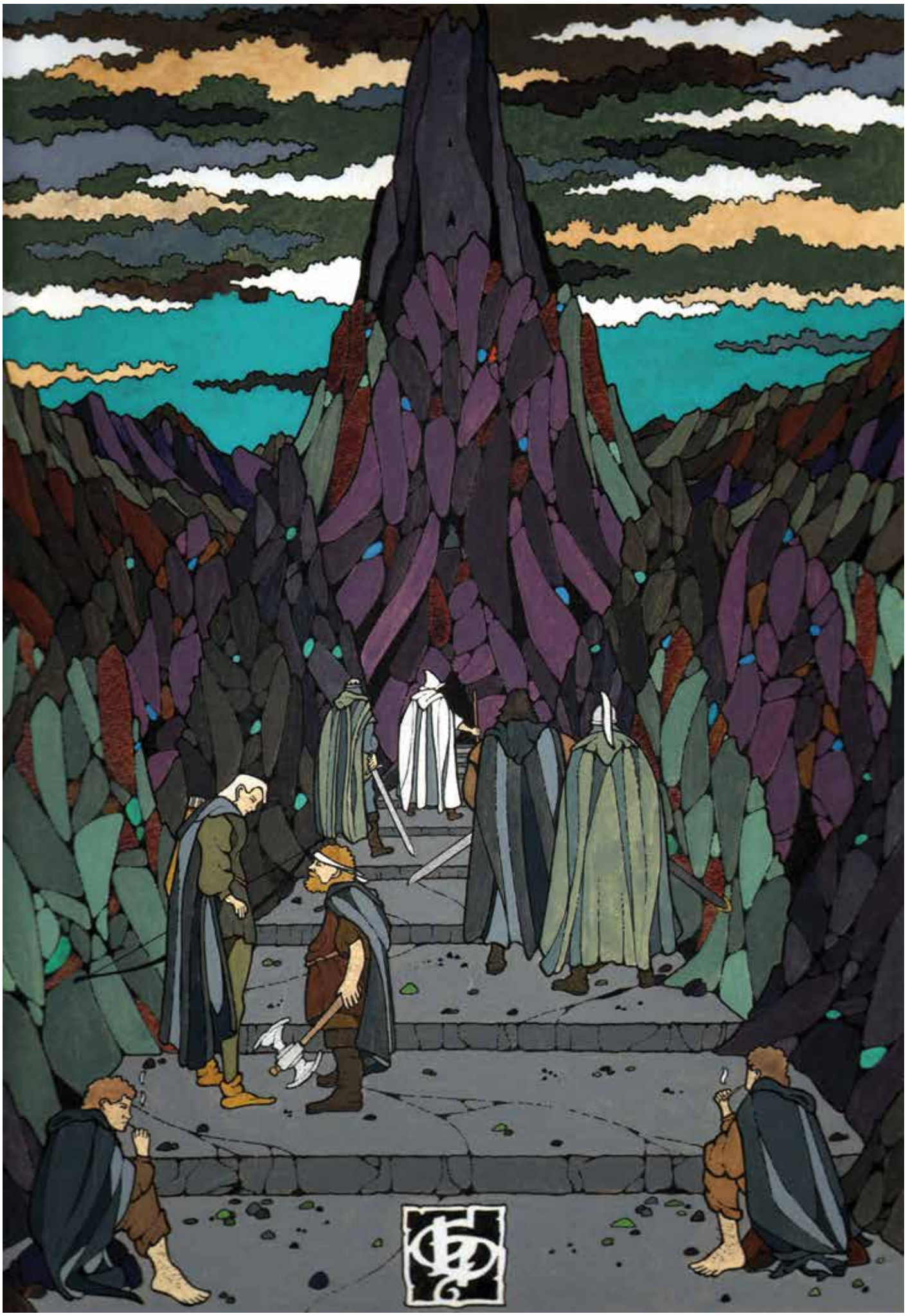
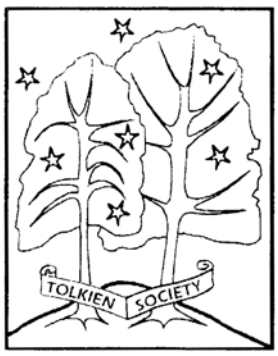
Issue 53 • Spring 2012

Mallorn

The Journal of the Tolkien Society





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The Journal of the Tolkien Society

Issue 53 • Spring 2012

Editor: Henry Gee
Production & design: Colin Sullivan

Cover art: *At the Cracks of Doom* by Ted Nasmith
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Mallorn is the Journal of the Tolkien Society, and appears twice a year, in the Spring (copy deadline 25 December) and Autumn (21 June). It considers reviews, comment, scholarly articles, original poetry, artwork and fiction (excluding fan fiction). Unsolicited material is welcome, but contributors should decide prior to submission to which category their manuscript belongs, and electronic submission is strongly encouraged. Full details on the preparation and submission to **Mallorn** are available on request from the Editor by email (mallorn@tolkiensociety.org) or by mail to 89 Connaught Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0DB, UK, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope (if in UK) or two International Reply Coupons (if outside the UK).

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.

An Elrond by any other name

Kristine Larsen

I consider myself to be unbelievably fortunate. I get to do what I love every single day — and I get paid to do it. My luck began at the age of three, when I fell in love with science through a packet of multicoloured plastic dinosaurs that I demanded my mother buy me at the gift shop of New York's Bronx Zoo. In high school, I devoured Carl Sagan's television series *Cosmos* and eagerly accompanied him on his virtual voyage "on the spaceship of the imagination". Through this I discovered my true calling — to share my love of the Universe with anyone who will listen (and occasionally those who are a reluctant captive audience).

As an undergraduate physics major, my passion was rewarded with a job running planetarium shows and telescope observing sessions for the general public. I quickly realized what a great responsibility teaching is, both in formal and informal settings. Simultaneously, I fed my interests in mythology, literature and ancient history as a student in the university's fledgling interdisciplinary honours programme. I developed an equal appreciation for the humanities and the sciences, and grew to see the world through an interdisciplinary lens. One of the greatest joys of my life was the day I was hired as a faculty member in the same department in which I had been an undergraduate, and was given the opportunity to professionally share my love for science with students and the general public.

But there was something missing from my new academic life as a professor, something that had been a natural part of my undergraduate days: that interdisciplinary way of thinking. In C. P. Snow's famous 1959 lecture 'The Two Cultures', he lamented the split of the "intellectual life of the whole Western society" into "two polar groups … literary intellectuals at one pole — at the other scientists, and as the most representative, the physical scientists". Snow warned[1] that such a division had serious consequences "for our creative, intellectual, and above all, our moral life. It is leading us to interpret the past wrongly, to misjudge the present and to deny our hopes of the future". I was struck by the basic truth that not only did I have an opportunity and a responsibility to help students and the general public discover the relevance of science, but I likewise had to do so for my colleagues in other fields. And, just as importantly, I had a responsibility to help my scientific colleagues realize the intimate relationship between science and the humanities.

This is where Tolkien enters the picture.

To be honest, I should really say 're-enters', because he had been by my side on my academic journey for more than a decade by that point. I discovered Tolkien when I was in eighth grade. I have no idea how I initially stumbled upon him (my previous literary tastes had largely been slanted towards Isaac Asimov), but like many of you I still own my original copies of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (the classic Ballantine paperback boxed set), *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*. Perhaps unlike many of you, I also still have my copy of the collector's edition programme from the much-reviled Bakshi film treatment of *LOTR*. I had a hand-drawn map of Middle-earth on my bedroom wall, and reread the trilogy every summer holiday well into college. I suspect, however, that one of the main reasons Tolkien enchanted me differs from the norm — from my first reading, I was impressed with the way Tolkien used astronomy in his secondary world. In high school, I not only wrote in dwarf runes on my notebook, but I was also making notes to myself of the Elvish names for the stars and constellations, and references to the Moon's phases. Like many of you, I too failed to complete *The Silmarillion* in my first attempt (the third time was the charm for me), but I was not put off by

the grand creation myth of Ainulindalë; on the contrary, it remains one of my favourite pieces of Tolkien's writing. My initial interest in *The Silmarillion* began to wane after the death of the Two Trees and the creation of the Sun and Moon. In other words, as the trials and tribulations of the Noldor waxed and the astronomy waned, I found myself bogged down in the Elvish phonebook.

Before the Jackson trilogy was released, my only (admittedly brief) attempt at Tolkien scholarship was an article entitled 'The Stars of Tolkien' in my then monthly column in the newsletter of the Astronomical Society of New Haven. With the resurgence in scholarly interest in Tolkien's works beginning in late 2001, I reread Tolkien's works with renewed interest, and discovered that I had been a foolish teenage hobbit indeed. For with the experience of my now less-than-tender years came an understanding that the science had not waned in the latter half of *The Silmarillion*, but had merely become more subtle. There were not only continued astronomical references to aurora, meteorites and planets, but also a wealth of geomythology, with references to volcanoes, earthquakes and catastrophic floods that I had completely missed in my initial readings. Now if I were ever stranded on a desert island (or on a moonbase) with only two works of literature, they would undoubtedly be *The Silmarillion* and *Morgoth's Ring*, the volume of the *History of Middle-earth* series that contains most of Tolkien's alternative cosmologies and creation myths for the Sun and Moon. To this day, each time I reread these works I discover fresh details.

With this renewed appreciation for Tolkien and his dedication to detail, I began my first hesitant steps into Tolkien scholarship, bringing together my expertise in astronomy with my devotion to interdisciplinary studies and public outreach. My first real foray into Middle-earth studies was a presentation at the 2002 RingCon convention in Bonn, Germany, a trip that was funded by former university provost Pearl Bartelt. She hoped that this opportunity would open up a new avenue of scholarly work for me. That proved to be an understatement of epic proportions. For, as my CV demonstrates[3], the intersection between Tolkien and science has been a very lucrative area of research for me.

Certainly my most prestigious presentation was 'Teaching Through Tolkien', a brief contributed talk given at the national meeting of the American Physical Society in Montreal, Canada, in 2004. Of more than 6,100 papers presented, mine was one of a handful to be featured in the conference press release and to be chosen for its own press conference[4]. The talk was standing-room-only — admittedly packed with far more graduate students than seasoned professors, but the interest in Tolkien among those science geeks was undeniable. An article on my presentation also appeared in *Physics World*, a British physics magazine.

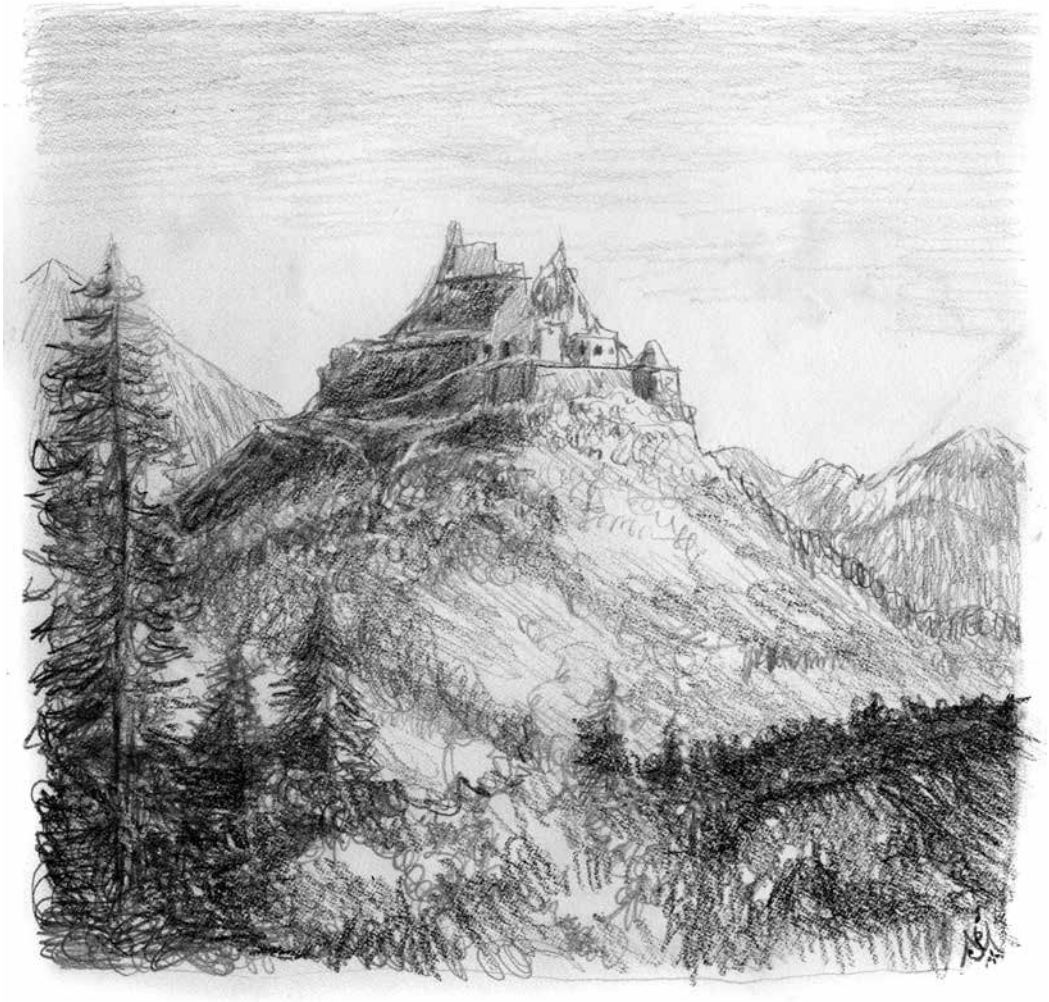
Another turning point occurred when I was contacted by Henry Gee, a senior editor at the prestigious science journal *Nature*, to review the draft of his book *The Science of Middle-earth* before publication and give suggestions about his astronomical references. As you all undoubtedly know, he subsequently became editor of this journal, further attesting to the importance of interdisciplinary studies of Tolkien. Thanks to Robin Reid, until recently the convener of the Tolkien at Kalamazoo sessions at the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, I was invited to participate as a faculty expert in a 2009 summer institute on Tolkien for high-school teachers in Texas, at which I presented a workshop and a Tolkien-based planetarium show.

My forays into Middle-earth (and other fantastical worlds) have kept my classes fresh and innovative, and my teaching enthusiastic.

Over the years, many of the astronomical details I discovered in Tolkien's works began creeping into my teaching, especially in interdisciplinary courses and courses for freshmen. I even developed several hands-on activities that used Tolkien's works to demonstrate astronomical

concepts to both college students and the general public. I routinely used the first third of *The Silmarillion* to teach creation myths, with great success. But the epitome of my classroom use of Tolkien occurred when I joined forces with a fellow Tolkien geek in our English department to develop a Tolkien-based learning community for freshmen. In the 2007 autumn semester, he taught two sections of freshman composition that used *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* as their main texts, and the same students were enrolled in a special course I offered entitled 'The Science of Middle-earth'. My course included topics from astronomy, geology and, to a lesser extent, biology[5]. The course not only had a science textbook, but relied heavily on *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, *LOTR* and excerpts from Tolkien's letters, essays and the *History of Middle-earth* volumes.

Getting students to read *The Silmarillion* is sometimes difficult; helping them to understand the details embedded in the legendarium is among the most fulfilling aspects of teaching Tolkien. For example, students in this particular course had a difficult time understanding Chapter 21 'Of Túrin Turambar' (which they were reading because of the references to a sword made of meteoritic iron). In an act of desperation, I acted out the entire chapter as a five-minute one-woman show, a feat never to be repeated again (and thankfully not available on YouTube). If you really want to know, I was especially proud of my rendition of the fateful conversation between Brandir and Niënor. Making Tolkien come alive for students is probably the most fun one can ever have teaching the legendarium, including that welcome reward when they say "oh, *that's* what he was talking about!" My colleague and I are currently planning our next iteration of this learning community, to coincide with the release of the films of *The Hobbit* in December 2012 and 2013. Thus to paraphrase Tolkien, the road to learning indeed goes ever on.



But although the Tolkien community appreciates the fact that viewpoints from myriad disciplines are required to truly understand Tolkien, we need to understand that this point of view is decidedly a minority in the Ivory Tower. As a position paper from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy written by Noftsinger, Brown and Benson argued, the American university has been "traditionally organized around silos" known as departments and programmes. Faculty members in each of these silos have been more concerned about protecting their own, sometimes at the expense of other areas of human knowledge. But as the paper (and C. P. Snow before them) further notes, knowledge "does not conform to the traditional segregated units of the academy"[6], and to improve the state of American higher education, faculty members, students and administrators must embrace true interdisciplinarity. They must move from mere lip-service to putting their money (and other resources) where their collective mouths are. Not only must they fund such research, but appreciate its worth, especially in decisions of promotion and tenure (the two keys to the kingdom in academia).

Overcoming these challenges should involve Tolkien scholars from all disciplines, for as we well understand, there is no realm of the human experience that Tolkien does not touch, and therefore no area in the liberal arts and sciences where his works cannot play a role in both educating students and increasing interdisciplinary collaborations. From religion to politics, geography to poetry, music, psychology, philosophy, history, and yes, even science and mathematics[7], there is room for scholars of all academic disciplines in Tolkien studies, as noted by Michael Drout in his defence of Tolkien scholarship published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*[8].

The Tolkien community opened its arms to me and my ideas (one might say obsessions), even when it didn't quite know what to do with my work. More than one editor has openly admitted to me that there was some initial head-scratching when reading my work, not because of a lack of scholarly rigour or evidence, but because they had, in some cases, never published articles like mine before. I probably should have warned them that I had been voted Class Individualist in high school. Thanks to the reception I have received from the Tolkien community, I have been encouraged to expand my interdisciplinary work to include such topics as depictions of time travel in the TV series *Lost* and children's films, astronomical motifs in the Harry Potter series, and feminist and scientific issues in *Doctor Who* and the works of Neil Gaiman[3]. Currently, I am also deeply involved in the astronomical community's ongoing battle against misinformation on the supposed 2012 apocalypse. All of this I owe to both the professor and the community of readers and researchers who have immersed themselves in the universe of Eä and the planet of Arda.

Not only has my scholarly activity blossomed, but my forays into Middle-earth (and other fantastical worlds) have kept my classes fresh and innovative, and my teaching enthusiastic. However, I should openly admit that not everyone has been as understanding (or supportive) as that first provost and the readers of this journal. For example, a former (note former) significant other used to refer to my Tolkien work as "Lord of the Ring Dings crap", and I recently pushed a friend and science colleague to her tipping point when I offered a course on zombies and modern science. But despite her half-kidding jabs, the proof is in the pudding; the students in that class, as in my Tolkien-based course, demonstrated critical thinking, deep learning and a clear understanding that a basic grasp of science is important for students in all majors and on all career paths. The result is a group of voting-age Americans who are much better prepared than their peers to critically analyse the History Channel 'documentaries', Wikipedia, conspiracy theories and political scare tactics. To quote Charlie Sheen: "Winning!"

As a tenured full professor, I now have the luxury to do pretty much what I want, as long as I minimally stay within the rather ambiguous contract. But as those who know me best can attest, I never do anything minimally. I observe the heavens because it's what I love, not because it's my responsibility. As of the writing of this Editorial, my

fascination with the intersections of Tolkien and the natural world has led to 33 Tolkien-related publications, 30 presentations, 5 professional workshops for teachers and 3 different courses that utilize the legendarium. Throughout this intellectual journey not only have I learned more about Tolkien than I ever expected to, but, perhaps more importantly, I have discovered a great deal about myself. I never stop being a teacher, whether my audience is students, the general public, a journal's readership or a conference. Most importantly, I am always teaching myself. As students often remark, I have, without a doubt, the coolest faculty office on campus. Not only because is it literally littered with telescopes and decorated with Tibetan prayer flags that flap in the breeze when I open the door to the rooftop observing platform, but because no other office on campus more closely resembles Middle-earth, right down to the busts of Gil-galad and Elrond, and life-size Legolas cut-out. These decorations always spark conversations, about Tolkien or astronomy or popular culture in general. But they always get students talking, and as any professor will attest, that is the most difficult first step.

It is no coincidence that the name of my favourite *LOTR* character — Elrond — literally means 'star dome'. Most of my life has been spent under the stars, the real stars viewed from an observatory, the artificial stars of a planetarium and the virtual stars of Middle-earth. But come to think of it, does this mean that Elrond is a planetarium or an observatory? Hmm, I smell another paper coming on.

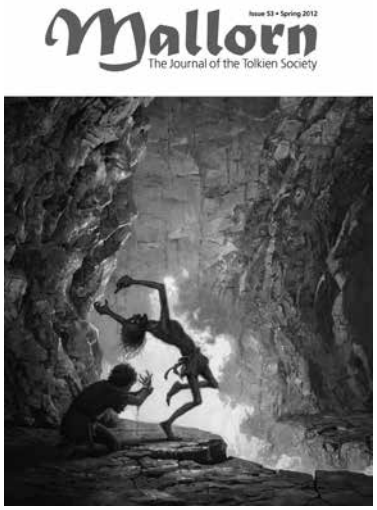
Thank you, Professor Tolkien. You and Carl Sagan have far more in common than most people realize.

Kristine Larsen teaches astronomy and Tolkien at Central Connecticut University.

