

Winter 12-15-1989

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### Recommended Citation

Startzman, L. Eugene (1989) "Goldberry and Galadriel: The Quality of Joy," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 16: No. 2, Article 1.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol16/iss2/1>

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### Goldberry and Galadriel: The Quality of Joy

#### Abstract

Argues the importance of joy, or eucatastrophe, in *The Lord of the Rings*. Sees the figures of Goldberry, Bombadil, and especially Galadriel as personifications of that joy arising unexpectedly.

#### Additional Keywords

Eucatastrophe in J.R.R. Tolkien; Joy in The Lord of the Rings; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Galadriel—As symbol of Joy; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Goldberry—As symbol of Joy; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Tom Bombadil—As symbol of Joy; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Lord of the Rings



# Goldberry and Galadriel: The Quality of Joy

L. Eugene Starczman

J. R. R. Tolkien, in his essay "On Fairy-stories," wrote that "the joy of the happy ending" is "the consolation of fairy-stories" (68). Tolkien explained that "In such stories when the sudden 'turn' comes we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through" (69-70). That joy "can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth . . . it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world" (71). Tolkien believed that the essential nature of reality is that joy experienced at the heart of the Christian story: not God's absence but His presence in the Word; not crucifixion and death, suffering and sorrow and despair, but resurrection and life-everlasting: "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe ['good catastrophe'] of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy" (72). Tolkien's own epic fairy-story, *The Lord of the Rings*, not only lets us experience that particular joy when the "turn" occurs (the destruction of the ring and the rescue of Frodo and Sam), but it also reveals that joy is the underlying reality of the entire fictional world of Middle-earth.

Joy, in the trilogy, is like a huge underground lake whose waters are under tremendous pressure so that they keep rising to the surface of the earth in unlikely and unlooked-for places. Two instances of that rising in *The Fellowship* are, first, the hobbits' encounter with Tom and Goldberry, and second, the encounter with Galadriel in Lórien.

The action in *The Fellowship* forms a classic and readily discernable pattern: jeopardy and escape, sanctuary. The action begins in the homely, comfortable, naive Shire, a place that is safe, for the moment, for all the inhabitants except Frodo. The menace is somewhat vague, a dark figure with a hint of the inhuman, the bestial, about him: on the road the dark figure *sniffs* as if "to catch an elusive scent" (1. 112); he *hisses* when he talks (1. 113, 136); and there is that "long drawn wail" that comes "down the wind, like the cry of some evil and lonely creature" (1. 131). The dark figure inspires terror in all who encounter him, and, as the action proceeds, the terror and the menace become more clearly defined.

The pattern of menace and sanctuary in *The Fellowship* is easily diagrammed. (See Fig. 1.) While one might argue whether to include the house of Farmer Maggot (I would, finally) or to exclude the Inn at Bree (I would not), my real concern is not with structure, but with the quality of Sanctuary offered in the house of Tom Bombadil, as well

as the contrasting quality of Sanctuary offered by Galadriel in Lórien, for in the first place we see the joy inherent in Middle-earth, joy incapable of being menaced by the Ring, a joy thus incorruptible. In Lórien, however, we not only rest for a moment from the terrors of orcs and evil things that slink in the dark, but we also discover a place and a person (Goldberry's counterpart) whose primary nature is goodness and light, for Lórien is a land where "no shadow lay," where "the ancient things still lived on in the waking world" (1. 453). Lórien is a place of light, and the place of the woman of light, the Lady Galadriel, whose beauty and goodness inspire Gimli the Dwarf, son of earth, to the highest tribute he knows: "the Lady Galadriel is above all the jewels that lie beneath the earth" (1. 461).

That the house of Tom Bombadil is a place of sanctuary, Goldberry makes evident immediately:

"Come dear folk!" she said, taking Frodo by the hand. "Laugh and be merry! I am Goldberry, daughter of the River." Then lightly she passed them and closing the door she turned her back to it, with her white arms spread out across it. "Let us shut out the night!" she said. "For you are still afraid, perhaps of mist and tree-shadows and deep water, and untame things. Fear nothing! For tonight you are under the roof of Tom Bombadil." (1. 172)

Tom's house too is a place of light: golden light streams out the door to greet the hobbits; the interior is lighted by "lamps swinging from the beams of the roof," and by "many candles, tall and yellow, burning brightly" (1. 172). In the center of this place of light-amidst-darkness is Goldberry, "daughter of the River," whose very gesture effectively bars the door against the terrors of the night. Frodo, overcome with wonder and "feeling his heart moved with a joy that he did not understand," addresses her and articulates the meaning he has experienced in her presence:

He stood as he had at times stood enchanted by fair elfen-voices; but the spell that was now laid upon him was different: less keen and lofty was the delight, but deeper and nearer to mortal heart; marvellous and yet not strange. "Fair lady Goldberry!" he said again. "Now the joy that was hidden in the songs we heard is made plain to me.

O slender as a willow-wand! O clearer than clear water!

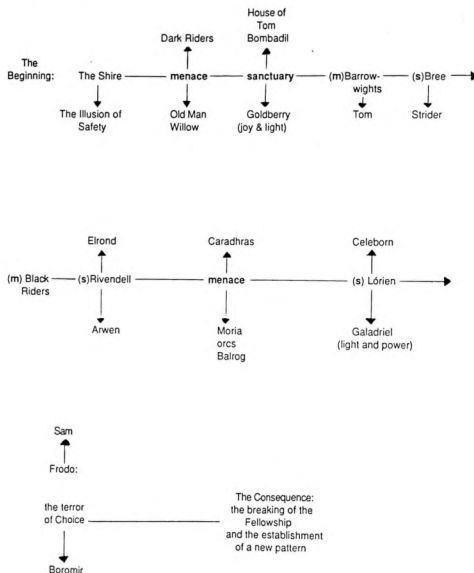
O reed by the living pool! Fair river-daughter!

