

Fall 10-15-1970

The Insurrection of the Toolies from Twee

Joe Snow

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Recommended Citation

Snow, Joe (1970) "The Insurrection of the Toolies from Twee," *Tolkien Journal*: Vol. 4: Iss. 3, Article 6.
Available at: https://dc.swosu.edu/tolkien_journal/vol4/iss3/6

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The Insurrection of the Toolies from Twee

Abstract

No abstract provided.



being a recently unearthed fragment of an epic poem that had been prosified in the Red Book and zealously handed down from generation unto generation of wise men who formed the League of Lorekeepers to preserve the wisdom of old in the Southlands of Middle-earth. The central action of the poem, though incomplete in the form we possess, is generally thought to have occurred sometime in the dawn period of that Age known to all Middle-earth historians as Gloomdays. The prose rendering of the epic appears in a fairly legible folio, carefully illuminated by a meticulous scribe in Gentian blue, chromium ochre and a vivid crimson: this alone accounts for its being one of the prized treasures of the Southlands Memorabilia. Alas, the final folios (we adduce a minimum of three) seem irretrievably lost and we can but sigh and surmise their contents from the prose accounts following, prose accounts which in effect summarize the poetic source material. Our episodes are from the end of the Mornland Annals, vol. III, Book 2, chapters 21-23 and appear to illustrate the inestimable labours of the Ents to restore peace after the outbreak of the Great War. The Ents unite the epic structurally and the individual heroes who fought and died are not listed until the finale, or what we assume to be the denouement, cut short by the missing folios. In the battle sequences (of which we have only one exemplum) the anonymity contributes a sense of community solidarity, for which we know the Toolies were renowned and which they revered in their villages above all other values. Surely, their kind is sorely missed in the councils of the lands of Middle-earth.

This writer's task has been first to translate the hauntingly musical prose of the strange and ancient language of Twee, whose status as a moribund language is a just cause for lament. "Truly hath beauty passed out from the tongues of Man!" Such translations are not easy and extreme care has been taken to avoid travesties of the kind once so pitifully common amongst the devotees of the school of Missaker. This writer's second task was, once having suspected the dependence of the chronicler on a poetic source (and just how these suspicions came about will be commented upon presently), to then isolate that section and attempt a reconstruction of the epic archetype, at least that part of it utilized as evidence by the chronicler in hopes that it would find favour amongst the literati of this age. Value to the historians is minimal since the Twee Histories have been accorded full-scale attention for well over seventy-five years. It is our scanty knowledge of the literary activities in the Gloomdays epoch, especially in the Outlands Territories, that has been a constant sorrow to those who have found unrivaled charm and a certain touch of greatness in the deceptively simple lyric voice that sprung from that soil. The discovery of an epic voice is cause for rejoicing, rejoicing! It is with an emotion not far short of transported exaltation that this writer presents to the admirers of the pure, ingenuous and powerful songs

of the Ancient Days this artless lai which, to our knowledge and to that of the most learned of my colleagues is the first authentic evidence of epic activity in the Twee tongue. Perhaps after all it is a matter of 'suspicions confirmed' for such a trippingly lofty language could never have attained to such perfection and grace were it not for a definitive corpus of great poetic song. Today marks the first taste of water from a spring which we sincerely hope is just beginning to show promise of its capacity to satisfy the thirsts of so many for whom it may well mean a neo-Renaissance of creative efforts in academic fields so long fallow.

A NOTE ON THE VERSION: It must be indicated from the outset that it was the curious pattern of interlocking rimes of which the chronicler (bless him!) was unable to rid his prose rendering of our epic source that started me along the path of felicitous discovery. Quite unlike all of the prose on which I had been working until that moment, the rhythmic flow and the sound and sense patterns caught my unbelieving and startled inner ear totally by stunned surprise. Trembling hands and quickened pulse. Vertigo. A rush of blood to the temples. Fear. Fear lined with a joy that could not find itself. A gulf seemed to open before me and a shadow dimmed my eyes and I do not hesitate to admit that I swooned, overcome for the first time in a lifelong quest for an impossible fulfilling of self. I awoke in a feverish state, dimly aware as of a distant, vacillating shape of the enormity of my discovery. Rather slowly, by afternoon tea, I emerged from my marvelous trance and was able to adjust to the new world around me which was never to be the same. I began, with some deliberation, to organize my thoughts.

And the tumult and the repercussions of these last seven months are known to all. The word, as it is said, went on the winds to all the corners of all the lands of Middle-earth, awakening the expectation which now this publishing venture hopes to partially satisfy. I have chosen to work without collaboration for I deem it essential that the epic reconstruction maintain a single tonality throughout, brief though the recension be. What follows is meant for the general reader: the original text is therefore not reproduced. This task has not been a facile one. The impossibility of establishing a definitive archetype after all was a disappointment of the greatest personal magnitude. But with the clues of plot action, however truncated, and the structural key revealed to me in the interlocking rimes I have attempted to adequately translate a poem none has ever seen into the harsh language we now employ --a language quite lacking in the tonal purities of Twee. Adopting the quatrain, I rimed the 2nd and 4th lines (which will reproduce to some degree the feel of the Twee original) and have also attempted in those same lines to lock in a hemistich rime that would echo the end rime of the preceding 1st and 3rd lines respectively, thus:

	a
_____	B
_____	c
_____	B, and so on.

