FRIDAY

Eucatastrophe Room

Merry as a Mirror

We all know the story of the Lord of the Rings. How a device of great power, hidden for much of the Third Age of Middle Earth, came, seemingly by accident, into the hands of a brave hobbit. How this hobbit undertook a perilous journey, during which he was captured by orcs but escaped with the aid of his hobbit companion. How, at the end of his journey, he used the device to vanquish a terrible enemy. Yes, we all know the tale of Meriadoc Brandybuck of the Shire.

The paper contrasts Frodo, who knowingly accepts the One Ring and undertakes his Quest, which succeeds only through the providential intercession of Sméagol, to Merry, who chooses to strike a blow in defense of Éowyn, while unaware of the unique qualities of his dagger and having arrived at Pelennor Field by seeming accident. It concludes with consideration of different ways in which personal courage may depend on providential events.

Steve Keen is a retired attorney who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

"Dear maid, kind sister": Tolkien's Niënor and Ophelia

In his letters, Tolkien acknowledges three sources for the tragic tale of The Children of Húrin: the Finnish Kalevala, the Norse Völsunga Saga, and the Greek Oedipus cycle. Yet there is another major literary work that seems to fit rather neatly into The Children of Húrin's "cauldron of story" and with which a comparative reading can prove instructive: William Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Drawing on disability theory and gender studies, this paper will compare the figures of Niënor and Ophelia in order to explore associations of women and madness, sexual deviance, suicide, and subjectivity within Tolkien's narrative. This paper will also apply recent feminist scholarship on interpreting and performing Ophelia to examine the ways in which Niënor challenges Túrin's self-focus and the narrative's focus on Túrin, which demonstrates the significant role Niënor plays within the story. A comparison between the characters, themes, and motifs in Hamlet and The Children of Húrin reveals not only similarities that suggest Tolkien took inspiration from Shakespeare's tragedy but also the important ways that Tolkien's tale differs from the Bard's. In Niënor, it is possible to see the resilience of the imagination in cultural conceptions of the "madwoman" dating back to the time of Shakespeare, but it is also possible to see the resilience of Tolkien's own imagination in the ways he adapted this conception to something more aligned with his own vision for his legendarium. Thus, a comparative study allows us to reevaluate Niënor's role and meaning within Tolkien's text.

Clare Moore is a Ph.D. student at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on disability, gender, and race in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and has appeared in Mallorn, Journal of Tolkien Research, and Mythlore.

This will I do: Míriel and the Making of Things New

Míriel Þerindë's character offers a fascinating exploration of imagination, creation, and resilience. Despite being often perceived as hopeless or stubborn, she defies traditional Noldor norms of "making" by engaging in active invention and creation, as seen through her textiles, her choices, and even in her creation of Fëanor. Her actions challenge the conventional distinctions between tradition/reproduction and imagination/invention outlined in Tolkien's work, particularly in "The Nature of Making" in Morgoth's Ring. By examining how Míriel acts outside of these conventions, this presentation will showcase Míriel's innovative creativity, and her resilience in the face of societal, divine, and metaphysical expectations, thereby challenging our understanding of imagination and its relationship to the Noldor culture. Ultimately, the goal of this presentation is to reframe Míriel, challenging previous receptions and presenting an alternative understanding of her character, her creations, and her choices.

Jackie Sheppard - Signum University student, ELA Instructor, and queer feminist geek

Singularity Room

Tales Never Told: Tolkien, Smith, and Re-enchantment

In his *Story of Kullervo*, Tolkien suggests readers take a brief holiday—nothing more—into this world's imaginative past. This holiday is not a 'nostalgie de la boue,' or a 'yearning for the mud,' as earlier Romantics, like Keats, envisioned, but any work that engages poets with a grander fantasy. I will compare Tolkien's "Kortirion Among the Trees" with Smith's "A Preface for a Tale I have never told," which both represent a longing for the pre-rational, imaginative world. Little research has specifically fused G.B. Smith's "A Spring Harvest" to Tolkien's legendarium, and in the vein of writers like Garth and Flieger, I propose a larger imaginative-inspirational approach to explore a relationship between two young writers who sought to re-enchant the world through the tales we no longer heed.

Kevin Waldron is a current Signum M.A. student with a concentration in Classical Literature. My current research interests include Tolkien's engagement with the fantasy of the past, particularly within poetry and linguistics.