O spring-time and summer-time, and spring again after!

O wind on the waterfall, and the leaves' laughter!"

Suddenly he stopped and stammered, overcome with surprise to hear himself saying such things. But Goldberry laughed. (1. 173)



Fig. 1 *The Fellowship of the Ring: The Pattern of Menace & Sanctuary*

She is the joy of water and springtime, the dancing delight of light and water brought to life in a woman and expressed in song and laughter. She is the joy hidden in water, just as Tom Bombadil is the joy hidden in earth and trees and grass, in the land itself and all that grows therein, the joy of nature untainted by the power of the Ring and the desire of man for mastery over life and death. Goldberry describes Tom as "the Master," not owner, "of wood, water, and hill" (1. 174); he is thus a real Master, a steward, like Adam before the Fall perhaps, because he entirely possesses himself and is, therefore, not bound by human acquisitiveness or the fear of death. When Frodo, out of wonder and fear (awe), asks, "Who are you, Master?", Tom's immediate response is: "Don't you know my name yet? That's the only answer" (1. 182). And when Tom puts on the Ring, he does not disappear. Tom is Master, Master of himself, and his house is a house of mirth and laughter that vanishes fear and gives us a glimpse of the deeper

reality of joy that stands over against the darkness of despair and the terrible black hunger for power over death that, to change the image, like the smoke of Mordor, hangs over Middle-earth and darkens the lives of elves and men.

For a moment, in the house of Tom Bombadil, in the presence of Goldberry and Tom, the hobbits are given a foretaste of real sanctuary, heaven itself. The language recalls Genesis and Luke<sup>1</sup> and a time before the fall of man:

Whether the morning and evening of one day or of many days had passed Frodo could not tell. He did not feel either hungry or tired, only filled with wonder. The stars shone through the window and the silence of the heavens seemed to be round him. (1.182)

But Middle-earth is not Eden, and that very silence of the heavens, unfamiliar in Middle-earth, moves Frodo to cry out his question, "Who are you, Master?" Tom describes himself as "Eldest . . . before river and trees," before elves and hobbits, "Big People" and "little People," and, unlike big people and little people, he retains the joy of creation. He does not walk, for example, but jumps, bounds, hops, and dances, all proper expressions of the energy of the joy that dwells within him.

The fullest expression of that joy is supper in Tom's house, a feast of merriment and light, a complex dance of service and courtesy, humility and hospitality:

Then Tom and Goldberry set the table; and the hobbits sat half in wonder and half in laughter: so fair was the grace of Goldberry and so merry and odd the caperings of Tom. Yet in some fashion they seemed to weave a single dance, neither hindering the other, in and out of the room, and round about the table; and with great speed food and vessels and lights were set in order. The boards blazed with candles, white and yellow. Tom bowed to his guests. "Supper is ready," said Goldberry; and now the hobbits saw that she was clothed all in silver with a white girdle, and her shoes were like fishes' mail. But Tom was all in clean blue, blue as rain-washed forget-me-nots, and he had green stockings. (1. 183)

Green and blue, grass and sky, life and hope, a reality that, like the forget-me-nots, one can hold in memory in darker



times. But Goldberry is silver and white — the gold of her name and the silver of her dress image her own preciousness, and the white girdle is the white of her own purity, the shield of her joy. Her songs lead the hobbits to experience unexpected depths of silence and light within themselves:

After they had eaten, Goldberry sang many songs with them, songs that began merrily in the hills and fell softly down into silence; and in the silences they saw in their minds pools and waters wider than any they had known, and looking into them they saw the sky below them and the stars like jewels in the depths. (1. 183-84)

The images of the good creation, the water reflecting sky and stars, suggest that the hobbits have the natural resources within themselves, as yet unrealized, to withstand the evil darkness abroad in the land.

The final two images associated with Goldberry are also images of silver and light. In the first, Frodo has, perhaps, been dreaming again:

But either in his dreams or out of them, he could not tell which, Frodo heard a sweet singing running in his mind: a song that seemed to come like a pale light behind a grey rain-curtain, and growing stronger to turn the veil all to glass and silver, until at last it was rolled back, and a far green country opened before him under a swift sunrise. (1. 187)

Unlike the first dream in Tom's house, where Frodo's mind was filled with images of wolves howling, a dark shadow crossing the moon, and Black Riders galloping, this image expresses journey's end, Valimar, one of the central images for goodness in Tolkien's universe. Frodo first experiences the song, which quickly changes from thing heard to thing seen, as pale light obscured by a dark veil of water, "a grey rain-curtain"; the song that is light then transforms the curtain so that it both transmits and reflects light (glass and silver), until finally the veil itself is rolled back (like the rock before the tomb?) to reveal "a far green country" opening "under a swift sunrise." The country is not only spacious, but also distant, not yet near. The land and the light though are the goal, as we see in *The Return of the King* when Frodo sets sail for Valimar, the Blessed Realm, and the same image for journey's end is repeated: "And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise" (3. 384). As Frodo awakens from the dream, he finds that Tom and the house and the light and the land are the immediate expression of that far place: "The vision melted into waking; and there was Tom whistling like a tree-full of birds; and the sun was already slanting down the hill and through the open window. Outside everything was green and pale gold" (1. 187).

