

Issue 60 • Summer 2020

# Mallorn

The Journal of the Tolkien Society









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## editorial

- 4 **Luke Shelton** Starlight in Shadow

## articles

- 6 **Garrett Van Curen** Scouring the Shire: Panoptic Power and Community Healing in Foucault's 'Panopticism' and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*  
14 **Kristen McQuinn** Not at Home: Liminal Space and Personal Identity in *The Hobbit* and *Coraline*  
19 **Andrew Higgins** Tolkien on Holiday  
25 **Martin Beech** In the Moon Gleaming

## notes

- 29 **Erik Mueller-Harder** The Tolkien Art Index  
31 **Mick Henry** There and Back Again? Tolkien's Brief Visit to Sussex in 1904  
33 **N.J.S. Polk** A Note on 'A Holy Party: Holiness in *The Hobbit*'

## reviews

- 34 **Martina Juričková** The Heroes of Tolkien by David Day, Translated by Jan Lipšanský  
35 **Jeremy Edmonds** Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist by Oronzo Cilli  
36 **Richard Rohlin** Sub-Creating Arda: World-Building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works, Its Precursors, and Its Legacies edited by Dimitra Fimi and Thomas Honegger  
38 **Tom Hewitt** Tolkien and the Classics edited by Roberto Arduino, Giampaolo Canzonieri, Claudio A. Testi.

## submissions

- 40 Letters to the Editor  
43 Guide for Authors

**Mallorn** is the journal of The Tolkien Society. Published once a year, it considers reviews, scholarly articles, creative essays, poetry and artwork. Contact the Editor if you are interested in submitting an item for a future issue. All enquiries and manuscripts should be sent by email to [mallorn@tolkiensociety.org](mailto:mallorn@tolkiensociety.org)

The Tolkien Society is an international organisation, registered as a charity in England and Wales, dedicated to furthering interest in the life and works of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien CBE (1892–1973). Founded in 1969, Tolkien remains its President in perpetuo and his daughter, Priscilla Tolkien, became its honorary Vice President in 1986. Alongside **Mallorn**, the Society publishes the bimonthly bulletin Amon Hen. In addition to meetings of local groups (known as 'Smials'), the Tolkien Society organises several UK-based events each year: Springmoot (including the AGM and Annual Dinner) in April, the Seminar in July, and Oxonmoot in September. Visit [www.tolkiensociety.org](http://www.tolkiensociety.org) for further information.

## Mallorn

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## Starlight in Shadow

Before I get to my editorial proper, it is important to take a moment to appreciate how challenging the past few months have been for everyone. Not only has the world been seemingly turned upside down by a pandemic, but early this year the Tolkien community lost one of its guiding lights: Christopher Tolkien.

I know that there have been many things to grieve over the past several months. In the midst of such grief, however, I like to think of Sam sitting in Mordor. When he sees the stars shine out above the shadow, he feels comforted that evil is a passing thing. It is my earnest hope that this issue of *Mallorn* will serve as a kind of starlight for you during this difficult time. What I mean by that is: while not a profound thing that changes your life, this issue can be a part of something bigger that has had meaning to you for a long time. In being that part, that ray of light, may this issue of *Mallorn* remind you of the joy that you have in Tolkien and in works of fantasy and fiction more generally. May it be a small reminder that these times of sadness pass and that greater things endure.

I am particularly grateful to my fellow editors, the peer reviewers, the writers, and the artists of this issue. These individuals, in addition to facing many of the same hardships as everyone else, decided that *Mallorn* was important enough for them to take on additional work during this difficult time. I am indebted to them for making this issue possible, and their commitment to this process means that the members of the Tolkien Society have something to look forward to. Now, in the spirit of providing the kind of quality research, scholarship, and content that we hope you will come to expect from us, I will step back into the editorial that I had planned for this issue, and from there we will continue as normal.

As the new editor-in-chief, I am very grateful for this opportunity to continue the work of the influential editors who have come before me, including my immediate predecessor

Rosalinda Haddon. I share her vision of making *Mallorn* a peer-reviewed journal, and I want to go one step further – I believe that *Mallorn* should strive to be an essential part of every scholarly conversation about Tolkien. You will notice some changes in content in this issue, and I hope you will agree that this puts *Mallorn* on a firm footing to reach that goal.

My experience as a scholar, podcaster, and public academic has shown me that the Tolkien fan community is filled with the desire and ability to consume the scholarship surrounding the things they love. It is my hope that these changes to *Mallorn* will be seen, as they are intended, as a way to enable Tolkien Society members to follow this longing to a much broader and deeper extent.

*Mallorn* will no longer publish poetry or fiction. Instead, the journal is transitioning to focus more exclusively on discussion of academic topics important to scholars and fans. The articles accepted for publication are all peer-reviewed, and the length will grow over time to be closer to what is expected in other peer-reviewed publications. You will also find a new section for shorter content called Notes. This has become a popular category in scientific journals and is finding increasing popularity in the humanities. Notes typically do not require as much secondary support. Rather, they are useful for things such as updating previous scholarship, presenting an idea that will be developed further in a later project, or presenting resources or material that is beneficial for the scholarly community.

I know that, in the past, *Mallorn* editors have used the editorial as a space to provide opinions about certain topics, or even to have guest editorials. My vision for this space is primarily to provide an outline for the contents of the current issue, contextualise how the issue fits in with current scholarly discussion (and previous *Mallorn* issues), and share relevant news and information of which the readership of the journal should be

aware. That being said, allow me to transition to discussing the contents of this issue.

*Mallorn* 60 presents a nice balance of scholarship. It includes articles comparing Tolkien's work to contemporary fiction, looks at some of Tolkien's less-explored works, touches on some biographical material, and examines Tolkien using a variety of critical lenses. In a sense, these articles follow many of the same impulses as those published in *Mallorn* 59.

In the first article, Garrett Van Curen uses the lens of Foucault's Panopticon to analyse the way that power is wielded in the Shire after the hobbits return from the quest of the Ring. He also does a nice job of complicating an overly simplistic analysis of this sort. While the panoptic characteristics of Sharky's power are more obvious, some of these traits are common to the hobbits of the Shire as well.

The next article is a very interesting comparison between *The Hobbit* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* using the frame of liminal spaces and personal identity. Identity formation is often discussed as being an important theme of literature for children and adolescents, and Kristen McQuinn shows how this theme is present in both novels. The article also intersects with ideas of liminality and uncertainty often present in fantasy literature.

Andrew Higgins' article presents a sweeping analysis of Tolkien's use of the theme of holidays, as well as some of his personal opinions about holidays more generally. The scope of this article is ambitious, and it manages to accomplish a lot in a small space. Ultimately, Higgins illuminates how Tolkien's conception of holidays is one that requires nuance to understand because it is associated both with ideas of enjoyment and creativity, as well as a return to the mundane and a sense of loss when they are over.

The final article discusses the ways in which the depiction of the moon in *Roverandom* is consistent with or differs from other depictions. Martin Beech examines how modern readers may be unfamiliar with the

astronomical and literary background that Tolkien is pulling from to depict the moon. Ultimately, though, Beech concludes that it is this background that makes the moon such an engaging aspect of the text for the reader's imagination.

The Notes in this issue provide a good overview of the intent of the Notes section moving forward. The first two notes deal with prior scholarship on Tolkien and with new information about Tolkien himself. Nick Polk uses his note to effectively reframe some of his logic and to clarify terminology from his article published in *Mallorn* 59. Mick Henry's note contributes some important biographical information about Tolkien and also includes a drawing by Tolkien which has never before been published.

The final note deals more with the broader scholarly community. Erik Muller-Harder's note provides an introduction to his Tolkien Art Index, which is an essential tool for scholars who include references to Tolkien's art. It is my sincere hope that *Mallorn* and all other Tolkien journals will use his referencing system in the future, which would alleviate confusion over which art pieces are being discussed.

Finally, this issue includes Book Reviews for *Sub-Creating Arda: World-Building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Work, Its Precursors, and Its Legacies*, edited by Fimi and Honegger, *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist* by Oronzo Cili, *Tolkien and the Classics* edited by Arduini, Canzonieri, and Testi, and *The Heroes of Tolkien* by David Day.



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# Scouring the Shire: Panoptic Power and Community Healing in Foucault's 'Panopticism' and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

GARRETT VAN CUREN

The image of Jeremy Bentham's 'panoptic prison,' made famous by Michel Foucault's prolific chapter on 'Panopticism' from *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, is one that has often been applied to the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>1</sup> The Panopticon is 'a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 203). It is a 'mechanism that automatizes and disindividualizes power' so as to establish permanent surveillance and assure the 'automatic functioning of power' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 201, 203). In its essence, the Panopticon is the perfect prison: a central tower rests in the middle of a vast, circular room overlooking the many cells of the prisoners. The prisoners are always visible, but they cannot see into the central tower. Over time, the prisoners assume they are always being watched and therefore come to monitor themselves. In the Panopticon, the central guard in the tower needs not exercise any physical control or punishment (if he is even there at all), because the system begins to run itself. The prisoners never know if or when they are being watched, so they come to assume they are always being watched. As Foucault insists, 'visibility is a trap' ('Panopticism', p. 203). Consider the great eye of Sauron as the perfect encapsulation of the unseen overseer Bentham envisions in his original conception: a menace forever looming, an invisible threat assumed to be standing guard at any given time in a centralised tower at the middle of a circular prison. Perhaps what makes Sauron such a grand enemy and still one of the most sinister antagonists in English literature is the fact that readers never actually see him; he is always alluded to, always feared, and yet never physically present. As Jonathan Witt and Jay W. Richards point out, were Sauron 'to repossess the ring that grants invisibility and magnified power, his goal of overseeing all while remaining unseen would be complete – the panopticon observer perfected' (p. 88). Patrick Curry also points out that, like the goal of establishing a singular form of governing power as a by-product of the Panopticon, Sauron's desire is 'one empire, ruled by one logic in accordance with one Will' and that the precise nature of that kind of power is only important insofar as it is secondary to 'its intended monism, universalism, and homogeneity' (pp. 145-6). Forms of institutional standardisation, as Foucault points out, lead to established norms and powerful forms of hegemony. It is through this process that, as Ji-Won Ohm asserts, 'power is more

economically exercised by imposing surveillance rather than the costly exemplary punishments' (p. 15). The Panoptic structure is one that sees all, governs all, and ultimately, dominates all, as those within the confines of the structure are not only the prisoners, but the prison guards, helping to monitor and surveil their fellow man and themselves.

This essay would like to consider Foucault's discussion of discipline and power through the accumulation of men and capital in his section on the formation of disciplinary society and economic processes, as it applies to the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*. Specifically, as the nature of power in the chapter 'The Scouring of the Shire' appears diffuse and self-perpetuating, one can see how the Panopticon functions on the communal level, entrapping the Hobbits and confronting them with an industrialised wasteland, characterised by, as Shippey notes, the 'vices of modernity... a kind of restless ingenuity, skill without purpose' and 'bulldozing for the sake of change' (p. 171). First, this essay will focus on reading Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as a novel concerned with panoptic forms of power. This is most clearly highlighted in two of the final chapters of *The Return of the King*, 'Homeward Bound' and 'The Scouring of the Shire.' Specifically, the forms of panoptic power present disciplinary and controlling structures inseparable from modes of production and 'usefulness' that come with the rise of capitalist industrialisation run rampant in the Shire. Additionally, in establishing this reading of Tolkien's work through the lens of Foucault's 'Panopticism,' the aim of this essay is to rethink the way in which the hegemonic and boundless panoptic structures of power are overcome, literally evaporated, beginning with the destruction of Saruman. While Foucault ends his chapter on Panopticism with no hope for escape from the structure of our own prisons and the 'mechanisms of discipline' that we are bound to, Tolkien points to a way out. His answer does not only come with re-establishing the rightful king of Gondor. Though the role of the benevolent caretaker king is central to Tolkien's conception of monarchical rule, the King's return does not save the Shire from itself in the short term.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Tolkien's answer to the problem of the Panopticon first comes from within the community. While the panoptic structure binds those inside it, it simultaneously isolates, as those same individuals grow to fear neighbours as well as a looming authority so often coupled with threats of violence. However, in re-establishing close communal ties and filling in the cracks created by Panopticism's

isolating effects, the hobbits disengage from the systems of power and dissolve the 'faceless gaze,' which has all but turned the Shire into an insular and authoritarian model of discipline and surveillance. Tolkien emphasises healing, care-taking, and intimate communal connection as a way to move outside of the panoptic prison.

As has already been noted, the Panopticon of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is best emblemised in the images of towers that spawn 'swarming' power and self-surveillance (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 205). One might apply this 'seeing machine' to the Shire at the end of *RK*, which has become very 'un-Shirelike' as observed by the four returning hobbits (*RK*, VI, viii). Despite Frodo's explanation that the 'Dark Tower has fallen, and there is a King in Gondor' to one of the 'ruffians' now occupying the Shire, he is met with laughs and insolence (*RK*, VI, viii). The returning Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin encounter hobbits who 'seemed ill at ease' as if 'some rule or other was being broken' (*RK*, VI, viii). Despite the angry pleas and evident consternation of the returning heroes, the resident hobbits are reluctant to admit them back into Hobbiton, which has been surrounded by a 'great spiked gate' – 'A hush fell on the hobbits beyond the gate. "It won't do no good talking that way," said one. "He'll get to hear of it. And if you make so much noise, you'll awake the Chief's big man"' (*RK*, VI, viii). The hobbits encounter 'mobile attentions ever on the alert' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 214) and the resident hobbits appear largely to govern themselves in fear of spectral, disciplinary force. Titles like 'the Chief,' 'the Boss,' and 'Sharkey' are all that is known about the elusive, authoritarian bodies now in power over the residents of the Shire. When Merry asks who Sharkey is, another resident hobbit explains that 'it was about last harvest, end o' September maybe, that we first heard of him. We've never seen him, but he's up at Bag End; and he's the real Chief now, I guess' (*RK*, VI, viii).

It is worth noting early on that the returning hobbits refuse to acknowledge these new titles, and instead, address their neighbours with their real names like 'Lotho' and 'Bill Ferny,' suggesting their resistance to these new forms of institutionalised anonymity wrapped up in panoptic forms of power. If the rest of the Shire has fallen subject to the Panopticon, then Merry, Pippin, Sam, and Frodo are spared from that fall and remain a part of a different sphere, undoubtedly due to their already having faced this kind of panoptic power before in the face of Sauron's domination, a far worse threat than anything they could expect to deal with in the Shire; they are wise to this game, and seem, at least initially, unable to take it seriously. The returning hobbits threaten, scoff, and even scale the new spiked gate in defiance of the gatekeepers. Following initial interactions, Sam exclaims,

All right, all right... That's quite enough. I don't want to hear no more. No welcome, no beer, no smoke, and a lot of rules an orc-talk instead. I hoped to have a rest, but I can see there's work and trouble ahead. (*RK*, VI, viii)

Their initial annoyance, however, gives way to a deeper understanding of the trouble that has taken hold of the Shire. Their expectations for the hallmarks of hobbitry like food, drink, pipe-weed, and a warm bed, are no longer offered. The stark dissonance between the returning hobbits' expectations and the reality they confront is demonstrative of the two separate spheres now currently at odds. While the rest of the Shire has fallen to surveillance, domination, and repression, indicators of the Panopticon's presence, the four returning hobbits stand apart and encapsulate the qualities of community, which they intend to restore in the Shire. However, before turning to a more thorough examination of the process of communal renewal, it is worth spending more time unpacking the ways in which the panoptic structure has taken hold of the Shire.

One must first consider the system of policing and monitoring in Hobbiton. As is made clear at the beginning of the chapter by Hob Hayward and Bill Ferny, the elusive 'Sharkey' does little to exercise control directly, as the hobbits have mostly taken to monitoring themselves (*RK*, VI, viii). Additionally, the location of the figure of Sharkey is at Bag End, which occupies the top of The Hill in Hobbiton, commanding a view of much of the rest of the community; however, he is never actually seen. Even with the destruction of the great gaze of Sauron, the permeating and 'swarming' authority enacted by the 'faceless gaze' is still quite clearly present here in the Shire. As Jay Atkins mentions in his work on distributionism and economics in the Shire, 'Sharkey, the new ruler of the Shire, administers orders to the "ruffians" who, in turn, give orders to commoners' (p. 25). The overseers themselves, of course, are not exempt from the gaze either. As the panoptic force grows in the Shire, the observational impulse is subsumed into the individual, and under the inspecting gaze, 'each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself' thus ensuring that power is 'exercised continuously' (Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', p. 4). It is through the process of diffuse surveillance that we are reminded of the disconnected, vaguely authoritarian, and menacing sense of disciplinary, 'militarized hierarchy' that 'disconnects Sharkey from the local culture, which Tolkien finds dangerous' (Atkins, p. 25). The disconnect of an unseen oppressor coupled with hierarchical systems of power, which lead to 'hierarchical surveillance' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 220) is the reality one faces upon entering a very alien Shire, marked by fear, oppression, and, as will be revealed, images of grotesque industrialism.

What is perhaps even more important to note upon entering Hobbiton is the way in which the Shire aligns with a version of Foucault's history that traces many of the roots of the panoptic model of power to capitalism's basic needs: subjection, manpower, and technology. It is also in the model of the Shire at the end of *RK* that provides a better picture of Tolkien's scepticism about any system that can



lead to domination of will or dehumanisation through the diffusion of disciplining and subjugating power. Foucault provides an overview of the way this model of authority changes in history with the rise of capitalism:

If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men Panopticism made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, .... In fact, the two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital – cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them...Each makes the other possible and necessary; each provides a model for the other. (Foucault, 'Panopticism', pp. 220-1)

Capitalism, as is made clear in the preceding passage, does not rise as a result of the need for a system of monitoring. However, it thrives in a panoptic structure and becomes part of the two-prongs of the system. Each of these systems, capitalism and Panopticism, helps to sustain each other and are co-dependent as one provides a framework for the other. The issue of discipline becomes the major problem for a society with a growing population during the rise of capitalism. However, the panoptic structure is a new machine capable of putting to productive use those in the new system. In Foucault's reading, each hand feeds the other. The disciplinary, 'military' methods in the panoptic structure provide the base for capitalism to thrive, while the accumulation of capital in growing capitalist systems that value efficiency, 'separation, coordination and supervision' provide a way for societies to deal with growing populations (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 221). As alluded to earlier, it is interesting that in the above passage, as is the case with the rest of Foucault's reading of the panoptic system, there is no apparent way out once panoptic industrial-capitalist structure takes hold.

It is important to note that Foucault does not go so far as to say that capitalism is the inherent problem. He does however, conclude by stating that '[t]he growth of a capitalist economy gave rise to the specific modality of disciplinary power', which places blame on a system that embodies many of the features necessary to sustain the model of Panopticism (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 221). As much as capitalism is presented as a major, systemic issue in Foucault's equation, its ability to 'divide labour' and follow the plan mapped out by the power structures in the 'schemata of power' is what is truly troubling, and where Tolkien and Foucault appear to agree most distinctly. To be clear, it is not that Tolkien appears to view capitalism as evil, nor is it likely that he would necessarily view capitalism as an inherent, corrupting power unique to itself. In fact, Tolkien's own idealised Shire boasts an economic system difficult to define. As scholars like Steven Kelly<sup>3</sup> point out, the Shire is undoubtedly an anachronism, blending medieval fairy-tale with 19th

century industrialism in a quasi-capitalist, pre-industrial system that produces only what it needs in an agrarian system, and yet somehow boasts the ability to produce commodities like waist-coats, clocks, and tobacco. However, like Foucault, it appears that Tolkien is afraid of what wide-spread, exploitive industrial-capitalism has the power to do. It is the essence of capitalism to feed, and be fed by, the structures of disciplinary and hegemonic power of the panoptic structure in society that makes it dangerous. While the structure of surveillance and discipline thrives, so too does the system that accumulates capital. The system of industrial capitalism can precipitate the rise of panoptic power, and when this happens, the two become permanently dependent on each other to sustain themselves. No doubt, Tolkien's well-documented<sup>4</sup> fears regarding destructive industrialisation and governmental oversight are something one must bear in mind when considering this reading.

By the end of *RK*, the reader is presented with numerous scenes of outright destruction in the idyllic agrarian landscape of the Shire, encapsulating the kinds of destructive power that come with this new form of authority and panoptic control. The destruction and reappropriation of the Shire for industrial capitalist means, however, appears to be a direct result of the diffuse power structures taking hold of the land. Industrialisation is not the root cause of the downfall of the Shire and the unhappiness of its people. Instead, the text suggests that this is due to both the isolation and alienation that come with the panoptic structure and, even more powerfully, from the willingness of some of the Shire's own residents to invest themselves in this new system. Before entering the Shire, the returning hobbits hear from the usually loquacious and jovial Butterbur, now subdued, who explains that the people of the Shire 'stay at home mostly and keep their doors barred' and warns that it 'isn't safe on the road and nobody goes far and folk lock up early. We have to keep watchers all round the fence and put a lot of men on the gates at nights' (*RK*, VI, vii). Later, another resident hobbit recounts the rigorous and exploitive system that has upended the usual harvest:

We grows a lot of food, but we don't rightly know what becomes of it. It's all these 'gatherers' and 'sharers', I reckon, going round counting and measuring and taking off to storage. They do more gathering than sharing, and we never see most of the stuff again. (*RK*, VI, viii)

These opening sequences provide some of Tolkien's most complex views of diffuse, hierarchical, and exploitive power in the novel. Systematic 'counting and measuring' followed by control and manipulation by a vague, decentralised force are evident. Thus, the reader enters Foucault's 'plague-stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 198).



