

OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role-Playing Magazine for J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

OTHER MINDS

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© 2009 Thomas Morwinsky: Déagol and Sméagol quarreling over the One (Mithril Miniatures)

Next Issue's focus theme: The Fourth Age

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Editorial: Surprise!

Things often develop contrary to expectations and that's what happened with *Other Minds*, Issue 8. Well, there has been several events that could be properly described in this way. First, we are overdue for about a month. Several factors contributed to this unfortunate delay, but I think the results have been worth the wait.

Second, in our previous Issue I announced that #8 would be a non-themed Issue. Well, technically true, but events have overtaken us. By chance we **got** a focus theme: **Magic**. An all-time favourite in Middle-earth gaming publications, I am sure you will find our contributions very useful both for theoretical considerations of the topic as well as practical implementations of the theme.

It's not only the content that has undergone a surprising turn – our team has changed as well! Chris Wade is now concentrating his efforts for *Other Minds* on proofreading duties, while Neville Percy switched places with him (so to speak) and is now stepping up to his position as our new Assistant Editor. In the early 1990s Neville was a long-time RPger looking for a bit more. He took up Anglo-Saxon reenactment to find out – as "Osric" – what it was 'really' like, and started a MERP game that ran for 12 everimproving years. A long-time stalwart of the merp.com mailing list and fan-sourcebooks group, he's also been with *Other Minds* since Issue 1 as contributor and eagle-eyed proofreader. See the picture on the right for what he looks like. Welcome aboard Neville!

Considering content, here are our contributions. As you will notice, two authors have taken the task of providing you a wide array of views on the matter. First-time contributor Daniel "Vaco" Vacaflares has not submitted one, but three articles at once for *Other Minds* to publish. That's what I call a head-on start!

His first contribution **Between Canon and Dogma: Human Magic in Middle-earth** deals with the opinions and conclusions from a recent (and still ongoing) discussion on the Yahoo-based fan-sourcebooks group. He uses this to detail the various problems and limitations but also the benefits of working from the original texts to achieve a base for further, more applied thoughts in gaming system. We are looking forward to his further steps building upon this.

Daniel's second piece, **A Journey in the Dark** shows us what can be gleaned from a close analysis of the chapter of the same name in *The Lord of the Rings*, supplementing his first contribution with a more focused eye on a single topic within this broad theme.



In his final contribution **The Ways of Magic**, Daniel summarizes the major results and conclusions of his two previous articles and combines them with a view on different approaches to implementing magic in a game setting as well as world-

building articles.

Assistant Editor Neville Percy's thoughts about **A Sense of Magic** handily supplement Daniel's observations. He analyzes the episode of the Fellowship on the Redhorn Pass and thereafter to show what can be seen about the detectability of 'magic' (and what cannot) and its relevance in enhancing the 'Tolkienian' feel of a game.

This article is supplemented nicely by his **Sense of Magic** spell list as a means to simulate the perceptiveness of spell-users to the usage of magic by other persons, giving PCs access to a power previously used only upon them by their enemies. It is designed for use with *Rolemaster*, but can easily be adapted for *MERP* as well.

Our last contribution comes from António Simões, whom you probably remember from the last issue. In his article **The Nine Nazgûl** he has turned his thoughts on the hypothetical biographies of the Ringwraiths, building upon the already established work done by ICE in their publications and adding more ideas of his own.

Having spoken about the content that **is** present, let me say a few words about something which is **not**, though it was announced in the last issue: This is my planned contribution about the Religions in Angmar. This one could unfortunately not be finished in time. As a small comfort I can assure you that it **will** be in *Other Minds*, Issue #9 for sure!

This outlook for the future is also a good opportunity to point out that our next Issue will have a focus – the Fourth Age! I am sure that quite a few among you, our readers, have a hidden gem dealing with this period of Middle-earth stored somewhere or at least in prepreparation. Do not hesitate to submit it, so that you can see it published and available for a wide audience. We will aid you in any way possible to make a superb contribution of it.

As an appetizer, we have included the introductory chapter from one of our already planned Fourth Age – contributions. The title **The Age of Sauron** says it all: It's a "what if" scenario where Frodo failed in his quest and Sauron got the One

back. You'll find the exciting rest of it, fully developed as a campaign setting in the decades following the War of the Ring in our next Issue.

So, enough for now and on with the show!




For the *Other Minds* team
Thomas Morwinsky
December 2009



A Sense of Magic

by Neville Percy

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The way magic is represented in the books along with the conclusions drawn therefrom, is a recurring theme among Tolkien enthusiasts as well as those who game in Middle-earth.

Within the broader “magic” theme, the way how to interpret certain key issues has received similar attention. The question about the detectability of magic is one of those, and Neville gives us a great overview how this could be seen with a close look on the original source.



At last reluctantly Gandalf himself took a hand. Picking up a faggot he held it aloft for a moment, and then with a word of command, naur an edraith ammen! he thrust the end of his staff into the midst of it. At once a great spout of green and blue flame sprang out, and the wood flared and sputtered.

If there are any to see, then I at least am revealed to them,” he said. “I have written Gandalf is here in signs that all can read from Rivendell to the Mouths of the Anduin.”

– THE RING GOES SOUTH,
FOTR

It is fairly common in fantasy tradition for magicians to have a ‘sixth sense’ for the workings of magic things and therefore, to some extent, to detect one another’s magical acts.

It is common to *any* conflict situation that both sides seek to learn about their opponent’s abilities, situation and strategies whilst equally striving to keep their own hidden. In an asymmetrical conflict this may be skewed, with one side so dominant that there is much they cannot hide, or the other so overwhelmed that in the absence of extensive intelligence they can depend only on hope, but the principle is the same.

Giving the protagonists – and hence the reader – just the right amount of awareness of their enemy’s activities is also extremely potent for drama and storytelling. Where the antagonists have ‘magical’ powers, the same principles apply even if the means employed are different, e.g. including ‘scrying’ (though Tolkien conspicuously never uses that word) and magical obfuscation (which he calls “shrouding”). Even if they have no means

of deliberately seeking to detect anything about their enemy, authors often introduce some knowledge of it through other means, such as ripples in the Force, or dreams and the aching of a scar.

The Lord of the Rings includes other manifestations of the conflict of intelligence and counter-intelligence. It is central to the tale that Sauron seeks the Ring, which has a power of being undetectable from a distance even to its Master, and can only be sensed vaguely even by the Ring-wraiths when they manage to come near to it. Everywhere that the tale involves those devices of information, the *palantiri*, there is a battle of wills to use them for misdirection.¹ Galadriel ‘knows’ all of the Dark Lord’s mind where it concerns the Elves, and “he gropes ever to see me and my thought. But still the door is closed!”² And Gandalf has a gift of defying detection, remarked upon by Galadriel.³

As an important first principle in any conflict situation, as a great source of drama, and possibly as a means of reflecting in microcosm a larger theme of LotR, some GMs may like to extrapolate from the episode with Gandalf upon Caradhras and introduce the principle that magicians can detect one another’s workings of magic into their Middle-earth games.

The episode in the Redhorn Pass is not conclusive proof that Tolkien portrays the wielders of magic in Middle-earth to be constantly engaged in detection and counter-detection of one another’s spells. Once revealed, Gandalf has no hesitation in using fire-magic on the Wargs. On confronting Durin’s Bane in Moria, Gandalf reveals himself fully as a servant of the Secret Flame just before passing out of the tale. By the time he returns as Gandalf the White, the time for stealth has passed. We are therefore presented with just this one

¹ On which see Tom Shippey’s ‘Interlacements and the Ring’ in *The Road to Middle-earth*, p. 149

² THE MIRROR OF GALADRIEL, FOTR.

³ “I cannot see Gandalf from afar, unless he comes within the fences of Lothlórien: a grey mist is about him, and the ways of his feet and of his mind are hidden from me.” – THE MIRROR OF GALADRIEL, FOTR.

example on which to base a decision as to whether to include a Sense of Magic in our game systems for Middle-earth.

The closest Tolkien comes to suggesting the detection of 'magic' anywhere else is in the following passages.

ARAGORN (OF THE NAZGÛL): "Senses, too, there are other than sight or smell. **We can feel their presence** – it troubled our hearts, as soon as we came here, and before we saw them; **they feel ours more keenly.**"

– A KNIFE IN THE DARK, FOTR

GANDALF (OF THE BALROG): "Then something came into the chamber – **I felt it through the door**, and the orcs themselves were afraid and fell silent. **It laid hold of the iron ring, and then it perceived me and my spell.**"

– THE BRIDGE OF KHAZAD-DÛM, FOTR

Frodo looked and saw, still at some distance, a hill of many trees, or a city of green towers: which it was he could not tell. **Out of it, it seemed to him that the power and light came that held all the land in sway.**

– LOTHLÓRIEN, FOTR

SAM GAMGEE: "Whether they've made the land, or the land's made them, it's hard to say, if you take my meaning. It's wonderfully quiet here. Nothing seems to be going on, and nobody seems to want it to. **If there's any magic about, it's right down deep**, where I can't lay my hands on it, in a manner of speaking."

"You can see and feel it everywhere," said Frodo.

– THE MIRROR OF GALADRIEL, FOTR

When ICE introduced detection by agents of the dark power as a reason for 'Mages' and 'Animists' not to abuse magic or even to use their magic too lightly,¹ I think most GMs welcomed it. Its main motivation was fairly clearly to be – along with the Corruption system – a means of

mitigating against excessive use of the magic that MERP had provided to its players. This may be appropriate for some GMs, but it should be worked into the drama of the adventure rather than in the (vain) hope of coercing people into a certain style of play.

The *Sense of Magic* spell list fragment is offered in the next contribution to add some detail to the magic used by the dominant forces of the Shadow. It also offers the PCs the opportunity to use the same technique against their enemies, and the tactical option (not available to Gandalf!) to expend a disproportionate amount of their Power Points in order for their magic to go undetected.

It could be used in conjunction with the Spell Use Risk Table in the existing MERP rules,² or could work very well with a recurring villain on the trail of the PCs, whom they can evade but who will draw nearer again when they are forced into the use of magic, either their own or in an enchanted item or similar.

A Night on Redhorn Mountain

Book I was about the Hobbits evading the Black Riders search of the Shire, and then Strider helping them escape the Riders' 'drag-net' through the wild to Rivendell. Book II's 'The Ring Goes South' again revolves around the evasion of detection. Gandalf has not been 'revealed' since his battle upon Weathertop, when he fought Nazgûl who are now known to have fled shapeless back to Mordor.

Event	Comment
Elrond warned against Sauron's "spies on foot and wing"	(A hint at the nature of potential watchers, below)
The Fellowship "could seldom risk the lighting of a fire". They found Ere-gion unnaturally silent - giving Aragorn "a sense of watchfulness, and of fear" - and overflown by armies of crebain, hawks high in the sky and an ominous shadow both felt and seen passing before the stars, "moving fast, and not with the wind".	Aragorn's sense of watchfulness and fear is attributed by Gandalf to the sensitivity of a Ranger. Was nature subdued deliberately to make the passage of the Fellowship more conspicuous?
The likeliest explanation for the shadow in the night sky is the first return of a re-mounted Nazgûl.	Could the dread aura of a Nazgûl, or the hordes of crebain, subdue the creatures of nature in a wide area?
Gandalf says, "We may well be seen by watchers on that narrow path" of the Redhorn Gate. But he still urges that they not light a fire, "Not unless it is a choice between fire and death."	(This reflects the deadly importance of escaping detection if at all possible. If lighting a fire is the most significant factor in this, that says something about the surveillance, natural or magical, that Gandalf seeks to elude.)
The mountains exhibit unseasonably hostile weather.	The weather is possibly attributed to Sauron's arm having grown long. But reference to "his arm" could equally include his "many allies" mentioned. ¹
The wind sounds like "shrill cries, and wild howls of laughter" and comes with stones and boulders aimed at the Fellowship. ¹	Aragorn's response is to tell of "evil and unfriendly things" that "are not in league with Sauron."
Gimli relates the ill-will of Caradhras the mountain 'himself'.	It seems that Tolkien is implying that Sauron's forces are not directly responsible here.
The cold of the night brings the foreshadowed choice between fire and death. Gandalf allows a fire, saying, "If there are any watchers that can endure this storm, then they can see us, fire or no."	Gandalf seems to distinguish between the elemental forces harassing them - that effectively are the storm - and his feared watchers that would have to "endure the storm". Gandalf fears watchers within and enduring the storm, not watching from away beyond it. (No one's remembered the ancient palantiri at this stage of the tale. Indeed, Tolkien hadn't yet conceived of them!)

continued on next page

¹ MERP 2nd Edition, Magic and Spells 15.3: Risk Factors, p. 71

² MERP 2nd Edition, Table ST-12, p. 264

¹ Peter Jackson's FotR directly attributes the storm to Saruman, an interpretation neither supported nor refuted by Tolkien's original text.
² This is a less-mythical counterpart – intended as a correction? – of the stone giants episode in TH.

Event	Comment
Gandalf relents in stages, using his magic only as a last resort. Once a fire is unavoidable, he wants it lit normally. Only when every struggle with normal skill ("even of a Dwarf!") failed, does he use his staff and his word of command. ¹ "At once a great spout of green and blue flame sprang out [...]"	Some trick of the rare, but still non-magical, artifice of a firework-crafter might have been Gandalf's next preference. He therefore doesn't seem to have anything of that nature in his possession. Also, even with his "study of bewitchments with fire and lights" ² his magic does not allow him to create anormal inconspicuous orange flame.
"If there are any to see, then I at least am revealed to them," he said. "I have written Gandalf is here in signs that all can read from Rivendell to the Mouths of the Anduin."	Gandalf already acknowledged that the Fellowship will have been seen by any watchers present. But the use of fire-magic, brief as it was, was worse in "revealing" - or perhaps more accurately: identifying - Gandalf specifically. If Gandalf's statement referred to the visible phenomenon, not every potential watcher among the folk and creatures of Middle-earth could be expected to read a green-blue flame as specifically identifying Gandalf - and he must therefore mean that any report of this will allow the spies' masters, from Rivendell to the sea, to identify him. ³ Alternately, if this last statement "If there are any to see" is unrelated to his previous talk of normal watchers, and instead refers to magical perception, then he may be saying that his use of fire-magic could have given him away to anyone from Rivendell to the sea who has (and is actively using?) the ability to detect it.
We never learn whether this made any difference to anything, beyond the fact that the Fellowship were beaten back! The next night sees the attack of the Wargs. But we do not know whether they came in response to a sighting in the storm, or a sighting by the circling black birds which the Fellowship ignored in their urgency of getting off the mountain, or even whether the Wargs sniffed them out independently of either.	

- 1 "word of command" (singular) is a 'poetic' description: *Naur an edraith ammen!* is a grammatically correct, if short, sentence. It is translated literally as "Fire be for saving of us!" (in *THE TREASON OF ISENGARD*, *HoME* 7, p. 175) though this is not good English.
- 2 - OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE, *TH*
- 3 This also argues *against* such magic being possible to anyone else (unaccounted-for) from Rivendell to the Mouths of Anduin.

Sense of Magic

by Neville Percy

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This optional Spell List for either ROLEMASTER or MERP is intended as the companion that implements the more theoretical thoughts of the previous article into some concrete game mechanics.

I think you will find them as useful as we and it will enrich your games in offering a possibility to

simulate in game terms what Tolkien described in his books.

