



*Anor Issue 46, Easter 2015*



# anor

## Ḅötcrö a pöcayun

### Editor's Note

*Mae govannen, mellyn nín!* Welcome, my friends, to Issue 46 of the Cambridge Tolkien Society's *Anor*!

Something has happened that has not happened for an age ... we have published an edition of *Anor* in Easter Term, meaning we have published three issues in one year! Many thanks to our contributors for this issue: Karampela Elli, Samuel Cook, and Ferrucio and Giulia Manfieri.

We have a range of pieces inside from an erudite article applying Marxist theory to *The Hobbit* from a contributor in Greece, to songs from contributors in Italy, through to tales of sheep and lettuces ... yes, that's correct: sheep and lettuces (the topics of discussion at the CTS Annual Dinner are nothing less than weird and wonderful, you see).

If you feel like writing, composing, drawing etc. over the summer, please do! Daeron always looks forward to receiving submissions!

Jamie Douglas, Daeron (Editor of *Anor*)  
Cambridge Tolkien Society  
University of Cambridge, Easter 2015

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## **"The Treasure of My House": Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Commodity Fetishism**

*Karampela Elli*

Long hours in the past days Thorin had spent in the treasury, and the lust of it was heavy on him. Though he had hunted chiefly for the Arkenstone, yet he had an eye for many another wonderful thing that was lying there, about which were wound old memories of the labours and the sorrows of his race.

*(The Hobbit 306)*

Although the academic discourse around *The Hobbit* (1937) does not include a lot of Marxist criticism, Marxist theories about capitalism and commodity fetishism can be interpretively productive for *The Hobbit*. In this case, ideas about the fetishism of commodities can be utilized for grasping the pervasiveness of the "dragon fever" influence. Money fever, in this respect, alludes to the way dragon fever and treasure charm correspond to the transformation of the commodity into an end in itself, essentially stripped of what Louise Kaplan recognizes as "its own enigmatic energy and immaterial essence" (5), what lies behind the superficial totality of the commodity. Tolkien, though often accused of as escapist and apolitical, gifts his novel with many an allusion to the materialist conditions of contemporary capitalist society. The whole enterprise of the dwarves in their quest for their homeland, symbolized by the locale occupied by the dragon hoard, is deeply embedded within ideology; ideology is recruited to veil precisely this involvement of capitalist rawness, and class in consequence, in the nexus of the quest. Tolkien expresses exactly the way the ideology of capitalism is sustained through a latent subjection of the fragmented individual by a supposedly whole, objectified (reified) commodity, the much-sought-for treasure that embodies their quest. The fetishistic character of the commodity will be approached, in this sense, to reveal a displacement of desire taking place unto the commodity itself, a desire for unity that stems from the fragmented subject and projected to an illusory conception of wholeness and materiality in the commodity. Commodity fetishism will be seen as a source of manipulation and social domination, but also as a target for subversion.

Taking cue from Lee D. Rossi 's contention that the dragon in *The Hobbit*, Smaug, "represents for Tolkien what Chesterton has called 'the sins of capitalism,'" (100), with his big bulk lying indefinitely upon a huge expanse of gold, I want to disentangle the mechanics of what exactly lures some of the characters, one by one, into the charms of the treasure, and what this enchantment points to. As a preliminary, therefore, it is only natural that I shall refer to Tolkien's effort to connect with and comment on, implicitly rather than explicitly, the capitalist conditions of his own society. Indeed, Patchen Mortimer recognizes that it is the "advent of the First World War" that "irrevocably altered almost everything in European society" (120), and the changes left artists and writers grappling with questions

about "the human condition in the wake of conflict that had been utterly dehumanizing" (120). Tolkien can be situated among those writers who, even imperceptibly, fought his own way towards expressing his views on contemporary events through fantasy. This does not mean, however, that his novels are allegories. *The Lord of the Rings* (1937-1949) is far from allegorical, although there are echoes of the war throughout, and *The Hobbit*, respectively, does not fit neatly into real-life events; "[i]nspiration," Mortimer goes on to argue, "is not equivalent to transplantation" (124). This does not leave the echoes fainter for all that, however; they become vividly enlivened by Tolkien's fantasy. "[B]ehind the fantasy," Tolkien admits in his pivotal essay "On Fairy Stories" (1947), "real wills and powers exist" (116).

Tolkien's world during the years he wrote *The Hobbit* was a troubled, post-war, capitalist world, triggered and pushed forward, as Jonathan Witt and Jay Richards maintain, by "what Friedrich Nietzsche called 'the will to power'" (23), the will to excel, impose oneself, and dominate. It is therefore not surprising that Tolkien, along with other fellow writers of his generation, saw his surroundings as a place of exploitation, and "a host of things that are tasteless, deadening, depraved" (23) that foster the violation of people's freedom in the twentieth century. This is not to say, of course, that Tolkien was a socialist, or a democrat; in fact, he was unsure about the effects of democracy on the lives of the people (Witt, Richards 23). But he yearned for the rural past of England, what Anna Vaninskaya suggests as the traditional mode of "English community" (21) before the imposition of the rule of the State, its control of a supposedly free economy, and the advent of industrialism that automatically arouses a nostalgia for the past.

The basis of international capitalism, the notorious *laissez-faire* (free trade), led to corruptions inimical to the best interests of the average worker, and sustained this will to power that Tolkien witnessed during the war and post-war years when he was fighting in the pulp of World War I and after. For Tolkien, as his biographer Humphrey Carpenter comments, such world put the idea of happiness irretrievably out of reach (123). This is evident if only one immerses into the rural landscape of Bilbo's Shire, with its rural charm, innocence, freedom, but also with what Witt and Richards call the "ideal form" of "a market economy" (26) that respects the freedom of the self and encompasses "a minimal government focused not on regulating and redistributing but on maintaining the rule of law" (26). It is, for Tolkien, an ideal, a perspective of his idea of the human and the organization of the human on the basis of his/her freedom, that remains highly nostalgic but no less political, even subtly. The opposite, for Tolkien, and the highest threat to his own view of the ideal society, is what Vaninskaya sees as international capitalism and the centralization of power on the state (21). In a world where capital pervades and rules, money and power are enmeshed with each other, and depend on each other. Through fantasy, Tolkien voices his conception about the darkness of his experiences, mostly from "the stimulus it required in the early years of his life, the years of event and changing landscapes" (Carpenter 124).

In connection to this decisive role ascribed to fantasy, it seems that the long-held belief that fantasy is escapist and therefore apolitical is questioned to the core; Edward James enacts a critique like this by referring to the political character of fantasy, the politics of which is a reality even when, especially when, fantasy itself is not aware of its political character (102). We can take Tolkien's word for that; for Tolkien, an awareness of what actually happens and exists in the world is an indispensable prerequisite for fantasy itself. In "On Fairy Stories," he makes a charming observation: "[i]f men really could not distinguish between frogs and men, fairy-stories about frog-kings would not have arisen" (144). In order to immerse oneself into fantasy, then, one should be acutely aware of what the actual reality is. In truth, it is the obtrusive repulsiveness of contemporary reality itself that drew artists towards fantasy and fairy tales, as Rossi notices (4). The First World War, modern industrialism, and bourgeois capitalist relations and practices foster conditions of thought; primarily, thoughts about power and the battle between good and evil even within the most virtuous characters are evident in Tolkien (Rossi 5). In the supposed "exile" of fantasy, as enacted by Tolkien or Lewis, for instance, a space is created where a latent critique of certain aspects of modernity can find true resonance.

Following the politics of fantasy, then, as well as Jack Zipes who actually employs a Marxist analysis and finds traces of anti-capitalism in Tolkien, I am going to examine specific allusions to capitalist ideology in *The Hobbit* to expose the way commodity fetishism informs the novel, as well as the conditions for its emergence and the way it is subverted. Zipes insightfully shifts attention to the way Tolkien's progressiveness is validated (175), and uses the Marxist lenses to argue for Tolkien's anti-capitalist attitude; he sees, for example, the dragon as "the picture-image of the capitalist exploiter" (171), a capitalist that steals and luxuriates in the labors of others. Rather than a superficial examination of how capitalism pervades the novel, however, I aim to delve deeply down the nucleus of capitalist ideology, and bring out the traces of commodity fetishism in *The Hobbit*. The turning point that triggered my awareness of commodity fetishism, and which will be rendered clear as we move along, is Tolkien's description of the charm of the Arkenstone: "drawn by its enchantment," (275), Bilbo notices how "[t]he great jewel shone before his feet of its own inner light, and yet, cut and fashioned by the dwarves, ... it took all light that fell upon it and changed it into ten thousand sparks of white radiance shot with glints of the rainbow" (274-275). This is one of the strangely familiar allusions to materialism that spread along the novel. The Arkenstone's "own inner light," its independent radiance and vitality, familiarly alludes to the way the commodity acquires a life of its own, a domineering fetish that regulates the self.

