ORCS

AN EPIC

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue 7

*ORCS: an epic*

I. Mount Doom 15

II. Uruk-Hai 23

III. The Scouring 31

*Appendices*

A. Notes on the Text 39

B. The Goblin Script 55

C. Orquian Song 59
“A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe.”

— Marx, Engels, Macfarlane.
A spectre begins by coming back. A frightful hobgoblin appears apropos nothing. Familiar to most English readers through the Samuel Moore translation of 1888, the famous spectre one remembers haunting the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) is a late arrival in England, too late for the first English version produced by the Chartist writer Helen Macfarlane and published by the journal *Red Republican* in 1850. Das Gespenst des Kommunismus: the thing expected will not appear. Instead — Ein Wechselbalg! — 'A frightful Hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe'. And this might or might not be the spirit that follows: 'We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism. All the Powers of the Past have joined in a holy crusade to lay this ghost to rest...'\(^1\)

Derided ever since as a comical and perverse rendering of the German original, Macfarlane's frightful Hobgoblin should not be so simply dismissed. As David Black's remarkable and richly rewarding investigation into the writer's life and work has established, Macfarlane's knowledge and understanding of the German philosophy was only equalled at that time in the United Kingdom by the novelist George Eliot, and no

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subsequent English translator has been better placed to gain insights into the composition of the *Manifesto* than Macfarlane, who befriended Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels shortly after the beginning of their exile following the counter-revolutions of 1848. In a letter to Engels, written in February 1851, Marx described Macfarlane as ‘a rare bird’ — ‘the only collaborator on [the Red Republican] who had original ideas...' Her decision to translate *Das Gespenst* as a Hobgoblin therefore merits attention. Not least because it maintains a distinction between the spectre (*Gespenst*) and the Spirit (*Geist*).

As Jacques Derrida once noted, the spectre and the spirit are not the same thing, though the spectre is of the spirit and participates in it even as it follows and reiterates it: a ghostly double. The difference between the two is precisely what tends to disappear in the ghost effect, just as the concept of such a difference or the argumentative movement that puts it to work in the rhetoric tends to vanish. In the course of sharpening this difference, Derrida observes that ‘what distinguishes the spectre or the revenant from the spirit, including the spirit in the sense of the ghost in general, is doubtless a supernatural and paradoxical phenomenality, the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, or an

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invisibility of a visible X... That is to say, a spectre is produced by an incarnation of spirit: ‘Once ideas or thoughts (Gedanke) are detached from their substratum, one engenders [the spectre] by giving them a body. Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and thoughts have been torn loose, but by incarnating the latter in another artificial body, a prosthetic body’. And in the chapters that follow, Derrida suggests the commodity-fetish that appears in Das Kapital would be the given, or rather lent, borrowed body...

The wood comes alive and is peopled with spirits: credulity, occultism, obscurantism, lack of maturity before Enlightenment, childish or primitive humanity. ... But, inversely, the spirit, soul, or life that animates it remains caught in the opaque and heavy thingness of the hulē, in the inert thickness of its ligneous body, autonomy no more than the mask of automatism ... The automaton mimics the living. The Thing is neither dead nor alive, it is dead and alive at the same time. It survives. At once cunning, inventive, and machine-like, igneous and unpredictable, this war machine is a theatrical machine, a mekhanē. What one has just seen cross the stage is an apparition, a quasi-divinity — fallen from the sky or come out of the earth.

Here, Derrida could be describing the hobgoblin that has proliferated in the West in the Modern Era. From the goblins that haunt the earliest printing-presses and the renaissance

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5 Ibid., 6.
6 Ibid., 158.
7 Ibid., 158.
8 Ibid., 191-193.
theatre, to the orcs that now thrive in paperbacks, tabletop RPG, video games and blockbuster cinematic franchises, these creatures from folklore have drawn increasing and uncanny vitality from each generation of mass-media entertainment technology, acquiring at last with the most recent advances in CGI bodies entirely spectral. No longer requiring even the silicon prosthetics needed for “practical” orcs, Azog the Defiler, the lead antagonist in Peter Jackson’s *Hobbit* trilogy, is a digital image created by VFX company Weta Digital using real-time facial- and motion-capture and muscle-simulation software — rotoscoped over live action elements obtained on Red Epic cameras at a resolution of 5K and 48 f.p.s. via a diversity map and integrated using 3D: white, brutal and beautiful, this phantasmal war-machine is a theatrical wonder that compels one to recall the spectacular inventiveness of ‘the wizard who evoked the powers of darkness, but could neither master them, nor yet get rid of them when they had come at his bidding.’

