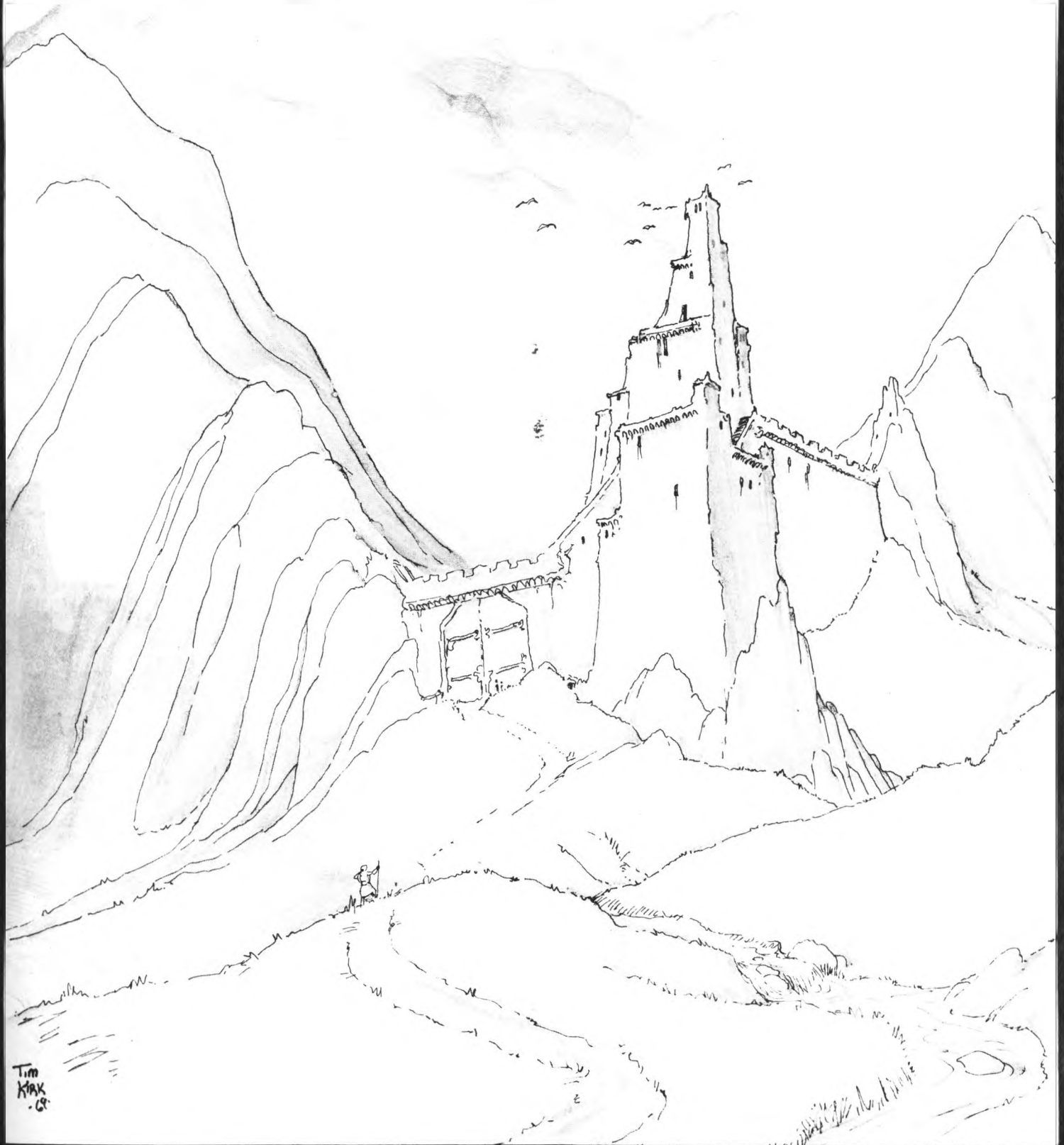


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DEDICATION

For Deborah Webster
critic, composer, poet
who has heard the horns of elfland

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LAYOUT & ARTWORK BY THE MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY

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Bruce McMenomy, pp. 2, 15, 19.
Diana Faxson, p. 20.
Bernie Zuber, pp. 12, 13.
Cover by Tim Kirk; The Hornberg in Helm's Deep.

INTRODUCTION

In May, 1968, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee sponsored a Secondary Universe Conference of lectures and panel discussions on various aspects of science-fiction and fantasy. The original plan was for these papers to be published in a special issue of Arts in Society, but material was so abundant that the editors of that periodical decided to limit the issue exclusively to science-fiction. It seemed a great pity for such outstanding fantasy studies to be scattered about in diverse journals or left unpublished, so we of the U. W. Tolkien Society decided to collect them in this special issue of Orclist.

Richard West's paper is a revision of the talk he gave at UWM as a member of a panel on "The Twentieth-Century Romance." Prof. Glenn Sadler was also part of that panel, but the talk he gave on Charles Williams is not yet in organized written form, so he offered us instead an appreciation of George MacDonald originally intended for a Scottish newspaper. Prof. Clyde Kilby's keynote address at the Secondary Universe Conference will be published in the special issue of AIS, but Orclist has gained this shorter paper. Prof. David Miller became known to Tolkien scholars with his excellent paper delivered at the Mankato State College Tolkien Symposium in 1966, and we are very pleased to be able to publish this other enlightening essay from his pen. Mr. Alexis Levitin's article was originally the first chapter of his Master of Arts thesis on The Lord of the Rings (Columbia, 1964), and appears here very slightly revised (also, the editor has added references to some of the more recent criticism in the sixth, fifteenth, and seventeenth notes).

The alert reader will have noticed from the title page that Orclist has now merged with the Tolkien Society of America and its Tolkien Journal. Orclist will continue to be edited independently and numbered separately, but it will now be sent to TSA members as part of their membership dues. The UWTS thus can send its bulletin to nearly everyone who would be interested in reading it, and the TSA can supply a Tolkien magazine more frequently than if only TJ was distributed.

Orclist is basically a scholarly journal and not a fanzine; though we trust that (to borrow terms used by Charles Williams) it is not "dying and scholarly" but "living and intelligent." The greater part of the contents of Orclist will usually be made up of scholarly and critical articles; we hope that they do not "murder to dissect" but are informed by the joy of reading and the adventure of literary investigation, and are interesting reading in themselves. Literary studies need not be as barren and dull as they too often are. Study should not deaden the excitement of the subject, but enrich our experience of the work in some way: by setting it in perspective, examining the bases of its art, exploring its aesthetic effects, illuminating its meanings. The proper relation between a scholar-critic and a text is not parasitic, but symbiotic.



Intelligence and fun are such harmonious qualities that we can serve them both. Orclist also has published in the past, and will do so in the future, poetry, parodies, music, and other entertainments. Orclist is intended partly as a vehicle for the efforts of UWTS members that we think worth preserving, but we are also grateful for any contributions sent to us that meet our editorial policies and standards. Our center of interest, of course, is Tolkien, but we are also interested in any related topic.

The better part of a year has passed since the second issue of Orclist appeared, and much has happened. William Ready set out to confuse bibliographers, first, by publishing an article completely different from his book, but under the same title, "The Tolkien Relation," and later by reprinting his book, The Tolkien Relation, in paperback under the vastly different title of Understanding Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings. Ballantine Books has continued its cam-

paign to make good fantasies readily available with the softcover publication of Peter S. Beagle's The Last Unicorn, E. R. Eddison's Mezentian Gate (the final volume of his Zimiamvian tetralogy), Mervyn Peake's Titus Groan trilogy, Tolkien's Farmer Giles of Ham & Smith of Wootton Major in one volume, and a series of Adult Fantasy novels selected by Lin Carter (now initiated with Fletcher Pratt's The Blue Star and Lord Dunsany's The King of Elfland's Daughter). Ballantine also published this year Lin Carter's noble but flawed effort, Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings. Mr. Carter writes with such verve that he may have the happy effect of sending readers to the old epics, romances, sagas, lays and novels he cites as forerunners of Tolkien, but they will most decidedly be disappointed if they expect them to be like modern fantasy novels. Notre Dame Press has knit up all this feast by releasing a paperback edition of its fine anthology of essays, Tolkien and the Critics.



An excellent new periodical focusing on Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams started publication this year: Mythlore, edited by Glen Good-Knight for the Mythopoeic Society (504 Elm Street, Alhambra, California 91801). It is nicely illustrated, and the articles tend to be varied, entertaining, and intelligent. (four issues for \$2.50).

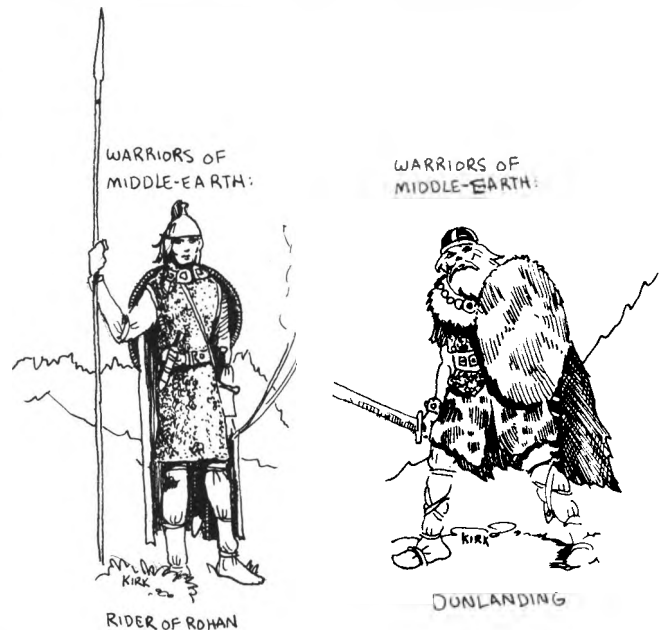
It has also been an interesting year for the U. W. Tolkien Society. It began last September (1968) with a Medieval Fair on the Madison campus, to which all U. W. student organizations were invited but in which, disappointingly, only a couple participated. The UWTS by sheer determination made a colorful afternoon of it anyway. A booth was set up displaying the multitude of interests of Society members, Tolkienian maps and posters were mounted, and a tape recorder regaled passers-by with Poems and Songs of Middle Earth and the themes from Star Trek and The Prisoner. Royce Buehler lolled on the grass in hobbit dress, his otherwise bare feet covered with the hair carefully saved for weeks from numerous trimmings. Duane Dobry came armed and armored as an orc-soldier, with the Eye of Sauron painted in red on his shield. Dick West, coerced into beard, eyebrows, silver scarf, and flowing robes, made a reluctant Gandalf the White. Carl and Paulette Carroll appeared garbed as Arthur and Guenevere; and Debby Webster came over from Green Bay in black tights and make-up, announcing herself as a Medieval Vice. Bill Orr chose a futuristic theme instead, and his Vulcan costume included pointed ears. As you might imagine, the group attracted no little notice. We adjourned to a local tavern afterwards for liquid refreshment and pour épater les bourgeois, and then ended the evening with a party.



At this, Editor West discovered that Orcrest #2 (just published) was collated very quickly by having the pages passed round a circle while singing rondels; so when, this spring, Orcrest #1 was reprinted for the second time, he insidiously got it collated by repeating the procedure at another party.

After the Medieval Fair, the UWTS settled into a schedule of two meetings a month, alternating a business meeting at which a paper was read or some topic set for discussion, with a party. (Most of us like parties). Activities conducted over the last year included a birthday party January 3rd in honor of Tolkien, a showing of slides of Oxford University, and a dramatic reading of "The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun." A number of performances were given of Queen Ann, a play by Paulette Carroll with both a medieval and a modern setting, twice under UWTS auspices. A Free University course in "Tolkien and Modern Fantasy" was offered in the spring semester on Tuesday evenings, with Richard West moderating discussions of The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, Till We Have Faces, The Once and Future King, Phantastes, Tree and Leaf, Farmer Giles of Ham, and Smith of Wootton Major. For the first time in three years, rain and cold weather made it impossible to hold our Annual Picklick at Picnic Point, so we obstinately moved indoors; festivities included listening to tapes of old radio shows and World War II news, with the pièce de resistance the Orson Welles dramatization of War of the Worlds.

One notable excursion was made last Easter week-end to Minneapolis, for the second "Minicon" science-fiction convention. This had nothing of specifically Tolkienian interest, but a delegation from Madison attended disguised as sf fans. The con had a showing of an old silent film called Metropolis (which pretended to be science-fiction but failed to be worthwhile from any point of view), a fascinating Star Trek slide show conducted by Ruth Berman, a panel with Clifford Simak, Gordon Dickson, and Charles DeVet, and parties on Good Friday and Holy Saturday evenings at which the distinguished



authors could be met socially. The panel began as a discussion of what might be called the economics of science-fiction (rate of pay for stories over the years and so on), and continued on this topic for an agonizingly long time. John Bullis growled wonderment at when the panelists would start talking about novels instead of how much they got for them. And Paulette Carroll passed a note to Ivor Rogers asking: "Can't we think of a good question from the floor to change the subject? (signed) Desperate Madison hobbits." Ivor read the message, looked at us with an expression of complete astonishment, and said, "But I'm interested in this!" Fortunately for the rest of us, John and a few others diverted the discussion to audiences of mass media, favorite books of the authors, the genesis of City, and other such matters of more general appeal. Most of us got the autograph of one author or another (Clifford Simak was the man we had gone specially to see, and even Dick West shyly pushed a copy of Way Station into his view and quietly indicated a desire to have it inscribed); and Paulette Carroll, who had approached Mr. Simak from the rear of the platform and remained talking with him for some time,

thus inadvertently (she claims) got into all the photographs taken of the panelists. Undaunted, she autographed the photos herself, and later presented Mr. Simak with an inscribed copy of her play, Queen Ann. The other notable event on this trip was automobile trouble encountered on the drive out to Minnesota, which for a while looked as if it would keep us from finishing the journey. John Bullis saved the situation by fastening some unruly engine parts with some S&H Green Stamps, and we had no further trouble with the car for the remainder of the trip, going either to or from Minneapolis. Such ingenuity deserves to be immortalized in the pages of Orcrest.

UWTS elections were held May 8th, with the result that Richard West was re-elected President (Pegn), and William Orr Secretary-Treasurer (Gimli), for the next academic year. James Robinson, however, has resigned as co-editor of Orcrest, apologizing that he will not be able to do enough to justify such status.

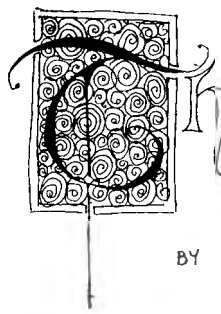
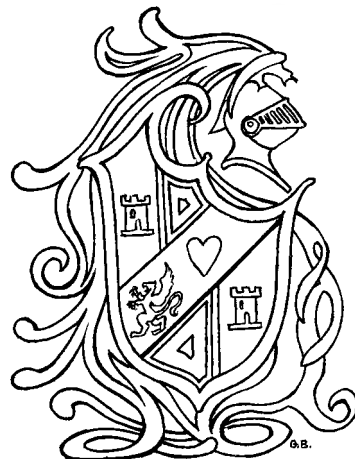
To date, too few misprints have been located in Orcrest #2 to bother with a separate page of errata. The following corrections should be made if they were not entered when copies were sent out: on page iv in the last paragraph, the initials of Prof. Cunliffe should read "W. C." instead of "W. E.", and the second series of initials in the signature should be "J. B. R." and not "J. A. R." (someday Editor West will learn what his friends' initials are); on page 11, "showmaker" in line 20 should read "shoemaker", and "Aravn's mythology" in line 27 is a mistake for "Alexander's mythology;" finally, item B46.1 in the bibliography on page 45 should end "which confront him" (the pronoun had been omitted). I also forgot, in the credits for last issue, to thank Mrs. Paulette Carroll for putting the lyrics and music for "Sing Along With Tolkien" on the masters.

