



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 21 | Number 2 | Issue 80, Winter

Article 43

Winter 10-15-1996

A Tolkien Chronology

Nancy Martsch

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Martsch, Nancy (1996) "A Tolkien Chronology," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 21 : No. 2 , Article 43.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol21/iss2/43>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward

San Diego, California

August 2-5, 2019

A Tolkien Chronology

Abstract

Premise: A writer's professional and personal life affect his creative writing. A knowledge of what Tolkien was doing, and when, may give insight into his Mythology, or creative writing on Middle-earth. Outlines Tolkien's life, giving dates of important events, professional and personal life, status of writing. Divides creative output into three Periods, Early, Middle, and Late, plus an *Ur-Period* (youth) before the Mythology was formed. Describes thematic and linguistic characteristics of each Period.

Conclusion: Although the substance of Tolkien's Mythology was not much influenced by outside events, except during the *Ur-period*, outside events greatly affected its composition, focus, and to a lesser degree its emotional content.

Additional Keywords

Tolkien biography; influences on Tolkien; development of Mythology

A Tolkien Chronology

Nancy Martsch

Abstract: Premise: A writer's professional and personal life affect his creative writing. A knowledge of what Tolkien was doing, and when, may give insight into his Mythology, or creative writing on Middle-earth. Outlines Tolkien's life, giving dates of important events, professional and personal life, status of writing. Divides creative output into three Periods, Early, Middle, and Late, plus an *Ur*-Period (youth) before the Mythology was formed. Describes thematic and linguistic characteristics of each Period.

Conclusion: Although the substance of Tolkien's Mythology was not much influenced by outside events, except during the *Ur*-period, outside events greatly affected its composition, focus, and to a lesser degree its emotional content.

Keywords: Tolkien biography, influences on Tolkien, development of Mythology

Part I: Tolkien's Life

The personal and professional aspects of a writer's life influence his creative writing. One does not create in a vacuum. Therefore a knowledge of what J.R.R. Tolkien was doing, and when, during the composition of the Mythology, may give us some understanding of that work.

Perhaps "influence" with regard to the writing of J.R.R. Tolkien is too strong a word – he was not much *influenced* by anything except in the early years of his life. His Middle-earth creation, his Mythology, was his own. (I use the term "Mythology" in lieu of "Middle-earth" because it extends beyond the bounds of Middle-earth proper.) But Tolkien was certainly *affected* by outside events. On the most mundane level, his professional work dictated how much free time he had to write. Disparagement from colleagues or family pressures, discouraged him from writing. Praise, encouragement from friends or family, inspired him to creativity. A request from his publisher might call forth a round of revisions or direct his interest to a certain area. Finals exams put a stop to writing altogether. The freedom of vacation released a burst of activity, often in the form of poems and art.

One may also detect possible cross-fertilization among projects, as for instance a cluster of vaguely "Arthurian" works in the early 1930s ("The Fall of Arthur", *Farmer Giles of Ham*, his student Simonne d'Ardenne's *The Life and Passion of St. Julienne*). Another example may be a Quenya variant using a pronoun prefix instead of the pronoun suffix, written at about the same time that Adûnaic, with its pronoun prefixes, was being developed. (This exemplifies a characteristic of Tolkien's writing: the re-use of ideas. Pronoun prefixes had been employed before, but their use in Adûnaic might have caused them to be recalled at this time.)

A knowledge of what Tolkien was writing, and when, can

be used to date unasccribed pieces. This is particularly helpful with languages, where contemporary works may yield clues to the meaning of unknown words. For example, some of the poems in "A Secret Vice" contain ideas found in the early works, and probably belong with them.

Finally, a study of Tolkien chronology tells us more about the man.

Tolkien's mythology can be divided into three periods, which I shall call "Early", "Middle", and "Late". There is also an "*Ur*-period", before the actual Mythology was written, in which many important ideas were formed. These periods can be tied to events in Tolkien's life, and are recognisable in the Mythology by subject matter, style, and Elvish linguistics. The periods overlap somewhat, as Tolkien often began one project before ending another. The *Ur*-period encompasses Tolkien's youth, the most formative period of his life, from his birth in 1892 until about 1912. The Early Period dates from roughly 1912 to 1920, and is characterised by *The Book of Lost Tales* and the Quenya and Gnomish Lexicons. The Middle Period, 1920 to about 1949, or the "completed" *Lord of the Rings* before it was accepted for publication, is characterised by *The Hobbit*, the early *Lord of the Rings*, "The Lost Road" and "Etymologies". The Late Period, 1948 to Tolkien's death in 1973, is characterised by *The Lord of the Rings* as published and the posthumous *The Silmarillion*. Dates for the Late Period are tentative, as working papers from this period have not yet been published.

