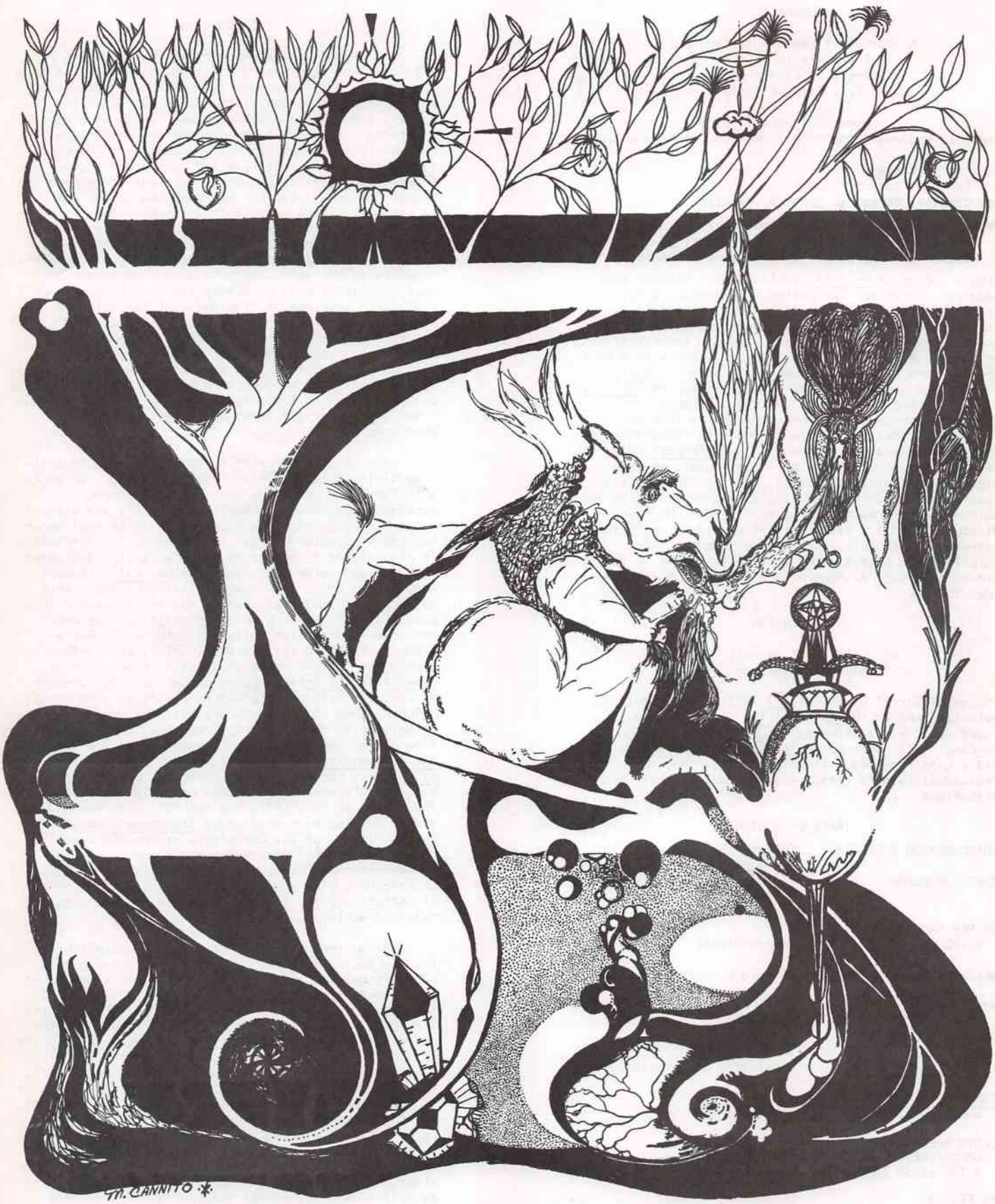


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# ORCRIST 7, Medieval-Modern ISSUE

ORCRIST

A Journal of Fantasy in the Arts
The Bulletin of the
University of Wisconsin
J.R.R. Tolkien Society

Number 7 (Summer, 1973)
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DEDICATION

For Carl Carroll
"un homme tant preux que nus plus"



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INTRODUCTION

One aspect of contemporary aesthetics which particularly intrigues me is the inspiration derived from the art of the Middle Ages discernible in much modern poetry, fiction, drama, film, music, and painting, in fantasy and science fiction as well as in other genres. Adaptations of medieval subject matter, techniques, and metrical schemes are not uncommon now. Much of this borrowing is conscious and deliberate; some (harder to detect or prove) is survival or reinvention though the artist was not aware of the historical background. There is evidently a market for medievalism (a recent fictional autobiography of Merlin was even a best seller), and it is perhaps no accident, but a related working of the modern mind, that medieval scholarship has also undergone a sort of renaissance over the past twenty or thirty years. There are now continuing sessions on "The Medieval Tradition in Modern Literature" (and other arts) at the annual Modern Language Association convention and at the annual Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University. This area of study in part helps medievalists like me keep from being mere antiquarians, but it is also an investigation of an interesting and, I believe, important facet of present aesthetic development.

This issue of Orcrist is mostly devoted to articles mining this vein of scholarly delving. We begin with "Songs of Gurre" by Jens Peter Jacobsen, a nineteenth-century poet well-known within and without his native Denmark, in a translation which Poul Anderson has kindly let us use. Mr. Anderson's translation is also slated to appear in Amra, a fanzine dedicated to sword-and-sorcery fiction, but Orcrist's readers should also enjoy it. Anyone wishing to learn more of Jacobsen's medieval sources may be interested in a recent article by W. Glyn Jones entitled "Valdemar and Tove--From Danish Ballad to Schonberg's Gurre-lieder" in Mosaic IV:2 (Winter, 1970), pp. 29-45. Bonniejean Christensen's study of Tolkien's use of Beowulf in The Hobbit, based on her doctoral dissertation, was originally given as a talk as long ago as October, 1969 at the Secondary Universe Conference II at University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, so it is high time it was published. R. C. West's paper on The Once and Future King and Ms. J. A. Johnson's on Farmer Giles of Ham were both originally given at Western Michigan University's annual Conference on Medieval Studies, the former in May, 1971, and the latter in May of last year. We also have studies of The Broken Sword by Sandra Miesel, of the Chronicles of Prydain by Elizabeth Lane, and (to escape somewhat from all this medievalism) of "The Hunting of the Snark" by J. R. Christopher, plus some letters, reviews, verse, and illustrations. We trust you feel you are getting your dollar's worth.

Let me remind readers of the Old Possum's Prize for the best previously unpublished, regular double dactyl submitted to Orcrist by anyone not a member of the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society. As we stated last issue, we will announce the winner in the first 1974 issue of Orcrist to be published, and the contest will remain open until then. We hope to print lots of these poems (there are some entries in this issue), so sit down and compose, people. Once again, a double dactyl is a humorous verse form consisting of two quatrains joined by a rhyme on the final words of the fourth and eighth lines. The first line is made up by nonsense words (like "Higgledy, Piggledy"), the second by a name in double dactyllic pattern, and somewhere in the poem there should be a single word which is a perfect double dactyl. Each line is in dactyllic dimeter, except the fourth and the last, both of which are a dactyl and one stressed syllable.

We look on Orcrist as basically a scholarly journal that is fun to read, and hope you find it dulcis et utile. We would like to put it on a quarterly schedule eventually, but, for the foreseeable future, it will continue to be published irregularly. This is due less to lack of time (though we do have other demands on our attention) or of material (though we still welcome contributions and especially need artwork) than to depletion of our treasury. We hear occasional grumblings about a single copy of Orcrist selling for a dollar, but, considering the cost of things like photo-offset printing, that's cheap, and, considering the number, variety, and (we trust) quality of items in each issue, it's rather a bargain. At any rate, we've decided it's economically wise to start accepting paid subscriptions (a dollar each for as many issues ahead as one desires; four issues for $3.50). We do hope you'll be patient with our necessarily irregular publishing schedule, however.

Orcrist No. 8, which we hope to publish this fall, will feature: Poul Anderson's translation of "Sonatorrek" from Egil's Saga; Patrick McGuire's study of the Nebula award-winning "Queen of Air and Darkness"; Robert Bunda on color symbolism in Tolkien and a companion piece by Deborah Rogers on the use of color by Tolkien and Lewis; Michael J. Ehling on "The Conservatism of Tolkien"; and J. R. Christopher on "Jabberwocky"; plus the usual extras. Future issues will have more supplements to the Tolkien bibliography and will publish many of the papers from the two Conferences on Middle-earth sponsored by Jan Howard Finder in Urbana and Cleveland.

R.C.W.
July, 1973

ERRATA TO ORCRIST NO. 5

p. 2, col. 1, artists. "Danny Frolich" should be "Dany Frolich".
p. 2, col. 2, Introduction, 4th paragraph. No proceedings of either of the Conferences on Middle-earth have yet appeared. Jared Lobdell has selected and edited Papers on Tolkien from those presented on these occasions, and is now seeking a publisher for this volume. Most of the other papers will be printed in future issues of Orcrist.
p. 9, col. 1, Poems review, l. 8. "Spenserian stanzas" should be "rhyme royal".
p. 13, col. 2, l. 15. Change the verb to "were" in "their minds was compatible".
p. 26, col. 1, "Voice...", l. 7. The comma after "Cowan)," should be a period.
p. 27, col. 1, Slavin item, l. 2. "There" should be "These".
p. 27, col. 1, 3rd line from bottom. For "comology" read "cosmology".
p. 29, col. 2, R. Wilson item, ll. 2 and 3. Capitalize "Festschrift" & "Festschriften".

ERRATA TO ORCRIST NO. 6

p. 2, col. 1, 3rd line above Dedication. The colon after "pencil" should be a comma.
p. 2, col. 1, end of Dedication. To explain further, add "Reading; Writing; Arithmetic--and Beyond".
p. 2, col. 1, Contents. Add "'In Review'...p. 19" and "'Moot Point'...p. 22".
p. 4, col. 1, 4th paragraph, l. 8. "...began before the Middle Ages and survived then" (i.e., in Spenser's time). The word might be "them" (in which case the phrase would mean "outlasted the Middle Ages"), as I originally thought when transcribing the manuscript of the letter. But Walter Hooper, who is much more familiar with Lewis's handwriting than I, thinks Lewis wrote "then", and I have adopted his reading.
p. 7, col. 1, 3rd paragraph, l. 7. Change "deepsense" to "deep sense".
p. 10. Art is by Laurie Hoffman.
p. 13. Art is by
p. 23, col. 2, top. The address "Haward St." should be "Harvard St."



RECYCLING

Here-again-gone-again
Cults are decriable;
Reincarnation is
Not justifiable.

Edgar M. Cayce says
Such things are viable:
We want to know if we're
Transmogrifiable!

--John & Kathryn Lindskoog

# SONGS OF GURRE

## by J.P. Jacobsen - translated from the Danish by Poul Anderson

The legend--it is only that, although some truth may lie behind it--is old, and says: King Valdemar of Denmark had a mistress named Tove, whom he dearly loved and gave the castle at Gurre for a home. At last his jealous queen had her murdered. A folk ballad makes the king then tell his wife:

"This be the way that I punish thee:
That nevermore hast thou man in me."

While Tove lived, he declared that God might keep Heaven if only he, Valdemar, might keep Gurre. Because of this (or else, as another story goes, because he cursed God in his despair when Tove died) he was condemned after his own death. Each night until Doomsday he, his men, their spectral horses and hounds, must hunt from Gurre to Burre. While the many stories about them reflect a natural fear, this particular version of the Wild Huntsman is less sinister than others, and sometimes Valdemar shows a bleak benevolence.

The tradition probably refers to the fourth king of that name, who lived from 1320 to 1375. By mentioning Queen Helvig and the councillor Henning, both historical, Jens Peter Jacobsen makes it clear that he assumes this. A notable Danish poet and novelist, he wrote Gurresange in 1869. The composer Arnold Schönberg used a German translation early in his career as the libretto for Gurrelieder, a fine and much too neglected piece of music. A propos such facts, I might remark that there is an excellent biography of Valdemar, The Third King, by Fletcher Pratt.

As far as I know, what follows is the only English version of Gurresange. It is taken directly from the Danish. I have tried to be faithful to the text and its slightly archaic language. When something had to be sacrificed, I let strict literalness go in favor of keeping Jacobsen's rhyme and metrical schemes, these being unusually good. (Note, for example, how III employs the changing rhythms of a horse's different gaits.) Such liberties are few and unimportant; on the whole, this is quite an accurate rendition. I am not prepared to judge the degree of its failure to convey the beauty and excitement of the original. Here is the only gate to Gurre which I can open for you.

P.A.

I
Valdemar.

The subtle blue twilight now softens
Each tone from the lake and land,
The hastening clouds have laid them
To rest upon Heaven's rand.
In soundless weight is gathered
The forest's aery deep,
And on the lake the ripples
Have rocked their own selves to sleep.
To west the sun is casting
His purple and gold away,
Then, drawing about him the billow,
He dreams of the splendid day.
No smallest leaf is stirring
To call me from my trance,
No smallest tone is ringing
To summon my soul to dance,
No, ev'ry force lies sunken
Beneath a flow of dreams
And gently and softly turns me
Back inward on their streams.

II
Tove.

Oh, when moonbeams mildly 'round are shining,
When about me all is hushed reclining,
Then to me not water are the billows,
Trees are not the somber, silent willows,
Clouds not what the vaulted sky is showing,
Hill and valley not as earth-waves going,
Form not form and coloring not color,
All: a sign of that which God has dreamed.

III
Valdemar.

Charger, dost thou stand here dreaming?
No, I see the highway streaming
Swiftly past; thou run'st thy sorest.
But spring forward stronger-gaited;
Thou art still within the forest,
While I long for thee have waited
At the gate of Gurre hall.
Forest passes, and I spy the lovely bower of my dear,
Forest trees, together gliding, form a darkling wall to rear.
But speed wilder yet and wilder!
Dost thou see that cloud's quick shadow
Tow'rd the ground of Gurre roam?
Ere it crosses marsh and meadow,
Must we stand at Tove's home.
Ere that tone, which now is ringing,
Goes eternally to sleep,
Must thy hoofs make timbers quiver
In the bridge to Gurre keep.
Ere that leaf, now falling,
Joins the brooklet's sport,
Must thy neigh be calling
Loud in Gurre court.
Shade may come and tone may die,
Leaf in waves may wander,
I see Tove yonder!

IV
Tove.

Stars are joyous, waters shining,
Pressing their hammering hearts to the shore,
Leaves are crooning, dewdrops dancing,

Over my bosom the wanton winds pour.
Weathercocks sing and the towertops tremble,
Fiery-eyed strutting, the young men assemble,
Maidservants press with their hands, hard and vainly,
Down on their breasts, that still rise and fall plainly.
Roses are peering with hands above eyes,
While our poor vision with torchlight allies.
Woodlands now open--and hark,
Dogs in the town start to bark!
The pathway that nears in crests and in hollows,
Rocking tow'rd harbor the cavalier's pace,
Will in the next upsurging, that follows,
Cast him full into my waiting embrace.

## V
## The Meeting

Valdemar.

No angels could dance for the Lord just as featly
As dances the world now for me!
Nor jubilate for him more humbly and sweetly
Than Valdemar's heart does for thee.
But, laughing at sorrow, the Christ did not go
To sit by the Lord with more pride
Than Valdemar, losing his cumber and woe,
Has seated at Tovelil's side.

No soul can more ardently long to be winging
Itself to the Heavenly stead
Than Valdemar when from the Sound he came springing
With golden-browed Gurre ahead.
And I would not barter these peaceable leas,
This pearl that they treasure the most,
For Heaven's own gleam and its loud melodies
And all of the holy ones' host.

Tove.

This first of all times I say to thee:
"King Valdemar, I love thee."
This first of all times I kiss thee now,
While throwing my arm 'round thee.
And sayest thou I have said it before
And that thou art wont to the kiss,
Then say I: "The king is naught but a fool,
Recalling a game and not this."
And sayest thou I am another fool,
Then say I: "The king speaks the truth."
But sayest thou that I am not one such,
Then say I: "The king has no ruth."
For all my many roses have I kissed unto death
While I was thinking of thee.

Valdemar.

Now the midnight has come,
And unblest generations
Arise from graves forgotten, sunken,
And they stare with a longing
At castles' candles and hutches' links,
And mockingly over them
Nightwinds go shaking
Tune of harp and clink of cup
And songs of passion.
And vanishing they sorrow:
"Our moment is past!"--
My head is rocked upon waves that are living,
My hand aware of a beating heart,
Swollen with life, the kisses come streaming
Down across me, a purple rain,
And my lip rejoices:
"It is my time now!"
But time is fleeing,
And I shall wander
At midnight moment
When dead at last;
Around myself I will draw the shroud,
For the winds are bitter,
Belatedly stealing forth by moonlight,
And bound by anguish,
In earth will scribble
With blackened grave-cross
Thine own dear name,
And sinking shall sorrow:
"Our moment is past!"

Tove.

Thou sendest me a look of love
And droppest thine eye then;
That glance, though, presses thy hand in mine,
A touch that dies;
But as a kiss awakening love
Thou layest thy handclasp on my lip.--
And still thou art sighing at death,
When a glance can arise
As a kiss all aflame!
The radiant stars up in yonder sky
Turn pale ev'ry dawn,
Yet kindle in ageless majesty
Each midnight hour.
--As brief is death
As calmest slumber
From dusk till dawn,
And when thou wakest,
Beside thee bedded
In newborn beauty
Thou seest shine
Thy youthful bride.
So let us then empty
The golden bowl
To the mightily gracing death;
For we gang to our graves
Like a smile, which dies
For a blessed kiss.

Valdemar.

O wonderfullest Tove!
So rich by thee am I now,
Not even a wish is there left me.
My breast is so light,
My thought is so clear,
A waking peace lies over my soul.
It is so quiet in me,
So strangely quiet.
Fain would the lip build a bridge of words,
But soon it again reposes;
For it is I, who knocked in my breast
With thy beating heart,
And as the breath I drew
Lifted, Tove, thy bosom.
And I see that our thoughts
Are born and then glide together
Like clouds that on meeting
Are gathered and rocked as one in changeable figures.
And my soul is quiet,
I look in thine eye and am silent.
O wonderfullest Tove!

## VI
## The Song of the Forest Dove

Doves of Gurre, sorrow weights me.
Gathered in flight over isle--
Come ye! Listen!
Dead is Tove! Night upon her eye,
Which for the king was day.
Silent is now her heartbeat,
But wildly rocks the king's,
Dead and yet wild!
Strangely like boat on billow
When he, he whom the planks curved themselves to embrace,
Lies dead--the steersman--wrapt with weeds out of the water depths.
No one carries their words,
Blocked is that highway.
Their thoughts were like a pair of rivers flowing,
Each of them side by side with the other.

Where now run the thoughts of Tove?
Those of the king go distortedly writhing,
Seeking for Tove's,
Finding them never.
Widely fared I, sorrow sank me, much did I see!
Kingly shoulders I saw bear coffin;
Henning supported;
Dark the night was; a single faggot
Shone in the alley,
Held by the queen, who watched and shuddered
At her revenge;
Tears that she did not wish to be shedding
Gleamed in her glance.
Widely fared I, sorrow sank me, much did I see!
Clad like a peasant, the king went driving
Off with the coffin,
Drawing the wagon, the horse that erstwhile
Bore him to battle.
Wildly wandered the kingly eye,
Seeking a glance,
Strangely listened the kingly heart
After a word.
Henning spoke him words of counsel,
Glance and heart did nonetheless seek.
The king now opens up Tove's coffin,
Gazes and listens, his lips full of prayers;
Tove is mute.
Widely fared I, sorrow sank me, much did I see!
The monk would draw upon the bellrope,
Ring the sun to rest;
But he looked upon the driver,
Runes of sorrow spoke their message,
Then the sun went down to tolling
As for the departed.
Widely fared I, sorrow sank me, much did I see!
Helvig's hawk
In royal courtyard
Smote the Gurre dove.

VII
Valdemar.

Lord, know'st thou what thou wert doing
When thou Tove took from me?
Know'st thou that it was my final
Resting place thou mad'st me flee?
Lord, for shame! It was very bad,
Stealing the lamb that the pauper still had!

