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Tolkien and Diversity (2023), edited by Will Sherwood

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On June 9, 2021, a news post on the Tolkien Society website by Education Officer Will Sherwood announced the speakers and talk titles for the then upcoming Tolkien Society Seminar 2021 on the theme of Tolkien and Diversity. Within a few days, conservative/alt-right websites launched vociferous condemnations of both the Tolkien Society and the speakers, based solely on this limited information. Although the conference – incorrectly branded as an "LGBTQ seminar" in some quarters (Basham 2021) despite the fact that only four of the sixteen advertised titles included what could be easily interpreted as LGBTQ+ references – was clearly advertised as free and open to all interested attendees, an alternative conference was hastily convened in protest, vowing to "not accept lectures on 'concepts not included in Tolkien's writing'" (Basham 2021). Essays based on ten of the sixteen Tolkien Society presentations[1] appear in this proceedings volume,[2] including two that had early on drawn detractors' ire for daring to include the word 'queer' in the title, ironically a term that Tolkien often used in his own writings (Kisor 2023) and therefore, by the very same critics' definition, appropriate for a Tolkien lecture. As noted by Sherwood in his Introduction to the proceedings volume, the two-day online seminar (July 3-4, 2021) was the "highest attended event in the history of the Society" with over 700 attendees (3), demonstrating the widespread interest in issues of diversity and inclusion as reflected in Tolkien's writings and the wider Tolkien fandom. The success of the one-day protest event by the "Society of Tolkien" is unclear.[3] In retrospect the online criticism against the Tolkien Seminar was the canary in the coalmine, warning of the far wider and more insidious online backlash brewing against the multicultural casting of the Amazon Prime adaptation *Rings of Power*, including direct attacks against both cast members and academics (Fimi and Maslen 2022). For this reason, it was important to begin this review by situating this timely and important volume within the wider reception of the seminar itself.[4]

For his part, Sherwood sets a different tone in his Introduction, ignoring the controversy in favor of establishing a careful, clear scholarly foundation for the

[1] Recordings of 15 of the 16 presentations can be found linked to the Tolkien Society's website: https://www.tolkiensociety.org/2021/07/recordings-of-tolkien-and-diversity-seminar-now-available/ .

[2] Several of the presentations were based on longer works that were already under contract or consideration for other volumes and therefore could not be published here.

[3] The official website (https://archive.ph/RNTFf) only lists the title of two papers.

[4] In the name of transparency, I state that I was one of the presenters in this competitive conference, for which abstracts were peer-reviewed. I verify that I had no part in the production of this volume.

study of diversity in Tolkien's Secondary World. Citing such notable scholars as Nick Groom, Dimitra Fimi, and Verlyn Flieger, Sherwood reminds us that issues of alterity, diversity, and evolution of thought are reflected in Tolkien's works, as well as rigorous scholarship concerning not only the Oxford don's writings, but Tolkien the man. There is also a deliberate accounting of some of the most important previous work on Tolkien and issues of gender, race, and alterity (e.g., Croft and Donovan 2015; Fimi 2009; Vaccaro and Kisor 2017), providing a necessary introduction to works that should be on the radar of anyone interested in a deeper understanding of Middle-earth.

Sonali Arvind Chunodkar, "Desire of the ring: an Indian academic's adventures in her quest for the perilous realm," and Martha Celis-Mendoza, "Translation as a means of representation and diversity in Tolkien's scholarship and fandom."

The volume begins with Chunodkar's semi-autobiographical essay, which offers the reader insights on four very disparate aspects of Tolkien scholarship and fandom, all viewed through the lens of "a second-generation Tolkien researcher in Indian academia" (7). It is quite fitting that such an essay kicks off the volume; while it is well-known that issues of representation can be deeply personal to the reader/viewer (see, for example, Reid's and Walls-Thumma's essays in this volume), we less often appreciate that scholars are, at a fundamental level, readers/viewers as well, and thus engage with the material in multiple ways that are, likewise, deeply personal. For example, Chunodkar's first set of observations are concerned with the problem of access to primary and secondary texts for Tolkien researchers outside of North America and Europe. As she significantly explains, "The limited access to published and archival material has obviously determined the research areas one could fruitfully engage with while remaining in places like India" (10). While she cannot offer definitive solutions, highlighting the very existence of the problem is productive in itself; reviewers and editors should be aware of this lack of resources, and take it into account when asking a contributor to a journal or edited collection to include particular references. Hopefully the increasing availability of Tolkien research in open access online collections (for example, *Journal of Tolkien Research*, *Mythlore*, and back issues of *Mallorn*) will aid researchers across the globe in engaging with and contributing to Tolkien scholarship with fewer roadblocks.

