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Additional Keywords
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"When C.S. Lewis and I tossed up," Tolkien wrote in 1964, "and he was to write on space-travel and I on time-travel, I began an abortive book of time-travel of which the end was to be the presence of my hero in the drowning of Atlantis" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 347). That "abortive book" was *The Lost Road*, which Tolkien left unfinished to begin *The Lord of the Rings*. It was one of only two efforts at time-travel, the other being the also abortive "The Notion Club Papers", also in its time abandoned in favour of *The Lord of the Rings*. Both are stories of twentieth-century men who travel back in time through their dreams. This treatment of dream and time qualifies them as both science fiction, after the manner of H.G. Well's *The Time Machine*, and dream-vision, after the manner of Dante and Mark Twain and Lewis Carroll.

What differentiates Tolkien's stories from their predecessors in both genres is the principle by which he turned dream into a time-machine. This was derived from a theory of time proposed by J.W. Dunne, an aeronautical engineer who in 1927 published a book called *An Experiment with Time*. Tolkien read the third edition of Dunne's book around about Christmas of 1934, and submitted an unfinished draft of *The Lost Road* to Allen & Unwin in November of 1937.

Like Tolkien's fiction, Dunne's *Experiment* combined time and dream to make a totality greater than the sum of its parts. He based his work on his own dreams, specifically on his experience of dreaming events which to his waking mind had not yet happened, but which did happen soon afterward. To explain the phenomenon, Dunne suggested that time is not the inevitable forward flow which our human senses perceive, but is instead a constant, ever-present totality, like space. We move through time as we move through space, and it is our movement, not time's, which creates the illusion of forward progress. If all time, like all space, is always present, Dunne postulated that human consciousness can –

and does, in dreams – extend its field of observation to travel through time in any direction.

Like the convention of dream vision, this is not in itself an especially new concept. It has been a subject for physicists and philosophers from Einstein to Ouspensky, and was the playing-field for the imaginations of writers as disparate as Henry James and E.R. Eddison. It was Dunne's particular model for the process which Tolkien found useful. Dunne envisioned a world of time-and-space wider than that perceivable to the conscious, waking mind, which he called Observer 1. Observer 1, he suggested, exists within the wider-perceiving, broader-ranging sleeping and dreaming mind which he called Observer 2. Observer 1's limited, waking experience is confined to its immediate field of attention, the so-called present, which Dunne named Field 1, or Time 1. But this larger Observer 2, containing (therefore exceeding the scope of), Observer 1, must then have access to a larger field of attention – Field 2 or Time 2 – which is not confined to the observable present.

To visualise the distinction, imagine someone watching a watcher, or picture a double set of parentheses, one set enclosing the other. If you want to carry on the conceit you can frame these parentheses with a third set, or add a third watcher to watch the second watcher watch the first watcher. Each successive parenthesis, or watcher, will encompass a larger awareness, a wider field of time. Dunne's theory, which for obvious reasons he called Serialism, went all the way to what he called "the observer at infinity," or "the ultimate observer".

Tolkien found in *An Experiment With Time* a principle through whose operation the mind could dream through time in any direction. This psychic principle he combined with Carl Jung's wholly compatible psychological theory of the collective unconscious, the commonly shared, unconscious memories of the human community, and used both to effect a

mode of travel through dreamed serial identities. As he described *The Lost Road*;

> The thread was to be the occurrence time and again in human families . . . of a father and son called by names that could be interpreted as Bliss-friend and Elf-friend . . . It started with a father-son affinity between Edwin and Elwin of the present, and was supposed to go back into legendary time by way of an Eädwine and Ælfwine of circa A.D. 918, and Audoin and Alboin of Lombardic legend and so [to] the traditions of the North Sea concerning the coming of corn and culture heroes . . . In my tale we were to come at last to Amandil and Elendil leaders of the loyal party in Númenor.
> (Tolkien, 1981, p. 347)

One of Tolkien's earliest inventions was the traveller Ælfwine – called by the elves Eriol – who functions as the auditor in *The Book of Lost Tales*. It is Ælfwine through whose consciousness the stories of the Ainur and Valar, and the chaining of Melkor, are transmitted. As Christopher Tolkien has pointed out, the surname "Errol" of the twentieth-century heroes of *The Lost Road* is close enough to Eriol to imply an association between the two. Moreover, the meaning of Eriol, "one who dreams alone", suggests the dreams through which the hero of *The Lost Road* accomplishes his time-travel. Thus the Anglo-Saxon *Ælfwine*, "Elf-friend" – of which *Elwin* and *Alboin* are the modern British and Lombardic forms – provides both the story's encompassing concept and all its characters' encompassing identity.

