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The Hobbit and Tolkien's Mythology Ed. Bradford Lee Eden

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moves on to the other element of his cross-disciplinary equation and provides a short history of modern fantasy and theories about the genre; much of this will already be familiar to most readers of *Mythlore*, at least. The point Haberkorn seems to be leading up to, but does not quite articulate clearly, is that the Todorovian definition of fantasy as the “moment of uncertainty [and] hesitation” (175) and the incongruity model of humor in which the “target” has to negotiate “at least two distinct and *opposed scripts*” (163) are roughly parallel, and Pratchett combines the two masterfully. But the true mind-debugging potential of Pratchett’s works arises from the way he uses story to make us question story, points out patterns so we will challenge the patterns we see, and leads readers to cheer on characters who subvert narrative causality. And Haberkorn does get to this concept of exploring “the role of the words in our heads, and how they control us,” but again, does not come straight out and state his conclusion clearly; it feels to me like I, as the reader, am having to do the work of drawing these conclusions. Well, perhaps that is part of the debugging process, in the end.

The volume concludes with bibliographies of: Pratchett’s works through 2014; articles, chapters, and monographs about Pratchett, with abstracts; interviews with Pratchett and with Paul Kidby; theses and dissertations; and relevant websites.

—Janet Brennan Croft

WORKS CITED

Croft, Janet Brennan. Introduction. *Lois McMaster Bujold: Essays on a Modern Master of Science Fiction*. McFarland, 2013. pp. 1-6.



THE HOBBIT AND TOLKIEN’S MYTHOLOGY. Ed. Bradford Lee Eden. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2014. 236 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-7960-3. \$29.95.

AS INDICATED IN EDEN’S INTRODUCTION, this book grew out of a 75th-anniversary celebration of *The Hobbit* at a 2013 conference in Valparaiso, Indiana, featuring two plenary papers which turned into two of the best chapters included here, one by John D. Rateliff and one by Verlyn Flieger. It is unclear whether the rest of the essays were other papers presented at the conference, or solicited, or a combination of both; but the end result is a wide variety of perspectives on *The Hobbit*, from astronomy to theology to optics to media studies.

Although Eden has organized the table of contents into three parts, the three are of quite unequal length; what they really are is two pairs of thematically-related essays (the first two parts) and a hodge-podge of subject matters in the vast majority of the rest of the book (the third part). Had there been at least three essays each in the first two parts, and/or if the essays in the third part had been more closely tied together, this organization would have made more sense; as it is, it gives the impression of wanting to pretend to be more organized than it really is.

Besides the essays discussed below, there is a cursory "About the Contributors" section and a small but serviceable index.

John D. Rateliff leads off the collection with "Anchoring the Myth: The Impact of *The Hobbit* on Tolkien's Legendarium," which places the writing of *The Hobbit* into the context of the writing of the Silmarillion. He demonstrates, through copious examples of Tolkien's writings before, contemporary with, and after the publication of *The Hobbit*, how Tolkien's concept of the dwarves of Middle-earth changed as a result of how he treated Thorin and company as characters. Early writings followed Nordic/Germanic folklore traditions that cast dwarves as villains, or at least as untrustworthy; but incorporating the dwarves of *The Hobbit* into the world of *The Lord of the Rings* necessitated a change of that perspective, one that carried over into later Silmarillion writings as well. Rateliff also points out certain historical events in Middle-earth that made their way into the post-*Hobbit* Silmarillion that did not exist before, due to the new characteristics of the dwarves as a people.

Unfortunately, the following essay, "From Nauglath to Durin's Folk: *The Hobbit* and Tolkien's Dwarves" by Gerard Hynes, spends its first six pages essentially duplicating exactly what Rateliff had just said, with only slight differences of focus and examples. Hynes only begins to contribute new information about halfway through, when he brings in dwarves described in the books of William Morris, Andrew Lang, and the Brothers Grimm. However, even much of this material seems like mere digression and not actually relevant to a discussion of *The Hobbit*; Hynes spends another five pages or so on this side trip. Of the remaining five pages of the essay, several of the points he tries to make are inconclusive at best: "[some passages] do not shed much light [...]"; a "possible explanation" is "shown as inadequate"; a purported connection "is unlikely"; an interpretation "may be unclear"; and "this author cannot find a clear cause" (32-33). After another half page of duplicating Rateliff's findings, Hynes finally says some interesting things about the dwarves, but those are the dwarves of *The Lord of the Rings*, not *The Hobbit*. All in all, there are only about two or three pages worth of relevant, original thoughts in this essay.

