

Middle-earth and Midgard: the Viking Sagas in Tolkien's Legendarium

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The world of J.R.R. Tolkien's Arda, populated by Men, Elves, Dwarves, and Hobbits, and crawling with all manner of strange otherworldly creatures – trolls, wraiths, and goblins, to name a few – appears understandably alien to the modern-day reader. The contemporary world has little room for the existence of such beings, and with the technology of the modern-day, it's hard to believe the world's forests could be hiding Ent populations from our view. Still, there is something about Tolkien's Arda that intrigues readers from generation to generation, keeping it high on the best-sellers list as the years pass by. Perhaps the mysticism of his world offers such appeal to readers in a world where very little seems mysterious or unknown anymore; the notion of beings just as intelligent and powerful than ourselves, if not more so, living among us likely sparks intrigue and fantastical daydreams among the fantasy fan base. Civilization and science, however, have not always been so advanced, and humanity's understanding – if we can call it that – of the world around us has vastly grown over the course of history. The magical nature of Tolkien's world, however far-fetched and mystical it may seem in the present day, has not always been unusual. Throughout history, many cultures have exhibited an affinity for – or at the very least, a belief in – the magical other, and the existence and prevalence of powerful beings outside humanity, both human-like in mind and nature – non-human human beings – and animal-like – the monstrous. Tolkien's Arda presents these beings as they would exist in a world outside our own, but for countless civilizations across history, such beings existed within the bounds of our own world, enduring on the boundaries of civilization, claiming the wilderness as their sanctuary. The domains of Middle-earth, Beleriand, and the Undying Lands of Valinor and Eldamar are home to Tolkien's Elves, Men, Dwarves, and the rest, but such worlds draw heavily on European traditions established in medieval times, when the world seemed more conducive to the existence of otherworldly beings. The Viking sagas as they exist today served as points of inspiration for Tolkien as he wrote, and much of what is found throughout his legendarium draws on the medieval sagas and their retelling of ancient Norse and Viking myths and legends. From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* to the far more recent *Laxdaela Saga*, the pieces of medieval Icelandic literature depict a world inhabited by trolls, Elves, and gods, and their repeated interactions with the human characters of the sagas. Beyond this, Tolkien appears to draw on many of the themes and tropes established in the pieces of Icelandic literature, using them as foundations for many of the characters and temporal events depicted throughout the

legendarium. In a manner similar to the Icelandic sagas, Tolkien's legendarium develops through time, beginning with the *Silmarillion*, which acts in the same manner as Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and *Poetic Edda*, retelling of the genesis of the world and fantastic stories concerning deities, heroes, dragons, and demons, and moving through the passage of time until his acclaimed epic, *the Lord of the Rings*, which mirrors the later Icelandic sagas in its more mundane and relationship-focused depiction of the world. Tolkien's legendarium, as beloved as it is in today's modern world, speaks to the development of the human race through time as it draws on Viking worldviews established in the medieval Icelandic sagas, suggesting that while contemporary society may seem lacking in mystery and intrigue, there is far more to know about the world than we are aware.

The origin of Tolkien's world is explored in his *Silmarillion*, which details the creation of the universe by Ilúvatar, the supreme deity of the cosmos. Ilúvatar, set at the top of a hierarchy composed of he, the Ainur, out of which arise the Valar, and the Maiar, the vassals of Ilúvatar. The existence of a supreme deity reflects common understanding of Norse myth, which is generally assumed as holding Odin as supreme deity, king of the gods. In his *Edda*, however, Snorri Sturluson establishes the presence of Woden – or Odin – and describes him as “an outstanding person for wisdom and all kinds of accomplishments” (3). While Sturluson's *Edda* does not place Odin at the moment of creation – indeed, he is a dependent human being, born out of a long line of powerful figures – he does make reference to creation, falling back upon the Christian belief that “Almighty God created heaven and earth and all things in them” (1). This Christianization of Viking beliefs is characteristic of the time period, during which many writers – Snorri Sturluson included – expressed deep-seated anxieties about the prevalence of paganism in the ancient world and its persistence into their contemporary societies. Sturluson's *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* are filled with similar Christianized themes, emphasizing both the importance of Christianity in Sturluson's time as well as the potential influence of Christianity on the myths during their time of belief. While this is more difficult to prove, it is possible that many of the Christian-seeming themes found throughout the Icelandic sagas – Baldr's death and resurrection, for example – arose out of an intermingling between Christian and pagan faiths, perpetuated by Christianity's rapid expansion at the hand of aggressively evangelistic mainland European kings. Despite this, Sturluson's *Poetic Edda* does refer to Odin as the “lord of gods, / Óthin the old,” establishing his dominance over the lesser gods and beings found throughout the remainder

