"And All the Days of Her Life Are Forgotten"
The Lord of the Rings as Mythic Prehistory

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My goal in this paper is to argue that Tolkien's conception of his mythos as a legendary reconstruction of the lost past of our world gave depth and resonance to his tales, as well as great poignance. By placing Middle-earth on our own planet—distant in time but not in space—he willingly accepted certain restraints on his sub-creation, which both gave it focus and dramatically distinguish it from most modern fantasy. Since Middle-earth is destined to become the world we see around us today, every wonder he describes is doomed to pass away and indeed is presented not so much from the delight of the thing itself but so that we may mourn its passing. In a way, the whole epic of Middle-earth, from the Ainulindalë to the Restored Kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor, is the world's longest line of dominos, set up with infinite care only to be knocked down: that is what it's for. Tolkien creates in order to destroy, wringing a moving elegy from his imaginary world even as he engineers its passing.

Part I: "So Hard and Bitter"

The title of my paper derives, of course, from the closing words of "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen," one of the very final passages of *The Lord of the Rings* according to the story's internal chronology, postdated only perhaps by Gimli and Legolas's departure (itself the final entry in Appendix B, "The Tale of Years"[1]) and by the events described in the fragment "The New Shadow."[2] Noting that "it was not her lot to die until all that she had gained was lost,"[3] Tolkien describes Arwen's bereavement at Aragorn's death and her own rapidly approaching consummation of mortality, her farewell to her children, and her decision to spend her final months alone in deserted Lórien:

> "[W]hen the mallorn-leaves were falling, but spring had not yet come, she laid herself to rest upon Cerin Amroth; and there is her green grave, until the world is changed, and all the days of her life are utterly forgotten by men that come after, and elanor and niphredil bloom no more east of the Sea.
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> "Here ends this tale, as it has come to us from the South; and with the passing of Evenstar no more is said in this book of the days of old." [Appendix A, "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen"][4]

I have chosen this passage as the keynote for my paper because it seems to me to highlight one highly unusual aspect of Tolkien's work that gets relatively little attention: his decision to set his tale in the real world but in an imagined prehistory. This is extremely rare in modern fantasy, even among Tolkien's most slavish followers—a point to which we will return later. As a necessary consequence of that decision, every wonder he creates is predestined to be destroyed, every race and creature he invents doomed to fade into extinction, every city and culture to pass away utterly, leaving behind no discernable trace. Only a word or two,[5] a few vague legends and confused traditions, a smattering of lines of nonsense nursery rhyme, and perhaps a single, battered book would remain to testify of a time when we shared this world with other folk: the elves and dwarves and goblins, and others we have utterly forgotten (e.g., ents and hobbits). Many have accused Tolkien of being too sentimental and softhearted—I'm thinking here of E.R. Eddison's critique, described in Tolkien's letter to Caroline Whitman Everett: "Eddison thought what I admire 'soft' (his word: one of complete condemnation, I gathered); I thought that, corrupted by an evil and indeed silly 'philosophy', he was coming to admire, more and more, arrogance and cruelty"[6]—not fully appreciating the cold-bloodedness required to build a fantasy world for the sole purpose of destroying it.

Thus, when a reviewer claimed that all Tolkien's characters "come home like happy boys safe from the War," Tolkien retorted "it's . . . untrue, isn't it, that it's a happy story. One friend of mine said he only reads it during Lent because it's so hard and bitter."[7] Or, as Paul Kocher put it in *Master of Middle-earth* (still one of the best books on Tolkien, over thirty years later):

> [In] his epic Tolkien inserts . . . some forebodings of [Middle-earth's] future which will make Earth what it is today . . . he shows the initial steps in a long process of retreat or disappearance by all other intel-

> ligent species, which will leave man effectually alone on earth. The greater elves are already going home to Eldamar, from which they will not return, while the lesser ones who remain sink into oblivion. Orcs shut themselves into their caverns under the mountains. . . . [H]obbits will retire from all communication with us, reduced in size, numbers, and importance. The slow reproductive rate of the dwarves foreshadows their gradual extinction, leaving behind them imperishable monuments of stone. Ents may still be there in our forests, but what forests have we left? The process of extermination is already well under way in the Third Age, and . . . Tolkien bitterly deplores its climax today.[8]

This close identification between his fantasy world and our modern world goes back to the very roots of Tolkien's mythos, the so-called "mythology for England," and remained a key element through his final jottings written more than fifty years later. Nor was the elegiac tone a later addition, layered onto an essentially lighthearted story; it was an essential element of the conception right from the start. They are the *lost* tales, the fragmentary sole surviving record of a forgotten history, the story of a people who are either dead, withdrawn from the world, or faded from view. While there are some comic touches (Melko and the pillars of ice; Melko's pine-cone comets), *The Book of Lost Tales* is essentially the tragic story of a ruined people. To quote Tolkien's own words when speaking of the *Beowulf*-poet, one of his major literary models,[9] "telling of things already old and weighted with regret . . . he expended his art in making keen that touch upon the heart which sorrows have that are both poignant and remote"—words that could equally well be applied to Tolkien himself, as indeed Christopher Tolkien does in the foreword to the first volume of his *History of Middle-earth* series (*The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*).[10]

Part II: "The Inhabited World of Men"

> I have, I suppose, constructed an imaginary *time*, but kept my feet on my own mother-earth for *place*. I prefer that to the contemporary mode of seeking remote globes in 'space'. . . . *Middle-earth* is . . . a modernization . . . of an old word for the inhabited world of Men. . . . Many reviewers seem to assume that Middle-earth is another planet! [Tolkien, to Rhona Beare, 14 October 1958, in *Letters*, 283]

> *The Lord of the Rings* may be a "fairy-story", but it takes place in the Northern hemisphere of *this* earth: miles are miles, days are days, and weather is weather. [Tolkien, to Forrest J. Ackerman, June 1958, commenting on the Zimmerman film script, in *Letters*, 272, italics mine]
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> Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past, and the shape of all lands has been changed; but the regions in which Hobbits then lived were doubtless the same as those *in which they still linger*: the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea. [Tolkien, Prologue to *The Lord of the Rings*, 14, italics mine]
>
> I am historically minded. Middle-earth is not an imaginary world. . . . The theatre of my tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary. The essentials of that abiding place are all there (at any rate for inhabitants of N.W. Europe), so naturally it feels familiar, even if a little glorified by the enchantment of distance in time. [Tolkien, comments on W.H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King*, early 1956, in *Letters*, 239]

Among the reams of Tolkien criticism produced in the last five decades, there has been surprisingly little emphasis placed on the simple fact that Tolkien's Middle-earth is indeed our own world; this essential detail is generally acknowledged and then ignored. Indeed, one is reminded of what Owen Barfield called residual positivism, and H.P. Lovecraft the inability of the human mind to correlate its contents: critics accept Tolkien's statement as true but do not bother to ponder the consequences, instead keeping the knowledge compartmentalized. Working within what we might call a teleological framework—a story with a definite predetermined end in sight—means Tolkien is not creating within a vacuum. By working within our own past, however fictionalized and elaborated, Tolkien committed himself to a world that would end up just like the present—from a multiplicity of wonders and speaking races (remembering his evocation of "one of the primal desires that lie near the heart of Faërie: . . . to hold communion with other living things"[11]) to a world in which we find ourselves profoundly alone. Late in life this decision would create for him many difficulties: for example, in the 1960 *Hobbit*, where he realized that the time-frame given in *The Hobbit* could not be reconciled with the Shire calendar given in Appendix D of *The Lord of the Rings* (a conundrum he never satisfactorily resolved).[12]

Or, more significantly, when he came to reject the literal truth of his own cosmogonical legend about the creation of the sun and moon as the last fruits of the Two Trees of Valinor, or of the flat earth being made into a round globe at the time of the Downfall of Númenor, believing that these were no longer plausible enough for a modern reader to evoke the Secondary Belief necessary for Sub-creation. Yet he could not bring himself to abandon the stories that embodied those myths, or the later tales that depended upon them (for example, the origin of the Silmarils themselves, or the nature of the Evening Star, the germ-root and inspiration of his entire mythology).

