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Delving Too Greedily: Analyzing Prejudice Against Tolkien's Dwarves as Historical Bias

Abstract

Tolkien's writings are imbued with the perspectives of their narrators and within them, the narrators' biases. This is most evident in the bias against the dwarves, particularly in the third age. Dismissing testimonials from neutral sources and dwarves alike, scholars have continuously inaccurately treated the anti-dwarf bias as a criticism of the Dwarves' relationship with nature. The criticisms levelled by scholars have led to the dwarves being dismissed as particularly environmentally destructive, a direct contradiction to how the dwarves interact with natural spaces and how they construct their own. Consequently, a more nuanced reading of the dwarves lends itself to the dismantling of the negative prejudices and stereotypes levied against the Dwarves and offers them a more just treatment in their own history.

Additional Keywords

Historical Bias; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Dwarves; Race and racism in fantasy literature; Historiography and historical bias; Dwarves in folklore



ELVING TOO GREEDILY:
ANALYZING PREJUDICE AGAINST
TOLKIEN'S DWARVES AS HISTORICAL BIAS

MITCHELL T. DENNIS AND KENTON L. SENA

GREEDY, MATERIALISTIC, EXPLOITATIVE; these are the common adjectives used in and exemplified by western cultural works to describe Tolkien's Dwarves. In particular, scholars use these adjectives in their criticisms of Tolkien's Dwarves in their works, founding their accusations in primary texts including Gandalf's famous quote on the Dwarves of Moria and the accounts of Dwarves in *The Silmarillion*, among other works. Furthermore, some adaptations, particularly in film, have reinforced these negative stereotypes relegating Dwarves to the role of comic relief. However, more recent film adaptations, fan fictions, and even music directly contradict these stereotypes, challenging the long-held opinion of many. Darvell notes that "it is easy to bring preconceived notions of what the dwarf is from other myths, fairy tales, novels, games, and even films" (42). We suggest that the typical western perspective on Tolkien's Dwarves, which marginalizes them as greedy, gold-crazed, and exploitative, stems from an uncritical, prejudiced perspective informed more from sources outside the text than a close reading of the text itself. If we treat Tolkien's works as historical texts recounting the history of Arda, we can interpret these harsher perspectives as a form of historical bias.¹

PRIMARY LITERATURE

Tensions between Elves and Dwarves are clear throughout *The Lord of the Rings*; this fraught relationship harkens back at least to an incident in Doriath during the First Age. Thingol, King of Doriath, came into possession of a Silmaril and the Nauglamír—each of them priceless heirlooms and artifacts. The Silmarils were wondrous jewels crafted by Fëanor, greatest of Elven smiths, to

¹ Bias, in particular, historical bias, has been discussed for thousands of years. However, although Polybius wrote first of bias in his lifetime (200 B.C.) (16), it is Tacitus's claim to be free from bias made a couple centuries later that is most often remembered. In his paper addressing ancient views on historical bias, Luce addresses an aside by Tacitus writing, "that readers more readily discern and despise the ambitious flatterer than the traducer, since the latter puts on a false front of speaking freely" (18). These two cases, the ambitious flatterer and the traducer, represent the two sides of bias, and it is the latter case that is the most evident when considering the case for bias in Tolkien's writings of the Dwarves.

contain the light of the Two Trees of Valinor. After Morgoth destroyed the trees, the Silmarils held the last vestiges of their light. Morgoth stole the jewels and fled to Middle-earth, and a large company of the Elves pursued him. All attempts to recover the jewels were fruitless until Beren and Lúthien stole into Morgoth's chambers and recovered a single Silmaril from his crown. This jewel they returned to Thingol in Doriath. The Nauglamír, the Necklace of the Dwarves, was crafted for Finrod Felagund in Nargothrond, and set with many gems he had brought from Valinor. After the sack of Nargothrond, Húrin took the Nauglamír and brought it with him to Thingol in Doriath. Thingol, then in possession of the greatest crafted objects of the Dwarves and Elves, decided to set the Silmaril in the Nauglamír and contracted the Dwarves of Nogrod for this work. However, when the Dwarves demanded the necklace, forged by their forebears, as compensation, the narrator claims that Thingol perceived the Dwarves' greed for the Silmaril (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* [*Silmarillion*] 233). The only accounting of the Dwarves' motivations in this passage comes from the narrator (likely Bilbo recording histories given to him by Elrond, an elf; Lewis 158) reporting the observations of Thingol (also an elf). However, Thingol dies in this encounter leaving readers to wonder who, if anyone, actually recorded the king's words.² By the narrator's own admission, Thingol "bade them with shameful words go unrequited out of Doriath" (*Silmarillion* 233), without compensation or reward for what was unquestionably skillful work. The prejudice of the Elves against the Dwarves is made further apparent in this passage when Thingol, standing in halls carved by the Dwarves, calls them an "uncouth race" and "stunted people" while at the same time himself coveting the Dwarves' greatest work (*Silmarillion* 233). Beyond claiming the Nauglamír as compensation, the Dwarves' claim to the Nauglamír (excluding the Silmaril) is much stronger than Thingol's. Not only did the forefathers of the Dwarves create the artifact, giving the Dwarves some claim to it, but Thingol was unrelated to Finrod Felagund, the original owner, and therefore himself had no claim to it. When negotiations broke down, the outraged Dwarves slew Thingol, swiftly leading to war between the two peoples. The bias present in these passages demonstrates a decidedly pro-Elvish slant, and is not the only form of bias within Tolkien's Middle-earth.³

² The gaps in the "chain of custody" of stories within *The Silmarillion* are also noted by Gallant, who points out that Fingolfin rode out alone to fight Morgoth and yet there is a fantastical (and very detailed) description within *The Silmarillion* (Gallant 35-36). Gallant further points out the biased narration even between the two different factions of the Elves.

³ While not the focus of this work, the bias of Tolkien's narrators towards non-Dwarven races is explored in Gallant; Tally.