of the piece (5). Like Ilúvatar, Odin is the chief deity, set to rule over a pantheon of lesser gods and angels. The Óthin of the *Poetic Edda* is notable for another reason: while in Sturluson's *Edda* he is explained away as merely a great king among men, the *Poetic Edda* places him at the creation of the world, among the god's responsible for the synthesis of the world from nothing. Also among the Norse gods, the *Poetic Edda* lists "lawless Loki," a troublemaking deity who, throughout Sturluson's stories, attempts to cause mischief and harm (7). From this, Tolkien also took inspiration, creating the character of Melkor, one of the Ainur – lesser deities – who attempts throughout Tolkien's entire legendarium to upset the plans of Ilúvatar and establish his own dominance over the world. Loki, as a Norse god, shares relationships with Baldr, Thor, and the rest, in the same manner



that Melkor shares a kinship with Manwe, Mandos, Varda, and the remainder of the Valar. The parallels between Melkor and Loki continue – one of Loki's sons, the Fenris-Wolf, "rends men" in Hel (*Poetic Edda* 7) and "bred there the bad brood of Fenrir," one of whom, "worse than they all, the sun [will] swallow" (*Poetic Edda* 8). The wolf-parallels will continue throughout Tolkien's work, always using Fenrir as inspiration, but they culminate in Tolkien's portrayal of Draugluin, the father of werewolves bred by Melkor, now named Morgoth, and Carcharoth, sired by Draugluin and raised in the depths of Angband. Loki's close connection with the brood of Fenrir led to Tolkien's inclusion of Draugluin and Carcharoth, both of whom factor into later tales in the *Silmarillion*. Sturluson also writes of Baldr, the "blessed god," and Odin's "dearest son" (*Poetic Edda* 6). Baldr's death

and prophesied return parallels the Christian belief in Christ and his ultimate return, and can be read as the inspiration for Manwë, the greatest of the Ainur next to Melkor, and the one most able to stand against his evil. In the same manner that Baldr is expected to return and make "all ill grow better," so too is Manwë portrayed as the protector of Arda and ruler of the mortal world (*Poetic Edda* 12). Manwë is not built from Baldr alone, however, and does not fit exactly the mold of the Norse savior. Instead, he appears to be a blend of two gods – Baldr, already discussed, and Thor, the god of strength and thunder. Manwë is associated with storms and the sky, much as Thor is associated with thunder, and Thor's position as "Mithgarth's warder" – the defender of the world – is in keeping with Manwë's position as lord of the Valar and defender of Middle-earth. The Norse tale of creation was vital to Tolkien's universe for another reason as well: after the genesis of Ymir, "Bur's sons" – explained in a footnote by Lee Hollander to be Óthin, Vili, and Vé – "lifted" the land to "[make] Mithgarth, the matchless earth" (*Poetic Edda* 2). Mithgarth, Hollander translates as "Middle World," the earth made for the lives of men (*Poetic Edda* 2). Middle World is, of course, the inspiration for Tolkien's own Middle-earth, the land of mortals in his legendarium. Middle-earth, guarded by Manwë and the rest of the Valar, sets opposite Mithgarth (Anglo-Saxonized 'Midgard') as Tolkien's recreation of the Viking tradition. Diverging from this belief, however, the doom of Middle-earth remains unpredicted and undiscussed, with the doom of Man beyond the scope of Tolkien's judgment. In this matter, the pantheon behind Tolkien's world – the ruling hand of Ilúvatar, the treacherous Melkor, the saint-like Manwë, and more – seems built from the writings of Sturluson and the pagan myths that permeated Viking society. Still, Tolkien infuses his created world with a sense of novelty, exploring concepts and notions more relevant to the modern-day – like humankind's preoccupation with the mystery of the afterlife and, what Tolkien terms the "gift of Ilúvatar" – the ability of mortal men to die (*Silmarillion* 187).

