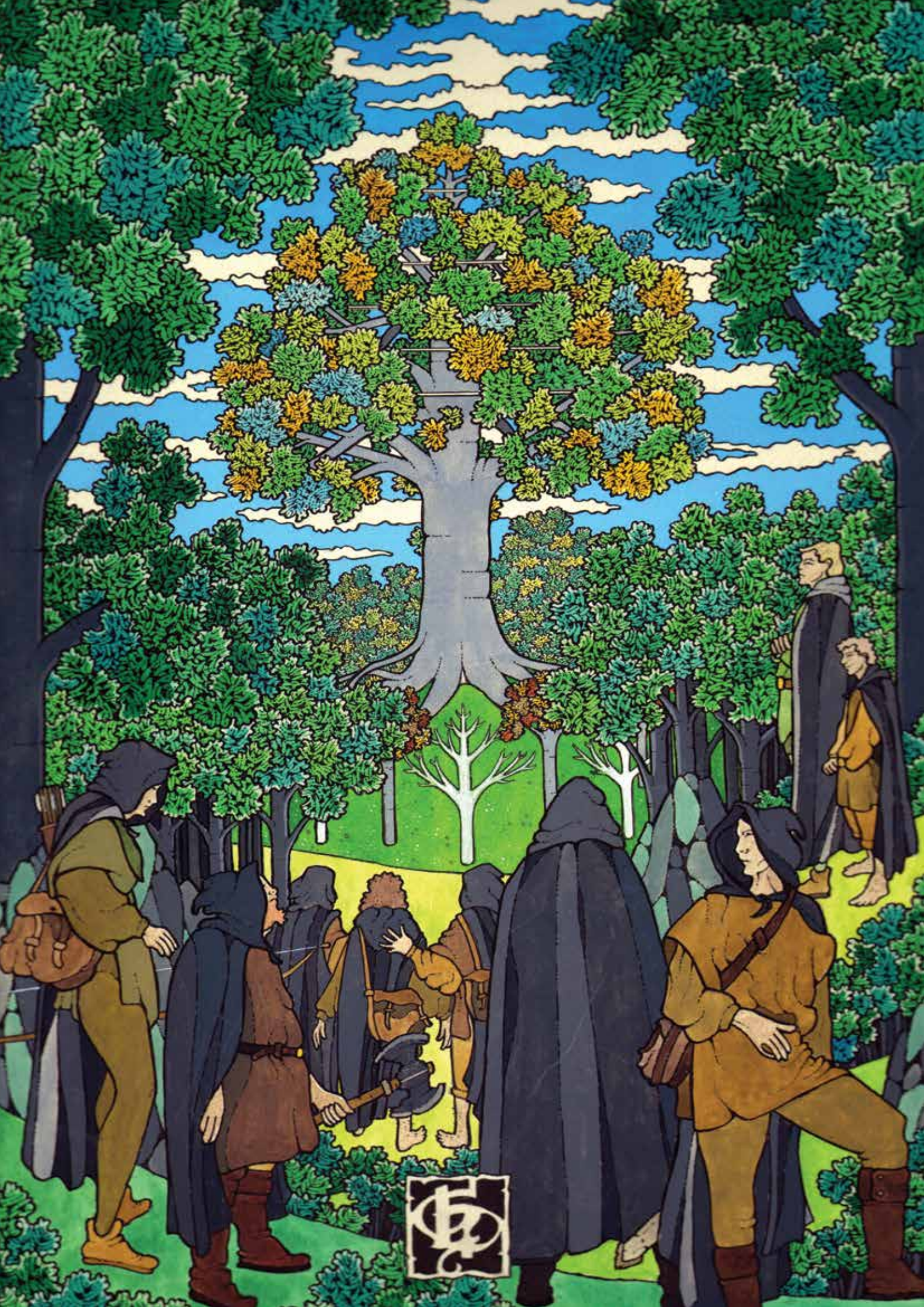


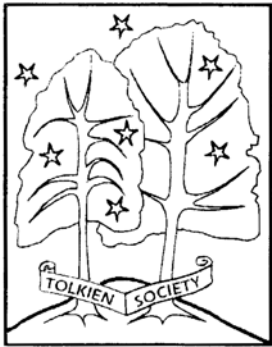
Mallorn

Issue 49 • Spring 2010

The Journal of the Tolkien Society







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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, original poetry, artwork and fiction (excluding fan fiction). Unsolicited material is welcome, but contributors should decide prior to submission to which category their manuscript belongs, and electronic submission is strongly encouraged. Full details on the preparation and submission to *Mallorn* are available on request from the Editor 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). *Mallorn* © 2010 The Tolkien Society. Copyright for individual articles and artwork resides with the authors and is used here under on a nonexclusive licence.

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 bimonthly 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>.

How do we know what we know?



John D. Rateliff

“We ... became acutely aware of the uncertainty of all historical claims and hence of the futility of requiring [absolute] proof ... some historical narratives and explanations are better and some are worse ... these should not be neatly labelled ‘true’ or ‘false’ but as falling along a scale of what I have come to call ‘competitive plausibility.’” (ref. 1)

Sometimes, it’s good to sit back and ask: how do we know what we know? How much of what we think we know is based on solid fact and how much on inspired guesswork? How much of our ‘conventional wisdom’ is, if we were really being honest, closer to biographical fiction? There are some things so well documented as to admit of no reasonable doubt — for example, the date upon which Tolkien began drafting *The Lord of the Rings* (between 16 and 19 December 1937)². There are others — for example, the origin(s) and theological status of orcs — for which the evidence is fragmentary or so contradictory that no definitive answer is possible.

But it is in the vast area between these two extremes where we work, constructing our theories on the basis of partial evidence, weighing the reliability of witnesses and struggling to fill lacunae in the record. Some claims can be dismissed out of hand, because of sheer improbability — for example, that Tolkien was secretly sympathetic to British fascism (debunked by David Doughan, who demonstrated it was based on forged evidence), or accounts of his cavalry exploits behind enemy lines in the First World War (impossible, given the trench warfare conditions on the Western Front when Tolkien arrived there). Sometimes, we want to leap to our feet with a cry of ‘Source, please!’ — as when I once heard a speaker at a science-fiction convention in Milwaukee claim, with perfect seriousness, that Tolkien had a religious conversion as a young man that led

him to destroy everything he’d written up to that point, thinking it was inspired by the devil (sheer fiction, but she was so evasive when challenged that I could never tell if it was her own or somebody else’s). Other claims, although bizarre, can’t be altogether dismissed — for example, did Tolkien really feel that the very ground in Ireland was saturated with ancient evil, only held in check because of the piety of its people? George Sayer, who is often inaccurate on detail but reliable on substantive matters, claimed Tolkien told him so; Sayer is unlikely to have invented such a story out of whole cloth, but did he garble or misunderstand something Tolkien said³?

In addition to the perils of misinformation, there is the problem of sheer lack of data. Tolkien himself spoke of “the great gaps of ignorance over which we now weave the thin webs of our literary history” (*Sir Gawain & the Green Knight/Pearl/Sir Orfeo*, page 13) and was himself an acknowledged master of assembling tiny hints with intuitive guesswork to build a coherent picture. Sometimes, trying to follow his example, we are lucky and what little evidence we have all points in the same direction. And other times we are faced with a puzzle in which the evidence is contradictory: one witness is mistaken, some of our ‘facts’ are wrong — but which ones? How to resolve the impasse when two sources with equal authority disagree?

For Tolkien scholars, this is made all the more interesting because, although the situation has improved vastly over the past 35 years, all the facts are not yet in. There are still uncollected letters out there, unwritten memoirs, annotated books from Tolkien’s library, overlooked clues, unpublished private material (such as Tolkien’s diaries) and, yes, still more unpublished poems and stories and essays (*The Fall of Arthur*, “Sellic Spell”, *The Bovadium Fragments*, “The Ulsterior Motive” ...), which will someday add to our pool of knowledge.

Those academics who devote their attention to long-established figures can draw on generations of prior scholarship as a framework within which to launch their investigations, but we get to enjoy the fun and excitement of being in on the ground floor of a discipline that is still taking shape.

Take, for example, one basic tool for studying an author's works as a whole: the creation of a reliable timeline, sequencing when he or she wrote each work. These provide a way to see development over time and suggest interconnections between works: hence collected works, such as G. B. Harrison's *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1968) or T. O. Mabbott's *Edgar Allan Poe: Tales & Sketches* (1978), often put their respective author's works in chronological order, starting from the earliest and ending with their final works. In Harrison's *Shakespeare*, this sequencing is sometimes based on solid evidence (for example, the date a quarto play was registered) and sometimes tenuous (when something in the play seems to be an oblique comment on current events). Although some parts of the resultant construct are guesswork, the overall structure of the whole can be immensely useful: it organizes all Shakespeare's work in such a way that illuminates his development as a writer, from his early blood-and-thunder to his complete mastery of his form at the peak of his career, pushing that form to its limits and perhaps beyond. Thanks to Christopher Tolkien's work in *The History of Middle-earth* series, I think we are on the verge of achieving something very like this in Tolkien scholarship; that we now have almost all the tools needed to do the job.

I was reminded of this recently when, looking through some papers of the late Taum Santoski, I came across a loose-leaf binder labelled 'Chronology of the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien', compiled in 1984 and thereafter periodically updated as new information became available. We have long known the general outlines of Tolkien's career — first coming up with his invented languages and secondary world of Middle-earth as an undergraduate and young soldier during the First World War, scholastic brilliance in the 1920s and 1930s,

writing the core of what we think of as *The Silmarillion* even before *The Hobbit*, which in turn was followed by his masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*, ending in a late twilight in which he worked on many small projects but failed to bring his life's work to what he would have considered a satisfactory end. But the details have been a long time coming, and there are still a number of decidedly fuzzy spots in the overall picture.

Back in the long-ago, when I first entered Tolkien scholarship, all of Tolkien's known works could be found in West's list⁴, a mere 38 items, roughly evenly divided between 16 academic and 22 literary works. With a little diligence and a good interlibrary loan

Almost all the materials needed to sequence Tolkien's works are now available.

department, it was not that difficult to track down and read virtually all of them, even including his more obscure philological pieces. Then came Carpenter's biography in 1977, which almost doubled the number of known works to 70 items (with his 'Appendix C: The Published Writings of J. R. R. Tolkien') and not only added a good deal of information about Tolkien's better-known works but established the framework we all still use for understanding the shape of Tolkien's career.

But within that framework, the details remained decidedly murky. Carpenter's biography, plus *Letters* (1981), made it clear that publication date was no certain guide to date of composition. Many of Tolkien's works were published years after they'd originally been written, a good example being 'The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun', which had been drafted by 1930 — about the time he started *The Hobbit* — but not published until 1945, when he was nearing the end of *The Lord of the Rings*. Others differed considerably between their earliest and latest versions, such as the 1937 and 1965 publications of 'The Dragon's Visit'. And so matters stood when Taum compiled his 'Chronology of the Works', drawing from primary sources such as Carpenter and *Letters* and the earlier of the posthumous volumes such as *The Book of Lost Tales*, supplemented by secondary sources such



as *Letters of C. S. Lewis* (in the original 1966 edition), *They Stand Together* and *Brothers & Friends* — the last of which he supplemented by some additional unpublished entries from Lewis's brother Warnie's diaries at the Wade.

Looking back, it is amazing how much can now be added to this, thanks to *The History of Middle-earth* (1983–96) and, more recently, Hammond and Scull's *Companion & Guide* (2006), the *Chronology* volume alone of which runs to 1,002 pages of smallish type. Some of this expansion comes from the fact that whereas Taum merely tabulates an event, Hammond and Scull quote extensively — theirs is less a timeline and more a biography in tabular form. To the basics already available from published sources they have added information gleaned from many uncollected letters and their extensive researches into his publisher's archive and into Oxford records to provide a skeleton of his academic activity (such as lectures and committee meetings). Thus for the year 1932 Taum provides six entries (four drawn from Carpenter, the remaining two from Warnie's diaries), whereas Hammond and Scull devote five dense pages (*Chr.* 162–167) to 48 separate entries. Or take 1935, for which Taum gave a single entry (“T. lectures ‘Finn and Hengest’”) whereas Hammond and Scull have three and a half pages (*Chr.* 176–179), or 42 entries, mostly drawn from Oxford records regarding the school year

and various academic duties (committee meetings he attended, the start and end of terms), plus a few historical events about the world outside (such as the King's jubilee or the beginning of the Abyssinian War). Even with all this additional information, aside from starting work on his ill-fated *Ancrene Wisse* edition, which would bedevil him for almost 40 years before finally seeing print in 1962, we are left knowing almost nothing about what literary projects Tolkien might have been working on that year.

The practical upshot of this welcome wealth of information is that, between primary, secondary and associative sources we now know more than ever before: almost all the materials needed to sequence Tolkien's works are now available, albeit buried amid a mass of biographical data and thus in need of extraction, evaluation and presentation. Putting it together into a chronology devoted to when Tolkien wrote what tells us things about Tolkien as a writer that we might otherwise overlook or misapprehend. For example, during my work on *The History of The Hobbit* it quickly became evident from such an assemblage and the evidence of the manuscripts themselves that Tolkien was not the kind of writer who works an hour each night, adding another few pages to his current project, but one who wrote in short, intense bursts, generally over the vacation times, between terms. Similarly, he was not one to concentrate all his energies by focusing

on a single project at a time but was always juggling multiple projects, and sometimes it can be significant which projects were being written at the same time (for example, the references to the Necromancer in *The Hobbit* came at the same time he was working on *The Lay of Leithian*, in which Beren & Luthien face the same Necromancer). I'd like to devote the rest of this piece to a brief discussion of several examples of the different kinds of evidence that help us establish what Tolkien wrote when.

Exhibit one: *The Hobbit*

Unlike the origins of *The Lord of the Rings*, which are exceptionally well documented, the writing of *The Hobbit* long presented a number of puzzles, chiefly because Tolkien himself, years after the event, could not recall the exact dates. Fortunately, we have a plethora of sources to help us establish when he began the book (summer 1930), completed the draft (January 1933) and revised the whole for publication (summer/autumn 1936). Here our sources include interviews given by Tolkien in which he recounted the book's origin; a publisher's memorandum; a letter to a newspaper; a friend's letter to a third party; a child's letter to Father Christmas; an after-dinner speech by one of his sons; and, above all, the testimony of the manuscript itself. Gathering, weighing and assembling all this and more into a coherent narrative was the chief goal of my essay 'The Chronology of Composition' (*Mr Baggins*, pp. xi–xx). Even so, it's important to note that for the 1933 date all the relatively sparse evidence we have supports the same conclusion, whereas for the 1930 date we have a much greater body of evidence, which includes many contradictions: it's not possible to reconcile them all, and reaching a conclusion that best fits the majority evidence requires us to identify and reject the more unreliable testimony.

Exhibit two: *Mr Bliss*

With this little posthumously published and lavishly illustrated tale we have the problem of two clusters of evidence, either of which might be right but which cannot both be true. Given two contradictory conclusions, two divergent dates, our difficulty becomes

choosing between them. First, there was Humphrey Carpenter's suggestion that it was written *circa* 1932 or shortly thereafter, following Tolkien's purchase of a motor car that same year. This was later challenged by Michael Tolkien's wife Joan, who stated that it had instead been written in 1928, inspired by a toy car of her husband's. Normally such a piece of eyewitness testimony, even conveyed second-handed many years later, would have more authority than a biographer's best guess, but it turns out that we have a few other clues that demonstrate that the later date is far more likely.

First, there is Christopher Tolkien's opinion that the writing of the manuscript more closely resembles his father's hand from the 1930s, not that of the 1920s⁵. Second, there is Tolkien's statement (*Letters* pages 347–348) that the character 'Gaffer Gamgee' was inspired by a local eccentric encountered on a family holiday to Lamora Cove; according to *The Tolkien Family Album* (page 62), this holiday took place in 1932. This is significant, because 'Gaffer Gamgee' has a cameo appearance in *Mr Bliss* (pages 36–37). Therefore, thanks to this one detail in the story, Tolkien's comment about that character's origin, and our being able to date that vacation, we can establish '*circa* 1932–33' as the more likely date.

Exhibit three: *Farmer Giles of Ham*

Here we have the same problem as confronted us with *Mr Bliss*, but without the benefit of external evidence to tip the balance one way or the other it remains unresolvable. We know the origin of this story was an impromptu tale told when a sudden downpour interrupted a picnic and the family took refuge under a bridge; hence it cannot have been before 1926, when the Tolkiens moved back to Oxford (as the story provides folk-explanations of Oxfordshire place-names). But when was the story actually written? A good case can be made for *Farmer Giles* in its original form having preceded *The Hobbit* (*ca* 1929), and an equally good one for its having been written immediately afterwards (*ca* 1933–34); knowing which would illuminate Tolkien's development as a story-teller. The impasse might seem unresolvable, but if we take

into account the manuscript evidence, we find that the first handwritten draft and first typescript of Giles' story both more closely resemble the very earliest material for *The Hobbit* (the unfinished first chapter; what in *Mr. Baggins* I call 'the Pryftan Fragment' and 'the Bladorthin Typescript', respectively) than they do either the manuscript or typescript of the bulk of that work. This in turn suggests that the earlier date is somewhat more likely than the later, although this dating must be marked as tentative for now⁶.

And so it goes. Sometimes events that went unrecorded at the time can be reconstructed from associative evidence — for example, the origins of the Inklings to ca 1933–34⁷. Sometimes things that seem obvious, such as *The Times* obituary of Tolkien having been written years before by C. S. Lewis, turn out to be surprisingly difficult to prove⁸. But just as partially assembling a jigsaw puzzle itself creates a framework that offers clues for where the remaining pieces might fit in, so too even suggestive gaps in a partial Chronology of the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien will clarify the possibilities for tentative datings that can later be revised, rejected or confirmed.

All in all, these are exciting times to be a Tolkien scholar. It can be argued that we're living in the Golden Age of Tolkien Studies⁹, and there's no reason to think it's on the wane, or to doubt that more works of the quality we've enjoyed over the past decade or so are on the way. In addition to new books by the fine array of Tolkien scholars currently publishing, I look forward to seeing what projects, by scholars whose names I don't even know yet, will see the light of day over the coming decade.



1. Bernal, M. *Black Athena Writes Back* 55 (2001). Bernal goes on to elaborate, contrasting the Holocaust with speculations on the origins of Minoan and Mycenaean civilization: "[T]o put this massively documented event [the Holocaust], which took place in... my life time, on the same plane as the reconstruction of the murky origins of Greek civilization over thirty-five hundred years ago is absurd. When dealing with this distant period we are not dealing with proof... but with 'competitive plausibility'" (p. 384). Elsewhere he re-emphasizes the point: "I do not deal in proof but in competitive plausibility" (p. 95). For a detailed summary of Bernal's iconoclastic and controversial thesis, see his introduction to the first volume of *Black Athena* (1987), particularly pp. 22–73.
2. *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, 26–27.
3. Burns, M. *Perilous Realms* 19 (2005). To make matters more uncertain, we do not have any document by

Tolkien in which he says this, nor did Sayer himself recount it in written form. Instead, it comes from a transcription of an informal discussion between Carpenter, Kilby and Sayer, published in a fanzine 30 years ago (*Minas Tirith Evening Star* 15–16; January 1980). The discussion itself took place at Wheaton on 29 September 1979 — the original audiotape of that event is lost. The lack of a first-hand source means the opportunities for garbling or distortion are high, yet these do not altogether discount its being a genuine anecdote that truly reflects Tolkien's view (or a view of Tolkien's) unrecorded elsewhere.

4. West, R. *Tolkien: A Checklist* (1970).
5. See Jared Lobdell's essay in the catalogue accompanying the 1987 manuscript exhibition at Marquette.
6. Another example of two clusters of evidence supporting an earlier and a later date is C. S. Lewis's posthumously published *The Dark Tower*, which was written either in 1938 or ca 1944–46. The latter range is more probable, but either is possible; it depends on which evidence you accept and which you reject.
7. Here our chief source is Tolkien's 1967 letter recounting the group's origin (*Letters* 387–388). As far as we know, Lewis himself never gave any account of the group's founding. Although vague on dates ("probably mid-thirties"), Tolkien's statement that the group took its name from an earlier group centred around undergraduate Edward Tangye Lean helps establish a starting date of ca 1933 (the year Lean left Oxford). Warnie Lewis retired and came to live with his brother in late 1932, and Dr 'Humphrey' Havard, the fourth of the core members who attended most often and over the longest span of years, moved to Oxford in 1934 and was invited to join soon afterwards; he told me he had the impression they'd already been meeting for some time: hence ca 1933–34 seems the most reasonable date, given the available evidence. The earliest contemporary documentary proof of their existence comes from CSL's first letter to Charles Wms, dated 11 March 1936, in which he invites Williams to visit "a sort of informal club called the Inklings" (*Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis* Vol. II, 183). In a good example of the indirectness of proof with which we must cope, Lewis's original letter does not survive, and we only know about it because of a typed copy made by Williams's disciple and designated biographer, Raymond Hunt, to whom Wms passed along letters he received praising his work so they could figure in the eventual authorized biography. In the event, Hunt never wrote the book, but he did preserve material that would otherwise have been lost, such as this first known mention of the Inklings. Curiously enough, one source of evidence we might expect to be able to draw on fails us in this case: Warnie Lewis, who kept diaries throughout the period 1932–36, does not mention the Inklings until as late as 1945 (*Brothers & Friends* 182), by which point they had been meeting for a decade or more.
8. It might seem odd that a man who died in 1963 should write the obituary of his friend who outlived him by a decade, but soliciting 'file obituaries' to be kept on hand until needed is a standard practice of newspapers and newscasts around the world. Lewis's authorship of this piece was widely accepted throughout the 1970s and 1980s (see Carpenter's biography, p. 133) but was challenged, on somewhat dubious grounds, in the 1990s. My research is ongoing on this one — I've now found proof that Lewis indeed wrote such an obituary; the only remaining problem is to establish to what degree the one published in 1973 might have been reworked (I'm inclined to think not, aside from the obvious addition of Tolkien's date of death and age at the time).
9. See 'Sacnoth's Scriptorium', "The Golden Age of Tolkien Studies", posted 7 April 2008; <http://sacnoths.blogspot.com/2008/04/golden-age-of-tolkien-studies.html>.

A corner of Middle-earth

SIR — Having gathered several recent issues of *Mallorn* for close inspection, I must say I appreciate the ways in which our journal continues to evolve and mature; to encourage and embrace both original, proactive academic research and a broad spectrum of the written and visual creative arts.

