

mythprint

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL. 47 NO. 3

MARCH 2010

WHOLE NO. 332



mythprint

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society
VOL. 47 NO. 3 MARCH 2010 WHOLE NO. 332

Table of Contents

Features:

Cover Art: *Melkor*, by Jef Murray. © Jef Murray.
www.jefmurray.com

Editorial..... 3

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection at
Texas A&M University. By Joe R. Christopher..... 3

Selected Upcoming Events..... 5

Discussion Groups..... 6-7

The Mythic Circle: Call for Submissions 10

Reviews:

Elizabeth Whittingham. *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology:
A Study of The History of Middle-earth*. Reviewed by
Douglas C. Kane 8

Owen Barfield. *Night Operation*. Reviewed by
Jason Fisher 9

Ursula K. Le Guin. *Cheek by Jowl*. Reviewed by
David Bratman 11

Reviews, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

Jason Fisher
Editor, *Mythprint*
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
mythprint@mythsoc.org

Send other Correspondence to:

Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary
correspondence@mythsoc.org

Deadlines for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1st of the preceding month.

The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore*: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and *Mythopoeic Literature* (subscription \$25/year for U.S. Society members) and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. (\$8/issue for U.S. addresses). Subscriptions and back issues of Society publications may be purchased directly through our web site (using PayPal or Discover card), or you may contact:

Mythopoeic Society Orders Department

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Visit the Mythopoeic Society on the web at www.mythsoc.org.

Mythprint is the monthly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. To promote these interests, the Society publishes three magazines, maintains a World Wide Web site, and sponsors the annual Mythopoeic Conference and awards for fiction and scholarship, as well as local and written discussion groups.

Membership and Subscriptions

Mythopoeic Society membership: \$12/year includes an electronic subscription and \$25/year includes a paper subscription to *Mythprint*; either entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

Postage and Non-member Subscription Rate

	Members	Institutions/Non-members
First Class U.S.	Included	\$25/year
Canada/Mexico (air)	+ \$7/year for postage	\$32/year
Rest of world (air)	+ \$16/year for postage	\$41/year

The number in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label is the "Whole Number" of the last issue of your subscription. Checks should be made out to the Mythopoeic Society. Foreign orders should use U.S. funds if possible; otherwise add 15% to the current exchange rate. Back issues of *Mythprint* are available for \$1 each (U.S. postage included.)

ISSN 0146-9347, © 2010 Mythopoeic Society

EDITORIAL

Many *Mythprint* readers already know me, and I am fortunate enough to count many of you among my close personal friends. But for those readers who do not know me, this seemed an appropriate moment to introduce myself as your new editor. By profession, I am a computer programmer in Dallas, Texas. By passion (and sometimes profession), I am a scholar, writer, reader, and editor. My interests range widely, not just among our beloved Inklings, but also reaching into language, literature, and history (particularly medieval), among many other subjects. I write a blog, *Lingwë – Musings of a Fish*, dealing mainly with J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S Lewis, and other fantasy authors on the one hand, and with matters of philology and linguistics on the other (very often overlapping). I welcome visitors and comments, and you can reach me there as well as through *Mythprint*. My previous experience as an editor includes six years at the helm of two computer-related publications, *Active Server Developer's Journal* and *SQL Server Solutions*. Both are now defunct – and no, that was not my doing! I have also published an embarrassingly large number of articles on computer-related subjects.

More to the point of the shared interests of *Mythprint* readers, I have written many essays, encyclopedia entries, and book reviews on the Inklings (a number of them appearing in these very pages), as well as proofread and edited those of many friends and colleagues. I hope to be able to introduce new features, more interesting design elements, and more varied content into *Mythprint* in the coming months, and I invite all of you to drop me a line with any ideas you might have. You will have noticed one conspicuous change already: more color! My personal thanks to Jef Murray for this wonderful cover image of Melkor.

And so, it is with much humility that I accept the mantle of leadership for *Mythprint*, a journal whose impressive forty-year lifespan matches my own almost exactly. Please don't hesitate to let me know when you like what I'm doing as well as when you don't, and I encourage readers to contact me about contributing to the newsletter as well.