The Periods themselves can be subdivided: the *Ur*-period, into the houses where Tolkien lived, the schools he attended, his vacation trips, his courses of study. The Early Period divides into University, War, and work for the Oxford English Dictionary. The Middle Period, the most fertile part of Tolkien's life (both professionally and with regard to the

Mythology), is composed of Leeds (1920-25), the Silmarillion¹ material, *The Hobbit* (and other children's writing), "The Lost Road" and the "Etymologies", and *The Lord of the Rings*. The Late Period contains the completed *Lord of the Rings*, and bursts of Silmarillion activity in the 1950s, Númenórean work in the 1960s, and Silmarillion studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the *Ur*-period most of the ideas behind the Mythology were formed. The Early Period saw the development of a Finnish-based and a Welsh-based language, Qenya and Gnomish, and all of the major themes of the First Age. In the Middle Period the First Age material was refined, and stories relating to the Third Age (*The Hobbit*) and the Second Age (Númenor) developed; all were tied together in *The Lord of the Rings*. The Late Period saw further development of the Third Age and refinement of the First: how Tolkien would have told the tale is unknown, because he was unable to finish it. *The Silmarillion* was assembled by his son Christopher Tolkien from a compilation of his father's writings.

The *Ur*-period

J.R.R. Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, on January 3, 1892. His mother took John Tolkien and his younger brother Hilary to England in 1895 to visit her parents; while they were away their father died. Mabel then took a house in Sarehole, in the country outside of Birmingham, where the boys lived from 1896 to 1900. Sarehole and its mill formed the basis for the Shire. Mabel tutored her sons in language, natural history, art. Tolkien also ascribed his "Atlantis dream", which gave rise to Númenor, to his childhood. In 1900 the boys were sent to King Edward's School in Birmingham, and the family had to move to the city. Here Tolkien studied Latin. Mabel Tolkien converted to Roman Catholicism in 1900 and was ostracized by her family, thus providing Tolkien with an early lesson in prejudice and financial hardship. In 1901 the family moved to a house near the railroad, where Tolkien was fascinated by the Welsh names on trains. In 1902 Mabel discovered the Birmingham Oratory church, and its rector, Father Francis Morgan (who became a lifelong friend). The boys were sent to the cheaper St. Philips Grammar school for a while, then withdrawn when it proved to be not sufficiently challenging, and Tolkien returned to King Edward's. Here he was introduced to Old English, the love of his life. In 1903 Mabel became ill with diabetes; the following summer (1904) she moved to a cottage at the Birmingham Oratory Retreat in Rednal (on the outskirts of Birmingham), where she died November 14, 1904. Tolkien was 13. Father Morgan became the boys' guardian; the boys lived with their aunt Beatrice Suffield. Now Tolkien was studying Old Norse and Gothic at school, and inventing languages on his own. In 1908 the boys moved to Mrs. Faulkner's boarding-house. Here Tolkien met Edith Bratt, another orphan, and fell in love. Father Francis discovered the affair in 1909 and moved Tolkien to another house. Forbidden to see Edith, Tolkien began to write poetry.

Some of this contained themes later used in the Mythology: woodland fairies, for instance. Tolkien also read the *Kalevala* and identified with the luckless Kullervo – the inspiration for the story of Túrin. He became close friends with three other boys, a fellowship which was to last until the death of two of its members in World War I, and profoundly influenced the Mythology. Tolkien won a scholarship to Oxford in 1910 and left King Edward's in 1911. That summer he took a trip to Switzerland, which would result in the Misty Mountains and Gandalf. On his first Christmas vacation at Oxford (1911) Tolkien visited his friends at King Edward's School and was inspired to write a poem, thus establishing a pattern of vacation composition which was to continue throughout his life. In 1912 he took up the study of Welsh and comparative philology, discovered Finnish, and began to create a Finnish-based language – Qenya.

On his twenty-first birthday, the day of his majority – no longer bound by Father Morgan's wishes – Tolkien wrote to Edith, and they were re-united. She would give up a fiancé and convert to Catholicism to marry him, a sacrifice Tolkien remembered in the tales of Lúthien and Arwen. In September of 1914, on holiday, Tolkien wrote "Éala Éarendel engla beorhtast", said to be the origin of the Mythology. (The Christmas holiday produced "Goblin Feet".) The language of the Mythology had begun two years before, but was not at first identified with the Elves. So the *Ur*-period can be said to last until 1912 or 1914.