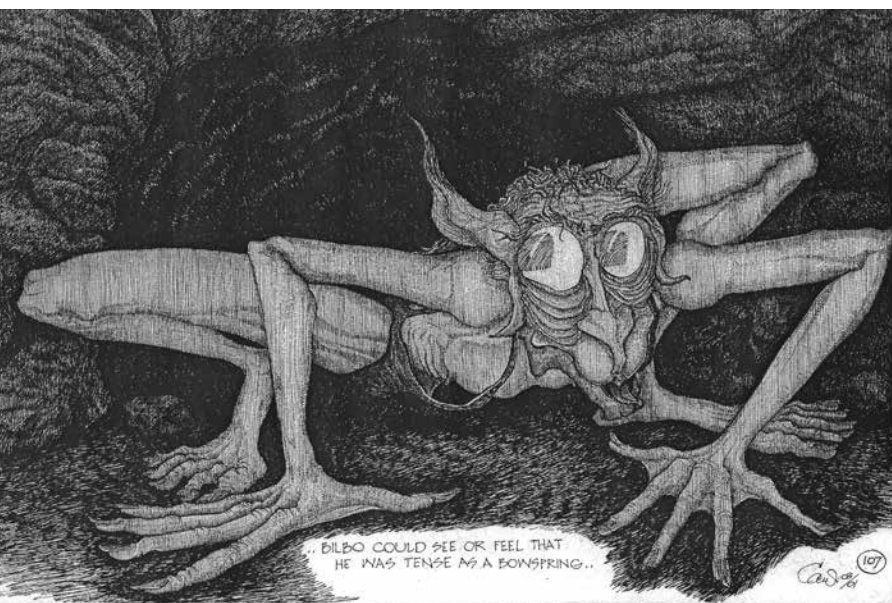
In its present incarnation, *Mallorn* successfully encompasses two distinct roles: first, it provides an accessible, friendly forum and gallery for informed formal and semi-formal Tolkien-related debate, discussion and artistic creativity for, and by members of the Tolkien Society. Second, *Mallorn* represents the published, public face of the society, and show-cases aspects of Tolkien studies as practised by the present occupants of Middle-earth. Ultimately, *Mallorn* is what we want it to be and what we make it. By the way, writers trained in the humanities are required to use appropriate footnotes, references and the like to identify sources and supporting evidence to shield themselves from accusations of plagiarism. Within academe, terrible consequences await those found to have exploited other researchers' thoughts and findings without crediting them.

In *Mallorn* 48, I especially enjoyed John Garth's Editorial on J. R. R. Tolkien's nomenclature. It would seem that John and I have been working on similar material from different directions. John has been considering Tolkien's use of multiple personal names for his characters, whereas I, via my landscape investigations, have been exploring Tolkien's approach to naming his physical Middle-earth places, features and locations. It would seem that, in writing *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien chose to give real places false names; false names that could/can, however, be philologically explained. With regard to fans' use of Middle-earth nicknames: I suspect Tolkien disapproved of fans simply 'borrowing' names from his books. Would he have considered such borrowings as laziness? I suggest that the

creative thinker and educator I have been privileged to walk beside for the past four years would expect his readers to use linguistics and philology to translate and reinvent their own personal names. I think Tollers would have gained much pleasure from discussing, at length, the origins of such invented names over a pipe and a pint or two.

Maggie Burns's paper on the 'tale-teller' provides much food for thought. 'Feign' also has the archaic meanings: to shape, invent or imagine. My ongoing landscape questings indicate that the feigning (shaping, reinventing) of appropriate elements of real localized history and geography represents the bedrock of Tolkien's Middle-earth subcreation. As a historian I would ask: what is 'true' history? Historians are human. Whether we like it or not, we are all influenced by personal, cultural, professional, commercial and/or political agendas. A 'true' history can only be written by an unbiased, objective thinker. When it comes to researching and writing history, we are all subjective creatures to a greater or lesser extent — sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously. We choose the objects of our research, then tend to select supportive evidence that we can analyse and cite in support of our hypotheses. A historian's nightmare is to discover, late in the day, irrefutable, primary-source evidence that challenges or disproves one's core hypothesis. It has long been said that 'history' is written — or 'spun'? — by the victors.

You say the last reference to *Mallorn* in *Tolkien Studies* was issue 44: methinks it is high time we took the academic Balrog by the horns (do Balrogs have horns?) and reclaim our Tolkienesque literary heritage from the University of West Virginia! Not only do we have some first class thinkers on this side of the pond, but we also have the real Middle-earth on our doorstep. No excuses!
Paul H. Vigor

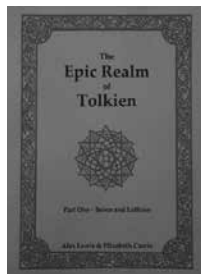


From the Editor

Thanks, as ever, to all who continue to contribute to *Mallorn*. Contributions are always welcome. The next issue will be *Mallorn*'s 50th, so I'd like to run something especially celebratory of the Tolkien Society, its membership, activities and influence. I'll leave the nature of such celebrations up to you, and I look forward to reading them, along with your usual contributions of essays, reviews, poetry, fiction and art. Thanks to you, the readers and contributors since *Mallorn* first appeared more than 30 years ago, *Mallorn* is now a journal of high regard both inside the Tolkien Society and in the world at large. Ladies and Gentlemen, keep it up.

A question of source

TOM SHIPPEY



The Epic Realm of Tolkien: Part One — Beren and Lúthien

Alex Lewis and Elizabeth Currie
228 pp, ADC Publications (2009)
ISBN 978-0-9551900-3-2, £19.99,
available from malcx@adcbooks.co.uk

One of Tolkien's most familiar warnings is his citation of George Dasent, the fairy-tale translator, in his essay *On Fairy-stories*:

In Dasent's words, "We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled" ... By "the soup" I mean the story as served up by its author or teller, and by "the bones" its sources or material — even when (by rare luck) those can be with certainty discovered. (*The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, p. 120)

It is worth considering what Tolkien meant by this. He clearly meant that the search for sources should not get in the way of appreciating the primary text. He equally clearly thought that source-spotting was not as easy as people assumed: once things have been boiled down into soup, it's difficult if not impossible to separate them out again. The image also indicates that creative writing demands more than just putting bits together: the 'boiling' in the author's mind (or in a sequence of authors' minds) is even more important than the ingredients. And finally, one might reflect on the poor 'ox', the source text itself, considered in its own right and not just as an ingredient. It may have been an interesting and attractive work per se, but by the time it's been exploited by the source-hunter, what is it? All too likely, a heap of dry bones.

What Tolkien was giving was a multiple warning. Who knows what a source is or was? Similarity does not prove connection. Does it matter anyway? Spotting a source is only valuable if it tells you something about the target-work. Can the selective paraphrases beloved of source-hunters be relied on? You must always try to see the source, as well as the target-text, in the round and as a whole. And who can tell what goes on in the alchemy of the mind? Even the author himself couldn't tell you what he or she half-remembered, was once struck by. Where did the word 'hobbit' come from? It came from "the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, [which] has always been boiling" (*MC* p. 125), or possibly fell as a leaf from the Tree of Language. But even if we found its 'source', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* has claimed to, that would tell us nothing about what Tolkien did with it.

I labour these points because none of them seems to have struck the authors of *The Epic Realm of Tolkien*, with (in my opinion) fatal results for their argument. They want to prove that Tolkien's primary sources for the Beren and Lúthien story, in its various formats from *The Book of Lost Tales* through to *The Silmarillion*, come from the Arthur legends, and in particular from two versions of them: the tale of 'Culhwch and Olwen' in *The Mabinogion* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. The first is likely enough as a source or influence. As Lewis and Currie point out, Tolkien wrote a long poem on The Fall of Arthur, so he was interested in the legend. He also owned several texts of *The Mabinogion*, as well as Lady Charlotte Guest's translation, and 'Culhwch and Olwen' is interesting as probably the earliest example of an Arthurian tale: Tolkien certainly knew it. The German romance strikes me as less likely and, as I am cited on page 7 as having pointed to Tolkien's interest in medieval German romance, perhaps I should here indicate more precisely what I thought, which is that Tolkien was interested in medieval German romance in so far as it preserved elements of the older, native legends or mythology of the North, as is the case with *Orendel*, *Kudrun* or *The Nibelungenlied* — but not with Wolfram's *Parzival*. Tolkien may have read it, or even been told about it, but I don't see it as a primary interest.

Where, then, are the proofs? Lewis and Currie begin by arguing a connection between 'The Tale of Tinúviel' and the German romance of Gauriel von Muntabel (which they have got, like much else, from the sequence of *The Arthur of the ...* books published by University of Wales Press, in this case *The Arthur of the Germans*). Asterian in the romance has a name with first element meaning 'star', as is the case with Tolkien's Tinwelint: true, but 'similarity does not prove connection'. Meanwhile both Tolkien's Gwendeling and later on his Lúthien are associated with nightingales, and Lewis and Currie comment: "In medieval thought, the nightingale is the bird of true love and spiritual aspiration (as opposed to the cuckoo, symbol of carnal lusts)." Lewis and Currie back this up by reference to the late medieval poem *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, which Tolkien again is bound to have known, but their comment is seriously misleading. The trajectory of the nightingale symbol is a complex one, and lumping it all together under 'medieval thought' is naive.

One thing they should, however, have remembered is Tolkien's interest in the poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, much earlier than the *Cuckoo* poem, much more interesting, a mainstay of the Oxford syllabus and in some way or other taken personally by Tolkien. The author of that poem seems to be one Nicholas (of) Guildford, and that is the name given

jokingly to the author of *The Notion Club Papers*, in other words Tolkien himself (see *Sauron Defeated* p. 156). In *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the nightingale is a symbol of illicit and adulterous love, as in Marie de France's *Lai de Laüstic* and any number of other (early) medieval texts, in one of which, at least, it becomes pornographic. Lewis and Currie mention Marie de France's *Lai* later on, and say that it "concerns true love versus platonic but adulterous love". No: the only love in the poem is the platonic but adulterous one, though this may well be in Marie's thinking 'true love' as well. But there's no 'versus' there. The conclusion one must draw is that Lewis and Currie cannot be relied on to see their sources 'as a whole and in the round'. They just want to fit them into an argument.

The way that argument proceeds is to look at, in succession, 'The Tale of Tinúviel', 'The Lay of Leithian' and chapter 19 of *The Silmarillion*, noting developments, and trying to find an Arthurian source for as many elements as possible. Some are quite plausible: the early Welsh demon cat, Cath Palug, as a model for Tevildo, the hunting of the great boar Twrch Trwyth as a model for the hunt of the wolf Karkaras. Others are much more dubious. Tolkien dithered between deciding whether Beren was an elf or a man. The author of 'Culhwch and Olwen' does not dither between, but seems uninterested in deciding whether Olwen is woman or giantess. Is it therefore "the only source that can account for Tolkien's early hesitation" (p. 15)? Only if you believe that everything in a text must come from a source, including authorial uncertainties. Similarly, the list of items demanded by Chief Giant Yspaddaden for his daughter's hand in marriage (39 of them, tediously enumerated in 'Culhwch and Olwen', as against the one demanded by Tinwelint/Thingol) is never completely fulfilled, as Arthur notes. Beren also fails to hand Thingol the Silmaril — for reasons every reader of Tolkien will recall — and Lewis and Currie conclude that both stories share the "motif of partial fulfilment of the outrageous request" (p. 19). But the scenes aren't like each other at all! Arthur's remark is merely *en passant*, Beren's is a major climax for the whole story. Many things look similar if you paraphrase them ruthlessly and selectively.

Even less convincing, however, are the attempts to drag in Wolfram's *Parzival*. Lewis and Currie's argument (which unfortunately I here have to paraphrase, I hope fairly) goes like this: Yspaddaden's list includes among its 39 items a magic cauldron, a magic hamper and magic bottles. Scholars connected these long ago with the Holy Grail, one of whose legendary properties is to serve everyone the food they most desire, a bit like the hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir. Wolfram's is one of many Grail romances, and its hero Parzival is commonly equated with Peredur, who has a romance of his own in the Mabinogion collection, and who is an older Grail-hero than the more familiar Galahad. Lewis and Currie conclude: "Therefore, it is very likely that

Tolkien would have turned to the Perceval lineage of Grail stories in general and to Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* in particular as the logical source for extensions to the idea that the Grail in some form [is part of the bride-price to be paid for Olwen]" (p. 28). Is the Silmaril that is the bride-price for Lúthien then to be equated with the Grail? There is a long discussion of this, with many implausible stretches — on page 34, are we to assume that anything known by one Roman Catholic priest is then available to all the others? — but among the stronger similarities is the fact that both are pure and will not bear the touch of anything unholy (like Karkaras, p. 30), while among the weaker is the suggestion that Cai's polished shield, in another Welsh tale, explains Beren striking at the wolf with the Silmaril, "a dazzlingly shiny, reflective object" (p. 79). "Both rings are round, and there the resemblance ends," said Tolkien on another occasion (*Letters* p. 306). Here he might well have said: "both objects are shiny, like a great many others".

Picking out unlikelys could go on a long time, but soon becomes tedious. It seems to me that one basic problem for the authors of this study is that they cannot conceive of anything not having a written source. On page

81 they state that they have "demonstrated that the matter of the main Quest for the Silmaril has been derived from largely Arthurian sources rather than it being a mystery as to how Tolkien worked his sources to derive his tale". But it never was a mystery "as to how Tolkien worked his sources". Does everything in a tale have to be derived from a source? Furthermore, it is not until page 180 that the authors get round to asking "what was Tolkien actually trying to achieve?"

Their answer is then quite an engaging one, but is based again on slender and second-hand evidence. Briefly, the most prominent early account of the Arthurian story is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (ca 1130), and Geoffrey — dismissed early on and ever since as a terrible liar — says his authority was *quendam Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum*, words that I give here in the original Latin, "a very old book in the British language". In modern times there has been some argument as to whether *Britannici sermonis* means 'in Welsh' or 'in Breton', for Geoffrey had connections to both groups, but Lewis and Currie argue that it could be taken to mean 'in English' — and what Tolkien was doing, accordingly, in writing *The Book of Lost Tales* and the later recensions of it was recreating Geoffrey's alleged lost book, in English, as (I think they mean) the lost foundation of English legend. The main problem here is that nobody now thinks that *Britannici sermonis* could mean 'in the English language', which would be *Anglici sermonis*. The authority Lewis and Currie cite is Sebastian Evans's 'Epilogue' to his 1903 translation of Geoffrey. This means admittedly that Tolkien could have read it, but would he have accepted Evans's idea? No one else has. When Lewis and Currie say that Evans's translation was approved by "one

You must always try to see the source, as well as the target-text, in the round and as a whole.

of the foremost American medievalists of the day, Lucy A. Paton, from Cambridge, Massachusetts” — well, with no disrespect to the lady, she’s not a clinching authority. Nor do you have to approve of everything in a book for which you agree to write an introduction.

Books of this kind would do better, in my opinion, if they gave less information, made fewer connections, and thought more seriously and open-mindedly about the connections

that, on reflection, they felt inclined to stress. In this book some possibilities, even probabilities, are drowned by a clamour of stridently argued but evidently doubtful cases. The best way to read it is to dip in here and there. As a connected argument it does not work. Nevertheless, the authors’ ramble through many medieval sources may, here and there, hit on something. Usually, though, the position (as with night-ingles) is a lot more complex than they admit. m

The shape of a story

CHAD CHISHOLM



Rhetorics of Fantasy

Farah Mendlesohn

336 pp, Wesleyan University Press
(2008)

ISBN 978-0819568687, £23.50

As the title suggests, Farah Mendlesohn’s book is a re-examination of fantasy literature, but through the lens of rhetoric. Rhetorical criticism of literature is an interest of mine. Its popularity grew substantially in the twentieth century: the resurrection of rhetorical studies in universities was quickly felt in writing and speech classrooms, but for me, Wayne Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961 displays many of the possibilities that rhetorical criticism has for the study of literature, which seem limitless.

Naturally, I was hoping Mendlesohn’s book would provide — as Booth did — a flexible categorization to help organize fantasy texts and authors based on narrative shaping, and a wide range of illustrations from fantasy works that show the individual elements of the rhetorical situation (which were, according to Lloyd Bitzer, author, text, audience, constraints and exigence). Mendlesohn’s book, however, is more successful at the former than the latter.

From the beginning, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* provides a workable taxonomy containing four categories for grouping texts of fantasy: portal-quest, immersive, intrusive and liminal.

According to Mendlesohn, portal-quest is where the characters enter the fantasy world through a doorway, and the fantastic does not enter the world on the other side. In novels such as C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, this door is literal, but it can be metaphorical as when Tolkien takes pains in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to differentiate between the Shire where Bilbo and Frodo live and the fantastical realms of Fangorn and Lothlórien where they have their adventures.

The immersive is where the reader is more fully immersed into the fantasy world along with its values and assumptions.

Mendlesohn believes the immersive differs from the portal-quest because there is either less or no need for narrative exposition, as the reader is assumed to be familiar with the fantastic elements within the setting. The vampire novels of Laurell K. Hamilton, Mendlesohn claims, share immersive elements because the reader would otherwise be more terrified of the horrific creatures in the books if he or she did not feel a part of this world.

The rhetoric of the intrusion fantasy is designed to make the reader feel the fantastic intrude forcibly on the frame world; the result of this approach is to make the reader experience the terror and awe of the fantastic as if it were encroaching on his or her own world. An example of intrusion is in Lewis’s *The Magician’s Nephew* where the Queen Jadis leaves the woodland between worlds and causes major disruptions in Victorian London, or when the Nazgûl enter the Shire searching for Frodo and the Ring of Power, and terrorize the Shire residents.

Finally, the liminal fantasy, the rarest according to Mendlesohn, is where rather than entering the fantasy world through the wardrobe, elements of the fantastic instead leak through the portal doorway in a reverse flow. The result of such a backwash is baffling and, at times, even remarkable. An example Mendlesohn provides is H. G. Wells’s story ‘The Door in the Wall’ where a man is three times tempted to walk through a green door, and each time he refuses this doorway to the fantastic. In this story, Mendlesohn contends that this seemingly ordinary story is different because of the apprehension created by the introduction of this small, fantastical element.

Although the taxonomy of *Rhetorics of Fantasy* is compelling, Mendlesohn’s illustrations of the rhetorical movements within fantasy often seem rushed. Indeed, were I to use a single word to describe her work, it would be Treebeard’s characteristic admonishment for Hobbits lost in Fangorn: ‘hasty’. Some of the problem is because Mendlesohn uses so many books for her taxonomy, more than most bookworms have read. (For example, although I have read many fantasy novels, I’ve never read the Conan series.)

However, this confluence of so many texts and haste makes for some questionable conclusions. Most of the hasty passages are too lengthy in their entirety for a short review,

but a shorter, less significant quote can illustrate some of the problems:

Even though *The Sword of Shannara* is horribly overwritten ('was dumbfounded,' was 'incredulous' that someone knew the way; adjectives are piled upon adjectives), what is immediately evident, and rather disconcerting, is that from the very beginning Flick, the protagonist, is a stranger in his own land.

Mendlesohn mentions the mere words 'dumbfounded' and 'incredulous' as if they are in some sense *ipso facto* excessive and uses the word 'horribly' to further stress its excessiveness, yet she takes no time to qualify this claim for the reluctant reader, but in a perfunctory manner quickly sidesteps this issue altogether for another topic, that of Flick's relation to his homeland.

As I mentioned before, the above example is not the most

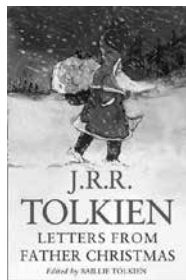
egregious instance of hastiness within *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, nor is it really important for the book's overall view. However, the hastiness is in contrast to Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* where the author understands (as he stresses in his Foreword) that he expects for many readers to be unable to read perhaps every single text that he uses in application, so Booth is naturally more methodical: he uses lots of literary quotations at length, which enables a reader unfamiliar with those texts to see and comprehend the rhetorical movements.

Like so many professional publications in our current 'publish or perish' academic climate, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* does not live up to the expectations of its title, cover notes, introduction or its initial reviews. However, it is at least an admirable start for a long overdue commerce between fantasy literature and rhetorical criticism. Hopefully, there will be more to come.

™

Dear Santa

MIKE FOSTER



Letters From Father Christmas

J. R. R. Tolkien, edited by Baillie Tolkien
160 pp, HarperCollins paperback (2009)
ISBN 978-0007280490, £7.99/\$15

From the first to the eleventy-first page, this delightful dazzler is the most brilliantly beautiful book Tolkien ever wrote and illustrated. Its 24 affectionate and amusing letters, penned in coloured ink and pencils, begin in 1920 to Tolkien's eldest son John (then aged three) during his father's tenure at the University of Leeds. The last, a poignant valedictory to daughter Priscilla depicting a bright earth floating in dark but starry space, comes at the bitter end of 1943, when sons Christopher, 19, and Michael, 23, were off in the Second World War.

First assembled and published in 1976 as *The Father Christmas Letters* and revised and enlarged to 159 pages in 1999, this edition, a 2004 paperback with a grand red and gilt embossed cover, likewise includes extracts and pictures not in the original.

Amid the wit and laughter are undertones of worry and loss. Yet Tolkien's emerging legendarium and linguisticum begin to shine through, trailing clouds of Northern-lights glory.

It grows with each tale. The North Polar Bear (or NPB, as he is called — devotees of Tolkien's good friend C. S. Lewis will fish the allusion) — emerges as a comic foil and clumsy correspondent. Snow-elves, red gnomes, snow-men, cave-bears, NPB nephews Paksu ('Fat') and Valkotukka ('White-

hair') swell the progress. In 1936, Elven secretary Ilbereth enters to make it a trinity of writers. The Elves loom large in the defence of Father Christmas's home and storage cellars against goblin attacks. Like *The Lord of the Rings'* elves, NPB senses goblins by scent. Father Christmas' mighty horn Windbeam pre-echoes the horns of Rohan and Buckland.

Wordplay of laughworthy prodigality abounds. Ilbereth is "thinuous" as opposed to fatuous. The roly-poly North Polar Bear calls Priscilla's stuffed bear Bingo "His Poliness." Like the pyrotechnical Gandalf, NPB loves setting off the "Rory Bory Aylis" fireworks.

The prototype of the illustration Tolkien would adapt for *The Hobbit's* dust-jacket is previewed in 1931–32's drawing. In 1937, only Christopher and Priscilla received letters; from 1938 to 1943, only Tolkien's daughter got one. 1938's is a long poem in rhyming couplets (if you allow "Priscilla" and "pillow").

Even at Christmas, the darkling clouds outside loom. Scholar Douglas Anderson writes that "Tolkien was constantly delayed by illnesses, and by worry about the illnesses of his wife [and children]".

John D. Rateliff adds: "I don't know what role weather or illness might have played, but finances certainly did — but not world economy so much as Tolkien family funds. Note that the letters are full of creative excuses why the children are not getting the (expensive) toys they asked for — North Polar Bear fell down the stairs on them, or the goblins stole all the trains, or NPB switched all the labels about. Once you notice it, it becomes quite a trend."

Family moves and household guests reflect real-world events in 1926 and 1927. The lamentation from 1940 on is "this horrible war is reducing all our stocks."

To 13-year-old Priscilla, Father Nicholas Christmas writes:

I suppose you will be hanging up your stocking just once more: I hope so for I have still a few little things for you. After this I shall have to say “goodbye”, more or less: I mean, I shall not forget you. We always keep the old numbers of our old friends, and their letters; and later on we hope to come back when they are grown up and have houses of their own and children.

Good writing grows out of passion; great writing grows from love, the purest passion. Charity, loyalty, faith, kindness, purity — the qualities that made J. R. R. Tolkien’s heroes, from Aragorn to his archetype, the Pearl-poet’s Sir

Gawain such true heroes — illuminate these letters, comical and childlike as they are.

And a poignant pang comes through, too. Orphaned of his father at age four, and his mother in 1904, when he was twelve, Tolkien grew up without Christmases with a father and mother. His wife, Edith Bratt, was illegitimate, which he discovered when they married in 1916 before he went off to the Great War. The love that shines all through his two dozen calligraphic and whimsical letters to their four children is as brilliant as the star of Bethlehem, and as holy.

As G. K. Chesterton wrote 100 years ago: “Father Christmas was with us when the fairies departed; and please God he will still be with us when the gods return.”



Pandora’s box

JAMES BOWER



Avatar

Dir. James Cameron

Cert. 12a, 162 mins (2009)

Cast: Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Stephen Lang

Watching *Avatar* is like looking at a finger painting by the Incredible Hulk. It’s enormous, it’s ham-fisted and it’s very, very stupid. But are you going to ask him to stop?

