

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion



Topic: Tom B: Peeling the Onion (Collegium 1)

'Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected analysis on the subject of Tom Bombadil, which I could dedicate to all Plaza enthusiasts. With that aim in mind I started The Great Work, with aid of some 30+ supportive loremasters. With that great aim in mind I spent almost a year searching on and offsite for anything connected to Tom, and my colleagues did likewise. An editorial committee was set up, a comprehensive topic list agreed, and projects assigned. But RL, loss of supporting project managers, and the sheer weight of coordinating such a large project and number of people finally brought my work to a halt. I had no need to leave scope for other minds, for they were already busy at work and have continued to offer their views in a multitude of threads from the inception of The Great Work, until today' {With apologies to JRR Tolkien and **Letter #131**}

However, the material acquired during that process still remains, and since then, even more views on Tom have seen the light of day- each one usually more absurd than the last.

So, rather than let all that research go to waste I have decided to use it to peel the layers of the onion that is Tom B and his fair Lady Goldberry, and provide a resource base for others who might wish to take up the torch where I laid it down.

This will be a very lengthy process and I will start it by simply listing some of the many views as to who or what Tom is. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Some of them might surprise you!

The Many Headed Hydra - Interpretations of Tom

Tom is:

Adam (and Goldberry is Eve - both are in their unfallen state)
Aule (and Goldberry is Yavanna)
A being thrown-up at the beginning of time
The Brown Man
The Chieftain of Birds
One of the oldest inhabitants of King Bonehig's kingdom
The Christian concept of stewardship
Christ (almost)
A daimonic being who lived before history
A Dutch Doll
The spirit of Ea itself
Earth's Gaia
Eru
Eru's representative in ME
An Enigma
The Fisher King
The Green Man
The Jungian concept of the 'Original Man'
The last Moorish King of Granada
A Maia 'gone native'
A Maia of Yavanna
The last Maia to enter Ea
A Merlin type figure
The spirit of ME
A nature spirit
A nature sprite

The embodiment of nature's moral neutrality or ambiguity
 Embodies Nature's pattern
 The Spirit of Nature
 A spirit of the vanishing Oxford and Berkshire Countryside
 A pre-existing spiritual being who became embodied as the spirit of nature
 The One
 Orome
 Pan
 Puck
 The Reader
 The opposite of Shelob but amoral
 A spontaneous generation from the land
 JRR Tolkien
 Tulkas
 Ulmo
 Uncle Tim's nephew in The Root of the Boot in The Adventures of Tom Bombadil
 Based on Vainamoinen from the Kalevala
 Wayland Young
 The list goes on!

N.B. I am indebted to Charles Noad's compilation of the various interpretations of Tom in *Leaves from the Tree* for much of this list.



Before we embark on our analytical Odyssey of whom or what Tom might or might not be, I thought it helpful to give a bibliography of sources.

This is not meant to be exhaustive, although it was exhausting to compile and took about one year hard labor - on and off!

However, in the spirit of scholarship if I have failed to complete my endeavor, by passing on the information I have gathered I can perhaps enable and encourage others to take up the torch or seize the baton, where I left off.

References are to texts I have seen and used, not necessarily to the first publication of such texts.

1.0 Tom in Tolkien's Letters

Letters #: 19, 47, 91, 144, 153, 163, 175, 207, 210, 229, 231, 233, 237, 240, 242

2.0 Tom in HOME

BOLT1*, **BOLT 2 ***, **The Shaping of ME***, **The Return of the Shadow**, **The Treason of Isengard**, **The War of the Ring**, **Sauron Defeated**

* **Tingfang Warbler as a possible precursor image of Tom**

3.0 Tom in LOTR

FOTR - Chapters 6-10; TT - Chapter 4; ROTK - Chapter 7

4.0 Other published works by Tolkien on or including Tom:

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil - Oxford Magazine 1934; **The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Bombadil Goes Boating** - in The Adventures of Tom Bombadil Allen and Unwin 1961; **Once Upon a Day** in The Young Magicians, ed. Lin Carter - Ballantine Paperbacks 1969

5.0 Secondary sources including Tom-Books

Basham and Bronson eds. The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy

Burton, Raffell The Lord of the Rings as Literature

Caldecott, Stratford Secret Fire {Ok if you like 'nuts'! Suggests 'the secret fire' is a reference to Glamdring!}

Carpenter, Humphrey The Inklings

Carpenter, Humphrey JRR Tolkien - A Biography
 Carter, Lin A Look Behind The LOTR
 Challis, Erica, ed. The People's Guide to ME
 Chance, Jane A Mythology for England - Tolkien's Art
 Chance, Jane, The Mythology of Power - Lord of the Rings
 Curry, Patrick Defending Middle Earth
 Duriez, Colin Tolkien and the LOTR
 Flieger, Verlyn A Question of Time
 Flieger, Verlyn Splintered Light
 Flieger, Verlyn Interrupted Music
 Flieger & Hostetter eds. Tolkien's Legendarium
 Fonstad, Karen Wyn The Atlas of Tolkien's ME
 Helms, Randall Myth, Magic, and Meaning in Tolkien's World
 Jones, Leslie Ellen Myth and ME
 Kocher, Paul Master of Middle Earth
 Krabbe, Kathryn The quest as Legend: LOTR in Modern Critical Interpretations: LOTR ed. by Harold Bloom
 Lewis and Currie The Uncharted Realms of Tolkien
 Lobdel, Jared The World of the Rings
 Noad, Charles The Natures of Tom Bombadil in Leaves From the Tree 4th Tolkien Society Workshop 1991
 Pirson, Ron Who Are You, Master? in Lembas Extra 1996
 Reynolds, Patricia The Real Tom Bombadil in Leaves From the Tree 4th Tolkien Society Workshop 1991
 Rosebury, Brian Tolkien A Cultural Phenomenon
 Scull, Christina Tom Bombadil and LOTR in Leaves From the Tree 4th Tolkien Society Workshop 1991
 Shippey, TA The Road to ME
 Shippey, TA JRR Tolkien: Author of the Century
 White, Michael Tolkien {not recommended}
 Zimbardo and Isaacs eds. Understanding LOTR
 5.0 Website references
 Albert, Edoardo – Who is Tom Bombadil? <http://greenbooks.theonering.net/guest/files/060101.html>
 ARDA, Encyclopaedia of – Entry under Tom Bombadil/Bombadil, Tom <http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/index.html>
 Beier, Barb – Bombadil Discovered <http://tolkien.cro.net/else/bbeier.html>
 Black, Asher – The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses <http://www.greenmanreview.com/bombadil.htm>
 Bouvin - Who or what was Tom Bombadil? <http://www.daimi.aau.dk/~bouvin/tolkien/tombombadil.html>
 Bromwell School – The True Story of Tom Bombadil [http://bromwell.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReader\\$179](http://bromwell.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReader$179)
 Eru – Tom Bombadil <http://www.flex/~layton2/encyc/maiar.html>

Hargrove, Gene - Who is Tom Bombadil (analyzes several of the theories regarding Bombadil and proposes the idea that TB is Aule. Essential reading.

<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~hargrove/tombomb.html>

Jensen, Steuard – What is Tom Bombadil (analyzes several of the theories regarding Tom Bombadil and proposes the idea of TB as a Nature Spirit. Essential reading.

<http://tolkien.slimy.com/essays/Bombadil.html>

Kalevala: advances the possibility that Tom B was based on the 'singing wizards' in the Finnish epic <http://www.scandga.org/Insights/2001-02%20Winter/Tolkien.htm>

Lalaith – Bombadil in the

Shire [http://rover.wiesbaden.netsurf.de/~lalaith/Tolkien/Bombadil in the Shire.html](http://rover.wiesbaden.netsurf.de/~lalaith/Tolkien/Bombadil_in_the_Shire.html)

Loos, William – Who or what was Tom Bombadil? <http://tolkien.cro.net/else/tombom.html>

Martinez, Michael – If I only had a Bombadil. http://www.suite101.com/print_article.cfm/4786/52486

Night Gem – The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, Bombadil Goes Boating (a side- by-side English/French version of the two poems, exactly as the original in the English)

<http://users.skynet.be/NightGem/translation1.htm>

Tracy, Erik – Why didn't the One Ring have any Control Over Tom Bombadil? <http://tolkien.cro.net/rings/tombom.html>

Varda – Goldberry <http://www.flex.net/~layton2/encyc/maiar.html>

Plaza {A small selection chosen for certain posts in each}

Disproving the disproofs: Tom Might be an Ainu

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=144892&PagePosition=6

Tom Bombadil – Tolkien's Gaia

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive3/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=65539&PagePosition=1

Goldberry in the Golden Key

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=66369&PagePosition=2

Morpheus and Tom Bombadil

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=7605&PagePosition=2

Frodo - Traitor or Tragic Hero?

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=28426&PagePosition=9

N.B. The Plaza urls are correct but sometimes you need to try two or three times as a 'timeout' ☹☹

The web urls are correct as and from my time of use - but I cannot guarantee that all of them are still available.



The Earlier Tom Bombadil

In **Letter #163** written to W. H. Auden in June 1955, Tolkien wrote:

'Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree.'

And know him he did - but not - in his earliest incarnation - as a character in LOTR.

Tom Bombadil was the name of a Dutch Doll owned by Michael Tolkien, that had the ignominy of being shoved down a toilet by his brother John, and provided the colors and clothing that Tolkien used in his later developed poems and stories regarding Tom Bombadil.

In her essay on Tom Bombadil and [LOTR in Leaves From The Tree -JRR Tolkien's Shorter Fiction - 4th Tolkien Society Workshop](#), Christina Scull tells us:

'...in a conversation reported in *Mallorn* 5, Father John {John Tolkien, JRR's eldest son became a Roman Catholic Priest} said he {the Dutch Doll} really did wear the same bizarre clothing mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*.'

The first 'literary' Tom, the earliest written reference to Tom is as the central character in an unfinished - indeed hardly started - story about the days of King Bonhedig, where Tom Bombadil was clearly to be the hero of the tale:

'Tom Bombadil was the name of one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom; but he was a hale and hearty fellow. Four foot high in his boots he was, and three feet broad. He wore a tall hat with a blue feather, his jacket was blue, and his boots were yellow'. {H. Carpenter *JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter v1 The Storyteller*}

Although some changes were made to the description of the feather in later tales –the template of a small, merry, stout man, with blue jacket and yellow boots, was to remain constant in every successive incarnation of Tom.

No date is given for this unfinished scrap of a tale but we know it postdates *Roverandom* which was written, though not published, in 1925. {In fact it was not published until 1998}. However, we do not know how long it postdates that work, although from Carpenter's comments it does not appear to be a significant period of time.

In 1934 more fully fleshed - Tom appeared in a poem –*The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* – which was published in *The Oxford Magazine* – February 1934.

In **Letter #153** Tolkien wrote that Tom Bombadil – '**first appeared in the Oxford Magazine**' {My bold emphasis}.

In my view this puts paid to any speculation that *Tingfang Warble* in BOLT1 & 2 is in any way a 'precursor' image of Tom – but I will return to that error in a later post.

Interestingly enough *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* - which we first see in book form in 1962 along with *Tom Goes Boating* and fourteen other 'nonsense' poems, is different from the 'germ' story that Tolkien saw as the originator of the more developed character . {The King Bonhedig episode having merely been a paragraph long}

In *HOME 6 The Return of The Shadow V The Old Forest and the Withywindle* CT informs us that Tolkien had written on the top of a paper containing the following verses:

'**Date unknown – germ of Tom Bombadil so evidently in mid 1930's**'. {my bold underline. Another refutation of the *Tinfang Warble* thesis}

Although the following verses do not appear *ad idem* with either the Oxford Magazine verse or the 1962 publication, although some resonances occur, they are closer - in small part - to some of the lines in the 1962 *Tom Goes Boating* - although the names of the characters are very different.

The mid-1930's *germ* poem was as follows:

'(Said I)
'Ho! Tom Bombadil
Whither are you going
With John Pompador
Down the River rowing?'

(Said he)
Through Long Congelby,
Stoke Canonicorum,
Past King's Singelton
To Bumby Cocalorum
To call Bill Willoughby,
Whatever he be doing,

And ax Harry Larraby
What beer he is a-brewing

(And he sang)

'Go, boat! Row! The willows are a-bending,
Reeds are leaning, wind is in the grasses.
Flow, stream, flow! The ripples are unending;
green they gleam, and shimmer as it passes.

Run, fair Sun, through heaven all the morning,
rolling golden! Merry is our singing!
Cool the pools, though summer be a burning;
in shady glades let laughter run a-ringing.'

So in the 1930's the actual character of Tom – **outside** LOTR had started to develop, and by 1937 Tolkien was suggesting that the somewhat comical character could be taking on a far more serious form.

The Earlier Tom Bombadil - contd.

'To feel that bit of country actually and literally in your veins'

Writing to his great friend Arthur Greve in June 1930, C.S. Lewis told the story of a friend of his who, with two other chums, had '*gone back to nature.*'

They had pooled their resources and taken a cottage in the Cotswolds. Here, their aim was:

'as far as possible, to use nothing which is a product of the factory system or of modern industry in general.....There is certainly something attractive about the idea of living as far as may be on the produce of the land about you: to see in every walk the pastures where your mutton grazed when it was sheep, the gardens where your vegetables grew, the mill where your flour was ground, and the workshop where your chairs were sawn - **and to feel that bit of country actually and literally in your veins.**' {*They Stand Together: The Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greve 1914-1963- my bold emphasis*}

Lewis goes on to say:

'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of the same few miles of country for six generations, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods - they were not mistaken for **there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.**' {*ibid. my bold emphasis*}

And, adding his own observations, Lewis concludes:

'**We** of course who live on a standardised international diet (you may have had Canadian flour, English meat, Scotch oatmeal, African oranges, & Australian wine to day) **are really artificial beings and have no connection (save in sentiment) with any place on earth. We are synthetic men, uprooted. The strength of the hills is not ours.**' {*ibid. my bold emphasis*}

Note these words:

1. **there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside** {Tolkien}
2. **What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.** {Tolkien}
3. **We... are really artificial beings and have no connection (save in sentiment) with any place on earth** {Lewis}
4. **We are synthetic men, uprooted. The strength of the hills is not ours.** {Lewis}

Now note the words from Letter #19 written to Stanley Unwin by Tolkien in December 1937, when Unwin's had asked for further books about hobbits:

'Do you think Tom Bombadil, **the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside**, could be made into a hero of a story?' {My bold emphasis}

Our comic hero is taking on a very different perspective. **BUT** far too many who quote that line omit the following one, which substantially qualifies it:

'Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined in the enclosed verses? Still I could enlarge the portrait.

The verses referred to, of course, are *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, which had appeared in *The Oxford Magazine* in 1934.

Tolkien was questioning whether or not he could fuse the comic relief figure of those verses with an altogether more serious figure – representative of part of the vanishing English countryside.

In the event he did not pursue that option, instead he let the matter gestate in his mind until he did do just that, fuse the differing natures, in the character that we all know so well from *Lord of the Rings* - Tom Bombadil.

The term 'comic relief character' has been used to describe the figure that Tolkien painted in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* and certainly in the brief mention we get of him in the *King Bonhedig* story. Yet is this really the case - or is that just another aspect of the many faceted character that Tolkien finally gave to Tom?

To understand what *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, as published in 1934 (and in book form in 1962) really tells us is the next subject that we need to look at.

Some Observations on Tom as portrayed in *King Bonhedig* and the 1930's "Germ" Text

Before looking at the 1934 *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* that appeared in *The Oxford Magazine* of that year, and contained many of the figures that would feature in the later LOTR masterwork, we need to take stock of the two earlier references - *King Bonhedig* and the 'Germ' Text of the 1930's.

King Bonhedig

What we might call the 'Bonhedig fragment' which first unveils Tom to our world is the very short piece left from a story that was never progressed, by Tolkien.

It was set in the reign of the mythical King Bonhedig where Tom Bombadil was clearly to be the hero of the tale:

'Tom Bombadil was the name of one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom; but he was a hale and hearty fellow. Four foot high in his boots he was, and three feet broad. He wore a tall hat with a blue feather, his jacket was blue, and his boots were yellow'. {*H. Carpenter JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter v1 The Storyteller*}

This first picture of Tom, of height, width, color coordination, and health, remains constant from this earlier unfinished story throughout *The Adventures*, *LOTR*, and *Tom Goes Boating* {certain minor changes are made in *LOTR*, *The Adventures* and *Tom Goes Boating* but they do not disturb the overall picture. {I will deal with the feather issue- separately}

So from a physical description point of view Tolkien had an image of Tom that remained constant from its inception. The same cannot be said about the *persona* of Tom!

It is also interesting to note that while he is not named 'oldest' in the Bonhedig fragment, he is named as: **one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom**. So the longevity aspect of Tom is also consistently maintained from the inception of the character.

And it is also quite clear that it was Tolkien himself who named him - *ab initio* - as Tom Bombadil:

'I do not mean him to be an allegory - or I should not have given him so particular, individual, and ridiculous a name' {**Letter #153** my bold emphasis}

The other very important point to remember is that - from the beginning - Tom Bombadil was **not** part of *The Silmarillion* legendarium, a point I will return to at greater length, later.

As to when he first appeared in this fragment Carpenter in his *Biography of Tolkien* seems to imply that it was after 1925 - it postdated the then unpublished *Roverandom*, but before the 'Germ' text of the mid 1930's.

It is to the very important 'Germ' text that I will turn in my next post.

The mid 1930's 'Germ' Poem

In his Foreword to FOTR Tolkien talks of:

'the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous'.

The latter part of that sentence:

'attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous'

are a pretty exact comment on our various attempts to crack the "Enigma Code" that is Tom, but at this point, we need to concentrate on the use of the word '**germ**'.

Tolkien uses the concept of a '**germ**' or seed' quite frequently to describe the way in which tales develop, and his use of words – as he himself points out with regard to LOTR – but also in general – is a very considered one:

'Hardly a word in its 600,000 or more has been unconsidered.' {Letter #131}

So, when he describes the mid-1930's Bombadil poem as

'Date unknown – **germ** of Tom Bombadil so evidently in mid-1930's' {HOME V1 The Old Forest and the Withywindle note quoting his father by CT} we must pay careful attention to his use of the word '**germ**'.

The OED definition of '**germ**' that most closely fits the context of Tolkien's use of the word is:

'That from which anything springs or may spring.'

So Tolkien is asserting that the mid 1930's '**germ**' poem is basically the foundation stone of his later development of Tom.

This again throws grave doubt on the theories that try and claim Tom as a Silmarillion character renamed, and then compound the felony by trying to straitjacket Goldberry into a similar mistaken slot.

While it might be argued (erroneously as I shall demonstrate later) that the Tom of LOTR, imported figure though he may be, was redefined by Tolkien to fit into the earlier Silmarillion Legendarium and thus has shades of or is Aule, Eru, Eru's representative in ME, A Maia 'gone native'; A Maia of Yavanna The last Maia to enter Ea, Orome, Tulkas, or Ulmo (the nonsense list is endless) **the one very clear fact is that Tom as a character per se was developed, *ab initio* outside the realms of either The Silmarillion or LOTR.**

He starts out as one of the oldest figures in *King Bonhedig's* kingdom, and then disappears for some time. When next we meet him, several years later, in the poem that Tolkien describes as the '**germ of Tom Bombadil**' he himself is not described physically, although the *King Bonhedig* physical description reappears in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* in The Oxford Magazine in 1934.

The "Germ Poem"

Hindsight, it is said, is twenty-twenty vision. One of the dangers we all face in analyzing the progression of Tolkien's thought and the development of his characters, is that we **know** what came after. There is thus a great risk of falling into the trap of seeing in precursor stories, a foreshadowing of what came later. In some cases this is actually the case, in others it is our projecting what came after on to what came before and seeing a causal relationship when there is none.

While this is a vice of which I am only too well aware, and one which I have tried to avoid in this analysis of Tom Bombadil, I thought it pertinent to flag it at this point, so that those reading this thread and its successors, have, as it were a sense of *caveat emptor* - though in this instance it is more a sense of '*Reader Beware*' than the more traditional '*Buyer beware*'!

'(Said I)

'Ho! Tom Bombadil

Whither are you going

With John Pompador

Down the River rowing?'

(Said he)
 Through Long Congelby,
 Stoke Canonorum,
 Past King's Singelton
 To Bumby Cocalorum
 To call Bill Willoughby,
 Whatever he be doing,
 And ax Harry Larraby
 What beer he is a-brewing
 And he sang)
 'Go, boat! Row! The willows are a-bending,
 Reeds are leaning, wind is in the grasses.
 Flow, stream, flow! The ripples are unending;
 green they gleam, and shimmer as it passes.
 Run, fair Sun, through heaven all the morning,
 rolling golden! Merry is our singing!
 Cool the pools, though summer be a burning;
 in shady glades let laughter run a-ringing.'

In some ways the "Germ poem" as Tolkien called it, produced in the mid-1930's, appears to be something of a disappointment.

The earlier, 1920's 'Bonhedig fragment' had contained a physical description of Tom, and some assessment of his character:

he was a hale and hearty fellow.

which tells us about him *per se* as well as his physical constitution.

In comparison, the 'Germ Poem' tells us nothing at all about him *per se* - being apparently simply a dialogue between Tom and the unnamed 'I' about the journeys of Tom B.

So why call it the "germ" of that much more rounded character that was to appear in 1934 in The Oxford magazine, and even more so in 1937 - when it had become - in part - the '[spirit of the vanishing Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside](#)'.

Moreover, in LOTR and The Letters the character becomes even more complex, leading to the famous 'Enigma' comment.

I think the answer probably lies in the fact that with the 'Germ Poem' Tolkien had returned to a character that he had only briefly considered in a children's story that never got beyond the first paragraph.

In the 'Germ Poem' Tom becomes an *idée fixe* in Tolkien's personal *Legendarium*, and, although he develops dramatically over the following years, the 'Germ poem' demarcates the time when Tom absolutely entered the 'canon' of Tolkien's characters - hence his description of the poem as the :

'germ of Tom Bombadil'.

Lewis's quote from Tolkien, referred to in a previous post, that:

1. there was in a sense a *real* (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside {Tolkien}

2. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was *in* them. {Tolkien}

had been made before June 1930, and before the 'mid-thirties' 'Germ Poem' was produced.

In a diary entry of the 19th August 1947, commenting on a walking tour in which he, Tolkien, and others had participated, Warnie Lewis - the brother of C S Lewis and a fellow Inkleling - wrote:

*'Tollers fitted easily into our regime and I think he enjoyed himself. His one fault turned out to be that he wouldn't trot at our pace in harness; he will keep going all day on a walk, but to him, **with his botanical and entomological interests**, a walk, no matter what its length, is what we would call an extended stroll, while he calls us "ruthless walkers" {*Brothers and Friends The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis* - my bold emphasis}*

and

'From time to time I contrasted this holiday with the Hugo one, {Hugo Dyson a fellow Inklings who objected to Tolkien's reading of 'The new Hobbit' i.e. LOTR, Lecturer in English at Reading University until 1945 when he became Fellow and Tutor in English at Merton College, Oxford}, and was struck with the diversity of taste and interest we have in the Inklings; particularly when Tolkiers stopped one day and gave us a talk on the formation of the Spanish chestnut at the identical spot which prompted Hugo to tell us the scandalous circumstances under which the late Earl of Beauchamp was ordered out of England by George V.' {ibid}

These two excerpts, plus the many references to 'Nature' in The Letters, demonstrate Tolkien's infinite appreciation of Nature, an appreciation which, it is suggested, in the 1930's began to coalesce around the developing figure of Tom Bombadil.

'(Said I)

'Ho! Tom Bombadil
Whither are you going
With John Pompador
Down the River rowing?'

(Said he)

Through Long Congelby,
Stoke Canonicorum,
Past King's Singelton
To Bumby Cocalorum

The **first two stanzas** of the 'Germ Poem' introduce two themes which are continued in Tolkien's further development of Tom; that of the River (capitalized) and of the very 'Englishness' of Tom and the Nature that surrounds him, a nature seen through the lens of the domesticated English countryside of S.E. England and the Midlands – Warwickshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, rather than a *Nature red in tooth and claw* of the Amazonian Jungle.

And the places that are listed – both real and imagined:

Long Congelby, Stoke Canonicorum {the Medieval name for what is now Stoke Canion in Devonshire} King's Singelton, Bumby Cocalorum

Are redolent of the ancient settlements of the English countryside - and emphasize once again the sense of 'oldness' and 'history' that surrounds the later Tom of LOTR.

To call Bill Willoughby,
Whatever he be doing,
And ax Harry Larraby
What beer he is a-brewing

Stanza 3 introduces two characters that Tom is visiting – again good old English country names, and the use of 'ax' which is an obsolete and a dialect form of *ask* again emphasizes the Englishness, the rusticity, and the age that surrounds Tom, as does 'a-brewing'. And **beer**, of course, features a lot in LOTR.

(And he sang)

'Go, boat! Row! The willows are a-bending,
Reeds are leaning, wind is in the grasses.
Flow, stream, flow! The ripples are unending;
green they gleam, and shimmer as it passes.

Stanza 4 introduces song - and song surrounds Tom, as it does LOTR - an aspect that will be returned to later. We also have the introduction of motifs that occur most significantly in the later developed Tom's story: willows – Reeds – and the stream.

Run, fair Sun, through heaven all the morning,
rolling golden! Merry is our singing!
Cool the pools, though summer be a burning;
in shady glades let laughter run a-ringing.'

In **Stanza 5** – the last stanza we get: *Merry is our singing, pools, shady glades, laughter run a-ringing* – again, all motifs that appear in the later characterization and development of Tom and his story.

So what might initially disappointing, becomes more interesting as we read on.

And, the opening caveat about ‘reading backwards’ notwithstanding, it is clear, yet again, that the character of Tom has been developed quite independently from his later LOTR incarnation – indeed – it is not too far-fetched to say that the Tom of LOTR was essentially developed by 1934 – as the poem in *The Oxford Magazine* clearly demonstrates, and it is to that we must now turn.

TH: Who (or what) is John Pompador, who is rowing with Tom down the River?

A good question to which I currently have no clear answer- if answer there be. It could be just a name that appealed to Tolkien, or it could carry a deeper significance. If the latter, it is currently not apparent to me.

There is no **OED** entry under Pompador and I do not have to hand a dictionary of English surnames (the Web is unhelpful also in the matter of this particular name).

The closest **OED** entry is that of **Pompadour** {name of the Marquise de Pompadour the mistress of Louis XV} - a name given to a particular style of fashion or hairdressing. This did not enter the English language until **1752** - and I think it unlikely that Tolkien anglicized the spelling and used it, unless John Pompador is a ‘flash fellow’ meant to complement in the extravagance of his dress that of Tom Bombadil as described in the ‘King Bonhedig fragment’ - but again I think this unlikely.

An alternative option would be to take the ME word ‘pomp’ and attach it as an extended surname – Pompador - to mean a vain or ostentatious person - but this is again purely speculative, and I am not happy with any of the explanations that I have speculatively offered.

As a footnote a surname - such as Pompador - is a name borne hereditarily by all members of a family in male-line descent.

In Anglo Saxon times people had personal names only, even when they were known by an additional ‘to-name’ (e.g. Edmund Ironsides).

Hereditary surnames were first introduced into England by some of the leading followers of William the Conqueror, and most were derived from the place-names of their estates, either in France or England. The custom began in the late 12th century and spread slowly with the South of England leading the way. By 1400 three-quarters of the population are reckoned to have borne hereditary family names and the process was complete by 1450.

Surnames had five main origins: place names, location of abode, occupations, nicknames and patronymics (derived from the personal name or occupation of a person’s father, or more rarely mother or relative e.g. Smithson, Fitzwalter).

Perhaps someone with a greater knowledge than I of the history of surnames can give us a closer explanation of Pompador - if indeed one exists.

Tolkien As Children’s Storyteller - A Relevant Digression

‘The {Tolkien} children’s enthusiasm for ‘Roverandom’ encouraged him to write other stories to amuse them. Many of these got off to a good start but were never finished. Indeed some of them never progressed beyond the first few sentences, like the tale of Timothy Titus, a very small man who is called ‘Tom Tit’ by his friends. Among other stories begun but soon abandoned was the tale of Tom Bombadil, which is set in ‘the days of King Bonhedig’ and describes a character who is clearly to be the hero of the tale..’ {Humphrey Carpenter - JRR Tolkien - A Biography - Part IV Chapter V1 The Storyteller}

What Carpenter does not tell us – other than regards Tom Bombadil – is that many of these stories were not just de novo inspirational ‘tellings’ or writings by Tolkien, many were written in response to childhood mishaps that befell his children, and were intended to comfort and assuage childhood grief or calm childhood fears. But in some instances – and *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* –1934 – is a prime example – what started out as a response to a child’s unhappiness or fear was transmuted by the crucible

of the Master's genius into a character that carried an altogether more substantial meaning as far as Tolkien was concerned.

But this too reasserts the point that with the creation of Tom Bombadil, Tolkien had created, outside the Legendarium of *The Silmarillion* and *LOTR*, a character whom he later had to assimilate **into** that Legendarium- but only *LOTR*, **not** *The Silmarillion*.

In her essay *Tom Bombadil and The Lord of the Rings {Leaves From The Tree – JRR Tolkien's Shorter Fiction – 4th Tolkien Society Workshop}* Christina Scull makes the following very pertinent comments regarding the way in which childish griefs and fears were utilized by the master both to create characters and stories to comfort and reassure his children – **and** provide a seed-bed of inspiration for his creative genius:

1. Even with the *LOTR* Tolkien maintained the habit of incorporating his children's toys into his stories. 'As originally conceived, apart from Tom Bombadil, Bingo Bolger-Baggins (the precursor of Frodo Baggins) derived his name from the Bingos, a family of toy koala bears owned by the Tolkien children.
2. 'In an interview for Radio Blackburn.... Michael Tolkien said that when he was a child they used to have riverside picnics with many willow trees nearby. One day he got caught up in the roots of a willow tree, tripped over them and fell in the river and was within an inch of being drowned when his father heard him splashing about and jumped in the river to rescue him. Michael found this a frightening experience, and his father had made up a story of Old Man Willow slinging him in the water, perhaps to bring his fear to the surface'.
3. 'John used to enjoy frightening the younger ones by switching off all the lights upstairs when they were going to bed and then with two torches imitating Gollum {The Hobbit} and his great shining eyes. Perhaps this was the source of the barrow-wight waiting upstairs for Tom.
4. Another fear of Michael's which might have influenced the later *Lord of the Rings* Barrow-wight episode is that he had a real terror of spiders and used to have nightmares in which a sort of hand or a spider came out from a curtain; one is reminded of the crawling arm of the Barrow-wight and that as Frodo left the barrow *he thought he saw a severed hand wriggling still, like a wounded spider, in a heap of fallen earth.*'
5. 'Tolkien used incidents from his own and his family's experiences in his writings, and earlier writings were changed and reused in later writings.'

But, as has been observed earlier:

*childish griefs and fears were utilized by the master both to create characters and stories to comfort and reassure his children - **and** provide a seed-bed of inspiration for his creative genius*

and

what started out as a response to a child's unhappiness or fear was transmuted by the crucible of the Master's genius into a character that carried an altogether more substantial meaning as far as Tolkien was concerned.

Tom Bombadil was very much of this genre but Tolkien's genius allowed him to transcend the limited experience and create out of Tom a character that – far from representing anything created in the *LOTR* or *The Silmarillion* Legendarium was the product of his own personal Legendarium, which in Tom found Tolkien's own concepts of Englishness, place, Nature, and a whole plethora of other aspects – which of course leads us back to the title of the thread - *Peeling the Onion*.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil - The Texts of the 1934 and 1962 versions

Please note that stanzas marked **A** refer to the 1934 version and stanzas marked **B** to the 1962 version. Where version **A** differs from version **B**, version **A** is given in blue, and version **B** in red. Where the two versions are the same they are noted together as **A and B** and denoted by the color black.

I owe – as ever – a huge debt of gratitude to my great friend, and the Plaza's 'source-guru'- *geordie* for making the 1934 version available to me.

After this post, on the two versions, in - **Comparisons: Section 1**, I will be commenting on words or images that might need an explanation. **I will not at that juncture be commenting on the differences between the two versions and the reasons therefore.**

After that, Comparisons :Section 2 I will compare Version **A** with the picture we are given of Tom and Goldberry in **Letter #19** and *FOTR* chapters: *The Old Forest*, *In the House of Tom Bombadil*, *Fog on the Barrow-Downs*, *At The Sign of the Prancing Pony*, *Strider* and *The Council of Elrond*. The Tom Bombadil references in *ROTK - Homeward Bound* will be dealt with in later sections.

I will conclude the comparison section **Comparisons Section 3**: by comparing the texts of versions **A** and **B** and demonstrate how Version **B** reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1937 *Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside* letter – **Letter #19** and the Tom of **FOTR**.

I will then continue the analysis of *Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion* by looking at a series of other aspects of Tom. I would request that anyone wishing to post comments does not anticipate future comparison sections, but sticks to the section currently under review.

This post contains the A -1934 and B – 1962 Versions of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*.

A 1

Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
He lived down under Hill: and a peacock's feather
nodded in his old hat, tossing in the weather.

B 1

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;
He lived up under Hill, where the Witherwindle
ran from a grassy well down into the dingle.

A 2

Old Tom Bombadil walked about the meadows
Gathering the buttercups, a-chasing of the shadows,
tickling the bumblebees a-buzzing in the flowers
siting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

B 2

Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows
gathering the buttercups, running after shadows,
tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers,
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

A 3 and B 3

There his beard dangled long down into the water:
up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter;
pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing
under the water-lilies, bubbling and a –swallowing.

A 4 and B 4

'Hey, Tom Bombadil! Whither are you going?'
said fair Goldberry. 'Bubbles you are blowing,
frightening the finny fish and the brown water-rat,
startling the dabchicks, and drowning your feather –hat!'

A 5 and B 5

'You bring it back again, there's a pretty maiden!'
said Tom Bombadil. 'I do not care for wading.

Go down! Sleep again where the pools are shady
far below the willow-roots, little water- lady!’

A 6 and B 6

Back to her mother’s house in the deepest hollow
swam young Goldberry. But Tom, he would not follow;
on knotted willow-roots he sat in sunny weather,
drying his yellow boots and his draggled feather.

A 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
Sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! quiet it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

B 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

A 8 and B 8

‘Ha, Tom Bombadil! What be you a-thinking,
peeping inside my tree, watching me a-drinking
deep in my wooden house, tickling me with feather,
dripping wet down my face like a rainy weather?’

A 9 and B 9

‘You let me out again, Old Man Willow!
I am stiff lying here; they’re no sort of pillow,
your hard crooked roots. Drink you river-water!
Go back to sleep again like the River daughter!’

A 10

Willow-man let him loose, when he heard him speaking,
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Tom he sat a-listening.
On the boughs, piping birds were chirruping and whistling
Tom saw the butterflies quivering and winking:
Tom called the conies out till the sun was sinking.

B 10

Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking;
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Out from willow-dingle
Tom went walking on up the Withywindle.
Under the forest eaves- he sat a-while a-listening:
on the boughs the piping birds were chirruping and whistling.
Butterflies about his head went quivering and winking,
until grey clouds came up, as the sun was sinking.

A 11

Then Tom went away. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river
Clouds passed, hurrying drops were falling helter-skelter;
Old Tom Bombadil crept into a shelter

B 11

Then Tom hurried on. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river;
a wind blew, shaken leaves chilly drops were dripping;
into a sheltering hole Old Tom went skipping.

A 12 and B 12

Out came Badger-brock with his snowy forehead,
and his dark blinking eyes. In the hill he quarried
with his wife and many sons. By the coat they caught him,
pulled him inside their earth, down their tunnels brought him.

A 13 and B 13

Inside their secret house, there they sat a mumbling;
'Ho Tom Bombadil! Where have you come tumbling,
bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have caught you.
You'll never find it out, the way we have brought you!'

A14 and B 14

'Now old Badger-brock, do you hear me talking?
You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.
Show me to your backdoor under briar –roses;
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow,
Like fair Goldberry and Old Man Willow!'

A 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!'
Showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

B 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!'
They showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

A 16

Old Tom Bombadil hurried home to supper,
unlocked his house again, opened up the shutter,
let in the setting sun in the kitchen shining
watched stars peering out and the moon climbing.

B 16

Rain had passed. The sky was clear, and in the summer- gloaming,
Old Tom Bombadil laughed , as he came homing,
unlocked his door again, and opened up a shutter,
In the kitchen round the lamp moths began to flutter;
Tom through the window saw stars come winking,
and the new slender moon early westward sinking.

A 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle
upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
'Hoo! Tom Bombadil, I am waiting for you
just here behind the door! I came up before you.
you've forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up here atop the hill with the ring of stones round

he's got loose tonight; under earth he'll take you!
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!

B 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle;
upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
'Hoo! Tom Bombadil! Look what night has brought you!
I'm here behind the door! Now at last I've caught you!
You'd forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round.
He's got loose again. Under earth he'll take you.
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you

A 18

'Go out! Shut the door, and don't slam it after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

B 18

'Go out! Shut the door, and never come back after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

A 19

Out fled barrow wight through the window flying,
through yard, over wall, up the hills a crying
past white drowsing sheep, over leaning stone –rings
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

B19

Out fled Barrow-wight through the window leaping,
through the yard, over wall like a shadow sweeping,
up hill wailing went back to leaning stone –rings,
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

A 20 and B 20

Old Tom Bombadil lay upon his pillow
sweeter than Goldberry, quieter than Willow,
snugger than the Badger-folk or the Barrow-dwellers;
slept like a humming-top, snored like a bellows.

A 21

He woke in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
he sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!'
Clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

B 21

He woke-up in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!'
He clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

A 22

Old Tom Bombadil was a clever fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer –time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water-
but one day Tom he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
an old song singing fair to birds upon the bushes.

B 22

Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow;
bright blue his jacket was, and his boots were yellow
None ever caught old Tom in upland or in dingle,
walking the forest paths, or by the Withywindle,
or out on the lily-pools in boat upon the water.
But one day Tom, he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
singing old water -songs to birds upon the bushes.

A 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil : 'Here's my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
roses at the window-sill and peeping through the shutter.
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'

B 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil: 'Here's my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
roses at the window-sill and peeping round the shutter.
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'

A 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle.

B 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
was robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle

A 25 and B 25

Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding;
in the bright honey – moon Badger –folk came treading,
danced down under Hill, and Old man Willow
tapped, tapped at window pane, as they slept on the pillow,
on the bank in the reeds River-woman sighing
heard old Barrow-wight in his mound crying!

A 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
“Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!”
sitting on the doorstep chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

B 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
“Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!”
sitting on the door-step chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

Comparisons: Section 1 Commentary on words or images that might need an explanation. Stanzas 1-10

Please note **A** = 1934 (**blue**) version; **B** = 1962 version (**red**) A and B = both versions the same (**black**).

Also note that Section 1 only deals with words or phrases that might not be clear to all - it does not attempt to deal with analysis which is the province of later sections of Comparisons.

A 1

Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
He lived down under Hill: and a peacock's feather **1**
nodded in his old hat, tossing in the weather.

1 This is the only time that Tolkien refers to a peacock's feather – a very non- English bird in terms of indigenous avians! He is probably emphasizing the color 'peacock blue' – although he omits the reference to 'blue'. In the 'Bonhedig fragment' Tom wears a blue feather as he does in LOTR. The significance of the later rejection of the term 'peacock's feather' will be dealt with in Comparisons Section 3 when the two versions of the poem are compared and contrasted.

B 1

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;
He lived up under Hill, where the Withywindle
ran from a grassy well down into the dingle.

A 2

Old Tom Bombadil walked about the meadows
Gathering the buttercups, a-chasing of the shadows,
tickling the bumblebees a-buzzing in the flowers
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

B 2

Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows
gathering the buttercups, running after shadows,
tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers,
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

A 3 and B 3

There his beard dangled long down into the water:
up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter;
pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing
under the water-lilies, bubbling and a –swallowing.

A 4 and B 4

'Hey, Tom Bombadil! Whither are you going?';
said fair Goldberry. 'Bubbles you are blowing,
frightening the finny fish and the brown water-rat, **1**
startling the dabchicks, and drowning your feather –hat!'; **2**

1 Finny fish- having fins. Often used as a poetic image.

2 dabchicks –The Little Grebe- a small water-bird noted for its diving

A 5 and B 5

'You bring it back again, there's a pretty maiden!';
said Tom Bombadil. 'I do not care for wading.
Go down! Sleep again where the pools are shady
far below the willow-roots, little water- lady!'

A 6 and B 6

Back to her mother's house in the deepest hollow
swam young Goldberry. But Tom, he would not follow;
on knotted willow-roots he sat in sunny weather,
drying his yellow boots and his dragged feather.

A 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
Sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! quiet it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

B 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

A 8 and B 8

'Ha, Tom Bombadil! What be you a-thinking,
peeping inside my tree, watching me a-drinking
deep in my wooden house, tickling me with feather,
dripping wet down my face like a rainy weather?';

A 9 and B 9

'You let me out again, Old Man Willow!
I am stiff lying here; they're no sort of pillow,
your hard crooked roots. Drink you river-water!
Go back to sleep again like the River daughter!

A 10

Willow-man let him loose, when he heard him speaking,
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,

whispering inside the tree. Tom he sat a-listening.
On the boughs, piping birds were chirruping and whistling **1**
Tom saw the butterflies quivering and winking:
Tom called the conies out till the sun was sinking.**2**

1 piping birds -sounding shrilly

2 called the conies out – Call out – to summon; Conies Rabbits cf. *TT – Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit*

B 10

Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking;
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Out from willow-dingle
Tom went walking on up the Withywindle.
Under the forest eaves- he sat a-while a-listening:
on the boughs the piping birds were chirruping and whistling.
Butterflies about his head went quivering and winking,
until grey clouds came up, as the sun was sinking.

Comparisons: Section 1 Commentary on words or images that might need an explanation. Stanzas 11-18

Please note **A** = 1934 (blue) version; **B**= 1962 version (red) A and B = both versions the same (black).

Also note that Section 1 only deals with words or phrases that might not be clear to all - it does not attempt to deal with analysis which is the province of later sections of Comparisons.

A 11

Then Tom went away. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river
Clouds passed, hurrying drops were falling helter-skelter;**1**
Old Tom Bombadil crept into a shelter

1 helter-skelter – in disordered haste

B 11

Then Tom hurried on. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river;
a wind blew, shaken leaves chilly drops were dripping;
into a sheltering hole Old Tom went skipping.

A 12 and B 12

Out came Badger-brock with his snowy forehead, **1**
and his dark blinking eyes. In the hill he quarried
with his wife and many sons. By the coat they caught him,
pulled him inside their earth, down their tunnels brought him.

1 Badger- brock - *brock* is an early English name for badger. It is frequently used to act as the name of a particular badger in folklore and children's tales- and is also often used poetically in the same fashion, or to emphasize the *badgeriness* of the animal. A more unpleasant connotation is that *brock* carries with it an association of a smelly or stinking thing. In the *Mabigoni* there is a game called '*the badger in the bag*' which represents the beating of a man with badger-like qualities i.e. those of slyness and deceit.

A 13 and B 13

Inside their secret house, there they sat a mumbling;
'Ho Tom Bombadil! Where have you come tumbling,
bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have caught you.
You'll never find it out, the way we have brought you!'

A14 and B 14

'Now old Badger-brock, do you hear me talking?
You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.
Show me to your backdoor under briar –roses;
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow,
Like fair Goldberry and Old Man Willow!'

A 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!';
Showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

B 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!';
They showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

A 16

Old Tom Bombadil hurried home to supper,
unlocked his house again, opened up the shutter,
let in the setting sun in the kitchen shining
watched stars peering out and the moon climbing.

B 16

Rain had passed. The sky was clear, and in the summer- gloaming, **1**
Old Tom Bombadil laughed , as he came homing, **2**
unlocked his door again, and opened up a shutter,
In the kitchen round the lamp moths began to flutter;
Tom through the window saw stars come winking,
and the new slender moon early westward sinking.

1 summer gloaming – evening twilight

2 came homing –returned home

A 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle
upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
'Hoo! Tom Bombadil, I am waiting for you
just here behind the door! I came up before you.
you've forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up here atop the hill with the ring of stones round
he's got loose tonight; under earth he'll take you!
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!

B 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle;
upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
'Hoo! Tom Bombadil! Look what night has brought you!
I'm here behind the door! Now at last I've caught you!
You'd forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round.
He's got loose again. Under earth he'll take you.
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you

A 18

'Go out! Shut the door, and don't slam it after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

B 18

'Go out! Shut the door, and never come back after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

**Comparisons: Section 1 Commentary on words or images that might need an explanation.
Stanzas 19- 26**

Please note **A** = 1934 (**blue**) version; **B**= 1962 version (**red**) A and B = both versions the same (**black**).

Also note that Section 1 only deals with words or phrases that might not be clear to all- it does not attempt to deal with analysis which is the province of later sections of Comparisons.

A 19

Out fled barrow wight through the window flying,
through yard, over wall, up the hills a crying
past white drowsing sheep, over leaning stone –rings
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

B19

Out fled Barrow-wight through the window leaping,
through the yard, over wall like a shadow sweeping,
up hill wailing went back to leaning stone –rings,
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

A 20 and B 20

Old Tom Bombadil lay upon his pillow
sweeter than Goldberry, quieter than Willow,
snugger than the Badger-folk or the Barrow-dwellers;
slept like a humming-top, snored like a bellows.

A 21

He woke in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
he sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!';
Clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

B 21

He woke-up in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!';
He clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

A 22

Old Tom Bombadil was a clever fellow
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer –time in the lights and shadows

down dale, over hill, jumping over water-
but one day Tom he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
an old song singing fair to birds upon the bushes.

B 22

Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow;
bright blue his jacket was, and his boots were yellow
None ever caught old Tom in upland or in dingle,
walking the forest paths, or by the Withywindle,
or out on the lily-pools in boat upon the water.
But one day Tom, he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
singing old water-songs to birds upon the bushes.

A 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil : 'Here's my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
roses at the window-sill and peeping through the shutter.
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!';

B 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil: 'Here's my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
roses at the window-sill and peeping round the shutter.
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!';

A 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle.

B 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
was robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle

A 25 and B 25

Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding;
in the bright honey – moon Badger – folk came treading, **1**
danced down under Hill, and Old man Willow
tapped, tapped at window pane, as they slept on the pillow,

on the bank in the reeds River-woman sighing
heard old Barrow-wight in his mound crying!

1 honey-moon – used in the traditional sense of the first month after marriage- not the modern one of a holiday taken by the bride and groom after marriage. In Medieval times, it was customary for a newly married couple to be given enough mead to drink a glass every night for the first month (or moon cycle) of their marriage. If the wife became pregnant and bore a son, the mead maker was congratulated and held in great esteem for his potent nectar. This is the origin of the term honey-moon.

A 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
“Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!”;
sitting on the doorstep chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

B 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
“Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!”;
sitting on the door-step chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

Tom in 1934

On Feb 15 1934 *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* was launched on an unsuspecting world in *The Oxford Magazine* - a literary magazine very much for adults.

The same magazine had published – 9 Nov 1933 – *Errantry*, which was included in revised version in the 1962 *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* – and *Looney*, also appearing in revised form in the 1962 publication under the name *The Sea Bell*. And in a separate publication - the *Chronicle* Convent of the Sacred Heart, Roehampton, had appeared in 1934 *Firiel*, later also to appear in revised form in the 1962 publication as *The Last Ship*. However, *The Sea Bell* and *The Last Ship* were extensively rewritten **after** the publication of LOTR, and although Elvenhome is mentioned, **there is nothing** to connect the poems in their **earlier form** with either *LOTR*, or indeed with what became the posthumously published *The Silmarillion*.

Indeed Tolkien himself makes it very clear that there is no real association, simply an attempt to further assimilate Tom. B into the *LOTR* Legendarium:

‘The only possible link is the **fiction** that they come from the Shire from about the period of the *Lord of the Rings*. **But that fits some uneasily. I have done a great deal of work, trying to make them fit better:** if not much to their good, I hope not to their serious detriment.’ {**Letter #237** - 12 April 1962 - to Rayner Unwin regarding the publication of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* – my bold emphasis.}

Moreover, although **we** know that Tolkien had introduced Tom in the ‘*King Bonhedig* fragment’ and returned to him in the *Germ* poem, the readers of the Oxford Magazine in 1934 had never met him before, nor were they given any clues as to who he might be or what he was, as there was neither editorial, nor authorial comment published with the poem.

But what emerged in **1934** was a character definition, of Tom, much more fully developed than previously, alongside a group of other characters, Old Man Willow, Goldberry, a family of Badgers, and a Barrow-wight who were all (other than the Badgers)* to feature in the as yet to be constructed *LOTR* - which did not see its first draft chapter in being until **1938**:

‘I enclose copy of Chapter 1 ‘A long – expected Party’ of possible sequel to *The Hobbit*’...’ {**Letter #23** – 4 Feb 1938 - Tolkien to Charles Furth of Allen & Unwin, publishers of *The Hobbit*.}

Thus Tom, Goldberry, OMW, and the Barrow-wight were **imported into** not **created for** *LOTR*.

And although those who seek to straightjacket, Tom, and Goldberry into either *LOTR* singularly, or into *LOTR* and *The Silmarillion* jointly– will waffle-on about how in the great creative-mind of Tolkien and his work to date in 1934 on ME there was a subliminal understanding that Tom was to be part of the as yet unwritten *LOTR* and the unfinished *Silmarillion* – **there is not a single piece of textual evidence to support such a contention.** Indeed, all that we have, and it is not insignificant, argues quite to the contrary.

Indeed, in later writings about Tom, Tolkien, in *The Letters*, speaks of:

'assimilating Tom B. to the Lord of the Rings world...' {Letter #240 - my bold emphasis}

Moreover in **December 1937** – Tolkien had written to Allen & Unwin:

'Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story?' {Letter #19}

No wonder there were problems **'assimilating Tom B. to the Lord of the Rings world...'** **because although he was later to be in that world, he was never fully of it, any more than Goldberry was.**

But we will return to those particular pieces of erroneous interpretation in detail later.

***(other than the Badgers)** Although the Badgers do not 'feature' as such in *LOTR* they are in fact referred to. In *FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil* we have the line:

'Tom was telling an absurd story about badgers and their queer ways' yet another reference back to the 1934 poem.

Tom in 1934 (contd.)

N.B. In the following post the **A** numbers refer to the 1934 text which has been given in full, previously.

So what does the 1934 poem tell us about Tom - quite outside - at this point in time, as he was, from *LOTR* and most certainly *The Silmarillion*?

1. Goldberry, (**A 3**) OMW, (**A 7**) (family of Badgers) who do not feature in *LOTR*. Although the Badgers do not 'feature' as such in *LOTR* they are in fact referred to. In *FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil* we have the line: **'Tom was telling an absurd story about badgers and their queer ways'** yet another reference back to the 1934 poem) (**A 12**) a Barrow-wight (**A 17**), and the River-woman (**A 25**) are all involved in Tom's life.

2. He is referred to as 'Old', 'merry' and wearing a peacock's feather (later dropped for *LOTR*). (**A1**). He was also 'Old' in the 'King Bonhedig fragment', but in both texts Tolkien is using 'old' in two quite different ways. He uses it to determine the age – longevity - of Bombadil – he is 'old' and this is consistent throughout all the Bombadil writings (except the 'Germ Poem' where 'old' does not appear at all. But he is 'old' also in the sense of 'a good 'ol boy' (USA) or 'my dear old thing' (UK) - which carries with it a sense of affection for a warm, friendly figure- which Tom most certainly is.

3. His color coding 'blue and yellow' is consistent with the 'King Bonhedig fragment.' (**A1**)

4. He is associated with meadows and with sitting by the waterside for hours. (**A2**)

5. Goldberry is introduced to us for the first time, and she pulls Tom by his beard into the water (**A3**)

6. She asks him where he is going and tells him that his hat is drowning. He does not answer her question on where he is going, but asks her to retrieve his hat as he doesn't like wading. {With the possible implication that he doesn't like to be **in** water but likes to be **by** it, thus defining him as of the land, and Goldberry as of the water.) Most importantly he tells her to sleep, implying that she should not be awake. But in this poem he doesn't **sing** her to sleep - he **tells** her to sleep. {**A 4 and A 5**}

7. Goldberry returns to her mother's house and Tom, she having retrieved his hat, sits on the willow-roots to dry out. {**A 6**}

8. Willow-man – introduced for the first time - wakes up and **sings** Tom to sleep, catching him in a crack. {**A 7**}

9 As with Goldberry - Tom **tells** Willow-man to go to sleep, as with the River-daughter (the first time this term is used) indeed he links her to the command. {**A9**}

10. Willow-man obeys Tom's **spoken** command. Tom sits listening to the mutterings of Willow-man and 'called the conies out' – summoned the rabbits. Notice now, how three times, Goldberry, OMW, the rabbits, Tom's **spoken** commands are obeyed by the creatures and beings of the wild. {A10}

11. Tom 'crept into a shelter' the later totally empowered Tom has not yet fully developed in Tolkien's thinking, the Tom of LOTR would not have done any 'creeping'. {A 11}

12. Tom is dragged from his shelter by Badger-brock and his family and taken to their underground burrow. Badger-brock is absent from the story of the LOTR developed Tom. {A12}

13. Tom commands Badger-brock to let him go – again a **spoken** command – because Tom must be 'walking'. He tells Brock and his family to go to sleep, like Goldberry and OMW, whom he names. {A 14}

14. The Badgers are frightened by Tom's command and what they have done, they apologize and free him, returning to their burrow - 'Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking.' For the first time we get an inkling of the **power** that resides in Tom's **spoken** commands. {A 15}

15. Returning home Tom is accosted by a Barrow-wight, hiding behind his bedroom door who threatens to make him 'cold and pale'. Tom commands him to go – again a **spoken** command – and, like Goldberry, OMW, and the badgers to go back to sleep - Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow! {A 18}

16. The Barrow-wight obeys him and returns to his lonely mound- 'crying.' {A 19}

17. Tom sleeps a perfectly natural and contented sleep {A20} and awakes in the morning happy and relaxed, singing what is to later become in LOTR main motif: Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!' He also 'whistles like a starling' – raucously – Tom is always portrayed as a very noisy person! {A21}

18. We are told that Tom is a clever fellow and that he is never caught:

'None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer-time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water'

How do we reconcile that with Tom having been caught three times in the previous verses? Note the omission of 'forest' from the 1934 poem – at this point Tom's mastery appears to be limited to 'meadows... down dale, over hill, jumping over water'. Note too that seasonality is now mentioned in conjunction with Tom - winter and summer-time. I do not think we can, at this point, read anything into 'shadows' other than meaning 'shaded areas'.

However, Tom goes and catches Goldberry, sitting in the rushes dressed in green and singing an old song to the birds. {A 22}

19. The river-beings are outraged by Tom's behavior:

Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried,

And even Goldberry's heart is set 'fluttering'.

Tom tells Goldberry that she will come home with him:

The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter

Notice how similar this vegetarian offering is to that of Beorn's in The Hobbit – loaves, butter, honey, {Queer Lodgings} – Beorn, although a man, is a shape-changer and close to nature!

Recall also Tolkien's remark recalled by C S Lewis:

'What had been earth and air and later corn, and later still bread was in them' {They Stand Together Letter 143} - talking in the context of man living in harmony with nature.

Tom also tells 'her not to mind her mother, in her reedy pool' as she will find no lover there. Again, we have the reference to 'mother' but as yet no mention of 'River-woman'. {A23}

20. For the wedding Tom removes his hat and feather and is crowned with buttercups, Goldberry:

with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
robed all in silver-green

and Tom sings like a starling – again – and hums like a honey-bee – creatures of nature. {A24}

21. The beings and creatures mentioned before are aware of and join in the celebrations- although some – the River-woman – finally identified as such, and the Barrow-wight – are not overjoyed! {A25}

22. Tom pays no attention to any nightly noises {*advice that is later given to different players - in LOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*} - friendly or otherwise, and in the morning sits on the 'doorstep'. Goldberry combs 'tresses yellow'. {A26}

Editorial Amendment and Retraction

A 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
"Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!";
sitting on the dock-step chopping sticks of willow, 1
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

1 dock-step – one of the steps of a 'dock-step'; the steps leading down to a moored boat to allow access and egress

B 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
"Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!";
sitting on the doorstep chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

Please note that my original rendition of the 1934 poem contained an incorrect line {though this has now been amended}:

sitting on the dock-step chopping sticks of willow,

This, like in the 1962 version should have read doorstep, although the 1934 version is not hyphenated- simply 'doorstep', whereas the 1962 version is 'door-step'.

This means that the interpretation relating the line possibly back to the 'Germ poem' is incorrect, although of course in that poem Tom did travel down river with John Pompador in a boat.

The problem arose because I departed from my good friend *geordie*'s transcript, through the ill-advice of another.

As *Geordie* was taking a well-deserved holiday I was unable to send my completed version of the 1934 poem to him for final confirmation. I therefore sent it to a friend in London as I was under the impression he had a copy of the 1934 version.

He did - but he had taken it from *The Uncharted Realms of Tolkien* - by Alex Lewis and Elizabeth Currie. Lewis' source quotes have been - justly- complained of before, and here again he has completely misquoted the original line - putting in 'dock-step' instead of 'door-step'.

If I had realized this was from Lewis - whose work I have - but whose ideas and comments I use very circumspectly - I would not have included it.

So, my profuse apologies to all for my mistake. It does not of course in any way impair the main thrust of my argument to date.

My sincere thanks to *geordie* who - gentleman and scholar that he is - allowed me to correct my own error - which of course he immediately spotted on his return from holiday.

And a warning to me - and us all - not just about Lewis's book but about the use of secondary sources as a medium for definitive information - caveat emptor indeed!👍

N.B. Given the difficulties the Plaza is currently experiencing I will post my next comments when I manage to open this thread without successive time-outs! Today I had over twenty+ before I finally succeeded! 😊

1937 – Tom Bombadil: The Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire Countryside.

In an earlier post it has been stated by me that:

'the character of Tom has been developed quite independently from his later LOTR incarnation – indeed - it is not too far-fetched to say that the Tom of LOTR was essentially developed by 1934 – as the poem in The Oxford Magazine clearly demonstrates' {Wednesday Oct 05 @ 18:59}

Of course this is an overstatement – a *headline* used to stress the point that long before the advent of LOTR, Tom Bombadil had become firmly established as a figure of significance in Tolkien's personal 'Legendarium' and was – as such - to be imported into LOTR – and , of course, further refined as a result of that importation.

But the point to stress - and it cannot be done too frequently - is of Tom's prior **developed** existence by 1934 – an existence that although modified – apparently - in 1937, and in LOTR, nonetheless has a **discrete and specific identity which was built on in later developments - 1937 and LOTR - not determined by them.**

Ab origine, to quote a later HOME LOTR comment on Tom Bombadil, Tom was very much in existence in 1934, as were those with whom he was later to interface in LOTR – OMW, Goldberry, and the Barrow – wight, but, like him, they had no LOTR provenance.

By December 1937 the success of *The Hobbit* {published on 21 September 1937} had both its reading public and its publisher - Allen & Unwin, clamoring for more – a clamor that put Tolkien into something of a dilemma.

Writing to Stanley Unwin in December 1937 (**Letter #19** 16 Dec 1937) Tolkien said:

'And what more can hobbits do? They can be comic, but their comedy is suburban unless set against things more elemental. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time. Perhaps a new (if similar) line? Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story? Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined, in the enclosed verses? Still I could enlarge the portrait' {My bold emphasis and underline}.

Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined, in the enclosed verses? The '**enclosed verses**', that Tolkien was referring to, are of course the verses of the poem *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* which first appeared in published form in *The Oxford Magazine* of Feb 15 1934, which we have looked at in great detail in previous post above. And what Tolkien is saying is that it is possible that Tom had been so well defined in those verses '**fully enshrined**', that the character could not be developed. Yet he then qualifies that by saying '**Still I could enlarge the portrait**'. In other words, that he felt it **was** possible to '**enlarge the portrait**'.

Moreover, he is now associating Tom with a pre-Hobbit period of history '**But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time. Perhaps a new (if similar) line?**' Indeed, by implication he is linking him, possibly, with orcs and dragons, whereas in 1934 we have only OMW, badgers, Goldberry, and a Barrow-wight!

And, to add to our confusion, he calmly announces that Tom is **the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside** a proposition, which, to be frank, unless one were psychic, it would be impossible to derive from the 1934 poem! We might have hazarded a guess at linking him with Nature, or being some form of nature spirit from the 1934 verses, but it defies logic that anyone, other than the author himself, could use those verses to have been so site specific as to locate Tom in the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire!

Had this been what he intended in 1934, something as specific as the *genius loci* of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside, or was this yet a further refinement and development in his thinking about Tom

that had taken place between the publication of the poem in February 1934 and the letter to Stanley Unwin of 1937?

Tomnoddý: Some very perceptive questions!👍 I hope my responses are equally so!😄

In the 1934 poem Tom has power over all those creatures and beings he comes into contact with:

- Goldberry
- OMW
- The badgers
- The conies (rabbits)
- The Barrow-wight

BUT - and it is a very important **but** - he is not yet the '**Master**'. He is caught by Goldberry, OMW and the Badgers, but they - and the Barrow-wight release him as a result of his **spoken** command. Moreover, he is at this point only in 'control' in:

None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer – time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water

the **forest** is not mentioned.

These points, '**Master**', '**Song**', and '**Forest**' are very significant - and I will return to them later - and represent the more developed Tom of the 1937 **letter #19** and *LOTR*. The 'singing' that Tom does in the 1934 poem stems from his ebullient spirit - it is only in *LOTR* that he is seen as using **song** as a mechanism of control.

Is it simply a matter of the Barrow-wight being geographically in the area that Tom has power over, or is there something more?

Your question - partially answered in the previous paragraph - anticipates responses that I will give later. Suffice it to say at this point that I think the answer to your question is - **both**. Tom - in the 1934 poem has - I think- become more fixed in Tolkien's mind in terms of place and has established some boundaries, but nothing like the developed way of *LOTR*. And the Barrow-wight falls within the boundaries that Tom has established, but Tom too has innate powers of control that he chooses to exercise only in those boundaries.

The 1934 *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* does not align with the geography of ME as exemplified in *LOTR* - again this is a later development used - among other things - to help assimilate Tom into the *LOTR* story, into which he was - to use Tolkien's word - 'inserted'. Thus the 1934 poem has no real relationship at all to either the geography or the world of ME - that was to come later.

And remember, all the creatures and beings that Tom comes into contact with - with the exception of the badgers – are - like him - imported from the 1934 poem **into** *LOTR* - and while changed and developed to fit that story are not the products of it.

Tom as a being of defined place

In a previous post I commented:

"And, to add to our confusion, he calmly announces that Tom is the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside a proposition, which, to be frank, unless one were psychic, it would be impossible to derive from the 1934 poem! We might have hazarded a guess at linking him with Nature, or being some form of nature spirit from the 1934 verses, but it defies logic that anyone, other than the author himself, could use those verses to have been so site specific as to locate Tom in the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire!

