HAL open science

” Traduire Tolkien en français: On the Translation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Works into French and their Reception in France ”

Vincent Ferré

▶ **To cite this version:**

Vincent Ferré. ” Traduire Tolkien en français: On the Translation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Works into French and their Reception in France ”. Thomas Honegger. Tolkien in Translation, Walking Tree Publishers, pp.45-68, 2003, Cormarie Series. hal-00768733

HAL Id: hal-00768733

https://hal.science/hal-00768733

Submitted on 29 Dec 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Vincent Ferré, D. Lauzon et D. Riggs, "Traduire Tolkien en français: On the Translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's Works into French and their Reception in France", in Th. Honegger (dir.), Tolkien in Translation, Zürich-Berne, Walking Tree Publishers, 2003, pp. 45-68

"Traduire Tolkien en français :
On the translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's works into French and their reception in France"

> It is […] surely intelligible that an author, while still alive, should feel a deep and immediate concern in *translation*. And this one is, unfortunately, also a professional linguist, a pedantic don […].
>
> (Letter to Allen & Unwin, April 1956, n°188)

> And therein lies the unrecapturable magic of ancient English verse for those who have ears to hear : profound feeling, and poignant vision, filled with the beauty and mortality of the world, are aroused by brief phrases, light touches, short words resounding like harp-strings sharply plucked.
>
> ("On translating *Beowulf*")

The Lord of the Rings shares so much in common with *Beowulf*, as is generally known, that any attempt to translate this book may seem presumptuous, given the depth of the reservations towards translation in general that J.R.R. Tolkien expresses in his 'Prefatory Remarks' to the 1940 revision by C. L. Wrenn of J. R. Clark Hall's *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment*[1] : he cautions those who imagine they know a text - *Beowulf* in this case - after reading only a translation ; for a translation is to him merely "an aid to study" (Tolkien 1997 : 49, *vide* p. 52, 53).

Many of the pitfalls he warns of in these acute and stimulating pages on translation apply to any target language – but the French case has several more that are unique. Most importantly, although the historical influence of French on modern English is unmistakable, much of the basic framework of Tolkien's work (placenames, character names, and made-up words) is drawn from the rich store of English's Germanic heritage which French does not share. Additionally, the chronological order in which Tolkien's books have (or have not yet) been translated into French has had an influence on the reception of his works as a whole.

As these lines are written, previously untranslated works (of *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth, Beorhthelm's Son*, "Mythopoeia," *The Letters* and soon *The Lays of Beleriand*) or revisions of previously published texts (*The Father Christmas Letters*, *The Lord of the Rings*) are in the works. This article will combine general remarks on the literary reception of Tolkien's works in France with observations drawn from problems with the French translation of *The Lord of the Rings.*

[1] These remarks have been reprinted as "On Translating *Beowulf*," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (Tolkien 1997, pp. 49-71).

Translation and reception of Tolkien's works

Tolkien was published quite late in French. *The Hobbit* was translated (by Francis Ledoux) twenty-two years after the Swedish version (1947) and twelve years after the German (1957) but also after the Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Japanese editions. The turning point was 1970, when Christian Bourgois published *Admirations*, a collection of critical articles by Jacques Bergier concerning texts by J. Buchan, A. Merritt, I. Efremov, S. Lem, R. E. Howard and other authors who were almost unknown to the French audience. Subsequently, Christian Bourgois asked J. Bergier's opinion on which of these works should be published first. He suggested four texts, one of which was *The Lord of the Rings*. To do the translation, Christian Bourgois chose Francis Ledoux, who had translated *The Hobbit*, but also a vast catalogue of works by Dickens, Fielding, D. Defoe, E. A. Poe, Horace Walpole, Ch. Williams, Shakespeare, H. Melville, Joyce Carol Oates, Tennessee Williams, etc. The first two volumes (*La Communauté de l'Anneau* and *Les deux Tours*) appeared two years later in 1972, with the final volume (*Le Retour du roi*) appearing the following year.

Christian Bourgois then began to make up for lost time by publishing *Leaf, by Niggle* in 1974, shortly after the Dutch and Swedish versions (1971 and 1972)[1]. Soon, the French translations were no longer lagging behind. When *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* followed (1975), only the Swedish translation had been published first. Eventually, French translations of the posthumous books, namely *The Father Christmas Letters* (1976), *The Silmarillion* (1977) and *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* (1980), came out with only a year or two of delay from their original publication in English.

French translations of Tolkien's works were produced during two main periods of intense editorial activity, the seventies (1969-1978) and the last eight years (1994 onwards)[2]:

Bilbo le Hobbit (1969)	*The Hobbit* (1937)
Le Seigneur des Anneaux (1972-73)	*The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955)
Faërie (1974)	partial translation of *Tree and Leaf* (1964) and *Poems & Stories* (1980)
Les Aventures de Tom Bombadil (1975)	*The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962)
Les Lettres du Père Noël (1977)	*The Father Christmas Letters* (1976)
Le Silmarillion (1978)	*The Silmarillion* (1977)
Contes et Légendes inachevés (1982)	*Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* (1980)
Peintures et aquarelles (1994)	*Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien* (1979)
Le Livre des Contes perdus I et II (1995 and 1998)	*The Book of Lost Tales* (1983-84)
Roverandom (1999)	*Roverandom* (1998)

[1] For the French edition, *Leaf* was bundled with "On Fairy-Stories," *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *Smith of Wootton Major* under the collective title *Faërie*.
[2] Chronological order - full references are given in the bibliography section.

A new series of translations was begun in 1994; and the French versions of three recently translated works - *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien* and *The Book of Lost Tales, I and II* (1994, 1995 and 1998) - deserve special attention, for they were translated by Adam Tolkien, assuring the French reader of a high quality of translation – even though few details are known concerning Adam's collaboration with his father, Christopher Tolkien, the editor of *The History of Middle-earth* series. Nevertheless, even if *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth…*, "Mythopoeia," as well as the long-expected *Lays of Beleriand* and *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* are to be published in the coming months, many texts still remain unknown to the French readership - who often lack the skill to read Tolkien in his native language - and these "missing texts" have had direct consequences for the way he is perceived in France.