In a related discussion, Chunodkar reminds us that readers for whom English is not a first language (or who are reading works in translation) are at a disadvantage when it comes to the "linguistic/semantic knowledge" that is central to a deep understanding of Tolkien's use of philology in crafting his mythology as well as his invented languages (13). The third section of the essay reviews recent

fantasy television series in India and argues for a causal connection between the reception of these series (and related literary works) and the "lukewarm reception" of the Marathi translation of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (18). A far-too-brief mention of sexism in Indian soap operas and Indian fantasy films could have used a bit of expansion in order to better explain a connection to Tolkien (especially as Jackson's films are invoked as an influence). The final section focuses on the character of Sam and his described darker skin color (as compared to Frodo) to demonstrate how the acceptance of the Jackson films as the 'standard' image in the minds of some readers results in an explaining away of skin color as due to sun exposure rather than heredity/ethnicity. While she is certainly not the first to investigate a connection between textual descriptions of Sam's skin color and Hobbit ethnicity, it is a topic that bears repeating. This is especially true in light of the backlash lobbed against Elyanna Choi (2020) for making similar statements at the Tolkien Society's Tolkien 2019 conference, an incident that served to make it obvious why the time was right for a seminar on Tolkien and Diversity. In reflecting on this essay as a whole, I find that the four topics are each well-deserving of expanded treatment on their own; hopefully the author intends to do so in another venue.

Celis-Mendoza was the only author in this volume to take advantage of the advertised opportunity to submit papers in English as well as in an author's preferred language; a Spanish version follows the English, and is a welcome addition to the volume, especially as the paper focuses on the benefits of translation in opening up both scholarship and readership. Like Chunodkar, Celis-Mendoza draws attention to issues of limited accessibility, with both Tolkien's creative works (outside of *The Hobbit/The Lord of the Rings*) and his own scholarship being available in a limited number of non-English translations. The same is also true of biographies and biographical studies of Tolkien. But in addition, the author draws attention to a wider problem of equal significance: very little of the non-English Tolkien scholarship is ever translated and hence escapes the notice of the English-speaking community of scholars; this is to the detriment of both the authors of this original scholarship, and the broader Tolkien scholarship community who could greatly benefit from their insights. Celis-Mendoza also notes that the situation is even more dire for fan-created works, which are often thoughtful, creative, and influential in their own right. Therefore, as the author sagely concludes, engagement with Tolkien's works by authors from different cultures will "bear a different fruit" and "their appreciation and scholarly analysis will enrich the soil where they are transplanted" (38). The remaining question is how we can best support increased availability of English translations of scholarship and fan works.

Robin Anne Reid, "How Queer Atheists, Agnostics, and Animists Engage with Tolkien's Legendarium," and Dawn Walls-Thumma, "Stars Less Strange: An Analysis of Fanfiction and Representation within the Tolkien Fan Community."

Similar to the first two essays, the next pair reflect a natural synergy, being reader-reception studies based on fan surveys. Reid's offering is part of a larger project interested in engagement with Tolkien's work by readers who identify as "atheists, agnostics, animists, and other participants in New Age movements" (53). The full mixed methodology data set (including quantitative demographic data and open-ended qualitative responses) consists of only 112 completed responses; this essay is based on a subset of 38 surveys from respondents who self-identified as "asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, or some combination" (54). Putting aside concerns with the relatively small sample size (which is not uncommon in these types of studies), the results can only be considered in isolation, as similar results for the entire data set are not presented. There is also an alternate explanation for Reid's conclusion that the relatively high percentage of respondents in "gender, romantic, and sexual minorities" (34% of the 112) reflects a true and meaningful higher representation of such individuals "among Tolkien fans than among the general population": similar to the high percentage of White respondents pointed out by the author, the data could be skewed by the social platforms the survey was posted to (as well as other sociological causes).

While these points are important to note, they do not detract from the overall message of the study; as reflected in Reid's ethnographic analysis of the open-ended questions, fan responses to Tolkien's works are both deeply personal and interestingly reflect universal themes, such as hope and environmentalism, and an appreciation for Tolkien's world-building and the overall complexity of his mythos. As Reid summarizes, her study suggests that there is much "shared by readers across the spectrum of religious and non-religious beliefs" (78). Perhaps the most interesting result is the personal observations of those who reject what Reid terms the "'Christian/Allegorical' reading, that the Christian meaning is the only correct meaning." There is a thoughtfulness, breadth, and depth in these responses that suggests that this is an area of study that deserves further analysis through a much larger survey. It is therefore hoped that someone will take up Reid's invitation to work on such a follow-up.