We hope that it will also fuel further thoughts on the matter, and some ideas for similar mechanics in other game systems—if they are lacking there as well.



lvl	Spell	Duration	Range*
1	Identify Signature	Inst	one spell
2	Sense of Magic I	10 min/lvl	50/20/10' / pt. of RF**
3	Trace of the Caster	Inst	50/20/10' / pt. of RF
4	Sense of Magic II	10 min/lvl***	50/20/10' / pt. of RF*
5	Enduring Trace of the Caster	5 min/lvl (C)	50/20/10' / pt. of RF
6	Suppress Signature	1 rnd/lvl	self
7	Sense of Magic III	10 min/lvl*	50/20/10' / pt. of RF*
8	Image of the Caster	Inst	one target
9	Suppressed Casting	one spell	caster
10	Sense of Magic True	10 min/lvl	50/20/10' pt. of RF
11	Area Sense of Magic	1 hr/lvl	100/40/20 yds / pt. of RF
12	True Image of the Caster	Inst	one target
13	Area Sense of Magic II	1 hr/lvl***	100/40/20 yds / pt. of RF*
14	Sense of Suppressed Magic	10 min/lvl	one spell of the caster
15	Area Sense of Magic III	1 hr/lvl***	100/40/20 yds / pt. of RF*
16	Domain Sense of Magic I	1 hr/lvl	5/2/1 mile / pt. of RF
17	Area Sense of Magic True	1 hr/lvl	100/40/20 yds / pt. of RF*
18	Suppressed Casting True	1 min/lvl	caster
19	Falsify Signature	one spell	caster
20	Domain Sense of Magic True	1 hr/lvl	5/2/1 mile / pt. of RF
30	Domain Sense of Suppressed Magic True	1 hr/lvl	5/2/1 mile / pt. of RF
50	Master of the Domain	1 hr/lvl	5/2/1 mile / pt. of RF
* The multiple Ranges are for Essence, Channeling and The Will, respectively (regardless of the caster's preferred Realms)			
** MERP 2nd Ed. gives every spell a 'Risk Factor' for detection (RF), from 1 for humble divination talents to 50 for the regrettable Fire Ball. Other spells should be compared to these to identify appropriate RFs. Note that the listed RFs do not increase in proportion with the level of the level spell cast, higher level spells are no more detectable than lower level ones of the same type. Option: Add (2× PP cost) to listed RFs. And optionally rename "RF" to "Impact" or something else with less of a modern engineering tone!			
*** If the caster opts to 'fix' a detected spell in his mind, this lasts only as described for Sense of Magic I.			

The spells on this list work on the premise that casting a spell of any Realm of Magic causes a degree of magical fluctuation in the vicinity, which other individuals can detect by employing the spells on this list.

1 – Identify Signature (I) Caster learns whether a spell detected by another spell on this list is of White, Grey, or Black magic, and memorises the unique magical signature of its caster. *This spell could also be made available on the 'Detect Magic' lists.*

2 – Sense of Magic I (I) For the duration of this spell the caster will become aware of the direction of all spells of his Realm which are active within a range dependent on their Impact values. The caster may at any time 'fix' one such target spell in his mind, terminating this spell. Other spells on this list may then be cast either on the fixed spell or whoever cast it for as long as it remains active and within range).

3 – Trace of the Caster (I) Caster learns the distance and direction to the caster of an active spell 'held' by a *Sense of Magic* spell.

4 – Sense of Magic II (I) As *Sense of Magic I*, but caster may a) add a second realm in which to learn of the casting of spells (second realm to be specified at the time of learning the list), b) increase the range or duration*** of this spell by one multiple or c) add the ability to 'fix' one detected spell in his mind whilst continuing to be able to sense further spellcasting as per a *Sense of Magic I* spell.

5 – Enduring Trace of the Caster (I) As *Trace of the Caster*, but within the duration of this spell the caster may at any time concentrate for 1 rnd to learn the distance and direction to the caster of the active spell 'held'.

6 – Suppress Signature (U) Makes caster's Signature, Image, and True Image impossible to divine unless the caster of an *Identify Signature* (etc.) wins a level vs level RR.

This and the other 'Suppress' spells on this list could also be made available on Rolemaster 'Misfeel' lists

7 – Sense of Magic III (I) As *Sense of Magic II*, but caster may add two picks from the options given, including using adding sensitivity to the 'third' Realm.

8 – Image of the Caster (I) Caster gains a mental image of the current appearance of the caster of a spell currently 'held' by a *Sense of Magic* spell.

9 – Suppressed Casting () Causes caster's next spell to be undetectable to spells on this list.

10 – Sense of Magic True (I) As *Sense of Magic*, but caster learns of spells of all Realms and may 'hold' any number of spells in his mind for purposes of casting further spells on this list, and still be aware of any and all spells subsequently cast.

11 – Area Sense of Magic (I) As *Sense of Magic*, but with increased range and duration.

12 – True Image of the Caster (I) As *Image of the Caster*, but caster learns the true appearance of the caster of the 'held' spell.

13 – Area Sense of Magic II (I) As *Area Sense of Magic*, but the caster may employ options as listed under *Sense of Magic II*.

14 – Sense of Suppressed Magic (I) As *Sense of Magic*, but spells cast under the *Suppressed Casting* spell are at -50 to their RR to resist detection.

15 – Area Sense of Magic III (I) As *Area Sense of Magic*, but the caster may employ options as listed under *Sense of Magic III*.

16 – Domain Sense of Magic (I) As *Sense of Magic*, but with increased range and duration.

17 – Area Sense of Magic True (I) As *Sense of Magic True*, but with increased range and duration.

18 – Suppressed Casting True (U) As *Suppressed Casting*, but affects all spells cast within the duration of this spell.

19 – Falsify Signature (U) As *Suppressed Casting*, but caster may apply a false signature to one spell, including making its signature seem White, Grey, or Black, as desired.

20 – Domain Sense of Magic True (I) As *Sense of Magic True*, but with increased range and duration.


30 – Domain Sense of Suppressed Magic True (I)

50 – Master of the Domain (I) As *Domain Sense of Magic True*, but caster automatically learns all the information normally obtained by the *Identify Signature*, *Enduring Trace of the Caster*, *Image of the Caster*, and *True Image of the Caster* spells.



Between Canon and Dogma— Human Magic in Middle-earth

by Daniel “Vaco” Vacaflares
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This extensive discussion of the magic available to humans offers a good overview concerning the textual situation and the various interpretations derived thereof. We think that it will greatly improve the basis upon which future contributors build their ideas. Therefore, have fun with this good summary of the subject of human magic!



Preface

*“Unless, of course, you give heed to rhymes of old days which women such as our good loreth still repeat without understanding. [...] It is but a doggrel, I fear, garbled in the memory of old wives. Its meaning I leave to your judgement, if indeed it has any.”
The Return of the King: The Houses of Healing*

In 2009, in the “Fan-Sourcebooks” discussion list, there was a discussion about the validity or not of the use of magic by human beings in Middle-earth, especially arguing from a so called “canon”: what “is” according to the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. I prefer to call this position “dogma”, not in the sense that it is incorrect (not at all!) but because it claimed to

reject other opinions as “not based in Tolkien’s world”.

In this article my intention is to analyze the possibility of magic use by humans, working from the writings of Tolkien himself. That is, I want to demonstrate that, at least in this case, there are different possible “correct” interpretations of canon.

For this argumentation I just don’t want to make a difference between “inborn powers” and “learned spells”. It is because my own philosophy on the matter: for me the difference between both is circumstantial, an interpretation made by the RPG industry. I do think that certain “inborn powers” could be transformed in “magic spells”, and those could also be reworked

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(Elena Rossi, ½ Listowner)

¹ <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules>

as “magical abilities”. For me magic is a mystical power that comes from the spirit (the *fëa*), that manifests itself in the real world in a more open or veiled manner. Whether it comes to “great wizards” or just the “lucky guy” is another story, for another article.

Here I am talking about the basic “magical” nature of human beings in Middle-earth. And as such should it be understood.

Canon and Dogma: analyzing the counter theory

The main argument against humans as users of magic is based on the following quote, taken from an unsent draft of a letter by Professor Tolkien:

“[A passage from a draft [...] which was not included in the version actually sent.]”

“Anyway, a difference in the use of ‘magic’ in this story is that it is not to be come by by ‘lore’ or spells; but is in an inherent power not possessed or attainable by Men as such. Aragorn’s ‘healing’ might be regarded as ‘magical’, or at least a blend of magic with pharmacy and ‘hypnotic’ processes. But it is (in theory) reported by hobbits who have very little notions of philosophy and science; while A. [ragorn] is not a pure ‘Man’, but at long remove one of the ‘children of Lúthien’.” Letters, #155

R. Henry noted, of the fact that this draft was never sent: “This could simply mean he thought it was not relevant after consideration, that he decided it was incorrect, or that he decided he was unwilling to commit himself to its correctness at that time. It certainly raises doubts that this was his settled conviction.”

I think the existence of this quote is grounds enough for the defenders of the non-magical nature of humans in Middle-earth. And as such I do respect it. As I already said my intention is not to “demonstrate” that this view is wrong, but that it is not the only one.

A maxim amongst storytellers is applicable here: “don’t just say it, show it”.

That is, it’s not enough to say that an old man is feeble, but this weakness should permeate the story, and not be just a rhetorical comment without implications.

In light of this it seems to me that the quote of Professor Tolkien should not be taken as absolute.

By reading his work again and again I convinced myself that Tolkien definitely does not describe a Middle-earth without human magic. This other “vision” is the one I’m going to show.

What happens if Tolkien says one thing in this draft, but shows us the contrary in his stories? My personal interpretation is that Professor Tolkien never developed a coherent theory about magic in Middle-earth. Instead the magic of Tolkien is more a feeling. So it is possible to interpret the same “feeling” from different perspectives, as presented in this article.

First argument: magicians as an integral part of the popular imagination in Middle-earth

“Wizards after all are wizards.”
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Party

The first point that I think is important is the numerous mentions of the existence of “magicians” and “magic users”, and not just in the narrow sense of the “Istari” as “angelic beings”. I want to show some quotes from the works of J.R.R. Tolkien that point this way.

“...in the wild lands beyond Bree there were mysterious wanderers. The Bree-folk called them Rangers, and knew nothing of their origin. They were taller and darker than the Men of Bree and were believed to have strange powers of sight and hearing, and to understand the languages of beasts and birds.”

The Fellowship of the Ring: At the Sign of the Prancing Pony

“All the company drew away from Pippin and Sam, who found themselves left alone in a corner, and eyed darkly and doubtfully from a distance. It was plain that many people regarded them now as the companions of a traveling magician of unknown powers and purpose.”

The Fellowship of the Ring: At the Sign of the Prancing Pony

“...the Heren Istarion or “Order of Wizards” was quite distinct from the “wizards” and “magicians” of later legend [...] Among Men they were supposed (at first) by those that had dealings with them to be Men who had acquired lore and arts by long and secret study.”

Unfinished Tales: The Istari

This first argument is about such “casual” references to the existence of (human) magicians or humans with some kind of magical abilities. This is in no way a complete ‘compendium’ of such kind of casual quotes of “wizards” and other “magic users”. In this first instance I have made just a speedy search, and it is no comprehensive of the total of Tolkien’s work.

For this first argument I selected just those indirect references that could be interpreted as simple superstition without a real justification. That was the biggest criticism: that they did not prove anything. In that context I want to mention the following discussion between Sam Gamgee and Ted Sandyman:

“Queer things you do hear these days, to be sure”, said Sam.

“Ah,” said Ted, “you do, if you listen. But I can hear fireside-tales and children’s stories at home, if I want to.”

“No doubt you can,” retorted Sam, “and I daresay there’s more truth in some of them than you reckon. Who invented the stories anyway?”

The Fellowship of the Ring: The Shadow of the Past

Professor Tolkien tells us again and again that the little and “ignorant” people of Middle-earth are a repository of profound truths. In fact one of the fundamental differences between Gandalf and Saruman is that Gandalf heeds them, while Saruman doesn’t.

“After all, I believe that legends and myths are largely made of ‘truth’, and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode...”
The Silmarillion: From a Letter by J.R.R. Tolkien

Anyway by now it is not my intention to elevate these observations to the status of truths. It is just to say that, be they simple superstitions or not, there is a popular concept that magicians exist, without excluding human beings.

Second argument: the words of Gandalf before the Gates of Moria

“I [Gandalf speaking] once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs that was ever used for such a purpose. I can still remember ten score of them without searching in my mind.”
The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

This is maybe one of the central quotes in the Fan-Sourcebooks discussion, about which there were many interesting opinions.

The first one is that this quote doesn’t demonstrate the existence of human magic users, just the existence of spells in human tongues. But it is admitted that it does suggest it.

Another opinion was that this quote tells us not just about the human capacity to use magic, but that of Orcs!

A third opinion says that the specific mention of “spells” and the possibility to “forget them” tells us not just about human capacity to use magic, but that it can be learnt (versus the position that magic is inborn and that it can not be learnt).

For this essay the aspect that I want to note is that the words of Gandalf strongly suggest the existence of human magic, even if it does not prove it. (For an argumentation for the validity of this quote see my article “A Journey in the Dark” in this Issue of *Other Minds*)

Third argument: examples of magic use by humans

“Tinúviel! Tinúviel!”
And clear his [Beren’s] voice was as a bell; its echoes wove a binding spell.
The Lays of Beleriand: The Lay of Leithian

The first two arguments might not be enough to demonstrate the validity of the use of magic by the humans of Middle-earth. So the next step in my logic is to show concrete references.

Eorl vowed that he would avenge his father. He hunted long for the horse, and at last he caught sight of him; and his companions expected that he would try to come within bowshot and kill him. But when they drew near, Eorl stood up and called in a loud voice: “Come hither, Mansbane, and get a new name!” To their wonder the horse looked towards Eorl, and came and stood before him, and Eorl said: “Felaróf I name you. You loved your freedom, and I do not blame you for that. But now you owe me a great weregild, and you shall surrender your freedom to me until your life’s end.”
Then Eorl mounted him, and Felaróf submitted.
LotR, Appendix A: The House of Eorl

I have included quotes with specific references to a “binding spell” made by a human (Beren), to the evident use of magic even if it is not mentioned specifically (Eorl). About this last quote it has been said that it could be that it really means the ability of some humans to understand the speech of animals or that an animal (e.g. Felaróf) understands the language of Men.

This argumentation supposes something (e.g. the submission of Felaróf). It

ignores the possibility of other options. This is namely the ability of some humans to understand the speech of at least one animals species. Secondly, dismisses the option of Felaróf of being almost of manish intelligence [this would make him recognize the situation with its implications (e.g. weregild) and **willingly** submit to Eorl’s demand without the necessity of any “spell”. All this (a horse understanding a man’s speech and recognizing the complex social implications of the situation) is clearly a good example for Tolkien’s usage of magic: something inherent and not “learned” by lore. (Thomas Morwinsky)

I myself think that it is clear that the active part in this quote is played by Eorl, who speaks a doom and so submits the will of Felaróf. That does not leave out the possibility that Felaróf could understand the speech of Men, and in fact I do think that is the case (see the description of Shadowfax in *The Lord of the Rings*). And I do agree that both the quotes of Eorl and Beren can be understood in a more “metaphorical” hindsight meaning love and righteous fate (see my article “The Ways of Magic”), but that in this kind of argumentation they are also good examples of “magic worked by humans”.

Here follows the specific description of Beorn as a “human magician”:

Though a skin-changer and no doubt a bit of a magician, Beorn was a Man.
Letters: #144

If you must know more, his name is Beorn. He is very strong, and he is a skin-changer. [...] He is a skin-changer. He changes his skin; sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard. [...] At any rate he is under no enchantment but his own. [...] he keeps cattle and horses which are nearly as marvellous as himself. They work for him and talk to him.
The Hobbit: Queer Lodgings

Specifically this quote was criticized that it would be a hereditary power, based on “what it is”, the essence of the self.

1 Beorn indeed became a great chief afterwards [...] and it is said that for many generations the men of his line had the power of taking bear’s shape, and some were grim men and bad, but most were in heart like Beorn, if less in size and strength. **The Hobbit: The Return Journey**

Anyway I want to make clear that the only thing we know for certain is that the descendants of Beorn did keep the ability to change skins.¹ But we don't know how Beorn: if from his ancestors, or if he was the first skin-changer. Additionally in *The Hobbit* there are other "bears", so that it is not necessarily a lone case limited to one lineage.

For me maybe the best example of the use of magic by human beings is the following:

...many of the Folk of Haleth believed that they possessed uncanny and magical powers [...] Aghan laid his hand upon it, and after a silence said: "See, I have left with it some of my powers" [...] There the watch-stone was, sitting on a dead Orc; but its legs were all blackened and cracked... "And better that his legs should trample Orc-fire than mine."

The he sat down and unlaced his buskins, and Barach saw that under them there were bandages on his legs. [...] If some power passes from you to a thing that you have made, then you must take a share in its hurts."

...the Drúedain, who were ever noted for their strange foresight...

Unfinished Tales: The Drúedain

Even when the first oration could very well pass in the quotes of my first argument, the following does take it out of "popular myth" to place it as a concrete fact.

The reference to the foresight of the Drúedain reminds us of the well known cases of Malbeth the Seer and Ivorwen, mother of Gilraen and grandmother of Aragorn. And I don't take into account Aragorn, Dírhael and Gilraen, because on the ground of the quote of Tolkien his "possible" magic skills would come from their elvish and Maiarin descent.