1. Snow, C. P. *The Two Cultures* 3–4 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959).
2. Larsen, K. 'The Stars of Tolkien' *Shooting Star* **54**(12), 10 (1990).
3. http://www.physics.ccsu.edu/larsen/resume.htm. A number of my Tolkien-related works are directly linked from there.
4. Harris,D., Tretkoff, E. & Ouellette, J. 'Biggest Physics Meeting of the Year' (2004); http://www.scienceblog.com/community/older/2004/3/20042297.shtml
5. The specific scientific concepts covered in the course and class assignments can be found at http://www.physics.ccsu.edu/larsen/courses_fall_2007.htm
6. Noftsinger Jr, J. B., Brown, D. T. & Benson, A. J. *Beyond Windmills, Silos and Disciplines: Higher Education as a National Critical Infrastructure* (2002); http://www.jmu.edu/research/wm_library/Windmills.PDF
7. Larsen, K. 'We Hatesses Those Tricksy Numbers: Tolkien, Lewis and Maths Anxiety' *Mallorn* 52, 33–35 (2011).
8. McLemee, S. 'Reaching For the Ring' *Chronicle of Higher Education* **50**(39), A11–A13 (2004).

From the Editor

SITS. VAC.



The Editor of *Mallorn* reports that whereas five years (ten issues) is far too short a time to spend among such admirable readers, he should like to take a holiday. A long holiday. A holiday, in fact, from which he intends never to return. He'll stay to do the next issue (Number 54, Autumn 2012) but that will be his last. This means that the Tolkien Society will need a new editor starting with issue 55 (Spring 2013). Please send all applications, witnessed by seven witnesses with their names signed in red ink, to Sally Kennett, Chairman of the Tolkien Society, 60 Greet Road, Winchcombe, Cheltenham, Glocs GL54 5JT, or by e-mail to chairman@tolkiensociety.org — as soon as possible, if not sooner than that. The Production Editor, without whose ministrations *Mallorn* would in fact be impossible, says he's happy to help the new editor into Issue 55 but after that might feel the lure of the Great Sea to be likewise irresistible.

Tolkien's Nobel prize

SIR — The Nobel prize committee has a strict policy of secrecy until 50 years after a prize is awarded, at which point the nominations, initial discussions and opinions of the committee are made public. In January 2012, the papers relating to the 1961 Nobel Prize in Literature were thus made public.

Volume III of *C. S Lewis: Collected Letters* contains a letter that Lewis wrote on 7 January 1961 to Alistair Fowler asking: "In confidence. If you were asked to nominate a candidate for the Nobel Prize (literature) who wd. be your choice? Mauriac has had it. Frost? Eliot? Tolkien? E.M.Forster? Do you know the ideological slant (if any) of the Swedish Academy? Keep all this under your hat." This has made people speculate that Lewis may have nominated Tolkien for the Nobel prize, and at least one commentator[1] has seen such a possible nomination as a demonstration of Lewis's "total political naïveté — often commented on by his brother Warnie — and delightfully captured in one interchange in which Warnie, exasperated by what he saw as incredible stupidity on Jack's part suddenly realised that the whole argument was skewed because of Jack's incorrect belief that Marshall Tito was the King of Greece."

For the past 50 years, such speculation is all that has been possible. But the archives of the 1961 committee are now open and, as he has done for the past five years, the Swedish journalist Andreas Ekström was first to check the newly released papers[2]. Apart from finding that the runners-up to Ivo Andric had been Graham Greene (number 2) and Karen Blixen[3] (number 3), Ekström found that Tolkien had indeed been nominated to the prize by Lewis, whose professorship had put him on the list of people eligible to nominate candidates for the prize. Evidently the invitation letter from the Nobel committee had prompted Lewis's question to Fowler in January 1961.

In the papers of the Nobel committee (the literature laureate is selected by the Swedish Academy), Tolkien's nomination is discussed, and the powerful committee secretary (probably the most influential literary critic in the committee), Anders Österling, expresses some appreciation of the imaginativeness of Tolkien's work after which he nonetheless dismisses it with the words "*resultatet har dock icke i något avseende blivit diktning av högsta klass*" ("the result has, however, not in any respect become writing of the highest class")[4]. The use of Swedish *dock* (here translated as 'however') implies a contrast with the preceding passage in which Österling is more positive. The Swedish word *diktning* means, in this context, 'writing' or 'literary composition', but strictly fictional writing or composition. The word may imply a stronger focus on prose over plot — an area of Tolkien scholarship where Richard C. West, according to his review in volume 8 of *Tolkien Studies*, feels that Steve Walker's book *The Power of Tolkien's Prose* "helps fill a gap".

Another issue that has been brought up is the question of which edition of *The Lord of the Rings* the members of the Nobel committee had been reading. There are two likely scenarios: either they were reading the book in the original language, which was not their native tongue (Tolkien's brilliant use of archaisms to illustrate status is, for instance, likely to go unnoticed by most foreign readers, myself included), or they were reading the Swedish translation by Åke Ohlmarks, for which Tolkien himself expressed a strong dislike (see, for example, *Letters* 204, 228 and 229). In any case, it seems likely that the committee would have been at some disadvantage in its quest to evaluate the quality of Tolkien's prose.

The whole story was soon taken up by the English-language media[5] and, although Ekström's original Swedish article had highlighted the fact that Graham Greene had been number two, it has generally been Tolkien's name that has made the headlines in the English-language news. This, in itself, is a sort of vindication for fans who feel that their favourite author has been snubbed by the snobs of the Nobel committee. A number of Tolkien readers have reacted in ways that suggest they have found that the grapes had turned sour, either by snubbing the importance of the Nobel Prize in Literature or by giving short thrift to the literary acumen of the members of the Swedish Academy. This, however, seems not to be an entirely reasonable reaction. Michael Drout, on his blog 'Wormtalk and Slugspeak', takes a different approach[6], discussing instead how the Nobel committee in 1961 was firmly rooted in a modernist stylistic view, which made the members unable to appreciate what Tolkien was trying to do.

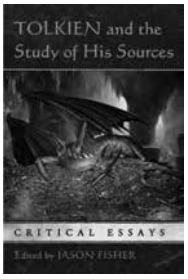
Ultimately it is no surprise that Tolkien did not get the Nobel Prize in Literature — most people would have been able to guess that, even had Tolkien been nominated, his work would not be of the kind and style that was rewarded with a Nobel prize. The surprising bit, if any, is that C. S. Lewis did indeed nominate Tolkien; that Anders Österling of the Nobel committee expressed appreciation of Tolkien's imaginativeness; and perhaps also that it is Tolkien's name that made the headlines in the English-language news in 2012 rather than Greene, Frost or Blixen.

Troels Forchhammer

1. User 'halfir' in the thread 'Tolkien and the Nobel Prize for Literature' on The Lord of the Rings Fanatics Plaza, 28 April 2008. Retrieved 9 January 2012; http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=224895&PID=6726466#6726466
2. Ekström, A. 'Greene tvåa på listan 1961' in *Sydsvenskan* (3 January 2012); Retrieved 10 January 2012; http://www.sydsvenskan.se/kultur-och-nojen/article1597798/Nu-avslojas-det-Greene-tvaa-pa-listan-1961.html
3. In the English-speaking world better known by her pseudonym Isaak Dinesen.
4. This translation is as literal as possible while retaining the sense of the original.
5. The first being by Alison Flood: 'JRR Tolkien's Nobel prize chances dashed by "poor prose"' *The Guardian* (5 January 2012).
6. Drout, M. 'Tolkien and the Nobel Prize' (8 January 2012). Retrieved 16 January 2012; http://wormtalk.blogspot.com/2012/01/tolkien-and-nobel-prize-many-of-my.html

On the origin of ideas

JANET BRENNAN CROFT



Tolkien and the Study of his Sources: Critical Essays
Jason Fisher (ed.)
McFarland & Company, 228 pp. $40.00
ISBN: 978-0786464821

With this excellent collection, Jason Fisher mounts a spirited defence of the somewhat academically unfashionable study of sources. This defence begins with a selection of essays on the philosophy and methodology of Tolkienian source-hunting, and these principles are then demonstrated in a group of studies chosen to illuminate under-examined sources and approaches.

Tom Shippey addresses the central question with his lead essay, 'Introduction: Why Source Criticism?'. As he reminds us, there's no good reason for a scholar to avoid source study simply because Tolkien inveighed against it; in fact, Shippey makes the excellent point that "all literary works bear some relation to the milieu in which they are composed and received, but we often do not realize how quickly elements of these milieux are forgotten". Understanding Tolkien's context — what he read both professionally and for enjoyment, the events of his times and his personal life — can serve only to enrich our appreciation of his work, so long as we do not mistake "similarity-spotting" for true connection and influence.

E. L. Risden moves from the 'why' to the 'what' in his essay, 'Source Criticism: Background and Applications', which attempts to define exactly what source criticism is, its methods and techniques, and how it grew from its early roots in Biblical source criticism. Defending this critical approach, Risden says that "finding writers' sources allows us to see what they studied, what they brought from those studies directly into their own work, what they used but changed, and what they wanted to challenge or correct". Risden uses the source study of *Hamlet* as one of his prime examples of the value of this approach.

In 'Tolkien and Source Criticism: Remarking and Remaking', Jason Fisher addresses some of the specific issues of Tolkienian source-study, first placing Tolkien in the borrowing-and-reworking tradition of medieval authorship. His most forceful argument is that "to be aware of sources acknowledged by Tolkien himself as having influenced his imagination, and not to examine them for what they might reveal, would be critically irresponsible".

This sets the tone for the essays that follow, which are arranged more or less chronologically by source. Leading off is Nicholas Birns' 'The Stones and the Book: Tolkien, Mesopotamia, and Biblical Mythopoeia'. What's interesting here is the impact discoveries of material such as the Gilgamesh epic and the *Enuma Elish* had on Biblical scholarship and the study of the early "consciously mythic" books of the Hebrew bible. In addition to giving examples of how Tolkien "calqued" and "bracketed" Old Testament material in his legendarium, Birns makes the astute observation that "if *The Lord of the Rings* … is like the Old Testament in literary terms, … then the *Silmarillion* material — incomplete, existing in multiple versions, archaic, primal, mythic, obscure, and sometimes disturbing — resembles Mesopotamian legend".

Next is Kristine Larsen's 'Sea Birds and Morning Stars', in which she traces a pattern of similarities between Tolkien's Eärendil and Elwing, and the classical myth of Ceyx and Alcyone. Most impressive is her rigorous list of sources from which Tolkien might have known this story, ending with her strongest argument — that this story was excerpted from Gower in Kenneth Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, for which Tolkien prepared the glossary.

Miryam Librán-Moreno, in '"Byzantium, New Rome!" Goths, Langobards, and Byzantium in *The Lord of the Rings*' contends that Tolkien put the "complex history" of the interactions of these peoples to "unique, nuanced, and innovative creative uses". She reminds us, before launching into a fascinating consideration of some key events of the fourth to eleventh centuries, of the concept of polygenesis: that elements in Tolkien's tales often were distilled from multiple sources, not one single 'true' source. Not only that, but "Tolkien reused the same historical sources in several episodes of *The Lord of the Rings* according to different narrative purposes, and thus revealed and exploited ambiguities already present in the historical source"; so one set of historical events may be only one of the inspirations for a similar set of events in the story, or may be echoed and re-explored multiple times.

Thomas Honegger addresses a particularly difficult question in his essay. Although the Rohirrim may indeed look simply like "Anglo-Saxons on Horseback" at first glance, they actually exhibit qualities of several different Germanic cultures. Honegger contends that Tolkien in part worked backwards from the choice of primary-world language he used to represent the riders (Old English), but at the same time was seeking a way to embody the purest representation of the "northern heroic spirit" possible, purer even than that in The Battle of Maldon; the Rohirrim grew out of this convergence of two differing artistic aims.

In 'William Caxton's The Golden Legend as a Source for Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', Judy Ann Ford makes a case for medieval collections of saints' tales as a rich source of stories of the miraculous, as rich as any of the pagan mythology generally credited as the origin of some of the magical elements in Tolkien's works. At the very least, Ford shows that Tolkien would have encountered Caxton's collection through his work on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it's not unlikely that he would have been quite familiar with it and similar works through more general reading in medieval literature.

With '*She* and Tolkien, Revisited', John D. Rateliff substantially revises his 1981 *Mythlore* article on the same topic. We know unequivocally that Tolkien read and enjoyed *She* and other books by H. Rider Haggard; Rateliff shows how, although Tolkien's work differs greatly in genre and feel, elements of Haggard's novels — images, motifs, quirks of character, words and phrases, themes of love and immortality — went into the "creative stock-pot" of story that contributed to forming Tolkien's legendarium.

Mark T. Hooker's 'Reading John Buchan in Search of Tolkien' initially struck me as weak in comparison to Rateliff's study; it seemed to consist mostly of the 'similarity-spotting' that Shippey warned about in his essay. But there are some gems of observation here; for example, the discussion of "gift" versus "plunder" and its implications for ownership of the Ring is quite insightful, and a potential source for Ghân-Buri-Ghân is found in a descendant of the pre-Roman inhabitants of Britain in *The Blanket of the Dark*. In the end, Hooker is just as convincing about Buchan as Rateliff is about Haggard; these adventure stories, devoured in Tolkien's youth, became part of the leaf-mould of his mind and echoes pop up years later in his own adventure tales.

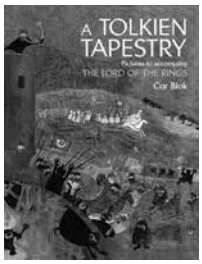
The approach taken by Diana Pavlac Glyer and Josh B. Long in 'Biography as Source: Niggles and Notions' is entirely different from the preceding essays. Here they attempt to show how "Tolkien appropriates his life experiences and uses them as a starting point to build something fresh and new". Tolkien's most obviously autobiographical works are the unfinished *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*, in which Tolkien, his family and fellow Inklings can be positively identified through his own notes, but Glyer and Long also make good cases for self-reference in *Leaf by Niggle* and *Smith of Wootton Major*.

Fisher has done excellent work in selecting the essays for *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources*, minimizing duplication of the usual subjects of source study and showing exciting new directions in which the field could go. The writing is consistently approachable and readable, a credit to his editing. This collection is well worth seeking out; an enjoyable read, full of new and enticing insights.

Janet Brennan Croft is at the University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

Visions of Middle-earth

DANIEL HOWICK



A Tolkien Tapestry: Pictures to Accompany The Lord of the Rings.
Cor Blok (ed. Pieter Collins)
HarperCollins, 160 pp. £20.00
ISBN: 978-0007437986

In the early 1960s, the Dutch artist Cor Blok created more than 100 pieces of art influenced by the legendarium of J. R. R. Tolkien. Soon after, the professor became aware of the artist and, after reviewing five pieces of the artist's work, wrote:

"I thought them [the pictures] most attractive … I should very much like to see some more, in the hope that some more will be as good as 'The Battle of the Hornburg'" (Tolkien-George Allen & Unwin archive, Harper Collins)

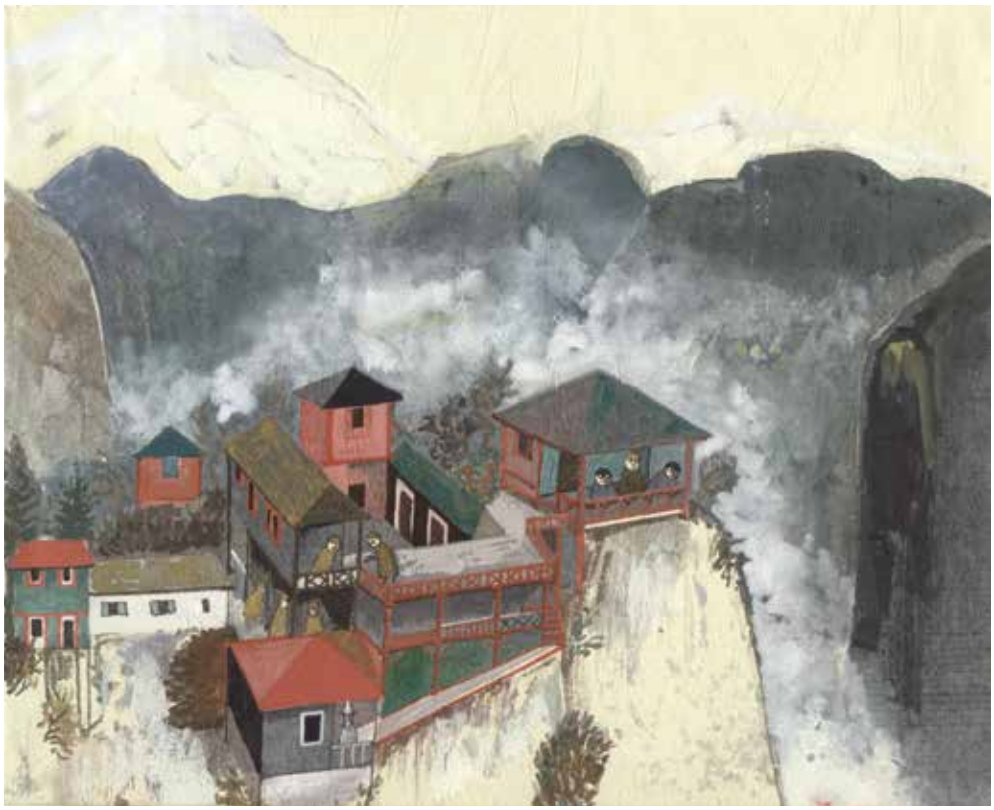
The very publication of Blok's *A Tolkien Tapestry* recalls a tale worthy of the professor himself. For it seemed to HarperCollins only a little while ago that there might not be enough of Blok's paintings to accompany a 12-month calendar (despite the fact the artist had painted more than 100 pieces), let alone a publication featuring 100 or so separate paintings (a hearty congratulations to Peter Collier, and of course to Mr Blok, for tracking them all down). Yet here it is, and here I am, desperately trying to write a review of the aforementioned text amid a heap of essays and assignments of my own. I should like to say that I am a student of English literature, not of art or illustration, so please bear in mind that this critique comes very much from a layman's perspective.

Tolkien expressed an aversion to having his *Lord of the Rings* saga illustrated because he didn't want his readers to "see his characters through the eyes of an individual artist". A fair request when we consider the public appropriation of Peter Jackson's Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf and so on.

Nevertheless, Tolkien held the young artist in high esteem and bought some of his *The Lord of the Rings* paintings. In a letter addressed to "Mr. Block", Tolkien praises the young man's artistry, citing that:

"I think it very kind of you to consider selling any of your pictures. If they were mine I should not be able to bear to part with them whether in need or not. I should like to order for myself 'The Battle of the Hornburg' and 'The Dead Marshes'."

When the matter of an illustrated edition of *The Lord of the Rings* resurfaced in 1962, Tolkien yielded and considered illustrator Pauline Baynes (Tolkien and Lewis's chosen illustrator) and art historian Cor Blok appropriate for the appointment. This edition, however, would never see the light of day, and the closest impression we have to what could have been resides within *A Tolkien Tapestry*.



The book is beautifully bound, wonderfully presented and sits in a rather lovely dust jacket featuring *The Battle of the Hornburg*, the painting Tolkien bought in 1962. I was also pleased to discover an illuminating introductory essay by the painter in which he cites his reasons for pursuing Tolkien, his methods and sources of inspiration.

In my capacity as critic, however, I must be candid. Blok's paintings are not of a consistent standard. Some are brilliant — *The Battle of The Hornburg*, for instance (an obviously busy painting, giving what it is trying to depict) — but some, unfortunately, are not, or rather, do not appeal to my tastes (preferring the busier, detailed works of Ted Nasmith, Alan Lee and John Howe).

Blok's artistic strategy, within the confines of his work, was to leave out a terrific amount of detail, in terms of both character and setting. This is evident in the majority of his paintings, although not in all of them. The idea — that this leaves more room for the viewer's imagination — is good, but it doesn't always work. With this artistic ploy, however, Blok is able to channel a medieval design through his paintings, recalling at times, the figures of the Bayeux Tapestry, even figures one might see in primitive cave drawings or in a medieval manuscript. Perhaps this is why Tolkien enjoyed Blok's paintings so much, given how his own work recalled medieval history — most notably that of the Anglo-Saxons and their Old English vernacular.

Personally, I think some of his best paintings are those in which Blok disregards this minimalist concept, such as *The Battle Of The Hornburg* or *Lothlórien I*. These paintings are full of detail and action — the settings figuring in a role at least as dramatic as those of Blok's diminutive figures. This approach, I feel, mirrors Tolkien's subcreational work far better, for as Blok himself observes: "landscape with Tolkien serves not merely as a backdrop to the action: it contributes greatly to the atmosphere".

Something else that irks me about Blok — and it probably shouldn't,

given my love of Peter Jackson's films — is his departure from the written word of Tolkien. For example, he has given Gollum a beak. A beak? Gollum, as we all know, is a not so distant relative of the hobbits, not the eagles of Manwë. So why?! To be fair, Blok admits to the mistake, citing that it had "escaped [his] mind" at the time, along with a few other minor deviations (Bag End has an upstairs for instance).

Despite my criticism, the publication itself is a handsome one, producing a unique interpretation of Tolkien's subcreational world. Although I profess myself slightly disappointed, some of the art produced is highly successful, such as *The Hornburg*, *The Petrified Trolls*, *Frodo's Vision On Amon Hen* and the wonderfully atmospheric *Rivendell*.

