

Professor Tolkien once remarked that "fantasy is, like many other things, a legitimate right of every human being, for through it is found complete freedom and satisfaction". It is curious that someone like the Professor, who repeatedly disdained the law in his life¹, should, above all in his extraordinary poem *Mitopoeia*, enshrine the right to fantasy, namely when he says that "Though all the crannies of the world we filled with elves and goblins, though we dared to build gods and their houses out of dark and light, and sow the seed of dragons, it was our right (used or misused). The right has not decayed. We make still by the law in which we're made."

And it is this law that we believe has inspired Professor Miranda Boto to write *Law, Government and Society in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works*, which, in our opinion, represents his consecration as the foremost legal researcher among Tolkienists at the international level.

In delving into its pages, the reader will see that this is a work of profound knowledge, not only of Tolkien's works, but also of law, literature and philosophy. This knowledge is wonderfully enveloped by a careful prose in English and a very fine sense of humour, which, together with the author's clarity of exposition, manage to capture the reader's attention and make it easy to read.

Although it is true that *Law* is not explicitly found in Tolkien's work, Professor Miranda Boto uses the Latin aphorism *ubi societas, ibi ius* to discover the legal institutions inherent in the different societies that Tolkien subcreates, and this leads him to outline a moral Law, a natural Law that runs transversally through Middle-earth and which commonly appears in the forms of equity and justice, with a tremendous influence, as is logical, from Common Law, the old Law of England.

This idea underlies the appreciation, for example, that rulers, though they have no formal restraints on their power, must govern their acts of imperium by a moral law superior to themselves, i.e. they are subject, in a sense, to the rule of law. This is a tremendously English idea, as exemplified by the conversation between James I and the famous Anglo-Saxon jurist William Blackstone in 1612, concerning the interference of royal power in the sphere of English rights. The monarch argued that if law was founded on reason, and he possessed it, he was then entitled to impart his justice over that of the judges. However, Coke, in explaining the relationship between Law and Crown, flaunts the well-known English liberty.

Finally, after these preliminary reflections, the author devotes the first part of the text to unpacking the concept of Law and Justice in Tolkien's work. To this end, displaying a profound knowledge of the Philosophy of Law, he manages, by means of examples, to point out those points in which the concept of Moral Law transversal to the whole work can be discovered, often tearing the very thin veil of the concepts of Law and Justice around this idea of natural law.

The second part is devoted to the study of the institutions of Public Law, i.e. the political organisation of the various peoples of Arda.

This political organisation begins with the description and historical comparison of their Heads of State, the executive, legislative and judicial powers, the succession to the throne, with a spectacular gem on the female succession to the throne, developed with a knowledge of Tolkien's work and its historical background and a preciousness that is impossible to overlook.

Also in this second part are procedural aspects of the informal trials that occur in the work, as well as criminal law aspects of crime and punishment.

The third part is a comprehensive study of feudalism in Gondor, the very important role of marriage from a social perspective, as well as its different legal regimes, the family and the passage of time, the economy, currency and trade, as well as property and social rank.

Although, in our opinion, the part that contains the most interesting (and amusing, by the way) information is undoubtedly the fourth part, where the author deals with Tolkien's use of law to create humorous situations in his work.

And he devotes, in two passages, special attention to the system of the Shire, first on its form of government and its possible framing in historical forms of government, and then on its defence systems, with the suggestive title (we translate) of "Max Weber in the Shire: On the use of physical coercion among the Hobbits", and which studies the unknown warlike aspect of the Halflings.

He will also study some aspects of Tolkien's use of law in other works outside the world of Middle-earth, such as in Farmer Gilles of Ham.

In this very complete book we also find a unique piece of teaching methodology, such as the explanation of the use of the relationship between Frodo and Sam to teach Labour Law, a practice celebrated by all those who know the author.

The book ends with an Appendix that necessarily had to be there, as a result of the author's admiration and profound knowledge of the life and miracles of Professor Tolkien, and which, in its reading, we can glimpse the clarity of exposition and depth of the great Tolkien biographers, such as Carpenter, Garth, or Hammond and Scull.

In short, this book is destined to become one of the great discoveries made in Tolkien's sub-creation, a sublime brushstroke of colour to the very complete world that the Professor bequeathed us and on whose canvas we find, like sheets of Niggle, the profound brushstrokes of Professor Miranda Boto.