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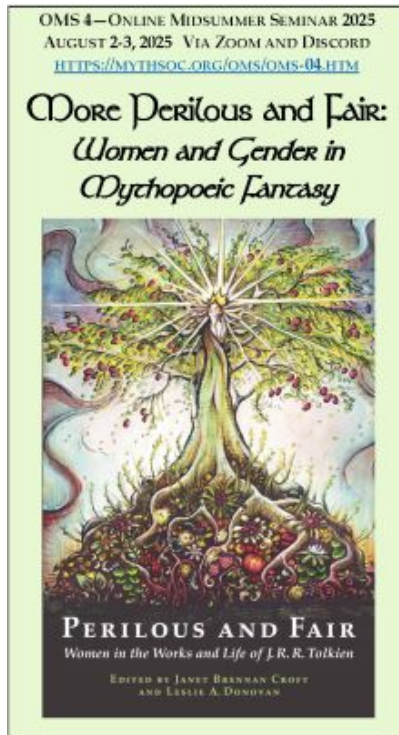
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Where Fantasy Fits: The Importance of Being Tolkien

Abstract

Scholar Guest of Honor speech, Mythcon 45. In his wide-ranging and conversational meditation on “Where Fantasy Fits,” the conference theme, West places Tolkien within a broad fantasy tradition but concentrates most closely on the decades preceding *The Hobbit* and following *The Lord of the Rings*, bearing out Garner Dozois’s observation that “[a]fter Tolkien, everything changed” for genre fantasy. Of particular interest is West’s discussion of science fiction works and authors appreciated by Tolkien and Lewis.

Additional Keywords

Anderson, Poul; Boucher, Anthony; Carter, Lin. Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series; Dante. *Inferno*; Fantasy literature; Lewis, C.S. “The End of the Wine”; Lewis, C.S. “An Expostulation (against too many writers of science fiction)”; Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*; Sawyer, Robert J. *Starplex*; Science fiction; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Critical reception; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Influence on fantasy literature; West, Richard C.

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HERE FANTASY FITS:
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING
TOLKIEN

RICHARD C. WEST¹

“Something has to be true to be real, but it doesn’t have to be real to be true.”
—Madeleine L’Engle, *The Wand in the Word* 109

IN THE PREFACE TO HER BOOK *GREEN SUNS AND FAËRIE*, Verlyn Flieger notes that in his essay “On Fairy-stories” Tolkien uses the term “green sun”

to express the element of ‘arresting strangeness’ that characterizes an imaginary world, that out-of-the-ordinary component that signals a departure from what he called the Primary World. A frog prince can be a green sun, as can a time machine or a unicorn or a space alien. Or a hobbit. Whatever it may be, the green sun sets the tone for the world it inhabits, and for the story that brings that world to life. (vii)

In chapter VII of Robert J. Sawyer’s 1996 science-fiction novel *Starplex*, the space explorers on the titular ship do literally see a green star (which would have been a sun had it been at the center of a planetary system, but this one has nothing orbiting it). One of the characters (all of whom are experts in various scientific fields) immediately says: “A *green* star? [...] There’s no such thing” (76 [Chapter VII; this title was published in several editions with differing pagination]).

Now, why shouldn’t there be a green star, if not one visible from Earth, at least deep in space where the good ship *Starplex* is exploring our galaxy? Because they don’t occur in nature, and this novel is a work of what is called “hard” science fiction, where the convention is that any marvels that occur should have an explanation within the framework of contemporary scientific theory however far the envelope gets pushed. The color of a star is determined mostly by its temperature. A relatively cool star, like Betelgeuse in the Orion constellation, emits most of its light in the infrared colors at the bottom of the spectrum (which you will remember goes violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red), so such cool stars have a reddish tint

¹ This paper was the Scholar Guest of Honor speech at Mythcon 45, August 2014, Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts.

to them. Slightly warmer stars, like Aldeberan in the constellation Taurus, look orange, a little higher in the spectrum of colors that the human eye can see. Stars a little warmer still, like our sun Sol, look yellow, yet a little higher on the spectrum. The hottest stars, like Rigel (also part of the Orion constellation) have a slightly bluish hue, close to the top of the spectrum. So why don't stars cooler than Rigel but hotter than our sun look green, which would be between blue and yellow and smack in the middle of the spectrum? Because nature is not so neatly organized: in such middle-range stars all the visible colors turn out to have roughly the same intensity, making the star look white instead (white being what the human eye sees when all the colors of the rainbow are combined). Hence we humans do not see stars as looking green, and the scientist on *Starplex* knows that.² I think that Tolkien knew it too. Tolkien was actually a pretty good amateur astronomer, as Kristine Larsen has shown, and it was because a green sun is not found in nature that he chose it as emblematic of a fantasy world.

Naturally, among its many plot threads this novel has to provide an explanation for the anomalous greenness of this star, and of a large number of other hitherto unknown green stars that are mysteriously popping up in our Milky Way and other galaxies. The story centers on the exploratory spaceship *Starplex*, crewed by members of four sentient species: humans, dolphins (this is a rather common science-fictional trope), and two extraterrestrial ones, whose nature and cultures are described (and interaction between the groups is part of the interest of the novel). They make first contact with yet a fifth species in the course of the novel. They have adventures, such as having to escape the gravity of that suddenly-appearing green star which threatens to destroy their ship. They overcome their problems via scientific ingenuity. Characters say things like "But that violates the law of conservation of matter and energy," to which someone retorts no, because of such-and-such special circumstances. Such interchanges are part of the fun of this type of "hard" SF. Eventually they discover that the green stars are artificial, manufactured by people in the very far future and sent back in time as part of a grandiose engineering project to prevent the heat death of the universe. Staggering, but esthetically satisfying.

Also, it's really fantasy, just with a scientific veneer. Talking to animals who provide help on the quest, only they're dolphins so that's "just" another species whose intelligence we humans overlooked for a time (but we have legends of dolphins helping swimmers in trouble). Interacting with fantastic creatures, but they are extraterrestrials who evolved differently (exploring such alien cultures provides great aesthetic pleasure). Traveling impossible distances in space and time, because of wormholes and stargates made by a highly advanced technology so that's not really magic. Science fiction turns out to be fantasy masquerading as realism.

² I am not an astronomer, so this description is adapted from and closely follows DeGraff 158-159.

And Tolkien is right. The green star is a signifier of the departure from the Primary World, and an integral part of that world and the story set in it.

Now, it can be argued that all fiction is fantasy. Fiction is entirely a product of the imagination, the *fantasy* in the original meaning of the word, and even the most realistic fiction can be only a selective representation of the Primary World. Jane Austen depicts her country villages with an astute eye as well as good humor, but the picture is artfully arranged. We never see the weary labors of the servants below stairs in the Bennett household, nor hear of the Napoleonic wars (though Austen had two brothers in the Royal Navy), but these are not weaknesses because they would only distract from the picture. C.S. Lewis was insistent that every element in a work of art has to be used or it is doing harm. Austen's world has the added charm for us that it did not have for its original audience that it has now vanished, and we visit it rather like time travelers.

I am not going to try to provide a definition of fantasy here, but I have included a number of scholarly works in the bibliography that do, so consult those if you are interested.³ I prefer fuzzy sets to definitions. Most of us who like works of fantasy enjoy other modes as well, or even mixed genres. And in general when we point to something as fantasy it is because, as Tolkien avers, something in the work departs from our consensus of what constitutes the Primary World. But that consensus is a fuzzy set rather than strictly fixed; it varies from time to time and place to place.

Fantasy fiction has certainly been around for millennia. It is often said to have begun in recorded form with the epic of Gilgamesh, fragments of which can be dated to at least the 18th century B.C.E. *Gilgamesh* is myth, a story that contains truth even if it is not literal, and that was likely always recognized, but still there would have been an element of religious belief for the ancient Mesopotamians. It is hard to know what in it they would have considered fantasy in our sense. Similarly the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would all along have been recognized as mythical, but also one would go to them to see how to perform a sacrifice properly or to hear the names of your ancestors in the catalogue of ships. Where the fantasy fits in can be problematical.