Lord, I am myself a ruler;
I have learned, as kings have done,
Not to take from those beneath me
All their final glimpse of sun.
Lord, thou makest a great mistake.
That is the way not to rule, but to break!

Lord, thy hosts of angels praise thee,
Surely far beyond thy meed.
Thou hast never friend to chide thee
When of chiding thou hast need.
None think always with clarity;
Lord, let me thus be the fool unto thee!

VIII
The Wild Hunt

Valdemar.

Waken, all of King Volmer's men!
Buckle on rusted old swords again,
Fetch in the churches the dust-covered shield,
Blazoned by trolls and the beasts of the field,
Summon your horses, that graze in the mould,
Set in their bellies the rowels of gold,
Leap toward Gurre town,
Now that the sun is down!

The Song of the Peasant.

Clap, clap with coffin lid,
Heavy steps by darkness hid;
Turf is casting off mould,
Paddock ringing with gold,
Porch of the church come a-clang with it,
Rattling and tossing of ancient grit,
Stones from the wall of the churchyard go spilling,
Hawks from the belfry go rushing and shrilling,
Gates fly open and close as fast--
Under the coverlet, there they went past.

--I draw three holiest crosses now
For folk and home, for horse and cow.
With thrice each name of the Saviour I busk,
Then they will not wither my seed for a husk.
And then I will mark upon my skin
Each place where the wounds of Our Lord went in,
So I shall become from elfshot free,
From nightmare ride and from trollery;
And last at the door I lay stone and steel
That none in the household may lose his weal.

Valdemar's Men.

Be greeted, king, here by Gurre Lake!
Across the island our hunt we take,
From stringless bow let the arrow fly
That we have aimed with a sightless eye.
We chase and strike at the shadow hart,
And dew like blood from the wound will start.
Night raven swinging
And darkly winging,
And leafage foaming where hoofs are ringing,
So shall we hunt ev'ry night, they say,
Until that hunt on the Judgment Day.
Holla, horse, and holla, hound,
Stop a while upon this ground!
Here's the castle which erstwhile was.
Feed your horses on thistledown;
Man may eat of his own renown.

Valdemar.

Forests whisper with Tove's voice,
Lakes look upward with Tove's eye,
Stars are shining with Tove's smile,
Clouds are swelling like breasts on high.
Senses are hunting and hunting to know her,
Thoughts are in battle to draw her together.
But Tove is there and Tove is here,
Tove is far and Tove is near.
Art thou, then, Tove, by witchery
Bound in the splendor of wood and sea?
Swells my heart as to shatter in burning.
Tove, Tove, Valdemar's yearning!

Klaus the Fool.

"Eels are the strangest of any birds,
Living by choice in rivers,
Wriggling, however, up on land
Often when moonlight shivers."
That have I sung about others erenow;
Best may it fit to myself, I avow.
I am but a cotter now, and my house is meager,
And though I lived quietly, was for guests not eager,
I'd be halfway eaten out of my house and table
So I can't bid many come; I am just not able.
Yet--he shall have my nightly rest
Who gives an explanation
Of why I must each midnight fare
Around this pool on station.
Why Palle Glob and Erik Po
Should do it, easy is to know:
Not pious, they, nor humble.
They dice from horseback as of yore
For coolest place beside the door
When down to Hell they tumble.

The king, too, he who runs out mad at darkest midnight tide
And calls a girl who long ago, a year and day beside,
With angels and with wild geese flew, he must with justice ride:
His righteousness too raw and dareful;
For one must ever be most careful
And watch oneself by day and night
When one is fool to such a might
As him who lives beyond the moon.

But that I, Klaus Fool of Farum,
Who believed that after dying
Came a time of peaceful lying,
With the dust the spirit's tether,
Till we got our thoughts together
And were ready for the banquet
Where, as Brother Knud has told,
We good ones have endless dinner,
Hearkening to horns of gold
While we eat each roasted sinner,
Oh, that I on a foal gone daft,
With my nose turned always aft,
Must limp about while folk are a-bed,...
I would hang myself if I were not dead.--
Ah, but how savory is that repast
When I win sanctification at last.
True, I have sinned a bit more than the many,
But I can talk me as free as any.
Who gave the naked truth a cloak
And later suffered from its stroke?
Aye--if hereabouts fairness prevails,
Seated on Heavenly benches I'll dine....
How I shall then the landlord malign!

Valdemar.

So now thou art laughing,
Thou judge the sternest!
But this I tell thee ere Doomsday's thunder,
And see that thou learnest:
One soul arises from love and wonder.
Thou shalt not tear this our soul asunder,
In Heaven she and myself cast under.
For then I get might,
I'll put thine angel guard to flight
And with my huntsmen of the night
Will burst through thy gates.

Valdemar's Men.

The cock is lifting his head to crow,
Has the day within him,
And morning dew is running red
With rust, from off our swords.
Past is the moment!
Graves are calling with opened mouths,
And earth sucks down ev'ry light-shy horror.
Sink ye, sink ye!
Strong and radiant, life comes forth
With deeds and hammering pulses.
And we are death folk,
Sorrow and death folk,
Anguish and death folk.
To graves! To graves! To dream-bewildered sleep--
Oh, could we but rest peaceful!

IX
The Wild Hunt of the Summer Wind

Sir Groundsel and Dame Daisy both, heed and have a care!
Wildly starts the summer wind now hunting in air:
Silver its tracks on the lake waters blink,
Marshland mosquitoes take flight from those reaches;
It is far more dreadful than you think.
Hoo, how it laughs in the leaves of the beeches!
Pull the sward to your chins!
There is a glowworm with fire-tongue of red,
And mist on the grass is a cloud that is dead.
What a surging and swinging,
What a ringing and singing.
Golden-eared grain, by the wind struck, so hard
On itself is cast, it clatters.
Meanwhile sounds the playing of the spider bard
On her harp till it is in tatters.
Dewdrops fall with a clinking cry,
Meteors rush down the arch of sky.
Butterflies go fleeing with noise through the hedges,
Frogs leap out, far into the sedges.
--Hush! What is the wind now at,
Turning ev'ry withered leaf?
Ah, it seeks your kin with grief,
Springtime's blue-and-white blossom-streaming,
Earth's too swiftly-gone summer-dreaming.
Long are they dust!
But it goes as a breeze
To the tops of the trees,
For arisen, it deems,
Are the blooms fine as dreams,
And with mystical sound
It salutes them again
Where the forest is crowned.
--See, though, soon it is through up there.
It whirls along on ways of air
To find the lake's bright surface,
And in a thousand wavelets' dance,
Beneath the stars' pale ghostly glance,
Is gently rocked to slumber.
Still is the night!
Would it were light!
O ladybird, arise and wing aloft from out your bower
And pray your Lady she give back to life and sun their power!
All dance the billows on the bay;
Through grass the snail may make his way;
The woodbirds waken in their flocks,
And flowers shake the dew from locks
And peer in search of sun.
Blossoms, wake, nor sleep nor ponder--
Sunlight yonder!
In the east in color-streams
Greet us now its dawntide dreams.
Smiling from the waters darkling,
Soon it rises there,
Brushing from its brow a sparkling
Wealth of sunbeam hair!

Notes
(Pronunciations are only approximate)

I. Valdemar (val'de-mar)
II. Tove (toe'veh)
III. Gurre (goor'reh, "oo" about as in "food.")
V. Tovelil (toe'veh-leel): An affectionate diminutive.
VI. Helvig (hel'vee)
VIII. Volmer (vol'mer): Another form of "Valdemar."
Night raven: In the original, Valravn, a feared mythical bird.
Thistledown: In the original, "Loki's oats," as the dust-motes in a beam of light are called in Danish.
Renown: In the original, somewhat of a pun between Ry, "reputation," and Rug, "rye," the pronunciations being rather similar.
Klaus (klowss, "ow" as in "clown.")
Palle Glob (pal'leh glob) and Erik Po: Two men famous in early Scandinavian history. In the original, "Po" is "Paa," meaning "Peacock," a nickname bestowed on account of Erik's pride and ostentation.
Farum (fah'rum): A small town in Denmark.
Knud (knooth, "oo" as in "food," "th" as in "the.")
IX. O ladybird: This insect was supposed to fly when asked to Our Lady, St. Mary, and pray to her for good weather--hence its name.

# No Man Can Escape His Weird - Sandra Miesel

Odin "weaves the dooms of the mighty"[1] says Saxo Grammaticus. The Danish historian records no destiny as that of Skafloc Elven-Fosterling, hero of Poul Anderson's magnificent fantasy The Broken Sword.[2]

Skafloc's life is a complex web indeed. When his viking father Orm slaughters an English family to take their land, the victims' witch mother responds with the curse "that his eldest son should be fostered beyond the world of men, while Orm should in turn foster a wolf that would one day rend him" (p. 2). At this witch's prompting Imric, earl of Britain's elves, steals unchristened newborn Skafloc, leaving in his stead a soulless changeling bred by Imric out of a troll princess. The Aesir send the elf-earl's fosterling an ominous gift--a broken runesword.

While Skafloc thrives in the misty splendor of Elfheugh his double Valgard develops into a universally loathed berserker. Acting on suggestions from Odin the witch maneuvers Valgard into slaying his foster father and brothers, razing his home, and carrying off his foster sisters to Trollheim. His parentage having been revealed by the witch, Valgard resolves to surpass even the trolls in malice.

Elf raiders under Skafloc's command rescue the captive girls. Although Valgard kills one in a subsequent skirmish, the younger one, Freda, reaches Elfheugh safely. Skafloc heals her sorrows and wins her love. The Aesir insure that the truth of their relationship is kept secret.

When Elfheugh is overrun by Valgard and the trolls, Skafloc and Freda escape to wage futile guerrilla resistance. In desperation he recovers his mysterious gift sword from the occupied elf castle, eluding the enemy only through Odin's intervention. To learn more about the ghastly weapon Skafloc raises the ghosts of Freda's family. The dead disclose that the lovers are siblings and Freda flees.

Accompanied by the Irish sea god Mananaan Mac Lir, embittered Skafloc sails to the realm of the giants and there has the sword reforged. The blind giant smith gloats over his handiwork:

> "We forged ice and death and storm into it, mighty runes and spells, a living will to harm . . . . Naught is there on which it does not bite, nor does it ever grow dull of edge. Venom is in the steel, and [the] wounds it gives cannot be healed by leechcraft or magic or prayer. Yet this is the curse on it: that every time it is drawn it must drink blood, and in the end, somehow, it will be the bane of him who wields it" (p. 159).

Thus armed Skafloc rallies the elves to reconquer their domain.

Meanwhile Freda has borne a son but Odin seizes the baby in payment for his earlier aid to Skafloc. He sends Freda to the siege of Elfheugh where she fatally distracts Skafloc as he duels with Valgard. The changeling perishes beside him. Imric orders the accursed blade flung into the sea but its foul history is clearly not yet complete.

True to the methods of traditional literature, The Broken Sword, like The Lord of the Rings, artfully rearranges and expands time-hallowed motifs and images. Right from its opening with the conventional recital of the hero's lineage, this novel authentically captures the mood of inexorable doom and bloody kin-strife met in the Norse sagas. It is there we must seek its antecedents.

Tyrfing, the runesword's proper name, points to Hervarar Saga (also known as The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise). This furnishes the nature, origin, and appearance of the weapon. By threatening death, Odin's grandson King Svafrlami forces captive dwarves Dvalinn and Durinn (Anderson's Dyrin, Tolkien's Durin) to forge him a rustless, golden-hilted, invincible sword. The dwarves curse it to require a human life at each unsheathing, to perform three dastardly deeds, and to cause the king's own death. Tyrfing brings Svafrlami years of victory until an enemy soldier snatches it from his hand and slays him with it. The new owner gives it to his eldest son who eventually falls in battle and is buried with his sword. This warrior's ferocious daughter Hervor strides through enchanted fire to summon the shades of her father and uncles from their barrows. She demands Tyrfing, Bane-of-Shields and Hater-of-Byrnies, heedless of its history or the disaster it will surely wreak on her descendants. Her father yields it reluctantly with this last warning:

> Long may you hold it and long enjoy it!
> But conceal it well. Beware the edges
> of Hjalmar's-Bane: both are poisoned.
> Mortal to men is the Measurer-of-Fate.[3]

After pursuing a viking career with the blade Hervor gives it to her favorite son Heidrek, a vicious berserker. He turns outlaw and kills his gallant elder brother with Tyrfing. He commits many other treacheries with the sword until his own thralls use it to murder him. Heidrek's sons wage war for possession of Tyrfing. The older slays the younger and concludes the saga with this plaint: "'A curse rests on our kin. . . . Evil is the doom of the Norns.'"[4]

The themes of a broken and reforged enchanted sword and sibling incest occur in Volsunga Saga which translator William Morris calls a tale of "utter love defeated utterly."[5] Here Odin personally manipulates the heroes' lives just as he does in the Anderson novel. King Volsung was the great-grandson of Odin, born as a boon from the god. Odin appears at the wedding of Volsung's daughter

Signy and in ironic use of a Norse marriage custom thrusts a marvelous sword into the main house pillar. The only man strong enough to pull the sword out is Signy's twin, Sigmund. Signy's envious husband subsequently kills her father and other brothers. In order to breed a pure Volsung to avenge them Signy visits Sigmund's hiding place in disguise and sleeps with him. When her husband later captures him and their bold son Sinfjotli, Signy provides them with Sigmund's sword to free themselves. She orders them to kill her legitimate children and husband. Then, vengeance complete, she chooses to die in her husband's burning hall.

Sinfjotli is ultimately poisoned by a stepmother. Odin himself carries his body away. Sigmund enjoys many glorious years as a warrior king until Odin appears in the midst of a battle and shatters his sword.

The shards pass to Sigmund's posthumous son Sigurd who has them reforged as the blade Gram. With this "wounding-wand/All wrought with gold"[6] he kills the dragon Fafnir. Odin favors him with advice and a horse sired by his own divine steed. After adventures familiar from Wagner, Sigurd is murdered by design of his first love, Brynhild. She then slays herself and is burned on Sigurd's pyre along with his horse and sword.

Norse literature abounds in references to doom-swords forged in hatred or under duress, hidden under the earth and retrieved at frightful effort to perform grim deeds. There are garbled associations of such swords with the giant Mimir and the World Ash Tree. Examples include Laevateinn forged in Hel by Loki and Dainsleif forged by dwarves which demands human blood each time it is drawn. A murderous enchanted sword is among the treasures Saxo describes in the bound giant Geirrod's ghastly underground realm. Saxo and Ásmundar Saga Kappabana both mention a cursed sword once concealed in a lake or cave which brings death to the descendants of the king for whom it was made. A sword forged by a giant to take vengeance on the gods is brought out of Mimir's Grove in Niflheim in "Svipdagsmál." According to Saxo, a mortal prince fetches the sword of Mimingus (who is either Mimir or his son) from the underworld, using it to defeat the Aesir in battle and kill Balder. A bloodlusting brand, broken and reforged, is the subject of "The Avenging Sword," a chilling ballad from medieval Denmark. But the owner has the wit to recognize the peril of his weapon. He discards it and does penance for deeds performed with it.

Anderson incorporates cultural as well as literary precedents into his fantasy. Although his own weapon is always the spear, Odin gives swords to his chosen heroes just as mortal kings distribute them to their warriors: to bind the subordinates' loyalty. Swords were divine solar and fertility symbols in the Bronze Age. The vikings associated these precious family heirlooms with their cult of dead ancestors.

In mythic chronology The Broken Sword falls after the death of Balder and the binding of Loki. The future holds only Ragnarök. Thus Odin's ultimate motive in molding the fates of the Volsungs and Skafloc is naked self-interest: he is breeding, training, and gathering troops for the last battle. In "Eiríksmál" Odin explains that he allowed his protégé Erik Blood-Axe to perish because "the grey wolf is gazing upon the abodes of the [illegible]."[7]

Odin is the crafty but fickle god of battle, death, and magic. He is "ruler of every ill/Who sunders kin with runes of spite."[8] Perhaps his malicious habits reflect in part immortal boredom like that of Anderson's elves. Deceit is ever his weapon of choice. The ruse by which Odin steals Freda's child occurs in a Scandinavian folktale in which the disguised god bargains with Geirhild Drinsdatter for "what is between her and the vat":[9] not her belt but her unborn child. Bölverk (Icelandic Bölverkr, "evil working"), the giant who mends Skafloc's Tyrfing, not only recalls legends of crippled, enslaved smiths like Wayland (Völund), his name is an alias of Odin used when he stole the mead of inspiration from a giant.

But of all the supernatural races, it is the elves and the whispering glamourie of their twilight lands which dominate The Broken Sword. The elves do not worship the Aesir--they themselves were once minor earth deities--but some serve in the palace of the fertility god Frey. In The Broken Sword they are allied with the Sidhe, Irish divinities rarely portrayed in modern fantasy. Both the Sidhe and the elves are doomed to dwindle away to sprites and vanish into folklore.

These elves are the same cloudy-eyed amoral immortals who reappear in Three Hearts and Three Lions but here the plot emphasizes the perpetual war between elves and trolls. To counter their foes with iron-wielding warriors, elves exchange changelings for human babies. Conscious of their soullessness, they sometimes envy their fosterlings: "'Happier are all men than the dwellers in Faerie--or the gods, for that matter,'" says Imric. "'Better a life like a falling star, bright across the dark, then a deathlessness which can see naught above or beyond itself.'" (p. 206).

The elves' limitations resemble those of Franco-Burgundian courtly culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As Sir Kenneth Clark observes:

> No society has ever been more elegant, more debonair, more dainty. . . . But it [courtesie] isn't enough to keep a civilization alive, because it exists solely in the present. It depends on a small static society that never looks outside or beyond, and we know from many examples that such societies can become entirely petrified. . . . The great, indeed the unique, merit of European civilization has been that it has never ceased to develop and change.[10]

The conflict between elven and human ways which so rends Skafloc is repeated in Anderson's recent science fiction story "The Queen of Air and Darkness." He always maintains the superiority of mortal men. As the dwarf-king states in The Broken Sword: "'. . . humans, weak and short-lived and unwitting, are nonetheless more strong than elves and trolls, aye, than giants and gods. And that you can touch cold iron is only one reason'" (p. 20). Not only can men change, they can love. This consolation is ordinarily denied to elves. But this exchange between Imric and his sister after Skafloc's death indicates that there can be exceptions:

> "If we elves do not know the thing called love, still, we can do that which would have gladdened a friend."
>
> "Not know love?" murmured Leea, too softly for him to hear. "You are wise, Imric, but your wisdom has its bounds." (p. 206).

Leea had been the infant Skafloc's wet nurse, then his leman, and afterward the unwilling concubine of his double Valgard. Her feelings for Skafloc are tainted by possessive jealousy that helps propel him to his doom.

Freda, on the other hand, not only shares her man's sufferings, she loves him enough to leave him for the good of his soul after their sibling relationship is disclosed. And she would surrender her own hope of salvation for the chance to save his life. Leea's unaging allure cannot match Freda's mortal vitality. Skafloc turns from faery to human love just as Holger Carlsen does in Three Hearts and Three Lions. But unlike Holger and Alianora, Skafloc and Freda were "Born into the world/For utter woe"[11] and are parted for all eternity after death. Though "There are powers of evil and inevitable destiny which are able to defeat the noblest

love,"[12] their bond was no less precious for its tragic sundering.

As befits a tale of enchantments, the novel's language is lush. It conjures up gemfire and silvergleam, eddying wind round starry spires, ice crags and salt spray, blossoms and cursed weapons' clangor. Poetry in the Norse manner also plays a prominent role. Anderson has long displayed a considerable gift for translation and adaptation: translating the Eddic Song of Grotte in Twilight World (reworked for his forthcoming version of Hrólfs Saga Kraka) and part of Jens Peter Jacobsen's Gurresange in Tau Zero; composing new poems on medieval models in "Tiger by the Tail," Rogue Sword, and "The Queen of Air and Darkness."

An appreciation of his method can be gained by comparing the gravemound scene in The Broken Sword (pp. 136-140) with "The Waking of Angantyr" from Hervarar Saga, "The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane" from the Elder Edda, and the ballad "Aage and Else," a twelfth-century Danish version of "The Unquiet Grave."