Additionally, as seen in Foucault's model, the most powerful forms of the panoptic structure are embedded in some of the industrial-capitalist constructs, which have been adopted by the Shire's most opportunistic inhabitants. Pimple, for example, is an early sign of the rise of this exploitive form of capitalism in the Shire:

He'd funny ideas, had Pimple. Seems he wanted to own everything himself, and then order other folk about...he was always grabbing more, though where he got the money was a mystery...He'd already bought Sandyman's mill before he came to Bag End, seemingly. (*RK*, VI, viii)

Pimple's 'funny ideas' are rooted in early, albeit simplified, forms of industrial capitalism. He wishes to own more and in doing so, dominate more. It is later revealed that Pimple, who takes control of the mill,<sup>5</sup> 'brought in a lot o' dirty-looking Men to build a bigger [mill] and fill it full o' wheels and outlandish contraptions...Pimple's idea was to grind more and faster, or so he said' (*RK*, VI, viii). Pimple's work in the mill is rooted in the domination and exploitation of 'dirty-looking Men' and, as is noted by the end of the passage by Cotton, 'I don't believe that fool of a Pimple's behind all this. It's Sharkey, I say' (*RK*, VI, viii). Capitalism enters its infant stages in the form of exploitive industrialisation and comes in conjunction with the panoptic force, which embeds itself in the culture, symbolised, in this case, with a reference to the vague, authoritarian power of 'Sharkey.'

These examples from the novel form an important pattern. As the destruction of community and intimacy becomes more and more apparent, the sense of isolation, discipline, and control take hold with the rise of industrial capitalism. One section that encapsulates this process fully occurs during Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin's journey to Bag End:

The great chimney rose up before them; and as they drew near the old village across the Water, through rows of new mean houses along each side of the road, they saw the new mill in all its frowning and dirty ugliness: a great brick building straddling the stream, which it fouled with a steaming and stinking outflow. All along the Bywater Road every tree had been felled. As they crossed the bridge and looked up the hill they gasped...The Old Grange on the west side had been knocked down, and in its place taken by rows of tarred sheds...Bagshot row was a yawning sand and gravel quarry. Bag End up beyond could not be seen for a clutter of large huts. (*RK*, VI, viii)

The preceding passage summarises the transition from the sleepy agrarian system of the familiar and communal often associated with the 'idyllic life uncluttered by the excesses of modern big city capitalism' (Richards and Witt, p. 198) to the industrial, orderly, and visible. Where trees and homes once dotted the landscape, there are now 'rows of new mean houses' and 'tarred sheds.' The 'meanness' and sterility of the new structures create an imposing

orderliness that the hobbits find ugly and daunting. The trees are cut down, leading to a greater sense of exposure. There is now a 'yawning sand and gravel quarry' which creates a sense of vast openness, emptiness, and visibility to contrast the once cosy and lush landscape. There are clusters of 'large huts,' which obscure any direct view of Bag End at the top of the Hill, now occupied by the elusive Sharkey. The entire passage is punctuated by the physically imposing 'great chimney' which looms over all.

The image of community being fractured at the hands of the Panopticon is made even more overtly manifest at the destruction of the Party Tree and the interaction between Sam and Ted Sandyman, who praises the changes in the Shire. 'They've cut it down...They've cut down the Party Tree!' observes Sam upon approaching the 'lopped and dead' tree in the field (*RK*, VI, viii). The Party Tree long stood as a symbol for community and togetherness and with its destruction, the encroaching power has struck its final and most detrimental blow, causing Sam to 'burst into tears' upon witnessing the ruin. Sandyman, a Hobbit who owns a mill and recognises the approaching changes in the Shire as advantageous from a venture capitalist perspective, approaches the distraught Sam. He is a 'surlly hobbit,' 'grimy-faced' and 'black-handed,' immediately suggesting his association with the destructive industrialisation that has taken root. His appearance and subsequent dialogue cause a distinct separation and aversion between the hobbits who look on, scowling: "Don't 'ee like it, Sam?" he sneered. "But you always was soft. I thought you'd gone off in one o' them ships you used to prattle about, sailing, sailing. What d'you want to come back for? We've work to do in the Shire now'" (*RK*, VI, viii). Sandyman's language is immediately divisive as it seeks to create separation between himself and Sam. There is 'work to do in the Shire now' Sandyman expounds, alluding to the processes of industrialisation that have become the new norm. Sandyman's 'work' requires the destruction of life to create sterile, ordered, and isolated structures, and his oppositional language furthers the effects of isolation that comes with the encroaching panoptic power. Even his name, 'Sandyman,' harkens to the 'yawning sand and gravel quarry,' symbolising sterility and non-growth.

The greatest issue at this point in *RK*, however, comes with the hegemonic complexities of the panoptic structure that are rooted in the apparent impossibility of escape. The Panopticon is a structure so securely threaded in society that liberation seems futile, because the very notion of escape necessitates a distinction between the residents of the community and the structures which contain and govern them. In the Panopticon, these structures are omnipresent; they function automatically and nearly invisibly. It is a 'cruel, ingenious cage' and 'its functioning... must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use' (Foucault, 'Panopticism,' p. 205). The Panopticon's power lies within its ability to operate as a driving force, a way

of negotiating and defining power between people and institutions so seamlessly that it tricks one into believing it to be the only avenue, the only way for operating societally. Foucault points to the very structures of modern societal institutions to prove his point: ‘The practice of placing individuals under “observation” is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures...is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?’ (Foucault, ‘Panopticism’, pp. 227-8). Our ‘factories, schools, barracks, hospitals’ all resemble prisons because Panopticism is our governing process. Panopticism leads to the way we organise society around us and is ultimately the foundation of the way we think. Sandyman appears to fall victim to this ideological framework first, as one who already finds himself engrossed in the industrial capitalist mindset.

Luckily for the returning hobbits, all hope is not yet lost. If there is an antidote to the malady of Panopticism, Tolkien places it within the structure of community care and healing. Jane Chance suggests that ‘the maintenance of society is best advanced by the caretaker and the gardener, those who nurture others and continue the work of the family or nation’ (p. 22). By extension, the community of caretakers is a community in which those healers, ‘in their role of understanding and tolerating individual differences within the community...empower both the individual and society, or, together, the social network’ (Chance, p. 22). One might also consider the field of ‘care ethics’ in this regard, as representative of a space distinctly opposed to the panoptic and industrial-capitalist forces that seek to divide communal spaces. Nel Noddings’ discussion of care ethics<sup>6</sup> posits that relational ethics are ‘rooted in and dependent on natural caring’ as ‘he or she calls on a sense of obligation in order to stimulate natural caring’ (p. 219). Virginia Held also discusses the notion of community care as a community grapples with its value system. Upon the four hobbits’ return to the Shire, they are quickly overcome by the sense that the Shire has had a new value system forced upon it, one marked by industrialisation, and, as Patrick Curry characterises it, ‘fascist thuggery and forced modernization’ (p. 41), which has largely blasted away its idyllic pastoral and communal spaces. Names are replaced with vague and sinister titles and the very landscape has started to become a wasteland, directly tied to the residents of Hobbiton who have become more insular and detached. The intimate sense of care that comes from the communal space has fallen away:

We can understand how a caring community will sustain and validate the efforts of caring persons, and how much more difficult it is for persons to cultivate caring relations when the messages from the ‘community’ promote, instead, the values of egoism, competition, and the victory of the fittest. (Held, p. 43)

Clearly, when the Shire falls to acidic forms of industrial capitalism and the panoptic structure, intimate communal

and personal relationships suffer, and thus even the natural landscape, emblematic of the hobbits’ sense of community (best encapsulated in the Party Tree) suffers as well in a kind of pathetic fallacy.

This reading certainly rings true regarding the crisis faced by the returning hobbits in ‘The Scouring of the Shire’ chapter, as they seek to restore community and healing to a Shire that has been pulled apart in its implementation of panoptic models of power. Importantly, the returning hobbits consistently refer to the encroaching ordering and industrialising of the Shire as ‘disorder,’ which suggests that the minds of Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin have not yet succumbed to the panoptic models of thought that have already enmeshed other fellow hobbits like Pimple and Sandyman. Bag End stinks of ‘filth and disorder’ upon their arrival and ensuing confrontation with Saruman, and great waggons stand in ‘disorder in a field beaten bare of grass’ (*RK*, VI, viii). The hobbits do not see this ordering and industrialising as a way to improve the otherwise sleepy and rural Shire. They sense the inherent totalising power embedded in the newly organised and developed landscape. ‘Wake our people! They hate all this, you can see,’ exclaims Merry, rallying his fellow hobbits upon his return (*RK*, VI, viii). His perceptions of what society should be are founded on intimate community relations, which are of course contrary to the growing panoptic and industrial models that have gripped the Shire.

It is important to note at this point that the Shire, and the community relations therein, are not perfect, nor do they appear intended to be. The hobbits live in communities that are Tolkien’s idyllic representations of an ancient and idealised space in England; however, gossip, grudges, and petty theft of the Shire are not markers of some inherent and insidious evil within the structure depicted at the end of the novel. These instances, instead, appear to showcase the minor pockmarks of human nature. Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, Sancho Proudfoot, and even Ted Sandyman are not evil. Instead, they are flawed like all hobbits and, by extension, all Men. No doubt, this is something Tolkien, as a Catholic and one who identified as a ‘*Hobbit* (in all but size)’ would have attested to (*Letters* 213). The real evil for Tolkien is not in gossip, petty crime, or other small acts of human greed and selfishness, but in domination of will. This would seem to also include murder, as Frodo attests that ‘[n]o hobbit has ever killed another on purpose in the Shire’ (*RK*, VI, viii). As Richards and Witt point out, in one of his letters, Tolkien claims that:

The most improper job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to take it on), is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek the opportunity. (*Letters* 64)

They go on to add that ‘[w]ith the Shire, Tolkien had created a society after his own heart,’ the good with the bad (Richards and Witt, p. 271).

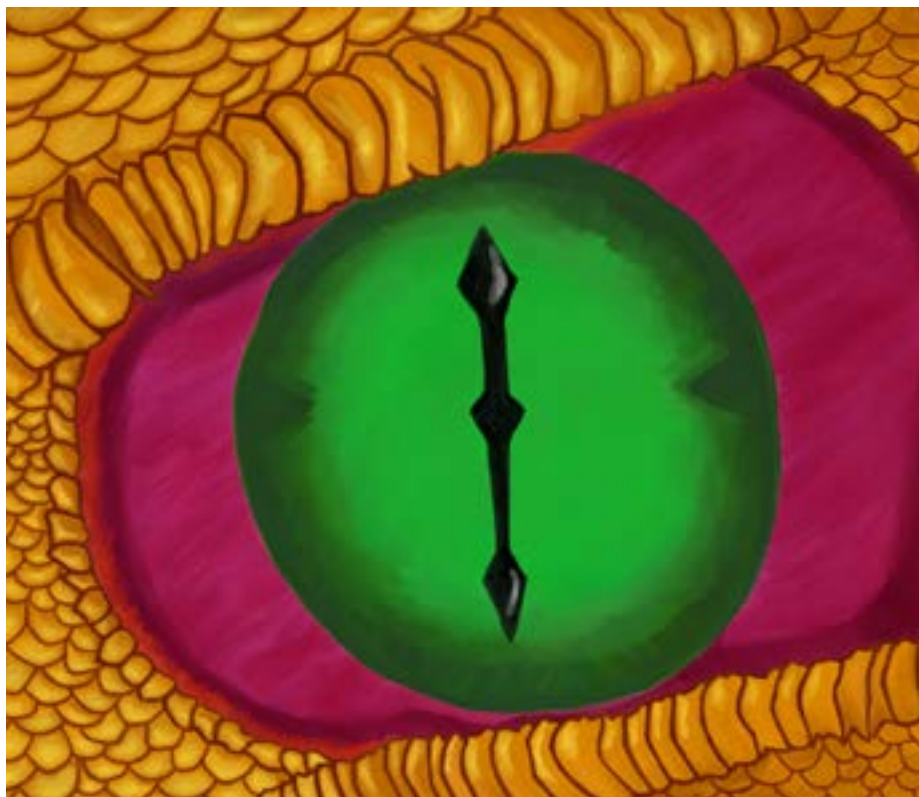
By the end of the *RK*, the returning hobbits insight a



rebellion among their fellow community members and overthrow Saruman, who is betrayed (literally stabbed in the back) by his lackey Grima Wormtongue, thus further emphasising the notion that '[e]vil shall slay the wicked' (Psalm 34:21) and that evil always contains the seeds of its own undoing. All the while, several important occurrences surrounding the actions of the healer and caretaker Frodo are provided. '[I]t is evidently high time that the family dealt with him and put him in his place,' Frodo exclaims at the entrance to Hobbiton upon hearing of the elusive 'Chief' who has come to occupy Bag End (RK, VI, viii). While at this point in the chapter, Frodo has not entirely registered the severity of the crisis currently faced by the people of the Shire, this early proclamation frames the coming events in the chapter. The 'family,' and by extension the community,<sup>7</sup> is crucial to the reading of this essay, as it will become vital to the destruction of the panoptic stronghold.

Frodo consistently demonstrates his desire for peace and healing in the Shire upon his arrival and must remind Sam, Merry, and Pippin of their inherent connection to a now altered and insular hobbit community.

He does so by establishing a binary, in which the communal and familial stand apart from the panoptic. 'Remember' explains Frodo, that '[t]here is to be no slaying of hobbits, not even if they have gone over to the other side. Really gone over, I mean...nobody is to be killed at all, if it can be helped' (RK, VI, viii). The hobbits, as previously mentioned, have no problem recognising that the rest of the community has become a kind of 'disordered' ordering, in which affronting sterilisation has replaced a more intimate way of life. The 'other side,' as Frodo describes it, is not so simply a kind of evil or 'dark side,' but rather a side in which fear of retribution, surveillance, and punishment govern one's actions. It is fear of a faceless and nameless 'Chief' that leads to the hobbits' initial refusal to admit the returning heroes into Hobbiton in the first place. Frodo is consistently attuned to this problem and recognises that



the answer to defeating the encroaching structure cannot solely come in the form of a violent overthrow, but also through communal reconciliation and healing.

The panoptic structure culminates in the physical destruction of the landscape, the building of factories, and the presence of Sharkey's men, but first and foremost, the Panopticon is a system, a governing form of surveillance and ordering that is interiorised, a form of 'machinery that no one owns' (Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', p. 5). The 'Battle of the Bywater,' the ousting of Sharkey's men, and even the death of Saruman are means to treat the symptoms that have run amok throughout the Shire, but violent revolution on the part of the hobbits cannot ultimately save the Shire from the Panopticon. As Shippey notes, "The Scouring of the Shire" gives a reminder that

the loss and damage of wars do not end with victory parades, but drag on in drabness and poverty' (p. 168). The overthrow of Sharkey's regime is the first critical and brutal step following the rest of the necessary violence that the free peoples of Middle-earth must

take to liberate themselves from the threat of authoritarian despots and tyrants. However, following the overthrow, the true healing must begin. As initial, principal healer, Frodo 'had not drawn his sword, and his chief part had been to prevent the hobbits in their wrath' (RK, VI, viii). He recognises that the healing of the Shire must utilise a force like that of the panoptic. Community healing must disperse itself outward through the actions, or in this case, the inaction of Frodo and its people, to counter the swarming nature of panoptic discipline and surveillance. Panoptic power slowly seeps into Hobbiton; therefore, to be dispatched, it must be slowly and carefully evaporated.

In the final conversation with Saruman, Frodo explains 'I have already done much that you will find it hard to mend or undo in your lives' (RK, VI, viii). Saruman recognises the difficulty in removing the structure he helped to unleash

upon the Shire. It is a generalising, institutionalising power and a system of discipline and surveillance that cannot be removed with violent overthrow alone. As Foucault reminds us, '[w]hat generalizes the power to punish...is the regular extension, the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques' ('Panopticism', p. 224). Saruman laughs while confronting Frodo and the rest of the hobbits because he knows that his physical ousting will not be enough to undo his work. It 'does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his family, his friends, his visitors, even his servants' (Foucault, 'Panopticism', p. 202). Frodo goes so far as to acknowledge this point, while maintaining the peace when he warns his fellow hobbits not to believe Saruman because '[h]e has lost all power, save his voice that can still daunt you and deceive you, if you let it' (*RK*, VI, viii). There need not be any actual power contained within Saruman's being at all, as the illusion of authority can be enough to sustain and perpetuate the panoptic system of power.

Saruman's being cast aside in the final moments of the chapter and then ultimately betrayed and murdered by Grima Wormtongue capture two final important elements. The first is the beginning of the evaporation of the panoptic structure as community returns to the Shire with the death of Saruman. His spirit, nothing more than wisps of white smoke following his murder, rises up and looks West towards Arda, hoping for a return to his own community; however, he is denied entry and thus dissolves into nothingness; 'a grey mist gathered' around Saruman's body and rose 'slowly to a great height like smoke from a fire...For a moment it wavered, looking to the West; but out of the West came a cold wind, and it bent way, and with a sigh dissolved into nothing' (*RK*, VI, viii). In this moment, Saruman's hold over the Shire is revealed to be more artifice than actual. His authority is bound to the impression of surveillance and discipline, which is really a literal smokescreen. The panoptic hold, following the reuniting of the community, is now, like Saruman's spirit, as thin as air. Having been denied a return to his own community, he dissipates into nothing.

The second element revealed in this scene is Frodo's actualisation of the role of healer and caretaker of the community, which must continue to rebuild following its dissolution of panoptic power. Frodo does not wish for Saruman to be slain in this moment and instead hopes that he may find redemption. Additionally, Frodo tells Grima that he 'need not follow [Saruman]' and offers him food, rest, and community until he is willing to go his separate way (*RK*, VI, viii). In this scene, Frodo actualises the role of caretaker in his community and seeks to heal and unite to undermine the work the panoptic has done. Unlike the panoptic force, which disempowers and insulates, the caretaker is healer of the community and 'empower[s] both the individual and society' (Chance, p. 22). The community structure is the only match for the panoptic forces as it is, in its essence, also a dispersed and

decentralised structure; however, while the Panopticon dominates, isolates, and orders, the community seeks to provide freedom, care, and intimacy that is not based in a desire to dominate or control. The solution is also far from a quick fix. Despite the casting out of Saruman's men and the return of the king to the throne, there is still much healing to be done from within the communal body. As Sam reminds us at the end of the chapter, 'I shan't call it the end, till we've cleared up the mess...And that'll take a lot of time and work' (*RK*, VI, viii). The total dissolution of the panoptic force will take the hard and deliberate efforts of the community working together; healing takes time.

It is important to remember, too, that Frodo is not a sovereign and his ability to unite and reform community is a power that comes from within the community itself. Despite his earlier explanations that the 'Dark Tower has fallen and there is a king in Gondor,' the rightful king of Gondor can do nothing in the promise of his presence alone to discontinue the panoptic forces at work in the Shire. The ability to upset the panoptic structure cannot come from a hierarchical and totalised symbol of regal and authoritative power, since this is not the way panoptic power works. As we are reminded in Foucault's 'The Eye of Power,' 'no one can or may occupy the role that the King had in the old system, that is as the source of power and justice' (p. 5). He goes on to state that, 'power is arranged as a machine working by a complex system of cogs and gears...no reliance can be placed on a single individual' (p. 5). While bizarre to consider the 'return of the king' as less significant in the re-establishing of the rightful order in the Shire, one must not forget that Tolkien places special emphasis on the power of self-sovereignty and community. The return of the rightful king of Gondor is certainly a critical step towards establishing peace and balance in Middle Earth; however, one should not forget how *RK* ends. What healing begins with Frodo and the rest of the returning hobbits, ends with the figure who best encapsulates caretaking: the gardener hero. As Chance points out, Sam Gamgee, the 'everyman,' serves as the final note to the slow return of community and healing in the Shire, years after the fall of Sauron, the start of Aragorn's reign, and Frodo's departure. The gardener 'has returned to his castle – to love, safety, nourishment, his family.' Sam is 'home again, as Tolkien the orphan always understood the true power of the most loving community' (Chance, p. 108). In ending a tale as epic in scale as *The Lord of the Rings* with a humble, yet poignant glimpse of Sam seated at his dinner table, with Rosie greeting his return and his daughter Elanor on his lap, Sam punctuates the real return of community and family. Sam is our best encapsulation of the community at large, finally renewed and at peace with itself following the dispersion of the panoptic industrial complex, perhaps giving new meaning to his final words, 'Well, I'm back.'