Like Das Gespenst, the Hobgoblin is an apparition that seems to embody even as it refuses merely to represent the ghost of that historical process which underlies its evolution into the “Orc”. And this tension is peculiarly apparent in the writing of the man primarily responsible for this development. ‘There is no “symbolism” or conscious allegory in my story’, insisted J.R.R. Tolkien. ‘To ask if the Orcs “are” Communists is to me as

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sensible as asking if Communists are Orcs.' But following increasing interest in his work and widening knowledge of his political positions, this extremely reductive reading was to become increasingly prevalent (to the great distress of the author). Humphrey Carpenter’s biography (1977), for instance, revealed that Tolkien ‘was suspicious not so much of German intentions as of those of Soviet Russia'; and that he had ‘a loathing of being on any side that includes Russia’. In his diary, Tolkien is said to have written, ‘One fancies that Russia is probably ultimately far more responsible for the present crisis and choice of moment than Hitler.’ And the publication of his letters revealed that the author had held a pro-Fascist position on the Spanish Civil War: ‘Nothing is a greater tribute to Red propaganda than the fact that [C.S. Lewis] (who knows they are in all other subjects liars and traducers) believes all that is said against Franco, and nothing that is said for him.’ All this has only served to compound the misapprehension that Tolkien was so keen to repudiate - and that his own translators appear to have shared. The introduction to the first Swedish edition of *The Lord of the Rings* explained that: *Here [in Mordor] rules the personification of satanic might Sauron (read perhaps ... as Stalin).* A reading that infuriated Tolkien. There is no “perhaps” about

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12 Tolkien, Letter 83: To Christopher Tolkien, 6 October 1944; 96.
it’, he raged. ‘I utterly repudiate any such “reading”, which angers me. The situation was conceived long before the Russian revolution. Such allegory is entirely foreign to my thought.’ And in his foreword to the second edition, Tolkien felt compelled to point out that the War of the Ring resemble the Second World War neither in its process nor its conclusion. ‘I think that many confuse “applicability” with “allegory”; he suggests. ‘An author cannot of course remain unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous’. In order to be quite clear, Tolkien explains that, ‘I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations [and] I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers’.

But if Tolkien is in earnest in what he says about history this can only invite further questions concerning the nature of the connection that seems to persist between his race of goblins and the Zeitgeist. The ‘undisguised ghost-story’ Marx is attacking in *The German Ideology* and subverting in *The Communist Manifesto* is the History of Spirit, is the very concept of World-History. And Tolkien’s work (produced in an era in which wars were waged over the nature and significance of that concept) is being presented to us

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(apparently in all seriousness!) as a hypothetical model of historical process extending over some twenty-thousand years. I contend that if we really are to approach these texts in the spirit intended that must require our raising a spectre which the author himself could not quite lay to rest. Bearing in mind the admonition against allegory — remembering that it is not Tolkien alone but Derrida too who cautions against mistaking the ghost for Platonic symbol — I want to explore the circumstances whereby the goblins of tradition mutate, in Tolkien’s work, into Orcs of the 21st-century mass media. In so doing, I hope to establish new perspectives on the impure history of spirit (die unreine Geistergeschichte), that is to say, the history of demonic possessions, that break with the prevailing views in the considerable body of scholarship that has built up in relation to the Derridean revenant.

II

The Scouring of the Shire

In this brief pamphlet I present my preliminary inroads on this subject, a record of those sudden intuitive leaps that are the prerequisite for any essay, but that are unlikely to have a place within the ultimate product of an empirically grounded investigation. I was particularly curious to trace the personal motives underpinning these research activities. I grew up just down the road from the Water-Mill that appeared in the first colour plate in The Hobbit, and my Grandfather had no ring-finger. For many years I was under the impression we might
be Hobbits. — I should have read ‘The Scouring of the Shire’ more carefully! I remember being shocked to discover at last that my Grandfather had not — as I had long thought — lost his finger in WWII, but while he was at work in the British Lion car-factory. It had been torn off by a chain in a machine. I remember being horrified to discover that work might hurt like war: and I have never stopped being so. Reading Tolkien now it is the Orcs with whom I identify with most closely and so this poem is for every Orc out there: for three generations of workers in Birmingham, for every injury we have suffered in the workplace, for the millions of us who have exchanged our own history for the fantasies of a Shire where we are not wanted.
I

MOUNT DOOM
There, far away, beyond sad Gondor now overwhelmed in shade, the Sun was sinking, finding at last the hem of the great slow-rolling pall of cloud, and falling in an ominous fire towards the yet unsullied Sea. The brief glow fell upon a huge sitting figure, still and solemn as the great stone kings of Argonath. The years had gnawed it, and violent hands had maimed it. Its head was gone, and in its place was set in mockery a round rough-hewn stone, rudely painted by savage hands in the likeness of a grinning face with one large red eye in the midst of its forehead. Upon its knees and mighty chair, and all about the pedestal, were idle scrawls mixed with the foul symbols that the maggot-folk of Mordor used.