Avatar is huge. HUGE. It’s so big, in fact, that there’s ample room for its own monumental stupidity. It’s a paint-by-numbers kit of a film rendered entirely in the broadest of broad strokes. If *Avatar* were a lake, it would be 100 miles wide and 2 inches deep. But it’s a lot of fun, provided you don’t try to dive in.

Jake Sully (Worthington) is a paraplegic ex-marine who signs up to the Avatar programme, remote-controlling a 10-foot tall cloned human/alien hybrid body. Its purpose is to infiltrate the Na’vi, the native population of the planet Pandora, whom a wicked corporation wants to drive out of their magic tree so they can drill for some special rocks. Predictably, Jake goes native and hooks up with Neytiri (Saldana), a Na’vi princess who initiates Jake into her tribe. It’s thrilling stuff; like a kid playing the world’s most immersive videogame, Jake spends an awful lot of time running, jumping and riding bizarre alien wildlife, and as action movies go it’s pretty damn good. Of all the comparisons critics have thrown at *Avatar*, *Dances with Wolves* holds the most water. But screw it, I’m going to go with *Knight Rider*. Think of Jake’s Avatar body as Kitt, the human corporation as an evil tycoon and Neytiri as a beautiful widow defending a

small cattle ranch. This will also give you a good impression of *Avatar*’s level of narrative sophistication.

Sadly there’s no place for anything as delicate as ‘acting’ in a world of this size. The Na’vi characters are incredibly convincing, at least visually. But most of the cast, Worthington included, seem to realize that they can either fade gracefully into the film’s sumptuous backgrounds, or man up, puff out their chests and start hamming like they’ve never hammed before. This goes for Michelle Rodriguez’ ballsy lady fighter pilot, Giovanni Ribisi’s corporate douche and Stephen Lang’s Colonel Quaritch. The Colonel is like a child’s drawing of a soldier — butch scars, bulging veins and a real passion for ethnic cleansing. He’s hilarious, rasping that the Na’vi are ‘savages’ and threatening to ‘blast a crater in their racial memory’. Damn, that’s some threat!

In any other film these performances would be the kiss of death. But *Avatar*’s obscene scale is also its saving grace. Pandora is pure spectacle. The characters may be monolithic, but so is everything else — it’s all relative; great vine-draped mountains float miles above the ground, swathed in alien clouds; an endless rainforest pulses with luminescence; the Na’vi are bright blue, lithe and impossibly toned with big, anime-inspired eyes. Like everything in *Avatar*, these super hot eco-smurfs are just bigger and sexier than reality, and that’s not a bad thing. The content of the movie is nothing clever or groundbreaking, but its realisation is simply breathtaking.

Avatar is not to be missed, but probably not to be rewatched either. On anything less than the most eyeball-shatteringly huge screen it’s likely to become pretty stale pretty fast. It’s way too long and could easily stand to shed an hour. Worse still is Jake’s patronising voiceover, spoonfeeding the facile plot to the audience. It’s like being given an instruction manual for a pencil sharpener. *Avatar* is a solidly entertaining piece of pop trash. It’s big, but it’s not clever.





Deep in the forest...

HENRY GEE



Born Of Hope

A movie by Actors At Work Productions, Produced and Directed by Kate Madison,

71 mins (Dec. 2009). Available free at www.bornofhope.com

It's hard to believe that almost a decade has passed since our cinemas were deluged by Peter Jackson's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, followed in subsequent years by its two even more eye-popping sequelae. We were, I recall, blown away by the detail of the production, the marvels of the special effects, and — of course — the expense.

The technology of film-making moves so fast that techniques hardly within Jackson's grasp at the beginning of the cycle were stalwarts of the toolbox by the end. One thinks of how motion-capture animation replaced simple CGI for Gollum in time for *The Two Towers*, and how advances in software allowed for the creation of those enormous orc armies in *The Return of the King*, each one of the thousands of virtual orcs being controlled by an independent, digital 'agent' running on its own rules. A decade later we have *Avatar*, and soon it will be possible, I dare say, to recreate the effect of a symphony orchestra actually playing in one's own sitting room.

Even so, there was a sense in which Jackson's films were the biggest-budget home-movies ever made — for all the hoopla, they were created by a team almost unknown to the wider world, using a cast largely of unknowns, scripted by enthusiasts and filmed in their own backyards. And as advanced film-making technology becomes cheaper and within the reach of more people, yet more teams of dedicated unknowns will follow in Jackson's footsteps, making ever more assured fan films.

Last year we saw *The Hunt For Gollum* (www.thehuntforgollum.com), a 40-minute fan-film in which one of the many back-stories implied by *The Lord of the Rings* was offered as a tale in its own right. A related (yet distinct) team has now made *Born Of Hope*, which at 71 minutes is much more of a

feature film than a short, and displays a much greater film-making finesse. Heavens, there's even some CGI in it.

For a start, *Born Of Hope* looks lovely. Watching it on YouTube's HD channel, one is never conscious, from the quality of the images, that this isn't a full-on, professional production — it's so much more assured than *The Hunt For Gollum*. There is less reticence to show props and scenery, which allows the film to breathe more. Second, this is a much more actorly piece — there is a large and very photogenic cast, and the actors do their jobs well. The dialogue is natural and unforced. The action scenes (and there are many) are well-choreographed and believable.

Behind every good film is a good story, and Tolkien's canon is such that ripping yarns can even be wrought from his most exiguous marginalia. Like *The Hunt For Gollum*, *Born Of Hope* has been crafted from the appendices of *LOTR*, including The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen. Readers of this organ will know the story well, so I needn't worry about spoilers — it tells of Arathorn, Lord of the Dunedain, his love for Gilraen and the birth of their son Aragorn. We see the Dunedain fighting the growing menace of Sauron from Dol Guldur; the death of Arathorn's father Arador in a battle against a troll, and Arathorn's own death fighting orcs, after which Gilraen and the young Aragorn go to Rivendell.

And that's it.

Which is part of the problem. For all the love and craft of the film, and for all that the film-makers introduce new characters and subplots (the director indulges herself as a feisty warrior-maiden character secretly in love with Arathorn, much as Eowyn was to fall for Aragorn) it can't quite stretch even as far as 71 minutes. It does drag, rather, and the limitations of the budget start to show through.

Arador's troll makes a stand as a CGI character, and I have to say that whereas it's a valiant effort, it's not quite up to *Avatar* standards. The locations, too, become rather limited. Much of the action takes place at the reconstructed Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow, which stands in for the Dunedain settlement, and Epping Forest features as the great forests of Middle-earth, as it did in *The Hunt for Gollum* (although Snowdonia and other places peek through from time to time).

The problem is that after a while one gets rather fed up of forests (untidy places, as Obelix the Gaul once said — trees all over the place) and yearns for somewhere grander, or at least different. This was brought home to me during Arathorn's death scene (very reminiscent of Jackson's Departure of Boromir), when the dying hero is pictured against a tree already scrawled with modern English graffiti (for sure, it doesn't say 'Darren loves Sharron', but modern English letters are clearly apparent). Jackson was able to balance each sylvan glade with Minas Tirith, or at least Meduseld; each rustic dell with Cirith Ungol. *Born of Hope* does give us a couple of darksome caves, but the giant spiders have long since left home, and we just get to look at more trees.

The syrupy music doesn't help. It's very well executed,

but it all sounds like the yawnsome Grey-Havens enormoschmalz at the end of Jackson's *Return of the King*, obviously imitative of Howard Shore's score but with little of the approaching menace of dark forces, and nothing at all of Shore's occasional lightness of touch.

Finally, that's the problem. Jackson's films were flawed in many ways, but they were very good indeed, and most importantly, they were first. It might take some time for film-makers seeking to follow in his footsteps to stray into less familiar and more adventurous territory, different ways of approaching Tolkien. *Born Of Hope*, for all that it's a great watch, is still more derivative of Jackson than a film that makes a stand on its own terms. M

For the inside track on *The Hunt for Gollum* see page 38.



Hay on fire

JOHN GILBEY

It wasn't what I expected, it really wasn't. I'd assumed that the Halloween festival in a small town that sits on the — once much disputed — border between Wales and England would be a standard bonfire and hot-dogs affair: but it was much more than that — so much more ...

You see, this was Hay-on-Wye — the heart of book-loving country and home of the Hay Festival, the Pimms-laden annual literary bash that occupies the town in the late spring. There was little spring-like about that October Saturday night, however, and the fact that the town was decidedly wet, very cold, uncommonly dark and deeply autumnal didn't distract anyone from their current task of producing a wildly spectacular multimedia show. That they also had a hell of a good time doing so was obvious from the performance.

Built loosely on the epic tale of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', the story built into a tale of inhuman greed — with the finance and banking industries taking the brunt of the attack. Bowler-hatted dancers wheeled in tight formation, while

flaming whips flailed around the Warren — a tree-lined meadow bounded by the river Wye on three sides and a river terrace covered with spectators on the remaining one.

This was bleak social realism: Daisy the Cow got barbecued (much to the horror of the younger children) instead of rescued — as is more traditional in the pantomime version. Bankers and units of currency were burnt in effigy, and even the eventual destruction of the Giant couldn't much lighten the mood — only the arrival of ancient pagan deities gave some hope of ultimate redemption.

With at least two bands, teams of dancers, a live Giant voiceover, lots of fire-based stunts and spectacularly pyrotechnic set pieces this was an event to treasure. Look out for it — hopefully — in years to come, and enjoy it as a truly community event.

When viewed through a suitably beery blur, you could almost have been in Hobbiton — a slightly surreal, cybersteam-punk Hobbiton ... M

'An unlettered peasant boy' of 'sordid character' — Shakespeare, Suffield and Tolkien

MAGGIE BURNS

In September 1928 an article in a Birmingham paper said of a Moseley nonagenarian: “his insuppressible vivacity, his merry humour, his geniality and his boyish playfulness ... have made him welcome always and everywhere”¹.

This was John Suffield, grandfather of J. R. R. Tolkien. In *J. R. R. Tolkien A Biography*, Humphrey Carpenter gives a similar description of Suffield: “as jolly as ever, cracking jokes and making dreadful puns”². Carpenter gives the impression that there was a rift in the family after Mabel Tolkien converted to Catholicism, but Tolkien continued to be in touch with his grandfather, as he was with other relatives. He wrote that Cotton Lane was important to him in his childhood³ — Cotton Lane, Moseley, was the home of his Suffield grandparents from 1904 until John Suffield's death in 1930.

Probably the Took family in *The Hobbit*⁴ and *The Lord of the Rings*⁵ were inspired by the Suffields, with John Suffield as the Old Took. Tolkien noted “the title Old was bestowed upon him ... because of the enormous number of young, younger and youngest Tooks”⁶. For a few years in Birmingham in the early 1890s the name John Suffield spanned four generations, Tolkien's great-grandfather, grandfather, uncle and cousin. The words ‘senior’ and ‘junior’ offer less flexibility than ‘old’ and ‘young’; at this time in Kelly's Birmingham directories there were two entries for ‘John Suffield senior’. ‘John Suffield’ in this article refers to Tolkien's maternal grandfather.

Carpenter does not mention John Suffield's interest in literature; nor that on one subject — the Bacon–Shakespeare question — Tolkien in his youth seems to share the opinions of his grandfather. Carpenter quotes the King Edward's School debate in which Tolkien makes an unreserved attack on Shakespeare: he “poured a sudden flood of unqualified abuse upon Shakespeare, upon his filthy birthplace, his squalid surroundings, and his sordid character”.

The debate concerned the authorship of works attributed to Shakespeare; was the author in reality Francis Bacon? Here I show how John Suffield took part in a discussion on the same theme, and the significance of Tolkien's contribution to the school debate.

John Suffield and the Suffields in Birmingham

The Suffields were tradespeople, middle-class, nonconformist, interested in literature and education. They were important men in nineteenth-century Birmingham, already by then the second largest city of England. J. R. R. Tolkien's description of the hobbits in the Shire: “there in that pleasant corner of the world they plied their well-ordered business of living”⁵ could apply to the Suffields, as could his description of the Tooks: “The Took family remained both numerous and wealthy, and was liable to produce in every generation strong characters of peculiar habits and even adventurous temperament.”⁵ One of the strongest characters in the family was Tolkien's grandfather John Suffield.

His father (Tolkien's great-grandfather), John Suffield senior, grew up in Birmingham.

In 1826 he set up a drapery business in a half-timbered building in Bull Street, an important shopping-street. The Suffields'

shop was known as Old Lamb House and stood in Bull Street until 1886, when it was demolished as part of the Corporation Improvement Scheme; not to improve housing in this case but to improve the road system. John Suffield senior married Mary Jane Oliver in 1830. On 10 September 1833 their third child and first son, John, was born. More children followed. The Suffields thought education important, and John attended five schools; first in Leicester, then in Kidderminster, then two schools in Birmingham. Finally, in the mid 1840s, he was a pupil at the Wesleyan Collegiate Institution in Taunton, Somerset. His report for 1846 shows that he was “Good” in English, Greek, Latin, German, geography, commercial arithmetic and writing. For French, history and drawing his



J. R. R. Tolkien as a young man.

grade was “Exemplary” and he was top of the class in Latin. There was no universal education in England before 1870; his parents paid for his education.

John served brief apprenticeships with drapers in Dudley and in London before returning to Birmingham. By 1851 the Suffield family was living in Edgbaston, a pleasant and affluent suburb to the west of Birmingham town centre with large gardens, many trees and even a lake. In 1858 John married Emily Jane Sparrow, her father was also a draper. They had seven children in all, including Mabel, Tolkien’s mother. They were living to the south of the town centre by 1861, first in Balsall Heath then in Moseley; both in the neighbouring county of Worcestershire. Like Edgbaston, Moseley was an affluent area; rich businessmen worked in Birmingham during the day, but went home to their houses on the edge of the countryside in the evening. By the 1860s most of the Suffields lived in Moseley in large comfortable houses with one or more servants living in.

The Suffield business was prospering. John’s brothers Mark Oliver and Robert also worked for the family business. This did not take up all their time as both John and Mark Oliver took a lively interest in literature and drama, and were active in two of Birmingham’s literary societies. The Birmingham Dramatic Club perhaps played the more important role in John Suffield’s life, as it was smaller and more intimate. He and the family enjoyed drama and acting. However this is only mentioned in passing as this article focuses on Suffield’s writing about Shakespeare, done for the Central Literary Association.

The Central Literary Association came about following a discussion by five businessmen in Birmingham who made the resolution: “That a ‘Central Association’ for literary purposes be now formed.” The group first met for a literary meeting on 28 November 1856. Meetings were held in the evening, and for the most part included a debate, or a talk given on a topic of literary or occasionally of musical interest. Membership was limited, a maximum of 250 members was permitted. The association was for men only. However there were some ‘semi-public’ debates that ladies could attend, and once a year there was a *Conversazione*, an evening for dinner and dancing where understandably the members were happy to have ladies present. Arthur Tolkien, father of J. R. R. Tolkien, was a member of the association from 1877 to 1889, so could have met Mabel at a semi-public debate, or *Conversazione*. Most of the members were Birmingham businessmen or professional men, among them nonconformist ministers, librarians and teachers.

Some were men who had built up a successful business or who had inherited one from their father — Birmingham at this time was manufacturing and exporting goods all over the world. They did not have to spend all their time at their business but had time to devote to study, and to enjoy the kind of lifestyle that Bilbo and Frodo enjoyed when living peacefully at Bag End. Some of these men wrote books and

collected material about the history of Warwickshire and Birmingham. Dr J. A. Langford and Samuel Timmins were two such who were also members of the Birmingham Dramatic Club. Hobbits would have approved of Langford’s

books: “they liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions”⁵. John and Mark Oliver Suffield were both subscribers to Langford’s *Century of Birmingham Life*, published in two substantial volumes in 1868⁷.

In January 1873 the first *Central Literary Magazine*⁸ appeared. Every magazine began: “It must be distinctly borne in mind that this Magazine is neutral in Politics and Religion; and that each contributor is responsible only for his own contributions.” The magazine carried a mixture of club news and announcements and material from association members. There were articles on literary topics, contemporary society and poli-

tics; fiction, reminiscences and poetry. Most appeared under pseudonyms, but probably members would know the identity of the author. Many can be deciphered; Howard Shakespeare Pearson was ACHESPE — the sound of his initials in French; on the same principle John Suffield (junior) was JAYESJAY.



John Suffield

Suffield and Shakespeare

John Suffield’s first article was published in the April 1874 magazine. It urged the members of the association to institute some form of celebration of the birthday of William Shakespeare. He urges his readers to consider this on moral grounds: “What can he teach? Everything! Religion, Morals, and Philosophy; the love of whatsoever is true and of good report, the hatred of meanness, malice and all uncharitableness.” The article sounds like a sermon, with exhortations and appeals to the reader: “Take him for guide, and he will pilot you through the dangerous waters of life.” Suffield gives quotations to show Shakespeare as a reformer, as a critic of slavery, as one who made a plea for peace. Suffield did not mention that the Birmingham Dramatic Club had already held dinners to commemorate Shakespeare’s birthday. He himself had been present at the first in April 1871. He and his brother Mark Oliver had sung a duet: ‘Sound, sound the trumpet’, and then each had sung a solo⁹. Some of his readers would have known this as they belonged to both clubs.

Suffield read widely. In this short article he also quotes from Ben Jonson, Spenser, Milton, Dr Johnson and Samuel Pepys. Over the next few years he wrote articles and gave talks at the Central Literary Association and at the Birmingham Dramatic Club about Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Congreve, Dryden, Chaucer and other English writers. Suffield describes Shakespeare’s work as something to be read, rather than as a drama to be watched: “Let him that is unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare . . . read every play, from the first scene to the last.” By contrast Tolkien thought that Shakespeare’s plays had to be experienced as drama; writing to his son Christopher in 1944 about a performance of *Hamlet* that he had found inspiring:

“it emphasised more strongly than anything I have ever seen the folly of reading Shakespeare ... except as a concomitant of seeing his plays acted”¹⁰.

By 1887 the second part of the statement at the head of the *Central Literary Magazine* had changed. The first part still read: “It must be borne in Mind that this Magazine is neutral in Politics and Religion;” but it now continued: “its pages are open to a free expression of all shades of opinion without leaning to any”. Two members of the association were about to be involved in an animated exchange of opinion. In January 1888 there was an article by John Suffield about Shakespeare: ‘Bacon v Shakespeare’. Suffield had lost none of his enthusiasm for Shakespeare’s writing, which he still considered to be: “full of the most profound truths and the highest philosophy, of tragic interest and enthralling beauty”. However a new book was about to appear — *The Great Cryptogram*¹¹ by Ignatius Donnelly — on the theory that the works of William Shakespeare had actually been written by Francis Bacon. John Suffield had already spoken about this in a debate in April 1877: “That it is highly probable that Lord Bacon was the real though concealed author of the Plays and Poems usually attributed to William Shakespeare.” He read the review of Donnelly’s book in *The Telegraph*. He was now prepared to be as enthusiastic about Donnelly’s ideas as he had previously been about Shakespeare and other writers.

As John Suffield did not have Donnelly’s book the remainder of his article consists of comparisons between Shakespeare’s character and Bacon’s. Shakespeare he calls “an unlettered peasant boy”. He argues that slanders against Bacon have been answered — Bacon is “the most generous of friends, and the most noble of patriots”. In a later article written in July 1888 he admits that he had “written in great haste” but says that he does not wish to retract anything. As in his article in 1874, his language is characteristic of a preacher or an orator; writing about Francis Bacon: “we have before us the noblest being the world ever saw, the Saviour alone excepted; and the most worthy to wear the crown in question. But was he capable as well as worthy? That is the question. Well! On the whole, he was.”

In his 1874 article about Shakespeare, Suffield had praised his female characters: “Whence did Shakespeare get his heroines? For spotless, lily-like purity and beauty of character they are matchless and supreme.” He then proposed that Shakespeare’s heroines should be role models for all English women. In his January 1888 article there is criticism of Shakespeare because he did not treat the women in his family correctly: “this man ... allowed his favourite daughter Judith to grow up unable to read or write”. From 1885 Suffield’s youngest daughter Jane had been a pupil at the new King Edward’s Girls’ High School. We do not know about Edith May and Mabel’s schooling, but it is clear that Mabel

had received a good education, as she was able to teach her young sons English, French, Latin and German, and to interest them in etymology and calligraphy¹⁰. Suffield believed in education for women.

In the next *Central Literary Magazine*, April 1888, came the reply in an article far longer than John Suffield’s, from Howard Shakespeare Pearson. He was a member of the association since 1860, lecturer on English Language and English History at the Midland Institute from the 1870s onwards, chairman of the Shakespeare Library for many years, also of the (Public) Reference Library and Lecture Committees. He had been a pupil at King Edward’s School at the same time as the artist Edward Burne-Jones and Archbishop E. W. Benson (*Old Edwardian’s Gazette* p. 3, 31 December 1923)¹². His knowledge of Shakespeare and his times could not be faulted. The title of his paper reverses Suffield’s title: ‘Shakespeare v Bacon’.

In obituaries Pearson was described as a lovable, helpful and conscientious man. His reply to Suffield starts with a note of condescension: “we must every one of us have a safety-valve through which to blow off some of that eccentricity and contrariety which are inwoven with the very fibres of the nature of man”. He cites several types of such eccentricity, proposes that it is best that he rather than another write the reply to John Suffield’s paper as he is “long bound to his antagonist by ties of friendship and respect” and finishes the long first paragraph with “Thus in all temperateness and good humour I crave leave to answer what has been alleged as to the character of Shakespeare, the character of Bacon, and the general probabilities of the case.”

Pearson then demolishes all of Suffield’s arguments with conviction, dealing firstly with Shakespeare’s character. Whereas Suffield had given quotations from recent Shakespeare critics, Pearson cited praise of Shakespeare from his own time. He then treats the character of Bacon, arguing that he might rationally be accused of wrongdoing. At this point he inserts a footnote giving five different references for the reader to “the highest authorities”. (There were very few footnotes in the *Central Literary Magazine* articles, and certainly none in Suffield’s articles.) He then makes an intriguing suggestion; Bacon had great intellectual capacity and a lack of sympathy with humanity; could a man of this calibre ever have written Shakespeare’s plays that had: “world-wide sympathy and unquenchable warmth of affection ... Bacon plus Shakespeare, great in two inconsistent directions, would be a monstrous creation”.

Pearson next answers Donnelly’s supposed arguments — they still do not have the book itself. Concerning the question of Shakespeare’s learning he devotes two pages to an analysis of and comparison between Shakespeare’s style, and Bacon’s. “Bacon’s fashion of speech is ... profound, thoughtful, acute, and imaginative, — but always measured and



Howard S. Pearson.

careful.” This he contrasts with Shakespeare: “Shakespeare is of all great writers . . . the most reckless of form.” He ends by asking the reader to reject Donnelly’s proposition in two sentences John Suffield probably resented: “I am not so foolish as to suppose that a belief which was never founded on reason will yield to argument. But to those who have been captivated by a specious novelty, and who, like my friend whose paper I am answering, are erring with a real desire to go right, I would make one earnest appeal.” Comparing the two articles it seems that John Suffield had simply been attracted to a new idea, whereas Pearson had considered the nature of both Shakespeare and Bacon more deeply.

