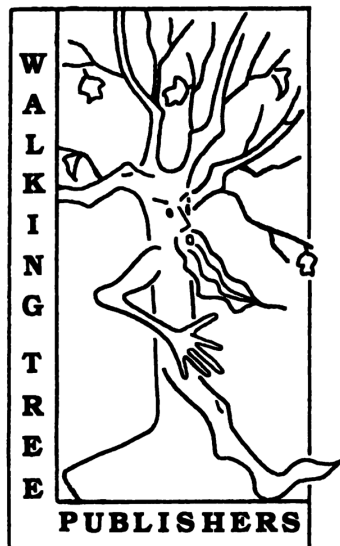


Call for Papers

The Romantic Spirit in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien

A volume in the Cormarë Series

Edited by Julian Eilmann & Will Sherwood



If we examine Tolkien research since the 1960s, we may conclude that the notion of Tolkien as a Romanticist is not a popular approach of interpretation: “When referring to Tolkien’s works, Romanticism is hardly the first genre that comes to mind” (Birks 28). His work has instead been largely interpreted within the context of his professional background as philologist and expert of medieval literature. The connection between Tolkien and the Middle Ages has thus become a commonplace of Tolkien scholarship: “Tolkien and the Middle Ages: a connection that seems self-evident and has frequently been dealt with by Tolkien scholars over the last years” (Brückner et al. 6). But as important as these studies grounded in history and philology may be, their dominance makes it difficult for other aspects of Tolkien’s complete works to become visible.

While Tolkien research has started to widen its scope with the aim of enlightening readers of Tolkien’s wider literary interests, the Romantic tradition has remained predominantly overshadowed. Scholars have repeatedly identified that the ‘Romantic Gothic opened imaginative spaces for fantasy in the broader sense’ (Roberts 29), but until Julian Eilmann’s extensive study *J.R.R. Tolkien – Romanticist and Poet* (2016) and Will Sherwood’s Master’s thesis *The ‘Romantic Faëry’: Keats, Tolkien, and the Perilous Realm* (2020), research has only sporadically acknowledged the Romantic motifs in Tolkien’s texts. Exceptions include R. J. Reilly’s *Romantic Religion: A Study of Owen Barfield, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien* (1971), Meredith Veldman’s *Fantasy, the Bomb and the Greening of Britain* (1994), and Michael Tomko’s *Beyond the Willing Suspension of Disbelief* (2015), all of whom understand Tolkien’s roots in the Romanticist tradition as a key to his literary work. The interest in the Romantic aspects in Tolkien’s

work was furthermore intensified in 2010 by the papers written for the Tolkien Seminar of the *German Tolkien Society* on the topic “Tolkien and Romanticism”.

Most recently Julian Eilmann’s 2016 monograph offered a widespread analysis and appreciation of the genuinely romantic quality of Tolkien’s legendarium. In context of the historical concepts of Romanticism, Eilmann traces these aspects in Tolkien’s poetic theory and literary work and especially focuses on Tolkien’s often neglected poetry in which the romantic spirit manifests itself most vividly. The book furthermore examines the romantic motifs in classic fantasy novels by George MacDonald, Lord Dunsany and others, thus illustrating the significant influence of Romantic aesthetics on modern fantasy literature. Will Sherwood’s research has sought to link Tolkien with the English Romantic Tradition through the poetry of John Keats. The poet was heavily admired by William Morris and the thesis argues that echoes of Keats run throughout Tolkien’s legendarium, providing a Romantic scaffold on which Tolkien built his Secondary World.

In continuation of the above-mentioned scholarship, this present book project (edited by Julian Eilmann and Will Sherwood) intends to bring together Tolkien scholars who are interested in using Romanticism and the Romantic tradition¹ as an interpretative framework for a deepened exploration of Tolkien’s work. The book is planned to be published in the second half of 2021 by Walking Tree Publishers. Authors are invited to contribute on topics of their choice. Possible research areas could be:

- The Pre-Raphaelites, Birmingham and the T.C.B.S.
- The Inklings as a Romantic literary circle.
- Victorian and Edwardian Romanticism and its influence on Tolkien
- The Romantic poetology and philosophy: Eilmann used mainly German Romanticism (Schlegel, Novalis etc.) as the framework for his Tolkien interpretation. Here a comparison with other national traditions (such as the immediate British that Tolkien was taught about) could be interesting.
- This leads to the more global research question: The diversity and heterogeneity of Romanticism as a philosophy and artistic movement makes a look at the different national Romantic traditions and their connection / differences to Tolkien’s work interesting.
- The Fairy tale tradition (Brothers Grimm and others)
- Nature and Landscape
- Imagination as a – if not *the* – key element of the Romantic poetology
- The Power of Poetry
- Pre-Romanticism of the Eighteenth Century (antiquarianism; the Gothic: Sublime, Terror, Horror, and the Supernatural; oral and written transmission; the ballad genre)
- Romantic irony

¹ When we speak of Romanticism and Tolkien it becomes evident that the famous fantasy writer was not a representative of the historical Romantic period of the first half of the 19th century but rather an author in the Romantic tradition who adopts certain aspects of a Romantic mind-set or worldview (cf. Eilmann 48-60). From this perspective his work can be understood as influenced by a superordinate and timeless Romantic spirit, as defined by scholars like Theodore Ziolkowski or Günther Safranski: “Romanticism as an epoch has passed away, but the Romantic as an attitude of mind remains. It almost always comes into play whenever discontent with reality and convention seeks escape, change, or the possibility of transcendence. The Romantic is fantastic, inventive, metaphysical, imaginary, seductive, exuberant, unfathomable” (Safranski 269).

- Romantic literary and linguistic scholarship of the 19th century and its influence on Tolkien as philologist and writer
- Romantic Medievalism vs Tolkien's Medievalism
- Rewriting the English Literary Canon
- Myth and world-building
- The historical novel genre within Tolkien's legendarium
- The Romantic spirit in fantasy literature: Romantic Motifs in other fantasy novels of Tolkien's predecessors and contemporaries
- Romanticism in other art forms (music, visual art etc.) and its connection to Tolkien
- Tolkien readers and fans and their Romantic approaches to Middle-earth

Please send an abstract (ca. 300 words) with a brief biography/bibliography by May 31st 2020 to julianeilmann@web.de and wsherwood92@outlook.com. The list of contributions will be finalized until the middle of June 2020. Papers should be handed in by December 31st 2020. Publication language is English.

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