I would recommend this book to anybody who enjoys an eclectic array of art (not just romanticism, classicism or modernism, say), and who doesn't mind the strokes of an artist who actively pursues minimalism, for the detail is … minimal.

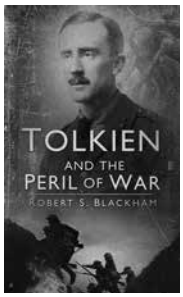
Daniel Howick studies Tolkien at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Cor Blok's originals (and soon reproductions) are available through Pieter Collier, at tolkienlibrary.com or orders@tolkienlibrary.com.

For another picture by Cor Blok, see page 21.

Life during wartime

BECKY HITCHIN



Tolkien and the Peril of War
Robert S. Blackham
The History Press, 144 pp. £9.99
ISBN: 978-0752457802

In *Tolkien and the Peril of War*, Bob Blackham provides a fascinating and absorbing view of a young officer's life before, during and after the First World War. But if you are expecting a book full of new revelations about Tolkien and his war years, you might in for a bit of a disappointment.

There are other, and probably better, books out there about Tolkien's thoughts on war; Tolkien's experiences in the war; the way Tolkien responded to war. Carpenter's *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* offers not only Tolkien's harrowing comparisons of war-torn northern France with Mordor and the Morannon, but also the haunting letters he exchanged with Christopher during the Second World War. John Garth's detailed *Tolkien and the Great War* provides an in-depth record of Tolkien's war service. Blackham rightly acknowledges both those sources as inspiration. Numerous books about Tolkien — from the most academic to the most popular — discuss the way in which the war affected his writing and his characters. We can even see the horrors of the Battle of the Somme in Peter Jackson's apocalyptic landscapes leading towards Mount Doom.

So what is left for Bob Blackham to tell us? What stories or tales can still be told? I say that there may be better books if you want an account of Tolkien's war years, but Blackham certainly carves out a niche for himself that none of the other books has filled.

This started on ebay. There is a telling acknowledgement in the book to Alison Houghton, who introduced the author to buying old postcards on the auction site, and the fruits of their labours are clearly seen in this book. A picture tells a thousand words, it is said, and rich illustrations in the form of postcards and photographs from years gone by make up a considerable portion of the book, enhancing the author's written descriptions of the trials, tribulations and quick moments of joy that made up the war years for so many.

I don't think that this really is a book about Tolkien and the war. It's a book about the life of a soldier in the Great War, from the rigours of the training camp to the horrors of the front line. It shows us these in pictures. It gives us the atmosphere and the reality that simple words cannot, and therein lies its value.

Blackham's book starts — after, rather wonderfully, a description of the Tolkien Society — with a short discussion of how the war began, followed by a few chapters that seem to skip rather confusingly from subject to subject. How Tolkien met Edith; his time at Phoenix Farm with his aunt Jane Neave; exams at Oxford; and Hilary Tolkien's war experiences (that scarred him so badly that on returning to his market garden, he never once talked about his time in the war) are all covered, albeit briefly.

From then on, the book becomes more methodological, starting with Tolkien's officer training in Bedford, his time in Whittington Barracks near Lichfield and then Rugeley Camp on Cannock Chase. This is where the book, for me, becomes very personal. When I was much younger, my grandparents would often take me to Cannock Chase, and every now and then we'd find unused bullets or shells half-buried in the scrubby heathland. It was always a shock for me, seeing the half-shiny pieces of deadly brass in the now beautiful and peaceful parkland.

I think a lot of people reading this book will find the same — that one picture, one small piece of description will suddenly echo with familiarity and personal experience.

Blackham shows how Tolkien's life was split into two very

different worlds: his life in officers' barracks, heavy with the smell of tobacco smoke and boot polish, and his life away from that with Edith, planning their wedding, attending his degree ceremony in Oxford, their wedding in Warwick, their honeymoon in Clevedon, and a rather considerable number of pages given to a day trip to Cheddar Gorge.

We then go back to army life and pass through Great Haywood to the continent — Le Havre, Etaples and the Battle of the Somme. Here, again, the book gets somewhat confused between telling the story of the dreadful battle and telling Tolkien's story. I feel it would have made easier reading to explain what was known of Tolkien's involvement and then to allow the battle to tell its own story, rather than mix up the two. What I would also have liked to know more about is a communication officer's role on the front line and in reserves. This seems to be relatively lacking in an otherwise thorough account. So many details, though, I find fascinating — an inter-company sports day while on R&R, tug-of-war, relay races and even a concert — and soldiers being able to attend religious services on a day away from the trenches. Two local valleys being called Sausage Valley and Mash Valley. Tolkien being pulled up on his German pronunciation by a wounded German officer. The fact that soldiers still had a daily rum ration (though of only 2 tablespoons).

From Tolkien's life on the front line came trench fever and removal to Gezaincourt and then Le Touquet, where a field hospital had been set up in the decadent settings of a casino. From there came transport to England, hospital in the University of Birmingham and one of the book's more interesting insights into the way the First World War seems to have found its way into every nook and cranny of Tolkien's writing — the suggestion that the white clothed nurses may have been some inspiration for the figure of Galadriel.

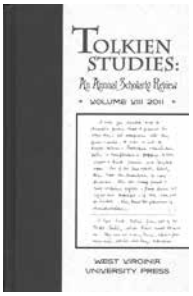
The book ends as it begins — with Tolkien and Edith back in Oxford, a new addition to their lives in the form of their son John, and a future clear of war ahead of them. Tolkien was back in his own world, far from the trenches, but with the memories of those terrible days forever with him, full of the courage of men, small in the face of the huge adversities they suffered. The feeling of surviving against all odds and returning home to loved ones.

This book is about Tolkien, but more, it is an elegy for all those who fought in the First World War. The author puts it best in his introduction: "The First World War still affects the world we live in today. Though the last survivors of the war have left the stage, it is important that we remember the sacrifice that was made by their generation in our recent past." Thank you, Bob, for showing those of us who do not remember those days, just how great some of their sacrifices were.

Becky Hitchin

The year in perspective

TROELS FORCHHAMMER



Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review, Volume VIII 2011

Eds Douglas A. Anderson, Michael D. C. Drout and Verlyn Flieger

West Virginia University Press, $60.00

E-ISSN:1547-3155

The eighth volume of *Tolkien Studies* is special in a number of ways. To let the last be first, the big news is that David Bratman, who has written the annual year's work overviews in the previous volumes, has enlisted Merlin DeTardo to assist him in the work. Furthermore, the new original material in this volume consists of letters from Robert Quilter Gilson rather than writings by Tolkien himself, and, finally, we are introduced to a new concept: the review essay.

The section of articles, shorter than in the past couple of years, opens with Philips Irving Mitchell's article 'Legend and History Have Met and Fused' in which he looks at "The Interlocution of Anthropology, Historiography, and Incarnation in J. R. R. Tolkien's 'On Fairy-stories'". Mitchell examines Tolkien's essay in the context of writings by Chesterton, Barfield and Dawson, and sees in these a Christian response to a contemporary view of culture and society as following the rules of Darwinian evolution and equating evolution with improvement, resulting in the view that modern society and culture is necessarily better.

In the shortest of this year's articles, 'Tolkien's Goldberry and The Maid of the Moor', John M. Bowers goes hunting for a source for Tolkien's character Goldberry. The study is weakened by the fact that the connection to the source that Tolkien is known to have encountered (in Kenneth Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose*) is tenuous at best, whereas the much stronger parallels to other incarnations of this moor-maiden figure cannot be connected firmly to Tolkien. Although the noted parallels are interesting, the article would have benefitted from not insisting on suggesting a source.

The linguistic study of 'Language in Tolkien's "Bagme Bloma"' by Lucas Annear starts out with a careful analysis of Tolkien's use of Gothic in the poem (published in *Songs for the Philologists*, 1936), and continues with an analysis of the meaning, relying also on other poems by Tolkien in

the same volume. Annear suggests that this is a partisan poem in the conflict between "Lit. and Lang.". Not being a linguist, and knowing nothing about Gothic, it was a pleasant surprise to be able to follow Annear's clear explanation of the linguistic details, and I would very much like to see similar work done on, for example, Tolkien's use of Old English.

José Manuel Ferrández Bru examines influences in the Birmingham Oratory in his article '"Wingless fluttering": Some Personal Connections in Tolkien's Formative Years'. The main focus is, naturally, on Father Francis, the guardian of the Tolkien brothers, whom Bru finds has been portrayed in an undeservedly negative light due to his resistance to Tolkien's courtship of Edith Bratt. But Bru also discusses other inhabitants of the Oratory in this article that remains interesting even when it at times wanders a little far from the direct link to Tolkien in his quest to portray Fr Francis as an intelligent man, conservative, but not ultramontane.

John Garth's contribution to the 'Notes and Documents', 'Robert Quilter Gilson, T.C.B.S.: A Brief Life in Letters', is an edition of letters by R. Q. Gilson of T.C.B.S. fame, whose correspondence with his fiancée and particularly with his step-mother became almost a diary. There is something heart-rending about reading this correspondence, youthfully hopeful and enthusiastic, knowing where it will end, but the tragedy is part of the history of the T.C.B.S. that was also an important influence in Tolkien's formative years, and Garth's editing, alternating between quotation and paraphrase, keeps it relevant and readable.

Following up on her book on Tolkien's war experiences, Janet Brennan Croft writes about his pre-war experiences in the Officers Training Corps, giving some background on this British military training scheme in 'The Hen that Laid the Eggs'. Croft also draws parallels to civil preparedness in Middle-earth.

John Garth reviews *Parma Eldalamberon XIX*, which takes the development of Quenya phonology through 1937 up to 1951. Volumes four and five of the annual journal of the German Tolkien Society, *Hither Shore*, are reviewed by Mark T. Hooker, who provides a very helpful estimate of the language level required for the German articles. Gerald Seaman reviews both *Music in Middle-earth* (eds Steimel & Schneidewind), and *Middle-earth Minstrel: Essays on Music in Tolkien* (ed. Eden), finding that the latter strays

a little far from the musical subject. Steve Walker's book on *The Power of Tolkien's Prose* is reviewed by Richard C. West, who finds it a good start in filling a gap in Tolkien scholarship. Finally, Tom Shippey reviews Christopher Tolkien's edition of *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, which is now available in a print-on-demand edition (with the original edition being freely available from the Viking Society web page).

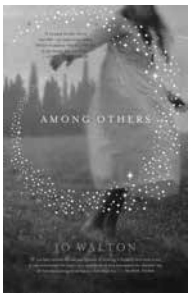
It has been discussed whether it was reasonable to allow Deidre A. Dawson almost 100 pages for the 'review essay' of the proceedings from 'The Ring Goes Ever On'. She spends 98 pages reviewing 835 pages, whereas more than the double number, 1,568 pages, are reviewed on the preceding 36 pages. Dawson gives an excellent overview and introduction to the two volumes of the proceedings, and goes on to review each paper in somewhat greater detail than is usual for a review (often spending more than a page on a single paper). This allows her to engage in a discussion with the paper that goes beyond the bounds normally used in a review (possibly the reason behind the invention of the review essay) without becoming a proper rebuttal. Unfortunately, this occasionally makes it seem idiosyncratic in a manner that, in my opinion, doesn't befit a scholarly journal.

Many regular readers of *Tolkien Studies* habitually open a new volume on 'The Year's Work in Tolkien Studies' to see what David Bratman has to say. Bratman's comprehensive knowledge of Tolkien scholarship as well as his dry wit (for example, from the present survey, "A sample analysis proves, to nobody's surprise, that chapters taking place in woods have lots of descriptions of forests".) has earned him great respect, but Merlin DeTardo is fully able to hold his own in this collaborative overview, and with the continued high output of Tolkien scholarship, I will look forward to seeing more from this pair.

Troels Forchhammer is a physicist who works for a major manufacturer of mobile telephones. He lives in Denmark.

Telling tales

PAT REYNOLDS



Among Others
Jo Walton
Tom Docherty Associates, 304 pp. £9.99
ISBN: 978-0765331724

Among Others is a fairy book in which Glorfindel is an important character and locations include Mordor and Ithilien. It is not set in Tolkien's Middle-earth, but has a central character — the crippled 15-year-old girl, Mori — who uses Middle-earth as a frame of reference for a childhood in the valleys of south Wales.

Among Others is a deceptively simple book. But it has as many layers as a millefeuille pastry. You might read it and think it an excellent coming-of-age fantasy, reminiscent of Penelope Farmer. Or you might read it against the background of closures of public libraries and think it an excellent advocation for them and reading in general — and reading of speculative fiction, in particular. Or you might read it and enjoy it as a novel with some great characters. Or you might read it with the kind of appreciation a craftsperson has when looking at a masterpiece — delighting in the technical skills of the accomplishment. Or you might read it and wonder what the fuss is about.

Among Others has several beginnings: a dedication, two pages of thanks and notes, two epigraphs, a piece that acts as a preface, a reflection on that piece, an inscription and another epigraph. All of these things deserve and repay careful reading — the dedication to libraries and librarians, for example, at one level is what it is: a dedication to libraries and librarians, at another level, it is the first introduction of a leitmotif, and at another, it is cleverly phrased: the noun-subject is not mentioned, so Walton avoids declaring that 'this' is a novel, a diary, an autobiography or anything else.

The second epigraph is a quotation from the LiveJournal of Farah Mendelsohn:

> What one piece of advice would you give to your younger self, and at what age?
> Any time between 10 and 25:
> It's going to improve. Honest. There really are people out there that you will like and who will like you.

This is framing the surface layer of *Among Others*: it is a diary of Mori for whom things need to improve. It is the story of how she finds people she likes, people who like her. It is also a fantasy novel. To be candid: those who find the idea of reading the diary of a 15-year-old — albeit one of a Tolkien-lover with an interesting life — like a waste of good reading time might be pleasantly surprised at how engaging this is, but confirmation of their suspicions is equally possible.

Much of the book is taken up with Mori's recordings and observations of her reading habits. Walton achieves the feat of remaining poised — and concealing the difficulty of the balancing act — between on the one hand making Mori an infuriating child phenomenon with the critical acuity that

only comes from a lifetime of reading, and on the other hand making Mori's reading list interesting only at the level that other people's bookshelves always are.

The commentary on the preface places *Among Others* in the context of "those memoirs … later discredited to everyone's horror because the writer lied and is revealed to be a different colour, gender, class and creed from the way they've made everybody think". This sounds like a description of *Down the Road, Worlds Away* by Rahila Khan, who far from being an Asian girl was a white Church of England vicar. In a mirror to the historical-fiction writer who renamed the seaside town where her work was set so that no nit-picking reader could pounce on her and declare that her hero could not have skipped down the cobbled high street in 1893, as the cobbles were lifted and tarmacadam placed the year before, Walton declares that the Welsh valleys do not exist.

It is notable that disability and sexuality are missing from the list of aspects of difference in the 'discredited memoirs', for they are all key themes in the book. Sexuality runs through like hormones in a teenager, but disability is more considered. Fiction — let alone speculative fiction — often gets disability wrong. Typical is the writer who spots the obvious and thinks that is all there is to it: such a writer would have observed that Mori cannot run for a bus. Disability is a bit more complicated than that. Thus it intersects with sexuality, with family relationships, and is far more than a description of what the disabled body cannot do. It isn't nice and it isn't easy. There is pain, for example. Another point of failure is particularly tempting to speculative-fiction authors: the compensation factor. In this failure, the 'cannot do' is balanced with a 'can do' — the blind can see the colours beyond the normal spectrum, the halt can pilot spacecraft and so on. It is refreshing, therefore, to find that Mori's pain, far from being a key to fairyland, drives fairies away. Another character, however, sees fairies more clearly when they are holding Mori's stick: the mechanics of this are not explored, and I suspect are of little interest to most readers, but I can't help wondering at the ambiguity — is it to do with the 'Celtic' or 'natural' or 'fairy-gift' or 'material culture of disability' aspects of the stick? Like artefacts in fairy tales, it is an object to be thought about, or not, as the reader finds it.

I can imagine that some readers will be disturbed by Mori's attitude to her mother. Reading this text as fantasy, Mori's mother is a witch. However, it is clear, just as abandoned tram-ways underlie the fairy-paths, Mori's mother is mentally ill. Again, this is something to be thought about, or not, by the reader.

This, then, is what the fuss is about: *Among Others* is a fantasy for lovers of fantasy, but not for those who are content with comfortable escapism of whatever genre. It is for those of us who are, perhaps, the Others.

Pat Reynolds is the archivist for the Tolkien Society.

Exploring the blind spots

HARLEY J. SIMS

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North

Snowblind Studios, £20.95 (PC), £21.95 (PlayStation 3), £24.95 (Xbox 360)

> Of the great War of the Ring, many songs have been sung and many tales told. The names of heroes like Gandalf the Grey, Aragorn the King, and Frodo the Ring-bearer are greatly revered. And rightly so … Yet Sauron's grasp stretched much further than the lands of Gondor and Rohan alone, and his forces might have done great evil in the North of Middle-earth had a handful of heroes not stood in his path. Their stories, too, deserve to be told … Pay heed now to one such tale which begins here, in the town of Bree, just a few short days before Frodo arrived on his quest.

So Gandalf commands in the introductory voice-over to *The Lord of the Rings: War in the North* moments before the player(s) are deposited before Aragorn inside the Prancing Pony. This is not, of course, the best imitation of Tolkien's writing; it seems unlikely that Gandalf would ever refer to himself or his companions as 'heroes' (he uses the word 'hero' only once (ref. 1, p. 263) and, as with its three other appearances in *The Lord of the Rings* (pp. 515, 697, 880), its use borders irony), nor is it likely that the wizard would state that his name is "rightly so" to be "greatly revered". Nevertheless, one does not pick up a video-game controller with expectations of literary precision, nor to peruse on-screen text for any longer than necessary. One does so expecting an interactive, audio-visual experience — something that lends to the passive medium of film some of the active depth and explorative interface of the real world. With a game based in Middle-earth, the appeal is obvious. The question, as always with adaptations, is whether the experience is worthy of its prestigious setting.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North is an action-RPG developed by Snowblind Studios of Seattle, Washington, in association with Middle-earth Enterprises, and published by WB Games for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 consoles, as well as for PC. The game is also affiliated with TimeWarner's New Line Cinema, and is set in the world of the recent films. It has an ESRB rating of Mature 17+ for the amount

of gore, something relatively new among *Lord of the Rings* games, which are nevertheless all combat-heavy. *War in the North* was released in the United Kingdom on 24 November, slightly earlier elsewhere.

Snowblind Studios is responsible for a number of well-known hack-and-slash fantasy titles over the past ten years, including *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* (set in the *Dungeons & Dragons* setting, *Forgotten Realms*), as well as the generic *Champions of Norrath* and its sequel *Champions: Return to Arms*. Veterans of any one of these titles will feel a profound sense of déjà vu even before the true action of *War in the North* begins. The systems and protocols involving conversation, equipment, inventory and purchasing are almost identical to the studio's previous RPG titles, which, for their efficiency, is not to say they could easily have been improved. Level advancement and acquisition of skills are also similar, providing yet another example of where *LOTR* inspires *D&D* inspires adaptations of *LOTR*. For the most part (and especially at the higher levels of difficulty), combat remains a button-mashing, potion-swallowing mayhem, especially when one is surrounded by orcs and the other party members are in need of reviving. Ranged attacks that involve precise aiming, as well as customizable abilities, tend to break this monotony somewhat, but the game remains overwhelmingly combat-based. *War in the North* can be played shoulder-to-shoulder with two players (except on PC) and over online networks with up to three.

For Tolkien aficionados, the most interesting aspect of the game lies in its use of literary material. Although around a dozen electronic games set in Middle-earth have been published for almost a dozen platforms since Peter Jackson's films began appearing (with most, but not all, being set in the world of the films), *War in the North* is the first one dedicated to peripheral areas, events and characters.

Choosing among three would-be heroes, players are sent north by Aragorn to investigate an attack on the Rangers' camp at Sarn Ford by nine black riders. They soon discover a campaign to conquer the north for Sauron's forces, one led by a towering black Númenórean who describes himself as the Dark Lord's "right hand". Before finally cornering the villain in his lair amid the grisly ruins of Carn Dûm, players will visit Fornost, Sarn Ford, the Barrow Downs, Rivendell, the Ettenmoors and Mount Gundabad, as well as ruins and a dragon's lair in the Grey Mountains, and an original Dwarvish kingdom called Nordinbad. Osgiliath and Lórien are also portrayed, although as 'challenge' areas for practising one's combat skills.

During their journeys, players will encounter familiar, original and never-before-portrayed characters. Most notable of the last group is Radagast, whom they must rescue in Mirkwood from the clutches of Saenathra, a clone of Shelob. Probably the most memorable of the original characters, however, is Úrgost, the firedrake in the Grey Mountains, with whom characters must deal rather than duel (this is not the First Age, after all). That the wyrm bargains honourably — and that the player-characters chide him good-naturedly at the end of the game — will doubtless stick in the craws of most purists. In the Ettenmoors, there is also a 'Stone-giant', a creature mentioned only (and possibly whimsically) in *The Hobbit*, and that *War in the North* has made to resemble the stone-based equivalent of an ent.

The writers of *War in the North* seem to have made admirable use of literary and linguistic resources in developing original material. Allusions are plentiful; a journal of Malbeth can be found in Fornost, and references to Angmar are common. The Eagles play a role — Gwaihir himself appears — and the members of the fellowship can be spoken with during the first visit to Rivendell.

