Stuart D. Lee, editor. *A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien. 2nd edition*. **Wiley Blackwell, 2022, xxxiv + 556 pages**

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In his excellent analysis of Tolkien's prose, Steve Walker pointed out that "seldom has a literary work stirred such a maelstrom of critical controversy as swirled around *The Lord of the Rings* at its publication" (1). More than half a century later, this statement remains more than correct. That maelstrom of critical approaches has increased steadily to reach an impressive number of publications on Tolkien's work in recent times.

The book reviewed here is an heir of the new approaches and reassessments of Tolkien's *oeuvre*. Furthermore, it brings some order in this morass of publications and posthumous books, so diverse in scope, academic depth, and quality. Tolkien and his work have finally entered the canon of Anglo-American studies, a milestone marked by its admission into the prestigious Blackwell Companion collection next to topics such as "American Gothic," "Translation Studies," "Victorian Literature and Culture," and "Modernist Poetry," just to quote the topics of the immediately previously published four volumes of the series when the first edition was released in 2014. Carefully edited again by Stuart D. Lee —one of the outstanding names of recent Tolkien critical scholarship and co-author of one of the most imaginative books on the relationships between Tolkien's fiction and medieval English literature (Lee & Solopova)—, the volume maintains its original division into five main thematic areas—Life, The Academic, The Legendarium, Context and Critical Approaches—preceded by an editorial introduction and the customary explanation on the reasons to pursue a second edition; these are mainly three, namely a) the possibility to include extra essays on areas that were neglected in the first edition; b) to cope with the appearance of a vast number of important publications in the field (from 2104 to 2021) that needed to be taken into account; and c) to consider the new visual materials that appeared in that same period, namely the Tolkien 2019 'biopic' directed by Dome Karukoski, Peter Jackson's take on *The Hobbit* and the Amazon series *The Rings of Power*, which was finally released last year. With the fantasy genre placed back in the

mainstream, a new revised and expanded second edition seemed the most appropriate path to tread. Assuming no prior knowledge of the contents of the first edition, I will proceed with a thorough examination of the volume's organization and materials.

After the customary and, in this case, rather extensive pre-introductory material—Acknowledgements, Notes on Contributors, Editorial Practices and Abbreviations and a Bibliography and brief Chronology (i-xxxiii)—, the editor offers a brief and concise introduction that appropriately describes the philosophy of this second edition. In a volume of considerable length and with so many sections and chapters, the reader appreciates not having to read a review-like introduction. With this brief account the reader has the essential information needed to immediately plunge into the different and well-structured sections of the volume.

"Part I: Life" (1-18) presents a biographical approach to Tolkien's life. Dealing with Tolkien's biography in fewer than 20 pages constitutes, as the Old English poet once said, an *enta geweorc* indeed, a highly difficult task, as attested by the in-depth previous work of Carpenter (*Tolkien*) and the exhaustive thousand-page long chronology by Scull and Hammond (Vol. 1). Notwithstanding, John Garth's "A Brief Biography," the only chapter included in this section, succeeds at presenting an excellent contribution to the topic. Garth, author of two of the most fascinating biographical books on Tolkien, manages to summarize the essence of Tolkien's life in a well-built chapter. Those who have never read a biography of Tolkien will be able to have a clear picture of the necessary background to go on reading the rest of the volume. Those who are already familiar with Carpenter's Tolkien biography and *The Inklings* and Scull and Hammond's *Companion & Guide* will have a perfect summary of the main events to refresh those readings and to have the appropriate contextual/historical perspective for the other sections in this *Companion*.

