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Reviews

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Reviews

Abstract

Sauron Defeated. J.R.R. Tolkien; Ed. Christopher R. Tolkien. Reviewed by Paul Nolan Hyde.

The Lord of the Rings. J.R.R. Tolkien; Illust. Alan Lee. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

The Tolkien Family Album. John and Priscilla Tolkien. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

J.R.R. Tolkien, Master of Fantasy. David R. Collins. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.



REVIEWS



Literary and Linguistic Genius

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Sauron Defeated*, edited by Christopher R. Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 482 pp.

This latest volume of the *History of Middle-earth* edited by Christopher R. Tolkien not only concludes the rather rigorous variorum textual study of the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, but also provides an extraordinary insight into Tolkien's linguistic genius in operation. Those who have paid their dues at Marquette University by spending long hours in the *Tolkien Collection* there will be delighted at the inclusion of the original "Epilogue," in its various forms, which has been absent from the text since the first edition because of space constraints. Facsimiles of Aragorn's letter to Samwise are provided as well as Tolkien's own transliterations. The "Epilogue" has the effect of placing a gossamer veil over the close of the narrative, a quite pleasant effect after all. The facsimiles provide us with other examples of the Middle-earth use of the Tengwar and one of the longest, if not the longest, passage written in one of the Elven tongues which has been published. For the first time we have a published text by reference to which a serious grammar may be begun for a Middle-earth Language.

The "Notion Club Papers" has an interesting history surrounding it, which Christopher Tolkien describes in some detail. At last, we may have a portion of what JRRT had proposed as his response to the Inklings project of Time-Space stories, a counterpart to C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy. The portrayals of the members of Notion Club do reflect somewhat on the Inklings themselves, but they are, in the end, fanciful representations, adapted to the design of the story itself. Notwithstanding the creative liberties taken with the various personalities derived from the Inklings, much of the spirit of those convivial meetings appears to remain unchanged in the translation into a work of fiction. The linguists of *Mythlore's* readership will find Tolkien's philological theories in abundance, and the *Notion Club Papers* may prove as valuable to Tolkien Scholarship in linguistic matters as *Leaf By Niggle* has been to our understanding Tolkien's artistic frustration as he created Middle-earth and its denizens.

The final section, "The Drowning of Anadûnê," provides extensive notes on the Language of Númenor, Adûnaic, a treasure trove of linguistic material calculated to reshape the traditional views of the nature of that West-Man speech. The structure of Adûnaic may help us to understand the nature of the Elven languages which influenced it.

All in all, *Sauron Defeated* is a volume of great importance

to all those who have an interest in the literary and linguistic genius of J.R.R. Tolkien.

—Paul Nolan Hyde

[Editor's Note: This volume will not be published by Houghton Mifflin in America until November of this year. —GG]

The Ring Goes Grey

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*. Illustrated with fifty original paintings by Alan Lee. Special one volume bound edition with slipcase, limited to 250 copies, each signed and numbered by the artist. (There is also the unsigned edition with dustjacket rather than a slipcase.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1991. ISBN 0-395-60423-0. 1193 pp. + 7 pp. of maps.

Even though this specially illustrated edition was reviewed in the last issue, I felt the need to write further on it. What is striking about this edition is that it does *not* contain an index or table of contents of these fifty nameless full page color illustrations. This was clearly an oversight that gave me the occasion to prepare this index; to number, name, and comment on them. After describing each one, I give it a double grade from A to F; the first for the achievement of the art as a composition unto itself, and the second for how well it illustrates the chapter or scene it attempts to convey.

Alan Lee has talent, and the publishers could have certainly done worse in their choice of an artist, but they and Lee could also have done *better*. Lee drops a dreary grey filter over Middle-earth, through which we see mostly bleak, depressing scenery of a basically sad world. Admittedly there are sad and bleak portions of *The Lord of the Rings*, but there is also the numinous, the beautiful and the joyous. Lee shows us little of those elements, as if those parts of the story had small importance to him. One gets the impression that Lee is cheating in too many of his pictures, which he fills up with easy-to-draw static and depressing scenery, with small characters added in almost as an afterthought. With artistic license, the first picture gives us a chilling thematic introduction, which is arguably justifiable, but the last picture is anti-climatic, containing no joy, and denying us even the hint of the bitter-sweet resolution of the story.