Had this been what he intended in 1934, something as specific as the *genius loci* of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside, or was this yet a further refinement and development in his thinking about Tom that had taken place between the publication of the poem in February 1934 and the letter to Stanley Unwin of 1937?"

Unfortunately, the written record is silent regarding at what point Tolkien saw Tom incarnated as **the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside** – or, if anything does exist, I am not privy to it. My inclination is to plump for a date nearer the 1937 letter **#19** than 1934, but what I think is clear, is that by 1934 Tolkien had decided that Tom existed in a defined space, that there were boundaries to where he went. Just how defined those boundaries were, and by whom, is difficult to say, but they were certainly not as articulated as they became in LOTR where Tom clearly is the definer of his own boundaries.

If we return to the 'Germ' poem, the picture we get of Tom is one of a traveler, and a traveler over a fairly wide stretch of the English countryside (Tom's 'walking' and 'traveling' will be examined later), although in the 'Germ' poem he is rowing - not walking!

Through Long Congelby,
Stoke Canonorum,
Past King's Singelton
To Bumby Cocalorum

Stoke Canonorum – as we know from CT's note in HOME V1 (*The Old Forest and the Withywindle*) is the medieval name for what is now Stoke Canon – Devon. And Devon is a far cry from the:

Oxford and Berkshire countryside of the 1937 letter!

Yet by 1934 Tom is existing in a defined – although as yet not specified – area. His area is bounded by the locations of those with whom he interfaces - Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, the Barrow-wight. So, while Tolkien might well yet not have defined the specific geographical location that forms the subject of Tom's wanderings, he has clearly demarcated some **place** by reference to the characters and creatures with whom Tom interacts. They are quite clearly 'local' although their *locale* is not yet specified.

Tolkien had a very strong sense of *place*. It was part and parcel of what we might call the 'Englishness' in him. That is made clear in the comments he made to C S Lewis – quoted in an earlier post:

'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of **the same few miles of country for six generations**, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods- they were not mistaken for **there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.**' {ibid. my bold emphasis}

And in talking of the Shire in **Letter #178** {cf. also **Letter #181**} he says:

'It is in fact more or less a Warwickshire village of about the period of the Diamond Jubilee'

and in **Letter #190** he writes:

'But, of course if we drop the 'fiction' of long ago, 'The Shire' is based on rural England... The toponymy (place names) of *The Shire*, to take the first list, is a 'parody' of that of rural England, in much the same sense as are its inhabitants: they go together and are meant to. After all the book is English, and written by an Englishman...'

And in referring to place-names of *The Shire* he remarks in **Letter #276**:

'The names already entered, even those that seem unlikely (as Nobottle), are in fact devised according to the style, origins, and mode of formation of English (especially Midland) place names.'

Name and **place** are very important to Tolkien, they give **identity**. And sometime – I think between 1934 and 1936 – Tolkien had finally come to identify Tom Bombadil with the countryside of Oxfordshire and Berkshire that he and his friends C S Lewis and Warnie Lewis and others walked so frequently.

And the **Nature** that is part of Tom's persona was finally derived from the gentle, domesticated countryside of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, rather than the wilds of the Yorkshire moors - which he also knew intimately from his days in Leeds.

As a consequence - as we have observed before:

Tolkien 'domesticates' the wildness of Nature and its inhabitants by using the 'lens' of the domestic and comfortable scenery of the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire and it is not without reason that he

describes Tom - in a later development, as the *spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside*.

Letter #19 – Is this the missing link?

Many scholars and commentators on Tolkien have seized on **Letter #19** and its reference to Tom as **the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside**

without aligning that statement with a number of other significant statements in the same letter.

Now, while I am the first to admit that what follows is speculation - although I hope intelligent speculation - I do believe that it might offer us some clues as to the linking of the Tom of the **Oxford and Berkshire countryside** with the Tom of the 1934 poem, and provide a bridge that begins the next stage of Tom's development in Tolkien's mind – that of linking Tom – an independently created figure, to the wider Legendarium of ME.

The 1934 poem had established Tom in a specific place - although as yet unnamed. It had shown that he had powers over others - using speech. It had shown although not yet Master he was able to free himself when caught, but that as yet, the forest was an uncomfortable place for him. It had associated him with summer and spring - an element of seasonality had been introduced. It had introduced three main characters with whom he was to be later associated - Goldberry, OMW, the Barrow-wight. It had demarcated him as of the land and Goldberry as of the water, and it had certainly associated him with Nature.

By 1937 – and **Letter #19** Tom's unspecified place is specified the – **(vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside** – of which he is the spirit or *genius loci*.

But, as yet, Tom is **not** associated with the wider Legendarium of ME and certainly not of LOTR – for Tolkien had as yet written nothing about LOTR.

But if we look carefully at **Letter #19** we can perhaps see - **and I stress again that this is intelligent speculation, not fact** - the beginning of a link between the independent Tom of 1934 and 1937 and the Tom who was later to become the enigmatic character of LOTR.

In the second paragraph of that letter- which is to Stanley Unwin, his publisher, Tolkien writes:

'My chief joy comes from learning that the Silmarillion is not rejected with scorn... I shall certainly now hope one day to be able, or to be able to afford, to publish the Silmarillion!'

As Shippey has said – *Author of the Century* – The Silmarillion was very much *the work of his heart*.

Unwin's had – quite rightly – rejected what they had seen of it at this point, but Tolkien makes it very clear that it is **the** real driving force behind his fictional writings. To quote again from **Letter #19**:

*'But I am sure you will sympathize when I say that the construction of elaborate and consistent mythology (and two languages) rather occupies the mind, and the Silmarils are in my heart. **So that goodness knows what will happen**'* {my bold emphasis}

So that goodness knows what will happen – bear this phrase in mind as it has, I believe, a critical significance for the linking of Tom with the wider Legendarium and more specifically, in the actual event - with the as yet unformulated LOTR.

We already know why Tolkien felt unable – as he then thought – to continue with further Hobbit adventures:

*'And what more can hobbits do? They can be comic, but their comedy is suburban unless set against **things more elemental. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time.*** {Letter #19- my bold emphasis}

N.B. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time.

'Elemental' and **'before their time'** – in a different sense perhaps to that meant here, but nonetheless real for that, Tom Bombadil was **'elemental** and **'before their time.'**

And, as if in extension of this thought - which is of course mine - I cannot say definitely it was Tolkien's, he goes on to say: **Perhaps a new (if similar) line?' Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the**

(vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story? Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined, in the enclosed verses? Still I could enlarge the portrait {My bold and underline}.

So that good ness knows what will happen' ... Perhaps a new (if similar) line? But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time.

Was Tolkien, however consciously or unconsciously in that amazingly fertile creative mind of his, beginning to see the glimmer of linking all these various elements into a scenario that would answer Unwin's request for another Hobbit story - allow his beloved Silmarillion some resonance, and weave the independent character of Tom into a story of 'orcs and dragons'?

And it would also allow the Tom of 'the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside' to be elevated from the specificity of an English countryside area to the universal stage of a myth!

For, if we look at the final version of LOTR - that is in many ways just what did happen. In part - and unlike the elves - Tolkien had both his cake and ate it!

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil - 1934 and Letter #19 1937 and their 'assimilation' into LOTR

In this section we will begin looking at the way in which the published LOTR chapters that deal with Tom Bombadil derive much of their substance from the 1934 poem, and, although Tolkien, as he develops the LOTR story associates some of the 1934 happenings to Tom with other characters, namely Frodo and his hobbit companions, the 1934 poem exercises a strong influence over the LOTR story.

At this point in the analysis we will be dealing with the final published version, and for ease of reference , as so many have this copy, or a variant of it, I will be using the revised 1966 version published by Allen and Unwin.

At a later stage I will deal with the way in which Tom is developed through the various re-drafts of the LOTR chapters – as denoted in HOME 6-9.

What is very apparent, however, is how consistent, overall, Tom remains throughout the various drafts, and that consistency comes from the 1934 poem.

In a letter to Rayner Unwin {Letter #237 – 12 April 1962} regarding the possibility of producing something about Tom B (which later appeared as the 1962 *Adventures*) Tolkien wrote:

'At any rate it performs the service of further 'integrating' Tom with the world of the L.R. into which he was inserted'

Note the use of the words 'integrating' and 'inserted' – hardly language to be used of someone who was generated **within** the context of LOTR- which, of course, as has been clearly demonstrated in previous posts, Tom most certainly was not.

And in Letter #240 to Pamela Baynes who illustrated the 1962 *Adventures* Tolkien speaks of:

'the process of **assimilating** Tom B. to *The Lord of the Rings* world.' {my bold emphasis}

So did Tom have to be 'changed' to fit in with LOTR? The answer is quite clearly a resounding **No!** Tom's character was **expanded** to allow him to have credibility within the world of LOTR but much that he had accumulated character-wise in his non-ME life - pre LOTR - was to remain with him. Moreover, he entered the world of ME with a group of companions, Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight who were also **imports** to not **creations** of LOTR, and most certainly not of The Silmarillion.

As CT remarks in HOME 6 *The Return of the Shadow*:

'the old poem was very largely preserved. In it are to be found the origin of many things in this and the following chapters – the closing crack in the Great Willow (though in the poem it was Tom himself who was caught in it), the supper of 'yellow cream and honeycomb, and white bread and butter', the 'nightly noises' that included the tapping of the branches of Old Man Willow on the window-pane, the words of the Barrow-wight (who in the poem was in Tom's house) 'I am waiting for you', and much else.' {Chapter V *The Old Forest and The Withywindle*}

'and much else'! 'Much else' indeed, for Tom brought much of his 1934 bag and baggage with him, as well as that of Letter #19 1937, and that too had not originated in ME, let alone LOTR!

Tom and Goldberry – Integrated – Inserted - Assimilated – a Necessary Digression

One of the truly pleasant things about the world of Tolkien scholarship is the way in which students of the Master's works help and assist each other. Here, on the Plaza, I am always in debt to our 'source guru' *geordie* and once again I have to acknowledge yet another great debt to him.

For example, without his helpful provision of the full 1934 Adventures text, I could not have adequately argued the case for the non-ME creation of Tom B – or, if I had argued it, I could not have done so as forcefully and with such strong textual support.

As I live in Thailand I cannot acquire recent publications quickly, and, like many, I have been eagerly anticipating the advent of the Hammond & Scull Companion volume to their recent LOTR edition.

As usual *geordie* is already in possession of a copy, and, as usual, in his generous way, has provided me with some information contained there, that very much supports my non-ME creation argument.

I will at a later date, when I have received my own copy, log in detail the points made by Hammond and Scull in relation to Tom B, but I felt it sensible at this point, to register the following information because of its overwhelming support of the position I have arrived at quite independently.

1. In a letter to Christopher Fettes of Ireland, written in **1961**, querying why Tolkien seemed to refer to both Bombadil and Treebeard as the oldest of living creatures, Tolkien replied:

"I think there are two answers; [i] External [ii] Internal; according to [i] Bombadil just came into my mind independently and got swept up into the growing stream of Lord of the Rings. The original poem about him, in the curious rhythm which characterizes him, appeared in the Oxford Magazine at some time not long before the war. According to [ii], I have left him where he is and not attempted to clarify his position, first of all because I like him and he has at any rate a satisfyingly geographical home in the lands of Lord of the Rings; but more seriously because in any world or universe devised imaginatively [or imposed simply upon the actual world] there is always some element that does not fit and opens as it were a window into some other system. **You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of Lord of the Rings, even the best and most holy, it does not touch Tom Bombadil at all. So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.**"

{*Amon Hen* no. 173 January 2002; pp.31-31 reprinted in Hammond/Scull pp. 133-4 my bold emphasis and underline}

N.B. This, like several other very important Letters, is **not** contained in the Carpenter edition of Tolkien's letters.

2. And Hammond & Scull – quoting Deidrie Green's essay – *Higher Argument: Tolkien and the Tradition of Vision, Epic, and Prophecy* – {Proceedings of the JRR Tolkien Centenary Conference} which I have, but had not read until *geordie*'s kindness drew my attention to it, say that Goldberry's powers are significantly enhanced in LOTR compared with the 1934 poem. Thus **they too** link **her** genesis to a non-ME environment:

"Goldberry in LotR has stature, and powers, not even hinted at in the 1934 poem."

Tolkien wrote in June 1958 to Forrest J. Ackerman:

[in LotR] we are ... in real river-lands in Autumn. Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands." [Letter no. 210]

Now, in fairness to those who subscribe to interpretations very different to my own, I must also point out that Hammond & Scull quote an unpublished draft that Tolkien wrote in **1968** that exists in a private collection:

'I do not *know* his {Tom Bombadil's} origin though I could make guesses. He is best left as he is, a mystery. There are other mysteries in any closed/organized system of history/mythology'.

And he had also in **1958** in a letter {#211} to Rhona Beare said:

'I do not 'know all the answers'. Much of my own book puzzles me: & in any case much of it was written so long ago (anything up to 20 years) that I read it now as if it were from a strange hand'.

However, I will explain in a much later post why I think Tolkien was reluctant to admit, in some letters, too much about Tom, while in others he was quite willing to disclose much more of his hand.

However, for me, the most significant quote for us all to reflect on is:

[So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.](#)

And if [he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.](#) which describes the world of ME, then he has no origin in The Silmarillion, either, which is itself - *inter alia* - about the creation of ME.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: The Old Forest: From Speech to Song - The Beginning of the 'Assimilation'.

In the 1934 'Adventures' poem there is no mention of the word *forest* at all. **But**, the forest **is** significant by its **exception** at this point in time; Tom could only not be caught in these locations:

None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer-time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water {My bold emphasis}

By **implication** the forest is a place of some danger to him - he is not yet 'Master'. And, **by inference**, Goldberry, OMW, and the Badgers live **in the forest** where Tom is caught – but escapes because of his words of command to all three (plus the Barrow-wight).

By 1937 and **Letter #19** Tom has been defined as 'the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'.

So Tom has now been given a finite location in which he resides, and by implication of which he is 'master' – though that term has not yet been introduced.

Prior to FOTR and The Old Forest, therefore, we have no objective developed sense of 'forest' as such, other than by inference, and with that inference goes the message, at least in the 1934 poem that it is a place of danger - the only place where Tom can be caught.

By the time Tolkien had started his process of 'assimilation' of Tom (and Goldberry) into LOTR, OMW has become a much more significant figure, the 'lord' of the Old Forest as it were - and his home - the forest, a much more dangerous place for those who do not live there - other than Tom, who, after 1937 and as part of the ME 'assimilation' process, has become 'Master', as Goldberry tells us *In the House of Tom Bombadil* chapter.

And Tolkien now makes another major shift with regard to Tom; instead of OMW catching Tom in his cracks, it is the hobbits, or more specifically Merry and Pippin who are caught fast by the wiles of OMW – who, like he did in the 1934 poem to Tom, uses 'song' to entrap them.

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
Sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! quiet it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather. {1934}

Although in *FOTR The Old Forest* OMW is very much awake - not asleep:

'There now seemed hardy a sound in the air. The flies had stopped buzzing. Only a gentle noise on the edge of hearing, a soft fluttering as of a song half whispered, seemed to stir in the bows above.....They shut their eyes, and it seemed that they could hear almost words. Cool words, saying something about water and sleep. They gave themselves up to the spell and fell asleep at the foot of the great grey willow.'

Only Sam, closest of all the four companions to 'Nature' is aware of danger:

'I don't like this great big tree, I don't trust it. Hark at it singing about sleep now!' {ibid}

And, as with Tom, Pippin is trapped inside OMW and Merry, half-in and half out.

And it is Tom Bombadil – **singing** – who comes to their rescue:

Poor old Willow-man, you tuck your roots away!
Tom's in a hurry now. Evening will follow day.
Tom's going home again water-lilies bringing. 'Hey! Come derry doll!
Can you hear me **singing?**' {ibid - my bold emphasis}

and, learning of the hobbits' plight he says:

Old Man Willow? Naught worse than that, eh? {With the implication that there are things far worse than OMW} That can soon be mended. **I know the tune for him...** I'll **sing** his roots off... Tom put his mouth to the crack and began **singing** into it in a low voice'. {ibid. My bold emphasis}

In the 1934 poem Tom's **spoken word** caused his release by OMW:

Willow-man let him loose, when he heard him **speaking**, {My bold emphasis}
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree

Now, in the context of LOTR and ME- a world that had been **sung** into being – Tom uses **song** to command OMW.

The first part of the further development and 'assimilation' of Tom into ME has begun!

N.B. For those who wish to follow in detail the importance of song in ME and its creation I can recommend *Heron's* excellent thread - *The Power of Song and Chant*

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=9350&PagePosition=8

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: The Old Forest continued: The Aggrandizement of OMW

In enhancing and deepening the role of Tom in LOTR- Tolkien also enhances the roles of those who interact with him in the 1934 poem, Goldberry-particularly, OMW, and the Barrow-wight. Only the badgers are effectively omitted – relegated to a single line of reminiscence cf. *In The House of Tom Bombadil*.

All of these characters are imported into ME and LOTR with Tom, but, unlike him, other than to a degree, Goldberry, they are all assimilated with greater ease, for Tolkien does not seek to use them in the multi-faceted way he does Tom.

Goldberry will be dealt with later as a subject in her own right, but the 'aggrandizement' of OMW is worthy of mention. From being a solitary being in the 1934 poem he becomes the very center of the strangeness of The Old Forest:

'The Withywindle valley is said to be the queerest part of the whole wood – the center from which all the queerness comes, as it were.' {*FOTR-The Old Forest*}

Not only is OMW now the kingpin of the whole forest, whereas in the 1934 no forest was mentioned, the River, also unmentioned in the 1934 poem other than when co-joined with Goldberry, and the River-woman, is named – and it is named **Withywindle**, because of the willows that line its banks.

'In the midst of it there wound lazily a dark river of brown water, blocked with ancient willows, arched over with willows, blocked with fallen willows, and flecked with thousands of faded willow-leaves. The air was thick with them, fluttering yellow from the branches; for there was a warm and gentle breeze blowing softly in the valley, and the reeds were rustling and the willow-boughs were creaking.' {ibid}

So, from the splendid isolation of the 1934 poem, OMW is surrounded by his 'courtiers' - the willow trees, and his and their dominance is such that even the river itself is named after him and them - **Withywindle**.

In his *Guide to the Names in the Lord of the Rings* {I am currently working from the Jared Lobdel text in *A Tolkien Compass* as my Hammond & Scull Companion has yet to arrive} Tolkien says this:

"*Withywindle*. River-name in the Old Forest, intended to be in the language of the Shire. It was a winding river bordered by willows (withies). *Withy* – is not uncommon in English place-names, but *windle* does not actually occur (*Withywindle* was modelled on *withywind*, a name for the convolvulus or bindweed)."

Given the constricting and binding nature of convulvulus or bindweed it is a particularly apposite name to give a river in which the dominance of willow-trees is so apparent and the practice of OMW is to 'squeeze'!

Willows, and 'willow themes' are everywhere in this the queerest part of The Old Forest: OMW himself, the willows arching over and clogging the river, the *Withywindle*, even the delicate figure of Goldberry:

'Slender as the willow-wand'.

But Tom, now unable to be caught even in forest, can control even OMW – but this time through song. {The significance of this change - from speech to song- we have explored in the previous post.} And with Tom going before them, Tom, the 'Master' as we shall shortly learn, there is no need for the hobbits to be fearful:

'Heed no hoary willow!

Fear neither root nor bough! Tom goes on before you.'

The 'spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside' has been named in Middle earth – he is Tom Bombadil – and as such a spirit he of course 'master' of the wood or forest too, and of all within the boundaries that he himself has now set.

It is interesting to note that in describing The Old Forest Tolkien switches between the words 'forest' and 'wood'. Now this could just be a literary device on his part, to avoid, say, repetition. But perhaps it goes further than that. When Tolkien takes OMW into ME he does so, as with Tom from a world that was not ME. If OMW existed in Real Life, we would probably find him, in Tolkien's geography, in a wood in Oxfordshire or Berkshire in which Tolkien, Lewis and other Inklings so loved to ramble on their many walks. And OMW, although malicious and dangerous, does **not** conjure up acute malevolence - even more than The Old Forest does.

In her book *Black Venus* Angela Carter makes this observation on the wood in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights Dream*:

'The English wood is nothing like the dark necromantic forest in which the Northern European imagination begins and ends, where its dead and the witches live... for example an English wood, however marvellous, however metamorphic, cannot, by definition be trackless...' {Quoted in P. Curry – *Defending Middle-Earth* - Chpt. Middle earth: Nature and Ecology}

And although a shadow fell on Greenwood the Great and it became Mirkwood, when the Necromancer took over, and Fangorn and The Old Forest have areas affected by the 'darkness' - they do not, overall, carry that stygian gloom that Carter is talking about, and they are certainly not trackless:

'something makes paths'

says Merry talking about The Old Forest. And if The Old Forest has OMW it also has its real 'Master' Tom Bombadil. His presence alone would ensure that the gloom and dangers of the Northern European necromantic forest that Carter writes of, are modified, for indeed, both Tom and his creator are steeped in the much more mellow wooded landscape of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, and seen through that lens, we have a much more 'domesticated' wildness. Here, nature, though it can be dangerous, is not '*red in tooth and claw*.'

So in integrating OMW and Tom into LOTR, Tolkien brings with them a sense of the RL countryside from which he derives so much of his creative imagination, and his interchangeable use of the words 'forest' and 'wood' might be seen to be one reflection of this.

And although OMW is dangerous and his spirit runs throughout The Old Forest, and he and his brethren- 'fathers of the fathers of trees' are proud and malicious, that pride and malice is rooted in a hatred of things that 'go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning; destroyers and usurpers'. {FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil}.

Malicious it might be, but it is not the malice of a Morgoth or a Sauron and its intent is derived from real grievances that it has experienced.

There is thus, in the transference of Tom and his peer group from the 1934 poem into ME and LOTR something of a paradox, where a number of different worlds are called on to co-exist. Some of Tom's peer group from the 1934 poem sit more happily than others in LOTR, because Tolkien does not give

them a multi-faceted role to play. Others, like Tom and Goldberry, as we shall see, fit less easily in some of their aspects- which of course, is what makes them enigmatic.

But even with those who are a 'close fit' there are still residuals, which while in no way interfering with the LOTR story carry with them, for those who can see, resonances of another world too.

Nieliqui Vaneyar

halfir, an acquaintance of mine recently corresponded with Lewis and Currie asking about the dock - door issue and here is Ms. Currie's response

Alex Lewis passed your query on to me as I was the one who did most of the research on Tom Bombadil for 'Uncharted Realms'. What I originally meant was that 'door-step' appeared in the 1934 version, and 'dock-step' in the 1962 version. The change thus fitted with alterations in JRR Tolkien's views on Tom Bombadil that arose during the writing of LotR. For the 1962 version I was using the 1990 Unwin Hyman edition of the book (and poem) 'The Adventures of Tom Bombadil', the ISBN's for which are: hardback 0-04-440727-0; paperback 0-04-440726-2. This has 'dock-step' on page 11, in the second-last line of the poem. The book gives no indication of any changes having been made to it after 1962 - there is no mention of any corrections let alone a Second Edition. However, in view of what you say about the Tolkien Reader version (a book virtually unobtainable in the UK) I am starting to wonder what has been going on. If you and your web correspondents can shed any more light on the history of the poem 'The Adventures of Tom Bombadil' by comparing different books which contain it, I would be very interested to hear about this.

As you can see, she maintains the 'dock' reference is in the later work and even provides a title, publisher, ISBN number, date and page reference. If it is true, then I would suspect a poor type set and proof read by the publisher, and only a secondary error on her part for not verifying the source, although I think a kindly pointing out of a possible error in typeset is much preferable to criticizing poor scholarship if this is the case. As I think we agree, obtaining original source material is preferable to using later copies or additions, which we can always hope still maintains the integrity of the original, especially by a primary publisher of Tolkien's works.

(oh, by the way you might want to add Melchizedek to the list of possible Bombadil alias', as he was without father and mother and first - Hebrews 7)

geordie

NE - [As you can see, she maintains the 'dock' reference is in the later work](#)

Actually, Lewis and Currie tell us that the 'dock-step' reference is in the 1962 edition of ATB. They refer to the 1962 ed. in the text, while comparing it to the 1934 poem. They do not tell us that the book they are referring to is a reprint; they cite the Allen and Unwin 1962 edition in their bibliography. [I know they add the term 'numerous later issues' but that is by the way.]

[If it is true, then I would suspect a poor type set and proof read by the publisher,](#)

The book which Ms Currie is referring to is listed in Hammond's Bibliography as a new, reset edition; not a 2nd edition. Hammond and Anderson note one error [in the Preface] that this ed. continues from the previous printings; but 'doorstep-dock-step' is not mentioned.

If it is true, then Lewis and Currie are desperately unlucky in their choice of edition. I have several versions of ATB; in various editions, including two copies of the first edition. [London: George Allen and Unwin 1962].

I also have one copy each of the following: all of which contain ATB -

Farmer Giles of Ham/Adventures of Tom Bombadil. Unwin Paperbacks 1977

Poems and Stories deluxe edition [London: George Allen and Unwin 1980]

The Tolkien Reader 46th imp. [New York: Ballantine Books 1992]

Poems and Stories [London: Harper Collins 1992]

Tales from the Perilous Realm [London: Harper Collins 1992]

All of these versions have the phrase 'door-step' - as revised from 'doorstep' in the version printed in the Oxford Magazine on February 15th 1934. So as you say, if it is true, [and I'm not doubting Ms Currie's word] then there must have been an error in that Unwin Hyman edition of 1990. Which, as I say, is unlucky for Lewis and Currie, because the George Allen & Unwin eds of pre-1990; and the Harper Collins eds of 1992, do not contain this error.

Hammond and Anderson do not note it in their Bibliography [but they admit that a work of that size and complexity cannot be 100 per cent accurate, and invited addenda and corrigenda, which have been published in issues of The Tolkien Collector. I've sent in a correction myself 😊]

Hammond and Scull make no report of it in their book -The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion - as far as I have read, at any rate. [I only got the book a week ago].

only a secondary error on her part for not verifying the source, well, nobody's perfect - but if you'd found a difference between the two texts, and wanted to make a point of it in your book about Tolkien, wouldn't you want to double check? I collect books by and about Tolkien. It's my hobby. It's not hard to get access to copies of ATB in the UK. A quick visit to the local library would have proved useful; unless Lewis and Currie's local library happened to have only the 1990 Unwin Hyman ed!

In my opinion, the onus was on Lewis and Currie to verify this point, using the 1962 text, which is the text they cite. Instead, they published this 'dock-step' error, which can lead to confusion among readers of Tolkien. [as has been the case on this Plaza]. It's not the first time Alex Lewis has published a text based on a printing error; or a possible misreading.

As for the ISBN - typing that ISBN into the search page on Abe books.com. comes up with editions of ATB from 1962 [the 1962 ed does not carry an ISBN] through the 70s, into the '90s. ISBNs are useful, but only up to a point.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: The Old Forest continued: Enter Tom Bombadil (1) – A Little Color Speculation and (2) Some Speculation on a Peacock's Feather.

'Tom Bombadil was the name of one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom; but he was a hale and hearty fellow. Four foot high in his boots he was, and three feet broad. He wore a tall hat with a **blue feather**, his **jacket was blue**, and his **boots were yellow**'. {H. Carpenter JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter V1 The Storyteller 'Bonhedig Fragment' my bold emphasis}

A 1

Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow

bright blue his jacket was and his **boots were yellow**

He lived down under Hill: and a **peacock's feather**

nodded in his old hat, tossing in the weather. {Verse 1 - The Adventures of Tom Bombadil - 1934 my bold emphasis}

*'The wind puffed out. The leaves hung silently again on stiff branches. There was another burst of song, and then suddenly, hopping and dancing along the path, there appeared above the reeds an old battered hat with a tall crown and a **blue feather** stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big People, though he made noise enough for one, stumping along with great **yellow boots** on his thick legs, and charging through grass and rushes like a cow going down to drink. He had a **blue coat** and a **long brown beard**; his **eyes were blue** and bright, and his **face was as red** as a ripe apple, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter. In his hands he carried on a large leaf as on a tray a small pile of white water-lilies.* {FOTR- The Old Forest – my bold emphasis}

'We know that Tom Bombadil was Dutch doll belonging to Michael Tolkien and, in a conversation reported in Mallorn 5, Father John {John Tolkien became a RC priest}, many years later, said he really

did wear the same bizarre clothing mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*’ {Christina Scull - *Tom Bombadil and The Lord of the Rings – essay in Leaves From The Tree 4th Tolkien Society workshop*}.

In an earlier post in this thread - **Tolkien as Children’s Storyteller**, it was observed:

‘In her essay Christina Scull makes the following very pertinent comments regarding the way in which childish griefs and fears were utilized by the master both to create characters and stories to comfort and reassure his children - **and** provide a seed-bed of inspiration for his creative genius:’

“Even with the LOTR Tolkien maintained the habit of incorporating his children’s toys into his stories. ‘As originally conceived, apart from Tom Bombadil, Bingo Bolger-Baggins (the precursor of Frodo Baggins) derived his name from the Bingos, a family of toy koala bears owned by the Tolkien children.” {Tom Bombadil and The Lord of the Rings - Leaves From The Tree – JRR Tolkien’s Shorter Fiction- 4th Tolkien Society Workshop}

By the time he had traveled the path that Tolkien set him on, Tom Bombadil had changed dramatically from a child’s toy that had suffered the ignominy of being stuffed down a toilet, into an ‘enigma’ that has kept thousands of us speculating for years. But, as Tolkien himself shrewdly observed- and most certainly believed – journey’s change people:

‘even an afternoon-to-evening walk may have important effects’ {Letter #183}

and Tom’s journey, from RL to ME most certainly did this, uniting both the old and the new, to produce the enigmatic character that we are presented with in LOTR.

Yet one thing did not change - Tom’s colors!

(1) A Little Color Speculation

From the ‘Bonhedig fragment’ through the doll referred to by John Tolkien, through the 1934 *Adventures* to LOTR, Tom’s primary colors remained – **Blue** and **Yellow** – with the addition of a brown beard and a red face in LOTR. In *The House of Tom Bombadil* {FOTR} Frodo’ poses Tom a question:

‘Did you hear me calling, Master, or was it just chance that brought you at that moment?’

and, at *The Council of Elrond* {ibid}, Elrond says:

‘You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered...’

It is fascinating to speculate was it by *chance* that the colors of the doll named Tom Bombadil were blue and yellow, or was it, in some way *so ordered* that the colors of the character whom Tolkien saw in 1937 – **Letter #19** – as:

‘the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside’

were blue and yellow – colors that when mixed make –up the color green- a color also closely associated with Tom in LOTR – one of the primary colors of Nature? And even the ‘peacock’ s feather’ which somewhat surprisingly adorns Tom’s hat in the 1934 poem but disappears by LOTR might be glossed as being a ‘peacock blue’ which is, of course, a **greenish** blue!

Of course, the logical part of one’s mind tell us that this is mere coincidence, and the literary analytical side tells us that this is part of the Master’s creative genius - taking the everyday as it sometimes affected him and his family and transmuting it into something ‘rich and strange’ while still keeping some of that earlier resonance. But, nonetheless – it is fun to indulge in a little fanciful supposition from time to time!

N.B. The actual color symbolism that some have seen in Tom and Goldberry and what it might/ does represent will be dealt with in a later post, so please hold back on discussing that particular issue in depth at this point.

2) Some Speculation on A Peacock’s Feather

The use of the *peacock’s feather* in the 1934 version is also worthy of some comment, particularly as it disappears after that poem.

In **Letter #237** to Rayner Unwin (12 April 1962) writing about the to be published *Adventures* (1962 version) Tolkien observes in an asterisked footnote that he has changed the ‘peacock’s feather’ of the 1934 poem:

'which (I think you will agree) was entirely unsuitable to his new situation in the L.R. In it his feather is merely, reported as 'blue'. Its origin is now revealed', (i.e. revealed in the poem written to be published with the amended 1934 *Adventures* and called in the 1962 publication *Bombadil Goes Boating*).

And, in **Letter #240** to his illustrator- Pauline Baynes, Tolkien explains:

'The peacock's feather belongs to an old draft {in fact it belongs to the 1934 **published** version of the poem}. Being unsuitable for L.R. this becomes in the L.R. (1p.130) 'a long blue feather'. In the poems as now to be published Tom appears (in line 4 of the first poem) with a 'swan-wing' feather: to increase the riverishness, and to allow for the incident in the second poem, the gift of a blue feather by the king's fisher. That incident also explains the blue feather of the L.R. Poem one is evidently, as said in the introduction, a hobbit-version of things long before the days of the L.R. But the second poem refers to to the days of growing shadow, before Frodo set out (as the consultation with Maggot shows: cf. L.R.1 p. 143). When Tom therefore appears in the L.R. he is wearing a blue feather... I found that the bird's name did not mean, as I had supposed, 'a King that fishes'. It was originally *the king's fisher*. That links the swan (traditionally the property of the King) with the fisher-bird; explains both their rivalry, and their special friendship with Tom: they were both creatures who looked for the return of their rightful Lord, the true king.'

Now these letters contain a lot of important points that will be returned to later as this thread develops. At this point I want to concentrate solely on the change from 'peacock's feather' in the 1934 draft to 'a long blue feather' in LOTR - *The Old Forest*.

It might be useful to remind ourselves of the chronology of Tom's feather so that we do not become too confused:

1. In the 1920's *Bonhedig fragment* Tom's feather was **blue** (as was the actual feather in the hat of Michael Tolkien's Bombadil doll)
2. In the mid 30's *Germ* poem no physical description of Tom is given so no color is mentioned.
3. In the 1934 *Adventures* Tom wears a **peacock's feather** (which we might or might not be able to assume is 'peacock blue' or greenish blue).
4. In 1937 **Letter #19** where Tom is locationally linked to Oxfordshire and Berkshire no physical description is given of him, but those counties are hardly a natural habitat for peacocks!
5. In LOTR Tom is wearing a **blue** feather.
6. In the amended 1962 '*Adventures*' poem Tom is wearing a **swan-wing feather** - which clearly isn't blue (but Tolkien explains why in **Letter #210** quoted above)
7. In the accompanying 1962 *Tom Goes Boating* poem Tom is given a **jewel-blue** feather by the kingfisher.

In his letter to Rayner Unwin in 1962 Tolkien had commented regarding the change from 'peacock's feather' to 'blue' feather:

'which (I think you will agree) was entirely unsuitable to his new situation in the L.R.'

He could also have said:

'which (I think you will agree) was entirely unsuitable to his new situation as the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'.

or

'which (I think you will agree) was entirely unsuitable for a fictional work that was attempting to be a myth for England'

But, of course, Tolkien was in any case writing specifically, some twenty-five years later, in the context of questions in 1962 regarding the publication of a book of poems about Tom Bombadil - not discussing the possible gestation of the character *per se* and what it might or might not represent, or of the **external** mythic implications of LOTR.

Because it can be argued that Tolkien's change of peacock's feather ties in with the very 'Englishness' that pervades Tom's character in all its **pre-LOTR** days – an 'Englishness' which he gradually developed

until he specifically named it in 1937, and which carried over into ME when he integrated and assimilated Tom into that work, which in itself was a microcosm of another England.

Moreover, the use of *peacock's feather* seems incongruous in the 1934 poem itself unless it is co-joined with the color it can be said to represent.

And there is further evidence of Tolkien's 'anglicization' of works which were later revised to integrate them with LOTR in the shape of revisions he made to *The Hobbit*, which support the 'Englishness' thesis advanced here for the changing of '*peacock's feather*' in pre-LOTR 1937 Tom too.

In changing '*cold chicken and tomatoes*' (1937) to '*cold chicken and pickles*' (1966)

"Tom Shippey suggests in the *Road to Middle-earth* that as Tolkien wrote the sequel to *The Hobbit*, and as he came to perceive the hobbits and their landscape as characteristically English in nature, he recognized tomatoes as foreign in origin and nature. They were imports from America, like potatoes and tobacco, which were quickly adopted in England. Though Tolkien does use the word *tobacco* in *The Hobbit* a handful of times, it is strictly avoided in *The Lord of the Rings*, where *pipeweed* is used. There, as well, potatoes are given the more rustic name *taters*. Tomatoes were thus out of place in the Shire as Tolkien came to perceive it." {Quoted by Douglas Anderson – *The Annotated Hobbit Chptr. An Unexpected Party* – Note 26}

Perhaps this argument has pushed too far into the realms of speculation, and that Part 1 on **Colors** has influenced Part 2 on the **Peacock's Feather**. I leave that for the reader to judge, but I personally believe that while Tolkien's statement to Rayner Unwin about the incongruity of the *peacock's feather* appearing in LOTR is totally true with regard to that story, it is also equally incongruent for it to have been attached to a pre- LOTR 1937 Tom who had, by 1937 - **Letter #19**, become so specifically English.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: The Old Forest continued: Tom and Song

Tom was born with song! We don't actually **know** that, as our first introduction to him – the '*Bonhedig fragment*' – gives a very brief snapshot and mentions only his 'color code', the fact that he was old, short and broad, and that: '*he was a hale and hearty fellow.*'

Yet, without indulging in hindsight - and transferring to his beginning what we come to learn about him and song in later poems and stories - even the term '*hale and hearty fellow*' conjures a picture of rustic joyfulness, rumbustiousness, and merry song.

And the emphasis is on 'merry song' because until Tom is imported into the world of ME his is a song of sheer joy and pleasure, of fun at being alive, not yet has the concept of song as power entered his world.

And in the mid-1930's *germ* poem he again uses song to express joy and merriment:

(And he sang)

'Go, boat! Row! The willows are a-bending,

Reeds are leaning, wind is in the grasses.

Flow, stream, flow! The ripples are unending;
green they gleam, and shimmer as it passes.

Run, fair Sun, through heaven all the morning,
rolling golden! **Merry is our singing!**

Cool the pools, though summer be a burning;
in shady glades **let laughter run a-ringing.**' {My bold emphasis}

'Merry is our singing!... let laughter run a-ringing.'

From the beginning, and throughout his developing stages as a character imported to ME and made part of it, Tom's love of life, laughter, and of song remains even in the darkest of moments.

And that joyful, carefree, spirit, which on one level can be seen to symbolize the exuberant joy of natural creation, the sheer exuberance of just being, also stays with Tom, and was with him too from his beginning.

By 1934 and the *Adventures* song is still used as part of Tom's celebration of life:

A 21

He woke in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
he sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!'
Clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

A 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle. {My bold emphasis}

whistled like a starling,
he sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!... He sang like a starling,
hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle

His music is like his being, loud, noisy, raucous 'like a starling', declaiming the sheer joy of life and creation.

And yet, even at this stage in his development, Tom has a serious side, and dangers that have to be avoided or overcome: Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight all 'catch' him – he is not yet Master. But he has enough mastery of words to ensure that they all release him – and the words that he uses are words that command them to sleep- they should not yet be waking, and they must not impede his walking- as he tells the Badgers:

You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.

N.B. {We will return to the sleep/hibernation/life/death/natural cycle motif in a later post in this thread.}

Tom's words carry power – all those who have tried to impede him release him at once when he speaks, and the Badgers show both contrition and fear for what they have done:

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!';
Showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking {my bold emphasis}

Tom might sing 'like a starling', and use words such as **Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!** but he is still a being of power, whose commands are respected.

But although Tom does not yet use song as a medium of control - that comes as part of his assimilation into ME - OMW certainly knows the power of song- a knowledge that he carries forward into ME where he - also an imported character - blends much more easily than Tom.

Up woke Willow-man, **began upon his singing,**
Sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging; {*Adventures 1934* - my bold emphasis}

'I don't like this great big tree. I don't trust it. Hark at it **singing about sleep now.**' {*FOTR - The Old Forest* – Sam; my bold emphasis}

And OMW too uses **sleep** – like Tom – as a medium of control.

Tom and Song in ME

Middle Earth was sung into being:

'In the beginning Eru, The One, who in the elvish tongue is named Iluvatar, made the Ainur of his thought; and they made a great Music before him. In this Music the World was begun; for Iluvatar made visible the song of the Ainur, and they beheld it as a light in the darkness.' {*The Silmarillion - Valaquenta*}

Like many recorded acts of primary creation, song is essentially the *fons et origo* of ME. {For further discussion on this particular subject of Song and Creation see *Heron's* excellent thread in archived AL *The Power of Song and Chant*}

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=9350&PagePosition=8

So it is not surprising, that in assimilating Tom into LOTR and ME Tolkien gives him as a major aspect of his being, **the power of song**, and the power over others that song gives.

In the early ages of ME song had been a powerful weapon used by both the forces of good and evil, and song was what distinguished many of the great characters of the Elder Days. Thus, for Tom to be cast into the ME framework as a being of those days – and before- (albeit one whose **origins** are not in LOTR or ME }, he too had to bear the hallmarks of those other great beings, of which the power of song was one.

Luthien, 'singing like a lark' spellbinds *Carcharoth* with the power of song and sends him to **sleep**. And even the mighty *Morgoth* succumbs to her song with its 'theme of sleep and slumbering.' *Finrod* sang and lost a duel of songs of power with Sauron.

By the Third Age - for reasons I will not adumbrate here - the power of song was in decline. Yet it still remained a hallmark of some of the great Elder Day beings. Gandalf, {*TT-The King of the Golden Hall*} **sings** softly of Galadriel before he casts Wormtongue to the floor. And Tom – created outside ME but assimilated into it and thus becoming part of it - characterized as one who has been from all time - too has to have the power of song - as both a hallmark of his ME pedigree **and** as his coming of age as Master.

Now no longer is Tom simply never caught

walking in the meadows

winter and summer-time in the lights and shadows

down dale, over hill, jumping over water {1934 Adventures}

he is never caught in the forest either!

None ever caught old Tom in upland or in dingle,
walking the forest paths, or by the Withywindle,
or out on the lily-pools in boat upon the water. {1962 Adventures post LOTR assimilation – my bold emphasis}

So one **very** significant difference between Tom of the 1934 Adventures and Tom of LOTR is that in order to be assimilated into LOTR he has to use the power of song - which he now does. It is his **song** which commands OMW and the Barrow-wight, not his **words**.

And he has also become **Master** – for now he cannot be caught at all!

And the process of assimilation into LOTR also interlinks with what had happened to Tom in 1937 when in **Letter #19** Tolkien had specifically identified him with a locality and as being the *genius loci* of that place - the Master. So, both in his 1937 non LOTR form and in his assimilated LOTR form Tom has become the Master, and in his LOTR form he has also taken on one 'badge' of ME greatness – that of the power of song, and thus is identified with ME although not originating from it.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: The Old Forest continued: Textual Similarities

In an earlier post it was observed:

'Tom Bombadil was the name of one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom; but he was a hale and hearty fellow. Four foot high in his boots he was, and three feet broad. He wore a tall hat with a blue feather, his jacket was blue, and his boots were yellow'. {*H. Carpenter JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter v1 The Storyteller*}

This first picture of Tom, of height, width, color coordination, and health, remains constant from this earlier unfinished story throughout The Adventures, LOTR, and Tom Goes Boating {certain minor changes are made in LOTR, The Adventures and Tom Goes Boating but they do not disturb the overall picture.

And if we compare the 'King Bonhedig' fragment (above) quoted from Carpenter with the 1934 Adventures and LOTR - The Old Forest – we see how accurate the consistency observation is.

Four foot high in his boots he was, and **three feet broad**. He wore a tall hat with a **blue feather**, his jacket was **blue**, and his boots were **yellow**'. {H. Carpenter JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter v1 The Storyteller}

A 1 -1934

Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow

bright blue his jacket was and his boots were **yellow**

He lived down under Hill: and a **peacock's** *feather

noddled in his old hat, tossing in the weather.

*the significance of the peacock's feather has been dealt with in an earlier post.

LOTR-The Old Forest

'Frodo and Sam stood as if enchanted. The wind puffed out. The leaves hung silently again on stiff branches. There was another burst of song, and then suddenly, hoping and dancing along the path, there appeared above the reeds an old battered hat with a tall crown and a **long blue feather** stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big people, though he made noise enough for one., stumping along with **great yellow boots** on his thick legs, and charging through grass and rushes like a cow going down to drink. He had a **bright blue coat**, and a **long brown beard**; his **eyes were blue and bright**, his face **was red as a ripe apple**, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter. In his hands he carried on a large leaf as on a tray as mall pile of white water lilies.'

So the pre-LOTR physical description of Tom, of Michael's doll, of Bonhedig's fragment, and of the 1934 Adventures is **imported** into the story. Only the **blue eyes**, and the **red face** are added, and the beard is given the color **brown** whereas in the 1934 Adventures no color is mentioned.

As Christina Scull mentions in her excellent essay on Tom Bombadil {*Tom Bombadil and The Lord of the Rings -Leaves From The Tree – JRR Tolkien's Shorter Fiction- 4th Tolkien Society Workshop*} Christopher Tolkien in HOME 6 – The Return of the Shadow comments that his father just doesn't take episodes from the 1934 Adventures into LOTR but quotes verbatim whole phrases.

This again provides us with a verbal linkage between pre-LOTR Tom and the Tom of LOTR and permits Tolkien the luxury of using Tom in the multi-faceted way he finally purposed, and keeping him in both worlds at the same time, without that aspect overtly intruding into or disturbing the LOTR story.

The main song that the hobbits hear before they actually see Tom also has phrases taken from or similar to, or resonant of the earlier 1934 Adventures:

1. **Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling** {A 21 line 2, A 26 L.4, LOTR The Old Forest Line 1}

2. **He lived down under Hill** {A 1 line 3,}

Down along under Hill {LOTR The Old Forest Line 3}

3. **the River-woman's daughter** {A 1 line 3,}

River-woman's daughter {LOTR The Old Forest Line 3}

4. **round her slender middle** {A24 line 6}

Slender as the willow-wand {LOTR The Old Forest Line 6}

5. **whistled like a starling** {A21 L.1}

and the feathered starling {LOTR The Old Forest Line 2}

The important water-lilies motif which features so strongly with regards to Goldberry in LOTR (dealt with later when we look at Goldberry) is only briefly mentioned in the 1934 poem:

'In he went a-swallowing

under the water-lilies, bubbling and a-swallowing' {A3 L.4}

But of course the **character** of Goldberry is virtually non-existent in the 1934 poem and we have no inkling as to whether she featured as a female complement to Tom in his incarnation as the Spirit of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside as she is not mentioned in **Letter #19 – 1937** – although of course a much later Letter (**#210 1958**) links her to 'seasonal changes' in river-lands.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: In The House Of Tom Bombadil: Textual Similarities

We have seen from the previous posts how Tolkien incorporated not only his four main non-ME created figures from his pre-1937 writings about Tom into LOTR – Tom, Goldberry, OMW, the Barrow-wight, but how he also kept textual links with the 1934 'Adventures' either by direct transfer of words and phrases or by literary resonance.

Although this has at one level a perfectly simple explanation - they suited the context of the story he was now writing as LOTR - they also hold a deeper significance, for they are visible reminders of the fact that Tolkien's usage of them, particularly of Tom and Goldberry, provides for him the opportunity to disguise another aspect of Tom which was personally very dear to him – that of Tom as an observer of and a commentary on some of the deeper nuances of LOTR, nuances which could be linked –back to the non-ME world from which Tom was taken. This is a subject we will return to in more detail later, but it is worth flagging at this point.

In the same way that Tolkien argued that [‘the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism’](#) {Letter #142} so much of what Tom represented for him in LOTR is ‘veiled’ in a similar way.

Textual Similarities

When Frodo and the Hobbits first see Goldberry {*In The House Of Tom Bombadil*} she is described as follows:

[‘Her long yellow hair rippled-down her shoulders; her gown was green, green as young reeds, shot with silver like beads of dew; and her belt was of gold, shaped like a chain of flag-lilies set with pale-blue eyes of forget-me-nots.’](#)

Compare this with the wedding dress that Goldberry wears in the 1934 Adventures

[A24](#)

[His bride with forgetmenots and flag lilies for garland
robed all in silver-green](#)

And in

[A26](#)

[While Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.](#)

And, as Christina Scull points out in her excellent Tom Bombadil essay Bombadil {*Tom Bombadil and The Lord of the Rings - Leaves From The Tree – JRR Tolkien’s Shorter Fiction - 4th Tolkien Society Workshop*} Goldberry’s answer to Frodo’s question as to who Tom Bombadil is:

[‘He is the Master of wood, water, and hill... No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. {In The House Of Tom Bombadil is very like](#)

[A22](#)

[Old Tom Bombadil was a clever fellow](#)

[Bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows
winter and summer-time in the lights and shadow
down dale, over hill, jumping over water.](#)

BUT as was observed in the first thread, the 1934 Adventures was written **before** Tolkien had elevated Tom to be the Spirit of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside (1937) – their *genius loci* which made him Master of wood and forest too. And that significant change is reflected in the fact that Goldberry’s words – written **after** the 1937 elevation, **include** wood and forest, and the 1934 Adventures **do not!**

The table that Tom and Goldberry offer their guests is:

[Yellow cream and honeycomb, and white bread and butter, milk cheese, and green herbs and ripe berries. {In The House Of Tom Bombadil}](#)

Like *Beorn's* table in *The Hobbit*, as was observed earlier, it is strictly vegetarian - there are no meats on offer.

And it is very similar to the fare that Tom offers Goldberry when he catches her and brings her home to be his wife in the 1934 Adventures:

A 23

You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter

{On a somewhat facetious note, perhaps Tom and Goldberry were slightly elitist as 'In the sixteenth century, white bread was only for the privileged in England. The rest of the people would make do with 'dark bread' made from barley, millet and other coarse grains.

<http://www.homebakingco.com/history.htm#Bread>

but perhaps that was not the case in earlier years!}

And before the Hobbits go to sleep Goldberry tells them to

Heed no nightly noises but Pippin wakes believing he hears taps and squeakings – like the sounds of willow-trees '**scraping wall and window**' {*In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

Compare that with:

A 25

and Old Man Willow
tapped, tapped at window pane, as they slept on the pillow
and

A 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps. Knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises.

And although The Badger family who capture Tom in the 1934 Adventures {cf. A12-A15} and drag him underground, are not mentioned in that vein in LOTR - they do get a mention, just as Frodo is slipping the Ring on - annoyed by the fact that it has not affected Tom:

'Tom was telling an absurd story about badgers and their queer ways' {*In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

So direct words and phrases are taken from the pre-LOTR writings because they fit nicely (when expanded and enlarged) within the storyline of LOTR. But they also provide a link-back to a different part of Tom, that part which although imported, assimilated and integrated by Tolkien into LOTR remains **in it** but not **of it** - but we have 'way to go' before we start to analyze that!

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil 1934 and Letter #19 1937 – LOTR Chapter: Fog on the Barrow-Downs – The Importation Completed

'A shadow came out of dark places faraway, and the bones were stirred in the mounds. Barrow-wights walked in the hollow-places with a clink of rings on cold fingers, and gold chains in the wind. Stone rings grinned out of the ground like broken teeth in the moonlight. The hobbits shuddered. Even in the Shire the rumour of Barrow-wights of the Barrow-downs beyond the Forest had been heard' {*FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*}

And of course, the hobbits are soon to personally experience the full terror of those wights, when they are captured by one and imprisoned underground (*FOTR Fog on the Barrow-Downs*).

In many ways the Barrow-wights and OMW are the most successful of the four 'importations' from the pre-LOTR legendarium, contained in the 1934 Adventures. They fit nicely into the Mordorian scenario that LOTR contains and feel much more at home in ME than Goldberry and especially Tom. The main reason for this is that Tolkien does not use them to achieve any other purpose, and thus they can settle down and assimilate into their new 'country' quite happily.

Goldberry, and more particularly Tom do not 'settle-in' in the same way. Although they 'fit' the LOTR story reasonably well, Tom especially appears to be a 'quirky' character who is not entirely at home in the ME

Legendarium, and Goldberry, as his consort, to a lesser degree suffers the same fate. This is quite understandable as Tom and Goldberry are representative of a tradition that exists **outside** the boundaries of ME, which is why Tolkien in his letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961 wrote about Tom:

'he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.'

But the detailed implications of that are for discussion much later in our analysis!

With the tales of Barrow-wights '*In The House of Tom Bombadil*' and the hobbits' capture by a barrow-wight in *Fog on the Barrow Downs*, the transference of pre- LOTR characters from a different world to that of ME is complete, for the Barrow-wight who captures the hobbits is of course our old friend from the *1934 Adventures*- with some finesses of detail and plot line.

A 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle
upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
'Hoo! Tom Bombadil, I am waiting for you
just here behind the door! I came up before you.
you've forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up here atop the hill with the ring of stones round
he's got loose tonight; under earth he'll take you!
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!

A 18

Go out! Shut the door, and don't slam it after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!';

A 19

Out fled barrow wight through the window flying,
through yard, over wall, up the hills a crying
past white drowsing sheep, over leaning stone –rings
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

A 25

Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding;
in the bright honey – moon Badger – folk came treading,
danced down under Hill, and Old man Willow
tapped, tapped at window pane, as they slept on the pillow,
on the bank in the reeds River-woman sighing
heard old Barrow-wight in his mound crying!

In the *1934 Adventures* the barrow-wight is hiding behind Tom's bedroom door and threatens to take Tom underground to his barrow:

under earth he'll take you!
Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!

And Tom, as with Goldberry, the Badgers, and OMW uses sleep to control the Barrow-wight - he tells him:

Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

Tolkien takes this episode from his pre-LOTR work, and brilliantly transposes it to ME. Instead of Tom it is the four hobbits who are captured by the Barrow-wight- a Barrow-wight who has taken on even more dread and terror as in LOTR he is aligned with the Dark Lord. Indeed, a barrow-wight who is set in a pre-Third Age context by Tom's comments to the hobbits in '*In The House of Tom Bombadil*'.

This grafting, together with that of OMW one finds totally compelling and completely explainable within the world of ME- yet it, too, like its three predecessors, is an 'import' that has had to have been assimilated.

Futher textual similarities and resonances

1. [I am waiting for you](#) {Line 3. A 17 1934}
[I am waiting for you](#) {Fog on the Barrow Downs p.151 1966}
2. [Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!](#) {Line 8 A 17 1934}
[..their faces looked deadly pale and they were clad in white](#) {Fog on the Barrow Downs p.151 1966}
3. [Go back to buried gold](#) {Line 6 A 18 1934}
[About them lay many treasures, of gold maybe](#) {Fog on the Barrow downs p. 152 1966}
4. [Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow](#)
[Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,](#) {A 18 Lines 3-4 1934}
[Cold be hand and heart and bone](#)
[and cold be sleep under stone;](#)
[never more to wake on stony bed](#) {Fog on the Barrow Downs p. 152}

And when Tom rescues the hobbits, this time he does not speak words of command- as in the 1934 poem, he **sings** them, for Tom is now part of the song that is LOTR and he is the **Master**.

There are other similarities that one could comment on but there is no need to over-egg the cake. From Tom himself, through Goldberry (who is developed much more fully in LOTR than in the 1934 poem) through OMW to the Barrow-wight we witness the importation and assimilation, to a greater or lesser degree, of characters created in a world that was not ME, characters who exist in the circle of influence of Tom Bombadil.

It is because of him, and his 1934 incarnation and 1937 development that the Tom of LOTR exists - and, of course in developing Tom within the context of LOTR Tolkien gives him some ME attributes - but he also keeps with him aspects that do not originate in that world - including of course - Tom himself.

Tom appears again, as a referenced figure, in *The Council of Elrond* (FOTR) and Gandalf is going to talk with him after the successful conclusion of the Quest - in *Homeward Bound*, (ROTK) but those episodes belong to a different part of our analysis.

We have now clearly established by comparing the 1934 Adventures and the 1937 **Letter #19** that the provenance of Tom is outside LOTR and ME. So too, is that of Goldberry, OMW, and the Barrow-wight.

Tolkien's transference of all of them to LOTR as imports to ME is a stroke of genius, but is more successful in some instances than others. And while Tom, and Goldberry especially, are both deepened in character and developed in context in LOTR they still remain beings who have:

['no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.'](#)

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside' - Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

Tom Redivivus - Background

The re-appearance of Tom in the 1962 publication of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* was not of Tolkien's desire but that of his beloved aunt, Jane Neave, who was then 90 years old.

After the publication of LOTR (1954-55) Tolkien's publishers - George Allen and Unwin - had waited expectantly for further work from the pen of the Master - and waited in vain.

Rayner Unwin who was specially charged with taking care of Tolkien for Unwin's writes:

['By now I was well aware that my colleagues were totally at a loss to understand why, some six years after the success of *The Lord of the Rings*, nothing else had been published. They knew that there were several projects in the air, and the volume of correspondence that I conducted with Tolkien occupied a](#)

noticeable part of my time. Perhaps I was not sufficiently forceful or encouraging? Perhaps I was the cause of his interminable distraction? I really did not know myself. In my simplicity I thought that now he had retired {1959} he had only to settle down to a single project in order to swiftly complete it. I was naturally aware of his perfectionist tendencies, but like almost everybody else I could not conceive that a single word or concept could halt all progress until it had been explored and filtered through the alembic of his self-created disciplines.

He lacked too, the arrogance that allows busy men to chart their own course through the pressures that surround them. He wanted to oblige everyone, but found himself overwhelmed by innumerable, seemingly simple tasks to which the complexity of his intellect gave equal and earnest consideration. Days could be spent dissecting etymological cruxes that might have a bearing on the interwoven linguistic foundation of Middle-earth. Sometimes these explorations arose from his endless, self-absorbing struggle to create a seamless web for his mythology, but as often as not they stemmed from a superficial enquiry from a friend or fan. Anyone who explored or questioned the detail of his creation a little further than the text allowed concentrated Tolkien's attention. He might be irritated, or he might accept and expand the theme in a reply of many closely reasoned pages. **Either way his work was focused away from any other work in hand.** {Rayner Unwin- *George Allen and Unwin- A Remembrancer Chptr. Publishing Tolkien 11 Merlin Unwin Books Ludlow 2000 ISBN 1 873674 37 6* - my bold emphasis]

In my simplicity I thought that now he had retired {1959} he had only to settle down to a single project in order to swiftly complete it

So, in his 'simplicity' Rayner Unwin, in 1959 went to visit Tolkien in Oxford armed with three contracts. One was for *Sir Gawain*, the second for *On Fairy Stories*, and the third – *The Silmarillion*:

'At the time these were the only titles we knew about. No delivery dates were entered on them, but it was unofficially agreed that **the first two books would be ready by the end of 1959 and The Silmarillion by the end of the year after.**' {ibid my bold emphasis}

In the event, as we know, *Sir Gawain* was finally published in **1975**, *The Silmarillion* in **1977**, and *On Fairy Stories* in **1983**. Tolkien died in **1973**!

So no wonder Rayner Unwin's publishing colleagues 'were totally at a loss to understand why, some six years after the success of *The Lord of the Rings*, nothing else had been published', and both he and they were delighted – as well as disconcerted when, out of-the blue Rayner received a letter from Tolkien in October 1961 suggesting a small book based on his Tom Bombadil verses. Nothing to do with what he had contracted to produce, but something nonetheless!

Then suddenly and unexpectedly in October 1961, Tolkien wrote (triggered by an idea from his 90 year-old aunt, Jane Neave,) suggesting a gift book based on his Tom Bombadil verses...The idea of a book of verses based on Tom Bombadil and illustrated by Pauline Baynes was a new distraction, but not an unwelcome one'. {ibid}

Not unwelcome indeed, for, as Rayner Unwin told Tolkien:

'As you know we are ravening for more work from the pen of JRRT'. {ibid}

It was indeed serendipitous that Jane Neave – the aunt so beloved by Tolkien – decided that a Tom Bombadil book was something that she would very much like to see, for the Master was not in any way inclined to write anything in that direction himself.

Jane Neave was an icon in Tolkien's life. In early years she had not only acted as match-maker between his father and mother, she had taken the young Tolkien under her wing on journeys, particularly to Switzerland, journey's which he was to use as 'story-germ' for *The Hobbit*. She had always been very dear to his heart as he showed in letter to Joyce Reeves (#232 4 Nov 1961) where he wrote:

'I always like shrewd sound-hearted maiden aunts. Blessed are those who have them or meet them.'

So it was particularly fortunate for Rayner Unwin that in October 1961 she had written to her nephew asking:

'if you wouldn't get out a small book with Tom Bombadil at the heart of it.' (Letter #231)

Fortunate indeed, as it is clear from Tolkien's reply that if the request had come from any other quarter it would probably have received short shrift:

'I think your idea about Tom Bombadil is a good one, **not that I feel inclined to write any more about him.** But I think that the original poem (which appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* long before *The Lord of the Rings*) might make a pretty booklet of the kind you would like if each verse could be illustrated by Pauline Baynes. If you have not ever seen the original Tom Bombadil poem I will try and find it and have a copy made for you.' {**Letter #231** my bold emphasis}.

But of course there was a problem. The 1934 Adventures had been written long before the enhancement of Tom in **Letter #19** and even longer before his importation and further alteration to LOTR. And there were problems raised by the publisher too. So the Master would have to make some substantial changes to his earlier work.

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside' - Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

Tom Redivivus – Background –2

Jane Neave's intervention was serendipitous for Tolkien too. By October 1961 he was yet again in default with his publishers. *Gawain* and *On Fairy Stories* had been promised by the end of 1959, *The Silmarillion* by the end of 1960. None of them were anywhere near completion. Moreover, Tolkien had also earlier blotted his copybook with Unwin's – albeit innocently, over the matter of the publication of *Gawain*.

They had been interested in its publication ever since Charles Furth - in 1950 - had written to him about the modern English version he was preparing for the BBC. They were thus horrified to receive a letter from Tolkien in 1959 saying that he had been sent a contract for the book by Heinemann, having completely forgotten – 'owing to distractions and incompetence' that he had an option with Unwin's for his next book. {*Rayner Unwin - George Allen and Unwin - A Remembrancer Chptr. Publishing Tolkien 11*}

Hence the rapid visit to Oxford that Rayner made that was referred to in the previous post.

So by late 1961 not only was Tolkien under an obligation to make up for the *Gawain* publishing mess he was under great pressure from Unwin's to produce something – and the three promised works had not materialized. So Aunt Jane's idea must have appeared as manna from heaven.

But, however it might have appeared to Tolkien, the Bombadil suggestion did not appear in quite the same light to Rayner Unwin.

As far as Unwin's was concerned the 1934 poem did not make a book. Even with illustrations by Pauline Baynes it would be no more than a pamphlet.

