

mythPRINT



**Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society with Book
Reviews, Short Articles, Event Information, and More!**

VOL. 62 NO. 2

SUMMER 2025

WHOLE NO. 413



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Mythprint is the quarterly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion, and enjoyment of mythic, mythopoeic, and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and other Inklings. To promote these interests, the Society maintains a website, social media, and digital archives, sponsors annual conferences (Mythcon and OMS), grants annual awards for fiction and scholarship, sponsors discussion groups, and issues three publications: *Mythlore*, our scholarly journal, *The Mythic Circle*, our literary magazine, and *Mythprint*, our newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mythopoeic Society membership:

- \$15/year includes Society membership and an electronic subscription to *Mythprint*
- \$30/year includes Society membership and a paper subscription to *Mythprint*

Either entitles you to members’ rates on publications and other benefits. For institutions and our non-U.S. subscribers, complete & updated price lists can always be found on our website. We also have a lifetime membership option.

The easiest way to join the Mythopoeic Society and subscribe to our publications or join our annual conferences is to visit our website. We take PayPal and personal checks. Back issues of *Mythprint* are available on our digital archives.

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Reviews of mythopoeic media, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, notes or short articles, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. In return for printed pieces, contributors who are not already subscribers will receive an electronic copy of the issue in which the item appears. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

Megan Abrahamson
Editor, *Mythprint*
315 Richmond Dr. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
mythprint@mythsoc.org

The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore* (subscription \$30/year for U.S. Society members) and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. (\$8/issue for U.S. addresses). Subscriptions and back issues of Society publications may be purchased directly through our web site, or you may contact:

The Mythopoeic Society
PO Box 28427
San Jose, CA 95159

Visit The Mythopoeic Society online at www.mythsoc.org.

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OMS 4: MORE PERILOUS AND FAIR: WOMEN AND GENDER IN MYTHO- POEIC FANTASY

August 2-3, 2025, Zoom and Discord

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the publication of *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Co-chaired by Cami Agan, Clare Moore, and Robin Anne Reid. With Guests of Honor Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan.

Join us for an online conference that focuses on intersectional feminist approaches to women and gender in fantasy, science fiction, speculative fiction, or other mythopoeic work and that will honor the first anthology on women and Tolkien, *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2015), edited by Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan.

Intersectionality, or intersectional approaches, developed out of research and scholarship by Black women, highlighting how aspects of identity (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or class) overlap and intersect. Since then, feminist scholars in a number of disciplines, including literary studies, have adapted intersectionality in their work.

Guest of Honor: Janet Brennan Croft

Janet Brennan Croft is an Associate University Librarian at the University of Northern Iowa. She is the author of the Mythopoeic Award winning *War in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Praeger 2004,



reissued in paperback 2024), and has written on the Peter Jackson Middle-earth films, the Whedonverse, *Orphan Black*, J.K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett, Lois McMaster Bujold, *The Devil Wears Pra-*

da, and other authors, TV shows, and movies. She is editor or co-editor of many collections of literary essays, the most recent being *Loremasters and Libraries in Fantasy and Science Fiction*, co-edited with Jason Fisher. She has edited the semi-annual refereed scholarly journal *Mythlore* since 2006, and is archivist and assistant editor of *Slayage: The International Journal of Buffy+*.

Guest of Honor: Leslie A. Donovan

Leslie A. Donovan is Interim Dean and Professor for the Honors College at the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. As a faculty member, she teaches varied interdisciplinary humanities courses for undergraduates, among which are six different versions of Tolkien courses. Her Tolkien studies publications include “The Valkyrie Reflex in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*: Galadriel, Shelob, Éowyn, and Arwen” (republished several times), “Middle-earth Mythology: An Overview” (Blackwell 2022), and four entries for the *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* (Routledge 2006). She edited *Approaches to Teaching Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and Other Works* (MLA 2015). In addition, she is the Editor of Mythopoeic Press.



Registration is still open!

Registration for OMS 4 is US\$20.00 for any Mythopoeic Society member. For non-members, the rate is US\$25.00.

Since a major component of the online seminar is the discussions and other activities on Discord, we would also like to know what screen name (or “handle”) you use, or would like to use, on that platform. Specifying both your real name and your Discord name helps us keep track of who is registered and who is not. However, supplying

your Discord name is optional, especially if you do not plan on participating in any Discord activities.