His solution, I think, as startling as it was brilliant, was to posit in *The Notion Club Papers* (c. 1944–46) that a change could come, so drastic that it changed not only the present and of course the future from that point on but even the past as well, so that the present now derived from a different past and the original past had no longer ever happened, being transformed from history—the things that actually happened—into myth; the things we remember that exist now only in legend and memory. Or, to put it a different way, after Númenor's destruction the only way to reach the lost isle would be through memory: the old shape of the world existed henceforth only as a memory of earth.[13]

Tolkien had already explored in *The Lost Road* (c. 1936) the idea of accessing the past via the welling up of inherited memories (primarily through dreams) in the descendants of those who experienced the calamity first-hand. Now in *The Notion Club Papers* he added to this the power of the mythical past to directly and dramatically affect the modern world when the two are brought into contact, so that when two characters (Arry Lowdham and Young Jeremy) travel back to experience the sinking of Atlantis (or Downfall of Númenor, as Tolkien preferred to call it), the event explosively affects their own time in the form of the worst storm of the century, which "slew more men, felled more trees, and cast down more towers, bridges and other works of Man than a hundred years of wild weather," with "[t]he centre of its greatest fury . . . hav[ing] been out in the Atlantic . . . its whole course and progress . . . something of a puzzle to meteorologists."[14] Clearly, evoking the Earth's memory is a risky business. The past still exists, and things can escape out of the past into our present,[15] just as one who knows how to find "the Straight Road" can travel a path that no longer exists in the modern world. Nor is this the only place in Tolkien where he hints that mythic worlds can affect the physical world of our reality—cf. for instance his references

in "On Fairy-Stories" to "elven drama," which are indistinguishable to a human mind from reality itself.[16]

In his dedication to the principle that Middle-earth is (or will become) our earth, Tolkien stands in stark contrast to most modern-day writers in the tradition he himself founded. Indeed, considering that Tolkien provided the paradigm for the modern fantasy novel, and the degree to which he is imitated (often slavishly) by those writing in the genre over the last fifty years, it's significant that "world-building" has become one of the essential elements of his successors' work, from Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea and Stephen R. Donaldson's The Land[17] to the worlds of Tad Williams' massive *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn*, George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*, David Eddings' *Belegariad*, Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, and the like, all of them fantasy worlds bearing more than a passing resemblance to Middle-earth but all clearly *not* set in our own world, however distantly in the past. Anne McCaffrey's Pern and Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover are actually located on other planets circling other suns, being essentially old-school pulp science fiction disguised as fantasy, while Terry Pratchett's Discworld comically reverses this by presenting a full-fledged fantasy cosmology (wherein a tiny sun circles his flat earth). Some are set in alternate Earths, like Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* or Roger Zelazny's *Chronicles of Amber* or Guy Gavriel Kay's loosely-linked series of stand-alone books beginning with *Tigana* (itself linked to the thoroughly Tolkienian *Fionavar* trilogy that preceded it).

But while all these authors are writing more or less in "the Tolkien tradition" and on the surface seem to be following his example (often with such Tolkienian touches as maps, appendices, interpolated songs, and bits of invented languages), in their works the issue of linkage from mythic history to prehistory, so important to Tolkien, doesn't even arise. Indeed, so obscured has this essential element in Tolkien become that Tolkien himself had to insist several times in letters and interviews on the real-world grounding of his tale. To find authors who, like Tolkien, are creating a wholly realized Secondary World set in the distant past of what will one day become our world, where indeed much of the point of the sub-created world is its explicit linkage to our own Primary World, it's necessary to turn to one of his contemporaries, Robert E. Howard, and one of his most illustrious predecessors, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain.

The Conan stories of Robert E. Howard are, on one level, pure pulp hackwork, written at great speed for quick sale at cheap rates to an undiscriminating magazine audience. But if Howard was a hack, he was an honest hack who wrote with great verve that has never been successfully imitated, though many have tried.[18] Like Tolkien, Howard set his stories in the distant past of our world, including very specific links between the two eras—for example, a subsequent drowning after the time of his stories converts the lowlands of Shem and Stygia into the Mediterranean basin (a fictional event very like the current real-world hypothesis for the catastrophic creation of the Black Sea, put forth over sixty years after Howard's death), while "the mountains of western Cimmeria," Conan's homeland, "became the islands later known as England, Scotland, and Ireland"[19]—very like Tolkien's early myths of the drowning of Broseliand/Beleriand and the creation of Luthany, or Britain.

But unlike Tolkien, whose inspiration was fundamentally languages and legends, Howard's mythic prehistory is obsessed with two motifs. The first is the noble savage—the more savage, the nobler, in his rather warped view; "civilization" and "civilized" are always pejorative terms in Howard's lexicon. The second is racial: Howard was an enthusiastic devotee of the Aryan myth popular in his time—unlike Tolkien, who repudiates it in no uncertain terms in his letter to the German publisher Rutten & Loening Verlag, written only two years after Howard's suicide (25 July 1938, in *Letters*, 37). Howard departed from most of his fellow racists in two details: he did not put much weight on "Aryans" (that is, Indo-Europeans) as the inventors of much of the world's civilization,[20] because he did not place much value on civilization per se, and he depicted the purest of all Aryan strains not as blond and blue eyed Scandinavians or Germanic Teutons but as dark-haired, blue-eyed "Aryan Celts," by which he meant Irishmen—or, rather, Americans of Irish descent, like himself.[21]

For much of Howard's Conan cycle, the fictional world is only a backdrop for the hero's exploits, its peoples thinly disguised versions of familiar nations well-known to history (thus the "Shemites" are Arabs [the children of Shem: Semitic], the "Stygians" Egyptians, the Æsir Norsemen, and the Picts, well, Picts). But he transcended this crude correspondence when in 1935, just about the time he abandoned the Conan series,[22] he wrote an 8,000-word essay, "The Hyborian Age" (complete with map), describing several thousands of years of his

imaginary setting's history, the rise and fall of kingdoms, the migrations of peoples, and the ultimate destruction of the era into a new dark age. While this reads rather like a bloody pulp version of *The Lord of the Rings*' Appendix A, it ends with a section that reveals Howard's real interest: the descendants of these imaginary peoples into historical time. Thus we learn that the Gypsies are part-Zamorian, part-Zingaran; the "Achaians [Greeks], Gauls, and Britons" were Æsir; the Sumerians a Hyrkanian-Shemitish mix, the Hyrkanians themselves ancestors of "the tribes later known as Tatars, Huns, Mongols, and Turks"; the Scythians descendants from an eastern offshoot of the Cimmerians, and so forth.[23] So while Tolkien is concerned with the preservation of language, legend, and myth, Howard is mainly interested in racial (racist) theory, in the mixing of strains and the preservation of purity—Tolkien does not tell us who the descendants of the Númenóreans are today, other than that they walk among us, but Howard is explicit about the reconstructed family tree of races and peoples.

A third writer who built up an antediluvian world which he developed at considerable length before describing its apocalyptic destruction is Mark Twain. Like Tolkien, Twain wrote a cycle of fantasy stories set in the mythical past of our own world, which he left in a fragmentary state and for the most part were only published posthumously.[24]

The Papers of the Adam Family, like Tolkien's Red Book of Westmarch (and the older Golden Book of Tavrobel that preceded it), purport to be translations of very ancient diaries and memoirs set in a now-lost and almost wholly forgotten world, only fragments of whose history (much distorted by time) have otherwise come down to us. Just as Tolkien builds his prehistory out of fragments of folklore, legend, and archeology, so Twain constructs his from the extremely sketchy accounts in the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis. And just as Tolkien's preoccupation is primarily heroic legends of the passing of an age and his beloved languages, so Twain's is primarily satiric: he conceives of a pre-Babel antediluvian world, with its extremely long life spans and unified universal language, as having reached a very high level of civilization ("as it is called"), so that it bears a remarkable resemblance to the nineteenth-century America of his own day, complete with railroads, newspapers, a corrupt Congress, unjust wars, and even baseball.

Through the diaries of Adam and Eve (and Satan) he tells about life in Eden; through the diary of Shem, about the final days of the old world before the Flood; through Eve's autobiography, Methuselah's diary, and

the various writings of Reginald Selkirk (a.k.a. "the Mad Philosopher") such as "Passage from 'Outlines of History' (suppressed)" and "Passage from 'Glances at History' (suppressed)," he depicts a world burdened with overpopulation (more than 5 billion people by the year 500 and a staggering 60 billion by the time of Adam's death in 930) and beset with all the ills of modern civilization. Naturally, since Selkirk, as Twain's spokesman, advances the Law of Periodic Repetition: "everything which has happened once must happen again and again and again."