Rayner Unwin writes:

'I insisted that he produce some more poems in order to bulk it up to at least 64 pages, and rather reluctantly he did so.' {ibid}

On 15 November 1961 (**Letter #233**) Tolkien wrote to Rayner Unwin:

'I have in fact made a search, as far as time allowed, and had copies made of any poems that might conceivably see the light or (somewhat tidied up) be presented again. The harvest is not rich, for one thing **there is not much that really goes together with Tom Bombadil.** Besides Tom Bombadil (of which you have a copy) I send Errantry and The Man in the Moon, which might go together. **About the others I am all together doubtful;** I do not know even if they have any virtues at all by themselves, or in a series. If however you think any of them would make a book and might attract Pauline Baynes to illustrate the I would be delighted.' {My bold emphasis}

And the Master clearly doubted that the work he wanted to produce for his Aunt Jane, and as a palliative to his long-suffering publishers, still waiting for unfulfilled promises to be fulfilled, as he wrote to Jane Neave (**Letter #234**) on 22 Nov 1961:

'Thank you for returning the poems. Do not worry about giving me trouble. I have enjoyed myself very much digging out these old half-forgotten things and rubbing them up. All the more because there are

other and duller things that I ought to have been doing. At any rate they have you as an audience. **Printed publication is, I fear very unlikely.**' {my bold emphasis}

Rayner Unwin says that on receiving the poems he doubts if he remembered how cavalierly he had treated 'Tom Bombadil' when Unwin's had received the 1934 'Adventures' in 1937. But he did remember 'Errantry' (first published in the Oxford Magazine in 1933, a year before the Adventures) and felt that there were enough other verses to make a book even if their themes were varied.

Once with Pauline Baynes - an illustrator for whom Tolkien had the highest regard (he recommended her to C S Lewis for his *Narnia* series) - the problem that Tolkien had highlighted to Rayner Unwin '**there is not much that really goes together with Tom Bombadil**' appeared again.

On Dec 6 1961 (**Letter #235**) Tolkien wrote to Ms. Baynes:

'Alas! You put your finger unerringly on a main difficulty: **they are not a unity from any point of view, but made at different times under varying inspirations.**' {My bold emphasis}

By April 1962 (**Letter #237**) Tolkien was getting more and more depressed about ever being able to complete the work. In a letter to Rayner Unwin his deep despondency is quite dramatically manifested:

'I have given every moment that I could spare to the 'poems', in spite of the usual obstacle, and some new ones. I am afraid I have lost all confidence in these things, and all judgement, and unless Pauline Baynes can be inspired by them, I cannot see them making as 'book'. ...**The various items - all that I now venture to offer, some with misgiving - do not really 'collect'. The only possible link is the fiction that they come from the Shire from about the period of *The Lord of the Rings*. But that fits some uneasily.** I have done a good deal of work, trying to make them fit better: if not much for their good, I hope not to their serious detriment. **You may note that I have written a new *Bombadil* poem, which I hope is adequate to go with the older one,** though for its understanding it requires some knowledge of the *L.R.* **At any rate it performs the function of further 'integrating' Tom with the world of *L.R.* into which he was inserted.** I am afraid it largely tickles my pedantic fancy, because of its echo of the Norse Niblung matter (the otter's whisker); and because one of the lines comes straight, incredible though it may seem, from the *Ancrene Wisse*....

Some kind of foreword might possibly be required. The enclosed is not intended for that purpose. Though one or two of its points might be made more simply. But I found it easier, and more amusing (for myself) to represent to you **in the form of a ridiculous editorial fiction**, what I have done in the verses and what their references now are. Actually, **although a fiction**, the relative age, order of writing, and references of the items, are pretty nearly represented as they were.

I hope you are not greatly disappointed by my efforts.' {My bold emphasis}

And on July 18th 1962 (**Letter #238**) Tolkien wrote to his aunt, Jane Neave:

'The book of poems is going along. Pauline Baynes has accepted the contract and is now beginning on the illustrations. The publishers certainly intend it for Christmas. I have done my part.'

He certainly had, and Rayner Unwin was not disappointed:

'As soon as Tolkien had produced enough I went to Oxford in order finally to determine the choice. For decisions such as this I had learned that correspondence always left doubts, but Tolkien never retracted from decisions face to face. Then I was able to send them to Pauline Baynes, who liked them, and agreed to do the illustrations. Her pictures matched Tolkien's text magically, and to everyone's astonishment a year after the book had been first mooted it was published. Our confidence in Tolkien's marketability, **even for a book of occasional verse**, was demonstrated by a first printing of 10,00 copies.' {*Rayner Unwin - George Allen and Unwin - A Remembrancer Chptr. Publishing Tolkien 11* - my bold emphasis}

Some wrinkles remained - as **Letter #240** to Pauline Baynes shows - but these dealt with differences between typescript and galleys that reflected some important changes Tolkien had had to make to the text in order to accommodate both pre-and post LOTR scenarios:

'I am sorry that you have been bothered by this detail. There have been a number of minor changes made at various times **in the process of assimilating Tom. B. to the Lord of the Ring's world**... The peacock's feather belongs to an old draft.... That incident also explains the blue feather of the *L.R.* Poem one is evidently, as said in the introduction, a hobbit-version of things long before the days of the *L.R.* But

the second poem {*Bombadil Goes Boating* – the one newly written for the purposes of extending the size of the 1962 publication} refers to the days of the shadow before Frodo set out.' {My bold emphasis}

The *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* was published on 22 November 1962 - 'to everyone's astonishment' {cf. Rayner Unwin}. On the 28th of November – **Letter #242** – a happy Tolkien wrote to Sir Stanley Unwin: 'I have so far seen two reviews of 'Tom Bombadil': *T.Litt.Suppl.* and *Listener*. I was agreeably surprised: I expected remarks far more snooty and patronizing. Also I was rather pleased, since it seemed that the reviewers had both started out not wanting to be amused, but had failed to maintain their Victorian dignity intact.'

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 *Adventures*, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside' -Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

Tom Redivivus – Background – 3

In his Preface to the 1962 *Adventures* Tolkien, as 'editor' of the Poems in the Preface fictionalizes their pedigree by stating that they are taken from various verses in the Red Book of Westmarch. They are taken from legends and jests of the Shire at the end of the Third Age, that appear to have been made by Hobbits, especially Bilbo and friends, or their immediate descendants. He even goes as far as attributing certain poems to certain individuals, e.g. No.5 to Bilbo, No. 7 to Sam.

Of the first two, the Bombadil poems – *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (revised from the 1934 edition) and *Bombadil Goes Boating* – written especially for this publication by Tolkien, the 'editor' says, in the Preface:

'Nos. 1 and 2 evidently come from the Buckland. They show more knowledge of the country, and of the dingle, the wooded valley of the Withywindle, than any Hobbits west of the Marish were likely to possess. They also show that the Bucklanders knew Bombadil, though no doubt, they had as little understanding of his powers as the Shire-folk had of Gandalf's: both were regarded as benevolent persons, mysterious maybe and unpredictable, but nonetheless comic. No.1. is the earlier piece, and is made up of various hobbit-versions of legends concerning Bombadil. No. 2 uses similar traditions, though Tom's raillery is here turned in jest upon his friends, who treat it with amusement (tinged with fear) ; but it was probably composed much later and after the visit of Frodo and his companions to the house of Bombadil.'

This 'fictionalizing' of the Preface had been referred to by Tolkien writing to Rayner Unwin in April 1962 – **Letter #237**:

'But I found it easier, and more amusing (for myself) to represent to you in the form of a ridiculous editorial fiction, what I have done in the verses and what their references now are. Actually, although a fiction, the relative age, order of writing, and references of the items, are pretty nearly represented as they were.' {my bold emphasis}

It was a fiction that amused Rayner Unwin and it was kept as the Preface. And it works very well, attempting as it does to locate non-ME and non-Bombadil material to an ME and Bombadilian tradition.

But it is a fiction, and those who try and claim that Tolkien wanted us to see both the 1934 revision that it contains, and the other poems as part of an actual Hobbit ME tradition are talking nonsense, for Tom was never part of any Hobbit or ME tradition - he was an import to their world.

He did with the 1962 *Adventures* what he did with revisions to the Hobbit post LOTR - he tried to make them align with the later work- and succeeded, in part. But he knew, and said it was a fiction and he was not at all happy that it worked, anymore than he was with the revisions to *The Hobbit*, or the truncated Appendices to LOTR that he was forced by book-economy to produce.

And the fact that Tom - and thus by definition those characters associated with him in the 1934 poem, are imports - are stressed again and again in the letters he wrote to Rayner Unwin, his aunt, and Pauline Baynes, as is his admission that many of the 'filler' poems in the 1962 *Adventures* - there are 14 over and above the two Bombadil poems – had little or nothing to do with ME – although he connived to make them appear to do so.

The reality of the 1962 Adventures is this:

1. The re-appearance of Tom in the 1962 publication of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* was not of Tolkien's desire but that of his beloved aunt, Jane Neave, who was then 90 years old, conjoined with the fact that yet again he was dismally overdue with promised books to his publisher.
2. Indeed, Tolkien had nothing more he wanted to say about Tom, in published form: **'not that I feel inclined to write any more about him' (Letter #231)**
3. When asked by Rayner Unwin to 'bulk' the proosed book more with other verse he responded by saying: **'there is not much that really goes together with Tom Bombadil' (Letter #233)**
4. The non-Bombadilian or ME nature of the other verse, and its lack of unity he confirmed to Pauline Baynes: **'they are not a unity from any point of view, but made at different times under varying inspirations.'** (Letter #235)
5. This lack of unity and ME credibility continued to concern him: **'The various items - all that I now venture to offer, some with misgiving – do not really 'collect'. The only possible link is the fiction that they come from the Shire from about the period of *The Lord of the Rings*. But that fits some uneasily. (Letter #237)**
6. Much of this was caused by the fact that Tom – and they – were never originally part of the LOTR or ME scene: **'You may note that I have written a new *Bombadil* poem, which I hope is adequate to go with the older one though for its understanding it requires some knowledge of the *L.R.* At any rate it performs the function of further integrating Tom Bombadil into the world into which he was inserted.'** {Letter #237}
7. The 'fiction' that surrounds the poems is to be continued in the Preface to establish some sort of consistency and credibility: **in the form of a ridiculous editorial fiction, what I have done in the verses and what their references now are. Actually, although a fiction....** {Letter #237}
8. Rayner Unwin further emphasizes the non-ME aspect by calling the work: **'a book of occasional verse.'** {Rayner Unwin - *George Allen and Unwin - A Remembrancer Chptr. Publishing Tolkien* 11}
9. And Tolkien, in responding to Pauline Baynes regarding changes in the text tells her that they were made as part of: **the process of assimilating Tom B. to *The Lord of The Rings's* world....** {Letter #240}

N.B. My emphasis and underline throughout.

What this demonstrates, yet again, is the essential fact that Tom Bombadil was never a ME figure - he was an import who was assimilated and integrated into the story but who always had aspects that were other than those of the world of ME and the Hobbits of LOTR. And even in the 1962 Adventures, refined through the lens of LOTR - Tolkien has to change the text to accommodate the Tom of 1934 and 1937's progression through LOTR.

The 1962 Adventures add nothing at all to our understanding of the nature of Tom or to his character. Tolkien had said it all in 1934, 1937 and in LOTR. Indeed he said as much in 1961, **'not that I feel inclined to write any more about him'** {Letter #231}. And in reality, although he wrote *Bombadil Goes Boating* for the 1962 work, he actually tells us nothing further about Tom. By the end of LOTR, other than in letters of explanation to readers, he has finished his story of Tom Bombadil. All that needed to be said had been said by the end of the Quest.

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 '*Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside*' - Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

The Poems Compared – Part 1

Please note that stanzas marked **A** refer to the 1934 version and stanzas marked **B** to the 1962 version. Where version **A** differs from version **B**, version **A** is given in blue, and version **B** in red. Where the two versions are the same they are noted together as **A and B** and denoted by the color black.

I owe – as ever – a huge debt of gratitude to my great friend, and the Plaza's 'source-guru' - *geordie* for making the 1934 version available to me.

A 1

Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow 1
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
He lived down under Hill: and a peacock's feather 2
nodded in his old hat, tossing in the weather.

B 1

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow 1
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;
He lived up under Hill, where the Withywindle 2
ran from a grassy well down into the dingle.

1. 'is' changes to 'was' in the later version as we are now talking about Tom B whom we have come to know in LOTR – therefore he now has a history.

2. The question of the 'peacock's feather' has been dealt with at length in the opening post of this thread (see above).

'down under' is now changed to 'up under' to fit in with the geography of LOTR. The *Withywindle*, introduced into LOTR is retained in the later version of the poem, in the earlier version no river is named.

A 2

Old Tom Bombadil walked about the meadows 1
Gathering the buttercups, a-chasing of the shadows,
tickling the bumblebees a-buzzing in the flowers
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

B 2

Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows 1
gathering the buttercups, running after shadows,
tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers,
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

1. The 'seasonality' that occurs in LOTR with regard to Tom and Goldberry is here established much earlier on in the 1962 poem, whereas the 1934 poem does not mention seasons until Stanza A 22

A 3 and B 3

There his beard dangled long down into the water:
up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter;
pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing
under the water-lilies, bubbling and a –swallowing.

A 4 and B 4

'Hey, Tom Bombadil! Whither are you going?';
said fair Goldberry. 'Bubbles you are blowing,
frightening the finny fish and the brown water-rat,
startling the dabchicks, and drowning your feather –hat!'

A 5 and B 5

'You bring it back again, there's a pretty maiden!';
said Tom Bombadil. 'I do not care for wading.
Go down! Sleep again where the pools are shady
far below the willow-roots, little water- lady!';

A 6 and B 6

Back to her mother's house in the deepest hollow
swam young Goldberry. But Tom, he would not follow;
on knotted willow-roots he sat in sunny weather,
drying his yellow boots and his draggled feather.

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'; -Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

The Poems Compared – Part 2

A 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,¹
Sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! quiet it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

B 7

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,¹
sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

1 In the 1934 Adventures it is Willow-man who knows the power of song- Tom only learns this, or is given it, as part of his translation into the world of ME in LOTR. And song is used to 'lull' the listener to sleep- like the lullaby sung to babies – a motif we shall return to later when we deal with Tom and song.

A 8 and B 8

'Ha, Tom Bombadil! What be you a-thinking,
peeping inside my tree, watching me a-drinking
deep in my wooden house, tickling me with feather,
dripping wet down my face like a rainy weather?'

A 9 and B 9

'You let me out again, Old Man Willow!
I am stiff lying here; they're no sort of pillow
your hard crooked roots. Drink you river-water!
Go back to sleep again like the River daughter!

A 10

Willow-man let him loose, when he heard him speaking,
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Tom he sat a-listening.
On the boughs, piping birds were chirruping and whistling
Tom saw the butterflies quivering and winking:
Tom called the conies out till the sun was sinking.¹

1. The conies and Tom's 'summoning' of them - an aspect of his power have disappeared from the Tom of LOTR, for he is now 'Master' of all.

Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking;
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Out from willow-dingle
Tom went walking on up the Withywindle. 2
Under the forest eaves- he sat a-while a-listening:
on the boughs the piping birds were chirruping and whistling.

Butterflies about his head went quivering and winking,
until grey clouds came up, as the sun was sinking.

2. Tom is identified with 'place' – hence the river, un-named in the 1934 Adventures is called the Withywindle – after the willow-trees that line its banks. The naming of the river does not just give it a locational aspect within the world of LOTR it serves also to identify Tom with a particular location.

We noted in an earlier post that:

"Tolkien had a very strong sense of 'place'. It was part and parcel of what we might call the 'Englishness' in him. That is made clear in the comments he made to C S Lewis – quoted in an earlier post:

'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of **the same few miles of country for six generations**, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods- they were not mistaken for **there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.** {ibid. my bold emphasis}

And in talking of the Shire in **Letter #178** {cf. also **Letter #181**} he says:

'It is in fact more or less a Warwickshire village of about the period of the Diamond Jubilee'

and in **Letter #190** he writes:

'But, of course if we drop the 'fiction' of long ago, 'The Shire' is based on rural England. The toponymy (place names) of *The Shire*, to take the first list, is a 'parody' of that of rural England, in much the same sense as are its inhabitants: they go together and are meant to. After all the book is English, and written by an Englishman...'

And in referring to place-names of *The Shire* he remarks in **Letter #276**:

'The names already entered, even those that seem unlikely (as Nobottle), are in fact devised according to the style, origins, and mode of formation of English (especially Midland) place names.'

Name and place are very important to Tolkien, they give **identity**. And sometime – I think between 1934 and 1936 – Tolkien had finally come to identify Tom Bombadil with the countryside of Oxfordshire and Berkshire that he and his friends C S Lewis and Warnie Lewis and others walked so frequently.

And Tolkien reaffirms his strong sense of place by giving Tom self-imposed boundaries in LOTR and naming the river, forest, and area in which he abides, an area he knows intimately, like the family who had 'fed on the produce of **the same few miles of country for six generations.**'

A 11

Then Tom went away. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river
Clouds passed, hurrying drops were falling helter-skelter;
Old Tom Bombadil crept into a shelter 1

B 11

Then Tom hurried on. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river;
a wind blew, shaken leaves chilly drops were dripping;
into a sheltering hole Old Tom went skipping. 1

1 By the time we reach LOTR Tom has become the 'Master' – he is afraid of nothing, although he still remains wary cf. Stanza **B 22 – 'Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow;**' - he has the wariness of the animal in its natural state. So clearly the word '**crept**' is totally inappropriate for such a self-possessed character, and, refined through the lens of LOTR by 1962 Tom, far from '*creeping*' into a shelter, goes '**skipping**' into one - far more appropriate for the character which he has now become.

A 12 and B 12

Out came Badger-brock with his snowy forehead,
and his dark blinking eyes. In the hill he quarried

with his wife and many sons. By the coat they caught him,
pulled him inside their earth, down their tunnels brought him.

A 13 and B 13

Inside their secret house, there they sat a mumbling;
'Ho Tom Bombadil! Where have you come tumbling,
bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have caught you.
You'll never find it out, the way we have brought you!'

A14 and B 14

'Now old Badger-brock, do you hear me talking?
You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.
Show me to your backdoor under briar –roses;
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow,
Like fair Goldberry and Old Man Willow!';

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'; - Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

The Poems Compared – Part 3

A 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!';
Showed Tom out again to their thorny garden, 1
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

B 15

Then all the Badger folk said: 'We beg your pardon!';
They showed Tom out again to their thorny garden, 1
Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,
Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

1. The 1962 version has the addition of 'They' in the second line

A 16

Old Tom Bombadil hurried home to supper,
unlocked his house again, opened up the shutter,
let in the setting sun in the kitchen shining
watched stars peering out and the moon climbing.

B 16

Rain had passed. The sky was clear, and in the summer- gloaming, 1
Old Tom Bombadil laughed , as he came homing, 2
unlocked his door again, and opened up a shutter,
In the kitchen round the lamp moths began to flutter;
Tom through the window saw stars come winking,
and the new slender moon early westward sinking.

1. The 'setting sun' of Line 3 of the 1934 poem is replaced by 'summer- gloaming' - summer evening - which identifies the season,
2. and Tom's 'control' and lack of concern - for he is now 'Master' is demonstrated by his laughter in Line 2.

A 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle
 upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
 ‘Hoo! Tom Bombadil, I am waiting for you 1
 just here behind the door! I came up before you.
 you’ve forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound 2
 up here atop the hill with the ring of stones round
 he’s got loose tonight; under earth he’ll take you! 3
 Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he’ll make you!

B 17

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle;
 upstairs creaking went, turned the door –handle
 ‘Hoo! Tom Bombadil! Look what night has brought you! 1
 I’m here behind the door! Now at last I’ve caught you!
 You’d forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound 2
 up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round.
 He’s got loose again. Under earth he’ll take you. 3
 Poor Old Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he’ll make you

1. The 1962 poem- unlike its 1934 precursor identifies the Barrow-wight as a creature of night - ‘Look what night has brought you’, of shadow and thus of **the** Shadow – for this is post Tom’s LOTR experiences.
2. The tense change from ‘you’ve’ to ‘you’d’ again reflects that this is a tale being told about Tom’s prior experiences in ME.
3. The change from ‘he’s got loose tonight;’ to ‘He’s got loose again.’ - implies some agency involved in the Barrow-wight’s release - and of course, we know that ‘evil things were stirring’ as the Dark Lord took power again. So this line is altered too, to take account of the changed state of Tom’s history as a result of his LOTR experience.

A 18

‘Go out! Shut the door, and don’t slam it after! 1
 Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
 Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
 Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
 Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
 Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!’;

B 18

‘Go out! Shut the door, and never come back after! 1
 Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!
 Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
 Lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
 Like young Goldberry, and badger-folk in burrow!
 Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!’;

1. The somewhat facetious comment of ‘and don’t slam it after’ is replaced by a command ‘and never come back after!’ for Tom post LOTR is the master and a commanding figure, and the Barrow-wight too, post LOTR is a more menacing and evil creature than existed in the 1934 poem.

A 19

Out fled barrow wight through the window flying,
 through yard, over wall, up the hills a crying
 past white drowsing sheep, over leaning stone –rings
 back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

B19

Out fled Barrow-wight through the window leaping,
through the yard, over wall like a shadow sweeping, 1
up hill wailing went back to leaning stone –rings,
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone –rings.

1. The 'shadow' motif is again introduced to give a link-back to the greater 'Shadow' that the Barrow-wight served in LOTR.

Comparisons Section 3: Comparison of the texts of versions A (1934) and B (1962) demonstrating how Version B reflects Tolkien's developed and matured image of Tom Bombadil post the 1934 Adventures, 1937 'Spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'; - Letter #19, and the Tom of FOTR.

The Poems Compared – Part 4

A 20 and B 20

Old Tom Bombadil lay upon his pillow
sweeter than Goldberry, quieter than Willow,
snugger than the Badger-folk or the Barrow-dwellers;
slept like a humming-top, snored like a bellows.

A 21

He woke in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
he sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!';
Clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather;
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

B 21

He woke-up in morning-light, whistled like a starling,
sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!'; 1
He clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat, and feather; 2
Opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

1. 'he sang' in the 1934 version
2. 'Clapped' in the 1934 version.

A 22

Old Tom Bombadil was a clever fellow 1
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow
None ever caught Tom walking in the meadows 2
winter and summer –time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water-
but one day Tom he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
an old song singing fair to birds upon the bushes.

B 22

Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow; 1
bright blue his jacket was, and his boots were yellow
None ever caught old Tom in upland or in dingle, 2
walking the forest paths, or by the Withywindle, 3
or out on the lily-pools in boat upon the water. 4
But one day Tom, he went and caught the River-daughter
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
singing old water -songs to birds upon the bushes. 5

1. Tom changes to 'wise and 'wary' in the 1962 poem, from 'clever' in the 1934 one. This reflects the growing maturity that LOTR has imposed on him and emphasizes the 'nature link' of the 1937 **Letter #19** - animals in the wild are 'wary'.
2. Tom is now not caught in 'upland or in dingle,' as opposed to the 1934 'meadows' again reflecting LOTR.
3. 'forest paths' and 'Withywindle' are changes made after the LOTR experience. Tom is now master of all within his boundaries, including the Old Forest and, as we have observed before, naming the *Withywindle* gives both ME identification, and emphasizes the importance of 'place'.
4. 'lily pools' affirms this aspect of the Tom/Goldberry relationship which is so strongly linked to lilies in LOTR.
5. 'an old song' in 1934 is changed to 'singing old water –songs' in 1962. **N.B. Notice how this emphasizes Goldberry's connection with water and nature - an aspect strongly developed in LOTR.**

A 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
 reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
 Said Tom Bombadil: 'Here's my pretty maiden!
 You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
 yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
 roses at the window-sill and peeping through the shutter.¹
 You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
 In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'

B 23

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
 reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
 Said Tom Bombadil : 'Here's my pretty maiden!
 You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
 yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
 roses at the window-sill and peeping round the shutter. 1
 You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
 In her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'

1. 'peeping through' in 1934 changes to 'peeping round' in 1962.

A 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
 crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
 his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
 robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling, 1
 hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
 clasping his river-maid round her slender middle.

B 24

Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding,
 crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding;
 his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland
 was robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling, 1
 hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle,
 clasping his river-maid round her slender middle

1. The tense change with the addition of 'was' in the 1962 version emphasizes that we are now talking about the past, whereas the 1934 poem was Tom in the present.

A 25 and B 25

Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding;
in the bright honey – moon Badger – folk came treading,
danced down under Hill, and Old man Willow
tapped, tapped at window pane, as they slept on the pillow,
on the bank in the reeds River-woman sighing
heard old Barrow-wight in his mound crying!

A 26 and B 26

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices,
taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises;
slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling:
“Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!”;
sitting on the doorstep chopping sticks of willow,
while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.

Bombadil Goes Boating

Bombadil Goes Boating – was written especially for the 1962 publication by Tolkien as part of his attempt to ‘bolster’ the size of the publication.

In Letter #240 to his illustrator Pauline Baynes, Tolkien wrote that the first poem – the amended 1934 version – was:

‘a hobbit-version of things long before the days of the L.R.: But the second poem {Bombadil Goes Boating} – refers to the days of the shadow before Frodo set out.’

Unlike the 1934 version which has only just become readily available through the publication of Hammond & Scull’s *Companion*, the 1962 *Adventures*, which includes *Tom Goes Boating* has been available for a long-time, so, rather than repeat its verses in full here, in commenting on it I only give relevant lines as reference points and their stanza number.

A Stanza 3

If you tell Willow-man where I’ve gone, I’ll burn you,

Old Man Willow of course appears in the *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* and LOTR

B Stanza 12

*Then he went winging;
dropped down jewel-blue a feather, and Tom caught it
gleaming in a sun-ray: a pretty gift he thought it.
He stuck it in his tall hat, the old feather casting:
Blue now for Tom”, he said, “a merry hue and lasting!”*

Like the swan the kingfisher is a royal bird: *“It was originally the king’s fisher. That links the swan (traditionally the property of the king) with the fisher-bird; explains both their rivalry, and their special friendship with Tom.” (Letter #240)*

C Stanza 16

*“I’ll give your otter-fell to Barrow-wights. They’ll taw you!
Then smother you in gold-rings!*

Reminiscent of the chapter *Fog on the Barrow Downs* - *FOTR* after the hobbits have been captured by the Barrow wight.

‘taw’ process of making skins into leather

D Stanza 18

*If one day the King returns, in upping he may take you,
brand your yellow bill, and less lordly make you!”
Old Swan huffed his wings*

We already know that the swan is the king's bird, (**Letter #240**: 'they were creatures who looked for the return of their rightful Lord, the true king.' In England, even today, swans are seen as belonging to the monarch and are specially protected. The practice of 'upping' still takes place; marking young swans on the upper beak as a sign of ownership.

E Stanza 21

I'll call the orks on you: that'll send you running!"

Self-explanatory!

F. Stanza 28

Come, Maggot! Help me up! A tankard now you owe me.

We know from *FOTR – In the House of Tom Bombadil* that Tom B was both a friend of and had a great respect for Farmer Maggot.

G Stanza 30

daughters did the Springle-ring, goodwife did the laughing.

In *FOTR- A Long Expected Party* Everard Took and Melilot Brandybuck dance the Springle -ring

H Stanza 31

swapping all the tidings
from Barrow-downs to Tower Hills: of walkings and of ridings;1
of wheat-ear and barley-corn, of sowing and of reaping;
queer tales from Bree,2 and talk at smithy, mill, and cheaping;3
rumours in whispering trees, south-wind in the larches,
tall Watchers by the Ford, 4 Shadows on the marches.5

1. **from Barrow-downs to Tower Hills**: Until the end of the Third Age a palantir was kept in Elostirion in the Tower Hills. The Tower Hills became the western Boundary of The Shire and later the home of Fastred of Greenholm and Elanor Gamgee, and later of the Fairbairns, their descendants in whose hands the Red Book of Westmarch was kept.

2. **queer tales from Bree**: 'Strange as news from Bree' was a saying in the Eastfarthing (cf. *FOTR At The Sign of the Prancing Pony*)

3. **'talk at smithy, mill, and cheaping'**: "the three places for gossip, smithy, mill and cheeping (market) from a medieval instructive work that I have been editing" (**Letter #240**) { The medieval instructive work was the 'Ancrene Wisse' }

4. **tall Watchers by the Ford** – the Dunedain

5. **Shadows on the marches** - the Nazgul

Summary of Textual Analysis

This first part of our analysis of Tom has been concerned with the primary published texts that give us background to and development of his character. This represents the first stage of our journey, as such we yet have way to go!

This is, however, a good point to summarize the information we have established to date. What follows is a summary of points derived from the substantive arguments and information of two threads:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=188085&PagePosition=1

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=191126&PagePosition=1 {The current thread}

If you wish to comment on any of the summarized points please ensure that you have read in full the relevant posts that refer to them in the threads in question as we do not wish to debate points that have already been covered.

This summary is simply a summation of conclusions whose substantive support has been given in this and the preceding thread.

Please note that this summary is in no way a substitute for reading the threads in full as they contain a cornucopia of information not addressed here.

1. Conceived in the 1920's, by the 1930's the actual character of Tom – created outside LOTR, The Silmarillion, and ME, had started to develop. Goldberry, OMW and the Barrow-wight – future characters in LOTR – are also created at this time and are also outside the ME legendarium.

2. From a physical description point of view Tolkien had an image of Tom that remained constant from its inception.

3. It was Tolkien himself who named him - *ab initio* - as Tom Bombadil.

4. The many references to 'Nature' in The Letters, and the comments of other Inklings, demonstrate Tolkien's infinite appreciation of Nature, an appreciation which, it is suggested, in the 1930's began to coalesce around the developing figure of Tom Bombadil.

5. It is not too far-fetched to say that the Tom of LOTR was essentially developed by 1934. Far from representing anything created in the *LOTR* or *The Silmarillion* legendarium Tom was the product of Tolkien's own personal legendarium, which in Tom found his own concepts of Englishness, place, Nature, and a whole plethora of other aspects.

6. What emerged in **1934** was a character definition, of Tom, much more fully developed than previously, alongside a group of other characters, Old Man Willow, Goldberry, a family of Badgers, and a Barrow-wight who were all (other than the Badgers) to feature in the as yet to be constructed *LOTR*- which did not see its first draft chapter in being until **1938**.

7. By 1934 Tolkien had decided that Tom existed in a defined space, that there were boundaries to where he went. Just how defined those boundaries were, and by whom, is difficult to say, but they were certainly not as articulated as they became in **Letter #19**, or in LOTR where Tom clearly is the definer of his own boundaries.

8. **Name** and **place** are very important to Tolkien, they give **identity**. And sometime – probably between 1934 and 1936, Tolkien had finally come to identify Tom Bombadil with the countryside of Oxfordshire and Berkshire that he and his friends C S Lewis and Warnie Lewis and others walked so frequently.

And the **Nature** that is part of Tom's persona was derived from the gentle, domesticated countryside of Berkshire and Oxfordshire rather than the wilds of the Yorkshire moors - which Tolkien also knew intimately from his days in Leeds.

As a consequence:

'Tolkien 'domesticates' the wildness of Nature and its inhabitants by using the 'lens' of the domestic and comfortable scenery of the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire and it is not without reason that he describes Tom – in a later development – as the '*spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside*.'

9. If we look carefully at **Letter #19** we can perhaps see the beginning of a link between the independent Tom of 1934 and 1937 and the Tom who was later to become the enigmatic character of LOTR.

10. Did Tom have to be 'changed' to fit in with LOTR? The answer is quite clearly a resounding '**No!**' Tom's character was **expanded** to allow him to have credibility within the world of LOTR but much that he had accumulated character-wise in his non-ME life pre-LOTR was to remain with him. Moreover, he entered the world of ME with a group of companions, Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight who were also **imports to not creations of LOTR**, and most certainly not of The Silmarillion.

11. In enhancing and deepening the role of Tom in LOTR- Tolkien also enhances the roles of those who interact with him in the 1934 poem, Goldberry-particularly, OMW, and the Barrow-wight. Only the badgers are effectively omitted -relegated to a single line of reminiscence cf. FOTR - *In The House of Tom Bombadil*.

12. It is not surprising, that in assimilating Tom into LOTR and ME Tolkien gives him as a major aspect of his being, **the power of song**, and the power over others that song gives. In the early ages of ME song

had been a powerful weapon used by both the forces of good and evil, and song was what distinguished many of the great characters of the Elder Days. Thus, for Tom to be cast into the ME framework as a being of those days – and before- (albeit one whose **origins** are not in LOTR or ME), he too had to bear the hallmarks of those other great beings, of which the power of song was one.

13. And in LOTR he has also become **Master** – for now he cannot be caught at all!

14. In many ways the Barrow-wight and OMW are the most successful of the four 'importations' from the pre-LOTR legendarium, contained in the 1934 Adventures. They fit nicely into the 'Mordorian' scenario that LOTR contains and feel much more at home in ME than Goldberry and especially Tom. The main reason for this is that Tolkien does not use them to achieve any other purpose, and thus they can settle down and assimilate into their new 'country' quite happily.

Goldberry, and more particularly Tom do not 'settle-in' in the same way. Although they 'fit' the LOTR story reasonably well, Tom especially appears to be a 'quirky' character who is not entirely at home in the ME Legendarium, and Goldberry, as his consort, to a lesser degree, suffers the same fate. This is quite understandable as Tom and Goldberry are representative of a tradition that exists **outside** the boundaries of ME.

15. The 1962 Adventures add nothing at all to our understanding of the nature of Tom or to his character. Tolkien had said it all in 1934, 1937 and in LOTR. Indeed he said as much in 1961:

'not that I feel inclined to write any more about him' {Letter #231}.

And in reality, although he wrote *Tom Goes Boating* for the 1962 work, he actually tells us nothing further about Tom. By the end of LOTR, other than in letters of explanation to readers, he has finished his story of Tom Bombadil. All that needed to be said had been said by the end of the Quest.

16. Perhaps the last word in this summary should be Tolkien's, because it is such an important comment. In a letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961 (not included in Carpenter's Letters) Tolkien wrote:

You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of Lord of the Rings, even the best and most holy, it does not touch Tom Bombadil at all. **So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.** {My bold emphasis}

The Development of Tom in ME Home Volumes 6-9

Unlike Athena, jumping fully formed from Zeus's brow, Tolkien's translation of Tom from a non-ME legendarium to the world of ME was a much lengthier process of creation and assimilation. While Tom was a 'known' entity – {cf **Letter #163**} unlike Faramir who, much to Tolkien's surprise came:

'walking into the woods of Ithilien'

'(I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him) {Letter #66}

he was by no means a 'finished article' when he entered LOTR - he had to be fitted in with its legendarium.

Indeed, it is a grave mistake to think that Tolkien created in a linear fashion, he did not, as any careful reading of HOME and CT's comments will clearly demonstrate.

So, although Tom comes to ME with quite a lot of 'baggage' already determined, he has yet to undergo a process of assimilation and development that will more fully fit him for the ME role *per se* Tolkien chose for him to play.

HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow

In an editorial comment in HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow, CT observes:

It is to be noted that Tom Bombadil, the Willow-man, and the Barrow-wights were already in existence years before my father began *The Lord of the Rings*;

A point that the Readers of these threads will be only too well aware of! 😊

In a letter to Charles Furth off Allen & Unwin's in February 1938 Tolkien wrote that, regarding developing the story after the first chapter of the sequel to *The Hobbit*:

'I have only the vaguest notions of how to proceed'

Yet, as CT points out, even at that time:

'Tom Bombadil, the Willowman and the Barrow-wights were already envisaged as possibilities'

as Tolkien's notes show.

By August 1938, however, the literary block had been removed and:

'It is now flowing along, and getting quite out of hand. It has reached about Chapter V11 and progresses towards quite unforeseen goals. {Letter #33 to Charles Furth}'

As CT observes:

It is clear that in those few days the hobbits had passed through the Old Forest by way of the Withywindle valley, stayed in the house of Tom Bombadil, escaped from the Barrow-wight, and reached Bree.

In the earliest drafts the Hobbits do not meet Tom Bombadil until **after** he rescues them from the Barrow-down.

They run into OMW who catches two of them, but releases them when singing is heard. The singing is Tom's but in this draft he is not named. They then have the Barrow-down adventure from which they are rescued by Tom, who hears them singing and answers in song, and takes them to his house, followed by two pursuing Barrow-wights on horses (Tolkien has not yet created separate Black Riders):

They go to his house for the night - two Barrowwights come [?galloping] after them, but stop every time Tom Bombadil turns and looks at them

It is interesting to note that in these earlier drafts Tom has more power, in terms of his power over the Barrow-wights/Ringwraiths than in the final publication – where Tolkien lessens his interaction/control with anything outside his boundaries:

'Tom is not master of riders from the Black Land far beyond his country' {FOTR - Fog on the Barrow – Downs}

So from the beginning of the LOTR drafts Tom has been given the power of song - a fundamental aspect of power and control in the Elder legendarium stories.

The first main point of interest to note, as the story develops to the form that we are most familiar with, is Tolkien's first attempt to define the nature of Tom. This 'definition' is attempted by trying to specify the nature of Farmer Maggot:

He turns out to know Farmer Maggot. (Make Maggot not a hobbit, but some other kind of creature - not dwarf, but **akin to Tom Bombadil**). {Tolkien's draft – my emphasis}

Note the term '**akin to**'. The **OED** defines 'akin' as: 'Of kin, by way of blood relationship.' Quite how one has a blood relationship with the '**spirit of the {vanishing} Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside**' is unclear - and Tolkien soon abandoned the kinship idea.

But the concept of aligning Tom with Maggot made good sense. Maggot, Gaffer Gamgee, Sam, are close to nature - Maggot most of all, and one can see why Tolkien needed to link Tom Bombadil with a community of like-minds - those who understood the significance of land, and nature in man's psyche, a significance of paramount importance to Tolkien himself:

'There's earth under his old feet, and clay on his fingers, wisdom in his bones, and both his eyes are open' {FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil}

In another incarnation this would not be an unreasonable description of Tom himself!

There are a number of draft notes on these earlier versions which also make interesting reading:

1. Water-lily motive - last lilies of summer for Goldberry.

This motif is strengthened in the published text

2. Relation of Tom Bombadil to Farmer Maggot (Maggot not a hobbit?)

Tolkien is still wrestling with the relationship between Tom and Maggot - finally deciding against a blood one.

3. Tom Bombadil is an 'aborigine' - he knew the land before men, before hobbits, before barrow-wights, yes before the necromancer - before the elves came to this quarter of the world.

ab origine – from the beginning. The timelessness of Tom, compared to all other ME beings in LOTR is something that exists from the earliest drafts.

4. Goldberry says he is 'master of water, wood and hill'. Does all this land belong to him? No! The land and the things belong to themselves. He is not the possessor but the master, because he belongs to himself.

In translating Tom to ME Tolkien continues the Mastery he had established in **Letter #19** from the non-LOTR legendarium. But this 'mastery' is a proper understanding of self - it is self-aware as opposed to self-centered, and thus *ego* has been conquered or is not relevant.

5. Description of Goldberry, with her hair as yellow as the flaglilies, her green gown and light feet.

The nature symbolism of Goldberry exists from the earliest after her translation to ME.

6. Barrow-wights related to Black-riders. Are Black-riders actually horsed Barrow-wights?

Tolkien still has not decided whether to separate or combine the two entities.

7. The guests sleep - there is a noise as of wind surging in the edges of the forest and... through the panes and gables and the doors. Galloping of [?horses] round the house.

Although in this version the dream which is later transferred to Frodo is dominated by horses, in the final version they are only a minor aspect – yet powerful enough for both Bingo in this draft and Frodo in the final published version to have expected to see hoof prints pock-marking Tom's turf in the morning when they awake. Indeed, in this version the horse sounds Bingo hears are real!

And song is everywhere! On the second day when Tom is telling tales to the Hobbits, compare the drafts here with the final FOTR version:

'always in a sing-song or actually singing' {draft}

'Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about.' {In The House of Tom Bombadil – FOTR}

HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow–2

As CT observes Tom Bombadil's answer to Bingo's question '*Who are you, Master?*' has some interesting differences from the final published form, which are here marked by underline and black text:

'Eh, what?' said Tom sitting up, and his eyes glinted in the gloom. 'I am an Aborigine, that's what I am, the Aborigine of this land. [Struck out, at once: I have spoken a mort **6** of languages and called myself by many names.] **{1}** Mark my words, my merry **{2}** friends: Tom was here before the River or the Trees. Tom remembers the first acorn and the first rain-drop. He made paths before the Big People, and saw the Little People arriving. He was here before the kings and the graves and the [ghosts] **{3}** Barrow-wights. When the Elves passed westward Tom was here already before the seas were bent. He saw the Sun rise in the West and the Moon following, before the new order of days was made. **{4}** He knew he dark under the stars when it was fearless - before the Dark Lord came from Outside.' **{5}**

1. In the published text this is replaced by the famous- and much debated passage that begins: '*Don't you know my name yet?*' In saying '*I am an Aborigine*' which does not appear in the published text Tom is saying that he has been here from the beginning. Mort = many

2. merry – omitted from the published text.

3. [ghosts] omitted from the published text.

4. omitted from the published text

5. Dark Lord = Morgoth

In the reference to Farmer Maggot that follows later in this draft Tolkien drops the idea of a close blood relationship between Tom and Maggot but still keeps the concept of kinship (omitted from the published version):

'We are kinsfolk, he and I. In a way of speaking: distantly and far back, but near enough for friendship'

With regard to the Ring episode CT observes:

'The episode of Tom and the Ring is told in virtually the same words as in FOTR, the only and very slight difference being that when Bingo put on the Ring Tom cried: 'Hey, come Bingo there, where be you a-going? What be you a-grinning at? Are you tired of talking? Take off that Ring of yours and sit down a moment. We must talk a while more . . .' Against this my father wrote later: 'Make the seeing clearer', and substituted (after 'where be you a-going?'): 'Did you think I should not see when you had the Ring on? Ha, Tom Bombadil's not as blind as that yet. Take off your golden Ring, and sit down a moment.'

Perhaps the most important observation to make here with regard to the **character** development of Tom is Tolkien's attempt to link him in some way with Farmer Maggot - in other words to take him from the 1937 concept of 'spirit' and to locate him more firmly with humanity. In the final event it was to be the 'spirit' that won and by the time we come to publication any attempt to establish family relationships between Tom and Maggot, or indeed between Tom and anyone, has been discarded.

HOME 6 Return of the Shadow- Fog on the Barrow-Downs - Enter the Barrow-Wight

This is something of a fraudulent header as like Tom, Goldberry, OMW and the badgers, the Barrow-wight has entered before - in the 1934 poem - and that archetypal image - after much drafting - and some embellishing of historical record, like Tom, does not change all that much.

And of course, in the original drafts of HOME 6 In *The House Of Tom Bombadil* Tom had told the Hobbits of the Barrow-Downs and the Wights, in a form virtually the same as that of the published version.

Also, we have seen that Tolkien toyed with the idea of fusing the Barrow-Wights and the Black Riders, and although he rejected this, in some drafts he kept a link between them cf:

*But he {Tom Bombadil} encouraged them - a little - by telling them that he guessed the Riders (or some of them) were seeking now among the mounds. **For he seemed to think that the Riders and Barrowwights had some kind of kinship or understanding.** If that were so, it might prove in the end well that they had been captured. {my bold emphasis}*

If evil things were stirring it perhaps made some sense to see them as having some form of liaison, but this point, the relationship between Black Riders and Barrow-Wights, Tolkien did not pursue in the published version.

It could be - reflecting Tolkien's later comment in *HOME 10 Morgoth's Ring-Myths Transformed V11* - that **'all evil hates'** that he decided that such 'alliances' were unlikely, even though the entities concerned apparently served the same ends. Either ways, there is no such relationship in the published version.

So again, we see how Tolkien has taken the earlier 1934 character and - after some consideration of how to use it - but giving it an historical perspective before lacking (cf. *FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*) - has finally opted for a subject, albeit more developed, that originated in 1934. Its interactions, have, of course changed, as it is with the Hobbits that the Barrow-Wight interfaces, on the Downs, not Tom.

Overall, as CT observes in his editorial notes in HOME 6:

the final form of FR Chapter 8 ('Fog on the Barrow-downs') is very largely present: for most of its length only very minor alterations were made afterwards.

The Barrow-wight's incantation in the published version remains the same as the finally selected draft version, apart from line 7:

Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone:
never more to wake on stony bed,
Never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead.
In the black wind the stars shall die,
and here on gold still let them lie,
till the dark lord lifts his hand

{till the king of the dark tower lifts his hand} Draft version*
over dead sea and withered land

* On this CT notes : In the rough workings for this verse my father wrote: *'The dark lord sits in the tower and looks over the dark seas and the dark world'*, and also *'his hand stretches over the cold sea and the dead world.'*

And the drafts give us a better insight into those whose treasures Tom blessed by laying them in the Sun and breaking the spell – thus preventing the Wight's return, by making the treasures 'free to all finders':

'For the makers and owners of these things are not here, and their day is long past, and the makers cannot claim them again until the world is mended.' And when he took the brooch for Goldberry he said: *'Fair was she who long ago wore this on her shoulder, and Goldberry shall wear it now, and we shall not forget them, the vanished folk, the old kings, the children and the maidens, and all those who walked the earth when the world was younger.'*

BUT as CT observes:

Of the hints in Tom's words in {the published} FR concerning the history of Angmar and the coming of Aragorn there is of course no suggestion

And of course, as with OMW, so with the now departed Barrow-wight – whose incantation to the Dark Lord is no match for Tom's own songs of power:

*'None has ever caught him yet, for Tom he is the master:
His songs are stronger songs, and his feet are faster.'*

So song again, in draft and published version identify Tom and those imported with him from the 1934 poem, with the world of ME and its elder-days Songs of Power, continuing the assimilation process.

But perhaps, **most significant of all is** Tom's farewell to the hobbits where, unlike the published version, he does **not** state:

'Tom's country ends here: he will not pass the borders' {FOTR - Fog on the Barrow-Downs}

but says:

They begged him to come as far as the inn and drink once more with them. But he laughed and refused, saying: 'Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting.' Then he turned, tossed up his hat, leaped on Lumpkin's back, and rode over the bank and away singing into the gathering dusk. {HOME 6 Fog on the Barrow-Downs}

Tolkien has yet to return to **Letter #19** and the location of Tom in a specific place- **Tom's boundaries have not yet been defined in the ME story** - as we shall see later when we examine Tom's relationship with Barliman Butterbur.

A Digression: Tom, Farmer Maggot and Cheddar Man

'Make Maggot not a hobbit, but some other kind of creature - not dwarf, but akin to Tom Bombadil'

'Relation of Tom Bombadil to Farmer Maggot (Maggot not a hobbit?)'

'We are kinsfolk, he and I. In a way of speaking: distantly and far back, but near enough for friendship' (in the original draft: *'We are akin, he said, distantly, very distantly, but near enough to count'*).

{HOME 6 *The Return of The Shadow* Chptr.V1 Tom Bombadil}

Although Tolkien ultimately rejected the 'kinship' concept between Tom and Maggot, his earlier approaches to our 'Farmer Friend' are worthy of further digressional observation.

In Note 7 on these texts CT quotes some other drafts of his father's which throw more light on Tolkien's initial thinking regarding the provenance of Maggot:

"Conceivably, some pencilled emendations to the typescript of the third chapter were added at this time and in this connection. Frodo Took's words of Farmer Maggot, 'He lives in a house' (p. 92), were thus extended: 'He is not a hobbit - not a pure hobbit anyway. He is rather large and has hair under his chin. But his family has had these fields time out of mind.' And when Maggot appears (p. 94), *'a large round hobbit-face' was changed to 'a large round hair-framed face.'* Afterwards, in the Prologue to LR, the

hobbits of the Eastfarthing were described as being 'rather large and heavy-legged': 'they were well known to be Stoors in a large part of their blood, as indeed was shown by the down that many grew on their chins. No Harfoot or Fallohide had any trace of a beard.' See p. 294. {My bold emphasis}

It is my view that Tolkien's initial idea with regard to the kinship question was to embed Tom in LOTR by way of such association. But he also had a secondary purpose, I believe, that is tied up to his focus on 'place' and continuity, and antiquity.

We have already seen the somewhat archaic use of the term 'mort' in talking of Tom, a literary device that, as *Saranna* has confirmed, is used by several noted writers to denote *inter alia* antiquity and rusticity. Tom is both 'antique' and 'rustic' and so is Maggot in the sense that he is of the country – a farmer and: **'his family has had these fields time out of mind.'**

Compare this with Tolkien's observations to his friend C. S. Lewis that was referred to in the first thread:

'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of the same few miles of country for six generations, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods- they were not mistaken for there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.' {ibid. my bold emphasis}

As *geordie* shows in a post in the thread *Tolkien Honoured in South Africa?* in the forum *Tolkien the Man*, Tolkien was almost obsessive about his Englishness and about the importance of place - and continuity in place of family and individuals, and the above quote certainly attests to the latter point.

'I wish I could be with you. My father's and my mother's family were Birmingham people. I was born far away but came home in 1895, and I have remained a Birmingham man ever since. The West Midlands are the best part of England...' [Tolkien's underlining].

And lest it be said that this letter needs to be seen in context [quite right; all of Tolkien's writings need to be seen in context], there is also this: in a BBC radio interview of 1964 with Denis Guerolt, T. says:

'The Shire is very like the kind of world in which I first became aware of things, which was perhaps more poignant to me as I wasn't born here, I was born in Bloemfontein in South Africa. I was very young when I got back but at the same time it bites into your memory and imagination even if you don't think it has...' Note the expression 'when I got back'. As I read T's family history as put down in Carpenter's biography of Tolkien, T's parents were not planning to stay in SA indefinitely [well at least Mabel wasn't too keen on the idea.

So, while not wishing to play down the importance of South Africa as Tolkien's birthplace, I would say that Tolkien's homeland was in fact, England."

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=49&TopicID=191129&PagePosition=1

'the kind of world in which I first became aware of things'

I will return to this later when I deal with why Tom had decided to live within certain self-defined boundaries, having quit his traveling, but for the purposes of this post, I want to draw attention to the way in which 'place' is so important to Tolkien; that Tom in **Letter #19** is defined 'in place' – Oxfordshire and Berkshire - **not** England *per se*; and that Farmer Maggot's family **'has had these fields time out of mind'**

Now read this:

In 1903 a Stone Age skeleton was discovered in Cheddar Gorge, in Somerset in England, and housed in the Natural History Museum. It was labeled 'Cheddar Man'.

In 1996 it was sent to the Institute of Molecular Medicine in Oxford for DNA testing, and samples its mitochondrial DNA were compared with a score of similar samples taken from volunteers among the villagers in the present-day Cheddar district. As *The Times* reported at the time, to the amazement of scientists a close match was found between Cheddar Man and Mr. Adrian Targett a forty-two year-old history teacher at the kings of Wessex Community Scholl in Cheddar Village. The experiment had proved beyond reasonable doubt that a man living in late twentieth-century Britain was a direct descendant through the maternal line of a person living in the same locality in the Middle Stone Age.{Quoted in *The*

Isles Chpt. Midnight Isles – Norman Davies, Professor Davies is Professor Emeritus of London University, a Fellow of Wolfson College Oxford, and a Fellow of the British Academy and a world renowned scholar on the history of the UK and Europe}.

I have quoted this because it seems to me to demonstrate in practice what Tolkien as a creator of a Myth for England sensed through his study of language, the importance of place, of family, of location, of antiquity, of continuity. And it is redolent in what Tom says and does and in what Maggot represents. It combines the Tom of 1937 and 1934 with the Tom of LOTR- and although Tolkien ultimately decided he could not go the whole nine yards of kinship between Tom and Maggot, both Tom's draft and final relationship with Maggot emphasizes this aspect of Tolkien's writing and belief, a belief fully endorsed in the reality of Cheddar Man and Mr Targett!

Geordie

I wonder if I may add something on Tolkien's 'obsession' with place, and with continuity? This is to do with his real work; his real passion; philology. But it might get a bit long; and I might drag in a bit of personal history [as Bilbo was wont to do] so please bear with me. 😊

Philology first: this was inspired by halfir's quote from Lewis above:

'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of the same few miles of country for six generations, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods- they were not mistaken for there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.'

I am reminded of a piece in Tom Shippey's book *The Road to Middle-earth* where Shippey is discussing an article of Tolkien's in *Essays and Studies* 1929. Shippey calls this [*Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meadhad*] 'the most perfect of Tolkien's academic pieces'. [p.31]

In this article, Tolkien minutely examines a philological point in a 12th century text, and concludes that far from being subsumed by Norman French, there was a thriving language, a natural successor to Old English, being written and spoken, in a corner of Herefordshire anyway, a century after the Conquest. But it's the way he puts it that strikes Shippey as 'perfect'; not in a dry way, but poetically -

'There is an English older than Dan Michel's and richer... one that has preserved something of its former cultivation. It is not a language long relegated to the 'uplands' struggling once more for expression in apologetic emulation of its betters or out of compassion for the lewd, but rather one that has never fallen back into 'lewdness', and has contrived in troublous times to maintain the air of a gentleman, if a country gentleman. It has traditions and some good acquaintance with the pen, but it is also in close touch with a good living speech - a soil somewhere in England.'

Shippey goes on to discuss how this must have pleased Tolkien, in showing that there was an England beyond England, a language which had defied conquest and the Conqueror. I recommend this book for those who haven't read it yet.


Now for the personal part. I, as all Englishmen do 😊 share with Tolkien a sense of 'place'. I come from the north of England; and share Tolkien and Lewis' feeling of 'Northernness' - it was particularly strong when I was a boy, before I read any Lewis or Tolkien, and I recognized what Lewis meant when I read it.

One of my favourite parts of LotR comes in the House of Tom Bombadil, where Tom tells of the country when there were sheep on the hills; men made settlements - there were fortresses on the heights. The new sun shone on new and greedy swords. Towers fell. Sheep walked again for a while, but soon the hills were empty again.

I am reminded of my childhood in Northumberland, when we were taken on a school trip to the far north corner of the county; to see a prehistoric hill-fort where the only signs of previous inhabitation are earthworks; and more poignantly, carvings on some of the exposed rocks, made by the forgotten people who'd once lived there. Cup and ring carvings, they're called. 'Only the stones remember them. Deep they delved us; fair they wrought us; high they builded us, but they are gone.'

I've never forgotten that. Nor the time we were taken off the school bus to walk across the road, and up a steep fell-side to see some scrapes in the overhanging crags, where ancient burials had been found. The beaker people I think they were called, after the grave-goods that were found with them. No other trace of them exists in history. there are many times when I feel an 'echo' of this feeling of a vast expanse of time when I read LotR.

I put that down to being part of Tolkien's art. The episode in Bombadil's house strikes a chord.

 geordie: A most stimulating and illuminating post. 🙌 Thanks so much for reminding me of *The Road to Middle Earth*. The line:

[there was an England beyond England](#)

is a brilliant summation of what Tolkien was trying to illustrate - and rather than a Brookian '[corner of a far flung field that is forever England](#)' Tolkien saw that the [England beyond England](#) was very firmly located in England itself, in the Shippey instance, in Herefordshire.

In that same chapter in *The Road to Middle earth - Philological Inquiries* - Shippey highlights the same point that you make when he talks of Tolkien's delighted review of the *Introduction to the Survey of Place Names* which Tolkien pointed out was fired:

['by love of the land of England'](#).

[Land, soil, seed, germ](#) are words that occur very frequently in Tolkien's writings, and they very much relate to the way he viewed his home-England.

I also found your own experience of 'place' very compelling. For me it was, and is the Cotswolds - Painswick, Bredon Hills '[in summer time on Bredon](#)' and Glastonbury - whether the latter is or not Arthur's real home! In all those places the real heart of England still beats for me. (London, as much as I love it - is a great Wen!)

The enduring sense of an historic yet ever present 'real' England was a sentiment I was trying to get across to *Aldoriana* in another thread in quoting Jared Lobdel's '*England and Always*', for Lobdel, an American, sees more clearly than most in Tolkien's writings the [England beyond England](#) - and Tom is part of that too.

Thank you so much for elevating the discussion. That was a great post. 🙌 🙌

I have not, of course, yet proceeded to analyze the final published text in detail, this comes much later. I am still comparing drafts and texts and, hopefully, demonstrating the striking continuity that Tom shows throughout all, in general. However, when I come to deal with *In The House of Tom Bombadil* I will certainly be zeroing in again on that resonance of place which is so powerfully portrayed by Tolkien in his writings and Letters, and in his comments to the Inklings.

A Wandering Minstrel I

There is no real justification for the self-indulgent header to this post, as I have no idea if Tolkien liked G&S! But he came from a musical family and he liked music, although he was not proficient in any instrument. Likewise Tom was not a minstrel, but his use and love of song, and – in his earlier years – his traveling and walking, taken in conjunction with the Tolkien's love of music, generated the header, which thus has some approximation to reality! 😊

In the "Germ" poem – the early 1930's fragment that Tolkien saw as the foundation of Tom Bombadil- Tom is very much a traveling man

[Through Long Congelby,](#)
[Stoke Canonicorum,](#)
[Past King's Singelton](#)
[To Bumby Cocalorum](#)

Through real and imagined towns he travels as far afield as Devon {[Stoke Canon](#) - Stoke Canon in modern parlance, in Devon}.

And in the 1934 Adventures, although defined to a more limited area by his encounters with Goldberry, Badgers, OMW, and the Barrow-wight he still goes:

walking in the meadows
winter and summer-time in the lights and shadows
down dale, over hill, jumping over water-

By 1937, however, and **Letter #19** he is much more location specific as the :

'spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'

But while the '*wanderlust*' is curtailed by 1937- as it is when we meet him in both the drafts and final text of LOTR – there is still the insistence on walking- clearly exemplified by his command to the badgers in the 1934 poem:

You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.

For Tom walking was freedom - as it was for Tolkien, Lewis, and their Inklings compatriots who walked the length and breadth of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside and further afield - in tune, as Tom was - with Nature.

Warnie Lewis sums up this attitude towards walking well in his introduction to his edition of his brother's letters:

'the lost simplicity of country pleasures, the empty sky, the unspoiled hills, the white silent roads on which you could hear the rattle of a farm cart half a mile away {The Letters of CS Lewis ed. W.H. Lewis. Geoffrey Bles 1966}'

And, as Warnie points out, this was no blind nostalgia.

Moreover, this is reflected in comments made regarding Tolkien by Priscilla and John Tolkien in The Tolkien Family Album, talking of Sarehole Mill:

'Ronald retained strong memories of the four years spent there and of flowers – such as wild daffodils – in the fields. It was, therefore, with great sadness that, driving to Birmingham in the mid-1930's he saw the whole region being built over and his beloved fields disappearing'

Walking integrated man with Nature, as it did Tom.

And, of course, walking brought adventures, as Bilbo discovered, including those of the mind as Tolkien commented in **Letter #183**

'As I tried to express it in Bilbo's Walking Song, even an afternoon-to-evening walk may have important effects. When Sam had got no further than the Woody end he had already had an 'eye-opener'. For if there is anything in a journey of any length, for me it is this: a deliverance from the plantlike state of helpless passive sufferer, and exercise however small of will, and mobility – and of curiosity, without which a rational mind becomes stultified.'

Alien views perhaps for us modern couch potatoes who drive everywhere and sit fixated in front of computer screens and – for the real morons – television sets!

So walking was essential to Tolkien and his friends, and it is also essential to Tom – it is freedom.

And clearly, as we learn from Tom in the published text and the drafts he had traveled widely – his very variety of names (*c f. The Council of Elrond – FOTR*) attests to this. But now, of course he has withdrawn into a much more limited area in which he is Master. Why this is so we shall return to later.

But in the drafts, as was noted in the previous Tom B post, he has not yet set his boundaries such that he cannot go into Bree (*cf. FOTR - Fog on the Barrow Downs- 'Tom's country ends here.'* In the drafts he simply states: '[Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting.](#)' *HOME 6 Fog on The Barrow-Downs* }

Indeed, in the drafts also, as opposed to the published text, Tolkien allows for a much greater degree of intimacy between Tom and other characters, viz. Farmer Maggot - already referred to and Balin Butterbur - as we know him:

The keeper was a good man and not unknown to Tom. 'Just you mention my name and he will treat you fairly.'

Or, as in a later draft:

'Barnabas Butterbur is the worthy keeper: he knows Tom Bombadil, and Tom's name will help you. Say "Tom sent us here", and he will treat you kindly.'

And Tom himself, as described by others, is seen as much more a figure of fun and merriment than in the published versions, not that he is an inaccessible figure in the final version, but the portrayal of that aspect is much more *sotto voce* in the final form e.g. Bombadil – as described by Sam (*FOTR - Fog on the Barrow Downs*):

'He's a caution and no mistake.'

Compared with Barnabas (Barliman) Butterbur's comment in the drafts:

'We were specially recommended to stop here by our friend Tom Bombadil. {said Bingo} In that case anything can be managed!' said Mr Butterbur, slapping his thighs and beaming. 'Come right inside! And how is the old fellow? Mad and merry, but merrier than mad, I'll be bound! Why didn't he come along too, and then we should have had some fun.' {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr V111. The Old Forest and The Withywindle*}

and – in a later draft:

'Yes,' said the landlord, 'but I am puzzled all the same. How came these Black Men to think Baggins was one of your party? And I must say, from what I've heard and seen tonight, I wonder if maybe they aren't right. But Baggins or no, you are welcome to any help I can give to a friend of old Tom, and of Gandalf.' {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr X1X. At The Sign Of The Prancing Pony*}

And Frodo makes no mention of Bombadil to Butterbur, whereas in the above quote and in the following one, Bingo does:

'I am grateful,' said Bingo. 'I am sorry I cannot tell you the whole story, Mr Butterbur. I am very tired, and rather worried. But to put it briefly, these - er - black riders are just what I'm trying to escape. I should be very grateful (and so also will Gandalf be, and I expect old Tom Bombadil as well) if you would forget that anyone but Mr Hill passed this way; though I hope these abominable riders won't bother you any more.'

Moreover, in the drafts after the attack of the Black Riders on the Prancing Pony Tom goes to Bree to find out what has happened:

Still, I believe he came out on the right side in the end; for it turned out that the ponies, wild with terror, had escaped, and having a great deal of sense eventually made their way to find old Fatty Lumpkin. And that proved useful. For Tom Bombadil saw them, and was afraid that disaster had befallen the hobbits. So he went off to Bree to find out what he could; and there he learned all that Barnabas could tell him (and a bit more). Also he bought the ponies off Barnabas (as they belonged to him now {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr 1X. Trotter And The Journey To Weathertop*})

Clearly such an option was not available in the published LOTR as Tom had very defined boundaries which he would not cross:

- 'Tom's country ends here:'

Tolkien, responding to the criticism of Lewis and Rayner Unwin had toned-down the humor of the Hobbits for the published version, but I do not think the same applies to Tom Bombadil. In the published version Tom's merriment is much more contained in his own words and songs and action rather than by comment of others. I think that Tolkien had decided to deliberately distance Tom in the final version, hence the disappearance of the relationship with Maggot, and the fact that in the final version Barliman Butterbur does not mention Tom at all, although Tom mentions him. The significance of the distancing will become clearer later.