The interactions between the Dwarves and the Elves in this passage bears strong resemblance to deal-breaking in our world, particularly when one party views itself superior to the other. It is difficult not to see the parallels between the Elves' contempt for the Dwarves (and their unwillingness to fairly compensate them) and the relations between the United States and many tribes and nations of indigenous peoples. There are countless examples of the United States government renegeing on promises of land. For example, in the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota Treaty of 1851, the Dakota People were promised millions of dollars, but the tribal leaders were later tricked into signing away most of that money to white traders who claimed it as "debts" according to an account written in 1993 (*The Dakota Conflict*). Instead of a fair trade between two peoples, (as far as a trade made at gunpoint can be fair), the Dakota People were the victims of the greed of the people they were dealing with. While the 1993 article offers a more just perspective, in an article written in 1951 Lucille Kane states, "Indians and half-breeds badgered them to make good the promises made in the heat of the struggle," and credits Hercules L. Dousman, a trader working in the area, with saying, "the Sioux treaty will hang like a curse over our heads for the rest of our lives" (79-80). Here Kane acknowledges the promises made to the Dakota People, but completely fails to acknowledge that the Dakota People were routinely and unjustly denied their due. The two very different portrayals, both created in the second half of the 19th century, show how bias can affect the recording of history. It is only in more modern times that the transgressions by white settlers are being readily called out by historians and the public alike. Therefore, it is not so difficult to believe that in their own history, the Elvish historians would disparage the Dwarves' intentions and inflate the reputation of their own kin. If it is possible for Elves to be greedy,⁴ then it is more than possible that Thingol promised the Dwarves ample compensation and in *his* greed, denied them their just reward upon seeing completion of their task, with subsequent generations of Elves buying into the narrative that the Dwarves were the greedy ones. In the absence of a clear Dwarven perspective on this incident, an unbiased historian might conclude that at minimum *both* peoples are at fault, and *both* share the blame for the destruction and long-standing tensions that followed, not the Dwarves alone.

During the quest of the Ring, the Fellowship, particularly Gimli and his kin, are faced with the harsh words of Celeborn: "[H]ad I known that the Dwarves had stirred up this evil in Moria again, I would have forbidden you to pass the northern borders" (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings [LotR]* II.7.356). Here it is clear that Celeborn blames the Dwarves for the destruction wrought by the

⁴ Much evidence supports the notion of Elven greed, most notably the elven king from *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* XIV.129).

Balrog. Gandalf also appears to hold this perspective, seemingly faulting the Dwarves for delving “too greedily and too deep” (*LotR* II.4.317). And yet, interestingly, not one person points to the true cause of the Balrog’s destruction: Morgoth. The Balrog was corrupted by Morgoth to ransack and destroy, to sow terror and destruction (*Silmarillion* 31), and yet the Dwarves seem to be bearing the brunt of the blame even though they were the primary victims of the Balrog’s wrath. The Balrog was a plague upon the land, like a natural disaster that happened to be triggered unknowingly by the Dwarves. Much like the Balrog was a plague upon Middle-earth, very real plagues have ravaged the peoples of our world for centuries, and marginalized groups have been singled out and blamed for many of them. For example, during the Black Death in the 14th century, Jewish people and their communities were accused of poisoning food and water supplies before being tortured into false confessions (Cohn). Many were even burned alive as they were falsely blamed for the suffering of others. In more recent times, an essay in the *New York Times* documented attacks blaming the Swine Flu Epidemic on Mexicans and immigrants from South American countries (McNeil). Most recently in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the number of attacks on Asian-Americans and their descendants have risen dramatically. A Pew research poll in April 2021 reported 8 in 10 Asian adults say violence toward them was rising (Ruiz et al). Time and again when disaster strikes, humanity finds a way to single out an individual group and blame them. The Balrog of Moria from Tolkien’s universe provides a clear opportunity to analyze how blame is often misplaced in the face of natural disaster.

Another obvious demonstration of bias against Dwarves comes from Legolas in *The Two Towers*. Upon hearing Gimli’s description of the Glittering Caves, Legolas says, “[O]ne family of busy dwarves with hammer and chisel might mar more than they made” (*LotR* III.8.548). Here Legolas clearly ignores the fact that Dwarves have been living underground since they awoke in the world and have in the time since created and preserved many incredibly beautiful spaces including Menegroth and Moria, both of which include extensive tributes to the natural world (*Silmarillion* 93 and *LotR* II.5.328). Fortunately, Gimli is quick to point out Legolas’s error, saying, “No dwarf could be unmoved by such loveliness,” asking if Legolas’s people would cut down “groves of blossoming trees in springtime” (*LotR* III.8.548). Gimli’s analogy from Dwarves and caves to Elves and flowering trees not only demonstrates a profound appreciation for caves as a source of natural beauty, but also a strong understanding of Legolas’s own lived experiences. Gimli’s ability to understand Legolas’s love for the trees is what sways Legolas and begins chipping away at his internal bias. While Legolas is ultimately corrected by Gimli, his initial statement is clearly a preconceived bias that he has learned most likely from his

own people, a bias that clearly disregards the millennia of experience the Dwarves have as caretakers of these kinds of natural spaces.

This type of dismissal can also be found within our world. Indigenous peoples have been responsible for taking care of their land for millennia, and yet Westerners frequently dismissed the practices of these peoples; for example, controlled burning in the Western United States and Australia, which has led to catastrophic results. Gerald Williams writes, "The basis for much of our forest health crisis nationwide lies in the almost complete cessation of Indian burning in fire-adapted ecosystems" (19). Native peoples and their land management practices were such an integral part of the natural ecosystem that their suppression by Western European colonists following the 18th century led to a rapid decline in forest health. Furthermore, researchers now understand, "The hazard reduction benefits of prescribed fires are easily demonstrated by fire behaviour theory" (Fernandes and Botelho 123), and "[I]ndigenous knowledge of fire is an invaluable resource [...] to enhance and maintain biodiversity for goals of ecosystem health" (Kimmerer and Lake 40). Additionally, as ecologists' understanding of natural spaces grows, they have found "[Indigenous Americans] used fire to prevent the natural transformation of grasslands [...] [and] burned the vast expanses of oak, hickory and pine forests in the eastern U.S. to prevent the emergence of less desirable trees" (Abrams). And yet, even though the extent of indigenous land management is now much better understood, their practices and viewpoints on land management continue to be sidelined in favor of Western practices. Legolas's dismissal of the Dwarves' experience in preserving and maintaining natural spaces is clearly paralleled in our own world.

SCHOLARLY WORKS

Critical perspectives on Tolkien's Dwarves often seem to participate in the biased narrative, uncritically accepting as fact Elven perspectives of the Dwarves as fundamentally greedy. This is apparent both in papers that reference the Dwarves in passing as well as in more detailed or focused analyses of the Dwarves. For example, Zimmerman justifies a synonymy of Gimli's name with jewels by identifying covetousness as a "racial characteristic" of the Dwarves (32). While Zimmerman subsequently describes the Dwarves as "noble and important," the only "racial characteristic" identified by Zimmerman in the paper is covetousness. Without primary textual references to support the claim of a "notorious" Dwarvish love of precious stones, Zimmerman projects to the reader that Dwarvish covetousness is a well-known, broadly accepted fact of Dwarvish psychology. This perspective is shared by Hawkins, who describes Gimli as escaping the "curse of his race" by the blessing of Galadriel (36). This reductionist language treats the Dwarves as monolithic and unilaterally greedy,

and denies them the more gracious and complex readings afforded to other races.

