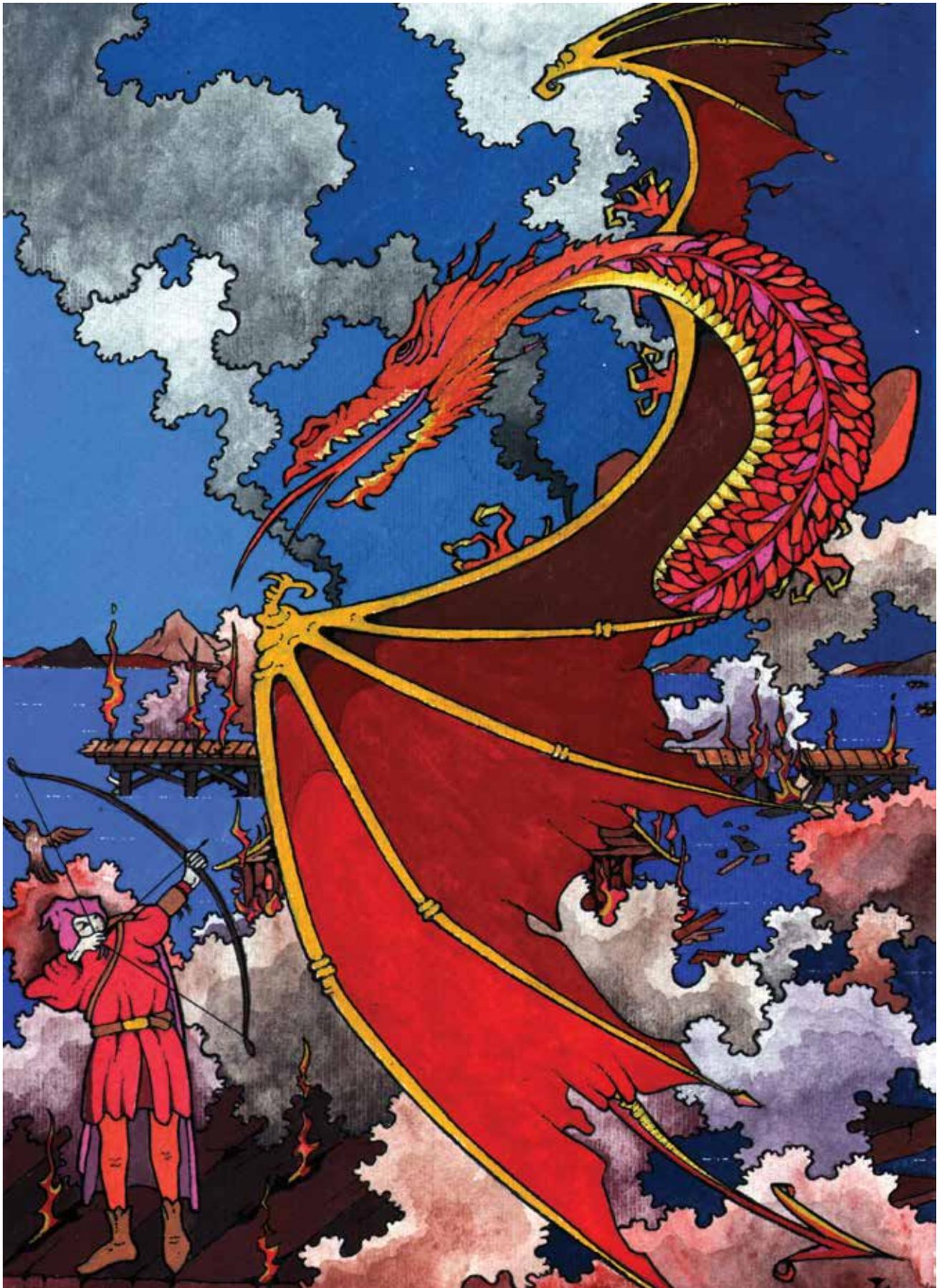


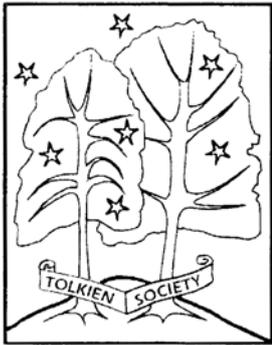
# Mallorn

Issue 50 • Autumn 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](mailto: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>.

# Envisaging the future

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Marcel Bülles

J. R. R. Tolkien is a unique author. There are many who have been successful, many who have been influential, but there are not many authors who have such a large and loyal following interested in so many different aspects of both his life and works. Although mainstream media and pop culture have integrated Middle-earth into their everyday coverage, any serious analysis of the fates of Boromir, Bombadil and Bilbo remain with literary societies and a small but growing number of academics acknowledging the influence Tolkien has exercised on both the genre and other fields of creativity. I should like to suggest some new or expanded fields of activity.

## Leading literature to wuthering heights

Any member of a literary society will appreciate the fact that pop stars, football players and video games garner more news headlines than his or her favourite author. Although literature is important in any nation, its cultural impact is limited by its very medium, and the membership of literary societies is usually low. But a good book will always leave a strong and lasting impression on its reader, and with works such as *The Lord of the Rings* we can count ourselves lucky to further interest in the life and works of this outstanding author.

So, be not afraid of Facebook, Twitter, e-books and the like. Video did not kill the radio star and so literature, too, will survive the digital onslaught of the twenty-first century. But it is high time we made it clear that our favourite author is worth reading. You may play computer games, move pewter figurines around a huge board or throw collectible cards down to beat your opponent — in the end all of this should lead you to the books. Tolkien Reading Days in libraries, book shops, universities and other locations should become staple events as well as Telerin Circles or other events promoting the written word — stage productions, radio plays and readings of a

book in one go are only a selection of what you could do to make people spend more time appreciating the works of Tolkien.

## Invigorating volunteer enthusiasm with professionalization

It is only a result of the enormous efforts of volunteer work that literary societies the world over continue to exist and thrive. Without their free time, knowledge and talents no event could be organized, no magazine published, no website run. However, the energy an honorary office may contribute to projected endeavours might vanish into thin air from the underlying structural weakness of volunteer work. It is by personal choice that a member decides to invest time. This decision can be revoked for a multitude of reasons, without prior notification and with great loss to the society.

Obviously, this personal choice may also be the very strength of volunteers recruited for society projects. They will not do a nine-to-five job but always go the extra mile to make things work. Their improvisational skills are outstanding and will save the day when all else has failed. It is hard to imagine an employee expending comparable efforts on any given task.

The importance and standing of volunteering members has seriously hampered an open-ended discussion about professionalizing the work of literary societies. An attitude of rejection is prevalent in most of Europe's countries when it comes to hiring an employee. Why hire an employee if there is a volunteer willing to do the job? Because enthusiasm can change easily and quickly into disappointment due to the many obstacles a volunteer has to overcome. Try imagining losing a treasurer from one day to another. How would you cope with that?

There can be no talk of spending horrendous amounts of money, as most societies will not even be able to fund a

freelancer working a few hours per week. But those who can should discuss the opportunity to free the committee and other creative minds from the drudgery of everyday business with which even a literary society has to deal. This would release untapped energies and motivate more members to volunteer. Motivation is the key to success in a literary society. Apart from this, an employee could raise funds (for the good of the society), improve relations to companies providing Middle-earth related products (for the good of the society) and set standards for interpersonal relationships and society procedures (for the good of the society). Marketing the pages of the society's bulletin will earn money; getting free board games for raffles will make a good impression; and writing a guide on how to run an event will help everyone involved. You might argue that all of these tasks can also be done by volunteering members. But there is a need for constancy and independence of actual involvement in the different areas of society projects due to the inherently ardent nature of volunteer behaviour. An employee might better stay aloof from interpersonal quarrels and even function as a mediator. The downsides are few — the advantages might be tremendous.

### Funding the Fellowship

All projects of a Tolkien society boil down to money. No volunteer effort can change this fact. The bulletin has to be printed and paid for; the event location has to be booked and paid for; sending out a newsletter has to be paid for. Membership fees are the major source of income but to rely solely on them would result in fewer activities and possibilities when numbers drop — a vicious circle. There are other areas of revenue you can tap into: events, marketing publication advertisement space, partnership programmes on the Internet, selling society merchandise such as mugs, t-shirts and lanyards, raising funds, gaining sponsors. The ultimate goal to all societies is 'to further interest in the life and works of the late Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, CBE'. The more money you have at your disposal the better you will be able to discharge your task. And there is more to it.

It is particular to Tolkienists all over the world to be extremely hospitable in welcoming fellow Middle-earth travellers. However, travelling is not cheap, yet would it not be wonderful if your society could invite a guest or two from other countries to come to your event? I can tell you from experience it is one of the best things in the world.

You know of a great master's thesis that is not going to be published? You could found

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## It is high time we made it clear that our favourite author is worth reading.

your own publishing house specialized in supporting Tolkien- and fantasy-related publications in your country. Or you could try to have great books translated into your language if this has not yet happened.

Buy a small bus. Put Tolkien books, banners, society brochures and give-aways into it. Drive to the next book/gaming/role-playing fair and represent your author. Get new members. Have even more fun. Or ...

### Arda\*Con 2020

I am not talking about an academic conference here. Luckily enough, our mother society in the United Kingdom has taken it upon itself to organize this with the support of the community. And I am not talking WorldCon — the fantasy community is a long way from something comparable (and it cannot really be compared to the science fiction fans, anyway). However, I would love Tolkien fans from all over the world to join in a great fun event, let us say, every three years with travel stipends available. Societies could apply for the duty and honour of organizing it and all proceeds would be passed on to the next society chosen to run the event. The idea would be to get people together for four days and simply to have plain, good old-fashioned fun with all sorts of creative ways of enjoying themselves against the vast backcloth of Middle-earth's legends.

Do you beware the Jabberwock — or could I actually apply some of this to my society?

There are a number of structural problems common to all literary societies. Does your society exist in a country of 80 million



## Brandywine

Jef Murray

people or merely 5 million? Is your historical and cultural background close to the sources of Tolkien's works as in Scandinavian countries or do you come from southeast Asia? Is there a vibrant cultural life stressing the importance of literature or are other areas of creativity more popular? Would you call it typical for your fellow citizens to found a society and run one or do you prefer simply to get together and celebrate Tolkien's legends in an informal way?

Whatever your answers to these questions, I consider it possible for you to follow many of my suggestions, for a very simple reason: the moment you put your mind to it, the moment you have a common goal, the moment you have actually made the decision to do it — you will be one step closer to your goal. What I have seen time and time again is that things get talked to death instead of done; I have witnessed people searching for problems where they could have been finding solutions; I have faced complacency where there should have been efforts to make things even better. Now, I am fully aware a society of 30 members will not be able to do the same things as a society of 600. But why not set yourself the goal of

getting 50 members and throwing a great party inviting people from other countries to join in when you have managed this? If you talk about the options with a bit of common sense it will become clear fairly quickly what you can and cannot do. And do think about cooperating with other societies — doing things together might make it even easier for you to attain your goal.

And for those societies numbering in the hundreds: where are your goals? Will you be having thousands of members? Will you start funding even more exciting projects you never thought possible? Why not pay into a travel fund for smaller societies to visit your events? Why not organize trips for your members to other societies at reduced rates? Why don't you apply for Arda\*Con?

I would like to hear your suggestions about what a Tolkien society can do. Write to me at [marcel.buelles@tolkiengesellschaft.de](mailto:marcel.buelles@tolkiengesellschaft.de) and tell me what you have done to enjoy the legendarium of Tolkien even more. The best thing about meeting fellow Tolkienists is the realization that there are a lot of truly creative minds from which you can learn. Share your knowledge, share your fellowship. 

## May the source be with you

SIR — We were disappointed in the review by Tom Shippey (*Mallorn* 49) of our book *The Epic Realm of Tolkien*. He is, of course, entitled to his opinions, but where that is all they are, we are entitled to ours, too.

Mr Shippey's first major quibble seems to be with source analysis and using comparison with older texts as a means of throwing light upon a story. He cited Tolkien's comments about criticizing the soup rather than the bones from *On Fairy Stories* in support of this. It suggests that Tolkien believed source analysis was invalid and finding similarities between texts was futile. However, this is done by selective quotation, and Tolkien's entire professional practice stands for the other approach. Shippey unfortunately neglects our Introduction where we said (p. 6): "It can be envisaged as a kaleidoscope where, with each turn of the device, a whole new pattern emerges. The same can be said for the ways one can 'view' or analyse Tolkien's works. No single reading is perhaps completely exclusive, but each can be better or worse at explaining the sum total of what has been written by Tolkien. In this respect, we believe that this particular approach to his writings offers some extremely valuable insights and can help to make sense out of a great deal that would otherwise remain obscure." Again, we concluded with (p.214): "It is pretty clear seen in this way just how infused with major references to the Arthurian material the whole tale of Beren and Lúthien is." 'References to' is the key.

In no way did we suggest that Tolkien was merely reproducing his sources with no creative input as Shippey seems to think. Far from reducing the text (and its sources) to "a heap of dry bones" we have made great efforts to present both Tolkien's work and the older texts as live and interesting works, in this as in the previous book. Also, Beren and Lúthien is not a "fairy story"! No more than a Beatles song is a folk song. The former have a single author, whereas the latter are passed down anonymously and altered — much as language itself — in ways beyond analysis, which is the point Tolkien was making in *OFS* (extensively, in an 11.5-page section of

the essay, compared with the 3 lines commonly quoted). You cannot apply it to his creative work. Not even Holy Writ can claim that exemption, after all. We do have to wonder why, if Shippey disapproves of source analysis so strongly, he bothered to review a book such as ours, which at the outset says this is exactly what it does.

Analysis by comparison of similarity and difference is the foundation of most disciplines in science and the humanities. In chemistry, the periodic table groups together elements with similar properties — so, alkali metals or noble gases. Philology compares words and looks for sources for linguistic analysis — check Tolkien's etymology of walrus in the *OED*. Selective quotation is indeed a dangerous game, but we would submit that the accumulation of correspondences indicates strong links, as we said on our page 211:

"We have shown through our analysis ... of the story of Beren and Lúthien that the Arthurian matter permeates all of the work, from minor through to major episodes. Far better than any other source material the Arthurian matter seems to coincide well with what Tolkien wrote not just in isolated points but right across the entire plot arc of the tale of Beren and Lúthien." We highlighted 38 major points of coincidence of every sort to back that up. Shippey quotes Tolkien's 'the 2 rings are round' argument at us — but in Appendix A of *The Road to Middle-earth*, he disagrees with Tolkien on this very point. "This is not entirely true" (p. 296). There he also gives sources himself, calling them the "true tradition".

If our choice of texts sometimes looks odd, it is because we have tried hard to use material that is relevant to the time when Tolkien was writing. We cited Sebastian Evans's translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth for the same reason that Tolkien and Gordon cited it in the select bibliography to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* — it was the only one available at the time. Likewise, one major reason for our use of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* was the scholarly opinion of it at the time Tolkien was writing the *Book of Lost Tales*. We cannot blame Shippey for being nervous about discussing the Grail in relation to Tolkien's work; we were, too. But serious questions have to be asked whether anyone likes them or not.

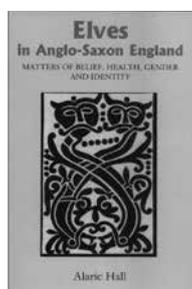
We hope that would-be readers will give us a fair chance to explain ourselves at our proper length, in the book itself. We also plan to continue exploring this material and will be very happy to discuss it in person at Tolkien Society meetings.

**Alex Lewis and Elizabeth Currie**



# The truth about elves

LYNN FOREST-HILL



## Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity

Alaric Hall

226 pp, The Boydell Press (2007)  
ISBN 978 1 84383 294 1, £45

The opportunity to find out more about elves does not come along very often — at least not in the form of a thoroughly researched academic study. Many books on fairies include elves under a sub-heading, and although these books may provide interesting and entertaining information, this is usually based around well-known tales, reiterating familiar ideas, and seasoned with the kitsch fantasy of nineteenth-century illustrations. Alaric Hall's book is not of this kind. It takes readers into areas of Norse and Anglo-Saxon etymology, philology and mythology with which Tolkien was familiar.

Although Hall does not cite Tolkien in his Index, he acknowledges in his Works Cited both *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics* and *On Fairy-Stories*, and references them in footnotes. Tolkien's work on *Beowulf* contributes to Hall's careful analysis of the significance of the use of *ælf*e (elves) alongside *eotenas* in line 112 of the poem, where, Hall maintains, following Tolkien, it is part of a very precise demonizing process. He also cites Tolkien's poem *Ides ælfscýne*, part of the collection *Songs of the Philologists*, in his chapter on the change of gender of the concept of *ælf*e. He notes that although they had originally been perceived as sinister and male in Old Icelandic and Old High German, this Old English compound word *ælfscýne* introduces the concept of elvish beauty — *scýne*. Hall sees this as a result of Anglo-Saxon translators needing to translate the Greek and Latin term 'nymph'. The compound is used by Tolkien to refer to a seductively beautiful lady, not an elvish lady, but one who is 'Elf-fair'. In his major works, of course, the concept of 'Elf-fair' is not necessarily gendered in this way but becomes more widely applicable.

Hall goes on to note that when confronted by the various categories of 'nymph' Anglo-Saxon scribes came up with additional compounds, including the very precise form *uudu.ælfinne* — wood elves — to translate the term 'dryad', the kind of nymphs associated with woods. It is remarkable then, that when Tolkien describes the failing beauty of Ithilien in *The Two Towers*, he uses uncharacteristically classical terminology referring to "dishevelled dryad loveliness", distinguishing it from the fading elvish beauty of Lothlórien.

Hall's observable debt to Tolkien is no greater than a few brief references but his research into the origins and

significance of 'elves', from Norse beliefs and myths to Anglo-Saxon charms against their power, provide other ways of understanding the background and development of Tolkien's elves. The differences illuminate further the subtlety of Tolkien's creation.

*Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* ranges widely as it builds up a picture of the inter-relationship between the various Norse and Germanic cultures in which belief in elves played a substantial part. Hall asserts that by studying those beliefs, particularly in Anglo-Saxon society, we get a rare insight into the Anglo-Saxon 'world-view'. The book reconstructs that world-view through the use of the term '*ælf*e' in its various contexts — and they are surprisingly diverse. His introduction sets out clear statements of his intentions, of the structure of the work and his methodology. Throughout, there is always a sense of control and direction over the sometimes unfamiliar material.

The introduction is also where Hall takes issue with the categorization of *ælf* in the recent *Thesaurus of Old English* by Jane Robertson, Christian Kay and Lynne Grundy, which is based on categories in the Bosworth and Toller *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, which had drawn complaints from Tolkien. The problem of categorization derives, for Hall, from an Anglo-Saxon healing charm of considerable obscurity known as *Wið færstice* (Against a sharp pain). It mentions otherworldly beings including *ælf*e and their *gescot* — the word that would give us the later concept of 'elf-shot', a very flexible way of naming ailments and afflictions, often of domestic animals, that had no apparent cause. This charm has been poorly understood and Hall re-examines its terminology to clarify its etymology, and its social and cultural significance.

Chapter one looks at folklore, belief and evidence, considering first the evidence from medieval Scandinavia, including the sagas, and the Eddas, where the *álfr* are otherworldly beings posing some threat to humans but without being monstrous or demonic. Chapter two examines the earliest Anglo-Saxon evidence for the development of the form *ælf* and its use in personal names of the period and in place names that can still be distinguished in the landscape, such as Elvedon Farm in Oxfordshire.

Chapter three traces the transition from earlier ideas of elves to those of the Middle Ages. Hall cites the "usual suspects" — Chaucer and *Sir Orfeo* — together with other texts, including the *South English Legendary*, which constructs the angels who did not side either with Lucifer or with God as *eluene* (elves). This distinction echoes ideas of fairies as fallen angels, but more significantly it reflects the division Tolkien creates in *The Silmarillion* between faithful elves, rebellious elves, and those who remained apart.

Having investigated the medieval association of elves

with female beauty, Hall turns his attention back to the Anglo-Saxon connection between elves and illness, including the phenomenon known as elf-shot. He returns to the charm *Wið færstice*, just one of a number offering protection against the malice or dangerous intervention of elves. Although the etymology of ‘elf’, its appearance in personal and place names, and the concept of elves as a kind of angel, may relate to Tolkien’s elves, anxiety over the danger elves posed to the health and well-being of humans (and their animals) is a major difference between Anglo-Saxon beliefs and his vision. His elves may be reserved, remote, disdainful, but they do not willfully endanger the health of mortals in any direct sense, no man or hobbit or dwarf is afflicted by *ælfadl* (elf-sickness). More obviously, the most skilled healer in Middle-earth is Elrond Half-elven.

As Hall reminds us, the Anglo-Saxon process of curing and protecting from *ælfadl* of all kinds always involved the use of herbs and a charm or formula of words to be recited in connection with their use. This process has some similarities with Aragorn’s use not only of *athelas* but of words that he uses before applying the herb. Each time the situation is different, but after Frodo is wounded by the Morgul blade, Aragorn — Elrond’s protégé perhaps — sings softly over the knife hilt and then tends the wound. This sequence of song and healing is no more ‘dislocated’ than the Anglo-Saxon instructions cited by Hall to prepare herbs and place them under an altar and sing nine masses over them. Both forms of singing draw on the belief that words have power against the affliction of the human body that is required in addition to healing herbs. The Nine Venoms Charm, on the other hand, is simpler, requiring only a specific recitation over prepared herbs at the point of use. So particular forms of words and methods of performance were suited to particular circumstances, and in Minas Tirith, while kingsfoil is being fetched, Aragorn calls Faramir by name out of his deadly

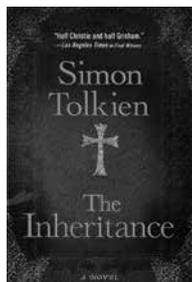
decline before using the herb. In Faramir’s case, his name is the ‘charm’ that compliments the virtue of the herb.

Hall’s final chapter, ‘Believing in early-medieval history’, confirms the impression that belief in *ælf*/elves was, in its own time, by no means straightforward. It was complex, deeply held and variable according to the need and agenda of the original society. As Hall notes, belief in elves is recorded in written manuscripts, testifying to its status and importance in Anglo-Saxon culture where the unseen presence of *ælf*e was constructed as a range of threats that could be deployed to maintain social cohesion. The concept of sharing Middangeard/Middle-earth with otherworldly beings who were not demons or monsters, but still dangerous to humans, pervaded medieval society. From this perspective, the complex functionality of elves made them fundamental to Tolkien’s depiction of Middle-earth; and he seems to have included most of the variations in elf-belief that Hall describes, including a pun on the theory of elf-shot. It is surely this that afflicts the winged beast of the Nazgul!

I cannot claim that *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* is a book for bedtime relaxation, although some names will be familiar to readers of Tolkien criticism. Dimitra Fimi is acknowledged and the late Benedikt Benedikz is referenced in a footnote for his translation of Einar Olafur Sveinsson’s *The Folk Stories of Iceland*. Hall cites Joseph and Elizabeth Wright’s *Old English Grammar* to contest entrenched theories about the development of the word ‘elf’ in English. The picture that builds up around *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* is of a book that intersect closely with what we understand of Tolkien’s interest in elves, mythology, etymology, philology, and Anglo-Saxon language, society and culture, even as it engages with current academic research in all these fields. For anyone with a serious interest in the background to Tolkien’s elves this book rewards the committed reader with new ways of appreciating the significance of the subtle choices he made. m

## An inspector calls

MIKE FOSTER



### The Inheritance

Simon Tolkien

325 pp, Minotaur Press (2010)

ISBN 978-0312539078, \$24.99, £16.14

With his second mystery novel, Simon Tolkien achieves one aspiration that every writer hopes for: his latest is better than his last. 2002’s *Final Witness* (published as *The Stepmother* in England) was blurb-ed as “Half Christie and half Grisham” by *The Los Angeles Times*. *The Inheritance* could add

Dorothy Sayers, Dan Brown, Colin Dexter, John Mortimer, Ruth Rendell and, not the least, J. R. R. Tolkien, Simon’s grandfather, to that roster. Sayers’s scrupulous plotting, Brown’s medieval MacGuffins, Dexter’s dynamic duo of protagonist Oxfordshire detective inspector Endeavour Morse and his sergeant Lewis, Mortimer’s courtroom turnabouts, bloodthirsty prosecutors and murderous judges, and Rendell’s well-woven webs of deception are evoked here.