Notes

- 1 See Jes Battis' 'Gazing Upon Sauron: Hobbits, Elves, And The Queering Of The Postcolonial Optic,' H.F. Ramos' 'Sauron's panopticon: Power and surveillance in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*' and Cherylynn Silva's 'One Ring to Rule Them All: Power and Surveillance in the Film Adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*,' in addition to sources cited in the essay that deal with panoptic power in Tolkien.
- 2 Jonathan Witt and Jay W. Richards point out in their chapter entitled 'The Free Peoples and the Master of Middle-Earth' that the importance of self-sovereignty is sustained in Aragorn's decision never to enter The Shire, after being crowned king, out of his respect for its freedom and self-governance. The King 'has a crucial role to play in this picture of ordered liberty, but Tolkien emphasizes the indispensable role of the citizen as well' (Richards and Witt, *The Hobbit Party*, p. 175).
- 3 See Kelly's discussion of economic anomalies in *The Lord of the Rings* and commodity fetishism in the form of pipe-weed in 'Breaking the Dragon's Gaze: Commodity Fetishism in Tolkien's Middle-earth.'
- 4 See letters 52 'From a letter to Christopher Tolkien 29 November 1943' and 131 'To Milton Waldman' on fears regarding issues of industrialization, destruction, and government overreach.
- 5 There is long-standing symbolism associated with the 'Mill' as being a place of economic and moral corruption in the Middle Ages. This is famously embodied in Chaucer's Miller character in *The Canterbury Tales*.
- 6 Noddings' full discussion of relational ethics, which are an essential framework for understanding principles of human relations in a vast scope of human interpersonal experiences, can be found in her article 'An Ethic of Caring and Its Implications for Instructional Arrangements.'
- 7 Hobbiton and many of the other hobbit communities are, by and large, intimately connected through close family ties. Famously, in the case of the Tooks and Bagginses for example, Bilbo is remarkably 'Tookish' at points throughout *The Hobbit*, despite being a Baggins on his father's side. Family traits become indicators of the intimate and familial nature of the community in which naming, family trees, and communal celebrations intertwine with family festivities. *FR*, of course, opens with a large community celebration for Bilbo's birthday. For more on hobbit familial and communal relations, see letter 214 To A. C. Nunn in Tolkien's *Letters*.

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# Not at Home: Liminal Space and Personal Identity in *The Hobbit* and *Coraline*

KRISTEN MCQUINN

In much of fantasy literature, liminal space plays a prominent role. The otherworldly sensations the reader experiences, the surreal settings, and unsettling feelings, are all a function of liminal space. Often, liminal space is physically portrayed by a portal or a door, and the act of opening a door and stepping through can have lifelong consequences as well as rewards. When characters cross through the Door to Wonderland, Platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ , or even the door to the Secret Garden, they will never be the same again, nor will the ordinary world hold quite the same shine for them. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* reveal the importance of doors and liminal space as necessary catalysts for evolving personal identity. In both novels, the act of physically passing through doors becomes the literal means by which liminality enters the narrative. Once that liminality is introduced, the characters enter their own liminal spaces, begin their rites of passage, grow as individuals, and discover new aspects to their identities within the action of the story.

For the purposes of this essay, *The Hobbit* and *Coraline* were selected primarily because they were both written for children. While some of Gaiman's other works might better fit a discussion on liminality, in particular *Neverwhere* which is placed almost entirely in a liminal setting and even includes a character called Door, they are not books for children. Keeping the intended audience for each book within the same age demographic would be more appropriate for comparison. As such, this essay will focus on the liminal spaces in *Coraline* and *The Hobbit* in terms of their function within tales written for children. Additionally, while both books are indeed written for children, their protagonists are different ages; Bilbo is an adult and Coraline is a child. Focusing on protagonists of differing ages allows us to reflect upon the alternative ways they use 'to assert their individuality due to factors such as confinement, loss and alienation.'<sup>1</sup> How the characters approach obstacles informs the ways in which they undertake and overcome them throughout their journeys, and each has a different end result from their quest despite the similarities otherwise. These differences can be viewed as being a function of their ages, and it impacts the trajectory of each tale.

Liminal space is an in-between place, whether physical or metaphorical. Deriving from the Latin term *limen*, or threshold, liminal spaces are transformative or transitional, serving as places where one waits between one point and the next. These spaces often engender feelings of unease or discomfort. Physical places that embody liminality can include the beach, stairwells, or doorways. Adolescence is another liminal space, since one is neither a child nor yet fully adult. This applies especially to *Coraline*; although her age is not specified, it is clear that her adventures are a coming-of-age based on the arc of her development and character growth throughout the novel.

Adolescents in various cultures often undergo rites of passage, another form of liminality, before they can become fully adult, such as bar mitzvah or quinceañera ceremonies. In literature, liminality is sometimes more abstract. As Klapcsik states, in liminal space, 'the fantastic is no longer interpreted as a realm different and distant from consensus reality.'<sup>2</sup> Narratives such as *The Hobbit* or *Coraline* are written so that the fantastical elements common to liminal space are made ordinary yet are vital to the development of plot and characters. Thus, normal doors become portals, or Other Parents with button eyes are accepted without second thought. Every story needs liminality in some form for character growth.

Whether he realises it or not (and he doesn't), Bilbo encounters many liminal spaces in his journey: his own front door, when he is caught by his coat buttons at the door to get out of Gollum's caves in chapter five, the Doors of Durin, Beorn's home and Beorn himself, invisibility while wearing the ring, and the journey through the forest of Mirkwood. Each encounter with these liminal spaces helps to prepare Bilbo for a new stage of his journey and a deeper understanding of himself. This essay will look at Bilbo's most important liminal experiences.

The first door the reader encounters in *The Hobbit* is Bilbo's front door. Indeed, it is the third line Tolkien pens in the novel, implying its importance immediately. Tolkien writes, '[The hobbit hole] had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle' (*Hobbit*, i). When the reader first meets Bilbo, he is standing just outside the door. His position is telling, for although he is outdoors, he is in ready distance of the threshold and may quickly return inside. Initially, this doorway serves for Bilbo as a safeguard against the outside world, keeping him safe within and the frightening things of the world locked out. In fact, that is exactly the door's role after Bilbo's encounter with Gandalf: 'With that the hobbit turned and scuttled inside his round green door, and shut it as quickly as he dared...' (*Hobbit*, i). However, once Gandalf enters the picture, Bilbo's worldview begins to be challenged, and the front door undergoes a change from the ordinary to liminal space. Crossing the threshold back indoors after his encounter with the wizard no longer offers the safety it once did.

After Gandalf's intervention, Bilbo's door becomes a portal into what is, for him, another place altogether: the wide world beyond the narrow borders of the Shire. It becomes the entrance into his own liminal space where he will grow into a different version of himself. Appropriately, liminality is about being on the verge of something, and, as the reader knows, Bilbo is about to embark upon the adventure of a lifetime. This kind of gateway is a necessary element in liminality that allows the protagonist to launch and either thrive or fail. So, whether a character knows it or not, liminal space forces characters to put



themselves ‘in a position where they will forever be altered... Thus, ...there are three possible outcomes: the character will return to their world changed for the better, changed for the worse, or they will not return at all.’<sup>3</sup> Bilbo, as we know, returns fundamentally changed from his journey, though whether for the better or for the worse might depend on if one asks a human or a hobbit.

Liminality also encompasses ambivalence; Bilbo embodies this at first, for he is uncertain about change, adventure, and going to new places. When Thorin arrives and begins making plans, Bilbo resists joining him. But then,

...something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick. ... Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up probably somebody lighting a wood-fire and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again. (*Hobbit*, i)

Bilbo’s yearning yet reluctance to join the company is a reflection of his liminal state, his desire to be in two places at once. Although he has crossed the threshold and taken the initial step into his adventure, he does not yet understand that liminal space is a place he cannot enter and then leave unscathed. His resistance reflects his new status; much like during adolescence, Bilbo is entering a similar state of growth. This journey is his rite of passage, and as most adolescents before him, Bilbo feels scared and eager, emotions which bring about a reflexive resistance. Eventually, although he still has understandable and normal fears, Bilbo stops resisting his liminality and instead leans in. ‘Then Mr Baggins turned the handle and went in. The Took side had won. He suddenly thought he would go without bed and breakfast to be thought fierce’ (*Hobbit*, i). Bilbo is still ambivalent at multiple points during his journey, but it is at this moment that he decides to enter his liminal space and embark on a life-changing adventure.

The Doors of Durin in the Lonely Mountain offer yet another entrance into liminal space for Bilbo. At first, the company is confounded by the door because it will not open. Bilbo physically enters a liminal state when he sits at the doorstep to ponder the dilemma: ‘he said they could sit on the doorstep till they thought of something’ (*Hobbit*, xi). Bilbo physically occupies a liminal place before entering the metaphorical space presented once the Doors of Durin are opened. The space acts as a waiting room for Bilbo; he is waiting to fulfil his role as Thorin’s burglar. The liminal space offers creative room for Bilbo to think, allowing him to figure out the secret of the Doors.

Once Bilbo figures out how to open the Doors, Thorin is able to use his key and reveal the actual passage into the Lonely Mountain:

A door five feet high and three wide was outlined, and slowly without a sound swung inwards. It seemed as if darkness flowed out like a vapour from the hole in the mountain-side, and deep darkness in which nothing

could be seen lay before their eyes, a yawning mouth leading in and down. (*Hobbit*, xi)

This tunnel is very much a physical manifestation of liminal space, leading Bilbo into another place. His liminal experiences up to this point have already made a profound change upon his identity, which is noted when he states,

‘Perhaps I have begun to trust my luck more than I used to in the old days’ - he meant last spring before he left his own house, but it seemed centuries ago - ‘but anyway I think I will go and have a peep at once and get it over.’ (*Hobbit*, xii)

Before entering his liminal space, it would have been impossible for Bilbo to take the initiative like this or to be bold enough to go into a dark tunnel. The narrator clearly acknowledges this change as well, stating, ‘He was trembling with fear, but his little face was set and grim. Already he was a very different hobbit from the one that had run out without a pocket-handkerchief from Bag-End long ago’ (*Hobbit*, xii). Bilbo’s changing identity is linked inextricably with the time spent in liminal space.

Bilbo’s narrative presents liminality as seen in an adult journey. However, children and especially adolescents also have to go through liminal stages of their own, which is experienced differently than the journey from an adult perspective. Although *The Hobbit* is written for children, Bilbo himself is an adult character, albeit a fairly young one as far as hobbits are concerned. An adult character may incorporate the experiences of their liminal journey in ways which serve to deepen their personal identity, adding to what they already know about themselves or how they perceive themselves. An adolescent character on a liminal journey is more focused on initial self-discovery, figuring out who they are as opposed to adding to their own existing understanding of themselves. This difference between adult and adolescent journeys is evident in Neil Gaiman’s children’s novel *Coraline*. As in *The Hobbit*, liminal space is the vehicle for character growth and personal identity, and indeed, ‘*Coraline* is centrally concerned with how one negotiates one’s place in the world; how one is recognised in one’s own right...’<sup>4</sup> The very first line of the book is about the door in the drawing room: ‘Coraline discovered the door a little while after they moved into the house.’<sup>5</sup> Immediately, the reader is alerted to the door’s importance in the narrative, and it will be through this door that Coraline enters her own liminal space. Unlike in *The Hobbit*, there is only one door in *Coraline* which is truly of significance. Gaiman writes,

Of the doors that she found, thirteen opened and closed. The other - the big, carved, brown wooden door at the far end of the drawing room - was locked. ... [Coraline’s mother] reached up and took a string of keys from the top of the kitchen doorframe. She sorted through them carefully, and selected the oldest, biggest, blackest, rustiest key. ... She unlocked the door with the key. ... The door didn’t go anywhere. It opened onto a brick wall.<sup>6</sup>

Coraline is intensely curious about the door; there is a sense of fate that she is meant to find her liminal space there. Her curiosity is natural and utterly in alignment with Tolkien’s



comment from his essay *On Fairy Stories* when he states, ‘The Locked Door stands as Eternal Temptation.’<sup>7</sup> Her parents are utterly uninterested, both in the door and, apparently, in Coraline herself. As Jones points out, ‘Coraline Jones is a very average, unextraordinary little girl with ordinary parents and a peculiar name that her neighbors seem unwilling to pronounce properly.’<sup>8</sup> Unlike Bilbo, or other adult characters who know that there are many ways to identify oneself, Coraline still incorporates her name as the primary element of her identity and having others pronounce it correctly is a part of what can make her feel seen and valued; that so many people do not say her name properly contributes to the neglect and unimportance she experiences. Her feelings of neglect and abandonment create the framework for her to desire different parents and a different life, which ultimately highlights the importance of the door specific to Coraline and her evolving identity.<sup>9</sup> That she feels invisible to her parents also creates a liminal space similar to Bilbo’s. Both are characters who are overlooked by others: Coraline by her parents in general and her neighbours who refuse to learn her name, and Bilbo when the dwarves talk about him as though he is not there at Bag-End before they set out on their quest. Being overlooked and marginalised can create some troubles with identity, largely because ‘the word *identity* implies that we consist of one, singular self, but in fact

we are multiple and fragmented, consisting at any moment of any number of conflicting beliefs, desires, fears, anxieties and intentions.’<sup>10</sup> This marginalisation is the catalyst that sets Coraline on her own quest.

When Coraline is left to her own devices, she attempts to open the door once more. Instead of finding the brick wall again, she discovers a long, dark hallway.

The bricks had gone as if they’d never been there. There was a cold, musty smell coming through the open doorway: it smelled like something very old and very slow. ... Coraline walked down the corridor uneasily. There was something very familiar about it.<sup>11</sup>

When Coraline reaches the end of the corridor, she discovers another flat mirroring her own, down to the same carpet, wallpaper, and parents. Coraline’s liminal space displays many traditional qualities, such as the feelings of unease that are often associated with liminality. She is being primed to enter her space purposefully so that she will be receptive to the tasks she needs to complete and the lessons she needs to learn along the way. Part of Coraline’s liminal space includes the Other Parents who want to keep her with them. She quickly learns that this liminal space tests her ability to think on her feet and outwit her Other Mother, honing her independence and critical thinking



in ways unavailable to her in the regular world. Tolkien's influence on Gaiman shines throughout this novel: Coraline's journey mirrors Bilbo's in its essence - she leaves the comfort of her home, undertakes an adventure she is not entirely sure she wants, performs heroic acts along the way, and returns from her quest changed in meaningful ways. Gaiman, perhaps drawing further influence from Tolkien, creates a journey through liminal space for Coraline that is similar to Bilbo's, albeit for a much shorter duration, a necessary concession to Coraline's young age.

Unlike *The Hobbit*, there is only one door in *Coraline* that is a threshold into liminal space; however, its function alters each time Coraline crosses it. Initially, the 14th door offers Coraline adventure, excitement, and a little bit of creepiness - nothing more than something to do to pass a boring, rainy afternoon. The door itself serves as her call to adventure, offering the liminality for her to explore a necessary new aspect of her identity. The function of liminal space to explore identity is underscored when Coraline meets the talking cat:

'Please, what's your name?' Coraline asked the cat. 'Look, I'm Coraline. Okay?'

The cat yawned slowly, carefully, revealing a mouth and tongue of astounding pinkness. 'Cats don't have names,' it said.

'No?' said Coraline.

'No,' said the cat. 'Now, you people have names. That's because you don't know who you are. We know who we are, so we don't need names.'<sup>12</sup>

It is here that Coraline starts to consider how the Other Place will influence her relationship with her own identity. The discussion of names continues during Coraline's second trip into the liminal space. The cat startles her but she still recognises him. "Oh. It's you," she said to the black cat. "See?" said the cat. "It wasn't so hard recognizing me, was it? Even without names."<sup>13</sup> Coraline is learning now that names, while a definitive part of a person's identity, are not always the most essential part.

Identity is found or evolves in one's liminal space, but it can also be lost if care is not taken, as Coraline learns from the three ghostly children she meets. She asks who they are, and one replies,

Names, names, names... The names are the first to go, after the breath has gone, and the beating of the heart. We keep our memories longer than our names. ... But I have forgotten the name of my governess, and of the tulips, too.<sup>14</sup>

These children teach Coraline one of the most important rules for being caught in liminal space, at least in fantasy literature: 'Remember your name.'<sup>15</sup> The thread of identity continues to be woven through Coraline's liminal space in this way, reminding her to reflect upon who she is, who she is becoming, and to hold on to that burgeoning self with both hands.

Coraline continues to evaluate her identity, though unconsciously, when her Other Parents ask if she likes it there. Coraline admits that it is more interesting than her real home, but balks at committing to staying there 'forever and always.'

<sup>16</sup>She returns to her own home and locks the door behind her, blocking the other world and resisting the call into her own liminal space as Bilbo similarly did. Resistance is futile, however, and once it becomes clear that the Other Mother has taken Coraline's real parents, her identity becomes entangled with the liminal space beyond the door. Crossing that threshold is now linked to the success of her quest to find her parents and bring them back. Coraline heads back through the door, telling the cat, 'when you're scared but you still do it anyway, that's brave.'<sup>17</sup> She, like Bilbo in Smaug's lair, goes back down the dark corridor to face a monster despite her terror. When she crosses the threshold into her liminal space this time, it is far more sinister than before, something she knows will have repercussions far beyond just providing her with some entertainment for a day. Her ability to return to her liminal space, despite her fear, is a result of her time spent in liminality, examining her identity and understanding that, even though she is young, she is brave, worthy of notice, and a person who can take matters into her own hands.

Once Coraline's quest is complete, the return from her liminal space is just as fraught as the rest of her experiences had been. Coraline must return through the dark corridor, past the Other Mother who is determined to keep her. Because her experiences have prepared her and shown her a valuable new aspect of her identity, Coraline is able to take command of the situation and return successfully to her world, with her parents tucked safely in her pocket, the ghostly children and the black cat accompanying them. Returning from her liminal space is as difficult as entering it the first time was easy. Coraline struggles to shut the door behind her, but, '[i]t was heavier than she imagined a door could be, and pulling it closed was like trying to close a door against a wind.'<sup>18</sup> The lessons she learns are being physically manifested in the battle with the door, which can be seen as a struggle against herself and her former desires as well as a struggle of good against evil. More importantly for Coraline, though, is that saving her parents requires 'being unselfish, a true indicator of maturity.'<sup>19</sup> She has truly learned the value of wanting, that wanting is part of the process of living, and that a full life will have both boring days and joyful ones.

Liminal space is a place to discover new aspects of characters' identities. Bilbo finds that he is courageous and adventurous even while he yearns for home. At Thorin's deathbed, Bilbo proclaims that he is glad he has been able to share in their adventures, wholly opposite from his position at the start of the book. Coraline not only learns to be self-reliant and to make others see her, but also that 'I don't *want* whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I wanted? Just like that, and it didn't *mean* anything.'<sup>20</sup> The lessons they each learn are appropriate to their ages and stage in life; it is reflected in the structure of their liminal spaces. These discoveries happen from the simple act of opening a door and stepping through. As author Seanan McGuire states, 'Doors are important. What we find on the other side matters even more.'<sup>21</sup>

## Notes

- 1 See Z.D. Lalmangaihi, 'The Fantastic as an Act of Resistance in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*', in *Labyrinth*, 8.2 (July 2017), 48-58, p. 49.
- 2 See S Klapsik, 'Neil Gaiman's Irony, Liminal Fantasies, and Fairy Tale Adaptations', in *HJEAS: Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 14.2 (2008), 317-334, p. 321.
- 3 See Tanya Carinae Pell Jones, 'It Starts with Doors: Blurred Boundaries and Portals in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman', in *Mythical Dimensions of Neil Gaiman*, ed. by Anthony Burdge, Jessica Burke, and Kristine Larsen (Crawfordville, FL: Kitsune Books, 2012), pp. 208-222, p. 209.
- 4 See David Rudd, 'An Eye for an I: Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Questions of Identity', in *Children's Literature in Education*, 39.3 (Sept. 2008), 159-168, p. 160.
- 5 See Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 1.
- 6 Compare Gaiman, p. 6-7.
- 7 See J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*, eds. Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson, (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), p. 11.
- 8 Compare Jones, p. 209.
- 9 See Jos R. S. Vargas and Juan C. S. Vargas, 'A Girl in the Dark with Monsters: The Convergence of Gothic Elements and Children's Literature in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*', in *Revista De Lenguas Modernas*, 21 (2014), 77-94, p. 83.
- 10 See Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2006), 257, quoted in Lalmangaihi, 2017, p. 55.
- 11 Compare Gaiman, p. 24-25.
- 12 Compare Gaiman, p. 35.
- 13 Compare Gaiman, p. 63.
- 14 Compare Gaiman, p. 81.
- 15 See Neil Gaiman, *Instructions* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), p. 21.
- 16 Compare Gaiman, 2002, p. 43.
- 17 Compare Gaiman, 2002, p. 57.
- 18 Compare Gaiman, p. 131.
- 19 Compare Jones, p. 211.
- 20 Compare Gaiman, p. 118.
- 21 See Seanan Maguire, 'Opening Doors: The Chosen Children of Portal Fantasy', in *Tor.com*, (4 Apr 2016), para 16, <https://www.tor.com/2016/04/04/opening-doors-the-chosen-children-of-portal-fantasy>.

