

# Environment, the World around us, and the Connatural World in Tolkien's Works

Call for Papers  
for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tolkien Seminar of the German Tolkien Society  
16-18 October 2026,  
at the Environmental Education Centre in Augsburg

“I am home among the trees.” (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, Chapter “The Old Forest”)

Forests, rivers, mountains and meadows are much more than mere backdrops in Middle-earth: they are carriers of history, mythological significance and ethical orientation. At the same time, many stories in Tolkien's oeuvre are marked by environmental destruction, industrialisation and the loss of ways of life close to nature – topics that are gaining new relevance in light of current ecological crises.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Tolkien Seminar is dedicated to the topic of **“Environment, the World around us, and the Connatural World in Tolkien's works”**, because Tolkien always constructs ‘world’ as a multi-layered structure of ‘environment’, ‘the world around us’ and ‘connatural world’. His narrative structure and ethical orientation are based on an interplay of these dimensions: the environment calls for preservation, the ‘world around us’ calls for critical reflection on boundaries, and the ‘connatural world’ calls for solidarity and responsibility. This semantic differentiation not only allows for deeper insights into Tolkien's narrative worlds, but also links them to contemporary discourses on ecology, community and transcendence.

Tolkien addresses ecological issues early on, particularly in his portrayal of nature and technology, for example in the contrast between the Ents and Saruman's industry. In this light, ‘the world around us’ becomes a poetic admonition: the world is not just our surroundings, but our ‘fellow beings’. At the same time, the semantic differentiation highlights Tolkien's philological thinking, in which the deconstruction and revitalisation of language functions as an act of cognition. Reflection on ‘the world around us’ and ‘connatural world’ can thus be understood as a Tolkienesque approach to the ethical, linguistic and ecological depth of his world-building.

The aim of this seminar is to bring together academic contributions from various disciplines that deal with questions of the relationship to nature, ecological ethics and the representation of the environment in Tolkien's works. An interdisciplinary view of Tolkien can offer a holistic perspective on sustainability issues in their ecological, economic, social and cultural complexity. Both textual analyses and interdisciplinary approaches – for example from ecology, sociology, philosophy or media studies – are welcome.

The conference will take place at the Augsburg Environmental Education Centre, the central location for questions of sustainability, environmental issues and the future in Augsburg. The Environmental Education Centre is located on the edge of Augsburg's city centre, but also borders one of the largest urban drinking water and nature reserves in Europe, thus enabling spatial proximity to complex questions about the ‘environment’ and ‘connatural world’.

Possible starting points for lectures could be:

- What surrounding, engulfing and separating significance do rivers, lakes and seas have in Tolkien's mythology?
- How are they staged symbolically, narratively or geographically?
- To what extent can ideas of sustainable economic and living practices be recognised in Tolkien's depiction of rural life, for example in the Shire?

- What ideals and warnings does the work convey with regard to the treatment of the natural environment?

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Seminar of the German Tolkien Society is supported by Walking Tree Publishers and will take place in a hybrid format (predominantly in person but with online options) at the Environmental Education Centre Augsburg on 16-18 October 2026.

Interested applicants are requested to send a short abstract (no longer than one page) and a short biography as well as their preference (attendance in person or online presentation) to Thomas Fornet-Ponse by 31 May 2026: [hither-shore@tolkiengesellschaft.de](mailto:hither-shore@tolkiengesellschaft.de)