From JRRT, Simon inherits delicately detailed description, complex characters, old but unforgotten grievances and chilling surprises. Above all, like his grandfather at his best, Simon has written a book that will make the reader get up early, stay up late, and be late for meals: a page-turner in the finest sense of the word. Basic Anglo-Saxon



## Orodruin

Phyllis Berka

vulgarity and passionate lovemaking scenes, true, do not suggest JRRT, but the artful limning of minor characters, such as the hangman, do. The narrative apple did not fall far from the Tolkien family tree.

More red herrings than a Communist fishmonger display the author's greater mastery of the mystery writer's craft. Bouquets and brickbats abound, in the forms of tender vignettes followed by tense violence.

"It's about fathers and sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters," says the author of this book. The next Inspector William Trave mystery, *The King of Diamonds*, due out in April 2011, will too. So shall the third, just under way.

The novel begins with a six-page prologue set in Normandy, 1944, during the waning days of World War II. Three British soldiers, led by Colonel John Cade, execute a machine-gun ambush of a Nazi convoy, slaying all. But the episode ends with a darker deed: the murders of a French family.

Cut to 1959: the colonel, now the invalid and retired Professor John Cade, a renowned medievalist, is found dead of a single pistol shot in his locked study at Moreton Manor. The most obvious suspect, estranged younger son Stephen, threatened with disinheritance and caught at the scene seconds later, is charged with murder, a hanging offence.

Enter Trave, shaking off the rain as he enters the Old Bailey as a security guard "humming a discordant version of that American song, 'Heartbreak Hotel'."

Trave lives on that lonely street. His son Joe is dead: automobile crash. His wife has betrayed and divorced him for a new lover. He sees Stephen as an embodiment of his lost son.



## Rivendell

Phyllis Berka

Of course, Trave's investigation, flashbacks and the shifting points of view reveal that all but one of those residing with the victim has good reason to kill him.

Consider Silas, Stephen's older adopted brother. In his cell, Stephen recalls an event 15 years earlier when Silas was home from school and the two sneaked out to play in Cade's prized black Rolls-Royce.

Silas handled the wheel, shifted the gear stick, and flicked the indicators up and down, up and down, until the door opened and their father pulled them out of the car one by one, dragging them by their collars out into the sunlight.

Stephen recalls his terror.

His father didn't touch him; John Cade's rage was focused entirely on his elder son. Cade let go of Stephen, adjusted his hold on Silas' collar, and with his free hand smacked Silas across the face one, two, three times. And then, pulling Silas close Cade spoke through his teeth into his son's frightened eyes: "Don't you ever do that again, boy. You hear me? One more time and you'll be gone for good."

Silas was a mess, bleeding from his nose and with tears running down his cheeks, and his breath came in strangled gasps. Stephen felt shocked. It was his first experience of violence.

"I'll kill the bastard," said Silas. "I swear it. When I'm old enough, I'll get a gun and I'll shoot him. Like a dog."

Trave's suspicion, and ours, soon turns to Silas, and his abrupt flight from the courtroom after testimony from a woman living at the Manor exacerbates this.

But other suspects abound: Stephen's actress girlfriend

Mary; Cade's medieval art history research assistant Sasha; the two soldiers caught up in 1944 French murders; his many friendly enemies.

Perhaps the first tangible 'Aha!' clue to the solution appears on page 209, only 116 pages from the end.

By that time, everybody but the hangman could be guilty. Trave himself has killed a man — the only inhabitant of Moreton Manor who could not be guilty. And Stephen has been convicted.

Finally the inspector travels alone to Normandy, site of Cade's war crime against civilians.

Trave sat in the back of Marjean Church during the Mass. It was in Latin and the liturgy was far removed from the Book of Common Prayer that he was used to in his Anglican Church at home. Unexpectedly, it lifted his spirits. *Deum de deo, Lumen de lumine, Deum verum de deo vero.* The singing reached into the rafters, mixing with the incense, muffling the sound of the rain beating against the windows, and Trave prayed to this unfamiliar Latin

God to show him the way, to save an innocent boy from another Calvary. At the end, he put a coin in the iron box by the door and lit two candles, one for Joe and one for Stephen.

The story ends on Joe's birthday; whether or not Trave's prayer was efficacious is up for *The Inheritance's* readers to discover.

A historian by education, a barrister by trade, and finally, a writer whose work honours the Tolkien heritage, Simon Tolkien gives readers an honest thriller, full of the 'cut and thrust' of the courtroom that the author savoured. Connoisseurs of crime and devotees of Oxford and London will be delighted, as this reader was.

And like his grandfather's works, *The Inheritance* gets better with each reading, as the artful armature of the plot shows its bones. Inspector Trave will return, and that is cause for rejoicing. For this reviewer, April cannot come soon enough.

✎

## Flights of fantasy

CHAD CHISHOLM



### Up

A film by Pete Docter and Bob Peterson

96 mins, Pixar Animation Studios, October 2009

*Up* is an animated film centred around the character Carl Fredrickson, a widower and retired balloon salesman, who escapes his fate of losing his house and being forced to live in a retirement home by turning his house into an airship: the image of the house at the moment of escape (juxtaposed with one of the best musical scores) floating on thousands of bright-colored balloons might prove to be one of the most aesthetically pleasing images in cinematic history.

In the movie, Carl decides to take his house to Paradise Falls, a remote and exotic location in South America, and he is joined by Russell, a boy scout from a broken family; Dug, a golden retriever who can talk with the aid of an interpretive collar; and Kevin, a giant flightless bird who is actually female and searching for food for her offspring while protecting Carl and Russell. Carl's inspiration for his adventure to Paradise Falls comes from a dream his wife, Ellie, had for them when they were children and avid fans of the adventurer Charles Muntz. Ironically, the adventurers come across Muntz himself, and Carl must defeat his childhood hero in order to save Kevin from being abducted from her habitat.

Carl must also choose how to honour Ellie's memory: to keep their past sterile, or to draw strength from it to begin new friendships with Russell, Dug and Kevin. Carl's house is a metaphor for his personal past, which poses a question for us viewers: how should we deal with periods of our lives that we cannot return to, yet remain inseparable from who we are? Should we preserve these moments (as we would a museum or shrine) so they remain static and unchanged, or should our pasts be the materials and tools for constructing our current relationships and confronting our present situations?

Both choices have risks, such as the alienation Carl feels when he lives alone in the shadow of the life he and Ellie lived in a neighbourhood that no longer wants him, or later when Carl chooses to use his floating house to retrieve Russell and Kevin and must sacrifice it in order to rescue his new friends. However, the difference between the two paths is that when Carl chooses to risk his house to save Russell and Kevin, he gains new companions and (more importantly) a new life that is worth living. Carl's previous mausoleum life, the film suggests, was not worth living and had long deviated from the spirit of the life he had lived with Ellie.

However, what the producers of *Up* do best is to create within the film a small world with its own rules and ethos so that the audience can enter and vicariously experience everything to the same degree as Carl. This point might seem redundant to some, but this is the greatest quality of *Up*, and I would argue this is something which often separates the classics from the movies that are merely 'entertaining'. Tolkien felt authorial creation of another world was not

a miniscule detail, and he profusely wrote about this creation in his celebrated essay *On Fairy Stories*:

What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful “subcreator.” He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is “true”: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken: the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside.

To put Tolkien’s argument in another way, a literary text must (to paraphrase Aristotle in *Rhetoric*) persuade the reader to decide to accept this Secondary World as (at least momentarily) true. The author can only succeed, Tolkien and Aristotle imply, if the author can anticipate the expectations of the audience. In this way, a balance in *Up* is maintained by a fusion of fantastic elements that appeal to our senses and a detailed portrayal of human devotion and courage that appeals to our emotions and our sense of character. All of these essentials make it easy — even desirable — for us forget that we are even watching a film and accept our invitation to share this world with Carl, Russell, Dug and Kevin.

The producers at Pixar Animation Studios seem to have a knack for creating films that appeal to families — movies that children can love and parents can more than just endure, but actually enjoy. However, *Up* might be their best film so far. Directed and co-written by Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, *Up* grossed \$731,338,164 globally and won the 2009 Academy Award for Best Animated Picture and for Best Original Score: the musical themes of the movie are character-based and are associated mainly with Muntz or Ellie. *Up* was also nominated for Best Picture, becoming the first computer animated film to be nominated, but lost the award to *The Hurt Locker* (2009).

These honours are well and good for *Up*, and its nomination beside Peter Jackson’s rendering of Tolkien’s *The Return of the King* (2003) — which was the first and remains only fantasy film to win Best Picture — shows that fantasy adaptations at least have a better chance at the Academy Awards these days. However, I doubt anyone was stunned that a film about an Iraq War veteran who defuses explosives trumped an animated film about an elderly man and a boy who lift a house off the ground using thousands of colourful balloons to fly to a place where giant birds eat chocolate and dogs use special collars to talk. But the unusual situation that put these two films, *Up* and *The Hurt Locker*, against each other is an opportunity to ask a couple of questions: when we view a film, what is more realistic, and what is more real? Often people (many of them critics) assume that these two things are the same, but in film and literature this is a speculative claim.

First, what is realism and why isn’t *Up* realistic? Here we

have to move beyond the obvious (floating houses, dogs flying airplanes, Carl’s mega-agility in the airship scene) and into the realm of what our culture takes for granted as ‘real’. Fantasy scholars such as Michael Drout differentiate between the fantastic and conventional in fiction by saying “fantasy and science fiction are about things that physically cannot happen”<sup>1</sup>. Although I am unsure what research is available to tell us how many birthday balloons are needed to make a house float to South America, it is safe to conclude that the amount of balloons that move Carl’s house violates the laws of physics, and is thus not ‘realistic’. However, as C. S. Lewis argues in his essay *On Three Ways of Writing for Children*, often the stories in which “children have adventures and successes which are possible, in the sense that they do not break the laws of nature, but almost infinitely improbable, are in more danger than the fairy tales of raising false expectations”<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the ‘realism’ that is depicted and even marketed in films is far more of a rhetorical appeal than the representative objectivism that we in the audience assume it to be.

For example, in *The Hurt Locker*, the idea of a soldier who can only love the thrill and rush that war provides feels authentic, but it is probably not something most Iraqi War veterans would view as ‘real’ or ‘realistic’, and this occurs because often the films that are called ‘realistic’ deal with an ethos that is peculiar rather than universal in experience. We see evidence of this from the various criticisms of *The*

## Even at its most exotic, fantasy always draws on what is most familiar and real.

*Hurt Locker* from Iraq War veterans such as Brandon Friedman who said<sup>3</sup>: “if you know anything about the Army, or about operations or life in Iraq, you’ll be so distracted by the nonsensical sequences and plot twists that it will ruin the movie for you. It certainly did for me.” To top it all

off, although most film critics praised the film’s realistic depictions of the battlefield, Friedman went on to scathe them caustically<sup>3</sup>, saying that “in real life, EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] techs don’t conduct dangerous missions as autonomous three-man teams without communications gear” and “you’ll rarely hear in combat ... an EOD E-7 suggesting to two or three of his guys that they leave the scene of an explosion in an Iraqi city by saying: ‘C’mon, let’s split up. We can cover more ground that way.’”

This begs another question: if the battlefield scenes and psychological conditions in *The Hurt Locker* are not believable to the very veterans that the film supposedly depicts, then what makes this film more real than *Up*?

When discussing fiction, Drout<sup>1</sup> takes issue with the contrasts that are often made between fantasy and ‘realism’, which he sees as ‘problematic’ because “literary scholars have shown that almost everything about realism is actually convention rather than any specific fidelity to any one kind of language”, and therefore “works are realistic because we think they are realistic”. What Drout says about literature also applies to film, not to mention that fantasy in fiction and film can, as Drout reminds us, use “very realistic physical descriptions (often of landscape)”, it “can examine deep

psychological motivation in the same way that realistic novels do”, and as a final parting shot, fantasy “sometimes bears a closer relationship to the realities of physics and biology than do contemporary realist novels”. Indeed, I can recall a plethora of films with romantic story lines, conspiracy narratives, cinematic representations of violence and sex that only the most puerile imagination could believe to be realistic, and are usually understood by the people who enjoy them (unconsciously or not) as a form of ‘wish fulfilment’.

Fantasy, however, can remain more true to reality in these respects because it fulfils a different sort of wish, or a deeper, more transcendent ‘longing’ as Lewis calls it, which is what we have in *Up*. Fantasy manages to externalize our deepest anxieties, hopes and joys in the form of narration,

images and characters. Therefore, even at its most exotic, fantasy always draws on what is most familiar and real. In the end, the fantastic elements in *Up* might not make the film more ‘realistic’, but the confluence of fantastic elements and human experience makes *Up* one of the most ‘real’ films I have seen in a long time. *Up* should be a delight for adults and children, to the minds and the hearts of all. m

1. Drouot, M. D.C. *On Sorcerers and Men: Tolkien and the Roots of Modern Fantasy Literature* (Portable Professor: Arts and Literature, Barnes and Nobel Audio, 2006).
2. Lewis, C. S. *On Three Ways of Writing for Children in Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (ed. Hooper, W.) p. 29 (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966).
3. Friedman, B. Movie Review: The Hurt Locker. *Vet Voice* (15 July 2010); <http://www.vetvoice.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=2975>

## Between discoveries and emotions

ROBERTO ARDUINI & CLAUDIO TESTI



**Tolkien and Philosophy**  
Conference, University of Modena,  
Italy, 22 May 2010

The Philosophical Institute of Thomistic Studies in Modena is a cultural association founded in 1988 which promotes and develops philosophical thought in relation to other branches of human culture, from science to literature. For this reason, the institute, in collaboration with the Roman Association of Tolkien Studies (ArsT), one of the most important Tolkien societies in Italy, edits and translates *Tolkien e dintorni*, the Italian-language book series on Tolkien and the other Inklings. Through this project, the two associations offer Italian fans and critics easy access to the most important studies on these authors. Our decision to organize an international meeting on ‘Tolkien and Philosophy’ was made with that same aim in mind.

Many people in Italy can now say: ‘I was there.’ This conference was an important event, successful and enjoyable. A day of work, an entire weekend alongside Verlyn Flieger, Tom Shippey and Christopher Garbowski, plus Italian scholars such as Franco Manni, Andrea Monda and Wu Ming 4. Not to mention moderators such as Saverio Simionelli, all Tolkien scholars.

Nine hours of deep reflections, which glided on as if we were chatting with friends. And although 22 May was the first sunny Saturday after weeks of rainy weather, a crowd of

nearly 200 people chose to stay indoors, looking into Middle-earth from different angles. The organization turned out to be excellent for an event entirely based on the effort of volunteers, and the great attendance — an incredible achievement for something like this in Italy.

After the opening greetings from the presidents of both the Thomistic Institute and ArsT, the first session began: Tom Shippey duelled in debate with Franco Manni the connections or, more likely, the lack of them, between Tolkien and the philosophers of his time. It was heated, yet friendly: Manni, obviously the philosophy’s supporter, made things hard for philologist Shippey but, in our humble opinion, the latter won the palm of victory. Shippey makes use of subtle humour and wit to address the audience, as his opening statement shows (“Tolkien doesn’t talk of philosophy in his work because, well, he’s not a philosopher”), and is able to pass abruptly to serious subjects: “Is it possible that Tolkien wrote *On Fairy Stories* and never discussed it with [philosopher] Collingwood, who used to have breakfast in a table beside him in Oxford while he was writing [it]?”

Next came Christopher Garbowski, speaking about ‘Philosophy and Theology of death in Tolkien’. His speech was serious and profound, discussing the subject of death from the point of view of the Catholic-oriented interpretation of Tolkien. After participating in a two-year study group on ‘Death and Immortality in Tolkien’ we met our match in Garbowski’s noteworthy inspiration and ideas, such as the disarming passage in which Garbowski recalled “the way to immortality for Hobbits: to have children”.

After a very good lunch (we were in Italy, after all), we were back on the stage with the fully home-made duet of Andrea Monda, a Tolkien scholar of the Catholic school, and Wu Ming 4, a member of the well-known yet shadowy Wu Ming collective of Italian novelists. In 2008 he wrote *Stella del mattino* (*Star of the Morning*), a novel set in Oxford



in 1919 and centred around T. E. Lawrence, J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and, most notably, Robert Graves. The duet in Modena was also a long-awaited match between two different approaches to Tolkien. At issue: was Tolkien a Catholic thinker? Finding, finally, a face to one of Wu Ming foundation (their camera-shy members will not appear on TV), we were impressed by the preparation and the passion of the debate. Some in the audience thought Monda was at his best, and Wu Ming 4 was a nice surprise, especially for those who had never listened to him.

Finally, the fireworks. It was really amazing for those (and there were many) who had never had the opportunity to hear the voice of a very young 77-year-old, Verlyn Flieger. She literally enchanted the audience with a speech on 'Philosophy of time and language in Tolkien', winning unanimous smiles with a 'pardon my Entish' before quoting Treebeard, as well as a one-minute applause at the end of the speech. In the words of Wu Ming 4: "I feel myself a bit in love with her. A small, skinny woman, with a penetrating gaze and a voice just as you imagine can be that of Galadriel. While she was reading the verses in Quenya and Entish (apologizing for

the pronunciation), in the perfect silence of the room, I was shivering. And when she spoke about Tolkien's theory of language, with such a perfect and clear speech without the least wandering from the point, using the exact number of words to say the exact number of things and not a comma more, she conveyed to me a sense of perfection, of height despite her not being a tall woman."

In the evening, then, some members of our associations had the privilege of a purely convivial dinner with the prestigious speakers. And then names that we pronounce with great reverence while reading, studying and translating their essays on Tolkien, became real smiling faces. In particular, Professor Shippey, very fond of football and a strong supporter of Leeds United, pawed the ground to watch the final match of the Champions League (supporting the Italian team). Meanwhile, Professors Garbowski and Flieger were surrounded by the merry confusion of our table, and between steaming pizzas, beers, laughter and occasional translation problems, they proved once again to be great experts of the hobbit, without apparent difficulty in supporting such a task. 

# The Tolkien Society — the early days

CHARLES E. NOAD

**T**he Tolkien Society did not spring fully formed into the world, but went through quite an extended process of gestation before it achieved coherent shape and evolved into its present form. The purpose of this piece is to examine that process in some detail, as well as to recall a very different era in the appreciation of Tolkien and his works.

However, before beginning such an account, notice must be taken of what might be called the prehistory of Tolkien fandom (to shift the metaphor slightly). By the word ‘fandom,’ I specifically mean organized fandom. In the sense that people who like and admire the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien can (however loosely) be classified as ‘fans,’ then Tolkien-fans must surely go back to the publication of *The Hobbit* in 1937. But here I am considering the results of fans getting into communication and becoming organized.

Before entering into the particulars of early Tolkien fandom and the coming-into-being of the Tolkien Society, it would be best at this point to note two important factors in the formation of that fandom: local groups and science-fiction fandom. There seem to have been local groups of Tolkien fans, usually spontaneously generated in and centred on places of higher education both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, for at least as long as any of the more generalized groupings. However, because many of them were so localized, and because in many cases they may have existed only among a particular generation, and didn’t survive those individuals’ dispersal into the wider world, they tend to have something of an ephemeral quality to them. (Not all, of course: think of Taruithorn!) But they had a part to play in the establishment of the larger bodies. Some of these local groups called themselves ‘smials.’ It is not clear when this natural-enough term for a local Tolkien group first emerged, but it seems to have been used from very early on.

Science-fiction fandom goes back many decades, and I do not even propose to touch upon its history; but it is a fact that Tolkien for a long time has had a following among readers of science fiction, and several people who were involved with the formation of Tolkien fandom in general and of the Tolkien Society in particular had a background in science-fiction fandom. Tolkien himself, we might note, had a couple of brushes with this world: in early 1954, he accompanied C. S. Lewis in an informal debate at the Eastgate in Oxford on the merits or otherwise of space travel with renowned science-fiction author and fan Arthur C. Clarke and the British rocket engineer A. V. Cleaver; and

in 1957 he received the International Fantasy Award at the fifteenth World Science Fiction Convention, held in London. (It should be noted that Tolkien was given the award at a special meeting of the SF Luncheon Club held during the course of the convention. The presentation was not open to the convention’s general membership.)

Another point that might be worth making is simply that at this period Tolkien was not remotely as well-known to the public as he later became. Nowadays it is hard to avoid some sort of reference to Tolkien or the characters of his fiction in the media. But in the days that I shall here mainly be discussing, any sort of reference to be found beyond the review sections of newspapers and magazines was rare indeed.

## The Fellowship meets

The earliest organized Tolkien fan grouping must be The Fellowship of the Ring, which was begun at a meeting held by American science-fiction fans Bruce Pelz and Ted Johnstone on 4 September 1960, at the eighteenth World Science Fiction Convention in Pittsburgh; the group of some 30 Los Angeles-based SF fans involved had been considering the idea of a ‘Tolkien-only club’ since the previous year. Ed Meškys recalled someone at it reporting that he had heard of several other already established groups, including one at Harvard; these, presumably, were some of the earliest local groupings, but of these particular ones, nothing further is known. (You might get some idea of the kind of fan Bruce Pelz was if I say that at his death in 2002, he willed his collection of fanzines to the University of California: there were some 200,000 of them.)

The Fellowship produced its own fanzine, *I Palantir* (edited by Ted Johnstone, published by Bruce Pelz), of which there were four issues, irregularly spaced, between August 1960 and August 1966. I don’t know that the Fellowship ever had a high membership: it cost \$1 to join but you needed the personal approval of Bruce Pelz, something

by no means easy to obtain, it seems.

Despite its exclusivity, there was an offshoot of sorts of the Fellowship in the United Kingdom: in Birmingham science-fiction fan Ken Cheslin early on became the Fellowship’s British agent and produced *Nazgul’s Bane* as a ‘newszine’ for its British members. There were at least four issues of this, from about 1961 (3 issues so dated) to 1963. (Sorry I can’t be more definitive: even Gary Hunnewell’s listing is vague on these dates.) It seems to have been a fairly sparse affair, as the number of pages in the first four issues were 2, 2, 4 and 1, respectively. I have not seen any of these, but

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obviously they have their place as the earliest specialist British Tolkien fan-publication. One of the people associated with *Nazgul's Bane*, as well as being himself a recipient of *I Palantir*, was veteran British science-fiction fan Archie Mercer, of whom we shall hear more anon. I note, from an anthology of extracts from Tolkien fanzines that Gary Hunnewell produced in 1987, that, even then, a certain book was awaited with not a little anticipation. Thus in no. 3 of *Nazgul's Bane*, Ken Cheslin wrote: "I heard a rumour that THE SIRAMILLION or THE SIMARILLION is it? is certain to be published in 1962. Nothing for certain yet tho." Even in those days, *Silmarillion* rumours were spread abroad.

For the decade following its first publication, *The Lord of the Rings* had been available only in hardcover. This changed with the three-volume American Ace paperback edition of mid-1965. Without delving into the complexities of the matter, this was a publication of questionable legality that, nevertheless, was the first mass-market edition of the work, making it much more readily available. This, together with the authorized Ballantine paperback edition later that year, had the effect of increasing its popularity generally, but especially on the campuses of American universities, and doubtless helped to stimulate the growth, though not, I think, the formation, of the Tolkien Society of America (or TSA). This was founded in the spring of 1965, initially as the New York Tolkien Society, by Richard Plotz. Plotz corresponded with Tolkien and visited him in 1966. The TSA brought out 15 issues of *The Tolkien Journal*. By number 2, dated "Winter-filth 1965", it already boasted of having British members. The third issue contained a listing of several local groups of the TSA, here called 'chapters' rather than 'smials', although a piece in the seventh issue, in 1967, referred to 'organized smials' as the most sensible way to organize the TSA. The ninth issue, of late summer 1968, named Archie Mercer as the TSA's British agent. Eventually, in 1972, it was absorbed into the Mythopoeic Society. This society (otherwise known as MythSoc) had been started in 1967 by Glen GoodKnight and was, and is, a serious concern, and concentrates not just on Tolkien but also on the other Inklings, and on writers such as Dorothy L. Sayers and George Macdonald. The Tolkien Society co-organized the Tolkien Centenary Conference in 1992 with MythSoc.