Consider the last canto of Dante's *Inferno*. The pilgrim and his guide, Virgil, have descended through one circle of Hell after another, always going down, and are traversing the final stretch, "the frozen Lake of Cocytus, which fills the bottom of the Pit, and holds the souls of the Traitors" (*Comedy* 271) when they come upon a fearful giant with monstrous bat-like wings, whose head and shoulders are sticking out of the ice—Lucifer, the Devil:

³ See Hume, Mendlesohn, Schlobin, Swinfen, Waggoner.

The Emperor of the sorrowful realm was there,
Out of the girding ice he stood breast-high,
And to his arm alone the giants were
Less comparable than to a giant I;
Judge then how huge the stature of the whole [...]
(Canto XXXIV, lines 28-32; *Comedy* 286)

Lucifer's giant head is equipped with three mouths, each devouring a wretched sinner. Virgil has the pilgrim hold onto him, carrying him as they climb down the huge body, until they reach the middle:

[...] about his neck I curled
My arms and clasped him. And he spied the time
And place; and when the wings were wide unfurled

Set him upon the shaggy flanks to climb,
And thus from shag to shag descended down
'Twixt matted hair and crusts of frozen rime.

And when we had come to where the huge thigh-bone
Rides in its socket at the haunch's swell,
My guide, with labour and great exertion,

Turned head to where his feet had been, and fell
To hoisting himself up [...]
(Canto XXXIV, lines 70-80; *Comedy* 287)

They then climb up for a long while until they come to a level resting place, where to Dante's astonishment he finds himself looking down on the Devil's feet; the ice is gone, and evening has suddenly become dawn. He asks Virgil:

'Kindly explain: what's happened to the ice?
What's turned him upside-down? Or in an hour
Thus whirled the sun from dusk to dawning skies?'

'Thou think'st,' he said, 'thou standest as before
Yon side the centre [...]

So long as I descended, thou wast there;
But when I turned, then was the point passed by
Toward which all weight bears down from everywhere.
The other hemisphere doth o'er thee lie [...]

When it is evening there, it's morning here;
And he whose pelt our ladder was, stands still
Fixt in the self-same place, and does not stir.

This side the world from out high Heaven he fell [...]'
(Canto XXXIV, lines 103-107, 109-112, 118-121; *Comedy* 288)

What has happened is that after their long descent they reached the center of the earth, what we now call gravity shifted, and they proceeded to climb up and out the other side of the planet. C.S. Lewis said that this passage creates "a perfect science fiction effect" ("On Science Fiction" 60) and so it does. But also even in the early fourteenth century, when the Devil was accepted reality, it would be understood that depicting Lucifer with a gigantic, bat-winged, physical body that was smashed halfway into the planet, there to be imprisoned in ice, is symbolic rather than literal. But it's a really cool image.

Perhaps I should point out that, while Dante's audience might have admired his cleverness in realizing that when one goes down through the Earth one would then have to climb up out of it, they did know the planet was round. That had been standard knowledge for centuries, at least since classical Greece. As Isaac Asimov succinctly puts it, "By 350 B.C., then, we can say that it was firmly established that the Earth was a sphere. This concept has been accepted ever since by the educated of the Western world" (6). Unfortunately it is still possible to find educated people in the Western world today who believe that people believed in a flat earth until 1492, however often it is shown otherwise.⁴ I'm not sure why this false myth is so persistent; there seems to be a tendency to want to think our ancestors were stupid. C.S. Lewis liked to point out that people in the past had brains just as good as ours.

The point I want to make about Dante is that while there are elements in the *Commedia* that his contemporaries would know to be imaginative creations, he based what is a magnificently carefully structured universe on the best philosophy and theology available in his day. If the term science fiction had been available at the time, it might have been recognized that that was pretty much what he was doing: constructing a work of fiction that might push the boundaries of what was considered possible but was within the parameters of existing knowledge.

But the concept was not available in Dante's time, for of course it was not until the late 16th century that the word "science," which originally meant knowledge of any kind, came to mean a body of organized knowledge based on investigating a subject. And the word "scientist" is of even more recent coinage, dating only from the 19th century (the earlier term was "natural philosophy," that is, applying "love of wisdom" to the natural world):

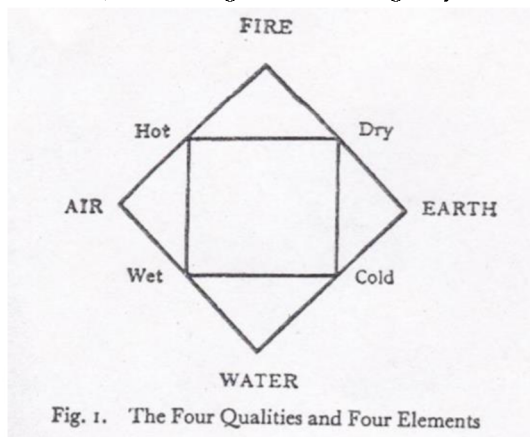
⁴ See Gould and Russell.

SCIENTIST. The word was coined in 1840 by the Rev. William Whewall (1774-1866) in his book *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, which contained a seventy-page section on the Language of Science. In it he discusses how the new words of science should be constructed. He then coins the universally accepted term *physicist*, remarking that the existing term *physician* cannot be used in that sense. He then moves on to the larger concept. "We need very much a name to describe a cultivator of science in general. I should incline to call him a scientist." The word that *scientist* replaced was *philosopher*. An account of this coinage in *Word Study*, a newsletter published by Merriam-Webster in 1948, noted: "Few deliberately invented words have gained such wide currency, and many people will be surprised to learn that it is just over a century old." (Dickson 147)⁵

It is sometimes averred that we can only have fantasy in the modern sense after the pre-scientific ages. I have trouble figuring out when these pre-scientific ages were. Certainly not in prehistoric times, when our ancestors learned how to use fire, developed agriculture, domesticated animals, began working with metals, built sailing vessels, and other such things that all we've done since is refine. Humanity has always investigated the world around us and kept learning about it.

It is perhaps more helpful to consider C.S. Lewis's observation that magic and science are twins that grew up together. One was sickly and died, one was healthy and flourished (*Abolition of Man* 47-8).⁶ That can be seen in the history of alchemy, which is both magical and scientific.

Consider this chart of the traditional four elements and four qualities (figure 1, Read 3). Don't laugh at there being only four elements. We actually still think much



the same, only the four labels we use are solid, liquid, gas, and—energy. Solid (let's represent that by, say, earth), liquid (water would be a good symbol for that), gas (air is a mixture of gases, fortunately including oxygen), and energy, for which fire has always been a symbol. The alchemists were trying to change, or transmute, one element into another. We today also feel that most stuff (matter) can indeed have a solid, liquid, or gaseous

⁵ See also the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁶ See also the first chapter of Lewis, *English Literature in the 16th Century*.

state, such as solid ice, liquid water, and water vapor. From this chart the alchemist calculated that water, the cold and wet element, could be transmuted into air, the hot and dry element, by applying heat so that the cold quality is displaced by the hot one. The process of vaporization is actually physical rather than mystical, but they were on the right track.

The alchemists experimented on what was happening in the real world, kept careful notes so their work could be replicated (though they used codes, because they were afraid of rivals stealing their secrets), developed techniques like distillation and chemical reagents like hydrochloric acid. Robert Boyle (1627-1691), who is considered the father of modern chemistry, was an alchemist. So was his younger contemporary Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who spent more time on alchemical experiments than on the investigations into "light and optics, planetary motion, mathematics, and physics" for which we primarily know him (Linden 243).

Though there is a direct line from medieval alchemy to modern chemistry, there was also a spiritual component. Trying to transmute baser materials (like lead) into nobler ones (like gold) also symbolized ennobling one's character, one's soul. (And their instincts were good. Lead [atomic number 82] and gold [atomic number 79] are very close together on the periodic table of elements. Turning an atom of one into an atom of the other cannot be done chemically, however. They couldn't know that, but even negative results have value.)

The goal of the alchemists was to make what they called the Philosopher's Stone (so-called because they were working in "natural philosophy") which could transmute lead into gold and produce the Elixir Vitae which would give eternal life. The goal was as spiritual as it was practical.⁷

Our contemporary fantasists often borrow from medieval alchemy as a means to depict their magicians as systematic, which makes for good fiction so long as one remembers that this doesn't actually work. I suggest, if Sir Isaac Newton could not make a philosopher's stone, that is pretty good evidence that it can't be done.

