

# O T H E R S H A N D S

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OATHBREAKERS  
AND  
DUNFENDINGS

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NEXT ISSUE

DWARVES OF THE  
BLUE MOUNTAINS

EDITORIAL:  
EMERGENCY DUTY!

Happy New Year's on this, the first day of the last year of the millennium! The countdown to the release of the Lord of the Rings movies begins...

You may have been a bit surprised at this issue's cover art, since the feature piece for January was advertised as being about the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains. Due to extenuating circumstances, the author of that piece (and those of other projected contributions) could not meet the submission deadline for this issue. Accordingly, the burden to create content fell on my shoulders.

That's OK. I always welcome an excuse to research a Middle-earth topic. It has also robbed me of precious vacation time I had set aside for preparing *The Oathbreakers* for publication. At the very least, I thought, whatever I end up writing should be apposite to that project. The result is the rather long essay that fills up most of this issue exploring Tolkien's evolving views on the Dunlendings and their cousins in the White Mountains. Its scope is quite different from *Oathbreakers*, which takes the interpretations of the MERP series for granted. The present essay does not; instead, it provides a basis for developing these two Middle-earth peoples in whatever direction you, the GM, may choose for your own campaign.

Next comes the prototype for a new regular feature I'd like to propose for OH. (Its name has yet to be decided.) My hope is to create a bridge between those subscribers interested primarily in MERP and those who collect Mithril miniatures—a crossover which would share the strengths but avoid the drawbacks of the "Digital Hands" column that appeared in past issues of OH. My basic idea is this: artistic renditions of figures from the Mithril series accompanied by descriptive background information derived from or inspired by the MERP modules.

The exactitude and richness of Chris Tubb's miniature designs have a lot of potential for visually enhancing the role playing experience. (Often the Mithril pieces possess more detail than the textual descriptions of the MERP characters they represent.) On the other side of the equation, there are the MERP modules, which often contain background information that influenced the design of the miniatures—information which the Mithril collector may be unaware of.

Naturally, my ulterior motive is to expand our subscription base so that eventually I will be able to take advantage of bulk mailing rates (thus

reducing subscription costs). But I also believe the concept has merit in its own right. You all will be the best judge of that. I'm also hoping that one of you will step forward and volunteer to write-up next issue's column. Anyway, for the inaugural column I've taken the Mannish soldiers of the Witch-king (all of them out of circulation, "vintage" figures). The artwork may have very practical value for a GM running a campaign in Eriador. ("Your party runs across an Angmarean patrol, and they look like this...")

Bridget Buxton came to the rescue when I discovered that there was a two-page gap between my Oathbreakers essay and this issue's episode of Rastarin's Log. Being an accomplished wilderness trekker, and anticipating the direction in which my current Middle-earth campaign is moving, Bridget offered to write a short article on travel in an arctic environment—advice for GMs who want to spice up the realism of their game. Great stuff.

Let me round this up quickly with some news. The only new development at ICE that I can confirm is that the long-awaited MECCG expansion set, *Middle-earth: The Balrog*, is finally in the stores.

On the Mithril front, Chris Tubb has just confirmed that Prince August is definitely committed to releasing 40 new Middle-earth figures this year. (What these are is still under wraps, but I hope to give updates as I learn them.) Some of you may remember a few years back that an online Middle-earth journal was being planned. This never materialized, but now another group of people has actually gone and done it. It's called "The Guild Companion," and it contains materials for all of ICE's product lines, including MERP. It can be accessed at <http://www.guildcompanion.com/>.

Last but not least, I'm pleased to announce that our subscription base continues to climb. Last night it reached 80.

Chris Seeman  
1 January, 1999

# OATHBREAKERS AND DUNLENDINGS

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In his introduction to Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* (*The Languages and Peoples of the Third Age*), Tolkien writes: "...in the hills of Dunland a remnant lingered of an old people, the former inhabitants of much of Gondor (RotK.405)." He refers here to the Dunlendings, the wild hillmen who joined the Orcs of Saruman in the siege of Helm's Deep because of their hatred for the Rohirrim (Chapter 7 of *The Two Towers*). At one point in that chapter, the origin of this hatred is explained. The Dunlendings, says Gamling, once dwelt in many western valleys of the Mark: "Not in half a thousand years have they forgotten their grievance that the lords of Gondor gave the Mark to Eorl the Young and made alliance with him (TT.142)."

Yet Gamling's statement seems to be of quite a different order from the claim that the ancestors of the Dunlendings had inhabited "much of Gondor." It is only in the Appendix that Tolkien establishes a more ancient historical connection between the Dunlendings of the Third Age and the pre-Númenórean inhabitants of Gondor.

Elaborating on his introductory note, Tolkien writes that the Dunlendings "were a remnant of the peoples that had dwelt in the vales of the White Mountains in ages past. The Dead Men of Dunbarrow were of their kin. But in the Dark Years others had removed to the southern dales of the Misty Mountains; and thence some had passed into the empty lands as far north as the Barrow-downs. From them came the Men of Bree; but long before these had become subjects of the North Kingdom of Amor and had taken up the Westron tongue. Only in Dunland did Men of this race hold to their old speech and manners: a secret folk, unfriendly to the Dúnedain, hating the Rohirrim (RotK.407-408; cf UT570)."

This ties in to yet another passage in *LotR*, in which Tolkien describes the inhabitants of Lebennin at the time of the War of the Ring: "There dwelt a hardy folk between the mountains and the sea. They were reckoned men of Gondor, yet their blood was mingled, and there were short and swarthy folk among them whose sires came more from the forgotten men who housed in the shadow

of the hills in the Dark Years ere the coming of the kings (RotK.22)."

Taken together, these two passages indicate a cultural dispersion extending from Bree in the north all the way to the southern coastlands of Gondor. Investigation of any one of these peoples should therefore take advantage of the available information pertaining to the others, in order to more sharply define their commonalities and differences. Regardless of which sub-culture one is interested in exploring, the Dunlendings will naturally play a key role, since, as Tolkien says, "Only in Dunland did Men of this race hold to their old speech and manners (RotK.408)." They are our main source for reconstructing their ancestors' lifeways.

This essay is primarily concerned with illuminating the history and culture of the Oathbreakers, the "Dead Men of Dunbarrow." While aware of the interpretations that have been given to this people by the *MERP* series (and having myself contributed to those interpretations), my purpose here is to confine myself to what Tolkien wrote. Inevitably, though, many of the questions I have posed to the sources have been shaped by (or in reaction to) the *MERP* canon, so I will often allude to it.

## NOMENCLATURE

"In the foothills of the western side of the Misty Mountains," writes Tolkien, "lived the remnants of the people that the Rohirrim later called the Dunlendings (UT.370; my emphasis)." This statement, taken from a discussion of the boundaries of Gondor and Arnor in the early Third Age (UT.369), implies that the term "Dunlending" was not what this people called themselves, nor did the name come into existence until the arrival of the Rohirrim in Calenardhon (TA 2510). So what *did* they call themselves? Or what, at least, were they called before the Rohirrim came?

So far as we know, Tolkien never gave an answer to the first question; but the second is answered in a footnote to a very late essay he wrote (ca. 1969, nearly 15 years after the publication of *LotR*) concerning cultural interactions among the peoples of

Middle-earth, posthumously entitled "Of Dwarves and Men." Here Tolkien writes:

*The Eneðbwaith (or Central Wilderness) was shared by the North and South Kingdoms, but was never settled by Númenóreans owing to the hostility of the Gwathuirim (Dunlendings), except in the fortified town and haven about the great bridge over the Greyflood at Tharbad. (PoMe.350)*

No explanation of the term "Gwathuirim" is offered, but its form and etymology are clear. It is a Sindarin compound: *gwathui* "shadowy" + *rim* (a collective suffix, frequently used in gentilitic names; e.g., Rohirrim, Haradrim, Onodrim, Naugrim, Falathrim, etc.). So, Gwathuirim would presumably mean "Shadowy Men, Men of the Shadow."<sup>1</sup> This epithet clearly relates to a larger matter which Tolkien discusses in the essay; namely, the Númenórean classification of Mannish races. Tolkien's discussion of this topic in "Of Dwarves and Men" was prompted by a passage from Chapter 5 of *The Two Towers*, in which Faramir tells Frodo and Sam about Gondor and its people.

*For so we reckon Men in our lore, calling them the High, or Men of the West, which were the Númenóreans; and the Middle Peoples, Men of the Twilight, such as are the Rohirrim and their kin that dwell still far in the North; and the Wild, the Men of Darkness.' (TT.287)*

In the present essay, Tolkien defines "Men of Darkness" thus:

*The Men of Darkness was a general term applied to all those who were hostile to the Kingdoms [of Gondor and Arnor], and who were (or appeared in Gondor to be) moved by something more than human greed for conquest and plunder, a fanatical hatred of the High Men and their allies as enemies of their gods. The term took no account of differences of race or culture or language. (PoMe.312)*

This same ambiguity plagues the Númenórean concept of “Middle Men:”

*Thus it came about that the Númenórean term Middle Men was confused in its application: Its chief test was friendliness towards the West (to Elves and to Númenóreans), but it was actually applied usually only to Men whose stature and looks were similar to those of the Númenóreans, although this most important distinction of friendliness was not historically confined to peoples of one racial kind. It was a mark of all kinds of Men who were descendants of those who had abjured the Shadow of Morgoth and his servants and wandered westward to escape it — and certainly included both the races of small stature, Drúgs and Hobbits. Also it must be said that unfriendliness to Númenóreans and their allies was not always due to the Shadow, but in later days to the actions of the Númenóreans themselves. Thus many of the forest-dwellers of the shorelands south of the Ered Luin, especially in Minhiriath, were as later historians recognized the kin of the Folk of Haleth; but they became bitter enemies of the Númenóreans, because of their ruthless treatment and their devastation of the forests, and this hatred remained unappeased in their descendants, causing them to join with any enemies of Númenor. In the Third Age their survivors were the people known in Rohan as the Dunlendings. (PoMe.313-314)*

This passage raises a number of questions related to Tolkien’s earlier remark about the relationship of this folk to the Men of the White Mountains. At present, though, it is sufficient to recognize that “Gwathuirim” is to be understood as equivalent in meaning to the “Men of Darkness” discussed in the essay.

Further observations can be made about Tolkien’s choice of “Gwathuirim” as the pre-Rohirric name for the Dunlendings. First, *gwathui* would appear to be a precise etymological equivalent to the *dun(n)* element common to the words Dunland, Dunlending, Dunlendish and Dunharrow, which Tolkien glosses as “dark, dusky, dull-hued” (TC.183, cf. 163). The gloss for Dunharrow, “the heathen fane on the hillside” (TC.183), is especially significant, as it plays on the religious element in the Númenórean concept of the Men of Darkness cited above. The expression “heathen” is used twice in LotR (once by Denethor and once by Gandalf speaking to him) with reference to the pre-Númenórean Men of Middle-earth “under the domination of the Dark Power” (RotK.99-100, 129).

It would appear, then, that the Rohirrim inherited the Gondorian label for the folk of western Calenardhon and the lands beyond, and simply translated that name into their own tongue.<sup>2</sup> From this we might speculate that the pre-Rohirric name for Dunland was Dor 'Wathui. From this point on, I will use “Gwathuirim” and “Dor 'Wathui” to talk about this people and their land, except when dealing with the Rohirric period (TA 2510ff.).

A second thought (purely speculative) on Tolkien’s choice of “Gwathuirim” concerns its resemblance to “Gwathló” (or “Gwathir”), the Númenórean name for the River Greyflood. In an extended etymological note on this topic, Tolkien writes:

*The origin of the name Gwathló must be sought in history. In the time of the War of the Ring the lands were still in places well-wooded, especially in Minhiriath and in the south-east of Enedwaith; but most of the plains were grasslands....But in the earlier days, at the time of the first explorations of the Númenóreans, the situation was quite different. Minhiriath and Enedwaith were occupied by vast and almost continuous forests, except in the central region of the Great Fens. The changes that followed were largely due to the operations of Tar-Aldarion, the Mariner-king, who formed a friendship and alliance with Gil-galad. Aldarion had a great hunger for timber, desiring to make Númenor into a great naval power; his felling of trees in Númenor had caused great dissensions. In voyages down the coasts he saw with wonder the great forests, and he chose the estuary of the Gwathló for the site of a new haven entirely under Númenórean control (Gondor of course did not yet exist). There he began great works, which continued to be extended after his days. This entry into Eriador later proved of great importance to the war against Sauron (Second Age 1695-1701); but it was in origin a timber-port and ship-building harbour. The native people were fairly numerous and warlike, but they were forest-dwellers, scattered communities without central leadership. They were in awe of the Númenóreans, but they did not become hostile until the tree-felling became devastating. Then they attacked and ambushed the Númenóreans when they could, and the Númenóreans treated them as enemies, and became ruthless in their fellings, giving no thought to husbandry or replanting. The fellings had at first been along both banks of the Gwathló, and timber had been floated down to the haven (Lond Daer); but now the Númenóreans drove great tracks and roads into the forests northwards and southwards from the Gwathló, and the native folk that survived fled from Minhiriath into the dark woods on the great Cape of Eryn Vorn, south*

*of the mouth of the Baranduin....From Enedwaith they took refuge in the eastern mountains where afterwards was Dunland... (UT.261-263)*

Here again there is much relevant historical and cultural information to be considered, but first the linguistic point: if it was away from the River Gwathlo that the Númenóreans drove these hostile forest-dwellers, the label Gwathuirim could take on a double sense, denoting both their hostility as “Men of Darkness” and their place of origin. The Númenóreans called the river “Gwathir” (later “Gwathló”) because “the forest drew down to the river-banks, and wide though the waters were the huge trees cast great shadows on the river...(UT.263).” Since the *gwath* element refers to the shadows cast by the trees of the great forest, “Gwathuirim” might well describe a people who had once lived out their lives in a shaded, arboreal environment.

A final shade of meaning (no pun intended) may relate to the physical appearance of the Gwathuirim. Dark hair and swarthy skin appear to have been hallmarks of the Gwathuirim of Eriador, the pre-Númenórean population of Gondor, and the Breelanders (see p. 7 below). Recall that physical appearance was one, though by no means the only, factor in the Númenórean classification of Men (PoMe.312-314, cited above).

To summarize: for all of the Second Age and most of the Third — including the time period in which the MERP modules are usually set—the people which the Rohirrim later called Dunlendings were known as Gwathuirim. The primary meaning of this was pejorative, “Men of Darkness;” but the choice of the element *gwath* (there are other Sindarin words for “shadow” and “darkness”) may have been influenced by other factors as well, such as their physical appearance or the character of the land where the Númenóreans first encountered them.

