



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

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Volume 39  
Number 1

Article 14

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Fall 10-15-2020

## ***Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond*, edited by Julian Eilmann and Friedhelm Schneidewind**

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### **Recommended Citation**

Fontenot, Megan N. (2020) "*Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond*, edited by Julian Eilmann and Friedhelm Schneidewind," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 39 : No. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol39/iss1/14>

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complexities oversimplified. Doyle does discuss key scenes in which Orcs are depicted as utterly human, complaining about their superiors and speculating about motives and outcomes, but Doyle sees these as examples of Mordor's dystopian political organization and of the Orcs' inherently evil character (156–159). Tolkien's depiction of Orcs is somewhat vexed, but his moral imagination is far more complicated than is typically granted or emphasized in *Utopian and Dystopian Themes in Tolkien's Legendarium*.

Still, *Utopian and Dystopian Themes in Tolkien's Legendarium* is an interesting study of Tolkien's world in relation to these political and cultural discourses. By bringing together studies of Tolkien's sources and genres, his environmental views, his uses of myth, and his political theory, combined with detailed readings of key scenes and passages from *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, Mark Doyle has made a significant contribution to Tolkien studies and to our understanding of the ways that fantasy literature connects us to social, political, and philosophical concerns that are very much part of our real world.

—Robert T. Tally Jr.

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**MUSIC IN TOLKIEN'S WORK AND BEYOND.** Julian Eilmann and Friedhelm Schneidewind, eds. Zürich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2019. 474 p. ISBN 9783905703399. \$32.00.

**M**USIC IS A FOUNDATIONAL ASPECT of J.R.R. Tolkien's *legendarium*. It was there from the beginning, when *The Hobbit* first launched itself to an unsuspecting world, and then again when *The Lord of the Rings* took the simple world of Bilbo Baggins and reimagined it as part of the epic culture of Middle-earth, full of life and terror and song. The posthumous publication of *The Silmarillion* only reaffirmed the centrality of music to Middle-earth, as readers sat breathless before the procreative songs of the Ainur as if under some spell. But even before this, Tolkien had been telling stories in song; indeed, many of the earliest tales from Arda are written as songs or poetry, and he continued writing and rewriting them his entire life.

It's no wonder, then, that critics and scholars of Tolkien have been fascinated by and drawn to his investment in music and poetry. They have written of Tolkien's music and the similarly procreative music of Väinämöinen, the singing sorcerer of the Finnish *Kalevala*. They explore the interplay between song and words of power, both of which are capable of introducing physical and spiritual changes into the very fabric of the world. They interrogate the role of the Music of Ilúvatar: its potency, its mercy, and its omnipotence. Music, in Middle-earth, is power. Who can forget Lúthien razing the haunted isle of Sauron with song, or singing the great Enemy Morgoth into forgetful sleep? Who is unmoved when Sam, bowed down by grief and despair in the tower of Cirith Ungol, pours out the torments of his soul in a song of defiance and hope?

So scholars write and debate and exclaim in awe as they—or we—contemplate Tolkien's music, and never seem to come to the end of all there is to say. *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* carries forward that tradition. According to the editors, Julian Eilmann and Friedhelm Schneidewind, the collection envisions itself as a "follow-up volume" to "the well-received 2010 volume *Music in Middle-earth*" (ii). It aims to "simultaneously [follow] the path of analyzing the use and significance of music and musical elements in Tolkien's literary texts while also considering the broader context, such as adaptations and other authors and composers" (ii). The editors do not attempt to narrow the focus of such broad ambitions; the volume contains no unifying concept or goal apart from the general investigation of music that is (sometimes only speculatively or tangentially) related to Tolkien and his work.

The introduction also does not attempt to suggest what contributions the volume will make to current scholarship, which is unfortunate, as it leaves the contents arranged round each other in a nebulous and ill-determined cloud. Since there is no conclusion to tie together these loose threads, they remain loose, unconnected.

So the introduction occasionally fails in its purpose. Several of the essay summaries provided are entirely unhelpful, and usually no different from the abstracts included as the headings to each chapter. Take, for instance, this short one: "Patrick Schmitz compares the function of music in Patrick Rothfuss's *Kingkiller Chronicles* with *The Lord of the Rings*. In doing so, similarities and differences between Tolkien's seminal work and the well-regarded piece of new fantasy literature are revealed" (vi). This is just the sort of vague statement of purpose that would receive low marks in most composition courses. It is, granted, the worst offender, but the reader may find the disparities between the attention given to some essays over others curious.