The editors and publishers of Tolkien material, such as this book and the calendars, no matter which country they are in, need someone who is awake at the switch — someone who really knows the texts, and keeps artists on track when their artistic license begins to wander away from what the text actually says or from the overall emotional tone of the work. That would be no easy job, but Tolkien *deserves* it. He saw himself as a scrupulous artist, not the

originator of a huge commercial industry that at times seems concerned more with profits than artistic integrity.

The superscripted ^R or ^L indicate on which side of the open book the picture is placed.

Book I

1. "Flight of the Nazgûl" left of the title page to *The Lord of the Rings*. A Nazgûl riding on a greenish pterodactyl-like steed flies over the ruins of a tower. A gloomy first picture to introduce us to the story. D+ as a composition / F as it does not really illustrate a scene from the text.
2. "The Road" between pp. 32/33^L. Just before Chapter I, "A Long-expected Party." The front door of Bag-end in the foreground, with the Road winding away into dark mountains overshadowed with dark clouds in the background. It is gloomy and depressing as a thematic introduction to the story. C / D — since it is also a thematic introduction piece and not actually related to Chapter I.
3. "Shadow of the Past" between pp. 64/65^R in Chapter II, "The Shadow of the Past." Gandalf and Frodo next to the fire at Bag-end. Gandalf lights pipe. Frodo looks very dejected. C+ as art / B- as illustration from story.
4. "Conversation with the Elves" between pp. 96/97^R in Chapter III, "Three is Company." Gildor and companions speak with the hobbits at Woody End. A slim border of yellow leaves on green background frames the picture. B / B. This is one of the better pictures of the book.
5. "The Old Forest" between pp. 128/129^R in Chapter VI, "The Old Forest." A scene of the Old Forest, with no people and a clutter of trees and branches. C- / D.
6. "The House of Tom Bombadil" between pp. 144/145^R in Chapter VII "In the House of Tom Bombadil." A bird's-eye view of Tom's house. A rainbow is in the dark sky in background. Thin border with thick bottom with waterlilies. C+/C-.
7. "Mr. Underhill Vanishes" between pp. 176/177^R in Chapter IX, "At the Sign of the Prancing Pony." The astonished hobbits and men in the inn at the moment after Frodo vanishes. D+/C-. One of the few pictures in which the scenery does not overwhelm or completely dominate. Instead we are overwhelmed with bulging eyes.
8. "The Nazgûl Steeds" between pp. 192/193^R in Chapter XI "A Knife in the Dark." Three horses of the Nazgûl, with dull glowing eyes in the night. C-/D. The ghostly eyes of the horses are an artistic (i.e. non-textual) interpretation.
9. "Tinúviel" between pp. 208/209^R in Chapter XI "A Knife in the Dark." Tinúviel from the poem told by Strider. C+/D. A picture of the attack of the Nazgûl would have been more appropriate.
10. "Trolls" between pp. 224/225^R in Chapter XII "Flight to the Ford." Two small hobbits and Strider sitting among the three large trolls turned to stone. B / B. The scene is too casual in that it looks like the characters are having a picnic calmly beneath the stone trolls.

Book II

11. "Rivendell" between pp. 240/241^R in Chapter I, "Many Meetings." View of the Valley of Rivendell with chimney smoke rising from the Last Homely House. B / C. Believable yet remote.
12. "The Council of Elrond" between pp. 272/273^R in Chap-

ter II "The Council of Elrond." This is a double picture, one inset into the other. The large picture shows the Council, with people in the lower part (including Elrond with a beard), the architecture above. The inset shows a cadaverous Gollum perched in a tree, eating a bird. "C+" (would have been a B if the Gollum inset did not frustratingly block out details of picture behind.) / B-.