Importantly, this perspective on the Dwarves is also, in some cases, adopted in more detailed analyses focused on the Dwarves. For example, Brackmann reads the Dwarves of *The Hobbit* as fundamentally greedy and cowardly, and builds on this reading to explore the Dwarves as participating in antisemitic stereotypes (90-91).⁵ We do not intend to wade into the question of whether or not the Dwarves participate in antisemitic stereotypes; rather, we argue that Tolkien's Dwarves are more complex than merely "greedy and cowardly." Similarly, in spite of a generally more positive reading of the Dwarves, Seymour asserts that they "have not done themselves any favours by secreting themselves into the mountains and coveting the treasures of other races" (31).

In general, scholarly perspectives of the Dwarves seem to focus on a few key themes or events: the Dwarves as unjust in their slaying of Thingol over the Nauglamír, Thorin and company as motivated primarily by greed in their quest, the Dwarves as responsible for the Balrog, and the Dwarven rings as exacerbating inherent greediness. As noted above, the altercation between the Dwarves and Thingol over the Nauglamír is recounted in *The Silmarillion* (a text riddled with Elvish bias), and may also be the incident noted by the narrator of *The Hobbit* as the origin of the Dwarf-Elf tensions leading to the mistreatment of Thorin and company at the hands of Thranduil (Hynes 22). While the account of this in *The Silmarillion* seems to cast the Dwarves as ungrateful or unwilling to accept fair payment (albeit also portraying Thingol as rude), the incident referenced in *The Hobbit* recognizes the Dwarven perspective—a perspective of unfair treatment or inappropriate compensation for services rendered. To conclude from the account in *The Silmarillion*, as does Hawkins (36), that the Dwarven slaying of Thingol is evidence of the universal greediness of Dwarves, fails to acknowledge that *The Silmarillion* is mostly a history of the Elves by the Elves (Lewis) and treats the Dwarves as monolithic.⁶

Similarly problematic is the reading of the Dwarves of *The Hobbit* as fundamentally greedy. As noted above, Brackmann takes this as a foundational truth throughout her analysis, identifying "love of gold" as the "dominant psychological attribute" of the Dwarves of *The Hobbit* (90-91), dismissing Thorin's valor in The Battle of the Five Armies as motivated by his desire to protect his treasure (93), and faulting the entire company of Dwarves as

⁵ See Vink, Hynes for a more thorough conversation on this question.

⁶ Interestingly, Tolkien revised the incident with Thingol to characterize the Dwarves more unfavorably (Darvell 43-44), which Lewis reads as additional evidence of Tolkien's intentional framing of *The Silmarillion* as an elven history (164).

covetous upon Thorin's refusal to share treasure with the men of Laketown (92). As above, this reading treats the Dwarves as monolithic rather than complex and nuanced. In his more complex analysis of the Dwarves of the *Hobbit*, Hynes characterizes them as profoundly aesthetic artisans, musicians, and poets (25), noting that Thorin's description of the Arkenstone centers its beauty rather than monetary value (22). Hynes also reads Thorin, and his admittedly problematic response to Bilbo's cloak-and-dagger diplomacy involving the Arkenstone, as an individual Dwarf not necessarily representative of all Dwarves in every respect, observing that Thorin and Company were not in agreement around their interactions with the Elves of Mirkwood and Men of Laketown (23). Darvell agrees with this reading, noting that "gold lust" was portrayed as characteristic of all the Dwarves in an earlier version of *The Hobbit*, but was revised to be more of a personal character flaw of Thorin in a later version (43).

Furthermore, Brackmann reads the quest of the Dwarves of *The Hobbit* as motivated fundamentally by greed: "Even if the Dwarves are undertaking an endeavor that is worthwhile, the destruction of Smaug, their prime motive in *The Hobbit* is to recover their gold and Elrond knows this" (91-92). In contrast, Hynes argues that, except for Thorin's anger toward Bilbo, "the vengeance of the dwarves in *The Hobbit* is [...] always presented as justified" (23), and Loughlin characterizes Thorin's affection for the treasures of Erebor as rooted in Dwarven "culture and history" (35). Critically, a reductionist reading of the Dwarves fails to affirm or respect the unique aesthetic and environmental relationships of the Dwarves (Loughlin 26-7; Seymour 30). By assuming that their appreciation for precious metals and stones is fundamentally wicked, scholars participate in the prejudice of the Elves and miss an opportunity to appreciate the complexity of Tolkien's imagined world. Rather, with Loughlin, we read the Dwarves as a noble people dispossessed from their ancestral home by an evil being of great power (25), and we understand Thorin's quest as fundamentally motivated by a desire to recover their home as well as their material culture (33). Finally, we recognize with Loughlin that the Dwarven appreciation of crafted objects differs somewhat from the attitudes of representatives of the other races: "Dwarves as artist-makers balance the beautiful creation's spiritual, historical, artistic, social, and commodity value" (27). Simplifying the Dwarven attitude toward their stolen treasure as greed refuses to acknowledge the cultural, aesthetic, and personal values of the treasure of Erebor, and marginalizes the trauma of their dispossession under the flame of Smaug.

Perhaps the most consistent scholarly criticism of the Dwarves stems from Gandalf's account of the awakening of the Balrog, where he describes the Dwarves as delving "too greedily and too deep" in search of mithril. For Brisbois, the Balrog represents an environmental response to the greed of the

Dwarves: “[We] can argue that the dwarves of Moria were punished for their greed and its consequent environmental damage. [...] [The] dwarves were too greedy and dug too deep, awakening the Balrog” (212).⁷ Similarly, Funk, while overall more generous in reading the Dwarves, describes their mining of mithril in Khazad-dûm as “excessive pride” (322), with the Balrog as a sort of morally just consequence. Hawkins shares this reading, describing the Balrog as the result of “[E]xcessive greed for *mithril*” (36). However, as noted by Sena and Harris (forthcoming), this reading of the Dwarves as responsible for the Balrog neglects to acknowledge the actual origins of the Balrog: a creature of great power perverted and corrupted by Morgoth in the First Age, that was discovered, not created, by the Dwarves. Rather, we agree with Robertson in describing the awakening of the Balrog as accidental (128). Importantly, this reading is similar to Gimli’s account of the Balrog, from which the word “greedy” is notably absent.

