather trite and silly lines to Arwen. But the good outweighs the bad by a margin so wide it beggars infinity. So let's begin.

Firstly, a note: the show did not, of course, première in London, but in Toronto, and it has been considerably trimmed since then. I have read about the changes made and seen the few clips available online from the original version, but my review is of the London show.

It is a very heart-warming production, and its keynote sounds from the start of the 'pre-show', as hobbits clamber over audience-members in their quest for fireflies before returning to the stage for the Springle-Ring. A little recorded narration from Gandalf, and the frontcloth (a huge golden ring surrounded by intertwining tree-roots) rises up to reveal Bilbo giving (and singing) his farewell speech before disappearing very impressively indeed. A little more narration as Frodo moves to the front of the stage looking curiously at the Ring, and the perfect front door of Bag End appears in the centre. Then Sam comes through it, and their characters begin to unfold.

James Loye (Frodo) and Peter Howe (Sam) provide the show's beating heart. They give rich and blended performances, capturing the relationship of knight and squire to perfection, and I don't think even Holm and Nighy (in the BBC Radio production) matched them for chemistry. This is the best overall portrayal of the two leading hobbits and their relationship that I have ever seen. Loye's Frodo is warm, full-blooded and the epitome of decency. He has remarkable stage presence, and is every bit as brave as a knightly Ringbearer should be.

The play is reassuringly hobbitocentric: those whose love of Middle-earth is less so may miss Théoden and Éowyn, casualties of the Transatlantic crossing, but to my mind rightly so, given the time-constraints. The fat-suits work very well to create an illusion of 'shortness', with Merry in particular looking rather like he's swallowed a spacehopper. There is lovely comic timing in Bree between the loquacious Pippin, a Frodo trying valiantly to be cautious, and the Breelanders. Bill Ferny has one of the show's funniest lines - "Henquiries 'ave been made" - and before long the cast (including ensemble) are launched into 'The Cat and the Moon', (the outside walls of the inn have already been transformed into mead-benches; now they become dance aids). It's a fantastic number, and at the end, Frodo puts on the Ring and apparates to Weathertop, where he invokes Elbereth as a very scary Ringwraith takes a swipe at him. The Rangers (another of the show's most beautiful touches, present from the moment the hobbits leave the Shire) help him get to Rivendell, led by Jérôme Pradon (an unusual Aragorn, but I did miss him when the understudy was on).

The Council of Elrond is fairly similar to that of the film, as are entrance (into the quest) of Merry and Pippin; the moving of the 'Pity-stayed-his-hand' speech from Bag End to Moria; and the general compression of the story up to Rivendell. Otherwise the play provides very much its own interpretation of Tolkien's characters and story.

Laura Michelle Kelly's Galadriel has the best voice in the show. She descends with consummate grace as a huge mallorn opens around her, and carries herself with elegance, clad throughout in a golden costume which incorporates the wonderbra of Lothlórien. Michael Rouse's Legolas is hardly less impressive. The mutual hostility with Gimli, transformed into firm friendship by the time they face the Last Battle, is present. Gimli, in Moria, sings perhaps the show's most haunting song, with Gandalf joining in at the end. Like the song in Bree, it is very similar in content and spirit to the poem Tolkien actually wrote into the scene.

And the battles themselves? The wooden 'O' *does* rise to the occasion (*and* falls, when it needs to). Helm's Deep is impressive and the orc-choreography works. Boromir (whose touching, melancholic yet strong performance is another highlight of the show) has a very impressive final fight and death-scene. You will have read elsewhere about the brilliance of the staging and set design, for which no

praise is too high. But it is not spectacle for its own sake: it is there to grace the performances and anchor the story. The revolving stage and its seventeen lifts do not only suggest mountains and valleys, they help convey wounded characters with speed, sometimes present more than one scene at once, and hence keep the story moving, in a narrative which is slick, fluent and refreshingly free from self-indulgence.

So you want to hear Saruman's last agonised strains of *My Way* as his spirit dissolves over the hill near Hobbiton? Well you can't; he's been cut from the ending since the Toronto show, but he has very clearly visited the Shire and worked his final mischief. Sam uses his box of dust to heal their ravaged land, and marries Rosie before the final parting, when Frodo (dressed, as always, in dark red and brownish golds) says goodbye to him amidst autumn flowers and leaves. Sam Marlowe's review of this show (*The Times*, 20th June 2007) was bang on target, but it deserves five stars, not four. The final word, I think, should go to the Frodo, Sam and Gollum 'triangle' which writer Shaun McKenna names as "The heart of the book for me" (quoted from Gary Russell's *The Lord Of The Rings: The Official Stage Companion*, which I highly recommend). Michael Therriault is an excellent Gollum and portrays his agony and conflict extremely well, from his first entrance, crawling down the frontcloth upside-down. One almost iconic moment is in Shelob's Lair when he and James Loye rise up simultaneously, each a mirror image of the other. Shelob is formidable, and seems to appear from nowhere and disappear just as quickly. Once Sam has fought her off, we get the emotion of about three book scenes rolled into one, with perhaps the most powerful and visceral acting in the show. Loye never loses the audience's sympathy, even when snatching back the Ring, and Howe's Sam is straight from the canon: common sense, loyalty, and utter devotion. **Laura Marples**

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## Reviews: Journey Into Faërie

*Explore Fairy Traditions by Jeremy Harte, illus. Ian Brown. Heart of Albion Press, 2004. 171pp. ISBN 1 872883 61 3*

Jeremy Harte's *Explore Fairy Traditions* is part of the "Explore ..." series, which aims "to provide accessible introductions to folklore and mythology". To a certain extent, it succeeds as an introduction (the title of the first section of the book). The book is certainly accessible, and some aspects of folklore studies and fairy tales are well covered. It very properly begins with quoting Tolkien. However, it has been seventy years since *On Fairy Stories* was published (in 1947), and other scholarship, before and since (notably the Aarne-Thompson classifcation, the work of Vladimir Popp) and in-depth explorations of such traditional games as hunt-the-solar-myth are oddly missing from an introductory text. While personally I would have liked to read what Jeremy Harte has to say about more literary analyses, including Tolkien's and Angela Carter's, their absence is more understandable.

But it is somewhat unfair to concentrate on what the series might promise, rather than what the book actually delivers, which is a well-written and thought-provoking study of belief. It says something about our age that one chapter is dedicated to exploring 'Are Fairies Real?' The answer is an anthropologically sensitive account of belief. It says a lot about the author that another chapter looks at 'telling' (rather than 'transmission'). One of the most interesting of these short chapters is 'Where are Faeries Found?' which neatly avoids nationalist stereotypes about 'Celtic' peoples and firmly places the traditions in relation to three dominant socio-economic landscapes of modern (1750 to 1950) Britain and Ireland. The impoverished marginal lands, the pastoral uplands, and the agricultural/urban lowlands have all, Jeremy Harte agues, their own kinds of belief, which is why a tale told by an Irishman in Manchester is nothing like a tale told in Galway.

*Explore Fairy Traditions* is far more than an introduction, and in the second, and greater, half (entitled "Fairy Traditions") Jeremy Harte presents a well-argued answer to the question of what are fairies are for. This is a return to Tolkien's answer (to not quite the same question) that fairy tales are characterized by fantasy, recovery, escape and consolation. Jeremy Harte notes that fairies, and stories involving them, provide a grand opportunity for anyone wanting to devise a classification system. But as useful as they are for anyone wanting to publish coffee-table book, a PhD or a note in a county journal, they were not created for this purpose.

Jeremy Harte argues that specific fairy traditions offer the tellers and listeners a view of a key issue of the human condition at a very specific time (the post-medieval, pre-industrial years in which the traditions were recorded), and in very specific places: marriage in Wales; indentured servitude in the English upland; *post-partum* depression on the Atlantic fringe. He observes that what fairy tales have in common is that they involve humans. Fairy traditions are human traditions, used like other traditions to disenfranchise some people, or to facilitate the resistance of those people; to make sense of the senseless, or to provoke questioning of the 'common-sense'. This is why searching for 'origin' and 'classification' are sports (gently) disparaged by Jeremy Harte, and why continuing belief in fairies is treated sympathetically: he concludes that fairy tradition is diverse and above all, about humans. As

he observes; fairy traditions are rarely about fairies alone, they are usually about human-fairy encounters.

*Explore Fairy Traditions* is illustrated by Ian Brown, in a style reminiscent of some fantasy novels. I would have much preferred early modern illustrations, and for Jeremy Harte to consider the visual representations alongside the verbal ones.

The index leaves a little to be desired: there are erratic references to the authors of works critiqued, and the underlying division of Britain into three land/economy types: place, type of fairy and type of encounter are well covered. *Explore Fairy Tradition* was therefore, deservedly the winner of the 2005 Katherine Briggs Award of the Folklore Society. **Pat Reynolds**

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## Review: Northern Venture

*The Golden Compass, a film directed by Chris Weitz. Screenplay by Chris Weitz, based on the novel by Philip Pullman. Starring Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig, Dakota Blue Richards, Ian McKellen, Eva Green, Tom Courtenay, Ian McShane and Christopher Lee*

Anyone reading this magazine will know how hard it is to appreciate a film based on a well-loved book. As regards *The Golden Compass*, at least, several folk whose opinions I trust muttered that they Didn't Like It. Of these, one was of the never-read-the-book persuasion; one of the loved-the-book persuasion; and several of the I-have-problems-with-the-book persuasion, so I couldn't say that one of the normal problems of adaptation had occurred. Having seen the film, I hesitate to write this review, because I found *The Golden Compass* very enjoyable.

The main strength of the film is the cinematography. The screen is saturated with the most gorgeous bronzes, golds and coppers. Some quite nice steels and aluminiums, too. Plus the necessary blues to set them off. The settings effuse authenticity: from the honey-gold colleges of Oxford to the flint-steel streets of Trollesund (a nice mix of Chatham Historic Dockyard and Bergen in Norway), events are filmed in the places where the book locates them, or real places which are indistinguishable from them. Nothing appears to have filmed on the back lots. There is, throughout, beautiful 'period detail': this is a Merchant-Ivory film of a parallel universe: Art Deco geometry, Victorian frilliness, Medieval Scandinavian beast-gripping, it's all here, and all perfect.

The costumes are stunning. Did I mention the colours? Let me add texture, cutting, embroidery, appliqué, knitting and fabric - it seems like quibbling to mention that some of the chain mail didn't work right when much of the wardrobe was clearly designed and hand made for the film. Ruth Myers, the designer, deserves every award going.

Oscars for the actors may be a little more scarce. The 'camera just loves' Dakota Blue Richards (Lyra), but her Oxford working-class accent becomes a shade too RP at times. She does manage the difficult balancing act of being the kind of smart, independent child I wish I was, and the brat that I actually was. Nicole Kidman (Mrs Coulter), thanks to Myers' costumes, looks absolutely perfect. A host of 'great' British actors supported (Tom Courtenay as Fader Coram was to my mind the best).

The soundtrack ranged from the good to the unobjectionable, but one of the ice bears sounded as if he'd been recorded on a completely different sound stage, with really lousy acoustics.

As an adaptation, I thought it stayed remarkably close to the book. It added to the book in one significant aspect for me: I had not imagined, while reading, what it would look like if all the extras had daemons. In other areas, it failed somewhat. While some of the actors pronounced the exotic words beautifully, the overall impression given by reading them in the text was lost. Much of the dialogue was taken from the books, but I conclude that dialogue isn't one of Pullman's strong points, and some additional lame dialogue didn't help. For example, Lyra to Iorek 'we are going to Bolvangar to save Roger, who is in imminent danger of death'. Er, you don't say. Well, it could have been worse: "As you know, Iorek ....".

I did miss the Gyptian's barges. The description of the visit to Lord Faa is my favourite section of the book ... I kept turning the pages as I read it thinking, it can't get better than this (I was right, it didn't). I can see why the Gyptians are shown more as merchant seamen than bargees (it cuts down a lot of the detail). But having delighted in the views of Oxford, I wanted the Grand Junction Canal and the Fens. The Witches are a very sketchy group, and as a result appear much as Eagles at the Battle of the Five Armies. I didn't particularly like the 'visions' produced by the alethiometer, which did not at all accord with the way I thought it worked from the books. It wasn't clear that Iorek had feigned injury. Just what was Lee Scoresby's motivation for taking a contract with Lyra? The aerial shots of the Magesterium in London didn't work for me. Individual gripes, but many of them indicative of a wider problem, which explains why so many people dislike *The Golden Compass*.

Many people seem disturbed that 'the film is over before the book ends'. No 'spoilers'; but just the observation that the up-beat note at the end of the film is not true of the end of the book. I think the first book is head and shoulders above the sequels, so stretching it out as much as possible makes a lot

of sense. But it hasn't been stretched out. The narrative has not been given room to breathe. Perhaps the screenplay has been constrained by sensitivity over the 'anti-religion' theme pervading the trilogy; or that this is a film for children'; or by some idea of what fantasy should be. But the result is that those of my friends who had not read the book said the film wouldn't inspire them to read the novel. I don't blame them: what makes *The Golden Compass* a good film is largely not drawn from the book. On the other hand, if Ruth Myers ever were to move into producing clothes commercially, I'm sure I'm not the only one who would be shopping in her boutique. And Lyra's Oxford is there to be visited.
**Pat Reynolds**

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## Reviews: A Morbid, Malignant Masterpiece

*Tolkien, J.R.R. The Children of Húrin. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. ISBN –13:978-0618-89464-2; ISBN – 10: 0-618-89464-0; ISBN – 13:978-0-618-90441-9 (deluxe edition); ISBN – 10: 0618-90441-7 (deluxe edition).*

Thirty years after *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien has published one of its starkest, darkest chapters, the tale of Túrin, begun by his father in 1918.

Set more than 6,000 years before the events of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, its narrative is one familiar to experienced Tolkien readers. Indeed, much of this 'new' book has been published before, including a 105-page fragment *Narn I Hin Húrin* in *Unfinished Tales* (1980) as well as poetical versions and other fragments found scattered throughout the 12 volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*. Many passages of *The Children of Húrin* correspond with chapter 21 of *The Silmarillion*, where the story first appeared in print - the grimmest episode in that 'Old Testament' of Middle-earth.

Readers seeking another happy hobbit holiday here will be grievously disappointed. This is sterner stuff. From the first, Túrin is the most anti-heroic of anti-heroes. Even as a child of five, "he was not merry, and spoke little, though he learned to speak early and ever seemed older than his years. Turin was slow to forget injustice or mockery; but the fire of his father [Húrin] was also in him, and he could be sudden and fierce. Yet he was quick to pity, and the hurts or sadness of living things might move him to tears."

He will have many occasions to be thus moved. His tears will be more bitter because most often he will be the agent of these tragedies due to that sudden fierceness. He will slay his best friends, marry his sister in unwitting incest, and perish a suicide.

Written in the high historic style of *The Silmarillion*, *The Children of Húrin* enriches and expands that account with detail, description, and dialogue absent in the earlier chronicle. As in Tolkien's more well-known works, a well-drawn map provides a much-needed companion. The story itself, 226 pages worth, is further supplemented with another 87 pages of preface, introduction, genealogical charts, guides to pronunciation, and two appendices. Unlike the estimable, exhaustive, and exhausting bits found in the histories of Middle-earth, here these notes are segregated. Christopher Tolkien's commentaries are unobtrusively placed before and after the narrative, not distractingly in their midst. He notes that he himself wrote some connecting passages missing from his father's manuscripts, but these supplementary scenes show no surgical scar.

Tolkien's tale is true to its inspiration, the story of the hapless Kullervo, hero of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic. Morgoth is in control here, master of the fates of all the characters from the first. Perhaps the cruellest of his many cruelties is enchanting the captive Húrin on a stone throne where he powerlessly witnesses all the many mishaps that befall his wife Morwen, his two doomed daughters, and his star-crossed son. "But upon all whom you love my thought shall weigh as a cloud of Doom", Morgoth tells Húrin, "and it shall bring them down into darkness and despair. Wherever they go, evil shall arise. Whenever they speak, their words shall bring ill counsel. Whatever they do shall turn against them. They shall die without hope, cursing both life and death."

Unlike Chesterton's gentlemanly Devil, Morgoth keeps his word.

Readers well-schooled in *The Silmarillion* will note many parallels between Túrin's tale and those of Beren, who precedes him, and Tuor, who follows him in that history. But Túrin is far less likeable than either. However innocently ignorant, his incest with his sister Nienor is a sullied love, unlike the redemptive romances of Beren and Luthien, and Tuor and Idril. When Glaurung, the great dragon who makes *The Hobbit*'s Smaug seem smarmy as Barney, reveals to Nienor that she is wedded to and pregnant by her own brother, she leaps to her death. Túrin will finally throw himself on his fatal sword Anglachel, agent of the slaying of his Elf-friend Beleg , dying as Morgoth foretold.

Artist Alan Lee's illustrations include black-and-white chapter headers and footers depicting Elves much as they were seen in Peter Jackson's film trilogy, which is unsurprising since Lee was a consultant for that project. His eight paintings are understated, with a Rackhamesque brown dominating many. Compared with the vividly detailed character studies Ted Nasmith did for the same in the 2004 illustrated edition of *The Silmarillion*, they are evanescent, soft-focussed, and landscape.

Lee's Glaurung is glimpsed only as a serpentine head shrouded in foul smoke, whereas every scale of Nasmith's can be numbered.

Whether or not *The Children of Húrin* can stand on its own without reference to *The Silmarillion* or Tolkien's hobbit works is a difficult question. If Turin resembles any character in the Ring saga, it is the wilful, proud and finally suicidal Denethor - or Aragorn cursed with a bad temper and worse luck.

In The Lord of the Rings, the hobbits can look back from dark present and darker futures to the homely joys of the Shire's rich simple life of family, friendships, cheer, and beer. Alas! Readers will find none of those here. What they will find is a well-woven web of doom, darkness, despair, and death. *The Children of Hurin* is a morbid, malignant masterpiece. Read it and weep. **Mike Foster**

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## Reviews: Medieval Manoeuvres

*Lee, Stuart D., and Elizabeth Solopova. The Keys of Middle-earth: Discovering Medieval Literature through the Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien. Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York, N. Y: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-1-4039-4672-0; ISBN-10: 1-4039-4672-8; ISBN-13: 978-1-4038-4671-3; and ISBN-10: 1-4039-4671-X.*

A work destined to play an important role in the lives of many Tolkien aficionados was released to little fanfare in 2005, and since then has not received the serious attention it richly deserves. *The Keys to Middle-earth* bridges the gap between two intertwined disciplines: Tolkien studies and medieval languages and literature. Tolkien, as undisputed master of the fantasy genre and gifted medieval scholar, would undoubtedly approve. Lee and Solopova's book will prove most useful for those who know Tolkien's work well, or are in the process of becoming acquainted with his books, but for whom the field of medieval studies remains a relative *terra incognita*. For them, the book's use of primary texts in various early languages, including Old English, Middle English, and Old Norse, may present a significant hurdle, but the rewards to be gained are ample.

In their introduction, the authors argue that the book can both "serve as an introduction to the range of medieval languages and literatures that Tolkien studied" yet also be "of interest to teachers and students of medieval literature" as what they term a "themed reader". The book's title correctly indicates that it can provide readers of Tolkien's works a means of unlocking the treasure hoard of the Middle Ages to which Tolkien devoted so much of his life. Its only limitation in this regard is its narrow focus on *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. An even more useful edition would include *The Silmarillion* and *The Children of Húrin*, and one of its authors has assured me that they would enjoy creating such a work if an audience exists. I write this review partly in hope of stimulating that readership.