This format seems to me to serve the dual purpose of retaining a poetic form with basic structural similarities (this is, naturally, in the way of being an educated conjecture) to what may well have been the form of the original epic song while at one and the same time positing the germ of an unfamiliar series of fantastical-sounding adventures of a faraway age of heroism. Lost? Yes, sadly, lost! But in the heart of man, not extinguished, not extinct. The upward, innate yearnings that shape the spirit of Humankind will respond ever to the fleeting intuitive glimpses of truth that so rarely are captured, as here they are, in mere words and shadows of those Eternal Mysteries we vainly seek to solve.

Now, I beg the reader to judge for himself. I ask him to look deep into the texture of this modest verse-rendering in order to see if he cannot himself feel (and be truly touched by) the beauty and the truth that pervade all of human experience and how sweetly they merge into oneness when invested and endowed richly by the simple genius of Art. I give you, then, the reconstructed fragment, which for me has been a labour of love, and leave you with these words: grilsen! ton arki! [Twee-ish. Freely rendered, it means, "May it live within you."]

Perhaps, as a reading suggestion, it could be recommended that the poem be read aloud to savour its full effect.

Once upon a not-faraway time
(A sinister clime, you see)
The industrious Toolies, to anger slow,
Let anger grow, in Twee,

And sudden built a tow'ring fence.
This perplexed the Ents, good neighbors
And not for all the green in shires about
Could they figure out the silver sound of sabres,

Nor the baleful glints in Toolies' eyes
When the moon was a-rise, but yet...?
Never when the sun was high, such a very
Great shift from customary, from ways once set!

And as those first night shadows slink
O'er the dancing brooklet Twink, and grow
Long 'cross all the countryside, the Ents
Take measures for defense, and silently know

That a heavy mirk will soon be loosed
And cruelly used, 'gainst all the folk
Of Middle-earth, to spread a poison pow'r
And wilt each lovely flow'r, and with sooty cloak,

To foul the sliding streams and clog
The air with murd'rous fog: these evils they foresee--
Those ancient Ents-- though this never
Had happened, ever, in a land of laws so free.

But, warn the hapless, valiant Tweemen
Of the venomed Demon oozing forth
To spill its spite to West and East,
To flail unleashed 'pon South and North!

And the warning wail takes to the breeze,
Gently rustling in the trees, and then to work!
Just as the Toolies forward come, in stealth,
All the earth's wealth to plunder, berserk.

Will the dreaming folk of Twee be roused,
Each sleepily housed, anon or late?
And will the message on the leaves
Come with speed, and halt the creeping, crawling hate?

It does! It works! The Tweemen rise
And each man hies what he can reach:
A candlestick, a beam, a poker, a stone,
And together, none alone, they headlong rush into the breach.

With stinging eyes, those hardies fought!
None better ought, once the story's told,
Cast doubt on the songs that will be limned,
The battle dimmed, the years of peace grown old.

The clash of steel, the clink of swords
Send sparks in hordes to pierce the night
That rims the tattered band that stays,
Tired, undismayed, ever in the fight.

The Toolies' magic sabres ring above the roar
Of selfish war, and no Tweeman pierced the fence
That stood rock-firm in its place. But hark!
As from the dark, a rising rustle, forest-dense

O'ertakes the ears of all in deadlocked duel;
It sounds to Toolies cruel, but in no sense
But joyful to the stalwart lads of Twee,
To see...the marshalled, marching army of the Ents,

Moving swift to shatter all the plans
Of the Toolie clans whose evil intents
They turned awry, as grappling roots
And thrusting shoots brought down the tow'ring fence!

[Here two stanzas are left out. The MS is badly worm-damaged at this spot and the fall of the Toolies and its specific manner are not now possible to ascertain.]

The ashes of the war are hardly cold,
But the story's told, the end is known:
The Toolies swept away, no evil one is left,
And Tweemen weep, bereft, for Ents and for their own.

Now gone to Westernesse, to endless joy and fame,
Their names, as lessons to the young,
Are registered in marble and in gold
And this catalog of heroes old, we dare not leave unsung...

Here we leave the present project. What follows is a matter for the historians, not for poets. The catalog of names is long and uninspiring for few details are known of the lives and deeds of these heroes. It is not fitting that we despoil the grandeur of their collective venture with the minutiae of their private lives. Rather, as poets, we should only be interested in these uncommon moments when their individual promise of greatness, exactly as we have seen, was fulfilled communally by the press of events far greater than themselves, by the monumentality of the odds against them, and by the need for unity in the face of Evil. The world they inhabited was left pure for a while and now, thanks be to our anonymous bard, we have had the rare privilege and pleasure to inhale the fragrance of that sweet air through this fragile and exquisitely lovely fragment of their epic art.

.....medieval graffiti.....

HRODGAR IS THE LORD OF THE RINGS
A Eþelræd Unræd
BEORN RUNS AROUND BEAR
Cuchulainn is a son of a bitch