Furthermore, characterizing the Balrog as a sort of environmental justice in response to Dwarven overconsumption or environmental degradation (e.g., Jeffers 56; Campbell 162, Brisbois 213)⁸ seems to take as fact the Elven prejudice toward the Dwarves voiced by Legolas at the Glittering Caves—that Dwarves would “mar” rather than protect and enhance natural beauty. In contrast, a close reading of the text will demonstrate, as noted by Sena and Harris (forthcoming) and in agreement with Seymour, that the Dwarves are not documented as participating in environmentally destructive activities (41). Rather, environmental degradation is associated with their absence (the unwholesome lake before the Doors of Durin, and its unwholesome denizen, as well as the Desolation of Smaug surrounding Erebor), and is reversed when their kingdoms are restored (such as the restoration of Erebor and Dale described at the end of *The Hobbit* and by Glóin in Rivendell). Barberis takes this reading when describing the efforts of the Dwarves as “sustainable development,” emphasizing that the Dwarves both lived and worked in their mines and made them beautiful cities (61). Thus, faulting the Dwarves for the Balrog and characterizing the Dwarves as environmentally destructive both seem to be inspired by an uncritical reading of the text.

Another common theme among critical perspectives on the Dwarves is the idea that the Dwarven rings took advantage of inherent greediness. The source text for this assertion comes from “Durin’s Folk” in the Appendices: “The only power over [the Dwarves] that the Rings wielded was to inflame their

⁷ Interestingly, Brisbois goes on, seemingly, to hold the Dwarves responsible for the damming of the Sirannon and appearance of the Watcher in the Water (212).

⁸ This perspective of the Dwarves as environmentally destructive or exploitative seems to be shared by other scholars, such as Habermann and Kuhn, who describe the Dwarves as “known to chop down trees for their forges” (271).

hearts with a greed of gold and precious things" (*LotR* Appendix A.1076). For Rawls, the Dwarven rings "were designed by Sauron to exacerbate the treasure fever of the dwarves and their tendencies to hoard and hold grudges" (30). Rawls goes on to speculate that the Dwarven rings may have given the Dwarves special ability to find hidden treasure, leading to conflict among the Dwarven kingdoms (30). Similarly, Darvell, who is generally more gracious toward the Dwarves, treats this matter with some ambivalence, leaving it somewhat up to interpretation whether the greed of the Dwarves is innate and merely stirred up by the rings, or whether the Dwarves as a people were just more vulnerable to greediness, and that the rings targeted this vulnerability (43). We contend that the original language does not necessitate that the Dwarves are inherently greedy. Rather, just as flammable material is not itself the flame, a more generous reading of the Dwarves treats greed as the flame, not the flammable material (the Dwarves). Of greater interest, then, is that which can be inflamed into greed.⁹ From this perspective, the Dwarves' skills with mining and crafting make them more susceptible to becoming greedy, but are not inherently wicked themselves. This more generous reading seems to be in line with Tolkien's treatment of the other races. While among each race are examples of flawed characters (e.g., Fëanor, Saruman, and Denethor), Tolkien ascribes no individual character flaw to every member of a particular race. He instead utilizes the antagonists Morgoth and Sauron to inflame weaknesses into the hearts and minds of the free peoples in the struggle for Middle-earth.

A final theme among critics of Dwarves is framing the Dwarves as more withdrawn and isolated than the other races. For example, Darvell describes the Dwarves as introverted and detached from other peoples, perhaps due to a need to be close to the materials they used for their crafts (43-44). For Darvell, this is potentially xenophobic (44). Similarly, Seymour noted "excessive secrecy and insularity" as characteristics of the Dwarves (30), and described them as "secreting themselves into the mountains [...]" (31). However, as Funk

⁹ Twice in *The Silmarillion* the verb "to kindle" is used in connection to the Dwarves (*Silmarillion* 233, 289). Hawkins notably uses one of these instances to stress Dwarven lust was kindled to rage and murder (36). However, a full reading of this quote from reads, "lust of the Dwarves was kindled to rage by the words of the king" (*Silmarillion* 233). Notably it was the *Elvish king* who caused the rage of the Dwarves. Hawkins further interprets "wrath and an overmastering greed of gold" (*Silmarillion* 289) as the motivation for killing the Dwarves. However, a full reading of that quote finds, "They used their rings only for the getting of wealth; but wrath and an overmastering greed of gold were kindled in their hearts" (*Silmarillion* 288-9) While Hawkins is comfortable attributing these traits to the Dwarves directly, a more nuanced reading shows that the Dwarves were corrupted by the forces of evil (the Dwarven rings) which in turn kindled (or set aflame) the Dwarves' love of beauty turning it into a greed of precious things.

notes, the Dwarves were familiar with Hobbits, and Bilbo was generally familiar with Dwarves before joining Thorin's company (330), likely because Dwarves often traveled through or past the Shire while journeying among their cities. The Dwarves are also well-connected with the men of Laketown and Dale—the wealth of the Dwarves explicitly flows out of the Kingdom under the Mountain, enriching Dale and Laketown, suggesting that intercultural trade is a characteristic of Dwarven kingdoms.¹⁰ While Dwarves certainly keep some aspects of their culture to themselves, such as their “secret language,” this seems somewhat justified, given that they were marginalized as uncouth and unlovely (*Silmarillion* 92, 233) by the Elves for thousands of years. Characterizing their “insularity,” if it were even fair to characterize them as more isolated than any of the other races, as “xenophobic” seems unfair.

In contrast, a few scholars have taken a more fair and unbiased critical approach, describing the Dwarves as a profoundly aesthetic people who demonstrate a deep love of the natural world, craft beautiful and mystical objects, and write moving poetry and music. For example, Seymour emphasizes the Dwarven relationship with the inorganic elements of the natural world—stone and metal—as a “celebration of the natural world” (30), and argues that “their understanding and appreciation of the natural world should not be marginalised simply because it does not conform to the Elvish and Hobbit standard” (30). Dwarven appreciation for nature is also evident in their built spaces, their poetry, and their craft, as detailed by Sena and Harris (forthcoming). Similarly, Hynes notes that the second song sung by the Dwarves in *The Hobbit* “places [them] in alliance with the natural world rather than merely as those who exploit it for ore” (26). Finally, as Loughlin notes, the Dwarves consistently demonstrate a reverence for light, particularly the light of the stars, which aligns them with Varda, the creator of the stars (26). While we argue that this appreciation of the natural world is characteristic of Dwarven culture, it is perhaps most evident in the character of Gimli,¹¹ who shares Dwarven poetry with the Fellowship, pauses during the escape from Khazad-

¹⁰ Regarding Dwarven insularity, see also the mutually beneficial trade between the Dwarves of Khazad-dûm and the Elves of Eregion in the Second Age.

