



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

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Volume 35  
Number 1

Article 1

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10-15-2016

## Editorial

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### Recommended Citation

Croft, Janet Brennan (2016) "Editorial," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 35: No. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol35/iss1/1>

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August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

<https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2023.htm>



## Editorial



## EDITORIAL

THIS ISSUE IS A BIT OF A GRAB BAG, with papers that push the boundary of the definition of what *Mythlore* considers within its subject area—but each is interesting and thought-provoking in its own way.

We lead with Robert Boenig’s plenary address from Mythcon 47, on the character of the “Materialist Magician” (Screwtape’s term) in Tolkien and Lewis—the Janus-like figure who looks backwards to magic and forwards to scientism, without the moral core to reconcile his liminality. Tolkien’s Saruman and Lewis’s Uncle Andrew and Devine are key specimens of this trope, with Merlin standing as a counter-example

In his article on G.K. Chesterton’s *Ballad of the White Horse*, Nick Milne follows Chesterton’s development of the idea of using King Alfred and the Battle of Ethandune as the core of a long poem on England and Englishness, and examines how the poem was received by contemporaries, fared in later criticism, and influenced other writers.

Jake La Jeunesse looks at a particular aspect of Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*: its evocation of the quintessential American small town of Lakeside, Wisconsin. Lakeside is compared to similar small towns, with their more or less ambiguous undertones of insularity and something not quite right, in Jerome Bixby’s “It’s a Good Life,” Ray Bradbury’s *Dandelion Wine*, and Garrison Keillor’s *A Prairie Home Companion*.

In “It Was Allowed to One,” Andrew Stout examines the way C.S. Lewis adopted Charles Williams’s ideas about coinherence and substitution in *Till We Have Faces* and, most poignantly, in *A Grief Observed* and his letters about his wife Joy Davidman’s cancer, miraculous remission, and eventual death.

Joe R. Christopher returns to our pages with a brief paper on Anthony Boucher’s short story “Review Copy,” part horror and part fantasy, drawing on mythology associated with both black and white blood magic.

Source-hunters on C.S. Lewis must deal with what James Como called his “alchemical imagination”—his tendency, as Thomas Schmidt puts it in his article, to act like like medieval writers who “were in the business not of inventing new material but of transforming existing material.” Schmidt tabulates parallels in Lewis’s writing to two particular sources: David Lindsay’s *A Voyage to Arcturus*, which Lewis acknowledged as a major influence, and V.A.

Thisted's *Letters From Hell*, which he claimed to his friend Arthur Greeves he couldn't get through and gave away after trying to read only once.

We close out the articles section with Todd A. Comer's exploration of the imagery and implications of the wounded body in Peter Jackson's films of *The Lord of the Rings*, in which he applies principles of disability theory to several characters but in particular to Frodo.

In our Notes and Letters column, Nancy Bunting replies to John Rosegrant's response (in *Mythlore* #128) to her provocative article on Tolkien's traumatic family history in *Mythlore* #127. We also have a very extensive review section 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. If you are involved with a conference related to fantasy literature or teaching a course and would like to have print copies of older issues of *Mythlore* to distribute, please contact the editor at [mythlore@mythsoc.org](mailto:mythlore@mythsoc.org).

*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; download it at <http://www.mythsoc.org/press/mythlore-index-plus-electronic/>. Also all issues back to #93/94 (2006) are now available as PDFs for purchase and instant download.

Please note the Call for Papers for a special issue of *Mythlore* on Divination in Mythopoeic Literature, to appear in Spring 2018 with guest editor Emily E. Auger. Details can be found on page 138 of this issue.

In addition to the members of the *Mythlore* Advisory Board and the Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards, I would also like to thank David Emerson, David Brennan, Jeffrey Marks, Andrew Lazo, Rut Blomqvist, Phillip Mitchell Irving, Joe R. Christopher, and Chris Vaccaro for their assistance with refereeing, proofreading, and source-checking this issue.

—Janet Brennan Croft

