

ANT OR

ISSUE 19

## Anor Issue 19

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No - you aren't halluci-what-not-ing - this really is **Anor 19**, only heaven knows how late. Excuses? - well, to start with there was b\*\*\*\*\* all material, so I thought I'd drop a few hints and wait a month or so. By the time the month came up, I was up to my armpits in running an SF convention, entering the Cambridge Rock Competition, recording a tape and generally discovering that I wasn't going to have time to do **Anor** and why the hell hadn't I retired after issue 18?

Anyway, here it is - my last issue as editor. After this, the **Anor** files get handed on to Duncan McLaren, to whom the copious contributions you have been saving up over the last few months should be sent. Me, I shall carry on writing Uncle Mike's Book Corner for as long as the editor wants it, not to mention slipping in the odd article as myself or the mysterious "Palantir". [Come on, who did you *think* it was?]

This issue is still a bit short - we haven't had a twenty-four page **Anor** for an awfully long time - so be nice to Duncan and send him lots of material so he can discover the joys of slaving over a hot PC at one in the morning trying to get an issue finished, when the last article is a handwritten manuscript which is not so much being read as deciphered!

Anyway, it's been fun, so, from me at the end of my second (and undoubtedly last!) stint as editor of this illustrious magazine,

*Namarië*

Mike Whitaker

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Copies of *Anor* are available from: Mike Percival, 20, Mulberry Close, Cambridge, CB4 2A

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## *A Long Awaited Journey*

When Mr. Mike Percival announced that there would shortly be an expedition to Mountfitchet Castle, there was much talk and excitement in Cambridge. Mike was not very rich, but made up for that with his excess of peculiarities, and had been the wonder of the CTS for ten months, ever since his remarkable midnight visit to the Castle. The tales he had brought back from his visit had become something of a local legend, and it was popularly believed that the house in Mulberry Close was stuffed with spoils from his adventures.

Anxiety was intense - especially to those on the committee who were desperately trying to work out how many were going. Then Sunday, October 30th actually dawned. The sun got up, the clouds vanished, the transport arrived, and the fun began. Mike Percival called it an invasion, but it was really a variety of entertainments stuffed into one. Graham was so excited that he almost went in the wrong direction, but after much hooting of horns and frantic flashing of lights he conceded that Mike Percival probably did know the way better than he did, and went second in the cavalcade.

Mike led the way down the Old South Road, a road fraught with perils. As they left Cambridgeshire, a speeding vehicle at a roundabout caused Mike to break suddenly, Graham even more suddenly, and Maggie not quite suddenly enough... Meanwhile, not a hundred yards ahead, Mike encountered further menace from (obviously) an Outsider, who was trying to reverse around the roundabout and accidentally reversed into Mike, who had stopped.

Undeterred, the party proceeded, and eventually arrived at Mountfitchet Castle, after making only one wrong turning. It was generally agreed that the trials of the journey had been in very bad taste, and food and drink were needed to cure the intrepid adventurers of shock and annoyance. A suitable inn was eventually located and sustenance and medication were obtained.

Not to arouse suspicion the party entered the castle under the pseudonym of "Cambridge Talking Society", but foolishly neglected to arm themselves with the sub-machine guns on sale, unaware of the perils that lay within, for as they entered the castle they were challenged by a group of gatekeepers consisting of large wobbling Yeti-booted chickens. Surviving that onslaught, they followed moans and cries for help coming from their right: "Aargh- get my leg out of 'ere, kind sir." Someone had been caught by a mantrap. What puzzled the party was how he managed to speak without moving his lips.

More terrors followed in the form of the torture chamber and the cackling geese - mercifully safely penned in. Even the doctor had an expression of manic delight on his face as he performed what appeared to be open heart surgery on an unanaesthetised patient. No-one was surprised to find a graveyard and a chapel nearby, from which came the sounds of plainchant - masterfully done by two monks to sound like twenty singing in a large stone-built monastery. Most horrific of all was the somewhat draughty privy (also known as Jakes or the Gong), which, they were informed, was tended by the Gong Farmers - forerunners, perhaps, of the Cambridge University Gong Appreciation Society?

Since Steve declined to go in the stocks (perhaps through a premonition of what

other perils were around, of which more will be said later - if we ever get to it) the party proceeded to the intimate family house, consisting of bed/sitting/bath room and a screened off area for the master and mistress of the house. Sorcerous things were going on here: a bath tub which never filled up even though water was continually being passed into it.

By this time the horrors they had encountered were beginning to make them feel thirsty, and they headed with one accord to the brewery. Despite the jovial expression on the hiccupping brewer's face, no-one liked the look of his ale - and since efforts to attract his attention to complain caused the party to jump up and down in frustration, they decided to leave the brewery behind.

As they emerged, blinking, into the daylight, the party was ambushed. Steve fell foul of a bantam weight killer chicken. Taking up a defensive posture, Steve was met with a squawk of defiance as the chicken launched itself at his knees. Steve decided that "just as discretion was the better part of valour, so was cowardice the better part of discretion"\*, and valiantly ran away, closely followed by the rest of the invasion force. Finding themselves faced with the gory sight of a not-too-recently hung man, they bolted for the nearest available building - which just happened to be a kitchen. Despite the highly realistic smoke filled atmosphere, they soon discovered that the food was made of plastic, and so they gave it up as a bad job. Sneaking past a manned watch tower they entered the Inner Bailey.