The second image occurs shortly thereafter as Frodo is leaving. He realizes that they have not said farewell to Goldberry and is "so distressed" that he turns back:

but at that moment a clear call came rippling down.

There on the hill-brow she stood beckoning to them: her hair was flying loose, and as it caught the sun it shone and shimmered. A light like the glint of water on dewy grass flashed from under her feet as she danced. (1. 187)

Sunlight and water and dance: her joy is there before them. The hobbits hurry up the hill and, ever courteous, bow before her beauty, yet she directs their attention to the land and to the task before them: "but with a wave of her arm she bade them look round; and they looked out from the hilltop over lands under the morning" (1. 188). The land eastward to the Barrow-downs — "a guess of blue and a remote white glimmer blending with the hem of the sky" (1. 188) — lifts their spirits and inspires them to recklessness: "It seemed fainthearted to go jogging aside over the crumpled skirts of the downs towards the Road, when they should be leaping, as lusty as Tom, over the stepping stones of the hills straight towards the Mountains" (1. 188). But "Goldberry spoke to them and recalled their eyes and thoughts. 'Speed now, fair guests!' she said. 'And hold to your purpose!'" (1. 188). Literally and figuratively then Goldberry's task in the story is to be an instance of the goodness and joy inherent in creation, in springtime, for her voice when she first greeted them was "as young and as ancient as Spring, like the song of a glad water flowing down into the night from a bright morning in the hills" (1. 171); and her task is to point the way to that reality for the hobbits: "hold to your purpose. . . it was a merry meeting."

The hobbits' final vision of Goldberry provides a new perspective: from outside Tom's domain, looking back, "they saw Goldberry, now small and slender like a sunlit flower against the sky" (1. 189). From outside Tom's protective circle, there is a sudden vulnerability. The flower can be cut down, it can wither and die; the hobbits may fail in their purpose. Her final gesture is toward them: "she was standing still watching them, and her hands were stretched out towards them. As they looked she gave a clear call, and lifting up her hand she turned and vanished behind the hill" (1. 189). Unlike her counterpart Galadriel, Goldberry has no power to help the hobbits beyond Tom's domain. Instead, she serves primarily as an image of the joy and light (all "glad water," dance, and golden morning brightness) that, in the third book, will become explicitly the central reality of the story.

That is not to say that the joy in Tom's house has no power, for it defeats the malice of Old Man Willow in the beginning, and it frees the hobbits from the creeping cold horror of the Barrow-wights. In fact, Tom's song seemingly has the power to remove the evil spirit from the very structure of the universe:

*Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!  
Shrive! like the cold mist, like the winds go wailing,  
Out into the barren lands far beyond the mountains!  
Come never here again! Leave your barrow empty!  
Lost and forgotten be, darker than the darkness,  
Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended.*

At these words there was a cry and part of the inner



end of the chamber fell in with a crash. Then there was a long trailing shriek, fading away into an unguessable distance; and after that silence. (1. 197)

Such is the power of Tom's joy.

Tom's merriment works equally well on the hobbits, for as they watch him laugh and dance in the sunlight, the horror they experienced fades out of their own hearts. The point is that at the beginning of the story we are given a glimpse of the reality that vanquishes evil: it is joy in creation, imaged in song and dance, in earth and sky, light and water, in Tom's energy and laughter, in Goldberry's beauty and goodness. But this joy which is constant is bound to this place; Tom and Goldberry simply are, an Adam and Eve, free and unfallen, caretakers, left in the world as a reminder of man's true state. The other "human" creatures, all those who possess rationality and thus the power to choose good or evil, can lose or win joy only as a consequence of their own acts. "Hold to your purpose!" The triumph of joy in the story depends on their acts. The beautiful flower can be trampled under foot, Middle-earth can be ruined, all is at risk, all is in jeopardy, and the hobbits move quickly beyond the range of Tom's power.

The difference between Goldberry and Galadriel is the difference between permanence and mutability, the difference between rest and motion, stasis and action. Goldberry is Eve, retaining her joy even in a fallen world, but Galadriel is Eden, heart's desire, beauty and goodness and power, but a perilous good, made poignant by the inevitability of loss. Goldberry, unaffected by the action of the story, can retain her delight in wood and water, hill and light. Galadriel, who acts constantly to defend Lórien from the Dark Lord, will of necessity lose all she has regardless of the outcome. She chooses, as Charles Williams might say, to embrace necessity: her power, her beauty, and the beauty of the land she freely relinquishes, and thus she becomes the most haunting and memorable character in the epic tale. Goldberry we forget for a time, but the light of Galadriel is with us to the end.

Our understanding of Galadriel comes primarily from her relationship with two characters, Frodo the Ring Bearer and Gimli the Dwarf. All the members of the Fellowship, however, experience her power to see into creatures' minds and to know their hearts, though her virtue is not in telling others what to do:

"I will not give you counsel, saying do this, or do that. For not in doing or contriving, nor in choosing between this course and another, can I avail; but only in knowing what was and is, and in part also what shall be." (1. 462)

Whereas Goldberry was a center of light and joy, offering sanctuary from the terrors of the night, Galadriel is a center of light and knowledge (insight), defining the exact nature of human responsibility and choice: "Your Quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all. Yet hope remains while the company is true" (1. 462). Having said this, she searches the mind and

heart of each of the companions, offering to each a choice "between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead, and something that he greatly desired: clear before his mind it lay, and to get it he had only to turn aside from the road and leave the Quest and the war against Sauron to others" (1. 463). Only after this testing does Galadriel release them and offer them the sanctuary of Lothlórien: "'Do not let your hearts be troubled. . . . Tonight you shall sleep in peace'" (1. 462).