John Suffield’s reply came in the next magazine in July 1888. He is indignant that he should have been named in the article by Pearson: “I think his paper would have been no less effective if it had been more general and less personal.” He then answers Pearson’s charges, defending Bacon’s character: “He laboured all his life for the benefit of mankind” and quoting the words of Sir Tobie Mathew who knew Sir Francis Bacon well: “A creature of incomparable abilities of mind, of a sharp and catching apprehension”, but this does not answer Pearson’s comments regarding Bacon’s: “lack of sympathy with humanity”. By now *The Great Cryptogram* had been published, and Suffield devotes the last part of this paper to commenting on the book. He cites various reasons for Bacon’s concealment of authorship of Shakespeare’s plays. He recommends that the reader study the cipher, but concludes that even if the cipher did not work any reader who studied the subject “fully, fairly, and candidly” would have to conclude that Bacon was the Shakespearean author.

Donnelly had visited Birmingham on 4 June 1888. In the Birmingham Dramatic Club Minutes there is an account of the “Visit of the Hon. I. Donnelly to Birmingham” written by the Chairman Arthur Butler, dated 13 September 1888. Arthur Butler’s careful phrasing suggests that although he felt an obligation to report the event fairly, he did not himself agree with Donnelly’s theorem, as he praised: “his [Donnelly’s] skill at extracting from the most unpromising material arguments that apparently supported the cause he was advocating”. The audience, estimated at 190, was unsympathetic to Donnelly’s ideas but received the speaker “cordially”. Butler reports that “Mr. J. Suffield” was Donnelly’s host and proposed the vote of thanks.

Finally an article written by J. W. Tonks appeared in the October 1888 magazine. Tonks was also a member of the Birmingham Dramatic Club, so would have heard Donnelly’s talk. The title was: ‘Mr. Donnelly and his Disciples’. Tonks tried to strike a note of good-humour by beginning with a quotation from Shakespeare: “bacon-fed knaves!”. It is clear that he does not personally support Donnelly, as he next cites Donnelly’s admission that he had “discovered Bacon’s love of cipher from the Boys’ Own Magazine”.

In the second paragraph having repeated Pearson’s observation that Bacon’s and Shakespeare’s natures were quite different,

he describes John Suffield’s nature. This ties in well with the descriptions given above. “Knowing that my friend who essayed to reply was ‘a fellow of infinite jest,’ his very answer seemed a colossal joke . . . one begins to wonder whether our friend will not come out at the end with a cheery smile, and the assurance that he was trying what our convictions were worth. His tone is certainly serious, but he is careful to inform us that the points stated are Mr. Donnelly’s.” Tonks was a successful businessman, having travelled to Vienna and Paris to promote Birmingham’s jewellery trade; in the 1890s he would become a local councillor. He may have wished to give Suffield a chance to withdraw gracefully.

Tonks gives many examples of Jonson’s admiration for Shakespeare, using the device of rhetorical questions. He quotes a statement of Bacon’s to the effect that he did not believe authorship should be concealed — so presumably would have claimed ownership of Shakespeare’s plays had he written them. He makes use of Donnelly’s cipher to give the following “MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WRIT THIS PLAY” then suggests a solution to the debate. On a visit to Shakespeare’s birthplace a few years before the guide said that a Delia Bacon from New England had lived with her brother, a curate, in Stratford. “This poor lady . . . had

a monomania that she herself was related to the great Francis Lord Bacon . . . she suddenly conceived the notion that if she could shew that Bacon wrote Shakespeare it would add greatly to the lustre of the family, and herself.” Tonks then declares that he will say no more. The next magazine, January 1889, carries no articles regarding Shakespeare or Bacon.

There is nothing to show whether John Suffield discussed this with his family. However the obituary for his youngest daughter Jane from St Andrew’s University, where she had worked 1909–11, praised her knowledge of literature: “her knowledge of English was so vast that one felt she should have been a Professor, perhaps of Poetry, a scholar and the author of many books” (St Andrew’s *Alumnus Chronicle* 1964)¹³. As she had specialized in science at school and at university it seems probable that she had learned about literature from her father.

In the same year, 1888, Mabel Suffield got engaged to Arthur Tolkien. He had been a member of the Central Literary Association for some years, and helped to organize the Old Edwardians’ Literary and Debating Society, which had been running since the autumn of 1884. In January 1886 Arthur was elected to the position of Hon. Secretary of the club, and wrote a report on the Literary and Debating Society meetings for the March edition of the *Chronicle*, 1886¹⁴. His report is noteworthy for the number of comments praising the speakers. The audience had reacted enthusiastically on each occasion, for example:

29th January Charles Dickens, the Man and his Books
“the paper, which occupied about two and a half hours in delivery, was listened to throughout with marked attention and frequently applauded”.

Tolkien’s comments about Shakespeare need to be seen in context.



There was no note of criticism of any kind. This is in contrast to previous reports, and indeed to some of his son's Debating Society reports.

Tolkien and Shakespeare

It may seem surprising to suggest a link between J. R. R. Tolkien and his grandfather in terms of their studies of Shakespeare. Nonetheless, Tolkien's oft-quoted participation in a school debate mentioned above means that Tolkien is considered to be hostile to Shakespeare by some scholars. Other scholars have come to the conclusion that although Tolkien felt this in youth, his work does show some influences from Shakespeare, and his views may have changed. In addition, Tom Shippey suggests that Tolkien may have felt that Shakespeare should have written more plays like *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, instead of plays of political and historical import¹⁵.

J. R. R. Tolkien first spoke at the School Debating Society in 1909, at the age of 17. Thereafter he spoke a number of times on a range of topics. Comments were made in the reports on his humour, his use of puns — and his lack of clear diction. In the June 1911 *Chronicle* there was a section on 'Debating Characters', a humorous assessment of the active members of the Debating Society. Of Tolkien it was said: "Has displayed great zeal in arranging meetings throughout the session and considerable ingenuity in advertising them. He is an eccentric humorist who has made many excellent speeches, at times rather burdened with anacolutha." Sadly there is nothing in the King Edward's publications to indicate the nature of Tolkien's ingenuity. There may be a clue in the remark of a speaker in October 1910, Mr C. H. Richards, who "regretted bitterly the weak moment in which he had capitulated to the highwaymanism of the Secretary".

Reports in the *School Chronicle* from September 1910 to April 1911 were by J. R. R. Tolkien, as the Debating Secretary during these months¹⁴. He did not end these with his name as previous secretaries had done. His reports are distinctively humorous, with the type of humour later evident in *The Hobbit*, and *Farmer Giles of Ham*. When the quotation concerning Shakespeare is considered it should be appreciated that Carpenter quoted directly from Tolkien's report of Tolkien's speech — and Tolkien was writing to entertain. Moreover the report had appeared in the June 1911 edition of the *School Chronicle* — when Tolkien was joint editor with W. H. Payton. To summarize: Tolkien the editor included a report by Tolkien the debating secretary on speeches made by Tolkien and his friends.

The topic for discussion at the April debate was "That the works attributed to William Shakespeare were written by Francis Bacon". It had been arranged some time in advance; first advertised in the February 1911 *Chronicle*, with an appeal for a good audience. The March 1911 *Chronicle* when D. G. J. Macswiney was joint editor with W. H. Payton¹⁶ further promotes the debate. It opens with a verse describing the Debating Society then gives details of the debate on the 'Bacon-Shakespeare controversy':

'Hark where in windy platitudes,
Compound of the froth of undigested fact,
And ponderous tub-thump wit of the hustings-wag,
Each for his own advertisement
They rant — they bellow — they abuse.'

We are reminded by the ever-active Secretary of the Debating Society, that the Annual Open¹⁷ Debate takes place on Tuesday, April 4th, at 7.00 p.m.

With regard to the KES Debating Society therefore: Tolkien displayed zeal and ingenuity, was ever-active, could be accused of highwaymanism, and was an eccentric humorist. The report on the debate in the June 1911 *Chronicle* is given below in full to give the flavour of these debates. The opening and the close of the evening are reported in a conventional manner, but it might be unwise to take all the statements made during the debate at face-value. From the number of votes cast there must have been a very good audience.

'On Tuesday, April 4th, the Annual Open Debate was held as usual in the Governors' Room. It had previously been decided that the Society should revert to its older usage and that only present members should speak. There was an unusually large number of parents and friends present, attracted, we like to think, by this prospect.

Soon after seven o'clock, MR. ISAAC BRADLEY, the Bailiff of the past year, took the chair and after briefly addressing the House called upon F. SCOPES to introduce the motion 'That the works attributed to William Shakespeare were written by Francis Bacon.' The Hon. Member gave an eloquent and convincing survey of all the different points involved in this theory. Disclaiming any connection with the wilder theories put forward by Baconians, he pleaded for a more sane and tolerant treatment than that normally accorded by the Stratfordians. Having endeavoured to show the unlikelihood of the man Shakespeare being the author of the plays, he passed on to enumerate some of the extraordinary facts, coincidences and parallelisms in ideas and writings which would lead one to ascribe the authorship to Francis Bacon alone among his contemporaries.

R.Q. GILSON was then called upon to combat the Affirmative position. He contested in detail the Hon. Member's facts, authorities, and evidence, and made some good points. He was astonished that the firmly established tradition which had satisfied English people for close on 300 years should now be set so lightly aside. Never indeed had any secret been so well kept as that of Bacon's if his was the authorship. The Hon. Member's speech was an excellent counterbalance to the previous one, and no improbability or rash statement escaped criticism.

J.R.R. TOLKIEN who spoke next on the Affirmative, poured a sudden flood of unqualified abuse upon Shakespeare, upon his filthy birthplace, his squalid surroundings, and his sordid character. He declared that to believe that so great a genius arose in such circumstances commits us to the belief that a fair-haired European infant could have a woolly-haired prognathous Papuan parent. After adducing a mass of further detail in support of the Hon. Opener, he gave a sketch of Bacon's life and the manner in which it fitted into the production of the plays, and concluded with another string of epithets.

T.K. BARNESLEY, who had pursued the previous Speaker with unremitting energy throughout the session, here ran him to earth at the last Debate. Shakespeare having retired to the background, the previous speaker, the Hon. Member's own expensive toilet and delicate coiffure, Delia Bacon, Mrs Gallop, and 'Penelope Potts' were dealt with successively. Apparently nothing could keep the Hon. Member off the cryptogram.

W.H. PAYTON then followed, and with marked contrast to the previous speaker, returned to serious discussion. In a very careful speech, which was one of the most convincing of the evening, he dealt with the so-called 'mistakes' in Shakespeare. His chief attention was then directed to the author of the plays as a lawyer and to the clearing up of the difficulty in the 'Merchant of Venice'. He concluded by emphasizing the previous affirmative speeches by adducing some further parallelisms and coincidences.

C.L. WISEMAN was then called upon to support the Negative. He seemed in a somewhat awkward position as he had to avow he scarcely believed in Shakespeare but he held that the motion was that the author was Francis Bacon, and this he did not think proved. Among other facts opposed to the Baconian theory he thought that the constant use by Bacon of the triplet — which was not to be found, he said, in Shakespeare — was important.

R.Q. GILSON then wound up the Negative in an eloquent reply. He could not, among many other things, see what the drains of Stratford had to do with genius, if he must again use that hackneyed word.

F. SCOPES then concluded the Debate. He dealt with each argument of the Negative which had escaped his colleagues and exploded the triplet theory of the last speaker on the Negative by sensationally reading out a long list of triplets occurring in Shakespeare.

MR. ISAAC BRADLEY then spoke while the votes were being registered, and was followed by MR. R.W. REYNOLDS who proposed a hearty vote of thanks to him for having taken the Chair. This having been carried unanimously, the Secretary, J.R.R. TOLKIEN took the opportunity of also thanking Mr. Reynolds¹⁸ for his continual kindness throughout that Session and many others. The votes were then declared to be — on the Affirmative, 37; on the Negative 52. The motion was therefore lost and the House dispersed.

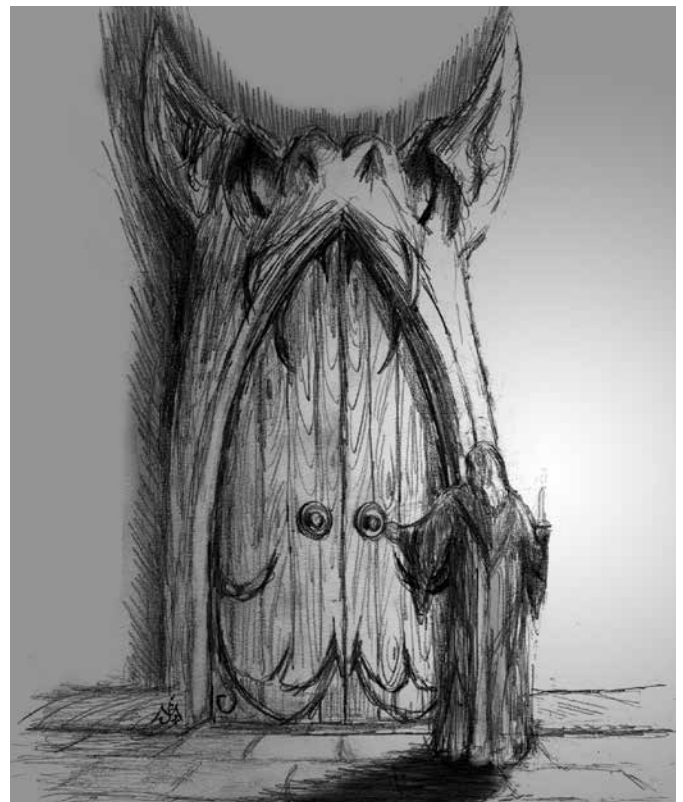
Tolkien's comments about Shakespeare need to be seen in context. This was the last debate of the school year, and the last debate during his time as a pupil at King Edward's. The participants were highly intelligent; they were in the top class of the best school in Birmingham. Tolkien had won an exhibition (a minor scholarship) to Exeter College Oxford; F. Scopes a scholarship at Corpus Christi, Oxford; W. H. Payton had an exhibition at Trinity College Cambridge; T. K. Barnesley had a place there to read history. Christopher Wiseman, and R. Q. Gilson would spend another year at King Edward's, and would then also go to Cambridge (Wiseman to Peterhouse, Gilson to Trinity). They were all accomplished debaters. They would not have expected the listener or reader to think that what they said necessarily represented what they believed. The art of debate consisted rather in being memorable and in entertaining the listeners — to attract

their vote at the end — than in establishing a truth.

Tolkien's approach to the topic indicates that he had probably discussed the Bacon–Shakespeare question with his grandfather, or heard his grandfather talking about it, or borrowed the book by Donnelly from him. However his participation in the school debate did not necessarily mean that he held the same views on Shakespeare as John Sufield. Shippey suggests that in fact Tolkien did not reject his co-author from Warwickshire, rather he was “guardedly respectful of Shakespeare . . . and may even have felt a sort of fellow-feeling with him”¹⁹.

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1. *Birmingham Evening Despatch* (10 September 1928).
2. Carpenter, H. J. R. *R. Tolkien A Biography*.
3. Hammond, W. & Scull, C. *The Lord of the Rings A Reader's Companion* (2005).
4. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit*.
5. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*
6. Tolkien, J. R. R. (ed. Tolkien, C.) *The Return of the Shadow*
7. Langford, J. A. *Century of Birmingham Life from 1741 to 1841*
8. *Central Literary Magazine* (Birmingham): 'Shakespeare's Birthday' Vol. 1, (April 1874); 'Bacon v Shakespeare' Vol. 8 (Jan 1888); 'Shakespeare v Bacon' Vol. 8 (Apr 1888); 'Bacon v Shakespeare' Vol. 8 (Jul 1888); 'Mr. Donnelly and his Disciples' Vol. 8 (Oct 1888).
9. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (ed. Carpenter, H.).
10. *Birmingham Dramatic Club Minutes* Volumes 1–3, 1865 onwards; — manuscript held in the archives section of Birmingham Central Library.
11. Ignatius Donnelly was a lawyer and congressman from Minnesota.
12. *Old Edwardians' Gazette* (1923).
13. I am grateful to Andrew Morton for this information.
14. *King Edward's School Chronicle* March 1886, October 1910, March 1911, June 1911.
15. Shippey, T. *The Road to Middle Earth*
16. MacSwiney left at Easter, Tolkien was the editor in the summer term.
17. 'Open' meant that friends and relatives could attend as well as the boys.
18. R. W. Reynolds (Dickie) gave Tolkien, Scopes and L. K. Sands a lift to Oxford in his car in the autumn of 1911.
19. Shippey, T. *Roots and Branches Selected Papers on Tolkien*



Lewis and Tolkien: bridges between worlds

MIKE PUEPPKE

For reasons that I hope will become apparent, my topic is the last two novels written by two of last century's most influential Christian authors: *Till We Have Faces* by C. S. Lewis and *Smith of Wootton Major* by J. R. R. Tolkien. My interest in *Till We Have Faces* was piqued in a graduate class a few years ago, and for the past year I have been writing my thesis for my MA on *Smith of Wootton Major*. The more I read and ponder these works, the more an uncanny similarity appears, for both novels skilfully juxtapose a secular and a sacred vision. They do this by presenting readers with a character who can see into another world: in *Till We Have Faces*, Psyche can see into the world of the gods, and in *Smith of Wootton Major*, Smith can see into Faery. Both characters live in the same world as do the other characters in the novels, but they are no longer of that world because they can see beyond it. Thus, they can be seen as at least loose allegories of Christians. To show how this works, I will briefly discuss each novel, and then give a few final comments.

In *Till We Have Faces*, C. S. Lewis retells the Cupid and Psyche myth found in Apuleius and Ovid. Lewis adds depth to the myth by making two key changes. First, he makes Psyche's palace invisible to her sister, Orual: only one sister comes to visit Psyche in Lewis's version. When Orual visits Psyche, in Lewis's words:

The poor sister saw only rock & heather. When P. said she was giving her noble wine, the poor sister saw & tasted only spring water. Hence her dreadful problem: "is P[syche] mad or am I blind?"¹

Later in the letter, Lewis gives his reason for this change: *Till We Have Faces* "is [the] story of every nice, affectionate agnostic whose dearest one suddenly 'gets religion,' or even every lukewarm Christian whose dearest gets a Vocation".

The second change Lewis makes is to tell the story through Orual's mouth — or pen, as it were — as the story is an autobiographical recollection in two parts. In the first part, Orual proclaims: "I will accuse the gods, especially the god who lives in the Grey Mountain. That is, I will tell all he has done to me."² The first part of Orual's autobiography is her complaint against the gods for taking her beloved sister Psyche from her and generally treating her very ill. At this point in her autobiography, her vision is too narrow to see what is truly going on.

Orual's problems begin when Psyche is accused of accepting the worship due to the local pagan deity, Ungit — an accusation that gains momentum when a plague breaks out among the people. Ungit's priest claims that because

of Psyche's impiety, she is "The Accursed", and she must be sacrificed to the holy Brute who is "in a mystery, Ungit herself or Ungit's son, the god of the Mountain; or both". Psyche's sacrifice not only gives the story, and Orual's world, its major crisis, it also provides an opportunity for juxtaposing Psyche's sanctified vision with that of the other characters: the King; the Priest of Ungit; the Fox, a stoic Greek slave who is Orual and Psyche's teacher; and of course Orual herself. Their perspectives are:

The King sees Psyche's sacrifice in solely pragmatic terms; he wants the people to be healed so that he can hold onto his power. He says: "What's one girl — why, what would one man be — against the safety of us all? It's only sense that one should die for many."

Ungit's priest speaks from a pagan wisdom, which understands sacrifice: "In the Great Offering, the victim, [Psyche] must be perfect. For, in holy language, a man so offered is said to be Ungit's husband, and a woman is said to be the bride of Ungit's son ... And either way there is a devouring ... many different things are said ... many sacred stories ... many great mysteries."

The Fox sees Psyche's sacrifice as a cruelty born of ignorance, and he sees the priest's divine and dark wisdom as only misleading contradictions: "Do you not see master ... that the priest is talking nonsense? [A] goddess ... is also a god, and loving is to be eating — a child of six would talk more sense."

Orual sees the situation most strongly in terms of her own selfish love for Psyche. She does believe that the gods exist, but she believes the worst of them. She says to Psyche: "What can these things be except the cowardly murder they seem? To take you — you whom they have worshipped and who never hurt so much as a toad — to make you food for a monster."

The perspectives of the King, Ungit's priest, the Fox and Orual, are similar in two ways. First, their speeches imply that they think about the god of the Mountain in worldly — that is, material or pragmatic — terms. The King thinks of the god as a power to be appeased so that he can continue his rule; Ungit's priest thinks of the god as a source of life but also of contradictions, which demands sacrifice; the Fox thinks of the god as a phantom of the ignorance of men's minds; and Orual views the god as a monster, an opinion that has less to do with the god's true temperament than it does with the fact that he will be taking Psyche from her. The second way these perspectives are similar is that they all, except for that of the Fox, strongly allude to Christ's crucifixion. Psyche is the one who "should die for all", the one who is "perfect", the one who is to be both "married" and

“devoured”, and the one who “never hurt so much as a toad” but still must be sacrificed.

But Psyche sees the situation differently. She says, “To be eaten and to be married to the god [of the Mountain] might not be so different. We don’t understand. There must be so much that neither the Priest nor the Fox knows ... The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty comes from ... All my life the god of the Mountain has been wooing me ... I am going to be with my lover.” Where others find the contradictions, cruelty and dark reflections of their secular vision, Psyche finds light and the source of all beauty.

By the end of the book both Orual and readers see that Psyche has been right — things were not what they seemed. In the second part of Orual’s autobiography, she re-evaluates her complaint against the gods, finding through conversations and visions that she is not as innocent as she first supposed. In a vision, Orual finds herself reading her complaint to the gods themselves, but, as she says: “it was not the book I had written”. It is Orual’s true complaint, her life

as she would have seen it if she had the honesty of Psyche’s vision. Writing of the vision she says: “Till that word can be dug out of us, why should [the gods] hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?” Psyche and Orual are reunited in a vision, and through Psyche’s sacrificial love and the grace of the Gods, Orual gains the same vision as Psyche. In a word, she becomes sanctified.

Now let us turn to Tolkien’s novel. *Smith of Wootton Major*³ is the story of a quasi-English medieval village with some unfamiliar customs, one of which is to hold a feast for 24 good children once every 24 years, and at the centre of this feast is a Great Cake. At one such feast the son of the village blacksmith swallows a tiny silver star, which is in his slice of cake. Because of this star, Smith becomes one of the few humans, if not the only one, to be able to walk in the land of Faery. In Faery Smith sees many things — Elves returning from their wars on the “Dark Marches of which men know nothing”; the tree of the King of Faery, which “bore at once leaves and flowers and fruits uncounted, and not one was



The house of Tom Bombadil

Phyllis Berka

the same”; and a vale where “the air is so lucid that eyes can see the red tongues of birds as they sing on the trees upon the far side of the valley, though that is very wide and the birds are no greater than wrens”.

But although *Smith of Wootton Major* exhibits some of the same characteristics as *Till We Have Faces*, especially that of one character who can see into a world that other characters cannot, Tolkien’s work is not overtly religious like Lewis’s. In fact, Tolkien goes to some pains to ensure that the story is not taken simply as a religious allegory. He admits that the Great Hall, where the Master Cooks lives and the feasts are held, “is evidently in a way an ‘allegory’ of the village church” and that “the Master Cook with his house adjacent, and his office that is not hereditary, is plainly the Parson and the priesthood”. But Tolkien is quick to point out that there is no overt religion in the tale and that “Faery [itself] is not religious”. He says: “It is fairly evident that [Faery] is not Heaven or Paradise. Certainly its inhabitants, Elves, are not angels or emissaries of God (direct) . . . The Elves are not busy with a plan to reawaken religious devotion in Wootton. The Cooking allegory would not be suitable to any such import.”