The reader's palate is cleansed by the following pair of essays, both of which use genuine astronomical science to reflect on the possibility of Durin's

Day (as defined by Tolkien) in the real world. Kristine Larsen, a professional astronomer and college professor as well as a fine Tolkien scholar, contributes "It passes our skill in these days': Primary World Influences on the Evolution of Durin's Day," in which she discusses Tolkien's admirable attention to astronomical detail, and attempts to reconcile this with what might be considered an inaccurate definition of Durin's Day. In order to do so, she first has to extricate the "true" definition from the various false starts as evidenced in the *Hobbit* manuscripts discussed in Rateliff's *History of the Hobbit*. She notes the similarity of Tolkien's basing the Dwarves' New Year on a lunar calendar to real-world calendars such as the Jewish and Muslim calendars, and goes on to describe how those cultures go about determining the first day of the new moon, which is more difficult than one might expect. To drive home this difficulty, she goes into a long historical discussion of various attempts to sight the new moon in the sky as early as possible after its astronomical closest approach to the sun. Although this information may be fascinating in itself, the degree of detail she presents is not always necessary to her central point of the task of spotting the new moon. After all that, and some speculation about how much Tolkien may have known of this history, she turns her attention to the particular requirements of Durin's Day: the date of the Dwarves' New Year and the possibility of the moon and sun being seen in the sky together. This argument presents difficulties, which she explains to the reader's satisfaction, but then in her concluding section, she practically throws up her hands in defeat, ultimately claiming that rather than being astronomically correct, Tolkien was using poetic license, and that the *impression* of that scene in the sky was more important than its actuality.

Immediately following Larsen's take on Durin's Day is a slightly different one by Sumner Gary Hunnewell (himself a dedicated amateur astronomer): "A Scientific Examination of Durin's Day." There is necessarily some redundancy with Larsen's essay, but not so much as to bore the reader. Hunnewell's true contribution is to question Tolkien's definition of autumn and winter, since the Dwarves' New Year is determined using "the last moon of Autumn on the threshold of Winter," so fixing the dates of the seasons is crucial to the calculation. Using internal clues such as travel times and holiday dates, he concludes that Tolkien didn't mean astronomical winter (which begins on the winter solstice) but winter defined by such as the Celtic calendar, which would put Durin's Day sometime in October. He also examines what Tolkien would have meant by "the first day of the last moon of Autumn." Using different interpretations of seasons, days, and weeks, and noting Tolkien's probable familiarity with ancient and modern Hebrew calendars and the medieval usages of terms for moon and month, Hunnewell finally comes to a reasonable

conclusion that yes, Durin's Day could actually exist, and yes, it probably does "[pass] our skill in these days" to predict it exactly.

Verlyn Flieger leads off the third section of general topics with "Tolkien's French Connection," a fascinating exploration of the influences on *The Hobbit* by various French sources, despite Tolkien's public stance of disliking things French. Flieger points to the quest and adventure stories of medieval knights, such as those told by Chrétien de Troyes, as templates for the hobbit's adventure. In her argument, she makes great use of the difference between the English word "adventure" and French "*aventure*" and their respective implications for Bilbo's story. (This essay, by the way, is another example of the discrepancy between Tolkien's statements about himself and the actual results apparent in his writings.)