As the *Silmarillion* moves forward in time it begins to shift away from the trials and tribulations facing the Valar and more toward the decisions of the inhabitants of Beleriand – north of Middle-earth – and the repercussions they face as a result. As the Noldor move across the sea to Beleriand their interactions with the surrounding world become increasingly difficult, and they find themselves beset time and time again by hardship and adversity, and the characters highlighted throughout the body of the *Silmarillion* grow generally grimmer and more hardened. The establishment of werewolves in Beleriand, discussed above, relates to the Norse myth concerning Loki's son Fenrir and his brood. Draugluin, the father of werewolves, and Carcharoth, named the greatest wolf to have lived, both emulate the destructive Fenrir, fated to "swallow [Odin]" at the end of the world, during the Twilight of the Gods (*Poetic Edda* 9). The two wolves both factor into later stories in the *Silmarillion*, particularly in the tale of Beren and Lúthien. Beren, one of the greatest heroic figures to be detailed in

Tolkien's legendarium and certainly one of the linchpins of the First Age, draws striking parallels with the Norse god Tyr, detailed in Sturluson's *Poetic Edda*. Though little of Norse mythology has come down to present-day scholars from the Viking age, a few stories of Tyr, the god of war, and his endeavors persist. Tolkien draws upon one particular event notable to Tyr for his characterization of Beren in the quest to wrest the Silmaril from the crown of Morgoth – his one-handed nature. In the *Poetic Edda*, Sturluson reveals that the “sword hand from [Tyr] was snatched... / by Fenrir's greedy fangs” (98). Fenrir, the ravenous wolf-son of Loki, is at this moment the parallel of Carcharoth, who in the *Silmarillion* tears Beren's hand from him, Silmaril still clutched in its grasp (182). The presence of wolves and beasts in the Norse myths is no surprise, as the Viking people would have dealt regularly with the dangers of the wilderness and the world outside civilization. This close connection between human and animal in medieval times is perhaps the reason for the focus in the sagas on so many monstrous beings – Fenrir the wolf, reflective of the dangers of the forest and the tundra, the Midgard serpent, suggesting the Vikings' misgivings about the treachery of sea travel and the dangers ever-present on the open water, and even the *Poetic Edda*'s portrayal of the first man and woman, “Ask and Embla,” described nearly as animals: “sense they possessed not, soul they had not, / being nor bearing, nor blooming hue;” indeed, it is only by the benevolence of the gods that humanity comes out of its animalistic state (3). After the discovery of Ask and Embla by the gods, they decide to gift this strange creation with that which they seem to be lacking. The first gift, “soul,” was given by Óthin, and the remaining followed from him: “sense gave Haenir, being, Lóthur, and blooming hue” (3). Tolkien has adapted even this discovery to his own narrative. In the *Silmarillion*, it is Oromë responsible for the discovery of the first Elves born to the world, but the circumstances are slightly different. Where in the *Poetic Edda* Ask and Embla are beastlike, without reason, soul, sense, or being, the Elves – or Quendi, as they name themselves – in the *Silmarillion* are fully formed and functional beings, new to the world but already able to exist on their own. Still, the Elves' innate possession of souls does not upset this parallel entirely; rather, if we analyze the actual givers of the gifts we can see the hand behind Tolkien's authorship. In the *Poetic Edda*, all the gods with Óthin give gifts, but it is Óthin himself who gives Ask and Embla their souls. If Óthin is, as established above, paralleled in many ways with Ilúvatar, the almighty being of Tolkien's cosmos, then the connection between Ask and Embla and the firstborn Quendi grows clearer. In Tolkien's legendarium, Ilúvatar is very clearly established as the only being with the power to bestow what Tolkien terms the “the Secret Fire that giveth Life and Reality;” and all attempts by others to mimic this creation – by Aulë and Melkor, in particular – fail (*Lost Tales I* 51). If we accept the parallels established between the *Poetic Edda* and Tolkien's work, and make the decision to read Tolkien's “Secret Fire” as synonymous with the soul, then we can understand Óthin's ability to bestow souls upon

Ask and Embla, bringing them from their beastlike beginnings into the rationality of humanity. Similarly, the gifts of the other gods accompanying Óthin – sense, being, and blooming hue – might be considered secondary to the existence of the soul, and can be reconciled with the knowledge and skills taught to the three groups of the Elves in Valinor, the Noldor, Teleri, and Vanyar. These three Elven clans, born with the innate gift of the Secret Fire, are still able to learn from the Valar and improve their skills and abilities, but Tolkien is sure to establish the difference between the gift of Ilúvatar – the gift of a soul – and the gifts from the lesser deities, the Valar, beings who are merely vassals for and creations of Ilúvatar himself.