In the earliest draft note, when the Hobbits reach Rivendell, Gandalf expresses astonishment when Tom Bombadil is mentioned.

'Gandalf astonished to hear about Tom'

However, this soon changes and we begin to get the glimmerings of the form we will finally see in the published version:

Why did not I think of Bombadil before! If only he was not so far away, I would go straight back now and consult him. We have never had much to do with one another up till now. I don't think he quite approves of me somehow. **He belongs to a much older generation, and my ways are not his.** He keeps himself to himself, and does not believe in travel. But I fancy somehow that we shall all need his help in the end - and that he may have to take an interest in things outside his own country. {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr X11. 'At Rivendell'*: - my bold emphasis}

He belongs to a much older generation, and my ways are not his.

Omitted from the final version this raises some fascinating queries - so much so that one can see why Tolkien rejected it! If Tom is older than Gandalf - himself a Maia - then just where does Tom stand in the chain of creation? And even given the fact that Tom is imported to ME and LOTR from a different legendarium, a statement such as this would raise more problems than it would solve.

Not until the final version does Tolkien have Tom with specifically defined boundaries that he chooses not to pass, and not until the final version does he distance him significantly from other parties. These are important points to bear in mind when we get to discuss the final text itself.

Support from Drout and Shippey!

In a Colloquy on Tolkien held in June 2005 - which has just been brought to my attention - Professor Michael Drout had this to say in answer to a question about Tom and Goldberry:

Question from **Eldridge Brown, Howard Community College**:

1. What is the Nature of Tom Bombadil and of Goldberry?

Michael D.C. Drout:

Tom Bombadil and Goldberry are never adequately explained within LotR. I think Shippey puts it best when he says that Tom is the "spirit of the Oxfordshire countryside." In one of the drafts for Fellowship, Tolkien calls Tom "ab origine," suggesting that he doesn't, perhaps, fit into the development/creation schema that everyone else fits in. I think that Tom was developed independently of Middle-earth (he appeared in a series of poems from the 1920's and 30's) and Tolkien just stuck him in.

<http://chronicle.com/colloquylive/2004/06/tolkien/>

While I do not agree that Tolkien 'just stuck him in' I am pleased to note that Drout and Shippey are thinking in the same general direction as I am!

The Power of Tom

Just to reiterate the context of this current cycle of analysis so that no one is under any illusions that we have yet come to the really detailed analysis of Tom's persona, the purpose of the current posts is to examine the changing and developing role of Tom in the HOME drafts and earlier writings about him, and, by comparing them with the final text, try and understand how Tolkien finally arrives at the character that he does.

From the earliest detailed portrait we get of Tom – that of the 1934 Adventures he is a figure of power. Not a figure of power in the sense of Sauron and Saruman, one who attempts to impose his will on others for personal benefit, but a figure of power in the sense of being self-aware- and brooking no interruption of his activities from those who interface with him.

Hence, in the 1934 poem, when in each of his series of adventures with Goldberry, OMW, The Badgers, and the Barrow-wight, his freedom is hindered he tells or commands them to release him and to go back to sleep.

But he in no way seeks to impose his will on anything else they are doing, only to ensure that they do not inhibit his freedom, or, as he puts it, to the Badgers in Stanza 14:

You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.

Yet his words carry power as we see in the lines:

Then all the Badger folk said: **'We beg your pardon!'**;

Showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,

Went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and a-shaking,

Blocked up all their doors, earth together raking {Stanza 15 my bold emphasis}

By the time we reach the drafts of LOTR (and of course the published version too) as part of his assimilation into the ME legendarium where song is power, Tom 'sings' to OMW and the Barrow-wight. So his words of power become songs of power:

'I'll sing his roots off. I'll sing a wind up and blow leaf and branch away. Old Man Willow' {FOTR-The Old Forest}

And in the Barrow-wight episode, when he comes to rescue the Hobbits:

'...he is the master,

His songs are stronger songs'

Of course Tom is associated with song from the moment we meet him, but in the LOTR drafts and the published version his songs are both songs of joy and songs of power, whereas in the 1934 Adventures while he had sung songs of joy, he had **spoken** words of power.

But Tolkien developed Tom's power in other ways too, as we see from the drafts, although in the final version, because of Tom's self-appointed boundaries, some of that earlier power is withdrawn.

We have already seen Tom's power at work in one of the earlier drafts when Tolkien had not yet decided whether the barrow-wights and Black Riders were one and the same:

They then have the Barrow-down adventure from which they are rescued by Tom, who hears them singing and answers in song, and takes them to his house, followed by two pursuing Barrow-wights on horses (Tolkien has not yet created separate Black Riders):

They go to his house for the night - two Barrowwights come [?galloping] after them, but stop every time Tom Bombadil turns and looks at them"

And of course the Ring's inability to affect Tom is the strongest affirmation of his power.

And when the race to Rivendell is on, at the Ford of Bruinen, in one draft we read:

One day at last they halted on a rise and looked forward to the Ford. Galloping behind. Seven (3? 4?) Black-riders hastening along the Road. They have gold rings and crowns. Flight over Ford. Bingo flings a stone and imitates Tom Bombadil. Go back and ride away! The Riders halt as if astonished, and looking up at the hobbits on the bank the hobbits can see no faces in their hoods. Go back says Bingo, but he is not Tom Bombadil, and the riders ride into the ford.' {HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow -The Barrow-Wight my bold emphasis}

And so to the Council of Elrond and the fullest description of Tom's powers - in LOTR terms, that we have yet received from Tolkien:

Elrond was also deeply interested in the events in the Old Forest and on the Barrow-downs. 'The Barrow-wights I knew of,' he said, 'for they are closely akin to the Riders; and I marvel at your escape from them. But never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil. I would like to know more of him. Did you know of him, Gandalf?'

'Yes,' answered the wizard. 'And I sought him out at once, as soon as I found that the hobbits had disappeared from Buckland. When I had chased the Riders from Crickhollow I turned back to visit him. I daresay he would have kept the travellers longer in his home, if he had known that I was near. But I am not sure of it: he is a strange creature, and follows his own counsels, which few can fathom.'**23**

'Could we not even now send messages to him and obtain his help?' asked Erestor. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.'

'That is not quite the way of it,' said Gandalf. 'The Ring has no power over *him* or for him: it can neither harm nor serve him: he is his own master. But he has no power over it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, not break its power over others. And I think that the mastery of Tom Bombadil is seen only on his own ground from which he has never stepped within my memory.'**24**

'But on his own ground nothing seems to dismay him,' said Erebor. 'Would he not perhaps take the Ring and keep it there forever harmless?'

'He would, perhaps, if all the free folk of the world begged him to do so,' said Gandalf. 'But he would not do so willingly. For it would only postpone the evil day. In time the Lord of the Ring would find out its hiding-place, and in the end he would come in person.²⁵ I doubt whether Tom Bombadil, even on his own ground, could withstand that power; but I am sure that we should not leave him to face it. Besides, he lives too far away and the Ring has come from his land only at great hazard. It would have to pass through greater danger to return. {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr XX111. 'In The House Of Elrond':*}

CT Notes:

23 An earlier form of this passage makes Gandalf reply to Elrond: *'I knew of him. But I had quite forgotten him. I must go and see him as soon as there is a chance.'* This was changed - at the time of writing - to the passage given, in which Gandalf says that he actually visited Tom Bombadil after the attack on Crickhollow - the first appearance of an idea that will be met again, though the meeting of Gandalf and Bombadil never (alas!) reached narrative form. Cf. the isolated passage given on pp. 213-14, where Gandalf says at Rivendell: *'Why did I not think of Bombadil before! If only he was not so far away, I would go straight back now and consult him.'* Cf. also p. 345 and note 11. Gandalf does not mention Odo here, and it becomes clear at the end of this chapter that he had been removed from Rivendell (see pp. 407, 409) -

24 In the third phase version of *'At the Sign of the Prancing Pony'* it is still apparent that Tom Bombadil was known to visit the inn at Bree (p.334).

25 In rough drafting of this passage my father wrote: *'and in the end he would come in person; and the Barrow-wights would'*, striking out these last words as he wrote and changing them to: *'and even on his own ground Tom Bombadil alone could not withstand that onset unscathed.'* *'Lord of the Ring'* was first written *'Lord of the Rings'*, but changed immediately.

A number of interesting points emerge at this stage:

1. *'for they are closely akin to the Riders'* Elrond continues the association between Barrow-wights and Black Riders which Tolkien later discards
2. *But never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil* At this stage of the story's development Elrond has no knowledge of Bombadil- and thus he cannot be known to the Elves and be supplied with the various names he is given in the final text. Yet Gandalf does know him.
3. *I turned back to visit him.* In this draft Gandalf actually visits Bombadil - an occurrence that does not take place until the end of LOTR in the published version.
4. *The Ring has no power over him or for him: it can neither harm nor serve him: he is his own master. But he has no power over it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, not break its power over others.* Virtually the same as in the published version.
5. *And I think that the mastery of Tom Bombadil is seen only on his own ground. The first time that we are told that Tom operates within very specific boundaries, and that his power is limited to that area alone.* The latter point is not so explicitly stated in the published version.
6. *from which he has never stepped within my memory. The first time that we learn that Tom never leaves his self-imposed boundaries.*
7. *'But on his own ground nothing seems to dismay him,' said Erebor. Would he not perhaps take the Ring and keep it there forever harmless?'* Exactly as in the published version.
8. *'He would, perhaps, if all the free folk of the world begged him to do so,' said Gandalf. 'But he would not do so willingly. For it would only postpone the evil day. In time the Lord of the Ring would find out its hiding-place, and in the end he would come in person.'*²⁵

I doubt whether Tom Bombadil, even on his own ground, could withstand that power; but I am sure that we should not leave him to face it. Besides, he lives too far away and the Ring has come from his land only at great hazard. It would have to pass through greater danger to return. In the published version the points made here are shared between Gandalf, Galadriel, and

Glorfindel, and intensified, although the references to 'even on his own ground', are implicit rather than explicit.

So, by the time of this draft Tom is established as being unaffected by the One, but limited in his ability to help others ensnared by its powers; he is located in a specific area within which his powers operate (cf. the comment in the published version *Fog on the Barrow Downs*: 'Tom is not master of Riders from the Black land far from his country'); and that ultimately even he could not withstand the power of Sauron; all points carried into the final published version of the story.

Tom and The Treason of Isengard {HOME 7}

Tolkien was well aware that he had created a number of contradictions in developing the storyline around Tom, one of the most significant being Butterbur's knowledge of him which, of course, clashed with Gandalf's very clear statement at the previously reviewed Council of Elrond draft (see previous post) that Tom never left his boundaries.

In a note on the fourth draft of the storyline Tolkien wrote:

5. Gandalf says Tom Bombadil never leaves his own ground. How then known to Butterbur? Tom's boundaries are from Bree to High Hay. {Against the words 'How then known to Butterbur?' my father pencilled 'Not'.} {The Treason of Isengard – Chptr 1. 'Gandalf's Delay'}

This is the first time that we have the specific boundaries of Tom spelled out:

Tom's boundaries are from Bree to High Hay.

It is more than likely that the actual Bree boundary line of Tom's enclave is The Greenway - the old North road used a lot when the Numenorean kings in exile had the High King's seat at Fornost, or Norbury. The High Hay boundary is of course the long hedge separating Buckland from the Old Forest.

In this draft too, all relations between Tom and Butterbur are severed, exactly as in the published work, and Tom's lines are changed in the revised *Fog on the Barrow Downs* draft to include the words:

'Tom's country ends here: he will not pass the borders.'

Tom's boundaries have been established and any connection between him and Butterbur, and any kinship with Maggot, severed. He has become the Tom of LOTR – almost.

One says 'almost' because in revising his thoughts on the Council of Elrond Tolkien still has Gandalf visiting Tom:

Gandalf in his reply to Elrond's question about Bombadil 'Do you know him, Gandalf?' now says:

'Yes. And I went to him at once, naturally, as soon as I found that the hobbits had gone into the Old Forest. I dare say he would have kept them longer in his house, if he had known that I was so near. But I am not sure - not sure that he did not know, and not sure that he would have behaved differently in any case. He is a very strange creature, and follows his own counsels: and they are not easy to fathom.'

And then, in what CT calls almost an immediate change, Tolkien substituted:

'I know of him, though we seldom meet. I am a rolling stone, and he is a gatherer of moss. Both have a work to do, but they do not help one another often. It might have been wiser to have sought his aid, but I do not think I should have gained much. He is a strange creature. . .'

{Compare this: I am a rolling stone, and he is a gatherer of moss with He is a moss-gatherer, and I have been a stone doomed to rolling'. ROTK - *Homeward Bound*}

But Tolkien almost immediately picks-up on the incongruity of Gandalf meeting him - and this is abandoned in favor of what we have in the final text.

Tom is now not connected with anybody!

In a Third revision of The Council of Elrond we glean some interesting information about Tom's many names:

"I knew of him," answered Gandalf. "Bombadil's one name. He has called himself by others, suiting himself to the times. Tom Bombadil's for the Shire-folk. We have seldom met."

Pencilled scribbles beneath this, difficult to interpret, give other names of Bombadil: *Forn for the Dwarves*" (as in FR p. 278); *Yare for the Elves, and laur* (see the *Etymologies*, V.399, stem YA); *Erion* for the Gnomes; *Eldest for m[en]* (cf. FR p. 142: 'Eldest, that's what I am').

Tom's many names will be dealt with later, but it is interesting that:

- a). Tom has named himself to other races suiting himself to the times- bespeaking of his longevity and
- b). *Tom Bombadil's for the Shire-folk* – a highly appropriate name to use with the Hobbits. In this one is reminded of the fact that Gandalf was only seen by most hobbits as a wizard who gave wonderful firework displays - his true mission was unknown to only a few - such as Bilbo - and latterly Frodo et.al. In **Letter #302 Tolkien** comments that Gandalf's role as the bearer of Narya - The Ring of Fire was veiled from the Hobbits:

'the most childlike aspect shown to the Hobbits being fireworks'

In the same way – Tom Bombadil – named in the Hobbits own Red Book – is shown as a figure of jollity and fun to Frodo and his friends - his true nature being veiled also. And even though in his digression In The House of Tom Bombadil, into the history of ME he is remembered by Sam for his veiled role:

'He' a caution and no mistake'.

In the fifth version of The Council of Elrond neither Elrond nor Gandalf have met Tom:

The world has changed much since I was last in the West. The Barrow-wights we knew of by many names; and of the Old Forest, that was once both ancient and very great, many tales have been told; but never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil. Is that his only name? I would like to know more of him. Do you know him, Gandalf?

'I knew **of** him,' answered the wizard. 'Bombadil is one name. He has called himself others, suiting himself to times and tongues. Tom-bombadil's for the Shirefolk; Erion is for Elves; Forn for the dwarves, and many names for men. We have seldom met. I am a rolling-stone and he is a moss-gatherer. There is work for both, but they seldom help one another. It might have been wise to have sought his aid, but I do not think I should have gained much. He is a strange creature, and follows his own counsels - if he has any: chance serves him better.'

'Could we not now send messages to him, and obtain his help?' asked Erebor. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.'

'That is not quite the way of it,' said Gandalf. 'The Ring has no power over him, or for him: it cannot either cheat or serve him. He is his own master. But he has no power **over** it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others. And I think that the mastery of Bombadil is seen only on his own ground, from which he has never stepped within my memory.'

Tolkien had clearly seen the possibility of Tom playing a more active role in the Ring quest. Earlier {see previous post} we had noted that in one conversation Gandalf says:

We have never had much to do with one another up till now. I don't think he quite approves of me somehow. He belongs to a much older generation, and my ways are not his. He keeps himself to himself and does not believe in travel. **But I fancy somehow that we shall all need his help in the end - and that he may have to take an interest in things outside his own country.** {My bold emphasis}

And a pencilled note found with the earliest drafts of *The Taming of Smeagol* bears the enigmatic phrase:

Tom could have got rid of the Ring all along {? without further}... *if asked* {HOME 8 *The War of the Ring* – *The Taming of Smeagol*}

But again and again it appears as if his attempts to get Tom more closely involved both in ME and the Quest come-up against another sentiment – objective or subjective is difficult to ascertain, that of the pre-LOTR Tom whose involvement in LOTR cannot be allowed to compromise his other role too. Tom cannot interfere too much because, as we have seen, he is **in** ME but not **of** it.

Tom Bombadil: Enter - and Exit - the Ents!

Understandably, many Readers have compared Tom Bombadil with the Ents, and more specifically with Treebeard. According to them Tom and Treebeard have basic similarities - both are Guardians of a

forest, Treebeard Fangorn and Tom the Old Forest. They are both associated with living, growing things, and anti-'machine' – Tom particularly so as he is unaffected by the One - the archetypical symbol of the 'machine.'

And yet, from the beginning, although Tolkien immediately excised the references to Tom and the Ents, Tolkien makes certain very major distinctions between Tom and Treebeard, through the words of Treebeard himself. And of course, Tom had never been a 'Guardian' in the way Treebeard had, for Tom's basic character presents a disinterested uninvolvedness in things - as Treebeard so aptly puts it in the passage below.

'What about Tom Bombadil, though?' asked Pippin. 'He lives on the Downs close by. He seems to understand trees.'

'What about whom?' said Treebeard. '*Tombombadil? Tombombadil?* So that is what you call him. Oh, he has got a **very** long name. **A** He understands trees, right enough; but he is not an Ent. **B** He is no herdsman. He laughs and does not interfere. **C** He never made anything go wrong, but he never cured anything, either. **D** Why, why, it is all the difference between walking in the fields and trying to keep a garden; between, between passing the time of a day to a sheep on the hillside, or even maybe sitting down and studying sheep till you know what they feel about grass, and being a shepherd. Sheep get like shepherd, and shepherd like sheep, it is said, very slowly. But it is quicker and closer with Ents and trees. Like some Men and their horses and dogs, only quicker and closer even than that. For Ents are more like Elves: less interested in themselves than Men are, better at getting inside; and Ents are more like Men, more changeable than Elves are, quicker at catching the outside; only they do both things better than either: they are steadier, and keep at it. [Added: Elves began it of course: waking trees up and teaching them to talk. They always wished to talk to everything. But then the Darkness came, and they passed away over the Sea, or fled into far valleys and hid themselves. The Ents have gone on tree-herding.] Some of my trees can walk, many can talk to me.

'But it was not so, of course, in the beginning. We were like your Tombombadil when we were young. **E** The first woods were more like the woods of Lorien....' {Excerpted from HOME 7 The Treason of Isengard – Chptr XX11 'Treebeard'}

Most of this passage, including all reference to Bombadil, was bracketed for omission, **4** and my father then struck it all out and substituted a new version on a separate page. It is clear that all this revision belongs to the time of the writing of the fair copymanuscript.**5**

CT's notes

4. It would be interesting to know why Treebeard's knowledge of and estimate of Tom Bombadil was removed. Conceivably, my father felt that the contrast between Bombadil and the Ents developed here confused the conflict between the Ents and the Entwives; or, it may be, it was precisely this passage that gave rise to the idea of that conflict.

5. This is seen from the fact that the new version was still numbered 'Chapter XXIV', i.e. 'Treebeard' had not yet been separated off as a new chapter, as was done in the course of the writing of the fair copy (p. 414). Moreover, when later the hobbits told Treebeard their story he was 'enormously interested in everything' and 'everything' included Tom Bombadil.

A. 'Oh, he has got a **very** long name' compare this with the earlier note CT had made on Tom, 'Pencilled scribbles beneath this, difficult to interpret, give other names of Bombadil: *Forn for the Dwarves*" (as in FR p. 278); *Yare for the Elves, and laur* (see the *Etymologies*, V.399, stem YA); *Erion* for the Gnomes; *Eldest for m[en]* (cf. FR p. 142: '*Eldest, that's what I am*', and with Elrond's list in *FOTR - The Council of Elrond*.

Treebeard's comments again emphasize the longevity of Tom – for his long name relates to the fact that he has been around for so long and is known – by different names, to all races.

B. 'he is not an Ent.' Treebeard makes it very clear that Tom is in no way connected with Ents.

C. 'He laughs and does not interfere.' Tom's laughter - his merriment, has been with us since the King Bonhedig fragment of the 1920's. His laughter is the joy of being – there is nothing malicious in it. **BUT** he does not interfere. As in the 1934 Adventures and LOTR - *The Old Forest* and *Fog On The Barrow Downs*- he **restrains** behavior that is '*against nature*' OMW, the Barrow-wight, and that impedes his freedom but he does not exact any punishment against its perpetrators, he '**does not interfere.**'

D. 'He never made anything go wrong, but he never cured anything, either.' Tom's 'disconnection' from the world he is in, his lack of engagement with it, his role as dis-interested bystander is strongly emphasized here- as it is in LOTR (cf. *FOTR - The Council of Elrond*).

E. 'But it was not so, of course, in the beginning. We were like your Tombombadil when we were young'. Treebeard distinguishes a time, in the beginning, when he and his brethren were like Bombadil-disinterested bystanders, until their interest was quickened by the Elves.

Clearly this sentence had to go if Tolkien was to be consistent with the singular character he had created, and, as CT points out, almost as immediately as he had written this piece, Tolkien excised it.

This demonstrates again the non-linear approach that Tolkien took in creating his masterpiece. Although Tom had a very real non ME role and function developed by this time, Tolkien did not allow that to assail the quality of the story itself- he tried to see how he could reconcile the two aspects and when, realizing that he could not make a perfect job of it, felt the other function for Tom that he foresaw as so important that he decided he had to keep Tom in the story:

I have left him where he is and not attempted to clarify his position, first of all because I like him and he has at any rate a satisfyingly geographical home in the lands of Lord of the Rings; but more seriously because in any world or universe devised imaginatively [or imposed simply upon the actual world] there is always some element that does not fit and opens as it were a window into some other system. {*Amon Hen* no. 173 January 2002; pp.31-31 reprinted in *Hammond and Scull*}

Concluding Tom in HOME

Three further references in HOME relating to Tom need to be included to complete our analysis of this aspect of the development of Tolkien's enigmatic figure.

The first has already been referred to in an earlier post, and appears in *The War Of The Ring - Part 2 - The Ring goes East Chptr. 1 'The Taming of Smeagol'*:

CT Notes

5 (2). "Tom could have got rid of the Ring all along {? without further}... if asked."

Unfortunately the dating of these notes - they may not all have been made at the same time - is not possible to determine. But, as was observed earlier, although the Tom of the 1934 Adventures and **Letter #19** had imprinted himself strongly on Tolkien's mind – even when transported to the world of ME – the Master clearly looked at every which way but loose in trying to determine how he could best assimilate Tom into the Ring Quest. But, as we have seen before with the figure of Farmer Maggot, Tom's extra-boundary visits to Bree, and his potential link with the Ents – Tolkien always returned to Tom as *sui generis* – a being **in** but not **of** ME.

In the Kirth Ungol chapter (*Shelob's Lair* in the published version of LOTR) *The War of The Ring - Part One -The Ring goes East Chptr. V111 'Kirth Ungol'*:

"Sam, sick, desperate, but angry more than all, groped for the hilt of his own short sword, carried so far and to so little purpose all the way from the Barrowdowns. 'I wish Old Tom Bombadil was near', he muttered."

This published version is very similar this, but emphasizes more the relationship between the darkness of the Barrow and that of Shelob's Lair:

"It's a trap!", said Sam, and he laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword; and as he did so, he thought of the darkness of the barrow whence it came. 'I wish Old Tom Bombadil was near us now', he thought"

And of course Tom is the obvious figure as he first saved the Hobbits from OMW and then the Barrow-wight and had given Sam the sword that he carried, from the very Barrow itself. And Gandalf - who might have been thought of as another worthy opponent of things 'unnatural' was of course, presumed dead in Moria.

And the final reference we should refer to comes as, the Quest over, the Hobbits return home: *Sauron Defeated, Part One - The End of the Third Age - Chptr.V111 'Homeward Bound'*:

“They passed the point on the East Road where they had taken leave of Bombadil, and half they expected to see him standing there to greet them as they went by. But there was no sign of him, and there was a grey mist over the Barrow-down{s} southward and a deep veil hid the Old Forest far-away. Frodo halted and looked wistfully south. ‘I should like to see the old fellow again. I wonder how he’s getting on?’

‘As well as ever, you may be sure’, said Gandalf. ‘Quite untroubled, and if I may say so, not at all interested in anything that has happened to us. There will be time later to visit him.’

This is virtually the same as the published version, except that in the latter Gandalf says:

‘Quite untroubled; and I should guess, not much interested in anything that we have done or see, unless perhaps in our visit to the Ents. There may be a time later for you to go and see him.’

In both HOME and the published version Tom’s lack of interest in the wider world and the Ring Quest is re-emphasized:

not at all interested in anything that has happened to us.

not much interested in anything that we have done or see, unless perhaps in our visit to the Ents.

In ME – but not of it!

Tom Bombadil and HOME - A Summary

So what points may we take from our analysis of the way in which Tolkien developed Tom in HOME before finally producing the enigmatic character that we have in LOTR?

N.B. Please note that as with the previous summary the conclusions contained here are supported by detailed textual analysis and quotes in the preceding posts on Tom and HOME. If you seek to question them please ensure you have read the entire relevant full post/s first.

1. Tom was by no means a ‘finished article’ when he entered LOTR - he had to be fitted in with its legendarium, but this came into conflict with other aspects that Tolkien sought to achieve.
2. From the beginning of the LOTR drafts Tom has been given the power of song - a fundamental aspect of power and control in the Elder legendarium stories
3. Perhaps the most important observation to make here with regard to the **character** development of Tom is Tolkien’s attempt to link him in some way with Farmer Maggot - in other words to take him from the 1937 concept of ‘spirit’ and to locate him more firmly with humanity. In the final event it was to be the ‘spirit’ that won and by the time we come to publication any attempt to establish family relationships between Tom and Maggot, or indeed between Tom and anyone, has been discarded.
4. Tolkien has yet to return to **Letter #19** and the location of Tom in a specific place - **Tom’s boundaries have not yet been defined in the ME story** in the earlier drafts, and it is some time before Tolkien finally reimposes boundaries similar to those referred to in the 1937 **Letter #19**.
5. In the drafts, as opposed to the published text, Tolkien allows for a much greater degree of intimacy between Tom and other characters, viz. Farmer Maggot - already referred to and Balin Butterbur - as we know him (Barnabas in the drafts).
6. Tom himself, as described by others, is seen as much more a figure of fun and merriment than in the published versions, not that he is an inaccessible figure in the final version, but the portrayal of that aspect is much more *sotto voce* in the final form.
7. In the published version Tom’s merriment is much more contained in his own words and songs and action rather than by comment of others. Tolkien had decided to deliberately distance Tom in the final version, hence the disappearance of the relationship with Maggot, and the fact that in the final version Barliman Butterbur does not mention Tom at all, although Tom mentions him.
8. Again and again it appears as if his attempts to get Tom more closely involved both in ME and the Quest come-up against another sentiment- objective or subjective is difficult to ascertain, that of the pre-LOTR Tom whose involvement in LOTR cannot be allowed to compromise his other role too. Tom cannot interfere too much because, as we have seen, he is **in** ME but not **of** it.

9. Tolkien makes certain very major distinctions between Tom and Treebeard, through the words of Treebeard himself. And of course, Tom had never been a 'Guardian' in the way Treebeard had, for Tom's basic character presents a disinterested uninvolved involvement in the control of things.

This is the third thread in the series Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion. The two prior threads can be accessed at:

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=188085&PagePosition=1

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion -11

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=191126&PagePosition=1

The summaries that follow are in no way intended to replace a thorough reading of the threads mentioned above. If you wish to raise comments or queries on anything contained in the summaries, please ensure you have first read the detailed post/s in the earlier two threads which refer to the summary point in question. 🙌

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=188085&PagePosition=1

Summary

1. Conceived in the 1920's, by the 1930's the actual character of Tom – created outside LOTR, The Silmarillion, and ME, had started to develop. Goldberry, OMW and the Barrow-wight - future characters in LOTR - are also created at this time and are also outside the ME legendarium.
2. From a physical description point of view Tolkien had an image of Tom that remained constant from its inception.
3. It was Tolkien himself who named him - *ab initio* - as Tom Bombadil.
4. The many references to 'Nature' in The Letters, and the comments of other Inklings, demonstrate Tolkien's infinite appreciation of Nature, an appreciation which, it is suggested, in the 1930's began to coalesce around the developing figure of Tom Bombadil.
5. It is not too far-fetched to say that the Tom of LOTR was essentially developed by 1934. Far from representing anything created in the LOTR or *The Silmarillion* legendarium Tom was the product of Tolkien's own personal legendarium, which in Tom found his own concepts of Englishness, place, Nature, and a whole plethora of other aspects.
6. What emerged in **1934** was a character definition, of Tom, much more fully developed than previously, alongside a group of other characters, Old Man Willow, Goldberry, a family of Badgers, and a Barrow-wight who were all (other than the Badgers) to feature in the as yet to be constructed LOTR - which did not see its first draft chapter in being until **1938**.
7. By 1934 Tolkien had decided that Tom existed in a defined space, that there were boundaries to where he went. Just how defined those boundaries were, and by whom, is difficult to say, but they were certainly not as articulated as they became in Letter #19, or in LOTR where Tom clearly is the definer of his own boundaries.
8. **Name** and **place** are very important to Tolkien, they give **identity**. And sometime – probably between 1934 and 1936 – Tolkien had finally come to identify Tom Bombadil with the countryside of Oxfordshire and Berkshire that he and his friends C S Lewis and Warnie Lewis and others walked so frequently. And the **Nature** that is part of Tom's persona was derived from the gentle, domesticated countryside of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, rather than the wilds of the Yorkshire moors - which Tolkien also knew intimately from his days in Leeds.

As a consequence:

Tolkien 'domesticates' the wildness of Nature and its inhabitants by using the 'lens' of the domestic and comfortable scenery of the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire and it is not without reason that he describes Tom - in a later development, as the '*spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside.*'

9. If we look carefully at **Letter #19** we can perhaps see the beginning of a link between the independent Tom of 1934 and 1937 and the Tom who was later to become the enigmatic character of LOTR.

10. Did Tom have to be 'changed' to fit in with LOTR? The answer is quite clearly a resounding '**No!**' Tom's character was **expanded** to allow him to have credibility within the world of LOTR but much that he had accumulated character-wise in his non-ME life – pre-LOTR – was to remain with him. Moreover, he entered the world of ME with a group of companions, Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight who were also **imports to not creations of** LOTR, and most certainly not of The Silmarillion.

11. In enhancing and deepening the role of Tom in LOTR, Tolkien also enhances the roles of those who interact with him in the 1934 poem, Goldberry-particularly, OMW, and the Barrow-wight. Only the badgers are effectively omitted - relegated to a single line of reminiscence cf. *In The House of Tom Bombadil*.

12. It is not surprising, that in assimilating Tom into LOTR and ME Tolkien gives him as a major aspect of his being, **the power of song**, and the power over others that song gives. In the early ages of ME song had been a powerful weapon used by both the forces of good and evil, and song was what distinguished many of the great characters of the Elder Days. Thus, for Tom to be cast into the ME framework as a being of those days – and before- (albeit one whose **origins** are not in LOTR or ME }, he too had to bear the hallmarks of those other great beings, of which the power of song was one.

13. And in LOTR he has also become **Master** – for now he cannot be caught at all!

14. Tolkien incorporated not only his four main non-ME created figures from his pre- 1937 writings about Tom into LOTR - Tom, Goldberry, OMW, the Barrow-wight, but he also kept textual links with the 1934 'Adventures' either by direct transfer of words and phrases or by literary resonance. Although this has at one level a perfectly simple explanation- they suited the context of the story he was now writing as LOTR- they also hold a deeper significance, for they are visible reminders of the fact that Tolkien's usage of them, particularly of Tom and Goldberry, provides for him the opportunity to disguise another aspect of Tom which was personally very dear to him that of Tom as an observer of and a commentator on some of the deeper nuances of LOTR, nuances which could be linked – back to the non-ME world from which Tom was taken.

15. In many ways the Barrow-wight and OMW are the most successful of the four 'importations' from the pre-LOTR legendarium, contained in the 1934 Adventures. They fit nicely into the 'Mordorian' scenario that LOTR contains and feel much more at home in ME than Goldberry and especially Tom. The main reason for this is that Tolkien does not use them to achieve any other purpose, and thus they can settle down and assimilate into their new 'country' quite happily.

Goldberry, and more particularly Tom do not 'settle-in' in the same way. Although they 'fit' the LOTR story reasonably well, Tom especially appears to be a 'quirky' character who is not entirely at home in the ME Legendarium, and Goldberry, as his consort, to a lesser degree suffers the same fate. This is quite understandable as Tom and Goldberry are representative of a tradition that exists **outside** the boundaries of ME.

16. The 1962 Adventures add nothing at all to our understanding of the nature of Tom or to his character. Tolkien had said it all in 1934, 1937 and in LOTR. Indeed he said as much in 1961, '*not that I feel inclined to write any more about him*' {**Letter #231**}. And in reality, although he wrote *Tom Goes Boating* for the 1962 work, he actually tells us nothing further about Tom. By the end of LOTR, other than in letters of explanation to readers, he has finished his story of Tom Bombadil. All that needed to be said had been said by the end of the Quest.

17. Perhaps the last word in this summary should be Tolkien's, because it is such an important comment. In a letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961 (not included in Carpenter's Letters).

Tolkien wrote:

“You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of Lord of the Rings, even the best and most holy, it does not touch TB at all. **So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in Lord of the Rings.**” {My bold emphasis}.

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion - 11

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=191126&PagePosition=1

Summary

Tom Bombadil and HOME

1. Tom was by no means a 'finished article' when he entered LOTR - he had to be fitted in with its legendarium, but this came into conflict with other aspects that Tolkien sought to achieve.
 2. From the beginning of the LOTR drafts Tom has been given the power of song - a fundamental aspect of power and control in the Elder legendarium stories.
 3. Perhaps the most important observation to make here with regard to the **character** development of Tom is Tolkien's attempt to link him in some way with Farmer Maggot - in other words to take him from the 1937 concept of 'spirit' and to locate him more firmly with humanity. In the final event it was to be the 'spirit' that won and by the time we come to publication any attempt to establish family relationships between Tom and Maggot, or indeed between Tom and anyone, has been discarded.
 4. Tolkien had yet to return to **Letter #19** and the location of Tom in a specific place - **Tom's boundaries have not yet been defined in the ME story** in the earlier drafts, and it is some time before Tolkien finally reimposes boundaries similar to those referred to in the 1937 **Letter #19**.
 5. In the drafts, as opposed to the published text, Tolkien allows for a much greater degree of intimacy between Tom and other characters, viz. Farmer Maggot - already referred to and Balin Butterbur - as we know him (Barnabas in the drafts).
 6. Tom himself, as described by others, is seen as much more a figure of fun and merriment than in the published versions, not that he is an inaccessible figure in the final version, but the portrayal of that aspect is much more *sotto voce* in the final form.
 7. In the published version Tom's merriment is much more contained in his own words and songs and action rather than by comment of others. Tolkien had decided to deliberately distance Tom in the final version, hence the disappearance of the relationship with Maggot, and the fact that in the final version Barliman Butterbur does not mention Tom at all, although Tom mentions him.
 8. Again and again it appears as if his attempts to get Tom more closely involved both in ME and the Quest come-up against another sentiment- objective or subjective is difficult to ascertain, that of the pre-LOTR Tom whose involvement in LOTR cannot be allowed to compromise his other role too. Tom cannot interfere too much because, as we have seen, he is **in** ME but not **of** it.
 9. Tolkien makes certain very major distinctions between Tom and Treebeard, through the words of Treebeard himself. And of course, Tom had never been a 'Guardian' in the way Treebeard had, for Tom's basic character presents a disinterested non-involvement in the control of things.
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Tom in The Letters

We have already looked at a number of Tolkien's letters relating to Tom: **Letter #19**, the Fettes Letter, and the 1968 letter to an unknown recipient. Several of the most important do not appear in Humphrey Carpenter's edition of The Letters,

{Humphrey Carpenter ed. The Letters of JRR Tolkien Harper Collins paperback 1995 – including new extended index ISBN 0 261 10265 6}

so they, together with the Carpenter letters about Tom, will be given in full, here. And, although we will give text, and commentary on the text, in later analysis on other aspects of Tom we will return to them – individually-again. But it is felt that a composite section containing all relevant letters would be a useful resource as well as an integral part of our on-going analysis of Tom.

Letter #19 {Excerpted from our earlier threads} Written to Stanley Unwin 16 Dec 1937

Letter #19 – Is this the missing link?

Many scholars and commentators on Tolkien have seized on **Letter #19** and its reference to Tom as:

the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside

without aligning that statement with a number of other significant statements in the same letter.

Now, while I am the first to admit that **what follows is speculation** - although I hope intelligent speculation - I do believe that it might offer us some clues as to the linking of the Tom of the **Oxford and Berkshire countryside** with the Tom of the 1934 poem, and provide a bridge that begins the next stage of Tom's development in Tolkien's mind- that of linking Tom – an independently created figure, to the wider Legendarium of ME.

The 1934 poem had established Tom in a specific place- although as yet unnamed. It had shown that he had powers over others- using speech. It had shown that although not yet Master he was able to free himself when caught, but that as yet, the forest was an uncomfortable place for him. It had associated him with summer and spring- an element of seasonality had been introduced. It had introduced three main characters with whom he was to be later associated - Goldberry, OMW, the Barrow-wight. It had demarcated him as of the land and Goldberry as of the water, and it had certainly associated him with Nature.

By 1937 – and **Letter #19** Tom's unspecified place is specified the – **(vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside** – of which he is the spirit or *genius loci*.

But, as yet, Tom is **not** associated with the wider Legendarium of ME and certainly not of LOTR – for Tolkien had as yet written nothing about LOTR.

But if we look carefully at **Letter #19** we can perhaps see - **and I stress again that this is intelligent speculation - not fact** - the beginning of a link between the independent Tom of 1934 and 1937 and the Tom who was later to become the enigmatic character of LOTR.

In the second paragraph of that letter- which is to Stanley Unwin, his publisher, Tolkien writes:

'My chief joy comes from learning that the Silmarillion is not rejected with scorn... I shall certainly now hope one day to be able, or to be able to afford, to publish the Silmarillion!'

As Shippey has said – *Author of the Century* – The Silmarillion was very much *'the work of his heart'*.

Unwin's had – quite rightly – rejected what they had seen of it at this point, but Tolkien makes it very clear that it is **the** real driving force behind his fictional writings. To quote again from **Letter #19**:

'But I am sure you will sympathize when I say that the construction of elaborate and consistent mythology (and two languages) rather occupies the mind, and the Silmarils are in my heart. So that goodness knows what will happen' {my bold emphasis}

'So that goodness knows what will happen' – bear this phrase in mind as it has, I believe, a critical significance for the linking of Tom with the wider Legendarium and more specifically, in the actual event- with the as yet unformulated LOTR.

We already know why Tolkien felt unable – as he then thought – to continue with further Hobbit adventures:

'And what more can hobbits do? They can be comic, but their comedy is suburban unless set against things more elemental. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time. {Letter #19- my bold emphasis}

N.B. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time.

'Elemental' and **'before their time'** – in a different sense perhaps to that meant here, but nonetheless real for that, Tom Bombadil was **'elemental** and **'before their time.'**

And, as if in extension of this thought - which is of course mine - **I cannot say definitely it was Tolkien's**, he goes on to say: **Perhaps a new (if similar) line? Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story? Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined, in the enclosed verses? Still I could enlarge the portrait** {My bold and underline}

So that goodness knows what will happen' ... Perhaps a new (if similar) line? But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time.

Was Tolkien, however consciously or unconsciously in that amazingly fertile creative mind of his beginning to see the glimmer of linking all these various elements into a scenario that would answer Unwin's request for another Hobbit story - allow his beloved *Silmarillion* some resonance, and weave the independent character of Tom into a story of '**orcs and dragons**'? And it would also allow the Tom of '**the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside**' to be elevated from the specificity of an English countryside area to the universal stage of a myth!

For, if we look at the final version of LOTR- that is in many ways just what did happen. In part - and unlike the elves - Tolkien had both his cake and ate it too!

Tom in the Letters -2

In commenting on the way the 1962 Adventures came into being Rayner Unwin remarks:

'I doubt if I remembered that I had treated 'Tom Bombadil' rather cavalierly in 1937' {George Allen and Unwin - a Remembrancer. Chptr. Publishing Tolkien 11)

Indeed - arriving along with other material which included the *Silmarillion* as Stanley Unwin called it, the '*great deal of verse*' which was also submitted was farmed out and Rayner Unwin got Tom Bombadil.

Tolkien was informed that the young Rayner considered it '*quite a good story*' - but Rayner then rather took the gilt off the gingerbread by saying:

'I think the story of old Took's great grand-uncle Bulroarer, who rode a horse and charged the goblins at Mount Gram in the battle of the Green Fields and knocked King Golfimbul's head off with a wooden club would be better.' {ibid. Chptr. Publishing Tolkien-1}

Everyone but the Master was thinking Hobbit!

Indeed, it is perhaps fortunate that the precocious young critic - Rayner Unwin - was so cavalier, for we might not have achieved the Lord of The Rings if he had not been.

So Tom, meaningful in to Tolkien, in many ways, appeared pretty meaningless to others!

It would appear that that attitude has carried over for many into LOTR!

Tom in the Letters – 3

Letter #47- Written to Stanley Unwin 7 Dec 1942

Would you also consider a volume containing three or four shorter 'Fairy' stories and some verses? 'Farmer Giles', which I once submitted to you, has pleased a large number of children and grown-ups. If too short, I could add to it one or two similar tales, and include some verse on similar topics, including' Tom Bombadil.

The re-appearance of Tom in 1942 – when Tolkien was well into LOTR – has nothing really to do with our story, and everything to do with Tolkien's financial problems.

By late 1939 Tolkien believed he was three-quarters of the way LOTR (in fact he had just reached Moria by the end of the year) although how he thought this when he actually finished in 1948 is difficult to understand!

But on 7 Nov 1940 disaster struck Unwins. 1,400,000 of their books warehoused in Edmonton were destroyed by a direct bomb hit. This included the 423 sets of sheets of *The Hobbit* from the 1937 second impression. For two years *The Hobbit* was unavailable. But Tolkien was in desperate need of money – as his letters to Unwin showed:

'I am in certain difficulties',

soon became

'I am in debt'.

He had nothing in print and his royalties had dried up. Hence the 1942 letter to Stanley Unwin. However, about the same time he had a lucky break.

'Foyle's Children's Book Club, which had its own paper ration, wanted 3,000 copies of *The Hobbit*, and George Allen and Unwin added enough paper to run an extra 1,500 copies for themselves. There was, therefore, a war-time third impression which certainly helped to keep the title alive during those difficult years.' {*George Allen and Unwin: A Remembrancer – Publishing Tolkien – 1*}

Tom could thus remain in his new home – the one to which he had been transported – LOTR and ME!

Tom in the Letters – 4

Letter #91 - Christopher Tolkien (giving synopsis of LOTR) 29 Nov 1944

But the final scene will be the passage of Bilbo, and Elrond and Galadriel through the woods of the Shire on their way to the Grey Havens. Frodo will join them and pass over the Sea (linking with the vision he had of a far green country in the house of Tom Bombadil).

This letter is simply an update letter to CT as to the progress of LOTR. But it is important as it links the dream that Frodo has in Tom Bombadil's house with the closing of the Quest story and the departure Over the Sea.

The significance of this and of the dream sequences in Tom's house will be the subject of a detailed study later, all we seek to do at this point is to flag the significance of **Letter #91** in this respect.

Letter #144 - Naomi Mitchison - Unwin's proof-reader 25 April 1954: The 'Enigma' Letter

As a story, I think it is good that there should be lots of things unexplained (especially if an explanation actually exists); and I have perhaps from this point of view erred in trying to explain too much, and give too much past history. Many readers have, for instance, rather stuck at *The Council of Elrond*. And even in a mythical Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one (intentionally).

(1)

Ibid - several pages on - Function of TB In LOTR

Tom Bombadil is not an important person - to the narrative. (2) I suppose he has some importance as a 'comment'. (3) I mean, I do not really write like that: he is just an invention (who first appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* about 1933), and he represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely. (4) I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function. (5) I might put it this way. The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (6) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless.

It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (7) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (8) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9)

He has no connexion in my mind with the Entwives. What had happened to them is not resolved in this book. He is in a way the answer to them in the sense that he is almost the opposite, being say, Botany and Zoology (as sciences) and Poetry as opposed to Cattle-breeding and Agriculture and practicality. (10)

This letter, along with those to Peter Hastings #153 and Christopher Fettes – not published in *Carpenter's 'Letters'* – are together with **Letter #19** perhaps the four most significant sources of our information about Tom, outside the text itself.

As such they will appear again - frequently - when we come to the detailed analysis of such things as **Tom and the Nature of Power Nature {sub-section: Tom as the antithesis of Sauron}**, **Tom and**

Nature, Tom and Symbolism, Tom and Color, Tom and the ME Hierarchy, Tom and the plot development of LOTR, Tom as a transitional function between *The Hobbit* and LOTR, Tom and Goldberry, Tom and Song, Tom and Dreams, The language of Tom, Tom and the 'Great Chain of Being' – the Medieval Connection, Sleep and Death in Tom's language, Tom the 'Eternal Figure' in English Mythology, Tom and 'Eldest', Tom as 'Old Western Man,' 'Will the real Tom Bombadil Please stand up!' et.al.

So, please don't be surprised – or disappointed – if the treatment of them at this point is more cursory than you would like or expect- there will be many further comments on them to come in those itemised individual sections about other aspects of Tom.

(1) *And even in a mythical Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one (intentionally).* This comment of Tolkien's has given rise to intense debate - which will go on long after this thread is finished and forgotten! But Tolkien's words cannot just be taken at face value. As C S Lewis points out, Tolkien '*had been inside language*'. Or, as Tolkien himself assented when it was put to him by Simone D'Ardenne: "*You broke the veil didn't you, and passed through*" {quoted in Flieger *Splintered Light* –Chptr. *A Man of Anthitheses*}.

So, we have to pay particular attention to the words he uses and the way he phrases them, for what Tolkien appears to say is not always what he actually means.

If we turn to his lexicographical bible - the OED - on which he had worked – **enigma** is defined as follows: Speak allusively or obscurely. 1.a. A riddle b. An obscure or allusive speech; a parable 2.fig. Something as puzzling as an enigma.

Allusion/Allusive: 1. *Illusion.* 2 *Word-play* 3. *A symbolical reference* 4. *A covert or implied reference.*

Tolkien is telling us that he has been deliberately obscure in the way he has depicted Tom. That does not mean Tom is unexplainable, it means that he is difficult to explain. One is reminded of the use of the same word Enigma – at Bletchley Park – and the code breakers of the Second World War. The code is there – it just has to be broken. But of course, one of the problems is that the code-writer, in this instance Tolkien, intensely disliked the idea of detailed analysis of his characters - of anyone looking at them:

'Like a patient etherised upon a table' {T S Eliot- *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*}

and would undoubtedly have said of our analysis:

'That is not what I meant at all, that is not it at all' {ibid}

for he held firmly to the view that:

'he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom' {Gandalf – FOTR - The Council of Elrond}

But of course, having denied us the right to analyze he frequently offers some analysis himself - as he does with Tom!

And when he writes of Tom – as he did in an unpublished draft letter in 1968:

'I do not know his origin, though I might make some guesses. He is best left as he is, a mystery. There are many mysteries in any closed/organized system of history/mythology' {Hammond & Scull – *Companion* p. 134}

He is being less than honest with us - and restating his strongly held aversion to literary analysis. For him the plot **was** the **thing** - the work of art its own explanation.

(2) *Tom Bombadil is not an important person - to the narrative.* This somewhat undercuts the argument of those who see Tom as nothing more than a transitional device linking *The Hobbit* to LOTR, for if he truly is not important to the narrative - then he cannot be functioning as a transitioning device.

(3) *I suppose he has some importance as a 'comment'.* Tolkien here zeroes in on the real reason that Tom has been left in LOTR - but is still coy about openly coming up-front with the statement - probably because so few would understand it if they only had the LOTR context alone in which to view it.

(4) *I mean, I do not really write like that: he is just an invention (who first appeared in the Oxford Magazine about 1933), and he represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely.* Tolkien confirms the earlier history of Tom – who first appeared

in **published** form in 1934 (not 1933) he represents something that I feel important (cf. **Letter #19**) I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely - again the reluctance to analyze - to lift the veil.

(5) I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function. Well we know that he represents something that I feel important, and a case can be made for him fulfilling a function vis a vis the plot of LOTR (more of that later). But again Tolkien demonstrates a marked reluctance to explain - and here he is talking to his Allen and Unwin proof-reader!

(6) want a measure of control: To Tolkien both Sauron and the Elves wanted some control - hence the making of the One and the Three - plus the other Great Rings. Tom is totally unstained in this way - a point Tolkien makes most forcefully. He is "Master" not over things - but of himself - which does not make him more powerful than other beings - it makes things of power have no influence over him for he conceives them to be unnecessary- he fulfils as Hammond and Scull observe :

'the precept 'Know thyself' attributed to many ancient authorities'. (*Companion* p. 132)

He has reached the Western equivalent of Eastern 'Enlightenment'.

(7) power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. Tolkien was not a pacifist - he had fought in one World war and supported the other - although with the reluctance of any balanced individual. And he saw how War -control- could pollute even the most noble of motives and men. cf. Boromir. But both Tolkien - and the religion he observed - believed in the concept of a 'just war'.

(8) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented. And one might add Tolkien's view too.

(9) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. Sauron can 'torture and destroy the very hills' (*FOTR- The Council of Elrond*) in other words destroy Nature her very self- and in such an environment nothing would have been left for Tom -the very spirit of Nature. Eliot's 'Wasteland' would have come.

(10) Botany and Zoology (as sciences) and Poetry as opposed to Cattle-breeding and Agriculture and practicality. The pursuit of knowledge for itself - not for what it can do - something the Western world is progressively losing as the New Barbarians take over our supposed seats of learning: Weston as opposed to Ransom, Post Christian Europe as opposed to Old Western Man.

Letter #153 – September 1954 Peter Hastings - manager of the Newman bookshop (a Catholic Bookshop in Oxford) (Hastings had posited inter alia that Goldberry's 'He Is' reference to TB implied that he is meant to represent God)

This Letter is the '**The whole Enchilada**' – the one that has caused most debate, discussion, and wrangling as to what Tolkien means than any other of the Letters about Tom. Indeed many 'authorities' on Tolkien duck the issue of any attempt to understand or explain the letter. In response to a query on one website all Michael Martinez did was to quote **Letter #153** with no commentary - hardly an enlightening exposition! (cf. <http://www.sf-fandom.com/vbulletin/showthread.php?s=cee2ebabe9d8e1ba4c687ac7bea597a1&threadid=16560>)

Perhaps we should look for enlightenment in *Bored of the Rings* with Tim Benzedrine and Hashberry! Or perhaps, as one observer has put it, to English Nursery Rhymes – after all Tolkien did correspond with the Opie's:

'I'm sure he's really Tom, Tom the Piper's Son, who stole a pig and away he run. In that rhyme the pig is eat and Tom is beat, but Tolkien can re-imagine old stories as he likes, and magnify a nursery rhyme to make you blink. Nobody catches Tom!' {Jonathan Burrows http://www.j-bradford-delong.net/movable_type/2005-3_archives/000191.html}

or children's literature:

Bombadil is the personification of English writing for children up to WWI (and perhaps as far as WW2) {Andrew Price – *ibid*}

Somehow I don't think we'll find the answer in any of these!

Tolkien himself is ambivalent in his attitude to questions about Tom – almost as if he seeks to avoid detailed answers, yet, ironically, in some way feels he must give them. In the ‘enigma’ letter #144 as in this one he actually ‘lifts the veil’ somewhat, although to most readers his comment to Peter Hastings that he is being ‘too serious’ could equally apply to the answer that Tolkien himself gives!

And so, to the letter itself!

As for Tom Bombadil, I really do think you are being too serious, besides missing the point. (1) (Again the words are used by Goldberry and Tom not me as a commentator). (2) You rather remind me of a Protestant relation who to me objected to the (modern) Catholic habit of calling priests Father, because the name belonged only to the First Person, citing last Sunday’s Epistle - inappositely since that says *ex quo*. (3) Lots of other characters are called Master; and if ‘in time’ Tom was primeval he was Eldest in Time. (4) But Goldberry and Tom are referring to the mystery of *names*. See and ponder Tom’s words in Vol 1 p. 142. (5)

You may be able to conceive of your unique relation to the Creator without a name - can you: for in such a relation pronouns become proper nouns? But as soon as you are in a world of other finites with a similar, if each unique and different, relation to Prime Being, who are you? (6)

Frodo has asked not ‘what is Tom Bombadil’ but ‘Who is he’. We and he no doubt often laxly confuse the questions. Goldberry gives what I think is the correct answer. We need not go into the sublimities of ‘I am that am’ - which is quite different from *he is*.* (7) She adds as a concession a statement of part of the ‘what’. He is *master* in a peculiar way: he has no fear, and no desire of possession or domination at all. He merely knows and understands about such things as concern him in his natural little realm. He hardly even judges, and as far as can be seen makes no effort to reform or remove even the Willow. (8)

I don’t think Tom needs philosophizing about, and is not improved by it. (9) But many have found him an odd or indeed discordant ingredient. (10) In historical fact I put him in because I had already ‘invented’ him independently (he first appeared in the Oxford Magazine) and wanted an ‘adventure’ on the way. (But I kept him in, and as he was, because he represents certain things otherwise left out. (11) I do not mean him to be an allegory - or I should not have given him so particular, individual, and ridiculous a name - but ‘allegory’ is the only mode of exhibiting certain functions (12) he is then an ‘allegory’, or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science:- the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature, *because they are ‘other’* and wholly independent of the enquiring mind, a spirit coeval with the rational mind, and entirely unconcerned with ‘doing’ anything with the knowledge: Zoology and Botany not Cattle-breeding or Agriculture. (13) Even the Elves hardly show this: they are primarily artists. Also T. B. exhibits another point in his attitude to the Ring, and its failure to affect him. (14) You must concentrate on some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything however fundamental - and therefore much will from that ‘point of view’ be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. The power of the Ring over all concerned even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion - but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the Universe. (15)

Footnote: *Only the *first* person (of worlds or anything) can be unique. If you say *he is* there must be more than one, and created (sub) existence is implied. I can say ‘he is’ of Winston Churchill as well as of Tom Bombadil surely? (7)

(1) As for Tom Bombadil, I really do think you are being too serious, besides missing the point. On occasions Tolkien is nothing if not direct! Basically telling Hastings to ‘lighten up’ and get his focus right is perhaps not the best way of winning friends and influencing people, but I have always felt, perhaps mistakenly, that Tolkien did not really like Mr. Hastings very much and found his questions irritating.

(2) (Again the words are used by Goldberry and Tom not me as a commentator). An interesting comment as it excuses whatever Tolkien says as being anything but his own view, not necessarily **the** view. Throughout the Letters as with his texts we have Tolkien wearing several hats, and sometimes getting confused between them! On the one hand he is the ‘**Author**’ the creator of the work being studied and explaining authorial intent.

On the other he is the ‘**editor**’ presenting information culled from old manuscripts and presented by him to the modern reader as a tale from days gone by - the story is not his - he is simply, like CT with HOME

acting in an editorial capacity. And thirdly he is the **commentator** offering his view of what the written words that he has presented from the Red Book et al. actually mean. Here he tells us that the words in question are **not** his - they are Tom's and Goldberry's - and thus have to be understood as such. One wonders how poor Mr. Hastings reacted to such a response!

(3) You rather remind me of a Protestant relation who to me objected to the (modern) Catholic habit of calling priests Father, because the name belonged only to the First Person, citing last Sunday's Epistle - inappositely since that says *ex quo*. Tolkien compares the 'He is' misunderstanding with the standard Catholic practice of calling priests 'Father' with the implication that Hastings - himself a Roman Catholic, is in as much error as Tolkien's Protestant relative.

(4) Lots of other characters are called Master; and if 'in time' Tom was primeval he was Eldest in Time. 'Master' Tolkien is being a little unfair to Hastings here, because Frodo's question to Tom uses the term 'Master' in a very different way to that used by Goldberry in her response to Frodo. And while the term 'Master' when used of Gandalf and Elrond are both courtesy titles **and** bespeak a degree of self-mastery - the very specific way that Goldberry uses 'Master' is not explicit in the way the term is used of them. 'in time' - history - Tom was of the earliest of times and was thus the Eldest. {for the Treebeard v Tom 'Eldest' argument see my thread 'Eldest: Treebeard's 'Courtesy''

Title http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=21&TopicID=193586&PagePosition=1

(5) But Goldberry and Tom are referring to the mystery of *names*. See and ponder Tom's words in Vol 1 p. 142. Tolkien's reference is to Tom's lines in *FOTR In The House Of Tom Bombadil*:

"Don't you know my name yet? That's the only answer. Tell me, who are you, alone, yourself and nameless? But you are young and I am old. Eldest, that's what I am."

Treebeard too refers to 'the mystery of *names*':

"An Ent?" said Merry. "What's that?" But what do you call yourself? What's your real name? Hoo now!" replied Treebeard. "Hoo! Now that would be telling! Not so hasty. And I am doing the asking. You are in my country. Now what are you, I wonder?" {TT-Treebeard}

Note that apart from the warning about not giving one's real name Treebeard does not ask **who** Merry is but **what** he - and Pippin - are. And later he remarks:

"You call yourselves hobbits? But you should not go telling just anybody. You'll be letting out your own right names in you're not careful." {ibid}

In my first thread on *The Naming of*

Sauron (http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive3/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=130347&PagePosition=5)

I made the following comments:

"So what were some of the main themes that the **external** mythology saw as being part of the process of 'naming'?"

1. That a person's name, particularly that of a god or king, but also of any individual was part of his/her very essence and had to be closely guarded and virtually never spoken.
2. That naming a person or thing with a 'true' name is to take possession over it.
3. That uttering a 'true' name acts as an invocation to the person or thing named.
4. That nicknames or names other than the 'true' name were used to protect the individual.
5. That to give one's true name oneself is to open one to harm, or to diminish one, but to allow a friend to name one's 'true' name is acceptable."

In reference to **Letter #153** Tolkien is referring to the first of the comments included in my list of external mythology:

That a person's name... was part of his/her very essence'

In a recent post in AI (*What is a*

symbol? http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=194322&PagePosition=1)

gerontian wrote:

'I am not aware of any symbol, either, which can claim to represent the totality of its subject, except, perhaps, a proper name. "i.e. *'his/her very essence'*"

In the revised and expanded *Road to Middle-Earth* {2005}, talking of Tom B's utterances, Tom Shippey observes:

'There is an ancient myth in this feature, that of the 'true language' the tongue in which there is a thing for each word and a word for each thing, and in which signifier then naturally has power over signified – language 'isomorphic with reality' {*isomorphic*- a one-to-one relationship- signifier and signified are *ad idem*} once again. {*Chpt 4. A Cartographic Plot*} i.e. The very essence of the thing is contained in the 'true language' – the word is that which it describes.

This is also an aspect in Barfield's *Poetic Diction* with its concept of the ancient '*semantic unity*' which so influenced Tolkien and Lewis – *signifier* and *signified* are one and the same.

So, how can we address Tom's question:

Tell me, who are you, alone, yourself and nameless?

In a seminal post in my first *The Naming of Sauron*

thread (http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive3/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=130347&PagePosition=5)

Mireth Guilbain gave this response, which I do not think I can better:

'*Who are you, alone, yourself and nameless?* I read this as an affirmation that the name by which an individual is called is reflective and indicative of the individual's personal nature {cf. the paragraphs above this quote of MB's in this thread}. That there is no way to answer "Who are you?" with anything other than a name, and therefore the name you supply in response is a summation of everything that makes you 'you'. Why else are name changes, multiple names, and translations so important in Tolkien's works?'

Why change Melkor to Morgoth, unless the name change also signified a change in the individual? Why is Gandalf deliberately called 'Gandalf the White' and 'the White Rider' after he is sent back unless we are supposed to attach significance to the change from Grey to White. And yet, despite all this, Tom B challenges Frodo's question of 'Who are you?' by bringing up the idea of being nameless. Without such a label, a clear identifier, how can you answer the question? Perhaps one might be tempted to answer 'Who is Gandalf' by answering 'An Istar'. Or answering 'Who is Melkor' by responding 'A fallen Vala'. Yet these responses do not answer the question 'Who' but rather the question 'What'.

{cf. Tolkien's comment in **Letter #153 above** - Frodo has asked not 'what is Tom Bombadil' but 'Who is he'. We and he no doubt often laxly confuse the questions}

And so Tom B's challenge to Frodo remains: 'Who are you, alone, yourself and nameless?'

(6) You may be able to conceive of your unique relation to the Creator without a name - can you: for in such a relation pronouns become proper nouns? But as soon as you are in a world of other finites with a similar, if each unique and different, relation to Prime Being, who are you? Tolkien asserts that in a unique one-to-one relationship with the Creator pronouns and proper nouns - names - are interchangeable, but in a world of many beings with their own unique and different relation to the Prime Being without a name - a defined essence - you have no identity.

(7) Tolkien reaffirms the point about "he is" not referring to God by stating that he can use the same term about Winston Churchill - who clearly isn't God!

(8) He is *master* in a peculiar way: he has no fear, and no desire of possession or domination at all. He merely knows and understands about such things as concern him in his natural little realm. He hardly even judges, and as far as can be seen makes no effort to reform or remove even the Willow. Tolkien points out that Goldberry goes on – after having answered – somewhat enigmatically – the 'who' question, to give some indication of 'what' Tom is. He makes it clear that Tom's '*mastery*' relates to 'self-mastery' – **Tom is master over no one but himself. BUT** because he has achieved self-mastery he has power **to do** - not **power over**, because, by definition, he does not desire the latter. Thus he 'controls' only in the sense that he prevents OMW and The Barrow-wight from 'controlling' Frodo and the Hobbits- other than that he makes no value judgment and seeks to control nothing. His banishment of the Barrow-

wight is in keeping with the nature of things - the Dark Lord's rule has not yet been re-established and thus the Barrow-wight's time has not yet come.

He merely knows and understands about such things as concern him in his natural little realm. Note the limitations too, of Toms power. It is limited to - as is his knowledge and understanding - his natural little realm. Mark the use of the term *natural* - we will return to that in a later thread.

(9) I don't think Tom needs philosophizing about, and is not improved by it. Given the preceding comments about the mystery of names Tolkien is being less than fair to Mr. Hastings here, but it does accord with his general dislike of analysis, which repeats itself throughout the Letters.