### **Selected publications on the topic:**

- Behrooz, Anahit. 2024. *Mapping Middle-earth. Environmental and Political Narratives in J.R.R. Tolkien's Cartographies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Brawley, Chris. 2007. "The Fading of the World: Tolkien's Ecology and Loss in The Lord of the Rings." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18.3(71): 292-307.
- Brawley, Chris. 2014. *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Brotton, Melissa J., editor. 2016. *Ecotheology in the Humanities. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding the Divine and Nature*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Campbell, Liam. 2011. *The Ecological Augury in the Works of JRR Tolkien*. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers.
- Curry, Patrick. 2014. *Deep Roots in a Time of Frost. Essays on Tolkien*. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers.
- Dickerson, Matthew T. and Jonathan D. Evans. 2011. *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Paperback edition. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Di Paolo, Marc, editor. 2018. *Fire and Snow: Climate Fiction from the Inklings to Game of Thrones*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- DiPasquale, Willow Wilson. 2025. *Finding the Numinous. An Ecocritical Look at Dune and The Lord of the Rings*. Ashland: Kent State University Press.
- Dobrzynski, Dion. 2026. *Forest Ecology and Fantasy Fiction: Morris, Tolkien, Le Guin*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Flieger, Verlyn. 2000. "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle-earth." In George Clark and Daniel Timmons, editors. 2000. *J.R.R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 147-158.
- Fontenelle, Sébastien. 2025. *Tolkien contre les machines: écologie et antifascisme en Terre du Milieu*. Montréal (Québec): Lux éditeur.
- Giblett, Rod. 2021. *Wetlands and Western Cultures. Denigration to Conservation*. Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic.
- Hazell, Dinah. 2014. *Plants of Middle-Earth: Botany and Sub-Creation*. Ashland: Kent State University Press.
- Hither Shore* 11: *Nature and Landscape in Tolkien / Natur und Landschaft in Tolkien's Werk*. Interdisciplinary Journal on Modern Fantasy Literature. Edited by Thomas Fornet-Ponse et al. Düsseldorf: Scriptorium Oxoniae.
- Jeffers, Susan. 2014. *Arda Inhabited: Environmental Relationships in The Lord of the Rings*. Ashland: The Kent State University Press.

- Judd, Walter S.; Judd, Graham A., editors. 2017. *Flora of Middle-Earth. Plants of J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lehning, Amber. 2022. *The Map of Wilderland. Ecocritical Reflections on Tolkien's Myth of Wilderness*. Ashland: Kent State University Press.
- Light, Andrew. 2003. "Tolkien's Green Time: Environmental Themes in *The Lord of the Rings*." In Gregory Bassham and Eric Bronson, editors. 2003. *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy: One Book to Rule Them All*. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 150-163.
- Lioi, Anthony. 2018. *Nerd Ecology: Defending the Earth with Unpopular Culture*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Martinez, Ann M. 2017. "Elvencentricism: The Green Medievalism of Tolkien's Elven Realms." In Karl Fugelso, editor. 2017. *Studies in Medievalism XXVI: Ecomedievalism*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 31-42.
- Oziewicz, Marek; Attebery, Brian; Dědinová, Tereza, editors. 2022. *Fantasy and Myth in the Anthropocene. Imagining Futures and Dreaming Hope in Literature and Media*. London et al.: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Parrila, Sofia. 2021. "All Worthy Things: The Personhood of Nature in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium." *Mythlore* 40.1, Article 2. <<https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol40/iss1/2>>
- Simonson, Martin, editor. 2015. *Representations of Nature in Middle-earth*. Cormarë Series 34. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers.

## **DTG Conference Scholarship for Early Career Researchers**

The DTG offers one conference scholarship for early career researchers in the field of Tolkien studies for the 22<sup>nd</sup> DTG Tolkien Seminar (Augsburg, 16 to 18 October 2026).

The following specifications apply:

- 1) Applicants must be students, PhD candidates, or PostDoc researchers with (at the time of application) no more than one academic publication in the field of Tolkien studies, and be no older than 35 years.
- 2) Applications, consisting of a brief CV and a short presentation of any Tolkien-related research or other activities, can be submitted together with the abstract for the conference presentation.
- 3) The Board of Editors of *Hither Shore*, in consultation with the Board of the DTG, awards the scholarship. The Board of Editors of *Hither Shore* decides about the acceptance of submissions for the conference independently, so that applicants who did not succeed in securing a scholarship may still be invited to present their paper at the conference.
- 4) The scholarship is meant to cover all travel and accommodation expenses connected to the conference, as well as the conference dinner costs, up to but not exceeding € 500. The scholarship holder is reimbursement after the

seminar and once the receipts have been submitted. Each scholarship holder receives a certificate of achievement at the conference.

- 5) The scholarship holder is to submit his/her paper for publication in *Hither Shore*. It undergoes the same peer-review process as all other submissions.

Please send scholarship applications for the 22<sup>nd</sup> DTG conference on 'Environment, the World around us, and the Connatural World in Tolkien' (Augsburg, 16 to 18 October 2026) till 31 May 2026 to:  
Thomas Fornet-Ponse: [hither-shore@tolkiengesellschaft.de](mailto:hither-shore@tolkiengesellschaft.de)