Here new surprises awaited them. A very still thoroughbred race horse (more sorcery, perhaps) and a ploughman whose studded leather forearm bands suggested that he had recently returned from a Judas Priest concert, as did his manic expression - or perhaps this was the result of the plough he was pushing being nearly as large as the plot he was ploughing. Running away with some haste, they encountered next the hut of the alchemist, who seemed to be trying to prove to the dwarves in the party that all that glitters can be turned into gold. They were helpfully told by an arcane inscription that "modern science has shown that while this is theoretically possible, it is not possible in practice". Mulling over this piece of wisdom they moved on to another inscription intimating that the Lord of the Castle was in the habit of taking his favourite hawk to bed with him (presumably to protect him from killer chickens) and that, should the hawks become over excited the falconer would spray water over them to calm them down.

At last they came to the heart of the fortress - alas without weapons. Passing by the merry banquet they came to the room in which (they were informed) the guards slept twenty-four hours a day - perhaps explaining why the Lord needed more protection from killer chickens. They scaled the staircase, which shook to the rumbling sounds of the Lord's snoring from above, and entered... The Bedroom. At last they had penetrated the final defences, and they lamented the fact that the Sword that was Broken ... er ... still is.

Leaving the sleeping Lord behind them they braved once more the Yeti-booted chickens as they crept out of the castle and headed towards the Trojan Rabbit siege engine, which appeared to have been carelessly left behind. The entire party of eleven squeezed onto the topmost part of the structure and learnt to their advantage that the guard on the watchtower was facing the wrong way. But by

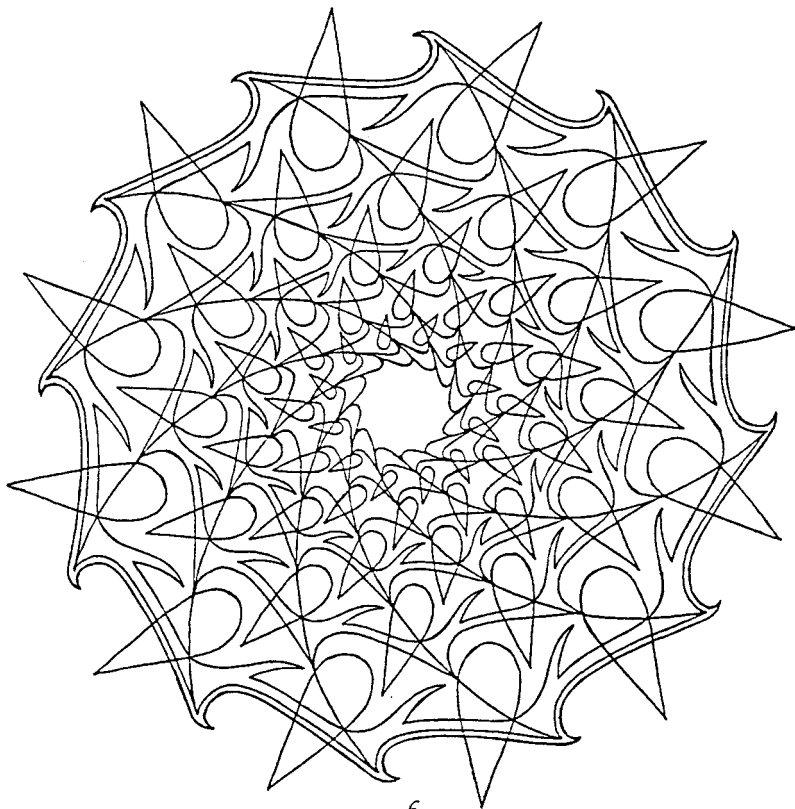
now they were feeling the strain enforced on them by the fowl inhabitants of the castle, and they decided instead to spy out the surrounding area, being careful to remain upwind of the pigsty.

Their experiences left them all feeling exhausted, and deciding, like all good hobbits, that it was time for tea, they returned to Mulberry Close. Again it was evening. The party was tired, especially the one who had been harried by the killer chicken. There they sat sipping their favourite drinks and nibbling their favourite dainties (Digestive and Rich Tea biscuits), and their fears were forgotten. But it was generally agreed that the journey had been worthwhile, even though some of the events had been in very bad taste, and Mike's reputation for peculiarity had increased still further. As they left the house at Mulberry Close behind and went to their separate homes a few turned and spoke of him to their friends: "He's mad... I always said so!"