## The Earthworm emerges

It would be an interesting study to see how quickly word spread in those pre-Internet days. Undoubtedly much news filtered through science-fiction circles on both sides of the Atlantic by the printed word in the various science-fiction fanzines of the time. It was thanks to Archie Mercer, now acting as the British agent for the TSA, that a significant event in the evolution of British Tolkien fandom occurred. This was the publication in October 1968 of the first issue of his personal 'zine', *The Middle Earthworm*, initially mainly intended for British members of the TSA. The emphasis was on Tolkien,

hence the title. This was a type of publication called a 'loczine', 'l-o-c' standing for letters of comment, the idea being that people would write to it, their letters would be printed on its stencilled pages, and its readers would write their own letters of comment on them for further publication. There was little editorial content beyond what Archie and his wife Beryl and their cats had been doing and what other magazines they had received. This, by the way, was no sort of official publication of any society: it was purely a personal publication of Archie's. Of course, starting such an enterprise must be slightly problematic, but Archie sent out the one-sheet first issue to British members of the Tolkien Society of America, and a few other people he thought might be interested. It should be realized that a good many of these people were science-fiction fans,

hence the largely science-fictional context I have mentioned within which the Tolkien Society was conceived. Archie noted especially that "several recent applicants for T.S.A. membership have seen fit to enquire the whereabouts of their

nearest smial". Although he knew of no British smials, he published the names and addresses of current British members of the TSA in that first issue. In the second issue, Archie noted that he had contacted Joy Hill, press officer at Tolkien's publishers, Allen & Unwin, who said that the professor was at present finishing off the notes for his translations of *Gawain and Pearl*, and then hoped to pick up on *The Silmarillion*; an optimistic forecast, as it turned out. Word spread, and succeeding issues of the magazine increased in size with the increasing correspondence.

As we have just seen, one of the people in that correspondence was Joy Hill, Allen & Unwin's press officer, but a good deal of whose time was actually spent helping Tolkien deal with his fan-mail. How much she may have discussed the contents of the *The Middle Earthworm* with him is a very moot point. A principal topic that emerged among the letters was, naturally enough, the idea of a purely British Tolkien Society. In number 3 of May 1969, Derek Slade and 'Fangorn' Sawyer asked if it was about time "there was a Tolkien Society of England (affiliated to T.S.A. of course)": *The Middle Earthworm* at this stage was still somewhat TSA-oriented. Archie thought a Tolkien Society was a good idea but had too much on his own plate to organize it himself. In number 4, in August, Hartley Patterson thought that an "English TS" was "plainly needed", and Catherine Goundry said that "there should be a Tolkien Society of England... After all... Prof. Tolkien is British". Plainly the idea of a domestic Tolkien Society was a welcome one, but, given the circumstances, one that was not simply an offshoot of a pre-existing, and foreign, body.

## Something gets done

The general feeling was that Someone Should Do Something, and, finally, someone did. That someone was Vera Chapman. In *The Middle Earthworm* number 5 of October she volunteered "to help to organise the TOLKIEN SOCIETY OF BRITAIN", and offered her time and talents as

## There was little editorial content beyond what Archie and his wife Beryl and their cats had been doing.

organizing secretary, assistant, or anything required to set the thing on its feet, expressing a hope that as soon as sufficient numbers were enrolled, a meeting would be held to place it all on a businesslike footing. In the same issue, Bob Borsley said that he “would like to see a British Tolkien Society” and that he would also like to see “some sort of Tolkien meeting perhaps like the T.S.A.’s annual meetings”.

Finally, the sixth issue, for November, of *The Middle Earthworm* led off with a letter from ‘Belladonna Took’ (the Tolkienian pseudonym adopted by Vera Chapman) in which she announced “if not quite the birth, at least the hopeful conception of a Tolkien Society of Britain” — “as soon as sufficient numbers are enrolled, a meeting will be held to place it on a businesslike footing”. This issue also contained a copy of her ‘pre-inaugural leaflet’ about the society. And in the personal column of the *New Statesman* for 7 November 1969, she announced “TOLKIEN SOCIETY of Britain — write Belladonna Took, c/o Chapman, 21 Harrington House, Stanhope St. London NW1”. I don’t know the exact date of publication of that *Middle Earthworm* so cannot tell which announcement has precedence, although I favour the *New Statesman* here. Since, as now, this magazine is dated to the Friday of the week, but actually hits the news-stands on the day before, we might therefore consider Thursday, 6 November 1969, as at least the informal beginning of the Tolkien Society. It should be explained that in those days members were encouraged to have a Tolkienian pseudonym. Although probably not really a good idea in general, Vera Chapman took the pseudonym of ‘Belladonna Took’, who was, as you may recall, Bilbo’s mother and “one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took”. It is by the name ‘Belladonna’ that those of us who knew her affectionately remember her.

Then in her early seventies, a retired civil servant, she had a particular motive in forming a British Tolkien Society: she was disturbed by Tolkien’s association, in certain parts of the public mind, with the drug-ridden writings of hippiedom. Remember, we were in the sixties, and Tolkien had developed something of a following in the counter-culture. Belladonna had expressed her concerns about the magazine *Gandalf’s Garden* in the third issue of *The Middle Earthworm* (her first published letter in that journal). (*Gandalf’s Garden*, by the way, was apparently to do with a shop-cum-café, I think, of the same name just off the King’s Road, in Chelsea. I’m not quite sure what kind of goods they sold...) She expressed similar sentiments in *Tolkien Journal* number 10, of November 1969. Although Tolkien indeed appealed to a wide range of people, the trouble was that it seemed to be a fairly narrow range that got publicized in the media. Her point of view, and, I think, a valid one, was that this kind of approach misrepresented both Tolkien himself and a great many, surely the great majority, of his readers. She wanted an organization that was truer to Tolkien’s own outlook and was more representative of the majority of his readership. I am not saying that this was an not an altogether unproblematic

stand to take, in that it may betray a tendency towards too prescriptive a view of Tolkien appreciation; but, as we shall see, hers was but one of the points of view that ultimately shaped the Tolkien Society. In the same issue of *The Middle Earthworm* Jim Leppard commented that “in view of the fact that Tolkien is British”, he “would prefer as a name simply ‘The Tolkien Society.’” And in response to Bob Borsley’s suggestion for something like the TSA’s ‘Yulemeet’, Hartley Patterson suggested that “EasterCon already exists to be used for that — if enough Tolkien followers attended, perhaps some programme time could be found for them”. I find surprising the idea that Eastercon would be an appropriate venue, but, as we have seen, early Tolkien fandom to a degree developed within the context of science-fiction fandom. Archie Mercer noted that since Derek Stokes (of the long-gone science-fiction and fantasy bookshop Dark They Were And Golden Eyed) was in touch with Belladonna at this time and was also on the committee of the forthcoming Eastercon, this would very likely happen anyway. In the end there was to be a meeting at the 1970 Eastercon, to which we shall return.

## Slowly, slowly ...

And after these announcements, things started, albeit slowly, to happen. On 17 December, a ‘preliminary meeting’ of interested parties, a proto-committee meeting if you like, was held in Belladonna’s flat. And in the same month she issued the first *Belladonna’s Broadsheet*, in which the aims of the society were explored further. This stencilled A4 newsletter included the announcement “Here ... begins THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY OF BRITAIN — its exact name may call for some more decision”. They still hadn’t quite settled on a name. It was hoped that it would appear quarterly.

In *The Middle Earthworm* number 7 in January 1970, Belladonna announced that “the Tolkien Society of Britain will have its inaugural (or words to that effect) meeting at London University, Rigby Room, Central Collegiate Building, Gower St., London NW.1, on January 29th, Thursday, 7.30.

All welcome”.

And this was done. As noted in the report in *The Middle Earthworm* number 8, as well as in the third *Belladonna’s Broadsheet*, this inaugural meeting was held under the auspices of the Hobbit Society of University College London, otherwise known as ‘Hobbisoc’, some of whose members were already *Middle*

*Earthworm* correspondents. This was one of the college-based groups mentioned earlier. It’s unclear exactly when Hobbisoc started, but perhaps about 1966 or 1967. More than 30 people were present at the meeting. A good deal was discussed here and things were moved a little bit forward. As this was, strictly speaking, a meeting of Hobbisoc, it could not be considered an authoritative meeting of the Tolkien Society, but recommendations were passed, to be ratified at a subsequent society meeting. There was a good deal of discussion regarding the name of the proposed society, such as ‘British Tolkien Society’ or ‘Tolkien Society of Britain’. But it was also argued that ‘The

**The general feeling was that Someone Should Do Something, and, finally, someone did.**

Tolkien Society' would be fine, which the meeting approved. (After all, it would be surprising if one were to come across 'The American Mark Twain Society', or 'The French Jules Verne Society'. The nationality we may reasonably omit from a society name when it is established in the writer's own country.) A committee consisting of Belladonna Took as chairman and secretary "for the present", Sharyn Stead as treasurer, and other members Derek Slade, Steven Thomson, Derek Stokes, Keith Bridges, and Alex Holdschmidt of Hobbitsoc, was appointed pending proper elections at a subsequent Tolkien Society meeting. Membership was said to be already more than 60. (I shall take note of the membership as given in various reports at points throughout this essay. Some of these numbers may be approximate but they give some idea of how many people were prepared to subscribe at any given time.) The objects of the society were stated to be: (i) to encourage the appreciation of the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, especially *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*; (ii) to endeavour to maintain the image of 'Middle-earth' uncontaminated by anything contrary to the intention of the author; and (iii) to enjoy the fantasy of 'Middle-earth' and express it according to the individual tastes and talents of the members. The subscription was provisionally fixed at 10/- a year (50p in decimal currency). Sharyn Stead resigned as treasurer in March, to be replaced by Philip Ansley-Watson. *Belladonna's Broadsheet* number 2, for March, announced a further meeting for 5 March, to be held on premises at UCL provided by Hobbitsoc, but this seems never to have occurred, possibly partly through Belladonna being ill at about that time. As we shall see, such a meeting took a long time to bring about successfully. Also, there was a very interesting question raised: 'What do we do?' I hope the succeeding 40 years have given some sort of answer to that. However, it should be borne in mind that at that time there was a good deal of uncertainty about the extent of the society's interests — should it be solely about Tolkien, or other fantasy writers, too? What about overlap with organizations such as the British Science Fiction Association or the British Weird Fantasy Society (the 'Weird' later being dropped from the name)? I don't recall that these questions were ever directly addressed: the society simply ended up doing what it did, and defined its own agenda in the process.

## Broadsheets, meetings and picnics

As noted, it was decided to have a special Tolkien Society meeting at the upcoming Eastercon ('Scicon '70') at the Royal Hotel in London, on Sunday 29 March, to be specific. This took place, although it turned out to be rather inconclusive, as well as being fairly informal, and was reported as having been jointly chaired by Derek Stokes and Keith Bridges, but was in fact largely conducted by science-fiction writer Kenneth Bulmer. SF fan Darroll Pardoe and his wife Rosemary (or just 'Ro') volunteered to edit the society's magazine, Darroll already having experience of producing fan magazine *Les Spinge*. Apparently the matter of the name of the society was

also raised again, with Arthur Cruttenden arguing for 'The Tolkien Society' pure and simple. One reason for the inconclusiveness might be the fact that this is generally rated as just about the worst Eastercon ever, one that had no mention of science fiction, in a dreadful hotel with surly staff and a bar that closed at 10 p.m. The hotel was shut down for demolition the week after. (Just a footnote, but the previous year's Eastercon, 'Galactic Fair', had been held at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, although Tolkien was probably unaware of it as he was then living in Bournemouth.)

Other events, of a more social nature, also took place in those days. Hobbitsoc had a May Eve party round a fire in Epping Forest on 30 April.

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Here begins THE  
TOLKIEN SOCIETY OF  
BRITAIN — its exact  
name may call for  
some more decision.

On 1 May, at Joy Hill's suggestion, Belladonna wrote a letter to Professor Tolkien, c/o Allen & Unwin, introducing the society and describing its aims, as well as enclosing a copy of the second *Belladonna's Broadsheet*. I am not aware that this ever got a response.

In the intervening months until a general meeting was held, publications continued to appear. *Belladonna's Broadsheet* number 3 came out in about mid-June. In the *Broadsheet*, apart from mention of the letter to Tolkien, Belladonna announced that this would be the last such, and that the society's organ would now be *The Mallorn*, to be edited by the Pardoes, with the first issue due some time in the autumn. A listing of members showed some 70 names. It was also announced that a constitution had been hammered out sufficient for the purpose of opening a bank account for the society. In *The Middle Earthworm* number 10, Ro and Darroll Pardoe confirmed that the society's magazine would be called *The Mallorn*, and in issue number 11 in September, they said they hoped to have the first *Mallorn* out by October, adding that they badly needed contributions (you will hardly be surprised to learn). Like the *Broadsheet*, this was initially conceived of as a quarterly publication. Things were starting to move. I will also note a letter from Derek Slade, describing himself as "Grand Master of University Smial, Oxford Farthing". I imagine this must have been a remote precursor to Taruithorn. I don't know if it had anything to do with the contemporary Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group.

More fun doings: there was a Hobbit Picnic on Hampstead Heath on 7 June, and, later that month, a picnic on Golders Hill.

September saw the arrival of another personal 'zine, *Gamma*, produced by Phil Spencer. He felt that there had been very little action in the first nine months of the society, there having been no publications since the last *Broadsheet*. He thought that the society should cover more than just Tolkien, and include Sword and Sorcery in general.

*Gamma* number 2, in October, raised the issue of a bulletin for the society, distinct from *Mallorn*. Phil Spencer said that he had offered to edit and distribute one. The treasurer thought that there would be enough cash to support both a quarterly *Mallorn* as well as a six-weekly bulletin. At a

committee meeting on 8 October, Phil's proposal regarding an 'Interim Bulletin' was discussed. This seems to have been quickly taken up, as *The Tolkien Society Bulletin*, as it was titled, was quickly prepared in time to go out with the first *Mallorn*. Given that both the first *Bulletin* and the first *Mallorn* were issued together, it is not altogether clear from the printed evidence in what sense the *Bulletin* was meant to be 'interim' — whether it was meant to fill in the time until the quarterly *Mallorn* was up and running, or was meant to emerge at intervals with and between *Mallorns*, although I think the latter. In any event, the necessity for a regular bulletin, of greater frequency than *Mallorn* (whether or not quarterly) soon became apparent, even though it took some time for *Amon Hen* to take on its current shape. In the same issue of *Gamma*, Rosemary Pardoe wrote to say that she would be happy to discuss other fantasy authors in *Mallorn*.

## Mallorn takes root

Finally, at some time in October, the first issue of *The Mallorn*, as well as the first issue of the *Bulletin*, made their appearance in a joint mailing. (I have been unable to establish the precise date of publication. It may have been 4 October, but this is not quite certain.) In her editorial, Ro Pardoe said she agreed with the third 'aim' of the society — "to enjoy the fantasy of 'Middle-earth' and express it according to the individual talents and tastes of the members" — but not with the second — "to endeavour to maintain the image of 'Middle-earth' uncontaminated by anything contrary to the intention of the author". She felt, perhaps not unreasonably, that that was far too restrictive an outlook. Also enclosed with *The Mallorn* was a copy of the constitution as it then stood. The reason for what some felt was a fair delay — four months from *Belladonna's Broadsheet* number 3 to the first *Mallorn* — was, according to Darroll Pardoe, to do with problems in getting the society's finances organized.

They decided to step down from editing *Mallorn* at this point (Ro had her A-levels to concentrate on), and hand it over to the Laureindorenan Smial in Richmond, Surrey, headed by Steven Thomson. (This smial largely consisted of sixth-formers preparing for university, so far as I recall.) In a letter to a later *Middle Earthworm*, she added: "It isn't that the Society doesn't have enough money to bring the MAL-LORN out, as some people seem to think. It's just that up until now the money has been inaccessible." Evidently, cash flow and money management were problems. The *Bulletin* announced a general meeting to be held on 20 November, again at University College London.

The long-awaited and much-needed general meeting of the Tolkien Society was at last held at UCL on 20 November 1970, attended by about 20, where the constitution was considered. This had been hammered out over several committee meetings, mainly by Philip Ansley-Watson and Belladonna's son Denis Chapman, a 'legal wizard'. It was needed in order to open a bank account and for the society to operate as a legal entity. It was initially accepted on a pro tem basis but then,

after much discussion on proposed amendments, rejected. Michael Lightfoot, a law student, who was the proposer of the motion that the constitution be rejected, offered to draw one up himself, which offer was accepted by the committee. The rejection of the constitution was a setback, and it took a long time for it to be sorted out. There had been a lengthy discussion on the matter at the 8 October committee meeting at Belladonna's flat. Plainly, this matter was still problematic. At the general meeting, Keith Bridges was elected chairman, Philip Ansley-Watson, treasurer, and Vera Chapman, secretary, all posts considered as temporary, pending another general meeting with a ratified constitution. The Laureindorenan Smial took over *Mallorn*. All this wasn't the best advertisement for the society. Ro Pardoe said she had "expected a fiasco, but this was ridiculous". However, she enjoyed the party afterwards.

Meanwhile the society carried on in its own way. A mailing in December saw *The Tolkien Society Bulletin* number 2 and *Gamma* number 3. January 1971 saw *Mallorn* number 2 (from Laureindorenan, now definite article-less, except on the front cover), *The Tolkien Society Bulletin* number 3 and *Gamma* number 4. Membership was said now to be about 100. Some copies of the second and third *Mallorns* were distributed for sale to the public at large at a few outlets, including Dark They Were And Golden Eyed. *Mallorn* number 3, *The Tolkien Society Bulletin* number 4 and *Gamma* number 5 followed in about June. We might perhaps note here that although a quarterly schedule for *Mallorn* sounds extraordinarily ambitious, yet, with the first few, it was almost achieved: there were three months between the first and second issues, five between the third and fourth, and three between the fourth and fifth. After that the intervals grew more extended. In the fourth *Bulletin*,

## A very interesting question was raised: 'What do we do?'

Keith Bridges mentioned the possibility of a 'Tolkien Society convention', an early stirring of what would eventually become Oxonmoot. There were occasional meetings, I am told, of interested parties to discuss relevant matters in The One Tun, a

pub in London where science-fiction fans would foregather on the first Thursday of the month.

The Laureindorenan Smial held a party in Richmond Park on 4 July. I'm not quite sure if I was at that (I had joined the society by then), although I think I was at a barbecue to celebrate Bilbo's birthday in the woods behind Keith Bridges' home in Welwyn Garden City on 18 September.

## In search of a constitution

An important event in the society's development now took place. At a committee meeting on 13 May, a decision was taken to get the constitution sorted out once and for all. As advertised in the fourth *Tolkien Society Bulletin* of June 1971, an all-day meeting was to be held at Keith Bridges' home on 10 July: this was to be the 'Grand Constitution Meeting'. The absence of a ratified constitution had been a stumbling block for far too long. This meeting was meant to bring all the interested parties together to make something presentable and workable. This was done; if it hadn't succeeded I suspect there might not have been a society afterwards. Steven

Thomson subsequently prepared a draft of the constitution from notes he took at the meeting. All that was needed now was to assemble a general meeting to ratify it; but this still took some time. Also at this meeting, Phil Spencer resigned from editing the *Bulletin*, which meant that, for the time being, the society was without a bulletin.

In the meantime *Mallorn* number 4, the last from Laurendorenan as it turned out, came out in about September. Membership was noted as about 65; plainly a good many people had become disaffected by the society's difficulties.

A general meeting for 23 October was decided upon by the committee but, to cut a long story short, notices weren't sent out in time and only one or two puzzled would-be attendees turned up at University College London round about the time appointed. Some people, including Keith Bridges and Howard Rosenblum, later turned up at Bel-ladonna's flat where they held an informal meeting so that the day wouldn't be completely wasted. It was noted that Philip Ansley-Watson had not been seen for some time and seemed to be incommunicado. A good deal was discussed and it was agreed that there should be a properly arranged and notified annual general meeting in January, in Welwyn Garden City. Before that there should be an audit of the

finances and someone persuaded to act as a new treasurer.

It was on 29 November of this year that Professor Tolkien's wife, Edith, died. I have a dim memory of Steven Thomson telling me that the committee intended to send a telegram of condolence to Tolkien. I recall that I was uncertain as to the propriety of this and urged caution. I don't know if the telegram was ever sent.

Possibly in part in response to the general feeling of things not getting anywhere, Hartley Patterson brought out, from November, his own personal 'zine, *News From Bree*, which, like *Gamma* (which was still going, but ceased with number 7), was meant to ginger things up in the society, especially in view of the absence of a regular bulletin since Phil Spencer's resignation. The initial issues were mainly Tolkien-based, but there was a gradual shift to other interests of Hartley's, and from number 16 it was exclusively about *Diplomacy* and war-gaming. Many issues went out with mailings of *Mallorn* and the society bulletin.

The society at this time was very much stuck in the doldrums. Things weren't happening, problems weren't being dealt with. Finally, the first committee meeting for about six months, since 13 May, in fact, was held on 4 December. About now John Martin agreed to serve as the new bulletin



## From *The Hobbit*

Colin Williams

editor. On 12 December, in preparation for the forthcoming general meeting, another committee meeting undertook an audit of the society's finances at Belladonna's flat.

### Words from the author

Tolkien was awarded a CBE in the 1972 New Year's Honours, and for his 80th birthday on 3 January 1972, the society sent this telegram:

CONGRATULATIONS ON 80TH BIRTHDAY AND HONOUR. ANOTHER 50 YEARS TO BEAT THE OLD TOOK.

THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY (IN BRITAIN)

This was 'officially' encouraged, as notification of the birthday had been received from Allen & Unwin in October. There was a small congratulatory notice from the society in the 'BIRTHDAYS' column of *The Times* of 3 January, which ran: "TOLKIEN. Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, C.B.E. Congratulations on your 80th birthday. 'Elen sila lumenn' omentielmo.' The Tolkien Society." And the society sent Tolkien a present of tobacco (best Latakia Mixture) in a green china tobacco jar, with a design of huntsmen and deer in white, which was delivered to Allen & Unwin with the following note:

FROM all Hobbits, Elves, Elf-friends, Dwarves, Ents, Numenoreans, Rohirrim, etc. etc. etc. of the TOLKIEN SOCIETY (in Britain) with love and honour and hearty congratulations, to the creator of so much wonder. Although not to be compared with the true LONGBOTTOM LEAF, we hope that this will at least raise a few smoke-rings of happy recollection.

THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY  
21, Harrington House  
Stanhope Street  
London N.W.1.

On the evening of 3 January Joy Hill rang Vera Chapman to say that the professor was delighted: "Of all the tributes he received, this was the one that gave the greatest pleasure. There was a chance that he might write personally." And a month later he did just that. In a letter to "Mrs. V. Chapman", dated 6 February 1972, and sent c/o Allen & Unwin, he wrote:

Dear Mrs. Chapman,  
May I thank you and the Tolkien Society for your good wishes and kind gift on my 80th birthday. I appreciated your generosity very much indeed.  
Best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,  
J.R.R. Tolkien [signed]

At last a general meeting was held at Keith Bridges' home in Welwyn Garden City on 15 January 1972 at 3 p.m., attended by about 13 members. The constitution was voted on and at last ratified, so establishing the Tolkien Society as a legal entity, and officers were elected: Keith Bridges as chairman, Belladonna

as secretary, Archie Mercer as treasurer, and Jonathan Simons as vice-chairman. Officers appointed were Janet Lee as assistant secretary, member without portfolio Hartley Patterson, *Bulletin* editor John Martin, and *Mallorn* editor Steven Thomson and the Laureindorenan Smial. This occasion might be held to be the formal beginning of the society, as opposed to its informal beginning with the *New Statesman* advert. Thus, with its first proper annual general meeting, was the society formed in the deeps of time. Philip Ansley-Watson's resignation was accepted. He had been having health problems, and had since left to go on an officer training course with the army. In order to place the finances of the society on a sound footing, it was decided to write off the loss in the accounts of £13 and officially terminate the Tolkien Society, the meeting then forming the Tolkien Society 1972. To quote: "It was ... proposed that 'THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY 1970' be wound up and all monies be transferred to 'THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY 1972' ... The meeting was resumed under the auspices of the above ['THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY 1972'], at 4 p.m.; Constitution accepted in toto." I cannot recall hearing before or since of the society's title having a numerical suffix. The annual subscription was fixed at £1.

