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## *Nólë Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien*

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## *Nólë Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien*

### Additional Keywords

Iberia, Spain, Portugal

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on display. I think *East of the Wardrobe* will be mined for all of these for some years to come.

—Philip Irving Mitchell



**NÓLĚ HYARMENILLO: AN ANTHOLOGY OF IBERIAN SCHOLARSHIP ON TOLKIEN.** Edited by Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Martin Simonson, and Angélica Varandas. Walking Tree Publishers, 2022. 198 p. ISBN 978-3-905703-47-4. \$24.30 from amazon.com.

**I**F YOU SHIED AWAY FROM *NÓLĚ Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien* in the belief that it would be in Spanish and Portuguese, or that a knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese culture or Tolkien fandom would be required, rest assured: this is not the case. The nine essays presented here are all in English, similar to what you would find in Tolkien-related English-language publications, without the pretentious academic jargon. This is a well-designed book, nicely produced, well written in excellent English and free from typos and other errors.

Series editors Thomas Honegger & Doreen Triebel write:

The present collection with essays by Spanish and Portuguese scholars is part of Walking Tree Publishers' endeavour to support the academic dialogue and exchange between the different international research efforts in matters Tolkien. The selection illustrates the breadth and depth of the Iberian scholarship, and we hope that it helps to build bridges between the Tolkien-communities of the English, Spanish, and Portuguese speaking worlds respectively. ("Acknowledgments")

One hopes that their efforts will bear fruit, for much work in Tolkien Studies is being done outside England and the United States, which needs to be acknowledged and listened to.

*NólĚ Hyarmenillo* ("Lore from the South" in Quenya) contains nine essays, chosen to highlight a variety of approaches to Tolkien: three on Peter Jackson's films, two on Anglo-Saxon and Norse elements, two on literary and philosophical approaches to Tolkien (using trees as metaphors), and two on popular culture (including one film essay).

The Introduction, by editors Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Martin Simonson, and Angélica Varandas, gives a history of Tolkien scholarship in Spain and Portugal, and of the authors and essays included. It should be read.

The four essays in Part I discuss film studies and Germanic sources, respectively, while the five in Part II deal with literary analysis and popular culture. Some have been published previously.

“‘I didn’t see the films, but I read the posters’” by Miguel Moiteiro Marques uses Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s *The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006) to analyze film posters for Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. Marques posits a viewer who has never read the books nor seen the films, and who knows nothing about Tolkien: how would this viewer interpret the posters? Marques first gives examples of different types of pictures to demonstrate Kress and Leeuwen’s theories (illustrated), and then proceeds to analyze both selected trailer posters and the final film posters (also illustrated). A trailer usually shows a single individual, close up; a film poster a montage of actors and scenes from the film, along with technical information. The viewer observes where the actors are positioned and at what size, do they look toward the viewer or to each other, what else is included, and so on. Marques notes that a Tolkienist might wonder who is the dark-haired lady in the montages, but to our naive poster-viewer it is obvious: she is the warrior’s love interest. You will never look at a movie poster in the same way again.

Ana Daniela Coelho, in “‘I See Fire’: Adapting *The Hobbit* beyond the Image,” focuses on the song of that name by Ed Sheeran, which accompanies the end credits to Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*. (The words to the song, and an account of its making, are given in two Appendices. Sheeran composed the song in a single day after watching the film.) Adaptation studies tend to focus on literary effect, on how faithful the film is to the written source material (despite the fact that literature and film are two different media), and to ignore the music. But the musical soundtrack is very important to the whole film experience. Coelho describes the music in previous theatrical and film and TV adaptations of *The Hobbit*. For Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films, Howard Shore’s soundtrack and leitmotifs have already been studied, but the pop songs at the end credits have been ignored. “I See Fire,” which is sung from Thorin’s point of view, evokes both Smaug’s attack in the past and the singer’s fear of the future; and he invokes the “misty eye of the mountain below/ Keep careful watch of my brothers’ souls” if “this is to end in fire.” The video for this song differs from all other Jackson end-credit song videos in that it shows the recording session as well as clips from the film. It became an independent hit.

