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Shieldmaiden

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Shieldmaiden

Abstract

"Shieldmaiden" is a poem that examines J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings series from a feminist perspective, focusing on the character of Éowyn and her influence on female readers of Tolkien's novels.

Keywords

creative writing, poetry, Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien, Éowyn, science fiction

Disciplines

Creative Writing | English Language and Literature | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Film and Media Studies | Poetry

Comments

This poem was written for Professor Nadine Meyer's *English 302: New Poems, New Poets* course, Fall 2013.

Shieldmaiden

When the nine are chosen,
I learn that this is not an adventure for women.
It's a truth that emerges, vivid and bright, between black lines of text—
like the inscription on a ring, rippling into existence
after a kiss from lips of flame.
Somehow, I'd never noticed it before—
this biting admission from my hero
that I was not made to be a heroine.

A teaspoon of faith flickers back to life when I meet *her,*
she who is *no living man.*
I want to don her armor, carry her sword,
feel my hair stream gold and glittery
against the red-and-black of the battlefield.

She joins the surge of defenders,
visor low to drown her face in shadow.
Mine is thrust to the sun,
chin aiming high, unapologetic.
I face no witches or kings, as she does,
but I'm satisfied with small victories
and small miracles—
like the day that I walk into my first
college-level computer science course
and see three female faces peering back at me,
three more unexpected anchors of hope.

When she faces her first and final challenge,
I find myself there in her world,
a dark shape towering over us, and then crumbling,
oddly vulnerable under her hand. I imagine her
turning to me, face finally bathed in light,
warm blood smeared across her cheek.
I imagine she half smiles, half gasps with relief,
as she says to me,
now you defeat yours.

There's no time to reply,
because I've known all along that

I'm not standing in Pelennor Fields but sitting in my room.
And yet, when the sky darkens and the wind picks up,
I swear I hear her whispered name through my window:
Éowyn, Éowyn,
as if this time, she's being called into my world,
two women walking shoulder-to-shoulder
through a man's world.