But religious allusions do exist in the work, particularly concerning Faery. On the morning of Smith’s tenth birthday, when the star becomes active — it has sat dormant inside Smith waiting for its time to come — a mighty wind rushes over the land, and Smith is so overjoyed that “he began to sing, high and clear, in strange words that he seemed to know by heart; and in a moment the star fell out of his mouth and he caught it in his open hand . . . Without thinking he clapped his hand to his head, and there the star stayed in the middle of his forehead . . . Some of its light passed into his eyes.” The wind rushing, Smith speaking in a language he does not know, and the star shining on Smith’s forehead all allude to the Pentecost in Acts 2, when the apostles receive the Holy Spirit. Thus, the ability to see Faery, which the star gives Smith, can be equated with a sanctified vision of the world. As a side note: although this religious allusion seems obvious when I explain it here, in the story it’s not obvious at all. Unlike some of Lewis’s allusions, which feel to me as if they are included to draw attention to themselves, this allusion feels like an integral part of the story as a story. Yet there is something holy about Faery. In his essay *Smith of Wootton Major*, Tolkien says:

[Faery] represents love . . . This ‘love’ will produce both *truth* and *delight*. Things seen in its light will be respected, and they will also appear delightful, beautiful, wonderful, even glorious. Faery might be said indeed to represent Imagination (without definition because taking in all the definition of this word) . . . This compound — of awareness of a limitless world outside our domestic parish; a love (in truth and admiration) for all things in it; and a desire for wonder, marvels, both perceived and conceived — this ‘Faery’ is as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life: sunlight as distinguished from the soil, say, though it in fact permeates even that. (Tolkien’s italics)

In the story, Faery is an actual physical reality, but as Tolkien makes plain in the passage above, Faery may be synonymous with a creative and sanctified vision of the world: “Things seen in its light will be respected, and they will also appear delightful, beautiful, wonderful, even glorious.” Thus, although religion is not as overt in Smith as it is in *Till We Have Faces*, both novels exhibit a character with what may be called a sanctified vision.

Finally, like *Till We Have Faces*, *Smith of Wootton Major* does not initially introduce readers to a character who has that sanctified vision. Smith is not named in the novel until about one-fourth of the way through the story. Instead readers are first presented with the perspective of Nokes, a “solid sort of man” who believes that Faery is a make-believe place, fit only for amusing children. Nokes is the Master Cook who, with some help, bakes the cake containing the silver star. Ironically, his narrow ideas of Faery are symbolized by a small doll of the Fairy-Queen that he causes to be placed on the cake “to amuse the children”.

In the beginning of the story, Tolkien controls the narrative in very subtle ways so that readers empathize with Nokes and his perspective of reality. Here are two brief examples. First, when Alf, Nokes’s apprentice — who readers later learn is the King of Faery himself in the guise of a small boy — first comes to Wootton Major, his friends call him by his name, “but to [Nokes and the rest of the villagers] he was just Prentice” because they only see him in terms of his job. Confirming his empathy with Nokes and his perception of the world, the narrator also refers to Alf as Prentice, at least until Smith is introduced. Second, at times readers are given the same level of knowledge as Nokes, even being forced to empathize with him through the syntax of the narrative. One scene where this happens reads:

“That’s Funny!” [Nokes] said as he held [the fay star] up to the light.

“No, it isn’t!” said a voice behind him, so suddenly that he jumped. It was the voice of Prentice, and he had never spoken to the Master in that tone before. Indeed he seldom spoke to Nokes at all unless he was spoken to first. Very right and proper in a youngster.


Like Nokes, who must turn around to see who is talking, readers’ knowledge of the speaker is delayed by the syntax of the following sentences: “No it isn’t!” said a voice behind him. It was the voice of Prentice.” To reinforce this perspective, Nokes’s evaluation of the situation is also given in the narrative itself: “Indeed he seldom spoke to Nokes at all unless he was spoken to first. Very right and proper in a youngster.”

Thus, both *Smith of Wootton Major* and *Till We Have Faces* contrast a sacred or sanctified vision with a secular vision. Both novels also initially force readers to empathize with a secular vision, only gradually revealing the sacred vision. This technique engages readers and allows them to experience the transition, or what I might call “literary sanctification”. As Mara Donaldson points out about *Till*

We Have Faces: “Orual’s rewriting of her book deconstructs her previous writing, and along with it her identity and her understanding of the gods.” Mineko Honda adds that “with Orual, the reader is also forced to reinterpret the invisibility of the castle and to think over the character of Orual, of God, and of Reality.” That is, Lewis’s novel, by its very structure, invites readers to participate in Orual’s redemption and sanctification. This is what leads Mara Donaldson to argue that the novel “is itself a story about the nature and importance of story”.

The same can be said of *Smith of Wootton Major*. When Smith meets the Queen of Faery on his last journey to that land, he lowers his eyes in shame both for himself and for his fellow humans, remembering the dancing doll on top of the cake when he was a child. In some way, readers also participate in this shame because the novel is structured in the beginning so that they will not judge Nokes’s decoration too harshly. When the Queen in effect forgives and blesses Smith, readers in some way participate in these as well.

Looking back at these novels and what they have meant to me, I realize that they have in a way had some of the same effect of ‘baptizing’ my imagination as Lewis reported upon reading *Phantastes*. I believe that something may be glimpsed in these novels that is deeper and more true than

our world of laptops, haircuts, MySpace, Halo 3 and hot-dogs. Something may be glimpsed that lies at the heart of why we write and read stories in the first place. On that note, I would like to end with my favourite lines from Smith, the words the Queen speaks to Smith after he remembers and is ashamed of the doll on top of the cake: “Do not be grieved for me, Starbrow, nor too much ashamed for your own folk. Better a little doll, maybe, than no memory of Faery at all. For some only a glimpse. For some the awakening.” 

1. Lewis, C. S. *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis* 590 (HarperCollins, 2005).
2. Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* 3, 48–9, 61, 71–6, 289, 294 (Harcourt, 1984).
3. Tolkien, J. R. R. ‘Smith of Wootton Major’ in *Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition* (ed. Flieger, V.) 84–101, 100–1 (Harper Collins, 2005).

This essay was originally given as a presentation at the Southwest Conference of Christianity and Literature in Dallas, Texas (October 2007). For those of you familiar with the nerves, scheduling, strong coffee and attempted courtesy of academic conferences, the paper went off remarkably smoothly. It assured this first-time graduate student that perhaps an academic career was on the cards. I’m thankful to many who have helped and are helping me share this paper and these thoughts again.

The words of Húrin and Morgoth: microcosm, macrocosm and the later legendarium

KRISTINE LARSEN

In a 1951 letter to Milton Waldman (ref. 1, p. 144), Tolkien explained that “once upon a time . . . I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of fairy story.” Although he never completed this life’s work, the one most dear to his heart, through the dedicated hands of his son Christopher, a version of this grand tale was finally published more than 30 years ago as *The Silmarillion*. However, as Verlyn Flieger warns us², “the published *Silmarillion* gives a misleading impression of coherence and finality, as if it were a canonical text, whereas the mass of material from which that volume was taken is a jumble of overlapping and often competing stories, annals, and lexicons.” Our first peek into the sausage making that Christopher had taken upon himself was in the volume *Unfinished Tales*, which included an enlarged version of the story of Túrin Turambar entitled ‘Narn I Hîn Húrin’. Christopher Tolkien placed the major work on this saga to the 1950s, after the completion of *The Lord of the Rings*. One brief section of this 100+ page-long story is entitled ‘The Words of Húrin and Morgoth’, a

two-page conversation between Morgoth and his prisoner Húrin. Although interesting, the true depth of this section could not be discerned until the later publication of the *History of Middle-earth* volumes, especially *Morgoth’s Ring*. For in that volume, we see the depth and breadth of Tolkien’s post-*LOTR* revisiting of the legendarium.

Christopher Tolkien calls these writings a “record of prolonged interior debate” (ref. 3, p. 370), including attempts to make the cosmological elements of the legendarium more clearly aligned with the real universe. Among the elements of Tolkien’s “dismantling and reconstruction” (ref. 3, p. 370) are the following: Melkor’s ultimate power, especially in relation to ‘The Elder King’, Manwë; Melkor’s marring of the world, and how he became bound to the physical world; the Fall of Humans; the ultimate fate of Arda.

Christopher Tolkien provides a valuable window into his father’s later thoughts on these issues in such texts as ‘Laws and Customs Among the Eldar’, the ‘Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth’, the essays referred to as ‘Myths Transformed’, and various versions of the ‘Ainulindalë’. However, ‘The Words of



Húrin and Morgoth's references all these elements, and now read with the hindsight of having read the *History of Middle-earth*, and reproduced as part of the volume *The Children of Húrin*, we can see that it is a clear microcosm reflecting the greater macrocosm of the post-*LOTR* writings and the tension involved in revisiting the legendarium.

Among Melkor's taunting remarks to Húrin is a rebuke of the human's understanding of the Valar: "Have you seen the Valar, or measured the power of Manwë or Varda? Do you know the reach of their thought? Or do you think, perhaps, that their thought is upon you, and that they may shield you from afar?" (ref. 4, pp. 63–64).

Húrin admits to not knowing the answer, but asserts that: "the Elder King shall not be dethroned while Arda endures." Morgoth concurs: "I am the Elder King: Melkor, first and mightiest of all the Valar..." (ref. 4, pp. 63–64).

This exchange between Húrin and Melkor hints at a deeper ongoing thread throughout Tolkien's revisions of the legendarium, namely the ultimate power of Melkor, especially in relation to that of Manwë. References to Manwë as the 'Elder King' can be found in letters written in 1957 and 1958 (ref. 1, pp. 259, 283). In the latter, he explains that Manwë "was Lord of the Valar and therefore the high or elder king". In Text II of 'Myths Transformed', Tolkien writes "Chief of the Valar of Arda was he whom the Eldar afterwards named Manwë, the Blessed: the Elder King, since he was the first of all kings in Eä" (ref. 3, pp. 378–379). Text VII of 'Myths Transformed' explains that Manwë was "the spirit of greatest wisdom and prudence in Arda" (ref. 3, p. 402). He is represented as having had the greatest knowledge of the Music, as a whole, possessed by any one mind; and he alone of all persons or minds in that time is represented as having the power of direct recourse to and communication with Eru." The same text explains (ref. 3, p. 399) that the "Elder King is obviously not going to be finally defeated or destroyed, at least not before some ultimate 'Ragnarok' ... so he can have no real adventures. When we move Manwë it will be the last battle, and the end of the World (or of 'Arda Marred') as the Eldar would say."

As undoubtedly mighty as Manwë is made out to be, Tolkien increases the relative power of Melkor throughout his revisions to the legendarium. Christopher Tolkien notes in a commentary to the 'Ainulindalë B' (written in the 1930s) that in this version of the creation myth we find "the first unequivocal statement of the idea that Melko was the mightiest of all the Ainur" (ref. 5, p. 164), when his father writes that "To Melko among the Ainur had been given the greatest gifts of power and knowledge, and he had a share in all the gifts of his brethren" (ref. 5, p. 157). Indeed, in the curious text entitled 'Ainulindalë C*' (the 'round earth' cosmology written in the 1940s), Melkor actually rips off a piece of the earth and forms the moon (ref. 3, p. 410). In Text II of 'Myths Transformed' we read that Arda is important in a cosmological sense (ref. 3, p. 375) as "the scene for the main drama of the conflict of Melkor with Ilúvatar, and the Children of Eru. Melkor is the supreme spirit of Pride and Revolt not just the chief Vala of the Earth, who has turned to evil". So who is the real first king, Manwë or Melkor? Not

so obvious, is it? In Tolkien's commentary to the 'Athrabeth', we read that Melkor was "originally the most powerful of the Valar" and "was the prime Spirit of Evil" (ref. 3, p. 330). Recall Melkor's taunt to Húrin: "I am the Elder King: Melkor, first and mightiest of all the Valar." Is he technically wrong in this boast? In the 'Athrabeth' itself, Finrod explains: "there is no power conceivably greater than Melkor save Eru only" (ref. 3, p. 322). Mightier than Manwë? So one might be led to believe. Tolkien himself described his conscious attempts to increase the relative power of Melkor in Text VI of 'Myths Transformed' in the essay entitled 'Melkor Morgoth'. Here we read that "Melkor must be made far more powerful in original nature. The greatest power under Eru (sc. the greatest created power). (He was to make/devise/begin; Manwë (a little less great) was to improve, carry out, complete.)" (ref. 3, p. 390). Tolkien even diminishes Manwë further in Text VII of 'Myths Transformed', when he explains that at the end of the First Age when Melkor was shut out beyond the Door of Night that this was "the end of Manwë's prime function and task as Elder King, until the End. He had been the Adversary of the Enemy" (ref. 3, p. 404). It thus appears the Lord of Lies was actually telling the truth to Húrin, at least on this point, a point which Tom Shippey briefly ponders in *The Road to Middle-earth*⁶.

Húrin refuses to believe Melkor's curse upon his family, claiming that Melkor did not have the power to "see them, nor govern them from afar: not while you keep this shape, and desire still to be a King visible on earth." Melkor reminds him that "The shadow of my purpose lies upon Arda, and all that is in it bends slowly and surely to my will" (ref. 4, pp. 63–64). This concept of 'Arda Marred' is an important and enduring concept within the legendarium, and we do not have sufficient time here to do it justice. A concrete example of the effects of Melkor's marring can be found in the 'Laws and Customs Among the Eldar', another post-*LOTR* text, namely the death of Miriel (and the deaths of elves in general). Here it is said that "nothing ... utterly avoids the Shadow upon Arda or is wholly unmarred, so as to proceed unhindered upon its right course" (ref. 3, p. 217).

In Text VII of 'Myths Transformed', an essay which Christopher Tolkien calls "the most comprehensive account that my father wrote of how, in his later years, he had come to 'interpret' the nature of Evil in his mythology" (ref. 3, p. 406), Tolkien explains in detail how Melkor further marred the world by becoming bound to it in a manner far beyond that of the other Valar. We read how:

to gain domination over Arda, Morgoth had let most of his being pass into the physical constituents of the Earth — hence all things that were born on Earth and lived on and by it, beasts or plants or incarnate spirits, were liable to be 'stained'. Morgoth at the time of the War of the Jewels had become permanently 'incarnate'.
(ref. 3, pp. 394–395)

But in the process Morgoth paid an awful price, and "lost ... the greater part of his original 'angelic' powers, of

mind and spirit, while gaining a terrible grip upon the physical world. . . . The whole of Middle-earth was Morgoth's Ring" (ref. 3, p. 400).


We see this reflected in Húrin's words to Melkor: "Before Arda you were, but others also; and you did not make it. Neither are you the most mighty; for you have spent your strength upon yourself and wasted it in your own emptiness" (ref. 4, p. 64). It was therefore possible for the Valar to ultimately defeat Morgoth in physical form and push him out into the void, although his power over Arda ultimately remained in the form of the shadow he had already cast upon it.

Among the permanent shadows that Melkor left behind was the fall of humanity and their lingering doubts as to the true nature of death, the so-called 'Gift of Ilúvatar'. Húrin perhaps spoke too boldly (or blindly) when he tells Melkor that "we escaped from your shadow" (ref. 4, p. 64). A different point of view can be seen in the 'Athrabeth', where Andreth voices the opinion that humans have been permanently marred from their original state of being by Melkor, and that their bodies were not originally made to be so short-lived. Details of the fall of humans are found in 'The Tale of Adanel', an addendum to the 'Athrabeth', in which Melkor appears to humans claiming that "Greatest of all is the Dark, for It has no bounds. I came out of the Dark, but I am its master . . . I will protect you from the Dark, which else would devour you" (ref. 3, p. 346). Although humans eventually realized that Melkor was really the enemy, the damage had already been done, especially to the humans' perception of death. For as Melkor warned them: "I do not trouble that some of you die and go to appease the hunger of the Dark; for otherwise there would soon be too many of you, crawling like lice on the Earth. But if ye do not do My will, ye will feel My anger, and ye will die sooner, for I will slay you" (ref. 3, p. 348). We see this fear of the dark, especially the ultimate darkness which lay after death, in the words of Andreth. When Finrod tells her that her beloved, Finrod's brother, will forever remember her when he is "sitting in the House of Mandos in the Halls of Awaiting until the end of Arda". Andreth counters, "And what shall I remember? . . . And when I go, to what halls shall I come? To a darkness in which even the memory of the sharp flame shall be quenched?" (ref. 3, p. 325). Compare Andreth's fears to Melkor's taunts to Húrin: "Beyond the Circles of the World there is Nothing" (ref. 4, p. 65).

What lies beyond the end of human life is certainly a thorny philosophical issue, but even more so is what lies beyond the end of the entire world as we know it. In the published *Silmarillion*, we read little of the conversation between Húrin and Morgoth, only that Húrin "defied and mocked him" and then Morgoth cursed Húrin and his family, because⁷ "Thou hast dared to mock me, and to question the power of Melkor, Master of the fates of Arda." This line appears with little change in the full conversation in *The Children of Húrin*. Just what did Melkor mean in calling himself the "Master of the fates of Arda"? What is the ultimate fate of Arda? What about Eä, the universe as a whole? In the post-*LOTR* deconstruction of the legendarium, Tol-

kien pondered what the ultimate fate of Arda might be, and whether or not Melkor's marring of Arda would be undone. In his commentary to the 'Athrabeth', Tolkien noted that "Beyond the 'End of Arda' Elvish thought could not penetrate" (ref. 3, p. 331), and that they believed that their bodies would be destroyed, negating the possibility of reincarnation. This meant that all Elves would die (permanently) at the End of Arda. Not surprisingly, the Elves "expected the End of Arda to be catastrophic", and would bring about the end of the Earth and perhaps the entire solar system. Tolkien was clear to note that "The End of Arda is not, of course, the same thing as the end of Eä. About this they held that nothing could be known, except that Ea was ultimately finite" (ref. 3, p. 342).

In several of the post-*LOTR* texts, such as the 'Athrabeth', 'Laws', and the texts of 'Myths Transformed', Tolkien pondered whether the end of Arda and the ultimate victory of good over evil will result in Arda Unmarred, Arda Healed, or a New Arda. What will happen to the Elves at the end of the world? What would be the role of humanity? Has the initial role of humanity been forever changed by the hand of Melkor? Is Melkor truly the Master of the fates of Arda? As with many ideas pondered by Tolkien in this time, there are multiple versions. Here are a few of Tolkien's thoughts on this issue. In the 'Athrabeth' it is posited that perhaps the ultimate role of humanity is to take part (in some undescribed yet apparently important way) in the healing of Arda in the end. Finrod explains that "Arda Healed shall not be Arda Unmarred, but a third thing and a greater, and yet the same." In the 'Laws', Manwë explains to the other Valar that there are two meanings or aspects to Arda Unmarred — one aspect is an unmarred state which is simply the removal of all the marred aspects, while the second is "the Unmarred that shall be . . . the Arda Healed, which shall be greater and more fair than the first, because of the Marring" (ref. 3, p. 245). If this is true, then Melkor does help determine the fate of the world, for its healing is a greater thing because of the marring that must be overcome.

The post-*LOTR* period of Tolkien's writing was one of tremendously creative thought, yet little definitive progress in reaching his goal of a self-consistent and complete legendarium. The brief conversation between Húrin and Melkor offers us a synopsis of his conflicting thoughts on many important and intertwined aspects of his mythology. Ultimately Tolkien's attempts to radically change pieces of his legendarium failed, and perhaps he should have known that they would. For as Gandalf said to Saruman, "he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom"⁸. 

1. Carpenter, H. (ed.) *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* Revised edn (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
2. Flieger, V. *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* 63 (Kent Univ. Press, 2005).
3. Tolkien, J. R. R. *Morgoth's Ring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).
4. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Children of Húrin* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
5. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lost Road* (Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
6. Shippey, T. *The Road to Middle-earth* Revised edn, 262–263 (Houghton Mifflin, 2003).
7. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion* Second edn, 197 (Houghton Mifflin, 2001).
8. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Fellowship of the Ring* Second edn, 272 (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

Balrogs: being and becoming

ALAN TIERNEY

Dreadful among these spirits were the Valaraukar, the scourges of fire that in Middle-earth were called Balrogs, demons of terror. (ref. 1, p. 23)

One of the most memorable scenes in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR)² is Gandalf's confrontation with the 'Balrog' on the bridge of Khazad-Dûm. Balrogs are demonic spirits³ of Tolkien's own invention, and appear sporadically within the history of his secondary world. There has been much speculation and debate among Tolkien's readership as to the 'actual' appearance and true nature of the creature, as Tolkien's description of the Balrog is notoriously ambiguous and vague. This has inspired varying (often derivative) interpretations of the creature in popular culture, although few (if any) of these seem to capture Tolkien's description of the Balrog in a satisfactory way. However, it should be noted that Tolkien's own approach to the Balrog changed over time, and that this may be reflected by the mutability implied in his description.

Here, I will attempt to show that this mutability is central to Tolkien's idea of the Balrog, and that the Balrog was very much a multivalent creation that embodied many of the central themes of Tolkien's work, such as industrialization and the different ways in which evil is manifested. I will also argue that, despite the relatively few instances in which they appear, Balrogs were important parts of Tolkien's secondary world, embodying diametrically opposite traits to those of Elves that "represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level"⁴. To this end, I will scrutinize Tolkien's descriptions of Balrogs and then look at how these descriptions have been interpreted by others. I will then identify any influences on their conception and examine the various names (and their meanings and etymology) that Tolkien applied to them. I will also attempt to establish exactly what Tolkien's approach to the Balrog was, and how these creatures fitted into his mythology, before finally comparing this to the interpretations of others.

Balrogs were originally conceived by Tolkien during the early stages of creating his secondary world. The earliest⁵ description that has been published is from an early version of his story *The Fall of Gondolin*⁶.

Yet as meed of treachery did Melko threaten Meglin with the torment of the Balrogs. Now these were demons with whips of flame and claws of steel⁷, by whom he tormented those of the Noldoli who durst withstand him in anything — and the Eldar have called them Malkarauki. (ref. 6, p. 169)

And:

Of these demons of power Ecthelion slew three, for the brightness of his sword cleft the iron of them and did hurt to their fire. (ref. 6 p. 181)

The whips are a constant throughout the evolution of the Balrogs, as is their demonic nature. However, the claws of steel were omitted from later descriptions, and the allusion to them being composed (partly?) of iron is never used again. There is one further description of Balrogs in *The Fall of Gondolin*. In this passage, a Balrog is in combat with the elf-lord Glorfindel.

Now had [Glorfindel] beaten a heavy swinge upon its iron helm, now hewn off the creature's whip-arm at the elbow. . . . Glorfindel's left hand sought a dirk, and he thrust up that it pierced the Balrog's belly nigh his own face, for that demon was double his stature. (ref. 6, p. 194)

Here it is implied that the Balrog is of a fixed shape and solid form and, for the first time, an indication of physical size is given. The Balrog also seems to be armoured, a concept that was later abandoned. It is interesting to note that some of the key features of the Balrog in *LOTR* — shadow and flame, for example — are absent at this early stage. However, in *The Lay of Leithian* (a slightly later work), some of these elements begin to appear.

About him sat his mighty thanes,
The Balrog-lords with fiery manes,
Redhanded, mouthed with fangs of steel;
Devouring wolves were crouched at heel. (ref. 8, p. 296)

At this point, the 'claws of steel' have become fangs and the Balrogs have acquired manes. Also, the motif of flame first appears in a limited form. Tolkien's conception of the Balrog is becoming more defined at this point. This conception is further developed in some early drafts of *LOTR*⁹.

