

### **Micaela MacDougall**

#### **“Joy beyond the walls of the world”: On the Presence of Sorrow in Eucatastrophe**

In “On Fairy-stories,” Tolkien writes that eucatastrophe denies not that sorrow and failure exist, but that sorrow and failure have the final word. In *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians*, Alison Milbank explores the paradoxical mixing of joy and sorrow in the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, calling eucatastrophe “an analogical anticipation of the Last Judgement.” This paper will consider what Tolkien calls the necessity of sorrow and failure to eucatastrophe in light of Milbank’s understanding of eucatastrophe as pointing to the Christian apocalypse, using Tolkien’s own writings as examples of eucatastrophic fairy stories. If a fairy story is to ring true, it cannot say that our present world contains perfect joy. Rather, the joy of its eucatastrophe must indeed be from “beyond the walls of the world,” both our own world and the world of the fairy story, pointing outside the story to the most ultimate triumph.

*Micaela MacDougall graduated in May 2014 from the Great Books program of St. John’s College (Annapolis), where she wrote her senior thesis on contrasting models of heroism in The Lord of the Rings. She has been accepted for fall 2015 entry into St. Andrews’ MLitt in Theology, Imagination, and the Arts. She is spending the 2014-15 academic year learning Latin, reading the New Testament in Greek, translating French family records, and trying to write something about Tolkien that captures even a small bit of his profundity.*



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