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Open Minds, Closed Minds in *The Lord of the Rings*

Abstract

A study of prejudice and tolerance, from the insularity of the Hobbits of the Shire to the mistrust between the Elves and Dwarves and the very nationalistic outlook of Denethor. This paper will show how some characters grew and became more tolerant, and that Tolkien was sensible enough to realize that only small steps can be taken at a time. It will also consider the unwillingness of some to believe in anything not witnessed with their own senses, thus leading them to discard as legendary much of the wonder of Middle-earth.

Additional Keywords

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Some time ago I planned a grandiose paper about the importance of the theme of not holding on to power, possessions, preconceived ideas, and so forth, in *The Lord of the Rings*. While reading and making notes I began to realize the importance of open-mindedness as a recurrent theme, coming to the surface again and again in several ways. Tolkien shows many of his characters prejudiced against other races, or having preconceived ideas about them. Some feel the same about others of their own race who live a distance away; and some are so predisposed to consider their own people or city more important than any other, or their own powers and abilities greater than any other person's, that they hardly value others and do not see the need to take other opinions into account. These are common human failings which are as rife as ever today, and Tolkien's underlying plea for more tolerance, for more open-mindedness, is still relevant. We should adopt Treebeard's motto, "Do not be hasty", in forming opinions of others; we should not immediately reject the unknown or alien, but equally we should not assume that all that outwardly seems fair is so. Another aspect of closed minds is the rejection of much ancestral knowledge as legend or as tales fit only for children. Some of Tolkien's characters learn from experience how wrong and stupid these prejudices are, and grow in stature; others refuse to widen their limited vision and have to accept the consequences. Tolkien is not so idealistic as to believe that attitudes in general can be changed overnight, but he does suggest that the example of a few may lead to the gradual erosion of barriers and a greater willingness to question commonly held ideas and values.

Much of the prejudice is only underlying and not active, especially with the Hobbits. In the days before they came to the Shire, the three breeds of Hobbits had contact with other races: the Harfoots with the Dwarves, the Stoors with Men, and the Fallohides with Elves. They learnt much from the Dúnedain who had granted them the Shire, but they always

kept to themselves, and after the fall of the North Kingdom they had little contact with anyone outside their own land. They came to distrust the Elves and those who had dealings with them. The miller called the Dwarves who visited Bilbo "outlandish" and referred to Gandalf as "that old wandering conjuror" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 32). The job of the Bounders was to keep undesirable strangers outside the Shire, and though genuine travellers could use the Great Road, the Hobbits were not interested in hearing news of other places from them.

The Hobbits were equally doubtful about other hobbits, not those of a different breed, but those who lived in a different part of the Shire. In this Tolkien probably intended to reflect the attitudes of inhabitants of the English countryside in the days before travel was common, when areas beyond the next village or market town were considered "foreign" and the people "different". The hobbits in the Ivy Bush thought that those who lived in Buckland were "queer" because they lived on the wrong side of the river, near the Old Forest, and messed about in boats. Lobelia Sackville-Baggins calls Frodo a "Brandybuck" and means it as an insult. The Gaffer tells the Black Rider that "they're queer folks in Buckland" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 79). We are told that Sam had a natural mistrust of inhabitants of other parts of the Shire. The Shire hobbits referred to those of Bree as Outsiders and considered them dull and uncouth.

Farmer Maggot says that Frodo should not have got himself mixed up with Hobbiton folk: they're queer. Frodo had been caught as a young hobbit, by Maggot, stealing his mushrooms, and had built him up into a figure of fear and avoided him. When Frodo meets him again he realizes that he has been stupid, and that his false picture had led to him missing a good friend.

