

A Brief Biography

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Famous photographs have frozen J.R.R. Tolkien in his seventies. This is ironic: the photographers only came calling when fame was actively distracting him from writing. He wrote *The Hobbit* during his forties and most of *The Lord of the Rings* in his fifties; his most productive periods were interspersed between 23 and 60. Even the idea of the family man and professor, distilling his medievalist expertise into fiction, gives only half the picture. His grand creative project, the Middle-earth legendarium, was begun in his early twenties, during formative years marked by shocks and griefs and by the violent advent of the modern age.¹

The painful collisions between his faith and the fragility of life, between his love of home and his experience of impermanency, were highly productive. So was the encounter between his medievalism and the modern age, the violent birth throes of which engulfed his generation. Middle-earth emerged during World War I, which exposed Tolkien to almost unspeakable horror and killed most of his friends. No wonder he then pursued a life of calm, solid security. When a further World War threatened everything Tolkien held dear, it powered and colored *The Lord of the Rings*, partly by reawakening memories of the earlier war.

Ancestry and Childhood: 1892–1904

Imaginative and conflicting family legends emerged about how Tolkien's German paternal ancestors left Saxony in the mid-eighteenth century; and to explain the origins of the surname *Tollkühn*, meaning "foolhardy." An ancestor was said to have fought the Turks at the Siege of Vienna and captured the Sultan's standard. Recent research suggests the emigration was from East Prussia (now Poland/Russia) and moves the Saxon connection back to the thirteenth century.

In nineteenth-century London and then Birmingham, the family trade had been clock-making or music: teaching, making pianos, or selling sheet music. However, Arthur Reuel Tolkien (b. 1857) left Birmingham in 1889 to work for the Bank of Africa; in 1890 he became branch manager in Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State, a Boer republic. His Birmingham fiancée, Mabel Suffield (b. 1870), married him in Cape Town in April 1891.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3 January 1892 in Bloemfontein, where he was baptized in the Anglican cathedral (for a detailed timeline of his life, see *Chronology*). He became known to friends as Ronald, John Ronald, JRRT, Tollers, or just Tolkien. In 1894, a brother was born, Hilary Arthur Reuel (d. 1976). But the stovetop climate did not suit Ronald, so on 20 April 1895, Mabel and the boys arrived in England to visit her parents in King's Heath near Birmingham. That autumn, Arthur contracted rheumatic fever and, in February 1896, he died, so the single-parent family stayed in England.

Even this early on, Middle-earth was perhaps brewing: giant spiders engendered by the tarantula bite he suffered in Bloemfontein, the recurrent sea awe awakened by seeing the Indian Ocean while not yet two years old, and the pivotal voyages of Eärendil and others prefigured by his own voyage to England. The Shire was shaped by his “particular love of central Midlands English countryside, based on good water, stones and elm trees and small quiet rivers”² – and especially by Sarehole, a village outside Birmingham where Mabel and the boys moved in summer 1896. In stories told to Hilary, Ronald made ogres out of the big people in their little world – the miller's son and the local farmer (see Hilary Tolkien 2009). Ronald came to identify closely with his mother's Suffield family and their roots in the West Midlands – so closely that he even felt he had inherited an aptitude for the English dialect of the region, from the Old English of Mercia to the language of the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain* poet (see Chapters 18 and 19).

Living frugally and supplemented by aid from relatives, Mabel taught the boys at home, introducing Ronald to drawing and calligraphy – both Suffield family talents – as well as botany, French, and Latin. She fueled his imagination with children's literature including George MacDonald, as well as mythology and Arthuriana. He enjoyed fairy-stories (notably the Andrew Lang fairy books), but they were not his favorites (see Chapter 24). He particularly “desired dragons,” but when he wrote about “a green great dragon” at the age of seven and was told, “green great” was bad English, it led to an interest in language which distracted him for years from further attempts at fiction (*Bio* 30–31; *Letters* 221).

School began in fits and starts. Ronald enrolled in September 1900 at King Edward's, and they moved into Birmingham to be nearer the school. Here, behind the new house in King's Heath, he observed names on coal trucks which kindled his love for Welsh (see Chapter 22). But after Mabel embraced Catholicism and instructed the boys in the faith, most of the family distanced themselves, including the uncle who had been paying Ronald's school fees. In 1902, the boys started at St. Philip's Grammar School, attached to the Catholic Oratory; but Ronald quickly outstripped his peers, and Mabel resumed teaching the boys at home. By the age of ten, Ronald was learning Greek, reading Chaucer, and imbibing Mabel's interest in etymology. A scholarship enabled him to return to King Edward's in spring 1903.

The following year Mabel fell ill from diabetes, and they moved to Rednal in rural Worcestershire so she could convalesce. When she died in November 1904, Ronald felt she had martyred herself to keep her sons in the faith. He remembered “vainly waving a hand at the sky saying ‘it is so empty and cold’” (*Letters* 416). Yet he remained a lifelong Catholic, and later used Middle-earth to explore the consolations of mortality.

Youth: 1904–1911

The Oratory's Father Francis Morgan (1857–1935), who had arranged and subsidized the cottage, now became the boys' legal guardian. A strict but flamboyant and kind man, he spent his own money supplementing the returns from Mabel's invested capital to provide for Ronald and Hilary. He moved them into a rented room in the Edgbaston home of their mother's sister Beatrice. They spent much time at the Oratory, and Father Francis took them for holidays at Lyme Regis, where Ronald found a fossilized jawbone and pretended it was a dragon's.

At King Edward's, Tolkien started German, but the headmaster and classics tutor Robert Cary Gilson also encouraged him to look at the history of Latin and Greek, while another teacher lent him an Anglo-Saxon primer, and in 1908 he discovered Joseph Wright's grammar of Gothic. And as if the world did not hold enough languages to learn, he started inventing new ones. Nevbosh or "new nonsense" was a hodgepodge of mostly classical words.³ In due course, he began devising codes and learning the artificial language Esperanto, creating the Spanish-influenced Naffarin, and supplementing the slim vocabulary of long-dead Gothic by reconstructing lost words from cognates in its kindred Germanic languages (see Chapter 14).

Translating classical verse also awoke a taste for poetry: it was Homer that first gave him "the sensation of literary pleasure" (*Letters* 172). He acquired a taste for the Catholic mystic poet, Francis Thompson, and the verse and prose romances of medieval revivalist William Morris. By now, he was reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in Middle English, *Beowulf* in Old English, and the story of Sigurd in Old Norse.