For this third issue, I am pleased to thank Mr. Carl Carroll and Mrs. Julie Redding for their help with typing and Mrs. Redding for bravely doing most of the lettering, Mrs. Frances Wood and Miss Genevieve Gogat for tolerating my wear and tear on their typewriters,

Ed Meskys and Ivor Rogers for their assistance in making printing arrangements, and the gentle reader who has borne this lengthy introduction.

Remember to vote for Madison in 2001.

R. C. W.
June, 1969



The Genre of THE LORD OF THE RINGS

BY Alexis Levitin

The genre of The Lord of the Rings is intimately related to its subject matter. A rather thorough examination of the various literary genres of which Tolkien's work partakes will throw considerable light on its nature and purpose.

Tolkien's trilogy is, first of all, a fantasy, in that it concerns a world where fantastic, magical events occur, events which are unknown to us in what we call real life. There is an aura of "strangeness and wonder"¹ in the telling of the tale, a quality which Tolkien designates as a primary element of fantasy, and an essential constituent of any fairy story. Considering Tolkien's great interest in fairy stories, it is not surprising to find that his trilogy displays many characteristics of this genre. In an essay entitled "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien says, "a 'fairy-story' is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic..."² In effect, Faërie is a land unlike any with which we are familiar, a land where magic is always to be expected, where the inexplicable often occurs. It should be noted that a fairy story may have several different purposes, which do not prevent it from retaining its function as a fairy story. Tolkien mentions adventure, morality, and fantasy as three possible purposes of a fairy story, and he intertwines these three elements throughout his own work.

In discussing the desired effect of the fairy story, Tolkien emphasizes the importance of the internal credibility of the artist's creation.

He says, "...the story-maker proves a successful sub-creator'. He makes a secondary world which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is true: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed."³ Later Tolkien adds, "Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it."⁴

The idea of drawing on reality may well stem from Coleridge's widely-known formulation concerning imagination: "The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception: and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation."⁵ Coleridge's treatment of the secondary imagination as an echo of the primary, which itself is our finite view of the Infinite, is almost precisely the same as Tolkien's concept of the derivation of the secondary world from true Reality.⁶ All this should be kept in mind when we consider, presently, Tolkien's theory integrating the Christian myth with the common fairy story, propounding the belief that such tales are human attempts to imitate the divine fairy story created by God, namely, the story of Christ and our Redemption.



Tolkien's high respect for the place of morality in the fairy story was of particular importance in determining the nature of his own work. Speaking of the famous animal tales of Beatrix Potter, he says that they approach the borders of Faërie: "their nearness is due largely to their moral element: by which I mean their inherent morality, not any allegorical signification."⁷ This term, "inherent morality," is of utmost significance in discussing the works of Tolkien, for it is this factor that is always at work, imbuing his story with a certain flavor which makes it more than an amusing adventure story or romance. That Tolkien considers morality an essential ingredient of fairy stories is illustrated by his reflections upon the responses of children to such tales: "Far more often than asking is it true they have asked me: 'Was he good? Was he wicked?' That is, they were more concerned to get the Right side and the Wrong side clear. For that is a question equally important in History and in Faërie."⁸ Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is not only meticulously true, internally, but, even more important, it is itself a highly moral treatment of the conflict between good and evil.

Tolkien lists four elements which he considers characteristic of the fairy story: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation. Fantasy has already been touched upon, but will reappear in conjunction with an explanation of recovery. By "Recovery," Tolkien means a returning to and renewal of health by a reattainment of clear vision, of true perspective. The result is fresh sight, absence of triteness.⁹ In a review of Tolkien's Rings, Douglass Parker claims that fantasy, being "other-directed," escapes triviality. He remarks that often the abandonment of the normal world allows the author "to get nearer to a fundamental reality."¹⁰ This idea of recovery is illustrated in G. K. Chesterton's novel Manalive, a breathless paean of life. Innocent Smith, the hero of this strange and headlong tale, is engaged in, among other things, meeting his wife, time and again, in new places and new situations, and treating her as if she were a stranger, each time falling in love anew and proposing marriage. We are told that he had even fled from England and walked all around the world so as to be able to return afresh to his beloved family and home. It seems to be his unspoken theory (he never speaks, but rather acts) that joie de vivre must be maintained by leaving what one loves only to return to it again and again, happier each time.¹¹ The departure from normal life into the fantasy world is such a leaving, a departure from the ordinary, taken express-

ly to enable one to return with freshness to everyday life, to return blessed with an easy facility for seeing new aspects of everything, thereby finding life a dynamic, vivid experience.

Escape means defiance in the face of what happens to be our present situation. Tolkien defends escape as a positive aspect of the fairy story and points out that the reality to which such literature leads may be closer to the basic truths of existence than the ugly, but transient, reality of today's world. Superficial realities such as factories, smoke, and dirt may easily be blinding us to the real world, to the truths of nature, that existed before the factories came and will exist after they depart.¹²

The Lord of the Rings is most remarkable for its internal credibility, for its essential truth, and for its manifest ability to reinstate in the reader a more vivid reality, attained through flight into fantasy. Tolkien has followed his own definitions of the fairy story very well.

Consolation is the last but most important element that must be present for the true fairy story to exist. Tolkien coins the word "eucatastrophe" to indicate the sudden, totally joyous turn of events at the end of the fairy tale. He says that "The eucatastrophe tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function."¹³ He goes on to describe the necessary happy ending as the arrival of "sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur...it denies universal final defeat... giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief."¹⁴ It is here that Tolkien integrates Christianity into his concept of the fairy tale. It should be held in mind, as one reads Tolkien's discussion of joy and Christianity, that there is absolutely no reference whatsoever to Christianity in his Rings, and that in spite of this, the whole atmosphere of the work is pervasively Christian. Without a mention of Christ or even one direct reference to God, Tolkien succeeds in presenting his world through a Christian atmosphere, invisible, but strongly felt.¹⁵

The Epilogue to Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories" makes evident his great Christian concern, thereby throwing much light on his own immense fairy story. It also specifically treats of joy as "the mark of the true

fairy-story...as the seal upon it,"¹⁶ and the knowledge of this concept is most important for the proper understanding of Tolkien's own work. For those who have experienced this Joy, nothing more need be said. For those who have not, it is hoped that Tolkien's lengthy discussion in the Epilogue will at least make this feeling understandable. Tolkien suggests that the life of Christ recorded in the Gospels is a fairy story authored by God, and continues:

It is not difficult to imagine the peculiar excitement and joy that one would feel, if any specially beautiful fairy-story were found to be 'primarily' true, its narrative to be history, without thereby losing the mythical or allegorical significance that it had possessed. It is not difficult, for one is not called upon to try and conceive anything of a quality unknown. The joy would have exactly the same quality, if not the same degree, as the joy which the 'turn' in a fairy-story gives: such joy has the very taste of primary truth. (Otherwise its name would not be joy.) It looks forward (or backward: the direction in this regard is unimportant) to the Great Eucatastrophe. The Christian joy, the Gloria, is of the same kind; but it is pre-eminently (infinitely, if our capacity were not finite) high and joyous. Because this story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men--and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused.

But in God's kingdom the presence of the greatest does not depress the small. Redeemed Man is still man. Story, fantasy, still go on, and should go on. The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the 'happy ending'. The Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may now perceive that all his bent and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed. So great is the bounty with which he has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation. All tales may come true; and yet, at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we give them as Man, finally redeemed, will be like and unlike the fallen that we know.

It should be clear by now that Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is not only a fantasy, but also a "true fairy-story," at least in so far as one accepts Tolkien's concept of this genre. There are many other literary genres to which this tale is related. Patricia Spacks considers Lord of the Rings a myth, in fact she refers to Tolkien, as well as Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis, as a Christian myth-maker.¹⁷ She goes on to say of Tolkien that, "like true myth, his trilogy bears no specific message, despite its heavy overtones of moral significance."¹⁸ It is, of course, open to personal judgement to determine how heavy overtones of moral significance must be before one can say that a specific message is intended. It does seem to me that Tolkien intends a message concerning the absolute nature of the laws of good and evil, and the place of hope and goodness as eternal safeguards against universal final defeat. This becomes especially clear in the light of his essay "On Fairy-Stories." There are such diverse definitions of the term "myth," that certainly The Lord of the Rings must be included within the broader ones. C. S. Lewis considers Kafka's The Castle a myth because the pattern of events constitutes all that is essential, the medium being irrelevant. "I first heard the story of Kafka's The Castle related in conversation and afterwards read the book for myself. The reading added nothing. I had already received the myth, which was all that mattered."¹⁹ Such a broad definition of myth must result in great confusion, as fairy-tales, epics, detective stories, and adventure tales often are appreciated solely because of the action depicted, irrespective of the manner of presentation. Furthermore, the feeling that reading a certain book adds nothing to the tale, already disclosed, is such a personal thing that any sort of agreement as to which tales are myths and which not would immediately become impossible. It is interesting to note that C. S. Lewis ascribes to the myth one of the important qualities which Tolkien assigns to the fairy story, recovery: "The value of the myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by the veil of familiarity."²⁰

If we hold to the conventional definition of myth as a traditional story which concerns supernatural events and gods, often connected with religious ritual, then The Lord of the Rings is excluded. Moreover, it seems that all conventional myth is composed of stories of obscure and diverse origins, stories that develop along with the growth of the culture of the time, rather than emanate suddenly in their entirety, from the mind and pen of one author. The great mythologies with which we are familiar are composed of numerous variant tales concerning the central characters, gods and men, and these tales, from various sources, not only present different aspects of the characters involved, but sometimes even directly

contradict each other. For example, in Greek mythology we find several differing accounts concerning Leda and her mates:

Leda, Daughter of Thestius, and sister of Althaea, and wife of Tyndarcos. According to Homer it was by Tyndarcos that she became the mother of Castor and Pollux, and also of Clytemnestra, while Helen was her daughter by Zeus. Generally, however, Helen and Pollux are described as children of Zeus, Clytemnestra and Castor as those of Tyndarcos. According to the later story, Zeus approached Leda in the shape of a swan, and she brought forth two eggs, out of one of which sprang Helen, and out of the other Castor and Pollux.²¹

This is typical of mythology because of its far-flung sources, but such contradicting stories cannot arise in a unified work, created and written, one could say de nihilo, by one man. Even the popular medieval legends such as the Quest of the Holy Grail or Tristan and Ysolt are of uncertain origins, composed of several differing versions from different parts of Europe, with no one variant being proven conclusively the original one, the source of all the others.



Perhaps it is best to say that Tolkien's Rings is mythopoeic, although not a proper myth. There are a number of myth characteristics, one of which is the grandiose scope of the tale, involving an entire civilization, and focusing on its struggles, both internal and external. The adventures of the Fellowship of the Ring, in particular, is mythic material. On the other hand, there is an unspoken but strongly implied governing ethos, which is quite unlike the impersonal fate that rules the destinies of men and gods alike, both in Greek and in Norse mythology. This ever-present, but always half-hidden ethos, together with a vague power of Good, only once or twice hinted at, replaces not only fate but also the whole complicated hierarchy of gods so typical of the mythologies of antiquity.

The Lord of the Rings may be called a modern epic. It differs from the traditional epic literature of the Greek and Teutonic cultures in the introduction of a quite unostentatious but powerful Christian ethos that underlies the entire tale. Broadly speaking, epic deals with great actions, great in their physical extent and great in the personal spiritual quality demanded of the chosen hero. Huge armies clash, and at the same time an heroic personage is involved in his own internal struggles as well as the obvious external combat that surrounds him. There is the general clash and the specific clash, both on an heroic level. The Lord of the Rings satisfies all the above criteria with its immense battle between the forces of good and evil, a struggle that spreads to all regions of the map, and involves all peoples, a world-wide conflict that allows no neutrals, and its heroic quest involving several humble hobbits and their fellows, and centering on the actions of Frodo, the much tormented, sorely tried hero, who fights his own personal battle against Evil.

In his book Epic and Romance, W. P. Ker places great emphasis on dramatic characterization as an essential constituent of the epic. He says, "Without dramatic representation of the characters, epic is mere history or romance; the variety and life of epic are to be found in the drama that springs up at every encounter of the personages."²² In his highly critical review of Tolkien's work, Edmund Wilson complains that "for the most part such characterizations as Dr. Tolkien is able to contrive are perfectly stereo-typed: Frodo the good little Englishman, Samwise, his dog-like servant, who talks lower-class and respectful, and never deserts his master."²³ And yet there is drama every step of the way, for Frodo, being such a stereo-type of us all, is torn internally, as most of us would be, by the ardors of his task. He must beware the ring he carries, he must constantly fortify himself against its insidious attempts, and he must unceasingly press onwards in his quest, the ultimate success of which he is never certain. The final victory is so uncertain that only a seemingly chance occurrence, perhaps an act of grace, assures success after Frodo himself has finally succumbed to the evil power which he is bearing to its destruction. Wilson's observation of the lack of careful and inventive individualization is for the most part valid, but it is irrelevant, for in a quest-tale of this sort it is the progress of the action that is most important. What does one really know about Beowulf and Sigur that distinguishes them from other great heroes? They possess the usual heroic virtues, the most obvious one being their great prowess in battle. We know very little else about them, for they are epic heroes, and as such exemplify the heroic and moral values of the cultures from which they spring. They are archetypal, fitting snugly into an heroic pattern. They are the heroes who can do something essential which no one else can do, and all else is secondary. What we do learn about these heroes as men, we learn through observing them in action. This is equally true of Tolkien's characters. Frodo and Sam are stereotypes, and although they fit into a vastly different pattern from that of Beowulf, they are types, just as much as he, and reveal themselves through their actions, as is the case with Beowulf and pagan epic heroes. There is, by the way, a true epic hero, archetypal, replete with arête, a princely man named Aragorn, but he is of secondary importance within the context of the work.

Beowulf was clearly a source of inspiration for Tolkien in his work on The Lord of the Rings. It is interesting to note that Ker acknowledged that "the characters in Beowulf are not much more than types..."²⁴ while maintaining, of course, that the work is a true epic. He justifies his opinion by adding, "Yet all those abstract and typical characters are introduced in such a way as to complement and fill up the picture. The general impression is one of variety and complexity, though the elements of it are simple enough."²⁵ Ker's defense of Beowulf against his own criticism may equally be applied to The Lord of the Rings.

There are many criteria of the epic that Tolkien's Rings most obviously meets. His tale deals with nations and individuals, and their respective actions. It concerns the emotions of people, depicting Frodo and Sam bravely doing their best while fighting the fear within them, the Elven people courageously sacrificing their earthly existence for the good of all, the pity of Boromir for his own people followed by his anger and his pride, and the wrath of Gandalf toward Saruman and his gentle love for



Frodo. As is characteristic of the epic, The Lord of the Rings exemplifies the ideals, customs, traditions, and moral values of a whole society, in this case the Christian civilization. The events that constitute the action are typically epic. There are great feasts and immense battles. The epic is expected to contain universal significance and relevance, and Tolkien's tale fulfills this demand with its depiction of a struggle between good and evil, in which the good must join together to overcome the powerful Enemy, and prevent his ascendancy to a position of total domination. The adventure symbolizes man's unceasing role in the cosmic scheme, a role in which he must choose for good or against it.