Indeed, most people in France are unaware that Tolkien's work stretches far beyond *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. The rest of *The History of Middle-Earth* remains inaccessible to the average reader, as *The Book of Lost Tales* was seven years ago, and as *The Road goes ever on* or *Mr Bliss* still are. The French audience is presented with only a partial image and it is difficult to guess at the magnitude of Tolkien's cosmogony. Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that *The Silmarillion* is far less read in France than *The Lord of the Rings*, which itself was published for fifteen years without appendices[1]. Moreover, Tolkien's academic writings on medieval literature are totally unknown, even though "*Beowulf* : The Monsters and the Critics" was published almost thirty years ago in Swedish and German (Carpenter 2002 : 358)[2]. The French audience has thus had no chance to see the link between his academic research and his fiction. This could have brought him well-deserved recognition in a country where Umberto Eco garners immense respect for his dual achievements.

Nevertheless, publication of *The Lord of the Rings* was warmly welcomed by some writers and scholars. It won the 1973 "Best Foreign Book Prize" (*Prix du meilleur livre étranger*) and J. Bergier even contemplated the possibility that J.R.R. Tolkien be awarded the Nobel Prize - provocatively suggesting that this would immediately spark vivid interest among French readers (Bergier 1970 : 173)[3]. The most distinguished of these writers, Julien Gracq, mentions Tolkien in his well-known *En lisant en écrivant* (1980). He underlines the huge changes in the contemporary literary canon, Tolkien having – to him – won full recognition, along with Simenon, as Dumas and Jules Verne had for the 19th Century (Gracq 1980 : 728, *vide* 763, 619). More explicitly, asserting that he does not read much contemporary literature, J. Gracq makes an exception for Tolkien :

> My last very strong impression as a reader was due, seven or eight years ago, to *The Lord of the Rings*, by Tolkien : in this book, the virtue of the novel [*la vertu romanesque*] reappears intact and new in a totally unexpected field. (Gracq 1986 : 1270, cf. 1269 on "innocence")

[1] The *Appendices & Index* were eventually translated by Tina Jolas and published in 1986.

[2] Christian Bourgois Editeur specializes in foreign fiction, which might explain why Tolkien's non-fictional writings have not been translated as a priority.

[3] J. Bergier was obviously extremely enthusiastic about *The Lord of the Rings* : at the end of his review, he praises Americans readers for being clever enough to read "this difficult book" (Bergier 1970 : 194).

In addition, Tolkien's name is to be found once more in a letter to the French review *Parages* in May 2001, when J. Gracq spontaneously evoked *The Lord of the Rings*'s "achievement" (*succès*) as a tale[1].

In the academic field, Pierre Jourde published in 1991 the interesting *Géographies imaginaires* [*The Geography of Imaginary Lands*] on More, Gracq, Michaux and Tolkien, drawn from a PhD submitted in 1989 ; three years before, Monique Chassagnol's impressive study addressed the question of *Fantasy in British juvenile stories (1918-1968)* [*La Fantaisie dans les récits pour la jeunesse en Grande-Bretagne de 1918 à 1968*]. But few PhDs have dealt with Tolkien : only ten between 1985 and 2001[2], and one or two in progress. Similarly, only a few articles have yet been published on Tolkien[3]; and it was not before 2001 that the first French book specifically on *The Lord of the Rings* (*Tolkien. Sur les rivages de la Terre du Milieu*) appeared, while the translation (1981) of the excellent *Master of Middle-Earth* by Kocher had been out of print for a long time[4].

Is this lack of academic research to blame for the misconceptions of the media, who may otherwise rely on such research? Articles contemporary with the publication of *Le Seigneur des Anneaux* and, as it happened, with Tolkien's death are quite revealing of the French situation[5]. In September 1973, *Le Monde* reckoned that Tolkien "had remained unknown in France for a long time" despite the publication of *Bilbo le Hobbit* in 1969, until *The Lord of the Rings* introduced him to a wider audience (*M* 73). Evidence of this lack of knowledge pervades the article, which introduces Frodo as Bilbo's son and Hobbits as "small Elves." Similarly, in the *Figaro*'s review of the *Silmarillion*'s French translation - which was very laudative, as was the *Républicain Lorrain* in evoking *The Lord of the Rings*'s "spell" (*RL* 73)- the journalist felt the need to give a biographical sketch of Tolkien's life, as if it was unknown to the reader. This hardly seems to have changed ten years later when, in 1983, a paper in *Le Quotidien* supplied yet another biography and confused *The Hobbit* with *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as Dwarves with Hobbits[6].

Almost from the beginning, Tolkien's work has been perceived by the media as an example of *fantastique* and juvenile literature. First, it is worth noting that French has no equivalent for 'Fantasy' as a genre: the word is usually borrowed from English unless "Fantaisie" is used, but may cause misinterpretation, for the word is equivalent to 'whim' or 'fancy' in contemporary French. In similar fashion, French journalists often use the adjective "fantastique" to refer to *Fantasy*, which is a fatal misinterpretation, as Tzvetan Todorov has shown in underlining the important distinction between "fantastique" and "merveilleux" (Todorov **:** 1976): *The Lord of the Rings* is definitely not a *roman fantastique*, but a romance in which *merveilleux* is essential. Consequently, the link between Tolkien's work and our world is often overlooked by

---

[1] Cf. http://www.parages.ens.fr/forum0.html (by courtesy of *Parages*).

[2] According to the *Docthèse* database (July 2001).

[3] Six of these articles, most of them written in the seventies, were republished in 1998 in a collection untitled *Tolkien en France* (Kloczko : 1998).

[4] A more "general" French book on J.R.R. Tolkien (N. Bonnal, 1998, *Les Univers d'un magicien*) was met with some reserve by many readers.

[5] *Le Monde* (September 5th 1973) is abridged as *M* 73, *Le Figaro* (July 22-23th 1978) as *F* 78, *Le Républicain Lorrain* (March 13th 1973) as *RL* 73, *Le Quotidien* (March 3rd 1983) as *Q* 83, *Lire* (March 2001) as *Lire 01* and *Le Monde* (December 31st, 1982) as *M* 82.

[6] According to *Le Quotidien*, in *The Lord of the Rings*, "The Hobbits go and find their ancestors' hoard, with Bilbo Baggins's help" (*Q* 83).

the media. The *Républicain Lorrain* was one of the first to assert, in 1973, that Middle-earth had come "from no-one knows where" (*RL* 73) — this long-lived misconception has surfaced over and over again.