(10) But many have found him an odd or indeed discordant ingredient. It would be interesting to know if any of the Inklings took this point of view. I have not yet come across any references in the writings of Carpenter, CS Lewis, Warnie Lewis, Roger Lancelyn Green, Walter Hooper, George Sayer, et.al. either Inklings or writers on the Inklings that mention Bombadil at all with regard to them, let alone in a negative light. If anyone one has contrary information I would appreciate their posting it in this thread.

(11) In historical fact I put him in because I had already 'invented' him independently (he first appeared in the Oxford Magazine) and wanted an 'adventure' on the way. Compare this to the comments Tolkien made to Christopher Fettes in 1961:

Bombadil just came into my mind independently and got swept up into the growing stream of LOTR. The original poem about him, in the curious rhythm which characterizes him, appeared in the Oxford Magazine at some time not long before the war.

And to Naomi Michinson in 1954:

I mean, I do not really write like that: he is just an invention (who first appeared in the Oxford Magazine about 1933)., and he represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely. (I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function.

Again one gets the feeling that Tolkien never wants to lift the veil on Tom and disclose him too fully, but he knows much more about him than he is letting on.

(12) I do not mean him to be an allegory - or I should not have given him so particular, individual, and ridiculous a name - but 'allegory' is the only mode of exhibiting certain functions. Some commentators have suggested that Tom B's name could have been invented by one of the Tolkien children, but this would appear to state that Tolkien himself invented the name.

(13) he is then an 'allegory', or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science:- the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature, *because they are 'other'* and wholly independent of the enquiring mind, a spirit coeval with the rational mind, and entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge: Zoology and Botany not Cattle-breeding or Agriculture.

The dreaded word 'allegory' is used - although in inverted commas, and it is clear that Tolkien does not use it in the sense that Lewis does - Tom B is nothing like an Aslan figure, nor is he simply an embodiment of natural science - but that is an aspect of him. For further comments on the idea of 'pure science' as opposed to 'doing' see Note 10 on **Letter #144** in the previous post.

(14) Also T. B. exhibits another point in his attitude to the Ring, and its failure to affect him cf. Tolkien's letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961:

You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of LOTR, even the best and most holy, it does not touch TB at all. So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in LOTR."

(15) You must concentrate on some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything however fundamental - and therefore much will from that 'point of view' be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. The power of the Ring over all concerned even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion - but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the Universe.

In order to tell the tale one must concentrate on part of the world- for the whole would be unmanageable. In doing so some things will be distorted or appear out of place, and even in that concentrated part the Ring's overweening power is not the whole picture.

Letter #163 7 June 1955 – to W H Auden

Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree.

Part of a lengthy and highly informative passage relating to the way in which the LOTR story actually unfolded in Tolkien's mind. The Tom B reference only confirms what we already know from our earlier analysis of the relevant HOME chapters. Tom, like Tolkien, had never been to Bree and in the end never got there in the published version (cf. the earlier posts in this thread).

Letter #176 – 30 Nov 1955 to Mrs. Molly Waldron (referring to the dramatization of LOTR by the BBC)

In his 'header' to the Letter Carpenter tells us that LOTR had been broadcast on the BBC Third Programme during 1955 and 1956. Among the large cast the parts of Gandalf and Tom Bombadil were played by the actor Norman Shelley. Clearly the Master was not overly enamoured of the dramatization of his work.

I think the book quite unsuitable for 'dramatization' and have not enjoyed the broadcasts – though they have improved. I thought Tom Bombadil dreadful - but worse still was the announcer's preliminary remarks that Goldberry was his daughter(!), and that Willowman was an ally of Mordor(!!) Cannot people imagine things hostile to men and hobbits who prey on them without being in league with the Devil!

Tolkien's comments are self- explanatory- particularly those relating to the erroneous 'relationship' between Tom and Goldberry!

Letter #207 – 8 April 1958 to Rayner Unwin (complaining of Morton Zimmerman's film script for the proposed cartoon version of LOTR)

This letter needs to be read in conjunction with **Letter #210** (see below). The excerpted quote effectively sums up Tolkien's view of Zimmerman's attempt at a synopsis - it tells us nothing about Tom!

The introduction of characters and the indication of what they are to say have little or no reference to the book. Bombadil comes in with 'a gentle laugh'!

Letter #210 - June 1958 to Forrest Ackerman (commenting on Morton Zimmerman's film script for the proposed cartoon version of LOTR)

I commend this letter to anyone who wants to laugh out loud, as well as to those who seek a deeper fulfillment - a greater comprehension of Tom. One would dearly love to read the whole script - it sounds a gas!

The first paragraph misrepresents Tom Bombadil. He is *not* the owner of the woods; and he would never make any such threat. (1)

(1) One can only speculate what 'threat' Tom made! Perhaps he accused the Hobbits of trespassing – similar to Farmer Maggot! And one can understand Tolkien's extreme irritation when a character who both actually and symbolically represented **lack** of control is described as an '**owner**'.

'Old scamp!' This is a good example of the general tendency that I find in Z to reduce and lower the tone towards that of a more childish fairy-tale. The expression does not agree with the tone of Tom Bombadil's long later talk; and though that is cut, there is no need for its indications to be disregarded. (2)

(2) In fairness to the unfortunate Mr. Zimmerman one can see how he arrived at the term 'scamp'. The impish or roguish humor that Tom demonstrates, particularly in his caperings and songs in the Old Forest could lead to such a misinterpretation- although – as Tolkien observes – the fully-rounded figure of Tom has to include the Tom of '*In The House of Tom Bombadil*' who :

'knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless'

I am sorry, but I think the manner of the introduction of Goldberry is silly, and on a par with the 'old scamp'. It also has no warrant in my tale. We are not in 'fairyland' but in real-river lands in autumn.

Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands. Personally I think she had far better disappear than make a meaningless appearance. (3)

(3) Again one would love to see what the unfortunate Mr. Zimmerman had written. But we do get one very significant piece of information about Goldberry, which, by implication, reflects on Tom:

We are not in 'fairyland' but in real-river lands in autumn. Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands.

Tolkien stresses the **natural** aspect of Goldberry- and thus Tom: We are not in 'fairyland' but in real-river lands in autumn

And note the critical locational limitation that Tolkien places on Goldberry: Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands.

He does not tell us that Goldberry represents actual seasonal changes in **the land** but in **such lands** – river valley lands of the Withywindle. Thus Goldberry, like Tom, is very **specifically tied to place** – the defined boundaries that Tom has chosen for himself- the doppelganger of the RL Oxford and Berkshire countryside of **Letter #19**.

And there is no avoiding the very obvious statement that Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands. In one aspect at least she represents Nature.

{Goldberry will be dealt with in much more detail when we come to look at the relationship between Tom and Goldberry.}

Letter #229 23 February 1961 to Allen and Unwin (commenting on Dr. Ohlmark's introduction to the Swedish translation of LOTR)

As for Wayland Smith being a Pan-type, or being reflected both in Bombadil and in Gollum; this is sufficient example of the silly methods and nonsensical conclusions of Dr. O. He is welcome to the rubbish, but I do not see that he, as a translator, has any right to unload it here.

This, and the preceding **Letter #228** are pretty powerful diatribes against the unfortunate Dr. Ohlmarks – the translator of the Swedish edition of LOTR who aroused the ire of the Master with some very fanciful interpretations of what LOTR meant.

In some ways one can see why Ohlmarks conjoined Wayland Smith with Tom Bombadil (though I can't see the Gollum connection and unfortunately I do not have an English translation of Ohlmark's comments). There is a theme running throughout English literature from medieval times certainly down to the 19th century with Kipling and even the 20th with Chesterton that produces figures like Wayland Smith who in themselves represent 'England', or relates to characters like the Oak King and the Holly King, and The Green Man, characters for whom some readers - Ohlmarks being one, would see as being reflected somehow in Tom. We will look at this tradition later, but it seems pretty clear that the Master most certainly didn't go the whole nine yards with it. And even though Ohlmarks' comments did go beyond the pale, once again, as in the Hastings letter (**#153**) one gets the feeling that Tolkien has an almost proprietorial attitude towards Tom and resents the speculation that surrounds him.

Letters #231, 233, 2337, 240, and 242 are all to do with The Adventures of Tom Bombadil – published in 1962 and have been dealt with at length in Peeling the Onion 11

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=191126&PagePosition=2

The Fettes Letter – 1961

In Amon Hen 173 (Jan 2002 pp. 31-32) Christopher Fettes quoted from a letter sent to him by Tolkien in 1961 {cf. Hammond & Scull Companion pp. 133-134}. This letter, along with **#s 144 and 153** contains information critical to an understanding of the multi-faceted character that Tolkien had created in Tom, and to his role and function in LOTR.

'I think there are two answers: (I) External (11) Internal; according to (1) Bombadil just came into my mind independently (1) and got swept into the growing stream of *The Lord of the Rings*. The original poem

about him, in the curious rhythm which characterizes him, appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* at some time not long before the war. (2) According to (11) , I have left him where he is and not attempted to clarify his position, (3) first of all because I like him and he has at any rate a satisfying geographical home in the lands of *The Lord of the Rings*; (4)but more seriously because in any world or universe devised imaginatively (or imposed simply upon the actual world) there is always some element that does not fit and opens as it were a window into some other system. (5) You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of *The Lord of the Rings* even the best and the most holy, it does not touch Tom Bombadil at all. (6) So Bombadil is 'fatherless' , he has no historical origin in the world described in *The Lord of the Rings*. (7)

(1) Bombadil just came into my mind independently: compare this with his comment in Letter #66 regarding Faramir:

A new character has come on the scene (I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but here he came walking into the woods of Ithilien): Faramir, the brother of Boromir...

Now of course Tolkien **had** invented Tom Bombadil – he had been around since the late 1920's – and he had been very much on Tolkien's mind cf. **Letter #19** as a possible sequel character to *The Hobbit*. But, given the nature of Tolkien's own creative process it is possible that he was simply lurking in the back recesses of Tolkien's mind, although this is a little difficult to swallow given his very early appearance in the first LOTR drafts and the consistency with which Tolkien maintained him and his character- throughout all revisions.

(2) The original poem about him, in the curious rhythm which characterizes him, appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* at some time not long before the war: 1934. Note 'in the curious rhythm which characterizes him' – a point we will return to in a later post. Shippey and several other critics have commented that Tom does not really speak - he uses a form of verse.

(3) I have left him where he is and not attempted to clarify his position: In the text perhaps, but both in **Letters #144** and **153** while telling his respective readers that Tom cannot be defined and should not be philosophized about, Tolkien has then gone on and attempted to do both!

(4) first of all because I like him and he has at any rate a satisfying geographical home in the lands of *The Lord of the Rings*: 'first of all because I like him' Tolkien clearly has a 'soft spot' for Tom , and one that derives from the fact that he represents something/s that the Master deems to be personally very important to him cf. **Letter #144**:

"he represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely" he has at any rate a satisfying geographical home in the lands of *The Lord of the Rings*: Tom is very much located in self-defined boundaries in LOTR by the time we meet him, wherever he may have 'wandered' before and in this he fits very well within Tolkien's specific views on location as an important determinant in the lives of his characters and indeed himself- and with the defined location of the 'spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside (**Letter #19**)

(5) 'but more seriously because in any world or universe devised imaginatively (or imposed simply upon the actual world) there is always some element that does not fit and opens as it were a window into some other system: compare this with **Letter #153**:

'Also T. B. exhibits another point in his attitude to the Ring, and its failure to affect him. You must concentrate on some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything however fundamental - and therefore much will from that 'point of view be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. The power of the Ring over all concerned even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion - but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the Universe.'

(6) You will notice that though the Ring is a serious matter and has great power for all the inhabitants of the world of *The Lord of the Rings* even the best and the most holy, it does not touch Tom Bombadil at all: In 'On Fairy Stories' Tolkien had commented that the creator of the 'Secondary World' creates a world in which:

'Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. Yet Tom Bombadil does **not** accord with the laws of that world because – as Tolkien says:

'it {the Ring} does not touch Tom Bombadil at all' – and then in

(7) he tells us why: 'So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in *The Lord of the Rings*.' He is in ME but not of it.

Unpublished Draft Letter 1968 {private collection}

{*Hammond & Scull Companion* p. 134}

'I do not know his {Tom Bombadil's} origins though I might make guesses. He is best left as he is, a mystery. There are many mysteries in any closed /organized system of history/mythology.' One is reminded of the comments in **Letter #144** regarding the constituents of a good story:

As a story, I think it is good that there should be lots of things unexplained (especially if an explanation actually exists) {my bold emphasis}

And on that note we conclude our study of the Letters!

The 'Color Coding' of Tom and Goldberry

In an earlier post and thread I made the following observations regarding Tom and Color.

A Little Color Speculation

From the *Bonhedig fragment* through the doll referred to by John Tolkien, through the 1934 Adventures to LOTR, Tom's primary colors remained – **Blue** and **Yellow** – with the addition of a brown beard and a red face in LOTR.

In *The House of Tom Bombadil* {FOTR} Frodo poses Tom a question:

'Did you hear me calling, Master, or was it just chance that brought you at that moment?'

and, at *The Council of Elrond* {ibid}, Elrond says:

'You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered...'

It is fascinating to speculate was it by 'chance' that the colors of the doll named Tom Bombadil were blue and yellow, or was it, in some way 'so ordered' that the colors of the character whom Tolkien saw in 1937 – **Letter #19** – as:

'the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside'

were blue and yellow – colors that when mixed make – up the color green - a color also closely associated with Tom in LOTR – one of the primary colors of Nature? And even the 'peacock's feather' which somewhat surprisingly adorns Tom's hat in the 1934 poem but disappears by LOTR might be glossed as being a 'peacock blue' which is, of course, a **greenish blue**!

Of course, the logical part of one's mind tell us that this is mere coincidence, and the literary analytical side tells us that this is part of the Master's creative genius- taking the everyday as it sometimes affected him and his family and transmuting it into something 'rich and strange' while still keeping some of that earlier resonance. But, nonetheless – it is fun to indulge in a little fanciful supposition from time to time!

N. B. The actual color symbolism that some have seen in Tom and Goldberry and what it might/does represent will be dealt with in a later post, so please hold back on discussing that particular issue in depth at this point."

That **N.B.** is the subject of this current post.

In commenting on Tom and Goldberry and the 'symbolism' of the color that both clothes them and surrounds them, we are entering uncharted waters, and I would be the first to admit that a good deal of what I say here is subjective. However, I have based all my comments soundly on a textual base - although others might query or disagree the interpretation that I have placed on that base.

We have already clearly established that one aspect of Tom – a very strong one – is closely associated with Nature, and, in *LOTR* Goldberry too gains a much stronger association in that sphere than she does in either the 1934 or 1962 Adventures. Indeed- as we shall see later in dealing with her - as Hammond and Scull comment in their *Companion* (p.132):

'Goldberry in *The Lord of the Rings* has stature, and powers, not even hinted at in the 1934 poem'

They could equally have observed that the same comment holds good for the later 1962 poem too.

Tom's Appearance - Clothing and Physical Colors

a. *The Bonhedig Fragment*

A hat with a **blue feather**, **blue jacket**, **yellow boots**.

b. *The Germ Poem*

No physical or clothing description

c. *1934 Adventures*

Blue jacket, **yellow** boots, peacock's feather in his hat i.e. greenish blue

d. *Letter #19*

No physical or clothing description

LOTR-The Old Forest

Yellow boots, a **blue coat**, **blue eyes**, 'face as red as a ripe apple' 'long **brown beard**', **blue feather** in his hat band.

f. *In The House of Tom Bombadil*

Thick **brown hair** crowned with autumn leaves. **Clean blue**, blue as rain-washed forget-me-nots. **Green** stockings.

g. *Fog on the Barrow Downs*

Blue jacket, **yellow** boots. And Tom chooses for Goldberry- from the Barrow-hoard: 'a brooch set with **blue** stones, many-shaded, like flax flowers or the wings of blue butterflies'.

h. *1962 Adventures*

Blue jacket, **yellow** boots, **green** girdle, leather breeches, swan wing feather changed to Kingfisher blue in *Bombadil Goes Boating*

Tom's Appearance Brown hair, Blue eyes, Red face, Brown beard

Tom's Clothes: Blue feather; Blue jacket, Blue coat, Blue clothing, Green girdle, Green stockings, Leather breeches color unspecified, Yellow boots

Choice of adornment: Blue brooch

Tom's Primary Colors

Blue

Brown

Green

Red

Yellow

Color Symbolism and its possible application to Tom

Blue

'The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth' according to Tennyson are the two great colors of the surface of things.

Because it is the color of the sky, blue is traditionally the color of heaven, of hope, of purity, of truth, of the ideal. Blue disembodies whatever becomes caught in it. It is the road to infinity on which the real is changed to the imaginary. It is the color of dreams.

'Indifferent and unafraid, centred solely upon itself, blue is not of this world: it evokes the idea of eternity, calm, lofty, superhuman, inhuman even.' {*The Penguin Dictionary of Symbolism* - entry under Blue}

cf. *FOTR* - *In The House of Tom Bombadil*- 'Tom Bombadil is the Master... He has no fear... Tom Bombadil is Master, and *FOTR-The Council of Elrond* 'he would not understand the need. And if he were

given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind."

Letter #19: 'Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside...'

1961 Fettes Letter: Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in LOTR."

(Interestingly enough, for those who see Celtic symbolism rife in Tolkien there is no specific word in Celtic languages for blue (*glas* in Breton, Welsh, and Irish Gaelic means 'blue' or 'green' or even 'grey' according to context).

Green

Green is a color combination of blue and yellow.

"The Greek word translated as 'green' or 'yellow green', *chloros* (whence English 'chlorophyll') , had a broader range of meanings than the color, just as our 'green' can mean 'unripe' or 'na-ve' without a color reference. the primary sense of Greek *chloros* may have been 'sappy' or 'having sap' and hence 'vital' or 'vigorous'." { *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*- Michael Ferber entry under *Green*.}

Given Tolkien's philological knowledge, and Tom's character, this would be a very appropriate color with which to associate him, with the 'sap' meaning being well to the fore!

Moreover:

'The Latin word for 'green' *viridis* (whence English 'verdant') , could also mean 'youthful' or 'vigorous'... its likely kinship to other Latin words suggests an older sense like 'sappy' or 'juicy': *vir*, man or male (whence English 'virile' and 'virtue')... {ibid}

English 'green' itself is related to 'grow' and 'grass'. {ibid}

Green is also the color of springtime and young vegetation – of renewal and hope, the beginning of the life/death/life cycle. It is also associated with longevity:

Cf. 'Eldest, that's what I am'. {*FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

The primary association of the color green, of course, is with herbage and foliage of nature, especially in spring and summer – again associations that underwrite that aspect of Tom. Green comforts and refreshes – and its manifestation in Spring, after Winter, has caused that season to be named the 'nurse of the human race'. It is a time of hope and renewal- again aspects which can be seen in Tom's relationship with the Hobbits, and his role as antithesis to Sauron and the 'machine'.

Green is the color of the awakening of life- the color of plant life rising afresh from the regenerating and cleansing waters- and here we can see a linkage between that concept and the relationship between Tom and Goldberry- Tom being of the earth and Goldberry of the waters. But, as ever, there is nothing enforcing in the way that Tolkien portrays this and we should savor the resonance of the symbolism and not press it too hard lest we descend into the grossness of allegory.

Yellow

In literary symbolism yellow is the color of autumn and the harvest. It also has associations with age – both associations being relevant to Tom! Yellow is also related to the mystery of renewal – which again aligns itself with the nature aspect of Tom. And of course yellow too, is the color of the Sun, whose rays, in positive symbology warm the earth and help things grow.

Brown

Brown is the color of earth, of ploughed land, of soil. Cf. **Letter #19:**

'...Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside...'

It is the color of autumn, and Tom's beard was brown as was his hair which was:

'crowned with autumn leaves' {*FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

Red

Red is only mentioned once in connection with Tom:

'face as red as a ripe apple' {FOTR – *The Old Forest*} and we must be careful not to over-egg any symbolic significance. In its positive aspect red is the color of maleness, strength; it heartens and stimulates.

In the instance of the quote about Tom I think we do have this element, but also – because of the 'apple' qualifier, we have the connection with russet, and autumn, and country and nature. Tolkien's symbolism – as has been observed before – is painted with the finesse of a fine-haired paint-brush – not laid on with a trowel!

In another thread dealing with symbolism I referred to what I called 'sub-text' the conscious or unconscious use of symbol – by both author and reader – and pointed out how difficult it was at times to discern between the two. In attempting to give a reasonable assessment of how I believe Tolkien – a deeply read Medievalist – dealt with symbolism – I have tried to keep myself exclusively focused on the text that he has given us. Only the reader will be able to judge if I have succeeded.

But the color symbology is not just limited – with regard to Tom – to his appearance and his clothing – it also surrounds him in other ways in LOTR and it is to these we must now turn.

The 'Color Coding' of Tom and Goldberry - 2

Everything about Tom bespeaks 'Nature'. He is *homo naturalis*. We first meet him in a **forest**, near a **river**, with **willows**, and he speaks and sings of **weather wind**, **feathered starling**, **hill**, **sun light**, **yellow berry**, **roots**, **yellow cream**, **honeycomb**, **white bread**, and **butter**, **mist**, **rain**, **cloudy weather**, **budding leaf**, **dew**, **feather**, **winds**, **heather**, **reeds**, **shady pool**, **lilies**. {cf. FOTR- *The Old Forest*}

And while he lives in a house it is *'up, down, underhill'* not one of Pete Seager's *'little boxes, all made of ticky tack'* – Tom is not an urban animal – indeed his self-set boundaries ensure that this is impossible.

And in his house, which is filled with a **golden** {autumnal, sun, warmth} light he has **'rush-seated chairs'**, and he is **'crowned'** with **autumn leaves**. And he serves **yellow cream** and **honeycomb**, **white bread**, and **butter**, **milk**, **cheese**, **green beans**, and **ripe berries**.

And the penthouse in which the hobbits freshen themselves and latterly sleep, has a floor strewn with **fresh green rushes**, and the wall hangings are **green hanging mats** and **yellow curtains**. By each bed are **soft green slippers**. The drink at table looks like **water** but acts like wine, the fire smells of **apple-wood**. And in his song Tom talks of **water-lilies**, **green leaves**, **winter**, **summer's end**, **spring**, **rushes**.

The fruits of the earth, their colors, and the seasons are repeated again and again in varying form.

And OMW's strength is **'green'**. And Tom talks of **green mounds** and **rivers** and **trees** and **raindrops** and **acorns**, and of **earth** and **clay** when he speaks approvingly of Farmer Maggot.

But at the end of all this, he makes one interesting observation:

'I am no weather-master, nor is aught that goes on two legs'

Lest we get too carried away and forget the multi-faceted character of Tom, Tolkien brings us down to earth. Redolent of Nature maybe – but still that is only one aspect of his nature – for he can't tell the weather!

And Tom cautions the Hobbits when they travel the Barrow-Downs to keep to **the green grass** almost as if it were the same as the 'Straight Road' – the true path, leading to ultimate safety. {FOTR- *In The House of Tom Bombadil*}

And in his dreams on the last night in Tom's house Frodo dreams of a **'far green country'** – a country in which – although he does not yet know it – he will be **renewed**. Tom is whistling like a **tree-full of birds**, and outside everything is **green** and **pale gold**. And Goldberry (whose colors we will deal with in detail in the next post) says her farewells wearing **silver green**. And as the Hobbits take their leave the air **'grew warmer between the green walls of hillside and hillside**, and their final view of her is from the bottom of a **'green hollow.'**

Of course much that is mentioned in these chapters is by its very nature **'green'**, but Tolkien, for whom: **'Hardly a word in its 600,00 or more has been unconsidered'**: was well aware of why he was repetitively using green.

As we saw in the previous post:

The primary association of the color green, of course, is with herbage and foliage of nature, especially in spring and summer – again associations that underwrite that aspect of Tom. Green comforts and refreshes – and its manifestation in Spring, after Winter, has caused that season to be named the *'nurse of the human race'*. It is a time of hope and renewal- again aspects which can be seen in Tom's relationship with the Hobbits, and his role as antithesis to Sauron and the 'machine'.

Green is the color of the awakening of life - the color of plant life rising afresh from the regenerating and cleansing waters - and here we can see a linkage between that concept and the relationship between Tom and Goldberry - Tom being of the earth and Goldberry of the waters.

And it is to Goldberry and her colors that we must now turn.

The 'Color Coding' of Tom and Goldberry – 3

Both in the 1934 Adventures, and in those of 1962 Goldberry is not given any particular characterization. Indeed, it is not until her importation into LOTR and ME that she achieves any overt significant status, or, as Hammond & Scull put it in their Companion {p.132}:

'Goldberry in *The Lord of the Rings* has stature and powers, not even hinted at in the 1934 poem.'

Why this is so we will deal with later when we come to look more closely at Goldberry's role and function, but for current purposes we are concerned with what color symbolism might inhere in her.

As well as not giving her any real character in the 1934 and 1962 poems, Tolkien doesn't give us too many clues about her either, other than the obvious connection with water.

The 1934 poem - which is simply repeated as far as the colors are concerned in the 1962 version, sees her wearing a **green** gown, and for her wedding-day having **forgetmenots {blue}** and **flaglilies {deep blue}** as her flower garland or 'crown', and a gown of **silver green**. Her hair is of **'yellow tresses'** in both poems.

In *FOTR - The Old Forest* she is associated with **white water lilies**. We really first get to see her with any degree of definition in *FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*. Her hair is **yellow**, her gown **green as young reeds** {notice the relation to water - 'reeds'}, **shot with silver like beads of dew**, a **gold belt shaped like flag-lilies** and **set with the pale-blue eyes of forget-me-nots**. In bowls of **green** and **brown** earthenware at her feet were **white water lilies**. And later, at supper on the following day she is dressed in **silver with a white girdle**, and **her shoes were like fishes' mail**. {Notice the relation to water-fishes' mail}

And on the morning of the Hobbits' departure she is once more clad in **silver green**. {*FOTR-Fog On The Barrow Downs*}.

The Nature aspect of Goldberry and her connection with water is not simply reinforced in the colors that she wears but also in Tom's and Frodo's songs/verse about her. Frodo – *FOTR - ITHOTB* – mentions **spring-time, and summertime, and spring again after** the times of birth and growth. He does not mention autumn and winter- decline and death.

In **Letter #210** Tolkien states that:

'We are not in 'fairy-land', but in real river lands in autumn. Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands.'

In reality, textually, she is only really associated with Spring and Summer- with birth and growth. Tom gathers water lilies each summer's end to please her and **'to keep them from the winter'** – not going into the Old Forest again until the **'merry spring, when the River-daughter dances down the withy –path to bathe in the water'**. {*FOTR-ITHOTB*} Autumn and Winter are also realities of their existence, but Goldberry is firmly associated with birth and growth and renewal- Spring and Summer.

And so to her colors:

Green

Silver Green

Blue

Yellow

White

Silver

Gold

I am not going to revisit the color symbolism already dealt with in the previous post, which is applicable- in general -to both Tom and Goldberry, but I am going to look at two particular aspects - her relationship with water and her feminine aspect.

In classical symbolism **green** is the color of water as red is the color of fire. Therefore **green** is doubly appropriate for Goldberry, both for the reasons explained in the previous post's analysis of the symbolism of green, and because it is the color of the element- water- with which she is most closely associated.

Silver relates to the Moon- which in turn relates to water and the feminine principle - so the color again reinforces Goldberry's femininity and her association with water.

I have used the term 'femininity' for I do not think we should press too strongly the association of Goldberry with the "Mother" – if anyone's that is Yavanna's role. But there is an aspect of the 'Mother' inherent in Goldberry and one that we should acknowledge but not over-stress- because I do not believe that Tolkien wanted to express her so strongly that way. I will expand on this later when I come to deal more fully with Goldberry.

Silver green gives us a double emphasis as it were – on water and the feminine.

Water is a life giver and a renewer – as is the feminine 'Mother' aspect of Goldberry.

White is the color of silver - symbolically. **White** is also the color of 'passage' as in 'rites of passage'- initiation, representing death and rebirth – the seasons –

[Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands.](#)

White of course, is also the color of purity, and innocence an antithetical color to the black of Sauron. But there is also a parallel symbolism which sees the **white lily**

['a small pile of white water lilies '](#)

['white water lilies were floating'](#)

as a symbol of procreation - which in turn ties in with the **green** of rebirth and renewal, and of water - the giver of life- and of the feminine 'the Mother'.

I am not sure how far we should press this point or how far Tolkien intended it - but I am certain, given his knowledge of Medieval literature and its overtly symbolic aspect, that he was aware of all the implications of the white lily.

Gold is a symbol of light, but, as with the 'red' reference to Tom, it is a singular reference and I do not think we should place too much emphasis on it, other than to see it as a reinforcing symbol for purity, and the sun and summer - represented in the renewal and growth aspects associated with Goldberry.

We should not leave this section on colors and Goldberry without some comment on the flowers which she uses as a garland- **forgetmenots (blue)** and **flag lilies (dark blue)**. The former – as a color – she shares with Tom who was:

['all in clean blue, blue as rain-washed forget-me-nots'](#)

the latter – **flag lilies (dark blue)** – she has alone.

The **forget-me -not** symbolically refers to memories and true love. The **flag lily** is the old word for the **Iris**- the **Fleur de Lys** of the French Kings. It is also known as 'Mary's flower' – representing fidelity, valor, wisdom and faith, and the 'Flower of Light'. Mary too, of course is the Christianized version of 'the Mother'.

I would not wish to hazard a guess at what the overall Tolkienian symbolic 'sub-text' might be telling us here - I suspect as complex a message as the one he sent us with the creation of Tom Bombadil.

But Goldberry – in her color and floral imagery supports and underwrites what Tom stands for in his.

EDIT NOTE: As a result of further information I think my reference to the Blue Flag Iris and thus a possible resonance of the Virgin Mary is incorrect. Please see my later post on the subject of Friday 27 January 2006 @ 17.04

Reply 🍌

The 'Color Coding' of Tom and Goldberry - An Amendment

I have a comment to make on the interpretation I have given to flaglilies- which in itself demonstrates the difficulties and dangers of symbolic interpretation. While this comment does not invalidate the overall comments I have made about Goldberry, it invalidates any resonance to the Virgin Mary that is inherent in 'Mary's Flower' the blue flag lily or iris.

In *UT Disaster of the Gladden Fields* Tolkien states in a note (13):

'The lake had become a great marsh, through which the river wandered in a wilderness of islets, and wide beds of reed and rush, and armies of yellow iris that grew taller than a man and gave their name to all the region and to the river from the Mountains about whose lower course they grew most thickly'.

In their authoritative Companion to LOTR Hammond and Scull say (p.131):

'Flag-lily-or yellow-flag is another name for the iris that gave its name to the Gladden Fields (see note for p.52). It is a perennial, native to Britain, growing in marshes and in wet grounds by rivers.'

So they clearly see the iris in question as being *the* yellow iris, not the blue one. And in the *Nomenclature* (p.771) Tolkien himself says that the *Gladden is here the name for the 'flag' or iris*'. Unfortunately he does not use the term 'yellow-flag'.

However, in *HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow VI Tom Bombadil* Tolkien writes:

'Description of Goldberry, with her hair as yellow as the flag lilies, her green gown and light feet.'

Clearly the belt worn by Goldberry and 'shaped like a chain of flag lilies' refers to the yellow iris, and the combination is not of blue and dark blue, but blue and yellow, which in itself combines to make green - a color motif emphasized again and again with Tom .

I had overlooked that quote and my earlier suggestion that the belt related to the blue flag lily is incorrect. It is indeed the yellow iris.

Tom and Song

In a letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961 Tolkien wrote:

'The original poem about him, in **the curious rhythm which characterizes him**, appeared in the Oxford Magazine at some time not long before the war.' {*Hammond & Scull Companion* p. 134, by bold emphasis}

and it is to that

curious rhythm which characterizes him

that we first need to turn, to unravel the clue that Tolkien is giving us with his use of the word 'rhythm.'

In *The Road to Middle-Earth {Revised edition 2005 Harper Collins paperback, ISBN 0 261 10275 3 Chapter 4 A Cartographic Plot}* Tom Shippey writes:

'Tom's other major quality is naturalness. Even his language has something unpremeditated about it. A lot of what he says is nonsense, the first thing indeed the hobbits notice, even before they see him. When it is not 'hey dol! merry dol! and the like, it tends to be strongly assertive or onomastic, mere lists of names and qualities.'

It is significant that Shippey chooses to use the term 'onomastic'. At its simplest level an *onomasticon* is an alphabetic list of proper names, especially of persons. The Ancient Egyptians produced Onomasticons – one of the most important being that of Onomasticon of Amenemipet.

{Tolkien was well aware of the Ancient Egyptian concept of naming- and probably aware of the Onomasticon of Amenemipet. His library –*inter alia*- contained Budge's three-volume Egyptian Book of the Dead: 'fragrant from many years exposure to pipe tobacco smoke' as the book-dealer that offered them for sale some years ago wrote! } (N.B. I owe the Tolkien library information to the kindness of *Geordie* - our 'source-guru'.)

Onomasticons were not dictionaries or explicit encyclopedias, because they did not include explanations for the words. However, the order and selection of words provide an implicit guide to the categories into which the Egyptians divided the world.

The **Ancient Egyptians** believed that **a word contained all the properties of the thing**, a belief we also find in Plato's *Cratylus* in his exposition on the nature of language. **Plato concludes that words are not arbitrary labels**, and that they can only be given by a **name-maker** who is 'of all artisans the rarest among men.'

Owen Barfield - a neo-Platonist and fellow Inkling, influenced both Tolkien and Lewis tremendously with this concept of **semantic unity** – a linguistic philosophy which essentially meant that **signifier and signified had a commonality** - which he called '**semantic unity**'. **Tom Bombadil** is a **name-maker**, he has lists, '**mere lists of names and qualities**' as Shippey puts it. And although his naming is hardly of the Gods - he gives names to the Hobbits' ponies –

Sharp-ears, Wise-nose, Swish-tail and Bumkin,
White socks, my little lad, and old fatty Lumpkin.

the important point to note is that they answer to them!

'behind him came in an obedient line six ponies : their own five and one more.....**Merry, to whom the others belonged, had not, in fact, given them any such names, but they answered to the new names Tom had given them for the rest of their lives.**...' {*FOTR - Fog on The Barrow—Downs- my bold and underline*}

Why? Because Tom as name –maker- had named them as they were –he had defined their essence. He had used the '**true-language**' –cf. Shippey below.

Commenting further on Tom's language Shippey observes:

'From time to time it breaks through to being 'perhaps a strange language unknown to the hobbits, an ancient language whose words were mainly those of wonder and delight'. But though they may not know the language, the hobbits understand it, as they understand Goldberry's rain-song without recognizing the words; and when Tom names something (as he does with the hobbit's ponies) the name sticks- the animals respond to nothing more for the rest of their lives. There is an ancient myth in this feature, that of the 'true language', the tongue in which there is a thing for each word and a word for each thing, and in which signifier then naturally has power over signified {cf. the Ancient Egyptian and Platonic beliefs referred to above, and Barfield's concept of 'semantic unity'} – language 'isomorphic with reality' once again. It is this which seems to give Tom his power. He is the great singer; indeed he does not yet seem to have discovered, or sunk into, prose. Much of what he says is printed by Tolkien as verse, but almost all of what he says can be *read* as verse { cf. Tolkien's observation: **the curious rhythm which characterizes him**} falling into strongly – marked two –stress phrases, with or without rhyme and alliteration, usually with feminine or unstressed endings....The scansion system... is a little like that of the Old English verse Tolkien was later to produce in the songs of Rohan, but more like that of much Old English 'prose', over whose claim to being 'verse' editors still hesitate. The point is though that while we appreciate it as rhythmical (unlike prose), we also do not mark it as premeditated or artificial (unlike verse). The hobbits fall into song themselves, 'as if it was easier and more natural than talking.'

And Tom interweaves both speech and song:

'Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about.' {*FOTR- In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

And Tom - like the language he speaks - or sings - is of that early age – before the semantic unity was shattered and the light became splintered. In one of the earlier drafts Tolkien has Tom referring to himself as *ab origine*, in LOTR he tells Frodo he is '*Eldest*' and his memory stretches far back:

'into ancient starlight, when only the elf –sires were awake.'

And so Tom is linked – by his very being – with the Ancient Egyptian Onomasticons where **the word contained all the properties of the thing**, to Plato's *Cratylus*, to Barfield's '*semantic unity*' and Shippey's '*true language*'. Of course this is nowhere explicit in the text- but the nature of the language he sings/speaks and his power as a **name-giver**- means that he is **the** ancient of days, the days in which signifier and signified were one, the days in which '**In the beginning was the song!**'

Tolkien thus again fuses the concepts of his own linguistic philosophy within those of the overarching external mythos to which he relates his own myth – in order to give it that universality that is the hallmark of true myth. Layers of an onion indeed!

Tom and Song – 2

Tom is not a product of the ME legendarium, which is why so much difficulty surrounds the interpretations-or perhaps one should say –misinterpretations – that occur in so many discussions about him. But one thing remains fairly constant -his use of song and his association with it.

We first meet Tom in a paragraph of an unfinished story – that of King Bonhedig – and although nothing about song is mentioned we just **know** from his physical and personality description that he will be a singer!

'Tom Bombadil was the name of one of the oldest inhabitants of the kingdom; but he was a hale and hearty fellow. Four foot high in his boots he was, and three feet broad. He wore a tall hat with a blue feather, his jacket was blue, and his boots were yellow'. {*H. Carpenter JRR Tolkien A Biography Part 3 Chapter v1 The Storyteller*}

In the 'Germ' poem of the mid-1930's we learn that:

(And he sang)

'Go, boat! Row! The willows are a-bending,
Reeds are leaning, wind is in the grasses.
Flow, stream, flow! The ripples are unending;
green they gleam, and shimmer as it passes.
Run, fair Sun, through heaven all the morning,
rolling golden! Merry is our singing!
Cool the pools, though summer be a burning;
in shady glades let laughter run a-ringing.'

{*HOME 6 The Return of The Shadow V The Old Forest and the Withywindle*}

Note the line: **Merry is our singing!** That is very much the hallmark of Tom's songs -

'a deep **glad voice** was singing **carelessly and happily...** {*FOTR- The Old Forest* my bold emphasis}

Hey dol! **Merry** dol!...

Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo {*ibid*}

"**Merry**" is very much the hallmark of Tom's verse - for he is full of the joy of life, of nature, of the creative force, of the **natural** cycle of birth and rebirth, not death, for, as we shall see later, 'sleep' which occurs in Tom's LOTR verse and the 1934 and 1962 Adventures is much closer to hibernation than termination! And this too ties in with the way in which Tom and his nature and Nature are portrayed by Tolkien - the gentle nature of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside as opposed to '*Nature red in tooth and claw*' and, formed by, as Tolkien put it in his 1971 Radio 4 interview with Dennis Gerrolt:

'If your first Christmas tree is a wilting eucalyptus and if you're normally troubled by heat and sand - then, to have just at the age when imagination is opening out, suddenly find yourself in a quiet Warwickshire village, I think engenders a particular love of what you might call central Midlands English countryside, based on good water, stones and elm trees and small quiet rivers and so on, and of course rustic people about'.

{http://www.minastirith.com/cgi-bin/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=5;t=000252;p=}

In the *1934 Adventures* and the *1962 Adventures* - which are their amended republication - Tom does not sing to sleep Goldberry, OMW, The Badgers, and the Barrow-wight- but of course his lines are in verse. Singing as such –in its fullest developed sense- is not extant until Tom has made the transition into ME via LOTR –where the 1934 ‘spoken’ injunctions of sleep are sung- transformed by the power of singing that is a foundation stone of power in ME – *The Silmarillion* and *LOTR*.

But even though outside the ME legendarium in the *1934 Adventures*, Tom’s words carry power. Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers and the Barrow-wight are all told to ‘*sleep*’ because their waking – at that point in time - is unnatural. (We have dealt with this at some length in the two earlier threads).

And, as was discussed in *Morpheus and Tom Bombadil*

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=7605&PagePosition=2

Tom’s injunctions to the four who seek to interrupt his ‘walking’ – have almost hibernatory overtones i.e. ‘*you have awakened too early- sleep again*’. Or, more correctly in the LOTR context as *Bear* pointed out:

‘For example, it is the fall when the Hobbits set out, and they encounter him (and Old man Willow) this season: ‘*I had an errand there: gathering water lilies... the last ere the year’s end... and to keep them from the winter*’. All other plants are preparing for the Winter to come. Old Man Willow should be sleeping.

‘As a being who is apparently in tune with the cycles of nature (birth, growth, reproduction and rebirth) his {Tom’s} might be the ability to ‘return’ those things to the Cycle when they stray.”

And in the same thread *Eonwe* pointed out that the earliest verse- or songs that we know as children -are lullabies- many of them nonsense rhymes- to send children to sleep. Tom’s verse in the *1934* and *1962 Adventures*, and his songs in LOTR might carry a weightier threat than childish lullabies- but they are meant to have the same effect – to send sleep – to quiet the unquiet spirit.

And although the ‘cycle of seasons’ is not apparent in the *1934* and *1962 Adventures* and it is not ‘Fall’

‘Old Tom Bombadil walked about the meadows’ 1934

‘Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows’ 1962

by the time Tom had entered ME and LOTR he had been defined as the

‘spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside **Letter #19** 1937

and both he and Goldberry had become much more closely associated with Nature:

‘We are... in... real-river-lands in autumn. Goldberry represents the actual seasonal changes in such lands’ **Letter #210**

and with autumn - so *Bear*’s seminal comments hold good.

But a very significant fact to observe is that although in both the *Adventures* and LOTR Tom’s verse/song/speech intimidate those to whom it is addressed (Goldberry excepted in LOTR) at no point is Tom using his power of song to **impose** his will on others – he simply uses it ensure they do not impede his freedom.

Thus Goldberry in the *Adventures* is admonished for stealing his hat and pulling him into the water- which impedes his ‘*walking*’; and OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight - in the *Adventures* too are seeking to constrain him, and at the same time acting unnaturally - being awake when they should be sleeping, or preparing for sleep.

And likewise, in LOTR, Tom does not seek to constrain either OMW or indeed the Barrow-wight unreasonably - he seeks to prevent them imposing their will on others - the Hobbits - and denying them their rightful freedom.

Tom’s walking is his freedom – a point we will return to later – and he has a ‘quest’ – in LOTR the gathering of water lilies! The Hobbits are on a much more important quest - although not fully conscious of its import at the time they meet Bombadil- and their ‘walking’ – their freedom – is impeded by OMW and the Barrow-wight.

Tom is Master because he seeks no mastery over others, but as a corollary to that his power is used to ensure that no others abuse their power and impose their will on weaker or objecting individuals.

Tom sings his songs and

'His songs are stronger songs' {FOTR-Fog on The Barrow Downs}

for he is a name-maker – he is Eldest – he uses 'True Language' but never to control for control's sake.

Tom and Song –3

In his Preface to the 1962 Adventures Tolkien comments:

'The verses, of hobbit origin, here presented have generally two features in common. They are fond of **strange words, and of rhyming and metrical tricks** – in their simplicity Hobbits evidently regarded such things as virtues or graces, though they were, no doubt, mere imitations of elvish practices. **They are also, at least on the surface, lighthearted or frivolous, though sometimes one may uneasily suspect that more is meant than meets the ear.**' {my bold emphasis}

Note these two comments:

strange words, and of rhyming and metrical tricks

They are also, at least on the surface, lighthearted or frivolous, though sometimes one may uneasily suspect that more is meant than meets the ear

For they accurately describe the verse that Tom himself gives us in LOTR – particularly the phrase:

more is meant than meets the ear!

In his comment on the 1962 Adventures Paul Kocher in *Master of Middle Earth – The Fiction of JRR Tolkien - Chptr. Seven Leaves* – observes:

'Almost totally absent from them is the mysterious aura of primal strength which sets Tom outside the spell of the one Ring and snatches the hobbits from the tomb of the barrow-wights. So much so that Tolkien feels it necessary to explain in the Preface that the two poems {The Adventures; Tom Goes Boating} were written by Buckland hobbits who: 'had... little understanding of his powers'. They regarded Bombadil 'with amusement (tinged with fear).

Note Kocher's reference to 'primal strength' – to a being created **outside** the context of the environment of the One – ME - to one who is 'Eldest', *ab origine*, who '**knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless -before the Dark Lord came from Outside**'. {FOTR-In The House Of Tom Bombadil}.

Of course there is more to Tom's singing than 'meets the ear', because he uses the "True Language" a language in which signifier and signified have a semantic unity, a language from the very dawn of linguistic consciousness. This 'primal strength' is why:

'His songs are stronger songs' {FOTR-Fog on The Barrow Downs}.

Even the Hobbits are aware of the power of his language, even though they do not understand much of it:

Tom sang most of the time, but it was chiefly nonsense, or else perhaps a strange language unknown to the hobbits, an ancient language whose words were mainly those of wonder and delight.' {FOTR-Fog on The Barrow-Downs- my bold emphasis and underline},

the 'True Language'!

Goldberry and Song- an interlude

One point that should be noted here, and one I will return to in more detail when I come to deal with Tom and Goldberry and their roles and relationship, is that it is very noticeable - and a point **infrequently** commented on by those who over-emphasize the role of Goldberry in LOTR - that **we are never given any of the words of Goldberry's songs!**

In the 1934 Adventures, we are told she sits in the rushes:

'an **old song** singing fair to birds upon the bushes'

This, of course, as a result of her transference in to LOTR is changed in the 1962 Adventures to

'singing **old water songs** to birds upon the bushes'

to emphasize her relationship with **water**.

And in *FOTR-The House of Tom Bombadil* in **his** song Tom tells us:

'Sweet was her singing'

And Frodo and his companions hear Goldberry singing a song that:

'seemed plain to them was a rain-song' {ibid}

but nowhere are we ever given any specific words of the songs that Goldberry sings.

This is very deliberate. It is Tom who is the Master, it is Tom who speaks the 'True Language' and it is Tom whose songs are '**stronger songs**' and it is Tom who is literally '**old**' *ab origine* Tom Bombadil, and Goldberry who is **young**:

"Old Tom Bombadil" and 'fair young Goldberry'

Tom's '**Mastery**' exists in his songs too, which is why we are not given any words of the songs that Goldberry sings, for only Tom can sing the '**stronger songs**'.

Tom and Song - Conclusion

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* Caliban observes:

'...the isle is full of noises.

Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.' {Act 111.Sc 11}

And Tom's songs too have the same effect. When Frodo and Sam first hear his singing (*FOTR-The Old Forest*) although:

'a deep glad voice was singing carelessly and happily, but it was singing nonsense' {ibid}

nevertheless

'Frodo and Sam stood as if enchanted' {ibid}

And in *The House of Tom Bombadil* – {FOTR} in telling the Hobbits of why he was in the Old Forest:

'...he went on in a singing voice' {ibid}

And when he tells them, after their somewhat dream-ridden night, the varied history of the land:

'Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about' {ibid}

and his very tonal quality would take on a resemblance of his own physical activities - his '**leaping on the hill-tops**' is captured vocally:

'Suddenly Tom's talk left the woods and went **leaping** up the young stream, over bubbling waterfalls, over pebbles and worn rocks, and among small flowers in close grass and wet crannies, wandering at last to up on the Downs.' {ibid- my bold emphasis}

And the Hobbits remembered – when he talked of the Barrow-wights:

'...what the joy of this house had driven from their minds'. {ibid}

'The hobbits sat still before him, enchanted' {ibid} –reminding us of Tolkien's comment in *On Fairy-Stories*:

'Small wonder that *spell* means both a story told, and a formula of power over living men.'

And when he releases them from the Barrow and calls their ponies and **names** them, he does so **in song**:

'So he sang, running fast, tossing up his hat and catching it...' {FOTR - *Fog on The Barrow Downs*}

And on the way to his borders:

'Tom sang most of the time, but it was chiefly nonsense, or else perhaps a strange language unknown to the hobbits, an ancient language whose words were mainly those of **wonder and delight**' {ibid- my bold emphasis}

wonder and delight – 'Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not' – even when controlling OMW and banishing the Barrow-wight Tom demonstrates no malice - no victimization - no desire to use his power **over** any being, only to use it in a way that ensures the right of all things to be free – the *lex naturalis* – is not in any way contravened by individual license.

But above all the 'true language' that he sings gives to his listeners – **wonder and delight** –
the wonder and delight of:

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

O wind on the waterfall, and the leaves 'laughter' {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

Tom does not sing of winter or enter –

'deep again along the forest water,
not while the year is old.' {FOTR-The Old Forest}

Tom, like Goldberry, emphasizes life and rebirth, not death and the hollow grave.

Tom Bombadil and the Medieval Hierarchy –The Great Chain of Being

'*Tolkien the Medievalist* will demonstrate in varied fashion how Tolkien from the beginning responded to his modern contexts by retelling his medieval sources and adapting his medieval scholarship to his own voice. Tolkien was, over time, influenced by his own personal medievalism, his profession as a medievalist, his relationships with other medievalists, and his own mythologizing in constructing his major fiction.' {*Jane Chance – Introduction - Tolkien the Medievalist – Routledge, London 2003, ISBN 0 415 28944 0*}

'The word that describes the structure {of parts of the LOTR} is 'interlace.'

Tolkien certainly knew the word, for it has become a commonplace of *Beowulf*-criticism, but he may not have liked it much: it is associated also with the structure of French prose romance, in which he took little interest. However, Tolkien certainly also knew that the Icelandic word for a short story is a *paettir*, literally a thread. One could say that several *paettir*, or threads, twisted around each other, make up a saga; and Gandalf comes close to saying something like that when he says to Theoden, 'There are children in your land who, out of *the twisted threads of story*, could pick the answer to your question' {Shippey's emphasis}. Tolkien may have felt that there had been all along a native version of the French technique of *entrelacement*, even if we no longer know the native word for it. But word or no word, he was going to do it.' {*Shippey - JRR Tolkien: Author of the Century Chptr. The Lord Of The Rings(1): Mapping Out A Plot*}

'His active life must have lain in the latter half of the fourteenth century; and he was thus a contemporary of Chaucer's; ... If the most certain thing we know about the author is that he also wrote *Patience*, *Purity* and *Pearl*, then we have in *Sir Gawain* the work of a man capable of weaving elements taken from diverse sources into a texture of his own, and a man who would have in that labour serious purpose. I would myself say that it is precisely that purpose that has with its hardness proved the shaping tool which has given form to the material, given it the quality of a good tale on the surface, because it is more than that if we look closer.

The story is good enough in itself... Of this the most notable example is the long Third Part with its interlacing of the hunting scenes and the temptations. {*JRR Tolkien- Introduction – Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*}

Tolkien's introduction to his modern translation of the *Sir Gawain* poem sounds remarkably like a commentary on his own masterpiece - *The Lord of the Rings*. But the purpose of these three quotations is not to open a discussion on the literary structure of LOTR, but to emphasize the importance of medieval literary structure and thought on the writings of Tolkien. We all too often –because we focus so heavily on Tolkien's seminal contributions to *Beowulf* scholarship, tend to overlook the fact that many of his scholarly contributions – such as on *Orfeo*, *Purity* and *Pearl*, *Sir Gawain*, *Ancrene Wisse* dealt with the medieval period proper. And the philosophic thought and literary style of that period played an important part in the way he conceptualized and wrote LOTR – including his treatment of Tom Bombadil.

Tom Bombadil and the Medieval Hierarchy – The Great Chain of Being - 2

The heavens themselves, the planet and this centre

Observe degree, priority and place,

Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office and custom, in all line of order;
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
in nobel eminence enthroned and sphered
Amidst the other; whose medicinable eye
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
And posts, like the commandment of a king,
Sans cheque to good and bad: but when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,

What plagues and what portents! What mutiny!
What raging of the sea! Shaking of earth!
Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture! **O, when degree is shaken,**

Which is the ladder to all high designs,
Then enterprise is sick! How could communities,

Degree in schools and brotherhood in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogeniture and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead;
Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong
(Between whose endless jar justice resides)
Should lose their names, and so should justice too!
Then every thing include itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,
And appetite, a universal wolf
(So doubly seconded with will and power)
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself."

Shakespeare – Ulysses's speech - Troilus and Cressida, 1.03.109-124 {My bold emphasis}

.....**for evil lies,**
not in God's picture, but in crooked eyes,
not in the source, but in malicious choice,
and not in sound, but in the tuneless voice

Tolkien - Mythopoeia {My bold emphasis}

Say first, of God above or Man below
What can we reason but from what we know?
Of man what see we but his station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer?
Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.

He who thro' vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied being peoples every star,
May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are:
But of this frame, the bearings and the ties,
The strong connexions, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd thro'; or can a part contains the whole?

**Is the great chain that draws all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld by God or thee?**

Alexander Pope – *Essay on Man- Epistle 1-Of the Nature and State of Man With respect to the Universe*
{My bold emphasis}

God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations

Word embroidered on an 18th century English sampler {wall hanging}

**untune that string,
And hark what discord follows**

Shakespeare - *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.03.109-124

Those words of Shakespeare capture the concept of 'divine order' and 'harmony' that characterized the Medieval world picture and that of the Elizabethan one too. It occurs again in *The Silmarillion* where the discord of Melkor destroys the divine harmony, and in *Pope's Essay on Man*, and it is seen at its simplest, and somewhat absurdly, in the words of the 18th century sampler. But all four quotes express the concept of divine order and harmony without which the world of man falls into disarray. 'The Discord of Melkor' and that which is aligned to it is a perversion of Nature, of the 'natural order of things' the '*lex naturalis*' and although Sauron and indeed Saruman claim to be imposing a 'new world order' in the philosophies they adumbrate, they are in effect perverting the divine harmony without which the natural world cannot function effectively.

The concept of a 'Great Chain of Being' which ordered the world, and ensured that 'Each thing' did **not** meet 'In mere oppugnancy', which both the Medieval and Elizabethan world subscribed to, albeit more in theory than practice, appears also in Tolkien's works of *The Silmarillion* and *LOTR* in varying forms.

I will – at a later date- develop a thread which deals with this aspect of the influence of this Medieval paradigm on his creative fantasy – but at the moment I wish to restrict the discussion to that concept and Tom Bombadil.

In his seminal work '*The Elizabethan World Picture*' {Chatto & Windus reprinted London 1960 – first published in 1945} E.M.W. Tillyard – Master of Jesus College Cambridge – gives us a detailed exposition of the 'Great Chain of Being' which, though related by him to the period between the reigns of Henry V111 and Charles 1 still has application to the earlier Medieval period.

Tillyard observes of '*the Great Chain of being*' that:

'This metaphor served to express the unimaginable plenitude of God's creation, its unfaltering order, and its ultimate unity. The chain stretched from the foot of God's throne to the meanest inanimate object. Every speck of creation was a link in the chain, and every link except those at the two extremities was simultaneously bigger and smaller than another: there could be no gap.' {*The Elizabethan World Picture – Chapter 4 –The Great Chain of being*}

Starting with Plato's *Timaeus*, developed by Aristotle, adopted by Alexandrian Jews, spread by the Neo Platonists it was:

From the Middle Ages till the eighteenth century... one of those accepted commonplaces, more often hinted at or taken for granted, than set forth.' {ibid}

Tillyard feels that the 16th century treatise on *Natural Theology* by Raymonde de Sebonde is probably the best account of the *Chain of Being*:

'First there is mere existence, the inanimate class: the elements, liquids and metals. But in spite of this common lack of life there is a vast difference of virtue; water is nobler than earth, the ruby than the topaz, gold than brass: the links in the chain are there. Next there is existence and life, the vegetative class, where again the oak is nobler than the bramble. Next there is existence life and feeling, the sensitive class. In it there are three grades. First the creatures having touch but not hearing or movement. Such are shellfish and parasites on the base trees. Then there are animals having touch and memory and movement, but not hearing, for instance, ants. And finally there are the higher animals, horses and dogs etc.,... that have all these faculties. The three classes lead up to man, who has not only existence life and feeling, but understanding: he sums up in himself the total faculties of the earthly phenomena. (For this reason he is called the little world or microcosm). But as there had been an inanimate class, so to balance it there must be a purely rational or spiritual. These are the angels, linked to man by community of the understanding, but freed from simultaneous attachment to the lower faculties. There are vast numbers of angels and they are as precisely ordered along the chain of being as the elements or metals. Now, although creatures are assigned their precise place in the chain of being, there is at the same time the possibility of a change. The chain is also a ladder.

{Halfir note: cf Ulysses comment quoted above:

O, when degree is shaken,

Which is the ladder to all high designs,

Then enterprise is sick!}

The elements are alimantal {Halfir note: Nutritive, nourishing}. There is a progression in the way the elements nourish plants, the fruits of plants beasts, and the flesh of beasts men. And this is alone with the tendency of man upwards towards God. The chain of being is educative both in the marvels of its static self and in its implications of ascent.'

There is considerably more to The Great Chain of Being and its implications for the Medieval and Elizabethan world, but what Tillyard has given us with Sebonde's quote and his own comments is currently sufficient for our purposes.

Of course Tolkien, as with all his sources, direct and indirect, places them in the crucible of his creative imagination and refines them in such a way that they become aspects of *his* storytelling and mythology, not borrowings, clonings, or copying from others. And in the 'transmutation' as it were, from source to '*Tolkien sprecht*' they often change in nature and degree. But the original concept also still resonates, binding Tolkien's world to an older and wider mythological world outside.

We must bear the comments of the previous paragraph in mind in seeing how Tom fits in to the concept of '*The Great Chain of Being*'.

'Now let the song begin! Let us sing together
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,
Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water:
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter!

FOTR - The Old Forest

Now let the song begin

The song, of course, is the song of creation, that which brings the world and its beings into existence, that which demonstrates and creates the interconnectivity of all things – the things that Tom includes in ' - [Let us sing together.](#)' - "*The Great Chain of Being*".

Jane Chance in *The Mythology of Power – Lord of the Rings*, {University of Kentucky Press 2001- Chptr. 3 *The political Hobbit* ISBN 08131 9017 7} argues that the earlier line of:

'Eat earth. Dig deep. Drink water'. {FOTR-The Old Forest}

'is directed to Old Man Willow as he attempts to transcend his place in the **created order**.

{Halfir note: cf.

**Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows}**

As 'Eldest', Tom Bombadil...acts as an Adam the Namer **who knows the history of the created world and remembers the original ideal for each species.**' {my bold emphasis},

And she further observes that because Tom is involved in the maintenance of the existing order, the songs that he and Goldberry sing:

'often praise the Middle-earth equivalent of the medieval Chain of Being'

Jane Chance Tolkien's Art - {University of Kentucky Press 2001 Chptr 5 The Lord of The Rings ISBN- 0 8131 9020 7

referencing the song that starts: 'Now let the song begin! – quoted above.

In seminal private correspondence to me, my good friend Osse – who first drew my attention to Tom's relation to the 'Great Chain of Being' – wrote of the song that begins 'Now let the song begin':

'This builds a chain of natural things with Tom and Goldberry at the base, supporting. Indeed taking Tolkien's mythos into account, the list here starts with that which is most manufactured even though seeming natural (the sun, the moon, and stars, which were created by the Valar as told at the start of The Silmarillion) and progresses through those elements that are less directly created by the Valar, thus implying that Tom and Goldberry are the 'least' created elements – therefore the most natural, the most wholly Middle Earth related.'

Thus yet again Tolkien, the master storyteller, establishes a relationship between Tom and a wider mythology, a mythology that underwrote much of the medieval literature that Tolkien studied, **yet at the same time he transmutes its form to fit his own mythology**, and the aspect of Tom as an exemplification of the Spirit of Nature, at least in one of his aspects.

And the concepts of 'degree', 'harmony', 'order', 'balance' are all here, creating what Jane Chance so aptly calls 'the Middle-earth equivalent of the medieval Chain of Being'.

In my post of the 28th of April 2006 I wrote:

And **BTW** for those of you who have waited so politely and patiently for the next major post, I will be making it over the next 48 hours and it will deal with: **Tom and the Cycle of Nature**

Sadly, **RL** reared its ugly head and those 48 hours have turned into something like 6 plus weeks. My apologies for such a delay. I hope this current contribution will have been worth the wait!

Tom and the Cycle of Nature

And death shall have no dominion.
Dead mean naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

Dylan Thomas

These magnificent opening lines from Dylan Thomas's great poem 'And Death Shall Have No Dominion' are a fitting prologue to any discussion on **Tom and the Cycle of Nature**, for, in Tom's world, as in the world of Dylan Thomas's poem- death has no dominion. The natural cycle is just that – birth, growth, decline and decay, rebirth.

As I wrote in the final lines of the section on **Tom and Song – Conclusion:**

Tom, like Goldberry, emphasizes life and rebirth, not death and the hollow grave.

As we shall see, the nearest that Tom comes to death is sleep –hibernation- and in his world there is only – to quote Frodo:

'spring-time and summer-time, and spring again after' {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

Within Tom's boundaries there is no 'winter of discontent'.

That is not to say that winter and death and the hollow grave are not present: OMW has that in mind for the Hobbits – as does the Barrow –wight, and death of course – is an aspect of Nature. But so is rebirth- and Tom's is an affirmation of the Natural Cycle in which death is but an interlude before rebirth – in the same way that Eru's gift of death to man is not the final statement to be made about humankind's existence.

In this respect Tom stands in complete opposition to Sauron who seeks to 'kill' the will of men- by mastering them, by making them 'belong' to him- through the power of the One. Tom – as we will see in more detail in **Tom and the Nature of Power** cannot conceive of such a situation, any more than Goldberry can:

'all things growing or living in the land each belong to themselves'. {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

Tom is free because he has mastered himself:

'he has no fear'. {ibid}

Sauron seeks to control **through fear**.

Everything about Tom's land bespeaks the Cycle of Nature and is an affirmation of life and growth – in which death is but a way-station – a rite of passage before rebirth. Compare Tom's land and *environs*:

'In that direction the land rose in wooded ridges, green, yellow, russet under the sun, beyond which lay hidden the valley of the Brandywine. To the South, over the line of the Withywindle, there was a distant glint like pale glass where the Brandywine River made a great loop in the lowlands and flowed away out of the knowledge of the hobbits. Northwards beyond the dwindling downs the land ran away in flats and swellings of grey and green and pale earth-colours, until it faded into a featureless and shadowy distance. Eastward the Barrow-downs rose, ridge behind ridge into the morning and vanished out of eyesight into a guess: it was no more than a guess of blue and a remote white glimmer blending with the hem of the sky, but it spoke to them, out of memory and old tales, of the high and distant mountains.

They took a deep draught of the air, and felt that a skip and a few stout strides would bear them wherever they wished.' {FOTR-Fog on the Barrow Downs }

with those of Mordor:

'North amid their noisome pits lay the first of the great heaps and hills of slag and broken rock and blasted earth, the vomit of the maggot-folk of Mordor; but south and now near loomed the great rampart of the two Towers of the Teeth tall and dark upon either side.' {ROTK - The Black Gate Opens}

One would hardly want to take a deep draught of the air here!

