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# Why Is the Only Good Orc a Dead Orc

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**INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume IV**

A Collection of Essays Presented at  
The Fourth

FRANCES WHITE EWBANK COLLOQUIUM

ON

**C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS**

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## Why is the Only Good Orc a Dead Orc?

Anderson M. Rearick, III

### The Dark Face of Racism Examined in Tolkien's World<sup>1</sup>

In Jonathan Coe's novel, *The Rotters' Club*, a confrontation takes place between two characters over what one sees as racist elements in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.<sup>2</sup>

Birmingham, Doug maintained, had produced two notable racist thinkers in the last few decades: Enoch Powell and J.R.R. Tolkien. Philip was outraged by this statement. Tolkien was unquestionably his favorite author and in what way, he wanted to know, could he be described as Racist? Doug suggested he reread *The Lord of the Rings*. Philip assured him that he did, at six monthly intervals. In that case, Doug replied, surely he must have noticed that Tolkien's villainous Orcs were made to appear unmistakably negroid. And did it not strike him as significant that the reinforcements who come to the aid of Sauron, the *Dark Lord* are themselves dark skinned, hail from unspecified tropical islands from the south, and are often mounted on elephants? (143)

The passage is telling on several levels.

First, the character Doug gives in a nutshell the basic concerns raised about racism in Tolkien's Middle Earth. It is undeniable that darkness and the color black are continually associated throughout Tolkien's universe with unredeemable evil, specifically Orcs and the Dark Lord Sauron, throughout—an evil that is dealt with by extermination. Contrariwise, the Orcs' mirror selves, the Elves, described as “the noblest of the children of Elru”<sup>3</sup> (Tyler 148) are continuously described as extremely fair. Galadriel's hair is “deep gold” (*FOTR* 369) and emphasis is made of her “white arms” (*FOTR* 380). In fact so fair are the elven folk in general that the dark hair of Elrond and his daughter Arwen, caused by them being part-human, is considered extraordinary among the Elves.

Second, the conversation described in *The Rotters' Club*, while fictional, is set during the seventies. If accurate, and there seems no reason to doubt the author, the setting of thirty years ago indicates how long questions centering on Tolkien's possible racism have existed. Yet the debate occurs between fans who are

themselves out of sync with most of their peers, thus underscoring the fact that Tolkien's work has up until recently been the private domain of a select audience, an audience who by their very nature may have inhibited serious critical examinations of Tolkien's work. As Neil Isaacs writes in his introductory essay to *Tolkien and the Critics*, “since *The Lord of the Rings* and the domain of Middle-earth are eminently suitable for faddism and fannism, cultism and clubbism . . . [its special appeal] acts as a deterrent to critical activity” (1). This may suggest why, even in the face of a long-term awareness among readers, the whole question of racism in Tolkien has been ignored by the academy. C.S. Lewis does make a comment in “The Dethronement of Power.” He notes that people who dislike a clear demarcation of good and evil “imagine they have seen a rigid demarcation between black and white people” (12). However Lewis does not pursue it, saying by the final volumes it is clear that the “motives, even on the right side [of the War of the Ring] are mixed,” and this mixture stops readers who might “brazen it out” from continuing their claim of racism (12). While Lewis may have been overly optimistic, it is certainly true that little has been written on racism since the works' original publication.

However, with the success of the film adaptations of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*, and the anticipation for the last of the trilogy, *The Return of the King*, being released this December, Tolkien's work has suddenly found itself a part of pop-culture, giving it a much broader exposure than it had experienced among the bookish, young, counter-culture readership of the sixties and seventies. As such, *The Lord of the Rings* has found itself open to pop-culture scrutiny, especially among contemporary, cultural critics, concerned with the racist heritage of Western—and especially American—culture.

Two vocal contemporary supporters of the opinion that *The Lord of the Rings* is racist are John Yatt, a critic for the Manchester, England, based newspaper, *The Guardian*, and Dr Stephen Shapiro, “an expert in cultural studies, race and slavery” (Reynolds and Stewart). Regrettably, both critics weaken their argument by making claims about Tolkien primarily based on their film experience. Yatt's lead in, for example, alerts the reader to the fact that he is responding not to the original text but to its cinematic interpretation: “Maybe it was the way that all the

baddies were dressed in black, or maybe it was the way that the fighting uruk-hai had dreadlocks, but I began to suspect that there was something rotten in the state of Middle Earth” (“Wraiths and Race”). Specific elements of wardrobe and makeup are, of course, choices made by the director not the author.