> Will this wonderful civilization of to-day perish? Yes, everything perishes. Will it rise and exist again? It will—for nothing can happen that will not happen again. And again, and still again, forever. . . . In time, [this civilization] will pass away and be forgotten. Ages will elapse, then it will come again. . . . Again it will pass away, and after ages will rise and dazzle the world again as it dazzles it now—perfect in all its parts once more.[25]

Thus Twain, like Tolkien, posited in his fantasy a world that had been swept away with hardly a trace, leaving behind an impoverished world that has become the world we know. However, both Howard and Twain are profoundly unlike Tolkien in that they do not consider the past better than the present. Each might express passing nostalgia—Twain for a time when we could meet Eve or Adam, our first ancestors, in the flesh; Howard for a time when a man could rage about, red in tooth and claw, without the troublesome restraints of civilization—but only Tolkien mourns the passing of the old world; he alone strikes the elegiac note.[26]

Part III: "Kortirion among the Trees": A Lost Past

> And now is the end of the fair times come very near . . . all the beauty that yet was on earth—fragments of the unimagined loveliness of Valinor whence came the folk of the Elves long long ago—now goeth it all up in smoke. . . .
>
> So fade the Elves. . . . Memories faded dim, a wraith of vanishing loveliness in the trees . . . . Tavrobel shall not know its name, and all the land be changed, and even these written words of mine belike will all be lost. . . . [Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*[27]]

Contrast the sentiment expressed in the preceding quote, written in 1920 to stand as the epilogue to *The Book of Lost Tales*, with these lines by one of Tolkien's favorite fellow fantasists, Lord Dunsany, set down only four years earlier during the middle of the most deadly battle in history, the Battle of the Somme:

> I do not know where I may be when this preface is read . . . But it does not greatly matter where I am; my dreams are here before you amongst the following pages . . . [W]riting in a day when life is cheap, dreams seem to me all the dearer, the only things that survive. . . . [I] offer you these books of dreams . . . as one throws things of value, if only to oneself, at the last moment out of a burning house.[28]

A key element in Tolkien's conception of Middle-earth as the legendary past of our world was what Tolkien in the essay "On Fairy-Stories" called Recovery: the restoration of a sense of wonder in everyday things—or, in this case, an appreciation of the wondrous history that might underlie what seem today very ordinary places. Writing many years after the fact to his friend, publisher Milton Waldman, Tolkien explained that part of the impetus for the creation of his imaginary world, in addition to his invented languages and his "passion . . . for myth . . . and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little in the world," was the desire "to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country."[29] His impetus for creating "a mythology for England"[30] was, he said, his grief at

> the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found . . . in the legends of other lands. There was Greek [Homer, Hesiod, the tales of Theseus and of the Argonauts], and Celtic [the *Mabinogion*, the *Tain bo Cuailnge*], and Romance [by which I take it he means the *Aeneid, Lays of Ancient Rome*, and the like], Germanic [the legends of the Goths, the Burgundians, the Lombards, etc.], Scandinavian [the *Eddas*, some sagas], and Finnish [the *Kalevala*] . . . but nothing *English*, save impoverished chap-book stuff [e.g., "Jack the Giant-Killer"]. Of course there was and is all the Arthurian world,

> but powerful as it is, it is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not with English.[31]

That is, Tolkien rightly saw King Arthur as a British, or Welsh, myth and not an English one, while *Beowulf*, though a masterpiece of the English language, was nonetheless a Germanic story rather than a specifically English one; each fails one of his two tests, of being "bound up" in England's "tongue and soil," English and England respectively. Thus the Arthurian cycle while set in what is now England is definitely not an English story (the English are in fact the barbarians Arthur strives to defend his homeland against), while Beowulf's exploits may be retold in magnificent English verse but take place far, far away back in the old country; it is English but not of England.

The Book of Lost Tales, then, was meant to remedy this situation by providing stories that were English in every sense of the term: both written in English and set in England; heroic tales poised between myth and history, and "mythic" in the sense that they would explain how our world came to be the way it is. Several prior critics—for example, Hostetter and Smith in their essay "A Mythology for England," Jane Chance in her book *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*,[32] etc.—have assumed that Tolkien meant his myth would have to incorporate elements from now-lost English legends. While this was certainly an important part of Tolkien's schema, I think his words are more literal than they credit.[33] As Christopher Tolkien noted in his commentary on "The Cottage of Lost Play": "In his earliest writings the mythology was anchored in the ancient legendary history of England; and more than that, it was peculiarly associated with certain places in England."[34] Specifically,

> the cardinal fact (made quite explicit in extant notes) of this [earliest] conception is that *the Elvish isle to which Eriol [the Wanderer] came was England*—that is to say, Tol Eressëa would become England, the land of the English, at the end of the story. . . . Kortirion, the town in the centre of Tol Eressëa to which Eriol comes in *The Cottage of Lost Play*, would become in after days Warwick (and [the names] were etymologically connected); Alalminórë, the Land of Elms, would be Warwickshire; and Tavrobel, where Eriol sojourned for a while in Tol Eressëa, would afterwards be the Staffordshire village of Great Haywood.[35]

That all these are places with which Tolkien felt a strong personal bond (Warwick was Edith Bratt's home during their engagement, while Great Haywood is the village in which the newlyweds lived in the early days of their marriage; similarly Taruithorn, or Oxford, was their chosen home after the War) is biographically significant but beside the point. The very essence not just of trifles like "Goblin Feet" (originally titled "Cumaþ þá Nihtielfas"—i.e., "The Night-elves Come"[36]) and "Tinfang Warble" but also more substantial poems such as "The Grey Bridge at Tavrobel," "Over Old Hills and Far Away," and especially "Kortirion among the Trees" depends upon the identification of contemporary England with the legendary elvenhome: Eärendel shines over both, linking the two worlds. Faerie, disenchanted, had become mundane reality, but those who knew how to hear and see could still catch glimpses and echoes of the fey world that had withdrawn. In a way, Tolkien's insight was precisely the opposite of Joseph Conrad's. When in "Heart of Darkness" (1899) Conrad's narrator Charlie Marlow looks out upon the Thames at night and says *this also has been one of the dark places of the earth*, it's a cynical realization that where now there is civilization there once was savagery. But instead of a memory of darkness, Tolkien's is an elegy to vanished light: "Tavrobel shall not know its name." Though now "bare," "stripped of its leaves," forgetful and forgotten, Kortirion of the Elms somehow endures: "Unseen the Elves go by . . . The Elves are silent. But they do not die! . . . Here undefeated dwell/ The Folk Immortal under withered elms,/ Alalminórë once in ancient realms" ("The Trees of Kortirion"). We should note that this poem was first written c. 1915 (as "Kortirion among the Trees") as part of the first stage of Tolkien's mythology, revised c. 1937 (that is, after he had put the final touches on *The Hobbit* and about the time he was beginning *The Lord of the Rings*), and revised again c. 1961–62 for possible inclusion in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* near the end of his career.[37]

Christopher Tolkien has said, on England's having been first Tol Eressëa and later Luthany: "All this was to fall away afterwards from the developing mythology,"[38] but I am not so sure. Even in its final form, "Kortirion among the Trees" could stand equally well as a poem from the Third/Fourth Age or from our own, the Seventh. And though much of this material was later deleted, so that Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Isle, became not an earlier name for Great Britain but a far-distant land, Tolkien never wholly abandoned this conception, and it remains perhaps the single most distinguishing feature of his world-building.

Even when the specifics were removed, the key concept remained: that he was telling the story of very ancient deeds, "lost tales" that took place in a distant past but in his familiar beloved homeland.

Furthermore, Christopher Tolkien warns us that details which drop out of the story during its long evolution are not necessarily rejected but sometimes merely omitted by means of compression.[39] It can hardly be coincidence that as late as 1930, when writing the opening chapter of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien felt free to include not only references to Beren, Tinúviel, the Necromancer, and Mirkwood (Taur-na-Fuin) but also to the Gobi Desert, Hindu Kush, and "the Wild Wire-Worms of the Chinese" as part of Bilbo's world.[40] That same year (1930), when writing the *Quenta* (subtitled "the brief History of the Noldoli or Gnomes, drawn from the Book of Lost Tales")—a major step forward in the "Silmarillion" proper that replaced the 1926 "Sketch of the Mythology," which had in turn replaced *The Book of Lost Tales* as the prime prose "Silmarillion" text—Tolkien added "Ingolondë" as one of the names for Beleriand, a name retained in the 1937 *Quenta Silmarillion*. In Christopher Tolkien's words, "it seems plain . . . that England was one of the great isles that remained after the destruction of Beleriand." He also gives it as his opinion that "England still had a place in the actual mythological geography" in 1937.[41] The implicit linkage of *Ingolonde* "Land of the Noldor" (or *Angoloð*, the Sindarin equivalent of "Noldor" or "Gnome") with *England*, the land of the *Angles*, is a very characteristic Tolkienian linguistic doubling; cf. the Old English word *orthanc* (*orthanc enta weorc* "the cunning work of giants") being given an Elvish etymology as well.

