

AN OR



*Issue 29*



## Steward's Address

This is an exciting time to be interested in Tolkien. The lesser-known works are getting reissued in new editions; the famous ones are probably being read more than they have been since being published. Suddenly wherever one looks people have their heads buried in *Lord of the Rings*. This is, of course, due to Peter Jackson's film. Opinions vary on his treatment of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. I happen to think that it was very good indeed, but no doubt many of you will disagree. Sometimes the consequences of the intense interest in the books feel uncomfortably like a violation of something that is, I'm sure, precious to all of us. Whatever, I wonder, would the Professor think about thousands of One Rings being sold across the globe? Nevertheless, the fact is that many thousands of people are being introduced to the words of Tolkien who might never have considered reading a great doorstep of a book by an old-fashioned Oxford don, and that is a marvellous thing.

Welcome, then, to *Anor 29*. This is the first edition of *Anor* we've seen for rather a long time, but it is worth the wait. We have a feast of great variety and quality here for your delectation. Allan Turner has written for us an erudite and fascinating article on issues surrounding the translations of *The Hobbit* into German. From Lee Sallows we have a persuasive argument that Tolkien sent the Fellowship of the Ring off on a quest that wasn't strictly necessary at all. There is a report on the 2002 Varsity Quiz, and an interesting review by Chris Kreuzer of an audio book of *The Silmarillion*. Chris also discusses the value for appreciating the works of Tolkien of verbal storytelling in general. Finally, Matthew Reid has uncovered for us an extraordinary testament that threatens to turn our understanding of the War of the Ring on its head, and Chris Kreuzer gives us an illuminating and amusing insight into the mind of Melian the Maia after things went a little awry in Doriath.

Many thanks to all contributors. Particular thanks also to Matthew Woodcraft who has edited this issue of *Anor*. He is standing down as *Anor* Editor after this issue – if anyone would like to take on the position then please let the committee know.

That, though, is more than enough from me. Enjoy!

Ben Colburn, Steward

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## Translations and Transformations

ALL translation is a form of re-writing; only the most linguistically naïve remain firm in their conviction that turning a text from one language to another is like sending a message in Morse code, substituting word for word into a different system. Indeed, since different languages correspond to different cultures, each with a slightly different way of categorizing the natural and social phenomena we see around us, few texts will emerge completely unchanged from the translation process. This applies more than ever to literary and poetic texts, which by their very nature focus the reader's attention more on linguistic forms and cultural resonances than on a simple message; that is to say, connotation takes precedence over denotation.

It is always a significant event when a new translation of a work by Tolkien appears, because it opens up something which has given so much pleasure to so many of us to thousands more potential Middle-earth enthusiasts who cannot approach it in the original. Whether or not the experience is quite the same, at least for *The Lord of the Rings*, which is a work of tremendous linguistic complexity, is a question that I shall not even attempt to answer. But what about when the new translation is not into a completely different language, but into one where a version exists already? Is there room for two *Hobbits* in one country, or must there be one 'authentic' text? True, Tolkien himself made considerable changes to the Gollum episode in the second edition, but he was careful to do so in such a way that this became the 'real' story, motivated within the Secondary World.

A new German translation of *The Hobbit* was published in 1998, and is available at present alongside the old one. No reason is given for this state of affairs, but an explanation should not be hard to find. The dissatisfaction of Tolkien fans with the old translation and a changing public perception of Tolkien's importance as a writer are certainly weighty factors, but underlying everything else are probably the most prosaic of business considerations.

The possession of rights in Tolkien is a highly desirable asset, as the takeover of George Allen and Unwin by HarperCollins has shown all too clearly. In Germany the main publisher of Tolkien has been Klett-Cotta, which even gives its paperback versions the imprint *Hobbit Presse*. However, in 1957, before *The Lord of the Rings* was widely known, the translation rights of *The Hobbit* were acquired by Paulus Verlag and held by their successors Georg Bitter, who have published the translation ever since. Although the precise contractual position is known only to the parties concerned, it seems as if Klett-Cotta are now trying to return the lost hobbit to the fold by bringing out a completely new translation.

Not before time, it could be argued. The old version by Walter Scherf has clearly been brought up to date from time to time, but in a rather piecemeal manner. For

example, some of the amendments in the Third Edition have been taken up, while others have been overlooked. The goblins are called *Orks*, which can only come from *The Lord of the Rings*, but many other personal and geographical names appear in different forms than in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*: for example, Scherf translates 'Mirkwood' and 'Dale' as *Nachtwald* and *Dal*, whereas elsewhere they are *Düsterwald* and *Thal*, while he leaves Rivendell untranslated (elsewhere *Bruchtal*). This happens all too easily when different publishers obtain translation rights of related works and then commission different translators<sup>1</sup>, but it is clearly an undesirable state of affairs, since Tolkien was so particular about maintaining consistency in his nomenclature, as in all other details.

The new translation brings all the names into line with what have come to be considered their 'normal' German forms, which is not surprising in view of the fact that the translator, Wolfgang Krege, has also written an original Middle-earth handbook on the lines of Robert Foster. It is obvious that the establishment of such normal forms is particularly necessary for a writer like Tolkien, who commands such strong Secondary Belief in his creations that they achieve a sense of authenticity as in the Primary World.<sup>2</sup>

However, the most striking contrast to the old translation is in the impression created by its appearance. Although the old *Hobbit* was published by Georg Bitter, it was most widely known in the paperback version produced under licence by the Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag in their series *dtv junior*, which immediately marked it out as a children's book, complete with whimsical illustrations by Klaus Ensikat which won a major prize and would have left Tolkien fuming. The mighty Smaug appears on the front cover with the spikes which seem to be obligatory in fantasy art, but with butterfly wings, limbs which simply won't work, and an inane grin on his whiskery face. The rest of the illustrations are no better, with an inverted teacup appearing to form the chimney of Bag End.

Krege's new translation (or at least the hardback which was available in June 1999) has no illustrations and does not mention children; instead, the dust-jacket blurb refers to it as the beginning of "die Fantasy-Literatur". The endpapers give a fine

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably translators of *The Hobbit* were not issued with Tolkien's notes on nomenclature prepared for translators of *The Lord of the Rings*. Although few of them are relevant to the earlier work anyway, they do include such important names as *Baggins* and *Took*. This may also help to explain why, although both books were translated into French by the same person, there are significant differences in the nomenclature, a situation which has still not been remedied.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Matthew Woodcraft for suggesting that, since we have the conceit that the works are translated from Westron in any case, it could be seen as entirely natural for the translators of different works to use different names. However, this argument cannot be allowed to stand. What is being translated (or retranslated), even within this conceit, is not the original Westron documents, but Tolkien's edition for the modern reader, in which ancient chronicles are largely re-cast into contemporary narrative. Therefore the translator is under an obligation to preserve as faithfully as possible the editor's painstaking efforts to achieve consistency.

reproduction of the maps, with the lettering precisely adapted to Tolkien's original style (although the moon letters are still in English), contrasting with the pitifully sketched map of Wilderland and the omission of Thror's map in the old paperback. This is clearly a work of serious quality, like the original.

