

J.R.R. Tolkien: The Beaten, Battered, Yellowed Bundle of Pages

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“Fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?... If we value the freedom of mind and soul, if we're partisans of liberty, then it's our plain duty to escape, and to take as many people with us as we can!”

– J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*

My collection of books by and related to author and Oxford professor, J.R.R. Tolkien began with a beaten, battered, yellowed bundle of pages, that found itself in the unfortunate circumstance of lacking both a front cover, and half the spine. This copy of *The Hobbit*, gifted to me by my uncle, was my gateway to Middle-Earth, and the first of what would become a substantial collection of novels, short story and poetry collections, one academic essay, a box-set of Middle-Earth inspired music, a book of letters, and a permanent tattoo on my left forearm. This loosely held-together tome was a humble beginning, but one that is now so deeply sentimental to me that I cannot separate that sorry volume from the general discussion of my collection.

To eleven-year-old me, *The Hobbit* was the first time I really believed in magic. Only to an extent, and only while my eyes skimmed the pages, but it was magic, nonetheless. I became enraptured and captured in ways that I had never been. To me, Middle-Earth felt old, and lived-in, and sacred, and real. For much of my childhood, and indeed into my young adulthood, The Shire was my preferred state of residence, and Erebor was my go-to vacation destination. I had become ravenous for more, and so it only made sense that I would move on to the arguably more famous sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*, as soon as I finished *The Hobbit*. Thus, my beaten, battered and yellowed bundle of pages found itself in the company of a fancy new (cheap) paperback copy of the trilogy bound as one volume, with a cover from Peter Jackson's movie adaptation. My collection was off to an incredible start.

This was not about collecting to me then. That would not happen for many years. At first, it was about the wholly unique experience reading the Middle-Earth Legendarium was to me. Like a wild fire, I consumed *The Lord of the Rings*, and quickly followed it with *The Silmarillion*, another gift from an uncle. I was not sated. I made it my mission to obtain, read, and hoard as much knowledge about Middle-Earth as I possibly could. I did research on publications; what I could easily find, and what I would have to search through used bookstores for. I would make long lists, and go down checking off what I had and circling what I believed to be the most urgent acquisition. In retrospect, “urgent” is the perfect word to describe the rate at which I devoured every book with Tolkien’s name that I could get my hands on. When I inevitably hit a plateau of new reading material in Middle-Earth, I figured it would make sense to go back and get prettier copies of some of the less glamorous editions in my possession. I started by buying a paperback copy of *The Hobbit* that actually had a cover, and buying a copy of *The Lord of the Rings* that had original cover art. This moment marked when I went from simply enjoying the content of Tolkien’s books to appreciating the items themselves as precious keepsakes and physical representations of my principle literary interest. In other words, this was the moment I became a collector of Middle-Earth.

With that came a certain level of sadness though. While Christopher Tolkien, J.R.R. Tolkien’s youngest son, published “new” Middle-Earth books occasionally, I had reached the end of the only mythology I had ever truly embraced. That’s what the Middle-Earth Legendarium was to me. It was a living myth created in the mind of a single man. So when there was nothing new to read, I came to the realization that I could never read these books for the *first* time, ever again. That sense of wonder that comes with traveling the landscape of Tolkien’s epic as a novice is something both extremely hard to articulate, and vitally important to

any Tolkien fan/scholar. It is the sensation of simultaneously holding belief in two worlds at once. While this feeling never fades in its entirety, the more time one spends in Middle-Earth, the more comfortable and aware one becomes of its inner workings. Wonder slowly unravels to knowledge, and knowledge of the setting I certainly had.