### The road goes ever on

The news about the annual general meeting was carried in the first issue, dated January 1972, of the society's new official bulletin, *Anduril*, edited by John Martin. However, this was number 0 of the magazine, not number 1. This was explained in the editorial: "Numbered 0, because this is more a flyer announcing the return of an officially approved T.S. Bulletin and asking, telling, BEGGING all of you out there to take up, in your nasty little handses, your pens, place to paper AND WRITE!!!!!!" Yes, even back then, bulletin editors were in want of contributions. However, for a flier, it was quite a sumptuous publication at 14 8" x 10" stencilled pages, with a 4-page membership list, which gave the names of some 80 paid-up members.

Mention should be made here of a small personal 'zine called *Nazgul*, produced by John Abbot in Yorkshire for Tolkien Society members, which made its first appearance in February this year, and which is too good to be forgotten. Consisting of John's observations on matters Tolkienian, with contributions from readers, its wonderfully dry sense of humour made a welcome contrast to the sometimes all-too-serious tone of the official publications. There were seven issues in all, up until 1977.

The next *Mallorn* was somewhat delayed. When Belladonna enquired about it, about a month after the annual general meeting, she was sent a pile of material, very little work on it having been done since the previous issue. Acting as a temporary 'pro-editor', with the assistance of Hartley Patterson and John Martin, she put together the new issue, which was sent out in about early April.

Published a little later was *Anduril* number 1. This carried a flier from Tolkien's publisher, George Allen & Unwin, advertising its range of Tolkien books; perhaps a sign, of sorts, of official recognition. Notably, on the front cover was

an illustration by John Martin portraying what I think is intended as a soldier of Gondor who has been celebrating the victory over Sauron: he is lying against a hayrick, an emptied flagon of ale in his hand, and a minimally clad young lady peering out from behind the hayrick. Flying from a pole is what is presumably her dress, with the words 'We won the war!' scrawled on it. I fear that Belladonna did not approve. On the back cover was the late Virgil Finlay's sample drawing for *The Hobbit*, which, as we know, Tolkien rather approved of. However, a Finlay-illustrated *Hobbit* never saw publication, which is a pity as Finlay was one of the most talented professional SF/fantasy artists ever.

On Tuesday 27 June 1972, Vera Chapman, representing the Tolkien Society, attended a sherry party held in Professor Tolkien's honour at Allen & Unwin's offices in Ruskin House, 40 Museum Street, in London, where she had the privilege of meeting Professor Tolkien himself. As noted in her account of the event, she managed to have a few words with him (bearing in mind that everyone else wanted to have a few words with him, too). After some remarks related to the belladonna plant (Tolkien may have misunderstood her reference to her society pseudonym of 'Belladonna Took'), she asked him if he would consent to be the society's honorary president, to which he replied, "Certainly". She gave him some short account of the Tolkien Society before other people made their claims on his attention. In a later, final word with her, the professor noted that he was glad to be in Oxford again, although it was full of crime and criminals: his CBE medal and some of his wife's jewellery had been stolen. Tolkien parted with the words. "If I can help your society in any way, I will," before the firm's head, Rayner Unwin, escorted him away.

## Consolidation and Amon Hen

July saw the publication of *Anduril* number 2. Another sumptuous production, this was in fact the last *Anduril* to be the society's bulletin. John Martin had increasingly seen it as his own magazine of fantasy in a general sense. November saw the first issue of *Amon Hen* — except that it wasn't called that, but *Henneth Annûn* (although at least it was called Number 1). December saw a joint mailing of *Amon Hen* number 2 and *Anduril* number 3. No explanation was offered for the change of name (or, rather, reversion to the correct name), although, in a letter in *The Middle Earthworm* number 19, for February 1973, John Martin admitted that his mind "was wandering somewhat" when he was typing the first issue up. *Anduril* number 3 was the last distributed by the Tolkien Society, and had by now become an independent magazine. (It is a very moot point if number 3 in fact was a Tolkien-zine as such. Numbers 0–2 definitely were, and numbers 4–7 (the last) definitely weren't; number 3 is borderline, although completists would probably want it.) A listing gives about 115 names of members.

*Mallorn* number 6 came out in January 1973, now edited by Jon M. Harvey. It contained 'Belladonna Goes to a Party',

her account of the above mentioned meeting with Professor Tolkien. *Amon Hen* number 3 followed a little later. Membership was noted as 120.

The first annual general meeting to have a guest speaker took place on 17 February, at the Sherlock Holmes Hotel in Bloomsbury. This was Joy Chant, author of *Red Moon and Black Mountain*. Attended by about 30, officers elected were Hartley Patterson as chairman, Vera Chapman as secretary, Archie Mercer as treasurer, and Jonathan Simons as vice-chairman (although this seems to be the last time such a post existed). Officers appointed were Howard Rosenblum and

John Martin as members' representatives, John Martin as bulletin editor and Jonathan Simons as managing editor of *Mallorn*. The subscription was raised to £1.50 (now that we had decimal currency).

This was reported on somewhat unenthusiastically by John Martin in *Amon Hen* number 4 in April — he called it a "tiresome event"; plainly the shine was wearing thin for him. However, he did note that "The constitution, which finally made the scene; after being unavailable for a year; for which we thank Keith Bridges, was ratified as it stood" [*sic*]. John further complains about people "playing constitutions", and I retain a very vague memory of Jill Bridges, perhaps at this event, depositing a pile of literature in front of the committee, thereby curtailing her and Keith's appointments to the Tolkien Society. Plainly, the matter of constitutions hadn't quite been finished with by the time this AGM came round. (Possibly Keith Bridges had had the only copy, and he had by now started to move away from Tolkien fandom.)

*Amon Hen* number 5 emerged in June. It announced the holding of a special general meeting of the society to consider a small amendment to clause 14 of the constitution regarding the composition of the committee, scheduled to take place on 30 June at the London pub where the local group (the Northfarthing Smial) then met. It was followed by a picnic in Regent's Park.

Professor Tolkien died on 2 September 1973. Perhaps not unexpected at his advanced age, the news was still of great sadness. The funeral was held at St Anthony of Padua's in Headley Way, Oxford, on 6 September, attended by Vera Chapman representing the Tolkien Society; and there was a memorial service at Merton College Chapel on 17 November, attended by Mrs Chapman and Jessica Kemball-Cook for the society. It was at this latter occasion that the society established contact with Priscilla Tolkien, whose friendly and generous approach to the society, especially in regard to the Oxonmoots, has been of inestimable value to the society and its members.

*Amon Hen* number 6, in September, was a very much abbreviated issue due to the editor's other commitments, and was in any case his last issue. An extra sheet was added to the end to record Tolkien's death. Eighty names are listed in a membership list.

1974 opened with *Mallorn* number 7 and *Amon Hen* [number 7]. Those square brackets are deliberate: this issue

## The rejection of the constitution was a setback, and it took a long time for it to be sorted out.

of the bulletin was, it has to be said, a decidedly scrappy affair, and the issue number was accidentally omitted. The sheet size was 8¼" × 11¾", up slightly from the 8" × 10" of preceding issues. It was edited by Keith Walker and Stuart Clark. Most of the issue was, appropriately, taken up with obituary material on Professor Tolkien, including an account of the funeral service by Belladonna. The new *Mallorn* was edited by the Numenorean Smial of Pinner, Middlesex, headed by Susan Adler, although Jonathan Simons was still 'editor-in-chief'.

## A moot point

Also out in January was *Nazgul* number 4 (actually dated December 1973). John Abbot made the innocuous-sounding proposal: "What do you think of the idea of Oxford Moot this year? No, seriously. Whilst watching the re-run of the television 'Review' film about Professor Tolkien, it struck me that the Soc. might be interested in arranging an Official Visit dreaming spirewards ... Maybe some modest hotel could be selected as H.Q.; and perhaps a Grand Tour(s) organised to take in some of the Colleges, breweries and finer points of the City ..."

*Amon Hen* number 8 (numbered this time), now under the editorship solely of Keith Walker, complained about the lack of material from members. It was largely filled up by material from Jim Allen and an article on 'The Hidden People' by Rosemarie Green. The editor announced that this would be his penultimate issue.

The annual general meeting for 1974 took place at the Ivanhoe Hotel in London on 16 February. Jonathan Simons was elected as chairman, Vera Chapman as secretary, Janet Gibbs (née Lee) as treasurer, and Howard Rosenblum as ordinary member. Stuart Clark was appointed bulletin editor, and Jonathan Simons carried on as managing editor of *Mallorn*. The subscription stayed at £1.50. Membership "was reported last May as 115, but ... it was now nearer 150" (as reported in *Amon Hen* number 9). On the death of his father Christopher Tolkien had been offered the post of honorary president of the society, but he thought it best that the title should remain with his father in perpetuity. So the motion was proposed and enthusiastically carried that Professor Tolkien be the society's honorary president in perpetuo. The idea of holding a meeting in Oxford — an 'Oxonmoot' — was also approved. The society was especially fortunate in its guest speakers this year, given that they were Austin Olney, head of Tolkien's American publishers, Houghton Mifflin, and Rayner Unwin, director of Allen & Unwin. The general feeling was that the Tolkien Society had arrived. The society has always been grateful to Rayner Unwin for his considerate and helpful attitude to it. He was guest speaker three times in all, as well as attending some three Oxonmoots, including the 1992 centenary conference. Both their talks were highly interesting. Austin Olney remarked that a good publisher likes to publish good books, but any publisher has to publish books that sell. In publishing Tolkien he felt they were doing both. Rayner Unwin provoked (as may well be believed) a great deal of interest with news of the work that was being done on *The Silmarillion*. Also present were Joy Hill and Pauline Baynes. A report on the

foregoing was carried in *Amon Hen* number 9 in March.

*Mallorn* [number 8] (the number for some reason being omitted) came out in June. Edited by Jonathan Simons, it carried a write-up on the speeches at the AGM by your present author, as well as much else. *Amon Hen* number 10, now reverting to its 8" × 10" format, and edited by Stuart Clark, came out at the end of June. It carried news of the forthcoming Oxonmoot, which was now to include visits to The Eagle and Child, and to the graves of Tolkien and of C. S. Lewis. *Amon Hen* number 11 revealed that it was intended to use the visit to lay a wreath at the professor's grave.

The very first Oxonmoot took place on the weekend of Friday to Sunday, 13–15 September 1974. The attendees gathered at The Welsh Pony (rechristened 'The Prancing Pony' for the occasion; now, alas, defunct). On the Saturday they visited the Bodleian Library to see Pauline Baynes's original map of Narnia, laid a wreath at Faith Tolkien's bust of Tolkien at the English Faculty Library (a photographer from the *Oxford Mail* turned up here), visited the churchyard of St Cross in Holywell to see Charles Williams' grave, lunched at The Eagle and Child (where a visiting American student who also happened to be a member of the Mythopoeic Society introduced himself and was invited to join the existing 16 to make the total tally for the first Oxonmoot up to 17), and visited Exeter and Merton Colleges later in the afternoon. In the evening they were received at Priscilla Tolkien's house, where Michael Tolkien and his wife Joan were also present. Many family anecdotes of the professor were told. Sunday saw a visit to Wolvercote Cemetery, where a wreath was laid on the grave of Tolkien and his wife, and 'A Elbereth Gilthoniel' recited. Lunch was taken at The Trout inn, where it was decided that Oxonmoot should henceforth be an annual event. From these small beginnings grew what without doubt has become by far the most popular single event in the society's year.

The next *Amon Hen*, number 12, for September, was prepared too early to have a report on Oxonmoot, but it had expanded to 17 printed pages, and Stuart Clark was now assisted by his wife, Rosie, in editing the magazine. There was, however, a detailed report on the proceedings in number 13, for October. This was a sumptuous production of 40 pages; 180 members of the society were listed.

*Amon Hen* number 14, for February 1975, was down to a mere 24 pages, followed in about a month by number 15, again with 24 pages, which carried a report on the annual general meeting, which had been held at the Bloomsbury Centre Hotel in London on 22 February. Jonathan Simons, Vera Chapman, Janet Gibbs and Howard Rosenblum were re-elected to their posts of chairman, secretary, treasurer and members' representative, respectively, while Stuart and Rosie Clark were appointed bulletin editors and Jonathan Simons carried on as managing editor of *Mallorn*. Also appointed was Vanessa Bryant as assistant secretary. The annual subscription to the society was increased to £2.50. (The report in *Amon Hen* said: "contrary to our belief, the subscription is fixed by the committee, and not by the AGM", which must have surprised some people.) Membership was stated to be 240. Guest speakers were Priscilla Tolkien and

Elizabeth Horrocks. The former needs no introduction; the latter was the winner of BBC TV's *Mastermind* in 1974, one of her specialist subjects being Tolkien.

June and July saw a visit to these shores by Glen and Bonnie GoodKnight of the Mythopoeic Society. They visited various points of Tolkienian interest, including a call on Christopher Tolkien, who was then preparing *The Silmarillion* for publication. The Northfarthing Smial in London held a special meeting for Glen and Bonnie on 26 July.

The ninth *Mallorn* came out in late June. Jonathan Simons announced it would be his last. Of particular interest was 'Tolkien's Walk (an unexpected personal link with Tolkien)' by Canon N. S. Power, as well as some of the society's correspondence with Michael Tolkien.

*Amon Hen* number 16 was another 24-pager from Stuart and Rosie Clark in May. However, the next issue, number 17, marked a change: this was the first issue in A5 format, as is used now. It was typed up on A4 sheets but then the image of each sheet was reduced to A5 size in reproduction. A peculiarity, however, of the first two issues in the new format was that they were not stapled but sewn in a continuous thread down the spine.

## Belladonna bows out

The next AGM was held at Hampstead Town Hall in London on 21 February 1976. (The reader may have noticed at this point a certain trend in holding AGMs in London. This, I think, was because most of the then committee lived in or near London and it was simplest to arrange the meeting locally. However, in view of the fact that the Tolkien Society had many members who didn't live in the capital, there has been, at the time of writing, only one further AGM held in London since, all the rest at various other locations in Britain.) The guest speakers were Priscilla Tolkien and Humphrey Carpenter. By this time it was known that Carpenter had been chosen to write the authorized biography of Tolkien, and his most interesting talk gave the members a glimpse of the work-in-progress. Regarding society business, Stuart Clark announced that he hoped to put out one more issue of *Amon Hen*, although, as it turned out, he was unable to do so and the task passed to Jessica Kembell-Cook. The elected posts continued with the same persons in office as at the last general meeting, but with one notable exception. Vera Chapman — Belladonna Took — stepped down from the post of secretary to a well-earned retirement. She was presented with a 'mithril' goblet, inscribed with "To Belladonna Took, with grateful thanks from the Tolkien Society" (in English) and "*Elen síla lúmenn' omentielvo*" (in Elvish), as a token of recognition of her services in getting the society started and organized, sticking at what must have seemed a thankless task in the more difficult times. Her place as secretary was taken by Jessica Kembell-Cook. Janet Gibbs said that her job as treasurer was in process of division, and that a membership secretary would have the job of enrolling new members and sending out reminders. (At the 1977 AGM, Lester Simons was elected as the first membership secretary per se.)

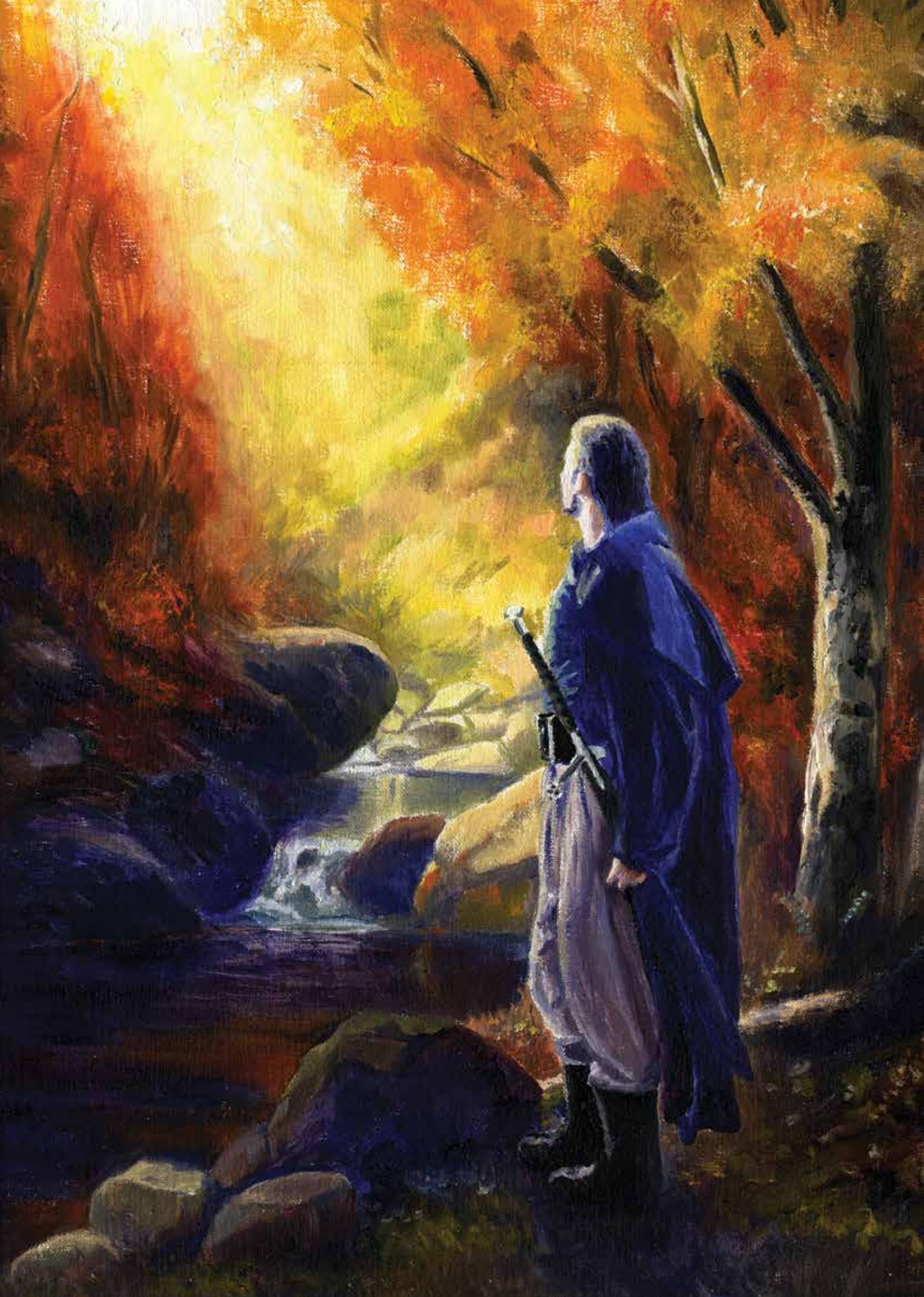
In so far as the retirement of Belladonna marks, I feel, the

close of the opening phase of the Tolkien Society, I shall draw this account to a conclusion.

There were some further adjustments still to come with regard to the society's publications. *Amon Hen* number 19 was the first issue of that magazine to be stapled rather than sewn along its spine. *Mallorn* number 10, edited by Kevin Young, displayed for the first time on its front cover a magnificent drawing of a mallorn tree by Pauline Baynes, done especially for the magazine. This was kept as the standard front cover, in its original form, up until *Mallorn* number 36 in 1998. As with previous *Mallorns*, number 10 was stapled down the left-hand side to keep it together. Number 11, uniquely, had its pages perfect-bound within a wraparound cover. Number 12 went back to side-stapling. Only with number 13 did *Mallorn* achieve its final form, with a stapled spine. The first of the annual workshops, or seminars, took place in 1986, and Oxonmoot also began to have a stream of serious papers. There were several adjustments to the constitution to be made over the years, as well as the matter of the society's charitable status, established in late 1977. But all these later developments belong to another account.

In closing we might pause to reflect on what a different era it was then, when the society began. Then, it operated on a shoestring, hardly surprising given the limited budgets of its, largely, youthful membership. All communication was by post, exceptionally by telephone, and face-to-face when people were physically present in the same place. Tolkien was still alive and, so, potentially accessible, although, so far as I'm aware, Tolkien Society members weren't among those who phoned him in the middle of the night or waylaid him in the streets of Oxford. And some of us waited with baited breath for *The Silmarillion* — for it was by now public knowledge that Tolkien was working on it. And, of course, his publisher was still George Allen & Unwin, headed by Rayner Unwin, whose helpful and sympathetic attitude to the society did so much both to encourage us and, I think, to validate our endeavours. We have come a long way. Indeed, the Tolkien Society must be one of the longer-serving examples of organizations of its type. I hope, despite a much-changed media environment, we shall continue to serve as a means of coming together for those who find wonder and meaning in the works of Professor Tolkien. 

**This essay is based mainly on my collection of the early magazines mentioned as well as, in some cases, my memories and notes. Mention must also be made of the research of Gary Hunnewell, which has been invaluable in discussing the 'prehistory' of Tolkien fandom. This is summarized in his listing of early Tolkien-related magazines, and in his detailed account of those published in 1960–64 (*Tolkien Fandom Review from its beginnings to 1964*, by Sumner Gary Hunnewell (Hildifons Took), The New England Tolkien Society, 2010); and I have already quoted from his delightful selection from the early fanzines, *Halfast Thinking* (1987). Rob Hansen's history of British science-fiction fandom from its beginnings to the mid-1980s, which gives some of the background of certain of the people mentioned here, is at <http://www.ansible.co.uk/Then>. I am grateful to Jonathan Simons for reading a draft of this account.**



# '... A local habitation and a name...'

MAGGIE BURNS

Tolkien and Birmingham was the theme of this year's Tolkien Society Seminar in the Shakespeare Memorial Room at the Central Library. Birmingham, an industrial city, has often been a home-town that inspired artists to produce works of fantasy, Burne-Jones and Sleigh for example. Sometimes Tolkien's writing is seen as pure fantasy — airy nothing — but it has roots in the earth, so can be given a local habitation, and a name. Tolkien wrote in 1956 that he took his 'models from life' (ref. 1, *Letters* 181). So we might expect to find echoes of Birmingham in Tolkien's work, drawn from the 16 and a half years he spent in Birmingham when young — from the spring of 1895 to the autumn of 1911.

In addition to the similarities between people, buildings and landscapes in his early life and in his writing there are also underlying themes, an outlook on life characteristic of Birmingham that is reflected in Tolkien's writing. He learned things from his early experiences in Birmingham that would be important to him throughout his life. Of course, as well as the influence of Birmingham, people, places and events in Tolkien's life after he left also played a significant role!

## Tolkien's Birmingham

For a century and a half Birmingham has been England's second largest city, with many suburbs. Tolkien certainly knew the centre, the suburbs to the south and southwest in Worcestershire, and Edgbaston to the west in Warwickshire. These are marked on the map. The asterisk shows King Edward's School in New Street, the numbers show each of the places where he lived, in order: King's Heath, Sarehole, Moseley, King's Heath, Edgbaston, Rednal, Edgbaston (several addresses). King's Norton (in 1904) and Frederick Road Edgbaston (in 1910) are not shown as he lived there very briefly.

Apart from Rednal these places are not far distant from each other; two miles from Sarehole to Moseley, or to King's Heath; two miles from Moseley to Edgbaston; two miles from Edgbaston to King Edward's School in the centre of Birmingham. From his letters and from Carpenter's biography<sup>2</sup> we know that Tolkien walked, cycled, took the bus, the tram or the train — so he had a good knowledge of the southern suburbs of Birmingham.

