



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

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Volume 34  
Number 1

Article 3

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10-15-2015

## Editorial

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### Recommended Citation

Croft, Janet Brennan (2015) "Editorial," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 34 : No. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol34/iss1/3>

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## Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL “HALFLING” MYTHCON

July 31 - August 1, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday)

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-51.htm>



## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

### Additional Keywords

Mythopoeic Literature; Inklings; C.S. Lewis; Charles Williams; J.R.R. Tolkien



WE HAVE A STRONGLY TOLKIEN-CENTRIC ISSUE this time, but make up for the imbalance with a major lead article on Charles Williams and a review section heavy on Lewis-related materials.

John D. Rateliff's Mythcon 47 Guest of Honor address was a fascinating one that kept the audience in Colorado Springs this August absolutely riveted. We are fortunate to be able to include "The Lost Letter: Seeking the Keys to Williams's Arthuriad" in this issue. The Arthuriad is dense with allusion and the reader often has a sense of missing much that goes on below the surface; as it happens, the reader is not wrong to be confused. Rateliff finds the keys that unlock this poetic sequence *à clef* in a relatively unknown letter Williams wrote in answer to a list of questions from C.S. Lewis, in the "gynecomorphical map" drawn to Williams's personal specifications, and in Williams's private life as revealed in letters and memoirs.

Sherrylyn Branchaw offers an interesting reading of several key passages in Tolkien's works that tie back to and illustrate his deepest-held philosophical beliefs about philology. Among other examples, she pays particular attention to Gimli's speech about the Glittering Caves of Aglarond and to Faramir's failure to understand the warning implicit in the place-name Cirith Ungol due to the drift of linguistic meaning over time.

In "Tales of Anti-Heroes in the Work of J.R.R. Tolkien," Philip Fitzsimmons asks us to consider two stories which seem uncharacteristically anti-heroic in comparison to the rest of Tolkien's legendarium—the story of Túrin Turambar, and in particular, the portrait of the failed marriage of Aldarion and Erendis in "The Mariner's Wife." What does this story represent, and why does Tolkien choose to include it?

Nancy Bunting's "1904: Tolkien, Trauma, and Its Anniversaries" presents a controversial speculative reading of J.R.R. Tolkien's early years with his mother Mabel and brother Hilary. Applying our current understanding of childhood trauma and its later effects, definitions of abuse, and knowledge of the history of child-rearing to a close reading of underused material from Hilary's memoirs and Ronald's artwork, among other documents, Bunting proposes a far less rosy picture of Tolkien's early childhood than usually seen. However, statements from Tolkien's official biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, hint at a great deal of suppressed

material; it's possible this interpretation may turn out to be closer to the truth than one might expect as more material becomes available.

Romuald I. Lakowski also returns to the pages of *Mythlore* with an exploration of Tolkien's depictions of dragons in his stories for children, *Roverandom* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*. Lakowski draws on "On Fairy-stories," the *Beowulf* lecture, the Father Christmas letters, and a little-known "Lecture on Dragons" Tolkien gave to an audience of children at the University Museum in Oxford.

Janet Brennan Croft continues her series of studies of names and naming in Middle-earth and other places with an essay on names and their use in war and conflict in Tolkien's works. This article considers named weapons, *noms de plume* and other personal name changes, and, linking back to Branchaw's article, place names. Un-naming is seen as a key tactic of in Sauron's arsenal.

To borrow a phrase from Cami Agan's paper, applying literary theory to authors whose works interest us is "a kind of play that attunes us to the interior movements, voices, and processes" of their work. Agan analyzes the *Aimulindalë* using the literary-historical theoretical framework of Michel de Certeau as a way of understanding how the inhabitants of Arda, not just the readers outside the world, comprehend how they are situated in their history, and what this says about Tolkien's understanding of history.

There are two items in our Notes column, a relatively new section which includes brief, non-refereed items of a factual, speculative, documentary, or useful nature. First is an obituary of long-time *Mythlore* advisory board member and Sayers scholar Barbara Reynolds, who passed away earlier this year; second, an anniversary appreciation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. We also feature a lengthier-than-usual selection of reviews in this issue.

If you would like to keep up with news relating to *Mythlore*, please follow us on Facebook, where we post advance notice of items accepted for upcoming issues, renewal reminders, and so forth. *The Mythlore Index Plus*, which covers *Mythlore*, *Tolkien Journal*, published Mythcon proceedings, and books published by Mythopoeic Press, is available as a free pdf file; request it at <http://www.mythsoc.org/press/mythlore-index-electronic/>. If you are involved with a conference related to fantasy literature or teaching a course and would like to have print copies of *Mythlore* to distribute, please contact the editor at [mythlore@mythsoc.org](mailto:mythlore@mythsoc.org).

In addition to the members of the *Mythlore* Advisory Board and the Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards, I would also like to thank Mike Foster, Bonnie Gaarden, Larry Swain, Robert T. Tally, and Jason Fisher for their assistance with this issue.

—Janet Brennan Croft