In what follows, I will offer a few examples from the volume that I believe are representative of the whole. *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* is a mixed bag. Its worst offenses, both as a whole and in the internal workings of

some individual essays, are a lack of direction and organization; recurring errors of grammar and typography; and a strikingly oblivious attitude towards current Tolkien scholarship. (One essay in particular deigns to cite no one other than Tolkien and its own author.) Another failing that is less ubiquitous but just as egregious is the tendency of a number of authors to reduce, in the last analysis, their own complex and generative arguments down to little more than evidence for a symbolic interpretation of Tolkien's work within the paradigm of Christianity—a common turn in Tolkien Studies, to be sure.

I mentioned above the grammatical and typographical errors. These were particularly shocking because they suggest a lack of attention and care on the part of the editors: in one case I casually counted five typographical errors on a single page (including the misspelling of Eärendil as "Aerendil"). In another place, the grammatical mistakes were so frequent that they severely detracted from the clarity of the argument. Now, the editors do mention in their introduction that "there are some articles which have been originally published in German or English and had to be translated into the respective language for the publication," and that "the great number of papers presented here is also responsible for the fact that the editing and translating process took us much longer than intended" (viii). While I am sympathetic to the efforts that undoubtedly went into publishing such a volume, I cannot see even this as a valid excuse for releasing into print a volume so riddled with errors. Besides, in the English version, only one essay makes any mention of being translated—it is undoubtedly the worst offender, but by no means the only, so difficulties in translation do not seem to be the root of the problem.

For all this, the volume has its triumphs, which is why I do not want to immediately dismiss it. A number of the essays are well-structured, reveal at least an adequate knowledge of current scholarship, and offer thoughtful and interesting claims that will do much for Tolkien Studies. Take the following handful as an example.

Two essays in particular stand out as offering useful political readings of Tolkien and his work. Jörg Fündling's "'Go forth, for it is there!': An Imperialist Battle Cry behind the Lament for Boromir" recognizes in said lament a subtle resistance to imperialism, which brings into question the imperialist projects of both Gondor and England. This interpretation not only steps away from traditional readings of the poem as a modified heroic elegy; it also offers an incisive critique of the price of war in which some may find echoes of Sam's momentary sympathy for the fallen warrior in Ithilien. Similarly, Lynn Forest-Hill's "Tolkien's Minstrelsy: The Performance of History and Authority" discovers in the poetry and songs of *The Lord of the Rings* an implicit critique of oppressive systems of power/knowledge. Together, these papers suggest that

readers might reconsider some of the political movements of Middle-earth, finding in them motivation for equitable and just change.

In his essay, Fündling explores the structural and thematic resemblance between Tolkien's "Lament for Boromir" and Rudyard Kipling's "The English Flag." Fündling first offers a detailed reading of the Tolkien poem's structure and rhythm, pointing out in particular its relation to the English ballad form and its "fill-in-the-blank" content. "Aragorn's first stanza [...] predetermines both the shape and the contents of the other two," Fündling points out. "Consequently, he and Legolas are able to 'fill up' about half of each stanza while only six of ten lines demand (or allow) additions of their own free choice" (113). These "additions" are, for Fündling, the meat of the lament: the "actual lament is written between the lines" (115). He also addresses the fact that Tolkien's original conception of the poem included a stanza for the later-ignored East Wind, and was far more irregular than its final state, which suggests to Fündling the Tolkien—Kipling parallel. Kipling's poem also asks the Four Winds for answers (120), is written with a similar rhythm, contains "markers of climate and local colour" (121), and is obsessed with death and the number of English lives lost for the sake of the Empire. Fündling's comparison is not unfounded: he directs the reader to a number of scholarly defenses of Kipling's influence on Tolkien, and then proceeds to reveal that a sort of catalogue of the Empire's gradual defeat was jotted down by Tolkien in the margins of the "Lament for Boromir" manuscript (126-7). The difference between the two, Fündling suggests, is that Tolkien was less certain than Kipling that the imperialist cause was worth the number of lives lost. "Kipling," he writes, "whose son had not yet been declared missing in Belgium, had offhandedly approved of such a price if his vision of the Empire demanded it" (128). Tolkien, on the other hand, had lost nearly all his close friends in the first war, and was agonizing over the safety of his sons in the second. Rather than support the cause, he questions it in the voice of a grieving father (the "Lament" was originally written to be spoken by Denethor) who cannot measure the worth of a nation over the price of his own son. The "Lament for Boromir," Fündling asserts, "spun the older poem round one of its axes—namely, the question [of] how high the cost of human lives may be" (128). Fündling's essay is a priceless contribution for those scholars interested especially in the imperialist mission of Gondor (see Elendil's words upon arriving in Middle-earth), for it reads the poem in a new way: not simply as a modified heroic elegy for a fallen warrior, but as a troubled interrogation of the contemporary political drama unfolding across both primary and secondary worlds.

