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***Charles Godfrey Leland and His Magical Tales*, edited by Jack Zipes**

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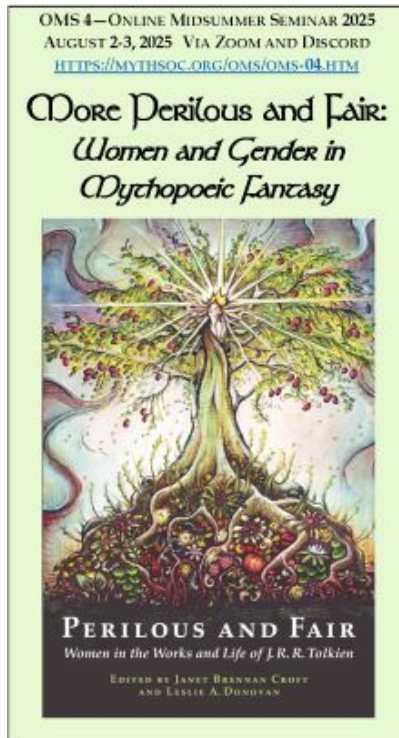
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Charles Godfrey Leland and His Magical Tales, edited by Jack Zipes

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are merely citations that offer no information beyond, say, “Freeman 2021,” which means that readers interested knowing the reference must continue flipping pages to the “References” section in order to track down the actual source. The process is frustrating, and this disservice to the reader undermines the otherwise salutary effects of the obviously rigorous scholarly effort that went into the research. It does not make for a pleasant reading experience.

That said, there is much value to be gained from *J.R.R. Tolkien’s Utopianism and the Classics*. Willaims makes a good case for the significance of classical sources and allusions in our understanding of Tolkien’s world, along with the ways that this classicism is informed by and extends a general utopianism in Tolkien’s legendarium.

—Robert T. Tally Jr.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Hospitality*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford University Press, 2000.
Shippey, Tom. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

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CHARLES GODFREY LELAND AND HIS MAGICAL TALES. Edited by Jack Zipes. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020. 191 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8143-4785-0

IN *CHARLES GODFREY LELAND AND HIS MAGICAL TALES*, Jack Zipes has edited selected tales collected by the nineteenth-century folklorist. In his introduction, Zipes provides a short biography and sketch of Leland’s life, noting his interest in ritual magic specifically, folklore in general, and the cultures of various people groups in geographically diverse locations. Leland pursued many varied interests and participated in a diverse array of experiences throughout his life. While Leland wrote many volumes of folklore, with this small book Zipes intends to represent the author’s varied exploration into the cultures and folklore of several groups. This does not come close to representing the entirety of Leland’s collected stories. However, Zipes reminds us that although Leland’s stories were not collected from first-person sources and thus cannot truly be considered folklore, they do help to historically and culturally represent the people groups from which the tales come (2). The tales recount important cultural and anthropological rituals not recorded elsewhere.

Zipes organizes these selected tales in four sections: "Algonquin Tales," "Florentine Tales and Legends," "The Unpublished Legends of Virgil," and "Romani Tales." Each chapter of selected tales is distinctive from one another, and the reader can detect specific elements of the tales, which represent cultural fears, desires, values, and morals. In Leland's tales from the Algonquin, taken from the Mic Mac and the Passamaquoddy (retaining Leland's and/or Zipes's spellings), animals and nature figure significantly, exhibiting the Algonquin's close ties with the natural world around them. These tales are filled with many strange and supernatural creatures, wild persons both male and female, cannibals, shape-shifters, and animal helpers. The stories focus on acquiring magic and skill in sorcery to enact revenge, gain power over others, and even help vulnerable people.

In the section entitled "Florentine Tales and Legends," Zipes has selected stories that are representative of a culture that is heavily focused on religious themes of virtue and vice, good and evil, and laden with elements such as devils, demons, hell, saints, and sin. All of the tales told here contain Christian overtones. While the Algonquin stories were more morally ambiguous, in the Florentine tales, goodness and virtue are rewarded while evil is punished (65). Where in the Algonquin tales, sorcery was a power desired by most, in the Florentine stories, magic is looked on with suspicion. In many instances, sorcery or any kind of magic spells are counteracted with Christian ritual and symbolism (71). The one magical/supernatural exception is fairies. Fairies are considered to be almost in the same category as saints. One tale even tells of a "pious fairy" (82) who is ultimately saved by a saint (83). But most of these stories are characterized by demons and devils trying to manipulate and coerce unsuspecting or sinful humans into doing their bidding while only Christian/Catholic symbols and rituals can save their victims from devilish schemes.

The "Unpublished Legends of Virgil," while maintaining the Etruscan/Roman/Italian flavor of the Florentine tales, only mention Christian elements in passing. The legends told here of the poet Virgil have a mythological flavor and strong overtones of magic and sorcery. These tales focus on the poet Virgil as a powerful and influential sorcerer, necromancer, and magician with an assortment of students, disciples, and enemies that all ascribe to him almost god-like status. In these tales, Virgil's followers love him and his adversaries fear him. Leland's interest in magic and preference to these tales are evident in that they focus heavily on spells, magic incantations, and rituals that Virgil uses to help those who are victims of black magicians and wicked witches. In these tales, Virgil is the master to whom lesser sorcerers and magicians turn for advice and help.

The “Romani Tales” section relates the folklore of those known colloquially as gypsies. These tales do not focus heavily on magic. Most of them attempt to offer good advice or relay cultural norms, beliefs, and values about how to live in the world, relate to others, and behave while providing some kind of moral or practical lesson. However, many of these tales disavow or purport to be unsure of the advice offered or the truth of the example provided. They contain what could be considered an almost tongue-in-cheek moral. A few selected tales concern themselves with origin/creation fables and myths reminiscent of Kipling’s *Just So Stories*.

Some of Leland’s tales in Zipes’s collection are reminiscent of classic fairy tales, several noted by Leland as such. Leland comments in a footnote that “The Magician Virgil: A Legend from the Sabine” seems to have been influenced by the story of “Rapunzel” (135). He also notes that “The Mournful Mystery of the Partridge-Witch, or How a Young Man Died from Love” reminds the reader of *Undine* (52). While not explicitly mentioned by Leland, the Algonquin tale “The Invisible One” with its disguised lover who must be set free by another is reminiscent of the Beauty and the Beast/Cupid and Psyche tale type while containing some elements from the Cinderella tale (43). The collection provides several such tantalizing connections and hints to other tales.

Although the tales do represent the cultures from which they are taken and are a pleasure to read, I suggest that readers would appreciate more explanation in this volume about where these tales were collected. Some information about source material and tellers is provided, but the reader is left with many questions about where Leland obtained these stories. Zipes also could have included more extensive notes about his own editing process. The reader wonders how much is from Leland and how much is edited. On that same note, Zipes could also have included notes on Leland’s own editing process. How much did Leland edit the tales that were told to him? Again, the reader is left with questions. However, Zipes intended this volume to be a representative collection of Leland’s tales for readers to enjoy. That seems evident in the way the book is presented. And in this Zipes succeeds. The reader is exposed to a bit of Leland’s work and left wanting to know more.

—Toni Thibodeaux

TONI THIBODEAUX holds an MA in English from Middle Tennessee State University and is currently working on her PhD. She serves as an adjunct at Columbia State Community College and Colorado Christian University. Her research interests include children’s literature; fairy/folktale, myth, legend; and Robert Louis Stevenson; she has written and spoken on topics related to these areas. Toni and her husband David reside in Middle Tennessee with their three children and live close to their two adult daughters, two sons-in-law, and five grandchildren.