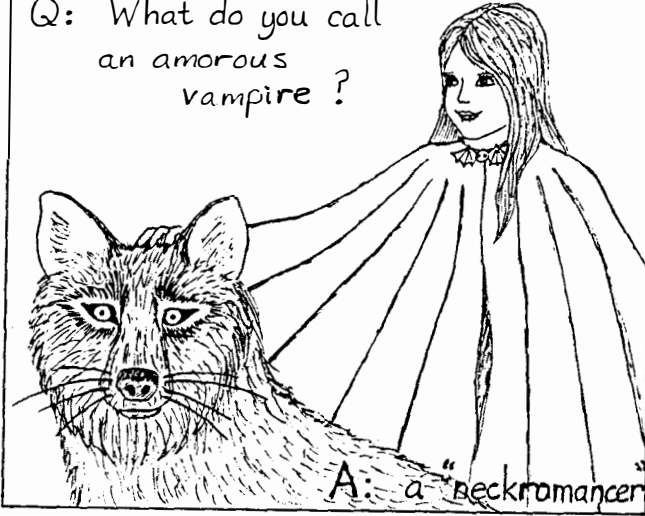
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\* Adams, Douglas. "Life, the Universe and Everything", p 134. Pan Books Ltd., 1982

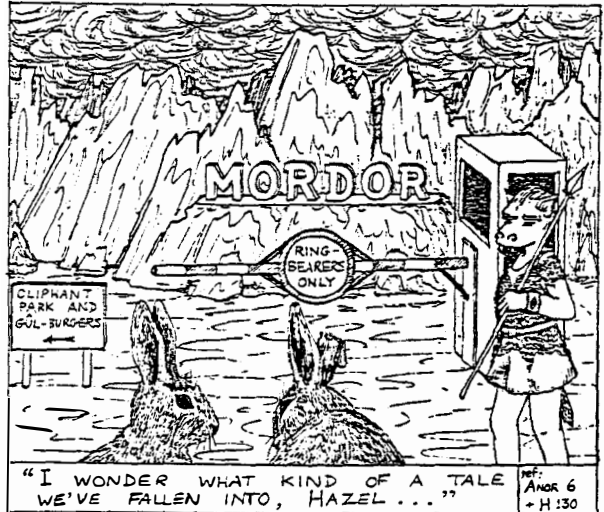


Q: What do you call  
an amorous  
vampire ?



A. a "neckromancer"

## MIDDLE EARTH REVISITED



## Uncle Mike's Book Corner

A comparatively modest and restrained bit of typesetting this time – truth to tell, I'm a bit short on ideas. However, I'm not short on books – there does seem to be a lot of C.J.Cherryh, but them's the breaks:

The 'Merovingen Nights' series  
"Angel with a Sword", "Festival  
Moon", "Fever Season", "Smugglers'  
Gold", "Troubled Waters"  
C.J.Cherryh

This is another 'shared world' series, in a similar vein to the long-running 'Thieves World' books edited by Robert Asprin. While we're drawing comparisons, it's also not dissimilar in premise to the 'Darkover' series by Marion Zimmer Bradley, in that it concerns a future Earth colony on a planet that has been forgotten. The series in fact belongs in the same universe as most of Cherryh's hard SF (e.g. 'Cyteen', 'Downbelow Station' [recommended] and the Morgaine series.)

The setting is gorgeous – the city of Merovin is a decaying Venice: the aristocracy live above the canals in houses linked by walkways and bridges, while below are the canalers, typified by the heroine, Altair Jones.

"Angel with a Sword" is the scene-setter – a full novel by Cherryh alone in which Jones meets Tom Mondragon (by fishing him out of the River Det) who is in deep trouble with the aristocracy. One novel and four shared books later, he's still in trouble, joined by a large supporting cast of characters provided by the other collaborators (such as Leslie Fish and Mercedes Lackey). Watch out especially for Black Cal, Leslie Fish's main character – and see if you can guess who he's based on!!!

Unlike the early Thieves' World books,

the series is much more a set of 'mosaic novels' with a continuing plot woven by the authors, rather than a series of disconnected shorts. The format gets irritating on occasions, as a character is introduced by one author and you have to wait till the author's contribution to the *next* book before you can find anything more out.

Nonetheless, well worth buying or borrowing.

"Sheepfarmer's Daughter" and  
"Divided Allegiance"  
Elizabeth A. Moon

These two form the first two parts of "The Deeds of Paksenarrion" trilogy (part 3, "Oaths of Gold" is out, but, can I get a copy...?).

Paksenarrion is a sheep-farmer's daughter (hence the first title!) who runs away from an arranged marriage to become a mercenary. This turns out to be something she is surprisingly good at, and she quickly advances through the ranks, eventually beginning training to be a paladin. I won't tell you any more, because that would spoil the (very well handled) ending to the second book.

What I like about this series is that the author has managed to create a world which is (if you look closely enough) based on the standard Dungeons and Dragons fantasy universe, while still maintaining both an air of gritty realism and sufficient individuality to keep the readers interest. The characters are good and the



rationalisation behind the idea of paladins is one of the best I've seen.

Now will someone please find me book 3...!!

"Ancient Light"  
Mary Gentle

Like, wow! This is the sequel to the minor classic "Golden Witchbreed" which anyone who hasn't read should go and do so now. For those who haven't, "Golden Witchbreed" is about a first contact between humanity in the person of the heroine Christie, and the inhabitants of a planet they call Oerth.

"Ancient Light" takes place ten years later, on Christie's return to the planet as part of a trade delegation, come to deal for the technology of the Witchbreed, a largely forgotten race on the planet. She meets old acquaintances, some of whom are much less pleased to see her than others and, eventually, learns the true secret of the Witchbreed, a weapon called "ancient light"...

Again, I shan't spoil the plot. The characterisation is excellent, especially the relationship between Christie and the alien Blaize.

Read both!

