Timeless Tolkien [Part 2]

ROSS SMITH

The enduring popularity of a philological fantasist

THE YEAR 2005 marks the 50th anniversary of the original publication of J. R. R. Tolkien's celebrated novel *The Lord of the Rings*. Voted both 'the book of the century' in a poll conducted by the UK book retailer Waterstones in 1997 and 'the UK's best-loved book' in a BBC survey carried out in 2003, *TLOTR* was adapted to the screen in in 2001 by the previously little-known director Peter Jackson and released in three parts between 2001 and 2003 to widespread popular acclaim. The present is the second of three linked discussions of Tolkien's work and the media through which it has been channelled. The first appeared as 'Why the film version of *The Lord of the Rings* betrays Tolkien's novel,' in *ET*83 (21:3). The third and closing article will appear in *ET*85 (22:1).

Tlón: a brave new world

In the middle of the last century, the world-famous Argentinian writer José Luis Borges published a short story, now considered a classic, called *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*[1]. In it, Borges describes a planet called Tlön, our knowledge of which, according to the narrator, Borges himself, has been pieced together from various works by anonymous authors, each writing on a specific characteristic of that world.

The fictive Borges comes across Tlön for the first time in a mysterious copy of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which contains an entry not to be found in any other copy. Intrigued, he seeks to increase his knowledge elsewhere, but there is nothing to be found in any of the numerous sources he consults. However, the fictitious world resurfaces in a mysterious book addressed to a recently deceased friend of the author, in the form of the eleventh volume of *A First Encyclopaedia of Tlön*. This encyclopedia, we are told, describes in the finest detail each and every aspect of the history, geography and culture of Tlön. The narrator hypothesises that this 'brave new world' is the work of a 'secret society of astronomers, biologists, engineers, metaphysicists, poets, chemists, algebraists, moralists, painters, geometricians, all directed by an obscure man of genius'[2]. Each specialist contributes data on his or her area, which is then woven into the overall plan by the anonymous master.

Given the format he has chosen, Borges cannot be too profuse, so he offers brief but brilliant descriptions of the science, philosophy, architecture, language, mathematics, literature, archaeology and history of Tlön, containing references of persuasively profound erudition. On the subject of literature, for instance, we are told that in the world of Tlön '[w]orks of fiction address a single argument, with all imaginable permutations. Philosophical works invariably contain a thesis and an antithesis, rigorously for and against a doctrine. A book that does not encompass its counterbook is considered incomplete.' Concerning the language of Tlön, Borges informs us in gravely academic tones that '[t]here are no nouns in the conjectural *Ursprache* of Tlön, from which

ROSS SMITH <ross.smith@es.pwc.com> is manager in charge of the translation service at PricewaterhouseCoopers Spain. He was responsible for introducing computerised translation support systems at PwC during the 1990s and has given papers on his experience in this area at major international conferences on machine translation and computer assisted translation. He holds a degree in English from Edinburgh University, is a government-authorised 'intérprete jurado' ('translator under oath') in Spain and a member of the UK Institute of Linguists. He regularly contributes articles on language and translation to specialised journals.

DOI: 10.1017/S0266078405004037
English Today 84, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October 2005). Printed in the United Kingdom

the "current" languages and dialects derive: there are impersonal verbs, qualified by monosyllabic suffixes (or prefixes) of an adverbial character'. He then offers us an example of how the sentence 'The moon rose over the river' would be rendered – quite beautifully - in the language of Tlön:

'Upward, behind the onstreaming it mooned.'

It should be noted that this sentence was written in English (a language Borges knew well and deeply appreciated), within the original Spanish narrative, since the Encyclopaedia of Tlön, we are told, *is in English*. There is considerably more on both literature and language, as well as on the other subjects referred to above.

Borges then goes on to describe his discovery of the identity of the 'obscure genius' behind the creation of Tlön, the formation during the late 19th century of a secret team of 300 specialists who wrote the forty volumes of the *First Encyclopaedia of Tlön*, the chance finding of this encyclopaedia in a library in Memphis in 1944, its unveiling via the international press, and the ensuing worldwide furore concerning all things to do with Tlön.