The hobbits of the Shire, though they do not know it, have long been protected from the outside world by the Rangers. This has enabled them to develop their own peaceful culture

but left them with little resource to protect themselves from the ambition of Lotho Sackville-Baggins and the machinations of Saruman and the depredations of the ruffians they imported. The trouble started when Lotho, thinking only of his personal ambition and wanting to dominate the Shire, brought in Men to aid him. He may genuinely have thought the Shire would benefit but he did not consult anyone else. In the same way, Vortigern brought the Anglo-Saxons into Britain, and both Vortigern and Lotho suffered disaster when they could not control those they had invited. The hobbits do little to protect themselves until the four members of the Fellowship return. They need the leadership of those who have grown in wisdom and character through their contacts with the wider world to recover the freedom of the Shire. Even when the intruders are ejected the hobbits are not really interested in what has been happening outside their boundaries. The Cottons are typical: they “asked a few polite questions about their travels, but hardly listened to the answers: they were far more concerned with events in the Shire” (Tolkien, 1967c, p. 291). But since Sam, Merry, and Pippin eventually occupied the three offices in the Shire of Mayor, Master, and Thain, and were also Counsellors of the Northern Kingdom and continued to travel outside the Shire visiting the Northern and Southern capitals of the restored Kingdom, the Shire could not but become gradually more involved in the affairs of the wider world.

The growth in understanding of Merry and Pippin is shown by their conversation in the Houses of Healing:

“We Took and Brandybucks, we can’t live long on the heights” [said Pippin].

“No,” said Merry. “I can’t. Not yet, at any rate. But at least, Pippin, we can now see them, and honour them. It is best to love first what you are fitted to love, I suppose: you must start somewhere and have some roots, and the soil of the Shire is deep. Still there are things deeper and higher; and not a gaffer could tend his garden in what he calls peace but for them, whether he knows about them or not. I am glad that I know about them, a little.”

(Tolkien, 1967c, p. 146)

Merry and Pippin choose to leave the Shire in their old age and return to Rohan and to Gondor, where they die and their bodies are placed beside that of the King. Frodo, who has mixed Hobbit blood, is aware of Hobbit prejudices. When Lobelia says to him “you’re no Baggins – you – you’re a Brandybuck!”, he says either tactlessly or jokingly to Merry Brandybuck: “That was an insult, if you like” (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 48). There are times when he thinks that the inhabitants of the Shire are too stupid and dull for words, but nonetheless he is willing to leave the Shire and all he loves to save it for them. His words to Gandalf at Rivendell show his prejudice against other races:

We should never have done it without Strider . . . it was Strider that saved us. Yet I was afraid of him at first. Sam never quite trusted him, I think, not at any rate until we met Glorfindel . . . I have become very fond of Strider. Well, *fond* is not the right word. I mean he is dear to me; though he is strange, and grim at

times. In fact, he reminds me often of you. I didn’t know that any of the Big People were like that. I thought, well, that they were just big, and rather stupid: kind and stupid like Butterbur; or stupid and wicked like Bill Ferny. But then we don’t know much about Men in the Shire, except perhaps the Breelanders.

(Tolkien, 1967a, pp. 232-3)

Frodo here is beginning to think for himself, and indeed had made the right decision at Bree to trust Strider when almost everyone else advised against it. But he can still misjudge: Gandalf says that Frodo does not know much about the Breelanders if he thinks old Barliman is stupid.

Both Sam and Frodo learn to be less prejudiced and even to feel pity for their enemies. It is easy to make simplistic judgements, but a greater knowledge of the person or race involved can lead to an understanding of the other’s viewpoint and can change attitudes. When he is first told about Gollum, Frodo cannot believe that such a creature is really a Hobbit, and thinks it a pity that Bilbo did not kill him. He does not understand why Gandalf and the Elves have also spared Gollum’s life, for he deserves death. He, Frodo, does not pity him. Gandalf says that that is because he has not seen him. Much later, when Frodo meets Gollum, he does pity him and spares him again and again. It takes Sam a long time to feel any sympathy, and his suspicious mind spoils the possibility of Gollum repenting at the Pass of Cirith Ungol; but Sam too spares his life, on Mount Doom, because Sam has himself borne the burden of the Ring, even though only for a short time, and now understands Gollum’s suffering. Knowledge leads to understanding and tolerance. And the pity of Frodo and Sam ensures the success of the quest, since Frodo is unable at the last to throw the Ring into the Fire.

