

Kascakova, Janka, and David Levente Palatinus, editors. *J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions, and the Legacy*. Routledge, 2024. pp. ix + 188. ISBN 9781032525587

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Janka Kascakova and David Levente Palatinus' edited book *J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions, and the Legacy* offers an in-depth examination of the development of Tolkien Studies in this region. The three chapters provide a substantial understanding of Hungarian, Slovakian, and Czech translations of Tolkien, and their reception in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the volume displays how the study of Tolkien might progress not only in Central Europe but also in the broader framework of the modern twenty-first-century evaluation of Tolkien's significance as a foundational figure in the fantasy genre.

The first part, "Reception and Translations of Tolkien in Hungary," which includes two essays written by Gergely Nagy, examines how J.R.R. Tolkien's works have been received and translated in Hungary in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Initially categorized as children's literature and science fiction, Tolkien's works were re-evaluated in the 1990s as influential classics. Nagy discusses the impact of Hungary's cultural and ideological shifts, especially the post-1989 period, and the influence of the 1970s "fantasy boom." The rise of new fantasy authors, like Andrzej Sapkowski and George R.R. Martin, in the 1990s prompted a reassessment of Tolkien's impact on literary studies. Nagy also emphasizes Peter Jackson's film adaptations in the early 2000s which renewed interest in Tolkien studies, leading to the formation of the Hungarian Tolkien Society in 2002. Nagy also addresses translation challenges and highlights key figures such as Árpád Göncz and Péter Kuczka in making Tolkien's works accessible to Hungarian readers.

The second part, titled "Reception and Translations of Tolkien in Czechoslovakia and Its Successor States," comprises articles that examine the influence and adaptation of Tolkien's literary works in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Janka Kascakova's research, "Mythologia Non Grata: Tolkien and Socialist Czechoslovakia," explores the impact of Tolkien's writings on Czechoslovakia's struggle for liberty against the communist regime, emphasizing the intricate relationship between literature, politics, and culture. Kascakova details the significance of a prominent individual, Victor Krupa, and the role of underground "Samizdat" publications in introducing Tolkien to Czechoslovak audiences, with a focus on cultural opposition to the communist dictatorship. The second article, Tereza Dedinova's essay, titled "Through Darkness, You Have Come to Your

Hope: The Dynamics of J.R.R. Tolkien's Work Reception in the Czech Context," examines the transformation of Czech readers' relationship with Tolkien, tracing its development from the communist era to the digital era. Dedinova's surveys offer valuable insights into the present-day attitudes of Czech readers, particularly those of younger generations who are well-acquainted with the cinematic adaptations of Tolkien's works. The essay explores issues of appreciation, criticism, and current societal sensitivity, such as female representation in Tolkien's texts.

The third essay, "J.R.R. Tolkien in the Slovak Press: Situation After 1990," written by Jozefa Pevcikova and Eva Urbanova, assesses the Slovak translations of Tolkien's mythology and examines their reception in academic journals, fanzines, and the mainstream press. The findings reflect a wide spectrum of opinions, encompassing both acceptance and criticism. Jela Kehoe's work, titled "Unknotting the Translation Knots in *The Hobbit*: A Diachronic Analysis of Slovak Translations from 1973 and 2002," looks at and contrasts the translations of "The Hobbit" by Viktor Krupa and Otakar Korfnek. Kehoe's primary focus is on the difficulties encountered in translation, specifically related to naming conventions and a culture-specific vocabulary, and the strategies employed by translators to address these constraints. This highly informative essay explores the complexities of translating literature, particularly in the field of fantasy fiction. It specifically considers the strategies of "domestication" and "foreignization" in translating children's literature and fantasy genres.

The third part of the book, "Studying Fantasy after Tolkien: Legacies and Contemporary Perspectives," begins with Martina Vrdnová's article, "Growing Up in Fantasy: Inspecting the Convergences of Young Adult Literature and Fantastic Fiction." Vrdnová explores the relationship between Young Adult Literature (YA) and the fantasy genre, noting their historical growth and interaction. She highlights the significant expansion of YA literature, attributing some of the genre's success to the integration of fantasy elements, as seen in popular series such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. Vrdnová argues that both YA and fantasy focus on the theme of identity exploration, making their combination particularly appealing. Using Jungian psychology and cognitive narratology, Vrdnová provides a deep insight into how these genres address complex issues relevant to young people. Nikolett Sipos's article, "One Does Not Simply Teach Fantasy: How Students of English and American Studies in Hungary View the Genre and Tolkien's Legacy," examines the perspectives of Hungarian university students on the fantasy genre and Tolkien's impact. The study emphasizes the importance of including fantasy in academic curricula, highlighting its cultural and educational value. Surveys conducted at the University of Pannonia and Pázmány Péter Catholic University reveal students' engagement with fantasy in various media and their interest in discussing it academically. The final article, "From Niche to Mainstream?" by David Palatinus, explores the ways in which screen culture and the rise of streaming services like Netflix, HBO, and Amazon Prime have made fantasy a widely popular genre. Palatinus discusses how these platforms use high production quality and transmedia storytelling to attract global audiences. He examines technological advancements in filmmaking, budgetary considerations, and the impact of audience engagement on the growth of fantasy in screen culture.

J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions, and the Legacy is an innovative book that showcases the significant contributions of Hungarian, Slovak, and Czech researchers to the field of Tolkien studies in the global realm of fantasy studies. The book comprehensively examines how Tolkien's work was received and translated in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, offering unique insights into the socio-political and cultural conditions that influenced the reception and appreciation of his work in these areas. An in-depth historical examination, focusing on the ideological changes after 1989 and the influence of Peter Jackson's films, this collection of essays enhances our comprehension of the intricate dynamics involved in the reception of speculative fiction. The book explores the place of fantasy literature in academic curricula and the impact of digital culture on the appeal of fantasy literature to contemporary readers. These modern perspectives illuminate fantasy literature's educational potential and its increasing prominence in the digital age, revealing readers' changing engagement with the genre. The book puts great emphasis on historical and translation aspects, although it sometimes neglects references to literary debates regarding representation, for example. Ultimately, the book provides a solid foundation of Tolkien's reception in Eastern Europe by providing extensive research of Tolkien's work and the challenges it has faced in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. This opens the door for future studies to delve deeper into the academic exploration of Tolkien's works and their lasting impact in different countries.