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J.R.R. Tolkien: the Forest and the City (2013), edited by Helen Conrad-O'Briain and Gerard Hynes.

Kelley M. Wickham-Crowley
Georgetown University, wickhamk@georgetown.edu

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 "This collection, as a whole, recognizes the interdependence of nature and culture in Tolkien's world as well as his art" (18): thus the editors sum up this gathering of papers from a 2012 conference at Trinity College Dublin. Featuring the work of seasoned scholars and postgraduate students, it attempts to get beyond the dichotomy of city vs. countryside and the associated clichés of civilization vs. savagery or bourgeois vs. primitive. At times uneven, the collection also contains some strong and illuminating essays (Shippey, Kinsella, Harwood-Smith, Flieger, Sebo, Milbank, Drout) and all chapters have their virtues.

   Tom Shippey gives a strong beginning to the volume, writing on "Goths and Romans in Tolkien's imagination" as much more than Roman civilization vs. Germanic barbarity. With his usual creativity, Shippey assembles a diffuse body of evidence: Tolkien's fascination for the Gothic peoples and languages, the exam questions he set while at Oxford, Shippey's own observations about Tolkien's fiction as parallel history, and how that fiction attempted to heal what Tolkien saw as "one of the greatest disasters of European history" (27). What that disaster might be will surprise many, as Tolkien saw the heretical Arianism of the Goths as where history was lost. Specifically, Fr. Robert Murray, to whom Tolkien declared this point, reported Tolkien's belief that the Gothic languages would have been enriched with a "great bible version" and a vernacular liturgy that "would have served as a model for all the Germanic people and would have given them a native Catholicism which would never break apart" (quoted on 27). Aside from his devout beliefs, why would that matter to Tolkien? Shippey looks at the archived exams set when Tolkien was at Oxford to see something of his thinking, finding that the questions students were asked to discuss involve such topics as the rare and faint evidence for Gothic influences on Old English meter or the influence of the Huns upon Gothic traditions. Shippey also extends his thoughts on how the Shire and Middle-earth's cultures parallel our known history. He closely traces the equivalencies of rulers and ages in Middle-earth with those of the Goths and the Romans, and finds that such parallel chronology eventually breaks down, as if "the period after the fall of the western Roman Empire, had been protracted, had never turned into 'the Middle Ages'. One has to wonder, why is that?" (26). Noting Tolkien's ambiguous attitude towards Romans despite his Catholicism, Shippey points out that the Empire was a disaster for linguists, erasing earlier varieties of language and dialect under its occupation. Yet Tolkien's belief that Rome should be the center of Christianity made him see the split between Rome and the Gothic Arians as the reason for such disastrous losses of language and lore. In the end, Shippey reads Tolkien as attempting to heal the

split he saw as causing the loss of Gothic myth and literature. In *The Lord of the Rings*, he fixed that by having the Rohirrim and Gondor (paralleling the Goths and the Eastern Roman empire) as loyal allies rather than as disaffected (31). Similarly, he uses his "new lay of Gudrún" (written at the same time as the exam questions discussed and involving Christopher Tolkien's scholarship on Goths and Huns) to solve a problem with the heroic tradition that has the Goths of Theodoric fighting for, instead of against, Attila the Hun. In Tolkien's lay, many Goths fight for Attila, but when the Nibelung king Gunnar was lured into a trap at the Hun's court, he sings an old lay to remind the Goths of their previous victories, causing them to remember who they are and join the Nibelungs. Shippey concludes that without the Arian heresy, we might be speaking Gothic now, still in possession of the old lays and epics, and links Tolkien's pervasive sense of loss to the specific repairs his history of Middle-earth attempts.

Jane Suzanne Carroll writes on "Civil pleasures in unexpected places: an introduction to the etiquette of Middle-earth," analyzing scenes of hospitality to look at the relationship between manners and space. She argues that Tolkien inverts the usual collocations of civilization and civility vs. rude spaces and rudeness as a philological joke, which seems somewhat broad. Noting that a variety of manners are accorded to the peoples in Middle-earth, she rehearses three examples of rudeness in hospitality: Bilbo's "disingenuous" politeness to the dwarves, Denethor's parallel "fraught hospitality" at Minas Tirith, and the "openly rude" reception at Theoden's hall in Rohan. In the last, she acknowledges Wormtongue leads the rudeness, but maintains that as the court never intervenes or contradicts him, it is party to the rudeness. (She does not acknowledge any role for Saruman's clear magical manipulation.) She sees the formulas of courtesy as undercut by selfishness or empty elaboration: behavior is all about etiquette here, but not ethics (36). She follows with three examples of sincere welcome and hospitality in wilder spaces: the stay with Tom Bombadil, Treebeard's generosity and adaptation to "hasty" or rude hobbits, and the reunion at the ruined gates of Isengard when the hobbits share out provisions to Gandalf's group—the last is read as subtly mocking court pretensions while being sincerely welcoming. In the end, however, Carroll offers no substantial reasons for why such inversions matter or are not clichés themselves: "Noble savage" is hardly a new and unproblematic phrase, and Tacitus was touting the ethics of Germanic tribes as superior to those of the Romans in the first century. Carroll states that "whereas the manners of the court enable people to offer insincere welcomes and to hide their true feelings behind formulae of language and behavior, the wilderness strips away those facades. The wilderness bestows a sense of honesty in personal interaction because it rejects the codification of relationships" (41-2). But finding manners in the wild is perhaps more expected than other readers of Tolkien would contend, and decades ago, Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian, famously