What we call fantasy fared well enough during the period of the realistic novel. During the 19th century many writers would pen an occasional departure from the Primary World among more verisimilitudinous works, such as Charles Dickens depicting not only the squalor of London as in *Oliver Twist* (serialized 1837-1839) but producing a ghost story like *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Even during World War I the prose romances of William Morris were popular reading in the trenches (Fussell 135-137). But then the fashion changed.

At last year's Mythcon, part of Scholar Guest of Honor Douglas A. Anderson's presentation noted how scarce works of fantasy became after the Great War, a dearth that pretty much lasted until the mid-1950s. As Tolkien observed, fairy

⁷ The literature on alchemy is immense. I have found Baigent, Coudert, Eliade, Linden, and Read helpful.

tales went into the nursery: fantasy was acceptable if it was aimed at a juvenile audience; *The Hobbit* and the Narnia Chronicles are examples. Anderson touched on some exceptions, mostly choosing works that are not very well known. I want to leapfrog quickly over some that probably are known, at least to this audience, to make a point.

James Stephens (1880-1950) was part of the Irish Literary Revival during the early part of the twentieth century, and wrote a number of short stories and novels using Celtic mythology. *Deirdre* (1923) is a tragic love story, the title character often referred to as the Irish Helen of Troy. He followed this up with *In the Land of Youth* (1924) (that is, in *Tír na nÓg*) in which some of the same characters reappear. He planned another sequel which would focus on the hero Cuchulain, but never finished that novel. I wish he had, both because I find his retellings of Irish myth very good, laced with humor and lyricism, and because then he would have written the first modern fantasy trilogy.

E.R. Eddison (1882-1945), who by invitation twice came to meetings of the Inklings, wrote high fantasy much like Tolkien's, though different thematically and stylistically. *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) is the best-known, followed by his Zimiamvian novels *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935), *A Fish Dinner in Memison* (1941), and the unfinished *Mezentian Gate* (1958) to which C.S. Lewis contributed a cover blurb.

The other Morris, Kenneth Morris (1879-1937), wrote a number of novels and shorter pieces using the Welsh Mabinogion and other mythologies from around the world. Anderson did mention *Lud-in-the-Mist* (1926) by Hope Mirrlees (1887-1978) but I want to point to it again since it has been very influential on later fantasy. Eating forbidden fairy fruit can do wondrous and terrible things. Mervyn Peake (1911-1968) again wrote a very different sort of fantasy than Tolkien's: *Titus Groan* (1946), *Gormenghast* (1950), *Titus Alone* (1959). John Myers Myers' *Silverlock* (1949) is an odyssey through the Commonwealth where myth, literature, and legend come together.

T.H. White (1906-1964) was rather successful, perhaps because the appetite for stories of King Arthur is apparently insatiable. *The Sword in the Stone* (1938) about Arthur as a child, *The Witch in the Wood* (1939) focusing more on Gawain and his brothers and their mother Morgause, *The Ill-Made Knight* (1940) about Lancelot, were combined, revised, and expanded as *The Once and Future King* (1958). White's use of anachronism delights me and apparently many other readers, but it was not to C.S. Lewis's taste; he said he liked White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946), about descendants of people whom Gulliver brought from Lilliput to England, "far the best of White's books" (*Collected Letters* [CL] III.285)⁸—it is a book I also love.

Poul Anderson's (1926-2001) father was the son of Danish immigrants, while his mother had herself emigrated from Denmark, and consequently he was raised bi-

⁸ In a letter to his goddaughter Sarah Neylan dated January 26, 1953.

lingual. He often visited relatives in Denmark (Bear 8-9). Hence he was able to draw on the same Old Norse sources as Tolkien. *The Broken Sword* was written around 1948, and so is among his earliest work, but it is significant that he could not find a publisher till 1954. The main characters are changelings and so we move between the worlds of elves and of humans. Groff Conklin described the novel as “a rip-snorting, bloody, imitation-Norse epic” in a review in the science fiction magazine *Galaxy* (July, 1955, 115). Anderson felt he improved it when he revised it for a reissue in 1971⁹. But it was from the original novel that Michael Moorcock borrowed the idea of the cursed sword to create the sword borne by Elric in *The Stealer of Souls* (1963) and its sequels.

There were a few other exceptions in this period from the 1920s-1950s (I might mention Robert Nathan and Thorne Smith), but not many. The point I wish to make is that while not many fantasy novels were published, other than juveniles, those that did manage to find a publisher were usually very, very good.

Fantasy in this period did also appear in lowbrow venues such as what are called “pulp” magazines. *Weird Tales* published H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard—authors who went on to be reprinted extensively in the last few decades. And of course there were many science fiction magazines with titles like *Amazing*, *Astounding*, *Fantastic*, *Startling*, and I argue that science fiction is really fantasy that puts a supposedly scientific veneer on the marvels it depicts. But I want to focus on one particular magazine that proved to have a major impact on later works of fantasy.

John W. Campbell as editor of *Astounding* (the name was later changed to the more dignified *Analog*) became legendary for his policy of insisting on stories where the sciences were used accurately and rigorously—what later came to be called “hard” science fiction. He wanted to have a fantasy magazine that would similarly feature stories where the fantastic premises are worked out logically, whether humorously (as often) or more seriously.

Unknown was published only from May, 1939 through October, 1943. It began as a monthly but, significantly, sales were not good enough to sustain this schedule so it became bi-monthly in 1941. It ceased two years later when wartime paper shortages forced Campbell to choose between also reducing *Astounding* to bi-monthly, or cancelling *Unknown*. But during this brief period it published work that was, well, astounding.

“Two Sought Adventure,” the first of Fritz Leiber’s (1910-1992) Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser stories, appeared in the August, 1939 issue, followed by four more in this series. The titular characters are rascals and professional thieves, so this is sometimes called “low fantasy” to distinguish it from the “higher” type populated by heroes, and has been much imitated.

⁹ See his “Foreword” to the 1971 reissue, especially the last two paragraphs.

"The Roaring Trumpet," the first of the Incomplete Enchanter series by L. Sprague de Camp (1907-2000) and Fletcher Pratt (1897-1956), appeared in the May, 1940 issue. The protagonist, a psychologist named Harold Shea, enters the world of Norse mythology by convincing his mind that the premises of that world are true. He is an "incomplete" enchanter because he is rather shaky in getting the premises of magic to work. In "The Mathematics of Magic" (a title emblematic of the type of fantasy Campbell was looking for) in the August, 1940 issue, Harold Shea enters the world of Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. In "The Castle of Iron" in the April, 1941 issue, it is the world of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Later stories (not published in *Unknown*) use Finnish and Irish myth.

There were numerous other stories of similar quality and originality, by such authors as Robert A. Heinlein, Jack Williamson, and A.E. van Vogt. Most of the contents of the magazine have been reprinted, whether in single-author collections or in anthologies such as the ones edited by Benson and Schmidt.

Now Tolkien was an author whom editor Campbell might have welcomed for *Unknown*. His stories are very logical in working out their premises. Think of the scene in *The Fellowship of the Ring* chapter "The Bridge of Khazad-dûm," where Gandalf has a magical duel with an unseen opponent in Moria, Gandalf commanding a door to remain shut while what turns out to be a Balrog commands it to open. Caught between these opposing magical forces, the door finally breaks.

A few years after the end of World War II, once paper was again available, there were some further attempts to bring out a fantasy magazine, mostly abortive, but one was quite successful. The first issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy* was dated May, 1949. The title was changed with the second issue to *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, so you can see they were hedging their bets. It is generally called just *F&SF*, and it continues to this day.

The co-founders were Anthony Boucher (1911-1968) and J. Francis McComas (1911-1978). McComas left as an active editor in 1954 but remained as an advisory editor until 1962. Boucher (he pronounced it to rhyme with voucher) left as editor in 1958, but also occasionally served in an advisory capacity until cancer took him ten years later. "Anthony Boucher" is actually a pseudonym for William Anthony Parker White, who, upon seeing the large number of William Whites in a library card catalogue, decided he would routinely publish under less common pen names. But he became so closely identified with his most frequently used pseudonym of Anthony Boucher that he had a large number of friends, especially in science fiction and detective fiction circles, who called him Tony. An annual conference of fans of mystery and detective stories is called Bouchercon in his honor.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Marks.