The authors provide a lengthy and detailed introduction that discusses Tolkien's career as a medievalist, his fiction, and more importantly for those whom I see as the book's natural audience, it provides useful introductions to the three languages in which the medieval texts appear. Other sections explore such topics as "the theme of the quest," the epic, runes, and alliterative verse, but these will not prove as valuable as the true treasure itself: the brief sections of medieval texts presented in whole or part, coupled with the relevant passages from Tolkien's works. The medieval works presented include sections of the Old English poems *Beowulf*, *The Fight at Finnsburg*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Ruin*, *Solomon and Saturn II*, and *Maxims II*, as well as two prose pieces, *Cynewulf and Cyneheard* from The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Ælfric's *Homily on the Maccabees*. In the Middle English section, three major poetic works are featured: *Sir Orfeo*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (all of which Tolkien himself translated and are widely available to Tolkien's readership).

The least well known and most interesting texts presented are relevant passages from the Old Norse poems *Vǫluspá* and *Vafþrúðismál*. A comprehensive bibliography of scholarship and a useful index represent the final keys to unlocking the hidden wealth of Tolkien's erudite use of medieval literature, all of which Lee and Solopova generously provide. If you are a true adventurer in the realms of Faërie, you will seek these keys to the most valuable of hoarded treasures. **John Damon**

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## Review: In The Matter Of Roots

*Roots and Branches: Selected Papers on Tolkien by Tom Shippey. Illustrated by Anke Eissman. WalkingTree Publishers: 2007. ISBN 978 3 905703 05 4*

Thomas Honegger, the Series Editor, begins the Preface of *Roots and Branches* with a story - he missed much of a conference in Dublin in 1992 because he was so absorbed in reading the *The Road to Middle Earth*, by Tom Shippey. The papers in *Roots and Branches* are drawn from 25 years of Shippey's work on Tolkien, from 1982 onwards. Some are previously published articles; a number were first given as lectures or talks and have been revised for publication here. As Honegger comments: "We are grateful to Tom Shippey to the care and labour he devoted to this volume… and are proud to offer the reader a rich, varied and nourishing banquet of Tolkien-related essays." The only objection that can be made is that some of Shippey's fondly-remembered talks or articles are omitted – perhaps there may be a second volume in the future.

The book is in four parts. 'The Roots – Tolkien and his predecessors' contains essays showing the range of literature in which sources for or common themes in Tolkien's work may be found, ranging from the Beowulf poet to Wagner. 'Heartwood – Tolkien and Scholarship' considers Tolkien's work as an academic. The twelve chapters in these two parts draw on Shippey's own extensive knowledge of philology and of the ancient and medieval literatures of Northern Europe. He gives a clear and fascinating introduction to the sources which Tolkien knew well, and then shows how they appear in Tolkien's academic work.

In the third section, 'The Trunk', there are six articles on *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. Here Shippey shows the role played in Tolkien's creative work by literary and folk tradition. There is also a consideration of the common themes in Tolkien's writing and in the work of other contemporary authors. Social issues as well as literature play an important role; a chapter entitled 'Images of Class in Tolkien' gives much food for thought.

The final section, 'Twigs and Branches; Minor Works by Tolkien' includes one of the earliest pieces, written for *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1982 when *Mr. Bliss* was first published. *Mr. Bliss* has just reappeared, and if you don't already have a copy Shippey's review may well encourage you to go out and buy it. Having compared Mr. Bliss to Tom Kitten or Mr. Badger, Shippey notes: 'This is a classic like they don't write any more…' On a more serious matter the essay on Beorhtnoth treats a theme which appears in Tolkien's writing at various times in his life. Here Shippey refers to four works: *Farmer Giles of Ham, Leaf by Niggle, The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*, and *Smith of Wootton Major*: "all four create a dialogue between a real world and a fantasy world; all end up in giving permission in a sort of way to use fantasy; but in the process they all indicate a kind of argument *against using fantasy*." This is an example of the richness of Shippey's critique of Tolkien's work, in that it raises questions whilst giving answers.

Many concepts are introduced, one or two of which might be questioned. But overall this book is inspiring and enjoyable because Shippey shares so *many* ideas. In the Introduction he mentions, amongst other topics for future examination, Tolkien's literary relationships —particularly Victorian and Edwardian studies of folk- and fairy-tales—and Tolkien's continual re-writing of his own early work. He concludes the Introduction by showing how much Tolkien's work offers. "Once one starts recommending works on Tolkien," Shippey writes, "so many are the perspectives he opens that there is just no end to it. As the Old Norse hero said (slightly adapted) *orÞz Þiccir enn vant oss hváro*: 'each of us thinks there is more to be said.' And so there is, as twenty-five years have repeatedly shown me." To repeat Honegger's comment, this book is 'rich, varied and nourishing'. **Maggie Burns**

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## Commentary: Women, Oxford and Tolkien

*David Doughan*

Tolkien's attitude to women is generally assumed to be at best old-fashioned, not to say patriarchal or even misogynist. He did indeed make one or two pronouncements that are prayed in evidence, most notoriously in his letter to his son Michael, who was contemplating marriage in 1941, which contained such pronouncements as:

> ... it is [women's] gift to be receptive, stimulated, fertilized (in many other matters than the physical) by the male. Every teacher knows that. How quickly an intelligent woman can be taught, grasp his ideas, see his point - and how (with rare exceptions) they can go no further, when they leave his hand, or when they cease to take a personal interest in him.[1]

This was fairly typical for an Oxford man of the time; in fact, some other dons in Tolkien's circle were just as bad, if not worse. As Dorothy L. Sayers said of Lewis:

> One just has to accept that there is a complete blank in his mind where women are concerned. Charles Williams and his other married friends used to sit around him at Oxford and tell him so, but there really isn't anything to be done about it.[2]

To be fair, Oxford was not alone in this; Cambridge could be at least as bad. For example, Sir William Ridgeway, a candidate for Cambridge praelections 1906, was extremely doubtful about women students. He reckoned that the good-looking ones had an unfair advantage in the *viva*: one recent candidate had even gone on to marry her *viva* examiner, and 'those women researchers who do not get married seem to do nothing.' It will come as no surprise to learn that, like most Cambridge graduates until 1948, he was vehemently opposed to women being full members of the University, and to put him further in context, he believed that without compulsory Greek Cambridge would rapidly descend to the level of a 'glorified technical college' that might struggle to finance even a 'tripos in brewing'.[3]

Cambridge was indeed less than receptive to women, but Oxford was hardly better. Until the late19th century Oxford, like Cambridge, had been an exclusively male, even monastic, world; fellows originally had to take holy orders, and it was not until 1871 that, following parliamentary pressure, they were grudgingly permitted to marry. By then British women had already been campaigning for women's access to higher education for some time, a very slow process that bore fruit mainly outside Oxbridge, the lead being taken by Owens College, Manchester - although the real turning point was when London University admitted women to degrees in 1878, and most other non-Oxbridge universities followed suit. But Oxbridge held out. Still, as early as the 1860s various groups had started arranging classes for women taught by some of the more radical Oxford and Cambridge lecturers. To accommodate the young women who wanted to take advantage of this, houses, rather grandly called 'halls', were bought, and so women's colleges had their first beginning, most famously by the efforts of Emily Davies at Hitchin in 1867, an establishment which in 1873 moved to Girton, near Cambridge, to join Newnham Hall, which had been set up in 1871. Oxford at this stage lagged behind Cambridge. Women at Oxford had been allowed to sit some university examinations (though not take degrees) since the 1860s, but proposals for women's halls only came to fruition in 1879, when two halls were established. The reason for the delay was disagreement over religious affiliation. The foundation that became Lady Margaret Hall (named after the mother of Henry VII) was to be solidly Anglican, and a number of sponsors of women's education at Oxford, being radically minded, did not like this, so they independently set up what they called Somerville Hall (named after the 19th-century scientist Mary Somerville). Later in the 1890s these two were joined by two other women's colleges, St. Hilda's and St. Hugh's.

Each of these halls, or colleges, came to acquire a particular reputation. In her outstanding history of Somerville, Pauline Adams quotes a saying current in Oxford *ca*. 1930: 'Lady Margaret Hall for Ladies; St. Hugh's for Girls; St. Hilda's for Wenches; Somerville for Women.' [4] Somerville especially has always had a reputation for powerful women, its alumnae including Vera Brittain, Indira Gandhi, Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin, Winifred Holtby, Emma Kirkby, Marghanita Laski, Winnie Mandela, Iris Murdoch, Esther Rantzen, Eleanor Rathbone, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margaret Thatcher, and Shirley Williams.

Anyway, women, whether at Somerville or elsewhere, definitely had a physical presence in Oxford by the 1880s. However, this was not at all to the liking of the governing circles of the University. Considerable opposition to the presence of women remained, and the revered Dr Pusey of the Tractarian Movement spoke for many when he said in 1884 that the establishment of women's halls was one of the greatest misfortunes that had happened to Oxford even in his own time. One of the reasons for this was the assumption that women's brains just weren't up to it, and that it was a waste of time to send them to university. In the outside world the idea of women's higher education was seen as something of a joke, and was treated very lightly by, for example, Tennyson in *The Princess*, talking of 'prudes for proctors, dowagers for dons and sweet girl graduates'. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Princess Ida* also took a similar indulgent line. More seriously, in 1871 Ruskin, when giving a series of public lectures proclaimed: 'I cannot let the bonnets in on any conditions this term. The three public lectures will be chiefly on angles, prisms (without any prunes) and other such things of no use to the female mind'.[5] It was also asserted not only that women's brains might overheat, and that they would get brain fever, but that studying such things as the classics or mathematics would sap the energy they ought to be devoting to motherhood. When in 1890 Margaret Alford at Girton was bracketed in the Cambridge Tripos with the senior classic, and in mathematics Philippa Fawcett was ranked 'above the senior wrangler' (though neither of them could legally take Cambridge degrees) this did nothing to change anybody's ideas - not at Cambridge, and certainly not at Oxford. Oxford of

course went out of its way to take no notice of what happened at The Other Place; and as for non-Oxbridge institutions, the Oxford attitude was exemplified by Benjamin Jowett, the famous (or notorious) Master of Balliol. When the equally famous (outside Oxford) Professor Blackie of Edinburgh University said to him: 'Now you mustn't think too hardly of us, Master!' his reply was: 'We don't think of you at all.'[6] This attitude is not entirely dead at Oxford in the 21st century.

Nevertheless, Oxford was increasingly having to think about women, however reluctantly. The women's halls were making their presence felt in numerous ways, not least because of their zeal for learning , so much greater than that of many of the men. The women had a point to prove, and they went out of their way to prove it. They were helped in this by the restrictions placed on them both by the university and by their own institutions. The university wanted to keep them as far as possible from having contact with male students, and the proponents of women's education were equally happy to avoid the least pretext for implications of scandal. Women were not allowed male visitors. They had to be chaperoned at all times. Additionally, they were supposed to keep a low profile in public, to be ladylike, demure, quiet, unassertive. And of course, when male undergraduates as part of a rag attacked the women's halls, it was the women who were gated as a result. At least this discrimination meant that, compared to the young men, the young women had very few distractions, and could actually do some work.

Then came the First World War. Increasing numbers of dons and male students volunteered or were conscripted for military service, and Oxford temporarily became a less overwhelmingly male place. Also, Somerville's buildings were taken over for the duration as a temporary hospital for servicemen, and Somerville women were moved to Oriel College. Formerly, they had felt that they were on the fringe of the university, but now they were physically in the heart of it. Then early in 1918 women (admittedly not all women, but a substantial number) were given the parliamentary vote. Women also could stand for parliament, and did; in 1919 one woman, Lady Astor, became an MP. Also the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 meant that women were no longer prevented from serving on juries, acting as magistrates or indeed entering the legal profession. And in 1920, after much agonising, Oxford University finally admitted women to membership of the university. They could now take not only examinations, but degrees, and could now write 'B.A. Oxon.' after their names. In fact Oxford almost immediately repented of its boldness, fearing an exodus of men to Cambridge, and a quota was placed on women students. Also, women were supposed to keep strictly the low profile they had grudgingly maintained in the 19th century. As Vera Chapman ('Belladonna Took'), who went up to Lady Margaret Hall in 1918, put it:

> Our colleges were rigidly cloistered. One man, and one man only, stood as guardian at our door – the porter – and he might admit fathers, or uncles, or brothers, but not, *not* cousins. … If one of us wished to entertain a young man to tea, she required first a letter from a parent to the Principal - then a public sitting-room in the college must be booked, and then a senior member (or 'Don') must be engaged to join the party and act as chaperone. For we were still emerging slowly from the 'chaperone age'.[7]

They were emerging far too slowly for many of the post-war women, at least some of whom had done war service of a dangerous and demanding nature and many of whom had lived independently. They were now expected to return to the pre-war standards, keep their heads down, and accept meekly what was handed out from above. In fact even before the war, by no means all women students had been as biddable as this; and now that they had won the right to equality, both within the university and to a limited extent outside it, they were minded to express their equality positively, or, in the case of Somerville, combatively. Somerville always had a 'going-down' or end-of-year play, and in 1921 this culminated in a song to the tune of the old German carol '*Tannenbaum*'. The song concluded with the following lines:

> Then let us raise the song on high
> All law and order we defy
> With strident voice and laughter clear
> We'll keep the red rag raging here.[8]

The language here is remarkable; as well as flaunting a menstrual reference, it deliberately claims the word 'strident', usually applied as a derogatory term to feminists; and it may well be that many of the women present would hear an echo from suffrage days of Cicely Hamilton's words to Ethel Smyth's *March of the Women*:

> Firm in reliance

Laugh a defiance
Laugh in hope, for sure is the end.

Of course a fair number of Somervillians were seriously stroppy feminists. A widespread attitude was later expressed by an old Somervillian, Winifred Holtby, novelist and prominent member of the campaigning feminist Six Point Group:

> I am a feminist because I dislike everything that feminism implies. I desire an end of the whole business, the demands for equality, the suggestions of sex warfare, the very name of feminist. I want to be about the work in which my real interests lie, the study of inter-race relationships, the writing of novels and so forth. But while the inequality exists, while injustice is done and opportunity denied to the great majority of women, I shall have to be a feminist with the motto Equality First.[9]

So these were the sort of women Tolkien was returning to in Oxford. I don't think there is any information about his relations with women (apart from Edith) in his undergraduate days, though while at King Edward's School he spoke, apparently humorously, in a debate on a motion supporting militant suffragettes[10]. At that time the issue of women's rights was generally regarded as a bit of a laugh; the suffragette was a figure of fun, and students were always on hand to try and disrupt suffrage meetings. Militant suffrage activities seem to have been regarded as a sort of rag, on the same level as highjacking a bus, which may have been what attracted Tolkien's interest when a boathouse was burned in 1913; he and Allen Barnett were photographed among the crowd looking at the ruins.[11] Before the war, women at Oxford, by and large, were taken seriously only by women - with, as someone said, rare exceptions.

However, Tolkien had been eased into post-war Oxford and the changing status of its women immediately after the war, when he was working at the *New English Dictionary*. To boost the exiguous family income, he engaged in private tutoring, and was an immediate success with the women's colleges, especially Lady Margaret Hall and St. Hugh's, first because they were lacking in expert tutors of Old English, and also because, as he was a married man, with wife and children in residence, the students did not need chaperoning when they went to his house. Thus his popularity with women students at this time was understandable, but it is also remarkable that when he returned to Oxford in 1926, as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon, he again had a positive reception from his women students, not only because he took his work as a teacher seriously, but also because he was perceived as being notably sympathetic to women undergraduates, which was somewhat unusual among dons at this time. One of his final year students was one Mary Challans, who later achieved fame as Mary Renault, and who was at that stage in her life highly interested in things medieval; she obviously got on well with him at the time, and in much later life they shared an appreciation of each other's fiction. To give some idea of how Tolkien was regarded by his women students, there is the case of Mary Renault's close friend Kathleen Abbott who in 1990 was still referring to 'darling Tolkien'.[12] Then there are the cases of Mary Salu and especially Simonne D'Ardenne - two students of Tolkien who were obviously among the 'rare exceptions' he mentioned in that notorious letter, since when they left his hand they went on to make highly successful careers as philologists and medievalists, and indeed became great friends of the Tolkien family. In addition, Simonne D'Ardenne, who was involved in the Belgian resistance during the war, was instrumental in getting the University of Liège to award Tolkien an honorary doctorate in 1954.[13] And of course, Priscilla, Tolkien's daughter, studied at Oxford, with her father's active encouragement. She recalls that he believed completely in higher education for girls, and it was a source of pride and pleasure that he had a daughter as well as sons at Oxford. [14]

So Tolkien was by no means a misogynist, or even a male chauvinist pig, which is what makes that bizarre letter to Michael so uncharacteristic. It really does contain a whole bunch of received clichés on the relationship between the sexes, and you can almost hear the formulas clicking into place:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence.[15]

Higamous hogamous, woman's monogamous -
Hogamous higamous, man is polygamous.[16]

It even recalls the old music hall joke about the order of the marriage service: the couple go up the aisle to the altar, and everybody sings a hymn. Aisle - altar - hymn. (Say it aloud.)

Much of this reflects Tolkien's Catholicism, especially when dealing with man's polygamous nature, which can only be done within marriage by 'great mortification'. Having been brought up as a Catholic in the 1940s and 1950s, I have experience of this attitude; before Vatican II priests were very big on mortification, in a way that only Opus Dei really seems to be now. Young lads especially were instructed to control their sinful urges by means of this same 'mortification' for the sake of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who looked sorrowfully on adolescent boyhood.. But all the same there were areas outside sexuality where mortification, or restriction, or even compromise, were ruled out, and these included a man's right to go off and spend the evening with his friends, abandoning his wife who had to stay and look after home and children. [17] In fact, over the years, Tolkien's position on this became rather more nuanced, as can be seen from his works.

The most obvious statement in *The Lord of the Rings* of the male-female contrast is in the case of the Ents and Entwives, into which, as Tolkien put it 'has crept a mere piece of experience, the difference of the "male" and "female" attitudes to wild things, the difference between unpossessive love and gardening.' Or, it could be said, gatherer-hunter civilisation as against horticulture and agriculture; or yet the Entwives doing the work, while the Ents go gallivanting round the countryside. Tolkien considered himself to be a bit of an anarchist (though not in Spanish Civil War terms), and felt that most men are similarly inclined, glossing over the fact that women are left literally holding the baby and usually cleaning up after the men. And yet, as I've said, in his latter years he seems to have seen things rather differently. For example, it's difficult to imagine the man who wrote that letter to Michael quoting with approval Simone de Beauvoir, as he did in a 1960s television interview. Also in about 1960 Tolkien started one of his most interesting (and frustratingly abandoned) stories: *Indis i-Kiryamo, The Mariner's Wife*, or *Aldarion and Erendis.*

In this story we have two very self-willed characters who love each other but whose temperament eventually leads to a tragic separation: Aldarion, the restless voyager, away from home far more than present at it; and Erendis, the stay-at-home who increasingly comes to resent her husband's long absences and keeps their daughter from him. And although Erendis is portrayed as unnecessarily stubborn, it is Aldarion who appears even more at fault, not only for leaving behind his wife and daughter, but neglecting the rule of Númenor at home for adventures abroad. Male and female stereotypes are far more subtly expressed, as in the description of the society of women at Emerië, 'the cool, quiet gentle life ... without interruptions or alarms. Boys, like Îbal, shouted. Men rode up blowing horns at strange hours, and were fed with great noise. They begot children and left them in the care of women when they were troublesome'. This resonates very much with E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, contrasting the woman-dominated family with the masculine world of 'telegrams and anger'. But, unlike the Entwives, Erendis does not go in for gardening. She it is who loves trees for their own sake, while to Aldarion they are mainly material for shipbuilding. And Tolkien puts into the mouth of Erendis, in an extraordinary address to her daughter, sentiments that are difficult to distinguish from the feminism of the 1970s and 1980s, accusing men of simply exploiting things, animals and people for their own ends and reacting violently 'when they become aware, suddenly, that there are other wills in the world beside their own'. She ends with this admonition:

> Therefore do not bend, Ancalimë. Once bend a little, and they will bend you further until you are bowed down . Sink your roots into the rock, and face the wind, though it blow away all your leaves.[18]

The remarkable figure here is reminiscent of the birch in *Smith of Wootton Major*, a book Tolkien would have been working on at about this time.

