

20th Annual UVM Tolkien Conference
University of Vermont
April 13th 2024
Lafayette L207

The Psychologies of Middle-earth



Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sara Brown

Dr Sara Brown lives in North Wales and is Chair of the Language & Literature faculty at Signum University. She completed her Ph.D. in Literature at Salford University in 2013 with a thesis that explores the way in which Tolkien was responding to the anxieties of the post-war world in the mid twentieth century, drawing on (amongst others) the theories of Julia Kristeva and Donna Haraway.

Sara has been with Signum since 2012 and has taught on courses with Corey Olsen, Verlyn Flieger, Dimitra Fimi, Robin Reid, Doug Anderson, Amy Sturgis, and John Garth. Sara has also taught her own 12-week lecture series entitled ‘Tolkien in Context: Middle-earth as a Roadmap to Twentieth-Century Anxieties’, which examines Tolkien’s writing as a response to modernity, and a second course on ‘Race, Gender, and the Other in Tolkien’s Work’ in collaboration with Dr Christopher Vaccaro. She also teaches on Signum’s Adult Continuing Education courses, primarily offering modules on different aspects of Tolkien’s writing.

Sara has given several lectures at various conferences on the topics of Tolkien, fantasy fiction, and fandom, and is regularly seen at Tolkien Society events in the UK. She currently serves on the editorial board of *The Mallorn*, the academic journal of the Tolkien Society and co-hosts on podcasts such as *The Tolkien Experience*, *Rings of Power Wrap-Up*, and *The Prancing Pony*. Her essay on an alchemical reading of the Ring of Power won the Tolkien Society Award for best article in 2023, and she is currently working on a number of other projects for publication, including ‘Mother or Other: Tolkien’s ‘Monstrous-Feminine’ Shelob’ in *We Could Do With a Bit More Queerness in These Parts: Queer Readings of JRR Tolkien’s Work* ed. Robin Reid, Stephen Yandell, and Christopher Vaccaro (forthcoming); ‘Taking Care of the Land: Stewardship in Tolkien’s Middle-earth’ in *Gardeners of the Galaxies* ed. Brenton Dickieson and Sorina Higgins (forthcoming); ‘Remembering and Forgetting: National Identity Construction in Tolkien’s Middle-earth’ in *Tolkien and the Medieval Poets* ed. Jane Beal (forthcoming).

Continental Breakfast

8:00am

Session 1

8:30-9:45am

Moderator: Christopher Vaccaro (University of Vermont)

Presenters:

“Ponying Up: Examining the Role of Bill and Human-Animal Bonds in *The Lord of the Rings*”
Brendan Anderson (Independent Scholar) [IP]

“Love Sickness in Middle-earth”
Giovanni Carmine Costabile (Friedrich Schiller University,
Jena) [VIRTUAL]

“Tolkien and the Moral Function of Language”
Mareike Huber (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität) [VIRTUAL]

Session 2

9:45-11am

Moderator: Christopher Vaccaro (University of Vermont)

Presenters:

“The Mariner and his Astronomer Father: Victorian Masculinities in Númenor”
Kristine Larsen (Central Connecticut State University) [IP]

“Will you still love me when I’m no longer Jung and beautiful: Divorcing Carl Jung, Melanie Rawls, and J.R.R. Tolkien”
Clare Moore (University of Glasgow) [VIRTUAL]

“Perceiving the Perceiver: ‘Viewing’ Sauron Through the Gestalt Theory of Perception”
Cameron Bourquein (Independent Scholar) [VIRTUAL]

Session 3

11am – 12:15

Moderator: Jamie Williamson (University of Vermont)

Presenters:

“Grief, Grieving, and Permission to Mourn in the *Quenta Silmarillion*”
Dawn Walls-Thumma [VIRTUAL]

“Allusion, Ambiguity, and the Search for an Ending: Reading Tolkien’s ‘The Homecoming’”
Anna Smol (Mount Saint Vincent University) [VIRTUAL]

Harry Driscoll (University of Vermont) [IP]

Lunch Break

12:15-1pm

Keynote Speaker: 1pm-1:50pm

“Restless and uneasy . . . thin and stretched”: The Ring, The Ringbearers, and the Bodies in Psychological Crisis in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Sara Brown (Signum University) [IP]

Brief Break 1:50-2pm

Session 4

2 -3:15pm

Moderator: Kristine Larsen (Central Connecticut State University)

Presenters:

“Tolkien’s concept of *Gift of Death*”

Ali Mirzabayati [VIRTUAL]

“Becoming Orcish: On the Inner-Worldly Psychological Sources of Shadow in Tolkien’s Abandoned Novel ‘The New Shadow’”

Martin Hauberg-Lund Laugesen and Bo Kampmann Walther [VIRTUAL]

“Old and Angry: The Psychology of Male Rage in Tolkien’s Legendarium, with Special Attention to Gandalf”

Nicholas Birns (New York University) [IP]

The Orphaned Bolg: Examining Orkish Psychology”

Robert T Tally, Jr. (Texas State University) [VIRTUAL]

Afternoon Break

3:15 -3:30pm Coffee, tea, snacks

Session 5:

3:30pm – 4:45pm

Moderator: Chris Vaccaro (University of Vermont)

Presenters:

“Tolkien and Attachment Theory: A Theory to Bind Them All?”

Lélie Bremont (La Sorbonne Université, Paris) [VIRTUAL]

“Victoria Goddard’s Nine World Series: Interleaving and Resonating with J.R.R. Tolkien’s Mythopoeic Worldbuilding”

Robin Anne Reid (Emerita) [VIRTUAL]

Psychologies in Middle-earth

Jamie Williamson (University of Vermont) [IP]

Tolkien at UVM, 2025

Saturday, April 5th

Theme: Tolkien and War

Keynote Speaker: John Garth

John Garth (Independent Scholar)

Tolkien at UVM, 2026

Saturday, April 4th

Theme: Tolkien and the Medieval

Keynote Speaker: Anna Smol (Mount

Saint Vincent University)

This year’s conference would not happen without the support of the UVM Humanity’s Center, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Psychology Department, and the Department of English.