



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

---

Volume 37  
Number 2

Article 18

---

Spring 4-17-2019

## ***Fire and Snow: Climate Fiction from the Inklings to Game of Thrones* by Marc DiPaolo**

Kristine Larsen

*Central Connecticut State University.*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Larsen, Kristine (2019) "*Fire and Snow: Climate Fiction from the Inklings to Game of Thrones* by Marc DiPaolo," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 37: No. 2, Article 18.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol37/iss2/18>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact [phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu](mailto:phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu).

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:  
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

SWOSU<sup>TM</sup>

---

## Online Summer Seminar 2023

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

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



***Fire and Snow: Climate Fiction from the Inklings to Game of Thrones* by Marc DiPaolo**

### Additional Keywords

Inklings, Game of Thrones, Fire and Snow, DiPaolo, clifi

He stood upon the bridge alone  
and Fire and Shadow both defied;  
his staff was broken on the stone,  
in Khazad-dûm his wisdom died. (*LotR* II.7.360)

I am also reluctant to overlook Sam's own humble but heartfelt contribution to this song.

Finally, for those who notice such things, the frequency of typos may be a little distracting; on average, I spotted one every ten pages. This will not trouble everyone, of course, and I would hasten to add that such errors are not necessarily attributable to the author, as they may be introduced later in the editing or printing process. But they can nonetheless undermine one's confidence in the author's care and attention to detail.<sup>2</sup>

Amendt-Raduege acknowledges from the start that her project must necessarily "leave out much that should be said," particularly concerning deaths of major characters in Tolkien's legendarium beyond *The Lord of the Rings* (6). There is much to admire and enjoy in the work she has put together, but there is clearly much more to be done. In that spirit, readers may appreciate her initial identification and analysis of a fruitful area for further reflection and study.

– Laura Lee Smith

#### WORKS CITED

- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again*. Houghton Mifflin, 2007.  
—. *The Lord of the Rings*. 50th Anniversary Edition, HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005.



**FIRE AND SNOW: CLIMATE FICTION FROM THE INKLINGS TO *GAME OF THRONES***. Marc DiPaolo. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018. 333 pp. ISBN 9781438470450. US HB \$95.00; PB \$30; Kindle \$28.45.

BETHAN FORREST COUSES IN AN ARTICLE on the *Huffington Post* website that "Literature is always a comment on the times in which we live regardless of the period in which it is set. This is potentially politically, economically, socially or now—environmentally." The current recognition that climate change is not only real, but its effects are camping out on our collective doorstep has led to a recent rise in media in the genre dubbed climate fiction or *cli-fi*. Described by

---

<sup>2</sup> In the Bibliography, for example, Janet Brennan Croft's middle name is spelled "Brennen" (145, emphasis added), although it appears correctly elsewhere (13, 155).

one of its founding mothers, Margaret Atwood, as media in “which an altered climate is part of the plot,” it is certainly not a new phenomenon. For example, Forrest traces the genre’s themes back to the late nineteenth century in Jules Verne’s exploration of “the sudden atmospheric temperature drops” in *The Purchase of the North Pole* (Forrest).

While it owes its name (a parallelism to sci-fi) to the efforts of journalist Dan Bloom a decade ago, whether it currently exists as a subgenre of sci-fi or a unique genre is debated by literary scholars. Bloom himself notes that the “cli-fi” label can be applied to a variety of scenarios, including both utopian and (far more frequently) dystopian works, and be set in the past, present or future (Holmes). As part of this review, I set out to discover the general consensus of scholars in the field as to what actually makes a piece of work truly cli-fi and found two theoretical camps. In the first are works that depict the effects of climate change in general, regardless of explicit cause (Harding; Ullrich), while in the second it is specifically human-caused climate change that is the focus (Leikam and Leyda). There are even far more general definitions, such as that found in Rio Fernandes’s article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, where it is termed a “subfield of literary studies that focuses on human beings’ impact on the environment.” It is this rather generous definition of the genre that is apparently embraced by Marc DiPaolo, author of *Fire and Snow: Climate Fiction from the Inklings to Game of Thrones*. The title, an obvious play on George R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* novel series, including *A Game of Thrones*, falsely highlights the term *climate*, whereas the work is, in actuality, a loosely connected series of essays on environmental (read: ecopolitical) themes in popular media.