The Early Period

On August 4, 1914 England entered World War I. Tolkien enlisted, but was permitted to finish his studies. He graduated from Oxford in June 1915, then began military training. In 1915, while he was still in college, the material that was to become *The Book of Lost Tales* began to take shape, with the poem "You and Me and The Cottage of Lost Play" and the "Qenya Lexicon". Late autumn produced a spate of elegiac poetry, "Kortirion among the Trees" and the like; not surprisingly, for his old happy life at school had ended and he soon would be sent overseas to fight, perhaps to die. This melancholy poetry ended abruptly on March 22, 1916, when Tolkien and Edith were married.

Tolkien was sent to France June 4, 1916. On July 1 his boyhood friend R.Q. Gilson was killed on the Somme; Tolkien saw action there on July 14. He came down with trench fever in October and was sent home; he would be in and out of hospitals for the remainder of the War. Another friend, G.B. Smith, was killed December 3. The death of his friends impelled Tolkien to record his Mythology, lest all that they had shared be lost. Most of *The Book of Lost Tales* and the "Gnomish Lexicon" was written in periods of convalescence between 1916-1917. A child was conceived: John Francis Reuel Tolkien was born on November 16, 1917. World War I ended on November 11, 1918.

At the war's end Tolkien got a job at Oxford, on the *Oxford English Dictionary*. His work was largely on etymology, with some definitions for the nouns; his

¹ In this essay, *The Silmarillion*, italicised, refers to the book of that title; the Silmarillion, not italicised, to writing on the subject.

employer was less certain of his verbs (years later, in his invented languages, Tolkien usually spent the most time on etymology, developed the noun, and fizzled out on the verb). From the time of his employment until 1920, when he moved to Leeds, there was little work on *The Book of Lost Tales*, and he never returned to it. At about the same time Tolkien began a poem in alliterative verse, "The Lay of Húrin". Another child was conceived; Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien was born on October 22, 1920. In the summer of 1920 Tolkien accepted the job of Reader in English Language at Leeds University. Edith rejoined him in early 1921.

The Early period can be said to come to an end with *The Book of Lost Tales*, and the Middle to begin with "The Lay of Húrin", though they overlap a bit, 1918-1920.

Middle Period

The Middle Period begins when Tolkien moved to Leeds in 1920, or perhaps when he joined the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1918. At the Leeds Christmas party someone impersonated Father Christmas: that same year (1920) Tolkien wrote a Father Christmas Letter to his children, a practice which continued until 1941, when his youngest child reached 12. This was a fruitful period professionally: Tolkien began work on "Pearl", and "A Middle English Vocabulary"; in 1922 E.V. Gordon joined Leeds, and they collaborated on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* was also published in 1922. Tolkien published on English every year from 1922 through 1928. In 1924 Tolkien was promoted to Professor of English Language, bought a house, and conceived another child: Christopher Reuel Tolkien, born November 21, 1924. (All these autumn births hint at fertility rites during Easter break.) Tolkien also told stories to his children, some of which ("Roverandom", 1925ff.) were written down. But in the summer of 1925 he got a job as Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, and the Leeds phase ended.

Tolkien returned to Oxford in the fall of 1925. Again Edith did not arrive until after the birth of her child, in early 1926. "The Lay of Leithian", in rhymed couplets, was begun at Oxford, and "The Lay of Húrin" ceased. In the spring of 1926 Tolkien met C.S. Lewis. He sent "Leithian" to Lewis to read, and wrote the "Sketch of The Mythology" to explain it. On vacation in the summer of 1927, and again in 1928, Tolkien drew pictures for the Silmarillion. The wonderful (in Tolkien's opinion) children's book *The Marvellous Land of the Snergs* was published in 1927.

But there were also marital problems between 1928 and 1929. A daughter, Priscilla Tolkien, was born in 1929. Tolkien was spending a lot of time with Lewis. Lewis had high praise for "Leithian", and encouraged it. Tolkien began other works: the "Annals of Beleriand" (1929), the "Qenta Noldorinwa", the "Annals of Valinor", and the "Aotrou and Itroun" (1930). Professional work fell off; between 1928 and 1940 Tolkien published on the average of once every three years. Perhaps, had he remained at Leeds with Gordon, Tolkien would have written more philology; as it was, he became friends with Lewis and wrote the Mythology instead.