But what of the Men of the White Mountains, to whom the Gwathuirim are said to be akin? What were they called? This question is more problematic because, unlike the Gwathuirim, the pre-Númenórean inhabitants of Gondor and their descendants do not seem to have constituted a single entity. Tolkien can speak of the “King of the Mountains” and of the “Dead Men of Dunharrow” (RotK.55, 408), but these surely cannot include those pre-Númenóreans who inhabited the lowlands of Gondor



“between the mountains and the sea” and who intermarried with the Dúnedain to form the population base of Lebennin. This last point can be demonstrated by juxtaposing the following two passages:

*In the days of the earlier settlements of Númenor there were many Men of different kinds in Eriador and Rhovanion; but for the most part they dwelt far from the coasts.... The shores of the Bay of Belfalas were still mainly desolate.... But it was long before the Númenórean settlers about the Mouths of Anduin ventured north of their great haven at Pelargir and made contact with Men who dwelt in the valleys on either side of the White Mountains. Their term Middle Men was thus originally applied to Men of Eriador.... (PoMe.515)*

Earlier in this same essay, Tolkien states that the term “Middle Men,” used in the above-quoted passage by the Númenóreans at Pelargir, was first coined in the time of Ar-Adúnakhôr, the 20th king of Númenor (ruled SA 2899-2962). But the haven of Pelargir had already been in existence for five and a half centuries before this (founded SA 2350). Of this haven Tolkien elsewhere writes:

*There Adúnaic was spoken, and mingled with many words of the languages of lesser men it became a Common Speech that spread thence along the coasts among all that had dealings with West-ernesse. (RotK.407)*

This linguistic situation would have necessitated a significant and ongoing interaction with pre-Númenórean inhabitants, and it is hard to imagine (in spite of Tolkien’s statement, quoted above, about the comparative desolation of the coastlands during the “earlier settlements”—which may not include Pelargir in any case, since it was not a very early foundation, nor was it located, strictly speaking, on the coasts) that the Númenóreans of Pelargir had absolutely no neighbors for more than 600 years, leaving at most only 479 years of the age left for Adúnaic to evolve into the Common Speech for all the coast-lands of northwestern Middle-earth.

More likely what is implied by these passages is a silent distinction between the pre-Númenóreans of the lowlands, who *did* interact with the Númenórean settlers, but “whose sires came more from the forgotten men who housed in the shadow of the hills in the Dark Years ere the coming of the kings (RotK.22),” and the “Men who dwelt in the valleys on either side of the White

Mountains (PoMe.313),” with whom the settlers did not interact, but to whom the lowlanders (like the Gwathuirim) were culturally related.<sup>5</sup>

A similar deduction may be made with reference to another statement of Faramir’s, that the wisdom of Gondor’s ruling stewards was to be seen in the fact that “they recruited the strength of our people from the sturdy folk of the sea-coast, and from the hardy mountaineers of Ered Nimrais (TT.286).”<sup>4</sup> Surely these mountain-dwellers cannot be identical with the Oathbreakers, who, after Isildur cursed them, “hid themselves in secret places in the mountains and had no dealings with other men, but slowly dwindled in the barren hills (RotK.55).”

Both of these passages illustrate that the Dead Men of Dunharrow—the Men of the Mountains in Isildur’s time—were not coterminous with *all* inhabitants of the White Mountains in *all* time periods, nor did the King of the Mountains’ realm encompass all those of his race who occupied the lowlands of Lebennin “between the mountains and the sea.”

What terms (apart from the English glosses Tolkien provides) the Dúnedain might have used to distinguish these groups is anyone’s guess. Elsewhere, however, in a wholly unrelated context, Tolkien devised a Sindarin term with the meaning of “a mountaineer, one living in the mountains.” This form, given in the singular, is *orodben* (WotJ.376), the “gentilic” plural of which (in parallel to Gwathuirim), would be *Orodbedhrim*.<sup>5</sup>

This is, in fact, the term that was used in ICE’s *Southern Gondor* (SG) modules, in correction of the grammatically erroneous “Eredrim” from earlier MERP publications. In SG, *Orodbedhrim* was used restrictively with reference to the Third Age inhabitants of the White Mountains *not* connected to the Oathbreakers. In this essay, however, I will, out of convenience, use it to refer to those who were to become the Oathbreakers. This still leaves unresolved the problem of what to call the related peoples of the coasts of Belfalas Bay and their adjoining lowlands, but as Tolkien provides no clues, I will content myself with referring to these simply as the “coastal peoples.”

## IDENTITY

Having labored through the thorny problems of nomenclature, we can now move on to a more interesting and important question: who were the Gwathuirim and the *Orodbedhrim*, and where did they come from? All three of our primary sources

(RotK, UT and PoMe) agree that they were related. But the sources appear to disagree—or to represent two distinct and unintegrated conceptions in Tolkien’s thinking—on how they came to be where we find them in the Third Age.

In the first conception (the one found in the published appendices to LotR), the Gwathuirim “had removed to the southern dales of the Misty Mountains” during the Dark Years, “and thence some had passed into the empty lands as far north as the Barrow-downs. From them came the Men of Bree... (RotK.408).” In UT, however, the Gwathuirim were already sundered from the *Orodbedhrim*, and withdrew east to the Misty Mountains, away from the River Gwathló and the coastlands of *Enedhwaith*, fleeing from Númenórean persecution and reprisal (UT.263).

It would not be difficult, if one wished, to reconcile these two accounts. A simple chronological observation makes it possible to combine both migrations into the same history without damage to either conception. The UT version is tied to the pre-war period of Eriador (i.e., before SA 1693-1701), since during that war, Sauron was able to recruit the Gwathuirim into his service as spies and guides *because* of the oppression they had suffered at the hands of the tree-felling Númenóreans (UT.263). The RotK version, on the other hand (undated though it is), seems to imply a post-war setting, since it describes the lands through which the Gwathuirim migrated as “empty” (RotK.408). Tolkien elsewhere writes of the war as the occasion for Eriador’s depopulation,<sup>6</sup> so it is likely that this reference to the desolation of the lands implies that the Gwathuirim migrated north at *some* point after SA 1701 (though when exactly is anyone’s guess, since the “Dark Years” extend at least until the foundation of Gondor in SA 3320).

So, the student of Middle-earth history can sleep soundly knowing that both of Tolkien’s ideas can be preserved without contradiction. The forest-dwelling Gwathuirim, already sundered at some time in the more distant past from their kinsfolk in the White Mountains, are driven into the dales of the Misty Mountains by the Númenóreans. During Sauron’s war with the Elves, they serve as spies and scouts against their former oppressors. At some point after the war (and for reasons to us unknown), some *Orodbedhrim* migrate north from the White Mountains to join their relatives in Dor Wathui. From there (either at that same time or sometime later)

some of these newcomers press on further northwards into empty Eriador as far north as the Barrow-downs. The furthest of these settlers become the ancestors of the Bree-landers.

But it may be more valuable to leave this project aside for the moment, and to view these divergent conceptions as a reflex of other concerns Tolkien may have had in mind as he endeavored to tie together the many cultural and linguistic relations of his ever-evolving mythology. Let us consider each version of Gwathuirim origins separately.

It is clear from Tolkien's linking of them to the Bree-folk (a detail otherwise irrelevant to the history of pre-Númenórean Gondor) that far more is at stake in the identity of the Gwathuirim than the mere desire to explain the origins of their hatred for the Rohirrim. I am of the opinion that Tolkien's development of the Gwathuirim in this direction was motivated by his concern to account for certain already-established characteristics of the Men of Bree; namely, their dwellings: Bree, Combe and Archet. These names are all of Welsh derivation, and Tolkien's selection of them had implications for his overall scheme of language as a tool for representing cultural identity in his invented world:

*In presenting the matter of the Red Book, as a history for people of today to read, the whole of the linguistic setting has been translated as far as possible into terms of our own times. Only the languages alien to the Common Speech have been left in their original form; but these appear mainly in the names of persons and places. The Common Speech, as the language of the Hobbits and their narratives, has inevitably been turned into modern English.... This procedure perhaps needs some defence. It seemed to me that to present all the names in their original forms would obscure an essential feature of the times as perceived by the Hobbits (whose point of view I was mainly concerned to preserve): the contrast between a wide-spread language, to them as ordinary and habitual as English is to us, and the living remains of far older and more reverend tongues. (RotK.411,412)*

Continuing in this explanatory vein, Tolkien writes:

*Having gone so far in my attempt to modernize and make familiar the language and names of the Hobbits, I found myself involved in a further process. The Mannish languages that were related to the Westron should, it seemed to me, be turned into terms*

On this principle, we know that Tolkien regarded the language of the Gwathuirim proper as "alien," because *Forgoil*, the one recorded Dunlendish word in LotR ("Strawheads," the name the Dunlendings used of the Rohirrim — the same name which the Easterlings gave to the Edain in Hithlum; LIT. 69), is Tolkien's own invention, not a translation into any real-world language related to English (TT. 142). Tolkien confirms the otherness of the Gwathuirim in Appendix F:

*Most of the Men of the northern regions of the West-lands were descended from the Edain of the First Age, or from their close kin. Their languages were, therefore, related to the Adûnaic, and some still preserved a likeness to the Common Speech.... Wholly alien was the speech of the Wild Men of Drúadan Forest. Alien, too, or only remotely akin, was the language of the Dunlendings. (RotK.407)*

Not so the Breelanders, who had long since, by the time of the War of the Ring, "become subjects of the North Kingdom of Arnor and had taken up the Westron tongue (RotK.408)." To depict the Bree-folk as being both assimilated to the culture of the West and yet rooted in a tradition "alien, or only remotely akin" to that culture, Tolkien injected a Welsh (i.e., a "Celtic" rather than a "Germanic") element into their nomenclature. The same thought process lay behind the names of the Hobbits of Buckland:

*It was from the former language of the southern Stooks, no doubt, that they inherited many of their odd names. These I have usually left unaltered [i.e., "untranslated"], for if queer now, they were queer in their own day. They had a style that we should perhaps feel vaguely to be 'Celtic'. Since the survival of traces of the older language of the Stooks and the Bree-men resembled the survival of Celtic elements in England, I have sometimes undated the latter in my translation. Thus Bree, Combe (Coomb), Archet, and Chetwood are modelled on relics of British nomenclature, chosen according to sense: bree 'hill', chet 'wood'. (RotK.413-414)*

But having made this linguistic move, Tolkien had then to justify it "historically;" that is, in terms of cultural migrations in the imagined history of his world. Initially, this may have posed a problem for Tolkien, since, in several other contexts, he had already designated northern Eriador as the ancestral homeland of the Edain (i.e., the speakers of Adûnaic/English). The intrusion

of a "Celtic" linguistic stratum into this region therefore had to be explained as the result of some historical intrusion of an "alien" people. Looking around for geographically proximate candidates, Tolkien found the Dunlendings, and promptly recruited them for the task. Tolkien employs this exact same tactic to account for the personal names of the Stooks. In fact, he makes so bold as to invent an early Stoorish migration into Dor 'Wathui itself: "the southern Stooks appear to have adopted a language related to Dunlendish before they came north to the Shire (RotK.408; cf. RotK.366, 367; FotR.15; PoMe.311)."

By inventing these historical connections to rationalize his linguistic decisions, however, Tolkien had landed the Gwathuirim into a new identity crisis. In his introduction of the Bree-folk, Tolkien as narrator writes:

*According to their own tales they were the original inhabitants [of the Breeland] and were the descendants of the first Men that ever wandered into the West of the middle-world. Few had survived the turmoils of the Elder Days; but when the Kings returned again over the Great Sea they had found the Bree-men still there, and they were still there now, when the memory of the old Kings had faded into the grass. (FotR.161)*

Were this proven true, however, that would make the Bree-folk Edain (or, at any rate, a people related to the Edain) — the very thing which Tolkien's imputation of "alienness" is meant to deny. Of course, one could point out in a conciliatory spirit that the above-quoted tale is only a subjective assertion on the part of the Breelanders, and need not be taken as accurate.

Entirely possible. But do Tolkien's own continued meditations on the Gwathuirim bear this out? Why, if Tolkien were content with the Bree-folk falsely imagining themselves to be heirs of an Adanic heritage, did he develop the subsequent version of Gwathuirim origins, in which later historians recognized them to be "the kin of the Folk of Haleth (PoMe.314)?"

I believe that Tolkien perceived the problem he had created, and that this realization was one of the factors that shaped his later view of the Gwathuirim. In order to resolve the contradiction between the Bree-folk as both Adanic and as proto-Dunlendings, he had, first and foremost, to explain how it was that their Adanic ancestors came to be regarded (and eventually came to behave) as Men of Darkness. To achieve this goal,

Tolkien had, ready at hand, the tale of Númenórean arrogance in Middle-earth, coupled with the already established “alienness” of the Haladin from the other two houses of the Edain in the Silmarillion tradition. In addition, Tolkien had now established a connection between the Haladin and the mysterious Drúedain, a connection which was itself prompted by Tolkien’s musings about the identity of the “Pukelmen” of Dunharrow, the ancient hold of the Orodbedhrim.

In his exploration of this nascent connection, Tolkien writes:

*This long account of the Drúedain had been given, because it throws some light on the Wild Men still surviving at the time of the War of the Ring in the eastern end of the White Mountains, and on Merry’s recognition of them as living forms of the carved Púkel-men of Dun Harrow. The presence of members of the same race among the Edain in Beleriand thus makes another backward link between The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion.... (PoMe.509)*

I suggest that Tolkien’s identification of the Gwathuirim (and, by association, the Bree-folk) with the Haladin was ventured in a similar spirit and with a comparable goal in mind. Not only did it resolve the problem of the Breelanders’ identity, it also “created a link backwards” between the history of the Elder Days and the later ages of Middle-earth.

In all this we may seem to have wandered far from our original topic: the Oathbreakers. In fact, though, the implications of Tolkien’s evolving views on the Gwathuirim have far-reaching consequences for understanding the Oathbreakers. It means that the cultural dispersion represented by the Gwathuirim, the Orodbedhrim, the anonymous “coastal peoples” of Gondor, and the Breelanders, is a dispersion of Adanic — and, more specifically, Haladic — peoples, just as northern Eriador and Rhovanion became the cultural zone for the “Northmen” (peoples related to the other two houses of the Edain). It is on this basis that we can now explore three markers of these peoples’ shared identity: physical appearance, language and customs.

## APPEARANCE

Given the fact that the Oathbreakers are all ghostly shades by the time of the War of the Ring, we are provided with no clues as to their appearance in life. But if the Orodbedhrim were a Haladic people in origin,

then we may infer what they might have looked like by comparing the physical characteristics of the Gwathuirim, Bree-folk and Haladin proper.

The very name “Gwathuirim” and its successor expression “Dunlending” alludes to the dark skin or hair-color of the inhabitants of Enedhwaith. In Appendix F, Tolkien confirms this: “*Dunland and Dunlending* are the names that the Rohirrim gave to them, because they were swarthy and dark-haired (RotK.408).” The one explicit description of the Dunlendings in LotR appears in the course of Merry’s retelling of the marching out of Saruman’s hosts from Isengard: “Most of them were ordinary men, rather tall and dark-haired, and grim but not particularly evil-looking (TT.171).” In Appendix A (“The House of Eorl”), the annalist says of Freca that he “claimed descent from King Fréawine, though he had, men said, much Dunlendish blood, and was dark-haired (RotK.346).”