commented that "Civilized men are more discourteous than savages because they know they can be impolite without having their skulls split, as a general thing." The lack of consequences for discourteous elites might have been a useful direction of further thought.

Dimitra Fimi uses Sophocles' version of the Oedipus story to discuss "'Wildman of the Woods': inscribing tragedy on the landscape of Middle-earth," following up on the third but neglected source for *Children of Húrin* besides Sigurd the Volsung and the *Kalevala*'s Kullervo. Both the classical world and the Judeo-Christian traditions saw the wild not as pure and needing protection but as threatening and chaotic, views espoused in Tolkien's story. The rational city is ordered, in opposition to the wild. Fimi notes that the tale's setting in the First Age reverses the Third Age setting of *Lord of the Rings*: men live in forests while elves prefer elaborate, often hidden or enchanted cities. For Fimi, Túrin thrives at "the liminal borders between the civilized centre and the chaotic wilderness" (51), and his two stays with wild men and corresponding two stays in Elvish cities are framed by his cursed father Húrin's two visits to Gondolin. She notes (in a table) the very close correlations between the events of Sophocles' tale of Oedipus and Tolkien's *Children of Húrin*, each protagonist progressing through error and aggression to his ultimate tragedy, both showing a confusion of boundaries between civilization and savagery. Both men carry a fierce anger that taints their choices and judgment: "Both have the potential to become heroic, even super-human, but both also fall to the level of beasts" (54). As with Oedipus' unknown origin, Túrin's frequent renaming hides his family identity, but Fimi notes how the names also "reveal his newly shaped personal identity as misunderstood, pursued by ill fate" (54-5 and Table 4: Túrin's names). Oedipus' own name meant "swell foot," connecting him to the lamed characters Sador and Brandir in Turin's tale but also to a pun on the Greek verb "to know," a darkly ironic link that pinpoints the blind spots of both characters. Even more, she notes that Túrin's real name links to Oedipus' title as ruler—*tyrannos*, one who comes to power by means other than birth or precedent, a fact that allows an "escape from the past," a rule without limitations. Fimi turns to Tolkien's linguistic notes on Túrin's name in a perceptive connection, listing terms and meanings to show how basic the Oedipus link is: *Turu* = "can, have power, is able, have strength"; *T rin*= "king" at first, then altered to "kingdom"; *T ranu* = "king." But she sees the constructions of cultural difference in the First Age and a critique of simple hierarchies and dichotomies as the most important reasons for understanding the play of wilderness and city. Elves are not merely the top of a hierarchy that rests on a base of orcs. Sophisticated but passive elves seem less capable of heroic deeds, whereas acknowledging the destructive nature of the human hero allows Tolkien to interrogate his sources as well as "established elements of his own invented world, a sign of a mature literary work" (56).

Rebecca Merkelbach uses the forests of folk- and fairy-tales in "Deeper and deeper into the woods: forests as places of transformation in *The lord of the rings*" to examine how Tolkien varies that motif. Where forests can be places of danger or refuge, in *Lord of the Rings*, the Old Forest, Lothlórien and Fangorn are all dangerous and ancient, remembering the past but influencing the future. Merkelbach argues that the transformations in Tolkien's work are spiritual, as in George Macdonald's "The Golden Key." The transformation from naifs to hobbits aware of violence and threats occurs in the Old Forest; Merkelbach links the Downs to the Forest as well because of the links of Tom and fog, making it a liminal space, but more strongly, she argues that Lothlórien gives the power to manifest thoughts and heal. Gandalf becomes the White. Aragorn becomes Elessar. Legolas and Gimli heal the rift of elves and dwarves. In Fangorn, being in the forest changes both hobbits and ents, and as in the Old Forest, the forest is active. (She also posits that perhaps the elves embody Lothlorien's active responses, a point begging for more development.) Amidst the discussion she also touches on ideas of gifts and the importance of water, though these are not well-integrated and scatter somewhat the points made more cohesively. Her conclusion argues that this representation of forests combines the familiar (what we know "going into the woods" means) and unfamiliar, contributing to their believability and the success of the created secondary world.