In contrast, Walls-Thumma's study specifically deals with fanfiction writers and readers, drawing from nearly 1800 respondents (1052 collected in 2015 and 746 in 2020). This essay also includes valuable material situating fanfiction's role in creating a space for female and queer fans (and the deeper investigation of similar characters), as well as summarizing issues of backlash against slash

writers, and a detailed explanation of the "10th Walker" trope (an idealized, often self-insertion character in the Fellowship, a version of the common and much-maligned Mary Sue character). Walls-Thumma's recounting of the "casual deployment of violent language" by the gatekeeping "Protectors of the Plot Continuum" (PPC) against the writers of such fiction has disturbing parallels to current online harassment of fans and scholars who promote a discussion of Tolkien and diversity by similar self-appointed "true fan" gatekeepers. This background material itself is a notable inclusion in the volume, and constitutes a beneficial introduction for readers who are not well-versed in issues surrounding fanfiction.

The demographic data of the survey reflects some similarities to Reid's smaller size as well as some interesting differences. For example, the vast majority were, as in Reid's case, White-identifying respondents (71% vs 74% found by Reid). However, 58% of Dawn-Thumma's respondents identified as being members of a group marginalized by "sexual orientation," a not-unexpected result given fanfiction's previously noted inclusive culture. Those interested in fanfiction will find the results of the survey interesting, especially in comparing author intentions to use fanfiction as a space in which to give increased voice/agency to female, queer, or BIPOC characters and how these intentions have (or have not) changed over 2015 vs 2020. But the larger discussion of fandom sociology threaded throughout the essay is perhaps the most obvious reason why this essay should be read well beyond those interested in fanfiction in particular. For example, the essay concludes by connecting prior weaponization of canon by fans against other fans in terms of fanfiction to current controversies surrounding Amazon Prime's *Rings of Power*, warning us that canonicity is habitually used as a "red herring that draws the discussion away from racist motives behind objections to more diverse representations of the characters" (103-4).

Joel Merriner, "Hidden Visions: Iconographies of Alterity in Soviet Bloc Illustrations for *The Lord of the Rings*."

Merriner's essay reminds us that diversity is a broad topic, especially when considered under the umbrella of alterity – the 'Other' (defined in relation to the majority or those in power). In particular, Merriner focuses on a particular minority interpretation of Tolkien, by three Soviet Bloc illustrators of Russian and Polish translations of *The Lord of the Rings* during the Cold War, specifically illustrators whose work "does not conform to the usual neo-medieval aesthetic associated with modern Tolkien visual culture" (108). Such representations could be subject to censorship, here not in terms of a strict adherence to "canonicity" (as defined by a self-designated dominant fandom culture) but rather in running afoul

of political censors. While the lack of illustrations in this volume is understandable from a copyright perspective, it would have been highly advisable to include URLs of representative examples available online.[5] Regardless, Merriner does an excellent job of describing Jerzy Czerniawski's Tolkien-based artwork and drawing comparisons to his other work, as well as identifying additional sources of inspiration in Primary World folklore. The second artist, Gennardij Kalinovskij, has a much narrower body of Tolkien related work, chapter initials, which does not lend itself to as detailed an analysis as full illustrations. The final artist, Sergei Iukhimov, has been the subject of previous analysis by Merriner; here the focus is strictly on specific pieces of iconography drawing upon bleak Soviet government architecture. While Merriner's connections seem to make sense, the lack of illustrations, coupled with less detail in the written description in this section, make it difficult for the reader to experience the full impact of the argument being made. Editors of future volumes in this series should strongly recommend that participating authors include URLs for representative illustrations.

Danna Petersen-Deeprose, "'Something Mighty Queer': Destabalizing Cishetero Amatonormativity in the Works of Tolkien," Sara Brown, "The Invisible Other: Tolkien's Dwarf-Women and the 'Feminine Lack,'" and Nicholas Birns, "The Lossoth: Indigeneity, Representation, and Antiracism."