W. P. Ker feels that Christianity had a deleterious influence upon the epic. Speaking of Beowulf, he points out that "the Christian sentiments and morals are not in keeping with the heroic or the mythical substance of the poem..."²⁶ In Beowulf, the sudden appearance of most obvious Christian preaching and moralizing in the midst of long pagan and heroic passages is certainly incongruous, but in The Lord of the Rings the Christian element is subtly felt, for it never intrudes upon the heroic narrative, never actually shows its face. By remaining hidden it avoids any blatant incongruities, while providing a stronger influence than it would if presented in the form of outright sermonizing. Ker's belief that the serious ascendancy of Christian thought and sentiment in the 12th century hastened the replacement of the epic by the romance seems valid. This does not mean that there cannot be a Christian epic. It is true, however, that The Lord of the Rings is not a pure epic of an heroic age. Written in contemporary times by a professedly Christian writer, it must differ significantly from its pagan predecessors. The important differences are due to the changes that the hero has undergone. Grandness and nobility are still present in the tale but the prosaic nature of the protagonist is strikingly non-heroic and non-epic, for he is the everyman of today. He is the potential hero smothered, but alive, dormant, but waiting, inside the soul of every Christian, no matter how unassuming and bourgeois he may be. When the time is ripe, the nobility reveals itself through the heroic answer to the epic challenge.

Romance and epic are not mutually exclusive. W. P. Ker recognizes that romance appears quite often to form interludes in epic narrative. Ker remarks, "...romance in many varieties is to be found inherent in Epic and in Tragedy...Possibly Romance is in its best place...as an element in the epic harmony; perhaps the romantic mystery is most mysterious when it is found as something additional among the graver and more positive affairs of epic and tragic personages. The occasional visitations of the dreaming moods of romance, in the middle of a great epic or a great tragedy, are often more romantic than the literature which is nothing but romance from beginning to end."²⁷ Tolkien's epic story has obvious romantic interludes. There are descriptions of the dreamy and quiet world of winding rivers and flitting creatures, of that rustic dweller, Tom Bombadil, and there are mysterious and fantastic episodes involving barrow-wights and walking and talking trees. Ker says, "Romance means nothing, if it does not convey some notion of mystery and fantasy."²⁸ Middle-Earth is replete with both.

W. H. Auden discusses romance in an essay entitled "Balaam and his Ass." "A Romance is a history, fabled or real. It recounts a series of unique and quite extraordinary events which have, or are purported to have, happened in the past. The source of interest is in the events themselves, not in the literary style in which they are narrated."²⁹ This definition seems ready-made for The Lord of the Rings. If one accepts the pre-eminence which Auden assigns to the depicted events, and relegates literary style to a position of secondary concern, then one is better prepared and able to appreciate Tolkien's story as it was intended. Edmund Wilson, the most vociferously displeased reviewer, criticizes Tolkien mainly for lack of imaginative characterization, as mentioned before, and for rather uninteresting and unsuccessful style. Readers who are not concerned with the significance of the pattern of events will most certainly be troubled, as was Mr. Wilson, for the nature of this work is such as to place relatively little emphasis on characterization and to make literary style entirely subservient to the story and the message it conveys. The style is only a means to an end. It must adequately describe the events in an interesting manner, without distracting attention from the events to itself. Tolkien's style fulfills this purpose.

W. R. Inge ascribes to romance what C. S. Lewis credits to myth and Tolkien to fantasy: namely, the deliverance of the reader over to a new and enriched life in the everyday world by a salutary immersion in another world. Speaking of the romances of Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and Tolkien, W. R. Inge says that they "deliver the reader into the unknown and scarcely imaginable, so that he may discover there the fullness of a cosmic and moral order which he has before but dimly perceived, returning him to himself and his common experience enriched, revived, and amplified by the vision."³⁰ He goes on to praise documentation within romance, specifically the technique of naming places and things, and dating events. Because of such documentation, "the reader is simultaneously aware of the familiar and the strange, and aware further that both are demonstrations of principles which he has always known."³¹ Douglas



Beren and Tinúviel hiding from one of Morgoth's servants

Parker, in a review on Tolkien, also ascribes this effect to fantasy, stating that good fantasy is "employed not as an end but a means...towards a perception...of reality that can better be attained and expressed in that genre than in any other."³² He goes on to say that "the sloughing off of the normal world, while imposing its own restrictions, has enabled the author to get nearer to a fundamental reality."³³ R. J. Reilly and Patricia Spacks both agree that "Tolkien has rejected realism in order to talk more forcefully about reality."³⁴ It can be seen that although the classification of a literary work that produces such individual renaissances in the readers is disputed, the result is widely observed and notably agreed upon.

Most clearly of all, The Lord of the Rings belongs to the heroic quest genre. The usual quest involves a search for a precious object, generally extending over long distances and long periods of time. Often all searchers but the successful one die. During the search many adventures befall the seekers, many obstacles must be overcome, much struggling must be gone through. Crisis follows crisis, and each one is a test of the courage or virtue or goodness of the hero, in a word, a test of his worthiness. His struggles may be external, involving physical combat, or internal, involving resistance of temptation. Often the quest is both spiritual and physical in nature. This is most apparent in the legends of the Holy Grail. It is equally true of the quest of the Fellowship of the Ring. Although chastity proves essential for success in the Perceval legends, and compassion or pity has a similar role in The Lord of the Rings, it is goodness that is required of the searcher in both. In the Holy Grail legends, only the best man living could confront the Grail, while in Tolkien's tale, only goodness enables the adventurers to destroy the Ring, in the end. W. H. Auden, discussing the goal in a typical quest, remarks that "everybody would like to achieve it, but it can only be reached by the Predestined Hero."³⁵ In The Lord of the Rings, there is no clear indication of a predestined hero. Frodo is destined to bear the Ring, but his success in the venture is never assured. Events prove that alone he could not have completed his mission, for the loyal aid of his servant, Samwise, and the unwitting aid of an old enemy, Gollum, prove indispensable to the satisfactory achievement of the quest. In fact, all the members of the Fellowship of the Ring were needed to keep the dreadful journey going. Together, good-hearted people are able to succeed against an Evil Power, where alone one could never stand. The mighty wizard Gandalf hints at this fact time and time again and points out that he himself, with all his magic, cannot perform the feat alone.

The world of the quest is a world in motion. There is physical movement toward the goal, and there is the internal progress that is necessary for success. In the quest world one is presented with a picture of life as becoming: everything is of interest in its relation to the future, for the goal of the quest, and its fulfillment, lie in the future. Because of the constant motion, we are more interested in the action, the events, the tests, the combats, than in the characters as such.

The quest of the fellowship is atypical, for the band of searchers is attempting to get rid of the precious object, not to find it. The object is a Ring of Power, quite conventional as such, but it was wrought for evil purposes and ultimately will drive its user to evil, regardless of his innate goodness, just as the Nibelung Ring, won through renunciation of all love, inevitably brought a fatal curse upon all its possessors. Knowing that only ill could come from the power of the Ring, an intrepid band of adventurers undertakes to return with the Ring to the volcano in which it was forged, and there to destroy it. The volcano is in the heart of the land of Mordor, ruled over by the Evil One, Sauron, who is most desirous of recapturing the Ring. There are countless obstacles, some physical, in the shape of enemies, some spiritual, in the form of moral weakness, greed or pride, on the part of the adventurers themselves. Sauron is the final and most dangerous obstacle. The last step in a quest adventure always involves defeating, whether by force or cunning, the guardian of the precious object. In the Holy Grail adventures there are many ranks of preliminary guardians to defeat, but the final "enemy" is the imperfectness of the searcher, himself. In the Nibelung legend, a dragon guards the treasure, as is the case in the last adventure of Beowulf. Most guardians try to prevent the searchers from taking away the treasure, but Sauron tries to take it from them, while they, ironically, must bring it to his doorstep in order to destroy it.

In spite of all obstacles, the quest party pushes on, doing what it must do, never flagging for long. Their duty consists in acting now, in the present, as well as they possibly can. For the rest, it is not their concern.

A more complex quest that may throw light on that of the Fellowship is the mad hunt after Moby Dick. Ahab's monomaniac pursuit of the White Whale finds the object of the quest, the precious thing, and the guardian of the treasure combined in the shape of the Whale. Nature defends herself. This unique quest is destined to be fatal to the searcher, for it is a forbidden treasure that he seeks. Finding the whale can only seal Ahab's fate; ostensible success will be followed by immediate doom. The quest itself is destroying Ahab; the pursuit of the unholy quest, if persevered in, can only result in his own death and damnation. The quest, by its nature, is doomed to failure. For Frodo, the quest object which he carries, always, presents the temptation which could destroy him. He must hold onto the evil Ring and must resist it, unflinchingly. Frodo's superiority and advantage is that he is making the quest for the triumph of good over evil. His quest is a means to an end, a good end. Ahab's quest has become an end in itself, and is, in a way, the opposite of Frodo's. Frodo is serving all the land, all the people, and the vague powers of good whose visible emissary is Gandalf. Ahab will not serve, his quest is the symbol of his refusal, and he is damned through his pride.

The trilogy is not quite a parable, nor is it an allegory. It is a story with religious, moral meaning that is not overt, and in this it

(continued on page 22)

CONTEMPORARY
MEDIEVAL
AUTHORS
by Richard C. West

The work of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien usually suffers when current genre theory is applied to it, since, while a long prose narrative like The Lord of the Rings can only be categorized as a novel, its fantastic nature fits ill into the traditional idea of the novel as "a reflection of real life." This is dismaying for critics who assume that the inadequacy is in the book rather than the theory; but so many people have found this book both "plesante to rede in" and "for our doctryne"¹ that it is more reasonable to attempt to establish a new genre that more accurately limns the outlines of this type of narrative. This would have to be distinct from a realistic genre like the novel, and so provide for the imagining of new and perhaps radically different "worlds" rather than for the selective representation of this one, and reverse the stress of the novel and place greater emphasis on story than on character. I believe that there is an existing contemporary tradition of a genre with these characteristics, which I will call "the twentieth-century romance," and Tolkien is only one, although one of the finest, of its practitioners.

The chronological limitation in the term is not an absolute statement of essence but a matter of focus, for the roots of this genre extend far back in time from the twentieth century, back to classical and Anglo-Saxon epic, classical and medieval romance, and Old Icelandic Edda and saga. Many nineteenth-century forebears are easily recognized: in the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, the exotic adventure tales of Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard, the medievalism of William Morris in verse and prose romances, and the Christian fantasy of George MacDonald. Yet the genre does seem to have flourished even in the "realistic" twentieth century. Many writers of the Irish Literary Revival were preoccupied with Celtic mythology (consider William Butler Yeats, AE, Lord Dunsany, Austin Clarke, and especially James Stephens). E. R. Eddison, British civil servant in Ireland in the first part of this century, wrote heroic fantasy in his Zimlamvian tetralogy, in which, in C. S. Lewis's phrase, he blended Renaissance luxury with Northern hardness.² Many science-fiction writers fit into the genre quite comfortably: think of the weird fantasy of H. P. Lovecraft, the hero-wins-princess tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs, the "incomplete enchanter" series of L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, some of Poul Anderson's work (such as Three Hearts and Three Lions), or the dark fantasy of Michael Moorcock, to name only a few of the most popular writers. Some of the best examples in this kind are among children's authors who are worthwhile enough to retain their following into adulthood: George

MacDonald again, his friend Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame's beast fables, the "secondary worlds" of E. Nesbit's fictional children, the extravaganzas of A. A. Milne and P. L. Travers, Carol Kendall's Minnipin books, and the Celtic-inspired mythologies of Alan Garner and Lloyd Alexander.

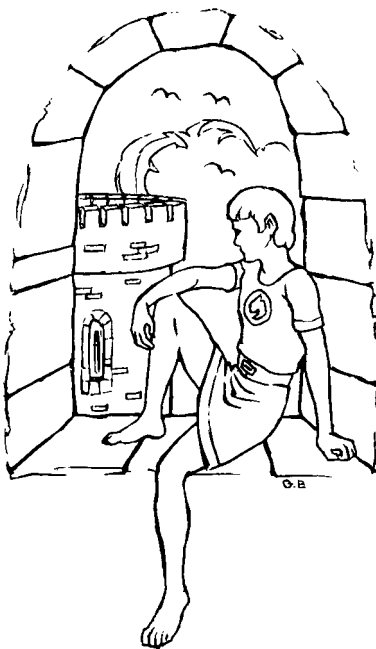
It is a long litany of authors, and this and my deliberate inclusion of writers who vary a great deal in literary skill and imaginative power should make it apparent why I would prefer to spend years studying this proposed genre before I could feel comfortable in discussing it or its many practitioners. What I offer here is a preliminary study of one aspect of this genre, an examination of the work of three men whose writings I do feel that I know well enough to say something about them, the three whom I am calling "contemporary medieval authors": T. H. White, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien.

I hope that a smile was the typical reaction upon reading my title, for, of course, it is, in part, a joke; but how I also mean it in all soberness will, I trust, become progressively clearer.

Terence Hanbury White, born an Anglo-Indian of Anglo-Irish lineage, is best known for what is generally considered his masterpiece, The Once and Future King (1958). The title is taken from an epithet applied to Arthur Pendragon in a number of medieval texts: rex quondam, rexque futurus (king formerly, and future king). He first published a novel (or, rather, a romance) about the boyhood of King Arthur, entitled The Sword in the Stone (1938). In the absence of any medieval source detailing this period, the book had to be nearly all of White's own invention. But he does make use of the "education of a prince" theme whereby a young aristocrat is prepared by good counsel and training to rule with wisdom, mercy, and justice; and he relates to this the convention of rearing one of noble blood in the country away from the corruptions of the court, thus getting the best of both worlds. In two sequels, The Witch in the Wood (1939) and The Ill-Made Knight (1940), White portrayed the chivalric world he found in the work of Sir Thomas Malory from the establishment of the Arthurian kingdom through the Grail Quest; and when he decided to combine his books into a vast modern Arthuriad he wrote two more sections to complete the story. "Candle in the Wind" brings the tragedy of the Round Table to the eve of the final battle with Mordred, and in "The Book of Merlyn" Arthur's truce with his nephew in a last attempt to establish a just society fails because of human distrust. This last section was later discarded,



except for the two chapters recounting Arthur's experiences with the ants and with the geese, which were used to replace, respectively, the lecture of the grass snake and the visit to Athene in the initial section. White also excised Madam Mim and the giant Golapas from the final version of "Sword in the Stone" for the completed book, drastically reduced The Witch in the Wood and changed its title to "Queen of Air and Darkness," and, judging from his numerous revisions, seems to have carefully re-read his every sentence before he was satisfied with his Arthurian epic. These are matters that deserve a fuller discussion than the theme of this paper permits. The main point I want to make about White's Arthuriad now is what he said himself, that he was trying "to write of an imaginary world which was imagined in the fifteenth century."³ He writes as if Alfred of Wessex and the Plantagenets are the stuff of legend, and Malory's stories of Lancelot and Guenever and Gawain the matter of history. He became one in a long line of continuators of the Arthurian story, in the medieval tradition of an author as one who adds to and re-works extant matter. His chief addition to his sources may be his marvelous sense of humor, or it may be his characteristic method of giving to the characters he borrowed from Malory a psychological depth palatable to modern readers.⁴ White had an encyclopedic cast of mind that liked to include all kinds of information in his work, and he was blessed with a remarkable empathy for other ages and other living creatures, so that his Arthurian writings in either their early or final form make an able introduction to the life of the Middle Ages.