"A Dirge for Sabis"  
C.J.Cherryh/Leslie Fish

Yup - more Cherryh. Sorry, but I'm a fan. This is billed on the cover as a shared world - the sharing is practically seamless: I can't tell where Cherryh ends and Fish starts.

The main protagonists are a group of artisans who are trying to develop gunpowder weapons (in a fantasy world in which magic is limited to wishing good or ill upon people). Unfortunately, their city is too narrow-

minded to see the potential benefits, and they are forced to flee when invaders take the city.

Basically, the book comes under the 'rattling good yarn' category, following the artisans as they take refuge in an outlying village, where they engage in a battle of wits with the priesthood of a local fire-god who are none too pleased with them.

It's not the best Cherryh I've read, but it's good fun. For those who haven't heard of her, Leslie Fish is also an accomplished writer of SF and fantasy related songs (a.k.a. 'filk') with several excellent tapes to her credit. (For that matter, so is C.J.Cherryh)

### Short Reviews

Another American filk singer is Mercedes Lackey, whose excellent 'Valdemar' fantasy series, consisting of "Arrow's Flight", "Arrows of the Queen" & "Arrows Fall", is being published over here - try Forbidden Planet for the American imports.

Remember 'Redfox', the fantasy comic I was recommending? - well, the second graphic novel ('The Demon Queen Saga' - a compilation of issues 5-10) is out, and very good - the third one will, I'm told, be of issues 21-24 and written by Mary Gentle.

Coming soon (mid-July), also, is the fourth book in the 'Horse Lord' series by Peter Morwood. Having heard him read from it at the Leeds SF convention, 'Iconoclasm', recently, it sounds as good as the rest - unfortunately, he neglected to say what it was called. Also at Iconoclasm was Terry Pratchett, signing copies of 'Sourcery' (that's not a typo!), the recently published fifth book of his Diskworld series.

That's all for now - bye!

# The Tree-Man

*Gary Savage*

On the northern moors where chill winds blow,  
And none but the stout now dare to go,  
There lurks a creature doomed to roam  
And gnaw cold rock, always alone.

A'hunting there Hal used to go  
And seek the barley fresh to mow,  
Yet Halfast now don't dare to roam  
On the northern moors when's't time to sow.

For there on the heath  
He aspied beneath  
The grey clouds cold and lour  
An elm stuck fast  
Where no tree'd last  
'Till that uneasy hour.

And as Hal dared  
To stay and stare,  
The ground, it creaked and crackled  
As that old elm uptook its roots  
An' loosed its rocky shackles.

Chanting in an unknown tongue  
Of rhymes and riddles long unsung  
The giant recalled a land undone  
By wars of long ago.

As over moor the tre-man walked  
Still mumuring its distant talk,  
Hal swiftly turned, his home to stalk,  
His fearful tale to tell.

And Hal's advice henceforth has been  
If you ever pass north-way,  
Is lock up well on any morn'  
When through the moors the winds have torn  
So if the giant return forborne  
He'll leave another way.

# nt...Comment...Comment...Com

Letters are in short supply this issue – fortunately **Nancy Martsch** contributed four sides, which I haven't room for all of but will give you the edited highlights:

"Enjoyed the articles on the Mines of Moria a couple of **Anors** back... I'm no expert on hard-rock mining either, but I've picked through many a mine dump in the South-West US as a child, and if there is one thing which characterises a mine, it is tailings [I hope I've read this word correctly – Mike]. Often, all that remains to show a mine had been there is a pile of rock and perhaps the ruins of a head frame, long after the shaft has filled in. Yet in Middle-earth, only the bad guys produce mine dumps. What did the Dwarves do with all the rock they hauled out of the mountain?

"Another thing conspicuous by its absence is support for tunnels, shoring. A recent article in *Lapidary Journal* magazine features the opening of an agate mine in Idar-Oberstein (Germany) for tourists... the article states that nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the identifiable adits had collapsed, and this in the space of a century since the mines had closed. The Mines of Moria remained open for a *millenium* – the Dawrves must have used powerful magic indeed!

"None of Tolkien's underground structures seem to utilise shoring. The salt mines of Salzburg are said to have all sorts of rooms, even a chapel (!), carved out of rock – perhaps this served as inspiration for Tolkien...

"**Anor 17** (like the new cover) also had an article on barter in the Shire. It should be noted that barter is not always one-for-one; credit was very important in a barter system. For instance, the farmer runs up a bill at the tavern; when his crop is harvested he pays the innkeeper off in produce; if he fails to do so, the innkeeper can march down to his farm and seize his plough. Various good can circulate as money in a primarily barter society: for example salt, furs, tobacco...

"Certainly money was used in the Shire – remember Frodo's dismay when he thought he was going to have to pay for the pony? But where did it come from? My guess is that they used coins from Gondor and maybe even a few old ones from Arnor, too, the Dwarves might have coined money. But the hobbits might have made their own – they were practical people. My theory was that barter was used in everyday transaction, coin for large purchases and special things. The Gaffer might have paid his rent in goods and services; Bilbo probably paid the hire of the cooks and tents for his Party in coin."

A couple of comments from our resident filler artist, **Susan Foord**:

"Please, please PLEASE: not the return of the spirograph pattern." Well, if you don't like it, send me something different!

