Anor Issue 43, Lent 2014

Editor's Note

Mae govannen, mellyn nín! Welcome, my friends, to Issue 43 of the Cambridge Tolkien Society's *Anor*! Quite a hefty issue, I must add – it seems my hopes in the Editor's Note of Issue 42 of being inundated with submissions came true, and how! Many thanks to all the contributors and to Heather Douglas again for the cover!

James Baillie's third instalment of *Dwarven Economy and Society* can be found within where he explores the questions of food and family structure. James also investigates the nature of the subject that is 'Tolkien Studies' and makes some preliminary steps in providing a framework for discussion of this diverse field. We also have two songs for you to enjoy and maybe (*whispers*) sing along to!

Jack Fleming's contribution looks at whether Fangorn can be reasonably defined as a settlement: what is a settlement? Is such a definition applicable to Ents? And, if so, how? This discussion was inspired by an Eagle Debate during our regular meetings, and I hope others may follow Jack's lead in being similarly inspired!

Christy Linder and Jing Ran have immortalised the CTS' victory over Taruithorn in the 2014 Varsity Quiz (now the third year running) in their dramatic account of *Defending Minas Tirith*. If anyone else would like to contribute a report of a society meeting/event or a review of a related film/book, I would very much encourage it!

Speaking of the Varsity Quiz, Samuel Cook is already preparing us for next year with a series of teaser questions (and answers!) for the brave of heart. He also provides an approach to evaluating film adaptations of Tolkien's works, an exploration of how the *palantíri* may have functioned, and a kill count for everyone's favourite hero, Túrin – just in case you lost count amidst the carnage of the First Age!

And finally, your humble Daeron has contributed a discussion of the nature of good and evil in *The Lord of the Rings*: how are they characterised? Where does the struggle between good and evil really lie? And does the nature of good and evil in Tolkien's sub-creation have any relevance in our own world?

Whew! All that is left to say now is happy reading, happy thinking, and I look forward to the many submissions that I anticipate will be coming my way!

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Dwarven Economy and Society: Food and Family in the Later Holds Period

James Baillie

This article [*editor's note*: the third in the series] was originally intended to focus on the hold-state as it existed at the close of the Third Age – a semi-independent city state with characteristic social and economic features. As I began this task, however, it became clear that two items were simply becoming extremely dominant and that these issues required dealing with first. They are in fact two of the questions that have plagued almost all of the discussions of Dwarves I've had; namely, family and food. What did the Dwarves eat, how were their families structured, why were they so vulnerable to population decline? What I present below is most specifically relevant to, and uses most evidence from/of, the Later Holds Period – essentially the end of the Third Age – but more generally some of the conclusions about families and agriculture I have made can be considered fairly consistent. Others may be less so; the socio-economic relations between Dwarves and Men need a good deal more thought, as do the origins of Dwarf agriculture in the First Age and relative differences in productivity or social status implied there. Nevertheless this essay is intended to form the groundwork for what we can and cannot assume about Dwarf families and advances several points that I hope will be a good basis for further discussions of Dwarf social groupings, status symbolism, agriculture, and gender relations.

The Family and the Hold

Firstly, we must turn to the relationship between a family unit and wider society; where did the family fit in to Dwarf political life? Ascertaining certainties about the structure of a hold politically is difficult due to the paucity of evidence, most of which comes from the very largest holds such as Erebor or Moria. What can be said, I believe, is that by the later Third Age the traditional role of *Uzbad*, probably originally a military "commander" role, had approximately transformed into the role of a hold-lord at least with regards to negotiation and diplomacy.[1] The line of Kings Under the Mountain held the titular kingship and retained powers when the hold went to war as a group, but by and large there was no direct control and family or personal allegiances were to local leaders – certainly there is no suggestion, for example, that Dáin was expecting to receive any share of Balin's recolonisation of Moria, and no investigation of the disappearance of the colonists was undertaken for a full twenty-five years.[2] Glóin in his speech to the Council mentions "chieftains" in the plural, which is interesting to note – given that Glóin seems to be specifically speaking on behalf of Erebor, this is one of our few indications of what structures might have existed between the hold-lord at the top and the ordinary Dwarf family or craftsperson as the base societal unit. The idea of some sort of clan chieftains being the mid-point in the chain makes a great deal of

[1] Baillie, "Dwarven Economy and Society: The Structures of Power", *Anor* 41, p.6
[2] The Lord of the Rings, p258

sense; the idea of fatherhood was perhaps the most deeply rooted unifying feature in Dwarf society.

Chieftains are also mentioned in a different context in "*Concerning the Dwarves*", specifically that of fatherhood. The statement that "save their kings and chieftains, few Dwarves ever wed"[3] must be taken with at least a pinch of salt unless we are to assume that the Dwarf population split neatly into two thirds apathetic craftspeople and one third sex maniacs. What it may of course indicate is that the bar to be a "chieftain" was in fact rather low, and that these were perhaps the patriarchs of extended family units or small clans. This would fit with Glóin's statement, if to get a manageable size of council for large consultations Dáin referred to his chieftains rather than the population en masse. If such a hypothetical role was along the lines of the oldest male member of a particular line, such a clan leader could easily have between twenty and forty dwarves in an immediate family grouping.

Demographics and Family Size

Dwarf populations, far more so than those of any other sentient Middle-earth species, were highly prone to shrinkage in unfavourable conditions. The population structure partly dictated this; the gender imbalance in the population meant that approximately a third of the population was female[4] – and of these, not all married,[5] an indication of the relatively high levels of freedom enjoyed by unmarried female Dwarves compared to human women. Given that under a third of Dwarf males married[6] (which given Dwarf males were 2/3 of the population means about 40% of Dwarves married in total) we arrive at a figure of around five children per marriage to keep the population stable. This is a total fertility rate that is almost surprisingly high; it is roughly equivalent to those currently found in relatively low-development nations such as Tanzania or Benin,[7] and this is for a *stagnant* population; for any sort of population boom the fertility rate would be more similar to that in Mali.[8] The converse point is that the fertile life of a Dwarf mother can probably reasonably be assumed to somewhat scale with lifespan whereas child rearing was unlikely to be so time consumptive, giving far more time in which to have said children. Unfortunately, even allowing for the lack of women on Dwarf family trees, the trees we have show no family reaching the requisite number of children – though these are likely to be atypical given the exceptional lives of the royal Longbeard line and should not be considered representative.

[3] The War of the Jewels, p.205
[4] LOTR, Appendix A, p.1116
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] CIA World factbook figures, 2013, accessed at:
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html
[8] Ibid.

Ultimately there is a problem of source material regarding base-level Dwarf demographics; if Dwarves rarely had four children,[9] and rarely married, and married late, the Dwarf population would simply decline irreversibly. What we must therefore assume is that some of these statements are fundamental characteristics – such as the gender balance – and that others were more specific to times and places when Dwarf populations were declining. I am inclined, for the Later Holds Period at least, to maintain the idea that Dwarves culturally had low rates of marriage, and assume that the low birth rates discussed in The Peoples of Middle-earth (and with them population decline) were a *result* of late marriages and were typical only of the Migrations Period (from the end of the brief reign of Náin I onwards). In other times and places I am inclined to suggest that birth rates were higher and marriages earlier – with the relevant circumstances discussed below.

Sustenance and Agriculture

As has been related in my previous work, the clearest indication we have of why population weakness should be the case revolves around the Dwarf hinterland; periods of population expansion tended to be correlated strongly with a significant non-Dwarf hinterland population.[10] A simplistic explanation of this would be a population-resources model; as the Dwarves were able to specialise away from food production there was simply more food available from human or hobbit farming methods. This model has significant flaws, however. We know relatively little about Dwarf farming; the principal known feature is that Dwarves found it difficult if not impossible to domesticate animals,[11] so we must assume that some sort of arable crops were the main basis of the diet in areas where Dwarf farming occurred on a significant scale. The Inca perhaps are the example that makes the most sense for a Dwarf society to follow: using constructed canals and, most importantly, terracing slopes, south-facing slopes on the north side of the Dimrill Dale or in the Iron Hills could produce sufficient agricultural surplus to keep a hold fed with grain.[12] Small Dwarf populations, furthermore, make it extremely unlikely that starvation would be an issue except in very long sieges indeed; even then it would not be hard to create situations in many holds whereby some upper slope terraces could only be accessed via the hold centre itself, creating easily defensible areas of backup farmland.[13] Starvation seems less than likely – quite the reverse, given the only well documented disease Dwarves suffered from was a form of excessive corpulence.[14]

The Dwarf diet in times when little trade was available would have been therefore based on a reasonable and plentiful supply of mountain-hardy cereal crops, made into

[9] The Peoples of Middle-earth, p.285
[10] Baillie, "Dwarven Economy and Society: Technology and Demography", *Anor* 42, pp. 5-15
[11] Note 29 on "Of Dwarves and Men", The Peoples of Middle Earth (Histories Book 12), p.323
[12] Bauer/Covey, "Processes of state formation in the Inca Heartland", *American Anthropologist 104*, No 3, pp. 851-852
[13] LOTR, Appendix A, p.1116
[14] The Peoples of Middle-earth, p.285

coarse breads like *cram*. Hunting and foraging would have supplemented this diet with meat, roots, and fruit – dairy products would have been a relative luxury and only available through trade. If, then, Dwarf agriculture was sufficient to feed the populations of the average hold, what does this indicate was keeping birth-rates down? The answer, I believe, lies not in food supply *per se*, but in marriage structure and culture. If we take my earlier assessment that low replacement rates were primarily the result of fewer births per marriage – and probably later marriage ages – we therefore need to question what the causes of this were.

At some points, high male mortality in warfare must have been a major restriction on the population, but it is unlikely that the long term effects of this would have been the largest cause of population depression; after all, two thirds of male Dwarves were at any one time unmarried, meaning that large male mortality could be suffered without any chance of eligible Dwarf women being without options. The effect may nevertheless have been pronounced for a generation as Dwarf women apparently would not remarry and possibly also if younger Dwarf women refused to consider partners other than a deceased prospective husband.[15] More probably, though, the balance of wealth and the relative gender balance were more prominent issues; to put it simply, Dwarves engaged in agriculture would have accumulated wealth comparatively slowly and so would have probably married later and had fewer children. There appears to have been little counter-pressure to marry earlier as a result of declining populations. As Dwarf status and wealth were probably based on hoarding, and as living standards remained high due to low rates of disease and minimal care being needed for the elderly, even when the population was falling fairly rapidly there were few incentives to increase birth rates and no central structures that would have been able to create such incentives.[16] Farming passes without comment in almost all Dwarf conversations reported – Thorin appears to note it as a matter of some pride that the folk of Erebor had been able to dispense with it entirely.[17] It seems not unreasonable to conclude that it was not viewed highly as an occupation by Dwarves, and given the relatively high agency of Dwarf women to choose partners it is likely that more Dwarves being farmers meant smaller hoards, lower social status, and less likelihood that marriage would be an attractive option for a Dwarf woman. Thus fewer, later marriages and smaller families conspired to cause slow, grinding population decline. Conversely, when Dwarves were able to "outsource" food production to hobbits or men, the percentage of crafts-dwarves increased, wealth was accumulated more quickly both as a result of more profitable and better respected crafts being more common and as a result of Men and Hobbits expanding and speeding up Dwarf trade networks. Family sizes then increased to in the region of six children per marriage, creating steady population expansion.

[15] LOTR, Appendix A, p.1116
[16] Ibid. – note that Dwarf women apparently have full agency in choosing partners (or at least cannot be forced to marry against their will).
[17] The Hobbit, p.28

The Extended Family

As noted previously just 40% of adult Dwarves would be likely to be in married, child-bearing relationships. The remaining 60% of the population should also be given some consideration. These Dwarves would have still been part of a chieftain's family-grouping, but probably were less likely to rise to positions of power within it given Tolkien's statement about chieftains having a high tendency to marry. The reasons for remaining single were in many cases lack of available or acceptable partners, as discussed above; these Dwarves may have failed to impress a suitable partner and, if we accept the indications of the importance of wealth hoarding, we may suggest that these were on average the less wealthy males of the hold. Dwarf women, conversely, may simply have ended up being *too* picky about partners. Thus the unmarried section of Dwarf society would have been a large proportion of the hold, most of them working; in more agrarian societies the expectation from my thoughts above would be that farmers and hunters made up a disproportionate percentage of this group – which would also mean that an extended family could rely on having enough labour to feed the family.