Shapiro makes a similar claim when he says “The recent films amplified a ‘fear of a black planet’ and exaggerated this difference by insisting on stark white-black colour codes” (qtd. in Reynolds and Stewart).<sup>4</sup> One bit of irony in Shapiro’s comments that seems to especially stem from his mixing of text and film is his claim that Tolkien’s dwarves reflect an English prejudice against Scotsmen: “the dwarves were his notion of what Scots were like. It is like a southern England cliché of a dour, muscular race and that represents the Scots in the book” (qtd. in Reynolds and Stewart). Tolkien himself in fact, connected the dwarves to a race, but the race was the Jews.

Now, considering the dwarves’ “love of beautiful things . . . a fierce and jealous love” (*Annotated Hobbit* 24) and their physical quality of having beards and large noses (169), this fact sends off all sorts of alarms centering on Jewish stereotypes. But in a letter to Naomi Mitchison (Letter #176 ) about the broadcast adaptations of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien explains this connection in a very different light: “I do think of the ‘Dwarves’ like Jews: at once native and alien in their habitations, speaking the languages of the country, but with an accent due to their own private tongue” (*Letters* 229). Thus, the connection to Scotsmen again suggests Shapiro’s over dependence on the film since in the actors’ commentary found on the extended DVD version of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, John Rhys-Davies describes his decision—not Jackson’s nor Tolkien’s—to add a Scottish accent to his portrayal of Gimli the dwarf. Thus, both Yatt and Shapiro, claiming to find racism in Tolkien the author, confound their observations with problems they have with Jackson the director.

Still in spite of some muddy thinking both do raise concerns that need a response. The silence of the academy must end. While admitting that Tolkien may have had a preference for the racial characteristics of his own people, an examination of his life, works and letters suggest that his treatment of dark forces in general and Orcs in particular is based more on an archetypal and Judeo-Christian parameter than a racial one. In fact, the central message of his famous work is contrary to the central racist presumption, i.e. that individuals can be categorized and judged by their physical, racial appearances.

Within the limitations of this presentation a full enquiry on the racist question is impossible. However, some overview is helpful. Yatt, who after responding to the films does return to Tolkien’s text, notes the

apparent color line in *The Two Towers* between good and evil: “In the good corner, the riders of Rohan, aka the ‘Whiteskins’: ‘Yellow is their hair, and bright are their spears. Their leader is very tall’ (*TT* 33). In the evil corner, the Orcs of Isengard: ‘A grim, dark band . . . swart, slant-eyed’ and the ‘dark’ wild men of the hills (*TT* 17-18).” (“Wraiths and Race” text citations added by Rearick). He also verbalizes a very troubling quality in Tolkien’s depiction of the battle at Helms Deep, specifically the expendable nature of the Orcs:

. . . genetic determinism drives the plot in the most brutal manner. White men are good, “dark” men are bad, orcs are worst of all. While 10,000 orcs are massacred with a kind of Dungeons and Dragons version of biological warfare, the wild men left standing at the end of the battle are packed off back to their homes with nothing more than slapped wrists. (“Wraiths and Race”)

Yatt’s conclusion is that Tolkien’s work is filled with “basic assumptions that are frankly unacceptable in 21st-century Britain” (“Wraiths and Race”). Prof. Shapiro’s approach is based more on autobiographical assumptions about Tolkien.