Morevoer, mainstream media have linked Fantasy with the juvenile, and stressed the picturesque elements ("Hobbits, a race of nice leprechauns," *RL* 73) to recommend *The Lord of the Rings*— and not only *The Hobbit*—to children. *Lire* even expressed a peculiar conception of juvenile literature in an article inviting the reader to "forget the overlong passages and slightly silly details" and to "bear in mind that you were once naïve" (*Lire* 01) ; one can find positive comparisons to Dumas and Proust, alongside such condescending statements, but that hardly seems to mend matters, for this kind of judgment did much harm to Tolkien's reputation in France.

Things took a turn for the worse as the French media evoked the possibility that Tolkien was a racist, basing this calumny mainly on the fact that … he was born in South Africa and was "conservative." According to *Le Figaro*, Hobbits are extremely "reactionary," which "is indicative of the ideological slant of the work as a whole" (*F* 78) – but no evidence is provided to prove this - and *Le Monde* echoed an anonymous judgement of *The Lord of the Rings* as a "conservative utopia," because of the "rigidity of the society it describes" (*M* 82). Similarly, some Catholic magazines put an unreasonable amount of stress on Tolkien's religion[1] - although *La Vie* did publish an interesting and well-informed article in December 2001. And, finally, the French extreme-right sometimes refers to Tolkien's work as a support, distorting his thought and writings.

But one has to ask if the French translation may (unwillingly) have given some weight to these misinterpretations - for instance by translating "race" (of Dwarves, of Men, of Elves …) by the literal *race*, which has a pejorative connotation in French; but there were a few occasions when a translator of F. Ledoux's skill should have been more careful. For example, he uses "noiraud" (*S* 94) to translate "black-like" (*FR* 100)[2], an adjective used by the Gaffer in his description of a Black Rider. Ledoux uses the same term again (*S* 95) for "a black chap" (*FR* 101) and (*S* 113 and 114) "this black fellow" (*FR* 123 and 125). This is inexact, since the blackness refers only to the way the Black Rider is dressed (the Gaffer and Farmer Maggot could not have seen anything else) ; this is unwarranted, because it unnecessarily translates various English expressions by a sole French noun ; this is also dangerous because *noiraud* refers to someone "very dark-skinned or dark-haired" and is a synonym of *moricaud*, which is a racist term! The French translation should have been something similar to "il était tout noir" or "un type en noir," which both clearly refer only to his clothes. We are not saying that Ledoux was acting consciously, but rather that a translation, thirty years later, may, in another context (i.e. the rise of extreme-right in France), acquire a meaning which alters the original text and allows the possibility of grave misunderstandings. Evidently, there is an interaction between a book's translation and its reception, and rescuing Tolkien from the undeserved taint of racism would alone justify the undergoing revisions of many of Tolkien's works by Christian Bourgois Éditeur.

---

[1] *Famille Chrétienne* published (in October 2000) a debatable article by Nicolas Bonnal, the same author of the extremely questionable *Les Univers d'un magicien*. The mistakes that pepper the article (the genesis of *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance, is supposed to have spanned the years *1946* to *1957*) do little to recommend it.

[2] *FR*, *TT* and *RK* refer to the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*, *S* to the French "compact" edition (cf. bibliography). The book and chapter are indicated with Roman and Arab numbers, such as "I, 2" for Book One, Chapter Two.

There are, of course, many other problems to solve, and the current climate in France seems quite favorable for such a project.

When Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* was released, in December 2001, the French media - especially newspapers and magazines, including some as important as *Le Monde* (December 18th), *Télérama* (December 19th), *Les Inrockuptibles* (December 11th) or *Le Courrier international* (December 6th) - gave considerable attention to the book, inviting a French readership still largely unaware of Tolkien's existence to join the rapidly growing number of their compatriots who had read *The Lord of the Rings*. Sales figures for 2001 show that as many copies were bought in that single year in France as in the seven previous years combined (1994-2000). We may hope that an improved translation will give the French reader a more faithful rendering of Tolkien's works, and dispel the fabricated myth of this so-called "racist writer of children's stories."

Unfortunately (or fortunately for the purpose of this article), the French translation of *The Lord of the Rings* has been for many years the subject of virulent criticism, particularly on the Internet. Some convincing accounts of errors have been drawn up by critics both serious and dilettante, invariably unkind to Francis Ledoux; but it would be wise to remain careful and moderate, especially considering the difficulties of translating Tolkien's English, with all of its Anglo-Saxon sensibilities, into French - a language for which he had a notorious dislike.

Translating *The Lord of the Rings* into French

The Lord of the Rings presents some specific difficulties, among which the extreme need for consistency and coherence, the complexity of the invented world, the full use of the English language in its historical richness and wide vocabulary, as well as the abundance of allusions to older works of literature. The combination and sheer amount of these things make *The Lord of the Rings* uniquely difficult to translate.

Interestingly enough, a whole section of Appendice F is devoted to the matter of translation. This may come alternatively as a blessing aid or predicament to translators as it unveils a wealth of information but also introduces possible complications. In this particularly interesting passage, Tolkien describes a striking characteristic of hobbit-speech:

> The Westron tongue made in the pronouns of the second person (and often also in those of the third) a distinction, independent of number, between 'familiar' and 'deferential' forms. It was, however, one of the peculiarities of Shire-usage that the deferential forms had gone out of colloquial use. […] Peregrin Took, for instance, in his first few days in Minas Tirith used the familiar for people of all ranks, including the Lord Denethor himself. (*RK*, 515)

Tolkien remarks quite matter-of-factly that "this has proved impossible to represent"; and yet there arises the question of the opportunity (or desirability) of representing this in the French translation, where it is indeed possible (as is also the case with German, Spanish and indeed

many other languages), “tu” being the familiar form of the second person and “vous” the deferential.

As tempting as it may be to hear Peregrin Took referring to the Lord Denethor as “tu,” one must bear in mind that this passage of Appendix F II is also part of the sub-creational process and is merely intended as a methodological account of the fictitious process of translation from Westron sources to English, not as a guide to eventual translators of *The Lord of the Rings*. Furthermore, any attempt to restore these distinctions between familiar and deferential would necessarily require arbitrary decisions on the part of the translator, for to this passage Tolkien adds as a footnote: ‘In one or two places an attempt has been made to hint at these distinctions by an inconsistent use of *thou*.’ But as this was not consistently applied, it is often difficult to be sure of Tolkien’s intentions in this usage of the archaic English pronoun. Moreover, however clear Tolkien might have been on Shire-usage, consistent use of the familiar form of “tu” in hobbit-speech, especially in the case of Sam addressing to Frodo, would inevitably confront the reader to an extremely peculiar form of address not present in the original version of *The Lord of the Rings*, and potentially detracting from the author’s true intentions in this matter.