This has come a long way from Ents and Entwives, and even further from that letter to Michael. It is also a long way from Oxford, both culturally and physically. Tolkien was finally at this period beginning to do what Edith wanted. They spent increasing amounts of time at Bournemouth, and finally moved there permanently in 1968, spending the last short years of Edith's life there; Tolkien at last mortifying not his flesh, but his desire for exclusive male company. Still, after Edith's death he moved back to Oxford.

So, finally, I have to say that as usual with Tolkien, his attitude to most things was much more complex than it appears at first sight, and this applies especially to women, where his perception seems to have developed remarkably over the years. The same can only be said of Oxford with considerable reservation, although in recent years it has learnt by and large to accept the presence of women on equal terms with a good grace.

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1. J.R.R. Tolkien *Letters* p.49
2 *Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers* v.4 London: Dorothy L.Sayers Society, 2000 *(Letter to Barbara Reynolds 21 December 1955)*
3. Quoted in the *Times Literary Supplement* 7 October 2005
4. Adams, Pauline *Somerville for Women* Oxford: OUP, 1996
5. For this and other historical information on Oxford see: Brittain, Vera *The Women at Oxford* London:Harrap, 1960
6. Benson, E.F. *As we were* London: Longmans, Green, 1930 pp 147-8
7. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference* (1992) pp12-13
8. Quoted in: Leonardi, Susan *Dangerous by Degrees* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989
9. Article in *The Yorkshire Post*, quoted in: Brittain,Vera *Testament of a Friendship* London:Macmillan, 1940 (p.134)
10. Scull, Christina and Hammond, Wayne *J.R.R.Tolkien Companion and Guide: Chronology* London: Harper Collins, 2006 ( p.16)
11. "Boats and boathouse destroyed by fire at Oxford", *The Daily Graphic*, 4 June 1913, p.3. My thanks to John Garth for this reference.
12. For the experiences of Mary Renault and her contemporaries, see: Sweetman, David *Mary Renault: a Biography* London: Chatto and Windus, 1993
13. Information on Mary Salu and Simonne D'Ardenne from the *Tolkien Family Album*
14. Quoted in: Scull, Christina and Hammond, Wayne *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* London: Harper Collins, 2006 (v.2 p.1111)
15. Byron *Don Juan Canto I*
16. Attributed to William James
17. Carpenter, Humphrey *Biography* p. 159.
18. *Unfinished tales,* p.20

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## Commentary: Demons, Choices, and Grace in *The Lord of the Rings*

*Chad Chisholm*

After Frodo, Sam, and Gollum climb the stairs of Cirith Ungol, Gollum disappears and Sam asks a metafictional question: "Don't the great tales never end?" Tolkien puts into Frodo's mouth a wonderful answer: "No, they never end as tales…But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended." Frodo's comments transcend Tolkien's sprawling invention of Middle-earth and speak towards an element that draws us to all the great tales: something that *transcends* the story itself.

In his lecture *On Sorcerers and Men*, Michael Drout suggests that the ascension of fantasy within popular literature is that fantasy is concerned largely with themes that are beyond the commonplace. Theologically, the transcendent lies beyond time and the universe; in Kant's 'theory of knowledge' it lies beyond the limits of human experience. Existential questions such as 'What is the meaning of life and death?' 'What duty does a society have to offer mercy to defeated and dangerous foes?' and 'How does a descent person coexist in a world of pain and suffering?' have existed since the time of Socrates, *transcending* every time and culture. Drout asserts that as modernist writers of the early 20th century began to veer from these transcendent themes, Tolkien and other writers took them up, which led directly to the rise of George Orwell's political fables *Animal Farm* and *1984*, and to the popularity of *The Lord of the Rings*[1].

Two transcendent themes in *Lord of the Rings* are the *diabolical* and *grace*. The scene inside Mount Doom at the end of *The Return of the King* contains both in the moment when Frodo refuses to toss the Ring of Power into the flames. Here Frodo and Sam are on the "brink of the chasm," and when Sam cries out to Frodo, Frodo turns and makes this speech in "a voice clearer and more powerful than Sam had ever heard" Frodo use:

> I have come…But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!

Tolkien chooses these words carefully, and "I choose not" and "I will not" convey the theme of *choice*. The themes of diabolical and grace transcend Frodo, Gollum, and all peoples of Middle-earth and the *choices* they make. The characters of Middle-earth cannot evade choice. When Éomer asks the trio of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli, "What doom do you bring out of the North?" Aragorn answers with, "The doom of choice." The enemies of Middle-earth thrive on this ineluctability. Saruman tries to

persuade Gandalf to join him with, "I said *we*, for *we* it may be, if you will join with me" and "This then is one choice before you, before us."

Considering *choice*, Drout asks if Frodo really the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*? From Frodo's words inside Mount Doom, it is easy to conclude that Frodo is not a hero, but *choice* is weighed differently in myth and literature. Tolkien often emphasizes the inward thought such as when he tells us that the bravest thing Bilbo ever did was not stealing from Smaug, or riddling with him in his lair, but Bilbo's *decision* to face the dragon. Frodo's and Gollum's decisions concerning the Ring are insignificant compared with their choices, and both choices are freely evil ones. But Tolkien gives his gift of *grace* to Frodo and withholds it from Gollum. Tolkien bases his choice on the *whole* of the choices of his characters. Our modern sensibilities would perhaps reward Gollum with a promotion, a salary increase, and floor seats to the New York Nicks, but not Tolkien! This is not his *choice*.

Although Drout discusses *grace*, he hardly touches on the diabolical in *Lord of the Rings*; however, the diabolical has quite a hold on Western literature and art. The diabolical has various names in Western culture, but its shadow has loomed often in lives of men and has shaped geopolitical events. In 1642, the Puritan wood-turner Nehemiah Wallington took up arms in the English Civil War against an 'Antichrist' spirit manifested in the form of Charles I. From the time of the *Beowulf* poet to the present day, the diabolical has been a cultural reality. In the Italian Renaissance, the diabolical was redefined by Luca Signorelli who painted his 'Deeds of the Antichrist' on the walls of the San Brizio chapel in Orvieto, Italy. On this wall, Signorelli transforms his Antichrist into a handsome duplicate of Christ adorned in a burgundy robe. But rather than miracles, destruction and spectacular miseries surround this Antichrist who listens intently to the whisperings of a horned, slouched figure[2].

Signorelli's representation adds a duality to the diabolical: a primary and secondary manifestation. The horned figure represents a diabolical that exists infinitely within the universe, a force which, like Milton's Satan, if it cannot have Paradise, will unrepentantly impose "a hell of heaven" on everyone. This diabolical is in search of souls, but does not want disciples…or not for long. In his *Screwtape Letters*, dedicated to Tolkien, C.S. Lewis's Screwtape gives an excellent analysis of diabolical desires:

> To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense…We want cattle who can finally become food…We want to suck in…We are empty and would be filled…Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself.[3]

Screwtape's analysis is similar to Tolkien's Shelob, the giant spider:

> But still she was there, who was there before Sauron…and she served none but herself, drinking the blood of Elves and Men, bloated and grown fat with endless brooding on her feasts…for all living things were her food, and her vomit darkness.

But the primary diabolical depends on those who can be led and freely *choose* to commit diabolical acts. Signorelli fashioned his Antichrist after Jesus to portray him with a higher nature than his deeds convey, monstrous only because he is so enthralled with the horned figure's whisperings that he remains unshaken by his deeds. While he retains the origins of his human nature, Signorelli's Antichrist has chosen to accept deeds that his humanity abhors, but, in the words of Macbeth, he has decided that "To know [his] deed, 'twere best not know [himself]." This is his *choice*.

While Sauron is Tolkien's horned figure, the Ring of Power is the *diabolical* that Frodo and others face. Revealed in its inscription 'in the darkness bind them' in Mordor where 'the Shadows lie' indicates that the Ring's forger has little desire to be the ruler of Middle-earth. Mordor is dark and desolate, devoid of beauty; other than merciless obedience to the 'Lidless Eye,' there is little order. This separates Sauron from Hitler: Sauron is not interested in being Middle-earth's next manager or emperor, but its devourer. Sauron comes forth from Mordor not to cleanse Middle-earth or exploit it, but to 'bind' it, vanquishing all traces that make it beautiful and free. Control of Middle-earth for Sauron is a means, not an end, which is especially clear when the Lord of the Nazgûl, Sauron's mirror reflection, warns Éowyn:

> Come not between the Nazgûl and his prey! Or he will not slay thee in thy turn. He will bear thee away to the houses of lamentation, beyond all darkness, where thy flesh shall be devoured, and thy shriveled mind be left naked to the Lidless Eye.

Killing Éowyn and mutilating her flesh is a means for the Lord of the Nazgûl, but his desired ends are more: to crush her mind and spirit, which is common of the diabolical in literature.

The ravenous diabolical in *The Lord of the Rings* transcends into modern literature nowhere more vividly than in George Orwell's *1984*. Winston Smith's world of Oceania is Orwell's dry, stale Mordor: a land of hate and fearful obedience ruled by its own 'Lidless Eye.' Orwell's novel has obvious similarities to Tolkien's with Big Brother and Sauron, and O'Brien and the Lord of the Nazgûl as their mirror manifestations. But *Lord of the Rings* and *1984* emphasize the *choice* of their protagonists. As Tolkien makes it clear with Bilbo, Orwell emphasizes Winston's inward choice more than his actions. In Frodo's speech at the 'brink of the chasm' at the fires under Mount Doom, when he says he does "not choose now to do what [he] came to do," Tolkien makes it clear that Frodo's decision comes not from an addiction to the Ring. After all his struggles against not only external evils such as spiders and orcs, but against the influence of the Ring, Frodo chooses not to save Middle-earth, but to freely take the Ring and doom Middle-earth. While Winston's choice in *1984* cannot lead to the fall of Big Brother, his choice is the same. Towards the end of section Two, Winston concludes that while the Thought Police can force him to confess, he decides that if he "can feel [that] staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result," then he will have the final moral victory. However, once inside Room 101, Winston fails as Frodo fails to do what he knows he must. Instead Winston, in a sudden ebb from his panic, freely chooses to "interpose another human being…between himself and the rats" he fears[4].

Both Winston and Frodo are on a moral quest, and while both stood on their own 'chasm' and failed, are they are both failures? Winston fails because, like Othello, he hardly knows himself anymore: he has been transformed into an orc for Ingsoc. While the outcome is better in *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo also fails. What makes Winston's and Frodo's failures most devastating is their occurrence near the brink of victory, Frodo at Mount Doom, and Winston at the door of Room 101. On the other side of the spectrum, the surrender is all the more diabolically delectable. In C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, added to a later edition of *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape concludes his address to the graduates of the Tempter's Training College by proclaiming proudly, "Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps on the altar."[3] If O'Brien is the narrator of *1984*, he is not telling us the story of a man broken mentally or emotionally, but The Party's greatest convert story: how Winston learned to make "a small effort of will," the "act of submission…the price of sanity."[4]

Nowhere in any adventure is a hero in more danger of losing his mission and himself as when his quest is almost complete. But the consequences of Frodo's failure are far more than Winston's: Frodo's failure feeds the opposite hunger and makes the ravenous appetite of the diabolical Sauron more dangerous to Middle-earth. When Éowyn stands before the Lord of the Nazgûl to mount a heroic defence, far from planting fear in her enemy, she instead further sparks his diabolic creativity. The Lord of the Nazgûl imagines her "mind" brought in its "shriveled" state before Sauron for the Dark Lord's pleasure. If Éowyn's pure heroism cannot thwart a diabolical imagination, then Frodo's willing failure is certain to cause its sheer ebullience. The devil does not rejoice when a sinner loses his faith: he rejoices most when one who has endured all the persecutions and exiles looks down the lion's throat and quits.

However, *1984* and *Lord of the Rings* have once difference: the *choice* not of the protagonists, but of the authors. Winston Smith and Frodo Baggins both come face to face with the primary diabolical. Frodo carries the addictive shadow of Sauron to be destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom, but the further Frodo carries the Ring, the more he is barraged with its whispers. Winston is strapped into the torturous bed while O'Brien, with his own methods, opens Winston's 'shriveled mind' and leaves it 'naked to the Lidless Eye' of Big Brother. Both endure uncommon suffering with a degree of courage and dignity, but in the end choose to surrender themselves—mind, body, and soul—to that heinous force. In the face of such a diabolical force, the consequences of surrender are direr than a moral compromise or even a tragedy. Othello dies after recognizing his deeds and inflicts justice on himself, regaining his dignity. However, Winston and Frodo have lost more: they have lost *themselves*. But Frodo receives a gift from Tolkien that Orwell could not give Winston: *grace*.

It is tempting to blame Frodo for his weakness, but all should bear in mind Aragorn's admonishment to Merry who is upset with Pippin who touched the palantíri:

> If you had been the first to lift the Orthanc-stone, and not he, how would it be now?...You might have done worse. Who can say?

Frodo's task is one where many could do worse. Frodo is on a mission to bear the Ring of Power though Middle-earth to the fires of Mount Doom to free Middle-earth from the 'shadow' of evil. Frodo is the hero until the end when, with the fires of Mount Doom at his feet and Nazgûl flying overhead, with the end of his quest in sight, Frodo makes an admission not that he cannot surrender the Ring, but that he *will not*. Frodo here loses his status as hero, but Tolkien's grace restores him. As Drout points out, when Gollum tears the Ring from Frodo's finger and then falls into the chasm, this is not because Tolkien is making Gollum the hero, but it is Tolkien's gift for a hero who has suffered so much for so long. It is especially fitting for Tolkien to use Gollum to deliver grace for Frodo because he has often given grace to Gollum, sparing his life, and this mercy makes it possible for Gollum to be at the cracks of Mount Doom at the end when Frodo has his crucial moment.

Grace is Tolkien's constant, often undeserved gift. Aside from Frodo's grace to Gollum, grace is ever present in *The Lord of the Rings* such as the Rohirrim's mercy to the Hillmen after Helm's Deep and Gandalf's attempts to sway Saruman at Orthanc. Grace is often discussed, but not always understood. The best example is in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus tells a parable that makes little economic sense — the story of the landowner and the workers in the vineyard. In the story, the landowner hires men one morning to work in his vineyard, and promises them a *denarius* for their wages. Three hours later, the landowner hires others to work in the vineyard, and every three hours after that he hired more men to work in the vineyard. When evening came, the landowner called all the workers and paid them: all the workers, from the ones who started in the morning to those who were hired at the eleventh hour, were paid the *denarius* offered to the early workers. The parable explains that grace is not something calculated, contracted, or even earned: it is a *gift*.[5]

As Paul explains in his legalese letter to the Romans, the gift of Christ and grace is necessary because salvation is otherwise impossible. In the same way, grace is necessary for Frodo because otherwise his task is impossible. Before the climax of Tolkien's long novel, Frodo has faced so many trials and struggles, including separation from his friends, the loss of Gandalf, and the mines of Moria, all for this moment so Frodo could bring Sauron's ring to the one place in Middle-earth where its destruction is possible. No other character in *The Lord of the Rings*—not Aragorn, Galadriel, Gandalf, not even Sam—could have brought the Ring of Power so far. Yes, Frodo does fail. Worse than failure, as Frodo faces the chasm inside Mount Doom, he has decided, now and forever, to join himself to the very evil he wished to destroy. Like Orwell's Winston, Frodo has lost himself. It is grace that saves Frodo and Middle-earth from the diabolical Sauron. But the fact that Frodo needs help to do what he has come to do does not diminish him in Tolkien's eyes. As Gandalf says to Bilbo at the end of his own adventure:

> You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins…but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!

Gandalf's words are a great comfort to Bilbo and all of Tolkien's characters. Tolkien's little hobbits find courage within themselves and strength that they thought they never had. However, Tolkien never intended these little Halflings to defy the Dark Lord and save Middle-earth single-handedly, and they don't need to. For Winston in *1984*, grace does not exist because Orwell failed to provide it. Winston can only place his hope in man, but towards the novel's climax, he can only put faith in himself that "To die hating them, that was freedom." Orwell creates a world where only man, like the coral in the glass, is small, delicate, and alone. And this is the choice of the authors that makes Orwell's *1984* different from *Lord of the Rings*: Frodo Baggins and Tolkien's other hobbits don't have Winston's pressure. No matter their dangers, fears, or triumphs, Tolkien's hobbits have the comfort of knowing that they are only 'quite little fellows' in a much larger scheme.

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## Commentary: Tolkien's Birmingham

*Bob Blackham*

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, who preferred to be called Ronald, had Birmingham roots and lived for much of his early life in and around that city. His father, Arthur Tolkien, came from Moseley, and his mother Mabel from King's Heath. He was, however, born far away: Mabel and Arthur left for South Africa where Arthur had a job in a bank. They were married in Cape Town in 1891 and Ronald was born in Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State, on 3 January, 1892.

Ronald's brother Hilary was born on 17 February 1894: Mabel and her two sons returned to England in the spring of 1895 and stopped with her parents in Ashfield Road, King's Heath. That November Arthur Tolkien became ill with rheumatic fever: he remained in poor health for some months, had a severe haemorrhage on 14 February 1896 and died the next day.

In the summer of 1896 Mabel Tolkien and the two brothers rented 5 Gracewell Cottages on Wake Green Road in the hamlet of Sarehole on the rural edge of Birmingham. This was a golden time in Ronald Tolkien's life. He was taught by his mother and there were wonderful places to see and explore in the countryside around the hamlet.

In a rare interview in 1966 in *The Guardian* (reproduced in *The Guardian* in 1991), Tolkien described how important Sarehole had been in the development of his fiction:

> It was a kind of lost paradise… There was an old mill that really did grind corn with two millers, a great big pond with swans on it, a sandpit, a wonderful dell with flowers, a few old-fashioned village houses and, further away, a stream with another mill… I could draw you a map of every inch of it. I loved it with an (intense) love…

Further on he re-emphasizes the importance of his childhood memories of the area:

> I was brought up in considerable poverty, but I was happy running about in that country. I took the idea of the hobbits from the village people and children…

This love of a more simple life was very much to Tolkien's liking and re-emerged many years later in his description of the hobbits as a people in *The Lord Of The Rings*.

> …for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools.