Intelligence, Instinct, and the Intermediate: The Restoration of an Old Model in *That Hideous Strength*

While reading a work of the magnitude of C.S. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*, one naturally wonders how Lewis will manage to put a grandiose bow on what is an increasingly fantastic story. One might feel disappointed or scandalized when a book with angels, demons, a pet bear,

an unearthed Merlin, and a new Tower of Babel all ended with a married couple going to bed. This paper argues that the ending, though initially surprising, is a grand image of the model for which Lewis argued in The Abolition of Man. Abolition contends that reality is constructed of three different realms: the intellectual realm, where the spiritual and conceptual belong; the instinctual realm, where appetites, pleasures, and craft belong; and the intermediate realm, where the two distinct realms are joined together by the affections and habits. Man, Lewis argues, is a representative of this tripartite reality, having a head (intellect), a belly (instinct), and a chest (intermediate). Lewis charges the modern paradigm with eliminating all use of the chest. This paper argues that the relationship between Mark and Jane Studdock is an image that suggests this same principle. Mark's view of his wife is merely instinctual—he feels toward her what Lewis calls Eros but nothing more. Jane's view of her husband is merely intellectual—she wants what Lewis calls the love of Friendship with her husband. Neither Mark nor Jane have what Lewis calls Affection for each other. As the story progresses, Mark and Jane each begin developing Affection for their spouse. When *That Hideous Strength* ends, the estranged couple find themselves for the first time. Mark and Jane do not merely fall into Eros, they truly know each other as they have never known each other before, and so forge in their union a bond between the intellectual and the instinctual realms. Even if Lewis' terminology in Abolition is forgotten, his imagination creates for the same principle a resilient metaphor.

John Southards is in his last year of Signum's MA program, where he is getting a double concentration in Classical, Medieval, & Renaissance Literature and Germanic Philology. He teaches humanities at a classical high school in Virginia where he aims to help his community recover the tradition of faithfully studying old texts.

Maslow's Dog: *Roverandom*

Roverandom has excited critical or perplexed reactions in comparison to Tolkien's more popular stories. The story has an episodic and somewhat disconnected style, leading some scholars to dismiss or belittle its value. In 1943, Abraham Maslow published "A Theory of Human Motivation" in which he offers a means of understanding the complex motives behind human behavior and the impact human needs and motivations have on developmental psychology. This theory is useful in unifying and understanding the progression of Roverandom's emotional and intellectual journey towards maturity.

Artaxerxes's enchantment causes psychological trauma that sends Roverandom into a regression. Roverandom's adventures follow a progression which mirrors Maslow's suggested sequence of deficiency needs – needs which are of particular importance in childhood. Obstacles to the fulfillment of Roverandom's deficiency needs, particularly Artaxerxes's frustration of esteem, make sensible the "rambling" nature of the latter portions of the story. A study from the 1980's suggests children pursue esteem before love and belonging. This revision to Maslow's suggested path fits with Roverandom postponing the reunion with Little Boy 2 until after resolution with Artaxerxes satisfies his esteem needs.

This paper will show that the utilization of Maslow's hierarchy of needs alongside the reading of Roverandom showcases the profound influence of fantasy in promoting an individual's cognitive,

affective, and spiritual development. In this narrative, Michael's unfortunate loss of a cherished plaything was skillfully transformed into an opportunity for personal growth by his father. By employing his creativity and imagination, Tolkien was able to address various levels of his son's psychological requirements, just as others had nurtured and supported him in his own childhood. What initially had the potential to be a traumatic experience ultimately became a source of transcendental hope, as Tolkien fostered Michael's resilience through imagination.

Bethany Bonzo is a student at Signum University, a full-time mom and a freelance fiber artist. She holds a Bachelors in Social Sciences from CSU Stanislaus and regularly inflicts educational fun facts on her defenseless husband and three sons.

Mimesis Room

Stories of Resilience: The Art of the Anglo-Saxons

The Anglo-Saxons are the starting point for many strands of popular imagination. They have inspired modern works of fantasy, gaming, and poetry, and they are often the next step for the Tolkien fan eager to study his influences. Old English language and poetry especially have enjoyed a rise in interest in recent decades. This presentation will offer a tour of other domains of Anglo-Saxon art: primarily jewelry and metalwork, manuscript illuminations, and stonework. A brief historical survey will include analyses of several single works, including pieces from Sutton Hoo and the Staffordshire Hoard, the Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses, and pages from the Lindisfarne and Echternach Gospels and the Stockholm Codex Aureus. The survey will identify points of intersection with some better-known poetic works, and in the process, build a picture of the resilience of the Anglo-Saxon imagination. Resilience is a response to challenges, and the Anglo-Saxons faced many—suffering, exile, death, migration, social upheaval, war, and the civilizational demise they knew was inevitable. All was impermanence. Anglo-Saxons responded to these forms of impermanence with an impressive level of sophistication and realism. This presentation will draw out three distinguishing characteristics of Anglo-Saxon art that reflect this resilience. First and most obvious is the way they constantly drew inspiration from each other, even across media, reflecting the inherent adaptability of the Anglo-Saxon spirit. Second, the analogy of weaving served as one of the Anglo-Saxons' core conceptual devices for understanding the world. Guided by this image, the artist perceived order in disparate realities, and combined them without diminution to create something stronger. Finally Anglo-Saxon art is self-conscious about its desire to challenge and engage the consumer, requiring effort and immersion and rewarding us with a new story about the world. This allows the art and the artist to live on in the other—and gives us a role in the ongoing resilience of the Anglo-Saxon imagination.