[Additional note: from these fragments it

would seem possible to begin a categorization of the "magic" usable by human peoples: prophecies, charms, animal communication and control, healing, shape change, the animation of inanimate objects, power transmission, etc. But this is not my goal in this article. Besides I want to warn against a categorization just from these few examples. A work of this kind does need and deserve a deeper and systematic analysis.]

Fourth argument: terminology used by Tolkien

Finally I think it is important to take a look at the way Professor Tolkien describes the nature of the *Istari* (Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast):

[The Istari exhibited] eminent knowledge of the history and nature of the World. [...] and they had many powers of mind and hand.

Unfinished Tales: The Istari

If we take into account that the *Istari* are essentially "magical", and that it is maybe their most important feature, then it is easy to understand the last two sentences do make reference not just to their "knowledge", but to their magic skills. Someone said that Tolkien is a master of describing magic in indirect terms, so the reader must make up his own mind about its deeper meaning. And that seems to be the case with these sentences.

But this is not new. We already know that the *Istari* ("wizards") use magic.

Compare this with a description of Denethor:

Denethor succeeded to the Stewardship in 2984, being then fifty-four years old: a masterful man, both wise and learned beyond the measure of those days, and strong willed, confident in his own powers, and dauntless. [...] Quite apart from the palantíri, Denethor was a man of great mental powers, and a quick reader of thoughts behind faces and words...

Unfinished Tales: The Palantíri

All these powers, knowledge and force of will can be interpreted from a mundane

perspective that has nothing to do with magic. But I would note that there are resemblances between it and the quote before where the nature of the *Istari* is described: both cases describe "knowledge/lore" and "power": specifically "mental powers" and "powers of mind and hand".

Extrapolating we could well suppose that Denethor was a master in magic arts in the specific sense of "magician", even if he didn't show it.

This interpretation do have an echo in the following quote:

Foresight which is prevision, and forecasting which is opinion made by reasoning upon present evidence, may be identical in their prediction, but they are wholly different in mode, and they should be distinguished by loremasters, even if the daily language of both Elves and Men gives them the same name as departments of wisdom.

Vinyar Tengwar, #39: Ósanwe-kenta

Here the words of Tolkien himself signal explicitly that knowledge (forecasting) and magic (foresight) do have "the same name as departments of wisdom". My proposal is that in Tolkien's writings, words like "knowledge", "lore", "wisdom" and "art" should be interpreted in a broad sense, which could take in the existence of magic arts.

In this way it is interesting to re-read a lot of historical passages of Middle-earth,

...the Edain of old learned swiftly of the Eldar all such art and knowledge as they could receive, and their sons increased in wisdom and skill.

Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Coming of Men into the West

They [the Númenóreans] became thus in appearance, and even in powers of mind, hardly distinguishable from the Elves [...] Their long life aids in their achievements in art and wisdom, but breeds a possessive attitude...

The Silmarillion. From a Letter by J.R.R. Tolkien

such as when human peoples learn “wisdom” and “arts” from the Elves.

Conclusions

If we consider that 1) the use of magic

“You don’t know much even about them [humankind], if you think old Barliman is stupid,” said Gandalf. “He is wise enough on his own ground. He thinks less than he talks, and slower; yet he can see through a brick wall in time (as they say in Bree)”

***The Fellowship of the Ring:
Many Meetings***

by human beings in the folk imagination of Middle Earth, 2) the explicit reference by Gandalf to spells in the tongues of human peoples before the Gates of Moria, 3) the concrete use of some kind of magic by human beings, and 4) that there is a great resemblance between Professor Tolkien’s descriptions of the *Istari* and other “non-magical” characters, I think we can assert the existence of human mages in Middle-earth.

Now, I want to repeat that I don’t think that it is the only valid interpretation about this matter in the Middle-earth “canon”. I think the quote of Professor Tolkien in the first section (see above) is a valid argument for those who do not wish to have human magic users in their Middle-earth roleplaying games.

But apparently this quote is an isolated reference, and the observation of R. Henry is valid about its “draft” nature. And as I show in this article the image that Professor Tolkien show us in his different stories tells us a very different story, where magic is not uncommon and is possible for human beings.

Every time I read the works of Professor Tolkien with my eye open for magic, I can’t help but find subtle references to magic again and again, including its use by human beings. One of these examples is the old Barliman Butterbur, and his supposed ability to see through a brick wall (“as they say in Bree”).

I think Professor Tolkien never developed a theory about the nature of magic in Middle-earth. I think that for him it was

more like a “feeling” that translates to his writings as we know them. And it is in this way that even when I think it is possible to go “nearer” to this feeling, there is place for different interpretations more or less compatible with one another, without denying them for a so called “canon”.

I will analyze precisely that possibility, of multiple interpretations, in my next article about magic in Middle-earth, “The Ways of Magic”.

To finish I want to look into two additional points to explain the nature of magic, as I interpret it, and why humans can use magic.

Excursus one:

The Nature of the World

The creation myth of Middle-earth is told in the *Ainulindalë*, the *Valaquenta* and in the first chapters of the *Quenta Silmarillion*,¹ where the nature of the world is given in some depth. I want to refer to these passages to explain my particular vision about the nature of magic, and especially to justify humankind as potential magic users.

I want to point to three basic facts: 1) the Music of the Ainur, 2) the nature of the Secret Fire (or Flame Imperishable) and 3) the essence of the Valar.

In the beginning Eru, the One, who in Elvish tongue is named Ilúvatar, made the Ainur of his thought; and they made a great Music before him. In this Music the World was begun; for Ilúvatar made visible the song of the Ainur, and they beheld it as a light in the darkness. And may among them became enamoured of its beauty, and of its history which they saw beginning and unfolding as in a vision. Therefore Ilúvatar gave to their vision Being, and set it amid the Void, and the Secret Fire was sent to burn at the heart of the World; and it was called Eä.

Then those of the Ainur who desired it arose and entered into the World at the beginning of Time; and it was their task to achieve it, and by their labours to fulfil the vision which they had seen.

The Silmarillion: Valaquenta

So great was her sorrow [of Nienna], as the Music unfolded, that her song turned to lamentation long before its end, and the sound of mourning was woven into the themes of the World before it began.

The Silmarillion: Valaquenta

The Music of the Ainur is the essence of the world, and its fate. This essence permeates all the fabric of reality, that is fundamentally divine (magical). The essence and nature of the Ainur’s selves is reflected in this Music.

This vision finds its fullness thanks to the Secret Fire, which gives it its quality of ‘reality’.

And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, in he will. [...] and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire [...] Eä! Let these things Be! And I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be; and those of you that will may go down into it.

The Silmarillion: Ainulindalë

The Flame Imperishable (or Secret Fire) seems to be the principle of life. From it the thoughts of the Ainur take shape, from it originate the living beings and from it is born the freedom of the Children of Eru. The Flame Imperishable is the manifestation of divinity in each of us.



¹ Apparently there are also references in *Morgoth’s Ring*, but I didn’t have access to that book.

Thus it came to pass that of the Ainur some abode still with Ilúvatar beyond the confines of the World; but other, and among them many of the greatest and most fair, took the leave of Ilúvatar and descended into it. But this condition Ilúvatar made, or it is necessity of their love, that their power should thenceforward be contained and bounded in the World, to be within it for ever, until it is complete, so that they are its life and it is theirs. And therefore they are named the Valar, the Powers of the World.

The Silmarillion: Ainulindalë

I perceive in this quote (“so that they are its life and it is theirs”) the principle that the essence of the Powers is in all creation. If it is true that the Powers (the Valar) do have differentiated identities, and the world is talked about as their “labours”, I understand their essence to be the “life of the world”. And as such their primal nature is to be found in every facet of creation.

The following quote reinforces this perception:

But mostly Ulmo speaks to those who dwell in Middle-earth with voices that are heard only as the music of water. For all seas, lakes, rivers, fountains and springs are in his government; so that the Elves say that the spirit of Ulmo runs in all the veins of the world.

The Silmarillion: Valaquenta

I would like here to make a fine distinction between the essence of the Valar in all of creation, and the specific identities of each of them. The essence of the world is not part of its identity and would stay free of their direct will even if, in their intimate relationship, the Valar can control it and modify it if they deem it necessary.

The world has its own life. Even if we could describe the winds and the airs of Middle-earth as the breath of Manwë, they do follow their own independent nature. Manwë can manifest his will through the Giant Eagles, but it does not mean that each eagle in Middle-earth is a direct manifestation of his will.

Excursus two: Human Nature

Life’s fire (the Secret Fire, the Flame Imperishable) is to be found in human nature. Human beings are the second sons of Eru Ilúvatar, and they have inside them the divine nature.

Therefore he [Ilúvatar] willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else [...] Yet of old the Valar declared to the Elves in Valinor that Men shall join in the Second Music of the Ainur.

Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Beginning of Days

The main gift of Eru Ilúvatar to humankind was the gift of freedom. This freedom is mainly understood as the gift of death and not to be tied to the Circles of the World. But it also implies the freedom to “shape their life”, even beyond the Music of the Ainur. And I interpret that also as the possibility to use magic in one way or the other.

Men have the same faculty as the Quendi, but it is in itself weaker, and is weaker in operation owing to the strength of the hröa, over which most men have small control by the will. [...] For we speak now of the Incarnate, the Eruhíni whom he most desired to subjugate in Eru's despite. Their bodies being of Eä are subject to force; and their spirits, being united to their bodies in love and solicitude, are subject to fear on their behalf. And their language, though it comes from the spirit or mind, operates through and with the body: it is not the sáma nor its sanwe, but it may express the sanwe in its mode and according to its capacity.

Vinyar Tengwar #39: Ósanwe-kenta

This last quote, even if it talks about the capacity for “language”, talks of it in a “mystical” way, the power of the spirit (fëa). And it says specifically that “Men

have the same faculty as the Quendi”, weaker but fundamentally the same one.

I think there is a consensus about the magic nature of Elves and Valar/Maiar. To understand the use of magic by human beings I propose that humans do have the potential for magic. Humans would be basically “un-magical”, but they could learn to use magic if they could awaken that inherent potential.

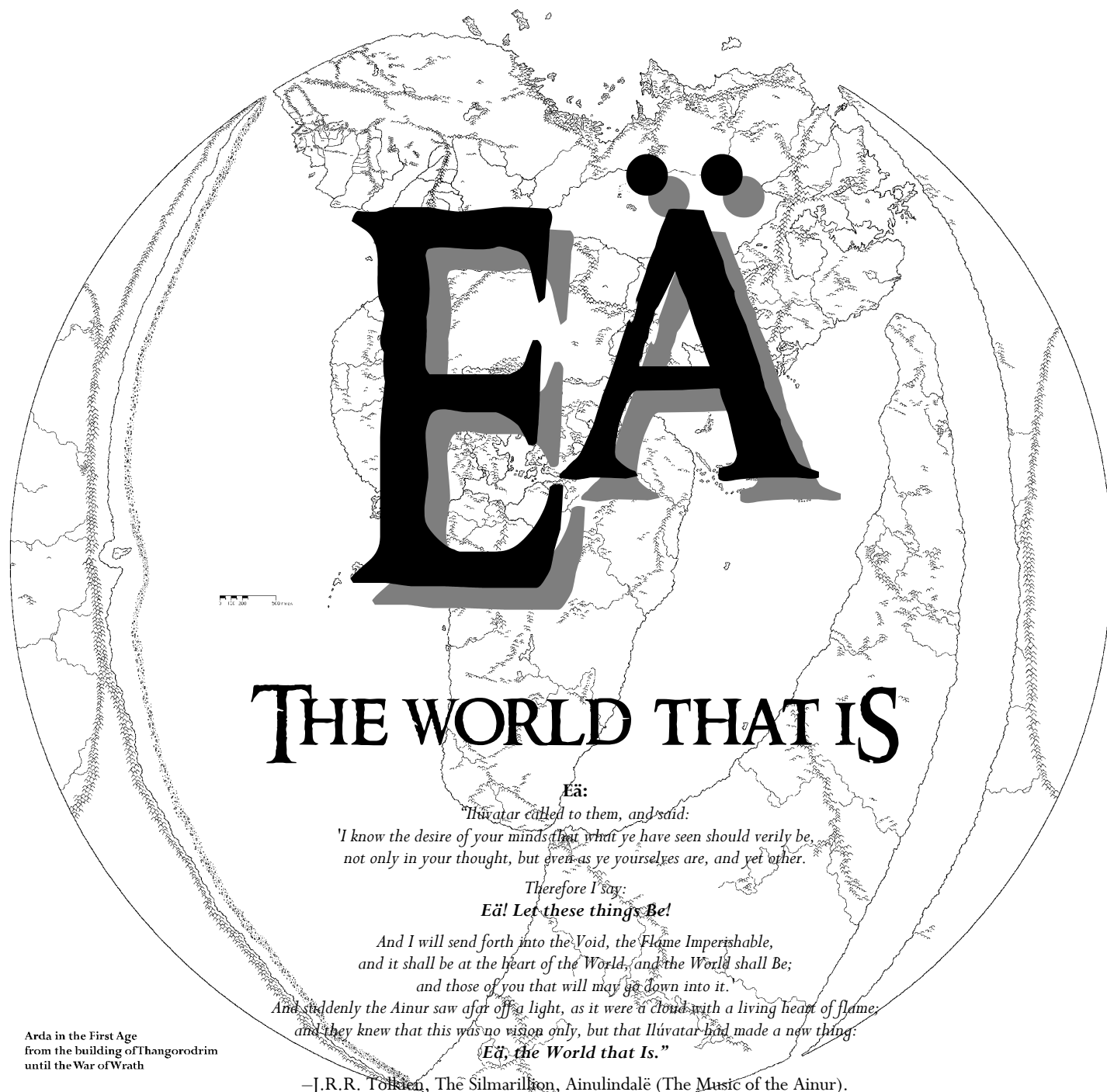
But even if both Elves and Men do have life’s fire that permits them to use magic, with whatever ease or difficulty, it’s not they who define the nature of magic. For that they must have recourse to the basic essence of the Powers (or of the Enemy).

In this way the Valar become magic’s paradigms.

It is not divine power delegated onto some earthly representative (such as Clerics/Priests in other roleplaying games). It is more some affinity with the nature of one or more Valar, and maybe the ancestral heritage of the teachings of these Powers, either in a direct way (for Elves) or through intermediaries (Elves, Maiar or other magic users).

In another article I will analyze deeply this nature of magic and its concrete application to roleplaying games.





Arda in the First Age
from the building of Thangorodrim
until the War of Wrath

—J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, Ainulindalë (The Music of the Ainur).

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A Journey in the Dark

by Daniel “Vaco” Vacaflores

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Complementing Daniel’s first contribution, his second piece offers an analysis for further developments on the nature of magic (again with a special eye for humans). In this way it has a similar trajectory as Neville’s contribution entitled “A Sense of Magic”, though with a wider scope.

It surely helps to better understand this complex and tricky issue, giving future authors the chance to build their own thoughts on these foundations.



It seems that magic in Middle-earth is a really explosive topic. After I wrote “Between Canon and Dogma” and “The Ways of Magic” the topic remained latent and gave rise to some additional discussions. This new article is the result of these. I want to thank all the participants whose contributions gave the foundation of the thoughts in this article.

Introduction

‘I once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs that was ever used for such a purpose. I can still remember ten score of them without searching in my mind. But only a few trials, I think, will be needed; and I shall not have to call on Gimli for words of the secret dwarf-tongue that they teach to none. The opening words were Elvish, like the writing on the arch: that seems certain.’

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

This quote was used as an argument in favour of human beings as magic users (see “Between Canon and Dogma”). But its validity was questioned in three phases: 1) that it did not prove the use of magic by humans, even if it did suggest it; 2) that the expression “without searching in my mind” was not a clear enough indication of remembering or forgetting to prove that magic could be “learnt”; and 3) that there was an ambiguous use of the words “spells” and “words” which meant that this quote was not valid as evidence for human use of traditional ‘spell-based’ magic in the classic RPG usage.

The first point I already agreed in my previous articles. For the second I prefer not to give my opinion because I do not see it as relevant. The third point is the one I want to discuss now, to argue that this passage does offer valid evidence. For that I think it is necessary to refer to other quotes from the same chapter, “A Journey in the Dark”, and the next one, “The

Bridge of Khazad-dûm”, that bring light in the context in which our quote was written.

