

Mythlore Referee Guidelines

Mythlore referees should be familiar with the journal's statement of editorial purpose (reproduced below). Papers which you receive have already been evaluated by the editor (or editors, in the case of a special issue) and should *minimally* meet these guidelines and standards, but if you feel they do not, please do not refrain from saying so—that's why we have referees and not just an editor. You know more about your own specialty than I do, so something that looks new and original to me may already be well-ploughed ground in your area of expertise.

If you disagree with what an author says, that does not necessarily mean the paper should be rejected; interpretations may vary (though facts should all be correct), and disagreements can be fruitful.

However, if you find yourself saying "So what?" after reading a paper, then it is probably not original enough for our journal.

It's okay to spend no more than an hour reading the paper and writing your report, if that's all the time you can give!

Referees are expected to comment on the following:

- Originality of author's ideas
- Thoroughness of author's research (please suggest specific additional resources if needed)
- Quality of writing (include suggestions for improvement)

Referees should make one of the following recommendations:

- Reject (any suggestions that might help the author are welcome).
- Suggest a major rewrite and resubmission.
 - Major rewrites include things like sharpening or changing focus, reducing or increasing length, restructuring, addressing major problems of logic or major errors, or working in a large number of additional sources. Revise-and-resubmit should *only* be suggested if you feel the author's central thesis has merit and will be worth the work of revision. When a revision arrives, I can check in with you and see if you want to read the new version or I can pass it on to someone else.
- Publish contingent on a minor rewrite.
 - Minor rewrites include things like stylistic revisions, working in another minor source or two, addressing specific minor quibbles that can be answered in a sentence or paragraph, or correcting facts that are not essential to the central argument. Papers with minor rewrites do not go back to a referee for a second round of review.
- Publish pretty much as is (rare, but delightful when it happens!)
 - Referees are not expected to proofread, but it is always helpful to have another eye look at things—so if you are recommending the paper for publication and spot a typo I might miss, please note it down.

Your comments may be as long as you feel necessary to truly evaluate the paper. But I am well aware that all of us have very limited time these days, especially for unpaid volunteer work like refereeing, so a short report of just a paragraph is fine. Referees should try to get back to me with a verdict within one month. If you feel you cannot, or if you are working on it and need more time, please let me know as soon as possible. The journal platform will send frequent automated reminders of deadlines.

Our referee practice is “double-anonymized” —you do not know the name of the author of the paper, and they will not know your name. All or part of your critique will be sent to the author, but your name will be removed from the report. Even though your name will be withheld from the author, please be kind and professional! The primary purpose of the referee process is to ensure the best quality content for the journal, but the secondary purpose is to help the author improve their work and encourage them to become a better scholar in the long run, thus benefiting the field as a whole. Your criticisms should be constructive, not destructive.

Referee reports are handled through the platform at <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/>, which will be how you are given access to the anonymized paper to download in PDF format. If you’d prefer a Word document to work with, please contact the editor directly at mythlore@mythsoc.org. If you have trouble uploading your report, I CAN copy and paste it from an email to me at mythlore@mythsoc.org.

The submission you have received is confidential. Please do not share it with anyone, and if you keep a copy for your own information after you send in your evaluation, please keep it confidential.

Since our peer-review system is double-anonymized, we no longer thank referees by name in each issue’s editorial. The system will send you an automated letter of thanks for your files, but if you feel that something more personal would be helpful for a report to your institution regarding your scholarly or service activities, please contact the editor directly at mythlore@mythsoc.org.

MYTHLORE’S STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the Mythopoeic Society is “promoting the study, discussion, and enjoyment of fantastic and mythic literature.” *Mythlore* contributes to this mission as the scholarly journal of the society.

Our audience is widely-read and well educated, but not necessarily academic. Writing should therefore be clear, accessible, and jargon-free. Terms and concepts that might be unfamiliar to a non-academic audience should be concisely and unobtrusively explained.

Our subtitle is “A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature.”

What exactly is “mythopoeic literature”?

It is literature that creates a new and transformative mythology, or incorporates and transforms existing mythological material. Transformation is the key—mere static reference to mythological elements, invented or pre-existing, is not enough. The mythological elements must be of sufficient importance in the work to influence the spiritual, moral, and/or creative lives of

the characters, and must reflect and support the author's underlying themes. This type of work, at its best, should also inspire the reader to examine the importance of mythology in his or her own spiritual, moral, and creative development.