A striking feature is that, at the very end, a few original lines of transition on a separate page lead the reader straight into the first half dozen pages of *A Long-expected Party*. This is on the one hand a powerful kind of advertising, leaving the reader's appetite well and truly whetted, and on the other a clear indication that the book is to be seen as of a piece with *The Lord of the Rings*.

And it is here that we have the unwritten sub-text: *The Hobbit* is being taken out of the nursery and reclaimed as a serious work of literature. An attempt is being made to show that it has passed into the German canon, but at the same time a subtle form of manipulation is being exerted. As I said above, a translation is a form of re-writing. This is done in various unobtrusive little ways, such as forms of address. The old-fashioned formal pronoun *Ihr* (which is also used in *The Lord of the Rings*) is replaced by modern *Sie* at the beginning, after which all characters lapse into the familiar (but also epic) *du*, while at the same time the incongruous *Mister Baggins* of the old version appears as *Bilbo Beutlin* or just *Bilbo*. In general, expressions tend to be turned in the new translation with just a shade more dignity. Even the familiar title, *Der Kleine Hobbit*, has become simply *Der Hobbit*, with the childish associations of 'little' removed.

Undoubtedly Tolkien was not completely happy in later years with the patronising adult storyteller style of *The Hobbit*, as can be seen from his comments in Letter 163 and his compiling of a 'serious' version of the Unexpected Party which appears in *Unfinished Tales*, not to mention his own published revisions to the text, so it could be argued that Krege is being faithful to the author's deeper intention. The counter-argument is that *The Hobbit* was explicitly intended as a children's story and any attempt to disguise that is falsifying the spirit of the original.

So which translation will turn out to be the 'authentic' version in the end? This depends on what agreement has been reached between the publishers. My guess is that the new one will gradually oust the old *dtv junior*, particularly if it comes out in a well-produced paperback. But only time and the continuing history of Tolkien's reception in Germany will tell.

Allan Turner

## An Appeal

**T***HIS remarkable document has recently come to our notice. Although the circumstances in which it was recorded can only be guessed at, it may cast new light on one of the least understood figures in the War of the Ring.*

I, Saruman, who was once the White, hereby appeal against my sentence of banishment beyond the doors of the night.

Though my deeds have been misinterpreted, and my words not repeated with scrupulous honesty, I bear no grudges for my treatment during the War of the Ring. My strategies were deep, and if the eyes of others did not plumb their depths, I accept that those who knew enough to judge me were more concerned with the fate of the Ring. Yet I assert that all my actions were done for good cause, and given our great victory, who can say that they did not have good results?

The heart of these misunderstandings is my encounter with Mithrandir at Orthanc in the year 3018 of the Third Age. I had heard that he had news of the One Ring, and, as he feared my corruption, so I feared his – and if he had in truth seen this thing, was my cause not the greater? I determined that he was not taken in by the lies of Sauron, and then, comforted a little in my heart, I turned my true face to him. My words were not quite those he reported to the council of Elrond. True, I asked what news he had of the Ring, true, I asked him of his business in the Shire; I was head of the White Council, and such things concerned me closely. When he refused to answer me, I feared greatly that the Ring was already working in his mind and that he would take this task upon himself alone. Fearing this calamity, I imprisoned him. I dared do nothing else, yet I did not mistreat him or torture him – no, I allowed him peace to meditate. Why did I not try everything in my power to discover where the Ring was if I was truly so enamoured of it?

When Mithrandir escaped me he poisoned the ears of Rohan and Fangorn against me. I learnt of the matters discussed at the Council of Elrond, and my heart was eased. Unwise the course they steered may have been, yet the motives were untainted. I knew much of what was going on through the *palantír* and other means. I gathered the Dunlendings, orcs and half-orcs (an early step in a long project of mine, hoping to adapt the orcs to an agricultural lifestyle), partly to defend Isengard, but mostly to deny them to Sauron. I provoked war against Rohan, an evil act, but necessary. I had intended to persuade Rohan and the Forest to help, but Mithrandir had denied that path to me. The Rohirrim were ill prepared for the Great War, and by my actions, I mobilised much of their army, and gave the Riders invaluable training in war. I did not attack to win a victory: had I wished that, I would have marched my army to Edoras months before.

I ordered an elite unit to slay Boromir, and capture the hobbits. This was again necessary. I had known the instant that Frodo's sight turned to Orthanc, when

he looked from Amen Hen wearing the Ring. Through the *palantír*, I helped turn the Eye from him, and in that moment much was revealed to me. Boromir had to be slain to protect the Ring, and capturing the Hobbits would guarantee that the rest of the fellowship would travel to Minas Tirith and not seek to aid Frodo. Aragorn alone might provide a great enough distraction from the true quest for that desperate gamble to succeed, and it was too late to try another stratagem.

When I had mobilised the Rohirrim and woken the Ents from their long slumber, I saw that there was little more I could do. Mithrandir would guide those who needed guidance, and a hostile Isengard would prove a distraction, while no offer of peace from me would be believed. So I destroyed my army. I waited until the moment was ripe, and marched my entire forces against the strongest place in the land, there to die between the walls and the army I had merely scattered, not destroyed.

When Mithrandir came again to Isengard, I hoped for a private reconciliation, but doubted that I could achieve it. I had to act as a traitor to the White Council so that the suspicions of Sauron were not aroused. I did not want the Enemy to search for a pattern in my actions. I asked Mithrandir to enter Orthanc privately, so I could discuss matters best not shouted to a company of men. When my hope failed, and Mithrandir broke my staff, Gríma did as I had ordered him and threw down the *palantír*, a gift to Mithrandir and to Aragorn.

So it was that I sacrificed my army, my home, my *palantír*, my staff and much of my power, just so that the Ring-bearer might hope to fulfil his quest.

Without the *palantír* or an army, I could do little. I had earlier arranged for some help to come to the Shire. I had been organising them from afar, forming the Sheriffs into an army, and arranging martial law and rationing. With the Dúnedain gone, and the whole West stirring, the Shire was in great danger and I arranged a little defence for them. My tools in that place were not the finest, but what use my attempts to protect them if Sauron gained the victory? When my powers were broken, they went out of control, I admit that, but when I put them in place I had not seen that eventuality. When Fangorn released me, I went with all speed back to the Shire, hoping to tie up a loose end that troubled my conscience. I arrived in the Shire little more than a month before the Hobbits. I started to work towards a solution, but matters were very serious, and without my powers I had made little progress. The end you already know. Gríma, an evil man whom I was trying to reform, freed my spirit from its body.