Ælfwine may have been a formative as well as a connective element in Tolkien's story. Christopher Tolkien comments that with:

> the thought of a "time-travel" story in which the very significant figure of the Anglo-Saxon Ælfwine would be both "extended" into the future, into the twentieth century, and "extended" also into a many-layered past, my father was envisaging a massive and explicit linking of his own legends with those of many other places and times: all concerned with the stories and the dreams of peoples who dwelt by the coasts of the great Western Sea.
> (Tolkien, 1987, p. 98)

This seems to suggest that the "very significant" figure of the Anglo-Saxon Ælfwine was to be the flax from which Tolkien spun his "thread", that this character's extension into the many-layered past and the twentieth-century future would make all the Elf-friends, all the Elwins and Alboins, avatars of Ælfwine. In Dunne's terms he would be the ultimate observer, the encompassing consciousness which carried within it the whole scheme.

This expansive concept was not to be realised, however, for Tolkien never got round to filling in the outline he had made, and the story survives only as a fragment. As published it is shorter and simpler than the story Tolkien described, and contains only two of the many father-son pairs he envisioned. The fragment is worth attention, however, for it illustrates Tolkien's own theories about how dreams work and how they should be used in fiction. As anyone who has read his essay "On Fairy-Stories" knows, Tolkien had decided opinions about the use of dream in narrative. He was comfortable with dream as vision, or as revelation of the unconscious, but not with the use of dream as narrative frame. The problem as he sees it is not with the dream itself, but with the awakening, with the sharp disjuncture between dream and reality.

> It is true [he says] that . . . in dreams strange powers of the mind may be unlocked . . . But if a waking writer tells you that his tale is only a thing imagined in his sleep, he cheats deliberately the primal desire . . . the realisation, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder.
> (Tolkien, 1983, p. 116)

Tolkien wanted to unlock these strange powers of the mind, but he didn't want the effect achieved by dream-vision stories, the rude return to waking reality that calls the dream into question. He wanted something subtler, a dream that would call reality into question. The quietness with which Tolkien eases *The Lost Road* into dream without ever identifying it as such, makes the dream-state both the narrative technique and the basic fabric of the story, blurring the distinctions between sleep and waking, and blurring past and future into a seamless present.

You have to read *The Lost Road* carefully to see how he does it. The first chapter begins in Cornwall in the present time, and introduces the hero of *The Lost Road*, Alboin Errol, and his father Oswin. Calling in search of his son, Oswin is answered by "a young voice" which sounds like "someone asleep or just awakened." Alboin is stretched out on a wall overlooking the sea, and Oswin remarks that he "must be deaf or dreaming." This early in the narrative the comment seems no more than a mild parental complaint, a throwaway line. But at the opening of Chapter III the same scene and lines are repeated with only slight variation by another father-son pair, Elendil and his son Herendil. The names have altered slightly from the "Amandil and Elendil" of Tolkien's first description to Elendil and Herendil, but the plan is the same, and it is clear that we are no longer in present England, but in the past and in Númenor.

And now both fathers' comments that their sons are dreaming takes on new significance. Both boys are of an age, both stretched out on sea walls, and the similarity of character and situation suggests a link. Both boys insist that they are *not* dreaming, but are awake. The similarity in the episodes is clearly no accident, and the re-echoes of dialogue convey the impression of two events occurring simultaneously, of parallel or overlapping time-schemes. Beyond the repetition of scene and character and dialogue, the emphases in both episodes on the boys as dreamers suggests that each may be dreaming the other. And if that is the case, then we have been in dream from the very opening of the story, and the whole of the narrative is to be understood as a dreamed reality.

From here it is only a small step to see it as the sort of dream experience described by Dunne, an experience in which Observer 2 (the connected ancestral consciousness of

both boys) ranges freely through past and future while Observer 1 (each temporal, individual boy) sleeps. Though only two identities are here connected, the extended list of father-son pairs that Tolkien envisioned would merely have lengthened the thread, but would not have materially altered it. It must be admitted that the shape of the story never really jelled, for Tolkien never filled in his outline, and the ideas often overlap or compete with one another. The one consistency, the one thing to remember, is that all the names are the same, all variations on Ælfwine and Eädwine, and therefore all the identities are serial recurrences, incarnations of one another.