Words and Spells

‘Yes,’ said Gandalf, ‘these doors are probably governed by words. Some dwarf-gates will open only at special times, or for particular persons; and some have locks and keys that are still needed when all necessary times and words are known. These doors have no key. In the days of Durin they were not secret. They usually stood open and doorwards sat here. But if they were shut, any who knew the opening words could speak it and pass in. [...] If you wish to know, I will tell you that these doors open outwards. From the inside you may thrust them open with your hands. From the outside nothing will move them save the spell of command.’

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

In this quote one can see the apparent indistinct use of “words” and “spells”: “governed by words”, “all necessary times and words”, “opening words” and “spell of command”. Does this mean that the ambiguous use of “words” and “spells” make both paragraphs invalid as evidence for the use of magic by human beings? I think not. Even more, I think that the whole scene tells us of us important aspects about the nature of magic in Middle-earth.

To begin with, I do think that the first part of the latter quote clearly talks of a “password”. In this context the mention of a “command spell” would seem to be a synonym, but I would like to leave that for further on. The notion of a “password” confirms itself later in the story (continued on next page):

With a suddenness that startled them all the wizard sprang to his feet. He was laughing! 'I have it!' he cried. 'Of course, of course! Absurdly simple, like most riddles when you see the answer.' [...] 'I was wrong after all,' said Gandalf, 'and Gimli too. Merry, of all people, was on the right track. The opening word was inscribed on the archway all the time! The translation should have been: Say "Friend" and enter. I had only to speak the Elvish word for friend and the doors opened. Quite simple. Too simple for a learned loremaster in these suspicious days. Those were happier times. Now let us go!' **The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark**

An absurdly simple password... once you find the answer. And we must not forget that the inscription on the West Gate of Moria is made in *ithildin*:

He [Gandalf] walked forward to the wall. Right between the shadow of the trees there was a smooth space, and over this he passed his hands to and fro, muttering words under his breath. Then he stepped back.

'Look!' he said. 'Can you see anything now?'

The moon now shone upon the grey face of the rock; but they could see nothing else for a while. Then slowly on the surface, where the wizard's hands had passed, faint lines appeared, like slender veins of silver running in the stone [...] 'They are wrought of ithildin that mirrors only starlight and moonlight, and sleeps until it is touched by one who speaks words now long forgotten in Middle-earth. It is long since I heard them and I thought deeply before I could recall them to my mind.' **The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark**

Ithildin reflects only the moonlight and starlight, and only when it is "touched by one who speaks words now long forgotten". The "password" is therefore only clearly visible for those who know where to search and know the secret of *ithildin*.

Until now I do think that the idea of a "password" is obvious. Does it mean that the "command spell" is a "password"? I think not. A (verbal) password is a word, and any word can be a password, but not every word is one.

Here I want to differentiate between "spells" and "words", and its effects on a theory of magic in Middle-earth. As I said before one of the principal arguments against the words of Gandalf being an indicator (not proof) of human magic users would be the ambiguity in that quote between "words" and "spells".

I think it is important to remember that a *magic spell* is the exercise of magic power through the use of words in a ritual way. Its ritual use would seem to be in essence one of the fundamentals of a "spell". And here I want to make clear that I am not thinking in the high ritualized form that makes each word and gesture an unalterable combination, the alteration of which would make the magic formula void. No, I am thinking of the ritual use of words as a way to express the will of the caster, where the important thing is the strength of the will (or of the spirit) and not the words themselves. In that way there would be flexibility in the magic formulas of spells, and only those magicians with a limited control would use inflexible and highly ritualized spells.

Now it would be good to say that spells are expressed through words, but not all words are spells. These last ones imply the exercise of magic through words.

From this basic fact we can go on with a deeper analysis about the nature of magic in Middle-earth.

Words, spells and the nature of magic in Middle-earth

In the tale of the Fellowship of the Ring and its journey through Moria ("A Journey in the Dark" and "The Bridge of Khazad-dûm") there are several examples of the use of "spells" as magic channeled¹ through the use of "words".

In the wavering firelight Gandalf seemed suddenly to grow: he rose up, a great menacing shape like the monument of some ancient king of stone set upon a hill. Stooping like a cloud, he lifted a burning branch and strode to meet the wolves. They gave back before him. High in the air he tossed the blazing brand. It flared with a sudden white radiance like lightning; and his voice rolled like thunder.

'Naur an edraith ammen! Naur dan I ngaurhoth!' he cried.

There was a roar and a crackle, and the tree above him burst into a leaf of blinding flame. The fire leapt from tree-top to tree-top. The whole hill was crowned with dazzling light. The swords and knives of the defenders shone and flickered. The last arrow of Legolas kindled in the air as it flew, and plunged burning into the heart of a great wolf-chieftain. All the others fled.

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

I do interpret this scene as a "spell", in the way that it is magic power channeled through a "magic formula": ritual words, fixed or not. The use of a burning branch as a "conduit" for the spell, together with the words is also relevant. Take into account also that this spell is spoken in elvish.

Last (but not least) I want to point at Gandalf's "growth". It could be a simple metaphor. It is not the only place where such is described. I myself think that it is a "making visible" of the spirit, that comes together with (or readies) the exercise of magic power.

Another example of the use of words to achieve a magic effect in this short scene is the one of Bill the Pony:

He [Gandalf] laid his hand on the pony's head, and spoke in a low voice. 'Go with words of guard and guiding on you,' he said. 'You are a wise beast, and have learned much in Rivendell. Make your ways to places where you can find grass, and so come in time to Elrond's house, or wherever you wish to go.'

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

¹ Please note that I don't mean the "channeling" of MERP/Rolemaster as magic energy channeled from the Valar.

Here they are “words of guard and guiding”, a channeling of magic through words. In this case the words would seem not specially ritualized, but simple and of everyday form. It is not clear whether Gandalf spoke the words quoted in a low voice, or whether he first said something too low to be heard and then followed that with the words quoted.

I have already presented the quote where Gandalf activates the *ithildin* script, which also seems to me to be the manifestation of magic through a magic formula. Gandalf did pass his hands one way and the other while he muttered words under his breath. For me the reference here is also clear: it is some kind of magic spell channeled through gestures and words. In this third example the tongue of the charm is not clear, but I think we can suppose that it would be elvish, because *ithildin* was developed by Elves.

A fourth example is to be found in the failed attempts of Gandalf trying to open the gates:

He stepped up to the rock again, and lightly touched with his staff the silver star in the middle beneath the sign of the anvil.

Annon edhellen, edro hi ammen!

Fennas nogothrim, lasto beth lammen!

he said in a commanding voice. The silver lines faded, but the blank grey stone did not stir.

Many times he repeated these words in different order, or varied them. Then he tried other spells, one after another, speaking now faster and louder, now soft and slow. Then he spoke many single words of Elvish speech. Nothing happened. [...] Again Gandalf approached the wall, and lifting up his arms he spoke in tones of command and rising wrath. Edro, edro! he cried, and struck the rock with his staff. Open, open! he shouted, and followed it with the same command in every language that had ever been spoken in the West of Middle-earth.

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

Again we find an enchantment in the elvish tongue. It seems to me clearly a “spell”, even if the words would seem to be specifically chosen for this moment and this situation. Even more, the alteration of the order of the words once and again signal the fact that the exact formula could be changed searching for the “exact” combination. And afterwards there are other “spells” and “single words”. But even then the Gates do not open.

Here I also think that there is a clear double differentiation between “words”, as a random search for the password, and “spells”, as arcane enchantments that try to force the opening mechanism of the Western Gates of Moria.

But even more interesting are the commands spoken in wrath: “*Edro, edro!*”, “*Open, open!*” This makes me think of something more than just words or spells, but *Words of Command*, as described later on in the first meeting of Gandalf and the Balrog of Moria:



© (GFDL) Ted Nasmith: Password into Moria

Frodo thought he could hear the voice of Gandalf above, muttering words that ran down the sloping roof with a sighing echo. He could not catch what was said. The walls seemed to be trembling. Every now and again the drum-beats throbbed and rolled: doom, doom.

Suddenly at the top of the stair there was a stab of white light. Then there was a dull rumble and a heavy thud. The drum-beats broke out wildly: doom-boom, doom-boom, and then stopped. [...] I could think of nothing to do but to try and put a shutting-spell on the door. I know many; but to do things of that kind rightly requires time, and even then the door can be broken by strength. [...] It [the Balrog] laid hold of the iron ring, and then it perceived me and my spell.

‘What it was I cannot guess, but I have never felt such a challenge. The counter-spell was terrible. It nearly broke me. For an instant the door left my control and began to open! I had to speak a word of Command. That proved too great a strain. The door burst in pieces. Something dark as a cloud was blocking out all the light inside, and I was thrown backwards down the stairs. All the wall gave way, and the roof of the chamber as well, I think.

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Journey in the Dark

Here the reference to “spells” and “counter-spells” seems clear to me; especially through muttered words. The exercise of magic power through magic formulae is obvious. Take note of the mention that this kind of thing requires time, and even then they can be forced by strength. Frodo does not recognize the words, so again we do not know the “language” used.

Anyway and beyond the categories of “spells” and “counter-spells” we find the explicit mention of a “Word of Command”, a desperate effort by Gandalf, the only thing capable of stopping the Balrog. It is in that sense (as *Words of Command*) that we can understand the orders (*Edro, edro!*) in the last example, but with the Gates resisting its power.

Words, spells, counter-spells and words of Command: a theory of magic

After going through these quotes it seems to me that there is no *ambiguity* in the use of “words” and “spells”, but a gradation on the same theme: words as an expression of power.

This is what I think:

Magic is the expression of the spirit, an exercise of the will over the physical world. In that way the words (and gestures and material components) are the channel through which “magic” is shaped. So words in their basic and everyday use serve only for verbal communication, but they can also be used to make real the essence of magic.

Words can also be specially charged with “power”, investing great energy in a desperate act. These would then be “words of Command”, of a higher grade than other spells.

But note also that this analysis is only of one scene in the whole work of Tolkien. In many other places there are examples of the exercise of magic power without the use of words, unlike the “spells” analyzed in this article. These represent the use of magic through willpower alone, ignoring the use of other “elements” to channel it.

Maybe it could also be understood that the elvish languages are perfect for the expression of the will in magic; but any use of language (*tengwesta*) as expression of the spirit (*fëa*) is capable of channeling magic power. Maybe in this way when Gandalf says “every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs”, he describes a skill open to every living being that possesses a spirit.

Please note that in this article I don’t want to argue the magic use of humans,¹ but to say that Gandalf’s quote is valid for such an argument. Also I don’t ignore that in all these examples it is Gandalf who works magic. But anyway I think it does not really matter, because my point now is not to say that a human could (or could not) achieve Gandalf’s magic use.

The different uses of words, gestures and willpower makes me think of magic as a natural and almost everyday power, far

from being limited by “arcane” rules and highly ritualized spells only open to a limited group of “magicians”, be it through the “correct” lineage or through the “exclusive” learning of magic arts.

Going back to the original theme of this discussion, I do think that the reference to the use of words as magic channels in this entire scene is clear. And so there would be no ambiguity in the mentions to “spells”. The Western Gates of Moria are magical, and they work with “words”: passwords and words of Command.

In this article I have limited myself to a specific analysis that does not include the whole of Tolkien’s writings. Nor did I want to explain the nature of other elements such as “dwarf doors” and “elven magic”, nor differentiate between magic as a skill and the use of “spells” as knowledge, because those are other issues. All these points could be developed further on, and maybe I will. But not now.

I want to ask for a more tolerant view on the different ways of interpreting magic in Middle-earth, and a general acknowledgment of its non-restrictive nature.


Aiya mellyn tolkiendili! Greetings, friends, lovers of Tolkien! Let the magic of Middle-earth bring us a fortunate future in our roleplaying games. And let the Flame Imperishable never die in our hearts.



¹ That is done in “Between Dogma and Canon”, with other arguments.

The Ways of Magic

by Daniel “Vaco” Vacaflores
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After having discussed two important topics of magic in Middle-earth (especially human magic), Daniel offers the icing on the cake by sharing his ideas about how magic in Tolkien's Middle-earth can be viewed from a more modern (or even game-oriented) perspective.

It highlights the problems and possible solutions associated with the subject by detailing the various views.



Preface

In 2009 I took part in a lengthy and passionate discussion about the nature of magic in Middle-earth, with a strong emphasis on “canon” and whether it permitted a vision where humans¹ could be users of a magic other than sorcery. In this article I don’t want to argument the magic use by humans,² but the different perspectives on magic in Middle-earth.

This article is the result of some of the reflections arising from this discussion, and a call for the “democratic” use of magic by every people, without contradicting the “canon” of Middle-earth.

This article also makes reference to a forthcoming article (“The Art of Magic: Magic in Middle-earth”) in which I will propose a new magic system developed for Middle-earth. In another article (“Between Canon and Dogma: Human Magic in Middle-earth” found in this Issue of Other Minds) I already discussed the validity of magic use by human peoples, that does not necessarily have to be “sorcery”. Here I want to justify the logics used to develop that magic system, and to argue its coherency and fidelity with the writings of Professor Tolkien.

Different possible “perspectives” about magic in Middle-earth

The main personal conclusion that I reached from that discussion was that there are definitely different possible perspectives on magic in Middle-earth; every one a valid one; every one near a “canonical” vision of Middle-earth.

Later I characterize those different perspectives and discuss their validity for use in roleplaying games of Middle-earth.

Magic as a “feeling”

Something that fascinates me about the “magic” of Middle-earth is that it is not written in stone. Every time I read and read again the books of Tolkien I do re-

peatedly think that my vision perfectly fits Middle-earth as it is presented by Professor Tolkien.

In “Between Canon and Dogma: Human Magic in Middle-earth” I argued that Professor Tolkien never developed a coherent theory of magic in Middle-earth. All that we have is a solitary note that rejects any human capacity to use uncorrupted magic. Even if this quote touches this theme directly, it does not fit with the rest of his writings. I question this incongruity twice because it is an unsent “draft” of a letter, even when the rest was sent. As I said in that article, it is not my intention to deny the validity of that quote, but to note that it is not compatible with his other writings.

All this makes me think that the magic in Middle-earth is a “feeling” expressed by Professor Tolkien, and that in consequence it is possible to give it different interpretations, keeping a high degree of fidelity to Middle-earth.

The different perspectives as “filters” of sense

All the perspectives that I present below have basic surmises. To be valid, any form of understanding magic in Middle-earth should be able to easily incorporate the writings of Tolkien. And in consequence such surmises should fit in the different examples of magic use in Middle-earth.

For example: my own basic surmise is that humans are not by *nature* magical and that they must “learn” the use of magic one way or another. I therefore make a connection between the learning of magic and the learning of elvish “wisdom” and “arts” by humans. And so forth.

I then look to see whether the basic surmises of the different perspectives do fit the various writings of Professor Tolkien. That is, I use a “sense filter”. This is the

¹ And dwarves, hobbits and orcs: everybody other than elves, Valar or Maiar; that is, almost every people open to the player characters.

² That’s made already in “Between Dogma and Canon”.

basic test that I'm going to apply to each of the perspectives on magic in Middle-earth to prove their validity and coherence.

A non-magical Middle-earth

He [Gandalf] can ride very swiftly when need presses.

The Fellowship of the Ring: A Knife in the Dark; p. 252

...and then we rested a while. But soon Aragorn arose, saying: "Lo! Already Minas Tirith is assailed. I fear that it will fall ere we come to its aid."

The Return of the King: The Last Debate; p. 857

One of the ways of understanding the "magic" of Middle-earth is as mundane knowledge developed to great mastery, but not magical in itself. These elements would be perceived to be "magical" by other people of Middle-earth, through superstition instead of an understanding of its real nature.

This can explain the healing arts of Aragorn, Elrond and the healers of Minas Tirith; the interpretation of signs (tracks) by Aragorn, Legolas and Gandalf; the fabrication of elvish ropes and cloaks, or weapons and armour by Dwarves, Elves and Dúnedain; or Gandalf's fireworks.

"Are these magic cloaks?" asked Pippin, looking at them in wonder.

"I do not know what you mean by that," answered the leader of the Elves. "They are fair garments, and the web is good, for it was made in this land. They are elvish robes certainly, if that is what you mean. [...] they are light to wear, and warm enough or cool enough at need. And you will find them a great aid in keeping out of the sight of unfriendly eyes, whether you walk among the stones or the trees."