Please specify the email address that the registrant prefers to be contacted with, as this may be different from the email address associated with the PayPal account being used.

Register today! www.mythsoc.org/oms/oms-04.

MYTHSOC AWARD FINALISTS 2025

The Mythopoeic Society has announced the finalists for the 2025 Mythopoeic Awards. For more information about the awards, visit the Awards section of this site; the finalists for the literature and scholarship awards and text of recent acceptance speeches are also listed in this section. The winners of this year's awards will be announced at our Online Midsummer Seminar 2025, "More Perilous and Fair: Women and Gender in Mythopoeic Fantasy," which runs August 2-3, 2025, on Zoom and Discord.

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature

Katherine Arden, *The Warm Hands of Ghosts* (Del Rey, 2024)

Yangsze Choo, *The Fox Wife* (Henry Holt & Co., 2024)

Minsoo Kang, *The Melancholy of Untold History* (William Morrow, 2024)

Deborah K. Vleck, *The Society of Guenevere* (FTL Publications, 2024)

Nghi Vo, *The City in Glass* (Tordotcom, 2024)

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Young Adult Literature

Anna Bright, *The Hedge Witch of Foxhall* (HarperCollins, 2024)

Amie Kaufman, *The Isles of the Gods* duology (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2023-2024)

Darcie Little Badger, *Sheine Lende* (Levine Querido, 2024)

Kelly Murashige, *The Lost Souls of Benzaiten* (Soho Teen, 2024)

A.B. Poranek, *Where the Dark Stands Still* (McElderry Books, 2024)

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature

Frances Hardinge, *Island of Whispers* (Harry N. Abrams, 2024)

Rajani LaRocca, *Sona and the Golden Beasts* (Quill Tree Books, 2024)

Kaela Rivera, *The Cece Rios trilogy* (HarperCollins, 2021-2024)

David A. Robertson, *The Misewa Saga* (Tundra Books, 2020-2024)

Lisa Stringfellow, *Kingdom of Dust* (Quill Tree Books, 2024)

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies

Anahit Behrooz, *Mapping Middle-earth: Environmental and Political Narratives in J.R.R. Tolkien's Cartographies* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024)

Annie Brust, *Tolkien's Transformative Women: Art in Triptych* (Vernon Press, 2024)

Cristina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, editors, *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien, by J.R.R. Tolkien* (William Morrow, 2024; 3 vols.)

Robert Stuart, *Tolkien, Race, and Racism in Middle-earth* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)

Hamish Williams, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023)

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies

Stefan Ekman, *Urban Fantasy: Exploring Modernity through Magic* (Lever Press, 2024)

Sophus Helle, editor, *Enbeduanna: The Complete Poems of the World's First Author* (Yale UP, 2023)

Matthew Oliver, *Magic Words, Magic Worlds: Form and Style in Epic Fantasy* (McFarland, 2022)

Dennis Wilson Wise, editor, *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2023)

Jack Zipes, *Buried Treasures: The Power of Political Fairy Tales* (Princeton UP, 2023)

The **Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature** is given to the fantasy novel, multi-volume, or single-author story collection for adults published during 2023-2024 that best exemplifies the spirit of the Inklings. Books are eligible for two years after publication if selected as a finalist during the first year of eligibility. Books from a series are eligible if they stand on their own; otherwise, the series becomes eligible the year its final volume appears.

The **Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Young Adult Literature** honors books for Young Adult readers (ages 13-18), and the **Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature** honors books for younger readers (ages 12 or younger). Rules for eligibility are otherwise the same as for the Adult literature award. The category of borderline books will be determined by their intended audience as named by the publisher and author.

The **Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies** is given to books on Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that make significant contributions to Inklings scholarship. For this award, books first published during the last three years (2019–2021) are eligible, including finalists for previous years.

The **Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies** is given to scholarly books on other specific authors in the Inklings tradition, or to more general works on the genres of myth and fantasy. The period of eligibility is three years, as for the Inklings Studies award.

The winners of this year's awards will be announced at our [Online Midsummer Seminar 2025](#), "More Perilous and Fair: Women and Gender in Mythopoeic Fantasy," which runs August 2-3, 2025, on Zoom and Discord.

A complete list of Mythopoeic Award winners is available on the Society web site: [Awards](#). The finalists for the literature and scholarship awards and text of recent acceptance speeches are also listed in this on-line section.