Although there is no published text to cite,<sup>5</sup> Shapiro has been quoted on several web sites as describing *The Lord of the Rings* as racist. Like Yatt, Shapiro points to the apparent color line that divides good and evil: “the fellowship is portrayed as über-Aryan, very white and there is the notion that they are a vanishing group under the advent of the other, evil ethnic groups. . . . The Orcs are a black mass that doesn’t speak the languages and are desecrating the cathedrals” (qtd. in Reynolds and Stewart).<sup>6</sup> In this he follows the standard complaints already outlined. Far more original is Shapiro’s take on Tolkien’s motivation for writing his epic fantasy:

Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* because he wanted to recreate a mythology for the English that had been destroyed by foreign invasion. He felt organic English culture had been destroyed by the Normans. There is the notion that foreigners destroy culture and there was also a fantasy that there was a solid homogeneous English culture there to begin with, which was not the case because there were Celts and Vikings and a host of other groups . . . the trilogy, begun in the 1930s and published in the 1950s, was written at the onset of decolonisation, when the first mass waves of immigrants from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent came to Britain. The Midlands, Tolkien’s model for the Shire, was

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becoming a multicultural region. (qtd. in Reynolds and Stewart)

Of course Shapiro's observations, while interesting, are not based on any of the writings of Tolkien himself but are instead built on observations of a time and assumptions of how Tolkien would interpret those historical moments.

Following this direction, there are, in fact, other factors not mentioned by either critic about Tolkien that could cause a pause among some readers. Tolkien lived in a time period that Chinua Achebe describes as one "when the reputation of the black man was at a particularly low level" (258).<sup>7</sup> Achebe writes that in the minds of many of that time there existed "the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this long [racist] attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world" (257). Furthermore, Tolkien himself lived at least for a time within this system. He was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Although he lived there only four years, his family existed in a circle that had certain expectations. In his biography of Tolkien, Carpenter describes his home in South Africa this way:

There were servants in the house, some black or coloured, some white immigrants; and there was company enough to be chosen from among the many other English-speaking residents, who organized a regular if predictable round of dances and dinner-parties. (11)

Thus, Tolkien was introduced into a world of privilege (if only middle class privilege) in which racial distinctions and levels in class were assumed. Additionally, his world of academia was one with a tradition of anti-Semitism. Norman Cantor in his *Inventing the Middle Ages*, an examination of the scholars who reshaped twentieth century perspectives of the past, notes that "a Jewish professor of humanities was as great an anathema in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century as in Germany" (55).

Yet these elements are hardly conclusive. Guilt by association is not a trustworthy tool. And so living in a racist society does not predestine one to be racist. Mabel Tolkien, J.R.R.'s beloved mother and also first teacher whose early death canonized her opinions, "found the Boer attitude to the natives objectionable" (Carpenter 13). Moreover, an inclusive attitude rather than an oppressive one can be inferred in a picture taken in November 1892. Thanks to its addition to the photo section of Carpenter's biography, the photo is clearly revealed to be on a Christmas card and therefore hardly an embarrassment. On it the immediate Tolkien family is shown. "Behind [whom] stood two black servants, a maid and a house-boy named Isaak, both

looking pleased and a little surprised to be included in the photograph" (13). Carpenter describes the Tolkien environment this way:

in Bank House there was tolerance, most notably over the extraordinary behavior of Issak who one day stole little John Ronald Reuel and took him to his kraal where he showed off with pride the novelty of a white baby. It upset everybody and caused a great turmoil, but Isaak was not dismissed, and in gratitude to his employer he named his own son `Isaak Mister Tolkien Victor. (13)

Like the idea of guilt by association, this evidence of equanimity is hardly conclusive, but it does suggest the possibility of non-racist attitudes. Stronger evidence comes from Tolkien's own correspondence.

In a letter to Graham Taylor (Letter #324) who had noted a similarity between Sam Gamgee and Samson Gamgee, a name listed in an old list of Birmingham, Jewry, Tolkien reflects on the suggestion that his own name might have a Jewish source: "It [Tolkien] is not Jewish in origin, though I should consider it an honour if it were" (*Letters* 410). More overt is Tolkien's response to Nazi publishers who wanted a "Bestatigung" or confirmation of his racial purity. To his own publisher, Allen and Unwin (Letter #29), Tolkien expresses his misgivings of allowing such a statement to appear on his text even if it costs the company money: "I should regret giving any colour to the notion that I subscribed to the wholly pernicious and unscientific race-doctrine" (*Letters* 37). Later, in a letter (# 30) dripping with sarcasm in which he pretends to not understand the Nazi publisher's definition of Aryan, Tolkien points out that true Aryans are, in fact, an "Indo-iranian" group and none of his ancestors spoke "Hindustani, Persian, Gypsy, or any related dialects" (*Letters* 37). Tolkien finally writes if "you are enquiring whether I am of Jewish origin, I can only reply that I regret that I appear to have no ancestors of that gifted people" (*Letters* 37).