Later Frodo also feels pity for Lotho, spares Saruman, and tries to prevent the hobbits from taking vengeance and shedding more blood than is necessary. Sam is less sympathetic to those who had done so much to destroy the Shire, but it was he who felt some empathy for the slain Southron in Ithilien. “He wondered what the man’s name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 269). Were his feelings perhaps inspired by the Christmas truces of the First World War, when men discovered that their enemies in the opposing trench were only other humans, with problems and feelings like their own?

Moving out of the Shire we come to Bree where, unusually, two races, Men and Hobbits, lived together amicably, “minding their own affairs in their own ways, but both rightly regarding themselves as necessary parts of the Bree-folk” (Tolkien, 1967a, pp. 161-2). It would appear from this that neither race tried to impose its culture on the other. Tolkien calls the situation at Bree an excellent arrangement. But the Breelanders still see those who are not native to Bree as “other” and “different”. Butterbur refers to hobbits from the Shire as “Outsiders” and then corrects himself. He has very little opinion of Strider and no real

interest in what he does: "He is one of the wandering folk – Rangers we call them . . . What his right name is I've never heard: but he's known round here as Strider. Goes about at a great pace on his long shanks; though he don't tell nobody what cause he has to hurry. But there's no accounting for East and West, as we say in Bree, meaning the Rangers and the Shire-folk, begging your pardon" (Tolkien, 1967a, pp. 168-9). When the hobbits of the Fellowship return to Bree at the end of the war they find events there have given Butterbur a better appreciation of how the Rangers have protected Bree and of what the Breelanders owe them. Butterbur welcomes the idea of decent respectable folk on the roads – but he does not want them settling nearby: ". . . we don't want no outsiders at Bree, nor near Bree at all. We want to be let alone. I don't want a whole crowd o' strangers camping here and settling there and tearing up the wild country" (Tolkien, 1967c, p. 272). Tolkien is realistic: individuals may grow greatly in understanding, but attitudes of the population in general change only slowly.

The Elves also hold themselves apart. Gildor says that "the Elves have their own labours and their own sorrows, and they are little concerned with the ways of hobbits, or of any other creatures upon earth" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 94). Lindir in Rivendell does not see much difference between Hobbits and Men: "It is not easy for us to tell the difference between two mortals . . . To sheep other sheep no doubt appear different . . . Or to shepherds. But Mortals have not been our study. We have other business" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 249). The Elven realm of Lórien is closely guarded, and few from outside, of any race, are allowed to enter. Yet Elves, especially Gildor, Glorfindel, and Galadriel, do help the hobbits and the Fellowship. Great help is also given by Elrond, who is a descendant of alliances of Elf and Man which played such a significant part in the History of the First Age. Rivendell is a place where all races are made to feel welcome. It is not that the Elves do not care about other races, but that they work on a different level, on a different time-scale because of their immortality. But they are willing to sacrifice much that they love if the power of Sauron may be ended.

Perhaps the greatest reconciliation theme in the book is the growing friendship of Legolas the Elf and Gimli the Dwarf, whose races had mistrusted each other since the Dwarves sacked the Elvish stronghold of Menegroth in the First Age. Again Tolkien is realistic and does not suggest a miraculous rapprochement of the two races, but that through the friendship of Legolas and Gimli their peoples may begin to understand each other better. We can also see that Elven attitudes differ, even before their friendship grows, in the contrast of the welcomes given by Galadriel and by Celeborn. At the Council of Elrond, Gimli's father Glóin is annoyed to hear that the Wood-elves have shown more tenderness to Gollum than they did to the Dwarves. Gimli and Legolas do not show any open hostility to each other as they travel with the Fellowship but there is tension under the surface. When Gandalf refers to the "happier days, when there was still close friendship at times between folk of different race, even between Dwarves and Elves" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 316), each is quick to declare that it was not the

fault of his race that the friendship waned. Again, when Legolas refers to sorrow coming to Lothlórien when Dwarves awoke evil under the mountain, Gimli quickly defends his people. They find that Dwarves are not welcome in Lórien, and Gimli objects to being blindfolded. Legolas comments: "A plague on Dwarves and their stiff necks!" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 362). Gimli says, a little maliciously, that he is willing to be blindfolded if Legolas shares his fate, and the dispute is solved only when Aragorn, showing good judgement, suggests that the whole company be blindfolded. Legolas sums up the sadness of the situation: "Alas for the folly of these days! Here all are enemies of the one Enemy, and yet I must walk blind, while the sun is merry in the woodland under leaves of gold!" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 362). Haldir comments: "Indeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 362).

