

### **Dawn M. Walls-Thumma**

#### **Transformative Works as a Means to Develop Critical Perspectives in the Tolkien Fan Community**

Transformative works, popularly known as fan fiction, based on Tolkien's books have existed since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. The Internet has given rise to a community of fan fiction writers that use transformative fiction as a means to extend their knowledge of Tolkien's fictional universe and engage critically with the texts on matters that also receive attention as part of more traditional Tolkien studies scholarship. This paper explores the history, demographics, virtual geography, and function of Internet Tolkien fan fiction communities and considers how the culture of Tolkien fandom differs from that of fandom in general.

*Dawn discovered the books of J.R.R. Tolkien through Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings movies and started writing stories based on The Silmarillion before she'd ever heard the term "fan fiction." In 2005, she established the Silmarillion Writers' Guild, which remains one of the Tolkien community's most respected archives and resources for fan fiction writers. Dawn is also a webmaster and moderator on the Tolkien fan fiction archive Many Paths to Tread and coordinates the event Back to Middle-earth Month, an annual celebration of Middle-earth through transformative works. This summer, Dawn will complete her MA in the humanities at American Public University, where in true Tolkien tradition, she has focused on Old English studies.*



**MYTHGARD INSTITUTE**  
from Sigum University