Compare with these passages the note about the “short and swarthy” character of the Men of Lebennin (RotK.22), and the description of the Men of Lossarnach as “shorter and somewhat swarthier than any men that Pippin had yet seen in Gondor (RotK.43).” Similar characteristics are ascribed to the coastal people of Gondor during the Dark Years in the story “Tal-elmar.” Hazad (father of Tal-elmar) is described as having been in his youth broad, swarthy and short, whereas Tal-elmar himself (who is in reality part-Númenórean) “might seem, among that swart sturdy folk, slender-built and lacking in the strength of leg and neck that they praised (PoMe.423).”

Related to this description is a shrewd exchange between Elmar (Hazad’s Dúnadan mother) and Buldar his father:

*‘Never again shall I be glad, while I am held captive among a strange folk that I deem base and unlovely.’*

*‘So be it,’ said Buldar. ‘But it is not to be thought that I should let thee go free... Base and unlovely thou namest us. Truly, maybe. Yet true is it also that thy folk are cruel, and lawless, and the friends of demons. Thieves are they. For our lands are ours from of old, which they would wrest from us with their bitter blades. White skins and bright eyes are no warrant for such deeds.’*

*‘Are they not?’ said she. ‘Then neither are thick legs and wide shoulders. Or by what means did ye gain these landd that ye boast of? Are there not, as I hear men say, wild folk in the caves of the mountains, who once roamed here free, ere ye swart folk came hitber and hunted them like wolves?’ (PoMe.425)*

With such physical descriptions in mind, the “Dunlendish” appearance of the Breelanders becomes manifest: “The Men of Bree were brown-haired, broad, and rather short (FotR.161).”

Turning at last to the Haladin themselves, we are told that, like the House of Bëor, they were “dark or brown of hair, with grey eyes...but they were of lesser stature (Sil. 148).” A comparable allusion to the shortness of the Haladin appears in the description of Húrin, who “was of less stature than his fathers...but he was tireless and enduring in body, lithe and swift after the manner of his mother’s kin, Hareth of the Haladin (Sil. 160).”

So, all three of the Haladic peoples whose physical appearance is described in the sources available to us display recurrent, if not universally-shared, features: 1) swarthy skin,<sup>7</sup> 2) dark hair, 3) broad build, 4) lesser stature than the other two families of Adanic peoples.<sup>8</sup> The Orodbedhrim probably deviated little from these genetic tendencies.

## LANGUAGE

During the Battle of Helm’s Deep, Gamling asks Éomer whether he hears the voices of the Dunlendings:

*‘I hear them,’ said Eomer; but they are only the scream of birds and the bellowing of beasts to my ears.’ Yet there are many that cry in the Dunland tongue,’ said Gamling. ‘I know that tongue. It is an ancient speech of men, and once was spoken in many western valleys of the Mark. Hark! They hate us, and they are glad; for our doom seems certain to them. “The king, the king I” they cry. “We will take their king. Death to the Forgoil! Death to the Strawheads! Death to the robbers of the North!” Such names they have for us.’ (TT.142)*

This exchange is an apt literary representation of an observation which Tolkien states in more scholarly terms in his lecture “English and Welsh” (an essay, incidentally, which reveals the inspiration behind Tolkien’s choice of Welsh place-names for the Bree-land). “Cacophony,” he writes, “is an accusation commonly made, especially by those of small linguistic experience, against any unfamiliar form of speech (E&W.182).”

Éomer’s dismissal of the Dunlendish tongue, followed by Tolkien’s refusal to “translate” the term *forgoil* into a real-world

language, communicates to the reader the “alienness” of the Dunlendings and their kindred peoples to the Edain and to those who had inherited the ancestral tongue of the Edain (Westron) as a *Lingua franca*. To reiterate, Tolkien translated the languages of the Northmen (i.e., relatives of the first two houses of the Edain) into languages related to modern English, because in Middle-earth those languages supposedly retained some similarity — even recognizability — to Westron (RotK.407). Consider Merry’s partial comprehension of the Rohirric speech:

*It was a Language in which there seemed to be many words that he knew, though spoken more richly and strongly than in the Shire, yet he could not piece the words together. At times some Rider would lift up his clear voice in stirring song, and Merry felt his heart leap, though he did not know what it was about. (RotK.65)*

Compare this with Gimli’s hearing of the language of the Oathbreakers as he tread the Paths of the Dead: “there seemed an endless whisper of voices all about him, a murmur of words in *no tongue that he had ever heard before* (RotK.60; my emphasis).”

In order for Dunlendish (and its related tongues) to lack this commensurability with Westron, it had to have been rooted in a language “alien, or only remotely akin” to the ancestor(s) of Westron in the Elder Days. It is no accident that the Haladin, in the latest version of the Silmarillion, were “sundered in speech” from the Bëorian and the Marachians (Sil.142). As Tolkien writes, “The Folk of Haleth were strangers to the other Atani, speaking an *alien* language (UT.383; my emphasis).”

Only so could Tolkien account for the initial failure of the returning Númenóreans to recognize their Haladic kinsfolk in Enedhwaith — in contrast to the “Northmannic” people of Bëorian or Marachian extraction, whom they *did* recognize:

*Thus it came about that there was a meeting between them on the Tower Hills; and to that meeting with the Númenóreans came twelve Men only out of Eriador, Men of high heart and courage, for most of their people feared that the newcomers were perilous spirits of the Dead. But when they looked on the shipmen fear left them....they felt no doubt of their ancient kinship; and likewise the shipmen looked with glad surprise upon the Men of Middle-earth, for it had been believed in Númenor that the Men left behind were descended*

*from the evil Men who in the last days of the war against Morgoth had been summoned by him out of the East. But now they looked upon faces free from the Shadow and Men who could have walked in Númenor and not been thought aliens save in their clothes and their arms. Then suddenly, after the silence, both the Númenóreans and the Men of Eriador spoke words of welcome and greeting in their own tongues, as if addressing friends and kinsmen after a long parting. At first they were disappointed, for neither side could understand the other; but when they mingled in friendship they found that they shared very many words still clearly recognisable, and others that could be understood with attention, and they were able to converse haltingly about simple matters. (UT.215-214; n.5)*

Not so for the latter-day kindred of Haldad, to their ruin. In a self-fulfilling prophecy, the Númenóreans by their own hubris had transformed their distant cousins into Men of Darkness, and, so branded, the fugitive Gwathuirim sought aid from the Dark Lord.

The alienness of Haladic speech to Westron raises a serious obstacle to the treatment which Dunlendish and Oathbreaker names have received in much of the MERP series. Though the approaches to nomenclature have varied, the usual procedure — taking Tolkien’s “Celticizing” of the Bree-land names as its model — has been to *translate* Haladic names into Gaelic or Welsh, or to invent names that sound suitably Celtic (*Arnor: The People*.8). From a pragmatic standpoint this tactic has some merit, since these real-world languages readily provide a large vocabulary and a consistent linguistic “style” with a minimum of hassle for the GM, but which retain their exotic quality for most English-speakers.

However, to adopt this convention is to misconstrue Tolkien’s intentions. His use of Welsh for Bree-land place-names was intended to represent the *process* of “the survival of traces of the older language of the Stoors and the Bree-men,” which, he claimed, resembled the *process* of “the survival of Celtic elements in England (RotK.413-414).” His preservation of untranslated *forgoil* indicates that Tolkien did not regard the Haladic tongues as such to be capable of “translation” by a real-world language related to English.

A variant of the translation principle adhered to in some of the MERP modules has been to invent alien words *modelled upon* a Celtic language (using *forgoil* as evidence that Tolkien was in fact seeking a “Celtic” style for Dunlendish and its related

tongues). Whether or not *forgoil* sounds “Celtic” is probably a subjective judgment, but the debate would be put on a broader footing if *forgoil* were not considered in isolation.

To facilitate this I present below in alphabetical order all of the pre-Númenórean names I am aware of that fall within the Haladic dispersion as we know it. I do not include the names of the Haladin in Beleriand, except in two cases where a clear etymology is given. I use “Agaric” to denote the language spoken by the Men of Agar.

- **Adorn:** “Tributary of the river Isen, forming with it the western bounds of Rohan. (The name is of a form suitable to Sindarin, but not interpretable in that language. It must be supposed to be of pre-Númenórean origin, adapted to Sindarin.)” (UT.416)
- **Agar:** The name of Tal-elmar’s village and the surrounding hill territory (most probably in southwestern Anfalas). (PoMe.423ff)
- **Arnach:** See Lossarnach. (RotK.407)
- **Bel(falas):** “...while the element *Bel-* is certainly derived from a pre-Númenórean name, its source was in fact Sindarin (UT.247).” I read this statement to mean that it was the Sindarin-speaking Elves of Edhellond who gave the coast of Gondor its name, but that the *bel* element was adopted by them from the pre-Númenórean inhabitants.
- **Buldar:** An Agaric personal name; Tal-elmar’s grandfather. (PoMe.424ff)
- **Eilenach:** One of the beacon-hills of Anórien. (UT.319; n.51; cf. RotK.407)
- **Eilenaer:** One of the beacon-hills of Anórien, “a name of pre-Númenórean origin, evidently related to *Eilenach* (UT.319; n.51; cf. UT.308).”
- **Erech:** A hill amid the Morthond-vale. Site of the oathbreaking. (RotK.407)
- **Erelas:** One of the beacon-hills of Anórien. “(Probably a pre-Númenórean name; although the name is Sindarin in style it has no suitable meaning in that language. ‘It was a green hill without trees, so that neither *er-* “single” nor *las* (s) “leaf” seem applicable.’)” (UT.436)
- **Forlong:** The name of the Lord of Lossarnach in the time of the War of the Ring. (RotK.407)
- **Go-hilleg:** An Agaric name for Black Númenóreans. (PoMe.427ff)
- **Gorbelgod:** An Agaric name; exact referent unclear: “the Swans of Gorbelgod”

seems to refer to the Númenórean ships. Perhaps it contains the same element *bel* as in *Belfalas*. (PoMe.426; cf. note 6 on p. 437 for the earlier, rejected, form of this name.)

- **Haretna:** The Haladic name given to Haleth's burial mound, apparently equivalent in meaning to Sindarin *arwen* "noble woman, chieftainess(?)" (Sil.147)
- **Hazad:** An Agaric personal name; Tal-elmar's father. (PoMe.423ff; 428 *Hazad uBuldar*)
- **Ishmalog:** An Agaric (?) name for a valley somewhere to the east of Agar. Perhaps the valley of Celgalen in Anfalas on the SG map. (PoMe.424)
- **Lossarnach:** "Region in the north-east of Lebennin about the sources of the river Erui. (The name is stated to mean 'Flowery Arnach', Arnach being a pre-Númenórean name.)" (UT.451) Perhaps *arnach* is related to the *-nach* in Eilenach.
- **Min-Rimmon:** A beacon-hill of Anórien. Glossed as "'Peak of the Rimmon' (a group of crags)" (UT.453) Also spelled Minrimmon, *min* is a Sindarin element meaning a "height" or "prominence" (cf. *minas* "tower"). Rimmon is the pre-Númenórean element. (RotK.407)
- **Mogru:** An Agaric personal name; master of Tal-elmar's village. (PoMe.428ff)
- **Rimmon:** See Min-Rimmon.
- **Swanfleet:** English ("Westron") name for the *Nîn-in-Eilph*. "If the river had any name it was in the language of the Dunlendings (UT.264)." Too bad Tolkien doesn't tell us what that name was.
- **Tal-elmar:** An Agaric personal name. Elmar (Tal-elmar's grandmother) is a Sindarin (Númenórean) name. Perhaps *tal-* denotes relationship of some kind. (PoMe.423ff; 428 *Tal-elmar uHazað*)
- **Tûr:** Haladic name for a burial mound, equivalent to Sindarin *haudb*. (Sil.147)
- **Udul:** An Agaric(?) name for a pre-Númenórean settlement neighboring Agar, probably also in Anfalas. (PoMe.433)

"Celtic" or not, one is struck by the great variety of phonemes and sound-patterns Tolkien employs to give voice to a lost Haladic past. At the same time, it is important to take care not to be misled by any illusions of linguistic unity. In the Tal-elmar story, for instance, the languages spoken by the neighboring peoples of Agar and Udul are mutually incomprehensible:

*But to creep into the unfriendly fields of Udul by night was another and far worse thing. Yet [Tal-elmar] had dared to do it. And he had come so close to one of the huts of watchmen that he could hear the men inside speaking — in vain. He could not understand the purport of their speech. The tones seemed mournful and full of fear (as men's voices were at night in the world as he knew it), and a few words he seemed to recognize, but not enough for understanding. And yet the Udul-folk were their near neighbours — indeed though Tal-elmar and his people had forgotten it, as they had forgotten so much, their near kin, part of the same people in past and better years. (PoMe.434)*

But if the Haladic peoples of Enedhwaith and Gondor could become so insulated in speech that they could not even understand their near kinsfolk, they could also become bilingual, dwelling as they did in regions which would one day come within the sphere of Westron: "Even among the Wild Men and the Dunlendings who shunned other folk there were some that could speak it, though brokenly (RotK.405)." The Oathbreakers (or at least their king) certainly remembered enough Westron to understand Aragorn's words of summons, and to respond to it in Westron (RotK.61, 63; cf. 71, 151, 152).