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# Tolkien on Holiday

ANDREW HIGGINS

According to the school's published chronicle, on 27 January 1911 the debating society of King Edward's School Birmingham, which included J.R.R. Tolkien among its active members, came back together after the Christmas break to start another year of debates. The report of the first debate states: 'a puzzled House fresh from the Christmas Revels came together to hear the discussion on the motion that, "This House considers that Holidays are in no way Beneficial, and demands their Abolition"'<sup>1</sup>

First into the fray was Tolkien's T.C.B.S.<sup>2</sup> companion Robert Quilter Gilson who chose to take a negative position in the holiday debate. Gilson asked what were the foundations of our deep-rooted preference for holidays, suggesting that our pleasure in them was gained merely by contrast with the opposing pain – work.<sup>3</sup> 'What are holidays used for?' he asked, and then gave his own answer – 'sleep, food, flimsy novels.'<sup>4</sup> Thomas Kenneth Barnsley (also known as 'Tea Cake') countered Gilson's anti-holiday diatribe by taking a more positive position on the value of holidays: likening the desire to work our brains without rest to the ridiculous act of attempting to set 'the Koh-i-noor in a jelly.'<sup>5</sup> K.W. Grant also took up the affirmative position and indicated that he thought holidays 'especially at Christmas were good for trade.'<sup>6</sup> As for Tolkien, it is not told in the report what position he took up or what he thought about the holiday debate. Tolkien's contribution (possibly written by himself) focuses more on the 'Koh-i-noor' comment made by Barnsley with Tolkien taking the reference to 'Koh-i-noor in jelly' as a personal insult, because he was in the habit of wearing a yellow pencil in his mouth.<sup>7</sup> In characteristic fashion, Tolkien was ludically punning<sup>8</sup> the literal meaning of the name 'Koh-i-noor' ('mountain of light') with the name of a brand of pencils that were also called 'Koh-i-noor.'<sup>9</sup> While we do not know how Tolkien voted, the motion, with thirteen negatives and only six affirmatives, did not pass and holidays were not abolished by the King Edward's School debating society.

Debates are all about taking up positive and negative sides for the purposes of the 'thrust and parry' of verbal sparring. Therefore, we cannot be entirely sure that the position each debater took up in the 'holiday debate' reflected their actual opinions on the value of holidays, nor, given the report, what side Tolkien would have positioned himself as being in the debate. However, it is interesting that in the years that followed, Tolkien would use the idea of a holiday and taking a holiday in different persistent contexts. This paper will explore several groups of examples of Tolkien's use of the word 'holiday'. First it will explore how Tolkien evoked the idea of a holiday in his writing to describe elements of a creative process; suggesting an encounter with the perilous realm of Faërie. Secondly, it will investigate examples of how Tolkien incorporated holidays into his own world-building containing, like the debate, both positive and negative aspects. Finally, this essay will conclude with exploring one of the most poignant uses by Tolkien of the

word 'holiday' in his creative writing.

Of course, given his love of language, it is a fairly good assumption that what may also have been in Tolkien's mind during the debate besides constructing a punning jibe to 'Tea-Cake', was the word 'holiday' itself and its truly English (that is Old English) origins. Our modern word 'holiday' comes from the Old English compound word 'Hāligdæg'; a combination of *hālig* (holy, sacred) and *dæg* (day). Thus, 'holiday' literally means 'holy day'. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word first appears in 950 C.E. in a note in the margin of the Lindisfarne Gospels.<sup>10</sup> Originally, the word signified a consecrated day or religious festival. According to the Venerable Bede's *De Temporum Ratione* (circa 725 C.E.), in the pagan early English calendar the month of September is known as 'haligmonath' meaning 'holy month' when celebrations and religious festivals would be held to celebrate a successful summer's crop.<sup>11</sup> In Early Middle English, the word became expressed in variant spellings including *halidei*, *halidai*, *halliday*, *haliday* – with the word 'halidei,' (and variants) being recorded in the early 13th century guide for anchorite nuns *Ancrene Riwe*; a work that Tolkien knew very well.<sup>12</sup> The spelling of the word as 'holiday' was first recorded in 1460, and it was here that the word started to acquire a more secular meaning. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines this sense of the word as 'a day on which ordinary occupations (of an individual or a community) are suspended; a day of exemption or cessation from work; a day of festivity, recreation, or amusement.'<sup>13</sup> That is how the single word 'holiday' came to include the secular side of life and became identified with vacations. In British English, the secular nature of this word was expanded to specifically mean a summer vacation from school; as in the title song from the 1963 British movie *Summer Holiday* whose lyrics, song by then British pop idol Cliff Richard, start 'We're all going on a summer holiday / No more working for a week or two. / Fun and laughter on our summer holiday / No more worries for me or you.'<sup>14</sup>

One of the earliest published examples of Tolkien's use of the word 'holiday' appears in his talk on the Finnish body of mythology the *Kalevala* which he first gave to the Corpus Christi College Sundial Society in November 1914. In this talk Tolkien suggests that the act of discovering and reading this body of strange and foreign mythopoeia was like taking a holiday:

We are taking a holiday from the whole course of progress of the last three Millenniums, and going to be wildly un-hellenic and barbarous for a time, like the boy who hoped the future life would provide for half holidays in Hell, away from Eton Collars and hymns. (*Kullervo*, p. 72)

When Tolkien said this he was already, in a sense, on a more permanent holiday from the Hellenic; having in 1913 switched his academic studies at Oxford from the Classics (known as

‘Greats’) to English literature and language.<sup>15</sup> The ‘Eton Collar’ Tolkien mentions was a wide stiff-buttoned collar which, starting in the late 19th century, formed part of the uniform of Eton College and suggests something very traditional and, given the tightness of it, quite restrictive. The holiday from hymns, suggesting organised religion, may be the ‘holiday’ that the *Kalevala* stories offered to Tolkien through its pagan nature and ‘luxuriant animism’ where everything, even beer and swords, have sentience (*Kullervo*, pp. 80-81).

When Tolkien gave a revised version of this talk in circa 1918, he elaborated on what he meant by the word ‘holiday’:

The holiday I suggest is a holiday from poetic and literary development, from the long accumulated weight of civilised tradition and knowledge, not a decedent and retrograde movement, not a ‘*nostalgie de la boue*’ – only a holiday; and if while on holiday we half hear the voice of Ahti in the noises of the sea, half shudder at the thought of Pohja, gloomy land of witchcraft, or Tuonela yet darker region of the dead, it is nonetheless with quite another part of our minds that we do this than that we reserve for our real beliefs for our religion just as it undoubtedly was for the Icelandic ecclesiastics of old. (*Kullervo*, p. 114)

Here Tolkien not only repeats and elaborates on his earlier thought that the very nature of the *Kalevala* represents a different type of literature that does not come from the familiar ‘weight of civilised tradition and knowledge’, but now adds to it that we take this holiday with another part of our minds and by doing this we come closer – we ‘half hear’ the enchantment of the *Kalevala*. It is also interesting that in this passage Tolkien evokes ‘Icelandic ecclesiastics’ which seems to suggest Christian writers like Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) who wrote about pagan Norse mythology by, if you will, going to another part of his mind than the part he reserved for his ‘real’ Christian beliefs.

In both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien uses the word ‘holiday’ to describe not a mental but a physical journey to another strange and foreign place. At the end of *The Hobbit* Bilbo thinks about describing his memoirs as ‘There and Back Again, a Hobbit’s Holiday’ (*Hobbit*, xix).

According to John D. Rateliff’s *History of the Hobbit*, the original manuscript just had ‘he thought of calling them “There and Back Again” – when there was a ring at the door.’<sup>16</sup> The published evidence suggests that Tolkien inserted the phrase ‘a Hobbit’s Holiday’ in the final text. By doing this, Tolkien seems to be framing Bilbo’s exciting as well as dark and perilous adventures to strange and foreign lands with elves, trolls, eagles, spiders and of course a Dragon as a holiday. Corey Olsen characterises this proposed title as ‘both cavalier and self-deprecating, speaking of his great adventure as if it were only a little interlude in his life, a vacation he took one year to get away from home for a while.’<sup>17</sup> Olsen also suggests that the title shows, with some comical exaggeration, how thoroughly Bilbo has integrated the experience of his journey into his life, in which the marvellous and the mundane are now ‘blended in measure.’<sup>18</sup> In her paper ‘Travel, Redemption and Peacemaking – Hobbits, Dwarves and Elves and the Transformative Power of Pilgrimage’ Victoria Holtz-Wodzack suggests that in this

case Tolkien is using the British-English meaning of the word ‘holiday’ to indicate a vacation such as the walking holidays he took with his Inklings colleagues C.S. Lewis and Owen Barfield.<sup>19</sup>

One of the early events of Tolkien’s own life, which he would later link with the landscapes and story of *The Hobbit*, was a walking holiday. In August and Early September 1911 Tolkien joined a summer holiday walking tour in the Swiss Alps with his Aunt Jane Neave, his brother Hilary and several friends and colleagues. Tolkien would characterise this summer before he went up to Exeter College, Oxford as the “*annus mirabilis*” of sunshine in which there was virtually no rain between April and the end of October’ (*Letters*, p. 391). Like Bilbo’s proposed ‘a Hobbit’s Holiday’, Tolkien’s walking trip in the Alps would be mixed with moments of extreme fun (such as damning a stream and letting the water loose on the villagers – well, not fun for the villagers!) and extreme danger; as Tolkien experienced when the party of twelve marched up the forbidding Aletsch Glacier and Tolkien nearly perished in an avalanche.<sup>20</sup> In an unfinished letter to his son Michael, Tolkien remembered that one of the rocks of the glacier only missed him by a foot (*Letters*, p. 393). In another letter from 1961 to Joyce Reeves, Tolkien recalled that, ‘it was while approaching the Aletsch that we were nearly destroyed by borders loosened in the sun rolling down a snow-slope. An enormous rock in fact passed between me and the next in front’ (*Letters*, p. 309). As Tolkien said in the same letter mentioned above to his son Michael, ‘it was a remarkable experience for me at 19, after a poor boy’s childhood’ (*Letters*, p. 309). In several of these later accounts Tolkien would characterise this holiday as inspiring certain key scenes and visual images in the very story and imagery that he also thought about associating the word ‘holiday’ with namely *The Hobbit*.<sup>21</sup> One wonders if the remembrance of this real holiday mixed with fun and terror was in Tolkien’s mind when, in the final stages of composition, he thought about characterising Bilbo’s adventures as a ‘holiday’.

At the start of *The Lord of the Rings* Bilbo uses the word ‘holiday’ several times. When Gandalf comments on how bright Bilbo’s garden looks, Bilbo responds with ‘I am very fond of it indeed, and of all that dear old Shire, but I think I need a holiday’ (*FR*, I, i). Suggesting that Bilbo, while loving his home, is also restless to be off again on another adventure. After his birthday party Bilbo expresses his concerns about feeling old and well-preserved with an even more emphatic need for a holiday which grows in its intensity:

I feel I need a holiday, a very long holiday, as I have told you before. Probably a permanent holiday: I don’t expect I shall return. In fact, I don’t mean to, and I have made all the arrangements. (*FR*, I, i)

In this development, Bilbo is no longer desiring a ‘there and back again’ holiday but a permanent one, and in this passage Tolkien seems to be foreshadowing the final journey that both Bilbo and Frodo will take at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*: the Grey Havens – the ultimate permanent holiday.

When the fate of being the Ring-bearer falls to Frodo, he too evokes the word ‘holiday’. In this case, Frodo’s use of the word



seems to be based on his perceptions of what Bilbo's adventures has been with the dwarves, which he now contrasts with the dark and perilous journey ahead for him:

I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again... I have sometimes thought of going away, but I imagined that as a kind of holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace. But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me. (*FR*, I, ii)

In Frodo's mind a holiday is 'a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace' as indeed Bilbo's seemed to be. Frodo's perception of the journey ahead is clearly not 'a hobbit's holiday' and seems more like Tolkien's own Alps walking holiday mixed with good times and fraught with peril; starting with encountering the Black Riders while still in the Shire. Before this encounter, the start of the hobbits' journey is positioned very much like a walking holiday, including cooking and sleeping in the outdoors with only a few creatures including a passing fox seeing them (*FR*, I, iii). The encounter and pursuit by the Black Riders changes this, and the holiday quickly becomes a series of perilous connected adventures. In her paper 'Tolkien's French Connection' Verlyn Flieger explores the difference between the adventures that Bilbo has been on and the more serious and darker 'quest' that Frodo is undertaking.<sup>22</sup> This indeed is no holiday, as Barliman Butterbur in Bree makes clear when he rebukes the careless hobbits with: 'Well, you do want looking after and no mistake, your party might be on a holiday!' (*FR*, I, x). Butterbur's rebuke reinforces the idea that this time the hobbits (and therefore the readers) are not on a holiday. This point is emphasised again by Gandalf in the darkness of Moria when he scolds Pippin growling, 'This is a serious journey, not a hobbit walking-party. Throw yourself in next time, and then you will be no further nuisance. Now be quiet!' (*FR*, II, iv). The quest therefore is a much more serious journey than 'a Hobbit's Holiday'; harkening back to Gilson's negative position at the King Edward's School debate that holidays are frivolous and only good for sleeping, food and reading flimsy novels. There will certainly not be any time for such acts on the perilous quest to destroy the One Ring and save Middle-earth from a second darkness.

Bilbo's comment to Frodo in *The Lord of Rings* about wanting to take a permanent holiday might suggest another aspect of holidays which returns to Tolkien's idea of creating an opportunity to travel to another part of the mind. If, as Tolkien says, a holiday 'even for a time' allows you to go to another part of your mind and access the strange and fantastic – what would a permanent holiday away from the mundane world allow you to do? Indeed, for Bilbo, after seeing mountains again, his holiday will fulfil the wish he expresses to Gandalf of finishing his book (*FR*, I, i). Bilbo will spend most the War of the Ring in Rivendell, certainly a physical state of Faërie, where he will not only finish his book but also compile the three volume *Translations from the Elvish*; the body of Elvish mythology mythically signifying Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* (*RK*, II, vi). Indeed, the very genesis of the earliest version of this

mythology itself was conceived in part when Tolkien was on a summer holiday. In the summer of 1914 while on holiday in Cornwall, Tolkien would study several Old English works that would, in part, inspire his own unique world-building and lead to his composing the earliest drafts of arguably one of the first poetic expressions of his mythology 'The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star' on 24 September 1914.<sup>23</sup> It was also while on a typically British 'summer holiday' in 1925 at the seaside resort of Filey in Yorkshire that Tolkien's son Michael lost his beloved toy dog on the beach which resulted in Tolkien creating the story of *Roverandom* to explain the adventures of the lost dog.<sup>24</sup> This desire for a long or permanent holiday to inspire creativity and stay much longer, or even indefinitely, in that other part of the mind also occurs in two other of Tolkien's works. At the end of his allegorical story 'Leaf by Niggle' the Second Voice describes an actual spatial place that represents Niggle's creation as a holiday that most people do not come back from:

'It is proving very useful indeed,' said the Second Voice. 'As a holiday, and a refreshment. It is splendid for convalescence; and not only for that, for many it is the best introduction to the Mountains. It works wonders in some cases. I am sending more and more there. They seldom have to come back.' (*TL*, pp. 311-312)

At the beginning of Tolkien's last published work, *Smith of Wootton Major*, the Master Cook, much like Bilbo, goes on a holiday that seems to reflect a transformation – an accessing of Tolkien's other part of the mind:

There came a time, however, when the reigning Master Cook, to everyone's surprise, since it has never happened before, suddenly announced that he needed a holiday; and he went away, no one knew where; and when he came back some months later he seemed rather changed. Now he was merrier, and often said and did most laughable things; and at feasts he would himself sing gay songs, which was not expected of Master Cooks. Also he brought back with him an Apprentice; and that astonished the Village. (*Smith*, p. 7)

The Master Cook, of course, has journeyed into the realm of Faërie and like Bilbo, as Gandalf remarks, has come back changed by his 'holiday'. Shortly after, the Master Cook tells Alf that he is going on holiday again 'and this time I shan't be coming back again' (*Smith*, p. 9) – again echoing Bilbo's desire for his ultimate holiday in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.<sup>25</sup>

An interesting mixture of the two conceptual spaces of home and holiday (both sides of the mind perhaps) occurs in a passage in *The Lord of the Rings* when Sam Gamgee in the Elvish realm of Lothlórien curiously describes his experience there as, 'it's like being home and on a holiday at the same time. If you understand me... I don't want to leave. All the same, I'm beginning to feel that if we've got to go on, then we'd best get it over' (*FR*, II, vii). Lothlórien for Sam is a place that is both familiar and strange; a physical and conceptual place, in a sense, that bridges both sides of the mind that Tolkien described in his talk on the *Kalevala*. Indeed, in another part of his *Kalevala* talk Tolkien described his discovery as crossing a gulf between

Indo-European speaking peoples of Europe into this smaller realm of those who cling in queer corners to the forgotten tongues and memories of an elder day (*Kullervo*, p. 69). As Verlyn Flieger has explored in her seminal *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie*, in entering Lothlórien Frodo has a similar experience as Tolkien had in his discovery.<sup>26</sup> In the passage above it is Sam, like the boy who wished for half holidays in Hell away from Eton Collars, who realises that while he enjoys his time there it is also time to get back to the 'real' world and the journey ahead – the holiday for Sam (and Frodo) is over.

Within the context of his world-building, Tolkien did include a good number of holidays in the calendars of Arda. From the earliest log drawing fest of 'Turuholmë' in *The Book of Lost Tales* (pp. 229, 270) to the Lithe and Yule Days on the Calendars in the Appendix in *The Return of the King* (Appendix D, I), Tolkien gave the peoples of his world time for holidays, celebrations and periods to stop and remember the past; as on *Cormarë* or 'Ring-day' held on the 22nd of September to celebrate Bilbo and Frodo's birthday (*RK*, Appendix D, I). In 'The Etymologies' the reconstructed proto-Elvish root MBER is the source for a series of Elvish words such as the Quenya word *meren* meaning 'feast' or 'festival' and *meryale* specifically meaning 'holiday' (*Lost Road*, p. 372). In inventing this proto-root with its derived Elvish words, Tolkien may be using sound-sense to signify the happy nature of holidays by echoing in his language invention the English word 'merry' – perhaps suggesting that our use of 'merry' in holiday greetings derives from and is an echo of this long forgotten Elvish word.

However, opposing this there are some examples of disastrous events that occur on days that are marked as the word's original meaning – holy or sacred days. The great tale of The Fall of Gondolin relates that as winter moves into spring, the inhabitants of the hidden city of Gondolin, unaware that the location of the city has been divulged to the first Dark Lord Melko, celebrate the holy day of Nost-na-Lothion – Gnomish for 'The Birth of Flowers' and the great feast of Tarnin Austa 'The Gates of Summer':

For know that on a night it was their custom to begin a solemn ceremony at midnight, continuing it even till the dawn of Tarnin Austa broke, and no voice was uttered in the city from midnight till the break of day, but the dawn they hailed with ancient songs. (*FoG*, p. 72)

It is at this moment when the city is engaged in this 'holy day' that Melko and his invading forces invade and vanquish Gondolin as the sun goes down:

Lo! even when she had gone and all was dark, a new light suddenly begun, and a glow there was, but it was beyond the northward heights, and men marvelled, and there was thronging of the walls and battlements. Then wonder grew to doubt as the light waxed and became redder, and doubt to dread as men saw the snow upon the mountains dyed as it were with blood. And thus it was that the fire-serpents of Melko came to Gondolin. (*FoG*, pp. 72-73)

In a later version of this tale from the 'Quenta Silmarillion' Tolkien emphasises that this act of 'holy-daying' caused the watch on the walls of Gondolin to be less vigilant:

The host of Morgoth came over the Northern hills where the height was greatest and the watch less vigilant, and it came at night at a time of festival, when all the folk of Gondolin were upon the walls to wait upon the rising sun and sing their songs at its uplifting; for the morrow was the feast they call *The Gates of Summer*. But the red light mounted the hills in the North and not in the East: and there was no stay in the advance of the foe until they were beneath the walls of Gondolin – and Gondolin was beleaguered without hope. (*Shaping*, p. 144) (my emphasis)

In this passage, Tolkien subverts the joy of the breaking of the night and the heralding of dawn (Tarnin Austa) with the glowing red light of Melko's fire serpents as the tragic invasion of Gondolin begins; an invasion which might have been prevented if the Gondolithim would not have been diverted by their 'holy-daying'.