Since traces of capitalism ideology inform the novel throughout, then, it seems fitting that my analysis be directed to Marxist formulations about commodity fetishism; in truth, what would suit us better than the concept of the fetish to characterize the almost automatic repression of what, in essence, relegates the treasure into an independent entity that seems to acquire a life of its own, religious-like, away from the reality that actually lies

underneath its shining facade? More than that, it is the form of a kind of commodity that the treasure takes on, a "product" of the whole enterprise of the quest as human labor effected by the dwarves along the way, as well as a nexus of commodity exchange value that testifies to its adornment with commodity value. How are we to comprehend the springs that channel this fever?

Karl Marx, himself, confesses that the analysis of the commodity "is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (*Capital* 42). It is in the first chapter of *Capital* that Marx reflects on commodities and commodity fetishism; one should not fail to grasp that, although Louis Althusser dismisses fetishism as marginal for an qualitative understanding of the *Capital* by giving "the following advice: put THE WHOLE OF PART ONE ASIDE FOR THE TIME BEING and BEGIN YOUR READING WITH PART TWO" ("*Preface to Capital*" 81), it is the exposition of the commodity fetishism theory that lays the foundations for the way capitalism functions. Indeed, as Chris O'Kane admits, for many interpreters of Marx's ideas fetishism is seen as integral to Marx's theory of what O'Kane calls "social domination" (18), grounded on the "primacy to productive activity" (42). But what is a commodity fetish after all? And why is it wrapped in mystery? According to Marx, this

consists simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. (164-65)

The commodity, therefore, the use value of which is irrelevant to its fetishistic character, is presented as something objective that exists in relation to other commodities, relations which exist, in reality, between their producers;<sup>1</sup> simply put, it is the relations of things between themselves, in their form of value<sup>2</sup> and exchange value, that overshadow what lies underneath the commodities' production, most notably the social relation between laborers. More importantly, it is their imbueement with "objective characteristics" (164), the advertisement of their independent essence as something that comes from "autonomous figures" (Marx 165).

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<sup>1</sup> This relationship between producers being objectified into a relationship between things stems from what Marx calls "the sum total" of individual labor (165). This, however, happens only within the act of exchange of commodities (166).

<sup>2</sup> Marx clarifies the significance of value, realized in exchange, in this formation of relations: "[v]alue" he says, "transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic" (167).

Subject and object, as it is, change positions; the object, the commodity, becomes the active subject, endowed with natural qualities, while the actual subject, the producers, is cast into the position of object, dominated by the personified commodity in the capitalist system (O'Kane 58). By virtue of my argument, this statement signifies for the way reification, the objectification of the commodity, is an integral part of commodity fetishism and dominates the subject, as shall be seen. Conversely, it signifies a great deal for the way a whole chain of individual characters, from Smaug to Thorin all the way through to the king of the Elves, including the dwarves that comprise Thorin's company, will turn into pawns in the game of the charm cast by a treasure tacitly personified. But why this redistribution of power positions? Why are commodities fetishized? "Fetishism," for Kaplan, "is a mental strategy or defense that enables a human being to transform something or someone with its own enigmatic energy and immaterial essence into something or someone that is material and tangibly real, a form of being that makes the something or someone controllable" (5). As such, the objectification of the commodity makes it more manageable, desirable because wrapped in an enigmatic energy that appeals and reflects desire.

Sigmund Freud's ideas about the fetish seem fit to offer a more concrete explanation; "the fetish," he claims, "is a substitute" (351).<sup>3</sup> A substitute for what, in the context of commodity fetishism? Marx, astute though he is in his exposition of the basic tenets of commodity fetishism, does not offer a substantiated account of how commodity fetishism results in the first place, or, put differently, of what Michael Billig calls "the conditions of existence" (314). What Freud explains is the nature of the fetish itself. Discussing Freud as involved in Theodor Adorno's theoretical framework about commodity fetishism, O'Kane discloses that "the human psyche is constituted by totality" (149), social totality as it were. In extension, it can be suggested that, fragmented as the subject is by the objectifying forces of commodity culture, commodities become a kind of substitute in their tangibility, a substitute that absorbs the subject's desire. In the context of the novel, Thorin and his company of dwarves set on their noble quest of restoring their homeland; but even when the rightful cause is most elevated, it is primarily associated with the treasure that lies captive under the watchful eye of Smaug. It is the treasure that acquires the role of the Freudian substitute for the dwarves' desire. In essence, homeland constitutes the landmark of the dwarves' desire, their lost and irrevocable past that represents for them a sense of unity.

By way of lament for their lost homeland and their own determination to regain it, their song about nostalgia, the past, and the upcoming future is truly indicative, and culminates in a sort of evocation for war: "*We must away, ere break of day, / To win our harps and gold from him!*" (19). It is the treasure that concentrates the energy of the dwarves' quest, and it is the idea of the treasure that enchants Bilbo, "who felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce

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<sup>3</sup> "Fetishism" (1927), from *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*.

and a jealous love, the desire of the hearts of the dwarves" (19), even as he hears a mere song about it. The channelling of the dwarves' desire for the homeland unto the treasure, apparently, suggests a latent but profound fetishization of the treasure, namely what Marx describes as the appearance of the products of labor as "endowed with a life of their own" (*Capital* 165). In this case, the fetish is expressed through the endowment of the treasure, the impressive result of centuries of laborious efforts, with a life of its own, symbolic of a displaced desire for the homeland. The treasure, evidently, and the commodity generally, are no simple material entities. What Guy Debord calls "our old enemy," the commodity, proves to be "so complex and so full of metaphysical subtleties" (107).

This displacement of desire is resolutely accompanied with the repression of it. Repression, admittedly, plays a central part in explaining how "disturbing thoughts" are pushed away "from conscious awareness," (320) in Billig's words. The Freudian concept of repression will be of remarkable help in the context of the novel, because it provides an answer to the question of what glues the commodity and fetishism together, and what commodity fetishism means for the individual. "Altogether those were good days for us," Thorin tells Bilbo as he reminisces the old glories of their own past. After the destructive usurpation of Dale and the treasure by Smaug, they were left weeping and cursing the dragon (30). Destitute, fragmented, and without a home, the dwarves set their quest for the homeland as an embodiment of their desire for unity again, for a totality that is dissipated in their present, nostalgic state; the unconscious forbids the rediscovering of the real essence behind the objectification of a commodity that seems whole, but is wrapped in baneful illusion.

Freud, in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) rightly observes that "[t]he reason why such ideas cannot become conscious is that a certain force opposes them," and he goes on to argue that the state of ideas that precedes their being transformed into conscious thoughts is *repression* (Freud's emphasis), while *resistance* (again, Freud's emphasis) is what preserves repression and holds such ideas in the unconscious (5). Fredric Jameson recognizes the fundamentality of Freud's theory and even goes further to contend that Freudian repression "has a specific content," and "may even be said to be something like 'recognition' of that content which expresses itself in the form of denial, forgetfulness, slip, ... displacement or substitution" (126).<sup>4</sup> Plainly, the repression in the fetish involves the repression of actual desire in the unconscious, and this "displacement or substitution" (126) Jameson refers to is enacted unto the commodity itself. Of course, this displacement and substitution effected in *The Hobbit* is inexorably linked to the way the treasure is being objectified, attributed with independent qualities, an inner light that reassures through its illusory totality and hosts the dwarves' desire. How commodity fetishism works, therefore,

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<sup>4</sup> "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (1979).

will be better examined by focusing closely on the concept of reification, namely the objectification of the commodity.

Certainly, as implied, Marx refers to the concept of reification; what he neglects, admittedly, is a detailed account of how reification as an aspect of commodity fetishism impacts on the concrete psychology of the individual, an omission that leaves him prone to satisfy Adorno's claim that he "was extremely anti-anthropological, anti-psychological" ("1962 Seminar on Marx").<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the imminent, alienating effects of commodity fetishism resonate through his writings, and, better still, expand fully by Georg Lukács, who orients Marx's theory towards the relation between reification and the alienation of the individual. In fact, Lukács examines reification as something that impacts on the whole social scale. Basically, Lukács practically conflates reification and commodity fetishism in the service of his argument about the pervasive impact of reification on societal totality in general. A study of the role of reification, initiated by Marx in *Capital* and extended in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, is paramount for the understanding of commodity fetishism in its account for reification as an expression of commodity fetishism; Lukács's theory supplements our analysis because of the centrality he places to the concept of reification for social totality. However, it shall be noted that reification is approached in this paper not as commodity fetishism per se, but as an integral aspect of commodity fetishism, together with the recognition of its primary role in any discussion of commodity fetishism.