Evidence for this lies in the titles which Tolkien gave his chapters. Chapter I, in which Alboin is stretched out on the wall, was to be called "A Step Forward. Young Alboin". In the context of the chapter by itself this title makes very little sense. No journey into the future is described, so in what sense and for whom is it a step forward? Certainly not for Oswin calling to his son, or to Alboin sleeping on a wall. But if both title and chapter foreshadow the dreaming Herendil, if his is a step forward through time and dream into Alboin's present consciousness (though not revealed as such until Chapter III) the title is pregnant with meaning. It becomes, indeed, a key to the whole design.

The title of Chapter III, "A Step Backward: Ælfwine and Eädwine", suggests a reverse process, the modern consciousness dreaming backward into the past. Tolkien did in fact start (though he never finished or inserted into the narrative) an Anglo-Saxon episode in which a character named Ælfwine awakens stretched out on a bench in an Anglo-Saxon hall. It seems probable that the awakening of this Ælfwine was to be coincident with the falling asleep of his Alboin counterpart, and that dream, as before, was to be the means of transition from one time to another.

Alboin's falling asleep is in fact, the transition, though in the text as published this occurs in Chapter II, "Alboin and Audoin". Alboin Errol, no longer "young Alboin", but the father of a son Audoin, falls asleep in his chair. It is not said that he dreams, only that he passes "out of the waking world". In this sleeping state he hears a voice and sees a figure whose face reminds him of his father. "I am with you," says the voice. "I was of Númenor, the father of many fathers before you. I am Elendil, that is in Eressëan 'Elf-friend', and many have been called so since." The name makes the connection clear, but in what sense is Elendil "with" Alboin?

I suggest that in Alboin's sleeping state the figure of Elendil operates as Dunne's "ultimate observer", an ultimate consciousness free to move through time in any direction, within whom the other observing consciousnesses — including Alboin's — are contained. Both Dunne and Tolkien went to some length to explain how this is possible. Their rationales are remarkably similar. Dunne writes:

> It is not surprising that [analysis] has brought to light no law which *compels* the ultimate observer to direct his attention to any particular phenomena in any particular field. That such attention is, as a matter of plain fact, habitually directed during waking moments to

phenomena in Field 1 is obvious enough; but the theory leaves us with habit as the only compulsion in the matter . . . Nevertheless, the habit was no *law*. It could be overcome . . . And in the rare instances when this was successfully effected, attention in Field 2 was free to slip away . . .
(Dunne, pp. 195-6)

Listen now to Tolkien's dialogue between the dreaming Alboin and what I will call his Elendil-self — Dunne's ultimate observer. Elendil speaks first, addressing Alboin:

> "You may have your desire."
> "What desire?"
> "The long-hidden and half-spoken: to go back."
> "But that cannot be, even if I wish it. It is against the law."
> "It is against the *rule*. Laws are commands upon the will . . . Rules are conditions; they may have exceptions . . . I ask if you would have your desire?"
> "I would."
> "You ask not how: or upon what conditions."
> "I do not suppose I should understand how, and it does not seem to me necessary. We go forward as a rule, but we do not know how."
(Tolkien, 1987, p. 48)

Except for the fact that Dunne uses the word *habit* where Tolkien uses *rule* it is clear that both are talking abut the same thing. A point of importance is that in both texts the conventional perception of the forward movement of time is reduced from a law to a custom, whether developed from within, as in Dunne's "habit", or imposed from without, as with Tolkien's "rule".

As Tolkien left it, the Cornwall portion of the story breaks off in Chapter II at a point where Audoin, returning from a walk with the intention of telling his father about his own dreams, sees his father sitting by the fire apparently asleep.

> Audoin was creeping out of the room, heavy with disappointment . . . As he reached the door, he thought he heard . . . his father's voice . . . murmuring something: it sounded like *herendil* . . . He turned back hopefully.
> "Good night!" said Alboin. "Sleep well, Herendil! We start when the summons comes." Then his head fell back against the chair.
> "Dreaming," thought Audoin. "Good night!"
> And he went out, and stepped into sudden darkness.
(Tolkien, 1987, pp. 52-3)

Since this is followed immediately by the first Númenórean chapter, the obvious intent of the episode is to show that Audoin has stepped into another time. Alboin's "We start when the summons comes", coupled with Audoin's step into darkness, is clearly intended as the transition from one world and time into another.

A note by Christopher Tolkien gives a revealing sidelight on the transition and its implications.