Tolkien repeats this theme in part of the cosmogonical cycle of the Lost Tale stories found in the published section 'The Theft of Melko and the Darkening of Valinor'. Tolkien describes a great feast held by the Elves and Valar every seven years called 'Years of Double Mirth' which is a three day holy-day Festival that ends with the Elves ascending to the heights of Taniquetil 'and there Manwë would speak to them as he thought fit of the Music of the Ainur and the glory of Ilúvatar, and of things to be and that had been' (*Lost Tales I*, p. 144). It is just on this last day of this sacred Festival that Melko, in company with the spider creature Ungoliantë, comes back into Valinor:

But in that fateful year Melko dared of his blasphemous heart to choose that very day of Manwë's speech on Taniquetil to carry out his designs; for then would Kor and Valmar and the rock-ringed dale of Sirunúmen be unguarded; for against whom indeed had Elf or Vala need to guard in those old days? (*Lost Tales I*, p. 144)

In the 1930's 'Quenta', this Festival is mentioned again, and Tolkien emphasises the fact that the Quendi were all on the heights of Tindbrenting (Taniquetil) engaged in singing before the feet of Varda. Thus, as in the earlier example of the invasion of Gondolin, due to the act of 'holy-daying' no one was guarding the land when Melkor and Ungoliantë entered and destroyed the Two Trees:

It was a day of festival, and most of the people of the Valinor were upon the mountain of Manwë – singing before him in his halls, or playing in the upland pleasenaunces upon the green slopes of Taniquetil... Valmar's streets were fallen silent, and few feet passed upon the stairs of Tun... Silpion was waning and Laurelin had just begun to glow, when protected by fate Morgoth and Ungoliantë crept into the plain. (*Lost Road*, p. 231)

In the 1950's 'Annals of Aman', Tolkien adds a new aspect to this holy day; it is now said that Manwë decreed a great festival to both celebrate the seeming defeat of Melkor and to heal the division that Melkor had caused among the Valar and the



Noldor:

Such now was the hour; but Manwë, hoping that indeed the shadow of Melkor was removed from the land, and fearing now worse than maybe a new war with Utmno and a new victory to end all, had decreed that this feast should be more glorious than any that had been held since the coming of the Eldar. He designed moreover to heal the evil that had arisen among the Noldor, and they all were bidden, therefore, to come to him and mingle with the Maiar in his halls upon Taniquetil, and there put aside all the griefs that lay between their princess and forget utterly the lies of their Enemy... It is said that even as Fëanor and Fingolfin stood before Manwë, and it was the Mingling of the Lights and both Trees were shining and the silent city of Valmar was filled with radiance as of silver and gold, in that hour Melkor and Ungoliantë came over the plain and stood before the mound. (*Morgoth*, p. 100)

What are we to make of this aspect of holidays as holy days that result in disaster? It appears that in both cases Tolkien is setting up a moment of joy and celebration when the Elves take a break from their daily life and watch upon the walls and in doing so forget for a moment that danger that is lurking outside waiting to attack. In a sense, both these tales' climaxes result in a reverse 'eucatastrophe'; Tolkien's term for the good catastrophe 'the sudden joyous turn' (*OFS*, p. 71). In both these holy days joy turns to grief. In *On Fairy-stories* Tolkien contrasts 'eucatastrophe' with 'dyscatastrophe' which are acts or events of sadness and failure that are necessary for 'the joy of deliverance' (*OFS*, p. 71) that the event or act seems to deny. Tolkien seems to be using these sacred holy days to emphasise that even if the greatest evil can subvert the glory of the holiest days that it will only be for just a time and eventually there will be deliverance and 'evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the wall so of the world, poignant as grief' (*OFS*, p. 71). Indeed, at the conclusion of *The Silmarillion* both these dyscatastrophic holy-days are contrasted with the eucatastrophic arrival on another holy-day of the great hope and deliverer for Elves and Men – Eärendil (*Silmarillion*, p. 256).<sup>27</sup>

To conclude, there is one other use of the word 'holiday' by Tolkien that has an incredible poignancy and perhaps contains Tolkien's own reflection on the fate of several of his King Edward's School companions who took part in the original holiday debate. In 'The Battle of the Pelennor Fields', Tolkien describes the heads of dead soldiers that are being hurled by Sauron's forces over the walls of the besieged Minas Tirith to frighten the soldiers of Gondor:

But marred and dishonoured as they were, it often chanced that thus a man would see again the face of someone that he had known, who had walked proudly once in arms, or tilled the fields, or ridden in upon a holiday from the green vales in the hills. (*RK*, II, iv)

These soldiers too had gone on holidays and then had ridden in from the green vales to find themselves back in the ranks of soldiers soon to be slaughtered; just as Tolkien's debating partner Robert Quilter Gilson was killed in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. For them the holiday was over – an elegiac there but this time not back again.

Notes

- 1 Scull and Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), pp. 27-28.
- 2 An acronym for Tea Club, Barrovian Society – a fellowship of Tolkien and his friends in Birmingham who often met at the Barrows Stores.
- 3 Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), pp. 27-28.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.* The 'Koh-i-noor is a famous diamond and became one of the British crown jewels after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The name is from the Persian koh-i-nur, literally meaning 'mountain of light', from the Persian koh 'mountain' and Arabic 'nur' light
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 This would not be the first time Tolkien would use punning in the King Edward's School debates. In his very first reported debate in October 1909 on the subject of the Militant Suffragette the report states that Tolkien 'spoke of the Suffragette from a Zoological point of view and gave an interesting display of his paronomasiac powers (ability to play on words). A good humorous speech.' (cited in Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), pp. 18-19.
- 9 Koh-i-noor was the name of a brand of pencils made by a Czech manufacturer of various arts supplies. In the 1889 World's Fair in Paris this manufacturer Hardtmuth displayed these pencils with the name 'Koh-i-Noor' with each pencil encased in a 'mountain of light' of a yellow cedar barrel which apparently Tolkien had in the habit of putting in his mouth;
- 10 *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 836.
- 11 Bede, *The Reckoning of Time* (edited by Faith Wallis) (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 53.
- 12 For example, '3ef hit is halidei, buhinde sumdeal duneward seggeð Paternoster ant Credo ba stille' 'if it is a holy day, bowing somewhat downward, say the Paternoster and the Credo both silently.' *MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402* edited by J.R.R. Tolkien E.E.T.S. Oxford 1962, p. 14.
- 13 *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 836
- 14 <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/cliffrichard/summerholiday.html> (last accessed 28 April 2020)
- 15 Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), p. 46
- 16 John D. Rateliff, *The History of The Hobbit*, One-Volume Edition (London: Harper Collins, 2011), p. 692.
- 17 Corey Olsen, *Exploring J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit* (New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012), p. 313.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Victoria Holtz-Wodzak, 'Travel, Redemption and Peacemaking - Hobbits, Dwarves and Elves and the Transformative Power of Pilgrimage' in *The Hobbit and Tolkien's Mythology Essays on Revisions and Influences* edited by Bradford Lee Eden (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014), p. 182.
- 20 Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), p. 33
- 21 *Ibid.* 33-34.
- 22 Verlyn Flieger, 'Tolkien's French Connection' in *The Hobbit and Tolkien's Mythology Essays on Revisions and Influences* edited by Bradford Lee Eden (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014), pp. 70-78.
- 23 Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide vol 1. Chronology* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (London: HarperCollins, 2017), p. 31.
- 24 *Ibid.* 141.
- 25 Tolkien's Inklings colleague C.S. Lewis also used the word 'holiday' in an intriguing way that also suggests the movement to another conceptual place. At the end of *The Last Battle* when Lucy asks Aslan if he is going to send the children back to their own world as he has done before, Aslan responds 'No fear of that.... There was a real accident.... Your father and mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands - dead. The term is over, *the holidays have begun*. The dream is ended: this is the morning.' (C.S. Lewis. *The Last Battle* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 224. (my emphasis)
- 26 In Verlyn Flieger, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), p. 91. Flieger cites the following passage from 'As

soon as he set foot upon the far bank of Silverlode a strange feeling had come upon him, and it deepened as he walked on into the Naith: it seemed to him that he had stepped over a bridge of time into a corner of the Elder Days, and was now walking in a world that was no more' (*FR*, II, vi).

- 27 This contrast is especially emphasised in the 1930's Quenta 'and he came at a time of festival even as Morgoth and Ungoliant had in ages past' (*Shaping*, p. 153).



**Figure 1:** The Man in the Moon came tumbling down – by L.L. Brooke. This illustration is from Andrew Lang's *The Nursery Rhyme Book* (1897). Interestingly, the image shows two dogs – a small (terrestrial dog) between the seated children and a (lunar) dog accompanying the Man in the Moon complete with his bundle of staves. Image: public domain.



# In the Moon Gleaming

MARTIN BEECH

*Roverandom* was submitted by J.R.R. Tolkien to Allen & Unwin publishers in 1937 as a possible text to follow *The Hobbit*. Very different in context and form, *Roverandom* is not a part of Tolkien's legendarium – rather, it is a tale from the *perilous realm* – and indeed, while Rayner Unwin found the story, 'well written and amusing' (*Roverandom*, p. xv) publication was not proceeded with at that time. The story was eventually published by HarperCollins in 1998, some 73 years after its first holiday-time telling in 1925.

Inspired by the actual loss, by his son Michael, of a favourite toy during a seaside holiday (*Roverandom*, p. ix), the story centres upon the antics of a small dog, called Rover (later *Roverandom*), who was bewitched by a wizard to take on a diminished size. The hound, thus shrunken, then becomes embroiled in a mix of adventures, on the Moon and in the sea, while all the time hoping to encounter the wizard, 'old Artaxerxes' again, so that his original size might be restored (*Roverandom*, p. 14). The adventures of Rover begin with a flight to the Moon upon the back of a seagull who flies over the very edge of the Earth (*Roverandom*, p. 20). To a modern reader, however, the Moon depicted, once Rover arrives, is far from a familiar place. This essay wishes to explore the reasons why the images jar (just a little – if allowed) even though they have a consistency steeped in ancient mythology. In particular, the topography of the lunar landscape described in *Roverandom* is inconsistent with actual astronomical observations, and likewise the dynamics of lunar rotation and internal structure are incorrectly portrayed. In addition to examining Tolkien's depiction of the Moon and the journey thereto, an explanation is sought for the idea behind the Man in the Moon having a companion dog.

Indeed, there is no strong folklore narrative to support such a companionship, but several books, known to be in Tolkien's library, could arguably have provided the seed idea for the invention of a lunar canine. A study of Oronzo Cilli's recent catalogue of Tolkien's library reveals that from a total of 2599 titles, only one is arguably a science book<sup>1</sup> – this is Ellison Hawks' *Starry Heavens* published in 1933. The inclusion of Hawks' text in Tolkien's library is perhaps not surprising – if not this text then some other astronomy tome would be expected, as the behaviour of the Moon, the motion of the planets, and the arrangement of the stars are important to many storylines in the legendarium. Ellison Hawks is less read today, but he was well-known in the early to mid-20th century as a populariser of science, writing many books for a younger audience.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Hawks published five books on astronomy: the first of these was *Stars Shown to the Children* (published in 1910); this was followed by *Astronomy* (1913), *The Boys' Book of Astronomy* (1914), *The Romance and Reality of Astronomy* (1922) and finally, *The Starry Heavens* (1933). The first four of these astronomy books may well have been known to Tolkien, through a school or local library. Hawks' last astronomy book, however, was published

at a time when Tolkien was well-established as the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, and just prior to the publication of *The Hobbit*. Much of the text for *The Starry Heavens* is extracted from the more extensive *The Boys Book of Astronomy*, which describes the Moon as it was known to astronomers circa 1915 to 1930.

In the preface to his *The Boys' Book of Astronomy* (1914), Hawks comments that the popular view of science is that it is a 'dull and wearying succession of figures', and that, 'they [the young audience] imagine astronomers to be slippered and doddering old men, with long grey beards, who potter about with weird-looking instruments' (Hawks, p. xiv). The latter may still be true, but it has a distinct resonance with the textual descriptions of the surly wizard Artaxerxes, and indeed, with the description of the Man in the Moon: 'an old man with a long silvery beard' (*Roverandom*, p. 22). As to the Moon itself, finding shapes within the mottled markings across its disk is akin to a cultural Rorschach test, with different cultures and different generations each finding their own distinctive figures. The Moon in popular culture is often depicted with a broad, beaming-face, either male or female, but such depictions are not anchored in actual lunar topography or colouration. On more traditional grounds, however, the First Nations people of north America perceive a rabbit in the Moon's dark maria, while the Pueblo people of New Mexico see the fertility deity Kokopelli. Chinese tradition depicts a rabbit and a frog amongst the shadings on the Moon, and Chinese tradition also tells of Chang'e, a female deity who lives in the Moon. Since the late 19th century popular astronomy texts have commonly described the profile of a lady's face within the Moon's shadings, with coiffured hair (depicted by Mare Serenitatis and Mare Tranquillitatis) and a pendant, composed of the distinctively rayed-crater Tycho, upon her throat. Additionally, and not to be missed from the list of lunar pareidolia, is the obscure case of seeing a dog in the Moon. The term obscure is used in this case because the only written account that I have ever found describing such a dog is that in the books by Hawks. In *The Starry Heavens*, Hawks writes that there is,

a delightful representation of one of those curious-looking dogs, a French poodle. The poodle's head and body are formed by the Lady's hair (this is the lady pareidolia just described); his front legs may be seen quite clearly – he is sitting on his haunches – and also his tail, complete even to the little pom-pom on the end! (Hawks, p. 29)

(Technically, the *pom-pom* is located in Mare Crisium, and the body is formed by Mare Tranquillitatis, the right fore-leg is delineated by Mare Nubium and the head by Mare Serenitatis, with its haunches being set in Mare Fecunditatis). There is no strong literary (rhyming or mythical) tradition for there being a dog in the Moon, and it is tempting to ask if Tolkien introduced Rover, the Man in the Moon's 'little white

dog', in part through a reading of the astronomy texts by Hawks. The answer to this question is most likely no, since, as discussed next, a stronger case can be made for a more down-to-Earth explanation.

A Moon-lore tradition not discussed by Hawks but which would have been well-known to Tolkien is that concerning the estranged Man in the Moon; and this is a much more ancient and very different Man to the one that we see in popular culture today. Indeed, the original Man in the Moon is largely composed of the same lunar maria that make up the *poodle* described by Hawks (just viewed differently). This crepuscular man, however, was cast there long ago. Indeed, he is envisioned as carrying a bundle of wooden staves upon his shoulders – his banishment to the Moon being attributed to Moses, no less, as a punishment for his sin of gathering fuel on a Sunday (Harley, p. 21). Not fully tied to his lunar exile, however, the anonymous child's nursery rhyme informs us that, 'The Man in the Moon came down too soon / and asked his way to Norwich / He went by the South and burnt his mouth / when eating cold plum porridge' (Harley, p. 6). Acclaimed illustrator Leonard Leslie Brooke produced a drawing of the Man in the Moon's return to Earth for Andrew Lang's 1897 *The Nursery Rhyme Book* – a book that Tolkien owned and knew well (Cilli, p. 152). Intriguingly, in the drawing by Brooke (see Figure 1) there are two small dogs – one accompanying the Man in the Moon, the other seated between two children – are these, one is tempted to ask again, the prototypes for Rover and Roverandom? Here, the answer could well be yes, but there is no definitive proof to support such a claim.

Beyond the nursery rhyme, however, there are the bawdier traditions that the Man in the Moon is a great imbiber of claret (it is not just the tides that he raises), an inveterate smoker, and even a poet (Harley, p. 12). Indeed, it is Frodo that reminds us, as he sings that 'ridiculous song' by Bilbo, at the *Prancing Pony* in Bree,<sup>3</sup> 'There is an inn, a merry old inn / beneath an old grey hill, / And there they brew a beer so brown / That the Man in the Moon himself came down / One night to drink his fill' (FR, I, ix). This trait of excess is further reinforced by the Man in the Moon's overindulgence of chocolates during a trip to the North Pole in 1926, and in an overindulgence of plum pudding and brandy in 1927 (*Father Christmas*). Tolkien describes his Man in the Moon as having, 'a workshop down in the cellars' where magic spells are brewed, and he reveals that the Man has, 'an enormously long telescope' that is capable of imaging people on the Earth, along with all the creatures that inhabit the illuminated lunar hemisphere (*Roverandom*, p. 37, 22). This telescopic ability has a direct, but in a reverse sense, resonance with the Great Moon-Hoax perpetrated by Richard Adams Locke in the pages of *The Sun* newspaper (published in New York) during the summer of 1835. This hoax, described in the form of dispatches and fictitious journal references, followed the discovery of intelligent lunar life (in the form of a man-bat creature: *Vespertilio Homo*) by famed astronomer Sir John Herschel from his observatory in South Africa.

This image of a strange, magical, semi-scientific figure has additional resonance with Lewis Carroll's Professor Mein Herr. In Carroll's case, the Professor described in *Sylvie and Bruno* (first published in 1889) – and a book known to be in Tolkien's library (Cilli, p. 41) – is the personification of the Man in the Moon. Indeed, in a letter to Allen and Unwin on 31 August 1937, Tolkien described Carroll's Professor as being, 'the best character' (*Letters*, p. 22).

By flying to the Moon on the back of a seagull, Rover continues the long-played theme of fantasy flights to the lunar realm. Lucian in his *Voyage to the Moon (A True Story* – composed in the 2nd Century A.D.) has the hapless crew of a sailing vessel carried to the Moon in just seven days by a stupendous whirlwind (Nicolson, p. 15). Once upon the Moon the sailors meet Endymion (the shepherd who fell in love with Diana) now risen to be King of the Hippiogugi. Lucian explains that the Hippiogugi, angling to do battle with Phaëton, the Sun King, are in the process of heading out to colonise the Morning Star (that is, planet Venus). The Hippiogugi travel upon vast, three-headed vultures, and a battle ground, made from the webs of giant spiders, has been prepared for the clashing armies. The war did not go well for Endymion (Harmon, pp. 261-273). Some fifteen hundred years further on in time, in 1638, we find adventurer Domingo Gonsales being carried to the Moon, in a stately twelve days, aboard a kite-like machine powered by wild swans. Indeed, it was long held in folk belief that migratory birds, especially swallows and cuckoos, spent the cold northern winter months sheltering upon the Moon.<sup>4</sup> Gonsales discovers a lush utopian world in the Moon, populated by 28-foot tall giants and ruled over by The Great Irdozonur. The Lunars, Gonzales informs us, have magical stones with wonderful heat, light, and colour-emitting properties, and that they exchange weakling lunar children with babies snatched from Earth. Not to be out-imagined, however, the mathematician Johannes Kepler, in his *Somnium* (published posthumously in 1634) has his hero whisked to the Moon by daemons in a mere four hours. The Moon described by Kepler is inhabited by nomadic, serpent-like creatures. Cyrano de Bergerac (in his 1657 *The Other World*) transported himself to the Moon in a flying machine powered by sky-rockets; a similar such, but much larger, device being applied by the members of the Baltimore Gun Club, in Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865). In the latter case, a giant cannon hurls the doomed<sup>5</sup> crew of astronauts to the Moon at a pace no better, in fact, than Gonsales' gansas. In *The First Men in the Moon* (1900), H.G. Wells whisked his lunar explorers to the Moon through the application of gravity-defying Cavorite paint, there to encounter an underground world inhabited by insects, enormous mooncalves and tall Selenites. Hawks, in his *The Boys Book of Astronomy*, indicates that, 'an express train, travelling day and night, would make the journey in about six months' (Hawks, p. 71). Mew, the seagull who carried Rover to the Moon, was clearly working overtime, however, being clocked by the Man in the Moon at, 'a thousand

miles a minute' (*Roverandom*, p. 22). At this super-charged speed, the journey to the Moon would take just four hours – the same time as Kepler's noxious daemons. In terms of purely imagined transportation and associated travel times, Tolkien uses an inherently natural and non-technological mechanism (a seagull), but invokes a truly fantastic (even breath-taking) speed of motion to complete the journey to the Moon. Additionally, in describing a living eco-system of strange lunar plants, insects, birds and exotic beasts, Tolkien is working within a long tradition of imagined lunar exploration and fauna.

The Moon Rover finds conveys a strange landscape to our contemporary eye: 'a new white world shining like snow, with wide open spaces of pale blue and green, where the tall pointed mountains threw their long shadows far across the floor' (*Roverandom*, p. 22). The Moon's mountains are neither particularly tall, nor are they strikingly pointed, but this image is in keeping with early 20th century depictions of the Moon's surface. Indeed, the moonscape illustrations that Tolkien produced for the text, in addition to his written depictions of Artaxerxes and the Man in the Moon, have a strong similarity to the characters and backdrops appearing in Georges Méliès 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune*. Oddly, however, there is no specific mention of craters – the most dominant and characteristic lunar feature – in *Roverandom*. In a clash of geometries and physics, Tolkien describes a flat Earth, but a spherical Moon, and he also allows the Man in the Moon and *Roverandom* to pass through the Moon's interior in order to explore its dark side. Lewis Carroll has Professor Mein Herr introduce the idea of gravity trains in *Sylvie and Bruno*, but Tolkien resorts to ancient physics in his narrative (Beech, p. 119). As *Roverandom* approaches the centre of the Moon he begins to slow down<sup>6</sup> and needs a set of wings to fly the rest of the way to the surface, 'like flying up, up, through a big chimney' (*Roverandom*, p. 39). In reality, as Professor Mein Herr correctly explains, if you jump into a tunnel cut through the Moon (or the Earth) then you will fall right through the centre, where in fact a maximum speed is achieved, and thereafter fly all the way up the remaining half of the tunnel at a gradually slowing rate (Beech, p. 23). Such a journey through a Moon-tunnel is, in fact, described by science-fiction writer Hugo Gernsback<sup>7</sup> in his *The Scientific Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (Beech, p. 241; Gernsback, p. 80). Indeed, the good Baron was earlier cast through an Earth-tunnel by an enraged Vulcan – a journey that took him from the throat of Mt. Etna to a watery emergence in the south Pacific seas. Rudolph Raspe's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (in a 1915 publication) is known to be part of Tolkien's library (Cilli, p. 239). Indeed, between Raspe, and Carroll, and from Dante's *Inferno* written in the 14th century to Jules Verne's writings in the mid-19th century, Tolkien, in his Moon-tunnel narrative, is tapping into and drawing inspiration from a large body of literature relating to subterranean exploration (Beech, p. 77). Tolkien's Moon has an atmosphere which enabled clouds, snow, and flight with wings, and this was still (just about) a viable

scientific possibility in terms of known lunar properties in 1925. Indeed, astronomers intermittently reported seeing shooting stars in a supposed lunar atmosphere<sup>8</sup> well into the 1950s. The Moon in *Roverandom* is also inhabited by sheep, birds, 'glass-beetles', 'shadow-bats' and 'fifty-seven varieties of spiders' (p. 27). This idea of extra-terrestrial life has a long philosophical heritage, and it was often stated in 18th and 19th century astronomy texts that all of the planets (including the Sun) were inhabited. Hawks correctly describes the Moon as a 'dead world', but literary history has long-held that the Moon is inhabited by *Selenites* of one monstrous form or another (Nicolson, p. 237).