Jane Chance, in "Tolkien's Hybrid Mythology: *The Hobbit* as Old Norse 'Fairy-Story'," points out that during the writing of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien was also working on Norse literature and "On Fairy-stories" as well as continuing his work on the Silmarillion legends. Collating these influences, she maintains that the genre of *The Hobbit* is actually a combination of heroic epic and fairy tale. For this assertion, she draws on Tolkien's references in "On Fairy-stories" to Andrew Lang's fairy-tale collections, especially the story of Sigurd and the dragon, and also on his fascination with the *Kalevala*. Chance then examines Tolkien's statement in "On Fairy-stories" about three faces of a fairy-story (the mystical towards the supernatural, the magical towards nature, and the mirror of scorn and pity towards man) and looks at *The Hobbit* in light of each of these aspects. In her discussions of the magical and the mirror, she mostly looks at the similarities and differences between Sigurd and Bilbo; but in the section on the mystical, she goes into a long digression about the Valar and the Eldar, neither of whom appear explicitly in *The Hobbit* (the Elves that Bilbo meets are Elrond, who is denoted as an "elf-friend" rather than an actual Elf, and the silly singing elves of Rivendell and the forest elves of Mirkwood, who are more like fairy-tale fairies than the Eldar of *The Silmarillion*). The fact that the wizard Gandalf is actually a Maia, and thus connected to the larger mythology, is never stated (or even hinted at) in *The Hobbit*, and is only brought to light in the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*, so asserting that *The Hobbit* exhibits the quality of the mystical towards the supernatural simply because of the presence of Gandalf is tenuous at best.

Next, French scholar Damien Bador examines Tolkien's conscious use of names and naming, in "From 'The Silmarillion' to *The Hobbit* and Back Again: An Onomastic Foray." Most of the names he examines are those of places, races, and creatures; using examples from both *The Hobbit* and the larger legendarium, he shows how Tolkien's approach towards naming is consistent across both works. Bador also touches on Tolkien's framing concept of the Middle-earth

stories as translations from the Red Book of Westmarch, and the further versions of names that arise from that, for example how English-sounding hobbit names are “actually” translations of the ancient Common Speech, or why Dwarf names originally in Khuzdul sound Norse or Germanic in the present text. This essay, while containing much that is fascinating, has a couple of difficulties that should be pointed out. First, Bador says that Tolkien admitted that *The Hobbit* contained an obscure reference to Owen Barfield’s theories about the progressive fragmentation of language—but he never identifies the reference that Tolkien meant. Secondly, there are several instances where the word “redaction” is used, when from context it is obvious that “edition” is meant. Although dictionary definitions of the two words may be similar, the common connotation (to a native English speaker, especially an American) of “redaction” is closer to “censorship”—as of classified documents. Even though, according to his biography in the back of the book, Bador studied at M.I.T., one may excuse his less-than-perfect understanding of this subtle difference; but the editor should have caught this and corrected it.

Subject matter shifts rapidly from linguistics to theology with Gregory Hartley’s “Civilized Goblins and Talking Animals: How *The Hobbit* Created Problems of Sentience for Tolkien,” in which the author extrapolates the implication of sentient non-human creatures in Middle-earth, specifically on the matter of whether various races have souls or not. Animals, monsters, and mythical beasts are all given individual attention, and receive different judgements.

Shifting again, Michael A. Wodzak’s “Seeing in the Dark, Seeing by the Dark: How Bilbo’s Invisibility Defined Tolkien’s Vision” takes a physical-sciences approach to the matter of invisibility (always a tricky concept, whether in science fiction or in fantasy). The perennial question that the concept of invisibility poses is, if invisibility is achieved by light passing through a body (i.e. transparency, like a glass window), then how can the retinas of an invisible person’s eyes register enough light for them to be able to see? Using references from all over Tolkien’s works, Wodzak gets around this by positing a different *kind* of light existing in the fantasy world, a kind that obeys different physical laws than the ones we’re familiar with.

Moving from matters within the story to matters in the real world, William Christian Klarner looks at Tolkien’s life and writing career in “A Victorian in Valhalla: Bilbo Baggins as the Link Between England and Middle-earth.” He notes the seemingly jarring discrepancy between the Shire, which Tolkien himself described as typical England in the 19th century, and the rest of Middle-earth, with its medieval trappings and mythical creatures. After reminding us of the early 20th century world in which Tolkien lived and wrote, and the effects this world must have had on him, Klarner concludes that the

process of writing *The Hobbit* taught Tolkien how to meld the two fictional milieus, so that the world of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* became more believable and acceptable.

With "Beorn and Bombadil: Mythology, Place and Landscape in Middle-earth," Justin T. Noetzel takes us back inside the books to look at two unique characters, who nevertheless turn out to display many similarities, especially in how each is tied so closely to the land he calls home. He brings in an analysis of the material surroundings of these characters (and others, too) to point up their particular qualities; Beorn surrounded by wood and leather, Bombadil by water and growing things. He also compares these "most interesting but obscure figures" to characters in Norse, Finnish, and Celtic myth.