> Since the Númenórean episode was left unfinished, this is a convenient point to mention an interesting note that my father presumably wrote while it was in progress. This says that when the first "adventure" (i.e.

Númenor) is over "Alboin is still precisely in his chair and Audoin just shutting the door."
(Tolkien, 1987, p. 57)

This is very much the way dreams do operate; the dream stretches out over seemingly endless time and space within the unconscious process of the dreamer, during what to the conscious observer are the documentably brief intervals of dreaming sleep. This is precisely the operational principle of Dunne's theory. The dream frees the dreamer's awareness, enabling it to move freely over the field of time. Observer 2 can go anywhere for any length of time, while Observer 1 sleeps on, fixed in one place and one time.

How successful the story would have been had Tolkien finished it, we shall never know, for the project was dropped when it was scarcely more than well-begun, and that was the end of the idea for some time. All his creative powers for the next seven years were focused on *The Lord of the Rings*. Nevertheless, the idea lay fallow at the back of his mind, and when he came to a halting-place in the new book, it sprouted again.

On July 21, 1946, Tolkien wrote to Stanley Unwin:

> I have in a fortnight of comparative leisure round about last Christmas written three parts of another book, taking up in an entirely different frame and setting what little had any value in the inchoate *Lost Road* . . .
> (Tolkien, 1981, p. 118)

Tolkien's dismissal of *The Lost Road* as "inchoate" may say more about the story's unfinished state than about its guiding concept. And though he was also to leave "The Notion Club Papers" unfinished, this next effort shows a considerable advance in technical sophistication over *The Lost Road*. Tolkien's handling of his material is surer, and his sense of story better developed. There is an increase in narrative tension through a carefully-orchestrated sequence of psychological aberrations, a judicious sprinkling of plot-teasers in the first part of the story, and a gothic use of weather, culminating in the story's violent climax in a night of storm. The tone of this second narrative is more energetic and its setting more clearly contemporary, more conspicuously grounded in time and place, than that of the earlier story. The characters, too, are better imagined. The argumentative, rumbustious members of the Notion Club are a distinct improvement over the rather quiet Errols, while Tolkien's earliest drafts make it clear that the wit, rough badinage, and often heated exchanges were drawn from life – specifically the Inklings.

Focus on the past is still paramount, but there is a venture into the future as well, for the story's fictive present is postdated forty or so years beyond the time of its composition, from the forties to the eighties of the twentieth century, and the narrative frame of the story pushed still farther ahead. This projected future is mere prologue, however. The past is still the focus, a section of time more immediate and more exciting than either the narrative present or its future. In addition, the plot and situation are framed by elaborate pseudo-editorial commentary describing the finding of the papers on a trash heap in a College basement, and their identification as minutes of meetings of some past, unknown Oxford club. Then comes an account of the conflicting opinions of experts about dating and provenance – are the *Papers* a hoax? could the dating be a deliberate red herring? This is followed by a list of the members – again with editorial comment; all this before we come to the story itself.

Since he had jettisoned the Errol fathers and sons in favour of the Notion Club, and replaced Cornwall with Oxford, Tolkien's comment that he intended to retain "what little had any value" from *The Lost Road* clearly meant the time-travel idea itself. But it also meant the concept of a static field of time to which dreams give access, as well as the idea of collective or ancestral memory. Though these elements gave him a basis on which to build, the progress of the new narrative went through even more stops and starts than *The Lost Road*. As it stands, it falls into two sections, Part One being "The Ramblings of Ramer" and Part Two "The Strange Case of Arundel Lowdham", but both parts were subject to extensive revision. Part One consists of manuscripts A, B, C, and a final typescript D, while Part Two has a manuscript E and typescripts F1 and F2, with F2 continuing to the place where the narrative breaks off.

Part One sets up the theory. Largely a discussion of competing principles and techniques, it is all talk and little action, while Part Two noticeably increases the pace and tension. The history of composition suggests that between Tolkien's original conception of Part One and his development of Part Two the focus and perhaps the direction of the story underwent a change. The titles themselves suggest a shift of emphasis from Ramer to Lowdham. Thus, not just the editorial introduction, but also "The Ramblings of Ramer", constitute a long preamble to the tale, which is "The Strange Case of Arundel Lowdham" and his travel through time.

