

Winter 2-15-1985

## The Rags of Lordship: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Reenchantment of the World

Peter Lowentrout

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



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

### Recommended Citation

Lowentrout, Peter (1985) "The Rags of Lordship: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Reenchantment of the World," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 11: No. 3, Article 9.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol11/iss3/9>

This Article 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>



---

## 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>



### The Rags of Lordship: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Reenchantment of the World

#### Abstract

Sees a movement at the leading edges of our culture away from the desacralized world and back toward the mythic. Sees the genres of science fiction and fantasy providing aesthetic windows to the sacred. Along with science and religion, they participate in a resynthesis of our culture's assumptions, pointing toward individuality within fundamental unity and broader notions of causality.

#### Additional Keywords

Fantasy—Moral and religious aspects; Fantasy and culture; Science fiction—Moral and religious aspects; Science fiction and culture

# The Rags of Lordship

## Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Reenchantment of the World

Peter Lowenrout

The steady demythologization of our culture over the past centuries has been both enriching and impoverishing -- a necessary precursor to greater insight and yet all too often psychically and spiritually debilitating. As the powerful assumptions which have underlain the main currents of scientific and humanistic thought have penetrated into even the farthest recesses of our culture, we have been brought up short time and again, discovering to our dismay but also our delight that our old beliefs and our old ways have been too narrow, too naive.

This epochal process of demythologization has led many of us into grave difficulties; it has led to that most haunting experience of demythologized humanity -- the experience of a world emptied of its meaning. Our universe has become vast, cold and objective. Our values and moral precepts have fragmented; sure and effective action are undercut by a seemingly inevitable relativism. Too often, we reduce ourselves to objects, subjectivity becomes suspect and the zest for living ebbs.

Is this too stark an evocation of our modern "spiritual crisis"? Sadly, it is not. Certainly, people have been throwing off their culture's embodiments of the sacred for as far back into history as we can see. Most often, however, this was done to move on to other, seemingly more adequate myths. If the rare person did indeed choose to stand alone, agnostic on the nature of his or her connections to the cosmos, it was at the least a personal choice. Today, hundreds of millions of us seemingly have little choice; never in history have our inherited myths of the sacred seemed so out of joint with our accepted (i.e.--scientific) understandings of the world.

And just as religion has waned, so, too, have those systems of thought and belief that for a time served as its surrogates. Freud's ego psychology, Marx's dialectic, Hegel's Universal History -- how many among us remain convinced by these? Those forces which have weakened our hold upon the sacred have at the last done the same for all our faiths, however dilute and secularized a shadow of the old they may be.

W.B. Yeats put a name to these "forces" in one of the most quoted poems of the twentieth century, his "The Second Coming":

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.<sup>1</sup>

The ceremony of innocence is drowned? Indeed, just here is our problem -- a loss of innocence on a grand scale, stretching out over the centuries and consuming

countless hearts in its inevitable dislocations of culture and spirit. Such a loss of innocence is a painful thing, and has it not been with pain-dimmed eyes that we have for long been examining the possibilities for belief that remain to us? In losing one faith, we have for a time lost them all. From our ancient prehistory to our present, we have lived a great *enantiadromia*. Swinging from one extreme to another, we have moved from a simple faith in our relation to and importance for cosmic process to a lack of faith in all but a radical relativism which at its worst enervates, and which denies us reasonable access to the sacred. Look beyond the feverish concerns of our day and you will find a world painfully wrenched free of the myths that once sustained it and bound it up in common cause with all creation, a world filled too full with weightless and frightened people.

But if history is any guide, our culture will not for long remain viable without a faith, a myth, an experience of the sacred. Nor is it too likely that it will need to do so. Whatever the ultimate metaphysical status of the sacred, at least twenty thousand generations of humans bear witness to its reality. Religion is among the most persistent elements of human culture and experience, and it is likely that our current disillusionment, however deep, must finally open up as many and perhaps even more sacred possibilities than it has closed off. Indeed, many today seem to be shaking off the numbing effects of the past centuries' loss of faith, the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of Matthew Arnold, and are perhaps catching the first movements of a faith that has at once the vigor and spontaneity of youth and the balanced penetration of a deeper maturity.