Interspersed with these are the two essays on Northern influences. “Facing Hope: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon Elegiac Tradition” by Angélica Varandas notes that major themes of both *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings* are the cycle of life and death, for all men must die. She notes the elegiac nature of many Anglo-Saxon poems, a sense of the splendor of

the past now gone, and compares some of these poems with elements in *The Lord of the Rings*. But for the Anglo-Saxon, his glory after death was to be remembered by men, whereas for the Christian—and especially for Catholic Tolkien—his glory lay in his life to come after death; the eucatastrophe, as it were. So, like the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, *The Lord of the Rings* contains an elegiac tone, it also contains Hope, which differentiates it from the Anglo-Saxon ethos.

Hélio Pires, in “Asgard and Valinor: Worlds in Comparison”, notes many similarities between the halls of the Norse gods as described in the *Grímnismál* and the abodes of the Valar as described in *The Book of Lost Tales, Pt. 1*. He gives examples from the *Grímnismál* and other Eddic poems. Tolkien even glossed “Valinor” as “Asgard” in the Appendix to *The Book of Lost Tales, Pt. 1*! And the Norse gods ride from Asgard to sit in judgment beside the World Tree, just as the Valar have their Ring of Doom near the Two Trees. Pires, while acknowledging that Tolkien drew on other mythologies and legends as sources for his *legendarium* (Finnish and Celtic, for example), he certainly drew upon Germanic myth for his “mythology for England,” and the *Grímnismál* must be considered one of his sources.

Part II contains five essays. The titles of next two, “The Voice of Nature in Middle-earth through the Lens of Testimony” and “‘Nonetheless They Will Have Need of Wood’: Aesthetic and Utilitarian Approaches to Trees in *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*,” look as though they will deal with ecocriticism, but this is not the case.

In “The Voice of Nature [...],” Andoni Cossio uses Treebeard’s outburst against Saruman’s cutting down trees as an example of “testimony.” “Testimony” is here defined as the account of a witness, often a marginalized person or someone not in conformation to the official viewpoint, which has been recorded by a disinterested party; thus giving credence to the words. Testimony may be emotional. It can also be a witness to the past. Treebeard’s outburst was reported by Merry and Pippin to Frodo, who wrote it down. And Tolkien gives Treebeard an anthropomorphic form. So Treebeard now becomes a spokesman (“spoketree”) for nature and against the abuse of trees.

“‘Nonetheless They Will Have Need of Wood’ [...]” by Martin Simonson considers both the aesthetic and the utilitarian views of nature in Tolkien’s work, using trees as examples. As in the dialogue between Yavanna and Aulë (the source of the quote in *The Silmarillion*), and in the “Tale of Aldarion and Erendis” (*Unfinished Tales*) along with the *Akallabêth* (also in *The Silmarillion*). Aldarion valued trees for shipbuilding (the utilitarian view), while Erendis loved them solely for themselves (the aesthetic view), and neither would compromise his views for the other’s. This led to an imbalance which had a deleterious effect on the development of Númenor. Utilitarianism combined

with the aesthetic (love of beauty) is the ideal. Elves singing in the woods alone are unsustainable.

Poor Boromir! In "Boromir: A Character Doomed to Die," Alejandro Martínez-Sobrino sees Boromir as a tragic hero, unable to fit into the changing culture of Middle-earth. He compares Boromir to Hector in James Redfield's *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, assuming that the reader is familiar with Redfield's interpretation. Boromir is a warrior hero who aspires to be a king, but the times are changing: the new world will have no place for Heroes. His dreams (of becoming king) are shattered at the Council of Elrond, where he encounters Aragorn, the heir to the throne of Gondor. If Boromir returns to Gondor, to his own land, Aragorn will be king and he will be displaced; on the other hand, one of the Company is carrying a weapon (the Ring) which he could use to overthrow Sauron and save Gondor . . . After his failure to obtain the Ring, all that remains for Boromir is to die heroically. He achieves salvation through his dying confession to Aragorn.