## FALL FROM GRACE

In recounting the history of the Oathbreakers to Legolas and Gimli at Helm's Deep, Aragorn says that the Orodbedhrim refused Isildur's summons because "they had worshipped Sauron in the Dark Years (RotK.55)." In this instance, "Men of Darkness" would have been a justly given epithet. But at no point does Aragorn tell how the Orodbedhrim came to worship Sauron in the first place, and it would be dubious to search for the answer in the story of the Gwathuirim, since it is not stated that the former forest-dwellers of Enedhwaith ever actually worshipped Sauron.<sup>9</sup>

How and when might the Orodbedhrim have become Men of Darkness? There is no definitive solution to this problem, but there are some hints. These, however, are bound up with other elements of Tolkien's imagined history, the most problematic of which is the "backwards link" Tolkien created between the Púkel-men of Dunharrow and the alliance of the Drughu with the Haladin in Beleriand:

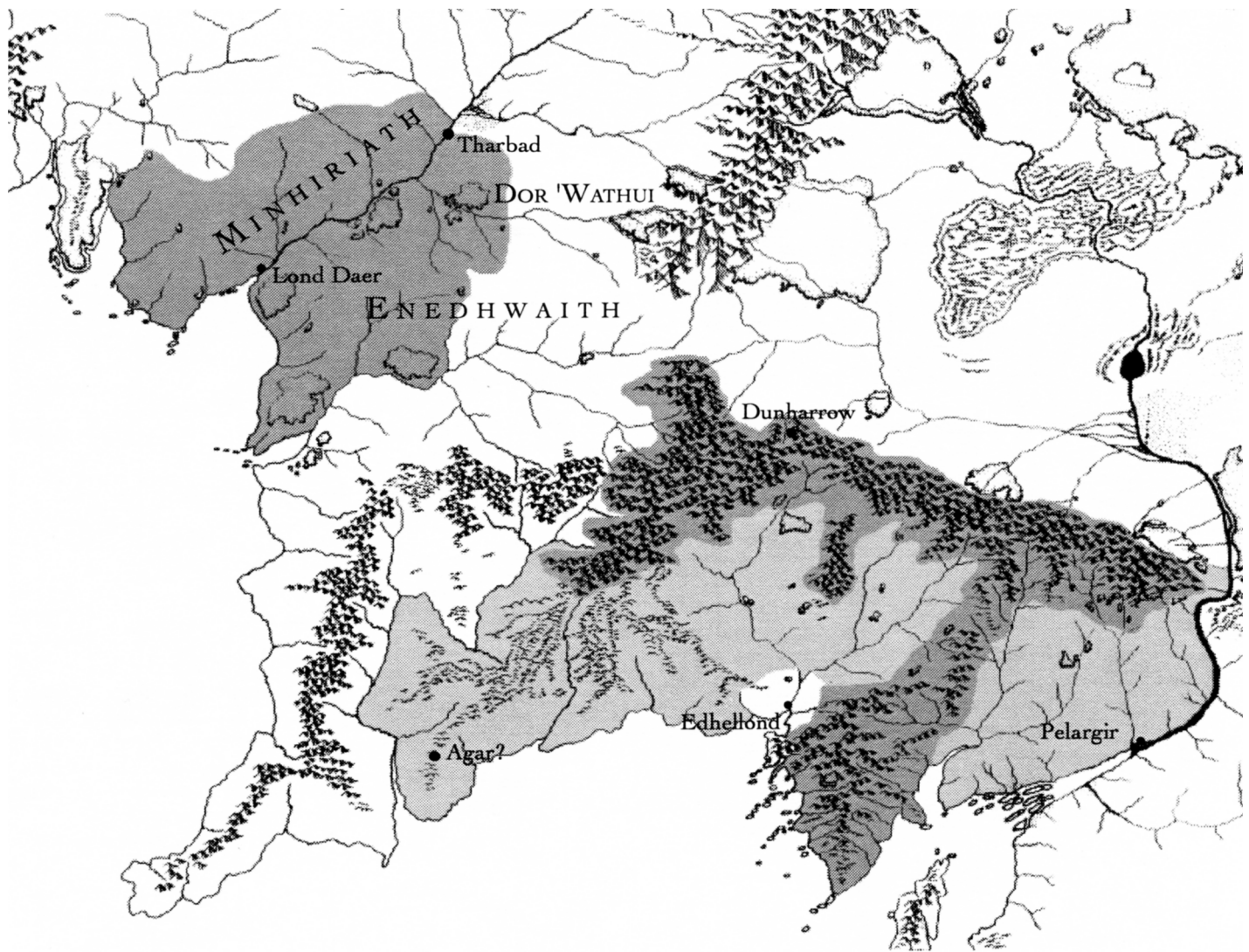
*The strangest of all the customs of the Folk of Haleth was the presence among them of people of a wholly different kind, the like of which neither the Eldar in Beleriand nor the other Atani had ever seen before. They were not many, a few hundreds maybe, living apart in families or small tribes, but infriendship, as members of the same community. The Folk of Haleth called them by the name drûg, that being a word in their own language.... The Eldar called them Drúedain, admitting them to the rank of Atani, for they were much loved while they lasted.... In their earlier days they had been of great service to those among whom they dwelt, and they were much sought after; though few would ever leave the land of the Folk of Haleth. (UT577-578)*

Though speculative, it is a fair inference that Tolkien intended this alliance to suggest that a similar relationship existed at some point between the Drughu and the Orodbedhrim at Dunharrow. The presence of protective Drúgic watch-stones (called by the later Rohirrim "Púkel-men") on the path to Dunharrow implies that the Drughu had once been there, yet the elaborate boring of a mountain road would hardly have been in keeping with the utterly primitive character of the Drughu as Tolkien depicts them in "Of Dwarves and Men" (UT.377ff).<sup>10</sup> In other words, if the Drughu had carved the watch-stones of Dunharrow, it is extremely unlikely that they had constructed the road itself; consequently, it must be surmised that the Orodbedhrim had built it.<sup>11</sup>

Yet this supposition that the Drughu had once been friends with the Orodbedhrim goes against everything else we know about these two peoples. The Gwathuirim (according to Tolkien's later conception, the closest relatives of the Haladin), fleeing the depredations of the Númenóreans:

*did not cross the Isen nor take refuge in the great promontory between Isen and Lefnui that formed the north arm of the Bay of Belfalas, because of the Púkel-men, who were a secret and fell people, tireless and silent hunters, using poisoned darts. They said that they had always been there, and had formerly lived also in the White Mountains. In ages past they had paid no heed to the Great Dark One (Morgoth), nor did they later ally themselves with Sauron; for they hated all invaders from the East. From the East, they said, had come the tall Men [i.e., the Orodbedhrim] who drove them from the White Mountains, and they were wiked at heart. (UT.585)*

In this connection we may recall the ex-



change between Elmar and Buldar about how the Orodbedhrim had driven the Drughu from the mountains (p. 7). This same tradition of animosity between the Haladic and Drugic peoples is expressed by Hazad to Tal-elmar:

*'Three folk we hold as enemies. The wild men of the mountains and the woods; but these only those who stray alone need fear. The Fell Folk of the East [i.e., the Faithful of Pelargir]; but they are yet far away, and they are my mother's people, though, I doubt not, they would not honour the kinship, if they came here with their swords. And the High Men of the Sea [i.e., the Black Númenóreans]. These indeed we may dread as Death. For Death they worship and slay men cruelly in honour of the Dark. (PoMe.426-427)*

Elsewhere Christopher Tolkien, paraphrasing a note of his father's, writes that:

*historians in Gondor beloved that the first Men*

*to cross the Anduin were indeed the Drúedain. They came (it was believed) from lands south of Mordor; but before they reached the coasts of Haradwaith they turned north into Ithilien, and eventually finding a way across the Anduin (probably near Cair Andros) settled in the vales of the White Mountains and the wooded lands at their northern feet. They were a secretive people, suspicious of other kinds of Men by whom they had been harried and persecuted as long as they could remember, and they had wandered west seeking a land where they could be bidden and have peace.' But nothing more is said, here or elsewhere, concerning the history of their association with the Folk of Haleth. (UT.585)*

The chronology of this passage (if the guesses of the Gondorian historians are to be taken as accurate) implies that the Drúgic-Haladic alliance could not have begun *prior* to the Drughu's settlement of the White Mountains; yet the first Men they met with *after* the settlement seem to have been their implacable foes and the cause of their violent dispersion further west into Andrast and finally Beleriand:

*An emigrant branch of the Drúedain accompanied the Folk of Haleth at the end of the First Age, and dwelt in the Forest [of Brethil] with them. But most of them had remained in the White Mountains, in spite of their persecution by later-arrived Men, who had relapsed into the service of the Dark. (UT.585)*

There is thus no way to determine exactly how this "emigrant branch" of the Drughu came to be friends with a Haladic people — apart from the obvious point that the Haladin were themselves, like the Drughu, "emigrants" from their own kinsfolk, and in that respect an exception. Perhaps the best guess would be that not all of the Haladic peoples had "relapsed into the service of the Dark," and these, for this very reason, unexpectedly found common cause with the Drughu, whom their kindred normally persecuted.

Unfortunately, this hypothesis still does not resolve the problem of Dunbarrow, unless we assume that it was *not* built during the Dark Years (as RotK.68 implies),



but was instead originally occupied by the ancestors of the Haladin proper before their emigration into Beleriand during the First Age, and that their abandonment of the site preceded its occupation by relapsed Orodbedhrim who were to worship Sauron in the Second Age (RotK.55).<sup>12</sup>

That aside, the above-quoted passage does, at least, indicate that the Orodbedhrim were already Men of Darkness prior to their arrival in the White Mountains. But they were “relapsed” Men of Darkness, implying that they had at some point in the still more distant past been reckoned among the Adanic peoples:

*who in the Dark Aged had resisted Morgoth or had renounced him, and had wandered ever westward from their homes far in the East seeking the Great Sea...for they were ever at war with the vile things that he had bred, and especially with Men who had made him their God and believed that they could render him no more pleasing service than to destroy the ‘renegades’ with every kind of cruelty. (PoMe.506).*

This passage is consistent with their persecution of the Drughu who, as we saw already (p. 3-4), were numbered among these “renegades.” Perhaps significantly, Tolkien’s earlier passage on the Gwathuirim’s fear of the “Púkel-men” of Andrast does not say that the Gwathuirim themselves had ever done harm to the Drughu—only that the latter were generally hostile because of the violence they had suffered at the hands of the Orodbedhrim (and, as we learn from the Tal-elmar story, the coastal folk of Gondor). This would seem to set up a distinction between the Gwathuirim and the Orodbedhrim: the former became Men of Darkness only as a result of persecution by the Númenóreans in the Second Age, while the latter had relapsed into the service of the Dark in the First Age before they had even reached the White Mountains.

This is prime raw material for inventing an epic background saga of the Drughu and the Haladic peoples of the Elder Days: By what route(s) did the Haladic peoples reach southern Eriador and the White Mountains? What course of events led some of them to relapse into the service of Morgoth? How was it that the Drughu first made alliance with the ancestors of the Haladin at Dunharrow, and what drove them on to Beleriand? Did the evil Orodbedhrim persist in their worship of “the Great Dark One” until that honor was claimed by

Sauron in the Dark Years, or did Morgoth’s expulsion give them a respite to recall, for a time, their original Adanic heritage?

As to this last question, some clues are provided by the tradition. At the beginning of “Akallabêth,” Tolkien writes of the fate of those Men of Darkness (the “Swarthy Men”) who had served Morgoth in Beleriand:

*In the Great Battle when at last Morgoth was overthrown and Thangorodrun was broken, the Edain alone of the kindreds of Men fought for the Valar, whereas many others fought for Morgoth. And after the victory of the Lords of the West those of the evil Men who were not destroyed fled back into the east, where many of their race were still wandering in the unharvested lands, wild and lawless, refusing alike the summons of the Valar and of Morgoth. And the evil Men came among them, and cast over them a shadow of fear, and they took them for kings. (SU.259)*

If by “the east” is meant “east of Beleriand” and not exclusively “Rhûn,” this development may have encompassed some of the Haladic peoples (though not, apparently, the Gwathuirim in Enedhwaith). Sauron, however, does not seem to have paid much attention to Men until his victory over Eregion in SA 1697 and his subsequent cultivation of a continental empire ca. SA 1800 (PoMe.304). Also, in the early centuries of the Second Age Sauron had not yet fallen back into his evil ways (Sil.285). It is only after the war with the Elves that we hear tell of the emergence of a Sauronic cult:

*Thus the Black Years began, which the Elves call the Days of Flight... Elsewhere Sauron reigned, and those who would be free took refuge in the fastnesses of wood and mountain, and fear ever pursued them. In the east and south well nigh all Men were under his dominion, and they grew strong in those days and built many towns and walls of stone, and they were numerous and fierce in war and armed with iron. To them Sauron was both king and god; and they feared him exceedingly, for he surrounded him abode with fire. (Sil.289-290)*

However things may have gone for the Orodbedhrim during the Second Age, their culture had certainly been influenced by the ways of the Men of Darkness far more profoundly than had the culture of the Gwathuirim or the Breelanders. On the other hand, many practical features of their social organization and standard of living

would have shared much in common with other “pre-Númenórean” peoples of Middle-earth, and some of these features may well have persisted among the Dunlendings of the late Third Age.

## SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Haladin of Beleriand “did not live under the rule of lords or many together, but each homestead was set apart and governed its own affairs, and they were slow to unite (Sil.145).” As we have seen, the forest-dwelling Gwathuirim of Second Age Enedhwaith and Minhiriath pursued a similar mode of life, dwelling in “scattered communities without central leadership (UT.261).” Much later, during the Great Plague of TA 1636-1637, the Gwathuirim are said to have suffered less than most from the pestilence “since they dwelt apart (UT.370).” This may mean only that they dwelt apart from other Men, but it could also indicate that, like their ancestors, they lived in “scattered communities.” A similar picture of social and political disunity is to be found in Tolkien’s description of the insularity of the folk of Agar from those of the neighboring village of Udul. With this backdrop in mind, the Orodbedhrim seem to have formed a more cohesive unity, since they were ruled by a monarch known as the “King of the Mountains;” and because Isildur’s curse affected all who were linked to that individual.

The mode of subsistence of the Haladic peoples naturally varied according to their environment. The Rohirrim speak of “the wild hillmen and herd-folk of Dunland (TT.132),” and elsewhere the Dunlendings are said to have raided the herds and studs of the Mark (UT.372), though whether “herds” includes other domestic animals apart from horses is uncertain. Presumably the Orodbedhrim were similar to the later Dunlendings in this respect, given their mountain environment. Fishing was practiced among the coastal peoples of Gondor (UT.247; PoMe.427), as was agriculture (PoMe.428), though this last may well have come about as a result of Númenórean contact (cf. Sil.263). Nothing certain is known about the subsistence of the Haladin in Beleriand, or of the later forest-dwellers.

“Of Dwarves and Men” says of the Haladin that “many of their warriors were women, though few of these went abroad to fight in the great battles. This custom was evidently ancient; for their chieftainess Haleth was a renowned Amazon with a picked bodyguard of women (UT.377 = PoMe.308-309).”



# THE INFANTRY OF A



# ANGMAR

*Though Orcs make up the greater part of the Witch-king's military might, many Men of evil kind are also numbered among his hosts. Preeminent among these Mannish forces are the Angmarean infantry. When fully mobilized for war, these are 10,000 strong, and together with the Witch-king's fierce Easterling cavalry they make up nearly a fourth of the entire Mannish population of Angmar. Much of the information presented here derives from ICE's Angmar module and from Mithril miniatures M42-M44.*

The majority of Angmar's infantry are of hillman origin, Haladic folk whose sires migrated north from Rhudaur or Dor 'Wathui to ally themselves with the enemy of their enemy. Over the years, however, most have abandoned their primitive tribal ways and become mingled with the other ethnic components of Angmar's sedentary population (Rhûnnish peasants and subjugated Northmen). All male children receive mandatory weapon training beginning at the age of 12, and from age 18 until 26 all but those destined for Angmar's priestly caste serve for nine years in the Witch-king's army. Those that survive are allowed to retire from active duty but remain obligated to muster with their local militia when called upon.