Mircea Eliade, the great historian and phenomenologist of religion, has noted this gathering movement toward new religious possibilities, and writes of the "nostalgia" of modern people for "real (i.e.--mythic) experience."<sup>2</sup> This nostalgia, he believes, is seen in a deepening of mythic themes in our fantasies and arts as well as in the striking amount of attention we give them.

In a desacralized world such as ours, the "sacred" is present and active chiefly in the imaginary universes. But imaginary experiences are part of the total human being, no less important than his diurnal experiences.<sup>3</sup>

Our modern attempt at the "demystification" of the cosmos is, Eliade believes, destructive of the human spirit and ultimately futile -- the deep patterned flows of the psyche can be debased, but never destroyed. Our sacred myths are more than simple fictions; they are phenomena. Rather, they are deeply true, fundamental expressions of our psyches, transrational structures around which we organize ourselves. Without myth, we have no hope of access to

the subliminal center of our being, no hope of anything but to live out disjointed parodies of true life.

In our deepening nostalgia for the real, the mythic, Eliade discerns a "demystification in reverse"<sup>4</sup> in progress in the arts, the sciences, religion and philosophy that he hopes will lead to a revalorization of our cosmos.

Two of the great fantasists of our century, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, shared Eliade's belief in humanity's need for a healthy mythos, as well as his belief in the efficacy of our imaginary universes in evoking in us a true experience of myth and the sacred.

"It is not difficult to see," Lewis wrote once of science fiction,

why those who wish to visit strange regions in search of such beauty, awe or terror as the actual world does not supply have been increasingly driven to other planets or other stars...the less known the real world is, the more plausibly your marvels can be located near at hand. As the area of knowledge spreads, you need to go further afield: like a man moving his house further and further into the country as the new building estates catch him up.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, observes Lewis, the fairy tales of truly ancient times could take place a mere half hour's walk from home, but with Homer we travel for days to meet the Cyclops. Swift takes us to the remotest of seas and Rider Haggard to unexplored Africa and Tibet. "It might have been predicted," Lewis observed, "that stories of this kind would have to leave Tellus altogether."<sup>6</sup>

But of those stories that do cut loose the bonds of Tellus, either by moving out into the stars as in science fiction or into the other worlds of fantasy, the best are, Lewis asserted, not at all bound by the gadgets that are sometimes lugged along on the voyage.

The pseudo-scientific apparatus is to be taken simply as a 'machine' in the sense which that word bore for the Neo-Classical critics. The most superficial appearance of plausibility -- the merest sop to our critical intellect -- will do. I am inclined to think that frankly supernatural methods are best. I took a hero once to Mars in a space-ship, but when I knew better I had angels convey him to Venus. Nor need the strange worlds, when we get there, be at all strictly tied to scientific probabilities. It is their wonder, or beauty, or suggestiveness that matter.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Lewis implies, the most effective science fiction and fantasy is that which quits Eliade's "desacralized world" altogether; the best of the genre is not that which relies upon the "scientific probabilities" of this world, but that which suggests the wonder and beauty of another, and which in doing so strikes most deeply into the heart of our own. "Good stories of this sort," Lewis observes,

are actual additions to life; they give,

like certain rare dreams, sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience. Hence the difficulty of discussing them at all with those who refuse to be taken out of what they call 'real life' -- which means, perhaps, the groove through some far wider area of possible experience to which our senses and our biological, social, or economic interests usually confine us.<sup>8</sup>

With Eliade and Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien believed that our imaginary universes could evoke in us a real experience of myth and the sacred. In poetic response to a critic who had described the creation of myth and fairy-story as "breathing a lie through silver," Tolkien wrote:

Dear Sir, Although now long estranged, Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed, Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned, and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned: Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light through whom is splintered from a single White to many hues, and endlessly combined in living shapes that move from mind to mind. Though all the crannies of the world we filled with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build Gods and their houses out of dark and light, and sowed the seed of dragons -- 'twas our right (used or misused). That right has not decayed; we make still by the law in which we're made.<sup>9</sup>