Eric J. Kingsepp is a perpetual polymath whose everyday thoughts are not of the Roman Empire but Anglo-Saxon England. His academic background includes graduate work in national security and a MA in theology, and his informal studies include languages, history, philosophy, literature, and being a homeschooling dad.

The Remarkable Resilience of a Glass Slipper

Imagination at its core is, as Tolkien reminds us, "the mental power of image-making," and as such, it is a fundamental aspect of human nature. But just as the body needs good food and challenging exercise to thrive physically, our imagination needs exposure to a wide range of stories (and art and music) to be a source of courage and hope in a world that is always (potentially) dangerous—in short, to inspire resilience.

Humans have been telling stories as long as we have been human — we still see their illustrations painted on the walls of caves around the world. As the stories changed and spread throughout the world, some came to be called fairy tales, generally because they included one or more characters who were, let us say, otherworldly. Recently, I was surprised to learn that the most popular of the stories to have survived into modern consciousness is the one we know as "Cinderella." Although not my favorite, I realized that it is one for which I could, without much thought, name 6-8 relatively modern English-language retellings (plus the Russian ballet). My paper will examine how this particular story has become so resilient as a story: how has it inspired the reader/listener to produce so many creative treatments?

The earliest versions of the story, from ancient Egypt and 9th century China, have many of the same tropes common to the Perrault and Grimm versions. I will set the ancient and the French/German tales against the more recent iterations (primarily films), with reference not only to Campbell's Hero Journey and Murdock's Heroine Journey but also to the more recent work of Weiland and others who offer an integrated analysis that may explain why we still care about the girl who loses a glass slipper.

Kate Neville received her M.A. in Tolkien Studies from Signum University, with a thesis examining the development of Lúthien Tinúviel through 1931. She currently keeps the books for her husband's online publishing business, serves on the board of the local public library, and looks forward to many more years devoted studying the works of J. R. R. Tolkien.

Recovery, Escape, and Consolation in Anime: *Love, Chunibyo and Other Delusions*

In "On Fairy-Stories," J.R.R. Tolkien argues against the characterization of fantasy as being a literature for children. Instead, he asserts that fantasy literature serves three important functions — recovery, escape, and consolation — that aid us throughout our lives. In this presentation, I will argue that the 2012 anime series Love, Chunibyo, and Other Delusions (Chūnibyō demo Koi ga Shitai!, literally "Even with eighth grader syndrome, I want to be in love!") explores how fantasy and imagination help us to be resilient through life's hardships. As the opening exposition of the series explains, "chūnibyō" (中二病), usually translated in English as "eighth grader syndrome," refers to "a frightful and yet lovable 'disease', when "a developing sense of self awareness mixes with the whimsical views of childhood, resulting in rather odd behavior." While in practice this "odd behavior" includes delinquents trying to prove themselves or people feigning interest in popular things to fit in, in *Love, Chunibyo and Other Delusions*, the central characters believe or have believed that they themselves possess mystical powers.

Duane Watson resides with his wife, Jen, and their four cats in the Texas Hill Country, where he is an instructor at Llano High School in Llano, Texas, teaching English Composition, Economics, Government, and Audio/Visual Art and Technology. He has a B.S. in History, an M.A. in English, an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, and will be/is a graduate of Signum University's MA in Language and Literature program.

SATURDAY

Eucatastrophe Room

Failures of Imagination: Finrod, Denethor, and Frodo Overcome (And What Happened After)

In order to speak of the resilience of the imagination, I first propose to speak about failures of the imagination. In a stronghold taken by the Enemy, Finrod the elven king struggles and fails to uphold an imaginative vision of fidelity and beauty against the magical and psychic assaults of Sauron, Morgoth's fearsome lieutenant. In the upper levels of his besieged White City, the Steward of Gondor comes to believe in the imminence of his army's defeat, and with it the demise of a broader vision of order encompassing the Westlands of Middle-earth, and arguably beyond them. Toiling in the wastes of Mordor, the halfling Frodo loses first his ability to recall to memory that precious home for which he undertakes his errand, then finally from within the loss of his self-imagination, his will to complete his task at all. For the purposes of this investigation, I am interested in comparing and contrasting the story outcome and moral judgment of these three characters' battles, which each take place as much in the imagination as in the physical realm. How did Tolkien handle, in narrative and extratextual commentary, the question of what may happen after a person's worldview and sense of self-identity is shattered, whether in sudden collapse or slowly dismantled? How may observers judge culpability when failure of the imagination leads to practical failure of hope or resolve? Can a lapsed hope be rebuilt, a lost sense of purpose or ideals regained: in short, can a failed imagination of the good be healed by resilience? I suggest that in these three exemplars, Finrod, Denethor, and Frodo, Tolkien models a spectrum of answers to the foregoing questions, from defeat compounded by stagnancy, to defeat ameliorated or expiated by a renewed imagination of the good which leads crucially to embodying that resilient imagination through positive action taken in the face of evil.