Forest-Hill begins her paper by pointing out that *The Lord of the Rings* doesn't offer readers many examples of proper medieval minstrelsy (176): professional (i.e., paid or commissioned) minstrels are few, rarely named, and

soon forgotten. Rather, non-professional minstrelsy, which is characterized by an improvisational approach to song and poetry, is far more common: and more importantly, it pushes against the boundaries of race, class, and status (177). This latter idea is Forest-Hill's most important contribution here. History in Middle-earth is often considered an affair for learned and high-class individuals. It is primarily written in elvish, and is often secreted away to become either hoarded (Rivendell) or forgotten (Minas Tirith). Song-writers like Bilbo, she argues, make history more accessible by translating it into songs in the vernacular (180). Thus, for Forest-Hill, translation in Middle-earth becomes a political act, resembling the struggles between scholarly and vernacular languages, and between print and oral cultures, in the Middle Ages and beyond (181). It is furthermore a power-act, a position of authority that is capable of putting elvish nostalgia in the mouth of a hobbit (188). Forest-Hill uses this idea to argue that translations and "versions," therefore, should more accurately be thought of as "variations on a theme" (196); if we wish to honor the politically-charged *mouvance* of poetry, song, and history in Middle-earth, we must consider all versions as being equal—none should be preferred over any other, nor should the "original" be considered more correct (197). Finally, in an exciting turn, Forest-Hill posits that we should see Tolkien's "translation" acts in the same way. When Tolkien halts the narrative to regale the reader with tales of long ago, it is in fact a "powerful assertion of [authorial] authority" (199): he is "smuggling" the supposedly "unpublishable" *Silmarillion* content into print (198), thereby making it more accessible. Critics who are concerned with Tolkien as Author have much to unpack here, as do those who are interested in adaptation studies, translation, and the socio-political landscape of Middle-earth.

For the reader interested in the interplay of sound, silence, and music, two papers come to mind. The first, Petra Zimmerman's "'A deep silence fell': Silence and the Presentation of 'Voices' in Tolkien" explores the measured silences of (primarily) *The Lord of the Rings*. She argues that silence is a predecessor to mindful listening, and that it signals to both characters and readers that something important is about to take place. Maureen F. Mann picks up the topics of silence and sound in her essay, "Musicality in Tolkien's Prose." Though dense in places, Mann uses Tolkien's obscure "Essay on Phonetic Symbolism" to expertly reveal the astounding care that Tolkien exercised in his prose writing.

Zimmerman launches her critique by pointing out that in *The Lord of the Rings*, silence is very often cast as negative, especially when it appears in forests (236). It "creates an almost unbearable tension" (236) and "cannot be dominated, because it seems to embrace its own will" (237). However, Zimmerman resists this reductive reading. More and more often, "silence is 'animated' by images from within," she insists (237). Characters consistently fill

silences with daydreams and healing rest: it is a space of emptiness that allows the sounds that follow to take full effect and the sounds that have just ceased to be contemplated. In other words, silence is “the precondition of listening closely” (239). But, significantly, “the fictional characters’ process of listening is also spread to the reader who imagines mentally what the characters hear” (241). In fact, “our brain is able to simulate sounds set into writing and indicated as sounds (here by inverted commas) as real aural impressions—the reader hears inwardly what is written on paper” (241). For Zimmerman, this groundbreaking neurological discovery means that both readers and characters participate in the soundscapes of Middle-earth. The songs interspersed within the text only intensify this phenomenon, Zimmerman argues, because they “interrupt the chronological-linear narrative flow” (243) and characters usually experience the silence after a song as “fill[ed] with images that transcend” (247). Her point is that the people of Middle-earth, by participating in creating imaginative visions in the silences, actually “show [readers] how to succeed in filling ‘space’ and imagining a secondary world” (248). Thus, Zimmerman’s argument has significant implications for ethics (in that she insists that respectful silence is the prerequisite of ethical relating), but for worldbuilding theories and practices as well.