O ears of tin! - On tachyon speed-dial the dead potential you must run to spend yr force again *infecting Middle Earth* - her black gelasma and then eyes that burn 3000 years no end in sight but seas & rivers moon & sun. The nails of God.

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*In this waste under mountainous dark you will hang upon nothing bt heat. in a tower of cloud that is fire after sunset a writhing carnivorous light. over black-lands the passage of Time is a Blast of hot air through tuyères. enter histories of spirit. effects the reduction of earth into met -rons of iron & bronze. and of silver & gold. is a Destiny stamp’d upon exta refin’d from the Zoa.*

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No euphemism straight out the gut this slab of god *is written history pathogens perpetual amputations* moving scars on meat I comprehend the signs that open mouths in me a tale of years and spew a molt -en rock from out Doom – I congeal a Black Speech.

Broadcast these gallstones I communicate nothing but *Power – transform yr reality – I bring this Gift to men concealed in rings my motto smolders red propellant drives industrial armies thru the weight of western seas in wrath to strike down ruling stars.*

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pheu pheu: push through the ceiling is vacant proceed — and plug patient full issue funeral phosphor impurities called activators Yr God is an eye — sluicing tears of ergol. pheu pheu
push to the pavement gestation—you gobbet
rip custard runs puckering feet thru to break-
fast on monster spectacular pasta—reiterate
wings in the dark whistle trembles your meat.

me hating me living what counts as a win should I
retract my right to brood on this waste? Here I sit
molding these munchkins after my own heart and
sigh me disjecta membra. No spirit to clade or kill
to suffer to forgive to defy or to liberate – Just not

Nailed to the rock we are legion: regional
blackout provide(r) — our ergative slang
sez that the subject need not be the agent

labour collective economic concentration
masses of men the basis the radical Work
my language is a metal tang Orquian song

hideous and foul, monotonous in purport
not mere casual group of nasty noises but
nowadays corruption: accurate transcript

best left to orcs, international-proletarian
poison tongue plaster a Tubal-Cain fungal
infection self-consistent artistic advanced.

Pulling out the Sun we have seen the whiteroot
spattering arithmetic. Through the pump-jack
pistonspress into the earth that the shaft bleed
black into Orc’s heart
Primeval-noons bound in hydrocarbons and held to that putrefaction – petroleum spews pure reflux to Light – incinerates nineteenth century smog – red

Banners — that liberate carcinogens — Hurl empires through the abyss: degenerate stars shall evacuate atoms in you — your soot will suffer us eating.

Orcs + Wargs will butcher the corpse of sunlight crash this spaceship earth thru an infinite dark Perpetual Motion Machines — on this warhead powered by cobalt.

I see stones whirl round in a ring and planets perform their revolt – over children sleeping under the Earth – Tù has said, Let the Object be two kinds of fruit you are perfect mechanical things strung up for the crows abhorrent SIBYLLA ANCEPS – | is that | “ JANITOR ” will return – antithetical | – Force – as lightning phlogiston, through air – settle rings in metal to fracture – the Light – | as on | waters in oil rainbows – sheer corrosive – no absolute but one hundred iron fortresses my containment So blew forth – ex-orbitant – optic nerves are flashing fast with song: and the path is black I pour down thru this tongue my entire refusal Ignition. “The Grand | Disqui- | sition” – Spirit is Matter. – I seize | that – Col | lapsing Dialect.
II

URUK-HAI
A strong place and wonderful was Isengard, and long it had been beautiful; and there great lords had dwelt, the wardens of Gondor upon the West, and wise men that watched the stars. But Saruman had slowly shaped it to his shifting purposes, and made it better, as he thought, being deceived – for all those arts and subtle devices, for which he forsook his former wisdom, and which he fondly imagined were his own, came but from Mordor; so that what he made was naught, only a little copy, a child’s model or a slave’s flattery, of that vast fortress, armoury, prison, furnace of great power, Barad-Dûr, the Dark Tower, which suffered no rival, and laughed at flattery, biding its time, secure in its pride and its immeasurable strength.

Our lives revolve round the Sun. That absentee landlord is on tour in the Black Land unseen - *his power is among us but passing he’ll say goodnight to the mushrooms and to the ubiquitous puddles. To the observation towers on Hagley Road. Machine turning light on time immemorial make each new instant through 24 hours a measure that might have framed: a chapter ring. But gravity broke him twice o he will continue while we prepare a replacement.