The boys were unhappy with Aunt Beatrice, so in mid-1908 Father Francis moved them to nearby Duchess Road.⁴ It was a fateful move. Here they befriended a fellow lodger and orphan, Edith Mary Bratt (b. 1889), who hoped to be a piano teacher; she and Ronald fell in love, reckless of differences. She was three years older than him and an Anglican. By autumn 1909, when Father Francis got wind of the secret romance and forbade it, Ronald had neglected his studies, and in December, he failed the Oxford University entrance exam. In January 1910, he was moved with Hilary to new Edgbaston lodgings and banned from all contact with Edith. She quickly moved to Cheltenham to stay with family friends.

The loss of his mother and the forced break with Edith led to periodic introspection and despair, which clashed with Ronald's natural energy and geniality. It eventually proved a fertile brew. He turned in on himself, writing not only an unhappy diary but also a smattering of poetry that shows for the first time some interest in Faërie – perhaps due to seeing J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan* in April 1910. Another building block of Middle-earth fell into place during the next school year – his last – when he discovered W.H. Kirby's translation of the *Kalevala*, Finland's mythological verse cycle (see Chapter 21). But Ronald was not instantly turned into a myth-maker. His first published verse, "The Battle of the Eastern Field" (*King Edward's School Chronicle*, March 1911), is not as epic as it sounds: it is a parody of epic about a rugby match. Rugby proved important, nevertheless. It was on the school rugby pitch that he befriended Christopher Luke Wiseman (1893–1987) and Vincent Trought (b. 1893). The school debating, literary, and dramatic societies were soon dominated by their larger circle, including the headmaster's son Robert Quilter Gilson (b. 1893). When Ronald was school librarian in his final term, the circle would meet for tea in the library office and at Barrow's department store. They called themselves the Tea Club or Barrovian Society, soon simply the T.C.B.S.

Oxford Undergraduate: 1911–1915

After a summer hiking holiday in the Swiss Alps in October 1911 with his Aunt Jane Neave and others – material he later wove into *The Hobbit* – Tolkien began reading Classics at Exeter College, Oxford, having passed the entrance exam second time round and won an annual £60 exhibition (financial award lower than a scholarship). Here he formed new clubs, the Apolausticks and the Chequers, and involved himself in the college undergraduates' Stapeldon Society and Essay Club. As was expected of Exonians born overseas, he also enrolled in the King Edward's Horse, a territorial regiment. Meanwhile, the thriving T.C.B.S. led a production of Sheridan's *The Rivals* at King Edward's that Christmas, in which Tolkien appeared as Mrs. Malaprop, but a month later suffered its first loss when illness claimed Troughton's life.

Further distractions included a rekindling of Tolkien's love of Finnish, which blossomed after he discovered C.N.E. Eliot's *Finnish Grammar* in the college library. But he wrote to Edith to renew his courtship the minute he turned 21 in January 1913. Her reply would have been a devastating blow to anyone less single-minded than Tolkien – she was engaged to another man – but Tolkien was undeterred. He took the train to Cheltenham and, in the course of a long afternoon's conversation, he won her over. Telling no one but Father Francis (who now accepted the inevitable), the two became engaged.

Tolkien's classical studies reached their ignominious end with Honour Moderations, the February 1913 mid-course exams. He only achieved a Second, despite an alpha in comparative philology. The problem was overfamiliarity with classical literature and a desire to explore beyond. It was the Northern world of the Germanic peoples that drew him, with Celtic as a further fringe interest. He switched to English Language and Literature, specifically the language course, which included very little literature later than Geoffrey Chaucer, but covered Old and Middle English, Gothic and Germanic Philology, as well as Old Norse. This, together with his engagement, set Tolkien squarely on his future road, academically and personally. But his creativity still ran no further than drawing landscapes or occasional symbolist pictures he called "Ishnesses" (Hammond and Scull 1995, 40), inventing languages and scripts that were rudimentary by his later standards, and writing a few poems.

The outbreak of World War I in summer 1914 was a profound shock – "the collapse of all my world" (*Letters* 393). He was shocked to find wounded soldiers in the streets, university buildings converted to military hospitals, and his college almost empty of undergraduates. But Tolkien delayed enlistment, knowing he would need his degree for an academic career (on the war and its creative impact, see Garth 2003; Croft and Röttinger 2019). It was also a creative turning point. Staying with Aunt Jane in Gedling, Nottinghamshire, in September, he wrote "The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star." In method (it extrapolates from an obscure Old English reference to *earendel*) and imaginative specifics (it describes the mariner Éarendel sailing over the earth's rim into the stars), the poem counts as the first Middle-earth text. Tolkien worked also on "The Story of Kullervo," a prose retelling from the *Kalevala*, and enthused about the latter in a talk to college societies (see Tolkien 2015a). Eccentrically, he inserted names from a Finnish-inspired tongue of his own creation: another breakthrough, his first known attempt to insert one of his invented languages into a story. He soon dropped the *Kalevala* retelling, but not the idea of giving his new language a home in story. As he later recalled, it was now that he "made the discovery that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition" (*Letters* 231). In other words, all this inventing of language was empty without a mythology to go with it.

After a T.C.B.S. “Council of London” at the Wiseman home in December, Tolkien experienced “a tremendous opening up” of creative energy and ideas (*Letters* 10). Poems poured out, fluent and diverse (including “Goblin Feet,” 1915). Tolkien named his new Finnish-style language Qenya and gave it its own linguistic history.⁵ In the poems and in the Qenya lexicon, Tolkien first described the Elves, Eldar or “fairies” living with the divine Valar westward across the ocean from mortal Men.⁶ Britain was visualized in some ancient era as the Lonely Isle of the Elves, with Warwick, Edith’s new home, as its capital (on the development of this idea, see Garth 2020). Later, Tolkien said his taste for fairy-stories was “quickenened to full life by war” (*OFS* 56). Amazed by his poetry, the T.C.B.S., now reduced to Tolkien, Wiseman, Gilson, and Geoffrey Bache Smith (b. 1894), began to believe they had “been granted some spark of fire ... that was destined to kindle a new light” in the world (*Letters* 10).