Jason Fisher

Editor, *Mythprint*
mythprint@mythsoc.org



2010 SUMMER SEMINARS

Weeks I-II: Dr. Michael MacDonald

I: C.S. Lewis & the Quest for the Permanent Things

II: C.S. Lewis & the Tantalizing Romance in Christianity & Art

Week III: Dr. Jerry Root

Topic to be announced

For more information on Summer Seminars of the C.S. Lewis Foundation, visit their website:



The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection at Texas A&M University. By Joe R. Christopher.

Various dates are significant here. By 1968 a student had given the Texas A&M University Library about a shelf and half of volumes from the Science Fiction Book Club. In 1970 Hal W. Hall joined the library staff as a serials librarian—and the collecting began, with approval of the English Department and the College of Engineering, and, of course, the Director of the Library. In 1974 a “Formal Presentation” of the Collection was made, it then being of a respectable size. The title of the booklet issued then was *Announcing the Future*. I attended that meeting, about thirty-six years ago, and I got to look at the rows of books on the shelves behind the area for researchers. I remember one librarian saying to me that the cost was not great to become fairly complete in science-fiction holdings (but the number of books issued has tended to go up since then). I wrote an account of the meeting for a fanzine called *Notes from the Chemistry Department*.

This year, on 12 March, a celebration of the Collection was held in the Cushing Library. James Gunn, who spoke at the formal opening, spoke again. (His speech was printed ahead of time in the soft-cover *One Hundred Years Hence: Science Fiction and Fantasy at Texas A&M*, the “catalogue” that was given out at the meeting.) Elizabeth Moon, a Texas-born SF author (and whose papers are collected at A&M), gave an autobiographical talk, with a different, historical paper about SF and Texas being printed in the catalogue. Michael Moorcock, whose later papers also are collected there, was present but did not speak.

Display cases stressed various areas of the Collection, which were also stressed in the chapters of *One Hundred Years Hence*. For example, one long-time member of the Mythopoeic Society, Ruth Berman, is listed as the editor of *Inside Star Trek*, No. 6 (December 1968), on p. 71 of the catalogue. The cover of that issue is reproduced, and the annotation speaks of *Star Trek's* "recent cancellation"—that's the TV series, not the fanzine. (An introduction to *Star Trek* sketches the varied appearances of that franchise, while the following three pages show some of the related publications and toys [70-72].)

In the catalogue appear many other items of interest: Hal Hall's "The Origin of a Collection" (18-19), with the names of a number of people involved, for example, and chapters—usually of two pages, with illustrations of manuscripts, book covers, or other photographs: chapters like those on Andre Norton (42-43), on Michael Moorcock (48-49), on Texas in SF (54-56), on George R. R. Martin (60-63), on UFOs (67-69), and twin chapters on books being made into movies (32-33) and movies into books, including in the latter *Metropolis* and *King Kong*—far before all the *Star Trek* novels (34-35). So far as is indicated, the Library collects only the books of these book-movies relationships.

Thus far the emphasis seems to be on SF more than on fantasy, and the engineering emphases at A&M meant that SF *was* the emphasis at first. (*Announcing the Future* spoke just of "the Science Fiction Research Collection," but the essays on the holdings mentioned fantasy among the magazines—*Weird Tales*—and among the books, including the two authors to follow here.) Thus, both at first and presently, the fantasy emphasis appears. For example, as might be expected, a chapter is published on Robert E. Howard (46-47), a Texas author, with the reproduction of a 1924 letter in rhyme. And of special interest to the Mythopoeic Society is a page in the catalogue on J. R. R. Tolkien (77). It reproduces a letter to Moira Sayer (addressed as "Mrs. Sayer") of 10 August 1952 (Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 387—from a Christie's listing). Tolkien thanks her for her invitation to come for a visit—and, in passing, compares himself to a hobbit. This is a two-page note as printed in the catalogue, of which only the first page is in the display case. But the display case also has a second letter, not in the catalogue, of 30 April 1954 to "Unwin," thanking him for forwarding a positive discussion of *The Lord of the Rings*: Tolkien says it helped with the "despondency" that had settled on him in 1953. (The listing by Scull and Hammond is brief—*Chronology*, 429—but it does clarify that the Unwin being addressed is Sir Stanley, not Rayner.)