Both Boucher and McComas wanted stories of literary quality, and got them, making *F&SF* an important venue for the history of fantasy literature. The series of anthologies they edited called *Best of F&SF* are all worthwhile volumes.

The first example I want to focus on is again Poul Anderson, a frequent contributor to the magazine. His novella "Three Hearts and Three Lions" appeared in the September-October, 1953 issue (so he was still continuing to write fantasy even before he had found a publisher for *The Broken Sword* the following year). He later revised and expanded it into a novel with the same title (Doubleday, 1961), and this has become something of a classic, frequently reprinted. The protagonist, called Holger Carlsen, is with the underground in Denmark fighting Nazis during World War II when he is translated to a parallel world which we gradually learn is that of the Carolingian *chansons de gestes*.

"[B]elike ye should seek the Empire," [Holger is advised]. "Tis far to the west, a hard perilous journey, but they'd welcome a strong knight [...] and no since Carl's day has there been one like ye."

"Who was this Carl?" he asked [...].

"Why, the founder o' the Holy Empire. The king who made Christendie strong and rolled the Saracens back into Spain. Carl the Great, Carolus Magnus, surely ye've heard of him." [...]...

"Do you mean Charlemagne?"

"So some call him. I see his fame has reached even to your South Carolina." (*Three Hearts and Three Lions* 86-87 [ch.10])

While the novel treats its fantasy background quite seriously there are also occasional jokes such as this, set up by Holger, as a disguise, having pretended to be from a place the local people will not have heard of (America in the magazine version, but the specificity in the novel increases the humor). But part of the fun is that the statement is also quite true. The attitude toward winning personal glory is appropriate to the setting in which Holger finds himself, but Charlemagne's fame really has spread throughout the entire world.

Holger meets a unicorn, a werewolf, a troll, a friendly wizard with helpful but not too great skills, and hostile, rather un-Tolkienian Elves in league with Morgan le Fay. He is pulled by a nixie into her underwater lair. He flees from the Wild Hunt. He plays a riddle game against a giant, playing for time until dawn turns the creature to stone. He is befriended by a dwarf named Hugi, and by Alianora, a maiden who can shape-shift into a swan. Magic works, being a science with its own rules, but Holger was an engineer in our world, so he is able to find ways to counter it. When they are attacked by a dragon he wonders "what amendment to the square-cube law permitted that hulk to fly?" (90 [ch. 10]), but he drives it off by pouring water down its throat, explaining that there has to be something approximating a boiler in the

beast's stomach to produce the fire it breathes, so the water causes an internal explosion.

Three Hearts and Three Lions, then, shows a fairly early use of what have become standard fantasy tropes that have a long provenance in folklore, but is in the relatively new "incomplete enchanter" tradition of parallel worlds and the mathematics of magic. Fantasy fits into the world of this novel by being given a scientific rationale. Someone becomes a werewolf under the influence of the forces of Chaos when they are on the march due to a recessive gene in the family susceptible to that influence. If iron hurts the denizens of Faerie, there must be something in their metabolism that accounts for it. Tales that anyone who plunders the body of a sun-stricken giant will be cursed will come true because when that much carbon is changed to silicon, the resulting radioactive isotope will be in large enough quantity to guarantee radiation poisoning. The novel's theme of ongoing battle between Law and Chaos across the ages has influenced many later writers as well as being absorbed into the game of Dungeons and Dragons.

Anderson went on to write a great deal more fantasy. He credited Tolkien for helping bring about the marketing conditions that allowed him to do so.¹¹ His novel, *A Midsummer Tempest*, won the 1975 Mythopoeic Award. He was a guest of honor at the 1972 Mythcon.

The other aspect of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* that I want to stress is its relation to C.S. Lewis, whose work it published. Anthony Boucher, in his capacity as editor, wrote to Lewis inviting him to contribute to the magazine. Boucher admired Lewis's space trilogy so it is natural that he should approach him with such a proposal. Lewis replied on February 5th, 1953 in a very interesting letter that I would like to discuss in detail (CL III.289-90).

He begins, "Dear Mr. Boucher[,] This is a delightful meeting," indicating that this is the first time they have exchanged letters. There must have been further correspondence dealing with Lewis's later publications in *F&SF*, but this letter is the only one extant or at least the only one in Lewis's *Collected Letters*. He goes on: "I did indeed value *St. Aquin* very highly and I have also greatly enjoyed *Star-Dummy* in its different way." This refers to two of Boucher's own short stories. "The Quest for Saint Aquin" is set in a future "Technarchy" ruling the three inhabited planets in our solar system, where all religions—including various Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, and others—are being persecuted. A Catholic priest investigates a legendary wonder-worker as a possible saint, which turns out to have been a robot. "The Star Dummy" is lighter fare (hence the remark that it is to be enjoyed "in its different way"), with a contemporary (that is, early 1950s) setting rather than the future world of "St. Aquin." The human protagonist, a ventriloquist named Paul Peters, meets Tarvish, a sentient extraterrestrial ("hnau," to use Lewis's term) who is searching for

¹¹ "Subsequently, I've been free to roam the fantasy field whenever I like" ("Awakening" 28).

his girlfriend lost somewhere on our planet. They hatch a scheme wherein the alien will pretend to be Paul's new ventriloquist's dummy so that they can get on television and hope the female extraterrestrial will see them. Both stories are now most easily found in *The Compleat Boucher*.

Lewis saying that he had "indeed value[d]" these stories suggests that Boucher had mentioned them in his letter and Lewis was responding to this. And it must be that Lewis had read them. "The Quest for Saint Aquin" was first published in 1951 in *New Tales of Space and Time* (edited by Raymond J. Healy) while "The Star Dummy" first appeared in the Fall 1952 issue of the American science fiction magazine *Fantastic*. Thus both came out not long before Lewis wrote his letter on 5 February 1953, and it is possible that he saw one or both of these publications. I surmise, however, that more likely Boucher may have sent copies as samples of the sort of fiction his magazine was looking for, and thinking that Lewis might enjoy seeing some F&SF other than his own that had a Christian background—obvious in "Saint Aquin," while "The Star Dummy" is framed by the Catholic protagonist seeking advice from his parish priest at the beginning and end of the tale. Later in the letter Lewis comments "The 'Antiparody' (a word we need) of the Lord's Prayer in *Star Dummy* was very fine" (CL III 289). He is referring to a prayer used by the extraterrestrial characters with similarities to the familiar Christian prayer but from an alien culture—a delightful bit in the story but a more serious matter than the word "parody" would imply, and hence the need for another term. It is worth quoting here:

Lifegiver over us, there is blessing in the word that means you. We pray that in time we will live here under your rule as others now live with you there; but in the meantime feed our bodies, for we need that here and now. We are in debt to you for everything, but your love will not hold us accountable for this debt; and so we too should deal with others, holding no man to strict balances of account. Do not let us meet temptations stronger than we can bear; but let us prevail and be free of evil. ("The Star Dummy" 428-429)

The protagonist shows the text to his parish priest, who is delighted with it. "Terribly free, of course, but still an unusually stimulating, fresh translation of the *Pater Noster*. [...] Where on earth did you get it?" (429).

Poul Anderson says of Boucher that "He was a tolerant but devout Catholic who knew his own faith better than most priests do" and remembers that

Someone sent him a story in which the characters included a werewolf, a sexy young woman, a Roman Catholic nun, a robot, and a detective [all of these being features that appeared in Boucher's own fiction]. He sent it back with the remark, 'Yes, you've pushed all my buttons, but you seem to have pushed them in the wrong order.' ("Memories" 12)

The science fiction writer Robert Silverberg similarly recalls that Boucher was “the most elegant and cultivated of men, a charming *litterateur* with a passionate love for cats, opera, detective stories, and the Roman Catholic Church. (I once sent him a story about an opera-loving priest who collaborates with a telepathic cat to solve a murder mystery. Tony was amused, but he didn’t buy)” (*Reflections* 264-265).