One Sun is risen. One Sun is set. Now a new Sun is rising

We are the servants of Saruman the wise: the white hand utility finger-tip red let the fighting Uruk-Hai do the work liberty & good housekeeping sweep thorns from the road this fire stolen from the gods for the burning of the world

Face the facts these golden numbers counted for nothing in the reckoning of the west — neither sun nor the moon brought Man these miracles to work: like the Wizard said *power to order all things as we (the wise) will for the good

Valorization follows provided human corpse can support the numbers knowledge order rule our victory is at hand Why not? – In this matter I put little weight, on the omen of whales or mountain eagles. Listen to the fables of bees

*Certain as to value of tangible past now Herbert Manzoni sent seizures straight through the tongue oneshiningsun on the hunt the habits of mind conditions of war applied to peace an inner-ring-road we are the fighting Uruk-Hai*
prefabrication assembly onsite the key is a strain of dead
Ent shuttering compact mountain over the abzu upended
the architect’s ziggurat paradise circus Laputa impending
bull dozers press every day of the week past my windows

our visions & re-visions their matadors make a Bull Ring
get style – think strong. Here: never a dog is left sleeping.
So (after 8 years have passed) I remember the one called
“Brush” my dog. Gone bad – no inkling – I had to kill him.

Sat on a fence. Sat this life out. The others are there; and
not pro- but anti: risk averse, the peoples of Arda say no
unacceptable tolerate alchemy permit effusions of metal
put yourself out of the question. It is through that portal

our eyes open wide that we meet the crusaders who lead
to the acts of withering communion – “L’épanouissement
les grands silences”... The Sea withdraws from the world
to resurge in wrath, over our broken lands, to a New Age.

Come that hour whatever you won’t be sitting there long.

I am a construct of masons and of princes; I live among
plain men, religious complex; architecture is a creature
replenish yr plenty till plenitude crack under salient ice
Cool to these complications you are a happy young dog.

Come to order ... The Modern Temple built to align with
Fish and Horse, and Shield-Maiden. I am consistent and
patient I wait ... on the splendor of a new Brutalism and
the grandeur of ponderous forms in strong lines of light.
Offer (with an open hand). It is open (since everything now, in position, is ready for seizure). Open to receive! Open to all come and take what you want! the running water the sunlight the whole sticky tissue god sneezed.

But “The White Hand” is loving and useful. He handled this prospect of plenty in a palantír. Our hands are full.

the sign is the carbon trace on a chart a great ring wall is proven less strong than hope or fantasy made it and this Tower alone left standing – The Wizards disputed relevance and rigour but conscience that was the sign.

*gnaw the end of yr old plots*: my response my decision
III

THE SCOURING
I had heard tales of the Orcs and their doings, but I had not been interested till then. You turned my mind to them. I grew out of my petty thefts (my father was not too easy), but I did not forget the Orcs. I began to feel hatred and think of the sweetness of revenge. We played at Orcs, I and my friends, and sometimes I thought: “Shall I gather my band and go and cut down his trees? Then he will think that the Orcs have really returned.”

The Masters of the Universal Concord
Power spent on golden rings & crystal
Lie broken on our altar, in their blood:
Let rites in this White Tower be a final

Hieroglyph: placed on a National Grid
In a wargame; imperiums rise and fall
Under enemy stars outside in the cold
History moves to this last-minute goal

And we are alone with our day no end
Our victories over the sun will eat shit
Is inside moving beneath my belly and

Eyes cry themselves to salt. All is Light
Or complications; our armies on stand
By never a new spring this is our remit.

Snows descending on an ancient world
Fearful symmetries forge a White Heat
Legions march through the frozen land
NHS issue acrylic bites down into meat.

Time is a ghost. We turn upon nothing
But I am my own rot How long is can’t
Under this Fridge there is a Something
Hungers for blood, barbarity and night

The games proceed to a psychic gestalt
lay waste an architecture built for wars
the earth outside is empty torn & quiet

And ivy over rubble swarms with bees
in rapture they too will rise utterblack
honeytoadiscontentseethingmoonshot
entropy/equilibrium \( (S) \propto \text{ # probable states } (W) \) \textit{in these our isolate systems and is perfect internal disorder}: \textit{i.e. The Original Promethean gift} was this Apple of Discord.

Papers push through resident hate sink iron laws into the Shire’s redundant fat no brainer efficiency savings a scouring \textit{in 10-steps: denationalization: Theory-X.}

Let me revert. Hope on that Littlechild “Thus it is Charles Atlas proclaims \textit{You too} potential to a sevenstone weakling.

If entropy tend to the maximum What shall it profit these engines of the soul \textit{fruit pegged to RPI} – in Goblin Market?

Falling back into the Sun: our ignition, a towerblock telescoped into its own dust \textit{while western skies riffle the cloud wrack} to shifting prisms : on a triumph of light.

\textit{policies & stratagems & wars} – his mind shook free – throughout his realms ran a tremor – slaves/ armies/ captains bereft of will waivered & despaired … forgotten.