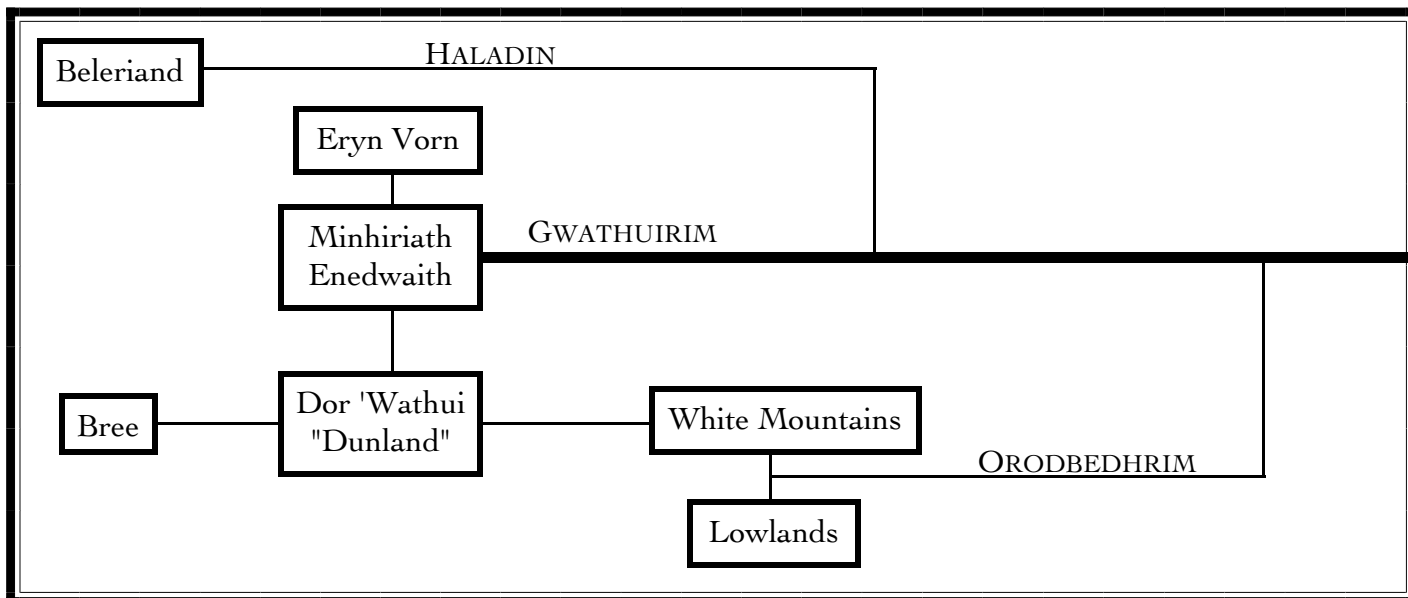
While some new recruits bring their own weapons into service with them (having inherited these from their fathers), the majority obtain their gear from the armories of Carn Dûm or from the fortress to which they are assigned. All recruits are issued shields and helms bearing the device of the Witch-king: a red tower on a black field (a representation of Carn Dûm), and these are returned upon termination of service, as they distinguish Angmar's standing army from its reserve levies.

In northwestern Middle-earth, scimitars are typically used only by Orcs. But the scimitar is a conspicuous melee weapon among the Angmarean infantry. This reflects the Black Númenórean element in the Witch-king's own background as well as the origin of his chief and most trusted servants. Much of Angmar's martial heritage consequently derives from the traditions of the King's Men in southern Middle-earth, where the scimitar is evidently more common as a Mannish weapon.

As its name signifies, Angmar is home to many iron mines, and this abundance of iron-ore readily available for weapon and armor-smithing was doubtless one of the factors leading to the Dark Lord's choice of it as a strategic position from which to spearhead his assault upon Eriador. Other raw materials for equipping the Witch-king's forces are brought to Angmar from Rhudaur (leather, wood) or Rhovanion and Rhûn (horses).

The Mannish infantry of Angmar is normally charged with the task of guarding the Witch-king's domain, and is deployed only for large-scale, expeditionary wars against the Dúnedain (such as those of 1409 and 1974). Inferior in skill and stature to their enemy counterparts, the Angmarean infantry relies on superiority of numbers and on support from the Easterling cavalry. (The Númenóreans never developed an equestrian tradition in warfare, relying instead, like the Witch-king, on mounted allies; but the Dúnedain of the North lack any mounted contingent to match that of Angmar.)

The Angmarean infantry is divided into companies of 100, each led by a mounted captain (M42) and subdivided into 5 lines of 20 light spearmen (M44). Each line is commanded in turn by a lieutenant (M43). Captains and lieutenants are better armored than spearmen, typically sporting well-crafted chain or scale-mail while the latter don padded leather jerkins. In large-scale battle maneuvers, the spear is the primary melee weapon; but every foot soldier possesses at least a short scimitar for close-in fighting. Each soldier's helmet bears a colored tassel indicating which line and company he belongs to.



Tolkien expounds upon this passage in the following note: “Not due to their special situation in Beleriand, and maybe rather a cause of their small numbers than its result. They increased in numbers far more slowly than the other Atani, hardly more than was sufficient to replace the wastage of war; yet many of their women (who were fewer than the men) remained unwed (UT.384 = PoMe.326).” If this custom was in fact ancient, it may have also been embraced by the Gwathuirim of Eriador, perhaps even the Orodbedhrim, though no hint of it survives in any of the sources. It appears to have been a train of thought that Tolkien failed to develop any further.

A less flattering custom of the Dunlendings and of the coastal-folk was their enslavement of war captives (slavery in Middle-earth being a practice identified wholly with the traditions of Darkness). Tal-elmar’s Dúnadan grandmother had been seized as war booty and taken to wife by Buldar (PoMe.425), much as Brodda the Easterling seized Aerin in Dor-lómin (UT.104). Thralldom was likewise the fate of those Rohirrim captured by the Dunlendings in the wars that preceded the Long Winter (RotK.347). There is no way of knowing for certain whether slavery was practiced by the Orodbedhrim, but it seems likely enough, given that they were longer inured to the ways of the Darkness.

Something of the warcraft of both the Dunlendings and the Orodbedhrim is known to us. Both cultures had an equestrian tradition in warfare (UT.357; RotK.61-62, 151), though there is no evidence that this was predominant. In this they seem to have been distinguished from

the earlier forest-dwellers and coastal peoples.

Tolkien comments that the Dunlendings “were without body-armour, having only among them a few hauberks gained by theft or in loot. The Rohirrim had the advantage of being supplied by the metal-workers of Gondor. In Isengard as yet only the heavy and clumsy mail of the Orcs was made, by them and for their own uses (UT.366; cf. TT.127).” Elsewhere Saruman himself is said to have armed the Dunlendings for war, implying once again that, though fierce in battle, they were not quite battle-ready when compared to the more martial Rohirrim (TT.132).

The Oathbreakers seem to have been better armed. Recall Legolas’ description of the Dead: “I see shapes of Men and of horses, and pale banners like shreds of cloud, and spears like winterthickets on a misty night (RotK.61-62).” Moreover, the presence of swords and spears among the arsenal of the Orodbedhrim (even if only of phantom-nature) implies that they possessed, or had access to, a tradition of metallurgy, something wholly lacking among the coastal peoples in Tal-elmar’s time (PoMe.428,433).

## RELATIONS WITH OTHER PEOPLES

The tradition of fear and antagonism existing between the Haladic peoples and the Drughu on the one hand and the Númenóreans on the other has already been explored. To this may now be added information about their relationships and reactions to other peoples:

Elves, Dwarves and Hobbits.

An etymological note on the name *Glanduin* speaks of this river as “the southern boundary of Eregion, beyond which pre-Númenórean and generally unfriendly peoples lived, such as the ancestors of the Dunlendings (UT.264).” This unfriendliness is seen also in the behavior of their descendants when confronted with the returning company of Galadriel, Celeborn, Elrond, Gandalf and the Hobbits after the War of the Ring: “The Dunlendings fled and hid themselves, for they were afraid of Elvish folk, though few indeed ever came into their country (RotK.261).”

In the Tal-elmar story, Elves are referred to as demons (PoMe.425), and in the account of the flight of the Gwathuirim from Minhiriath it is said that they dared not cross the Baranduin “for fear of the Elvenfolk (UT.263).” In one version of Edhellond’s founding, the Elves find “a primitive harbour there of fisherfolk, but these in fear of the Eldar fled into the mountains (UT.247).” Later on, the mariners of Edhellond speak to Amroth of Nimrodel’s prospects for safely reaching their haven:

*‘If she came through the settled lands of Gondor,’ they said, ‘she would not be molested, and might receive help; for the Men of Gondor are good, and they are ruled by descendants of the Elf-friends of old who can still speak our tongue, after a fashion; but in the mountains are many unfriendly Men and evil things’ (UT.241-242)*

All these episodes reveal reactions characteristic of the Men of Darkness — one of Morgoth’s chief goals was to estrange Men from Elves (Sil.144-145).

Compare the behavior of these Haladic peoples with that of the Easterlings in Hithlum, who in fear regarded Morwen as a white-fiend or a witchwife, their names for “Elf” and “Elf-friend” (UT.69, 105).

But not all relations with other races were so unambiguously hostile. If the southern Stoors had adopted a language related to Dunlendish (RotK.408), they must have enjoyed some degree of ongoing, amicable relations with the Gwathuirim. There is also a very tantalizing note about a Dwarven inscription relating to a Haladic people. Dwarf-runes (i.e., the Cirth) did not, Tolkien writes:

*appear in the inscriptions on the West Gate of Moria. The Dwarves said that it was in courtesy to the Elves that the Fëanorian letters were used on that gate, since it opened into their country and was chiefly used by them. But the East Gates, which perished in the war against the Orks, had opened upon the wide world, and were less friendly. They had borne Runic inscriptions in several tongues: spells of prohibition and exclusion in Khuzdul, and commands that all should depart who had not the leave of the Lord of Moria written in Quenya, Sindarin, the Common Speech, the languages of Rohan and of Dale and Dunland. (PoMe.519; n.8)*

Our interest in this passage is that the presence of a “Dunlendish” inscription implies that the Dwarves thought it was likely that “Dunlendings” would read it, which in turn presumes some kind of interaction. At first glance this might seem evidence for unfriendly relations, but closer examination reveals that this is not necessarily the case. In the interpretation of the passage, however, much depends on the time period to which it is presumed to belong. The temporal setting of the inscription also has a bearing on the actual identity of the speakers of “the language of Dunland” (hence my use of scare quotes).

The *terminus ad quem* for the gate-inscription hinges on the date of the gates’ destruction “in the war against the Orks;” but what exactly that refers to is not entirely clear. The paragraph from “Of Dwarves and Men” to which this passage is a footnote reads:

*The Longbeard Dwarves therefore adopted the Runes, and modified them for their own uses (especially the expression of Khuzdul); and they adhered to them even far into the Third Age, when they were forgotten by others except the loremasters of Elves and Men.*

*Indeed it was generally supposed by the unlearned that they had been invented by the Dwarves, and they were widely known as ‘dwarf-letters’.*

The theme of this passage (the adoption and use of the Cirth by the Dwarves of Moria) begins with the initial contact between the Longbeards and the Elves of Eregion (SA 750ff.), but extends “far into the Third Age.” At no point in the essay prior to this paragraph has Tolkien made mention of “the war against the Orks,”<sup>13</sup> but in the absence of any corroborative evidence it would be safest to assume that it refers to the great “War of the Dwarves and the Orcs,” fought late in the Third Age from 2793 until 2799 (the latter being the more likely date for the gates’ destruction).

The presence of the Common Speech among the inscriptions also strongly suggests a Third Age setting, since Westron did not penetrate Rhovanion until the close of the first millennium of that age — though the passage does not specify that all of the inscriptions were written at the same time. The tone of the East Gate inscriptions, after all, is being contrasted with that of the West Gate, which was inscribed during the Second Age.

The dating of the “Dunlendish” inscription is not, then, finally determinable. Regardless of when it was inscribed, however, the reference to a Rohirric inscription cannot be literal, since Rohan proper did not come into existence until long after the Dwarves had abandoned Moria. This, at least, must be a linguistic anachronism, referring merely to the language spoken in the Anduin vales by the ancestors of the Rohirrim, just as Tolkien freely uses the Rohirric form “Dunlending” to refer to the inhabitants of “Dunland” before it actually got that name. In this respect “the language of Dunland” must also be anachronistic, since Dor ‘Wathui was not called Dunland until the Rohirrim came to Calenardhon — some five centuries after the Dwarves had been driven from Moria.

This observation makes it possible to conceive of the “Dunlendish” inscription as having been set at any point in time prior to TA 1981, for which reason we should more correctly call it “Gwathuiric,” vague though that term is. Granting even this uncertainty of time setting, however, some conceptual difficulties remain. It is difficult to believe that a people so terrified of Elves (if we are, in fact, speaking of the Gwathuirim of Eredhwaith) would dare to traverse Ere-

gion in order to reach the East Gate of Moria by the Redhorn Pass; it is equally difficult to imagine them daring to approach Elven Lóthlorien for the same purpose.

The only solution I can think of is that the speakers of “the language of Dunland” were none other than the ancestors of the Haladin proper, the only Haladic people known not to have shunned the Elves. Of course, nothing is known about the movements of the Haladin before they entered Beleriand, but that very uncertainty opens up the possibility that at some stage in their migrations they had either dwelt near to the East Gate of Moria or had been in more distant friendly contact with Moria — in parallel to the Dalish inscription. Perhaps the three Mannish languages Tolkien anachronistically associates with “Dale, Rohan and Dunland” point, in fact, to the ancestral tongues of the three houses of the Edain: the Bëorian, the Marachian, and the Haladin. Perhaps too these three inscriptions possessed a geographical intention to cover all Adanic peoples then dwelling north (Dale = northern Rhovanion), east (Rohan = Anduin vale) and south (Dunland = Haladin) of Moria.

Pure speculation, to be sure — but an intriguing possibility, if the Haladin had, in fact, occupied Dunharrow at some point in the Elder Days. This hypothesis actually works quite well with Tolkien’s emerging conception of Dwarven-Mannish relations:

*in far distant days the Dwarves were secretive... and had few dealings with the Elves. In the West at the end of the First Age the dealings of the Dwarves of the Ered Lindon with King Thingol ended in disaster and the ruin of Doriath, the memory of which still poisoned the relations of Elves and Dwarves in after ages. At that time the migrations of Men from the East and South had brought advance-guards into Beleriand; but they were not in great numbers, though further east in Eriador and Rhovanion (especially in the northern parts) their kindred must already have occupied much of the land. Their dealings between Men and the Longbeards must soon have begun. For the Longbeards, though the proudest of the seven kindreds, were also the wisest and the most farseeing. Men held them in awe and were eager to learn from them; and the Longbeards were very willing to use Men for their own purposes. Thus there grew up in those regions the economy, later characteristic of the dealings of Dwarves and Men (including Hobbits): Men became the chief providers of food, as herdsmen, shepherds, and land-tillers, which the Dwarves exchanged for work as*



*builders, roadmakers, miners, and the makers of things of craft, from useful tools to weapons and arms and many other things of great cost and skill...before Men became wiser and developed skills of their own. (PoMe.501-502)*

The Dwarves, of course, did not build Dunharrow, which was “a great work of men’s hands in years beyond the reach of song (RotK.67; my emphasis);” but perhaps the builders of Dunharrow had learned their crafts from the Dwarves. It is also possible that the proto-Haladin participated in the nascent Dwarven-Mannish alliance not from Dunharrow but from other dwelling places (perhaps in southern Greenwood), which they may have passed through during their early wanderings.

