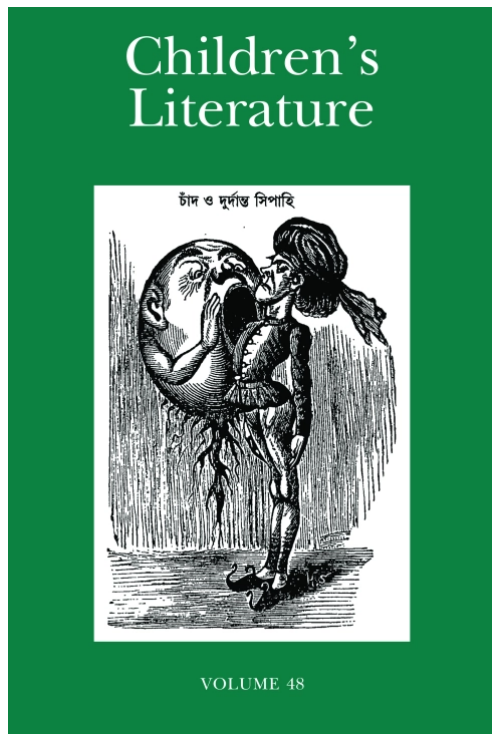


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## UT AMS PhD Student Whitney S. May Published in Children's Literature by American Studies



Congratulations are in order for UT AMS PhD student Whitney S. May whose article **"The Lioness and the Protector: (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/756798)The (Post)Feminist Dialogic of Tamora Pierce's Lady Knights," (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/756798)** was recently published Volume 48 of Children's Literature. Whitney spoke to us about the inspiration for the article and the urgency of critical work on young adult fantasy. Read on!

**Whitney:** I'm especially pleased with how this article turned out because it was one of those rare labors of so much love that they never actually manage to feel much like labor at all. As a passionate fan of Tamora Pierce's young-adult fantasy novels since I was a child, I've read all of her books several times over. This project on feminist dialogue in Pierce's work emerged when I noticed that I always found myself getting choked up when I read a specific conversation between two women in one of her novels, *Squire* from *The Protector of the Small* quartet. I followed that observation into an early draft of this research, which was

presented at the Mythopoeic Society's 2016 conference in San Antonio, TX. The powerful response I received during and after that talk's Q&A session made me realize that many women who read Pierce's fantasy felt the same way when reading the same scene, and many were keen to read research that might put into clearer words why that might be.

This article pulls back the focus on the conversation in that scene, using it as a model by which to interpret the broader dialogical interventions at play between not just the two conversing characters in that moment, but between their entire respective quartets as these reflect Pierce's broader, multidimensional feminist dialogic that observes the ideological shifts in feminism which occurred between the quartets' respective eras of publication. Ultimately, the article finds that, "[r]eflecting the self-critical relationship of postfeminism to previous feminisms, *The Protector of the Small* (1999-2002) critiques and engages the problems of *The Song of the Lioness* (1983-88) and generates a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the feminism as we have known it, as well as a vision of what it might look like in the future. In so doing, Pierce offers, by way of her fantastic postfeminist dialogic, a successful model of how to diligently engage with the past and responsibly project its ideological lessons into a critical, better-equipped future" (52-53).

As we have seen in global headlines just this month, authors of fantasy for young adults are uniquely positioned to not just reflect, but encourage the momentums of social change—or not. This article details one of the many ways in which Pierce's feminist fantasy has taken great care to hold itself

accountable to its readers by not merely recognizing weaknesses when they appear, but actively seeking to correct them. In so doing, her work encourages feminists across almost five decades to do the same.

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