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Abstract

Theorizes that works of fantasy need some sort of bridge linking them to the primary world in order to have literary depth. After discussing bridging devices in several other fantasies, notably Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros*, the author locates Tolkien's bridging device in the initial utter ordinariness and realistic character growth of the hobbits, with whom the reader is led to identify from the start and therefore throughout their later encounters with the high and heroic of Middle-earth.

Additional Keywords

Eddison, E.R. *The Worm Ouroboros*; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Hobbits; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*



HOBBITS:

Common Lens for Heroic Experience

by David M. Miller

Now that some of the bloom is off hobbit-mania, it may be possible to avoid both the paralysis of ecstasy and the thud of automatic rejection in order to begin an assessment of Tolkien's accomplishment. Perhaps the surprising facet of that accomplishment is that Tolkien is read seriously. *The Lord of the Rings* is a didactic, sexless story whose major characters rarely encounter their own psyches. Its three volumes are liberally sprinkled with poetry and verse. It very nearly begins "Once upon a time" and almost ends "They lived happily ever after." Its prose style is vaguely King James Biblical, ranging backward to heroic Old English and forward to a kind of Peter Sellers Cockney. The story is sternly moral; judgments are based upon black and white distinctions with, ultimately, no room at all for grey. As Tolkien's characters move through semi-animate landscapes, they are aided and thwarted by both magic and outrageous coincidence. And most damning of all, there is not just one, but a host of certifiable heroic-heroes.

Our age, boasting of situational ethics, seeing no ends for a grey moral continuum, preferring its heroes anti, seeing sex as the "obligatory" for sales and sophistication, rejection not only happy endings but happy middles as well—an age whose fantasies are all psychological and largely libidinous should, one might think, have found *The Lord of the Rings* to be escapist rubbish, a sort of 20th century Ossianism. We are clearly (and proudly) "A bantering breed, sophisticated and swarthy." And, in charity, we might be expected to say with John Crowe Ransom, "Unto more beautiful, persistently more young / Thy fabulous provinces belong."¹ Such *ubi sunt* self-indulgence is not without its attractions, and certainly a good deal of Tolkien's popularity may be marked down to a reveling in adolescent gnosticism, complete with handshakes, secret signs, mimeographed journals, and fraternal societies. Tolkien can (and sometimes has) become an article of faith, and the true believer is paralyzed in ecstasy. But without denigrating such responses, it is clear that they disable criticism. A

less impressionistic approach is in order.

By now it is clear that *The Lord of the Rings* is not just camp. Sales continue, and the search for more Tolkien is on. *Smith of Wootton Major* was printed in *The Red Book* (not of Westmarch, but of suburbia), and from time to time pieces appear in serious journals of substantial professional reputation. Literate, sophisticated, often learned admirers of Tolkien keep turning up in unlikely places. But most convincing to me is the recurring temptation to reread for the 7th or 10th or 14th time a work which professional training ought, one might think, to reveal as a waste of time. The most awkward fact about the ring trilogy is the utter seriousness which it demands. To find oneself as serious about the siege of Minas Tirith as about the siege of Troy is startling. The reader is asked to submit, to believe in Frodo's journey, almost in the way he must surrender to *Paradise Lost*. It is not a willing suspension of disbelief, but rather a process which is neither "willing" nor a "suspension" nor does it have much to do with "belief" as that word is ordinarily meant. Since the raising of the problem of belief is a classic *pons asinorum*, one had better define terms and cases as narrowly as possible if he is to speak of belief at all. Two groups of readers we may pass over at once, though for opposite reasons.



The first group to be excluded are those who resist fantasy entirely unless it is "explained" as a dream or a mental aberration. Such readers frequently insist that a bridge be constructed between the primary and secondary universe and that the author acknowledge fantasy as fantasy any time a story lacks "verisimilitude," by which they mean reality of detail. There is often a curious parallel phenomenon: so long as the details are exact, the realities of motive, of coincidence and of character may be quite overlooked. Chronic examples of such "realism" are to be found often in historical novels, in detective stories, and in the jargon sort of science fiction, but the attitude is not confined to readers who are amateur or frankly escapist. There is perhaps an equally large number of readers who find the absence of particular kinds of detail (scatology, for example) and of particular themes (alienation, for example) to leave a work flabby or "sentimental." There is no question but that the problems of man's sexuality make a nearly perfect literary vehicle (almost iconic) for investigations of many basic facets of human nature. It is likely that all men are diurnally lustful (or would like to be), but it is also likely that visions of beauty and truth occasionally intrude. The