For more information about the Mythopoeic Awards, please contact the Awards Administrator: Dennis Wise, awards@mythsoc.org.

Get Excited For These Presentations and More at OMS 4

A taste of next OMS's programming, in order of presenter last name.

- Revisiting Ambiguous Aredhel. Megan Abrahamson
- Our Flag Means Gender: Gender "Fuckery" in Our Flag Means Death. Megan Abrahamson, Dusty Brooks, Ashley Flanagan, Cassidy Percoco
- Witches, Prophets, and Outcasts: Liminal Women in Mythopoeic Fantasy. Supriya Bajjal
- The Influence of the Pearl-Maiden on the Imagination of J.R.R. Tolkien. Jane Beal
- The Lay(er)s of the Corrigan. Lelie Brémont
- Painting "the most beautiful of all the Children of Ilúvatar": Aesthetic Beauty in The Silmarillion and its Illustrations. Marie Bretagnolle
- "Her hair was held a marvel unmatched": The Significance of Long, Blonde Hair in Tolkien's Imagination. Sara Brown
- Belief After the Death of King Arthur: Lev Grossman's Postsecular Portrayal of Nimue in The Bright Sword. Liz Busby
- The Tragedy of Arwen Evenstar in "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" and in Her Legacy on Film. Nicole duPlessis
- "Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans": Melian's and Lúthien's Numinosity. Alexandra Filonenko
- She Chose Her Fate: The Genderqueer Women of Tolkien and Freedom Beyond the Patriarchal Binary. Alicia Fox-Lenz, Leah Hagan, & Grace Moone
- Reimagining Human-Nonhuman Friendships through Feminist Animal Studies: An Exploration of Sunny and Della's Cross-Species Friendship in Nnedi Okorafor's The Nsibidi Scripts Series. Akshitha Javahar
- Sex, the Body, and Learning Gender: Demons in the World of the Five Gods. Erin McBrien
- "The gift which was withheld I take": The Rape of the Sun Maiden in Tolkien's Legendarium. Kristine Larsen

- Gender, Language, and Power among the Dead Who Live. John Rosegrant
- I'd Rather (S)He Was Dead: Resurrection & Gender Transition in Superhero Comics. Jonathan Sexton (Eitan Runyan)
- How Do You Solve a Problem like Grendel's Mother?: Contemporary Women's Mythopoeic Revisions. Anna Smol
- Bolg's Mother: Orc Women in Tolkien's Legendarium. Robert Tally
- From Once to Future Queen: Revitalizing Guinevere in Recent Arthuriana. Michael A. Torregrossa
- From Haleth to Hére: J.R.R. Tolkien's Shieldmaidens and Kenji Kamiyama's War of the Rohirrim. Christopher Vaccaro
- 'Desirable Lady' or 'She who desires': Examining Aredhel's Agency in Tolkien's Legendarium. Lyra Keran Zhang



MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY DIGITAL DOWNLOADS SURPASS ONE MILLION DOWNLOADS SINCE 2017

By Phillip Fitzsimmons

In less than eight years, the Mythopoeic Society's publications have been downloaded more than one million times by readers from around the world. What started as fan-produced lithographs in southern California a few decades ago is now a highly respected print and digital collection of scholarly and artistic works.

That milestone for the 4,981 items on the socie-

ty's archive (<https://dc.swosu.edu/mythsoc/>) was reached on Feb. 24, 2025. The Mythsoc archive was opened on July 7, 2017.

The Mythsoc Digital Collections are hosted by the Al Harris Library at Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) in Weatherford, OK. on the SWOSU Digital Commons <https://dc.swosu.edu/>. Phillip Fitzsimmons is the University Archivist and Special Collections Librarian at SWOSU. He is the administrator for the digital platform and responsible for physical collections in the General Thomas P. Stafford Archives in the Al Harris Library. He is allowed to use the digital and physical facilities to be the archivist for the Mythopoeic Society.

By comparison, the entire SWOSU Digital Commons' 27,815 items, in all its collections, have been downloaded 2,158,788 times since March 7, 2016. The Mythopoeic Society collections represent approximately 18 percent of all the SWOSU Digital Commons collections but account for nearly half of the downloads from SWOSU's collections.