"We make still by the law in which we're made": the surface of an imaginary world may not be factual, but Tolkien is convinced that the deeper processes which inform that world are the same as inform our own. Writing of the "eucatastrophic tale,"<sup>10</sup> the tale that suddenly ends in good, Tolkien asserts that:

It is the mark of a good fairy-story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the 'turn' comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality. The peculiar quality of 'joy' in successful Fantasy can...be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth.<sup>11</sup>

The myth and symbol with which fantasy and science fiction work is not untrue, Tolkien believes, but a reflection in consciousness of deeper, subliminal movements in our psyches and in our world. While fantasy can move us into an enchanted "Secondary World,"<sup>12</sup> it can also, by moving us more perfectly into our own, help us to reenchanted, to breathe life again into a cosmos that has for too long been slowly dying.

Vital myth a psychological necessity? A "demystification-in-reverse?" What are we to make of these claims of Lewis, Tolkien and Eliade? Indeed, if we look around us today, is there any evidence we can adduce to support them? Are these men not simply dreamers, dreamers unwilling to loose a dying past? Our earlier evocation of the modern feeling of weightlessness seems well justified. Certainly, more people than ever before wobble about the world burying

the Angst resulting from this panicky feeling of weightlessness in one or another half-thought-out creed, doctrine or illegality. But if a stark evocation of our modern spiritual crisis is justified, it is, as well, quite misleading. For while this feeling of weightlessness is real enough for many people, more and more it seems that the weightlessness itself is not. For many of us, talk of "Angst," "emptiness," and moral relativity will simply not ring true; it will not at all reflect our lived experience. And we will account for our being out of step with our demythologized times in different ways. We will say that we are too well aware of the "discontinuities" of modern physics, micro and macro, to believe in a mechanistic universe. Or perhaps we will liberally supplement our religious orthodoxy with the insight of such religious fantasists as George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien. Philosophers will speak of post-critical epistemologies and the new metaphysical possibility, epistemologists and religious scholars of the seeming need for deeply-lived myth for right relationship and true psychological health.

But whatever the rational articulation, there is a core of shared assumptions in all these positions that, while leading to no hard and fast metaphysics, nonetheless does provide increasing numbers of people access once again to the mythic. Along the leading edges of our culture there is emerging now an axiomatic "shifting of gears" which is likely to have much to do with meeting the spiritual crises of recent centuries. And when the lineaments of this "shift" in axiom are traced out, science fiction and fantasy can be seen participating deeply in it.

What is it about the best science fiction and fantasy that is so satisfying? Certainly, it is fun to be center-stage where the great events of the imaginary day are happening. But more than this, we are moved because for a short time we are catapulted into a world where people and cosmos are once again intimately linked, a world where moral choice is again meaningful. Good and evil in the best fantasy and science fiction are more than just white hats and black -- both are embedded in the deepest processes of the imaginary universe itself.

Sam Delany observes that "virtually all the classics of speculative fiction are mystical."<sup>13</sup> And, indeed, this is so. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Lewis' space trilogy, Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, George Lucas' *Star Wars* epic -- in all these, people are portrayed as having intimate and immediate access to the "sacred," variously expressed. In the almost Teilhardian vision of Arthur Clark's *Childhood's End*, humankind at the end of its earthly evolutionary arc ascends into the Pleroma. And the classics of children's fantasy and science fiction show this passion for the mystical, as well, and more so today than yesterday. The children's fantasy of George MacDonald, Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Lewis' *Narnia Chronicles*, James H. Schmitz's *The Witches of Karres*, the recent multivolume fantasies of Lloyd Alexander, Lucy Boston, Susan Cooper, and Madeleine L'Engle -- in these, too, access to the sacred is intimate and immediate.