The first two of these three thoughtful essays were among those most vociferously criticized by the seminar's detractors in online comments, again, based solely on the titles. Upon seeing the completed essays in print, these gatekeepers of 'true' interpretations of the canon would rightly be mightily disappointed, because of what these theory-based essays do *not* claim, rather than what they do (the warning about judging books by their covers extending to essay titles). All three focus on different types of minority communities – romantic/sexual preference, gender, and indigenous status – unpacking the characteristics of specific characters/populations within Tolkien's legendarium through a specific theoretical lens.

Petersen-Deeprose acknowledges from the start that "queer readings of literature are always controversial topics, both because of cultural prejudice and because the term 'queer' itself remains nebulous and difficult to define" (119), although Yvette Kisor's (2023) recent paper in this journal gives us valuable insight as to Tolkien's specific usage of the term. In this way, it is important to

[5] A recording of Merriner's presentation can be found at https://www.tolkiensociety.org/2021/07/recordings-of-tolkien-and-diversity-seminar-now-available/ and includes many images. The interested reader is strongly encouraged to read this essay in tandem with a viewing of this video.

begin such analysis with a focused set of definitions and expectations for the theoretical lens to be used in the analysis. This particular essay focuses on a specific flavor of 'queer,' as the subversion of the "cishetero amatonormative" relationship (in other words, relationships that are not limited to the narrow definition of an "exclusive, amorous" heterosexual relationship between individuals who identify with their "biological assigned sex" [120]). This definition admittedly leaves a wide continuum of possibilities, which is precisely the point; terms such as homo/heterosexuality, love, and desire have specific mainstream contemporary meanings, and, as Christopher Vaccaro explains, their "anachronistic use" can be "problematic" (Vaccaro 2). However, despite what the seminar critics suggested online, this essay does not posit that all of these non "cishetero amatonormative" characters are homosexual, only that many of Tolkien's characters "form non-heterosexual partnerships [which] transcend traditional gender categorization, and develop non-normative families that, while not necessarily homosexual, are deeply queer" (120).[6]

The first examples of nontraditional partnerships/family units analyzed here are the standard triumvirate, Frodo and Bilbo, Frodo and Sam, Legolas and Gimli, with the occasional mention of examples from *The Silmarillion* (Beleg and Túrin, Maedhros and Maglor). Perhaps the most interesting example is Sauron and Melkor, and Sauron's later relationships with Celebrimbor and Ar-Pharazôn (the latter two relationships "openly coded as homoerotic" [128]; it would be particularly interesting to revisit these in terms of their representation in Amazon Prime's *Rings of Power*). The critics of the essay's title would be disappointed to read the author argue that claiming that a couple is not "just friends" is not necessarily declaring them to be sexual partners; Petersen-Deeprose effectively argues – especially in the case of Legolas and Gimli – that friendship does not have to be "subordinate to romantic love and that a life partner must be a sexual and romantic partner" (123). It is ironic that it is the heteronormative reading that forces Legolas and Gimli's relationship to be read as 'queer' – as non-normative – rather than accepting it at face value as a 'normal' and "great love" (*RK* 360). Recent texts published in *The Nature of Middle-earth* concerning the relationship between "friendship and romantic or sexual love among elves" (124) – including the point that the same word is used for emotional love between friends and spouses in Quenya – are effectively utilized to make the case that "Same-gender love, it would seem, is not subordinate to heterosexual love" among elves (126). An analysis of Galadriel and Éowyn and their relationships gets lost in the greater argument, and perhaps might have been better served as a separate exploration.

[6] One is reminded that to so-called 'mundanes,' members of close-knit fandom groups (whose members consider themselves 'family') would be considered mighty 'queer,' even if they were strictly cis-heterosexual in the bedroom. Such is the inherent fluid beauty – and practical political danger – of the term 'queer.'

This is an essay that requires – and deserves – several readings to appreciate how Tolkien's own words invite us to think more deeply, and perhaps more openly, about definitions of love and family than a narrow modern lens would allow.

