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Binding Them All (2017), ed. by Monika Kirner-Ludwig, Stephan Köser, and Sebastian Streitberger

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J.R.R. Tolkien created an expansive enough Secondary World to provide vast fields for different scholars to work in, and the collection of papers in *Binding Them All: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on J.R.R. Tolkien and His Works* gives us a glimpse of just some of the ways in which Tolkien's fiction, poetry, and essays—or even Peter Jackson's films and movie trailers—provide ample material for scholars in different disciplines. These essays were originally presented as lectures at the University of Augsburg in a successful 2014 series focusing on Tolkien; selected papers were then published in this collection. Although not all of the original lectures are represented in this volume, the book includes eleven papers (plus an introduction) that draw on linguistics, film studies, education, geography, postcolonial race theory, and ecopsychology. The editors, Monika Kirner-Ludwig, Stephan Köser, and Sebastian Streitberger, argue that even though most of the individual scholars in this book examine Tolkien's work through the lens of their particular discipline, the fact that different disciplinary studies are bound together in this venture, both literally and figuratively, illustrates the interdisciplinarity that is possible in Tolkien Studies. While one might quibble that the collection is more "multidisciplinary" rather than "interdisciplinary," the effect of even just sampling a few essays, going from linguistics to geography to film studies, for example, provides a varied experience in disciplinary approaches no matter what one calls it. And some of the essays do combine disciplinary methodologies, as in essays on linguistics and media analysis or on ecocriticism and psychology. You don't have to be an expert in each field to understand the essays, although I did find a couple of them to be quite technical and difficult for someone untrained in the field to follow in all details; however, all the writers introduce the basic terminology of their field before demonstrating how their approach can be applied to Tolkien's work, and each one includes a bibliography of resources for further reading.

Thomas Honegger opens the volume with "'Meet the Professor'—A Present-day Colleague's View of Tolkien's Academic Life and Work." He introduces Tolkien as a university administrator, lecturer, and thesis supervisor while surveying some of his important academic work and some unconventional ideas expressed in his lectures that he never published as scholarship. Honegger points out that Tolkien was known in his day as an author of fiction who also published a few philological studies, but it is only since the last decades of the twentieth century that the connection between his philological work and his legendarium

has been studied and brought to light for general readers. According to Honegger, Tolkien's "legacy to the generations after him lies not so much in his contributions to philology itself, but in the way he made it fruitful for the study and production of literature" (29).

While the philological tradition that Tolkien represented has receded in the face of literary studies in most university curricula over the course of the last century, the study of language continues in the current field of linguistics, which is well represented in this book. Certainly, this volume is a good example of how various methodologies in linguistics can be applied to Tolkien's work, as a number of the essays focus on approaches deriving from language study, making linguistics the largest block of disciplines represented in the volume.

Oliver M. Traxel's "Exploring the Linguistic Past through the Work(s) of J.R.R. Tolkien: Some Points of Orientation from English Language History" discusses how Tolkien's work can be used as a lure to further study, in this case, in historical linguistics. After a brief survey of the significance of Old English, runes, and Middle English for Tolkien, Traxel illustrates concepts from etymology, lexicology, and onomastics with examples from Tolkien's fiction.

A couple of essays deal with the style of Tolkien's writing as derived from medieval examples. Carolin Tober, in "How J.R.R. Tolkien Used Kennings to Make *The Lord of the Rings* into a Medieval Epic for the 20th Century," provides a discussion of the historical-linguistic background of kennings in Old Norse and Old English, summarizes current research, and develops a definition of the linguistic characteristics of kennings, which are "metaphorical compound-like structures used in poetry" (254). She considers Tolkien's definition of a kenning as stated in his commentary on *Beowulf*, where, according to Tober, he allows for a freer form of a "kenning-equivalent as long as it retains the colour and the character of a kenning" (265). Subsequent sections in her paper address Tolkien's kennings in *The Lord of the Rings*, including sword kennings, name kennings, place kennings, and unconventional examples that demonstrate a "kenning-ish" (272) character.

Birgit Schwan also discusses a medieval stylistic feature, alliterative metre, in her essay, "Searching 'For a Better Rhythm, or a Better Word or Phrase': J.R.R. Tolkien's Re-Telling of the Legend of King Arthur in Alliterative Metre." This essay only presents a general idea of what constitutes the medieval alliterative line, not a detailed analysis of alliterative verse types, but the author does suggest an interesting point about the modern cinematic effect of Tolkien's use of alliterative verse in his *Fall of Arthur*. I have to wonder, though, why the comparison is between Tolkien's alliterative verse and Malory's fifteenth-century prose retelling of the Arthurian legends when the fourteenth-century *Alliterative Morte Arthure* might have made a more apt comparison in the use of this verse form.

Magdalena Spachmann presents another linguistic perspective on Tolkien's work in her discussion of phonetic aesthetics in several of his texts. Her essay, "Ethereal Elvish and Horrid Orkish: An Attempt to Capture J.R.R. Tolkien's Controversial Theory of Linguistic Aesthetics and Phonetic Fitness," examines how Tolkien's ideas on language disagree with current linguistic theories about the arbitrariness of signifier and signified. After looking at examples of Tolkien's ideas on language in "A Secret Vice," "English and Welsh," and his letters, Spachmann discusses examples of various kinds of speech in *The Lord of the Rings*, in Tolkien's invented languages of Quenya and Sindarin, and in the "Nomenclature." She concludes that while Tolkien did not publish a complete (and controversial) theory about phonetic fitness, his fiction demonstrates his personal philosophy of language.