Tolkien continued to tell stories to his children. *The Hobbit*

may have begun in oral form around 1929; by 1931 it was certainly being written. In 1930 the Tolkien family moved to a larger house on 20 Northmoor Road, where they lived until 1947. In 1930 also Charles Williams' *War in Heaven* was published, a work which greatly influenced Lewis (Tolkien disliked it). Tolkien was active in academic life, proposed a revision of the English School Syllabus, which he got passed in 1931. "A Secret Vice" – no doubt hinting at what he had been doing – was read in 1931. On September 19, 1931, after a long conversation with Tolkien, C.S. Lewis converted to Christianity, an event which Tolkien recorded in his poem "Mythopoeia".

In 1932 Tolkien bought a car, which produced *Mr. Bliss*. The Inklings club was formed in 1933, and met mornings at the Eagle and Child pub. Lewis wrote his first book on religion, *Pilgrim's Regress*, in 1932 (published 1933). This irritated Tolkien, who may have felt that Lewis, a recent convert, was too hasty to rush into print. In the mid-1930s Tolkien also wrote "Errantry", "The Fall of Arthur", and *Farmer Giles of Ham*. Beginning around 1933-4 more Silmarillion material was written, the "Lhammas", "Quenta Silmarillion", "Ambarkanta". *The Hobbit* was nearing completion; it was essentially "complete" by 1935.

Tolkien's sons were now in their teens, and away at school. *The Hobbit* manuscript was read, submitted to publisher Allen & Unwin, and finally finished on October 3, 1936. (*Mr. Bliss* was also offered, but the colour pictures proved too difficult to print.) "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" was presented on November 25. Lewis proposed a space/time trilogy: Tolkien promptly began work on "The Lost Road", which led to "The Fall of Númenor" and "Etymologies"; Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet* (published 1938). *The Hobbit* was published September 21, 1937. Then Allen & Unwin requested more, so Tolkien revised and submitted *Farmer Giles*, "Leithian", "Quenta Silmarillion", "The Lost Road", and others. They were rejected: Allen & Unwin wanted more *Hobbit* material. So between December 16 and December 19, 1937, Tolkien began *The Lord of the Rings*. And all work on Númenor and the Silmarillion ceased.

Professional publication pretty much ceased, too: Tolkien produced a preface for *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment* in 1940, then nothing until 1947. (This does not mean Tolkien was idle: he was teaching and busy with academic work. There was the grind of examinations, and frequent illness. And he revised *Sir Gawain*, taught and collaborated with his students on their research projects, some of which contained his ideas. But he published nothing under his own name.)

Tolkien worked steadily on *The Lord of the Rings* until the spring of 1938, stopping when 15-year-old Christopher became ill. (At this time John was studying theology in Rome, Michael attending Trinity College in Oxford.) The Inklings now met twice weekly, in the pub and Thursday evenings at Lewis' rooms in Magdalen College. That July E.V. Gordon died. "On Fairy Stories" was also written that summer – Tolkien was trying to define his fantasy work; it was presented the following March (1939). Work on *The*

Lord of the Rings was not resumed until summer holiday (1938), after Christopher had recovered; it continued until September. That fall Tolkien revised it; by the following year (1939) he stopped altogether. In summer he was considering starting over. Edith was ill that summer and fall (1939), feared at first to be cancer, but fortunately not.

World War II began on September 1, 1939. It caused an upheaval in the lives of all concerned. John Tolkien rushed back to England, Michael tried to join the army, was told to wait one year, Priscilla stayed home. Charles Williams moved to Oxford and joined the Inklings. Tolkien gave up his car, and became an air-raid warden; Lewis joined the Home Guard, Lewis' brother and fellow-Inkling Warnie was on active service. (It should be remembered that, after the initial flurry, the first months of World War II in England were quiet.) Edith was recovering. Tolkien was able to continue *The Lord of the Rings* and, at his publisher's insistence, produced the preface to *Beowulf*.

He stopped again sometime in late 1939 or 1940, "stuck at Balin's tomb". But this was not the only reason. In spring fighting began in earnest; Germany invaded France (Dunkirk, May 24-June 4), England's back was to the wall, Churchill offered "blood, toil, tears, and sweat", the bombs rained down on London. Michael was an anti-aircraft gunner in the Battle of Britain (July 1940-May 1941). There were marital problems again, this time about religion. Tolkien was spending a great deal of time with the Inklings, who now met three times a week, and was jealous of Lewis' friendship with Williams. Tolkien did not resume work on *The Lord of the Rings* until 1941, by which time the situation had calmed somewhat. He also worked on "Sir Orfeo" and "Pearl". Michael Tolkien was married.