From Frodo's relation to Galadriel we see her true quality emerge, for, if she tests the Fellowship, Frodo also, in offering her the One Ring, tests her:

"You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!" (1. 473)

In defining this possibility, Galadriel draws all of nature into the image of herself as Lilit, as Siren, as Perilous Lady of medieval romance and fairy tale. Grasping at power as an end in itself is evil, the wrong use of creation; seeking to hold on to life and possess it as if it were one's own simply perverts the creature, as it did Melkor before the beginning of the worlds, as sung in the *Ainulindalë*.<sup>2</sup>

For a moment Galadriel allows the light from her own ring to obscure all else, thus letting the light itself convey the evil in the temptation:

She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illumined her alone and left all else dark. She stood before Frodo seeming now tall beyond measurement, and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful. (1. 473)

Real light is not for self-glorification; it is for illuminating creation and dispelling darkness, not for creating darkness. Like her male counterpart, Gandalf, Galadriel refuses the ring and passes the test. Laughter and self-mastery triumph over greed and despair; she will be herself and accept the role that necessity will bring:

Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! she was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.

"I pass the test," she said. "I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel" (1. 473-474)

The longing for permanence, the sadness of loss, the renunciation of power and worship, and exquisite beauty combined with a strong sense of moral obligation (right choice) — such is the quality of Galadriel as she interacts with the Ring-bearer. Like Goldberry Galadriel sings, but her songs express the sadness of her exile in Middle-earth, the beauty of Eldamar, the ancient home of elves "beyond the Sundering Seas," the coming of Winter to Lórien and the uncertainty of the final days: "But if of ships I now should sing, what ship would come to me, / What ship



would bear me ever back across so wide a Sea?" (1. 483). At the parting feast Frodo is little able to eat, "heeding only the beauty of the Lady and her voice." In rejecting the Ring she has become for him what she will be once his quest is complete:

She seemed no longer perilous or terrible, nor filled with hidden power. Already she seemed to him, as by men of later days Elves still at times are seen: present and yet remote, a living vision of that which has already been left far behind by the flowing streams of Time. (1. 483)

Like the idea of Eden or the Garden of the Hesperides, Galadriel (as Elf Queen) is the image of an unattainable beauty that haunts the world of men (our world), but is no longer present in it.

In addition to offering sanctuary, Galadriel gives gifts that stay with the members of the Fellowship through the last chapter of the story, "The Grey Havens." Thus, while she remains in Lórien, her gifts keep her image and her meaning often before us, and they finally bring the magic of Lórien to the Shire at the end of the tale when, in her own words, as Sam uses her gift of the earth from her garden, we indeed "remember Galadriel, and catch a glimpse far off of Lórien. . ." (1. 486).

Her gift to Frodo, the Ring-bearer, typifies her nature as Lady of Light:

"For you I have prepared this." She held up a small crystal phial: it glittered as she moved it, and rays of white light sprang from her hand. "In this phial," she said, "is caught the light of Eärendil's star, set amid the waters of my fountain. It will shine still brighter when night is about you. May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out. Remember Galadriel and her Mirror!" (1. 487-488)

At this point in the story, with Gandalf presumed dead, she is the primary image of goodness that stands against evil, of light that casts out darkness. In remembering her the characters remember that entire structure of goodness imaged in the beauty and strength of the Lady, the glory of the Light, and the timelessness and peace of the Land, and that vision, as we shall see, keeps them steadfast to those tasks that mean the destruction of Mordor and the redemption of Middle-earth.

If Frodo's relationship with Galadriel brings out the near supernatural dimension of her character, the Lady of Light, Gimli the Dwarf's relationship reveals the true depths of her character, her insight, her love, and her capacity to inspire love in others. When Celeborn, for example, after hearing of Gandalf's demise in Moria, recalls the ancient enmity between Dwarves and Elves and repents having allowed the Fellowship access to Lórien, Galadriel stops him:

"Do not repent of your welcome to the Dwarf. If our folk had been exiled long and far from Lothlórien, who of the Galadrim, even Celeborn the Wise, would pass night and would not wish to look upon their ancient home, though it had become an abode of dragons?" (1. 461)

She is insightful; she understands the Dwarf's love of his ancient home, first through her own love of Lothlórien, but finally because she is able to understand Moria on its own terms (imagined by her use of the Dwarves' language) and as a Dwarf would perceive it:

"Dark is the water of Kheled-zâram, and cold are the springs of Kibil-nâla, and fair were the many-pillared halls of Khazad-dûm in Elder Days before the fall of mighty kings beneath the stone." (1. 461)

As she finishes speaking, her words and her smile dissolve the categories of Dwarf and Elf; the relationship achieved here touches the source of their creatureliness, what we might call their common humanity:

She looked upon Gimli, who sat glowering and sad, and she smiled. And the Dwarf, hearing the names given in his own ancient tongue, 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. (1. 461)

Having said "Thou" To Gimli, Galadriel enables him to respond "Thou" to her:

Wonder came into his face, and then he smiled in answer. He rose clumsily and bowed in dwarf-fashion, saying: "yet more fair is the living land of Lórien, and the Lady Galadriel is above all the jewels that lie beneath the earth!" (1. 461)

Galadriel's courtesy and love call forth a like response from Gimli, for as she has seen into his heart and given him Moria, so to speak, so he is able, in his own fashion, to give her Lothlórien, for now he has truly understood it. Moria is a dead land, and his desire is no longer fixed there, but on the living land of Lórien and the Lady who rules it in wisdom and love.