Dominika Nycz focuses on Saruman and Radagast in "The forest and the city: the dichotomy of Tolkien's Istari," contending that Gandalf as a wandering wizard, a pilgrim, is not connected to a specific landscape and retains an "essential otherness" by which he succeeds as an Istari, a messenger of the Valar. Nycz observes that Radagast in *The Hobbit* is barely more than a name, but that once Tolkien delivered his Andrew Lang lecture on fairy-stories, he took wizards less lightly, signaled by capitalizing the word "Wizard." Saruman is "born" after the Lang lecture and represents the tradition of the city or false magician as power-hungry, while Radagast is the "natural magician" of folklore. Surprisingly, Nycz sees both Istari as turning from their path, with one submerged in the world of men and technology at Isengard, the other in the forest as protector of its creatures. Nycz says it is "easy to see" the idea of the power-mad wizard as coming directly from Tolkien's "re-immersion in the realm of Faërie through Lang's collection" (73), citing "The Tale of Caliph Stork" as source for the usurper role and "The Bronze Ring" for losing wisdom through covetousness. This point is intriguing but too easily assumed (possible, not a given), and the reason for the seemingly pointed quotations, which highlight a Jew and a Moslem, is not elaborated. Nycz has a larger project studying the literary development of wizards, and at times introduces interesting but unanchored parallels as if mined from this project. For example, she links Saruman and the *palantír* to the late legends of Pope Sylvester II/Gerbert d'Aurillac as magician and his

misinterpretation of the Brazen Head's prophecies; worth a fuller discussion (or a separate article), it is instead simply presented as a tradition from which "much of Saruman's character finds a source" (74). Arguing that both Istari fall from grace because of immersion into their respective landscapes despite elsewhere claiming the importance of Radagast's connection with the Eagles, Nycz sees them as losing their identity as Istari. No comment is made on the admittedly more obscure Blue Wizards, sent into the East, and the focus on these two wizards as typifying the city vs. forest theme is expected but often overstated, as here: "once given the depth and substance of the Istari, Radagast is transformed into vital part [sic] of Tolkien's narrative. Moreover, without Radagast's connection to the natural, Saruman's manifestation of the city would not nearly be so poignant" (75).

Thomas Honegger considers how eating and food are perceived as "ultimately of moral relevance" (83) in "'Raw forest' versus 'cooked city'—Lévi-Strauss in Middle-earth." Drawing on anthropological ideas about how transforming food takes on values exploited by religion and literature, Honegger begins with a structuralist approach that separates raw from cooked and unelaborated from over-elaborated to discuss the function of food as a narrative device. He rehearses "Herbs and Stewed Rabbit" to examine "the relationship between what and how a character eats and is" (77). Gollum and Sam eat the same food—rabbit and fish—but prefer it raw or cooked respectively, a reflection of moral status in this analysis. Later, when Sam loses his pans, he is "cut off from culture in the form most dear to him" (82), whereas Gollum's association with nature and unelaborated food (no boiling, baking or smoking) is a sign not of innocence but of spiritual decline. His intolerance for lembas, the elvish bread that feeds the spirit as well as the body, underscores the point. Honegger points out that elves eat and cook, but despite feasts, Tolkien never describes elves eating, part of a strategy to mystify the elves as otherworldly. But Honegger wants to go beyond structuralism and easy dichotomies, thank goodness, noting that trolls eat roast mutton and Farmer Maggot's meal is good plain food. He begins to over-reach on the consequences, however, when he says cooking could approach redemption by treating the raw "that must necessarily partake in the fallen nature of the world" (86). If Gollum had eaten Sam's cooking (he didn't, a tragic rejection, in Honegger's reading), he thinks it might have lessened for him the gap between his preferred food and the "spiritual naturalness" of lembas. As he notes, the implied opposition of raw and cooked does not do justice to food as a narrative device. Both nature and culture are fallen. But elves have a third way, transforming forest into city without losing the forest, and he sees their food as part of this project of Recovery, the term used in Tolkien's "On Fairy-stories." Ultimately, Honegger over-extends his point, claiming too much in the name of anthropological rituals, paraphrasing Tolkien: "we should taste bread again and our taste-buds should be

startled anew (but not numbed) by water and fruit and vegetables—and thus regain a clear 'view' (or rather taste) so that they are freed from the drab blur of triteness and familiarity and tasted again as we are (or were) meant to taste them" (86). What would he make of ent drafts?