Monika Kirner-Ludwig examines one of Tolkien's essays in "A Meta-pragmatic and Discourse-analytical Approach to Tolkien's '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics': A Deliberate Look at its Edges, not its Centre." Kirner-Ludwig demonstrates how the methods of text linguistics, which she explains exist "at the very interface of linguistic and literary analysis" (43), can be used to analyze how Tolkien explicitly or implicitly addresses his audience and positions himself as an authority, sometimes in a privately humorous way, in his famous essay on *Beowulf*.

A final example of the application of linguistic methods is Heike Krebs's multimodal analysis of twelve film trailers for Peter Jackson's trilogy using Roman Jakobson's ideas in *On Language* to examine how the trailers communicate to fans and potential new audiences. Well-illustrated with charts and photos, Krebs's essay, "'One trailer to bring them all and in the darkness bind them?'—*The Lord of the Rings* Trailers and their Communicative Functions," uses Jakobson's functions of language as a model to analyze the multimodal trailers that were released from 2000 to 2011.

While the essays discussed above clearly represent the linguistic focus of a good part of this book, albeit each in a different way, other essays branch out in different directions, with concepts of space, geography, and the environment as their foundations. Sebastian Streitberger's "Concepts of Space in Middle-earth's Landscapes or the Potential of Fantasy and Film for School Geography" also deals, similarly to Krebs, with Peter Jackson's films but with a focus on geography. Streitberger argues that using films in education is effective in teaching media literacy and, in this particular case, in examining visualizations of landscapes. Streitberger defines the difference between geographical concepts of "space" and "place," pointing out that landscapes in film can be perceived as a space, with an "objectively measurable" reality; whereas "place . . . adds emotional impressions to an otherwise objectively perceivable space" (202). Streitberger further defines four geographical concepts of space and how *The*

Lord of the Rings, particularly the films, can illustrate these core concepts to students of geography.

Dealing with concepts of perceived space, Sabine Timpf's essay also discusses geography but turns to Tolkien's fiction, sketches, and maps. "Insights into Mapping the Imagined World of J.R.R. Tolkien" provides a brief introduction to the functions of maps and to literary cartography before presenting a theory of cognitive mapping. Timpf suggests that the term "cognitive collage" (246) can be used to describe Tolkien's various revisions and sketches, which are not always consistent with each other, but which nevertheless form a whole picture in his mind.

Discussing Tolkien's constructed imaginary environment, Heike Schwarz introduces recent concepts from the emerging discipline of ecopsychology. In the essay, "Wounds that Can(not) Be Wholly Cured: Ecopsychology, Solastalgia and Mental Substainability in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," Schwarz describes interdisciplinary connections in ecopsychology, which studies physical and psychological health in relation to one's environment. Schwarz illustrates the approach with examples of various novels before defining how the concept of "solastalgia," which "stresses the psychological impacts of ecological destruction" (141) can be applied to Tolkien's Secondary World, particularly to the Ents who suffer deep distress over their destroyed environment. Her essay makes a strong case for literature, especially a fantasy like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, in helping readers to empathize with the ecological Other and to understand the relationships between environment and health.

Another discussion of spaces analyzes Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* from the perspective of critical whiteness studies, defined by Christine Vogt-William as an approach which "posits whiteness as an unmarked position that connotes power and privilege throughout history" (311). Her essay, "Tolkien's Green Man: The Racialised Cultural Other Within and Green Spaces in *The Lord of the Rings*," analyzes the medieval figure of the Green Man and the Wild Man as symbolizing cultural Others—heathen, primitive, uncivilized—living in marginal, wild, green spaces, and she connects these figures to the representation of Treebeard and Ghân-buri-Ghân, who stand in contrast to the normative whiteness of Elves, Men, and Hobbits. Vogt-William looks at Treebeard as a "racially constructed Other reminiscent of the Green Knight in the *Gawain* poem" (319), although she sees Merry and Pippin's interactions with the Ent as representing a positive encounter between the "English Self and the Wild Other" (327). In contrast, the Drúedain are marked by a colonial discourse of the primitive and savage. Vogt-William reads Ghân-buri-Ghân's negotiations and demands for his people's rights to claim their space in the Forest as a "decolonial gesture" (331) and a subversion to some extent of the stereotype held by the Rohirrim against them. Vogt-William is well aware of the "fraught category of race" and "The vehemence with which both

defence and condemnation of Tolkien's use of such language [of difference] has been mounted" (310, note 6). This statement is from one of several valuable footnotes packed with definitions and references for further reading in addition to the bibliography at the end of the essay. In her conclusion, Vogt-William does not excuse Tolkien: "Tolkien has doubtless implemented certain types of racialising discourse in the shaping of his world" (333); but neither does she completely condemn him: "But there is reason to believe that he was intent on some level, in recuperating the racialised, dehumanized, marginalized and monsterised in medieval and modern colonial traditions that are contiguous with each other" (333). This essay offers a clear-sighted approach by a knowledgeable reader who is not prone to blind reverence or blind condemnation, a much-needed quality in any scholar dealing with the issue of race in Tolkien's works.

A journey through *Binding Them All* takes us into Tolkien's Secondary World through various avenues. It asserts different linguistic approaches to literature and film, and it leads us into different places and spaces, for the most part through disciplines that are not represented in most English and North American literary studies of Tolkien.

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