Mann’s essay takes the concept of sound and dissects it, arguing that sound in Tolkien carries the weight of meaning and leads to a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the world of Arda. There is a powerful “relationship between sound and meaning,” Mann argues (208), in that even if the words themselves mean nothing to us, the *sound* of the words will impart knowledge. To support her claim, she investigates a number of significant scenes in *The Lord of the Rings* in which sound plays an important role. For example, in “The Flight to the Ford,” “alliteration, adverbial inversion, and rhyme increase with the arrival of Glorfindel” (220). As the reader walks with Frodo and Sam into Shelob’s lair, the complexity of the syntax increases radically, and the long sentences and stretched phrases extend the reader’s sense of time (223-224). Bombadil, for Mann, is noteworthy because he “bring[s] into prominence the significance of sound,” rhythm, and rhyme (222). In *The Hobbit*, alliteration marks heroic action (227). According to Mann, these kinds of stylistic contrivances invite the reader into deeper participation with the story that is being told. The musical, stylistic tendencies of Tolkien’s prose, she suggests, “enhance or help formulate the comprehension of meaning” (207). When placed into conversation with Zimmerman’s insistence that silence and sound in Tolkien’s work facilitates readers’ immersion in the secondary world, Mann’s ideas are even more exciting. There are certainly many opportunities here to carry forward the discussion, bringing new complexities to readers’ understanding of Tolkien’s language.



The four essays presented above are representative, I think, of the best the collection has to offer. They are, on the whole, well-organized, thought-provoking, and suggest exciting directions yet to be explored in Tolkien studies. Other essays are certainly worth considering: some, like those of Łukasz Neubauer, Angela P. Nicholas, and Bradford Lee Eden would have been considerably improved had they not been so focused on description and summary—almost cataloguing—instead of analysis, and, by extension, been more invested in the current scholarship. Other essays tended to wander too far into speculation to be truly useful to the academic reader, or else were too invested in finding origin points for Tolkien's ideas (Nancy Martsch and Rainer Groß fall into this category), another common temptation in Tolkien scholarship. Yet others, like those of Allan Turner and Patrick Schmitz, simply needed more development.

A smaller number contained more serious problems. Chiara Bertoglio's "Polyphony, Collective Improvisation, and the Gift of Creation," which opens the collection, often failed to make necessary connections between sections; it attempted to tackle far too many ideas; and perhaps worst of all, it referred repeatedly to its own "sketchy references" and the fact that it "cannot establish with any certainty whether Tolkien was familiar with any individual possible source of influence" (6). Indeed, at times it regrettably seemed as if the author was more invested in displaying her own "omnivorous reading" than accounting for Tolkien's (6). It does, however, offer some interesting speculations about the nature of the Music of the Ainur that will encourage more scholarship on the texts' practical musical aspects.

"Laments and Mercy: Tolkien and Liturgical Music," from Michaël Devaux and Guglielmo Spirito, suffered a similar crisis of identity in that it seemed unable to decide whether it was a sermon, a devotional, or an academic article. It evidenced a critical lack of audience awareness, at one moment involving readers in melodramatic and flowery descriptions of the heights that "we" experience in prayer (29), and a mere page later condescendingly suggesting that if "you" are not particularly religious, or perhaps are misfortunate enough not to have had "elementary religious instruction," you "might assume that what would be fun around a campfire for young scouts [...] deserves to take place in the church during Mass" (30-31). Only a few pages later, however, readers are called to think of all the many, many places ("everywhere," in fact) "we" hear and encounter the *Kyrie eleison*" (36). While the authors do make some interesting points, and clearly invested time and effort into their research (the charts laying out the Masses in the churches Tolkien attended during the years he was there are fascinating), the particulars of their argument are often lost in the melodrama of religious fervor and the unfounded assumptions that are made about their readers.