Tolkien provides a second explanation, however, which fits both genders, namely that Dwarves got too engrossed in their crafts to wish to marry.[18] These Dwarves, not seeking to take part in the standard rituals of marriage, perhaps form almost a third gender role; their role is defined societally not by their attempts to gain marriage but much more by their creations and works as an end unto themselves. How many Dwarves were in this position rather than simply unable to find a partner is impossible to say; but they may well have been societally in the opposite position to the lower classes described above, given the Dwarf reverence for creation and the making of physical items.

The unmarried parts of extended families made up 60% of Dwarf society; their relations with the rest of the family grouping must have been of considerable importance. It seems likely that the Dwarf household was fairly nuclear by nature, given their fierce regard for and protection of their offspring, but it is certainly possible that the family grouping may have employed or shared in the labour of particularly unmarried Dwarf farmers. For those who were never likely to have sufficient wealth, status or desire to marry, and who were not craft-obsessed, family groups may even have become proportionally more important; marginalised in society generally, the protection and comfort afforded by making use of one's family ties could have been crucial. On this point considerably more work and thought is needed; but that will be for another time. Presently, it suffices to say that the impact of the 60% must have been significantly felt, whether as high-value expert craftspeople or as marginalised labourers; the extended family may have helped bind them into overall Dwarf society.

[18] LOTR, Appendix A, p.1116

Conclusions

The arguments I have made above can be boiled down to a few important points. Firstly, that family was an important element in Dwarf society, with chieftains binding groups of nuclear families and mediating between the family and the hold. Secondly, that low rates of population growth/rates of population decline must almost certainly have been the result of depressed birth and replacement rates given relatively low mortality. Thirdly, that this was most likely caused by later marriage ages rather than lower birth rates within marriages, and that in turn these were a social rather than economic or sustenance-based response to difficult economic conditions. Those difficult conditions were, in short, a lack of effective farmland and significant trading networks, leading to declining wealth, a shift towards agriculture, and thus an increase in the average age of Dwarves who were wealthy enough to be able or likely to start a family. This model has some particularly strong factors in its favour as compared to a Malthusian population-resources system; it allows for Dwarf settlements actually being well supplied with food, as the distinct lack of attestations to periodic starvation does indeed suggest. The high development in the economy, low mortality, relatively low dependency ratios, and the number of Dwarves without families all meant that there were few major quality of living drivers to counterbalance the strong cultural frameworks around wealth and power that were linked to marriage. The Dwarf arable economy was, whilst culturally marginalised, very much in existence, and its continued use to support extended families puts it at the centre of the economies of more isolated holds. The wider characteristics of that economy, and how it used the varied family and labour structures hinted at and discussed above, will have to remain for now a subject for a future paper.

Is Fangorn a Settlement?

Jack Fleming

The eagle debate last term (Michaelmas 2013) had the amusing topic of Best Settlement. The first game was pretty standard, with the likes of Rivendell, Moria, Minas Tirith and Bree being represented, with the final victory going to Hobbiton (perhaps that's not such a great surprise). In the second, smaller game, I tried to defend Fangorn as the best settlement, but was voted off the Eagle early on, not because Fangorn isn't an awesome place, but on the basis that it didn't count as a settlement. I confess, when I selected Fangorn, I had not put much thought into what exactly defined a settlement, and was using the term in a very loose sense, namely somewhere sentient beings lived in a group. It had not occurred to me that Fangorn counted more as a region, with Ents' living arrangements fitting better into a nomadic, individualistic model than a sedentary one. However, having made such a blunder, I now plan to prove Fangorn to be a settlement in a more traditional manner. My compact Oxford English Dictionary defines a settlement as 'a place where people establish a community.' Taking 'people' to include all sentient beings, this is the definition I will use. So here goes nothing.

First of all, it is clear that the Ents have an understanding that they, as a group, inhabit a certain part of Middle-earth: they have a sense of collective identity. Treebeard is sometimes known as Fangorn, suggesting that he is the leader of the region, and he describes the forest as 'my country' supporting such a view.[1] However, Ents also demonstrate democratic government; what else could one call an Entmoot? Clearly they have some kind of communal ethos. Having said that, this could just as easily argue in favour of Fangorn as a country or a people with a system of government, but without the group communities found within them.

However, there are also signs of Ents forming more traditional communities. First of all, they were not entirely nomadic. While Treebeard notes he has multiple homes, which he moves between, the one home which is described, his 'Wellinghall' (a proper noun), is clearly a permanent built environment which 'had been hollowed back into a shallow bay with an arched roof', with 'a great stone table' and even lighting; Treebeard explicitly calls it an 'ent-house'.[2] We may reasonably infer that this is representative of all Ent homes, suggesting that their multiple homes do not indicate a nomadic society as much as one where Ents simply like variety, much like someone who lives in London but has a holiday home in Cornwall. Of course, the comparison is not exact, since I am arguing that Fangorn is not several settlements, but one large one.

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of The Rings (1 Volume), The Two Towers* (London, 2001), Treebeard, p.453.
[2] *The Two Towers,* Treebeard, pp.459-460.

So, apart from a built environment, how else would one define a community? First, boundaries. Though these are sometimes hard to define, in a pre-modern world like Middle-earth, most settlements have clear boundaries. Settlements as varied as Bree and Minas Tirith had hedges/walls, Rivendell was contained within a valley. Fangorn clearly had such boundaries, namely the edge of the forest. These boundaries, however, enclose an approximate area of 90km x 100km, or 9,000km^2, which is far larger than any city.[3] This need not necessarily be a problem, however. Let us make some comparisons. First, let us take a relatively sparsely populated, but clearly defined, city. Constantinople had clear boundaries in the form of the Theodosian Walls, which encompassed some 12km^2.[4] By the fifteenth century, however, its population had declined to some 50,000 people, giving a density of some 4,167 people/km^2.[5] Based on a quick trawl of Wikipedia, similar low density settlements, for example, in suburban parts of the USA, tend to fall in the range of 1,000-10,000 people/km^2, so this will serve as my range of comparison. At the Entmoot there are some two dozen Ents, which would give a population density of 0.0027 Ents/km^2. This differs by a factor of some 1,000,000, so does not, at first sight, look good for my argument. However, it is strongly implied that a significant proportion of Ents did not come to the moot. Although we cannot get an accurate estimate of population, the moot might only have attracted a quarter of Ents and still be seen as democratically representative in a society with no system of elected representation. If there are 100 Ents, the density would be about 0.01 Ents/km^2, giving an updated scale factor difference of 100,000.

These calculations, however, do not account for the Huorns. While not Ents, and requiring less in the way of built environment, they have some sense of collective identity, both among themselves and with the Ents, seeking to maintain the welfare of the forest as a whole. Furthermore, they are able to move, speak and act against their enemies, so they must have some kind of sentience. The two species can be seen as living together, much as Hobbits and Men did in Bree. Now, again, we do not know how many Huorns there were, but since Ents are Treeherds, whose main purpose is to control the Huorns, we may assume that each Ent has a flock of Huorns which are (broadly speaking) his responsibility. I am not particularly well informed about shepherding practices, however, the Gospel of Luke (written in a far less urbanised society) recounts a parable where a shepherd has one hundred sheep, and, after losing one, goes out his way to track it down.[6] We may assume this is a normal amount for one shepherd – were it a small flock, it would not be a surprise that the shepherd was concerned about the absence, and were it very large, it would be far more unlikely that the shepherd would bother to look for it at all. If every Ent has about 100 Huorns in his care, this gives a total population in the region of 10,000 sentient beings in

[3] K. W. Fonstad, *The Atlas of Tolkien's Middle-Earth* (London, 1994).
[4] http://www.livius.org/cn-cs/constantinople/constantinople_land_walls.html
It is surprisingly hard to find data on cities with low population density, and I am indebted to the ruling steward, James Baillie, for his suggestion of Constantinople in the C15th.
[5] D. Nicolle, *Constantinople 1453: The end of Byzantium*, p.32.
[6] Luke 15:4-6.

Fangorn, and a density of about one being/km^2, which differs by a scale factor of only 1000. We are getting closer.

Furthermore, the comparison is not like for like. Ents, as we know, are significantly taller than humans, and with this goes a different understanding of scale. Quickbeam, a young, hasty and (one may presume) juvenile Ent is 14ft.[7] Furthermore, Treebeard, in one day, carries Merry and Pippin some 70,000 ent-strides in one day. The relationship between height (*h*) and stride length (*s*), both in cm, may be expressed as $s = 0.7098h - 44.05$**.** 14ft is approximately 420cm, so an average ent-stride = 0.7098 x 420 - 44.05 = 254.066cm**,** or about 2.5m**.** This means that, in a day's walking, Treebeard covered 70,000 x 2.5m = 175km, without showing significant signs of fatigue above a normal day's work. A day's walking for a human might equal some 25km, so we may infer that Ents can walk seven times further than Men, and that their ideas of scale are correspondingly varied – most people assess the size of a town by how long it takes them to walk from one side to the other in one dimension, despite area varying in two dimensions, and we may assume that Ents are much the same. Since we are trying to reach a similar factor, since Quickbeam may well be shorter than average, and since most people would be knackered after walking 25km, let us round this up to 10 times**.** That takes our scale difference down to 100**.**

Unfortunately, I do not think I can find any way to get closer to the mark. The Entwives, before they disappeared, lived separately to the Ents, who would visit them from time to time, so they cannot be said to have added to the population. Of course, it is likely that the number of Ents was in decline; without the Entwives, there could be no Entings. Although such decline might be balanced out by more trees becoming Huorns, this is far from certain, lacking as we do clear population data. The level of population collapse could be very significant (though it is hard to imagine that Ents have a particularly high birth rate, eschewing as they do all things 'hasty'). What, then, are my conclusions?

Accounting for the difference of scale between Ents and Humans, and using rough population estimates for both Ents and Huorns, it seems that Fangorn in the Third Age was less densely populated than even relatively sparse human settlements. However, it is possible that the loss of the Entwives had led to population decline; it is certainly possible that in past times Fangorn was somewhat more crowded. Furthermore, Ents do seem to have a social system, permanent built environments and borders which would suggest a fixed home and the establishment of a community. The Ent social structure seems to lie between that of a sedentary settlement and a nomadic tribe. Given the cultural insensitivity of imposing our norms of what density a settlement should be on another race, until we can find an Ent and conduct detailed anthropological and demographic studies, I declare the matter unsolved. Therefore, in a spirit of cultural relativism, I demand that the second of last term's Eagle debates be stricken from the Red Book post-haste!

[7] *The Two Towers*, Treebeard, p.471.

The Televisions of Middle-earth: How do the *Palantíri* work?

Samuel Cook

The palantíri are some of the most useful, yet enigmatic, of artefacts in Middle-earth. And, as my namesakes,[1] I feel I should write something about them. In this article, I'll run through the history of the Seven Seeing-Stones, what we know about them, and conclude with some speculation as to how something like a palantír might actually function.

Originally, there were seven stones, which were given to the Lords of Andúnië by the Eldar. Indeed, the master stone still abides with them in the Tower of Avallónë on Tol Eressëa (*The Silmarillion*, p. 292). They were saved from the Ruin of Númenor by Elendil, being one of the few things he was able to take with him. After the founding of Gondor and Arnor, the palantíri were placed throughout the kingdoms. Three were in Arnor: one each at Annúminas, Amon Sûl, and the tower of Elostirion on Emyn Beraid (the Tower Hills) west of the Shire. The other four were in Gondor: at Minas Anor, Minas Ithil (as the two cities were then called), Orthanc and Osgiliath. By the events of LOTR, only the Elostirion stone survived of the three that were originally in Arnor – the other two were somewhere at the bottom of the Ice Bay of Forochel, along with the wreck of Arvedui Last-King's ship.[2] Of the four Gondorian stones, the Osgiliath one had been lost, having fallen into Anduin when Osgiliath was ruined. The stones of Orthanc and Minas Anor survived (the first being used by Saruman, the second by Denethor in the events of LOTR), whilst the Ithil stone had been taken by Sauron when the city was captured by the Ringwraiths, and was then presumably lost in the fall of Barad-dûr at the end of LOTR (at least, nothing more is heard of it).