The Fellowship of the Ring: Farewell to Lórien; p. 479

Denethor was a man of great mental powers, and a quick reader of thoughts behind faces and words...

Unfinished Tales: the Palantíri; p. 431

The answer for this perspective is to ignore any magic system and to consider the possibility of apparently impossible feats by means of "worldly" skills.

When we pass this through the "sense filter" there are some points where this vision does not apply: the obvious uses of magic, like the transformation of Beren and Lúthien after confronting Sauron in the First Age (see further on) or Gandalf's stabbing white light in the Pelennor fields, extraordinary cases in themselves.

An alternative to this would be to consider such cases as "legends" not applicable to the "real life" of the characters; extraordinary skills but not magical, even with some tendency to the existence of "technology" (Magic as technology, comes below) able to reproduce them; simple overreactions of the witnesses (something like "mass hallucinations"); or natural events born of "luck".

Magic as technology

'But the Orcs have brought a devilry from Orthanc,' said Aragorn. 'They have a blasting fire, and with it they took the Wall.' [...] There was a roar and a blast of fire. The archway of the gate above which he had stood a moment before crumbled and crashed in smoke and dust. The barricade was scattered as if by a thunderbolt. Aragorn ran to the king's tower.

The Two Towers: Helm's Deep; pp. 526, 528

Our ships go now without the wind, and many are made of metal that sheareth hidden rocks, and they sink not in calm or storm; but they are no longer fair to look upon. Our towers grow ever stronger and climb ever higher, but beauty they leave behind upon earth. [...] our shields are impenetrable, our swords cannot be withstood, our darts are like thunder and pass over leagues unerring.

The Lost road and Other Writings: The Lost Road, the Númenórean chapters; p. 74

Another possibility is to consider magic as a superstitious view of different forms of technology. And so everything

that is called "magic" is science not very well understood by the peoples of Middle-earth. In this interpretation "elvish magic" would be the application of a series of scientific principles developed by this people or taught to them by the Valar.

An exemplary case to this interpretation is the alternative description by Professor Tolkien of Númenor as highly technological: "metallic" warships, long range missiles and firearms. In that way it is also exemplary the consideration of the arts of healing (quoted before) as a variation of modern medicine, a lot more effective than any "medieval" medicine and not readily understandable by the layman.

Many paths were made when Stone-house-folk were stronger. They carved hills as hunters carve beast-flesh.

The Return of the King: The Ride of the Rohirrim; p. 815

For though all lore was in these latter days fallen from its fullness of old, the leechcraft of Gondor was still wise, and skilled in the healing of wound and hurt, and all such sickness as east of the Sea mortal men were subject to. Save old age only. For that they had found no cure[.]

The Return of the King: The Houses of Healing; p. 842

This perspective has the advantage of being explicitly explored by Professor Tolkien himself, even if he did reject the "technological Númenor" afterwards. We could say that this is a "valid" interpretation for those players and storytellers that want to ignore the following "mystic" vision of Tolkien. With a little bit of good will this sense filter should be applicable to almost every quote of Tolkien's writings.

In this case the interested should develop their own technological system (replacing any other magic system), and decide which are the real possibilities of it [I am going to work in a separate, special supplement for it].



"Then Ilúvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.'"
- Ainulindalë (The Music of the Ainur)

The Silmarillion

by J.R.R. Tolkien

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A Middle-earth full of magic

*He chanted a song of wizardry
Of piercing, opening, of treachery,
Revealing, uncovering, betraying.
Then sudden Felagund there swaying
Sang in answer a song of staying,
Resisting, battling against power,
Of secrets kept, strength like a tower,
And trust unbroken, freedom, escape;
Of changing and of shifting shape,
of snares eluded, broken traps,
The prison opening, the chain that snaps.
Backwards and forwards swayed their song.
Reeling and foundering, as ever more strong
The chanting swelled, Felagund fought,
And all the magic and might he brought
Of Elvenesse into his words...*

Quenta Silmarillion: Of Beren and Lúthien

This is a basic position that recognizes (and enjoys) the existence of a magical Middle-earth. Here the intervention of the Valar and the arts of the Sons of Eru are considered as essential aspects of Middle-earth. And in consequence they should not be ignored nor evaded in the development of any roleplaying game.

At this basic level there should be no problems applying the sense filter.

Anyway this perspective has in itself the potential for a broad range of interpretation of "power" and "accessibility" of magic. These various interpretations are discussed below.

The "canon" and the restricted use of magic

Anyway, a difference in the use of 'magic' in this story is that it is not to be come by by 'lore' or spells; but is in an inherent power not possessed or attainable by Men as such. Aragorn's 'healing' might be regarded as 'magical', or at least a blend of magic with pharmacy and 'hypnotic' processes. But it is (in theory) reported by hobbits who have very little notions of philosophy and science; while A. [ragorn] is not a pure 'Man', but at long remove one of the 'children of Lúthien'.

Letters, #155 – in a part that was drafted but not sent

This is the so called "canonical" point of view of magic in Middle-earth. I think it's

already clear that there is no textual reference in the works of Professor Tolkien against it. And the sense filter doesn't show inconsistencies either in its formulation.

This is maybe the best option for those players who like the idea of a low-magic Middle-earth.

Gandalf struck a blue light on the end of his magic staff, and in its firework glare the poor little hobbit could be seen kneeling on the hearthrug...

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Party

Aragorn went first to Faramir, and then to the Lady Éowyn, and last to Merry. When he had looked on the faces of the sick and seen their hurts he sighed. 'Here I must put forth all such power and skill as is given to me,' he said. 'Would that Elrond were here, for he is the eldest of all our race, and has the greater power.'

The Return of the King: The Houses of Healing

The alternative for this perspective is to restrict the use of magic to specific individuals with elvish or divine "blood". And not to allow its use by humans, dwarves, hobbits or orcs, unless it is magic of the corrupt kind known as "sorcery".

The magic level should be kept to the minimum, using only the concrete examples found in the books [a good guide for this is the magic system of the CODA system]. All magic should be subtle. And the "epic" kind of magic should be limited to the First Age and to the Valar and Maiar (the exalted or the fallen ones).

And at the last by the power that Ulmo set upon them they came to the hidden door of Gondolin...

Quenta Silmarillion: Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin

Then the Edain set sail upon the deep waters, following the Star; and the Valar laid a peace upon the sea for many days, and sent sunlight and a sailing wind, so that the waters glittered before the eyes of the Edain like rippling glass...

The Silmarillion: Akallabêth

"Divine" intervention should be considered as a real alternative, maybe the only possibility for "common" characters to have direct experiences with magic in Middle-earth. Anyway these divine interventions should be kept to a minimum and should be managed by the storyteller (and not by the players).

Magic for everybody

This is my preferred point of view, and the one on which I base my own magic system for Middle-earth.

This perspective implies a magical Middle-earth, and that this magic comes from the Imperishable Flame, and that the essence of the "Powers" becomes its "paradigm". Magic can be used through an exercise of will, and is inherent to life itself.

It also implies the existence of innate "magical" peoples (Valar, Maiar and Elves), whose access to magic is "natural".

It is told that a ser and harp-player of Brethil named Glirhuin made a song, saying that the Stone of the Hapless should not be defiled by Morgoth nor ever thrown down, not though the sea should drown all the land; as after indeed befell, and still Tol Morwen stands alone in the water beyond the new coasts that were made in the days of the wrath of the Valar.

Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Ruin of Doriath

This vision also implies a basically non-magical nature of the human peoples, but it does include the power "to shape their life [...] beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else" (Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Beginning of Days) and the gift of freedom given to the sons of Men, that includes the potential to learn and use every kind of magic (good or evil).

For all other peoples it is considered that they have some kind of relationship with some Power(s) of Arda: Dwarves with Aulë/Mahal, orcs with Morgoth and Sauron, etc.). And they can resort to their respective essences to work their own will on the nature of the world.

But it also implies that the magic of Middle-earth is by definition subtle, so that most of the time it could be interpreted as luck, special abilities or even as the intervention of the Valar behind the will of the characters. Explicit magic does exist, but it is not common and a lot of people are never going to see it. And those people who use magic may not even know themselves that they actually do magic.

As they sang the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and jealous love, the desire of the hearts of dwarves. Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pin-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick. He looked out of the window. The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up — probably somebody lighting a wood-fire — and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again.

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Party

The sense filter fits also very well in the writings of Professor Tolkien. In this "filter" we can understand the expressions of "wisdom" and "art" in an ample way that includes the knowledge and use of magic arts.

...the Edain of old learned swiftly of the Eldar all such art and knowledge as they could receive, and their sons increased in wisdom and skill.

Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Coming of Men into the West

My own magic system for Middle-earth uses this vision as its base perspective.

The high magic of traditional fantasy

By the counsel of Huan and the arts of Lúthien he was arrayed now in the hame of Draugluin, and she in the winged fell of Thuringwethil. Beren became in all things like a werewolf to look upon, save that in his eyes there shone a spirit grim indeed but clean; and horror was in his glance as he saw upon his flank a bat-like creature clinging with creased wings.

Quenta Silmarillion: Of Beren and Lúthien

This, the third perspective, argues that a roleplaying game should be there for the enjoyment of its players, and that in consequence the magic use should not be restricted to them. In this direction we would have player characters capable of magic use even to levels normally reserved for specific individuals, or even further.

This vision comes from the importation of magic systems of other generic roleplaying games of “high fantasy”.

FRODO: “I won't do it! The Ring is mine!”

SAURON: “Dammit, why does this happen on the one day I prepared “Crush the Army of the West” instead of preparing “Teleportation” like normal?”

The biggest criticism of this perspective makes reference to the incongruity of certain “magic powers” normal in other games, but that make most of the stories of Middle-earth as written by Tolkien himself impossible or senseless. Why go to all the trouble of the quest of Frodo, if Elrond or Galadriel could have teleported to Mount Doom and there destroyed the Ruling Ring themselves?

Even if this point of view does seem valid to me, for those who want a high magic Middle-earth, I think one should use certain care in its application, especially trying to limit those powers that don't pass with Tolkien writings. Maybe the best alternative in this road is to use the guides of the previous perspectives, but without

their limitations on the power that could be achieved.

Conclusions

Here I want to insist that there are different “right” ways to interpret the magic in Middle-earth. I sincerely believe that it is just a matter of the point of view that one wants to take and the protagonism wished for the player characters. As I already said I think it is just a matter of interpretation, and none of these perspectives should be treated as “false” *per se*.

Taking into account that magic in Middle-earth would be more a feeling than a coherent theory, I think that the nearest to a “canon” is a middle point between all these perspectives; a point that is necessarily subjective.

I do think that the only relevant thing is to take care to try to reproduce the “magic” of Middle-earth and not to uncritically “import” the magic systems of other roleplaying games that set out from different basic elements. Besides that and so long as your players are happy, anything goes.

I do think that this game should take into account the opinions and preferences of all visions of Middle-earth. That's why in my own magic system I do include mechanisms to adapt the magic system for every one of these points of view.



The Nine Nazgûl

by António Simões

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Within The Lord of the Rings the Nine Nazgûl, Saurons most terrible servants, are an enduring subject of fascination for readers and gamers alike.

ICE has already tackled the subject of their supposed backgrounds in several publications – most notably Lords of Middle-earth, Vol. 2 – The Mannish Races. Building upon this foundation, but with a number of striking differences as well, Antonio develops his very own version which can be used in a game setting with a strong focus on gaming fun rather a very strict “canonicity”.

It’s an inventive way to deal with the subject, as we know almost no biographical detail from Tolkien himself concerning these beings. António uses an unconventional approach, making a high-magic re-interpretation of the theme with a strong focus on abundant spell-casters in all times. As you will notice, the availability of Rolemaster and its Companions (RM2) will be very helpful to tap the full potential of these very gameable overflowing magic suggestions.



Preface

This essay covers the Nine Nazgûl based on the descriptions in the MERP modules, notably *Lords of Middle-earth, Vol. 2 – The Mannish Races* (1988) by Peter Fenlon, but also drawing on material in *The Lord of the Rings* and especially on the notes in *The History of Middle-earth XII, The Peoples of Middle-earth* that provides many new insights to the story of the Dúnedain, Dwarves and Northmen. The names of the countries of Middle-earth are taken from Peter Fenlon’s map of Middle-earth published by ICE with the reference #2100A.

As stated in the MERP books, the Nazgûl had their levels and skills halved during daylight. In the SA when Sauron was in possession of the One Ring their power doubled.¹ When the One Ring was taken away from Sauron, the Nazgûl rarely used their Rings of Power, as their capture would mean their replacement by new independent wraiths and the end of their immortal undeath. In this case their power was at half of their levels and skills and a quarter if they functioned in daylight. They would keep the Rings hidden and only use them to cast high level spells such as weather-affecting ones or the summoning of Maiar Demons from the Void. In the late TA Sauron gathered the Nine Rings to his hand so as to increase his magical ability.²

Rolemaster 2 and *MERP* do not have multi-classed professions. These would best reflect the lives of the Ringwraiths who became “mighty warriors, sorcerers and kings”; most would have started as fighters, then would become spell-casters. I chose therefore to make them all Arcane spell-casters, the realm of magic encompassing Essence, Channelling and Mentalism³ that was taught to the Númenóreans by the Maiar and Elves until their descent into evil from SA 2251-2899 onwards.

The reader may be startled at the appearance of republics among the Dúnedain states. Tolkien only describes one republic in *The Hobbit*, in Lake-town, with elected

elders, and does so in a depreciative tone as of government by merchants. My assumption was that just as there were republics among the Northmen, so republics must have existed at some time in history among the Dúnedain. There are further political characterizations described in this essay, such as anarchists and communists. Tolkien himself used the term anarchists in his Letter 144 to describe the reaction of the Entwines to militarized and industrial agriculture. As for Tolkien’s political views, he expresses them in Letter 52 “My political opinions lean more and more to Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning abolition of control not whiskered men with bombs) – or to ‘unconstitutional’ Monarchy.”

Er-Mûrazôr, the Witch-king

Númenórean Ringwraith, the First. He was the second son of the king of Númenor, Tar Ciryatan, born in SA 1920. In SA 1940 he sailed with a private household fleet to the colonies of Lond Daer and Umbar but was unsuccessful in obtaining any feudal dominion there over the previous Númenórean claimants. He then went to the colony of Sakal an-Khâr in the Bay of Ormal, east of Greater Harad, which he came to control as an independent potentate. His father, however, demanded his surrender of independent control and, defeated, the Black Prince retreated to the jungles of the interior to wage a prolonged guerrilla war. In SA 1998 he accepted a Ring of Power from a Maia of the land not knowing that he served Sauron. By SA 2243 he had become a Ringwraith and tried to wrest New Atlantis, his old colony,⁴ from the hands of the Númenóreans. When Sauron accepted defeat in SA 3262 and went to Númenor, the Nazgûl remained in control of the defences of the One Ring in the Dark Tower.⁵

He assisted the Black Númenóreans of the South in their struggle against Gondor in the early TA. In TA 1250, he left the East and went to Dol Guldur, his master foreseeing that the kings would soon fail in

Arnor. In c. TA 1274 he established the realm of Angmar denouncing Dúnadan imperialism in Eriador and the Northern Wastes and the rebellion of its undead servants, created with Erech-like stones,⁶ with money and weapon supplies sent secretly from Sakal an-Khâr, the greatest surviving state of the Black Númenóreans after Umbar had been taken. He then travelled between Angmar and Mordor to marshal recruits in the wars against the Dúnedain of Arnor and Gondor. Between 1309-1349, the Dúnedain kings were expelled from power both in Rhudaur and Cardolan, and the Hillmen and Dunlendings that constituted the majority and poorest segments of society took over power in the newly-formed republics. In 1356 Angmar allied secretly with the Hillmen of Rhudaur and the Dunlendings of Cardolan, and defeated and invaded Arthedain.

'There the Dúnedain were few, and power had been seized by an evil lord of the Hill-men, who was in secret league with Angmar. Argeleb therefore fortified the Weather Hills; but he was slain in battle with Rhudaur and Angmar.