The quality of this relationship is continued in the scene of the gift-giving. The situation there, I think, bears a noticeable resemblance to that of St. Thomas before the crucifix in the church of St. Dominic in Naples, as described by G. K. Chesterton in his biography, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*. The story is a traditional saint's story: a voice speaks from "the carved Christ," telling the "kneeling Friar that he had written rightly," and it offers him the "choice of reward among all the things of the world" (135). Chesterton says,

It is an old story, in so far as it is simply the offer made to a devotee of solitude or simplicity, of the pick of all the prizes of life. The hermit, true or false, the fakir, the fanatic or the cynic, Stylites on his column or Diogenes in his tub, can all be pictured as tempted by the powers of the earth, of the air or of the heavens, with the offer of the best of everything; and replying that they want nothing. (135)

St. Thomas, however, does not make the usual reply. With all creation spread before him, he, in Chesterton's words, "spoke with, and for, that almost blasphemous audacity which is one with the humility of his religion: 'I will have Thyself'" (137).



It is hard to imagine Tolkien not having read Chesterton's account of the miracle, but whether he did or no, the situation in *The Fellowship of the Ring* has similar impact. While Galadriel has prepared gifts for the other members of the Fellowship, she has none for Gimli and thus bids him ask: "And what gift would a Dwarf ask of the Elves?" (1. 486). Her question again focuses the differences in kind: Dwarf and Elf, different kinds of creatures, one of earth, gemstone, and gold, one of tree, air, and starlight. Gimli's answer is the traditional reply, "None, Lady," which he qualifies immediately: "It is enough for me to have seen the Lady of the Galadrim, and to have heard her gentle words." Dwarves are creatures noted for making things and acquisitiveness, yet before the reality of the Lady, her beauty and her courtesy, gentleness in the old language, no *thing* will suffice.

While the difference in kind is maintained, Gimli's response becomes the basis for a new understanding between Dwarves and Elves. Galadriel's words have the authority of law: "Here all ye Elves!" she cried to those about her. "Let none say again that Dwarves are grasping and ungracious!" (1. 487).

Again, in her courtesy, she presses Gimli to name his desire: "Yet surely, Gimli, son of Glóin, you desire something that I could give? Name it, I bid you! You shall not be the only guest without a gift" (1. 487). Indeed, no. It would be almost discourteous to refuse; thus, like St. Thomas, Gimli defines his desire in the only terms available:

"There is nothing, Lady Galadriel," said Gimli, bowing low and stammering. "Nothing, unless it might be — unless it is permitted to ask, nay, to name a single strand of your hair, which surpasses the gold of the earth as the stars surpass the gems of the mine. I do not ask for such a gift. But you commanded me to name my desire." (1. 487)

The Elves are astonished at the enormity of Gimli's request; Celeborn gazes at Gimli "in wonder"; but Galadriel understands and smiles:

"It is said that the skill of the Dwarves is in their hands rather than in their tongues," she said; "yet that is not true of Gimli. For none have ever made to me a request so bold and yet so courteous. And how shall I refuse, since I commanded him to speak?" (1. 487)

Her value is fixed: one strand of her hair is more valuable to the Dwarf than gold; the quality of her life — her love, her beauty, her goodness, her understanding — is the only *thing* worth possessing in the universe.

When Galadriel asks Gimli what he will do with such a gift, he responds, "Treasure it, Lady, . . . in memory of your words to me at our first meeting" (1. 487). Here then are creatures in their true relationship, different in nature as Elf and Dwarf, yet one in understanding and love; the insight achieved in Lórien stands with us throughout the remainder of the epic quest as Galadriel's name is brought into the story again and again.<sup>3</sup>

As with Goldberry, we see Galadriel for the last time from a distance. The image is that of light: "She shone like a window of glass upon a far hill in the westerning sun, or as a remote lake seen from a mountain: a crystal fallen in the lap of the land" (1. 488). From the far perspective the light is diminished, sunlight reflected off glass, a shining lake seen from a great distance, and finally, picking up the strain of imagery from Gimli, crystal, precious stone, the most valuable thing in the land.

Galadriel's final act is a song, the "Námárie" or "Farewell," and it serves at least two purposes in the story. First, it expresses the intolerable sense of loss possible in life, for Galadriel sings of her own loss of Valimar, the blessed land of the gods, from whence she was banished because of her part in the rebellion of the Noldor against the Valar.<sup>4</sup> Galadriel's desire for the blessed land expresses too Frodo's sense of loss in parting from Galadriel. The song and the translation come to us, apparently, through Frodo: "Yet as is the way of Elvish words, they remained graven in his memory, and long afterwards he interpreted them, as well as he could: . . ." The narrator gives us first the Elvish words, then the translation:

"Ah! like gold fall the leaves in the wind, long years numberless as the wings of trees! The long years have passed like swift draughts of the sweet mead in lofty halls beyond the West beneath the blue vaults of Varda wherein the stars tremble in the song of her voice, holy and queenly. Who now shall refill the cup for me? For now the Kindler, Varda, the Queen of the Stars, from Mount Everwhite has uplifted her hands like clouds, and all paths are drowned deep in shadow; and out of a grey country darkness lies on the foaming waves between us, and mist covers the jewels of Calacirya for ever. Now lost, lost to those from the East is Valimar! Farewell! Maybe thou shalt find Valimar. Maybe even thou shalt find it. Farewell!" (1. 489)

While the land, her heart's desire, is lost to her forever, she believes, yet she offers hope to Frodo and his companions: "Maybe thou shalt find Valimar. Maybe even thou shalt find it" (1. 489). Yet Frodo is not comforted. The doom of choice is upon him and Lórien is the last sanctuary. The song is lovely, but Frodo is not comforted.

