

The “consolation” of fairy-stories...is the Consolation of the Happy Ending. Almost I would venture to assert that all complete fairy-stories must have it. The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending...is not essentially “escapist,” nor “fugitive.” In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace.... It does not deny the existence...of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. The peculiar quality of the “joy” in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth.

(J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*)

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

In the bleak midwinter, icy wind made moan
 Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone
 Snow on snow had fallen, snow on snow on snow
 In the bleak midwinter, long and long ago

Angels and archangels, may have gathered there
 Cherubim and seraphim, rising in the air
 Oh, but only Mary, in her maiden bliss
 Worshipped the Beloved, with a mother’s kiss

Heaven cannot hold Him, nor can earth sustain
 Heaven and earth shall fall away, when He comes to reign

What then can I give Him, empty as I am?
 If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb
 If I were a wise man, I would know my part
 What then can I give Him? I must give my heart

Words: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), London 1872; she wrote these words in response to a request from the magazine *Scribner’s Monthly* for a Christmas poem. *Music:* “Cranham,” Gustav T. Holst, 1906