

Tolkien Anniversaries

One day symposium, Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 1-5 p.m., Western Michigan University Library

1-1:30 p.m.

Kristine Larsen, Ragnarok and the Rekindling of the Magic Sun

One of the central aspects of the marring of Arda by Melkor in *The Silmarillion* is the death of the Two Trees and the subsequent fashioning of the lesser (imperfect) lights of the sun and moon from their last fruit and flower. The story of how the sun and moon were placed into the sky and driven by a female and male (respectively) Maia dates back to *The Book of Lost Tales*, and persists through the various revisions of the legendarium as late as the completion of *The Lord of the Rings*. While the concept of the sun as female and the moon as male may appear to counter the standard in Western mythology, it is, in fact, in line with many European mythologies, including Germanic, Norse, and Finnish. It is worthy of note that as the *Silmarillion* texts evolved, Tolkien apparently increased the power of this female character, explaining that Melkor dared not to attack the driver of the sun, Arien, not only fearing her brilliance but lacking the power to assail her. This is an interesting change from the original story of Urwendi, she who steers the sun vessel in *The Book of Lost Tales*, who is attacked by Melkor and killed. The so-called “Rekindling of the Magic Sun” foretold at the end of time was to include both the restoration of the Trees (and their perfect light) and as well as some unexplained rebirth of Urwendi. There is an interesting parallel here to a Norse myth recounted in the *Prose Edda* that predicts that in the beginning of Ragnarök (the end of the world and the death of the Norse pantheon) the wolves Hati and Sköll will finally devour the sun maiden Sól and the male moon Mani, but in the restoration of the world, a new sun will be formed and driven across the sky by Sól’s daughter. This perfect sun is said to play a central role in the regeneration of life on Earth. This paper will examine the interesting parallels between the solar aspects of the eschatological myths of *The Book of Lost Tales* and the *Prose Edda*.

1:40-2:10 p.m.

Sandra Hartl, The Ainur and the Greek Pantheon: From *The Book of Lost Tales* to *The Silmarillion*

As J.R.R. Tolkien was a professor of Anglo-Saxon, a tremendously great amount of research has traced back his works to Germanic and especially Old English motifs, setting aside any possible other sources. In fact, he started studying Latin and Greek at age eleven and was awarded an Open Classical Exhibition at Exeter College, Oxford. Although he formally abandoned reading for Classics in 1913 and changed focus to English, he never truly left Greek and Latin literature behind, neither in the outline of his legendarium, *The Book of Lost Tales*, nor in its further developed version, i.e. *The Silmarillion*. The classical texts are also mentioned in the famous Letter to Milton Waldman as one of the great stories which have deeply impressed him.

First, the influence of Greek mythology can be discovered very apparently in the Valar, who have a greater resemblance to the Olympian gods than to the Germanic ones, as far as their attributes, surnames, responsibilities and domains are concerned. Manwë, e.g., is called king in Sindarin, just like

Zeus in Ancient Greek. To both, the eagle is sacred, and not the raven, as for Odin. In a similar way, Mandos, lord of the Houses of the Dead, echoes Hades.

Whereas there are some obvious parallels between the Valar and the Greek gods, Tolkien also introduced some new features. While the Valar have children in *The Book of Lost Tales*, as do their ancient paradigms, this is no longer the case in *The Silmarillion*. Makar and Meássë, the martial Valar calling Ares to mind, no longer appear in later drafts.

Moreover, some of the Maiar trace their roots back to Norse mythology, such as Gandalf when appearing as the Grey Pilgrim like Odin, who also inspired Sauron's description as the one-eyed.

Finally, the end of the world is foreseen by the Second Prophecy of Mandos (cf. *The Shaping of Middle-earth*), predicting the Dagor Dagorath (Battle of Battles), when all the good forces in the world will return and defeat the evil ones forever. Afterwards, they will join the Second Music of the Ainur. In *The Silmarillion*, this concept was removed by Christopher Tolkien. Not only does the cataclysmic ending and the return of a golden age exist in Northern sources, but also in some classical ones.

All these things considered, Tolkien's first subject of choice enriched his works to a great extent throughout his life, albeit with some minor changes over time. But of course, one has to keep in mind his saying about the soup and the bones, meaning that Middle-earth is a place where many paths and errands meet, and that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

2:20-2:50 p.m.