Even so brief a discussion as this shows that T. H. White used medieval materials to address a modern audience. Similarly, the imaginative writings of C. S. Lewis have clearly been influenced by his studies as a scholar and critic of the literature of the Middle Ages. Ransom, the space traveller of the Deep Heaven trilogy, finds a solar system modeled as much on medieval as on modern cosmology: vibrant with radiance and life, with each planet having its tutelary spirit to guide it. This depiction, obviously, is not made for astronomical "realism" but for its imaginative potency (Lewis's shining and bracing "heavens" are much more attractive than the dead, cold blackness of outer space in much other science fiction) and its thematic relevance. The medieval theory (derived from Aristotle) that Earth alone is corrupt because of Original Sin while all creation else is perfect beyond the orbit of the Moon, is used in Out of the Silent Planet (1938) to contrast, in the best tradition of the traveller's tale (parts of Mandeville as well as Swift) the unfallen world of Malacandra with our "bent" or evil one. The mystically ecstatic conclusion of Perelandra (1943) makes highly effective use of the Great Dance, a medieval symbol for cosmic harmony and union. The Arthurian legend, and especially Merlin in his Malorian role of strategist in battle, informs much of That Hideous Strength (1945), and another feature of this book is the theme of the "descent of the planets" in Chapter 15, in which each has the "influence" (in the original sense) on the terrestrial sphere that is proper to its astrological character.⁵ The Chronicles of Narnia, full of single combats, enchantments, and quests by land and sea, read much like many medieval romances of the ilk of Chaucer's Squire's Tale.⁶ The witty and penetrating Screwtape Letters (1942) have proved a popular entry in the medieval genre of the Christian moral fable.

With Lewis's friend J. R. R. Tolkien, another medievalist of note, we have a man so thoroughly immersed in the literature of the Middle Ages that he wrote a sequel to an Old English poem, The Battle of Maldon: his verse play, "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhtelm's Son" (1953). He also wrote many other poems in the alliterative meter used by Anglo-Saxon scops. "The Lay of Actroun and Itroun" (1945) is his own example of that medieval genre dealing with love and the supernatural, the Breton lay. His Lord of the Rings (1954-55) is as thoroughly medieval in spirit as, one would think, any modern work could be, and has been called with some justice and more wit "the last literary masterpiece of the Middle Ages."⁷ It is informed by medieval conventions like courtly love, courtsoisie generally, fealty to one's lord, and the quest. Names are borrowed from medieval texts and languages; the Old Norse Elfeim becomes Elvenhome, for example, and the Old English adjective "frod" (applied to one who has gained wisdom and experience through age) is chosen as the basis for the name of Frodo, who in the course of the story changes from a hobbit in his irresponsible twoons (I, 44) to a halfling who has grown very much (III, 369).⁸ Even the medieval convention of inventing a source in order to lend authority to a tale one has created oneself (for medieval people had no "originality" fetish and thought what was worth repeating must be valuable) is made good use of in the fiction of the Red Book of Westmarch which the author humbly claims to be translating. Magical aids, battle tactics, social structure and runic inscriptions are all borrowed from the Middle Ages and transformed into the stuff of a gripping modern fantasy.

There is an anecdote about Tolkien (one which I am perhaps overly fond of repeating, but one which fascinates me) which sheds light on his impregnation with medievalism. I was told, by one who was present, of an occasion on which Tolkien was to present a philological paper at Oxford. When he appeared, he expressed regret that he had not finished the announced study, but would instead read a poem he had composed, and proceeded to do so. The audience was a trifle nonplussed; though I don't know if this had anything to do with whether or not they liked the poem. In explanation, Tolkien told his colleagues that his immediate reaction upon reading a work of medieval literature was not a desire to analyze its language nor to study it from a critical point of view, but rather to write a new work in the same tradition. His impulse, then, is to make literature himself rather than to write about it. I believe that Mr. Lewis and Mr. White also shared this sort of living response to old art.

Perhaps after all this medievalism you will see why I have preferred to use the term "romance" with its medieval associations, rather than just "fantasy" for this genre. I would not claim too much, however. My own chief interests are medieval and modern literature, and so perhaps I am biased in favor of



HOBBITS:

Common Lens for Heroic Experience

by David M. Miller

Now that some of the bloom is off hobbit-mania, it may be possible to avoid both the paralysis of ecstasy and the thud of automatic rejection in order to begin an assessment of Tolkien's accomplishment. Perhaps the surprising facet of that accomplishment is that Tolkien is read seriously. *The Lord of the Rings* is a didactic, sexless story whose major characters rarely encounter their own psyches. Its three volumes are liberally sprinkled with poetry and verse. It very nearly begins "Once upon a time" and almost ends "They lived happily ever after." Its prose style is vaguely King James Biblical, ranging backward to heroic Old English and forward to a kind of Peter Sellers Cockney. The story is sternly moral; judgments are based upon black and white distinctions with, ultimately, no room at all for grey. As Tolkien's characters move through semi-animate landscapes, they are aided and thwarted by both magic and outrageous coincidence. And most damning of all, there is not just one, but a host of certifiable heroic-heroes.

Our age, boasting of situational ethics, seeing no ends for a grey moral continuum, preferring its heroes anti, seeing sex as the "obligatory" for sales and sophistication, rejection not only happy endings but happy middles as well—an age whose fantasies are all psychological and largely libidinous should, one might think, have found *The Lord of the Rings* to be escapist rubbish, a sort of 20th century Ossianism. We are clearly (and proudly) "A bantering breed, sophisticated and swarthy." And, in charity, we might be expected to say with John Crowe Ransom, "Unto more beautiful, persistently more young / Thy fabulous provinces belong."¹ Such *ubi sunt* self-indulgence is not without its attractions, and certainly a good deal of Tolkien's popularity may be marked down to a reveling in adolescent gnosticism, complete with handshakes, secret signs, mimeographed journals, and fraternal societies. Tolkien can (and sometimes has) become an article of faith, and the true believer is paralyzed in ecstasy. But without denigrating such responses, it is clear that they disable criticism. A

less impressionistic approach is in order.

By now it is clear that *The Lord of the Rings* is not just camp. Sales continue, and the search for more Tolkien is on. *Smith of Wootton Major* was printed in *The Red Book* (not of Westmarch, but of suburbia), and from time to time pieces appear in serious journals of substantial professional reputation. Literate, sophisticated, often learned admirers of Tolkien keep turning up in unlikely places. But most convincing to me is the recurring temptation to reread for the 7th or 10th or 14th time a work which professional training ought, one might think, to reveal as a waste of time. The most awkward fact about the ring trilogy is the utter seriousness which it demands. To find oneself as serious about the siege of Minas Tirith as about the siege of Troy is startling. The reader is asked to submit, to believe in Frodo's journey, almost in the way he must surrender to *Paradise Lost*. It is not a willing suspension of disbelief, but rather a process which is neither "willing" nor a "suspension" nor does it have much to do with "belief" as that word is ordinarily meant. Since the raising of the problem of belief is a classic *pons asinorum*, one had better define terms and cases as narrowly as possible if he is to speak of belief at all. Two groups of readers we may pass over at once, though for opposite reasons.



The first group to be excluded are those who resist fantasy entirely unless it is "explained" as a dream or a mental aberration. Such readers frequently insist that a bridge be constructed between the primary and secondary universe and that the author acknowledge fantasy as fantasy any time a story lacks "verisimilitude," by which they mean reality of detail. There is often a curious parallel phenomenon: so long as the details are exact, the realities of motive, of coincidence and of character may be quite overlooked. Chronic examples of such "realism" are to be found often in historical novels, in detective stories, and in the jargon sort of science fiction, but the attitude is not confined to readers who are amateur or frankly escapist. There is perhaps an equally large number of readers who find the absence of particular kinds of detail (scatology, for example) and of particular themes (alienation, for example) to leave a work flabby or "sentimental." There is no question but that the problems of man's sexuality make a nearly perfect literary vehicle (almost iconic) for investigations of many basic facets of human nature. It is likely that all men are diurnally lustful (or would like to be), but it is also likely that visions of beauty and truth occasionally intrude. The

point is that *kind* of theme or *sort* of detail has nothing to do with the important sense of reality, of belief, which it is the writer's minimum task to enable. The implications of such a statement are circular, of course. A work induces literary belief if it is good. It is good if it induces such belief. At its most basic level all critical evaluation is plagued by such subjectivity. Still, one may point to specific elements in a work and so claim tied, rather than free, responses. And about tied responses a great deal may be said which is not wholly subjective. Presently, an attempt will be made to illustrate the way in which Tolkien induces belief, but first the second irrelevant category of readers must be dealt with.

At the opposite pole from the Benthamite realists are the neo-goths: they believe *because* the story is impossible. So long as there are knights and dark towers and fates worse than death, endurance beyond belief, treasure beyond measure, and a sad clear song beneath a single star as night and evil and doom sweep the kingly, bloody, unbowed brow, it is enough. Such readers smile on all alike. E. R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* and *The Lord of the Rings* serve equally well as gothic feast. The "realists" raise irrelevant standards and so disbelieve; the neo-goths believe too easily. In both cases Tolkien is made something which he is not and so judged inappropriately. Certainly this is not true of all Tolkien; if *Smith of Wootton Major* or *Farmer Giles of Ham* are to be enjoyed, something of neo-gothic tolerance is necessary. The surprising thing is that such tolerance is unnecessary for the ring trilogy.

But, to the problem of belief: all fiction is, by definition, non-fact and as such is not to be believed (or disbelieved) in the way one believes a newspaper report. Schliemann's discovery of a real Troy has no effect whatsoever upon the aesthetic believability of the *Iliad*. Creative writers create. And what they create is a secondary universe. We should value that created universe too much to insist that it live only by the rules of the primary universe in which we live. I do not suggest that there are not relationships between the two universes, but rather that the secondary universe is relevant precisely because it is different from the primary. To insist on identity is to move toward the idiocy of the unities of time and place—when the ability to unshackle experience from precisely those two unities is one of fiction's greatest resources. The opposite temptation must be resisted as well. Literature is not relevant in direct ratio to the increasing distance between the world of fiction and the world of the reader. But certain general observations may be made. If the secondary universe in question is very like the primary universe of its reader, the question of belief is unlikely to arise. Or, if that secondary universe, however different from the primary it may be, is one which has often been visited by the reader, no particular problem of credibility will arise.

However, the greater the distance between the primary and secondary universes and the less familiar the reader is with the universe of fiction, the greater is the writer's responsibility for providing a bridge. Two sorts of bridges have already been rejected: the dream and the madman. Both entail delusion, rather than illusion, or more accurately, both place a delusion within the pervasive illusion of fiction in an attempt to explain the illusion. Since both are themselves a part of that illusion, the effort can often be self-defeating, for it gives the reader an escape hatch. He is at any point at liberty to wake himself or to regain his sanity. Both these familiar bridges keep the primary world too thoroughly in the foreground, and in their sometimes successful efforts to gain a tentative acceptance for their secondary universes, they are likely to create a sense of "artificiality" in the bad, rather than the good, sense.

A brief (and loaded) comparison may make the point more clearly. *The Worm Ouroboros*² and *The Lord of the Rings* have much in common: malign King Gorice, like Sauron, is destroyed only to resume life in a different form. Queen Sophonisba is in many ways a Galadriel. Lord Juss parallels the Aragorn of the last two volumes. Lord Gro and Saruman are both excellence ruined. Goblinland and Witchland, like Gondor and Mordor, are eternally at war. And much of the machinery of the two tales is identical. Differences are equally clear. In *The Worm* there is a good deal of confusion as to whose side one should be on, though the Goblins in general are more noble than the Witches. The code of knightly valor in Eddison's work has little moral underpinning. And Eddison has neither the skill in writing and naming, nor the epic learning that Tolkien has. But the matter of bridge from primary to secondary universe is perhaps the most relevant distinction for the present purpose.



Eddison seems to be aware of the need for a stance, at least initially, for he introduces a bridging consciousness in the person of Lessingham. Lessingham is a rather mauve Englishman who is guided by a supernatural martlet to the planet Mercury where, invisible, out of time, he sees one cycle of an eternal drama. Drama is the proper word since the action seems staged. We, at best, watch Lessingham watch a play, but we do not identify with him for he has no substance, is not really present, does not, for example, ride behind Goldry Bluzsco nor fall under the spell of Lord Gro's voice. To the degree that he is effective at all, he makes belief more, rather than less difficult. Both the reader and the author soon forget him. He is never returned to earth. Hence the frame, the bridge to a secondary universe, is incomplete. How did the manuscript get back to Earth? Of course we do not need to know, but the existence of Lessingham is the kind of apology which creates an offense where there might not have been one.

Although in "On Fairy-stories"³ Tolkien insists that fantasy must not be explained as anything at all, he incorporates a bridge device which is in some ways similar to Eddison's use of Lessingham. Tolkien claims that the ring tale is a translation of excerpts from the Red Book of Westmarch, but unlike Eddison Tolkien incorporates that "authority" into the tale proper; as the story progresses, we see Bilbo writing a part of the Red Book. Tolkien's device is irrelevant. The problem of belief is really not much affected either way. Still, an author must provide, if not a bridge for the Benthemite, at least a stance, a viewpoint, a point of identification, a central intelligence—something or someone with whom the reader can view the action. Only if he is willing to attempt that almost contradiction in terms, the "dramatic-narrative" point of view, can an author dispense with this rhetorical imperative. Since it is clear that Tolkien wishes to tell his story, consideration of viewpoint is immediately relevant. It is in the remarkably complex set of relationships between the ordinariness of the hobbits and the alienness of their surroundings that a key may be found to the differences between *The Lord of the Rings* and the works of Lewis, Williams, Eddison, Morris, etc. with which it is most often grouped.

As usual, a consideration of Tolkien's choice of names provides a convenient point of entry. The principal hobbits are all

commonly and somewhat comically named: Sam Gamgee, Merry Brandybuck, Pippin Took, Frodo and Bilbo Baggins. It would be difficult to discover names less magical. Certainly the names within the Shire are not evocative of romance: "The Water," "Over Hill," "Bywater," "Woody End." As Ted Sandyman the miller's son remarks, "There's only one Dragon in Bywater, and that's Green"⁴—by which he means the tavern of that name. The action of the ring trilogy moves from one rise of earth to another: from "The Hill" to "Orodruin." From the simplest of places with the plainest of names to strangeness named exotically. Sam leaves "Rosie Cotton" behind as he journeys to "Galadriel." Only gradually do the familiar "goblins" become the unfamiliar "orcs." It is the believability of the hobbits in their solid earthy world that pulls together impossibility compounded and subdues the otherwise incredible to belief. If the hobbits are real, all else can follow, for they are constantly at the center of action. If somehow the reader can be lead to identify with one or more of them, or even to become thoroughly sympathetic, belief is no longer a problem.

But these are very large "if's." On first acquaintance the hobbits are as unlikely as Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit: beardless, furry-footed eternal children whose civilization has ceased to evolve so that the "good old days" of a Pabst Beer commercial are relived. They have none of the evils of the industrial revolution, nor have they the penalties of being without it. One would hardly expect that they could provide easy access to events which would otherwise be unbelievable. But in fact they are a more acceptable ground than the alternative. Tolkien traps the reader between two sorts of unbelievable characters: the hobbits on one hand and the heroes on the other. The hobbits are in some ways the equivalent of Eddison's Lessingham, but whereas Eddison tried to interject a real man into an imaginary landscape, Tolkien builds a real set of characters out of the imaginary materials of his landscape. The question is how.