The incantory verses in this scene reproduce Icelandic epic meter: four stresses divided into two half-lines with the first stress in the second half-line alliterating with either stress in the first half-line while the last stress does not alliterate. A very few of Anderson's lines are imperfect because the final stress alliterates. For example: "'Welcome, brother,/ valiant warrior'" (p. 140). The half-lines are printed as independent lines in this novel. Trochaic meter is used for somberness although Icelandic poetry does not require metrical regularity in the English sense.

Anderson paraphrases and condenses. Thus Hervor's curse: "May all of you feel within your ribs/as though in ant-hill your ill bones rotted"[13] becomes on Skafloc's lips: "'In your ribs/may rats build nests'" (p. 137). The author also rearranges lines and adapts details of content to his plot requirements but retains the dramatic structure and spirit of the originals. The stanzas based on "The Waking of Angantyr" present the same struggle between insistent child and reluctant parent over a deadly boon. Those modeled on "Helgi" and the ballad proclaim the same love undimmed by death.

In addition to their notions of Valhalla, Hel, and reincarnation, pagan Scandinavians believed that the dead dwelt within their barrows, ready to destroy intruders but willing to counsel and bless their descendants. Runes could compel corpses to speak and answer questions. In this first pair of parallels Hervor demands Tyrfing from her dead father while Skafloc, accompanied by Freda and their mother, raises the shades of their father and brothers to learn how Tyrfing can be reforged. Verse numbers are given in the left-hand margin to indicate rearrangement of "Angantyr."

9 Hervor:
Angantyr, awake! Hervor calls you,
Your only daughter whom you had by Tofa.
Give up from the grave the gleaming sword
That the dwarves smithied for Svafrlami.

16 Angantyr:
Graves open and Hel's doors,
The island surface is one searing flame,
. . . . . .

10 Hervor:
Hervard, Hjorvord, Hrani, awake!
Hear me all of you, under the tree roots,
With sharp swords, with shields and byrnies
And red spears, the rig of war.

13 Angantyr:
Evil it is, Hervor, my daughter,
To call down such curses upon us:
Your words are mad, without meaning in them.
Why do you wake the bewildered dead?

16 All without is a horror to view:
Go, while there's time: return to your ship.

17 Hervor:
With no flames, tonight or ever,
With no fire can you frighten me,
Nor daunt the heart in your daughter's breast
With ghosts standing at grave-mouths.

12 May ants shred you all to pieces,
Dogs rend you; may you rot away.
Give back the sword that was smithied by Dvalin:
Fine weapons are unfit for ghosts.[14]

Skafloc cried out:
Waken, chieftains,
fallen warriors!
Skafloc calls you,
sings you wakeful.
I conjure you,
come on hell-road.
Rune-bound dead men,
rise and answer!
The barrow groaned. Higher and ever higher raged the icy flame above it. Skafloc chanted:
Grave shall open.
Gang forth, deathlings!
Fallen heroes,
fare to earth now.
Stand forth, bearing
swords all rusty,
broken shields,
and bloody lances.
Then the howe opened with leaping fires, and Orm and his sons stood in its mouth. The chieftain called:
Who dares burst
the mound and bid me
rise from death
by runes and song-spells?
Flee the dead man's
fury, stranger!
Let the deathling
lie in darkness.
. . . . . .
Terror shall not
turn my purpose.
Runes shall bind you.
Rise and answer!
In your ribs
may rats build nests,
if you keep hold
on what I call for! (pp. 136-140)

The second set of parallels shows that even spell-bound ghosts retain their own interests, especially in kinship ties. One brother greets Freda:

Gladly see we
gold-decked woman.
Sun-bright maiden,
sister, welcome!
Ashy, frozen
are our hollow
breasts with grave-cold.
But you warm us.
Father greets mother:
Dreamless was not
death, but frightful!
Tears of yours, dear,
tore my heart out,
vipers dripped
their venom on me
when in death
I heard you weeping.

This I bid
you do, beloved:
live in gladness,
laughing, singing.
Death is then

the dearest slumber,
wrapped in peace,
with roses round me.

"That I have not strength to do, Orm," she said. She touched his face. "There is frost in your hair. There is mould in your mouth. You are cold, Orm."
"I am dead. The grave lies between us."
"Then let it be so no longer. Take me with you, Orm!"
His lips touched hers. (pp. 138-139)

She followed his ghost back into the mound, never to return.

In "The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane" Queen Sigrun greets her recently slain husband:

First will I kiss the lifeless king,
Ere off the bloody byrnie thou cast;
With frost thy hair is heavy, Helgi,
And damp thou art with the dew of death;
(Ice-cold hands has Hogni's kinsman,
What, prince, can I to bring thee ease?)

Helgi replies:
Thou alone, Sigrun of Sevafjoll,
Art cause that Helgi with dew is heavy;
Gold-decked maid, thy tears are grievous,
(Sun-bright south-maid, ere thou sleepest;)
Each falls like blood on the hero's breast,
(Burned-out, cold, and crushed with care.)

Well shall we drink a noble draught,
Though love and lands are lost to me;
No man a song of sorrow shall sing,
Though bleeding wounds are on my breast;
Now in the hill our brides we hold,
The heroes' loves, by their husbands dead.[15]

Sigrun offers to sleep with him in the barrow but Helgi is called away by cockcrow. Sigrun dies of sorrow shortly afterward.

In "Aage and Else" the dead knight tells his widow:

For every tear thou lettest fall
In mournful mood,
Adown into my grave doth drip
A drop of blood.
. . . . . .
But when a song thou singest
All in delight,
Then all my darksome grave is hung
With roses red and white.[16]

Else, too, promptly perishes of grief.

The Broken Sword is the earliest-written and by far the saddest of Anderson's novels. Its impact on young Michael Moorcock may have provided the remote inspiration for that author's gorgeously gruesome Elric series.[17] Between The Broken Sword and his forthcoming "Merman's Children" and Hrolf Kraki's Saga, Anderson took a lighter approach to fantasy: the romantic Three Hearts and Three Lions, a clutch of comic short stories (like "The Valor of Cappen Varra"), The Fox, the Dog, and the Griffin for young children, the rationalized and domesticated Thaumaturgic Age series (Operation Chaos), or else sounded the horns of Elfland in science fiction (Let the Spacemen Beware! and "The Queen of Air and Darkness").

The differences between the 1954 Abelard-Schuman hardback and the 1971 Ballantine paperback editions are greater than the author's modest introduction to the revised version would suggest. Anderson has thoroughly re-edited the novel, improving both content and form. The sword's name and history have been added to the second edition and its appearance drastically altered--an enchanted weapon ought not to rust. Not Satan, but Odin in Satan's guise advises the vengeful witch on destroying Skafloc's family. New passages clarify Fred'a psychology. Some details of combat have been changed for realism.

Innumerable stylistic improvements have been made: extraneous modifiers pruned, substitutions made for precision, freshness, crispness, rhythm, or consistency. A single sentence can demonstrate this. Old:

> The great dim splendor of the castle which was also a barren crag, the sorceries drifting in the very air of its eternal twilight, the presences haunting hills and forest and sea--all these oppressed her with their strangeness and aloofness (p. 100).

New: The dim splendor of the castle which was also a barren tor, the sorceries adrift through its eternal warm twilight, the presences that haunted hills and woods and waters--oppressed her with strangeness (p. 77).

The revision is altogether smoother and surer.

The Broken Sword's theme, man and fate in the northern tradition, is a subtype of Anderson's perennial theme, man and the challenge of the universe. Living on the edge of calamity made it easy for the Norsemen to believe in Ragnarok. Their response to a brutal world and fickle gods was courage of a particularly steely sort: courage that echoes in the death-lay of Ragnar Lodbrok: "all hope of life has fled, and laughing I go toward death."[18]

Foreknowledge of doom--personal and cosmic--breeds no bitterness but rather incites men to brave deeds while life lasts. As Beowulf declares:

> "Each of us will come to the end of this life
> On earth; he who can earn it should fight
> For the glory of his name; fame after death
> Is the noblest of goals."[19]

However Skafloc is not motivated by this usual pagan incentive. Unmindful of public glory, he is thrust back upon heroism for its own sake. He is as grimly resolute as the English warrior who vowed: "'Will shall be the sterner, heart the bolder, spirit the greater as our strength lessens.'"[20] J. R. R. Tolkien notes that these lines from The Battle of Maldon "have been held to be the finest expression of the northern heroic spirit, Norse or English; the clearest statement of the doctrine of uttermost endurance in the service of indomitable will."[21] Or as Skafloc summarizes his own code: "'There is no other road than the one we take, hard though it be. And no man outlives his weird. Best to meet it bravely face to face'" (p. 132). Their father had imparted these same principles to Freda: "'None can escape his weird; but none other can take from him the heart **wherewith** he meets it'" (p. 68). Doomed in life, doomed in love, yet Skafloc and Freda's bravery has a validity in and for itself which death's victory can in no way diminish.

Skafloc is ground between supernatural forces like grain in a quern. Nevertheless he dies no pawn of Odin nor of fate that stands beyond the gods. He dies a man. His is the indomitability that reappears again and again in Anderson's work from this earliest novel, through The Enemy Stars, to his recent Tau Zero. His heroes insist, "A man can try," even as they recognize Time's arrow points but one direction. Man's destiny is to face the unfolding challenge of the universe.

Now may all earls
Be bettered in mind,
May the grief of all maidens
Ever be minished
For this tale of trouble
So told to its ending.[22]

A shorter preliminary version of this paper appeared in the fanzine Energumen, No. 8 (June 1971).

FOOTNOTES

[1]Saxo Grammaticus, Gesta Danorum, trans. Oliver Elton (The Folklore Society: London, 1894), p. 78, quoted in H. R. Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (Penguin: Baltimore, 1964), p. 49.

[2]1st ed. (Abelard-Schuman: New York, 1954) and rev. ed. (Ballantine: New York, 1971). Unless otherwise specified, all references are to the revised edition and will be given in text.

[3]"The Waking of Angantyr," The Elder Edda: A Selection, trans. Paul B. Taylor and W. H. Auden (Random House: New York, 1970), p. 105.

[4]Peter Andreas Munch, Norse Mythology, rev. Magur Olsen, trans. Sigurd Bernhard Hustvedt (American-Scandinavian Foundation: New York, 1926), p. 147.

[5]William Morris, "A Prologue in Verse," Volsunga Saga, trans. William Morris (Collier: New York, 1962), p. 86.

[6]"The Lay of Brynhild," Morris, p. 272.

[7]trans. N. Kershaw in A Pageant of Old Scandinavia, ed. Henry Goddard Leach (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1946), p. 320. Compare the situation in "Hakonnarmal": the death of king Haakon the Good serves the "military requirements" of Asgard.

[8]"The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane," trans. Henry Adams Bellows as "Helgi Thrice-Born," in Pageant, p. 72.

[9]Sigrid Unset, Kristin Lavransdatter, trans. Charles Archer and J. S. Scott (Alfred Knopf: New York, 1937), p. 236. The same sort of prenatal trickery appears in the eerie Danish ballad "Germand Gladensvend" and the happier Scandinavian fairy tales "The Three Princesses of Whiteland" and "The Mermaid and the Boy." As in The Broken Sword, christening does not protect the child from enforcement of the pledge.

[10]Civilisation (Harper: New York, 1969), p. 74. I am indebted to Patrick McGuire for pointing out the similarity.

[11]"The Short Lay of Sigurd," Morris, p. 257. This refers to Brynhild.

[12]Axel Olrik, A Book of Danish Ballads, trans. E. M. Smith-Dampier (Books for Libraries Press: Freeport, New York, 1968), p. 52. This refers to "Germand Gladensvend."

[13]"The Waking of Angantyr," trans. Lee M. Hollander in Pageant, p. 86.

[14]"The Waking of Angantyr," Taylor and Auden, pp. 101-105.

[15]Pageant, p. 73.

[16]Olrik, p. 88. This ballad is also known as "Aager and Eliza" and "The Betrothed in the Grave."

[17]"The Michael Moorcock Column," Speculation, II, No. 7 (1968), 57.

[18]Munch, p. 315. In The Broken Sword, Ragnar is Skafloc's great-grandfather. Although Skafloc does not die laughing, many another hero did. Compare "The Treachery of Asmund," Taylor and Auden, p. 100: "Men shall remember while men live/That the Lord of Rogaland laughed as he died."

[19]Beowulf, trans. Burton Raffel (New American Library: New York, 1963), lines 1386-89, p. 67. Compare Odin's statement in "The Words of the High One," Taylor and Auden, p. 47:

Cattle die, kindred die,
Every man is mortal:
But I know one thing that never dies,
The glory of the great dead.

[20]J. R. R. Tolkien, "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son," in The Tolkien Reader (Ballantine: New York, 1966), p. 5.

[21]Tolkien, p. 20.

[22]"The Whetting of Gudrun," Morris, p. 301. These lines also close Morris' version of Volsunga Saga, p. 232.

Doggerel, doggerel!
Mad dactylographers
Spout without let-up their
Nonsense supreme!

Seize any epithet
Sesquipedalian
If it but fit with the
Metrical scheme.

--William Linden

IVAN VASILEVITCH

Hippety, hoppity,
Ivan the Terrible
Vanquished the Tatars and
Slew his own son.

Ever since Ivan, some
Egomaniacal
Tyrant has had the poor
Slavs on the run.

--L. Sprague de Camp

Everyman, Jedermann.
Hugo von Hofmannsthal,
Are you a Jedermann
Or Fledermaus?

"Sir, you don't know your own
Musicalology!
Bury your head, sir, you've
Got the wrong Strauss!"

--William F. Orr

# Malory and T. H. White

## - Richard C. West

C. S. Lewis has suggested that almost the typical activity of a medieval author was, not the modern concern with originality, but "touching up" a traditional story. What he is saying in this charming British understatement is that a medieval writer did not have to concern himself with inventing the matter of his story but with transmitting that matter worthily (however radically he may have reshaped it).[1] It is interesting to see so central a literary tradition of the Middle Ages be taken up by a contemporary author, for T. H. White, in The Once and Future King, can be seen as one of the latest (though not the last) continuators of the Arthurian legend so popular throughout Europe during medieval times. As White wrote to a friend in 1938:

> Do you remember I once wrote a thesis on the Morte d'Arthur? Naturally I did not read Malory when writing the thesis on him, but one night last autumn I got desperate among my books and picked him up in lack of anything else. Then I was thrilled and astonished to find (a) that the thing was a perfect tragedy with a beginning, a middle and an end implicit in the beginning, and (b) that the characters were real people with recognizable reactions which could be forecast.[2]

The purpose of this paper will be to indicate the various uses to which White put his Malorian source material, and thus define the literary quality of his Arthurian novel.

One proviso before we begin. I will be accepting the British view that The Once and Future King is one of their literary masterpieces (it is still possible for American scholars to admit, without feeling ashamed, that they have not read it), and this and my own pedantic nature will keep my tone mostly "serious" or at least solemn. But one should not forget that the work is pervaded with humor. This comic vision of White's is a "serious" matter, too, for no view of life would be complete without it, and it deserves a paper to itself. For our purposes, I need only mention that chivalric phrases are lifted from Malory to serve as a comic counterpoint to the modern styles of dialogue otherwise spoken, and that in making us laugh with the foibles of these characters, White manipulates us into a rather un-modern acceptance of the real humanity of certified hero-types like Lancelot.

To begin, then. White's dependence on Malory is written into his own text. "There is no need to give a long description of the tourney," announces the narrator at one point, "Malory gives it."[3] Elsewhere the reader is told that if he wants more details of the Grail quest, "you must seek them in Malory."[4] And again: "If people want to read about the Corbin tournament, Malory has it. He was a passionate follower of tournaments..."[5] White goes so far as to write into the text an explanation of how Malory became so familiar with Arthuriana, when at the end of the novel Arthur knights a young page and sends him away from the Battle of Salisbury Plain so that he may provide future ages with a true history of Arthur's reign, and the page turns out to be a boy from Warwickshire named Tom Malory. There are numerous such references, a modern equivalent of the medieval author's habit of citing his authority for a passage, such as Malory's frequent use of "as the French book saith." There is a significant difference, however, between the kind of respect for authority shown by the writers of the different ages. I have already mentioned the medieval respect for what has been hallowed by long tradition, and the corresponding lack of respect for what is merely novel and original and has not yet proven its worth. Quite often Malory's allusions to his "French book" turn out to be illusions, for his French source is found to say nothing of the kind, and the citation was apparently meant to give only a spurious authority to a detail or an episode which Malory invented himself. T. H. White's references are footnotes of a sort which lead the reader to where more information can really be found. White is serving notice that the events he relates remain faithful to his source, which he is "touching up" for presentation to a modern audience.

This same deep and affectionate respect for the tradition imbues all of The Once and Future King. White had written to a friend that what he sought to do was "to write of an imaginary world which was imagined in the 15th century."[6] His text shows that his self-perception was accurate. The narrator says the book is set "in the Old England of the twelfth century, or whenever it was."[7] Arthur's father, Uther the Conqueror, reigns, impossibly, from 1066 to 1216;[8] he must have taken very seriously his subjects' dutiful cries of "Long live the king." Such dismissal of accepted historical reality is of course comic, part of the fun, but this acceptance of the Arthurian world as the "real" one also functions to place the reader in what Tolkien calls a secondary world.[9] We are in the world of the Knights of the Round Table, a world of giants and dragons and damsels in distress, where it is possible to pursue a wild boar or the Questing Beast or the Holy Grail, where even the malfunctions of Merlyn's wizardry reinforce the impression that magic is here a serious matter. In short, White has put the reader into Malory's secondary world, into an imaginary world created in the fifteenth century. But all secondary worlds borrow from primary reality, and White has also accepted the historical medieval world. The Once and Future King is full of discussions and descriptions of feudal customs, of the architecture of a castle and the sort of activities that went on inside it, of what impression the vast and wild forests must have made, of what it must have been like to wear a suit of armor.

Such wealth of detail, much of it quite realistic, is another way of rendering the secondary world aesthetically credible, so that we believe in it while we are inside--that is, we give it what Tolkien calls "secondary belief," a different kind of belief than we accord to

primary reality. Still another way of supporting this aesthetic effect is through characterization. White shares our modern fascination with psychology, with understanding personalities and motivations, and his "touching up" of his source to a large extent means accepting the incidents Malory relates but exploring the psychology that might have produced them. You should remember, in this connection, my earlier quotation from White noting that he thought that in Malory "the characters were real people with recognizable reactions which could be forecast." His character portraits are memorable, but we have time for only a brief glance at a few.

Arthur receives perhaps most attention--I do not say "of course," for in many medieval romances he is a background figure, a master of ceremonies who sends knights out on quests and welcomes them back from them. White keeps him at the center of his fictive world. We watch Arthur growing up, "a kind, conscientious, peace-loving fellow",[10] a hero-worshipper and born follower[11] who had never been unjustly treated and hence was kind to others in his turn. Subconsciously aware of his wife's adultery with his commander-in-chief, he kept it from his conscious mind, not because he was a cowardly cuckold, but because he could have had them executed at any time and he was too decent to use his public power to avenge a private quarrel. The Round Table and the ideals it stood for were more important to him than his wife or his friend, and his own attempt to replace force by codified law left him no alternative but to seek to punish them when the scandal was brought to a court of law. He is always given credible, if idealistic, motivations.

Those incidents which White invents himself rather than borrows from Malory are often connected with the childhood of the character whose psychology is being probed. So it was with Arthur and so it is with Lancelot. He is portrayed as a boy with an ugly face, which, in accordance with medieval theories of physiognomy, he feared mirrored an ugly soul. So he spent his life seeking to make up for what he felt to be his defects, sublimating his sadistic impulses into consistently kind and merciful behavior, sternly disciplining his body to make himself a more redoubtable warrior than any other in his day. Where a modern in his situation might simply have run off with Queen Guenever, Lancelot could not: because he did not believe, as a modern might, that his inclinations were necessarily nice or good; because he was deeply committed to Arthur's ideal of Right over Might, and it would be hypocritical to use force so selfishly; and because he was a pious medieval Christian whose religion forbade him to run off with anybody's wife, let alone the spouse of his best friend.

His other actions are similarly motivated, and numerous other characters are also drawn in the round. We see, for example, the individual personalities of the various members of the Orkney faction: the dominating mother, Morgause; the fiery Gawaine with his sturdy clan loyalty; Agravaine with his mother complex; Gareth who hates injustice and cruelty and hero-worships Lancelot; and Mordred who broods over the wrongs life has dealt him.