***Left**: looking up Wake Green Road towards Moseley Village at the hamlet of Sarehole, Gracewell Cottages are on the left hand side. **Right**: Sarehole Mill.*

While living at Sarehole, Mabel, Ronald and Hilary would have walked to King's Heath to see her parents in Ashfield Road and they most likely walked up Green Hill Road in Moseley. The memory of these walks must have been in his mind when writing the chapter *Three is Company* in *The Fellowship of the Ring* as the three Hobbits, Frodo, Sam and Pippin pass through Green Hill Country on their journey to Crickhollow.

**Moseley and King's Heath**

In 1900 Ronald passed his examination for King Edward's School in New Street in Birmingham city centre, but travelling from Sarehole was a problem. So the family packed their belongings and most likely loaded them onto a horse-drawn cart or even a handcart and travelled up Wake Green Road to Moseley Village, where Mabel had rented a house. This was on the hill leading out of the village towards King's Heath and was on tram route, where the steam-powered trams ploughed back and forth, in and out of the city centre. The houses on the route were blighted because of the noise and smoke, so the rents were discounted: no bad thing for Mabel, who by this time had been a widow for nearly four years. But there was another reason for the location. Just before leaving Sarehole, Mabel had converted to the Roman Catholic religion, and the church at St Anne's Alcester Street was a short tram ride away. Ronald did not like the house in Moseley. He thought it 'dreadful', and Moseley itself, with the noise, smoky chimneys, horse-drawn traffic and lots of people was such a change from his rural haunts.


***Left**: A steam tram in Moseley Village outside the Fighting Cocks*. ***Right**: The Moseley Road leading towards Birmingham city centre. This would have been Ronald's route to school.*

Tolkien's time in Moseley was short, however. The family soon moved again, to Westfield Road on the Grange Estate in King's Heath. This house backed on to the railway line and looked across fields to two grand mansions, Highbury and Uffculme. Coal was King in those days, and coal trucks from the South Wales coalfields passed through King's Heath Station a short way from their house. The strange-sounding names on the trucks led to Ronald's discovery of the Welsh language.


***Left**: The now lost King's Heath railway station.* ***Right**: The inside of The Oratory old church*

By then the Tolkiens were attending the small Catholic church of St Dunstan's, on the corner of Station Road and Westfield Road. The church was a small iron building with a pine-board interior, opened in 1896. But in 1902, they moved again, this time to Oliver Road, Edgbaston (the house now long gone as a result of road redevelopment). Religion, once again, played a big factor, for the Birmingham Oratory Church was a short walk away.

**Edgbaston and Rednal**

The Birmingham Oratory Church was the first English community of the Congregation of the Oratory, the order started in Rome by St. Philip Neri in the 16th century. This community was founded by John Henry Newman in 1848 and moved to the present site on the Hagley Road in 1852.

***Left**: The Hagley Road, Edgbaston, with a horse drawn bus coming down the road, just opposite the Plough and Harrow hotel with the Oratory community just behind the bus.**Right**: Beatrice Suffield's house in Stirling Road as it is today. The Tolkien brothers lived in the attic rooms at the top of the house, which would usually have been servants' quarters.*

In 1904 Mabel became ill with diabetes and spent some time in hospital. In those days the only known remedy for illnesses such as diabetes was thought to be fresh air. So the family moved once again, to Fern Cottage in the large grounds of Oratory House in Rednal, just outside Birmingham. Oratory House itself stands on the wooded slopes of Rednal Hill, part of the Lickey Hills and was used as a retreat by members of the Oratory community.

But after a wonderful summer in the woods and fields of the Lickey Hills and the glorious colours of the trees in the autumn, Mabel's diabetes overcame her and she died in the November. After a short while Ronald and Hilary returned to Edgbaston, to live with their aunt Beatrice Suffield in Stirling Road, a short distance from the Oratory. Living on the other side of the road was the widow of the locally famous surgeon, Dr Joseph Sampson Gamgee. He founded the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund in 1873, which helped its members with hospital bills, as it still does today. He also invented Gamgee tissue, a cotton wound-dressing. He died in 1886 but his name lives on as a major character in *The Lord of the Rings*.

At the end of Stirling Road stands a tall chimney. But this is not your common circular brick chimney but a beautiful Italianate structure with ornamental cream brickwork built in 1862. Standing next to the chimney were the boiler house, engine room and workshops of the Edgbaston Water Works. This would have been a busy place at the time when the Tolkien brothers lived in Edgbaston, with much horse drawn traffic coming and going. The carts would have been carrying coal, most likely from the canal a short distance away, to feed the ever-hungry boilers that supplied steam for the beam engines that pumped the water. From outside the great chimney would have sometimes belched black smoke and the sound of the engines pumping would have been felt and heard. A short distance further down the aptly named Waterworks Road, just before the junction of Monument Road, stands a second tower - but this is a true tower in every sense. This beautiful jewel of architecture was built in brick in 1758 for one Humphrey Perrott, next to his hunting lodge.


***Left**: Duchess Road, with (rare) motor car. **Right**: A modern view of the Two Towers with Perrott's Folly in front and the chimney of Edgbaston Waterworks in the background.*

The tower, known as Perrott's Folly, is 96 feet tall, and has a spiral staircase of 139 steps, with small rooms on each floor. It the later part of the 19th century the tower became one of the world's first weather stations under the guidance of the pioneering meteorologist, A. Follett Osler. It must have been a mysterious place at night during this period with lighted windows at all hours through the evening and night as weather readings were being taken. The two towers – the waterworks chimney and Perrott's Folly - are locally believed to be Minas Morgul and Minas Tirith but Tolkien himself was very ambiguous about which pair of towers are commemorated in *The Two Towers*.

While living in Stirling Road, Ronald would most likely have walked past a Victorian public house on the corner of Monument Road and the Hagley Road as he went to and from school. The public house is called the Ivy Bush and this would reappear many years later - in Hobbiton.

In 1908 Ronald and Hilary moved from Stirling Road to into lodgingas at one Mrs Faulkner's house in Duchess Road. Living there at the time was Edith Bratt, another orphan. Romance started to blossom between sixteen-year-old Ronald and Edith, then nineteen.

They most likely would have gone for walks around Edgbaston Reservoir, a short walk from Duchess Road, which in those days was like an inland seaside attraction. It had a band stand, rowing boats for hire, and even beaches.

This relationship was frowned on by Father Francis Morgan – parish priest at the Oratory as well as the boys' guardian - and he had Hilary and Ronald moved out of Duchess Road into a house in Highfield Road just over the road from the Oratory, presumably so he could keep an eye on them. This was to be Ronald's last Birmingham address. While he was living at this house, Father Francis banned Ronald from pursuing his relationship with Edith, who moved to Cheltenham.

But before she left, she and Ronald met by chance, one lunchtime, at the Prince of Wales public house in Moseley Village. The tale now moves away from the Birmingham area as Ronald went up to Oxford. As soon as he attained his majority, at the age of 21, Tolkien felt that Father Francis' strictures no longer applied, and proposed to Edith in a letter. She accepted (a complicated matter, as she was at the time engaged to someone else). Ronald finished at Oxford in the summer of 1915, by which time the Great War was raging. Ronald joined the Lancashire Fusiliers, but he and Edith were married in the spring of 1916.

***Left**: The bandstand and boathouse at Edgbaston Reservoir. **Right**: The Plough and Harrow*

The couple returned to Birmingham in the June and stayed overnight at the Plough and Harrow hotel just over the road from the Oratory.

Ronald was most likely on embarkation leave as he was shortly to go the Western Front and it would be nice to think that they were returning to the places of their childhood sweetheart days. They stayed in room 116: a Blue Plaque records it.

*Bob Blackham is a noted expert on Tolkien's Birmingham connections and an obsessive collector of old postcards.*

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## Commentary: John Ronald's Schooldays

*Maggie Burns*

When you think about Tolkien's Birmingham you may well think of Sarehole, and of the annual weekend at Sarehole Mill - this year on 17-18 May. Two other places in Birmingham should also be remembered as they were vitally important to Tolkien's life and to his career; the Oratory Church in Edgbaston, and King Edward's School.

Tolkien was a pupil at King Edward's from 1900 to 1911 (ref. 1) with a short break in the summer of 1902 when he attended the Catholic grammar school of St. Philip's in Edgbaston. Studying at King Edward's he gained the scholarship which took him to Oxford University. University education at that time was still a rare privilege. Without a scholarship only the children of rich parents could hope for that opportunity. King Edward's gave the kind of education which meant that a number of its pupils each year gained exhibitions or scholarships enabling them to study at Oxford or Cambridge.

King Edward's was founded by Edward VI in 1552, and for centuries was Birmingham's 'free grammar school' (for boys). It stood in the lower part of New Street in the centre of Birmingham. The building Tolkien knew was designed by Sir Charles Barry and built in 1836, beautiful, as Tolkien wrote to his son Christopher in April 1944 'better than most Oxford colleges' [2]. This was after he and other Old Edwardians had visited the new building in Edgbaston to have lunch, by invitation of the Head Master.

The visit from Sarehole will be to this building, which unfortunately Tolkien did not like at all, describing it to Christopher as: 'ghastly, utterly third-rate… like a girls' council-school'[2]. But the past sixty years have softened the rawness of the new brick, and the trees around have grown. In addition there is the school chapel, part of the old New Street building which was only reconstructed on the new site in 1952 (ref. 3), some years after Tolkien's visit.

The beauty of the chapel's stonework and windows suggests how attractive the old building in New Street had been, as there it was simply the 'Upper Corridor'.

It contains a memorial plaque listing the Old Edwardians who had died in the First World War, many of whom were known by Tolkien. Two, G.B. Smith and R.Q. Gilson were very close to him. He did not forget them. In an excerpt from the Tolkien Papers he states that the lament which Aragorn chants for Legolas and Gimli as they pass the burial mounds before Edoras: "Where now the horse and the rider?…" is not an attempt to echo the mood of loss in the Old English poem *The Wanderer*. Rather, "… it laments the ineluctable ending and passing back into oblivion of the fortunate, the full-lived, the unblemished and the beautiful." [4] . Tolkien remembered his friends. The plaque was placed in the Upper Corridor and unveiled in December 1920.


***Left**: The 'Upper Corridor' at KES in 1935.**Right**: KES Oxford Scholarship board*

Sir John Barnsley, whose son T.K. Barnsley had died in the war, pledged that if the school moved - even then the building was too small and there were no playing fields - the plaque would be transferred[3]. A photo taken just before the old building was demolished in 1936 shows that every stone of the Corridor was lettered so that it could be rebuilt in Edgbaston.

Tolkien was living at Sarehole when he first took the King Edward's admission exam in November 1899. He had been taught English, French, Latin, mathematics and botany at home by his mother Mabel. His Aunt Jane, one of the first women science graduates in the country, and herself a teacher at one of the King Edward's Foundation girls' schools in Bath Row, had taught him geometry[2]. It was Tolkien's father's old school: Arthur Tolkien was a pupil there 1870 to 1873. The *King Edward's School Lists* show that Mabel's older brother Roland and her cousin Mark Oliver were pupils in the late 1870s. Wilfred, a Tolkien uncle, had been a pupil in the mid 1880s, and his sister's husband T.E. Mitton was also an Old Edwardian. Tolkien's Aunt Jane was a pupil at the new King Edward's Girls' High School 1885 to 1892. All in all it was natural that Mabel Tolkien should wish her sons to go to King Edward's.

However King Edward's New Street was no longer a 'free' grammar school. The Board Schools had been set up in 1870, offering free elementary education to all children. From 1883 schools in the King Edward's Foundation focussed on secondary education through the two High Schools in New

Street, and grammar schools at Five Ways, Camp Hill, Bath Row, Summer Hill and Aston. Pupils at the King Edward's Foundation schools had to pay tuition fees unless they gained a scholarship. The fees were higher at the High Schools in New Street than at the grammar schools; £12.0.0 per annum in 1900 compared to £3.0.0. per annum at the grammar schools[5]. Mabel Tolkien, with her limited income, could have sent her sons to Camp Hill, a mile closer to Sarehole than New Street.

But Ronald took the admission exam for the High School. He was only seven years old and he failed. Carpenter suggests that this was because Mabel was not strict enough[6], but more probably it was due to the fact that few pupils were admitted at such a young age. When Tolkien was successful at his next attempt in June 1900 he was one of only three eight-year-olds to gain a place. Foundation scholarships were available for one-third of the boys in the school, but Tolkien did not get one and his fees were paid by an uncle.

From Sarehole it was a four-mile journey into Birmingham each day. Tolkien had to walk about a mile from Sarehole to reach the Stratford Road. Now there is a good path alongside the River Cole; willow-trees still line the river. Old photos show that in Tolkien's time the fields were water-meadows, prone to flooding. Having reached the Stratford Road Tolkien had to walk a further mile to the steam-tram terminus, then at St. John's Church in Sparkhill, to travel into town on the tram. It was a long journey for a small boy, and Mabel decided to move to Moseley two miles to the west, directly on the Alcester Road tram-route into Birmingham.

Tolkien continued at King Edward's until April 1902, when his mother entered him in St. Philip's[7]. This was the Catholic grammar school close to the Oratory in Edgbaston. From having a long journey to school Tolkien and his younger brother Hilary now had a very short one – St. Philip's was then in Oliver Road, where the family lodged from 1902. But the lessons were too easy for him so in November 1902 he took the King Edward's admission exam again. By now he was eleven, he knew the school and would have known what to expect in the exam. As before, Mabel could have entered him for a King Edward's grammar school at Five Ways, less than a mile from Oliver Road, but again she chose to enter him for the High School. This time he was awarded a Foundation Scholarship. He stayed at King Edward's until 1911, when he left for Oxford University.

Officially King Edward's was a Church of England school, but it also reflected the diversity of religious sects in the city of Birmingham. When E.W. Badger – a former pupil and a teacher - wrote an article about King Edward's for the journal *School* in 1908 he asserted: 'Religious education in the school is entirely unsectarian; Anglican, Nonconformist, Roman Catholic, and Hebrew, all meet for scripture lessons…'[8]. This diversity was also seen in Tolkien's family, and in his friends. He was a Catholic; his Suffield grandfather was a Unitarian; the Mittons (Tolkien aunt and uncle) were Baptists; the Incledons (Suffield aunt and uncle) were Anglican; and Christopher Wiseman, his closest friend in his last year at school, was Methodist – he later wrote tunes for the Methodist hymnbook.

In the years before the First World War, King Edward's was often described as a 'public' school. It had a very high reputation in the country. There were significant differences from a traditional public school, however. Although some English public schools had originally been founded to educate poor boys, by Tolkien's time they were primarily private, fee-paying, usually boarding schools. King Edward's was a day school, with no boarders. The *Blue Book* shows that some pupils had parents or guardians living in other parts of the country, or in other parts of the Empire. In January 1911, Tolkien's last year, there were three boys with parents in India and China. The Ehrhardts' father worked in Heidelberg, others had parents living in Wales, Devon, London and Lancashire. They would live with relatives or have lodgings somewhere in Birmingham, as did the Tolkien brothers.

Secondly the boys were from families which needed to earn money, from a profession or 'in trade'. They could not hope to live off inherited wealth, though a few came from families with prosperous businesses. In his 1908 article E.W. Badger described the social background:

> K.E.S. does not draw its pupils from any one stratum of society. We rather glory in the fact that the professional man's son sits beside the tradesman's son, and the boy who comes down to school in his father's motor has for comrade the foundation scholar who has been trained in a public elementary school[8].

This social set-up is reflected in the story of Sam and Frodo, one working-class and one middle-class. Badger continues: 'Generally speaking, the K.E.S. boy is painstaking and earnest… inclined to be utilitarian… But he is intelligent, and takes a certain undemonstrative interest in what is going on around him, and he is fairly well informed'[8]. Badger also cited academic achievements; at a time when very few boys went to university, 25 Old Edwardians had gained first-class degrees in the previous six years.

The *School Lists* show that from 1905 Tolkien was generally near or at the top of his class[9]. He was awarded a King Edward's Scholarship in 1908 (ref. 1) so that as well as receiving free tuition he was given some money to buy schoolbooks. The 1911 Speech Day programme, when Tolkien was about to leave the school, gives an idea of the standards taken for granted at King Edward's. As well as Aristophanes' *Peace*, performed in classical Greek, there was an excerpt from a French play: *Le petit voyage* by Eugene Labiche. T.K. Barnsley played one of the four parts in this. There was a Latin song: *Gaudeamus igitur*. There was a brief explanation of the French and Greek plays, but none for the Latin. And the Speech Day programme ends with a verse in the Greek alphabet, again with no explanation. It was the first verse of the national anthem, *God Save The King*; translated into Greek by P.G.M. Rhodes, School Captain of King Edward's 1903-4.

There were also English songs at the Speech Day. One starting with an account of a rugby match 'It's a dull December day, there's five minutes more to play…'. had first appeared in the *Old Edwardians Gazette* in 1909. The mood of the chorus and of the first and third verses are similar to that in Henry Newbolt's 'Play up! Play up! And play the game'. The third verse of the King Edward's song ends 'And I played the game – they taught us that at School'. It is however the second verse which tells most about the ethos of the school:

> Where the blazing sun beats down on the mud-walled tropic town
> Sits an Old Edwardian in the judgement place:
> To the reeking city slums, priest of God, another comes,
> With the word to give the sinner hope of grace;
> For the sinner's laboured breath, yet a third one strives with death;
> And another toils upon an office stool…

Judge, priest, doctor, clerk – these are careers for those with a sense of responsibility towards society. Many Old Edwardians followed this path, including many known to Tolkien, and information about their lives appears in the *Old Edwardians Gazette* through the years. W. H. Ehrhardt was called to the Bar in 1919; W.H. Payton was in the Indian Civil Service - he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma in 1944. Some were churchmen; the Rev. J.N.E. Tredennick was appointed principal of Bishop Wilson College on the Isle of Man, reported in 1925. Many boys started work as clerks in the family business; Hilary Tolkien had gone to work in the Incledon firm in 1910 (ref. 4) before deciding that he would like to be a farmer.

Doctors: one name recognised by Tolkien readers may be (Leonard) Gamgee. Professor of Surgery at Birmingham University, he was later a Governor of King Edward's School. Tolkien was the Oxford representative Governor from late 1937 to 1940; signatures in the King Edward's Governors' records show that they were present at the same meetings. Tolkien gave an alternative source for the name 'Gamgee'. He did not mention Leonard Gamgee until after his death in 1956 (ref. 2). However 'Gaffer Gamgee' first appears in the 'Third Version' of the first drafts early in 1938 (ref. 10). Tolkien's signature is next to Leonard Gamgee's in the King Edward's record of the Governors' meeting of February 1938, suggesting that they were sitting next to each other. It seems probable that the meeting with Leonard Gamgee had been the reminder of the Birmingham name for cotton-wool – invented by Leonard's father.

Although entries for Tolkien in the *List* and the *Blue Book* show that he won many class prizes he did not win the yearly competitions – there were many highly intelligent boys in the school. We know that Tolkien did enter at least one competition set in 1909, and he probably entered others. The *List*[8] for December 1909 gives details of twelve assignments for which prizes would be awarded in 1910. There were two science prizes, four for English, three for Latin and three for Greek. The tasks set were demanding: in December 1909 the prize for Latin Verse required boys to write 'about 60 hexameters' on the subject of Arctic and Antarctic Expeditions. And for the Greek Verse prize boys had to translate into Classical Greek an excerpt from Shakespeare: '*Romeo and Juliet* Act III Scene iii "Hold thy desperate" ... to ... "is coming."' The tasks had to be completed by the third week in May.