The preamble is important, however, for it shows Tolkien's concern with both the technique and the aesthetic of time-travel as a mode of fiction. Once his narrative frame has simultaneously established the setting and called its time into question, his story itself begins with a heated discussion of exactly those parameters of science fiction. The question before the Notion Club is whether the means of entry into other space or time can legitimately be a mere device, an arbitrary "frame" around the narrative, or whether it must be an integral component of the story. Readers of Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories" already know the answer. An arbitrary frame will not satisfy, indeed it will undermine the intended effect of the story, the "realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder". In "The Notion Club Papers" the chief defender of this position is the Club's recorder Nicholas Guildford, who here speaks for Tolkien:

> An author's way of getting to Mars (say) is part of *his* story of *his* Mars; and of *his* universe, as far as that particular tale goes. It's part of the picture, even if it's only in a marginal position; and it may seriously affect all that's inside.
> (Tolkien, 1992, p. 163)

In this respect the first part of the *Papers* is self-reflexive, for the whole frame-embedded discussion of frame is itself a

frame. It is designed to present the credentials for Tolkien's way of getting to "*his* Mars", that is, Númenor, which is, of course, by dreams. Here he frankly uses a kind of Inklings-argumentation, setting up the question, discussing and dismissing all previous attempts, and then producing his own solution. Again he uses the voice of Guildford:

> "No! For landing on a new planet, you've got your choice: miracle; magic; or sticking to normal probability, the only known or likely way in which anyone has ever landed on a world."
>
> "Oh! So you've got a private recipe all the time, have you?" said Ramer sharply.
>
> "No, it's not private, though I've used it once."
>
> "Well? Come on! What is it?"
>
> "Incarnation. By being born", said Guildford.
>
> (Tolkien, 1981, p. 170)

Having thus carefully introduced and integrated his time-travel principle, Tolkien proceeds to introduce the device itself, the dreaming minds of his characters. But where *The Lost Road* eased its story and characters into dream presented as waking reality, "The Notion Club Papers" allows the dream-state to dramatically erupt into and momentarily displace the present reality of his protagonist, Lowdham. Like Alboin Errol, but more dramatically, Lowdham dreams a reality and eventually comes to live it. Once again, the name is the clue to Tolkien's intent, and to his use of Dunne's theory. Lowdham's full name is Alwin Arundel Lowdham. The attentive reader will recognise Alwin as a variant spelling of Elwin and both as forms of Ælfwine, making it clear that Tolkien had not strayed far from his original design, and that the Ælfwine consciousness was once again to be the ultimate observer, that encompassing consciousness with whose awareness other, lesser observers would move across the field of time. To underscore the significance of the name, Lowdham is explicitly referred to by one member of the club as "Elf-friend".

But with the character of Lowdham the narrative takes a sharp departure from the scheme of *The Lost Road*. No ghostly dream-visitor appears to Lowdham, or invites him to journey into the past. Simply, his waking experience begins to be bizarrely punctuated by sudden flashbacks into an unremembered past, moments when he clearly takes on another personality, and expresses emotions untypical of his ordinary, waking self. Such an unpremeditated shift of consciousness, a flashback without warning to a forgotten, earlier state, is a recognised psychological phenomenon involving the involuntary eruption into present consciousness of some memory — usually repressed and often violent — whose return is triggered by some present event. It is not so much a remembering as a re-experiencing of the past, of any moment too powerful to be immediately processed by the receiving psyche.

In Tolkien's hands this becomes not so much a psychological as a psychic gateway into locked-off areas of the soul. He has extended the concept beyond past experience to encompass past lives. This recalls Guildford's speech about the only way to land on a new world, and his word *incarnation* with its implied corollary, *re-incarnation*.

Lowdham is increasingly — and apparently involuntarily — regressing into some previous life and identity, a past identity which gains increasing power over the present until, in a climactic scene of storm and memory, it possesses him altogether and sweeps him wholly into another time.

In its handling of the transition from present to past, "The Notion Club Papers" displays considerably more dramatic tension than its predecessor. Where the Errols were to move into the past as Alboin sat quietly asleep in his chair and Audoin stepped into "sudden darkness", the comparable episode in the "Papers" has the past come storming directly into the present in a night of psychological and meteorological tumult. For this scene, Tolkien has gathered the club in Ramer's rooms, all present except Lowdham, who arrives late, waving a sheaf of papers. He has been dreaming intensively, and has written down what he can remember. The record of his dreams proves to be actual texts in two unknown languages which seem to be paired accounts of the destruction by storm and flood of *Atalantë*, the Downfallen. Atalantë, of course, is Númenor.