To return to Lewis’s 1953 letter to Boucher, his opening paragraph asserts that he is not

the real out-and-out SF reader who is, within that field, omnivorous. In reality I’m extremely hard to please. Most of the modern work in this genre seems to me atrocious: written by people who just take an ordinary spy-story or ship-wreck story or gangster story and think it can be improved by a sidereal or galactic setting. In reality the setting, so long as it is a mere setting, does harm: the wreck of a schooner is more interesting than that of a space-ship and the fate of a walled village like Troy moves us more than that of a galactic empire. You, and (in a different way) Ray Bradbury, are the *real* thing.” (*CL* III 289)

Lewis expresses similar sentiments in many of his writings¹² so this passage merely confirms an attitude of long standing. It does throw light on the famous conversation with Tolkien when Lewis lamented that there just wasn’t enough of the sort of literature they liked, when they felt that even much that ought to have been to their taste was not of good enough quality. And it underlines for us that it is no accident that Lewis was careful to make very effective use of setting in his own fiction, as did Tolkien. Doubtless Boucher, also a good writer, agreed with Lewis’s complaints. I think, too, he may have used it to elicit a contribution from Lewis, but more of that in a moment.

The reference to Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) is also of interest in identifying another SF author whom Lewis regarded as “the real thing.” Elsewhere he expresses his admiration that “Bradbury has real invention and even knows something about prose”—like most people he was impressed with Ray Bradbury’s skill as a prose stylist (*CL* III 288).

We can add to the list Arthur C. Clarke (1917-2008), whose *Childhood’s End* (1953) Lewis said “bowled [him] over” in a December 1953 letter to Joy Gresham (*CL* III 390). This book, a classic of science fiction, deals with alien “Overlords” who take over the Earth in order to save humanity from extinction and guide us to the next step in our evolution. When the novel was reissued the following year (1954), Lewis provided a blurb for the cover: “There has been nothing like it for years . . . an author who understands there may be things that have a higher claim on humanity than its own survival” (*CL* III 1206n179). Elsewhere, in a 1954 letter to George and Moira Sayer, he calls the novel “A great tragic myth” (*CL* III 406).

¹² See, for example, his essay “On Science Fiction” in Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*.

Another is Brian Aldiss (born August 18, 1925), whose *Hothouse* was serialized in *F&SF* in 1961 and published as a novel the following year. Aldiss describes the book in a memoir by saying “I had imagined a mango tree covering the world, encouraged by global warming, as the Sun began to go nova” (*Exile* 29.) Aldiss was living in Oxford at the time and became friendly with Lewis; together they founded the Oxford Speculative Fiction Society (mere “science” fiction at the time being considered too plebeian a term). So it was natural for him to give a copy of *Hothouse* to Lewis when it was published by Faber in 1962. He recalls that Lewis “liked it enough that he bought a copy to present to his friend J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien kindly wrote to me to say how much he enjoyed my novel. I was delighted. A month or two later a second letter arrived saying he had just reread *Hothouse* and liked it even more a second time” (*Exile* 31). Aldiss shared with Tolkien a love for trees, and notes in his memoir that

Trees, whether naked or clothed in leaves, depending on the season, are a source of pleasure, and often an exemplar of calm. The remorseless quality of trees is to be admired. How they survive despite urban crawl! Trees root themselves in the earth, as they have done since before intelligence tinkled its way into the world. (*Exile* 25)

Returning to the letter to Boucher, Lewis says further: “Thank you very much for the year of *F & SF*. I hope there will be plenty of your work in it” (*CL* III 290). It appears from this that Boucher gave Lewis a year’s complimentary subscription, perhaps hoping to keep reminding him of the magazine and to show by the quality of its contents that it would be no disgrace to contribute to it. Lewis did indeed like *F&SF* very much, calling it “by miles the best” of the SF magazines he had seen: “Some of the most serious satire of our age appears in it” he told Arthur C. Clarke in a letter dated January 26, 1954 (*CL* III 418). However, in a February, 1953 letter Lewis gently declines Boucher’s request for a story: “All my imagination at present is going into children’s stories. When that is done, I may try another fantasy for adults, but it would be too quiet and leisurely for your magazine” (*CL* III 289). Other letters from this time confirm that the Narnia Chronicles were absorbing a good deal of his energy. He wrote to Roger Lancelyn Green on February 25th that “I’ve nearly finished the last chronicle” (*CL* III 297), referring to *The Last Battle* (which came out three years later in 1956), and to publisher Geoffrey Bles on March 20th that “Here is the next tale” (*CL* III 307), the revised text of *The Horse and His Boy*, published in 1954. Lewis would spend part of the next three years preparing the last three Narnia books for publication. Moreover, he was also certainly busy enough with academic duties; for example, at this time he was checking the proofs for his massive volume for the Oxford History of English Literature (*CL* III 288; letter to Nathan Comfort Starr dated February 3rd, 1953). Though he was getting some assistance with that: his preface to that volume, dated 7 October 1953, ends by thanking “Miss Joy

Davidman for her help with the proofs" (*English Literature* vi). No wonder he married her. However, it is not surprising that he did not feel able to promise anything just then.

Boucher must have persisted, however, and in the event Lewis did publish two short stories and two poems in *F&SF*. The short stories are the moody and rather misogynistic piece "The Shoddy Lands" in the February 1956 issue and the more jocular "Ministering Angels" in the January 1958 issue. Both are most easily found reprinted in one of Lewis's collections such as *Of Other Worlds* or *The Dark Tower*. I do not consider either story among Lewis's best work, but it is worth noting that "Ministering Angels" was included by David G. Hartwell in *The Science Fiction Century* (1997), which this veteran editor put together as an anthology of outstanding examples of twentieth-century science fiction.¹³

The first of the two poems is one I think Boucher might have cadged out of him by getting Lewis to set his complaints about bad SF into some jolly little verses. At any rate, once Lewis had done so, it may have occurred to him that *F&SF* would be a good venue for "An Expostulation (against too many writers of science fiction)" and this poem was published in the June 1959 issue:

Why did you lure us on like this,
Light-year on light-year, through the abyss,
Building (as though we cared for size!)
Empires that cover galaxies,
If at the journey's end we find
The same old stuff we left behind [...] (*Poems* 58)

Lewis's youthful ambition had been to become a great poet. He may never have achieved that, though I trust that scholars like Joe R. Christopher and Don W. King have shown that neither was he a bad poet, and he could do light verse such as this quite amusingly. The insistent *aa* rhyme scheme in a tetrameter line might be too monotonous or even deadening in a longer piece, but works well enough over a mere twenty lines, with the grumbling tone of the first verse, the more fervent desire of the second, and the overall humorous effect. The vocabulary is appropriately science-fictional: light-year (correctly used as a unit of distance), galaxies, Tellurian as a somewhat grandiose term for Earthly. Line 8—"crooks, spies, conspirators, or love"—suggests very common types of fiction set in our world; the word "conspirators" alliterates with "crooks" and echoes "spies" providing some cohesion to the disparate terms, and letting us feel that we are reading a poem. In line 10, naming urban areas

¹³ I thank Joe R. Christopher for this reference. After I gave this talk at Mythcon 45, Prof. Christopher shared with me a draft of his essay on "C.S. Lewis and American Science Fiction," which I hope he will finish and publish. He discusses extensively the two short stories by Lewis mentioned above, in their contexts.

in three different countries implies the whole world, while the places chosen (“The Bronx, Montmartre, or Bethnal Green”) all have associations with the ordinary to underscore the disappointment the speaker feels when the extraordinary had been promised. The second stanza begins by calling our planet tiny—a “cell” such as a monk or a prisoner might live in—but immediately starts soaring poetically (the ground covered by vegetation is a green floor, the sky a blue roof), culminating in a plea for the “Sense of Wonder” that is the quality we mainly desire when we seek out stories other than the realistic (“Strangeness that moves us more than fear, / Beauty that stabs with tingling spear” [lines 15-16]). You might say that fantasy fits here.

The second poem is a more somber one that came to *F&SF* a few years later by a more circuitous route. “The End of the Wine” had originally been published in the December 3, 1947 issue of *Punch*,¹⁴ a British magazine famous for its humorous pieces, but it did (and still does) publish all manner of things. Let me return again to our old friend writer Poul Anderson, who came across the poem in the early 1960s, presumably in an old copy of *Punch*, and liked it so much that he memorized it. After he recited it on a visit to the offices of *F&SF*, the magazine got permission to reprint it in the July 1964 issue.