The Lightfoot Thucydides prize for 1910 required boys to take an exam on the *Fifth Book*. In 1965 Tolkien received a letter from Zillah Sherring who had purchased *The Fifth Book of Thucydides.* It had a handwritten inscription in Gothic at the back and Tolkien's name on the flyleaf. He replied that it was his[2] and that the meaning of the inscription was: "I read the words of these books of Greek history in the sixth month of this year: thousand, nine hundreds, ten, of our Lord in order to gain the prize given every year to the boy knowing most about Thucydides." However Tolkien was unsuccessful, in 1910 the prize was won by Sidney Barrowclough. In 1911 the *Sixth Book of Thucydides* was set, and the prize was won by W.H. Payton and F. Scopes.

In addition to academic work there was the School Club. E.W. Badger listed the activities covered by the Club as

> cricket and football [rugby, not soccer], music and swimming, use of the library of 2500 books, the right to attend and speak at the school debating and literary society, membership of the natural history society… and a copy of the school *Chronicle,* which is published six times a year[8].

Boys had to pay a small annual subscription to belong – two shillings and sixpence by 1911. Almost all boys were members of the Club.

There is nothing to show whether Ronald and Hilary Tolkien were members of the Club when they were younger (Hilary started at King Edward's in January 1905). According to the report on 'Debating Characters' for 1910-11 (ref. 11) J.R.R.Tolkien had been a member from 1909, whereas Christopher Wiseman had first spoken in 1907. Tolkien made his maiden speech in October 1909 when he was seventeen. It was reported that he made a 'good humorous speech' [11]. Before this speech at the Debating Society in English he had previously spoken in the annual Latin debate, in March 1909. By his last year Tolkien was Secretary of the Debating Society, Secretary of the Football Club, Captain of Measures' house and in his final term the Editor of the *Chronicle*, with W.H. Payton.

At King Edward's attendance and physical exercise at the gymnasium were compulsory, other sports were voluntary as they were part of the Club. There was no space for a sports field in the centre of Birmingham; boys had to take the tram two miles along the Bristol Road to the playing-fields at Eastern Road. Tolkien became house-captain in 1910 and gained his colours in the next season, by '(legitimate) ferocity' as he wrote to his son Michael[2]. In 1911 he combined several interests by writing a humorous epic poem about a house rugby match, *The Battle of the Eastern Field*. This first appeared in the *Chronicle*, March 1911.

There will be more about this poem and Tolkien's friends in the next *Mallorn*. And in the meantime we hope you will be able to come on the visit to King Edward's School from Sarehole, Birmingham, in May.

*Maggie Burns is at Birmingham City Library.*


1.*KES Blue Book* - 1901 onwards, this appeared twice yearly, January and September
2.Tolkien, J.R.R. *Letters* London: George Allen & Unwin 1981 p70
3.*Old Edwardians Gazette* – the Old Boys' magazine, 1890 onwards, at least once a year, sometimes more often.
4.Hammond, Wayne & Scull, Christina *The J.R.R. Tolkien Reader's Guide*
London: HarperCollins*Publishers* 2006
5.*KES Reports* (later called Accounts) annual from 1887 onwards. Financial information about all the Foundation schools. This includes school fees, statistics about the pupils and their ages, and teachers in the various schools. The records of Governors' meetings and the KES admissions registers are manuscript and are held in the King Edward's School Archives at the Foundation Office in Edgbaston. The St. Philip's admissions register is manuscript and is held at the Oratory, Edgbaston.
6.Carpenter, Humphrey, *J.R.R. Tolkien A Biography* London: George Allen and Unwin
1977
7.MS St. Philip's Admissions Register 1902
8.Badger, E.W. *King Edward's School* 'School' 14-17. ed. R. Latimer. London: John Murray 1908
9.*KES Lists* – 1859 onwards, twice yearly (July and December): similar information to the *Blue Book* but in different formats.
10.Tolkien, Christopher, *The Return of the Shadow* London: HarperCollins 2002
11.*KES Chronicle,* 1872 onwards. In Tolkien's time there were usually two editions a term.


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## Commentary: (V)Arda Marred - The Evolution of the Queen of the Stars

*Kristine Larsen*

One of the most powerful characters, of either gender, to appear in the published form of *The Silmarillion* is undoubtedly Varda (Elbereth), Queen of the Stars. Complementary in abilities to Manwë, her spouse, she above all others is said to be feared by Melkor. She creates the first generation of stars in the early history of Eä, fills the Two Lamps with light, and hallows the Silmarils. Her creation of the second generation of stars, to illuminate the coming of the Elves, is called the "greatest of all the works of the Valar

since their coming into Arda".[1] Last she creates the Big Dipper (Valacirca), set to swing around the northern sky as a symbol of Melkor's eventual demise. Varda also plays a seminal role in the creation of the Sun and Moon, and designates their motions in the heavens. It is therefore understandable that the Queen of the Stars is referred to more than a dozen times in *The Lord of the Rings* (mostly calls for her protection), including the explanation by Aragorn that the name of Elbereth is more deadly to the Witch King of Angmar than any blade.[2]

However, as Flieger warns us, "the published *Silmarillion* gives a misleading impression of coherence and finality, as if it were a canonical text."[3] Among the significant changes found throughout the evolution of Tolkien's *legendarium* are the roles and relative importance of the various Valar. This paper will investigate the waxing and waning of Varda's characteristics and relative importance as reflected in five very specific actions – her role in the creation of the primordial stars, greater stars, Valacirca, Two Lamps, and sun and moon – as well as descriptions of her attributes of power.

**First Iteration: *The Book of Lost Tales* (*c.* 1916-1926)**

In *The Book of Lost Tales*, Varda, who "at the playing of the Music had thought much of light that was white and silver, and of stars", is generally depicted as lesser in power to her husband, and seems to accomplish little of note without his (and Aulë's) guidance. Here Varda's original efforts of star creation are described as "playing", in which she "set but a few stars within the sky".[4] As in later tales, Aulë created the Two Lamps, but here their light was "gathered lavishly from the sky" by Manwë and Varda. After the destruction of the Lamps, Varda "wished to gather new store" of light from the heavens to "set a beacon on Taniquetil", but was overruled by her husband. Instead, he requested that Ulmo gather some of the liquid light found in "blazing lakes and the pools of brilliance" which he brought back to Valinor to fill "two great cauldrons that Aulë fashioned".[4]

In Valinor Varda largely has the role of stelliferous interior decorator, resulting in the house of Manwë being "spangled" with stars, and the dwelling and gardens of Lórien being set with stars for his "pleasure".[4] Even her role as the creator of the greater stars is devalued, as these stars became an afterthought, *following* the coming of the Elves. Indeed, what eventually becomes her greatest work, the Valacirca, is originally attributed to Aulë: "Some have said that the Seven Stars were set at that time by Varda to commemorate the coming of the Eldar… yet the Seven Stars were not set by Varda, being indeed the sparks from Aulë's forge whose brightness in the ancient heavens urged Varda to make their rivals; yet this did she never achieve". Therefore Varda's greater stars are a mere copy of a mightier, albeit accidental, work of a male Vala. The removal of the Valacirca from her hands also stands in opposition to her later role as an active threat to Melkor, a symptom of her lesser importance relative to later texts.

Finally, not only is her role as star-kindler greatly diminished and devalued, but so initially is her role in the creation and regulation of the Sun and Moon, both largely ascribed to Aulë and Manwë. For example, Manwë "bade therefore Ilinsor, a spirit of a Súruli who loved the snows and the starlight and aided Varda in many of her works" to pilot the Ship of the Moon. It is fair to say that the first iteration of Varda bears little resemblance to the powerful Elbereth Gilthoniel of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, to whom the Elves (and Elf friends) "call at need."

**Second Iteration: Before *The Lord of the Rings* (*c.*1926-1937)**

Between *c*. 1926-1930, Tolkien composed what he termed the "Original 'Silmarillion'", a sketch of the mythology required as background material for the tale of Túrin he had begun in 1918.[5] A close reading offers some interesting changes from *The Book of Lost Tales*. The creation of the Two Lamps is inferred to have been done by anonymous Valar. Unlike the earlier work, there is a single session of starmaking, which Varda (Bridhil) does, being "moved" by the darkness of the Outer Lands. It is written that the Eldar

awaken "at the making of the stars," an important aspect of Varda's relationship with the Eldar that endures throughout the evolution of the main legendarium. The creation of the Sun and Moon and their "appointed courses" are credited to the Valar in general.

A far more detailed explication of the mythology was written in 1930. The *Quenta Noldorinwa*, or *Quenta*, reveals a slowly evolving role for Varda. The creation of the Two Lamps is again accomplished from the light "scattered over the airs and lands and seas" but by the Valar in general.[5] As in the *Sketch*, Varda places the stars into the sky in a single act, the lack of a primordial starmaking apparent by a reference to the "unlit skies" prior to this event. However, in this work we have the creation of the "Sickle of the Gods" (the Big Dipper) by Varda, "the emblem of the Gods, and sign of Morgoth's doom". Christopher Tolkien explains that the first appearance of this concept actually occurs prior to this work, in lines 2666-71 of *The Lay of Leithian* which he dates to April 1-6, 1928.[6] As in the *Sketch*, the creation and administration of the sun and moon is generically accomplished by the Valar.

In his commentary to *The Lost Road*, Christopher Tolkien attempts to disentangle the complex chronology of several works composed after the *Quenta* but before the commencement of *The Lord of the Rings*, including (in approximate chronological order) the "earliest" *Annals of Valinor* (AV1), the *Later Annals of Valinor* (AV2), the *Ainulindalë* (text B), and the *Quenta Silmarillion* (QS).

AV1 offers a new synopsis of the early history of Middle-earth, in which the Two Lamps are made by Aulë and no mention is made of the source of their light.[7] As in the *Sketch* and *Quenta*, the stars are created by Varda just prior to the awakening of the Elves, and Varda creates the "Sickle of the Gods… as a threat to Morgoth and an omen of his fall", after which the Elves awaken. In later revisions, Tolkien explicitly stated that the creation of the Sickle happened last and as Christopher Tolkien points out, in this text the Elves awaken at the completion of the stars' creation, rather than at the stars' making in general (as in the *Sketch* and *Quenta*). In doing so, Tolkien emphasizes the importance of the Valacirca (as it becomes known) as an omen of Morgoth's eventual demise, and hence increases Varda's power and relative importance. In AV1 "the Gods made the Sun and Moon and sent them forth over the World."

The *Later Annals of Valinor* (AV2) contains a further elevation of importance of Varda's creation of the Sickle of the Gods, as it is here called "the mightiest of the works of Varda".[7] In the *Ambarkanta*, which Christopher Tolkien places in this same general time period but after AV1, it is written that "Varda ordained the courses of the stars, and later of the Moon and Sun".[5] In the *Ainulindalë* text B we have Tolkien's thoughts from this period on Varda's general attributes:

> Varda the most beautiful… [was] the Queen of the Valar, and was the spouse of Manwë; and she wrought the stars, and her beauty is high and aweful, and she is named in reverence.[7]

Interestingly, in this still-early cosmology, it is said that it is Manwë not Varda whom the Elves and Men love most.

In 1937 Tolkien composed a revision to the *Quenta* known as the *Quenta Silmarillion* (*QS*) manuscript, which was to remain (with some revisions) the main working version of the legendarium until the completion of *The Lord of the Rings*. Varda is termed "the maker of the stars, immortal lady of the heights, whose name is holy."[7] There is only a single epoch of starmaking, which concluded with Varda's creation of the Sickle of the Gods, and the Elves awoke at the "opening of the first stars." As in the *Quenta*, the Lamps were created by the Valar, but similar to the *Ambarkanta*, Varda is responsible for the motions of the Sun and Moon:

> These vessels the Gods gave to Varda, that they might become lamps of heaven, outshining the ancient stars; and she gave them power to traverse the region of the stars, and set them to sail appointed courses above the earth.[7]

Thus by the time of the commencement of *The Lord of the Rings*, Varda continued to evolve toward the embodiment of the power of light that she ultimately became in the novel.

**Third Iteration: Varda *circa The Lord of the Rings* (c. 1938-1951)**

During the later writing of the novel, significant changes were apparently being made to Varda's attributes of power. For example, although Varda's name was "holy" pre-*Lord of the Rings*, and she undoubtedly had high stature due to her creation of the stars as well as governance over the sun and moon, there is no mention in the "Silmarillion" texts of her central role in *The Lord of the Rings*, namely as the Power whose name is invoked by the Eldar and to whom the Eldar call in times of need. In fact, the first mention of this (and several other expansions of Varda's powers) in the 'Silmarillion' tradition is in the 1951 text called *LQ1* by Christopher Tolkien (Phase 1 of the *Later Quenta Silmarillion*).[8]

In this work we find the first mention since the *Book of the Lost Tales* of a primordial as well as pre-Eldar star creation. After the destruction of the Lamps that Aulë had made, the "Earth was dark, save for the glimmer of the innumerable stars which Varda had made in the ages unrecorded in the labours of Eä."[8] Mandos later pronounces the doom that the Eldar "should come in the darkness and should look first upon the Stars…. To Varda ever shall they call at need." Varda then begins her second starmaking, now said to be of "new stars and brighter against the coming of the First-born" including the Sickle of the Gods, finally named the Valakirka.

It is in *The Lord of the Rings* itself and (to the knowledge of this author) no other text that we find another important power attributed to Varda, in relation to Earëndil. In Bilbo's Rivendell song, we hear

> The Silmaril as lantern light
> And banner bright with living flame
> To gleam thereon by Elbereth
> Herself was set, who thither came
> And wings immortal made for him,
> And laid on him undying doom,
> To sail the shoreless skies and come
> Behind the Sun and light of Moon.[2]

Here, and only here, are we told that it is Varda who sets Earëndil and the Silmaril into the sky and governs his motions. For example, in the *Sketch* and the first version of the *Quenta*, seabirds give him the power to sail the skies in search of Elwing, while in second version of the *Quenta* is the origin of the idea that the Valar in general set him in the sky.[5] This concept persists in the *Quenta Silmarillion* and in fact appears in the published form of *The Silmarillion*. There are at least fifteen texts of Bilbo's poem,[9] but the poem's history suggests that the first reference to Varda (Elbereth) appears in version C (which was ultimately published in the novel). This reference persists even after the poem was further modified, appearing in the "final form" of the poem, version F. The date of version C is not determined with certainty, but appears to be no earlier than December 1944 and perhaps as late as several years afterwards.[9] In addition, since it is Varda who is responsible for the Star of Earëndil and by default its light in the heavens, each mention of the light of this star in *The Lord of the Rings* (such as in the phial of Galadriel) and its powers is yet another reflection upon the might of Varda.

As Christopher Tolkien notes in *Morgoth's Ring*, his father returned to the cosmogonic myth of the *Ainulindalë* before writing *The Return of the King*. During this time, he became concerned with the scientific realism of his cosmology, including what he later termed "the astronomically absurd business of making the Sun and Moon".[8] During the period *c*.1945-1948, Tolkien experimented with a radical departure from the canonical cosmology in a text termed *Ainulindalë C**. The world was round from the beginning, and the sun coeval with the Earth. Given Varda's role in the formation and regulation of

the Sun and Moon in the published form of *The Silmarillion*, and the abandonment of the Two Lamps in the *Ainulindalë C**, it is clear that the adoption of such a serious departure from the main legendarium would herald a downward shift in the relative power and role of Varda. It is also said that Manwë alone knows what Iluvatar has in store for the Elves at the Great End, in contradiction with later texts which state that he and Varda both may know.

Tolkien abandoned this text and afterwards crafted the C text, and, prior to 1951, the D text. Both texts have it that Iluvatar chose a place for Arda in the "midst of innumerable stars" but it does not state that Varda created them. In a late revision to the D text, Varda is said to have "wrought the Great Stars" which Christopher Tolkien interprets as meaning she created only these.[8] Text C has no mention of Varda's role in the Two Lamps, while Text D echoes the published version of *The Silmarillion*, having Aulë make the Lamps, Varda fill them with light, and Manwë hallow them.

**Fourth Iteration: The Legendarium after *The Lord of the Rings* (*c.* 1951-1960)**

After the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* (*circa* 1958), Tolkien once again set to revise the legendarium, through texts which followed (with revisions) from LQ1 and related works, as well as further radical departures from the standard 'Flat World' mythology, during a period of "prolonged interior debate" concerning the scientific inadequacies of his cosmology.[8] In the former category are LQ2 text and the *Annals of Aman* (AAm).

The revision of the LQ2's *Valaquenta* text (Vq2) is precisely the text which Christopher Tolkien selected for the published form of *The Silmarillion*, and includes a much enlarged and enhanced version of Varda's powers and importance:

> With Manwë dwells Varda, Lady of the Stars, who knows all the regions of Eä. Too great is her beauty to be declared in the words of Men or Elves; for the light of Ilúvatar lives still in her face. In light is her power and her joy. Out of the deeps of Eä she came to the aid of Manwë; for Melkor she knew from before the making of the Music and rejected him, and he hated her, and feared her more than all others whom Eru made…. When Manwë there ascends his throne and looks forth, if Varda is beside him, he sees further than all other eyes…. And if Manwë is with her, Varda hears more clearly than all other ears…. Of all the Great Ones who dwell in the world the Elves hold Varda most in reverence and love. Elbereth they name her, and they call upon her name out of the shadows of Middle-earth, and uplift it in song at the rising of the stars.[2]

The breadth of Varda's powers recounted here certainly reflects her majesty as implied in *The Lord of the Rings* in a way that previous 'Silmarillion' texts fail to do. LQ2 also contains a unique reference to her power which does not appear in the final *Silmarillion*:

> [Ungoliantë] would not dare the perils of Aman, or the power of the dreadful Lords, without a great reward; for she feared the eyes of Manwë and Varda more even than the wrath of Melkor.[8]

The final 'Silmarillion'-based text which appears in the *The History of Middle-earth* is the *Annals of Aman* (*circa* 1958). Varda is apparently responsible for two starmaking episodes in this text, the second of which (including the creation of the Valakirka) is "the greatest of all works of the Valar since their coming until Arda".[8] The Eldar awaken after the completion of this great labor, and "beheld first of all things the stars of heaven. Therefore they have ever loved the starlight, and have revered Varda Elentárie above all the Valar." She fills the Two Lamps and is given the vessels of the Sun and Moon, which she sets in the sky and determines their motions. As in other post-*Lord of the Rings* texts, Varda's powers appear to be at their zenith, logically supporting the repeated references to her in *The Lord of the Rings* (and the published form of *The Silmarillion*).

As noted, it is during this same time that Tolkien embarked on a series of experimental revisions to his cosmology in an attempt to achieve a closer alignment with the real universe. Of the eleven essays published as "Myths Transformed,"[8] only the first four

mention Varda directly, while text VI also impacts the presumed nature and powers of Varda as written in other texts. This work affirms that Melkor "must be made far more powerful in original nature…. The greatest power under Eru (sc. The greatest created power)." This directly contradicts the *Valaquenta*, where Melkor "feared her more than all others whom Eru made"[2] and is also at odds with the inferred power of Varda in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In text I, Tolkien wrote that "the Sun and stars were all older than Arda. But the placing of Arda amidst the stars and under the [?guard] of the Sun was due to Manwë and Varda before the assault of Melkor." In text III Tolkien explained that Aman had been covered by a dome of "mist or cloud down through which no sight would pierce nor light. This dome was lit by stars – in imitation of the great Firmament of Eä". This planetarium-like dome also kept out the polluted light of the Sun after the rape of the Sun's fire-spirit Árië by Melkor, as described below.