¹¹ Note that some scholars, such as Susan Jeffers, read Gimli as the exception rather than the rule here—Gimli is seen as having been “delivered” from the “curse of his race” (Hawkins 36) by Galadriel, and is seen as wholly different from normal or typical Dwarves. This, however, patently refuses to acknowledge Gimli as an authority on Dwarven culture, even when he explicitly speaks on behalf of the Dwarves as a people.

dûm to view the Mirrormere, and educates Legolas on Dwarven environmental aesthetics at the Glittering Caves.¹²

The legendary craft of the Dwarves is an even more common theme among more positive critical scholarship. Funk describes this as the “joy of making”—a profound joy at the crafting of beautiful and useful things (332). Hynes notes that craftsmanship is one of only a few key traits that persisted throughout Tolkien's revisions of the Dwarves (20). Loughlin describes Dwarven crafted objects as “simultaneously valuable commodities, expressions of artistic vision, and vessels of enchantment,” calling Dwarves “artist-makers [who] balance the beautiful creation's spiritual, historical, artistic, social, and commodity value” (27). Importantly, as Loughlin points out, this love of craft is an inheritance from Aulë, the creator of the Dwarves (26). Finally, contrary to some perspectives of the Dwarves as unpoetic, Hynes describes the Dwarves of the *Hobbit* as especially artistic, making beautiful music and writing deeply evocative songs (22), even if their poetry was mostly unknown to Elves and men (25).

ADAPTATIONS

Overall, most critical perspectives of the Dwarves tend toward oversimplification—emphasizing and problematizing (perhaps unfairly) one general characteristic of the Dwarves (their love of precious stones and metals) and neglecting to grapple with their profound appreciation of beauty and the aesthetic and cultural significance of their craft. A generally negative or oversimplified version of the Dwarves is also seen in several adaptations and popular cultural spaces.

For example, *The Lord of the Rings Online* (LOTRO) is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) adapted from *The Lord of the Rings* (*Lord of the Rings Online* v. 32.07). Players can develop characters within several classes and races with specific abilities and skillsets and play through quests derived from *The Lord of the Rings* and other texts in the legendarium. Importantly, the Dwarves are a playable race, and players can engage several storylines involving the Dwarves. While LOTRO's Dwarven content is somewhat fairer to the text than other interpretations of the Dwarves, their interpretation of Dwarven spaces is less so. As Sena and Harris (forthcoming) note, Dwarven built spaces demonstrate a profound, and consistent, interest in fusing organic inspiration with inorganic materials. For example, the Doors of Durin fuse the organic tree characteristic of Eregion with the inorganic stone,

¹² Hynes describes Gimli's speech at Aglarond as an “outpouring of dwarven love, not just for precious things or for the work of their hands, but for the beauty of the fabric of the earth. It is specifically a love without possessiveness” (34).

bringing together Aulë and Yavanna in a sort of unexpected reconciliation. Among the most consistent elements of Dwarven architecture noted by Sena and Harris is what they call “arboreal architecture”—the crafting of pillars in underground rooms to resemble trees. This thread runs throughout Dwarven built spaces, from Menegroth in the First Age, through Khazad-dûm in the Second Age, and culminating in Erebor in the Third. While this feature of Dwarven architecture is clear in the text, and demonstrates a complex Dwarven aesthetic, the interpretation of Dwarven spaces in LOTRO is less imaginative, distinctly lacking tree-like features in the pillars of Khazad-dûm and Erebor. In contrast, the pillars in these spaces in LOTRO are squared-off and angular, decorated with geometric shapes possibly inspired by stars. However, tree-like features described as a common characteristic of Dwarven architecture are distinctly absent from this adaptation—these pillars are not rounded, the woodland creatures described in the halls of Menegroth are not featured, and the ceiling is not evocative of a “branching tracery of stone.”

Similarly, *The Lord of the Rings* films, directed by Peter Jackson, depart from the text in their portrayal of Dwarves. Critics have thoroughly analyzed the films for textual elements that did not make it into the films, as well as novel elements introduced into the films that were not in the text. As Croft notes, the films are “terribly off the mark” in their portrayal of Gimli, the closest we get in the films to a Dwarven voice and perspective (76). The Gimli of the text is a scholar of his people’s history and quite literary, sharing his culture with the Fellowship through both poetry and prose. However, Jackson’s interpretation of Gimli strips the character of his historical and cultural literacy, flattening him to a comic relief. This is particularly evident in the “dwarf-tossing” references (*The Fellowship of the Ring*), as Croft notes, as well as Gimli’s snoring during Gandalf’s funeral (*The Fellowship of the Ring*), and his drunkenness and uncouth belching in the halls of Théoden (*The Two Towers*).

Even more egregious, however, are Jackson’s omissions—some of Gimli’s greatest opportunities to present (and represent) the Dwarves as a complex and thoughtful people are absent from the films. As noted by Sena and Harris, these include Gimli’s recitation of “The Song of Durin” in Khazad-dûm, his brief pilgrimage to the Mirrormere, and his conversation with Legolas around the Caves of Aglarond. In each of these scenes in the text, Gimli demonstrates that Dwarven culture¹³ is characterized by a profound appreciation of natural beauty—omitting these from the films further flattens

¹³ Note also that, contrary to Jeffers, we contend that Gimli here is representative of the Dwarves, and explicitly so. We read “The Song of Durin” as a Dwarven cultural text, and we take Gimli at his word when he describes the cultural significance of the Mirrormere and the universal care and attention the Dwarves would pay the formations within the Glittering Caves.

Gimli's character (and thus the Dwarves as a whole). Furthermore, as above with LOTRO's portrayal of Moria, Jackson's films notably replace the arboreal pillars described in the text with the same sort of geometric, squared-off pillars that might be characteristic of a different sort of Dwarf.