Meanwhile Lewis was publishing one or two books a year, Williams was publishing, there was a religious revival in Oxford and Lewis gave radio talks on Christianity. And Tolkien was still plodding along on *The Lord of the Rings*. He read E.R. Eddison's fantasy novels in 1942, and Eddison later visited the Inklings. Tolkien's first grandson, Michael George Tolkien, was born in 1942. In 1943 fellow Inkling Dr. Havard was called up (though Tolkien later got him transferred to Oxford – he seems to have had a talent for intrigue). Tolkien was stuck again in the summer of 1943, and Christopher joined the Royal Air Force. He expressed his feelings in "Leaf by Niggle" (triggered when a neighbour butchered her tree). Lewis persuaded Tolkien to start again in the spring of 1944: Tolkien wrote in a great rush of inspiration, sending his work to Christopher in South Africa to read, finally stopping in October. Then the work lay idle for nearly two years, while he contemplated finishing "The Lost Road" (Lewis' *Perelandra* was published in 1943) or collaborating with Lewis on a book on language.

World War II ended May 9, 1945; on May 15 Charles Williams died. Eddison also died that year. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength* (published 1945) showed Williams' influence: Tolkien disliked it. A second grandson, John Tolkien was born. Tolkien was appointed Merton Professor of English Language and Literature, a step up and new duties. He wrote "Imram", and had begun *Beorhthoth*.

Christopher returned to Oxford in the fall of 1945, and joined the Inklings. The Inklings by now had become an institution, and were attracting members of the second generation. Thursday evenings were sometimes enlivened by ham dinners, the main course being sent by an American admirer. During Christmas vacation of 1945 Tolkien began "The Notion Club Papers", which spawned "The Drowning of Anadûnê" and the Adûnaic language. John Tolkien became a priest.

The friendship with Lewis began to cool. In the summer of 1946, at the insistence of his publisher, Tolkien reluctantly resumed work on *The Lord of the Rings*, abandoning the Númenórean material; it was read to the Inklings by Christopher. Money being tight, Tolkien sold his house on 20 Northmoor Road (now too large since the children had left), and moved to a smaller one on Manor Road (spring 1947). Inkling Hugo Dyson did not like *The Lord of the Rings* and in October 1947 Christopher ceased to read from it. (Lewis' *Narnia* stories – which Tolkien did not care for – were never read to the Inklings, either.) In 1947 Tolkien rewrote the "Riddles in the Dark" chapter of *The Hobbit*.

The Lord of the Rings was "finished" in 1948. Freed from this burden, Tolkien was able to resume professional writing, publishing in 1947 and 1948. He became embroiled in a debate with his publisher over illustrations for *Farmer Giles*. Also in 1948 Lewis was soundly trounced (by a woman!) in an Oxford debate on Christianity, a bitter blow; he did not try to "prove" Christianity by logic again for some time. And he was hurt by Tolkien's criticism of his professional book *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. In 1949 Tolkien typed *The Lord of the Rings*. Christopher graduated from Oxford; the last Inklings evening was held October 20, 1949 (though some friends continued to meet at the pub). *Farmer Giles* was finally published. Tolkien returned to the Silmarillion. The Middle Period came to an end, circa 1949.

Late Period

The house on Manor Road was too small, so Tolkien moved to another house, on Holywell Street, in March 1950 (probably over Easter break – many of his moves seem to have taken place at this time of year). Now filled with enthusiasm for the Silmarillion (he had begun a second version of "The Lay of Leithian" and perhaps the "Narn i Chîn Húrin"), he felt that the Silmarillion should be published with *The Lord of the Rings*. In February 1950 Milton Waldman of Collins expressed interest in it, so Tolkien contrived a quarrel with Allen & Unwin (demanding that they publish both or nothing; they said nothing) and offered the manuscript to Collins. Time passed. In 1951 a third grandchild (Judith Tolkien) was born. Lewis' long time companion Mrs. Moore died. Tolkien was involved in academic work, travelling to Ireland and to Belgium; his failure to support Lewis on a proposed change in the English curriculum or in the latter's bid for Professor of Poetry chilled their relationship still further. Tolkien gave "A Secret Vice" again, worked on the "Annals of Aman" and the "Grey Annals". The second edition of *The Hobbit* was published.