I ask you to allow my spirit to remain within this world. Remember that if you do banish through the Gates of Night, the sentence is irrevocable. The Valar granted Morgoth and Sauron second chances, can you not do the same for me?

Matthew Reid

## Review

J.R.R. Tolkien *The Silmarillion*, read by Martin Shaw (HarperCollins Audio Books)  
ISBN: 0-00-105534-8; £35

“The *Silmarillion* tells of the First Age of Tolkien’s world, the ancient drama to which the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* so often look back.” – “The myths and legends of Middle-Earth”, says the introductory blurb on the packaging. This is not a dramatised version however, but the real thing: fifteen hours of unabridged narrative covering the entire mythology from the creation myth of the *Ainulindalë* to the events at the end of the Third Age.

This does not make for easy listening. Following the story requires the same level of concentration as reading a book. Without pictures, music, or sound effects, the listener is compelled to work overtime with his or her imagination in creating a vivid picture of the unfolding scenes as the storyteller relates them. Just letting the words flow over you can easily send you to sleep, as some of the longer descriptive passages meander past. Only once in the whole fifteen hours does Martin Shaw’s voice rise above conversational level. Rather, he demonstrates the skills of a master storyteller by using subtle changes in volume, carefully timed pauses, and precise emphases to convey his interpretation of the text. Attentive listening is required to sense the rich atmospheric tones that Shaw imbues his reading with; some may say too much attention is required. While it is true that some parts of the tale might have benefited from more drama from Shaw, in the main the understated reading of the text allows the power of Tolkien’s style of writing to shine through.

This effect is best felt in *Of the Fall of Númenor*. Here, the measured tones of a master storyteller unfold the broad brushstrokes of Númenórean history: from the voyaging of the Edain to Andor, following Bright Eärendil, to the glory of Armenelos in the noon-tide of the Númenórean realm. The mental pace quickens as the story focuses on the dark days following Ar-Pharazôn’s ascension to the throne, and the waxing of Sauron’s power. Tension mounts unbearably as Tolkien’s words, delivered calmly but forcibly by Shaw, build to a climactic finish, while the epilogue is heartbreakingly beautiful.

Listening to this particular story on tape, I discovered another aspect of audio books. When reading the *Akallabêth* I had always read it at the same fairly fast pace, only slowing at the epilogue as a mental drawing of breath after the Drowning. In so doing, I had failed to fully appreciate the natural tempo of the story, where a drawn out historical phase is followed by a steadily narrowing focus on the gradually accelerating downfall of the Númenóreans to ultimate catastrophe. Only the medium of true, verbal storytelling slowed the tale enough to allow the intended rhythm and tempo to remain, so adding immeasurably to the impact on the listener as opposed to reader.



This phenomenon is true for the entire book as well. Listening to about an hour every day for two weeks makes the book last longer than normal and, more importantly, gives time for the atmosphere to sink in. Slowly a picture builds in your mind of the peace and glory of Aman, heightening the drama to follow in *Of the Darkening of Valinor*. Over the whole book there is a real sense of the centuries passing in Beleriand as we see the waning of the Elf kingdoms under the growing power of Morgoth. The slow tempo of a storytelling spread over several days only serves to emphasise this. Each pause allows a slow digestion of the story so far, setting the context for the following evening's episode. This is, of course, hardly surprising when you recall that, as revealed in the *Books of Lost Tales*, the stories in the *Silmarillion* started off as fireside tales in Mar Vanwa Tyaliéva. I will swiftly leave a discussion of such stylistic hallmarks to others, better versed in the convoluted *History of Middle-earth* series.

Anyone, though, who has read the *Silmarillion* will agree that it cries out to be read aloud, and it is to be expected that even an understated reading will produce a powerful effect, given the splendid writing of Tolkien. This is, however, a review of the audio book, not the book itself, and a few words must be devoted to technicalities.

Your reviewer used the complete Dolby tapes boxed version of five sets of two tapes each. Each set comes with a cassette jacket beautifully illustrated by Ted Nasmith. These depict scenes such as Túrin and his band of outlaws with Mîm the petty-dwarf, and (my personal favourite) Elendil's ships fleeing the Downfall of Númenor. The main box packaging also has its own picture showing Maglor hurling a Silmaril into the sea against a glowering red sunset – fit to grace any bookshelf. There are even some runes accompanying the Tolkien logo which I abjectly failed to translate.

The one minor nit-pick concerns the blurb which, while carefully referring to the Valar as guardians in one place, calls them gods on the main box cover. Understandable, but irritating nonetheless. It is also strange to note that the blurb for *Of Beren and Lúthien and the Ruin of Beleriand*, presents Beren as the sole hero attempting to recapture a Silmaril for 'Lúthien's father', and doesn't mention Lúthien's key role at all. Oh well, probably says something about the 'knight in shining armour' and 'damsel in distress' mentality that advertisers think will sell a story. Anyway, rest assured that the *real* story is on the tapes.

Further definition is provided, even given Martin Shaw's exemplary oration, by a musical lead in and fade out at the end of each of the tapes. Sadly the same piece of music is used throughout: "like to the sound of harps and viols and organs and trumpets and countless choirs singing" to misquote the great man, (well actually there aren't any choirs). The music is suitably uplifting and dramatic, while remaining rather subdued, and the repetitiveness does serve as a kind of theme tune. Given

the lack of any music in the *Ainulindalë* it could also be thought of as a pale imitation of the Music of the Ainur. Apart from this, the only other effect used is a roll of drums to fade out at particularly dramatic endings, such as when Melkor flees Valinor with Ungoliant, leaving darkness and confusion in his wake. Simply the best part of the whole reading.

However this *is* a reading, not a film or radio dramatisation. It is the range of Shaw's oratory skills that communicate the power of Tolkien's writings. Special effects would distract from all this. What little dramatisation the reading contains, independent of the considerable drama inherent in the words, is provided by Shaw. He does this in several ways, one of which is the use of a slightly different voice for each of the Valar. The fact that he uses his 'near-normal' voice for Mandos should give an idea of the overall tone of the storytelling.

As well as the subtle range of tempo, style and volume that Shaw uses, a great deal of attention has been paid to pronunciation. I was surprised to discover that despite many corrections over the years, I am still mispronouncing some of the names. Be warned that the guides left by Tolkien have been followed assiduously, and this can shock when you hear some of the names pronounced properly for the first time. In particular, *Ulmo* with a long *oo* for the *U* took some getting used to. I was very impressed with the consistency Shaw showed in the pronunciations, the one exception being *Illúvatar*, where a slight emphasis on the *vat*, rather than the *ú*, grew stronger throughout the first tape.