Of course, the Collection has various books by Tolkien. The catalogue mentions holding the first edition of *The Lord of the Rings* and the Ace edition. (A copy of the Ace edition of *The Fellowship of the Rings* was in the display case.) In *Announcing the Future*, the copy of *The Lord of the Rings* listed in its selected titles is the first American edition, so the Collection has moved up to the absolute first. But what may interest the linguists among us is that the catalogue says, "A small collection from the author's library, consisting of German linguistic books signed by Tolkien, with several pages of notes in his hand, are also part of the repository." The account in the display case is more specific: it says the Collection has "sixteen monograph texts and half a dozen sheets of notes which [Tolkien] probably used as bookmarks." The books were published from 1881 to 1937, and some of the books have dates in them which are presumably the dates of purchase. On display was *Die Enforschung der indogermanischen* (no author listed; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1927); it was open to the front endpapers where Tolkien had signed it with what looked like a soft blue pencil on the free endpaper. One of the pages of notes was also on display, browned on the edges. Probably it referred to the book on display since "1927" appeared at one point on the page. (Someday there will be a scholarly essay on "Tolkien and the Indo-European Language" based primarily on that one book and Tolkien's notes.)

Someday there will be a scholarly essay on "Tolkien and the Indo-European Language" based primarily on that one book and Tolkien's notes.

The Celebration was fun, making a pleasant afternoon. A substantial number of SF fans were there, some of them members of the Cepheid Variable, the campus SF club. After the talks, cookies and punch were served on the first floor. (The displays and the talks were on the second.) Some of the students competed in identifying SF-movie music being played in the background.

Since 2001 (an appropriate date!), Hall has been Curator of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection, but he is retiring this August. Luckily he will continue to compile the *Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database* <<http://libraryasp.tamu.edu/cushing/sffrd>>. But this display and catalogue, this speechifying and socializing, was a good way to celebrate his work in the field—not that anyone said that was the major purpose of the Celebration. But I'd like to believe it was. 🍷

SELECTED UPCOMING EVENTS



C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth. April 9-10, 2010. Oklahoma City University.



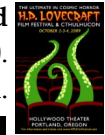
Oxonmoot 2010. September 24-26, 2010. Annual meeting of the Tolkien Society. Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.



45th International Congress on Medieval Studies. May 13-16, 2010. Kalamazoo, Michigan.



H.P. Lovecraft Film Festival and CthulhuCon. October 1-3, 2010. Hollywood Theatre, Portland, Oregon.



Baycon 2010. May 28-31, 2010. Hyatt Regency, Santa Clara CA.



Omentielva Cantea: The Fourth International Conference on Tolkien's Invented Languages. August 11-14, 2011. Universidad



Politécnica de Valencia, Spain.



Infinitus Harry Potter Fan Conference. July 15-18, 2010. Orlando, Florida.



The Return of the Ring: Sponsored by the Tolkien Society. Loughborough University (England), August 16-20, 2012. .



Comic-Con 2010. July 22-25, 2010. San Diego Convention Center.



Confluence 2010. The 22nd Annual Literary Sci-Fi Convention in Pittsburgh. July 23-25, 2010. Doubletree Hotel, Pittsburgh Airport.



Edge of the Wild Tolkien Art Exhibition. August 13-16, 2010. Redesdale Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh, England. Search on



Annual Convention of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society. August 13-16, 2010. University of Nottingham.



Festival in the Shire: August 13-15, 2010. Conference, Collector's Exposition, and Festival. Y Plas, Machynlleth, Wales.



Coming Soon in Mythprint

- A scholar-in-residence report from the Kilns
- Reviews of *Tolkien and Shakespeare, Black and White Ogre Country*, and other new Inklings titles
- Reviews of *Inkheart* and other films
- Conference reports from Oklahoma and Vermont
- News, events, and announcements

IF YOU HAVE NEWS TO SHARE OR WOULD LIKE TO WRITE A BOOK OR FILM REVIEW, THE EDITOR WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Groups

The Mythopoeic Society has members throughout the U.S. and in several foreign countries; the lucky ones are able to find other people interested in the Inklings, myth, and fantasy literature close enough geographically to meet on a regular basis. The Society sponsors Discussion Groups in several different states in the U.S., with a number of additional groups in the process of forming and active.

