



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

Volume 18
Number 1

Article 6

Fall 10-15-1991

Artists' Comments on Their Art

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Recommended Citation

DiSante, Paula; Beach, Sarah; and Patterson, Nancy-Lou (1991) "Artists' Comments on Their Art," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 18: No. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol18/iss1/6>

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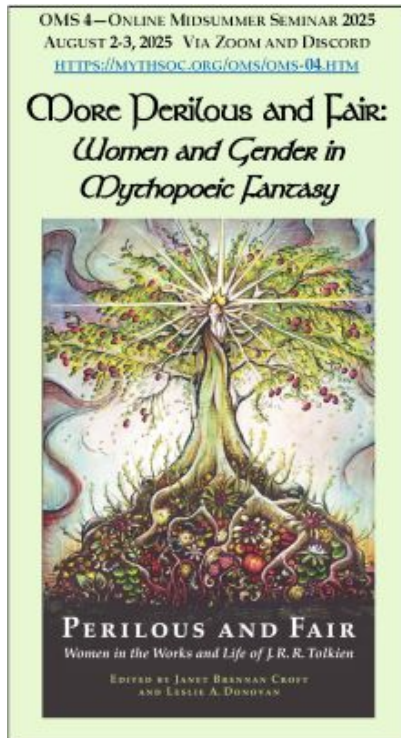
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Artists' Comments on Their Art

Abstract

A collection of statements taken from featured artists on pieces seen in this issue of *Mythlore*.

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Artists' Comments on Their Art

The Torment of Húrin by Paula DiSante (Front Cover)

Then Morgoth cursed Húrin and Morwen and their offspring, and set a doom upon them of darkness and sorrow; and taking Húrin from prison he set him in a chair of stone upon a high place of Thangorodrim. There he was bound by the power of Morgoth, and Morgoth standing beside him cursed him again; and he said: 'Sit now there; and look out upon the lands where evil and despair shall come upon those whom thou lovest. Thou hast dared to mock me, and to question the power of Melkor, Master of the fates of Arda. Therefore with my eyes thou shalt see, and with my ears thou shalt hear; and never shalt thou move from this place until all is fulfilled unto its bitter end.' — *The Silmarillion*

It has been a while since I last did a cover for *Mythlore*, so when the opportunity came around again, I thought Húrin would be the perfect subject. I decided to eliminate Morgoth from the scene and show Húrin nearing the end of his imprisonment. He is quite old, and the ravages of his horror and anguish are written in his face. But he has not forgotten his hatred toward his evil captor, and he still struggles against Morgoth's sorcery in a determined, if futile, effort to break free.

How to depict "bound by the power of Morgoth"? I considered simply showing Húrin seated upon the stone chair, fighting against nothingness. But ultimately this proved too esoteric and cerebral for illustration purposes, and so I opted for swirling, shadowy bonds to provide a visual realization of his predicament. The whorls around the captive's head also allow me to direct the viewer's attention to Húrin's face, while at the same time suggest the supernatural powers of sight and hearing with which Morgoth has tortured him. Precisely what horror Húrin is seeing at this moment I leave to the viewer's imagination.

This piece was done in a technique that is new to me. It consists of powdered graphite mixed with acrylic matte medium, then applied with a brush onto watercolor paper. In a way, it is both a painting and a drawing. I found this method to have its own pros and cons, but despite its inherent difficulties, it was challenging and absorbing. It allows for a bolder and wider range of gray tones, and it forced me to get away from the obsessive precision of my pencil technique. But I have no intention of giving up my pet medium, since mistakes made in pencil are so much easier to correct! In any case, this was an interesting experiment that I will probably pursue again in the future.

Morning on Vingilot by Paula DiSante (Page 35 — facing this page)

Thus Maedhros and Maglor gained not the jewel; but it was not lost. For Ulmo bore up Elwing out of the waves, and he gave her the likeness of a great white bird, and upon her breast there shone as a star the Silmaril, as she flew over the water to seek Eärendil her beloved. On a time of night Eärendil at the helm of his ship saw her come towards him, as a white cloud exceeding swift beneath the moon, as a star

over the sea moving in strange course, a pale flame on wings of storm. And it is sung that she fell from the air upon the timbers of Vingilot, in a swoon, nigh unto death for the urgency of her speed, and Eärendil took her to his bosom; but in the morning with marvelling eyes he beheld his wife in her own form beside him with her hair upon his face, and she slept. — *The Silmarillion*

This is an older work (1987) that I recently dug out of the closet. I originally created this to show at the Marquette Mythopoeic Conference, with no thought that it would ever be published. I used a very light, silvery touch in the original, which is quite difficult to capture in a halftone, so it may be that the reproduction here is not very good. I admit that I don't really work this way any more. The technique is a little too "precious," even for my tastes.

I still like parts of this work quite a bit, but I can hardly bear to look at other parts of it. The Nauglamír is a disaster, with a Cringe Factor of about 9.2 (the Cringe Factor, a handy phrase coined by Patrick Wynne, indicates how severely an artist physically reacts when confronted by his or her older works, which that artist now finds "deficient" in one way or another. A Cringe Factor of 1 or 2 means the artwork is still valid and enjoyable, although a few elements of the piece may disturb or rankle. A 6 or 7 can cause osteoporosis. A 10 is fatal.)