In contrast, the Dwarves of Jackson's *The Hobbit* films are portrayed as more complex and nuanced characters, even though non-Dwarf characters see them as basically greedy. For example, in *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, Beorn describes the Dwarves as "greedy and blind to the lives of those they deem lesser than their own." Similarly, Thranduil dismisses the idea that the purpose of the Dwarven quest was to reclaim their homeland, implying that their primary aim was to recover their treasure. Thranduil also reifies the idea that Smaug was a sort of just consequence of Dwarven greed, resonant with popular perspectives of the Balrog.¹⁴ Rather than portraying the Dwarves as generally greedy, Jackson centers greed in individual characters framed as under the influence of enchantment, specifically Thrór (*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*) and Thorin (*The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, and *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*). While Jackson's Dwarves are definitely interested in reclaiming their treasure, they also demonstrate a love and appreciation for their homeland apart from the treasure, gazing with affection and awe upon the profile of the mountain as they approach (*The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*). Furthermore, while certainly depicted as rude and quarrelsome at times, Jackson's Dwarves in *The Hobbit* are also portrayed as courageous and loyal, charging in to rescue Bilbo from the three trolls and fighting through the goblins of Goblin Town (*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*). Finally, the Dwarves of Jackson's *The Hobbit* films benefit from something they were rarely or never afforded in his adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings*—attention to their songs, legends, culture, and occupation as artisans. Thus, the Dwarves of Jackson's *The Hobbit* complicate common perspectives (even perhaps Jackson's original perspectives) of Tolkien's Dwarves, adding depth and nuance that was lacking in previous adaptations.

Finally, the more recent Amazon Studios adaptation, *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*, further advances the work of a balanced portrayal of the Dwarves, albeit with some holdovers from stereotypical perspectives. In general, the Dwarves are given a voice to share their perspectives about themselves and their culture, pushing back against stereotypes of the Dwarves as uncultured. For example, King Durin invokes a version of the Dwarven creation myth in a conversation with Prince Durin in the episode "The Eye." The disparity between Elven and Dwarven perspectives is further explored in an

¹⁴ Notably, Thranduil's perspective is problematized as prejudice by Tauriel (*The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*).

early conversation between Elrond and Prince Durin, when Durin rebukes Elrond for returning after a long absence but expecting their friendship to be in good standing: “You missed my wedding!” Durin exclaims. “The birth of my children, two of them! You cannot barge into my mountain and demand I welcome you with open arms. You cannot claim that which you discarded. [...] Twenty years might be the blink of an eye to an Elf, but I’ve lived an entire life in that time. A life you missed” (“Adrift”). Giving Dwarves the voice to share their own perspectives, especially as they contrast with Elven perspectives, does an important work of letting Dwarves tell their own story, rather than having their stories told by non-Dwarves.

Perhaps for the first time in an adaptation, the mining of the Dwarves is framed as thoughtful and respectful to nature in Disa’s explanation of the Dwarven practice of “resonating”:

A mountain’s like a person. It’s a long and ever changing story made of countless small parts. Earth and ore, air and water: sing to it properly, and each of those parts will reflect your song back to you, telling you its story, showing you what might be hidden, where to mine, where to tunnel, and . . . and where to leave the mountain untouched. (“Adrift”)

After a tunnel collapse, this relationship is further explored, and observed by Elrond, as Disa sings a ritual song as a “plea to the rocks to release the bodies of the miners with breath still inside them” (“The Great Wave”). This careful relationship between the Dwarves and the stone with which they work is also acknowledged by an Elf: Celebrimbor says “They sculpt the rock with the respect of one who cares for an aged parent” (“Adrift”) While previous adaptations leaned into Elven stereotypes of Dwarves as greedy, emphasizing Dwarven relationship with the stone as relational rather than consumptive subverts this stereotype—the Dwarves know where to leave the mountain alone as well as where to find their materials, and they learn this through a sort of conversation with the mountain.

Furthermore, this adaptation complicates the portrayal of Dwarven built spaces. While much of the architecture of their underground cities is consistent with previous portrayals, this adaptation brings cultivated plants into Dwarven cities (“Adrift”).¹⁵ The natural light, falling water, and gardens of this space are reminiscent of the portrayal of Rivendell in Peter Jackson’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, blurring the lines between Elven and Dwarven architectures. Finally, Durin cares for a tree in his underground home—bringing

¹⁵Notably, LOTRO does include gardens and natural lighting in its portrayal of Dwarven spaces.

the organic into the inorganic in, as Sena and Harris (forthcoming) write, a sort of reconciliation of Aulë and Yavanna.

While *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* does much to complicate stereotypical narratives of the Dwarves, it reifies and creates evidence for, rather than interrogating, the conventional reading of Dwarven mining for mithril as greedy. From the first mention of mithril, it is described as “perilous to mine,” setting up mithril extraction as fundamentally unwise or foolhardy, ripe for Elven condemnation (“The Great Wave”). Mithril becomes a point of contention between King Durin and Prince Durin, eventually driving them apart (“The Eye”). Mithril is further cast as a fraught resource by the Elven myth of its creation—the product of conflict between an elf and a balrog, infused by the last of the Silmarils (“Partings”). Thus, rather than being imagined as a metal like gold or silver, just with unique and valuable properties, mithril is mythically cast as caught between good and evil, and a sort of heirloom of the Elves by way of the Silmaril. Similarly, its connections to relational strife and its framing as dangerous to mine clearly sets up an argument for the Dwarves as at fault for the destruction to come. This represents a missed opportunity to detach the Dwarves from Elven prejudice; it will be interesting to watch this particular thread unfold in upcoming seasons of the show.

TOLKIEN GATEWAY

The Tolkien Gateway is an online resource similar to *Wikipedia* which contains well documented information on Tolkien's collected works including, but not limited to, summaries of important events, character profiles, family trees, and descriptions of the individual races. The text is not solely quotations, and within the interpretation by *Tolkien Gateway's* contributors, there is room for individual perspective and bias to slip through. This bias is particularly noticeable on the page describing the Dwarven race. The *Gateway* page repeatedly characterizes the Dwarves as greedy, summarizing Tolkien's words, “they slew Thingol out of greed and stole the Silmaril” (“Dwarves”), reinforcing the Elvish version of events as mentioned above. With respect to the Dwarven Rings, the contributors assert, “The Rings only augmented their greed and ability to create riches” (“Dwarves”), implicitly agreeing with the reading of Dwarves as innately greedy, as described above. They similarly draw from Gandalf in their description of the industry of the Dwarves in Khazad-dûm writing, “greedy digging for mithril” (“Dwarves”) resulted in the destruction of the Balrog, characterizing the destruction of the Balrog as a sort of punishment for the fundamental greediness of the Dwarves. Unfortunately, this page contains no references to the Dwarves' appreciation for natural beauty and the reflection of nature in their built spaces (e.g., Menegroth, Khazad-dûm, and Aglarond), primarily focusing on Dwarven smithing and building. The page

also contains no mention of the Dwarven toy makers of Erebor or specific mention of crafts beyond “items of art and beauty” (“Dwarves”). This takes away from the “joy of crafting” mentioned above, diminishing Dwarven culture. Overall, the *Tolkien Gateway* page on the Dwarves seems to accept uncritically Elvish prejudices that view the Dwarves as fundamentally greedy and unlovely, and fails to present a balanced perspective of the Dwarves as appreciative of natural beauty and appropriately fond of crafting beautiful objects.