While Petersen-Deeprose's essay casts a wide net, Sara Brown keeps a laser focus on one long-neglected subpopulation in Middle-earth, Dwarf women. Pre-seminar online allegations to the contrary, Brown makes it clear that she is *not* making claims concerning Tolkien the man and sexism and misogyny, but rather pointing out in "reference to Dwarves: the absence of the maternal figure, the issue of procreation, and the lack of female presence within the narrative" (143). Brown does much with what relatively little Tolkien wrote about Dwarf women in the legendarium (that fact alone helping to bolster her original point about the "feminine lack"). She carefully reviews the murky history of Dwarf women in the origin stories of their people and the curious fact that Durin – whose line is specifically said to never fail – has no mate in many versions of the creation myth. Central to Brown's concise and well-laid-out argument is the theoretical framework of Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, in particular the defining of women only in "relation to man" (as the "Other") (6) and in the resultant "'feminine lack,' the negative space against which the masculine identity differentiates itself" (150). In particular, Dwarf women – who seem so similar in appearance to their male counterparts that members of the other species "cannot tell them apart" – are defined only in relation to their men (*RK* 360).[7] This "lack" is also seen, for example, in the aforementioned origin stories, as Tolkien never arrived at what he considered a satisfactory explanation for the creation of female Dwarves. As Brown reflects, "Dwarf-women are obscured even in their moment of origin" (147); this silencing continues through the downplaying of their stereotypical role of mother and their physical similarity to males of their kind; theirs is an invisibility in plain sight. In the process, Dwarf-women are "not merely marginalized" but "effectively excluded from the narrative" (152). A similar analysis of Orc women utilizing Brown's theoretical framework might prove particularly interesting.

Nicholas Birns also makes impressive work from limited primary material (from Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*), delving into Tolkien's depiction of the Lossoth, an Indigenous people living in the cold north of Forochel that are "clearly modelled on the Inuit, Sámi, or Nenets" (154). Birns presents the Lossoth as a missed opportunity in Tolkien's world-building; rather than presenting us with a celebration of an Indigenous peoples in his depictions of the Lossoth, he instead turns them "into an avatar of colonialism" (155). For example, while the Lossoth are not depicted as evil characters, they are undeniably portrayed as "less

[7] Speaking of beards, *The Nature of Middle-earth* states that "All *male Dwarves* had them" but is silent about female Dwarves (187; emphasis original). What this means for female Dwarves is an ongoing point of online debate among fans.

noble and consequential" than the last king of the Northern line of the Dúnedain, Arvedui, and his people, in keeping with the hierarchical structure of Tolkien's world-view (explored in detail by Fimi [141]). Despite the obvious privilege implicit in both the author's portrayal of their interactions and Arvedui's "heedless self-confidence" (159), Birns makes the point that the Lossoth do play a meaningful role in the tale, in their operation as an "intermittent brake upon Eurocentrism, and an indicator that resistance to evil cannot be channeled through one model of identity or belonging" (155). As part of his carefully laid out argument, Birns draws upon real world precedents and contemporaries, including descriptions of 19th century Arctic exploration and related ethnographies as well as possible references to Indigenous peoples in *Beowulf*. In doing so, we see yet another argument against the all-too-common presumption built into much of Western medievalist Fantasy media that medieval Europe was a "White space" (Young 11), for as Birns points out, medieval Europe had "contact with Indigenous peoples in Greenland, Vinland, and the lands of the Sámi" (160). This essay demonstrates why further exploration of depictions of Indigenous peoples (or even individual characters) hidden within the nooks and crannies of Middle-earth should be a priority of Tolkien scholarship.

V. Elizabeth King, "'The Burnt Hand Teaches Most About Fire': Applying Trauma Exposure and Ecological Frameworks to Narratives of Displacement and Resettlement Across Elven Cultures in Tolkien's Middle-earth," and Clare Moore, "The Problem of Pain: Portraying Physical Disability in the Fantasy of J.R.R. Tolkien."

While King's essay could easily have been discussed in concert with Birns', I have elected to pair it with Moore's, as both focus on trauma (psychological in the first, physical in the second). The natural flow of each essay's focus to the next reflected in the book's layout is a testament to Sherwood's editorial skill (as is the fact that no single essay is inordinately long, as has been the case in some previous volumes in this series [Kane 2022]). King reminds us that Tolkien's characters live in Arda Marred, a world in which Melkor's stain affects all peoples. In particular, this essay focuses on the effects the trauma associated with forced displacement/migration and refugee status had on the elf realms of the Third Age (Rivendell, Lothlórien, and Mirkwood). As in the previous three essays, King firmly situates the discussion within a theoretical framework, here social ecological models that interrogate the two-way connections between individuals, communities, events, and time (as the same event can have a very different impact on two individuals experiencing the trauma in different stages of life). In terms of Tolkien's elves, King also points out that trauma has "multifinality" – the same experiences lead to different results in the lives of an

individual, and the importance of "intergenerational transmission of trauma" (170).