Text II consists of two related narratives, here denoted as IIa and IIb, and a short note. Text IIa lays out a cosmology similar to the actual universe, where the Sun and Earth are the same age, the Moon is created by the Valar to foil the nefarious designs of Melkor, and the Solar System is set "in the void 'amidst the innumerable stars'". It is further said that because of this Varda "cannot be said to have 'kindled' the stars, as an original subcreative act – not at least the stars in general." Instead, she sets "certain stars" in the sky after the first battle with Melkor "as ominous signs for the dwellers of Arda to see." Her "original chief concern" in this revised cosmology is the "Primeval Light", from which the Two Trees are lit. But as Tolkien himself understood, this revised myth poses problems for calling the Eldar the "Star-folk" due to their awakening after the creation of the great stars. Text IIa attempts to save the appearances by having Melkor envelop the sky in a dark cloud before the coming of the First-born. At the appointed time, "Varda arises in her might and Manwë of the Winds and [they] strive with the Cloud of Unseeing." After some dramatic struggle, Manwë manages to blow away the cloud just in time for the Eldar to awaken and behold the stars, including the Valakirka.[8] The appearances have certainly been saved, but at what cost? One may argue that in this story Varda's connection to the Elves is significantly minimized. Here, we not only have Arda Marred, but perhaps one could argue Varda Marred as well.

Text IIb explains how Varda was given a holy light by Ilúvatar, which she brought into Eä. It is for this reason that she is "the most holy and revered of all the Valar, and those that name the light of Varda name the love of Eä that Eru has, and they are afraid, less only to name the One."[8] Once in the world, Varda selects the fire spirit Árië to accompany the sun and gives her some of the holy primordial light. This light is permanently lost to the world after Melkor rapes Árië and she commits suicide. The Moon is constructed by Manwë, Varda, and Aulë in order to prevent Melkor from causing trouble under the cover of night. In a short note which Christopher Tolkien associates with these texts, his father wrote that Varda gave the holy light to the Sun, the Two Trees and to "the significant Star", whose "meaning is nowhere explained."[8] Given the massive revisions here planned in the cosmology, might it be possible that this reference is to the Evening Star (i.e. Venus), especially if Tolkien meant to dissociate this heavenly body from Earëndil and the Silmaril? In text IV, we read

> Varda was in Eldarin and Númenórean legends said to have designed and set in place most of the principal stars; but being (by destiny and desire) the future Queen of Arda, in which her ultimate function lay, especially as the lover and protectress of the Quendi, she was concerned not only with the great Stars in themselves, but also in their relations to Arda, and appearance therefrom.[8]

She is therefore said to have designed the major constellations, notably including the Valacirca. Tolkien writes that it is chiefly from her creation of the Dome of Valinor described above "but also from her original demiurgic labours" that she has the title "Star-Kindler." Among the 'Myths Transformed' texts, this essay arguably presents the clearest explanation for the Eldar's love for and reverence of Varda. But this text also describes Varda as the "most foresighted of all the Valar, possessing the clearest memory

of the Music and Vision in which she had played only a small part as actor or player, but had listened most attentively." Christopher Tolkien points out that a similar description is instead assigned to Nienna in the AAm* text of the *Annals of Aman*.[8] In labeling her action in the primordial drama "a small part" and painting her in the passive role of attentive listener, Tolkien significantly curtails Varda's potency relative to the 'Silmarillion' texts of that era and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Christopher Tolkien has found that references to the Dome of Varda persist in revisions to the *Annals of Aman* as well as the *Later Quenta Silmarillion*, demonstrating that although these experimental texts were not integrated into the legendarium *en masse*, certain aspects were incorporated. Another possible example can be found to the final revision of the *Ainulindalë* text D, where Varda's starmaking is limited to the "Great stars." However, the fact that these experimental texts remained largely that – experiments – possibly reflects an understanding by Tolkien that "his 'old' mythology was a more successful construction than his later conception."[10]

**Conclusion**

As with any mythology, Tolkien's legendarium evolved in its repeated telling, leading to sometimes significant changes in the relative importance and powers of certain characters. This analysis has demonstrated that Varda, Queen of the Stars, is a vivid example of this character development. From her earliest stages as companion of Manwë who "played" at placing stars into the heavens, Varda had clearly become one of the mightiest of the Powers by the time of the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, perhaps only second to Ilúvatar himself. However, in light of the 'Myths Transforned' texts and their related amendments to works such as the *Annals of Aman* and the *Ainulindalë* D, one can speculate that Varda might have, to paraphrase Galadriel, diminished and gone into the West, if Tolkien had continued tinkering with the legendarium in any concerted way.

Hammond, quoting an unnamed 'enthusiast', reminds us that "there are Tolkien's *latest* thoughts, his *best* thoughts, and his *published* thoughts, and these are not necessarily the same."[10] Perhaps from Varda's point of view, with the exception of the anomalous 'Myths Transformed' essays, these three may actually be close to synonymous.

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## Fiction: White Annays

*Lynn Forest-Hill*

The voluptuous glow of late afternoon spread across a deep peaceful valley. The golden light heralded autumn. On the sloping meadows sheep stood like landlocked clouds and in the faded meads beside the river cattle moved slowly down to drink. In the far distance under the eaves of the forest spotted pigs rummaged through beech mast and the first fall of acorns, unsuspecting.

Annays sat in the shade of a great spreading oak that stood right on the edge of the great encircling forest. Her head was in her hands and her long dark hair fell around her face. Tears still trickled through her fingers though she was breathless with long weeping. The deep shade under the oak concealed her, absorbing her gloom into its own and offering temporary sanctuary. Her nut-brown kirtle was faded to an indefinite shade that blended so well with the shadows that even on that bright autumn afternoon she could not have been seen by anyone down in the meadows, far less in the vill that straddled the gleaming river half a mile away along the valley. She had been coming here for weeks, seeking solitude every time sorrow overwhelmed her. In her distress she was unaware that keen eyes were observing her.

In truth, she had reasons enough to weep, but her presence so close to the forest puzzled and surprised the watcher. A forest from which few wolves and no bears came prowling down in the snows of winter was a forest which gave rise to strange rumours. It was a forest where woodcutters barely penetrated, but then its more open margins were so wide to the east that there was plenty of dead wood for firing and enough fresh timber for building. No roads ran through it because the land to the west offered easier routes to the markets in distant settlements, and they were separated from its unknown depths by a deep ragged gorge out of which the foaming river issued that watered the valley. Its dark and tangled interior deterred the most stalwart hunters, and no deer or boar had ever been seen. Not so much as a track or hair was ever found where men dared to walk. It was said in the valley that although wolves and bears surely lived their own lives secluded far within the forest's dark heart, there were places there into which even they would not trespass. The source of such rumours was unknown.

The dark-haired incomers often questioned their yellow-haired bondsmen – those who had been conquered in the time of their grandfathers – but they only replied reluctantly and in whispers that the forest was home to creatures that should not be disturbed because they were "not the same'. Among the dark-haired masters a belief soon grew to certainty that an ancient elven folk dwelt deep in the forest and it was they who took the deer and boar, and through their magical powers the cruel beasts of winter did not trouble the valley. So the valley dwellers left the forest to its unseen inhabitants, erring on the side of caution lest their intrusion should unleash magic, or wild beasts, against them.

Annays did not care about the stories told in the valley of the pathless darkness into which no one entered.

"Why do these little drops of water fall from your eyes?"

Annays jumped, startled, scared, ready to defend once again her right to mourn in solitude. But there was no one. Just the huge towering oak and the ranks of trees receding, so thick and so woven with dense undergrowth that the darkness under them was closer than night. "Who's there?" Annays demanded in a thin and wary voice. Memories of yellow-haired outlaws suddenly terrified her. She wished she was safe back in the vill, but she also felt a sudden defiant rage and determination, in spite of her powerlessness. On the other hand the voice had not quite the sound she dreaded.

"I did not mean to cause you fear," it said. It was soft, gentle, beautiful even, and faintly but indefinably accented. It seemed very close but no form interrupted the deep autumnal shadows receding into the forest depths. "I'm not afraid!" Annays replied, lying bravely. "I can feel your fear." the voice softly told her.

"Who's there?" She demanded again, "who are you?"

"One who lives here as you do," said the voice.

"Stop this!" she snapped, assuming someone from the vill had hidden among the trees. "I don't recognise your voice. If you don't come out I'll raise the hue and cry on you!"

"Why are you scared?" the voice asked calmly.

"Stop it! Stop it!" she demanded.

"I mean no harm. I only came to discover why you come alone to the trees in a way that others never do." There was a quality to the voice that in spite of her fear calmed and reassured her. "Please," Annays began more calmly, "Please come out so I can see you. If you're not one of those yellow-haired heathens why do you hide?"

"I am not yellow-haired," came the reply, "Neither am I ready to show myself. You are already talking to me without seeing me, why do you want to see me?"
"So I know who I'm talking to." Annays replied.
"And how will you know that by seeing me?" Annays was puzzled. "Are you a stranger in the valley?" she asked.

"Oh no." said the voice. "I have lived among these trees and meadows for ages."

"But you are not a yellow-headed heathen?" she asked again.

"Nothing about me is yellow."

"Are you one of Lord Eudo's men?"

"I am no one's man." the voice asserted firmly but gently.
Although the answers to her questions deepened Annays' sense of bewilderment, the voice which spoke them soothed her, comforted her, as no other had had the power to do through all the long months. She began to feel the desire merely to hear it. Her tears had dried on her cheeks. Her breath had returned. All that remained of her sorrow was a pain behind her eyes from much weeping. "If you are an outlaw, please, let me go back. I will not speak of meeting you, and I have no family to pay a ransom." she told the unseen presence.

"As for me, you may go as you choose," the voice responded, placidly, "though I had hoped we might be friends, because you come alone to the trees and do no harm. I have not come to harm you, but I would talk with you, if you are willing, for the friend I had went away."

"Truly, I wish I had a friend." Annays admitted with a sigh, rather surprised at her own sudden frankness. "Someone who would just let me talk and say how I feel without offering advice, or telling me my duty. I know nothing can amend the loss or change what follows. Everyone has been kind to me in their own fashion. I am not ill-used, and I am not ungrateful. All I want is more time, and my brother to come home."

"What you say is hard to follow." the voice told Annays, with such sweetness of tone that her reawakened pain subsided. "Tell me what has happened to you" the voice went on, "as if you were twisting thread, so it is straight although it involves many strands."

Annays actually smiled a pale puzzled smile at this description. Then she sighed and tried to order her feelings into thoughts. She began again, and as she spoke aloud the tale of her grief she wove into it fragments of description such as she had heard the storytellers use by the hearths of the vill on winter evenings, believing that such words were needed:

"When spring had unlocked the iron chill of winter my father was killed by raiding outlaws, down there in the pasture. The raiders came as dusk fell, riding down from the high moors to north. They took all the livestock and what food remained after a long hard winter, and that was little enough. And they killed my father as he tried to defend us and our home. Lord Eudo's men soon hunted down the outlaws and killed them, but what help or comfort were we supposed to find in that? Then as the weather brightened Lord Eudo summoned his liege men to ride north and cleanse the land of all the lawless heathens who were ravaging the farmsteads and communities of other settlers. They even attack those of their own kind who still live peacefully on the manors of our lords." she added, and then resumed: "As head of the family, my brother Jehan had to answer the summons. Mother took the absence of her eldest son hard. She was still grieving for the loss of my father, and her grief and anxiety so weakened her that before harvest-time she was dead of a quartain fever. Now that we are on our own and without Jehan, we, my younger brothers and sister and I have been taken under the wardship of our priest, Daun Gaudefroy. He's a good man, and his wife is as careful for us as for her own children, but now they want me to marry their eldest son Yonec. Even if Jehan returns safely from the northern campaign, he will not refuse the match. I know I have to marry, but this is too soon, too soon. Besides, my father told us last Yule that he intended me for Richere the wainwright's son."

"But why do you venture here alone?" asked the voice.

"To be alone." Annays replied with a slow, weary shake of her head.

"This is a good place." said the voice.

“I should marry Richere.” Annays said after a while. “Father was making the contract with Richere’s father before the raiders came. I was to take as my dowry an eighth share in the mill. With such a dowry, Father could have bestowed me…” she hesitated, “Father said Richere was hard-working and good hearted even though he was young. Yonec is young too, and favoured by Lord Eudo, but I want to do what Father wanted. Honouring his decision is all I have left.” Her voice tailed off, wavering, and she buried her head in her arms again.

“Be at peace, little creature.” The voice was soft, murmuring close to her ear. Every word it spoke was consoling and strengthening, as if it came from one who knew her sorrow profoundly. She raised her head and wiped her hand across her eyes. All she wanted now was to listen to that voice.

The cows were being driven from the fields and the changing pattern of movement in the distant pastures roused Annays. She had become so entranced by the beautiful voice that she had lost track of the passage of time. “I do not know how to thank you for your kind words”. She said hesitantly, looking round again for some sign of her unseen companion. “Please, will you not tell me your name?”

“Why do you want a name?” asked the voice quietly.

“It is customary. It is courtesy to address a person by their name.”

“So it is.” agreed the voice as if recognising something long forgotten. “Will you tell me yours first?”

“My name is Annays,” she said.

“Annays.” the voice repeated. “Will you come here again?”

“Yes. Will you?”

“I will. And when you come you may address me as “Eran’, if that will please you. But my name is not for others to hear, only for my friend.”

“I understand,” Annays said, for she thought she did – there were many reasons why someone might seek anonymity in the forest, and all of them implied desperate circumstances, but the voice was beautiful and in her grief she had found a comfort she would not relinquish or endanger.

The autumn that year was fine and warm. Winter was long coming, for which everyone gave thanks, except that Lord Eudo’s campaign lasted longer and he did not return with his men. In the weeks before winter set in Annays went as often as she dared to the forest edge. She hoped each evening that the wood-cutters would not work within sight of the great oak during the following day, and that the priest’s wife would not make her stay at home spinning, or brewing, or pickling, or doing any of the other routine chores. Whenever she could not slip away she missed her unseen friend, but she could hear his voice in her head. Beautiful, gentle, but definitely masculine, she was sure of that, though speaking so softly and with such insight that every word comforted and delighted her and she began to wonder if she was perhaps imagining it. It was as if the voice was inside her head, it was so perfect. As if some inner inhibited delight had begun to speak aloud exactly the words her mind wanted to hear.

Then a message came that Lord Eudo had been summoned to attend the King and his men with him. Annays fled to the comfort of the dark trees. “Eran! Eran!” she called urgently but softly, staring into the deep gloom that did not change though the trees were leafless now. Though gathering clouds silhouetted their twiggy crowns the tangles of brambles, tall withered bracken, and other, unidentifiable, roughness seemed to soak up the gloom of the sky, becoming duller and more indistinct. Annays turned away tearfully. “Annays?” said the gentle and beloved voice.

“Oh Eran, what shall I do?” she asked, turning, longing to see the face of her kindest friend. “What do you mean?” he asked. Annays had grown used his need to have things explained. “Eran, dear Eran, the news came this morning, Lord Eudo and his retinue have been summoned to attend the King. Jehan will not be home before Yule!’

“Does this make you sad?” the beloved voice asked quietly.

“Oh Eran, I miss my brother! I am so lonely without him. My sister and my little brothers are children, they need me, and I care for them, but I can’t talk to them as I talk to Jehan.’

“And as you talk to me?” Eran asked. Annays was suddenly aware of how ungrateful she must have sounded: “Forgive me, dear Eran. Jehan has been gone so long, and I had hoped to see him soon. The longer he is away the more I think about him, and the more I fear being made to marry before he returns, but you have been the best of friends, more than a friend.” she added earnestly. Eran did not speak, so she continued: “What shall I do if they start talking of marrying me to Yonec again? If Jehan had come home I might have been able to persuade him to honour Father’s decision about Richere.”

“But you have said they could not make you marry without the consent of your brother and his lord.” Eran then reminded her.

“I’m not sure now.” Annays replied. “Father’s share in the mill that is my dowry might make them impatient if Jehan and Lord Eudo don’t come home. What shall I do Eran?” She did not expect an answer.

“I do not understand your sadness, and yet I see once again the water drops like dew spilling from your little pale eyes. What you are without troubles you, and yet what you have seems to trouble you more.’

“Father’s share in the mill, you mean?” she said quietly. “Father’s reward for his loyalty to Lord Eudo during the conquest. “We should be thankful for a generous lord”, Father used to say. “Give thanks.” He used to tell us when we went to prayer, “Not many are as good as our Lord Eudo.” Give thanks. Oh Eran, I know what I can do!” Suddenly her eyes shone through their tears and she took a few paces back and forth with the energy of excitement.

“I will give the rent from my share of the mill for the next year to the *domus dei* as an offering of thanks in memory of our parents and for the safe return of Jehan! How could I not have done this before? Dear Eran, how can I thank you for this!”

“I don’t know what you mean,” he said, “but I have done nothing to deserve your thanks.’

‘But you have! You said it was what I have that was the trouble, and you are right. I can do something good and that will take away the temptation of the dowry to everyone else.”

“I do not know those words you spoke.” He interrupted quietly. “Domus?”

‘Ah! Down there.” Annays pointed excitedly at the little grey stone building in the far edge of the vill.”

“I see,” said the sweet gentle voice. “You mean the ċiriċe”.

With a short sharp intake of breath Annays took a step away. “Then you are a yellow-headed outlaw!” she exclaimed. “Only our bondsmen still call it that!”

“I am sorry.” Eran murmured. “I did not know the sound would make you fearful again. I am not of the yellow-haired race, but I knew their sounds, as I now know yours. That is all.”

“Oh, Eran,” Annays sighed. “I do so want to trust you. And to thank you. May I not see you?”

“Now is not the time.” He replied so gently and sweetly that she could not then ask for more than to hear his voice, whatever its language.

Through the crisp glittering frost and the deep snows of winter Annays went wrapped in her cloak of worsted warmly lined with squirrel fur to the shadow under the leafless oak. Even in the brilliance of snow the gloom beneath the trees did not seem to lessen, so thick was the undergrowth, but others also went that way now, for the need to gather firewood was very great. Everyone was required at this task and there was no time for solitude. Annays missed Eran very much, but because she had never seen him what she missed was the feeling of his sympathetic presence. She did not miss his beautiful voice for it was with her whenever the business of each day allowed a moment of peace. When her brothers stopped quarrelling, and her sister stopped crying because they were quarrelling; as she kneaded the bread dough, or fed the chickens, or fetched water for the cooking; in such brief moments Eran’s voice echoed in her mind as clearly as if he had been standing right behind her. And in the darkness, as the frost coated the fallen snow with crystal, it was warmth and comfort against the fearful cold. Its power to soothe seemed almost magical, a power surely greater that that of any ordinary voice.

Winter took its customary tribute of souls from the vill. Fevers and fluxes used up almost all the stores of medicinal herbs before the new growth sprouted with the coming of the full moon at the end of Lent. It was a close-run thing. And still Jehan did not return with Lord Eudo and the other men. “Ah, Annays, my child, just think of the tales they’ll have to tell when they do get back!” Daun Gaudefroy told his ward enthusiastically as the extended family sat feasting, modestly. Annays’ brothers and sister had survived the red fever and were regaining their strength with beakers of new milk as well as eggs and cheese, being too young and weakened to have endured the Lenten fast.