Soldier and Mythographer: 1915–1918

Tolkien achieved a First in his June 1915 final exams and immediately joined the Lancashire Fusiliers as a second lieutenant. A short officers’ course in Bedford was followed by training with the regiment’s 13th Battalion near Lichfield and then on Cannock Chase. The outdoor life among men of all classes, and the darkness of the times, prompted him to write now not just of Elves but of mortals, wandering benighted in a world of fleeting enchantment. Urged on by the T.C.B.S. – with Smith and Gilson now at the Western Front – in early 1916, Tolkien submitted a collection of poems, “The Trumpets of Faërie,” to Sidgwick & Jackson, but the publishers turned it down. He married Edith in Warwick on 22 March 1916. The next month, she moved with her cousin Jennie Grove to Great Haywood, Staffordshire, to be near him, but soon after that, his embarkation orders came. After a final night with Edith, on 6 June, he took ship to France.

Transferred to the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, Tolkien was fortunate to be five miles from the front when the Somme offensive was launched on 1 July, but he witnessed the “animal horror” of the trenches (*Letters* 72) on 14–16 July, when his battalion seized Ovillers-la-Boisselle from the Germans. On return to base, he learned that Gilson had been killed, one of 21,000 British deaths on the first day of battle. It seemed to call into question the T.C.B.S. “spark of fire,” but new duties as battalion signals officer gave Tolkien scant time to ponder. During three months in and out of the trenches, as the Somme became a mire, he wrote little except a handful of poems.

Days after the battalion seized Regina Trench on an icy 21 October, Tolkien succumbed to trench fever, a potentially fatal louse-borne virus. His battalion was sent on to Ypres, but the hospital ship *Asturias* returned him to England. The Somme dealt a final blow to the T.C.B.S. even after the battle was over. Smith was hit by a stray shell-burst while organizing a football match several miles behind the lines; he died on 3 December (his poetry was edited by Tolkien and Wiseman as *A Spring Harvest*, published in 1918). Many other friends from school, University, and army died in the Great War, but from late 1916 Tolkien’s ill health kept him in England. In early 1917, Tolkien achieved a new creative breakthrough, and Middle-earth assumed its lasting moral dimensions: a scene of desperate heroism in a war against tyrannical and demonic evil (see Chapter 31). Convalescing at Great Haywood and in hospital, Tolkien wrote the prose “Fall of Gondolin” (see Tolkien 2018) in which the mortal, Tuor, joins the Elves fighting the forces of Melko (later Melkor/Morgoth). In the same months (as it now appears), he also wrote a creation myth titled “The Music of the Ainur,”⁷ as well as “The Cottage of Lost Play,” in which a Germanic mariner called Eriol meets the Elves of the Lonely Isle, whose histories were to form *The Book of Lost Tales*, the prose mythological cycle first adumbrated in Tolkien’s lexicon and poems (see Chapter 10).

In April 1917, Tolkien was posted to the 3rd Lancashire Fusiliers, which trained recruits while guarding Yorkshire's Holderness coast. Here he began a lexicon of a Welsh-inspired Elvish language, called Gnomish or Goldogrin⁸ – the prototype of the Sindarin of *The Lord of the Rings*. Edith moved to be with him, and a walk at Roos in which she danced among flowers of Queen Anne's lace inspired "The Tale of Tinúviel," written in hospital at Hull that summer: the enduring "kernel of the mythology" (*Letters* 221). However, tired of repeated moves, Edith returned to Cheltenham, and on 16 November, gave birth to their first son, John Francis Reuel Tolkien (d. 2003). Promoted to lieutenant, Tolkien wintered with the 9th Royal Defence Corps at Easington; returned to the 3rd Lancashire Fusiliers at Cannock Chase in the spring of 1918, when he was reunited with his family, but spent much of that summer in hospital with gastritis.

Tolkien recalled that he "wrote a lot else in hospitals before the end of the First Great War" (*Letters* 215). It now seems likely that this included most of the *Lost Tales*:⁹ from the earthly contest between the Valar and Melko, who suborns the Elves in Elvenhome; through the creation of the Sun and Moon from the fruit of the Two Trees; to the Elves' hopeless war against Melko in exile. The story of doomed Túrin Turambar, inspired by Kullervo, Sigurd, and Oedipus, would be an enduring focus for Tolkien (Tolkien 2007b).

Lexicography: 1918–1920

Released from military duties in October 1918, Tolkien spent almost the next two years immersed in words. His former tutor, William Craigie, one of the editors of the then incomplete *Oxford English Dictionary*, had him made an assistant lexicographer, dealing primarily with the etymologies of *w*- words under co-editor Henry Bradley. Supplementing his income with private tutorials to English undergraduates, in summer 1919, Tolkien began a Middle English glossary for a student anthology by Kenneth Sisam. He recalled that he "learned more in those two years than in any other equal period" (*Bio* 108).

From 1919 Tolkien kept diaries using invented scripts which became linked to his legendarium. A climactic "Tale of Eärendil" was never begun. Instead, in 1920, Tolkien began a revision of the frame-story, no longer equating the Lonely Isle with Britain and recasting Eriol as an Anglo-Saxon named Ælfwine. It was the first of a series of revisions which endlessly postponed the completion of his legendarium.

Leeds: 1920–1925

On 22 October, Edith had a second son, Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien (d. 1984). That same month, Ronald took up the post of Reader in English Language at Leeds University – one step below professor and a testament to the reputation he had already achieved. With E.V. Gordon (1896–1938), who became a close friend, Tolkien popularized the language course by such innovations as a Viking Club to read sagas in Icelandic. He knew how to engage his audience as equals, with neither condescension nor compromise. His lectures were always popular, though his words might deteriorate drastically in a race with his thoughts. He once cited an observation that "I talk in shorthand and then smudge it" (*Chronology* 527).

Tolkien's academic output at this point is documented elsewhere in this book (see Chapters 2, 3, 18, and 19) but includes his glossary to Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* entitled A

Middle English Vocabulary (1922); an edition with Gordon of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1925); and two papers on Middle English dialect (1925), “The Devil’s Coach-Horses” and “Some Contributions to Middle-English Lexicography.” The Sisam text and work with Gordon have remained standard texts ever since. However, Tolkien’s academic projects tended to progress slowly, and several were never completed; he undertook a student edition of Chaucer in 1923 but surrendered his papers to the Clarendon Press in 1951, fatally incomplete (see Bowers 2019). His standards were exacting; he lavished precious time on the work of colleagues and pupils; and with the arrival on 21 November 1924 of a third son, Christopher John Reuel Tolkien (d. 2020), he now had a considerable family competing for his attention.

