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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

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Editorial

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WE BEGIN THIS ISSUE OF *MYTHLORE* with three papers on sources and influences. First, Marie Nelson demonstrates that Tolkien's allegorical short story, "Leaf by Niggle," owes a great debt to the medieval play *Everyman* as its primary spiritual ancestor, and discusses the changes Tolkien makes to its message in the light of concepts he developed in "On Fairy-Stories."

Jeffrey Bilbro examines the close link between George MacDonald's *Phantastes* and C.S. Lewis's first post-conversion fiction *The Pilgrim's Regress*, born out of the "baptism" of Lewis's imagination by MacDonald's seminal work.

Marek Oziewicz and Daniel Hade then closely scrutinize Philip Pullman's frequent denials of his quite obvious debt to C.S. Lewis, finding the hidden nuances in Pullman's statements by separating out his responses to Lewis as a reader, author, and critic.

Frequent contributor Joe R. Christopher then leads us on a brief but significant journey through C.S. Lewis's poem "The Meteorite" and two readings of it: first reading and explicating it out of context, and then demonstrating the added layer of meaning gained by considering its use as the *envoi* to *Miracles*, and the implications this has for Formalistic critical approaches to literature.

Helios de Rosario Martinez explores the linguistic heritage of the terms *elf* and *fairy*, and shows how Tolkien eventually adapted them for his own purposes. His discussion of how Tolkien determined the characteristics of his elves and the indistinguishable nature of early folkloric references to elves and dwarves provides a lead into next pair of papers.

Rebecca Brackmann's challenging paper on antisemitism in the depiction of Tolkien's dwarves brings some much-needed definition to the ongoing discussion of Tolkien and race. She quotes China Miéville's observation that "*racism is true*" in Tolkien's works, "in that people really are defined by their race," but demonstrates how Tolkien's conception of the racial characteristics of Dwarves changed over his lifetime. Yet we come back in the end to the inescapable fact, with all its implications, that the Dwarves *continue to have* a set of recognizable racial characteristics.

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is not usually thought of as one of his more mythically resonant plays (aside from the Belmont casket scene), yet it is ultimately based on prevailing contemporary Christian myths about the Jews and the way these myths defined Christians' beliefs about themselves. Frank P.

Riga's examination of film director Michael Radford's masterful use of myths and symbolism resonates with Brackmann's paper; one cannot read the scene of Tolkien's Petty-dwarf Mim sharpening his knife over the bound body of Beleg Strongbow without being forcibly reminded of Shylock gloating over Antonio in the climactic courtroom scene. We include a reproduction of a painting which Radford duplicates in the final scene of the film; as Riga shows, this source is dense with meaning that resolves the multiple themes of the play.

Yvette Kisor's paper provides us with a close look at Tolkien's incorporation of traces of shamanism and totemism in his depiction of Gandalf and other characters; yet another indication of how Tolkien created historical depth in his tales by reproducing the way traces of early mythic and religious themes survive in later tales and folklore.

Jay Ruud examines a different aspect of Tolkien's wizards—their skill in the art of rhetoric. His essay provides a useful exercise in recognizing fallacious reasoning in the persuasive speeches of politicians. (Of course, wizards are all grammarians, if you go back far enough...)

Finally David M. Waito urges us to take a step back from the well-known and thoroughly examined Ring Quest in *The Lord of the Rings* and consider its frame, the beginning and ending chapters set in the Shire, as representing an important framing Quest in their own right.

This issue we feature reviews of *Where the Shadows Lie: A Jungian Interpretation of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, by Pia Skogemann; *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*, by Evan I. Schwartz; *Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman*, edited by Don W. King; *Collected Poems*, by Mervyn Peake; *C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy*, by Sanford Schwartz; *Death and Fantasy: Essays on Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, and R.L. Stevenson*, by William Gray; *Stephen R. Donaldson and the Modern Epic Vision* by Christine Barkley, and *The Fantastic Horizon: Essays and Reviews*, by Darrell Schweitzer. 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 Carl Hostetter, John Rateliff, Anne Petty, and Joe R. Christopher for their assistance with this issue.

—Janet Brennan Croft

