



Tolkien and Wagner: The Ring and Der Ring

Christopher MacLachlan

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Tolkien famously rejected comparison of his Ring with Wagner's, though there is good evidence that Tolkien knew much more about *Der Ring des Nibelungen* than he let on after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. Analysis of that work from a Wagnerian point of view enables consideration of it in a new way. By exploring the parallels between Wagner's Ring and Tolkien's, a fresh interpretation of Tolkien's work emerges, one that hinges on associating Gandalf with Wotan. Like Wagner's god, Gandalf has to find a way of solving the problems posed by the Ring and like Wotan he cannot succeed without other people. When the plots of *The Lord of the Rings* (and *The Hobbit*) are examined in this way it becomes apparent how much they owe to Wagner's music-drama, and the role of Gandalf is opened to new explanation.

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