

Will Sherwood and Julian Eilmann, eds, *The Romantic Spirit in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2024. Pp. 422. £23.25. ISBN 9783905703511.

The Romantic Spirit in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien does not disappoint its readers in the seamless and intriguing blending of ideas from the worlds of Romanticism and Tolkien. Divided into four sections—‘Nationalism, History, and the Other’; ‘Language, Art, and Music’; ‘Imagination, Desire, and Sensation’; ‘Nature and Travel’—the 14 essays will appeal to those curious to see connections between Romantic literature and Tolkien.

‘Nationalism, History, and the Other’ begins with “‘Anglo-Saxons on Horseback’” or “‘Mail-Shirted Sioux or Cheyenne’”? by Valentina P. Aparicio and Elliott Greene. By first examining the stadal history of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic literature, Aparicio and Greene draw comparisons between Romantic and Rohirrim descriptions of ‘Indians’, followed by descriptions of *The Last of the Mohicans* and the most significant ‘Indian War’ battle: the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In ‘Tolkien, Medieval Romances and the Romantic Spirit’, Lynn Forest-Hill acknowledges Tolkien’s indebtedness to Sir Walter Scott’s Romantic Medieval Romances but argues that *The Lord of the Rings* forms the Tolkienian *legendarium*, seeking a connection to Richard Wagner’s *Ring* cycle. Sharin Schroeder bridges the novels of Walter Scott and Tolkien through literary traditions, examining how Scottish Romanticism lends itself to the conception of Middle Earth. Mariana Rios Maldonado’s ‘A Dark Romantic Gaze: Otherness and Evil in Hoffmann and Tolkien’ uses otherness to connect Hoffmann to Tolkien, illustrating how German gothic elements play into Tolkien’s other worlds, centering on the otherness of Middle Earth.

‘Language, Art, and Music’ begins with Verlyn Flieger’s ‘Words, Words, Words: Tolkien, Barfield and Romanticism’. Flieger demonstrates how language can create a mythology that offers the reader a practical approach to analysing the imagination. Invoking Owen Barfield, Flieger relies on and expands her support of Tolkien to fellow World War I poets. ‘Horns, Bullets, and Rings: Tolkien’s “extreme fondness” for Carl Maria von Weber’ seeks to ‘make comparisons between some subjects, episodes characters and characterisations of Weber’s operas and those found in Tolkien’s works’. Here, Chiara Bertoglio illustrates the connection between music and literature, suggesting that Weber influenced *The Lord of the Rings*. Annise Rogers expounds upon how William Blake and Tolkien each created visual arts to accompany their literary endeavors. Here, Tolkien is in good company with fellow writer-poet-artists like those of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Art Nouveau movement. David Smith’s “‘living shapes that move from mind to mind’”: Tolkien’s Visual Romanticism’ is a wonderful companion piece to Rogers’. Smith examines multifaceted elements where ‘conscious allusions to visual theories proposed by Goethe and Romanticists’ enable readers to literally visualise a form of transcendence.

‘Imagination, Desire, and Sensation’ begins with ‘Tolkien’s Romantic Gusto’, co-authored by Kacie L. Wills and Christopher Hagan. The essay connects Keats with Tolkien through Keats’ notion of ‘gusto’. Next, in ‘Tolkien and Coleridge: Act and Desire in *The Silmarillion*’, Adam Neikirk connects Plato, transcendence, and Coleridge to Tolkien through the ontology of language, as indicated by power, desire, and energy. John R. Holmes writes about Romantic imagination and fancy in ‘Romantic Imagination, Fancy, and *kalymma* in Tolkien’s “On Fairy-stories”’. This essay examines: ‘(1) the philological relations of the words *imagination*, *fancy*, and *fantasy*; (2) the relation of poetic creation to God’s (Tolkien’s sub-creation); and (3) poetry’s power of ‘removing the veil’ from reality’. “The Backs of Trees’: Tolkien, the British Theological Romantics, & the Fantastic Imagination’ by Austin M. Freeman seeks to elucidate the ‘engagement with God,

society, and nature' through 'sacramental ontology, anti-industrialism, medievalism, optimism and an emphasis on the fantastic imagination'. Finally, in "'His songs are stronger songs": Aesthetic Creation, Enchantment, and the Wordsworthian Sublime in Tolkien', Brandon Wernette argues that 'On Fairy-stories' encapsulates Tolkien's aesthetic theory by examining moments within *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, which ultimately 'manifests as a kind of magic'.

'Nature and Travel' comprises Eva Lippold's 'Walking into Mordor: Tolkien and Romantic Travel Writing' and Nick Groom's "'The Ghostly Language of the Ancient Earth": Tolkien, Geology, and Romantic Lithology'. Lippold compares and contrasts 'Tolkien's idea of journeying in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and the portrayal of travel in Romantic writing', identifying a kind of Tolkienian 'grand tour' of Middle Earth. Groom evokes a connection between Tolkien, his Romantic poetic precursors, and instances framed in Anglo-Saxon literature.

Specialists and nonspecialists alike will enjoy the arguments presented in over 400 pages of scholarship. Nonspecialist readers will gain a deeper understanding of Tolkien's best-known and lesser-known works; whilst specialists will appreciate the scholars' ability to bridge Tolkien's works with those of the Romantic period writers, providing a better understanding of the period and Tolkien's connections. I highly recommend this collection for the casual and serious reader of Tolkien.

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