Shifting focus to the need for an analysis that considers the historical position of capitalist society through a Hegelian dialectic that resituates the concrete aspects of capitalist society into the totality of that society (7), in "What is Orthodox Marxism?"<sup>6</sup> Lukács suggests that the independence of these aspects are illusory, being, in reality, "involved in a dynamic dialectical relationship with one another and can be thought of as the dynamic dialectical aspects of an equally dynamic and dialectical whole" (12-13). That is a paramount reason, then, for the importance of social totality and the pervasiveness of the effects of capitalism. In the context of a social totality, capitalist ideology persists and spreads its influence throughout. Reality, for Lukács, is a "*social process*" (13) (Lukács's emphasis) which is mediated by "the ideology" of a "ruling class" (14) that renders, as Lukács argues, "man's environment" objective (14), an understanding Marx also mastered. In this context, Lukács refers to "the insidious effects" of capitalism (24), the objectification of social relations which involve class consciousness, that, as O'Kane contends in his analysis of Lukács, "fragments the subject who takes on a contemplative stance towards its own activity" (104).

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<sup>5</sup> Backhaus, H.G. notes in translation from Adorno's 1962 Seminar on Marx. *reificationofpersonsandpersonificationofthings*. Web. 11 Dec. 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *History and Class Consciousness* (1923).

Primarily, however, some of Kaplan's strategies of fetishism, that is to say strategies that will enable us to understand how the fetish is manifest, will be employed to clarify these points further before we peruse the way the fragmentation of the self is actualized. Akin to the transformation of the commodity into a palpable object (5), fetishism involves bringing "*certain details into the foreground of experience in order to mask and disguise other features that are thus cast into the shadows and margins and background*" (Kaplan 6) (Kaplan's emphasis). The examples abide; desire for wholeness is displaced and hidden well behind the quest for the treasure; the general amount of labor the dwarves and Bilbo have given their hearts and minds to throughout the quest is cast into the foreground when Thorin gets blinded by the abundance of his wealth (306); most of all, Thorin refuses to give the people of Dale their rightful amount from a treasure that contains "much of the wealth" of Bard's ancestors (306), but chooses to relegate their rights to the obscure place behind the shadow of the power of gold (306) that leaves him incapable of clear perception. He therefore becomes the exploitative capitalist in the place of Smaug.

This blindness to what constitutes reality underneath the illusion means that the dwarves are oblivious to the elaborate social relations displaced by the treasure. Social relations are cast to the background by the arresting appearance of the treasure, and the dwarves, and Bilbo for that matter, although in a lesser degree as shall be demonstrated, place the treasure on the podium of their attention, indeed on the podium of their ultimate interest. The "dwarfish hearts" become "rekindled" if only by "[t]he mere fleeting glimpses of the treasure" (276) when they venture to stroll around the huge piles of gold and jewels the absence of the dragon left unattended, and they stuff their pockets with as many as they could (277). But why, as Kaplan pointedly asks, does one need for the existence of a material object as a representation of something else? (5) The imbueing of a spiritual essence with a material quality, Kaplan concludes, is favoured because of the fact that a fetish "can be held, seen, smelled, even heard if it is shaken, and most importantly it can be manipulated at the will of the fetishist" (5). And it is at the will of the fetishist that the commodity, the treasure in the novel, is manipulated, unconsciously or consciously. But the reverse also happens; the commodity manipulates, in its turn, the fetishist. In the presence of the treasure, the dwarves are enlivened; in subtle but illuminating moments, however, the effects of the reified treasure, as shall be seen, offset a subjection of the individual, whose source is the unconscious forgetfulness about the social relations behind the commodity, and beyond the commodity. It is the same with Golum in *The Lord of the Rings*, and, briefly, *The Hobbit*; the Golum surrenders to the power of the ring, and becomes dependent on it, humbled by it, alienated from its own self, and feels completed in the presence of it.

Lukács refers to this estrangement of the subject from its own essence. He makes an interesting observation about the way reification pervades society and consciousness, and alienates the self; "[i]t stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man" he says, "his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things

which he can 'own' or 'dispose of' like the various objects of the external world" ("Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" 100).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Lukács's concept of reification can be revealing because it illustrates how it impacts on a wider level. Man becomes part and parcel with his material world, divorced of his own immateriality. There is "no way," Lukács claims, "in which man can bring his physical and psychic 'qualities' into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process (100). Even the worker, because *in* the entire production and exchange system, is commodified almost imperceptibly, Kaplan says. It is bound with the notion of surplus value which stems from the underpayment of the laborer and the profits acquired by the capitalist (Kaplan 139); the commodity emerges in exactly these conditions, and flourishes in the dehumanization of the subject whose value becomes lesser the larger the value of commodities (Kaplan 142). The alienation of the individual from his/her own product, then, is unmistakably related to reification, because the social, as Lukács argues, determines consciousness ("What is Orthodox Marxism?" 18). It is, in truth, the effects of commodity fetishism that are lucidly divulged through Lukács's theory of reification.

On the doorstep of their dome, Thorin confronts the representatives of Dale and the king of the Elves, and dismisses their claim because of their allegedly hostile attitude: "*nothing* will we give, not even a loaf's worth," Thorin exclaims, "under threat of force" (307). With the lust of wealth "heavy on him" (306), he refuses the people's share on the treasure. Desperately, Roäc warns Thorin: "How shall you be fed without the friendship and goodwill of the lands about you? The treasure is likely to be your death, though the dragon is no more!" (310). Thorin is on the verge of total exclusion from the social, let alone from his own essence. The bargaining is only effected by a forced exchange, at the moment Bilbo sneakily hands the Arkenstone to the people of Dale for use as a stepping stone for an effective bargain. It is at the moment of the exchange, when the Arkenstone is exchanged for "one fourteenth share of the hoard" (319), set as the promised share of the treasure Bilbo deserves for his services—surplus labor at its most evident—when Bilbo himself is exchanged as he is given to the people of Dale together with part of the treasure (319), that the evils of the capitalist modus operandi are jostled closer and become vividly affirmed. In essence, relations between men are hidden under the illusion of an objectified exchange; Marx himself says that relations between men in society are transformed into relations between commodities (*Capital* 165).<sup>8</sup> Lukács similarly argues that capitalist ideology "subjects the process of production to an abstract, rational analysis, without regard to the human potentialities and abilities of the immediate producers" ("What is Orthodox Marxism?" 6). Evidently, the human is dehumanized and the true social nature of human existence is hid under the pretense of deadening economic values. Again, Kaplan sheds light to this alienation of humanity; apart from the fact that, as she suggests, a laborer can be an object of exchange by the capitalist "for a small quantity of diamonds" (139), she visualizes

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<sup>7</sup> History and Class Consciousness (1923).

<sup>8</sup> See also Marx's "Estranged Labor" from his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

the "deadly, destructive force" of the fetishism strategy, which "opposes human dialogue, the heartbeat of human existence" (14).

Hence the thrust of capitalist ideology, commodity fetishism, turns the individual against his own human essence, sets him apart from the total of society and the social relations that comprise it, and places the commodity at the pedestal of his worship. Even Bilbo falls into the trap of commodity fetishism; blind to the world beyond and around the commodity, he is dazzled by the complete sway the beauty of the treasure holds, his breath "taken away," destitute of "words left to express his staggerment" (250). Notably, even the reader luxuriates in the mere (although irresistible and glamorous) description of "the splendour, the lust, the glory of such treasure" (250), let alone Bilbo, who "gazed motionless," "almost forgetting the frightful guardian" (250). Taken to another level, the exchange between the Arkenstone and part of the treasure replaces, in a roundabout but truly indicative way, social relations within the persistent grasp of capitalism. In his stress of the abstraction of labour and its relegation to the background of the reified commodity, Marx, although kind of oblivious to the psychology of the individual, pointedly remarks that the action of the producers turn into actions of things, "and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them" (*Capital* 167-68).