Winter - the harbinger of death - is mentioned only once by Tom:

'I had an errand there; gathering water-lilies...
the last ere the year's end to keep them from the winter,
to flower by her pretty feet till the snows are melted.'

{FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil}

And note that Tom gathers the water lilies to **protect** them from the winter- so that they may continue to flower until the time of death is passed- for- as we have seen – for Goldberry especially – there is only:

spring-time and summer-time, and spring again {ibid}

And Tom too, like all within his boundaries, goes into a 'hibernatory mode' throughout the winter:

'Nor shall I be passing
Old Man Willow's house this time of spring-time,
not till the merry spring.' {ibid}

In my long-archived thread *Tom Bombadil and Morpheus*:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=7605&PagePosition=2

I referred to the role that sleep plays in Tom's interface with others, and in his songs.

'The most obvious reference is in FOTR in *The Old Forest* when Tom says to Old Man Willow: "*You should not be waking... Go to sleep.*"

In *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* Tom progressively encounters: Goldberry, Old Man Willow, a family of badgers, and a Barrow Wight. In each case he uses sleep as a control mechanism cf.:

Goldberry: "*Sleep again where the pools are shady.*"

Old Man Willow: "*Go back to sleep again like the river daughter.*"

The Badgers: "*Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow.*"

The Barrow-Wight: "*Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow lay down you bony head, like Old Man Willow.*"

Tom's injunctions have almost hibernatory overtones i.e. '*you have awakened too early, sleep again.*'

In response to that opening post *Bear* responded:

"According to **Letters**, Tom Bombadil was "intended" by the author to represent the "Spirit" of a particular countryside he knew and loved.

As a being who is apparently in tune with the cycles of nature, (birth, growth, reproduction, sleep/death and rebirth) his might be the ability to "return" those things to the Cycle when they stray.

For example, it is the Fall when the Hobbits set out, and they encounter him (and Old Man Willow) during this season: "***I had an errand there: gathering water lillies... the last ere the year's end to keep them from the winter.***" (FoTR 142). All other plants are preparing for the Winter to come, therefore Old Man Willow *should* be sleeping.

As for the Barrow-Wight, I would say he has reached the "Winter" of its existence as well. He should also be sleeping, and not bothering stray travelers in dream or in waking..."

And in a later post she observed:

"Over the weekend it was suggested in one of our Sunday Espresso-enhanced philosophical discussions, that Tom was the ultimate "conservationist" - that the killing of anything (even in self defense) is not an option. Therefore, sleep represents to him, the "force majeure" that he is willing to take in any situation..."

Which is a fascinating view given Tolkien's comment in **Letter #144** that Tom's is a:

'natural pacifist view'.

In *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* Goldberry, Old Man Willow, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight all *catch*, or *try to catch* Tom. They interrupt the *quest* that he is on (albeit a very lowly one compared to the Ring quest). In FOTR Old Man Willow and the Barrow Wight don't *catch* Tom, they *catch* the hobbits, who too are on a *quest*.

Tom uses song (speech in the 1934 original version before he has been translated to ME) with a sleep motif in both *The Adventures* and *FOTR* and in both works he uses it to either escape from or prevent capture and the interruption of a quest, in the first instance his own, in the latter that of the hobbits.

This theme of capture and control is something that is clearly alien to his spirit and indeed "***None has ever caught him yet, for Tom he is the master: His songs are stronger songs, and his feet are faster.***" {*FOTR-In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}. So *Bear's* earlier posted comment:

sleep represents to him, the "force majeure" that he is willing to take in any situation..."

takes on an added significance, for Tom is a 'free spirit' free because he has self-mastery- and does not impose himself on others within his boundaries **unless** they by their actions impede or transgress the freedom of others:

'all things growing or living in the land each belong to themselves'

But even here when they do transgress he only uses 'sleep' to return them to the natural cycle from which they should not have awakened.

And, as was pointed out in Heron's excellent thread *The Power of Song and Chant*

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=9350&PagePosition=8

in a post by *Gerontian*:

It is not far fetched to say that the first musical instrument was the human voice. **Notice our speech when speaking to infants and animals; it is often more pronouncedly musical, or sing song, as part of our way to communicate comfort, security and affection. As I said, music has strong emotional power.** {my bold emphasis}

And *Celanor* in my *Tom and Morpheus* thread observed:

Tom was an elder member of Middle Earth and his singing of slumber songs merely confirms his place in the hierarchy. He can soothe the younger creations by songs of sleep - such as a mother sings a lullaby to lull an errant child into sleep. It establishes his position - and **makes for a peaceful solution to his constructed world.** {my bold emphasis}

That latter – emphasized – phrase jells well with:

sleep represents to him, the "force majeure" that he is willing to take in any situation... "

And *Eonwe* in the same thread commented:

hmmm.... child afraid to go to sleep because sleep resembles death (I don't want to go away, will I come back?), mother sings a lullaby with a reassuringly cyclical structure (all things return)... child awakes from a nightmare about its own death (Frodo in the barrow, and in Tom's house), etc.

Perhaps we should remember that we usually refer to Nature as **Mother Nature!**

So, again through the magic of the Master we have Tom- as both a spirit of nature and *homo naturalis* - and his references to sleep are both a return to the natural cycle of things **and** a method of both imposing 'control' and of reassuring:

'Sleep till the morning-light., rest on the pillow! Heed no nightly noise! Fear no grey willow' – in itself almost a lullaby!

Addendum to Tom and the Cycle of Nature

One point I omitted to mention with regard to Tom's dealing with the Barrow-wight is a comment made by Hammond & Scull in the *LOTR Companion* with regard to the Barrow-wight's chant:

Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone:
never more to wake on stony bed,
never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead.
In the black wind the stars shall die,
and still on gold here let them lie,
till the dark lord lifts his hand
over dead sea and withered land.

They comment (*Companion* p. 143 entry 141 (1:152))

Quote

'The wight's incantation, looking to the triumph of the 'dark lord' recalls the oath of the Orcs of Morgoth in *The Lay of Leithian* (written in the mid-1920's to 1931 published in *The Lays of Beleriand* p.230)

Death to light, to love!
Cursed be moon and stars above!
May darkness everlasting old

that waits outside in surges cold
drown Manwe, Varda, and the sun!
May all in hatred be begun,
and all in evil ended be,
in the moaning of the endless Sea!

End Quote

Color Code:

Blue – Barrow-wight

Black -Orcs

In both verses the opening lines deal with death:

Cold be hand and heart and bone,
Death to light, to love!

In both the Sun, Moon, and Stars – Valarian creations are cursed and made to fail
never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead.

In the black wind the stars shall die,

Cursed be moon and stars above!...

drown Manwe, Varda, and the sun!

and in both the Dark lord - at the end - rules over an abomination of desolation, in which the sea –
Ulmo's kingdom - is also made sterile:

till the dark lord lifts his hand

over dead sea and withered land.

and all in evil ended be,
in the moaning of the endless Sea!

It is also interesting to compare the Wight's desolate **incantation** and final lines:

till the dark lord lifts his hand

over dead sea and withered land.

with Tom's

till the world is mended.

a perfect statement of opposites, as indeed is the very way in which Tom **sings his song** - almost as
'nonsensical as his 'Hey dol! Merry dol!':

Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!

and the Wight **wails its incantation**, demonstrating the life-force of the former and the death-wish of the latter.

In *Tom Bombadil and the Medieval Hierarchy –The Great Chain of Being -2*

Thursday April 13 2006 at 20:40, posted earlier in this thread, I quoted

Now let the song begin! Let us sing together
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,
Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water:
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter!

from *FOTR-The Old Forest* and –heavily borrowing from my good friend Osse said:

This builds a chain of natural things with Tom and Goldberry at the base, supporting. Indeed taking Tolkien's mythos into account, the list here starts with that which is most manufactured even though seeming natural (the sun, the moon, and stars, which were created by the Valar as told at the start of *The Silmarillion*) and progresses through those elements that are less directly created by the Valar, thus

implying that Tom and Goldberry are the 'least' created elements – therefore the most natural, the most wholly Middle Earth related.

And I went on to say:

“And the concepts of ‘degree’, ‘harmony’, ‘order’, ‘balance’ are all here, creating what Jane Chance so aptly calls ‘the Middle-earth equivalent of the medieval Chain of Being’.”

Now look again at the Barrow-wights incantation, and interlace it with Tom’s paen to the natural order, the Great Chain of **Being** – and the concepts of **degree**, ‘harmony’, ‘order’, ‘balance’ and the celebration of life. See how everything that Tom sees as part of life the Barrow-wight’s incantation seeks to extinguish, **upsetting** ‘degree’, ‘harmony’, ‘order’, ‘balance’ and replacing it with **dead sea and withered land** replacing it, as it were, with a ‘Chain of **Unbeing**’.

Color Code

Blue –Tom Bombadil

Black – Barrow-wight

Now let the song begin! Let us sing together
Of **sun**, **stars**, **moon** and mist, rain and cloudy weather,

Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone:

never more to wake on stony bed,
never, till the **Sun fails** and the **Moon is dead**.

Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,

In the **black wind** the **stars shall die**,
and still on gold here let them lie

Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water:
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter!

till the dark lord lifts his hand
over dead sea and withered land.

The juxtaposition only re-emphasizes the paen to life of Tom and the incantation to death and the grave of the Barrow –wight- of the Great Chain of **Being** and of the **dead sea and withered land** of extinction – the ‘Chain of **Unbeing**’ - the complete inversion of the natural order.



Tom and the Nature of Power

1- Setting the Context

In a letter of 3 April 1887 to Bishop Mandell Creighton, the eminent Victorian ecclesiastical historian, Lord Acton, equally famous as the planner and editor of the Cambridge Modern History, wrote words - often misquoted - that have subsequently been used so often that they are now somewhat clichéd - but none the less true for that:

‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.... There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.’

Like Tolkien, Acton was a devout Roman Catholic, although unlike Tolkien his loyalty was severely tested by the ultramontane demands of the late 19th century papacy under Pius IX which introduced the concept of papal infallibility and caused a number of leading Roman catholic ecclesiastical scholars and historians to break away from the Church. Acton was not one of them, although he fiercely contested the doctrine espoused by Pius IX and his followers.

One cannot say with any certainty that Tolkien knew of Acton’s historical writings - he was only ten when Acton died in 1902, but that quote would almost assuredly have been known to him, and its sentiments, at least those of the first sentence:

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely

would have struck a powerful chord in him.

In talking about her book, *The Battle for Middle Earth*, Fleming Rutledge, a female Protestant Episcopalian priest comments:

The book {LOTR} is about the way that evil (understood as power over others) has the capacity to insinuate its way into the hearts and souls of absolutely everyone. Not even Gandalf is immune. That, for me, is the greatness and the subtlety of [LOTR].

Compare the two comments written one hundred or so years apart and in very different contexts:

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men
evil (understood as power over others) has the capacity to insinuate its way into the hearts and souls of absolutely everyone. Not even Gandalf is immune

both see power – control – as having the propensity to evil. To Acton *Power tends to corrupt*, to Rutledge –commenting on LOTR *evil (understood as power over others) has the capacity to insinuate its way into the hearts and souls of absolutely everyone*

Tolkien would have been at one with both comments, for power was something of which he had an innate suspicion. Like Acton and Rutledge – he saw the irresistible corrupting and insinuating effect of power {– which equates to evil in LOTR- with only one exception –

‘...‘(power’ is an ominous and sinister word in all these tales, except as applied to the gods. {Letter #131}}

even when it was used for good, as Boromir and Denethor purported they would do, as indeed, did Saruman:

‘For we are attempting to conquer Sauron with the Ring. And we shall (it seems) succeed. But the penalty is, as you will know, to breed new Saurons, and slowly turn Men and Elves into Orcs. Not that in real life things are as clear cut as in a story and we started out with a great many Orcs on our side... {Letter #66}

Tolkien’s concern with the dangers of power and control in LOTR was very much a reflection of his view of those same two things in the real world. In **Letter #52** he wrote:

‘My political opinions lean more and more to Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning **abolition of control** not whiskered men with bombs) – or to ‘unconstitutional’ Monarchy. {my bold emphasis}

He was concerned with the emergence of ‘*Theyocracy*’ - the depersonalization of those in power by lack of reference to them as individuals, and the emergence of the anonymous – and thus unaccountable – *they*, and he decried the personalization of the word ‘*State*’ - as if it had an actual living existence as opposed to being:

‘the inanimate realm of England...a thing that has neither power, rights, nor mind.’ {ibid}

And he argued that:

‘the most improper job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to take it on), is **bossing other men**. Not one in a million is fit for it, and **least of all those who seek the opportunity**. {ibid – my bold emphasis}

bossing other men – few are fit for it **least of all those who seek the opportunity**

Consider Tolkien’s comments with regard to Saruman’s proposal to Gandalf:

‘We may join with that Power.....and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. **We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring many evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose. Knowledge, Rule, Order, all the things we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends.**’ {FOTR- *The Council of Elrond*- my bold emphasis}

Saruman, who lusts for power both exemplifies the dictum of Lord Acton - *Power tends to corrupt*, but also – given that he is an aspirant to power -the One -rather than a possessor of, also that of Adlai Stevenson – the US Statesman who in 1963, giving a twist to Acton’s dictum said:

Power corrupts, but lack of power corrupts absolutely!

And of course, that lack of power corrupting absolutely is perfectly exemplified in Saruman's mean-spirited decline into 'Sharkey' the 'Chief' in *ROTK The Scouring of the Shire* who instead of principalities and kingdoms 'rules' over:

'ugly new houses all along Pool Side,'

and foolish Ted Sandyman and his new mill:

full o' wheels and outlandish contraptions.' *{ibid}*

As Tolkien observes in **Letter #75**:

'There is the tragedy and despair of all machinery laid bare. Unlike art which is content to create a new secondary world in the mind, it attempts to actualize desire, and so create power in this World; and that cannot really be done with any real satisfaction. Labour-saving machinery only creates endless and worse labour. And in addition to this fundamental disability of a creature, is added the Fall, which makes our devices not only fail of their desire but turn to new and horrible evil.

And Tolkien too, with his portrayal of Mordor, reflects his distaste and distrust of: power and control exemplified by the centralized State – or - in LOTR terms - *will*:

'the State-God and Marshal This or That as its High Priest' **{Letter #183}**

ruling over 'ant communities' **{Letter #52}**

But he recognized that the ultimate domination inherent in such control tragically can arise from a good root:

'The Enemy in successive forms is always 'naturally' concerned with sheer Domination, and so the Lord of magic and machines; **but the problem: that this frightful evil can and does arise from an apparently good root, the desire to benefit the world- and others – speedily and according to the benefactor's own plans - is a recurrent motive.**{Letter #131 my bold emphasis}.

However he makes it very clear that while:

'You can make the Ring into an allegory of our own time if you like: an allegory of the inevitable fate that waits for all attempts to defeat evil power by power. But that is only because all power magical or mechanical does always so work. **{Letter #109 – my emphasis and underline}**

his is **not in any way an allegory of his times** – nor is it:

'about JRRT at all, and is at no point an attempt to allegorize his experience of life – for that is what the objectifying of his subjective experience in a tale must mean, if anything.' **{Letter #183}**

Insofar as his real-life concern with power and control is reflected in his epic masterpiece it is because that's the way it was, and is, both in reality and fiction - a universal absolute.

all power magical or mechanical does always so work in either ME or RL.

Given the above context, then, it is not surprising that - in talking of Tom to Naomi Mitchison - his proof - reader for LOTR – he wrote:

I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function. **{Letter #144}**

For one of the many layers of the onion that we are peeling is Tolkien's use of Tom - and his *persona* - to act as a comment on and a contrast to power and control in LOTR **and R** - both beneficent and malefic.

Tom and the Nature of Power -2 – Justice Shall Be Done

Before we can fully understand how Tolkien used Tom to comment on the use of power and control we need to have an overview of a number of aspects that influenced both Tolkien's approach to control- as expressed by war, and the attitude of him and his peer group to the concept of a **Just War**, and **Pacifism**. Some Readers may find this section heavy going, but I would ask you to bear with it, as it is indeed integral to comprehending the very complex approach Tolkien adopted towards power and control both in RL and in LOTR.

War is the ultimate weapon of control- the imposition by force of one will upon another. That imposition, of course, does not have to be simply by physical force, it can be – as in Sauron's case, through the existence of the One and the Nine Rings of Power, be an imposition of one overwhelming will upon

other wills, but even when it takes this form it is also usually accompanied by or reinforced with physical power - as it was in the Ring Wars.

And in either form it can be weighed in the balance and deemed to be a **just** or an **unjust** war.

When Aragorn and the Captains of the West arrive before the Black Gate (*ROTK-The Black Gate Opens*), their heralds:

stood out and sent their voices up over the battlement of Mordor.

'Come forth!, they cried'. "Let the Lord of the Black Land come forth! **Justice shall be done upon him.** For **wrongfully he has made war upon Gondor** and wrested its lands. Therefore the king of Gondor demands that **he should atone for his evils**, and depart then for ever. Come forth!' {my bold emphasis]

The phrases **Justice shall be done**, **wrongfully he has made war**, **atone for his evils**, go right to the heart of the matter of war as waged in Middle Earth and indeed, in Real Life, and Tolkien, medievalist, Catholic, soldier, and myth-maker was well aware of this. Without in any way **intruding** his own particular experiences into his masterwork he could properly say - as he does in **Letter #163** that he is a writer:

whose instinct is to cloak such self-knowledge as he has, and such criticisms of life as he knows it, **under mythical and legendary dress...**

And this was perfectly valid because:

In a larger sense, I suppose it is impossible to write any 'story' that is not allegorical in proportion as it 'comes to life'; **since each of us is an allegory embodying in a particular tale and clothed in the garments of time and place, universal truth and everlasting life.** {my bold emphasis and underline}

And part of that **universal truth** for him and many others was the concept of a '**Just War.**'

The Concept of a Just War

The classic Medieval exposition of the concept of the '**Just War**' (*jus ad bellum*) was that set out by St. Thomas Aquinas, but it had, as did so much Medieval moral philosophy, an Augustinian pedigree.

Aquinas laid down three main conditions that had to be satisfied for a '**Just War**' (*jus ad bellum*) and, other legalists and moral philosophers developed both these and conditions for the **conduct** of a just war (*jus in bello*).

Aquinas's three conditions can be summarized as follows:

In order for a war to be just, three things are necessary.

First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of a private individual to declare war, because he can seek for redress of his rights from the tribunal of his superior. Moreover it is not the business of a private individual to summon together the people, which has to be done in wartime. And as the care of the common weal is committed to those who are in authority, it is their business to watch over the common weal of the city, kingdom or province subject to them. And just as it is lawful for them to have recourse to the sword in defending that common weal against internal disturbances, when they punish evil-doers, according to the words of the Apostle (Rm. 13:4): "He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil"; **so too, it is their business to have recourse to the sword of war in defending the common weal against external enemies.** Hence it is said to those who are in authority (Ps. 81:4):

"Rescue the poor: and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner"; and for this reason Augustine says (Contra Faust. xxii, 75): "The natural order conducive to peace among mortals demands that the power to declare and counsel war should be in the hands of those who hold the supreme authority."

Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault. Wherefore Augustine says (Questions. in Hept., qu. x, super Jos.): "A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly."

Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil. Hence Augustine says (De Verb. Dom. [*The

words quoted are to be found not in St. Augustine's works, but Can. Apud. Caus. xxiii, qu. 1}): "True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, of punishing evil-doers, and of uplifting the good." For it may happen that the war is declared by the legitimate authority, and for a just cause, and yet be rendered unlawful through a wicked intention. Hence Augustine says (Contra Faust. xxii, 74): "The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things, all these are rightly condemned in war." {my bold emphasis and underline}

Conditions for the **conduct** of a **Just War** (*jus in bello*) are: a). **proportionality**: ensuring that the means used in war befit the ends of the just cause and that the ensuing good is not outweighed by bad
b). **discrimination**: prohibiting the killing of noncombatants and/or innocents.

{**'Just War'** Sources:

<http://ethics.acusd.edu/Books/Texts/aquinas/justwar.html>

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy: entry: **just war theory**}

Tolkien and the concept of the Just War

In the light of the *Just War* concepts set out by Aquinas, it is relevant to compare some of the statements on the rightness and wrongness of causes - and thus wars - contained in Tolkien's notes about Auden's review of ROTK **Letters: # 183**

1. If the conflict really is about things properly called *right* and *wrong*, or *good* and *evil*, then the rightness or goodness of one side is not proved or established by the claims of either side; it must depend on values and beliefs above and independent of the particular conflict...That being so, the *right* will remain an inalienable possession of the right side and justify its cause throughout.

2. The rightness of the cause will not justify the actions of its supporters, as individuals, that are morally wicked. But though 'propaganda' may seize on them as proofs that their cause was not in fact 'right', this is not valid. The aggressors are themselves primarily to blame for the evil deeds that proceed from their original violation of justice and the passions that their own wickedness must naturally (by their standards) have been expected to arouse.

3. Good actions by those on the wrong side will not justify their cause.

There may be deeds on the wrong side of heroic courage, or some of a high moral level: deeds of mercy and forbearance. A judge may accord them honour and rejoice to see how some men can rise above the hate and anger of a conflict; even as he may deplore the evil deeds on the right side and be grieved to see how hatred once provoked can drag them down. But this will not alter his judgement as to which side was in the right, nor his assignment of the primary blame for all the evil that followed to the other side.' {my bold and underline}

This approach seems to be very much in line with the precepts that Aquinas set out for the justification of a '*just war*'.

ME and the concept of the Just War.

Now it is not being suggested that LOTR and ME were privy to the Aquinian doctrine of **Just War** (*jus ad bellum*) *per se* but it is suggested that the resonance of that concept - and of the concept of (*jus in bello*) the **conduct** of such a war was very much present.

Justice shall be done, wrongfully he has made war, atone for his evils,

Both in embarking upon war and in the waging of it, Sauron had flagrantly broken all the conditions that governed the concepts of (*jus ad bellum*) and *jus in bello*.

(*jus ad bellum*)

First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged.

Sauron had no legitimate authority to wage war. He was in open rebellion against the Valar and Eru and thus had no 'God-given' authority – an authority that **had** underwritten the earliest Numenorean monarchs. Nor was he legitimately:

defending the common weal against external enemies,
in fact, quite the contrary.

a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault

Sauron had no **just cause**, nor could have because he was not a legitimate sovereign. There were no **wrongs inflicted** upon him by the subjects of any of the states he attacked, nor had anything been **seized unjustly** from him.

it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil

Not even the most polished of 'spin doctors' could argue that Sauron in waging his wars had **rightful intention** or intended **the advancement of good**,

jus in bello

proportionality: ensuring that the means used in war befit the ends of the just cause

'Then among the greater casts there fell another hail, less ruinous but more horrible. All about the streets and lanes behind the Gate it tumbled down, small round shot that did not burn. Burt when men ran to learn what it might be, they cried aloud or wept. For the enemy was flinging into the City all the heads of those who had fallen fighting in Osgiliath, or on the Rammas, or in the fields. They were grim to look on; for though some were crushed and shapeless, and some had been cruelly hewn, yet many had features that could be told, and it seemed they had died in pain; and all were branded with the foul token of the Lidless eye. {ROTK- The Siege of Gondor}

proportionality – Sauron did not know the meaning of the word!

discrimination: prohibiting the killing of noncombatants and/or innocents.

While no specific textual support comes to mind with regard to the precept of discrimination, given the *indiscriminate* way in which the forces of Sauron responded to the rules of war we can safely infer that he failed this test too.

And Tom Bombadil – staying within his self-defined boundaries, took no part in this **Just War** against Sauron!

The Inklings on War

{Source: The Inklings Humphrey Carpenter Part 2 Chapter 3 Thursday Evenings}

In this chapter of his book on The Inklings, using – *inter-alia* – Tolkien's Letters, Warnie Lewis's Diaries, and CS Lewis's letters – HC brilliantly recreates the sort of conversation they might have had regarding WW2. While not the authoritative record of an actual conversation but a compilation of conversations that were had and comments that were made, it reflects accurately enough their attitude towards the legitimacy of WW2 as a 'just war', their rejection of pacifism *per se*, but their understanding of why pacifism was acceptable in defined circumstances. It also deals with their view of the response of victors in war. It also demonstrates - without actually referencing LOTR other than fleetingly - how brilliantly Tolkien captured the moral dilemma facing those involved both in its wars, and those of RL, and how – to use Gandalf's phrase:

You can't fight the Enemy with his own Ring, without turning into an Enemy yourself

N.B. The text is HC's but its presentation has been edited by me.

Tolkien: It seems to me, that in doing what that newspaper article did, we are in spirit doing exactly what the Germans have done. They have declared the Poles and the Jews to be exterminable vermin, utterly subhuman. We now declare that all Germans are snakes, and should be systematically put to death. We have as much right to say that as they have to exterminate the Jews: in other words, no right at all, whatever they may have done.

{Note also the Third of the precepts governing a just war laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas:

The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things, all these are rightly condemned in war."

C S Lewis: Otherwise we will be no better than the Nazis.

Tolkien: Exactly. **As Gandalf often says, you can't fight the Enemy with his own Ring, without turning into an Enemy yourself.** {my bold emphasis}

{Note also Tolkien's comments in **Letter #66**

'For we are attempting to conquer Sauron with the Ring. And we shall (it seems) succeed. But the penalty is, as you will know, to breed new Saurons, and slowly turn Men and Elves into Orcs. Not that in real life things are as clear cut as in a story **and we started out with a great many Orcs on our side** {my bold emphasis}

Warnie Lewis: And it seems to me, that taking what Jack and Tollers were saying only just a little bit further, **you land up in a kind of pacifist state of mind in which you're not going to fight anybody, however wicked and dangerous they are, because you know that potentially you're just as wicked and dangerous yourself.** Now, don't get me wrong: I'm not attacking *real* pacifism, a real hatred of war. The only true pacifists I've met have been professional soldiers - they know too much about the game to be fire-eaters. What I'm attacking is the kind of woolly intellectual pacifism which we've all seen a good deal of. {my bold emphasis}

C S Lewis: Oh, of course. **I don't think any of us is really remotely pacifist in the sense that we're uneasy at taking part in a war. Don't we all believe that it's lawful for a Christian to bear arms when commanded by constituted authority, unless he has a very good reason – which a private person scarcely can have – for believing the war to be unjust?** {my bold emphasis}

Charles Williams: **The notion that the use of physical force against another is always sinful, is based on the belief that the worst possible sin is the taking of physical life. Which I'm sure none of us believes.** {my bold emphasis}

Humphrey Harvard: I'd like to ask Williams **what he *would* regard as the worst possible sin?** {my bold emphasis}

Charles Williams: **The exclusion of love.** {my bold emphasis}

C S Lewis: Certainly war is a dreadful thing. **And I can respect an honest pacifist, though I think he's entirely mistaken.** What I *can't* understand is the sort of *semi*-pacifism you get nowadays **which gives people the idea that though you have to fight, you ought to do it with a long face, as if you were ashamed of it.** {my bold emphasis}

Tolkien: Oh, yes. **And it's a perfectly ridiculous attitude. I find it refreshing to discover at least some young men who have the opposite approach.** I've met several, all of them airmen as it happens, to whom the war has offered the perfect round hole for a round peg- and they only found square holes before the war. What I mean is, **the job of fighting demands a quality of daring and individual prowess in arms** that I'd have thought was a real problem for a war-less world to satisfy. {my bold emphasis}

Warnie Lewis: All right. **You're not any of you supporting pacifism. You say its right to fight Hitler. But you're not in favor of exacting cold-blooded revenge after the war has been won. Is that it?** {my bold emphasis}

{Note also Tolkien's comments in **Letter #96**

'I have just heard the news... Russians 60 miles from Berlin. It does look as if something decisive might happen soon. The appalling destruction and misery of this war mount hourly: destruction of what should be (indeed is) the common wealth of Europe, and the world, if mankind were not so besotted, wealth the loss of which will affect us all, victors or not. **Yet people gloat to hear of the endless lines, 40 miles long, of miserable refugees, women and children pouring West, dying on the way. There seem no bowels of mercy or compassion, no imagination, left in this dark diabolic hour.'** {my bold emphasis}

C S Lewis: **Yes.** {my bold emphasis}

When Warnie Lewis asked the Inklings: **But you're not in favor of exacting cold-blooded revenge after the war has been won. Is that it?** the **Yes** he received from his brother was an answer for all of them. That was how a *just war* should be fought and ended. In that light it is interesting to look at Aragorn's treatment of the defeated allies of Sauron after the demise of their great master and the victory of the West:

'In the days that followed his crowning the king sat on his throne in the hall of the kings and pronounced his judgements. And embassies came from many lands and peoples, from the east and the South, and from the borders of Mirkwood, and from Dunland in the west. And the king pardoned the Easterlings that had given themselves up, and sent them away free, and he made peace with the people of Harad; and the slaves of Mordor he released and gave to them all the lands about lake Nurnen to be their own.'*{ROTK - The Steward And The King}*

Pacifism

In his essay "*Why I Am Not a Pacifist*", *The Weight of Glory* (1949) CS Lewis, picks up, as it were on the comment made by Warnie Lewis's 'Inklings' comment:

you land up in a kind of pacifist state of mind in which you're not going to fight anybody, however wicked and dangerous they are, because you know that potentially you're just as wicked and dangerous yourself

when he writes:

If not the greatest evil, yet war is a great evil. Therefore, we should all like to remove it if we can. But every war leads to another war. The removal of war must therefore be attempted. We must increase by propaganda the number of Pacifists in each nation until it becomes great enough to deter that nation from going to war. This seems to me wild work. **Only liberal societies tolerate Pacifists. In the liberal society, the number of Pacifists will either be large enough to cripple the state as a belligerent, or not. If not, you have done nothing. If it is large enough, then you have handed over the state which does tolerate Pacifists to its totalitarian neighbour who does not. Pacifism of this kind is taking the straight road to a world in which there will be no Pacifists.** {my bold emphasis and underline}

And Tolkien, in commenting on Tom's 'pacifism' in **Letter #144** comes to a similar conclusion:

It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, **but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron.** . {my bold emphasis and underline}

Both Tolkien and Lewis identify the central paradox of the pacifist approach, an approach they do not share, but one that they, and Rivendell, see the value of: Pacifism can only survive in the very world whose course of action for survival - war- it does not approve of!

So, we have Tom **not** supporting a **Just War** (or the ME equivalent of it) and Tom surviving only if the West is victorious in a war that he will not take part in!

'*Curioiser and Curioiser*' as Alice says - but whoever suggested Tom and war or Tolkien's writing on both, were simple matters?

Addendum Note on Tom and the Nature of Power - 2 –Justice Shall Be Done

Please note that I have expanded the previous post on **Justice Shall be Done** to include a section on **Tolkien and the Concept of the Just War**, and, under **The Inklings on War** I have included Aragorn's treatment of the defeated allies of Mordor as an example of Warnie's comment' **But you're not in favor of exacting cold-blooded revenge after the war has been won'**

Tom and the Nature of Power -3 –The View of Rivendell

1. 'I have seen three ages in the West of the world, and many defeats, and many fruitless victories' *Elrond – FOTR - The Council of Elrond*
2. 'Through the ages of the world we have fought the long defeat' {*Galadriel – FOTR - The Mirror of Galadriel*}
3. 'However it's {War} always been going on in different terms, and you and I belong to the ever-defeated never altogether subdued side.' {**Letter #77** to CT}
4. 'The utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, is so staggering to those who have to endure it. And always was (despite the poets) and always will be (despite the propagandists) – **not of course that it has not is and will be necessary to face evil in an evil world.** {**Letter #64** to CT - my bold emphasis}
5. **(which is for all the evil of our own side with large view good against evil)** {**Letter #5** to G B Smith - my bold emphasis}

What is fascinating about the above quotes is that they can apply equally to both ME and RL, thus validating Tolkien's comment that he was one:

'whose instinct is to cloak such self-knowledge as he has, and such criticisms of life as he knows it, **under mythical and legendary dress....** {**Letter #163**, my bold emphasis}

since each of us is an allegory embodying in a particular tale and clothed in the garments of time and place, universal truth and everlasting life. {ibid. my bold emphasis}

But of course, as has been ceaselessly pointed out in a number of Plaza threads, because a book can sustain a viewpoint that might have both a general **and** a specific individual application to a time and place (in Tolkien's case WW1 and WW2) it does not mean that the book is about the particular, as opposed to the general.

It is quite clear from both Tolkien's letters, and, more importantly from the text of LOTR, that he saw the absolute necessity of establishing that the war being fought against Sauron- and indeed his great predecessor, Morgoth, was a just one.

(It is also highly likely that Tolkien applied the same criteria to the war that was being fought in RL as he wrote LOTR.)

Indeed ME is full of examples of the dangers that befall those who engage in an unjust war. The Valar warned the Elves who followed Fëanor and warred against Melkor, that no good would come of it, particularly as they began it with an act of evil - the Kinslaying at Alqualondë.

Fëanor's possessive pride in refusing the Silmarils to revive the Two Trees ultimately led to the Noldorian demise and the Drowning of Beleriand and the loss of much of beauty and value. And Ar-Pharazon fought both a war against Sauron, and then - with Sauron's guileful counsel - effectively a war against the gods- out of pride, a pride which led to the Drowning of Numenor. So the omens for those who fought unjust wars were not propitious.

But, even more importantly, to support so continuously such a struggle, and at such bitter cost in lives, it was critical that the (ME) West should both believe itself to have and be able to demonstrate that it depended on:

values and beliefs above and independent of the particular conflict... That being so, the *right* will remain an inalienable possession of the right side and justify its cause throughout. {**Letter #183**}

and thus

The story is cast in terms of a good side, - and a bad side {**Letter #144**}

Without such **values and beliefs** what would be the moral underwrite for **three ages** of **many defeats, and many fruitless victories**? If one did not have those values and beliefs, why would one 'through the ages of the world have fought the long defeat'? And without those values and beliefs how could one seriously continue to want to 'belong to the ever-defeated never altogether subdued side.'

And even more compellingly, without those values and beliefs how could one face such a challenge knowing **the utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual... so staggering to those**

who have to endure it, and knowing that it was, **is and will be necessary to face evil in an evil world**. But also knowing, that in doing so, we too were tarnished by the very thing we were opposing, but believing that we were fighting a just war, one **which is for all the evil of our own side with large view good against evil**'.

And there is the critical paradox, the fact that in fighting a just war one ran the risk, because of the nature of warfare, of becoming that which one opposed:

you can't fight the Enemy with his own Ring, without turning into an Enemy yourself.

But even that paradox has a finesse – because if – as Warnie Lewis so rightly observed you fear that happening:

you land up in a kind of pacifist state of mind in which you're not going to fight anybody, however wicked and dangerous they are, because you know that potentially you're just as wicked and dangerous yourself

and, as CS Lewis shrewdly observed:

Only liberal societies tolerate Pacifists. **In the liberal society, the number of Pacifists will either be large enough to cripple the state as a belligerent, or not. If not, you have done nothing.**

If it is large enough, then you have handed over the state which does tolerate Pacifists to its totalitarian neighbour who does not. Pacifism of this kind is taking the straight road to a world in which there will be no Pacifists.

Which of course confirms Tolkien's observation that:

Ultimately **only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive.** Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron {Letter #144}

Yet both in RL, and even more significantly in ME, for in a Fairy Story we can go where men in RL fear to tread, Tolkien saw the critical importance of the role and function that Tom fulfilled for both worlds, in representing :

a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war.

Tom and the Nature of Power 4 – The View of Rivendell – (2)

In talking, in **Letter #144** of:

a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war.

Tolkien asserts that:

the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented

Not the view of Elrond - although he clearly is an integral part of any view that Rivendell takes, nor the view of the elves in general, for the comment is not phrased in that way, and certainly not the view of The Council of Elrond. Indeed several members of that Council had no apparent knowledge of Bombadil, Elrond himself had clearly not been in any recently close contact with him, and Erebor, Elrond's chief counsellor clearly misunderstands both the nature of Tom's power and his character. {cf. *FOTR-The Council of Elrond*}

Which is of course why Tolkien uses the term "Rivendell", for Rivendell stands for certain standards and values that are critical to the '*just war*', standards relevant both to ME and RL, and, most importantly, standards that represented a part of Tolkien's own thinking.

In a footnote to **Letter #131** Tolkien tells us what those standards are:

Elrond symbolizes throughout the **ancient wisdom, and his House represents Lore – the preservation in reverent memory of all tradition concerning the good, wise, and beautiful. It is not a scene of action but of reflection.**

And because it - and Elrond too - symbolizes ancient wisdom, and reverentially preserves the tradition of all that is good, wise, and beautiful, it is a place where one reflects – perhaps on '*war and the pity of war*' – not plans campaigns of conquest- although one has to plan campaigns. Which is why Frodo is ultimately so much more at home in Rivendell than Boromir, as he is in Lothlorien. And, most importantly,

it is a place that while believing – ultimately - that what Tom represents can only survive through means that he has eschewed – indeed whose need he cannot now even understand – also knows that it is essential – if the concept of a just war is to survive in the world – that thinking such as Tom's

a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war

– is thinking that has to be respected, and protected – the reverse - as it were - of the paradox that faces the pacifist.

And it is in Rivendell too, that *Vilya* – the Ring of Air resides – borne by Elrond- and (as my good friend *Parmardil* pointed out in his commentary on the Three in the *Rings of Power* threads:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive2/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=18673

Air is the element of Manwe, the lord of the Valar and probably for this motive Vilya is the mightiest of the rings. We do not hear anything of its powers: the only (very thin) reference, perhaps, to its action is that in Imladris, where Elrond its keeper, dwelt, "the stars of heaven most brightly shone." (*Silmarillion, Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age*).

"the stars of heaven most brightly shone" reinforcing, perhaps, the celestial beauty inherent in Rivendell's values of goodness, wisdom, and beauty, values finding their most complete expression in Valinor and in the being of Manwe:

"the first of all kings; lord of the realm of Arda, and ruler of all that dwell therein {*The Silmarillion-Valaquenta*}

and thus linking Rivendell's values with the values of 'heaven'.

The paragraph in **Letter #146** that talks of Tom's **natural pacifist view** is important too for the ME and RL philosophy that Tolkien sets out- for it identifies aspects of his own personal philosophy that both align with, but also contradict, the philosophy he gives to Tom Bombadil. And of course, too, in the values of Rivendell and the character of Tom Bombadil – we have exemplified one of the three main functions of the fairy story that Tolkien set out in his 1939 lecture/essay *On Fairy Stories* – that of **Recovery** – of **regaining of a clear view**.

Rivendell **is not a scene of action but of reflection**, both for LOTR and its characters - and for us too.

Thus in that paragraph in **Letter #146** are summed up both the personal philosophy of Tolkien, the value system of the **good side** of ME, and **Recovery** – the **regaining of a clear view** for us.

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

(1) The story is cast in terms of a good side, - and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship

By describing the story as **cast in terms of a good side, - and a bad side** Tolkien is not advancing a simplistic black versus white argument. We have seen previously that both in RL and ME he was only too aware that there can be and are Orcs on both sides! Rather in this comment he is stating that those who have adopted the standards of a just war (explained in detail in the two preceding threads), are able to claim the term **good** and those who reject such standards are rightly labeled **bad**.

What is very revealing is the comment **tyranny against kingship**. Throughout his *Legendarium* there runs a permanent theme- that while there might be- indeed are – bad kings – the basic concept of kingship is that of the good steward – holding in trust from 'God' the duty of care for his people.

Recall the first of Aquinas's precepts for a just war:

"He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil"; so too, it is their business to have recourse to the sword of war in defending the common weal against external enemies. Hence it is said to those who are in authority (Ps. 81:4): "Rescue the poor: and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner"

And, most importantly, the **legitimate** king is a healer – and that healing power comes ultimately from the 'Gods.' Legitimacy and healing are significant – Aragorn has both – and in his own person legitimizes the fight against Sauron – the fight of **kingship against tyranny** to invert Tolkien's phrase.

These fundamental concepts of **legitimacy** as opposed to **tyranny** and **healing** as opposed to **wounding** – in the way both Morgoth and Sauron have wounded ME and **Nature!** are best summed up in the following extracts from two separate threads. One of the extracts is from posts of my good friend *Mrs. Maggot* the other from my own posts. Both extracts have been conflated – they are from a number of separate posts.

Legitimacy

Tolkien - like C. S. Lewis - considered the concept of monarchy to be the closest thing on earth to man's relationship with God (the "ultimate" King). Hence, a "Christian" King would be the ultimate good for his people (King Arthur, Aslan, King Elessar). Therefore, Tolkien's Aragorn is a very "christological figure". Yes, he has self doubts (especially as can be seen in FOTR), but he has *no* doubt about his ultimate destiny - *if* circumstances permit him to put forth an open claim to the throne, something that had not been possible thus far in his line for various reasons that do not obtain to this thread.

Actually, the idea here goes beyond "kings" and into the concept of the legitimate right to rule. From the beginning, Melkor wishes to rule where he has no right to do so. The result of this usurpation of power is tragic and evil. Sauron continues in his master's footsteps and Saruman also falls into evil in his desire to "rule" where he has been sent to "serve". Even Denethor's eventual evil end is the result of his desire to reign as king, albeit under the name of Steward. We never know when he fell from grace and betrayed his oath to rule in the king's stead "until his return", but we do know by the time he and Gandalf meet in Minas Tirith before the city is besieged, Denethor spurns Aragorn (that Ranger from the North) and denies the legitimacy of his line which he declares is "bereft of dignity". When Gandalf asks him what he would have instead, he demands that things be as they were; that is, that he, Denethor, be allowed to rule as a king - albeit under the name of Steward - and that his *rightful* son (the dead Boromir) rule after his death. Once Denethor has betrayed his oath and sought to rule illegitimately, the only end can be an evil one - and it is.

Mrs Maggot {*The Concept of Kingship*:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive2/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=116897&PagePosition=3}

Healing

The concept of the *king as healer* is a concept that has a very ancient RL history as well as a ME one. The king as healer - taken to extremes - in one aspect meant that *the king must die* that his blood would make the land fecund and heal its woes.

In a less extreme context it meant that the true king was a healer - and in Christian monarchies this was sometimes tied in with the 'divine right of kings' - kings derived their powers (including their healing ones) from God.

Tolkien, links the healing aspect of Aragorn - with the role of the priest-kings of Numenor - which in turn links into RL with the concept of the 'priest-king' who was appointed by God and had the hands of a healer. And that concept is available only to Numenor and its Gondorian successors - to no other human monarchy in ME.

That concept is, I think, reinforced by *maiarian mans* post in which he points out that Aragorn goes back to a founder-king - Elros appointed by the Valar - angelic beings - close to ERU - and thus the concept of the king appointed by God - as in medieval RL - is echoed in ME.

The Numenoreans had worshipped Eru - led by the king. Only the king could speak on the hallowed summit of the Meneltarma. After the Fall of Numenor the Kingdoms in Exile continued this tradition bringing with them - "...the knowledge of the True God"; (**Letter #156**) Mindolluin was a hallowed place, like Meneltarma, only approachable by the king- "where he had anciently offered thanks and praise on behalf of the people." (ibid)

.....But the 'hallow' of God and the Mountain had perished, and there was no real substitute. Also when the 'Kings' came to an end there was no equivalent to a 'priesthood': the two being identical in Numenorean ideas." (ibid)

The 'priest -king' concept of RL is thus reflected in the Numenorian concept of king/priest, which the Kingdoms in Exile continued.

So Tolkien limits the healership to the Numenorian priest-kings and their successors and thus Theoden and Eomer are excluded because their kingship had never followed in this priest-king tradition.

And, of course, they are not descended from Luthien.

I think Tolkien, through the particular utterances of *loreth* intended this resonance from RL to reinforce his concept of 'the king as healer', because it fitted into the myth he was trying to create - in which the 'king as healer' would - as in other myths- play an integral part.

And of course, Aragorn as 'healer' has a far wider remit than just the healing of physical and psychological wounds. His marriage 'heals' the long -sundered lines of the Half-Elven, and as King Elessar he heals the 'wounds' of ME by re-establishing the rule of law and the King's Peace.

halfir {Aragorn and Healing

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=61738&PagePosition=2

Tom, of course, existed before any of these human polities had been established – indeed – he 'was here before the kings... When the Elves passed westward, Tom was here already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless – before the Dark Lord came from Outside'. {FOTR - In the House of Tom Bombadil}

But, even though he has renounced power and control, he can still distinguish between natural and unnatural- between good and bad – between, *before the seas were bent* and after; between the *fearless dark under the stars* before its pollution when *the Dark Lord came from Outside*'.

And even though he has withdrawn from that world, perhaps he too, is waiting for the king to come again: 'And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, **waiting perhaps for a change of days**, and he will not step beyond them' {FOTR - The Council of Elrond}

Was it just a '*great expanse of years behind them*' {FOTR - Fog on The Barrow Downs}

that the hobbits glimpsed on the Barrow-Downs when- released from the wight's power by Tom as he tells them of those who still:

'go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in loneliness, guarding from evil things folk that are heedless'? (ibid)

or was it also a 'foretelling' and the last man they saw in their vision

'one with a star on his brow' (ibid)

was both the *once and future king Isildur/Aragorn* and was this what Gandalf meant by speaking of Tom:

waiting perhaps for a change of days?

Tom and the Nature of Power - 5 - The View of Rivendell –(3)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) **moderated freedom with consent against compulsion** that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but **both sides in some degree**,

conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

We have already seen, from the previous post, why Tolkien made a very clear distinction between tyranny and kingship and how- as *Mrs. Maggot's* seminal post shows:

Tolkien - like C. S. Lewis - considered the concept of monarchy to be the closest thing on earth to man's relationship with God (the "ultimate" King). Hence, a "Christian" King would be the ultimate good for his people (King Arthur, Aslan, King Elessar).

and why both Morgoth's and Sauron's governance 'qualified' for the term tyranny:

Actually, the idea here goes beyond "kings" and into the concept of the legitimate right to rule. From the beginning, Melkor wishes to rule where he has no right to do so. The result of this usurpation of power is tragic and evil. Sauron continues in his master's footsteps....

And the *stewardship* that the legitimate king exercised – for he was holding his rule in trust from 'God' meant that his subjects accepted **moderated freedom with consent**.

(2) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power

Freedom for Tolkien resided not in the unbridled license of the individual to do what he or she wanted to but in '*freedom under the law*' for without the law there could be no freedom.

This belief is perfectly captured in the *Prologue* to *FOTR* when Tolkien writes:

'...there had been no king for nearly a thousand years, and even the ruins of King's Norbury were covered with grass. Yet the Hobbits still said of the wild folk and wicked things (such as trolls that they had not heard of the king. **For they attributed to the king of old all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules (as they said) both ancient and just.**' {my bold emphasis and underline}

moderated freedom with consent – the keeping of the laws through individual free will, because they were seen to be just.

Tolkien contrasts this with **compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power**. It could well be, in times of crisis, that basic rules of law have to be suspended to allow the optimum response to an enemy threatening the commonweal (a siren voice we hear all too often today) **but** once that that has passed the old rule of law must be reinstated.

With Sauron, and Saruman, and even Denethor, (cf. Letter #183) compulsion was the order of the day- not to achieve any 'good' end – however much Saruman's honeyed words might 'spin' - but an end in itself.

Sauron took for himself the title of:

'King of Kings and Lord of the World' {Letter #131}

thus arousing the ire and the jealousy of Ar-Pharazon - who himself had betrayed the legitimacy of his own kingship.

And:

'Sauron desired to be God-King, and was held to be this by his servants; if he had been victorious he would have demanded divine honour from all rational creatures and absolute temporal power over the whole world.' {Letter #183} –

compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power!

Perhaps the best example of **compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power** is given by Saruman when he tries to persuade Gandalf to join him in aiding - *pro tem* - Mordor:

'A new Power is arising... It's victory is at hand... As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its course and control it. We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purposes: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. **There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means.**' {FOTR - The Council of Elrond – my bold emphasis}

That last line of Saruman's must leave our current political spin doctors gasping for breath in admiration! **Knowledge, Rule, Order** fine words, but Saruman's real intent, the whole thrust and purpose of the being he has now become are not summed up in those words but in this line:

'The Ruling Ring! If we could command that, then **the Power would pass to us.** *{ibid-my bold emphasis and underline}*

- **compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power** – indeed!

And where does Tom fit into all these high politics, Tom who has withdrawn into his own small area within invisible bounds that he has set?

Tom who has tolerated OMW and the Barrow-wight within those boundaries. Tom who is '**the Master.**' Yet Tom who sees that:

'all things living or growing in the land belong to themselves'.

Tom himself in the great scheme of nature too is a **legitimate king** - it is not happenstance that he is described as:

'**crowned with autumn leaves.**' {FOTR-In The House of Tom Bombadil}

There is freedom under the law in Tom's 'kingdom' too – the law of nature which demands that all things be free and that nothing may impede the freedom of anything else **unless** it offends the *lex naturalis* that Tom represents. Which is why Tom inhibits OMW when he captures the hobbits but does not punish him, but banishes the wight because he is both *unnatural* and has sought to impose a totally improper control for the '*dark lord*' has not yet '*lifted his hand over dead sea and withered land*' – his time has not yet come.

Tom too - in his own particular way - represents:

tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power

Tom and the Nature of Power - 6 - The View of Rivendell –(4)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, **tyranny against kingship**. (1) **moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power**, (2) and so on; but **both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control.** (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) **then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless.** (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

(3) but **both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control**

Even those like Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel, who see the impossibility of using Sauron's Ring to defeat Sauron, for they would simply replace one Dark Lord with another, still represent – albeit *sotto voce* aspects of control that the One represents *fortissimo*.

In a web article on Tolkien Stephen Hart comments:

Looking back on Tolkien's life, we find his conservatism was rooted in a proper suspicion of power and the motives of those who seek to wield it. This suspicion infuses every line of "The Lord of the Rings," in which the good characters are defined by their wariness of power, while the bad are invariably eager to seize it

<http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/feature/2004/02/28/lord/index.html>

{In fact Hart overlooks the fact that while wary of the One, in using the Three the Keepers are – to a degree – falling prey to the very thing they abhor in Sauron- a point Tolkien was only too aware of}.

Tolkien was very uncomfortable with control - for ultimately it implied - as with the One – slavery - the very negation of freedom and free will. In a sense this reflects the very 'Englishness' of Tolkien: from Boudicca, through Magna Carta, through Elizabeth the First proclaiming '*I would not open windows into men's souls,*' through the independent country gentlemen of the 18th century parliaments, to William Connor Magee – former Archbishop of York – in the House of Lords debate on temperance declaring he would prefer *England free than England compulsorily sober*, {Magee was actually Irish! 😊}, down to today's English aversion to identity cards carried by virtually all their EEC counterparts, there has been and remains – almost as if it is in the 'soil' and the 'soul' of the country - the same suspicion that Tolkien had towards power and central control.

And he discerned very clearly that even those who were fighting on the side of good demonstrated - even if unconsciously - a sly yielding to that which they condemned - Power and Control as exemplified by Sauron and the One.

We have seen in an earlier post how in **Letter #52** Tolkien described himself as: '*leaning more to anarchy or unconstitutional monarchy*' or, in other words, '*the abolition of control*'.

and:

'I am *not* a 'democrat' only because 'humility' and equality are spiritual principles corrupted by the attempt to mechanize and formalize them, with the result that we get not universal smallness and humility, but universal greatness and pride, until some Orc gets hold of a ring of power - and then we get and are getting slavery.' **Letter #186**

And he fully recognized the perils that beset anyone who used power - whether with good or bad intent. It was indeed a poisoned chalice.

'I am not a reformer nor an 'embalmer'! I am not a 'reformer' (by exercise of power) since it seems doomed to Sarumanism. But 'embalming' has its own punishments. **Letter #154**

It was through the apparently positive aspects of 'control' that Sauron – as Annatar – Lord of Gifts - ensnared the elven smiths of Eregion and persuaded them to make the Great Rings of Power.

The Elves represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men. That is: they have a devoted love of the physical world, and a desire to observe it and understand it for its own sake and as 'other'; – sc. As a reality derived from God in the same degree as themselves – not as a material for use or as a power-platform. They also possess a 'subcreational' or artistic faculty of great excellence... Mere change as such is not represented as 'evil': it is the unfolding of the story and so to refuse this is of course against the design of God. But the Elvish weakness is in these terms naturally to regret the past, and to become unwilling to face change: as if a man were to hate a very long book still going on, and wished to settle down in a favourite chapter. Hence they fell in a measure to Sauron's deceptions: they desired some 'power' over things as they are (which is quite distinct from art), to make their particular will to preservation effective: to arrest change, and keep things always fresh and fair. The 'Three Rings' were 'unsullied', because this object was in a limited way good, it included the healing of the real damages of malice, as well as the mere arrest of change; and the Elves did not desire to dominate

other wills, nor to usurp all the world to their particular pleasure {Letter #181 my bold emphasis and underline}

Even though the elves partly fell for Sauron's deceptions they did so without an intent to dominate other wills, or to usurp the world to their pleasure. Although they did wrong, in the creation of the rings, they did not do evil, and the countervailing value of *The Three* in including:

'the healing of the real damages of malice,'

meant that *The Three* were unsullied- without stain or evil. Nevertheless – as Tolkien observed **any embalming' has its own punishments** and to refuse change - **is of course against the design of God.'**

So even the Three – not evil, unsullied, and unstained, still had the inherent danger of power and control. {For opposing views of the nature of the Three in terms of 'evil' or 'unsullied' see:

The Elven Rings were Evil {Eladar}

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive4/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=173352&PagePosition=5

The Unsullied Three {halfir}

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive4/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=175913

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive4/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=178870&PagePosition=4

And it is into this complicated scenario that we must now turn to Tom and his approach to power and control, for, unlike Sauron and the forces of evil, or Gandalf and the forces of light, Tom has **taken 'a vow of poverty', and renounced control.**

Tom and the Nature of Power - 7 - The View of Rivendell –(5)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, **beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}**

(4) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing,

In **Letter #144** Tolkien tells us – *inter alia* – that Tom can be compared to one who has:

taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control

and who takes **delight in things for themselves** – without reference to himself,

watching, observing, and to some extent knowing – acting almost like a disinterested bystander-eager to see what is going on but not to influence it in any way.

Indeed- in an earlier – rejected - draft Treebeard had made a very similar comment about Tom:

He laughs and does not interfere. (1) He never made anything go wrong, but he never cured anything, either. (2) Why, it is all the difference between walking in the fields and trying to keep a garden; (3) between passing the time of a day to a sheep on the hillside, or even maybe

sitting down and studying sheep till you know what they feel about grass, and being a shepherd.

(4) {HOME 7 *The Treason of Isengard* – Chptr XX11 'Treebeard' my bold emphasis}

(1). 'He laughs and does not interfere.'; Tom's laughter - his merriment, has been with us since the King Bonhedig fragment of the 1920's. His laughter is at the joy of being – there is nothing malicious in it. **BUT** he does not interfere. As in the 1934 *Adventures* and LOTR -*The Old Forest* and *Fog on The Barrow Downs* - he **restrains** behavior that is 'against nature'; OMW, the Barrow-wight, and that impedes his freedom but he does not exact any punishment against its perpetrators, he 'does not interfere.'

(2) 'He never made anything go wrong, but he never cured anything, either.' Tom's 'disconnection'; from the world he is in, his lack of engagement with it, his role as dis-interested bystander is strongly emphasized here - as it is in LOTR (cf. *FOTR-The Council of Elrond*). Because he is **beyond** such engagement - a point we will return to later.

(3) **Why, why, it is all the difference between walking in the fields and trying to keep a garden.** {cf **The Entwives – desire in their control – gardens**, below}.

This is a fascinating line, contrasting as it does – implicitly - Tom and the Entwives – **joy in the being of things for themselves** and **desire in their control**:

Tom - Joy in the being of things for themselves

Now let the song begin! Let us sing together
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,
Reds by the shady pool, lilies on the water'

{*FOTR - The Old Forest*}

'The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong to themselves.

{*FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*}

The Entwives - desire in their control

They did not desire to speak to these things; but they wished them to hear and obey what was said to them. The Entwives **ordered them to grow according to their wishes**, and bear leaf and fruit **to their liking**... for the Entwives desired **order**, and plenty, **and peace (by which they meant that things should remain where they had set them.)** So the Entwives made **gardens** to live in...' {*TT - Treebeard* my bold emphasis and underline}

Compare Tom's approach- as seen in both his lines and Goldberry's description of him above, with the Entwives approach:

**ordered them to grow according to their wishes
to their liking**

and peace (by which they meant that things should remain where they had set them.)

and remember the words of Saruman:

Knowledge, Rule, Order {*FOTR - The Council of Elrond*}

Control is a primrose path!

(4) **between passing the time of a day to a sheep on the hillside, or even maybe sitting down and studying sheep till you know what they feel about grass, and being a shepherd.**

Consider also, with regard to (4) above **Letter #153**:

he is then an 'allegory', or **an exemplar**, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science:- **the spirit that desires knowledge of other things**, their history and nature, **because they are 'other'** and wholly independent of the enquiring mind, a spirit coeval with the rational mind, **and entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge**: Zoology and Botany not Cattle-breeding or Agriculture. **Even the Elves hardly show this**: they are primarily artists.

the spirit that desires knowledge of other things... because they are 'other'... and entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge:

Knowledge is not power to Tom, knowledge **is**.

Compare Tom's approach **entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge** with that of the Elves, particularly the Noldorian elves:

'The particular branch of the High-Elves concerned, the Noldor or Loremasters, were always on the side of 'science and technology', as we should call it: they wanted to have the knowledge that Sauron genuinely had, and those of Eregion refused the warnings of Gilgalad and Elrond. The particular 'desire' of the Eregion Elves – an 'allegory' if you like of a love of machinery, and technical devices – is also symbolized by their special friendship with the Dwarves of Moria.' **{Letter #153}**

But perhaps Treebeard's simple analogy tells it most powerfully, like it really is:

between passing the time of a day to a sheep on the hillside, or even maybe sitting down and studying sheep till you know what they feel about grass, and being a shepherd.

BUT and we mustn't forget this, unlike Tom, Treebeard too was a **shepherd!**

'We keep off strangers and the foolhardy, and we train and we teach, we walk and we weed.

We are tree-herds, we old Ents'. {TT - Treebeard}

Tom and the Nature of Power - 8 - The View of Rivendell –(6)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) **{Letter #144}**

(5) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless

At The Council of Elrond (*FOTR*) when Erebor asks Gandalf, of Tom:

'But within those bounds nothing seems to dismay him...Would he not take the Ring and keep it there, forever harmless?'

Gandalf replies:

'No... not willingly. He might do so, if all the free folk of the world begged him, **but he would not understand the need**. And if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. **Such things have no hold on his mind**.' {my emphasis}

which aligns perfectly with point (5) from **Letter #144**.

Erebor misses the point. Tom's immunity to the One arises because he has renounced power and control, 'taken a vow of poverty'. Thus it is illogical to ask him to take the Ring and keep it harmless because the One's lack of control over him is precisely because he does not control anything or fight for anyone. His immunity to its powers is dependent on his non-alignment to anything or anyone.

And we have seen from *In the House of Tom Bombadil* {*FOTR*} the nil effect of the One on Tom. Indeed it is not Tom, but the Ring that vanishes:

'Tom laughed again, and then spun the ring in the air - and it vanished with a flash.'

Nor indeed, when Frodo seeks to ensure the returned Ring is indeed the One, and puts it on, can he deceive Tom's 'seeing look in his shining eyes'. Although the other Hobbits cannot see Frodo he is

perfectly visible to Tom – the Ring's snares, and delusions and illusions, have no hold over him, for **Tom Bombadil is master**. But he is master **because** he has renounced power and control.

One is reminded of a line from *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* - (1934 and 1962 with a slight variant):

None ever caught old Tom

because one definition of '**catch**' is '*to ensnare*' '*deceive*' – the very things that the One does! And although the 1934 poem preceded Tolkien's development of the One as a ring of Power (the 1962 version is amended to fit the events of LOTR) *ab initio* Tom was never able to be caught – and any impedance to his 'walking' – by Goldberry, OMW, the Badgers, and the Barrow-wight was swiftly overcome by Tom's words of power. But in the developed version of Tom that we are given by Tolkien in LOTR there is now way that Tom is able to be restricted by anyone or - in the case of the One - ensnared or deceived.

In '**renouncing control**' Tom has achieved the fullest of freedoms - self-freedom, because having no desire to control others – others have no ability to control him. {Which is not to say that he is invulnerable – all Nature is - but that is a different point which we will return to later}.

In an earlier post in this thread **Thursday, March 16, 2006 at 18:34 goldenhair** wrote:

'I have never seen it mentioned anywhere. If Tom B has renounced control (letter 144), that suggests that he had control to begin with. What exactly has he renounced control of?

We have seen in the earlier sections dealing with *Tom and Song*

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePosition=1&PagePostPosition=5

that Tom spoke the '*true language*' the language that existed when signifier and signified were one and the same, and a time when to know the 'true language' and thus the 'true name' was to have power over it. Tom is *ab origine* – from the beginning – he both heard the first words of power - the 'naming words' and he used them - for Tom is a 'maker' a 'namer' - and that power he still exercises within his own self-defined boundaries. He 'names' the Hobbits' ponies - and they answered to those names for the rest of their lives.

'I've got things to do... my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country.' {FOTR - *Fog on The Barrow Downs* - my emphasis}

Note how **my making and my singing** are linked together.

And of course, one Medieval English use of the verb '*to make*' was '*to cause to exist*' – and Tom – in his nature aspect causes things to exist. {It is interesting to note that Maker – as applied to God – did not used to be given a capital M. I am not, of course, suggesting that Tom is Eru, he clearly isn't, but that in his aspect as a Spirit of nature - which is only one part of the role that Tolkien gives him - he is indeed a creator}.

So Tom's 'control' inheres in the knowledge of names – a knowledge of the essence of things - and such knowledge gives power and control. But Tom makes no use of that power- indeed he has rejected it he has:

the spirit that desires knowledge of other things... because they are 'other'... and entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge Letter #153

As in the joyful way he tells the Hobbits about the natural world – turning to song and getting out of his chair and dancing about while doing so, is - **Joy in the being of things for themselves** – as was observed in the previous post:

'He told them tales of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, about evil things and good things, things friendly and unfriendly, cruel things and kind things, and secrets hidden under brambles' {FOTR - *In The House of Tom Bombadil*}

- **entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge** - other than joyfully sharing.

As Tolkien observes in the same letter:

He is master in a peculiar way: he has no fear, and no desire of possession or domination at all. He merely knows and understands about such things as concern him in his natural little realm. He hardly even judges, and as far as can be seen makes no effort to reform or remove even the Willow.

And in an earlier draft {HOME 6 The Return of the Shadow V1 Tom Bombadil} Goldberry says:

'He is not the possessor but the master, because he belongs to himself.'