“I don’t know what kinds of stories they’ll come back with.” Daun Gaudefroy’s wife observed. “All this time at court among fighting men, they will have learnt bad ways.”

“Guildeluec, alderleifest, they have fought for their lord like true men, protecting us from the heathens, they deserve our thanks, as we should thank God for their courage.” her husband observed mildly.

“Certainly.” she said, “but the court will not have made them better farmers, or millers, or wainwrights.” She looked at Annays. In the sudden heavy silence Yonec, her eldest son, looked up from the gravy-soaked trencher he was busy devouring, but his father spoke for him. “Annays has shown great piety in her gift to the *domus dei*. She is a credit to her lamented parents, a fine example to her dear little sister there, and even more to her brothers,” he added with a stern look at the boys. The stern glance did not last, it never did. Only his wife ever boxed their ears, though Annays sometimes took a switch to them, and then he gently rebuked her in private after he had rebuked them for upsetting her.

"The Good Lord will look kindly on the orphans, and reward patience." the benevolent priest observed. "It is through His inspiration that Annays saw what was due to her parents and to Him." "Madam my mother," Yonec began, "I will be obedient to your wishes and those of my father, and so Annays will wish to be obedient to those who have cared for her. I would not wish her to disobey the desire of her own parents, for all that I would be honoured to take her for my wife."
Young as he was, he always spoke with measured courtesy whenever their marriage was discussed, and Annays liked Yonec because of that. Without the arrangement begun with Richere's father she could have accepted him easily enough, except of course for Eran.

"You are a good and dutiful son." Daun Gaudefroy told Yonec, being always inclined to see the best in people.

"He's been too much in the wrong company!" the priest's wife observed sharply. "How is it fitting for our son to speak so? Those knights that came to visit Lord Eudo last year began all this nonsense. So much language, and for what? Speak plain, boy! If you defy us, say so, but how dare you encourage the girl to ignore your father."

"Mother …" Yonec began, only to have his father interrupt. "Guildeluec, he speaks what he feels and what he thinks, and if that is not a plain feeling or a plain thought …"

"I could expect as much from you, Husband," she snapped back. "Priests are by nature subtle in their language but when that subtlety is used against you to flout and defy your decisions … Oh, it is a wonder you should see no harm!" She threw down the spoon she had been brandishing like a weapon and stormed out of the door into the spring sunshine. "Do not be dismayed." Daun Gaudefroy told Annays and Yonec. "She is wise in her own way, but times change. In this new and turbulent land life cannot always be spoken in plain language, and simple obedience without thought is not always the right way." The priest's words were gentle and even after all these years his voice was slightly accented for his native tongue was Occitan, and for that reason his wife's objection to the knights was more pointed. For Gaudefroy's family came from the estate of one of them, and he had been invited to Lord Eudo's hall to renew old acquaintances. Of course he had taken Yonec with him. The knights' language and their mode of expression were by nature less straightforward than the Northern tongue Guildeluec was accustomed to, and she had never forgotten that her distaste at the marriage arranged by her father to Gaudefroy the priest, fifteen years her senior, had been because she had difficulty understanding his mode of speech. Obedience, as she liked to remind the family, had nevertheless made her a good wife and a caring mother. Annays showed no signs of disliking the courtesy Yonec now practised, or the thoughtfulness of Gaudefroy's speech, and to Guildeluec, that too was hard to understand – what need was there, she wondered again, for so much speech, especially when there was work to be done!

The spring skies opened into endless blue as April passed. May Day was celebrated with customary vigour and much gathering of greenery. Life became easier without the draining cold. Energy returned with returning warmth and new growth of worts and herbs to eke out and flavour the last of the salted pork and stockfish. Hawthorn buds and nettle shoots could be gathered. Peas and beans flowered, the apple and pear trees blossomed, promising sweeter fare to come, as did the merry hum of bees that bustled in and out of renovated straw skeps.

Annays' gift to the *domus dei* had been the subject of endless comment in the vill during the long winter months, but with the spring the topic ceased to be news and she was free more often to wander through meadows full of cuckoo-flowers and crow garlic and up the slopes crowded with cowslips towards the newly green forest edge. Ramsoms shone white along the margins where lately pale nodding anemones had carpeted the ground. Further in, endless bluebells mantled the ground, fading into shadow wherever bracken and bramble, sharply green, loomed up. But all colour was swallowed eventually in the gloomy forest. Still on its edge Annays would sit again under the great oak and wait, longing to hear the beloved voice in reality once more, to be sure that it was not just her longing for consolation that spoke in her mind.

The fragrance of early summer was all around her on a cool evening in late May. The sun was sinking in a molten glow, but the days were long now and curfew was still far off as Annays sat among the flowering grass heads close by the oak. She was drifting, remembering, wishing for news of her brother as her thoughts roamed dangerously close to the pain of the past.

"Annays." She swung round at the sound of her name. The evening shades were gathering under the trees and the newly green undergrowth did not permit the golden light of evening to penetrate far. It was already intensely dark under the trees. She could not see anyone.

"Eran, is that you?" she asked.

“Of course.” said the same beloved voice. “Has the winter been so long that you have forgotten me?”

“I have never forgotten you.” she replied with great earnestness. “I have heard your voice in my head all through the long months. I have come here hoping to find you so often.”

“I do not venture far in winter.” said the unseen voice. “The frost and the snow are dangerous.”

“Oh Eran, I have missed you!” Annays exclaimed, unable to restrain herself. “There have been times when I doubted that I had ever talked with you. I wondered at times if I was becoming mad, if your voice was real, or if I only heard it in my head, because it is so kind, so beautiful, and so comforting.”

“I do not understand you, little creature.” the voice said placidly. “Why do you doubt that you hear my voice, when we have spoken together so often?”

“It is hard to know, to believe that what I hear is real, because I have no form before my eyes to reassure me. You cannot be just a voice.”

“No, indeed, I am not just that. But what I am may not be what you would wish.” Eran said. She heard the doubt disturbing his voice and sought desperately for the right words with which to reassure him.

“Eran”, she began, with profound emotion, “You have been my friend and my comfort in the worst of times. Your voice has been my consolation, it has lived in my head through the long winter, and I have longed to be with you again. Can you not trust me? I have not spoken of you to anyone through all these months because I would not betray you, and I would not lose you. Have I done anything that offends you? Am I that which offends you because I am one of the newcomers? If so, why have you come back to talk with me? What is it that you distrust about me?”

“Annays, I am fearful to look upon, or so I am led to believe. Many who have seen me have fled from me. I would not wish to see you turn from me as they did.”

Annays was astonished at Eran’s words. They served only to strengthen her desire to reassure him that for her their friendship, his kindness, was more than could be shaken by any outward form.

It took weeks of gentle persuasion to overcome Eran’s reticence. For days on end he did not come to the oak, excusing his absence by telling Annays that he had been busy hunting and weaving now the weather was warmer. She perceived rather his reluctance to be persuaded to reveal himself. During his absence Annays began to wonder if she had understood his words properly. At first she had thought that he meant to explain that he was evil to look upon when he said ‘fearful’, but how could such a voice belong to anything evil, or horrific. She had gone over and over all the kinds of deformity, all that sickness and warfare could do to a man; then she had wondered if the stories of elven folk in the forest meant that his form would be like that of an angel, too glorious for human eyes to bear. Angels, she had been told, were fearful to look upon, being too bright in their glory. It could not be that Eran was an angel. That, Annays told herself sternly, was a blasphemous thought. But if he was one of the elven folk – the storytellers always said elven folk were passing fair to behold, that they shone with a strange glow, and could be dangerous to encounter. Whatever the truth, she decided, it could not be that her kindest friend would be a danger to her.

Eventually, on a warm evening in late June, as the bats began to fly in the twilight and lights began to twinkle far off in the vill Annays got her dearest wish. She had been staring into the gathering gloom under the trees. Eran’s voice seemed very near, carried on the soft evening air. “Very well,” said he quietly and sombrely, “Turn away from the trees. Do not turn back until I tell you.” Breathless with anticipation, excited, and a little nervous, she waited. She was resolved that no form or visage could be contrary to that voice so fair, so kind.

“Annays, I am here.” it said.

She turned.

If that which stood before her was mortal it was not in even the smallest degree human in form.

If she had been forced to put into words that which was to her mind the most horrifying, the most repulsive of all forms, she would have recoiled from naming her worst fear, but that indeed was what she saw. It was not human, but it was not deformed, it was of all forms that which beyond nightmare repulsed her.

“Annays,” said the beloved, beautiful, sorrowful, voice.

It was the difference between the beauty of the voice and the horror of the physical presence that tormented Annays. Grief-stricken, she mourned the friend she had lost as, day after day, the voice and the vision tore at her mind. To the bewilderment of her family, Annays never spoke again.

No one knew, but Eran did not go to the forest edge any more.

The great hunter’s moon of late autumn hung above the dark and silent vill flooding the landscape with a cold white light through which the river wound like an unpicked black thread. Annays stood under a

drooping alder, pale as the wraiths of mist that wound about her. Pale as the owl that ghosted out from the forest eaves. A heavy dew glistened around and over her bare feet.

As the moon passed a figure was revealed, motionless above the sleeping valley on the rim of the gorge to the west. The thegn Alwaker son of Altei stroked the muzzle of his horse. “It looks almost the same.” He murmured to the beast, then “No, there is a great new stone hall.” The valley had been Alwaker’s land before the dark-haired incomers arrived, his ancestral home given to Eudo by the new king. “They say Eudo is not evil to the people”, Alwaker murmured again. It was fifteen years to the day since Eudo had ridden into the vill and taken possession of the whole manor by the authority of the alien king. Alwaker wanted, one last time, to see his land again and pay his respects to his father’s grave down in the little cemetery beside the bend in the river where the alders drooped, for he was old now and unlikely to ride out much longer.

Over the river a flash of white, moving faster than the curling mist, caught his eye. In spite of the grizzled grey of his beard and thick braided hair, and the knotted joints of his calloused hands, the old thegn’s eyes were still sharp and his body still retained enough of the vigour for which he had been renowned. Now he sprang swiftly onto the horse and sped down into this familiar valley to which his heart and mind belonged.

In the depth of the forest Eran felt a change in the fabric of the night. A thread was cut that he had not cut, a weft unravelled; a fraying jarred the smooth passage of time and life in the valley.

Alwaker came too late, the distance had been a mortal hindrance. Shining in the moonlight the small frail white form swung out over the river. He had to ride down the bank and into the fretting water before he could reach it. Positioning the horse beneath the white figure, he grasped the body round the knees, reaching up with his sword in his right hand to cut the rope. As it sheared through, Annays slumped own into his supporting arm. Holding her gently, Alwaker rode back onto the dewy grass, laid her briefly over the horse’s neck, dismounted and carefully lifted her down, cradling her across his knee as he sought for signs of life.

In the forest, Eran already knew that it was too late.

Alwaker heard nothing until his idle horse snorted, then the old man swung round, startled by the sound. The horse fled. Laying the girl reverently but quickly on the grass the old warrior grasped his sword again as he got to his feet. “Whatever demon you may be, I defy you!” he cried valiantly in his own tongue. Approaching from the forest – a crook-legged moving darkness pierced with eyes that caught the moonlight: “Alwaker, my old friend, we both come too late.” The beautifully modulated voice of Eran the weaver was husky. “I knew the small creature, and now she is not”.

“Eran, Old One, I had not thought to see you again”, exclaimed the old man, and he bowed, recognising the weaver’s once-familiar voice and discerning the limits of the great form. “How do you know this incomer’s child?” he asked.

“I am quite alone now, the last one, and I missed your friendship.” Eran told him simply. “I befriended her, for she too was lonely, and troubled, but she was not you, she saw with - little eyes”. Alwaker nodded his understanding.

He knelt again to raise the frail body of Annays from the cold ground. A gasp interrupted his task. He clutched his left arm, crumpled forward, and rolled onto his back. Eran watched dismayed as he felt life silently retreating from the old warrior’s weary frame. The effort of cutting Annays down had been too much for him. He lay now beside the small body of the dark-haired maid, one greying golden braid had fallen across her shadowy hair spread over the faded grass.

The great moon was sinking towards the western hills as Eran began his loving task. Sadly, deftly, he wove then, grieving for the past and the present. With the first pearling of the sky the ancient weaver crept back to the long solitude of the forest. He had barely reached its margin when the hue and cry was raised.

The search party found Annays lying in the damp grass. Very pale, but beautiful in death, covered as she was with a pall of gossamer lace, incredibly fine and delicate, upon which the dew lay sparkling and glittering in the first rays of morning sunlight so that the pall seemed to be embroidered with diamonds and pearls. Upon her dark hair was wound a chaplet of the same unaccountable fineness and brilliance.

“What has happened here?” cried Daun Gaudefroy as he came running up to the knot of searchers who stood now speechless and amazed, shifting their gaze from the pitiful and beautiful form of Annays to the unexpected sight of the old yellow-haired warrior beside her.

“He killed her!” someone shouted harshly.

“This is the thegn Alwaker!” cried one of the bondsmen indignantly.

Everyone looked at him. They had not recognised the old lord, for he too was draped in the same kind of soft fine pall, the same kind of chaplet garlanding his greying temples.
"Who ever could have done this?" asked the wainwright's son. "I've never seen such stuff."

"The forest elves, that's who." Yonec told him sharply.

"This is the work of angels." said Daun Gaudefroy quietly. "Look at them: Annays, poor child, has taken her life, see, the rope is still upon her neck, and the end is sheared clean through. It has not broken. The old man must have cut her down with his sword and tried to carry her to the vill. See, there are hoof prints but no sign of his horse. It must have run away while he was caring for Annays. The miracle of their shrouds is a sign of her purity, and of forgiveness for her sin, and of his charity, even though he was not of our kind".

Slowly and reverently the searchers raised and carried the bodies in their shining palls back to the vill and laid them together in the little stone ċiriċe. News of the miracle of the palls soon spread abroad and many folk of both races came to the vill to see the work of angels, or elves, that did not corrupt during the lives of men. It became a place of pilgrimage, and of prosperity. Jehan came home to grieve for his sister and care for their remaining family, inheriting Annays' portion of the mill. Count Eudo entertained the King during the following Yule, and everyone said the valley was blessed as the story-tellers commemorated the wonders that attended the death of the girl they called White Annays.

Of the ancient weaver no tale but this ever has been told.

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## Fiction: Mayan Wayfinding

*Brenda Cooper*

Cauac sat silently at his teacher's feet while Ndan gazed at him. When the older man eventually spoke, his voice was calm and soft, yet it seemed to fill all the stone space the two men sat in.

"You are trying to decide your Way. Your Way is your life, your path. It decides you." The power of Ndan's voice made Cauac feel small, but he stiffened his spine, unwilling to give in.

"I will return to the jungle today and wait again."

"And wait for jaguar to ignore you another day?" He swallowed. "If I must." He had dreamed the Jaguar would choose him, that he would feel the cat walking in his body, that it would join him on days of high ceremony and climb the pyramid steps back home in Chichen Itza and marry him to his people. He had even saved for and purchased a jaguar pelt for his costume, for the Dance of the Wayob. It was a fine thing with golden-brown hair surrounding the dark eyes of knowledge that peppered its coat, the mouth open in a scream of power. But since his training began here, the jungle had offered him nothing. Not jaguar, not peccary, not even the howler monkey.

Ndan met his gaze. "If you want to return home with nothing, stay on the path you walk now. But of you want to find your Way, look in another direction."

Why couldn't Ndan just tell him what to do directly? The only other way was the water, and there was no sea around Chichen Itza. It could not be his Way. As if he could read his student's mind, Ndan said, "Your certainty is a barrier for you."

Morning came. Cauac had come down to the white-sand beach below the sacred city. He turned for a look behind him. The bright blue and red pyramids of Zama seemed to loom along the low hills, to ring him with expectation. Swallowing, he turned back to the sea, muttering, "Why do you call me?" The sea simply washed his feet over and over, sighing softly in the morning sunlight. It went forever, far and far, too big a thing to possibly rest in, too big to be welcoming. And now, for the first time ever, he had put his foot in it. Both of them. He stood on the edge of something so big he could not see it all. The brightness of the sun-sprites on the tiny waves made him squint. He took another step. He quivered. Fear, or anger? Two more steps, three, and the water washed his knees. He swallowed and grit his teeth, and breathed out like his teacher had told him, from deep inside the womb of his belly. The sea seemed indifferent to him. He stood there, praying and breathing, water washing up and down his chest now, making him light, as if he were a feather on wind instead of a tall man in the sea. A head popped up in front of him. Golden and orange like a daytime coal from the hearthfire laying upon the water. And a great stone behind it, and then, shocked, he reached a hand out. A turtle. He had seen them on stone stelae, but never alive. A great one,

the pattern of its shell familiar, like the jaguar's, golden-brown rings around spots. A bit of him opened then, and out flew disappointment – the turtle conveyed the gods, rather than being a god itself. But behind the disappointment was wonder. Such a being! It's jaws could enclose his hand, sever it, yet it swam in place in front of him, sometimes doing a small circle and returning, always visible. It wanted him to follow it.

A step would be acceptance. His Way. Different from his hopes. But he had always known it was his duty to follow his Way. Another breath. Another step. The sand fell away from under him and water filled his mouth and he spluttered and flailed. His toes found nothing. His heart beat, fast, and faster. Water closed over his head. There, under his right hand, something bumping him. He pushed on it, rising up, the hump of the shell against his belly, his chest, his heart beating against the great shell of the great turtle. His hand closed around the top of the shell, just behind the great beast's head. It jerked forward, the motion scaring him, making him clutch the shell with his other hand, too. The turtle rose from the sea, giving Cauac access to precious, golden air, letting him gasp and fill his lungs. Then it bobbed once, and Cauac took a breath. Water washed his face as they began to move. He closed his eyes and somewhere inside him he simply knew to hold on. He knew more, as well: the beast was older, older than Zama, older than Chichen. Old enough to have carried the gods to the Ball Court where the hero twins played for the soul of the world. The great shell under his belly was ridged enough to poke into his breast. Perhaps if he could split the shell open (as if he would dare, as if he could bear to), he would find the gods were carrying him out to sea.

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## Fiction: Across The Sea of No Return

*Gareth Caradoc Owens*

The dream was the same every night, settling on his shoulders heavy as the northern snows. They had come to him in the winter these silent ravens of his nightly vision. They stood guard over his sleep, their vigil unbroken, unexplained and unwelcome.

Ludan had travelled far since leaving the great cities of his homeland. The last year that he could remember the name for, was "Year of the Golden Throne". He only knew that because it was the name of the festival during which he had left Karduniash to go wandering.

Ten times since then the sun had passed through the Bull of Heaven, the sign of his birth, and he had travelled further from "The Gods' Gateway" than any civilised man had ever been.

He had learned the ways of the sword from the Ashuriyya, he had learned the ways of the horse in Washukani, he had learned the ways of the sea from the Kaltiyya, and always he was drawn to the west.

Travelling from the shores of the Lower Sea he had sailed beyond the Upper Sea journeying into the Third Sea, the Sea of no Return.

Ludan is what his rescuers named him, unable as they were, to pronounce his given name. A joke in the local tongue about his size, he bore it with good grace as in the speech of the old ones it meant 'Mighty Man'. He stood a full head above everyone that he had met on the Isle of Tin.