Other writers, although not academics, have presented forceful defenses for Tolkien against the charge of racism. In response specifically to John Yatt, Jared Ingham writes in *The Warwick Boar* that while admitting that the portrayal of evil in *The Lord of the Rings*—especially in the Orcs—may seem to moderns as overt crude, [and] simplistic, to "say that Tolkien set out with strictly racist intentions, or that overall his book is blatantly racist, is pure politically-correct hokum" ("A Different Look At Tolkien"). Shapiro, meanwhile, is taken to task by Julia Houston who suspects that some of his conclusions about Tolkien's racism are based more on him being an American who does not understand European ideas of class which

Tolkien seems to have held than to any actual elements of racism in Middle Earth. However, she goes on to an even more provocative conclusion:

Going after the works of a man whose epic champions the strength of “the little guy,” and who often wrote of the evils of apartheid and racism, smacks of an academic who’s just trying to get noticed and an American who really needs to end his witch-hunt and remember that other countries don’t write literature based on uniquely American sins.  
 (“Tolkien, Racism, & Paranoia.”)

Like Lewis years ago, Steuard Jensen<sup>8</sup> does an excellent job of reminding the reader of the breadth of *The Lord of the Rings* by showing that the dark and light dichotomy is actually a part of a much larger and mixed description of good and evil:

Light skinned characters who did evil things include Saruman, Grima, Gollum, Boromir, Denethor, and the Numenoreans as mentioned above. And it is notable that Tolkien described Forlong’s people of Gondor and even the men of Bree as “swarthy,” the same term he used for example of the Southrons who were ambushed by Faramir (though to be fair, he may have imagined different degrees of “swarthinness” for those groups). For that matter, Sam’s flash of empathy for the fallen Southron he saw during the ambush indicates that many of Sauron’s soldiers were likely unwilling slaves, not evil at heart. (“Was Tolkien Racist?”)

The passage to which Jensen refers comes from *The Two Towers* when Sam sees a Southron warrior fall: “His brown hand still clutched the hilt of a broken sword . . . [Sam] wondered what the man’s name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace” (*TT* 269). Tolkien as a veteran of World War I had seen battle directly and to give so much thought about “the other” while in battle surely indicates a heart not directed towards racism but inclusion.

Finally, while Leanne Potts of the [Albuquerque Journal](#) reports the wide divergence of opinion, she includes the comments of Leslie Donovan, a UNM (University of New Mexico) professor who points out that “Tolkien is dealing with literary archetypes. . . . Those beings that are closer to the light are considered more heroic, more self-sacrificing, more sympathetic. Those individuals farthest from the light are morally

and spiritually corrupt in Tolkien’s moral landscape” (qtd. in “*LOR* Unleashes Debate on Racism”)

There are just a few more points regarding racism in Tolkien’s work that deserve further examination. It does seem that Tolkien, as he depicted beauty in his work, gravitated toward a more northern esthetic than otherwise. He wanted the work to “be redolent of our ‘air’ (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and hither parts of Europe, not Italy or Aegean, still less the East) while possessing . . . the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic” (qtd. in Cantor 227). Responding to this quote, Cantor notes that Tolkien had “a faith in the elevated ethos of the Nordic peoples” (227), which again sounds troubling. However, is having an appreciation for one’s own culture and its definition of beauty racist? If it is, then every African American who believes “black is beautiful” is racist.

Far more troubling might be the fact that all the races included in *The Fellowship* seem to share Tolkien’s sensibilities and be internally attracted to the fair qualities of the elven people. Some might question if this should be. Why should dark skinned and short dwarves and hobbits, who seem especially agog in the presence of elves, find tall fair individuals attractive unless there is an organic sense of their superiority? And again, wouldn’t this be racist?