Such examples are legion, by far the rule rather than the exception. In fact, we do move with the classics of science fiction and fantasy into an experience of the "mystic," the sacred. And how could

it be otherwise? For as Delany himself asserts, "the best science fiction explores the attack."<sup>14</sup> Science fiction explores the attack when it presents us with ways to think, feel and organize in the context of new technology. And more than this, both science fiction and fantasy can help us achieve a fuller articulation of our social ethic. Only two hundred years ago, Western culture was brutal and callous in ways we have now forgotten. New technology, better communications, new patterns of social theory and organization have greatly heightened our awareness of others' suffering, and we have moved slowly to alleviate it. Extrapolating these social and moral trends into the future is not simply good entertainment; it is a valid moral exercise, as well. But the most gallant attack mounted by science fiction and fantasy is that which they have made on the meaninglessness that for long threatened to ring us in. And in the particulars of their pervasive mystical content, we shall see them sharing with some recent religious and scientific inquiry a deep resynthesis of our culture's dominant scientism.

Care must be taken to note first, however, the different contexts in which religious and literary production take place; the aesthetic must not be confused with the religious. Making a stylistic point about science fiction and fantasy, Delany notes that "the only thing we will trust enough to let it generate in us any real sense of the mystical is a resonant aesthetic form."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, if the vehicle is too gravely flawed, we go nowhere. But a "resonant aesthetic form" is not alone enough to evoke the "mystical;" fantasy and science fiction do that only to the extent that they ably tap the deep flows of myth that have been articulated by human cultures through the millennia to give us access to the sacred. Further, myth can never be held to in its fullness in an aesthetic context. Only the devout, and never aesthetes as aesthetes, can make that commitment which is necessary if myth is to so deeply inform a life that it expands into the holy. The aesthetic playfulness of science fiction and fantasy make them a window onto the sacred, and not a door. They may, indeed, help us to, in Lewis' words, "steal past [the] watchful dragons:"

I thought I saw how [fairy stories] could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought that the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.<sup>16</sup>

Lewis' psychology cannot be faulted here; he is clearly correct. It is especially interesting, though, that he intends to steal past the watchful dragons of his religion for the sake of that same religion. Clearly, where science fiction and fantasy successfully help us to reenchanted our world, they do

so as adjuncts to a faith already held or newly developing.

It is not surprising, then, to see an aesthetic play with the sacred characterizing the Church of All Worlds, established in 1961 by social psychologist Tim Zell. With Wiccas in several cities and a membership of seven hundred in the mid-seventies, the group draws on Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* for its mythic paradigms. But science fiction is not revelation, and the credal confession of the group sounds like a litany of pop psychology:

I hereby dedicate myself to a way of life which is non-destructive, peaceful, creative, joyous, alive, non-violent, loving, life-affirming, free, responsible, ecstatic, aware, nonhypocritical, gentle, courageous, honest, tolerant, humanistic, nonauthoritarian, benevolent, moral, growth-oriented, and ecologically sane.<sup>16</sup>

These are laudable goals, and people who strive to realize them should be heartily commended. What they are not, however, is religion, for true myth cannot be generated out of an aesthetic context as long as that context is perceived to remain simply aesthetic. Scientology, the cult and creation of L. Ron Hubbard, moves beyond the playfulness of literary mythic production precisely because it is believed to be true by its adherents, and because its ground in truth is Hubbard's claim of revelation received during a near-death experience in the nineteen-fifties.

This mythic and "mystic" playfulness of science fiction and fantasy is a healthy and necessary development in our culture, and it can serve us well. As we have lost our hold on tradition and our great mythic orthodoxies have withdrawn, we have overcome the stifling sense of existential and moral confinement they at the last imposed upon us. But we have lost their benefits, as well. We have lost their stabilizing influence on the mythic imagination. Parents who bemoan their children's intense absorption in the satisfying mythic patterns of Dungeons and Dragons, Star Wars, or science fiction and fantasy generally, should look again and count their blessings. For the mythic is rising once more, all ashimmer with the numinous, and God can be horrible as well as good. After Jonestown, no one will dispute Eliade's assertion that:

There is no heresy so monstrous or orgy so infernal, no religious cruelty, folly, absurdity, or religious magic so insane, that it may not be 'justified' in its very principle by some false — because partial and incomplete — interpretation of a grandiose symbolism.<sup>17</sup>

All too often, our children have no exposure to vital myth. Where this is so, they have, as well, little immunity to the excesses of religion, excesses that make perfect sense within their own charmed, tight, and vicious little circles. The mythic playfulness of science fiction and fantasy can help our children in their initial articulation of the deep flows of myth, can help inculcate them against religious excess by helping to develop in them some common sense about the sacred.