My desire to recapture this feeling eventually compelled me to pursue Professor Tolkien's other works, both prose and poetry, fiction and essay. I wanted to believe in magic again and feel wonder without knowledge. Wonder I indeed felt. *Farmer Giles of Ham* shook me with its hilarity, *Tree by Niggle* made me ponder questions about life, friendships, and religious philosophy, *Smith of Wootton Major* manifested Tolkien's philosophy on fairytales as described in his essay *On Fairy Stories*. Thus my "Middle-Earth Collection" became my "Tolkien Collection", and my horizons were permanently expanded. While nothing has ever or likely will ever impact and influence me to the same extent as the mythology of the Middle-Earth Legendarium, these other works were clearly penned by the same brilliant hand.

I do not think I will ever stop collecting J.R.R. Tolkien's books. No other single author has inspired me to read, to write, to speak without reservation like J.R.R. Tolkien has. Even when my bookshelf is swamped with eclectic copies of *The Hobbit*, or *The Silmarillion*, I will continue to eye the shelves of my local used bookstore or keep watch on the official online Tolkien shop. What began with a beaten, battered, and yellowed bundle of pages has become a passion that I have no doubt will be with me from now until the end¹.

¹ I no longer possess my original copy of *The Hobbit*, the victim of a careless move from my old home. This fact is one of my deepest regrets in recent times. I name this collection in honor of the book that started it all. I hope it is out there somewhere, and that that somewhere is not a landfill.

Annotated Bibliography

Day, David. *Guide to Tolkien's World: A Bestiary*. Bounty Books, 2010.

This book, while of lesser narrative consequence to the greater world of Arda (the fictionalized world in which Middle-Earth resides), is an all around fun and engaging examination of the magical and oftentimes strange fauna of Middle-Earth. It is full of illustrations and references to other books, most of which I also have. I got this book back in 2013 as a gift from my grandmother.

Fonstad, Karen W. *The Atlas of Middle-earth*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

The Atlas of Middle-earth contains some of the most detailed and thoroughly researched maps of Arda that exist. Karen Fonstad did an outstanding job of combing Tolkien's massive works for even the smallest hint at geography, distance, topography, and more. I believe that, despite Tolkien himself never drawing maps of the eastern continent, Aman, or the southern continents, Karen Fonstad's realization of her incredible research is the closest Legendarium fans will ever get to Tolkien's original vision of Arda.

Glyer, Diana. *The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community*. 2007.

This was a gift to me from my mother to congratulate me on completing my first semester at Goucher. I consider this one of the more unique parts of my collection. *The Company They Keep* is an academic thesis on J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis's impact on each other's creative process, with special attention paid to the Oxford Inklings writing group. While I have known about the Inklings for years, this book was my first real historical deep-dive into the topic. I find the thesis of *The Company They Keep* –that Tolkien and Lewis both heavily impacted the other's writing in tangible and observable ways – deeply compelling.

Sisam, Kenneth. *A Middle English Reader and Vocabulary*. Courier Corporation, 2011.

This book is a collection of and introduction to Middle-English literature by academic Kenneth Sisam and includes some short work by J.R.R. Tolkien. This was the first book I picked up with Tolkien's name on it that had no connection to the Legendarium. In that respect, this book is deeply sentimental, despite Tolkien's other stories being dearer to my heart.

The Tolkien Ensemble, and Christopher Lee. *Complete Songs and Poems: The Lord of the Rings*.

The Tolkien Ensemble's Complete Songs and Poems: The Lord of the Rings is precisely

what its name states. It is a musical and dramatic rendering of every single poem and song within the Lord of the Rings trilogy, of which there are many. The Tolkien Ensemble was the first group to ever fully adapt Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* poems to music. They also received approval from both the Tolkien estate, and Harper Collins publishing, making them, for all intents and purposes, the officially recognized sound of Middle-Earth. I have a special four-CD box set which I purchased online when I was fifteen. At this point in my life, I must have listened to the entire several-hours-long collection over a dozen times.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Beren and Lúthien*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.