In addition to deploying his extraordinary imagination and narrative skill, in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, Borges uses a number of devices to make his tale seem more factual than fictitious. These include references to real people alive at the time (such as fellow writer and Argentinian Bioy Casares, who initiates the search for Tlön in the story), comments and footnotes on the work of historically relevant authors (Berkeley, Hume, Russell), specific place names, dates, and so on. He also takes advantage of his vast erudition in descriptions such as those quoted above on literature and language to strengthen the sense of reality. Nonetheless, readers are evidently aware of Borges' literary magic and know that this is fiction, however skilfully he has enabled them to suspend reality. The story is provocative and brilliantly told, but the belief persists that no one could ever truly invent an entire world, with the almost infinite strength of imagination, and volume of information, that would require.

However, when Borges published his most renowned works of fiction during the 1940s, an English author and academic on the other side of the Atlantic had already for decades been assembling a whole universe, partly from his own imagination and partly from his scholarly knowledge of ancient tales and sagas from north-western Europe. It was a world with its own seas, islands and rivers, mountain ranges, plains and swamps, its own skies and stars, inhabited not only by men but also by other sapient beings, each with a specific language and culture. There were wild beasts, some like those of our world and some not, and abundant plant life. The author had also created a history for this world, which went back not just to primitive times but to the very creation of the world itself, by its particular Gods.

The English academic in question was, of course, J.R.R. Tolkien, and to make his world credible he did not need to use any of the literary artifices employed by Borges. In fact his approach was quite the opposite of Borges'. As in much of his greatest work, in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* Borges sought to compress an intellectually stimulating idea into the shortest format possible. One of his devices, for instance, was to write a brief, entirely fictitious review of a book rather than the book itself, thus conveying the same basic concepts in a far smaller format. Tolkien's creativity followed the opposite course: most of his work was boundless, thousands of pages which told one vast story, so difficult to get into a publishable shape that in the end it was the author's son who had to take on the task, since Tolkien himself had not managed to do so during his lifetime. His two most popular published works, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, are but two clearly delimited islands in Tolkien's wide sea of fictitious creation, the former emerging from this literary primeval soup almost wholly by chance[3], with the latter as a vast sequel.

Scale and scope

Tolkien created a universe on a scale which was entirely unique. No one before or since has come close to equalling his achievement, because no one before or since has followed a creative process as singular and unrepeatable as Tolkien's.

This enormous scope is a significant factor when trying to explain the extraordinary and lasting popularity of Tolkien's work, and why *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* remain in the best-seller lists several decades after their publication, when most other imaginative fiction writers of Tolkien's generation are forgotten. Dozens of authors have created cities, con-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tinents, planets, galaxies, even parallel universes, but none have succeeded like Tolkien, because his Middle-earth was much more than just a setting for his novels; rather, it was his life's work, spanning more than half a century, during which time he sought to fill in every detail, to leave no corner of his enormous canvas blank. He was not particularly concerned about being a successful author in critical or commercial terms.

These issues mattered to him as they would to anyone, but they were not central to his work. For one thing, he was in the comfortable position of earning the salary, and enjoying the undemanding timetable, of a professional academic. However, Tolkien was not some Kafkaesque intellectual ascetic, shunning worldly gain in his pursuit of artistic expression. Simply, he wished to create a new mythology for his own satisfaction, and his two main novels are small chapters in this overall design of Middle-earth, from its creation by the supreme God Eru onwards, which absorbed much of his life.

The practical repercussions of this huge background in novelistic terms are clear: when the characters in his two novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, wish to describe some present or past element of their wider world, the material is already there, so abundant as to be almost infinite. His repository of imaginary historical, cultural, scientific and geographical data is massive and this gives his novels a breadth, density, or (to use the spatial metaphor preferred by the pre-eminent Tolkien scholar Professor Tom Shippey) a *depth*[4] that cannot be equalled even by the most gifted writers of fantasy or imaginative fiction, despite the memorable efforts of T.H. White, Mervyne Peak, Ursula LeGuin, and others.

Readers come into contact with this wider universe during *The Lord of the Rings* essentially through comments by the more learned characters, Gandalf, Aragorn, Elrond and other elves, much as rail travellers might glimpse distant valleys and mountains as they speed on their journey. They become aware that in Tolkien's fiction there is a much larger world in space and time than the geographical and temporal framework to which their story (the War of the Ring) is limited. This sense of larger reality is effectively created in two ways: through relatively lengthy historical descriptions of the kind offered by the wizard Gandalf to Frodo near the beginning of the story (Book 1 Chapter 2) and by the elf leader Elrond to the assembled council of the Good (Book 2 Chapter 2); and through small off-hand comments and references made as the action progresses.

