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## "What has it got in its pocketses?"

George Barr

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"What has it got in its pocket?"

# "What has it got in its pocketses?"

notes on the cover illustration by George Barr

If the Tolkien books had been fully illustrated in their first printing, as were the ALICE books by Lewis Carroll, those illustrations would have forever set the standards for the characters' appearance. No one can think of Alice, the Mad Hatter, the Jabberwock, or the Queen of Hearts as other than the way Tenniel drew them. But aside from the drawings by Tolkien himself, which are pleasant little pictures, but not really satisfying as illustrations, the books have been presented so that one may imagine the characters any way he pleases...which is good. This way, Aragorn can never remind you of your hated grade-school principal, and Legolas can never smile exactly like the creep who stood you up last week.

For this reason: that everyone who has read the books has undoubtedly pictured the characters in their own minds as composites of all the wonderful real and imagined features that inhabit their own daydreams; I do not feel that an illustrated edition of THE LORD OF THE RINGS could ever be anything but a failure. The editor and possibly the artist would be the only people in the world it would satisfy. You'd agree on some points, of course, but on others...well, Gandalf really shouldn't look all of THAT old, and Sam's hair shouldn't part in the middle.

Also, this leaves each artist in the world free to indulge his own fantasies, and everyone else free to disagree.

This picture was drawn after careful rereading of the passages in THE HOBBIT which could give clues to Gollum's appearance. Then several people were asked to give descriptions of what they thought he should look like. I got as many different versions as people I asked...which didn't surprise me.

One pictured him as "rather froglike;" another as being "like a weasel," another, "huge and white and bloated," all different.

My version came about like this:

Gollum was at one time, however far in the past is not said, a hobbit. So that was my starting point. Whatever he might have become, his basic structure would be somewhat hobbit-like. Though Tolkien described him as "as dark as darkness," I feel this is metaphorical since the comparison of light and dark and good and evil is used constantly throughout the books. And I couldn't help remembering other things I've seen that have lived their whole lives in darkness: blind cave fish, certain cave-dwelling amphibians. All were of a peculiar waxy whiteness, a color...or lack of color...like the maggots one sometimes finds under rocks in damp soil.

The size and paddle-like shape of his feet are explained in the book, as well as his huge round eyes. The size of his eyes I limited to the probable size of the sockets in his rather hydrocephalic skull. I pictured very little actual intelligence showing in his face...it has not been necessary to be intelligent to lead the kind of life Gollum has had. But he does possess a kind of feral cunning and a mindless, self-centered cruelty.

Food could not at any time have been plentiful; and what he could get could hardly be particularly healthy. Therefore, his general proportions I've taken from memories of bony, reed-thin, starving children, with their pitifully haggard faces and distorted little pot-bellies.

Constant hunger cramps, combined with the necessity of stooping to get through tight little tunnels, plus a natural tendency to sneak, I've pictured as resulting in a permanent crouch and a crab-like scuttling method of travel. I cannot imagine him standing erect, but bent and hunched, with arms hanging near to the ground, ready to help him over rocks and obstructions.

Where others compared him to weasels, frogs, slugs, beetles, etc., I find that the animal which comes to mind most often when thinking of Gollum is the Spectral Tarsier, a tiny nocturnal monkey-like creature of the Malayan and Indo-Chinese jungles. It looks like a starved and degenerate squirrel monkey, with its skinny body, huge round eyes, and grasping hands and feet.

Gollum is pictured here, after he has searched for his lost "Precious," just as the thought has entered his mind that it just might be the answer to Bilbo's riddle.

I have drawn him as a creature dangerous not because of size, strength, or intelligence, but because of a driving need, a hunger not alone for food, but his addiction to the ring itself. I see him as something capable of intense ferocity, desperate cunning, and insane cruelty. Crouched among the remnants of former victims, he has just realized that someone must have in his possession the one thing that he needs most, that he must have in order to survive. Fear is there, a fear which draws him protectively into himself and gleams in his bulbous eyes. His desperate need cramps his stomach and he stifles his first gasp of horror.

I don't expect anyone at all to agree with my depiction of Gollum. And I really don't care. Perhaps on another rereading of the books my own ideas will change. But that's the beauty of the whole thing: they can. I can draw him as I want him; you can picture him however you please. And neither of us can prove the other wrong.

This cartoon has a story to it. Bernie Zuber, George Barr, Bonnie Bergstrom and myself were invited to a meeting of the Petards, a science fiction group, for a meeting on Sword and Sorcery vs. Heroic Fantasy (see Bonnie's article). During a break in the discussion, George was looking at some of Bonnie's artwork. In the discussion with her, he commented on how he didn't like some artists, not Bonnie, who depicted hobbits with hair up to their knees. It upset him to think of a hobbit girl with think hair all over her legs! Later I looked over to see Bonnie drawing a girl hobbit with hair curlers on her legs!!! I think I spoiled the meeting by totally cracking up with insane laughter. I had to stop the discussion to explain why I had suddenly gone nuts. The cartoon is a good example of Bonnie's quick mind and zany imagination. — editor.