Marc DiPaolo, Assistant Professor of English at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, previously published *War, Politics and Superheroes: Ethics and Propaganda in Comics and Film* (2011) and *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen’s Heroine from Book to Film* (2007), and it is clear that the author is a consumer of popular media of many flavors. The deep interest in adaptations and passion for politics that apparently fueled his earlier works is clearly on display in his third book. My overall assessment of this work is that it is a book with an identity crisis. It frequently wanders off topic, as the author uses it as a platform from which to rail against various evils of modern American society (including the current Administration). The analysis is uneven, with nearly equal parts keen and clever insights, problematic simplifications and generalizations, and, perhaps worst of all, missed opportunities for original and deep connections between the disparate works presented here (as well as others that would have added to his argument). The lengthy editorialized asides included as picture captions are both unique and problematic, as the reader is likely to gloss over these central points. For example, one of the most clearly climate related examples noted in the book is only included as a caption to an illustration of

Jadis the White Witch from the film *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) in Chapter 2. The caption, not the main text itself, notes the climate change wrought upon Narnia by Jadis. With this overview in mind, a detailed exploration of the peaks and valleys of the text will now ensue.

DiPaolo's Introduction begins by summarizing Ullrich's *Atlantic* article "Climate Change: Can Books Save the Planet," slightly miscasting it as claiming that Jules Verne "created" this "subgenre of speculative fiction" (DiPaolo 1). In truth, the original article merely notes that "Jules Verne played with the idea in a few of his novels in the 1880s" (Ullrich). Rather than define the genre himself, DiPaolo quotes Ullrich's observation that the genre examines "the impact of pollution, rising sea levels, and global warming on human civilization" (2). While the term "climate" is not directly cited here, the inclusion of "global warming" suggests that climate *change* is an important part of defining the genre. Illustrative examples listed by the author range from the films *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), *Silent Running* (1972) and "multiple Godzilla and Mothra films" (3) to the television series *Game of Thrones* (2011-19) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017-), and such varied written texts as B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948), Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* (1972), and P.D. James' *The Children of Men* (1992). While he lists numerous works that fit within the new canon of cli-fi as well as highlights the series' inherently interdisciplinary nature, he never quite gets around to defining it beyond the quotation from Ullrich.

Instead, DiPaolo makes the statement that his work deliberates on C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as "innovators of environmentalist fantasy and science fiction" (5) before moving on to works influenced by the Inklings. He informs the reader that his central thesis is to focus on the "commonality of ecological sentiment and ethics uniting these works thematically [rather] than any divisive ideological label should be allowed to undermine" (6). Here DiPaolo falls into the dangerous pitfall of making general pronouncements about George R.R. Martin's series before it has been concluded (either in televisual or literary form), announcing that it "calls for a balancing of oppositional social, natural, and religious forces in the world, and warns that unchecked sectarianism and totalitarianism, and an endless, unbroken cycle of intergenerational violence creates a society divided against itself that descends into chaos and summons monsters" (6). This is the first of many times that he makes sweeping generalizations or simplifications without including sufficient (or, in some cases, *any*) supporting evidence from the primary texts.

Note that in the space of a few pages DiPaolo moves from focusing on "climate fiction" to "environmentalist fantasy" and then finally "ecological sentiment." This unapologetic bait-and-switch carries throughout the entire work. Instead, DiPaolo offers that because climate fiction deals with a wide range of issues including "sustainability, animal welfare, extinction-level events,

the evils of industrialization, the ecological ravages caused by large-scale and extended military conflicts, the preservation of nature, the rights of indigenous peoples" and more, it is perhaps more appropriate to call it "everything fiction," piggybacking on Margaret Atwood's description of climate change as "everything change" (8-9). If cli-fi is "everything fiction," then, by extension, it seems that everything (and anything) can be discussed in this book, whether or not there is even a cursory connection to climate proper, let alone climate change.