Clearly, *The Hobbit* and its dazzling narrative about the treasure as a symbol of values and an ethical incitement breeds a counter-narrative that sees social relations tramped by a superficial exchange between commodities; righting a wrong, as when Thorin is asked to right the miserable condition of the people of Dale, is an ethical imperative undervalued by the economic exchange between reified objects. Rossi observes that there is a quality in the treasure that transforms even benevolent characters, like the wood-elves, into their evil self (100). Bard himself is not exempt from the power of the Arkenstone; he is also "dazed" (314); yet, as shall be seen, he resists and creates frictions *within* capitalist ideology. Social bodies become insignificant, displaced by the reification of commodities within the commodity fetishism of capitalist ideology. It dehumanizes subjects and, as Jameson highlights, reconstitutes older models of "human activity" "according to various rational models of efficiency" (116). The bodies become the means towards constructing relations between reified, totalized commodities. In effect, they become themselves the commodities, devalued in proportion with their alienation as well as the increased value of the products they produce; according to Marx, "the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men. Labor produces not only commodities: it produces itself and the worker as a commodity" ("Estranged Labor" 71). Because of this subject-object reversal, the commodities effectively rule instead of being ruled. Smaug's destruction springs from his subjection to the treasure, and Thorin, estranged from his own human essence, came close enough.

What M.O. Grenby calls Tolkien's "anti-capitalist agenda" (155) is patently verified; in fact, it is more than verified at the moment the reader confronts Thorin's stubbornness

when he is said to be "quite ready to sit on a heap of gold and starve" (313). It is like the treasure stands for completeness, and dismisses everything else out of consideration. The quest for the homeland is materialized, and finds ostensibly true resonance in the tangibility of the treasure; the dwarves can get hold of it, sit on it, gaze at it, handle it. It is exactly what Kaplan means when she argues for the way fetishism brings something closer to human grasp, and "makes the something or someone controllable" (5). This way, the fragmentation of a self that is yearning for the lost home finds momentary consolation in the materiality of the treasure; indeed, Renée Vink agrees and suggests that reclaiming their treasure "is the main motive" behind the dwarves' "expedition to the Lonely Mountain" (127).

In extension, it can be argued that the expedition of the dwarves, and Thorin's resultant greed and estrangement, denotes the ideological nature of capitalism. Louis Althusser retorts that, for Marx, ideology is something imaginary, "a pure dream, empty and vain" (175),<sup>9</sup> that signifies the way individuals try to define their relationship with "their real conditions of existence" (181). That is to say, reality is a construct, infused by ideology and pervaded by ideological implications on both social practices and the individual consciousness. Implications of ideology resonate in my discussion of commodity fetishism; in fact, these two are indispensably related. An explication of its nature is rendered necessary at this point, however, if one wishes to examine the idea of illusion that fits with the alienation of consciousness that is inextricably linked with the material. Also highly relevant with ideology and its impact is the spaces it allows for resistance.

Raymond Williams admits the interconnection between the material process and consciousness: "consciousness," Williams claims, "is seen from the beginning as part of the human material social process, and its products in 'ideas' are then as much part of this process as material products themselves" (59-60). It is by becoming conscious and sensitive of his social identity that man, the proletariat in Lukács's formulation, "can and must liberate" himself ("What is Orthodox Marxism?" 20), and acknowledge the illusions behind ideology. In truth, Adorno goes even further than this to suggest that, while "commodity fetishism is an illusion," it is also the "ultimate reality" ("1962 Seminar on Marx"). The question is, can one really escape the reality of ideology? Williams says that the distinction between 'true' and 'false' consciousness is effectually shattered (68). If ideology encompasses all human experience, how can resistance be effected? All these are prominent questions, echoed in *The Hobbit*, if only one probes into the way the dwarf quest is dipped in ideology that finds its ultimate expression in the fetishized treasure and its pursuit, as well as Bilbo's resistant attitude.

Slavoj Žižek offers useful tools for understanding how ideology works; in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), he sees ideology as "a kind of reality whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants" (15); "if we

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from: *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1971).

come to 'know too much'," he observes, "to pierce the true functioning of social reality, this reality would dissolve itself" (15). Hence, ideology constructs reality around an illusion whose consistency is felt as objective by the individuals, but which is prone to be dismantled if exposed as an illusion. This "non-knowledge" Žižek speaks of refers to the "non-knowledge" about the illusion individuals act under. They are not aware that they act under pretenses, although they know what lies behind; they are so immersed within ideology, that the illusion seems to be "already on the side of reality itself" (Žižek 30). Justice and worth are measured in the novel by the ideology of capitalism, which, for Marx, is the ideology of the ruling class. Thorin's becomes the ideology of the ruling class, and it is he, from all the dwarves who are overwhelmed by the beauty of the treasure, who is corrupted to the core by the power of it. Capitalist ideology pervades all, and measures all; Thorin regards the treasure as his private property, as Smaug did before him; Bilbo does not expect Thorin to remember and reward the fact that it was he who discovered the dragon's "weak spot" (306); Thorin guards himself and his hoard against the threat of those he blindly sees as foes and thieves (305). These illustrate the effects of the commodity fetishism capitalist ideology. Smaug's armor charmingly metaphorizes the illusions behind; "I am armoured above and below with iron scales and hard gems. No blade can pierce me" (262), he proudly boasts. Interestingly enough, the shining armor of capitalist ideology is eventually pierced, even momentarily.

Bilbo sets himself as a ray of hope against the relentless world of commodity fetishism and capitalism in *The Hobbit*. Although regularly thought of as bourgeois, "the ideal passive consumer" (Zipes 169) that proclaims himself in favor of "[a] warm bath and late breakfast on the lawn afterwards" (132) throughout their journey, Bilbo actually surprises the reader towards the end of the book by subverting the swaying hand of capitalism and preventing war. Zipes observes that Tolkien directs criticism against the "crass materialism of contemporary society" and accuses those who used their wealth to "promote their own glory" (167). In his anti-capitalist stance, therefore, Tolkien places his own hero in the midst of capitalist ideology so that Bilbo can actualize a kind of change by way of perceiving the contradictions within ideology. Bard lays a similar example, the example of change effected by Lukács's proletariat; by gaining consciousness of his own condition as part of a social totality, the proletariat becomes "at one and the same time the subject and object of its own knowledge" ("What is Orthodox Marxism?" 20), aware of his place within the social sum. Hitherto comes his revolutionary stance when he pledges himself in the cause for his people. Unlike Thorin, who disperses with any considerations of his place within the social totality, during the encounter it is Bard who "thought for the sorrow and misery" (306) of his fellow people. Bilbo is a much more peculiar case, what Zipes calls "an unlikely hero" (169).

It is in the power of this unlikely hero to resist the luring illusions of commodity fetishism after all. Eventually, Bilbo saves the day; not only does he find the dragon's weak spot, but also hands the Arkenstone over to the other side and admits, in the end, to the

uselessness of such an amount of wealth and riches. As he confesses, "really it is a relief to me. How on earth should I have got all that treasure home without war and murder all along the way, I don't know" (337). His last words of course refer to the impracticality of carrying such a great heap of gold back home, but, underneath, they acquire a peculiar aptness. Indeed, what Tolkien saw as one of the greatest blasts of his world is for Bilbo the dangerousness of "coming home with the treasure"; not only power, but also "war and murder" follow at the doorstep. That is to say, bringing together the concepts of home and treasure is in fact commodity fetishism, and its sway leaves the self alienated, illusioned, filled with pure emptiness. Kaplan herself realizes that alienation brings about a yearning for something that can fill in the deadness (139)"; her view totally answers for the reason the commodity becomes fetishized in the first place.

It is at moments like this when Tolkien creates the meaningful and human within the ugliness of his world. Although a representative of a relaxingly comfortable bourgeois, he overcomes himself to step into an adventure that testifies to his power for resistance, despite his eventual return to his comfortable life; Rossi notices that "[j]ust how much Bilbo develops in the direction of self-determination may be noted in his attitude toward ... that emblem of pride and the temporal power which riches bring, the dragon's hoard" (99). In truth, it is on his encounter with the beguiling charm of the treasure, and the ideology wrapped around it, that Bilbo manages to advance himself, and subvert it. From within, that is, Bilbo discovers the ambiguities that sustain commodity fetishism, ambiguities that the fetishist is not aware of. Kaplan's theorization of the fetishism strategy is yet again confirmed; in her view, "*[f]etishism transforms ambiguity and uncertainty into something knowable and certain and in doing so snuffs out any sparks of creativity that might ignite the fires of rebellion*" (6) (Kaplan's emphasis). The reified treasure is the reified commodity, the knowable object that reassures the fetishist. Bilbo resists, and makes the readers side by Gandalf when he says that "There is always more about you than anyone expects!" (315).