Like most of the information Tolkien has appropriated from the medieval Icelandic sagas, the story of creation has been modernized and changed for the sensibilities of the contemporary reader. Ask and Embla appear beastlike and inhuman upon their discovery, reflecting what could be taken as the perspective of the Viking people on the origins of humanity and the close relationship between human and monster. Such a perspective is not unusual and appears across literature, suggesting that humans are closer to beasts than many think, and that the line, already thin, is easily breached – but not easy to return through. Grendel, in *Beowulf*, is described as a “[kinsman] of Cain,” (55) and thereby can be considered a human being (or at the very least, closely related to them). Yet, throughout the entirety of *Beowulf*, Grendel is portrayed in a monstrous manner, referred to as a beast and a creature, and seen by all the human protagonists as a monster worthy of death. While the depiction of Ask and Embla in Sturluson's *Poetic Edda* fell far short of suggesting a comparison between the two humans and Grendel, such correlations between humans and beasts were not uncommon for the time. Tolkien's more modern writing, however, reanalyzes this question and frames it separately. Rather than depicting sentient, humanlike beings as being born closer to an animal-like state than human, he suggests that Elves and Men alike – Children of Ilúvatar, and synonymous with humankind of the world in which readers live – are born apart from beasts, kept separate by their innate abilities to reason and rationalize. The innate presence of a soul separates the groups of Elves and Men from the beasts that roam Middle-earth, mimicking the prevalent modern-day worldview that establishes a distinct division between humans and animals. Tolkien's world was far less connected with the natural world than that of the Viking people as well, and so his interpretations of the closeness between human and beast in the sagas would have been very different than the interpretations of the medieval Icelanders reading the sagas.

The further Tolkien's world moves in time, the more parallels between his legendarium and the sagas begin to grow. *The Hobbit*, the beginning of Tolkien's still-ongoing dominance of literature, draws heavily on traditions established in the Icelandic sagas. On the basic level of language alone, the names of the characters in *The Hobbit* are taken directly from Sturluson's *Edda*. The prophetess of the

Gylfaginning lists a series of names, out of which are drawn Dvalin, Dain, Bifur, Bafur, Bombor, Nori, Ori, Oin, Thorin, Fili, Kili, Fundin, Thror, Throin, and Gandalf (*Edda* 16). The names appear throughout Tolkien's *Hobbit*, albeit in slightly Anglicized forms. The parallels between *The Hobbit* and the Icelandic sagas run far deeper than the simple presence of names, however. Tolkien borrows heavily from the *Poetic Edda* here as well, building the ever-famous "Riddles in the Dark" off of "the Lay of Vafthrúthnir." This segment of the *Poetic Edda* details a competition between Óthin the almighty and Vafthrúthnir, the king of the etins (giants). Lee Hollander offers context for the poem, suggesting that the Lay is based around Óthin's decision to "match his own lore against [Vafthrúthnir] the giant's" (*Poetic Edda* 42). Ultimately, Óthin stumps Vafthrúthnir, asking him a rather unfair riddle: "What did Óthin whisper in the ear of his son, / ere Baldr on bale was laid?" (*Poetic Edda* 52). Such a riddle game, as well as Óthin's victory on what cannot be considered a fair riddle, of course walks a very close parallel with Tolkien's riddle-game in *The Hobbit*. Though Bilbo's entry into the riddle-game was hardly his decision, and the game was characterized by less wit than fear and luck – one of Tolkien's favorite themes – the game itself, "sacred and of immense antiquity," connects directly back to the *Poetic Edda* and the games played by the gods throughout Norse mythology (*Hobbit* 86). Even the finality of both games – the lack of a "genuine riddle according to the ancient laws" at the end of the game marks a connection between Óthin's game and the far more famous one between Bilbo and Gollum (*Hobbit* 86). Tolkien's appropriation of the riddle game, however, is only the beginning of the connections between *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the sagas.