England’s dreaming the blank we build over deadchildren under the threshold becomemycorruption let stand o christ

lay me a stone on mytongue an epic fail. Here I cry myself out this universe; call timeontheradicalsubjectmy hate isfinal.
Come over quick only that low credit! pushed upon you like a pram yr head is priced parcelled. To predators sent same-day-delivery to someplace you’d much rather not. "The Absolute Spirit is structure cantilevered over the void is it Shackle sd. poetryischoice so pick the salt from yr eyes and prepare for a storm to eradicate paradise. I tender u my resignation that my heart is bound to repeat. But yr Love’s like a battered Fish plus the leftovers 5000 times that scampi for the sake of scroungers : and I cannot lack charity I hope you choke
APPENDIX A

NOTES ON THE TEXT
I. Mount Doom


5. Mervyn Peake, "When God Had Pared His Fingernails" [1939], *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), 75-76.

6. "In that kingdom of Abchaz is a great marvel. For a province of the country that hath well in circuit three journeys, that men clepe Hanyson, is all covered with darkness, without any brightness or light; so that no man may see ne hear, ne no man dare enter into him. And, natheles, they of the country say, that some-times men hear voice of folk, and horses neighing, and cocks crowing. And men wit well, that men dwell there, but they know not what men." — *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, XXVIII (London: Macmillan, 1900), 171.

7. "To the north lies Zorzania, near the confines of which there is a fountain of oil which discharges so great a quantity as to furnish loading for many camels. ... In the neighbouring country no other is used in their lamps, and people come from distant parts to procure it." — *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Benjamin Colbert (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1997), 16.


12. Daniel 2:31-43. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109-201. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1:89-150. Dante, *Inferno* 14:94-120. “The Egyptians divided all of the world’s history into three ages: (1) the age of the gods, (2) the age of heroes, and (3) the age of men… Corresponding to these in number and order are three languages: (1) a hieroglyphic language, using sacred characters; (2) a symbolic language, using heroic characters; and (3) an epistolary language, using characters agreed on by the people. … My New Science also traces the ideal eternal history through which the history of every nation passes in time; and it follows each nation in its birth, growth, maturity, decline and fall.” — Vico, *New Science*, 1744, trans. David Marsh (London: Penguin, 2013), 44, 129.


14-18. It is often pointed out that the liver torn from Prometheus each morning by the emissary of Zeus is the only organ in the human body capable of growing back. I want to suggest here that the choice of this particular organ might extend beyond mere medical contingency. In the Ancient World the liver was believed to be the seat of prophecy. Having compiled centuries of data on the appearance of entrails extracted from sheep in a compendium called the Bārūtu, haruspices in Mesopotamia and Etruria considered the various markings on these entrails to be associated with certain types of recurring historical events, and thought they might correctly predict the future by referencing newly acquired signs with those on record. The liver held a special place within this discipline. The blood is the life and regarded as the source of blood the liver was thus a direct link to the cosmic force that animates each living thing and motivates the world historical process. In my opinion the decision to amputate the liver of the rebel Titan is therefore significant. Zeus tortures Prometheus in order to learn about his future overthrow: a secret known to the Titan whose name means foresight. Clearly, Zeus must be hoping to discover this secret on the livers brought to him each morning. No mere lump of meat, the Promethean liver would have appeared to the eyes
of this initiate rather more like that clay model from Sippar now in the British Museum: an object that resembles nothing so much as a first-generation computer-console; an ergonomic keyboard covered in strange signs, an alien form of information-technology. For details on the Bārûtu see Westen Holz and Ulla Koch, The Babylonian Liver Omens: The Chapters Manzazu, Padanu and Pan Takalti of the Babylonian Extispicy Series Mainly from Assurbanipal's Library (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000).

24-27. Ovid, Metamorphoses II.1-30.


38-39. In the Black Speech, linguist Alexandre Nemirovsky sees “an agglutinative ergative language — i.e. a language of non-Indo-European type, really alien to all others, and of a very archaic type.” He speculates that Tolkien may have modelled the language on a pre-existing tongue; it is well known that Quenya and Sindarin had been originally inspired by Finnish and Welsh (and Khuzdul by Hebrew) and Nemirovsky suggests that in this instance Tolkien may have drawn on Hurrian, a forgotten language of the Middle East which had recently been discovered by E.A. Speiser, and that seemed to possess some sort of relationship with the Caucasian languages. Nemirovsky’s case is compelling — and building on this insight I want to suggest that Tolkien might have followed up the references in Speiser’s writing to the Japhetic Theory of Soviet linguist Nikolai Yakovlevich Marr — whose work had attained the status of an orthodoxy in the years prior to Stalin’s denunciation in 1950. I intend to present my findings fully in a later paper — in the meantime I hope this suffices to explain the allusions, in this section, to
Soviet linguistics and the morphology of the Caucasian languages. For details on ergativity in particular the reader might want to consult the definitive work on the subject: R.M.W. Dixon *Ergativity* (CUP, 1994).