"Part II: The Academic" (19-64) contains three articles covering Tolkien's main occupation as medievalist, Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford and member of the British *academia*. Since his fiction was so deeply influenced by his love and knowledge of medieval languages and literatures, it is most logical that this *Companion* opens with a section devoted to trace this area in his life. Thomas Honegger's "Academic

Writings" deals with Tolkien's scholarly publications on words, language, and literature, covering from the most famous ones on *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, to the lesser-known works on some Old English poems and texts. Honegger's survey is sound and provides the reader with the necessary understanding of how these academic pieces "have become increasingly inter- and metatexts for the interpretation of Tolkien's works of fiction and thus gained a new lease of life" (30). A separate chapter is devoted to his philological editorial activity. Tom Shippey's "Tolkien as Editor" deals with a central issue in understanding Tolkien's attitude towards philology and writing: editing as the central role of his professional activity, with translation as a "more personal by-product of his editorial work" (34). Shippey deals at length with Tolkien's most famous and influential editions—*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Exodus* and *Beowulf*'s Finnsburg episode—and translations, and offers enough discussion on the rest of his less known editorial work. The reader, thus, appreciates the importance of this activity for Tolkien and his fictional creativity. Closing this initial section, Stuart D. Lee's "Manuscripts: Use, and Using" covers another aspect of this division between the author and the academic as it discusses "how Tolkien the medievalist worked with manuscripts (…) but also how his professional experience filtered into his creative work" (49). After introducing the topic, which deals with the presence of manuscripts in Tolkien's fiction, and considering Tolkien's own manuscripts, since he was a constant rewriter of his own work, Lee offers a practical analysis to exemplify this fact, reviewing the process of how the "Shelob's Lair" chapter from *The Two Towers* was composed. This analysis of the manuscript variants of the chapter made by collating them all enables the reader to understand how crucial manuscript studies are in the study of Tolkien's fiction; this has been recently well attested by the exhibition (and subsequent catalogue by Schaeffer & Fliss) *J.R.R. Tolkien: The Art of the Manuscript*, held at the Haggerty Museum of Art at Marquette University (home of the second most important Tolkien Ms archive), from August 19th to December 22nd, 2022.

The next block, "Part III: The Legendarium" (65-188), contains ten articles that review Tolkien's main body of fictional work, commonly known by that label. The two initial chapters of this section give the necessary theoretical background to understand the meaning of the legendarium. In "Myth-making, Sub-creation, and Word-building",

Carl Phelpstead covers the foundation of the theoretical concepts that built Tolkien's mythology, while Leslie A. Donovan, with "Middle-earth Mythology: An Overview," offers an accurate description of the mythical architecture of Tolkien's world of fiction. The remaining eight chapters of this section go into specific works.

The Silmarillion is a complex corpus of mythological texts written by Tolkien over many years, whose image is shaped not only by the fragments written by Tolkien through his life but also by the volume of that name edited and published by his son Christopher Tolkien. Gergely Nagy's "*The Silmarillion*: Tolkien's Theory of Myth, Text and Culture" deals with how this body of work helps readers to understand the depth of the remaining works of Tolkien's legendarium.

John D. Rateliff is one of the most noted experts on *The Hobbit*. His monumental analyses of the novel's textual history constituted a landmark for Tolkien studies, combining philological accuracy with outstanding literary criticism and critical analysis. His expertise is distilled in a brief and brilliant chapter ("*The Hobbit*: A Turning Point") devoted to the book's writing process, the influence that Tolkien's medieval scholarship had on its themes, and the connections that it shares with the rest of the legendarium and with children's literature as a genre. This chapter is immediately followed by John R. Holmes' review of *The Lord of the Rings*. Holmes signals the reasons to consider Tolkien's major work a modern classic, and offers a brief note on the origin of the novel, its structure, and thematic depth.

In "*Unfinished Tales* and the History of Middle-earth: A Lifetime of Imagination", Elizabeth A. Whittingham provides an analysis of the different materials that Tolkien wrote throughout his life that were edited, profusely annotated, and published by Christopher Tolkien as *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* and as *The History of Middle-earth* in twelve volumes. Whittingham spells out the contents of those works and highlights the importance of the huge editorial task carried out by Christopher Tolkien to grant us access in a readable form to these essential texts, which provide phenomenal density to Tolkien's created world. This huge task has been fully recognized quite recently by Richard Ovenden and Catherine McIlwaine (2022) in the volume of essays in his memory, published by the Bodleian Library, home of the most important Tolkien Ms archive. His passing opens for sure

an unknown stage for the future editorial history of Tolkien's (un) published materials.