Beren and Lúthien is one of three major stories that comprise the “Great Tales” of the First Age of Middle-Earth. It was also one of the most personal stories to Tolkien, who came to view it as an allegory to his marriage, and his love for his wife. It is the story of a human man who falls in love with an immortal Elf princess. The two of them embark on an impossible quest to secure approval from her father. This quest ultimately kills Beren, though the God of death, Mandos, sends him back to life. In the real world, written on the shared gravestone of Edith (wife) and J.R.R. Tolkien, are the names “Beren” and “Lúthien”. This edition of the story offers a comparative look at each iteration of the tale, from Tolkien’s younger years all the way to the final version as told in the Silmarillion.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Children of Húrin*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007.

The Children of Húrin is another of the Great Tales of the First Age of Middle-Earth. It tells the tragic story of a man named Túrin Turambar, who desperately and fruitlessly fights against his own dark destiny before becoming prey to his own lust for control. Túrin is, in my opinion, the most complicated character in the whole of the Legendarium and is my own personal favorite character in all of Tolkien’s mythology. While this book is certainly difficult to read at times with Tolkien's purposely medieval archaisms, the story and character alone make this perhaps my singular favorite story Middle-Earth tale.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Fall of Gondolin*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.

The Fall of Gondolin is one of the three “Great Tales” of the First Age of Middle-Earth. It tells the story of the human man, Tuor, and his divinely inspired quest to locate the hidden Elf city of Gondolin to save it from its fated destruction. Tuor is ultimately unsuccessful, and the ramifications of this failure are felt even in the Third Age, many thousands of years later. A fun connection this has to *The Hobbit*: both Gandalf, Thorin, and Bilbo’s swords are said to have been forged in Gondolin before its destruction, many thousands of years in the past.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Der Kleine Hobbit*. Klett-Cotta, 2012

This German translation of *The Hobbit* was a gift to me from my girlfriend of 5 years during a trip she had to Germany. It is small, and paperback, and impossible for me to read, but it has a certain charm that makes me smile when I see it. It reminds me that,

even if I do not share a language with someone, there is still a good chance we have quite a bit in common.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Die Abenteuer des Tom Bombadil*. Klett-Cotta, 2016.

This German translation of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* was another gift to me from my girlfriend during that same trip to Germany. In addition to the same significance as *Der Kleine Hobbit*, this book is a running joke with my family. For the longest time, I struggled to find even a used copy of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. I searched online and in person, and never lucked out. I began to think of it as the book I would never get. Flash-forward to now, and I have four different copies of it, one of which in an entirely different language.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Farmer Giles of Ham, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

This was one of my earliest excursions into Tolkien's non-Middle-Earth literature. Like many books I own, it was a Christmas gift. I do not remember how long ago I first read *Farmer Giles of Ham*, but I do know that I instantly loved it. The English humor that permeated *The Hobbit* was the central element of Farmer Giles's story, and I was on-board for the whole ordeal. This particular edition comes with some additional features, including commentary on the origins of the story and Tolkien's creative process, and a full copy of Tolkien's original draft.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Letters from Father Christmas*. Harper Collins, 2015.

Letters from Father Christmas is a collection of letters addressed to Tolkien's children written by Tolkien posing as Santa Claus. These letters include full color illustrations, and various recurring characters, like the Great (Polar) Bear, and the Man in the Moon. This book includes full page scans of the original letters, as well as typed versions to clarify where handwriting may be illegible. In my personal opinion, this book is the most adorable part of my collection. Tolkien was a family man, through and through, and the level of detail he put into works of writing he never intended for any eyes other than his children is legitimately heartwarming and incredibly human.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Smith of Wootton Major*. HarperCollins, 2015.

Published in 1967, *Smith of Wootton Major* was the last story Tolkien published before his death in 1973. It is the story of a child given the opportunity to wander and explore a magical realm locked off from humanity. This child grows, learns, and then passes on the key to the next generation of children. This story is a perfect narrative representation of Tolkien's definition of "fairy stories" as laid out in his essay *On Fairy Stories*. This is also one of the most recent additions to my collection, having only just received it Christmas of 2018. This edition includes dozens of pages of additional content, including earlier drafts, notes from Tolkien himself, and annotations from the editor.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1978.