40-41. “The roots of human speech are not in heaven or in the underworld and not in nature either but are in man himself — not however in his individual and physical nature, in his throat or in his blood, nor in his individual existence, but in the collective, in the economic concentration of masses of men, in the labour to create a general material basis... The sounds of language, the so-called phonemes are the result of the special work of men, of the collective labour when producing, they are the result of social labour, probably the collective or choral song.” — Nikolaï Yakovlevich Marr: *Izbrannye raboty*, 5 vols. (Leningrad, 1933-37), 744.

43-48. “The Black Speech was not intentionally modelled on any style, but was meant to be self consistent, very different from Elvish, yet organised and expressive, as would be expected of a device of Sauron before his complete corruption. It was evidently an agglutinative language. ... I have tried to play fair linguistically, and it is meant to have a meaning not be a mere casual group of nasty noises, though an accurate transcription would even nowadays only be printable in the higher and artistically more advanced form of literature. According to my taste such things are best left to Orcs, ancient and modern.” — Tolkien, “Words, Phrases and Passages in Various Tongues in The Lord of the Rings”, *Parma Eldalemberon* 17 (Linguistic Fellowship of the Mythopoetic Society, 2007), 11-12.

46. “Japhetic theory rejects the notion of the national classless language which exists outside the strata; it is, for it, an unscientific notion. Neither in Armenia nor in the Apennines, nor anywhere else in Europe has there existed nor could there exist a national language in antiquity save as a social language conditioned by the classes.” — Marr, 237.

47. “The future economy — its technology — its classless society and its classless culture do not yet exist... In the same way, it is clear that the future unified world language will be a
language with a new system — a special system — that has not existed so far...” — Marr, 89.


49-64. Very loosely modelled on passages from the poetry of Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh: the Zaum poetry written in Georgia, and the libretti of his Futurist Opera, Victory Over the Sun (1913). The latter has recently been translated and published in a beautiful two volume set by Patricia Railing (Artists’ Bookworks 2008).

57. Ezekiel 38.


64. Cobalt. The “goblin” metal identified by Georg Brandt c. 1735; the first metal to be discovered since prehistory. See Mary Elvira Weeks, “The discovery of the elements. III. Some eighteenth-century metals” (1932), The Journal of Chemical Education, 9: 22

65-80. Loosely modelled on Rig Veda, IV:4: in the tristubh metre with four padas of eleven syllables (final four in trochaic cadence) containing forty-four syllables in each stanza.


67. Tû. Earliest extant form of the word “Sauron”. In the first stories in Tolkien’s legendarium, latter published as The Book of Lost Tales 1 (1983), this figure is a mysterious and morally ambivalent being, a powerful mage who has established his kingdom in caves under a waterfall surrounded by the mountains of the East. Here he seems to watch over the race of men before the time set for their arrival in Middle Earth: — children sleeping in a garden that Tû is trying to keep secret.
67-69. Joseph Priestley, *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* (1777) *The Collected Theological and Miscellaneous Works*, Vol. III, ed. John Towill Rutt (London: G. Smallfield, 1832), 473. “Since ... desire necessarily implies volition, we have here a clear case of the will being necessarily determined by the circumstances which the mind is in: and if in one case, why not in all others...? [The] determinations of what we call the will are, in fact, nothing more than a particular case of the general doctrine of association of ideas, and, therefore, a perfectly mechanical thing...” A member of the Birmingham-based “Lunar Men”, Priestley played a formative role in both the political and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth century.

72. *Phlogiston*. Before the rise of Lavoisier’s New Chemistry combustible material had been thought to be rich in a fiery-element named *phlogiston*. This discredited theory underpinned those experiments conducted by Priestley, which culminated in the discovery of oxygen. See — *Considerations on the Doctrine of Phlogiston and the Decomposition of Water* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1796), 26.


75. *Rig Veda*, IV: 27.


77-78. *Rig Veda*, VII: 3.

79-80. *The Grand Disquisition*. Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions of Matter and Spirit* (1777). With his philosophy of necessity, his attempts to synthesise theism and materialism, and his belief that history is to be regarded as “philosophy teaching by example”, Priestley might perhaps come to be thought of as
the bridge linking Reformation theologies of predestination to the philosophical history developed by Hegel.

II. Uruk-Hai


82. “The Sun is not named but his power is amongst us.” — From the T.S. Eliot translation of St John Perse’s *Anabasis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1931, 1985), 23.

84-85. *The observation tower / off Hagley Road.* — Perrott’s Folly (also known as the Monument or the Observatory) is a ninety-six foot brick tower in Birmingham, built in 1758 for reasons unknown.