But let us focus on facts specific to Tolkien's works: translating texts dealing with such a complex invented world as Middle-earth is indeed an undertaking of considerable proportions; thirty years ago, before *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales* or *The History of Middle-Earth* were published, the task was even more daunting. Nevertheless, this is what F. Ledoux, the French translator, undertook with *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, it proved impossible for the translator to fully grasp the richness of this universe, or sometimes to make the right decision concerning minute details of the underlying cosmology or mythology - although contrary to what has often been reported, Ledoux knew and studied the *Guide to the Names in* The Lord of the Rings (published in *A Tolkien Compass* by J. Lobdell) and followed it for the most part. This can be easily demonstrated by examining key entries for which it is reasonable to assume that a translator, had he not read Tolkien’s enlightening remarks, would most certainly have erred.

Good examples of this include the name *Cotton*, which bears no relation with the textile material despite the identical spelling, as well as other names such as *Fallohide* which contain Old English elements which nevertheless were all correctly translated. Where the names are incorrectly translated, many were clearly chosen as the closest possible equivalents according to the *Guide*’s indications, and only a few of them are actual errors on the part of Ledoux. It is worth reporting that F. Ledoux even told his publisher, Christian Bourgois, that he had written to J.R.R. Tolkien about the translation of such names as *Bilbo*, *Frodo*, etc., to justify his choices of *Bilbo*n and *Frodo*n, which contradict the author’s explicit instructions in *The Guide to the Names*…

But in spite of Ledoux’s obvious care in translation, many different kinds of errors did creep into his translation. The most famous (and horrendous) case of misinterpretation occurs at the end of the Prologue where “though Elrond had departed” and “the departure of Galadriel” (*FR* 21) are respectively translated as “bien qu’Elrond fût mort” (“though Elrond was dead,” *S* 28) and “la mort de Galadriel” (“the death of Galadriel,” *S* 28-29). Although this metaphorical usage is common in English—it is used in Book III, Chapter 1 (“The Departure of Boromir”)—the translation as it stands is misleading the reader about the fate of two important characters, and about the immortality (or rather “serial longevity”) of Elves. Another recurring mistake attributable to Ledoux’s misconception of Tolkien’s creation is the introduction of anachronisms

or hints that can break the suspension of disbelief, whose importance Tolkien has underlined in his lecture "On Fairy-Stories." The first striking occurrence in the French translation is a reference to Brittany : when Frodo is described as Bilbo's "first *and* second cousin, once removed either way" (*FR* 29), Ledoux chooses "son oncle *à la mode de Bretagne*" (*S* 37), an expression used to indicate how intricate the family link is – a more correct translation would be "son cousin germain *et* cousin issu de germain, au deuxième degré des deux côtés." Ledoux runs equally afoul of "single file" ("They went in single file along hedgerows and the borders of coppices…," *FR* 94), translated by "Ils longèrent en file indienne" ("Indian file," *S* 89), although Ledoux does make a better choice in a later chapter ("à la file" for "in a file").

In addition, we might examine the issue of prepositions, since it was apparently quite difficult to choose the right French ones for names such as Shire, Mordor, etc. For instance, Ledoux writes "dans la Comté," and "de Mordor," while French rules would command "en Comté" (like "en France," "en Bretagne" or "en Mayenne") and "du Mordor"[1]. Apparently, the peculiar status of Middle-earth, which meant that no established usage could be refered to, bewildered a translator more used to Dickens' England. But since - to quote Tolkien's *Letters* - in Middle-earth "miles are miles, days are days, and weather is weather" (Tolkien 1995 : 272), why violate rules of grammar in places where the author makes no such violation, instead of simply transposing the existing rules to this invented world ?

But one of the more ubiquitous mistakes is bringing in references to God or Christianity where the original text conspicuously omits them. "Bless him," for example, is thus rendered by "Dieu le bénisse" ("God bless him," *S* 37 *vide* 126). Even in places without the slightest religious reference in the original, the problem surfaces in translation. The word "cracker" (as in "not a single squib or cracker was forthcoming…," *FR* 33) is translated as "diablotin," an adequate equivalent but for its blatant etymological relation to "le diable" ("the Devil"). Even worse, "[… if you don't keep your feet,] there is no knowing where you might be swept off to" (FR 99) is altered to "*Dieu* sait où tu pourrais être emporté" (*S* 92, emphasis mine), instead of "nul ne sait où tu pourrais être emporté," for instance.

Purposeful repetition of a word or word group is one of many elements that influence the coherence of a work of literature. In his "Prefatory remarks," Tolkien highlights the difficulties this can pose for a translator willing to be faithful to a text :

> No translation that aims at being readable in itself can […] indicate all the possibilities or hints afforded by the text [*Beowulf*]. It is not possible, for instance, in translation always to represent a recurring word in the original by one given word. Yet the recurrence may be important. (Tolkien 1997 : 50)

This applies perfectly to *The Lord of the Rings*, where such repetitions (of single words or even of full sentences) are abundant and often essential to the understanding of the book. Some are obvious, such as in the case of the title of the initial chapter, "A Long-expected Party" (*FR* 27) - which itself is a modified repetition of the title of the initial chapter of *The Hobbit* ("An Unexpected Party"). *Expected* reappears in various forms throughout the first Book : as an adjective ("there was a large crowd at Bag End, uninvited but not unexpected," *FR* 48, "a quite unexpected direction," *FR* 141), as a verb ("Expect me when you see me!" *FR* 53, "But I

[1] Ledoux chose the masculine genre, thus *Mordor* functions like *Portugal* (for instance).

expected to find it," *FR* 74) and as an adverb ("coming unexpectedly after dusk," *FR* 60). Preservation of this recurring motif in the translated text is essential : since each repetition foreshadows ever more strongly the looming onset of Adventure.

An equally obvious example is Sam's almost literal quotation of Gandalf's advice : "he said *no ! take someone as you can trust*" (*FR* 139) is the Samish version of "'But I don't think you need go alone. Not if you know of anyone you can trust, and who would be willing to go by your side […]" (*FR* 83). Consequently, Ledoux's choice ("Emmenez quelqu'un en qui vous puissez avoir confiance" (*S* 126) needs to be emended to "*Emmenez quelqu'un de confiance*." This becomes all the more important as the repetition reveals itself as quite intricate, a cascading series of interconnected motifs: the adjective *willing* is used again by Gildor in Book I, chapter 3 - "'do not go alone. Take such friends as are trusty and willing'" (*FR* 112) –, whose advice is quoted (incompletely and indirectly) by Frodo – "[…] even if they are willing to come" (*FR* 114) – and more explicitly by Sam – "Gildor said you should take them as was willing" (*FR* 139). Once more, Ledoux either failed to notice or chose to ignore this repetition, since he uses respectively "disposés" (Gildor) and "volontaire[s]" (twice, for Frodo and Sam)[1] – a better choice might have been "determiné[s]," which fits in all three situations.