The Oxford weather matches the mood of the texts, and the Club's discussion proceeds in the thundery oppressiveness of an approaching storm. The discussion of Lowdham's dream-texts has the immediate effect of increasing the intensity and duration of his flashbacks. I have called these "flashbacks", but they could as well be called "flashforwards", or better yet "co-incidents" in the most literal sense. For they are neither backward not forward but concurrent, both apparent directions being simply options in the always present, static field of time. A new manifestation of this is that the power of these eruptive memories begins to engulf another member of the Club as well as Lowdham, Wilfrid Jeremy, who also begins to take on another identity. Suddenly, and to the complete bewilderment of the Notion Club, both Lowdham and Jeremy undergo a complete regression into past identity. While fully present in body, both men pass mentally and emotionally out of present-day Oxford and into the time-consciousness of Númenor, wherein they begin to address one another as Nimruzīr and Abrazān. As familiar to one another in that time frame as in their ordinary one, they share not only a history but common knowledge of some anticipated, impending catastrophe.

Bizarre as the scene is, however, the groundwork has been laid for it in a previous meeting's debate about the power of myth to transcend both history and fiction, to establish a life of its own. "The daimonic force that the great myths and legends have," is compared to an explosive which "may slowly yield a steady warmth to living minds, but if suddenly detonated . . . might go off with a crash . . . might produce a disturbance in the real primary world." This is precisely what happens on the night of the storm. Discussion of the content of Lowdham's dream-texts detonates the daimonic force of the Atalantë/Númenor myth, and it does indeed go off with a crash, as the cataclysm that drowns Númenor produces a disturbance in the primary world of Oxford. While the Notion Club watches in bewilderment, and the dark clouds come up over Oxford, Lowdham and Jeremy, together in their past world, stand at the window

staring into the storm and speaking apprehensively of the Lords of the West, of Eru and the Valar.

A significant detail here is Guildford's irresistible visual impression of "two people hanging over the side of a ship", conveying in one phrase the obvious but important fact that, in another time, they are necessarily in another place. That the place is a ship makes the shift even clearer, for it is one of the ships that ride out the destruction of Númenor. I must emphasise that this is not a simple case of the present's return to the past, or of the past coming into the present, but of both impinging on one another. For a little space the two times overlap, and the storm is a synchronous event in both, yet with its deepest meaning and most profound effect in the past. Suddenly the two men fall to their knees and cover their eyes, crying out to one another of "glory fallen into deep waters", of wind like "the end of the world", of huge waves "like mountains moving". As the gathering storm sweeps over Oxford, inundating Ramer's rooms, soaking and scaring the daylights out of the hapless Notion Club, so also and in another time-frame it sweeps Lowdham and Jeremy into the destruction of Númenor.

This glimpse of the past is quickly replaced by the present, for the next meeting records the Notion Club's anxiety over Lowdham and Jeremy, who have not been seen since they stumbled out of Ramer's rooms at the height of the storm. When they do return they bring fresh news of both dream and time-travel, for Lowdham, out-topping Dunne, reports that "Jeremy and I seem to have got into the same dream together, even before we were asleep." The dream is the Anglo-Saxon episode which Tolkien originally wrote for inclusion in *The Lost Road*. Narrated by Lowdham in the identity of Ælfwine, an Anglo-Saxon of the early tenth century, this first real adventure is framed as the memory of a dream narrated by the dreamer to his audience. Tolkien takes care to keep the dream-quality alive, for when "with a sudden change of tone and voice" Lowdham finishes his story, his hearers "jump like men waked suddenly from a dream." Momentarily caught up in this collective dreaming, the Club agrees to meet again in a week to hear further tales of Ælfwine.

But there were to be no further tales, for there, most frustratingly, the story breaks off, though Tolkien had made notes and sketches for its continuation. Why he never finished it is anybody's guess. In Christopher Tolkien's judgement the whole concept had become too elaborate and complex to be sustainable. In any case, *The Lord of the Rings* was still a work-in-progress at that time, and its completion was more important, both for Tolkien and for the enrichment of his mythology. Nevertheless, the unfinished works are provocative in their implications. Had either *The Lost Road* or "The Notion Club Papers" come to completion, we would have had a dream of time-travel through actual history and recorded myth which would have functioned as both introduction and epilogue to Tolkien's own invented mythology. The result would have been time-travel not on the scale of ordinary science fiction but of epic, a dream of myth and history and fiction interlocking as Tolkien wanted them to, as they might well once have done.

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