One extremely helpful thing that Shaw does, though, is to pause before a new word and slow the initial pronunciation slightly. This allows the listener to take the name in and recognise it in future. This was especially notable if you had the text in front of you as you listened to the tapes (not recommended!). I picked up several other discrepancies in this way: minor word changes to aid the flow of a few sentences, and simple slips of the tongue (very rare). Finally, the ultimate in 'reverse nit-picking' concerns the (correct) change in the quoted number of Númenórean kings mentioned on tape, as opposed to my inferior 1987 edition of the *Silmarillion*. I would love to find out when this change was made, does anyone know?<sup>1</sup>

Overall then, a well packaged and presented audio book, that was a joy to listen to, however many times I fell asleep during the *Valaquenta* and *Of Beleriand and its Realms*. (Hint: use the map while listening to this bit, it really helps!). I hope this review has inspired people to consider the different media through which a story can be experienced, and would thoroughly recommend this audio book to anyone.

Christopher Kreuzer

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: Christopher is referring to the discussion in *The line of Elros* (UT 2 III note 11). I surmise that this change was made in 1990, which is the copyright date given in HarperCollins paperback editions from the 1990s; certainly it is present in the seventh printing of the 1994 edition.

## Varsity Quiz



IT was a small but optimistic band of CTS members that set out from Cambridge station on the morning of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March. We were in high spirits, optimistic and eager to wreak revenge upon Oxford for our defeat the previous year. Tom Davidson chaired a team composed of Chris Kreuzer, Matthew Reid and Matthew Woodcraft, whose distilled wisdom would, we felt certain, guarantee our victory.

Upon arriving at our venue, we became somewhat less certain. Taruithorn had organised the event with some style. Christchurch Lecture Room 2, which we had (somewhat dismissively) assumed to be “somewhere underground built in the 60’s” turned out to be a well appointed room overlooked by the cathedral and lined with portraits of dour 18<sup>th</sup> century clergymen. Moreover, Taruithorn had not only a full team but also an enthusiastic audience.

After orange juice and an exchange of ritual war dances the fun began. Quizmaster Mark Waller had divided the quiz into six rounds of eight questions each. We started with a round about hobbits. Oxford scored a rather pitiful two points here by giving the correct answer to the question ‘How many hobbits were invited to the family dinner part at Bilbo’s birthday party?’ (It is, of course, 144 – the combined age of Bilbo and Frodo). The CTS, on the other hand, answered five questions correctly, earning seven points – though the team should be ashamed of forgetting Gandalf’s farewell to the Eagles; ‘May the wind under your wings never grow less’ is not nearly purple enough. In fact Gandalf said ‘May the wind under your wings bear you where the Sun sails and the Moon walks’.



The second round, alas, was not so successful for us. This was one of the two rounds with questions on *The Lord of the Rings*. The CTS succeeded in answering two questions, but failed to remember both the orientation of the second gate of Minas Tirith but also the year of the overthrow of Sauron. Taruithorn, on the other hand, not only gave the correct answers to both of these questions ('South-east' and 'the year 3441 of the third age', respectively) but also answered all their questions correctly. This resulted in Taruithorn earning ten points, while the CTS earned only four, putting Taruithorn into a 12-11 lead.



The third round consisted of questions about *The Silmarillion* and such others of the posthumous works that had been published when the questions were written. The CTS performed marginally better at this. The team answered three questions correctly and were unable only to name the only easy entrance to Gondolin, but then, neither were Taruithorn and the answer was a rather pathetic one anyway (being 'the Way of Escape'). Taruithorn correctly gave the birthname of Gil-galad (*Ereinion*) and the names of the seven sons of Fëanor, but were unable to give the meaning of the name of Ard-galen after it was destroyed by Morgoth. While both teams know that the plain was called Anfauglith, nobody realised that this meant 'the gasping dust' (rather than 'the gaping mouth' or variations on the same as considered by the CTS). At the end of the third round, then, the CTS took six points to Taruithorn's four, and jumped back into the lead with 17 points to 16.



The fourth round contained questions about the minor works of Tolkien. Both teams performed reasonably well, here, earning a respectable five points each. The CTS picked up a somewhat lucky point from Taruithorn in the first question. The latter, having decided that the master cook Rider was Smith's grandfather, mistakenly said that he was Smith's paternal grandfather, leaving the CTS with a difficult task in determining the truth. Neither team were able to say why Niggle was sent to the workhouse after his train journey – Taruithorn's sensible answer ('for neglecting the parish') and our more cynical one ('for helping his neighbour') both fell short of the rather whimsical real answer, which was that he *had no luggage*. Both teams having scored equal points, we went into the fifth round with the CTS leading 22 points to 11.

In the fifth round we had questions about Tolkien's languages and his life. Neither team scored particularly well. Neither could say what the *tyeller* were (they are

horizontal groups of tengwar letters representing different modes of articulation, as it happens) and nobody could translate the name *Deldwath* (it means 'Horror of Night Shadow'). The CTS picked up three points by answering one of their questions correctly ('What did the definition of a fairy story depend on?' being answered with 'A definition of Faërie') and taking one point from Taruithorn's question 'What does *Cúthalion* mean?' Nevertheless Taruithorn managed four points by answering two biographical questions correctly, and the scores going into the sixth round were a nail biting 25 points each.

The final round was a second bout of questions on *The Lord of the Rings*. The pattern here was dismally similar to the second round. Taruithorn answered all their questions correctly and also one of the questions that the CTS didn't answer. The CTS answered two questions but mistakenly said that Sting was what Sam used to strike Gollum at Torech Ungol – in fact it was the 'black staff of *lebethron* given to him by Faramir', as Taruithorn correctly answered. The team also failed to say what Gimli especially sought in the ruins of Isengard, as did Taruithorn – though their guess of 'a pipe' was closer than the CTS guess of Saruman. Taruithorn ended the round with nine points and the CTS with four, bringing the final scores to a resounding 34-29 victory for Taruithorn.

What can we learn from this? Well, first, we really ought to re-read *The Lord of the Rings*, since we did much better than Taruithorn in the other rounds (21 points as opposed to Taruithorn's 14). We might also try advertising for Russian members with prodigious memories. We can draw one consolation from the day, though, since we won the drinking contest.



Many thanks to Taruithorn for such a well-organised and enjoyable afternoon, and to Mark Waller for being a scrupulously fair quizmaster. Thanks also to the team. Better luck next time!

Ben Colburn

## Melian's reaction to Thingol's death

**S**ORROW and grief,<sup>1</sup> and then... Oh damn! I've lost my "allowed" powers over the substance of Arda. @\*\$& and \$&@%! panic. I'm gonna need to shack up with another elf to do the "Girdle" thing again.<sup>2</sup>

Otherwise the Valar will have my guts for garters for overstepping my bounds.<sup>3</sup> I still remember what they did to Iarwain Ben-adar. Poor guy, only a little cottage and a river-spirit's daughter.<sup>4</sup> Did he really deserve that?