Groups are listed as **Active** or **Inactive**. Groups that wish to be listed in the Active category should regularly update the Secretary with their meeting and discussion plans. Groups are also encouraged to share reports of their activities with the Secretary for inclusion in *Myth-print*.

Groups that wish to become active should contact the Secretary and inform her of their first meeting, topic, time, location and contact person. Groups that have not yet chosen to become Chartered, or those who are interested in creating a new Mythopoeic Society-sponsored discussion or special interest group, please complete our group charter form at <http://www.mythsoc.org>.

Marion VanLoo
Membership & Discussion Group Secretary

memberships@mythsoc.org

Active Groups

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles/Pasadena: *Mydgard*

Lee Speth,

San Francisco Bay Area: *Khazad-dum*

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

March 14, 2010: *The Knights of the Cornerstone*, by James Blaylock. In Saratoga, CA; contact Edith for more info. Time TBA

June 13: *Earthquake Weather*, by Tim Powers. At Edith and Amy's at 2:00 PM.

Sept 12: *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrun*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. Contact Edith for location. 2:00 PM.

Dec. 4: The Annual Reading and Eating Meeting. At Edith and Amy's at 6:00 PM.

COLORADO

Denver area: *Fanuidhol* ("Cloudy Head")

Patricia Yarrow,

March 14: *Ink and Steel* by Elizabeth Bear.

April 11: Movie day: Neil Gaiman's *MirrorMask*

May 16: Game day: we'll be looking at, and possibly trying, board games with fantasy themes, particularly those inspired by *The Lord of the Rings*

June 13: Mythopoeic Award nominees (if the list is out) or recent fantasy

July 11: Mythopoeic Award nominees

Aug. 15: *Coyote Road: Trickster Tales* (anthology) edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling

Sept. 12: Classic fantasy: *The King of Elfland's Daughter* by Lord Dunsany

Oct. 10: Scholarly work: *The Owl, the Raven and the Dove* by G. Ronald Murphy

Nov. 7: *Storied Treasure* by Bailey Phelps

Dec. 12: recent works by Terry Pratchett

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington & Suburbs: *Knossos*

Mimi Stevens,

March 19: *In the Land of Invented Languages* by Arika Okrent. At Brent's, 16116 Jerald Rd, Laurel, MD finnmaccool@his.com

April 16: *Coyote Blue* by Christopher Moore. At Mimi's,

HAWAII

Oahu: *Sammath Naur*

Steve Brown,

Or, Ken Burtress- email:

March 21: *Mutant Messages Down Under*, by Marlo Morgan.

April 18: *Lavinia*, by Ursula K LeGuin

May 22: Topic: Ghosts

June 20: *The Magician*, by Lev Grossman

July 18: *The Lost Symbol*, by Dan Brown

August 21: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, by Betty Smith

Sept. 18: *Garlic and Sapphires*, by Ruth Reichl

Oct. 16: *A Game of Thrones*, by George R.R. Martin

Nov. 13: *South of Skye*, by Steven Goldsberry.

IOWA

Decorah: *Alfheim*

Doug Rossman,

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: *Rivendell*

David Lenander,

TBA: *Thirteenth Child*, by Patricia Wrede.

TBA: *The Magician's Book*, by Laura Miller.

TBA: *Iolanthe*, by Gilbert and Sullivan

NEVADA

Reno: *Crickhollow*

Joanne Burnett,

Crickhollow

March: *Pandemonium*, by Daryl Gregory

April: *Lavinia*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

May: *The Bell at Sealey Head*, by Patricia McKillip

OREGON

Portland: *Bywater Inklings*

Gary Lundquist,

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh: *Fantasy Studies Fellowship*

Lori Campbell,

WASHINGTON

Seattle: *Mithlond*

John D Rateliff,

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: *The Burrahobbits*

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]

Note: *Burrahobbits* is currently full to overflowing with members. If you live in the Milwaukee area and would like to be a part of a discussion group, why not start your own? Contact the Discussion Group Secretary for more details.