Tolkien, as a consequence, transforms the world through his fantasy; it is his fantasy that scrutinizes capitalist ideology at the same time as it unfolds it. Jim Casey agrees when he argues that "fantasy, by its very nature, challenges the dominant political and conceptual ideologies in a manner similar to that of postmodernism" (113-14). In truth, by laying out the wretchedness and harmfulness of commodity fetishism in capitalism, Tolkien's narrative includes the evil to expose it, and make his story appealing to the contemporary reader. After all, as Tolkien says, "the presence ... of the terrible is, I believe, what gives this imagined world its verisimilitude. A safe fairy-land is untrue to all worlds" (*Letters*). And the terrible resides, in *The Hobbit*, in the world of illusions constructed by "the gold beyond price and count" (250), a world where "dreams of greed and violence" (250) abide, and trap the desiring fetishist in the treasure's "own inner light" (274). In the end, it is only through the approach of death that Thorin opens his eyes, when he leaves "all gold and silver," and goes "where it is of little worth," that true friendship is restored between him and Bilbo (33). Only by opening his eyes can one subvert the ideology of commodity fetishism from

within, and revive the kind of humanity that lays dormant underneath; Bilbo is Tolkien's hero.

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## A Calendrical Conundrum

*Samuel Cook*

Attentive perusers of the Appendices will be familiar with the Tale of Years, detailing the chronology of the Second and Third Ages<sup>1</sup>. What you may not notice, as your head fills with dates, your vision blurs and you just wish that they hadn't been quite so long<sup>2</sup>, are some of the rather odd datings that crop up. One in particular in the Second Age caught my attention recently:

c.1600. Sauron forges the One Ring in Orodruin. He completes the Barad-dûr. Celebrimbor perceives the designs of Sauron.

1693. War of the Elves and Sauron begins. The Three Rings are hidden.

What I would like to know is what was going on for those 93 years? On the one hand, we have a Dark Lord with an evil superweapon; on the other, we have a load of whiter-than-white Elves, led primarily by Gil-galad, Círdan and Elrond, who now know this and know that, to put it lightly, he's not their biggest fan<sup>3</sup>. This is not, *a priori*, a recipe for what were apparently 93 years of not trying to kill each other. From Sauron's point of view, he knows where his enemies are<sup>4</sup>, who they are, and now has some means of destroying them. From the Elves' point of view, they know they face an implacable, very powerful enemy hell-bent on destroying them and they know where he lives. For this situation to remain stable for nearly a century and to not rapidly degenerate into what Jeremy Clarkson might call a "fracas"<sup>5</sup> is not the most evident of outcomes.

So, I wondered if there were any parallels in human history for having two powerful opposing blocs who were on the record as Not Getting On, yet largely avoided blowing each other to kingdom come<sup>6</sup>? After literally picoseconds of thought, it turned out there was an obvious parallel: the Cold War<sup>7</sup>. It hadn't lasted 93 years, but it did manage over 40. Unlike Middle-earth, both sides had evil superweapons and a succession of variously-evil rulers<sup>8</sup>, but the overall context was surprisingly similar. Could this offer an explanation for what was going on in Middle-earth for most of the 17<sup>th</sup> century of the Second Age?

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<sup>1</sup> But not the First. You've got to either delve into *The History of Middle-earth*, look online or try to work it out yourself from *The Silmarillion* (speaking from personal experience, an enjoyable, if frustrating task, the fruits of which are in *Anor* 42. Trying to count seasons in the stories of Beren and Túrin was a particular highlight).

<sup>2</sup> Maybe that's just me.

<sup>3</sup> In the same way that Guy of Gisborne wasn't a big fan of Robin Hood and His Merry Men. Less signing autographs, more signing death warrants.

<sup>4</sup> More or less – Gil-Galad and Elrond never granted him entry to their lands.

<sup>5</sup> And which everyone else might call "assault and battery".

<sup>6</sup> Can you tell what is it yet?

<sup>7</sup> Preceded by the Hot War and followed by the Frozen and Inadequately-Reheated Wars.

<sup>8</sup> OK, ignoring all the propaganda, we're not talking Sauron, but both sides had some pretty unpleasant people at the top and did things that were only notionally-connected to such concepts as "international law, respect of", "being nice" and "not blowing up the planet".

It turns out it could. Here are a few suggestions for what was going on in Middle-earth, based on the events of the second half of the twentieth century. Anyone interested in finding out more about the real Cold War is recommended to watch any action or spy film from the 60s, 70s or 80s (especially the Timothy Dalton Bond films<sup>9</sup> or anything about Vietnam), read any Tom Clancy book ever (or watch the resulting films), read any book about spies ever, read an actual history book, ask their parents, or go on holiday anywhere in Europe east of a line stretching from Szczecin to Trieste<sup>10</sup>.

### A Proxy War

The actual Cold War is replete with examples of proxy wars, where the two main antagonists (the USA and the USSR) didn't fight each other directly but each supported a different faction in a conflict to do the fighting for them. The most famous example is Vietnam (where the Americans supported the South Vietnamese against the Soviet-backed North Vietnamese, though, as is well-known, the Americans soon got dragged in to doing the fighting themselves), but proxy wars were also fought in Afghanistan<sup>11</sup>, and throughout Latin America and Africa.

In Middle-earth, one presumes the proxy war, given the locations of the belligerents and their comparatively-restricted logistical capacities, would have happened either west of the Misty Mountains and Eregion and south of what would become Arnor, or north of the White Mountains, east of the Misty Mountains and south of Anduin. In other words, in the lands later known as Eredwaith and Rohan.<sup>12</sup> It is known that the ancestors of the Dunlendings inhabited the northern vales of the White Mountains and, presumably, they also had some population in what later became Dunland and around the southern Misty Mountains more generally. It would certainly seem possible that both Sauron and the Elves sponsored sympathetic Dunlendish factions to further their causes. Inevitably, this would lead to a vicious internecine conflict (or would aggravate an existing one), the result of which was, presumably, that everyone involved died or eventually refused to get involved. Certainly, there is no indication in the sparse annals available that a substantial kingdom of Men in this area aided either side.

This would be borne out by two factors:

- Eredwaith was virtually unpopulated throughout the later Second Age (after the destruction of Eregion and the isolation of Moria) and remained so throughout the Third Age. Rohan,

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<sup>9</sup> The mujahedeen are the good guys. How times change.

<sup>10</sup> The termini of the Iron Curtain as defined by Churchill in his "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946 in Fulton, Missouri

<sup>11</sup> In an instructive example of history repeating itself, a conflict with a remarkable number of parallels to the current one. An unpopular central government propped up by a foreign power and army facing continual guerrilla warfare from militants in remote areas, leading to lots of dead civilians and soldiers. At least the current government is doing slightly better than the Soviet-backed one in the 80s....

<sup>12</sup> I feel that it would be too difficult for either side to mount a substantial support operation across the northern part of the Misty Mountains, or across/around the White Mountains, ruling out both Rhovanion and Gondor as possible theatres of operation.

similarly, was sparsely-populated in the Third Age before the arrival of the Rohirrim (but after the arrival of the Númenorean Exiles and the growth of Gondor). Presumably, it was also underpopulated in the later Second Age.

- The remaining Dunlendings became extreme isolationists and xenophobes.

The first point could be explained by the ravages of a proxy war, with large casualties and widespread devastation, whilst the second would be a natural consequence of this – being manipulated and coerced by external powers is hardly going to breed a tolerant, open and positive-minded attitude to foreigners, is it? It would therefore seem entirely plausible that a conflict involving the Dunlendish People's Front and the People's Front of Dunland, with each side supported by the Elves or Sauron, could have occurred in the middle of the Second Age.

### Spying

The Cold War involved a lot of spying <sup>(citation required)</sup>. The number of films, books, plays, videogames and TV programmes predicated on this simple fact is huge. Given that Elves are naturally stealthy and, one imagines, Sauron could have bought the services of infiltrators<sup>13</sup> and had theoretically-invisible Ringwraiths<sup>14</sup>, spying would seem to be a likely activity that both sides engaged in heavily. Admittedly, 93 years is an awful lot of spying with nothing happening, but perhaps both sides were so focussed on their (counter-)espionage efforts that they forgot about the whole “doing anything with the resulting information” side of things. Or maybe both sides were so terrible at counter-espionage, any military initiative was deemed to be doomed to failure, so they didn't bother for a very long time.

Either way (in)effective spying could be at least partly responsible for the long period of quiescence. The Elf Yeimesebond<sup>15</sup> against the Orc Blozgfeld<sup>16</sup>, perhaps? Obviously, the nature of spying means that there's no evidence to support this, but when has that ever been a problem in ~~conspiracy theorising~~ Tolkien speculation?