We should note, though, that, while White tries to make us feel that the things which moved his characters are not completely alien to modern man, still he seeks not to modernize them but to present them in terms of the medieval attitudes which shaped them, even to the extent of having the narrator apologize rather irritably for speaking of such unfashionable matters as honor, loyalty, "having a word", belief in God as a person, pity, or magnanimity.[12] Also, he deliberately refrains from explaining everything, as when the narrator says there is a secret at the bottom of Lancelot's mind which it would be discourteous to illuminate,[13] or wonders if perhaps Guenever could have loved two men so deeply because Arthur was a father figure to her while Lancelot stood for the child she was never blessed with bearing.[14] The effect is to give the aesthetic illusion that these fictional people have complex inner lives of their own.

In The Once and Future King, as is typical of the modern novel, character produces event--or at least White manages to convey this impression by dwelling on possible psychological motivations behind events borrowed from Malory. Not so characteristically modern is its moral, or at any rate moralistic, tinge. But this is typical of T. H. White's writing, and that it was also common in medieval literature may help explain White's remarkable empathy with that age. It is unlikely that any reader fails to notice the moral concerns of The Once and Future King. Again and again we are told that Might does not make Right, that the Knights of the Round Table will harness Might to work for Right, that Might should serve spiritual ideals, that Might should be uprooted and replaced by Law. The matter is mulled over so many times that a reader may be pardoned for sometimes agreeing with Lancelot's exclamation at one point, "Oh, God, we needn't explain it again."[15] This tendentiousness is largely a product of White's revision of his work after, as he wrote in 1940, he "suddenly discovered that... the central theme of Morte d'Arthur is to find an antidote to war."[16] I am not sure that Malory would have agreed that this was his central theme; it is more likely to result from White's watching with fear and guilt the Second World War rage all around him while he lived in peace and safety in Ireland. But we should note that the Arthurian society of The Once and Future King is not presented as an ideal, for it fails due to its own weaknesses. We are given all those moral disquisitions because Arthur is never satisfied with his efforts and reviews his past progress while preparing to step closer to the ideal. Even of the law of which Arthur was so sanguine, the text states "the codification of Justice was still weak and muddled",[17] and it is through legal means that the Table is broken. The tale is rather an exploration of human possibilities and human nature, a somewhat pessimistic one though there is the hope that we may learn from Arthur's mistakes as he does and do better with each effort (perhaps the reign of the future king will be ideal), and ultimately the exploration is a profoundly questioning one.

For all the comedy in this book, Arthur's story is basically a tragedy. White says Malory was right to call "his very long book the Death of Arthur. Although nine-tenths of the story seems to be about knights jousting and quests for the Holy Grail and things of that sort, the narrative is a whole, and it deals with the reasons why the young man came to grief at the end. It is the tragedy, the Aristotelian and comprehensive tragedy, of sin coming home to roost."[18] Arthur's "fatal flaw", in Aristotelian terms, was to sleep with his own sister and beget on her the incestuous and illegitimate son, Mordred, who would destroy his kingdom and slay him in battle. On the vexed question of, in R. H. Wilson's phrase, how many books Malory wrote, White thus comes down firmly on the side of those who hold that Malory wrote "one whole book"--though it is true that White did this before the question was raised and probably was never aware of the critical battle. He has also recorded that he sees three unifying themes in Malory: the Cornwall feud (by which he seems to mean the feud between King Pellinore and his sons and the Orkney faction), the Nemesis of Incest, and the Lancelot-Guenever romance.[19] It is interesting to note that White has here anticipated some of the very themes that Charles Moorman argued unified The Book of Kyng Arthur in his study of that title.[20] Hence he might serve as independent confirmation that Moorman and others of R. M. Lumiansky's persuasion are reading this sort of unity out of Malory and not into him. However, T. H. White is a modern author, whose aesthetic concerns are contemporary ones, and on a closer view he can be seen to have indeed presented an Arthuriad organized according to modern conceptions of organic unity, in which events are connected in an unbroken chain of cause and effect and irrelevant matters are excluded, but only by reshaping the narrative as Malory gives it. Thus the long section on Tristram and Isoud

and King Mark in Malory (always a knotty structural problem for critics arguing for unity in a modern sense) is reduced to a few brief references serving mostly to stress the analogy of the situation in Cornwall with that at Camelot. Thus we are told only enough of Gareth's adventures to understand his relationship with Lancelot and his role in the final tragedy. Thus Arthur is kept at the center of our attention; even the Grail quest is told through the medium of reports to him by the knights who were on it. That such careful selection from Malory's rich diversity is necessary to achieve the "one whole book" that a number of critics would like Malory to have written suggests that the Warwickshire knight was working with structural notions rather different from the modern. But this question requires a fuller examination than I can give it in this paper.[21]

If I have bewildered you with all these points, let me conclude with a summing up. T. H. White, inspired by medieval history and legend which he dwells on in loving detail, has adopted Malory as a source, but also adapted him. He largely retains Malory's plotting, but he selects incidents to achieve a unified effect, and shapes the narrative to deal with the questions of power and war. His other major additions to the traditional story are elements of humor and psychological depth. And all of this "touching up" is done to make the story more palatable to a modern audience.

NOTES

[1]See his essay, "The Genesis of a Medieval Book", in C. S. Lewis, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 18-40.

[2]Sylvia Townsend Warner, T. H. White: A Biography (Viking Press, 1967), p. 98. Hereafter referred to as Warner. This quotation is from a letter to L. J. Potts, dated January 14, 1938.

[3]The Once and Future King (G. P. Putnam's, 1958; Dell, 1960), p. 364 (p. 349). Hereafter referred to as OFK, followed by page references first to the hardcover and then (in parentheses) to the paperback volumes.

[4]OFK, p. 459 (p. 436). [5]OFK, p. 517 (p. 489).

[6]Warner, p. 133. From a letter to Sydney Cockerell, dated July 28, 1939. The italics are White's.

[7]OFK, p. 204 (p. 200). [8]OFK, p. 198 (p. 195).

[9]J. R. R. Tolkien's essay, "On Fairy-Stories", is most readily found in The Tolkien Reader (Ballantine, 1966), pp. 3-84.

[10]OFK, p. 380 (p. 364). [11]OFK, p. 8 (p. 14).

[12]OFK, p. 510 (p. 484). [13]OFK, p. 421 (p. 402).

[14]OFK, p. 498 (p. 472). [15]OFK, p. 379 (p. 364).

[16]Warner, p. 178. [17]OFK, p. 540 (p. 510).

[18]OFK, p. 323 (p. 312). [19]Warner, p. 130.

[20]Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965. The three themes Moorman identifies are the Lot-Pellinore feud, the Grail Quest, and the Lancelot-Guenevere intrigue. It is not very easy to find Arthur's incest as his nemesis in Malory, where the subject is used to censure Mordred for revolting against his own father.

[21]You can find the lines of battle drawn in Eugène Vinaver's edition of The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford University Press, 1947, revised 1967) and in R. M. Lumiansky, ed. Malory's Originality (Johns Hopkins Press, 1964).

RICHARD III

Sanglier, sanglier.
Richard Plantagenet
In more romances than
Ever before,

Subject of arguments
Revindicationist,
Verges on being a
Consummate bore.

--William Linden

# Moot Point

Tim Kirk
1530 Armando Drive
Long Beach, Calif. 90807
April 30, 1972

Dear Dick:

Glad you like my stuff. For my master's on LOTR I'm doing a series of large paintings illustrating various scenes, dealing mostly with the concept of the protagonists vs. their environments; Frodo's isolation and aloneness, for example. Hopefully I'll have 20-25 acceptable pieces by the time I graduate. If I ever do, that is!

May 9, 1972

Dear Dick:

Orcrist 6 was much appreciated. I particularly enjoyed Eugene Warren's "Venus Redeemed" and Professor Kilby's piece on Till We Have Faces (have you seen Imagination and the Spirit, by the way?)[a Festschrift for Kilby; see "In Review" on p. 29 for a brief note--RCW]. I'm not sure that artwork in profusion is really necessary to successful layout. Filler illos are nice to break up large bodies of type; and I think articles can be enhanced with specific illustrations accompanying them. But a large number of fanzines use artwork rather indiscriminately. At any rate, Orcrist was quite handsome technically.

Eugene Vinaver
2139 Lincolnwood Drive
Evanston, Ill. 60201
May 12, 1972

Dear Dick,

Your edition of C. S. Lewis's letters to me is wonderful, and I am delighted to have the latest No. of Orcrist (which, I am sure, C. S. L. would have liked too). Reading your edition of, and notes on, the letters I have come to understand--far better than I had done before--what it was that, in spite of the obvious intellectual sympathy between us, separated our approaches to literary problems, especially medieval ones, from one another. The version of the Rise of Romance which Lewis had read was, of course, a very early and very unsatisfactory one in many ways, but the things to which he objected in it are the things which are still there and in which I still believe. It all turns on the problem of 'art and nature', and our disputatio in Bennett's book of essays is in a way a culmination of this controversy: Lewis saw nature at work where I could only see art. There is a very fundamental difference there, which would be worth exploring further because it involves the whole question of what literary art really is.

# Tolkien's Creative Technique: BEOWULF & THE HOBBIT

- Bonniejean Christensen

In his essay "On Fairy-Stories" J. R. R. Tolkien speaks of recovery as one of the aims of fantasy, recovery in his sense including "return and renewal of health," or "the regaining of a clear view."[1] Recovery is seeing with fresh perspective, with new eyes, things which have lost their meaning through familiarity:

> I do not say 'seeing things as they are' and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'--as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity--from possessiveness (p. 57).

It is possible to consider The Hobbit[2] as a fresh vision of the world of Beowulf[3]; indeed, it is possible to consider it as a retelling of Beowulf, but from a Christian rather than a pagan point of view, and as a fantasy rather than an elegy--as Tolkien calls the old English poem in his significant essay "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics."[4]

A comparison of the two works is possible on a very general level: each contains an unpromising hero who achieves heroic stature; each has monsters in an ascending scale of terror identified as "descendants of Cain," either literally or by implication; each has peripheral tales dealing with the histories of peoples, or dwarves in the case of The Hobbit; and each, of course, has at least one dragon. A much more detailed comparison can be made, one showing that Tolkien has recreated Beowulf through a complete retelling of it, but a retelling that denies the Anglo-Saxon belief that within Time every man is destroyed by evil, that the dragon waits at the end for every man.[5] It is a retelling that affirms the Christian belief that man can successfully withstand the dragon.

In this paper I am primarily concerned with internal evidence to demonstrate that The Hobbit, differing greatly in tone, is nonetheless a retelling of the incidents that comprise the plot and the digressions in both parts of Beowulf.

But there is also external evidence available that Tolkien was greatly concerned with Beowulf and with the nature of fantasy during the period of The Hobbit's composition. In 1936 he read his "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" before the British Academy. It was an essay that changed the direction of Beowulf criticism by insisting that Beowulf had to be read as a poem, a work of literature, rather than as a curious document illuminating history or religion or archaeology. The next year, 1937, he published in Great Britain The Hobbit, and the following year in the United States; it received favorable reviews in both countries, but was not a commercial success. Also in the year of its British publication he composed as an Andrew Lang Lecture "On Fairy-Stories," which he read at the University of St. Andrew. It is an essay that affirms the writer as a sub-creator, the Christian as an assistant "in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation" (p. 73). During the same period he composed "Leaf by Niggle"[6] and began work on The Lord of the Rings.[7] And both, differing so widely in scope and appeal, are examples of Tolkien's concept of "sub-creation" as developed in that essay. During this period he was also concerned with the revision of the Clark Hall translation of Beowulf and the Finnsburg fragment into modern English prose, a translation to which he contributed a preface.[8]

Allowing for the difference in tone, which is considerable, we can see the similarity in structure if we take the main sections of Beowulf and relate to them the corresponding sections of The Hobbit. Beowulf has of course been criticized for being so diffuse, for putting the monsters in the center and relegating the historical material to the edges in a hodge-podge of stories and allusions. Tolkien has reordered this material in The Hobbit, still keeping the monsters in the center, but interweaving the digressions so that they are an important part of the fabric, an integral part of the narrative. Both works can be divided into four sections, which, following Friedrich Klaeber, we can call "the monsters," "the descendant of Cain," "episodes and digressions," and "the dragon."[9]

The part of Beowulf dealing with the monsters begins with the prologue narrating the early history of the Danes: the genealogy of the royal house, the building of the hall at Heorot, and the destruction wrought by Grendel. The first chapter of The Hobbit has the early history of the dwarves, the establishment of their Kingdom under the Mountain, and the arrival there of Smaug and the consequent destruction. In the poem, fifteen companions, hearing of Grendel's depredations, cross the sea to put an end to them. In The Hobbit, fifteen companions (counting Gandalf) also set out, but one of them--Bilbo--is anything but an enthusiastic champion of the cause.

Beowulf has a brief review of Grendel's nature and companions: Grendel dwells in darkness, a descendant of Cain, as are trolls, elves, monsters, and giants.

> Þanon untydras eallе onwōcon,
> eotenas ond ylfe ond orcnēas,
> swylch gīgantas, Þa wiþ Gode wunnon
> lange Þrage. (ll. 111-114)
> [From thence sprang all bad breeds, trolls and elves and monsters--likewise the giants who for a long time strove against God.]

Tolkien expands this reference to several chapters in The Hobbit. The company meet these lesser evils on their way to the greater evil, the dragon--the same pattern Tolkien perceives in Beowulf.[10] The company first meet trolls and overcome them with the help of Gandalf. Next they encounter elves, which Tolkien has removed from the

Germanic catalogue of evil creatures and placed in the Celtic tradition of the "Good People." And then a glimpse of giants warring against nature, giants of whom Gandalf later says he will see about getting one to block up the entrance to the goblins' lair. And finally the monsters, the orcneas. The various references in Beowulf to Grendel and to orcneas [hell-corpses] are brought together in The Hobbit and applied to the goblins, which Tolkien calls ogres in his criticism and orcs in The Lord of the Rings.

In Beowulf we find: Þa cōm of mōre under misthleoðum Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bær [Then came from the moor under the misty hills Grendel walking, wearing God's anger] (ll. 710-711). Tolkien constructs the Misty Mountains and populates them with a breed vicious and soulless. (No need to remind you of the fire-lit cavern in which the Great Goblin holds court.) In Beowulf Grendel attacks an alerted troop--he is described as coming on a night in which all expect that scaduhelma gesceapu scriðan cwōman wan under wolcnum [shadowy shapes of darkness should come gliding, black beneath the clouds] (ll. 650-651). In The Hobbit Tolkien develops the scene by contrast: the company is unsuspecting and all the ponies are driven off to become a meal (substituting, after a fashion, for the one warrior eaten by Grendel), observed only by the restless, dreaming Bilbo who sees a crack in the wall but is so afraid he cannot call out.

In Beowulf the hero struggles with Grendel until the monster finds that Hyge wæs him hinfūs, wolde on heolster flēon, sēcan dēofla gedræg [His heart was eager to get away, he would flee to his cavern, seek his pack of devils] (ll. 755-756). Tolkien has the goblins, frightened by Gandalf's display of fireworks, fleeing to their cavern and their companion devils.

The special grudge the goblins have against the dwarves is reminiscent of the Freawaru episode (ll. 2024-2069), in which Beowulf speculates that a certain feud will be renewed when some old warrior draws his chief's attention to a sword now in the possession of the other side. A similar recognition scene occurs in the cavern in The Hobbit, not of an heirloom previously belonging to the goblins, but of a sword familiar to them because it had claimed so many of them as victims. As Grendel gives up his arm and shoulder, and eventually his life, to Beowulf, so the Great Goblin loses his life to the sword flashing in its own light, once he recognizes Orcrist [Goblin-cleaver]. Here we have Tolkien's skillful interweaving of an incident with the main plot, correcting a criticism frequently leveled at Beowulf, that it is not integrated, but a collection of incidents surrounding the plots of the two parts.

In the company's escape Bilbo is lost, and Chapter V, "Riddles in the Dark," introduces Gollum, a descendant of Cain, and the killer of his brother hobbit, as we are to learn in The Lord of the Rings. Gollum partakes of the nature of both Unferth and of Grendel's mother, and the scattered incidents concerning them in Beowulf are drawn together in The Hobbit. In Beowulf Unferth taunts the hero, or as the poem has it, onband beadurūne [unbound a battle-rune, or battle-runes] (l. 502), and one meaning of "battle-runes" is "riddles," as Tolkien himself points out elsewhere.[1] Beowulf accuses Unferth of fratricide. Each tells his own version of Beowulf's swimming contest with Breca (which Tolkien transforms later, in the battle with the giant spiders). And Unferth lends Beowulf his sword Hrunting, a name which can be glossed "Sting."

You will remember too that in Beowulf the hero risks his life in descending an unknown trail to a lair of water monsters and in a cavern there fights Grendel's mother, who is safe from his sword Hrunting, but vulnerable to a magic artifact he finds there--the sword with which he dispatches her.

From these varied elements Tolkien has created Gollum, who dwells on a rock in an underground lake, around which are many ancient creatures unknown even to the goblins. When Bilbo encounters Gollum, the two engage in a riddle contest in which Bilbo's life is the prize. In the end, it is not the sword which he is to name "Sting" that saves him, but a magic artifact, the ring, which he finds in the cavern.

When Bilbo reaches the surface again, he finds the dwarves lamenting his loss, as Beowulf found his men mourning for him.

In The Hobbit in Chapter VI the incident with the Goblins and the wargs in the woods incorporates the whole of the Finnsburg fragment. Tolkien has the Lord of the Eagles summon his warriors to him when he becomes aware, in the moonlight, of the flash of fire, the howling of the wolves, and "the glint of the moon on goblin spears and helmets, as long lines of the wicked folk crept down the hillsides from their gate and wound into the wood." How similar in detail to the Finnsburg fragment, where the mighty chief sees fire flashing:

ac hēr forþ berað, fugelas singað,
gylleð græghama, guðwudu hlynneð,
scyld scefte oncwyð. Nū scȳneð þes mōna
waðol under wolcnum; nū arisað wēadǣda,
āe ðisne folces nið fremman willað.
(ll. 5-9)

[but here they bear forth weapons, the birds sing, the grey-coated wolf howls, there is a din of spear, shield answers shaft. Now shines the moon fitful beneath clouds. Now arise evil deeds that will further this hatred of the people.]

The hatred is furthered, of course, giving the goblins one more score to settle at the Battle of Five Armies. This part of the story is not left a fragment, however; the eagles rescue the besieged companions, and Tolkien tells us, "So ended the adventures of the Misty Mountains."

What can be called "episodes and digressions" in Beowulf provides the details for the middle part of The Hobbit, primarily, though a few are used in the conclusion of the fantasy to tie up the loose ends of narrative. The middle part is concerned with Beorn, the giant spiders, and the Elvenking. Tolkien's narrative skill is nowhere more evident than in his successful reweaving of so many strands of story.

Among the episodes and digressions that Tolkien here incorporates from Beowulf are the feasting and gift-giving and recapitulation of events that occur at Hrothgar's table; Beowulf's following of the trail of Grendel to the mere where his mother's lair is; Beowulf's taking of trophies, specifically, Grendel's arm and later head; the story of the sea-battle with the nicors; and the story of the hateful queen Modthryth.

In The Hobbit we meet Beorn, a skin changer, who is sometimes a man and sometimes literally a beo-wulf, a bear. With him there is much feasting and retelling of events and, upon the company's departure, much giving of gifts. During the company's visit, Beorn retraces their steps to confirm their story, and returns with trophies of their enemies, a warg skin and a goblin head--close enough parallels to the concluding scenes in Hrothgar's hall.

Tolkien has his company plunging into the forest, which replaces the sea, and has as their antagonists giant spiders rather than the nicors, the sea monsters. In the passage in Beowulf which is the source, Beowulf is telling of the Breca incident, in which he and his companion are driven apart in the sea and the anger of the nicors is aroused. He continues:

Mē tō grunde tēah
fah fēondsca∂a, fæste hæfde
grim on grāpe hwæþre mē gyfeþe wear∂,
þæt ic āglæcan orde geræhte,
hildebille; heaþoræs fornam
mihtig meredēor þurh mīne hand. (ll. 553-558)
[A fierce cruel brute dragged me to the ground (bottom), held me grim in his grasp, but it was granted me to reach the monster with my sword-point, with my battle-blade. The war-stroke destroyed the mighty sea beast through my hand.]