Besides the obvious differences between the predominantly aesthetic and philosophically playful genre of science fiction and fantasy and devoutly held

religious belief, there are between them some very important points of contact. The deepest of these has been skillfully evoked in George P. R. Martin's recent short story, *The Way of Cross and Dragon*. Father Damien Har Veris, Knight Inquisitor of the One True Interstellar Catholic Church and empty priest, is ordered to the planet Arion to put down a peculiarly dynamic heresy. Father Damien makes planetfall in his starship, the *Truth of Christ*, and soon Lukyan Judasson, leader of the heretical Order of St. Judas Iscariot, reveals himself to Damien as a Liar. The Liars are an ancient and secret brotherhood dedicated to spinning beautiful lies for the rest of us to stave off our realization that the universe is in fact doomed, transient, and uncaring. With the assistance of a telepath, Judasson skillfully maneuvers the Father into a crisis of faith as the Liars try to recruit him. But in his deepest moment of doubt, Father Damien finds one thing in which he believes and is lost to the Liars.

I hesitated, looking deep into myself, wondering what it was I did believe. I searched for my faith — the fire that had once sustained me, the certainty in the teachings of the Church, the presence of Christ within me. I found none of it, none. I was empty inside, burned out, full of questions and pain. But as I was about to answer the smiling Lukyan Judasson, I found something else, something I did believe in, had always believed in.

Truth.

I believed in truth even when it hurt.<sup>18</sup>

The best science fiction and fantasy and the most incisive religious inquiry share in common a quest for truth. Any such quest assumes a belief in the goal, and where a belief in truth is strong, there, too, is hope.

In the context of this quest for truth, fantasy and science fiction constitute one literature with dual balance points, one in science and the other in Faerie. Together, they constitute a speculative literature of our inner and outer frontiers — and always it has been impossible to subdue the mythic imagination on our frontiers. Going out to go in, going in to eventually go back out, science fiction and fantasy move us toward the decisions we must make in the decades ahead and they shape us as we move.

What is it, then, toward which we move? If our decisions are already being shaped, what are their contours? If, as is so often the case, our answers lie implicit in our inquiry, what are the answers that lie in the questions we today put to the future? Where science fiction and fantasy, religious and scientific inquiry explore the attack, they can together be seen to participate in a broad and deep resynthesis of our dominant culture's assumptions. The irreducible elements of this resynthesis seem to be three.

Both science fiction and fantasy and much recent religious inquiry assume a qualified monism, asserting a unity of the world in the context of which personalities remain uniquely themselves. Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, palaeontologist and Jesuit mystic, has observed that "a fundamental dualism" is "at once impossible and antiscientific."<sup>19</sup> And, indeed, the movement of science and mysticism in the West has for long been toward a vision of the

fundamental unity of the world, and both are emerging now on the other side of the dualism that has in the past so deeply informed our culture. The dynamic of science is implicitly monistic as it seeks out the one simplest unity with which to account for the processes of the world. Mystics have long sought unity with the One, and it is, in fact, mystic experience that lies at the heart of all religion. In the past, even the most orthodox Christian mystics wrote often in terms that shaded the monistic and bordered on heresy in the sight of many of their contemporaries. In most modern religious thought deeply influenced by our developing sciences, from the popular expressions of "metaphysical" and UFO cults to the high syntheses of Teilhard, Jung and the process theologians proper, monism holds the high ground. This accelerating movement of the sciences and religion is reflected in the explicitly monistic themes that lace science fiction and fantasy, and it implicitly lies at the heart of the merging of individuals and cultures so often effected in the genre by the lavish inclusion of parapsychological pyrotechnics.