Vickie L. Holtz Wodzak (formerly Holtz-Wodzak) looks at the journeys of both Bilbo and Frodo through the lens of the medieval concept and practice of pilgrimage in "Travel, Redemption and Peacemaking: Hobbits, Dwarves and Elves and the Transformative Power of Pilgrimage." She draws parallels with *The Canterbury Tales* and the Old English poem "The Seafarer," and notes that Tolkien's Catholicism, as well as his medievalism, would surely have acquainted him with classical and contemporary real-life pilgrimages. She then shows how Bilbo and Frodo (and indeed all of the Fellowship) are altered by their journeys, so that their pilgrimages are internal as well as external.

In "A Baggins Back Yard: Environmentalism, Authorship and the Elves in Tolkien's Legendarium," David Thiessen takes a fresh look at the often-studied element of environmentalism in Tolkien, by considering the "internal authorship" of various Middle-earth texts: i.e. which portions of The Red Book of Westmarch were "written" by Elves, Hobbits, or Men. Assuming that the attitudes towards nature expressed in the books are connected to who was supposedly writing the original passages, this sheds a new light on this subject.

Judy Ann Ford and Robin Anne Reid collaborate on a look at the first of Peter Jackson's three *Hobbit* films in "Polytemporality and Epic Characterization in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*: Reflecting *The Lord of the Ring's* Modernism and Medievalism." They portray Jackson's version as aligning with Tolkien's own efforts to rewrite *The Hobbit* to fit more closely, in both style and content, with *The Lord of the Rings* after the latter was published. They also point out how geopolitical developments in England and Europe during the time of the writing of *The Hobbit* could have influenced the deeper plot of *The Hobbit* as published, and how those influences were made more overt in the film. The authors then go on to examine, and attempt to justify, the changes in characterization of Thorin and Bilbo between the book and the film.

In the closing essay, Michelle Markey Butler writes on "The Wisdom of the Crowd: Internet Memes and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*," providing an interesting addition to Tolkien studies by looking at a very particular form of

fan response on the internet. By analyzing the frequency and popularity of various different categories of memes, she is able to draw conclusions about what the creators and perpetuators of these memes liked and disliked about the first Jackson *Hobbit* film.

On the whole, this volume contains many noteworthy essays and is worth the reading. However, the editing leaves a bit to be desired. For example, the very juxtaposition of the pairs of essays in the first two sections reveals far too much repetition of information between the works; a more aggressive editor might have discussed the contents with the contributors and come up with suggestions for modifications that would have reduced the redundancies. A proper editor would realize when a scholar has spent too much time on an irrelevant digression and ask the author to cut it down. A proper editor would recognize words consistently being misused by an author whose first language is not English, and kindly suggest the correct alternatives to the author (or simply change them himself). Finally, while the inclusion of the last two essays, both of which dealt with issues raised by the first of the Peter Jackson *Hobbit* films, is a good step towards broadening study of *The Hobbit* to more than just the original book, both essays suffer from only having access to the first film of the trilogy. Either omitting them altogether, or delaying publication until after the release of the third movie so that the authors could reference the entire work, would have resulted in a more satisfactory final product.

—David L. Emerson



MEDIEVALISM IN A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE AND GAME OF THRONES.
By Shiloh Carroll. D.S. Brewer, 2018. 192 p. ISBN 978-1843844846. \$33.67. \$20.99
Kindle format.

“THIS BOOK EXPLORES MARTIN’S AND HBO’S approaches to and beliefs about the Middle Ages,” states the cover of this book. Excellent news. As Carroll observes, cast members of the show “refer to the setting of *Game of Thrones* as ‘back then’” (145), appealing to history as a basis for the creative decisions they enact, while the unsophisticated assumption that Martin is “more realistic” than other fantasy authors has thus far bedeviled criticism of his work and its televisual adaptation. A serious critical investigation of Martin’s response to the Middle Ages would be a great contribution to the study of his work. Carroll’s book on the subject is therefore disappointing. This is not to say that I