A figure strode to the fissure, no more than man-high¹⁰ yet terror seemed to go before it. They could see the furnace-fire of its yellow eyes from afar; its arms were very long; it had a red tongue.¹¹ Through the air it sprang over the fiery fissure. The flames leaped up to greet it and wreathed about it. Its streaming hair seemed to catch fire, and the sword that it held turned to flame. In its other hand it held a whip of many thongs. (ref. 9, p. 197)

Christopher Tolkien notes that written on the manuscript from which this passage is taken, are notes which read:

Alter description of Balrog. It seemed to be of man's shape, but its form could not be plainly discerned. It felt larger than it looked. (ref. 9, p. 199)

And:

And a great shadow seemed to black out the light. (ref. 9, p. 199)

This description marks not only an advancement but also a departure from earlier conceptions. Gone are the steel claws/fangs and there is no mention of armour. The description of eyes is a new detail, as is the red tongue and the length of the arms. However, these details were omitted from the final version. It seems from the addendum notes that Tolkien was dissatisfied with this description and so made three very significant changes. The Balrog's shape became indistinct, the appearance of the Balrog was implied to be subjective¹² and the motif of shadow was used for the first time. These new features became prominent in the final version of the Balrog that was published in *LOTR*¹³.

“Then something came into the chamber. I felt it through the door, and the orcs themselves were afraid and fell silent. It laid hold of the iron ring, and then it perceived me and my spell. What it was I cannot guess, but I have never felt such a challenge. The counter-spell was terrible. It nearly broke me. For an instant the door left my control and began to open! I had to speak a

word of command. That proved too great a strain. The door burst into pieces. Something dark as a cloud was blocking out all light inside and I was thrown backwards down the stairs. All the wall gave way, and the roof of the chamber as well, I think.”

(ref. 2, p. 345)

In this passage we see a more ‘concrete’ allusion to the Balrog being a thing of shadow. We also see the first character reaction to a Balrog. The description is further elaborated in the next passage;

“It was like a great shadow, in the middle of which was a dark form, of man-shape maybe, yet greater¹⁴, and a power and terror seemed to be in it and go before it. It came to the edge of the fire and the light faded as if a cloud had bent over it. Then with a rush it leaped across the fissure. The flames reared up to greet it, and wretched about it; and a black smoke swirled in the air. Its streaming mane kindled and blazed behind it. In its right hand was a blade like a stabbing tongue of fire; in its left hand it held a whip of many thongs”.

(ref. 2, p. 349)



Withywindle

Phyllis Berka

The first thing to note about this passage is that the Balrog has regained its former size. Also, the sword it carries now seems to be composed of flame rather than metal. The flame and smoke described seem to react to (and may even be a part of) the Balrog. In the next passage, the Balrog is actually described as a “fiery shadow” and “streaming with fire”.

The dark figure streaming with fire raced towards them. The orcs yelled and poured over the stone gangways. Then Boromir raised his horn and blew. Loud the challenge rang and bellowed, like the shout of many throats under the cavernous roof. For a moment the orcs quailed and the fiery shadow halted. (ref. 2, p. 348)

In the next passage, Tolkien alludes for the first time to the possibility of the Balrog having wings.

His enemy halted again, facing him; and the shadow about it reached out like two vast wings¹⁵. It raised the whip, and the thongs whined and cracked. Fire came from its nostrils. (ref. 2 p. 348)

The fiery nature of the Balrog is made more explicit in the above passage as, for the first time, a Balrog issues fire from its own body¹⁶. An interesting feature in the next passage is when the Balrog’s fire dies down and the darkness grows. This seems to suggest that the Balrog can draw power from the fire.

The Balrog made no answer. The fire in it seemed to die, but the darkness grew. It stepped forward slowly on the bridge, and suddenly it drew itself up to a great height, and its wings were spread from wall to wall; but still Gandalf could be seen, glimmering in the gloom; he seemed small: and altogether alone; grey and bent, like a wizened tree before the onset of a storm. (ref. 2, p. 349)

The Balrog here seems to grow, and its ‘wings’ become enormous. This represents the most concrete example of the Balrogs mutability. The final description of the Balrog in *LOTR* is from a scene in which Gandalf relates the story of his battle with the creature¹⁷.

“He was with me still. His fire was quenched, but now he was a thing of slime, stronger than a strangling snake.” (ref. 2, p. 523)

This is one of the most interesting (although typically ambiguous) of all the descriptions of the Balrog. Once its flame is extinguished by water it turns to slime (like wet ash). However, it is not explained whether or not this means that the Balrog just has slimy skin, or has become an amorphous blob. Whichever, there is still a certain amount of mutability implied. These descriptions in *LOTR*, led Tolkien to revisit the descriptions of Balrogs in his earlier work. For example, the following passage, taken from *The Silmarillion*¹⁸:

And in Utumno he gathered his demons about him, those spirits who first adhered to him in the days of his splendour, and became most like him in their corruption: their hearts were of

fire, but they were clouded in darkness, and terror went before them; they had whips of flame. (ref. 1, p. 43)

As can be seen, the Balrogs have taken on the characteristics that Tolkien developed in *LOTR*, especially the fire and shadow (both of which are highly mutable). These descriptions differ markedly from the early versions of the Balrog, in that the creature is now more elemental, indistinct and mysterious; almost a shape made out of fire and smoke. However, these almost ‘impressionistic’ descriptions — abstract, subjective and based on character reaction — leave much to the imagination, and have led to varying depictions in popular culture, which often involve much artistic licence and draw heavily from other sources.

There are several artists who have gained reputations as illustrators of Tolkien’s work including Alan Lee, Ian Miller and Roger Garland. However, the artist John Howe has produced several pieces of work that depict Balrogs in particular. Howe’s *Glorfindel and the Balrog*¹⁹ shows Glorfindel’s duel with a Balrog on Cirith Thoronath⁶. This piece seems to draw solely on Tolkien’s earlier descriptions of Balrogs as there is no presence of shadow and flame, even in the Balrog’s sword. Other illustrations of the Balrog in Howe’s portfolio include *Moria*²⁰, *Gandalf and the Balrog II*²⁰ and *Gandalf Falls with the Balrog*²⁰. These works depict Gandalf’s battle with the Balrog at the bridge of Khazad-Dûm from *LOTR*, although the design of the Balrog seems to draw more on descriptions in Tolkien’s earlier work: it is solid, visible, armoured and seems to have steel fangs. Also, the Balrog in these pictures displays shadow and flame. However, Howe has also used his own approach. His Balrogs are bestial, Minotaur-like creatures that have wings and seem to be based partly on depictions of Christian demons. Although Tolkien does describe the Balrogs as demons, there is no reason to suppose they resemble the traditional image of Christian ones.

Another artist who has illustrated Balrogs in several pieces of work is Ted Nasmith. These include *The Bridge of Khazad-Dûm*²¹ and *At the Bridge*²¹. These images draw on the descriptions of flame and shadow to a greater degree than Howe’s, and have opted to show a wingless Balrog. The quality of the Balrog in Nasmith’s depictions is perhaps unsatisfying, and presents a highly bestial creature. Other Balrog illustrations, such as Andrzej Grzechnik’s *Glorfindel Fighting Balrog*²¹ and Greg and Tim Hildebrandt’s *The Balrog*²¹, depict Balrogs with faces that are less bestial and more humanistic, which connotes a reasoned malevolence rather than mere savagery and is perhaps more in line with Tolkien’s conception. One final noteworthy illustration of a Balrog is featured in Catherine Karina Chmiel’s *But Morgoth Sent the More*²¹. This depiction relies almost wholly on Tolkien’s (earlier) descriptions and atypically seems to have no demonic preconceptions. This Balrog has no wings, horns or tail, is quite shadowy and mysterious, and is also of ‘man-shape but greater’. Of all the illustrations discussed, this seems to capture Tolkien’s descriptions most successfully (albeit the earlier versions).

Balrogs have also appeared in other media, such as action-figures, role-playing games and war-games, for example, Tony Akland's sculpture of Mighty A'Angor, Gigantic Balrog, which is a lead miniature used for role-playing games. This again seems to be heavily influenced by Biblical and mythological demons²². There have also been two cinematic representations of Balrogs, first by Ralph Bakshi²³ and then by Peter Jackson²⁴. Both make use of the shadow and flame motifs, although they are each overly bestial in appearance (particularly Bakshi's, which seems to have a lion-like head²⁵). Both versions are quite impressive on screen, and Jackson's version is particularly effective²⁶. However, it could be argued that an opportunity has been missed. Cinema (particularly in the digital age) is possibly the best medium for capturing the mutability and indistinct nature of the Balrog. It could also be argued that none of the depictions discussed successfully capture all the aspects of Tolkien's descriptions, and few of the deeper meanings that are present in the language Tolkien uses to name the Balrogs.

The first mention of the Balrog in *LOTR* is during the Council of Elrond when the dwarf Glóin says: "Too deep we delved there, and woke *the nameless fear*" (ref. 2, p. 315, my italics). It is fair to say that much of Tolkien's writing was shaped (partly) with the intention of justifying the etymologies of the languages²⁷ he created. This implies that the nameless fear is not just an arbitrary description; for Tolkien, names were descriptive (see Table 1), so 'nameless' can justifiably be construed as 'indescribable'²⁸. Even the names that are later given to the Balrog ('Durin's Bane'²⁹ and 'flame of Udûn'³⁰) are proxy names that do not refer to the Balrog directly. This certainly fits with the ambiguous description in *LOTR*. However, the earlier versions of Balrogs are less vague, and Tolkien had several names for them³¹.

The Sindarin word 'Balrog' and the Quenya word 'Valarauko' (-ar pl.)³², translate into English as 'demon of might' and are constructed thus (another example is in ref. 33).

So it can be seen that the names that Tolkien used are descriptive and give a strong indication of what the Balrog represented for Tolkien. The words 'bal/vala' and 'rog/rauko' are etymologically linked to other words that mean, for example, cruel, terror and torment. These terms have been used or linked to the Balrog at various times, and may have helped shape Tolkien's concept of the creature. For example:

The torment of the Balrogs will be ours ... one worthy of the torment of the Balrogs. (ref. 6, p. 15, my italics)

However, as Shippey notes³⁴, in an early academic paper Tolkien argued that an Anglo-Saxon word, *Sigelhearwan*, was mistranslated as 'Ethiopian' when it actually was a reference to 'the sons of Múspell', the Norse fire-giant. Shippey believes that Tolkien's fascination with this word may be the source of the Balrog's conception. Noel³⁵, in a similar vein, believes that Gandalf's battle with the Balrog on the bridge of Khazad-Dûm is based on the battle between the giant Surt(r), and Freyr, which destroyed the rainbow bridge Bifröst. As Thompson states³⁶:

Deities are the abstract ideas of objects or feelings. Priestcraft separated these objects from the feelings and gave them will and 'first cause'.³⁷

Gods of the Greek pantheon are a good example of this, and there are parallels of this in Tolkien's own work (the Ainur where, for example, Varda represents light and Ulmo represents the motion of water). With this in mind, it can be reasoned that this could also apply to Balrogs, who (as well as the terms mentioned above) may personify terror.

It was like a great shadow, in the middle of which was a dark form, of man-shape maybe, yet greater, and a power and *terror* seemed to be in it and go before it. (ref. 2, p. 345, my italics)

And:

Their hearts were of fire, but they were clouded in darkness, and *terror* went before them; they had whips of flame.

(ref. 1, p. 45, my italics, they are also described as "demons of terror").

These passages from *LOTR* and *The Silmarillion* respectively, are later writings, but the association with the Balrogs and terror goes back to Tolkien's earliest drafts. In *The Fall of Gondolin*, Rog says:

"Who now shall fear the Balrogs for all their *terror*?"

(ref. 6, p. 178, my italics)

The above passages imply that the terror is not just a reaction of those seeing a Balrog; rather it is terror as an 'active force' that is as much a part of the Balrogs as flame and shadow. Further evidence of this is in the next passage, where terror is used not only to name the Balrog, but is also present in the overall tone of the dialogue.

Then Aragorn recounted all that had happened upon the pass of Caradhras ... the coming of the *Terror*³⁸. "An evil of the Ancient World it seemed, such as I have never seen before," said Aragorn. "It was both a *shadow and a flame*, strong and *terrible*."

"It was a Balrog of Morgoth," said Legolas; "of all elf-banes the most deadly, save the One who sits in the Dark Tower."

"Indeed I saw upon the bridge that which haunts our darkest dreams, I saw Durin's Bane," said Gimli in a low voice, and dread was in his eyes.

"Alas!" said Celeborn. "We had long feared that under Caradhras a *terror* slept." (ref. 2, p. 375, my italics)³⁹

It seems clear that for Tolkien, the Balrogs symbolized terror, but they also symbolized other concepts, some of which are represented by the Balrog's other constant: the whip.

The whip of many thongs carried by the Balrogs is the type of whip used for punishment by torturers and slave drivers, and can be said to be a symbol of slavery, subjugation and coercion. Other concepts can also be associated with the whip, such as terror, torture, torment, cruelty and power

TABLE 1

English	Noldorin/Gnomish	Sindarin (S.)	Quenya (Q.)	Old English
Anguish	Bal			
Crush			Mala	
Cruel	Bal	Balc		
Demon	rhaug/graug	Rog	Rauko	bealu
Evil				
Feel terror		Groga		
Hate	Mog	Mog	Moko	
Horror		Gorog		
Power		Bal	Vala	
Powerful/hostile creature			rauko/Arauko	
Strife/war	Goth	Goth	Koso	
Terrify		Gruitha	Ruhta	
Terrible			Rúkima	
Terror	Ruku	Raug	Rukin	brogan
Torment		Baul	Ngwal	
Torture			(m)valkanë	

See ref. 45, p. 209 and refs 51–55

— all words that are part of the Balrog’s etymological history. However, terror is the concept most closely associated with the Balrog, and terror, when applied with the whip, is a means of coercion. Coercion is a feature of ‘The Machine’, a phrase that for Tolkien was a trope, by which he meant, as Christopher Tolkien explains⁴⁰:

the attempt to actualise our desires ... this meant coercion, domination, for him the great enemy; coercion of other minds and other wills; this is tyranny. But he also saw the characteristic activity of the modern world, the coercion, the tyrannous reformation of the earth. That is why he hated machines.

This refers to the way in which industrialization has not only shaped the world in which we live (in Tolkien’s opinion, not for the better), but also the lives we lead and the modification of people. There are also aspects of the Balrog that correlate with The Machine; the flame and smoke that surround the Balrog are evocative of the furnaces of industry, and the description of its ‘wings’ conjures images of vast plumes of smoke rising from the chimneys of Victorian factories. Furthermore, as Clark notes⁴¹:

[Dragons are] ... the work of ‘smiths’ and sorcerers, these forms [in three varieties] violate the boundary between mythical monster and machine, between magic and technology ... The iron dragons, carry orcs within and move on ‘iron so cunningly linked that they might flow ... under bombardment, ‘their hollow bellies clang ... yet it availed not for they might not be broken, and the fires rolled off them’. The more they differ from the dragons of mythology, however, the more these monsters resembled the tanks of the Somme.

This ‘industrial’ version of dragons can also be applied to the early version of the Balrogs. They were originally said to contain iron, and, as Tolkien’s first writings of Middle-earth were conceived at the Somme, it is likely that the machinery

of war was as much the basis for his original conception of the Balrogs as it was for the dragons (although Balrogs could also have represented the opposing war leaders)⁴². However, just as Tolkien’s concept of ‘The Machine’ broadened later, so did his conception of the Balrogs. Christopher Tolkien states that his father made explicit the fact that ‘The Machine’ was a major theme in his work⁴⁰.

It can be said, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that Elves in Tolkien’s work represented his ‘poetic imagination’⁴³. The Machine is the antithesis of this. The Balrogs were conceived to be (originally) of the same order of power as the greatest Elves, such as Glorfindel and Fëanor, and were diametrically opposed on several levels. Table 2 demonstrates this clearly. It makes clear the polar opposition between these two creations. The original idea was that the Balrogs had been bred by Melko.

And in Utumno he wrought the race of demons whom the Elves named the Balrogs. (ref. 44, p. 70)

And:

He devises the Balrogs and the orcs. (ref. 45, p. 295)

TABLE 2

Balrogs (the machine)	Elves (poetic imagination)
Magic	Enchantment
Industry	Nature
Shadow	Light
Corruption	Growth/fecundity
Terror	Joy
Pragmatism	Idealism
Functionality	Artistry
Torture	Pleasure
Power	Creativity
Coercion	Freedom
Fear	Hope

Later, instead of ‘bred’ they were ‘multiplied,’ and they became more powerful. As Christopher Tolkien states;

The early version of the Balrogs makes them less terrible and are certainly more destructible than they afterwards became.
(ref. 6, p. 212)

By this, Christopher Tolkien is referring to the fact that Balrogs were later recast as Maiar⁴⁶ although there were still ‘a thousand Balrogs’ (ref. 45, p. 302). However, one of the last notes Tolkien left, which he unfortunately was never able to elaborate on, read:

There should not be supposed more than three or at most seven ever existed.
(ref. 44, p. 79)

The reason that the Balrogs increased in power but grew smaller in number⁴⁷ is that they began to embody a wider and more mutable concept. Shippey states⁴⁸ that the Roman senator Boethius believed that there was no such thing as evil, only an absence of good. This ties in with the motif of the mutable shadow. The Balrogs may have come to represent the faceless corruption of ruling hegemonic powers (or the evil in wars) that is detectable and determinable, but that is unidentifiable and even abstract — the shadow can be seen, but not the source. As Shippey states:

People of Tolkien’s generation had a problem identifying evil, they had no difficulty recognising it, but the puzzling thing is that this seemed to be carried out by entirely normal people, and indeed Tolkien, who was a combat veteran, knew that his own side did things like that too. The nature of evil in the 20th century has been curiously impersonal. It’s as if sometimes nobody particularly wants to do it. In the end you get the major atrocities of the 20th century being carried out by bureaucrats.⁴⁹

Here Shippey is referring to the Nazgûl⁵⁰, but the principle is the same; they and the Balrogs are abstracts of the negative emotions and corrupt organizations that lead to repression and true evil.

Some of the above interpretations of the Balrog by others are varied and sometimes quite interesting and/or accurate. However, none of these approaches truly captures the conceptions and complexity of this multivalent creation. Because of the vagueness of Tolkien’s creation, there is a proclivity to fill the gaps by introducing intertextual concepts. However, some of these artists (and directors) seem to have missed the point. The descriptions of the Balrog are vague, figurative, symbolic and mutable because that is what a Balrog is — it is a manifestation of the abstract, and Tolkien has created a creature that the reader and artist alike have to use their own interpretation and conception of evil, terror and corrupt power to visualize. In this sense, it could be said that all interpretations are necessarily subjective and thus correct.



1. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion* (Harper Collins, 1999).
2. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* (Harper Collins/BCA, 1991).

3. In Tolkien’s work, spirits of this kind are referred to as Ainur. They are similar in nature to both Biblical angels and demons, and the gods of Norse and Greek pantheons. The greatest of these are called Valar, the rest are Maiar, of which Balrogs are one type (Gandalf another).
4. Carpenter, H. (ed.) *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* 236 (Harper Collins, 1995).
5. Much of the material that does not appear in *LOTR* is assembled from notes, and is thus often difficult to date accurately.
6. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume II: The Book of Lost Tales Part Two* (ed. Tolkien, C.) (Harper Collins, 2002).
7. There is an almost identical description on page 179 of ref. 6, although it contains the added line “and in stature they were very great”.
8. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume III: The Lays Of Beleriand* (ed. Tolkien, C.) (Harper Collins, 2002).
9. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume VII: The Treason of Isengard* (ed. Tolkien, C.) (Harper Collins, 2002).
10. Later versions of this sentence include: “The shape of a man perhaps, and not much larger”, and then “... and not much greater”, ref. 9, page 202. However, this small sized version was quickly abandoned.
11. This detail may be informed by some gargoyles, which are often depicted with extruding tongues.
12. It could be argued that these two descriptions imply the beginnings of the mutability seen in the published version of the Balrog.
13. This passage is spoken by Gandalf in the book.
14. It is interesting to speculate how various characters see the Balrog. The descriptions given in *LOTR* would seem to be from the perspective of the ‘mortal’ characters. It is likely that the Balrog would appear differently to Elves, who can ‘see’ beings in the shadow world. It is significant that Legolas recognizes what he sees instantly and is terrified by it. Elves have no fear of the dead, the undead or even the Nazgûl, yet the Balrog paralyzes Legolas with dread. Another strange case is Gandalf. As a fellow Maiar, one would expect him also to recognize the Balrog, yet this does not seem to be the case. It could be that his ‘true’ form, that of the Maiar Olórin, would recognize a Balrog, but his ‘limited’ and earthbound form (Gandalf) cannot, and can only see from the perspective of a mortal.
15. There is much speculation among Tolkien’s readership as to whether the Balrog’s wings were real or whether this reference to them was a figurative description. There are also debates as to whether or not it could fly, whether it could speak, and if it was under the control of Sauron.
16. There are earlier indications that they can do this, but these are highly ambiguous.
17. An earlier version of this passage adds to this description “sleek as ice, pliant as a thong, unbreakable as steel” (ref. 9, p. 431).
18. The published version of *The Silmarillion* is ostensibly composed of the most recent notes. However, there are concessions to this where issues of contradiction or incompleteness arise.
19. Howe, J. in *The Tolkien Calendar 1991* (Allen & Unwin, 1990).
20. Online at <http://www.john-howe.com>.
21. Online at <http://fan.theonering.net/rolozo/collection>.
22. This design was commissioned c. 1985 for Citadel Miniatures Ltd. It also seems rather reminiscent of the demon in the film *The Night of the Demon* (dir. Tourneur, J.) (Columbia Pictures, 1957).
23. Bakshi, R. (dir.) *The Lord of the Rings* (Warner Brothers, 1978). This Balrog was designed by the animation department of the film, although the actual artist is not specified.
24. Jackson, P. (dir.) *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New Line Cinema, 2002). This Balrog was designed by Weta Digital. The actual artist is not specified, although John Howe was involved, and Jackson acknowledges that this version was inspired by Howe’s earlier work (see *The Lord of the Rings: Extended Edition* disc 3, ‘Designing Middle-earth’ New Line Cinema, 2002).
25. This may possibly be because Tolkien describes Balrogs as having manes.
26. Jackson’s Balrog is composed of lava with a constantly shifting and cracking ‘skin’ of crust. This does sound an almost Tolkienesque idea, despite its inaccuracy.
27. Noldorin and Gnomish are early versions of the later languages Sindarin and Quenya.
28. For mortals at least. Elves seem to be able to describe them quite well (see ref. 14).
29. This refers to the fact that the Balrog killed the dwarven king Durin IV.
30. *Udûn* is Sindarin and means *Utumno* in Quenya, Melko’s original underground fortress. It could therefore refer to any Balrog and is not necessarily a specific name for this particular one.
31. Some of these terms are older than others, and in some cases obsolete.

However, this is not reflected in the text as they are only mentioned to demonstrate the terms and concepts Tolkien applied to Balrogs.