Arveleg son of Argeleb, with the help of Cardolan and Lindon, drove back his enemies from the Hills [thus the invasion]; and for many years Arthedain and Cardolan held in force a frontier along the Weather Hills, the Great Road, and the lower Hoarwell. It is said that at this time Rivendell was besieged.' **The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A**

The Witch-king was driven back with the help of Lindon, and they re-placed a Dúnadan prince in Cardolan. Er-Mûrazôr then besieged Rivendell unsuccessfully. In 1409, openly allied with Rhudaur, he defeated and invaded Cardolan and Arthedain. The Dúnedain of Rhudaur that would not convert to Morgoth were killed.

'[I]n Rhudaur for long there dwelt an evil people out of the North much given to sorcery.' Only Fornost, the North Downs, the Old Forest and Tyrn Gorthad, as the Barrow-Downs were later to be known, were defended. However, 'It is said that Angmar was for a time subdued by the Elven-folk coming from Lindon; and from Rivendell, for Elrond brought help over the Mountains out of Lórien.' **The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A**

From that time onwards, the Witch-king's spells of coldness and ice made the Northern Wastes become uninhabitable except for the Grey Mountains, and the north of Eriador became much more bleak. He did this as the Wastes were the mating centre of Dragons, and these had rebelled against the authority of the Necromancer and had conquered and consumed four Rings of the Seven in disobedience to the orders of Sauron, who wanted to use the Rings for his own purposes. From that time onwards the armies of Angmar lost much of their offensive power and what seemed to be the irresistible onslaught of its shock armies became much more diminished in its punch. In TA 1413, Gandalf the Grey put together a party of Northman Estaravi from Eastern Angmar, composed of run-away serfs and champions of that folk who at that time sat under the Shadow, and raided Carn Dûm, the eastern approach routes coming from Rhovanion and Rhûn being much less guarded than the western ones. They used pressurized siphons to project the famous Númenórean liquid fire onto the wraiths with which Carn Dûm was filled. With these tubed flamethrowers they destroyed Er-Mûrazôr's form but failed to find his First Ring of the Nine and so the Úlair re-formed 25 years later. Nevertheless, the power of the dread realm of Angmar was seen to be toppled.

In TA 1432 the kings nearly failed in Gondor due to a civil war between the Northmen of Rhovanion and the conservative part of the Dúnedain, who lost and fled to Umbar. Thereafter the Northmen majority in Gondor mixed with the Dúnadan race. In contrast to the Hillmen and the Dunlendings in Arnor, the forces of the Enemy were never able to infiltrate

either the Northmen of Gondor or the Dúnedain of Umbar, called the thereafter the Corsairs, who took over most of Gondor's empire in the South. In TA 1634 the Corsairs slew King Minardil at Pelargir.

'It [Umbar] was never again completely subdued until the days of Elessar; and the region of South Gondor became a debatable land between the Corsairs and the Kings.'

The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A

In TA 1636 came the Great Plague and only Arthedain was little affected.

'In the days of Argeleb II the plague came into Eriador from the Southeast, and most of the people of Cardolan perished, especially in Minhiriath. The Hobbits and all other peoples suffered greatly, but the plague lessened as it passed northwards, and the northern parts of Arthedain were little affected.'

The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A

In the other places the death rate amounted to between a third and half of the population.

'Then the forts on the borders of Mordor were deserted and Minas Ithil was emptied of its people'

The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A

Osgiliath was partly deserted and few of those who had fled the undead in the cities 'were willing to return'⁷ as it became 'a city of ghosts'⁸ where 'shadows walked.'⁹ Large regions of Cardolan became entirely deserted, the Dúnedain of Tyrn Gorthad mostly perished, and the Witch-king summoned Wights to inhabit the deserted Barrow-downs. The lands of Sauron also suffered, but the Nine gathered in abandoned Mordor to unite the Orc tribes again into confederations and legions, the chief objective of Sauron's plague.

1700— ... 'Communication between the North and South kingdoms ceases for a long while.'

The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Prologue and the Appendices of The Lord of the Rings

However, in 1810 king Telumehtar took Umbar by storm, and the Corsairs perished or fled.

'With the help of Lindon and Imladris Araval' of Arthedain, who reigned 1813-1891, won a great victory over Angmar in 1851, and drove the evil wights north. He reoccupied Cardolan.¹⁰ The Witch-king then fled east to Mordor to recruit new troops. In 1851 the Wainrider Easterlings invaded Gondor under the command of the Nine. Narmacil II of Gondor 'was slain by the Sorcerer-king' in TA 1856.¹¹ At that time Er-Mûrazôr summoned new wights to Cardolan that 'terrified all who sought to dwell near.'¹² In TA 1900 he conquered Minas Ithil, though it was retaken by the Dúnedain of Gondor during that same year. For Araphant of Arthedain defeated the Sorcerer-king and 'in 1900 destroyed Cardolan' which was full of 'evil things'.¹³ In early 1940 Minas Ithil was retaken. But in Araphant's time Angmar recovered and made war again. For, in late TA 1940, the Necromancer was finally able to set up, with knowledge gained from the two of the Seven that he had recovered, undead Lidless Eyes and Watchers that attacked magic-users in north-western Middle-Earth.

'For at last they [the Dúnedain] perceived that some single power and will was directing the assault from many quarters upon the survivors of Númenor.'

The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A

Also, the Úlairi created an alliance between the Easterlings and Haradrim both to attack Gondor, and to re-establish the state of Angmar. 'In 1944 King Ondohér and both his sons, Artamir and Faramir, fell in battle' 'with the Ringwraiths' and 'an alliance of the Wainriders and the Harad'.¹⁴ Umbar was lost in TA 1944, but a captain of Gondor, Eärnil defeated them separately in southern and northern

Ithilien; and Minas Ithil was retaken. In TA 1974 Er-Mûrazôr conquered the kingdom of Arthedain. The Nine conquered Minas Ithil definitively in TA 2002 directing from there the attacks on Gondor. He defeated attacks from the prince of Lond Ernil, or Dol Amroth, Aerdur, in TA 2034 and of King Eärnil II,¹⁵ in TA 2050 to reconquer Minas Ithil. The kings had failed in both Dúnedain realms and thereafter the House of the Stewards took over in Gondor while Arnor remained forsaken to the rebellious Eriadorans, where the anarchists were prevalent. In TA 2475, the Witch-king conquered Osgiliath, but was later defeated by the Steward Boromir I and had to abandon it. Sauron returned to Mordor in TA 2941. When the White Council and its host besieged Dol Guldur in TA 2941, the Nazgûl that came to the relief, along with the other undead troops of the Necromancer were dispelled by a hitherto new spell that Saruman cast.¹⁶ The Nine were able only to re-assume a shape in TA 3008.¹⁷ In TA 2951 Sauron declared himself openly in Mordor and started the rebuilding of Barad-dûr, long prepared by the Úlairi. In the War of the Ring, 6,000 riders of Rohan went to the relief of Minas Tirith in 15 March, TA 3019 and a lady among them together with a Hobbit slew Er-Mûrazôr. **Level 60, Arch-mage (specialization in Sorcerer and Necromancer spell lists).**

Khamûl the Easterling

Easterling Womaw half-Elf Ring-wraith, the Second. Born in Laeg Góak, the son of Mûl Tanûl of the Womaw in north-eastern Middle-Earth; he was raised by the lord's Silvan Elf consort Dardarian. He was, however, forced by the hereditary tradition of the assembly of Womawas Drús to choose mortality. The Dúnedain had had established trade relations with the Womaw since SA 900. He ascended the throne in SA 1844, at which time the southern part of his realm had become a Númenórean colony. By SA 1994 his kingdom had crumbled to Númenórean influence and become one of its colonies. He turned to the demon realm of Helcarth for support to re-conquer Womawas Drus. In SA 1996 a wraith-emissary of Mordor offered Khamûl one of the Nine Rings. He was, nevertheless, defeated by the Númenóreans and appeared at the gates of

the Dark Tower in SA 2000. From SA 3262, when Sauron went to Númenor, he went to the East and attacked the five tribes of Shay, east of Sakal an-Khâr. In SA 3319, he returned to Mordor. In SA 3400, three of the tribes of Shay fell to the Shadow.

Khamûl rejoined his master in TA 1050 at Dol Guldur. In TA 1300 he departed to the south-east of Middle-earth. He resided at the Mountains of Wind at the fortresses of Sart and Mang, working in unison with Dwar, the Third to battle Alatar and Pallando, the two Istari Blue Wizards and their allies, for control of the region, and was defeated. In TA 1635 he was recalled to Dol Guldur. In TA 1640 the Watch on Mordor was ended and the Dark Lord sent the eight Nazgûl to Mordor to unite the Orc tribes into confederacies and legions. They met at the city of Ostigurth and Khamûl and Dwar continued the efforts of Gûrthlug, a female half-troll, in creating a new Orcish confederation. Khamûl retained the command of the City of Death, or Ostigurth, until TA 2063. He then travelled to the lands of the Womawas Drús and conquered part of their realms, entering the capital Góak in TA 2400. He went back to Minas Morgul and Dol Guldur and it was he that captured the Dwarf king Thráin II and imprisoned him at Dol Guldur in TA 2845-50. In TA 2941, he and Sauron fled to Mordor from the attack of the White Council. In TA 2951, Sauron declared himself openly, and Khamûl and Adûnaphel travelled back to Dol Guldur. In TA 3008-3017 he led and Dwar of Waw, the Third, led the conquest of Alatar's and Pallando's states and their Dwarven allies of Ruuriik in the Far East of Endor.¹⁸

Level 40, Arch-mage (Sorcerer and Warlock, also known as Chaos Mage).



Dwar of Waw

Easterling Wôlim-Númenórean Ringwraith, the Third. Born on the island of Waw in eastern Middle-earth in SA 1949. In SA 1965 the K'Prur of Hent conquered the island and killed his father. Dwar then sailed to the mainland, to Wôl, to learn a way of revenge. In SA 1969 he entered a Númenórean-Wôlim school of magic, and in SA 1980 he participated in a Númenórean expedition that wrested the island of Waw from the K'Prur. He sided with the Númenórean leadership that refused to re-assemble the Elder council and he became the head of an oligarchy. He then conquered, with Númenórean backing, the lands of Wôl, Brôd, Címóniemor, and Hent in SA 1998-2009. He then fell to the lure of immortality of a Ring of Power and ended up changing sides. However, his change of allegiance was discovered by the Númenóreans and he kept up a guerrilla war on the mainland until his transformation into a wraith by SA 2244, at which time he travelled to Mordor. There he engaged in laboratory tests to mix Orcs, Men and dogs. From SA 2251 to 3262, he commanded the forces of Mordor in attacks upon the Númenórean possessions on the coasts of south-eastern Middle-earth.

Dwar directed secretly the recruitment of savage Easterling infantry hordes in central Rhûn, namely from Khargagis Ahar, Rycolis and Y-Lusturongsur, together with Ren the Eighth and Úvatha the Ninth that attacked Gondor's eastern provinces in TA 490 and were defeated in TA 500, only to re-appear again with Black Númenórean subsidies and defeat and kill King Rómen-dacil in TA 541. Turambar, his son, avenged him, defeated the Easterling tribesmen and conquered western Rhûn up to the river Talathrant. Dwar thus had to travel south to assist the Black Númenóreans of Umbar and Ciryatandor in their wars with the Dúnedain of Gondor in the early TA. In TA 1391 he went to Waw and led a rebellion against the Lochas Drus. In TA 1640 he was recalled to Mordor. He reoccupied the fortress of the Morannon in TA 1656. Afterwards, the Host of Gorgoroth attacked and occupied the city of Minas Ithil repeatedly, which they held permanently from SA 2002 onwards. In TA 2063, he went to the East with Sauron and fought the Istari Alatar and Pallando.

In TA 2941 he went back to Mordor. In TA 3008-18 he and Khamûl finished the conquest of the independent states withholding their allegiance to Mordor in the Far East, namely those of the Blue Wizards and the Dwarves of Ruuriik.

Level 39, Arch-mage (Evil Magician and Warlock).

Indûr of the Utter South

Haradrim Kiran-Númenórean Ringwraith, the Fourth, called The Dawndeath. Born in SA 1955 to one of the richest families in Korlan, capital of the republic of Koronnandë, in the Utter South of Haradwaith, Indûr was the youngest governor ever elected to the post. As Númenórean influence grew he tried to implement a dictatorship, to which he succeeded in SA 1978. In SA 2000, the Elven magician Val-morgul, of the Court of Ardor, arrived in the Númenórean colony of Tantûrak. A coup d'état ousted Indûr from government and he fled to Mûmakan. Sauron had established his influence there since circa SA 1750, and he offered the exiled Kiran dictator a Ring of Power. He was offered the throne of Mûmakan in SA 2251 and took the name of Jí Amaav II. He ruled from the holy city of Amaru and attacked the Númenóreans on the coasts. He fled to Mordor when Ar-Pharazôn defeated Sauron and conquered Mûmakan.

He supported the Black Númenóreans of Umbar in secret from TA 830 onwards. In TA 1279 he started operating against the Dúnadan empire of Gondor from the island of E-Sorul Sare. By circa TA 1250 he had re-established control of Mûmakan and attacked the other Dúnadan possessions in the Utter South from there. In TA 1264 he was ordered to seek an alliance with the Elven Court of Ardor, but they refused. In TA 1365, Tantûrak and Koronandë invaded Mûmakan under the Magician, but Koronandë eventually changed sides with many assassinations at dawn that Indûr ordered to hold control of the former Dúnadan protectorate, which earned him the name of Dawndeath. In TA 1640, he went to Mordor, to Barad Wath. In TA 1652, he went north to Carach Angren. In TA 2002 the Olog Bulrakur took over and Indûr and the other Úlairi conquered permanently the city of Minas Ithil. In TA 2460 Indûr went to the Utter South again

to lead operations against the remaining states friendly to the Dúnedain, namely Mirëdor and Elorna. In TA 2941 he returned to Minas Morgul. In TA 3008-12 he assisted to the final conquest of all independent states friendly to the Dúnedain in the Utter South. Level 37, Arch-mage (Evil Magician and Necromancer).

Akhôrahil of Greater Harad

Númenórean Ringwraith, the Fifth. Akhôrahil was born in SA 1888 in Númenor, a distant cousin of the King Tar-Ciryatan. In SA 1904, his father Ciryamir obtained a licence to establish and administer a colony in the western sea-cost of Greater Harad. Akhôrahil and his family sailed to Hyarn the next year. They travelled up the river Aronduin to the new citadel of Barad Carannûn (S. Tower of the Red Sunset) on the northern flank of the Yellow Mountains (S. Ered Laranor), which became the capital of the new kingdom of Ciryatandor. In SA 1919 the young prince raided the holy city of Tresti in Far Harad and wrested from it the most precious Haradaic relic called the Eyes of the Well. With it he managed to become the new king when his father died in battle in SA 1988. By SA 1999 he had conquered those states of Greater Harad that had formerly been under Sauron's power, namely Chennacat, Isra, Kirmlesra, and Harshandad. But he was offered a great artifact that was promised to give him immortality and greater power, and he accepted in SA 2000 a Ring of Power. Having unknowingly accepted the Fifth of the Nine he became a great king, but by SA 2229 he had become a Ringwraith under the control of the One Ring. By SA 2251 he seceded his colonies from the dependency of Númenor and declared his obedience to Sauron. Tar-Ancalimon's imperial army defeated Akhôrahil's hosts in Ciryatandor and Harshandad in SA 2280 but the inland realms could not be taken from the lords loyal to the theocracy of Sauron. After Sauron's capture in SA 3262, Akhôrahil went to Mordor, to the fortress of Luglûrk, in Nûrn, to oversee the supplies of Mordor.

He was sent to Umbar in TA 1103 to strengthen them in their wars with Gondor, but was defeated. In circa TA 1300, Akhôrahil re-appeared in Ny Chennacat and attempted the conquest of Greater Harad. In TA 1640 he was recalled to

Mordor to fight Gondor and resumed his post at Nûrn, and occasionally travelling to Minas Morgul and Barad-dûr. He went back to Ny Chennacat in TA 3008 and finished Greater Harad's conquest by TA 3016.

Level 36, Arch-mage (Sorcerer and Necromancer).