In the spring of 1952 Tolkien issued an ultimatum to

Collins: all or nothing, at which point Collins turned down both works. Feeling despondent, he visited his friend George Sayer. In an attempt to cheer him up, Sayer suggested that Tolkien read *The Lord of the Rings* into his (Sayer's) tape recorder. The therapy worked; the recordings would later be marketed by Caedmon Records, and Tolkien bought a tape recorder for himself when he returned home. (He later recorded *Beorhthoth*, perhaps in 1954). On June 22, 1952, he offered *The Lord of the Rings* to Allen & Unwin; they snapped it up, sending Rayner Unwin to pick up the manuscript in person on September 9. The contract was signed on November 10, 1952. Work on the Silmarillion had to stop, for now *The Lord of the Rings* must be completed and proofs checked. Tolkien continued to revise at this late date, even after it was set in type. Many familiar works date from this time. Tolkien found his house too noisy, and Edith, lame with arthritis, was bothered by the stairs, so they moved again to Sandfield Road, in Headington, in March 1953. Volume I was finished in April, Volume II soon after, Christopher did the maps, Tolkien started on Volume III and bogged down on the Appendices. He was able to publish some professional work: *Beorhthoth* and a philological essay; gave a lecture on *Sir Gawain* in August, and was working on *Ancrene Wisse*. *Sir Gawain* was broadcast on the BBC in 1953 and *Beorhthoth* the following year (1954). On July 5, 1954, Tolkien received an Honorary Doctorate from the Catholic University of Dublin, and in October an Honorary doctorate from the University of Liège. On July 29 *The Fellowship of the Ring* was published. *The Two Towers* followed on November 11. Lewis became a Professor at Cambridge and left Oxford; the farewell dinner was held December 9. He continued to visit his friends at the pub on Mondays, but Tolkien no longer came. Lewis was also romantically involved with an American admirer, Joy Davidman.

Tolkien finally finished the Appendices on May 20, 1955 (they had produced such ancillary works as "The Istari" and "The Hunt for the Ring"). He went to Italy on holiday. He may also have resumed work on the Silmarillion. The lecture "English and Welsh" was presented October 21, the day after *The Return of the King* was published. *Ancrene Wisse* was completed, a preface (to *The Ancrene Riwele*) published. Lewis secretly married Joy (without telling Tolkien) on January 3, 1956; this caused the final breach between them. In 1956 Tolkien received his first payment for *The Lord of the Rings*, the handsome sum of £3,500. Marquette University (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) offered to purchase the manuscripts to *The Lord of the Rings* for £1,250 (\$5,000) in 1957; they were delivered the following year. There was talk of a *The Lord of the Rings* film, too, but nothing came of it. Tolkien visited Holland in the spring of 1958. Christopher was married, and lecturing at Oxford. Lewis' wife Joy became ill with cancer.

Tolkien retired from teaching in June, 1959, at age 67. He brought his books back from the college and converted his garage into an office-library. He also hired a part-time secretary, for he had begun to receive fan mail for *The Lord of the Rings*. Christopher's son Simon was born. Tolkien

worked on the Silmarillion, the proofs of *Ancrene Wisse* (which for various reasons, including a printer's strike, was not published until 1962), then *Sir Gawain*. Edith Tolkien became ill; she and Joy were in the hospital together in May 1960. This brought a reconciliation between Tolkien and Lewis. Joy died on July 13, 1960.

In 1961 Tolkien's aunt Jane Neave asked him for "a small book", which resulted in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, published in November 1962. *Ancrene Wisse* was finally published. Edith was in poor health. Tolkien worked on the Númenórean material, produced newspaper doodles. The final version of "The Last Ark" may date from this time. In 1962 he revised some of his early poems, "The Cottage of Lost Play", "Kortirion". He also wrote "The Bovadium Fragments", a satire on Oxford. Jane Neave died in 1963, age 91; that summer Lewis suffered a heart attack and retired. Tolkien was given an Honorary Fellowship to Exeter College, and an Emeritus Fellowship of Merton. He revised *Sir Gawain*, "Pearl", "On Fairy-Stories". The mid-1960s saw another burst of creative activity, "A Description of Númenor", "Aldarion and Erendis", "The Quest for Erebor".

On November 22, 1963, C.S. Lewis died. Allen & Unwin expressed interest in the Silmarillion. *Tree and Leaf* was published in 1964. In 1965 Tolkien was asked to write a preface for George MacDonald's *The Golden Key*; it became *Smith of Wootton Major* (1967). Tolkien's oldest grandchild, Michael George Tolkien, was studying at St. Andrews University.

