October 2022

*Friendship in* The Lord of the Rings by Cristina Casagrande

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Available at: [https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol41/iss1/18](https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol41/iss1/18)

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Additional Keywords
Friendship; Lord of the Rings; Aristotle; Aquinas

This book reviews is available in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature: https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol41/iss1/18
by the methodology and arguments of the book. Driggers’s *Queering Faith in Fantasy Literature* offers an incredibly nuanced and impactful addition to the field of fantasy criticism. As a first monograph, Driggers’s approach to ways in which we can consider fantasy literature, as a methodological tool to push the boundaries of queer theory and to deconstruct theology, is an impressive undertaking. I look forward in seeing the ways in which future scholars of fantasy literature take up Driggers’s “call for adventure” in implementing both his arguments and methodology to the critical field.

—C. Palmer-Patel


Recently translated from Portuguese, the English edition of Cristina Casagrande’s *Friendship in The Lord of the Rings* marks not only a meaningful contribution to Tolkien scholarship, but also evidences the excellent direction of Tolkien studies beyond the Anglo-American world. Casagrande employs many of the common secondary sources in Tolkien scholarship (viz. Aquinas, Aristotle, Propp, etc.) and brings to these readings a renewed vitality while also gathering them into fruitful conversation with voices of Brazilian Tolkienists. What Casagrande advances in her detailed study of *The Lord of the Rings* (in both the original and the film adaptations) is that friendship, as far as Tolkien is concerned, “is the necessary condition for the plot to unfold” (1).

Casagrande begins her first chapter with a brief outline of her project. Here, she surveys Tolkien’s life and the publication story of *The Lord of the Rings*, sketches the methodological lens she will latter utilize (Thomistic and Aristotelean), and suggests the ways in which a comparative reading of the books alongside their film adaptations deepens such a study. “The intention […]” Casagrande informs us, “is to deepen the knowledge about the theme—friendship—verifying how the same work is articulated across media” (10). By employing a Thomistic-Aristotelean reading of *The Lord of the Rings* in these two different forms, Casagrande suggests a unity of meaning between Tolkien’s concept of the *eucatastrophe* and the teleological *eudaemonia* spoken of in both Aquinas and Aristotle.

The second chapter resumes and expands on the role friendship played in Tolkien’s own life, suggesting a link between the sub-creative powers of friendship which engender fantasy writing (Tolkien wrote with and among
friends), and the role that friendship plays the consolations offered to us in fantasy (Tolkien wrote about friendship). “In other words: the presence of friends is essential for the happy ending, and, in opposition, one might say that enmity is the main responsible [sic] for the defeat of Evil, because it destroys itself” (28). She draws on Aristotle’s suggestion that friendship necessitates a kind of equality among persons and allows it to be questioned and problematized. What is meant by equality among friends? How can such a thing exist with any purity, save in theory between two psycho-somatically identical individuals? How does such a fetishized equality as a precondition for philia not produce enmity, and therefore an evil that destroys itself?

Casagrande, following Aquinas, argues that differing persons can be united, made “equals” in Aristotelean terms, by virtue; that is, by loving the same things and loving one another, so that each aims for the others real eudaemonia. She cites Antonin-Marcel Henry’s introduction to the Summa Theologica who argues that friendship results from a kind of communion formed by the reciprocal benevolence of the friends. “Friendship, based in equality through virtue, requires reciprocity” (41). It is in their fidelity to the extreme value of friendship, thus conceived, that Casagrande sees the filmic adaptations as extending Tolkien’s work, lending force to “the desires that feed the Secondary World, like the yearning to find friends to walk alongside us” (53).

But friendship is not merely about a kind of external unity with another; friendship for Tolkien, argues Casagrande, also has an inward dimension. Virtue concerns both and inward and outward dimensions, a unity with others and with self. Samwise becomes more truly himself as he grows in charity for Frodo. Contrary to friendship, suggests Casagrande, is Gollum, who is both at war with himself, torn between Sméagol and Gollum, and with Frodo and Sam. “Whoever surrenders to the Ring, by thirst for power and selfishness, ends up emptying oneself of the nobility of character, distancing oneself from the chief good, eudaemonia, happiness” (59). Thus, while Frodo and, at times, Samwise extend charity and clemency to Sméagol/Gollum, the bond they share with the creature cannot be reckoned properly as friendship for when reciprocity of charity is absent “what is left is only goodwill” (71).

Casagrande is careful to show that, while Frodo and Samwise are united by a shared goal, or telos, Sméagol/Gollum is torn apart by conflicting and contrary goals. The unity of purpose that sets Frodo and Sam out on their journey gathers into its circle more friends. ‘Friend,’ Casagrande demonstrates, becomes something of a verb; it makes friends, friendship generates new friends. Merry and Pippin join themselves to the duo, and thus transform it. She notes also the way in which that group is multiplied upon its departure from Rivendell, becoming a fellowship of nine persons, nine anticipatory friends, united by a common good. Circling back to her study of Sméagol/Gollum, she
notes that the division of the party, the “breaking-up of the fellowship,” finds its genesis in the disunity of Boromir, who seeks his own private good apart from his friends, and, like Sméagol/Gollum, is torn apart by it.