Although the first chapter, "*Star Wars*, Hollywood Blockbusters, and the Cultural Appropriation of J.R.R. Tolkien," predictably begins with Campbell's monomyth as applied to the *Star Wars* saga, it was interesting to see the argument couched in environmentalist terms. For example, he argues that the indigenous Ewoks's defeat of the Stormtroopers can be read as a "victory of life over death and nature over mechanization" (23), something that would have resonated with Tolkien. The chapter contains a number of thought-provoking insights; for example, that numerous adaptations of cli-fi (read: environmentalist) novel series (in particular Martin's, Tolkien's, and *The Hunger Games*) are troubling in their myopic focus on battle scenes at the expense of the author's original social commentary. The result, he argues, is that a work "written to *challenge* fascistic forces in the real world is often transformed into a movie that [...] appears to *promote* the very fascist causes the story was written to oppose" (emphasis original; 26). He adds that such adaptations' frequent glossing over of Campbell's Return stage shifts the focus of the work squarely onto the superficial theme of vanquishing the monster, and includes as his main example the various adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* (including the animated films). His passionate analysis in this section is perhaps his best work in the entire book, especially his discussion of Samwise Gamgee, although his lack of reference back to Dimitra Fimi's seminal work *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History* when discussing Tolkien and race is rather disconcerting.

His contemplation of environmental themes in Tolkien's work continues in the second chapter, "Of Treebeard, C.S. Lewis, and the Aesthetics of Christian Environmentalism." Note that the title signals his broader interest in environmentalism rather than the advertised climate change. Following an examination of the influence of Tolkien's early life on his worldview, the focus shifts to his fellow Inkling, C.S. Lewis, including references to both the Space Trilogy and the Narnia Chronicles. While DiPaolo's comparison of Lewis and Tolkien's environmentalism is interesting, he paints Tolkien's mythology with the same broad brush of allegory that applies to Lewis, for example stating quite emphatically that Eru and Melkor are "literally supposed to be the Christian God and the Christian devil" and that Gandalf is "an angel" (56-7). As Bradley Birzer argues, "no single character or place within *The Lord of the Rings* directly

parallels the places, events, and people of the Christian story—to do so would have made the myth a formal allegory” (61), something Tolkien pointedly denies doing (*Letters* #211, 283). In fact, in an unsent letter that summarized the salient points of his invented mythology, Tolkien is clear to differentiate between his “Myth and what may be perhaps called Christian mythology” (#212, 286).

DiPaolo’s generalization also ignores the fact that Tolkien often takes care to place particular words in single quotation marks in his letters and essays in order to differentiate between their literal use and some similarity to a more general concept, including ‘god,’ ‘angel,’ or ‘angelic.’ Examples include references to Melkor’s “‘angelic’ powers” (*Morgoth’s Ring* 400) and comparisons of the Valar as “as powerful as the ‘gods’ of human mythologies” (330). Such imprecise wording was necessary because he was attempting to translate between his invented languages and their mythology to the everyday language and familiar examples of his readers. Thus we read in the letter to Milton Waldman that the Valar are to be thought of as “powers: Englished as gods” (#131, 146). Tolkien himself was well aware of the potential for a precise meaning to be lost in such translations, and writing in a letter to Father Robert Murray he explains “I am under the difficulty of finding English names for mythological creatures with other names, since people would not ‘take’ a string of Elvish names, and I would rather they took my legendary creatures even with the false associations of the ‘translation’ than not at all” (#156, 207). In another letter to Murray, Tolkien admits that there are “no precise modern terms” to explain what Gandalf was, but offers that he was an “incarnate ‘angel’—strictly an ἄγγελος” (#156, 202). The Greek term is translated as “messenger” in the endnotes (445), an identification bolstered by a 1956 draft to a letter to Michael Straight in which Gandalf’s “function as a ‘wizard’ is an angelos or messenger from the Valar or Rulers” (#181, 237). Therefore DiPaolo’s flat statement that Gandalf is an “angel” in the literal sense of a Christian angel either reflects a lack of understanding on the part of the author, or intentional sloppiness that could certainly mislead the reader who has not probed the Tolkien corpus beyond *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Lewis also suffers a hyperbolic treatment by DiPaolo in this chapter, with Fairy Hardcastle of *The Hideous Strength* characterized as “a grotesque lesbian dominatrix” (63). The chapter truly begins to unravel when DiPaolo makes the claim that superficial connections between *The Notion Club Papers* and *That Hideous Strength* (including Lewis’ well-known reference to “Numinor”) allow us to read Tolkien’s legendarium and not only Lewis’ Space Trilogy but the Narnia Chronicles as a “shared universe” (71). Given Tolkien’s less than enthusiastic opinion of the Narnia Chronicles as “outside the range of my sympathy” (#265, 352) and his observation that Lewis “cannot be restrained

from using" references to Númenor in his Space Trilogy (#131, 151), one could only guess how loudly he would scoff at DiPaolo's assertion.