Alyssa House-Thomas is a Signum University alumna who dwells in California. She has a tragically brown thumb herself, but is theoretically in sympathy with all who take the part of the plants.

Embodied Trauma and Treatment Methods in *The Lord of the Rings*

In Tolkien's trilogy, we see many 'terrible' events – war, confinement, torture, abuse – and the characters react to these events in different but remarkably true-to-life ways. Of particular interest is how the trilogy portrays embodied trauma. The portrayal of embodied trauma in Lord of the Rings is varied and pervasive; characters manifest their trauma as physical, psychosomatic pain, as well as difficulty regulating their emotions and behaviours. Tolkien's approaches to embodied trauma and treatment reflect the real-world fact that every individual experiences and internalises trauma differently. The fact that the trilogy was published at such a moment in history – following two world wars, one of which the author actively fought in – serves to heighten the impressive real-world applicability of these portrayals.

While the traumatic effects of war and grief were not new at the time that Tolkien was writing the trilogy, treatments were limited and tended to be metaphysical in nature. The treatment methods we see in Lord of the Rings – guiding characters towards resilience and healing through (religious) faith, physical rest, expression through words/song, and companionship/collaboration – are less thoroughly-grounded in medical practices, and more in the realm of healing the spirit. Nonetheless, these approaches indicate an awareness of the importance of methods like verbalising trauma and avoiding isolation. They also follow literary traditions of trauma treatment in fiction, which Tolkien would have been tangentially aware of as a philologist trained in the classics. Whether Tolkien was reflecting his own experience, or the literary tradition, the corporeal effects of trauma on characters is recognisable and engaging.

Dr **Jessica Seymour** is an Australian researcher and lecturer at Fukuoka University, Japan. Her research interests include children's and young adult literature, popular culture, and comparative literature.

From the Ashes: Healing Hearts and Homes After Disaster

In 'The Scouring of the Shire', Sharkey and his ruffians cause devastation to hobbits, homes, and the landscape when they invade the Shire. Once the Travellers return and oust the intruders, all of the hobbits have plenty of work to do to turn the Shire back into the idyllic place we all want to visit. The Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 near Melbourne, Australia, caused similar devastation, on a larger scale. People, animals, homes, and land were lost to the flames, and it took years for the affected communities to recover.

After disasters like these, a community needs resilience in order to overcome the trauma involved, and rebuild. But resilience doesn't spring out of holes in the ground, it has to come from somewhere. Imagination, generosity, collaboration, and hope can all contribute to the resilience of a person or a community as a whole, allowing them to get on with the job of rebuilding. In this presentation, I use these themes to compare the rebuilding efforts of the hobbits, described in the chapter The Grey Havens, to the physical rebuilding and emotional recovery of affected communities in the aftermath of Black Saturday. I pay particular attention to two community-led creative projects which helped locals to heal from their trauma and find hope in their lives again.

Jenni Aldred lives in Melbourne, Australia, and was inspired to take up her current career in audio post-production for film and television by watching the behind-the-scenes of Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings films. She loves all things Tolkien, watches too much television, and spends her spare time knitting, nerding, and napping.

Singularity Room

Collaborative Sub-Creation: Principles for Writing Stories in Community

It started as a joke: Since Will writes only dialogue and Cate writes only description, between us we have a whole story! Over the last year, we have co-written a short story titled The Iron Rose and invited more writers into a shared-world universe. Come join us as we discuss starting a project together, co-imagining a shared universe, and our principles of collaborative writing and editing. We became familiar with each others' work through the SPACE Creative Writing community and the Collaborative Feedback Method used there.

We began our project in response to writing prompts from the Stories in the Darkness module, and found that we had several compelling story ideas we wanted to continue to pursue together. Our co-writing experiment was built on the trust and relationship that we already had through several months of creative writing, and we continued to build on that with each other and in collaboration with our writing colleagues. The kindness-first model of community and relationship-building was both the foundation of our work and the result of our project, as the collaboration has now grown to include more writers co-imagining with us.

Cate Conners is an academic advisor and a Signum SPACE creative writing preceptor; she holds a M.A. in Educational Leadership and is pursuing a PhD in Education and Human Development. In her spare time, she is a squirrel-watcher, a cat-lover, and an instigator of chaos.