However, there seems to be far more going on in the bright nature of the Elves than just physical attractiveness. They embody ancient lore in all forms of poetry, art, and music. And as the eldest of races they demand a level of honored respect. Meanwhile the other races do stay true to themselves. Sam, for all his desire to meet the Elves is also more than ready to return home to the Shire and marry Rosie Cotton. And although Gimli becomes the champion of the elf queen, Galadrial, he and his company can resist elvish charm well enough when they first visit Rivendale. What draws Gimli to Galadrial is her grace and kindness. When she speaks with compassion and appreciation for the beauty of his people’s once great city a bond is created which is not physical but emotional and spiritual. Gimli doesn’t carry the threads of her golden hair because he wants a blond wife but because he “looked into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding” (*FOTR* 371). In his journey to become the “lock bearer and elf friend,” Tolkien seems to suggest in Gimli the hope for a co-existence of races more than the dominance of one over the other.

There is still the question raised by John Yatt, which is also the title of this paper: “Why is the Only Good Orc a Dead Orc?” The answer lies within Tolkien’s faith. Carpenter and others regularly describe Tolkien as “a devout Christian” (146), and this central quality had a profound effect on his imaginative work. “*The Lord of the Rings*,” claimed Tolkien in 1953, “is, of course, a fundamentally religious and Catholic work;

unconsciously so at first but consciously in the revision” (qtd. in Cantor 230). A central error when thinking of Orcs in Tolkien’s imagination is to think of them as mortal beings like hobbits and men. However, their darkness is not determined by race but by their alliance with evil. This use of terms like darkness and shade comes from scriptural images. So the battle between light and dark comes which runs all through *The Lord of the Rings* comes from Tolkien’s Judeo-Christian mindset.

Although many critics like Achebe have correctly pointed out that Christianity, especially in America, has at times coexisted with racism, readers should draw a line between cultural Christianity and Biblical text. The text of the Bible is filled with light and dark images having nothing to do with race. Few would think that the Semitic Jewish David’s comments about the shadow of death as in anyway a racial comment. The following scriptural examples were taken from the Catholic “Rheims Douai” 1582-1610 translation. As a linguist, Tolkien could probably read scripture from the original texts, but these English translations, which just pre-date the King James version, illustrate how common the terms *dark*, *shade*, and *shadow* were used to describe an evil or dangerous situation in the Bible: “Before I goe, and returne not, unto the *darke* land, that is covered with the mist of death, A land of miserie and darknesse, where is the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horrour inhabiteth” (Job 10:21). “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the *shades of death*” (Psalm 23:4). “For all you are the children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the *night* nor of *darkness*.” (I Thessalonians 5:4). This is only the smallest of samples of light and dark metaphors and images used in scripture.

Remembering that dark and light in *The Lord of the Rings* is about the powers of good and evil and not race, readers should realize that Orcs are dark because they are far from the good. *The Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the term Orc used by Tolkien may have come from Orc, a “vaguely identified ferocious sea-monster.” It may also come from the Old English *orcyras* *oe heldeofol* “orc-giant or hell-devil,” also *orcneas* “from *Beowulf*.” One way or another the term links Orcs to the infernal world of demons. If this were not enough, readers should remember that in *The Hobbit*, the narrator uses instead of Orc the word “goblin.” The swords, Orcrist and Glamdring, which Thorin Oakenshield and company find in the Troll hideout and bring to Elrond are identified as coming from the “goblin wars” (*Annotated Hobbit* 62). Again *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “Goblin” “as a mischievous and ugly demon.” Ironically the OED gives as an example taken from scripture, the source of this dark and light dichotomy, specifically from the 1388 Wycliffe translation “<sup>c</sup>His treuthe schal cumpasse

thee with a scheld; thou schalt not drede of ny[y]tis drede. <sup>e</sup>Of an arowe flynge in the dai, of a gobelyn goynge in derknessis; of asailing, and a myddai feend” (Psalm 90: 5-6). Why is the only good Orc a dead Orc? One might just as likely ask Tolkien, “Why is the only good demon an exorcised demon?” In Christian thought the elimination of evil is the only way to respond to it. There is no parley in the battle between Heaven and Hell, and that is why there is none between Orcs and Elves either.