Hoarmûrath of Dîr

Easterling Urd Ringwraith, the Sixth. Hoarmûrath was born in SA 1954 in the forest of Dîr, in northern Middle-earth, to a folk of hunters and trappers related to the Lossoth, the Urdar. His mother, the great matriarch, died in the Umli wars, SA 1962-75. Her daughter, Amûrath, was elected to succeed in the line of Queens. Yet Hoarmûrath's close association with the half-demons of the Northern Wastes, spawn of the demons of former Angband, influenced his views toward patriarchal organization, and in the ensuing fight his faction took over power and in SA 1992 he became the king of Urd. He became a close ally of the four demons of Morgoth that dominated the Chaos-Waste, as the Northern Wastes were known. He sought immortality like his half-demon allies and accepted an artifact that was promised to deliver him eternal life. With it his powers over the demon warp-stone of the Chaos-Waste became unrivalled among men and with its radiations he could create loathsome changes in man and beast ranging from claws to incurable diseases, as well as a cure to the mutations that imparted prolonged and sometimes immortal life. However, the Sixth of the Nine Rings turned him into a wraith in SA 2123 and he travelled to Mordor to join his new master. In SA 2251 he appeared as a Ringwraith to drive the Númenóreans from the coasts of northern Middle-earth. Later, after SA 2262, he was sent as an emissary to the Black Númenórean colony of Sakal an-Khâr to teach them warp-stone magic.

In the TA, in circa 1100 he returned to Urd and created a kingdom in the forest of Dîr, becoming known as the Ice King. He was ordered to recruit Urd and the Easterling peoples of the Northern Wastes that now came under the influence of Sauron for the wars of Angmar with the Men of Arnor. His hosts and evil folk were at the battles with the Dúnedain of the North in

TA 1356 and 1409, and one of his Urd confederations was allowed to settle in Rhudaur after TA 1409. In TA 1640 he was recalled to Mordor to begin the secret rebuilding the nine Nazgûl-cities surrounding the Dark Tower, using the slave-labour of the reorganized Orcs. He resided at the citadel of Durthang together with the demon werewolf Gaurhir. He created the Uruk-Ûdun Orc confederation and the recruitment and training of the army of the Crater. After Minas Ithil was permanently conquered in TA 2002, he resided there with Er-Mûrazôr and Adûnaphel.

Level 33, Arch-mage (Animist and Warlock).

Adûnaphel of Near Harad

Númenórean Ringwraith, the Seventh, called The Quiet. Adûnaphel was born in SA 1823 in Númenor. She left with the fleet of her household in SA 1914 for the land of Umbar with a licence for its administration. She erected a fortress called Vamag at the north-west tip of the peninsula in SA 1939, from which she governed the land of Umbar and Near Harad, in contention with Sauron's theocracy. She then moved towards independence and was offered the Seventh of the Nine Rings in SA 1951 under the promise to change sides. She accepted, and became a Ringwraith in SA 2243, and attempted to secede from Númenor but was defeated in the lands of Umbar. In SA 2251 she tried to bring to her side a rebellion of the city of Umbar, whose burghers tried to set up an elected government, but was rejected. Adûnaphel found the allies with which to rule Near Harad in the land called the Last Desert, north-west of Clyan in eastern Haradwaith, ruled by Black Númenórean sorcerers wearing the shapes of were-dragons.

Her grip on the land was firm until SA 2262 when Sauron went as a prisoner to Númenor, at which time she fled to Mordor.

She went secretly to Lugalûr in Near Harad in TA 1113 to try to re-establish her state in Near Harad and she and six of the other Nazgûl were welcomed by the Black Númenóreans of Umbar. At that time, the might of Gondor was too much for the diminished Ûlairi without the One Ring and they had to flee south to Ciryatandor, and then east to Sakal an-Khâr. In circa TA

1300 the forces of the Enemy had reorganized and recovered enough power for the Nine to reveal themselves openly. The men of Gondor were forced onto the defensive and had to abandon the conquest of the Khanîm lands in the Bay of Ormal. In TA 1640 Adûnaphel was recalled to Mordor with the other Nazgûl to re-establish it as the main state of Sauron's power. After the definitive conquest of Minas Ithil she resided in Ostigurth, the City of Death, until TA 2951 when she was sent to reconquer Dol Guldur with Khamûl, the Second, and Ûvatha the Ninth.

Level 32, Arch-mage (Sorcerer and Necromancer).

Ren of Chey

Easterling Chey-Númenórean Ringwraith, the 8th, called The Unclean. Born at Ulk Jey Ama in Chey, east of Khand, in SA 1969, the son of a Númenórean teacher and a Chey woman. His father taught him arcane magic, the primeval magic, which was splintered for men into the three realms of magic after the Akallabêth. In SA 1992 he moved to the Ered Harmal to escape persecution by the servants of Sauron. His family and followers were caught in SA 1998 and were sent as slaves to the capital of Ulk Chey Sart that stood near the volcano in the middle of the southern Chey plateau. Resisting conversion to the religion of Morgoth he was sent to the Houses of Lamentation in Mordor for brainwashing. His will broken, Sauron realized his potential and gave him the Eighth of the Nine Rings. By SA 2155 Ren had become a Ringwraith and was sent as a High-Priest to Chey. From there he ruled over the neighbouring lands of Chey, namely Khargagis Ahar, Dalpygis, Heb Aaraan, and Orgotraath that comprised southern Rhûn, becoming known as the Fire Priest. He was assisted by Ûvatha the Ninth in the administration of eastern Middle-earth. In the breakdown of Sauron's theocracy following SA 3262, he fled to Mordor. After the War of the Last Alliance he fled like the other Nazgûl to the East.

In TA 1100 he secretly aided the Black Númenóreans of Umbar. Defeated, he returned to his land of Chey Sart, attempting to re-build Sauron's theocracy. He strove against the protectorate the men of Gondor had installed in Chey Sart to weaken

Mordor as well as to stop Khanîm weapon-supplies to Angmar. But his attempts to counter Saruman's influence in southern Rhûn were unsuccessful. In TA 1640 he was ordered to go to Mordor to prepare it for his master's return. He resided at Barad-wath and Minas Morgul. He subsequently formed and, with the other Úlairi, commanded the Easterling Wainrider confederation that attacked Gondor from TA 1851 onwards, in which western Rhûn was lost to the southern Exiles. Saruman was undefeated in the lands of southern Rhûn until he was forced to travel to the defence of Gondor in circa TA 2000²⁰ that it might not go the way of Arthedain, but he left Alatar the Blue Wizard, one of the chief Five of the Istari, to handle affairs there. In TA 2063 the Fire Priest, together with Khamûl and Dwar, accompanied Sauron to the East, to the Elf-kingdom of Helcarth under Queen Dardarian near the Orocarni, or Red Mountains, as Gandalf and his closest allies had expelled the Necromancer from Dol Guldur. In addition, the Dwarven kingdom of the Lonely Mountain under Durin's line had armed the Northmen of Rhovanion since its foundation in TA 1999 thus freeing northern Rhovanion from the yoke of the Necromancer. The Necromancer could not go to Mordor either, which was still the theatre of many Dúnadan counter-offensives and special operations' infiltrations from southern Rhûn. Only circa TA 2400 was southern Rhûn, including Chey Sart, conquered from the Elendili and their allies, forcing Alatar to flee to its south-eastern ranges, to the lands of Alduryakar and Burskadekdar. The stage was set for Sauron to return from the East to Dol Guldur with increased strength in TA 2460, where he was able to receive the emanations of the One Ring again and grow in power.

Level 32, Arch-mage (Illusionist and Evil Cleric).

Úvatha of Khand

Easterling Variag-Haradrim Ring-wraith, the Ninth, called The Horseman. The boy who was to become Úvatha was named Úvathar Achef at his birth in SA 1970, in the caves of Olbamarl in the south-eastern reaches of Ephel Dúath on the southern border of Mordor.

'He was the son of an exiled prince of eastern Khand and experienced the nomadic lifestyle throughout his early years. Living in exile, Úvatha shared his father's pain and uncertainty, and developed a marked antipathy for the regime holding the Laôrki throne.'

Gorgoroth, p. 48

He was educated by Sauron's priesthood.

'By the time he was 17 he led a wing of light cavalry in his father's rebel army'

Gorgoroth, p. 48

Thus he helped to secure the victory in SA 1987. His father, however, died in the battle and Úvatha's uncle was elected to succeed him, forcing Úvatha to flee for his life to Lower Khand. There he gained the confidence of the King Urig Urpof and was appointed chieftain of the armies of Lower Khand.

'He turned this to his advantage and' with the help of the priesthood of Sauron 'overthrew the king the following year. He then exacted his revenge upon his uncle and crushed Upper Khand in SA 2000.'

Gorgoroth, p. 48

Sauron offered him one of the Nine to ensure the unification of Khand and the recruitment of its tribes for the wars against Umbar. By SA 2223 he had become a Ringwraith. With his Ring he completed the conquest of Núrn and Núrad. In SA 3259, he joined an alliance with the Nazgûl Ren of Chey to conquer Khargagis Ahar in central Rhûn. In SA 3262, he fled to Mordor with the collapse of Sauron's theocracy to Númenórean power.

In circa TA 1000 he returned from the East to his original home in Olbamarl. He

tried to create a rebellion against the Dúnadan client King Uonid Irbo. Unsuccessful, he went on to wage a guerrilla war in the Variag lands. He hid in the mountains when the Black Númenóreans of Umbar and the Haradrim were defeated in TA 1050 by the Exiles of Gondor. The Variag lands were conquered in this process by the men of Gondor. Úvatha staid behind waging a guerrilla war. It was not until the time of Minalcar, the Regent of Gondor, the later Rómendacil II, who had begun the recruitment en masse of whole Northman tribes to the military of Gondor from circa TA 1230, that things changed. With the Northmen, Minalcar 'defeated a large army of the Easterlings and destroyed all their camps and settlements east of the Sea'²¹ in TA 1248. Rhovanion was lost, however, to barbarian Northmen tribes, some of them infiltrated by the agents of the Necromancer. The Elendili tried to colonize western Rhûn to resist Mordor's occupation of that territory and they allowed the immigration of the conquered and pacified Variags from Khand and Núrad to fill the vacuum left by the extermination of the Easterlings and employed them in menial roles. These brought horses with them and were later to teach the Easterlings plains tribesmen of central Rhûn the use of cavalry. In TA 1636 the Great Plague killed about half of western Rhûn's settlers from Gondor. Úvatha the Ninth moved with his Variags into the lands south of the Sea of Rhûn and began the recruitment of Easterling tribes from further east. He ruled from the Easterling-Haradrim Variag tent-city of Mistrand on the southern shores of the Sea of Rhûn, and directed the attacks against Gondor's remaining colony of Dor Rhûnen west of the Sea of Rhûn. Furthermore, using Khanîm subsidies he recruited Easterlings to fight for Angmar. The men of Gondor abandoned the barren lands of Gorgoroth in TA 1640 through lack of numbers, while rebellions under the command of Úvatha erupted in the Variag lands of western Rhûn, Núrad, Núrn and Khand, imperilling the hold of Gondor on southern Rhûn despite the efforts of Saruman that had brought together an alliance of the Men of the land opposed to Sauron. Úvatha's main role became to direct the college of priests that controlled Mistrand and recruit the migrations of Easterling tribes into Angmar.

He shifted his attention in TA 1851-1944 to the creation of a confederation of Easterling tribesmen that were known as Wainriders and that invaded Dor Rhúnen, killing the Dúnadan king of Gondor, Ondóher and his sons in 1944. When the kings failed in Gondor in TA 2050, he travelled between Mistrand and Minas Morgul in the continuing attacks on Gondor that held on with diminishing strength as its magic-users dwindled every year due to the Weapons of Possession and were not replenished. When Saruman headed the attack on Dol Guldur in TA 2941 with new weapons that dispelled the undead armies of the Necromancer, the Nine were also affected and did not resume a new shape until TA 3008²².

Level 31, Arch-mage (Shaman and Evil Cleric).



Notes

- 1 Gandalf: 'The Ringwraiths are deadly enemies, but they are only shadows yet of the power and terror they would possess if the Ruling Ring was on their master's hand again.' *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 2 Gandalf: 'So it is now: the Nine he has gathered to himself; the Seven also, or else they are destroyed.' *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 3 Rolemaster Companion, pp. 3-5 and 10-17.
- 4 Glossary in *The Silmarillion*: *Akallabêth* 'The Downfallen', Adûnaic (Númenórean) word equivalent in meaning to Quenya *Atalantë*. 'Númenor' (In full Quenya form *Númenóre*, 321-2, 347.) 'Westernesse', 'Westland', the great island prepared by the Valar as a dwelling-place for the Edain after the ending of the First Age. Called also *Anadûnë*, *Andor*, *Elenna*, the *Land of the Star*, and after its downfall *Akallabêth*, *Atalantë*, and *Mar-nu-Falmar*. 'And even the name of that land perished, and Men spoke thereafter not of Elenna, nor of Andor the Gift that was taken away, nor of Númenóre on the confines of the world; but the exiles on the shores of the sea, if they turned towards the West in the desire of their hearts, spoke of Mar-nu-Falmar that was whelmed in the waves, Akallabêth the Downfallen, Atalantë in the Eldarin tongue.' *Akallabêth*, *The Silmarillion*. Letter 131: 'The Men of the Three Houses were rewarded for their valour and faithful alliance, by being allowed to dwell 'western-most of all mortals', in the great 'Atlantis' isle of Númenóre.' Letter 154: 'The particular 'myth' which lies behind this tale, and the mood both of Men and Elves at this time, is the Downfall of Númenor: a special variety of the Atlantis tradition. That seems to me so fundamental to 'mythical history' – whether it has any kind of basis in real history, *pace* Saurat and others, is not relevant – that some version of it would have to come in.'
- 5 In *The Silmarillion* it is said, contrary to the Letters, that Sauron did not take his ring to Númenor. 'He came in secret, as has been told, to his ancient kingdom of Mordor ... There now he brooded in the dark, until he had wrought for himself a new shape; and it was terrible, for his fair semblance had departed for ever when he was cast into the abyss at the drowning of Númenor. He took up again the great Ring and clothed himself in power'. *The Silmarillion*.
- 6 See my previous essay in *Other Minds*, Issue 7.
- 7 *Peoples of Middle-earth*.
- 8 *The Silmarillion*.
- 9 *The Council of Elrond*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 10 *The Peoples of Middle-earth*.
- 11 Tolkien writes several versions for this event. *Peoples of Middle-Earth*, 215.
- 12 *Peoples of Middle-earth*, 195.
- 13 *Peoples of Middle-earth*, 209, 210.
- 14 *Peoples of Middle-earth*.
- 15 Eärnur: 'He went to war with Minas Ithil and Mordor and never returned'. *Peoples of Middle-Earth*, 217.
- 16 Gandalf: 'Saruman has long studied the arts of the Enemy himself, and thus we have often been able to forestall him. It was by the devices of Saruman that we drove him from Dol Guldur.' *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 17 Gandalf: 'Long ago they fell under the dominion of the One, and they became Ringwraiths, shadows under his great Shadow, his most terrible servants. Long ago. It is many a year since the Nine walked abroad. Yet who knows? As the Shadow grows once more, they too may walk again.' *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 18 TA 3008-18: 'But now Frodo often met strange dwarves of far countries, seeking refuge in the West. They were troubled, and some spoke in whispers of the Enemy and of the Land of Mordor. ... The Dark Tower had been rebuilt, it was said. From there the power was spreading far and wide, and away far east and south there were wars and growing fear.' *The Fellowship of the Ring*.
- 19 The Chaos Mage is a profession created in *Rolemaster Companion II*.

- 20 'c. 2000 Curunír (Saruman), returning out of the East, takes up his abode in the Tower of Orthanc in the Ring of Isengard. This had been an ancient stronghold of Gondor, guarding their north-west frontier, but the northern parts of the realm were now largely empty and King Eärnil [II] was glad to have the aid of Curunír against the Ringwraiths, and gave Isengard to him for his own.' *Peoples of Middle-earth*.
- 21 *Appendix A (iv), Return of the King* (in reference to the Inland Sea)
- 22 Gandalf: 'It is many a year since the Nine walked abroad. Yet who knows ? As the Shadow grows once more, they too may walk again.' *Fellowship of the Ring*.

The Age of Sauron – Preview

The Return of the King Chapter 3 - Mount Doom

... And far away, as Frodo put on the Ring and claimed it for his own, even in Sammath Naur the very heart of his realm the Power in Barad-dûr was shaken, and the Tower trembled from its foundations to its proud and bitter crown. The Dark Lord was suddenly aware of him, and his Eye piercing all shadows looked across the plain to the door that he had made; and the magnitude of his own folly was revealed to him in a blinding flash, and all the devices of his enemies were at last laid bare. Then his wrath blazed in consuming flame, but his fear rose like a vast black smoke to choke him. For he knew his deadly peril and the thread upon which his doom now hung.