This is one of my four copies of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, and each one means something different to me. This particular copy, the 1978 edition, was a gift to me from

my older brother, and was my first copy I ever had. I was blown away that my brother had somehow managed to find a used copy, since I had been trying in vain for over two years at the time. This was before new editions of the book had gone into print, so my only option was to try and get lucky from used bookstores. I am not ashamed to admit that when I realized what he had done, my brother's generosity deeply moved me, as my brothers and I have never really made a habit of exchanging gifts during the holidays.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. Harper Collins, 2014.

This copy was one that I purchased myself, as I was afraid that I would ruin my older copy (1978) if I continued to read from it. When I heard new copies of the Middle-Earth poetry collection were going to print, I was naturally extremely excited. It had been out of print for a long time. This edition comes with historical/literary analyses of each of the poems in the collection, and an extremely informative preface by the editor. This is the copy that I reach for when I am in the mood from some Tolkien-caliber poetry.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Fellowship of the Ring: Being the First Part of The Lord of the Rings*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

This is a simple paperback copy of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and is the copy I purchased to replace my older, less eye-pleasing copy. I consider this, as well as the other two in the trilogy, to be my first foray into book collecting, as it was an entirely unessential purchase done only for the pleasure of ownership.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

This copy of *The Two Towers* is a simple paperback copy that I purchased to replace my original, less eye-catching copy of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. This is part of the collection that I accredit for getting me into Tolkien book collecting.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Return of the King: Being the Third Part of the Lord of the Rings*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

This is the copy of *Return of the King* I purchased to serve as a prettier version of my first copy of the trilogy. I goes together with *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and *The Two Towers*.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit Facsimile First Edition*. Harper Collins publishers, 2018.

This was a Christmas gift from my grandmother during the holiday of 2018, thus making it one of the newest additions to my collection. It is a scale facsimile of a first edition copy of *The Hobbit*. I have already read through it and found notable differences between it and the later editions. It is clear that at the time of writing, Tolkien had no plans for the sequel *The Lord of the Rings*, as certain scenes and statements contradict that later story. Seeing as there exist only 1500 copies of the first edition in the world, this is almost certainly the closest I will come to experiencing one in person.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings, Del Rey Books Boxed Paperbacks*. Ballantine Books, 2012.

This is a box set of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy with covers based on

stills from Peter Jackson's movie adaptations. I consider these my “sacrifice copies”, as I have given myself free reign to crease, fold, and abuse them as I please. I am ordinarily extremely careful with my books, even treating paperbacks with gentleness and respect. However, the single purpose of these editions is providing me cheap and expendable copies that I can afford to take with me on the bus, through the rain, to the park, et cetera.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit, Deluxe Collector's Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, This deluxe collector's edition of *The Hobbit* was my first really nice copy of any of Tolkien's books. It is a hardback book with a green leather cover, gold leaf lettering, and a full color map on the inside., as well as penciled illustrations throughout It is one of my most personally prized possessions, and I place it at the very top of my Tolkien bookshelf, alongside my other most valued items. Like many of my Tolkien books, it was a gift from my grandmother.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings, Single Movie Edition*. Houghton Mifflin, This was my first ever copy of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and was my second ever J.R.R. Tolkien book. It is for this purely sentimental reason that I have decided to include it in my entry for the Applestein-Sweren book collection contest. A major theme of my essay was sentimentality (thus the name of my collection), and while this book has less monetary value than some of my other volumes, it more than makes up for it in personal value.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004. This was a birthday gift to me some years ago, and I can honestly say that this is likely my singular most prized possession. The fiftieth anniversary edition of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is printed in a single volume, the way Tolkien always intended. I do not know if this fact is well known or obscure, but Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* as a single book and meant it to be published as such. However, due to a paper and ink shortage at the time coupled with the immense length, his publisher opted to cut it into three volumes. Seeing this single volume, bound together with black leather and a hardback cover and original cover design as imagined by Tolkien fills me with satisfaction. I feel as though Tolkien would be happy to know that all these many years later, his original wishes were recognized, at least by some.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion, The Myths and Legends of Middle Earth*. 1998. This copy of *The Silmarillion* was a gift from an uncle when I was twelve, as a logical progression from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. That makes this the third book in my Tolkien collection, and at the time it was by far the nicest. It was my first hardcover copy of any Tolkien book, and it includes beautiful full-color illustrations and a full-color map of Beleriand, (former eastern part of Middle-Earth). It also used to be my uncle's own copy of the book, from when he too began to kindle an interest Arda as a child. While he never found interest in the *Silmarillion*, I'll never forget what he told me