Usage figures for Mythsoc publications as of April 24, 2025, show:

- *Mythlore*: 915,941 downloads in all of the world's countries of 2,025 works. The million-mark milestone for this publication alone should be reached by the end of 2025, estimated by Fitzsimmons.
- *The Mythic Circle*: 27,489 downloads in 140 countries/regions of 966 works and 115 streams of 27 audio files from June 27, 2019, through April 24, 2025.
- *Mythprint*: 10,236 downloads in 119 countries of 489 works, Dec. 1, 2022, through April 24, 2025. *Mythprint* Book Reviews: 960 downloads in 69 countries/regions of 29 works, May 31, 2024, through May 5, 2025.

The Mythsoc Digital Collections <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythsoc/> includes:

- The complete runs of the three Mythsoc publications *Mythlore* <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/>, *The Mythic Circle* <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/>, *Mythprint* <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythprint/>, and the *Mythprint* Book Reviews page https://dc.swosu.edu/mpr_rev/.
- Mythcon programs <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythprog/>, presentation videos https://dc.swosu.edu/ms_events/, Proceedings <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythpro/>, Souvenirs <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythsowv/>, photos https://dc.swosu.edu/ms_photos/
- Art galleries from the publications includes:



Mythlore https://dc.swosu.edu/ml_art/, *The Mythic Circle* <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/>, and *Mythprint* https://dc.swosu.edu/tolkien_art/

Use of the Mythsoc Digital Collections:

1. Everything on the Mythsoc Digital Collections is free and open to the public. Most items can be downloaded to the user's computer.
2. Some items have embargos to protect the value of membership dues and subscriptions. *Mythprint* has a two-year embargo, *The Mythic Circle* has a one-year embargo. *Mythlore* has no embargo. A journal embargo is a period of time during which a publisher restricts access to the full text of articles in the most recent issues. A one-year subscription to *Mythprint* is one of the benefits that come with Mythsoc annual membership dues. The two-year embargo of the newsletter keeps Mythsoc news exclusive to subscribing members. The exception is for book reviews in *Mythprint*. All *Mythprint* book reviews are now available, as soon as they are published in the newsletter, on the *Mythprint* Book Reviews page at https://dc.swosu.edu/mpr_rev/. Stewards decided that book reviews should be made available to readers, educators, and librarians, close to when books are released. The one-year embargo of *The Mythic Circle* is also intended to protect the value of subscriptions to the literary journal.
3. Some items cannot be downloaded. Videos of

Mythsoc digital archive usage map.
1,000,000 downloads, 3,080 video and
audio streams in 223 countries/regions of
4,981 items from all Mythsoc collections
07/07/2017 to 4/24/2025

event presentations can be streamed but not downloaded. Also, images from the publications' art galleries can be viewed on the platform but not downloaded. This restriction is in

place to protect the interests of the artists.

4. Internet users can search the Mythsoc Digital Collections visually on the index page at <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythsoc/>.
5. The collections can be searched by the platform using the search box in the left navigation bar.
6. The user can download PDFs of most items from the Mythsoc publications. Once downloaded, the user can do keyword searches using a PDF reader of the optical character recognition (OCR) that is incorporated into most files on the repository. For example, the user may need to download an issue of *Mythprint* to their computer and then search the PDF for specific names or keywords.
7. The user can look for specific issues for each publication by using the **All Issues** dropdown menu in the left navigation bar. Click the desired issue from the menu, then click browse; and the requested journal issue will appear.
8. The user can click the **Browse** button next to the **All Issues** menu, and it will show a list of all issues in the collection with links to each issue.

If you have any questions, contact Phillip Fitzsimmons at phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY STEWARDSHIP OPENINGS REMAIN

Do you love Tolkien, Lewis, or the Inklings so much you wish you could do it as a job? (Well, a volunteer job.) Do you want to be part of a fifty-year legacy of mythopoeic fandom and scholarship? Have you ever wanted more of a say in an organization you love? Do you need (or want) non-profit board experience to add to your résumé or curriculum vitae? Then look no further! We are *still* in need of volunteers!

Mythprint Steward

As alluded to in *Mythprint* #411 (the special 500th issue), Megan Abrahamson is looking to retire from the editorial position (and the lateness of this issue coming out may have many of you thinking, good riddance!). She will be remaining on the Board of the Mythopoeic Society in a new role (see below) but in the meantime will continue putting together quarterly-ish issues until a replacement is found.