Inactive/Prospective Groups

CALIFORNIA

Oakland: *C.S. Lewis Society of California*

David J. Theroux, [REDACTED]

FLORIDA

Tampa Bay: *Hobbiton*

Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]

North Central Florida: *Eryn Galen*

B.L. McCauley, [REDACTED]

ILLINOIS

Peoria: *The Far Westfarthing smial*

Mike Foster, [REDACTED]

INDIANA

Central Indiana: *Cerin Amroth*

Ellen Denham, [REDACTED]

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: *Roke*

Sally Budd, [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor area: *Galadhremmin-Ennorath*

Dave Lovelace, [REDACTED]

MISSOURI

St. Louis: *The Khazad*

Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell, [REDACTED]

St. Louis: *Imladris*

Tonia O'Neal, The Tolkien Adventure Community, [REDACTED]

NEW YORK

New York: *Heren Istarion*

(The New York Tolkien Society)

Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke, The New York Tolkien Society, [REDACTED]

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte: *The Carolina Tolkien Society*

Matt & Renita Peeler, [REDACTED]

OHIO

Akron:

David Staley, [REDACTED]

OREGON

Mid-Willamette Valley Area

Donovan Mattole, [REDACTED]

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster Area: *C.S. Lewis and Friends*

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: *The Columbia C.S. Lewis Society*

Nina Fowler, [REDACTED]

Special Interest Group

The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Newsletter, Vinyar Tengwar. Journal, *Parma Eldalamberon*: Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]

Active Correspondence Groups

Once Upon A Time (children's fantasy)

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]

Correspondence circular. Issues come out every other month, on the even numbered months. Our membership is small; we would welcome new members. Interested people can contact Laura for a sample issue.

Online Discussion Groups

Mythsoc Announcements

Society announcements

Sign up: [REDACTED]

or contact Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED]

Mythsoc E-List

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

Sign up: [REDACTED]

or contact Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED]

LiveJournal Mythopoeic Society discussion forum

Society activities and general book-related discussion, especially the works of JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, and Charles Williams. It is also a place to talk about The Mythopoeic Society and to post Society News. Sign up: [REDACTED] or contact Lisa Deutsch Harrigan: [REDACTED]

Facebook Group

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

Friend "The Mythopoeic Society"

or contact Lisa Deutsch Harrigan: [REDACTED]

Elizabeth Whittingham. *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology: A Study of The History of Middle-earth*. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2007. xii + 230 pp., \$35.00 (softcover). ISBN 9780786432813. Reviewed by Douglas C. Kane.

Elizabeth Whittingham's *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology* is one of the first pieces of Tolkien scholarship that examines the *History of Middle-earth* series ("HoMe") in detail. Among the only previous scholarly works that focused on the series were the excellent *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter, and Flieger's books *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* and *Interrupted Music: The Making Of Tolkien's Mythology* (as well as the updated and expanded edition of her classic book *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*). But *Tolkien's Legendarium* consists of a series of independent essays that each focus on different aspects *HoMe*, while Flieger's books look as particular parts of the series, with *A Question of Time* mainly examining (in terms of content from *HoMe*) the *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*, the two time-travel novels that Tolkien began and abandoned and which were published for the first time in *HoMe*, and the other two mostly focused (again in terms of content from *HoMe*) on the material showing Tolkien's later work on the legends of the first age and earlier. Whittingham's book is perhaps the first attempt to systematically examine the full series in order to show how Tolkien's overall legendarium (or mythology, if one prefers) evolved over the course of almost 60 years. Moreover, she attempts to place this evolution in context by showing how the different stages of Tolkien's work compare with – and were influenced by – older mythological traditions.

