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## Reality, Magic, and Other Lies: Fairy-Tale Film Truths

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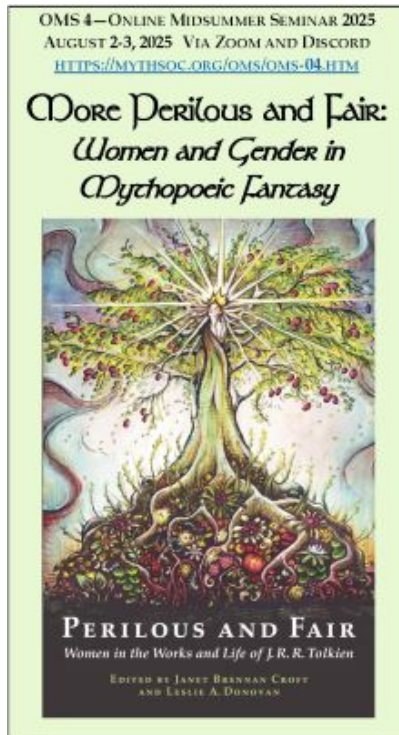
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Online MidSummer Seminar 2025  
More Perilous and Fair: Women and Gender in Mythopoeic Fantasy  
August 2-5, 2024

Via Zoom and Discord

<https://www.mythsoc.org/oms/oms-04.htm>



## Reality, Magic, and Other Lies: Fairy-Tale Film Truths

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Eliade. The book is a standard reference for anyone interested in studying, using, and interpreting symbols, and therefore important to readers and scholars of mythopoeic literature. Its entries can read as somewhat dated now, though, and should be supplemented by other dictionaries of symbols for a fuller understanding. For example, I find, in dipping into various entries, that the distaste he expresses in his introduction for Freudianism also plays out in a certain fastidiousness about sexual symbolism. While his entry on LINGAM mentions that it is a representation of the phallus, his entry on YONI completely avoids any mention of the female sexual organs, and the two entries do not refer to each other.

Cirlot's introduction is a dense piece of writing about the importance of symbolic thought in human development, and sets out the limits of his project. There is a great deal of resonance here with Owen Barfield's thinking on the developmental stages of human language in *History in English Words*; as with language, the evolution of the meaning of symbols "reveals the evolution of consciousness" (Barfield 14). To Cirlot, everything has layers of symbolic meaning behind and around its actual existence: "Symbolism in no way contradicts natural or utilitarian reality, but only serves to transform it by imbuing a spiritual sense" (Cirlot 94). A useful reference source for those who like to have physical books on their shelves.

—Janet Brennan Croft

#### WORKS CITED

Barfield, Owen. *History in English Words*. 1926. New edition, Faber and Faber, 1954.



#### REALITY, MAGIC, AND OTHER LIES: FAIRY-TALE FILM TRUTHS.

Pauline Greenhill. Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 2020. 265 p. ISBN 9780814342220. \$32.99.

PAULINE GREENHILL'S *REALITY, MAGIC, AND OTHER LIES: Fairy-Tale Film Truths* is organized into two distinct sections, movies and books, followed by an analysis of popular western fairy tales and fairy tale figures in popular media. The first section focuses on stop-motion and live action films. This is particularly interesting because of the range of media that Greenhill chooses to focus on. LAIKA's "Box Trolls," Tarsem Singh's live-action "The Fall," and Fred Pellerin's "Babine" all sit comfortably in the same section. Greenhill's pattern is a brief contextualizing summary preceding analysis of each one's place within the fairy tale telling tradition, magic versus reality, and then the interplay between the two for each title.

Whereas the first section can act as a basis or launch point for an amateur's curiosity, the second part is clearly meant for Greenhill's peers. Terms and theories from women, gender, and sexuality studies appear briefly within part one, but are much more prevalent in part two.

By Greenhill's own admission in her introduction, the goal of the book is not to create a meter by which to analyze all fairy tales or turn it into a quantitative scientific analysis. It is instead, as she clarifies nearly in the same breath, a journey through topics, themes, and works that she finds interesting. *Lies* combines criticism, analysis, and theory into an excellent source of subject readings or reference material for a modern fairy tale or folklore course or researcher. This book is part of Wayne State University's Series in Fairy Tale Studies.

—Alissa Renales



## ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

**MARIA ALBERTO** is a third-year Ph.D. student in literary and cultural studies at the University of Utah, where she is pursuing research interests in fan studies, adaptation, and popular culture. Some of her recent projects have focused on fans' use of platforms, canon in tabletop roleplaying games, and mythmaking in Tolkien's work.

**JANET BRENNAN CROFT** (ORCID ID 0000-0003-2692-3586) is Associate University Librarian for Content Discovery at the University of Northern Iowa. She is the author of *War in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*, has published articles on Tolkien and other topics in a variety of journals, and is editor or co-editor of numerous collections of essays. [northerniowa.academia.edu/JanetCroft](http://northerniowa.academia.edu/JanetCroft).

**DAVID L. EMERSON** is an independent scholar living in Iowa. As a generalist, he is fond of making connections between disparate areas of fantasy, science fiction, graphic novels, and even music. He has made presentations at Tolkien conferences in years past on Michael Moorcock, Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, Jasper Fforde, Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, and on Donald Swann's setting of "Errantry." He has been known to collaborate with Professor Mike Foster in setting Tolkien-themed lyrics to Beatles and Bob Dylan songs. He is currently investigating the mythopoetic dimensions of the Grateful Dead.

**MEGAN N. FONTENOT** is currently working towards a PhD in nineteenth-century British literature at the University of Georgia. She is also a devoted Tolkien scholar