13. "Caradhras" between pp. 304/305^R in Chapter II "The Ring Goes South." A scene of dark Caradhras. B+ if you like dark mountain scenery / C+.
14. "Entrance to Moria" between pp. 320/321^R in Chapter IV "A Journey in the Dark." The Company before the entrance to Moria; Gandalf touching the wall. C+ / C. The gloom here is justified.
15. "In Moria" between pp. 336/337^R in Chapter IV "A Journey in the Dark." The Company, very small in the left foreground, sees the shaft of morning light shine through the eastern halls of Moria. C / B-.
16. "The Mirrormere" between pp. 352/353^R in chapter VI "Lothlórien." A scene in the mountains, looking down on the Mirrormere. D too bleak / D- fails to capture the scene.
17. "Cerin Amroth" between pp. 368/369^R in Chapter VI "Lothlórien." A scene of Cerin Amroth upon the mound of Amroth covered with pale niphredil. Thick border of yellow leaves and grey branches. B+ / C+. Pretty, but does not capture the wonder of Lórien.
18. "The Mirror of Galadriel" between pp. 384/385^R in Chapter VII "The Mirror of Galadriel." Frodo looks into the mirror as Sam and Galadriel watch. B+ / C. A relatively good picture except for the faces and the color of Galadriel's hair.
19. "The Stair of Amon Hen" between pp. 416/417^R in Chapter X "The Breaking of the Fellowship." The overgrown steps at Amon Hen, with Boromir ascending at extreme bottom left, and Frodo barely visible sitting at the top of the hill. C- / B-. The scenery overwhelms, as is typical of Lee's art.

Book III

20. "On the Plains of Rohan" between pp. 448/449^R in Chapter II "The Riders of Rohan." Two pictures, with the larger above the smaller. Top: Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli searching for Merry and Pippin on the brown grassy plain. Lower: Merry and Pippin are carried piggy-back by a band of orcs. C+ / C. Merry and Pippin look like seven year-old English school boys. Legolas' and Aragorn's faces are turned away.
21. "Fangorn Forest" between pp. 480/481^R in Chapter III "The Uruk-hai." The small figures of Merry and Pippin in left foreground enter Fangorn Forest. C / C-. The tiny figures are nearly lost in the static scenery.
22. "Treebeard" between 406/497^R in Chapter IV "Treebeard." A portrait of Treebeard's face. B- / B. Arguably a believable face of Treebeard.
23. "Entering Fangorn Forest" between 512/513^R in Chapter V "The White Rider." Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli enter Fangorn Forest. D+ / D-. Dull.
24. "Edoras" between pp. 528/529^R in Chapter VI "The King of the Golden Hall." Edoras upon a hill, with Meduseld at the crown. B+ / B. A good picture except that the hill is too steep.
25. "Helm's Deep" between pp. 560/561^R in Chapter VII "Helm's Deep." The Battle of Helm's Deep, with the gap in the wall in the foreground. B / B. A believable battle scene.

26. "Road to Isengard" between 576/577^R in Chapter VIII "The Road to Isengard". The dried-up bed of the Isen is in the foreground, with mist in the background. D- / F. Dismal in mood; this is not an illustration. Probably the worst picture in the book.

27. "Orthanc" between 608/609^R in Chapter X "The Voice of Saruman." The lower portion of the Tower of Orthanc, with flooded land and posts in the foreground. The architecture is interesting, but does not conform to Tolkien's own sketch of Orthanc. B- / D-. Lee should have done his home work: see Picture 27 (of Orthanc) in *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien, 1979*, and *The War of the Ring, 1990*, pp. 33 and 34. These give Tolkien's drawings of Orthanc.

Book IV

28. "The Taming of Sméagol" between 640/641^R in Chapter I, "The Taming of Sméagol." Frodo with Sting is rescuing Sam in the clutches of Gollum. Gollum is too monkey-like. Sam too bland. A dramatic picture in the moonlight, but so totally grey. B- / B.

29. "The Dead Marshes" between 656/657^R in Chapter II "The Passage of the Marshes." The Dead Marshes, with faces of dead men under the water in foreground, dark grey mountains in background. Uninspired scenery. C- / D.

30. "The Black Gate" between 672/673^R in Chapter II "The Black Gate is Closed." Frodo, Sam, and Gollum in the foreground, hiding among the rocks, as tiny military figures from the South march toward the Morannon. Primarily scenery. Gollum's hands are unbelievably large and ape-like. C+ / B.

