

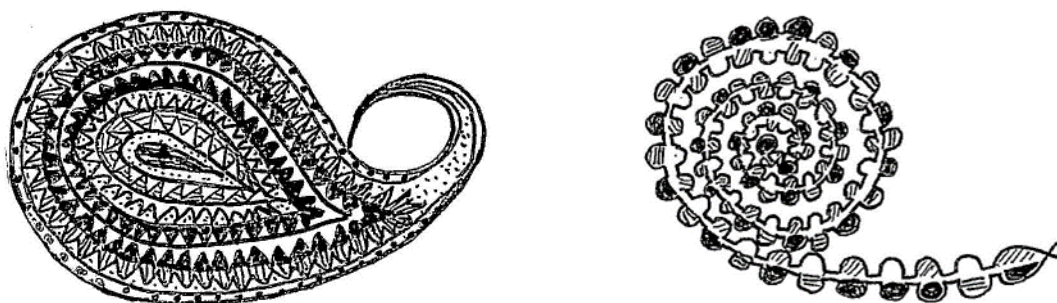
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Designs by Nancy Martsch after JRR Tolkien

### NÓLÈ HYARMENILLO

Review by Nancy Martsch

Nólë Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien, ed Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Martin Simonson, and Angélica Varandas; Walking Tree Publishers, 2022. Paper, 198 pp. 6 3/16 x 9 1/4" (15.7x23.4 cm). \$21.38 from amazon.com. Cover: "Rivendell, el Refugio Elfico" by Fredy Jaramillo (from Colombia).

If you shied away from Nólë Hyarmenillo: An Anthology of Iberian Scholarship on Tolkien in the belief that it required a knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese Tolkien fandom or culture, rest assured: this is not the case. The essays presented here are similar to what one would find in Tolkien-related English and American 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.

("Acknowledgements")

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

Nólë 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 (one a film essay) on popular culture.

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 consider literary analysis and popular culture. Some have been published previously.

In "'I didn't see the films, but I read the posters'", Miguel Moiteiro Marques uses Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's The Grammar of Visual Design to analyze the film posters for Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy, both teasers and final

posters. How would a viewer, never having read the books nor seen the films, knowing nothing about Tolkien, interpret these posters? Marques gives examples of pictures that illustrate Kress and van Leeuwen's theories, and then analyzes the selected posters - both teasers and final posters, in English. He notes which actor is positioned where and at what size, where their eyes gaze (toward the viewer or not), what else is included, and so on. The trailer usually shows a close up of a single individual, while the film poster a montage of actors and scenes from the film, along with technical information. 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", considers the song "I See Fire" 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 the fidelity of the film to its literary source, and ignore the music. But music is very important to the whole film experience. Howard Shore's soundtracks for Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit films have been studied, but the pop songs at the end credits have not. "I See Fire", sung from Thorin's point of view, evokes both Smaug's attack in the past and Thorin's fear for the future; as 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 also differs from all other Jackson end-credit song videos in that it shows the recording session as well as clips from the film.

The first of the two essays on Northern influences is "Facing Hope: The Lord of the Rings, Beowulf and the Anglo-Saxon Elegiac Tradition" by Angélica Varandas, who asserts that major themes of both Beowulf and The Lord of the Rings are the cycle of life and death. Many Anglo-Saxon poems have an elegiac nature, a sense of the splendor of a past now gone. She compares these poems with elements in The Lord of the Rings. But for the Anglo-Saxon, his glory was to be remembered by men after his death, whereas for the Christian - and especially for Catholic Tolkien - his glory lay in his life after death. So while 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 described in the Grímnismál and the abodes of the Valar as described in The Book of Lost Tales, Pt 1, giving examples from the Grímnismál and other Eddic poems. "Valinor" is even glossed as "Asgard" in the Appendix to BLT Pt I! Pires acknowledges that Tolkien used other mythologies and legends as sources for his *legendarium*, but certainly he drew upon Germanic myth for his "mythology for England", and the Grímnismál must be considered one of his sources.

Part II begins with two essays which use trees to illuminate literary or philosophical ideas. In "The Voice of Nature in Middle-earth through the Lens of Testimony", Andoni Cossio uses Treebeard's outrage against Saruman's cutting down trees as an example of "testimony". Here "testimony" is defined as the account of a witness (often a marginalized person or someone not from the official viewpoint), recorded by a disinterested second (or third) party; thus giving credence to the account. Merry and Pippin reported Treebeard's outburst to Frodo, who wrote it down. Thus Treebeard becomes a spokesman ("spokestree") for nature and against the abuse of trees.

"Nonetheless They Will Have Need of Wood..." by Martin Simonson considers both aesthetic and utilitarian views of nature in Tolkien's work, using trees as examples: in the dialogue between Yavanna and Aulë (the source of the quote) in The Silmarillion, in the "Tale of Aldarion and Erendis" in Unfinished Tales, and the "Akallabêth" in The Silmarillion. Aldarion valued trees for shipbuilding (utilitarian), Erendis loved them solely for themselves (aesthetic), neither would compromise toward the other's view. This led to an imbalance which had a deleterious effect on the development of Númenor. Utilitarianism combined with love of beauty (aesthetic) is the ideal. Elves singing in the woods alone are unsustainable.

In "Boromir: a Character Doomed to Die", Alejandro Martínez-Sobrino sees Boromir as a tragic hero, unable to fit into the changing culture Middle-earth where heroic warrior-kings will have no place. He compares Boromir to Hector in James Redfield's The Tragedy of Hector: Nature and Culture in the Iliad, unfortunately assuming familiarity with Redfield's interpretation. Boromir's dreams of kingship are shattered when he encounters Aragorn at the Council of Elrond. If he returns to his land, Aragorn will supplant him as the ruler; on the other hand, one of the Company is carrying a weapon (the Ring) which he could use to save Gondor... After his failure to obtain the Ring, all that remains is to die heroically.

Pop culture: the influence of Tolkien's work has spread throughout the world. Most commonly this has been considered through 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, bizarre examples as "subculture" (hippies); "counterculture" (Italian Neo-fascist Hobbit Camps); and "exploitation" (porno films - these are parodies). Some of these have led to other 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 JRR Tolkien's The Hobbit", uses Peter Jackson's dwarves to demonstrate traditional film ideas of masculinity. The role of the male romantic lead is split between hot Kili and heroic Thorin. (Thorin, Fili, and Kili are also the most human-looking of the dwarves.) Bombur, Alfrid, and others provide comedy. Tauriel, for all her warrior capabilities, is still presented as very feminine. "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 the ideal and less than ideal masculinities, and it is worth noticing the the former coincides with traditional Western stereotypes of virile beauty and charisma." (184)