Of these surviving stones, some were more useful than others – the Elostirion stone only looked back to Valinor as described in LOTR Appendix A (I, iii): it was "unlike the others and not in accord with them; it looked only to the Sea. Elendil set it there so that he could look back with 'straight sight' and see Eressëa in the vanished West". The Anor stone, having been held by Denethor as he burned, meant any user "unless he had a great strength of will…saw only two aged hands withering in flame" (LOTR, p.836), so was largely unusable. This means that, at the end of the Third Age, only the Orthanc stone, which Aragorn had bent to his will after its loss by Saruman, was a) extant and b) fully functional.

So, what exactly did a fully-functional palantír enable you to do? Some clues are given in LOTR, but the most complete account of the palantíri is found in *Unfinished Tales*, from which most of the following material is taken. The Stones had initially been widely

[1] For those of you not at last year's AGM, through a complicated set of circumstances and some creative minute-taking by the then-Keeper of the Red Book, I ended up being appointed King Tar-Palantír. Just in case you think I'm a power-crazed maniac, I will point out I voted against my own ennoblement.

[2] He had managed to save them from the assault of the Witch-King and the subsequent fall of Arnor, so they went with him in exile to the land of the Lossoth, the Snowmen of Forochel. Círdan subsequently sent a ship to rescue Arvedui, but as it was trying to leave the Ice Bay, with the king on board, it was sunk by a storm – the Lossoth had counselled Arvedui to wait it out, but he ignored them. See Appendix A of LOTR.

used in the Realms in Exile, and were always a closely-guarded secret, with their use restricted to the Kings, Stewards and their appointed Wardens in the case of the more far-flung Stones. Over time, they gradually fell out of use as part of the more general decline of Arnor and Gondor and the associated loss of knowledge.[3] The uncertainty over the fate of the Ithil stone also made Gondor reluctant to use its remaining ones – the wiser amongst its rulers realised there was a possibility that Sauron had gained it (which seems to have indeed been the case).

Individually, each Stone only allowed the user ("surveyor" was Tolkien's preferred term) to see things in the past or in distant places. This could be directed and specific details enlarged upon, but it required a strong will and a lot of practice, which made them very difficult to use by the later Third Age, given the millennium of disuse that had occurred. To use the Stones like this, the surveyor had to position himself looking through the Stone in the direction of the thing he wished to see (so, on the opposite side of the Stone from the object). All the Stones had fixed poles – i.e. a top and bottom, so had to be the right way up to work. The smaller Stones also had fixed faces, so the west face had to face west to show anything. Otherwise, it was blank. The larger Stones, though, afforded continuous 360° view. This meant that, once a Stone was moved from its original setting and its orientation lost, it took a lot of effort and trial and error to get it set up properly again. Pippin was simply very (un)lucky in that he put the Orthanc stone in exactly the right position and orientation to be able to converse with Sauron in LOTR.

Some caveats were relevant to this use: the Stones could only see things that had light falling on them – whilst their view was not hindered by mundane barriers, such as hills or walls, they did not let you see in the dark. Whatever you were looking at had to be already illuminated in some fashion. Objects could also be shrouded from the Stones' view though exactly how this was achieved is now lost (see below for some conjectures on how this could have been done).

Used together though, the Stones could allow two[4] surveyors to communicate mind-to-mind, provided their respective Stones were in accord. This function could be used to transmit both words and images, though, it is important to note, did not let you read the other person's mind – this depended on each surveyor's relative willpower. Therefore, Sauron also used this function to transfer his will and dominate weaker surveyors, as he did to Saruman and Denethor to differing extents. An important point to note here is that using the Stones led to considerable mental strain, hence the need for a strong will. This strain was even greater if the surveyor did not have the right to use the Stone, which is partly the

[3] It is stated in *Unfinished Tales* (p.532, note 1) that "The message received in Gondor in [T.A.] 1973, telling of the dire straits of the Northern Kingdom, was possibly their last use until the approach of the War of the Ring".

[4] Only ever two – a third surveyor trying to eavesdrop would see or hear nothing. The only exception was the surveyor using the Master Stone of Osgiliath (*Unfinished Tales,* p.528), who could listen in on all the other Stones. As stated, this was lost by the events of LOTR, so, for example, Sauron could not have eavesdropped on conversations between Saruman and Denethor.

reason Denethor was never dominated by Sauron in the same way Saruman was, and was also why Aragorn was eventually able to wrench the Orthanc-stone to his will. The right to use the Stones belonged to the Heirs of Elendil and their appointees and successors. Sauron therefore had no right to the Ithil-stone and Saruman's right to the Orthanc-stone was somewhat dubious – he was the appointed Warden of the Tower (by the Steward Beren in T.A. 2759), but had never been specifically authorised to use the palantír (or, at least, it seems unlikely that he would have been). Denethor, however, as the ruling Steward, had the right to use the Anor-stone and Aragorn, as the Heir of Elendil, had an indisputable right to the Orthanc-stone, so both were able to use their Stones reasonably successfully and independently, despite Sauron's superior will and attempts to dominate them.

We now come to the two central mysteries of the Stones: what were they made from and how did they work? In *Unfinished Tales* (p.529), the Stones are described as "perfect spheres, appearing when at rest to be made of solid glass or crystal deep black in hue". As we know from the events of the books and films, they were also pretty much indestructible. *Unfinished Tales* (p.529) states that "they were indeed unbreakable by any violence then controlled by men, though some believed that great heat, such as that of Orodruin, might shatter them". Not being a materials scientist, I can't say for sure, but I'm fairly certain that no known material fits those two criteria – unbreakable and glasslike. The closest would seem to be something like diamond, but, realistically, "magic super-crystal" is probably the closest we can come. As far as how they work, let's review what we know of their functioning: the Stones provide view in a straight line through (nearly) all obstacles in their path. This would suggest some sort of directed beam, with only space for 4 fixed emitters in the smaller Stones (one at each cardinal point), whilst the larger ones could have a larger, circular emitter or many of the smaller, fixed ones, to provide the illusion of a continuous field of view. Alternatively, they picked up on something already present in the natural world, and had directionally-focussed receivers instead of emitters. However, quite what they were detecting or emitting is open to question. Clearly, most forms of electromagnetic radiation are not suitable – *Unfinished Tales* (p. 536, note 18) states that the ideal viewing distance for the lesser palantíri was "of the order of five hundred miles". Whilst gamma and x-rays could potentially penetrate obstacles, they do not have that sort of range. Radio waves could reach that far, but their wavelength would be such that they would be useless for imaging purposes.[5]

One other possibility, not on the electromagnetic spectrum, would be neutrino beams or detection. These would certainly easily have the range and would be able to pass through anything in their way very easily.[6] However, this then leads to the question of how

[5] Anything smaller than the wavelength of a wave is effectively invisible to that wave, hence why you can only go so small with an optical microscope. With radio waves for the range specified, the wavelength would be several tens of centimetres, if not metres, which would mean that a person would only barely show up as a fuzzy blob at best.

[6] The Earth is constantly bombarded by billions of neutrinos. Most of them pass straight through the planet and everything on it (including you) without anyone noticing.

the palantíri would be able to detect any infinitesimal variations in the neutrino flux intensity from objects through which it passes, given neutrinos aren't reflected by anything and barely interact with planet-sized masses, let alone individual people or places, and then convert this into visual data. Notwithstanding the questions of how the neutrinos are generated in the first place (if the Stones generated their own beams), how the neutrinos are detected (given that our current neutrino detectors are effectively very large underground tanks of very pure water), or how anything could be shrouded against the beam or ambient neutrino flux.

A final, highly speculative, suggestion is that the Stones could detect the gravitational field or gravitons.[7] Such a thing is possible – satellites currently orbiting the Earth, such as GRACE, can detect small variations in the Earth's gravitational field and use this to work out how much ice has melted in Greenland, for example – but the resolution is on the order of hundreds of kilometres. You also wouldn't be able to produce a colour image from gravitational data, just an outline of masses. So, this doesn't seem like it could really explain how the palantíri function either. I think, like many of the wonders of Middle-earth, we just have to accept that we can't really explain how they work. A bit like a Silmaril. Or Tom Bombadil. As far as shrouding goes, evidently, the object to be shrouded would have to be somehow shielded from whatever radiation, flux or particles the palantíri are emitting or detecting. For some of the suggestions above, such as radio waves or X-rays, this would be quite simple. For gamma rays, for example, you would just have to put the object in a thick-walled box of dense material (traditionally, lead). For neutrinos, gravitons or anything even weirder, it becomes rather difficult to think of anything that would stop them, without getting into some seriously odd and speculative physics. Again, this is one of the mysteries of the Stones.

In conclusion, whilst much is known about the history and functioning of the Stones, it is very difficult to come up with any coherent, rational explanation for how they worked or what they were made of, certainly within our current knowledge of physics. So, as so often with Tolkien, we have to resort to the "Elvish magic" explanation and just be prepared to accept that one of the great things about Middle-earth is that not everything is explained and that some things are just mysterious. The longevity of CTS suggests we still haven't got bored of arguing about these mysteries, even if some of them have been definitively ruled on.[8] So, long live inconclusiveness, ambiguity and shades of grey![9] Hopefully they'll give us another 30 years of interesting debate.

[7] These might exist. They might not. In theory, gravity propagates somehow, but whether there's a gravity particle in the same way as a photon is a light particle is one of the major questions in particle physics. The Higgs Boson doesn't transmit gravity, per se, it merely creates a field that imbues everything else with mass.
[8] There is only one Glorfindel. Anyone who believes otherwise is wrong. There's a royal edict for you.
[9] This should not be interpreted as an endorsement of a certain book.

Approaches to Tolkien Studies

James Baillie

"Tolkien Studies", despite having at least three journals,[1] is a spectacularly ill-defined field. Academic explorations of Arda can take many forms, with advantages and disadvantages to different approaches being many and varied. What I hope to do in the space of this paper is to give an approximate outline of some of the broad methodological differences that exist within the field, and within these methodologies ask the question of where "Tolkien Studies" fits alongside the intimately related disciplines of linguistics, literature, and history. To my mind the two most prominent questions are the extent to which authorial intent in the works is considered important, and the extent to which the works are looked at from an "internal" or "external" style. It is these that I shall roughly use to structure the following paragraphs, assessing different ways of looking at Tolkien and by and large attempting to defend and argue for the utility of each.

Firstly, the question of "internal" and "external" forms of examination must be considered. To put it in a clearer form, the question I am posing here is to what extent one is looking at Tolkien's work as a facet or feature of the real world inside which it exists (looking at it externally), or whether one essentially accepts the paradigm of Tolkien's sub-creation and delves further into particular aspects of his work (an "internal" viewpoint). The motive for external examination is clear; the works of Tolkien are genre-defining for fantasy authors, and represent a very significant cultural and literary phenomenon in themselves. Looking at how they interact with the outside world – what went into them and what came out – is vital for understanding their impact. Internal examination is, however, also interesting and important, for the very feature of Tolkien's work that makes it worth examining is the depth of the sub-creation. The depth of the Legendarium cannot be reasonably examined purely by looking at external influence; Middle-earth is too complex a structure for that to be possible, and therefore internal examination is also at the very least a valid way of looking at Tolkien's works.