The recent Mathew Lyons book *There and Back Again: In the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien*,[42] for all its occasional breeziness, is probably nearer to grasping the essence of Tolkien's "mythology for England" than those who delve into lost myths. The legend of Wade, now wholly lost, was an important inspiration for Tolkien when creating his myth of Eärendel, yet the streets and trees of Warwickshire were equally important. Tolkien scholarship of the last twenty-odd years has given much attention to one aspect while ignoring the other. We need a balance: both are important, and the combination of the two is what makes Tolkien Tolkien. Tolkien himself included "passing into history" as part of the equation (cf. above): that's what roots the story in real-world experience and gives it relevance. Middle-earth is not a Neverland or a Narnia or

even a Dunsanian Dreamland but the good green earth beneath our feet, when it was enchanted.[43]

But if the world survives, it survives diminished and forgetful, like a small market town that was once the center of its own (little) kingdom, as in this passage from *Farmer Giles of Ham*, describing the valley of the Thames: "The face of the land has changed since that time, and kingdoms have come and gone; woods have fallen, and rivers have shifted, and only the hills remain, and they are worn down by the rain and the wind. But still the name [*Worminghall*] endures . . ."[44]

Part IV: "A Solemn Thought": Lost Tales, Lost Authors, Lost Language

> Of this author, nothing is now known. But he was a major poet of his day; and it is a solemn thought that his name is now forgotten, a reminder of the great gaps of ignorance over which we now weave the thin webs of our literary history. [J.R.R. Tolkien, describing the so-called "Gawain-poet"[45]]

And here we return to our elegy theme, for a sense of loss is always pervasive in all Tolkien's work, even so cheerful a tale as *Farmer Giles of Ham* or *The Hobbit*. As a medieval scholar and above all as a philologist, Tolkien was keenly aware of just how much we have lost of our cultural heritage: R.M. Wilson managed to fill an entire book just listing works we know about that no longer exist[46]—and this is just the things that got written down and does not even consider all the stories, folklore, and legends that existed only in oral form, or that perished without leaving a trace.

Consider, for example, the three authors to whose work Tolkien devoted his professional life: the so-called "*Beowulf*-poet," the "*Gawain*-poet," and the equally anonymous author of *Ancrene Wisse*, brilliant writers whose names are forever lost to us and, in the case of two out of three, whose work survives only by happenstance. We have hundreds of surviving manuscripts from antiquity of Homer, and what are considered to be the complete works of Plato, and many manuscripts of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Contrast this with *Beowulf*, universally acknowledged the finest work of Old English poetry, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, matched in Middle English literature only by Chaucer at his best, if at all. In each case the poem survives in a single copy, one manuscript. Both these

solitary manuscripts in turn by luck survived the disastrous 1731 fire at Ashburnham House that destroyed or damaged roughly a quarter of the Cotton Collection to which they belonged; even the *Beowulf* manuscript itself was scorched along the edges and had already begun to crumble away before the first transcription was made from it, decades *after* the fire.[47] We know that other works, possibly of equal or even greater merit, did not survive the chances of history—for example, only a single page of another Old English epic, recounting the disaster Tolkien called the *Freswæl* and telling in part the story of Hengest, the man who led the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain, survived to modern times, and even the original manuscript of that page has since disappeared, presumably destroyed.[48]

As a philologist, someone who was a master at puzzling out earlier forms of language and extrapolating from remaining fragments what they could tell us about our own forgotten past,[49] Tolkien would have been particularly aware of the corrosive effect of time. In the words of linguist John McWhorter,

> an extinct language before the advent of writing is even more unrecoverable than an extinct life form. Life forms may leave their impressions as fossils, and technology gets ever closer to allowing us to someday at least partially resurrect ancient life forms through remains of their DNA. However, a language could not leave an "imprint" before writing existed, because an individual language is not encoded in a person's genes. . . . The particular word shapes, grammatical configurations, and various irregularities that characterize any one language are the result of largely random accretions through the millennia, no more reproducible from basic human materials than the form of an individual snowflake is from the water droplets that it began as.[50]

For my own part, I would reverse McWhorter's metaphor and compare our inability to re-create a wholly lost language to our inability to re-create a snowflake from the melted drop of water it became: all the structure, detail, and beauty that made it unique is forever lost. But would Tolkien have agreed with McWhorter's bleak assessment? The indications are that he would not. Not only did he belong to an elder school of philologists, well documented in Shippey's *Road to Middle-Earth*,[51] who thought that by understanding and correctly applying Grimm's Law and similar rules of sound-change they could re-create lost languages from their latter-day descendants (if any); Tolkien's own

reconstruction of Gothic, in which he wrote one of his finest poems ("Bagme Bloma," a celebration of the beauty of trees), stands witness to his mastery of this method, which led from the creation of a fairly extensive proposed Indo-European vocabulary, to the still earlier Indo-Hittite or the parallel proto-language of Afro-Asiatic, to the current efforts of some linguists to reconstruct "Proto-World": the original human language from which all others derive.[52]

In his professional life, Tolkien could go no further. But in his fantasy, which was always closely connected to and drew constant inspiration from his professional studies (to cite only three examples, his derivation of the Dwarf-names in *The Hobbit* from a list interpolated into *The Elder Edda*, or his modeling Bilbo's stealing the cup on a parallel scene reconstructed by nineteenth-century scholars from the most badly damaged page of the *Beowulf* manuscript, or his creating a new myth to explain the obscure Old English name *Earendel*), he was able to go beyond that and speculate on means whereby truly dead languages, with no living speakers and which have left behind no physical trace, could be recovered. He even wondered if a language could lay latent in the descendants of its speakers until called to life again by the right circumstances, and wrote in all seriousness to W.H. Auden: "I daresay . . . linguistic tastes . . . are as good or better a test of ancestry as blood-groups."[53] This belief or idea was reflected in his fiction: the common theme of both Tolkien's time-travel stories, *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*, is the recovery of a lost language through dreams that transcend time, allowing a far-off descendant to "learn" a long-dead language, directly experiencing what had been known by his distant ancestors.[54] Tolkien is not the only man to create his own language or script—from collaborative efforts like Esperanto and its lesser-known contemporaries to modern examples such as Klingon or Laadan (Suzanne Haldin Elgin's so-called language-for-women) and solitary creations such as M.A.R. Barker's Tekumel; it seems very likely that the so-called "Voynich Manuscript" represents a late-medieval private language and script by an unknown author,[55] while Dr. John Dee's Enochian seems to have been invented by Dee's medium, Edward Kelley, for no better purpose than to gull the credulous old man. But it is deeply characteristic that, having created a new language, Tolkien would not present it as a modern-day competitor to English but as a lost language from the distant past. The languages he invented after neo-Gothic are new tongues, deriving elements from

real world speech (Welsh, Finnish) but only as raw materials: they are *creations*, not re-creations.

As in language, so in stories. Tolkien liked to say that he was not learned in fairy-stories and myths because he rarely read a legend without wanting to write a new one. Seen in this context, his "mythology for England" takes on a new meaning. His *legendarium* is not the lost English mythology[56] but a substitute for it, having the same air, same tone, and same elusive quality as the best of what had been lost. Tolkien wanted to create a new story to take the place of the lost tales, that would have the same function and feel as the stories he would have cherished if only they had survived, if only they had come down to us. He wove in as many elements of the surviving fragments as he could—even Hengest himself became a son of Eriol the Wanderer in a version of his mythology[57]—but the essential purpose is to create something new out of the surviving fragments. One does not read Tolkien to learn about ancient English myth (though Tolkien's readers do absorb a good deal of what Tolkien called his "linguistic wisdom," whether they know it or not); we read Tolkien to experience something new that nevertheless has the quality of something ancient and immemorial. And Tolkien's success is such that he not only revived the mythic mode of writing but stamped the old materials he reworked into something new, and those who follow him in the new genre he created, modern fantasy, absorb and transmit characteristically Tolkienian innovations without even realizing it: he did indeed create a new "mythology" (or at least mythical mode of thinking) not just suitable but deeply appealing for our time.

Part V: "We Make Because We are Made": Tolkien's Sub-creative Theology

Blessed are the men of Noah's race that build
their little arks, though frail and poorly filled. . . .

Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme
of things not found within recorded time. . . .
They have seen Death and ultimate defeat,
and yet they would not in despair retreat. . . .

. . . *We make still by the law in which we're made.*

[J.R.R. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," c. 1931[58]]

The question inevitably arises at some point: why bother? If all human languages are doomed to one day go extinct—McWhorter estimates that 90% of the languages spoken today will be extinct within a century, an unprecedented mass extinction that would have deeply saddened Tolkien, who once praised the multiplicity of tongues with the phrase "O happy sin of Babel!"[59]—if all authors are ultimately forgotten or their works lost or both, if all nations eventually end and their people are absorbed into later conquerors, why write at all? Yeats' famous answer, in one of his final poems, "Lapis Lazuli" (1938), is simple: "All things fall and are built again, / And those that build them again are gay."[60] That is, we create for the sheer joy of creation—no matter what becomes of our art in the end, the act of artistic creation is a positive good in itself. Tolkien's answer is somewhat different, but I think relevant to our topic in hand, and to fairly represent it requires a brief metaphysical, not to say theological, digression on the way to our conclusion.