Karl Kinsella takes a refreshingly different direction in considering "'A preference for round windows': hobbits and the Arts and Crafts movement." In his first section he considers parallels between Tolkien's Shire and the Arts and Craft movement, noting that even in Tolkien's early landscapes with architecture (ages 14-25), the trees and shrubs of the immediate landscape "nearly always" take priority or take over. In the Movement, the processes of building dictated appearance and its "appraisal as a morally positive output of a community effort" (89). Key proponents Ruskin and Morris saw the worker as a creative force on a par with the architect, a "non- or anti-industrial" view (90). These concepts are ones with which Tolkien would sympathize, given his houses of wood, brick, and stone for what Kinsella calls craftspeople in the Shire. In his second section, Kinsella looks at the architecture of Edward Schroeder Prior (1852-1932), who used natural and local resources and textures with concern for how materials were extracted and gathered. Prior's church of St Andrew in Roker, Sunderland, was called one of the best of the twentieth century and compared to a convivial cave. Its five large transverse arches are the same feature Tolkien used in drawing Bag End's hall. Prior's clients were a wealthy middle class; Kinsella recalls Tom Shippey's point that Bilbo is almost aggressively <u>middle</u> middle class, with Victorian pantries and wardrobes as storage spaces in his hobbit hole at Bag End. Turning then to sketches and an elevation Prior drew for the West Bay Promenade, Dorset (ultimately never built), Kinsella sees many suggestive details. It is built to look like a hill or grassy mound along the beachfront, with a library and smoking room, a promenade, and coffee shops for the comfort of those using the building. The roof was to be covered with a "transparent felt" of wool to let in a green-hued light, which he compares to the turf roof of Crickhollow, and the felt was to be covered with waterproof material. Inside it had a system of enfilade-type doorways reminiscent of the warren-like rooms of Bag End. For both Tolkien and Prior, a building should relate to its setting without being invisible. Kinsella is not arguing for direct connections but that Tolkien must have been aware of the Movement and its discussions given the number of Arts and Craft buildings in North Oxford. He argues that the Shire "more than hints" at the Movement's influence, leading to a call for further study to see if other races in Tolkien's works show different, nineteenth-century architectural influences.

Jennifer Harwood-Smith considers a broader genre setting for cities in "Fractures, corruption and decay: understanding speculative cities through the imagery of Minas Tirith, Minas Morgul and Metropolis." Seeing the mythic cities of the gods as precursors for those of speculative fiction, she comments that

science fiction generally features large industrialized cities of the future, while fantasy depicts small cities with magical pasts. Using *Metropolis* and *Lord of the Rings* as foundational examples of fractured cities, Harwood-Smith stresses that their impact is in imagery, commenting that both share a particular moment in history. The lighter, upper city of languid intellectuals in *Metropolis* sits over the oppressed, energetic working masses. Minas Tirith shines as the white city, replete with crystal, banners and shafts of sunlight, while its twin Minas Ithil has become Minas Morgul, imaged as dark and black, empty, and imprisoning moonlight. While she sees standard science fiction cities as tending to stability (naming exceptions such as Miéville's works), for Harwood-Smith, Tolkien's two towers are more subtle due to their dynamic histories. Originally a unity, built by brothers to threaten and repel Mordor, Minas Anor must become Minas Tirith when the capital Osgiliath falls, while the wraiths take over the tower of the moon and make it Minas Morgul, "a city that has been killed, gutted and used to dress monsters" (103). The city of *Metropolis*, though in a silent film, conjures whirring machinery and angry rallies rather than a changing, living form, and is not a city to which to aspire. *Metropolis* favors a future in space over the world's future, while Harwood-Smith sees space as "where *The lord of the rings* comes into its own as an innovative text" (103). Comfortable with distance between his cities, Tolkien allows the two examples to be figures of decay and integrity, not representations of all cities in Middle-earth. When Elessar destroys Minas Morgul, he shows no nostalgia for the past, yet Minas Tirith surpasses its first glory, healed. After briefly reviewing some of the more successful cities created (*Blade Runner's* Los Angeles, Pratchett's Ankh-Morpork), Harwood-Smith sees only *Dark City* as accomplishing innovation so far, but only by breaking its own history. She ends with a challenge to the future of speculative cities in which Tolkien's accomplishment provides a model: "to combine the visual majesty of *Metropolis* with the vast subtleties of Minas Tirith and Minas Morgul, and find new ways of representing the fractured civilizations that populate speculative literature and, indeed, reality" (106).

Verlyn Flieger uses two characters from Alan Garner's *Thursbitch* (2003) to demonstrate a landscape of awareness and consciousness in "The forests and the trees: Sal and Ian in Faërie." Objective vs. subjective reality informs the perspectives of Sal, a geologist who speaks of a landscape that "knows we're here," and the rational priest Ian, who sees that view as a projection. Flieger says, "it is the mark of Tolkien's skill… [to use this dichotomy] to create the atmosphere of his invented world" (108). Evoking Tolkien's discussion in "On Fairy-stories" about the skill needed to create a credible green sun, Flieger makes a connection between forests and an altered state of consciousness, though her use of Old English *wód* for "wood" is incorrect (the words would be *wudu* or *holt*; Middle English *wode* does work for both wood and changed awareness, though