The Moon in *Roverandom*, while being spherical, is incorrectly described as not spinning – the Light and Dark hemispheres never apparently changing their illumination characteristics. This is in contrast to most tales of lunar exploration in which the periodic variation between the warm and illuminated phase is contrasted against that of the dark and frigid phase. Given, however, the strange orbital geometry described – the Moon being able to pass under the flat Earth – this physical inconsistency is a jarring, but acceptable literary device. Eclipses are attributed to a 'Great White dragon', and this idea has historical resonance. Indeed, a lurking dragon, eating the Moon at the times of an eclipse, is still embodied within the name for the time interval between successive passages of the Moon through its orbital nodal point (the Moon's required location if an eclipse is to be seen) – this being the Draconic month. One of the adventures of Rover and *Roverandom* involved being chased by the white dragon, and they were only saved by The Man in the Moon uncorking from the depths of his cellar, 'a dark, black spell that looked like jellified tar and honey' (*Roverandom*, p. 35). The dragon was so put-out by this spell that we are informed, 'the next eclipse was a failure'.

Scull and Hammond argue that Tolkien's interest in re-working and reviving the tale of *Roverandom* may have been sparked by missing the lunar eclipse, due to clouds, that occurred on 8 December 1927 (*Roverandom*, xiii). This eclipse-washout was reported in *The Father Christmas Letters* for that year, and partially blamed upon The Man in the Moon's overindulgence of plum-pudding and brandy. This particular eclipse, however, was not as such a failure. It certainly happened, even if missed because of clouds. As a possible alternative explanation, one may note that there was a relatively rare (there have been just eight such events in the past hundred years) total penumbral lunar eclipse on 19 December 1926, and such an eclipse is more readily describable as being a failure, because the Moon's brightness hardly changes as it only passes through the Earth's partial shadow. The timeframe of this latter eclipse fits the same Christmas holiday period highlighted by Scull and Hammond when Tolkien would have had time to work on non-academic projects. While the penumbral eclipse of December 1926 was well advertised in astronomical journals, it seems unlikely that Tolkien, as a non-astronomer, would have been fully aware of the event. Indeed, the eclipse of



8 December 1927 is mentioned in the *Times* newspaper, while that of 19 December 1926 is not. Linking, however, developments in Tolkien's writing of *Roverandom* to a specific astronomical event is particularly interesting and is a point worthy of further research.

Tolkien's Moon in *Roverandom* is familiar and yet, to the modern eye, odd. This latter point, of course, is not really important since Tolkien is using, as well as adapting, a diverse set of mythical and historical sources to craft an engaging tale. The Moon in *Roverandom* is not the real Moon, but it is a fully believable Moon that works superbly within the context of the story – it is a full and glorious Moon plucked from the deep-well that is the human imagination, interlaced, to give it form and place, with a smattering of astronomical and literary mythology.

## Notes

- 1 Three other texts loosely qualify as being science related: (i) *Sundials: incised dials or mass-clocks*, by A. R. Robert, (ii) *Science is a sacred cow*, by A. Standon, and (iii) *Mendip – Cheddar, its gorge and caves*, by H. E. Balch. The first of these books, published in 1926, is a scholarly text on medieval church sundials, while the second, published in 1950, criticised the unquestioning public faith in scientists, teachers of science, and scientific institutions. Indeed, Standon, a chemist by training, charges scientists with having overly 'inflated egos' whose words and works are given far too much attention. The text by Balch was first published in 1935, and describes the history and archaeology of the limestone caves in Cheddar gorge. Tolkien first visited Cheddar, with his wife Edith, in 1916, and noted in a letter to P. Rorke S.J. in 1971 that the caves had provided inspiration for the Caverns of Helm's Deep (*Letters*, p. 321). There are a good number of science-fiction books listed by Oronzo Cilli in Tolkien's library, including works by H.G. Wells, Olaf Stapleton, Frank Herbert, and David Lindsay.
- 2 <https://shasurvey.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/ellison-hawks-biography.pdf> (accessed February 2020).
- 3 Tolkien wrote the first version of this poem in 1915 and saw it published (greatly modified) in 1923. As Tom Shippey argues in his masterful *The Road to Middle Earth*, Tolkien, in the original version of his poem was looking to resurrect or recreate a more ancient poem, that actually made sense, but is now (and long past) largely lost and fragmented.
- 4 Francis Godwin: *The Man in the Moone, or a discourse of a voyage thither* (1638). The exchange of lunar and terrestrial children, as described in Godwin's text, has a parallel with the narrative developed in *Roverandom*, where it is explained that terrestrial children can be carried to the Moon in their dreams. Also published in 1638 was the remarkable book by John Wilkins' (Wadham College, Oxford) *The Discovery of a World in the Moon* – a world, that in this case, is attained by the construction of a 'flying chariot'. That birds migrate to the Moon during the northern winter months was addressed in some detail by Charles Morton, an associate of Wilkins at Wadham College, in his *Compendium Physicae*, first published in 1687. Reasoning from limited observations and Holy Scripture, Morton argued that migratory birds, 'do go into and remain in one of the celestial bodies; and that must be the Moon, which is most likely, because nearest'. Morton further calculated that, in the absence of gravity and travelling at an impressive 125 miles per hour, a migratory bird would take some sixty days to reach the Moon, and as many days to come back to Earth. See also, T. P. Harrison, *Birds in the Moon*, *Isis*, 45 (1954) pp. 323-330.
- 5 The spaceship and crew were left, at the end of the novel, in orbit, 'to move around the Moon until the end of time'. Their rescue, as such, only coming about with the publications of Verne's second lunar exploration book, *Around the Moon*, published in 1870. Verne has his three trapped astronauts discuss the possibility of lunar life, but, breaking with tradition, they conclude that the Moon is barren and lifeless.
- 6 That an object falling down a tunnel cut through the Earth must stop at the Earth's centre is a remnant from Aristotle's dictate of final causes. The tendency of all earthly matter, Aristotle argued, is to fall to the centre of the universe, and this centre coincided with the centre of the Earth.

- 7 This book is the compilation of the story as published, between May 1915 to February 1917, within the pages of *The Electrical Experimenter* magazine. Gernsback is perhaps best-known today as the Hugo behind the annual Hugo Awards for best science fiction and fantasy writing.
- 8 The apparent detection of lunar meteors, and the early study of a supposed lunar atmosphere are discussed in M. Beech and D. W. Hughes, *Seeing the impossible: meteors in the Moon*. *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 3.1(2000), 13-22.

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# The Tolkien Art Index

ERIK MUELLER-HARDER

*The Tolkien Art Index* may be found at <https://tai.tolkienists.org/>

*The Tolkien Art Index* is an online *catalogue raisonné* of all published Arda-related artwork created by J.R.R. Tolkien. It provides a succinct and unambiguous way to refer to each of his paintings, drawings, sketches, and doodles that are (or might be) related to his legendarium, briefly describing each and listing the publications in which each work has been reproduced.

## History

When writing about Tolkien's written works, we use abbreviated forms that are commonly understood within the field of Tolkien Studies. *The Lord of the Rings* is often rendered *LotR*, for example, and the seventh volume of *The History of Middle-earth* is often written as *HoMe 7* or as *Treason*. This saves space, of course, but it also gives us a common language that we use to clearly and concisely communicate information.

There has been no similar way to refer to Tolkien's artwork. For decades, of course, this scarcely mattered: for well over thirty years after the original 1937 publication of *The Hobbit*, only twenty-two of Tolkien's Middle-earth drawings and paintings had been reproduced. It was easy to refer simply to *Rivendell*, for example, and to be confident that the writer and the reader pictured the same painting.

This number grew by almost one hundred in the '70s with the publishing by Allen & Unwin and by Ballentine Books of various 'Tolkien' calendars and diaries and with *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien* edited by Christopher Tolkien. The number slowly crept upwards in the '80s and early '90s, and then mushroomed over the last twenty-five years thanks to Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*, *The Art of The Hobbit*, and *The Art of The Lord of the Rings*, as well as most recently the companion books to the Bodleian exhibition *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* (the catalogue of the same name and the diminutive *Tolkien Treasures*), and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France's recent exhibition, *Voyage en Terre du Milieu*.

As of 2020, there are now well over five hundred items that fit the index's criteria.

## Scope

Ultimately, it is hoped that the *Tolkien Art Index* will comprehensively catalogue every extant specimen of anything created by J.R.R. Tolkien that might be construed as art, other than items consisting purely of Tengwar or Cirth writing. (For these, see the excellent *Mellonath Daeron Index of Tengwa Specimina* (DTS) and *Index of Certh Specimina* (DCS), respectively).

The current aim is more modest: to include all of Tolkien's *published* artwork related (however tangentially) to Middle-

earth in particular and Arda in general; or, more broadly, all published artwork not demonstrably *unrelated* to his legendarium.

## Order

There is no perfect order in which to list these works. Perhaps the most obvious possibility is date of creation; unfortunately, for most of Tolkien's artwork we would be forced into educated speculation as to the exact date – and often (especially in the case of maps), composition of one work continued for months or even years.

Categorising works (such as 'maps,' 'sketches,' 'friezes,' 'elevations,' and so forth) is also a mechanism fraught with grey areas of forced interpretation and decision-making: is a bird's-eye view of the Falls of Rauros a map? A sketch? And what of the drawings of Farmer Cotton's house? And when the *Index* is expanded to include all of Tolkien's art, would it really make sense to include his sketches of real-world houses in the same categories?

Another possibility would be to organise items by their geographic location, but then the question of scale becomes problematic: if we create a classification for 'Mordor' and place sketches of Mt. Doom and Barad-dûr and Shelob's lair in it, then where should we place a map that includes Mordor, Rohan, and Gondor?

At the end, it has seemed best to follow the time-honoured practice of organisation by *accession number*; that is, more or less, assigning each item a unique number as we first come to it. Improving a bit on such a 'system,' we can imagine a world in which the *TAI* was created in the early twentieth century, with new artwork added to it as it was published. And this, indeed, is what the *Index* has tried to recreate, with the first items listed in the *Index* detailing the artwork published in the first edition of *The Hobbit* from 1937, and the last items cataloguing material published for the first time in *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* in 2018. (2019's *Voyage en Terre du Milieu* introduced no previously unpublished reproductions related to the legendarium.)

The cardinal rule of any *catalogue raisonné* is that the numbering will never change, so that as new items are added to the *Index* – whether because they are published for the first time or because they were not originally within the scope of the *Index* – they will simply be added to the end. As with so much else, this too is a compromise; however, it does mean that researchers may simply and safely refer to (for example) TAI #67 and it will in perpetuity unambiguously refer to the watercolour 'Nargothrond' that appeared as figure #33 in *Pictures of J.R.R. Tolkien*, as figure #54 in *The Art of The Hobbit*, and as the April feature in the 1979 *Silmarillion Desk Calendar* – and which was first published as the May feature in the Allen & Unwin 1978 *Silmarillion Calendar*.

This rule does mean that overlooked items 'discovered' by the compiler after the *Index* was first published will necessarily

have higher *TAI* numbers than expected, but workarounds for that difficulty tend to be ungainly.

## Organisation

Each entry in the Index comprises two distinct sets of information. These are shown on the website with white and with pale blue backgrounds.

On the top and the left of the entry, with a white background, is information about the work of art. The work's title is listed across the top. On the left side is a space for the thumbnail, and also many pieces of metadata:

- A single black and white tag shows the library which holds the item (the Bodleian or Marquette), if relevant, and its reference ID, or shelfmark.
- In orange one will find the type of item, such as frieze, tableau, artefact, map, and so on.
- The materials Tolkien used to create the item (inks, pencils, watercolour, etc.) are shown in a French blue colour.
- In green is a list of items that the work portrays (mountains, birds, the sun, etc.).
- Geographic locations that are represented or portrayed in the piece are listed in blue.
- Any characters that might be in the work, such as Bilbo and Smaug, are listed in purple.

Each entry also features a table on the right, with a pale blue background wherein publication information is listed chronologically for the piece of artwork. For each published reproduction one can find:

- the year of publication;
- the name of publication;
- the earliest associated number in Hammond & Anderson's bibliography (if relevant);
- the page number (for volumes) or month (for calendar);
- the figure # (for volumes, if relevant);
- and notes about the reproduction, such as whether the image has been colourised or rendered in greyscale, and whether it's been rotated, flipped, or cropped.

## Images

An index of this sort, of course, is far easier to use if, in addition to a brief description of each item, it also contains a reproduction of the item – even if only a small 'thumbnail' image. *Thumbnails cannot be presented at this time; however, discussions with the Tolkien Estate continue.*<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, the brief descriptions make the Index useable, especially if one also has access to the Hammond and Scull volumes or exhibition catalogues mentioned above for reference.

## Use

Using the *Tolkien Art Index* is straightforward. The home landing page at <https://tai.tolkienists.org/> is in itself the entire catalogue. Visitors can easily scroll through the list in their browsers and move instantaneously to the top or the bottom of the page by the usual browser commands. And, of course,

one may take advantage of the browser's *Find* or *Find on Page* command (Control-F on Windows, Command-F on Macintosh, and Find on Page in the sharing menu in iOS).

Visitors can easily look at smaller portions of the *Index*: everything on the site that has the geometric shape of a *stadium* (also called an *obround*) is in fact a link to a subset of the *Index* that includes only those items that include that value. For example, clicking on a French-blue *watercolour* stadium displays a page containing forty items that were made (at least partially) with watercolour paint. Clicking on a green *stars* stadium brings up a page of thirty-six works that include stars (either in the sky or used as ornament). In almost all cases, the items are in order by *TAI* number; that is, mostly, when they were first reproduced.

One interesting feature is that it's possible to click on a *source* stadium, such as *Maker of Middle-earth*. This will display a list of all of Tolkien's Arda-related artwork that was reproduced in that book – in the order in which it appears within that book.

Similarly, clicking on a *Bodleian* or a *Marquette* stadium will bring up a list of Tolkien's published Arda-related artwork held by the library in question, in order by the library's shelfmark system.

## Terms of Service

The *Tolkien Art Index* is free in every way, though donations (to help defray the costs of hosting the site, obtaining reference material, and physically travelling to libraries to check shelfmarks) are accepted. The use of *TAI* numbers in print, web, and other media to refer to the artwork with which they are associated is acceptable, legal, and encouraged. More than one Tolkien scholar is currently planning to use *TAI* numbers to refer to artwork in their upcoming books.

## Updates

Though *TAI* numbers are guaranteed never to change, the *Index* itself is regularly updated. All changes and additions are outlined on a dedicated *Updates* page. Anyone who is aware of reproductions not currently listed, or who notices an inaccuracy or would like to add a description or other information is encouraged to get in touch at <https://tolkienists.org/contact>

## Notes

- 1 Cathleen Blackburn, 'Re: Permissions request: *Tolkien Art Index*', e-mail messages with Erik Mueller-Harder, Sept. 14, 2017; March 23, 2020; April 22, 2020.



# There and Back Again? Tolkien's Brief Visit to Sussex in 1904

MICK HENRY

It has been well documented that the 12-year-old Tolkien came to stay in Hove, East Sussex in 1904, though there has been some confusion over Edwin Neave, the person with whom he was staying, and Edwin's relationship to the Tolkien family at the time. What also hasn't been established is the address where Neave and Tolkien lived in Hove.

Edwin Neave, who would the next year marry Tolkien's aunt, Emily Jane Suffield, had come to know the Tolkien family when they were boarders with Emily's parents in Kings Norton, Worcestershire. The 1901 census shows John and Emily Suffield, Emily Jane's parents, living at 7 Ashfield Road. Edwin Neave is described as an insurance inspector, aged 29, and Emily Jane, his soon to be wife, as a school-teacher, aged 28.

In 1901 the Tolkien family was also living in Kings Norton at 86 Westfield Road, just a short distance from the Neaves in Ashfield Road. A year later the Tolkien family moved to 26 Oliver Road in Edgbaston, a suburb of Birmingham.

While living together, Edwin and the young Tolkien formed a close relationship. Edwin was an entertaining fellow who enjoyed drinking and music hall songs. Tolkien's Aunt Emily was also quite taken by the sandy-haired insurance clerk who played 'Polly-Wolly-Doodle' on his banjo on the stairs at Ashfield Road.

In the spring of 1904 Tolkien's mother became seriously ill with diabetes and could no longer look after her two sons. The Oliver Road house where they lived was closed, the furniture stored, and the boys sent away, Hilary to his Suffield grandparents and Ronald to stay with Edwin Neave in Hove.

Edwin had moved down to Sussex the year before and had been promoted to secretary of the Guardian Life & Fire Assurance Company. His position at that workplace is verified by the listing in the 1904 Towner's Directory for that year.

Some of the evidence for Tolkien's 1904 visit to Hove are the drawings he made on postcards that he sent back to his mother in her Birmingham hospital. One of the drawings, 'They slept in beauty side by side', postmarked 27th April 1904, shows Edwin and Tolkien sharing a bed in a room where they were staying. Another picture of the same dwelling, titled 'What is home without a mother or a wife', shows the front room of the same property.

Yet another postcard drawing, 'For men must work as seen daily at 9.00 am', shows Edwin and Tolkien arriving at Neave's workplace at the offices of the Guardian Life & Fire Assurance Company in East Street in Brighton.

I found three photographs of the same building on the corner of East Street. The Guardian Assurance building is evident by its bold letters.

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A fourth picture, which Scull and Hammond describe but which has not been previously published, (Hammond & Scull, 6) entitled ‘Working over time S.P.Q.R.’ shows the young Tolkien seated at a tall desk with the Guardian Fire Insurance calendar on the wall behind him. We can presume that he stayed with Edwin at his workplace, maybe somewhere out of the way in Edwin’s office, quietly working.



© The Tolkien Trust 2018

We have established where Tolkien and Neave were during the day, but we still do not know the address where they were living. However, a closer inspection of the drawing, ‘For men must work as seen daily at 9.00am’, reveals a faint embossed address, 20 Catherine’s Terrace, Hove, on the top right. This drawing is reproduced on page 134 of the Tolkien, *Maker of Middle Earth* catalogue. (McIlwain, 133-34)

I cannot claim to be the first to notice that the drawing has a place written on it, as Scull and Hammond mention the address, but I think I am the first to publish it. Today it remains an impressive building looking out on the Hove seafront. At the corner of Seaford Road and St Catherine’s Terrace, with the entrance in Seaford Road, the house is currently divided into seven flats. The walk from the house to Edwin Neave’s workplace would have taken around an

hour, though Tolkien and Neave could have caught a bus.

There can be no doubt that Edwin Neave had a transformative effect on the young Tolkien, at a time when the death of his mother on 14th November 1904 must also have affected him greatly. Sadly, just five years later, Tolkien was also to lose his friend Edwin, who after his marriage had moved to The Cottage in Gedling, Nottingham. He died of pneumonia and heart failure on 8th May 1909, aged just 37, never knowing what the young child he had loved and cared for was to become.

I am indebted to Hammond and Scull for the sheer rigour and accuracy in their documenting of Tolkien’s life, to the Tolkien Estate for allowing me to reproduce one of Tolkien’s early drawings, and to the Tolkien Society for their support and love.

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# A Note on 'A Holy Party: Holiness in *The Hobbit*'

N.J.S. POLK

This note is in regard to the article in the 2018 issue of *Mallorn* entitled 'A Holy Party: Holiness in *The Hobbit*' with the intention to clarify terms and logic. There is also a point to critique the article in aspects that promote a misreading of a passage in *The Hobbit* - specifically when Bilbo negotiates with the Arkenstone with Bard and the Elvenking - and the methods of argument used in the article.