The introduction of the hobbits in both *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Hobbit* is singularly unpromising. In both cases Tolkien sets his fairy tale elements in nursery tale form. *The Hobbit* opens as a kind of Pooh Bear Bilbo receives a series of Snow White dwarfs and plays the Little Red Hen host with lots of "good gracious" thrown in. The opening of the trilogy is, if

possible, worse. Not only is Bilbo's birthday party dull, it is cute. And cuteness is an unpardonable sin for the creator of an imaginative world. Cuteness does not fare well with my four year old son; it is honored only by grownups who think it is what they liked about nursery tales. And it is this aspect of adult memory that Tolkien uses to establish the reality of the hobbits. They belong with childhood imagining that we have put away with teddy bears, but for which we feel strong, if embarrassed, sympathy. For readers who are neither neo-goths nor realists, the first encounter with hobbits is likely to produce a vague sense of discomfort, a kind of half-recognition which, though without shock, is troubling. It is not the sort of discomfort occasioned by a unicorn in the garden, but rather more as if the anthropomorphic metaphors for one's automobile suddenly appeared to have a foundation in fact. To come at it from another angle: everyone has met the round-faced, ordinary, average sort of man . . . the kind who is at once familiar. With him you can go to lunch or for a drink, play golf or argue politics without bothering to get his name, or to remember it if you do. Such is the initial effect of the hobbits. We disbelieve in their existence because they are too ordinary, too insignificant, to be real. However my car might respond to a spoken command, I would pretend not to notice. There is, at this stage, no possibility of identifying with the hobbits; it would be like identifying with a stuffed toy animal.

But once the action proper gets underway, a choice is forced upon the reader. If he is to continue, he must somehow come to terms with events and characters which are unbelievable because they are unusual, magical, and heroic. In *The Hobbit* it may be about the time of entry into the Great Goblin's cave; in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the intrusion of the Black Rider into the Shire. Since we disbelieve in Black Riders and in goblins for reasons opposite to those we have for refusing to accept hobbits seriously, we, in effect, are left for the moment without a place to stand. It is easy to retreat to the hobbits because it is they with whom we see the impossible aliens. We begin to believe in the hobbits because they initially share our disbelief in ring-wraiths. As they are convinced, so are we. The initial superiority to hobbits which their nursery tale introduction encourages is thus used to good advantage. Anything a teddy bear can face or believe is not too much for a grownup. The awe-inspiring aspects of the ring trilogy develop slowly, starting with happenings which even the hobbits view as only slightly out of the ordinary. Sam, prior to the journey, *thought* that he had once seen an elf. He *wants* to believe in the ent which his cousin reported seeing, but it is mostly wishful thinking.

The introductions of Gandalf and Aragorn are cases in point: Gandalf has been sent by The One to battle the Dark Lord and so conclude an age of middle earth, but to the hobbits he is a funny old man who is good at smoke rings and fireworks. The reader discovers Gandalf's significance only as the hobbits do, though Tolkien maintains the superior attitude which the reader has toward the hobbits by allowing him to see things a little more quickly. Aragorn, heir of Elendil, bearer of the sword that was broken, true king, is to Frodo an ill-visaged vagabond whom he calls "Strider." The hobbits, despite their protests to the contrary, are remarkably free of preconceptions as to what can and cannot exist, and their ingenuousness is contagious. By the time the action moves to Moria, the reader is likely to have completed his identification with the hobbits. Only the neo-goth could imagine himself battling a Balrog on the fire bridge as Gandalf does, but many of us might stab a troll in the foot if Boromir held the door.

But even if we grant the sympathy for or identification with the hobbits, the question remains as to how Tolkien makes use of that identification in presenting heroes to an unheroic age. Tolkien is careful to keep a hobbit present in almost every scene so that the heroic virtues and actions which fill the books are softened by the quiet, unassuming gaze of a self-proclaimed non-hero. Hobbits do not remain astonished at anything for very long, but their capacity for renewed wonder is infinite. To Sam the fearful Malamuks are Oliphants, and the comic rejection of their terrible strength is subdued to the tale from within, rather than being brought to the tale destructively by the reader. If *The Lord of the Rings* is to fail, it explodes. The "practical" rejection of magic and coincidence is to a remarkable degree incorporated within the action.

So long as the fellowship is forming, or intact, there is no real necessity for Merry and Pippin. In fact, it is not easy to keep them separate. But when, at the end of the first volume, the fellowship splits, the utility of several hobbits becomes obvious. Merry and Pippin lead the western fellowship to Rohan and eventu-

ally to Gondor. And as Frodo and Sam struggle toward Mordor, the reader learns enough about hobbits and about heroism to make the final efforts of Frodo and Sam acceptable.

Merry and Pippin grow very gradually, but it is not long before they are accustomed to heroic actions in others and accept the reality of heroes as a matter of course. The battle between the Rohirrim and the kidnapping orcs is stern, no-nonsense heroic, but the hobbits, crawling away, stopping to munch lembas, and worrying about bed and breakfast, provide a non-heroic framework for the action. There exists a useful tension between the reader's feeling of superiority toward the hobbits and his inability to identify with the mighty warriors and magicians. As the hobbits become more heroic without ever quite losing their childlike qualities, the reader is likely to grow with them. When out of hopeless battle come the victorious forces of Theoden to treat with the evil wizard Saruman, there, eating a second breakfast atop the rubble of Isengard, are two very unheroic hobbits. Tolkien thus allows the reader to find his stance somewhere between the Benthamite and the neo-goth. Gradually the hobbits are absorbed into cosmic action. Both Pippin and Merry join the heroic households of old men. Merry is to tell Theoden of pipe weed. Denethor accepts Pippin for mixed reasons, none of which involve his heroic prowess. But each is accoutered for battle, and Tolkien thus keeps a hobbit-eye at the center of the major actions. As we see Pippin's helpless terror when he gazes into the Palantir, we can more fully appreciate the heroism of Aragorn as he wrenches it from Sauron. But at the same time Pippin's escape from the eye makes Aragorn's escape more credible. And we are prepared for the bone-weary despair of Frodo as Sam carries him up the slopes of Orodruin.



There are two major episodes in *The Lord of the Rings* which have no hobbit to serve as the practical pole of reader evaluation. The first is the coming of Gimli, Legolas, and Aragorn to Meduseld and the following battle of Helm's Deep. The second is the march of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli through the paths of the dead to the spectral tryst at the Stone of Erech. In both episodes Gimli steps forth to play the role of hobbit—to be amazed, delighted, or terrified in a manner quite unsuitable to his usual character. At Helm's Deep he hides until enemies his size show up. On the march of the dead, he is terror stricken: a role he need not have played had there been hobbits enough to go around. Still, he is heroic in both episodes. Perhaps he prepares for the later actions of the hobbits by being himself a kind of heroic hobbit. "Heroic hobbit" is a contradiction in terms, but it is exactly that contradiction which enables belief in the ring trilogy. Even the most heroic actions of Merry and Pippin are kept within compass. In despair Merry stabs the chief of the ringwraiths—reaching upward, he stabs him in the back of the leg! Pippin gets his troll at the battle before the Morannon, but the dead troll falls on him, completely covering him so that the heroism is slightly ridiculous, though very satisfying.

The scouring of the Shire, the last action of the trilogy, cements the attitude toward hobbits and heroism. Merry, Pippin, and Sam return no longer the stuffed-toys the reader met at the beginning of the tale. They too find the Shire hobbits too ordinary, too passive, too much out of childish memory. Frodo has moved beyond the hobbit (and human) level so that he fits with the elves. But Merry, Pippin, and Sam have grown very human. The

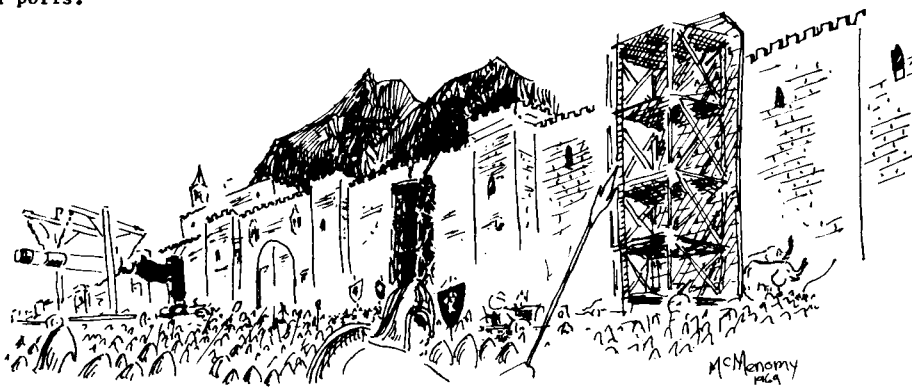
dispossessing of Sharkey from his illgot holdings requires nothing at all the reader cannot conceive of himself as doing. Hobbits turn out to be very human. Gollum too is a hobbit.

I may have seemed to imply that there are not intelligent, literate readers who find hobbits silly, or even hate them. This is certainly not the case. Condemnations of Tolkien's work range in tone from the shrill to the supercilious. Astonishingly, one frequently hears a note of anger, sounded early by Edmund Wilson in "Oo, Those Awful Orcs." *The Nation* magazine went so far some time ago as to equate hobbitism and AMERICAN-IMPERIALIST-AGGRESSION in Vietnam.⁵ Sometimes it seems as if something very important were being threatened by Tolkien. He asserts the value of honor, bravery, justice—the reality of free will and responsibility—the existence of a benevolent and watchful deity—the necessity and relevance of moral absolutes. It is as if we were felt to be in danger of losing our new found sophistication and freedom. In danger of sliding back through the age of disillusion, to the age of reason, to the age of belief. That danger is hardly lessened, apparently, even if such unsophisticated assertions as Tolkien makes are enclosed in a "fairy story" written by an aging English philologist. Most of my "practical" friends find Tolkien unreadable. There are undoubtedly thorough-going new-leftists who understand Tolkien and approve of him—I have met none. Responses to *The Lord of the Rings* are remarkable. It might even be that an examination of the reasons for its popularity would tell us as much about the bumping forces in our chaotic national dark as any number of public opinion polls.

It is relatively easy to create a secondary universe. One need only change the sun from red to green and all else will follow. But it is quite another thing to make that universe ring true. The problem is particularly difficult if the secondary universe is heroic. Heroism is not very fashionable. Tolkien hit upon a brilliant solution to the problem of bridging the gap between the two worlds when he created the hobbits. In their solid-down-to-earth childishness, in their wonder, delight, fear, and terror, the 20th century reader finds a guide who makes middle earth accessible without the necessity of suspension; or of disbelief. It is the hobbits who take us there and back again.

NOTES

- 1 John Crowe Ransom, "Philomela," *Poems and Essays* (New York, 1955), page 30.
- 2 E. R. Eddison, *The Worm Ouroboros* (New York, 1962).
- 3 J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," *Tree and Leaf* (Boston, 1965).
- 4 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston, 1954-55).
- 5 *The Nation*, CCV (October 9, 1967), pages 332-334.



Contemporary Medieval Authors

(continued from page 9)

seeing a disproportionate medieval element in contemporary romancers. Nevertheless, I do think a medieval impulse can legitimately be detected in the writers I have named in my opening list, even if only absorbed at second-hand from Scott and Morris,⁹ but I would not underrate other roots and influences which are also operative. Indeed, I mean my title to apply only to those three writers of twentieth-century romance whom I have discussed in this paper. I don't want to suggest that they be regarded as transplanted medieval authors, for they are part of our age however uncomfortable they often felt in it, and they speak directly to us. Rather I would submit that their imaginations are inspired by their reading of medieval literature so that they re-shape and re-write medieval material and conventions for the pleasure and profit of a contemporary audience.

ENDNOTES

¹Besides a host of popular articles, see the Tolkien number of *Mankato State College Studies* (February, 1967), and the critical anthology edited by Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbaro, *Tolkien and the Critics* (Notre Dame Press, 1968).

²In his essay, "On Stories," in C. S. Lewis, ed. *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Oxford, 1947; William B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. 104. Eddison's four romances, in the order in which I recommend they be read, are: *The Worm Ouroboros* (1926), *A Fish Dinner in Memison* (1941), the posthumous *Mezentian Gate* (1958), and *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935). All have recently been reprinted in paperback by Ballantine Books.

³Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White* (Viking Press, 1968),

p. 133; the italics are White's. This biography quotes liberally from White's diaries and letters and from the unpublished "Book of Merlyn."

⁴For White's psychoanalysis of Lancelot and Guenever, see Warner, op. cit., pp. 148-152.

⁵Compare Robert Henryson's fifteenth-century poem, *The Testament of Cresseid*, ll. 141-270.

⁶There are seven of these Narnia stories: *The Magician's Nephew* (1955); *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Horse and His Boy* (1954); and *The Last Battle* (1956).

⁷William Blissett, "Despots of the Rings," *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 58 (Summer, 1959), p. 449.

⁸Reference is made parenthetically to J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Ballantine, 1965); Roman numerals refer to the individual volumes of the romance: I, *Fellowship of the Ring*; II, *The Two Towers*; III, *The Return of the King*. Also see John Tinkler's article, "Old English in Rohan," in Isaacs and Zimbaro, op. cit., pp. 164-169. Many readers have noticed that the list of dwarf names in the *Poetic Edda* (and quoted by Snorri Sturluson in his *Prose Edda*) has supplied the name for numerous Tolkien characters, including Gandalf.

⁹What counts, of course, is the medieval inspiration, not necessarily accuracy of medieval scholarship. C. S. Lewis, for example, considered Scott's medieval books his weakest efforts.



Tolkien and Coleridge

by Clyde S. Kilby

Any literary work in no small way reflects somehow all literary works, but sometimes two works are so alike that the matter is worth looking into. This I think is true of Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner" and J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

My attention to their similarity was first caught by their confessed experimental ground. Tolkien says that his story grew out of his philological interests and was made "rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse."¹ The plan of Coleridge and Wordsworth for their Lyrical Ballads is well known, Coleridge's part being to try to create supernatural characters but portray them with such truth that the reader would accept them as real. But in both Tolkien and Coleridge the matter goes much deeper. It plunges downward toward the mystery of words and of meaning. Tolkien's remark that the Rings was largely an effort in "linguistic aesthetic" may at first sound like a sapless plant but it is not. From early childhood philology had been as exciting to him as adventure stories to others. The philology had indeed been adventure, the touchstone to the realms of gold. Philology continued his lifelong professional interest but he was sensible enough to retain its parturient rather than turn it into a dull academic affair.

Coleridge's lifelong passion for the vortical quality of language is also evident. He talks of bringing out "some horribly learned book, full of manuscript quotations from Laplandish and Patagonian authors, possibly, on the striking re-

semblance of the Sweogothian and Sanscrit languages, and so on!"² Humphrey House alludes to Coleridge's remark that a look at the moon caused him "rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolical language for something within me that, already and forever exists, than observing any thing new."³ For Tolkien the discovery of the Welsh language was a deeply emotional affair. "I heard it coming out of the West. It struck at me in the names on coal-trucks; and drawing nearer, it flickered past on station-signs, a flash of strange spelling and a hint of a language old and yet alive; even in an adeiladwyd 1887, ill-cut on a stone-slab, it pierced my linguistic heart."⁴

That Coleridge's basic experience of words was essentially philological is evidenced by his lifelong passion for etymologies and the number of fanciful ones he made up as well as his tendency to invent words, such as apheterize, vaccimulgence, and ultra-crepidated, and his production of a poem called "The Nose, An Odaic Rhapsody." If that title suggests that Coleridge's attitude toward words was more whimsical than Tolkien's, one needs only to remember The Adventures of Tom Bombadil with its Fastitocalon, its Mewlips, its Princess Mee, and "the fat cat on the mat."