As one might expect from the title of Chapter 3, "The Time Lord, the Daleks, and the Wardrobe," the focus turns to environmental (broadly defined) themes in *Doctor Who*, in particular the 2012 Christmas special "The Doctor, the Widow and the Wardrobe." The title of the episode is, of course, homage to Lewis's novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. DiPaolo is correct that environmental themes have been demonstrated throughout the BBC series from its early days (including the 2012 special), but again, there is a paucity of connections drawn to climate change as such. For example, DiPaolo completely ignores the serial "Earthshock" (1982), which depicts perhaps the ultimate environmental catastrophe—the large impact from space that wiped out the majority of life on Earth at the end of the Cretaceous Period—as being a technological catastrophe (the collision of a large space freighter rather than an asteroid with our planet). Once again, the chapter begins to meander, with the argument doubling back to Gandalf the angel and comparing the Doctor to Gandalf and his fellow Time Lord and nemesis, the Master, to Saruman. While such comparisons could be interesting, they are rushed here and do not add significantly to the overall thematic argument of the chapter. But if the Doctor is not a Maia like Gandalf, could he be John Lennon, or a Judeo-Christian angel, or Aslan, or even Jesus himself, the author asks? My question is, what does this have to do with climate change?

It must be said that two potentially insightful sub-arguments of this chapter certainly have the potential to add in creative ways to the larger discussion of *Doctor Who*. The first is a consideration of the Daleks as a villainous species (what he correctly terms the "Neofascist Menace" [92]). While the section ends with a curiosity-provoking remark comparing Daleks to "parodies of the most ruthless Christian missionaries" (95) in their subjugation of indigenous peoples, it is not explored further. I was also left puzzled by the author's claim that Tolkien's Orcs are similar to Daleks in their desire "to remake creation in their image" (93). While there has been considerable debate within Tolkien scholarship as to the fundamental nature of the Orcs (and the interested reader is encouraged to read the appropriate sections of *Morgoth's Ring* that sample Tolkien's personal struggles to resolve it within his own mind, to which I believe DiPaolo may be obliquely referring without attribution), generally speaking when Orcs take independent actions beyond simply fulfilling the orders of their master(s) the tendency is to destroy, not make or remake. Indeed, as Tolkien explains in his famous essay "On Fairy-stories," the ability of humans to "make in our measure," or to serve as a subcreator, is a sign of our having been "made in the image and likeness of a Maker," i.e. God (66). To creatively remake is to serve the purpose of the divine, something that is certainly not often



associated with Orcs. The lack of precise examples (or references back to the primary texts) is frustrating, to say the least.

A later discussion draws comparisons between the apocalyptic Time War between the Time Lords and the Daleks in *Doctor Who* and Tolkien's great battles between Melkor and the forces of the Valar (and Elves) in Middle-earth. The points raised (including the devastation to the environment in both cases) are thought-provoking and worthy of consideration, despite the fact that they certainly take the reader down yet another path that has little explicit connection with climate. Again, DiPaolo's characterization of Melkor as "Tolkien's depiction of Lucifer" (103) lacks the subtleties that make Melkor a character worthy of deeper analysis (rather than merely a caricature of Big Bad Evil), as demonstrated by the post-*Lord of the Rings* essays published in *Morgoth's Ring*. Indeed, the title of that volume comes from Tolkien's reflection that, since Melkor is not only responsible for the corruption of the world through his part in the great song of creation (leading to the term *Arda Marred* for the world as it currently exists) but "incarnated" himself into the physical world in order to control all "physical matter," Middle-earth itself "was Morgoth's Ring" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 399-400). It would have been interesting for DiPaolo to consider Melkor as the embodiment of pollution of the natural environment, yet another relevant lost opportunity in this volume.