The urge to work on his legendarium and its languages also competed. While at Leeds, Tolkien set aside *The Book of Lost Tales* to focus on a long alliterative version of the Túrin Turambar narrative, “The Children of Húrin” (*Lays* 3–130). A fresh, vital element in Tolkien’s creative output appeared in the annual letters he wrote to his children from Father Christmas (Tolkien 1999b) and the bedtime stories he made up and sometimes wrote down.

In July 1924, a Professorship of English Language was created for Tolkien at Leeds. But a year later, he was appointed Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.

Oxford and the Road to the “Silmarillion”: 1926–1930

In January 1926, in the middle of a period spent juggling duties at both Universities, the family moved to 22 Northmoor Road, Oxford. Tolkien, who was soon made a Fellow of Pembroke College, founded another club to read Icelandic sagas, the Kolbítar (“Coalbiters,” Icelandic for feckless youths who shirk action but typically end up as saga heroes). Into this, he pressed a new friend and powerful ally: Clive Staples Lewis (1898–1963), recently appointed to teach English at Magdalen College. Over the next few decades, “Jack” Lewis picked up the fallen mantle of the T.C.B.S. in encouraging his creative work, all the better because his interests were closer to Tolkien’s and his energies irrepressible. The two were also allies on the conservative side of battles over English teaching at Oxford. Lewis claimed that “No one ever influenced Tolkien. You might as well try to influence a Bandersnatch,” yet each was to have a profound impact on the other (Lewis 2007, 1049; and see Gyer 2006). The ideas of Lewis’s friend, Owen Barfield (particularly his *Poetic Diction* of 1928), were also to prove a significant influence on his thinking. Tolkien, meanwhile, produced a landmark analysis of two religious texts in West Midlands Middle English, “Ancrone Wisse and Hali Meiðhad” (1929; see Chapter 19). For three years, he contributed to the survey of “Philology: General Works” for *The Year’s Work in English Studies* (vols. 5–7).

The return to Oxford heralded two of the three central works of Tolkien’s legendarium. First, the “Silmarillion” came about almost incidentally. Tolkien started a long version of the Lúthien Tinúviel story in rhyming couplets, “The Lay of Leithian” (*Lays* 150–367). When in 1926 Tolkien sent parts of these poems to his former English teacher, R.W. Reynolds (1867–1948), the response was disappointing, but Tolkien had also written a précis or sketch of the mythology as background (*Shaping* 11–75). In 1929, Lewis read and rhapsodized over “Leithian,” and it seems likely that this spurred Tolkien to compose as background, over the following year or so, the “Qenta Noldorinwa” or “History of the Gnomes” (*Shaping* 199–338), a completely fresh telling of the events of *The Book of Lost Tales* and the first true version of what Tolkien later came to call the “Silmarillion” (see Chapter 7).

Writings outside the legendarium included in 1930 a long narrative poem in the form of a Breton lay, “The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun,” about a childless lord who strikes a desperate pact with a witch (Tolkien 1945b, repr. as Tolkien 2016b). Tolkien also continued to write stories and poems for his children, including an ambitious and whimsical adventure story, *Roverandom* (Tolkien 1998a), originally inspired by the loss of Michael’s toy dog on Filey beach in 1925 (see Chapter 13). The “Father Christmas Letters” grew in ambition. Separately, a character called Tom Bombadil, inspired by their Dutch doll, had probably already appeared by the time Priscilla Mary Reuel Tolkien, the youngest and the only daughter, was born on 18 June 1929. A series of “Tales and Songs of Bimble Bay,” set in an imaginary seaside town, notably included “Glip” (Tolkien 2002a, 119), about a Gollum-like cave-dweller. *Farmer Giles of Ham* (Tolkien 1999a) told of a dragon and dragon tamer set among the villages to the east of Oxford. *Mr. Bliss* (Tolkien 2007a) was prompted by Tolkien’s purchase of a family car and was richly illustrated with examples of his artwork.

However, one story proved truly momentous and became the second central work of Tolkien’s legendarium. It originated – quite characteristically – in a moment of boredom. While marking summer exams, Tolkien idly wrote the words “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” on a student’s paper, and by the end of 1929, he was telling the story of Bilbo Baggins to his children, setting it in Middle-earth, in some undefined period after the Elf-wars with Morgoth. *The Hobbit* intruded a quasi-modern (or at least Edwardian) Everyman figure, Bilbo Baggins, into the world of wizards, dragons, and *Edda*-inspired Dwarves. It allowed Tolkien considerable latitude to undercut or heighten the drama at will; and increasingly, as the story went on, to draw upon his own experiences as an ordinary man who had gone “There and Back Again” to war in his youth (see Chapter 8 for a full exploration of the novel’s phases).

20 Northmoor Road and *The Hobbit*: 1931–1937

The Tolkiens moved next door in January 1930 into a bigger house, 20 Northmoor Road, Oxford, where most of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were to be written. Tolkien’s academic output during these years was steady; especially his articles on “The Name ‘Nodens’” (1932), “Sigelwara land” (1932 and 1934), and “Chaucer as a Philologist” (1934),¹⁰ the offshoot of his ill-fated “Clarendon Chaucer” edition (Bowers 2019, see also Chapters 2 and 3).

Tolkien also made translations of *Beowulf* (Tolkien 2014a) and *Pearl* (for BBC radio 1936, later to become his *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo* (Tolkien 1995d). However, much of his academic work was submerged in that of other authors. His assistance was vital to E.V. Gordon’s 1937 edition of the Old English *The Battle of Maldon* (as it had been to Gordon’s *An Introduction to Old Norse* a decade earlier). An edition of the Middle English *De Liſflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iuliane* (“The Life and the Passion of Saint Juliana”) was published in 1936 as the doctoral thesis of his Belgian pupil and friend, Simonne d’Ardenne (1899–1986), but in her own estimation, it was a collaboration with Tolkien.