The job entails editing four newsletter issues per year, on a quarterly schedule (anything more consistent than Megan's tenure will be an improvement!). This entails co-ordinating and soliciting reviews of mythopoeic works, as well as articles/notes, and artwork. Much of the content is automatic, such as announcing Mythsoc news, conferences, awards, conference reports, and the like. Currently, this work is done in Microsoft Publisher, so if you are in a career (such as academia) which gets you free access to the software, you'll be in a good position—however, there's no rule that it can't be done with another software the future editor may have familiarity with and access to.

Other elements of the job are attending quarterly meetings and voting as a Steward, and any small committee-type tasks that may grow from those meetings.

The benefits to the new editor are experience serving on the board of a non-profit organization, which can be billed differently to academic and corporate audiences—either way, it's a CV/résumé-builder! In the role as *Mythprint* editor, you will build relationships with authors, publishers, artists, and other wonderful folks! You will also gain valuable editing experience (or add to any experience you already have).

The ideal *Mythprint* Editor Steward:

- Can work (or learn) Publisher or some equivalent in order to compile the issues
- Is reasonably software-savvy (though all can be learned even by a novice)
- Is reasonably organized

- May already know artists, authors
- Is interested in the mission of the Mythopoeic Society, which is simply to love and share the work of the Inklings and other fantasy creators
- Is already or is willing to become a dues-paying member of the Mythopoeic Society (currently the low low price of \$15/year)

If you are interested in the role, please reach out to mythprint@mythsoc.org with any questions. Applicants will be asked to submit a CV/résumé and a brief letter of interest in the position.

Orders Steward

The Mythopoeic Society is looking for a volunteer interested in nonprofit experience to learn the Orders Steward role with the eventual plan to take over from Lee Speth as he retires from the role.

The job entails minding a storage unit and shipping purchased items to our membership. Though the storage unit is currently in California, anyone interested should feel free to apply, as we are willing to ship the items to a convenient storage unit near you (or your house, if that's for some reason more convenient). The Orders Steward would be responsible for inventory, and ordering new materials (such as T-shirts) when we run out.

Other elements of the job are attending quarterly meetings and voting as a Steward, and any small committee-type tasks that may grow from those meetings.

The benefits to the new steward are experience serving on the board of a non-profit organization, which can be billed differently to academic and corporate audiences—either way, it's a CV/résumé-builder!

The ideal Orders Steward:

- Is generally able-bodied and mobile, can move (and potentially ship) boxes of books
- Is comfortable shipping with USPS (or equivalent local carrier)
- Can learn how to use PayPal (where Orders come in, and how you will be reimbursed for shipping)
- Is interested in the mission of the Mythopoeic Society, which is simply to love and share the work of the Inklings and other fantasy creators
- Is already or is willing to become a dues-paying member of the Mythopoeic Society (currently the low low price of \$15/year)

If you are interested in the role, please reach out to chair@mythsoc.org (currently Janet Brennan Croft) with any questions. Applicants will be asked to submit a brief letter of interest in the position.

REVIEWS

Dimitra Fimi, Thomas Honegger, ed. *Sub-Creating Arda: World-building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Work, its Precursors and its Legacies*. Walking Tree, 2019. 464pp. \$32.00. Reviewed by Phillip Fitzsimmons.

Sub-creating Arda: World-building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Work, its Precursors and its Legacies is a substantial anthology of works by contemporary Tolkien scholars about sub-creation, as described by J.R.R. Tolkien, and fantasy world-building in general. This collection of papers is often demanding, but well worth pursuing and can be read for pleasure or studied fruitfully by scholars at all levels. Dimitra Fimi and Thomas Honegger, the editors, summarize the scope of the book in their introduction,

"This volume has taken up this shift towards literary sub-creation and world-building as worthy subjects of academic discourse. Locating Tolkien's work as a paradigmatic example of these processes, it seeks to illuminate hitherto neglected aspects of his sub-creation, but also to open up the debate of theorizing world-building and sub-creation and exploring other writer's world-building via a Tolkienian lens." (ii)

The twenty papers in this volume carry out everything the editors set out to do in the quotation above. These essays discuss a range of subjects, from sub-creation in which "a secondary world resets Primary World defaults," (1-15) "Aesthetic Limits to World-building," (57-92) and "Worldbuilding Design Patterns..." (93-116) to literary analysis of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, such as an in-depth exploration of a possible literary influence to Tolkien's *The Music of the Airs*, (117-151) a discussion of magic in the legendarium, (153-175) and poetry in *The Lord of the Rings*. Regardless of the topic of each chapter, Tolkien's *On Fairy-Stories* is never far away and is typically the work to which the discussions are responding.