King's first case study is Elrond, a character who undeniably experiences significant trauma (both individually and, as explored in an appendix, in an intergenerational sense as well).[8] While King makes some clear points in this section, it is curious that the essay ignores well-documented parallels with trauma in Tolkien's own life (for example, losing his parents, being a foster child, war experiences, etc.). Case Study Two centers on the "Sindarizing" of the wood elves by the Sindarin princes and Noldorin exiles (combining Mirkwood and Lothlórien). This section includes numerous lost opportunities to strengthen the argument further. For example, the section on language as an "*explicit* cultural weapon" (177; emphasis original) needs to be further unpacked. There is also the issue (relegated to a footnote) of an unclear definition of what "Sindarin princes" means, including the lack of definitive bloodlines for Amdir and Oropher (178). The author is led to speculate here, and, generally speaking, in some ways this essay is the most speculative of the volume. While this is not a problem in and of itself, it should be openly admitted as such. Part of the problem is the incomplete and contradictory nature of Tolkien's writings on the subject of Galadriel's history and its relation to the Sindarin princes (mainly found in *Unfinished Tales*). However, Brown also deals with similar challenges in her essay, and does so more successfully. The connection between a specific trauma and the experiences of the Sindarin princes and Noldorin exiles is not as clearly argued as it had been in the case of Elrond. While the role of the Fëanorean oath in generating trauma in Middle-earth is incontrovertible (and would be connected to Galadriel), it is less clear how it plays a central role in the lives of the Sindar, who never traveled over sea. Perhaps the essay should have expanded its analysis on Elrond in lieu of the addition of the second case study.

The volume finishes with Clare Moore's exploration of physical pain as a disability in Middle-earth. Moore's brief recap of previous studies of depictions of disability in Tolkien's works simultaneously demonstrates that this is an important area for scholarship, and that there has not been nearly enough of it done thus far. Moore carefully situates her argument for the non-expert, first contrasting the social model (disability is "the result of a non-normative body engaging in a world engineered for 'normate' bodies" [191]) with the medical model (disabled persons are limited by "physical or intellectual impairments" [192]). She then clearly defines her specific case study – physical disability caused by the pain of injuries suffered in adulthood by Beren, Maedhros,

[8] This appendix recounts the intergenerational trauma going back to Thingol and Melian on one side, Turgon and Huor on another. While it is an interesting summary, and may be valuable to the reader who is not fluent with *The Silmarillion*, it is not clearly explained how this deep-time trauma directly impacts Elrond.

Morgoth, and Frodo[9] – and states her thesis: not only does Tolkien not emphasize the initial pain of a disabling adult injury, in those limited instances when Tolkien offers a "vivid portrayal of pain as part of the lived experience of disability after the injury" it is "inherently tied to, and predominantly subsumed into, the experience of psychological and spiritual pain" (193). The argument is clearly and cogently laid out for each example, with Moore drawing connections to mythic and medieval literature examples and giving generous credit to previous scholarly work related to the topic. There is also the occasional invitation for other scholars to continue the investigation, for example in noting that a separate paper should be written aligning Morgoth's vivid pain with his designation as chief villain (197). In this way Moore models the best of what we hope Tolkien scholarship continues to offer – acknowledging our past, looking towards the future, and offering keen insights in the present.

To borrow from (and expand upon) Petersen-Deeprose's essay, taken in total this volume demonstrates that while Tolkien's vision "can reinforce gender [and racial and religious and other cultural] norms . . . beneath the surface, it in fact destabilizes" these and more (137). Therefore, as Sara Brown argues, "a fresh outlook on Tolkien's work can only be a benefit to the wider scholarly conversation" (142). This point is echoed by Moore in her conclusion: there remains much more to do in terms of disability studies and Tolkien, work that "will only deepen our understanding and appreciation of Tolkien's legendarium" (199). This volume is yet another important step forward in Tolkien scholarship, inviting others to engage their hands and minds in the mining of those diamonds in the rough that remain both beneath the surface and hidden in plain sight. Rather than undermining the foundation of Tolkien fandom and scholarship, honest and open interrogation of all aspects of Middle-earth – the beautiful as well as the problematic – can only aid in our ultimate appreciation of Tolkien's works. Understanding that Middle-earth exists in Arda Marred does not mean that we need reject it, or love it any less, but only that we are willing to love it honestly and with eyes wide open.

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[9] While reading the essay I was struck by the fact that Celebrían could have also been included, although there is clearly less written about her than the four characters Moore included.

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