### An Arms Race

Another key facet of the Cold War was the arms race between the two sides, as each sought to gain a decisive military advantage over the other. Perhaps both the Elves and Sauron were trying to develop some sort of superweapon for 93 years? They evidently failed, but maybe it took them that long to admit defeat. Sauron already had the Ring, but, presumably, would have aimed to re-create Dragons and then improve on them<sup>17</sup>. The Elves

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<sup>13</sup> Orcs are less-known for their stealth. They would, however, have made great saboteurs and assassins, as long as Sauron wasn't too bothered about the collateral damage. Which he probably wasn't.

<sup>14</sup> Presumably some of the original possessors of the Nine would have fallen into wraith-hood at some point in the 93 years, even if they aren't listed as officially appearing until 2251....

<sup>15</sup> So it's not the best transliteration. Turns out “j” really doesn't map well into Sindarin. Unlike his filmic alter-ego, he probably wouldn't sleep with every woman he came across. Elves aren't like that, it's fair to say.

<sup>16</sup> That one just has a gratuitous “z” and “g” in. He would probably look something like Gothmog in the films.

<sup>17</sup> Armoured flying invisible Dragons with Rings of Power!

would have, one imagines, endeavoured to grow a giant tree that turned Orcs back into Elves? Breed Entish legions? Superweapons aren't really very Elvish, are they? Still, maybe they tried to develop something to get into the spirit of total war.

### Bloody-mindedness

An underestimated factor in international relations. The Cold War, to an extent, kept going because the leadership on both sides were too stubborn to admit that things changed and that they could be wrong. They had too much invested in the systems they were propping up to voluntarily abandon them. So, it carried on until one side collapsed.

In Middle-earth, similarly, it might be that neither side apparently did anything for so long simply because they already hadn't done anything. The whole thing had devolved into a staring contest, where each side was waiting for the other to blink first. And when one side is made up of immortal Elves and the other side is led by an immortal spirit, it could conceivably take a long time for someone to lose patience and give up or turn the war hot...

More prosaically, being immortal(-led), it is probably just that both sides tended to take a rather longer-term view of events and barely noticed a few decades here and there when they were making such consequential decisions. But that's not as much fun as groundless speculation and surreal grandstanding.

In conclusion, something must have happened in the 93 years between Sauron forging the Ring and war between him and the Elves actually breaking out. Some sort of Cold War-esque conflict seems as good an explanation as any, with a proxy war in Eredwaith and Rohan, extensive espionage and an incipient arms race. But, perhaps the real reason is to be found in that both sides, being immortal(-led), had taken Treebeard's maxim of "Don't be hasty" to heart, and simply took a very long time to make up their mind to do anything.

## The Rolls of the King's Court

*Samuel Cook*

Being excerpts from the proceedings of the legal systems of Middle-earth and Valinor, collected by the archivists of Minas Tirith, presented for the edification of later jurists.

"In *Free Races of the West vs The Orcs*, the plaintiffs wish to indict the entire Orcish race for war crimes, attempted genocide, several thousand counts of murder and pillage, and several million counts of vandalism. The defendants responded that murder and pillage were important facets of their culture and submitted a counter-claim that the plaintiffs were guilty of institutional racism and of breaching the Orcish right to freedom of expression. The case continues."

"Whilst the court has some sympathy with the plaintiffs' plight, recognising the historical injustices perpetrated against the Dunlendish people, it cannot uphold their claim against Fangorn and the Huorns for aggressive afforestation, given their role in the initial deforestation."

"*In absentia*, this court finds Melkor the Morgoth Bauglir, Father of Lies, guilty of everything ever"

"In view of the defendants' past behaviour and this being the 3,752<sup>nd</sup> ASBO collectively served on them, this court has no qualms in imposing a sentence of exile-for-life on the House of Fëanor, particularly in view of the fact that the cumulative effect of these past judgements means that they are banned from all of Valinor, excepting 1m<sup>2</sup> in the middle of the largest room in Formenos."

"Today was a particularly unusual day in the Family Court, as a custody battle for the Precious was fought between Sméagol and Gollum. The fact that the plaintiff and defendant inhabited the same body gave much entertainment to the crowds in the viewing gallery, who were blindsided when the judge unexpectedly awarded custody to some Hobbit named Bilbo Baggins from the far land of the Shire who had just wandered in off the street to ask for directions. Sméagol-Gollum immediately settled their differences and lodged a claim for theft against Mr Baggins, which the judge initially threw out. Sméagol-Gollum was later arrested for stalking, conspiracy to commit murder, and indecent exposure."

"Sauron Gorthaur the Abhorred, formerly of the Barad-dûr, nr. Orodruin, EV1L LORD, Mordor, has brought a suit against Mr Frodo Baggins, Esq. Of Bag End, Hobbiton, The Shire, for destruction of property...."

"Your honour, when the plaintiff said no man could kill him, how was I to know it was "man" with a small "m", rather than "Man" with a big "M"? I thought I'd give him no more than a scratch. It's not my fault he's a sexist pig. If you're going to go around claiming that sort of

thing, you've got to be prepared for people to stab you, just to see if it's true. As far as I'm concerned, the Witch-King committed suicide" – *Eowyn's defence, from The Witch-King of Angmar, Lord of the Nazgûl, vs Eowyn*

"Great consternation was observed in court today. During the hearing of Gorbag vs Shagrat, concerning a minor property issue, fighting broke out between the plaintiff and accused's families, whilst the two parties squared off in front of the judge. The court guards were summoned, but by the time they arrived, everyone in the viewing gallery had been killed, as had Gorbag. The judge therefore acquitted Shagrat on the grounds that Gorbag had presented no case against him, but summarily sent him down for murder"

"The People of Gondor would like to take out an injunction against the Lord Aragorn, Son of Arathorn, Elessar, the Elfstone, Envinyatar, the Renewer, Elendil's Heir of Gondor, known as Strider and Wingfoot, to stop him wilfully declaiming his excessively-long list of titles at every opportunity and on every official document, and thereby wasting everyone's time, not to mention reams of parchment."

# The Quiz Qronicles: Volume 18<sup>1</sup>

*Samuel Cook*

On Saturday last, the 28<sup>th</sup> day of February of the Year of our Lord 2015, a most solemn event did occur. For the two feuding houses of Minas Tirith and Taruithorn did join battle in the realms of knowledge in the 18<sup>th</sup> iteration of the Tolkien Varsity Quiz within the hallowed precincts of Clare College, in a room donated with great piety by Squires Elton<sup>2</sup> and Bowring. The teams were formed of 6 proud knights of each of these august societies, whose names shall be here inscribed to perpetuate their valour across the deeps of time and through the fading of the years:

Minas Tirith:

James II Nanofilos – Steward

David Vasak – Smaug

Rachel Fletcher – ex-Keeper of the Red Book

Hannah Parish<sup>3</sup>

Liam Waters

Sam Brennan the Tall<sup>4</sup>

Taruithorn:

Amrit Sidhu-Brar – Errol and Saruman

Lynn Edwards

Joseph Bartram – Gandalf

Hebe Stanton – Rúmil

Anahita Hoose – Wrexham Rep

Martha Buckley – Mornington Crescent Rep

The parties were marshalled by Sarah Binney, an acolyte of Clare, who ensured that all praiseworthy deeds were fairly and truly recorded using the Works of Isengard to be preserved in the archives; and Samuel Cook, ex-Steward of Minas Tirith, who arbitrated the duel and, with the lamentably-absent Clare Wilkinson of Taruithorn, set the challenges of the day. After winning the favour of Fate, which at first was unclear, owing to the marshals' unfamiliarity with modern coinage, Minas Tirith elected to subject their opponents to the rigours of tilting at the infinitesimal targets of knowledge first.

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<sup>1</sup> Because anything with the word "chronicles" in the title has to have an insane number of volumes. Also, it was the 18<sup>th</sup> quiz....

<sup>2</sup> Probably not John Elton. At least, the room was free of pianos and tinted glasses.

<sup>3</sup> Believed to be no relation to Niggle's neighbour

<sup>4</sup> Because there aren't enough Tolkien characters defined by their height already

The first part of the day's contention concerned that foundational tome, *The Lord of the Rings*. Minas Tirith ran out as clear victors, 8-4, and there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth from Taruithorn at their own abject failure to draw first blood.

But, soft! Taruithorn rapidly riposted with a superior display of Hobbit lore, overmastering Minas Tirith 8-6. It was clear the field would be closely-fought! Both teams clearly needed to pay more attention to matters of Dwarven fashion, as the eminently-memorable and simple kaleidoscope of garbs worn by Thorin and Company had escaped their attention.