Bilbo has an encounter in the dark with a great spider, after he and the dwarves are driven apart, and is held down while the spider attempts to poison him. He is able, with much struggling and the aid of his sword, to kill it. As a result of his single combat, Bilbo gains confidence in himself, knowing he is capable of heroism. The rest of his activities in freeing the dwarves correspond to Beowulf's description of the remainder of his battle with the nicors, though Bilbo is aided by a magic ring instead of by inhuman strength, as Beowulf is. Bilbo can say of the spiders what Beowulf says of the nicors: Næs hie ∂ære fylle gefēan hæfdon [They had no joy of that feast] (l. 562).

The company's next adventure is with the Elvenking, modeled on Modthryth, a queen the Beowulf-poet mentions (ll. 1931-1962). Modthryth in her youth was suspicious and proud and vengeful, but after her marriage to Offa came in time to use her offices well. When we first hear of her, she is moved by violence of mood because of fancied insult, ready to cast anyone into deadly bonds. This is approximately the situation, you will remember, between the Elvenking and Thorin. The Elvenking is easily offended and excessively suspicious and casts Thorin into a dungeon. Later the Beowulf-poet indicates that men at their ale-drinking (l. 1945) discuss the change in the queen's behavior; Tolkien used the drinking motif, applying it to the steward and chief guard whom Bilbo overhears discussing the banquet and the evening's work in sending empty barrels down to Laketown. The Beowulf-poet concludes with a description of Modthryth's activity after her marriage, in which she is praised for her goodness:

∂ær hio syð∂an well
in gumstōle, gōde mære,
līfgesceafta līfigende brēac,
hīolde hēahlufan wi∂ hæleþa brego.
(ll. 1951-1954).
[There afterwards on the throne she was famous for generosity, while she was alive, held high love toward the lord of heroes.]

Tolkien seems to have this passage in mind in describing the change in the Elvenking in later chapters, when the Elvenking comes to the aid of Bard and the men of Laketown, when he offers sanctuary to Bilbo after the latter's betrayal of Thorin, and when he names Bilbo "elf-friend and blessed."

In Beowulf the transition between Part I and Part II has the completion of the company's sea-crossing, their mooring their ship, their arrival at the stronghold, and their report to Hygelac, who gives great gifts to the hero and his men. In The Hobbit there are comparable events: barrels, instead of a ship, lashed to moorings; the company creating a stir by their arrival; and the banquet and the company's report to the Master, who, from mixed motives indeed, gives them provisions to continue their quest.

The remainder of Beowulf and of The Hobbit is concerned with the dragon. The Beowulf-poet summarizes three hundred years of dragon history in a few lines:

o∂ ∂æt ān ongan
deoroum nihtum draca rīcs [i] an,
sē ∂e on hēa(um) h(eaþ)e hord beweotode,
stānbeorh stēapne; stīg under læg
eldum uncu∂. (ll. 2210-2214)
[until in the dark nights a certain one began to hold sway--a dragon, who on the upland heath kept watch over a hoard, a steep stone-barrow; below lay a path unknown to men.]

The expansion of this material in The Hobbit is obvious; every detail is used literally. The lines actually dealing with the thief number less than two dozen in the poem. In The Hobbit these few lines are expanded to a chapter (XI). From Beowulf we learn also that a thief, not of his own accord, flees to the cave and sees the sleeping dragon and carries off a precious cup (ll. 2215-2230). We learn from a later retrospect that the dragon upon waking finds the footsteps of the one who tō for∂ gestōp dyrnan cræfte dracan hēafde nēah [had walked forward and close to the head of the dragon by his stealthy craft] (ll. 2289-2290). These events are telescoped in The Hobbit (Chapter XII), and we find Bilbo examining the sleeping dragon and his hoard and walking invisible near his head with the help of the magic ring. As the thief in Beowulf takes a cup for reparation, Bilbo takes one in reparation of the low opinion the dwarves still occasionally have of him: he is frightened, "but still he clutched the cup, and his chief thought was: 'I've done it! This will show them. "More like a grocer than a burglar" indeed! Well, we'll hear no more of that!'"

The Beowulf-poet next has a company of thirteen return with the unwilling thief to examine the treasure, and at the end of the poem has a group enter the cave to despoil it, a group led by one with a flaming torch. Tolkien combines these separate events. You will remember (Gandalf having left the group before the crossing of Mirkwood) the descent of Thorin and his twelve followers with--or more accurately, after--Bilbo when that burglar makes his third excursion into the cave, carrying a burning pine torch. And you will remember their taking wealth and armor and weapons, though Fili and Kili were less practical, spending time playing on the harps removed from the wall. You will remember, too, Bilbo's concealment of the Arkenstone. But more of that after the dragon.

Tolkien in The Hobbit patterns Smaug's behavior on that of Beowulf's dragon, but with a simpler and tidier chronology. In both the dragon is enraged by the theft, examining his barrow carefully for the thief, and each waits until nightfall to descend on the countryside to take vengeance. Even the scorching of the hero in Beowulf is included in The Hobbit, but shifted to the time of the interview between Smaug and Bilbo. You will remember that their battle consisted of a riddle contest, ending abruptly when Bilbo taunts the sensitive Smaug, who in turn singes the hair of the fleeing hobbit. Thus Tolkien reduces to a verbal contest the battle between Beowulf and the dragon, as he had earlier reduced the fight between Beowulf and Grendel's dam.

For the fight between Bard and Smaug in The Hobbit, Tolkien draws his details from the lay of Sigemund, recited in the first part of Beowulf after the visit to the mere (ll. 874-914). Bard, of course, performs in The Hobbit the actions attributed to Sigemund, killing the dragon and having great prosperity after the death of a greedy and battle-prone ruler. And like Sigemund, he is of royal descent, though this is recorded of Sigemund not in Beowulf but in the Voluspá. And Sigemund's foe, the Beowulf-poet tells us, is burned up in his own heat: Wyrm hāt gemealt (l. 897). Smaug suffers (Chapter XIV) the same fate, falling on the town: "His last throes splintered it to sparks and gledes. The lake roared in. A vast steam leaped up, white in the sudden dark under the moon. There was a hiss, a gushing swirl, and then silence." Here again Tolkien has combined separate incidents from Beowulf: it is at the end of the poem that

the warriors push the dragon over the cliff into the sea.

Through the last part of The Hobbit there are some episodes and digressions woven in, primarily those dealing with the eorclanstanas and the various greedy rulers who were unjust to their faithful men. Eorclanstanas is a word occurring once in Beowulf, where it signifies "precious jewels" and has the connotations of "brilliant" and "opalescent" (l. 1208). Tolkien produces the Arkenstone, the heart of Thorin, and interweaves three of the digressions in the poem to develop the importance of the Arkenstone and to expand on the theme of the destructiveness of lust. One digression (ll. 1197-1201) seems to indicate that the necklace worn by the goddess Freya at one time was stolen from the Gothic king Eormenric by the betrayer Hama. In The Hobbit the theft of the stone is developed by Bilbo's stealing Thorin's Arkenstone (Chapter XIII) and his later giving it to Bard to facilitate treaty discussions (Chapter XVI). Another digression, Heremod's tragedy (ll. 1709-1922), is paralleled by Thorin's tragedy: greed turns each of the rulers into a cruel and miserly tyrant. Heremod, the "war-minded," is the prototype of Thorin under the spell of the Arkenstone, for of Heremod it was said ne gewēox hē him tō willan, ac tō wæl-fealle ond tō deaðcwalum Deniga lēodum [he grew great not for their joy, but for their slaughter, for the destruction of Danish folk] (ll. 1711-1712). The third digression is Hygelac's fall (ll. 1202-1214), which refers to Hygelac's last expedition and terms it both unwise and fatal. It is paralleled in The Hobbit (Chapter XVII) by Thorin's last rash battle, which brings destruction on himself and on "many men and many dwarves, and many a fair elf that should have lived yet long ages merrily in the wood."

After Beowulf kills the dragon and himself dies, his people fear that old enmities will be recalled and old hatreds renewed through warfare. In a retrospect the messenger who reports his death also recites the events that occurred long before at the battle of Ravenswood and predicts the battle to come. This material Tolkien applies in The Hobbit to the events after the death of Smaug: the preparations of goblins and others to attack the defenders of the Mountain and, as it came to be called in the history of Middle-earth, the Battle of Five Armies that took place at Ravenhill.

In both Beowulf and The Hobbit there is an old feud and the motive of revenge: Ongentheow to avenge his queen; the goblins their Great Goblin. In both there is the initial success of the attackers--the Swedes and the goblins--and the withdrawal of the defenders--the Geats to Ravenswood and the elves to Ravenhill. The fight, in both, lasts until dawn. The defenders are in despair until their chief arrives to rally the forces. In Beowulf:

> Frōfor eft gelamp
> sārigmōdum somod ærdæge,
> syððan hīe Hygelāces horn ond bȳman,
> gealdor ongēaton, þā se gōda cōm
> lēoda dugoðe on lāst faran. (ll. 2941-2945)
> [Relief came afterwards with the dawn to the sad-hearted ones when they heard Hygelac's horn and trumpet sounding, when the herd came on their track with a picked body of troops.]

In The Hobbit Tolkien expands on the same incident:

> Suddenly there was a great shout, and from the Gate came a trumpet call. They had forgotten Thorin! Part of the wall, moved by levers, fell outward with a crash into the pool. Out leapt the King under the Mountain, and his companions followed him. Hood and cloak were gone; they were in shining armour, and the red light leapt from their eyes. In the gloom the great dwarf gleamed like gold in a dying fire.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'To me! To me! Elves and Men! To me! O my kinsfolk!' he cried, and his voice shook like a horn in the valley.

Noting the differences in chronology, we see that Beowulf has time for a dying speech, and so does Thorin. Beowulf can look upon death knowing he has not broken the two great pagan prohibitions--false swearing and the murder of kin--and that he has merited the lof, the praise, of his peers. Within the context of his pagan world, Tolkien sees him achieving all that can be expected of a man who must lose his battle within Time.[12] Thorin (Chapter XVIII) does not have that comfort--the death of a good pagan, for he has lied to Bard in refusing to reward his aid and he has caused the death of kin through his pride--but he achieves a reconciliation of himself to the world and to what lies beyond Time. He renews his friendship with Bilbo and he realizes the little worth of the treasure for which he is sacrificing his life. It is his nephews who achieve the pagan ideal, the praise of their peers, for "Fili and Kili had fallen defending him with shield and body, for he was their mother's elder brother."

Both Beowulf and Thorin receive a burial worthy of their station. The poem ends at this point, but The Hobbit concludes where it began, at Bilbo's hobbit-hole under the Hill. Tolkien interweaves the remaining episodes and digressions from Beowulf in order to complete this circle of the year and the circle of the journey. As one queen, Wealtheow, gives Beowulf a precious circlet--Brūc ðisses bēages, Bēowulf lēofa (l. 1216)--and he in turn gives it to another queen, Hygd--wræ-licne wundurmaððum [a splendid wondrous treasure] (l. 2173)--so Dain, the new King under the Mountain, gives Bilbo a necklace of silver and pearls and he in turn presents it to the Elvenking, who names him "elf-friend and blessed." We are reminded of the king in Widsith whose name Aelfwine can be translated as "Elf-friend," who, we are told, was most liberal in bestowing gifts:

> sē hæfde moncynnes mīne gefræge,
> lēohteste hond lofes tō wyrcenne,
> heortan unhnēaweste hringa gedales,
> beorhtra bēaga. (ll. 71-74)
> [he had of all mankind, as I have heard, the readiest hand to work praise, the most liberal heart in the distribution of rings, bright necklaces.]

The second series of Swedish wars alluded to in Beowulf (ll. 2354-2396) are transformed in The Hobbit into the history of Bard subsequent to the Battle of Five Armies, when he becomes protector of the Master of Lake-town (Chapter XIV and XIX), as Beowulf became protector of Heardred, the son of the dead Hygelac, and of the widowed queen Hygd, and later when Bard becomes Lord of Dale (Chapter XIX), as Beowulf became king after Heardred's death.

"The Song of Creation" (ll. 90-98), occurring near the beginning of Beowulf, is described by Tolkien in his essay on Beowulf as "the song of the minstrel in the days of untroubled joy, before the assault of Grendel, telling of the Almighty and His fair creation" (p. 101). In The Hobbit this song is represented by Gandalf's speech at the end of the story. It is a speech that affirms divine creation and preservation and is the only direct reference in the story to an ordering force in the universe.

Selectivity is Tolkien's hallmark in applying traditional material to his own literary works. Besides using both the plot and all the incidents from Beowulf, he reworks smaller units of material. He distributes the characteristics of the hero Beowulf over various individuals in The Hobbit, including on occasion Gandalf, Bilbo, Thorin, and Bard. He draws upon his concept of Heorot as a lighted place in the dark night of evil for

the creation of various places of refuge in The Hobbit--Elrond's house, the cavern in the Misty Mountains, Beorn's hall, and the dwarves' kingdom under the Mountain. He elaborates on casual references to places and objects in Beowulf to create important matter in The Hobbit, including the Misty Mountains and the Arkenstone. He borrows selectively and creatively from other sources--the Eddas, Widsith, and the Finnsburg fragment.

Tolkien has used the general techniques of expansion, transposition, and negation, the statement of the contrary, in transforming Beowulf into The Hobbit. He has converted what he calls in his criticism of Beowulf "an heroic-elegiac poem" (p. 85) into an affirmation of faith by transforming the theme. Beowulf he sees as an elegy on man's heroic struggle against inevitable defeat in Time; The Hobbit, his response to this concept, is the affirmation that man has the possibility of resisting and overwhelming evil within Time. It illustrates a principle of the eucatastrophe, the consolation of the happy ending (p. 68).

Tolkien's literary work derives its scope from his medieval studies and its form from his theory of sub-creation, the rearranging--in the secondary world of the artist--the components perceived in the primary world. He has rearranged material in Beowulf as he interprets it from his own scholarly and Christian perspective to create The Hobbit. He has given us the opportunity for seeing with new eyes things which have lost their meaning through familiarity, for "seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them."

FOOTNOTES

[1]P. 57 of the revised essay in Tree and Leaf (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1965; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

[2](London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1937, 1951; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938, 1958; New York: Ballantine Books, 1965, 1966; London: Longmans, Green, 1966.) My citations are to chapter numbers.

[3]My text is Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, ed. Friedrich Klaeber, 2nd ed. (New York: D. C. Heath, 1928), since it is the edition Tolkien would have known in the thirties.

[4]Proceedings of the British Academy, XXII (1963), 245-295. Reprinted in An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), and in The Beowulf Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Donald K. Fry (Englewood Cliffs, 1968). My citations are to Nicholson.

[5]"Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," p. 67.

[6]Publication came some years later in the Dublin Review, CCXVI (January 1945); twenty years afterwards it was reprinted with "On Fairy-Stories" in Tree and Leaf; and a year later both were reprinted in The Tolkien Reader (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966).

[7]Consisting of three volumes, "The Fellowship of the Ring," "The Two Towers," and "The Return of the King" (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1954-55; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954-56; New York: Ace Books, 1965. Ibid. Rev. ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1965. Ibid., 2nd ed. London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1966; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967. Ibid. 1 vol. paperback, omitting the Appendices except for "Aragorn and Arwen." London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1968).

[8]"Prefatory Remarks" to Beowulf and the Finnsburg Fragment, A Translation into Modern English Prose, by John R. Clark Hall (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1940).

[9]Tolkien attacks the general position held by Chambers, Klaeber, et al., but he does not deal specifically with Klaeber. Yet much of his discussion parallels Klaeber's introduction.

[10]"Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," p. 86.

[11]"Prefatory Remarks," p. xi.

[12]The Anglo-Saxon's doom Tolkien calls in his essay on Beowulf "this paradox of defeat inevitable yet unacknowledged," concluding that "It is in Beowulf that a poet has drawn the struggle in different proportions, so that we may see man at war with the hostile world, and his inevitable overthrow in Time" (p. 67). Beowulf has the comfort of knowing at his death that he has shown courage, "the exaltation of undefeated will" (p. 66). He knows that his foes are God's also:

> Man alien in a hostile world, engaged in a struggle he cannot win while the world lasts, is assured that his foes are the foes also of Dryhten, that his courage noble in itself is also the highest loyalty: so said thyle and clerk (p. 78).

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COMING EVENTS

**The Science Fiction Research Association (see announcement on p. 3) will sponsor the 6th Secondary Universe Conference, on the theme of "The Writer & Science Fiction," on September 14-17, 1973 at Pennsylvania State University. For information write to either Dean Arthur O. Lewis or Prof. Philip Klass, Co-Chairmen, 104 Sparks Building, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802.**

**There are continuing seminars on "The Medieval Tradition in Modern Literature" at both the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association and the annual Conference on Medieval Studies. MLA members interested in attending that seminar (remember there would only be room for about 35 people) may write to the chairman, Rose-Ann Martin, 470 Winspear Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14212. MLA also devotes a seminar to science fiction every year; for details write to Thomas D. Clareson, Box 3186, College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio 44691. And let us also mention that at MLA's meeting in Chicago this December there will be a new seminar on "Myth & Character in American Juvenile Literature," chaired by Ivor Rogers, Box 1068, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. As for the ninth annual Conference on Medieval studies (mentioned above), this will be held in May, 1974 and will feature scholarly papers on all aspects of the Middle Ages as well as entertainments in the form of music, plays, perhaps a tournament, and the like; for information, write to George Demetrakopoulos, Assistant Director, The Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001.**

**There will be a Tolkien section at the 1974 Eurocon (European Science Fiction Convention). Jan Howard Finder is coordinating this, and is seeking papers. Write to him at: p. A. Staatl. Neuspr. Gymnasium, 544 Mayen, Am. Heckenberg, Deutschland.**

**As you see, we have begun to accept advertising in Orcrist. We would prefer to do this on an exchange basis: we will run an ad for your publication in return for your running one for Orcrist. If you insist on cash payment, the standard rates will apply: $15 for a full page, $10 for a half page, and $5 for a quarter page. In either case, copy sent to us should be camera-ready. A page is 11"x13", a half-page is 5¼"x 6½", and a quarter-page is 5¼"x 3¼". There will be an additional charge for half-toning, or if it is necessary to adjust the size of copy.**

# FARMER GILES OF HAM: What Is It?

## - J. A. Johnson

Like The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien's short story, Farmer Giles of Ham, owes part of its considerable charm to the reader's frequent delighted recognition of a name, an incident, a character, a bit of dialogue, a motif, or a theme from some medieval work. One can find brief echoes of the Icelandic saga, the chronicle, and the fable, and substantial reminders of the romance, the fabliau, and the epic.

Primarily, Farmer Giles of Ham is an epic, folk variety; however, it is the interweaving of the other genres with the epic elements which makes the tale such fun. There are, for example, echoes of the Icelandic sagas, specifically the Grettissaga: first, in the use of rather wry, gnomic utterances; second, in the luck motif; and third, in the confrontation scenes between the hero and an adversary. In the Grettissaga we find:

> The moon was shining very brightly outside, with light clouds passing over it and hiding it now and again. At the moment when Glam fell, the moon shone forth, and Glam turned his eyes up towards it. . . [When Grettir] saw the horrible rolling of Glam's eyes, his heart sank so utterly that he had not strength to draw his sword. . .[1]

In Farmer Giles:

> The moon was low behind him, and he could see nothing worse than the long black shadows of bushes and trees. . . . Suddenly up over the edge of it [a hill] the giant's face appeared, pale in the moonlight, which glittered in his large round eyes. . . [Giles] was scared out of his wits.[2]

Note the parallels: the moon, the eyes of the monster, and the terror of the hero. By pure ill-luck Grettir, though he kills Glam, is doomed; by pure good luck (actually hitting the giant when he pulls the trigger of the blunderbuss), Giles is saved.

The luck motif of the Grettissaga, in which all of Grettir's setbacks and his final doom are determined by chance bad luck, finds a reverse parallel in Farmer Giles, where events which might have proven disastrous turn into triumphs, thanks to strokes of good luck.