In 1965 Ace brought out an unauthorised edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, taking advantage of a loophole in copyright law. Allen & Unwin asked Tolkien for revisions to *The Lord of the Rings* so that it could again be copyrighted. He responded by revising *The Hobbit* in the spring, and making an analysis of "Namárië" for *The Road Goes Ever On* in June, finally finishing *The Lord of the Rings* in August. Work on the Númenórean material and *Sir Gawain* probably ceased. The Ballantine *Hobbit* (unrevised) came out in August 1965, *The Lord of the Rings* in October, and the Tolkien craze was on.

Tolkien societies were formed: Tolkien, pestered by fans, needed a secretary for fan mail. His last professional work, for *The Jerusalem Bible* (Jonah), was published in 1966 (he was unable to finish *Sir Gawain* and "Pearl"; they were published posthumously). Tolkien and Edith celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary March 22, 1966. They went on holidays to Bournemouth. Tolkien continued to produce essays on *The Lord of the Rings*: "The Palantíri"; "The Disaster of the Gladden Fields", "Cirion and Eorl", "Fords of Isen", "The Drúedain", and linguistic works. That summer Prof. Clyde S. Kilby, of Wheaton College, Illinois, came to assist him on The Silmarillion. Christopher and his wife had separated.

Edith suffered greatly from arthritis. The two-story house on Sandfield Road became too much for her to manage; it was also noisy and far from the centre of town. And Tolkien was increasingly bothered by fans. So in June 1968 the Tolkiens moved to Bournemouth, where they had spent their vacations. Unfortunately Tolkien fell and injured his leg, so

was unable to supervise the move: as a result his papers were badly packed, which troubled him greatly. Nevertheless he continued to work on the *Silmarillion*. Edith, though in declining health, was happy. Tolkien was ill himself (July 1969). Christopher had remarried, and was teaching English at New College, Oxford. One grandchild and two great-grandchildren were born in 1969, another grandchild in 1971. Edith died November 29, 1971, after a short illness.

Tolkien returned to Oxford in 1972, to live in a house belonging to Merton College. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters in Philology from Oxford, a CBE which was confirmed by the Queen March 28, 1972, and an Honorary Degree from the University of Edinburgh in June 1973. He did not do much writing. Tolkien died on a visit to Bournemouth on September 2, 1973.

It can be seen that although the substance of Tolkien's Mythology was not much influenced by outside events, except during the *Ur*-period, outside events greatly affected its composition, focus and to a lesser degree emotional content.

Part II: Themes and Linguistics

As has been already been noted above, the foundation of the Mythology was laid early in Tolkien's life. The Mythology proper grew from two created languages, one based on Finnish and the other on Welsh. The Finnish-based language (among other things) borrows from Finnish phonetics and noun case system; the Welsh-based language uses Welsh phonetics, noun plurals, and initial mutation (lenition). Stories developed about the speakers of these languages, the Elves. In the Early Period all of the major themes of the First Ages were invented, though sometimes differing in form (such as the tale of Lúthien). This was to be a "mythology for England", as the Elves were the ancestors of the English fairies. The tales were heard by an English traveller who sailed to the Lonely Isle, and bits of the stories were recorded in Old English. In some versions the Lonely Isle was England, and Elvish sites were identified with actual locales in England. The tales began with the Cottage of Lost Play, where the children of Men had travelled to fairyland in dreams; perhaps an explanation of how Tolkien felt he had acquired the stories. The Valar or Gods are described in lively fashion; they intrigue among themselves and make magic; Melko is more like Loki than Lucifer. Troops of sprites and fairies patter about the land. Less is told about the Elves and Men. Eärendel is the Eternal Wanderer. The love stories are permeated by a sense of loss; boy loses girl, perhaps a reflection of the uncertain state of Tolkien's own life at the time. There is a certain pettiness, a lack of nobility – as when Tinwelint (Thingol) cheats the Dwarves out of their wages. (And later Faramir would not tell a falsehood to an Orc!) The Three Kindreds of Elves are called Teleri, Noldoli, Solosimpi. The Elves of the Blessed Realms named their city Kôr, so they are called Korins and the Elves of Middle-earth (not those of Kôr), Ilkorins.

The Finnish-based language is Qenya, spoken in the Blessed Lands; the Welsh-based language is Gnomish or Goldogrin, evolved from the speech of the Noldoli (Gnomes)

during their long thralldom under Melko in Beleriand. Other dialects are only hinted at. Men awakened mute, and were taught to speak by the Dark Elves. The tongues of Men and Dwarves are not developed.

Middle Period

In the Middle Period the tales of the First Age quickly approached their final (published *Silmarillion*) form, though many details still differed. The Cottage of Lost Play, the English locales, the pattering troops of fairies were eliminated. The mariner who travels to the Lonely Isle gradually fades out, though the tales are still ascribed to various authors, and some are in Old English.