A different challenge quickly followed – both fellowships had to commune deeply with Ulmo to recall the many names of the many rivers of Gondor. Minas Tirith again had the victory, owing to Smaug's surprising knowledge of such matters – it can only be assumed that he has made a study of such things so as to be able to avoid them in his forays into the world. A 12-7 incineration was the result, as Taruithorn fled before the dragon's wrath, to leave Minas Tirith in command at 26-19 overall. Acolyte Binney also found some apposite music from a particular televisual spectacle popular with the aged and the apprentices to convey the timebound nature of the round.

Yet again, Taruithorn were not dismayed by this defeat and fought back, again through their superior lore, in this case of the remotest history of the World, knowing the exact age of Bëor the Old. Whilst Minas Tirith clearly had Ulmo's favour, Taruithorn had courted Manwë, and took the round 8-6 once more, though one unfortunate knight stabbed himself in the foot by providing Minas Tirith with an answer, though it was claimed that it was known regardless....

Taruithorn pressed their advantage with the first Taboo round, led by Sir Amrit the Amazing<sup>5</sup>, the multi-talented incarnation of Errol and Saruman, where it was clear that their ability with words matched that of Fëanor himself, inflicting a crushing blow on Minas Tirith and gaining 8 points. This gave them the upper hand for the first time in the contest and great consternation was discerned among the Knights of Minas Tirith, staggered by the failure of their mime tactics.

Some small measure of composure returned among Minas Tirith after fighting a desperate rearguard action and stemming the Taruithorn tide with the grace of the Founder himself, on whose life and languages they triumphed 6-5. Dame Fletcher the Fluent<sup>6</sup> particularly impressed with her mastery of strange tongues from the furthest reaches of the realm of Arda, though Minas Tirith seem to have forgotten the millennial deficit, as their calendar seemed curiously at odds with the wider world, to which Taruithorn were far more attuned.

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<sup>5</sup> So it's really difficult to come up with alliterative epithets that are tangentially-relevant to the topic discussed. Deal with it.

<sup>6</sup> See what I mean?

Being now halfway through the tourney, with the scores at Minas Tirith 39-42 Taruithorn, a brief cessation was called to enable the participants and the loyal crowds to refresh themselves in preparation for the final reckoning. Both troops of combatants licked their wounds and plotted cunning stratagems in an effort to secure their ascendancy at the day's end.

Re-entering the fray, the two companies belied their frequenting of the Inn of the Prancing Pony and other establishments of that ilk, demonstrating a great and wondrous knowledge of far-flung realms where the stars were strange, across the vast field of Arda's history. Their knowledge being of such striking similarity, the two sides battled to a standstill, with honours even 8-8. A note was made that such challenges will have to be harder or different, when next the feuding twain meet.

At this point, great horns of the North were heard blowing wildly; an omen of great portent as the second list was upon the teams. It was revealed that the task was to recall all the Kings of the Mark, from the days of our longfathers of old through to latter times. It now became apparent that the Steward of Minas Tirith had been spending long hours in the city's archives, poring over ancient scrolls and tomes of lore, for he had committed the names of the kings of his noble allies to memory! Taruithorn could not resist this sudden onset and were swept away as leaves before the wind, bemoaning their fate. With a 15-5 crushing victory, the fickle tides of battle had clearly swung back towards the Gondorians, leaving them 61-55 ahead.

Next followed the other specialist round, requiring deep thought to defeat this latest wile of the enemy. For the brave knights had to remember the next lines of songs of yore, a feat of great perplexity. Again, Minas Tirith's time spent in the city's archives availed them much, taking the laurels 6-2 – the low scores belying the craftiness of the challenge. It seemed that they would soon carry the field and rout Taruithorn.

However, another taboo round loomed, and hope soared among the hard-pressed Oxonians. Could they relive their earlier success and revive their flagging fortunes? Minas Tirith appointed Smaug to be their interlocutor, but lo! it appeared a weakness had been found in his intellectual armour and their attempt perished in fire. Taruithorn, this time led by Lady Lynn the Lyrical<sup>7</sup>, confidently despatched the Golden Worm, securing an invaluable four points, leaving the contest at 67-61 as the last challenge of the day was to start. Hope was faint for Taruithorn, but it was not yet lost.

The last ordeal began and proved to be the most deceitful of all. For the combatants were confronted by a multifaceted monster of lateral thinking: an Only Connect round. Such beings have seduced many watchers of the modern palantíri, and it was a great misfortune that one should appear here, when all were already weary. Nonetheless, both teams girded

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<sup>7</sup> See previous footnotes.

their loins (wo)manfully and prepared to do battle once more. The monster's first few riddles were eventually dispatched after frantic cogitation, but then both teams stumbled, being unable to discern the many names of Moria, before a great cave troll of a question, bearing the legend "STEWARD" graven on its brow in runes of power, appeared and laid all, the knights and their loyal followers, low. It was only with great difficulty that all were saved from the wreckage, and, as the dust cleared, Minas Tirith had won 4-3, and had thus carried the field 71-64. This marked the 4<sup>th</sup> successive win for the Men of the City and, for the first time, they took the lead in the standings. At this, there was much rejoicing.

The two groups of weary knights congratulated each other on a close-fought battle and promised to renew their feud the following year, before retiring to a nearby inn and quenching their thirst.

Some inconsistency in the scoring was noted, but the margin of victory was such that the result was not in doubt, so no further effort was expended on trying to work out exactly where the impish goblins had caused the various keepers of the annals to diverge by two points.

Here endeth Volume 18 of the Qronicles.

# The Strange Tale of the Sheep and the Lettuce

*Samuel Cook*

*Being a very silly tale of Middle-Earth fully intelligible only to those who were at the most recent Annual Dinner, recorded in a forgotten scroll in the Archives of the City, which no man has looked upon since the time of Elendil.*

Dusk fell over Númenor. Hallatan the Sheep-Lord<sup>1</sup>, son of Cemendur the Cow-Count<sup>2</sup>, was in his personal chambers, preparing himself for bed. Suddenly, a servant rushed in, gasping.

“My lord, p-p-pardon me for the intrusion” he stammered, barely able to stand upright.

“Calm down, Emerendil<sup>3</sup>. What is it? Has something happened? Are Hallacar and Nessanië<sup>4</sup> hurt?”

Emerendil had recovered his breath a little. “N-n-no my lord. They’re safe, for the moment, at least. It’s the Arminyan<sup>5</sup> sheep. Something’s happened to them.”

“Not my prized-yet-available-at-discount-in-bulk-where-bulk-is-defined-as-greater-than-a-thousand Arminyan sheep! Say on! What malady has afflicted them?!”

“Well, my lord, they were out grazing earlier this afternoon and somehow got in to your field of Methesind<sup>6</sup> lettuces.”

“Not my divine Methesind lettuces that even the Valar envy! Say on!”

“Even so, my lord. The shepherds eventually managed to get them all out of the field after they’d eaten a fair portion of the lettuces<sup>7</sup>.” At this, Hallatan wailed and gnashed his teeth. “But, lettuces grow back, and we thought it was just an unfortunate incident. This evening, however, the sheep started acting strangely. Their ears started growing to resemble those of our elven brethren and they became restless and savage. We currently have them locked in the barn, but we fear they may soon break out.”

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<sup>1</sup> It’s in Unfinished Tales (specifically, *The Mariner’s Wife* or, if you prefer, *Aldarion and Erendis*). I’m not even wilfully twisting it for once.

<sup>2</sup> OK, I made that one up. Not the name, but the epithet.

<sup>3</sup> And that one.

<sup>4</sup> I didn’t make them up, though. Hallacar, for your edification, became the husband of Tar-Ancalimë.

<sup>5</sup> I definitely didn’t just badly transliterate “Armenian”. Definitely. What it definitely comes from instead is “Ar” (high)+”minya” (first), because they’re really noble sheep from which all other sheep are descended. Obviously. That’s why the name’s in Quenya. They’re so noble.

<sup>6</sup> And that’s not a terrible transliteration of “Seth’s Seed” either. It’s “methed” (last) + “sind” (grey), because they’re really long-lasting lettuces that don’t rot for ages. And, because they’re as mundane as lettuces, they’re named in Sindarin.

<sup>7</sup> I presume sheep would eat lettuce. I don’t actually know.

“This must be some wile of the Enemy. His shadow is long and though he is now defeated, his will lives on and continues to do his work in the world. How else could such noble animals have become corrupted? I remember that strong wind from the West yesterday that brought that sticky dust with it. It must have poisoned the lettuces!<sup>8</sup>”

*Unbeknownst to Hallatan, yesterday in Valinor, the Valar had held their annual “Who’s the Manliest Valar?” competition. As per usual, Tulkas had won, beating Oromë in a tense “Mine is bigger than yours” final round. However, the result of their...exertions...had been picked up by a strong wind that Manwë had caused to blow to get rid of the stench of BO and booze that permeated Valinor. It was this that had been deposited on Hallatan’s lettuces. But, who knows, the arm of the Enemy is long indeed – perhaps he had somehow contrived this situation to further his greed for mastery?*

“Brilliant, my lord!” exclaimed Emerendil. “But what do we do about it?”