This "foolish inconsistency" is too often a fault of the French translation. Such a commonly used and important noun as "Ringwraiths" is translated in no less than three different ways: as "Esprit servants de l'Anneau" (*S* 68 and 946), "Spectres" (*S* 248), and even "Chevaliers servants de l'Anneau" (*S* 1009). A similar inconsistency plagues the translation of the poems : Frodo thinks he might have invented "The Road goes ever on and on" (the song he sings in Book I, chapter 3), while Pippin recognizes it as one of Bilbo's (*FR* 97-98) ; and Tolkien carefully plays on the difference between the two versions, since we have read these verses fifty pages earlier, as sung by Bilbo (*FR* 47), the two differing only by one word. Bilbo's "Pursuing it with eager feet" is replaced by Frodo's "Pursuing it with *weary* feet" (emphasis mine), which foreshadows the immensity of Frodo's burden. Unfortunately, the French version misses the point totally, since the second occurrence of the song is translated in such a way as to make it practically unrecognizable as a variant of the first[2] (cf. Ferré 2001 : 261, 281).

Repetition is not, of course, the only element of Tolkien's narrative coherence in *The Lord of the Rings*, where even the smallest detail may foreshadow important episodes, and every nuance is important. Thus, in the French version, the flowers of Bilbo's garden are not "peeping in" at the windows (*FR* 33) but merely "stick up over the windowsills" (i.e. "débordaient au bord des fenêtres," *S* 40): the slight personification is not translated[3]. This would hardly be a major error in itself – but Tolkien may have been gradually introducing the reader to the notion of a world in which plants are not the innocuously inanimate things they are in ours, a process he continues on page 60 where he uses the metaphor of the "fingers" of a tree (translated into French as simple "branches"). Eventually we meet the mobile and forbidding trees of the Old Forest who "drop a branch, or stick a root out, or grasp at you with a long trailer" (*FR* 145), the

[1] "[…] ne partez pas seul. Emmenez avec vous des amis qui soient sûrs et disposés à vous accompagner" (*S* 103), "même s'ils sont volontaires pour venir" (*S* 106), "Gildor a dit que vous devriez prendre qui serait volontaire" (*S* 126).

[2] The song appears a last time in Book Six, Chapter Six, modified by Bilbo as a sign of his decision to renounce to Adventure : "Let others follow it who can!" (*RK* 321).

[3] Tolkien conspicuously chose very carefully (as usual) the terms in this sentence, as is revealed by a letter to Katherine Farrer (August 1954) : "But *nasturtians* is deliberate, and represents a final triumph over the high-handed printers" (Tolkien 1995 : 183 ; cf. D.A. Anderson's "Note to the text ," *FR* ix).

terrifying Old Man Willow with his "sprawling branches going up like reaching arms with many long-fingered hands" (*FR* 154) and, of course, the Ents. Is Tolkien preparing us here for this journey away from the comfortable and familiar? It would hardly be the only occasion.

Many more instances of foreshadowing may be found early in the book, such as Frodo's first awareness of growing distant from his friends (a feeling which later increases significantly) ; during the farewell feast at Bag End he worries about the upcoming separation with Merry and Pippin required by his own plans: "The four younger hobbits were, however, in high spirits" (*FR* 90) the narrator notes. This is translated as "Les quatre jeunes Hobbits étaient toujours plein d'entrain" (*S* 86), where "however" is rendered as "still" and any sense of opposition between Frodo and his friends is dropped, as is the comparative "younger" which places an implied emphasis on the age of an older Frodo. "Old" is precisely the word Frodo chooses to describe himself a few pages later ("Be kind to a poor old hobbit!", *FR* 93), but is unwarrantedly scrapped by Ledoux ("Soyez bon pour un pauvre Hobbit!", *S* 89).

These nuances do not have to directly connect with other episodes in the book to be important. Although the book is written in third-person narration, Tolkien still occasionally adopts a Hobbit point-of-view by using subtle markers in his descriptions. For example, when the Black Rider forces Frodo, Sam and Pippin into hiding, the narrator's description tells us that "From inside the hood came a noise *as of* someone sniffing to catch an elusive scent; the head turned from side to side" (*FR 99*, emphasis mine). The Hobbits are baffled, they have no idea what this thing is that seems to be searching for them and so make a comparison to the familiar. But Ledoux's "le son de quelqu'un qui renifle ["a noise *of* someone sniffing"] pour saisir une odeur fugitive […]" (*S* 93) is a mistake, because it makes concrete what was only metaphorical - especially since this device is used later again. In the same way, Tolkien's choice of where to use "forest" and where to use "wood" is not insignificant, even though Ledoux chose to consistently use the single French term "forêt." Where the Old Forest is instead referred to as a "wood" we get a glimpse of the Hobbit's tendency to underestimate the place, since a *wood* may evoke (to Hobbits) pleasant outings with friends, while a *forest* is a much more wild and uncontrolled place – foreign to the calm and cultivated Shire.

The last quotations show Tolkien's careful use of the richness of the English language, which contains many more words than French : to quote a letter to Hugh Brogan, "Why deliberately ignore, refuse to use the wealth of English which leaves us a choice of styles [?]" (Tolkien 1995 : 226).

The variety of his vocabulary is striking, and sometimes difficult to match in French. For instance, a single word, *iris*, renders the English terms *gladden* (the Gladden Fields) and *iris*, which explains a sentence like "to the Gladden Fields, where there were great beds of iris" (*FR* 70) being translated by "aux Champs aux Iris, où il y avait de grands parterres d'iris" (*S* 70) : the French version sounds redundant, while in English the *gladden* form, a variant of the dialectal *gladdon*, does not overlap with *iris*. And Tolkien did specify, in *The Guide to the Names…*, that translators should "avoid if possible" translating *Gladden* by *iris* (Lobdell 1975 : 185-186) – in addition to his "Prefatory Remarks," in which he cautions that different (Anglo-Saxon) words should not be translated by a single one in Modern English (Tolkien 1997 : 56).