32. Originally, the definite article of Balrog was i'Malrog and the plural i'Malaraugin (araukë and Malkaraukë respectively in Quenya).
33. Gothmog refers to Gothmog: the Lord of Balrogs, High Captain of Angband. Also called Kosomot, Kosomok(o) or Kosmoko, he was originally intended to have been the son of Melko (Morgoth) and Ulbandi(?) (later the ogress Fluihuin). However, this idea was abandoned and he was later made into one of the Maiar that were loyal to Melko. Gothmog was the most powerful of the Balrogs, and killed several prominent elves including Féanor and Fingon, until eventually, he and Ecthelion slew each other during the attack on Gondolin. Gothmog is one of only two Balrogs named by Tolkien. The other is called Lungorthin; Lord of Balrogs. Lungorthin is only mentioned once in all of Tolkien's notes and Christopher Tolkien believes that it is 'a' Balrog lord, rather than 'the' Lord of Balrogs, as Gothmog is referred to by this title both before and after this reference.
34. Shippey, T. *The Road to Middle-earth* 39 (Harper Collins, 1992). Further developed in Shippey, T. J. R. R. *Tolkien: Author of the Century* 84–85 (Harper Collins, 2001).
34. In *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader* (ed. Chance, J.) 180 (Univ. Press Kentucky, 2004).
36. Thompson, E. P. *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994).
37. That is to say, they come to be regarded as the instigators of the concepts they were originally conceived of to embody.
38. Significantly, the capitalization of the word terror is Tolkien's own.
39. See also in the same text "They roused from sleep a thing of terror" (p. 1109).
40. Bailey, D. (dir.) *A Film Portrait of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Landseer Films and Television Productions, 1992).
41. Garth, J. *Tolkien and the Great War* 220–221 (Harper Collins, 2003).
42. And possibly Tolkien's idea of 'The Machine'.
43. Most of the views Tolkien stated regarding art, nature and aesthetics are mirrored in the nature of the Elves.
44. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume X: Morgoth's Ring* (ed. Tolkien, C.) (Harper Collins, 2002).
45. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume IV: The Shaping of Middle-earth* (ed. Tolkien, C.) (Harper Collins, 2002).
46. Tolkien sometimes used the term Umaiar for evil Maiar.
47. This low number of Balrogs would have created some major continuity problems that Tolkien was never able to address, and it is interesting to speculate how he would have resolved them. Several Balrogs are killed throughout his history — substantially more than seven. He may have explained this away by having the Balrogs reincarnate like the Elves and Maiar can. However, in Tolkien's secondary world, evil spirits are less potent after they are reborn (this is why Sauron cannot take form again after *LOTR*), but it could be that Morgoth replenished them. Another problem is why have they not been reborn again? This could be because Morgoth is no longer there to replenish them, or it may simply be that most of them were killed by Manwë, who is not only more powerful than even Morgoth, but the most powerful being in all of Arda.
48. Shippey, T. J. R. R. *Tolkien: Author of the Century* 130 (Harper Collins, 2001).
49. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers Extended Edition Disc 3 'Origins of Middle-earth'*.
50. It could be that, given the description of the Lord of Nazgûl (ref. 2, p. 874) "a shadow of despair", that the Ringwraiths were Sauron's attempt to create Balrogs of his own.
51. Allan, J. *An Introduction to Elvish* (Bran's Head Books, 2001).
52. Noel, R.S. *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-earth* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980).
53. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume I: The Book of Lost Tales Part One* (ed. Tolkien, C.) 250 (Harper Collins, 2002).
54. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume VI: The Lost Road and Other Writings* (ed. Tolkien, C.) 377 (Harper Collins, 2002).
55. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The History of Middle-earth Volume XI: The War of the Jewels* (ed. Tolkien, C.) 329–330 & 415 (Harper Collins, 2002).



Andunie
Jef Murray



Has anyone seen Sméagol?

Chris Bouchard, the man behind fan film *The Hunt for Gollum* talks to *Mallorn* about heroes, orcs and stuffing Gollum in a sack.

In May last year, Chris Bouchard saw the fulfilment of a dream — and several years' hard work — when the film he directed made its premiere. Since then, *The Hunt for Gollum* has been seen by well over 4 million people. Taking a breather from touring the film around the world and planning his next cinematic adventure, Chris agreed to sit down and answer a few questions from *Mallorn*.

***The Hunt for Gollum* is a 40-minute film with high production values, yet it apparently cost just £3,000. Is that true? And, if so, how was that possible?**

The amount spent on the film was indeed only £3,000, which was spent very carefully on absolute essentials: props, costumes, make-up, food, equipment ... I was lucky enough to find a hugely talented and dedicated cast and crew who worked unpaid, purely for the love of the material and the love of film-making. We also had the advantage of making the film over a longer than usual timeframe, progress was made whenever time would allow. With more than 140 volunteers over the two-year period, we realized that, had this been a for-profit film it would have cost at least £100,000 to pay the cast and crew. So I guess that puts it into perspective. It's thanks to the hard work, belief and dedication of a large number of Tolkien lovers that the film exists.

The film has done very well, has the response exceeded your expectations?

The reception has exceeded my wildest hopes. After a very hard two years I was terrified of the fan reaction and at first I couldn't face reading the first few viewer comments. I certainly expected them to be much more critical overall, as I would have been as a viewer. It wasn't until my partner read

a few comments out loud that I realized that on the whole people enjoyed or appreciated the film. So that has been very exciting. As a director they say you only see the flaws in your work, and that's definitely true. Winning the 'Best fiction produced for the web' in Geneva was particularly special, as we didn't think a fan film could win an award at a serious festival.

Now that the dust has settled on the initial release, you seem to be taking the film to far-flung places for screenings. How is it being received in non-English territories?

Screening requests have come in from a number of festivals, conventions and events, and it's been very exciting to go out and talk to fans in Poland, Spain, Canada and Switzerland



who have seen the film. It appears that the film was actually more popular in non-English speaking countries, perhaps because the media in those countries got more excited about it. I also think that native English speakers are familiar with the voices of Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen and co, so found it harder to connect with the 'new voices' of our actors in *The Hunt For Gollum*. Non-English speakers perhaps found it easier to be immersed with the familiar Middle-earth visuals. We launched the film with subtitles in more than 12 different languages, all translated from the script by fans on our forums.

What is your background — this surely can't be the first film you've been involved with?

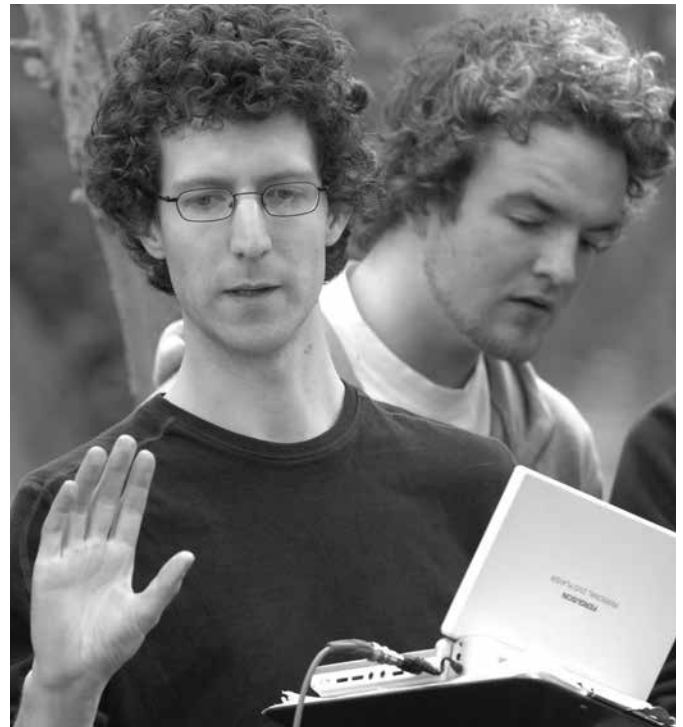
I've been dabbling in film for the past eight years or so. Starting off as a music composer, I had a musical upbringing playing in orchestras and choirs. At university I joined a film-making society where I learned camera and editing skills, and eventually made some short films and experimental projects. I was aware of the idea of fan films and even scored a *Star Wars* fan film. I also helped out on all sorts of low-budget feature films, usually with sound, music or editing. There is a huge network of independent low/no-budget filmmakers in the UK and some very exciting projects happening all the time. I work full time for a post-production company in London, doing technical/engineering work for films and TV commercials.

So why did you decide to tackle Tolkien?

Four reasons. 1) Because *The Lord of the Rings* is the greatest and most cinematic story I've ever read, and I've read it numerous times since quite a young age. 2) Because I needed a calling card, a showpiece for my career that was doable on a tiny budget. 3) Peter Jackson's films inspired me to get more seriously into the art and craft of film-making. 4) Due to the popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* we knew there would be an audience for the film. As an independent filmmaker it's incredibly difficult and frustrating that nobody ever sees your work, beyond a handful of friends, family and maybe 100 people at a festival screening. I wanted to make something that actually got seen. This non-profit unofficial Tolkien film guaranteed that at least somebody I didn't know would watch it.

You opted to maintain visual continuity with the Peter Jackson films. What prompted that decision?

Because we were only filming an appendix here, it made sense to connect it visually with the style of Peter Jackson's trilogy, which I find very inspiring. Of course, if we had been remaking the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy then I would have opted for a complete redesign, and a new cinematic look and feel, but a 40-minute prequel to a 12-hour movie didn't warrant that. It's not intended to stand alone. We approached it as if it were a missing chapter from the existing film trilogy, to fill in a little backstory for those (like us) who wanted more. Of course, this made it difficult for ourselves as it was sometimes near-impossible to hit the



Chris Bouchard takes control during the shoot.

Peter Jackson benchmark, with our resources but it gave us something to aim for.

I assume you are a fan of Tolkien's work. How did you go about choosing which piece of backstory to bring to life? What was it about the hunt for Gollum that made it right for this project?

I'm a huge fan. I find Aragorn a particularly fascinating character and the possibility of filming something during his early years was interesting. However it wasn't until I reread the appendices and rediscovered the hunt for Gollum story, that I realized that with the addition of a few simple tricks, this could be filmed with minimal actors and crew on a very low budget. Stuffing Gollum in a sack negated our need for heavy CGI and gave us the opportunity for Gollum and Aragorn to talk to each other. The idea of exploring some backstory on such wonderful characters: Gandalf, Aragorn and Gollum was very appealing. I do wish, however, that I had been able to develop more interesting dialogue for Aragorn and Gollum. That's where the sack let us down a bit. Perhaps they could have learned something from each other during that long lonely northward march.

To what extent did you make the film assuming a knowledge of the main story? I would guess that it is a tough balance to strike between teaching fans to suck eggs and alienating general viewers?

What's that about eggs? A box without hinges...? (ha ha... sorry!) I assumed that viewers had seen the films, but that they hadn't necessarily read the books very recently (or at all). The prologue is really just a reminder of what's been going on, and to get people's brains to the right point, before the trilogy. I didn't worry too much about the balance,



however if I had made the film on a more personal level I would have put more detail in for those who knew the books really well.

Where was most of the film shot? How hard was it to find locations that both matched the story and reflected the world seen in Jackson's films?

Snowdonia, Epping Forest, Surrey and London. We only filmed 3 days of 17 in Wales, which was the perfect location, but it was very expensive to get everybody there. So we had to make do with the forests near London for the most part, as I'm sure you can tell. Often it's about finding a slightly unusual location, or a grand looking tree, and photographing it in a way that makes it look more otherworldly than it really is — or only pointing the camera in one direction, because if you pointed it an inch to the left you'd see a motorway! We had to use a lot of tricks, and a lot of the mountains were added in post-production. Our 'helicopter shots' were all computer generated.

Compared with Jackson's trilogy, the budget and time you had available must have made all aspects of the film a creative challenge?

Indeed, it was always a case of doing the best we could with whatever we had on the day, with some quite hilarious outtakes. Tying it all together was a huge creative challenge when we were editing, because there was nearly always some kind of continuity error. We had shot 40+ hours of footage in a fairly inconsistent, run-and-gun fashion, which often didn't cut together very cleanly. Many scenes had to be cut entirely.

Apart from being practical, keeping Gollum in a sack for much of the proceedings dramatically increases the impact (and surprise) of the final CGI scene. How hard was it to realize those CG effects?

The CG animated shot of Gollum (yes, there is only one shot!) was without a doubt the most technically difficult

aspect. Animating creatures is a very time-consuming and tricky effect to get photo-real, which usually takes a team of highly skilled CG artists working for several months full time. Those kind of artists are usually very busy so it was hard to find anyone willing to do it in their spare time. For me it was a nightmare because I knew we needed this shot, and it got left until last. In fact it didn't get finished until two or three days before the release date of the film, and it was touch and go whether Gollum was going to actually make the cut or not. The last six months of post-production for me actually became a literal search for Gollum! I was constantly hunting for the right combination of skilled digital artists who could create that shot to a high standard. In the end it was a combined effort of ten people who created that one shot. Three modellers, texture artist, rigger, animator, shader artist, compositor. All of whom were trying to fit the work in their spare time, and on a very short deadline. Trying to match the quality of Weta digital's Gollum was the challenge, and I think we got very close thanks to the talent and hard work of our team.

The film took around two years from conception to finished product, but to what extent did it take over your life?

It completely took over my life for at least a year and a half. I was working a full-time job to pay the bills, and then every evening and weekend working on the film. Surviving on the minimum amount of sleep. There's a huge amount of administration and coordinating work when making a film — getting 50 people to turn up at 7 a.m., with the right combination of props, costumes, equipment as well as the script is a logistical nightmare. My co-producers eased the load but as I was the only one really working 'full-time' on the project I didn't really have time to do anything else. A strong bond formed within our team and I think the Gollum crew will be good friends for life.

There must have been a phenomenal commitment from people both in front of and behind the cameras?

More than 140 people worked on the film. With around half of those giving a major commitment, or a large amount of time to the project. We all took the film incredibly seriously and even though it wasn't a paying project we treated it as a professional commitment. The majority were working evenings and weekends, but for some key roles, such as sound post-production, visual effects supervisor, music composers and other heads of department like the Orc effects, it became a full-time commitment for a number of weeks, in some cases months. I was pretty much working as many hours as I could stay awake to keep the ship from sinking.

The recent adaptations of Terry Pratchett's stories for movies on Sky One have featured a huge number of Pratchett fans as extras, did you call on a similar resource?

Not in our case, as our extras were playing Orcs, and had to be trained in stage combat, so we had to be careful. Nevertheless many of our cast and crew were avid fans. One of the

reasons the film was so cheap is that we didn't have many scenes with extras — they're expensive to feed!

How did you go about casting? I seem to recall a story about one of the orcs being cast after he read in some of Gollum's lines during a shoot?

We did auditions for some of the important roles: Gandalf, Arwen. Others (Aragorn and Arithir) were played by actors I've worked with on previous films and we figured pretty much anyone could play an Orc. The most surprising casting was Gareth Brough who was the cameraman on the first shoot and happened to read a few Gollum lines in a rehearsal. He ended up doing much of the Gollum voice and also plays the big Orc in the fight scene, for which he trained substantially. There's lots about that in our making of videos.

Working with friends and fans, is it hard to say "no" in terms of casting, filming or other involvement?

It is! But luckily I hardly ever had to. We got the producers and friends to be extras in the Prancing Pony and once the main four actors were cast the other participants were open to pretty much anybody. We always needed more hands on set so it was always the more the merrier. We had a great team spirit on set even though we were working 12 or 14 hour days with everybody pitching in to get the job done, and the feeling that this was something unusual for a low-budget film.

With the world of Tolkien wrapped up in copyright and licensing, how problematic was the rights issue for you? Does it restrict your ambition in terms of distribution?

Tolkien Enterprises really understand their fans surprisingly well. They appreciated that this was a passionate labour of love, made out of respect for the source material and permitted us to release the film so long as it remained non-profit. Our distribution is limited to free streaming, but thanks to the quality of YouTube and Dailymotion this is pretty good quality, even HD, for most people. I'd like to think that one day maybe we could do a charity DVD release or something for those with slow Internet connections who want to have a copy, but the rights issue is very complicated so it probably won't happen and that's up to Tolkien Enterprises.

Are you involved in any other production at present? I see, for example, that you are also promoting another fan film — *Born of Hope* — what's the relationship between your team and the group who made that film?

We have a very close relationship with the makers of *Born of Hope*, which was released recently. The producer/director Kate Madison supported me when I was starting out on *THFG* by lending me some costumes and swords. Later, we handed over all the orc and ranger costumes we made after we were finished and they were reused in *Born of Hope*. We also shared tips, techniques and pooled resources on locations, post-production and cameras. Many of our crew worked on both projects and I was a cameraman on some of their scenes. *Born of Hope* is actually a far bigger film than *THFG* and quite

a spectacular achievement. The coordination alone of bringing all those set pieces together, combined with the emotional intensity at the end is fantastic. Also there is a possibility of us teaming up together to make our next film.

Do you feel that, with the developments in Internet technologies, the time of the fan film has finally come? Do you feel a part of rising tide of fan filmmakers?

Absolutely. The Internet is breaking down all traditional boundaries from film production, collaboration and even distribution. I think we'll continue to see better and better fan films appearing on the Internet as technology enables cheaper film-making. And society in general will gradually become more aware of them as each year a yet more ambitious film is released.

What's next for you? Do you have plans to make another fan film?

I'm very excited about my next film. I think it might be a nice surprise for *LOTR* fans like me, who are yearning for films that connect on an emotional level in an epic setting. I am currently adapting some brilliant original fantasy works to the screen and searching for the right investors to make a 'real' feature film, meaning for cinema release. We've made a popular film on virtually no money, so now we're hoping we can raise the finance for something much bigger. I think audiences are crying out for serious fantasy/epics like *LOTR* with grown-up intelligent themes. The digital techniques we've developed on *THFG* could be used to make a \$40 million equivalent film on a fraction of the cost. As for timescale it will likely be a year or so but we're pushing the web-interactivity side of things so Gollum fans will be able to get involved in the film-making process through our site. In a month or so we'll be ready to announce just what that story will be...

Some have suggested that the Tom Bombadil episode is an omission from the Jackson films that would lend itself to a fan film. Would that interest you?

I love Tom Bombadil. A number of fans have asked us to make a Bombadil episode or parts of *The Silmarillion* but actually my personal favourite would be the Scouring of the Shire. Should such a film be made, it would make sense to do a Tom Bombadil episode too as you could have the same hobbit actors for both films! For the moment I'm going to be focusing on my next project so perhaps the next generation of fan filmmakers can make that happen.

Finally, what do you feel you have learnt from the process of making *The Hunt for Gollum*?

Low-budget film is surprisingly hard work! Actually, it's been an amazing journey for me. Not only creatively, developing my directing method but also on a personal level. I've met some fantastic people and made friends for life. On top of that, experiencing the fan reaction has been quite overwhelming.

Interview by **Colin Sullivan**.

See page 15 for a review of *Born of Hope*.

SLAYING THE DRAGON

Tuilinde

What first I feared had finally come to pass!
 Their graceless grandeur, their greed and foolishness,
 ignorance, thoughtlessness, arrogance and pride
 had drawn down the dragon's ire, and doom was come
 upon us.

~~~~~

Our place, our prosperity and precarious peace  
 we had held here hidden in our hands;  
 with quiet commerce cautiously constructing  
 a life and living on the lake through long years.  
 Not troubling the terror, nor travelling to the north;  
 but finding firm friends in the Elf kingdoms,  
 winning trade in wine both west and south.

Then the Dwarves came with confusion and controversy.  
 Ragged refugees, claiming royal rights.  
 Hopes were heard, and were hurriedly believed —  
 rich and poor saw a bold brightness brandished.  
 False was the future they unfolded before us!  
 The briefest thought had told me, that burning bane  
 could not be conned and cornered, or craftily killed,  
 by so few, so simply, and so soon!  
 "Doom and disaster, danger and devastation!"  
 Perforce I spoke these words of woe,  
 pleading for patience, and proper thought.  
 But all-unmoved, a mockery they made of me,  
 in excitement bound to their unreal dreams.  
 New songs they sang, sated their thirst, and spoke  
 of fame and fortune, gold and glory!  
 Thorin - a new and caring kind of Dwarven king!!

~~~~~

The year's end approached, and our ending also!
 Lo, in the North, a light was lit in the darkness!
 Bereaved of his gold by the bold burglar —
 Arisen from rest, his revenge seeking,
 roaring in rage, he rowed the dark skies,
 as a flaming dart of final doom.
 Red the ripples on river and lake,
 as Smaug, in swift spite swooped down
 and with furious fire fought against us.

Urgent, the trumpet sang out the alarm!
 At once our axes bit and cut
 until crashing, the causeway crumpled and fell.
 But broad wings beating bore him on
 daring the danger of dark, quenching depths.
 Fear of our fiery foe found many unmanned,
 scattering and scrambling to escape all scathe.
 Sturdily my mighty men still stood unmoved,
 terror not tearing their trusty hearts.

Archers all, 'gainst Smaug their anger stirred
 till hard hands high their shafts directed
 straight and strong, none straying from the target.
 Vainly we loosed until the last, yet naught availed.
 Hard as adamant his hauberk of jewels,
 and our shafts shrivelled in his white-hot breathing.
 Through all the town the thatch he tore and burned,
 as with brimful buckets brave souls struggled
 to quickly quench the flaming roofs.
 His thrashing tail smashed homes and Hall;
 his brute breath burned the broken ruins.

The while we fought, wives and widows wept;
 and bundled into boats with babes in arms,
 hoping against hope this horror would be halted.
 Almost my soul and strength did quail
 as still unhurt he hunted them across the waves.
 Wrathful beyond reason he raged over us again,
 careless and reckless, in heedless confidence.

Then to my shoulder the thrush flew, fluttering.
 "Wait!" he whispered, "Watch for his weakness!"
 "A hole there is in his ancient armour —
 beside the breast, behold — beneath the leg!"
 Bending my bow I begged, "Black arrow,
 trusty heirloom, fly true to the final target!
 Straight from the string smite this evil Smaug!"
 So deafening was the dreadful, dying cry,
 the awful anguish echoing across the lake,
 his scream splintered stone, split trees tumbled.
 Full on the flames of his fiery pyre
 he crashed... and was quickly quenched.
 The dark depths swallowed him in steam...
 and sudden silence.

ARWEN

Ben Gribbin

With flowers on her silver wrists and silence in her hair,
 where darkness dries and moonlight twists, having escaped
 the rain —
 she wakes when I wake; in the dark, the words she whispers
 span
 the stars, until we see a hidden link for every fire,
 and bearing back against the sheets, I sense her words explain
 the bonds, unbreakable and strong, I couldn't see before,
 that her own thoughts have strung, connecting, tautly, every star:
 and as she speaks, the simple moonlight flutters at her face —
 these are the words that call the constellations into place,
 she says to me, then says the words. I can't repeat them here,
 any more than I might say the moonlight; nonetheless,
 I saw, I swear, on that dark air, the patterns, very old
 and wonderful, and mythical — impossibly distant, cold
 dry silver lines connected stars, spun into place as she spoke,
 held high in space, as spiders' webs, then broke, and broke,
 and broke,
 until by dawn, there were no more, and both of us awoke.

THE BALLAD OF SAM GAMGEE

Teresa Kirkpatrick

It's Christmas Eve: we've feasted well
And carolled merrily;
Now gather round and I will tell
The tale of Sam Gamgee.

Young Sam, a gardener, overheard
His master plan to flee
The Shire: "I'll join you! Say the word!"
Declared stout Sam Gamgee.

Two more made up their little band;
They roamed adventurously
Beset by danger in strange lands
Unknown to Sam Gamgee.

At length they came to Rivendell
And tarried pleasantly:
"Elves and wizards! Dwarves as well!"
Said happy Sam Gamgee.