Strangers were not always welcome amongst the inhabitants of the Isle, who were known as the tribes of the Daen. After the angry seas had thrown Ludan against the razor sharp black rocks of the Isle, he had escaped the waves only to nearly die of the cold as he clung to life against the fury of the storm. The sons of the Daen had found him and he did not resist as they took his sword from where he had fastened it over his shoulder. Then they led this shaggy giant at spear-point before the head of the clan of Mael.

Ludan shivering with the cold, knew that without the local tongue he needed to find a way to show his worth. In the longhouse of the village one of the small war ponies stood placidly by the seat of judgement.

Ludan slipped his bonds, and with a move as lithe as the salmon leap he crossed the floor to the pony. His guards raised their spears ready to bring him down but the headman waved the warriors back.

Ludan looked around and on seeing that he was being given room to perform bent down low and placed his neck and shoulders under the belly of the pony. With a great scream he lifted the surprised little horse until he, Ludan, stood with his back straight as an Ashuriyyan arrow and a ferocious look in his eyes. In his weakened state the effort nearly killed him. He could feel muscles in his back being pulled and ripped. The pain was as massive as the weight of the pony but his agony merely added to the ferocity of his expression.

The old grey bearded headman smiled and laughed. The potential of such a mighty ally was not lost on him, or the rest of the clan. As this giant of a man stood silhouetted against the flames of the fire in the long house, the chief nodded to himself.

The clan of Mael accepted Lludan, and without their kindness he would not have survived his first winter in the ice. He took up the local custom of dressing in garments of fur and the closely woven cloth of the Bolgea. They even made a round house for him within the village wall, and that had been when the dream started.

He would wake, eyes wide and panting, to find two large birds, one on each shoulder. He had seen nothing like them before he had arrived on the isle but here they were common, large, black, and as shiny as the shell of a beetle. Their loud colonies were like towns in the trees. They called the darkness down at the end of the day and their raucous voices carried on the still and chill air. Yet the two that woke him every night, made no noise. He lay on his back, and they hovered with their great sharp beaks one over each of his eyes.

They said nothing, they made no sound. They merely looked into his soul. Then he would wake a second time, realising that the birds were the spirits of dream. Unlike in normal dreams the birds stayed with him for the whole of the waking day. He could feel their presence with him wherever he walked.

The winter passed and the thin sunlight of the northern spring began to warm the lands. Icy melt waters ran swiftly off the mountains, swelling streams into furious cataracts. The new year was come, winter was dead and the cycle of rituals was set to begin anew. Over the dark months Lludan had listened to the tongue of the sons of Mael, learning to talk a few words as a child does.

The headman of the village had earned the battle name Straight Spear. His hair was long and still mostly black. He wore it unbound as was the tradition amongst the people of the isle. His beard was grey and a jagged and dark scar ran up one cheek stopping before the miraculously uninjured eye and then continuing through his brow.

Straight Spear came to Lludan one morning and informed him that they were to travel with the livestock of the clan to the village of Cadri'ell. The spell weavers there would make the fires of spring and the annual marriages would be blessed or abandoned.

Lludan welcomed the trip. He felt that perhaps he would be able to lose the two black spirits of his dream. They gathered supplies for the journey which would take two days of easy travelling. Easy travelling that was for everyone else in the party but not for Lludan.

A giant of a man was not made for travel on the back of the ponies of the Isle of Tin; therefore he walked.

"Tell me of the fires of spring." He called to Straight Spear on the morning of the second day. They meandered slowly, following their animals through the well-trodden pathways of the deep forest path that led to Cadri'ell.

Straight Spear Smirked, and made a sound like an owl.

"Hooo," he said, "this place is the home of the green, and the winter dies, the green comes again in the spring. The lamb and the goat, the cow and the maiden, are linked with the fertility of these lands. This is the celebration of the rebirth of the world. The livestock is driven between the fires, and the contracts of marriage are made solemn, and more to the point there is much drinking."

"Much drinking?" asked Lludan hopefully.

"*Much* drinking!" came the emphatic reply.

"Straight Spear!" a shout went up from the front of the heard. The old chief looked up and saw that the group had come to a halt. In the path stood a single figure, confident and leaning on the stout handle of a long axe. Its small blade told Lludan that it was better at going through heads than trees. Straight Spear rode casually and unhurriedly to speak to the figure.

"How many cows you takin'?" asked the bandit.

"Thirty-five," said Straight Spear.

"We'll take fifteen," said the bandit.

"I'll suggest a wager", said Straight Spear. He was relaxed and exuded confidence. "My champion against yours, winner takes all, our cattle against your weapons. What d'you say?"

The bandit looked off into the woods and called out.

"What say you Brays, battle of champions?"

A great shout came as answer.

"Hah! Farmers all, nary a warrior amongst the lot of them." A barrel-chested figure emerged from the bracken. His limbs were stout as any carthorse and the muscles that wound around his forearms resembled

a sinuous snake writhing beneath the skin. This was not mere strength for show. He walked confidently down to join his lieutenant.

"Send your best out, old man," he said, "and I'll personally teach you the difference between a warrior and a cow worrier." Brays flung his cloak aside and snatched the axe from the grasp of the first bandit.

"Lludan, it's time to earn your keep." Straight Spear called out, although his gaze never broke from that of the bandit chief.

Lludan walked slowly up the line of cattle, until he stood before Brays. With one hand he slipped the knot of his cloak and threw it to Straight Spear for safekeeping. The gilded pommel of his long sword Sikatsayli, a final gift from Pool priest of SharAn, rose above his shoulder.

In a single liquid move Lludan reached up and grasped the sword bringing it forward, liberating it from its carrying rings and aligning the point so that the entire length of the blade was now directed at the eyes of the bandit, Brays.

Brays looked up, and his face registered exactly how far up he was having to look.

"Bound by honour now you are." Reminded Straight Spear, his voice filled with gentle humour.

Lludan looked at the axe. He had learned to treat axes with a great deal of respect. The shortest fight he had ever seen had been between an Aki'iyya swordsman and his friend, Tarhunda the Luwian at the battle of 'iluseh.

The two warriors had stood assessing each other, Tarhunda had brought down the end of the axe handle on the unprotected toes of his opponent and as the swordsman hopped about comically on one foot, Tarhunda, with a single swipe of his bearded axe, hooked the remaining supporting ankle, pulling it out from under the Aki'iyya so that the unfortunate soldier was sent to the ground on his back, from which he did not get up again.

Ludan looked at Brays, judging the grip with which he held the haft. His right hand was slightly too close to the head, and his grip was slightly too spread out, also Lludan noticed that Brays had all his weight on the back foot, and that his legs were too straight. This was an opponent that had never been taught how to fight; everything that he had learned came from experience and judging by the web of scarring that covered every visible patch of skin he was a slow learner.

The two men stood looking into each other's eyes, weighing up their adversary. Suddenly Lludan saw the moment that he had been waiting for. The bandit Brays blinked, and as he opened his eyes again the focus of his gaze had slightly changed. Lludan lifted one of his feet and planted a great kick into the chest of the surprised bandit chief sending him spinning backwards.

The kick had the desired effect and when Brays turned back to face Lludan the rage burned in his eyes. He rushed the much larger man and once within reach he took a brutal overhead swing with his axe.

The attack was inexpert and easily sidestepped. Brays flew passed and Lludan deftly reaching out to grasp the handle of the axe. In the same motion with an extended ankle he tripped Brays so that the bandit came crashing to the ground, deprived of both weapon and dignity.

Stunned, the bandit took a second to realise that he was lying on the floor and that was all the time that Lludan needed. Placing one foot in the middle of the bandit's back he raised Sikatsayli's deadly curved blade over Brays' head.

"No! Lludan." shouted Straight Spear, staying the swing. "They did not attack us, they did not demand the whole heard, and they accepted the terms of an honourable wager. If you take this man's life, you will dishonour the clan of Mael. Now Brays, order your men to bring down their weapons."

Brays, pinned into the mud, began to laugh.

"Men?" he said. "Men! It's just me and my brother. There are no men, and you already have our axe. Lludan was not yet that fluent with the tongue and Brays had an accent that made the words difficult for him to understand but eventually he realised what the bandit was saying. He had made a fool of him, made him fight when there was no need of it. He felt the rage rising in him in a way that he had not during the mêlée.

The muscles in his arm tensed, the great sword was once more about to begin its downward sweep when Lludan became aware of a noise. It was the sound of laughter. Straight Spear was laughing, a great warm and deep laugh that came from the heart, it was the same laugh that had saved his own life a few short months before.

"Fearless beggars! Ride with us, and share a meal. Your blood shall not stain our hands today. Lludan put up your weapon." Lludan confused did as he was bid. Reluctantly he moved aside and let Brays up.

After that the remainder of the journey through the close-packed forest passed smoothly, if rather grumpily on Lludan's part.

By nightfall they came to the place where forest met plains. The sound of wild music could be heard coming from a large settlement nearby. Behind the great wooden palisade of Cadri'ell, the flickering of many campfires showed, orange and smoky, making the shadows of dancers rise into the evening, spiralling up as though to dance among the stars.

The travellers from Maelgoyd were welcomed as long lost brothers. The tall war-horns were sounded in greeting from the gates and the heard was taken off to pasture. Brays the bandit and his brother Maiv were handed drinking cups full of the dark, sweet, mead so beloved of the peoples of the Isle. The feast was in full swing with musicians filling the air with melodies that were as gentle as the breeze and as wild as the passion that grips the lover.

Lludan tapped Straight Spear on the shoulder, none too gently, for he was still upset over Brays.

"Much drinking?" He said.

"Aye, little Llu, much drinking, and some good eating too." The answer was not what Lludan had been after.

"Much drinking…Now." Straight Spear got the point. A place was made for them at the feast and Lludan received a brimming cup of mead from the great cauldron. A shiny and sticky hunk of meat was placed in his hands and for the first time in months Lludan was happy. A haunch of venison, a cup of mead, only one more thing was needed to make this moment perfect for him. Grinning happily he looked around.

Suddenly the music stopped, the sounds of the celebration ceased, the dancers all froze in their places. Beyond the timid sputtering of the cooking fire, she stood, beautiful and proud. Her hair seemed to be flame itself, her eyes green flashing emeralds that possessed life beyond that imparted to them by the fire. Her skin was as pale as the fresh snow that blanketed the distant mountain tops, and her gaze went through Lludan as if he had been harpooned. The moment stretched, and for all that she was proud Lludan felt in her a vulnerability. She needed him.

He blinked and she was gone. The revels around him were pallid now compared to a few moments before, mere passionless shadows compared to the reality of the full-bloodied beauty that he had just appeared to him. He sat for a moment, shocked. He had seen many things in his wanderings, he had been many people but never had a woman so shaken him to the core. He had to find her. He stood and walked to the place where she had pierced him deeper than any sword. He looked around for some sign of her but she had disappeared.

He returned to where Straight Spear sat and in halting words he asked about the woman. The headman of the clan of Mael, shrugged.

"There are many pretty girls here, from all the clans. Look around, you'll find her." Lludan stood, his cup forgotten. The only thought in him now was to find the mysterious beauty that had put a glamour on him.

He wandered away from the firelight, away from the feast and the music into the darkened part of the village. Everyone was at the celebration and as he walked deeper into the darkness the shouts and laughter dwindled behind him and he could feel the cool air of the night sky and the damp rich grass beneath his feet. The roundhouses of Cadri'ell smelled of the peat of the fires.

Lludan felt a hollowness inside him, the same feeling that he would get before a battle. He reached up and touched the pommel of Sikatsayli for reassurance. He was now crouched over almost double. Unconsciously he had begun to behave as if in an enemy's camp. He stretched his head around the wall of one of the round houses and heard the gentle low murmuring of a whispered conversation between two men.

A small fire before them, two warriors stood in easy conversation. Yet Lludan was able to see from their posture that both were alert and ready to fight. Her eyes burning emeralds, her skin pale as the snow. She was inside and not an army of all the great empires would keep Lludan from her side. He had to find her. Silent as his years of experience had taught him to be, he worked his way through the unattended buildings until he came to the back of the guarded house. Quietly as he could he pulled Sikatsayli clear of her rings, and with his ears straining to catch the murmuring of the guards he began to cut through the thatch of the building.

The rhythm of the conversation did not waver and Lludan worked his way through the grass and the reed hurdles of the wall. He cut with the point of his sword until he had made a hole big enough to peer through. The scene inside the round house showed him what he already knew. She was there, this vision of all things feminine. He managed to get an arm through the hole, and then a shoulder, until he tumbled through onto the straw of a bed that was made next the wall.

The gloom of the space was emphasised by two torches that hung from the upright beams that supported the domed roof. The floor was bare, just made from the hard packed black soil. Between the

beams, she stood, and where everything else in the world was dark and drained, she radiated colour as if she was the only thing real.

He clothes were as red as fresh blood, and her feet were bare.

"You came," she said.

"When you call I will always come," said Lludan in his own tongue.

"I know," she replied.

Lludan looked down and noticed two prostrate bodies curled like puppies on a rug.

"My magic may not kill," she said gently as she saw him notice her guards. "They sleep for now."

"Come, we must leave," said Lludan, indicating the hole he had made in the wall. He turned back, expecting her to follow him but she stood still. Instead she pointed at the ground.

Lludan noticed for the first time a thin ring that encircled her. On the floor around her, in a perfect circle, was placed a ring of feathers from the hooded crow, and both inside and outside of the ring, was another unbroken circle of salt.

"They hold me captive, and they force me to do their bidding." She said. "The villagers of Cadri'ell have taken their wealth from gifts that have been stolen, and power that has been taken against my will." She looked into his eyes and Lludan felt as if a torrent of flame flowed into him. She was beyond all mortal desire, his passion for her burned inside, not like the poets fire, imagined and weak, but like the blade pulled from the forge and pressed against the skin.

"Break the circle Lu Gal, Gnir Nita Kalamgha." She spoke the tongue of the old ones. Lludan knelt down before her, and with his hands he scrabbled at the earth, pushing the feathers aside, and breaking the circles of salt.

"Suddenly he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder, and he stood to find that she was already behind him.

"Leave the way you came, and make straight for the forest, I will meet you there." Lludan was entirely in the thrall of this creature, and although the idea of parting, even for a moment, was more painful than any wound he had ever endured, he made no word of complaint.

He slipped out through the hole in the wall and made for the palisade. Everyone was still at the feast, and only a few warriors patrolled the platform behind the village walls. It was no effort for Lludan to swarm up one of the pilings, and leap over the wall and disappear into the darkness of the forest. He wandered aimlessly for a measureless time, his thoughts chaotic and confused. Turning his back on Cadri'ell, he stumbled into the darkness. He breasted the rise of a small hill and in a hollow on the other side, out of sight of the village, he found her. She sat bright as the fire she had already made in the bracken lined hollow.

In trance Lludan came to her. She held out her hand to him, and he took it. Wordlessly they came together, and for the first time in his life Lludan understood how incomplete a man is. The fire died and Lludan slept with her wrapped in his arm. In his slumber he felt her stir, and he awoke his eyes wide. Before him were the two ravens of his dream, between them the woman that had taken his soul and heart. He could not move. She walked towards him, and where he lay powerless on the ground, she kissed him. She kissed him above his heart, she kissed each of his hands, she kissed him on his throat, she kissed his mouth, and she kissed his forehead. Slowly, her gaze locked with his, she stepped backwards, until she once more stood between the silent birds.For a second Lludan was able to see them as they really were, an old woman with a spindle stood on the left, and on the right a fearsome warrior woman armed as for battle. Then like drifting smoke, there were three of the birds. They turned and flew into the stars of the night sky, cawing as they went.

Lludan woke a second time. She was gone. He stood and faced the dawn alone. Turning his back to the rising sun he began to walk back to Cadri'ell. There was still something of the dream within him. She had left something of her spirit inside him, and he knew that he would never be entirely alone again. Her last gift to him had been to bestow upon him a new name. He was now the one called Gwion. He had been reborn in the rising sun and his path wound ever to the west. He knew that he would not tarry on the Isle of Tin for much longer, and that somewhere across the Sea of No Return his destiny awaited him. The breeze caressed his face, as if from a raven's wing. Gwion set his path towards the west and to the future.

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## Well, I'm Back: Word Magic

*Cecilia Dart-Thornton*

Was Tolkien a synaesthete – a person who perceives one sense in the mode of another? This possibility is important, because the reason he invented languages was to satisfy his synaesthetic taste, and the reason he invented worlds and stories was to create places where his languages could be spoken. "Nobody believes me", Tolkien wrote (*Letters*, 264), "when I say that my long book (the *Silmarillion*) is an attempt to create a world in which a form of language agreeable to my personal aesthetic might seem real. But it is true". Philologist and Tolkien scholar Helge Kåre Fauskanger (http://www.uib.no/people/hnohf/vice.htm) says

> It was important to Tolkien that his invented Elvish languages should be beautiful. Their sound should be pleasing. Tolkien tasted languages, and his taste was finely tuned. Latin, Spanish and Gothic were pleasing. Greek was great. Italian was wonderful. But French, often hailed as a beautiful language, gave him little pleasure. Heaven itself was called Welsh.

For me, personally, much of Tolkien's language is a thrill to the eye as well as to the ear. I've always associated the colour golden yellow with the *letter* "i" as written on the page. Not only a colour, but a sensation of floating. The way thistledown floats; the way tiny mayflies dance just above the surface of water. When reading Elvish names such as Gil-galad, Galadriel, Valinor and Lórien, I see floating golden motes like the leaves of mallorn trees, and when "i" is combined with "l" to make 'sil' 'til' 'lin' 'riel' 'il' etc, that part of the word shimmers like sunlight or even moonlight on water, for it can turn to silver depending on the other letters in the word.

The letter 'a' as the initial letter of a name has a special meaning – I see it as being dark in colouring, close to raven black; a chevron, an arrowhead or spearhead, and a thorn. Its shape is extremely powerful (not to mention its position in the alphabet!) and it is utterly appropriate for Aragorn and Arwen.

I do not know where this comes from, or whether in my case it's really synaesthesia or merely some unconscious learned association. I only know it means for me, as for countless other readers, that Tolkien's Elvish names have an utmost rightness to them. And so it is with most of his other invented words – the harsh, clashing z's and k's of the orc tongue, the solid, brown-bread b's of doughty men's and dependable hobbits' names – Brand and Boromir, Beorn; Boffins Bagginses and Bracegirdles.

The day the young Tolkien came across a book of Finnish grammar in an Oxford library, he found himself in synaesthetic ecstasy. "It was like discovering a complete wine-cellar filled with bottles of an amazing wine of a kind and flavour never tasted before," he wrote. "It quite intoxicated me." (*Letters* 214). It is significant that Tolkien spoke more than once of *tasting* and *flavour* in relation to his experience of language. "Gothic was the first to take me by storm," he wrote: "to move my heart. It was the first of the old Germanic languages I ever met. ... I have, in this peculiar sense, studied ('tasted' would be better) other languages since. Of all save one among them the most overwhelming pleasure was provided by Finnish, and I have never quite got over it."

Thank goodness he didn't. Whether or not he was in fact a synaesthete, the flavours he *tasted* have led to a bewitching literary *banquet* for us. Synaesthesia may well be a neurologically based phenomenon but it *feels* like magic when sounds and written symbols evoke vivid emotions, flavours or clear images in full colour. Perhaps it is the one in twenty-three people with some form of synaesthesia who find Tolkien's works so full of enchantment, or perhaps the spell is cast because, of all writers of fantasy and poetry, J.R.R. Tolkien remains the Lord of Word Magic.

*Cecilia Dart-Thornton's latest book is Fallowblade, published by Pan Macmillan.*