Celeborn welcomes Gimli as the first Dwarf to be allowed into Lórien for many years, and hopes that it is a sign that in the present darkness of the world better days are at hand. He repents his welcome when he hears of the Balrog, but Galadriel, who is a Noldorin Elf with a greater understanding and appreciation of Dwarves, intervenes and welcomes Gimli with words that change his attitudes forever. She smiles at him, and he "looked up and met her eyes; and it seemed to him that he looked suddenly into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 371). From that moment he gave his heart to her and loved her in a way that echoes the courtly love of the Middle Ages. And because he loves her, he loves her people and wants to bring reconciliation between Dwarves and Elves. When she asks him what he would do with the strand of her hair that he had requested, he says: "Treasure it, Lady, in memory of your words to me at our first meeting. And if ever I return to the smithies of my home, it shall be set in imperishable crystal to be an heirloom of my house, and a pledge of good will between the Mountain and the Wood until the end of days" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 392). The gift that Galadriel grants to him is one that she had refused Fëanor, the greatest of the Noldor.

From that time on, friendship grows between Gimli and Legolas, and they become almost inseparable, praising each other and having a friendly rivalry during the battle of Helm's Deep. Their friendship is greater than their prejudices and fears, for each agrees to visit places of interest to the other, even though he fears them. Legolas even concedes that for the first time, a Dwarf had won a contest for words, for he cannot match Gimli in describing the Caves of Aglarond as well as they deserve. It is Gimli, rather than Legolas, who defends Galadriel from the aspersions cast on her by the Rohirrim. Yet he shows that he realizes that others are entitled to their opinions when he accepts Éomer's preference of the beauty of Arwen to that of Galadriel. When Legolas departs over the Sea, Gimli goes with him because of their great friendship and because he wishes once more to see the beauty of Galadriel.

An example of a persecuted race is the Woses. The

Rohirrim call them the Wild Men of the Woods, and it seems that at times they have been hunted and treated as animals, since they reject rich rewards for their aid in the War of the Ring and ask only that if the Rohirrim are victorious they leave them alone and no longer hunt them like beasts. After the war, Aragorn confirms the promise by giving Druadan Forest to Ghân-buri-Ghân and his folk forever and forbidding Men to enter it without their leave.

Aragorn, a Man with some Elvish blood who was fostered by Elrond Half-elven and taught by Elves, and who has travelled widely in Middle-earth and served both in Rohan and Gondor, has few prejudices, but for good reasons takes his time to decide about the hobbits. Even when he has decided that they are friends, he at first underestimates them – though that is not entirely surprising, considering their unwise behaviour at the Inn. He is surprised by Merry's courage in following the Black Rider, even though he comments that the action was foolish. At Weathertop he admits that Frodo is made of sterner stuff than he had guessed. His final love and appreciation of the hobbits is evident in his remark as Merry rides away with Théoden and Éomer: "There go three that I love, and the smallest not the least. He knows not to what end he rides; yet if he knew, he still would go on" (Tolkien, 1967c, p. 53). And his real understanding of them is shown in the fraught atmosphere of the Houses of Healing, when he realizes that light words such as hobbits would use themselves would be more suitable than solemn speeches.

At the Council of Elrond, when Boromir lauds the part played by Gondor in protecting the rest of Middle-earth and remarks on the grudging thanks they get, Aragorn points out that the Rangers, his people, do as much but do not expect praise and thanks, and accept that their care must be kept secret if simple folk are to remain simple. Aragorn and his folk do have a pride in their race, but they do not carry it to excess, and they accept the obligations that go with it as a duty to be carried out regardless of thanks or praise. Nationalism seems far less developed in the North than it is in the South. Théoden shows how nationalism can lead to suspicion and rejection of those from outside in times of tension. The companions are told: "It is the will of Théoden King that none should enter his gates, save those who know our tongue and are our friends. None are welcome here in days of war but our own folk, and those that come from Mundburg in the land of Gondor" (Tolkien, 1967b, pp. 112-13). When Théoden has been cured by Gandalf of his suspicion and hostility, he changes dramatically and becomes courteous and welcoming to all he meets, including Ents, Hobbits, and Woses, and real affection grows between him and Merry, leading to firm links between the Mark and the Shire. His mind which had been closed is now open.