Perhaps the greatest similarity between Tolkien's story and the Grettissaga can be illustrated by means of the gnomic utterances which typify each. When Grettir saw his horse mangled by Glam, he might have said, "This is not the end of the affair, mark my words."[3] In Norway, to undergo the ordeal, Grettir fails because he is verbally attacked by an "unclean spirit"[4] disguised as a boy, whom Grettir strikes almost hard enough to kill. At this moment the hero might have said, "A bad omen."[5] After Glaum, the lazy thrall who betrays Grettir, has gone to pull up the ladder on Drangey, Grettir might have said, "A worm won't return, say what you like. But no good will come of it either way."[6]

Similarly, it might have been said of Ham's blacksmith, "the friend aye warns his friend of ill."[7] Of Giles' battles, before which he is always abandoned by his supposed supporters, it might have been said, "Alone in misfortune is worst,"[8] but considering the outcome of those battles, it might also have been said, "The likely may happen--also the unlikely"[9] or "Luck is one thing, brave deeds another."[10] The interchangeability of the Grettissaga gnomes and those of Farmer Giles indicates their similarity.

The parallels between Farmer Giles and the chronicles are of a different nature. There are no stylistic similarities, nor any similarities of character, unless one compares Geoffrey's giants with Tolkien's. But there are other links; one is the author's assertion that the work is a translation of a text whose credentials are described at length and in which the reader believes not at all. The dedication prefacing Geoffrey's "history" claims:

> Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, . . . offered me a certain most ancient book in the British language. . . . At his request . . . have I been at the pains to translate this volume into the Latin tongue.[11]

Tolkien announces:

> Of the history of the Little Kingdom few fragments have survived; but by chance an account of its origin has been preserved. . . . [This is] a translation of this curious tale, out of its very insular Latin into the modern tongue of the United Kingdom. . .[12]

Another parallel is the folk-etymology of place names, with which both Tolkien and the chroniclers enliven their works. A third similarity is that the various chroniclers of Britain, like Tolkien, claim to be recounting a history of Great Britain in ancient times. Farmer Giles of Ham could almost be a chapter from Monmouth's great work.

In the chronicles there are giants and dragons, as there are in Farmer Giles, but these creatures appear in several other genres as well; they are not distinctively chronicle beings. But where, except in the fable and its close cousins, can one find beasts as highly verbal as the dog, Garm, and the dragon, Chrysophylax? Caxton's translation of one of Aesop's fables has a dragon who sounds like Tolkien's,[13] but Garm and Chrysophylax are wittier than Caxton's beasts; one is reminded more of the creatures in Henryson's fables, not so much by what they say but by the tone. The pathetic or tragic tone is avoided and humor evoked at each turning point, thanks to the dialogue. In one of Henryson's fables, the wolf, who intends mayhem, is playing priest to the penitent fox, and he asks, "Will thou tak pane for thy transgressioun?" to which the fox replies, "Na, Schir, consider my Complexioun."[14] In the fable of the country

mouse and the city mouse, the Christmas feast is interrupted by the steward, the mice run for their lives, and the author comments, "Thay taryit not to wesche."[15]

Similarly, in Farmer Giles, Garm flees, terrified, from the giant to his master, but the note of terror is short-lived. Garm turns Giles' query, "What's come to you, you fool?" into a play on words with his response, "Nothing, but something's come to you. . . . There's a giant in your fields."[16] Giles' meetings with the dragon are potentially serious and dangerous, but one cannot worry about the fate of a hero whose adversary, told that he should beg pardon for causing "bother" replies, "I do indeed! I wish you had not troubled to come."[17] A reader simply cannot feel pity or terror when he is chuckling.

The fable is a distant cousin of the fabliau, and it is the fabliau genre, more than the fable, which finds analogues in Farmer Giles. The fabliau elements in Tolkien's tale have little to do with the plot, unless one wishes to make something of the two window scenes between Giles and his dog, but much to do with the characters, the dialogue, and a few motifs. The major characters in fabliau are primarily bourgeois--merchants, millers, clerics, smiths, and farmers. The fabliau author presents his characters in a few deft strokes, resulting in caricature more than portrait. The blacksmith of Ham is "a slow, gloomy man, vulgarly known as Sunny Sam . . . [who] never whistled at his work, unless some disaster (such as frost in May) had duly occurred after he had foretold it."[18] The miller is the sort of person for whom "to see Giles in a real fix seemed worth [any] risk"[19] and who sniggers a lot.

Fabliau dialogue is colloquial, earthy, and natural. None of the formalism of epic or romance here, nor any of the speechifying. The characters talk to one another, in conversational give and take; insults and innuendos abound: "So! Are you sneaking home to me again--idle and empty-handed?"[20] "Be quiet, good-for-nothing."[21] "You are as drunk as a dog. . . . Who's been wrestling with you?"[22] "Drat you, dog! What be you a-doing? . . . good-for-nothing nosey-parker."[23] Only the last of these is from Farmer Giles.

Fabliau characters are not particularly brave; when cornered, they often grovel. In one fabliau, a miscreant pleads:

> "Sire," he said, "for the mercy of God,
> If I have done you wrong in any way,
> I will make it up to you without argument;
> Willingly--as much as you want--
> I will give you riches and money"[24]

Compare this with Chrysophylax' plea:

> Good people, don't kill me! I am very rich.
> I will pay for all the damage I have done. . .
> I will give you each a really good present. . .[25]

Frequently, too, a character's thought and speech are at odds:

> He thought: "I'll be a villain!
> If I didn't need you so,
> I'd maim your calves and cows
> and break your back . . ."
> Sweetly he began to speak:
> "Don't be angry, dear piper."[26]

The passage is similar to one from Tolkien's story:

> It was years since [the dragon] had tasted a large fat man. He had now made up his mind to try this easy meat, and he was only waiting until the old fool was off his guard . . . "Excuse me," said he. "Haven't you dropped something? . . . My mistake! I beg your pardon."[27]

A frequent fabliau motif is the middle of the night alarm ("For God's sake get up!"[28]) which is received less than graciously ("Be off, you son of a mare!"[29]). Giles' reception of Garm's summons is similar: "Help!" cries Garm; "Shut up!" responds Giles.[30] Not uncommonly, the alarm leads to a fight in which at least some of the damage done the combatants happens more by accident than intent. Giles' firing of the blunderbuss is not deliberate; similarly, knowing nothing of dragon anatomy, Giles luckily lands a blow on the joint of Chrysophylax' wing, incapacitating it for days, and ensuring victory. In Chaucer's Miller's Tale and Reeve's Tale, the most severe injuries result from chance, not malice, as is true of the analogues to both tales. In the fabliau, as in Farmer Giles, no one of note is killed; indeed, rarely is really serious damage done.

Finally, if fabliaux may be said to share a common theme, it might be stated: "One who deserves a put down gets what he deserves." King Augustus Bonifacius Ambrosius Aurelianus Antoninus etc. is certainly deserving.

Although Farmer Giles is not a fabliau, the numerous fabliau elements which it does contain add to its charm, especially when one meets them juxtaposed with romance characteristics. The romance theme of the hero's preparation for knighthood[31] is closely paralleled in Tolkien's story. The theme has several typical situations:

1. The attention of the court is drawn to the hero. In Farmer Giles, the hero's victory over the giant gains the court's attention.

2. Dubbing is mentioned, but the hero is not yet ready. When Giles' friends suggest that he could be knighted, his response is, "Nay! Dubbing is not for my sort."[32]

3. The hero is knighted. In Tolkien's tale, the actual knighting is an unintentional act on the part of the king, and the courtiers ignore it, but the fact is clear:

   > Farmer Giles knelt before the King, when he was presented; but the King told him to rise, and actually patted him on the back.[33]

4. A setback occurs, following which the hero is summoned to a new adventure. Chrysophylax fails to show up on time, and the king departs, furious; shortly thereafter Giles is summoned to lead the knights to the dragon.

5. The hero's new status is made public. "'Give me my sword!' shouted the King," using the commoner's "I"; "'Give us your crown!' said Giles," using the royal "we."[34]

The parallels between Farmer Giles and the romance one thinks of first when Tolkien's name is mentioned, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, are numerous. The main adventure in both starts on New Year's Day, and numerous other feast days make up the calendar of events. In Tolkien's story there are the feast of St. Michael (the day of the king's first letter), Twelfth Night and Epiphany (when Giles' armor is being made), the feast of St. Hilarius and St. Felix (when the dragon is due back), the feast of Candlemas (the day of the second battle), and St. Matthias' Day (renowned in memory as the day Giles confronted the king on the bridge). Other parallels include the fact that the hero must seek his adversary before the second adventure can occur; the brief suspension of the narrative to describe an important piece of equipment (in Farmer Giles, the blunderbuss; in Sir Gawain, the pentangle); the expectation on the hero's part that the second adventure will have a miserable outcome for him. (As far as Gawain is concerned, "hym no gomen þozt"[35]; Giles, when offered a rope, asks, "What for? To hang myself?"[36]) and, Giles, like Gawain, has, at the crucial moment, "no fere bot his fole."[37]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is rich in symbolism, especially with respect to colors, which has been discussed at length and need not be reiterated here, except to note the parallels between the green of Sir Gawain and the red of Farmer Giles. Giles' beard is red, the giant has a copper pot, red hands are mentioned, as are red faces, the metal rings for Giles' armor are found in a rust heap, the lightning is red, the knights are red, the king is red, the proclamations are in red ink, the seal is red, and the dragon has red eyes. (So, by the way, does the Green Knight.) Lest the reader miss the symbolism, Tolkien clearly draws attention to it: Giles pulls out a hanky when he approaches the dragon, and it is "green, not red."[38] Who ever saw a man with a green hanky? Obviously, the author wishes to remind the reader of the dominant color symbol of Sir Gawain so that the symbolic significance of red in Farmer Giles will not be overlooked. Red is a common symbol for battle, courage, rage, and royalty; in Tolkien's story it represents them all in turn. The tale is a tale of great battles, so red is the expected color symbol in the battle scenes. Giles is red, because he is courageous and because he has the necessary qualities for kingship. The king and his courtiers are red, primarily because they are angry; they are also royal, but their royal redness, unlike Giles' (remember that red beard), is not a natural characteristic but a transitory phenomenon. I suppose, with regard to the king and his court, one might also consider red as the color of embarrassment.

One final similarity between Farmer Giles and Sir Gawain is the bargain motif. In Sir Gawain the bargain forms the plot base, potential disaster is the result of breaking it, and the romance ends relatively happily because Gawain's failure to keep his bargain is only a partial failure. In Farmer Giles the dragon breaks the first bargain and puts his life in jeopardy; the second bargain is upheld, and all ends happily.

Basically, Farmer Giles of Ham is not a romance, but a folk epic. Like Beowulf, it involves three battles, two of which form a single structural unit complemented by the parallel unit composed of the third battle. Not only the general structure of Farmer Giles is epic; so, also, are the formal details making up the substructures. In a paper given at this conference a couple of years ago by Donald Fry, concerning the themes and type scenes of Elene, the theme of "The Hero on the Beach" and the type scene of "The Approach to Battle" were discussed and their presence in other Old English poetry, including Beowulf, was noted.[39] Observe what is going on in Tolkien's story, not just once, but three times: the giant's presence is announced, and 1) Giles is, figuratively, on the beach--stranded. He must do something. 2) His retainer, Garm, is with him. 3) The moon is shining. 4) Giles begins his journey to the fields. 5) He passes through an open door. Here, we have the five elements of the Hero on the Beach theme. It overlaps with the Approach to Battle type scene: Giles' wife commands his advance; Giles arms himself by taking the blunderbuss; Giles advances to the field; the intent--to protect his property--is stated; the beasts of battle are there (but very subtly; Garm does double duty as both retainer and wolf figure. The raven and the eagle are there in the guise of dragon flies--and note the foreshadowing of the next adversary Giles will have to face); the attitude of the hero is stated: he's scared but resolute; it is the giant who hastens, away from the field.

Leading up to the first confrontation between Giles and the dragon, we have the theme again: the hero is on the beach (actually the doorstep); with his retainers--the miller, smith, and parson; the sun is shining brightly; the journey is begun; and the door to battle is a bridge. Again the theme and type scene overlap; the comments of his friends, the memories of the epic tales of his youth, and an ample indulgence in bottled courage all command Giles to advance; in the arming scene, the reader is told all the details of the leather jerkin and the sewing on of the rings; Giles and his friends assemble; Giles advances; with the intention of finding the dragon; the wolf is there (Garm, again); Giles hastens, slowly; and his attitude is one of wondering whether perhaps he had taken a pint too many.

Both the theme and the type scene appear a third time, with artistic variation, when Giles and Chrysophylax meet again. Giles is on the beach again (more accurately, on the carpet); with his retainers, the king's courtiers, who snub him; it is the feast of Candlemas, a very adroit allusion to the flashing light; the journey begins; and the door of the treasure cave is described. The type scene begins with the king's summons and continues with a reference to the knights' armor, and that of Giles'; the assembly, described in greater detail this time; the advance; the statement of intent (find the dragon and force him to keep his promise of treasure); the beasts of battle (Garm howls); the hastening, which is mostly backwards; and the statement of the attitudes of the hero and his retainers.

There are other type scenes in Farmer Giles, reinforcing its epic quality: the feast, the arrival of the messenger, and the battle, which contains such events as 1) the hero's confrontation with the foe, 2) the failure of a trusted piece of battle gear (in Giles' case, the horse goes lame before the final battle), 3) the abandonment of the hero, and 4) the false report of the hero's death. There is also at least one other epic theme, which might be called The Hero in Peril, involving such elements as 1) the descent or entry into an enclosed place, 2) the inscribed sword of mysterious antecedents and powers, 3) the rope (actually, I am not sure that this is a part of the theme, but Grettir would be in that pool below the troll-house yet if it hadn't been for his rope[40]), and 4) the specific statement that twelve retainers accompany the hero, but are not present at the battle. Tolkien handles this one nicely; Giles picks up his "dozen likely young fellows"[41] after the final battle.

One last Beowulf parallel in Farmer Giles is that the hero becomes king. In the romances, the social position of the characters does not alter. One may have princes disguised as persons of lower rank, but neither farmers nor warriors become kings. Only in the epic do inherently noble qualities lead one to noble rank.

Three medieval genres, then--epic, romance, and fabliau--contribute in a major way to the structure of Farmer Giles of Ham, and three others--fable, chronicle, and saga--contribute in a minor way. There is, however, a bit more to the tale's charm, which has to do with what medieval genres Farmer Giles is not. The medieval ballad is not actually included in the tale, but the ballad of the bridge, "in a hundred mock-heroic couplets"[42] is mentioned. There is no bestiary, but we are provided with a great deal of dragon lore, though it is not given moral signification. The dialogue between the characters is not a debate, although some of the snotty comments remind one fleetingly of The Owl and the Nightingale; nor is the dialogue dramatic in the narrow sense, though Mrs. Giles and Noah's wife sound like sisters. There is no medieval epistle; the two letters from the king are actually proclamations, in proper proclamation form, with much use of the royal "we" and a good interlarding of parallel construction and Latin diction. Home truths are uttered, but not in a homiletic or proverbial framework, though there are gnomic utterances, as we have noted. The giant and his environs are described rather in the fashion of Mandeville's travel essays, but how else does one describe such things? There are no lyrics in Farmer Giles, either; people do sing, we are told, but neither words nor tunes are given. Finally, I will stick my neck out and assert that Farmer Giles of Ham is not an allegory; one could attempt an allegorical interpretation, but, remembering Tolkien's remarks

concerning critics who allegorized Beowulf to the point of farce, I won't.

Whether or not Tolkien consciously intended to incorporate a variety of medieval genres in his tale does not really matter. One who spends a lifetime steeping himself in matters medieval will predictably range widely, willfully or not, once he decides to write a tale involving more than one genre. I like to think that Tolkien deliberately included, in Farmer Giles of Ham, every genre I have mentioned, and perhaps some I have missed, purely for the delight of us, his readers.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The Saga of Grettir the Strong, trans. G. A. Hight, ed. Peter Foote (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1965), p. 98.

[2]J. R. R. Tolkien, "Farmer Giles of Ham," in The Tolkien Reader (New York: Ballantine, 1966), pp. 15-16.

[3]Tolkien, p. 67.

[4]Grettissaga, p. 109.

[5]Tolkien, p. 55.

[6]Tolkien, p. 47.

[7]Grettissaga, p. 28.

[8]Grettissaga, p. 34.

[9]Grettissaga, p. 30.

[10]Grettissaga, p. 95.

[11]Geoffrey of Monmouth, History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Sebastian Evans (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1958), pp. 1-2.

[12]Tolkien, p. 7.

[13]Book five, fable 8, "The serpent and the labourer."

[14]Robert Henryson, "The Taill how this foirsaid Tod maid his Cõfessioun to Freir Wolf Waitskaith," in The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, ed. H. Harvey Wood (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 27.

[15]Henryson, p. 13.

[16]Tolkien, p. 13.

[17]Tolkien, p. 61.

[18]Tolkien, p. 35.

[19]Tolkien, p. 34.

[20]Apuleius, "Tale of a Poor Fellow's Cuckoldry," in The Literary Context of Chaucer's Fabliaux, ed. Larry D. Benson and Theodore M. Andersson (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1971), p. 7.

[21]Guerin, "De Berangier au Lonc Cul," in Benson and Andersson, p. 25.

[22]"The Students' Adventure," in Benson and Andersson, p. 121.

[23]Tolkien, p. 13.

[24]Guerin, "De Berangier au Lonc Cul," in Benson and Andersson, p. 21.

[25]Tolkien, pp. 45-6.

[26]Heinrich Wittenweiler, "The Ring," in Benson and Andersson, p. 42.

[27]Tolkien, pp. 42-3.

[28]Wittenweiler, "The Ring," in Benson and Andersson, p. 42.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Tolkien, p. 14.

[31]The theme of the hero's preparation for knighthood is most completely developed in the Gareth/Parsifal romances.

[32]Tolkien, p. 29.

[33]Tolkien, p. 49.

[34]Tolkien, p. 71.

[35]Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 20; "no pleasure it seemed to him."

[36]Tolkien, p. 54.

[37]Sir Gawain, p. 20; "no companion but his horse."

[38]Tolkien, p. 40.

[39]Donald K. Fry, "Themes and Type Scenes in Elene, 1-113," Speculum, xliv (1969), pp. 35-45; originally presented at the Fourth Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, March, 1968.

[40]Grettissaga, p. 176.

[41]Tolkien, p. 66.

[42]Tolkien, p. 74.

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**The Medieval Tradition in Modern Poetry**

**or**

**Rime Couronnée à la Nouveau-Née**

**Cries à tue-tête**
**Jusqu'à ce que tu tettes.**

**Ma mie, ne cries mie "Mies!"**
**Mais (ne déplaise à Rabelais) "Lait!"**
**Jamais tu ne demandas qu'il t'en vînt en vain,**
**Après boire ce qui lui plaît mieux que vingt vins,**
**Mon petit oison, petit toison d'or, s'endort.**

**Jeanne LaMère de Belges**

# Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain & the Welsh Tradition

- Elizabeth Lane

Unlike the Arthurian matter, the myths and legends of Wales have only a small canon of literature based upon them. Yet at least one twentieth-century work has made a significant addition to the tradition of the Triads and the Mabinogion. This is a five-volume series for children, the Prydain Cycle by Lloyd Alexander. The cycle was published between 1964 and 1968 and includes The Book of Three, The Black Cauldron, The Castle of Llyr, Taran Wanderer, and The High King.[1]

A glance through these books reveals several names from the Mabinogion among Alexander's characters, not the least of them Gwydion. The setting, Prydain, is much like Wales. But Alexander warns, in his introduction to the first book, that the cycle "is not a retelling or retranslation of Welsh mythology" (Book of Three, 5). A few secondary characters, and here and there a weapon or a "Precious Thing," may appear in both Prydain and in ancient Welsh lore--but the young hero and heroine of Alexander's series have, by his own admission, no analogues anywhere (Book of Three, 5). And indeed Prydain's cosmology is more like Tolkien's Middle-earth than like anything in the Mabinogion.

What, then, do the five chronicles of Prydain owe to Welsh tradition, and to the Mabinogion in particular, as the biggest gathering of this tradition? Has Alexander created his own mythology out of a few borrowed names and situations as did Tolkien, or has he rather drawn upon and synthesized Welsh sources purposefully to enhance them? Richard C. West, in a talk printed in Orcrist No. 2,[2] answered the first question in part with a list of the main analogues. He then concluded that Alexander has indeed invented his own mythology.[3]

Alexander's letter in reply to this encouraged a closer look into possible sources.[4] The results of that investigation are recorded in this paper. The borrowings are indeed "mixed up in bits and pieces" as the author states--yet the cycle remains well in the spirit, and even within the genre, of the tales of the Mabinogion.