It opens with a framing device asking anyone who looks disapprovingly on those who sigh ruefully when “drinking the last decanter” (line 1) to consider the example depicted in the body of the poem: the last survivor of a fleet escaping from a tidal wave drowning Atlantis, shipwrecked on the coast of prehistoric Europe, met by a “barbarous nation” (line 15) who appear to be Neanderthals:

Horribly ridged are their foreheads. Weapons of bone,
Unhandy and blunt, they brandish in their clumsy grips. (ll. 17-18)

The man has one remnant of his cultured homeland with him, a phial “Holding the last of a golden cordial, subtle and sweet” (line 15). He drinks from it, obviously in part to steady himself for the coming encounter, but also the taste brings back memories of the high civilization and loved ones he has lost. His happy recollections of art and science and social gatherings are constantly interrupted by thoughts of the catastrophe that has drowned them: “Where musicians played, huge fishes goggle and stare” (line 32). The poem ends as he goes to meet the primitive tribe:

Those naked men. Will they make him their spoil and prey
Or salute him as god and brutally fawn at his feet?
And which would be worse? He pitches the phial away. (ll. 34-36)

¹⁴ Reprinted as “The Last of the Wine” in Lewis, *Poems*, pp. 40-41.

This poem is quite different from the other. Here the only light touch is the framing device: those self-righteous prigs who look down on people regretful upon finishing off a good wine should just think what a sigh could mean. Still, it seems a bit much to relate that to a shipwrecked refugee from a devastated country bravely abandoning his last relic of home before going to an unknown fate. This frame seems to me the least successful part of the poem, but it does lighten what otherwise is a very dark depiction. The poem as a whole I find very gripping. It is tightly structured with a regular *abab* rhyme scheme and an internal rhyme or assonance in every line. Notice, in the few lines quoted above, *hand/brand*, *naked/make him*, *salute/brute*, *which/pitch*, and (perhaps less obviously) in line 17 *horribly/forehead* (remember that “forrid” was the standard pronunciation when the poem was composed). This is all done subtly enough and with sufficient enjambment that none of it is overwhelming. The sunken continent of Atlantis has been a staple of science fiction and fantasy at least since Captain Nemo visited its ruins, and this works well for poetic compression. A few details call up for us the traditional high civilization of Atlantis and Lemuria, contrasted with prehistoric Europe. The mental state of the poem’s protagonist, remembering happier times in his cultured homeland while thoughts break in of the catastrophe that has drowned it, is movingly done. The shipwrecked mariner approaching strangers who might be either compassionate or hostile, the civilized man meeting the primitive, are also familiar *topoi* that can be called up quickly. The dilemma at the end—and which would be worse? is it worse to be slaughtered or made a false idol?—is a distinctly Lewisian touch.

We should also notice the reference to “Numinor” in the second stanza:

The cities are drowned, the pitiless all-prevailing
Inhuman sea is Numinor’s salt grave. (ll. 7-8)

Tolkien’s Númenor arose out of what he called his recurring “Atlantis dream” and his *legendarium* hints it was the prototype for the Atlantis legend, so it is appropriately used here. Lewis spells it differently, possibly because he had mostly heard it orally from his friend rather than seen it written (though we know he did often see and comment on Tolkien’s manuscripts), or possibly he wanted to suggest that an old term had changed spelling over the years.¹⁵ In either case it is one writer paying homage to another.

This, when it was published in *F&SF* in 1964, happens to have been the first poem by Lewis that I ever read, and I was excited to see that *he wrote poetry, too!* I have always had a special fondness for it for this reason. But I hope you will agree that it is quite a good poem, as well as appropriate for a fantasy magazine.

¹⁵ For an extended discussion see Glycer 98n29.

But let us return to Lewis's 1953 letter to Anthony Boucher, and—bear with me—now we can finish up with it. The last paragraph reads: "If you are ever in England or I in U.S.A., we must most certainly meet and split a $\text{CH}_3 \text{CH}_2 \text{OH}$ together" (*CL* III 290).¹⁶ Those carbon and hydrogen and oxygen atoms constitute the structural formula for ethanol, or more familiarly *spirits*, the principal type of alcohol found in alcoholic beverages. The formula is given in Boucher's story "The Star Dummy" when the protagonist and the alien are exchanging information about intoxicants enjoyed by their respective species; for the alien it is caffeine rather than alcohol. The story does not mention a particular beverage so Lewis's jocular remark alludes merely to the formula which would be in any alcoholic drink. Maybe what he had in mind was that they should go out for a beer, but the reference to "split[ting]" whatever drink it is suggests that he was thinking of sharing a bottle of wine. Both men liked an occasional glass of wine. In any case Lewis was plainly amenable to a spot of male bonding. Boucher may have expressed a wish that they might meet in person sometime if it ever became possible. Unfortunately, as far as I can tell, they never did.

The letter closes "*Urendi Maleldil*. Yours, C.S. Lewis." You will all recognize the Old Solar phrase as appearing several times in Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength*, where it is never translated (nor is it here) but from context has to mean something like "God bless you" or "God be with you" or "Go with God." Perhaps Boucher had himself used the phrase in his letter, but at any rate Lewis expected him to know it from having read the novel.

I wish we had more of the correspondence between the two, Boucher's side as well as Lewis's, but I have thought it worthwhile to consider in detail most of the one letter we do have (I have skipped part that is off the topic) because it shows the involvement of the science-fiction community with this conference's favorite mythopoeic authors. During what was largely a fantasy famine between the Great War and the mid-fifties, the SF magazines provided a venue for this type of literature. When fantasy did manage to come out in book form the SF magazines reviewed it, bringing it to the attention of their readers and so to the people most likely to appreciate it. When Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* was reissued in 1953, for example, Boucher and McComas gave it their recommendation (*F&SF* April 1953, 99). When it was reprinted again in 1963, Avram Davidson (*F&SF* October 1963, 19-20) and Fritz Leiber (*F&SF* January 1964, 44-45) wrote commentaries. When *The Lord of the Rings* was published in 1954-55, it was enthusiastically reviewed. SF fans in Los Angeles formed the first fan group, calling themselves the Fellowship of the Ring. SF fans gave *The Lord of the Rings* the International Fantasy Award in 1957 (not technically a Hugo award since it was made by a special committee rather than voted on by the

¹⁶ In *CL* the formula, given correctly above, was misprinted with superscript instead of subscript numerals.

membership of a World SF convention, but similar in design). The award was presented to the author at a meeting of the Science Fiction Luncheon Club at the Criterion Hotel in London at which Arthur C. Clarke presided (not formally part of the World SF Convention in London going on at the same time); Tolkien quipped that he had never stopped a rocket before (qtd. in Scull and Hammond 511). Robert Foster began publishing the articles that became his massive "Guide to Middle-earth" in SF fanzines, a book Christopher Tolkien says he has often consulted. (So have I.) Gary Hunnewell has documented the involvement of SF fan groups in the early history of Tolkien fandom.

One of the *false* myths I would like to dispel here is that *The Lord of the Rings* was only a modest success until it first came out in paperback in 1965, a full decade after its initial publication. In fact it was both a commercial and a critical success from the beginning. The book that Allen and Unwin decided to publish because it was "a work of genius," even though they expected to lose a thousand pounds, turned out to be a money maker. They had underestimated the demand and had for a while kept doing so, having to go back to press a number of times. Stanley Unwin was soon assuring Tolkien that he could expect the royalties to help him to have a comfortable retirement. It elicited scores of reviews over the next several years, some of them brief, some long enough to be short essays. Reviews were mixed because, of course, this was fantasy. Many were favorable, but even negative reviews piqued interest. Being attacked by so prominent a reviewer as Edmund Wilson did call attention to the book; there is a saying that no advertising is bad advertising.

Scholarly writing on Tolkien's work was well begun even in this early period. During the ten years before the paperback there was one master's thesis devoted wholly to Tolkien's fiction and four doctoral dissertations that devoted substantial sections to his work. The appendix to this paper lists these and other early works of scholarship discussed in the next two paragraphs.

