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## Editorial

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## Online MidSummer Seminar 2025

### More Perilous and Fair: Women and Gender in Mythopoeic Fantasy

August 2-5, 2024

Via Zoom and Discord

<https://www.mythsoc.org/oms/oms-04.htm>



## Editorial

### Abstract

The majority of articles in this issue of Mythlore have to do with a selection of female characters in fantasy and their issues of agency, visibility, relationship, and gender roles.

### Additional Keywords

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

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## EDITORIAL

BY COINCIDENCE, THE MAJORITY OF ARTICLES in this issue of *Mythlore* have to do with a selection of female characters in fantasy and their issues of agency, visibility, relationship, and gender roles. This ties in nicely with the publication this spring of *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Life and Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*, edited by Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie Donovan; please see the advertisement on page 110 for more details about this new volume from the Mythopoeic Press.

In “Magical Genders: The Gender(s) of Witches in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld*,” Lian Sinclair fruitfully explores the similarities between Pratchett’s theory of narrative causality and the gender theories of Butler and Foucault; all deal with an urge to fit gender performance into an established story.

One of the interesting challenges in reading the Harry Potter series is that the reader must eventually face the fact that Harry is not a totally reliable narrator or viewpoint character, especially as far as the female characters closest to him are concerned. Melanie J. Cordova explores this issue in “‘Because I’m a Girl, I Suppose’: Gender Lines and Narrative Perspective in *Harry Potter*.”

In “Constructing Lothíriel: Rewriting and Rescuing the Women of Middle-earth from the Margins,” Karen Viars and Cait Coker examine the presence and absence of female characters in Tolkien, in the Peter Jackson films, and in fanfiction, paying particular attention to a “footnote character,” Lothíriel, and what the body of fanfiction built around her brief mention as the daughter of Imrahil and wife of Éomer reveals about reader engagement with Tolkien’s texts.

“Romantic comedy” is not a genre whose conventions one would readily associate with the television series *Game of Thrones*, but Inbar Shaham makes a case for the evolving relationship between Brienne of Tarth and Jaime Lannister as an intrusion of the “green world” of spring and summer into the bleak winter of the show.

In “Isn’t it Romantic? Sacrificing Agency for Romance in *The Chronicles of Prydain*,” Rodney M.D. Fierce addresses the vexed question of Princess Eilonwy’s gesture of giving up magic and immortality to be the wife of Taran and queen of Prydain. Was it a forced choice and a sacrifice of the capable and strong-willed girl’s agency and power, or does it proceed logically from her depiction throughout the series?

To round out this examination of female roles, we finish with Victoria Holtz-Wodzak’s study “Tolkien Sidelined: Constructing the Non-combatant in *The*

*Children of Húrin*." Holtz-Wodzak gives close attention to Morwen, Niënnor, and Aerin, comparing them to Éowyn before she rode to battle and to Tolkien's own mother Mabel and wife Edith. The author also considers the situations of several male characters unable to or uninterested in serving in war, and Tolkien's own experiences on being sent home to England with trench fever.

Leaving this topic, we continue with a selection of papers on other subjects. John Gavin, S.J., in "St. Jerome's Narnia," compares "two exercises in Christian myth-making"—C.S. Lewis's *Narniad* and *The Life of Paul the Hermit*, the earliest work of the ascetic St. Jerome. Both are entertaining, and even whimsical at times, and feature communication with intelligent animals and a restoration of Paradise.

In "Tolkien's Dialogue Between Enchantment and Loss," John Rosegrant examines the tension between the theme of loss which underlies so much of the content of *The Lord of the Rings*, and the enchantment of the form of the work; the balance between the two generates a melancholy beauty that brings readers back to the book over and over again.

Our final paper is "*Chaoskampf*, Salvation, and Dragons," a study of world-wide mythical archetypes in Tolkien's Eärendil. Tibor Tarcsey lays out a broad array of evidence attesting to a complex of characteristics associated with a mythical morning-star character, chief among them an association with water, horses, boats, constellations, being a messenger or herald, and monster-slaying, particularly of monsters associated with chaos.

New in this issue is a Notes column. This section of *Mythlore* will include brief, non-refereed items of a factual, speculative, documentary, or useful nature. In this issue we have a note by Nancy Martsch proposing a specific source for certain imagery associated with the Battle of the Pelennor Fields in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and obituary/bibliographies for the recently deceased Tom Loback and Terry Pratchett. We also include a letter from Richard West in this issue, correcting and expanding on some items in his Mythcon Guest of Honor speech printed in *Mythlore* #125, and the usual selection of in-depth and brief reviews.

In addition to the members of the Mythlore Advisory Board and the Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards, I would also like to thank Richard West, Sue Bridgewater, Doug Jackson, Chris Vacarro, David Emerson, David Oberhelman, Robin Reid, Amy Sturgis, and Daniel Lüthi for their assistance with this issue. Additionally, my personal appreciation to staff at the Raynor and Memorial Libraries at Marquette University, where I did some of the quote-checking and proofreading for this issue.

—Janet Brennan Croft