The fires below awoke in anger, the red light blazed and all the cavern was filled with a great glare and heat. Suddenly Gollum was lifted into the air; his tight lips were stretched wide; his white fangs flashed in the red light as he let out a cry of dismay. Then an unseen force launched Gollum over the edge of the abyss and the wretched creature let out a pitiful, hopeless shriek of despair as he plummeted to a fiery death.

Sam's heart leapt, for despite his earlier sparing of Gollum's life, he knew that Gollum's heart was black and capable of great evil. Choking back a sob of relief and fear, Sam dragged himself to his feet and stumbled towards the chasm and where he had last seen Frodo. But before he had shuffled more than a few paces an invisible force knocked him on his back and settled upon his chest. And Sam heard a terrible voice above him utter words that brought real despair to his heart.

"On your back and stay there, Halfwit! A new power is now Lord of these lands, and none will stand in its presence unless given leave to do so!" Frodo's once pleasant tenor was now filled with vitriol and loathing for his former servant and friend.

The second blow to his head and the difficulty in breathing due to the pressure to his chest caused Sam to lapse into unconscious. Frodo, denied his audience, snorted in rage and passed from Sammath Naur back out onto the mountainside. He looked out at the realm of

Mordor with newfound acuity and events that were far away he could discern clearly. Looking west he perceived the Realm of Gondor and the shining city of Minas Tirith nursing its wounds and slowly recovering; looking north he saw the massed armies of the West embroiled in war with the forces of Sauron, but Mordor's superior numbers were now in turmoil, and Frodo knew why. The lords of war Sauron commanded were now cut free from the Dark Lords mind and purpose; bereft of his control and having to take command without the surety that the Will of Sauron gave them, they quailed and were flooded with fear.

For a moment silence fell on the battlefield, and then the Captains of the West, sensing an opportunity to strike at the heart of the Enemy's military leadership, they change their purpose and they drove home their advantage. The forces of Mordor were pushed back, despite their superior numbers, the forces of the West cleaved into them, slaying their captains and their lords, causing the remainder to rout before them. But the victory of the West would be short lived if Frodo had the chance to deal with them properly! And finally, looking to the east Frodo perceived Barad-dûr and he met the gaze of the Dark Lord in his high tower.

Frodo issued the challenge, and the Dark Lord responded. Across the vast expanse of ash plains between Orodruin and Barad-dûr the very air pulsed with power and the two foes' contest of wills began. But Frodo had no comprehension of the power of the Dark Lord, for even without his Ring, Sauron, amongst the mightiest of the Maiar to dwell within the confines of Eä, was more powerful and more terrible than any in Middle-earth could conceive, except perhaps the Wise. Even over such a distance Sauron's Will was vast, and using such command as he could he locked Frodo in a battle of minds which could have only one ending.

Soon the Nazgûl arrived on their winged steeds, circling Frodo's position like vultures over a wounded beast of the plains. They descended in haste and took up positions encircling the Halfling. Sensing the presence of the Nazgûl, Frodo torn free from his mental battle with the Dark Lord, seeking to bring his will to bear on the Black Riders and bend them to his purpose. They stood like statues surrounding him, black shadows against a dark and grey broken land.

"Kneel before me! I am your Lord! I command the One Ring, the Master Ring!" Frodo cried as he put forth his will and battled for command of the Nazgûl for what seemed an eternity.

But too little did the young Hobbit know of the lore of the Rings of Power. Perhaps one of the Wise could have temporarily mastered the Nazgûl, perhaps Saruman with his knowledge of Ringlore could have achieved that which Frodo strove for. But Sauron still held the Nine Rings of Mortal Men, and through those Rings he still held the Nazgûl to his Will. Sauron knew this all too well and indeed counted on his servants loyalty to ensure the pretender could not escape, and to hold him against Sauron's own coming to the slopes of Orodruin.

Frodo stretched out his mind and grasped at those of the Nazgûl. A moment of uncertainly hovered in the air between them, but suddenly the Nazgûl bowed before the Halfling. A hollow voice issued from one of the Nazgûl, bidding Frodo look out upon his new domain. With mounting confidence and exhilaration Frodo strode down the mountainside as the Nazgûl spoke to him of the great victories he would achieve and the mighty domains he would rule. But the Nazgûl suddenly withdrew in haste. Frodo, sensing some new reluctance within them, filled with fury and commanded them to obey him. They refused and then the true reason for the Nazgûl's withdrawal became clear.

Frodo, sensed the approach of a Power, looked back east. He saw, moving as swiftly as an arrow propelled from the mightiest of elven bows, a dark and terrifying form approaching in wrath, leaving a storm of ash in its wake. The figure slowed as it achieved the lower slopes of the mountain, and the Nazgûl scattered in fear as the dark shape drew near. Frodo cackled, for now he knew his chance for complete victory had come. He would throw down the Dark Lord on his own mountain and assume the Throne of Mordor. He would achieve that which even the pitiful Lords of the Eldar and the Dúnedain at the end of the Second Age could not achieve. All manner of victories and triumphs boiled in his head, all he had to do was...

Sauron, the Lord of Mordor, Lord of the Rings of Power, self-proclaimed Master of Middle-earth finally arrived. Frodo put forth his

power, more power than any Halfling could have dreamed of, to enslave the Dark Lord and crush his will. The command was sent and it shattered on the wall of indomitable power that was Sauron's mind.

How preposterous; how absurd; how laughable the efforts of this contemptible and tiny-minded mortal seemed. How could anyone in Middle-earth hope to withhold the One Ring from its true master? Only one of the Wise, one of the great among Wizards and Eldar could have hoped to withhold from the Ring-maker his rightful property. Sauron's mind struck out at Frodo, crippling the Halfling's mind and body. With another thought the Ring itself, burning with a white hot intensity in response to the approach of its true Master, was torn from Frodo's hand and shot like a burning meteorite into the grasp of Sauron.

Frodo fell to his knees, momentarily oblivious to all else that happened by the removal of the Ring, but he had little time to grieve his loss or do much else.

Sauron raised his periapt of power in triumph, for a fatal and ultimate disaster had been avoided through the weakness of this pathetic creature in front of him, and for a moment everything around the Dark Lord stopped. Orodruin seemed to grow silent, the great winds of Gorgoroth died, and for Frodo and the Nazgûl (now prostrate before their Master) nothing else existed except the scene of the towering figure of Sauron, now seemingly grown tall to an unimaginable height, holding up his Ring, the One Ring.

Sliding the Ring onto his finger, a dreadful cry of victory erupted from Sauron, and an invisible wave of power and authority issued forth from the Dark Lord's being. Frodo's physical form was thrown back and down, crushed against the unforgiving volcanic rock of Mount Doom. The Dark Lord stepped over the Halfling's form, seeing that the tiny Hobbit was about to expire.

"Stay thy mortal soul!" Sauron commanded, stretching out his black hand.

Frodo's broken body was lifted by unseen hands from the ash-covered rock, and made whole again; cuts sealed and bones knitted.

"The perverse release of death shall not be thine!" the Dark Lord said. "Thou shalt be taken

now to my dungeons, and there thou shalt burn for eternity for thy insolence. But even in those hallowed depths thou shalt understand the true measure of my victory over thee and thine allies. Thou shalt see all that I see; feel all that I feel; and thou shalt **curse** the moment that thou had not the strength to finish thy quest!"

Then with a mental command Sauron ordered one of the Nazgûl to take Frodo to Barad-dûr, there to await the Dark Lord's pleasure. Then Sauron cast his gaze northward, to the battle before the gates of Morannon. In the time since Sauron had realised the true purpose of his enemies to this moment, the battle had swung in favour of the Lords of the West. They had carved their way through Sauron's forces; orcs fled; trolls swung aimlessly, in frenzy at anything that came near them, killing friend and foe alike; the only forces that maintained any semblance of control were the Haradrim and Easterling men, but even they fought a retreat to positions of relative safety and to spread the enemy front as thinly and as wide as possible. The Lords of the West also sought to secure an exit from the battlefield, but the vastness of the enemy forces made this a difficult goal to achieve.

Sauron's power, now absolute, stretched forth and all his minions were brought back under his invincible will and purpose. Slowly the onslaught of the West was stayed; slowly the superior numbers of Mordor began to impose mastery on the battlefield, and slowing they cut into the ranks of the West. Then with gathering speed the forces of Mordor began to crush the forces of Rohan and Gondor. Before long the West was routed, and there on the plains before the Black Gates many great and fair folk fell in ruin. Few indeed of the West escaped that day.

On the eastern hill the riders of Rohan and Dol Amroth fared better than those on the western hill, but the numbers of Mordor could not be held back. Éomer, King of Rohan, fell leading a charge to save the noble Prince Imrahil; Beregon and Pippin were slain and consumed by the hill-trolls of Gorgoroth. Only Prince Imrahil and some few of his household, pushed north and cut off from all other friends by the forces of Mordor, escaped the battlefield that day.

On the Western hill fell Legolas the Elf and Gimli the Dwarf, defending each other as no

two of the oldest of kindreds had done ever before. And nearby fell the fair sons of Elrond, Elladan and Elrohir, finally brought low by the beastly orcs they had spent many lives of men hunting, in payment for the foul tortures that their mother, Celebrian, had suffered at the hands of those creatures. Almost all the Dúnedain folk who had ridden to battle fell, and among them the last of the line of Isildur, Aragorn son of Arathorn, Elessar the Elfstone, finally succumbed to the forces of Mordor.

And last of all, with all other friends about him slain; dying; or in the hands of the enemy, Gandalf the White, last of the Istari messengers of the Lords of Valinor to remain true to his duty, fell. No songs are sung by any who witnessed or heard of his fall, in either sorrow or triumph, so profound was the loss and so costly was the victory. He stood alone, surrounded by the enemy, pierced by many blades. About him the air seethed and crackled with the energies he released in his defence. Orcs could not approach him freely and only did so due to the pressure of numbers at their rear, and those that were forced closer burned. Trolls were filled with fear, despite the mastery Sauron held over their every thought, and they fell by the mighty wizard's blade, their black blood soaking the hillside. But the sheer force of numbers of Mordor could not be overcome, and last of all, Gandalf the White fell. His robes were stripped from him, his blade taken, his staff shattered and Narya the Red recovered by The Mouth of Sauron for safekeeping and eventual delivery to his Dark Lord.

With victory at Morannon secured, Sauron's mind stretched forth, further afield. And from the slopes of Orodruin Sauron saw all. The West was broken, and whilst there would be many battles to come, and many victories to be won, Sauron knew the enemy was defeated. The Dark Lord's triumph was almost complete and as Gondor's power shattered on the plains of Morannon, on the slopes of Mount Doom, Sauron laughed. All the dark servants felt the force of the Dark Lord's glee, but they did not join their Master. Sauron's delight was not theirs, for now Sauron's power was absolute. Finally after thousands of years of effort and toil, the Age of Sauron had truly arrived.

The events both at Mount Doom and the Morannon have gone terribly wrong and different to the hopes that everyone aligned with the Free Peoples had. Stay tuned for a detailed view of the further developments after Sauron's decisive victory in

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Appendix A: Timeline for “The Nine Nazgûl”

The table on this and the following page is intended as a supplement to the article *The Nine Nâzgûl* in this Issue of *Other Minds*. It builds upon information both from Tolkien and ICE’s publications, adding further original information.

It is designed to ease navigation in the article itself and get a quick overview of key events in Antonio’s vision of the Nine.

Date	Event(s)
TA 25	Recruitment en masse of whole Northman tribes to the military of Arnor.
TA c. 250	Rise to power of the Northmen in the kingdoms of Rhudaur and Cardolan.
TA 861	Division of Arnor into smaller kingdoms.
TA 1230	Recruitment en masse of whole Northman tribes to the military of Gondor.
TA 1248-57	The Dúnedain of Arnor use Erech-like necromantic stones to guarantee the loyalty of the serfs of the subject races of Eriador. With these undead armies they defeat decisively the forces of the four demon-gods of Morgoth, and reach and destroy their capitals in the confines of the Northern Wastes.
TA c. 1274	Foundation of the feudal kingdom of Angmar by the Witch-king at the Far North’s major Dúnadan necromantic city and Dwarven colony of Carn Dûm.
TA 1309-12	Republican revolutions in Rhudaur and civil war between the monarchists and republicans.
TA 1313	The parliamentary monarchy of Rhudaur is overthrown. A republic is created in Rhudaur.
TA 1320	Republican revolution in Cardolan; a republic of limited franchise is created in Cardolan.
TA 1356	Secret alliance between Rhudaur and Angmar; war with Arthedain which is defeated and invaded.
TA 1369	Angmar and Rhudaur defeated by an allied force of Arthedain, Cardolan and Lindon. Creation of a parliamentary monarchy at Cardolan under the influence of Arthedain.
TA 1363-6	Angmarean siege of Rivendell, and Angmar’s attempt to close the routes that pass through the Misty Mountains between Eriador and Rhovanion.
TA 1377-83	The Dwarves of Durin in the Grey Mountains are defeated by a combined force of Dragons of the Northern Wastes and their Orc legions, and Angmarean troops; the Dwarves flee to the Misty Mountains or to the Iron Hills.
TA 1385-98	The Dwarves of Durin in the Misty Mountains are defeated by the Dragons and Men of Angmar and lose all their cities there save Moria.
TA 1409	Angmar and Rhudaur defeat Arthedain and Cardolan and invade the Dúnadan states. Only the regions around Fornost and Tyrn Gorthad are defended; the rest is over-run.
TA 1413	Gandalf and company raid Carn Dûm and destroy for 25 years the form of the Witch-king.
TA 1432-48	Civil war in Gondor between on the one side, the Northmen and parliamentary monarchists, and on the other side, the majority of the Dúnadan and absolute monarchists. Victory of the Northmen and creation of a parliamentary monarchy with two houses, a parliament and a senate.

Date	Event(s)
TA 1429-1635	Dragons consume four of the Seven Rings of Power draining their power levels thus becoming stronger; the Necromancer's forces turn against them and they have to flee to the Utter North where the four demon-gods of Morgoth hide.
TA 1636	The Great Plague; appearance of evil cults and undead in the cities of Gondor, namely in Osgiliath and Minas Ithil.
TA 1634-36	Corsair invasion of southern Gondor that defeats and slays the king.
TA 1638-43	Anarchist revolutions in Gondor and Arnor, defeated.
TA 1671-74	Communist revolutions in Gondor and Arnor, defeated.
TA 1693-97	Republican revolutions in Gondor and Arnor, defeated.
TA c. 1700	Communication between the lands of Arnor and Gondor ceases due to the internal chaos.
TA 1810	Umbar taken from the Corsairs who flee and are dispersed ending any further political organization.
TA 1851	Arthedain defeats and destroys Angmar; Carn Dûm is sacked. Cardolan is re-settled but the anarchy and evil cults prevalent there defeat further attempts at the re-establishment of order.
TA 1851-56	The Witch-king flees east and assembles the Wainrider Easterling confederation that invades Gondor, slaying its king.
TA 1858	Re-establishment of Angmar as an absolute monarchy.
TA 1900	The eight Nazgûl take Minas Ithil but lose it soon afterwards. Angmar invades Cardolan with new Undead but is defeated; the Men of Arthedain destroy Cardolan.
TA 1918	Minas Ithil is taken by the Úlairi.
TA 1940	Minas Ithil is re-conquered by the Men of Gondor. The Necromancer creates much more powerful Fear and Phantom weapons known as the Weapons of Possession; such overt assertion of power reveals him as Sauron.
1944	The Wainrider Easterlings invade northern Gondor and defeat its army, but the Dúnedain recover and defeat the Nazgûl, retaking Minas Ithil. They nevertheless lose their southern empire in Haradwaith; Umbar is taken by the Haradrim.
1974	Angmar invades and defeats Arthedain. An allied force composed of the Men of Gondor, the Elves of Lindon, Rivendell and Lórien defeat and destroy Angmar and Rhudaur. Due to the prevalent anarchy in Eriador, the Dúnedain fail to re-establish their kingdom.
2002	The Nazgûl conquer permanently Minas Ithil and it becomes known as Minas Morgul.