## THE OATHBREAKING

Having pondered many questions concerning the origins and culture of the Men of the White Mountains, we turn at last to the event which transformed them into the Oathbreakers. Two questions immediately pose themselves: when was this oath sworn, and when was it broken? The basic text follows:

*“...the oath that they broke was to fight against Sauron, and they must fight therefore, if they are to fulfil it. For at Erech there stands yet a black stone that was brought, it was said, from Númenor by Isildur; and it was set upon a hill, and upon it the King of the Mountains swore allegiance to him in the beginning of the realm of Gondor. But when Sauron returned and grew in might again, Isildur summoned the Men of the Mountains to fulfil their oath, and they would not: for they had worshipped Sauron in the Dark Years.*

*“Then Isildur said to their king: “Thou shalt be the last king. And if the West prove mightier than thy Black Master, this curse I lay upon thee and thy folk: to rest never until your oath is fulfilled. For this war will last through years uncounted, and you shalt be summoned once again ere the end.” (RotK.55)*

Later in the story, when the stone of Erech is described, the omniscient narrator states that “those who remembered still the lore of Westernesse told that it had been brought out of the ruin of Númenor and there set by Isildur at his landing (RotK.62; my emphasis).” This statement is problematic, not only because Erech lies far from the Sea,<sup>14</sup> but also because it would mean that the oath of allegiance to Isildur had been sworn before the realm of Gondor had

been established.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, moreover, it is implied that Isildur and Anárion landed first not at the mouth of the River Morthond but in Pelargir, where the Faithful mainly dwelt at that time (Sil.291).

But there is another clue which may tie in to this question. In the account of Gondor’s founding, Minas Anor is said to have been built “as a shield against the wild men of the dales (Sil.291).” Recall also the earlier quoted passage (p. 5) which stated that even by the time of Adúnakhôr the Faithful of Pelargir had made no contact with the Orodbedhrim. It may follow, then, that the “wild men” became a concern to the Númenórean exiles only by virtue of the fact that Isildur had now for the first time pushed the sphere of Dúnadan settlement north into the regions of Anórion and Ithilien. It may have been this new development, therefore, which demanded that Isildur take measures to secure his western frontier from assault by these Men of Darkness. Minas Anor served as a physical barrier, the oathtaking at Erech provided moral deterrence.

How long did the oath hold? The answer to this depends on when exactly Isildur issued his summons. The curse assumes uncertainty as to the outcome of the war, but that does not help us much, since a full five years passed between Sauron’s initial attack on Minas Ithil and the Battle of Dagorlad, and still more time would have elapsed between the Gondorians’ perception of Sauron’s return and his first strike (RotK.317-318; Sil.293).

The narrative of the oathbreaking seems to imply that Isildur was himself present at Erech when he pronounced the curse. If this is correct, the opportunities for Isildur to do so would have been limited. The account of Isildur’s movements during the outbreak of the war runs as follows:

*When therefore Sauron saw his time [SA 3429] he came with great force against the new realm of Gondor, and he took Minas Ithil, and he destroyed the White Tree of Isildur that grew there. But Isildur escaped, and taking with him a seedling of the Tree he went with his wife and his sons by ship down the River, and they sailed from the mouths of Anduin seeknig Elendil. Meanwhile Anárion held Osgiliath against the Enemy, and for that time drove him back to the mountains; but Sauron gathered his strength again, and Anárion knew that unless help should come his kingdom would not long stand. (Sil.295)*

It does not seem probable to me that

Isildur would have personally abandoned Minas Ithil while it was under threat of attack in order to travel all the way to Erech to summon the Orodbedhrim. It was not yet certain whether the front of battle would advance westwards to Osgiliath; when this did happen, however, Anórion became exposed and the defenders might have been strengthened by the Men of the Mountains. Isildur, moreover, having taken to ship, might have been in a position to carry the summons westwards quicker than any horsed rider.<sup>16</sup> His personal presence would add force to the call.

## THE ACCURSED YEARS

Now under the curse, the Oathbreakers:

*fled before the wrath of Isildur, and did not dare to go forth to war on Sauron’s part; and they hid themselves in secret places in the mountains and had no dealings with other men, but slowly dwindled in the barren hills. (RotK.55)*

How long did this “slow dwindling” take? How many years did the Oathbreakers persist as living Men before all went down into the shadows? Tolkien never says outright, but he does provide some oblique hints.

At Helm’s Deep, Aragorn tells Gimli and Legolas: “The living have never used [the Paths of the Dead] since the coming of the Rohirrim...for it is closed to them (RotK.54).” Later, at Dunharrow, Théoden explains to Merry that none have ventured in to search its secrets, since Baldor, son of Brego, passed the Door and was never seen among men again (RotK.70).” If these two statements refer to the same event (Baldor’s entering of the Paths), it follows that no living Oathbreaker survived past the year 2570.

But how long before that time did the Oathbreakers persist? I believe the following tale holds the key:

*“It is said that when the Eorlingas came out of the North and passed at length up the Snowbourn, seeking strong places of refuge in time of need, Brego and his son Baldor climbed the stair of the Hold and do came before the Door. On the threshold sat an old man, aged beyond guess of years; tall and kingly he had been, but now he was withered as an old stone. Indeed for stone they took him, for he moved not, and he said no word, until they sought to pass him by and enter. And then a voice came out of him, as it were out of the ground,*



and to their amaze it spoke in the western tongue: The way is shut.

*‘Then they batted and looked at him and saw that he lived still; but he did not look at them. The way is shut his voice said again. It was made by those who are Dead, and the Dead keep it, until the time comes. The way is shut.*

*‘And when will that time be?’ said Baldor. But no answer did he ever get. For the old man died in that hour and fell upon his face; and no other tidings of the ancient dwellers in the mountains have our folk ever learned. (RotK.71)*

It may well be that this old man was the last of the Oathbreakers, and it would seem a fitting turn that the memory of Oathbreakers and of dark Dunharrow should fade at the very time that their ancient land was passing into the hands of a new people with a new history.

The lore of the Oathbreakers is fragmented, and its pieces are often found embedded in other matters of Tolkien’s *legendarium*. Darkness shrouds many episodes in this ancient people’s history, and the aim of this article has been more to identify those gaps than to fill them. To carry on the process of subcreation and give voice to the unknown secrets of the Orodbedhrim is a task that has been essayed in the MERP modules, and which will be brought still further by the soon to be published *Oathbreakers* supplement. If this prelude has whetted the imagination of you, the reader, it has achieved its purpose.

## NOTES

1. In an etymological note, Tolkien writes: “*gwath* is a Sindarin word for ‘shadow’, in the sense of dim light, owing to cloud or mist, or in deep valleys (UT.261).” The form *gwathui* is simply *gwath* + the adjectival suffix *-ui*, seen also in several Sindarin names in the Númenórean calendar (e.g., Ninui “Watery;” Norui “Sunny;” Uruí “Hot;” Hithui “Misty”).
2. This supposition fits well into the pattern of Rohirric place-names, remarked upon by Tolkien in his essay “Cirion and Eorl” (UT.318, n. 46).
3. That there were pre-Númenórean inhabitants on the coastlands of Anfalas at a slightly later period (under Ar-Pharazôn) is assumed by Tolkien’s late, unfinished narrative “Talelmar” (PoMe.422-438). Of similar import is Tolkien’s undeveloped remark that the *bel* element in “Belfalas” (the name given to the great peninsula defining the coasts of Gondor between Anfalas and Lebennin) was derived from a pre-Númenórean name (UT.247).
4. Cf. Faramir’s later words concerning his parting gifts to the Hobbits: “‘I have no fitting gifts to give you at our parting,’ said Faramir; ‘but take these staves....The men of the White Mountains use them....They are made of the fair tree *lebethron*, beloved of the woodwrights of Gondor, and a virtue has been set upon them of finding and returning (TT.303).” This also seems to imply some degree of friendly relations between the Dúnedain and the mountain-dwellers of the late Third Age.
5. When the *n* of *orodben* and the *r* of *rim* are joined, a consonantal mutation to *obr* takes place; cf. Caradhras = *caran* + *ras*.
6. UT speaks of Sauron “slaying or drawing off all the small groups of Men” remaining in Eriador during the war (UT.238).
7. The Haladin alone are given no explicitly described skin-tone by Tolkien — perhaps because he simply assumed them to be fair-skinned like the other Edain, or because he wanted to downplay their physical similarity to the Easterlings (the “Swarthy Men”) that entered Beleriand soon after the Edain: “These Men were short and broad, long and strong in the arm; their skins were swart or sallow, and their hair was dark as were their eyes (Sil. 157).” As we have already learned from “Of Dwarves and Men,” it was this very similarity which played an important role in the later Númenórean “mis-recognition” of the Haladic peoples of Enedhwaith as Men of Darkness.
8. Merry’s description of the Dunlendings as “tall” might be thought to belie the shortness attested elsewhere, yet here the point of comparison would seem crucial. Merry viewed the Dunlendings as a Hobbit. Gimli, too, as a Dwarf, thought them “over large” for him (TT. 140). Finally, the Drughu remember the Men who drove them out of the White Mountains as “tall” (UT.385).
9. This is an open and unresolvable question, of course. On the one hand, the Gwathuirim did ally themselves with Sauron during the war in Eriador. On the other hand, Eriador (and presumably Enedhwaith) remained free of Sauron’s dominion during the Dark Years — unlike the White Mountains — due to the strength of Gil-galad and his Númenórean allies at Tharbad.
10. Of the dwellings of the Drughu, Tolkien writes: “they were content to live in tents or shelters, lightly built round the trunks of large trees, for they were a hardy race. In their former homes [i.e., in the White Mountains], according to their own tales, they had used caves in the mountains, but mainly as store-houses, only occupied as dwellings and sleeping-places in severe weather (UT.386).”
11. “Here they labored in the Dark Years [i.e., the Second Age, long after the Drúgic-Haladic alliance in Beleriand], before ever a ship came to the western shores, or Gondor of the Dúnedain was built (RotK.68).” Note also that the Dunharrow road was accessible to horses (RotK.67), something the Drughu themselves would never have taken into consideration had they designed the path solely for their own use. Moreover, it is unlikely that Dunharrow would have been used as a refuge *by* the Drughu after the manner of the caves referred to in the immediately preceding quote (note 10 above), since “these places were guarded and not even their closest friends among the Folk of Haleth were welcomed there (UT.387).”
12. Note that this reconstruction of Dunharrow’s history differs substantially from that offered in the SG modules, which were based on somewhat different assumptions (though they addressed the same conceptual problems posed by the sources).
13. Though the first page of the essay is actually missing, so we cannot be entirely certain about this.
14. Some hundred miles, according to Christopher Tolkien’s LotR map. It is also doubtful to my mind (though unprovable) that the River Morthond would have been navigable to sea-going vessels so close to its sources in the White Mountains.
15. This insight was gleaned from an essay by Jenny Curtis, published in *Mallorn* 24 (1987) pp. 13-15.
16. Remember that Gondor had not yet extended its presence west of the Mouths of Anduin, so that there may have been no reliable roads across the mountainous cape of Belfalas.

# CAMPAIGNING IN THE NORTHERN WASTE

Bridget Buxton

*When winter first begins to bite, and stones  
crack in the frosty night, when pools are black  
and trees are bare, 'tis evil in the Wild to fare  
—LotR I.286*

Overland travel is a frequent necessity in any long-running campaign, and when a party decides to head off into the wilderness a GM is faced with peculiar challenges. This is particularly true for extreme environments such as Forodwaith, the subject of ICE's recent Northern Waste sourcebook. It goes without saying that sub-arctic travel can demand just as much courage and ingenuity as a dungeon-crawl, and offer as many opportunities for adventure. On the other hand, being mostly armchair adventurers ourselves, how can we create realistic challenges without having to read up on every aspect of wilderness survival?

The easiest answer is, of course, to fake it. Then it simply becomes a matter of distinguishing those challenges that are valid and interesting (like crossing wild rivers) from those that are just plain annoying (like wet socks). Unfortunately, The Northern Waste offers very little specific information about the perils and problems of wilderness travel, most of which are understandably difficult to quantify into statistical tables. The following, then, is a brief collection of trivia and suggestions to make winter travel realistic and challenging without getting bogged down in detail.

- **Cold:** Humans are physically very poorly equipped to deal with extreme cold, but this is a weakness we have more than made up for with intelligence. It follows that except in the case of freak accidents, sub-arctic cold only becomes dangerous as a result of poor decisions or lack of experience. The natives of central Alaska take infants on sled journeys in -50°F cold, but hypothermia can kill an ill-prepared individual even when it is +50°F. It has been observed that certain races seem to have higher cold tolerance, but it is not under-

stood why, or what role experience plays. We do know that people who live in colder environments tend to develop physical reflexes (such as 'cold vasodilatation,' the so-called 'hunting reaction') to regulate circulation in their extremities and prevent cold injuries. Hence The Northern Waste refers to people who are able to "walk about barefoot in the snow without danger of frostbite (NW.148)." This, however, is only partially true: there is a limit to how long any human can regulate their metabolism to compensate for heat loss before their core body temperature starts to drop below the average of 98.6°F, and they begin to experience the effects of mild hypothermia.

- **Hypothermia:** A number of factors may contribute to an individual's proneness to hypothermia, such as size (smaller people lose heat faster), body fat, health and fitness, caloric intake, fatigue, wind chill, altitude, experience, alcohol, clothing and shelter, water/humidity, dehydration, hypoxia, injury and trauma, contact with metal and other heat conductors, even psychological stability and attitude have been deemed significant. For the most part these factors cannot be quantified, but here are a few points to keep in mind. Water has a conductivity 240 times greater than air, and the body loses heat 7 times faster when immersed. The sweat built up over a long day's exertion can therefore be fatal once a traveler has stopped moving if they don't have warm, dry layers to change into. The evaporation of water from wet clothing causes a devastating loss of body heat when you consider that the evaporation of one gram of water on the skin extracts about 580 calories of energy. Falling into freezing water needn't be dangerous if core body temperature can be maintained by subsequent exercise or another source of warmth, but immersion in water colder than 50°F for more than 10-15 minutes is very serious. At this time it usually becomes impossible to continue swimming, and within 15-20 minutes core body temperature begins to drop steadily. Wind chill also increases heat loss through convection cooling as a square of wind velocity. Thus, a wind of 20mph will drain heat 4 times faster than a wind of 10mph. To compensate for heat loss, the body must burn calories, either by shivering or (most effectively) by exercising the large muscle groups. A day of

vigorous crosscountry skiing will burn up around 4000 kilocalories (obviously this figure varies according to many factors). The dryness of air in extreme cold or at high altitude is also significant. Just breathing alone requires about 4 liters of water a day to humidify inhaled air, the evaporation of which can extract about 2000 additional kilocalories. Moreover, the effects of hypothermia are heightened by dehydration. The symptoms of hypothermia begin with loss of concentration and judgment, irritability, fatigue and apathy, and among other things the victim may stop shivering or taking any interest in keeping themselves warm. Mild hypothermia can be treated relatively easily, simply by warming the victim up by whatever means are to hand, and taking steps to ensure they stay warm.