the specific reference is to madness, rabidness, or rage in both periods). However, the many medieval stories that have characters gone mad turning to live in the woods, from Suibne/Sweeney to Merlin to Tristan, validates her connection of forests and altered perceptions. Flieger reads the Old Forest, Old Man Willow, the Huorns of Fangorn and the birch tree of "Smith of Wooten Major" as "green suns," tracing what she terms a learning curve from *The Hobbit* through *Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien's late work on "Smith." Comparing scenes on Caradhras in *The Hobbit* with that in *Lord of the* Rings, she moves from the "bedtime story" effect of giants hurling stones and Thorin evoking football to the much improved intentional acts of the mountain itself, wind and fell voices. "Faërian Drama," Flieger's next subsection, builds on altered states and posits that the term refers to an intense state of mind where primary belief in a secondary world takes hold as if directly experienced. The storms on Caradhras would then be a type of Faërian Drama, "a dream some other mind is weaving," as Tolkien puts it. She goes on to read Old Man Willow as the dreamer of the Old Forest: the trees never act as anything but trees, as Cynthia Cohen noted, but the hostility is palpable. Old Man Willow is recognized as "waking" by Bombadil, and the hobbits hear laughter, hisses, almost words, singing. But more, Merry is pinched, and Frodo thinks the tree threw him into the water. Sam is both right and wrong that it is a dream: it is a dream woven by another mind, not Frodo's, and the willow moves from "it" to "he" (114). Moving on, Flieger sees the huorns as the most obvious candidates for sentient nature, but also as straining credulity, pace Cohen. They violate consistency for Flieger, "one green sun too many," both entish and tree-ish yet presented as trees only through the characters' eyes, able to move together and bury orcs, though how is a mystery. Eyes appear as do "moving towers of shadow" complete with sound effects and trembling earth, but a variety of approaches eventually abandoned by Tolkien show that he decided to leave huorns unexplained. Finally, Flieger sees the birch in "Smith of Wootton Major" as "the least explicable tree in all of Tolkien's fiction" but also as the best example of faërian drama, his "most uncompromising presentation of the power of the imagination" (118). This section is the strongest in the article, drawing in part on her work in *A Question of Time* but extending it beautifully, ending in a double message: one cannot live wholly in the imagination and one cannot recover the past (120). Flieger posits it as likely no accident that "Smith" is itself a faërian drama, Tolkien's farewell conveyed through the birch tree's agency.

Gerard Hynes focuses on the causes and consequences of human corruption in "'The cedar is fallen': empire, deforestation and the fall of Númenor." Tolkien distrusted the cultural homogeneity empires created, not least linguistically; Hynes cites his 1943 letter to Christopher where he says he loves England but not Great Britain or the British Commonwealth and says it is a "damn shame" if 1/8 of the world people speak English (125). Rehearsing the various versions of

Númenor's history, Hynes connects the increasing imperial ambition of its rulers to deforestation in Tolkien's drafts from the 1940s on. The Eldar gift Númenor with plants and trees, and mallorn grow there. But Númenor also has plantations of timber for its ships, and the great forest that once covered Middle-earth is devastated to create its fleet, especially under Aldarion. He builds a massive "castle" of a ship and places a golden, bejeweled eagle at its prow instead of the traditional Bough of Return, nature replaced by empire (or a usurpation of Manwë's symbol). Hynes notes that Tolkien's treatment is not simplistic: while Aldarion deforests great areas of timber, that act then also allows his army to land at his port behind Sauron's lines, and similar conflicted attitudes towards war and empire occur in several other works. Tar-Meneldur asks, "To prepare or to let be?" Hynes asks why Tolkien linked empire and deforestation. Besides the narrative need to explain the source of timber, Hynes argues that they are linked in the Hebrew scriptures, though he sees influence, not a direct source. Even more, writing *Lord of the Rings* "may have sharpened Tolkien's feelings about the connection between domination of other peoples and domination of the environment" (131). He sees a similarity between the breakdown of Aldarion and Erendis' marriage and the separation of ents and entwives, the latter mildly criticized by Treebeard for their desire to order and control, even as both refuse to compromise. As a synecdoche for humanity's fall, Númenor itself is shown in microcosm in Aldarion and Erendis' relationship, and its story "speaks . . . to contemporary political and environmental issues as readily as to the perennial human concern that is finitude and mortality" (132).