The logic for connecting holiness, Ilúvatar, and Eucatastrophe in Section C is messy at best. It is easy to interpret the arguments as intending to equate the concepts of "holiness" and "eucatastrophe." To conclude that holiness and eucatastrophe are interchangeable terms is incorrect. The intention was to make the argument that Ilúvatar is holy in a way similar to the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition as Tolkien might have understood God and that it is because Ilúvatar is holy that he acts through eucatastrophe, which transforms situations and characters into instances and agents that "shall prove but [Ilúvatar's] instrument..."

At one point in the article it is stated that "Bilbo seeks to achieve a parley with no selfish gain in mind." (Polk, p. 60) Where this might be true in Bilbo's meeting with Bard and the Elvenking (*Hobbit*, xvi), it does not take into consideration the way in which Bilbo acquired the Arkenstone or his thoughts when he pocketed it. In the scene where Bilbo discovers the Arkenstone, Tolkien writes, "Suddenly Bilbo's arm went towards it drawn by its enchantment... he lifted it, shut his eyes, and put it in his deepest pocket. 'Now I am a burglar indeed!' thought [Bilbo]. 'But I suppose I must tell the dwarves about it - some time. They did say I could pick and choose my own share; and I think I would choose this, if they took all the rest!' All the same he had an uncomfortable feeling that the picking and choosing had not really been meant to include this marvelous gem, and that trouble would yet come of it." (*Hobbit*, xiii) This passage brings another level of context about just how complicated this situation with the Arkenstone really is. Not only does the deal with the Arkenstone complicate Bilbo's relationship with the dwarves and the diplomacy between Bard, the Elvenking, and Thorin but it also gives the reader insight into the complicated nature of Bilbo's inner conflict in handling the Arkenstone. With this in mind it does not seem that Bilbo's intentions are all-in-all holy. By a stroke of luck, we know that Bilbo's choices lead to an eucatastrophic end. This does not justify Bilbo's actions, however and, following the article's line of argument, it cannot be concluded that Bilbo's interactions with the Arkenstone were holy in and of themselves.

This article also leans heavily on making its arguments based on a reading of the Assimilation version of *The Hobbit*. Where an Assimilation reading of *The Hobbit* is fitting for the article's purposes, it fails to explore the issues that could arise in trying to point out elements of holiness in the text in a Solo and Revision reading of *The Hobbit*. (Olsen, p. 9-12) The history of the development of *The Hobbit* and its fitting

into the llegendarium fails to make an appearance in the article. It would do well to put a higher value of consideration on the entirety of *The Hobbit*'s development and history. To do this would give rise to more potential issues, questions, and proofs of holiness in Tolkien's thought in his writing of *The Hobbit*.

Another point of interest that is needed for inquiry is regarding Ilúvatar's nature and therefore, insight into Tolkien's theology. In Section C it is stated, "Luck would lose its 'luckiness' if it meant coercion. Rather, luck maneuvers in and through all things and circumstances that are good or bad, waiting for a response that 'shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of all things more wonderful.'" (Polk, p. 61) Perhaps this statement about luck (Ilúvatar's providence) is accurate as it pertains to Tolkien's theological commitments, but there is room for an argument to be made that the providence of Ilúvatar is coercive. Taking Tolkien at his word is fine if it is in recognising his personal theology and how that theology is translated into the llegendarium. It is another thing to challenge Tolkien's theology. If the will of Ilúvatar is truly not coercive then why is it inescapable? If there is a fixed end that is located in the foresight of Ilúvatar, is that not a coercive future that is guised under an illusory experience of freedom? There is still plenty of work to do in the realm of Tolkien and theology. This includes inquiry into Tolkien's own theological understanding as well as challenging critique from other theological traditions.

This article serves as a continued conversation about a particular theological aspect of Tolkien found within the llegendarium as a whole. Careful reading and analysis are required of any serious inquiry of a subject. If further endeavors to investigate a theology of holiness that is found in Tolkien are to be done with integrity, more work is surely required.

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# The Heroes of Tolkien

By David Day. Translated by Jan Lipšanský  
Praha: Dobrovský, 2019.

ISBN 978-80-7585-171-0

According to the general academic opinion, David Day is deemed to be a highly controversial writer in the field of Tolkien studies. Renowned Tolkienists, such as David Bratman and Michael Martinez, do not recommend his books. While Day likes to present himself as a Tolkien expert, his work does not meet the standards of academic research, as will be shown later. So when I received one of Day's books, *The Heroes of Tolkien*, I decided to read and review it for myself to find out whether the criticism is deserved.

As the title suggests, this book is concerned with the characterisation and interpretation of both greater and smaller Middle-earth heroes in relation to ancient Greek and Roman mythology. The book's seven chapters are each focused on different historical periods of Arda, from the creation of the world by Valar through the three ages. The last three chapters deviate from this chronological division, as they are focused on the events of the Third Age with regard to the specific 'hobbit stories' in which they appear. The book is rich with fascinating illustrations by Mauro Mazzara, such as the blue leather-imitation cover with imprinted synopsis and a picture of an elf warrior. This, along with the golden-lettered title and author name, gives an impression of luxury and respectability.

Day's description of races and characters simply recounts the information provided in the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings*. Thus, readers familiar with Tolkien's works are not presented with anything new. Occasionally, Day complements his descriptions with compacted (read incomplete) charts taken therefrom, such as the genealogy charts of the leaders of Númenor or Gondor (Day, p. 93, 117). This can be pardoned, since the information left out is irrelevant to Day's exegesis. However, criticisable is the fact that he never mentions the original source of his information. And his interpretative argumentation is no better.

The foreword itself suggests taking a cautious approach to reading *The Heroes of Tolkien*. Day's interpretation includes groundless ideas such as likening various Tolkien characters to ancient heroes or fairy-tale figures (e.g. Isildur and Ánarion as analogies of Romulus and Remus or elven queens as the images of Snow-White) and presents these ideas as indisputable facts. In addition, he sometimes ascribes these statements of comparison to Tolkien himself, although none of Tolkien's published works or his Letters include a hint of such ideas. At other times he ignores the obvious symbolism, parallels, and interpretations that were confirmed by Tolkien himself, his son Christopher, and other prominent Tolkienists, such as Tom Shippey and John Garth. Moreover, he does not acknowledge taking inspiration from these scholars even though readers well acquainted with their work may easily recognize ideas introduced by others in Day's book. For example, the theory on etymological origin of the name Baggins seems to be stolen

from Shippey (Day, pp. 180-181).

At times, while explaining the name symbolism, Day seems oblivious to the fact that Tolkien kept changing the names long into the process of writing (e.g. the names of the characters who eventually became Frodo and Aragorn). He bases the analogies with the ancient legends on forms of names that Tolkien later rejected (as is the case of Broceliand, a former name of Beleriand). Readers well versed in Tolkien criticism may get the impression that Day picks from the available material only such information as fits his intended interpretation. And no one can overlook such a factual mistake as referring to the ancient philosophical-mathematical school of Pythagoreans as a mystic sect.

But not to be only negative, it must be acknowledged that Day also presents some interesting views on the interpretation of symbolism in Tolkien's stories. He points out remarkable parallels between the legendarium and Greek, Roman, Celtic, and Northern mythologies, as well as Gothic, and British legends. Unfortunately, the biggest problem of this publication is the total absence of proper sourcing of the arguments. These are especially wanted in cases which either contradict Tolkien's own ideas or were never confirmed or even hinted at by the professor (e.g. the analogy between Aeglos the elven sword and Gungir the mythical spear). However, the use of adverbs expressing certainty he uses create the impression that his theories are indisputably true.

While pointing out the parallels between Tolkien's stories and real-world legends and events is valid, a critic should not assume the truthfulness of his interpretation with god-like authority, as Day does, unless his claims are well-founded, sourced, proved, and properly referenced. He should not proclaim a one-to-one analogy between Tolkien's characters and mythological figures in a manner that implies this is the only right interpretation, and ignore other, verified academic interpretations. Instead, one should approach these analogies as diverse ways of reflecting some common universal archetypes (for example, not identifying Morgoth with Odin, but interpreting them as two separate, unique images of the archetypal diabolic divinity).

A big problem in Day's book is the lack of proper referencing or at least the acknowledgment of the true authorship of some relevant arguments taken from other academics, because otherwise it may seem that Day appropriates their ideas. And the fact that the book does not include any bibliography or resource list (though an index is there), a horrendous academic faux pas, speaks for itself.

In conclusion, *The Heroes of Tolkien* fails all the criteria for an academic publication, and I would not recommend it as a relevant study source for the analysis of the symbolism of Tolkien's stories. However, the book can be a worthy starting point for novice Tolkienists, to whom it provides with a handful of interesting assumptions. The credibility and relevance of which can then be further examined and academically assessed. Furthermore, I would not recommend *The Heroes of Tolkien* to film-only fans of Tolkien who have not read any of his works but would like to enter his enchanting book universe through Day's book, which, due to its marketing, can seem

to them as a simplified version of *The Silmarillion* or a guide through Middle-earth, which it is certainly not. The danger of acquiring some misconceptions about Tolkien's legendarium is high with this one.

So, who can benefit from reading this book? Readers who are well-oriented in Tolkien's universe and its critical research and at the same time not too sensitive to Day's unorthodox interpretation, who are looking for some light reading to go with their afternoon tea or second breakfast, or who just desire another interesting artsy piece to add to their Tolkien fan book collections.

Reviewed by Martina Juričková

## Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist

By Oronzo Cilli  
Luna Press, 2019.

ISBN 978-19-1114-367-3

'One writes such a story not out of the leaves of trees still to be observed, nor by means of botany and soil-science; but it grows like a seed in the dark out of the leaf-mould of the mind: out of all that has been seen or thought or read, that has long ago been forgotten, descending into the deeps' – J.R.R. Tolkien (*Carpenter*, p. 126).

There have been many biographies written and published about what Tolkien has seen and thought – here, over the course of five years of research (and counting), Cilli attempts to document what Tolkien has read. The title of the book might lead us to think that he has listed the books that Tolkien owned during his lifetime. Were this volume to do only that, it would be a useful research tool for finding possible connections between Tolkien's writings and other authors', looking for inspirations or refutations to better understand Tolkien's own leaf-mould. *Tolkien's Library* goes well beyond such a simple checklist of 'primary' books owned by Tolkien though. It attempts to infer books that Tolkien read or was knowledgeable of through copious annotated notes for secondary sources as well – be they authors or books that his students wrote theses on, titles mentioned by him or close family and friends in interviews and letters, lectures that Tolkien gave, or references that Tolkien would have been exposed to while he worked on the *New English Dictionary* (now the *Oxford English Dictionary*) from 1919-1920.

As a research tool, *Tolkien's Library* does very well at positive confirmation. To find out if Tolkien read or had any opinion on Frank Herbert's *Dune*, looking at page 118 (entry 964) shows two primary sources, both unpublished

letters, where Tolkien states that he 'dislike[s] *DUNE* with some intensity.' For obvious reasons, it does rather poorly for books not listed. There is no entry for any books by Isaac Asimov – does this mean that Tolkien never had any exposure to his works, or that Cilli was unable to document any? There is no way to know based on this book. The sheer number of references, however – almost 2600 at the time of publication – means there is more than enough material for decades of reading to catch up with Tolkien. For example, a researcher interested in Tolkien and George MacDonald will find nine entries on pages 177-178, all with collaborating primary and secondary sources showing that Tolkien found him an important author, allowing the researcher to trace what Tolkien said and when, for each book. Information such as this will prove invaluable for validating existing research, but also discovery of new and interesting potential threads through casual browsing.

There is a note of caution that must be kept in mind when using this as a reference book, however, in order to not infer too much from the small nuggets of solid information that Cilli has assembled. A book may be included in this annotated checklist due to an ownership signature as seen in an auction, or due to Tolkien being given a copy. Beyond these bare facts, there is no indication of what Tolkien thought, or even if he read the cited work. Take for example entry 1009 by Richard Hoffman, 'The Theme of "Judgement Day II"' (p. 123). Cilli adds this to *Tolkien's Library* based solely on the fact that a copy was recorded as being sent by the author to Tolkien. Cilli does an excellent job annotating this entry with exactly this information and nothing more, and the reader should exercise the same caution.

*Tolkien's Library* is a powerful starting point for any research project about Tolkien and his possible inspirations. In the form of an annotated checklist, I expect it will not often be cited as a primary source of information. It is more a conduit between the researcher and hundreds of other primary sources. The value it adds is in the aggregation of all these other sources in a single place, well documented, with enough annotation to enable the reader to quickly move on. Cilli's meticulous research acts more like the librarian who knows where to find the information you are looking for – invaluable and praiseworthy, and hopefully not neglected in the acknowledgements.

Cilli has compressed a very large amount of information into the 432 pages of this book, and with that compression comes a lot of shorthand notation and his methodology for abbreviating and cross-referencing. The methods he has chosen make for a non-trivial amount of moving back and forth through the book to understand fully all of the information for a particular entry. Were Cilli to write everything out in longhand, though, the book would possibly double in length, so these shortcuts are fully understandable but do take some getting used to.

Beyond the primary 'Section A' that covers the book

entries themselves, there are five additional sections included – Section B lists Tolkien’s publications in chronological order (duplicating many entries from Section A, as Cilli has also documented copies of Tolkien’s own books that he is known to have owned); Section C quite usefully lists interviews and reviews; Section D covers Tolkien’s research students, their theses and which colleges they attended – useful to understand Tolkien’s breadth of knowledge through those he taught between 1929 and 1960; Section E is a checklist of all of the publications of the Early English Text Society from 1938-1972 – Tolkien was on the EETS committee during this time, and would have been at least aware of all of their publications; and Section F gives an overabundance of detail for the lectures that Tolkien is known to have given.

Lastly the book has multiple indexes, most of which are useful. I think the book would greatly benefit from adding one more index covering subject matter. It would multiply the usefulness of *Tolkien’s Library* tenfold in my opinion, to be able to see all the books that crossed Tolkien’s desk on a particular topic. The indexes that are present, however, do allow for easily finding all of the books by a particular author, or finding books by title.

A labour of love and meticulous research such as this is never finished, and never completely and correctly documented. Cilli maintains an online Addenda and Corrigenda for the book ([tolkienslibrary.blogspot.com](http://tolkienslibrary.blogspot.com)) with these updates.

Reviewed by Jeremy Edmonds

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## Sub-Creating Arda: World-Building in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Work, Its Precursors and Its Legacies

Edited by Dimitra Fimi and Thomas Honegger  
Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2019.

ISBN 978-3-905703-40-5

This volume takes up the threads of Mark J.P. Wolf’s 2012 monograph *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. Wolf’s work provided a ‘grammar’ for discussing world-building as worthy of study and attention in its own right. Following that vein, *Sub-creating Arda* collects twenty essays which showcase diverse approaches for considering the world-building elements of various fantastic and fictional text-worlds – some of them more convincing than others. As the name suggests, this anthology is primarily concerned with Tolkien’s *Legendarium*, taking for granted the fact that it presents a supremely convincing example of a secondary world.

But it would be a mistake to think that this book is only about Tolkien. In fact, it is divided into three sections: five essays which consider the theoretical problems and solutions which world-building provides, nine essays focusing on world-building in Tolkien’s work, and six essays looking at world-building by other writers through a Tolkienian lens. Each of these sections has its gems, but it is also worth mentioning that many of these essays are best considered in dialogue with the other pieces in the collection. This review will take the approach of highlighting one essay from each of the volume’s three sections, and then suggest ways in which that essay can be read in dialogue with the others in the book.

In the first section, Massimiliano Izzo’s ‘Worldbuilding and Mythopoeia’ critiques Wolf’s grammar of subcreation by making a distinction between ‘worldbuilding’ and a ‘myth-making’ or ‘mythopoeia.’ By the former, Izzo means the scientific, quantitative, or computational aspects of a secondary world: economics, physics, and intricate magical systems borrowing from the physical sciences of the primary world. In explaining the latter set of terms, Izzo draws upon Tolkien’s seminal essay ‘On Fairy-stories,’ in which the things that lend verisimilitude to a secondary world are primarily mythical and linguistic constructs. Thus, there can be said to be a dialectical opposition, or at least a tension, between worldbuilding and myth-making. Izzo argues that Tolkien’s successors in the fantasy genre have often failed to hold this tension. Contemporary high fantasy authors have far exceeded the *Legendarium* in terms of volume, detail, and scale,



but lack the enduring mythical quality of Tolkien's work due to their tendency to historicise myth rather than to mythologise history.

On the opposite extreme, Izzo points to authors such as Peter Beagle, Neil Gaiman, and Juliet Marillier, all of whom have tended to avoid the more tangible aspects of worldbuilding and embrace the 'placelessness' of the fairy tale genre, losing the distinct sense of time and place afforded by a convincing myth. One gets the impression that Izzo thinks this the lesser of two evils, but he ends the essay by calling upon these mythopoeic writers to 'reach out' and embrace the attractive scope and scale of contemporary high fantasy, and provide 'a glimpse of Fäerie as well as an immersive experience in a massive story' (p. 52). Detailed in its scope and constructive in its conclusions, 'Worldbuilding and Mythopoeia' offers an answer to the much more pessimistic critique of worldbuilding found in Péter Kristóf Makai's 'Beyond Fantastic Self-indulgence: Aesthetic Limits to World-building,' and in combination with N. Trevor Brierly's incisive and practical 'Worldbuilding Design Patterns in the Work of J.R.R. Tolkien,' it would provide a helpful way forward for aspiring subcreators.

In the second section, John Garth's 'Ilu's Music: The Creation of Tolkien's Creation Myth' is as engaging a read as one would expect from the author of *Tolkien and the Great War*. Taking the form of a literary 'whodunit,' Garth's essay chases the various threads of Tolkien's Ainulindalë down unexpected avenues of Tolkien's early years, from the home library of his friend and fellow T.C.B.S. member Christopher Wiseman's father, to the death of two of his closest friends at the Battle of the Somme. Throughout this process, Garth shows us that 'Tolkien is still half a stranger to us' (p. 122). Garth proposes an alternative timeline to the one generally supposed for the first draft of the *The Music of the Ainur*, placing it roughly contemporary with *The Fall of Gondolin*. In all of this, Garth avoids stooping to mere source-hunting (always a danger when trying to ferret out Tolkien's 'influences'). He draws on a complex range of elements from Tolkien's life during those years: musical interests, linguistic play, and personal correspondence.

The essay ends by highlighting yet another facet of the complex relationship between language and legend in Tolkien's work, tracing Tolkien's engagement with an (erroneously translated) Akkadian creation myth and the Biblical story of Babel, all of which is entangled in his attempt to find meaning and identity during a time of personal crisis. Set in this light, *The Music of the Ainur* can be understood not merely as a work of theological speculation, but as a real source of consolation which Tolkien used to navigate tragedies in the primary world. Within the larger context of this collection, 'Ilu's Music' serves as a useful counterpoint to Bradford Lee Eden's 'Sub-creation by any Other Name: The Artist and God in the Early Twentieth Century.' Eden focuses mainly on the 'Third Spring' authors who predated or were Tolkien's

contemporaries, suggesting tenuous connections between them without drawing any conclusions about how this should illuminate our reading of any of the authors mentioned.

In the final section, Kristine Larsen's 'A Mythology for Poland: Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* Fantasy Series as a Tolkienian Subcreation' challenges preconceptions about what 'Tolkienian fantasy' might mean. Larsen draws comparison between two secondary worlds which, at first glance, are quite different in scope and tone. Larsen argues convincingly that the genesis of Sapkowski's *Witcher* stories as attempting to give voice to a lost sense of Polish national identity – characterised, among other things, by scarring – is similar in its aims to Tolkien's early desire to create a 'mythology for England.'

To follow Larsen's argument: Sapkowski, though not endowed with the same poetic or linguistic gifts as Tolkien, has adapted a wide range of recognisable European fairytales and folk traditions, modifying and subverting them in ways that compensate for the erosion of Polish national identity by the wars and conquests of the twentieth century, and by an Anglo-American hegemony in Polish science fiction and fantasy. Larsen even suggests that in this regard, Sapkowski's experiment has been more successful: while *The Lord of the Rings* 'will never inspire patriotic emotion in the English breast, or culturally distinguish any English person from the rest of the world,' Sapkowski's subcreation does in fact seem to inspire these sentiments in Poland (pp. 389-90). In the way it uses a Tolkienian lens to examine Sapkowski's secondary world, this essay is a good companion to Maureen f. Mann's 'Artefacts and Immersion in the Worldbuilding of Tolkien and the Brontës,' which compares some of Tolkien's statements about children's linguistic play as found in his lecture 'A Secret Vice' to the Brontës's own imagined world, a shared collaborative space in which they could engage in literary experimentation.

*Sub-creating Arda* is a fascinating collection of essays, many of which highlight less well-known facets of Tolkien's subcreative technique, such as focalisation (Allan Turner's 'One Pair of Eyes: Focalisation and Worldbuilding'), poetry (Michaela Hausmann's 'Lyrics on Lost Lands: Constructing Lost Places through Poetry in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*'), and dialogue (Lothmann, Heilmann, and Hintzen's '*Then Smaug Spoke*: On Constructing the Fantastic via Dialogue in Tolkien's Story Cosmos'). It deserves a place on the shelf of scholars, enthusiasts, and aspiring subcreators with an interest in Tolkien's Legendarium.

