This article seeks to explore the political significance of Tolkien’s Shire through consideration of both his works and his historical background. Even though the nature of politics in The Lord of the Rings has already been much discussed, there is, given the scarcity of Tolkien’s political references, further investigation is still needed. In a first part, this article will look at the interaction of Tolkien and the “movement” known as Tory anarchism. This article’s thesis is that this particular species of anarchy was an immediate background to Tolkien’s political views represented in his writings, especially in his mythological corpus as well as in his shorter stories—as in Farmer Giles of Ham. In a second part, this article investigate the meaning of Tolkien’s self-described attachment to “unconstitutional monarchy.” Here, comparison with the Shire’s political structure will be instructive, as will be the influences of Chesterton and Belloc’s political philosophy. In this regard, their work The Party System, is of special significance. In conclusion, this article will defend that Tolkien’s Shire is best seen as a Distributist conservative anarchy.

Biographical sketch

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