In his theory of Sub-creation, Tolkien posits that only God can create; mankind sub-creates. That is, the artist creates a world that is, within its fictional confines, as "real" to the mind of the reader as our material world is within its own. But Tolkien goes beyond this: though not a gnostic, he suggested that God prefers to work indirectly. Middle-earth (Arda) is not created by Ilúvatar but only made real by him: it originates as a piece of collaborative art, the music of the Ainur.[61] All this might be dismissed as "merely" a Creation Myth (but only if we use "mere" in C.S. Lewis's sense of what is basic, essential: "Mere" Christianity), did it not sync up so precisely with Tolkien's little fable "Leaf by Niggle," which presents in fictional form the same ideas as his sub-creationist manifesto, the essay "On Fairy-Stories" (with which Tolkien himself paired it in *Tree and Leaf*).

Like the angels of the cosmogonical legend, Niggle is an artist ("a Leaf by Niggle has a charm of its own"[62]) who passes from Making (by which Tolkien means the re-arrangement of materials in the artist's world—e.g., combining canvas and paint in such a way as to make a picture of a leaf blowing in the wind) to Sub-creation (the depiction through art of something not existing in the artist's world, like the Tree of Amalion) and whose sub-creation is "taken up into Creation" and made real.[63] The original painting on canvas is used to patch a roof (a small piece survives and is hung in a museum, but even this is eventually lost and both it and Niggle himself "were entirely forgotten in his old country"[64]), yet elsewhere Niggle's imagined tree becomes a living

three-dimensional Tree, the heart of Niggle's Parish, where spirits of the dead can find peace and wonder and refreshment (in a word, Recovery). The poem "Mythopoeia," which anticipates the key argument of "On Fairy-Stories" and which Tolkien quotes from within the essay, advances the related point that we create because we are created: it is a fundamental part of our nature ("We make still by the law in which we're made"). One can even find Biblical support for Tolkien's view that God grants Man a creative faculty and charges him to exercise it: "the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man *to see what he would call them*; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (Genesis 2:19, emphasis mine).

This injunction to create, and God's enjoyment of the result ("I will sit and harken, *and be glad* that through you great beauty has been wakened into song"[65]), I think lies at the heart of what we may call Tolkien's sub-creative theology. We often hear it asserted that Tolkien was a traditionalist in religion (in fact, a conservative Catholic[66]), but while absolutely true this is nonetheless not the whole truth. It would be truer to say that Tolkien believed everything the Church taught, and more. Thus, when rebuked by a fellow Catholic (Peter Hastings, manager of a local Catholic bookstore in Oxford) for "over-stepping the mark in metaphysical matters" by including elements in his story which were not strictly in accord with Church doctrine—for example, the reincarnation of the elves—Tolkien responded by setting down his position with great care.

Throughout his letter to Hastings, Tolkien vigorously asserts his right as a sub-creator to explore avenues God himself had not used in creating this world—in the words of "Mythopoeia," ". . . 'twas our *right* / (used or misused). That right has not decayed / we make still by the law in which we're made"[67]—and instead argues that "liberation from the channels the creator is known to have used already . . . is . . . a tribute to the infinity of His potential variety, one of the ways in which indeed it is exhibited,"[68] utterly rejecting the idea that "the channels known (in such a finite corner as we have any inkling of) to have been used are the only possible ones, or efficacious, or possibly acceptable to and by Him!"[69] Thus, for example, Tolkien allowing for a sentient race like the Elves to experience a longevity that approaches immortality[70] as well as reincarnation within the world of time is not heresy, as Hastings had charged, but simply a proffered alternative—a thought experiment, if

you like, but fleshed out and given sub-creative power. The same could be said of his depiction of a plural humanity sharing the Earth (Elves and Dwarves and Men and Hobbits): there's no reason, theologically, why different beings of similar moral stature shouldn't share the same planet, as they do in Lewis's Malacandra (*Out of the Silent Planet*), or as they did historically during the period when Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons shared the earth. Tolkien was even willing to blur the line between levels of reality when he observed that "inevitably my [sub-created] world [i.e. Middle-earth] is highly imperfect . . . nor made wholly coherent—our Real World does not appear to be wholly coherent either; and I am actually not myself convinced that . . . even in ours there are not some 'tolerated' sub-creational counterfeits!"[71]

That is, our Primary Reality shows telltale traces of being a sub-created world, not the perfect place an omnipotent being could plan and execute but one flawed though full of beauty and wonder, worthy of being taken up into a divine plan and made real. To put the matter metaphorically, Tolkien's position would seem to be that this world is a rough draft that will some day be destroyed and replaced by a revised and corrected final copy; it's an author's right and privilege to offer suggestions for additions and revisions which may or may not be taken up into the New Heaven and Earth.

Thus, for Tolkien, the destruction of what we sub-create is no defeat. If it had value, that may be taken up into primary reality in some form, at some time; if not in this world then in the next. Nothing worth preserving is ever really lost. Just as a lost past may linger on in the Memory of the World, so too lost art still exists where it really counts, in the Mind of God. Niggle's masterpiece is destroyed and his name utterly forgotten, but in the end this does not matter much; Niggle's Parish survives. Once again Mark Twain provides a striking parallel in his 1907 work "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven." Stormfield is surprised to find that, in heaven, Shakespeare is ranked far below a tailor from Tennessee by the name of Billings:

> That tailor Billings, from Tennessee, wrote poetry that Homer and Shakspere couldn't begin to come up to; but nobody would print it, nobody read it but his neighbors, an ignorant lot, and they laughed at it. . . . [O]ne night when he was sick and nearly starved to death, they . . . crowned him [with cabbage leaves], and then they rode him on a

> rail about the village. . . . [H]e died before morning. He wasn't ever expecting to go to heaven, much less that there was going to be any fuss made over him, so I reckon he was a good deal surprised . . ."[72]

Or, as Gerard Manly Hopkins put it, a writer's desire to communicate, an artist's desire to share his vision, may be frustrated in this world by the destruction of the painting or manuscript, or the death of the person who would most have enjoyed reading it. Tolkien definitely agreed, since he approvingly quoted Hopkins' conclusion to C.S. Lewis, that "[t]he only just literary critic is Christ, who *admires* more than does any man the gifts He Himself has bestowed."[73]

And here we return to our main theme, the evocation of loss in Tolkien's works. For despite the fact that he is often accused of being nostalgic or sentimental ("soft," as Eddison unkindly put it), he is firm on this point: however heartbreaking to our human sensibilities, we must accept loss and decay as essential parts of the world—in short, "the Gift of Men." To do otherwise is to fall into the error of the Elves, whom Tolkien in this context called "embalmers,"[74] so in love with the past that they want to prevent the future from ever arriving—at least the future conceived of as different from the present. Their ideal would be for the past to continue into present time and beyond, continually enriched but never passing away. Tolkien himself certainly understood the appeal of this—a seductive ideal of more time, if not infinite time, to go on making things and doing things that Tolkien called "an expression of certain not wholly legitimate desires the human race has about itself"[75]—which makes his ultimate regretful rejection of it all the more moving.

"The chief power (of all the rings alike) was the prevention or slowing of *decay* (i.e., 'change' viewed as a regrettable thing), the preservation of what is desired or loved"—an error so fundamental that Tolkien likens it to a second Fall of the Elves.[76] The Black Númenóreans want to live forever in a kind of infinite present, and the Elves want the past to last forever: both errors that seek to frustrate the ability of the future to contribute its own sub-creations. Wootton's Smith, wiser, passes along the gift he has been blessed with, accepting mortality. Brendan discovers paradise, only to be told to go home and die. The Gift of Men is inexorable: time obliterates the past to prepare the space for the present, and the present passes away (bearing us along with it) to make way for the future: time and death are God's method of providing us with space to

create. The present is not a blank slate but an erased blackboard. The Elves cling to the past and so are swept away with it; in a fallen world, acceptance of the inevitability of death is the only way to pass beyond the world's limitations, for Brendan or Niggle or Arwen.