The second question is that of authorial intent. How important is what Tolkien thought in assessing his work? It is certainly possible to argue that for any author, as the creator of a world or setting or piece of work, their word must be accepted as law for the base principles and this should therefore be extended to working out a singular "truth" out of their writings. It is clear, for example, that we have many old versions of parts of the Legendarium that were later discarded. It is certainly worth looking at Tolkien's opinion and how it changed to put him as an author and academic into context, and the ways in which his beliefs and ideas are woven into his work – intentionally or not – are a fascinating source of study. On the other hand, the effects of a work on a reader are like a conversation; one

[1] *Tolkien Studies*, *Anor*, and *Mallorn*.

person knows what they want to say, but the listener only knows what they hear, and so authorial intent cannot be the be-all and end-all.

All this leaves us with four basic categories, depending on the answer to the two questions outlined. The first category is the external/authorial, occupied by those studying Tolkien's life and individual circumstances and how those impacted on his work. These are Tolkien's biographers, and their work is invaluable. By understanding Tolkien himself we can learn a lot about what drove him to create such a vast work of sub-creation, and furthermore understand more generally the creative processes and inputs that go into works of fantasy fiction. Biography of Tolkien can be extremely useful in working on non-authorial approaches (see below), as it helps pinpoint the different material he was exposed to. This leads to questioning whether particular tropes or ideas or themes are likely to have come from the world around him or are simply being read that way by modern readers (both interesting phenomena, but ones that at times may necessitate different treatment). Tolkien is also a divisive figure, and so his personal viewpoints can be of interest as part of public debate over his legacy – fought over by and between everyone from academics to environmentalists to Christians to white supremacists. What Tolkien thought and believed may not be the first and foremost aspect for many readers of his work, but it does matter, both for understanding Middle-earth and for informing the ongoing public debate around the problematic and frequently criticised attitudes in some of his work.

The second category we will not spend much time on, but that it exists is the reason for us having enough of Tolkien's work to even count it as a subject. The internal/authorial viewpoint, which can be described as that of the "literary archaeologist", attempts to construct what Tolkien thought about particular aspects of his work. What is the "right" form of the story of the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, or the Children of Húrin, or the Akallabêth? We have a wide range of documents and knowing what Tolkien counted as canonical has been hugely important for bringing more of his work to casual readers in a less complex form than it is presented in in the histories.

The third category, external/non-authorial, is the largest academically. These are the scholars, English professors, and social scientists who try to fit Tolkien's Legendarium in its cultural context. This can overlap, of course, with biography where the question asked involves whether Tolkien was *intentionally* using a particular literary parallel, but more often comparative literature studies can look at how Tolkien's work compares to other works of fantasy before or since. Indeed in exploring how Tolkien creates his setting not only fantasy is necessarily involved; his uses of real-world legal or geological concepts can be explored to show why Middle-earth fits together from the reader's point of view, to take the example of just one recent paper.[2] The willing suspension of disbelief on the part of Tolkien's readers is subtly aided by many references and anchors to our real world, consciously or unconsciously put there by the author himself, and teasing out the roots of these is an important part of

[2] Kane, "Law and Arda", *Tolkien Studies* 9 (2012).

understanding why Tolkien's work has been able to make an impact. That impact in itself can be a subject of study – the cultural impact of Tolkien's work is such that it has permeated deep into the public consciousness, with throw-away phrases and quotations slipping easily into common parlance.[3] Tracing the routes of these phenomena, from the slaying of Grendel to the grittier feel of more modern fantasy series, must be a major preoccupation of anyone wishing to study fantasy literature. Studying Tolkien's influence on that process, the different ways people have read and digested and used his work and the different inputs that created Middle-earth, is clearly one of the largest features of the study of Tolkien.

Finally, we must look at internal and non-authorial approaches – the realm of the linguists and pseudo-historians. Both of these, the area that Ruth Lacon terms "Middle-Earth Studies",[4] extend the approach of those looking at context from "Why does this feel real?" to "What if it was?", and therefore essentially are engaged in their own act of sub-creation. In trying to fit Tolkien's work together, linguists and pseudo-historians essentially treat the mass of source documents as precisely that, and then interpret what these would mean in functional languages and societies. Is there any point in this? In some senses, of course not – working out if a Dwarf state would be more likely to be constrained by mortality or lack of staple food supplies is very unlikely to create any earth-shaking academic revelations. Speaking as someone who spends a good deal of time doing precisely that, however, I shall go out on a limb and claim that there is a lot to be said for it. There are two reasons for this. The first is that it can actually be useful to anyone who is still sub-creating in Tolkien's world (and through role-play games, strategy games, and "fanfic" many people are). The second is that in Tolkien's work we have a surprisingly good theoretical playground, and asking "what if" questions in this setting can simply lead to interesting thought experiments. If the human imagination is eminently capable of envisaging certain ideas or theories in the context of Tolkien's world, we must ask ourselves whether this is as a result of parallels in our own; every myth must have a grain of truth. Alternatively, we must ask why, if these concepts cannot be found, this should be the case; is an advanced society based on symbiotic relationships with forests implausible? Why were more cities not built into mountainsides? Would the Rohirric style of warfare have been useful or successful on a real battlefield, and indeed how does this interface with its basis in northern European mythology? These are all questions that may have interesting answers, and those answers may not in any sense be useless to the real world in which we live. As such, I believe Middle-earth Studies deservedly has a place in the broader world of Tolkien studies.

To conclude, "Tolkien studies" is a multifaceted field that both examines Tolkien's work in historical, personal and literary context and uses it as a springboard for investigation of what fantasy can further tell us about the world we live in. The depth, chronological span, and documentary texture of Tolkien's work allows internal analyses of a sort that would be

[3] There may, after all, come a day when Tolkien dies as a cultural phenomenon – but it is not this day.
[4] Lacon, "The Invisible Shire", *Mallorn* 37 (Dec 1999).

either impossible or at the very least profoundly uninteresting in the work of most equivalent authors; the continuation of that sub-creation to this day is an important reason why internal examination of Tolkien's work merits significant interest. External examination of course further fuels the need for this, and is highly instructive in itself about the impact of stories and storytelling in our world; so much of modern fantasy literature is rooted in Tolkien's work that it further deserves to be a subject of study. Its impacts are of course not just limited to books; it is in the construction of a secondary universe that Tolkien's work is at its greatest, and this can, in the modern age, include impacts on games, films, music, and more. It is nonetheless important within this plethora of ideas and possibilities to note and delineate the different methodologies within Tolkien Studies and their relative utility for tackling various questions; this paper has, I hope, gone some way to framing that discussion.

On the Nature of Good and Evil in *The Lord of the Rings*

Jamie Douglas

Introduction

To a first approximation, *The Lord of the Rings* could be described as a story of good vs. evil. Note the article *a* story of good vs. evil. To be sure, there are many stories that could be described in this way, and such stories are the bread and butter of much fantasy literature. Stories of good vs. evil are so strongly associated with fantasy and fairy-tale that many people appear to write off such stories as simplistic and, in particular, escapist. There is nothing wrong with simplicity and escapism, but if applied to Tolkien's writings, I believe that the charge is severely misguided.

It often goes unnoticed, but one of the striking absences from *The Lord of the Rings* is what could be described as 'the showdown', the ostentatious climax of the conflict between the two personifications of good and evil, the hero and the villain. Of course there are the epic battles, each more climatic than the last in a sense (the battles of Helm's Deep, the Pelennor Fields, and before the Black Gate of Mordor), but we are told that these are diversions from the true climax. But what is the true climax? Given the showdowns many people are used to, we might have expected Sauron to come forth at the last, but he never does. Instead we get Frodo and Gollum fighting at the Cracks of Doom. This is highly unusual because Gollum is not the arch-villain, and he and Frodo had been in each other's company for quite some time. However, it is only surprising given what we might have come to expect from stories of good and evil. We might have expected Aragorn and Sauron to have a face-off (or even Frodo and Sauron?). What Tolkien makes clear in *The Lord of the Rings* is that this is not how good and evil works in his sub-created world. Upon closer consideration of how the struggle between good and evil plays out in Middle-earth, we may start to realise that Tolkien's works are in some sense so far from 'escapism' that we are actually being confronted with a picture of our own world without even noticing.

In this essay, which was in part inspired by a very interesting documentary on Tolkien's influences and outlook (it can be seen on the extras of the Extended Version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* film), I would like to explore several facets of the nature of good and evil as presented in *The Lord of the Rings*. I will look at hope and despair, the substance of good and evil, questions that *The Lord of the Rings* raises concerning how to recognise evil and where battles between good and evil truly take place, and why characters get involved in the first place. These are big questions, and ones that cannot be done justice in a single article. View it, then, as an introduction to a selection of some of the major themes.

Hope and despair

I think it is fair to assume that Tolkien viewed both the real world and his sub-created world as being essentially 'fallen'. Evil exists in the fallen world, but a principle

message of Christianity and an undercurrent in *The Lord of the Rings* is that there is hope that evil can be overcome. Similarly, Hope was the last thing inside Pandora's Box; Hope was a small thing but nonetheless present and powerful. Hope, or *estel*, is also the name Gilraen gave to her son, Aragorn. In other words, hope is the most important gift to a world plagued by evils. It allows us to dare to dream that there is something beyond the fear of evil, and provides something to strive towards. It feeds courage. Consequently, the most effective weapon of evil is not fear but rather despair, literally 'without hope'. By removing hope, evil can starve courage and so facilitate the spread of fear.

More accurately, the weapon of evil lies in *causing* and *preserving* despair. For Tolkien, evil gains a foothold whenever a good character *abandons* hope. I will continue to refer to the weapon of evil as 'despair' but I will have this more subtle notion in mind. So, what forms can despair take? One is despair caused by imprisonment, the theft of freedom to even try to accomplish what one hopes for. This is what Éowyn fears most by her own admission:

> '…I can ride and wield blade, and I do not fear either pain or death.'
> 'What do you fear, lady?' he [Aragorn] asked.
> 'A cage,' she [Éowyn] said. 'To stay behind bars, until use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire.'
>
> *The Passing of the Grey Company, The Return of the King*

Despair leads to idleness and forgetfulness, and this despair results from being caged. This applies not only to literal cages, but also (and perhaps even more so) to a caging of the mind. This caging can be voluntary, in which case one closes one's mind off from even perceiving the good that lies beyond the evil. Saruman appears to have voluntarily caged his mind to some degree, as remarked by Treebeard:

> "…his face, as I remember it – I have not seen it for many a day – became like windows in a stone wall: windows with shutters inside."
>
> *Treebeard, The Two Towers*

In closing the shutters, Saruman turns from looking beyond himself to looking within himself. He turns his attention away from the living world and to the manufactured world of darkness and industry. The caging of a mind can also be involuntary, as in the case of Théoden, who has become "…so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf…" by "…[sitting] in shadows and trust[ing] to twisted tales and crooked promptings…" courtesy of Gríma Wormtongue. Indeed, Gandalf's 'cure' for Théoden is to "…come out before your doors and look abroad." (*The King of the Golden Hall*). In other words, hope is found when one turns one's attention to the wider world and is open to it.

It is particularly interesting to compare Théoden and Denethor in this respect. Gandalf says to Théoden "No counsel have I to give to those that despair" (ibid.). Théoden is perhaps saved just in time, and indeed goes on to achieve great things before his death. Denethor, on the hand, had a much more insidious counsellor whispering in his ear, and he eventually succumbed to full despair and madness. Denethor did not look outward – he sat alone in his tower and his mind was focused wholly on Sauron by the end. Sauron was thus able to strike at the heart of Minas Tirith with the slow but powerful weapon of despair.

The relationship between despair and madness is also noteworthy. Once again, Tolkien says via the words of Gandalf:

> "…despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubt. We do not. It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed, though as folly it may appear to those who cling to false hope."
>
> *The Council of Elrond, The Fellowship of the Ring*

If someone were able to see the end beyond all doubt, then and only then might they have just cause to despair. However, none (save Eru) have such foresight or knowledge, not even the Valar. Despair is therefore wrong. It is irrational, 'twisted' and 'crooked'. This quote also raises the notion of false hope. Such hope seems to be one that allows you to see beyond present evil but which does not in fact offer any glimpse of what is objectively 'good'. Thus Boromir's desire to use the Ring to save Minas Tirith from Sauron is fed by false hope. Hope because he sees beyond the evil of Sauron, false because the evil of Sauron will remain in the form of the One Ring and hence what is 'beyond the evil of Sauron' can never fully be achieved by Boromir's designs.