point is that *kind* of theme or *sort* of detail has nothing to do with the important sense of reality, of belief, which it is the writer's minimum task to enable. The implications of such a statement are circular, of course. A work induces literary belief if it is good. It is good if it induces such belief. At its most basic level all critical evaluation is plagued by such subjectivity. Still, one may point to specific elements in a work and so claim tied, rather than free, responses. And about tied responses a great deal may be said which is not wholly subjective. Presently, an attempt will be made to illustrate the way in which Tolkien induces belief, but first the second irrelevant category of readers must be dealt with.

At the opposite pole from the Benthamite realists are the neo-goths: they believe *because* the story is impossible. So long as there are knights and dark towers and fates worse than death, endurance beyond belief, treasure beyond measure, and a sad clear song beneath a single star as night and evil and doom sweep the kingly, bloody, unbowed brow, it is enough. Such readers smile on all alike. E. R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* and *The Lord of the Rings* serve equally well as gothic feast. The "realists" raise irrelevant standards and so disbelieve; the neo-goths believe too easily. In both cases Tolkien is made something which he is not and so judged inappropriately. Certainly this is not true of all Tolkien; if *Smith of Wootton Major* or *Farmer Giles of Ham* are to be enjoyed, something of neo-gothic tolerance is necessary. The surprising thing is that such tolerance is unnecessary for the ring trilogy.

But, to the problem of belief: all fiction is, by definition, non-fact and as such is not to be believed (or disbelieved) in the way one believes a newspaper report. Schlemann's discovery of a real Troy has no effect whatsoever upon the aesthetic believability of the *Iliad*. Creative writers create. And what they create is a secondary universe. We should value that created universe too much to insist that it live only by the rules of the primary universe in which we live. I do not suggest that there are not relationships between the two universes, but rather that the secondary universe is relevant precisely because it is different from the primary. To insist on identity is to move toward the idiocy of the unities of time and place—when the ability to unshackle experience from precisely those two unities is one of fiction's greatest resources. The opposite temptation must be resisted as well. Literature is not relevant in direct ratio to the increasing distance between the world of fiction and the world of the reader. But certain general observations may be made. If the secondary universe in question is very like the primary universe of its reader, the question of belief is unlikely to arise. Or, if that secondary universe, however different from the primary it may be, is one which has often been visited by the reader, no particular problem of credibility will arise.

However, the greater the distance between the primary and secondary universes and the less familiar the reader is with the universe of fiction, the greater is the writer's responsibility for providing a bridge. Two sorts of bridges have already been rejected: the dream and the madman. Both entail delusion, rather than illusion, or more accurately, both place a delusion within the pervasive illusion of fiction in an attempt to explain the illusion. Since both are themselves a part of that illusion, the effort can often be self-defeating, for it gives the reader an escape hatch. He is at any point at liberty to wake himself or to regain his sanity. Both these familiar bridges keep the primary world too thoroughly in the foreground, and in their sometimes successful efforts to gain a tentative acceptance for their secondary universes, they are likely to create a sense of "artificiality" in the bad, rather than the good, sense.

A brief (and loaded) comparison may make the point more clearly. *The Worm Ouroboros* and *The Lord of the Rings* have much in common: malign King Gorice, like Sauron, is destroyed only to resume life in a different form. Queen Sophonisba is in many ways a Galadriel. Lord Juss parallels the Aragorn of the last two volumes. Lord Gro and Saruman are both excellence ruined. Goblinland and Witchland, like Gondor and Mordor, are eternally at war. And much of the machinery of the two tales is identical. Differences are equally clear. In *The Worm* there is a good deal of confusion as to whose side one should be on, though the Goblins in general are more noble than the Witches. The code of knightly valor in Eddison's work has little moral underpinning. And Eddison has neither the skill in writing and naming, nor the epic learning that Tolkien has. But the matter of bridge from primary to secondary universe is perhaps the most relevant distinction for the present purpose.