There are countless such occasions in the book. The following example is taken from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and concerns Aragorn, the king-to-be. At this stage of the story, however, he is known only as a wandering Ranger, one of the anonymous guardians of unprotected hobbits and men against the forces of evil, and he is trying to heal a wound inflicted on the hobbit Frodo by one of the Black Riders (later revealed as the Nazgûl, Sauron's most fearful servants). To do this he is using some leaves he has found growing in the wild. As he prepares to dress Frodo's wound on a lonely hillside, he informs the other hobbits present (Sam, Merry and Pippin) about the plant concerned:

> 'It is fortunate that I could find it, for it is a healing plant that the Men of the West brought to Middle-earth. *Athelas* they named it, and it grows now sparsely and only near places where they dwelt or camped of old; and it is not known in the North, except for some of those who wander in the Wild.'

The importance of these two sentences is more in what is not told than what is.

Who are the Men of the West, that deserve to be thus capitalised? We are not sure, though earlier in the story there was a similar reference to the Men of Westernesse, who were overthrown by an evil king centuries earlier. Are the West and Westernesse the same? In any case, how far west was their homeland, and when did they come to this part of Middle-earth, where, we are also told, they dwelt and camped of old? They brought this plant with them, Aragorn tells us, but from where precisely, and what else did they bring?

The plant is also enigmatic: is called *Athelas*, written in cursive in the original, to indicate an unknown language. Is it an elvish language, or a lost language of men? Furthermore, we are told that it is not known in the North. Does this mean that it *is* known in the South (capitals should again be noted)? And finally, who are 'those that wander in the Wild'? Men like Aragorn, or others?

Our curiosity is continually fed by passages such as this. At face value it seems little more than a brief explanation by Aragorn to keep Frodo's companions informed as he tries to save their friend's life, but on a narrative level

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the effect is to weave a few more strands into Tolkien's vast tapestry. We gradually piece these strands together as we progress through the book, and by the end most of the questions of the kind posed above have been answered, to our great satisfaction. In Tolkien's fiction no thread is left hanging, and this tying-up process typically produces a sense of pleasure and fulfilment in readers.

When seeking to explain the phenomenal popularity of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* over the years, therefore, this 'depth' or density, this larger reality in space and time, is a key factor. Reading fiction always entails stepping into an imaginary world, be it past, present or future; what is unique to Tolkien is the extraordinary level of detail used to describe the settings for his stories. The sense of full immersion in a new reality is exceptionally strong and many readers find this a thrilling and powerful experience, one which they often wish to repeat almost as soon as they finish the final volume. *The Lord of the Rings* is a much re-read book, which may seem surprising in view of its length and the amount of reading required.

This fact is widely recognised in Tolkienian circles and is backed by research data: According to information collected by the *Lord of the Rings Research Project*[5], 47.4% of the 25,000 respondents to the Project's on-line questionnaire had read all three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* more than once. Perhaps its very size is one reason that so many readers come back to it, as one reading is insufficient to take in the whole story. Whatever the case, the level of detail is such that even after finishing the story *per se*, readers can continue to broaden their knowledge of Middle-earth, its people, customs and languages by examining the Appendices that Tolkien added to the final volume, *The Return of the King*.

These Appendices are largely a synopsis of his own broader writings that would appear posthumously in *The Silmarillion* and other works. Again, Tolkien did not think up the information given in the Appendices in order to heighten the sense of reality felt by his readers; on the contrary, the information had already been available for years in his writings on Middle-earth. Like Borges, he provides detailed descriptions of his invented languages, including correct pronunciation, but he differs from Borges in that these descriptions are but the tip of the iceberg.

Elvish and linguistic aesthetics

In fact, Tolkien had been working on his imaginary languages since his youth (in his own words, 'since I could write'[6]), applying his knowledge of both modern and ancient languages as he matured, and as a result the volume of data he had amassed by the time he wrote *The Lord of the Rings* was infinitely greater than that available to other authors. As he mentioned on various occasions (see below), language was largely the source of his fiction rather than an appendage to it; his characters and their languages developed organically over the years. His original use of language is an important part of his perennial popularity, with regard to both English and the languages he made up for the elves, dwarfs and orcs.

It seems paradoxical that text which is incomprehensible to virtually all readers should lend credibility to the story, yet this is the effect Tolkien achieves when he sprinkles elvish expressions or verses through his prose. Readers get that familiar feeling of being faced by an unknown foreign language, yet at the same time the words, though not understood, sound pleasant when spoken (whether openly or mentally) and certainly look as if they pertain to a real language.