The editors have rightfully given "pride of place"(ii) to *Concerning the "Sub" in "Subcreation": The Act of Creating Under* by Mark J.P. Wolf. It is a good piece to launch the volume because it explores fundamental questions in world-building, such as how far removed the secondary world can be away from what Wolf calls

the "Primary World defaults" (1) and still remain convincing. Wolf begins with a discussion of the act of subcreation as practiced by J.R.R. Tolkien, provides a number of examples of author's discussions of world-building from science fiction and fantasy literature, and then writes about the ways that world-building for video games is different from the creation of secondary worlds in literature. Principally, the purpose and use of secondary worlds, and the user's experience of them, are different in video games than when they are in literature. Wolf's chapter is the beginning of a number of papers that collectively can be studied by novice world-builders to learn the issues involved in the sub-creation of fantasy worlds.

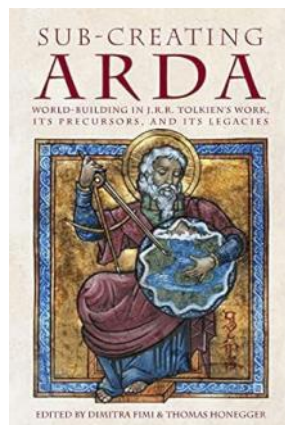
Examples of contributors discussing the nuts-and-bolts of world-building include the following three papers:

First, in *One Pair of Eyes: Focalization and Worldbuilding* (17-29), Allan Turner describes the role of character's focalization (points-of-view) within world-building. The human ability to project ourselves into the perspective of others allows the reader to "become immersed in fictional events taking place in an unfamiliar setting." (17) And he illustrates his point that "a different historical period can be almost as unfamiliar as a different world" (17) by comparing Tolkien's work to that of Sir Walter Scott in *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*.

Second, *Worldbuilding and Mythopoeia in Tolkien and post-Tolkienian Fantasy Literature* by Massimiliano Izzo describes the balance Tolkien created between authoring mythopoeic literature and the requests of fans for an encyclopedic presentation of Middle-earth. Izzo states in his conclusion that "...but after Tolkien high fantasy has relied more and more on worldbuilding and less on mythopoeia. However, the opposition between worldbuilding and myth-making does not necessarily correlate with an opposition between high fantasy and 'low' fantasy." (51) He ends the chapter by urging high fantasy writers to stretch themselves to

create works that are both long and provides a well-developed fantasy world.

Third, *Worldbuilding Design Patterns in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (93-116) by N. Trevor Brierly proposes the idea of design patterns for worldbuilding that are similar to ones used in architecture. The chapter ends with an appendix containing twenty-five examples of worldbuilding design patterns inspired by the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. I point to these three papers, from the first section of the book, (1-116) because they illustrate that this section of



the book can be used by aspiring world-builders to learn the principles of their craft.

Limitations in space prevent me from discussing the other sections of the book. However, I do want to mention that it contains *Ilu's Music: The Creation of Tolkien's Creation Myth* by John Garth. This paper presents evidence that *The Music of the Ainur* was written, in part, for his friend Christopher Wiseman, argues for a literary influence of the piece, and discusses its themes. The book also contains *The Faërie World of Michael Swanwick* by Tom Shippey, who points to a possible common literary source of inspiration for both authors J.R.R. Tolkien and Michael Swanwick. Shippey makes a compelling case for the sophistication of Swanwick's world-building and the desirability of reading his "Industrialised Faërie" novels (415).

In short, this collection has the feel of a very smart and ongoing conversation by the members of a group of scholars who love the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, know each other's works, and are discussing the topic of literary sub-creation and world-building. The papers explore the topics of the book in both wide-ranging and in-depth fashions. Two ways the book can be read are as a source to learn how to do world-building and as a contribution to Tolkien literary studies. This book is appropriate for all academic libraries, especially when connected to institutions with language arts programs that include studies about the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, the Inklings, or fantasy literature. As mentioned at the beginning of this review, *Sub-creating Arda: World-building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Work, its Precursors and its Legacies* is a substantial volume. Within its many pages are contained a robust exchange of ideas among twenty-plus scholars that has given this reader much to think about on the topics of the book.