98. Marx, 293-306.

102. “I have never been very certain as to the value of tangible links with the past. They are often more sentimental than valuable... As to Birmingham’s buildings, there is little of real worth in our architecture. Its replacement should be an improvement... As for future generations, I think they will be better occupied in applying their thoughts and energies to forging ahead, rather than looking backward.” — Sir Herbert Manzoni, Birmingham’s “City Engineer and Surveyor” from 1935 to 1963.

104. “In the matter of revolutionary excitement there was indeed not much more to be got out of the plastic or graphic arts. Their purely ‘revolutionary’ value exhausted after the war (which also eclipsed and luckily put an end to Marinetti’s bellowings, besides killing off most of the ‘futurists’), their play-boys’ place was taken by real, Red Revolution; just as Marinetti’s postnietzschean war-doctrine became War, tout court; and then Fascismo, which as Futurism in practice is the habit of mind and conditions of war applied to peace.” — Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man (California: Black Sparrow 56.

105. Manzoni had been planning an Inner Ring Road for Birmingham since at least 1943. Construction began in 1957, and the orbit was completed in 1971.

107. Abzu. “House of the Watery Void”, name of Enki’s temple in Eridu: according to the Sumerian king-list, the oldest city in the world. En-merkar/Nimrod sought to rebuild this temple, but abandoned this half-finished, following a destabilising influx of refugees from his war in the north, speaking a variety of foreign tongues.

108. upended / the architect’s ziggurat. Birmingham’s Central Library. Designed by John Madin in 1966, and said to be the largest municipal library in Europe at the time of its opening in early 1974. “The library’s outward form is simple and comprises the massive reference block and a smaller lending block to the east — [the former] designed around an open lightwell or ‘atrium’ above a public square that could be entered from all sides by walking beneath the building itself, which is raised above the sloping ground level by two or three
storeys... Above this float the cantilevered floors of the library, each larger than the one below, resulting in the distinctive inverted ziggurat formation ... a popular motif in the '60s, derived ultimately from Sant'Elia's drawings for 'Casa a gradinate.'” — Alan Clawley, *John Madin* (London: RIBA Publishing, 2011), 109.

110. *Bull Ring.* The Bull Ring Centre. Designed by the local modernist architect James A. Roberts and Laing Developers. Demolition of the Old Markets began in 1955. The new Shopping Centre opened in 1964. The Shopping Centre extended over twenty-three acres and featured now iconic structures such as the Rotunda. The latter was scheduled for demolition with the rest of the modernist complex in the late nineties but was saved following public protest. For further details on these buildings see Laing, *The Bull Ring Centre* (London: Laing Developers, 1960).


128. *Pisces, Sagittarius, Virgo.* Three of the four mutable signs — Water, Fire and Earth, respectively — and so signifying a deep unity, discoveries and purification of the body: these signs signify the crisis that is prerequisite for a new beginning.

134. “The Jatravartid people of Viltvodle Six believe that the entire Universe was in fact sneezed out of the nose of a being called the Great Green Arkleseizure [and] live in perpetual fear of the time they call the Coming of the Great White Handkerchief...” — Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (London: Pan Macmillan, 1980), 1,

137. *LOTR*, 541.

139. *this tower alone left standing.* Not strictly correct. The lonely tower referred to here is the CEGB (Central Electricity Generating Board) headquarters building on the Stratford Road. Designed by John Madin, and opened in 1967, the building has now stood empty for twenty years. But might yet outlast the rest of Madin’s public-service buildings. — The
BBC’s Pebble Mill and the Birmingham Post and Mail were both demolished in 2005. Birmingham’s Central Library is scheduled for demolition in 2017. Madin’s other office towers have fared rather better and there are a number of these to be seen along Broad Street and the Hagley Road.

141. *LOTR*, 569.

III. The Scouring


145. The CEBG building. Following the abolition of the CEBG, the building served the newly formed electricity company Powergen until the latter moved away to a greenfield site in the early nineties. Acquired by a major supermarket chain and permitted to fall into ruin by this owner, who thereby hoped to compel the local people to consent to an unwanted supermarket on neighbouring publicly-owned parkland, the CEBG building has nevertheless survived longer than the privatised energy company Powergen, which was bought by German energy-provider E.ON in 2002.


150. “We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and / History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.” — WH Auden, “Spain” (1937).