If the extent of his vocabulary did not pose enough of a challenge for translators, Tolkien adds to it by coining neologisms. Leaving aside *Hobbit*, the most famous of his coinages, let us consider the word *tweens*, which designates, among Hobbits, "the irresponsible twenties between

childhood and coming of age at thirty-three" (FR 28)[1]. This term, reminiscent of *twenties*, *teens* and *between*, is undertranslated by the French "ses années intermédiaires" (*S* 35) or "l'entre-deux-âges" (*S* 59), which clarify the "betweenness" but lose the other meanings. Why not try to invent an appropriate neologism, like *vingtescence*, which combines *vingt* (twenty) and *adolescence* ?

Tolkien's broad lexical variety, which includes these ancient, half-forgotten or even invented words is broadened still further by his use of a wide range of styles and dialects, from the high formality of Gandalf's or Elrond's speech to the idiolects of the Gaffer or Gollum. But what is broad in the original all too often becomes narrowed in the translation. A comparison of one of the Gaffer's dialogues to its translation serves to illustrate the problem:

> 'No, Mr Baggins has gone away. Went this morning, and my Sam went with him: anyway, all his stuff went. Yes, sold out and gone, I tell'ee. Why? Why's none of my business, or yours. Where to? That ain't no secret. He's moved to Bucklebury or some such place, away down yonder. Yes it is – a tidy way. I've never been so far myself; they're queer folk in Buckland. No, I can't give no message. Good night to you!' [The Gaffer, *FR* 92]
>
> – Non, M. Sacquet est parti. Il est parti ce matin, et mon Sam est parti avec lui ; de toute façon, ses affaires sont parties. Oui, vendues et liquidées, je vous dis. Pourquoi ? Ça ne me regarde pas, ni vous non plus. Où ? Ce n'est pas mon secret. Il est allé à Chateaubouc ou quelque part comme ça, au loin, là-bas. Oui, la route est bonne. Je n'ai jamais été aussi loin pour ma part ; ce sont des gens bizarres, dans le Pays de Bouc. Non, je ne peux pas transmettre de message. Bonsoir! (*S* 88)

The French translation diminishes the peculiarities of Gaffer's speech, and even contains misinterpretations[2]. Similar observations could be made about Gollum's language : "'What had it got in its pocketses ?' he said. 'It wouldn't say, no precious. Little cheat… We ought to have squeezed it, yes precious… precious !'" (*FR* 76) is prosaically rendered as " 'Qu'avait-il dans ses poches ?' disait-il. 'Je ne pouvais le dire, pas de trésor. Petite tricherie… On aurait dû l'étouffer, oui, mon trésor… mon trésor !' " (*S* 74). " 'Qu'*est-ce que ça* avait dans ses pochess ?' disait-il. '*Ça ne voulait* pas le dire, non, trésor. *Petit tricheur*…' " would be better (emphasis mine). For one may remember that Tolkien remarks, in the famous letter to Milton Waldman, that "even in style [*The Lord of the Rings*] is to include the colloquialism and vulgarity of Hobbits, poetry and the highest style of prose" (Tolkien 1995 : 159-160). And he insisted on the variety of speech, as he states in Appendix F :

> It will be noticed that Hobbits such as Frodo and other persons such as Gandalf and Aragorn, do not always use the same style. This is intentional. The more learned and able

[1] The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* gives two homonyms, "'tween" (between) and "Tween" (a "class of derivatives of fatty acid esters of sorbitan."

[2] The "secret" which "ain't" one because everyone knows where Frodo has gone off to now becomes a secret that the Gaffer feels is not up to him to give away ("that isn't my secret"). And the Gaffer's use of "tidy way" indicates that, by the Gaffer's standards, it is a long way to Crickhollow (cf. "away down yonder," "so far"), not that it is *easy* to get there ("la route est bonne").

> among the Hobbits […] were quick to note and adopt the style of those whom they met. It was in any case natural for much-travelled folk to speak more or less after the manner of those among whom they found themselves […]. (*RK* 516)

Lastly, the variety of the vocabulary used in *The Lord of the Rings* is combined with an extremely acute awareness of the history of language. While reading this book, one cannot help thinking of Tolkien's remark on Beowulf's lexis : "For many Old English poetical words there are (naturally) no precise modern equivalents of the same scope and tone: they come down to us bearing echoes of ancient days beyond the shadowing borders of Northern history" (Tolkien 1997 : 50). Since *The Lord of the Rings* was written in the 20th century, the case is different here, but the translator has to bear in mind that it is crucial to try and understand Tolkien's lexical and grammatical choices, and to reproduce them. This task is perhaps less daunting than it would be for a translation of *Beowulf*, since we can know if a particular term was archaic or rare at the time when *The Lord of the Rings* was composed (cf. Tolkien 1997 : 51). Tolkien explicitly addresses this issue in a letter to Allen & Unwin, when the question of translation (in Dutch) first appears : to him, "the assistance of the author" is essential, for *The Lord of the Rings* contains "many special difficulties," among which the fact that "there are a number of words not to be found in the dictionaries, or which require a knowledge of older English" (Tolkien 1995 : 249).

Francis Ledoux is right, then, when he tries to give a similar impression of historical depth to the French reader by translating "a pony-trap" (*FR* 53) by "un tonneau à poney" (*S* 55) since *tonneau* is rarely used with this meaning, and usually evokes a barrel ; or again by translating "Why didn't I drive ?" (Frodo, *FR* 96) by "Que n'ai-je pris une voiture ?" (*S* 91). The reader (in 1972 and a fortiori in 2002) is sometimes obliged to modify his initial reaction to words. Taking into account the moment in history when the reading takes place is very important. This is confirmed by Tolkien (writing about *Beowulf*) : "The words chosen, however remote they may be from colloquial speech or ephemeral suggestions, must be words that remain in literary use […] among educated people" (Tolkien 1997 : 55). Let us generalize, and say that the image of an "ideal" reader (cf. Umberto Eco's analysis in *Lector in fabula*) must guide the translator. But anachronisms must be avoided : as in the borrowing of a 19th century English word to translate "In that room there are *three* tubs" (*FR* 133) by "Dans cette pièce, il y a *trois* tubs" (*S* 121). It might even be argued that, in order to compensate for the extensive use of older, sometimes archaic or dialectal forms of English difficult to reproduce in French, the technique of borrowing (and calquing, in the case of word groups) has often be resorted to. Ledoux's gamble was to take advantage of the fact that a number of common English words were originally borrowed from Middle French. Some of these words survive in contemporary French, but their meaning may be slightly altered, the ancient meaning forgotten or found only in older literature. Ledoux's technique consists of using these words in the older sense, reborrowing them, as it were, from English. Following this plan from the start, Ledoux translates "they […] delighted in parties" (*FR* 2) as "ils se plaisaient aux parties" (*S* 12) and "first hobbit to become famous" (*FR* 1) as "premier hobbit à devenir fameux" (*S* 11), whereas "parties" and "famous" would naturally translate as "fêtes" and "célèbre" in this context. Similarly, the very common English phrase "a couple of," found in Chapter 9 of Book I ("a couple of dwarves," *FR* 204) is calqued in the French translation ("une couple de nains," *S* 178): this usage now seems archaic (and perhaps incomprehensible) in modern French, although it remains highly in favour in Quebecois French.