For it is itself a mabinogi, an account of the birth, "boy deeds," heroic exploits, and marriage of a young hero. With Alexander's Taran the attention is on boyhood deeds mostly--he is a child in three of the books (they might perhaps even be called "branches"). In the fourth chronicle he is nearly grown and goes seeking his parentage, which has not yet been revealed. The adventures of the last book prove him worthy to be king of Prydain, and the heroine of the series becomes his queen. It is true that an account of Taran's death is missing from his mabinogi; we are assured, however, that Taran will die, as at the end of The High King he chooses mortality in Prydain over sailing west to eternal life.

As for the mythological structure of Alexander's secondary world, it is too much like Middle-earth's scheme to be noteworthy in itself. Arawn, ruler of the underworld in the "Pwyll" branch of the Mabinogion, figures prominently in it. He undergoes a sort of epic degeneration in Alexander's hands. In the Welsh story he is honorable and just; he becomes a shape-shifting villain in the Prydain books. His land of Annuvin becomes an earthly realm of death-in-life. Both are quite like, and probably derived from, Tolkien's Sauron and his Mordor, as West points out.[5]

Arawn's evil is opposed by the Children of Don, a race of superhuman beings who long ago sailed to Prydain from the "Summer Country" in the West, and who will return when the "Death-Lord" is vanquished, and men no longer need their protection (High King, 279). Alexander has here restored the dignity of the roguish magicians of the Fourth Branch (lost in their development from the Tuatha de Danaan) by giving them the same duty to protect goodness as Tolkien's wizards and elves.

As for Prydain itself, the name is rendered "North Britain" by Lady Charlotte Guest in her translation of the Mabinogion,[6] but Alexander applies it to a sort of ancient Wales, with some of the same geographic features--the river Avren (the Severn) and the Isle of Mona, to name two. West has indicated already that this again parallels Tolkien's Middle-earth, which is Europe "in an imaginary heroic age."[7]

Thus the cosmology of The Lord of the Rings has greatly influenced Alexander. So greatly, that the Prydain scheme is not particularly unusual or interesting beside it. One must look then to something outside its mythological universe to understand the Cycle's special flavor and appeal.

A source-hunt through the Mabinogion proved helpful here, for it led to some interesting conclusions about the nature and genre of the Prydain series. Alexander's debt to the Welsh tales is greater than West indicated: the plots of the first two books are, in fact, developed completely around elements taken from the Mabinogion. These books will be discussed in some detail. The remaining three will be briefly summarized to show the development of the work after the legend-based foundation is laid, and any elements not touched on in The Book of Three or The Black Cauldron will be mentioned then.

The Book of Three begins the boyhood deeds of Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper of Caer Dallben. Like Pryderi and Llew Llaw Gyffes, each a subject of his own mabinogi, he was separated from his mother when very small, and he is being raised by the old enchanter Dallben.

This character had apparently quite a legend behind him, though all that remains of it is encapsuled in a note of Lady Guest's: Dallpenn or Dallben owned a magical sow called Henwen, kept for him by Coll ab Collfrewi, an enchanter, the legendary bringer of wheat and barley into Britain, and one of the Three Powerful Swineherds. It was believed that disaster would fall on Britain if Henwen became with young. When this happened, King Arthur pursued her so that he might destroy her and save his realm. Her flight from him took her all over Britain, and in various places she stopped she left blessings such as grain and honey (Mab., 313).

All three characters are found in Alexander's version. Dallben has become the enchanter; Coll is a stout old warrior but retains his association with farming, for his chief love is tending the crops at Caer Dallben. The pig is called Hen Wen, and her magic is oracular: she spells out messages with her snout on three rune-carved "letter sticks" (derived no doubt from the Bardic rods mentioned in a note by Lady Guest on 315). Her pregnancy occurs at the end of the series when Prydain is suffering a singular disaster: the loss of all magic, both good and bad (High King, 278).

As for her flight, it begins the action of The Book of Three, though it is not from Arthur but from a henchman of Arawn called the Horned King. Taran pursues her and quickly loses her. The Horned King's retinue attack him and leave him wounded. But his idol, the hero Gwydion Son of Don, finds him and heals the wound. Together they continue the search, until the beautiful and wicked enchantress Achren seizes them and imprisons Taran in the dungeons of her stronghold, Spiral Castle.

Gwydion is, of course, one of the main characters in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion. There he is the cunning enchanter who cheats Pryderi of his pigs with illusions: horses and greyhounds "formed of fungus" (Mab., 64). He has planned and directed the raid as a diversion so that his brother might have his desire of Goewin, "footholder" to their uncle Math, the lord of the cantrevs of Gwynedd.

In the Prydain books, Math Son of Mathonwy remains the venerable old man one pictures in the Fourth Branch, but here he is elevated to High King over all the cantrevs of Prydain. Gwydion Son of Don is his war leader (Book of Three, 13). Alexander's Gwydion is as versatile as his forebear, for he too is an accomplished magician. In The Castle of Llyr, by skillful illusion, he puts on the shoemaker disguise that he and Llew wore in "Math," and in it successfully spies out the villain's moves.

When he goes to war in The High King, it is not on the ignominious pig-raid of the Fourth Branch, but a march against Annuvin, the very stronghold of evil. As Achren's prisoner in The Book of Three he valorously faces and overcomes the torments she has devised for him in the Castle of Oeth-Anoeth [a name mentioned by Lady Guest as Oeth and Anoeth (Mab., 405-06), the sinister sound of which Alexander splendidly capitalizes upon]. For a short time, Gwydion rises to the power and position he fully deserves: he inherits Math's throne (High King, 162-63). He is in every way an "ennobled" version of his antecedent, to use West's word.[8]

Achren, mentioned above, is an obstacle in The Book of Three, and the chief villain of The Castle of Llyr. Her primary basis in legend is a note describing the Cad Goddeu or Battle of Achren, again in Lady Guest (Mab., 324)--but there is little about her here except the name. [The Battle story's peculiar twist, that of a man who cannot be defeated as long as his name remains secret, is used by Alexander: Hen Wen tells Gwydion the Horned King's secret name, and that villain is undone (Book of Three, 216-17). In the original Gwydion guesses the name.] One senses an affinity with Arianrhod, however, in various small ways: both share castles with well-known dungeons, for one thing, and throughout the Prydain books Achren and Gwydion show a solicitude for each other that would be a little shocking if the old brother-sister relationship didn't come to mind. At one point Achren offers to make Gwydion her consort (Book of Three, 61). The similarity is borne out in Robert Graves's book The White Goddess. The names of Achren's two strongholds, Spiral Castle in The Book of Three and Caer Colur in The Castle of Llyr, do not occur anywhere in the Mabinogion, but both appear in Graves's work--and in connection with Arianrhod and her castle. All are death symbols and labyrinthine fastnesses associated with the Ariadne myth, according to Graves.[9] Alexander's Spiral Castle is just such a maze (Book of Three, 77), and his ruined Caer Colur lives up to its meaning, which Graves gives as "gloomy castle."[10]

Alexander may have chosen the name Achren, rather than Arianrhod, because he wished to use the Spiral Castle theme, but wanted no suggestion of the Llew episode--already having his Gwydion busy looking after another young boy. He has, at any rate, given a shape to a part of the tradition that was only a name before, making Achren, like Blodeuwedd,[11] an aspect of Arianrhod.

A girl named Eilonwy rescues Taran from the dungeons of Spiral Castle. She becomes the heroine of the series, and though, like Taran, she has no exact analogue in the Mabinogion, there are many of its heroines like her. She is as self-assertive as Arianrhod, sneaking off to fight along with the men in The High King, and her tongue is as sharp as Rhiannon's: both contrive to make their men look silly. Eilonwy's response to Taran's proposal of marriage, "Well, indeed... I wondered if you'd ever get round to asking...." (High King, 282) reminds one in particular of Rhiannon's answer to Pwyll: "I will stay gladly...and it were better for thy horse hadst thou asked it long since" (Mab., 20).

Earlier, Eilonwy has been revealed as a Princess of the House of Llyr, and heiress to the magical powers of that House. Heir as well, perhaps, to the sorrows of its women, from Fionnuala in the Irish "Fate of the Children of Lir" to Branwen Daughter of Llyr to even Cordelia. Eilonwy's mother Angharad died searching for her after she was stolen, in babyhood, by Achren. Twice Achren has imprisoned and cruelly used Eilonwy in an effort to tap the powers of a daughter of Llyr. In the end Eilonwy chooses to stay in Prydain, "a kingdom of sorrows," over immortality in the Summer Country, but her fate as Taran's queen is, of course, a happy one.

In The Book of Three Taran and Eilonwy gain a band of friends who follow them through the adventures in all the books. One of these is the shaggy Gurgi, a sort of "redeemed Gollum" in West's words.[12] His prize possession is a wallet of food that is always full; this parallels the basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir, a "Precious Thing" mentioned in "Kilhwch and Olwen," which, "if the whole world should come together, thrice nine men at a time, the meat that each of them desired would be found within it" (Mab., 114).

Another of the companions, who joins Taran and Eilonwy after all three escape from Spiral Castle, is the bard Fflewddur Fflam. His character is suggested by his name, which is one of the list of Arthur's court in "Kilhwch"--and which, as West says, "looks and sounds so comic to speakers of English who cannot pronounce it."[13] Lady Guest's note on the name (Mab., 312) mentions a reference to "Fleidur Flam Mab Godo" in one of the Triads; accordingly, Fflewddur introduces himself as the Son of Godo (Book of Three, 94). In the same Triad (quoted in Mab., 405), he is listed as one of three princes who chose to stay at Arthur's court rather than care for their own domains. Alexander's Fflewddur is also a king, and will abandon his own domains for less reason than this, for he likes better the life of a wandering bard.

As The Book of Three progresses, the companions decide they must give up the search for Hen Wen. They believe that Gwydion perished in Spiral Castle, so they take up his task, a journey to Caer Dathyl, the traditional stronghold of the Children of Don in Welsh legend, and here also Prydain's capital city. On the way they are guests of Medwyn or Nevvid, the old Noah figure told of in one of Lady Guest's notes (Mab., 327), and of the Tylwyth Teg or "Fair Folk." One of these, a comical dwarf named Doli, becomes one of Taran and Eilonwy's band of friends.

In the Mabinogion, the Tylwyth Teg's king is the intriguing figure Gwyn ab Nudd (Mab., 309), who is also associated with the underworld (Annwvyn) as well as with Faerie. Alexander, in making his little people more comical than "poetical," invented King Eiddileg, a disgruntled dwarf, to rule them. Gwyn, on the other hand, does appear in the Prydain books, where he is called Gwyn the Hunter, and retains his connection with the underworld (not, of course, Annuvin in this version). The echoes of his horn and the baying of his "Gabriel Hounds" summon men to their deaths (Wanderer, 84; High King, 134). The huntsman association is, again, not made clear by Lady Guest, but occurs in Graves.[14]

The companions find Hen Wen safe with the Tylwyth Teg and go on. They meet the Horned King before the gates of Caer Dathyl. Taran carries a sword he and Eilonwy stole from Spiral Castle. Its inscription forbids it to be drawn by any save those of "noble worth" (Book of Three, 107-08). Seeing his friends in danger as the Horned King bears down upon them, Taran tries to draw the blade. It flashes fire and burns his arm, but stuns the Horned King--just as Gwydion, free from Oeth-Anoeth, appears and cries out the foe's secret name. The Book of Three ends with the Horned King's destruction and a blow to Arawn's power.

The sword the children stole was called Dyrnwyn (Book of Three, 107); it lay in the barrow of the Old King who built Spiral Castle. In still another note Lady Guest lists Dyrnwyn as one of the Thirteen Precious Things of the Island of Britain. Rhydderch Hael had it forged, and if any man but himself drew it, "it burst into a flame from the cross to the point" (Mab., 328). In Taran's case it took the noble worth he had not quite yet attained to wield Dyrnwyn without burning himself. In The High King it is revealed that Rhydderch Hael is indeed the name of the King who built the castle and ordered Dyrnwyn made for him (High King, 31).

The prophecy concerning this sword, and its powers against Arawn, form much of the plot of The High King. Alexander's development of the Dyrnwyn legend is a good example of the use he makes in the later books of his mythical base: this sword, in his version, is the sole means of destroying the undead warriors created in the cauldron of "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr" (High King, 262).

This cauldron is the central worry of the second Prydain book, The Black Cauldron. In "Branwen" the cauldron Bran offers Matholwch will bring slain warriors back to life, as good as new save that they cannot speak (Mab., 37). Alexander's cauldron produces zombies, mute and sightless, who kill with no memory of human feeling, but cannot be killed (Cauldron, 15).

Gwydion and Taran and their friends set out in this book to seize the cauldron and destroy it. Arawn has it at the moment, and to swell the ranks of his fighting men he has taken to barrow-robbing and even murder, using the cauldron to make the bodies into scores of indestructible warriors (Cauldron, 20).

Taran's searching party includes all his friends and two newcomers, the kind and sensitive Adaon Son of Taliesin and the evil-tempered Prince Ellidyr. Both have sources in the Mabinogion. Adaon marches through "Rhonabwy's Dream," where he is praised as "The most eloquent and the wisest youth that is in this island" (Mab., 140). Alexander's character retains this eloquence and the courage imputed to him in Lady Guest's note concerning him (Mab., 344-45).

The other, Ellidyr, is a nice foil to Adaon; his story and its antecedents tie in with those of the cauldron. His evil temper comes of a desire for honor; he is at pains to remind Taran of the differences between a prince and a "pig-boy." As the youngest of many sons (Cauldron, 24), he has not had much chance to gain honor. A bitter and jealous rivalry ensues, and, when they recover the cauldron under Taran's leadership, Ellidyr tries to steal the glory by making them all swear he found it (Cauldron, 189). At the last the traitor King Morgant captures them all. But before he can slay them and make them the first of his cauldron-born warriors, Ellidyr destroys the cauldron in the only way it can be destroyed: by casting himself, a living man, into it willingly--and losing his own life.

In the Branwen story the cauldron is destroyed by Evnissyen, the heroine's quarrelsome half-brother. The ghastly deeds he commits seem to be entirely motiveless--though perhaps he feels as slighted as Ellidyr when he maims Matholwch's horses, for he says, "'...is it thus they have done with a maiden such as she, and moreover my sister, bestowing her without my consent?'" (Mab., 35). Regretting the war he has caused, he casts himself into the cauldron by means of which reborn Irish warriors are defeating his people, "...And he stretched himself out in the cauldron, so that he rent the cauldron into four pieces, and burst his own heart also" (Mab., 44).

As West points out, Alexander's Ellidyr absorbs the character of this troublemaker[15]--though without, of course, Evnissyen's horrible, purposeless cruelty. Alexander has shaped the Welsh material into a twentieth-century plot form by adding the requirement that the cauldron may be destroyed only by a willing loss of life to it, and by giving his Evnissyen character a consistent motivating force and a "poetically just" end.

Three interesting characters introduced in The Black Cauldron are Prydain's Norns: Orddu, Orwen, and Orgoch. There are no Triple Goddess figures as such in the Mabinogion, but Taran's mentor Dallben when a baby gained wisdom from the kettle of Orddu and company by the same method that little Gwion, in the "Taliesin" story, grew wise from Caridwen's (Mab., 263-64): he burnt his finger on the kettle's contents, a "wisdom potion," and when he put it in his mouth, the potion on it gave him immediate wisdom (Cauldron, 132). The correlation is very nice in the light of Robert Graves's thesis that the Muses or Fates, whether threefold or ninefold, are ultimately an aspect of Caridwen.[16]

Taran frequently refers to Orddu alone when speaking of the three (e.g., Wanderer, 286). Indeed the name seems a nice cognate with Norse "Urd" and Anglo-Saxon "Wyrd." Its ultimate source, however, is "Kilhwch and Olwen," where one of Kilhwch's tasks is to procure "the blood of the witch Orddu, the daughter of the witch Orwen" (Mab., 134)--or the "jet-black sorceress" and the "pure white sorceress" (Mab., 116). The third name, Orgoch, may mean the "blood-red sorceress," as coch in Welsh is "red," modified to goch by a preceding consonant. The name also suggests, along with the hood Orgoch always wears (in either of her "loathly lady" aspects), the carnivorous Morrigu of Irish legend. The Morrigu, herself a Triple Goddess figure,[17] haunted battle sites in the form of a raven or hooded crow. Orgoch's desire to eat everything, even Taran and his friends (Cauldron, 126), may be an echo of the Morrigu --or she may represent the all-devouring Past in the threesome of Past, Present, and Future.

In the remaining three books, particularly The High King, Alexander resolves the situations set up by his various borrowings and his Tolkinian scheme of good and evil forces. Fewer new elements appear that come directly from the Mabinogion, and the main story line is generally Alexander's own invention.

The third chronicle is The Castle of Llyr, set on the Isle of Mona. Eilonwy is sent there to learn the manners of a young lady and to be betrothed to its clumsy, good-natured Prince Rhun, inspired, according to Alexander, by a line in "Taliesin"[18]: "Now Rhun was

rhe most graceless man in the world..." (Mab., 269). Achren kidnaps Eilonwy and imprisons her in Caer Colur. Taran and the rest set out to free her: of their adventures, the most important here is an encounter with Llyan, a giant mountain cat. She has precedent in the kitten deposited by Henwen on her flight and eventually carried to Mona, where it became the dreaded Palug Cat, one of the Island's Three Plagues (Mab., 314). Alexander breaks the link with Henwen, but his cat remains associated with Mona. And here, also, she gets her size from the ill-starred experiments in enlarging potions of one Glew. Far from becoming a Plague, however, Llyan grows fond of Fflewddur Fflam and becomes a formidable mascot for the forces of good. She also rescues Taran and all from drowning at the book's climax, where Eilonwy destroys her own power out of affection for her friends, and in doing so brings down Caer Colur crashing into the sea.

The fourth volume, Taran Wanderer, is a vital part of Taran's mabinogi. In his search to learn his parentage he fights and labors beside Prydain's farmers and craftsmen. He is satisfied of his identity at the end, but doesn't yet realize what he has become fit to be: namely, High King of Prydain. He has won the confidence of its people by sharing their problems and demonstrating his valor and good judgment.

Legendary elements are rare in this book; the character Morda, whose life force resides in the bone of his little finger, is a mythic figure, according to Alexander's introduction (Wanderer, 8)--but he has no analogue in extant Welsh myth. Taran's settlement at one point of a long-standing quarrel over a cow is reminiscent of the story of Nenniaw and Piebiaw told in the Mabinogion notes (Mab., 326-27)--and another character, Llonio, has a weir like Gwyddno's in "Taliesin." Otherwise there is nothing much more than borrowed names.

The High King concludes the Prydain Cycle, and incorporates nearly every character that has gone before. The common folk, led by Taran, together with the Men of Don, led by Gwydion, make a last stand against Arawn. The necessity of destroying him is doubly strong since he has stolen the sword Dyrnwyn. Hen Wen's prophecies have made regaining it appear nearly impossible, so they need all the help they can get. In particular they are counting on the forces of the cantrevs under King Pryderi. But when Pryderi arrives he announces he has leagued with Arawn, and his troops flatten Caer Dathyl.

This is, of course, a complete reversal of the Pryderi saga in the Four Branches. In them is seen the basis of the House of Pwyll's friendship with Arawn, begun before Pryderi's birth and kept going with gifts such as pigs (Mab., 62). When, in Alexander's scheme, Arawn is metamorphosized into a villain, Pryderi must become bad as well if the alliance is to be maintained. Also in the Branches, Pryderi opposes Gwydion in war, but it is Gwydion who plays the villain and ignobly ends Pryderi's life by sorcery (Mab., 66).

Alexander's version gives the story from another point of view, and at the same time vindicates Pryderi's unfair slaying in "Math" by giving the men of Caer Dathyl their just desserts at his hands. In The High King, too, Pryderi gets his death by magic, but the reader is satisfied because he brings it upon himself, stricken down when he tries to seize the magic Book of Three despite Dallben's warning not to touch it (High King, 234).