The last four chapters of this section focus on the rest of Tolkien's works. All of them try to establish that, although their subjects are considered sometimes as minor or less relevant works, they do belong with Tolkien's legendarium in their own right. Thus, Verlyn Flieger's "'The Lost Road' and 'The Notion Club Papers': Myth, History, and Time-travel" aptly examines Tolkien's unfinished time-travel stories and their connection with his major works. Corey Olsen's "Poetry" reviews the Tolkienian poetic corpus by analyzing not only the poems published by Tolkien in different journals through his life but also those forming part of his main body of work. Maria Artamonova's "'Minor' Works" deals with *The Father Christmas Letters, Roverandom, Mr. Bliss, Farmer Giles of Ham, Leaf by Niggle* and *Smith of Wootton Major*. She reviews them not only in isolation—explaining why most of them are works of outstanding literary qualities—but also in their connection to the legendarium outlining the reasons why they are perfectly related to the mythology and the themes Tolkien was so deeply interested in. Arden R. Smith's "Invented Languages and Writing Systems" is a detailed account of Tolkien's languages as they appear in his works and on their narrative influence.

"Part IV: Context" (189-352) constitutes an interesting and rather novel section. Although filled with extraordinary chapters, the customary work-by-work coverage offered in Part III conforms to a classic critical approach to Tolkien, similar in organization to what has been offered in earlier critical works. This section presents a different and innovative way of organizing the information, placing Tolkien's works in a thematic context and reviewing accordingly general areas that have influenced Tolkien's creation. They offer, thus, a literary context or a tradition into which Tolkien's works could be inserted.

We could separate the thirteen chapters that form this section into three different subparts. The first one places Tolkien in the wider context of fantasy literature with three newly commissioned chapters: Edward James's "Fantasy: An Introduction", which traces the history of fantasy and the fantastic, and the critical approaches to its academic study, in a succinct but complete and very clear manner; Hamish Williams's "Classical Literature", whose contribution, as the author himself states,

"discusses the influence of Classical literature, that of ancient Greece and Rome, on the life and creative works of J.R.R. Tolkien (203)"; and Juliette Wood's "On Fairy-stories and Folktale research", which not only revises the famous lecture—and its subsequent publication— that Tolkien gave at St. Andrews University, but also offers a practical application of his folklore theories with a comparative analysis of Galadriel's mirror in *The Lord of the Rings* with the mirror motif in Snow White and related folktales. By doing this, Wood sets clear, as the previous two sections also contribute to back up, that Tolkien's "essay "On Fairy-stories" is essential for understanding his ideas about fantasy (…) a better understanding of the interplay between fantasy writing and traditional folk narratives can deepen our appreciation of both "fairy-tale fantasy" and folk narrative and of those qualities that keep fairy-tales alive. (222-223)".

The second one deals with Tolkien's medieval background. Here we find five chapters that analyze not only Tolkien's knowledge of several medieval languages and literary contexts but also how such knowledge shaped important aspects of his works. Dealing with the earliest stages of the English language, Mark Atherton's "Old English" and Elizabeth Solopova's "Middle English" present introductions to the divisions of Tolkien's most relevant medieval background in language and literature. They complement Honegger's chapter on Tolkien's academic writings by expanding on traditional approaches to this subject in which specific elements of both contexts were traced. Atherton includes this standard approach (elaborating his point on Anglo-Saxon culture and language and their influence on aspects of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* using Shippey's *Road to Middle-earth*). Moreover, he goes beyond that, offering an account not only of Tolkien's professional expertise on Old English but also of how he used such expertise creatively, how he exploited as a writer Old English language and names, Old English texts and literature, and the philosophy contained in them. Atherton's section on "Anglo-Saxon Attitudes and the poem *Maxims II*" offers a practical example of how to connect Old English literature with the use Tolkien made of it in a given work of fiction, which is complementary to previous discussions on the subject such as the one offered by Lee and Solopova (232-233). It is sound that Atherton finishes his piece by connecting his point to Lee and Solopova, as Solopova herself complements Atherton's chapter with an excellent depiction of the connections between Tolkien

and Middle English. From a general description of Tolkien's scholarly achievements in the field through his many publications, she proceeds to highlight how "Tolkien's fiction and literary-critical writing were also influenced by his study of Middle English language and literature" (239). Middle English themes, plot elements and fictional models are studied by Solopova with great detail and concision despite the brevity of the chapter.