John Livingston Lowes was the horticulturalist who showed how the overstocked Coleridgean seedbed matured into a great garden of beauty and terror by some proto-Mendelian process not likely ever to be really understood. It was words from Purchase His Pilgrimage which grew up by a process no less

miraculous than nature's own into "Kubla Khan." Lowes tells us concerning that poem and "The Ancient Mariner" that by following Coleridge's divagations we shall come in contact with

alligators and albatrosses and auroras and Antichthon; with biscuit-worms, bubbles of ice, bassoons, and breezes; with candles, and Cain, and the Corpo Santo; Dioclesian, a King of Syria, and the daemons of the elements; earthquakes, and the Euphrates; frost-needles, and fog-smoke, and phosphorescent light; gooseberries, and the Gordonia lasianthus; haloes and hurricanes; lightnings and Laplanders; meteors, and the Old Man of the Mountain, and stars behind the moon; nightmares, and the sources of the Nile; footless birds of Paradise, and the observatory at Pekin; swoons, and spectres, and slimy seas; wefts, and water-snakes, and the Wandering Jew.⁵

Though Tolkien must still wait for his Lowes before we shall learn how words and images flowered into scenes like Rivendell and characters like Galadriel, Bilbo's remark at the end of the Rings suggests a similar originating richness. The One Ring, says he, managed to get itself mixed up with many other things: "Aragorn's affairs, and the White Council, and Gondor, and the Horsemen, and Southrons, and oliphaunts...and caves and towers and golden trees, and goodness knows what besides."⁶ For both Coleridge and Tolkien the world is composed of "a number of things" and all capable of setting the creative nature to work.

It is this originating depth of the "Mariner" and the Rings that appears to be the chief element in the profundity of impact of the two pieces. The wedding guest in the poem heard and saw signs of the wedding party but was transfixed to his stone seat by the story the old man poured out. Many readers of Tolkien have felt a similar hypnotic hold upon their attention. One reader wrote that "from the moment I took the first volume from the shelf to the time when the last page was finished, I reluctantly stirred only to eat." "It is detrimental to people's health," he facetiously added, "to publish such books." Apparently he would not have made to to a wedding party either. A friend told me that two surgeons in New York City had been so completely caught by the "glittering eye" of Tolkien they were letting their patients languish until the story was completed. In England I saw ten and eleven-year-old youngsters do a dramatization of the Rings with such intensity and obvious belief in its reality that their audience was spellbound.

A mysterious recurring torture forces the Mariner to repeat his story on occasions. Though not with the same result, Frodo suffers a similar recurring burden growing out of his long and momentous journey. The Mariner alone on the becalmed sea and feeling the curse in the dead men's eyes was like Frodo at the bottom of Mount Doom: "No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left me. I am naked in the dark...and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire" (III, 215). And later, as with the Mariner, when danger no longer threatened, Frodo said, "I am wounded with knife, string, and tooth, and a long burden," (III, 238) a burden which never left him entirely as long as he was in Middle Earth and at times was as stark as that of the Mariner. A comparison, indeed, of the two burdens may throw some light on the magnitude of the Mariner's agony, for it seems most insufficient to see no meaning beyond the simple release of the Mariner on his repeating his story. The burden in both cases seems ultimately no less than cosmic.⁷

Then we can say that both these stories are indebted to antiquity and particularly the overcharged atmosphere and broadside thrust of much medieval writing. Tolkien's extensive dependence upon Norse and other mythologies is everywhere apparent. And Lowes makes clear Coleridge's indebtedness to a world of reading much of which harks far backwards. Not only did Coleridge adopt the ancient ballad stanza for his poem, but in the earliest version he filled the whole with archaisms and "antique" spelling. House points out the Gothic affiliations of the "Mariner."⁸ In Tolkien's case I would think no one would seriously question that the machinations of the Ringwraiths through their master Sauron produce a horror outstripping, for our century at least, the

Gothic ones of Horace Walpole, "Monk" Lewis, and Clara Reeve. Sometimes description itself, apart from action, conveys horror. The desolation before the gates of Mordor is an example. "Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and grey, as if the mountains had vomited the filth of their entrails upon the lands about." (II, 239) It is not unlike Coleridge's "thousand thousand slimy things," his sweating dead bodies, and the rotting deck of his ship above the rotting sea, horrible in any period but partaking unquestionably of Gothicism.

Again, both accounts are highly imaginative journeys which carry the principals to vast and unknown areas over which they are led, or driven, by strong and often unknown forces. Their direction is sometimes unsure and their movements uncertain. Destiny seems suspended over them. Both learn a greater appreciation of natural and supernatural worlds. Both feel the permeative terror of nature and, on the other hand, its materializing strength. To neither of them will food and water ever taste the same, for they discover as few men ever do their more than natural goodness and life-givingness. They both anticipate their homegoing with joy, but they go back realizing that a new dimension has been added to their outlook. "Though I may come to the Shire," says Frodo on his way home, "it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same" (III, 268). The Mariner is likewise saddened by the plangent effect of changes in his innermost parts. Their souls have traveled on "a wide wide sea" which had the effect of shedding new light on land and water, earth and sky, and men and things.

In neither the poem nor the story is the chief adventurer fundamentally heroic. House says that the Mariner is "not a great adventurer, though he has a great spiritual experience,"⁹ words I believe equally applicable to Frodo. Discovering the ominous quality of the One Ring, Frodo laments: "I am not made for perilous quests, I wish I had never seen the Ring: Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?" (I, 70) Later, at the Council of Elrond, when the full implication of the One Ring fell upon him, Frodo could feel nothing but a great dead, "as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace...filled all his heart" (I, 284). In the Mariner's case he came to the point of envy of his dead fellow sailors, but Death had lost the throw of dice and he was therefore condemned to the status of Life-in-Death, a status not unlike that of Frodo as he approaches Mordor and Mount Doom. It can be added that Frodo and Sam's experience in that place involved the same sidereal loneliness in Mordor that the Mariner experienced on the ship with the dead sailors lying about him.

Both stories, again, are alike in being at once clear, sharp narratives and at the same time bearing rich but mysterious meaning that seems capable of infinite interpretation. One may wonder almost endlessly why the specter-ship appears just long enough for the mariners to see the two figures casting dice and one triumphing over the Mariner as her victim, but the fact that it happens is clear enough. Both stories rise above allegory into myth and thus offer themselves to a wide field of view. It is commonly agreed that both have a rich moral, or even religious, underlay. While no one will claim that his explanation of either is final or wholly comprehensive, it is not chance that makes the best interpretations of each no less than a strongly moral one. The Rings, says Michael Straight, "illuminates the inner consistency of reality." Very much the same comment on the "Mariner" is made by House: "Its imagery, both of religion and of the elements, goes deep below the surface of what we may happen to remember or happen to have seen." Says Dorothy E. K. Barber of the Rings: "The basis...is the metaphor 'God is light.'" "I have never found a reader of Tolkien," says Guy Davenport, "who did not see what blackened the Dark Lord or why the ring of power must be destroyed, yet many of them were not aware that the gift of their understanding is millennia old, given them anew by a man who knows that there are some things that cannot be allowed to fade."¹⁰ Coleridge had dreamed of a great poem in which he might record and unify all human knowledge and wisdom. The few pages of the "Mariner" suggest something of this broad spectrum, and I think we can say that beyond doubt Tolkien endeavors to inculcate wisdom if not actual knowledge.

Both writers are able to leave the mind of the reader filled with a glow that is greater than simple emotion, one involving the realization of profound meaning, even when that meaning cannot be easily rationalized.

At first it seems that a basic difference between the two pieces resides in the innocence of Frodo and the guilt of the Mariner from slaying the albatross. This is perhaps a genuine difference, yet something can be said as to possible similarity. There are critics who believe that the Shire had become for Frodo and the other hobbits a retreat and an escape from (in Keats's words)

those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.¹¹

Frodo and his friends went out and discovered other people and their needs and helped destroy the dark shadow hovering over all Middle Earth. Their world was thereby enlarged and, as with the Mariner, their "crime" was "expiated." But there was indeed a real crime, or rather series of crimes, of no minor significance back of the Fellowship's experiences in the Rings. The first crime was that of Morgoth and Sauron proving rebellious to a "calling in the First Age of Middle Earth. Two other crimes were the kin-killing among the elves in the First Age and the Numenorean attempt in the Second Age to storm Aman the Blessed and gain, or gain back, everlasting life. Of course Frodo and the hobbits had no part in either of these crimes, and should we accept them as the cause of the Third Age wars we must see Frodo's part in the suffering as a vicarious one.

There are other elements of agreement in these two pieces that seem noteworthy. For instance, both tend to make more than usual of contrasts. Critics have pointed out in Coleridge the strong contrasts, which often follow one another quickly, between noise and silence, sudden calm and swift movement, thirst and slaking of thirst, the peaceful versus the terrible, etc. In Tolkien contrasts are also seemingly more than accidental. One of the greatest is that of the darkness, danger, and death in the caverns of Moria with the following peace and benignity of Lothlorien. The one is all fierce hatred and brute power, the other sublime grace and supernal beauty. In Lothlorien Sam said he felt as if he were inside a song (I, 365).

As in Coleridge, the slaking of thirst after desperate dryness is an element in the Rings. In the forlorn wastes and shriveled scenery of Mordor, Sam and Frodo, desperately thirsty, come joyfully upon water trickling out of a cliff, "the last remains, maybe, of some sweet rain gathered from sunlit seas" and to them it "seemed beyond all praise" (III, 197-198). One means of gaining contrast in both writers is through memory. Through memory the quiet past of the hobbits and the glorious one of the elves and dwarfs is lit up with delight. Often the memories originate through their songs and sometimes under the most adverse circumstances, as when Gimli in the black darkness of Moria sang of western seas and fairer days when the world was young (I, 329-330). In Coleridge the sweet songs of the spirits help create in the Mariner a memory recorded in what is for me the loveliest passage in the poem, the memory in the Mariner, so long exiled from land, of the sounds of home—the sweet jargoning of the little birds and the pleasant sound of

a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Over and over in the tense circumstances of their struggle the sharp, warm memory of the Shire gives the hobbits renewed courage. Sometimes it is a longer and deeper memory. After victory over Sauron the minstrel rose up and his voice was glorious. He sang to them, sometimes in the Elvish tongue and sometimes in Western words, "until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness" (III, 232). For the Wedding Guest the story is painful, but in both cases the hypnotic power is present. It would be possible to write at length on elements of contrast in Tolkien and along the same lines as those identified in Coleridge.

The two images of contrast in the two writers are sometimes quite similar. The "slimy things" that "live on" in Coleridge remind us of the ubiquitous presence of the nasty Gollum slithering in the footsteps of Frodo and eating raw fish.¹² Coleridge's "rotting sea" is more than a little suggestive of the Dead Marshes through which Gollum led Frodo and Sam—waters "all foul, all rotting, all dead," where corpses long since dead lit up "like dimly shining smoke, some like misty flames flickering slowly above unseen candles; here and there...twisted like ghostly sheets unfurled by hidden hands" (II, 234). The picture, though less colorful, is not unlike that of the shining and twisting water creatures underneath the Mariner's ship. The storm "tyrannous and strong" which drove the ship south and the spirit from the south pole which later drove it northward in a frenzy are partly like the great snowstorm against which the Fellowship wrestled on Caradhras. "Let those call it the wind who will," says Boromir during the terror of the storm, "there are fell voices on the air; and these stones are aimed at us" (I, 302). Like the ship of the Mariner, Frodo and his friends were at the mercy of the elements

Supernatural or at least preternatural elements are another strong element of similarity in Coleridge and Tolkien. In both stories non-human forces frequently participate in the action—trees, birds, Seeing Stones, and the rings themselves. At Bruinen Ford when the black Ringwraiths came closest to capturing the One Ring, Frodo was saved by a "plumed cavalry of waves" rushing down the river to overthrow the demon riders. And human forms also take on superhuman qualities. When Frodo and his friends first saw Glorfindel as he rode his horse against the dark shadows of the woods, it seemed as if "a white light was shining through the form and raiment of the rider," and, having used Glorfindel's great horse to outrun the Ringwraiths, Frodo, looking back across the Loudwater, saw Glorfindel as "a white figure that shone and did not grow dim like the others" (I, 221, 227, 235). Equally present is the preternatural Sauron and his nine horrible followers, who haunt the Rings as the specter-ship and the spirits nine fathoms deep haunt the "Mariner."

Again, though the motives are different in each case, the evil eye of Sauron holds Pippin as transfixed as the glittering eye of the Mariner holds the Wedding Guest. A curse hangs over the Mariner that is similar to Sauron's curse in the Rings. One of the most supernatural of all the actions, and contributing strongly to the moral tone of the Rings, is Aragorn's raising of the unresting dead (from their failure to keep a vow) under black Dwimorberg and leading them in long procession into battle against the common enemy (III, 59ff).

Both stories have an essential Catholic orientation which is chiefly marked by the Virgin as gift-giver, prayer-answerer, and guardian saint. But this can be said only if we regard Galadriel (or, at more distance, Elbereth Gilthoniel) as symbol of the Virgin. The Mariner says plainly that it was the Virgin who sent the sleep that "slid" into his soul. Sam prayed¹³ to Galadriel for water and light, both of which were shortly given. Furthermore, no man could well be more devoted to the Virgin than Sam and Gimli to Galadriel. The songs of the blessed spirits in the "Mariner" were sent down, according to Coleridge's gloss, "by the invocation of the guardian saint." In the post-Lothlorien adventures Galadriel serves the same purpose. She not only gives unimaginably good gifts but also leaves in her wake memories "more strengthening than any food made by man," (I, 385) and thus suggests the Eucharist. The crystal phial, another of her gifts, was to be to them a light "in dark places, when all other lights go out" (I, 393) and can hardly be mistaken for anything but a more than natural gift, possibly the Holy Spirit. Indeed all of Galadriel's gifts are more than natural.

Both stories bear an overtone of reverence for life and this because both writers regarded life as numinous. Coleridge's gloss on the famous verse beginning, "He prayeth best, who loveth best" is as follows: "And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth." Though some have seen in the "Mariner" no deeper moral than that of being kind to dumb animals, the best critics have suggested things more profound. In the Rings a quietly magnificent sense of the significance of human life and positive values is everywhere apparent. The Mariner's religious renovation began when he discovered himself blessing the sea creatures and afterwards was able to pray. Frodo in

the course of time also develops a deeper sense of values, a direction best seen in his relations with Gollum. In the beginning Frodo had asked Gandalf why Bilbo "did not stab that vile creature" when he had the chance, but the time came when Frodo, like the Mariner, gained a more adequate realization of the sacredness of life. Though only his hidden coat of mail saved Frodo from Saruman's dagger, he refused to let Sam kill this bitter and depraved enemy. "He was great once, of a noble kind that we should not dare to raise our hands against," said Frodo. And anyway, "It is useless to meet revenge with revenge; it will heal nothing" (III, 298-299). The same nobility marks the common practice of all the real moral agents in the Rings.

Finally I shall mention Charles Williams' commendation of "The Ancient Mariner" as a poem that attains to faerie, that is, assumes sovereignty over all its materials and by creating its own unique myth makes the suspension of disbelief not only possible but obligatory. Because Coleridge first puts poetry into his "philosophy," the reader is prepared to accept the philosophy in the poem. (On the other hand, says Williams, the essential unity of Wordsworth's poems is sometimes broken by moral instruction left to lie unabsorbed by the poetry.)¹⁴ Can it be said that Tolkien's Rings suspends disbelief by a similar accomplishment? I think so. Tolkien manages to dip his characters, his action and his landscape into faerie. Like all good art, faerie in this instance succeeds in making a secondary world of elves, hobbits, and the like into a world even more convincing than our primary world. To do this it must above all things avoid so much as a hint that the story is a dreamed or imagined one or to show in any wise a "frame." It must simply be. Men, says Tolkien, are a "refracted light" and make "by the law in which we're made."¹⁵ Anything short of such a recognition is bound to fall somewhat short of the best. What Tolkien hints at, I think, is the fact that unity—an utter unity—is itself a symbol of the seamless universe to which our longing aspires. Tolkien is of course no exception to the rule that it is not for humans to attain this perfection, but the fact remains that he has lifted millions of readers into a world more complete and more meaningful than their own.