Although many new names are imperfect, most are transparent enough etymologically, or at least adhere to blind spots in Tolkien's less-developed languages. The names of two of the three player-characters — the Dúnadan ranger Eradan and the Dwarf champion Farin — have precedents in literature, which was certainly the safest option for the writers. The name of the third, the Elf loremaster Andriel, is Sindarin for 'great lady'. The game's villain is Agandaûr, whose name means 'death-pale' in Adûnaic (according to the Númenórean vocabularies in *Sauron Defeated*, however, the circumflex on *daûr* should have been on the *a*, providing *dâur*[2]. Úrgost, the name of the dragon, is probably an attempt at Quenya 'heat/fire fortress'. If so, it should probably have been **Úrosto*; the incorrect *gost* suffix was probably deduced from 'Belegost', which is Sindarin *Beleg* 'strong' plus *ost* 'fortress'/'city'. There are several other examples of original names based on existing roots, with perhaps the most notable being Azan-zâram, apparently the name of the scenic subterranean lake within Nordinbad, and Khuzdul for 'dark pool'. The names of the orcs and dwarves — whose languages have very limited corpora — simply keep to established phonology.

Although the amount of carnage in the game seems gratuitous for the franchise — players receive bonus experience for decapitating, as well as severing the limbs of, their opponents —the visuals of *War in the North* are breathtaking. Flowers bloom within the cracks of Fornost's pavestones, seed fluff drifts through the air at Sarn Ford and breath clouds the air everywhere north of Rivendell. The sounds of the game are equally gripping; steel grinds through steel and flesh, and orc-horns blare like wounded cattle. Flies drone in the abattoir of Gundabad, and crows erupt alarmingly from the thickets of Mirkwood. The voice acting is superb, and the musical score is well coordinated to the on-screen action.

Although there are many issues in terms of character ethics and technical gameplay — players must smash shrines on the Barrow Downs to find treasure, for example, and fellow player-characters, unlike enemies, cannot hurt each other with their attacks — *War in the North* is an electronic masterpiece, and by far the most majestic game yet developed for Middle-earth. There is not the space here to debate the rightful place of video games in Tolkien studies, it is worth noting that although no commercial literary fiction set in

Middle-earth has appeared that does not bear the authorship of J. R. R. Tolkien, games — whether electronic or tabletop — routinely involve characters, events and narratives that establish new material. Whether or not those creations will ever be considered canonical, the monetary, intellectual, artistic and technical resources behind such products deserve more comprehensive consideration than the gaming industry and the discipline of game studies together will grant them. *The Lord of the Rings: War in the North* is a deserving candidate of this consideration, and Tolkien studies would certainly benefit from more thorough analysis.

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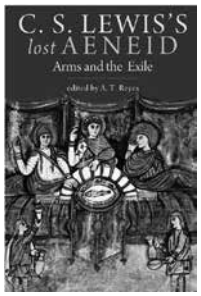
1. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* 2nd edn (HarperCollins, 1965).
2. Tolkien, J. R. R. *Sauron Defeated* 423 (HarperCollins, 1992).

Sought in translation

SHARRON SARTHOU



C. S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid: Arms and the Exile
A. T. Reyes (ed.)
Yale University Press, 184 pp. £18.99
ISBN: 978-0300167177

For a host of reasons, it was a pleasure to read the whole of *C. S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid: Arms and the Exile*, and not only for the introduction to a beautiful translation of a text I had hitherto considered a scholarly necessity, rather than a reading experience to be treasured. Walter Hooper's gentle introduction maintains the myth of the "what might have been lost" in the legacy of C. S. Lewis, and this idea of literary treasure hunting permeates the whole of the text, from foreword, to the tragedy inherent in the *Aeneid* itself. Even the title, *C. S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid*, invokes that familiar myth of the burning manuscripts snatched at the last minute from the bin fire described by Hooper. A. T. Reyes elaborates on the *Aeneid* as lost in bad and faithful translations — and lost as part of a world that no longer values a strictly classical education. And lost as well in a sense that it is almost never taught — except in world literature, and then less as an aesthetic statement and more of a heuristic text. And yet, at the heart of Virgil's text is the inspiration for so much a part of the literature we read: the doomed lovers who doom a kingdom. Helen. I much prefer the concept of Helen as an eidolon — an idea of Helen, as the idea that substitutes for the thing — for, of course, no one goes to war over a mere woman, even the daughter of Leda. D. O. Ross is quite right, Dryden, for all his parsimonious parsing of the Greek, could not imagine the thing that was an imagined harbour, or the thing that was the imagined Helen.

In his preface, Ross painstakingly explains how valuable is Reyes' introduction and description lyrical is Lewis's translation — a discussion made more graphic by his own scholarly redundancy. There is something rather ironic about the excruciatingly thorough, and dry and dusty preface to an often equally dry explanation of how all previous translations of the *Aeneid* have completely missed the poetry. At the same time, Ross's preface connects Lewis's love of Virgil to his work as a Christian apologist — no mean task to connect Dante's guide to hell and C. S. Lewis. According to Ross, Lewis saw Virgil as a pagan prophet, a coincidental reading that Ross does not fully explain. More reasonable is Lewis the scholar's love of Virgil, not as an artefact to be used as a palimpsest for modern interpretation, but as a work of art to be valued for its unretouched beauty and what it reveals about the world from which it was born.

Reyes' preface is alternatively illuminating and frustrating. Reyes is nothing if not thorough, and is not be satisfied with contrasting one, two or even three previous translations of various passages in an effort to illustrate their failings. At the same time, having taught the *Aeneid*, one cannot help but agree that most translations lose in the process, and that modern readers too often resist what they consider archaic and dismiss it as artificial, when what is artificial is the very dead modernity. It is more than readily apparent early in the essay that neither Reyes nor Lewis appreciated the heavy hands of the classicist translator, or the influence of the humanist philosophers. Generally speaking, as Reyes points out exhaustively, translations have been dry at best and at worst have imposed an arid and alien worldview onto the text. Dryden's translation, for example, altered the *Aeneid* for a modern world — colonizing it to create a seminal tale that would meet the stringent rational needs of the literature of the machine age. He shaped it to fit into a world that rejected beauty for form, as Reyes and Lewis both noted, and subsequent scholarship continued in that vein.

Unfortunately, Reyes assumes a knowledge that I do not have and his use of textual excerpts in the original do nothing to illuminate my understanding of the various translations. Moreover, some contrasted excerpts are from

different portions of the *Aeneid* — comparisons more of style and less illustrative of errors in translation, a strategy that is less than helpful. At the same time, the discussion of how the language, metre, imagery and style of the *Aeneid* inserts itself into the work of Lewis is all too brief.

As a lowly assistant professor in postcolonial studies, it falls to me to teach world literature survey courses, in which the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* figure greatly. My secondary education was in colonial versions of modern British curriculum, which means that students remained blissfully unlearned in Greek or Latin, and although the curriculum included a much edited version of Jason and the Argonauts, and an adolescent version of Greek and Roman mythology, that was that for the ancient world. It was not until graduate school that I realized the huge and (I thought then) boring, but important gaps in my education. In order to read Joyce, I had first to read the *Odyssey*. To read Dante, I needed Virgil. Having done so, it became obvious how many other texts owed much to these early works and how deadly dull were the majority of classic translations of these classic texts. Fortunately, recent scholarship has been gradually rediscovering the grace and beauty and even humanity of early works, and newer translations of these texts would, I think, please Lewis as being, if not perfect, at least in the right direction.

Lewis's fresh and sympathetic translation reveals the mystery of a text that illustrates a world not defined by logic and, ironically, the formal alexandrine frees the word to shape the world of the Trojans and bring it to life. In essence, through his translation, Lewis symbolically returns the *Aeneid* to its creators. The editor of this text gifts us with the original text facing Lewis's translation on the right and, having instructed the reader beforehand, does not muddy the whole with superfluous notes. The reward for slogging through the thoroughly admirable scholarly start to this text is the reading of Lewis's translation, which is beautiful, for there:

> … Scylla coils and centaur stands,
> And Gorgon, and the giant of the hundred hands
> …
> And Harpies, and Chimaera the fire-breathing drake,
> And one, a threefold shadow …

Sharron Sarthou

What made J. R. R. Tolkien tick and why was he called 'Reuel'? The importance of Tolkien biography

COLIN DURIEZ

Tolkien, like his friend C. S. Lewis, was strongly against the tendency of his time to see works of literature as somehow revealing, or being about, their creators. Lewis dubbed this "the personal heresy". Tolkien famously discouraged W. H. Auden from writing a study of his work that would have involved biography. Yet it is self-evident that knowledge of the author illuminates his or her work. The biographical fact that Tolkien was a professional philologist who had been "inside language" (*Times* obituary, 3 September 1973) is a master key for unlocking his fiction. And why was he called 'Reuel'? Is this significant to his work? This essay explores what the value of Tolkien biography might be.

In one of a number of biographies that exist of J. R. R. Tolkien, Neil Heims recounts the story of a reporter asking J. R. R. Tolkien what "made him tick". Tolkien retorted that he did not tick — he was not a machine.

Tolkien was a complex character, a gift and a challenge to the biographer. He is a gift because of his depth and colour as an individual. He vividly lives. Whether the focus is on Tolkien the young child, the boy, the young man thrust into the death-pits of World War One and the Battle of the Somme, the aspiring scholar or the learned professor at Oxford, Tolkien is recognizable. He is himself and no other. But he is also a challenge to the biographer, as so much of his life (in terms of what is interesting and memorable for others to read about) resides in his mind and imagination. He is not a man of action. Outwardly, his life (at least to his official biographer Humphrey Carpenter) often seems routine and even monotonous.

A biography needs to embrace both the gift and the challenge of Tolkien, presenting an accessible portrait of the man and a reliable and useful insight for the general reader into the inner workings of his complex mind, to the extent that this is available from what remains on record, including the memories of friends and family. There is, of course, also place for academic biography that focuses on the development of his thought and writings. The intended readerships of a general and a specialist kind would dramatically shape and distinguish the two types of biography. One is less likely than the other to go deeply into the significance of the two main variants of Elvish to the narrative structure of *The Silmarillion*, for instance. The other is less likely to explore the emotional impact of losing a father and a mother, and then exposure to the trenches of the Somme, in early life. Yet for each level of biography, such exploration can provide appropriate and helpful context to understanding Tolkien's fiction and poetry.

Like his close friend C. S. Lewis, Tolkien intensely disliked the critical trend (the "personal heresy") that focused on the psychology of the author to the detriment of the subject's work. (No doubt much of what is written about him today Tolkien would have regarded as, to use his word, "impertinence".) Accounts of Tolkien's life are likely to have the purpose of illuminating the main fictional works, particularly *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. It is because of the global popularity of these works, particularly *The Lord of the Rings*, that a large number of people have become interested in the man, who became a celebrity only towards the end of his life, much to his bemusement and sometimes annoyance (as when he got phone calls from enthusiastic American readers, unaware of the time difference, in the early hours of the morning). On one occasion, on the basis of his academic position at Oxford, Tolkien attended a public lecture by the writer Robert Graves, which was also attended by the film star Ava Gardner. As the three — Graves, Tolkien and Gardner — left the building, the flash bulbs of the press attended to the actress, ignoring the man who, as far as the media then was concerned, did not exist.

It is one of the deepest ironies of literary history that Tolkien, known only to specialists in early English language and literature, took up a fantasy genre considered then only to be suitable for children — the fairy story, or elvish tale. Almost single-handedly he recreated an adult readership for it. But not quite. It was C. S. Lewis who enlisted his help in such a project. Lewis deliberately turned to a type of science fiction, belonging to the same family of 'romance' as fantasy. Stories of 'romance' provide tantalizing glimpses of other worlds, and make a direct appeal to the imagination in their wonder and strangeness. Without Tolkien's part in the project there would be no fantasy sections in today's bookstores, perhaps no visible sign of Ursula Le Guin or Terry Pratchett or Orson Scott Card. Certainly, New Zealand would not have become Middle-earth (much of Tolkien's original The Shire having been lost for ever in the creeping urban spread

of Birmingham in the English Midlands). Vast audiences around the planet would have been deprived of Peter Jackson's brilliant film rendition of *The Lord of the Rings*, and we wouldn't have his two-part *The Hobbit* movie to anticipate.

Tolkien objected to the reporter's question about what made him tick. This was because he was extremely sensitive to the modern issue of the machine, which dominates *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, in a way, the ring itself is the culmination of the machine, exerting remorseless control over human life and being itself uncontrollable. Lewis called our present time the "Age of the Machine", a view Tolkien implicitly endorsed in his work. In older times, Lewis believed, the human issue was how to relate to nature, the non-human world. Today's issue is how we relate to the machine that we ourselves have spawned.

Because of his preoccupation with the machine, and for many other reasons, Tolkien is a contemporary writer, rather than a nostalgic sentimentalist. As Tom Shippey points out, he belongs with George Orwell, William Golding and other post-war writers in his endeavour to come to terms with modern global warfare and manifest evil. Even in this endeavour, however, Tolkien avoids the mechanical archetype of the newer being the better (what Lewis called our "chronological snobbery"). He addresses the unprecedented situation of warfare dominated by the new magicians, as he saw them, the scientific technocrats with weapons beyond the reach of the human mind and destructive of humanity (and as real in the trenches of the Somme in World War One as it was in the bombing of Nagasaki). But, even more, Tolkien was concerned with the perennial battle to live virtuously, with honour, sacrifice and courage, seeking fellowship and loving beauty in a world he saw, with a deep Christian faith, as radically fallen and broken. In this world, malice against the weak and helpless is dreadfully real. Nothing marks the wider and more ancient context of Tolkien's writing than his momentous reversal of the quest, which in literature is usually for something that represents what is desirable to the human heart. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the quest is to destroy something that corrupts almost anyone that touches it, offering unfettered power over others. In Tolkien's tale, it is the meek who inherit Middle-earth.

The value of biography

The antipathy of Tolkien and Lewis to the "personal heresy" needs to be considered. Is biography unnecessary in illuminating Tolkien's fiction? It should be borne in mind that the two also considered study of any English literature after 1830 unnecessary. This was the basis of the Oxford English syllabus moulded by Tolkien, with Lewis's help. Lewis put this succinctly and perhaps a little brutally in an essay in his book *Rehabilitations*, a book that reflected in 1939 many of the concerns of the two friends. He speaks as an Oxford tutor in the Honours English School:

> We naturally wish to help the students in studying those parts of the subject where we have most help to give and they need help most. On recent and contemporary literature their need is least and our help least. They ought to understand it better than we. (*Rehabilitations* p. 91).

Cutting off 100 years or so from the modern end was part of limiting the terrain of the subject studied. Lewis mentions other limitations, on the grounds that a wide sweep would impose an artificial selection on the student, denying the firsthand encounter of learning for its own sake. My deduction is that Tolkien and Lewis regarded biographical study of authors as part of this over-generalizing of knowledge.

The clearest statement of this view is given in Lewis's *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*, which was jointly authored with E. M. W. Tillyard, a Cambridge literary critic, giving an opposing point of view. What they both say about poetry and the poet applies equally to fiction. Lewis argues against the view that poetry provides biographical information about the poet, and that it is necessary to know about the poet to understand the poem. He focuses on the intrinsic character of a work of literature, rather than extrinsic factors. In reading a poem we look with the poet, rather than at him or her. We see with his or her eyes. We can only see if we do not dwell on the particulars of his or her consciousness. Rather, we indwell them as we attend to a new level of meaning. The poet's consciousness is a condition of our knowledge, not the knowledge itself. This passage from *The Personal Heresy* is characteristic:

> Let it be granted that I do approach the poet; at least I do it by sharing his consciousness, not by studying it. I look with his eyes, not at him. … To see things as the poet sees them I must share his consciousness and not attend to it; I must look where he looks and not turn round to face him; I must make of him not a spectacle but a pair of spectacles: in fine, as Professor Alexander would say, I must enjoy him and not contemplate him.

Lewis has made a very strong point about sharing a writer's consciousness as we read, rather than focusing our attention upon it. However, if a student is not reducing the meaning of a work of literature to its maker's psychology, biography falls into the same category as any knowledge of context, as when Tolkien lectured on the history of the English language or Lewis provided an introduction to the medieval world in his popular lectures, which long after became his book *The Discarded Image*. It makes a great difference to understanding *The Lord of the Rings* if we know the author is twentieth not nineteenth century. To take this to absurdity, imagine how odd it would be if a fourteenth-century manuscript was discovered somewhere deep within the Bodleian Library that proved to be the original of *The Lord of the Rings*, and that Tolkien had only discovered it. The ancient writer somehow would have anticipated literary and linguistic style, characteristics of the fiction genre, and features of a world many hundreds of years in the future, such as fish and chips!

Against the view that the modern reader does not need the kind of help a teacher such as Tolkien or Lewis could give, there is much in Tolkien's fiction that does need explanation;

or rather, explanation can help us share Tolkien's consciousness, allowing us better to see with his eyes. As just one example, the origin of Tolkien's mythology in his invented languages, and their roots in living languages, opens up one of the important secrets of Tolkien's imaginative and poetic power. The events and settings of Tolkien's life, his profession as a philologist and his devout Christian worldview, also illuminate his fiction. His friendships, first with the TCBS, and later with C. S. Lewis and the Inklings, including the creative collaboration of fellow writers involved, are part of the conditions that made Tolkien's consciousness possible, although, as Lewis pointed out about the man himself as known to biography, they were not the consciousness itself. If I may adapt a parable from Tolkien, those conditions were a tower that allowed Tolkien to glimpse the distant sea.

Tolkien once remarked that he could best do a true biography of himself as a writer and maker. He best knew his interior life. His words to a student requesting such information for a thesis on his fiction were: "I do not feel inclined to go into biographical detail. I doubt its relevance to criticism. Certainly in any form less than a complete biography, interior and exterior, which I alone could write, and which I do not intend to write" (*Letters* p. 257).

Let us suppose Tolkien had written a "complete biography". It would have been autobiography or memoir, or a mixture of both. Let us take as a parallel Lewis's *Surprised By Joy*, which covers the first half of his life. It is dominated by his chosen theme of how he passed from atheism to belief in a personal God and to Christian belief, in particular. It is necessarily selective. The book throws very helpful light onto Lewis's fiction and non-fiction writing, but there is still plenty of scope for the biographer (Walter Hooper and Roger Lancelyn Green, George Sayer, A. N. Wilson, Alan Jacobs and others). Unfortunately we don't have a biography from Tolkien, and, if we had, it would not have obviated the need for biography, both for the general reader and for the academic student of Tolkien. As it happened (and happened often) Tolkien was not consistent, and did provide "incomplete biography", or rather autobiographical fiction, in the form of *Leaf by Niggle* and *Smith of Wootton Major*. His inconsistent friend, C. S. Lewis, ventured into autobiography to explain how he came to write theological fiction and popular theology, and also portrayed a Tolkien-like figure as his hero in the first two books in his science-fiction trilogy, Dr Elwin ('Elf-friend') Ransom. In addition he, almost certainly, wrote *The Times* obituary of his friend, even though he predeceased him by ten years! With Tom Shippey's entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, these are the most brilliant short biographical pieces on Tolkien.

But why was Tolkien called 'Reuel' as one of his first names? Presumably he might have become known as 'Reuel' Tolkien to family and some friends instead of 'John', 'John Ronald' or 'Ronald', as he was known. (He was also known to some friends as 'Tollers'.) Do we need the information a biographer might give us about his being called Reuel? Humphrey Carpenter informs us that Tolkien's father is "Arthur Reuel Tolkien" and the family tradition is kept up by Ronald and Edith in their children's names John Reuel, Michael Reuel, Christopher Reuel and even Priscilla Reuel. Although *The Road to Middle-earth* is not a biography, Tom Shippey is enlightening about Reuel in his account of the fictional debate *The Notion Club Papers*, which has a number of allusions to Tolkien:

> All the characters who speak [in tongues] are, rather evidently, reflections of Tolkien himself. Ramer is a professor of philology; Lowdham a lecturer on English language; Rashbold's last name is a 'calque' of Tolkien's (from German toll-kühn = 'crazy-bold'), while his middle name, 'Jethro' is linked with Tolkien's third name, 'Reuel', in the Old Testament; and … it seems plausible that 'ramer' is in fact meant to be the dialect word 'raver, babbler', and so to fit Tolkien's repeated self-image as one who sees visions and dreams and is accordingly stigmatised by others as a 'looney' (*The Notion Club Papers* revised and expanded edn, pp. 297–8)

Interestingly, (here's my own biographical comment) Reuel in ancient Hebrew means 'Friend of God', which goes even deeper than Lewis's 'Elwin' (elf-friend) in *Out of the Silent Planet*. In naming his children thus, Tolkien was placing a blessing rather than merely keeping up a family tradition, just as his devout parents had blessed him by giving him the name Reuel.

Colin Duriez has written a number of books on J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and the Inklings, and contributed to many essay collections or reference works, including *The Tolkien Encyclopedia*. As well as a commentator on various video documentaries, he has lectured widely on Tolkien and related authors. He is currently writing a biography of Tolkien for Lion Hudson, due to appear later this year.