He makes it clear that Tom's 'mastery'; relates to 'self-mastery'; **Tom is master over no one but himself.** And because he has accomplished that, as Goldberry so rightly observes

'Tom Bombadil is the Master' {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

and all acknowledge that, within his boundaries, even though

'all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves.{ ibid}

Because he has achieved self-mastery he uses no **power over** other things unless, as we have seen before, they break the *lex naturalis*, and themselves seek to impose their will on others. He then steps in to restore the balance. Thus he 'controls'; only in the sense that he prevents OMW and The Barrow-wight from 'controlling' Frodo and the Hobbits - other than that he makes no value judgment and seeks to control nothing. His banishment of the Barrow-wight is in keeping with the nature of things - the Dark Lord's rule has not yet been re-established and thus the Barrow-wight's time has not yet come.

And the very fact that Tom has:

'withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set'

is also a sign of his renunciation of power and control, but one we will look at later under **Tom's Boundaries.**

Tom and the Nature of Power - 9 - The View of Rivendell -(7)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, -and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

(6) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war

In his review of Peter Jackson's *Fellowship of the Ring* in 2001 Philip French the film critic wrote:

"Traditional quests are in search of some numinous object that confers power and a special grace on its owner. But Tolkien, writing after the Nazis had come to power and during the Second World War, thought Wagner's interpretation of the ancient Ring stories was dangerously perverse. **So he made the object of Frodo's journey not a search for power but its abnegation.** The aim is to take the One Ring to Mount Doom and destroy it in the Fire of Doom where it was originally forged." {*The Fellowship of the Ring*, "The Observer", December 16th, 2001 my bold emphasis}

And Carlo Stagnaro in writing about *Tolkien's Lesson for Sept 11* wrote:

Power can't be defeated by merely changing who holds it; indeed, it should be eliminated, so that men could have no such means to dominate their fellows
{<http://www.lewrockwell.com/orig2/stagnaro3.html>}

The *abnegation* and *elimination* of power is a primary aspect of the Ring Quest, for as Auden observed in his lyrical view praising FOTR when it was first published, and French echoes, unlike the classical mythological quests this was not one to **find something** but to **destroy something**.

It is, as C S Lewis so aptly put it, about '**The Dethronement of Power.**' {C S Lewis essay *The Dethronement of Power in Understanding the Lord of the Rings* ed. Zimbardo & Isaacs}

And Tom Bombadil, in his own way personifies that aspect of the Quest - in the sense that he has passed beyond the use of power for personal gain, even for – initially – intended social good. His withdrawal behind his defined boundaries also represents the *abnegation* and *elimination* of power – his personal destruction of his ‘ring’.

We have already reviewed at length, in previous posts above, Tolkien’s personal hostility to power and control, and his utter detestation of war. And even though he accepted that some wars had to be fought, it in no way lessened his horror at the waste, and misery, and stupidity that war entailed:

Letter #64

‘The utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, is so staggering to those who have to endure it. And always was (despite the poets) and always will be (despite the propagandists) – not of course that it has not is and will be necessary to face evil in an evil world.

Letter #96

The appalling destruction and misery of this war mount hourly: destruction of what should be (indeed is) the common wealth of Europe, and the world, if mankind were not so besotted, wealth the loss of which will affect us all, victors or not. Yet people gloat to hear of the endless lines, 40 miles long, of miserable refugees, women and children pouring West, dying on the way. There seem no bowels of mercy or compassion, no imagination, left in this dark diabolic hour.

Yet this was the man who could also say – as we saw in the reconstructed Inklings conversation above:

C S Lewis: Certainly war is a dreadful thing. **And I can respect an honest pacifist, though I think he’s entirely mistaken.** What I *can’t* understand is the sort of *semi*-pacifism you get nowadays **which gives people the idea that though you have to fight, you ought to do it with a long face, as if you were ashamed of it.** {my bold emphasis}

Tolkien: Oh, yes. **And it’s a perfectly ridiculous attitude. I find it refreshing to discover at least some young men who have the opposite approach.** I’ve met several, all of them airmen as it happens, to whom the war has offered the perfect round hole for a round peg - and they only found square holes before the war. What I mean is, **the job of fighting demands a quality of daring and individual prowess in arms** that I’d have thought was a real problem for a war-less world to satisfy. {my bold emphasis}

There is an apparent paradox between this view and his earlier comments on war and the pity of war, and yet there isn’t, for Tolkien was neither a pacifist (although he and his colleagues could empathize with true pacifism though not support it), nor a ‘*gung ho jingoism*’ like that expressed in England at the time of the Boer War.

Tolkien is no militarist. In both LOTR and the Letters he is clearly critical of *ofermod* - of pride - particularly the pride of the military/military-politico mind - as exemplified by Boromir and Denethor, which, while laying them open individually to the siren song of the One also allows them to wastefully sacrifice the lives of others – a subject he also addressed in *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*.

Nor does he see physical valor as an end in itself, although he recognizes its importance, but sets it in the context of moral courage, self-sacrifice, loyalty and humility – characteristics that the Hobbits epitomize.

And while recognizing the value - indeed necessity of the pacifist viewpoint - ultimately – in the words of the hymn - he believes that a man must:

Fight the good fight with all thy might

BUT and it is a critical **BUT** the emphasis is on **good** – it must be a Just War.

However, Tom Bombadil is not Tolkien - although aspects of Tolkien’s personal views on war are obviously reflected in the comments he makes about him. Tom has gone beyond power to a sphere in which control *per se* is not an item on the agenda, and he cannot therefore participate in a world in which it exists - hence his withdrawal behind self-defined boundaries.

Tolkien was a brilliant philologist – and he chose his words most carefully. It is therefore interesting to examine the phrase that he uses in regard to Tom’s ‘**vow of poverty**’ - his rejection of power:

It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war

At first glance it is a simple and obvious statement. Tolkien sees pacifism as a perfectly natural, perfectly usual thing to occur in some peoples' minds when there is a war. He doesn't support that approach but he sees its necessity - as does Rivendell, because, as we have seen before Rivendell stands for certain standards and values that are critical to the 'just war', standards relevant both to ME and RL, and, most importantly, standards that represented a part of Tolkien's own thinking.

And Rivendell – as we know:

represents Lore – the preservation in reverent memory of all tradition concerning the good, wise, and beautiful. It is not a scene of action but of reflection.

And thus both in RL and ME 'Rivendells', if humane society is to survive, there must be room for those who, even in the times of the direst threats to the very fabric of their society, question the rightness of using power, and indeed, refuse to use it, and have gone beyond using it.

But words, as Tolkien was well aware, carry their own 'baggage' - they are redolent with meanings - not just one solitary meaning. And this was written by a man who wrote the Riddle Game for *The Hobbit* and loved verbal conundrums, jokes, and puns – a man who had '*been behind language*'.

So when he says '*natural*' he just doesn't mean '*the obvious thing that comes into the mind of the pacifist in wartime*'. Because *natural* – as the OED tells us – connotes:

Based upon the innate moral feeling of mankind; instinctively felt to be right and fair.

Constituted by nature

Taking place of or operating in accordance with the ordinary state of nature

Not artificial

Having a specific character by nature

And Tom, of course, in one of his aspects, represents Nature; Natural Law is a foundation of much philosophic thought of the Neo-Platonists and of the Medieval philosophers; we basically feel war to be wrong:

'The utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, is so staggering to those who have to endure it. And always was (despite the poets) and always will be (despite the propagandists) – not of course that it has not is and will be necessary to face evil in an evil world.

even though at times we have to participate in it; it is in our natures to live together socially – to do what is *instinctively felt to be right and fair*. Nature is *Not artificial* – war is, and *Taking place of or operating in accordance with the ordinary state of nature* we do not wage war.

So in using that one word Tolkien combines a whole host of meanings – all of which show that Tolkien, in his commentary on Tom and Tom's function in this particular role, sees pacifism as the natural, the right, the proper state of things, and war as evil-even though he did fight in a war in the same way that Gandalf, and Elrond, and Theoden, and Merry and Pippin, and Sam, and Frodo did - until – of course – Frodo too rejected power and control and too became a pacifist - but that's for another thread.

And it is very important to Tolkien that the aspect of pacifism is covered in LOTR. He makes that clear both in **Letter #153** written in 1954 and in the Fettes letter in 1961. {*Amon Hen no. 173 January 2002; pp.31-31 reprinted in Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion pp. 133-4* }:

Letter #153

Also T. B. exhibits another point in his attitude to the Ring, and its failure to affect him. You must concentrate on some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything however fundamental - and therefore much will from that 'point of view be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. **The power of the Ring over all concerned even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion - but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the Universe.** {my emphasis}

Fettes letter

I have left him where he is and not attempted to clarify his position, first of all because I like him and he has at any rate a satisfyingly geographical home in the lands of Lord of the Rings; but more seriously because in any world or universe devised imaginatively [or imposed simply upon the actual world] **there**

is always some element that does not fit and opens as it were a window into some other system {my emphasis}

●

Tom and the Nature of Power - 10 - The View of Rivendell –(8)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, - and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

(6) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war {Continued}

In a post in this thread of **Thursday, March 16, 2006 at 18:34** *goldenhair* wrote:

It seem that to be a pacifist is unacceptable if one is in the "hierarchy". One must accept and do ones duty. No matter the horror, the stupidity, the waste or the grouching, there is evil, one must go on to the bitter end and not bow.... therefore, Tom seems to sit outside the hierarchy by definition (or else we view him almost as a traitor). By outside I do not mean in the same way as the "in ME but not of ME" conversation. But that if he is a Vala or Maia, then his "pacifist view" is in and of itself "shirking".

That seems to me to fairly sum-up Tolkien's view of all the other 'players' on the side of 'good' in LOTR and in any case exonerates Tom because he quite clearly is not a part of the ME hierarchy.

And there is a line in a C S Lewis letter that appears to capture an element of Tom's **natural** 'pacifism' but I can't help wishing one could *hibernate* till it's all over!

{Letter #201 15 Sept 1939 *They Stand Together – Letters of C S Lewis to Arthur Greves 1914-1963* – my emphasis}

Hibernation is very much a function of the world of nature!

But Tom is not '*hibernating*' - his is a very conscious decision to withdraw from the power game.

And I think that Tolkien is saying that it is a fundamental aspect of the '*being*' of a '*good*' society that voices such as Tom's should exist and be heard and respected-even though-paradoxically - as we have already seen - their existence depends on the very power they will not use!

However, there appears to be some minor disparity between Tolkien's observations in **Letter #144** and the actual text of LOTR. We have already seen that within the boundaries he has defined Tom exercises some 'control' - over OMW and the Barrow-wight – albeit that it a use of 'control' to restore others' freedoms - not control willfully exercised to aggrandize Tom.

But, more significantly, the words of Glorfindel seem to suggest that Tom will 'fight' to defend his boundaries and the way of life that exists within it:

'Could that power be defied by Bombadil alone? I think not. I think that in the end, if all else is conquered, Bombadil will fall, Last as he was First; and then Night will come.' {FOTR - The Council of Elrond}

And Galdor adds:

'Power to defy our Enemy is not in him, unless such power is in the earth itself.' {ibid}

But perhaps the disparity, if disparity there be, lies in the fact that Tolkien, using Tom in a number of different ways, does not always reconcile those differences- leading to his very judicious explanation of him as an '*enigma*'!

But what is clear – is Tom's disinterest in the 'power game' that is being played out in ME – he is philosophically beyond that. Power *per se* has no meaning for him, anymore than the goings on in the Ring Quest do, for he is no longer part of that world in which the Quest takes place.

This is perhaps best summed up towards the end of LOTR in the draft of *ROTK - Homeward Bound - {Sauron Defeated, Part One - The End of the Third Age - Chptr.V111 'Homeward Bound'}*;

when Frodo expresses a wistful desire to see Tom again:

"They passed the point on the East Road where they had taken leave of Bombadil, and half they expected to see him standing there to greet them as they went by. But there was no sign of him, and there was a grey mist over the Barrow-down{s} southward and a deep veil hid the Old Forest far-away. Frodo halted and looked wistfully south. 'I should like to see the old fellow again. I wonder how he's getting on?'

'As well as ever, you may be sure'; said Gandalf. **'Quite untroubled, and if I may say so, not at all interested in anything that has happened to us.** There will be time later to visit him.'

{my bold emphasis}

This is virtually the same as the published version, except that in the latter Gandalf says:

'Quite untroubled; and I should guess, not much interested in anything that we have done or see, unless perhaps in our visit to the Ents. There may be a time later for you to go and see him.'

{my bold emphasis}

In both HOME and the published version Tom's lack of involvement in the wider world and the Ring Quest is re-emphasized.

Tom and the Nature of Power - 11 - The View of Rivendell –(9)

The story is cast in terms of a good side, - and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, (1) moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, (2) and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (3) But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, (4) then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (5) It is a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war. (6) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented, (7) but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends. (8) Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron. (9) {Letter #144}

(7) But the view of Rivendell seems to be that it is an excellent thing to have represented,

We have already seen in the post of **Thursday, July 06, 2006 at 01:40**

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePostPosition=6

that in talking of Rivendell (or Rivendells if we include Tolkien's RL implication) Tolkien is talking of an 'idealised' Rivendell - not simply of those elves who happened to inhabit it at any point in time.

Quote

"Tolkien uses the term 'Rivendell', for Rivendell stands for certain standards and values that are critical to the '*just war*', standards relevant both to ME and RL, and, most importantly, standards that represented a part of Tolkien's own thinking."

In a footnote to **Letter #131** Tolkien tells us what those standards are:

Elrond symbolizes throughout the ancient wisdom, and his House represents Lore – the preservation in reverent memory of all tradition concerning the good, wise, and beautiful. It is not a scene of action but of reflection.

And because it - and Elrond too - symbolizes ancient wisdom, and reverentially preserves the tradition of all that is good, wise, and beautiful, it is a place where one reflects – perhaps on ‘*war and the pity of war*’ - not plans campaigns of conquest- although one has to plan campaigns. Which is why Frodo is ultimately so much more at home in Rivendell than Boromir, as he is in Lothlorien. And, most importantly, it is a place that while believing – ultimately - that what Tom represents can only survive through means that he has eschewed – indeed whose need he cannot now even understand – also knows that it is essential – if the concept of a just war is to survive in the world- that thinking such as Tom’s

a natural pacifist view, which always raises in the mind when there is a war

– is thinking that has to be respected, and protected – the reverse, as it were, of the paradox that faces the pacifist.

And it is in Rivendell too, that *Vilya* – the Ring of Air resides – borne by Elrond – and (as my good friend *Parmardil* pointed out in his commentary on the Three in the *Rings of Power* threads:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive2/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=18673

Air is the element of Manwe, the lord of the Valar and probably for this motive Vilya is the mightiest of the rings. We do not hear anything of its powers: the only (very thin) reference, perhaps, to its action is that in Imladris, where Elrond its keeper, dwelt, “the stars of heaven most brightly shone.” (*Silmarillion, Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age*).

“the stars of heaven most brightly shone” reinforcing, perhaps, the celestial beauty inherent in Rivendell’s values of goodness, wisdom, and beauty, values finding their most complete expression in Valinor and in the being of Manwe:

‘the first of all kings; lord of the realm of Arda, and ruler of all that dwell therein {*The Silmarillion- Valaquenta*}

and thus linking Rivendell’s values with the values of ‘heaven’.

The paragraph in **Letter #146** that talks of Tom’s **natural pacifist view** is important too for the ME and RL philosophy that Tolkien sets out- for it identifies aspects of his own personal philosophy that both align with, but also contradict, the philosophy he gives to Tom Bombadil. And of course, too, in the values of Rivendell and the character of Tom Bombadil – we have exemplified one of the three main functions of the fairy story that Tolkien set out in his 1939 lecture/essay *On Fairy Stories* – that of **Recovery** – of **regaining of a clear view**.

Rivendell **is not a scene of action but of reflection**, both for LOTR and its characters - and for us too.

Thus in that paragraph in **Letter #146** are summed up both the personal philosophy of Tolkien, the value system of the **good side** of ME, and **Recovery** – the **regaining of a clear view** for us.

End Quote

Both in ME and in RL Tolkien is telling us that while ultimately he believes we must fight the good fight- with the emphasis on good = moral, we must also allow for the view that rejects such a solution.”

- (8) **but there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends.**

It **cannot cope** with those who would assault the very freedoms it values, who would use the power it has rejected, against it, who would replace ‘all things living and growing in the land belong to themselves’ with Saruman’s ‘**Knowledge, Rule, Order**’ but in a way that would replace ‘**moderated freedom with consent**’ with ‘**compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power**’. It cannot oppose Sauronian tyranny because – by definition - the organized state – **polis** – has been rejected as part of its rejection of power and control, and because in rejecting power and defining its own self-imposed boundaries it has effectively withdrawn from the world - forgetting the words of Gildor to Frodo:

‘**The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot forever fence it out.**’ {*FOTR - Three is Company* – my emphasis}

- (9) **Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron.**

Tolkien also demonstrates the paradox that face those - who like Tom - have 'gone beyond' control and power as ways to solve problems, best summed-up by CS Lewis in his essay "*Why I Am Not a Pacifist*", *The Weight of Glory* (1949),

when he writes:

If not the greatest evil, yet war is a great evil. Therefore, we should all like to remove it if we can. But every war leads to another war. The removal of war must therefore be attempted. We must increase by propaganda the number of Pacifists in each nation until it becomes great enough to deter that nation from going to war. This seems to me wild work. **Only liberal societies tolerate Pacifists. In the liberal society, the number of Pacifists will either be large enough to cripple the state as a belligerent, or not. If not, you have done nothing. If it is large enough, then you have handed over the state which does tolerate Pacifists to its totalitarian neighbour who does not. Pacifism of this kind is taking the straight road to a world in which there will be no Pacifists.** {my bold emphasis and underline}

Compare:

Pacifism of this kind is taking the straight road to a world in which there will be no Pacifists

with

Ultimately only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive. Nothing would have been left for him in the world of Sauron.

That is the terrifying paradox.

And Sauron's world we can best leave to our own imagination - helped by these descriptions:

"Sauron can torture and destroy the very hills" {*FOTR – Galdor - The Council of Elrond*}

'North amid their noisome pits lay the first of the great heaps and hills of slag and broken rock and blasted earth, the vomit of the maggot-folk of Mordor' {*ROTK - The Black Gate Opens*}

'Wide flats lay on either bank, shadowy meads filled with pale white flowers. Luminous these were too, beautiful and yet horrible of shape, like the demented forms in an uneasy dream; and they gave forth a faint sickening charnel-smell; an odour of rotteness filled the air.' {*ROTK - The Stairs of Cirth Ungol*}

This is the world of the 'Machine'- of the Iron Crown!

This is what fighting the good fight seeks to prevent.

But, of course, the real reason why **Nothing would have been left for him {Tom} in the world of Sauron** is that there would have been **no freedom!**

And yet, in a world of ME in which **Elrond**:

1. 'I have seen three ages in the West of the world, and many defeats, and many fruitless victories' *Elrond - FOTR - The Council of Elrond*}

Galadriel

2. 'Through the ages of the world we have fought the long defeat' {*Galadriel – FOTR - The Mirror of Galadriel*}

And **Tolkien** himself

3. 'However it's {War} always been going on in different terms, and you and I belong to the ever-defeated never altogether subdued side.' {**Letter #77** to CT}

have 'fought the long defeat' Rivendell - both in ME and RL - believes that for it to have value, moral worth, and cleave to the light, the position taken by Tom Bombadil, is, in its world,

'an excellent thing to have represented.'

BUT

Sauron's world would be:

'a world in which there will be no Pacifists'

'nothing would have been left for him {Tom} in the world of Sauron.'

Tom and the Nature of Power - 12 - Tom and the One Ring

'Could we not still send messages to him and obtain his help?' asked Erester. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.' 'No, I should not put it so, said Gandalf. **'Say rather that the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master. But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others.'** {FOTR - The Council of Elrond – my emphasis}

In the post *Tom and the Nature of Power - 8 - The View of Rivendell* –(6) Thursday, July13, 2006 at 00:36
http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePosition=1&pagepostposition=7

it was observed:

Erester misses the point. Tom's immunity to the One arises because he has renounced power and control, 'taken a vow of poverty'. Thus it is illogical to ask him to take the Ring and keep it harmless because the One's lack of control over him is precisely because he does not control anything or fight for anyone. His immunity to its powers is dependent on his non-alignment to anything or anyone... the Ring's snares, and delusions and illusions, have no hold over him, for **Tom Bombadil is master**. But he is master **because** he has renounced power and control.

We need perhaps to explore this a little more fully, both in the context of the One in LOTR and the concept of Rings of Power in a wider external mythological cosmogony.

Quote

The Ring is traditionally a symbol of the personality, and to bestow a ring implies the surrendering, for good or evil, of one's being. Moreover, the receipt of a ring, can imply the same thing.

In Medieval Templar symbolism, during Divine Mediation, when God the father and God the mother put on Rings, it is the union of their *personality or being*. But that union – that complementarity – means the 'surrendering' of oneself to become a greater, more fulfilled whole.

Miyamoto Mushashi's great book on sword fighting, *The Book of Five Rings*, is about developing the *personality or being* to become a master-swordperson. That involves giving-surrendering something in order to gain a greater thing.

In the exchange of rings in the Christian marriage ceremony the union of two-in-one is achieved by the *surrendering* of each individual personality.

Which brings us to LOTR. Sauron *surrenders* part of himself to create the One. Sauron again *surrenders* himself to the One in using it: "*it was beyond the strength of any will (even his own) to ignore it, cast it away, or neglect it.*" (**Letter #131**).

In turn, Sauron gives Rings, the Seven and the Nine, to Dwarves and Men in order to get them to *surrender* their will, their personality to his. (Admittedly he comes unstuck with the Dwarves, but nonetheless the Dwarven rings inflame their possessors with greed - a *surrender* of the personality also.)

Bilbo feels 'stretched', Frodo claims the One for himself on Mount Doom, Gollum is a puppet of the Ring, his personality totally dominated by it, Saruman rejects his Istari pedigree to try and obtain the One, Boromir betrays the nobility in his nature to try and get the One - all, in one way or another a **surrender** of their personality.

So, **external** to the story, Rings, demand "surrender" of self - and so they do **within** the story.

{cf. *halfir The Rings of*

Power http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=15179&PagePosition=9}

End of Quote

The external mythology complements the internal mythology of LOTR.

In **Letter #153** Tolkien wrote of Tom:

He is master in a peculiar way: he has **no fear**, and **no desire of possession or domination** at all. {my emphasis}

no fear - no desire of possession or domination

He is completely self-possessed – not in an egocentric way – in seeing or wanting the world to revolve around him - but in a totally self-fulfilling way – he has conquered all needs and passions and desires - and reached – as the Buddhists might say ‘*enlightenment*’. That is not to say he has an ascetic self-sufficiency – quite the opposite – he enjoys the hobbits’ company and as acting as their host and he clearly has a warm and loving relationship with Goldberry. But in both instances these are a result of his ‘wholeness’- he sees such hospitality and companionship as self-fulfilling - in a positive sense - they complete his ideation of himself - he is fully rounded.

And thus – being a fully rounded individual – he has no desire - or need - of possession or domination - he has passed beyond that state. And so the One, which feeds on individual need, and lust for power and control, and also **induces** that which it feeds on cf. Sauron after the creation of the One and the dispensing of the Seven and Nine to dwarves and Men:

‘Now Sauron’s lust and pride increased, until he knew no bounds, and he determined to make himself master of all things in Middle-earth,, and to destroy the Elves, and to compass, if he might, the downfall of Numenor. He brooked no freedom nor any rivalry, and he named himself Lord of the Earth. {*The Silmarillion – Of The Rings Of Power And The Third Age*}

has no interest for him and no power over him because he has

taken ‘a vow of poverty’, renounced control, and {takes his} delight in things for themselves, without reference to {himself}, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, {and} the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control {has} become utterly meaningless to {him}, and the means of power quite valueless.

And so, as he has passed beyond desire he has nothing to surrender, not even in a positive sense, for, as we have seen above, not all ‘surrender’ is negative, and thus the One has no effect whatsoever on him.

Tom as the Antithesis of Sauron

Just compare the philosophy of these two passages to see the total difference in approach between Tom and Sauron - for in many ways - while withdrawn from the world of ME in general, Tom is the antithesis of Sauron philosophically

Tom

But if you have, as it were taken ‘a vow of poverty’, renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (Letter #144)

Sauron

but secretly Sauron made One Ring to rule all the others and their power was bound up with it, to be subject wholly to it and to last only so long as it too should last. And much of the strength and will of Sauron passed into that One Ring; for the power of the elven –rings was very great, and that which should govern them must be a thing of surpassing potency; and Sauron forged it in the Mountain of Fire in the Land of shadow. And while he wore the One Ring he could perceive all the things that were done by means of those lesser rings, and he could see and govern the very thoughts of those that wore them. {*The Silmarillion- Of The Rings of Power and the Third Age*}

Philosophic Comparison - Tom and Sauron

Tom

Renounced control

Power and control meaningless

Means of power valueless
One}

Sauron

Rule all others

Power bound up in it {the One}

A thing of surpassing potency {the
Govern the thoughts of those
that wore them {the nineteen}}

Tom has eschewed all control and thus become **Master**. Sauron seeks to become **Master** by utilizing the very thing that Tom has rejected!

In response to Frodo's comment:

'Then all this strange land belongs to him?'

speaking of Tom as **Master** - Goldberry says:

'No, indeed! ... That would indeed be a burden... The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master... He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master. {FOTR - In the House of Tom Bombadil}

Tom is Master **because** he does not exercise power and control over others. He is the very antithesis of Sauron, the Dark Lord who **seeks to exercise power and control** to **gain** mastery:

'it was the *creatures of earth, in their minds and wills, that he desired to dominate.*' {HOME 10 Morgoth's Ring Myths Transformed Text V11 - Tolkien's italics.}

And one of his methods in doing this was to dispense the seven and the nine to dwarves and men:

hoping thus to bring under his sway all those that **desired secret power beyond the measure of their kind**. {The Silmarillion - Of The Rings of Power and the Third Age - my emphasis}

Note the words:

beyond the measure of their kind.

In other words, beyond the **natural limits** of their race - thus **unnatural** - the very opposite of what Tom stood for - the rejection of power, and the *lex naturalis*.

Tom and the Nature of Power - 13 - Tom and the One Ring (2)

As I wrote in the final lines of the section on **Tom and Song - Conclusion**:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePostPosition=5 Monday, April 03, 2006 at 00:35}

Quote

Tom, like Goldberry, emphasizes life and rebirth, not death and the hollow grave.

As we shall see, the nearest that Tom comes to death is sleep -hibernation- and in his world there is only - to quote Frodo:

'spring-time and summer-time, and spring again after' {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

Within Tom's boundaries there is no '*winter of discontent*'.

That is not to say that winter and death and the hollow grave are not present: OMW has that in mind for the Hobbits - as does the Barrow-wight, and **death of course - is an aspect of Nature. But so is rebirth - and Tom's is an affirmation of the Natural Cycle in which death is but an interlude before rebirth - in the same way that Eru's gift of death to man is not the final statement to be made about humankind's existence.**

In this respect Tom stands in complete opposition to Sauron who seeks to 'kill' the will of men - by mastering them, by making them 'belong' to him - through the power of the One. Tom - as we will see in more detail in **Tom and the Nature of Power** cannot conceive of such a situation, anymore than Goldberry can:

'all things growing or living in the land each belong to themselves'. {FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil}

End Quote

In one of her typically seminal posts in the *Rings of Power* threads Bear wrote:

Quote

I have always found it significant that Tolkien used the "Ring" (the quintessential symbol of birth, life, death, and rebirth) to represent the repudiation of that natural cycle.

Despite the Elves' understandable desire to protect and preserve their world, nothing can prevent the passage of time. In their desire to "halt the forces of decay" they tried to tamper with the immutable laws of the universe. In this they have committed a tragic error, for except in the "supernatural realms," nothing lasts forever. Middle-earth, for all of its mystery and majesty is not supernatural, within its borders, decay must come, so that rebirth is possible.

In his construction of the One Ring, Sauron also wishes to halt the natural progression; not to preserve and protect... but to dominate and destroy. For him, "decay" is not the gateway to rebirth, but the weakening of something so that it can be dominated and controlled.

So, for whatever reason they were created (i.e. preservation or desecration) it always made sense that the Elven Rings would pass when the One Ring was destroyed; not because they were "tainted" by evil, but because they served a purpose no longer in harmony with the world around them.

Perhaps this is why Tom Bombadil was not affected by the One Ring, for he is the Master, and in him the Cycle of Life was strong, unyielding and unstoppable

End Quote

Bear The Rings of

Power http://www.lotrplaza.com/archive/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=18673&PagePosition=9 Friday, August 30, 2002 at 19:56

Tom's is an affirmation of the Natural Cycle in which death is but an interlude before rebirth – in the same way that Eru's gift of death to man is not the final statement to be made about humankind's existence.

Perhaps this is why Tom Bombadil was not affected by the One Ring, for he is the Master, and in him the Cycle of Life was strong, unyielding and unstoppable

These two quotes demonstrate quite clearly the **Cycle of Nature** that Tom (and Goldberry) represent, in which birth, growth, death, rebirth occurs **naturally**.

Sauron - and – sadly - the Elves – although for totally different reasons – sought to interrupt that Natural Cycle, and thus Sauron, and to a lesser degree - the Elves - are in opposition to what Tom stands for. Both sought to **control** the **Natural Cycle** – and thus committed offences both against the *lex naturalis* **and** the laws of Eru: cf. the making of the Elven Ring's under Sauron's instigation:

Was really a veiled attack on the gods, an incitement to try and make a separate independent paradise **{Letter #131}**

An attempt to prevent 'fading' and 'decay' in order to preserve 'the bliss and perfect memory of the West.'

But what they had created in the sixteen, once repossessed by Sauron:

And all those rings he governed he perverted, the more easily since he had a part in their making, and they were accursed, and they betrayed in the end all those that used them. {The Silmarillion - Of The Rings of Power and the Third Age}

became the very **inversion** of that the elves had sought to accomplish, for the 'fading' they sought to prevent became negatively transmuted into a physical **fading** which led to the wraithdom of the Nazgul, and a spiritual **decay** of their being.

Totally **unnatural**, and in complete opposition to the fading and decay represented by Tom and the Cycle of Nature, in which fading and decay were precursors to death and rebirth.

But to return to *Bears'* perceptive initial comment:

I have always found it significant that Tolkien used the "Ring" (the quintessential symbol of birth, life, death, and rebirth) to represent the repudiation of that natural cycle.

What she has seized upon here is Tolkien's masterly ability to demonstrate how evil corrupts and attempts to 'mirror' good. From the perversions of the Trolls and Orcs – aping the true creations of Eru, to the use of gold – always seen as 'purity' – the essence of light and purification - the Sun - of all things holy - to a debased form - used to pervert the very purity it had once stood for.

Tolkien saw both the **yang** and the **yin** in the Cosmos - the positive and negative, and also the light and the dark sides of symbolism - for the nature of symbols is complex and that which gives light can also, in a different context be the harbinger of dark.

And as the circle - particularly a circle of gold - is seen as **the quintessential symbol of birth, life, death, and rebirth** – so the forces of evil, the Morgoth's and Sauron's of the world, can pervert it, so that it becomes the very opposite of what it should be. Instead of an affirmation of the natural cycle it becomes **repudiation of that natural cycle**.

In a post of *Thursday, April 07, 2005 at 19:09* in the thread

The Ring's Casing: Why not Mithril?

http://www.lotrplaza.com/Archive4/display_topic_threads.asp?ForumID=21&TopicID=175125&PagePosition=51

I wrote:

Quote

1. It was not so much Sauron as Tolkien who decided on gold! Given his vast knowledge of myth he would have been well aware that mythologically gold has always been regarded as *"the perfect metal"*. It has been linked to the Sun - the creative spirit, and seen as divine, By choosing the 'perfect' metal for Sauron's ring Tolkien demonstrates how evil attempts to pervert that which is essentially 'pure', to corrupt even the most perfect metal, and emphasize its destructive qualities (vis a vis the Sun) rather than its creative ones.

Moreover gold is a weapon of light, and its use in Sauron's hands can be seen as a perversion of that original purity. Remember that Gandalf in his battle with the Balrog in Moria says:

"I am wielder of the flame of Anor". (FOTR - The Bridge of Khazad-Dum.) This, it has been suggested by some (cf. Foster - *Complete Guide to ME*), is possibly an allusion to the white light of the Sun, as a symbol of the Secret Fire. The Secret Fire is, in turn, possibly the Flame Imperishable - the creative spirit of Iluvatar (ibid).

Thus the white light of the Sun, the creative spirit, the *'flame of Anor'* is opposed to the Balrog's *'dark fire'*, *'the flame of Udun'* - the destructive side of flame, the perversion of light as used by Morgoth and Sauron. (And there is the added implication that the Sun/light/flame/ fire, is also a destroyer as well as a creator, cf. When Melkor destroyed the Two lamps: *"destroying flame was poured over the world"*, as opposed to the *"the light of the Lamps of the Valar flowed out over the world"* *The Silmarillion - Of the Beginning of Days*.)

2. There is another interesting aspect, that *'minted'* gold i.e. that which is mined, fashioned and stamped, *"is a symbol of perversion and the exaltation of unclean desires"*, cf. Paul Dies - *Le Symbolisme Dans La Mythologie Grecque*).

Sauron *minted* or *stamped* the One with his inscription of power!

3. There, is of course, **and perhaps more importantly**, against the background of the overall mythology of gold - **the specific fact that it was Morgoth's metal** - in the same way that all materials of Arda contained an aspect of the first Dark Lord.

"Melkor 'incarnated' himself (as Morgoth) permanently. He did this so to control the hroa, the 'flesh' or physical matter of Arda. He attempted to identify himself with it, a vaster, and more perilous procedure, though of similar sort to the operation of Sauron with the Rings. Thus, outside the Blessed Real, all 'matter' was likely to have a Melkor ingredient... Sauron's relatively small power was concentrated; Morgoth's vast power was disseminated. The whole of 'Middle-earth' was Morgoth's ring... Moreover, the final eradication of Sauron as a power directing evil was achievable by the destruction of the Ring. No such eradication of Morgoth was possible since this required the complete disintegration of the 'matter' of Arda. Sauron's power was not (for example) in gold as such, but in a particular form or shape made of a particular portion of total gold. Morgoth's power was disseminated throughout Gold, if nowhere absolute (for he did not create Gold) it was nowhere absent. (It was the Morgoth-element in matter, indeed, which was a prerequisite for such 'magic' and other evils as Sauron practiced with it

and upon it") (HOME Vol 10 Morgoth's Ring - Myths Transformed - Notes on the Motives in the Silmarillion - my blue, bold, and underline.)

Note the significance of this line:

Sauron's power was not (for example) in gold as such, but in a particular form or shape made of a particular portion of total gold.

and particularly:

in a particular form or shape made of a particular portion of total gold.

Moreover, from the same source we read:

*'It is quite possible, of course, that certain 'elements' or conditions of matter had attracted Morgoth's special attention (mainly, unless in the remote past, for reasons of his own plans). **For example, all gold (in Middle-earth) seems to have had a specially 'evil' trend - but not silver'**. (HOME Vol 10 Morgoth's Ring - Myths Transformed - Notes on the Motives in the Silmarillion - my blue, bold, and underline.*

Gold has a '**specially 'evil' trend'**', but '**not silver'**'.

This, I suggest, explains why mithril is not used- it is 'silver' in all but name and it has the same attributes of silver, it lacks the '**evil' trend'** of gold.

Thus by utilizing the wider overarching **external** mythology to which his own **internal** mythology is linked, and using his own **internal** mythological parameters, the Master rightly chooses gold as the metal with which Sauron forges the One Ring.

End quote

And of course, the

particular form or shape made of a particular portion of total gold.

brings us full **circle/RING** (sorry about the pun! 😊) back to Bear's initial comment:

I have always found it significant that Tolkien used the "Ring" (the quintessential symbol of birth, life, death, and rebirth) to represent the repudiation of that natural cycle.

Tom and the Nature of Power - 14 Tom and the One (3)

Now you see it, now you don't

'He appeared already to know much about them and all their families, and indeed to know much of all the history and doings of the Shire down from days hardly remembered among the hobbits themselves... (1) he made no secret that he owed his recent knowledge to Farmer Maggot... (2) and it seemed in some fashion that news had reached him from Gildor (3) concerning the flight of Frodo.....{who} found himself telling him more about Bilbo and his own hopes and fears than he had told before even to Gandalf. (4) Tom wagged his head up and down, and there was a glint in his eyes when he heard of the Riders. (5)

'Show me the precious Ring!' (6) he said suddenly in the midst of the story; and Frodo, to his own astonishment, drew out the chain from his pocket, and unfastening the Ring handed it at once to Tom. (7)

It seemed to grow larger as it lay for a moment on his big brown-skinned hand. Then suddenly he put it to his eye and laughed. For a second the hobbits had a vision, both comical and alarming, of his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold. (8) Then Tom put the Ring on the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. There was no sign of Tom disappearing. (9)

Tom laughed again, and then he spun the Ring in the air-and it vanished with a flash. (10) Frodo gave a cry- and Tom leaned forward and handed it back to him with a smile...

Frodo looked at it closely... It was the same Ring, or looked the same and weighed the same... But something prompted him to make sure... He waited for an opportunity... then he slipped the Ring on... and crept quietly away from the fireside towards the outer door. (11)

'Hey there!' cried Tom, glancing towards him with a most seeing look in his shining eyes. Hey! Come Frodo, there! Where be you a-going? Old Tom Bombadil's not as blind as that yet. (12) Take off your golden ring! Your hand's more fair without it. Come back! Leave your game and sit down beside me.' (13) {FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil}

- (1) 'He appeared already to know much about them and all their families, and indeed to know much of all the history and doings of the Shire down from days hardly remembered among the hobbits themselves...

Another example of Tom's longevity in ME. He knew about doings of the Shire down from days hardly remembered among the hobbits themselves

- (2) he made no secret that he owed his recent knowledge to Farmer Maggot

In the earlier drafts Tolkien had toyed with the idea of making Bombadil and Maggot kinfolk, but this, of course, would have complicated the other uses he needed Tom to fulfill. Moreover, in the earlier drafts also, Tom had not had fixed boundaries, had visited Barliman Butterbur in Bree and, in the 1962 *Bombadil Goes Boating*, had gone down the Withywindle and drunk ale and gossiped with Maggot. Although we can pass off the Bombadil poems as Hobbit 'nonsense' verse – not following any actual historical progression – although containing incidents that actually occurred, both Bombadil himself {FOTR - *Fog on the Barrow Downs*}, and Gandalf {FOTR *Council of Elrond*} make it clear that Tom no longer moves outside his fixed boundaries. So how does Tom now get his information from Maggot?

Simple! We learn from a comment of Merry's {FOTR-A *Conspiracy Unmasked*} that Maggot:

'used to go into the Old Forest at one time, and he has the reputation of knowing a good many strange things.'

So we can assume that in fact Farmer Maggot **still** goes into the Old Forest and visits Tom, and this is how the current information was obtained.

- (3) it seemed in some fashion that news had reached him from Gildor

Clearly the way in which Gildor's news reached Bombadil was different to the way Maggot's did. Not only are we told *it seemed in some fashion that news had reached him* but Elrond {FOTR - *The Council of Elrond*} says 'I had forgotten Bombadil' so it is hardly likely that Gildor would have remembered him.

In an essay on **Omens** Michael Martinez baldly states:

Gildor's Elvenfolk had asked Bombadil to watch out for Frodo and his friends, and to help them on their way.

Count, Count, Weigh, Divide

http://www.merp.com/essays/MichaelMartinez/michaelmartinezsuite101essay99/document_view?month:int=9&year:int=2004

And, in typical Martinez fashion, gives no textual support for his assertion!

Admittedly Gildor says:

'The Wandering Companies shall know of your journey, and those that have power for good shall be on the watch.' {FOTR - *Three is Company*}

But apart from the fact that if Elrond has forgotten Bombadil, Gildor is likely too have done so also, if he ever knew him, Tom has renounced power, is living within self-imposed boundaries and does not take sides. But Tom *is* **Master** and thus all sentient beings within his boundaries will no doubt pass on all and every piece of information too him, and Tom himself, as he tells the Hobbits:

'I've got things to do, my making, and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country.' {FOTR - *Fog on The Barrow-Downs*}

It is highly unlikely that Gildor told Tom anything at all, because it is doubtful if he met him, but clearly, Tom has his own methods of finding out what he needs to know about what might affect the country that lies within the boundaries he has imposed: *my watching of the country*.

- (4) Frodo... found himself telling him more about Bilbo and his own hopes and fears than he had told before even to Gandalf

In his 'editor's' introduction to the *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962) Tolkien says of both Tom and Gandalf that to the Hobbits:

'both were regarded as benevolent persons, mysterious maybe and unpredictable but nonetheless comic'.

Thus is it not surprising that having been rescued by Tom from OMW, been given his and Goldberry's excellent and merry hospitality, and learned from Tom that he knew more about hobbit history than they did themselves that Frodo should relax, and open-up. But it is interesting that we are told that he told Tom even more *than he had told before even to Gandalf*.

In that context it is perhaps significant to note that when Sam is battling the horrors of Shelob his thoughts turn not to Gandalf, but to Tom:

'I wish old Tom was near us now *he thought*'. {TT - *Shelob's Lair*}.

Now of course Tom had rescued them twice, and Sam (and Frodo) thought Gandalf had perished in Moria, but even if that latter fact had not been the case it is suggested that Tom would still have been foremost in Sam's mind, because Tom is essentially *homo naturalis* - natural man - and Gandalf is a wizard. And Tom is thus more *accessible* as a personality than Gandalf - even though both veiled from the Hobbits the real nature of their respective powers and who they were.

Moreover, Tom, and Maggot, and Sam have an affinity with Nature, an affinity much stronger than any of the other characters in LOTR and a point we will return to later. They are thus *naturally* aligned.

(5) *Tom wagged his head up and down, and there was a glint in his eyes when he heard of the Riders*

In *FOTR - Fog on The Barrow-Downs* – Tom says to the Hobbits:

'Out east my knowledge fails. Tom is not master of riders from the Black Land far beyond his country'.

One is reminded of Gandalf's comment:

'to the east I go not' {UT - *The Istari*}

That text is probably best read as meaning that Tom has no knowledge of what the Nazgul are likely to do by way of following the Hobbits, for his comment is made in the context of answering Pippin's question as to whether the Hobbits are likely to be pursued that night.

It is not clear just how one should interpret any wider implication in Tom's comment about the Black Riders. In earlier drafts they had drawn back at his command, but Tolkien did not continue along that path, and they do not appear within his boundaries (unlike the Barrow-wight who at one time was also seen potentially as a Black Rider).

Glorfindel tells us later that in his view, if Sauron himself came against Tom, Bombadil will fall. Quite how he would fare against the Nazgul if they tried to oppose him is difficult to assess, but it is likely that he could hold them off, if they assaulted his 'kingdom' but would not be able to withstand a combined assault of them and Sauron. However, that particular question does not raise itself in the context of the *Fog on the Barrow Downs* quote.

(6) *Show me the precious Ring!*

The addition of that one word '*Ring*' is critical - because it immediately focuses us on the fact that to Tom it is anything but precious! It has no power over him.

To Gollum it was "my Precious", and to Bilbo too {*FOTR - A Long-Expected Party*}. It had become so to Isildur {*FOTR - The Council of Elrond*} and latterly to Frodo {*ROTK - The Tower of Cirith Ungol*} and the great Elven Lords and Gandalf feared to touch it – but to Tom it was just a ring.

He could as lief have said '*show me the blessed thing*' or '*show me the darn thing*' for that is the import of his use of *Show me the precious Ring*. It means nothing to him and it has no power over him.

But there is also a hidden power in his words. Tom is **Master** '*His songs are stronger songs*' as the Barrow-wight and OMW episodes demonstrate. And in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* - both 1934 and 1962, when he speaks or sings words of command all obey.

He does not ask Frodo, he tells him.

- (7) and Frodo, to his own astonishment, drew out the chain from his pocket, and unfastening the Ring handed it at once to Tom.

Compare this with the reluctance of both Bilbo and Frodo when Gandalf asked them to do effectively the same thing. And also compare it with Frodo's offering of the one to Galadriel (*FOTR - The Mirror of Galadriel*). The **giving** of the One for Tom to look at and the **offering** of the One to Galadriel to use are two very distinctive and thus very significant responses from Frodo.

Frodo responds to Tom's command, but he also, instinctively knows, that Tom has absolutely no desire or interest in the One, other than just to see it- and then to demonstrate his indifference to it. However, he is still 'possessive' enough of the One to be astonished by his own actions.

With Galadriel Frodo's response is entirely different. She does not command him to show her anything. He freely offers because she has convinced him that she is wise and fearless and, if anyone can, she can use it for good. He is wrong, but he is also right. Because in offering her the One he allows her to pass through the fire like Prince Tamino and come out purified on the other side.

Because he offers her the One and she rejects it, she redeems herself and the Ban of the Valar is lifted. But to Tom it is just a trinket – an irrelevance – an aspect of a philosophy that he probably can no longer comprehend, and one he has totally rejected.

- (8) It seemed to grow larger as it lay for a moment on his big brown-skinned hand. Then suddenly he put it to his eye and laughed. For a second the hobbits had a vision, both comical and alarming, of his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold.

Just compare 'The Eye of Sauron' and 'The Eye of Tom':

'In the black abyss there appeared a single eye that slowly grew, until it filled nearly all the Mirror. So terrible was it that Frodo stood rooted, unable to cry out or withdraw his gaze. The Eye was rimmed with fire, but itself was glazed, yellow as a cat's, **watchful with intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing.**' {*FOTR - The Mirror of Galadriel* my emphasis}

a window into nothing

The negation of life – the abomination of desolation.

'Then suddenly he put it to his eye and laughed. For a second the hobbits had a vision, both comical and alarming, of **his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold.**' {*FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil* my emphasis}

his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold

The blue of the sky and the gold of the sun- the life-giving force of Nature.

- (9) Then Tom put the Ring on the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. **There was no sign of Tom disappearing** {my emphasis}

Tom – representing that which has rejected power – control – is in no way subject to that which uses deceit and illusion, and individual greed, and the hunger for power, to ensnare its victims. To turn them invisible- and thus morally unaccountable - for invisibility - on a spiritual level - reflects total lack of individual accountability. Tom is very visible - and highly accountable - except that in his case he has gone beyond the need to be accountable because he does not operate within the control system.

- (10) Tom laughed again, and then he spun the Ring in the air-and it vanished with a flash

And in a total inversion of the power of the One, and its invidious corrupting power of invisibility and ultimate wraithdom, **it is not Tom who disappears, but the Ring!**

- (11) Frodo looked at it closely... It was the same Ring, or looked the same and weighed the same... But something prompted him to make sure... He waited for an opportunity... then he slipped the Ring on... and crept quietly away from the fireside towards the outer door

At The Council of Elrond (*FOTR*) Gandalf had said of Tom:

'...the ring has no power over him. He is his own master. But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others.'

That is quite clearly demonstrated in Frodo's reaction. Although he is nowhere as influenced by the One as he is to become, and even though he is in the House of Tom Bombadil, the Ring's evil, it's effect of possessiveness on the part of its 'owner' is still apparent, as Frodo's actions demonstrate.

(12) 'Hey there!' cried Tom, glancing towards him with **a most seeing look in his shining eyes**. Hey! Come Frodo, there! Where be you a-going? Old Tom Bombadil's not as blind as that yet. {my emphasis}
a most seeing look in his shining eyes

The nine mortal men, ensnared by Sauron's guile, who had accepted the Nine Rings:

'...could walk, if they would, **unseen by all eyes** in this world beneath the sun, and they could see things in worlds invisible to mortal men; but too often they beheld only **the phantoms and delusions of Sauron** {*The Silmarillion - Of the rings of Power and the Third Age* – my emphasis}

unseen by all eyes... the phantoms and delusions of Sauron

But neither they, nor Frodo, could avoid the **seeing look** in the **shining eyes**

of Tom Bombadil, who could not be deceived by **the phantoms and delusions of Sauron**

(13) Take off your golden ring! Your hand's more fair without it. Come back! **Leave your game** and sit down beside me. {my emphasis}

'And if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind.' {*Gandalf – FOTR - Council of Elrond*}

Ultimately, it **was** a **game** to Tom, and a game he was not interested in participating in, because his mind did not work in that way. He had passed beyond such things. And while he would ensure that within his boundaries the Hobbits would not be controlled by any others who might seek to impede or harm them, in exactly the same way as he would have prevented the Hobbits doing such things to those who lived within his boundaries, outside those boundaries he would not step.

'Tom's country ends here: **he will not pass the borders**'. {*FOTR - Fog on The Barrow-Downs*}

'And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.' {*Gandalf – FOTR - The Council of Elrond*}

And it is to those 'boundaries' that we must next turn.

Tom's Boundaries

I keep six honest serving-men
I keep six honest serving-men
They taught me all I knew;
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Rudyard Kipling

It is not inappropriate to start a discussion of Tom's boundaries with these opening lines from Kipling's poem *I keep six honest serving-men*, for the six "question words" that the poem immortalizes basically cover the gamut of what we need to understand about the question of Tom's boundaries. **What** were they? **Why** did he have them? **When** were they established? **How** were they established. **Where** were they established? And **Who** established them. And some of those questions are much simpler to answer than others.

When we first come across Tom in any detail - prior to his translation from a non-ME Legendarium into LOTR and ME - he is a traveling man, albeit unlike his later - and more usual walking - he is rowing down the river:

(Said I)

'Ho! Tom Bombadil
Whither are you going
With John Pompador
Down the River rowing?

Germ Poem – HOME VI The Return of The Shadow –Chptr. The Old Forest and the Withywindle

By the time he appears in the poem *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* – Oxford Magazine 1934 – he has adopted his more usual walking – and is seen as living:

down under Hill

and

walking in the meadows

winter and summer-time in the lights and shadows

down dale, over hill, jumping over water-

and because this is all pre-transference to LOTR his adventures with Goldberry, OMW, the badgers, and the Barrow-wight are not located in any specific geographical area, although clearly he has some implied 'boundaries' by the fact that he lives

down under Hill

(changed to [up under Hill](#) in the post LOTR transference 1962 version of the poem).

Three years on, by 1937, Tolkien has given him not a fictional boundary but an RL one. In Letter #19 he is [the spirit of the \(vanishing\) Oxford and Berkshire countryside](#). And one is not oblivious to the fact that the Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside were of course the favored local walking areas of Tolkien and several of his Inklings companions.

But both in the 1934 *Adventures* and the 1937 Letter – in fiction and in fact as it were, Tom's boundaries were more restricted than when we first met him in the germ poem- where he went as far afield as [Stoke Canon](#) - Stoke Canon in Devonshire. {*"Germ Poem – HOME VI The Return of The Shadow – Chptr. The Old Forest and the Withywindle"*}

What is interesting is that this movement from the general to the particular, from countrywide to localized, is repeated in exactly the same way once Tolkien transferred Tom Bombadil into LOTR and the ME Legendarium.

The 'localization' OF Tom and the establishment of his boundaries is best looked at in two parts with regard to LOTR. As with the pre-LOTR development we have Tom moving from the general to the local, to the particular - from the Germ poem's countrywide traveling, to the 1934 poem's localization, to the specificity – albeit in RL – of **Letter #19**, in terms of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire (vanishing) countryside.

In LOTR we have exactly the same - Tom moves from a general - '[walking of the woods and hills long ago](#)' and the fact that he traveled far and wide is confirmed by the information given by Elrond that he was named differently by different folk - including the Dwarves and the Northern men, as well as the Elves (cf. Faramir's comment regarding Gandalf's wide traveling in *TT - The Window on the West*); to a more restricted locale in the first drafts:

'We were specially recommended to stop here by our friend Tom Bombadil. {said Bingo} In that case anything can be managed!'; said Mr Butterbur, slapping his thighs and beaming.' Come right inside! And how is the old fellow? Mad and merry, but merrier than mad, I'll be bound! Why didn't he come along too, and then we should have had some fun.' {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr V111. The Old Forest and The Withywindle*}

Still, I believe he came out on the right side in the end; for it turned out that the ponies, wild with terror, had escaped, and having a great deal of sense eventually made their way to find old Fatty Lumpkin. And that proved useful. For Tom Bombadil saw them, and was afraid that disaster had befallen the hobbits. So he went off to Bree to find out what he could; and there he learned all that Barnabas could tell him (and a bit more). Also he bought the ponies off Barnabas (as they belonged to him now) {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr 1X.*; *Trotter And The Journey To Weathertop*}

To the final published version:

Tom's country ends here: he will not pass the borders {*FOTR - Fog on The Barrow-Downs*}

and

'...now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set... and he will not step beyond them'. {*FOTR - The Council of Elrond*}

So, we can now at least answer two of our original questions - the easy ones!

Who established the boundaries? Well clearly Tom Bombadil.

Where were they established? Well, initially, before Tolkien decided that Tom did not any longer visit Barliman in Bree they were described as:

Tom's boundaries are from Bree to High Hay (*The Treason of Isengard – Chptr 1. 'Gandalf's Delay'*)

But once it had been decided that Tom no longer stepped outside his boundaries it is more than likely that the actual Bree boundary line of Tom's enclave is The Greenway - the old North road used a lot when the Numenorean kings in exile had the High King's seat at Fornost, or Norbury. The High Hay boundary is of course the long hedge separating Buckland from the Old Forest.

What were the boundaries? **How** were they established? The '**what**' and the '**how**' are closely associated with the '**where**' for other than the actual physical line of the boundaries, explained in the '**where**' answer we are given no real explanation as to how the boundaries were constituted or what they were.. Indeed Gandalf, *FOTR - The Council of Elrond* simply tells us: 'And now he has withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.' {my emphasis and underline}

It would seem from this that the bounds are not so much set to keep others out, than to circumscribe Tom himself, and to keep him in - a reinforcement of his 'vow of poverty' – his renunciation of control and power which has caused him to withdraw from the world per se.

And clearly, they are not visible boundaries - none can see them.

As to them keeping Tom in, rather than keeping others out, we know that Merry and other hobbits had entered the Old Forest:

'...the trees do not like strangers. They watch you. They are usually content merely to watch you, as long as daylight lasts and don't do much... But at night things can be most alarming or so I am told. I have only once or twice been in there after dark...' {*FOTR - The Old Forest*}

And of course the Bonfire Glade was so named after the trees attacked The Hedge and the hobbits in retaliation cut down and burned hundreds of them. {*ibid*}.

Yet Tom does appear to impose some sense of watchfulness over the land within whose defined boundaries he has chosen to live, for he tells the hobbits that he has:

'my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country'

{FOTR - Fog on The Barrow Downs}

But why he is watching, or what he is watching for he never clearly explains. Indeed, as is suggested below his 'watching' has nothing at all to do with 'looking-out' for potential miscreants or threats, but to observing the great glory of nature and of all natural things.

And Gandalf also remarks, somewhat enigmatically, that Tom is *waiting perhaps for a change of days*

Perhaps Tom too, is waiting for the king to come again! If he is, the accession of King Elessar to the throne of the reunited kingdoms doesn't seem to have had too much of an effect on him as at the end of *fROTK - Homeward Bound* Gandalf says:

'I am turning aside soon. I am going to have a long talk with Bombadil: such a talk as I have not had in all my time. He is a moss-gatherer, and I have been a stone doomed to rolling. But my rolling days are ending, and now we shall have much to say to one another'.

So Tom is clearly still behind his boundaries! {The significance of this visit of Gandalf's to Tom will be dealt with in a later post}.

The **'why'** is clearly related to Tom's 'vow of poverty' – and of course it also emphasizes the wider philosophic aspect of Tom, that he is in ME and LOTR but not of it. In that sense he is an odd form of 'deus ex machina' whose function is not so much in what he **does** as in what he **doesn't do**, and thus what he stands for.

Tolkien's comment in **Letter #144** is very pertinent in the **'why'** context:

'But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing...'

Clearly, if you have taken such a vow you are likely to withdraw from the world- enter perhaps a monastery, but as this is not a Christian age and religion – other than natural religion – does not feature - Tom's withdrawal from the world is not to a monastic life – but to a circumscribed geographical area, defined by himself, in which his particular *'weltanschauung'* is operated.

Moreover, it links back very much to Tolkien's concept of 'place' and to **Letter #19's** assertion that Tom is the *locus genius* of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside.

As I commented in an earlier post:

Thursday, October 20, 2005 at 17:58

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads2.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePosition=1

Quote

"Tolkien had a very strong sense of *place*. It was part and parcel of what we might call the 'Englishness in him. That is made clear in the comments he made to C S Lewis – quoted in an earlier post:

*'Tolkien once remarked to me that the feeling about home must have been quite different in the days when a family had fed on the produce of **the same few miles of country for six generations**, and that perhaps this was why they saw nymphs in the fountains and dryads in the woods- they were not mistaken for **there was in a sense a real (not metaphorical) connection between them and the countryside. What had been earth and air & later corn, and later still bread was in them.*** {ibid. my bold emphasis}

And in talking of the Shire in **Letter #178** {cf. also **Letter #181**} he says:

'It is in fact more or less a Warwickshire village of about the period of the Diamond Jubilee'

and in **Letter #190** he writes:

But, of course if we drop the 'fiction'; of long ago, 'The Shire' is based on rural England... The toponymy (place names) of *The Shire*, to take the first list, is a 'parody' of that of rural England, in much the same sense as are its inhabitants: they go together and are meant to. After all the book is English, and written by an Englishman...

And in referring to place-names of *The Shire* he remarks in **Letter #276**:

'The names already entered, even those that seem unlikely (as Nobottle), are in fact devised according to the style, origins, and mode of formation of English (especially Midland) place names.';

Name and **place** are very important to Tolkien, they give **identity**. And sometime – I think between 1934 and 1936, Tolkien had finally come to identify Tom Bombadil with the countryside of Oxfordshire and Berkshire that he and his friends C S Lewis and Warnie Lewis and others walked so frequently.

And the **Nature** that is part of Tom's persona was finally derived from the gentle, domesticated countryside of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, rather than the wilds of the Yorkshire moors - which he also knew intimately from his days in Leeds.

As a consequence - as we have observed before:

Tolkien 'domesticates' the wildness of Nature and its inhabitants by using the 'lens' of the domestic and comfortable scenery of the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire and it is not without reason that he describes Tom - as the *spirit of the (vanishing) Oxfordshire and Berkshire countryside*.

End Quote

So for reasons both interior to and exterior from LOTR and ME it makes sense for Tom to withdraw inside self-defined boundaries in which both his intent and his identity can be defined.

And there is too, a residual personal aspect in Tom of Tolkien himself and his approach to nature and the countryside – not that it is suggested that Tolkien identified himself with Tom per se any more than he did with all or any of his other LOTR characters.

Tolkien had talked – in **Letter #144** of:

Tak{ing} your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing...'

and Tom,

'my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country.' {FOTR – Fog on The Barrow Downs}

As is mentioned above, this is not the 'watching' of 'watchfulness' for danger, but the 'watching' or observing of nature, a thing much beloved of Tolkien himself.

And walking integrated Tolkien with Nature, as it did Tom:

Ronald retained strong memories of the four years spent there and of flowers – such as wild daffodils – in the fields. It was, therefore, with great sadness that, driving to Birmingham in the mid-1930's he saw the whole region being built over and his beloved fields disappearing {*Priscilla and John Tolkien in The Tolkien Family Album, talking of Sarehole Mill*}

'As I tried to express it in Bilbo's Walking Song, even an afternoon-to-evening walk may have important effects. When Sam had got no further than the Woody end he had already had an 'eye-opener'. For if there is anything in a journey of any length, for me it is this: a deliverance from the plantlike state of helpless passive sufferer, and exercise however small of will, and mobility – and of curiosity, without which a rational mind becomes stultified. {**Letter #183**}

Tollers fitted easily into our regime and I think he enjoyed himself. His one fault turned out to be that he wouldn't trot at our pace in harness; he will keep going all day on a walk, but to him, **with his botanical and entomological interests**, a walk, no matter what its length, is what we would call an extended stroll, while he calls us "ruthless walkers" {*Brothers and Friends The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis*-my bold emphasis}

'From time to time I contrasted this holiday with the Hugo one, {Hugo Dyson a fellow Inklings who objected to Tolkien's reading of 'The new Hobbit'; i.e. LOTR, Lecturer in English at Reading University until 1945 when he became Fellow and Tutor in English at Merton College, Oxford}, and was struck with the diversity of taste and interest we have in the Inklings; particularly when Tollers stopped one day and gave us a talk on the formation of the Spanish chestnut at the identical spot which prompted Hugo to tell us the scandalous circumstances under which the late Earl of Beauchamp was ordered out of England by George V.; {*ibid* my emphasis}

These excerpts, plus the many references to 'Nature'; in The Letters, demonstrate Tolkien's infinite appreciation of Nature, an appreciation which, it is suggested, in the 1930's began to coalesce around the developing figure of Tom Bombadil, and which Tolkien transmitted, via Tom's own words, into LOTR:

'my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country.' {FOTR – Fog on The Barrow Downs}

But the final, and most difficult question, the '**when**' must remain until the next post.

Tom's Boundaries – 2

It is interesting to see how others have treated the subject of Tom's 'boundaries' – interesting, but ultimately not very rewarding, for apart from Steuard Jensen and Michael Martinez, most other commentators have either ignored or passed over the issue.

A search - admittedly not exhaustive - of a variety of writers on Tom throws-up the following responses - or lack of them:

Albert, Edoardo

Who is Tom Bombadil?

<http://greenbooks.theonering.net/guest/files/o60101.html>

Doesn't deal with the subject

ARDA

Tom Bombadil

Doesn't deal with the subject

Beier, Barb

Bombadil Discovered

<http://tolkien.cro.net/else/bbeier.html>

Doesn't deal with the subject *per se*, but sees Tom's house as a 'safe haven' from which the reader – male and female - Tom and Goldberry - can view all the action in ME. One of the sillier of many silly theories on Tom.

Bolinger, Blake {I owe this reference to the kindness of NV}

J.R.R.Tolkien's Tom Bombadil

<http://www.geocities.com/thebolingers/>

Doesn't deal with the subject

Bromwell School

The True Story of Tom Bombadil

[http://bromwell.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReaders\\$179](http://bromwell.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReaders$179)

Doesn't deal with the subject

Hargrove, Gene

Who is Tom Bombadil?

<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~hargrove/tombomb.html>

Doesn't deal with the subject

Jensen, Steuard

What is Tom Bombadil?