31. "Oliphaunt" between 688/689^R following Chapter IV "Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit." A rampant oliphaunt, as described in the text, viewed by Sam in a tree in right foreground. "B / B+." A good capturing of action.

32. "The Tombs of Gondor" between 704/705^R in Chapter V "Window on the West." This appears to be an illustration not directly from the text, but a visual comment on the discourse by Faramir on the ancient glories and follies of the Númenoreans in Gondor. In the background are what may be elaborate tombs; the middle ground features a broken statue of a wing-helmed warrior; the foreground shows a broken balustrade and broken head of a statue on paving stones. Inset with a border featuring stars at the top and tree branches below, which is a reference to the device of Elendil with the White Tree and Seven Stars. C- / D.

33. "Cirith Ungol" between 736/737^R in Chapter VIII "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol." The Mountains of Ephel Duath with Minas Morgul in left background. D / D. Ninety percent of picture is monochrome jagged crags.

34. "Shelob" between 752-753^R in Chapter IX "Shelob's Lair." Shelob, in foreground, encountering Sam, in middle ground, with Tower of Minas Morgul in background. This is a plausible scene from the text. C / B+.

35. "Shagrat and Gorbag" between 768/769^R in chapter IX "The Choices of Master Samwise." Shagrat and Gorbag. The picture is not balanced, with details of figures only in the lower half of the picture. D+ / D. Lee's orcs are too comically frightening to truly horrify.

Book V

36. "Gandalf and Pippin before Denethor" between 784/785^R in chapter I, "Minas Tirith." The style of architecture is correct but the foreground figures have much less detail than the thick pillars in the background. C+ / B+. Believable scene from text.

37. "Minas Tirith" between 800/801^R in Chapter I, "Minas Tirith." A midview portion of the City of Minas Tirith, with prow of rock in the middle of the background. B- / C.

38. "Éowyn and Aragorn" between 816/817^R in chapter II "The Passing of the Grey Company." Éowyn bidding Aragorn farewell with a cup at Dunharrow. C+ / B-.

39. "Dunharrow" between 832/833^R in Chapter II "The Muster of Rohan." Dunharrow with tents in a camp on the bluff. D / C-. Ninety percent of the picture is mist over blackness.

40. "The Siege of Gondor" between 848/849^R in Chapter IV "The Siege of Gondor." Battle of men and orcs. C / D.

41. "The Battle of Pelennor Fields" between 880/881^R in Chapter VI "The Battle of Pelennor Fields." Battle scene with the banner of Rohan in the middle and Mûmak in the background. B- / B.

42. "After the Battle" between 896/897^R in Chapter VIII "The Houses of Healing." Ashes of the Nazgûl steed and fallen crown in foreground, fields in the middle, and Minas Tirith in the background. C- / C.

Book VI

43. "Barad-dûr" between 928/929^L. At the beginning of Book VI. The cloud-wracked Tower of Barad-dûr, surrounded by a thick border of twisted orc faces. All in grey. This is supposed to inspire terror, but falls short of the attempt. C / D.

44. "The Tower of Cirith Ungol" between 944-945^R in Chapter I "The Tower of Cirith Ungol." Static dull brown. D / D-.

45. "Two Orcs" between 960/961^R in chapter II "The Land of the Shadow." Two orcs who look like two different species, not genetically related, in bleak scene. Lee's orcs are not believable here; they look like they belong in a children's book of boogies. D / D.

46. "Mount Doom" between 976/977^R in Chapter II "Mount Doom." Looking up the foot of Mount Doom, with hardened bleak lava. Gollum in the right foreground. D / D.

47. "To the Sea" between 992/992^R in Chapter IV "The Fields of Cormallen." Illustration of the song Legolas sings "To the Sea." The center picture is of a swan ship in brisk sea and sea gulls, surrounded by a wide border of moon-lit land with small boats on a river. B+ / B.

48. "The White Tree in Flower in the Courts of the Kings" between 1008/1009^R in Chapter V "The Steward and the King." The sapling of Nimloth planted in the Court by the Fountain. Very pale grey and blue for a scene that should depict joyous triumph. C / D.