But if time and death are inevitable, in some sense forgetfulness is even harder to accept. In the words of Mathew Lyons, writing of Merry's pity for the Púkel-men, "it is a peculiarly Tolkienish sentiment, this, the capacity to be profoundly moved by the idea of the distant, unknown, entirely lost past. Some might characterize Tolkien's world . . . as being one of 'remote, meaningless antiquity', but that misses the point of Tolkien's life's work, which was precisely to restore to antiquity its meaning and identities. . . . [With the Púkel-men] we see Tolkien making room within his work to articulate the very emotion that drove him to create it in the first place."[77] Elsewhere, Lyons ties Arwen's grave itself into this impulse. Speaking of the barrow-mounds in Berkshire (similar to the thousands of anonymous "Indian mounds" found throughout the United States) that inspired the Barrow Mounds and the Barrowfield at Edoras, he writes:

> [Arwen's] green grave resting on Cerin Amroth until the end of time [is] part of the landscape long after she herself has been forgotten. In pre-literate societies . . . death and memory went hand in hand, since life could have no record but a burial site or a fistful of stories passed down from father to daughter, mother to son. . . . [S]uch grave-making is . . . a claim on eternity against the depredations of time, a plea for remembrance. . . . [T]he five hundred years and 16 generations of men that the mounds of Rohan mark . . . are as nothing to the elves. Yet elves and men such as these have been alike forgotten, have fallen out of memory: it is the central conceit of Middle Earth [*sic*]. . . . [T]he poignancy derives from . . . the simple absence of identity, as if such barrows, like the various national monuments to unknown warriors, stood for the sorrows of all the vanished peoples of the Earth.[78]

Conclusion: "So Arbitrary and Precious"

> [T]he past is so difficult to know—the survival of anything from it so arbitrary and precious—that any chance to rescue the merest fragment of it from oblivion should not be given up lightly. [Lyons, *There and Back Again: In the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 60]

> [T]he story was drawn irresistibly towards the older world, and became an account . . . of its ending and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told. [Tolkien, Foreword to *The Lord of the Rings*, 9]
>
> The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. [ibid., 10]

In the end, Tolkien did not perhaps achieve his goal of creating the Mythology for England. Even his most precisely localized tale, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, originating before he wrote *The Hobbit* and published about the time he finished *The Lord of the Rings*, exists for most of his readers in a delightfully vague pseudo-medieval world not unlike many another modern fantasy. Relatively few among the hundreds of thousands who have read this story are aware that Thame, Worminghall, Oakley, and the Standing Stones are all real places within a twenty-mile radius of Tolkien's home at the time. The very fact that most of the places visited in Lyon's book—Cheddar Gorge, the Berkshire Downs, Sarehole Mill—have never been heard of by the vast majority of people who consider *The Lord of the Rings* their favorite book shows the degree to which Tolkien's achievement transcended his original intent. Instead of "a Mythology for England," he wound up creating a Mythology for Our Times, one that in its "applicability" (cf. the Foreword to *The Lord of the Rings*, second edition) could transcend not just geographic boundaries but linguistic and, increasingly, chronological ones: many who consider *The Lord of the Rings* "the Book of the Century" have never visited England, were not even alive when the books were first published, and may or may not speak the language it was written in (the number of languages and dialects it has been translated into now reaches thirty-eight,[79] and the book recently won a poll in Germany where a quarter-million Germans chose it as their favorite piece of literature, beating out the Bible and Thomas Mann[80]).

To quote Lyons a final time, "Tolkien was right to be wary about conceding . . . the relationship between real places and his imaginary ones, since it is the ambiguity of his world's relationship to England that generates meaning, not its explicitness."[81] As I have argued above, I believe more of the specific correlations existed and remain than we

are perhaps aware of, but I agree that Tolkien was wise to downplay this element in his later work, for the reasons he himself set forth in Note E at the end of "On Fairy-Stories" (a 300-word appendix that is the shrewdest analysis of his narrative method ever penned):

> Literature works from mind to mind . . . at once . . . universal and . . . poignantly particular. If it speaks of *bread* or *wine* or *stone* or *tree*, it appeals to the whole of these things . . . yet each hearer will give them a peculiar personal embodiment in his imagination. Should the story say "he ate bread" . . . the hearer of the story will think of bread in general and picture it in some form of his own. If a story says "he climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below" . . . every hearer of the words will have his own picture [of the scene], and it will be made up of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but specially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word.[82]

Out of the England he knew and loved, Tolkien created Middle-earth, a sub-creation that has become beloved in its own right. Out of his "linguistic wisdom" and expert knowledge of prehistory and fragments of lost myth, he enriched it while simultaneously paying a silent homage to those who have, like the makers of the Púkel-men, gone before and vanished, leaving little or no trace. And if its deliberate vagueness about specific one-on-one correlations blunts the original impetus for his "mythology for England" it also grants his myth transcendence and "applicability," just as its grounding in our world gives the story weight and *gravitas* and prevents it from being escapist in the negative sense. Instead, his evocation of the lost past evokes the human condition, "weighted with the presage of 'bereavement,'" but "not bound for ever to the circles of the world."[83]

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 1 vol. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 1134.

2. J.R.R. Tolkien, "The New Shadow," in *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 12 of *The History of Middle-earth* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 419–20.

3. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 1099.

4. Ibid., 1110.

5. A word or two: I am thinking here of Tolkien's statement in a letter of June 1971 that the element *ond* 'stone' (*Ond* > *Ondor* > *Gondor*) derived from his having read as a child that *ond* 'stone' was one of only two words surviving from the Pre-Indo-European language of Europe, adding "I have no idea how such a form could even be guessed" (to Graham Tayar, 4–5 June 1971, in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, selected and ed. Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981], 410; this volume is hereafter cited in the text and notes as *Letters*, by page). Elsewhere I have found a suggestion that **ond-* is itself Indo-European (Patrick C. Ryan, "Proto-Language 'He' and 'It': IE -l/-n Nouns," initially published in *Dhumbadji!* 1, no. 4 [Winter 1994], posted at http://www.geocities.com/Proto-language/PERSPO3A.htm); but I have not been able to confirm this. It is not included among the Elvish/Indo-European "loan-words" in the section of *An Introduction to Elvish*, ed. Jim Allan (Hayes, Middlesex: Bran's Head, 1978) devoted to Indo-European/Elvish parallels.

6. J.R.R. Tolkien, to Caroline Everett, 24 June 1957, in *Letters*, 258.

7. J.R.R. Tolkien, interview by Denis (i.e. Denys) Gueroult, British Broadcasting Corporation, Oxford studio, 1964 (i.e. 20 January 1965), issued as side 1 of *Tolkien and Basil Bunting* (Guildford, Conn.: BBC Cassettes, 1980).

8. Paul H. Kocher, *Master of Middle-earth: The Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 10.

9. As Tolkien conceived him, the *Beowulf*-poet was a learned man who wanted to preserve something of his country's ancient legendry; a Christian who wrote about pre-Christian times; a man who preferred to tell stories of larger-than-life heroes fighting epic monsters rather than realistic accounts of wars between princes or the brutal struggles of his own day—cf. Tolkien, "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" (delivered 1936, first published 1937).

10. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 1 of *The History of Middle-earth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 5.

11. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 19.

12. For more on the "1960 *Hobbit*," Tolkien's retroactive attempt to create a perfect fit between *The Hobbit* and its sequel, see my forthcoming book, *The History of* The Hobbit.

13. As Tolkien put it in his 1965 BBC interview, after the Downfall Númenor "lived then only in memory. It lived in time but not present time. . . . Númenor was drowned, and the Earthly Paradise removed, and so then you could get to Central America! . . . [T]he world became round." This ties in closely with his phrasing a decade earlier in his letter to Milton Waldman: "Valinor (or Paradise) . . . [is] removed, remaining only in the memory of the earth" (probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 156). We find two other examples of the memory of what we would consider inanimate objects in Legolas's words in

Hollin: "[T]he trees and grass do not now remember them. Only I hear the stones lament them: *deep they delved us, fair they wrought us, high they builded us; but they are gone*" (Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 301), and in Ramer's experience of the forlorn lost memories of a meteorite in *The Notion Club Papers* (*Sauron Defeated*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 9 of *The History of Middle-earth* [London: HarperCollins, 1992], 181–83). Something similar may perhaps be glimpsed in Bombadil's tales, since he is in effect a *genius loci*, or anthropomorphized spirit of the countryside; note that the four hobbits seem to experience his words more as shared memories than as told tales, experiences that predate any human or human-like occupation of the land: "[he] wandered into strange regions beyond their memory and beyond their waking thought, into times when the world was wider, and the seas flowed straight to the western Shore; and still on and back Tom went singing out into ancient starlight, when only the Elf-sires were awake. Then suddenly he stopped. . . . 'When the Elves passed westward, Tom was here already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless—before the Dark Lord came from Outside'" (Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 146).

14. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lost Road*, published in *The Lost Road and Other Stories*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 5 of *The History of Middle-earth* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987); Tolkien, *The Notion Club Papers*, Night 67, in *Sauron Defeated*, 157, 252.

15. Cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Dark Tower* (c. 1946, posthumously published in 1977), where this very thing happens when the Stingerman escapes into modern-day Cambridge. Tolkien himself noted that Lewis's new story "seems likely to clash with mine"—i.e., in the sense of pre-empting his themes (J.R.R. Tolkien, to Christopher Tolkien, 18 December 1944, in *Letters*, 105).

16. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," 48–49. For another present-tense reference to the elves on Tolkien's part, implying that they still share this world with us in some sense, see "On Fairy-Stories," 61: "The human stories of the elves *are* doubtless full of the Escape from Deathlessness" (emphasis mine). Note that by this standard the tale of Tinúviel is the archetypical elven fairy-tale.