Tom Birkett presents a similar approach in "Old Norse," which reviews the influence that this language, literature, and culture exerted on Tolkien's work. By granting that "well-attested influence" (247), Birkett starts his essay with a definition of the label "Old Norse" and continues with an extensive analysis of Tolkien's scholarly works on Old Norse and of the traces of it in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Birkett also provides a brief section on *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* and its relation to Tolkien's legendarium.

The admiration that Tolkien felt for Finnish in general and for *Kalevala* in particular has also been well-attested by Tolkien himself and his critics. Lenna Kahlas-Tarkka's "Finnish: The Land and the Language of Heroes" begins by acknowledging earlier studies on this topic (specially Chance and Petty). From this initial section on the state of the art she proceeds with brief and precise short sections on Lönnrot, Tolkien and *Kalevala,* Tolkien and Finnish, and Tolkien and the story of Kullervo. Nothing is left uncovered.

This subsection on medieval influences finishes with J. S. Lyman-Thomas' piece on "Celtic: 'Celtic Things' and 'Things Celtic'—Identity, Language, and Mythology," an issue sometimes neglected in discussions of Tolkien's medieval background. Lyman-Thomas sees Tolkien's own distaste of "things Celtic" as one of the reasons little attention has been paid so far to this topic (271). Recent times have seen a great deal of work on this area, though; after acknowledging those pioneer scholars, Lyman-Thomas discusses the issue from the point of view of identity (Tolkien's sense of what is Celtic through language and culture), language (Welsh as a model for Sindarin) and mythology (Elves and Welsh mythology). He presents a neat summary of what has been stated so far and defines some avenues of research to follow.

The third subpart of this section concerns the placement of Tolkien in English literature as a whole and in the fantasy fiction genre he did so much to shape and even create. Nick Groom's "The English Literary Tradition: Shakespeare to the Gothic" succinctly covers an enormous topic, as wide in Tolkien's scholarship as the previous one on Celtic issues. He begins the discussion by defending the existence of "important strands of thought in the period 1550 to 1800 that profoundly affected Tolkien's overall vision" (284); he tackles the traces of English literary sources of inspiration other than medieval in Tolkien's works, and establishes an adequate link between medieval influences and the subsequent modern ones covered by the final four chapters.

These final pieces deal mainly with pre- (Rachel Falconer's "Earlier Fantasy Fiction: Morris, Dunsany and Lindsay") and post- (Dimitra Fimi's "Later Fantasy Fiction: Tolkien's Legacy") Tolkienian fantasy fiction and with the context in which Tolkien wrote both in (David Bratman's "The Inklings and Others: Tolkien and His Contemporaries") and out of the Inklings (Anna Vaninskaya's "Periodizing Tolkien: The Romantic Modern"). Vaninskaya's essay addresses the important question of setting "what exactly, then, was Tolkien's period?" (338) for a writer who "was active … from the 1910s, which may (arguably) be classified as the tail end of the nineteenth century, to the 1970s—the height of postmodernism" (338). That Tolkien as a writer (modern, modernist, and even post-modernist as Verlyn Flieger has aptly argued in her wonderful 2005 essay) belongs to the literary period(s) he wrote in is a fact these final contributions (especially Vaninskaya's piece) to Part IV emphasize convincingly.

"Part V: Critical Approaches" (353-534) continues with the novel approach of the previous section with a thorough examination of critical approaches to Tolkien's works from almost every possible point of view. The section begins with two excellent chapters that place the reception of Tolkien's fiction and its style in context.