In simplest terms, the forces of good defeat Arawn at the end of The High King by outwitting him. Taran discovers Dyrnwyn's hiding place. He is now fit to draw the sword, and with it destroys first Arawn's Cauldron-Born and then Arawn himself. This job done, The children of Don prepare to sail back to the Summer Country (given by Lady Guest, Mab., 333-34, to be the eastern place of origin of the Cymry) in an ending very much like that of Lord of the Rings. All the companions who helped in the war are entitled to go, but Taran has cast his lot with the mortals of Prydain, who must live on lands laid waste by this same war. He chooses to stay behind, thus fulfilling a prophecy that he who becomes the next High King of Prydain is one who will choose a kingdom of sorrow over a kingdom of joy (High King, 294). Eilonwy chooses also to remain, with Taran, and the Sons of Don depart, taking with them all the magic from the earth.

Looking back over Alexander's borrowings, probably two-thirds of them are from Lady Guest's notes: the material on which the Prydain Cycle is built is thus peripheral to the main body of the Mabinogion. Save for Gwydion and Pryderi, none of the chief characters of any of the Branches appear. Manawydan and Bran are not even mentioned as illustrious ancestors of Eilonwy's. Alexander has, rather, put the lesser-known elements in a framework wherein they are not peripheral--Coll and Hen Wen, for example, and the sword Dyrnwyn. It is as if their primary source, to which the Triads allude, had been recently found. Occasionally he gives an alternate version of an element prominent in the Mabinogion, as in his treatment of the cauldron, for example, or the Gwydion-Pryderi conflict. And he even supplies the stories one knew were behind some of the names in the notes or lists, but couldn't find anywhere: Achren is a case in point.

Thus a new mythology has not been created; rather an old one has been enriched. Many have spoken of the vaguely Nordic flavor of Lord of the Rings, and of Teutonic elements which it contains: the sword that was broken, the dragon with its hoard, and such. Yet Tolkien's world is concerned, ultimately, with marvels and gods of its own: and does not, nor is it intended to, "fill out" its sources. The Smaug episode in The Hobbit casts no light on the story of Fafnir and his brothers; whereas Alexander in his books is at pains to remind his reader of the matter of Wales--and constantly gives a new wrinkle on some aspect of the Mabinogion.

The borrowed elements in Alexander may seem randomly chosen; but the correlations between the Prydain cycle and the Mabinogion seem also to be neither more nor less orderly than those between say, the different versions of the Helgi story, wherein the minor, scarce-mentioned Volsung of the Volsungasaga also appears as the King of Denmark and the father of the hero Hrolf Kraki in that character's own saga. Indeed, Alexander's use of his sources may be best compared to these variants--not to the elements from Norse legend in Tolkien. Even as he borrows from the canon of Welsh mythology, Alexander deepens and enriches it.

Elizabeth Lane

FOOTNOTES

[1]All parenthetical page references in this paper to Alexander's Prydain Cycle are taken from the Dell Publishing Company's editions (New York, 1969).

[2]"The Tolkinians: Some Introductory Reflections on Alan Garner, Carol Kendall, and Lloyd Alexander," Orcrist, No. 2 (1967-1968), 10-13.

[3]West, p. 13.

[4]Lloyd Alexander, "Letter to the Editor," Orcrist, No. 4 (1969-1970), 10.

[5]West, p. 11.

[6]All page references in this paper are to this edition of Lady Guest's translation of the Mabinogion (1906; rpt., New York: E. P. Dutton, 1932).

[7]West, p. 10.

[8]West, p. 11.

[9]Robert Graves, The White Goddess (n.p.: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1948), p. 89.

[10]Graves, p. 85.

[11]Graves, p. 76.

[12]West, p. 12.

[13]West, p. 11.

[14]Graves, p. 69.

[15]West, p. 12.

[16]Graves, p. 325.

[17]Graves, p. 206.

[18]Alexander, p. 10.

# In Review

## SOLID GOLD GUIDE

Deborah Rogers

Robert Foster, A Guide to Middle-earth. Mirage Press, 5111 Liberty Heights Ave., Baltimore, Md. 21207, 1971. Hardcover, $5.95; paperbound, $3.75.

Bob Foster's Guide to Middle-earth belongs within hand's reach of every devoted Tolkienian. And, as I hear Mirage has had to reprint the book, Tolkienians must know it. Combining the zeal of the ideal fan with the accuracy of the ideal scholar, Mr. Foster has indexed the persons, places and things of Tolkien's fiction, collating the scattered facts related to each one into a most convenient reference-work. He also gives page-references to the Ballantine edition so the reader can check up on him (it would be even easier if the page-references were set directly after the statement they support, instead of at the end of the entry). The Guide also contains a table of corresponding pages for the Ballantine and revised Houghton Mifflin editions, and six family trees.

By way of discussion, I should like to raise two questions: Mr. Foster translates the "imloth" of Imloth Melui as "deep-blossom"; might it not rather be a dialect form of "imlad," "valley"? Also, I miss an entry on tarkś (III, 223). The context suggests it could be the Orkish for Wizards, a hypothesis supported by the similarity of the word Tharkun, the Dwarvish name for Gandalf.

Mr. Foster's work is painstaking in the highest degree, and correspondingly valuable; it will clearly take its place in the first rank of Tolkieniana.

## BRIEF MENTIONS

Richard West

We lack space in this issue for full reviews of the following books, but we do not wish to leave them unacknowledged. We hope to comment more substantially on them in future issues.

James D. Allan, A Glossary of the Eldarin Tongues (1972). Send 70¢ to ELDARIN GLOSSARY, c/o James D. Allan, 144 Mary St., Orillia, Ontario, Canada. Useful dictionary of all Elvish texts extant. Recommended.

Thomas D. Clareson, ed. SF: The Other Side of Realism. Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971. Hardcover, $8.95; paperbound, $3.50. These twenty-six essays can't cover all of modern fantasy and science fiction, and so they don't, but they take a wide and varied sweep. Recommended.

Charles H. Huttar, ed. Imagination and the Spirit: Essays in Literature and the Christian Faith presented to Clyde S. Kilby. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971; $9.95. There is plenty of value here for your money, with twenty essays plus a biographical sketch of Prof. Kilby and a bibliography of his work. There is a long section on "Inklings and Ancestors" with interesting essays on MacDonald, Williams, Lewis, and Tolkien (highlighted by Walter Hooper's piece on Narnia). Other studies consider Chaucer, Coleridge, O'Connor, et al.

Carolyn Keefe, ed. C. S. Lewis: Speaker and Teacher. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1971; $3.95. C. S. Kilby, Walter Hooper and Owen Barfield, in particular, stand out in this uneven but worthwhile collection of seven essays on Lewis as a conversationalist, academic lecturer, preacher of sermons, and radio speaker.

C. S. Lewis, God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics, ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; $6.95. (Published in England under the title Undeceptions.) Though there is a good deal of repetition in these forty-eight essays and twelve letters, since they often had similar points to make at different times and before different audiences, they show the range of Lewis's thought, and they are hard to come by elsewhere, and so belong in every Lewis scholar's library.

Sam J. Lundwall, Science Fiction: What It's All About. New York: Ace Books, 1971; 95¢. Shallow history of sf. Don't bother.

Jeremy Potter, A Trail of Blood. New York: McCall, 1971; $5.95. Historical fiction plus detective story. A monk of Croylands Abbey investigates a notorious mystery, the disappearance of the two young sons of King Edward IV from the Tower of London in 1485, in an effort to find a means of preventing Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries.

William Ready, The Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit Notes. Toronto, Canada: Coles Publishing Co., Ltd., 1971; $1.50. Includes brief introduction, short synopses of the books followed by chapter-by-chapter synopses, essay topics (almost all of which merely ask for plot summaries again), and a selected bibliography of criticism. Abounding in errors and misleading statements (the latter especially due to poor writing), this should be studiously avoided.

R. J. Reilly, Romantic Religion: A Study of Barfield, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971; $9.00. A selection of the MLA Scholar's Library. Difficult reading, but very worthwhile.

Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave. New York: Morrow, 1970; $7.95. New York: Fawcett World (Crest P1570), 1971 (reprint of 1970 edition); $1.25, paperbound. Fictional autobiography of Merlin which can't make up its mind whether to be fantastic or naturalistic. The plot creaks at several points while trying to include and rationalize bits from medieval sources. Not among Stewart's best work, this is eminently missable.

Gunnar Urang, Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien. Philadelphia: United Church Press, Pilgrim Press Book, 1971; $6.95. Sees Lewis building his art around the concept of Sehnsucht, Williams that of the Beatrician moment, Tolkien that of eucatastrophe, and tries to assess the merits and failing of the three and their degree of success in using fantasy to express religious themes.

# On THE HUNTING OF THE SNARK as a Romantic Ballad

## - J. R. Christopher

Obviously Lewis Carroll's The Hunting of the Snark, like Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, is a sea-ballad, one of the imitation ballads which the nineteenth century loved to construct, based on the folk ballads which the eighteenth century began to collect and publish. But perhaps equally important with the poem's relationship to such folk ballads as "Sir Patrick Spens" is its relationship to the Romantic imagination: the literature produced between 1770 and 1914. Indeed, in W. H. Auden's study of this literature, The Enchafed Flood; or, The Romantic Iconography of the Sea (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), it is not surprising that Carroll's poem is mentioned fifteen times. This note will be an epitome of Auden's view of The Hunting of the Snark.

Auden sums up the shift away from the traditional, non-sympathetic view of the sea in four points: "The distinctive new notes in the Romantic attitude are as follows:

> 1) To leave the land and the city is the desire of every man of sensibility and honor.
>
> 2) The sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man.
>
> 3) The sea is where the decisive events, the moments of eternal choice, of temptation, fall, and redemption occur. The shore life is always trivial.
>
> 4) An abiding destination is unknown even if it may exist: a lasting relationship is not possible nor even to be desired." (pp. 12-13)

Some of these points seem to apply more to Coleridge's poem or Melville's Moby-Dick than to Carroll's ballad, for after all the crew in the latter does land somewhere, presumably but not certainly an island, with a "view / which consisted of chasms and crags" (II, 35-36; Auden mentions the landing in connection with such islands as Melville's Encantadas [pp. 22-23]). But certainly it is at the end of this voyage that, as Auden puts it in his third point, "decisive events occur": first, the Beaver and the Butcher are made fast friends (V) - they become perhaps more than that if Andrew Lang, in his review of the poem on its original appearance, was right in referring to the Beaver as "she" despite Carroll's use of the neuter it.[2] Auden also suggests a sexual level here, but one of sublimated sexuality: "...the Beaver and the Butcher, romantic explorers though they are, who have chosen to enter a desolate valley, where the Jub-Jub bird screams in passion overhead, and the creatures from The Temptation of St. Anthony, surround them, escape from the destructive power of sex sublimating it into arithmetical calculations based on the number 3" (pp. 83-84). Lewis Carroll himself, in one particular example, considered mathematics as a substitute for (not sublimation of) sexual thoughts: I refer to the preface of Pillow Problems, where he suggests the mathemarical problems in the book may be used on sleepless nights to busy the mind and eliminate, among others, "unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence the fancy that would fain be pure."

To return to the decisiveness of the events in the poem: second, the Banker is transformed to a Mr. Bones of a minstrel show (VII, 25-28, 33-36), and third, the Baker's vanishing (VIII) is also decisive - for him. Of all the adventures which occur, only the Barrister's dream (VI) is not clearly a turning point for the character involved. By the way, Auden's comment on this dream is interesting: in the midst of a discussion of the innocence and sinlessness of Melville's Billy Budd in terms of Hebraic and Christian law he places a footnote:

> In the Barrister's dream... the pig is charged with deserting its sty, i.e., the crime is not the eating of the tree but the expulsion from Eden. The Snark who is officially the counsel for the defense is also the accuser-judge and the sentence is a repetition of the offence. "Transportation for life." (p. 143n)

Although I find this an interesting observation, I cannot draw any implications from it about the Barrister - unless it is that lawyers and lawsuits occur only in a world outside Eden.[3]

But if the decisive events of life figure in the Romantic imagination as the result of voyages, of journeys, of searchings, likewise the voyage itself is important as a symbol. Auden comments:

> If thought of as isolated in the midst of the ocean, a ship can stand for mankind and human society moving through time and struggling with its destiny. If thought of as leaving the land for the ocean, it stands for a particular kind of man and society as contrasted with the average land-dwelling kind. The Hunting of the Snark is a pure example of the first use.... (p. 63)

Perhaps it would be fairer to say that Carroll's poem is an impure example, for it opens with the landing - not the Ancient Mariner's becalming "in the midst of the ocean"; on the other hand, perhaps Auden considers the island (if that is what it is) as "isolated". At any rate there is some difficulty in considering the ship as centrally a symbol of society.

However, parts of the poem - "flashbacks" of one or another sort - discuss the mariners' voyage, and perhaps these can be considered as containing brief equations of the ship and society. If so, then the Bellman's map for the voyage - "A perfect and absolute blank!" (II, 16) - suggests the absolute freedom possible for the Romantic reshaping of society: no tradition has significance. (Cf. Auden, p. 14.) More literally, the map suggests the Bellman's absolute ignorance:

> ...the Captain they trusted so well
> Had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
> And that was to tingle his bell.
> (II, 18-20)

At the same time the mechanized nature of modern society is suggested by Carroll's naming of the crew by their occupations (except for the Beaver) rather than what they are: the Banker, the Baker or Butcher, the Barrister, the Bellman, the Billiard-marker, the Boots, the Bonnet-maker, and the Broker (pp. 28-29). As was suggested above, even for these mechanized citizens of the modern state, moments of truth may come - moments which may even change such a conservative figure as Banker to the more artistic role of Mr. Bones.

However the full role of the Romantic artist, Auden suggests, is symbolized in the Baker. As the hero of the poem, he resembles other sensitive heroes of Romantic poems who are defeated by the world - or, for that matter, artists like Cowper and Baudelaire who faced madness (p. 42). Unlike heroes in other ages, "the Romantic Hero does not expect any ultimate relief." Ahab does not "believe for a moment that if he succeeds in killing the White Whale, he will be any happier", and "the Baker more than half suspects that the Snark may be a Boojum" (III, 41-56; p. 111). But it will be worthwhile to pause on the characteristics of the Romantic hero:

1) "There is almost universal agreement that one of the distinguishing marks of the hero is that he is always unhappy" (p. 103). This unfortunately, does not fit the Baker, for

> He would joke with hyaenas, returning their stare
> With an impudent wag of the head:
> And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw, with a bear,
> 'Just to keep up its spirits,' he said.
> (I, 45-48)

2) "There is also an agreement that the hero should be solitary, or if he does enter into relations with others, the relations should be very temporary" (p. 105). This failure in lasting relationships may be the reason the Baker fails to remember to explain his fear of Boojums at the start of the voyage in English (he does mention it in Hebrew, Dutch, German, and Greek - IV, 17-20); this solitariness may also explain why the Baker reached the Snark by himself, without a companion (VIII, 15-20).

3) There is general agreement (Auden says) that his past has been catastrophic in one way or another - perhaps his ancestors were neurotic or his childhood unhappy (p. 108). Here the reader is penalized by the Bellman's refusal to allow the Baker to tell his life story (III, 13-16), but certainly - if we interpret his "uncle's last words" (III, 42) to be his dying words, as Henry Holiday's illustration to the first edition encourages the reader to do - certainly his uncle's dying message, warning of the Boojum, might be traumatic; further, any hero who forgets as many things as the Baker does - an umbrella, watch, jewels and rings, and clothes, all packed in forty-two boxes, as well as his name (I, 21-32) - may well be suffering from some ancient trauma. (On the Baker's namelessness, cf. Auden, p. 86.)

4) As a corollary to the catastrophic injury, the Romantic hero finds in his injury the reason for his existence, as Captain Ahab seeks revenge on Moby-Dick for his lost leg and the Ancient Mariner spends his time telling of the suffering he brought on himself (pp. 108-111) - because relief from the problem would mean loss of role and of identity. Thus, as was said above, the Baker seeks the Snark although expecting a Boojum because, if he does not, he has no identity left. Indeed, instead of regarding his Uncle's warning as the cause of his trauma, the reader may regard it as a test of his resolve - as Ishmael's resolve to go whaling is tested by Elijah (p. 115); but unlike Ishmael, the Baker is a Romantic hero: like Captain Ahab, he must seek the beast which is to be his undoing.

And with this definition of the Romantic hero, we may return to the Baker as the Romantic artist: Auden writes:

> The characteristic of the Romantic period is that the artist, the maker himself, becomes the epic hero, the daring thinker, whose deeds he has to record. Between about 1770 and 1914 the great heroic figures are not men of action but individual geniuses... with a religious dedication to furthering knowledge, and the kind of knowledge the artist could obtain was chiefly from himself. Characteristically, the subtitle of Wordsworth's epic poem is "The Growth of the Poet's Mind." (p. 147)

Fittingly enough the Baker may be identified with Lewis Carroll. The forty years of his life which he skips telling (III, 17) puts him in his early forties. Carroll began writing The Hunting of the Snark in 1874 when he was 42. Further, the 42 boxes left behind on the shore could easily symbolize Carroll's past life, left behind in his search for whatever unknown the Snark stands for. Other details - such as the Baker's absent-mindedness and his pseudonyms - also may connect him with Carroll.

This identification made, we may continue with Auden:

> The artist who has thus to be at once the subject of his experiment and the recorder enjoys excitement and suffers terrors hardly known before. He ceases to have an identity and becomes like the Baker, who cannot remember his name and who no longer bakes but hunts. He used to bake bridecake, i.e., his recording of glorious deeds and thoughts strengthened the bonds of community. Now he is a nomad explorer, whose one virtue is his courage that can
>
> joke with hyaenas returning their stare
> With an impudent wag of the head.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> [Some of the Romantic artists realized that they were only] the explorer[s] of possibility, for whom... the Boojum [is] waiting at the next cross-roads where they will be asked to prove whether or not they have become their actual selves. (pp. 148-149)

Thus Auden describes the search by artists such as Carroll through identity for identity; he concludes:

> Let us, reading the logs of their fatal but heroic voyages, remember their courage.
> (p. 150)

FOOTNOTES

[1]One reader of this paper before its publication objected to Auden's use of the poem to illustrate the Romantic view of the sea, for (the reader said) Dodgson said in "A Sea Dirge" that he hated the sea. Even if Dodgson did hate the sea, this would not invalidate The Hunting of the Snark as a symbolic statement about the ocean. But, as a matter of biographical fact, I do not think Dodgson's hatred of the sea can be supported.

Here is his journal account of his trip from England to France on his Russian journey:

> The pen refuses to describe the sufferings of some of the passengers during our smooth trip of ninety minutes: my own sensations were those of extreme surprise, and a little indignation, at there being no other sensations --it was not for that I paid my money....
>
> --Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll (1898), p. 113.

This is humorous but hardly hateful. More evidence comes from Gertrude Chataway's account of how she met Dodgson:

> I first met Mr. Lewis Carroll on the seashore at Sandown in the Isle of Wight, in the summer of 1875....
>
> ...He would come on to his balcony, which joined ours, sniffing the sea-air with his head thrown back, and would walk right down the steps on to the beach with his chin in the air, drinking in the fresh breezes as if he could never have enough.
>
> --Ibid., p. 379

Again, the evidence is not conclusive, but it does not support his hating the sea. I take "A Sea Dirge" simply as humorous.

[2]Certainly the Beaver's lace-making (I, 18) suggests a female, as well as its poor schooling (V, 41-48)--for women's education was one of the major debates of the Victorian era. (For literary reactions to the idea of women's education, see Tennyson's The Princess and its parody by W. S. Gilbert as Princess Ida.)

[3]Carroll's actual account of the suit is strikingly parallel to Charles Dickens' account of Jarndyce and Jarndyce in Bleak House (1853). Dickens was presumably influenced by the criticism of the Court of Chancery in 1851, and Lord John Russell's reform act concerning it; I do not know if Dodgson, in 1876, was reacting to the times or reflecting Dickens.

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Carroll, Lewis. The Annotated Snark: The Full Text of Lewis Carroll's Great Nonsense Epic, "The Hunting of the Snark," with the Original Illustrations by Henry Holiday. Edited by Martin Gardner. First publication of the annotated edition, 1962. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967. (Gardner did not know Auden's work, but most other incidental information used in the above essay may be found in this work. See p. 63 for a fuller identification of Carroll and the Baker than I borrowed for my text.)



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