Reviewed by Richard Rohlin

## Tolkien and the Classics

Edited by Roberto Arduino, Giampaolo Canzonieri, and Claudio A. Testi.

Walking Tree Publishers, 2019.

ISBN 978-3-905703-42-9

*Tolkien and the Classics* is a Walking Tree Press publication. Walking Tree is known among Tolkien fans and scholars for its series of Tolkien related academic works. This volume comes from the Italian Association of Tolkien Studies (AIST) and is edited by Roberto Arduino, Giampaolo Canzonieri, and Claudio A. Testi. The editors state the purpose of this collection is to support the realisation that Tolkien's work is worthy of scholarly interpretation and to offer a study that can be used and enjoyed by students and teachers alike. The AIST notes that academic study and writing about Tolkien is becoming more prevalent at the secondary and university levels. Considering its purpose, this volume could very well be an effective tool. The essays are written in a wholly approachable style and yet do not dumb down the content.

The material is presented in three sections, each focusing on authors and texts from specific literary eras. There are four essays on Tolkien and Antiquity, six on Tolkien and the Middle Ages, and eleven concerning the Modern Period. Finally, these essays started as AIST presentations, from which members' suggestions and comments about individual research are all considered in creating the final piece.

The first series of essays focuses on works from Antiquity. In this section we get comparisons to Polyphemus in *The Odyssey*, Apollonius Rhodius, Euripides, and Virgil. It is not hard to make connections to Tolkien, as it is the understanding that he would have been familiar with almost any of these classics. However, these are not low-hanging-fruit as much as solid examples of this collection's purpose. Each author makes connections to the classics without hard claims that Tolkien was inspired by them. The focus of each essay is how the works communicate with one another – an intriguing example being the similar historical framework in which Tolkien and Apollonius wrote and how each created a hero very different from their contemporaries.

In the second section, Tolkien's extensive studies of the Middle Ages allows for a wide assortment of topics. These essays show that there are connections large and small to be made. The first essay, comparing Marco Polo's travels to those of Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, is a surprise encounter. The stated reason for the book's publication is most supported in this approach since it places Tolkien's work beside a long-studied text, thus adding to a larger literary conversation.

Each of the other essays attempt to do the same, with varying degrees of success. An essay on Dante and one on Aquinas focus on Tolkien's creation music. Two others, one a comparison to Malory and the other to deTroye's *Gauvain*, relate to Tolkien's inspiration and scholarly work with King Arthur and the Grail myth. The final essay in this section, 'Common Folk in Tolkien and Chaucer', supports the assertion that Tolkien's oeuvre stands with accepted classics.

The section focusing on authors from the Modern Period was the most interesting and challenging to this reader. There is a time-spanning array of authors. Sir Walter Scott, Shakespeare, Joseph Conrad, and Edgar Allan Poe are familiar in schools and each the subject of an essay, so all of these could be a worthy and easy source for the intended audience of this collection. There is also a short piece on war poets that may be used as a starting point in the study of said works.

I am sorry to say that I was unfamiliar with two of the subjects in this volume, and they are both in this section. One is Vittorio Alfieri, and the other is Alessandro Manzoni: both Italian authors who, considering the origin of the collection, should be expected. Each essay, read without the context of familiarity, was engaging enough that both authors are on my 'Read Next' list.

Four essays discuss other fantasy (in a loose definition) works and authors: respectively Kenneth Grahame, J.M. Barrie, Canzonieri (Pinocchio) and William Morris. Anyone less familiar with classical literature will find these to be refreshing topics. Perhaps William Morris is the most esoteric of these authors, but Tom Shippey's approachable writing and story-teller authorial voice make for an engaging article with surprising connections, despite the known inspiration Morris had on Tolkien. For anyone who has read Shippey's other works about Tolkien, this particular essay, being the final one in the collection, is like being with an old friend.

The positive and the negative of the pieces overall is that they are short. The brevity may be the magic in this volume in that each essay can be ingested in a short sitting. The intended focus being to aid teachers in presenting Tolkien within a legitimate milieu, these are a perfect place to begin asking 'and what else?' The brevity creates an urge for more information, however, as anyone looking for deep-dives into works will be left wanting more. As the texts cited are often quite large, they beg a deeper reading and interpretation. However, I would not assert that the amount of potential material is the fault of these pieces. It is perhaps a glimpse into Galadriel's mirror.

Each topic allows a return to, or first discovery of, a text through the lens of Tolkien study. Any reader familiar with Tolkien's work and the classic would be able to dive into each essay and follow the arguments and evidence. However, even if one is unfamiliar with a particular work (I had never heard of Vittorio Alfieri), familiarity with Tolkien's work affords the reader a compulsory

understanding. Evidence of a clear power within this collection is that during or after every piece I had a desire to revisit or start reading the subject of the comparison. Anyone who approaches academic writing with a deep-dive will likely want to read each essay with a recently (re) visited volume of the compared work. First up, Alfieri.

Reviewed by Tom Hewitt





Letter to the Editor,

In response to the article by Jean Chausse (*Mallorn* No. 59, Winter 18), one may indeed see in the healing of Théoden “a glimpse of the Final Victory”. I wonder also if Tolkien’s use of material in *LotR* is even more subtle and nuanced than has been suggested so far.

That striking phrase “through fire and ...”, spoken by or of Gandalf, morphs through three variations across two chapters:

First Mithrandir himself: “I have passed through fire and deep water” (The White Rider – my emphasis)

Then Aragorn: “He has passed through the fire and the abyss”

Gandalf again, waiting on Théoden: “I have not passed through fire and death to bandy crooked words with a serving-man till the lightning falls” (The King of the Golden Hall)

The vocabulary of fire and water prompts in my mind too thoughts of baptism in water and the Holy Spirit – alongside the straightforward meaning of the narrative. This is what good fiction does: suggests, alludes, nudges? A Church-minded person or a medievalist (Tolkien was, of course, both) may also notice the dominant pigments in the story-line at this point: white and gold – in the Western Church, liturgical colours of Eastertide.

In the first formulation, “I have passed through fire and ... water”, one might detect an echo of another bible text, Isaiah 43:2, which in Church is often read during the Paschal season. The addition of the adjective “deep” may bring to mind waters plural in scripture and liturgy: the psalmist’s lament of having come into “deep waters” (Psalm (68)69); and the phraseology of traditional orders of service for Easter (and obsequies) about going “through the deep waters of death”.

In the second iteration, “the abyss” could suggest not only the chasm beneath Durin’s Bridge, where “the deep water” temporarily extinguishes the fire of the Balrog, but also the story of Christ’s descent into hell. It would be only an oblique reference, for unlike the scriptural “bottomless pit” (Revelation 9:11), the great rift in Moria does have a bottom, albeit one “beyond light and knowledge ... where time is not counted” (The Bridge of Khazad-Dûm).

Third time round, death is named; but still the reader is kept waiting to be told explicitly that Gandalf had fallen in the military sense of the term. For that we have to wait until he pays a visit with a very different outcome, to an erstwhile colleague (The Voice of Saruman). There, on the steps of Orthanc, before witnesses, he states in plain words: “I am Gandalf the White, who has returned from death.”

Jennifer Brooker

Dear *Mallorn* Editor,

May I make a few comments regarding Nancy Bunting’s ‘Checking the Facts’ (*Mallorn* 59, pp. 52-6)? She has much to criticise certain Tolkien scholars for in their ‘relationship to the facts’, but I feel that although in certain cases she may well be correct, in others the evidence is ambiguous, and in yet others she is plainly wrong.

Dr. Bunting quotes Tolkien as saying (Flieger & Anderson, *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories*, p. 56 [not 71]): ‘A real taste for [fairy-stories] awoke after “nursery” days, and after the years, few but long-seeming, between learning to read and going to school.’ However, she disagrees with Flieger & Anderson’s interpretation of this as meaning the period following his mother’s death, when Tolkien was 12. Instead she considers that the time referred to is sometime before he was eight. But the language here is quite ambiguous. Tolkien isn’t saying that he got a taste for fairy-stories right after learning to read, but after (not ‘between’) the years between learning to read and going to school. This could place the beginning of his particular interest in fairy-stories anywhere from, say, mid-way between learning to read and going to school to even some time after starting school, which latter he did when he began at King Edward’s school in Birmingham at the age of 8 in 1900. Tolkien’s reminiscence in later life of the years he lived at Sarehole (1896–1900) as ‘the longest-seeming and most formative part of my life’ is possibly, but by no means necessarily, the same as the period in which he developed a taste for fairy-stories.

Another ambiguity is what is meant by ‘a real taste’ for fairy-stories. Undoubtedly Tolkien was well-acquainted with such things from an early age: witness his early liking, as Carpenter notes, for Andrew Lang’s Fairy Books, and his attempt to compose a story about a ‘green great dragon’ at about the age of 7. But that may or may not be the same as his getting a ‘real taste’ for them.

This might seem to be making heavy weather of the specific point. For all we know, the infant Tolkien first heard the horns of Elfland at the age of 4. All I am saying is that the available evidence admits of enough ambiguity to give the editors of TOFS some benefit of the doubt in their own evaluation of the matter, and surely yields no justification for Dr. Bunting’s castigation of those reviewers of the book who looked favourably upon it.

John Garth (*Tolkien and the Great War*) and Raymond Edwards (*Tolkien*) are taken to task by Dr Bunting for claiming that the subjects of the poem ‘You & Me and the Cottage of Lost Play’ are Tolkien and his fiancée Edith Bratt, rather than Tolkien and his younger brother Hilary. The poem was written on 27-28 April 1915, when Tolkien was 23. Certainly it is about childhood, but is it about Hilary? Vairë’s remarks to Eriol in ‘The Cottage of Lost Play’ (c. 1916-17) reveal a tender concern for the welfare of young children: ‘Ever and anon our children fare forth again to find the Great Lands, and go about among the lonely children and whisper to them at dusk in early bed by night-light and candle-flame, or comfort those that weep’ [BoLT1, p. 20]; so Tolkien was

not insensitive to such matters. And, of course, Tolkien and Edith didn't first know each other as children, but only later, as teenagers. Yet, is the poem specifically about the Tolkien brothers? Perhaps, but this reader simply cannot see that it is plainly and obviously about them, any more than it is plainly and obviously about Tolkien and Edith. Possibly it is a sort of retrojection of the latter pair into an imagined shared childhood. In any case, the ambiguity (sorry to use that word again!), in the absence of further evidence, frustrates a definitive identification. A Scotch verdict is appropriate here.

The dating of *Leaf by Niggle* raises some concerns with Dr. Bunting. She criticises Raymond Edwards for casting doubt on Tolkien's dating of *Leaf by Niggle* to 1938-9, arguing that other evidence for a date in the early 1940s is inconclusive. One particular piece of evidence she considers to be crucial comes in a postcard of Tolkien's, dated April 21, 1943, to the poet Alan Rook, where Tolkien promises to send Rook a story relevant to 'pictures' that Tolkien 'wrote this time last year'. Hammond and Scull consider this to be conclusive evidence for dating *Leaf*, but Dr. Bunting says, 'The Chronology documents that in the spring and summer of 1942 Tolkien was working on *The Lord of the Rings* and that time frame matches the reference in the Rook postcard.' But this really won't do. Tolkien was indeed working on *LotR* in 1942, but he was also working on it in 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941 etc. Note that the form of words 'wrote this time last year' gives an impression of something written and finished the year before; *LotR* was very much an ongoing and unfinished process at that time. Also, Rook would have to have read *Leaf* in the first place (impossible at that time) even to understand *LotR* as a 'picture'. (We should note that Tolkien was not always a reliable guide to his own chronology. In *The Return of the Shadow* (p. 461), Christopher Tolkien considers that his father 'erred in his recollection of the year' in which a certain point in the writing of *LotR* was reached.)

Dr. Bunting concludes this section with a list of reviewers of Edwards' book on Tolkien who, doubtless wrongly, praised it.

On the basis of the omission of a paragraph gap in Douglas A. Anderson's obituary notice of Humphrey Carpenter in *Tolkien Studies* II (2005), Dr. Bunting deduces that there were three drafts of Carpenter's biography of Tolkien: one which takes an initial, rather flippant, 'slapstick' view of Tolkien, a more serious draft which was the one submitted to the family, and finally the one that was published. Anderson quotes from a transcribed interview with Carpenter in which Carpenter discusses the writing of his biography. The part quoted by Anderson consists of the end of one paragraph as printed in the original printed source, and the beginning of the next. However, Anderson omits the paragraph gap, and prints a continuous text of Carpenter's quoted speech, an action which is of concern to Dr. Bunting. She considers that a new paragraph 'signals a new thought indicating that the "first draft" submitted to the Tolkien family was not the same as the "first draft" in

which Carpenter struggled with learning how to write his first biography and which contained that initial "slapstick" treatment of Tolkien.' But this is wrong on two counts. First, this interpretation indicates that there were three drafts of the biography: a 'slapstick' one; a more serious one, as presented to the family; and the final one, as approved by the family and published. Now, nothing that I have ever heard about Carpenter's biography, including what Carpenter said in publications, in lectures, or even in conversation, leads me to conclude that there were three drafts. There was the original first draft as submitted to the family, and the final, published version. Doubtless, in writing the first draft, which, as noted, was a learning experience for Carpenter in writing biography, Carpenter did a great deal of re-writing, and we might not be too surprised to see that the earliest writing indeed belonged to the 'slapstick' approach; but such writing, in itself, hardly constitutes a draft in any real sense. However, there is another flaw – a fatal one, I think – in Dr. Bunting's argument. Carpenter's reminiscences were not written by him: they were spoken by him and then broken up into paragraphs for easier reading by the transcriber of what Carpenter said. Hence the paragraphs in fact have no 'authority' in the first place, and criticism of the omission of paragraphing and of what that might imply carries no weight.

Dr. Bunting is suspicious of the excuse that the published *Letters of Tolkien*, in Douglas A. Anderson's words in his Carpenter obituary, 'proved too large from the publishing point of view, and cuts were made for reasons of length.' She contrasts this with the demand for Tolkien material at that period, and the many and varied publications – 'posters, calendars, and cards,' as well as books such as *The Father Christmas Letters and Pictures* by Tolkien – with which that demand was satisfied, and wonders if the cuts to the original selection of letters were due to censorship rather than size. But perhaps this isn't a valid contrast. I would put forward two considerations here: (i) the actual size of a published book involves considerations of publishing economics which outsiders might not always appreciate. It was doubtless for such reasons that those volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* devoted to the composition of *LotR* took up three-and-a-half volumes rather than just three slightly larger ones; (ii) the *Letters of Tolkien*, I would suggest, was plainly not intended to be a 'complete letters' of Tolkien, more a selection mainly to keep the readers happy. Doubtless we will one day get such a desideratum as the *Collected Letters*, but not, I imagine, for some time yet.

I'm not quite sure I follow Dr. Bunting's animadversions about Verlyn Flieger's writings on *The Story of Kullervo*. She considers that Professor Flieger's 2012 essay 'Tolkien, Kalevala, and "The Story of Kullervo"' in *Green Suns and Faërie* contains revisions from her 2010 essay "'The Story of Kullervo' and Essays on Kalevala' in *Tolkien Studies* VII which she does not acknowledge and which the reviewers of the latter largely fail to pick up on. (It's tough being a reviewer these days.)

In the 2012 essay and in her commentary in the published

*The Story of Kullervo*, Professor Flieger remarks that ‘the tradition that physical mistreatment of an infant could have psychological repercussions is an old one’. But this is incorrect, Dr. Bunting points out: in the nineteenth century (and before), ‘physical abuse and beating of children by strangers, educators, and parents was common, acceptable, and unremarkable.’ But the writer of the *Kalevala*, in a passage spoken by Väinämöinen, remarks that ‘Children brought up crookedly, Any infant cradled wrongly ... Never acquires a mind mature.’ Dr. Bunting considers that since such brutal attitudes were common in Tolkien’s childhood (he was born in 1892), such an affirmation in a poem which had an enormous impact on Tolkien would have resonated with him. However, I’m not sure I altogether grasp the point that Dr. Bunting is trying to make here. Is she criticising Professor Flieger for not giving due weight to the possibly brutal regime in which the young Tolkien may have been brought up in her appreciation of Tolkien’s response to the *Kalevala*?

Doubtless much more could be said on these matters, but I shall not burden the reader who has got this far with any further ramblings.

Yours truly,  
Charles Noad

Dear Rosalinda,

Just received this year’s *Mallorn*, and what a bumper issue it is too!

Sorry to hear that you’ll be moving on. It’s hard to believe that it has been four years, and where those four years have gone, but whatever you do I wish you all the best for the future.

Regards,  
Gordon Palmer





# Mallorn: Guide for Authors

The following list describes the different types of material *Mallorn* usually accepts. If your submission does not meet this criteria, feel free to send a letter of inquiry.

## Letters to the editor:

Letters include reader comments on material previously published in *Mallorn* or elsewhere or may include comments about *Mallorn* as a publication.

## Reviews:

Reviews of books, films, theatre shows, art, web-sites, radio, exhibitions or any other presentation of Tolkien works or comments regarding Tolkien's works that may be of interest to a large, general audience. Reviews are to be no more than 1000 words.

## Articles:

Scholarly articles about Tolkien's works, life, times, concepts, philosophy, philology, mythology, his influence on literature or other areas of interest regarding Tolkien. Articles are usually between 5,000 and 10,000 words with references in either MLA or APA style. Submissions must be in English, double spaced, accompanied by a cover letter which includes an abstract of the article and a brief bio of the author. Please submit an electronic copy in Arial or Times Roman 12 font. No hand-written copies will be accepted.

## Notes:

Notes are shorter research pieces, usually covering a topic or resource of interest to the Tolkien community. Notes are generally between 1,000 and 3,000 words. This format is most suitable for extensions or updates on previously published research, descriptions of projects that have important insight but did not lead to a full article, descriptions of new resources for Tolkien scholars, or presentation of new Tolkien-related material that may be built on by further research. These are reviewed by the editor, but are not usually considered peer-reviewed.

## Artwork:

*Mallorn* gratefully accepts all artwork, whether paintings, drawings or photographs and will attempt to match the artwork with articles. Please include a brief bio with the original artwork.

## Submission Guidelines:

All submissions are to be sent to the *Mallorn* editor at [mallorn@tolkiensociety.org](mailto:mallorn@tolkiensociety.org)

## Conventions:

All citations of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* use volume, book, and chapter only because there are so many editions. E.g. "When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton" (*FR*, I, i). Tolkien's other works, however, should include page numbers. E.g. "Lo, now do we know the reason of our transportation hither as it were cargoes of fair slaves" (*Lost Tales I*, p. 164).

# submissions

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## Abbreviations:

<i>A&amp;I</i>	<i>The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun</i> , ed. by Verlyn Flieger
<i>Arthur</i>	<i>The Fall of Arthur</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>AW</i>	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i>
<i>B&amp;L</i>	<i>Beren and Lúthien</i>
<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary, together with Sellic Spell</i>
<i>Bombadil</i>	<i>The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and other verses from the Red Book</i>
<i>CoH</i>	<i>The Children of Húrin</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>The Old English Exodus</i>
<i>Father Christmas</i>	<i>Letters from Father Christmas</i> , ed. by Baillie Tolkien
<i>FoG</i>	<i>The Fall of Gondolin</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Hobbit</i>	<i>The Hobbit</i>
<i>Jewels</i>	<i>The War of the Jewels</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Kullervo</i>	<i>The Story of Kullervo</i> , ed. by Verlyn Flieger
<i>Lays</i>	<i>The Lays of Beleriand</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien</i> , ed. by Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien
<i>Lost Road</i>	<i>The Lost Road and Other Writings</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Lost Tales I</i>	<i>The Book of Lost Tales, Part One</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Lost Tales II</i>	<i>The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Monsters</i>	<i>The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays</i>
<i>Morgoth</i>	<i>Morgoth's Ring</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>OFS</i>	<i>Tolkien On Fairy-stories</i> , ed. by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson
<i>P&amp;S</i>	<i>Poems and Stories</i>
<i>Peoples</i>	<i>The Peoples of Middle-earth</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Perilous Realm</i>	<i>Tales from the Perilous Realm</i>
<i>RK</i>	<i>The Return of the King</i>
<i>Silmarillion</i>	<i>The Silmarillion</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Sauron</i>	<i>Sauron Defeated</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Secret Vice</i>	<i>A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages</i> , ed. by Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins
<i>Shadow</i>	<i>The Return of the Shadow</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>Shaping</i>	<i>The Shaping of Middle-earth</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>S&amp;G</i>	<i>The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>TL</i>	<i>Tree and Leaf</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>The Two Towers</i>
<i>Treason</i>	<i>The Treason of Isengard</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>UT</i>	<i>Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien
<i>War</i>	<i>The War of the Ring</i> , ed. by Christopher Tolkien

## Reviewers:

Many thanks once again to our Peer Reviewers - Sue Bridgwater, Sara Brown, Chad Chisholm, Gabriel Erstgaard, Timothy Furnish, Sharon Hsu, Romauld Lakowski, Kristine Larsen, and Jennifer Marchant.





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