"I wish to point out in self-defence that the joke in M.E.R. was written half a year before Steve Linton's miraculous recovery of the article so cunningly lost by Mike Whitaker (and it was bad enough then!)" [Hey! I didn't lose that article, we just had a difference of opinion as to what the file was called and what side of the disk it was on – anyway, I know nothing about BBC micros!!]

Th-th-th-that's all, folks.

## Reflections on Gandalf...

by

Richard J. Spontak

Did you ever stroll down the streets of Cambridge (alias present-day Minas Tirith) and find yourself reflecting upon a nagging thought? So it happened one day that I began thinking of Gandalf, or *Mithrandir* as he was named by the Elvish Eldar, on my weekly pilgrimage to the Cavendish Laboratory in West Cambridge. "Why has Gandalf received so much attention, being a mere fantasy figure from Tolkien's masterpieces *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*?" was the question that demanded an answer. "Why do I even care about a character who wears a grey (or white) robe, carries a wooden staff, and issues magical spells?" was the subsequent question on the heels of the first. Has Gandalf's wizardry, or his cunning, been solely responsible for this vested interest, or has it been his unadulterated courage that has earned him sincere respect from readers? After a half hour's worth of deliberation, I concluded that rather than offering a literary critique *per se* on these classics or compiling a complex summary of Middle-earth, we can appreciate some of Tolkien's characters -- such as Gandalf -- as friends, or even role models, and enrich our own personalities with their desirable traits.

Before delving into a somewhat esoteric, but nonetheless significant, subject, the character of Gandalf must be placed into proper context; consequently, a brief history of his existence and character development in the Third Age is warranted. According to Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*, the "Grey Pilgrim" arrived in Middle-earth approximately a thousand years after Sauron was overthrown, thereby ending the Second Age. He and the other *Istari* (Wizards) came into the world of Elves, Dwarves, and Humans to provide assistance in the complete destruction of Sauron's evil.

Aside from some appearances in Dol Guldur, in search of Sauron's ever-growing hunger for power (and the rings of power), little was recorded about Gandalf for almost 1100 years! Unlike his peer, *Curunir* (otherwise known as Saruman) who settled into a stronghold at Isengard, Gandalf was believed to be a wanderer. This aspect of his character already provides us with insight into his seemingly self-perpetrated mysterious nature, exemplified by the point that "they [the *Istari*] revealed their true names to few." Subsequently, little was actually known about Gandalf, and legends of his capabilities (especially fireworks among the Hobbits) grew among all of Middle-earth. Despite this fact, he was often welcomed by the "good" races, the Elves in particular, as demonstrated by the following passage:

"Farewell! O Gandalf!" said the [Elven] king [of Mirkwood].  
"May you ever appear where you are most needed and least  
expected! The oftener you appear in my halls the better shall I be  
pleased!"

After Gandalf's confrontation with Saruman during the initial stages of the White Council and continued search for Sauron in Dol Guldur, Gandalf does not figure prominently in Middle-earth's legacy until the eventful plot to turn Bilbo Baggins into a world-class adventurer. Why would such an experienced sage select someone who neither possessed experience nor even desire to be other than a content and somewhat complacent homebody to go on such a serious mission? What follows, of course, constitutes a wonderfully delightful tale, in which Bilbo's meager thirst for excitement is filled (more than I daresay he ever desired!), and the prelude to the War of the Ring. During his travels with Bilbo and the Dwarves, Gandalf appears (and disappears) many times to be an impatient father-figure, often rebuking his troublesome children. Still, we are given glimpses into Gandalf's extraordinary perception (e.g., "If I say he [Bilbo] is a Burglar, a Burglar he is, or will be when the time comes." ) and magical abilities.

The mysterious shroud surrounding Gandalf is slowly unveiled in the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* to reveal a being of tremendous power, best demonstrated by the battle with the Balrog in Khazad-dûm and the meeting with the Witch-king of Angmar in Minas Tirith. However, the Gandalf we see in *The Lord of the Rings* is a bit different from the cold, almost insensitive character in *The Hobbit*. In fact, after having seen a theatrical production of *The Hobbit* after having just finished the trilogy, I wondered why Gandalf seemed so distant to both Bilbo and the Dwarves. His rough edges are smoothed in the trilogy, and outbreaks of authoritarian outrage are few and occur only at points of immediate distress. Instead, he attempts, often at great personal effort, to make others -- e.g., the members of the Fellowship -- understand the gravity of a given situation. The scenes in which he (a) explains the history of the Ring to Frodo at Bag End and (b) describes the alternatives for traversing Caradhras best make light of this point. Rather than portraying the impatient father-figure, he has evolved into a warm person, always willing to help, but sworn to uphold his "mission" in life.