The hope of Sauron is to my mind one of Tolkien's most interesting ideas. On the one hand, it is a false hope. Despair is unwise, and Sauron does not despair (until perhaps the very end, if he even has time to go from shock at discovering his folly to despair). Indeed, Sauron has a great deal of hope based on his wisdom, which is very great, as Gandalf tells the Council:

> "For he [Sauron] is very wise, and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice. But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts."
>
> *The Council of Elrond, The Fellowship of the Ring*

Since Sauron only has the one measure, i.e. desire (for power), his hope is false because there are measures he is not taking into account. In a sense, Sauron believes he has weighed all courses and so is as sure as he can be of the outcome, hence he feels he knows there is no reason to despair. Of course, the Council knows that there are other measures to be considered, and this is precisely the means by which they mean to deceive and overthrow

Sauron. But, in a strange twist, Sauron is actually correct! If we consider what would have happened without the famous eucatastrophe at the Cracks of Doom, Sauron would have come perilously close to destruction but ultimately would have come through: remember that Frodo in fact failed at the last by claiming the Ring as his own. Sauron, then, was quite right to have weighed all things as he did. In this sense, his hope was not a false hope at all. If only that eucatastrophe hadn't happened…

But the fact of the matter is that the eucatastrophe did happen. Furthermore, if hope is to be anything but false, we must assume that the goodness beyond evil does in fact exist and that there are unforeseen ways of attaining it (this is particularly true for a pre-Christian world that is nonetheless supposed to be Christian-compatible, as Tolkien intended his 'sub-creation' to be). Hope is thus not merely a default position in the face of uncertainty, it is actually fully justified (albeit retrospectively) in a world that can be touched by Providence. The weapon of evil, despair, lies in obscuring any potential justification for hope and giving a false sense of certainty in an uncertain, but ultimately 'good' cosmos. What is evil is thus not that the world is fallen *per se*, but the false belief that there is nothing beyond it within reach by any means.[1]

The substance (or non-substance) of good and evil

I mentioned at the outset that there is no 'classic' showdown between the hero and the villain. Perhaps more curious is the fact that we never actually meet Sauron at all. The fullest extent of his physical presence is as the Eye of Sauron, but even then can we really call it physical? Peter Jackson's cinematic interpretation suggested that the Eye of Sauron was literally a flaming eye atop Barad-dûr,[2] but the description in the book is more metaphysical; it is perceived, but not by the conventional senses. The Eye is a metaphor for the relentless will of Sauron:

> "But far more he [Frodo] was troubled by the Eye: so he called it to himself… The Eye: that horrible growing sense of a hostile will that strove with great power to

[1] Note that these 'means' are plausibly not available to anyone without grace. Thus, not only is it not enough simply to hope (as Gandalf says, "Hope is not victory" (*The White Rider, The Two Towers*)), it is not even enough to try and achieve this hope. That is not to say that one should not try – there is something heroic in striving for good, especially in the pre-Christian world that is Middle-earth. Indeed, persistence in trying despite its ultimate futility in the absence of grace is perhaps a sign that one either has grace or that one is committed to overcoming their 'fallen' nature. Perhaps the eucatastrophe is Eru's way of saying that Frodo has done well and will thus be duly rewarded. The mechanics of grace and Providence and other related theological questions in Middle-earth merits further discussion, but I leave that for the future.

[2] Whilst I appreciate the greater 'need' for a visible Eye to some extent, I much preferred the uncertainty concerning the nature of the Eye of Sauron as suggested/depicted in *The Fellowship of the Ring* to the 'lighthouse' version of *The Two Towers* and, especially, *The Return of the King* (the eagle-eyed viewer may also have spotted this 'lighthouse effect' when Smaug opened his eye for the first time in *The Desolation of Smaug*! In the case of Smaug, however, this is taken directly from the description in the book (see the chapter *Inside Information*)).

> pierce all shadows of cloud, and earth, and flesh, and to see you: to pin you under its deadly gaze, naked, immovable… Frodo know just where the present habitation and heart of that will now was: as certainly as a man can tell the direction of the sun with his eyes shut."
>
> *The Passage of the Marshes, The Two Towers*

The Eye of Sauron, the only 'form' that Sauron really assumes is thus remarkably (physically) insubstantial. This is significantly different from most evil-doers in most modern interpretations of good vs. evil, where the aim of good is to make the evil-doer insubstantial, i.e. destroy them physically/kill them. Such an approach would be utterly useless in Middle-earth given that Sauron is doing (or is about to do) great evil despite the notable (apparent) handicap discussed above!

Furthermore, this is not an isolated theme. In *The Silmarillion*, Morgoth is, for the most part absent from the main action of the First Age (a notable exception being his duel with Fingolfin). Similarly, the Ringwraiths are, as described, wraiths: they are non-corporeal, twisted souls, who exist in their faded form by the will of Sauron. It is worth noting at this point that the Ringwraiths exist in the unseen world as well. Frodo catches a glimpse of this on Weathertop and at the Fords of Bruinen. Interestingly, Glorfindel (and presumably other High Elves) exist as more than shadowy figures in this world too. It is perhaps possible, then, that the true nature of good and evil is, somewhat ironically, more perceptibly manifested in the world of the unseen. I will return to this point in the next section.

Before moving on, though, it is worth returning to the way in which evil is sustained. Sauron's sheer strength of will holds sway over his hordes and especially the Ringwraiths. In the end, when Sauron realises his peril, his will is withdrawn and his hosts find themselves bewildered and afraid, like puppets whose strings have been severed. The reason for Sauron's fear is obvious: since he invested so much of his own strength into the Ring, the destruction of the Ring is tantamount to his own destruction. Morgoth paid a similar price. Morgoth was the most powerful being in creation, but his own power was diminished precisely because a great part of it went into the corruption of others. The important point about the substance of evil is that evil is a single, albeit very powerful, entity of sorts. However, it is not a singular entity made up of many parts, rather it must put forth its strength in order to bring many parts under its dominion. This brings to mind the verse inscribed on the One Ring.

> *Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatulûk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul*
>
> 'One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them'

The One Ring is not an instrument of unity and fellowship, but one of binding, imprisonment and domination.

By contrast, good is pluralistic. We have a fellowship, one which swears no oaths or bonds, in other words a group of willing members who opt to aid Frodo as best they can for as long as they feel they can. This is unity – the coming together of many individuals to form a greater whole. In this respect it is interesting to contrast Sauron and the One Ring on the one hand, and Frodo and Sam on the other. Whilst Sauron and the One Ring are two halves of one whole, Frodo and Sam are two wholes, with Sam steadfastly supporting his master. Sauron has no such means of support. Any aid that Sauron might receive would have to come from one who is supported by Sauron in the first place.

To summarise, the substance of evil seems to be characterised by its non-substance (at least in the world of the seen) or its ability to make things insubstantial, i.e. to fade. Evil is also a singular entity portioned out among those it holds under its sway. Evil spreads rather than grows, and as it spreads its source becomes increasingly thin. Perhaps the best image of evil is the One Ring – a circular band of gold designed to encompass and bind, but one which is ultimately hollow at its centre.

Recognising and identifying evil

Having discussed the non-substance of evil, let's now turn to questions of how to recognise and identify evil, which is no trivial task. We know that Morgoth and Sauron are evil, but we rarely meet them, if ever. This leaves the One Ring, and the question 'is the One Ring evil?' It is not clear. One possible answer is that it is indeed evil, and possesses a will of its own that seeks to corrupt whoever bears it (or indeed anyone else nearby, for example, Boromir). Another possible answer, though, it is that, as an artefact, it cannot be evil in and of itself. It is a weapon, and evil lies in its use by one with a will.

The assumption is often that these are two complementary answers, but it is more likely that both answers are correct. Tolkien was a devout Catholic and his work is by admission intended to be Catholic-compatible. This implies that no character is without original sin. In other words, the potential for evil lies in everyone. The One Ring is thus an instrument for channelling and projecting such evil. The connection that Frodo and Gollum share is arguably down to the fact that Frodo knows he will ultimately become a second Gollum through the Ring unless he succeeds in his quest. However, the One Ring is not wholly innocent. It is a burden to its bearer – it does not simply project its bearer's will, it projects its own. The One Ring is thus more than just an instrument, it is a temptation. The scene where Galadriel is offered but ultimately rejects the One Ring is of paramount importance here. Tolkien says that Galadriel was only able to reject the One Ring because of her wisdom which had greatly deepened over time. She was able to recognise the Ring for

what it was, and (perhaps most importantly) was able to recognise the dark desire within herself that she had to overcome. She succeeds and thus chooses to diminish and relinquish her pride. She humbles herself and in so doing is able to overcome her own internal potential for great evil.

We are now ready to return to the idea that the nature of good and evil and the struggle between them exists not so much in the visible world, but rather in the world of the unseen. Just as evil is insubstantial and difficult to pinpoint, so too is goodness. It is all too easy to assume that the great battles in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, Helm's Deep and the Pelennor Fields, are literally battles between good and evil. But they are not – when it comes to the battlefield, these are battles between armies pure and simple. This is hardly surprising if the battle between good and evil actually occurs in the invisible realm, but this is often overlooked. Consider the War of the Ring from the perspective of the vast majority of people participating in it. Only a few people in the whole of Middle-earth actually knew of the Ring's existence. Even Théoden is not told and Denethor left to guess. Imagine, then, what the common soldier fighting in these great battles knew. As far as they are concerned, they believe that their lives and way of life is under threat, but this is really only an epiphenomenon of the ultimately world-changing struggle playing out within the mind of Frodo as he battles the influence of the Ring. This is not to suggest that the physical battles are somehow unreal, rather the point is that these battles are not ones of good and evil, such battles being inherently intangible. Sam sums up the pitiable nature of battle well when he first witnesses a battle between Men.

> "He wondered what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace…"
>
> *Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit, The Two Towers*

Even Orcs would rather be elsewhere as Gorbag and Shagrat's conversation suggests:

> 'You should try being up here with Shelob for company,' said Shagrat.
> 'I'd like to try somewhere where there's none of 'em. But the war's on now, and when that's over things may be easier.'
> 'It's going well, they say.'
> 'They would,' grunted Gorbag. 'We'll see. But anyway, if it does go well, there should be a lot more room. What d'you say? – if we get a chance, you and me'll slip off and set up somewhere on our own with a few trusty lads, somewhere where there's good loot nice and handy, and no big bosses.'
> 'Ah!' said Shagrat. 'Like old times.'
>
> *The Choices of Master Samwise, The Two Towers*

Orcs will be Orcs, of course, but even they would rather do what Orcs do *away from war* and in particular *away from the 'big bosses'* (the Ringwraiths and Sauron).[3]

I imagine that such sentiments are shared by all normal people, yet they often find themselves caught up in the 'battles' between 'big bosses'. There are no showdowns between good guys and bad guys. The principal characters (for us think politicians) meet at summits not on battlefields, if they meet at all. The fighting is done by regular people, who would probably much rather not be fighting but just getting on with their lives. Conversely, those who are intent on waging wars commit the gravest atrocities in relative safety far from any battlefield. This is where the evil is committed, and its effects ripple outwards in time and space until one finds it on one's own doorstep.

Getting involved

Although people would much rather not be at war, the fact that there is a battle between good and evil which constantly rages throughout the world means that people must fight in some sense. They have a moral and/or perhaps spiritual obligation to get involved.

