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***Vargar***

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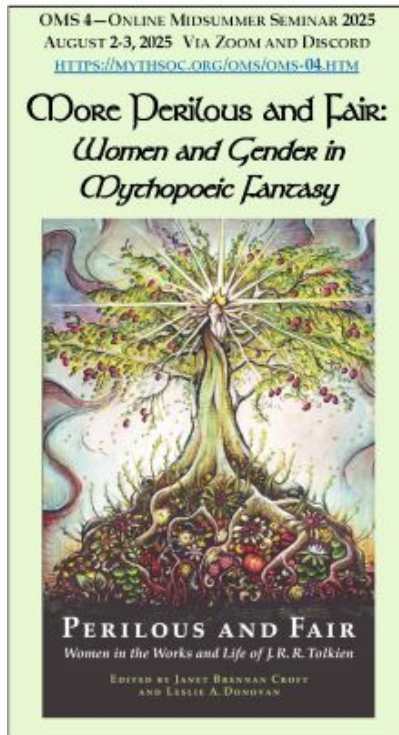
## Online MidSummer Seminar 2025

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

August 2-5, 2024

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## Vargar

### Abstract

Squinting my eyes and resuming the frenzied spurring, I headed unflinchingly towards the setting sun. The gap between my steed and the couple of pursuers was widening, we were almost outside their shooting range.

### Additional Keywords

Story; Fiction; Andoni Cossio

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# Vargar

## Story by Andoni Cossio

## Image by Yiming Zhao

*An earlier version of this work won the XI International University Short Story Contest in English language in Honor of "Félix Menchacatorre" (2020), organized by the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and the University Study Abroad Consortium (USAC).*

Squinting my eyes and resuming the frenzied spurring, I headed unflinchingly towards the setting sun. The gap between my steed and the couple of pursuers was widening, we were almost outside their shooting range. But suddenly I found myself flying and shielding the wolf cubs as I could from the imminent fall. I turned around and saw horrified my prostrate horse pierced by two arrows, barely enduring the pangs of pain. They were coming.

Wolf den raids in search of cubs, infrequent until that spring, had been merciless. These animals, no longer slain for their pelts or in self-defense, found themselves in peril of being wiped out. Associating wolves with witchcraft, the demented villagers had burnt fellow women and their offspring suspicious of being in league with the lupine creatures. I escaped but had nowhere to go. Mother wolves raise others' young when their own have perished. I wished to partake in the same noble action of helping those who still had descendants left. I owed them much as they had never harmed you, daddy, or our cattle—the reason behind the whistleblowing.

The two men dismounted and approached me. The cubs could not flee; with the membranes covering their undeveloped eyes, they were as blind as bats. One of the pursuers had his bow at the ready, the other drew a dagger. My heart throbbed as the cold blade got closer to my throat. Yet I knew we were not alone.

The men found themselves prey to dozens of stealthy wolf mothers wishing to take revenge on the brutes for the cub massacre. Tears filled my eyes; I closed them and prayed. When silence reigned in the woodlands once again it was dark, and I could only see the lamp-like glow of the wolves' eyes. I freed the cubs, who clumsily sniffed their way to their mothers. The pack started retreating into the forest, occasionally stopping and casting inviting glances. Our kindred had abandoned us; thus I resolved to join theirs.

As you know, my child, *vargr* means either wolf or outlaw.

We are both now.

*Vargr* is a real Old Norse strong singular noun (pl. *Vargar*) and stems from the reconstructed Proto-Germanic \**Uargaz*. *Vargr* is cognate with the Old English *wearh*, Old High German *warg* and Old Saxon *unrag*. I have particularly chosen the Old Norse term in order to vaguely set the short story around a given historical time and at an approximate unspecified location. The masculine noun *Vargr* is in its second sense only seemingly applicable to adult men who were ousted from their respective societies and had to live in the wild (and hence its association with the first meaning "wolf"). However, I have conceived a mythical setting in which both senses are applicable to a woman (and her child), and that re-interprets this pejorative word in a new more positive light, hinting that the change of status hereby leads to a new beginning. For more information on the noun *vargr* see Robinson, Fred C. "Germanic \**Uargaz* (OE *Wearh*) and the Finnish Evidence." *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, edited by John Walmsley, paperback ed., Chichester: Wiley Publishers, 2016, pp. 242-267.

### Bibliography

Robinson, Fred C. "Germanic \**Uargaz* (OE *Wearh*) and the Finnish Evidence." In *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, edited by John Walmsley, Chichester: Wiley Publishers, 2016, pp. 242-67.