Will Estes acts as captain of a galactic spaceship with his wife and children, searching the galaxy for civilizations that appreciate a proper pulled pork barbecue. He has a Masters in Mathematics and precepts in SPACE Creative Writing.

There and Not Back Again: A Hobbit's Journey to Downsize Bag End

In many ways, decluttering an entire house is similar to being a small, drenched hobbit riding a pony through the pouring rain and knowing there are no provisions for supper. It is a reluctant quest to an unknown destination in a far away land. Come along on An Adventure and discover how, with a little imagination, J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit is actually a decluttering book! You'll learn how this beloved children's story provides the prompts and resilience you need to wrangle wargs, petrify trolls, and slay a dragon (or two) while decluttering your personal Bag End.

Daisy Schrock graduated from MIT with a degree in Materials Science and Engineering. After working as an engineering research analyst and middle-school science teacher, she now makes quilts and serves as a moderator in a competitive knitting group.

Let's Read the Book of Mazarbul!

Prepare to be led through reading the Book of Mazarbul, transliterating the Cirth Runes and Tengwar script on Tolkien's facsimile pages.

Chad Bornholdt, from Houston, Texas, is a Process Control Systems Engineer whose Tolkien hobby has led him down many smials in efforts to make learning Tolkien easier for others.

Mimesis Room

Happiness for Deep People: How Sadness Leads to Life

Through the sublime, Gothic literature evokes powerful feelings and reactions in an audience by expanding the soul to feel some of the most powerful emotions– such as awe or reverence– known to mankind. As Edmund Burke argues, it is the sublime's focus on pain rather than pleasure that leads to these stronger, rewarding experiences. As a subset of pain, the Doctor Who episode "Blink" narrows in on the emotion of sadness and explores its overall importance in a quality life. Sally Sparrow's comments that "sad is happy for deep people," and throughout the episode, she repeatedly experiences sorrowful events (Moffat, 2007, 5:12-5:17). Yet, that sadness is placed in direct contrast with Sally's overall happiness and a fulfilled life. "Blink" focuses on these emotions and evokes them in order to emphasize that sorrow can ultimately create a feeling of happiness and fulfillment because, through contrast, sadness gives happiness value. Sally experiences much sorrow, but in the end, ends up well-adjusted, in a loving relationship, and working a great job. While Sally experiences these emotions first hand in the episode, the audience can also experience them vicariously just by watching the show. Burke argues that when there is a "certain distance" between the pain and the feeler "they may be, and they are delightful" (Burke, 1757). Consequently, a viewer can experience the pain associated with sorrow without actually having to experience loss. This transitive power of story– of experiencing other's lives and learning from their actions– is one of the reasons stories remain at the heart of human experience.

Taylor Johnson Guinan is a high school English teacher from Florence, Arizona with a passion for science fiction and fantasy. She has a BA in Education- English from Arizona State University and an MA in Language and Literature with an emphasis in Speculative Fiction from Signum University. She has presented a number of papers at Signum University's annual conference Mythmoot as well as a paper at the Mythopoeic Society's annual conference Mythcon.

Qui-Gon Jinn: The Star Wars Galaxy's Human Rights Activist

As The Phantom Menace celebrates its 25th anniversary this summer, Qui-Gon Jinn remains one of the Star Wars saga's most popular Jedi characters. The film positions Qui-Gon as a counterpoint to the sclerotic Jedi Council and corrupt Galactic Republic. Qui-Gon repeatedly defies the Council to help the poor and downtrodden. In TPM, he frees Anakin Skywalker from slavery and supports Queen Amidala's insurgency against the Trade Federation. In the novel Master & Apprentice, he intervenes in a corporate contract negotiation on the planet Pijal to free slaves. In The Living Force, Qui-Gon gives food vouchers to a poor couple on a passenger ship.

Yet, Star Wars shows the limits of Qui-Gon's activism; as a representative of the Jedi and the Republic, he cannot use his powers to save everyone. In TPM, the junk dealer Watto forces Qui-Gon to choose between saving Anakin and his mother. In The Living Force, other passengers angrily confront Qui-Gon asking if they too will receive food handouts. These stories question if the Jedi could do more to help ordinary citizens in the Star Wars Galaxy – and if they should.

In this paper, I draw upon my experience working on human rights in Asia to explore the extent to which individual Jedi like Qui-Gon could have pushed for more sweeping reforms. I assess how the Council and Republic's rules constrained Qui-Gon's actions much like US and international law constrain rights advocates. Even representatives of powerful countries in our world often compromise with local elites in order to make incremental progress. While the Force gives Jedi superhuman powers, using force to protect human rights entails significant risk and could exacerbate a humanitarian crisis. Ultimately, I find the Star Wars saga's use of Qui-Gon to be a thoughtful exploration of the moral dilemmas that human rights advocates in our world face.