The first elvish words we meet in *The Lord of the Rings* belong to a typical greeting, *Elen síla lúmenn' omentielvo* ('A star shines on the hour of our meeting'), in high-elven, or Quenya. From this brief example it appears that in elven the light *e* and *i* vowels predominate, coupled with soft-sounding consonants like *l*, *m*, *n*. There are no hard consonants or throaty, guttural sounds. Many words end in vowels, and the overall impression is a language which is agreeable to the ear. The dwarf language occasionally voiced by Gimli (the only significant dwarf character in *The Lord of the Rings*) produces the contrasting effect. The place-name *Khazad-dûm*, for instance, sounds quite the opposite of Quenya; it contains the harsh Dwarvish *kh*, the buzzing and aggressive *z*, the low *u*, and consonant endings, reflecting the hard, earthy character of the dwarves themselves.

These languages sound dissimilar, but they produce a similar effect, as do the runes and elvish script to be found in Tolkien's text. Depth, or density, is at work again: we sense that these incomprehensible lines are a

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

glimpse of something far larger, in this case an entire linguistic system, as indeed they are. The feeling of fullness, of being totally immersed in another world, is further heightened, and our experience as readers enriched.

Tolkien's imaginary languages are a world in themselves. They have been and continue to be the subject of much research and effort by both academics and amateur enthusiasts, and constitute a full sub-field of Tolkienian lore which is too vast to go into here[7]. What it is interesting to consider on a more conceptual level, however, is Tolkien's singular interest in linguistic aesthetics, the sound of words and the impression they produce. Tolkien's fascination with language is impossible to exaggerate: he devoted his academic life to studying languages and his free time to inventing them. While his main professional interest was the study of Old English and other ancient Germanic and Norse languages, he felt genuine passion for the aesthetics of language in general.

Tolkien's interest in this matter is exceptional because, apart from his particular inclinations, he was continually in the process of inventing and replenishing his own languages, and had the unique power to determine what those languages sounded like. On one occasion he complained ironically that he was 'cursed with an acute sensibility in such matters'[8], while elsewhere he commented that '[t]he invention of languages is the foundation. The "stories" were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse. To me a name comes first and the story follows. *The Lord of the Rings* is to me largely an essay in "linguistic aesthetic"'. And: 'Nobody believes me when I say that my long book is an attempt to create a world in which a form of language agreeable to my personal aesthetic might seem real … but it is true.'[9]

These remarkable affirmations are not taken at face value by most Tolkien scholars, and are contradicted by Tolkien himself when, for instance, he states, with reference to his motives for writing *The Lord of the Rings*: 'The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them.'[10] Linguistic aesthetics is evidently not the only driving force behind his fiction; however, the above comments obviously reflect a deep fascination with this subject, and there are indications in his academic work that he would have liked to have turned this into a coherent theory. Much of his non-fictional work is devoted to this area; he even refers to his magnum opus as an 'essay' on the subject and once described himself as a 'professional philologist especially interested in linguistic aesthetics'.

Throughout his academic life he came back time and again to the chimerical relationship between sound and emotion, seeking some kind of satisfactory explanation; in fact, his last major academic work was on the subject[11]. However, he never produced a theory of linguistic aesthetics, perhaps because he did not have enough time, but probably because he realised that an all-encompassing doctrine was impossible, like trying to bottle the sea. On the one hand, not many people shared Tolkien's 'acute sensibility' on this matter, so achieving understanding was difficult; on the other, the degree of subjectivity is simply too high for a rational theory to be formulated. Put simply, what sounds delightful to A may leave B indifferent and C cold. This can be observed in the enormous degree to which peoples' taste in music varies.

On a more serious level, there are in *TLOTR* elements bordering on racism, of which Tolkien may or may not have been aware, which make any pursuit of such a theory to its final consequences a dangerous undertaking. The languages of his evil characters certainly do not sound English, north-western European or Mediterranean, these being Tolkien's zones of emotional and intellectual devotion. Tolkien has been accused of racism, among many other things, and it cannot be denied that his more unsavoury characters tend to be 'squat', 'swarthy' and perhaps 'slant-eyed', although, like all authors, he has to be criticised within the general trends of his time: one imagines he might have avoided such adjectives if writing in our more racially sensitive days. Parallel accusations could perhaps be voiced in his choice of phonemes for Orcish and the language of Mordor.