I am of course not unaware of significant differences between "The Ancient Mariner" and The Lord of the Rings, but in this paper I have been concerned with some of their parallels. In closing I should like, however, to emphasize that both are stories and not tracts, not even allegories. Tolkien has urgently insisted that the Rings has "no meaning outside itself," and he would undoubtedly agree with Coleridge's judgment that a proper story should "simply permit the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence in the judgment."¹⁶ At the same time I do not forget Humphry House's insistence that the reader of the "Mariner" cannot help being "aware that its whole development is governed by moral situations, and that without them there wouldn't really be a story."¹⁷ This I am convinced is equally true of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

NOTES

¹ Edmund Wilson, "Oo, Those Awful Orcs!" The Nation (April 14, 1956) p. 312.

² Lawrence Hanson, The Life of S. T. Coleridge (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962) p. 344.

³ Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-52 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953) p. 28.

⁴ Angles and Britons (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1963) p. 39.

⁵ The Road to Xanadu (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927) p.3.

⁶ The Lord of the Rings (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company) III, 265.

⁷ Though one of the marked differences between "The Ancient Mariner" and the Rings is the location of one on the sea and the other on land, it is noteworthy that Frodo found at Rivendell everything to make him happy "except the sea." (III, 265) Earlier Arwen had said to him, "If your hurts grieve you still and the memory of your burden is heavy, then you may pass into the West, until all your wounds and weariness are healed." (III, 252-253) Going into the West involved sailing a long journey. And though we must assume it was not the same for Frodo, the same water was filled with Coleridgian terrors when Earendil passed that way in the First Age of Middle Earth. (I, 246-249)

⁸ Humphry House, op. cit., p. 86.

⁹ Humphry House, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁰ The four quotations are, in order, from The New Republic, January 16, 1956, p. 26; Humphry House, op. cit., pp. 86-87; Dorothy E. K. Barber, "The Structure of The Lord of the Rings," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1965, p. 192; and National Review, April, 1965, p. 334.

¹¹ "The Fall of Hyperion," ll. 148-149.

¹² Dr. Robert Siegel of Dartmouth College, to whom I am indebted for critical aid in the writing of this paper, points out the potential contrast of good in such ugly things as Gollum (in Tolkien) and the slimy things (in Coleridge). The Mariner acquired the ability to see another side to the water creatures, just as Frodo did to Gollum.

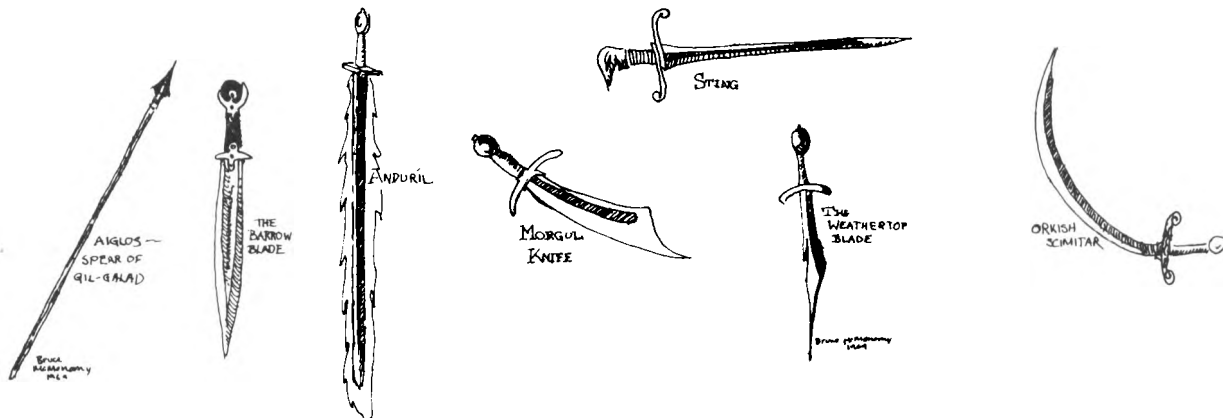
¹³ That Sam's calling to Elbereth (II, 339) was indeed a prayer is made clear by The Road Goes Ever On, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967, pp. 65-66.

¹⁴ The English Poetic Mind (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932) p. 168.

¹⁵ Tree and Leaf (London: Unwin Books, 1964) p. 49.

¹⁶ Biographia Literaria, ch. 22.

¹⁷ Op. cit., pp. 89-91.



At the Back of the North Wind: George MacDonald: A Centennial Appreciation

By Glenn E. Sadler



Author of twenty-five novels, three adult prose fantasies, poems like "Baby" ("Where did you come from, baby dear?"), and children's classics, *The Princess and the Goblin* and *At the Back of the North Wind*, George MacDonald (1824-1905) is not only C. S. Lewis's chief mentor but Scotland's master of myth-makers as well. In his Castle of Imagination lived, for instance, the voluptuous, cruellest mother of all, Lilith, Adam's rebellious first wife. He believed in ghosts and Second Sight.

North Wind and George MacDonald were inseparable. "I have often tried how far back my memory could go," wrote MacDonald, in 1872, in his autobiographical novel *Wilfrid Cumbermede*. "I suggest there are awfully ancient shadows mingling with our memories; but, as far as I can judge, the earliest definite memory I have is the discovery of how the wind is made; for I saw the process going on before my very eyes. . ."

Seated on the broad sill of his dormer window, Wilfrid saw, from his boyhood watch-tower fortress, North Wind at work. There could be no mistake about the relationship of cause and effect. The trees churning in the distance and the swinging of the clock-pendulum caused the storm: great gusts came faster and faster, and grew into a steady gale. As the pendulum went on swinging--to and fro--the gale increased in violence. "I sat half in terror, half in delight, at the awful success of my experiment." Thus began George MacDonald's lifelong ride, over castles of granite, with Mistress North Wind to her icy blue cave.

HEWN FROM GRANITE

There is a sense in which one's childhood is inescapable. No matter how hard one may try to improve upon it or abolish memories of those early years, they continue to lurk, like last month's calendar, hanging glaringly on the inner wall. A popular literary theory claims that writers, particularly creators

of fairytales, seed their imagination most with vivid--and not always pleasant--recollections of the family circle. This is especially true, I think, of Scottish writers, for whom kith and kin means something more than simply relatives.

"Surely it is one of the worst signs of a man," insisted MacDonald, "to turn his back upon the rock whence he was hewn." With national loyalty as his touchstone, MacDonald went on to become, in the 1870's, chieftain of nineteenth-century Fairyland.

Born on December 10th, 1824, in the stone-built house on Duke and Church Streets, next to his grandmother's, George MacDonald, the second of four sons, carved out, early in his boyhood, a special niche for Huntly, "The Little Grey Town" (as he called it) in his library of memories. From its bustling Square, menacing Norman castle--encircled by the Bogie and Deveron Rivers--its crop-anxious townfolk, Missioner Kirk and jolly Boar's Head [Gordon Arms], MacDonald mirrored, literally, its clannish world of plain living, "tawse and pleuris," in two of his best Scottish novels, *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865) and *Robert Falconer* (1868).

A rugged life which had as its main sources of community excitement, floods and funerals and anniversary processions of children up to the Lodge, next to the Castle, to give "her Grace a cake and an orange each." Local inhabitants of Huntly found themselves transformed, without knowing it, into fictional characters overnight. Names were changed, of course, in order to protect the innocent as well as the guilty: for example the brutal schoolmaster Murdoch Malison [Colin Stewart] who beat MacDonald's brother Charles into a "dead faint," when he was yet under nine years of age, an episode (sadistic schoolmasters are popular fellows in most Scottish fiction) which takes place in *Alec Forbes*. Cannily MacDonald continued to intermingle reality and fantasy in his novels and fairytales, throughout his prolific literary career, in which he produced over fifty

works in forty-two years and developed a genius for myth-making which has few modern rivals.

CASTLE-BUILDING AND DEATH'S STAIR

MacDonald's favorite boyhood pastime was castle-building; his closest friends were, in fact, horses and dreams. At two years of age, young George moved with his family, and that of his uncle James, to Upper Pirriessmill, The Farm, "Howglen" or, as it was known then, Bleachfield Cottage. He spent summer days riding his white mare "Missy," for which he claimed Arabian blood, to Fortsoy or Banff to visit his pretty cousin Helen and Uncle George MacKay whose love of the sea stirred up the dream-ridden lad's desire to become a sailor. Investigating the gloomy caves along the Moray Firth, near the quaint fishing village of Gardenstown, a place alive with tales of pirates, lost sailors and hidden treasure, was his secret delight. All of which he put, in 1855, at age thirty-two, into "A Story of the Sea-Shore," a narrative poem surging with sea-Death, expectation of marital fulfilment, and dark omens.

"My days pass so quietly--I hardly go anywhere but saunter about the house with Shakespeare in my hand or pocket," wrote MacDonald to his wife, in the summer of 1855 during a restful holiday at Huntly. "If you had been here after I wrote to you last night, you might have seen me in less than an hour on the far horizon--the top of a hill [Clashmach] nearly 1,000 feet high 2½ miles off. You would have seen my white mare and myself clear against the sky. . ."

And again, on July 20th (1855), he wrote: "I have been out since twelve o'clock, have had 18 miles on horseback, and some delightful feelings floating into me from the face of the blue hills, and profusion of wild roses on some parts of the road. The heather is just beginning to break out in purple on the hillsides. Another week of sunshine will enpurple some from base to summit. How much more I understand nature than I did! . . ." This typically Scottish scene he put into his verse-parable, "The Hills":

For I am always climbing hills,
And ever passing on,
Hoping on some high mountain peak
To find my Father's throne. . . .

But for the newly married Wordsworthian bard this refreshing summer jaunt--man and horse against the sky--to the Cabrach and Moray coast, ended in sorrow; on August 24th (1855) his sister Bella died, and MacDonald was forced to face again the grim reality of descending "death's lonely stair."

Death, its sombre actuality, entered prematurely into George MacDonald's childhood world of "kirk and dreams": his mother Helen MacKay died when he was only eight, thus starting the long procession of funerals throughout his life.

MacDonald took as his major literary theme the stifling experience of dying; some of the greatest moments in his novels are death-bed scenes. With moving simplicity, void of sentimental froth, he describes in another of his Scots novels, Malcolm (1875)--the instalments of which the townsfolk of Cullen reportedly rushed--the confessional death of the Marquis of Lossie. Lady Florimel, rushing into her father's arms, cries: "Papa! papa!" laying her cheek to his. And with "shining tearful eyes" the marquis murmurs: "'Flory! . . . I'm going away. I'm going--I've got--to make an apology. Malcolm, be good--'" But the curious "apology" is never made and in the sequel to Malcolm, The Marquis of Lossie (1877) the mysterious tale of illegitimate birth is unravelled. As a novelist, MacDonald saw minutely into life's actualities (his characters are never forced to be good), and as a myth-maker, in Phantastes and Lilith and his fairytales, he detected something more, a golden moment which held him, and his readers, to the end.

AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

Most famous of MacDonald's fairytales is At the Back of the North Wind, which he serialized in "Good Words for the Young" (1868-69) as its editor. Now in its centennial year, this two-dimensional fairytale, which reads at times like a novelette, is, with the Alice books by MacDonald's close friend Lewis Carroll, the Victorian masterpiece of dream-world fantasy, not necessarily restricted to children.

The tale itself sweeps us along somewhere between London and the country at the back of the North Wind, actually MacDonald's imaginative depiction of Thurso, with its treeless skyline and icy northern winds, where he had gone, in the summer of 1842, to catalogue the library of Sir George Sinclair. A student on leave from King's College, Aberdeen, MacDonald re-lived, at age eighteen, his childhood discovery, turning North Wind this time into a beautiful lady, with raven-black, streaming hair, the wise woman who had instructive powers which Cinderella's godmother lacked. She was, for MacDonald, symbolic of Nature's maternal side, fairyland's ruling Queen.

A VISIT TO AMERICA

1872 was certainly the most outstanding year in MacDonald's life. He accepted the invitation to make a lecture tour in the United States. Upon his arrival with his wife and son Greville, on the Cunard S. S. Malta, MacDonald was cordially met by the famous James T. Field, who hurried the MacDonalds off to his plush "Morris style home" in a distinguished part of Boston.

The Scottish bard's first lecture was on Robert Burns, the first Burns lecture, so I am told, to be given in America. It took place on October 15th (1872), with a "blaze of carmine or rather blood-colour elm trees" outside Union Hall, Cambridgeport. "There were two thousand eight hundred and fifty ticket holders, besides a few that got in as friends," Mrs. MacDonald reported to her bairns. "'Such a hall! with two balconies all round it. They say Papa was heard in every corner of it.'"

At the conclusion, Mr. Field, "his eyes full of tears," rushed forward to shake Mr. MacDonald's hand; "and declared there had been nothing like it since Dickens." A certain Mr. Redpath almost angrily retorted: "See here, Mr. MacDonald, why didn't you say you could do this sort of thing? We'd have got 300 dollars a lecture for you!"

Offered the pastorate of a church in New York, on Fifth Avenue, at the incredible sum of \$20,000 per annum, MacDonald refused. He agreed to do a novel with Mark Twain in order to obtain international copyright; but in 1873 he returned with his wife and son to Hammersmith, The Retreat, London, where, as father of eleven children (and two adopted), he spent the happiest years of his life.

THAT GOLDEN MOMENT

MacDonald's two adult romances, Phantastes (1858) and Lilith (1895), are his recognized masterpieces; they are as well vignette glimpses into his youthful dreams and passions (Phantastes), his old man's fears and visions (Lilith). It is nearly impossible to describe them adequately; their make-believe cosmology is almost as evasive as North Wind herself, the reader wanders down through endless dark cells of the Self. In MacDonald's Jungian corridors one meets, for example, Lilith, feminine symbol of sexual frustration and loneliness; and, on the way up, one experiences filial warmth, that cozy feeling of being at home with one's self, God, and others. In a word, Phantastes and Lilith are best described as "soul-romances," the adult side of Fairyland.

The last page of Lilith is MacDonald's endless fairytale. The hero, Mr. Vane, having returned safely from his journey into the seventh dimension, muses over the "Strange dim memories, which will not abide identification. . ." and concludes: "But when I wake at last into that life which, as a mother her child, carries this life in its bosom, I shall know that I wake, and shall doubt no more." And then there comes that "golden moment": "I wait; asleep or awake, I wait. Novalis says: 'Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one.'"

For George MacDonald his great wait began on September 18th, 1905, at Ashstead, Surrey. Mistress North Wind hid him off, finally, to her cave of eternal dreams. He went home.

"The Legend of the Cairngorm Stone"

(Written in imitation of George MacDonald)

A long, long time ago in Scotland, there lived somewhere in the Cairngorm mountains a very wise and beautiful old woman. Some thought she was a witch because of her great powers. She could bestow gifts (and curses) on whomever she wished.

One day a fair, sky-eyed lassie, with tumbling red hair wandered into the old woman's forest hut, which was actually nothing more than a cave in the side of the mountain. The lassie longed to know her destiny; she found the old woman tending a roaring peat fire; shadows flitted about the walls of the cave in the semi-darkness. Mary, for that was her name, crept timidly up to the open fire. With crackling voice the old woman demanded why she had come. Mary gazed silently into the glowing fire--a single tear fell into the blazing flames.