Patrick Curry, known in Tolkien scholarship particularly for his controversial and excellent *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* (1997), starts this section with a splendid piece—"The Critical Response to Tolkien's Fiction"—that examines the negative (and frequently wrongly grounded) criticism Tolkien's works have received since *The Hobbit* was first published. Dismantling such wrongly

constructed criticism with an accurate historical survey, Curry not only describes the critical unfairness Tolkien suffered but also states how recent critical studies have presented better-grounded analyses that have highlighted the literary quality of the Tolkienian legendarium. Curry puts special emphasis on Tom Shippey's seminal works *The Road to Middle-earth* and *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, and several other critics who followed his example. In the next essay, "Style and Intertextual Echoes," Allan Turner follows this lead by focusing on how Tolkien's style (or rather Tolkien's *poor* style) has always been dealt with negatively by critics as a kind of biased mantra that has been repeated without giving real examples demonstrating such a conclusion. As Turner points out, when critics have severely judged Tolkien's style "in spite of giving examples of writing that they find unsatisfactory, neither of these critics manages to explain clearly and concisely what it is that they object to, but both seem to assume that the reasons for their conclusions will be evident to the reader" (374). Using Shippey's seminal works, Turner tries to cover this critical gap in the field of in-depth analyses of Tolkien's style. Despite limited space, Turner manages satisfactorily to cover the essential arguments defending Tolkien's stylistic excellence. This chapter constitutes certainly a must for subsequent future stylistic analysis of Tolkien's works, such as the one recently published by the very editor of the volume, Stuart D. Lee ("Were many paths and errands meet").

The remaining chapters of section V cover several main anthropological and conceptual themes that contribute to create the complex *Weltanschauung* of Tolkien's legendarium. Two separate subsections can be found in this final part: the first subsection contains essays on thematic/ideological concepts that are self-explanatory in their titles. Despite their obvious labels, the authors offer insights that are excellent in every case. Anna Caughey's "The Hero's Journey" deals with the obvious Campbellian mythic heroic structure in narrative fictions present in every quest adventure. Many authors have explored this aspect before in Tolkien's fiction and heroes (and she quotes the important references) but this anthropological quest analysis is enlarged by Caughey as she establishes a sound connection to the Quest genre of the Middle Ages and its role in Tolkien's works, especially in the development of the so called "eucatastrophic turn" of events in story-telling. Caughey's expansion is more than adequate and her understanding of this complex topic helps to clarify the issue. The same level of clarity and

concision is found in Christopher Garbowski's "Evil," which addresses this complex category from different points of view: Tolkien's war experience as a source (following Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War*), evil and sub-creation, power and dominance as key issues in the good-evil divide and its subcategories (polyphonic good, monological evil, evil as action, evil as privation). He succeeds, thus, in describing the huge importance evil has as a topic in Tolkien's legendarium. There is no less complexity to Liam Campbell's "Nature," a masterly handling of an issue that, mainly since Curry and ecocriticism, has been considered a vital element in Tolkien's works. Readers will benefit enormously from Campbell's deep knowledge of this subject matter (see his 2011 *Ecological Augury*) as he unfolds a clear analysis of how Nature "is never a trivial matter for Tolkien" (421), either personally or thematically as a writer.

The same personal point of view appears in Pat Pinsent's "Religion: An Implicit Catholicism," which starts from Tolkien's religious background to develop a brief study on certain religious aspects of his writing, mainly connected with *The Hobbit*. Although for the author "religion" is exclusively Catholicism, I think that the essay would have benefited from a wider spiritual perspective. That "further research investigation" (435) Pinsent calls for at the end of her essay could include this perspective as a complement to her account of Tolkien's Catholicism.

While Christopher Garbowski in his section on "Evil" mentioned Tolkien's war experience as a source he used to develop his ideas on evil, Janet Brennan Croft's "War" offers an excellent complement to that by elaborating on war as a motif in Tolkien's books, one drawn directly from his own war experience. After describing this experience and Tolkien's transformation of it into literary material, Croft includes two final and highly interesting sections: "The Wounds That Will Not Heal," in which she applies some elements of trauma theory to define Tolkien's interest in depicting how some mental war wounds never heal in the real world; and "War: Just or Unjust?," two pages which provide a concise and accurate account of the (un)just motivations of warfare itself, the morale behind fighting, and the role these questions play in Tolkien's use of war as a topic. An excellent conclusion provides suggestions for further research.