Treebeard seems to be one of the most fair-minded of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. He thinks deeply and avoids making hasty decisions. Yet after he has sung the Elven song about the Ents and Entwives, which seems to present each side equally, he can't resist saying: "I daresay it is fair enough. But the Ents could say more on their side, if they had time!" (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 81). I wonder, if the Ents

and the Entwives had met again, if they would have had any more success living together.

An interesting comparison can be made of the attitudes of Faramir, Boromir, and Denethor to personal power and to their native city. Faramir has always yielded place to his elder brother and has no great personal ambitions. He quite happily yields the Stewardship to the returning King. He easily avoids the temptation of the Ring and realizes that the ends achieved by using the Enemy's weapon will not be worth it. He wants the city he loves to be free, but has no ambitions for her to have world dominion:

For myself, I would see the White Tree in flower again in the courts of the kings, and the Silver Crown return, and Minas Tirith in peace: Minas Anor again as of old, full of light, high and fair, beautiful as a queen among other queens: not a mistress of many slaves, nay, not even a kind mistress of willing slaves . . . I would have her loved for her memory, her ancience, her beauty, and her present wisdom. Not feared, save as men may fear the dignity of a man, old and wise. (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 280)

Boromir also loves Minas Tirith, but admires her mainly for her role in the forefront of the battle against the Enemy. Unlike Faramir, he seems to enjoy fighting for its own sake and the glory he earns by it. Faramir judges his brother well: "If it were a thing that gave advantage in battle, I can well believe that Boromir, the proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein), might desire such a thing and be allured by it" (Tolkien, 1967b, pp. 279-80). Boromir shows his feelings clearly at the Council of Elrond, saying that Minas Tirith alone holds back the Dark Lord and does not get the praise and help it deserves. He interprets everything in relation to Minas Tirith. "Is then the doom of Minas Tirith come at last?" he asks (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 260). It is he who suggests using the Ring against Sauron, and although he seems to accept the decision of the Council, he never really understands, and is tempted by the Ring. He is convinced that he would not succumb to its evil, and his words to Frodo on Amon Hen show his underlying prejudice in favour of the Men of Gondor. "These elves and half-elves and wizards, they would come to grief perhaps. Yet often I doubt if they are wise and not merely timid . . . True-hearted Men, they will not be corrupted" (Tolkien, 1967a, p. 414). He never outgrows his early suspicions of Galadriel. When he cannot persuade Frodo, he tries to use force. Nonetheless he is a loyal comrade for most of the journey south, repents his attack on Frodo, and dies defending Merry and Pippin. His love of Minas Tirith and desire to save her were the main causes of his fall, and his desire for personal glory only a contributory factor. He does not seem to have resented Aragorn, and Faramir judges that he would have revered him if he were convinced of his claim, though he might have seen him as a rival as war leader. The implication is that Boromir might not have minded giving up the Stewardship but would have resented losing the supreme command of the armies. But I think that if Boromir could have saved Minas Tirith only by giving up everything he would have made that

sacrifice.