Even the issue of local accents (and accompanying class sensitivity) make considerations about linguistic aesthetics complicated. On one occasion, when trying to explain his love of the sounds of Welsh, Tolkien gave the example of the English words *cellar door* as a paradigm of acoustic beauty, as follows: 'Most English-speaking people will admit that *cellar door* is beautiful, especially if dissociated from its sense

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(and from its spelling). More beautiful than say, *sky*, and far more beautiful than *beautiful*.'

We can assume that he means *cellar door* pronounced in a standard educated south-eastern English accent, rather than, say, in the accents of Glasgow, Sydney, or Texas. In any event, this brief quote neatly sums up the thorniest problem with linguistic aesthetics: lack of an objective basis. Is Tolkien right to claim that 'most English-speaking people' will find *cellar door* particularly pleasing? This seems doubtful; in fact it is quite reasonable to think that many may disagree outright with Tolkien and consider *sky* to be more attractive, or even *beautiful* itself, for no reason other than indefinable personal preference. Aesthetics as a broader philosophical discipline has suffered from this weakness since the times of Aristotle; proponents of aesthetics theories have no choice but to base their judgements on assumptions, and assumptions do not provide a sound basis for a logical, or scientific, discipline. Whatever the case, in this particularly tricky area Tolkien was doubtless right to scrutinise the waters avidly from the bank, but not to dive in.

Over and above the effects of sounds, Tolkien believed that language was at the root of all consciousness and expression, with a power of its own beyond a given language's grammar and lexis. To a certain extent, he felt that we could somehow understand language on a primitive (or exalted) level even when we do not comprehend, in the traditional sense, what is being said. He expresses this notion through his fictional characters on numerous occasions, as is pointed out by Tom Shippey, who provides various instances in his seminal study *The Road to Middle Earth*[12]. One example will suffice for our purposes here, taken from *The Two Towers*, when the elf Legolas hears the language of a Saxon-like people called the Rohirrim in a song sung by the multilingual Aragorn, and remarks: 'That, I guess, is the language of the Rohirrim … for it is like to this land, itself rich and rolling in part, and else hard and stern as the mountains. But I cannot guess what it means, save that it is laden with the sadness of Mortal Men.'

The language, the people and the land are intimately linked, the language originating on a metaphysical level from both people and land.

These considerations are evidently theoretical. What is more tangible is that the sense of realism that originates from the depth, or density, discussed above is partly derived from the presence of invented languages in Tolkien's fiction. On a more specific level, his imaginary languages have provided generations of readers interested in such things with a vast treasure-trove of material for their study and enjoyment. This has been particularly true in recent years with the advent of the Internet, which has enabled fans of Tolkienian linguistics to share material and ideas with a speed and efficiency previously unthinkable.

A gift for naming

In his review of *The Fellowship of the Ring* for the New York Times in October 1954, the renowned English poet W.H. Auden mentioned that 'Mr Tolkien is fortunate in possessing an amazing gift for naming and a wonderfully exact eye for description.' Few people have been as acutely aware and knowledgeable as Tolkien with regard to the development of English and other northern European languages over the last two thousand years. He is recognised as a major 20th century scholar in his academic field, in addition to his success as a novelist. His interest in etymology was of course a basic element of his larger knowledge of old languages and his 'hobby' of invented languages.

He had a scholarly knowledge of many languages in addition to those of Germanic and Norse origin. He was particularly fascinated by both Welsh and Finnish, which respectively formed the basis of his two main elvish languages, and took advantage of this when constructing his invented languages and also when finding names for the places and characters in his stories. To give just a few examples, the names of the company of thirteen Dwarves in *The Hobbit*, are lifted from an ancient Norse poem, while *orc*, *warg* and *ent* are adapted from sources in Old English and Old Norse[13]. The 'gift for naming' mentioned by Auden, then, was part gift and part erudition.

Certainly, names are central to Tolkien's fiction and none are used by chance. There are three main classes: names derived directly from ancient northern European sources; names derived from his invented languages (which may also have an ancient Norse or Germanic root); and the rest. The first group includes the examples given above, while the second comprises the names of elven and some human characters and several towns and other place names, such as *Minas Ithil, Minas Tirith, Osgiliath, Orthanc*. The last group includes

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

names that have a recognisable modern English source such as *Rivendell* for Elrond's elvish sanctuary (*dell* meaning valley and *riven* to indicate a deep cleft; indeed, at one stage in *The Fellowship of the Ring* the narrator refers to the 'cloven vale of Rivendell', as if to clarify any doubt), or that derive from a combination of ancient root and right sound, such as *Withy-Windle* for a winding, rather magical, river with banks full of willow trees.