Both Chapter 4, "Noah's Ark Revisited: 2012 and Magic Lifeboats for the Wealthy," and Chapter 5, "Race and Disaster Capitalism in *Parable of the Sower*, *The Strain*, and *Elysium*," deal with issues of class and power. As the title of the former suggests, not only is Roland Emmerich's 2009 disaster film a central theme, but flood narratives more broadly. Of course, in the context of Tolkien, catastrophic flood imagery should immediately lead to a discussion of the fate of Númenor and Tolkien's admitted "Atlantis complex" (*Letters* #163, 213), and as expected DiPaolo wades into those deep waters. He walks himself back from the waterfall of over-reaching by stating that there is "little to no evidence to suggest that Tolkien's recurring dream was in any way related to fears based in scientific theories about glacial melt and the greenhouse effect," but does note that Tolkien's dreams now reflect an "internationally shared recurring nightmare" (110). This insightful comment could have been followed up with further analysis of the cautionary tale of Númenor, in particular the fact that the island was ultimately destroyed (and its world forever changed from flat to spherical) due to the hubris of humans (certainly a relevant cautionary tale in the age of climate change). This is yet another lost opportunity to draw connections to climate change rather than general environmentalism. The chapter later wanders off into the wilderness of Dominionism and American politics, with a side step into the life of C.S. Lewis. The only reason for this

diversion appears to be to set Lewis in opposition with hypocritical (read: American Conservative) Christians.

An eclectic range of works with clearer connections to climate are referenced in Chapter 5, including the seminal cli-fi film *Snowpiercer* (2013), *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2015), and the trio of *The Strain* horror novels penned by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan. While I was delighted to see the last of these included in his analysis (as they have somehow been largely ignored in academic circles), DiPaolo once again largely fails to explore the central cli-fi point of the series, a nuclear winter that blocks out much of the sunlight, changes the climate, and allows vampiric creatures to freely walk in the daylight and enslave humanity. It is also disappointing that he does not go into the differences between the novel series and the even more rarely mentioned FX horror television series adaptation (2014-7), relegating it to a single mention in the caption of a photograph of one of the series' main vampiric characters. Like the titular train in *Snowpiercer*, the chapter barrels ahead on its appointed path, which appears to be to use examples in popular culture as a soapbox from which to espouse political views. While many of these issues (e.g. the environmental dangers of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access Pipeline projects) are likely to find a sympathetic audience among those to whom cli-fi most deeply speaks, the earnestly argued political viewpoints add little to the direct analysis of the cited media.

Issues of ecofeminism and feminist theology (principally in the works of Catholic writer Sallie McFague) form the focus of the next chapter. Issues of Catholic theology, in particular the views of St. Francis of Assisi, are discussed in terms of how they resonate with the works of Tolkien and Lewis. Several recurring themes already noted in this review pop up again in this chapter, in terms of the road not taken versus a diversion down the path into the woods that often leads to oversimplifications. The latter here is a discussion of Lewis and Tolkien's relationships with women, in the case of Tolkien succumbing to long-standing misconceptions and demonstrating a lack of familiarity with recent scholarship in this regard (e.g. Croft and Donovan). At the same time, while arguing that Lewis was a "proto-ecofeminist" (155), DiPaolo overlooks the opportunity to discuss Tolkien's views on pure science (as opposed to technology) reflected in his published letters, views that it can be argued have much in common with ecofeminism (Larsen).

The chapter concludes with a discussion of St. Francis of Assisi, not, as in other works (Birzer; Campbell; Dickerson and Evans) in a comparison to Tolkien's elves or wizards, but rather in analyzing the story of the ferocious wolf of Gubbio who was said to have been tamed by the holy man. DiPaolo compares this tale to the lesson of the Stark children in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, in that while each of them adopts a wild direwolf pup, Bran and Jon have

exceptional abilities to commune with the untamed, dangerous indigenous nature of the wild beyond the Wall through their deep connections with their wolf. Again, it is unfortunate that this insight is not explored in more depth, and is particularly frustrating in the case of Bran and his ability to “warg” into his wolf (and other animals). Indeed, his role as seer (as the “Three-Eyed Raven”) is intimately tied to his ability to commune with the natural world on a deeper level, something that DiPaolo sadly does not explore.

Two works that commonly appear on any list of cli-fi, Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* Trilogy and *The Handmaid’s Tale*, form the basis of the surprisingly short seventh chapter, although it is one of the most clearly focused. Among the important points made is that Offred of *The Handmaid’s Tale* retains a personal religious belief despite the horrors that are perpetrated upon her (and her sister handmaids) in the name of the state religion of Gilead. However, the greater climate change issues of the novel (and Hulu television adaptation) are glossed over, another unfortunate lost opportunity. DiPaolo also returns to his discussion of St. Francis, and draws a number of logical connections between the basic philosophical message of Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy and Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*.