Erin Sebo looks at the English folk tradition of riddling to discuss the implications of where riddling occurs in "'Sacred and of immense antiquity': Tolkien's use of riddles in *The Hobbit*." The two riddle contests of this book, between Bilbo and Gollum and between Bilbo and Smaug, both take place at the root of a mountain where treasure is hoarded. Sebo rehearses modern definitions and views on riddles, concluding that modern European culture assigns low status to the genre and also blurs the differences between riddling cultures while "forcing" us to see interconnections with such genres as proverbs and wisdom literature. She sees Tolkien as unusual in loving all forms of riddles, especially using "most of the riddle types found in English folk literature" (136) whether folk or literary, and identifies "riddle-wit" as key. Here, as Taylor and Auden wrote, riddles see through disguises and appeal to a thought process, not an inventory of knowledge (137). Further, *The Hobbit* is a riddle narrative in which the contest itself is not about riddles but about how form and content mirror each other. She uses the example of *Vafþrúðnismal* where, despite answering all riddles, the main character loses the contest because he fails to recognize that Odin himself, in disguise, is the one posing them: he is the "meta-contest" (138). Related to this discussion, Sebo introduces neck riddles, direct questions at the

end of contests which cannot be answered, such as Bilbo's final question to Gollum about the contents of his pocket. Far from illegitimate, this riddle has folk antecedents, such as Ballad 45A of Child's *Ballads*, in which a shepherd disguised as a bishop is challenged by the king, after a series of riddling questions about the king's worth, to tell what the king thinks. The shepherd-bishop replies, "you think I am the bishop," which points out the king's failure to see the real riddle of his identity. Sebo then proceeds through the two riddling contests, noting Tolkien is never wholly comfortable with the ethics of riddling, an unequal contest in which the odds always favor the powerful; yet his optimism about "at least hobbit nature" has Bilbo saved by luck and his loyalty to the dwarves. Tolkien's strongest statement rests in his choice of location, according to Sebo. She sees forests as entities in their own right for Tolkien, and the "profoundly verbal, 'human' conflict" of riddling makes for her no sense in a forest, a point that begs for a bit more expansion to convince us. Instead, underground cities overtaken by "malign influence" are the stage for such contests, with the decay of cities at the root of much evil—Sebo sees riddling "in its humble way . . . used against the unjustly powerful as a means to return the human world to rights" (143).

Ian Kinane reads objects of material production as "mere simulations of history" (144) in "Less noise, more green: cultural materialism and the reverse discourse of the wild in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*." This essay, buried sometimes in over-deployed lit-crit shorthand, has fruitful observations nevertheless; here, I will try to use the clearest phrasings to do justice to Kinane's ideas. Contending that Bilbo becomes a political figure in the text, Kinane tracks him as he travels through the counter-cultural forest which stands in opposition to material culture. Meeting the distinctly "not drawing-room fashion" trolls shows Bilbo as the "focalizer for all non-hobbit societies" (148), and the swords found in their cave exhibit a found history that excludes both trolls and hobbits from that of the elvish makers. Yet these same swords evoke an alternative history when the group is captured by goblins, as they know Orcrist instead as Biter: "Orcrist, then, is only imbued with an authentic aura of history when possessed by those whose cultural narrative is reified as historical fact by it, as the elves' narrative is" (149). He goes on to see the Ring as teaching Bilbo something of "the process by which history is historicized in material cultures": he observes that the Ring is "the suppression of a collection of histories, and the assertion of a forged or mythological 'History' . . . reflective of the ruling class—Sauron's rule" (150). Sauron, of course, is not a class, nor even a ruler: he is a despot and tyrant. The forest becomes "the text's ultimate metaphor for Bilbo's attempts to resist the overriding meta-narratives of dominant cultures," with Mirkwood helping him evolve into "a proto-cultural materialist" (151), an argument some will find hard to swallow. In the kingdom of the Wood Elves, material objects and wealth once

again become pivot points for differing histories: while the elves think the dwarves stole their treasure, the dwarves saw their work on the elves' raw metals go unpaid, and thus they took what was due them. So too Smaug's treasure gathers objects with varied histories which are nevertheless irrelevant to the dragon, and Smaug "is, in part, monstrous precisely because of his defiance of the social system that privileges material wealth" (151-52), a statement that finally makes no sense. Smaug does not renounce any social allegiance—he never belonged—and what defines a dragon's character more than its jealous hoarding of accumulated wealth? If he refers to Smaug's claiming of treasure from the dwarves, it was hardly a rejection of their social system that was the issue. Thorin, in fact, is the better candidate for that role, rejecting as he does the claims of others on "his" treasure and especially the Arkenstone. But Kinane does give a social purpose to Bilbo's use of the Arkenstone to make peace: "By attempting to initiate a reverse discourse that exposes the means through which historical narratives are reified by material possessions, Bilbo can be read as a proto-cultural materialist, whose burglary is a distinctly political act carried out in order to bring about significant historical change" (153). While many might reject Bilbo as a political figure, Kinane is surely right that here he is subversive and much changed by the novel's end, even if the critic could profitably have taken more account of Michael Drout's points on ideology later in the collection.