*mental slap* Concentrate Melian. Gotta find someone.

Hmm, Galadriel was all right.<sup>5</sup> Damn that Celeborn for whisking her off to find wide kingdoms of their own to rule.<sup>6</sup> Ah well, she'll find out what I meant by "long defeat" soon enough.<sup>7</sup>

*enter Mablung*<sup>8</sup>

"Hail Fair Queen! I bring reports from the borders. Esgalduin, the enchanted river, speaks with a different voice.<sup>9</sup> It has ceased to flow! There is panic among the Sindar.<sup>10</sup> Rumour runs rife that the Girdle has failed. What say thee to this?"

"Hail Mablung! The death of Elwë Singollo foretells a greater doom that draws nigh.<sup>11</sup> The fate of Doriath has become bound with that of the Silmaril.<sup>12</sup> I can stay no longer in the fair lands of Middle-earth. The Girdle has indeed failed.<sup>13</sup> Take heed for the Silmaril, and send word to Beren and Lúthien in Ossiriand. Farewell!"<sup>14</sup>

*Mablung: Oh @\$&%!*

*exit Mablung*

*back to Melian's thoughts*

Useless Sindar! If they understood my needs they could have a @\$&\* "Girdle". Look how long it took me to seduce Elwë.<sup>15</sup> Haven't got time for all that rubbish again.

So what now? I can't stay and carry on with that elf queen thing. Don't particularly want to hang around here in that case. Bad things are going to happen soon.<sup>16</sup> I mean, Morgoth and Sauron have to control their orcs.<sup>17</sup> I had to do practically the same for the Sindar. Without a driving purpose they'll run hither and thither, witless and purposeless like headless chickens.<sup>18</sup>

Pity the Noldor were warned off me in Aman. Otherwise I could have gone for a "Girdle" of Gondolin. I wonder who told them all those tales about my misspent youth? Too late for the Noldor now, arrogant fools. Hah, if only they knew what was coming to them!<sup>19</sup>

Oops. That reminds me. I should have given Mablung a hint about going to Ossiriand personally.<sup>20</sup> Really getting a bit scatter-brained. Ah well, looks like I'll have to slink back to Aman. Pity about that bet I had with Iarwain. Hope I can remember the way to Lórien. . . .<sup>21</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Upon Doriath a heavy change had fallen. Melian sat long in silence beside Thingol the King, and her thought passed back into the starlit years and to their first meeting among the nightingales of Nan Elmoth in ages past . . .

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*<sup>1</sup>

- 2 For Melian was of the divine race of the Valar, and she was a Maia of great power and wisdom; but for the love of Elwë Singollo she took upon herself the form of the Elder Children of Illúvatar, and *in that union she became bound by the chain and trammels of the flesh of Arda*. In that form she bore to him Lúthien Tinúviel; and *in that form* she gained a power over the substance of Arda, and by the Girdle of Melian was Doriath defended through long ages from the evils without. But now Thingol lay dead, and his spirit had passed to the halls of Mandos; and with his death *a change came also upon Melian*.

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*, (my italics)

- 3 [The Valar sent the Istari] desiring to amend the errors of old, especially that they had attempted to guard and seclude the Eldar by their own might and glory fully revealed; whereas now their emissaries were forbidden to reveal themselves in forms of majesty . . .

UT 4 II, *The Istari*

Here we can see a later development of the attitude of the Valar to the Ainur's use of power in Middle-earth. Maybe this was informed by this episode concerning Melian in the First Age?

- 4 Tom's country ends here: he will not pass the borders. Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting!

LR 1 XIII, *Fog on the Barrow-downs*

and from Gandalf:

And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.

LR 2 II, *The Council of Elrond*

As a fellow spirit creature (or whatever Bombadil is) Gandalf is not going to reveal to the Council the real reasons for Tom's limited powers!

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: Christopher Tolkien's *Note on Chapter 22 Of the ruin of Doriath in the published Silmarillion* in the *History of Middle-earth*, WJ 3 V, gives an interesting view of this text.



- 5 Galadriel, most beautiful of all the house of Finwë ...  
     *QS 5, Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalie*
- 6 ... but Galadriel, the only woman of the Noldor to stand that day tall and valiant among the contending princes, was eager to be gone. No oaths she swore, but the words of Fëanor concerning Middle-earth had kindled in her heart, for she yearned to see the wide unguarded lands and to rule there a realm at her own will  
     *QS 9, Of the Flight of the Noldor*
- 7 ... for ere the fall of Nargothrond or Gondolin I passed over the mountains, and together through the ages of the world we have fought the long defeat.  
     *LR 2 VII, The Mirror of Galadriel*
- 8 Thereafter Melian spoke to none save to Mablung only ...  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 9 ... and Esgalduin the enchanted river spoke with a different voice ...  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 10 ... the captains of the Grey-elves [Sindar] were cast into doubt and despair ...  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 11 ... she knew that her parting from Thingol was the forerunner of a greater parting, and that the doom of Doriath was drawing in.  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 12 Thus he wrought the doom of Doriath, and was ensnared within the curse of Mandos. [and] ... now is Doriath drawn within the fate of a mightier realm.  
     *QS 19, Of Beren and Lúthien*
- 13 Thus it came to pass that her power was withdrawn in that time from the forests of Neldoreth and Region ...  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 14 Thereafter Melian spoke to none save to Mablung only, bidding him to take heed to the Silmaril, and to send word speedily to Beren and Lúthien in Ossiriand  
     *QS 22, Of the Ruin of Doriath*
- 15 She spoke no word; but being filled with love Elwë came to her and took her hand, and straightway a spell was laid on him, so that they stood thus while long years were measured by the wheeling stars above them; and the trees of Nan Elmoth grew tall and dark before they spoke any word.  
     *QS 4, Of Thingol and Melian*

16 ... the halls of Thingol were ransacked and plundered ... [and] Celegorm stirred up his brothers to prepare an assault upon Doriath. [and] Thus Doriath was destroyed, and never rose again.

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*

17 ... so the creatures of Sauron ... ran hither and thither mindless ...

LR 6 IV, *The Field of Cormallen*

18 ... the captains of the Grey-elves [Sindar] were cast into doubt and despair, and went hither and thither purposeless.

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*

19 But the red light mounted the hills in the north and not in the east; and there was no stay in the advance of the foe until they were beneath the very walls of Gondolin, and the city was beleaguered without hope.

QS 23, *Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin*

20 For there was battle in the Thousand Caves ... There fell Mablung of the Heavy Hand before the doors of the treasury ...

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*

21 ... she vanished out of Middle-earth, and passed to the land of the Valar beyond the western sea, to muse upon her sorrows in the gardens of Lórien ...