In some of the more recently released Tolkien writings edited by his son, Christopher Tolkien, Tolkien confirms that Orcs were indeed irredeemable at least to the inhabitants of Middle Earth. In *Morgoth’s Ring*, within the “Myths Transformed” section, Tolkien writes about elvish rules of engagement concerning orcs: “the Wise in the Elder Days taught always that the Orcs were not “made” by Melkor, and therefore were not in their origin evil. They might have become irredeemable (at least by Elves and Men), but they remained within the Law” (419). The suggestion that there might be a plan of redemption in the mind of Elru but that it was beyond the concern of mortals sounds a lot like the ideas of the great Church Father Origen (185-254 AD) who thought that even demons would eventually be redeemed although the process was a concern for God and not men. This portrayal of irredeemable Orcs which echoes at least one great Catholic theologian is vital since it suggests one more way that *The Lord of the Rings* is based in Tolkien’s faith and that the war between Elves and Orcs parallels the war between Hell and Heaven.

The final argument against Tolkien being a racist can be gained by looking at the over-all message of the work rather than particular battles or physical descriptions. Whatever qualities the forces and peoples of Middle Earth have behind them there is the universal truth that all things were created good. And since good is not always shining out like light, a lesson that many of the individuals in the *Lord of the Rings* must learn is to not judge individuals by their outward appearances. “We always seem to have got left out of the old lists,” complains Merry when he and Pippin discover that the Ents have no recollection of them (*TT* 68). It is true that all through the work Hobbits are either gently condescended to or overtly disdained. No one, not even the Elves, judges them aright. And yet this least significant of races—at least so considered by the other peoples of Middle Earth—is the only one with enough love of life and enough selflessness to produce individuals who can carry the ring to the very edge of Mount Doom. Racism is a philosophy of power, but *The Lord of the Rings* functions with the Christian idea of the renouncement of power. Christ gives up Heaven, power on Earth and finally His Life to achieve His goal. So does Frodo. Racism claims that one can tell the

value of an individual just by looking at his or her outward appearances. But nothing could be more overtly counter to the Christian worldview that Tolkien functions in even as he creates his fantasy. “Man [Elf, Dwarf and Ent] looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Nothing could be more contrary to the assumptions of racism than a Hobbit as a hero.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A special note of appreciation must be given to my Honors, Selected Topics, Class for the Fall of 2003. Without their stimulating discussions both in and out of class and their assistance in web and text searches, my ideas would have remained vague and unsupported. Let me thank Adam Beutel, Stephanie Bloom, Laura Honigford, Andrew Johnston, Erin McDonough, Heather O Conner, Joel Potter, Emily Snyder, Nichol Vanscoy, and especially Rebekah Radcliffe who assisted me so extensively in tracking down light and dark references in the actual text of “Lord of the Rings.”
- <sup>2</sup> All references to Lord of the Rings come from the 1965, Houghton Mifflin editions. For convenience’s sake the entire Lord of the Rings will be sometimes identified as LOTR while the different portions of the work will be identified in parenthetical notation by the following abbreviations: Fellowship of the Ring (FOTR), The Two Towers (TT), and The Return of the King (ROTK).
- <sup>3</sup> God the creator in Tolkien’s mythology. “Elru: the One, who in Arda is called Euvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made.” (Silmarillion 3).
- <sup>4</sup> Literature professors are well used to explaining to contemporary readers the dangers of assuming that a film and the text upon which it is based are one and the same. Even when a text is followed faithfully, as in Branagh’s *Hamlet*, directorial choices still shape the work to a particular interpretation.
- <sup>5</sup> I find it disturbing that “the respected academic” (Reynolds and Stewart) makes his comments not in a publication but from some undisclosed platform after the premier of the film *The Two Towers*. Academics should be writing not pontificating.
- <sup>6</sup> I have been wracking my mind trying to remember where there are cathedrals in LOR.
- <sup>7</sup> Chinua Achebe is describing Joseph Conrad’s time, but the author of *Heart of Darkness* and Tolkien’s dates are actually fairly close: Conrad (1857-1924) and Tolkien (1892-1973). Conrad was only 33 years older than Tolkien. Thus much of the social

commentary Achebe makes applies to Tolkien as well as Conrad.

- <sup>8</sup> Although cited just this once, Steuard Jensen has been extraordinarily helpful in this work. Many of the sources included herein were uncovered by his direction both in the site listed as well as through email correspondence. Thanks so much Steuard!

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