Hamish Williams. *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics*, Bloomsbury, 2023. 224pp. \$90.00. Reviewed by Łukasz Neubauer.

At first glance, the concept of looking at the works of Tolkien through the prism of Classical studies may strike one as eccentric, even misguided. After all, he dedicated his academic life to the study of medieval literature, teaching courses in early English poetry as well as Norse myths

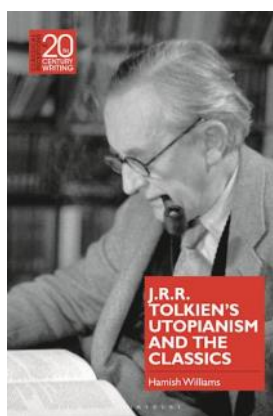
and sagas. Likewise in his literary oeuvre, the majority of Tolkien's inspirations are of indisputably medieval character, from the more topical concerns, such as the quest to reclaim the lost treasure in *The Hobbit*, to the recurrent puns and word-plays in *Farmer Giles of Ham*.

Such a narrow framework, however, would clearly disregard the fact that long before Tolkien took to learning Old English, he had been a dedicated student of Classical languages and literature. His mother taught him the rudiments of Latin before his tenth birthday and he started to learn Greek when he was eleven. Tolkien would later recall that "the fluidity of Greek, punctuated by hardness, and with its surface glitter, captivated [him], even when [he] met it first only in Greek names, of history or mythology" ('English and Welsh' 191). Also, as he himself declares in a letter to Robert Murray SJ, it was in the works of Homer that he "first discovered the sensation of literary pleasure" (*Letters* 172). And even though after a year of studying the *Literae Humaniores* Tolkien ultimately chose to read English, his earlier interest in the ancient world and its cultural inheritance never really faded, resulting in multiple, if not always easily detectible, Classical threads in the fruits of his literary imagination.

Many of these threads, hitherto ignored or at least downplayed, have recently begun to be explored with greater vigour and effectiveness by scholars like Giuseppe Pezzini, Philip Burton, and Hamish Williams. Particularly that last name should now be familiar in the ever-growing circles of Tolkien scholarship and fandom. 2021 saw the publication of *Tolkien & the Classical World*, a volume of fifteen essays under his editorial supervision.

One year later, Williams's own work, the cross-sectional paper 'Classical Literature,' found its way into the second edition of the Willey-Blackwell *Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien*. Finally, in 2023, his monograph *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics* was published by Bloomsbury Academic, at roughly the same time as his other edited volume (with Ross Clare), *The Ancient Sea: The Utopian and Catastrophic in Classical Narratives and Their Reception*.

All these strands of theoretical modelling – some tight and some loose – come out intertwined in *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics*. One needs to be careful, though, in assigning meaning to the word *utopia* (and its all-encompassing derivative *utopianism*), which in its original, Morean sense of a socio-political satire denotes a place which is not only idealised and in some measure harmonious with variedly understood human 'wellness,' but simply non-existent (hence its imbedded pun:



οὐτόπος ‘no-place’). Instead, Williams proposes a working definition, according to which “utopianism is a form of thinking which defamiliarizes physical space for the sake of exploring and evaluating an ideal” (2). In Tolkien’s works, definitely not of the utopian kind, this labelling applies to “the spatial richness in narrative, of imaginative defamiliarization (nowhereness) and of (im)perfectionism or idealism” (6). The roots of this kind of engagement with ‘utopian’ visioning, Williams argues with a convincing array of evidence, could be found in the Classical authors Tolkien studied and held in high esteem throughout his life. For this ‘rediscovery and rewriting’ (8) of ancient texts in Tolkien’s world-building, however, Williams draws upon Zygmunt Bauman’s term of *retrotopia*, a nostalgic yearning for a reality deeply entrenched in the idealised past, and therefore, notwithstanding its subjective character, perceived as benign.