Hobbits are among the least likely people to get involved with wars and battles – they like the comfortable life. But when they must, they do, and how. When the simple person is called upon, they will answer and demonstrate their worth – something Tolkien saw first-hand in WWI. This is against overwhelming odds in the case of Frodo and Bilbo, and against more manageable odds in the case of the Scouring of the Shire. Frodo knows what he must do, he knows what is right, and it is by doing or attempting to do this that he is fighting for good against evil. As Elrond says:

> "If I understand aright all that I have heard […] I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great."
>
> *The Council of Elrond, The Fellowship of the Ring*

Frodo's offer to bear the Ring into Mordor is a manifestation of goodness, it is a *sacrifice*. Other sacrifices are being made as well. Sam immediately jumps to Frodo's side to accompany him to Mordor. Sam, too, knows that he must do what he can. When Sam, thinking Frodo dead, takes the Quest upon himself, his heart and his mind are in conflict. But when Frodo is taken by Orcs:

[3] The question of evil in relation to Orcs is something Tolkien wrestled with to no definitive conclusion.

> "He flung the Quest and all his decisions away, and fear and doubt with them. He knew now where his place was and had been: at his master's side, though what he could do there was not clear."[4]
>
> *The Choices of Master Samwise, The Two Towers*

Aragorn says something similar of Merry:

> "There go three [Théoden, Éomer and Merry] that I love, and the smallest not the least […]. He knows not to what end he rides; yet if he knew, he would still go on."
>
> *The Passing of the Grey Company, The Return of the King*

And, so as not to leave Pippin out, consider what Elrond and Gandalf say after Pippin makes it clear that he wishes to be part of the Fellowship:

> 'We want to go with Frodo.'
> 'That is because you do not understand and cannot imagine what lies ahead,' said Elrond.
> 'Neither does Frodo,' said Gandalf, unexpectedly supporting Pippin. 'Nor do any of us see clearly. It is true that if these hobbits understood the danger, they would not dare to go. But they would still wish to go, or wish that they dared, and be shamed and unhappy. I think, Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom…'
>
> *The Ring Goes South, The Fellowship of the Ring*

The main point here is that the hobbits know what they should do even if they do not know what they will do. Sam, Merry and Pippin all set out with the intention of aiding Frodo in whatever way they can. This, too, is a sacrifice – perhaps not one as large as that made by Frodo, but one that is nonetheless necessary. Recall that evil must sustain itself since it relies on the theft of the free will of others, but Frodo can (and must) be supported by the voluntary sacrifices of his friends.

The Wizards' mission in Middle-earth is to ensure that goodness supports goodness in much the same way. Gandalf aims to have the free peoples of Middle-earth unite, but crucially does not unite them himself. Gandalf takes an interest in subjects usually overlooked by the scholars – he calls the study of hobbits, for instance, 'an obscure branch of knowledge' but it turns out to be of vital importance. Gandalf is friends with the Ents, the Eagles, the Beornings, the Dwarves, most Men (apart from those in the East where he does not go), and of course the Elves (and Bombadil!). Gandalf looks outwards to the wider world (contrast this with the shuttered mind of Saruman); he recognises the need for unity, not so

[4] The words of Blaise Pascal from his *Pensées* come to mind: *Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point* ('the heart has its reasons which reason knows not').

as to have numerical or brute force advantage (which they never seem to have had in the Third Age) but more in a supportive, fellowship-type way. Note that the free peoples often live on islands so-to-speak, cut off from each other by Sauron's forces (the divide and conquer principle). In other words, isolation is not a good policy. As such, there is a sort of moral and spiritual imperative to fight for goodness – we may not all be heroes like Frodo, Aragorn or Gandalf, but it does not diminish the heroism of those who do all they can, such as Sam, Merry and Pippin.

Conclusion

Evil lacks substance in the tangible world, yet is nonetheless very real, part of the fabric of the world itself. Nevertheless, hope tells us that there is something beyond this and it gives us the strength to fight against evil, something which it is our moral and spiritual duty to do. Such goodness can be displayed by the smallest of peoples with just a 'fool's hope' who recognise what they must do and attempt to do it even in the face of overwhelming odds. As Elrond says:

> "The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere."
>
> *The Council of Elrond, The Fellowship of the Ring*

If this has no resonance in the real world, I don't know what does. Indeed, Tolkien explicitly said *The Lord of the Rings* is not allegory but it might nevertheless be applicable to the lives of readers in some way. Gandalf, too, hints at such relevance when he warns the Hobbits of Saruman:

> 'Well, we've got you with us,' said Merry, 'so things will soon be cleared up.'
> 'I am with you at present,' said Gandalf, 'but soon I shall not be. I am not coming to the Shire. You must settle its affairs yourselves; that is what you have been trained for… You are grown up now…'
>
> *Homeward Bound, The Return of the King*

Their adventure in the wide world has prepared the Hobbits for taking up the good cause in their own country. Our journey with them should do likewise for us.

Some Thoughts on the Films

Samuel Cook

Warning: Contains Spoilers

Unless you've been doing a Gollum and living in a cave underneath a mountain for the past 500 years, you will be aware of the release of Peter Jackson's film versions of LOTR and the Hobbit, and the ensuing heated debate this has generated in Tolkien fandom. Indeed, such divisions are present within the august membership of CTS – our very own Glaurung refuses to watch them, considering them works of Isengard; whilst other members could be said to be rather over-enthusiastic to say the least (the two most recent predecessors of the Keeper of the Red Book spring to mind…). Here, therefore, is an attempt to provide a framework for analysing the films in something that comes close to an objective manner and, consequently, to make the debates about them slightly more rigorous than:

> "Thranduil is AMAZING!"
> "But what's wrong with his face?"
> "Who cares? He's AMAZING!!"
> "But the implication in the film is he fought a dragon, possibly Smaug himself. Where have they got that from? And how'd he get away with only a ravaged face?"
> "Your Mum's face"

And so on, into increasing levels of bitterness, childishness and inanity.

The first thing to consider is the point of the films. Ultimately, the only reason they were made is because the various studios involved thought they'd get a lot of recognition and, more importantly, money out of the franchise. Jackson himself and many of the rest of the production team as well as the actors may well have done it out of a love of Middle-earth but, ultimately, the studio management would only have agreed to it if they thought it was good business. And, on that front, the films have been undeniably, astonishingly successful. LOTR won 17 Oscars and grossed just short of $3bn at the box office worldwide. So far, the Hobbit films have been unrewarded at the Oscars, but the first part received three nominations in technical categories. If the pattern is anything like that seen with LOTR, the third instalment will win quite a few though. And, on the financial front, the franchise has already grossed well north of $1.5bn at the global box office. Combined, this means the films are currently the 4th highest-grossing franchise so far, outranked only by the Marvel universe, the James Bond franchise and the Harry Potter films (though, given the plans for future Star Wars films, it is likely Middle-earth will drop down to 5th in the near future). Jackson has, arguably, become one of the most famous and successful modern directors, and many of the cast of the LOTR films have seen a major upswing in their fortunes. Who'd heard of Karl Urban or Orlando Bloom before LOTR turned up? And I

suspect that if you played the word association game, most people's response to "Ian McKellen" would be "Gandalf". So, on the terms they were made, the films have been undeniably successful, regardless of whether you enjoy them.

A second point, following on from the above, is that the success of the films has generated a huge amount of interest in Middle-earth and the works of Tolkien, encouraging many more people to read the books than might otherwise have done so (including, I suspect, many of the current CTS membership). Hobbits and Rings have entered mainstream culture and most people will have some idea of what you're talking about when you treat your non-CTS friends to learned monologues on Middle-earth (whether they'll think of it as a treat is neither here nor there). Aside from the lurid and faintly worrying fan fiction this has led to, this can only be a good thing from the society's point of view and for Tolkien nerds everywhere. So, again, regardless of what you think of the films, you have to admit they have some advantages.

Moving on, it is now necessary to consider how the films relate to the books and whether the differences between the two are justifiable, as this has been the main point of contention and the source of most of the arguments. First thought, two important caveats: a film adaptation of a book is never going to be exactly faithful to the book. If it were, it would most likely be an awful film. So some degree of distortion has to be expected. Second, "the films don't look like what's in my head" is not a valid criticism. Everyone who reads a book will come up with their own mental images of the characters, places and objects involved. Just because the particular interpretation portrayed in the films does not match exactly with your own mental image, does not mean it is bad or wrong, provided it is plausible. Jackson's mental image is just as valid as yours. If he'd dressed all the hobbits in neon green tracksuits, that would be a different matter, but I think that, generally, the films are visually in keeping with what we're given in the books and they do look fantastic(al).

Admittedly, not many people have criticised the films for their visuals (ignoring the whole High Frame Rate in the Hobbit debacle). Instead, it has largely been around issues of plot and characterisation that the debates have focussed. When it comes to these sorts of issues, I would argue there are two questions you need to ask before you can criticise the film. The first of these is: Is there a good reason for the alteration? In other words, does it make the film better in some way or clarify a character's actions, motives or similar when we don't have all the background in the books to hand? Second: Is the alteration plausible? In other words, does it fit with the general ethos and feel of Middle-earth or with what we know of the character? If it directly contradicts what is in the books, is it a plausible alternative version of events? The first question is particularly relevant to omissions of things in the books, the second to film-only additions. If the answer to both questions is "Yes" then I would argue that the alteration is a good one and should not be criticised. This doesn't mean that I would want the books re-written to include it, but that it works and makes sense in the film universe. If the answer to one of the questions is "No", then that

probably makes it a valid target for criticism, though, depending on the person, you might feel that it is justified in some way (for example, it might make the film a lot better but is somewhat implausible). These sorts of situations are the most subjective and the best ones to argue about! If the answer to both questions is "No", then it is definitely a valid target for criticism, should be universally condemned, declared anathema and ritually burnt.

Obviously, different people will have different interpretations of what is plausible within Middle-earth and what makes a good film, but at least using the above framework gives you something to structure an argument on. To show you what I mean, I've picked a few examples from the films and applied the framework to them.

The Elves fighting at Helm's Deep

Is there a good reason for it? YES
Is it plausible? YES

This is probably the most noticeable completely-fabricated addition to the LOTR films. However, I'd argue it is a good decision. To start with, it does make Helm's Deep a better climactic action scene for TTT, with the sense of it being a pivotal wider good vs. evil battle, rather than just Rohan vs. Isengard. Given that a lot of the material tangential to the main plot in the books is missed out, and that the War of the Ring is condensed to the two battles of Helm's Deep and the Pelennor Fields (a decision you may or may not agree with), it also shows that the Elves weren't just sitting around doing nothing whilst the Men did all the work. Given we're not told about all the fighting in Lórien, around Erebor and so on, without the Elves turning up at the Hornburg, the films would suggest that Galadriel and Elrond just sat in their respective Elven wonderlands fretting and sighing without actually doing much once Frodo had left.

Within the films, it is also plausible – Lórien is not that far from Rohan, and in the opposite direction from Isengard, so there's no reason to expect that the Elves would have been prevented from reaching Helm's Deep. As the assaults by Sauron on Lórien itself aren't mentioned in the films, there's also no reason why the Elves would have needed to stay there to defend it. So, all in all, a good decision, I would argue.

The Omission of Bombadil

Is there a good reason for it? YES
Is it plausible? YES

As opposed to the above, this is probably the most marked omission of material from the book in the films (representing 2 or 3 chapters completely ignored). Many Tolkien fans like Bombadil (though many others also find him a bit odd) and his nature is a source of eternal debate, but his omission from the films made sense. Bombadil does not feature anywhere else in the books and plays no further role in any way. As the films show, you can

safely omit the entire Bombadil episode and the only thing you really have to explain is how the Hobbits get their swords.

Furthermore, his appearance would have been confusing – many people would have wondered why this apparently very powerful person over whom the Ring has no control is not further involved in the Quest. This would have necessitated a lot of explanation that wouldn't really have added anything to the films, beyond runtime. It also would have been difficult to make him fit with the generally fairly bleak serious tone of the films (particularly in FOTR, which is probably the bleakest film overall). In the books, in my opinion, the Bombadil chapters mainly serve to demonstrate that a) the Ring is evil and attracts evil and b) that there are other powers in the world that are independent of it and that, therefore, there is hope. And c) to give more depth to Middle-earth. I think the films adequately show a) and b) in other ways and, as mentioned previously, much of the material elsewhere pertaining to c) is left out, so leaving this part out fits with the general approach of the films.