How can we, as readers, interpret this change in character? Certainly we could blame Tolkien for Gandalf's shortcomings in *The Hobbit* due to a lack of true interest in a children's story (since Tolkien's heart was beset by *The Book of Gnomes*, later to be called *The Silmarillion*). [This, of course, is unfair, as the author cannot defend his intention.] Let us assume, for the moment at least, that Gandalf's nature was dynamic and represented true growth. Poor Bilbo, on the other hand, was like a child in many ways; and Gandalf provided the challenge and "encouragement," albeit sometimes stern, for Bilbo to also grow personally and to shed complacency. Perhaps in his innumerable travels, Gandalf himself learned enough about dealing with and appreciating the different races (especially the Elves) inhabiting Middle-earth that he

wanted to provide Bilbo with ample opportunity to become the best Bilbo attainable and to avoid the mundane, dull lifestyle enjoyed by most Hobbits. Here, then, is a key insight to Gandalf's personality: he was not afraid to challenge and induce change in matters which seemed accepted, rigid, or stagnant. [The point can be argued that Gandalf manipulated Bilbo; and, indeed, this is true to some extent. However, Bilbo certainly had many chances to end his "bothersome" adventure but did not (due to his Took ancestry, no doubt).]

This aspect of challenging established norms, whether they appeared good or evil, on the basis of honesty was not always well-accepted. In his attempt to persuade King Théoden to prepare for war with Saruman's Orcs, Gandalf was awarded the surname "Stormcrow." Yet he remained adamant in his pursuit of righteousness. In essence, his staff was not the only source of light in the dark places where he roamed (e.g., Wormtongue's Edoras). For this reason, he has earned a tremendous following both here and abroad. It is not surprising, for instance, that many computer users throughout the world have selected "GANDALF" as their identification word. A musical group selling albums in Vienna, Austria, has adopted the name of "GANDALF." Another example of this loyalty reflects the sincerity of a young woman's respect for Gandalf. While she was travelling to New England (USA) with some friends, she had entered the Mines of Moria in the back of a van. She explained that her eyes filled with tears when she read the following:

But even as it [the Balrog] fell it swung its whip, and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard's [Gandalf's] knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. "Fly, you fools!" he cried, and was gone.

Consequently, she threw down the book and wept bitterly, cursing the name of Tolkien. Only after she was reassured that Gandalf would later be resurrected would she even consider continuing the trilogy.

To some, Gandalf's love for a peaceful Middle-earth and his self-sacrificing nature have been likened to those of a savior. If his qualities are that commendable, perhaps he can be a worthwhile role model to some extent in our own lives. Contrary to the lyrics in Tina Turner's Top-10 hit, we do need another "hero" -- one that can prove that each of us can make a difference in the world in which we live with the "magical" abilities each of us possesses. As we must repeatedly contend with those ugly moments of loneliness, hatred, and prejudice, Gandalf reminds us that the indestructible beast is not so indestructible -- Balrogs do die -- and that we can bring light into our own Moria's and aid to our own Frodo's. We can live harmoniously with ourselves and others. This is certainly not a new conclusion; but perhaps each one of us in his/her own way can honestly say, "I am a Servant of the Secret Fire" and understand both the implications and requirements.

# Tolkien and Chaucer: some light on Tom Bombadil

Steve Linley

“And even in a mythical Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one (intentionally).”<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Tolkien himself, in one of his very few comments on the nature of Tom Bombadil. No wonder, then, that this perplexing figure has been the subject of much (largely vague and inconclusive) discussion. In his recent article *Of the Maiar* (Anor 17), Mike Percival considers, and discards, the suggestion that Bombadil be counted amongst the Maiar, and I agree with this conclusion for reasons besides those given in the article.<sup>2</sup> Mike also lists other possible identities for Bombadil: an ‘Earth Force’, one of the Valar, or even Iluvatar himself. Now the last of these, if we equate Iluvatar, Eru, the One, with the Judaeo-Christian God, is refuted by Tolkien himself,<sup>3</sup> and it is as unlikely that Tom is a Vala as it is that he is a Maia, for much the same reasons. This leaves the somewhat nebulous ‘Earth Force’ proposal, and it is this aspect that I wish to consider in this article. Again, support comes from Tolkien himself, who refers to “...Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside...” (*Letters* p.29). In particular, I hope to show the influence in Tolkien’s presentation of Bombadil, of Geoffrey Chaucer, whose name, if it appears at all in Tolkien criticism, is found only in connexion with the more overtly Mediaeval *Farmer Giles of Ham*. I intend to point out the similarities between the exuberance that Bombadil feels about his ‘natural habitat’ and the irrepressible vitality of Nature which is the *primum mobile* of *The Canterbury Tales*, and lies at the heart of *The General Prologue* in particular.<sup>4</sup>

In the opening passage of *The General Prologue*, Chaucer describes the effect that “Aprill with his shoures soote”, that is, the coming of Spring, has on the countryside, so that crops grow and flourish, “and smale foweles maken melodie”, in a bursting forth of creative power which engenders and sustains natural life. The effect that this has on the poet is the (sub)creation of the personae of the poem, the self-sufficient vitality of their characters analogous to the vitality of Nature. This superabundance bursts through the text in various ways, both general and specific to certain characters, and many of these appear also in Tolkien’s account of the Bombadil episode.

## General Features

First of all, there is the strongly natural imagery, particularly in short similes. For example, the Monk’s horse is “as broun as is a berie”, the Franklin’s beard “Whit ... as is the dayesie”, his purse “whit as morne milk”, the Pardoner has “Swiche glaringe eyen ... as an hare”, the Miller’s “berd as any sowe or fox was

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1. *Letters* p.174

2. Cf. *Letters* p.179: “Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive.” If Bombadil were “an extremely high power class I Maia” (*Percivalop. cit* p.9) one might expect him to put on a better show against Sauron than that, even if he could only be motivated *in extremis*.

