

About this issue

The first Tolkien Seminar in Cologne took place on 24th and 25th of April, 2004. Its topic "Interpreting Tolkien" aimed at revealing the diversity and range of Tolkien's works as well as gaining insights into them. Its interdisciplinary approach is intended to further an interest in the different valuable interpretations of Tolkien's works. In this first issue, the talks given at the Seminar are presented as part of the current discourse on Tolkien. They are listed here according to their topics rather than the chronological order at the conference itself.

We start off with Marcel Bülles presenting a status quo of Tolkien research. He describes the situation of scholarly work on Tolkien, suggesting topics to be worked on in the future (such as the reader him/herself, or a more exact categorization of *The Lord of the Rings*). He offers several approaches on how to make Tolkien more accepted in academic circles. In his view, it is, for example, essential to have a closer look at the historical background as well as the background of academics and critics dealing with Middle-earth.

Oliver Bidlo's article deals with several general literary aspects of modern Tolkien research. He discusses Tolkien's statement that *The Lord of the Rings* is neither allegorical nor topical and proves this to be false on the basis of a hermeneutical concept of allegory. In addition to this, he explains the methodological conditions necessary to this kind of research.

Moving away from a general to a technical perspective, Thomas Honegger starts off with introducing research on Tolkien from a medievalist point of view. He suggests that fully understanding *The Lord of the Rings* with only the tools of the literary trade will not be as successful as an "interpretatio mediaevalia" based on Tolkien's biography. Different levels of interpretation are then available, such as talking about the motif of "wassailing", or (beyond the textual level) the concept of time, and a large number of intertextual relations become evident.

A comparable approach is presented by Thomas Fornet-Ponse with his "interpretatio christiana". By referring to Tolkien's biography and several statements made by the author, he explains the motivation and legitimacy of a Christian approach, and then presents different positions claiming an all-Christian approach as the only relevant one. He also talks about serious scholarly work on the Christian topics or background of *The Lord of the Rings* and suggests a future theological reception and its fields of research.

The next article, by Frank Weinreich, moves from theology to philosophy and the topic of freedom of will. He discusses the importance of freedom of will in any given ethical concept (and therefore a concept of good and evil) and points out the basic problems of the current discussion of freedom of will, i.e. the logical and the theological. Based on this, he discusses freedom as

presented in Tolkien's works and compares it to the views held by Erasmus of Rotterdam and Martin Luther. His conclusion shows the proximity of Tolkien's and Erasmus' view.

In a thorough comparison of both German translations of *The Lord of the Rings*, Rainer Nagel sheds some insight on the intricacies of translating Tolkien by discussing the intentions as well as the interpretations underlying either translation. He stresses that fact that in both cases the translations follow a strategy of functional translation determined by differing translatorial (and maybe editorial) intentions. In a final step of analysis, he discusses how these intentions have been realised in the published German editions.

The Tolkien Seminar's documentation is concluded by Alexandra Velten's article. It deals with the texts accompanying the orchestral score to the Peter Jackson films. The texts are presented in an overview and examined according to their contents and form, discussing whether or not they can be seen as true to Tolkien's textual legacy. Remarkable parallels can be drawn between the function of non-English texts in the book and in the films.

Another philosophical article comes from Gregor Raddatz, who discusses the development of Frodo on his journey on the basis of Hegel's speculative and Adorno's negative dialectic as well as the ethics of the Other by Lévinas. With Adorno and Lévinas, he refers to the mythical characters of Odysseus and Abraham, showing the close relation of Abraham and Frodo. According to him, Frodo's behaviour is to be strongly identified with Judaeo-Christian ethics.

Last, but not least, Stefan Rösch presents his dissertational project on the marketing of the sets of major film productions by tourism organisations, including the films by Peter Jackson.