when he gave me this copy: "there's no one in the world I would rather give this than you."

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Tolkien Reader*. Del Rey, 1986.

This volume includes various short stories and poetry collections that I also own in other volumes including: *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, *Tree and Leaf*, and *Farmer Giles of Ham*. Similar to my paperback boxset of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* that has Peter Jackson cover, this is my beat-them-up copy of those specific stories. I dog-ear the corners, I toss it to the side, and I crease the spine. Essentially, it is the copy I sacrifice so that my nicer copies may live in peace and comfort.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Tree and Leaf, Including Mythopoeia and The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*. HarperCollins, 2018.

This book is a collection of wildly different things. It includes the essay *On Fairy Stories*, the historical poem *Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*, the short allegorical story *Leaf by Niggle*, and the religious and philosophic poem *Mythopoeia*. This eclectic selection gives the reader a well-rounded view of what to expect from Tolkien's writing. It makes one dip their toes in Tolkien's academic writing, his verse, and his prose. For someone looking for a general understanding of Tolkien's capabilities, *Tree and Leaf* is a great and easy to read choice.

Tolkien, J.R.R., and Humphrey Carpenter. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

J.R.R. Tolkien's letters are a treasure trove of information for both lore junkies, and the fan with a passing interest in Tolkien's fiction and/or life. It was compiled and edited by Humphrey Carpenter, a leading Tolkien scholar and academic. I have spent many hours combing this book for notable quotes, gems of information on Tolkien's famously private life, or nuggets of lore either never published, or later discarded. I have also cited Tolkien's letters on two separate college essays, so it has also had a tangible impact on my education.

Tolkien, J.R.R., et al. *Lord of the Rings, Four Volume Sixtieth Anniversary Boxset*. HarperCollins,

In my opinion, this is the most beautiful item/items in my collection. The Lord of the Rings trilogy has had many different covers over the course of its publication history, but my personal favorites were always the original dust-cover designs drawn by Tolkien himself. Thus, when I saw a Sixtieth anniversary edition of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy alongside a copy of the *Lord of the Rings Companion*, I had to see it on top of my bookshelf. While I considered making each book in this boxset a separate item on this bibliography, I think they stand out the most when presented together.

Tolkien, J.R.R., and Christopher Tolkien. *Book of Lost Tales Part 1*. Del Rey,

This is the first volume in a twelve-book series entitled *Histories of Middle-Earth*. The primary focus of this book was the unpublished "Book of Lost Tales", or the version of *The Sillmarillion* myth Tolkien wrote before any inkling of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy

or *The Hobbit* had crossed his mind. This book, along with all the other *Histories of Middle Earth* are densely packed, lore-heavy experiences that lack traditional narratives for the sake of packing in as much information as possible.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Book of Lost Tales Par 2*. Del Rey,

This is the second volume the *Histories of Middle-Earth*. It is a continuation of the first volume in the series; providing a look at the first myths of the Silmarils (jewels of great significance in Middle-Earth history) before the addition of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to the mythology. While most of the lore in the first two volumes is defunct, having been either updated or abandoned by Tolkien with later story additions, they both still provide amazing glimpses into the creative process of the man who made Middle-Earth.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lays of Beleriand*. Del Rey,