Still, in the face of this monism, the purposeful articulation of "personality" that has been the peculiar achievement of the West is preserved. In fact, mystics and religious thinkers claim that it is the movement into unity with God that is paradoxically the final perfection of individuality. Humanistic depth psychology reflects this principle, as do science fiction and fantasy. Further, in science fiction and fantasy the audience's appreciation of "personality" seems no less acute than its taste for monism, and the requirements of satisfying character development seem sufficient guarantee that the Hero will be no less fully developed an individual than the individuals who read about him or her. That this is so is seen in the dirth of pantheistic and animistic themes in the genre.

Secondly, both fantasy and science fiction and religious inquiry assume that mind is not epiphenomenal, that mind is intimately linked with deep processes in nature. Mind is a real thing knowing real things, a position which implies the epistemology of a critical realism and opens for us again the possibility of a metaphysics. That these are the operating assumptions of science fiction and fantasy and all religious inquiry is not likely to be disputed. Religion would hardly be religion if it professed mind to be the epiphenomenal result of a deterministic evolution. And in the parapsychological phenomena so much a part of science fiction and fantasy, mind makes for exciting and convincing fiction by arcing out past its presently perceived limits into deep union with other minds and with nature. It is not only the inherent wish-fulfillment that makes so deeply satisfying religion and science fiction that take mind seriously. More than this, they satisfy because they strike directly into humanity's central myths of itself, myths which are the expressions in consciousness of the structures which undergird our psyches. Ultimately, mind seen as a real thing is consonant with our deepest intuitions about ourselves.

Finally, fantasy and science fiction, religious inquiry and some recent scientific inquiry assume the inadequacy of a strict determinism, and in widening our notions of causality, often imply an ontologically-based notion of form. Almost always, the functioning of a formal principle is implicit, a more fundamental assumption buried below the more

fully articulated notions of a qualified monism and mind assumed to be a real thing. There are occasional exceptions to this prevailing low visibility of a formal principle in science fiction and fantasy. Explicit consideration of an acausal patterning of events is central in a few works of note -- the fantasy of Charles Williams, Samuel Delany's *Nova*. But where prophecy is a part of the storyline in science fiction and fantasy, there is an implicit patterning of the imaginary history that must be seen as the in-forming action of diety, variously expressed. Events in Middle Earth are ultimately constituted in the harmonies of the Great Music of Eru. Obi-wan, Luke, Yoda, Vader, and the Emperor feel deeply the patterning of the great events of which they are a part because of the Force, in the context of which all time and space and action cohere.

Of the sciences, physics seems nearest to a tentative articulation of an empirically verified notion of form. Writing of the significance of the recent disconfirmation of the Bell Inequality for the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen Paradox, Rudy Rucker concludes that "the world we live in is filled with harmonies and coincidences that have no explanation in terms of cause and effect."<sup>20</sup> In religious inquiry, there is some explicit consideration of a formal principle -- Carl Jung's notion of "synchronicity," for instance, and the similar notions of those who have taken their cue from Jung. Almost always, though, the action of a formal principle is buried in myth -- in Christianity, for instance, in the action of God, Christ and Holy Spirit on history. In the context of myth, however, the apprehension of a formal principle underlying the causal flows of our world is universal and found in the popular affirmation of providence of God, Allah, or Buddha. And parapsychological phenomena, which have always played a role in our religions and which now so pervade fantasy and science fiction, are most often portrayed as effectively independent of time and space. Thus removed from the causal process, they are probably best seen as formal phenomena.

When I was a boy, I watched the flashing destruction of Sputnik I as it sank into the wintry northern Virginia skies. An avid reader of Tom Swift and Tom Corbett, the early space race fueled my imagination. I yearned to slide like the Toms between the worlds. Imagine my joy if someone had been able to tell me that just ten years and a few months later, humans would do just that and return to tell the tale. But while my joy would have been deep, my surprise would not have been; the Toms, after all, had beat Neil Armstrong hands down. Science fact has passed up such early space opera now, and science fiction has moved off with fantasy to work other, more promising, fields. But once again, my joy will be deep, but not my surprise, if these fields prove before too long to be every bit as fertile as the old.