3. See *Letters* pp.191f.

4. For a fuller discussion of this aspect of Chaucer’s poem, see e.g. J. Winny’s edition of *The General Prologue*, esp. pp.32-40, to which I am indebted for many of the ideas which follow.

reed", and so on. This compares with the first descriptions of both Bombadil "... like a cow going down to drink ... and his face was as red as a ripe apple" (*FotR* p.122), and also of Goldberry, whose "gown was green, green as young reeds, shot with silver like beads of dew", "as she ran her gown rustled softly like the wind in the flowering borders of a river" (*ibid.* p.125. Cf. Frodo's verses on the following page).

This spring-time vitality comes out in other aspects of Nature, for instance the singing of the birds, referred to above, which is to say that the mating season begins. Similarly, Bombadil continues his wooing of Goldberry, bringing her the last of the spring lilies, as he does every year, and repeatedly bursting into song, much of it nonsense, succumbing to an irrepressible urge to sing for the joy of singing. This is a particularly important motif, which I shall consider in more detail below. This same urge inspires Chaucer in the production of his poem, which is symbolized by the gathering of the folk who "longen ... to goon on pilgrimages" at this same time of the year. Bombadil, too, delights in telling tales, spending the second day of the hobbits' visit in this activity, when they are kept in by the rain of "Goldberry's washing day and her autumn-cleaning" (*ibid.* p.131). Here, too, "Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about". Just as Chaucer's characters assume a life of their own, so also "Tom's talk left the woods and went leaping up the young stream, over bubbling waterfalls, over pebbles and worn rocks, and among small flowers in close grass and wet crannies, wandering at last up on to the Downs".

#### Type and anti-type I: the Squire and the Pardoner.

Two characters in particular from *The General Prologue* seem to me to provide types for Bombadil, namely the Squire and the Franklin, and two provide striking contrasts, representing vain mockery and total negation of this natural vitality, the Pardoner and the Reeve respectively.

First of all, the Squire, who is probably the most obvious model for Bombadil. In Chaucer's poem he is described as follows:

Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,  
Al ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.  
Singing he was, or floytinge, al the day;  
He was as fresshe as is the month of May. (ll.89-92)

...  
He koude songes make and wel endite. (l.96)

...  
He sleep namoore than dooth a nightingale. (l.98)

There are striking parallels here with Bombadil. The first couplet, for example, recalls Bombadil's own taste for bright clothes, most notably his outfit "blue as rain-washed forget-me-nots, and he had green stockings" (*FotR* p.131), which picks up the flower motif. The next line brings us back to the theme of constant singing, which is as true of Bombadil as it is of the Squire. Even when he descends into 'prose' speech, Tom continues with the strong rhythms, rhymes, abrupt phrases, peculiar diction and superabundance of exclamation marks which characterize his verses. For example, his very first prose speech (*FotR* p.122) might just as well be written in verse as follows:



Whoa! Whoa! steady there! ... Now, my little fellows,  
Where be you a-going to, puffing like a bellows?  
What's the matter here then? Do you know who I am?  
I'm Tom Bombadil. Tell me what's your trouble!  
Tom's in a hurry now. Don't you crush my lilies!

So too, after rescuing Merry and Pippin, he invites the hobbits home, falling by degrees back into song: "...Time enough for questions around the supper table. You follow after me as quick as you are able." And so he led them off, "still singing loudly and nonsensically." Careful reading of other examples of Bombadil's speech, preferably aloud, will also reveal this tendency for the blurring of the boundaries between prose and song. Nor indeed is this habit peculiar to Tom. Goldberry, too, though to a less marked and rhythmical extent (more appropriately for a river, perhaps), not only sings to the hobbits, but also often falls into poetic diction, and the hobbits themselves "became suddenly aware that they were singing merrily, *as if it was easier and more natural than talking*" (*ibid.* p.127, my italics).

The final similarity is between the lovesick sleeplessness of the Squire, likened to that of a nightingale, and the fact that the hobbits are woken on both mornings by Bombadil, the perpetual wooer of Goldberry, already up and about, "whistling like a starling" (*ibid.* p.129) or "whistling like a tree-full of birds" (*ibid.* p.136).

An anti-type to both the Squire and Bombadil, revealing their characteristics by contrast, is provided by the Pardoner, who is as vain a parody of the vitality of the other two as he is a corrupt, avaricious example of his profession. His inner sterility is revealed by his lank, meagre colourless locks (*GP* 677-81), and also by his falling short of full sexual maturity in the effeminacy implied by the following passage:

A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;  
As smothe it was as it were late shave.  
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare. (690-4)

These descriptions serve to highlight the incongruity of his affected dress, his hair, albeit sparse, not short as appropriate to his priestly function, and the grotesque singing of love-songs with his 'companion' the Summoner. Compare this with the honest vitality represented by the thick hair of both the Squire, curled thickly as if artificially, but presumably naturally so (*GP* 81), and the bearded, thick haired Bombadil (*FotR* p.126). The sexuality of both is never in doubt: Bombadil is perpetually wooing Goldberry, the Squire is "A lovyere and a lusty bachelor" (*GP* 80), well versed in the arts of winning a lady's favour.