The Lays of Beleriand is the third volume in the Histories of Middle-Earth. The primary focus of this volume is the epic poems of the tales of the First Age. This includes the various iterations of poetic versions of *Beren and Lúthien*, *The Fall of Gondolin*, *The Children of Húrin*, and others. This book is particularly lore heavy, as many of the poems retain much of the finalized information present within the finalized version of *The Silmarillion*. Like the other volumes in the Histories of Middle-Earth, I recommend only to those fans who do not mind pure lore unfiltered through a narrative. Personally, I love these books.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Shaping of Middle-Earth*. Del Rey,

This is the fourth book in *The Histories of Middle-Earth*. This volume in the series provides earlier versions of the tales of the First Age, the creation myth, and the war with Morgoth, the original Dark Lord. Like the other books in the series, this book is deep on lore and light on traditional forms of storytelling.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lost Road and Other Writings*. Del Rey,

This is the fifth volumes of the Histories of Middle-Earth, and the last one I have the pleasure of owning. The focus on this volume is the real-world history of the tales of Númenor, one of the most pivotal moments in Middle-Earth history. Christopher Tolkien expertly lays out how this tale originated with a bet between C.S. Lewis and Tolkien during a meeting of the Inklings. In my opinion, this volume of the *Histories of Middle-Earth* is unique, in that it is far less focused on the lore (though still far more lore-heavy than most of Tolkien's other works), and far more concerned with placing the story into a real-world historical context. Of the *Histories of Middle-Earth* I own, this is my personal favorite – despite and perhaps because of – the spotlight shifting slightly away from lore.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*. 1st ed., Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1977.

This is a first American edition of *The Silmarillion* I found on a whim at my local used bookstore. There was live music playing at the bookstore that night, and I was distractedly flipping through a copy of *The Silmarillion* I happened to pick up. I

eventually looked at the information page and was both surprised and delighted to see the words “First American Edition” printed square in the middle. After that, I slowly closed the book, brought it to the counter, and paid six dollars for it without ever speaking a word. While I am aware first edition copies of *The Silmarillion* are not all that valuable, as it had a rather large first edition run, it is still the only note worthy first edition I have. It is worth something to me, for that reason alone.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-Earth*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001.

This book I find both fascinating and profoundly sad. It is a collection of Middle-Earth stories that Tolkien never completed, either because he lost interest in them, or because of his death. In these tales I see the spark of that same Tolkien fire I experience in his other, finished works. There are some stories, such as a Gandalf first-person narrative, that genuinely intrigue me with how different they are from Tolkien’s other work. Tolkien was a man who was deeply contemplative, and often took years and years to write even short stories. By all accounts, he agonized about every detail, big or small, and this severely impacted the volume of work he put out. *Unfinished Tales* reminds me that Tolkien was both unquestioningly brilliant, and profoundly human in both his triumphs and failures.

Benkert, Bruce, “J.R.R. Tolkien Tattoo”. Locke Studios, 2017

This tattoo is something I have wanted since I was eleven years old. I always wanted it the same way. I remember asking my mother if I could get it and she told me that if I still wanted it when I was eighteen, it could be a birthday present. My eighteenth birthday rolled around, and I still desperately wanted it. So I got it, and I am still as ecstatic about it as I was the day I got it. It is three symbols, each from a different aspect of Tolkien’s work. The bottom symbol is the mark of Gandalf, as left by Gandalf on letters, Hobbit doors, and fireworks. The center symbol is the Livery of Elendil (Tree of Gondor), as drawn by Tolkien himself on the original cover for *Return of the King*. The top symbol is the famous Tolkien symbol that appears on the spine of every book he ever wrote.

Annotated Wish List

Blackham, Robert. *Tolkien's Oxford*. History Publishing Group, 2008.