Dominic Nardi is a political scientist with a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and teaches an undergraduate course about human rights at George Washington University. He worked for the U.S. government and NGOs on human rights in Southeast Asia. He has published academic articles about politics in J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Star Trek, and Blade Runner. He has also coedited The Transmedia Franchise of Star Wars TV (Palgrave, 2020) and Dune for the 21st Century (McFarland, 2022).

Psychological Mechanisms Behind the *LoTR* Fandom

What is a story worth? Is it more valuable than a diamond? Would you value a good story over a nice dinner? Or a brand new pair of the newest Nikes? How about a house? How about a whole building?

How is it possible that a completely intangible idea could be more valuable than all these things?

Enter the Lord of the Rings. The latest adaptation of LOTR, written by JRR Tolkien and adapted to film by Peter Jackson, grossed over $3 billion dollars. The books alone have grossed about $2.5 billion dollars. Amazon, whose sole purpose is to sell tangible stuff, just spent $250 million dollars just for the right to make an adaptation of just a small part of this story. LOTR fans are one of the largest, most diverse, and intensely devoted audiences in the world.

As Steve Colbert likes to say, "Lord of the Rings is the Number One Trilly!"

But Why? What could make this story so incredibly powerful and valuable to such a broad audience?

Psychology is the answer. Like art and music, certain stories elicit human reaction. And those reactions can change lives in ways that tangible experiences cannot. My paper will discuss what those typical reactions look like and then break down the psychological mechanics behind them. I will discuss psychological mechanisms such as Flow State, Resilience, Grit, and Transformative Learning Theory. We will discuss why Faerie, and Tolkien's stories specifically, are so successful at triggering these psychological functions.

This paper is not so much about Tolkien's work, but rather it is a study of the people who are impacted by his work and why they react the way they do.

Dori Acampora is the Founder and CEO of Integrity Media & Consulting and has worked in Advertising for 25 + years. In May 2021 She completed her Masters Degree in Psychology in Education at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. Her focus was on Social Emotional Learning & Adult Education with a special interest in how leisure activities such as Sports & Fantasy Literature contribute to positive psychological outcomes.

SUNDAY

Eucatastrophe Room

Plans Within Plans: Introducing the Epigraphs of Dune Project

From novel to multiple movie adaptations, miniseries, games, and comics, Frank Herbert's Dune saga continues to capture imaginations across the globe. While the work can be read at surface level, peeling back the layers reveals a wealth of new insights into Herbert's world. In this panel discussion, we introduce our long-term collaborative project to provide a reader's commentary for Herbert's masterpiece, focused specifically on the novel's epigraphs. Epigraphs of Dune will highlight real-world influences, provide explanations of in-universe terminology for new readers, and present guiding questions on the thematic significance of the epigraphs for the overall narrative. Rather than considering each epigraph in isolation, we investigate the motives and biases Herbert built into Princess Irulan's viewpoint. As Irulan aptly notes, "a beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct." In this panel, we will analyze four epigraphs and outline the project's methods and goals, before inviting comments and questions from the audience.

Julian Barr completed his PhD in Classics at the University of Queensland. A novelist and academic, he teaches creative writing and literature classes in Signum University's adult education program.

Trevor Brierly has a background in literature with an MLIS from the University of Texas at Austin and a BA in English from George Mason University. He is co-editor of "Discovering Dune" from McFarland Press and has presented working papers about "Dune", "The Lord of the Rings", Shakespeare, and worldbuilding at academic conferences.

Lauren Petronaci obtained her double BA in Geography and Anthropology from the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs in 2009. Since then, she has been a railway tour guide, zoo tour guide, and for a month, she followed ring-tailed lemurs through the dwarf forest in Madagascar for lemur conservation (watch out, Dr. Kynes)!

Pat Lusk retired from financial services so that he could do more interesting things on a full-time basis. He has a BA in Mathematics from Vanderbilt University and is still trying to figure out what that has to do with Dune.

Lynne Darga double majored in Economics & Management and Literature at Albion College and earned an MBA from the University of Michigan. While working in automotive finance she furthers her passion for literary study through leadership on the board of a non-profit focused on mythopoeic literature and with regular work on the Sisyphean task of trying to finish an ever growing 'to read' list.