- **Profound Hypothermia:** Said to occur once core body temperature drops below 90°F, it should be treated as a medical emergency. By this point the victims are often acting completely irrationally, even taking off their clothes, before they eventually go into a coma. Victims of profound hypothermia have a very high chance of dying from ventricular fibrillation in the process of warming them up. The trick to treating such people is to be exceedingly gentle and to warm them externally, torso first, with extreme slowness. Without going into all the details of technique, let it just be said that the chances of survival in the field are not great. One unfortunate fact about profound hypothermia is that it also mimics death: the pupils may not respond to light, the limbs are frozen stiff, and pulse and respiration become almost undetectable. No doubt more than a few such victims have been abandoned by their companions when there was still a chance of saving them.
- **Frostbite:** Commonly attacks the feet, hands, ears and nose, the areas that are the first to suffer when the body decides to conserve heat by restricting circulation to the extremities. It only occurs in temperatures below freezing, and may result from a very brief contact to a supercooled metal or liquid (such as alcohol) as well as longer-term exposure to the elements. Flesh freezes, becomes pale and hard, and feels either numb or painful. The after effects are huge blisters and dark discoloration,

often presaging the permanent loss of much of the affected tissue. Frostbitten flesh should be warmed up only when it can be kept warm and immobile. The technique to minimize damage is to warm the affected part very quickly in hot water. After about a week, dead frostbitten tissue turns black, mummifies and eventually drops off; tissue that survives can take months to heal and is very prone to infection. In short, frostbite is a far more serious and potentially incapacitating injury than most people realize.

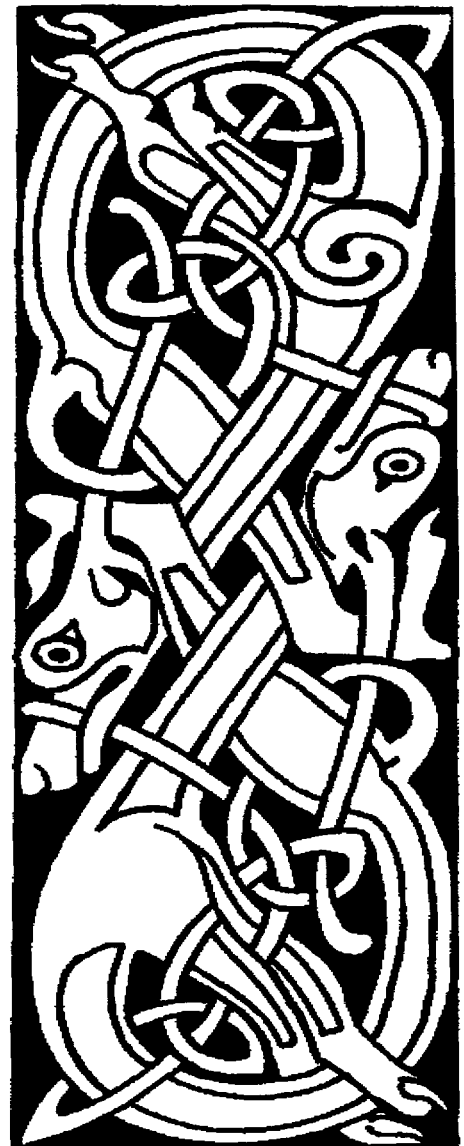
- **Rivers:** Sub-arctic rivers are often formed largely from glacial run-off, which can contain large amounts of silt. This can be so dense that visibility is less than a finger's length, and anyone unlucky enough to fall in will probably end up on the bottom pretty quickly. Water levels rise and fall swiftly depending on the weather, and a river in high Spring flood can carry all sorts of unpleasant debris, from sweepers (logs and trees) to icebergs. In recognition of these and other additional dangers, rivers in sub-arctic environments are automatically graded one point higher than the equivalent whitewater in other areas. For all their danger, rivers are invariably the swiftest (and sometimes the only) way to travel through the dense fir and scrub forests, the treacherous taiga and swamplands that characterize many areas of the far north. In winter a river becomes a veritable frozen highway, but for those who brave the water in small craft a whole range of nasty surprises may lie in store. When a large stream or river combines with the main flow at high speed, the water can fold downwards into a deep trough capable of swallowing a small boat and not spitting it out again for 100' or more. Rivers flowing over falls and large rocks can form 'keepers,' areas where the water recirculates indefinitely (and so will you). Then there are all the usual hazards of whitewater: log jams, floods, sweepers and submerged branches, large standing waves, whirlpools, converging currents and other forms of turbulence. Even clear water can be dangerous if it has been highly aerated (either by rapids or other natural processes) because it offers almost no buoyancy, and anyone who falls in will not be able to swim back to the surface. By far the most exciting obstacles to encounter on arctic rivers are glaciers. Glaciers can be the height of a football field and extend for several miles in width. When a large chunk carves off, the resulting waves can easily be 20' high. Glaciers also carve underwater, offering the prospect of blocks of ice the size of small skyscrapers surfacing unexpectedly under or near the intrepid paddlers. One tell-tale sign of a temperamental glacier on a river is when the long-suffering trees on the opposite bank bear an assortment of dead fish in their branches. Icebergs can be treacherous and tip up suddenly as a result of uneven melting, and 'pack ice' can accumulate and circulate in elbows of the river outside the main current. Of course, one can always choose to travel across a glacier instead of under it, but that carries its own set of risks too. Hidden crevasses are probably the chief danger, and it is well to remember that when falling or sliding

down such chutes, the ice can literally burn off exposed skin like sandpaper. A note on drowning: in very cold water, the average person cannot hold their breath for more than 15-25 seconds. Perversely, however, the human brain requires far less oxygen at such temperatures, and may continue to function at some level for up to 40 minutes after a person has become submerged. This partially explains why there have been some rare instances of children who have been trapped under frozen lakes for almost half an hour and yet have survived without brain damage. One unpleasant characteristic of frozen lakes is that the actual water level sometimes recedes many feet below the bottom of the surface ice, making it virtually impossible to rescue anyone who breaks through and falls in. Sudden immersion in freezing water can also cause fatal heart attacks even in relatively young and healthy people, especially if alcohol is involved.

- **Snow Avalanches:** Loose snow and slab avalanches are most common on steep, open slopes and precipitous gullies, especially after heavy snowfall. Wet snow avalanches occur when the snow pack becomes soft due to melting. Books have been written about the skill of reading snow for avalanche danger, and they cannot be summarized here, but it is possible for a knowledgeable and experienced person to make a reasonable assessment of a particular route by surface observation and digging pits to examine the snow pack. Once an avalanche is triggered, it can travel with astounding speed and force. The current thinking is that anyone buried by an avalanche has less than a 50% chance of survival if they are not located and dug out within 10 minutes. One rare and unusual type of avalanche (save this one for special occasions) occurs when wind gradually blows snow off sheer mountains or cliffs into an enclosed canyon. The snow begins to settle slowly like a blanket and the air pressure underneath it increases, to the point where the whole thing explodes with rock-shattering force.
- **Wildlife:** NW. 172-173 provides tables for beast encounter with everything from bees to humpback whales. Knowing the typical behavior of a wild animal is the key to dealing with the potential threat it represents, but since this is GM-determined (and many of these creatures exist only in fantasy) it would be pointless to dwell on the nuances of black vs. brown bear attack. Using wildlife as a source of food is a different matter. Subsisting off the tundra is impossible for people whose skills and equipment are not specifically adapted to the task (just read the Jack London short story *The Love of Life* to get the idea). Rivers, however, can provide a fairly reliable source of food in summer. The salmon run for several months, hugging the banks in silt rivers so that it is often possible to scoop them out with a dip net. Trout and other freshwater fish inhabit the confluence of streams and rivers. Larger wildlife is wary, but if you want to take the Ameri-

can North as a model, there are many smaller and fairly stupid animals and birds that could provide an occasional meal to a good hunter. For example, the ptarmigan or snow chicken is the wildebeest of the far north, the staple dish on every predator's menu. All of this information, needless to say, is only useful if someone in the party has the requisite skills to take advantage of it. It is no simple matter to catch a fish or butcher a deer if you have never done it before.

The information in this article was obtained through personal experience and a very large number of books, too large to give full credit to here. For further reading, there are several excellent series of books on wilderness survival and sport published in the USA by "The Mountaineers Books" (306 Second Ave. W., Seattle, Washington 98119), "Wilderness Press" (2440 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, California 94704) and "The Great Rift Press" (1135 East Bonneville, Pocatello, Idaho 83201). Happy adventuring!



# RASTARIN'S LOG

Bridget Buxton have opposed him?"

## CHAPTER SIX: TRUST ME

It is now 2 AM on the 19th Úrui, and Rastarin (after some serious drinking) decides the time has come to match her womanly wiles against the power of Zimrakhil and the cunning of Herod. Assuming her most abject expression, she knocks upon Arkhâd's door. It opens to soft candlelight, and a moment of silence follows as the young man regards her warily. "What — still more surprises, Captain? Don't tell me you've lost the Elendilmir again?"

"Arkhâd, I must talk with you — as a friend and kinsman," she pleads.

"What is it that troubles you, Rastarin?" he asks, his tone softening.

"Many things," she answers. "You know as well as I do that Zimrakhil was casting necromancy on the Arangwil yesterday. How is it possible that a cabal with the most noble cause in the world, putting a true-blooded king on the throne of Gondor, is willing to allow such unclean powers to probe the Elendilmir itself?"

As Rastarin unburdens these words, and many more besides, she can barely conceal her satisfaction when Arkhâd, his fair young face downcast in shame, suddenly seems a different person.

"Legend tells that the Elendilmir only becomes an item of power in the hands of the true king," she continues. "We should be delivering it to Sangahyandion at once! Involve Zimrakhil if you must — but I hardly expect a mere half-breed (and one who does not share our royal blood) to understand why this thing must be kept pure from dark sorcery. But you understand, don't you Arkhâd?" With these words, Rastarin puts her hand upon his and gazes earnestly into his eyes.

"Lady," he stammers, "were Elendil himself standing before me now, I would not dare to answer in my own defence. Do not be surprised when I tell you that I fear Zimrakhil, and rue the day that I sought his aid in forming this cabal. But how should I

"There is no need to, yet," Rastarin replies. "We can leave letters to ally his suspicions. Tell Zimrakhil you fled Umbar to thwart Herod's designs on the Elendilmir, and that you did not inform him of this at once for fear of forcing him to compromise their sorcerer's oath. He will be suspicious, of course, but while he remains unsure of your true intentions I think we will be reasonably safe."

"You speak shrewdly," says Arkhâd, "And I shall do as you say. Perhaps the thought of Herod's duplicity will distract Zimrakhil long enough for us to reach my brother. But let us leave this place, as swiftly and secretly as may be!"

"My ship is ready to sail," replies Rastarin with a smile.

*Dearest Herod,*

*Arkhâd and I decided this morning to bear the Elendilmir to Sangahyandion at once. Our bargain still stands: you will help me in that matter we discussed, and I in turn shall ensure that all your desires are eventually satisfied, as I promised. Until then, I am sure you will enjoy a most pleasant and rewarding stay in Umbar with your new colleague Zimrakhil. I remain, as always, your only friend.*

*Rastarin*

*p.s. trust me!*

Herod crumples the letter in disgust and calls upon Zimrakhil, who has received a similar message. They decide that now is the time for them to share some of their magic and exchange knowledge of forbidden spells.

"Come, and I will introduce you to a power greater than any you imagined," Zimrakhil says, and leads Herod and Nubjub under the city to a hidden shrine of Melkor. There Zimrakhil removes his glove to reveal a skeletal claw charged with unnatural energies, a legacy of his apprenticeship to the sorceress Adûnaphel, the Dark Lady of the South.

Herod is impressed, but confesses that he is finding all this evil no substitute for Ras-

tarin's company. Zimrakhil agrees that it is time they rejoined their wayward friends, but first Herod insists on summoning Balmet, a dreadful demon whom he intends to send against those who dared to attack Nubjub.

"And I think I know where they may be found," he says, producing the strands of Tarassis' hair to a chorus of evil laughter.