17. I would include Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar, except that its creation actually predates his exposure to Tolkien, deriving inspiration instead more from the work of Robert E. Howard and E.R. Eddison and existing less in its own right than as mere backdrop to the heroes' exploits.

18. Most notably L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter, who published a number of "collaborations" with Howard several decades after his death. Like August Derleth's "collaborations" with H.P. Lovecraft, these usually consisted of the latter-day writer taking an idea from the earlier writer's work and writing a whole new story around it, aping the original author's style in the process and inserting some of his favorite motifs repeatedly. In four cases, de Camp took stories by Howard set during other eras (such as the Fall of Khartoum or the

Northwest Frontier during the Indian Wars) and re-wrote them into a Conan story, claiming (mistakenly) that no one could tell the difference. Compare the pastiches of Tolkien's work by Dennis McKiernan and Terry Brooks.

19. Robert E. Howard, "The Hyborian Age" (1935), in *The Conan Chronicles*, vol. 1, *The People of the Black Circle*, ed. Stephen Jones (London: Millennium Books, 2000), 22–23.

20. For a succinct dissection and rebuttal of that still-lingering view, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. to date (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987–91), and Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics*, ed. David Chioni Moore (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

21. L. Sprague de Camp, *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy* (Sauk City, Wisc.: Arkham House, 1976), 149.

22. Ibid., 160; Stephen Jones, "Afterword: Robert E. Howard and Conan: The Final Years," in *The Conan Chronicles*, vol. 2, *The Hour of the Dragon*, ed. Stephen Jones (London: Millennium Books, 2001), 563.

23. Howard, "The Hyborian Age," 23–24.

24. Twain even wrote a story about a land named *Gondour* ("The Curious Republic of Gondour," 1870, first published in book form in 1919), which begins on a linguistic note (the first line being: "As soon as I had learned to speak the language a little . . ."). Unlike Tolkien's more familiar *Gondor*, Twain's is not a legendary kingdom of the distant past but a modern utopia which he holds up as a model for voting reform (the Gondourans allow not just universal suffrage and female suffrage but grant citizens additional votes for education and achievement). While we know this could not be the direct source for Tolkien's name because of the *Ond* > *Ondor* > *Gondor* evolution already mentioned (see note 5), the similarity is nonetheless striking. Furthermore, Tolkien did know at least some of Twain's work; Clyde Kilby, although not the most reliable of sources, was probably accurate when he reported being "pleasantly surprised" by Tolkien's familiarity with Twain (Clyde S. Kilby, *Tolkien and* The Silmarillion [Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1976], 30–31)—Clemens was, after all, enormously popular in England when Tolkien was growing up and had made a famous visit to Oxford to receive an honorary doctorate only four years before Tolkien himself started there as an undergraduate (Milton Meltzer, *Mark Twain Himself: A Pictorial Biography* [New York: Bonanza Books, 1960], 276–81).

25. Mark Twain, *The Bible According to Mark Twain: Writings on Heaven, Eden, and the Flood*, ed. Howard G. Baetzhold and Joseph B. McCullough (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 78.

26. For a more lighthearted vision of antediluvian days which Tolkien almost certainly read, see Hugh Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle and the Secret Lake* (1923).

27. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 2 of *The History of Middle-earth* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 287–89.

28. Lord Dunsany, preface, *The Last Book of Wonder* (New York: John W. Luce, 1916), [v–vii].

29. Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 144.

30. The phrase is apparently Humphrey Carpenter's (cf. *Tolkien: A Biography* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977], 89) rather than a direct quote from Tolkien himself; if so, it is an extremely apt coinage.

31. Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 144, emphasis mine.

32. Carl F. Hostetter and Arden R. Smith, "A Mythology for England," in *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*, ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight, 281–90 (Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena, Calif.: Mythopoeic Press, 1995); Jane Chance, *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England* (1979; rev. ed. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

33. Especially since Tolkien was more eclectic than he has been given credit for in the sources he drew on for his mythology. The Norse mythology underlying the Eddas was certainly a major influence, but he also drew on Finnish myth (the *Kalevala*), Roman and Greek myth (a major overlooked source, as Robert E. Morse pointed out in his unfortunately inadequate chapbook *Evocation of Virgil in Tolkien's Art: Geritol for the Classics* [Oak Park, Ill.: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1986]; we should not forget that Tolkien was a classical scholar when he first went up to Oxford, and the Valar of *The Book of Lost Tales* owe more to the Olympians than the denizens of Asgard), Egyptian (the journey of the sun and moon beneath the world through the *Duat* or Underworld), and the invented mythology described by Lord Dunsany in *The Gods of Pegāna* (1905). Tolkien's mythology was not purely "Northern" either in plan or in detail; he simply drew his deepest inspiration from the things that interested him most and that he loved the most.

I should note that the whole concept of "a mythology for England" has been challenged by some critics, who insist the idea was foreign to Tolkien's intentions and cannot be supported by the available evidence. The most exhaustive summation of this argument can be found in Anders Stenström's essay "A Mythology? For England?" in *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*, ed. Reynolds and GoodKnight, 310–14, which argues that in Tolkien's usage the word "mythology" could not mean his legendarium but only the small part of it devoted to describing world-creation. Unfortunately for this rather hair-splitting argument, in his seminal 1965 BBC interview with Denys Gueroult Tolkien repeatedly uses the term in precisely the sense Stenström denies, leaving no doubt that by "my mythology" he meant the entire sub-created history of Middle-earth.

34. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*, 22.

35. Ibid., 24–25.

36. Ibid., 32.

37. Ibid., 33–43.

38. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*, 327.

39. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*, 9.

40. See Rateliff, "The Pryftan Fragment," in *The History of* The Hobbit, forthcoming.

41. Tolkien, *The Lost Road and Other Writings*, 253; J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, vol. 4 of *The History of Middle-earth* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986), 174, 199.

42. Mathew Lyons, *There and Back Again: In the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Wimbledon: Cadogan Guides, 2004).

43. Cf. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," 14.

44. J.R.R. Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949), 77.

45. J.R.R. Tolkien, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 13. Tolkien considered the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* "a man of thought and intelligence," whose achievement was rivaled only by Chaucer's masterpiece—by which he meant *Troilus & Criseyde*, not *The Canterbury Tales*. Specifically, he calls *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* "the best conceived and shaped narrative poem of the Fourteenth Century, indeed of the Middle Ages, in English, with one exception only. It has a rival, a claimant to equality not superiority, in Chaucer's masterpiece *Troilus and Criseyde*. That is larger, longer, more intricate, and perhaps more subtle, though no wiser or more perceptive, and certainly less noble" (J.R.R. Tolkien, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," the W.P. Ker Lecture, 1953, in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983], 91, 105).

46. R.M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952).

47. For more on the Cotton Manuscripts and the disaster at Ashburnham House, see Andrew Prescott, "'Their Present Miserable State of Cremation': The Restoration of the Cotton Library," in *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy*, ed. C.J. Wright (London: British Library, 1997), available online at http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/ajp-pms.htm.

48. For more on the so-called "Finnesburg Fragment" and a detailed examination of this nearly lost tale, see J.R.R. Tolkien, *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode*, ed. Alan Bliss (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

49. Cf. his tour-de-force discovery of an otherwise unrecorded literary tradition through an acute analysis of a few surviving religious works written

in West Midland dialect, in "*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 14 (1929), 104–26. See also Arne Zettersten, "The AB Language Lives," in the present volume.

50. John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 254.

51. T.A. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

52. J.R.R. Tolkien, "Bagme Bloma," in *Songs for the Philologists*, by J.R.R. Tolkien, E.V. Gordon, and others (London: Privately Printed in the Department of English at University College, London, 1936), 12. For more on Proto-World, see Richard Rudgley, *The Lost Civilizations of the Stone Age* (New York: Free Press, 1999). For McWhorter's strictures and skepticism about the project, see *The Power of Babel*. For a lucid discussion of Afro-Asiatic and its relationship with Indo-Hittite, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, 1:11–17.

53. J.R.R. Tolkien, to W.H. Auden, 7 June 1955, in *Letters*, 214.

54. For more on these two tales, see my essay "*The Lost Road, The Dark Tower,* and *The Notion Club Papers*: Tolkien and Lewis's Time Travel Triad" in *Tolkien's* Legendarium*: Essays on* The History of Middle-earth, ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2000), 199–218.

55. For an overview of various theories advanced regarding the Voynich Manuscript and their varying plausibilities, see Mary E. D'Imperio, *The Voynich Manuscript: An Elegant Enigma* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Aegean Park Press, [circa 1976]). D'Imperio explores the idea of an invented script but not an underlying invented language as well; to any scholar of Tolkien's invented languages, the possibility of the Voynich Manuscript being the result of an unknown author's "secret vice" immediately suggests itself.