From Dunne to Desmond: disembodied time travel in Tolkien, Stapledon and *Lost*

KRISTINE LARSEN

In her introduction to H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, Marina Warner explains that "dreams and trance states used to be the principal … methods of time travelling" before Freud. Wells' 1895 novella brought time travel into the scientific realm in literature, and openly drew on current mathematical and scientific discussions of the nature of time. The time traveller explains to his houseguests that "there is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of space except that our consciousness moves along it…. Time is only a kind of Space". Wells drew on the writings of mathematician Charles Howard Hinton, including his 1884 essay 'What is the Fourth Dimension?', which argued that if we assume the existence of one additional dimension of space, we can explain all apparent motion in the Universe as the motion of our field of observation across this higher dimension.

The ideas of Hinton and Wells found an eager audience in British aeronautical engineer J. W. Dunne. He was intrigued by a series of curious dreams that he later claimed to be prescient. He began to 'experiment' with his dreams, carefully writing them down as soon as he awoke, and noted any instances in which the dreams were later found to be foreknowledge of future events. He enlisted the help of friends and family, and came to the conclusion that there was nothing supernatural in these occurrences; instead the dreams were "merely displaced in Time". Clairvoyance did not exist; instead, our understanding of time is faulty, and with practice, we can train our minds to overcome the habit of experiencing events only in the rigid order of past–present–future. It is in the dream state that our minds are most open to such travels.

Dunne's new concept of time, called serialism, is based on the idea that what we call the present is a window through which we view the entirety of reality, like a train rider looking at a landscape through a small window. Like the train, our present moves along a track, in the dimension we call time T1. Dunne argued that like the train track, T1 is actually a spatial dimension, and that there must exist a higher dimension, a more ultimate time T2, in which we measure the rate of motion of our journey along time's track. There exists a higher-dimensional observer in this T2 who has the freedom to observe all events in T1 (all events in our perceived time) in whatever order he or she wishes. He argued that there exists an infinite regression of these higher times and observers, leading to some Ultimate Time and an

Ultimate Observer, which Dunne calls the "Super-Mind". Dunne published his model as *An Experiment with Time* in 1927. In subsequent books, *The Serial Universe* (1938), *The New Immortality* (1939) and *Nothing Dies* (1940), Dunne used his model to argue that death only occurs in T1, our perception of the present, and that in higher dimensions we achieve immortality as part of the Super-Mind.

Dunne's work attracted a lot of attention, not all of it positive. Ernest Nagel's review in the *Journal of Philosophy* begins: "This is a book very difficult to take seriously … the temptation to substitute satire for a serious review is repressed with some hardship." Nevertheless the work generated serious discussion among members of the general public, psychologists and philosophers. For example, Dunne's ideas were explored in the 1937 University of London psychology PhD thesis of Miss Mary Cleugh, *Time and its Importance in Modern Thought*. Dunne addressed a number of his critics, including Miss Cleugh, in his 3rd edition. Was the character of Ms Klugh (spelled differently) one of *Lost*'s 'Others', named after this author? Interestingly, a contemporary of Dunne who also explored time as a fourth dimension was Laurence J. LaFleur, LaFleur being the pseudonym that *Lost*'s Sawyer takes when time-travelling to the 1970s. Coincidence? Dunne's work was still widely read as late at 1959, being referenced in *The Mathematical Gazette* as "far fetched" and a work "which some mathematicians are said to have been misguided enough to take seriously".

In the past 20 years, literary scholars have begun to take notice of Dunne's impact on the literature of his time. For example, Jane Fenoulhet argues that J. J. Slaurhoff's 1931 Dutch novel *Het Verboden Rijk* (*The Forbidden Realm*) is based on Dunne's work. The impact of Dunne on the plays of J. B. Priestley and the novels of Olaf Stapledon are widely acknowledged, and in her 1997 book *A Question of Time*, Verlyn Flieger traces the influence of Dunne on J. R. R. Tolkien. This essay will briefly examine the influence of Dunne and Stapledon on Lewis and Tolkien, as well as extending this analysis to a new target, the TV series *Lost*.

Before examining these works, two additional sources of influence must be noted. In 1911, the principal and vice-principal of St Hugh's College, Oxford, published *An Adventure* under the pseudonyms of Miss Morrison and Miss Lamont. In it they claimed that in 1901 they had engaged in a telepathic journey back through time to the consciousness of Marie Antoinette when visiting the gardens of the Petit Trianon. Although the claim was not taken seriously by the Society for Psychical Research, *An Adventure* enjoyed four editions and was widely discussed. Central to all these works is the concept of what physicists call the 'block universe', in which the past, present and future exist simultaneously. Philosophical difficulties exist in that the block universe seems to negate the existence of free will, as all we can do is bring the fixed future into existence. Modern quantum theories of time work around these problems by positing the existence of multiple realities or universes, and Dunne appealed to his higher dimensions to somehow avoid strict predeterminism. He wrote that the reason we do not recognize some dreams as precognition is that when in response to the dream, we change that future, all points along the future continuum are immediately changed, and we do not experience the event when we arrive at that moment in our T1 future, thus never knowing that we have indeed changed it.

Philosopher William Olaf Stapledon published a number of science-fiction books based on Dunne's method of mind-only time travel. In 1930's *First and Last Men*, 1932's *Last Men in London* and 1937's *Star Maker*, the protagonists travel through both time and space by inserting their consciousnesses into the bodies of others, thus viewing the past through the eyes of those who actually lived it. In *First and Last Men*, Stapledon's exploration of 18 fictional stages in the evolution of humans beginning with their current form, the 'Fifth Men' first achieve this method of time travel after millions of years of genetic manipulation directed at this goal. The first child to be forced to past-travel successfully accomplishes the task, only to die during the debriefing after a subsequent experiment. In further experiments, "experience seemed to set up a progressive mental disintegration which produced first insanity, then paralysis, and within a few months, death". With further genetic engineering the dangers were removed, and a vast recapturing of a previously lost history was begun. But as with all species of humans in Stapledon's work, the Fifth Men came to extinction, and it was not until the eighteenth and last species of humans that the past was once again explored. Using a special organ in their brains, and following a number of ritualistic precautions developed to keep their bodies safe while they were 'away' for perhaps weeks or months at a time, the Last Men not only observed the past by co-habitating the bodies of others, but influenced those whose bodies they entered, thus allowing them to (in a limited way) change the past. The future narrator explains that there is no paradox, as "some feature of a past event may depend on an event in the far future. The past event would never have been as it actually was … if there had not been going to be a certain future event, which … influences it directly." Therefore the Last Men intercede in the past because this is what they have always been meant to do.

In the sequel, *Last Men in London*, one of the Last Men observes the twentieth century through the eyes of Paul, an Englishman whose body he inhabits. When his attempts to convince Paul that he is not a demonic spirit or a sign of mental illness fail, he directs Paul to read Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*. The narrator also recounts the tragedies that accompanied the Last Men's first attempts at mind-only time travel, in which some travellers allowed their bodies to starve to death while they were in a trance, or fell into violent convulsions. In some cases, the travellers kept falling back into trances, travelling from time to time to time, while in others the trances were permanent, and the travellers' unresponsive bodies were kept in stasis for millions of years.

Star Maker recounts the journey of an ordinary modern man who inexplicably finds himself journeying, sans his body, in search of the creator of the Universe. Although some of his journey was as a pure consciousness through interstellar space itself, most of his adventures were

accomplished in the same manner as that used by the Last Men, briefly co-inhabiting the bodies of various extraterrestrial creatures throughout the history of the Universe.

C. S Lewis called Stapledon "a corking good writer" but in a 1938 letter explained that he was "spurred" to write *Out of the Silent Planet* by Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and geneticist J. B. S. Haldane's *Possible Worlds*, both of which Lewis accused of having the same "desperately immoral outlook" that he wrote into the Space Trilogy's corrupt scientist Weston. *Out of the Silent Planet* ends with the claim that Weston had "shut the door" to space-travel and that "if there is to be any more space-travelling, it will have to be time-travelling as well…!" Although Lewis seemed to violate this in the sequel, *Perelandra*, we do see time travel in the final book of the series, *That Hideous Strength*. In this novel, Merlin, a fifth century mage, is able to awaken in the twentieth century because "he had not died. His life had been hidden, sidetracked, moved out of our one-dimensional time … in that place where those things remain that are taken off time's mainroad…. Not all the times that are outside the present are therefore past or future." Walter Hooper, Lewis's former secretary and editor of his posthumous works, ties these ideas to the work of Dunne, ideas that found more explicit expression in Lewis's unfinished novel *The Dark Tower*. This work begins with the scientist Orfieu flatly stating: "Of course, the sort of time-travelling you read about in books — time-travelling in the body — is absolutely impossible." He explains that this is because the very particles that make up one's body do not exist in the past or future. Instead, he creates a chronoscope, a device that sees other times remotely, like a telescope views distant places. His friend, MacPhee, is sceptical of Orfieu's theories about time travel, even when Orfieu references "the story of the two English ladies at Trianon" — that is, *An Adventure* — and Dunne's work. Orfieu encourages MacPhee to try Dunne's dream experiments for himself. "They're irresistible," he explains.

The chronoscope shows the men an alternate reality called Othertime. Scudamour, Orfieu's assistant, somehow exchanges consciousnesses with his doppelganger in the Othertime, and in an attempt to understand what has happened to him and return home, Scudamour scours the Othertime library. He reads about the history of that universe's experiments with travel between realities, and for several pages Lewis paraphrases Dunne's work in such mind-numbing detail that the reader is rather relieved when the manuscript ends unfinished. The first experiment — as in the case of Stapledon's works, on a child — led to the successful transference of consciousness but the consciousness from our reality could not adapt to being trapped in Othertime and "was finally used for scientific purposes".

Lewis's friend J. R. R. Tolkien likewise did not complete his own works based on Dunne's model, but what was written was far less dark than Lewis's novella. Flieger notes that both Lewis and Tolkien owned copies of the third edition of *An Experiment with Time*, and that Tolkien's contains numerous comments that suggest that he understood Dunne's theory yet did not completely agree with it. As Flieger argues, Tolkien undoubtedly took Dunne's dream mechanism as the starting point for both of his abandoned time-travel projects, *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*. *The Lost Road* centres on a father–son pair who travel back through time through what Flieger describes as "racial memory and serial identity" combining "the memory transfer of *An Adventure*" with Dunne's work and Tolkien's own ideas on the subject. In fact, Flieger argues that the title *The Lost Road* derives from "the deliberate presentation of time as space". Although the

work was abandoned not long after it was begun (*circa* 1937), Tolkien revisited the idea of time travel through dreams after he had completed what would become *The Two Towers* (late 1944). The result was *The Notion Club Papers*, which like Lewis's *The Dark Tower* was never finished.

The completed drafts of Part 1 of *The Notion Club Papers* detail the discussions of a group of intellectuals not unlike Tolkien and Lewis's Inklings, focusing on the improbability of space travel "in mortal flesh". After criticizing Lewis's "crystal coffin" method of getting Ransom to Venus in *Perelandra*, attention turns to a space-travel story written by Ramer, one of the members, which seems far too realistic to be fiction. Ramer admits that he does not know where the alien planet is, only that "I went there". Ramer explains that when he began writing the story he had become "attracted by what you may call the telepathic notion", which he notes he got from reading Stapledon's *Last Men in London*. Ramer then gives a brief synopsis of Dunne's model of time, which he does not mention by name, but which he notes has had "a pretty good case" made for it. Ramer is able to train his mind to travel through time and space, and is careful to explain that in these travels "the mind is still … anchored to the body" for it "would feel terribly loose without the anchor".

This idea of an anchor, or constant, is a central theme in the time travel plotlines of the recently completed television series *Lost*. Putting aside the controversial alternate reality/limbo/afterlife portrayed in the final season, four identifiable kinds of space-time travel were portrayed in the series:

1) Teleportation from one place to another, as in the case of Ben and Locke using the 'donkey-wheel' to travel to Tunisia from the Island;

2) The constant jittering motion of the Island in space-time that makes it difficult to locate (and results in the disjointed time measurements between the Island and the off-shore freighter in Season Four);

3) The motion of persons through time while on the Island (including the 'time-travelling bunnies' seen in the Orchid orientation video);

4) The motion of consciousnesses in space and time (and perhaps between alternate universes), including incidences of precognition.

Although only the last of these directly aligns with the works previously mentioned, certain aspects of mind-only time travel and the constraints of the block universe model are apparent even in the whole-body time travel so central to Season Five.

Physicist Daniel Faraday explained in the season opener that Ben's intentional moving of the Island resulted in it and its inhabitants becoming "dislodged" in time. As Daniel and his companions flash back and forth through time, they are increasingly plagued with headaches, nosebleeds, memory lapses, periods of unconsciousness and moments of disorientation. Charlotte finally succumbs to her symptoms four episodes later. Daniel describes the deleterious symptoms as being caused by their brains' internal clock being thrown off by the disorientating flashes of time travel. Although the Losties' symptoms are more graphic than the disorientating effects seen in the works of Lewis and Stapledon, one can draw connections to those works. It should also be noted that Charlotte — Charlotte Staples Lewis — owes her name to C. S. Lewis. When Locke resets the donkey wheel and travels to Tunisia, the Island quits its seemingly random swings in time, and the physical symptoms abate. However, the remaining Losties are trapped in 1974, forcing them to assume the identity of DHARMA Initiative recruits. The Losties blend in with the past timeline and do not seem to affect history, for as Daniel explains time is

> like a street…. We can move forward on that street, we can move in reverse, but we cannot ever create a new street. If we try to do anything different, we will fail every time. Whatever happened, happened.

However, Daniel had previously violated his slavish adherence to the block universe when, in his desperation to stop the Island's time flashes and save Charlotte's life, he banged on the Swan Station's door and begged Desmond's past self to go to Oxford University and find Daniel's mother, Eloise Hawking. Hawking herself is an unwavering adherent to the block universe, as she knowingly directs her son's entire life to lead to his death at her own hands. Although Daniel's intervention does not in itself stop the flashes or save Charlotte, it does change the timeline (for, as he notes, Desmond is "uniquely and miraculously special"). In the future, Desmond wakes from a dream with a "new memory" of Daniel's visit to the hatch, and helps to set in motion the return to the Island of many of Jacob's candidates for future caretaker of the Island. Desmond's actions can be explained in the context of Dunne's model, in which the future 'resets' as it incorporates the new event. Perhaps Desmond's 'special power' to move through time and make changes in the timeline are possible because he can access the position of a higher-order Observer in T2 more readily than other people.

We also see a connection with Stapledon's work in the 1977 plotline, when a young Ben is shot by Sayid and the other Losties argue as to whether or not Ben can die, as doing so would certainly change the timeline. Kate realizes that they are "supposed to save him". Indeed, as the episode title says 'Whatever Happened, Happened', and in saving Ben the Losties are merely playing the part that had always been ordained for them. This mirrors the actions of the Last Men in Stapledon's novels in affecting the past because that is what they were supposed to do.

Returning to consciousness-only time travel, we see the works of Dunne, Stapledon and others reflected in this aspect of *Lost*'s time-travel plotline. After imploding the hatch, Desmond's consciousness briefly travels to another reality (or perhaps "off time's mainroad" as Lewis described it) his body meanwhile lying unconscious and naked on the Island. When he returns, he finds that he has the curse of precognition, and repeatedly saves Charlie's life over the course of Season Three. In each case, we can explain this in Dunne's model, in which Desmond can access the point of view of a higher-order observer in T2, and as he changes the

timeline (by saving Charlie) the rest of the timeline adjusts.

Desmond later endures uncontrollable bouts of mind-only time travel in Season Four, as he travels from the Island via helicopter to the offshore freighter. Apparently as a side effect of the Island's constant jittering in space-time, Desmond and the freighter's communications officer Minkowski become mentally dislodged in time and suffer life-threatening symptoms similar to the writings of Stapledon and Lewis. At the insistence of the present's Daniel Faraday, Desmond travels to past Oxford during one of his out of body flashes and witnesses past Faraday's experiments on the lab rat Eloise, lovingly named after his mother. Eloise's consciousness leaves her current body and travels to her future body, learns how to run a new maze, and then returns to her current body and successfully completes the task. However she dies of a brain haemorrhage shortly thereafter. Faraday explains that she couldn't tell which was which — the future or the present. "She had no anchor" — no constant. Desmond is able to return to the present and remain there after arranging for his beloved Penny to call him at a prearranged time, thus acting as his constant. As for Minkowski, his flashes escalate, he has a seizure, begins bleeding, and gasps "I can't get back" before dying. We also learn that one of Daniel's two human test subjects (the other being himself), his girlfriend Theresa, has fallen into a permanent disabled state as she uncontrollably travels between the past and present. As her sister explains to Desmond when he visits: "Theresa's away now."

In the opening lines of his poem *Burnt Norton*, T. S. Eliot wrote:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present.

In introducing the scientific scaffolding of intense electromagnetism and the Casimir effect that the writers of *Lost* use to explain the time-travelling bunnies and scientist Pierre Chang's intense interest in the Island's properties, Dunne's largely pseudoscientific ideas are given a flash of hard-science credibility within the mythos of the series. But given the intricacies of the plotlines involved, who can blame the readers and viewers of all the works discussed here for commiserating with Eloise the rat right before her brain exploded?

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Going back: time travel in Tolkien and E. Nesbit

VIRGINIA LULING

> He felt that he could say that his most permanent mood … had been since childhood the desire *to go back*. To walk in Time, perhaps, as men walk on long roads; or to survey it, as men may see the world from a mountain, or the earth as a living map beneath an airship. But in any case to see with eyes and to hear with ears: to see the lie of old and even forgotten lands, to behold ancient men walking, and hear their languages as they spoke them, in the days before the days.
>
> *The Lost Road and other writings* 1987, p. 45

Among the many things that nourished Tolkien's imagination was the reading of his childhood and youth. This includes George MacDonald, the Kipling of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, H. G. Wells, Rider Haggard's *She* and also E. Nesbit's fantasy stories. Others have pointed this out, though not analysed it in detail, and I think that anyone who is familiar with those stories must recognize their presence in his work. Here I want to look at one particular and rather peculiar idea, found in one of his many abandoned projects, which is clearly derived from E. Nesbit.

That Tolkien read Nesbit as a child goes without saying; there can have been few English-speaking children who read anything, at that time or for some time after, who did not read her books. Also he must have given them and possibly read them to his own children. I don't know how many read her now, apart from *The Railway Children* (whose ending, by the way, is one of the best examples I know of what Tolkien named 'eucatastrophe', though I am not suggesting he noticed that). I think there are a number of echoes of Nesbit in Tolkien, but there is one link that as far as I know nobody has noticed, but that I believe is obvious when you see it. This is in his unfinished, indeed barely begun, time-travel story *The Lost Road.* In a letter of 1964, he wrote:

> When C. S. Lewis and I tossed up, and he was to write on space travel and I on time travel, I began an abortive book of time-travel of which the end was to be the presence of my hero in the drowning of Atlantis. This was to be called *Númenor*, the Land in the West.

> The thread was to be the occurrence time and time again in human families … of a father and son called by names that could be interpreted as Bliss-friend and Elf-friend. These no longer understood are found in the end to refer to the Atlantid-Númenórean situation and mean 'one loyal to the Valar, content with the bliss and prosperity within the limits prescribed' and 'one loyal to friendship with the High-elves'. It started with a father–son affinity between Edwin and Elwin of the present, and was supposed to go back into legendary time by way of an Eadwine and Aelfwine of *circa* AD 918, and Audoin and Alboin of Lombardic legend, and so to the traditions of the North Sea concerning the coming of corn and culture heroes, ancestors of kingly lines, in boats … In my tale we were to come at last to Amandil and Elendil leaders of the loyal party in Númenor, when it fell under the dominion of Sauron.
>
> *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* no. 257 and *The Lost Road and other writings*, pp. 7–8. The 'Lombardic legend' refers to events in the sixth century

But almost none of this was ever written; all that survives of the project, apart from some scattered notes, are a beginning, with a twentieth-century father and son (confusingly called by the Lombard names Audoin and Alboin rather than Edwin and Elwin), a Númenórean chapter, and a scene in the England of the tenth century. Tolkien had reason to abandon it: the existing chapters are unsuccessful, though with gleams. Evidently he was not really comfortable with the framework that he had taken on, and in the end he satisfied the desire to see "the lie of old and even forgotten lands" by going straight to them without explanation. Meanwhile the device he hit on for time travel was a curious one: the father–son pair recurring throughout history and prehistory with the same names in different forms, and the modern pair in some unexplained way entering the consciousness of their earlier namesakes. It is not suggested that this is a case of reincarnation; only that it is somehow a way into the past.

The only place I know that a similar device is used is in E. Nesbit's *The House of Arden*. In this story a brother and sister, Edred and Elfrida, travel back from their own time in Edwardian England to four earlier centuries; each time there was in the Arden family a brother and sister pair of the same names — "There was always a boy and a girl — a boy and a girl" — whose identities they take. Here too there is no suggestion of reincarnation; they simply occupy the places of their namesakes.

So far as I know, there is no other example of this particular time-travelling device: the visiting of the past in the person of an earlier person with the same name; and with it the very peculiar use of a related pair, father–son in one case, brother–sister in the other. I think it is a reasonable assumption that Tolkien's idea originated from *The House of Arden*. I am certainly not suggesting that he consciously borrowed it from Nesbit — I would think that most unlikely. I simply mean that it had become part of the 'leaf-mould of the mind', from which his own very different story grew. It was perhaps assisted by the real historical names of the two Lombard kings, and his playing with their meanings.