Denethor equates himself with Minas Tirith. He is not willing to surrender the Stewardship to a returning king and justifies his decision by denigrating the line of Isildur. He is not a man to consider his allies as equals or to be able to appreciate a wider policy, or to see that anything beyond Minas Tirith is worth saving. This should be contrasted with the willingness of the Elves to consider the greater good, and with Gandalf's statement that he too is a steward and will not utterly have failed in his task if anything fair survives. Denethor's view is: "Yet the Lord of Gondor is not to be made the tool of other men's purposes, however worthy. And to him there is no purpose higher in the world as it now stands than the good of Gondor" (Tolkien, 1967c, p. 30). Love of native land or city, the desire to defend it against an aggressor, is not of itself bad, but for Denethor it seems to be as much because Gondor belongs to him as because he really loves it. When it seems likely that no heir will survive him to continue his house, he abandons the defence of the city and thinks only of his own grief. He seeks death, and not a death useful to Minas Tirith, defending it on the battlefield, but a wasted death also killing his son. His mind is so taken up with self-love and love of the power of his office that he can see nothing else, and if he cannot have what he wants he will have nothing. We also know that as a young man he had resented the military success of the disguised Aragorn. His vision is so much narrower than that of Beregon, who says that "Gondor shall not perish yet. Not though the walls be taken by a reckless foe that will build a hill of carrion before them. There are still other fastnesses, and secret ways of escape into the mountains. Hope and memory shall live still in some hidden valley where the grass is green" (Tolkien, 1967c, p. 39).

Three times in the story a very important theme occurs, of judging for oneself and not obeying orders blindly. These passages were written well before the end of the Second World War and the trials for war crimes when the defence was often that the accused was just obeying orders. But they show Tolkien's interest in the important issue of whether blind obedience should prevail over personal responsibility. Éomer goes without his king's leave to waylay the orcs, and he should have taken the Three Hunters back to Meduseld since the law of Rohan forbade strangers to wander in the land without permission from the king. Éomer chooses to put his own life at risk and not only lets them go freely but lends them horses. Aragorn's reply to his query as to how men should judge in such times makes Tolkien's own feeling plain: "As he ever has judged. Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house" (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 41). Similarly, Faramir decides to judge for himself and not obey orders to slay all he finds in Ithilien without the leave of the Lord of Gondor. He spares and helps Frodo, Sam, and Gollum. How might the quest have fared if Éomer or Faramir had not acted so? Pippin and

Beregon disobey Denethor and save the life of Faramir. The blind obedience of Denethor's other servants who would have burnt Faramir is not a virtue.

A very unfortunate example of racial prejudice led to the first decline of Gondor. The kinstrife that resulted when Valacar took a wife not of Númenórean descent led to bitter fighting and the destruction of Osgiliath and the lasting enmity of Umbar. The marriage came about because Valacar's father had sought greater friendship with other races of Men and sent his son to live in the North for some years. Later, after the failing of the royal house, the earlier Stewards also sought alliances with non-Númenóreans. This strengthened Gondor even if the Númenórean blood ran less true in Gondor thereafter. It did show that they had learnt from the past. The Dúnedain of the North did not make such alliances and preserved their racial purity, but at the cost of becoming very diminished in numbers.

Tolkien depicts his "good" leaders showing mercy to all but Orcs. The Rohirrim spare the Dunlendings on condition they take an oath not to pass the Fords of Isen. The Dunlendings are amazed, for they have been told that the Rohirrim were cruel and would burn them alive. Aragorn pardons those who surrendered and made peace, and gives the lands about Lake Núrnen to the slaves of Mordor that he has released. The only exception, one that has worried many readers of Tolkien and has been much criticized, is that no mercy is ever shown to Orcs. Indeed, killing Orcs seems to be regarded as good in itself, whereas regret is shown on occasion for enemies of other races who are slain. Tolkien was aware of possible criticism, but nothing has been published which satisfactorily accounts for a race that seems to be considered irredeemably evil.¹ Tolkien wrote in a letter to Naomi Mitchison that Elves "represent really Men with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 176). Perhaps, without approaching too near to allegory, Orcs might be considered to represent the evil aspects of human nature which have to be destroyed if the Good is to prevail. But I do not want to press that, and I admit that the Orcs remain an exception to Tolkien's usual pleas for mercy and tolerance and sympathy for others, whether of one's own race or not.

Another way in which narrowness of mind can be shown is a refusal to believe in anything that lies outside one's personal experience, often denigrating it by calling it not true, just a legend or tale for children, or mistrusting it if its existence can no longer be denied. Ted Sandyman does not believe in dragons or walking trees, though we know that they do exist in Tolkien's world. It is probably his lack of wonder that leads to Ted actually welcoming the industrialization of the Shire. Sam has his fair share of Hobbit prejudices, but he thinks that there is something in legends, and he wants to meet Elves. The Men in the South who have little contact with Elves seem to distrust them: Boromir does not want to enter Lórien; Éomer remarks, "Then there is a Lady in the Golden Wood, as old tales tell! Few escape her nets, they say" (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 35);

¹ But see *Morgoth's Ring* (1993), published subsequent to the first presentation of this paper.