Caroline Whitman Everett's thesis (I consider it quite a good analysis for so early a study) includes a letter from Tolkien answering her thoughtful questions about his work that is still consulted by later scholars as an invaluable resource (it is Letter 199 dated 24 June 1957 in Tolkien's *Letters* 257-259). Notice how the Ph.D. students have already this early begun the tradition of placing Tolkien among his fellow Inklings.

By my count there were at least eleven articles published during this decade in journals that can be called intellectual, and the articles certainly are. R.J. Reilly's essay was based on his dissertation. J.S. Ryan had been a student of Tolkien's at Oxford. Some of these were reprinted (occasionally with revisions) in a 1968 anthology of scholarship, *Tolkien and the Critics*, edited by Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. The first scholarly conference on Tolkien was held in 1966 in Mankato,

Minnesota, the second in New South Wales in 1969.¹⁷ The appearance of the Ace and Ballantine paperback editions did give a fillip to the anthology and the conferences, but I submit that this is still a great deal of attention for so recent a book. What transpired after it appeared in paperback is that a novel that was already very successful became phenomenally successful. And so it has remained.

The other *false* myth I must argue against is that *The Lord of the Rings* “created” modern fantasy. It is not possible for any single book to do such a thing, not even one that came like lightning out of a clear sky (as C.S. Lewis characterized it). What it did was demonstrate very clearly that a large audience existed for this type of literature.

The eminent critic Northrop Frye, one of our greatest theoreticians on types of literature, noted: “When Tolkien first came out a lot of people would say ‘I can’t read fantasy,’ with an air of conscious virtue. But when he became popular it became evident that a tradition was behind him” (*Notebooks on Romance* 191). He puts George MacDonald, William Morris and some of H. Rider Haggard in that tradition. He also observed: “The success of Tolkien’s book [...] indicated a change of taste parallel to the post-Ginsberg change in poetry, towards the romantic, the fantastic, and the mythopoeic” (*Modern Culture* 146-147).¹⁸

Gardner Dozois, an esteemed contemporary editor of science fiction magazines and anthologies, puts the matter this way in *Modern Classics of Fantasy*:

After Tolkien, everything changed. The audience for genre fantasy may have existed already, but there can be no doubt that Tolkien *widened* it tremendously. The immense commercial success of Tolkien’s work opened the eyes of other publishers to the fact that there was an immense hunger for fantasy in the reading audience [...]. (xv)

After Tolkien, the deluge. Publishers first looked for older fantasy novels that could be brought back into print. Newcastle published a “Forgotten Fantasy” series reprinting authors like the two Morrisises (William and Kenneth), H. Rider Haggard, and Lord Dunsany. Lin Carter edited the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, which is one of my favorite publishing series, bringing back authors like George MacDonald, William Morris, Lord Dunsany, E.R. Eddison, Mervyn Peake, and the best of the old *Weird Tales* authors like H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Poul Anderson revised *The Broken Sword* for this series.

¹⁷ See “The Tolkien Papers” for the first and Ryan for the second.

¹⁸ Here I must thank Jason Fisher and David Bratman for pointing me toward Frye’s remarks in his notebooks. It may be worth mentioning that Frye had taken a course in Old English from Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis was one of the examiners when he earned his Oxford degree.

There are only so many old classics to reprint, so publishers sought new stories. Some of the first were imitations of Tolkien. They became known as Tol-clones. Let's just say that some were more successful than others.

But many original new fantasy novels that came out around this time were very good indeed. Lin Carter reprinted Evangeline Walton's 1936 adaptation of the Welsh Mabinogion in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series as *The Island of the Mighty* (1970), and she was encouraged to bring out novels based on the other three Mabinogi branches for which she had not earlier been able to find a publisher. Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* (1968), which I consider one of the all-time greats, received its paperback version in this series.

There was at first a tendency to think that fantasy novels fell naturally into trilogies. This was erroneously thought to be following Tolkien's example. *The Lord of the Rings* was divided into three volumes as a matter of convenience, but it is really one long book, not a trilogy. Tolkien called this version a three-decker novel, a common form of publication in the Victorian period; and no one considers *David Copperfield* a trilogy. Deborah and Ivor Rogers observed wryly in 1980 that the trilogy has become a favorite form ever since Tolkien didn't write one. In time the fantasy "trilogies" expanded to four, five, and more volumes, until today it is common to have very lengthy individual books making up very lengthy multi-volume series (examples include series by David Eddings, Steven Erikson, Robert Jordan, and George R.R. Martin). This can lead to bloated books, but in the best cases the length allows a satisfyingly full exploration of the secondary world which the author has taken great trouble to create. Tolkien himself came to feel that *The Lord of the Rings* was too short, and many readers agree that there are events peripheral to the main action that are relegated to summaries in the appendices and that they would rather have seen more fully treated.

For a time any fantasy novel that came out was advertised as "in the tradition of Tolkien," whether or not it bore much similarity to Tolkien's mode. Fantasists imitated him (Guy Gavriel Kay started off with his "Fionovar" trilogy that borrowed from Tolkien, Lewis, Eddison, and just about every fantasy and mythology in sight, before going on to specialize in combining the historical novel with fantasy) or they learned from him while trying to do something different (Patricia Wrightson, for example, went to the mythology of the Australian aborigines for inspiration, while emulating Tolkien's method of associating specific cultures to their own territory), or denied and tried to throw off his influence (I might mention Michael Moorcock and China Miéville as two of the better writers in this vein). Roz Kaveney has a good article called "In the Tradition . . ." where she discusses a variety of authors advertised as "in the Tolkien tradition," with special attention to Stephen R. Donaldson, Terry Brooks, and Tad Williams. But the road he opened has been trod also by a great many good writers, such as the author guests of honor at previous Mythcons, and the nominees and winners of the Mythopoeic Award for fantasy: look

in your program book for a roll call of very impressive names. I recommend *Meditations on Middle-earth* edited by Karen Haber as a collection of essays by a veritable who's who of contemporary fantasists paying tribute to Tolkien. I point also to the sweeping 1997 survey *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* by Richard Mathews.

Tolkien felt that one should always write to a map, or one would get hopelessly muddled trying to keep times and distances straight. Maps of imaginary places of course pre-date Tolkien, but after him no fantasy novel can be considered complete without one.

It has been harder to emulate Tolkien's skill at inventing languages, not surprisingly since it would be difficult to match his professional knowledge. George R.R. Martin has lamented that people will keep asking him for more information on the languages in his "Song of Ice and Fire" series, and he has to reply saying things like "I've invented seven words of High Valyrian" (Miller 34). It's enough to give a hint, a flavor, and most writers settle for that, but have learned from Tolkien that it is a good idea to pay close attention to invented language. C.S. Lewis did a good enough job with Old Solar to win Tolkien's modest approval ("the linguistic inventions and the philology on the whole are more than good enough" [*Letters* 33]), but I have found when trying to interpret a number of words that Lewis left untranslated that there isn't really enough data to do more than guess. Richard Adams in *Watership Down* (1975) calls his primordial rabbit folk hero El-Ahrrairah, the Prince with a Thousand Enemies, without giving the derivation, but he has provided enough of his lapine language to figure it out: *el* means the many predators rabbits must fear; *hrrair* is the lapine word for "a great many" since rabbits can't count very high; and *rah* means chief rabbit.

I would like to touch briefly on two other British writers of fantasy who have acknowledged their debt to Tolkien while going off in rather different directions, and each becoming a phenomenon in their own right. The first is Terry Pratchett, whose Discworld series started by spoofing fantasy clichés and expanded into a vehicle for social satire. It has been eminently successful at making fantasy funny.

The other is J.K. Rowling, who combined the traditional British school story with fantasy about witches and wizards. The British school story is known to Americans, if at all, from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) by Thomas Hughes and Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899), but in the U.K. the genre has so many practitioners and is so familiar that C.S. Lewis was careful to state in *The Silver Chair*, which begins in a British school, that "This is not going to be a school story, so I shall say as little as possible about Jill's school" (1), so as not to raise false expectations in the reader. Rowling was not really the first to realize that old wizards must have learned their profession somewhere when they were younger. Prior examples include Terry Pratchett's Unseen University in the Discworld series and the school in Ursula

K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*. (1968). A wizard (Martinus Trismegistus) in *Three Hearts and Three Lions* makes an offhand remark that "You have no idea what student pranks can be until you've seen a magicians' college" (149, ch.15), but this is not followed up. Rowling, however, organizes the Harry Potter series around seven years in the British curriculum, which provides a familiar basis for her audience in her own land to which she can then add fantastic elements, and works well enough for foreigners, too, though we may not catch all the jokes. Each novel is also structured as a mystery being investigated by the protagonist and his cohorts, so it is not too surprising that Rowling went on to write detective stories.