Analysis of the *Tolkien Gateway* is incomplete without a discussion as to *who* is writing the content. As of this writing, there have been hundreds of edits since 2006. However, while the title page advertises “anyone can edit,” a negligible fraction of the site’s 1.7 million total views was both viewing and editing (let alone whether or not those edits were subsequently changed or reverted by another user). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the authors of this paper did not edit or rewrite the pages on *Tolkien Gateway* despite finding substantial bias in the text and the apparent advertisement on many pages that the content needs “more/new/more-detailed sources to conform to a higher standard and to provide proof for claims made” (“Dwarves”). Lastly, a discussion of the various *The Lord of the Rings* styled wikis is beyond the scope of this work, but a more complete analysis is currently missing from the scholarly literature and is sorely needed.¹⁶

FAN-FICTION

While not written by Tolkien, fan fiction can offer valuable insights into both the original texts and how readers have interpreted Tolkien’s words. Abrahamson has argued “[F]ans, by virtue of their close relationship to and rereading of their fan texts, actually develop critical interpretive power over a text similar to that of a scholarly reader” (58). Abrahamson alleges that by virtue of fans’ relationships to the Tolkien texts, they develop a critical analysis that can then be expressed through their own creative works. Sturgis argues that fan fiction authors are actively adding meaning to the “otherwise incomplete literary portrait” of Rosie Cotton (183). Further, Viars and Coker suggest that *The Hobbit* itself is a historical record “translate[d]” by Tolkien and that other writers should “rescue” the narratives of lost characters (e.g., a character like Peter Jackson’s Tauriel) whose involvement may have been dismissed,

¹⁶ The authors of this work did not even consider using *Lord of the Rings Fandom* as our collective experience led us to consider its contents substantially less reliable. Alarming, *Lord of the Rings Fandom* has a factor of 4 greater total views than *Tolkien Gateway* despite having a factor of 8 fewer pages (54,000 vs 6,000), and an unbiased Google search (a search done with a clean browser history) for “lord of the rings wiki” does not even yield *Tolkien Gateway* on the first page of results.

especially when considering women's historical treatment in records (40). As both J.R.R. Tolkien and his successor Christopher Tolkien have passed, who remains to complete the story of Rosie Cotton? Or rescue the narratives of lost characters whose existence is not explicitly mentioned? It is through this lens that our work addresses Dwarven fan fiction, providing both a critical interpretation of Tolkien's works and exploring ambiguous or missing perspectives that are not wholly accounted for within the legendarium.

Some of the most popular fan-produced stories offer a more positive reflection on the Dwarves. These differ from the critical literature by containing a diverse range of perspectives on Tolkien's Dwarves, most notably positive ones. In "Spring After Winter and Sun on the Leaves," the author specifically addresses the creation story of the Dwarves from *The Silmarillion*, with Elrond saying, "As the elves give the account [...] Aulë's impatience and the secrecy of his project account for all that is strange and, perhaps, seemingly unlovely about them" (Moonraykir). While not a direct quote from *The Silmarillion*, the language is undoubtedly similar (*Silmarillion* 92). However, transitioning from storytelling, Elrond follows up with, "I acknowledge that the elvish version of the tale is not without prejudice." Here it is obvious that the author has interpreted *The Silmarillion* as an *Elvish* history informed by all the biases and prejudices of the Elves. This analysis is made more compelling with the implication that Elrond himself is likely the source for *The Silmarillion* as a compilation of the history of the Elves (Lewis 158). Furthermore, in another fan fiction, "Sansûkh," Aulë says, "[T]he Enemy is ever wily and cunning; he finds other ways to work his will. And so the seven rings worked in other ways, unseen ways, upon my children. Thus, over the long, long years the love of craft and beauty that I gave you was slowly twisted into a desire for jewels and metal" (Determamfidd). This reinforces the perspectives taken above that Dwarven hearts were "kindled" to greed, but were not fundamentally or essentially greedy. And in "Inshêt zahrar" (meaning "Search for Home"), a retelling of *The Hobbit* whose very name reinforces the arguments made earlier regarding the motives of the quest for Erebor, there is an entire passage dedicated to the disparities between Dwarven histories and Elvish histories. The author's original Dwarven character Rhonith describes a great disparity between how the Elves and Dwarves view their shared history, and an unbalanced relationship where the Dwarves willingly assist Elves in times of crisis, but their efforts are not reciprocated as the Elves believe the hardship of Dwarves is self-inflicted by their greed (Raiyana). These fan fictions provide a compelling narrative highlighting the biases within *The Silmarillion* and Elvish perspectives throughout Tolkien's work, acknowledging them, and then expounding further on their inaccuracies about the Dwarves in further writing.

Throughout “Spring After Winter and Sun on the Leaves,” there are roughly two dozen references to treasure and gold. However, only two of the uses of treasure directly reference gold, jewels, etc. These two references are “a treasure-laden marriage cup” and a wedding band (Moonraykir). All the other references to treasure and wealth made by the dwarf Kili are primarily references to love and relationships. For example, the birth of Kili’s child is described as “A new treasure for them both to cherish,” and Kili’s thoughts reflect that his pregnant wife represented his “two dearest treasures closely bound in one” (Moonraykir). Within the fan fiction “Sansûkh,” new dwarvish words are created and defined within the text. One of these words is “Ghivashelê,” meaning “My treasure of all treasures” (Determamfidd). If written from a perspective of Dwarvish greediness, one would expect this word to refer to such objects as the Arkenstone, a Silmaril, or the Nauglamír. However, the word *ghivashelê* is exclusively used within the text as a reference to people similar to “heart of hearts” and interpreted as a person’s true love (Determamfidd).