## How Birmingham is seen

In a number of Tolkien biographies Birmingham is depicted as being purely an industrial city with slums, distant from the countryside. Maps of the time, in addition to contemporary descriptions by people living in Birmingham suburbs, give a different picture. The parts of Birmingham where Tolkien lived had parks, streams, gardens and trees. Birmingham was and is a city of trees. It is said there are more trees in Birmingham than in any other European city. This may be an urban myth, but undeniably trees flourish there, and aerial



Tolkien's Birmingham.

photographs show that much of the city is green. Trees had a deep significance in Tolkien's work, and were dear to him, he used them as symbols of spiritual matters as well as enjoying trees in themselves<sup>2</sup>: "In Fayery a tree is a Tree, and its roots may run throughout the earth, and its fall affect the stars."

Carpenter's role is significant. His biography is still highly influential as he had greater access to Tolkien's letters and papers than has any biographer since. However, he might not be the most reliable informant on matters in Tolkien's life linked with Birmingham. Douglas Anderson's obituary of Humphrey Carpenter suggests that he wrote Tolkien's biography with the desire to show him as a man from Oxford<sup>4</sup>: "I'd lived in the same culture as him, in an Oxford academic family. I wanted to portray that milieu." Tolkien called both Oxford and Birmingham his home town when writing to his son Christopher in 1944 (Letter 58)<sup>1</sup>. Carpenter seems to be prejudiced against Birmingham as a town, saying in 1977 that the industrial wasteland of Birmingham was the inspiration for Mordor. But this was refuted by Graham Tayar, who had corresponded with Tolkien. Tolkien had told him<sup>5</sup> "the physical setting [of Mordor] derived directly from the trenches of World War I, the wasteland of shell-cratered battlefields where he had fought in 1916."

Tolkien felt that the world of his childhood was fundamentally different from the world in the time when his stories were published. The Birmingham described as wasteland by Carpenter in the 1970s was not the Birmingham that Tolkien knew around 1900. Much of the town had been rebuilt during the 20 years before Tolkien arrived there as a three-year-old in 1895. There were many new and imposing buildings.

Sarehole, on the edge of Birmingham, was described by Tolkien as an “almost rural village”<sup>1</sup>. It was the centre of Tolkien’s tales, he said that the Shire was based on the Worcestershire countryside of his youth. His favourite landscape was unmechanized farmland. Most transport depended on the horse and there were very few cars. From his biography<sup>3</sup> we know that he was entranced by the story of Sigurd and the dragon when he read it at Sarehole; in *On Fairy Stories* Manuscript B he wrote<sup>2</sup>: “I never imagined that a dragon was of the same order as a horse or stud. I am clear that this was not solely because I had seen many horses but had never seen a dragon.”

Many aspects of Tolkien’s daily life were the same in the countryside as in the nearby city. The countryside was not distant from the city as implied in some Tolkien biographies. Sarehole was four miles from the centre of Birmingham. He wrote of hobbits in Letter 25 that they “only lived on the borders of the wild”<sup>1</sup>. Horses were in the city as well as in the country.

In 1900 trams were still drawn by horses and cars were a rarity. Horses were used on the land; they were also used in most Council departments. Birmingham City Council had an official register of these horses. This had columns listing their colour, price, where they were bought and so on. The Fire Brigade added a column for the horses’ names: such as Kichener, Bobs, Snowball, Gladys and Muriel<sup>6</sup>.

Tolkien’s fiction is linked with his life through his use of language and through the names he invents. In *The Roots of Romance*<sup>9</sup> Tom Shippey looks at the derivation of the name Sarehole. ‘Sare’ might derive from Old English *sear*; grey, withered. Or it might be from a name *Searu* — in the Midland (Mercian) dialect this would be *Saru*. Peter Jackson’s film changed the story, but in Tolkien’s tale the old and withered Saruman is killed by Wormtongue in Bilbo’s hobbit-hole in the very heart of the Shire. And so the village might later be known as Sarehole, the place of the hole where Saru died.

## Later visits

Tolkien’s picture of Hobbiton, drawn to accompany *The Hobbit* published in 1937, probably reflects not only his childhood memories, but also what he had seen when he visited Sarehole later in life. He kept in touch with the



The Suffield clan circa 1880.

Mittons who lived nearby, visiting his aunt Mabel after her husband died in 1933. In 1900 when the Tolkiens were there Sarehole was a working mill. However during the World War I the younger miller, George Andrew Junior, started a floristry business, and this was the business listed in directories after the milling had stopped. A photograph from the 1960s shows a ruined greenhouse on the side of the mill. There is a flower-bed next to the mill in Tolkien’s drawing, perhaps inspired by what he had seen in 1933.

The Shire is important as a home in *The Hobbit* and in *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>10</sup>; the stories begin there and the adventurers return there at the end. Sarehole was special because it represented the happiest time of Tolkien’s childhood. He had joyful memories, it was the place where he lived with his mother and brother before he had to go to school, and before his mother became ill. He reminisced<sup>2</sup>: “I lived in childhood in a cottage on the edge of a really rural country — on the borders of a land and time more like ... the lands and hills of the most primitive and wildest stories ... than the present life of Western Towns (in fact and wish). This virtue of fairy-story may appeal only to a kind of nostalgia, to mere regret. Yet nostalgia means an ‘(aching) desire to go home.’”

## Moseley, a prosperous suburb

In the autumn of 1900 the Tolkiens left Sarehole for Moseley. Carpenter presents this as a move from countryside to city, and stresses how the brothers suffered. Later biographers have developed this theme with enthusiasm: smoking factory chimneys, mills, slums and so on. But this doleful description of Moseley is not true to life. In his poem *Battle of the Eastern Field*<sup>11</sup> written in 1911, Tolkien refers to “Moseley’s emerald sward” — there were several parks, almost all the houses had large gardens, and it was the home of “the prosperous bourgeoisie of Birmingham”<sup>1</sup> on the edge of the countryside. Moseley is next to Sarehole, and the Tolkiens probably visited their aunt and uncle Beatrice and William Suffield, who moved into their house there when they left.

## Tolkien’s family

Many of Tolkien’s relatives lived in Moseley, a pleasant middle-class suburb. The Mittons — his aunt Mabel was a sister of his father Arthur Tolkien — lived at Abbotsford, a large house and garden on Wake Green Road, about a mile from Sarehole. Tolkien visited his uncle aunt and cousins often; he was named as an executor and was an heir in his aunt’s will. His Suffield grandparents had a house in Cotton Lane, off Wake Green Road, from 1904 until John Suffield died in 1930. His Tolkien grandparents lived in Church Road, off Wake Green Road, until 1900. And the Incedons — his mother’s sister’s family — lived in a luxurious new house on Chantry Road Moseley, with a garden running down to a private park.

## Bourgeoisie

Some of Tolkien’s relatives, especially the Mittons and the Incedons, could certainly be described as the ‘prosperous bourgeoisie of Birmingham’ [Letter 181]. This photo of the Suffield family taken around 1880 offers several possible

models for the type of hobbits who played heroic roles in Tolkien's stories: "[Bilbo] was a prosperous, well-fed young bachelor of independent means." (ref. 1, Letter 25, 1938.) Another characteristic of the English middle-class, that they rarely express emotion, is also true of hobbits. Merry says to Aragorn<sup>7</sup>: 'It is the way of my people to use light words ... and say less than they mean. We fear to say too much. It robs us of the right words when a jest is out of place.'

Hobbits were based to a large degree on the people Tolkien knew in Birmingham when he was young, as well as on individuals he knew. Tolkien said that the smallness of the hobbits represented their limited imagination. The smallness may also represent the fact that they are fairly ordinary middle-class or working-class characters. Yet they can show heroism. Other characters in his writings show this ordinariness along with a down-to-earth heroism. Farmer Giles states<sup>5</sup>: "I am a farmer and proud of it; a plain honest man." Heroic hobbits and others have a sense of humour and enjoy jokes: "His [Farmer Giles'] wife made a queen of great size and majesty, and she kept a tight hand on the household accounts. There was no getting around Queen Agatha — at least it was a long walk."

The characteristics of the Edwardian middle class make another story about Tolkien and Moseley unlikely; that Tolkien and his future fiancée and wife Edith met by chance in a Moseley pub in February 1910, after Father Francis Morgan had forbidden Tolkien to see her. He thought Tolkien should spend all his time in study for the scholarship he needed to go to university. Carpenter reports that Tolkien wrote in his diary on 16 February<sup>2</sup>: "Last night prayed would see E. by accident. Prayer answered. Saw her at 12.55 at Prince of Wales ..." A landlord of the Prince of Wales pub in Moseley took this reference up with enthusiasm.

This story is improbable for several reasons. What was Tolkien doing in a pub at lunchtime on a schoolday 'by accident'? — 16 February 1910 was a Wednesday. His school was in the centre of Birmingham, why was he in Moseley three miles to the south? And what was Edith doing in a pub, by accident or design? Single ladies from the middle class would not go into pubs on their own, they were not considered respectable at that time. Where did they meet? There were several Prince of Wales pubs in Birmingham, but they are all unlikely meeting places for the same reasons. However, until the 1940s — it was destroyed in a blitz in April 1941 — there was a Prince of Wales Theatre on Broad Street.



St Patrick Chapel oratory.

Broad Street is the road from Five Ways, on the route from where Tolkien and Edith were living to the centre of Birmingham. Almost certainly they saw one another 'by accident' while going along Broad Street, in front of the Prince of Wales theatre. Tolkien saw *Peter Pan* when it was on at the Prince of Wales<sup>12</sup> in April 1910<sup>2</sup>. He was probably thinking of the chance meeting two months earlier when he wrote of the play: "Indescribable but shall never forget it as long as I live ..." and continued "Wish E. had been with me."

## Birmingham

From 1900 Tolkien travelled into the centre of Birmingham to go to King Edward's School in New Street. Birmingham was a city of industry, but this was industry entailing craftsmanship, taking place in thousands of small work-

shops. There are many guides produced in the nineteenth century that describe this character. This is from Cornish's *Stranger's Guide through Birmingham* 1867<sup>13</sup>

In Birmingham steam machinery has never been more than an auxiliary force ... the majority of Birmingham workmen are employed in their own homes, or in little shops not large enough to hold more than four or five men. These artisans depend chiefly upon skilled hand labour ...

The writer goes on to apologize that there are no large factories such as those in the north, but recommends that the visitor should stand on the railway viaduct at night:

Beneath him, and seemingly for miles round, he will observe thousands of twinkling points of fire, indicating the spots where industrious artisans are engaged in fashioning articles of Birmingham manufacture ...



Birmingham's coat of arms (ca 1889).

Birmingham's coat of arms from 1889 when it finally became a city suggests how Birmingham saw itself. Some parts of the coat of arms represent industry. The motto 'Forward' suggests modernity. But the man is a blacksmith, a craftsman. Art and literature are represented by the woman holding an artist's palette and a book. The two figures stand on a flowery meadow, which sadly no longer appears on the coat of arms.

## Craftsmanship seen in buildings

Of hobbits Tolkien wrote<sup>10</sup>: "They were skilful with tools." Tolkien was skilful with words but he was also an artist.

In his writings he praised those who could craft beautiful things. In *Smith of Wootton Major Smith* is a blacksmith, working with iron<sup>14</sup>. He could make lasting things, good strong tools “but some things, when he had time, he made for delight; and they were beautiful, for he could work iron into wonderful forms that looked as light and as delicate as a spray of leaves and blossom, but kept the stern strength of iron, or seemed even stronger.”

One hundred years ago there were many examples of such beautiful work in Birmingham, iron gates and railings; buildings enriched with elaborate terracotta decoration, and with decorative stained glass windows. Much of Birmingham had been rebuilt during the 1870s and 1880s. Tolkien felt that beauty should be an integral part of a building; from *On Fairy-stories*:

In Faerie one cannot conceive of a house built with a ‘good’ purpose — a hospital, an inn or refuge for travellers — being ugly or squalid.

Much of Birmingham’s metalwork was melted down for munitions in two world wars, and many buildings have been demolished for road improvement, but some remain to give an idea of Tolkien’s Birmingham.

The school Tolkien attended was beautiful. King Edward’s in New Street was a magnificent building, like a smaller version of the Houses of Parliament. It was designed by the same architect, Sir Charles Barry. Big School, the main school hall, is not unlike Beorn’s Hall in *The Hobbit*. One small part of the old building was transported to the current site at Edgbaston; now the school chapel it had been the upper corridor in the old building, leading into Big School.

This was also true of the Oratory church, founded by John Henry Newman. Mabel Tolkien brought the family to Edgbaston to be close to the Oratory. While the Tolkiens were there the Oratory, originally a fairly plain building, was rebuilt to give a more fitting memorial to Cardinal Newman. Between 1903 and 1906 the church was transformed; materials coming from all over Europe to build an outstandingly beautiful church. The artistic skills and the crafts of men were being offered to glorify God.

A further building that would have aroused Tolkien’s curiosity was a distinctive tower, called both Perrot’s Folly and the Observatory. It had been built in 1758 by John Perrot, and there are several stories about his reason for building. The most prosaic — it was on the edge of his large estate, Rotton Park — was that he wished to be able to see the game. The other two concern his wife, who came from a village to the west in Worcestershire; one story is that he wished to see what she was doing when she went back there, the second that he wished to look towards her grave in the village. Perrot’s Folly is normally described as being one of two towers

— thanks to Bob Blackham for pointing out that the second tower is actually the waterworks chimney. As such it is supposed to be the inspiration for the second part of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Two Towers*. I do not intend to discuss this here, as it could be a lengthy debate.

However, towers are generally significant in Tolkien’s writings, and there is one that almost certainly owes something to Perrot’s Folly, an odd-looking brick tower looking across to the hills and the canal reservoir constructed from a small lake in the late eighteenth century. In *Beowulf, the Monsters and the Critics*, Tolkien proposed an allegory to explain how the work of the teller of the story of Beowulf had been treated. The story was like an old tower built by a man who inherited a field that contained the ruins of an old hall. Friends and relatives wished to discover why the tower had been built, so they destroyed it to be able to examine it

closely. Then they suggested perhaps the man should have restored the old house. But, Tolkien wrote: “from the top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea”. A tower is often a place of vision.

From the 1880s to the 1970s Perrot’s Folly was a weather observatory, used by Birmingham University with equipment on the top. Old photos show that Tolkien could see the equipment on top of the tower from below. In Tolkien’s fiction *palantiri*, ‘far-seeing’ stones, are all set on towers. In English an instrument which looks a long distance is described by a word of Greek origin that means far-seeing — a telescope. Tolkien lived close to a tower with a telescope, Perrot’s Folly, from the age of

10 to the age of 19.

### The craft of Birmingham reflected in *The Hobbit*

At Bag End Thorin gives an account of the history of the dwarves, and of their life and work in the past: “those were good days for us, and the poorest of us had money to spend and to lend, and leisure to make beautiful things just for the fun of it”. Thorin ended this speech with a phrase that would have appealed to Tolkien, the scholar of language. It echoes the history of Birmingham in a way not immediately apparent in our times, as Thorin continued: “not to speak of the most marvellous and magical toys . . . the toy market of Dale was the wonder of the North”. I would like to thank Murray Smith for mentioning a further reference to toys from Dale in the first chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*; musical crackers, obviously of high quality as they contained small musical instruments “of perfect make and enchanting tones” — not normally a characteristic of musical instruments found in modern crackers.

To the modern reader a ‘toy’ is a plaything for children. But it had a different meaning two centuries ago, as Tolkien would have known. A poem written in 1800 told of the Ramble of the Gods through Birmingham<sup>15</sup>:



Perrot’s Folly

The Toy Shop of the World then rear'd its crest,  
Whilst hope and joy, alternate, fill'd each breast  
Inventions curious, various kinds of toys,  
Then occupied the time of men and boys

This concept of Birmingham continued through the nineteenth century; in the 1867 guide<sup>13</sup>: “Birmingham has not infrequently been called ‘the toy-shop of Europe’ ... Birmingham makes toys enough, no doubt, but they are intended for the rough hands of hard-working men; not to amuse the idle hours of laughing children.”

In our times Tolkien has been perceived as a man who objected to many things modern, especially industry. Tolkien's objection was to large-scale industry — and indeed to many other modern ‘ugly or squalid’ impersonal activities; mass mechanized warfare, mass housing, mass production. He was not protesting about small workshops where things of beauty might be produced. When writing about cars he criticized car factories partly because of the effects of its production on the workers<sup>5</sup>: “the motor-factories and their subsidiaries and the cars themselves and their black and blasted roads, devour the ‘country’ like dragons ... and to make the chain hundreds of the magician's prisoners sweat like morlocks.” This comment probably refers to Oxford (Cowley) rather than Birmingham, as motor factories came only to Birmingham in the 1920s, after Tolkien's time there. Before the Great War, Birmingham had many craftsmen, and the largest firm in 1914 did not make cars, but confectionery; it was Cadbury's.

Individual craftsmen are praised in Tolkien's stories. Individual craftsmen and workers had created Birmingham, and Birmingham society and politics. Individual workmen had independence of mind. The owner of a workshop had been part of it, he might through work come to own a factory, but would still have a link with those who work there. His men would not be overawed by their masters because they were too close. So hobbits speak with respect to those whom they feel deserve respect — but there are no hobbit kings. Tolkien explained in the Prologue to *The Lord of the Rings* that “The Shire at this time had hardly any ‘government.’”

Because there is little ‘government’ there is little about politics in the Shire. Tolkien does describe one politician in *The Hobbit*: the Master of Lake Town. The Master of the Town is the equivalent of a mayor. John Rateliff in *The History of the Hobbit Mr. Baggins*, suggests that the Men of Lake Town were “urbane, with a culture right out of the High Middle Ages”<sup>16</sup>. His description of the Master however bears a close

resemblance to a man whom Tolkien's grandfather John Suffield would have known in Birmingham societies. The Master “has a good head for business — especially his own business ... he is not without skills ... it is he who plans the new Lake Town that rises from the ashes of the old, and does it so well that the new is fairer than the old. A wily politician (the only one in Tolkien's work) the Master is sophisticated, subtle, and just a touch corrupt.” For the Master as for other characters Tolkien probably had several models — Murray Smith has suggested David Lloyd George. The Master also bears a close resemblance to a famous Birmingham politician before and during Tolkien's youth, Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain had been Mayor of Birmingham, and caused Birmingham to be demolished and rebuilt before he left to take part in national government<sup>18</sup>.



The Old Library's gates.

## Learning and study

Mabel wished her sons to study at King Edward's School New Street. Their father Arthur Tolkien, her older brother Roland, her brothers-in-law T. E. Mitton and Wilfred Tolkien, her nephews Eric and Thomas Ewart Mitton were all pupils there. King Edward's was of fundamental importance to Tolkien's future career as an academic. High standards were demanded, to the extent that the most able scholars took part in a debate in Latin each year. University places were then far more limited than they are now. If Tolkien had not gone to King Edward's it is unlikely that

he would have been able to study at Oxford, and the rest of his life might have taken a very different course. There were only a few schools in England at that time that would give education of that kind to a middle-class boy whose mother had little money.

## Religion: love the Lord your God, love your neighbour

Pity, compassion and mercy were important qualities to Tolkien throughout his life. When Gandalf tells Frodo the story of Bilbo and the ring, Frodo says of Gollum: “‘What a pity [Bilbo] did not stab that vile creature, when he had the chance!’ Gandalf replies: ‘Pity? It was pity that stayed his hand. Pity and Mercy, not to strike without need.’”

In *Unfinished Tales*, in the Quest of Erebor there is an account by Frodo of a conversation between Gandalf and the hobbits that took place after the coronation of Aragorn. Gandalf explains his concern for the hobbits<sup>18</sup>:

I began to have a warm place in my heart for the [Shire-folk] in the Long Winter ... They were very hard put to it then: one of the worst pinches they have been in, dying of cold, and starving in the

dreadful dearth that followed. But that was the time to see their courage, and their pity one for another. It was by their pity as much by their tough uncomplaining courage that they survived.'

In 1957, after he had taken part in working on the translation of the Jerusalem Bible, he wrote<sup>1</sup>: "If you look at Jonah you'll find that the 'whale' — it is not really said to be a whale, but a big fish — is quite unimportant. The real point is that God is much more merciful than 'prophets', is easily moved by penitence."

The qualities of compassion and pity were not only evident in religious life but also in Birmingham society generally. The reference to the recreation of Lake Town by the Master above may be a reflection of the creation of a new Birmingham in late Victorian times, for the sake of both the middle-class and the working-class. The social values of the city that Tolkien knew are also reflected in the Shire, for example Sam's sharing of Galadriel's gift with the whole Shire. Some of Birmingham's middle class felt it their responsibility to make life better for those poorer than themselves. One rich lady, Louisa Anne Ryland, gave land to the city for hospitals and parks. Boys at King Edward's, at the time when Tolkien was there, arranged evening clubs for street-boys, and organized camping trips for them. In 1900 they helped collect for the national Baden-Powell collection for widows and orphans in Mafeking.

At the Oratory, from his mother, and probably from other members of the family, Tolkien learned to worship God. His devotion also was part of his whole life. He enjoyed his creation and wrote of his desire to tell an exciting story<sup>10</sup>. This he hoped was part of God's creation, as a subcreation. His

fiction was based on real life, in Birmingham and elsewhere. The hobbits linked the fantasy with the reality: "I myself saw the value of hobbits, in putting earth under the feet of romance" (Letter 163; 1955). The reality, like the trees he loved, reached from the earth to the sky.

"Before him stood the Tree, his Tree, Finished. If you could say that of a Tree that was alive, its leaves opening, its branches growing and bending in the wind... 'It's a gift!' he said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally."<sup>19</sup> m

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## The magic of fantasy: the traditional, the original and the wonderful

SIMON BARRON

Over the past decade, fantasy literature has experienced an immense resurgence in popularity. The critical success of fantasy literature is demonstrated by the honours recently bestowed upon them. According to AwardsAnnals.com, of the ten most honoured fiction books, four are fantasy books — Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and *American Gods*; Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* and Terry Pratchett's *Nation*. A further two can be classified as speculative fiction — Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. In terms of commercial success, the past decade has brought the massive popularity of the Harry Potter series and the *Twilight* series as well as a renewed public interest in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: in 2003, the fantasy epic took the top spot in the BBC's The Big

Read survey; in the same year, Peter Jackson's movie version of *The Return of the King* was a tremendous box-office success and tied for winner of the most Academy Awards ever.

This renaissance of fantasy literature has flooded the book market with fantasy fiction. Despite the large amount available, only a few achieve excellence. Here I discuss what makes fantasy literature successful by examining which qualities of plot, characterization, and style serve as marks of excellence within the fantasy genre and demonstrates how Tolkien's masterpiece matches all the criteria of successful fantasy.

### Defining fantasy

Fantasy has been defined in various ways. Leng<sup>1</sup> defines works of fantasy as those in which "the author deliberately presents objects or incidents which do not observably occur in real

life<sup>2</sup>. Lourie<sup>2</sup> distinguishes realism, which deals with improbabilities, from fantasy, which deals in impossibilities. These definitions are too broad as they cover a range of speculative fiction including science fiction and horror. Merla<sup>3</sup> narrows the definition by identifying ‘magic’ as the essential component of fantasy: “a supernatural force whose use, misuse, or disuse irrevocably changes the lives of those it touches”. This is equally unsatisfactory as there are fantasy works in which ‘magic’ is either not used or used only tangentially.

Fantasy literature may best be defined by its tropes: a nebulous cloud of shared characteristics rather than a strict verbal definition. *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, published in 1812, introduced the characteristics of fantasy fiction that have been adopted as hallmarks of the genre. Tales such as ‘The Frog Prince’, ‘Hansel and Gretel’, ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, ‘Snow White’ and ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ share the characteristics of anthropomorphic animals, dream-like scenarios, and the use of magic as a plot device. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the stories of Hans Christian Andersen have been identified as the first ‘literary fantasies for children’. As well as possessing the characteristics listed above, *Alice* contains another that would become important for fantasy: the creation of a fantasy world. Use of magic, anthropomorphic animals, and the creation of a secondary world are tropes shared by subsequent fantasy classics, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Peter and Wendy*, *The Once and Future King*, the novels of Roald Dahl and the epics created by C. S. Lewis and Tolkien. The works of Narnia and Middle-earth introduced another defining characteristic of fantasy: the stark depiction of good and evil, and the eternal struggle between those forces. These defining tropes have been passed on to current fantasy literature: all fantasy novels will contain one or more of these characteristics. How is it that works containing such similar elements can have such divergence in quality? What is it about a great fantasy work that sets it apart from the lesser works lining the shelves of bookshops?