The 1930s also saw important flashpoints in the Lewis – Tolkien friendship. Strolling in Addison’s Walk at Magdalen one night in September 1931, Tolkien and their friend Hugo Dyson convinced Lewis to finally accept the truth of Christian belief. The conversation inspired Tolkien to write “Mythopoeia” (TL 83–90; see also Chapter 5), a philosophical poem developing his theory of sub-creation, by which the human capacity to create myths and stories is testimony to the greater creative powers of God. The conversation may also have inspired his “new lays” of

the Völsungs and of Gudrún (Tolkien 2009). These two narrative poems, in the difficult meter of the Norse *Elder Edda*, retell its Sigurd element, filling a gap in the surviving story and reconfiguring the pagan hero as a quasi-Christian savior figure. In 1934, Tolkien had also made significant progress with an alliterative poem on “the matter of Britain,” *The Fall of Arthur* (Tolkien 2013a), which he planned to link tangentially or otherwise with his own mythology.

Meanwhile, Tolkien set aside the “Lay of Leithian” (it was never ultimately completed) but rewrote the climax of “Qenta Noldorinwa” so that Eärendel becomes a savior figure too. He also worked on the chronology of his increasingly complex history by way of annals reminiscent of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and sometimes even written in Old English. The Elvish tongues, however, retained their vital role. Tolkien had given the world’s first public performance of Elvish poetry as part of an eloquent justification of language invention in “A Secret Vice,” a 1931 talk to the Johnson Society at Pembroke College, Oxford (MC 198–223 and Tolkien 2016a and 2020a). In the “Lhammas,” he recounted the history and interrelations of Middle-earth’s languages, while “The Etymologies” provided an extensive lexicon of Elvish roots and derivations (*Lost Road* 167–198, 341–400). This was accompanied by other thorough analyses of the languages, especially Quenya (e.g. morphology and phonology, see *Parma Eldalamberon*, 18 and 19 (2009 and 2010)). Tolkien also produced the elegant cosmography, “Ambarkanta” (*Shaping* 235–261), and revised the main narrative sequence as “Quenta Silmarillion,” which he carried as far as the story of Beren and Lúthien by 1937 (*Lost Road* 199–338; see Chapter 7).

Much of this – and more – was the fruits of two crucial years when Tolkien’s professional burdens were lightened. He was left £1,000 by Father Francis, who died in 1935.¹¹ In early 1936, Tolkien tore a ligament, forcing ten weeks’ bed rest; and in July he was awarded a £400 Leverhulme Fellowship in support of his academic research.¹² He was able to pause the examination marking that had eaten much of his free time since 1922. An immediate result was “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics,” a game-changing lecture to the British Academy in November 1936 (published in 1937 and available in MC), which championed the Old English poem as a work of art rather than merely as a “quarry of fact” for archaeologists and historians.¹³

A week later, Tolkien signed a publishing contract for *The Hobbit*. By chance, news of the story’s existence had reached publisher Stanley Unwin (1884–1968) of George Allen & Unwin, and it was accepted after his 10-year-old son Rayner Unwin gave it the thumbs-up. A December request for publicity material led to the invention of the “missing link” (*Letters* 232) between the “Silmarillion” and *The Hobbit*: “The Fall of Númenor” (*Lost Road* 11–35). With this Atlantis story, Tolkien first methodically extended his invented history beyond the fall of Morgoth and accounted for how the flat mythological world had become the round earth that we now inhabit.

Númenor was drawn into (or perhaps sparked) a wager between Lewis and Tolkien to write science-fiction stories because, as Lewis said, “there is too little of what we really like in stories.”¹⁴ The first volume of Lewis’s resultant “cosmic trilogy,” *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), was read at meetings of the Inklings, a group of like-minded drinking, talking, and reading men that had coalesced around the Lewis – Tolkien friendship and now met weekly in Lewis’s rooms at Magdalen and socialized in Oxford pubs, notably The Eagle and Child (see Chapter 25 and Carpenter 1979). Tolkien’s side of the pact was “The Lost Road,” a “time-travel” adventure in which a semi-autobiographical, modern-day academic was to witness, through dream, the downfall of Númenor (*Lost Road* 36–104; see Chapter 11).

The Hobbit was published on 21 September 1937 to enthusiastic reviews, prompting a request from Stanley Unwin for “more from you about Hobbits” (*Letters* 23). Tolkien had already suggested “Roverandom,” “Mr. Bliss,” and “Farmer Giles of Ham,” and now offered some items for

a distinctly unjuvenile audience: unfinished materials including “Quenta Silmarillion,” “The Lay of Leithian,” and “The Lost Road.” The publisher’s readers were baffled and bemused by these arcane complexities devoid of Hobbits. Just before Christmas 1937, Tolkien reluctantly began a new Hobbit story, with a chapter titled “A Long-expected Party.”

A “New Hobbit” and a New War: 1938–1945

Work on the “Silmarillion” material was delayed again, for more than a decade. “The Lost Road” was abandoned, along with its transparent references to the tyrannies and remilitarization of the 1930s. Yet the new story acquired a depth, detail, and complexity far greater than *The Hobbit*, thanks to increasingly liberal injections of “Silmarillion” and Númenor prehistory, a novelistic style reminiscent of “The Lost Road,” and Tolkien’s feelings about the darkening European situation. The keen interest of C.S. Lewis and Christopher Tolkien spurred *The Lord of the Rings* forward from its beginnings. The growing clarity of J.R.R. Tolkien’s thought on his “sub-creation” is evident from “On Fairy-stories,” a paper presented at St. Andrew’s University in Scotland in March 1939 and expanded for publication in the 1946 *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* edited by Lewis (Tolkien 2008a). It was effectively a manifesto for *The Lord of the Rings*.

In World War II, Tolkien was exempt from conscription thanks to his age and University work, and Oxford was spared by German bombers. He had agreed to work in cryptography but was not required. However, by the start of 1941, he was an air-raid warden, staying at post in Oxford on night duties. The war also drew off many colleagues and meant extra University duties for Tolkien. For a while, he was examiner for Allied prisoners of war (PoWs) in German and Italian camps as well as the director of an English course for cadets from the RAF and Royal Navy (for whom he prepared an edition of the fourteenth-century *Sir Orfeo*; see Tolkien 1995d and 2004b).