Tolkien's work has spread its influence throughout the world. Most often this influence has been considered through the media of adaptation studies, the films, slash culture, and the like. In "Shadows of Middle-earth: Tolkien in Subculture, Counterculture and Exploitation," Mónica Sanz considers a few of the most extreme, most bizarre examples of influence. These include hippies (subculture), Italian Neo-fascism with its Hobbit Camps (counterculture) and sexploitation films (she names a few porno examples—parodies all) as exploitation. Some of these have led to spin-offs not particularly Tolkien-related. Scholarship needs to realize that Tolkien's influence extends beyond the mainstream, and that creativity can take on a life of its own.

And lastly, Amaya Fernández Menicucci, in "'Aren't You Going to Search My Trousers?': Gender and Representation of the Dwarves in Peter Jackson's Adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," uses Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* dwarves to demonstrate traditional film ideas of masculinity. Jackson had to follow *The Lord of the Rings* with a blockbuster, so the role of Aragon (king and lover) becomes split between sexy Kili and heroic Thorin. Bombur, Alfrid, and a few others provide comedy. Tauriel, for all her warrior capabilities, is still presented as very feminine. Thorin, Fili, and Kili are also the most human-looking (and the most aristocratic and best-groomed) of the dwarves:

Although masculinity is constructed dualistically in opposition to femininity [Kili and Tauriel] [...] archetypal masculinity is mostly oppositional to ridiculous masculinity in the case of Jackson's representation of the dwarves. Thus, Jackson draws a clear line between ideal and less than ideal masculinities, and it is worth noticing that the former coincides with traditional Western stereotypes of virile beauty and charisma. (184)

To sum up, then, *Nóle Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien* provides a selection of essays on film studies, source studies, text studies, and the influence of Tolkien's work on pop culture. Scholars of Tolkien's works need to look beyond the borders of the United States and England, for people are reading—and studying—Tolkien's work everywhere.

—Nancy Martsch

(a shorter version of this review appeared in *Beyond Bree*, February 2023)



**SUNBEAMS AND BOTTLES: THE THEOLOGY, THOUGHT AND READING OF C.S. LEWIS.** James Prothero. Hamden CT: Winged Lion Press, 2022. 416 p. ISBN 9781935688327. \$22.99.

THIS highly ORIGINAL BOOK about C.S. Lewis and his ideas is conveniently divided into bite-size chunks and is ideal for reading one chunk at a time. There are twenty-one chapters, a preface, a conclusion and two appendices, each of which takes about fifteen minutes to read. There is also a short bibliography and an index. Each chapter has a short essay followed by a key idea and includes some discussion of books Lewis had read and learned from. The subjects covered are extremely varied, some are theologically complex, others more related to literature or to daily life and relationships. Some are extremely controversial, some quite personal and others are likely to meet with general agreement. Many develop ideas that have been mentioned, but not gone into in depth, in other books about Lewis and there are a few original insights. Most of Lewis's published works are mentioned somewhere, but the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity* and *Surprised by Joy* appear the most frequently. An attempt has been made to relate the arguments to contemporary issues, mainly in America, and the author succeeds in showing that it is impossible for any political group or faction to enroll Lewis onto their list of supporters. All this is written in clear, well-structured English, making it accessible for anyone who enjoys reading Lewis, but still interesting for students and academics.

The title, *Sunbeams and Bottles*, comes from Lewis's own statement in *Reflections on the Psalms* that trying to systematize Christ's teaching was "like trying to bottle a sunbeam" (quoted by Prothero in his Preface, 1). James Prothero applies this statement to Lewis himself and shows how difficult it is to pin Lewis down and classify his ideas. He represents Lewis as "ultimately his own category" (8) and largely unbothered about what others thought of him, a widely read man with medieval, Victorian and Edwardian roots, a little out of place in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century culture around him, taking his best ideas from a