The second purpose of the song is to put before us the figure of Varda, spouse of Manwe, Queen of the Stars, the Lady who is at once angelic Intelligence and goddess,<sup>5</sup> highest among the Valar who sprang from the mind of Ilúvatar (the Father of All) and into whose charge the world, Arda, was given, the being Frodo invoked before the Black Rider stabbed him (1. 263). If Galadriel's light is a reflection, finally, as the images of window and lake suggest, then surely it is a reflection of the light of Varda and therefore an image of that reality that stands behind the world of Middle-earth and that brought it into being as we see in *The Silmarillion*. Thus, when Frodo has been wounded by Shelob at the end of *The Two Towers*, Sam discovers the Phial of Galadriel, speaks her name faintly, and thus invokes the whole world of the Elves that he loves:



"Galadriel!" he said faintly, and then he heard voices far off but clear: the crying of the Elves as they walked under the stars in the beloved shadows of the Shire, and the music of the elves as it came through his sleep in the Hall of Fire in the house of Elrond.

*Gilthioniel A Elbereth!* (2. 430)

What happens next remains somewhat of a mystery. Presumably the music of the Elves, as well as the name of Elbereth, invokes their song of Varda, whom they call Elbereth Gilthioniel, the song Frodo had heard in Rivendale, but one Sam had heard only in his sleep (1. 312). In any case the name is enough, for Sam cries out a prayer in a way that suggests the whole world of Galadriel speaking through him:

And then his tongue was loosed and his voice cried in a language which he did not know:

*A Elbereth Gilthioniel  
o menel palan-diriel,  
le nallon sí d'nguruthos!  
A Tiro nin, Fanuilos!*

And with that he staggered to his feet and was Samwise the hobbit, Hamfast's son, again. (2. 430)

Professor Tolkien translates the invocation thus:

O! Queen who kindled star on star, white-robed from heaven gazing far, here overwhelmed in dread of Death  
I cry: O guard me, Elbereth! (*The Road Goes Ever On* 72)

Sam is strengthened, Galadriel's light blazes, and Death in the form of Shelob is turned back. The cumulative effect of the references to Galadriel and Varda or Elbereth is to secure the sense of a supernatural power at work behind Galadriel, one that is as constant and beautiful as the stars, and one that gives Galadriel a supernatural aura as well. Implicitly then she acquires the stature of a goddess; she becomes a figure like Beatrice, and the light of the heavens associated with her becomes finally the central image that expresses the underlying reality of goodness and joy in Middle-earth.

In Lothlórien Gimli the Dwarf gives final expression to the meaning of Galadriel and her land. Just as her love and understanding were the only goods worth desiring, so is separation from that love and understanding the only real evil:

"Tell me, Legolas, why did I come on this Quest? Little did I know where the chief peril lay! Truly Elrond spoke saying that we could not force what we might meet upon our road. Torment in the dark was the danger that I feared, and it did not hold me back. But I would not have come, had I known the danger of light and joy. Now I have taken my worst wound in this parting, even if I were to go this night straight to the Dark Lord. Alas for Gimli son of Glóin!" (1. 490)

Legolas attempts to console his friend but to little avail:

"Nay!" said Legolas. "Alas for us all! And for all that walk the world in these after-days. For such is the way of it: to find and lose, as it seems to those whose boat is on the running stream. But I count you blessed, Gimli son of Glóin: for your loss you suffer of your own free will, and you might have chosen otherwise. But you have not

forsaken your companions, and the least reward that you shall have is that the memory of Lothlórien shall remain ever clear and unstained in your heart, and shall neither fade nor grow stale." (1. 490)

Mutability is the theme. Finding and losing are the terms of this life. The heart's desire is real, light and joy are possible, but one achieves them only by pursuing the task at hand. Legolas' words, however, are cold comfort for Gimli, for "Memory is not what the heart desires" (1. 490). Yet memory serves the characters well, for the figure of Galadriel stays with the characters throughout the quest and is taken up into the images of sunlight and starlight that fill the third volume of the trilogy:

"Then you think that the Darkness is coming?" said Éowyn. "Darkness Unescapable?" And suddenly she drew close to him.

"No," said Faramir, looking into her face. "It was but a picture in the mind. I do not know what is happening. The reason of my waking mind tells me that great evil has befallen and we stand at the end of days. But my heart says nay; and all my limbs are light, and a hope and joy are come to me that no reason can deny. Éowyn, Éowyn, White Lady of Rohan, in this hour I do not believe that any darkness will endure!" And he stooped and kissed her brow.

And so they stood on the walls of the city of Gondor, and a great wind rose and blew, and their hair, raven and golden, streamed out mingling in the air. And the Shadow departed, and the Sun was unveiled, and the light leaped forth; and the waters of Anduin shone like silver, and in all the houses of the City men sang for the joy that welled up in their hearts from what source they could not tell.

(3. 297)

In the preceding passage we have the "turn" in the story experienced by characters who are no longer directly involved in the action. At the moment when "Darkness Unescapable" seemed about to roll over them like "a wave that should engulf the world," the change occurs, beyond all reason. The language describing the threat and the change is biblical and apocalyptic: earthquake and lightning accompany the "vast mountain of darkness"; the use of the coordinate conjunction *and* to join together a series of primarily independent clauses suggests the narrative style of the King James translation. The effect is to celebrate and further ground that joy which we experience in the turn of the story in the very structure of the universe. That is, Sun and Stars are always there behind the Darkness; they are permanent and have their ultimate origin in the Flame Imperishable of Ilúvatar. As Sam realizes upon being "smote" by the beauty of a white star the night before he and Frodo reach Mount Doom, the Shadow is "only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach" (3. 244).