One of the areas where a sense of the depth of time may most firmly established is in the choice of names (for characters and of places). Let us first remark that some names have, besides a purely historical depth, a connection with literary history, and take on additional resonances: examples dating back to *The Hobbit* may be given, such as "Beorn," which Tolkien designates as an Anglo-Saxon term (Tolkien 1997 : 51) ; but they are much more abundant in *The Lord of the Rings*. To mention only one, *Hall* (in "Brandy Hall" for instance) is full of echoes, and is particularly connected with *Beowulf*. As a consequence, Ledoux's translation by "château" (*castle*) alters the reference and sounds too "Arthurian" and maybe even "grand." Moreover, Ledoux uses the same noun to translate *bury*, in "Bucklebury" (Chateaubouc) and Norbury (Norchâteau). Since the *Guide to the Names…* indicates that the latter means "(fortified) town" (Lobdell 1975 : 190) and derives from the "Old English *burg*, mean[ing] a place occupying a defensive position, walled or enclosed; a town" (p. 180). A proper translation could be "Fertébouc" and "Norferté," the Old French *ferté* meaning "fortress, fortified town" and having survived in placenames – which has the added benefit of avoiding the use of "bourg," used in the French "Hobbitebourg" for "Hobbiton." As for *Hall*, a comparison of three French translations of *Beowulf*[1] has not been very helpful, for the Anglo-Saxon term translated in English by *mead-hall* is rendered in French by "salle," "grand-salle," but also "palais" : thus, it is necessary to use different translations following the context, "grand-salle" (*S* 100) and even "demeures" (*S* 101), and maybe *Castel* for "Brandy Hall" (Castel-Brande), which has the interest of consistency, since "Woodhall" is already (rightly) translated by "Castelbois" – but Grendel is no longer evoked for the French reader.

The Guide… indicates the origin of names, their meaning (when obscure or archaic, like "Fallohide"), and their consistency - their mutual links. For instance, "Shirriff" is supposed to be close to "Shire" (Lobdell 1975 : 173), which is lost in Ledoux's choice of "Shirriff" and "la Comté" ; but this case is rather difficult, since Tolkien gives two different suggestions :

> "Since this word [*Shire*] is current in modern English and therefore is in the tale in the Common Speech, translate it by sense." (p. 191)

> "Actually a now obsolete form of English *sheriff*, 'shire-officer,' used by me to make the connection with *Shire* plainer. In the story *Shirriff* and *Shire* are supposed to be special hobbit-words, not generally current in the Common Speech of the time, and so derived from their former language related to that of the Rohirrim. Since the word is not supposed to be Common Speech, but a local word, it is not necessary to translate it, or do more that accommodate its spelling to the style of the language of translation. It should, however, resemble in its first part whatever word is used to represent *Shire* (see this entry)." (p. 173)

A choice has to be made, and it is more logical (and interesting) to treat them as "Common Speech" words, and to translate them consistently. This decision is not too problematic, if we keep Ledoux's translation by the feminine "la Comté," while *Shire* would more normally be translated as "le Comté" : it fits quite well the indication that the word is "not generally current in

[1] *Beowulf*, 1991, ed. and transl. by A. Crépin, Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2 v. ; *Beowulf*, 1981, transl. by J. Queval, Paris: Gallimard, 188 p. ; *Beowulf*, 1989, transl. by D. Renaud, Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 110 p. Bilingual (Anglo-Saxon and Modern English) edition : *Beowulf*, 1994, ed. and transl. by M. Swanton, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 212 p.

the Common Speech of the time." The most important thing is the relation between *Shire* and *Shirriff* : merely borrowing the latter in French is disastrous, for it irresistibly evokes Indians and the American Far West. The solution may be to use *connétable* : it does not have *exactly* the same meaning (the word was used to designate the head of the French royal army) but this comes from *comes stabuli* i.e. "*comte* de l'étable" or "count of the stable," a position whose original responsibilities were not entirely dissimilar to those of the shirriff.

To suggest etymology, and the presence of words within words, we have also decided to amend Ledoux's decision to leave the Shire placename of *Rushey* untranslated (*FR* 130). Tolkien suggests that this name should be translated, meaning "Rush-isle" (Lobdell 1975 : 190) ; the basis of the French translation must be "jonc" (*rush*), but instead of using "jonchaie," "joncheraie," "jonchère" (the place where rushes grow), we have decided upon "Joncquisle," which complies with *The Guide*'s indication and attracts the reader's attention because although there is no actual etymological connection with jonquille (daffodil), it does look like it, and it conspicuously contains "jonc" and "isle," an archaic spelling form for "île" (island). This may be a way to invite an awareness that Tolkien's names have an interesting etymology, and that there is more about them than meets the eye - to paraphrase Gandalf's comment about Frodo (*FR* 430).

> "[…] I suddenly realized that I am a *pure* philologist. I like history, and am moved by it, but its finest moments for me are those in which it throws light on words and names!"
> (Tolkien 1995 : 264).

This review of the circumstances surrounding the French translations of J.R.R. Tolkien's works shows the strong link between the translations and the image the media and readers have of this writer. But we must keep in mind that the specific difficulties raised by the translation into French of Tolkien's writings can explain delays in publication (of *The History of Middle-earth*…) as well as explain the rather incomplete success of Francis Ledoux's translation of *The Lord of the Rings* – though some of his more inspired translations, such as *Fondcombe* for *Rivendell*, have delighted many French readers.