Tolkien’s sons were more directly affected by the war. When hostilities began in September 1939, John was in Rome training for the priesthood and had to flee in civilian clothes, finally reaching England on the last boat to leave Le Havre, France. Michael earned the George Medal as an anti-aircraft gunner defending aerodromes during the Battle of Britain in 1940, but transferred to the RAF and served as a rear-gunner on bombers over France and Germany until 1944, when he was found medically unfit (“virtually a shell-shock case” wrote his father; *Reader’s Guide* 1315). Christopher, the closest to Tolkien in spirit, was called up to join the RAF in July 1943 and was sent to South Africa in 1944 to train as a fighter pilot.

Work progressed in fits and starts on *The Lord of the Rings*, which Tolkien read in stages to the Inklings, now with the vital addition for a few years of Charles Williams (1886–1945), author of mystical Christian novels and a long narrative poem, *Taliesin through Logres*. By war’s outbreak, Tolkien had produced drafts of what is now Book I, and by the end of 1939 had reached Moria. He resumed in August–September 1940, reaching Rohan, Fangorn, and Isengard in 1942 (probably around the time he wrote his “fairy-story” retelling of *Beowulf*, “Sellic Spell” (Tolkien 2014a, 355–414)). However, on reaching the first pages of what became Book IV, he became “dead stuck” (*Letters* 321). His anxieties about the fate of his unfinished work on Middle-earth are reflected in “Leaf by Niggle,” written that spring (published in the *Dublin Review* 1945 and *Tree and Leaf* 1964; see Tolkien 2001a and 2008d). However, two inspired months in 1944 produced Book IV (sent in installments to Christopher in South Africa). Tolkien began Book V in October but soon halted again.

The Lord of the Rings Completed, the “Silmarillion” Resumed: 1945–1955

In June 1945, Tolkien was elected Professor of English Language and Literature at Merton College, Oxford. Soon, disquisitions on Númenórean history in Book IV doubtless led to the diversion Tolkien took between Christmas 1945 and August 1946, when he wrote “The Notion Club Papers” (*Sauron* 145–327; see Chapter 11), featuring an Oxford cabal very like the Inklings and using dream and time-travel to connect with ancient Númenor. This unfinished story included a poem within it about the voyage of St. Brendan, which was later revised as “Imram” (published in *Time and Tide*, December 1955; see *Sauron* 296–299). The related “Drowning of Anadûnê” gave a new account of the Atlantean downfall (*Sauron* 340–413), and Tolkien even created a new language, Adûnaic, for the Númenóreans. In a version of the cosmogonic “Ainulindalë” from the same period (*Morgoth* 199–205), Tolkien experimented with the idea that the world was created round and that the Sun and Moon were at least coeval with it – scientifically more accurate, but undermining his foundational cosmological concepts of a flat earth lit by the fruit and bloom of the Two Trees. He returned to the chapter “Minas Tirith” in autumn 1946 and over the next year managed to complete Book V of *The Lord of the Rings*.

After moving to the smaller 3 Manor Road with Edith and Priscilla in summer 1947, Tolkien first planned several revisions to *The Hobbit* to match *The Lord of the Rings*, notably in the “Riddles in the Dark” chapter. “Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age” (S 339–366), created from substantial historical material initially devised for “The Council of Elrond” chapter in *The Lord of the Rings*, was written by summer 1948. Tolkien finally completed *The Lord of the Rings* in draft by mid-September 1948, including an Epilogue later excised (*Sauron* 114–135). Typing, revising, and work on the appendices went on until August 1950.

Allen & Unwin had been eager for a stopgap while *The Hobbit* sequel gestated, and Tolkien began a productive working relationship with the artist Pauline Baynes in 1948 when he selected her to illustrate *Farmer Giles of Ham* (which first appeared in 1949; see Tolkien 1999a and 2008d). On his recommendation, she was later commissioned to illustrate Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*.

The Lord of the Rings nearly fell at the final hurdle. Motivated by his publisher’s earlier rejection of the “Silmarillion,” by late 1949, Tolkien entered into discussions with Milton Waldman of Collins over the idea of publishing both books simultaneously. In April 1950, just ahead of a move to 99 Holywell Street in Oxford with Edith and Priscilla, he freed himself from Allen & Unwin by handing them the impractical ultimatum: two books or none. But Waldman promptly demanded cuts to *The Lord of the Rings*, then fell ill, and discussions progressed little.

Nevertheless, Tolkien turned back to the “Silmarillion,” writing with vastly greater confidence and maturity thanks to the long honing of his craft on *The Lord of the Rings*. New revisions and expansions included a sprawling prose “Narn i Chîn Húrin” (“The Children of Húrin” – UT 75–209 and Tolkien 2007b). He reassigned the Welsh-inspired language of the Noldor or High-elves, first devised in 1917, to the Grey-elves or Sindar, a fundamental change with complex ramifications. To this phase also belongs the “Akallabêth,” a new account of Númenor (S 307–338).

What was to prove a decisive blow to the “Silmarillion” came in April 1952 when Collins told Tolkien that joint publication with *The Lord of the Rings* was prohibitively expensive. He reopened negotiations with Allen & Unwin over *The Lord of the Rings* in June and was welcomed back with a 50:50 profit-sharing deal (though nothing until costs were covered). During the summer break, on holiday in Malvern as a guest of his friend George Sayer (1914–2005), he was tape-recorded reading from both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.¹⁵

That autumn, his projects included work on “The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth, Beorhthelm’s Son” (appearing in *Essays and Studies* 1953, dramatized for BBC radio in 1955; see *TL* 119–150), a verse drama begun in the early 1930s as a sequel of sorts to *The Battle of Maldon*, questioning the Old English poem’s Northern heroic ethic. Shortly after a move with Edith to 76 Sandfield Road in Headington, Oxford, in March 1953, Tolkien gave the W.P. Ker Lecture at the University of Glasgow, speaking about the Middle English *Sir Gawain* (*MC* 72–108) and quoting from his own translation. A 1955 paper on “English and Welsh” reveals many of his views on language in general and striking insights into the position of Britons in Anglo-Saxon England (first published in *Angles and Britons: O’Donnell Lectures*, 1963; see *MC* 162–197; expanded edition from Yoko Hemmi currently in preparation).