Also notable for its connection to the Icelandic sagas is the character of Beorn. Described as a "skin-changer," a man who quite literally "changes his skin," sometimes into "a huge black bear," and sometimes into "a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard" (*Hobbit* 118). The *Poetic Edda* introduces the concept of skin-changing with Loki, who shifts in "The Flyting of Loki" into "the shape of a salmon," and his son Narfi, who "became a wolf" (103). In the case of Narfi, the transformation seems to have been permanent, and Narfi is not mentioned as having changed shape throughout the remainder of the *Poetic Edda* or any of the later sagas. For Loki, however, this skin-changing is par for the course, and both Eddas contain multiple mentions of his ability to shift into various animals time and time again. It is likely from this instance that Tolkien drew the concept of skin-changing for Beorn; in *The Hobbit*, Beorn is able to change shape seemingly at will and shift freely back and forth; though in his animalistic form he does not seem to have complete control, as emphasized by Gandalf's warning to the company to "not stray outside until the sun is up, on [their] peril" (129). Again, Tolkien plays with the boundary between what is human and what is animal, depicting Beorn as a beastlike man quite capable of hospitality and friendliness, but dangerous when provoked and not entirely in control of his own actions. This shift is marked

by the difference between night and day, suggesting that night, traditionally considered more dangerous and less human, represents the encroachment of the wilderness into the domestic domain. Day, conversely, sheds light into the wilderness and the outdoors and makes everything far less mysterious. Similarly, Beorn's bear form – his direct link to the "other" as represented by the wilderness – is, if Gandalf is to be believed, unable to enter into areas which represent civilized society, such as the home. He is instead relegated to the wilderness, momentarily a part of the mysterious "other" that the Vikings consigned to the moors and crags of unsettled Iceland. This interplay between the dangers of the unknown wilderness and the familiarity and safety of civilization is Tolkien's way of connecting to themes readily apparent throughout the Viking sagas, while at the same time maintaining a sense of modernity through Bilbo's own sense of wonder and awe at the strange and magical nature of the skin-changer's behavior.

The crux of *The Hobbit* and Tolkien's later *Lord of the Rings* is, of course, the One Ring. From Bilbo's unexpected find in the caves of the Misty Mountains to Frodo's perilous climb up the slopes of Orodruin, like the skin-changing and riddle game, Tolkien adapted the concept of the magical ring from a tale found in Sturluson's *Poetic Edda*. In the Edda, Loki captures a dwarf, Andvari, who gives up all his gold but for "one ring which he kept for himself" (217). Hollander glosses the ring, explaining that this ring "had the power to renew itself," being "the 'Ring of the Niflungs'" (*Poetic Edda* 217). This moment establishes a tenuous link between the "Reginismál," a section of the *Poetic Edda*, and Tolkien's entire conception behind *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. Though the Ring of the Niflungs is not characterized in precisely the same way as Tolkien's One Ring, the two do share striking similarities. Both Rings carry with them a dark power – in the case of the Ring of the Niflungs, it is the curse laid upon it and the horde of gold by Andvari, that "the glittering gold which [Andvari himself] had owned / the bane shall be of brothers twain... / he who holds my hoard shal e'er hapless be" (*Poetic Edda* 218). Tolkien's One Ring is similarly devious, though its power is of a different nature. Made by Sauron, the protégé of Morgoth, the One Ring exhibits semi-sentience as it contains a great part of his being. In the same manner that the Ring of the Niflungs brings woe to all of its owners, so too does the One Ring cause strife among its company. Upon reaching Lothlórien, the Lady Galadriel greets the Fellowship with a warning, underlining the dire abilities of the Ring to corrupt and decay: "your Quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all." Lest the reader – or the company – be confused as to the meaning of her words, she clarifies, adding, "Yet hope remains while the company is true" (*Fellowship* 462). Shortly thereafter, the Lady herself will be tempted by the Ring, and Boromir will fall as its victim. In the same way that the Ring of the Niflungs deals in multiplication and exponentiation of gold, so too does the One Ring multiply desires, proliferate deception, and twist motives. It is out

of the Ring of the Niflungs – Andvari’s ring, taken forcibly by Loki and given as recompense for a death – that the One Ring of Middle-earth is born, and as a result of Tolkien’s knowledge of the Ring of the Niflungs that all the events in *The Lord of the Rings* will transpire.