We hope that the revised edition of *Le Seigneur des Anneaux* will meet the expectations of the majority of the French readership when it is released. In any case, it is worth remembering these words of Tolkien: "The effort to translate, or to improve a translation, is valuable, not so much for the version it produces, as for the understanding of the original which it awakes" (Tolkien 1997 : 53).

Vincent Ferré,
CELAM/

Daniel Lauzon
Université de Montréal

David Riggs
Saint Paul,

Université Rennes II-Haute Bretagne Minnesota

Bibliography

I. Works by J.R.R. Tolkien quoted in the article

Tolkien, J.R.R., "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*," in J. LOBDELL (ed.), 1975, *A Tolkien Compass*, La Salle: Open Court, pp. 155-201.
Tolkien, J.R.R., 1995, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, (second edition, first edition 1981), ed. by H. Carpenter, London: HarperCollins, 1995, 512 p.
Tolkien, J.R.R., 1999, *The Lord of the Rings*, (paperback edition, 2nd ed., 1966), London: HarperCollins, 3 v.
Tolkien, J.R.R., 1997, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, (paperback edition, first edition 1983), ed. by Ch. Tolkien, London: HarperCollins, 240 p.

II. French Translations of Tolkien's works

The Book of Lost Tales : *Le Livre des Contes perdus*, 1995 and 1998, ed. by Ch. Tolkien, transl. by A. Tolkien, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 362 p. & 447 p. [published in one volume in 2001, 695 p.]
Smith of Wootton Major, *Leaf, by Niggle*, "On Fairy-Stories," *Farmer Giles of Ham* : 1996, *Faërie*, (first edition 1974), transl. by F. Ledoux, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 217 p. [a new edition, revised and enlarged is to be published in 2003]
The Father Christmas Letters : 1993, *Les Lettres du Père Noël*, (first edition 1977), transl. by G.-G. Lemaire, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 46 p. [a new edition, revised and enlarged is to be published in 2003]
The Hobbit : 1995, *Bilbo le Hobbit*, (first edition Stock, 1969), transl. by F. Ledoux, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 308 p.
The Lays of Beleriand : *Les Lais du Beleriand*, transl. by E. Riot, Paris: Christian Bourgois [to be published in 2003]
The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien : *Les Lettres de J.R.R. Tolkien*, transl. By D. Martin, Paris: Christian Bourgois [to be published in 2004]
The Lord of the Rings : 1995, *Le Seigneur des Anneaux*, (first edition 1972), transl. by F. Ledoux, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1278 p. [a revised edition is to be published in 2004]
Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien : 1994, *Peintures et aquarelles de J.R.R. Tolkien*, transl. by A. Tolkien, Paris: Christian Bourgois, [99 p.]
Roverandom : 1999, *Roverandom*, ed. by W. G. Hammond and C. Scull, transl. by J. Georgel, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 135 p.
The Silmarillion and *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* : 2002, *Le Silmarillion* (first edition 1978) followed by *Contes et légendes inachevés* (first edition 1982), ed. by Ch. Tolkien, transl. by P. Alien and T. Jolas, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 826 p.

III. Selection of books (esp. in French) on Tolkien's work or mentioning him:

BERGIER, J., 2000, *Admirations*, (second edition, first edition Christian Bourgois, 1970) Paris: l'Œil du Sphinx, 317 p.
CARPENTER, H., 2002, *J.R.R. Tolkien, une biographie*, (second edition, first edition, 1980), Paris: Christian Bourgois, 245 p. [translation of *J.R.R. Tolkien – a Biography*, 1977]
CHASSAGNOL, M., 1986, *La Fantaisie dans les récits pour la jeunesse en Grande-Bretagne de 1918 à 1968*, Paris: Didier Erudition, 808 p.
COUEGNAS, D. (ed), 1982, *Les Cahiers de l'imaginaire. Dossier J.R.R. Tolkien*, Laillé: Société des Cahiers de l'Imaginaire, 68 p.
FERRÉ, V., 2001, *Tolkien. Sur les rivages de la Terre du Milieu*, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 354 p.
GRACQ, J., 1980, *En lisant en écrivant* & 1986, « Entretien avec Jean Carrière », in 1995, *Œuvres complètes II*, édited by B. Boie, Paris, Gallimard, p. 553-768 and p. 1231-1273
HAMMOND, W. G., SCULL, C., 1996, *J.R.R. Tolkien, artiste et illustrateur*, Paris : Christian Bourgois, 205 p. [translation of *J.R.R. Tolkien, artist and illustrator*, 1995]
JOURDE, P., 1991, *Géographies imaginaires*, Paris: J. Corti, 343 p.
KLOCZKO, E., 1995, *Les langues elfiques : dictionnaire quenya-français-anglais*, Toulon: Tamise productions, 214 p.
_____, (ed.), 1998, *Tolkien en France*, Argenteuil: Arda, 192 p.
KOCHER, P., 1981, *Les Clés de l'œuvre de J.R.R. Tolkien*, Paris: Retz, 183 p. [translation of *Master of Middle-Earth: the fiction of J.R.R Tolkien*, 1972]
LURIE, A., 1991, *Ne le dites pas aux grands, essai sur la littérature enfantine*, trad. M. Chassagnol, Paris: Rivages, 253 p.
TODOROV, Tzvetan, 1976, *Introduction à la literature fantastique*, (second edition, first edition, 1970), Paris, Seuil, 188 p. ; English version : TODOROV, Tzvetan, 1975, *The fantastic: a structural approach to a literary genre*; transl. by Richard Howard, with a foreword by Robert Scholes, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, xi, 180 p.

Vincent FERRÉ teaches Comparative Literature at the Université de Rennes II. His chief area of interest is the modern novel (1910-1950), especially Proust, Broch and Dos Passos. On J.R.R. Tolkien, he has published articles and *Sur les Rivages de la Terre du Milieu* (2001), an analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* which focuses on the theme of death. He has also been an advisor on the French translation of Peter Jackson's *The Fellowship of the Ring* and is in charge of translations of Tolkien's works for Christian Bourgois Editeur.

Daniel LAUZON is majoring in Translation Studies at the University of Montreal.

David RIGGS received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls in 1991. His adventure began after innocently publishing a list of errors on a French Forum.

Summary : 430 c

This article first discusses the link between the history behind the French translations of J.R.R. Tolkien's works and the reception of his works in France, as well as Tokien's image among both the general French readership and the French media. In the second part, *The Lord of the*

Rings becomes the focus, as we examine the problems raised by the translation of Tolkien's unique style, his creations and his universe into French.