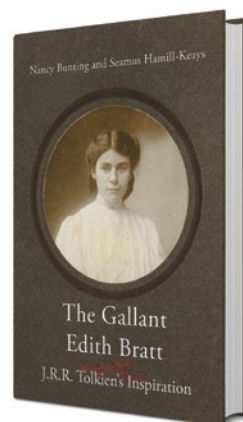


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BY JENNIFER LATSON AND
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The Gallant Edith Bratt

J.R.R. Tolkien's Inspiration

**Nancy Bunting '74 and
Seamus Hamill-Keays**

Walking Tree Publishers, 2021

EDITH BRATT TOLKIEN has never gotten much credit for influencing her husband's literary accomplishments — and that does a disservice both to Edith and to scholars seeking to fully understand the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, argue Nancy Bunting and Seamus Hamill-Keays. In “The Gallant Edith Bratt,” they set out to correct that error, shining a spotlight on the woman Tolkien referred to as his Lúthien, the powerful Elvish princess who helps a mortal man on an epic quest in “The Silmarillion.”

Edith's life was an epic quest in its own right. She overcame what Tolkien called “the shadow of the past”: her illegitimate birth in classist Victorian England. “Hers is a very Victorian story of luck and pluck,” write Bunting and Hamill-Keays. “Edith Bratt Tolkien triumphed over her background to snatch love and happiness from the iron jaws of social strictures and rigid class consciousness. ... She created the security and stability which Ronald Tolkien needed to write.” And while Tolkien, during his lifetime, discouraged any attempt to write his biography, which he considered irrelevant to understanding his writings, Bunting and Hamill-Keays make the case that his personal life and his creative work were much more closely intertwined than even he realized.

— J.L.