However, not all portrayals of the Dwarves in fan fiction are as generous as in “Spring After Winter and Sun on the Leaves,” “Sansûkh,” and “Inshêt zahrar.” In “Made to Endure,” the author rewrites a scene from *The Hobbit*, where Bilbo is asked to join the company. In Tolkien’s novel and, even further, in *none* of Tolkien’s writing is there any real legal documentation or contract of services of the kind that is portrayed in Peter Jackson’s Film, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. However, in this fan fiction, the author rewrites the scene from Jackson’s film changing this contract to be remarkably unbalanced. The inclusion and change of the contract from Jackson’s film, which is notably typical (including travel expenses, funeral arrangements, etc.) to the one portrayed in “Made to Endure” contains provisions such as:

The Company shall retain any and all Recovered Goods until such a time as a full and final reckoning can be made, from which the Total Profits can then be established. Then, and only then, will the Burglar’s fourteenth share be calculated and decided. [...] Transport of any remains, in whole or in part, back to the country of Burglar’s origin is not included. [...] Return Journey is deemed outside the Terms of Reference. [...] Present Company is not obliged to assist Burglar in this so-called ‘pest control’ phase of the Adventure. [...] Disputes arising between the Contract Parties shall be heard and—judged by an Arbitrator of the Company’s choosing, and all pleas shall be—pleaded, shrewd, defended, answered, debated and judged in the Dwarvish Tongue. (ApologiesInAdvance)

Further, the author writes that “[The Dwarves] had indeed not been asked to sign such a document” (ApologiesInAdvance). This passage from “Made to Endure” presents the dwarves as conniving, overly technical, greedy, and even exploitative. These perspectives are further shared in other reimaginations of Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*. In “The Price the Gods Decree,” instead of just Thorin succumbing to dragon sickness as in Tolkien’s works, all of the Dwarves fall prey to the greed of dragon sickness, reveling in the gold from the mountain (Harrypanther). Further, Belba Baggins (Bilbo’s aunt) is written as saying, “[The Dwarves are] all grasping, greedy creatures” (Harrypanther). Additionally, in the fan fiction “Seven Devils,” an original fae character Nymeria says, “[Dragons] hunt for gold just as hobbits eat, wizards cast their spells, elves sing and dwarves *greed*” (Jackieshalom02). Here we see a bias that has extended beyond the original races of Tolkien’s works to include additional races. These fan fictions, “Made to Endure,” “The Price the Gods Decree,” and “Seven Devils,” all have presentations of Dwarves in an unfavorable light. In particular, they present negative stereotypes of the Dwarves as greedy, isolating and amplifying these from their muted and balanced formulations in Tolkien’s works.

MUSIC

As early as the 1960s, Tolkien’s works have inspired musicians, including Led Zeppelin, to incorporate references to Middle-earth in their songs. Several music groups have even taken their names from Tolkien’s legendarium (eg, Marillion, Cirith Ungol, Amon Amarth). There are several groups who are exclusively inspired by Tolkien’s works, contributing to a surprisingly sizable body of Tolkien related music. While Elves are more predominantly represented than Dwarves in these collections, there are several references to Dwarves and Dwarf inspired songs. In a song written by Charles Randolph Grean and performed by Leonard Nimoy titled “The Ballad of Bilbo Baggins,” the third verse is as follows,

But one day Bilbo was asked to go
On a big adventure to the caves below
To help some dwarves get back their gold
That was stolen by a dragon in the days of old.
(Grean)

These lyrics are a flat reading of the Dwarves’ motives in returning to Erebor that reflect the interpretations of the Dwarves as only trying to retrieve lost gold, as opposed to the more favorable interpretation by Loughlin mentioned above. Other artists are more generous in their depictions of the Dwarves. In an original song, “The Song of Hammerdeep,” by music group Clamavi de Profundis,

The craftsman shapes eternal art
The world seeks out the merchant's cart
At banquet hall where blood is strong
The Dwarven mines ring out in song

Jewels drive the dark away
And night becomes as bright as day
An honest end from an honest start
For wealth is found inside the heart
(Clamavi De Profundis)

In these lyrics, we see a reflection of the “joy of making” and a counter to the thought of Dwarves as isolationist as opposed to well-traveled merchants as were both mentioned above. Additionally, we see an inspiration for the desire for jewels (the creation of beautiful lamps from jewels is well established as both an Elvish and Dwarven craft), a pushback against the stereotyping of Dwarves as dishonest in bargaining, and an emphasis that true wealth comes from within (a direct contrast to negative criticism and portrayals found in the secondary literature and fan fiction).

CONCLUSION

The consequences of historical bias are extremely prevalent in modern society, and are only now beginning to be undone. A notable example of the positive impacts that can come from a re-evaluation of biased history is the history of Polynesia. Ever since the discovery of Polynesians on islands in the Easternmost regions of the Pacific such as Tahiti, scholars have postulated many different theories about how the Polynesians settled their islands. Thor Heyerdahl postulated Polynesians originated in the Americas and accidentally drifted to Polynesia on rafts (see the Kon-Tiki expedition of 1947) (Herman). In his book, Andrew Sharp theorized Polynesians accidentally got lost on one-way voyages from Asia. James Cook, whose own history with Polynesians is tenuous at best, was one of the few who believed the Polynesians were capable of embarking on two-way voyages throughout the Pacific, but this perspective was dismissed by academics in favor of the accidental drift theories (“Polynesian History and Origin”). Not until the Polynesian Voyaging Society built a traditional two-hulled canoe and sailed to Tahiti with master navigator Mau Pailug¹⁷ were Polynesian stories taken seriously. Western scholars, influenced

¹⁷ Mau Pailug of Satawal was one of only a handful of traditional Pacific navigators in the world at the time of Hōkūle‘a’s voyage. Traditional Pacific navigators could traverse the oceans without instruments, and Pailug proved their effectiveness by accurately predicting (down to a few hours) when the Hōkūle‘a crew would sight land after 31 days

by their negative bias, ignored the tales of Polynesians. Subsequently, they presented a biased history that was not fully disproven until the landing of the Hōkūleʻa canoe in Tahiti June 4, 1976, a powerful moment from the end of the Second Hawaiian Renaissance which saw a resurgence of traditional practices and culture after decades of negative stereotypes (“The Story of Hōkūleʻa”). The consequences of re-analyzing the biased history of Polynesia are not only a more accurate accounting of history, but also an affirmation of the identity of an entire people.

By re-analyzing the original texts, subsequent secondary scholarly work, adaptations, and other Tolkien inspired works and media, we find evidence of a bias against the Dwarves which tends to inaccurately present them as inherently greedy, secretive, and at odds with the natural world. These works often ignore evidence within Tolkien's original writings that presents the Dwarves as a people in tune with their natural and constructed spaces—Tolkien's readers have perhaps been too hasty, failing to delve deep enough to uncover the complex character of Tolkien's Dwarves. In this work, we present a thorough review of the secondary portrayal and analysis of the Dwarves which demonstrates a bias against the Dwarves, and we argue that a more nuanced reading of the Dwarves presents a race that, while flawed (like the other races), ought to be highly regarded within Middle-earth.

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