The similarity of the two pairs of names is intriguing too, Edred being translatable as 'Bliss-counsel' or 'Wealth-counsel' and Elfrida as 'Elf-strength'. (These meanings are of no significance in Nesbit's story, and I do not suppose she was even aware of them.)

Otherwise the two stories are very different, in background and feeling as well as plot. *The Lost Road* has nothing of a children's story about it. There is naturally no question in Nesbit of the children's names taking different forms in the times that they visit, which are much more recent than those of Tolkien. Also, throughout their adventures, Edred and Elfrida have full recall both of their home period and of the other times that they have visited. As far as can be seen from the unfinished fragments of Tolkien's story, his heroes do not have any such recall; at most they have momentary feelings that their surroundings are somehow strange.

There is another remarkable thing. *The House of Arden* contains a marvellous hidden city, in a plain surrounded by a wall of unclimbable cliffs and accessible only through one way, which is closely guarded to protect it from the evils of the modern world. (It is in the South American jungle, and the children's missing father and uncle are held prisoner there.) I would not propose that this is definitely the source for Gondolin — there are other such 'lost world' stories after all — but it could well be the way in which the conception first entered Tolkien's imagination.

If so, then here are two instances of the way an idea or an image absorbed at an impressionable age can resurface in a creative mind years later. The one idea, however, was, as Tolkien said, abortive, the other richly fruitful.

Virginia Luling

Ten-thousand moons of howling

GARETH OWENS

Olambur of Kess stood at the edge of the world looking across the border into the invading realm of death. Behind him lush Kiri groves and boundless fields of Shea grass, crisscrossed by silver veins of canals, stretched, ordered and disciplined, all the way back to the city called The Gods' Gateway.

Warchief of Karadunia, Olambur stood with all that proof of mortal devotion behind him, and at his feet the realm of ripening gold and living green ended as if slashed across with an obsidian dagger.

A blanket of unnatural ash, seeping dark, like old blood spat from the netherworld across the living land. A tide of eerie substance, choking and consuming everything it touched.

Olambur signalled to the old priest next to him, waving him to walk into the sulphur stinking ash field as if calling forward a unit of soldiers. The priest bowed and, head still low, he began to shuffle towards the border between the two worlds. Prayer bells in his hand, burning incense tied into his hair, the wizened figure began the old songs of the lost Kingir.

"At the command of the dragon spirit, living son of the eternal sun, the dead may not harm the living. The dust of Nuji Giya, land of no returning, may not blow under the Cover of the Four Corners."

Still chanting, the priest made three steps into the billowing dust, leaving footprints of flame, before the cinders rose up around him. The ash, brown like yesterday's clinker and studded with livid ruby embers, swirled up in a whirlwind. Twisting, the wilful dust-devil grew, raging and becoming solid until towering over the man it pounced, layering itself around and clinging to his skin as if with hooks. It encased him like a living statue.

Once he'd been cocooned like a spider's meal, the ash twister fell away. A dread-filled silence for a few heartbeats, even Olambur held his breath.

Fire exploded from the ash-man like bellows put to the forge. The imprisoned priest screamed, sudden and urgent, with a new understanding of the reality of agony, powerless to move, his soul consumed in unwilling sacrifice.

Olambur's hand tightened on the haft of his mace, but he stood as impassive as he could. The gods were always powerful enemies.

Controlled by the will of the spirit feeding from the flames, the man-filled dust furnace turned. Screaming, it faced warchief Olambur, his army and entourage of holy men.

Through the scream came words.

"Olambur, King of Strangers, render unto the dead that which is their due. You harbour the Running Man, fugitive from death itself." The spirit words powered by shrieks as fire consumed the struggling priest, blasting his body and soul.

"Before Silver-Thirty closes his eye again, the Lord of Wits must cross the gateway of Burning Crown, or the dead will hold this land for ten-thousand moons. So speaks the Bonded of the First Dragon."

The voice of the spirit ceased, but the screams of the priest did not.

In the distance, above the middle of the spreading cancer of ash, a ball of darkness formed, clouds of purple shrouding. Lightning made from the opposite of light, not mere darkness, not the mere absence of light, but the deepest concentration of light's ethereal counterbalance, sundered the day. Flowing like water from a cliff, the dark energy cascaded over the dead ash filling the world with night.

Where the black lightning struck began to rumble as if the Bull in the Earth had awoken and charged at the very pillars holding up the heavens. Olambur staggered as the world shook. The horses of the army stamped and whinnied, wild eyed they looked around, on the verge of bolting.

"Hold," Olambur commanded, taking back the step he'd lost. The soldiers held. Even the horses seemed to calm for a moment.

Then, surging up came a mountainous wave of ash. Nuji Giya pushed outwards as something old arose from the land of the dead. A lance in the side of the living Earth, the fabric of the four-corners pierced by the unwelcome nation.

Surging outwards, a great hissing wave of clinker, cinder and choking dust came on. The horses on his right broke, rearing in their traces. They tried to get away, twisting and overturning their chariots, spilling driver and soldiers. The wave melted into the sea of ash already covering the land, and Olambur saw the rising of the lost city, the city stolen by the dead.

The tip of the highest temple, Burning Crown, broke through into daylight and the walls thrust up from the underworld. Ramparts built by men but taken against an unpaid debt, arose from the invading soil of Nuji Giya.

For the first time in ten-thousand moons the city of Uracha Deki broke the surface of mortal reality. Walls, once white and tall as distant mountains, now glowering embers of baked brown, dull as Greek coin, growing from the ground like teeth pushed from a bone. Defensive walls, older than memory and crewed by the blue glowing spectres of the inhabitants of the damned city.

The buildings seemed to shimmer for a moment before

solidifying. Everything in Olambur called for the charge, to wave his army on towards the ramparts of the enemy, but no mortal foot could step across the ash, he had seen that for himself. He took a breath and let it out as a war cry of raw frustration. The army echoed it, greeting the returning city with their living fury. The cry died down, replaced by the regular beat of the soldiers chanting themselves into the world of battle.

The tall banded gate of Burning Crown shook off the store of dust on the hinges and swung open to let something out. The army grew quiet with the stillness of dread.

From the gateway a single figure swaggered. The grey shadow of something not a man, yet somehow manlike. A rolling gait like a fisherman familiar with the pitch of the deck beneath his feet.

The shade wore a cloak made from raven feathers and a large bag across its back, and with that swaggering rolling walk, it came forward across the ash until it stood grinning before the Warchief.

"Speak fiend. What do you want among the living?" Olambur's voice as steady as anyone that ever addressed such an apparition.

Eyes, brown from edge to edge, set in grey blue skin looked up, and Olambur caught the flash of fury in them.

"Fiend is it?" The words were plain in Olambur's ears but the mouth of the creature made no show of talking. "I am Lord Good Earth. Your kind gave me name. I should have lived and died with the souls of my own people."

As he spoke, Lord Good Earth reached around and from the great bag strapped across his back he produced a skull. The dome of bleached white bone perfect and clean. The creature looked into the darkened holes where eyes had once been.

"I was an explorer, I followed the herds. I roamed alone with none but the beasts for company, until I came to the lands of your people."

Lord Good Earth leaned forward suddenly and placed the skull down into the ash, pushing and twisting so that only the top remained above the powdery surface. With one fluid movement he removed another from the bag, taking two steps before pushing that into the corrupted soil.

"The sons of a city blighted by a king too powerful, too mighty to be overthrown, found me." Another skull went into the ash. "They introduced me to the flesh of woman, they gave me beer and bread, then they shaved me, all for a joke."

Olambur watched without action. The spectre moved along the claimed territory of Nuji Giya as if behind a wall. The burning ash that consumed the priest now collapsed into nothing more than a shapeless mound, but the memory of his screams were still fresh in Olambur's ears.

"And now I and the army of the risen dead demand restitution."

Olambur heard the shade speak, but the words blurred, he felt his fingers tighten on the haft of his mace. If the creature would just come within arm's reach, if he could just get the first swing in, the mortals might stand a chance.

"I know what you think Olambur, but you cannot kill the dead."

Olambur started at the sound of his name.

"I may not be able to kill you, beast, but I will send you back whence you came." The army in earshot cheered at his words and the army farther away cheered at the sound of their cheering.

Lord Good Earth sighed, barely perceptibly, Olambur saw it as only a pause before the creature continued to plant his line of skulls.

"Give us the Running Man, hand over Din Yirgish and we will leave these lands. None may be allowed to avoid death, not even the greatest of kings."

"How comes it," Olambur felt the question and it came straight to his mouth. "That death can call for a living man? Are not all our destinies written? What are you doing here?"

The shade of Lord Good Earth smiled, yet he did not pause as he planted another line of skulls behind the first.

"Your screaming priest was right, the dead may not harm the living, but when the living offend against the dead, once in ten-thousand moons the Land of No Returning may raise

an army and take what is owed to it," another skull went into the ash. "Once before, the soldiers of the dead rose up and these walls and all the souls within became indentured against the heart of their living king." Another skull. "Yet I still wait for Din Yirgish to arrive. I cannot leave this place, stuffed with the souls of man, and go to join the souls of my own kind. Not until that miserable Kullabite crosses the border of Nuji Giya."

Olambur shivered, as if aroused from daydream or woken from a holy trance. The shade of Lord Good Earth had planted a field of skulls that stretched all the way back to the walls of the risen city. While he'd been talking he'd laid hundreds, perhaps thousands of the bleached bones into the otherworldly ash.

"Olambur," Lord Good Earth whispered in his ear like a mother waking a reluctant child. "Bring Din Yirgish here to Burning Crown."

The air shimmered and Olambur stood in a different place. He tried to understand the sudden change.

Without getting there, he stood at the top level of the temple. Below him, under the golden sun, spread the city of Kardunias, burnt dark and glazed in brilliant blue and yellow.

Vibrant and loud, the shouts of the markets, the zamzam music of the priests set to the pulsing beat of the tigi drums, the smells of roasting meat from the street sellers and the perfumes from the temple behind him. Olambur shut his eyes briefly.

"To be alive is to be assaulted by our five wits. I won't give up the light."

His mace already drawn and ready to strike, Olambur whirled around. For less than a heartbeat he saw a massive hand that covered and gripped his face, lifting him from his feet, his mace removed from his grasp as easily as a rattle taken from a fractious child.

"I take it you're the current king of this place."

The hand that held his face let go and pushed him back a couple of steps.

"You come and go so quick it's hard to keep count." The deep voice continued without any sign of exertion. "You don't dress like the locals. Kardin Yira been invaded again?"

Olambur took another step trying to find fighting distance, but it was hard to get the measure of the man who now held his mace. The stranger hefted the weight of the enormous piece of greenstone as if it were a mere pebble.

"I'm Din Yirgish."

The Bigman held out the mace, handle first, returning it to Olambur.

"The dead have risen in the fields," his words stilted and oddly accented. "What they seek I cannot allow them to have."

Olambur took the proffered mace with a petulant swipe.

"I have become aware of this," he said returning his mace to his belt.

"My priests say that you were once a great king, the Lord of Wits. They still sing of your deeds, and always will, but this is a war between gods, can't you take it somewhere else. Don't mortals have enough weight to carry already?"

Din Yirgish looked down.

"The court of the gods has decreed the whole of my fate based on one-third of my nature. I am neither mortal nor god but I will not submit to their authority."

Olambur looked at the king who should be dead, and as he did, Din Yirgish raised his eyes. Olambur met the gaze that had seen more years than a man had any right to. A fire burned, a rage, a furnace, lightning in the gale, and Olambur felt the hackles rise down his arms.

"I expect Lord Good Earth has given you his "The dead shall hold this land for ten-thousand moons" speech?"

Olambur nodded.

"Before Silver-Thirty crosses the sky. All of that is true, but what he never says is that if the Executed God is struck down by mortal hand then the city of the dead shall sink back into the sands of Nuji Giya."

Olambur screwed his face up.

"Executed god? What executed god. I'm a stranger, new to these gods and lands, but who executed a god?

"The other gods. There was a war and the First Dragon lost, killed in the fighting, but her husband was brought before the other gods and executed as proof of their power."

"So," Olambur spoke slowly. "This executed god became a god in the underworld?"

Din Yirgish shook his head, his face disappearing briefly behind a curtain of unbound hair.

"No one had ever seen the soul of a god before. He can find no place in the afterlife. That is why he chases me. He is neither one thing nor another, neither god nor shade, and me, I'm neither man nor immortal. He thinks that I am his balance, or the cause of the imbalance."

Olambur sat down on the edge of the temple steps.

"We endure wars, we suffer famines, pox, pestilence and plague, isn't that enough? Priests take our harvests, they tell us we were created to serve the gods, isn't that enough? We build mountains in our cities because the gods need to feel at home, we take the timbers of the barbarians because they need the scent of cedars, is all this not enough? Now we have to fight the dead because of some long forgotten war in heaven?"

"Why are you here, Olambur?" the question sudden as a jabbed fist.

"I must bring you to Burning Crown to save the land of Karadunia."

"Yet you talk to me, you hear my words, you see my reason. I am the Lord of Wits. I will fight beside you Olambur, I will face my old friend Lord Good Earth, but you must meet the Executed God. Only a true man, born of woman can strike the blow that sends Qin Gu back to Nuji Giya."

"Why don't I just kill you instead, then I can drag your lifeless, overdue, corpse out to the monkey king and be done with it?" Olambur had a part of his soul with a direct connection to his mouth. Din Yirgish pouted.

"Well, you could have a go if you think you're hard enough, but what part of two-thirds god are you failing to comprehend? I could shove you under one arm and crush

the life out of you, but then the dead will really be free to roam these lands.

"All right, if I can't beat you, merely the mortal offspring of fundamental forces shaping the heavens, how can I beat a proper god?"

"Qin Gu is only a dead god, mortal. Even the lowest living thing possesses a spark that he can never regain. No mortal made blade or spear can harm him nor the warriors in the army you are about to face, but I have touched the stone you carry, and it now carries an imprint of the power of The Fifteen. None of Nuji Giya can withstand its touch. As long as you keep swinging all will fall before you, Even Qin Gu the Executed."

Olambur drew his mace and looked at the carved green-stone ball. He had taken it from a great hall in the Sealands. The cedar haft came from the shores of the upper sea. Edge to edge of his empire held in one hand. He could feel it squirm in his grip. It seemed to almost move as if it struggled to be free. The head of the mace, carved with foreign scenes and symbols of alien meaning, now glowed with a light blue sheen he could only see when he looked away.

It buzzed in his hand calling for battle.

"You carry the imprint of the Fifteen Gods, under the protection of its power you can stride the ashes of Nuji Giya, you can destroy the warriors of the Land of No Returning, and you can smite the soul of a dead god. I will fight by your side, your legend will be great and your deeds will be sung as long as there are voices to sing them."

Olambur could feel a glow in his lungs. All the colour of vibrant life, raw and hungry. Calling for the passionate kill.

"I am ready."

"No, Olambur. We are ready."

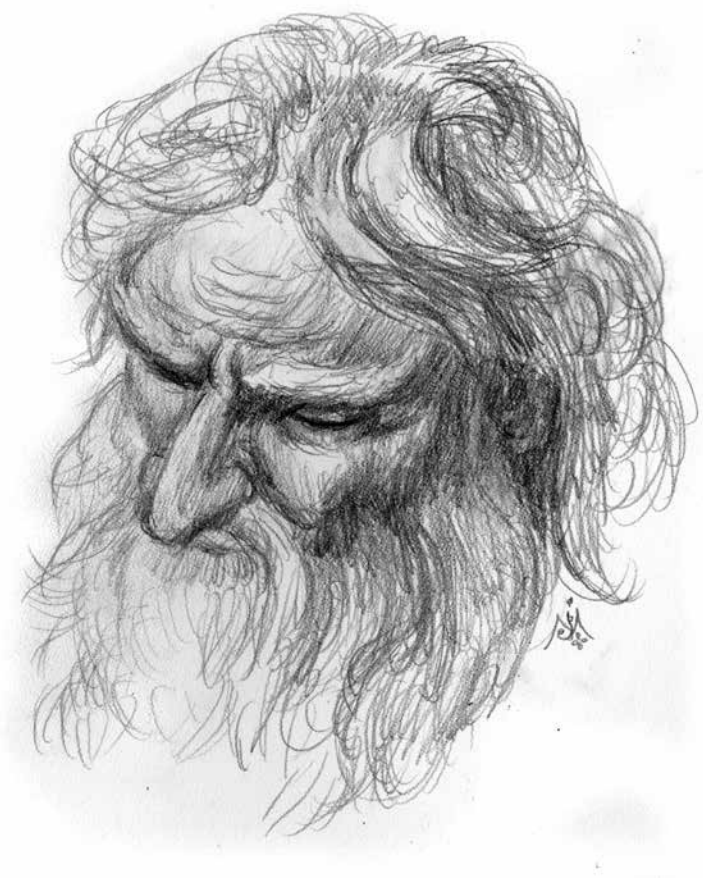
Din Yirgish drew his axe made from star metal and slashed at the air. A purple rift opened before them as if a curtain had been slit with a knife. Beyond the glowing edges of the hole in the air Olambur could see the walls of Uracha Deki. The doorway jumped forwards and snatched them both, then in an instant disappeared.

Olambur looked around to see his generals and priests. But all stood still, really wrong still. The whole army seemed frozen. None made a move or reacted to his return.

The skulls Lord Good Earth had planted had grown from the ground and stood now as almost complete skeletons, like maggots struggling from split flesh. Olambur turned to Din Yirgish and caught a flash of faint blue. A smear of soul stretched from each man in his army to a corresponding skeleton.

"Soul frames," Din Yirgish answered the question Olambur had been unable to ask.

"It looks like the bones of a man, but the vines grow down into Nuji Giya and form a frame from the fabric of the netherworld. The souls of the dead wrap around them, it allows them to walk the living world, to touch and to move and to fight. But today they act like fly-traps they suck in the souls of the soldiers you brought to fight at your side. If we do not hurry we will have to cut our way through your own army to get to the city."



Din Yirgish took two strides into the ash and lopped off the head of the nearest skeleton. The stain of blue that Olambur could see snapped back away from the fallen soul frame and one of the statue-still soldiers collapsed unconscious onto the ground, released from the dread attraction. Din Yirgish took another step and another skull flew.

Olambur looked at the ash, the collapsed mound of the incinerated priest still visible, then with a roar he ran at the nearest skeleton. The green stone came down through the curve of the skull, two more steps and the mace came up smashing through the ribs of the next frame. Olambur looked down briefly and saw that he now stood up to his knees in the dread ash. No time to fear it, he swung again and another trap released the soul of its victim. With each swing he and Din Yirgish smashed their way closer to the walls of Uracha Deki.

An arrow whistled through the air straight towards Olambur's face. He saw it come, but had no time to move. One of the soul frames near the wall had shaken itself free from the ash and stood with bone bow strung with sinew. The axe head of star metal flashed in front of Olambur's eyes and Din Yirgish cut the arrow from the air. Olambur glanced across at the Bigman, and a flash of movement caught the corner of his eye. A sword of bone, sliver sharp, long and wicked, cleaved the air where Olambur would have been. His left arm flashed around encircling the blade and grasping the cold wrist of the soul frame warrior he brought the mace down on the grinning death mask of a face.

The two mortal warriors moved through the wakening army, and every time they brought a soldier down, releasing his captured spirit, another rose behind to take its place. The ash became strewn with the broken bones of stolen souls.

Olambur experienced the rush as being in a crowd. The soul frames now moved, the blue stain enrobing them. As he lifted the greenstone to smash another skull Olambur saw that the blue mist took the form of the ghosts of his army wrapping the bones of the otherworld. With every swing his mace came down through the face of a friend or brother, shattering the netherbone beneath.

Olambur and Din Yirgish fought with cold fury. Each step forward taken from the army of the undead.

"Idu Weh!" Din Yirgish shouted up at the walls of the city. "Idu Weh! Open the gate, I wish to enter." At the crenellations a new face appeared, different from the ghosts that stood before them.

"Luwatu, open the gate." The figure disappeared.

Olambur turned his full attention to the fight. He felt a guilty start of intense pleasure as he brought the mace down through the face of his cook. Step by step the two kings fought on.

As one the ghost-wrapped skeletons stopped, lowering their weapons and stepping away. The huge and ancient wood creaked open to reveal the main square, Lord Good Earth silhouetted, a shade against the shadow. He walked forwards and Din Yirgish stood waiting for him.

"Olambur, this is my fight. Go on, find Qin Gu."

"So Brother," Lord Good Earth ignored Olambur. "You have finally come. Sixteen hundred years I've waited for this moment. Sixteen hundred curse-filled, dark and dusty years waiting for you. Today it ends. Embrace me, brother and set me free."

Olambur took one last look at the two as they began to circle each other, then he sprinted for the gate.

He ran across the threshold and up through the rotting wrecks of the market and began to climb the wide stairway to the temple. A line of the soul frames stood like soldiers to attention. They marked the way to the Burning Crown. The dust of the darkness covered every surface. It flowed down the great staircase like a river. Olambur slowed as the skeletons made no move to hinder him. He loosened his shoulders and limbered his swinging arm, taking the opportunity to get his breath back.

The stairs wound in a curve up to the Kiyutu gate before the courtyard. Olambur entered like a wrestler expecting his opponent. To his right the broken bricks and burnt statues were all that was left of the Peak-House, the heart of the burning Crown.

Faces and arms of statues and broken gods jutted from the rubble and wreckage, leaning at strange angles and pointing meaninglessly. The socket of the sacred pool before them empty like the eyes of the dead.