Following his notions about linguistic aesthetics, Tolkien always strove to make his names sound appropriate to the things they denominated. The names of Frodo's three hobbit companions give a simple example: Sam is down to earth and straightforward, Merry (short for Meriadoc) is optimistic, and Pippin (short for Peregrin) is effervescent and cheeky. At the other extreme is the unforgettable Gollum, whose name comes from a gargling sound he makes when speaking to himself, as he often does. In a very long story with a large number of characters, this facility for inventing memorable names is undoubtedly of great help to readers and makes *TLOTR* both more manageable and more enjoyable.

History's favourite storyteller

The unprecedented figure of 50 million copies of *The Lord of the Rings* have been sold around the world, and the figure for Tolkien's work as a whole is estimated at over 100 million. It has been translated into every major and a number of less widely-spoken languages, including Basque, Catalan, Croatian, Esperanto, Finnish, Galician, Hebrew and Ukrainian. Tolkien seems to be impervious to trends: his work was equally popular in the swinging sixties as in the neo-conservative nineties, and has attained even greater success in the 21st century's global information society.

Explanations for this remarkable achievement have been put forward from many angles, in addition to those of a particularly linguistic nature, as discussed above. When considering the Tolkien phenomenon as a whole, however, we should recall that (over and above the questions of ethics, environmentalism, religion, historical allegory and so on that his work raise) his gift as a teller of tales is the fundamental reason for his popularity and continued success. Social concerns fluctuate over the years, or even over months, but a great read is eternal. Tolkien himself liked the epithet *tale-teller*, one assumes because it describes what he does best.

His forte was not the brilliant literary inventiveness of the kind shown by Borges (as in 'upward, behind the onsteaming it mooned'), or by more closely related novelists like Dickens or Conrad. Tolkien preferred an antiquated style, with medieval and biblical overtones, which he regarded as appropriate to his story. Anti-Tolkien critics often snipe at the use of words like *thither*, *yonder*, and *thou*[14]. In fact, Tolkien was a master of many registers and an excellent essayist, capable of expressing complex ideas with great grace and considerable humour, particularly of the ironic sort, in his non-fiction output. However, he chose to clothe his long works of fiction in the sombre tones of the great myths and legends, in which there is no place for cutting wit or eye-catching turns of phrase. His fans would certainly have it no other way. ■

[To be concluded]

Notes

1 *Ficciones*, José Luis Borges, Alianza Editorial (pb), originally published in 1944
2 *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* in *Ficciones*, *op. cit.*; translations from the Spanish by R. Smith
3 Famously, *The Hobbit* was born when Tolkien scribbled 'in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit' while correcting exam papers.
4 The *Road to Middle Earth*, Tom Shippey, HarperCollins 2005 (revised edition)
5 *The Lord of the Rings Research Project* is an initiative undertaken by the University of Wales with funding from the UK Economic and Social Research Council <www.lordoftheringsresearch.net>
6 Letter to M Waldman, in the preface to *The Silmarillion*, HarperCollins, 1992 edition
7 An outstanding study of the development of Tolkien's elvish languages is to be found in *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* by Verlyn Flieger, Kent State University Press, revised edition 2002; and there is an excellent Tolkienian linguistics website at <www.elvish. org>
8 Letter to M Waldman, *op. cit*.
9 *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter & Christopher Tolkien, HarperCollins 1999
10 Foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, HarperCollins (1966 edition)
11 The O'Donnel Lecture on 'Welsh and English', Oxford 1954; reference in T. Shippey p. 129, *op. cit*.
12 T. Shippey *op. cit.*
13 These examples are taken from T. Shippey, *op. cit*. Information on names in Tolkien is contained in *The Complete Guide to Middle Earth*, Robert Fos-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ter, HarperCollins 2000. A useful on-line dictionary is available at the time of writing at <www.quicksilver899.com/Tolkien/Tolkien_Dictionary.html>

14 Tolkien's deliberately grandiose style has been attacked over the years by illustrious members of the literary community including Edmund Wilson, Edwin Muir and Harold Bloom, and still raises hackles in certain quarters. A recent example is an article by the American literary pundit Judith Shulevitz in *The New York Times*, whose assault on *TLOTR* contains references to 'fusty archaisms', 'pedantry' and 'portentousness' ('Hobbits in Hollywood,' 22 Apr 01).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078405004037 Published online by Cambridge University Press