## Plot

Plot refers to the structure of the story and the setting including the building of any secondary worlds. A good fantasy plot involves the balance of two contrasting qualities: traditionalism and originality. As Gates and colleagues<sup>4</sup> explain: “The making of successful fantasy calls for a *mélange* of original and traditional, unfamiliar and familiar, unconventional and conventional, fresh and imitative.” Too traditional, and a work feels derivative, as in the numerous novels about young wizards that appeared when the popularity of the Harry Potter series was at its height. Conversely, too much originality can dilute the defining tropes and means a work falls outside the genre border.

On the traditionalist side, a mark of excellence is a the kind of story structure readily recognizable from traditional myth or legend. In his 1949 book, Joseph Campbell<sup>5</sup> determined the ‘monomyth’: the standard structure for tales of mythic heroes. The monomyth structure recurs across cultures and throughout history. The author of a novel is often consciously unaware that he or she is following a pre-defined

story structure, aware only of the intuitive satisfaction of the ‘standard story’. Many great works of fiction, especially children’s fiction, follow Campbell’s outline which consists of three parts corresponding to traditional tribal rites of passage: ‘separation–initiation–return’. The full structure is as follows<sup>5</sup>: “a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

Most of the classics of fantasy literature share this traditional structure. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* follow it closely: a girl is transported away from her mundane existence to a magical realm; strange beings are encountered and befriended; a victory is won — in these cases over a tyrannical matriarch: the Queen of Hearts and the Wicked Witch of the West respectively — after which the heroine returns home, all the richer for her experience. So too in fantasy books for younger children: consider *Where the Wild Things Are* and *The Cat in the Hat*. The same basic structure occurs in *The Hobbit*: a child-like figure ventures from his comfortable home, has extraordinary adventures, and returns home with renewed confidence and a magic ring. The quest structure is even more explicit in *The Lord of the Rings* which, to some extent, renewed and updated the monomyth for the latter half of the twentieth century through the addition of stark good and evil and a large cast of allies and enemies.

Although many adult fantasy novels have more sophisticated plot structures, many still owe something to the monomyth. At its essence, George R. R. Martin’s sprawling epic *A Song of Ice and Fire* is about the displacement and subsequent adventures of the House Stark. Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower* series centrally follows the traditional quest structure albeit in a non-traditional fashion. Neil Gaiman, in particular, has acknowledged the unintended debt which *American Gods*, *Stardust* and some of *The Sandman* stories owe to the monomyth<sup>6</sup>.

As mentioned, successful fantasy blends traditionalism with originality. To a greater extent than realist literature, fantasy writing is based upon imagination: expansive creations of fancy and whimsy; the construction of unique characters; unusual beasts and creatures; the construction of worlds; and the writing of new laws for the operation of reality. Realist works do require authorial imagination but fundamentally operate under the laws of our reality. Fantasy works require more invention and a further mark of quality is the conveyance of the author’s unique imaginative vision.

While the plot structure of heroic fantasy follows the traditional outline, a novel’s setting can be used to demonstrate originality. This is often done through the author’s creation of what Tolkien referred to as a ‘secondary world’. World-building is a key part of fantasy literature and an original fantasy world is often the most memorable part of a novel or series: from the whimsical worlds of *Wonderland* and *Oz* to the culturally complex kingdoms of R. Scott Bakker’s *Eärwa* or Ursula Le Guin’s *Earthsea*. In the absence of original plot,

setting is a key place for the author's originality to manifest itself. The central stories of *The Hobbit* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for example, are fairly similar but it is the setting that distinguishes these novels and makes them so memorable: Middle-earth is a land of sprawling history with only a few races — largely elves, dwarves and men — living and struggling together; Narnia is a more fanciful land of talking animals, hundreds of races, and a unique system of time dilation. An original setting can give a fantasy novel a unique flavour. As another example, the plots of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* are virtually identical: it is the idiosyncrasy — and uniquely British nature — of Hogwarts that gives the setting and consequently the whole novel an original feel.

## Character

Another good place to demonstrate originality is in characterization — indeed, another element determining a novel's quality is original characters. These are the characters that stick with you long after the story has faded from your mind: Gollum, Mr Tumnus, Merlin, Roland Deschain, Rincewind and others. Original characters are often secondary characters as primary characters by necessity act as a 'blank slate' for entrance into the text. Particularly in children's novels, primary characters act as avatars for the reader to occupy while exploring the story and the world of the fantasy novel. Most children's fantasy books, for example, have a young protagonist or a protagonist sufficiently childlike that children can identify with them. These protagonists are usually nondescript thus allowing the reader to project themselves into the characters: take Alice, Dorothy, Wendy Darling and Bilbo Baggins — characters largely defined by their attribute of curiosity, an attribute that all children can identify with.

Secondary characters have more freedom to be original, unconventional, fantastic, unusual and ultimately memorable. There are hundreds of stories in which certain characters are more memorable than the central plot overshadowing the primary character: the eccentric Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*; Willy Wonka in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; Death in Pratchett's Discworld (who started 'life' as a secondary character before his promotion in *Mort*); the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, the Caterpillar, the Duchess and so on from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Tolkien's stand-out example is Gollum, a unique and tragic character whose struggle against the ring epitomises the reason for the primary characters' journey.

## Style

In addition to the substance of plot and characters, style is important in making successful fantasy literature. This includes the narrative techniques used to advance a story and the use of language to create a novel's tone. A distinct style helps to embed the author's work in the reader's mind

and there are specific stylistic qualities that make fantasy writing excellent.

The first is a level of narrative sophistication appropriate to the book's audience. As an example, fantasy literature tends to invite the use of the *deus ex machina* — a sudden, inexplicable event that immediately resolves a problem within a story. In fantasy, the author may extend the internal logic of their secondary world or classify anything unexpected as 'magic' to cover inexplicable events: this was parodied in *The Simpsons* through the use of the cover-all phrase: "Whenever you notice something like that, a wizard did it." As a fantasy reader grows more sophisticated,

he or she loses their patience with lazy narrative techniques and feel cheated when books do not possess narrative consistency. For example, as part of the dénouement of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, it is revealed that Harry survived Voldemort's attack as a baby because of 'love' and a protection that is never mentioned prior to that scene or used in the series again. By contrast, the climax of *The Lord of the Rings* is Gollum's final attempt to wrest back his Precious: this event is foreshadowed and made possible by events throughout the novel. The narrative progression is logical, the reader feels that it makes sense, and the scene is satisfying. Survey data<sup>1</sup> indicate that "Miraculous events occur in nearly a quarter of the books borrowed at the age of six. Afterwards, the boys borrow fewer and fewer of these stories every year, until by the age of twelve they are seldom borrowed." This indicates that as readers grow, they lose patience with *deus ex machina* techniques, progressing to narratives with more sophistication. Thus a mark of excellence is the use of plot devices appropriate to the age of the reader.

A second stylistic mark of successful fantasy literature is a certain tone. More than other genres, fantasy requires willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. Fantasy literature — particularly children's fantasy literature — requires readers to 'play along' with the author as he or she spins a tale of impossibility: one effective means of cultivating this sense of playfulness is by using language to create a tone. The first lines of *The Hobbit* for example immediately involve the reader in the author's telling of the story: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort." Tolkien begins by clarifying his first point: this lets the reader see 'behind the scenes' of the telling of the tale. It is the author's way of telling the reader that this is an invented story and that they should play along from the start. Similar playful tones occur in Pratchett's writing and Gaiman's novels, particularly *Neverwhere*.

Although a playful tone is a mark of excellence for children's fantasy, adult fantasy generally aims for a more serious style. Though there can be moments of light-heartedness and brevity (notably in adult fantasy novels such as Patrick

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Rothfuss's *The Name of the Wind* or Scott Lynch's *Gentleman Bastard* series), most fantasy novels tend towards a historical tone as if the author were imparting lost tales of what happened long ago. This is certainly the case with *The Lord of the Rings*, Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series, and Bakker's *Prince of Nothing* series. The main stylistic mark of successful fantasy is a tone appropriate to the story being told. Tone helps ease a reader into a narrative and helps them to believe in the story — either as a ripping yarn or as a serious moralistic tale.

## The unquantifiable

The most important quality of good fantasy is one that does not fall under the categories of plot, character or style but is an amalgamation of all three: “the capacity to incite wonder”<sup>4</sup>. Fantasy has the unique ability to show events, people, and worlds that could not possibly be seen in real life: to evoke the sense of wonder that comes from encountering the unexplained. G. K. Chesterton said fantasy shows that “the universe is wild and full of marvels”<sup>7</sup>. In defending fantasy as a genre, Jorge Luis Borges said<sup>8</sup> that fantasy is the most ancient genre: “dreams, symbols and images traverse our lives; a welter of imaginary worlds flows unceasingly

through the world”. Fantasy articulates this everyday power of imagination and transports readers to realms beyond the ordinary, encouraging them to think outside their comfort zone and consider other ways of living. Fantasy, with its expansiveness and its possibilities, broadens the reader's experience of the world, increases their curiosity, and forms a bridge to complex philosophy and heady morality. In other words, “stories prepare us for the day to come”. Ultimately, a good fantasy novel inspires wonder in the same way as a magic trick: the best ones leave you wondering how it was done. 

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# The wizard and the rhetor: rhetoric and the ethos of Middle-earth in *The Hobbit*

CHAD CHISHOLM

Early in *The Hobbit* when the wizard Gandalf arrives at the clearing in the woods, he finds that Thorin Oakenshield and his 12 dwarf companions have been captured by the trolls Bert, Tom and William. Shortly before their captivity, Thorin had fought valiantly, using a torch to burn Bert in the eye and to knock out one of Tom's front teeth, before William finally takes Thorin from behind and places him in a sack. Now the trolls, more incensed than before, are quarrelling about the most expedient way to cook these unlucky 13: roast them slowly, mince and then boil them, or “sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly”. After much heated debate, the trolls decide to follow Bert's idea to roast the dwarves immediately and save them for a later snack. However, once they come to their tenuous consensus, the trolls hear a voice (which Bert takes to be William's) say “No good roasting 'em now, it'd take all night”. William and Bert immediately begin to quarrel again and finally decide to boil the dwarves, when the voice (which Bert and William take to be Tom's) begins to quibble about fetching the water for the pot. This starts the argument

afresh, and the three trolls start fighting again, which goes on awhile until the sun peeks into the clearing in the woods and the voice says, “Dawn take you all, and be stone”. The trolls freeze into statues, and Gandalf, who had been disguising his voice, steps triumphantly into the clearing.

Although it is unclear whether Gandalf used magic or acting to dissemble his own voice for the trolls, his strategy for keeping the trolls from eating the dwarves and arguing until morning is shrewdly rhetorical and begins long before he contributes a single utterance to the trolls' culinary conversation. For instance, before he speaks, Gandalf listens to Bert, Tom and William argue and fight over roasting or boiling, and deduces the character (ethos) and emotional state (pathos) of his audience: that the churlish companionship of the three trolls is hardly filial, but held in place mostly by their gluttonous urges and desire for plunder, which leads to a mutual suspicion that makes their alliance shaky. Gandalf then infers that the trolls could be credulous enough that if he were to exploit these tensions, he might persuade them to focus their anger more on themselves rather than the dwarves.

Gandalf here is being very Aristotelian. In Book II of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle uses chapters 1 through 17 to enumerate the emotions or passions so that the rhetor can use them in order to effectively persuade his audience. For example, in chapter 2, Aristotle discusses anger as an impulse that is always directed towards another person, often because of an insult, and that “people who are afflicted by sickness or poverty or love or thirst or any other unsatisfied desires are prone to anger and easily roused: especially against those who slight their present distress” (ref. 1, p. 251). Aside from describing the characteristics of anger, Aristotle further claims that “the orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry” (ref. 1, p. 257).

Then in chapter 10, Aristotle discusses the passion of envy, which he claims is the only emotion that is distinctively bad or evil. “Envy,” says Aristotle, “is pain at the sight of such good fortune as consists of the good things already mentioned; we feel it towards our equals; not with the idea of getting something for ourselves, but because the other people have it” or “We feel envy also if we fall but a little short of having everything” and that in general “those who aim at a reputation for anything are envious” (ref. 1, p. 303). No matter the station or degree in life, Aristotle suggests that among those whom we consider ‘equals’, any perception of increase in fortune will raise the emotion of envy in the envious man. Envy is always competitive, and Aristotle cautions the rhetor that if “we ourselves with whom the decision rests are put into an envious state of mind... it is obvious that they will win no pity from us” (ref. 1, p. 307).

Later in Book II, Aristotle moves on from emotions to the differences in individual character that the rhetor should consider when trying to persuade members of the audience — examining the probable characteristics of young persons, old persons and those who are middle-aged — because Aristotle wants to show the rhetor how persons in each age group might (in all probability, of course) respond to different sorts of arguments and proofs. The rhetor must appeal to these values if he wants to persuade the audience. The rhetor in this case, Gandalf, uses scenic elements that are already in his favour. Henri Bergson, in his theory of laughter, claims that many comedic situations are caused by the complementary forces of tension and elasticity:

If these two forces are lacking in the body to any considerable extent, we have sickness and infirmity and accidents of every kind. If they are lacking in the mind, we find every degree of mental deficiency, every variety of insanity. Finally, if they are lacking in the character, we have cases of the gravest inadaptability to social life, which are the sources of misery and at times the causes of crime. (ref. 2)

The relational tension between Tom, Bert and William, coupled with their dearth of intellectual agility, does much of Gandalf’s work for him so that he can act merely as an ignition spark to their own self-immolation.

With the trolls, Gandalf uses a prescriptive rhetoric similar to Aristotle’s, but the wizard puts his rhetorical abilities to full use when he, Bilbo Baggins, and the 13 dwarves come to the house of Beorn — the half-man, half-bear creature who lives in a great wooden dwelling in the middle of the woods outside Mirkwood Forest. Thorin, Bilbo and company have just escaped from the goblins of the Misty Mountains with the aid of Gandalf, but they are without food or transportation, and Beorn is the only person in the area who can aid them. Unfortunately, Beorn is not amenable towards needy company, but without some aid Thorin’s expedition to the Lonely Mountain will surely fail, and the adventurers will likely perish either by starvation or at the mercy of their enemies.

Although the rhetorical situation Gandalf faces with Beorn is not as dire as with Bert, Tom and William as no one is about to be roasted or boiled, everything hangs on Gandalf’s ability to persuade Beorn to help them. This is even more difficult because Beorn is far more shrewd and decent than a cabal of feckless trolls. However, before they reach Beorn’s lands, Gandalf has several advantages, one of which is his familiarity with Beorn’s origins and history. As Gandalf explains to Bilbo:

Some say that he is a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains that lived there before the giants came. Others say that he is a man descended from the first men who lived before Smaug or the other dragons came into the hills out of the North ... As a bear he ranges far and wide. I once saw him sitting all alone on the top of the Carrock at night watching the moon sinking towards the Misty Mountains, and I heard him growl in the tongue of bears: ‘The day will come when they will perish and I shall go back!’ That is why I believe he once came from the mountains itself.

As they reach Beorn’s lands, Gandalf cautions the dwarves “not to annoy him” and that Beorn “can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humoured”. Then the wizard instructs the company to come to the house two at a time, so Beorn will not be startled, and tells them to come in pairs after he whistles, and to continue to do this at five minute intervals. Gandalf then takes Bilbo with him and the two proceed alone while the other 13 wait in the woods. Gandalf and Bilbo find Beorn in a courtyard who asks, rather tersely, “Who are you and what do you want?” After Beorn says he has never heard of Gandalf, the wizard asks Beorn if he knows the wizard Radagast, who is Gandalf’s cousin and lives nearer to Beorn on the southern border of Mirkwood. Beorn does know Radagast, “not a bad fellow as wizards go”, and he begins to somewhat soften his tone. Then Gandalf begins to tell Beorn the story of their adventure in the Misty Mountains, the trouble with the goblins, their victory and escape, which greatly amuses Beorn because he despises goblins as invaders and enemies of nature.

Once again, Gandalf is Aristotelian — he uses his knowledge of Beorn’s character, his history, and his location to place the cranky bear-man into a favourable mindset that is more open to persuasion. Gandalf’s plan is so clever and

persuasive, that Beorn, rather than being annoyed at finding that Gandalf has been fiddling with the number of dwarves (at one time the wizard says he was with “a friend or two”, then “several of our companions” and then its “more than six of us” ...) is almost jocular, and in his amusement helps correct Gandalf’s equivocal arithmetic as if it were a game. Beorn is so pleased, he offers the company food, lodging and he also does some scouting for them, learning that the goblins have an attack party that is out searching for the dwarves and wizard that killed the Great Goblin, who was their king. Beorn gives them advice on how to evade this group by taking the northern pass through Mirkwood that will take them near the Lonely Mountain.

What is also noticeable is that Gandalf, in dealing both with Beorn and the trolls, does not tell the truth, or at least not the whole truth. Indeed, he deceives the trolls into believing he is one of them, and he purposely misleads Beorn about the numbers of Thorin’s company. Such dissembling tactics, on the other hand, seem to be a violation of Plato’s and Aristotle’s views of rhetoric, which are that the rhetor must always be truthful. However, Gandalf here seems to be following Quintilian, the rhetorician of Imperial Rome, who maintains that the rhetor must be honest and just, of course, although Quintilian manufactures a special back door that is a unique innovation for Classical Rhetoric:

A good man may sometimes think it proper to tell a lie, and occasionally even in matters of small moment, as, when children are sick, we make them believe many things with a view to promote their health, and promise them many which we do not intend to perform ... and much less, is it forbidden to tell a falsehood when an assassin is to be prevented from killing a man, or an enemy to be deceived for the benefit of our country so that what is at one time reprehensible in a slave is at another laudable even in the wisest of men. If this be admitted, I see that many causes may occur for which an orator may justly undertake a case of such a nature, as, in the absence of any honourable motive, he would not undertake’ (ref 3, p. 417).

In other words, the rhetor must be honest with himself, and therefore manipulation or even lying can be acceptable if done for justifiable reasons, such as when Gandalf wants to save his companions from being roasted, or likewise when they are cold, wet and hungry, to get them food to eat and a bed for the night. Therefore, although Gandalf here might not be truthful, he is adhering to what many Classical rhetors often refer to simply as ‘the good’, which is what is best for the greater number of people.

However, in another sense, Gandalf by misrepresenting the truth is adhering to the ethos of Middle-earth (formed carefully by Tolkien), which makes the argument that for Gandalf to remain honest and true to his own convictions (which Quintilian implies must be overriding), he has no choice but to deceive his audience for the sake of his companions. Otherwise, the wizard will fail to uphold his values and adhere to the most ‘honourable motive’ within him.

In the end, Gandalf the Grey abides by the rules of the

Classical rhetor that acknowledges, what Plato argues in the *Phaedrus*, that “there never is nor ever will be a real art of speaking which is divorced from the truth” (ref. 4, p. 235). Therefore, Gandalf is only a rhetor second, after he is first a philosopher. As Plato makes a distinction between teaching the truth to others and being persuasive, he argues that those who seek the truth must learn philosophy before rhetoric, and that rhetoric must be employed in the service of philosophy so that souls of persons might be led to truth. In contrast to Saruman the White (who becomes Saruman of Many Colours), rhetoric for Gandalf is only a tool so that he might be the philosophic hero of Tolkien’s world, whereas Saruman becomes the archetypical Platonic representation of the Sophist rhetor that places persuasion as the measure of all things, even before truth.

And yet, rhetoric in Tolkien’s fiction serves a larger role than merely advancing the plots of his novels or adding depth to his wizards. The novels themselves are arguments: from the early stages of the Middle-earth tales, Tolkien establishes an ethos within his world: for example, there are certain values that all of the characters are supposed to know and are not to violate, and when they do, the terrible consequences are understood. In the opening pages of *The Silmarillion*, for instance, we see Melkor who ends the harmonious fellowship of the Music of the Ainur with his wandering “alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame”: once this happens, then within Melkor “desire grew hot ... to bring into Being things of his own”, which is dangerous because “being alone, [Melkor] had begun to conceive thought of his own unlike those of his brethren”. As such, Melkor begins to violate the natural laws of Middle-earth, which further illustrates that Tolkien is placing at the centre of his world a rhetorical argument that holds through all of his fiction, using his words and his textual characters as tropes for his worldview, which is that both a love and life of adherence to truth is more important than the pursuit of self-interest, empowerment or even simple expediency.

Gandalf, therefore, is the hero of Middle-earth not because he is persuasive as a speaker or powerful as a wizard, but because he knows what is true, and he cannot bear its corruption by the trolls nor, later, Saruman, and Gandalf uses his rhetoric to lead others to that truth, which matters most whether or not it is profitable. In the rhetoric that Gandalf uses throughout Tolkien’s fiction, he urges the other characters not only to learn the values of Middle-earth, but to discover and remember the absolute truths and forms of their shared world, and thus find peace and certainty at their core. This, from a Platonic point of view, is what all persons yearn for beyond dragon treasure or all the power of which mortal kings can dream. 

1. Aristotle *Poetics and Rhetoric* (trans Butcher, S.H. & Rhys Roberts, W.) (Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005).
2. Bergson, H. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (16 October 2009); at <http://www.authorama.com/laughter-3.html>.
3. Bizzell, P. & Herzberg, B. (eds) *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* 2nd edition (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001).
4. De Blas, P. (ed.) *Essential Dialogues of Plato* (trans. Jowett, B.) (Barnes and Noble, 2005).

# Arwen and Edward: redemption and the fairy bride/groom in the literary fairytale

VANESSA PHILLIPS-ZUR-LINDEN

**W**hat does redemption mean in the context of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Twilight* series and specifically to the apparently unredeemable outsiders, little mentioned fairy-bride Arwen, and Edward, the fairy-groom with the unmentionable secret?

The problem of redemption has preoccupied religious thinkers, philosophers, psychologists, literary and other artistic movements through the ages, worldwide, as the question of how to cope with the grief and guilt our existence entails is a timeless and universal one. Their multiple influences can be felt in the work of J. R. R. Tolkien and Stephenie Meyer, although they reach their own conclusions.

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is an inverted quest story for the redemption of a whole world — Middle-earth — the saving and healing of that world — not through the conventional fairy story motif of search for treasure, but through renunciation of treasure: the corrupting Ring. Arwen, the fairy bride is caught up in this quest. Meyer's *Twilight* series portrays the struggle for redemption — for liberation — of an individual from his demonic or nature bound self, of Edward the fairy groom.

Both Arwen and Edward seek redemption through transcendence of the boundaries imposed by their assigned roles: she as an immortal elf is faced with future departure from Middle-earth, he as a vampire living on blood, a situation that confronts him on an almost daily basis.

At first glance both seem images of perfection, of self sufficiency (they are forever young, strong, beautiful and rich). They do not appear needy like their human counterparts, the faltering Aragorn (and by extension the fallible hobbit Frodo) and the accident-prone, insecure adolescent from a broken home — Bella. And yet they need these particular human beings, who initially endanger them. They recognize qualities of resilience, originality and compassion in Aragorn and Bella, they themselves do not appreciate, and both Arwen and Edward are lonely and incomplete without them. They seek a form of redemption in fulfilment through their relationship with their human Other.

Neither Tolkien nor Meyer, despite their Christian background, answer the question conclusively whether redemption as salvation is ultimately available to Arwen and Edward. These authors may have created alternate worlds and beings from another dimension, but their outlook remains realistically rooted in the uncertainties of the primary world as it was and currently is perceived by many of their contemporaries.

Although *The Lord of the Rings* has been classified as fantasy, even as the forerunner of twentieth-century fantasy literature, and *Twilight* has been labelled a teen romance, both can be seen as literary fairytales. Both draw on the rich tradition of the literary fairytale based on and reinterpreting folktales, myths and legends. Indeed with *The Lord of the Rings* "fairy lore in literature has here reached its high water mark"<sup>1</sup> in the opinion of the noted folklorist Katherine Briggs.