"So you have finally come, Din Yirgish." The voice disembodied, like the screams of the ash covered priest. Olambur tightened his grasp on the mace. The ash in front of him began to move like the sea. Waves formed and began to break on the steps of the temple, and from the broken columns a figure began to coalesce.

Tall, and shaven like a civilized man, he wore a kilt made from lambs tails. Olambur saw the face grow from the clay, strong and handsome. Eyes sharp and sparkling like lapis lazuli and obsidian. The executed god materialized before Olambur's eyes. Growing more massive in stature with every passing heartbeat. Qin Gu stood, alive, full of the power of godhood.

Olambur felt a strange weakness: he looked briefly at his fingers and saw his hands tremble. Was this fear? Was this what it was like to be afraid?

Qin Gu took one step forward. He had become perfect, but still he carried on forming. A jagged wound appeared across his throat, and the god fell. The colour and vitality shining from the figure as it made itself, faded into the grey of wood ash.

With visible effort the god figure raised himself so that he stood on one knee. One hand went to his throat the other reached around and drew a thin metal staff from his back. He used the weapon to support himself as he stood once again.

Olambur had glimpsed the lost reality of the god briefly, but what stood before him now was the mere shade, the remnant of that living glory.

"Din Yirgish. Our life is mapped as star points of event and memory. The star of my brothers and children forcing my head down low to slit my throat like a praying animal, burns bright as Lady Pure Bird across the dawn sky." The god ghost held his staff before him, ready for battle. "But I have guided my course in these trackless underworlds by keeping my wits turned to the star of this meeting. I will end your stolen life and the balance between the worlds of living and dead will return to peace and darkness."

Olambur stood very still, the muscles across his shoulders tensed and balanced against the almost cramp in his calves. Cat with a mouse, waiting. Qin Gu looked in slightly the wrong direction when he spoke, almost as if he couldn't see Olambur properly.

"Why don't you speak Din Yirgish?" Qin Gu swung a wide arc with his staff.

Olambur bent down and picked up a mosaic cone from the dust. With a flick he cast it across the courtyard. The living statue of the fallen god snapped across the space faster than any arrow Olambur had ever seen. Qin Gu's staff, sharp as a whip, broad as a tree trunk, smashed into the ground where the cone landed, making the city tremble beneath his feet.

"I know you're here, Din Yirgish, I can sense the energy of the Fifteen on you. The essence of the living gods, plump with prayer and scented with offerings."

Olambur ran across the courtyard, years of stealth keeping his footfalls quiet as any assassin. One of the fallen columns of the temple lay at an angle and he slowed to keep his climb silent.

"Why don't you speak, Din Yirgish? Your fame is as Lord of Wits."

Olambur reached a point on the column where he stood roughly the height of a man above the head of his opponent. He grabbed a pebble from the dusty surface and dropped it into the ash below. Qin Gu flashed across, and the great staff came down again like thunder from the mountains.

Olambur dropped from the column, and as he did so, he spoke.

"I am Olambur of Kess, demon, and you are not welcome here."

The god-ghost looked up at the words and his face met the downswing of the greenstone mace. Olambur's blow landed exactly on the line where chin meets throat. Qin Gu's head snapped back and the giant toppled like a stunned bull.

Olambur rolled to one side and stood up. The dead god lay still. Olambur saw the same blue glow that had wreathed the end of his mace now played around the head of the fallen giant.

The ground convulsed beneath Olambur's feet. The city trembled and dust came cascading down from the roofs of the temples. The whole world moved like the deck of a ship. Olambur took his mace and started back down the stairway to the gate of the city. He had won: he had bested a god.

The skeletons collapsed as he went past, the soul frames releasing each spirit back to the underworld. He crossed through the market between the rotten stalls, and stood before the archway of the city. The black wood of the gate solidly shut. No way out that way. He turned and found a small figure standing behind him. On the stairs back up to the temple, Qin Gu sat nursing the place where Olambur had struck him.

"Tell him, Luwatu," the dead god's voice soft, almost kind.

Luwatu, a little old man with a squint and one tooth. Looked up and smiled.

"No man who crosses the threshold of Uracha Deki may leave. This is the dark house."

"But I'm not dead."

Luwatu nodded.

"Would have been better for you had you been, my lord. This place is built for the comfort of the spirits. They find no rest in the mortal world, but the living find nothing but darkness and dust here."

"But I won. I beat you, I killed the dead god. The city returns to Nuji Giya."

Again Luwatu smiled and nodded.

"All true my lord, and you with it. I am afraid the Lord of Wits has consigned you to the darkness. He has once more evaded the justice of the Fifteen, and thanks to you we've lost his soul brother Lord Good Earth, released finally to join the souls of his own kind."

The last of the daylight of the mortal realm faded in the sky as the city travelled back to Nuji Giya, and Olambur began the howl that would last for ten-thousand moons.

Gareth Owens is a Babylonian Wizard. He lives near Tunbridge Wells.

Riders of the last orc

LYNN FOREST-HILL

A night at the start of February: gathering drifts of thick grey fog pressed against the plate-glass windows of a Student Union bar as the weather started to change after heavy, sleety rain. No one inside noticed the weather, of course, certainly not the small group who were huddled together at a corner table, deep in conversation.

"It would make a great bit of rag publicity," declared a thick-set young man enthusiastically. On his right, from under a mass of long unruly fair hair a young woman nodded. "I'll see if I can borrow some horses from the riding school," she announced.

"Oh, not horses!" She sighed and looked at the pale and slender young man who had spoken. "Look," she said patiently, "all you have to do is sit on it. We can put you between us, Mark on one side, me on the other. You'll be fine. You could even come for a couple of riding lessons beforehand."

"Good idea," said Mark, the thick-set young man, who was her boyfriend.

"Can you get a white one for me?" The fourth member of the group asked. The girl was about to speak but "You can have mine," said the pale young man as he got up with his hands full of glasses to go to the bar. Everyone else laughed.

"Ok, then," said Mark. "Phillipa will sort out the horses, Rowan will sort out the box." The pale young man nodded reluctantly. "I'll do the announcing, and Bang will bring the Orc," he added, grinning at Gunnar Olafson, the fourth member of the group. He was an intense Icelander studying ship science. With a stunning lack of imagination he was generally known to everyone as 'Bang'.

The group set the date of their publicity stunt for Midsummer's Day, which conveniently that year fell on a Saturday. They had plenty of time to organize the details and costumes, to practise, choose a suitable name for themselves and to reorganize everything when Phillipa could not arrange the fourth horse.

Midsummer's Day was fine and sunny after an anxious week of grey drizzle. It was even a bit hot for such elaborate costumes. The event was organized to take place on the green lawns of the campus that sloped gently down to the river. The site had been carefully chosen. The library building loomed close on one side. A thicket of rhododendrons on the other provided a screen from behind which entrances and exits could be made. There was plenty of space for spectators and for the press. Leaflets had been distributed in all the pubs and clubs, and when Rowan peeped out from the rhododendron thicket that Saturday afternoon, quite a crowd was gathering.

At precisely 3 p.m. out from behind the rhododendrons rode three figures wearing chain mail under green cloaks. Deep hoods obscured their features. Long black boots had dark leggings tucked into them and their hands were gauntleted. In his most impressive voice, and it was very impressive, Mark declaimed: "We are the Riders of the Last Orc, descendants of those who anciently fought against orcs and their masters. It has been our mission to seek out and capture the last remaining specimen of this foul and unnatural breed. Here before this assembly we present the Last Orc."

With a bold flourish he indicated Rowan sitting nervously on a large but docile old bay mare, holding the reins tightly in one hand. From beneath his green cloak he produced in the other hand a wooden box, which he passed ceremoniously to Phillipa. She opened it slowly and with a flourish. Nothing happened.

One of the disinterested members of the local press asked "Is that supposed to mean something?" Phillipa looked inside the box, it contained a small cage, which was quite empty. She looked meaningfully at Mark, who hissed at Rowan "Where is it?" Rowan shrugged, more concerned with holding onto his reins. "And where's Bang?" Mark demanded of no one in particular. It had all gone horribly wrong, the toad that should have been in the box was not there. Gunnar was not there. "All he had to do was put a toad in the box and then turn up on cue!" Mark hissed again. He turned his irritation on Rowan: "Didn't you check?"

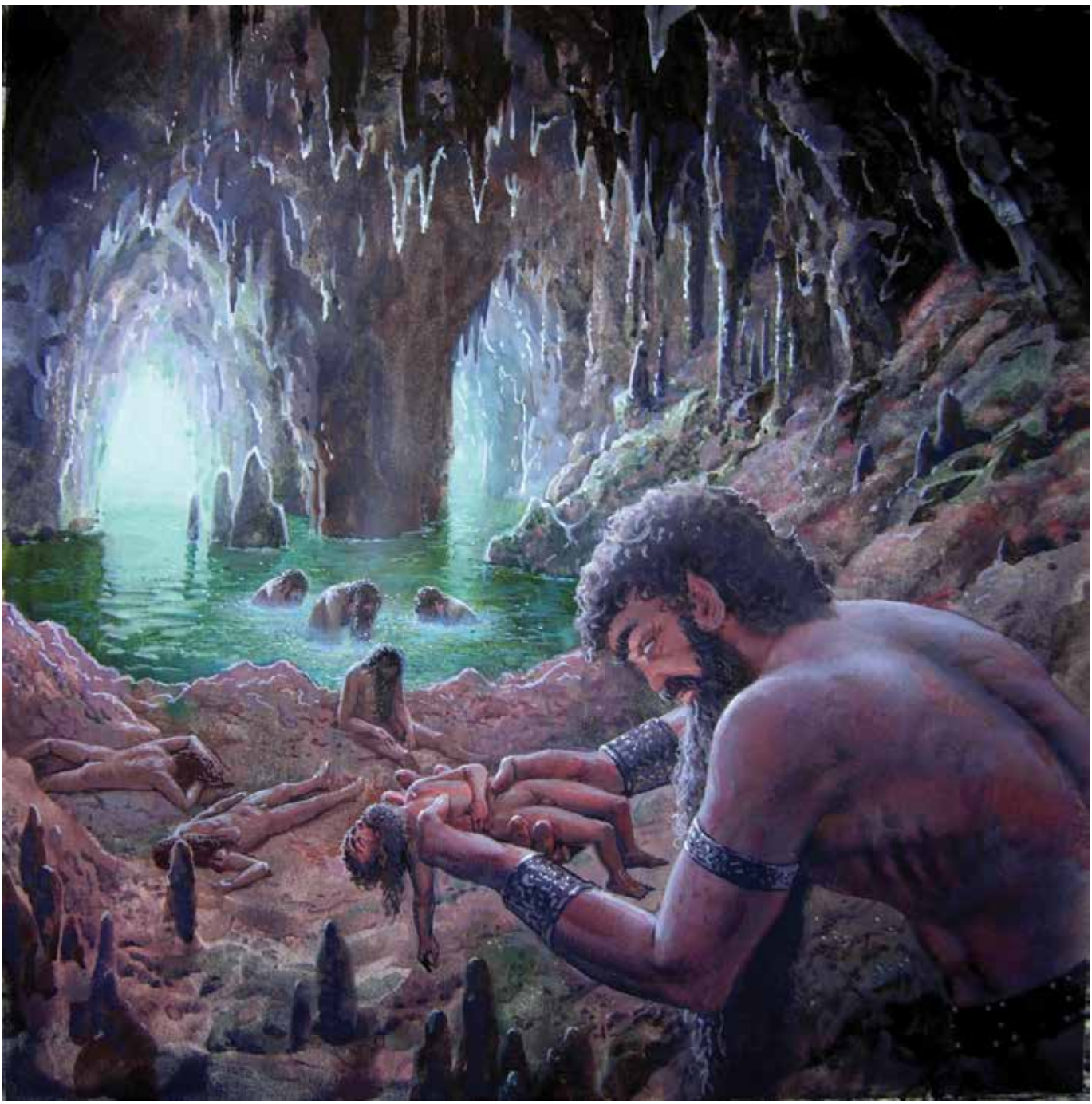
"Why?" asked the even paler young man. "The box was with my stuff. I got changed and picked it up. You know I don't like toads. If Bang had done it …"

"You'd have been too small for Bang's part!" Mark snapped in a stage whisper through gritted teeth.

"Look what's going on?" Someone asked as people were starting to walk away. "I thought this was going to be some kind of medieval recreation." Glaring at the interruption, Mark was about to answer when:

"What exactly do you think you are up to?" demanded a high hostile voice. "Don't you know you are infringing …" Everyone looked round. Heading through the diminishing crowd came a small, plump, elegantly dressed young woman — too elegantly dressed for such a hot afternoon. She wore a cream linen business suit over a white silk blouse. Her finely tailored jacket had unusually elaborate lapels and sleeves smocked in green and gold — it was a very expensive outfit, and she was wearing totally unsuitable high-heeled snakeskin shoes that stabbed the soft grass as she teetered towards the Riders.

"Sorry?" Mark said, puzzled by her tone, and the information she was relaying to the effect that whatever they thought they were doing they should not be doing anything of the kind without her permission, and if they went on with it there would be serious trouble, consequences of a legal kind entailing huge fines …



"It's just a rag stunt for charity," Phillipa tried to explain. "We've got permission to ride on the lawns."

The woman rounded on her with quite unnecessary venom: "I don't care about your lawns!" she snapped, waving a hand dismissively.

Now, Rowan's horse was a mild old beast, but Phillipa's was a spirited young gelding and the waving hand startled it. It shied, and in an attempt to control it, Phillipa, no mean horsewoman under normal circumstances, dropped the box. At the same moment a figure in a long grey cloak and broad-brimmed hat came through the crowd and stepped forward. Mark, being closest to the figure, hissed loudly "About flaming time too, Gunnar! Where have you been?" he growled. The question was overwhelmed by several competing noises. There was a bang and flash, various screams and several instances of bad language. By the time the smoke cleared Phillipa had regained control of her horse, but Mark was still struggling to calm both Rowan and his agitated old bay. Phillipa dismounted and picked up the box she had dropped, only to drop it again with a small scream. As it landed for the second time, out spilled a spectacularly warty toad. Phillipa's horse shied again and upset the other two. Rowan clung on for dear life and it took some time to calm things down again.

Those members of the crowd who had remained laughed, applauded, and gave a rather derisory cheer. They supposed the rather lame conjuring trick was what should have happened in the first place. Everything else was a bonus. It was

one of the local reporters who noticed something lying on the ground where the horses had been trampling. "What's that?" she asked. Phillipa's horse was still unsettled, and among its dancing legs there lay, unmistakably, a smocked sleeve, incongruous against the dark grass. "Cripes!" Rowan exclaimed, expecting to see a prostrate figure close by. But there was none, and no sign of the owner of the sleeve. "Where did that woman go?" asked the reporter. People looked around.

"Must have cleared off," Mark concluded. But not everyone was satisfied with this conclusion.

While some of the spectators were milling around looking for the woman with one missing sleeve no one noticed a figure in a long grey cloak until it spoke. "Sorry I'm late, mate," it gasped in a heavily accented voice, addressing Mark, from beside his stirrup. Mark looked down and saw beneath the obscuring hood the sweating face of Gunnar. "Late, what d'you mean late?" Mark demanded furiously. "And what's with the firework? We agreed, no fireworks because of the horses! You were just supposed to stride up and explain the toad in the box."

"But I couldn't get a toad," Gunnar replied. "That's why I'm late. When my friend took me over to zoology we couldn't get hold of the big one we wanted. We got chucked out by security …"

"What are you talking about?" Phillipa demanded as she walked her horse to calm it. "What was that great thing in the box if it wasn't a toad?"

"Nothing to do with me," said Gunnar shrugging.

"Excuse me," said a girl in a floral dress, "is the show over? I mean, I don't understand it."

"Neither do I," said Phillipa pointedly. "Who put the toad in the box if you didn't?" she asked Gunnar. "And why did you bring that wretched firework? And who was that horrible woman?"

No one knew the answers. Gunnar continued to deny all knowledge of anything that had happened, maintaining that he and his friend had been having a row with security outside the zoology block and he had had to run all the way to the lawns. The row and its timing were eventually confirmed by his friend and by the security officer. "Then someone must have nicked your costume!" Mark told him fiercely as they discussed events later in the Union bar.

"But I had it with me," Gunnar objected. "To get changed behind the library, like you said, and come in from that end so as not walk up from the thicket and spoil the effect. That's what I did."

The friends' frustrations with one another paled into insignificance a week later when the local constabulary visited each of the Riders to enquire about events leading up to the disappearance of a young female member of the local legal profession. It was known to her colleagues that she had intended to communicate a warning to those involved in the rag event that they were engaged in illegal activity, and she was known to have left her office at half-past two. Allowing for Saturday afternoon traffic she should have arrived at the venue at about five-past three. The grounds had been searched and a sleeve of her suit had been discovered among the reeds at the edge of the river.

Phillipa, Rowan, Gunnar and Mark explained things as far as they could, including what should have happened but didn't. On Midsummer afternoon the three Riders got changed into their costumes in the rhododendron thicket where the horses were tied up in the shade. The costumes were in plastic storage boxes. With Rowan's was the small wooden box he was to carry. They had ridden out as intended to begin the 'performance'. Rowan produced the box and gave it to Phillipa to open. Phillipa was to open the box revealing a large toad in the cage, and from the crowd Gunnar, in his wizard costume, was to step forward and declare that this was the 'last orc' that they had captured in distant parts. He was then to explain that he had transformed it into a toad so it would be easier to transport. There had been no plans for any fireworks and they knew nothing about the woman with the fancy sleeves. They had seen the single sleeve on the ground, but had left it on a bench in case she came back for it. They didn't know how it got into the reeds.

If they had trouble explaining what happened to the police, they had greater trouble trying to explain it among themselves. Phillipa said again and again "The first time there was nothing in the box. The cage isn't big enough for anything to hide in it. Certainly not a toad that big."

"So where did the toad come from?" Gunnar demanded.

"I wonder what happened to it," Rowan said pensively; everyone else looked at him. "Well — where did it go?"

"Who cares!" exclaimed Mark slapping the table.

As the dean of his faculty pointed out shortly afterwards, the incident was damaging to the institution and if the police enquiries revealed anything more than the most arrant

stupidity, Mark and his ill-advised friends were likely to be sent down.

The local newspapers were full of the story — the wrong story. Not the entertaining fund-raising one about the Riders of the Last Orc, but the one about the disappearance of a young woman who left behind only her sleeve. Sensational speculation ranged from rag-week abduction to spontaneous combustion. Her distraught family appealed for information. Her employers put up a small reward.

Two and a half weeks after the unfortunate events of Midsummer, on a warm, damp July evening, a thin young female in a dishevelled condition walked barefoot up to a group of graduation revellers saying she couldn't remember who she was. Her hair was wet and very tangled, her nails were broken and dirt was ground under them. She seemed to have mud on her face. Emergency services were called and paramedics got her to hospital immediately. In spite of her amnesia, there was one distinguishing feature that had her quickly reunited with her family — she was wearing an expensive linen jacket, badly shrunk, that might once have been cream-coloured. It only had one sleeve.

Happily for all concerned, her memory eventually came back almost entirely, except for the time she was missing. Of that she never had any memory at all. But the closest physical and psychological examination showed that she had suffered no harm whatsoever, apart from being a few pounds lighter. Whatever had happened, her experience seemed to change her outlook on life. After a few years, she renounced the practice of law and moved to rural Wiltshire where she took over a small cottage industry farming edible snails and maggots for the medical profession. She never could afford expensive clothes again, nor snakeskin shoes, spending much of her small disposable income on private dermatologists. They said her unfortunate skin condition stemmed from being in close contact with viruses found in soil and mud. They assured her of an eventual cure. In the meantime an elderly hiker that she met in the local pub recommended the traditional remedy of wart-biter crickets. They proved painful but successful.

The Riders of the Last Orc were given severe warnings for their 'prank', but were not sent down. In fact, they all graduated and went their separate ways to lead remarkably quiet lives. Gunnar changed disciplines and became a particle physicist. Phillipa (history 2:1) married Mark (English 2:1) and to satisfy Mark's interest in drama, they established a riding school specializing in training stunt riders for film and TV. Rowan (philosophy 1st) never told anyone about his work for the MoD developing camouflage; and none of them ever dared to seriously consider how the toad got into the box.

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Dark trails

MARK RIDGE

As I write this, with the wisdom of age and hindsight, all the events in my life seem finally to come together as the threads of a fine tapestry are carefully woven in order to create a landscape both alien and familiar to those who view it. Like most people, I have felt a bit lost in this mad confusion of life. I have always felt as if I belonged somewhere else. Now I am beginning to see more clearly how my anachronistic feelings have continued to steer me off course; keeping me from achieving my true goals in life. We never truly appreciate how much our close friendships keep us focused on living; helping us remain awake and not lost in the waking dream of what-ifs. Only near the end of life, when we have either drifted away from good friends, or they have continued to the new frontier ahead of us, do we really understand that which is most important for us all. The one true secret of all existence viewed only as short momentary glimpses that are ignored, or too soon forgotten.