That despair (Darkness Unescapable) is possible and overwhelming, we have ample evidence, but, as for the Psalmist, "joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30), and the language of the third volume of the trilogy conveys the real nature of that joy experienced in the Ringbearer's victory. The Sun, for example, doesn't just emerge from behind the



clouds: it is "unveiled," and the style suggests that the departure of the Shadow is not necessarily the cause. The coordinate conjunctions separate and emphasize each action: "And the Shadow departed, and the Sun was unveiled, and light leaped forth;..." The semicolon after *forth* allows a brief pause between the vigorous action of the light and its immediate consequences, thus giving final emphasis to the meaning of the light: "and the waters of Anduin shone like silver, and in all the houses of the City men sang for the joy that welled up in their hearts from what source they could not tell." The effect on the water is connected to the effect on the people because the joy "welled up" as if from some underground, hidden source, which is exactly what joy (and the Sun in the third volume) has been throughout the story — hidden because of the menace of darkness and despair, but glimpsed throughout as well in characters like Gandalf and Treebeard, Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, and, of course, Galadriel.

That Galadriel is part of this celebration of light and joy is dramatized by the final confrontation between Gimli and Éomer concerning "the Lady of the Golden Wood":

And before he [Éomer] went to his rest he sent for Gimli the Dwarf, and he said to him: "Gimli Glóin's son, have you your axe ready?"

"Nay, lord," said Gimli, "but I can speedily fetch it, if there be need."

"You shall judge," said Éomer. "For there are certain rash words concerning the Lady of the Golden Wood that lie still between us. And now I have seen her with my eyes."

"Well, lord," said Gimli, "and what say you now?"

"Alas!" said Éomer. "I will not say that she is the fairest lady that lives."

"Then I must go for my axe," said Gimli.

"But first I will plead this excuse," said Éomer. "Had I seen her in other company, I would have said all that you could wish. But now I will put Queen Arwen Evenstar first, and I am ready to do battle on my own part with any who deny me. Shall I call for my sword?"

Then Gimli bowed low. "Nay, you are excused for my part, lord," he said. "You have chosen the Evening; but my *love is given to the Morning*. And my heart forebodes that soon it will pass away forever." (emphasis added; 3. 312-313)

Even though the Lady Arwen Evenstar emerges at the end of the story as the final, archetypal, feminine image of goodness and light (As Frodo says to Gandalf, responding in wonder to the arrival of Arwen, "At last I understand why we have waited! This is the ending. Now not day only shall be beloved, but night too shall be beautiful and blessed and all its fear pass away!" [3. 310]), Gimli's response recalls the significance of Galadriel in the story and her fate; Gimli identifies her with Morning, the coming of light, the rising Sun, whose function as triumphant image of joy we have just seen. Yet the triumph of Light over Darkness in the story means that the Morning of the world is past and that the Evening of the world has come; the Third Age of Elves, Dwarves, Ents and Wizards, the Age of the Rings, has truly ended. Alas!

Our last glimpse of Galadriel occurs as she rides to the Grey Havens with Elrond to set sail for the West and her true home, Valimar, from which she has so long been separated. Sam and Frodo hear the Elves before they see them, and the Elven song is, appropriately, "A Elbereth Gilthoniel," which focuses the real end of this journey, the return to Valimar and the presence of Varda or Elbereth, the Queen of the Stars. Elrond is there, wearing "a mantle of grey," and he has the most powerful of the three rings, Vilya, "gold with a great blue stone"; but it is Galadriel who stands out for the last time, for she is dressed in white and seems to contain the light of Elbereth within herself; given her role in the story, it is a fitting final image:

But Galadriel sat upon a white palfrey and was robed all in glimmering white, like clouds about the Moon; for she herself seemed to shine with a soft light. On her finger was Nenyia, the ring wrought of mithril, that bore a single white stone flickering like a frosty star. (3. 381)

Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories" writes that the joy of the fairy-tale "denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *exangelium* [good news], giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (68). The glimpse in *The Lord of the Rings* is not so fleeting, but it is poignant. The meetings with Goldberry and Galadriel provide intimations of that joy, and the entire thrust of the story is toward the experience of joy in Frodo's successful completion of the quest and the celebration that follows. There is poignancy too in the change that must of necessity occur in Middle-earth with the loss of Galadriel, Gandalf, and Frodo, and the fact that the story (now our story) must go on. We have had a glimpse of Valimar, Home beyond the walls of the world, so to speak, but the last image of light in the story is a truly homely image that captures that sense of continuance and continuity and eases us back into the ordinary, unpretentious world where the story began. The story ends with Sam's return home:

And he went on, and there was yellow light, and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was expected. And Rose drew him in, and set him in his chair, and put little Elanor upon his lap.

He drew a deep breath. "Well, I'm back," he said.