Eddison seems to be aware of the need for a stance, at least initially, for he introduces a bridging consciousness in the person of Lessingham. Lessingham is a rather mauve Englishman who is guided by a supernatural martlet to the planet Mercury where, invisible, out of time, he sees one cycle of an eternal drama. Drama is the proper word since the action seems staged. We, at best, watch Lessingham watch a play, but we do not identify with him for he has no substance, is not really present, does not, for example, ride behind Goldry Bluszco nor fall under the spell of Lord Gro's voice. To the degree that he is effective at all, he makes belief more, rather than less difficult. Both the reader and the author soon forget him. He is never returned to earth. Hence the frame, the bridge to a secondary universe, is incomplete. How did the manuscript get back to Earth? Of course we do not need to know, but the existence of Lessingham is the kind of apology which creates an offense where there might not have been one.

Although in "On Fairy-stories"³ Tolkien insists that fantasy must not be explained as anything at all, he incorporates a bridge device which is in some ways similar to Eddison's use of Lessingham. Tolkien claims that the ring tale is a translation of excerpts from the Red Book of Westmarch, but unlike Eddison Tolkien incorporates that "authority" into the tale proper; as the story progresses, we see Bilbo writing a part of the Red Book. Tolkien's device is irrelevant. The problem of belief is really not much affected either way. Still, an author must provide, if not a bridge for the Benthemite, at least a stance, a viewpoint, a point of identification, a central intelligence—something or someone with whom the reader can view the action. Only if he is willing to attempt that almost contradiction in terms, the "dramatic-narrative" point of view, can an author dispense with this rhetorical imperative. Since it is clear that Tolkien wishes to *tell* his story, consideration of viewpoint is immediately relevant. It is in the remarkably complex set of relationships between the ordinariness of the hobbits and the alienness of their surroundings that a key may be found to the differences between *The Lord of the Rings* and the works of Lewis, Williams, Eddison, Morris, etc. with which it is most often grouped.

As usual, a consideration of Tolkien's choice of names provides a convenient point of entry. The principal hobbits are all

commonly and somewhat comically named: Sam Gamgee, Merry Brandybuck, Pippin Took, Frodo and Bilbo Baggins. It would be difficult to discover names less magical. Certainly the names within the Shire are not evocative of romance: "The Water," "Over Hill," "Bywater," "Woody End." As Ted Sandyman the miller's son remarks, "There's only one Dragon in Bywater, and that's Green"⁴—by which he means the tavern of that name. The action of the ring trilogy moves from one rise of earth to another: from "The Hill" to "Orodruin." From the simplest of places with the plainest of names to strangeness named exotically. Sam leaves "Rosie Cotton" behind as he journeys to "Galadriel." Only gradually do the familiar "goblins" become the unfamiliar "orcs." It is the believability of the hobbits in their solid earthy world that pulls together impossibility compounded and subdues the otherwise incredible to belief. If the hobbits are real, all else can follow, for they are constantly at the center of action. If somehow the reader can be lead to identify with one or more of them, or even to become thoroughly sympathetic, belief is no longer a problem.

But these are very large "if's." On first acquaintance the hobbits are as unlikely as Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit: beardless, furry-footed eternal children whose civilization has ceased to evolve so that the "good old days" of a Pabst Beer commercial are reified. They have none of the evils of the industrial revolution, nor have they the penalties of being without it. One would hardly expect that they could provide easy access to events which would otherwise be unbelievable. But in fact they are a more acceptable ground than the alternative. Tolkien traps the reader between two sorts of unbelievable characters: the hobbits on one hand and the heroes on the other. The hobbits are in some ways the equivalent of Eddison's Lessingham, but whereas Eddison tried to interject a real man into an imaginary landscape, Tolkien builds a real set of characters out of the imaginary materials of his landscape. The question is how.

The introduction of the hobbits in both *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Hobbit* is singularly unpromising. In both cases Tolkien sets his fairy tale elements in nursery tale form. *The Hobbit* opens as a kind of Pooh Bear Bilbo receives a series of Snow White dwarfs and plays the Little Red Hen host with lots of "good gracious" thrown in. The opening of the trilogy is, if

possible, worse. Not only is Bilbo's birthday party dull, it is cute. And cuteness is an unpardonable sin for the creator of an imaginative world. Cuteness does not fare well with my four year old son; it is honored only by grownups who think it is what they liked about nursery tales. And it is this aspect of adult memory that Tolkien uses to establish the reality of the hobbits. They belong with childhood imagining that we have put away with teddy bears, but for which we feel strong, if embarrassed, sympathy. For readers who are neither neo-goths nor realists, the first encounter with hobbits is likely to produce a vague sense of discomfort, a kind of half-recognition which, though without shock, is troubling. It is not the sort of discomfort occasioned by a unicorn in the garden, but rather more as if the anthropomorphic metaphors for one's automobile suddenly appeared to have a foundation in fact. To come at it from another angle: everyone has met the round-faced, ordinary, average sort of man . . . the kind who is at once familiar. With him you can go to lunch or for a drink, play golf or argue politics without bothering to get his name, or to remember it if you do. Such is the initial effect of the hobbits. We disbelieve in their existence because they are too ordinary, too insignificant, to be real. However my car might respond to a spoken command, I would pretend not to notice. There is, at this stage, no possibility of identifying with the hobbits; it would be like identifying with a stuffed toy animal.

But once the action proper gets underway, a choice is forced upon the reader. If he is to continue, he must somehow come to terms with events and characters which are unbelievable because they are unusual, magical, and heroic. In *The Hobbit* it may be about the time of entry into the Great Goblin's cave; in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the intrusion of the Black Rider into the Shire. Since we disbelieve in Black Riders and in goblins for reasons opposite to those we have for refusing to accept hobbits seriously, we, in effect, are left for the moment without a place to stand. It is easy to retreat to the hobbits because it is they with whom we see the impossible aliens. We begin to believe in the hobbits because they initially share our disbelief in ring-wraiths. As they are convinced, so are we. The initial superiority to hobbits which their nursery tale introduction encourages is thus used to good advantage. Anything a teddy bear can face or believe is not too much for a grownup. The awe-inspiring aspects of the ring trilogy develop slowly, starting with happenings which even the hobbits view as only slightly out of the ordinary. Sam, prior to the journey, *thought* that he had once seen an elf. He *wants* to believe in the ent which his cousin reported seeing, but it is mostly wishful thinking.

The introductions of Gandalf and Aragorn are cases in point: Gandalf has been sent by The One to battle the Dark Lord and so conclude an age of middle earth, but to the hobbits he is a funny old man who is good at smoke rings and fireworks. The reader discovers Gandalf's significance only as the hobbits do, though Tolkien maintains the superior attitude which the reader has toward the hobbits by allowing him to see things a little more quickly. Aragorn, heir of Elendil, bearer of the sword that was broken, true king, is to Frodo an ill-visaged vagabond whom he calls "Strider." The hobbits, despite their protests to the contrary, are remarkably free of preconceptions as to what can and cannot exist, and their ingenuousness is contagious. By the time the action moves to *Moria*, the reader is likely to have completed his identification with the hobbits. Only the neo-goth could imagine himself battling a Balrog on the fire bridge as Gandalf does, but many of us might stab a troll in the foot if Boromir held the door.

But even if we grant the sympathy for or identification with the hobbits, the question remains as to how Tolkien makes use of that identification in presenting heroes to an unheroic age. Tolkien is careful to keep a hobbit present in almost every scene so that the heroic virtues and actions which fill the books are softened by the quiet, unassuming gaze of a self-proclaimed non-hero. Hobbits do not remain astonished at anything for very long, but their capacity for renewed wonder is infinite. To Sam the fearful Malamuks are Oliphants, and the comic rejection of their terrible strength is subdued to the tale from within, rather than being brought to the tale destructively by the reader. If *The Lord of the Rings* is to fail, it explodes. The "practical" rejection of magic and coincidence is to a remarkable degree incorporated within the action.

So long as the fellowship is forming, or intact, there is no real necessity for Merry and Pippin. In fact, it is not easy to keep them separate. But when, at the end of the first volume, the fellowship splits, the utility of several hobbits becomes obvious. Merry and Pippin lead the western fellowship to Rohan and eventu-

ally to Gondor. And as Frodo and Sam struggle toward Mordor, the reader learns enough about hobbits and about heroism to make the final efforts of Frodo and Sam acceptable.

Merry and Pippin grow very gradually, but it is not long before they are accustomed to heroic actions in others and accept the reality of heroes as a matter of course. The battle between the Rohirrim and the kidnapping orcs is stern, no-nonsense heroic, but the hobbits, crawling away, stopping to munch lembas, and worrying about bed and breakfast, provide a non-heroic framework for the action. There exists a useful tension between the reader's feeling of superiority toward the hobbits and his inability to identify with the mighty warriors and magicians. As the hobbits become more heroic without ever quite losing their childlike qualities, the reader is likely to grow with them. When out of hopeless battle come the victorious forces of Theoden to treat with the evil wizard Saruman, there, eating a second breakfast atop the rubble of Isengard, are two very unheroic hobbits. Tolkien thus allows the reader to find his stance somewhere between the Ben-thamite and the neo-goth. Gradually the hobbits are absorbed into cosmic action. Both Pippin and Merry join the heroic households of old men. Merry is to tell Theoden of pipe weed, Denethor accepts Pippin for mixed reasons, none of which involve his heroic prowess. But each is accoutered for battle, and Tolkien thus keeps a hobbit-eye at the center of the major actions. As we see Pippin's helpless terror when he gazes into the Palantir, we can more fully appreciate the heroism of Aragorn as he wrenches it from Sauron. But at the same time Pippin's escape from the eye makes Aragorn's escape more credible. And we are prepared for the bone-weary despair of Frodo as Sam carries him up the slopes of Orodruin.



There are two major episodes in *The Lord of the Rings* which have no hobbit to serve as the practical pole of reader evaluation. The first is the coming of Gimli, Legolas, and Aragorn to Meduseld and the following battle of Helm's Deep. The second is the march of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli through the paths of the dead to the spectral tryst at the Stone of Erech. In both episodes Gimli steps forth to play the role of hobbit—to be amazed, delighted, or terrified in a manner quite unsuitable to his usual character. At Helm's Deep he hides until enemies his size show up. On the march of the dead, he is terror stricken: a role he need not have played had there been hobbits enough to go around. Still, he is heroic in both episodes. Perhaps he prepares for the later actions of the hobbits by being himself a kind of heroic hobbit. "Heroic hobbit" is a contradiction in terms, but it is exactly that contradiction which enables belief in the ring trilogy. Even the most heroic actions of Merry and Pippin are kept within compass. In despair Merry stabs the chief of the ringwraiths—reaching upward, he stabs him in the back of the leg! Pippin gets his troll at the battle before the Morannon, but the dead troll falls on him, completely covering him so that the heroism is slightly ridiculous, though very satisfying.

The scouring of the Shire, the last action of the trilogy, cements the attitude toward hobbits and heroism. Merry, Pippin, and Sam return no longer the stuffed-toys the reader met at the beginning of the tale. They too find the Shire hobbits too ordinary, too passive, too much out of childish memory. Frodo has moved beyond the hobbit (and human) level so that he fits with the elves. But Merry, Pippin, and Sam have grown very human. The

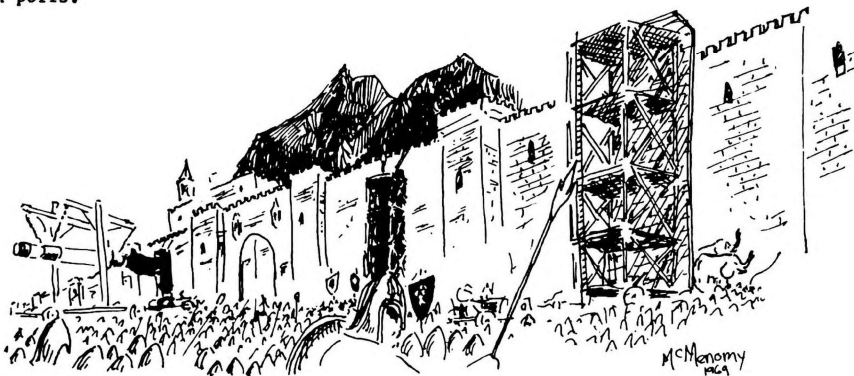
dispossessing of Sharkey from his illgot holdings requires nothing at all the reader cannot conceive of himself as doing. Hobbits turn out to be very human. Gollum too is a hobbit.