Andvari’s horde of gold discussed in the *Poetic Edda* appears again in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. Here, much mention is made of the cursed gold and the dragon – once a man named Fafnir – jealously guarding it. This trope of a cursed horde of gold is reflected across literature – in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a child is transformed into a dragon, in *Beowulf* the well-meaning populace buries the cursed dragon’s treasure, and Tolkien himself adapts the trend, using it both in his representation of the Silmarils – cursed gems in the *Silmarillion* – and in his depiction of the Dwarven treasure guarded by Smaug in *The Hobbit*. While the treasure itself is not overtly cursed, Thorin’s behavior at the end of the novel could certainly suggest that it is; indeed, Gandalf argues that the dwarf is “not making a very splendid figure as King under the Mountain” (*Hobbit* 262). The gold frenzy into which everyone falls at the novel’s end – the Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, and Men – indicates Tolkien’s perspective that even without a proper curse, gold still retains an eerie power over the sentient world.

Not all of Tolkien’s inspiration from the sagas came directly in the form of Norse themes, however. In the case of Galadriel, faint parallels can be seen between her behavior and that of Unn the Deep-Minded, the female leader as depicted in *The People of Laxardal*. Galadriel, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, is established that the Lady Galadriel is an extremely powerful woman, ruling over the land of Lórien, having been the first who “summoned the White Council,” (462), and providing each member of the Fellowship with gifts of goodwill for their safety and service (486). This is similar to Unn, who, as the leader of a group of people, is considered “a paragon amongst women” and proves able to fend for herself in a world of men (*Laxardal* 52). Unn both leads her followers effectively and manages to procure large areas of land, much of which she grants away in “reward for [their] labours” (*Laxardal* 54). Much like Galadriel, Unn proves herself to be a woman more than capable of leading and acting on her own accord, and does so with remarkable success. The two also share a similarity in their progeny, both of whom go on to either, in Unn’s case, play large roles in subsequent stories – her son, Olaf – or, in the case of Galadriel, become the parent of important later characters – Celebrían, her daughter.

Tolkien’s legendarium in many ways draws on themes and tropes established by the Viking sagas. An analysis of his work in connection with the sagas cannot, however, be complete without a mention of Eärendil. Born of the Norse Aurvandil, mentioned in the *Edda*’s “Skaldskaparmál,” Eärendil is Tolkien’s exploration and recreation of an almost-completely nonexistent Norse myth. Aurvandil, according to Sturluson, was known as Aurvandil the Bold, and was mentioned because he was married to Groa, a sorceress who factors into the tale. Aurvandil is known for being carried

across Elivagar in a basket on Thor’s back. After one of his toes became frostbitten, Thor “broke it off and threw it up in the sky and made out of it the star called Aurvandil’s toe” (*Edda* 80). Nothing else is known of Aurvandil, but such a tale fascinated Tolkien, who developed the name Aurvandil into his own Eärendil. The tale of Eärendil and the Silmaril was meant to be the last of Tolkien’s great tales – among the others, the tale of Beren and Lúthien and the tale of Túrin Turambar – but Tolkien died before he was able to complete it. What does remain, however, tells us that much like Aurvandil, Eärendil crossed a great body of water – the sea, in this instance – and was subsequently made into a star as a result. While the circumstances of Eärendil’s stellation are distinctly more heroic than Aurvandil’s, and do not involve a toe of any sort, it is the tale of Aurvandil’s star that inspired Tolkien to begin his foray into Eärendil’s adventure, and thus create what would later become *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *the Silmarillion*. Though this is certainly one of the smallest parallels in the legendarium, it is no doubt one of the most important to the existence of the literature.

Tolkien’s work draws on myriad sources and themes from across history, but seems particularly linked to the Viking sagas. Among these, both Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* proved extraordinarily influential in the genesis of the texts, and themes from both of these would carry through to Tolkien’s final drafts. Rather than merely adopt motifs from the literature, however, Tolkien proved more interested in adapting such trends to better fit the experience of the modern-day reader, exploring concepts found in the medieval sagas through a more current lens. The manner in which the texts explore the Icelandic sagas makes them some of the most influential and beloved texts of the modern era, and will likely continue to do so until they themselves hold the same position in the literary world as the sagas upon which they draw so artfully.

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