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## Editorial

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## Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward

San Diego, California

August 2-5, 2019

Editorial



OUR THIRTIETH VOLUME BEGINS with the Scholar Guest of Honor speech from this summer's Mythcon, Michael D.C. Drout's entertaining and thought-provoking discussion of the continuing influence of Tolkien's famed *Beowulf* essay on its seventy-fifth anniversary. Drout shows us how the essay both opened up and limited later *Beowulf* scholarship, and draws some interesting parallels with the current state of Tolkien scholarship. Along the way he questions the wisdom of believing everything an author says about his own work, and asserts the value of familiarity with critical history.

I placed Andrew Hallam's essay, winner of this year's Alexei Kondratiev Student Presentation Award, next because of its multiple resonances with Drout's address. Hallam begins by strongly questioning Tolkien's own assertions about allegory, and draws on a wide range of theory and scholarship to show the subtle operation of a deep pattern of allegory in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* centered around imagery of readers and reading, thresholds and journeys.

C.S. Lewis is then subjected to a similar interrogation in T.S. Miller's paper, where his firm assertion that *Till We Have Faces* is not the least bit allegorical is challenged through its parallels in plot and theme with the highly allegorical Middle English *Pearl*. The deep allegorical structures in both revolve around seeing truly and falsely, and blindness both intentional and ignorant.

Next we have a study of Charles Williams's *War in Heaven* by Sørina Higgins, examining its radical upsetting of the detective novel norms promised in the first few paragraphs and showing how Williams uses and subverts these conventions and leads us to contemplate, instead of a mystery and its solution, an insoluble Mystery with a capital M.

Don W. King continues his fascinating work with the writings of Joy Davidman, all-too-briefly the wife of C.S. Lewis. Here he looks at her involvement with Hollywood—her short and unlamented stint in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Junior Writer Program in 1939, and her movie reviews for the Communist Party of the USA newspaper, *New Masses*, in 1941-43. Davidman's incisive wit, impatience with any hint of phoniness, and passion for social, racial, and gender justice come through loud and clear.

Marek Oziewicz introduces us to a young adult historical-fantasy trilogy, *The Saxon Saga* by Nancy Farmer, and elucidates the value of its multicultural approach in our distrustful and fragmented age. The respectful representation of three conflicting cultures in the novels—Christian, Norse, and Celtic—demonstrates to young readers that people may hold vastly different metaphysical views and yet may have many core values in common, enough to forge a relationship of mutual trust.

Back to C.S. Lewis, Brian Melton looks at the influence of World War I in Lewis's autobiography and on war in Narnia, correcting what he sees as a mistaken search for deep-seated war trauma in Lewis's life by some recent critics. Melton reinforces the fact that Lewis and Tolkien were not psychological twins, had differing personalities going into the war, and came out of it with different approaches to dealing with the war in their fiction. The Chronicles being children's books, Lewis operated under certain self-imposed restrictions in writing them, and yet managed to convey some realistic lessons about war learned through his own harrowing experiences.

Our final article deals with the Peter Jackson films. Emily E. Auger continues her investigation of how Tolkien's interlacing narrative technique is translated in different visual interpretations of his work by studying the recent film trilogy, and in this particular paper, Jackson's method of interlacing Isildur's story, Gollum's torture in Mordor, and Elrond's expanded council with foreshadowings and re-echoings of dialogue and visual cues.

In this issue we have reviews of *The Making of a Mystic: New and Selected Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, edited by Carol Poston; *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend* by Valerie Estelle Frankel; *The Wizard of Oz and Philosophy: Wicked Wisdom of the West*, edited by Randall E. Auxier and Phillip S. Seng; *C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid: Arms and the Exile*, edited with an introduction by A.T. Reyes; *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings*, edited by Paul E. Kerry; recent issues of the journals *Fastitocalon: Studies in Fantasticism Ancient to Modern*, *Journal of Inklings Studies*, *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, and *Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review*; and *Tolkien and the Study of his Sources: Critical Essays*, edited by Jason Fisher. If you would like to be a reviewer or suggest a book to review, please contact the editor.

In addition to the referees on the *Mythlore* Editorial Advisory Board, I would also like to thank John Rateliff, Joe Christopher, David Oberhelman, and Jason Fisher for their assistance with this issue. I could not continue to edit *Mythlore* without their support and that of the Society's Board of Stewards. Thank you all!

—Janet Brennan Croft