Wormtongue refers to Galadriel as the Sorceress of the Golden Wood and says that “webs of deceit were ever woven in Dwimordene” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 118). But Éomer later asks pardon for his rash words, thus showing that when he has thought, he realizes that he has no real knowledge. Faramir says that “in Middle-earth Men and Elves became estranged in the days of darkness, by the arts of the Enemy, and by the slow changes of time in which each kind walked further down their sundered roads. Men now fear and misdoubt the Elves, and yet know little of them” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 288). Again mistrust is seen as the result of evil and fostered by lack of contact. We should be more outward-looking and not turn inwards. Yet even Faramir says that it is perilous to have dealings with the Golden Wood.

Elves also know less as they have less contact. Celeborn warns the Fellowship against Fangorn Forest, and Treebeard says that Celeborn must be “falling rather behind the world” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 70); yet he admits that had they been going the other way he would probably have warned them against Lórien. Boromir dismisses Ents as old wives’ tales, and even Aragorn is surprised to find that they really exist: “Then there is truth in the old legends about the dwellers in the deep forests and the giant shepherds of the trees? Are there still Ents in the world? I thought they were only a memory of ancient days, if indeed they were ever more than a legend of Rohan” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 102). Théoden is also surprised to see the Ents and to realize how narrow has been the perspective of the Rohirrim:

Ents! Out of the shadows of legend I begin a little to understand the marvel of the trees, I think. I have lived to see strange days. Long we have tended our beasts and our fields, built our houses, wrought our tools, or ridden away to help in the wars of Minas Tirith. And that we called the life of Men, the way of the world. We cared little for what lay beyond the borders of our land. Songs we have that tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to children, as a careless custom.

(Tolkien, 1967b, p. 155)

Halflings are also only a little people in old songs and children’s tales for the Rohirrim. Théoden welcomes all these races new to him and establishes good and warm relations. In Minas Tirith the healers have also forgotten much lore and think the rhyme about *athelas* only doggerel.

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In “On Fairy-Stories” Tolkien regretted the relegation of legends and fairy tales to the attic and to the nursery. In *The Lord of the Rings* he shows how foolish this is. As a philologist he would have known how much of human history can be deduced from the evolution of language and that various studies were proving that some aspects of many legends could be authenticated. The late nineteenth century was also a time of archaeological discovery which often showed that there were some true elements in old poems and tales. Since Schliemann’s finds at Troy and Mycenae, no longer are the poems of Homer thought entirely false to the period they claim to describe. We still have no real proof that King Arthur ever existed, but archaeology does show that the Saxon advance was stopped and reversed for some time, and it may be that the leader who achieved this provided the foundation for the stories of Arthur.

Tolkien shows Evil as having a very narrow outlook. Saruman seeks his own aggrandizement and will overlook any evil that is necessary to achieve what he wants. He will not repent even when a prisoner in Orthanc. As Gandalf says, he has withered altogether. Sauron in his search for world domination has an even narrower outlook: “the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it” (Tolkien, 1967a, pp. 282-3). Galadriel says that she perceives the Dark Lord’s mind but that he cannot see her thought. The quest succeeds because Sauron, even when he knows that the Ring is being brought south, assumes that it is being taken to Minas Tirith so that the new Ring Lord can challenge him. “That we should wish to cast him down and have *no* one in his place is not a thought that occurs to his mind”, says Gandalf. “That we should try to destroy the Ring itself has not yet entered into his darkest dream” (Tolkien, 1967b, p. 100). So Sauron takes no special measures to prevent anyone entering Mordor, and the Ring is eventually destroyed.

Open-mindedness is as relevant in our world as it is in Tolkien’s Middle-earth. So many of our problems have their source in intolerance, nationalism, and closed minds. But the popularity of Tolkien’s writings in so many countries has contributed to breaking barriers and uniting his devotees across international boundaries.