Finally, before offering some more generalized conclusions, I want to address Tobias Escher's long essay, "Of Home Keys and Music Style Guides: Orchestral Scores for Tolkien-based Video Games," which left me particularly disappointed because, as the author notes, there is still so much to consider in the world of Tolkien-inspired gaming. Unfortunately, it contained numerous grammatical and typographical errors, and failures of style, too, that made it difficult to read. It also frequently wandered down rabbit holes; like Bertoglio's piece, it was simply trying to cover too much ground. Most unfortunate, however, was the fact that one of Escher's most important sources, Chance Thomas's *Music Style Guide* for video games inspired by Tolkien, "is not publicly available for legal reasons," meaning that its "whole content remains inaccessible save for some information disclosed by Thomas in a magazine article" (458). While I admire Escher's ambition in trying to "draw a number of conclusions about its content" through snippets in an interview (458), it seems to me a slippery slope to walk down, and not exactly a credible basis for an argument. What is clear, however, is that Escher has done some useful groundwork in preparing the way for future scholarship, and I personally hope we will see more of it. Maybe one day we'll even get to see that *Music Style Guide*.

I have not, of course, mentioned each of the 21 essays contained in *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond*. Rather, I have pointed to what seem to me to be the high and low points of the collection, as well as indicated its more general disappointments. The impression I am left with, after having pored over this volume for quite some time, is that a majority of its failures are editorial in nature. Disregarding the proliferation of copyediting mistakes that went (apparently) unnoticed, I would have to question even the volume's organization and composition. For example, Heidi Steimel's "An Orchestra in Middle-earth" is included in the "Instruments in Middle-earth" section, as the title might suggest—but in actuality, the essay is about primary world music that has been inspired by Tolkien's work (and not all of it is orchestral), and belongs rather in the "Music Beyond Tolkien" section, along with the paper on "Orchestral Scores in Tolkien-based Video Games."

Furthermore, it is unclear to me whether *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* is meant to be a work of academic scholarship. The book refers to itself, in a roundabout way, as "Tolkien scholarship," and it even suggests that it contains "a multitude of different academic approaches" (ii). But some of the papers are hardly academic at all—I have already mentioned the number of essays which are merely summative or wildly speculative. For example, Groß's piece, while it does open with an overview of the history of organ building, does so for no discernable purpose outside of mere intrigue, and closes with speculative drawings of what the portatives of a few races of Middle-earth

might have looked like, had they had them. Though interesting and diverting in its own right, it adds little to scholarly discussions of Tolkien's work.

My sense of the deficiency in editorial oversight is further heightened by the fact that contributors were ostensibly not given (or if they were, for some unfathomable reason did not take) the chance to review the scholarship of their peers before the collection went to print. There is no internal conversation within the volume—a hard disappointment, as many of the papers would have benefited from the knowledge of another that, sometimes, is its immediate neighbor. Some essays take for granted what another in the volume has decisively shown to be incorrect. Some others are simply shallow and inconclusive in areas that another contributor has explored in great depth. Connections are thus dropped, opportunities lost, and the reader is left to groan in frustration as she considers what might have been.

It would be ungenerous (not to mention untrue) to suggest that *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* has little worth. I hope I've accurately illustrated in the foregoing that the volume carries forward many important discussions in Tolkien Studies, and that it offers new ideas for exploration and interrogation. But even besides that, it is certainly worth pointing out that even the most flawed of this volume's offerings might be the seed that produces a great tree. One has only to soldier through its imperfections to reach the goal. Read it with this in mind.

—Megan N. Fontenot



**HOBBIT VIRTUES: REDISCOVERING VIRTUE ETHICS THROUGH J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE HOBBIT* AND *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*.** Christopher A. Snyder. New York NY: Pegasus Books, 2020. 254 p. ISBN 9781643134109. \$27.95.

CHRISTOPHER SNYDER BEGINS HIS WORK *Hobbit Virtues: Rediscovering Virtue Ethics through J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings* by discussing the careful tending of a garden. Tolkien and his Hobbits were particularly fond of gardens, but this serves as his introductory image for a more profound reason. He suggests, "Cultivating one's garden can also be seen as tending to our individual souls, cultivating virtues through reason and discipline" (4). Harkening back to Socrates, Snyder suggests that a well-ordered soul leads to the growth of virtue, but that leads the reader to a question that defines the remainder of this work. What types of virtues might Tolkien be presenting through his legendarium? Snyder points to what he terms a Hobbit philosophy drawn from the final words of Thorin Oakenshield, "There is more