This first subsection of Part V ends with two essays on two infrequently discussed topics in Tolkien's Criticism, namely otherness and difference, and women and the role female characters play in his works; Adam Roberts' "Women" elaborates extensively on the latter trying to "challenge the view that Tolkien's treatment of women is fatally limited" (448). Roberts succeeds in doing so, as the argument that he builds and the analysis of female characters that he offers are sound and relate the issue to other topics that open the mind of the reader to a new understanding of femaleness in Tolkien's art. A similar goal is attained by Cristopher Vaccaro in the newly commissioned chapter "Difference and Otherness", which defends the current need of such studies in a time like ours "when ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual minorities are scapegoated by some to promote right wing, nationalist attitudes that are staunchly xenophobic" (460). Vaccaro's take on this complex issue calls for a close reading of his texts as something that should compel any reader that J.R.R. Tolkien was as aware of difference and otherness as much as any writer of his time. Vaccaro aptly covers the essentials on the abject, women and feminine as the other (completing Roberts's previous view), gender studies and the queer, Peter Jackson's films and Tolkien studies today. There is a lot to be done as far as the study of otherness and difference in Tolkien's writings is concerned, but Christopher Vaccaro's piece contributes enormously to set firm, well-grounded foundations to be expand in future analyses.

The second subsection of Part V contains chapters that place Tolkien's works in relation to other forms of artistic expression. Christopher Tuthill's "Art" deals mainly with illustration and painting by reviewing the work of several illustrators (John Howe, Ted Naismith, Jef Murray and, secondarily, Alan Lee) in three specific iconic examples taken from *The Lord of the Rings*: The Balrog scene at the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, Éowyn and the Witch King, and the architecture of Minas Tirith. The analysis is excellent and highlights how this visual representation of Tolkien's fiction influenced the way in which generations of readers approach the visualization of his works. Although he quotes Hammond and Scull (*Artist & Illustrator*, but not *The Art of The Hobbit*), no specific section is devoted to discuss Tolkien's own art. Perhaps an essay on this topic, Tolkien as illustrator, should have been commissioned for this second edition, especially bearing in mind how since Catherine

McIlwaine's 2018 volume, *Tolkien. Maker of Middle-earth*, we all have a new understanding of Tolkien as painter and illustrator.

Concluding that "research on Tolkien's musical references and use of musical allusions through his mythology is a vast topic waiting to be explored" (494), Bradford Lee Eden's "Music" tries at least to start that exploration by presenting the essential lines of such an approach with the analysis of some sketches on music in *The Silmarillion* and some other works of the legendarium, and with a brief critical survey of the scholarship on this topic and of specific music based on Tolkien's works. This article was written with the aim of presenting a basic panorama to encourage research and Eden succeeds in such encouragement.

No consideration of Tolkien and the arts could be complete nowadays without a discussion of film adaptations, almost a separate topic on its own. Kristin Thompson, an expert on film studies and Tolkien on film, presents a detailed panorama of their history in "Film Adaptations: Theatrical and Television Versions". Rather than offering an in-depth examination of a specific film or set of films, Thompson chooses an exhaustive approach to give the reader—after a brief introductory background section—a complete and coherent overview of the film adaptations made—or never made—from Tolkien's material: the Morton Grady Zimmerman Project of 1957-1959, the 1967 *Hobbit* Short, the 1969 United Artists contracts and projects, Saul Zaentz and the Ralph Bakshi version, Rankin/Bass's *The Hobbit* and *The Return of the King*, a Soviet *Hobbit* from 1985, Finnish *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* TV movies from 1993, Peter Jackson's epic films on *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, produced by New Line, and a final couple of paragraphs on the new Amazon Prime series. These complete and informative accounts, excellent in their neat presentation of the most relevant details, could have been complemented with an additional essay giving a deeper critical analysis of the main films—Jackson's and Bakshi's—as works of art or/and as adaptations of Tolkien's works, along the lines of what readers could find—by Thompson herself among others—in Bogstad & Kaveny or in other pieces like Shippey's insightful article on Jackson's films ("Another Road to Middle-earth").