The first volume of *The Lord of the Rings* was published as *The Fellowship of the Ring* on 29 July 1954, with maps by Christopher Tolkien. Tolkien completed the appendices but not a glossarial index (excised appendix material appears in *Peoples* 19–289, and as “The Hunt for the Ring” in *UT* 436–459 and “The Quest of Erebor” in *UT* 415–435 and Tolkien 2002a, 367–377; while the index appears in *Parma Eldalamberon*, 17 (2007)). Publication of *The Lord of the Rings* was completed (again with maps by Christopher Tolkien) with *The Two Towers* on 11 November 1954 and *The Return of the King* on 20 October 1955.

Success and Retirement: 1955–1964

The Lord of the Rings earned Tolkien £3,000 in royalties in 1955 alone – equal to more than £64,000 today. It meant demand for the “Silmarillion” at last, but Tolkien was stressed and often ill. For years, he had been writing in the interstices between University and domestic duties, and he confessed, “I am rather tired, and no longer young enough to pillage the night to make up for the deficit of hours in the day” (*Letters* 228). Eventually, he retained a secretary to type up his manuscripts. Now that he no longer needed the money, Tolkien regretted having taken on two further years’ academic tenure. At the same time, he suspected colleagues resented him for devoting such energies to “trivial literature” (*Letters* 238).

The business of *The Lord of the Rings* brought pleasures but also distractions. In 1957 he won the International Fantasy Award and made a substantial £1,500 from the sale of manuscripts of his published fiction (plus *Mr. Bliss*) to Marquette University, Milwaukee (see Chapter 4). He wrote extensive advice to translators (“Guide to Words and Names in *The Lord of the Rings*”; see *Companion* 750–782). A BBC radio version and Forrest J. Ackerman’s 1957 proposals for an animated film distressed him (see Chapter 39). What he saw as misrepresentation of his character and misunderstanding of his works led to vituperations against biographical criticism, though at the same time, he drew attention to his kinship with his creations:

“I am in fact a Hobbit (in all but size). I like gardens, trees and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much.”¹⁶

Probably in 1958, a sequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, “A New Shadow,” was quickly abandoned as “not worth doing,” though resumed briefly in the mid-1960s (*Peoples* 409–421). Tolkien’s final term teaching at Oxford was Trinity (Summer) 1959, and he gave his valedictory address on June

5 (MC 224–240). In his final years with the University and the first of his retirement, Tolkien revised the story of the fall of the Noldor (*Morgoth* 141–300) and produced the separate “Valaquenta” (*Morgoth* 199–205). He continued his work on the “Narn” and began a continuation, “The Wanderings of Húrin” (unfinished; see *Jewels* 251–310).

But much attention was given to ancillary or underlying matters at the expense of actual story. He experimented with the radical revision of Middle-earth’s cosmos, considered the moral nature and influence of Melkor, discussed “Laws and Customs among the Eldar,” and in “Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth” meditated on immortality (all in *Morgoth* 369–431, 207–253, and 303–366). Topics of his disquisitions – often partly philological – ranged from “Eldarin Hands, Fingers and Numerals” to “Fate and Free Will,” Elvish concepts of the spirit, Elven reincarnation, and communication by thought (material now gathered in Tolkien 2021). Númenor was not neglected, with “The Line of Elros,” an unfinished story of unhappy marriage, “Aldarion and Erendis,” “A Description of the Isle of Númenor,” and other writings (*UT* 212–293 and Tolkien 2021). Everywhere, there were the signs of a desire to give close attention to too many matters.

After this burst of activity, it appears that Tolkien quickly floundered. In July 1960, he confessed to Rayner Unwin that he was “utterly stuck – lost in a bottomless bog” (*Letters* 301). Professional duties had provided a rhythm and regular outside contact to energize him. He lost his Merton College rooms and had to move his books and papers to a garage-cum-study at Sandfield Road. He dealt with a growing postbag, including letters from fans – some in runic or the Elvish script *tengwar* – and requests for interviews or for permission for adaptations, amateur and professional, artistic, dramatic, and musical. Further delays came from his health problems, including worsening fibrositis and arthritis, as well as from Edith’s. The Vatican II reforms to Catholic worship depressed him (he continued to use the Latin liturgy loudly, while those around him used English). He also now lacked effective encouragement from any close, understanding, powerful personality. C.S. Lewis’s intense involvement with Charles Williams and with Christian apologetics, as well as his *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), seems to have opened a gap which Tolkien’s sympathies struggled to bridge. Lewis’s secret 1956 marriage to divorcée Joy Gresham (1915–1960) widened it further. After Lewis’s death in 1963, Tolkien resumed keeping a diary, largely when depressed.

He completed an edition of *Ancrene Wisse* for the Early English Text Society in 1962 – long overdue, it had originally been commissioned in 1935. Allen & Unwin, while breathing regular encouragement over the “Silmarillion,” were happy to accept other Tolkien material, and he had plenty to offer from among his papers, but polishing for publication inevitably distracted him from the larger task. At the suggestion of his Aunt Jane Neave, he compiled his poems (new or revised) in 1962 as *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, illustrated again by Pauline Baynes. Christopher Tolkien was suggested by Rayner Unwin as a possible editor for his unfinished works in 1963, but then became a Fellow of New College, Oxford.

Final Years: 1965–1973

The last story J.R.R. Tolkien saw published in his lifetime, *Smith of Wootton Major* (1967), was characteristically unplanned, originating in a 1965 attempt to write a preface to George MacDonald’s *The Golden Key*.

In 1961, the critic Philip Toynbee had said of *The Lord of the Rings*, “today these books have passed into a merciful oblivion” (see Chapter 28). He could not have been more wrong. Sales of

Tolkien's books continued to rise and rise through the decade, and a piracy row took his fame into the stratosphere. The American publisher, Ace Books, exploited a legal loophole to release an unauthorized paperback of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1965. To counter this, Tolkien prepared an authorized second edition, with new "Foreword," emendations, and index, published in October by Ballantine. In his letters to fans, he promoted a widespread boycott of Ace, who backed down. The furore made Tolkien a cult figure in America. Even in Oxford, he was plagued with phone calls and knocks at the door from unannounced strangers.

However, not all visits were unsolicited. Tolkien gave time to journalists, photographers, and even a BBC film crew (*Tolkien in Oxford*, 1968; see Lee 2018 for outtakes and history). In 1966, Clyde S. Kilby (1902–1986) of Wheaton College, Illinois, came to Oxford and spent several months trying (with little success) to assist Tolkien in preparing the "Silmarillion" for completion. Donald Swann (1923–1994), of Flanders and Swann, set several songs and poems from *The Lord of the Rings* to music; the sheet music was published as *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle* (Tolkien and Swann 2002) with extensive linguistic notes from Tolkien on the Elvish songs "Namárië" and "A Elbereth Gilthoniel." Swann also performed at the Tolkiens' Golden Wedding celebrations in 1966.