What began as a children's story, *The Hobbit*, grew to become a part of the Mythology, a history of the Third Age. The time travel story "The Lost Road" brought forth Númenor and the Second Age. These were linked together by *The Lord of the Rings*, which set forth the Three Ages of Arda. Galadriel enters the Mythology. The Three Kindreds of Elves are called Lindar, Noldor (Gnomes), and Teleri. The city of the Noldor is Tûn (or Túna), upon the hill of Kôr; the Elves are first Koreldar and Ilkorindi (Ilkorins), later Kalaqendi (Elves of Light [of the Two Trees]) and Morigendi (Elves of Darkness).

The Elvish languages underwent an explosion, a veritable Darwin's-finches speciation of evolution, that resulted in many dialects for both Undying Lands and Middle-earth ("Lhammas", "Etymologies"). The Finnish-based language became Qenya, the Common Speech of the Undying Lands: it had a colloquial and a written version. The Welsh-based language divided into three groups, with sub-groups: the language of the Noldor (Noldorin), of the Elves of Beleriand (Doriathrin); of the Elves east of the Blue Mountains (Danian). Men are either taught or influenced by Elves; the Men who journey westward speak a Danian-influenced language called Taliskan, which seems intended as a link between Elvish and Indo-European. The later development of Adûnaic may have invalidated this concept; at least, Taliskan is no longer named. The inclusion of *The Hobbit*, with its Northern European names, into the Mythology necessitated some explanation: in *The Lord of the Rings* they are said to be "translations" of Westron, the Common Speech, a derivative of Adûnaic (and Elvish). These "translations" also provide a history for the tongues of Men. Khuzdul and Orkish are developed, and Sauron invents the Black Speech.

Late Period

The Silmarillion, the history of the First Age, was published after Tolkien's death, assembled by his son Christopher from a mass of uncompleted manuscripts. As much of the Late writing on this subject has yet to be published, we can only deduce what it contains from that in *The Silmarillion* which differs from earlier versions. Christopher, under pressure to complete his father's work, and for an audience that expected another *Lord of the Rings*, decided to omit the mariner and various authors (whose importance had been diminishing anyway) and to present the tales themselves. We do not

know if Tolkien would have done so. We are told (*Unfinished Tales*) that Tolkien's view of the role of Galadriel had expanded, that she was to become the female counterpart of Fëanor, but as the tales themselves were inchoate, Christopher was forced to fall back on earlier, more complete, versions. During the Late Period Tolkien also elaborated upon the Third Age and Númenor.

The sense of nobility, of wisdom, which infuses *The Lord of the Rings* (and to a lesser extent *The Silmarillion*) dates for the most part from the latter part of Tolkien's life. It is this moral depth which makes *The Lord of the Rings* a great work of literature and sets it apart from the earlier stories. First evident in *The Hobbit*, it grows as the series progresses. The Valar are now remote, lofty gods, and Melkor is akin to Lucifer. The three Kindreds of Elves are Vanyar, Noldor (now called Wise or Deep Elves, not Gnomes), and Teleri; the Calaquendi and the Moriquendi.

The Lord of the Rings and *The Silmarillion* don't discuss

language very much, and the Late linguistic essays have yet to be published. So we don't know many details. The language of the Undying Lands is Quenya, the situation in Beleriand is greatly simplified, with the Welsh-based language now called Sindarin, the language of the Grey Elves (Sindar) of Beleriand, and it is adopted, not evolved, by the Noldor. There are two Welsh-based groups, Sindarin and Silvan, the language of the Elves east of the Blue Mountains. How these were to be equated with the languages described in "Etymologies" is not explained, though no doubt Tolkien knew. Again there are hints of dialects, but few published details. Foreign loan-words are described, and for the first time words from other languages are said to be taken into Elvish.

Men are described as having been influenced by Elves, dialects among Houses of Men are mentioned, and a new race, the Drúedain or Woses, appears. The history of Westron is set forth in *The Lord of the Rings* and elsewhere.

References

- Carpenter, Humphrey. 1977. *J.R.R. Tolkien*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. 1978. *The Inklings*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1977. *The Silmarillion*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1979. *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1980. *Unfinished Tales*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1981. *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter with Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1983. *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1984. *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1985. *The Lays of Beleriand*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1986. *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1987. *The Lost Road*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1988. *The Return of the Shadow*. Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1989. *The Treason of Isengard*. Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1990. *The War of the Ring*. Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. 1992. *Sauron Defeated*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins.