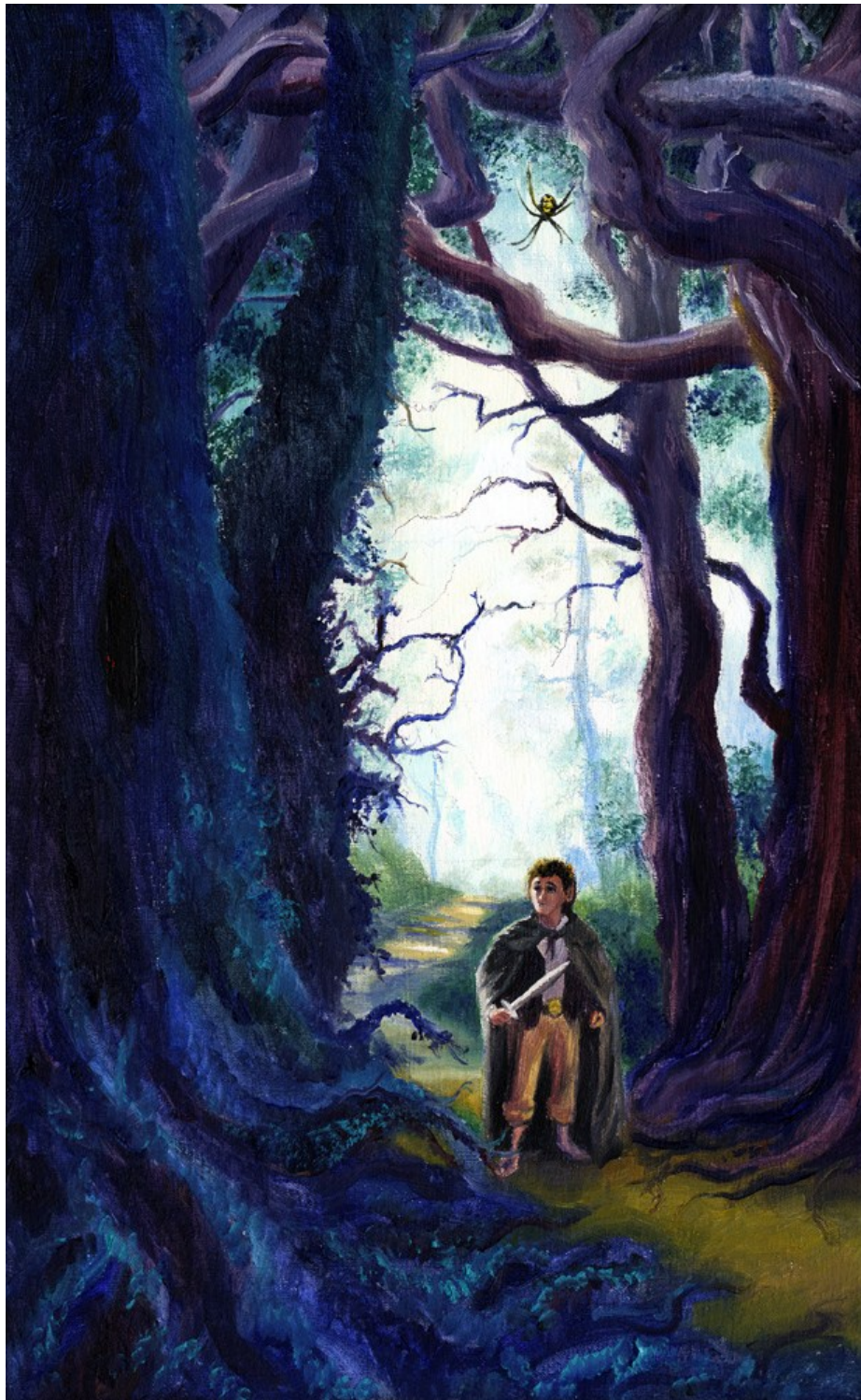


# mythPRINT



**The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society**

VOL. 49 NO. 10

OCTOBER 2012

WHOLE NO. 363

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## The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

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— Letter to the Editor —

The campus craze was in full swing when I became an undergraduate in '67, but I was too preoccupied with poetry to be much of a fiction guy at the time, though I did begin to read science-fiction as an upperclassman. I remember seeing the Ace paperback editions on dormitory bookshelves and the “Frodo Lives,” “Come to Middle-earth” and “Gandalf” buttons — bring back those white-on-black Gothic-font Gandalf buttons!

Still I did also remember having been emphatically instructed by fellow students not to read *The Lord of the Rings* without having read *The Hobbit* first, when Ursula Le Guin’s elegiac Tolkien essay finally got me there in the summer of '85 (being in the process of reading *The Two Towers* for the first time during a train ride from Geneva to Paris was particularly memorable). Those were the Ballantine paperbacks with Darrell Sweet’s cover illustrations, which I still have, and I would agree that his hobbits remain as definitive as Ted Nasmith’s landscapes.

I got two-thirds of the way through *The Hobbit*, and I just couldn’t believe it was going to go on getting wilder and wilder for that much longer, but it did. More recently I’ve had cause to reflect that the map of Wilderland is much more like a late-medieval/early-Renaissance map than any of his other ones.

Big ups to David Oberhelman for mentioning poetry as both reader and reviewer, and many thanks for Mark Walker’s admirably rigorous account of translating the *Hobbit* songs into Latin and Kathryn Colby’s ideal opening statement. Best *Mythprint* issue since I joined in 2000 — props to the trolls guy!

Fraternally,  
Kent Wittrup  
Lynn, MA

### From *Gomrath* to Ludcruck

Alan Garner. *Boneland*. Fourth Estate, 2012.  
149 pp. £16.99 (hardcover). Reviewed by  
Verlyn Flieger.

Reproduced on the back cover of the jacket of Alan Garner’s *Boneland* is a prehistoric cave drawing of a bull pierced by spears and marked by the outline of what looks like a human hand. The cave drawing plays a part in Garner’s family memoir *Stone Book Quartet*, and the constellation of the Bull is a force in this his latest novel. Both are evidence of human continuity, of pre-history become myth and translated again into modern fiction. This is what Alan Garner writes about, again and again and again. When he does it well, as in *Boneland*, he has an impact on his reader like no other current novelist I know, conveying the strong impression that there’s a story behind the story behind the story, a mystery whose solution, though beckoning, would if found rob the book of its power to enthrall.

*Boneland* is just such a story, a powerful tale of obsession and psychic displacement, tightly narrated and laced with haunting echoes of the great myths and legends of the British Isles. It will not be to every reader’s taste, but for those who like this kind of tale-telling it is a gripping, challenging read. It is also tough going. Garner makes no concessions to his readers. He gives data but no explanations. It’s up to you to figure out what is really going on. This isn’t easy. A first reading will barely scrape the surface of this densely-packed story. The best way to read *Boneland* if you want to appreciate the fullness of Garner’s reach and imagination, is to re-read it, not just once but several times. With every re-reading more of the pieces will fall into place, more of the allusions will connect with each other, and for faithful Garner fans, a structure will emerge. Those who are not faithful Garner fans will long since have lost patience and gone back to Harry Potter.

The jacket of *Boneland* describes the book within as “THE CONCLUDING VOLUME IN THE WEIRDSTONE TRILOGY.” Well, yes. And no. This is and is not the case. Yes, it is the case in that the book is set in the same landscape, deals with some of the same characters, and builds on some events drawn from the first two volumes, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and its successor *The Moon of Gomrath*.

And no, it is not the case in any other respect. Readers of the first two books may find their knowledge of them more hindrance than help in understanding the third, let alone putting the three together. Where *Weirdstone* and *Gomrath* are fantasies about and for children, *Boneland* is about and for adults. Moreover, it does not, in spite of the jacket blurb, “conclude” in any satisfactory narrative sense, the events of the first two. The end of *Gomrath* left that book’s child protagonists Colin and Susan in a state of shock and bereavement, sister Susan left behind by the Wild Hunt as the horsemen mount into the sky, brother Colin newly rescued from the clutches of the Morrigan, but attacked and injured by the Brollochan. The Morrigan is Garner’s version of the Irish death and fertility goddess. Don’t ask what a Brollochan is. Garner won’t tell you, except that it’s big and bad and shapeless. And rather than providing a conclusion, the new book seems to raise the question whether these events actually took place, or if Colin has dreamed them. Far from being an observer of Susan’s ride with the Wild Hunt, as in *Gomrath*, Colin is, according to *Boneland*, “asleep in the next room.”

*Boneland* is, in a sense, a riff on the two earlier books and especially on *The Moon of Gomrath*, taking a “what if?” approach to their content — what if the same events had had different motives behind them? And different meanings? What would then be the outcome? Perhaps Colin has dreamed the circumstances of the first two books and they never really happened? This might take the edge of enjoyment off for readers who have read and loved them for some fifty years. Readers expecting *Boneland* to tidily finish off the story may be disappointed. Parents looking for something for their 10–14 year olds should be so advised, and adults

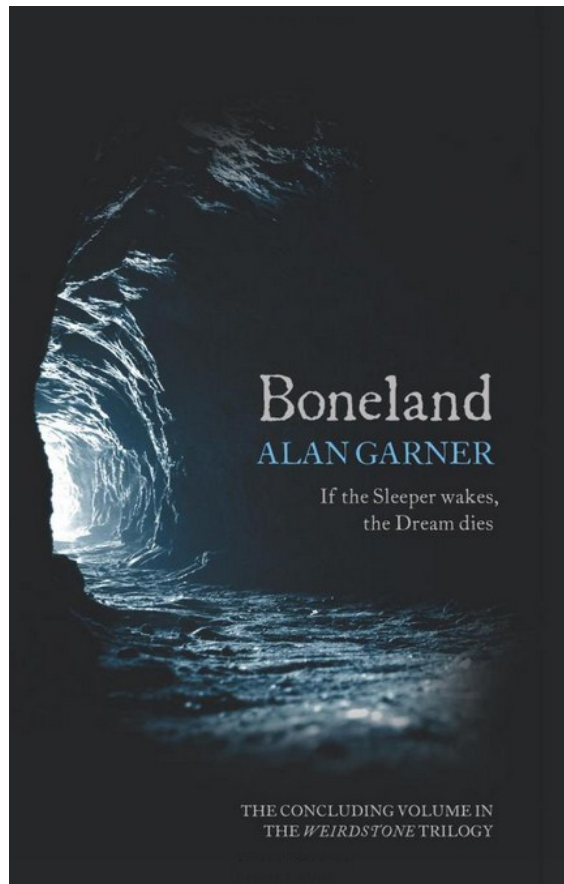
who read the first two books when they were children and expect more of the same may be in for a surprise, perhaps a shock. Readers willing to trust Garner and follow wherever he leads are in for a wild ride.

In narrative treatment, in style, in tone and in content, *Boneland* is a dramatic departure from its two predecessors, its jumps in time and place owing more to later Garner novels like *Red Shift* and *Thursbitch* than to the books to which it is supposed to be a sequel. Where *Weirdstone* and *Gomrath* use conventional narrative and description, *Boneland* extends the mature Garner style in which

both of these are replaced by dialogue which is uncontextualized but which (if you stick with it) will eventually reveal situation and unfold character. He used this technique to dramatic effect in *Red Shift* and refined it in *Thursbitch*. It’s a method that forces you to read actively, to take part in what’s being said as well as listening to it. When it works (and it doesn’t always — *Red Shift* has patches where the dialogue is simply not engaging and interest flags) it invites the reader to enter into the book as part of the performance. Not willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, but participation, full engagement of the reader’s sensibilities with a dialogic voice. In this respect, Garner owes more to James Joyce than to J.R.R. Tolkien,

more to myth on the hoof than to narrative on the page, more to language than to literature.

Where *Weirdstone* and *Gomrath* are aimed at children of the same age as their sibling protagonists Colin and Susan — twelve or thereabouts — *Boneland* gives us a middle-aged Colin as a troubled astrophysicist, and withholds Susan as the (now) twin sister he lost at the end of *Gomrath*. It is worth noting that in the earlier books the two were not twins; they were just “the children.” This



new story requires that there be a stronger, more psychic bond. Driven to nervous breakdown by his now long ago loss of Susan, Colin is on sick leave from his work at the Jodrell Bank telescope, still desperately searching among the stars for his twin. Hardly developed as a character in the earlier books, he is now a brilliant, obsessive-compulsive astrophysicist whose intelligence has been advanced to genius capacity by the head trauma he sustained in *Gomrath*, in that book attributed to the Brollochan, in *Boneland* to being struck by lightning. Susan, in the first two books the more active sibling, is in *Boneland* an unnamed and disembodied voice that haunts and taunts Colin from the acoustic “Whisper Dishes,” set up near the telescope. These vocal mirrors are a metaphor for the growing identification Garner builds between twin and twin, suggesting finally that they are reflections of one another, male and female halves of a whole.

Interlacing Colin’s story, which is told almost entirely in dialogue, is the wholly third-person narrative of an ice-age pre-British cave sculptor who has lost a wife and child and is, like Colin, desperately seeking re-connection with a female figure, in this case by trying to sculpt her shape onto the cave wall. Colin and the sculptor are a pair: ancestor and descendent, avatars of one another, or the same person. Or all three. Both their stories ride on a grid of implied correspondences: between the sculptor and Colin, between young Colin and mature Colin, between episodes in *Weirdstone* and *Gomrath* and matching episodes in *Boneland*, between Garner’s story and Arthurian myth and legend. Sentences that recur like leit-motifs are signals that time repeats itself, leaving the reader struggling to make linear sense of what is obviously a cyclical and elliptical story that may be happening all at once. Or not at all.

The physical setting of *Boneland*, the same as that of the first two books, is real geography on which is superimposed Colin’s troubled psychology. It is Garner’s home turf of Alderley Edge and surrounding Cheshire, the geography of *Thursbitch* and *The Stone Book Quartet*. In *Boneland* this geography owes less to his previous fiction than to its own indigenous myths. Even more than its precursors, *Boneland* is packed with allusions to Cheshire archaeology, pre-history, Arthurian myth in general, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in particular, plus the local Alderley Edge legend of the

Sleeping Knights. Names are clues to the novel’s mythic underpinning. The computer that drives Colin’s telescope is nicknamed Arthur. The sculptor hangs out in Ludcruck, a crack in the earth corresponding to modern Lud’s Church, by some identified as the Green Chapel where the medieval Sir Gawain got tested by the Green Knight. Close by is the High Forest, associated by one scholar with Hautdesert (literally “High Wilderness”), the castle where Sir Gawain resists temptation by his host Bertilak’s (aka the Green Knight) wife (aka Morgan le Fay). Not surprisingly, it is High Forest Taxi service which takes Colin to and from his therapy appointments with his sexy therapist Meg (Morgan), and the taxi driver’s name is Bert. “I’m the governor of this gang,” he says to Colin, just as the Green Knight inquired of Arthur (*SGGK* l. 225), and Mary’s father told her on page 14 of Garner’s *Stone Book Quartet*. Is Garner quoting the Middle English poem? Or are he and the Green Knight and Bert just all using Cheshire dialect?

Garner used a similar complex of mythic references in *Weirdstone* and *Gomrath*, but his early technique was undisciplined and the result, instead of an integrated vision, was a jumble of disparate elements. The crow goddess Morrigan from Irish myth, Grimnir (aka Odin) and the Einheriar from Norse myth, and the Germanic Wild Hunt rubbed shoulders with Eddic ljós-alfar and svart-alfar and lesser-known Gaelic supernaturals such as palugs and bodachs, plus the large and indescribable evil from the West Highlands called the Brollochan. Missing from this gallimaufrey was the kitchen sink, but not much else. One got the sense that Garner had ransacked the cupboard of Western European myth, pulled out every name that looked interesting, and thrown them all in the pot. Thus *Ragnarök*, in the Icelandic Eddas a cataclysmic event, the Doom of the Gods, became in *Weirdstone* a place name, and *Nastrond*, in the Eddas a realm of the underworld, became a character. *Boneland* shows a considerable advance in the handling of nomenclature; the elements are more controlled and disciplined and the connections (provided you can figure them out) therefore more coherent.

That said, the structure is still not perfect. The interlaced story of the ice-age sculptor, though Garner clearly wants him to have equal significance with Colin, seems not just archaic but remote and inaccessible. Garner is trying to convey

a primitive and animistic mindset and worldview, but he does it from the inside, making it hard for the external reader to connect. One thinks of Golding's *The Inheritors*, told from the point of view of a (presumably) less intelligent Neanderthal encountering homo sapiens. The reader is limited by the limited intelligence of the character. The ice-age sections simply do not have the same energy or narrative interest as the modern story, whose dialogue crackles with wit and whose characters speak an idiom which, although some of it is regional and some deliberately over-intellectual, is nevertheless something like a modern reader's own. Psychotherapist Meg is sexy, motherly, flirtatious, tough-talking. Taxi-driver Bert talks Cheshire dialect and spouts country wisdom. Colin's colleagues at the telescope are flip wisecrackers. His boss, the Director R.T. (Artie? Arthur?) speaks like a CEO and cuts his Gawain-like employee a lot of slack. Colin himself alternates between abstruse explanations of scientific terms and ordinary speech. In contrast, the primitive and animistic sculptor, who hardly speaks until near the end, when he says "Who are you?" is a far less interesting character than dictionary-spouting, pun-loving, too-often apologetic Colin. Colin says "I'm sorry" so often to so many people and to so little avail that it seems clear Garner wants us to associate him with the repentant Gawain who got chided for dodging the Green Knight's axe.

But there's also a hint that Colin may be the dreamer in the medieval *Gawain* poet's second-best poem, *Pearl*. Like that dreamer, who tries to cross the river that separates him from the Pearl, Colin tells the invisible sister who speaks to him from the Whisper Dish that she is his pearl and begs her to "let me across." The reference works just fine. But then Garner has Colin call her his pearl to a white pea, which neither she nor the reader can make sense of. But if you have your *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* handy (Garner hopes you do) you'll find that that's a comparison the Green Knight makes about Gawain: "As perle bi þe quite pese is of pryse more, so is Gawayn" (*SGGK*l. 2364). Is this a joke? Or a reinforcement? Meaning is piled on meaning, and Garner makes it the reader's task to unpack the layers. The medieval poem uses the old word for pearl, *margery*, and a nickname for Margery is Meg, and Meg is Colin's therapist, and MEG is the acronym for magnetoencephalography, the MRI that

measures his brain and reveals the trauma caused by the lightning strike. Or by the Brollochan. Take your pick. The voice from the Whisper Dish that starts out as the missing sister sometimes sounds like the Morrigan from *Weirdstone* but turns into Meg, and when Colin, like the sculptor, asks "Who are you?" she answers "You."

There are more mythic allusions packed into the 149 pages of *Boneland* than one review can encompass. I have not mentioned the Grail, to which the cup of the telescope is compared, or the importance Meg puts on Colin's asking the Grail Question, "Whom does it serve?" There are references to the Grail as a stone and to the Stone with which the sculptor carves his woman on the cave wall. There are references to the cycles of the moon, with the lost sister (she is never named) as the crescent moon, Meg/Morgan as the full moon, and the Morrigan as the old moon. There are thirteen days from crescent to full moon. Traumatized Colin can remember nothing before the age of thirteen, when he was injured and when he lost his sister. There is an ice-age character called Grey Wolf, apparently the cave sculptor's spirit guide as Meg is Colin's. There are allusions in both narratives to holly, the Green Knight's wand. The sculptor cuts holly to make a ladder. Meg lops the holly around her house, and Bert cautions Colin to watch out for her *gullantines*, which in Cheshire dialect can mean either pruning shears or (without the 's' plural) to kill or destroy. Axes, the Green Knight's head-chopping weapon, also show up in both narratives. There's the sculptor's mesolithic hand axe which R.T. finds under the mid-point of the telescope dish and gives to Colin, as well as Colin's wood-chopping axe which has roughly the same dimensions (four feet) as the Green Knight's (an ellyarde=45 inches).

The book begins and ends with the same sentences spoken by Colin, but when you've finished the book it isn't clear how much (if any) time has elapsed between page 1 and page 149. Do the repeated sentences enclose something more than themselves? And if so, what? Is this a coherent work of genius or one that crumples under the weight of its own allusions?

Meg starts to tell Colin, but stops halfway through: "You pays your money and you takes your choice."

Bert tells Colin, "Thee think on, and then."

Up to you. ≡

## A Year and a Day in the Life of a Hobbit.

By Mark T. Hooker.

Some legal scholars are troubled by the apparent short amount of time that elapses between Bilbo's departure and his being presumed dead, which is a necessary legal step preceding the authorization for the sale of his estate at auction. In "most common law jurisdictions," says Douglas C. Kane, five to seven years time is required to declare a missing person dead, unless the person is known to have been in "imminent peril" — like a plane crash.<sup>1</sup>

Bilbo left Bag-End in April (*H* 26), "just before May" (*H* 42) of the year 2941 (*RotK* 461), and came back on the twenty-second of June 2942. (*H* 284, *RotK* 461) That is roughly fourteen months. The auction could not begin, of course, until the legal proprieties had been observed, which means that the period required for a presumption of death would be less than the total time that Bilbo was away. This suggests that the requisite period was the proverbial "year and a day" of both legal and literary precedent. In medieval Normandy, for example, pilgrims to the Holy Lands left wills that would be executed if they did not return within a year and a day.<sup>2</sup> Pilgrimages were journeys — not unlike Bilbo's — from which one might "never return" (*H* 29). As Kane points out, setting out on this kind of journey could be considered an indication of "imminent peril."

While there are numerous laws that hinge on the period of a year and a day,<sup>3</sup> Tolkien would have been more familiar with the literary perspective. The time frame of *a year and a day* is the traditional period given for a quest. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C.S. Lewis (Tolkien's close friend), Caspian swore an oath to sail east for a year and a day in search of seven friends of his father's who had been sent off to explore the unknown Eastern Seas beyond the Lone Islands.<sup>4</sup> In "Wife of Bath's Tale" by Chaucer (with whose work Tolkien was professionally familiar), a knight is given "a twelf month and a day" to find the answer to the question of "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren." In Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the vow to enter upon a quest for the Holy Grail is for "a twelvemonth and a day."<sup>5</sup> In his "Essay on Chivalry," Sir Walter Scott related the tale of a fair lady who, beset by numerous suitors, announced that she would give her hand to "the

man who should keep the perilous Castle of Douglas (so it was called) for a year and a day."<sup>6</sup>

A year and a day is also the time frame commonly associated with visits to Faerie. In *Celtic Folklore* by John Rhys (Tolkien's professor of Welsh in college), if a young man wandered into a Fairy Ring, he could be rescued unharmed "at the end of a year and a day" if his friends could touch him with a piece of iron. A young man so rescued from a place called *Bryn Glas* (*Green Hill*), thought that he had only been away for little "more than five minutes, until he was asked to look at his new shoes, which were by that time in pieces." They had been new when he entered the Fairy Ring.<sup>7</sup> Those who wandered into a Fairy Ring "remained away from home, as they always did, ... a whole year and a day,"<sup>8</sup> observes one of Rhys's informants.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as translated by Tolkien, the Green Knight offers to exchange blows with any present, and to grant a "respite" of a year and a day for his challenger to take the blow from him. In *The Mabinogion*, with which Tolkien was very familiar, Caridwen boils the cauldron of Inspiration and Science for a year and a day.<sup>9</sup> Edward Lear's "Owl and the Pussy-Cat" (1871) "sailed away for a year and a day" in a beautiful pea-green boat.<sup>10</sup> In the nineteenth-century Irish tale of Finn MacCool, Finn secures the services of eight small men for a year and a day.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1937 edition of *The Hobbit*, Thorin's father left on the third of March one hundred years ago last Thursday (*AH* 56n50). That would mean that Bilbo left Bag-End a week later on the tenth of March. With this departure date, there is no timeline marker that would frame the end of a year and a day. Beginning with the 1951 edition, Thorin's father left on the twenty-first of April (57n50). In Tolkien's notes for the 1960 edition, there is a precise timeline, which states that Bilbo and the Dwarves depart on the twenty-eighth of April (*HotH* 815, 826, 833). The modification of the timeline from an early March to a late April departure changes the timeline so that a year and a day now seems to match a block of time delimited by the structure of the story. Tolkien's meticulous notes on the chronology and itinerary of *The Hobbit* as recorded in *The History of the Hobbit* (813–38) suggest that the correspondence between the widely recognized time period of a year and a day and the elapsed time of events in chapters II to

XVIII is not the result of coincidence.

Bilbo leaves on his adventure in chapter II, and finishes the adventurous elements in the story in chapter XVIII, which concludes just as Bilbo's Tookish part is getting tired, and his Baggins part is getting stronger (*H* 278). This segue between the chapters suggests that chapter XVIII ends on the twenty-ninth of April, a year and a day after Bilbo's departure, and that chapter XIX ("The Last Stage") picks up the story again some days later, on the first of May 2942, when Bilbo and Gandalf arrive in Rivendell (*H* 279).

The last chapter of the novel glosses over the time remaining until the twenty-second of June, which is how long it takes for the wheels of Hobbit jurisprudence to grind out the authorization for the sale of Bilbo's estate; for Bilbo and Gandalf to visit with Elrond for a week (*H* 282), and then complete the 412-mile journey from Rivendell to Bywater (*HotH* 815), so that they arrive in time to discover the auction of Bilbo's estate in progress. This arrangement of events neatly sandwiches the year and a day of Bilbo's adventure between chapters I and XIX, giving the novel a symmetrical structure. Chapter I acts as the prologue, and chapter XIX as the epilogue. ≡

#### References

Note that common works are abbreviated thus: *H*, *The Hobbit*; *RotK*, *The Return of the King*; *AH*, *The Annotated Hobbit* (Douglas A. Anderson); *HotH*, *The History of The Hobbit* (John D. Rateliff).

<sup>1</sup> Douglas C. Kane. "Law and Arda." *Tolkien Studies* 9 (2012). West Virginia University Press, p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Sumption. *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God*. Paulist Press, 2003, p.239.

<sup>3</sup> For example: *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales: Comprising Laws Supposed to be Enacted by Howel the Good*, Commissioners of the Public Records, 1841.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Staples Lewis. *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader': A Story for Children*. Puffin Books, 1979, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Tennyson. *Idylls of the King*. C. Kegan Paul, 1878, p.263.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Scott. *Miscellaneous Prose Works* (in six volumes), Volume 6: *Chivalry, Romance, The Drama*. 1827, p.44.

<sup>7</sup> John Rhys. *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx*, Volume 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901, p.200.

<sup>8</sup> Rhys, p.194.

<sup>9</sup> *The Mabinogion, From the Llyfr coch o Hergest, and Other Ancient Welsh Manuscripts; With an English Translation and Notes*, Lady Charlotte Guest (trans.). Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849, p.357.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Lear. "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat," *The Columbia Anthology of British Poetry*. Columbia University Press, 1995, p.609.

John D. Rateliff. *The History of The Hobbit: One Volume Edition*. Harper Collins, 2011. 960 pp., hardcover. £35.00. Reviewed by Mike Foster.

Revised from an earlier version published in *Gilbert Magazine*

When this long-awaited party of a study finally emerged in 2007, those who knew the soft-spoken Arkansas scholar with the brown fedora rejoiced.

This work began at Marquette University's Tolkien manuscript collection as a joint effort by John and the late Taum Santoski. They had migrated to Milwaukee from different states, Rateliff in August of 1981, Santoski a year earlier. They were on the task already when this writer met them in October of that year.

Together they worked from late 1981 until the beginning of 1989. Then illness struck.

Taum perished at 32, all too young, slain by a sudden and swift disease on August 19, 1991. Rateliff inherited his voluminous notes to supplement his own scholarship. With the help of his wife and amanuensis Janice Coulter and the encouragement of his erstwhile *smial*, Milwaukee's Burrahobbits, and Marquette University's Special Collections curators Chuck Elston and Matt Blessing, this love's hard labor of over thirty years finally was born.

Now, five years after its first publication, John D. Rateliff's historical study of this seminal Tolkien work, the first baby steps of what would be a boggling creation and sub-creation of the wonderful world of the Middle-earth legendarium is well worth re-reading.

If, as he stated at his Marquette University Raynor Library commentary on his masterful book just after its publication, in the twenty-first century we are entering a new "golden age of Tolkien scholarship," this book is one of the brightest gleamers in the trove.

As faithful readers and re-readers of this book know well, Rateliff's long-awaited scholarly study chronicles the creation of the story of Bilbo Baggins, the first-published of J.R.R. Tolkien's tales of Middle-earth. Since its first publication in 2007, this book has been issued in a two-volume U.K. hardcover edition, a two-volume U.K. trade paperback, and a one-volume U.K. revised second edition.



It includes the complete original version of *The Hobbit*, from the first fragment of the earliest lost draft through an abandoned 1960 revision wherein Tolkien attempted to attune *The Hobbit's* style, geography, and chronology to its sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*. Enriched with Tolkien's own illustrations and maps, this tome testifies that the author's finely-tuned fanciful fiction was achieved only through careful craftsmanship.

Rateliff's lively, lucid commentary resounds with wisdom and wit, with allusions to everything from prehistoric lake villages in Glastonbury to Scrooge McDuck. His masterful command of both Tolkien text and Tolkien scholarship makes this essential reading for everyone who ever enjoyed the adventures of the hobbit, the dwarves, and the wizard.

As Rateliff wrote in his introduction: "Since the published story is so familiar, it has taken on an air of inevitability, and it may come as something of a shock to see how differently Tolkien first conceived of some elements, and how differently they were sometimes expressed."

For instance, in early drafts Bilbo was to be the slayer of the dragon Smaug; the sudden appearance of Bard, a prototype of Aragorn, gave the tale its human hero. Rateliff observes that "the projected scheme of Bilbo stabbing the dragon 'as it sleeps, exhausted after battle,' while very much in keeping Jack the Giant-Killer's ruthless practicality, has the drawback of creating sympathy in the reader's mind for the villain of the story. The eventual solution Tolkien arrived at, while much more complex and unexpected smites down this mass-murderer in the midst of his villainy, far more satisfactory from the point of view of the story's moral code."

Conversely, the original Gollum never intended to kill Bilbo. Rather, after losing the riddle game, he apologetically escorts the hobbit out of the maze of goblin tunnels. Many scenes were added, and many others were extirpated. Characters who perished in the published version do not

die in the earliest account. The wizard Gandalf was originally named Bladorthin; the chief dwarf Thorin was first known as Gandalf; Beorn was Medwed.

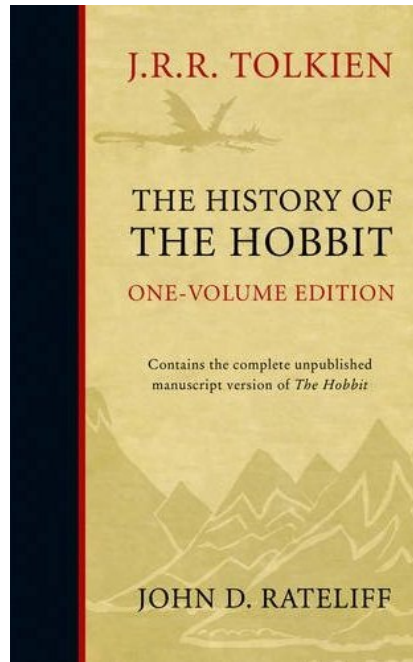
Rateliff has meticulously mined the riches found in the 1,586 pages of *The Hobbit* material in the Marquette University Tolkien manuscript collection. That tremendous trove was purchased for a relatively small sum in 1957 before the Middle-earth boom began. William Ready, then Marquette's newly appointed director of libraries, was charged by the university's Jesuits of Marquette with the mission of adding to the library's academic holdings, which include an author-edited typescript of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the papers and poetry of Joyce Kilmer, most famous for "Trees."

Ready negotiated with Tolkien through London bookseller Bertram Rota. The deal was concluded, and thus a priceless cache of holograph drafts, typescripts, plot notes, scribbled additions, sketches, and corrected galley proofs of *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and *Mr. Bliss* was acquired for 1,500 English pounds, then worth about \$4,900.

When Christopher Tolkien, the author's son and literary heir, embarked on the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth* series, he discovered more manuscripts that should have been included in the parcel purchased, so between 1987 and 1998, another 4,000 pages, mostly of *The Lord of the Rings*, were transferred to Marquette.

Like two other classics of English fantasy, *Peter Pan* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Hobbit* was a tale that was told before it was finally written down. Beginning in late 1930, Tolkien narrated the story of Bilbo Baggins to his young sons, John, Michael, and Christopher. As Christopher, then 13, wrote in his letter to Father Christmas in 1937, just after the book's publication, they heard it "in our winter 'reads' after tea; but the ending chapters were rather roughly done, and not typed out at all; he finished it about a year ago."

"This is a book to be read aloud to an attentive audience," Rateliff states. "Scenes are deliber-



ately described in such a way as to help a listener visualize them.” He points out that the rich detail, the word-play, and the comic elements “liven up the narrative.” As anyone who has ever read aloud to children or grandchildren, especially one’s own, knows, youngsters do not feign interest. Both delight and boredom are obvious. Tolkien’s friend C.S. Lewis, who read and critiqued the tale in January, 1933, would have been a comparatively easy audience.

*Mr. Baggins* begins with a first-chapter fragment whereon Tolkien had scribbled “Only page preserved of the first scrawled copy of The Hobbit”. Here the dragon Smaug is called Pryftan, but otherwise, much of this early draft is verbatim with the published text. Deleted, however, are references to the real world, such as China and the Gobi desert, and likewise names from the author’s unpublished “Silmarillion” mythology, such as Fingolfin. Elrond of Rivendell is originally described as being “kind as Christmas,” not summer.

Enumerating all the gems of lore in this book would be like doing a complete inventory of the treasure-pile Smaug sleeps on in the Lonely Mountain. Each chapter here concludes with a section of textual notes on the preceding narrative followed by passages of cogent commentary. For instance, notes appended to the “Gollum” chapter discuss Gollum himself, riddles, the Ring, and invisible monsters. Early drafts of poems, hitherto unpublished maps, little-known illustrations, and four sets of plot plans testify to the author’s perfectionism.

Tolkien’s 1947 revision published in 1951, which changed the story to harmonize it with the yet-unpublished *The Lord of the Rings*, the cursory 1966 revision to assert the American copyright, and the 1960 undertaken but unfinished extensive rewriting of the story are all here.

Rateliff interweaves not only works by other authors but also Tolkien’s own, including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* as well as his letters, interviews, and the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* edited by his son. References encompass a boggling variety of works and authors, including the *Kalevala*, the *Mabinogion*, Chaucer, Malory, Spenser, the brothers Grimm, Macaulay, Wodehouse, Dunsany, Swift, Grahame, Shakespeare, Lovecraft, Morris, MacDonald, Carroll, and Hugh Lofting’s *Dr. Doolittle* series of children’s books, to name but eighteen. Moreover,

Tolkien scholars tend to be generous with their insights, and this work is augmented by both published and private contributions from that community.

The eclectic erudition of the notes and the commentary make this book indispensable to those who admire Tolkien and crave a better understanding and appreciation of his efforts to perfect this first Middle-earth morsel. The great joy is Tolkien’s tale itself. Here the adventure of Bilbo Baggins is witnessed as it grew from seed to sprout to sapling to full and final splendor. Every reader who loves the familiar version will delight in *The History of the Hobbit’s* exegesis. With fluent expression and revelatory insight that deepens and broadens our appreciation of *The Hobbit*, Rateliff has enhanced the magnificence of Middle-earth.

The friendly joke shared before this long-awaited book was that John Rateliff had taken years to produce a work thrice as long as the tale it studies.

The news now is that Peter Jackson will trifurcate *The Hobbit* into a film trilogy, which begins this December, continues in December 2013, and concludes in July, 2014.

Indeed, as Rateliff and *Mythprint* readers now, the Road goes ever on. ☸

## NEW DISCUSSION GROUP

Please join The Mythopoeic Society in welcoming our newest Discussion Group, based in Washington DC: **The Society for the Discussion of the Works of C.S. Lewis** (SDWCSL). Their leader is Christopher Lee Pipkin; email him at [mr.pipkin@gmail.com](mailto:mr.pipkin@gmail.com). The group’s mailing address is 715 Hamlin Street NE, #3, Washington DC 20017-1616.

## EDITORIAL NOTICE

I regret that the review of Mark Walker’s *Hobbitus Ille: The Latin Hobbit*, promised for this issue, has been delayed. It is my hope to run that review in the November issue of *Mythprint*. Thanks for your patience!

Our “Green and Growing” venue for 2013 is the tree-laden campus of **Michigan State University**. Located in East Lansing, three miles east of Michigan’s capitol in Lansing, it is a 5,200-acre campus, with 2,100 acres in existing or planned development, and the rest in green space. There are 15,000 acres throughout Michigan used for agricultural, animal, and forestry research. The nation’s pioneer land-grant university, MSU began as a bold experiment that democratized higher education and helped bring science and innovation into everyday life. The revolutionary concept became a model for the nation; MSU became the prototype for sixty-nine land-grant institutions established under the Morrill Act of 1862. Further information on the university’s history can be found at <http://msupress.msu.edu/sesquicentennial.php>. In 2011, 36,675 undergraduate and 11,279 graduate and professional students were enrolled. It has the largest single-campus residence hall system in the country with 23 undergraduate halls, one graduate hall,

and three apartment villages, and its ever-growing library system is approaching 6 million volumes.



Program sessions will be taking place in the Kellogg Center ([www.kelloggcenter.com/index.html](http://www.kelloggcenter.com/index.html)), a full-service hotel and conference center. Sleeping rooms have either two double beds or one queen-size bed, high-speed wireless, voicemail, coffeemakers, ironing equipment, and hair dryers. Our Banquet will be held in the Center’s Lincoln Room.

Our meals will be served in the Brody Dining Room (<http://eatatstate.msu.edu/residentialdining/brody>), immediately across the street from the Kellogg Center. The “Brody Neighborhood” facilities were remodeled in 2010, and have 9 areas of various cuisines from which to choose: vegetarian/vegan options, comfort food, grill items, pasta, salads, desserts, international cuisine, pizza and sandwiches, breakfast items and more. (For more information, see <http://eatatstate.com/menus/brody>.)



**Travel Options**

Kellogg Center is located eight miles from Lansing’s Capital Region International Airport (LAN), served by Delta and United. Shuttle service is available to the Center. Flying to the conference can also be done using Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW), which is within 90 miles, Kalamazoo/Battle Creek Airport (AZO), within 80 miles, and Grand Rapids Ford Airport (GRR), within 65 miles. There is motor coach service from Detroit Metro to East Lansing on the comfortable Michigan Flyer buses. A full range of rental vehicles



is available at Metro, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids Airports. If airport-to-venue shuttle service from either airport is needed, contact the East Lansing Taxi Co. East Lansing is served by Amtrak; station code LNS. For those renting cars or driving one’s own vehicle to the campus, East Lansing is located in south-central Lower Michigan just off US-127, and near I-96. Interstate-94 runs the width of southern Michigan, and northbound US-127 is at Exit 138. A 1,000-space attached parking garage is available at no charge to guests at the Kellogg Center. One might choose to rent an MSU bicycle for use during the conference. You can find additional information for visitors here: [www.msu.edu/visitors/index.html](http://www.msu.edu/visitors/index.html).



**Summer in Michigan**

Activities abound in Michigan in the summer, and conferees may wish to plan some holiday time before and/or after the conference. As Michiganians say, “your trip begins at Michigan.org,” a one-stop planning site for any sort of traveler’s interest; a number of conferees at the 2004 Mythcon in Ann Arbor planned vacation time around the conference. The landscape varies from the stunning lake shores of the Third Coast to the agricultural heartland to the thick forests of the northern regions of the state. Summer festivals, shopping, sports activities, and many other things await those who choose to vacation in Michigan.

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