In addition to the obvious (criticism of mythopoeic literature by our major authors or any other author, reconsiderations of authors not normally considered mythopoeic, influence of mythopoeic authors on other writers and vice versa, etc.), some of the other kinds of papers *Mythlore* publishes include:

- Studies of other writings by our three key authors and other writers of mythopoeic literature, not all of which are mythopoeic fiction. Papers of this sort should address the relation of these other writings to the author's fiction and seek to provide keys for understanding it. For example, a study of Lewis's theological writings should consider how his theology is manifested in his fiction.
- Study of the sources incorporated in mythopoeic fiction. Again, these studies should provide us with keys to understanding mythopoeic fiction and should not simply list sources. For example, a study of echoes of *Beowulf* in Tolkien's work should demonstrate how the elements used contributed to Tolkien's themes, and how and why he transformed them in his fiction.
- Psychological interpretations of mythological symbol-systems in mythopoeic fiction and its sources in mythology and folklore. We tend towards Campbell and Jung rather than Freud; archetypes and the hero-journey rather than pathologies.
- Studies of other writers considered Inklings, Inklings-related, Inklings-influenced, or influences on the Inklings, particularly if similar themes and concerns appear in their work. For example, while Dorothy L. Sayers was not formally an Inklings, nor did she write fantasy, her friendship with several Inklings and her themes and theology are sufficiently in tune with those of our primary authors that she is a frequent subject of *Mythlore* papers.

We do NOT publish:

- Pure "Middle-earth studies" and the like. Articles which take as a premise that the mythopoeic creation of any author is real, or that fail to relate their work to the "mundane world."
- Specialized studies of Tolkien's invented languages. Other journals cover this area admirably, particularly those published by our society's special interest group The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship (<http://www.elvish.org/>).
- Fiction, poetry, art, fan fiction. (All but fan fiction may be submitted to our sister publication *Mythic Circle*. We do sometimes reproduce artwork from earlier issues of *Mythlore*.)
- Fiction book reviews, except for new editions of works or newly published works by Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams. Film reviews except for documentaries about our three major authors. (Fiction and feature film reviews may be submitted to our sister publication *Mythprint*.)
- Articles which simply list the mythical references in any given work.
- Evangelization. Religion and myth are intertwined expressions of the same impulse in humankind; therefore, it is inevitable that the religious views of an essayist may at times

be discernible in a paper. However, keep in mind that our audience is very broadly ecumenical, and that any denigration, explicit or implied, of another's religion or lack of it is against our editorial policies.

We strive for what our society's founder, Glen GoodKnight, called "the Middle Way" (see his editorials <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol16/iss3/5/> and <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol16/iss4/6/>): neither denying the religious beliefs and purposes of our three core authors, nor serving as an organization seeking to propagate those beliefs; and while urging the importance and relevance of our central three authors, avoiding the trap of becoming a "cult of personality" for any one of them.

FURTHER SUGGESTED READINGS ON THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

New to being a referee? Interested in seeing what academics are currently thinking about peer review? Want to know about the challenges journals face in light of "The Great Resignation" and the increasing adjunctification of academia?

"How to Be a Good Peer Reviewer":

<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/09/17/how-to-be-a-good-peer-reviewer/?informz=1>

"The Art of Peer Reviewing and Why it Matters":

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2014/09/15/essay-art-peer-reviewing-and-why-it-matters-academic-careers>

"Quality is Multi-Dimensional":

<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/09/16/quality-is-multi-dimensional-how-many-ways-can-you-define-quality-in-peer-review/?informz=1>

"Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices":

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lZmZqeNNnYfYgmTKSbL2ijYbR4OMovv6A-bDwJRnwx8/edit>

"Has Peer Review Created a Toxic Culture in Academia? Moving from 'Battering' to 'Bettering' in the Review of Academic Research":

https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2022/08/16/guest-post-has-peer-review-created-a-toxic-culture-in-academia-moving-from-battering-to-bettering-in-the-review-of-academic-research/?informz=1&nbd=b0040bc8-5e2a-4803-b470-24936c7c8855&nbd_source=informz

Peer Review Terminology Standardization:

<https://www.niso.org/standards-committees/peer-review-terminology>