“We beseech Oromë, Lord of the Hunt, to help us deal with these savage beasts, of course.”

So saying, Hallatan strode out of his house towards the barn where the murderous sheep were still trapped. Emerendil ran after him, shouting “No my lord, they might-“

At that moment, the sheep finally burst out of the barn and charged straight for Hallatan. He lifted up his arms and, in a voice of surpassing strength and clarity, called on Oromë<sup>9</sup>. As Hallatan chanted, the sheep began to glow, first from their stomachs, and then over their whole bodies. The glow grew stronger. The leading sheep, with their blood-crazed gimlet eyes, had nearly reached him. Suddenly, the sheep started to burn. One by one, they ignited and a great reek rose to heaven. As the last sheep combusted, a great cry went up and was heard no more in that age of the world. Nothing was left of the ovine<sup>10</sup> horde, except a few wisps of charred wool floating on the breeze.

Emerendil stood stunned. Hallatan lowered his arms and turned away from the devastation. “W-w-what? H-h-how?” Emerendil managed to say whilst shaking.

Hallatan placed his hand on his shoulder. “These were no natural sheep. They were clearly servants of the Enemy. I simply called on the Tauron Inferno<sup>11</sup>, the manifestation of Oromë’s disdain for all unclean beasts, to aid me in my endeavours. It is a secret of the ruling house – make sure you speak of this to no man.” Emerendil nodded mutely. “Shame

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<sup>8</sup> It’s a short fable. Jumping to completely preposterous conclusions is totally legitimate. You didn’t want actual plot or character development, right?

<sup>9</sup> Imagine I’ve put something appropriate in Quenya here. I mean, I haven’t, because I don’t know enough Quenya and I haven’t got time to learn it, but it’s the thought that counts, right?

<sup>10</sup> It’s the adjective for sheep, in the same way that bovine means “like a cow”. Maybe slightly obscure.

<sup>11</sup> I didn’t even start out with the intention of getting a terrible pun in this time. It just happened. Admittedly it requires you to have heard of the film, *The Towering Inferno*, and to know that Tauron was another name of Oromë, but I reckon CTS have got a better chance than most of appreciating it.

really.” continued Hallatan. “If we could have controlled them, we could have given them to the King<sup>12</sup> to use against any enemies he might encounter on his voyages.”

“But sir, think of the logistical challenges! How would you have moved 1000 sheep across the island and over the sea? The cost would have been so astronomical that the King’s father<sup>13</sup> would have descried it from his observatory.”

“Hmmm, yes, good point Emerendil. Perhaps it is best that they are no more. Well, what’s done is done. I can’t pretend it isn’t a sore loss, but my flocks will recover in time. Come, let us retire for the night and never speak of this again.”

Here ends the Strange Tale of the Sheep and the Lettuce, most puzzling and pun-tastic of the Tales of Númenor.

*Scribe’s note SA 3430: In later days, it was seen that this tale marked the first re-appearance of the Shadow on Númenor and who knows how much woe would have been avoided if this portent had been understood or had Hallatan brought it to the attention of the Kings. Of the Fire of Oromë, no further tales have come down to us from days of yore, but mayhap the Kings still maintain the secret.*

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<sup>12</sup> Tar-Aldarion

<sup>13</sup> Tar-Meneldur, surnamed “Elentirno” or “Stargazer” because of his love of astronomy. It’s a terrible joke, for which I apologise unreservedly.

## No Whip, No Way

*Ferruccio Manfieri & Giulia Manfieri*

**(To the tune of *No Woman, No Cry* by Bob Marley)**

No whip no way  
No whip no way  
No whip no way  
No whip no way

'Cause I remember when we used to sit  
In Saruman's yard in Orthanc  
Observing our fellow Uruk-hai  
Mingle with the good Orcs we meet  
Good orcs they were  
Oh, Where there's a whip there is a way  
And with that whip, you can't forget  
Your back  
So dry your tears, I say

No whip no way  
No whip no way  
Little Uruk, don't shed no tears  
No whip no way

Said I remember when we used to sit  
In Saruman's yard in Orthanc  
And then Uglúk would make the fire lights  
I say, log wood burnin' thru the nights  
Then we would cook Hobbit flesh porridge of which I'll  
Share with you  
My feet is my only carriage and  
So I've got to push on thru  
Where there's a whip there's a way

Everything's gonna be alright  
Everything's gonna be alright

No whip no way  
No whip no way  
I say little Orc don't shed no tears  
No whip no way

## Whip Whip Whip Your Orc

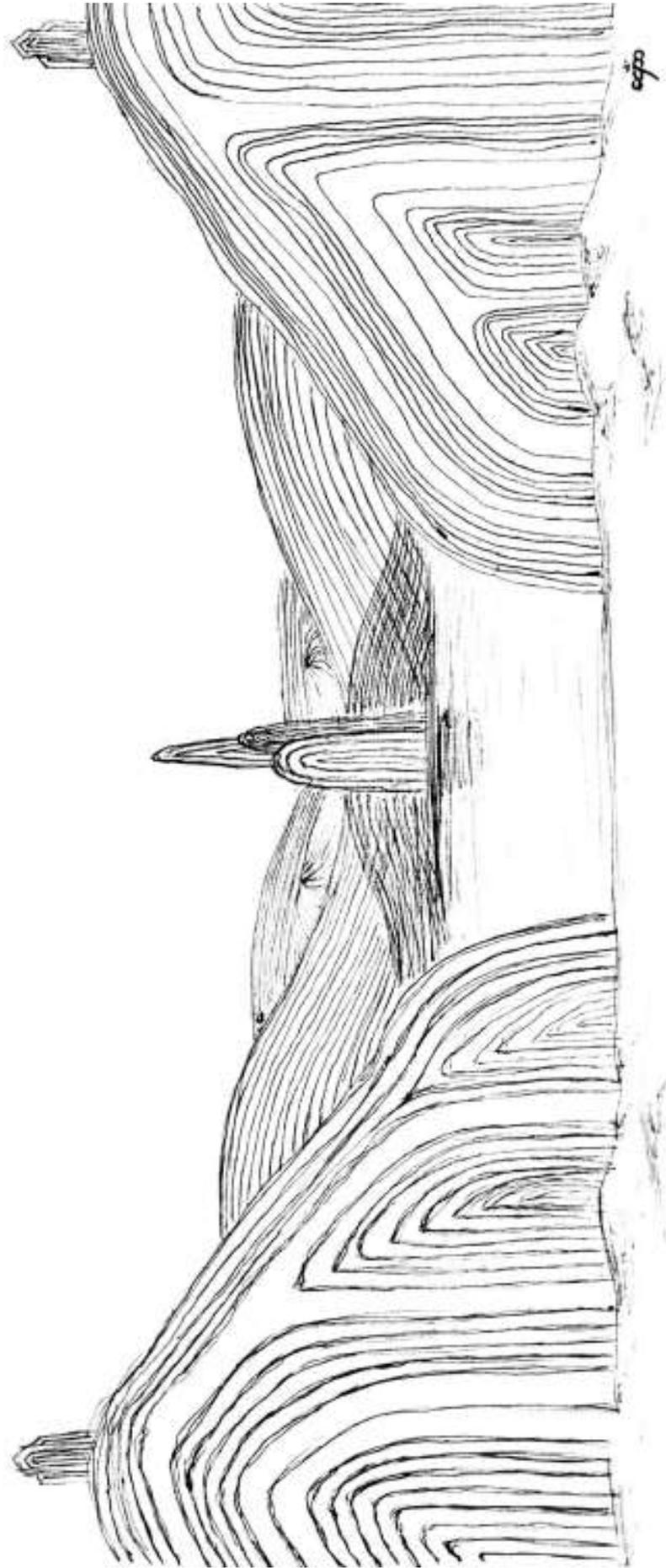
*Ferruccio Manfredi & Giulia Manfredi*

**(To the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*)**

Whip whip whip your Orc  
gently down the street  
merrily merrily merrily merrily  
ignore his bleeding feet

Whip whip whip your Orc  
gently down the way  
merrily merrily merrily merrily  
whip him all the day

Whip whip whip your Orc  
gently down the road  
merrily merrily merrily merrily  
or turn him into a toad.



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