## **Type and anti-type II: the Franklin and the Reeve**

Whereas the Squire provided a model for the bursting forth of natural vitality, the Franklin provides the model for honest enjoyment of abundant provisions, "a man finding endless delight in the pleasures of fine cooking and lavish hospitality, and radiating a spirit of content. The Franklin's high living does not imply gluttony, nor that he is neglecting more important issues in his enthusiasm for the pleasures of the table. Its well stocked cellars ... make the house rival the abundance of the natural world" (*Winy, op. cit.* p.101). Like Bombadil, the Master of his 'patch', the Franklin had once been a sheriff, and an

honest, responsible one at that. The climactic phrase of Chaucer's description of the Franklin's house, "It snowed in his hous of mete and drinke" (*GP* 347), could just as well be applied to Bombadil's house: "Though the hobbits ate, as only famished hobbits can eat, there was no lack" (*FotR* p.127). Both "could represent the heaped-up fruitfulness of the natural world at harvest, that withholds nothing in its abundance" (*Winnyp. cit.* p.36). Both also display anger towards whatever obstructs the full enjoyment of this lavish abundance, the Franklin towards his cook, should he not come up to scratch, Bombadil towards Old Man Willow and the Barrow-Wight. Finally, both share the same complexion, the Franklin "sangwin", Bombadil's face "as red as a ripe apple", which indicates the good health and inner well-being that come from an outdoor life and enjoyment of Nature.<sup>5</sup>

In opposition to the Franklin, and with striking similarities to the Barrow-Wight, stands the Reeve,

... a splendre colerik man.

His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;  
His heer was by his eris ful round yshorn;  
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,  
Ylik a staf, ther was no calf ysene. (589-94)

In this revealing description the Reeve comes across as one who rejects and despises the jolity of Nature's rich abundance - his bilious temperament is directly opposed to the sanguine cheerfulness of the Franklin, his close-cropped hair and close-shaven beard contrast with the rich locks of the Squire and, for example, the bright red beard of the lively Miller.<sup>6</sup> His fleshless legs contrast with the shapeliness of the Squire's (implied by the latter's short tunic) and again indicate a rejection of the pleasures of the table, both culinary and social, which are so heartily embraced by the convivial Franklin. The overall visual impression given by this description is of a corpse or skeleton, an undead figure who regards all natural pleasures with arid, coldly deliberate malice. Just as he rides at the back of the company, ever-present yet keeping himself to himself, so too he lives apart from his fellow men, "His woning [dwelling] was ful faire upon an heeth" (*GP* 608), and such is his unscrupulous malice that "They were adrad of him as of the deeth". The Wight, dwelling alone on the desolate Barrow Downs, amidst thick, cold, heavy fog, shares the same deathly malice towards all living things, as is most clearly revealed in the "grim, hard cold words, heartless and miserable" of the bewitching incantation (*FotR* p.141). Both sit guard over 'dishonestly acquired' treasure (cf. *GP* 610-14), hoarded merely for the sake of possession, and kept locked away lest it should give any enjoyment. Under the spell of the Wight, the many golden treasures of the barrow "looked cold and unlovely". In short, both the Reeve and the Barrow-Wight could be said to represent the frozen barrenness of winter.

## Conclusion

It seems to me quite clear that Bombadil represents the abounding vitality of the countryside. In his house, though it may reign for a short time elsewhere, winter with its cold barrenness has no place. The last of the spring lilies which he brings

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5. Cf. the description of the Monk, another lusty, healthy outdoor figure, despite his calling (*GP* 165-207).

6. Indeed the two are at odds later in the work - see esp. the *Prologue to The Miller's Tale*.

to Goldberry are preserved from the winter until the following spring. This power of Bombadil's house is expressed also in Frodo's prophetic utterance "O spring-time and summer-time, and spring again after!" (*FotR* p.126). Spring shall return to overcome the barrenness of winter. Nor is there any place for winter's representative, the Barrow-Wight. The entire Bombadil episode, deriving much of its content and expression from Chaucer, is yet another example of the optimistic spirit of *LotR* as a whole. Though the negative forces may gain the upper hand, and may never be entirely vanquished before the End, nevertheless the vitality of life cannot be permanently checked, the long cold winter will be repulsed by the overwhelming energy of the spring. Stars shine in Mordor to give Sam renewed hope, the corruption of the Shire is cleansed and wholeness and vitality is restored with a vengeance.<sup>7</sup>

As I have tried to show, Chaucer's expression of this same fundamental optimism provided material for Tolkien to use for a similar purpose, and he was thus able to express this optimism in terms appropriate to the rusticity of the Shire and its environs, while avoiding the more explicitly Christian themes which enrich (some would say mar: see Shippey pp.150ff.) the triumphal return of the King to Gondor (*RotK* pp.212ff.). It seems to me surprising that, in their eagerness to point out sources from 'old books' for *LotR*, critics focus almost entirely on Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse writings, and omit the wealth of Middle English literature with which Tolkien was just as familiar. Even Shippey, in his meticulous list of major sources (Appendix A) makes no mention of Chaucer. As this article shows, I think this a major oversight, and perhaps those more familiar with Chaucer than I may be moved to point out further similarities and borrowings.

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7. See the description of S.R. 1420, The Great Year of Plenty, *RotK* p.268

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