All silliness aside (or some silliness aside), I must have been on another planet when I did that necklace (I was watching the Iran-Contra hearings while I was drawing. There may be a connection....). The Nauglamír is so awful, so Truly Dreadful. The individual gemstones are handled well enough, but the necklace as a whole is a flop. I remember having all of these terrific photo references for the stones. I became enamored of the gems: "Look at how I did that emerald! Look how slick that cabochon sapphire turned out! Check those crazy diamonds!"

If I had paid half as much attention to the "big picture" of the necklace as I did to these singular elements, perhaps the Nauglamír would have had a ghost of a chance. In regards to the finished product... well, let's just say I won't be considering jewelry design as my next career move.

The figures of the amazed Eärendil and the sleeping Elwing still work, for the most part. The feather on Eärendil's sleeve is meant as a reminder of Elwing's sea bird incarnation. I probably pulled two dozen feathers out of my pillow before I found just the right one to draw. The artwork is narrower than it ought to be for publication in these pages. But, as I explained before, I hadn't intended to publish it when I drew it. Yet I think the composition benefits from this slightly more forceful verticality. To have made it wider would have required the addition of extraneous elements simply to fill the page, and compositionally, this was something I couldn't justify. On the whole, this was a challenging picture of an unabashedly romantic subject, and I had a great time working on it.

The Death of Beleg by Sarah Beach (Page 49)

"Beleg drew his sword Anglachel, and with it he cut the fetters that bound Túrin; but fate was that day more strong, for the blade slipped as he cut the shackles, and Túrin's foot was pricked. Then he was aroused into a sudden wakefulness of rage and fear, and seeing one bending over him with naked blade he leapt up with a great cry, believing that Orcs were come again to torment him; and grappling with him in the darkness he seized Anglachel, and slew Beleg Cúthalion thinking him a foe.

But as he stood, finding himself free, and ready to sell his life dearly against imagined foes, there came a great flash of lightning above them; and in its light he looked down on Beleg's face. Then Túrin stood stone-still and silent, staring on that dreadful death, knowing what he had done; and so terrible was his face, lit by the lightning that flickered all about them, that Gwindor cowered down upon the ground and dared not raise his eyes.

—The Silmarillion

A few years ago (well, actually, it was the Spring 1982 issue of *Mythlore*), Patrick Wynne did a version of this scene. It appeared about the time I was fiddling with idea sketches for my own rendering of the scene. It is a bit depressing to have someone else turn up with something you are also thinking of. So I put off doing my version for some time. About 3 or 4 years ago, however, the urge to do my own version reasserted itself, and I did the preliminary sketches for this composition. And then they just sat

there, tacked to my bulletin board over my desk, still waiting for me to do the picture. Finally, this fall, I was ready to do it. It's amazing with a nine-year gestation period can do for a piece of artwork! It was completed very quickly, the most difficult aspect of the picture being the gradations from black to light grey — merely a matter of the time spent doing it.

With my usual penchant for the dramatic, I illuminated the moment with the lightning bolt itself — no moon peeping through angry clouds. I felt it heightened the emotional isolation of the scene. Rather than focus on Túrin's facial expression, I used his whole stance to communicate his dismay in realizing he had killed Beleg. Also, I wouldn't exactly call Gwindor's pose "cringing". I positioned him this way to convey two combined emotions: his anguish at Beleg's death, and a need to stop Túrin from further violence (and perhaps even an emotional rejection of Túrin). All in all, I'm happy with the results.

Bacchus and All His Wild Girls by Nancy-Lou Patterson (Back Cover)

Here is a drawing of a subject in the Narnian Chronicles that I have always enjoyed. I cast my middle son Patrick as Bacchus, and all of my five daughters — Barbara, Dolores, Francesca, Samantha, and Melanie as his "wild girls"!... I am back to teaching full-time.

Tributes and Articles about J.R.R. TOLKIEN Sought for Special Issue

As is well known, 1992 is the 100th Anniversary of the birth of J.R.R. Tolkien. The Mythopoeic Society is preparing to hold its 1992 annual Mythopoeic Conference in Oxford, England (see page 67).

In addition to this, *Mythlore* is planning a special Centennial issue in the first half of 1992.

Whether or not you will be attending this once-in-a-lifetime Conference in Oxford, you, the readers of *Mythlore*, are invited to submit special articles and tributes in praise and honor of John Ronald Reule Tolkien. The articles may be on any aspect of Tolkien or his works, but ones dealing with his overall achievements and significance is especially welcome.

Tributes may be as short as one paragraph to as long as two typewritten pages. They may include your first reading of Tolkien, your initial responses, what influence Tolkien has been to you, your appraisal of his genius and greatness, and your thoughts on how your response has changed over the years.

It will be gratifying to see many people to share their thoughts and feelings with the other readers on this not-to-be-repeated occasion.

Please send these tributes directly to the Editor:

Glen H. GoodKnight,
742 South Garfield Ave., Monterey Park, CA 91754 USA.