Part V closes its coverage of critical approaches with two interesting and complementary pieces by Péter Kristóf Makai and Cait Coker. Makai's "Games: Playable Arda" covers in detail the "story of how

Tolkien's creations have made their way into material and virtual games" (511). To trace that story Makai starts by highlighting the importance of "On Fairy-stories" (and Tolkien's definition of Enchantment, Fantasy, Primary and Secondary Belief) as a foundational theory for the development of gaming based on Tolkien. From this background, Makai develops a historical account of Tolkien-based games in chronological (and technological) order: wargaming and board games, role-playing games, computer games, and Massively Multiplayer Online RPGs. Makai also offers, in a brief concluding section, an analysis of certain general trends that analog and digital gaming have in common. Coker's newly commissioned chapter, "Fandom", addresses a very contemporary issue: Tolkien as a mega-franchise similar to Star Wars, Star Trek, Harry Potter or the Marvel Common Universe, just to quote the usual suspects. Coker describes, thus, the evolution of the concept revising Tolkien's early fandom from the 1950s and 1960s, the transformative fandom from the 1970s-1990s, the boom of the mega-franchises from the 2000s-2010s, and a final section that looks towards the future, from 2020s and beyond. The perfect way, indeed, to end the volume.

As a summary, all these final chapters are written with a high level of critical analysis and display an excellent degree of concision. In the brief space allotted to each chapter all authors succeed in covering deep topics with the utmost clarity and the widest critical scope possible. Virtually no important aspect is left unexamined and no major critical bibliographical reference is missed.

Regarding overall structure and organization, each chapter presents the same layout, with chapter endnotes (always contextual and informative, never just bibliographical), works cited exclusively in the chapter and, in the majority of them, a brief further reading list on the chapter's topic.

As a complement to the list of works cited in every chapter, this companion offers a General Bibliography (535-543) that does not reproduce the previously quoted works, but rather contains the following new information: a) a complete list of the "Works by J.R.R. Tolkien" (guiding the reader to Hammond & Scull's chronology to expand precise references) that is organized by the most recent edition of every work but with an extensive indication of its publication history, which facilitates a great deal the location of materials; it is fully updated as to

include Carl Hostetter's *The Nature of Middle-earth* (2021), first volume of the post-Christopher Tolkien era. Being closed for any further additions, the companion was late to include Brian Sibley's standalone edition of *The Fall of Numenor* (2022) and *The Battle of Maldon: together with The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth* (2023) edited by Peter Grybauskas; b) a "Further Reading" section offering, as the editor states, works which "supplement the individual bibliographies at the end of each chapter and are recommended to allow further explorations of the themes and topics in this volume" (539); and c) a list of Key Journals and Web Sites. The companion closes with an index of key words, works and authors (544-556).

All things considered, I think that the work presented in this new edition is really impressive. Tolkien, as an academic subject, is a complex and deep field of analysis. Such complexity was stated by Tolkien himself in a well-known letter to Milton Waldman (Carpenter: *Letters* 143) reprinted in some recent editions of *The Silmarilion*:

> You asked for a brief sketch of my stuff that is connected with my imaginary world. It is difficult to say anything without saying too much: the attempt to say a few words opens a floodgate of excitement, the egoist and the artist at once desires to say how the stuff has grown, what it is like, and what (he thinks) he means or is trying to represent by it all.

Every Tolkien expert knows that doing justice to the multilayered density of Tolkien's works is impossible in a brief sketch; instead, "a floodgate of excitement" is always opened in every companion, handbook, encyclopedia, guide, or specific study.

The volume described in this review opens such a floodgate again, so we all should celebrate its second expanded edition as it covers even in more detail every necessary aspect needed to understand the discipline. It keeps on constituting the essential reference to guide how this complex issue will be dealt with in the future, by offering at the same time new avenues for future research and a state-of-the art approach to the subject that complements what previous companions (Drout) or independent studies (Rosebury, Walker, and Zettersten) have already offered.

Note

This review is based on the text that I wrote to revise the first edition from 2014, which appeared in *Tolkien Studies* 12 (2015): 177-189, DOI 10.1353/tks.2015.0016. Since it was most coherent to maintain my arguments as I expressed them originally when reviewing those sections of the book with minimum or no changes and the philosophy of the book as a whole, using that text of mine as the main skeleton of this review had to be the only approach. The reading scope of both journals is also different, which gives even more sense to its being used as the basis of this review. My thanks go to Sara Georgi, Managing Editor, West Virginia University Press, publishers of *Tolkien Studies*, for granting me permission to use such content.

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