<http://tolkien.slimy.com/essays/Bombadil.html>

Why, then, has Bombadil withdrawn into such a small area of Middle-earth instead of ranging all over? Two reasons come easily to mind. First, his chosen country is all quite wild and uncultivated, which means that living things and even the streams and landscape are closer to their natural state. One could imagine that the orchards and fields of the Shire or Bree-land would hold less interest for a 'spirit of the vanishing Oxford and Berkshire countryside' (from Letter #19) than untamed woods and deserted hills. Second, after ages of wandering, Tom may have finally decided to settle down with his favorite river spirit, and it is entirely possible that he needed to remain nearby to keep Goldberry happy and 'active' in his house. It is even possible that Tom's collection of water lilies was necessary for her: that they helped her to remain in his house, away from the river. Tom may have needed to stay nearby to tend the lilies and perhaps keep them growing through the winter.

Jones, Leslie Ellen

Myth and ME: Chptr. The Cosmic Couple

Doesn't deal with the subject

Loos William. D.B.

Who or what was Tom Bombadil?

<http://tolkien.cro.net/else/tombom.html>

Doesn't deal with the subject

Martinez. Michael

Count, Count, Weigh, Divide

http://www.merp.com/essays/MichaelMartinez/michaelmartinezsuite101essay99/document_view?month:int=9&year:int=2004

Like Gandalf, Bombadil serves a purpose in Iluvatar's plan. But unlike Gandalf, Bombadil is not charged by a higher authority with taking a more direct action against Sauron. Gandalf cannot use his power to overthrow Sauron, but he is obligated to work toward Sauron's defeat. Bombadil seems only obligated to preserve an enclave or two. That is, his function in Eriador seems to be that of a special guardian for the Shire and Bree. Gandalf suggests at the Council of Elrond that Bombadil had "withdrawn to a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them."

Gandalf doesn't speculate on why Bombadil has withdrawn to that land, though Bombadil himself hints at the reason when he bids farewell to the Hobbits: "I've got things to do, my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country. Tom can't be always near to open doors and willow-cracks. Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting."

In a very Ent-like fashion, Tom explains that he has responsibilities. His singing, talking, and walking may serve more purpose than to amuse the local water-lilies and critters. Maybe he is keeping the evil forces which have permeated the land in check. Maybe he is helping preserve something of Eriador's ancient civilization by holding back the anger of the Old Forest from overwhelming the Shire. When Gildor promises Frodo that he'll ask others to help the Hobbits, he names "the Wandering Companies...and those that have power for good". Bombadil is clearly one of "those that have power for good", for all he does is good, and he opposes evil in his own way.

Bombadil's function in the story thus serves to show that all the world opposes Sauron, not just his philosophical opposites among the leaders of the West. Bombadil's intervention legitimizes Frodo's task and paves the way for clearer signs of warning to Sauron.

Martinez, Michael

If I only had a Bombadil

<http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/tolkien/52486>

Doesn't deal with the subject directly but Martinez sees Bombadil as restraining the Old Forest and watching over the Bree folk who might be threatened by the Barrow-wights if they were not held in check.

Martinez, Michael

Love in the Trees

www.suite101.com/article.cfm/tolkien/98168

Asks why and when with regard to Tom's boundaries and his withdrawing behind them but never gets round to answering the question.

Rosebury, Brian

Tolkien – A Cultural Phenomenon

Doesn't deal with the subject

Shippey, T.A.

The Road to ME

Doesn't deal with the subject

Steuard Jensen

As shown above Jensen gives two reasons for Tom withdrawing behind boundaries:

1. His chosen country is all quite wild and uncultivated, which means that living things and even the streams and landscape are closer to their natural state. One could imagine that the orchards and fields of the Shire or Bree-land would hold less interest for a 'spirit of the vanishing Oxford and Berkshire countryside {from Letter #19} than untamed woods and deserted hills.

This is not very helpful as it gives us no real reason as to why he has chosen the particular *locale* that he has, for there are other areas of ME, indeed other areas near the Shire, that would fulfil the requirements of *wild and uncultivated* if that indeed is a precondition of Tom's.

2. after ages of wandering, Tom may have finally decided to settle down with his favorite river spirit

Again, this might be true, but begs the question of **when** he decided to do that (and **why** at that particular moment, and again gives us no clue as to the choice of location.

Jensen's 'explanations' are not particularly helpful to us and because he is not seized of the fact of Tom's importation, and the multiple roles that Tolkien has given him, restricts his explanations to the context of ME and LOTR solely - and thus edits out - intentionally or otherwise, wider options that come into the frame. And even within the context of ME and LOTR we need to remember what Tolkien wrote in **Letter #153**:

'You must concentrate on some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything, however fundamental- and therefore much will from that 'point of view' be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. The power of the Ring over all concerned, even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion - but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the universe.

Michael Martinez

Martinez deals with the question of 'boundaries' in two separate essays - and in a third asks the question but then proceeds not to answer it!

His first- and in my view totally erroneous view is to see Tom as an agent of Iluvatar:

Like Gandalf, Bombadil serves a purpose in Iluvatar's plan. But unlike Gandalf, Bombadil is not charged by a higher authority with taking a more direct action against Sauron. Gandalf cannot use his power to overthrow Sauron, but he is obligated to work toward Sauron's defeat. Bombadil seems only obligated to preserve an enclave or two. That is, his function in Eriador seems to be that of a special guardian for the Shire and Bree.

Tom is his own man - if man he be - and - as Tolkien wrote in a letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961, Tom: 'has no historical origin in the world described in *The Lord of the Rings*. {Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion In The House of tom Bombadil pp.133-34}

He is thus hardly likely to be an agent of Iluvatar, in however restricted a form.

Moreover - Tom's boundaries as such **preclude** him from any active guardianship **without** those boundaries, so to claim him as *a special guardian for the Shire and Bree* seems somewhat excessive.

And the statement:

Tom explains that he has responsibilities. His singing, talking, and walking may serve more purpose than to amuse the local water-lilies and critters. Maybe he is keeping the evil forces which have permeated the land in check. Maybe he is helping preserve something of Eriador's ancient civilization by holding back the anger of the Old Forest from overwhelming the Shire.

Is dominated by the use of the '*Maybe*' which renders it something short of credible or reliable.

Martinez, like Jensen, restricts the sources of his comments exclusively to the LOTR text - normally a laudable approach - but in the case of Tom, an unhelpful one.

In a second essay Martinez effectively repeats the assertion that 'maybe' Tom is instrumental in restraining the Old forest and the Barrow-wights, from affecting The Shire and Bree respectively. But again, the argument is very weak.

Unlike Gandalf, Treebeard, Aragorn, even Denethor, Tom is **not** a **steward** and any '*guardianship*' he exercises, is exclusively kept **within** his boundaries.



Tom's Boundaries - 3

We face three basic questions with regard to Tom's decision to withdraw behind self-defined boundaries:

1. When did he take that decision?
2. Why did he take it at the time that he did?
3. Why did he choose those particular boundaries?

As we have argued earlier, one of the problems relating to Tom is that in order to fully comprehend his **internal** ME role, we have to use **external** ME evidence, for, as we have seen, although Tom is **in** ME he is not **of** it. {cf. Fettes Letter 1961 **he has no historical origin in the world described in *The Lord of the Rings***. {Amon Hen no. 173 January 2002; pp.31-31 reprinted in Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion pp. 133-4 }.

When did he take that decision?

The Master, too, had problems in deciding when Tom actually formally carried out his 'vow of poverty'.

In *FOTR - The Council of Elrond*, Gandalf tells us:

'And **now** he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.' {my emphasis}

Compare this, with some of the earlier drafts:

Why did not I think of Bombadil before! If only he was not so far away, I would go straight back now and consult him. We have never had much to do with one another up till now. I don't think he quite approves of me somehow. **He belongs to a much older generation, and my ways are not his. He keeps himself to himself, and does not believe in travel. But I fancy somehow that we shall all need his help in the end - and that he may have to take an interest in things outside his own country.** {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr X11. At Rivendell* - my bold emphasis}

Here we see that Tom is living in a defined area – **his own country** – though we are not told what it is, and that **He keeps himself to himself, and does not believe in travel.**

So at this point in Tolkien's thinking Tom has a reluctance to step outside his boundaries, but has not yet arrived at the state of affairs that ensures **he will not step beyond them.**

And so to a later draft Council of Elrond and the fullest description of Tom's powers - in LOTR terms, that we have yet received from Tolkien {cf. my post in this thread **Thursday, December 08, 2005 at 01:17**

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads2.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePosition=1}

Extract:

Elrond was also deeply interested in the events in the Old Forest and on the Barrow-downs. 'The Barrow-wights I knew of,' he said, 'for they are closely akin to the Riders; and I marvel at your escape from them. But never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil. I would like to know more of him. Did you know of him, Gandalf?'

'Yes,' answered the wizard. 'And I sought him out at once, as soon as I found that the hobbits had disappeared from Buckland. When I had chased the Riders from Crickhollow I turned back to visit him. I daresay he would have kept the travellers longer in his home, if he had known that I was near. But I am not sure of it: he is a strange creature, and follows his own counsels, which few can fathom.' **23**

'Could we not even now send messages to him and obtain his help?' asked Erebor. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.'

'That is not quite the way of it,' said Gandalf. 'The Ring has no power over *him* or for him: it can neither harm nor serve him: he is his own master. But he has no power over it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, not break its power over others. And I think that the mastery of Tom Bombadil is seen only on his own ground from which he has never stepped within my memory.' **24**

'But on his own ground nothing seems to dismay him,' said Erebor. 'Would he not perhaps take the Ring and keep it there forever harmless?'

'He would, perhaps, if all the free folk of the world begged him to do so,' said Gandalf. 'But he would not do so willingly. For it would only postpone the evil day. In time the Lord of the Ring would find out its hiding-place, and in the end he would come in person.**25** I doubt whether Tom Bombadil, even on his own ground, could withstand that power; but I am sure that we should not leave him to face it. Besides, he

lives too far away and the Ring has come from his land only at great hazard. It would have to pass through greater danger to return. {*The Return of the Shadow – Chptr XX111.* 'In The House Of Elrond'}

CT Notes:

23 An earlier form of this passage makes Gandalf reply to Elrond: *'I knew of him. But I had quite forgotten him. I must go and see him as soon as there is a chance.'* This was changed - at the time of writing - to the passage given, in which Gandalf says that he actually visited Tom Bombadil after the attack on Crickhollow - the first appearance of an idea that will be met again, though the meeting of Gandalf and Bombadil never (alas!) reached narrative form. Cf. the isolated passage given on pp. 213-14, where Gandalf says at Rivendell: *'Why did I not think of Bombadil before! If only he was not so far away, I would go straight back now and consult him.'* Cf. also p. 345 and note 11. Gandalf does not mention Odo here, and it becomes clear at the end of this chapter that he had been removed from Rivendell (see pp. 407, 409) -

24 In the third phase version of *'At the Sign of the Prancing Pony'*; it is still apparent that Tom Bombadil was known to visit the inn at Bree (p. 334).

25 In rough drafting of this passage my father wrote: *'and in the end he would come in person; and the Barrow-wights would'*, striking out these last words as he wrote and changing them to: *'and even on his own ground Tom Bombadil alone could not withstand that onset unscathed.'* *'Lord of the Ring'*; was first written *'Lord of the Rings'*, but changed immediately.

halfir notes:

A number of interesting points emerge at this stage:

1. *'for they are closely akin to the Riders'*; Elrond continues the association between Barrow-wights and Black Riders which Tolkien later discards
2. *But never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil* At this stage of the story's development Elrond has no knowledge of Bombadil - and thus he cannot be known to the Elves and be supplied with the various names he is given in the final text. Yet Gandalf does know him.
3. *I turned back to visit him.* In this draft Gandalf actually visits Bombadil - an occurrence that does not take place until the end of LOTR in the published version.
4. *The Ring has no power over him or for him: it can neither harm nor serve him: he is his own master. But he has no power over it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, not break its power over others.* Virtually the same as in the published version.
5. *And I think that the mastery of Tom Bombadil is seen only on his own ground. The first time that we are told that Tom operates within very specific boundaries, and that his power is limited to that area alone.* The latter point is not so explicitly stated in the published version.
6. *from which he has never stepped within my memory.* The first time that we learn that Tom never leaves his self-imposed boundaries {*my emphasis*}
7. *'But on his own ground nothing seems to dismay him,' said Erebor. Would he not perhaps take the Ring and keep it there forever harmless?'* Exactly as in the published version.
8. *'He would, perhaps, if all the free folk of the world begged him to do so,' said Gandalf. 'But he would not do so willingly. For it would only postpone the evil day. In time the Lord of the Ring would find out its hiding-place, and in the end he would come in person.'* 25

I doubt whether Tom Bombadil, even on his own ground, could withstand that power; but I am sure that we should not leave him to face it. Besides, he lives too far away and the Ring has come from his land only at great hazard. It would have to pass through greater danger to return. In the published version the points made here are shared between Gandalf, Galadriel, and Glorfindel, and intensified, although the references to *'even on his own ground'*, are implicit rather than explicit.

So, by the time of this draft Tom is established as being unaffected by the One, but limited in his ability to help others ensnared by its powers; he is located in a specific area within which his powers operate (cf. the comment in the published version *Fog on the Barrow Downs*: *'Tom is not*

master of Riders from the Black land far from his country'); and that ultimately even he could not withstand the power of Sauron; all points carried into the final published version of the story.

End of Extract

But, for the purposes of our current discussion, **Point 6** is the one to note:

6. from which he has never stepped within my memory. The first time that we learn that Tom never leaves his self-imposed boundaries. **And note within my memory** – which **carries a much earlier implication than the final published lines: And now he is withdrawn into a little land, {my emphasis}**

And, in a later variation of this same passage – {cf. my post in this thread **Tuesday, December 13, 2005 at 18:21**

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/display_topic_threads2.asp?ForumID=46&TopicID=193589&PagePosition=1

we read:

Extract:

The world has changed much since I was last in the West. The Barrow-wights we knew of by many names; and of the Old Forest, that was once both ancient and very great, many tales have been told; but never before have I heard tell of this strange Bombadil. Is that his only name? I would like to know more of him. Do you know him, Gandalf?

'I **knew of** him,' answered the wizard. 'Bombadil is one name. He has called himself others, suiting himself to times and tongues. Tom-bombadil's for the Shirefolk; Erion is for Elves; Forn for the dwarves, and many names for men. We have seldom met. I am a rolling-stone and he is a moss-gatherer. There is work for both, but they seldom help one another. It might have been wise to have sought his aid, but I do not think I should have gained much. He is a strange creature, and follows his own counsels - if he has any: chance serves him better.'

'Could we not now send messages to him, and obtain his help?' asked Erebor. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.'

'That is not quite the way of it,' said Gandalf. 'The Ring has no power over him, or for him: it cannot either cheat or serve him. He is his own master. But he has no power **over** it, and he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others. **And I think that the mastery of Bombadil is seen only on his own ground, from which he has never stepped within my memory.**'

Tolkien had clearly seen the possibility of Tom playing a more active role in the Ring quest. Earlier {see previous post} we had noted that in one conversation Gandalf says:

We have never had much to do with one another up till now. I don't think he quite approves of me somehow. He belongs to a much older generation, and my ways are not his. He keeps himself to himself and does not believe in travel. **But I fancy somehow that we shall all need his help in the end - and that he may have to take an interest in things outside his own country.** {My bold emphasis}

And a pencilled note found with the earliest drafts of *The Taming of Smeagol* bears the enigmatic phrase: **Tom could have got rid of the Ring all along** {? without further}... **if asked** {HOME 8 *The War of the Ring* – *The Taming of Smeagol*}

But again and again it appears as if his attempts to get Tom more closely involved both in ME and the Quest come-up against another sentiment – objective or subjective is difficult to ascertain, that of the pre-LOTR Tom whose involvement in LOTR cannot be allowed to compromise his other role too. Tom cannot interfere too much because, as we have seen, he is **in ME but not of it.** {my bold emphasis}"

End of Extract

Again it is **within my** {Gandalf's} **memory** that Tom has been withdrawn behind self-imposed boundaries which, unless this is a miss gloss, which is always possible, is a much longer time period than the **now** of the final published version.

A definitional interlude with the OED

Within – *In the limits of a period of time:* - thus **within my memory** is defined for the purposes of defining that phrase as meaning *'for the period of time of which I have conscious memory.*

Now – *At the present time or moment; at the time spoken of or referred to:* thus **'And now he is withdrawn'** is glossed as meaning a shorter time period than that contained in **within my memory**

We will pause here to allow for any comment on the interpretation offered of **within my memory** and **now** as they are fairly critical in attempting to give some more specific time-frame as to when Tom actually made his choice to withdraw **'into a little land'**.

In 1961 Tolkien wrote to Christopher Fettes:

'So Bombadil is 'fatherless', he has no historical origin in the world described in The Lord of the Rings.

{Tolkien letter to Christopher Fettes 1961 quoted in Hammond & Scull *LOTR Companion* pp. 133-4}.

{cf. also: **larwain Ben-adar we called him, oldest and fatherless.** *Elrond-FOTR- The Council of Elrond*}

Of course Tolkien did not mean that Tom Bombadil had **no history** in ME, simply that as a character he had been imported into ME from a different legendarium, and thus could not simply be explained in terms of LOTR or indeed of ME.

And, in support of the 'importation' to LOTR and ME, in a letter to Rayner Unwin {**Letter #237** – 12 April 1962} regarding the possibility of producing something about Tom B (which later appeared as the 1962 *'Adventures'*) Tolkien wrote:

'At any rate it performs the service of further 'integrating' Tom with the world of the L.R. into which he was inserted" {my bold emphasis}

And he further asserted that point in a letter to Pauline Baynes – his illustrator – 1 Aug 1962 – **Letter #240:**

There have been a number of minor changes made at various times in the process of assimilating Tom. B to the Lord of the Rings world. {my bold emphasis}

But, although we cannot explain Tom's origin in the context of LOTR and ME, we can at least place the **time** at which he is seen to be part of that world, and thus, from that, attempt to define when he actually withdrew behind his self-appointed boundaries, for every single reference to Tom, either implicitly or explicitly tells us that he was there from the very beginning.

In *Home 6 The Return of the Shadow – Tom Bombadil* p.121 he describes himself to the hobbits in this way:

I am an Aborigine, that's what I am, the Aborigine of this land.

In describing himself as such Tom is not simply stating that he is a native of ME as opposed to others who came later, indeed, the real significance is contained in the second half of the sentence:

the Aborigine of this land.{my bold emphasis}. He is **the** original 'inhabitant' – as Tolkien noted earlier - *Home 6 The Return of the Shadow –Tom Bombadil* p.117:

Tom Bombadil is an 'aborigine' - he knew the land before men, before hobbits, before barrow-wights, yes before the necromancer –before the elves came to this quarter of the world.

But of course he is **not** really an 'inhabitant' native or otherwise - he is **ab origine** - *from the beginning*, which is not really surprising, as in another 'manifestation' he is:

'the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside (Letter #19)

a spirit of nature!

And here, of course, we start to get into confusing, if not deep water, as the Tom **in** ME but not **of** it describes himself in the context of its history, as befits a character in LOTR - which, of course, in one aspect, he most certainly is!

The important thing to bear in mind, however, is the **ab origine from the beginning**, for **every single reference to Tom**, either by himself or others **always places him from the beginning and/or** emphasizes his singularity, whether in HOME, or final LOTR text.#

Consider the following: at different times, and in different texts - HOME, LOTR - Tom is called by the following names - names given by Elves, Dwarves, Northern Men, and Hobbits:

Tom Bombadil for the Shirefolk {in Note 2 p.9 The Adventures Tolkien as 'editor' writes of the name Tom Bombadil – *Indeed, they {the Hobbits} probably gave him this name (it is Bucklandish in form) to add to his many older ones.*

Eldest *Eldest, that's what I am* {Tom, speaking of himself, *FOTR - In The House of Tom Bombadil*}

Erion (cf. Eriol adj. **alone, single** {Old Sindarin, *eriola*, Common Eldarin *erjala* - David Salo *A Gateway to Sindarin* p. 253} cf. also Eriol in *BOLT 1 The Cottage of Lost Play* '*One who dreams alone*' – the Eriol BOLT connection with Tom will be dealt with further in the next post.

Forn is actually the Scand. Word for '(belonging to) *ancient* (days)' {Tolkien - *Nomenclature Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion* p. 761}

Frumbarn (Old English: ***first-born***)

Iarwain - *Iarwain Ben-adar we called him, oldest and fatherless. But many other names he has been given by other folk: Forn by the Dwarves, Orald by Northern Men, and other names beside.* {*Elrond- FOTR- The Council of Elrond*}

Iarwain = *old-young*, presumably because as far as anyone remembered he had always looked much the same: old but very vigorous. {*An unpublished draft letter of late 1968 from Tolkien, quoted in Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion* p. 128}

Iaur = *ancient* *Etymologies. HOME V. The Lost Road 399, stem YA*

Orald is an OE word for '*very ancient*'. {Tolkien - *Nomenclature Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion* p. 761}

Oreald, Orold (Old English: '***very old***') {cf. Tolkien- *Nomenclature Hammond & Scull LOTR Companion* p. 761}

Yare *former days* - *ancient* *Etymologies. HOME V. The Lost Road 399, stem YA*

Tom is always described, both by himself and others, with names that bespeak the most ancient of days – ***ab origine* – from the beginning.**

There is one exception to this - Tom's naming by the Hobbits - which of course adopts the name imported from the earlier *legendarium* cf.

Tom Bombadil for the Shirefolk {in Note 2 p.9 The Adventures Tolkien as 'editor' writes of the name Tom Bombadil – *Indeed, they {the Hobbits} probably gave him this name (it is Bucklandish in form) to add to his many older ones.*

Tom Bombadil's for the Shire-folk - a highly appropriate name to use with the Hobbits. In this one is reminded of the fact that Gandalf was only seen by most hobbits as a wizard who gave wonderful firework displays - his true mission was unknown to only a few- such as Bilbo - and latterly Frodo et al. In **Letter #302 Tolkien** comments that Gandalf's role as the bearer of Narya -The Ring of Fire was veiled from the Hobbits:

'the most childlike aspect shown to the Hobbits being fireworks'

In the same way – Tom Bombadil – named in the Hobbits own Red Book - is shown as a figure of jollity and fun to Frodo and his friends - his true nature being veiled also. And even though in his digression In The House of Tom Bombadil, into the history of ME he is remembered by Sam for his veiled role:

'He' a caution and no mistake'

although Tom's more potent side shows through-in Sam's thinking- when Sam and Frodo have their dreadful encounter with Shelob.

But, indeed, it would be inappropriate for the Hobbits to be seen as 'namers' in the way that the Elves, Dwarves and Men are, for they do not feature *per se* in the stories of the Elder Days and ancient times.

Moreover, Tom revealed himself in different ways to different peoples at different times cf.

Elrond: ...never before have I heard of this strange Bombadil. Is that his only name?

Gandalf: Bombadil is one name, he has called himself others, **suiting himself to times and tongues. Tom-bombadil's for the Shirefolk**; Erion is for Elves, Forn for the dwarves, and many names for men.
{my bold emphasis}

Council of Elrond 5th version HOME 7 The Treason of Isengard

The association of Tom with 'first things' is also seen in the following lines - lines which have been discussed earlier in this thread under *Tom and the Great Chain of Being*.

Now let the song begin! Let us sing together
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,
Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water:
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter!

FOTR -The Old Forest

Now let the song begin

The song, of course, is the song of creation, that which brings the world and its beings into existence, that which demonstrates and creates the interconnectivity of all things – the things that Tom includes in ‘ - **Let us sing together.** ’ - “*The Great Chain of Being*’.

Jane Chance in *The Mythology of Power – Lord of the Rings*, {University of Kentucky Press 2001- Chptr. 3 *The political Hobbit* ISBN 08131 9017 7} says:

As ‘Eldest’, Tom Bombadil... acts as an Adam the Namer **who knows the history of the created world and remembers the original ideal for each species.** {my bold emphasis},

And she further observes that because Tom is involved in the maintenance of the existing order, the songs that he and Goldberry sing:

‘often praise the Middle-earth equivalent of the medieval Chain of Being’

Jane Chance Tolkien's Art - {University of Kentucky Press 2001 Chptr 5 The Lord Of The Rings ISBN- 0 8131 9020 7}

referencing the song that starts: ‘**Now let the song begin!**’ – quoted above.

In seminal private correspondence to me, my good friend Osse – who first drew my attention to Tom’s relation to the ‘Great Chain of Being’ – wrote of the song that begins ‘**Now let the song begin!**’:

‘This builds a chain of natural things with Tom and Goldberry at the base, supporting. Indeed taking Tolkien’s mythos into account, the list here starts with that which is most manufactured even though seeming natural (the sun, the moon, and stars, which were created by the Valar as told at the start of *The Silmarillion*) and progresses through those elements that are less directly created by the Valar, thus implying that Tom and Goldberry are the ‘least’ created elements – therefore the most natural, the most wholly Middle Earth related.’

Thus at every point, self -named, described by others, the memories that he has, the images he is associated with, Tom can only be seen in the context of being *ab origine* - from the beginning. He is in ME when its history starts- but he is not of it - nor is he created by it - **He is.**

An Interlude

My distaste for Gene Hargrove's bizarre - and outdated - theory that Tom is Aule and Goldberry is Yavanna is well-known, recorded both in this thread and elsewhere on the Plaza and Web, together with my reasons why.

I was particularly incensed when I learned that the entry in the then 'Routledge Encyclopaedia' on Tom was to be by Hargrove - one of several reasons why I have currently decided not to purchase it.

So I was fascinated to read the following review of the entry by Hargrove (I have not read anything from the Encyclopaedia other than by way of secondary comment) contained on a website that provides the opportunity for Reader Comment on the articles in the Encyclopaedia.

I have to thank *geordie* - our source guru - for bringing this site and the article in question to my attention.



I promise you, it is not written by me! 😊

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Tom Bombadil - Gene Hargrove

Comments by squire, February 26, 2007

This is infuriating. Although there is plenty of material here about Tom that is accurate, it is mixed in with an unseemly amount of ill-founded speculation, circular reasoning, repetition, and to top it off, clumsy writing.

Without wasting words on a complete plot summary, Hargrove could at least have started his reader out with some mention of Tom's role in the story of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, to give context to the rest of the article. Nor would it have been a bad idea to cover a bit of Tom's nature like his sing-song speech, and his semi-magical powers; a reference to the long and meaningful poem "Bombadil Goes A-Boating" would not be out of place, I suggest, in an article about Tom.

Hargrove focuses almost exclusively on the problem of Tom's identity. **Although his treatment of this question is thorough, it unfortunately leads to the - I'll say absurd - theory that Tom is Aulë the Vala of smithcraft and fabrication (in disguise). This makes Goldberry Yavanna, by the way.**

Without getting too far into the problems with this, I'll note that Hargrove's article has in contradiction to this theory both Tolkien's statement that Tom is meant to be an enigma (and Tolkien in his letters was usually glad to explain any keys to his story that were not apparent to his correspondents); and Hargrove's own earlier analysis that "Tom relates to the world through pure science and poetry rather than applied science and technology". Nor is it effective to defy Goldberry's clear identification as a water-spirit with the argument that "if Tom is not Tom" then Goldberry must not be Goldberry either, which must prove that...Tom is not Tom.

The conclusion meanders off into the wilds of *The History of Middle-earth* and is lost therein. The Further Reading egregiously cites two editions of Hargrove's Tom-as-Aulë theory. There is no See Also cross-reference. {My bold emphasis and underline}



The Dating of Tom's Boundaries – A Barrow-wight digression

In *ROTK App A The Northern Kingdom and the Dunedain* it is stated that:

In the days of Argeleb 11 the plague came into Eriador... {1636 *App B Tale of Years The Third Age*}. It was at this time that and end came to the Dunedain of Cardolan, and evil spirits out of Angmar and Rhudaur entered into the deserted mounds and dwelt there.

In their LOTR Companion. p. 145 *Hammond & Scull* draw attention to *Marquette MSS 4/2/36 (The Hunt for the Ring)*:

{The Witch -king} now visits the Barowdowns and stops there some days (probably **until late on 27** {on **27 September 3018** Frodo and the hobbits are spending the second night in the House of Tom Bombadil-*App B Tale of Years- The Third Age*} **This proves a main error, though in fact it was nearly**

successful since the Barrow-wights are roused and all things of evil spirit hostile to elves and Men are on the watch with malice in the Old Forest and on the Barrowdowns. {my bold emphasis}

In a further entry on the same page, quoting *Marquette MSS 4/2/33 (The Hunt for the Ring)* Hammond & Scull observe:

Another text concerning *The Hunt for the Ring Marquette MSS 4/2/33*, notes that 'the Witch-King... had known something of the country long ago, in his wars with the dunedain, and especially of the Tyrn Grothad of Cardolan, now the Barrow-downs, **whose evil wights had been sent there by himself** (see also *Unfinished Tales* p.348) {my bold emphasis}

Now, leaving aside the problems inherent in reconciling the unpublished Marquette texts of *The Hunt for the Ring* with LOTR, and accepting for the moment that the two are reconcilable, a combination of these pieces of information gives us the following:

1. The Barrow-wights entered the Barrow-mounds sometime after 1636
2. The wights had been sent there by the Witch-king of Angmar
3. The Witch-king of Angmar had entered the boundaries of an area now occupied by Tom Bombadil {27 September 3018}

Points 1 & 2 are, I think, important in helping us date - if that is at all possible - Tom's withdrawal behind fixed boundaries. Point 3 I will return to in a later post.

We know that Tom must have been established within his boundaries **before 1636** as in FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil he tells the hobbits that:

A shadow came out of dark places far away, and the bones were stirred in the mounds. Barrow-wights walked in the hollow places with a clink of tings on cold fingers, and gold chains in the wind.

Tom accepted them only as long as they did not interfere with his:

making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country

{N.B. In an earlier post in this thread I have argued that in using the term '*watching*' Tolkien uses the term to mean studying and observing cf. **Letter #144**}

in a similar way to his putting - up with OMW.

In a rejected draft of Tolkien's Treebeard had said of Tom:

He laughs and he does not interfere. He never made anything go wrong, but he never cured anything either. {*HOME 7 The Treason of Isengard Chptr. Treebeard*}

This is 'neutral' nature, allowing all things to thrive and survive, unless they actually threaten other living things by their activities. (cf. the earlier posts on *Tom and Control*)

So, unless others have strong views to the contrary, we can say we know that Tom had withdrawn behind his boundaries **before 1636**, probably a very long time before, and although it doesn't help us that much, it does give us one fixed point to work from.

Tom's Boundaries - The 'why' as an aid to explaining the 'when'

In an earlier post in this thread I suggested that if we could understand the '*why*' of Tom's withdrawal, it could perhaps give us some guide to the '*when*'. While recognizing that both the '*why*' and the '*when*' are highly speculative, I suggest that the following points might be able to steer us towards some further conclusion as to when the boundaries were drawn, for I believe we have already established some base data with the recent posts on the subject of **Oin** and myself.

1. In a little commented on line in *FOTR - The Council of Elrond* Gandalf says:

And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see beyond them, **waiting perhaps for a change of days...** {my bold emphasis}

2. In **Letter #240** to Pauline Baynes- his illustrator, in talking of the revised *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (revised to account for the now-published LOTR and of *Bombadil Goes Boating*, a new poem, the first being related to days long before L.R. the second to the days of the growing shadow) Tolkien says:

...I found that the bird's name did not mean, as i had supposed 'A King that fishes'. It was originally *the king's fisher*. That links the swan (traditionally the property of the King) with the fisher-bird; explains both their rivalry, and their especial friendship with Tom: **they were creatures who looked for the return of their rightful Lord, the true King.** {My bold emphasis}

3. In *FOTR- Fog on the Barrow Downs* - talking to the Hobbits of the blades of Westernesse and of those who forged them Tom says:

Few now remember them... yet still some go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in loneliness, guarding from evil things folk that are helpless...

The hobbits did not understand his words, but as he spoke they had a vision as it were of years behind them, like a vast shadowy plain over which their strode the shapes of men, tall and grim with bright swords, **and last came one, with a star on his brow.** {My bold emphasis}

(The **star** is of course *The Elendilmir* the Star of Elendil - symbol of the Kings of Arnor:

whose kings wore no crown, but bore a single white gem, the Elendilmir, Star of Elendil, bound on their brows with a silver fillet {*ROTK App A (111) The North-kingdom and the Dunedain; UT Disaster of the Gladden Fields Note 1*})

Most commentators have taken the view that **one, with a star on his brow** is Aragorn (cf. Hammond & Scull *LOTR Companion* p. 147). But, as I observed in an earlier post this is only part of the picture, not the whole canvas.

Tolkien is conjuring, in this vision- '*the once and future king*'- the line from Elendil to Aragorn, and, thus back to the true kings of Numenor:

Nay, lady, I am the last of the Numenoreans and the latest King of the Elder Days {Aragorn to Arwen: *Tale of Aragorn and Arwen ROTK App A (v)*}

So **one, with a star on his brow** is both Aragorn and those who wore *The Elendilmir* before him, the true Kings of Anor and thus of Numenor. It is thus representative of '*the once and future king*' - the line of the true monarchy.

And it is this, I would suggest, that Gandalf means by:

waiting perhaps for a change of days

for the blue feather that Tom wears in his cap is of *the king's fisher* and both that bird and the swan **were creatures who looked for the return of their rightful Lord, the true King - as did Tom!**

For Tom, **one, with a star on his brow** in the Hobbits' vision, is '*the once and future king*' from Elendil and his heirs, to Aragorn.

And, if my suggestion is correct, we now have to try and determine at what point in time Tom felt that the **rightful Lord** had been displaced, finally causing him to become:

withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see beyond them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.



Topic: Tom B: Peeling the Onion (Collegium 1)

Woodman Tom - A Digression

In the same way that Tom is **in** ME but not of **it**, he is **in** the Old Forest but not **of** it too, his remit is far wider. But it is entirely appropriate that the Hobbits first encounter him there, for to Tolkien the forest is where humankind meets Faerie.

Frodo meets Gildor Inglorion in:

a wood of ancient oak-trees {*FOTR- Three is Company*}

Tom, in The Old Forest.

Elrond at Rivendell - in a tree-lined valley {cf. *The Hobbit - A Short Rest*}

Galadriel in mallorn-treed Lothlorien.

The appropriateness of those settings, and of the Hobbits meeting Tom in The Old Forest is made very clear when we read Tolkien's essay on *Smith of Wootton Major* {extended edition, ed. Verlyn Flieger-Harper Collins 2005 ISBN 0 00 720247 4}:

It is common in Fairy tales for the entrance to the fairy world to be presented as a journey underground, into a hill or mountain or the like. The origins of this do not concern me here. They lie largely in necological imagination. But as used they are often mere 'rationalizations' - like the diminution in the size of elves - a way of providing for a land of marvels within the *same geography* as that of men. They are no more credible and no more interesting than Edgar Rice Burroughs tales dealing with a vast subterranean world. To me they kill the very kind of 'literary belief' that they are supposed to produce.

My symbol is not the underground, whether necological and Orphic or pseudo-scientific in jargon, **but the Forest**: the regions still immune from human activities, not yet dominated by them (dominated! not conquered!). If Faery Time is at points contiguous with ours, the contiguity will also occur in related points in space - or that is the theory for the purpose of the story. At certain points at or just within the Forest borders a human person may come across these contiguous points and there enter F. time and space - if fitted to do so or permitted to do so. {my bold emphasis}

Because Tom is a unique figure - being within, but not of, the world of Faerie *per se*, we cannot simply apply the 'rules of faerie' one hundred per cent to him, but it is very much in keeping with Tolkien's view of the contiguity of the world of men and the world of faerie, that Tom meets with the Hobbits in The Old Forest.

And while that meeting is a transposition and transference of things that happened largely to Tom in the 1934 poem - from which he is transferred to the world of LOTR and ME - it is a consistent theme in Tolkien (as evidenced by *Smith of Wootton Major* itself) that for the Master *the entrance to the fairy world* was *the Forest*.

The Creation of the One and Tom's Withdrawal – c. 1600 Second Age

I personally remain unconvinced that Tolkien had a specific date in mind at which he saw Tom as withdrawing behind self-defined boundaries. The act of withdrawal itself - the '*vow of poverty*' as Tolkien put it in **Letter #144** was, I believe, more important than the time the withdrawal actually took place.

However, if he **did** have a particular time in mind then I think what inferential evidence we have, points to the point in time at which Sauron created and put-on the One- the point in time **c. 1600 of the Second Age** – when '*the Machine*' was finally objectified, and Tom –the '*avatar*' of Nature- rejected it.

In *UT The Hunt For The Ring* Saruman describes Gandalf to the Witch-king, as:

Mithrandir, enemy of Sauron

and in

ROTK –The Steward and the King, Gandalf says: *I was the Enemy of Sauron*

But the **antithesis** of Sauron is **not** Gandalf but Tom Bombadil!

In an earlier post:

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=193589&PN=5

I wrote:

Excerpt

Tom as the Antithesis of Sauron

Just compare the philosophy of these two passages to see the total difference in approach between Tom and Sauron- for in many ways - while withdrawn from the world of ME in general, Tom is the antithesis of Sauron philosophically

Tom

But if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves, without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent

knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (Letter #144)

Sauron

but secretly Sauron made One Ring to rule all the others and their power was bound up with it, to be subject wholly to it and to last only so long as it too should last. And much of the strength and will of Sauron passed into that One Ring; for the power of the elven –rings was very great, and that which should govern them must be a thing of surpassing potency; and Sauron forged it in the Mountain of Fire in the Land of shadow. And while he wore the One Ring he could perceive all the things that were done by means of those lesser rings, and he could see and govern the very thoughts of those that wore them. {*The Silmarillion - Of The Rings of Power and the Third Age*}

Philosophic Comparison - Tom and Sauron

Tom

Renounced control

Power and control meaningless

Means of power valueless

All things growing or living in the land
belong each to themselves

Sauron

Rule all others

Power bound up in it
{the One}

A thing of surpassing
potency {the One}

Govern the thoughts of
that that wore them
{the nineteen}, and
dominate the minds
and wills of the
creatures of the
earth

Tom has eschewed all **control** and thus become **Master**. Sauron seeks to become **Master** by utilizing the very thing that Tom has rejected – **control** !

In response to Frodo's comment:

'Then all this strange land belongs to him?'

speaking of Tom as **Master**- Goldberry says:

'No, indeed!... That would indeed be a burden... The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master... He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master. {*FOTR - In the House of Tom Bombadil*}

Tom is Master **because** he does not exercise power and control over others. He is the very antithesis of Sauron, the Dark Lord who **seeks to exercise power and control** to **gain** mastery:

'it was the *creatures of earth, in their minds and wills, that he desired to dominate.*' {*HOME 10 Morgoth's Ring Myths Transformed Text V11 - Tolkien's italics.*}

End excerpt.

So at the very moment in time that Sauron – via the creation of the One- announces his intention of total control, Tom responds by completely rejecting the concept of control, and takes a 'vow of poverty' - withdrawing behind self-defined boundaries.

To Tolkien both Sauron **and** the Elves wanted some control - hence the making of the One and the Three – plus the other Great Rings. Tom is totally unstained in this way – a point Tolkien makes most forcefully. He is 'Master' not over things - but of himself - which does not make him more powerful than other beings

- it makes things of power have no influence over him for he conceives them to be unnecessary- he fulfils as Hammond and Scull observe :

[‘the precept ‘Know thyself’ attributed to many ancient authorities’](#). (*LOTR Companion* p. 132)

He has reached the Western equivalent of Eastern ‘Enlightenment’.

He thus rejects the very thing that Sauron seeks to achieve and he does this by withdrawing himself effectively from the arena in which the conflict and contest of control is going to take place.

Moreover, the **natural order** which Tom represents has been interfered with not only by Sauron’s creation of the One, but by the Elves’ creation of the Great Rings of Power- and particularly the Three – which seek to impose a rule of stasis on that which naturally would be born, grow, age, die, and be reborn - the natural cycle.

So Sauron’s initial defeat at the Battle of the Last Alliance in no way diminishes the threat of control, for the One is still undestroyed and the Three are actively being used by the Elves/Gandalf in a way that offends against nature.

Thus the comment Gandalf makes of Bombadil re-entering society-as it were:

[waiting perhaps for a change of days’](#) {*FOTR- Council of Elrond*}

references not simply the return of the king and the re-establishment of the natural order – of which true kingship is a part- but the specific destruction of the One and the loss of power of the Three – so that the *lex naturalis* which Tom represents can be re-established.

Only when that happens will Tom step outside his boundaries.

N.B. There is one major problem with the suggestion that Tom withdrew c.1600 of the Second Age, and that is the way Gandalf talks of him both at *The Council of Elrond* (FOTR) and in *Homeward Bound* (ROTK).

The language that Gandalf uses about Tom seems to me to predicate a primary as opposed to a secondary knowledge, which implies personal contact. And Gandalf did not arrive in ME until after about a thousand years of the Third Age (ROTK App B The Third Age), and Tom by that time was long since ensconced behind his boundaries. That being the case how did Gandalf speak knowledgeably about him? Of course one could argue that he visited him within those boundaries, but that also clashes with the HOME comments about Tom visiting Bree - although that has been excised in the final publication - which would have made his withdrawal much later.

I would be very interested in response to my primary thesis suggesting c.1600 and the complications that faces from Gandalf’s comments about Tom.

Well some months have passed since we last visited with Tom and for that I apologize. This current post is something of a digression as it does not deal with the subject matter I latterly said I would revisit when I returned to Tom viz:

1. [Tom’s relationship with the elves and how he received information regarding the hobbits from Gildor and the traveling companions](#)
2. [The point in time when Tom withdrew behind his self-defined boundaries.](#)

Having revisited my position on these two points, I will then address [Kirinki 54’s](#) question as to where Tom sits in the LOTR legendarium, and then return to my mainstream analysis of Tom by starting with the [relationship between Tom and Goldberry](#).

This post, however, arises from a serendipitous happening. In reading Thomas Honegger ed. *Tolkien Revisited* I came across an essay by Dirk Vandebeker - *Language Lore, and Learning in Lord of the Rings*.

Vandebeker asserts a proposition that is hardly new - that:

[he is akin to Adam without the fall: immortal, still living in a local Paradise and still in command of the divine and uncorrupted language that coincides with the essence of things. In the Bible, Adam is the one to give names to birds and beasts, "and whatever the man called every living creature , that was its name](#)

(Gen. 2.19) According to Walter Benjamin, Adam's act of naming indicates that the paradisiacal language of man must have been one of perfect knowledge i.e. these names are not arbitrary significations but the 'true' ones which capture the essence of the named. A trace of this perfect act of naming can be detected in *The Lord of the Rings*, when Tom Bombadil gives names to the ponies of the hobbits "Merry {...} had not given {the ponies} any such names, but they answered to the new names that Tom had given them for the rest of their lives" (LOTR 159).

The 'Adam' suggestion has been made before, though perhaps not in exactly the same way. Vandebeke's comments of Tom [living in a local Paradise](#) seems a bit wide of the mark when also living and coexisting in the same area are OMW, the Barrow-wight, with the WK dropping in on occasion! And Tolkien's use of Tom as a 'namer' has more to do with Owen Barfield's *Poetic Diction* than it has to do with the Book of Genesis!

On the 10th of February 2006 I wrote this regarding *Tom and Song* which is relevant to the Tom as 'akin to 'Adam' argument.

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=193589&PN=5

Excerpt

Tom and Song

In a letter to Christopher Fettes in 1961 Tolkien wrote:

'The original poem about him, in **the curious rhythm which characterizes him**, appeared in the Oxford Magazine at some time not long before the war.' {*Hammond & Scull Companion* p. 134, by bold emphasis}

and it is to that **curious rhythm which characterizes him** that we first need to turn, to unravel the clue that Tolkien is giving us with his use of the word 'rhythm.'

In *The Road to Middle- Earth* {*Revised edition 2005 Harper Collins paperback, ISBN 0 261 10275 3 Chapter 4 A Cartographic Plot*} Tom Shippey writes:

'Tom's other major quality is naturalness. Even his language has something unpremeditated about it. A lot of what he says is nonsense, the first thing indeed the hobbits notice, even before they see him. When it is not 'hey dol! merry dol! and the like, it tends to be strongly assertive or onomastic, mere lists of names and qualities.'

It is significant that Shippey chooses to use the term 'onomastic'. At its simplest level an *onomasticon* is an alphabetic list of proper names, especially of persons. The Ancient Egyptians produced Onomasticons – one of the most important being that of Onomasticon of Amenemipet.

{Tolkien was well aware of the Ancient Egyptian concept of naming- and probably aware of the Onomasticon of Amenemipet. His library – *inter alia* – contained Budge's three-volume Egyptian Book of the Dead: 'fragrant from many years exposure to pipe tobacco smoke' as the book-dealer that offered them for sale some years ago wrote! } (**N.B.** I owe the Tolkien library information to the kindness of *geordie* - our 'source-guru'.)

Onomasticons were not dictionaries or explicit encyclopedias, because they did not include explanations for the words. However, the order and selection of words provide an implicit guide to the categories into which the Egyptians divided the world.

The **Ancient Egyptians** believed that **a word contained all the properties of the thing**, a belief we also find in Plato's *Cratylus* in his exposition on the nature of language.

Plato concludes that words are not arbitrary labels, and that they can only be given by a **name – maker** who is 'of all artisans the rarest among men.'

Owen Barfield - a neo-Platonist and fellow Inklings, influenced both Tolkien and Lewis tremendously with this concept of **semantic unity** – a linguistic philosophy which essentially meant that **signifier and signified had a commonality** – which he called '**semantic unity**'.

Tom Bombadil is a **name-maker**, he has lists, 'mere lists of names and qualities' as Shippey puts it. And although his naming is hardly of the Gods - he gives names to the Hobbits' ponies –

Sharp-ears, Wise-nose, Swish-tail and Bumkin,
White socks, my little lad, and old fatty Lumpkin.

the important point to note is that they answer to them!

‘behind him came in an obedient line six ponies : their own five and one more... **Merry, to whom the others belonged, had not, in fact, given them any such names, but they answered to the new names Tom had given them for the rest of their lives.**’ {*FOTR - Fog on The Barrow-Downs - my bold and underline*}

Why? Because Tom as name-maker - had named them as they were – he had defined their essence. He had used the ‘true-language’ –cf. Shippey below.

Commenting further on Tom’s language Shippey observes:

‘From time to time it breaks through to being ‘perhaps a strange language unknown to the hobbits, an ancient language whose words were mainly those of wonder and delight’. But though they may not know the language, the hobbits understand it, as they understand Goldberry’s rain-song without recognizing the words; and when Tom names something (as he does with the hobbit’s ponies) the name sticks - the animals respond to nothing more for the rest of their lives. There is an ancient myth in this feature, that of the ‘true language’, the tongue in which there is a thing for each word and a word for each thing, and in which signifier then naturally has power over signified {cf. the Ancient Egyptian and Platonic beliefs referred to above, and Barfield’s concept of ‘semantic unity’} – language ‘isomomorphic with reality’ once again. It is this which seems to give Tom his power. He is the great singer; indeed he does not yet seem to have discovered, or sunk into, prose. Much of what he says is printed by Tolkien as verse , but almost all of what he says can be *read* as verse { cf. Tolkien’s observation: **the curious rhythm which characterizes him**} falling into strongly – marked two – stress phrases, with or without rhyme and alliteration, usually with feminine or unstressed endings... The scansion system... is a little like that of the Old English verse Tolkien was later to produce in the songs of Rohan, but more like that of much Old English ‘prose’, over whose claim to being ‘verse’ editors still hesitate. The point is though that while we appreciate it as rhythmical (unlike prose), we also do not mark it as premeditated or artificial (unlike verse). The hobbits fall into song themselves, ‘as if it was easier and more natural than talking.’

And Tom interweaves both speech and song:

‘Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about.’ {*FOTR - In The House Of Tom Bombadil*}

And Tom - like the language he speaks - or sings - is of that early age – before the semantic unity was shattered and the light became splintered. In one of the earlier drafts Tolkien has Tom referring to himself as *ab origine*, in LOTR he tells Frodo he is ‘*Eldest*’ and his memory stretches far back:

‘into ancient starlight, when only the elf –sires were awake.’

And so Tom is linked – by his very being- with the Ancient Egyptian Onomasticons where the word contained all the properties of the thing, to Plato’s *Cratylus*, to Barfield’s ‘*semantic unity*’ and Shippey’s ‘*true language*’. Of course this is nowhere explicit in the text- but the nature of the language he sings/speaks and his power as a **name-giver**- means that he is **the** ancient of days, the days in which signifier and signified were one, the days in which ‘**In the beginning was the song!**’

Tolkien thus again fuses the concepts of his own linguistic philosophy within those of the overarching external mythos to which he relates his own myth – in order to give it that universality that is the hallmark of true myth. Layers of an onion indeed!

End excerpt

I find that Vandebekes limitation - comparing Tom to Adam - restricts rather than enhances our understanding of Tom - whose ‘naming’ existed long before the Book of Genesis. Granted that it is comparable to what Vandebke tells us Walter Benjamin has said regarding the **paradisiacal language of man** - but Tolkien is here dealing with the nature of ‘true language’ when signifier and signified were one, which certainly predates any Biblical references. Moreover, such a comparison as Vandebekes makes constrains the mythic imagination that Tolkien brought to bear on LOTR and Tom - in implicitly giving it a religious tinge which it does not have.

Tom Bombadil: Peeling the Onion – Index

This thread has been running since 19th of September 2005. As I said in the opening post then:

'Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected analysis on the subject of Tom Bombadil, which I could dedicate to all Plaza enthusiasts. With that aim in mind I started The Great Work, with aid of some 30+ supportive loremasters. With that great aim in mind I spent almost a year searching on and offsite for anything connected to Tom, and my colleagues did likewise. An editorial committee was set up, a comprehensive topic list agreed, and projects assigned. But RL, loss of supporting project managers, and the sheer weight of coordinating such a large project and number of people finally brought my work to a halt. I had no need to leave scope for other minds, for they were already busy at work and have continued to offer their views in a multitude of threads from the inception of The Great Work, until today' {With apologies to J R R Tolkien and **Letter #131**}

However, the material acquired during that process still remains, and since then, even more views on Tom have seen the light of day - each one usually more absurd than the last.

So, rather than let all that research go to waste I have decided to use it to peel the layers of the onion that is Tom B and his fair Lady Goldberry, and provide a resource base for others who might wish to take up the torch where I lay it down.

This long-promised Index I hope goes some way to providing easier access to the thread as a database on Tom – one of its intentions- than has currently existed to date. There are still a few glitches to overcome. Through various server – changes and thread re-profiling some topic areas appear twice in the text. I hope, however, that the pages referenced do contain the topics mentioned - and I apologize if they are then repeated later - but not - I hope- in the Index.

In trying to find out more about Tom I have changed some earlier views and ideas, and I thank all those who have helped me develop - and modify - my views on the subject.

Some four years on my passion for Tom is undiminished - and I hope soon to continue this thread – which still has much ground to cover.

I hope this Index will enable those who love Tom and are fascinated by his enigmatic character to focus on those areas that particularly appeal to them.

The sage tells us that journey is more important than the destination - and in seeking to get a clearer picture of Tom I think that an important fact to bear in mind.

Tolkien told us that journey's change people - they certainly did Bilbo and Frodo - and they have me as I have traveled this still on-going path that seeks to understand better the nature of Tom Bombadil.

I hope that others will also seek to travel their own similar paths to understanding 'Old Tom Bombadil' and that this thread, will provide them with some ideas of the route they should take.

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Ring Out Great Tom: Mark T Hooker and Magnus Thomas Bombadilus Oxoniensis – A Digression

While many have written about the nature of Tom - trying to identify who or what he is, far fewer have spent any real quality time analyzing his name itself. Most are content just to leave it as an idiosyncratic creation of Tolkien's.

Those who have gone further – and tried to get '*inside the language*' of the name - have normally not produced any convincing arguments for their suggestions. For example, an early attempt at an explanation by Lin Carter in *A look Behind the Lord of the Rings* that Tom Bombadil's name is derived from the 'Boabdil' – (itself a corruption of the original Arabic name) – the last Moorish king of Granada, has little substance behind it.

And while, of course, **we** know that Tom Bombadil was probably a name given to this enigmatic character by the Buckland Hobbits (cf. *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* 1975 footnote 2 P. 9) that doesn't really take us any further forward in finding out what was in Tolkien's mind when he named his character in this fashion. 🤔

However, there may well be some light at the end of this particular tunnel which is not like most of the other explanations - a train coming in the opposite direction! 😊 Through the kindness of **Dorwiniondil** my attention has been drawn to an article by **Mark T. Hooker** in (probably) *Beyond Bree* which may hold the key to the naming of Old Tom!

In an interview with **Tolkien Library**

<http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/mark-hooker-interview.htm>

Mark Hooker described himself as:

a specialist in Comparative Translation associated with Indiana University's **Russian and East European Institute** (REEI). Now retired, I conduct research for publication on topics that interest me.

Mark's work has been the subject of discussion here on the Plaza, firstly in

Tolkien Through Russian Eyes

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=214404

and then in

A Motley Crew of Reprobates

http://www.lotrplaza.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=226084

in which he discusses Tolkien's use of the word '*Garn*'.

The full article from which that thread was drawn can be found here:

<http://accurapid.com/journal/32garn.htm>

Further describing himself in the *Tolkien Library* interview, Mark goes on to say:

I am a linguist who laughs at Tolkien's low philological jests, and who plays the same kind of word games himself.

This is important to bear in mind as we look at Mark Hooker's explanation of the name *Tom Bombadil*.

Ring Out Great Tom: Mark T Hooker and Magnus Thomas Bombadilus Oxoniensis – A Digression – 2

Mark Hooker opens his paper on the name '*Tom Bombadil*' by observing how Tolkien was influenced and inspired by things in and around Oxford in the creation of his fictional works:

the discovery of a likely association between the name Boffin, the town of Oxford and Tolkien [1] suggests that other things in and around Oxford might have served as prompts to Tolkien's imagination for more than just Boffin.

Those familiar with Tolkien's pseudo-historical romp *Farmer Giles of Ham* will recall how redolent that work was of Oxford and its environs.

{All references to *Farmer Giles* are to the 50th Anniversary edition edited by Scull & Hammond and the relevant notes there}.

- The Foreword probably alludes to the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by the **Oxford** cleric Geoffrey of Monmouth.
- *The valley of the Thames* - the Thames flows *inter alia* - through Oxfordshire
- *Otmoor* - a wild moor east of Oxford
- *Farthingho* – a village 20 miles north of Oxford
- *Standing Stones* –the Rollright Stones – an ancient stone circle north-west of Oxford
- *The four wise clerks of Oxenford* – as well as being a reference to the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Tolkien includes an Oxford –'in joke' – his 'four wise clerks' being the four editors of the OED - Murray, Bradley, Craigie, and Onions.

So Oxford, its environs, and Oxford life were firmly imprinted on Tolkien's mind.

Mark Hooker points to the most famous 'Tom' in Oxford for an explanation of the name of Tom Bombadil –

the "Great Tom" bell of in the Tom Tower of Christ Church. Its fame—and Tolkien's awareness of it—can hardly be doubted

And he also draws attention to the *original* inscription borne by the bell:

In Thomae laude resono Bim Bom sine fraude (In praise of Thomas I ring out Ding Dong truly)

Mark Hooker goes on to observe that:

The rhyme pattern of the Latin inscription on the bell is distinctive. It not only identifies itself as an inscription on a bell by its vocabulary, [2] but also by its structure, which resembles the *ding dong* of the peal of a bell with two rhymed phrases that mirror the ringing of a bell just like *ding* and *dong* do.

The Latin inscription, he comments:

has a number of similarities to the song that the Hobbits hear Tom Bombadil singing just before he arrives to rescue Merry from Old Man Willow.

Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo!

Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!

Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo!

Mr Hooker goes on to comment that

One of the likeness between the song and the Latin inscription is the repeat of the rhyme *Tom Bom* in line three of the song and in syllables 2 and 11 of the inscription. This rhyme pair is so unusual that its repeat suggests that this was not the result of pure chance.

The other likeness between the song and the inscription is found in the structure of the lyrics. Like the inscription, the lyrics have an obvious bell theme, found not only in their vocabulary (ring a dong), but also in their structure.

In a detailed analysis of the structure of the song and its comparison to the Latin inscription and the tolling sound of Great Tom, Mr. Hooker puts forward a very compelling thesis that the name that Tolkien gave to his son Michael's doll is in fact derived from Great Tom of Christchurch.

In further expert etymological exegesis Mr. Hooker also explores the relationship between the name and the buzzing of bees - linking with:

Tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers {*The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*}

And of course Tom himself:

Hummed like a honeybee {ibid}

Mr. Hooker observes:

In Latin, there are: *bombio* (to buzz, to hum) and *bombus* (a deep sound, rumble, booming, buzzing [especially of bees]), which is the zoological Latin name of the genus to which bumblebees belong. In Italian, *bombo* is the word for *bumblebee*; *bombito* is *resonance* and *reverberation*, while *bombardino* is a *bugle*. In Middle English, *bome* (also *beme*) means *trumpet*, and *bomeling* is the *buzzing of bees*. In Spanish and Portuguese, *bombo* is the word for *bass drum*. A *bombard* is a deep-toned wooden musical instrument of the bassoon family that is no longer commonly played. In Greek, *bombos* is a deep, hollow sound. The English word *bomb* (in Italian: *bomba*) was originally the description of the sound that an explosive device made when it went off. The first element (*bomba*) in the name *Bombadil* would, therefore, seem to mean *a loud sound* (like that of a bell), or *a buzzing* (like that of bees).

Combining the meanings of these two elements gives the name *Bombadil* the sense of:

- 1) one who takes delight in the sound of bells
- 2) one who takes delight in the sound of bees.

There is more, much more, of detailed etymological analysis that Mr. Hooker undertakes to support the basic thesis of his paper, and I have done scant justice to the depth and compelling nature of his argument.

But Tolkien most certainly could well have walked the path that Mr. Hooker has outlined in coming-up with the name *Tom Bombadil*. His formidable philological skills, his love of punning, his play of words within words all fit the template so skillfully and compelling drawn by Mr. Hooker in his paper.

Whether he did or not one cannot say with certainty, but I rank this the best explanation yet of how the name *Tom Bombadil* came into being.

Envoi

If in fact 'Great Tom' and 'Old Tom Bombadil' are interlinked, it is interesting to note *that* 'Old Tom Bombadil' even if he shared a provenance with 'Great Tom' would not have been well received in Christchurch Meadows.

In *Bombadil Goes Boating* you will recall that Farmer Maggot greets Tom with:

Ho there! beggarman tramping in the Marish!

What's your business here? Hat all stuck with arrows!

An early notice in Christchurch Meadows reads:

The Meadow Keepers and constables are hereby instructed to prevent the entrance to the Meadow of all beggars, all persons in ragged or very dirty clothes, persons of improper character who are not decent in appearance and behaviour; and to prevent indecent, rude or disorderly conduct of every description.

{Dacre Balsdon – *Oxford Life*:}

Tom Bombadil would not have been welcome! 😊

Concluded

[1] Hooker, "Boffin of the Yale."

[2] *Resono* (I ring), compare *resonate*; *Bim Bom* (ding dong). The sound that a bell makes in Latin (*Bim Bom*) is almost the same one that bells make in present-day Dutch (*bim bam*).

Another Digression: Northrop Frye, Randel Helms, Tolkien, Tom Bombadil, and the 'Golux'.

In the headnote to **Letter #142** from Tolkien to Father Murray, Father Murray is quoted as doubting whether many critics will be able to make much of the *LOTR*:

they will not have a pigeon-hole neatly labelled for it.

If that is the case with the work itself, how much more so is it the case with one of its most complex characters: Tom Bombadil.

Tom defies 'pigeon-holing', indeed, some would argue that he defies definition - which, of course makes him all the more desirable to try and define! But to 'fix in a formulated phrase' - most certainly not, for above all other things Tom is his own man:

Tom Bombadil is the Master {*FOTR - In the House of Tom Bombadil*}.

So when Randel Helms {*Tolkien's World Chptr 5 Tolkien's World -*} somewhat dismisses Tom as a 'stock -character' - one must take some issue with him:

Tom Bombadil, Frodo's mentor, in this second adventure is Tolkien's version of the stock figure Northrop Frye calls the 'Golux' (after Thurber) the one romance character who can 'elude the moral antithesis of heroism and villainy' pervasive in romance, one of the 'spirits of nature....[who] represent partly the moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature and partly a world of mystery.

Helms is quoting from Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism - Third Essay: Archetypal Criticism - Theory of Myths*.

In fact, if we quote more extensively from the original Frye we can see that Tom indeed does in part fulfil the role so ascribed in Frye's great work on critical theory:

The characters who elude the moral antithesis of heroism and villainy generally are or suggest spirits of nature. They represent partly the moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature and partly a world of mystery which is glimpsed but never seen, and which retreats when approached...

Such characters are, more or less, children of nature, who can be brought to serve the hero, like Crusoe's Friday, but retain the inscrutability of their origin. As servants or friends of the hero, they impart the mysterious rapport with nature that so often marks the central figure of romance. The paradox that many of these children of nature are 'supernatural' beings is not as distressing in romance as in logic. The

helpful fairy, the grateful dead man, the wonderful servant who has just the abilities the hero needs in a crisis, are all folk tale commonplaces. they are romantic intensifications of the comic tricky slave, the author's *architectus*. In James Thurber's *The Thirteen Clocks* this character type is called the 'Golux' and there is no reason why the word should not be adopted as a critical term.

Frye's phrase 'folk tale commonplaces' is indeed partly true both of Tolkien's story-telling and of Tom's character - but it is not **the** truth, and thus it is not proper for Randel Helms to define Tom as a 'stock - character' any more than it would be to describe Tolkien's great work as simply being a compilation of 'folk tale commonplaces'.

For Tolkien's great vision was to see the power that resided in the 'stock characters' from folk and fairy tale - and the importance of creating a work of high romance that had the ability to embed itself within a wider and more historic mythic framework. As he wrote in **Letter #337**:

To my mind it is the particular use in a particular situation of any motive, whether invented, deliberately borrowed, or unconsciously remembered that is the most interesting thing to consider.

So, if we argue that Tom fits into a particular category of literary archetype we must also understand **the particular use in a particular situation** of that archetype, and in that instance the 'stock-character' becomes anything but, and most certainly so in the case of Tom Bombadil.

And as for the 'folk tale commonplaces' it is well for us to remind ourselves of the words of wisdom contained in that which is passed down- from the Rohirrim's songs referring to the Ents, which they no longer understand, {cf. *TT-The Road to Isengard*} to the words of Ioreth dismissed as doggerel by Herb master {*ROTK - The Houses of Healing*}. That 'hidden' wisdom is the same as the use of 'folk tale commonplaces' and their **particular use in a particular situation**.

The way in which 'stock-character's' and 'folk tale commonplaces' are used by Tolkien, does not dull, but radiantly illuminates the story that he tells, and far from being a negative criticism of his story-telling and characterization, become a positive benefit to it, as they resonate so strongly with his reading public.

As for Tom, well, Old Tom remains anything but a stock-character - **Tom is master!** { *FOTR - In the House of Tom Bombadil*}.