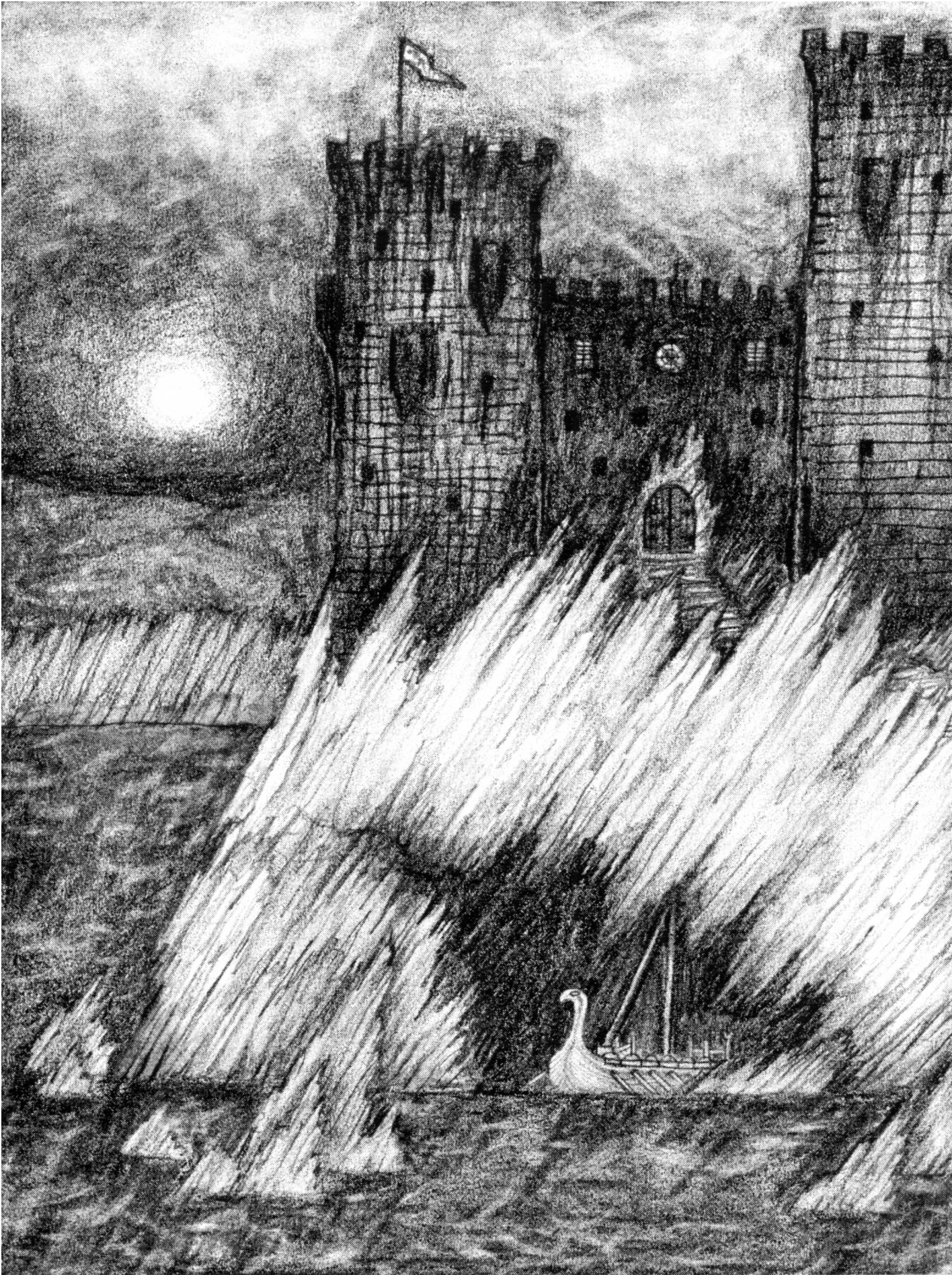
Meanwhile, many miles to the north, Captain Delbo's ship, the Drowning Duck, is making drunken yet determined progress towards Gondor. Lytta reclines below deck, where Rassimus is giving his misguided brother a piece of his mind.

"You've done some bad things, Tarassis. Well, so have I, so I can't be your judge. I would take you to our father for justice — but heck, our father has probably done worse things than both of us. So here are your choices: either stay with us and help undo some of the evils you've done, or leave this ship at the next port."

Tarassis breaks down and tells Lytta and Rassimus all about the cabal, which he once believed to have a noble purpose. Now, he says, Arkhâd is being bullied by Zimrakhil, whose plan is to kill Sangahyandion eventually and place his more malleable brother on the throne. Tarassis claims he intended to stay with the cabal as long as possible in order to thwart the assassination, but his plan was foiled when Rastarin betrayed them and Zimrakhil handed him over to her. He reveals that Zimrakhil intends to use Rastarin as the scapegoat for Sangahyandion's murder. He then becomes distressed and insists he must leave the ship at once, claiming that Irusan can get to all of them through a scar he bears on his wrist — a legacy of his blood oath to the cabal. Lytta observes that Rastarin bears a similar scar, and Tarassis laughs bitterly.

"Forget what you ever knew of Rastarin," he says. "Irusan controls her now."

The next day TCBS pulls into the harbour town of Kas Shafra to pick up supplies. Rastarin sits in her cabin, drinking





heavily as she has been since the night she joined the cabal. Suddenly there is a knock on the door, and Arkhâd enters with news from some couriers in town: it seems that Sangahyandion has just arrived at the nearby port of Mírlond to pick up more mercenaries. They send messages to arrange a meeting at the nearby fortress of Gurthost, home of Rastarin's old friend Konar the Barbarian — cook, bartender, sailor, comedian, seamstress, and finally, king "by his own hand" (but that is another story). TCBS sets sail at once, and Rastarin and Arkhâd pass the rest of the voyage discussing the situation in Umbar.

"You mentioned last night that you knew or guessed something about Zimrakhil's purpose," she says. "Can you tell me more?"

"The Southron ambassador is a very powerful figure in Umbar, and not least with Sangahyandion, for it is Zimrakhil who has mustered the greatest military support for my brother, while the Council of Captains equivocates." Arkhâd explains that he formed the cabal — with his brother's approval, he adds — in order to seek new allies for the campaign. "But it was Zimrakhil's idea to recruit the services of your enemy, Captain Hardon. He seemed to think he would be a great asset for our cause."

"Hmmm. I wonder what sort of 'asset' Zimrakhil was thinking of? I have reason to believe that Captain Hardon has boarded more than ships and parted more than cables in his piratical career."

Arkhâd shrugs. "It is plain to my eyes that Zimrakhil harbours ulterior motives as well. In his speech I have caught words of darker significance, though I know little of them. 'Irusan' is chief among these."

Rastarin frowns at the mention of the name. "Therein lies the real power behind your cabal, Arkhâd. I lost both of my brothers to this Irusan you speak of..." Her voice trails off, and an awkward silence follows.

"Then it was a brave deed, and a noble one, Rastarin, to swear yourself into the cabal which you hold to be to blame for these injustices in order to avenge your family," Arkhâd says at last.

"Perhaps," Rastarin replies. "But as I see it, I made my trust with you and no other — because I believed, or wished to believe, that you and your brother were ignorant of the evils done in your name." She rises and excuses herself, pleading duties on deck.

On the 21st Úrui the castle of Gurthost is in sight, with the flag of the 'Master of Death' (Konar's mascot, an iguana named Turion) flying above it. Rastarin warns Arkhâd to show proper respect to Turion in Konar's presence, for the barbarian firmly believes that his small pet iguana is actually a miniature dragon of god-like powers.

As evening falls TCBS pulls into a cavernous harbour in the cliffs under the fortress. Rastarin (trying to look regal and yet sexy in a dress borrowed for the occasion) makes her entrance into the great banquet hall where many men are feasting and making merry. 'King' Konar greets her heartily, scattering food and dishes as he leaps up from his huge throne, an ornate crown (probably stolen on some raid) perched ridiculously on his head. But Rastarin's eyes are immediately drawn to Sangahyandion, the rebel commander. Castamir's grandson resembles Arkhâd in many respects, but he has a noble presence and captivating personal charm that his brother lacks. Arkhâd is whispering something in his brother's ear as she approaches.

While TCBS is making for Gurthost, Lytta discovers that the scar on Tarassis' wrist is only one symptom of a magical connection to Irusan. She succeeds in severing the link, but not before a spirit assassin slips through and nearly kills all of them before it can be dissipated.

Exhausted and wounded from the struggle, Lytta is just falling asleep when suddenly the spectral form of the Prophetess Ygana appears before her, and warns her that Herod has summoned a powerful demon to destroy them. Only by hastening her own death does Lytta stand a chance of saving her companions, and rescuing Rastarin, whom Ygana says now desperately needs her help.

"Rescuing Rastarin! After what she has done to us?" Lytta says with disbelief, but Ygana silences her.

"Rastarin is the only one who can wield the Gwaedhel-sword to destroy Irusan, my child. She needs you, and if you would help save our people, you must sacrifice yourself."

Lytta reluctantly accepts her unjust fate, and Ygana entrusts her with a magical dagger — deadly to any mortal wielder, but the only weapon potent enough to stand a chance against the terrible creature that Herod has sent against them.

Back at Gurthost, Konar's parry is now in full swing, but Rastarin soon contrives to get Sangahyandion alone. Their conversation quickly turns to Zimrakhil, Irusan, and the cabal. Sangahyandion lets it slip that he has only just learned of Irusan and the cabal's existence from Arkhâd — one of the brothers must be lying!

Rastarin decides to test Sangahyandion. She gives him the Elendilmir, and he dons it with trembling hands. At once he seems different: even more kingly and serene, and the gem begins to glow with a white light. Sangahyandion is clearly overawed by the experience, but when Rastarin asks him to return the gem to her, he does so at once.

"You have shown your quality," she says. "And I believe you are worthy to take this thing. Indeed, as the true King of Gondor it is rightfully yours." Sangahyandion accepts the Elendilmir and thanks her graciously, offering to withdraw from Pelargir as a pledge of his good faith until her quest against Irusan is complete.

"Capturing Pelargir is taking longer than I expected anyway," he admits with ironic humour. "Tarondor's steward is indeed a worthy opponent." Rastarin agrees, adding that Daeron would probably not appreciate her present actions, but Sangahyandion shakes his head.

"He would forgive you anything, because of who you are." He then reveals that Daeron and the original Dread Pirate were lovers during the Kin-strife, but he was forced to abandon her when Queen Mûrabeth arranged a political marriage for him.

"I believe that jewelled dagger you bear is responsible for a rather nasty scar on Daeron's stomach — courtesy of your late namesake!" he laughs. They talk long into the night, parting on very amicable terms. Rastarin is filled with hope for the future of Gondor and dazzled by Sangahyandion's nobility and charm, and she retires to her room dreaming of a life as his queen.

As moon rises over Gurthost, the mood on the Drowning Duck is not so happy. Rassimus and Tarassis do their best to prepare Delbo's ship for the arrival of Herod's demon, while Lytta steels herself to face the conflict that she knows will bring her death.

In a short time a great black cloud blocks out the stars over the deck, and two gleaming red eyes appear in its midst. Balmet ma-



terialises, a vast and grotesque shape with a horribly bloated body. The force of its landing shatters the ship's mast and at least one unfortunate sailor, and the rest of Delbo's crew run screaming for cover.

Rassimus bravely lures the creature into a trap, but is caught in one of its huge claws and crushed horribly. As Balmet drops his crumpled body, Lytta attacks with Yganas dagger, and a great concussion of power shakes the ship, causing Balmet to howl with pain and dissipate into nothingness.

Tarassis and Lytta rush to help Rassimus, but he is mortally wounded. "You must help Lytta.. Promise me you'll take care of her," he begs his brother, and Tarassis tearfully agrees. Rassimus dies in his arms.

Delbo's crew is in an uproar over the unexplained attack, and only Tarassis observes that when Lytta tries to touch Rassimus' body, her hands pass right through him. The Oathbreaker's mortal form has been destroyed, and she must now concentrate to perform even simple tasks that require corporeal strength. Her cloak cannot fully disguise the fact that Lytta is now only a spectre of her mortal self. When she encounters Delbo on deck he stares at her oddly, and then at his bottle of scrumpy. Apparently satisfied with this explanation, he informs them that they should be able to reach Mírlond in a few days and get a new mast fitted. Rassimus is given a burial at sea.

Meanwhile, Rastarin's sleep at Gurthost is troubled. She wakes up suddenly, half imagining that she has heard a noise. Grabbing her cutlass and a bottle of naurnen, she slips quietly outside, and senses an evil presence in the darkness ahead. She creeps towards it, and as her eyes adjust to the gloom, she sees that the door to Sangahyandion's bedroom is ajar. Yet her perceptions seem hazy and slightly distorted, as if seeing through a dream. The scar on her wrist is throbbing and glowing faintly. Peering around the door, Rastarin beholds a terrible sight: a white shrouded figure, skeletal and withered, hovering over the prone body of Sangahyandion. It can only be Irusan!

"Stop!" she cries, and Irusan looks up.

"Join me, descendant of Berúthiel, and you shall rule as Queen of Gondor — and my slave."

Rastarin does not reply.

"You must decide now," Irusan contin-

ues. "Join me and bring me the sword, or die."

"First give me the Elendilmir," she says at last, and Irusan complies.

Rastarin places the fillet on her head, and is suddenly filled with a sense of its power as the gem begins to glow. She begins to back away, trying to lure Irusan away from Sangahyandion; he follows slowly.

"You cannot escape," Irusan cackles as she retreats down the hall, suddenly aware that two spirit assassins are materializing 20 feet on either side of her. Irusan continues to speak. "You must serve me or die."

Rastarin finally finds the courage to answer. "I'll never join you!" she cries and hurls her bottle of naurnen at Irusan's feet. There is a blinding explosion, and she hears Irusan's evil laughter.

Aware that the spirit assassins are still approaching from behind, Rastarin lunges sideways into another room, slamming the door and bolting it. But to her dismay it has no exits, not even a window — and there is suddenly a great pounding on the door.

After a while the pounding stops, and Rastarin's vision clears, as if just awoken from a dream. There is the sound of fire and shouting outside, as Konar and his men try to get the blaze under control. She runs through them. The naurnen she remembered exploding in the corridor seems unaccountably to have started a fire in Sangahyandion's room, which is now a blazing inferno and impossible to enter.

Rastarin turns to Arkhâd, who like her is held back at the doorway by the intense heat and listening in horror to his brother's dying screams. When it becomes possible to enter, they find Sangahyandion's charred corpse still lying beside the bed — and the haft of Rastarin's jeweled dagger thrust like an accusing finger from his heart.

Rastarin is overcome with grief and terrible realization. Heedless of its scorching heat, she pulls out the knife and plunges it towards the scar upon her wrist, attempting to cut off her own hand. Konar dives forward and grabs Rastarin's arm at the last moment, interposing himself between her and Sangahyandion's soldiers who are now entering the room.

"You murdered him, you traitor!" shouts Arkhâd, pointing at Rastarin.

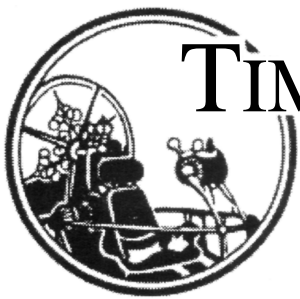
"That was your dagger, your naurnen! And now you try to steal the Elendilmir! Kill her!"

Konar boxes a few of Sangahyandion's guards who leap forward, gaining Rastarin enough time to leap over the balcony to a courtyard that extends to the cliffs. She runs to the edge; it is a drop of several hundred feet to the sea below. Sangahyandion's men soon overwhelm Konar and come on to the balcony — now there truly is no escape.

"It wasn't my fault!" she cries. "I can explain everything!"

"What are you waiting for? " Arkhâd roars at the soldiers. "KILL HER!"

In frustration and despair, Rastarin throws down her weapons and casts the Elendilmir on the ground, moments before Sangahyandion's soldiers seize her and begin to beat her mercilessly. In the seconds before she loses consciousness, she hears Irusan's distant laughter...



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## F i n e P r i n t

*Other Hands* is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, *Other Hands* aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role playing community. Within the pages of *Other Hands*, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including *Rolemaster* and *Middle-earth Role Playing*). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. *Other Hands* provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: USA/Canada (\$6.25/Issue), South/Central America (\$6.75), UK/Europe (\$7.25), New Zealand/Australia (\$7.75). For other zones, contact Chris Seeman. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213 Novato, CA 94948, USA. No Eurochecks, please! Submissions are welcome in any form (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can to send a file. We use Word for Windows. If there is any question as to the readability of your file, please save it in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 [USA]. Please write me or call if you have any difficulties. My phone number is [415] 892-9066. Please note also that I may be reached on-line at: [chris1224@aol.com](mailto:chris1224@aol.com).