49. "Bilbo at Rivendell" between 1024/1025^R in Chapter VI "Many Partings." An aged Bilbo at Rivendell, with books and scrolls, with a view of the Valley through the window. B / B+.

50. "Return to the Shire" between 1040/1041^R in Chapter VIII "The Scouring of the Shire." Frodo, Sam, Merry on horseback in foreground, riding past trees stumps and fallen trees on the roadside. Smoke stack belching black smoke in background. C+ / C+.

Grades for the entire set of 50 pictures: C- as art / D as fitting illustrations for this text.

— Glen GoodKnight

A Turreted Typewriter

John and Priscilla Tolkien, *The Tolkien Family Album*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992. ISBN 0-395-59938-5. 90 pp., 119 photographs and illustrations.

Easily the sweetest and most delightful account of J.R.R. Tolkien's life ever likely to be published, this exquisitely illustrated book deserves and likely will find a place on every shelf devoted to him and his works. Fortunately the man whose children remember his like this! Most moving, perhaps, is a photograph from 1928 in which Ronald (for the first time one feels easy in calling him that, as one calls C.S. Lewis "Jack") lies asleep in his own back yard on a cot, his hat tilted over his cheek for shade, his refined and aquiline face relaxed and vulnerable (the way Lord Peter looked to Harriet when he fell asleep in the punt in *Gaudy Night*), and beside him, equally sound asleep on a plumped-up pillow, his luminously beautiful little son Christopher.

The narrative is clear, warm, and (to continue my soup simile) nourishing. Any adult can read it with pleasure and receive illumination from it, and I suspect an older child would find it equally appealing. Among many visual delights beyond the text are sketches, receipts, a postcard, and similar detritus from and about the master. The photographs are plentiful and superbly chosen. As for the text, a few quotes will show its richness.

Priscilla remembers of the typewriter upon which not only her father but she typed out (with a "thud") the manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings*: "The Hammond was a splendid-looking machine with twin castle-like turrets that operated the upper-case keys, and a wooden frame and lid which made it enormously heavy." (p. 72) And John remembers a house in Oxford which looked "like something leaning back after a good dinner. Its small garden contained a hawthorn tree that attracted nuthatches and tree creepers, and the high wall at the back, dividing it from the gardens of New College, was part of the medieval wall of the city." (p. 74)

It is delightful and obviously not surprising to report that this little memoir truly does its subject justice, providing new dimensions to our understanding and enhancing our pleasure in sharing Tolkien's world. Highly recommended.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

Wolves and Snakes

David R. Collins, *J.R.R. Tolkien, Master of Fantasy*. (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1992), 112 pp. ISBN 0-8225-49022-9.

Quoting, but not identifying, reviewer, the author of this brief biography gives the source of his subtitle: "Tolkien, in his volume *The Hobbit*, or *There and Back Again*, has earned the title 'master of fantasy.'" (p. 82) Although

a workmanlike effort, designed to satisfy a young reader's curiosity about a favorite author's life, this study labors under the unsympathetic efforts of some nameless editor, who burdened it with the stodgiest historic photographs imaginable, along with some of the poorest drawings I ever saw. One would conclude from these visuals that the volume is a very dated travel book and that Tolkien's writings are concerned almost exclusively with the monstrous and the grotesque.

Perhaps I have been too generous in crediting these elements to an editor; the work itself is burdened, too, by a need to dramatize. In Collins' account, "wolves howled eerily" and snakes silently slithered" (p. 9) in the grasslands around Bloemfontein as Mabel Tolkien took up residence in that town. Happily, this artificial style gradually diminishes as the book continues, but the effect is annoying, at least to an adult reader. One also suspects that a child reader will wonder where the orcs went, when encountering the actual life of Tolkien. I admit that I read this volume of educational prose in the same month that I read John and Priscilla Tolkien's enchanting memoir, *The Tolkien Family Album*, and that my present subject probably suffered by the comparison. After all, Humphrey Carpenter's exceedingly adult and literate biography seems to show (in retrospect) a master somehow cramped and crabbed compared to the beloved father the Tolkien children recollect.

The intended reader of Collins' study is a youngster in a school library; I only hope that reader has been given a chance to read *The Hobbit* first.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

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