Erik Mueller-Harder, The river Swanfleet: A journey from the Misty Mountains to flat fenlands and half-way back again; or, How the discovery of Tolkien's annotated map of Middle-earth by Blackwell's Rare Books in Oxford extricates Pauline Baynes' cartographic reputation from the marsh of *Nîn-in-Eilph*

Just as Christopher Tolkien's exacting work in *The History of Middle-earth* has provided both the basis for and the standard with which we measure research into his father's Middle-earthly subcreation, so too have his maps of the west of Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age long served as both the canonical representation of Middle-earth and the gauge with which we have measured all subsequent *Media-terrestrial* cartography.

The recent discovery of the map that J.R.R. Tolkien himself annotated for Pauline Baynes's reference in producing her 1970 poster map, however, now provides a welcome opportunity to explore some issues that J.R.R. Tolkien said "give some trouble," and which Christopher Tolkien agreed have "bedevilled ... representation on the maps." Of particular interest is the mysterious relationship of "Swanfleet" to the fens of *Nîn-in-Eilph* and the Glanduin River, about which Christopher Tolkien, Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull, and Karen Wynn Fonstad have all implicitly or explicitly concluded that Baynes "misunderstood."

This paper demonstrates that Baynes had it right all along, and that this is a rare case where Christopher Tolkien went astray, taking Hammond, Scull, and Fonstad with him. Along the way, we will also make brief excursions to several little-known rivers in Gondor and through the famed vineyards of *Dorwinion*.

3:30 p.m.

Michael Wodzak, **An Auto-Ethnographic Study of Bilbo's Party**

During the Unexpected Party, Bilbo stumps off to his pantry grumbling to himself that it seems that his guests know as much about the inside of his pantry as he does. Indeed, Tolkien provides a very specific inventory of the foods demanded by the dwarves and provided by the increasingly disgruntled hobbit. In doing this, Tolkien reveals a great deal about the everyday eating habits of an early twentieth century Englishman from the Midlands. Having grown up in the same area of England that the very young Tolkien called home, and recognizing Tolkien's genealogical and linguistic affinity for the region, I will provide description, explanation, and perhaps samples of the contents of Bilbo's pantry and demonstrate that, for those not from this region, some of the food items may not be so very generic and straightforward as one might assume. In presenting this only marginally academic argument, I shall endeavour to demonstrate that this basic problem of not understanding the regional specifics of the food Tolkien talks about is symptomatic of a larger problem in Tolkien scholarship, of mistaking the specific for the generic, and using that as the basis for interpretive study.

3:40-4:10 p.m.

Andrew Higgins, **Mapping Tolkien's *The Book of Lost Tales*: Exploring 'I Vene Kemen' ('The Ship of the Earth')**

One of the unique para-textual elements that Christopher Tolkien published in the first volume of *The Book of Lost Tales* which is celebrating its 100th Anniversary in 2017 was a map in the form of a Viking ship which his father invented as he was writing the first version of his mythology.

In this paper I will examine this conceptual and radical map called 'I Vene Kemen' ('The Ship of the Earth') from three perspectives. First, as a key element of Tolkien's early myth-making; examining how it is linked to the body of 'Lost Tales' he was composing. Secondly, as a para-textual artefact which reflects Tolkien use of his emerging Elvish languages. Here I will focus specifically on how the place names on the map reflect the 'consistent and coherent' nomenclature Tolkien invented drawn from the Elvish lexicons and grammars he was developing at the time. Finally, I will examine this map as a key element in the wider process of 'world-building' for fiction. Here I will explore how this map represents the first of many maps Tolkien would invent and integrate into his narratives to build the world of his legendarium. I will also explore and suggest some possible reasons why Tolkien decided to cast this map in this conceptual form of a Viking ship based on his early objective of linking his unique mythology to a lost tradition of England.

4:20-5 p.m.

Victoria Holtz-Wodzak, **'On Golden Grove Unleaving': Tolkien, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and the Inscapes of Middle-earth**

In *Elves, Ents and Eriador*, Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans note a number of striking similarities between poet Gerard Manley Hopkins' 1879 poem "Binsey Poplars Felled" and Bregalad the Ent's lamentation for his fallen rowan trees in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. They further note that Tolkien and Hopkins shared an admiration for alliteration and a deep, emotional connection to trees. Further,

they point out that Tolkien was sufficiently familiar with his work to draw on one of Hopkins' letters in a letter of his own to CS Lewis in which he apologizes for having given offense. Given these similarities, and their shared Catholic faith, this argument, presented in the 99th year since the publication of Hopkins' poems and the 100th year since Tolkien's birth, seeks to extend Dickerson and Evans' claims. It examines echoes Hopkins' poems "God's Grandeur," "Pied Beauty," and "The Windhover" in selected passages of *Lord of the Rings* and concludes that there is persuasive internal evidence of Tolkien's familiarity with, and admiration for, Hopkins' poetry.