



Bard the Bowman and the human race: sources and comparisons

Isaac Juan Tomas

Abstract:

J.R.R. Tolkien has established a series of well delineated and enduring human heroes: Aragorn, Tuor, Húrin, Túrin, etc. Although their stories are full of sorrow and suffering, they are rarely rewarded with victory after so many works and deeds. But may it be small and short victory or complete defeat, their stories seem to be linked by a recognizable thread that seems to be originated by their belonging to the human race. Thus, it is possible to note several common characteristics present in them all that could be attributed to race, such as charisma over Elves and Men, a predisposition to sacrifice that tends to envision the survival of the self as non important, and an apparent difficulty to make the right decisions, just to say some of them. These are also present in the “grim-voiced” and “grim-faced” Bard the Bowman.

This paper will focus first in finding out how these major characteristics of Men are depicted in Bard. Contrast and comparison with other Men heroes will help to shape their presence in The Hobbit through Bard. Once the comparison is defined, the paper will try to find out why Bard and the rest of Men heroes seem to possess these similar characteristics and if they can be attributed without discussion to race.

Finally, there will be an exploration of the sources that have inspired Tolkien to depict these humans heroes so similarly from two opposed points of view: internal sources found in the Legendarium that concern specifically the origins of Men and their relationship to the Shadow; and external sources which can be found in the literature of the North, especially those found in Icelandic Sagas, such as Egill Skallagrímsson by Snorri Sturluson.

ISAAC JUAN TOMAS is an MA student at the Mythgard Institute. He was born in Barcelona, Spain, but currently lives in Paris, France. Several years ago completed an MA in Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language. Afterwards, he taught Linguistics at the University Autònoma of Barcelona for three years. Following that experience, he fulfilled a dream by going to Iceland and teaching Spanish there for four years at the University of Iceland. He currently teaches Spanish courses at Signum University. His passion has always been Tolkien and therefore he enrolled at the Mythgard Institute, which has given him the opportunity to share his love for Tolkien and Fantasy with other fellow students and scholars. *The Children of Húrin* is his preferred Tolkien book, after reading it in 2008, and it constitutes, along with Morgoth's actions against Men, the topics he likes to spend his time working on.