*The Lord of the Rings* is set in a world removed from ours by time and space to a vaguely prehistoric sphere, to the Once Upon a Time of the classic literary fairytale. Arwen's world is removed still further from the world of humans, by location, time, and by the prejudices of humans, born of fear and ignorance (Eomer views Arwen's grandmother Galadriel as a witch, her domain Lothlorien as a trap or illusion, the heroes coming from there as 'dreams and legends'<sup>2</sup>, not believed in, though bringing hope when the situation seems hopeless). Arwen belongs not to the mundane, but to starlight and twilight<sup>3</sup>. But the real in *The Lord of the Rings* is removed from our reality by appertaining to hobbit farmers and hobbit artisans (of a rural idyll) and valiant warriors (of heroic epics). Arwen's world is a fairytale within a fairytale.

*Twilight* is set in the world we ourselves inhabit. Edward's family is integrated into human society, his adoptive father makes a positive contribution to the workplace, Edward goes to school. Edward's family are our neighbours, albeit the ambivalent 'Good Neighbours'<sup>4</sup> of English fairy tradition.

The extraordinary is not removed from us but lives with us, perhaps even within us as it does in E. T. A. Hoffmann's literary fairytales. The magical is within our reach.

And yet Edward, like Arwen is accessible only through redemptive imagination as Atreju is to Bastian in Michael Ende's *Die Unendliche Geschichte*. Just as Bastian seeks to be reunited with his other self (Atreju), so Bella fears separation from her fairy groom Edward and Aragorn from his fairy bride Arwen.

Arwen is an elf, Tolkien's particular interpretation of an elf, "originally the Anglo Saxon name for fairies"<sup>5</sup> according to Katherine Briggs. Like the fairies she can be seen as pagan god, nature spirit<sup>6</sup>, a symbol of the divine-demonic, blessed and cursed with eternal life (meaning existence), an exile (from her true home in the Undying Lands)<sup>7</sup>, or original inhabitant gone into hiding in our world<sup>8</sup>, a descendent of the departing fairies<sup>9</sup> of folk tradition, lingering yet leaving, an 'inspirational hero'<sup>10</sup>, a giver of gifts, a provider of redemption to others (to Aragorn, her partner, by sharing his life, adapting herself to the demands his life call for, and

to Frodo, the Ring-bearer, ceding to him her place on the last ship to leave Middle-earth for Elven-home). Is Arwen herself redeemed or redeemable?

Arwen is the fairy-bride of a human, but she does not become so out of compulsion, no bird's wings or seal skins have been stolen from her obliging her to stay, forever longing for escape (as in the myth of Wieland the Smith's swan-maiden wife). Arwen unites with a human by her own choice. A human whose potential is revealed to her, when, having "cast aside his wayworn raiment", he is "clothed... in silver and white"<sup>11</sup> by Galadriel, in the classic fairytale role of the fairy godmother.

Arwen's choice involves the loss of her kin and the chance to journey to their paradise, a form of existence still, even if different from the human one. Like the little mermaid of Andersen's literary fairy tale, she chooses love and a short span of life.

Her choice to remain in Middle-earth with Aragorn means she must move out of the forest, the twilight and the shadows and to the city of Minas Tirith, embracing daylight, and human society with all its complexities.

Is there redemption for Arwen in the sense of the 'happy ending' of classic Western fairy tales? Tolkien who created fantasy not as escape or comfort but as challenge and insight, does not give a facile 'happily ever after' ending answer. Aragorn the mortal eventually dies. Arwen returns to the place where Galadriel's realm of Lothlorien fades. She has lost everything and will pass away. Arwen's end is one of resignation and 'sorrowful beauty'<sup>12</sup> much as we find it in the Japanese folk tale 'The Bush Warbler's Home', celebrating loss of everything as the achievement of nothingness in which a form of redemption may be found.

Edward, though sharing the blood lust of the vampire of Romantic, Gothic and contemporary fiction is also a manifestation of the fairy bridegroom. He conceals his true nature in accordance with the traditional taboo on human knowledge of the fairy partner's identity (as in the myth of Melusine). When Bella discovers his secret, she cannot be sure whether he will turn out to be a Bluebeard or a Swan Knight, her murderer or her protector. Whatever the case, ambivalent Edward is Bella's fate, a fairy in the sense of fatae<sup>13</sup>. "Your number was up the first time I met you" Edward asserts<sup>14</sup>. Her fate is sealed by their encounter.

Edward can be seen as a 'half deified spirit of the dead'<sup>15</sup>, as a 'fallen angel'<sup>16</sup>, as the demonic-divine lover, Beauty's Beast, Psyche's Cupid, whose meeting with his mortal partner requires sacrifice from both in order to achieve redemption for each other.

On a superficial level Edward appears to be the teasing fairy lover of European folk tradition and ballads who snares a mortal woman only to abandon her, after which she pines and usually dies<sup>17</sup>. In this sense Edward feeds on Bella vampirically and yet he did not mean to harm her by this action. Edward is not a conventional fairy lover or traditional vampire. Though bound by nature's implacable laws for existence, the necessity to eat (and therefore to kill), Edward is desperately seeking not to be governed

by his 'addiction'<sup>18</sup>. He is attempting to find redemption under the influence of his adoptive father Dr Cullen, who, having become separated from his own father (a vampire hunting priest, who may be interpreted as representing an established church persecuting heretics<sup>19</sup>), returns to the basics of Christianity, living in active service to others as a doctor<sup>20</sup>.

Dr Cullen has overcome his blood lust in a Buddhist sense of going beyond 'craving'<sup>21</sup> and has become life affirming, a valuable member of society healing others, sustained not by blood (or human life force) but by Christian faith<sup>22</sup>. He keeps a cross in his house and in the traditional Christian sense appears redeemed. But Edward does not have faith, nor does he live in service to others. So what of his redemption?

When Edward abandons Bella (in *New Moon*, the second book of the *Twilight* series) he does so because he wants to protect her. An incident in his home forces him to recognize just how dangerous the violently parasitical nature of the vampire is for her. He abandons Bella in a well intentioned effort to save her from himself and his kind. He is like the snake groom<sup>23</sup> of Japanese folk tales whose spirit-essence threatens to destroy his mortal bride, but who genuinely loves her. Edward thinks erroneously that by leaving Bella he gives her the opportunity to lead a safe life, integrated into human society. She is prepared to become a vampire to be with him, but Edward, like Andersen's little mermaid or Asimov's robot<sup>24</sup>, sees indispensable value in being human and mortal. He does not want her to lose irretrievably what he regrets losing immeasurably. He wants to shield Bella from the misery and alienation he feels. In traditional terms he wants to save her soul and so sacrifices his personal happiness.

But Edward has made a choice for her and his choice almost destroys her. He does not acknowledge that he (love gained through night, a symbol of the inner world, as in the *Hymnen an die Nacht* by Novalis) transforms her material, mundane everyday existence, magically infusing it with meaning. He cannot accept that she would rather share hell with him without hope of redemption (as the protagonist does in director Vincent Ward's film *What Dreams May Come*, reinventing the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice) than be separated from him, her other self.

Edward is not Christian in the conventional, organized sense. He refuses to prey on humans (he thinks of himself as 'vegetarian'<sup>25</sup> as he hunts animals instead), because he wants to be an ethical being. He seems Kantian in that he feels he must do what is right or good without hope of reward, without faith even<sup>26</sup>. He appears an unconscious follower of Albert Schweitzer, trying not to contribute to human suffering, seeking to replace the "amoral will-to-live with the ethical will-to-love"<sup>27</sup>.

Edward and Arwen are rebels, they do not conform to others' expectations of them. They are free in that they are determined by the choices they make for themselves. Free will according to Christian thought makes redemption possible.

Arwen's choice to become human, in the tradition of Luthien her ancestor, is opposed by her father. Arwen's



father Elrond is not cruel as Luthien's was; he is saddened by Arwen's choice out of concern for her. She will lose all connection with her people and all hope of eternal life (existence) in a place of beauty and harmony. Elrond — the half-human, half-elf — had been given a choice long before Arwen was born, whether to cast his lot with elves or humans. He chose the former and will depart with them.

Why do Tolkien's elves depart? Why do they feel they cannot coexist with humans?

It is not only yearning for their true home that drives them, but also possibly the perception that humans, although liberated from the Ring, may, empowered by peace and prosperity, turn to the destruction of nature (the habitat of the elves) in their efforts to control it, much as their former enemies, the servants of the Ring had done. After all the Shire (the hobbits' homeland) was scoured after the Ring was destroyed and humans were involved in this devastating industrialization and exploitation.

"The world is changing," says Treebeard<sup>28</sup>, the tree guardian, to the departing elves. Change is something the nostalgic elves are extremely wary of and reject. Arwen, by staying with Aragorn shows perhaps greater faith in human nature, in human capacity for regeneration and in the positive potential of change. While her kin look outside the world for a link to the divine, Arwen seeks to help make the divine accessible to those around her, those with no possibility of leaving. She continues to be part of the redemption process of Middle-earth, which does not stop with the destruction of the Ring.

Arwen may be regarded as related to the Chinese Buddhist Goddess of Mercy Guanyin or Kuan Yin<sup>29</sup>, who remains in this world of suffering out of (compassionate) love, deferring her own deliverance from earthly matters.

Edward stands with his family against the Volturi, an ancient and powerful vampire clan — a few unconventional individuals against a traditional establishment. His restraint or abstinence goes not only against his own cravings but also against the norm, the creed of ruthless self gratification and relentless consumption imposed by the form of permissive society espoused by the dominant vampire clan. Edward and his family do not subsist in a dark fortress, sleeping in coffins, the domain of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, associated with decay and disease. They live in a white house protected by the shadow of trees, (very much the realm of Arwen), "very bright, very open and very large. The walls . . . were all varying shades of white"<sup>30</sup>. Contrary to preconceptions about vampires Edward belongs to an Apollonian minority in constant passive resistance to a Dionysian majority. Edward is more closely related to the gleaming, sweet breathed panther<sup>31</sup> of Anglo Saxon Christian allegory than Bram Stoker's repulsive, reptilian, foul breathed *Dracula*. Indeed Edward as the panther is the dragon's enemy<sup>32</sup>.

Arwen turns from the twilight of eternity and the elves' form of shared salvation, the redemption of return from exile granted to Galadriel when she lets go of ambition by refusing the Ring (a symbol of devouring<sup>33</sup> compulsion, domination and destruction, very much an emblem of vampirism).

Arwen chooses the temporal, a moment in time, personal happiness, however brief. She becomes a wife and mother, and lives in the present (uprooted from her past and cut off from her preordained future).

Whatever form Arwen's individual salvation may eventually take if granted is not revealed, but Aragorn parts from her with hope in redemption as liberation from the limitations of existence (short or long) inflicts on sentient beings: "In sorrow we must go, but not in despair. Behold! We are not bound forever to the circles of this world. . ."<sup>34</sup>

Edward, finds some form of solace in music (in the Schopenhauer mode<sup>35</sup>), in love — when reunited with Bella allowing her to make her own decisions, even if they entail pain for her — and in his choice to refrain from evil. This choice is not a foregone conclusion. Edward when confronted with the temptation Bella represents could become a vicious Byronic vampire<sup>36</sup>. But his compulsion is repugnant to him, as it is to the Undead in Goethe's *Die Braut von Korinth* or in Angela Carter's *The Lady of the House of Love*. Edward's statement "I don't want to be a monster"<sup>37</sup> is at the root of all his choices, all his yearning for moral integrity, for redemptive transformation. Just as the vengeful water sprite Undine is changed into the compassionate Little Mermaid, so Edward's negation of his vampire nature makes, in Christian-literary fairytale terms, the attainment of a soul possible.

The vampire Nick Knight of the TV series *Forever Knight*



wished to repay his debt to society and to become human again, but he is destroyed by his blood dependency, guilt and grief. In marked contrast, Edward's capacity to love someone else more than himself breaks the spell of being a Beast — to a certain extent. For although he fights the craving successfully he can never be completely rid of it. He is forced to 'endure'<sup>38</sup>. But he is not alone. Bella joins him, undergoing the terrible transformation necessary to become a vampire. And she seems largely free of the compulsion to hunt humans giving Edward hope that vampires are not beyond redemption. Edward's struggle will last as long as he exists, but it is this struggle which may ultimately lead to his salvation: As in Goethe's *Faust*: "Wer immer strebend sich bemueht/ den koennen wir erloesen" — He who strives and ever strives him we can redeem.<sup>39</sup>



1. Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 210 (1967).
2. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 453–454 (1966).
3. "By the starlit mere ... they [the elves] rose ... their eyes beheld first of all the stars. Therefore they have ever loved the starlight." Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion* 56 (1977); "if you cleave to me, Evenstar, then the Twilight you must also renounce" Aragorn to Arwen, Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 1076 (1966).
4. "Of the many euphemistic names for the fairies the Good Neighbours is one of the most common" Briggs, K. *A Dictionary of Fairies* 196 (1976).
5. Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 217 (1967).
6. Fairies as "lost heathen gods ... and the spirits of the woods and wells and vegetation" Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 4 (1967).
7. The process of the elves' return to Middle-earth has been described as exile. "The Silmarillion is the history of the rebellion of Fëanor and his kindred against the gods, their exile ... and return to Middle-earth" Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion* first page (unnumbered) (1977).
8. Tolkien's elves inhabited Middle-earth before humans did (see *The Silmarillion*). By the end of the Third Age when the Ring quest takes place the elves are in decline and men are on the increase (see *The Lord of the Rings*). Compare with the entry on theories of fairy origins: "fairy beliefs ... founded on the memory of a more primitive race driven into hiding by invaders" Briggs, K. *A Dictionary of Fairies* 393 (1976).
9. "From the time of Chaucer onwards the Fairies have been seen to have departed or to be in decline, but still they linger" Briggs, K. *A Dictionary of Fairies* 94 (1976).
10. Porter, L. R. *Unsung Heroes of the Lord of the Rings* 115 (2005).
11. "Galadriel bade him cast aside his wayworn raiment, and she clothed him in silver and white" Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 1073 (1966).
12. Stories in Japan have "balanced figures of sorrowful beauty" Kawai, H. *The Japanese Psyche: Major Motifs in the Fairy Tales of Japan* 122 (1988).
13. Entry on Fairy: "originally Fay, from Fatae, the Fates" Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 217 (1967).
14. Meyer, S. *Twilight* 152 (2005).
15. a) "Fairies as half deified spirits of the dead" Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 4 (1967); b) Edward was once human, but was transformed into a vampire when he was dying. In his entry on vampires, Matthew Bunson quotes various sources, describing vampires as ghosts, revenants, the undead, reanimated bodies and so on, Bunson, M. *Vampire, The Encyclopaedia* 262 (1993).
16. a) Fairies as "fallen angels" Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 9 (1967); b) Edward is likened to an angel by Bella: "His angle's face was only a few inches from mine" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 230 (2005).
17. According to her index: a love talker or type of incubus Briggs, K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 257 (1967).
18. The vampire's urge to drink blood is compared to alcohol dependency and drug addiction in Meyer, S. *Twilight* 234–235 (2005).
19. a) "Stern measures were taken to purge ... heretics from the Church, ranging from the Inquisition to the individual punishment of excommunication ... the idea was fostered that excommunicants would be liable to transform into vampires" Bunson, M. *Vampire, The Encyclopaedia* 119 (1993); b) "As the Protestants came to power he [Dr Cullen's father, an Anglican pastor of the 1650s] was enthusiastic in his persecution of Roman Catholics and other religions ... he led the hunts for witches, werewolves ... and vampires" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 289 (2005).
20. Entry on Christianity: "This supreme love to God is a complete oneness with Him in will, a will which is expressed in service to our fellowmen (Luke x25–37)" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5, 631 (1961); "early Christian literature is filled with medical terms ... Jesus was remembered as the great physician ... a vast activity animated the early church: to heal the sick" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5, 634 (1961).
21. Entry on Buddhism, Doctrines: "The second is the noble truth of the cause of pain and this is the craving (tanhua, thirst) that leads to rebirth ... The third is the noble truth of the cessation of pain consisting in the ... cessation of craving, its abandonment and rejection" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5, 326 (1961).
22. Entry on Christianity: "Man is to live in ... trust in the divine love ... hence he attains salvation" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5, 631 (1961).
23. A variant of the snake bridegroom tale which perfectly illustrates my point is HI 411 Stork's Eggs Ko-no tori no Tamago in Ikeda, H. *A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk Literature* (1971).
24. Asimov's robot sacrifices all his nonhuman traits, even immortality in his endeavour to become human. Asimov, I. *The Bicentennial Man* (2000).
25. "We call ourselves vegetarians, our little inside joke. It doesn't completely satiate the hunger — or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist. Most of the time" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 164 (2005).
26. "A human action is morally good, not because it is done from immediate inclination — still less because it is done from self interest — but because it is done for the sake of duty" Kant, I. *The Moral law — Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* 19 (1993).
27. "The Christian hero ... and striving — even though inevitably unsuccessfully — to infuse and transform the amoral will-to-live with the ethical will-to love" Cupitt, D. *The Sea of Faith* 107 (1984).
28. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 1017 (1966).
29. "Guan Yin ... was about to cross over into heaven when she heard a cry ... from the world below. She turned around and saw the massive suffering endured by the people of the world. Filled with compassion, she returned to earth" *The Legend of Miao Shan*; available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanyin>
30. "The trees held their protecting shadow right up to the walls of the house ... It was painted a soft, faded white" and "The inside was even more surprising. It was very bright, very open and very large ... The walls, the high-beamed ceiling, the wooden floors, and the thick carpets were all varying shades of white" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 280–281 (2005).
31. "He's most wondrous fair ... the coat of this beast is wondrous bright, glowing in beauty and gleaming in hues ... a breath more winsome, sweeter and stronger" Kennedy, C. W. on the panther allegory in the Exeter Book in *Early English Christian Poetry* 226 (1952). Compare Meyer's description of Edward: "His skin literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds ... his glistening lids ... a perfect statue ... glittering like crystal" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 228 (2005) and "I smelled his cool breath in my face ... sweet, delicious ... it was unlike anything else" Meyer, S. *Twilight* 230 (2005).
32. a) "Save the dragon only with whom for ever He wages eternal, unceasing war" Kennedy, C. W. on the panther allegory in the Exeter Book in *Early English Christian Poetry* 226 (1952); b) The historical Dracula, Vlad Tepes, on whom Bram Stoker is said to have based his fictitious character, is associated with dragons, the medieval Christian symbol of evil and the devil, see the entry on Dracula: "Dracula was based on the title Dracul given to Vlad's father, meaning the 'Devil' or the 'Dragon' Bunson, M. *Vampire, The Encyclopaedia* 71 (1993).
33. "The dark power will devour him" (Gandalf speaking of the Ring's dark power) Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 60 (1966).
34. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 1076 (1966).
35. Schopenhauer contended that suffering caused by the will can be briefly transcended by aesthetic perception (of art, music), Schopenhauer, A. *On the Suffering of the World* 100–101 (1970).
36. Entry on the vampire "Lord Ruthven, the villain, bore more than a passing resemblance to Byron and became a highly influential model for the so called Byronic vampire of literature" (the reference is to Dr John Polidori's *The Vampire, a Tale*) Bunson, M. *Vampire, The Encyclopaedia* 269 (1993).
37. Meyer, S. *Twilight* 163 (2005).
38. *Twilight* (Contender DVD, 2009).
39. "Wer immer strebend sich bemueht/den koennen wir erloesen" von Goethe, J. W. *Faust II Act V*, 521 (1885); "He who strives and ever strives, him we can redeem" von Goethe, J. W. *Selected Works* (trans. Fairley, B.), *Faust II Act V*, 1046 (1999).

# A man of mystery

Simon Tolkien has just finished his second novel. He talks frankly about his grandfather, his past and his literary ambitions.

Simon Tolkien found his calling at age 40. He kills people for a living. Like his grandfather, J. R. R. Tolkien, his vocation as a writer came midway through his appointed life. He began a new career as a mystery novelist after distinguished success in another — in Simon's case as a solicitor and criminal barrister in London.

A scion of many gifted artists, including his sculptress mother Faith Faulconbridge Tolkien, his scholar-editor father Christopher Tolkien, and a family choir of prodigious and gifted letter-writers, including his grandmother Edith and his aunt Priscilla, Simon came to a mid-life crossroads.

So he took it. His first novel, 2002's *The Stepmother* (issued as *Final Witness* in the United States when he was 43), established Simon as a writer gifted with his grandfather's skills for description and characterization allied with his sculptor mother's gift for 'armature', the painstaking construction of a plot strong enough to hang a tale upon.

Now his second novel, *The Inheritance*, has been published. National Public Radio's Diane Rehm, interviewing the author, described it as "a courtroom drama as well as murder mystery", and the book is all that and more. Set in 1959, the year the author was born (on 12 January), it begins with a flashback to the war in Normandy in 1944, introducing three main characters, including Colonel John Cade. Fifteen years later, Cade is found shot to death in a locked-room slaying at his posh estate. His younger son, Stephen, is charged with patricide by pistol — a hanging offence.

Simon and his wife, the former Tracy Steinberg of Clayton, Missouri, left London and Oxford, where they had met when she was a student from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, studying T. S. Eliot. He turned away from his career in the courts of the Temple and moved eight time zones west, to Santa Barbara, California.

In the first of our five long-distance telephone interviews, Simon had been reconnecting with *The Lord of the Rings* by reading it aloud to his nine-year-old daughter.

"It's the first time rereading since I've been a writer.

Reading it in my fifties, I find myself kind of touched by it."

They were approaching Cirith Ungol. He marvelled anew at the descriptive writing in Ithilien and the Ephel Duath.

"You feel every wisp in the grass, every wind. The nature description is very important. It reminds me of Thomas Hardy." His grandfather's "intense love of landscape, love of words" was impressive to this father reading to his daughter, not unlike Sam Gamgee reading the Red Book of Westmarch in the unused epilogue chapter of his grandfather's masterpiece.

He recalls his first reading of the book as a boy: "thrilling".

"I was very fond of *The Hobbit*. I read it to my daughter a few years back. It bears no relation to *The Lord of the*

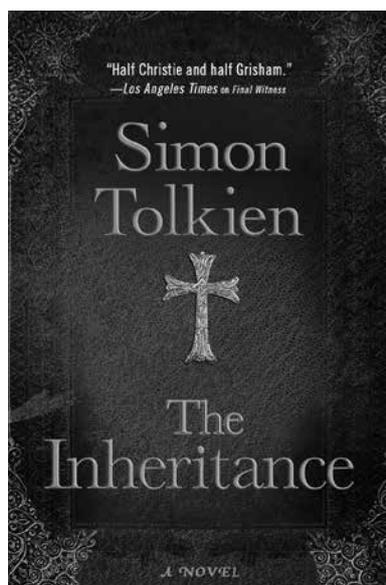
*Rings* in one sense and yet in another sense it was the genesis of the trilogy. I remember my grandfather's comment that the Necromancer peeked over the edge. And then, of course, so much turned on the publisher's insistence on more hobbits when he was offered *The Silmarillion*.

"I also particularly like the pictures, especially the one showing the escape by barrel from Mirkwood, a marvellous amalgam of colour and shape."

Besides the works of his grandfather, which he first read at age nine, Simon "loved history. Ladybird books: the picture on one side — Harold getting it in the eye, Admiral Nelson, Agincourt — and the story on the other." Growing up an only child in an Oxfordshire country cottage, he delighted in books. Titles he cites as favourites include *Gormenghast*, *David Copperfield* and *The Woman in White* along with the usual suspects like *Treasure Island*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Emily Bronte and Thomas Hardy, all feeding his fondness for history. He admires Westminster Abbey for "the sarcophagi" of writers and historical figures.

Tom Bombadil, one character defenestrated from the Peter Jackson screen version, serves "a vital function. He gives the story another aspect. The Ring is infinitely more interesting because of Tom Bombadil. He amplifies the Ring's interest because he is not vulnerable; the Ring has no power over him."

**Just because I'm his grandson, I'm treated like royalty. I'm not royalty. I'm not a fan of royalty in the twenty-first century.**





Simon Tolkien.

The deletion of Bombadil is not the only quibble Simon has with the three Jackson films.

“They were steadily worse. I liked the first one. But it [the film series] came down to a special effects fest or character development. Action, not character. There was more character development in the second, but in the third, the special effects became Jackson’s Ring.”