Singularity Room

The Resilience of Imagination and Imagining Resilience: Mental Health and Unchaperoned Experience in Children's Fantasy

A joke that floats around online goes something like this: "In old Disney movies, your parents are dead and you need to go on an adventure; in new Disney movies, your parents are alive and you have to deal with them." There is truth to both parts of the joke, both the decrease in absent parent tropes, and an increase in stories whose primary conflict involves the emotional and psychological challenges of dealing with an overbearing family, including "Encanto," "Luca," and "Inside Out." While this shift likely attends to and reflects concerns of a modern audience, it also recreates conditions in which individuals define themselves in increasingly stifling close quarters of family dynamics and less so in the broader world. This coincides with emerging evidence of a crisis of adolescence, in which rising rates of anxiety track alongside youths' diminished exposure to the world without parental oversight. My paper looks closely at the importance of unchaperoned experience in two dramatically different stories of childhood: Ursula Le Guin's fantasy novel, A Wizard of Earthsea and Cartoon Network's Halloween special, "Over the Garden Wall."

Justin Cosner earned his Ph.D. in English Literature studying fantasy and speculative literatures which explore themes of religion and secularity. He currently teaches at the University of Iowa where he has written about China Mieville, Nalo Hopkinson, Ursula Le Guin, and Philip K. Dick.

The Resilience of Imagination in Modern Academia: Tolkien as Master of the "Non-traditional Research Output" (NTRO)

Morale among academics, especially academics working within the Humanities, is very low and for many reasons: increased managerialism; students-as-consumers, culture wars; 'publish or perish'. There is a tendency to see the 20th century as a 'golden age' for the Humanities, where academics were free to let their imaginations run loose instead of responding to external pressures. Yet Tolkien's letters present us with a familiar reality: high teaching workloads; demands to publish; administrivia. Hardly the seed bed for creative thinking! Yet the evidence is clear that Tolkien continued to think and write imaginatively throughout and beyond his working career.

In Australian academia, the term 'non-Traditional Research Output', is used for works that are not published in peer-reviewed journals and scholarly publishers, but are nevertheless works of scholarship. This includes academics writing fiction that intersects with their scholarly expertise. It is well established that Tolkien's fictional writings are highly informed by his scholarly expertise in Anglo-Saxon and Germanic Philology (e.g. Shippey's 1982 'The Road to Middle-earth') . But there are other ways that Tolkien's fiction can be seen as academic scholarship.

In this paper I focus on the ways in which scholars themselves are represented in his fiction, from Pengolodh to Findegil, Eriol to Elrond, and how these served as an imaginiative outlet for Tolkien to reflect on the practice of scholarship, and how his persistence in this exploration over his academic career can serve as a morale-booster for the contemporary worker within the tertiary sector.

Ilana Mushin is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Queensland, Australia. She is still unsure whether she became a linguist because of Tolkien or whether she was drawn to the similar questions of the relationship between languages and cultures that Tolkien was also drawn to.

Heroes of Their Own Stories: Resilient Characters Imaginatively Interpret Their Own Lives As Story

Imagination has been described as the power to form mental images, either of things "not actually present" or even "not to be found in our primary world at all". But imagination isn't limited to dreaming up green suns or writing stories about unicorns. Imagination can also be the "organ of meaning", which forms judgments about our observations, helping us make sense of the world and allowing us to see connections between otherwise unrelated events.

This second kind of imagination can even involve conceiving of the events of one's life as a narrative, giving those experiences context and meaning. Life viewed as an unfolding story provides a more meaningful framework than the reductionist alternative: a series of random events, and then you die. Moreover, when the narratives we tell ourselves are linked to other larger stories, the context becomes weightier and the meaning deeper, giving us the courage to die bravely or to live tenaciously.

Imagination can impart a story-based sense of hope, which can lead to resilience, the ability to bear hardship and recover from loss. In many stories, we can see examples of characters whose own sense of imagination connects their experiences to stories told either to themselves or among groups at the communal or societal level. We will explore some of the narratives characters tell themselves in The Lord of the Rings, The Dark Crystal, and Fullmetal Alchemist. These self-told narratives give context and shape to their lives, but interestingly can engender in characters either hope or despair, leading to resilience or ruin.

Jason Troutman is a recently retired Air Force officer who has enjoyed spending a bit more time on amateur scholarship into Arda and other fictional worlds. He resides west of Boston with his wife and frequent collaborator Kerra Fletcher, as well as their two young hobbit-like children.

One of **Kerra Fletcher**'s favorite things is discovering that whatever movie/tv show/mini-series she's currently watching is actually based on a book. When she's not binging on stories in all their forms, she enjoys spending time with her partner in Mythmoot shenanigans, Jason Troutman, and visiting new museums with her two young kids.

Untangling the Pentangle: The Knighting of Sir Gawain

The more we delve into the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, rich with symbolism and nuance, the more it fascinates, as ingenious stories ever will. Among its more captivating features is a symbolic knighting that frames the story, enhancing its depth and relevance. My presentation will explore the details of this knighting–where and how it appears–and the moral struggle that occasions it, as well as its significance to the protagonist and to the story as a whole. With regard to this year's Mythmoot theme of "The Resilience of Imagination", my presentation will also reflect on Sir Gawain's excursion into Faerie as a way of confronting the inescapable realities of human frailty–particularly moral weakness and mortality–making imaginative use of fantasy to arm him–and us–against the very real flaws that are part of our human legacy.