The films also construct an entirely plausible alternative storyline. As referred to above, the only thing they really have to explain is the provenance of the Hobbits' weapons. This is dealt with by just having Aragorn carrying a stash of appropriate weapons – one assumes that he would have bought or found some knowing that he was to look after the Hobbits in Gandalf's absence.

Barrel-fighting

Is there a good reason for it? YES
Is it plausible? NO

This scene is probably the most spectacular action scene in the second Hobbit film. It takes what would have been, arguably, a rather boring scene of Thorin and Company floating down the Forest River sealed in barrels and turns it into an exciting set piece. Unlike the scene in FOTR of the Fellowship paddling down Anduin, there wouldn't be the Argonath to look at and you wouldn't actually be able to see any of the characters, apart from Bilbo's head. The alternative would have been to almost leave it out entirely – perhaps just have a shot of the Dwarves getting sealed into the barrels and dropped into the river and then another one of them getting out at Laketown – which would have been rather a shame. The scene also serves to develop the Kili-Tauriel relationship (which, for me, would fail both tests suggested here), which is an important element of the plot. So, from a film point of view, there is a very good reason for putting it in.

On the other hand, it's perhaps not the most plausible of scenes. The Dwarves have been wandering around Mirkwood and then locked up for a bit, so their apparent energy seems a little out-of-place. They also somehow acquire a lot of weapons (which they then manage to mysteriously lose by the time they meet Bard), despite having been locked up and not raiding Thranduil's armoury. Legolas and Tauriel also take Elven combat acrobatics

to a new level of ridiculousness, and Bombur's barrel getting somehow flipped out of the river, crushing a load of Orcs, flipping onto the other bank and crushing more Orcs, followed by Bombur's impression of a whirling dervish and plopping perfectly back into a new barrel is completely improbable. How the Orcs get so close to Thranduil's palace without being spotted when the kingdom is on high alert is also rather mysterious.

Personally, I think the scene is great fun, and I'm happy to suspend my disbelief when watching it. But other people will feel differently, so there's a legitimate argument to be had here.

Weak Faramir

Is there a good reason for it? NO
Is it plausible? NO

One of the other major plot deviations in the LOTR films is when Faramir succumbs to the lure of the Ring and initially decides to take Frodo back to Minas Tirith. I have always been slightly puzzled and quite annoyed by this scene. I don't really think it adds much to the film, beyond demonstrating that the Ring is evil and that Men are susceptible to it, which is adequately portrayed elsewhere (Boromir….), and giving Galadriel an opportunity to do some portentous voiceover work demonstrating how precarious Frodo's position and quest are. This is also adequately demonstrated elsewhere and could have been achieved by having Faramir let them go, as he did in the books, and then showing them wandering through Ithilien for a bit, finding the signs of Orcs everywhere and making them really paranoid.

However, my main problem with the scene is that it is completely implausible – the whole point of Faramir is that he is different to Boromir and can resist the Ring. If the intention was to portray Faramir as being more similar to Boromir, then I could understand it, but he later does decide to let the Hobbits go anyway, and his future actions are largely concordant with how he is characterised in the books. Why, therefore, couldn't he have just let them go the first time, making the contrast with Boromir clearer, and sticking closer to how Tolkien saw the character? The only way to explain it is that Faramir's sense of duty to Gondor initially overruled his personal feelings and morality. But, if he knew that the Ring was evil and would harm Gondor if he brought it back (as suggested by his later release of Frodo), why would he feel that taking it to Minas Tirith would help? Unless he was consciously trying to emulate Boromir, in which case, why the sudden change of heart? Boromir would not have been put off by a Ringwraith and some Orcs. So, for me, the scene adds little to the movies and is largely implausible within the movie universe – it seems to be a more-or-less pointless deviation from the books.

In conclusion, when criticising the films, it is important to bear in mind their success on their own terms and the recognition they've brought Tolkien's works. It is also necessary

to accept that the films' interpretation of Middle-earth is as valid as anyone else's and not to fault them for not being the same as your personal vision of the world. Lastly, it is necessary to recognise that a completely faithful adaptation of the books would almost certainly make a very long and very bad set of films. Where the films have deviated from the books, it is important to ask whether there is a good reason for doing so and whether the film version of events is plausible. If both of these conditions are true, then it is not really fair to criticise the films for straying from the books in that particular instance. If one is false, then criticism may be justified, though that will depend on your personal feelings, and if both are false, then criticism is almost certainly justified, except in very rare cases (people might just irrationally really like the scene…).

Túrin: Middle-earth's Stalin?
The Kill Count of the Most Murderous Man in Middle-earth

Samuel Cook

The Narn i Hîn Húrin is one of the most complete of the tales of the Elder Days and, arguably, the most tragic. Túrin is normally seen as a fundamentally good guy, who is perhaps just a bit too proud for his own good and really, really unlucky. And cursed. But, actually, if you read it a few times, you realise just how many Men/Elves/Orcs/Dragons/Dwarves Túrin directly or indirectly killed. So many, you begin to wonder if he really was quite as essentially good as all that…. Here, therefore, is an attempt to quantify Túrin's homicidal streak, explore the reasons behind his proclivity for killing (through some rather liberal interpretation of the books), and compare his score to some of the more bloodsoaked nutters of history. Sorry if you were expecting a serious historical essay on the parallels between Túrin and Stalin.

The list is based on Chapter XXI of *The Silmarillion*: "Of Túrin Turambar", and the Narn i Hîn Húrin, as published in *Unfinished Tales*. Unfortunately, I didn't have access to a copy of *The Children of Húrin* at the time of writing, but, beyond forcing me to flick between two books, the actual material is more-or-less the same. And, given the approximations made later on, a few details and supplementary deaths here and there aren't going to make much difference. Deaths are attributed to Túrin if he directly killed someone, ordered a death, or by his actions or inaction, where he was free to choose, made a death far more likely. The more perspicacious reader will notice this is hopelessly subjective. But so is a lot of Tolkien analysis, so tough. Arguing is all part of the fun and please do feel free to disagree with all or part of the article. There's also a question as to how far Túrin was ever free to act, but a discussion of free will in Tolkien and how it applies to Túrin is rather beyond the scope of this article (this has been discussed in Anor before – see Anor 38 "On the Nature of Freedom in Middle Earth" (by our very own Daeron) and "Masters of Doom: by Doom Mastered?"). So we'll assume he did have free will, to make things easier.

- First Blood: at the age of 17, Túrin starts on his lifetime of killing by slaughtering unspecified numbers of Orcs, whilst defending Doriath for 3 years. Being a rather effective warrior, and "forward in deeds of daring" (*Unfinished Tales*, p.103), we can safely assume he averaged at least one kill a day.
    - Kill Count: **1,000**
- Killer: having acquired a taste for slaughter, Túrin undertakes his first cold-blooded murder at the age of 20 by chasing the harmless idiot elf, Saeros, off a cliff, over a bit of dinnertime banter. Rule 1 of Túrin club: Don't insult Túrin. Rule 2: Do not make "your mum" jokes about Túrin's mum.
    - Kill Count: **1,001**

- Outlaw: sliding ever further into depravity, Túrin joins up with a bunch of outlaws, gaining admittance to the band by killing one of its existing members "for looking at him funny".[1] He then schemes to take over the band, eventually contriving to kill the leader, Forweg, in a staged accident. To do this, he pays a local girl to seduce Forweg, so he could then "rescue" her and, in the confusion, bump off Forweg, claiming he didn't recognise him and that he was just protecting an innocent maid.[2]
    - Kill Count: **1,003**
- Bandit: Túrin takes to the life of a highwayman, robbing helpless travellers. One caravan of Orcs, more cunning than the rest, uses scouts and foils Túrin's ambush. Túrin kills two of the scouts, but his companion, Orleg, is killed in the botched attack and the Orcs subsequently kill all their human captives, in fear of this unruly and violent race. The number of captives that Túrin's senseless lust for violence caused to be killed is unknown, but 100 seems like a nice round number.[3]
    - Kill Count: **1,106 (est.)**
- Marauder: Túrin and his band wander around for a few months, having running battles with roving groups of Orcs. Kill count unknown. Let's call it another 3,600 (at 1 a day or so per man in the band for 3 months).
    - Kill Count: **4706 (est)**
- Genocidal maniac: Túrin's rampant bloodthirstiness keeps on growing, and he settles on a plan to wipe out the critically endangered species of the Petty-Dwarves, as he becomes convinced that they secretly rule the world in alliance with lizards from space, after a particularly trippy night with a renegade Elf named Deividhaec.[4] They stalk the last three representatives of this race, before ambushing them and killing one, Khîm, and holding the other two hostage in their own house, trying to get them to tell them where they'd hidden all the money they had to have as rulers of the world, and torturing them with their sheer stupidity.
    - Kill Count: **4707**
- Guerrilla: From his new base, Túrin and co., with the assistance of his old friend and henchman, Beleg Bigbow,[5] start preying on Orcish families coming south for the winter to have a nice holiday. Inevitably, things escalate quickly into a major hit-and-run campaign against the entire Orcish military. Lots of Orcs die. At one Orc per man

[1] This is purely anecdotal from some man I met down the pub. In the interests of balance, it should be pointed out the killed man was pointing a drawn bow at Túrin. But so were several other outlaws at the time, so Túrin must have had a reason for picking this particular guy.

[2] This was also vouchsafed by my knowledgeable friend down the pub. It's not that far from what's printed in *Unfinished Tales* (p.114-116)….

[3] We know the band of Orcs was "far greater" (*Unfinished Tales*, p.119) in number than the band of outlaws, who numbered around 50. So, it seems likely that the Orcs numbered in the low hundreds, so 100 captives seems like a manageable number. More would be too difficult for them to control; less would probably not have been worth their while.

[4] Who, ironically, was later killed by an infected lizard bite, received after he kept on trying to get one to take him to its leaders. He then became the only spirit in Mandos to move Mandos to rage, with his incessant prattling, so got serially reincarnated as an amoeba for eternity.

[5] His is bigger than yours.

per day for 6 months, that's about 9,000. Eventually, Túrin and his gang are tracked down in a massive counter-insurgency operation, where the blood-crazed Túrin fights to the last man. Túrin is captured and Beleg escapes by feigning death. So that's another 100 deaths we can attribute to Túrin (the 50 men of his band and the same number of Orcs).

    - Kill Count: **13,807**

- Jailbird: Beleg, with the assistance of his crony, Gwindor the Grim, contrives to spring Túrin from jail, slaying several guards in the process. Unfortunately, Túrin's temporary captivity has pushed him into insanity, causing him to mistake Beleg for a Petty-Dwarf and butchering him on sight. Gwindor manages to get a hypodermic into Túrin, and sedate him. Using a cocktail of powerful drugs, he is able to control Túrin's insanity and mood swings, and lead him back to his home: the underground-base-hidden-inside-a-volcano of the rebel Elvish general, Orodreth the 'Orrible, known as Nargothrond.
    - Kill Count: **13,815**
- Generalissimo: Túrin gradually takes over Orodreth's organisation and quickly becomes the de facto Boss of Nargothrond, sidelining Orodreth, with the assistance of his moll, Finduilas, Orodreth's daughter. He slaughters some more Orcs and escalates warfare in the area (probably leading to at least 5,000 deaths now he commands an army) to cement his standing and, as his insanity and arrogance grow, he builds a massive bridge over the river in front of the base. This rather negates the principal advantage of secret bases: being secret.
    - Kill Count: **18,815**
- Deposed: Having revealed the location of his base, Túrin's enemies gather and attack, with the assistance of the mercenary dragon, Glaurung, who was really annoyed at Túrin for implicating him in his lizards-from-space conspiracy theory. Túrin, now barely functioning on a mental level, orders his army to march out and attack, rather than destroying the bridge and fighting from a superb defensive position. Much killing occurs (let's say 10,000 on each side[6]), but Túrin's army is worsted, and Orodreth and Gwindor are killed. Finduilas is taken captive, to be put on trial for crimes against Orcdom. The Orcs also go a bit crazy and sack Nargothrond, killing nearly all the inhabitants. So that's another 10,000 attributable to Túrin. Túrin escapes, but, having seen Glaurung in the vanguard of the enemy army (where else would you put a dragon?), takes this as incontrovertible proof that the lizards are in control and loses whatever tenuous grip on reality he still had. He therefore sets off for Dor-lómin, his original home, on a vague notion that he should check his family aren't really lizards. Or Petty-Dwarves. Or something. He's a bit confused.
    - Kill Count: **48,815**

[6] It's a nice big round number. Given the endless pages of discussion, argument and speculation on the population of Middle Earth, picking a nice big round number is as valid a strategy as any in this case.