The End (3. 385) ☛

## Notes

1. See for example Genesis 1:3 and Luke 2:9-10.
2. "And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined" (17).
3. See for example Gimli, Legolas, and Aragorn's encounter with Éomer of Rohan (2.41-50); their and Gandalf's encounter with Éomer's lord, King Théoden, and Grima Wormtongue (2.150-151); and most importantly, perhaps, Frodo and Sam's encounter with Faramir (near the end of volume 2) where Sam, this time, asserts the value of Galadriel: "The Lady of Lórien! Galadriel!" cried Sam. "You should see her, indeed you should, sir. I am only a hobbit, and gardening's my job at home, sir, if you understand me, and I'm not much good at poetry — not at making it: a bit of a comic rhyme, perhaps, now and again, you know, but not real poetry — so I can't tell you what I mean. It ought to be sung. You'd have to get Strider, Aragorn that is, or old Mr. Bilbo, for that. But I wish



I could make a song about her. Beautiful she is, sir! Lovely! Sometimes like a great tree in flower, sometimes like a white daffodownily, small and slender like. Hard as di'monds, soft as moonlight. Warm as sunlight, cold as frost in the stars. Proud and far-off as a snow-mountain, and as merry as any lass I ever saw with daisies in her hair in springtime. But that's a lot o' nonsense, and all wide of my mark."

"Then she must be lovely indeed," said Faramir. "Perilously fair."

"I don't know about perilous," said Sam. "It strikes me that folk takes their peril with them into Lórien, and finds it there because they've brought it. But perhaps you could call her perilous, because she's so strong in herself. You, you could dash yourself to pieces on her, like a ship on a rock; or drown yourself, like a hobbit in a river. But neither rock nor river would be to blame. . . ." (265-66)

4. This is told fully in *The Silmarillion*.

5. In *The Road Goes Ever On* Tolkien, in discussing his translation of the song, describes Varda thus: "As a 'divine' or 'angelic' person Varda/Eäwëth could be said to be 'looking afar from heaven' (as in Sam's invocation); hence the use of a present participle. She was often thought of, or depicted, as standing on a great height looking towards Middle-earth, with eyes that penetrated the shadows, and listening to the cries for aid of Elves (and Men) in peril or grief. Frodo (Vol. 1, p. 208) and Sam both invoke her in moments of extreme peril. The Elvish hymns to her. (These and other references to religion in *The Lord of the Rings* are frequently overlooked.)" (73)

6. In the second chapter of Luke, for example, in the King James version, of the 52 verses, 43 of them begin with coordinate conjunctions: 39 and, 2 but, 2 for. Needless to say I take exception to Humphrey Carpenter's reductive comments on Tolkien's style in *Secret Gardens*: "The quasi-biblical diction of the later parts of *The Lord of the Rings* suggests that Tolkien was trying to lift the events of his tale on to an Old Testament level" (212). My point is that Tolkien succeeds: Frodo (and Gollum) and Sam complete their task, Goodness and Light triumph, and that is the pattern we watch unfold from the very beginning of the Trilogy when the forces of Darkness (the Black Riders) first began to menace the hobbits; the "heightened" language reflects the full supernatural significance of that triumph. To borrow a phrase from C. S. Lewis, joy is the serious business of *The Return of the King*; the style of the Psalms is appropriate:

And before the Sun had fallen far from the noon out of the East there came a great Eagle flying, and he bore tidings beyond hope from the Lords of the West, crying:

Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor,  
for the Realm of Sauron is ended for ever,  
and the Dark Tower is thrown down.

Sing and rejoice, ye people of the Tower of Guard,  
for your watch hath not been vain,  
and the Black Gate is broken,  
and your King hath passed through,  
and he is victorious.

Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West,  
for your King shall come again,  
and he shall dwell among you  
all the days of your life.

And the Tree that was withered shall be renewed  
and he shall plant it in the high places  
and the City shall be blessed.

Sing all ye people!

And the people sang all in the ways of the City. (3. 297-298)

The passage is packed with biblical themes and images that suggest the experience of joy as a consequence of God's activity in human history. To enumerate some: the eagle as messenger suggests Exodus 19:4 and Isaiah 40; for the singing of praise in the Psalms see especially 92, 95, 96, and 98; for the coming (Return) of the King (human and divine) is certainly an important Old and New Testament image; and then there are the references to Waiting, Towers, Watches, and Gates, as well as the major theme of renewal found in Isaiah 40 and the following chapters.

7. Note the way in which joy is imaged as the central reality of Gandalf's character. Gandalf's "gay and merry" laughter is, in effect, his response to Pippin's "generous" behavior before the grim Denethor:

"Pippin glanced in some wonder at the face now close beside his own, for, the sound of that laugh had been gay and merry. Yet in the wizard's face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth." (3. 34).

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## Editorial Announcement

Mythlore welcomes a new Staff position and new Staff Member. Frank Medlar is the new Submissions Editor. Effective now all submissions that are not reviews, letters, artwork, linguistic articles, or ads should be sent to him. His enthusiasm and commitment will make the submissions process flow more smoothly and rapidly, especially since the implementation of the refereed system of Editorial Advisors. His address is on Page 2.

## SUBMISSIONS

Mythlore welcomes submissions of articles, art, letters of comment, reviews and other related material. See page two for the addresses of the appropriate editor when making submissions. All written submissions, except letters, must be in one of two forms:

(1) Typewritten submissions should be double spaced. Two copies should be submitted. Articles should be in "blind" submission format for editorial evaluation, with the name and address of the author indicated only on the cover letter. They should also include a short paragraph of biographical information about the author for publication.

(2) IBM compatible formatted 5.25" floppy disk, with a text print out, to verify format. The files should be straight ASCII files unless the material has been written using Microsoft Word, Word Perfect (4.2 or 5.0 versions), Wordstar, MultiMate, XyWrite, or Volkswriter III (1.0 version). Disk submissions save both time and expense. In effect, this represents a much appreciated contribution, and is encouraged whenever it is possible.

The *MLA Handbook* is the preferred style for articles, except that short citations like *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, & author and page number references alone, are best incorporated within parentheses in the text, rather than making them footnotes.

Additional questions concerning submissions should be sent to the Submissions Editor.