Chapter 8 is an uneven offering that applies Umberto Eco’s concept of Ur-Fascism to rebellions against repressive post-apocalyptic regimes in works as varied as *Snowpiercer* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* to *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Of particular note is an insightful analysis of the complex relationship between Atwood’s Commander and his handmaid Offred, although it begins to fall flat when comparing this relationship with that between Martin’s Tyrion Lannister and the prostitute Shae. Once more, the chapter begins to go off the rails when it diverts from issues of climate change and environmentalism to critiques of American politics, and concludes with a discussion of the *Mad Max* franchise that focuses on depictions of the rape of various individuals (rather than the rape of the environment).

Chapter 9 returns to Tolkien and issues of Catholicism, specifically in the works of author Suzanne Collins. DiPaolo argues that a close reading of her *Hunger Games* series demonstrates that it is not only inherently Catholic, but a *liberal* Catholic text. Along the way he stops to consider the different circumstances of Lewis and Tolkien’s marriages before plunging into a more detailed analysis of Tolkien’s conservative Catholic worldview. Of interest is the examination of the misappropriation of Tolkien by neoconservatives that follows, although, again, it escapes me as to how it is connected with cli-fi. After wandering down a dark alley to explore the views of Catholics suffragist Dorothy Day and satirist Oscar Wilde (and making the awkward typographical error of including “Tolkein” in the page header), we finally arrive at Panem and the travails of Katniss Everdeen, where connections are at least made to

environmentalism (Katniss' relationship with nature as a respectful hunter). DiPaolo's observation of parallels between the journeys of Katniss and Samwise Gamgee (including the Scouring of the Shire) are interesting, and bring the chapter to a relatively satisfying conclusion that thematically circles back to Chapter 1.

Naomi Klein's 2014 nonfiction work on climate change *This Changes Everything* and both Martin's novels and the film *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991) form the heart of the penultimate chapter. Both Martin's novel series and the HBO adaptation are discussed, and DiPaolo takes special care to point out how the ecological and climate change themes of the novels are greatly diminished in the TV series. In particular, Martin's seeming obsession with menus and catalogues of food stores in the novels is explained as a creative way of signaling to the careful reader how climate change in Westeros is negatively affecting food supplies as the series advances. Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* novel series would have been a natural addition to the analysis of this chapter, in particular speculation of how the clear environmentalism and climate change plotline will be handled in the upcoming Netflix adaptation (currently in production).

DiPaolo raises interesting parallels between what he terms the "Cowboy and Indian Alliance" (235) between the Federation and Klingons in *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country* and Martin's *Night's Watch* and the *Wildlings beyond the Wall* (and tosses in the *Doctor Who* serial "The Curse of Fenric" for good measure). However, when Klein's work is added to the mix we find ourselves back to discussing the Keystone Pipeline. While the environmental concerns of this project (and the potential devastation an accident could cause to the landscape) are undeniable, the chapter's final assertion that the pipeline is (at least symbolically) Tolkien's Smaug appears, like the dragon, to emerge out of thin air. Upon further reflection, the metaphor is an interesting one and is certainly in keeping with the many other envelope-pushing proclamations made throughout the work.

DiPaolo continues his analysis of the connections he sees between Martin and Klein in Chapter 11. While the fate of Westeros has yet to be revealed (as of the time of the writing of this review), a happy ending is certainly an unrealistic expectation. Is the same true of the story of the human species? Have we already doomed ourselves to extinction through our reckless exploitation of the environment? DiPaolo takes a practical yet not hopeless viewpoint moving forward, returning to Tolkien (in the form of Gandalf) for tempered words of inspiration: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us" (*LotR* I.2.51). While these words would have been intellectually and emotionally fitting as an ending to the work, DiPaolo instead chooses to include a seemingly tangential epilogue, "Who Owns the Legacy of J.R.R. Tolkien?" As he explains

in his introduction, it is meant to address the question of who has earned the right to sit upon the authorial and environmentalist throne vacated by J.R.R. Tolkien. After briefly surveying Tolkien's experiences as a cult figure and his unease with it, he offers, not surprisingly, that it is "ecofeminist genre writers" (282). While this assertion is in keeping with the overall arguments offered in the work, it is a strange way to end a book that is purported to focus on cli-fi, and certainly could have been included in the final chapter in a holistic way (rather than crafting a separate epilogue).