Let me indulge in a grumble here. When I read the first Harry Potter novel after it was published in 1997, I was surprised at this passage in chapter 13 that Hermione Grainger reads from "an enormous old book" to Harry and Ron Weasley:

The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Sorcerer's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The Stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal.

There have been many reports of the Sorcerer's Stone over the centuries, but the only Stone currently in existence belongs to Mr. Nicholas Flamel, the noted alchemist and opera lover. Mr. Flamel, who celebrated his six hundred and sixty-fifth birthday last year, enjoys a quiet life in Devon with his wife, Perenelle (six hundred and fifty-eight). (220)

And I thought: *Sorcerer's Stone*? There is no more such a thing as a sorcerer's stone than there is a green star. What is being described is obviously the *Philosopher's Stone*, the legendary prize sought by many an alchemist. What was it doing being called "sorcerer's stone" here? The copy I had was of course the American edition of the book, and I did not then know that the American publisher had changed the title. All Rowling fans now know that the title of the original British edition was *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, so "philosopher's stone" is the term that is used throughout the novel and this passage has the correct terminology in the original. Since the U.S. publication had changed the title, all references to the Stone in the text were perforce also changed.

Now, this change annoys me no end. It may seem perverse of me to complain that there is no such thing as a sorcerer's stone when equally there is no such thing as a philosopher's stone, either, but the latter term is traditional and altering it is just not cricket (or should I say just not Quidditch?).

I have never heard a satisfactory explanation as to why the title was changed. Perhaps there is one somewhere in the studies of Rowling that have started to come out, of which I've read only a little. What I've heard is speculation that Scholastic Press, the U.S. publisher, thought that the term "philosopher's stone" was too arcane to be understood by American children. But I do not see why British

children could be expected to know more of the history of alchemy than children anywhere else, and they took to the book with fervor.

My own hypothesis is that the novel ran into *Catch-18*.

Do you know of *Catch-18*? Whether or not you do, I am sure that you know *Catch-22*, which has become part of the English language since Joseph Heller's novel of that title was published in 1961. As often happens with novels, part of it had earlier been published in magazine form—and the initial chapter had appeared in 1955 in issue 7 of *New World Writing* under the title "Catch-18." The novel was originally to be called *Catch-18*, but as it was being prepared to go to press it so transpired that another author published a novel that became a best-seller: *Mila 18* (1961) by Leon Uris. Consequently the marketing department became afraid that the American public might get confused if two novels with eighteen in the title were published too close together. So the title of Heller's novel was changed to *Catch-22*.

In this instance, everybody was happy. The number used in the catchphrase is quite arbitrary, after all. Maybe 22 is funnier than 18.

My hypothesis, then, is that When *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was in preparation to be printed in the United States, the marketing department at Scholastic Press saw that another children's book was recently out: Max McCoy's *Indiana Jones and the Philosopher's Stone* (1995).

Now, Indiana Jones was already well-established as a franchise both as a series of films and as a series of books for young people, so it would not be surprising if the similarity in title might give pause to a publishing house. At any rate this seems to me to be a more plausible explanation of what led to changing the book's title. Certainly young Americans had no trouble understanding what the Philosopher's Stone was when it was Indiana Jones who was searching for it, so I see no bar to their being able to appreciate the concept when treated by any other author. Harry Potter would of course go on to dwarf even Indiana Jones in popularity. If this had been, say, Rowling's third Potter novel instead of her first, there would have been no question of a publisher changing her title once she had decided on it. It is understandable that, once having made the alteration, Scholastic did not want to change the title back again. But it still irks me. Rowling mixes a good deal of traditional folklore in with material of her own invention,¹⁹ and I feel that should be preserved. Nicholas Flamel, for instance, is a historical figure, a prominent citizen of Paris circa 1330-1418 known for his wealth and philanthropy. We cannot be certain that he was a practicing alchemist (probably not), though we can be certain that he did not produce a Philosopher's Stone nor live into the twentieth century to become a

¹⁹ Carol R. Dover (Georgetown University) is editing a volume of essays on "The Medievalism of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series" based on panels she has chaired for the last few years at the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies.

laboratory partner of Albus Dumbledore in the study of alchemy. If he had lived he would, however, have been about 665 as stated at the time the novel is set, in 1995. The later, 17th-century legends about his putative alchemical accomplishments note that his wife Perenelle was involved as a full partner (Nicholas is supposed to have written of his successfully transmuting lead into gold three times that “she helped mee in my operations, and without doubt, if shee would have enterprised to have done it alone, shee had attained to the end and perfection thereof” [Linden 128].)

The Harry Potter series won the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award in 2008. I also admire J.K. Rowling for getting young people to read, to read very long books, to *re-read* very long books, and to read very carefully to discern patterns, nuances, foreshadowings.

Today we have come a long way from the decades when works of fantasy were rare, or relegated to plebeian pulp magazines or books thought fit only for children, and a publisher expected to lose a thousand pounds on a fantasy that was so good he would publish it anyway. The genre now gets respect. J.K. Rowling became a billionaire by writing fantasy novels. Arthur C. Clarke’s body of work earned him a knighthood in 1998, Terry Pratchett’s in 2009. (Perhaps Tolkien might have been knighted if he had lived longer; after all, he was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1972, an honor not far below knighthood.) Vampires and werewolves and zombies and fractured fairy tales dominate our television and movie screens. Fantasy can be found mixing in other genres that were once kept distinct, like Westerns (in Emma Bull’s *Territory* [2007] Wyatt Earp is a practitioner of black magic), or private eye stories (Jim Butcher began his series about wizard and detective Harry Dresden with *Storm Front* in 2000, and his Dresden Chronicles series at present extends to fifteen novels and a large number of shorter works). There is now a whole subgenre called Paranormal Romance. Also comic books, another form in which fantasy took refuge when it was relegated to the nursery, have been getting more respect. Neil Gaiman, now an award-winning fantasist, got his start writing “Sandman” for DC comics. Dave Sim’s “Cerebus the Aardvark” began as parody of sword-and-sorcery and became social satire more broadly. Jeff Smith’s “Bone” creates a fantasy world with a long history. And of course Ursula Vernon composed *Digger*, a wonderful graphic novel (comic, tragic, and mythopoeic) that we’ll be hearing more about this weekend.

I look forward to hearing what you people have to say about where fantasy fits in the current state of things. But I like how Lisa Padol phrased it yesterday afternoon: the short answer is, wherever it likes.

APPENDIX

SCHOLARSHIP ON TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* PRIOR TO THE 1965 PAPERBACK EDITION

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RICHARD C. WEST was one of the founding members of the Tolkien Society at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1966 to date) and also an early member of the Tolkien Society (U.K.), the Science Fiction Research Association, the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, the Madison C. S. Lewis Society, and, of course, the Mythopoeic Society on which he has long served on the Board of Advisors. He is on the Editorial Board of *Tolkien Studies* and a peer reviewer for several scholarly journals. He has published *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* (Kent State University Press, 1970, rev. ed. 1982) and numerous articles on Tolkien, Lewis, and other authors of fantasy and science fiction such as Peter S. Beagle, Ursula K. Le Guin, Mervyn Peake, and T. H. White. His academic training includes graduate work in medieval English, French, and Scandinavian literature, and in library science. He retired in 2012 after 37 years at the Kurt F. Wendt Library, College of Engineering, UW-Madison, and is now a Senior Academic Librarian Emeritus. He lives in Madison with his beloved wife, Perri Corrick-West (also retired from teaching chemistry at the same University, and a Lecturer Emeritus). He was thrilled to be invited to be Scholar Guest of Honor at Mythcon 45, where he felt very honored. He especially appreciated Prof. Verlyn Flieger's wonderful capsule biography in the conference program book, and conference chairman Michael Drouot's perceptive compliment that underlying all his scholarly work is a love of literature that seeks to understand what an author is actually saying.

