

A Janus-headed View backwards

The year 2 after Jackson's movie trilogy, was marked largely by 'The Return of Normality'. The extended DVD versions had been released, watched, discussed, criticised, lauded, digested and absorbed into the critical scholarly discourse. In 2005, the three Tolkien-related academic events of national and international importance, respectively, did not focus on the movie in particular (nor did they make a point of ignoring it), but concentrated rather on Tolkien's books.

The first of these, in chronological order, was the Second Tolkien Seminar of the DTG held at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena (15 to 17 April). Nine scholars presented their papers exploring the question of Tolkien's view(s) of the world. The revised versions of these papers, which have been supplemented by additional essays on the topic, make up the bulk of the volume on hand. The Seminar, which was open to the public and attended by circa 80 people, some of which have come from as far as Cambridge or Zurich, provided a much-needed (inter-)national platform for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of Tolkien-related projects.

The second conference to be mentioned is, of course, the 2005 Tolkien Conference held at the Aston University Birmingham. It rivalled the 1992 Centenary Conference in scope, length and size. Over 600 registered participants from all over the world, among them a strong DTG contingent, convened in the town where Tolkien spent formative years of his youth. The organisers, in cooperation with numerous Tolkien societies, offered a rich and varied programme. Speakers with celebrity status (e.g. Tom Shippey, Verlyn Flieger), authors of important monographs on Tolkien (e.g. Patrick Curry, John Garth, and Christopher Garbowski), rubbed shoulders with internationally famous artists (e.g. Alan Lee, John Howe, and Ted Nasmith) and a plethora of Tolkien scholars and enthusiasts of lesser fame – though not necessarily of lesser quality. The conference committee had tried (mostly successfully) to arrange the panels, lectures, seminars etc. in coherent and meaningful sections; this effort paid off in so far as the individual speakers in a section would interact with each other and present different approaches to the same topic. We are all looking forward to the publication of the proceedings and although the organisers certainly deserve a break, a similar event in the not-too-distant future would be most welcome.

Wetzlar was the venue for the third conference, organised by the Phantastische Bibliothek, the DTG and the Inklings. On a slightly smaller scale than the DTG Seminar in Jena, it attracted about 50 people and offered a well-chosen

cross-section of (predominantly) German Tolkien scholarship. The papers, which dealt with a variety of Tolkien-related topics, are going to be published in the series edited by the Phantastische Bibliothek.

2005 also saw the publication of an ever increasing number of monographs and volumes of articles on Tolkien and his work. The review section of *Hither Shore 2* bears witness to this. *Tolkien Studies* presented in spring a substantial sequel to their first issue, Verlyn Flieger reworked and united her articles on *The Silmarillion* into a monograph, Marjorie Burns explores the Celtic and Nordic influences in her book, and Lynnette Porter discusses the fate of the minor characters of *The Lord of the Rings* in Jackson's adaptation. The 'American section' has thus once more proven their predominance in the field.

Yet the 'Old World' has not been idle, either. Lewis and Currie finished the second volume of their multi-volume series on Tolkien's influences and background, Allan Turner published his masterful study on translating Tolkien, and Walking Tree Publishers brought out a new volume with articles. German speaking scholarship also contributed to the field. Alexander van de Bergh presented his study on the contemporary relevance of Tolkien's work, and Honegger, Johnston, Schneidewind and Weinreich co-authored a monograph on the moral dimension of Tolkien's fiction.

Apart from the general academic publishers, European Tolkien scholarship has now the choice between three specialised publishers: Scriptorium Oxoniae (Germany, publications in German and English), Edition Stein und Baum (Germany, publications in German), and Walking Tree Publishers (Switzerland, publications in English). The three complement one another and provide European Tolkien scholarship with an excellent starting point for its dialogue and collaboration with the American Tolkien scholars. The increasingly bilingual nature of *Hither Shore* is also due to this need and wish for international co-operation. As Gildor said: "The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot for ever fence it out." So let us make a beginning by bringing down some 'linguistic' fences.

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