In the end, I was left understanding "climate fiction" less well than I began—is it synonymous with apocalyptic literature? Dystopian? Ecofeminism? Ur-fascism? New Wave Catholicism? DiPaolo's book ultimately tells us more about the author's personal tastes than the genre as a whole. If you are specifically interested in climate fiction that truly deals with issues of climate change, this work will cause you palpable frustration. If instead you are open to the author's personal exploration of a potpourri of minimally connected yet interesting insights into popular speculative media, there may be sufficient content to interest you here, although be prepared to take some of his pronouncements (especially about Tolkien) with a pinch of Himalayan rock salt.

—Kristine Larsen

#### WORKS CITED

- Atwood, Margaret. "We Must Tackle Climate Change Together." *Huffington Post* (Canada Edition). 12 Nov. 2013. [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/margaret-atwood/atwood-climate-change\\_b\\_4256145.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/margaret-atwood/atwood-climate-change_b_4256145.html)
- Birzer, Bradley. *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth*. ISI Books, 2002.
- Campbell, Liam. *The Ecological Augury in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Walking Tree Publishers, 2011.
- Croft, Janet Brennan, and Leslie Donovan, editors. *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Mythopoeic Press, 2015.
- Dickerson, Matthew, and Jonathan Evans. *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien*. The University Press of Kentucky, 2011.
- Fernandes, Rio. "The Subfield That is Changing the Landscape of Literary Studies." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 21 Mar. 2016. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Subfield-That-Is-Changing/235776>
- Fimi, Dimitra. *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Forrest, Bethan. "Cli-Fi; Climate Change Fiction as Literature's New Frontier?" *Huffington Post* (UK Edition). 22 July 2016. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/bethan-forrest/climate-change-fiction\\_b\\_7847182.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/bethan-forrest/climate-change-fiction_b_7847182.html)
- Holding, Sarah. "What is Cli-Fi? And Why I Write It." *The Guardian*. 6 Feb. 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/feb/06/what-is-cli-fi-sarah-holding>

- Holmes, David. "‘Cli-Fi’: Could a Literary Genre Help Save the Planet?" *The Conversation*. 20 Feb. 2014. <https://theconversation.com/cli-fi-could-a-literary-genre-help-save-the-planet-23478>
- Larsen, Kristine. "Medieval Organicism or Modern Feminist Science? Bombadil, Elves, and Mother Nature." *Tolkien and Alterity*, edited by Christopher Vaccaro and Yvette Kisor, Palgrave Press, 2017, pp. 95-108.
- Leikam, Susanne and Julia Leyda. "Cli-Fi in American Studies: A Research Bibliography." *American Studies Journal* no. 62, 2017. DOI 10.18422/62-08
- Martin, Emily. "What is Cli-Fi? A Beginner’s Guide to Climate Fiction." *Book Riot*. 3 May 2018. <https://bookriot.com/2018/05/03/climate-fiction/>
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Edited by Humphrey Carpenter, Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- . *The Lord of the Rings*. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- . *Morgoth’s Ring*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993. History of Middle-earth.
- . "On Fairy-stories." *Tolkien On Fairy-stories*. Edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson, Harper Collins, 2008, pp. 27-84.
- Ullrich, J.K. "Climate Fiction: Can Books Save the Planet?" *The Atlantic*. 14 Aug. 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/08/climate-fiction-margaret-atwood-literature/400112/>



**THE GREAT TOWER OF ELFLAND: THE MYTHOPOEIC WORLDVIEW OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN, C.S. LEWIS, G.K. CHESTERTON, AND GEORGE MACDONALD.** Zachary A. Rhone. Foreword by Colin Duriez. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2017. 186 p. 9781606353295. \$45.00

IN HIS PREFACE TO THIS BOOK, COLIN DURIEZ characterizes Zachary Rhone’s purpose succinctly: “to convincingly set out a worldview in common between two of the Inklings: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien” and to conclude that “there is a shared and unified worldview” between Lewis, Tolkien, G.K. Chesterton and George MacDonald (x). Rhone argues that the four authors build a “Great Tower on which they all stand: their Christian mythopoeia” (117). Deploying and repurposing symbols from all four authors, Rhone offers an alternative analytical structure to the conventional academic argument that integrates and responds to contemporary literary theory as well as to biographical and theological scholarship of the four authors.

The book presents an experiment in inductive argumentation in line both with Lewis’s own *Experiment in Criticism* and with Tolkien’s discussions of the scholarly tradition of Beowulfiana. Rhone uses Tolkien’s “allegory of the tower” from “*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*” as his guiding image and