

### Laura Lee Smith

#### Tolkien's Widows: Part I

In a sense, Tolkien's childhood was dominated by widows. His own mother was widowed early, and when she passed on, the boys boarded with another widow. Meanwhile, in the background loomed the shadow of Queen Victoria in permanent mourning and seclusion. Although Tolkien's fiction largely focuses on the perspective of male characters, Tolkien nonetheless brings four distinctive fictional widows to life with a few deft strokes. This presentation will focus on Melian and Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, who have significant character arcs that are completely independent of their husbands and do not appear to draw significantly on conventional portrayals of widows in literature. Indeed, although Lobelia's part is small, one scholar has suggested that Lobelia is "one of the most under-rated female characters in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Hughes 252).

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