A Fellowship they formed at last,
A valiant Company
In Mordor's fires the Ring to cast
(Including Sam Gamgee).

Two Men, one Wizard, Dwarf and Elf,
Four Hobbits, one Po-nee?
He kept having to pinch himself,
Excited Sam Gamgee!

In Moria, when Gandalf fell,
Sam wept despondently.
Then under charmed Lothlorien's spell
Came heartsore Sam Gamgee.

At Amon Hen Frodo took flight:
"Now, Master, wait for me,
I mustn't let you out of sight!"
Cried desperate Sam Gamgee.

To Mordor then with Gollum's aid
They went. Great bravery
In Shelob's lair our Sam displayed —
That's just like Sam Gamgee!

And for a while Sam kept the Ring
For Frodo; faithfully
Ignored its call; the evil thing
Could not touch Sam Gamgee!

Then, as they neared their journey's end,
His master valiantly
Sam carried, like a true, true friend;
Devoted Sam Gamgee!

They stood beside the Cracks of Doom,
The Ring shone vividly;
Despite the heat a sense of gloom
Crept over Sam Gamgee.

"I'll keep the Ring!" his master cried
But Gollum viciously
Bit him and took it o'er the side
In front of Sam Gamgee.

Beside his master Samwise lay
In Orodruin's lee.
The Ring was gone — no more to say
But "Thank you, Sam Gamgee."

Home in the Shire they feasted well
(They made Sam Mayor, you see)
And to this day the hobbits tell
The tale of Sam Gamgee.

(This was found scrawled on a piece of paper which fell out of an ancient copy of the *Red Book of Westmarch*. Like many such ballads it's not entirely accurate, being a popular version of an old, old tale)





-THE HILL - AS ALL THE PEOPLE FOR MANY MILES AROUND
CALLED IT..

2

Chad 04/97

The architect of apathy

SHELLY LI

It is said that if history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten. So let me tell you a story about apathy and how it came into this world. Now, some people think that hate is the opposite of love. But really, does one hate because he cannot love? No. One hates because he has loved and lost, turning hate and love into neighbours.

However apathy, by definition being the absence of passion, emotion, excitement — is the sole antithesis of love.

And before it came to earth, it lived in the form of a house that hovered among the clouds.

“You know that house?”

“What house?”

“The one in the clouds. With the tall green trees and great white pillars holding up balconies of black iron. Apathy, it’s called.”

“Oh, duh. Everyone knows Apathy. What a strange name for a home . . .”

A smile crossed the face of the young boy named Rhett. He said to the girl: “I’m going to visit Apathy.”

At this the girl, 14, about his age, chuckled and told him, “That’s silly. No one ever journeys to Apathy. Besides, how are you going to get there? It’s so high above us.”

Rhett just shrugged and said: “I’ll ask nicely.”

“Ask who?”

Grinning, he looked up at the heavens and pointed at the great floating house cutting through the sky. “Him.” He had seen the old man a dozen or so times in the night, while his parents believed him to be sleeping soundly in bed. The man would carry a flashlight as he walked to the trees on the edge of his front yard, and look down at the lights in the abyss below. And Rhett could watch him like the old man could watch the world forever, full of curiosity and apprehension.

After a moment of squinting into the rays of the afternoon sun, trying to get a glimpse of whatever Rhett was pointing at, the girl finally threw her hands up in the air. “You’re a crazy one, Rhett,” she said, and walked away.

But inside his house, in the monitor room, the architect of Apathy heard Rhett’s words, and as he watched the boy sitting on the grass with his head craning upwards, a thought wormed into his mind.

Perhaps the boy can help me fix the disease that is plaguing the house. Perhaps, with the fresh naïveté and imagination that burns bright inside the youthful, he can preserve Apathy.

And so, with an outstretched hand, the old man lifted Rhett off the ground and, with flicks of the wrist, raised the boy up and up until he reached the treed gates of Apathy.

At first young Rhett did not understand what was hap-

pening to him as he ascended towards the clouds, and the architect could feel the boy’s pulse in his solid hands of air, racing to the unsteady beat of fear.

But the closer the architect carried him to Apathy, the wider Rhett’s eyes grew. Then suddenly, between that height that corporate buildings reached and the altitude that air-planes flew, Rhett seemed to understand what was happening

He ceased to struggle, and his heartbeat began to regulate again.

Turning over on his stomach, Rhett watched the people, cars, buildings fade into unrecognizable dots as he flew higher and higher, all sense of fear now abandoned.

A smile crossed the architect’s face, though it faded after half a second. He felt a sharp pain in his chest, reminding him of what he had done wrong.

A sprinkle of excitement had entered into his soul, sparked and flashed and then disappeared as quickly as it had come.

You are the architect of Apathy, he reminded himself.

Anything and everything else is unnecessary.

From the moment his feet touched the ground again, Rhett’s eyes couldn’t stay in a single spot for more than a few seconds. Everything around him was so full of life — the green trees generously sleeved with leaves, the dwarfed evergreens lining the walkway up to the front of the house, the white marble fountain situated at the centre of the terrace of shamrock shrubs and indigo flowers, pumping out clear water and letting it spread like a halo as it landed back in the pool.

So much more satisfying than the vague outlines from my window, Rhett said to himself. So much more beautiful than I imagined it in my dreams.

The smile frozen on his face, he continued to head for the front doors of Apathy, happily anticipating the man who lived in such a beautiful place, everything here for him and him alone to enjoy.

The double doors were maple wood, with a glass window in the middle, the shape of the star of David. As Rhett approached, the doors swung open, cutting the star in half.

His foot hit the tiled floor with a soft click.

From his bedroom window to Apathy’s front yard, Rhett had thought that he’d feel the same overwhelming excitement upon entering the house that had long seduced his interest from the sky.

However he had no such luck. No, not at all.

Looking around at the glittering, high-ceilinged foyer room, Rhett knew that his jaw should have unhinged.

Instead he found himself filled with a strange . . .

Nothingness. No more excitement, no more pleasure — even the smile fell from his lips.

Just nothing.

And through this nothingness, a voice spoke from the top of the large marble staircase.

“Good afternoon, Rhett.”

Rhett peered up and locked eyes with a bearded man in his mid-, possibly late sixties. The beard was silver-white, while the thin hair on his head possessed a few strands of brown.

Still in a state of unfamiliar detachment, Rhett said to the man: “You are the owner of the house, then?”

Descending the steps of the staircase, the man’s black dress shoes made no sound as they touched the spotless floor.

When the man reached the last step, he extended a hand toward Rhett. “More than just the owner,” he said as Rhett shook his hand. “I am Apathy’s architect.”

Rhett nodded, hesitating after he pulled out of the architect’s firm grip. He had had so many things to say, so many questions to ask.

And yet, as he stared into the man’s water-blue eyes, all words escaped him.

“Come,” the architect said, gesturing at the room across. “I have just spent quite a bit of time fixing the house. You must let me give you a tour.”

Rhett tried a smile, but it almost hurt to do so, and he stopped trying.

He followed the architect into the next room, and the tour began.

“As you might imagine, Apathy is not your average house,” the architect said. “Likewise, the rooms are unconventional as well.”

He stopped, and Rhett halted behind him. “This is the Room of Liberation,” he said, gesturing at the space around them. “I spend all my mornings here, meditating.”

Rhett took a look around and frowned at the cornerless white walls, baring no pictures, no patterns, no colour. “Liberation,” he repeated.

“Liberation from pain, fear, desire, pleasure ... everything.”

Rhett tried to find a window in the room, but couldn’t. He looked for a lamp, but no such luck.

Finally he located the source of light when he moved close to the curving wall and realized that it was composed of millions of tiny, almost inscrutable pores. Light was flooding the room from every direction, abundant and ambiguous.

“Why must you free yourself from pleasure?” Rhett asked, turning to the architect, standing behind him. “That’s always a good emotion.”

The architect stared at him for a long time — no more than ten seconds, really, but it seemed like hours. And then the old man spoke. “Any emotion, good or bad, is unnecessary in Apathy. That’s just the way it is. Besides ... how does one measure pleasure without pain?”

Rhett did not have an answer and proceeded to follow the architect into the next room.

“This is the Room of Insecurities,” the architect said. “Stored in this space are the insecure thoughts of every per-

son on the planet. I come here to gain a better understanding of the world below me, below Apathy.”

The edge of the room was so dark that Rhett stumbled a few times on his way, blinking to adjust to the new surroundings. He knew that there was no light, however, because any other light would draw away the beauty of the pink aurora floating around in the centre, its rays extending out like waning arms.

A shiver ran down Rhett’s back as one of the rays passed through him, and he stuck his hands into his trouser pockets. The seemingly warm pink streaks were freezing.

“Walk forward,” the architect coaxed.

And so Rhett did, shuffling towards the contained aurora until his ears began to pick up on a soft murmuring. Gradually the sound turned into words, though scattered and uttered by a multitude of voices.

“Can you hear them?”

Rhett said: “Yes.”

The architect approached to stand next to him and reached out to grasp one of the nearby rays. Like cotton, the pink emanation stretched in his hand until it severed in half.

“These are the secrets buried inside insecure hearts. These are the words that people never give voice to.”

“And they end up here? In Apathy?” Rhett turned to the old man.

“Better here than on earth.”

Rhett was about to ask another question, but before he could open his mouth, the architect turned and strode out of the room.

Rhett followed him around the base of the staircase, through a beautifully carved wooden door and into what looked like a large mess hall. But there were ivy vines climbing the stone walls and the ceiling. Some hung so low that they brushed the floor, projecting a stomach-clenching deadness through the room.

The ivy was not there for decoration, however, as Rhett was quick to realize when his eyes took notice of what was cradled between the entangled dark vines.

Tucked under vines were tiny jars of fluid, and floating inside the fluid of each jar was a human heart.

The architect spoke. “This is the Room of Broken Hearts.”

Rhett couldn’t tear his eyes away from the jungle before him as he stared at the hearts, different sizes, different tints, though none beating.

But out of all these broken hearts, suspended behind the glass jars, one in particular caught Rhett’s eye. It was bigger, ten times bigger than any of the other hearts in the room, and it was white and glowing. The light didn’t come from the surface of the heart, though, because the surface was dark and veined like any other. No, the glow escaped from inside, seeped through the hundreds of tiny cracks in the heart.

“Whose heart is this one?” Rhett couldn’t help but ask.

The architect paused for only a beat before replying. “Mine.”

And silence fell over the room.

A thread of pity wormed into Rhett's chest, but only stayed long enough to make him feel a sharp twinge before disappearing into nothingness again, short enough to make Rhett hurt without understanding the source of this fleeting pain.

"I think this tour should come to a close here," the architect finally said, rubbing his eyes. He looked worn out at this point. "Many rooms in Apathy are self-explanatory anyway."

He was about to walk away when Rhett said: "Wait. Umm . . . What am I here for, exactly?"

The architect shrugged. "This was your wish, wasn't it? To visit the house in the clouds." He stepped out of the Room of Broken Hearts, and Rhett followed. "Of course, if you want to leave now, I will safely send you home to your parents."

But the thought of going home, back to staring out his bedroom, didn't appeal to Rhett in the least. In fact, nothing on earth did anymore, and he realized that he would be perfectly content living here in Apathy for a while.

And so Rhett said: "Is it all right if I stay?"

After a short pause, the architect nodded. "Yes, you may stay as long as you like," he said, "but I feel I must tell you something about this house."

"What's that?"

"It's crumbling," he said. "I don't know what's causing it, but Apathy is falling to pieces."

Rhett took a careful look, but all he saw was the unblemished tiles of the floor, the shimmering chandelier's crystal shards hanging above the imperforate staircase. "I don't even see a speck of dust."

The architect let out a tired sigh as he began to climb the stairs. "That's because I just fixed up the place," he said. "But let's be realistic. I'm growing weaker by the day, and soon I'll be unable to keep maintenance on Apathy. What will I do then?"

"I can help you," Rhett said almost immediately, finding his excuse to stay now. "I'm good at repairing things. Really good, actually."

"Well, it would be nice if you," — standing at the top stair, the architect gestured from one side of the foyer to the other — "helped around where necessary. Thank you, Rhett."

And with those words, he turned and disappeared down the long stretch of hallway, leaving Rhett standing alone in the room.

Rhett shrugged and scanned his surroundings one more time, and again he could not find even a single crack or patch of faded paint.

How hard would it be to keep maintenance of Apathy?

The first thing that required fixing was the cabinet doors, and they came to Rhett's attention the next morning, after his first night in Apathy. He hadn't got a wink of sleep, though, for he had spent the entire night with a warm wind sweeping over his face as he peered down into the darkness of the world.

It was strange, almost funny. Inside Apathy, he could hardly feel an ounce of excitement or pleasure inside him.

But just outside in the courtyard, surrounded by trees and shrubs and flowers, watching the twinkling city lights and the blanketing abyss of the countryside, Rhett could feel what seemed like every emotion at once.

But back to the cabinet doors. All morning, Rhett marched around the house with his screwdriver, tightening every hinge. And by the time he finished, all 500 or so cabinet doors in Apathy swung straight again.

While eating lunch, Rhett said to the architect: "Did something happen, maybe a shift in balance, to make all the hinges on all the cabinet doors become loose?"

The architect chewed slowly on his sandwich, seeming to give the question some thought before saying: "Unusual things happen in a floating house in the clouds, things that even its architect does not understand."

Rhett sat back in his seat, sighing. The architect had no reason to lie to him, and he believed the answer. However it was much less than satisfying and left Rhett with only one choice.

He would have to figure out the cause of this strange chaos himself, and would have to solve this problem, whatever it turned out to be, on his own.

After lunch, Rhett put the dishes in the sink and began to wash them, setting the plates and the silverware in a tub when he finished.

He turned off the water and was just about to dry his hands when he heard a dripping noise.

Looking back around, he saw that there was a leak in the tap.

And so, running to the basement shut-off valve to turn off the water system and hunting down tools, Rhett spent the entirety of the afternoon fixing the leaky tap.

By the time he finished, the sun had gone down, and a gibbous moon was now hanging high in the night sky.

Although his brain was pounding from tightening washer screws, capping on packing nuts, and winding threads around the stem of the tap, he had had a productive day.

Without bothering to sit out in the front courtyard and stare out in wonder at life below, he crawled into bed and was staring into the inside of his eyelids almost immediately.

He woke just in time to take a stroll outside and catch the sunrise. His eyes didn't leave the rays poking through the clouds until the sun had almost climbed directly above Apathy.

But again, there was much to do today. When Rhett returned inside, he found that dust covered every inch of the house.

He wondered how, in a matter of hours, so much dust could cloak a previously immaculate house.

It took him a full three days of dusting, three brooms and countless washrags to restore the house to its original, sparkling condition. Occasionally the architect would drop in and observe the progress that he was making. But outside of these random appearances and the three meals that they shared every day, Rhett never really saw the old man much.



From *The Hobbit*

Colin Williams

After the dusting adventure, everything quietened down for a couple days, and Rhett spent this time exploring new rooms and towers in Apathy.

The architect was almost always in the Room of Liberation or the edge of the courtyard, surveying the tiny dots moving on the ground. Sometimes Rhett and the architect would sit and look down together, pointing out this or that. But Rhett seemed to get the feeling that the architect kept everything at arm's length, stingy with smiles, impassive to anything Rhett would say or ask.

Rhett also noticed that the architect was physically weakening with each day. The old man's breath would become heavy after just a few minutes of walking. His hands began to shake more and more often, and a repressed pain constantly sat at the surface of his expressions.

One morning, Rhett was scouting around the north end of the house when he realized that the vanilla-coloured paint was peeling off the walls.

Frowning, he backpedalled out of the large music room and returned to the Room of Insecurities, from which he had left not 30 seconds ago.

Sure enough, the walls of the Room of Insecurities

looked just as tattered as the music room. The room had not looked this way 30 seconds ago. The room had been flawless.

And so, retrieving cans of paint and rollers from the storage closet, Rhett set out to repaint the walls. Between covering the tiled floors with plastic sheets, protecting the baseboards with tape, and rolling paint over the walls, it took him eight hours to restore the Room of Insecurities alone.

But as he moved into the music room and began to prepare to repaint its walls, he looked out the window at the room across the courtyard and saw that its paint, too, was crumbling away.

With this sight, a dark realization settled into him. He wasn't going to be able to repaint all the walls before something else broke or cracked. He would never be able to return Apathy to the condition it used to be in, to that state of perfection in the moment that Rhett had entered its front doors.

Destruction, in Apathy, seemed to be an immanent force of nature, one that he could no longer struggle against.

And so he let the paint roller and the masking tape drop

from his hands and left the room, searching for a place to ponder.

First he went to his bedroom, thinking that peaceful silence would help him figure out what was wrong with Apathy.

He paced across the length of his room for hours, going through his days here in the house, all the rooms he had discovered, the broken hearts, the voices of insecurities . . .

Rhett frowned. He knew that something was missing, but he couldn't manage to put his finger on it.

He walked out of the bedroom and began roaming the upstairs, wondering what was missing. It wasn't anything material, no. Just . . . a feeling.

Before he knew it, he had arrived in the foyer room and was approaching the front doors. The glass star of David window was cracked, and the right door was tilted off its hinge.

Another problem to fix, Rhett thought as he stepped through the doors.

His feet froze as he stood on Apathy's porch, looking out at the courtyard. Everything was still, silent, like all the sound had escaped from the world.

Standing eye-to-eye with the great white moon in the dark, Rhett felt an overwhelming wave of that missing something wash over him. The feeling, feelings, all of it, slammed into him like a steel fist, making him want to keel over with happiness, pain, triumph, despair.

Nevertheless he kept his composure and continued to the middle of the courtyard and sat down in the grass, facing the house.

Apathy, Apathy.

He understood now.

"Rhett, what are you doing out here at this ungodly hour?"

Rhett lifted his eyes up from the cracks on the ground to find the architect standing at the front door of the house — not standing, really, but leaning his frail body against the frame of the door.

"I'm sorry, I can't do it," Rhett said, frustration coursing in every breath. "I'm good at repairing, painting, whatever. But . . ." He trailed off, thinking of a way to convey his thoughts to the architect.

"You made a valiant effort," the architect said as he sat down next to Rhett. "Don't apologize for something that —"

"Well, wait," Rhett interrupted, sticking out a hand to pause him. "After I tell you what I think should be done with Apathy, I'm positive that I'll have something to apologize about."

The architect fell into silence, and Rhett continued. "Surely, you must notice the emotional difference between being here, outside, and being inside Apathy."

He stood up and walked a few paces around the fountain. "Out here, I feel as close to heaven as I'll ever be. Happiness, anger, I can feel all those soul-touching emotions in heavy doses. But from the moment I step inside that house," — Rhett turned and found the architect's empty

eyes staring back at him — "I can't feel a thing."

Rhett watched the architect's face carefully as he waited for a response. The old man looked like he wanted to smile, maybe cry, but in the end his expressions remained unmoved. Finally he spoke. "I used to feel the same way, back when I had just constructed Apathy and everything was perfect, pristine. But after you've spent many human lifetimes up here, the line between indoor and out blends together, and everything becomes nothing."

"So you're telling me that you can feel nothing? No pain, pleasure, anything?"

The architect shrugged. "Apathy makes everything else unnecessary."

"So burn Apathy!" Rhett said, throwing his hands up. He wanted to grab the architect by the shirt collar and shake his thoughts, feelings, into him. Only fear of hurting the old man held him back. "Why do you cling to it if it's destroying everything that makes you human?"

The architect looked away and gestured at the house in front of them, with its elegant decor and white roman columns, lined like the bars of a jail cell. "This is all that I have," he said. "And — burning it down?" He shook his head. "You realize that if Apathy is unleashed into the world, everyone whose thoughts are stored in the Room of Insecurities, the Room of Broken Hearts, they'll all be able to numb themselves with Apathy. It's a misconceived and destructive cure."

"And so you're electing to trap it here forever, in the form of a house?"

There was silence for a long moment, as Rhett stared at the architect, the architect back at him.

Finally Rhett said: "Nothing, not even Apathy, is meant to be bottled up and suffocated within the confines of a house, no matter how magnificent. You can't trap knowledge."

The architect let out a small chuckle, although the smile didn't travel farther than the curl of his lips. A frown of pain touched his forehead, but nevertheless he said: "Wise beyond your years, Rhett." He paused a moment. "I could use some rest. Maybe find a nice quiet place on earth and take a nap or something."

Rhett nodded and set a hand on the architect's shoulder. "So let it burn," he said. "Let the house burn, and let the world below you figure out what to do with Apathy."

The architect looked back at the house, its haunting beauty glaring back almost defiantly.

Then the old man raised his hand and made a sweep motion, and flames of fire erupted from the roof.

Rhett began to feel the emitting warmth from the burning house as he sat there, watching the fire grow bigger and bigger. A big smile slowly spread from one end of his mouth to the other.

He turned and found the architect smiling as well. It was still tight, almost fearful, but Rhett had no doubt that the old man would recover his smile, along with his heart, in time.

And so the house burned, burned, burned and the apathetic remnants penetrated through the clouds and floated down to earth like silver snowflakes.



Two cheers for applicability

GARETH OWENS

How much control do you have over a text once you have finished writing it? The answer to that is quite short: none. None at all, actually. When Tolkien says that there is no allegory in *The Lord of the Rings* he is quite wrong. There is allegory if the reader finds it there.

Tolkien himself, as the author, may not have put it there and, being a linguist, the good prof. would have understood the concept of allegory to be about the deliberate and conscious choice to represent something in the exterior world as a consistent mirror within the story world. Therefore, for Tolkien, Sauron could only have been a representation of Stalin if he had chosen to write him as such and only then if that deliberate representation persisted all the way through the narrative.

For Tolkien the accusation of allegory was a denial of his created characters' individuality. If they represented something or someone else, those characters could not have their own drives, desires, or reality, independent of what they were supposed to be mirroring.

However, he did say this:

"That there is no allegory does not, of course, say that there is no applicability. There always is".

(*Letters* 262)

Always in the detail with linguists. Applicability: what does that actually mean? Does it mean that some things in *The Lord of the Rings* may at times be taken to be a reflection of some exterior reality? The truth is (and for a writer it is a painful truth) once you put the words 'the end' at the bottom of anything, you no longer get to say. You have given your world to the reader as a place to live, and they are going to move in and change all the furniture around.

When the writing ends, the author becomes just another reader, and what they say about the text has no more weight than anyone else. One reader suggests that the five wizards represent the five senses; J. R. R. says nonsense, this is totally alien to my way of thinking. Well, it may have been, but without meaning to sound unsympathetic, tough! *The Lord of the*

Rings exists as a brick-sized wad of paper that has acted as a portal and an invitation for millions of people to another world, a world that they have taken to, and lived in, and drawn on as the inspiration for their own creativity (or ripped-off mercilessly depending on your point of view).

What the author was thinking when he created his tale of the few triumphing against the many, whether the West and the hordes of orcs represented totalitarian threat looming over this little island, or not, is a by-the-by.

If he were writing the book today, Middle-earth would no doubt be very different from the world of 60 years ago. The shadow of Sauron rises once more in the west and new ring-wraiths skulk in caves in the mountains sending suicide goblins to attack the Shire. The remains of the Uruk-hai harvest the Ents for timber to make furniture to sell to the Rohirrim. Rivers are fouled with the spill from dwarf-mines, human and elf are too divided to believe the warnings, and all are doomed. But if he brought those characters alive made them live and breath in a twenty-first-century Middle-earth, it would still be about those lives and their actions, and allegory would still be found where none was intended.

He might even find a way of working some hope into the narrative. A way for the many to defeat the few. Wouldn't that be nice?