QS 22, *Of the Ruin of Doriath*

Christopher Kreuzer

# The Problem of Gwaihir and the Council of Elrond

*One [...] difficulty was [Tolkien's] perfectionism. Not content with writing a large and complex book, he felt he must ensure that every single detail fitted satisfactorily into the total pattern.*

Humphrey Carpenter [1]

*It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed.*

Gandalf the Grey

## The Council of Elrond

UNLIKE those who know only the film version, no reader of Tolkien's book, *The Lord of the Rings*, could be unaware of the pivotal role of the Council of Elrond to the evolution of the plot. At the Council, which occurs early on in the tale, Elrond is joined by emissaries of the Elves, Dwarves, Men, and Hobbits, to decide what to do with the One Ring.

"That is the purpose for which you are called hither," he tells them. "Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find council for the peril of the world."

Strong meat indeed. There is thus no denying the decisive import of the debate that now ensues in determining the further course of events in the story. Yet the problem posed by the Ring would seem to offer few options:

"Gandalf has revealed to us that we cannot destroy it by any craft that we here possess," says Elrond. "And they who dwell beyond the Sea would not receive it: for good or ill it belongs to Middle-earth: it is for us who still dwell here to deal with it."

A suggestion by Erebor that Iarwain Ben-adar, alias Tom Bombadil, might be of help, since "It seems that he has a power even over the Ring," is rejected by Gandalf because, "... if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind. He would be a most unsafe guardian."

"Then," says Glorfindel, "let us cast it into the deeps ... in the Sea it would be safe."

"Not safe for ever," rejoins Gandalf. "There are many things in the deep waters; and seas and lands may change. And it is not our part here to take thought only for a season, or for a few lives of Men, or for a passing age of the world. We should seek a final end to this menace, even if we do not hope to make one."

In the end, concludes Elrond, his words echoing those of Gandalf to Frodo made long ago in the Shire, there is but one way to put the Ring beyond the grasp of Sauron for ever. The Ring must be unmade by returning it to the Fire in which

it was forged, in the Cracks of Doom beneath Orodruin, or Mount Doom, in the heart of Mordor, the land of the Enemy.

There remains only a final question for the Council to decide, and that is how this perilous mission is to be achieved. Who is to be entrusted with the desperate enterprise of bearing the Ring to Mordor and casting it into the Cracks of Doom? We come thus to the final scene of the Council and the fateful utterance of Frodo that will decide the shape of all that is to come: "At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice."

"Gwaihir," he said. "Gwaihir the Eagle must carry the Ring to the Fire."

Some other will *is* using his small voice: the above, I contend, is what Frodo *ought* to have said. Or if not Frodo, then some other member of the assembly. Instead of which, what Frodo actually says is: "I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way," and thus is launched the great adventure that culminates in Frodo and Sam's eventual arrival at Mount Doom, the successful destruction of the Ring, and the downfall of Sauron. And few of us, I guess, would have it otherwise.

Nevertheless, below I hope to show that, for all his meticulous attention to the internal consistency of his created world, Tolkien is guilty of a whopping oversight in regard to Gwaihir that can only be viewed as an irretrievable flaw in the internal logic of his narrative. Irretrievable because no amount of logic-chopping is able to explain away a disparity that undermines almost everything that happens in the wake of the Council, which is to say, the very Quest itself.

My aim is not to denigrate Tolkien, whose wonderful book has brought me endless hours of delight, but merely to draw attention to a significant discrepancy in *The Lord of the Rings*. If anyone can discover some plausible alternative to the conclusion here reached that Tolkien has blundered, I shall be curious to learn the details.<sup>1</sup>

### Gwaihir the Windlord

If the words I have put into Frodo's mouth above strike the reader as ridiculous or far-fetched, consider the evidence of the narrative.

We first meet Gwaihir, Lord of the Eagles, in *The Hobbit*. Gandalf, it will be remembered, "had once rendered a service to the eagles and healed their lord from an arrow-wound." Thus it comes about that Gandalf, Bilbo and the dwarves, perched perilously amid treetops set afire by their goblin pursuers, are carried to safety when Gwaihir and his companions swoop unexpectedly to their rescue.

Still later Gwaihir puts in a second appearance at the Battle of Five Armies, when under his leadership the eagles come speeding down the wind,

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: *Anor* is of course happy to publish readers' letters.

"line after line, in such a host as must have gathered from all the eyries of the North. . . . They it was who dislodged the goblins from the mountain-slopes, casting them over precipices, or driving them down shrieking and bewildered among their foes."

"Eagles are not kindly birds," the narrator informs us, but they are "proud and strong and noble hearted." Besides which, we might add, events show them to be loyal allies and fierce fighters, unswerving in their hatred of orcs and wolves, and willing to bear heavy burdens or fly long distances in the service of friends. The latter is clearly shown by the journey of the eagle host from their home in "the eyries of the North[ern Misty Mountains]" to the scene of the battle under the Lonely Mountain on the other side of Mirkwood, a distance that cannot be less than six hundred miles, according to the map of Middle-earth included in the book. Small wonder then that Dáin, the successor of Thorin Oakenshield, King of the Dwarves, "crowned their chief with gold, and swore friendship with them forever."

Eagles, in short, are no cheap chickens, and Gwaihir's credentials as an agent able to smuggle a small object over a long distance through an opponent's defences without attracting notice are impressive, to say the least. Why then, we may wonder, did Elrond not invite Gwaihir to the Council? True, the story reveals no explicit indication that Elrond is acquainted with the Eagle, but the text does make clear that Gwaihir enjoys the friendship of at least two close intimates of the Lord of Rivendell.

"Naked I was sent back - for a brief time, until my task is done," reminisces Gandalf, now reunited with Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas in Fangorn forest, following his presumed demise in the chasm under the bridge of Khazad-dûm. "And naked I lay upon the mountain-top," he goes on,

... And so at the last Gwaihir the Windlord found me again, and he took me up and bore me away. 'Ever am I fated to be your burden, friend at need', I said.

'A burden you have been,' he answered, 'but not so now. Light as a swan's feather in my claw you are. The Sun shines through you. Indeed I do not think you need me any more: were I to let you fall, you would float upon the wind.'

'Do not let me fall!' I gasped, for I felt life in me again. 'Bear me to Lothlórien!'

'That indeed is the command of the Lady Galadriel who sent me to look for you,' he answered.'

Gwaihir, we are thus reminded, is a trusted confidant of both Galadriel and Gandalf, each of whom, like Elrond himself, is a bearer of one of the three Elven Rings of Power: Narya, Narya, and Vilya. The idea that Elrond was not on terms of equally close friendship with the King of the Eagles is thus difficult to believe, and the question of why Gwaihir was not present in Rivendell is made only keener. Add to this that Glóin the Dwarf could hardly have forgotten the friendship sworn between the Eagles and his sire King Dáin. Did he not think to ask Elrond about Gwaihir's omission from the assembled company? And had Legolas never heard of the part

played by the Eagles in the Battle of Five Armies from his father Thranduil, King of the Elves of Northern Mirkwood, himself leader of one of those armies? Might not Legolas look about himself thoughtfully in anticipation of meeting Gwaihir's majestic gaze, and puzzling at its absence? Why is it that nobody at the Council thinks to enquire about Gwaihir's whereabouts?