The ruin worked by disunity and betrayal is not final, however. Boromir, “like one who confesses before a priest […] bids farewell to life with the blessings of the future King of his people” (94). He dies pierced with evidence of friendship’s power; each arrow shaft lanced within him speaks to the fact that he died laying down his life for his friends. Even Sméagol/Gollum plays an incalculable role for the good of those who sought to be his friend, multiple times, aiding in the achievement of the quest. This is precisely because, as Casagrande argues, in Tolkien’s world friendship is a thing that redeems what has been ruined. Thus, “the split of the fellowship” and all of the pain and loss of it “opened room for their friendship to grow, thus helping the fulfilment of their collective objective” (97). Like the bread in Christ’s miracle of fishes and loaves, friendship is a thing that multiplies life even amidst its fracture.

Casagrande grounds her penultimate chapter by bringing us back around to the problem of Aristotle’s claim that “perfect friendship is only possible between those who are equals in virtue” (119). And yet, as she has demonstrated, in the saga of The Lord of the Rings “all characters undergo a process of development […]. Equality, therefore, is not immediately established” (119). For Casagrande the friendships in Tolkien’s work, particularly the one between Sam and Frodo, are made possible by mutual love which mediates a proportionality between persons unequal in either station or virtue. She draws upon Christ’s teaching in John 15 in which he calls his disciples his friends. The inequality between the Son of God and folk such as Peter and John, suggests that even in the greatest of friendships a kind of inequality “will always be a fact” (123). And yet, within this Christian concept of friendship, the apparent inequality of persons is remedied by incarnated love in which each person lays down their life for the other (123-125; cf. Jn. 15:13).

Thus, there exists a mutual exchange of roles among the friendships in The Lord of the Rings. Aragorn bows before Frodo, at times Gimli follows Legolas and at other times Legolas follows Gimli. Casagrande delightfully points out that even Sam is temporarily exalted to the office of “master” between Shelob’s cave and the storming of Cirith Ungol. Drawing our attention to the fact that that chapter in The Lord of the Rings is titled “The Choices of Master Samwise”: “Sam grows in wisdom and metamorphoses [sic] from gardener to master” (147). The inequality is sustained, these two persons are unalike and unequal, and yet the nature of that inequality is translated, exchanged, and enjoyed. The happy ending, the consolation offered in Tolkien’s story, “relies on friends to come about and, with them, it is celebrated and registered in the story” (188).
Friendship is not merely useful, not merely the means to an end, but is the end or telos itself.

Casagrande’s study is wonderful and illuminating in several areas in addition to the ones already explored above. It does, however, suffer from a few noticeable problems. First, there are numerous spelling, grammar, and style problems which, while they seem to have more to do with the processes of translation (e.g., certain ideas or syntaxes not translating over well into English), do make the road more difficult than necessary. A second, updated edition could easily amend and remedy these problems. The second problem is a structural one. While Casagrande offers us a thorough and exciting reading of both the books and the film, many of the chapters cover and recover the same material, at times repeating material and arguments already covered, at others concluding lines of thought begun (and paused) sections earlier. For readers who desire a more straightforward analysis, the arrangement Casagrande has chosen may prove at times difficult to follow.

Though there is nothing novel in deploying Aristotle and Aquinas to limn Tolkien’s works, Casagrande brings to such a project a renewed energy. Perhaps the work of making sense of Middle-earth by way of Thomistic categories hasn’t merely been left unfinished, perhaps it hasn’t even gotten into full swing. The work that new and emerging voices in Tolkien scholarship like Casagrande are doing is not a mere identical repetition of older projects, but a confection, a ripening and sweetening of the work they build from; a repetition that exceeds what has come before. In particular her work demands that we attend to that important thing that lies at the heart of The Lord of the Rings, which we have ignored precisely because of how obvious and unobtrusive it is: friendship. How very much like hobbits friendship is: there the whole time and yet constantly overlooked until at last it is brought to our attention by those who esteem it rightly—like Gandalf, or Cristina Casagrande.

—Mark A. Brians II

**CHARLES WILLIAMS AND C.S. LEWIS: FRIENDS IN CO-INHERENCE.**

Though the book’s title is *Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis: Friends in Co-Inherence*, the author Paul Fiddes spends more time on Williams than Lewis. Fiddes approaches his subject as a professor of theology and offers textual analysis at times similar to a literary critic. He explores co-inherence as the overarching theme throughout the book and shows how Williams develops the