To illustrate his line of reasoning, Williams provides three instances of ‘utopian’ (in the above sense of that word) imagining in the works of Tolkien. First, he looks at what he calls ‘lapsarian narratives,’ which, on the one hand, owe a great deal to the circumstances and consequences of man’s fall in Genesis, but, on the other, appear to be seasoned with the notion of gradual decline in the works of Hesiod, Ovid or Plato. Here the best example of Tolkien’s indebtedness to Graeco-Roman tradition is his self-admitted fascination with the ‘Atlantean’ myth, used (with certain ethical underpinnings) as an explanation of the Númenórean fall. The second issue tackled by Williams is that of different notions of hospitality as they are typified in the recurrent xenophilic and xenophobic themes in Homer’s *Odyssey*. In an exhaustive yet never overwhelming manner, he takes a close look at their corresponding themes in *The Hobbit*: the comfortable and reluctant host (Bilbo, Beorn, Smaug) and his intrusive visitors (dwarves), disappearing/reappearing traveller (Gandalf), and long-delayed homecoming (Bilbo). Finally, in the third chapter, Williams turns to transcendence in nature (and beyond), with a particular focus on *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In comparison with the first two sections, this one seems least consistent in argument and somewhat debatable as regards its indebtedness to the Graeco-Roman tradition and employment of utopian visions. Nonetheless, certain interpretative frameworks, such as seeing gardening not only as a remedy for deforestation, but also as “an act of faith” (101), are interesting in themselves and rise above

the clichéd and ideologically-infested applications of popular ecocritical theories.

In the ultimate section, the epilogue ‘Ancient Trees in Tolkien’s Forest,’ Williams recapitulates the gist of his retrotopian musings, arguing that one should never cease to consider Tolkien’s narratives within the twentieth-century context. There is nothing innovative about this kind of approach, not only in the field of Tolkien studies. However, why, at the same time, Williams seems afraid that “modern thinkers will find the concrete version of utopia which Tolkien’s narratives tend to construct *disappointingly retrogressive or conservative*” (141) eludes my comprehension. That is to say, I know that in the belligerently progressive mindset of twenty-first-century academia the words ‘past’ and ‘conservative’ tend to be treated with caution or even hostility. However, below the ostensibly dated façade of Tolkien’s ethical vision there is a firm substratum of universal application whose verity could only be questioned if, simultaneously, one has reservations about the ethical principles of the Western civilisation.

Despite these minor flaws – or rather issues on which I hold a slightly different opinion – Williams’s book is a timely and welcome addition to the field of Tolkien studies, particularly that branch which is concerned with Tolkien’s non-medieval influences. And on a more personal note, I hope that despite his other academic pursuits, not directly concerned with the mythic tapestry of Middle-earth, the author will not cease in his efforts to shed more light upon the Classical threads in the works of Tolkien. Keep on the good work, Hamish!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MythSoc Stewards Meetings

To ensure all Mythopoeic Society members are aware of the schedule of meetings, so that any member of the Society can propose a topic to be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting, the following is the tentative schedule of the Council of Stewards Meetings planned:

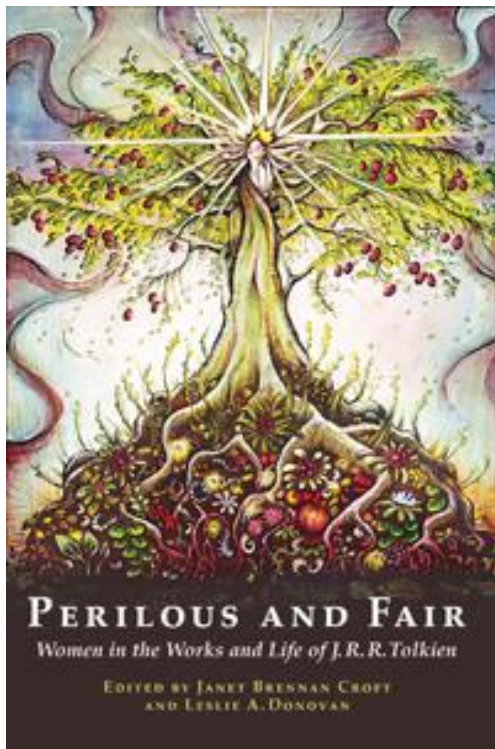
- July 26, 2025
- Nov 1, 2025
- Feb 7, 2026

To propose a topic to be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting, email the Chair of the Society (currently Janet Brennan Croft) at chair@mythsoc.org.

Submit to Mythprint!

We are always accepting reviews of any mythopoeic media, but we also publish letters to the editor or society, short articles and notes on Inklings topics, art, meeting discussion reports, and more! We are especially interested in reviews of mythopoeic works by creators of color and other historically underrepresented perspectives. Submit to: mythprint@mythsoc.org

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