## NOTES

- 1 Williams, Oscar, ed., *Master Poems of the English Language*, Simon & Schuster, New York, New York, 1967, p. 887.
- 2 Beane, Wendell, C., and Doty, William, G., eds., *Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader*, Vol. 1, Harper Colophon Books, Harper & Row, New York, New York, 1975, p. 126.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Continued on page 57

Continued from page 51

- 5 Lewis, C.S., "On Science Fiction," in *Of Other Worlds*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, New York, 1975, p. 67-68.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 9 Tolkien, J.R.R., "Of Fairy Stories," *The Tolkien Reader*, Ballantine Books, New York, New York, p. 54.
- 10 Lewis, C.S., "On Science Fiction," p. 68.
- 11 Tolkien, J.R.R., "Of Fairy Stories," p. 70-71.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 13 Delany, Samuel, R., *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Essays on Science Fiction*, Berkeley Windhover, New York, 1977, p. 34.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 16 Lewis, C.S., "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," *Of Other Worlds*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, New York, 1975, p. 37.
- 17 Beane and Doty, A *Mircea Eliade Reader*, p. 91.
- 18 Martin, George, R.R., *Sandkings*, Pocket Books, New York, New York, 1981, p. 29.
- 19 Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, New York, 1965, p. 64.
- 20 Rucker, Rudy, "Powers of Coincidence," *Science85*, January/February, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 57.

## 1985 Mythopoeic Conference

By all means possible do all you can not to miss this year's Mythopoeic Conference. It promises to be excellent. See the full page in this issue for details, but note that room and meals can be paid in advance or at the door, if you register now. Don't wait until the last minute. It may be too late. Send your registration now and ask for the detailed Progress Report.

## BACK ISSUES

### Mythlore

All back issues of *Mythlore* are available. Do you have a complete set? If not, a great wealth of material awaits you. Check the enclosed order form, or ask the Orders Department for one, for a breakdown of prices.

### Tolkien Journal

Complete sets of *Tolkien Journal*, numbers 1-15 (excluding #12, which is the same as *Mythlore* #5) are available for \$23 (plus shipping). See the Order Form.



## Mythopoeic Celtic Stationery by Patrick Wynne

This new stationery is now available for \$5 plus \$1 in handling. It features four designs, all found in *Mythlore* 35: The Celtic circles portraying themes from J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams (found on page 3 of Issue 35). Each circle is at the top right of the page and is 3 5/8" in diameter, with a lined border around the page. The fourth design is of the four corners found on page 2 of this issue, but much larger in size. The set includes 4 sheets of each design, making 16 printed sheets, 12 blank second sheets, plus 16 envelopes. The paper is of a neutral but beautifully antique appearing parchment. This would make fine personal stationery for both men and women, as well as for gifts. Send your order to: Orders Department, 1008 N. Monterey St., Alhambra, CA 91801.

## Mythopoeic Core Reading List

*Mythlore* frequently publishes articles that presuppose the reader is already familiar with the works they discuss. This is natural, given the special nature of *Mythlore*. In order to assist some readers, the following is what might be considered a "core" mythopoeic reading list, containing the most well known and discussed works. Due to the many editions printed, only the title and original date of publication are given. Good reading!

### J.R.R. Tolkien

*The Hobbit* (1937); "Leaf by Niggle" (1945); "On Fairy-Stories" (1945); *The Lord of the Rings*: Vol. 1, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954); Vol. II, *The Two Towers* (1954); Vol. III, *The Return of the King* (1955); *The Silmarillion* (1977); *Unfinished Tales* (1980).

### C.S. Lewis

*Out of the Silent Planet* (1938); *Perelandra* (1943); *That Hideous Strength* (1945); *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Horse and His Boy* (1954); *The Magician's Nephew* (1955); *The Last Battle* (1956); *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

### Charles Williams

*War in Heaven* (1930); *Many Dimensions* (1931); *The Place of the Lion* (1931); *The Greater Trumps* (1932); *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933); *Descent into Hell* (1937); *All Hallow's Eve* (1945); *Taliesin through Logres* (1938); *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944) (printed together in 1954).