156. “For some reason, the sight of snow descending on fire always makes me think of the ancient world – legionaries in sheepskin warming themselves at a brazier: mountain altars where offerings glow between wintry pillars; centaurs with torches cantering beside a frozen sea – scattered, uncoordinated shapes from a fabulous past, infinitely removed from life; and yet bringing with them memories of things real and imagined.” — Anthony Powell, *A Dance to the Music of Time Vol. 1, A Question of Upbringing* (London: Heinemann, 1951), 1-2.
157. “What immortal hand or eye / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry” — William Blake, “The Tyger” (1794). Also, Harold Wilson (1963) — “We are redefining and we are restating our socialism in terms of the scientific revolution. ... The Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or outdated methods on either side of industry.”


170-172. Entropy / Equilibrium (S) [is directly proportional to] the number of probable states (W = Wahrscheinlichkeit) in these our isolate systems. This is a slightly expanded version of Boltzmann’s Equation: S = k. log W. — See Ludwig Boltzmann, Vorlesungen über Gastheorie (J.A. Barth: Leipzig, 1896 & 1898), and Sadi Carnot on the Second Law of Thermodynamics in Réflexions sur la puissance motrice du feu et sur les machines propres à développer cette puissance (Bachelier: Paris, 1824)

173-174. The original Promethean gift. “Keynes wished to achieve formalism and ‘objectivity’ ... But it is the desire for a perfect formalism which, it seems to me, has impelled theorists to mistake the nature of unknowledge. It goes against the grain of Western man’s whole history and ambition to recognize an ultimate stop to his progress towards ‘control’ of his affairs. The inspired creative power, the original Promethean gift, original in its continuous power of perhaps ex nihilo contribution to history, which drives the human affair along, is incompatible with foreknowledge. The gift of choice (if choice means anything worthwhile) denies us the gift of knowledge of time-to-come. For how should there be knowledge, in every present moment, of what men are about to originate in the extreme sense, to draw from the void. ... There is formalism, and there is poetry.” — GLS Shackle, Imagination and the Nature of Choice (Edinburgh University Press, 1979).

174. *hate sink* — Management jargon for a member of staff who is disliked and presented with a great many unpopular or unnecessary tasks in consequence.

176. *no brainer / efficiency savings* — Two popular managerial phrases, intended by those who use them to mean ‘an obviously intelligent thing to do’ and ‘cutting programs, procedures or people to save on costs’.


177. *Theory X.* Term coined by Douglas McGregor, Professor at MIT Sloan School of Management, to describe an authoritarian hierarchical management style and the impact this has on staff motivation and production “output”. See *The Human Side of Enterprise* (McGrawHill: New York, 1960)

178. *Let me revert.* Additional management jargon with connotations unintended by the speaker.


182. *Engines of the soul.* “The production of souls is more important than the production of tanks. ... And therefore I
raise my glass to you, writers, the engineers of the human soul.” — Joseph Stalin, 1932. “We hope that more and more comrades in their ranks will become real engineers of the human soul.” — Deng Xiaoping, 1979. “Economics is the method, but the object is to change the soul.” — Margaret Thatcher, 1981.

183. fruit pegged to RPI. The Retail Price Index. “Littlechild’s solution for Britain was to replace the American ceiling on profits with a ceiling on prices. Privatised companies would only be able to increase their prices each year by an amount equal to inflation, measured by the Retail Price Index, RPI, minus an X-factor, which the regulator would set every five years...” Littlechild is reportedly still proud of this innovation: “He once said that instead of RIP, the inscription on his gravestone should read 'RPI-X'.” — James Meek, “How We Happened to Sell Off Our Electricity”, London Review of Books, Vol.34, No.17, 13 September 2013; 3-12.

188-191. LOTR, 925.


193. “In the sanctuary in Gezer were found two burnt skeletons of six-year-old children and the skulls of two adolescents that had been sawn in two. At Meggido a girl of fifteen had been killed and buried in the foundations of a large structure. Excavations show that the practice of interring children under new buildings was widespread and some were evidently buried alive.” — Nigel Davies, Human Sacrifice (Macmillan: London, 1981), 61.

195. Rev. 2:17. Also, see Steiner: “There is Kabbalistic speculation, to which I will return, about a day on which words will shake off ‘the burden of having to mean,’ and will be only themselves, blank and replete as stone.” — After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation (OUP, 1975), 313.


208-211. Mark 6:31-44.
APPENDIX B

THE GOBLIN SCRIPT
The Goblin Alphabet from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Father Christmas Letters* (1976). The two digital fonts, horizontal and vertical, used in this pamphlet were created by Babelstone — and are free to download at the website: www.babelstone.co.uk.

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The section headings that appear throughout the *Orcs* poem are in English and are readily deciphered. The epigraph and the Orquian prayer that follows are in the Debased Black Speech created by linguist David Salo for the film-trilogies and readers will need to consult one of the Orc-English dictionaries that have sprung up on the internet if they want to try their hand at translation. For those pressed for time I offer the following simple key to the Orquian Song in goblin cipher:
APPENDIX C

ORQUIAN SONG