Alison Milbank sees Tolkien and Dante's fictions as sharing "a common project of philosophical realism" in "Tolkien and Dante's Earthly Paradise: enculturing nature." Both convey metaphysical depth that makes readers believe in a transcendent reality beyond the perceptible, beginning in a wood and ending in a garden city. Milbank notes that Tolkien and Lewis read Dante aloud, and that Tolkien was once a member of the Oxford Dante Society and delivered a lecture there on Dante in Purgatorio, "haunted by an imagination of his figure as it was in this world," possibly in the circle of the proud (cited from the unpublished manuscript at the Bodleian in Milbank 156, n. 10). Such melancholy, "pulled in two directions" between this world of time and what stands outside it, briefly evokes similar moments in *Lord of the Rings* such as Frodo's final departure, Lothlórien and its nostalgia for Aman, and Númenor's destruction over its urge for immortality and the West, paralleled by a timely reference to Dante's Ulysses as he shipwrecks on Mount Purgatory's shores. Milbank notes that the circle of the proud emphasizes artistic production: the sinners are taught humility by speaking pictures and include figures such as Oderisi the illuminator. The transcience of beauty in Tolkien's works includes Kortirion among the trees, Niggle's incomplete painting, the decline of Gondor after Aragorn's death, and the Two Trees. The last in particular allow Milbank to show how "love of the natural world . . . drives the making of cultural artefacts" (157), here the light of the Trees preserved in the Silmarils, and how that wish to preserve is the root of

contention and loss. Milbank then turns to a deeper look at Galadriel and her "more nuanced approach to change," and at Lothlórien as closest to Dante's *Purgatorio*. Frodo's experience of ancient things still living in the world evokes Eden, as does his fresh experience of colors. Citing Flieger's description of this time as a "dream," Milbank counters that "this is a dream of the real," where Tolkien's Christian view of Eden as where "true life is to be found" shows clearly in "a creative balance between human naming of things and their enjoying their own life" (158-59). Seeing Galadriel and Nenya as what makes such balance possible, the author notes other scholars' comparisons of Galadriel to Dante's Paradise image of Matelda, who sits singing and weaving garlands in a wood of perpetual spring. Both women are linked to water, and Milbank discusses Sam and Frodo's experiences of Galadriel's mirror, linking it both to Dante's vision of Leah and Rachel and to Sam and Frodo as representing the active and contemplative lives, also represented by Matelda and Beatrice respectively. Along the way a series of lovely parallel details emerges, such as the elvish rope that comes when called as evoking Edenic naming: just as to be created is to be in relation, so too does naming engender a relationship with what is named. The final pages discuss "crossings-over" between nature and culture, noting especially an elision of the two rather than a contradiction in Tolkien's fiction and drawings. Drawings of Tanaqui (1915) and the Merking's palace turn "wildness into pattern and therefore culturally encodes it" (163). Minas Tirith with its levels reminds Milbank of the Mechelino painting of Dante which conflates Florence, hell and purgatory, but it also evokes, with its white tree descended from one of the Two Trees, the garden city of New Jerusalem, both endowed with healing properties. Milbank ends by citing complexities of Tolkien's literary project: "its self-conscious artifice, its tension between achieved beauty and change, its tendency to turn nature into culture" (165) where humans are not the focus. Indeed, she argues that "Each race or genus needs to encounter another, to wonder at its difference, and learn some mode of relation towards other beings for its own moral growth" (166), an active role that has us cooperating with nature just as Matelda delights in creation, weaving garlands that transform nature into culture.

In a sensitive and often moving final essay in the collection, Michael D.C. Drout discusses the particular ache or pain of longing for the lost when considering two images, "The tower and the ruin: the past in J.R.R. Tolkien's works." Describing towers as representations of power, Drout notes that "a ruin can be more permanent than all towers strong and high," and that it "makes concrete the inescapable fact that what is lost cannot be recovered" (177). The aesthetic effect of contemplating such permanent loss is "the dominant emotion in all of Tolkien's works and perhaps a reason why they are so important to so many, why they are achievements of art beyond those of Tolkien's antecedents or his imitators" (177). This emotion is not a self-indulgent "nostalgia," a word that