He noted that, unlike Jackson’s giant blazing eye, Sauron is “unrevealed in the book”.

The spirituality that suffused the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* is not present in the films, one reason why some viewers were dissatisfied with the adaptation.

As a devout Roman Catholic of the traditional sort, the boyhood convert son of a convert mother, J. R. R. Tolkien disliked liturgical changes imposed by Vatican II in the 1960s, especially the vernacular English Mass. When the priest began with “The Lord be with you,” Tolkien would voice the response loudly — in Latin.

“The ‘*et cum spiritu tuo*’ — yes, this is my recollection,” Simon remembers, “and at the time, as a ten-year-old boy in the church at Bournemouth, I felt acutely embarrassed!”

If his grandfather was religious, his grandmother Edith was not. “She converted in 1916 as my grandfather was off to war. She didn’t want to go to the Catholic church. It was most distressing. She’d had an active life with the Church of England congregation in Cheltenham after her engagement, playing music at the local church.” A gifted pianist, Edith quit playing after her children were born.

“People do,” says Simon. “It was tough in 1920. Four kids in all, not much money. She was very isolated. Oxford culture was male-dominated.”

She found happiness after Tolkien retired and the couple moved to the coast.

“Miramar was a happy place. She was happy there. He felt it was her turn, in a certain sense. She liked Bournemouth. My grandmother wrote endless letters; she was very much the matriarch.”

Tolkien himself “loved the sound of the sea. He dreamed of the sea. In *The Lord of the Rings*, there is always the sea just over the edge of consciousness.”

As to the town where Simon grew up, “I have a love-hate relationship with Oxford. It’s my college [Trinity] town. My parents lived there. I stay there once a year. I like that it has retained its rural character. I love that and the architecture. But when I went up to London, I was consciously putting Oxford behind me.

“When I was a child, I had huge problems writing, intense problems. I had this spidery calligraphy like my father and grandfather. Much later on, I developed this slanting cursive, writing as a criminal barrister, noting what witnesses said. I wrote with unbelievable speed. Now I use Microsoft Word.”

After studying law in London following his Trinity College degree in modern history, Simon became a solicitor in 1987, “doing wills, preparing cases for court. But I wanted to be presenting cases, not just preparing them. I wanted to go on the firing line.”

In 1994, he got his wish and became a barrister.

“The Bar is the Temple. It was a bit like getting to the Promised Land. It’s very difficult to get into. Seventy-five per cent of the vote is required to get into it.

“The Temple is fantastic, like time stood still.” A connoisseur of architecture, Simon described the Temple as “a miniature Oxford. I was keen to bring the flavour of it to my book.”

As is customary, Simon argued cases for both the



Simon with his grandparents.

Simon Tolkien

prosecution and the defence. Although he hasn't practiced in eight years, he enjoyed his legal career for its "strongly intellectual element, questions about the admissibility of evidence".

"But it was not just intellectual. It was the cut and thrust."

Some of his cases were murders, "mundane affairs in public housing".

He still relishes one defence case in which he persuaded the jury that the man on trial was not a deliberate murderer.

"The prosecution had made a transcript of his statement. So I used the recording in my case. The guy had made mistakes. It was a knifing, and the jury sees that it was self-defence, that he was not incredibly bright. The sound of his voice acquitted him."

Simon's courtroom experiences serve his fiction well. *The Inheritance* is rich with description: high-speed luxury sports cars zoom from the Old Bailey to Moreton Manor. Sex, betrayal, thuggery, murders most foul, double identities and revenge of all kinds weave through the tale. Readers will learn about everything from medieval codexes to the grim business of the hangman and the gallows. The characters, even the most minor (a press photographer, for one) are limned with vivid detail.

The best of these is Detective Inspector William Trave of the Oxfordshire CID. Trave, the author's favourite character, becomes the reader's too. He will return in *The King of Diamonds*, due for publication in March 2011.

"Trave is even more interesting in the next book,"

promises Tracy Tolkien. "His estranged wife is involved with a suspect. He also appears as a much younger man in the third book, which Simon is writing now."

Simon adds: "His wife has taken up with another man, so he investigates with a conflict of interest. The Holocaust in Belgium is the backstory. There are fewer people who could have done it."

He says that *The Inheritance* "accomplished most of what I wanted to do. I liked the historical dimension of World War II, and the medieval dimension. The armature is European history."

When his description of a love-making scene in a laundry room is praised, he accepts the compliment. "Yeah. That was good."

Readers of *The Inheritance* may hear echoes of John Dexter's Inspector Morse, and John Mortimer's Rumpole of the Bailey. Admitting to some Morse-Lewis overtones in Trave's relationship with younger detective Clayton, Simon disavows the latter.

"He [Rumpole] is a caricature. Having been a barrister, I don't need that."

Simon volunteers that his novel's search for the codex of John of Rome was inspired by Gandalf's 'Shadow of the Past' research to discover the Ring's true nature.

"Documents lost in libraries" comprise part of both plots' puzzles. "If only you could find them, the mystery might be solved."

Simon was Christopher and Faith Tolkien's only child. His mother, 82, now has Alzheimer's disease. She was a gifted sculptress.





Tea with grandfather.

“She’s good, isn’t she?” her son said, extolling her triptych of the Resurrection in clay bas-relief for Sacred Heart, a Catholic church in Sutton Coldfield in the west Midlands.”

Inverting the traditional left-to-right reading of triptychs, Faith put the resurrected Christ on the sea-shore and his apostles in a boat as depicted in the last chapter of John’s gospel. The Crucifixion is the centrepiece with the Last Supper on the right.

“It’s her masterpiece,” Simon says. “She liked the fact that was on the walls of a church and could be a part of someone’s religious experience.”

Her last work was of St Joseph, using an earlier image of Simon she sculpted when he was 18 months old as the infant Jesus. The Exeter College Chapel houses her 1959 portrait bust of her father-in-law.

Asked if his craft as a novelist is analogous to his mother’s as a sculptor, Simon paused so long I feared that our phone link between south California and central Illinois had ruptured.

“That’s a very good question and I’m trying to think of a good answer.

“There is a similarity. The process of building a book is like creating the armature under the sculpture. The mechanics of the plot take as long to plan as the writing. You must build the armature rather than begin with the flesh. If the plotting is too detailed, the writing will be stilted, too preplanned. You have to lay it down but don’t overbuild. The armature is the maquette.”

His mother met his father Christopher at a party in Oxford “in the late 1940s. My mother’s father, Frank Faulconbridge, had gone to King Edward’s School [in Birmingham] and had been on the same rugby team as my grandfather.”

Her Catholic faith “was deeply important to my mother

as it is to my aunt Priscilla, as it was to my grandfather. I remember asking my mother what would happen to my father [after Christopher divorced Faith and married Bailie, his current wife].”

Simon’s grandfather paid his tuition to The Dragon School in North Oxford (“great, quite famous”) from ages seven to thirteen, and later, from thirteen to eighteen, to Downside, a Benedictine monks’ school: “miserable”. Christopher, his father, had attended both institutions. One consequence of that Catholic education was Simon’s loss of faith.

“I’ve been agnostic since I was 18, 20. Some lose their faith in those years and later come back. I never came back.”

His protagonist Trave “is religious. And I’m not totally comfortable with it. I’m not sure of it. I see him as a doubter rather than a believer.”

He has a mixed view of Tolkien fandom.

“Just because I’m his grandson, I’m treated like royalty. I’m not royalty. I’m not a fan of royalty in the twenty-first century.”

Like many an Englishman who has left his country for southern California — Evelyn Waugh and Jeff Beck are two who come to mind — Simon enjoys his new home. He hopes, he said, to achieve dual citizenship eventually.

Of *The Inheritance*’s cast, “I liked Carson. I remember the big gangster funeral that the Kray brothers had. My editor wanted me to enhance the relationship between Stephen and [his older half-brother, and another suspect] Silas.”

“I was very sorry to see the last of [another character]. You can’t reveal too much about a character. But he was the only one who couldn’t have done it.”

Plotting means “you have to give the reader a chance, or the reader will feel cheated. But not too much of a chance. [One other character] is too obvious a clue. His name has to be ambiguous.”

Discussing another episode which grew after the book was already drafted, Simon says: “You come back to it. You are putting a peg in a hole that is already there. Your unconsciousness sets something up and you come back to it. It means that the book is living.”

What would J. R. R. Tolkien think about his continued popularity, 73 years after *The Hobbit* was published?

“He would be delighted,” Simon replies without hesitation. “He was not a man who doubted himself. He regarded it [his legendarium] as a thing of beauty. It has reality. The languages preceded the people. That was a good thing.”

His hopes for his own career as a novelist?

“That I am able to continue in a difficult marketplace. I think if I am good, and use imagination, I hope to make a living at it. That’s what I want to be able to do: continue. It’s a modest hope.”

Interview by **Mike Foster**.

*The Inheritance* is reviewed on page 9.

Readers interested in Simon Tolkien are encouraged to seek out Jason Fisher’s Q&A interview with the author in *Mythprint: The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society* Vol. 47, No. 6, June 2010.



## THE LONG WATCH

Lynn Forest-Hill

I was standing lost in starlight on the white cliffs of the headland  
When I saw the swan ships coming like a blessing from the West;  
Their sails a-gleam with pearl-dust from the strands of distant havens,  
My thought was filled with music and the sorrow it expressed.

I was standing wrapped in twilight in the long grass of the headland  
When I saw the great ships coming on a storm of wind and wave.  
On their sails they bore a white tree, and lanterns at the mastheads  
Shone coldly on the captains, noble, tall and grave.

I was standing wreathed in darkness by the menhirs on the headland  
When I saw the black ships coming like a curse up from the south.  
Their oars dipped deep and slow, since the wind had died before them:  
Ominous and evil they approached the river's mouth.

I was standing as the darkness broke and daylight touched the headland,  
And I heard their voices singing of the triumph of the West.  
At each masthead broke the standard of the white tree's lord returning.  
In the cool grass by the menhirs I lay down at last to rest.

## THE END OF THE SUMMER

Anne Forbes

She slept with her weather eye open as ever,  
And breathed so faintly and so slow,  
Less of an air than the cool damp breath of the night breeze  
That sighed over her shoulder through the shutters.

And she dreamed such a fair dream  
Of the sunlit garden, bright and clear  
The scents of flowers overlaid and stirred  
With the green air of grass and trees.

But in the middle night, so dark and still  
The dream changed, so smoothly  
A different scent, as of autumn leaves, cooler  
With a hint of mushroom and clouds over the sun.

She stirred, and breathing deeper, caught the scent  
And knew what it meant, he was coming  
Out of the night, bringing the essence of the woods  
From off the hillside, over the river with him.

Out of sleep she heard the step and creak of door  
The rustle and drop of gear on the floor  
The cooler air as the covers lifted, another creak  
And the bed ropes no longer slack.

"You have brought the night in with you"  
She whispered as he curled around her  
"Aye, and beautiful it is, but not near as fair as you"  
He said, his answering whisper muffled in her hair.

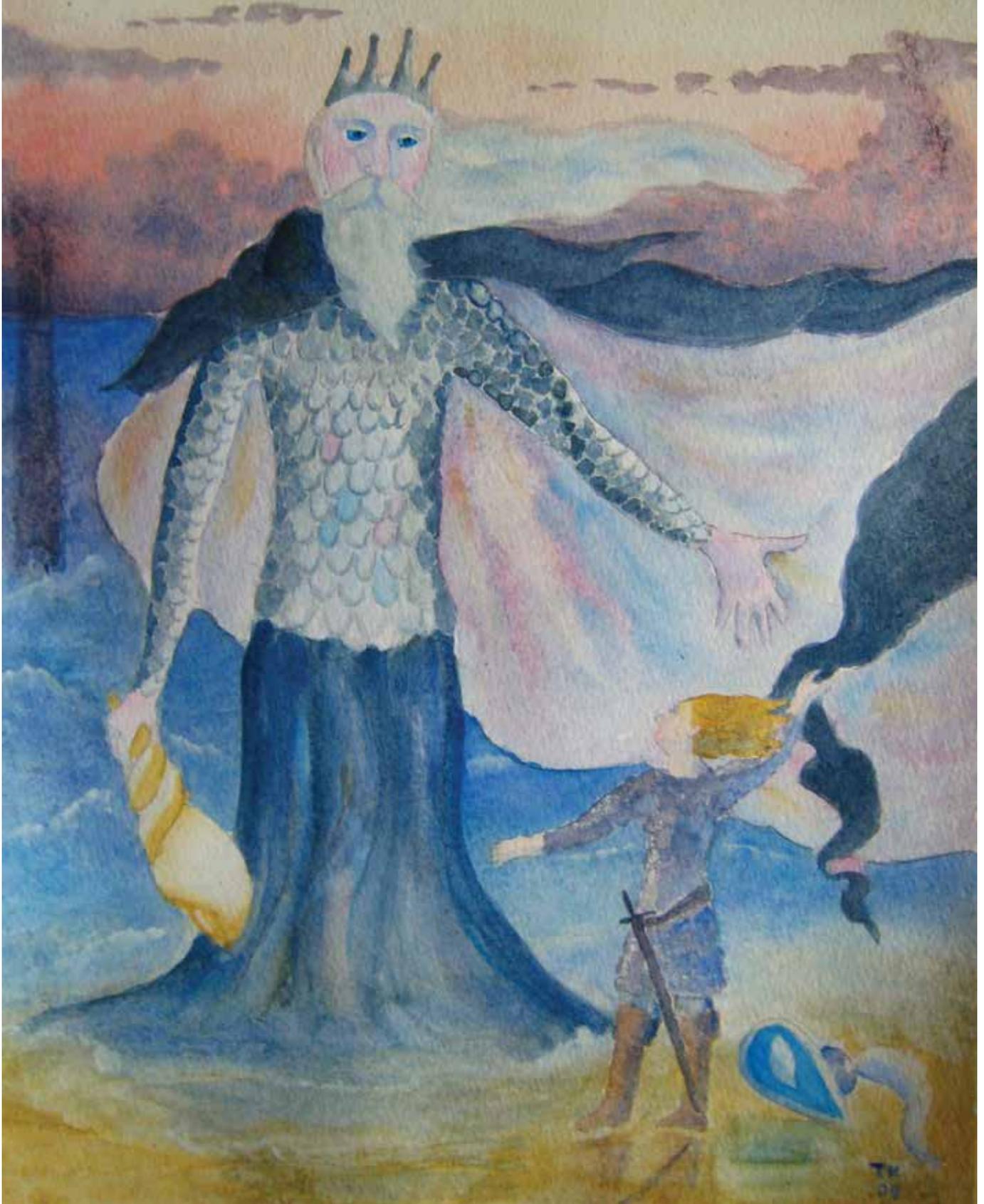
## THE PATH TO THE SEA

Anne Forbes

Between the house and the sea ran the path, grass under foot  
Overshadowed with trees, dappling all with their leafy light  
And on a spring morning, the grass felt cold to her feet  
With dew scattering on the tiny blue flowers set amongst  
bright gold celandine and shivering white anemones.

The sparkling blue green sea, she anticipated, but now  
Only patterns of green and yellow light was there  
Painting her dresses as if with magical embroidery.  
In her hand she had her basket and at her belt,  
Her knife, newly sharpened on the dewy doorstep.

And the spring low tide would offer shellfish,  
Rock fast, easy to gather amongst the stony pools  
Then the long shells, spitting from the smooth sand.  
And on the road home, wild garlic and mushrooms  
Her turn to set the board from sea and woods.



## TUOR AND ULMO

Teresa Kirkpatrick

Swan on shield  
and swan-helmed, Tuor  
to the strand strayed,  
storm-clouds noting;  
wild the wind and  
waves revealing  
glorious Ulmo,  
Lord of Waters!

“Messenger, my  
mantle wear ye,  
path & purpose  
from peril shielded;  
warn the wise and  
wily Turgon:  
dread downfall of  
doomed Gondolin!”

Transfixed, Tuor  
took the lappet,  
cast the cloak  
with care about him,  
valiant vowed to  
voyage onward,  
seeking secret  
city of Turgon.

Waves lashed wildly,  
washed ashore  
shipwreck survivor  
stunned Voronwë:  
guide to Gondolin,  
gift of Ulmo!  
swift they set to  
sea-god's bidding.

# Blasphemy

JULIA FENTON

I liked the blue flowers best. I thought it was a choice, but Nelyo told me that it wasn't. I was supposed to be fond of blue, he said. I was to blue as he was to red. That was how it should be. We were in the garden and the light was changing to gold. He laughed. His laugh felt nice, but I didn't know what he meant.

When I said I wanted the garden to be all mine, he was silent at first. There was one place, he finally explained, that I could not have. He brought me there. "My father told me..." he said. "He told me that this is where she was." He sounded sad, but in a respectful sort of way.

I did not know who he was talking about. "Maybe she'll come back," I suggested. I was nervous at the mention of my uncle. He had never seemed to care about me.

Nelyo shook his head and refuted this, gently. "Lucky for you," he added. He was often like that, bringing up references that I did not understand and never paying heed to my confusion. I think he liked his own air of mystery.

Despite this, I always behaved as though I knew everything about Nelyo. I mentioned him in every conversation. I did not notice or care when my father would press his lips



together, leaving unspoken his belief that maybe I liked my cousin too much for my own good.

Time went by, and I grew, but the light was golden each time I came to the garden.

Everything always looked warm there, and gracious. Those blue blossoms I loved so much were graced by greens, purples and yellows: polite, subservient foliage that paid homage rather than to rise on its own. I said all this to Nelyo. "Are you a poet, now?" he teased, but his voice was pleasant.

I told him more. I told him that I liked the red flowers best. I said it because I wanted Nelyo to know how much I liked him, but he just looked at me strangely. "There are no red flowers here," he said. I looked around. He was right.

I didn't see him as much as I wanted to. He was always off playing some sort of game. They called it sparring and they said that he was good at it. I wanted to learn, too. When I told my father that we should play it in the garden, he scolded me, and the next day I asked Nelyo what blasphemy meant.

"Something that's wrong," he answered, and I think he was simplifying it for me. "Like going against the gods," he continued.

"So it's a bad thing." I didn't say it quite like a question.

Nelyo smiled and looked away, the way grown-ups do when they know something you don't.

The garden was always there. The masses of carefully tended plant life wound together like ropes and ribbons, vines coiling around trees like knotted green stairways, trees that never shed their leaves of jade and gold. There were lawns sprinkled with the occasional wildflower, avenues of soft grass lined with lavender and violets, arches tangled with leaves.

With every passing year I felt less and less that I belonged amid such effeminate beauty; I hid behind trees when friends or relations might wander by, and more frequently left in a rush, off to whatever formal occasion at which I was to be exhibited.

My parents liked to show me off. They liked to dress me up even more royally than I was meant to be, and display me to the rest of the family. Nelyo once said that I would make a good king. Coming from anyone else, it would have been treason; but instead, this remark made my father smile and grip my shoulder. "Say thank you," he instructed.

I obeyed. Then, as soon as no one was watching, I grabbed Nelyo's hand and tugged him away from the festivities, back to the garden. The silvery light tinged the undergrowth as though we were walking on clouds. I found, for the first time, that the breeze there was too gentle for me, the colours too refined, and I wanted more. But it was the only place where I knew I could find privacy, and there was a question I wanted to ask, something of which his comment had reminded me.

"Father told me that people die, sometimes," I said. I received no response. "He says that they go to sleep, and

they don't wake up." Silence. "He said it happened to your grandmother, that she was right there, where you showed me ... in the garden ..." Nearly tripping over my words, I rushed on. "... and that if that happens to Grandfather and to your father, you would be the king."

Nelyo didn't look at me. "You shouldn't talk like that."

I remembered what we had discussed, some time before. "Is it blasphemy?" I emphasized the word.

He did not respond to the question. He left a lull in conversation, then commented: "You are getting too old to be playing in gardens."

Nelyo was right; and so I found more appropriate pastimes. I climbed rocks, instead. I stood on cliffs and looked out over the land. After long hours of watching birds, I found myself wishing that I could ride one. I read books about history, and learned to spar with my cousins, until at last Nelyo could win against me. He did so every time.

I pretended that childhood was over, and pushed those blue flowers from my mind. I stopped trailing after Nelyo like a lost kitten and tried to carry on proper conversations with him, rambling on about philosophical concepts that I barely understood and revelling in delight when I was treated as an equal. I came to realize that he was not so much older or wiser than me, after all.

But I crept back there, just one day. I scrambled through bushes and narrowly missed trampling a few delicate white flowers that reminded me of the snow that they said was in the north. I wanted to steal a flower — just one — and I wanted to keep it with me. It would be something to remember the garden by, as it was no longer my place. It did not cross my mind that such a bloom might wither, once torn away and detached from itself.

It was blue, and I held it behind my back when I passed Nelyo in the street. He grinned, and asked what I was hiding. We snuck into an alleyway and I showed him. "You are quite a rebel, aren't you?" he questioned, clearly amused. It was a word I was unaccustomed to, but I pretended to understand. I nodded and smiled.

That night, the two of us sat on a balcony, overlooking the city; it spread out beneath us, lit by hoary light and coloured to perfection, elegant and very much a paradise. Nelyo spoke slowly, warily, as was his way, but I could tell that he was impatient to expose his thoughts: "Do you ever think about leaving?"

I drummed my fingers on the stone floor.

"Do you ever think that maybe we're just like that flower ...?" He gestured down to it. It lay between us in all its brilliant blue splendour. Clearly symbolic; though of what, I was not sure. I remembered parting the blossom from its stem. I had not before considered that I was abducting it from its home. "That maybe," Nelyo continued, "maybe we weren't meant to stay rooted forever ..."

I was silent. He bit his lip. "Do you think there could be something more ...?"

We could see the sea, off in the distance. I finally thought I knew why the garden had no red flowers.



# Thror's map: decoration or examination?

PAUL H. VIGOR

Tolkien considered maps an essential, guiding element of his sub-creation. He worried about them continually, revised and niggled them, and had his son Christopher redraw them for clarity and, ultimately, publication. Were the maps Christopher was asked to redraw simply products of his father's imagination, or records of rambling through real landscapes?

Millions of readers have pored over Thror's map in *The Hobbit*; and, presumably, read Tolkien's introductory tutorial — how to read runes, and how to interpret his cartography:

'On the Map [Thror's Map] the compass points are marked in runes, with East at the top, as usual in dwarf-maps, and so read clockwise: E(ast), S(outh), W(est), N(orth).'

It would appear that, having digested this information, Tolkien's readers chose to accept — without question, as paradigm — that maps displaying the four cardinal compass points marked just so — with East at the top — must be dwarf-maps. But why should Tolkien's dwarves place East at the top of their maps? Is this a unique quirk of dwarvish cartography, or does it have its sources in the primary world?

It might be noteworthy that the medieval 'Mappa Mundi' in Hereford cathedral is drawn as a circle with east at the top and Jerusalem in the centre. To the thirteenth-century mind, this convention would have seemed quite normal (P. D. A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map. Hereford Cathedral*, 2002), Thence — as on Thror's Map — one reads clockwise: East at twelve o'clock, South at three, West at six, and North at nine o'clock. It should come as no surprise that Tolkien chose to employ orthodox, medieval convention when making his Middle-earth maps. 'At first sight the geography of a medieval mappa mundi makes no sense' writes G. Alington, (*The Hereford Mappa Mundi: A Medieval View of the World. Gracewing: Leominster*, 1996):

'The outline of the land, the islands, oceans, seem entirely strange. It could be the surface of the moon. ... Yet, despite these

distortions, once you have sorted out the compass points — east is at the top, the world is lying on its side — you begin to see that places are generally in relation to one another.'

The same observation might be applied to Tolkien's Middle-earth. At first sight, the places and landscapes depicted appear strange. However, once Tolkien's cartographic orientation has been established by close, critical analysis of the *Hobbit* and *Rings* texts — and the maps aligned accordingly — the depicted features begin to make real-world, geographical sense. It would appear Tolkien took the real world that he knew and loved, and lay it 'on its side' — historically, culturally and cartographically.

So, Thror's Map: mere decoration; or academic examination? Thror's Map and Tolkien's introductory explanation thereof appear to incorporate two principal, educational roles: to teach readers how to translate runes; and to provide the key that unlocks the philosophy underpinning the maps and landscapes of Middle-earth.

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