This book is a biographical account of Tolkien's time and role in the academia of Oxford College. I was fortunate enough to be one of two Goucher students selected for the Oxford St. Anne's College study abroad program for 2020. In my application essay for that program, I wrote of my love of Tolkien, and his role at Oxford. This book would give me the chance to learn more about both the author whom I idolize, and the school at which I have the rare opportunity to study.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

As my interest in Tolkien books has grown, my fascination with their creator has

grown also. This is a general biography, observing Tolkien's life in all of its phases. What I know of Tolkien's life, I have gained through a combination of information in his books' prefaces and forewords, research on the Tolkien Gateway wiki, and simple osmosis. I would love to have a better general knowledge of Tolkien's life, and Humphrey Carpenter's biography is the most widely respected source for learning just that.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.

Another Humphrey Carpenter book, this one focusing entirely on the famous group, the Oxford Inklings, to which Tolkien, Lewis, and other notable writers belonged. I wrote an essay on the Inklings during my first semester at Goucher, and it is a topic I find myself continuing to go back to in my thought. The fact that so many great mind even knew each other is astounding to me, let alone that they creatively collaborated.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

Tolkien was a linguist, and a famous lover of medieval history and literature. Thus it was that he knew and was extremely familiar with the Beowulf story. I, as a reader of almost entirely modern literature, am only tangentially familiar with Beowulf and his story, mostly through what I've learned in my study of Tolkien. This translation and commentary by Tolkien would be a great gateway for me, a Middle-Earth and fairy story nut, to become more familiar with Beowulf, one of Tolkien's many classical inspirations.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Der Herr der Ringe*. HarperCollins, n.d.

Ever since my girlfriend gave me two German translations of Tolkien's books, *The Hobbit* and *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* to be exact, I have wanted a German copy of *The Lord of the Rings* to round it out. As it stands, those two books sit on my shelf together, but they just look incomplete. I think having this third volume would help bring the German offshoot of my collection together. Who knows, perhaps in a few years I'll have German copies of all my books and along with them a pretty compelling incentive to learn German.

Tolkien, J.R.R., and Christopher Tolkien. *Histories of Middle Earth, Three Volume Collector's Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d.

I intend to purchase the rest of the Histories of Middle-Earth in single paperback editions eventually, so I can have my sacrifice copies, but these editions just look so beautiful and sleek, that I can hardly help but want it first. It is all twelve Histories bound into three massive books and contained within the same boxset. It is, unfortunately, over 100 USD on the official J.R.R. Tolkien online bookstore, but it is more than worth it, once I save up the money.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Mr. Bliss*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011.

Mr. Bliss is one of Tolkien's lesser known stories. I only learned about it a few months ago, and ever since it has been a germ in my head. It is a children's picture

book about a man by the name of Mr. Bliss taking a ride in his new car. To me, this premise reminds me of *Smith of Wootton Major*, as both stories have relatively low stakes, choosing to focus on other factors than plot to drive the story. I am more than a little curious as to the effect of a Tolkien book of which even I had never heard.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *Roverandom*. London: HarperCollins UK, 2013.

This, like many of Tolkien stories, began as a story for his children. From what I understand of the story, it is the story of a dog who gets turned into a toy. This story attracts me for the same reason *Letters from Father Christmas* attracts me. It seems like a cute story that has a connection to the family life of J.R.R. Tolkien, who kept his person so private during his lifetime.

Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Fall of Arthur*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

This book is Tolkien's own version of the famous story of King Arthur, and the destruction of his kingdom at the hands of Mordred. I am intrigued by this, as Tolkien wrote the entire Middle-Earth Legendarium as a means of creating a distinctly "English" interpretation of mythology. Therefore, seeing how he approaches what is genuine English legend is interesting to me, and is why this book makes my annotated wish list.

Tolkien, J.R.R., and Christopher Tolkien. *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*. 1992.

One of the aspects of Tolkien's books I love the most is the incredible artwork. What many people do not realize about Tolkien, is he himself produced much of the artwork featured in certain editions of his books. He personally drew the maps in *The Hobbit*, and him and his son Christopher collaborated on the maps in *The Lord of the Rings*. *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien* is a collection of – and commentary on – Tolkien's illustrations across many of the most famous books in his career.