Clotho, the spinner of fate's web, may seem cruel at times with the curves and misery we experience, but, if you believe in such things, she spends much of her time attempting to correct errors injected by the great adversary. Direct hands-on involvement is not usually needed, but at times she makes herself known — as do many of the other Angels of Light — for reasons that will never be known or understood by mortals. I never believed any of this until Michael brought me his journals and spent a week revealing things that until then I had viewed as mere myth, legend and twisted lore. So I now look into my past to see my future present more clearly. As I review those events that helped to shape my friends and myself, the hidden images sharpen, and I am filled with clarity of thought.

The wolves howl across the lake. Another mist has formed on the still surface of the green water. Summer is ending.

By the time Michael, Jase and I were in Junior High, we'd made it a ritual always to go camping together down at Brown County State Park — a few miles east of our hometown of Noble, Indiana— during the major holidays from Memorial Day to Labour Day.

The horsemen's camp sits at the top of a mesa reached by a narrow two-mile-long two-lane road. The winding road continues for another two miles and splits twice: to the left leading down to Straw valley and to the right leading to Lake Ogle. On the mesa are three large primitive and semi-primitive camps — two with indoor shower areas and flush toilets. The horsemen's camp was located in the centre next

to the General Store and the buffalo pens, near the Nature Centre, before a new and larger camping area exclusively for the horsemen was built down in Straw Valley.

Every holiday weekend, either Michael's father or my father would take Jase, Michael and me along with our horses down on Friday after school. We usually arrived early enough to get a good spot down the slope from the general store close to the showers, which was good for me because I took so many. I really never understood how Michael and Jase got by with just one shower a day. Mom said I was obsessive, but the truth was I just didn't like being dirty. Michael's parents slept in the camper attached to their pickup, and my parents slept in one of those pull-along campers that folded out. Jase, Michael and me slept in an old US Army wall-tent that we called our Base Headquarters.

Sometimes, Michael's grandfather and great-grandmother Tava, joined us at noon to take us down extra early to save spots for the horses and trailers.

By midnight, trucks pulling trailers would be arriving and unloading horses all over the area, squeezing in wherever they could get their trailers. Michael, Jase and I were usually too excited to sleep on Friday and would be up roaming around the camp until about four in the morning.

One of the things we enjoyed most about our camping trips was riding the trails. There are three main trails leading out of the horsemen's camp, and I don't know how many branches out in the woods. We'd head out one of the trails then cut cross-country to see what we could find. My dad often got angry with us for trailblazing, but even when he was giving us a chewing out in front of Mom, and everyone else — reminding us how dangerous it was to get off the trails — I could see a hint of a smile on his lips. Dad was a true woodsman and had grown up with Michael's father in Sanders. He and his friends, in their youth, knew just about every stick and tree in Brown and Monroe counties. Before his death, he took Michael, Jase and me aside and asked, "Did you ever see the rainbow at midnight?" Looking back all these years, I think I finally understand what he meant.

I figured he didn't really mind what we did, but in some ways worried about what we might run into out there on our own. Michael's dad just frowned and told us to listen to William, my father, because he knew these woods better than anyone and knew what he was talking about. We'd listen, say yes sir, and do it again the first chance we got.

Maybe we should have listened to my dad a little harder.

One of our favourite trails leading out of camp was the 'A' trail that wound north to an open field near the fire tower. At several points along the trail lay fallen trees that no one seemed to care about moving out of the way. Generally people would just ride around them, but not us. We'd get our horses into a slow canter, side by side, and jump the trees while yelling, "Whaaaaaahoooo!"

People would hear us coming down that mile-long trail, and move aside letting us pass. There must have been about 15 of those trees to jump and by the time we'd reached the open field our horses were pretty tired, so we'd rest them a few minutes before continuing.

Michael's horse was a stallion with long mane and tail that he called Darkle because he was blacker than night. I said he looked like the horse Zorro rode. Jase rode a medium-sized pinto named Tonto that was so hyped up from show racing he often spun in circles when not walking or galloping along a trail. My horse was a half-quarter, half-appaloosa with a strawberry mane everyone at the barns said was crazy because he had pig-eyes (eyes with more of the white showing than was usual). I named him Lucky — my reasoning was that if everyone else thought the horse was crazy then he'd have to be lucky for me. In fact, I was the only person, besides girls I personally introduced him to, that could even get on the horse.

"Dang it, Jase," I said as we rested the horses in the field, "settle Tonto down will ya."

"Trying to, bud," Jase said, bailing to the ground, "but you know how he gets once I let him run."

Michael had turned his horse loose and it was placidly chomping grass a few feet away.

"Maybe if you'd stop running him in those stupid shows he wouldn't get wound up." Michael didn't like horse shows; he said they were a waste of time. But Jase was good and made a lot of money on weekends running the barrels, poles and rescue races, most of which his dad took to support his drinking habit.

"Where we going this time guys?" I asked, scanning the

trees a quarter mile across the field.

"Your lead, man," Michael and Jase said together.

I hated that. At home, Michael was our leader, more or less, but in the woods, I was. Okay, I liked being the one to make decisions, but sometimes it got on my nerves. There would be times when we went camping that I'd be the one to disappear, often for hours. I loved riding alone in the woods. It was peaceful and I could think clearly. Most of my best stories were thought up while riding alone.

I stuck my foot in the stirrup and said, "Race." Lucky sprang into action just about the time I was swinging up into the saddle.

"Dang it!" Jase spat, grabbing his saddle horn and swinging from the ground into his saddle, as Tonto spun in a circle, before pursuing.

Michael just whistled to Darkle who turned so Michael could spring up on him from the rear, just like cowboys do in the movies, and dug in his heels.

Clouds of smoke sprang up behind us as we raced neck and neck across the short trail from tree line to tree line. Entering the trail, we took a hard turn and jumped a downed tree single file. "Whaaaaaahooooooo!"

The trail made a descent, and I slowed the pace to a canter. At the bottom, I saw a deer trail and headed into the forest. I'd never noticed this particular deer path before, even though we'd been riding trails for years. But I had an idea where it might lead.

A couple of miles or so in the direction we were going was Ogle Lake where most of the city folk came to fish and picnic. But in the woods, you can get off track and turned around pretty easily and fairly quickly.

The deer path got lost in the foliage, and I decided to let Lucky have his head. We wound our way through the woods, dodging tree limbs, up and down hills, for a long time. I figured we'd gone off our intended course because we should have been near the lake by then. Michael and Jase never said a word about our heading; they trusted me and my woods-sense enough to know that we'd eventually reach a familiar spot.

But as we wound deeper into the woods, I began to worry. Partly because I had no idea which way to go, but mostly because I could tell by the light coming through the trees that the sun was getting ready to go down. Just about the time I was ready to admit that we were lost, Lucky burst out of the woods onto a trail.

I let out my breath.

"Dang man, I was worried there for a minute," Jase said, hopping off his horse and loosening up the girth. "Shoulda known you never get lost."

"Yeah," I said looking to Michael who merely stared back with a dark look that told me he knew we were lost, but debating the issue would get us nowhere.

"Getting dark guys. Anyone have any cigars?" Michael said, breaking the awkward silence, looking around as if expecting to see something out of the ordinary. That was one of the few times in our travels I actually saw fear on his face.

We didn't smoke, but often used cigars on night rides to keep track of where people were. You could always tell, if you couldn't hear someone speaking or the creaking of the leather on their saddles, where they were by looking for the burning cherry of their cigar. Well, that and the smell. On moonlit nights, it's not too bad, but this was the dark of the moon and the night would be pitch black.

"Naw, man," I said, "all out. Jase?"

"Tapped," he said, hunkering down to chew on a weed.

Michael scanned the trail and looked through the trees. "This trail seems to run north and south. I say we go south."

Besides being a genius, Michael had this uncanny way of knowing direction that was a little unnatural. We could blindfold him, spin him in circles, and he could still get his bearings almost immediately. He also suffered from a rare eye disease that made it possible for him to see clearly in total darkness, but required him to wear glasses with dark lenses in the daytime to keep from being blinded.

He kicked Darkle and started down the trail at a walk, Jase and I following behind. As we rode, a fog began to form. It seemed to fall from the trees onto us slowly. Soon, we were riding single file, Michael in front, Jase in the middle and me in the rear. After a while, I don't know how long because I didn't then, nor do I now, wear a watch, I called out to Michael to hold up. The night, combined with the fog, brought my visibility to zero. My rear was getting tired and I wanted to stop to stretch my legs. But Michael didn't respond. So I called out again, louder, "Michael!"

The night was quiet. I couldn't hear the squeak of leather from their saddles, talking, or any animal noises. Even Lucky was quiet, which was very strange. When you're out in the woods at night, you can hear for quite a distance, and the night creatures seemed to fill the trees with their racket. However, on this night, I heard nothing. I felt as if a veil to another world had swallowed me, stranding me in a nowhere land someplace between shadows of reality and fantasy. I chided myself for thinking that the books I had read by Burroughs and Lovecraft somehow had too much truth in them. I've never been completely comfortable alone in the darkness, but when I was with my friends, I was usually the brave one. On this night, however, fear took hold of my mind. Suddenly, I felt a cold touch on my bare neck like icy fingers stroking my flesh. "Shades of the mind," I said under my breath. "I gotta stop reading those horror stories."

Like I said, I didn't normally dislike riding alone, but it was a different case when you're alone in the dark, lost and the usual noises you're used to hearing aren't there. The farthest I could see was Lucky's head, and I noticed that his ears were perked up like he was on edge. When horses get angry their ears lay back, almost flat, but when they sense something curious, their ears point forward and twitch back and forth. He jumped suddenly to the side, almost dislodging me from the saddle.

"Easy, Lucky. What is it?" I said, glancing about nervously.

Brown County is known to have packs of wild dogs that roam the woods, and I feared that some might be near, the way Lucky was moving his head about. Wild dogs are like

wolves, they'll track their prey in silence, giving warning they're near only when they attack. I took my Buck hunting knife out of its sheath and nudged Lucky on, keeping my ears open for the slightest hint of anything moving in through the forest. Then I heard, or thought I heard, soft singing like that of a heavenly choir floating on the fog.

"Michael! Jase!" I yelled, starting to shiver with nervousness. "Hey! Where are you?"

Still I heard no response, just that eerie singing calling out to me.

It wasn't like them to just up and leave me, for any reason, especially in the middle of the woods at night. I began to wonder if they'd gone off the trail in the dark and fog, and we'd gone and got ourselves into a real mess, when I saw a light up ahead. My Dad often told us stories about Witch Light or Fairy Fire that would appear from nowhere and lead lone woodsmen astray. "You have to be careful out in the woods, boys." He would say as the campfire crackled, "These woods have long memories and harbour things known only in folktales." We really should have taken his advice more seriously. I shrugged off the eerie feelings and forced myself to think more realistically.

I reasoned that I might be coming out into one of the primitive campsites. I'd certainly been riding long enough to have gone that far, so I dug my heels into Lucky's side urging him to go faster. The sooner I was back in camp the better. However, as I got closer to the light I saw that it wasn't the camps, but a small log cabin sitting on the side of the trail.

Now I'm here to tell you, I've been all through those woods, and haven't seen any cabins before. Oh, we'd find old foundations, and forgotten family graveyards, or the remnants of barns, but never a fully functional cabin.

I began thinking about how long I'd been riding and calculated how far I might have gone. Could be, I thought, I got off on some fire trail and was near the outskirts of Nashville. Nashville, Indiana, is a small town about two miles west of the main entrance to the park on Highway 46. Roughly six miles from our starting point. It was possible that I'd ridden that far. Well, I figured, might as well ask whoever lived in the cabin.

Right about the time I reined Lucky to a stop, the door of the cabin creaked open and this girl came out. She was cute, at least from what I could see of her in the shadowed doorway backlit by candlelight. She seemed to be about my height and age, with long flowing black hair with thin strands of silver in it, wearing a mid-length black and silver dress and soft black leather ankle boots that were covered in a lattice work of silver webs. Her face was round, and she smiled brightly, easing the tension.

"I bet you're lost, aren't you?" Her voice was like wind chimes tinkling in a light spring breeze.

"Yeah, I guess. My friends and I got turned around in the fog." Then I asked, hopefully, "Have they come by here?"

"Nobody has been here for, oh, it doesn't matter." She stepped aside in the doorway. "My name's Cloe, come in and be at peace."

I felt that icy feeling racing through my veins again. Twice before I had felt such a sensation — in the principal's office when I was five and a couple of years before this strange night when that nice woman from social services came to take Lloyd away. Both of those women were named Cloe, too. I figured it must be some common name in southern Indiana, but somehow, as I recall, they all had similar features and smiles that made the heart melt with a quiet calmness. I shrugged the idea off and dismounted. After tying Lucky's reins to a tree branch and loosening the saddle, I entered the cabin followed by the girl.

It was a cosy, if not spooky, one-room cabin. The drapes and curtains covering the single window were black lace with silver strands that made a pattern that kind of reminded me of a spider's web. There was a small wooden table with two wooden chairs in the centre of the room. A big black kettle, hanging from a rail above the fire in the fireplace, was bubbling with what I took to be a stew of some kind. The aroma of vegetables and spices cooking made my mouth water. The only other furniture in the place were an antique wardrobe and china cabinet that contained several pieces of regular looking dinnerware — plates, cups, saucers and bowls — and a single twin bed with a black quilt, black sheets and a fluffy pillow in a black case — all with the same silvery web-like pattern.

The girl, walking over to the kettle and stirring the stew, said pleasantly: "Please have a seat. There's milk in the pitcher on the table."

"Thanks," I said, as I sat down and poured myself a glass.

As there wasn't much else to do, I made small talk, hoping I wouldn't say anything stupid and end up kicking myself in the butt like I had with Sabon almost a year previously. I had met her in wood shop in 7th grade and immediately fell in love. She possessed a strange aura around her that drew me in and made me feel at ease. When she vanished after the fall semester, I felt as if the best part of myself had been lost. In many ways, Cloe reminded me a great deal of Sabon. But at 14 a lot of girls seemed to be similar in appearance. Still, I couldn't stop staring at her, wondering …

"You live here alone?" I said, feeling my foot making contact with my butt.

"Sometimes," she replied. "Not often. I travel a lot."

I figured she was definitely not my age. But she looks so young, I thought.

Right about then she turned, smiled, and said: "Thank you."

I blinked.

No way could she have heard my thoughts. I took a long drink from my glass and shook my head. Dang it, I thought, I must be really tired. I probably only imagined she'd said anything in response to my thoughts.

She laid out two bowls and filled them with stew.

"I hope you like vegetable stew. Seems to be all I have at the moment. I never eat meat."

Boy, when I smelled that stew I couldn't have cared less what it was, I was so hungry. I dove in.

"Takes the chill off, eh?" She said, quietly, her brown eyes sparkling with a silvery light.

"Yeah. Thanks." I had been a little chilly come to think of it. The warmth of the room, combined with the stew, started making me feel warmer, relaxed.

She was looking at me as we ate. I swear her eyes, big round and brown, could see right into my soul. She was giving me one of those odd feelings I often got around Sabon — a kind of excited tingling sensation on the back of the neck. Moments later, I felt my eyelids droop.

"Perhaps you should lie down and get some rest."

"Ummm, yeah, maybe —" I was out before the words.

I dreamed of an endless field of honeysuckle. The air was warm, although I could see no sun. Before me was a large waterfall that seemed to reach to heaven. As I stood marvelling at the wonder of the sparkling water as it fell into the lagoon beneath it, someone said my name. The words hung on the air like soft chimes. I turned and saw Sabon standing behind me, her long brown hair being tossed gently by a soft breeze, and her bright eyes drawing me towards her … but before I could respond, I woke up.

The sunlight was rushing in through the open window and I heard the roaring sounds of birdsong coming from the forest. My host was sitting at the table, her legs crossed casually at the knee, and knitting something with what looked like silver thread.

"Good morning. I trust your dreams were pleasant." Sensing my disorientation she added, "Nothing is ever lost, completely." Then she winked at me, and smiled like Mona Lisa.

"Wha … what?" I felt woozy as if I'd been teleported from one location to another. I blinked as the room came into full focus.

"Your fate has yet to be measured fully." She said, handing me a glass of milk. "This will make you feel better."

"Thanks," I said, sipping the milk, as I stumbled to the chair by the table. I struggled to connect her words with my dream, but was unable to make the connection. Coming more fully awake I asked, "What time is it?"

"Just a few minutes past dawn, you should have no trouble finding your way back now."

I thanked her for her kindness and she followed me outside. Climbing into my saddle I said, "Maybe I'll come back and visit sometime."

She just smiled and winked at me, saying in her musical voice, "Oh, we'll meet again, I'm sure."

I headed south on the trail at a gallop hoping to find some familiar signs that would lead me back to camp. About 15 minutes, must have been, down the trail I came to a crossroads with a sign in the middle. Two wooden placards were nailed on it. One pointed right, and read 'Lake Ogle'; the other pointed left and read 'Campgrounds'.

I headed up the left side. After about another 20 minutes or so, I came out on the eastern side of the first primitive camping area and breathed a sigh of relief. As I slowed Lucky to a walk, I hoped that Michael and Jase had made it back okay. Right as I turned towards the general store, I heard Jase call out, "Yo, man, where ya bin?"

Boy, you never heard anyone breathe a louder sigh of relief than I did at that moment. Michael and Jase were sitting on the limestone wall outside the store drinking chocolate milk and eating Twinkies.

"I'm glad to see you guys. What happened? Is my dad mad?" Of course he was, I thought.

"Don't know man," Michael said. "We were riding along, came to a sign that pointed the way here, and hit camp around midnight."

"What about my dad?" I was envisioning not only a chewing out, but most likely a demoralizing belt lashing.

"No problem, bud," Jase said. "Everybody was in bed when we got in, and we told your dad that you'd gone off on one of your early morning rides."

I sighed loud enough to make the dead bang on the walls for quiet. Michael was laughing his rear end off.

"Thanks guys."

I thought about telling them about the girl in the cabin, but decided to keep that experience to myself. Sometimes, you just have to keep secrets from people, even your best friends.

"Where'd you get off to anyways?" Jase asked around a mouthful of squishy brown Twinkie.

"I must have gone off the trail and wandered around in circles or something."

Michael stopped laughing and gave me a look that said he knew I was lying. Then he smiled. "Whatever, man. You're here now."

You know, as hard as I tried, I never was able to retrace my tracks and find that cabin with the strange girl again.

Mark Ridge lives in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Meriadoc and the matter of Rohan

DAVID DOUGHAN

Rohan (in Breton *Roc'han*) is the name of a small town in Brittany, the original home of an old French aristocratic family named for it. In *Letters* 297, Tolkien gives the impression, without saying so outright, that he devised the name Rohan independently, and that any connection between the Riddermark and France is coincidental: "Nothing in the history of Brittany will shed any light on the Eorlingas." Up to a point.

In Middle-earth, Rohan 'horse land' is a place where the names of people and places are a variety of Old English: Théoden, Eowyn, Meduseld, Edoras. However, the name Rohan itself is Sindarin, like that of nearly all other places and people in Middle-earth, apart from a few Gothic names from across the Anduin — Vidugavia, Vinitharya — and, of course, apart from Bree and the Shire.

The names of hobbits and their dwelling places are modern English, although the forenames of many in prosperous families are more 'elevated' than is usual, frequently resulting in a comic contrast with surnames, such as Filibert Bolger. The forenames of the two chief families, the Tooks and the Brandybucks, repay particular attention.

Although the Old Took was called Gerontius, which in fact is probably a Latinization of a Brittonic name (such as Welsh Geraint), most Took names are originally from Frankish sources — the 'Matter of France', tales of Charlemagne and his knights, or paladins: Isengrim, Ferumbras, Sigismond and of course Paladin father of Peregrin. On the other hand, the Brandybucks' names, according to Tolkien, "had a style we should perhaps feel vaguely to be 'Celtic'". His words are carefully chosen as although Gorhendad is modern Welsh for great-great-grandfather, few of these names are actually of Brittonic or Gaelic origin. Names such as Dodinas, Seredic and Saradoc suggest more the Arthurian tales: the 'Matter of Britain'. However, there is one particular name of respectable 'Celtic' origin: Meriadoc.

Back in our world, the legendary founder of Brittany was one Conan Meriadoc. The name occurs in other instances; for example, a seventh-century St Meriadoc is venerated in Cornwall (Camborne Parish Church is dedicated to SS. Martin and Meriadoc) and even more so in Brittany, where tradition makes him Bishop of Vannes. There are variant forms of this name, such as Meriaduc, Meriasec and Meriadec. Also, *Meriadeuc, ou li chevalier as deus espees* is a thirteenth-century French romance from the Arthurian cycle; and then there is Hercule-Mériadec de Rohan! So we have now returned to Brittany, and the noble family with whom we started; although by this time the family of Rohan has moved south to Bordeaux, a big city in southwestern France, renowned, among other things, for its wines. The son of Hercule-Mériadec, Ferdinand Maximilien Mériadec de Rohan (1738–1813), became Bishop of Bordeaux and definitely left his mark on the city. The imposing city hall opposite the cathedral is called the Palais Rohan; and a 1960s commercial quarter near the centre of Bordeaux is named Mériadeck in his honour; it stands on land that he donated to the city.

So Tolkien was wrong … or not. Examining the context and wording of the letter cited above, we can see that he never quite denies a connection; indeed at one point he even hints that he picked on the name Rohan because it fitted his existing stem Roh (= horse). Did the use of Rohan suggest to him a Meriadoc with a Rohirric connection? An interesting speculation. Certainly it is a lesson in looking carefully at what Tolkien actually says, rather than what he seems to say.

David Doughan is a gentleman of leisure.