Very well, you may say, Gwaihir the Eagle was known to Gandalf and to Elrond, and perhaps a few other members of the Council, but so what? Is there any good reason why Frodo (who, as far as we know, has never so much as clapped eyes on an eagle), or anyone else, should start even thinking about Gwaihir at a critical juncture during the Council of Elrond?

There is every reason. In fact, the more one considers the circumstances the more difficult it becomes to see how anyone present could have possibly *avoided* speculating about Gwaihir.

### Gwaihir to the Rescue Again

As already observed, the main purpose of the Council of Elrond is to decide what to do with the Ring. By way of introduction to the predicament, speaker after speaker is heard, until Elrond calls lastly upon Gandalf, "... for it is the place of honour, and in all this matter he has been the chief." Gandalf then recounts his slow unravelling of the history of the Ring, his meeting with Gollum, his proof of the true nature of Frodo's ring by placing it in the fire and reading the fiery letters, and finally, his encounter with Saruman. As he says, "It is the last chapter in the Tale of the Ring, so far as it has yet gone."

Quite so. And it will therefore be the freshest thing in the minds of his listeners when he has finished speaking and they begin their discussion about how to dispose of the Ring. A few points from this final part of Gandalf's account will thus bear re-examination.

Gandalf explains how he had chanced upon Radagast the Brown, a fellow wizard, on the borders of The Shire. Radagast has been sent by Saruman to seek out Gandalf and to offer his help. This is welcome news to Gandalf, who immediately sets off for Orthanc, after telling Radagast, "We shall need your help, and the help of all things that will give it. Send out messages to all the beasts and birds that are your friends. Tell them to bring news of anything that bears on this matter to Saruman and Gandalf. Let messages be sent to Orthanc."

So it is that, following Gandalf's interview with Saruman-now-turned-traitor, at the conclusion of which he finds himself held captive upon the roof, eventually

"... there came a night of moon, and Gwaihir the Windlord, swiftest of the Great Eagles, came unlooked-for to Orthanc; and he found me standing on the pinnacle. Then I spoke to him and he bore me away."

Good old Gwaihir has turned up in the nick of time once again. And how came Gwaihir to Orthanc? Gandalf explains: "Radagast knew no reason why he should not do as I asked: and he rode away towards Mirkwood where he had many friends of old. And the Eagles of the Mountains went far and wide, and they saw many things: the gathering of wolves and the mustering of Orcs; and the Nine Riders going hither and thither in the lands; and they heard news of the escape of Gollum. And they sent a messenger to bring me these tidings."

### **Gwaihir the Ringbearer**

For anyone at the Council not yet familiar with the ways of Eagles, this report of their exploits as uniquely mobile, far-sighted intelligence-gatherers, actively at work on the side of the West in the struggle against Sauron must have gladdened their hearts as it widened their eyes. Clearly Radagast places complete confidence in the Eagles, since he has brought them abreast of developments concerning the Ring, with the result that besides wolves and Orcs, they are now keeping an eye on the Nine Riders, as well as an eye open for Gollum. Nor is the commitment of the Eagles to be underestimated. At Radagast's request Gwaihir sets out on a flight to Orthanc, a destination some twelve hundred miles south of his home territory in the North, and this merely in order to bear tidings of a general kind to Gandalf. No sooner arrived, he is off again bearing Gandalf to Rohan. Gwaihir's qualities may not receive special emphasis in the narrative, but the little we do hear of him can leave no possible doubt of his remarkable power and devotion as an ally.

Is it then credible that with this story still ringing in their ears, and with the problem before them of how the Ring is to be conveyed to the inaccessible Cracks of Doom deep within enemy territory, that nobody at the Council even paused to consider Gwaihir for the task? Based on the evidence Gandalf has presented but moments previously Gwaihir would seem to be better equipped for this errand than any creature in Middle-earth. The Ring could be carried without difficulty in beak or claw, or as a pendant around his neck, without requiring him to put it on. His former exploits show that a swift flight to Mordor is easily within his capacities. Keeping at high altitude he can count on remaining virtually invisible from enemies. The exact location of Sammath Naur, or the Fire Chamber, on the mountain is perhaps unclear at the time of the Council, but as a high flyer Gwaihir could use his piercing sight to perform a leisurely reconnaissance of the slopes of Mount Doom with little risk of danger. How he might have fared at the critical moment when the Ring was to be dropped into the Cracks we cannot know of course, but the same doubt attached equally to Frodo.

But would Gwaihir have been *willing* to take the Ring? For an answer, consider the behaviour of the Eagles in the face of acute personal danger as evinced near the end of the story, in their flight through smoke, fumes, and a rain of hot ash to the rescue of Frodo and Sam stranded amid rivers of fire belched out by the erupting cauldron of Mount Doom. The Quest, as they knew, had already been achieved,

so that their deed of mercy, carried out at the urgent request of Gandalf, is an act of unalloyed loyalty to him, unrelated to the fate of the Ring. Need we then think that Gwaihir would have hesitated to accept the Burden of the Ring had Gandalf suggested such a contingency, however obliquely?

### The Nazgûl Threat

Yet what of the Ringwraiths? Surely the winged Nazgûl would pose a mortal danger to Gwaihir in attempting a flight over Mordor? So it might seem, and yet scrutiny of the narrative specifically discounts this contingency in two distinct ways.

In the first place, recall that the greatest weapon of the Nazgûl is fear. "Their power is in terror," as Aragorn tells the hobbits in Bree, and examples of this capacity to induce terror are exemplified repeatedly thereafter: in the dell on Weathertop, in the pursuit of Frodo to the Ford, in the episode of 'The Winged Messenger' shot by Legolas above Sarn Gebir, and so on. Yet remarkably, the fact that the Eagles were *not* to be intimidated even by Ring-wraiths is plainly evidenced during the battle between the Captains of the West and the hosts of Mordor before the Black Gate. As on a former occasion, we hear: "The Eagles are coming! The Eagles are coming!" And,

"There came Gwaihir the Windlord, and Landroval his brother, greatest of all the Eagles of the North... Behind them in long swift lines came all their vassals from the northern mountains, speeding on a gathering wind. *Straight down upon the Nazgûl they bore*, stooping suddenly out of the high airs, and the rush of their wide wings as they passed was like a gale." [my emphasis].

Thus, not only are the Eagles unafraid of the Nazgûl, but any remaining doubts there may have been about the readiness of Gwaihir to make the long journey to Mordor and to join the attack against Sauron in the service of the Quest are here decisively resolved.