Drout notes first appeared in 1770 in English as a translation of the German *Heimweh*, suffering for home or over loss of home, a severe homesickness (178). Drout reviews many instances of partings that might be permanent, from Frodo's leaving the Shire ("when winter comes without a spring that I shall ever see"), to Elrond's seeing that many fair things will fade and be forgotten, to Gandalf's mourning the ancient holly trees ripped from the Moria gate, to Sam's outraged sorrow at coming home to a ruined Shire "worse than Mordor." He then visualizes the use of "ruin" in four graphs that chart its 89 occurrences in *Lord of the Rings* according to grammatical categories, helping to show where and how the term evokes the experiential for a reader. The largest cluster of *ruin* (as verb and subject complement) occurs in "The Scouring of the Shire," where Sharkey hoped to wreck it beyond repair: "*heimweh*, intense pain for the loss of home" echoes in hobbit and reader alike, especially in our sadness at Frodo's incurable suffering in the Shire that is lost to him. Yet Drout cites the description of the departing group on its way to the Grey Havens and west, "filled with a sadness that was yet blessed and without bitterness," the qualified sadness he sees as more important than (or made important by) "joy beyond the walls of the world," the often-quoted eucatastrophic phrase from "On Fairy-stories." While generating sadness is not difficult for writers, *blessed* sadness, and no bitterness, "is a different sort of achievement." He cites examples that fall short in Joyce and Hemingway while noting "Tolkien accomplishes the transmutation—no mean feat—more than once" (185). Because of its permanence in the landscape, a ruin gives us permanent separation of the past from the present, reached only through memory though experienced in the present. That inaccessibility is the source of *Heimweh*, which "is not cured by ideology." Drout wryly contends this point is misunderstood by contemporary "uðwitan" (Old English for "wise men") who see ideology and reification as solutions. Most importantly, they "skip over the most interesting aspects of writing" that evoke this emotion of separation and loss: reifying ideologies elide "the problem of *how* one *imbues* something with history, a problem . . . whose solution would be a great contribution not only to the study of Tolkien, but to our understanding of literature in general" (187). Avoiding Tolkien's psychology or personal tragedy, Drout echoes Tolkien's comments on mortals in his *Beowulf* essay when he says that "being human incarnate in the irreversible stream of time is enough, for being so incarnate, we are permanently separated from our past joys" (187). The blending of love and art causes readers not simply to read the text but to *experience* it, perhaps why we continue to re-read, and Drout traces that to two features. First, Tolkien's narrative allows us to know only as much as the least knowledgeable character in a scene; second, he creates deep textuality which implies and often has layers of texts behind each text. Readers learn through experience just as children learn cultural history from adults, through a doubled consciousness of memory and experience. His lovely

phrase, "the ghosts of now peeping through the mist of then," describes seeing ruins in a landscape that are overwhelmed by our present perceptions, where we see with the eyes both of body and of mind (190). Ending with the ruin that can only exist because the achievement of the tower came first, Drout sees the deep sorrow without bitterness that "is the great achievement of Tolkien's art," noting it as the resonant reason that Sam's final words, "'Well, I'm back' . . . are both heartbreaking and blessed" (190).

This collection has something for many interests and backgrounds, and that by default means that some essays will be of less interest to any particular reader even while all are serious and mostly readable scholarship. The unevenness mentioned at the beginning of this review however stems from varying levels of sophistication in analysis and critical reading and what seems a reluctance on the part of the editors to push the weaker arguments of some for implications and depth, and to tighten the prose of others. This is not a swipe at the postgraduate vs. the professional, as the flaws certainly do not lodge in any one camp. Instead, I applaud the inclusiveness of the collection and the retention of authorial styles and voices while wishing a somewhat stronger editorial coherence were present. And, minor as it may seem, the foreword ill serves the volume. It is likely that the editors felt obliged to have Darryl Jones write as the hosting university's Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and a specialist on British popular literature. But if I had read the foreword when wondering whether to buy or use the volume, I would not have made the purchase. In two pages, Jones makes several errors while regaling us with dubious anecdotes on ferrying Tolkien to pubs in Ireland and how he would not get an academic post today, though I enjoyed his comments about his father's shelves of books. The errors? I'll stick to two. Shippey's book *J.R.R.Tolkien: Author of the Century* is not an argument that Tolkien is *the* author of the century, but "an" author, set within the context of the twentieth century and in some ways, *authoring* the century by introducing or re-introducing a "forgotten taste" for what becomes the century's dominant literary mode, the fantastic. (See especially Shippey's Foreword and Afterword.) As for saying Tolkien was nowhere to be seen on academic syllabi in the 1980s and "In fact, I doubt the book was on *any* university syllabus at the time" (5, Jones' emphasis), he is simply wrong, though perhaps correct about Irish and British universities of the time. Volume contributor Verlyn Flieger began teaching Tolkien at the University of Maryland in 1977, about the same time I was taking a course on Fantasy Literature at Georgetown University in which Tolkien's work took up the last half of the course. A similar course with Tolkien's work enrolled over 200 students at Cornell by the time I was a graduate teaching assistant for Robert Farrell in the mid-80s. It does no good to perpetuate the myth that the academy is hostile to Tolkien in particular or fantasy in general. Instead, we might find a way to celebrate the fact that, despite many

proclamations of the decline or even death of the Humanities, Tolkien's writings continue to be proof against them, and this collection helps show why, in a variety of voices and often in new ways.

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Kelley M. Wickham-Crowley
Georgetown University

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