Elizabeth Lyon is a geriatric MA student with Signum University who nevertheless dares hope that she will earn her degree before she departs the circles of this world. She is a Wisconsinite from the bones out, and (still) enjoys running, knitting, music, words, and–above all–basking in the reflected glory of her six amazing children.

Imagine Beowulf in a World of Runes

It is quite hard to convey the groundbreaking impact of everything I have uncovered in *Beowulf* from these last two years in 20 minutes. These nine quotes will give just a tantalizing morsel of what the world has never read nor said in over 1,000 years. The majority, if not most, of those troublesome Old English lines disappear into a more informed story and more breathtaking poetry.

Imagine for a moment that the voices of the past can speak today. What would they say? How would those voices from centuries gone, tell us about the time of Beowulf?

Imagine the Danish Coastguard:
"Do ye hear my horse?
And not a single thought? Afast! the ice in the Sun.
Best tell to the one steed in need: Where are you coming from?" (255-7)*

Or King Hrothgar:
"Sit now at Symbel. Undo a hall in need, with mead.
You may sink in glory with the Spear-men. So, thine spirit I will whet." (489-90)*

Perhaps you know of Queen Wynn?
"Her words were winsome. The Welsh one, Wynn, she went forth." (612)*

Even Grendel has a thought:

—"To Hel with men, with their iron."— (729)*

And Hunferth definitely does, when it comes to Beowulf:
"So in Hel, you shall suffer . . ."   [Beowulf]
"Do, Hail the Hero!"   [Hunferth interrupts]
". . . although your wit may be good."[Beowulf's reply] (588-9)*

You can hear the sailors talking amongst themselves:
"Hurry, to the oak on the sea."
                And they do whisper, "What of the fee?" (694)*

The poetry of the Narrator gets stronger:
—"Sleep ever into the night, with the ring of peace, right to the dawn."— (729)*

And what would the warrior, Beowulf, say to his men?
"For Hlín, she may not bend down to a hail of ice. Brave in battle then." (688)*

Would we ever hear about the gods?
                "May Odin, Father, All-Wielder,
with his messenger-runes, keep his war-horse home in its wick.
May Thor, with his ice in the sky, deliver thee." (316-8)*

You need not imagine anymore. For each of these quotes takes into account the letter runes. Always there. Hiding—in plain sight. All 393 of them in the first third of Beowulf. Imagine!

James H. Buckingham, a/k/a James the Howard of Buckingham, is a retired high school English teacher, who has spent two years translating the first third of "Beowulf." His groundbreaking translation, "The Runic Beowulf: Grendel, the Horse of Hel," is singular in taking "Beowulf" back to its original content.

Adventures in 8-bit Text: *The Hobbit* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

"Obviously, no small computer program can encompass the entire universe. What it can do, however, is simulate enough of the universe to appear more intelligent than it really is."
   -   Dave Lebling, co-creator of Zork

Text adventures were among the earliest forms of computer game. Such games immerse the player in a secondary world where they embark on some form of quest, usually involving the solution of a series of puzzles. Location descriptions and game status are conveyed purely through text output, while the player interacts with the world by typing text commands, often in the form of simple sentences such as "get key" or "go north".

The genre originated with the early giant mainframe and minicomputer systems of the 1960s and 1970s. Despite their size and bulk, these systems were nevertheless immensely limited when judged by today's standards. The emergence of home computers in the 1970s saw an even greater stranglehold on machine performance. Consequently, game designers and programmers were constantly contending with the issue of how to create increasingly sophisticated interactive worlds on machines with incredibly limited resources.

In the 1920s Ernest Hemingway coined a writing technique known as the "Iceberg Theory", a style whereby a skilful writer may omit certain details from a text yet still implicitly impart existence of those details to the reader: only the tip of the iceberg is visible but we know much more lies underneath.

This presentation examines how the early pioneers of text adventures employed similar artistry. Primarily I will draw from two early 1980s text adventures based on literary works that will be familiar to many of the Signum community: The Hobbit and The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. We will see how the application of iceberg-theory-like tricks and techniques enabled game designers to impart a far greater impression of richness to their secondary worlds than was actually present in the code, and thereby conjure a far more captivating player experience.

Phil Knight is from Wolverhampton in the UK. He obtained an MA in Language and Literature with Signum University in 2022 and is currently studying for a PhD in Scandinavian Studies with The University of Aberdeen where he is creating a digital edition of the exempla in the AM 657 a-b 4o manuscript.