Secondly, remember that at the time of the Council, the Ringwraiths had only recently been unhorsed at the Ford of Bruinen: "There is nothing more to fear from them at present," Gandalf tells Frodo as he awakes to recovery in Rivendell. Still later, following the return of the scouts dispatched by Elrond almost two months afterwards, we hear him say:

"Eight out of the Nine are accounted for at least. It is rash to be too sure, yet I think we may hope now that the Ringwraiths were scattered, and have been obliged to return as best they could to their Master in Mordor, empty and shapeless. If that is so, it will be some time before they can begin the hunt again."

Bear in mind that Gandalf is talking here about Ringwraiths in the shape of *Black Riders*; the time of the Nazgûl on flying steeds is not yet even anticipated in the story. Thus, had Gwaihir been dispatched with the Ring at the time of the Council, or indeed at any point in the two month interval following, his chances of running into a Nazgûl on the way, winged or otherwise, were remote in the extreme.



The objection that airborne wraiths would have been a threat to Gwaihir is thus demolished on two separate counts, while the fact that Gandalf was aware of this Nazgûl-free window of opportunity serves only to deepen the puzzle of why Gwaihir is passed over in silence by the wizard during the Council.

### An Eyrice Silence

Of course, ingenious minds may produce plausible theories as to why Gwaihir was not invited to the Council. He was discounted because he was a mere creature, rather than a delegate of one of the 'peoples' of Middle-earth, for instance. Some, on the other hand, may argue that Gwaihir's suitability as Ringbearer would have been rejected by the Wise, in the same way as Bombadil's, not because he would treat the Ring lightly, but because his mind would become corrupted by its evil influence, with the risk he would try to set himself up as a new Dark Power. No doubt alternative conjectures can, and will, be advanced.

But Gwaihir's absence or Gwaihir's suitability are really beside the point, however compelling the arguments advanced. The crux of the matter is that for all his extravagant eligibility, the contingency of Gwaihir as Ringbearer is a notion completely *ignored* by the Council, is a proposal *not even raised* by any of those present. And this, I believe, is a gap in the story that, once glimpsed, cries aloud for explanation, and yet ineluctably defies every attempt to explain. An eyrie silence pervades the Council of Elrond on the topic of Gwaihir that nothing in the narrative is able to render intelligible.

Did it not, for example, once cross Gandalf's mind that Gwaihir provided a dazzlingly obvious solution to The Problem over which the entire Council was now bowed in thought? The notion is ridiculous. But Gandalf, it may be conjectured, might have had a private reason for not wishing to enlist Gwaihir. Very well, but then why keep it secret? Given that the wizard might reasonably expect Glóin, or Legolas, or somebody else in the chamber to suddenly blurt out, "Couldn't Gwaihir the Eagle take the Ring?", whereupon his objection would need to be voiced, the inexplicability of Gandalf's silence becomes only compounded. Nor is his seeming obtuseness confined solely to the duration of the Council meeting:

"Will you not first give us news of the hobbits," asks Aragorn of Gandalf, again at their meeting in Fangorn forest. "Did you find them, and are they safe?"

"No, I did not find them," said Gandalf. "There was a darkness over the valleys of the Emyrn Muil, and I did not know of their captivity, until the eagle told me."

"The eagle!" said Legolas. I have seen an eagle high and far off: the last time was three days ago, above the Emyrn Muil,"

"Yes," said Gandalf, "that was Gwaihir the Windlord, who rescued me from Orthanc. I sent him before me to watch the River and gather tidings...."

Here again then we find Gandalf, now returned from his former life (and presumably a wiser wizard for the experience), continuing to exploit Gwaihir's singular

avian skills, without it once dawning on him that Frodo and Sam and everyone else might have been spared their ongoing ordeal if only the same bird had been enlisted as a carrier pigeon at the very outset. Similar charges of impercipience apply equally to Elrond and Galadriel of course, as well as to others on the side of the West, any one of whom *might* have hit on the idea of recruiting Gwaihir, albeit belatedly, at any time after the Council. But no, there is something about Gwaihir that induces amnesia in all.

### The Verdict of the Wise

Gwaihir's creator not excepted. For the truth can be put off no longer. Unpalatable as it may seem to some, there is simply no escape from the conclusion that Tolkien has sailed on, quite oblivious to the problem. Gwaihir has been overlooked.

With the advantage of hindsight we can see also that Tolkien's error is in fact a common-place inadvertency, one met with more frequently in works of fiction. Following the method of many an author before him, the writer has employed the hoary device of a Surprise Rescuer. The Surprise Rescuer is an agency that is introduced in the nick of time to effect a sudden deliverance of the Hero, or Heroic Cause, from some supposedly ineluctable Fate. In a story depicting Cowboys beset by Red Indians, for example, such an agency might take the guise of The Cavalry. In both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, it can be found in the shape of an Eagle. A danger in the use of a Surprise Rescuer, however, is its potential for being *invoked by the reader* while the author's back is turned, so to speak. And the writer's only protection against this danger is for the Surprise Rescuer to be assiduously *rendered inert* after each use, when its intervention is no longer required or desired.

It is this that Tolkien has neglected, of course. For, in between his deeds of rescue, Gwaihir has been allowed to retain his potential for action, when the narrative should have included devices for keeping him occupied, which is to say, pretexts that would rule out his further participation. A trivial lapse, but one with far-reaching implications, as we have seen.

According to his son Christopher [2], Tolkien

“... once said that in writing he had a sense of recording what was already there, somewhere, not inventing it, and where there were discrepancies between things he had written, he sought to study more deeply what he had already written in order to reconcile them.”

Perhaps. But I fear it will take something more than a deeper study to reconcile the discrepancies in this case, for all Tolkien's intuition.

© Lee Sallows

### References

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, *A Biography* (George Allen & Unwin, 1977).

[2] Quoted by William Cator in *A Tolkien Treasury* (Running Press, 1978).

## Term card, Michaelmas 2002

### Squash

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 8:30pm  
Borradaile Room, Selwyn College

### Eagle debate

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 8:30pm  
Room J1, Cripps Building, Selwyn College

### 'What if' discussion – *Sauron in the North*

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 8:30pm  
Room T4, King's College

### Film showing – *Ralph Bakshi's Lord of the Rings*

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
6 Ainsworth Court

### Discussion – *Tolkien in film and media*

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November, 8:30pm  
Room T4, King's College

### Games evening

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November, 8:30pm  
Munby Room, Kings College

### Discussion – *Did the wizards do more harm than good?*

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November, 8:30pm  
Room T4, Kings College

### Foreyule Feast

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November  
Venue: *Foundation*

### Discussion

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 8:30pm  
Room T4, King's College

### Reading evening

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 8:30pm  
Room T4, King's College

# The Cambridge Tolkien Society and Anor

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