- Berserker: Túrin reaches Dor-lómin and finds his family gone. Assuming they've been abducted by the lizards, he goes berserk and slaughters a peaceful immigrant[7] Easterling family (10 kills) who have moved into the area, with the assistance of the fighters of the People's Front of Dor-lómin. The Easterlings are a little miffed by this, and rise up against the remnants of Túrin's own ethnic group, the House of Hador (say another 100 deaths). Having started civil war and ethnic cleansing in his homeland, Túrin meanders vaguely towards Doriath, where he heard his family had gone.
    - Kill Count: **48,925**
- Vigilante: In the course of his wanderings, Túrin comes to Brethil and comes upon a band of men having a tense stand-off with a group of Orcs over whether falling trees do or do not make a sound if there's no one there to hear it. With his peculiar genius for creating chaos, Túrin immediately turns a peaceful, if tense, philosophical debate (which the Orcs were winning through sheer weight of numbers) into an orgy of bloodletting. Fortunately, many of the Orcs recognised Túrin from the "Wanted" posters everywhere and knew of his condition, so scattered before they were cut down. So, only another 100 deaths or so.
    - Kill Count: **49,025**
- Stalker: Túrin is taken in by the men of Brethil, who recognised him as a useful tool for gaining the upper hand in their ongoing philosophical debates with the Orcs. From them he learns that Finduilas has been executed for crimes against Orcdom. He falls into a coma, due to shock, and on waking, regains a measure of sanity. His insane rage is cooled, and he only hunts a few Orcs for the next two-and-a-half years, say 10 a month, giving 300 more deaths. On the other hand, he does marry his sister, Nienor "Ninny" Niniel, (who had been brainwashed by Glaurung, because he really was a lizard from space and was trying to entirely discredit Túrin, who had stumbled on his conspiracy to take over the world), who he had never met, so his life wasn't exactly normal….
    - Kill Count: **49,325**
- Commander: Glaurung indoctrinates an army of Orcs and sends them to attack Túrin, as some less crackpot people had picked up on Túrin's ramblings and were asking awkward questions. This assault on his new home pushes Túrin back towards the brink of insanity and he leads an army of the Woodmen to confront and slaughter the Orcs. Chalk up another 2,000 kills on the list….
    - Kill Count: **51,325**
- Dovahkiin[8]: In his unstable mental state, Túrin becomes convinced that he is in some way related to the lizards from space and that it is his destiny to destroy them. After the failure of his assault on Brethil, Glaurung himself attacks, grumbling about needing to do things yourself to get them done properly. Túrin's newly-developed

[7] Unsurprisingly, his mental state also made him rather xenophobic.
[8] It really helps if you have some familiarity with the Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim at this point.

god complex therefore leads him to decide that he needs to fight him one-on-one. Túrin FUS-RO-DAH's Glaurung's arse, though a few inconsequential generic friendlies (Hunthor and Dorlas) are killed in the process. Trying to carry all the dragon bone and scales to sell for lots of money, Túrin exceeds his carrying capacity and collapses with exhaustion.

    - Kill Count: **51,328**

- Romeo: Whilst Túrin lies collapsed, Nienor finds him, and thinking him dead and herself being free from Glaurung's brainwashing, jumps off a cliff. Túrin recovers and wanders off in search of someone. He finds Brandir, who tells him the news of Niniel and that she was his sister. In return, Túrin kills him, because a) he was a little distraught and insane, and b) he'd never liked him much anyway. Finally, he kills himself, now that he believes he has nothing to live for, having halted the lizard conspiracy and lost his family.
    - Kill Count: **51,331**

Overall then, the figure of somewhere around 50,000 kills puts Túrin far short of, say, Stalin, Hitler or Mao, but, given the likely relatively small population of Middle Earth, this still puts him up there on a proportional basis. On the other hand, he did manage to prevent the Space Lizard-Petty Dwarf conspiracy from taking over Middle Earth, so, in a sense, he saved all of us. Like Flash Gordon, just with better acting and more insanity.

To finish on something approaching serious reality, despite the rather non-standard portrayal of Túrin above, it would appear he did kill, or at least cause the death of, a very significant number of Men, Elves, Orcs and a dragon. To my mind, none of the other "good" heroes can quite match the sheer scale of Túrin's destruction, especially given the fact that much of it could have been avoided – the Sack of Nargothrond springs to mind here. Whilst, arguably, Fingon and Maedhros (largely responsible for the Nirnaeth Arnoediad), Turgon (he could have evacuated Gondolin before it fell) or Gil-Galad (3,500 years as High King of the Noldor and an awful lot of fighting Sauron) may have killed more, they just don't seem to match Túrin's ability to leave a trail of death and destruction everywhere he went. To state the obvious: being cursed by Morgoth isn't exactly a bundle of laughs….

Defending Minas Tirith: The Battle of the Two Tolkien Societies

Christy Linder & Jing Ran

Like Bilbo venturing forth from Bag End for the first time, we (Jing & Christy) left Cambridge with a whimsical sense of anticipation and excitement about the day ahead. That was somewhat dissipated by the first misfortune: the news that Jamie and Bettina, our foremost Silmarillion and Elvish scholars, had been overwhelmed by the Black Breath and thralldom respectively. The immediate import of this piece of news was that the day's five-person team was composed of three people who basically knew what they were talking about and two people (us) who were largely clueless, gibbering, and unhelpful, until the movie round, when Jing actually turned out to be quite a boon to the team (no worries – she has been duly censured).

The quiz, in spite of our change of fortunes, turned out to be every bit as fun as we expected. Taruithorn presented a very strong team this year, with their people expertly fielding questions like the length of the Second Age and the name of the town that *Farmer Giles of Ham* gives a historical explanation to (Worminghall, in case you had forgotten). In fact, they probably would have beaten us if it weren't for the game rounds. Just as a note for next year: the teacher has sternly told us that we need to read the books.

That being said, there were some very impressive moments on our side as well. Memorably, Rachel was able to recall the name of Frodo in Westron, James recited the epitaph on Balin's tomb in Khuzdul, which was unsurprisingly epic to hear (although I really think Sam fiddled with the questions, so that James would get that one), and Christy remembered the names of the three oldest Ents remaining in the Third Age. But where we really excelled was in the Taboo rounds, where in-jokes will get you a lot further than a clear, pedantic description of the word in question. For example, the cult of Caradhras came in quite handy when David was working through his list of Taboo words. Aside from the helpless laughter, it's easier to answer quickly when a single gesture or motion is a sufficient clue. Other noteworthy Taboo hints included: "party king on stag" (Thranduil), "fabulous" (do I even need to say it?), pointing at Sam for Ar-Pharazôn, "shiny" (Arkenstone), and David raising his arms like a tree for Quickbeam.

After several question rounds, two games of Taboo, and two list rounds (Outlaws of Dorthonion and Children of the Old Took), we had finally pulled ahead with a slight lead over Taruithorn going into the final round, which was a game of Only Connect. By the end of that round, we were ahead 72 to 67, securing a win over Taruithorn and holding on to the title for the third year running. I think most of us were a bit surprised that we had actually pulled off the win, but Tolkien was a fan of victories in uncertain times, so we'll just think of it as a tribute to the master himself. Congratulations and best of luck next year!

Anor Quiz Questions

Samuel Cook

Here is a selection of really rather hard quiz questions (only some of which are about geography) for you all to mull over, as practice for the Varsity Quiz [if this is published before then – if not, delete that bit]. If you get full marks, you really should be on the team. In fact, if you get half marks, you should be on the team.

Scores:

1-3: Fool of a Took
4-6: A quite respectable hobbit
7-9: Mayor Samwise
10: The most famousest of hobbits

Questions:

1. Which constellation in the Silmarillion is shaped like a butterfly, and is probably an equivalent to Cassiopeia?

2. What was Tar-Aldarion's birth name and how might you translate it?

3. Which two rivers join to form the Anduin?

4. What is the name of Farmer Giles's sword?

5. What year did the kingdom of Arnor fall?

6. In LOTR, who is the Lord of Dunharrow?

7. Who are the three wizards in Roverandom?

8. What colour were the hoods of Bifur and Bofur?

9. Which beacon hill is the nearest to Minas Tirith and borders the Grey Wood and Stonewain Valley?

10. What fraction of Elvish blood does Elrond actually have?

See page 47 for answers.

Gondorians

James Baillie

(To the tune of “Pokémon”)

I want to be the very best,
Like Morgoth never was.
With orcish minions at my behest,
To serve the evil cause.

My armies travel across the land,
Burning far and wide.
These Gondorians don’t understand
The thrill of homicide.

Gondorians, (gotta slay them all) it’s them or me.
I know it’s my destiny.
Gondorians, oh, they have no friends
In a world they can’t defend.

Gondorians, (gotta slay them all) my orcs are true,
With Haradrim and Mûmaks too,
And Easterlings to cut things in two,
Gondor-ia-ns, gotta slay 'em all.

Every challenge along the way
With crushing force I’ll face.
My redshirts battle every day
To claim my rightful place.

With Saruman, the time is right
There's no better team.
I’ll seize my ring and win the fight
And Gandalf’s gon’ get creamed.

Gondorians! (Gotta slay 'em all)
It's them or me
I know it's my destiny

Gondorians!
Oh, they have no friends
In a world they can’t defend

Gondorians!
My orcs are true,
With Haradrim and Mûmaks too,
And Easterlings to cut things in two,

Gondorians!
(Gotta slay 'em all) x5

Yeah!
Gondorians!
It's them or me
I know it's my destiny

Gondorians!
Oh, they have no friends
In a world they can’t defend

Gondorians!
My orcs are true,
With Haradrim and Mûmaks too,
And Easterlings to cut things in two!

The White Hand of Saruman

James Baillie

(To the tune of “The Phantom of the Opera”)

THÉODEN
First Wormtongue sang to me,
That strange young man,
Now something calls to me and rules Rohan,
And do I dream again for now I find
That the white hand of Saruman is there
Inside my mind.

SARUMAN
The Westfold burning bright,
The orcish threat,
My power over you grows stronger yet,
And soon the downfall comes of all mankind
For the white hand of Saruman is there
Inside your mind.

THÉODEN
Now you control me with
Your lies and fear.
I am the mask you wear

SARUMAN
It's me they hear...

BOTH
Your/My spirit and my/your voice in one combined
For the white hand of Saruman is t/here
Inside my/your mind.

BACKGROUND / WORMTONGUE
He's there, the new white Wizard Gandalf!
Beware, the new white Wizard Gandalf!

SARUMAN
And this my palantír did not foresee
That old man here to help

THÉODEN
Me struggle free!

BOTH
But though I/you struggle now
Old and half blind,
Still the white hand of Saruman is there,
Inside my/your mind.

THÉODEN
He's there, the new white Wizard Gandalf!

SARUMAN
Speak, my Puppet of Rohan,
Speak, my Puppet,
Speak for me,
Speak, my Puppet!
Speak for me!

Anor Quiz Questions (Answers)

Samuel Cook

Answers:

1. Wilwarin
2. Anardil - “sun-lover” or words to that effect
3. Greylin and Langwell
4. Tailbiter/Caudimordax
5. T.A. 1975
6. Dúnhere
7. Artaxerxes, Psamathos Psamathides, The Man in the Moon
8. Yellow
9. Amon Dîn
10. 9/16 – he’s slightly more than half-Elven.

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