Then a very strange thing happened: the old woman lifted her beautiful arms, brushing aside her flowing black hair, and addressed the fire: "Burn, burn thrice bright, make of this

lassie's tear her future part!" Instantly Mary saw, flashing in the flames, a glittering diamond-studded crown, and in the center she saw herself. Overcome by excitement she plunged her wee hands into the flames, attempting to seize the burning crown. Back she drew her singed fingers: in the palm of her left hand there remained a single heart-shaped stone, cooling slowly into a smoky gem. Proudly she clutched it, while the old woman cried: "the Cairngorm be thine as long as thy love be fire-burnt--the crown must be given to another."

And thus it was that Mary Queen of Scots first learned of her ill-fated reign--all because one lass had courage enough to take her heart's desire without fear.



An Annotated Bibliography of Tolkien Criticism —Supplement Two

compiled by Richard West

This is a continuation of the effort to list all books and articles by and about J. R. R. Tolkien, begun with the bibliographies published in Orcrist #1 and #2. As always, Section A is devoted to works by Tolkien and Section B to scholarly and critical investigations of these works. Annotations are kept as objective as I can make them; an asterisk (*) indicates that I consider that entry worth reading for some reason. I have used the symbol "#" to designate an entry which has appeared in the bibliography before but is here repeated with some addition or correction. It will be noticed that I have abandoned assigning each item a separate letter and number (e.g., A1, B1, etc.) and cross-referencing entries by this means. This was very convenient for a single printing of the bibliography, but, since entries are arranged alphabetically by author, it meant that new insertions in the list could not be made without re-numbering or some other awkwardness. I am now making cross-references by author, which I trust will occasion no confusion.

SECTION A

"Henry Bradley, 3 December 1845 - 23 May 1923," Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association, No. 20 (October, 1923), pp. 4-5. Epitaph for a fellow scholar.

"Some Contributions to Middle-English Lexicography," Review of English Studies Vol. I (April, 1925), pp. 210-215.

"The Devil's Coach-Horses," Review of English Studies Vol. I (July, 1925), pp. 331-336. Notes on Middle English aeveres.

SECTION B

Carter, Lin. "Notes on Tolkien, Part I: Theme and Form," Xero No. 7 (November, 1961). Xero is a science-fiction fanzine. This article and the three following ones were incorporated in Carter's book (see below, Look).

Carter, Lin. "Notes on Tolkien, Part II: Names and Places," Xero No. 8 (May, 1962).

Carter, Lin. "Notes on Tolkien, Part III: Sources and Influences," Xero No. 9 (September, 1962).

Carter, Lin. "What About This Tolkien Fellow, Anyway?" Triumph (November, 1966). Evidently a condensed version of the Xero articles.

Carter, Lin. Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings. New York: Ballantine, 1969. An expansion of the three Xero articles, giving a brief biography of JRRT, plot summaries of H and LOTR, a treatment of Tolkien's ideas on fantasy, and a discussion of a tradition of fantasy from Gilgamesh to the present day (sweeping over classical epic, French chansons de geste, Spanish and Italian epic, Spenser, William Morris, Lord Dunsany, Eddison, Pratt, Peake, Kendall, Garner, and Alexander), with the Scandinavian Eddas and sagas seen as the major wellspring of Tolkien's inspiration. Mr. Carter's enthusiasm is infectious, but much of his commentary on older works suffers from a lack of historical perspective and there are many inaccuracies in his book.

Del Ray, Lester. "A Report on J. R. R. Tolkien," Worlds of Fantasy Vol. I, No. 1 (October, 1968), pp. 84-85. Article in a science-fiction "pulp" magazine. JRRT has revolutionized modern literature and single-handedly created a demand for fantasy in soft-cover publishing. His books are "filled with such things as the love of beauty, the dignity of ordinary people, and the conflict of good and evil" (p. 85).

Derrick, Christopher. "And See Ye Not Yon Bonny Road?" Tablet Vol. 222 (February 10, 1968), p. 132. SWM review. JRRT is here a miniaturist, offering a sad, wise book that is a myth of great delicacy, teaching that ordinary life deserves a patient and positive attitude.

Egoff, Sheila. The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967. Brief mention of JRRT. H "is a fantasy set in a world that never was...and yet it is English to the core..." (p. 3). H and LOTR "have epitomized fantasy for our own generation" (p. 136).

Evans, W. D. Emrys. "The Lord of the Rings," The School Librarian Vol. 16, No. 3 (December, 1968), pp. 284-288. General discussion article, dealing with: the rigorously opposed but complex forces of good and evil; the ring of power as a measure of the strength of those who resist its temptation; the skilful blending of diverse strands of mythology; the beauty and power of places, things, and names.

Léaud, Francis. "L'Épopée Religieuse de J. R. R. Tolkien," Études Anglaises Tome XX, N° 3 (1967), pp. 265-281. JRRT's work is little-known in France. It is not enjoyed by positivist readers, but appeals to people of a broadly religious temperament (whether or not they have a formal creed). To provide too precise an interpretation would betray the text, but in general the mythic fantasy of H and LOTR speaks without ever naming them of the mysteries of Providence and grace. JRRT's mastery of language also helps explain his appeal. The living world of Middle Earth compares favorably with the dramatized Europe of War and Peace.

Ready, William Bernard. "The Tolkien Relation," Canadian Library Vol. 25 (September, 1968), pp. 128-136. Not to be confused with the same author's book of the same title. Tolkien's fantasy is essentially religious in character and relates man to the world around him, making of life the struggle that it really must be. For those who are interested, W. P. Dagger has an article about Mr. Ready in Canadian Library Vol. 24 (May, 1968), pp. 651-652.

#Ready, William. Understanding Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings. New York: Paperback Library, 1969. Soft-cover reprint of his book, The Tolkien Relation, published in 1968. Annotated in Supplement One of this bibliography, in Orcrist #2.

Reinken, Donald L. "J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings: A Christian Refounding of the Political Order," Christian Perspectives: An Ecumenical Quarterly (Winter, 1966), pp. 16-23.

*Stevens, Cj. "Sound Systems of the Third Age of Middle-Earth," Quarterly Journal of Speech Vol. 54 (October, 1968), pp. 232-240. "This present study...seeks to present a more compact and systematic overview of one aspect of the language of the Third Age: the sound systems. Consideration is given especially to the dialects of Eldarin." (p. 232)

*West, Richard C. "An Annotated Bibliography of Tolkien Criticism," Extrapolation Vol. X, No. 1 (December, 1968), pp. 17-45. Somewhat revised and expanded version of Section B only of the bibliography from (basically) the first two issues of Orcrist. There can be

no question on the part of any impartial judge that this entry deserves to be asterisked.

#Wojcik, Jan. "Tolkien's Lord-of-Rings Quest Likened to Christmas Gospel," Boston Pilot (December 24, 1966), p. 8. See Orcrist #1 for annotation, and correct the date and add the page number for that entry.

Woods, Samuel, Jr. "J. R. R. Tolkien and the Hobbits," Cimarron Review Vol. I, No. 1 (September, 1967), pp. 44-52.



²Ibid, p. 43. ³Ibid, p. 60. ⁴Ibid, pp. 82-83.

⁵Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (New York, 1939), p. 378.

⁶Cf. Jan Wojcik, "Tolkien and Coleridge: Remaking of the 'Green Earth'," Renaissance XX (Spring, 1968), 134-39, 146.

⁷Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 45.

⁸Ibid, p. 61, n. 1. ⁹Ibid, p. 74.

¹⁰Douglass Parker, "Hwaet We Holbytla," Hudson Review, IX (1956-1957), p. 601.

¹¹G. K. Chesterton, Manalive (London, 1921).

¹²Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 78-79.

¹³Ibid, p. 81. ¹⁴Ibid, p. 81.

¹⁵For further illustration of this point, see Sandra Miescl, "Some Religious Aspects of Lord of the Rings," Riverside Quarterly 3 (August, 1968), pp. 209-213.

¹⁶Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 82.

¹⁷Patricia Spacks, "Ethical Pattern in The Lord of the Rings," Critique III (Spring-Fall, 1959), p. 30. Reprinted in Tolkien and the Critics, ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbaro (Notre Dame, 1968), pp. 81-99.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 41.

¹⁹C. S. Lewis, George Macdonald: An Anthology (New York, 1948), p. 16.

²⁰C. S. Lewis, "The Dethronement of Power," Time and Tide XLV (October, 1955), pp. 1373-1374.

²¹Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, ed. H. Nettleship and J. E. Sandys (Cleveland, 1963), p. 345.

²²W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957), p. 17.

²³Edmund Wilson, "Oo, Those Awful Orcs!" Nation CLXXXII (April, 1956), p. 313.

²⁴Ker, Epic and Romance, p. 165. ²⁵Ibid, p. 167.

²⁶Ibid, p. 158. ²⁷Ibid, p. 321. ²⁸Ibid, p. 4.

²⁹W. H. Auden, The Dyer's Hand (London, 1962), pp. 137-138.

³⁰W. R. Irwin, "There and Back Again," Sewanee Review LXIX (Fall, 1961), p. 567.

³¹Ibid, p. 570.

³²Parker, op. cit., p. 601. ³³Ibid, p. 601.

³⁴R. J. Reilly, "Tolkien and the Fairy Story," Thought XXXVIII (1963), p. 94.

³⁵W. H. Auden, The Dyer's Hand, p. 162.

³⁶W. H. Auden, dust jacket of The Two Towers, by J. R. R. Tolkien (Boston, 1962).

The Genre of the Lord of The Rings

(continued from page 7)

is a parable. However, it is the nature of a parable to make the bearer imagine himself as the central character, and to say to himself, "I am this person, now what do I see and how should I act?" In this sense, Kafka's The Trial is more clearly a parable. And within The Trial, the parable of the Law and the doorkeeper is particularly suited to demonstrate the immediate relation that must exist between the story and the listener, for it to be termed a parable. The listener must compare himself to the central character of the story and draw directly from this comparison his personal conclusions. This is the purpose of the parable. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings has a message for the listener; but, strictly speaking, the immediate personal involvement, the direct personal message, is absent and prevents it from being more than somewhat a parable. An allegory is a figurative story presenting an implied meaning without expressly stating it, making use of metaphors or signs to represent the undisclosed virtues, vices, and actions, which are the essentials of the allegory. Abstract virtues will be represented in a clear-cut, one-to-one relationship, by the metaphorical representative. For example, the lion may be the sign for bravery, in which case he will be always brave. The serpent will usually be the sign for evil, or cunning, in which case he will consistently be evil and cunning. The one-to-one relationship is fundamental to allegorical representation. Allegory uses analogy, and all correspondences are definite and complete. The Lord of the Rings is not an allegory as such, but, loosely speaking, one can claim that it has allegorical content. There are creatures peopling Tolkien's world which are clearly referential to aspects of human nature: there is the Ring which represents the inevitably corrupting influence of power; there is Sauron, the then current representative of the Common Enemy with his suggestive reptilian name promptly recalling his predecessor Wormwood. The correspondences, however, are rarely exact, and the analogies are suggested but uncertain, and it would be wrong to read the work as a connected allegory. Let us say that there is an underlying message suggested throughout, suggested by the everpresent inherent morality of the work itself and that without this continuous, unflinching undercurrent, The Lord of the Rings would be but an adventure story.

I have attempted to show the relationship of The Lord of the Rings to various conventional literary genres as well as to point out the chief merits and uses of these genres. By so doing, I hope to have indicated the nature of this unique story and set forth its strange position as an alien but very effective piece of work, a work which seems oddly isolated from and yet clearly significant in the contemporary literary scene. Although I consider all the genres discussed influential, it seems to me that The Lord of the Rings is basically a quest-story presented in an epic and fairy-tale medium.

The general relevance of this tale to our own world cannot be denied. As W. H. Auden says of it: "...however superficially unlike the world we live in its characters and events may be, it nevertheless holds up the mirror to the only nature we know, our own..."³⁶

NOTES

¹J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," Essays Presented to Charles Williams (London, 1947), p. 67.

Conferences and Conventions: Past and Future

SECONDARY UNIVERSE II AND TOLKIEN SOCIETY CONFERENCE was held at the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay on October 31 - November 2. The main theme of the Conference was Two Cultures in Collision. Write to Ivor A. Rogers, The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay, Green Bay, Wisconsin. 54305, for possible outcome and publications.

NARNIA CONFERENCE sponsored by The Mythopoeic Society was held on November 29, 1969, the 71st anniversary of the birth of C.S. Lewis, in West Los Angeles, California. The Conference was on C.S. Lewis' series of seven children's books. Write to Glen GoodKnight, 6117 Woodward Ave., Maywood, California. 90270., for a copy of the proceedings. \$1.50.



WESTERCON XXIII. The 23rd Annual West Coast Science Fantasy Conference to be held July 3-5, 1970 in Santa Barbara, California at the Francisco Torres. A general convention with panels, masquerade, art show, and banquet. There will be much at this convention to interest Tolkien admirers, including meetings on Tolkien and the other Inklings. Full memberships are \$3.00 until June 22, 1970, \$5.00 thereafter. Send checks to David G. Hulan, Westercon XXIII, Box 4456, Downey, California. 90241.

TOLKIEN SOCIETY CONFERENCE III and MYTHCON I, sponsored jointly by The Tolkien Society of America and The Mythopoeic Society, to be held in late summer or autumn of 1970 at a college or university in the Southern California area. Besides papers presented, there will be a masquerade and art show and exhibit. Further detail may be had by writing to Glen GoodKnight, 6117 Woodward ave. Maywood, California. 90270.

INKLINGS

For background into J.R.R. Tolkien, here is a list of books (mostly recent) that covers the Inklings, the group of men that played an important part in Tolkien's literary and social life. C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams were also well known writers from this circle. Knowledge of the Inklings tends to give a fuller and more rounded understanding of J.R.R. Tolkien.

The Precincts of Felicity by Charles Moorman. Gainesville: University of Florida Press. 1966. The book has two introductory chapters, with a good description of the Inklings historically, followed with a chapter each on Tolkien, Lewis and Williams, and a concluding chapter on Dorothy Sayers and T.S. Eliot as they relate to the other three.

Man in Modern Fiction by Edmund Fuller. New York: Random House. 1958. The book is a "minority opinion" on contemporary American writing. It mentions the Inklings several times in passing.

Books With Men Behind Them by Edmund Fuller. New York: Random House. 1962. The last half of the book has a chapter each on Tolkien, Lewis and Williams, and an introductory chapter on the three and the healthy function of fantasy.

The Image of Man in C.S. Lewis by William Luther White. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1969. A through study of C.S. Lewis as man and writer. Contains a letter from Tolkien on the origin of the term Inklings."

C.S. Lewis: A Critical Essay by Peter Kreeft. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1969. A good covering of all Lewis' facets in 48 pages.

Christian Letters To A Post-Christian World by Dorothy L. Sayers. Edited by Roderick Jellema. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1969. The section on "Man: The Creating Creature" has a philosophy of creativity and imagination that is very close to the ideas set forth by Professor Tolkien in his "Essay on Fairy-Stories" found in **The Tolkien Reader** (Ballentine).

An Antique Drum: The World As Image by Thomas Howard. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott. 1969. A hard look at the "modern" condition. The authors says "it will be perfectly obvious to many readers that a hundered acknowledgements are due to Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and T.S. Eliot."

Shadows of the Imagination: The Fantasies of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams edited by Mark R. Hillegas. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 1969. A collection of essays.

Charles Williams: A Critical Essay by Mary McDermott Shideler. Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans. 1966. A good survey of Williams in 48 pages.