The marriage, though firmly rooted, had not always been easy. Catholic observance had been a source of occasional friction, while Tolkien's decades of University work and world-building had often left Edith – never academically minded – feeling isolated in Oxford. Needing a smaller home and hoping that a new address would be a refuge from interruption, they moved in July 1968 to Bournemouth, the retirement backwater on the South Coast.

Since arriving in England as a child, and with the notable exception of his war service, Tolkien had rarely traveled far. He had shared walking holidays with the Lewis brothers, traveled to Ireland (mostly as an external examiner), to Venice and Assisi with Priscilla in 1955, and to Rotterdam as a guest of Dutch fans in 1958. A Mediterranean cruise in 1966 had been marred when Edith was injured in a fall on the first day. Otherwise, a staple had been the much less ambitious and more affordable holidays in seaside towns. The couple had stayed in Bournemouth many times – so frequently in recent years that the Hotel Miramar had become a home away from home. Now they bought a bungalow in Lakeside Road, where Tolkien set up a study in the garage.

But the move was disruptive, and he found conservative, unintellectual Bournemouth little more congenial than Edith had found Oxford. Middle-earth did not thrive here. Progress on the "Silmarillion" narratives was piecemeal and minimal, and Tolkien mostly steered back into his comfort zone, tinkering with his languages (mingled with glimpses of story, e.g. "The Problem of Ros" in *Peoples* 367–376, and "The Rivers and Beacon-hills of Gondor" in *Vinyar Tengwar*, 42 (2001)).

Edith died in hospital on 29 November 1971, following inflammation of the gallbladder. Tolkien, awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours List for 1972, no longer wanted to stay in Bournemouth, and Merton College invited him to become a Residential Fellow with rooms in Merton Street, where he moved in March. Oxford awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Letters in June. Again, he engaged a secretary; again, he made scant progress on his legendarium. During a visit to Bournemouth in August 1973, Tolkien fell ill. Diagnosed with an acute bleeding gastric ulcer, he died in hospital there on 2 September 1973. He was buried alongside Edith at Wolvercote Cemetery, Oxford, and along with their names, the headstone carried the names Beren and Lúthien.

Despite the epic scale of *The Lord of the Rings*, what Tolkien published in his lifetime does not suggest a productive writer. However, as will already be clear from this sketch, his posthumous

publications vastly outnumber what he published in his lifetime. In 1977 *The Silmarillion* was published, edited, and compiled as a continuous, consistent text by Christopher Tolkien. His *Unfinished Tales* and 12-volume History of Middle-earth series (1983–1996, see Chapter 10) trace through its many stages the unique creative project he began in 1914–1917. The project is supplemented by Tolkien's late-life reflections on nature, history, and metaphysics in *The Nature of Middle-earth*, edited by Carl F. Hostetter (2021). Academic notes and papers edited by others include *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode* (Tolkien 1982a), *The Old English Exodus* (Tolkien 1981a), and *Beowulf and the Critics* (Tolkien 2002b). At the time of writing, further unpublished items include poems from as early as 1910; “The Orgog,” a Leeds-era children's story; “The King of the Green Dozen,” an unfinished satirical fairy-story; “The Bovadium Fragments,” an early 1960s satire on Oxford and the car; and many writings about his invented languages (on-going publication in *Parma Eldalamberon* and *Vinyar Tengwar*).

It remains true that Tolkien's success is generally measured by the impact of a few works, yet he is a prime example of an artist whose visible genius is a function of vast invisible labor. The efficient Lewis observed that he worked “like a coral insect” (Lewis 2007, 1579), and it is true that overall, Tolkien was a slow, painstaking, and private maker. Nonetheless, he loved an appreciative audience, and he generally wrote (or drew) in bursts, short or sustained, between the academic work that took up most of his time. When new ideas surged up in him, he could write at a furious pace. His perfectionism entailed fastidious revision that, however, often led to re-evaluation and fresh writing. That was exacerbated when fame brought a huge postbag of queries from curious readers. He had reason to be saddened by his own failure to complete the “*Silmarillion*,” yet the diligent labors of his son Christopher mean that the two enduring classics J.R.R. Tolkien saw published in his lifetime – *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – can now be seen as part of an incomparable body of world-making. The vitality of his creation was bound up with its breadth and depth.

NOTES

- 1 The term Middle-earth is used here for convenience. Tolkien did not use the term until the late 1930s (Gilliver, Marshall, and Weiner 2006, 164).
- 2 Interview with Denys Gueroult, January 1971, BBC Radio 4, “Now Read On ...”, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p021jx7j> accessed 9 February 2021.
- 3 His previous interest in inventing languages stemmed from his cousins' “Animalic” code (*Bio* 43).
- 4 Rent payments switched from Suffield to Faulkner in May/June (Father Francis Morgan's papers, Birmingham Oratory archives).
- 5 Qenya was so spelt at first, later Quenya; Éarendel became Eärendil.
- 6 See *Parma Eldalamberon*, 12 (1998, revised 2011).
- 7 Tolkien recalled writing “The Music of the Ainur” while working at the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*Letters* 345) but internal and manuscript evidence points to the Great Haywood and Harrogate period of 1917 (Garth 2022).
- 8 See *Parma Eldalamberon*, 11 (1995).
- 9 See Garth 2022.
- 10 The “Chaucer” article is reprinted in 2008 alongside his version of *The Reeve's Tale* in *Tolkien Studies* 5: 109–183 (see Tolkien 2008b; 2008c, and Chapter 3).
- 11 John Garth, “Preface” (Bru 2018).
- 12 *The Times*, 10 July 1936, 8.
- 13 See MC 5–48, which also includes Tolkien's useful preface to the 1940 revised John R. Clark Hall translation of *Beowulf* (MC 49–71).
- 14 On the dates of “The Fall of Númenor” and the wager, see Garth (2017).
- 15 Released as LPs by Caedmon, now available on CD as *The Tolkien Audio Collection* (HarperCollins 2002).
- 16 Interview with Denys Gueroult (see n. 2).

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