I may have seemed to imply that there are not intelligent, literate readers who find hobbits silly, or even hate them. This is certainly not the case. Condemnations of Tolkien's work range in tone from the shrill to the supercilious. Astonishingly, one frequently hears a note of anger, sounded early by Edmund Wilson in "Oo, Those Awful Orcs." *The Nation* magazine went so far some time ago as to equate hobbitism and AMERICAN-IMPERIALIST-AGGRESSION in Vietnam.⁵ Sometimes it seems as if something very important were being threatened by Tolkien. He asserts the value of honor, bravery, justice—the reality of free will and responsibility—the existence of a benevolent and watchful deity—the necessity and relevance of moral absolutes. It is as if we were felt to be in danger of losing our new found sophistication and freedom. In danger of sliding back through the age of disillusion, to the age of reason, to the age of belief. That danger is hardly lessened, apparently, even if such unsophisticated assertions as Tolkien makes are enclosed in a "fairy story" written by an aging English philologist. Most of my "practical" friends find Tolkien unreadable. There are undoubtedly thorough-going new-leftists who understand Tolkien and approve of him—I have met none. Responses to *The Lord of the Rings* are remarkable. It might even be that an examination of the reasons for its popularity would tell us as much about the bumping forces in our chaotic national dark as any number of public opinion polls.

It is relatively easy to create a secondary universe. One need only change the sun from red to green and all else will follow. But it is quite another thing to make that universe ring true. The problem is particularly difficult if the secondary universe is heroic. Heroism is not very fashionable. Tolkien hit upon a brilliant solution to the problem of bridging the gap between the two worlds when he created the hobbits. In their solid-down-to-earth childishness, in their wonder, delight, fear, and terror, the 20th century reader finds a guide who makes middle earth accessible without the necessity of suspension, or of disbelief. It is the hobbits who take us there and back again.

NOTES

- ¹ John Crowe Ransom, "Philomela," *Poems and Essays* (New York, 1955), page 30.
- ² E. R. Eddison, *The Worm Ouroboros* (New York, 1962).
- ³ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," *Tree and Leaf* (Boston, 1965).
- ⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston, 1954-55).
- ⁵ *The Nation*, CCV (October 9, 1967), pages 332-334.



Contemporary Medieval Authors

(continued from page 9)

seeing a disproportionate medieval element in contemporary romancers. Nevertheless, I do think a medieval impulse can legitimately be detected in the writers I have named in my opening list, even if only absorbed at second-hand from Scott and Morris,⁹ but I would not underrate other roots and influences which are also operative. Indeed, I mean my title to apply only to those three writers of twentieth-century romance whom I have discussed in this paper. I don't want to suggest that they be regarded as transplanted medieval authors, for they are part of our age however uncomfortable they often felt in it, and they speak directly to us. Rather I would submit that their imaginations are inspired by their reading of medieval literature so that they re-shape and re-write medieval material and conventions for the pleasure and profit of a contemporary audience.

ENDNOTES

¹Besides a host of popular articles, see the Tolkien number of *Mankato State College Studies* (February, 1967), and the critical anthology edited by Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics* (Notre Dame Press, 1968).

²In his essay, "On Stories," in C. S. Lewis, ed. *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Oxford, 1947; William B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. 104. Eddison's four romances, in the order in which I recommend they be read, are: *The Worm Ouroboros* (1926), *A Fish Dinner in Memison* (1941), the posthumous *Mezentian Gate* (1958), and *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935). All have recently been reprinted in paperback by Ballantine Books.

³Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White* (Viking Press, 1968),

p. 133; the italics are White's. This biography quotes liberally from White's diaries and letters and from the unpublished "Book of Merlyn."

⁴For White's psychoanalysis of Lancelot and Guenever, see Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-152.

⁵Compare Robert Henryson's fifteenth-century poem, *The Testament of Cresseid*, ll. 141-270.

⁶There are seven of these Narnia stories: *The Magician's Nephew* (1955); *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Horse and His Boy* (1954); and *The Last Battle* (1956).

⁷William Blissett, "Despots of the Rings," *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 58 (Summer, 1959), p. 449.

⁸Reference is made parenthetically to J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Ballantine, 1965); Roman numerals refer to the individual volumes of the romance: I, *Fellowship of the Ring*; II, *The Two Towers*; III, *The Return of the King*. Also see John Tinkler's article, "Old English in Rohan," in Isaacs and Zimbardo, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-169. Many readers have noticed that the list of dwarf names in the *Poetic Edda* (and quoted by Snorri Sturluson in his *Prose Edda*) has supplied the name for numerous Tolkien characters, including Gandalf.

⁹What counts, of course, is the medieval inspiration, not necessarily accuracy of medieval scholarship. C. S. Lewis, for example, considered Scott's medieval books his weakest efforts.