56. "These tales are 'new', they are not directly derived from other myths and legends" (Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 147).

57. Christopher Tolkien tells us that "when lecturing on *Beowulf* at Oxford" his father "sometimes gave the unknown poet a name, calling him *Heorrenda*" (Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*, 323)—significantly, a name he wove into his own mythology as the son of Eriol the Wanderer (a.k.a. Ælfwine), the mythical compiler of the *Book of Lost Tales* itself. In Tolkien's private schema, Heorrenda Halfelven was the younger half-brother of Hengest and Horsa, the two men who led the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England (*The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*, 290–92). This fictional addition to the royal house of the Jutes was deeply rooted in Tolkien's own historical research on the historical Hengest: see *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode*, Alan Bliss's edition of Tolkien's unpublished lectures and notes relating to Hengest's story, as an example of his mastery of this material. As for Heorrenda, Christopher Tolkien notes that his father took this name from the Old English poem known variously as "Deor" or "Deor's Lament" (preserved in the tenth-century *Exeter*

Book); Deor himself shows up elsewhere in Ælfwine's imagined family tree as the father of Ælfwine (i.e., Heorrenda's grandfather).

58. J.R.R. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 99–100. The final line (italics mine) precedes the others quoted.

59. McWhorter, *The Power of Babel*, 257; J.R.R. Tolkien, to Christopher Tolkien, 9 December 1943, in *Letters*, 65.

60. W.B. Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli," in *Selected Poems and Two Plays*, ed. M.L. Rosenthal (New York: Collier Books, 1966), 160.

61. Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, *Ainulindalë*, *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 15–22.

62. J.R.R. Tolkien, "Leaf by Niggle," in *Tree and Leaf*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 85.

63. J.R.R. Tolkien, to Peter Hastings, September 1954, in *Letters*, 195. For Tolkien's own picture of a tree like Niggle's, see the Tree of Amalion in Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 64.

64. Tolkien, "Leaf by Niggle," 95.

65. Ilúvatar, in Tolkien, *Ainulindalë*, 15, emphasis mine.

66. Recently there have been a great many books on Tolkien from a religious perspective, most trying to claim him (with dubious results) as an Evangelical, or at least a fellow-traveler with the modern American Baptist-Pentecostal tradition; a favorite tactic is to quote C.S. Lewis, assuming that anything C.S. Lewis said can be taken as an expression of Tolkien's opinion as well (a view not supported by *Letters*, to say nothing of "The Ulsterior Motive," unpublished, in the Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford). A minority point of view, vigorously expressed by Joseph Pearce, seeks to stress Tolkien's catholicity instead, going so far as to claim that only Catholics can truly understand Tolkien's work (see, for example, Pearce's foreword to Bradley J. Birzer, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth* [Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2002], ix–xiv). This seems ironic, given the care with which Tolkien (a deeply religious man) avoided any overt reference to religion in his work, that some among his admirers defy his wishes and seek to sabotage his achievement by imposing a single reading upon his story and stripping away the "applicability" he deliberately built into the text.

67. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," 51, emphasis mine.

68. Tolkien, to Peter Hastings, September 1954, in *Letters*, 188. For the distinction between Making and Creating ("the act of [God] that gives Reality to conceptions"), see the same letter, in *Letters*, 188, 190, where Tolkien also says of his work that "the whole matter from beginning to end is mainly concerned with the relation of Creation to making and sub-creation."

Note that John Wain, in his autobiography *Sprightly Running* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 182, describes C.S. Lewis as having put forth a similar argument. When Wain took the Inklings to task for their love of fantasy and argued that "a writer's task . . . was to lay bare the human heart, and this could not be done if he were continually taking refuge in the spinning of fanciful webs," he says that "Lewis retorted with a theory that, since the Creator had seen fit to build a universe and set it in motion, it was the duty of the human artist to create as lavishly as possible in his turn. The romancer, who invents a whole world, is worshipping God more effectively than the mere realist who analyses that which lies about him." Clearly unconvinced, Wain concludes, uncharitably, that "looking back across fourteen years [i.e., from 1962], I can hardly believe that Lewis said anything so manifestly absurd as this, and perhaps I misunderstood him."

Typically, Lewis apparently did not reveal that he was merely expounding one of his friends' ideas; Tolkien noted that he sometimes found his ideas being expressed by Lewis in somewhat "Lewisified" form (letter to Christopher Tolkien, 31 July 1944, in *Letters*, 89), and examples abound in Lewis's essays and letters. Any reader of C.S. Lewis well versed in the work of Owen Barfield will recognize the same phenomena at work there as well.

69. Tolkien, to Peter Hastings, September 1954, in *Letters*, 189. Elsewhere, Tolkien was more terse: he wrote to W.H. Auden on 12 May 1965, "I don't feel under any obligation to make my story fit with formalized Christian theology" (*Letters*, 355). While "intend[ing] it to be consonant with Christian thought and belief" (ibid.), he was determined to follow the example of the *Beowulf*-poet and avoid anachronistic references to Christianity itself (for Tolkien's interpretation of the *Beowulf*-poet, one of his role-models, as a Christian writer telling a story set in pre-Christian times, see note 9 above and his "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" [repr. Darby, Pa.: Arden Library, 1978], 20), especially since he thought that the Arthurian cycle's "explicitly contain[ing] the Christian religion" was one of the things that disqualified it from serving as a mythology for England (Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 144). Note, in the BBC interview with Denys Gueroult, 1965, Tolkien's analysis of the problem of using real-world gods in a fantasy pantheon: "The man of the twentieth century must of course see that you must, whether you believe in them or not, that you must have gods in a story of this kind. But he can't make himself believe in gods like Thor and Odin. Aphrodite. Zeus. And that sort of thing"; and his emphatic declaration that "I couldn't possibly construct a mythology which had Olympus or Asgard in it on the terms which people who worshipped those gods believed in. God is supreme: the Creator. Outside. Transcendent. The place of God is taken—so well taken that I think it really makes no difference to the ordinary reader—by the angelic spirits created by God, created before the particular time sequence which we call the

World." Unlike things, true religion and false religion and sub-created powers, must be kept separate in Tolkien's artistic credo; an insistence on trying to bring them together, or impose one upon the other, destroys the sub-creative coherence of the fictional world.

70. "I had to use [the word] 'immortal,' but I didn't mean they were eternally immortal, merely that they're very longeval, and their longevity probably lasts as long as the inhabitability of the Earth" (Tolkien, interview with Denys Gueroult, 1965).

71. Tolkien, to Peter Hastings, September 1954, in *Letters*, 191. While Tolkien does not elucidate on what he means by these "sub-creational counterfeits," from the context (a discussion of beings made by the Dark Lord in counterfeit of the Free Peoples) I suspect that he is speaking of something along the lines of C.S. Lewis's Un-man, an idea which Lewis seems to have derived in turn from Dante's *Inferno*. Cf. Canto XXXIII, where Dante meets in Hell someone he knows to be alive in the world above and is told that while the soul is already damned and in Hell the body, animated by a devil, is still walking around in the world of the living (Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 1: Hell*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers [Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1949], 281–82).

72. Mark Twain, "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," in *The Bible According to Mark Twain*, 170.

73. J.R.R. Tolkien, to C.S. Lewis, spring 1948, in *Letters*, 128; emphasis mine.

74. Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 151.

75. Tolkien, interview with Denys Gueroult, 1965. In full, Tolkien remarked that

> ultimately we've only got humanity to work with; it's the only clay we've got. And of course any races you make, if they're speaking and thinking, are taken from certain parts of humanity as one knows it with slight alterations of emphasis. That's all you can do, isn't it? Of course the Elves are simply in a sense an expression of certain not wholly legitimate desires the human race has about itself. We should all, or at least a large part of the human race, would like to have greater power of mind, greater power of art—by which I mean that the gap between the conception and the power of execution should be shortened. We should like that, and we should like longer time if not indefinite time in which to go on knowing more and making more.

76. Tolkien, to Milton Waldman, probably late 1951, in *Letters*, 152, 151.

77. Lyons, *There and Back Again: In the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 54.

78. Ibid., 70–72.

79. Armenian, Basque, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Esperanto, Estonian, Faeroese, Finnish, French, German, Greek,

Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Iranian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Marathi, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian. (My thanks to Christina Scull and Wayne Hammond for help with this list.) *The Hobbit*, of course, has been translated into even more languages; the number is now approaching fifty.

80. Krysia Diver, "Troubled Germans Turn to Lord of the Rings," *Guardian*, 4 October 2004; http://www.guardian.co.uk/germany/article/0,2763,1319107,00.html.

81. Lyons, *There and Back Again: In the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 144.

82. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," 70.

83. J.R.R. Tolkien, to Roger Lancelyn Green, 12 December 1967, in *Letters*, 389; Tolkien, "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen," in Appendix A, *Lord of the Rings*, 1100.