As is often the case, the biggest strength and biggest weakness of Whittingham's book have the same root: her highly systematic approach. After an initial largely superfluous chapter examining influences in Tolkien's life, Whittingham traces the development of different aspects of Tolkien's mythology, and compares them with different mythological traditions, including Greek and Roman classical mythology, Norse mythology (particularly the Eddas), Finnish traditions as represented in the *Kalevala*, and also with Biblical texts and history. Each chapter covers a different aspect: Tolkien's creation mythology; his mythology of divine beings; the physical world of Middle-earth and Eä; death and immortality among Elves and Men; the last days of Middle-earth; and the Final Victory. For each, she follows the same pattern: first she lays out the comparable mythological and biblical traditions, then she describes the history of that aspect of Tolkien's work and how it developed over time, followed by a detailing of how it compares to and was influenced by the mythological and biblical traditions over the course of that history, and finally a brief summary of the chapter. This systematic approach makes the work clear and very easy to follow. However, it can also be quite limiting at times. *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology* fails to achieve the kind of penetrating insights that one finds in Flieger's works (which are frequently cited by Whittingham, particularly *Interrupted Music*, which covers some of the same territory). But then very few if any works do reach those heights.

That is not to say that Whittingham does not make interesting and valuable observations; she does. One particularly thought-provoking pattern that she demonstrates is how Tolkien's female divine beings start out being presented as virtually equal in power and authority to their male counterparts in the early phases of the creation of the legendarium, then are significantly marginalized in the middle phases, and finally returned to positions of power and majesty in the last phases. Also intriguing is the observation that while the return of the female divine beings to positions of power and majesty renders them more similar to pagan goddesses, the overall trend over the course of the history of the creation of Tolkien's mythology is for his divine beings to become *less* similar to the pagan gods and goddesses, and more similar to the angels of Christianity. These observations show the value of Whittingham's approach; a less comprehensive and systematic study would have inevitably suggested a misleading picture.

The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology reaches its peak in the final two chapters. The rest of the book often feels like a series of largely separate essays, each following roughly the same pattern. However, these two chapters, "The Last Days of Middle-earth" and "The Final Victory," are closely related, and build significantly on what has come before them. One of the most fascinating details that Whittingham shows is how Tolkien responded to reader reactions to *The Lord of the Rings* in subsequently revising the works that would eventually become *The Silmarillion*. This really gives the sense of Tolkien's full legendarium as a single evolving entity. Here we see the clearest demonstration of how Tolkien's legendarium moved further away from resembling the pagan mythologies that he began by emulating, and became more and more closely

aligned with his own Christian theology. Whittingham notes that in the end “Tolkien finds personal hope in the assurances of Christianity, and in the world that he created, he provides a source for hope in its eschatology, the tales that in times of loss and defeat promise a ‘final victory’ to come” (171) and shows how that final victory was to provide the ultimate “eucatastrophe” for his whole legendarium. Sadly, that development is almost entirely missing in the published *Silmarillion*, rendering works like Whittingham’s all the more important.

In summary, *The Evolution of Tolkien’s Mythology* is a somewhat limited, but still highly valuable work. Even if it does not quite reach the level of insight achieved by the best Tolkien scholarship such as the books of Shippey and Flieger, it does cover significant new ground in comprehensively examining *The History of Middle-earth* series. One hopes that more such studies will be forthcoming in the future. ❧



Owen Barfield. *Night Operation*, Barfield Press UK, 2008. 80pp., £6.99, \$12.99 (softcover). ISBN 978-0955958212. Reviewed by Jason Fisher.

Night Operation, a novella dating from 1974 or 1975 (depending on whom you ask), is apparently the only work of science fiction Owen Barfield ever wrote. It has appeared in print on two previous occasions: first, serialized across two successive issues of the journal *Towards* (2.4 and 2.5, Fall/Winter 1983 and Summer/Fall 1984); and then in *A Barfield Sampler* (1993), edited by Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas. This new standalone edition is published by The Barfield Press UK, under the aegis of the Estate of Owen Barfield, and brings the novella to a wider audience than ever before. The Press has been busily reissuing Barfield’s works, with *Eager Spring* already released and five more titles coming this year.

Jane Hipolito, Barfield scholar from the California State University at Fullerton, opens this slim volume with a short but astute Introduction to *Night Operation*. For those who have not read the novella before and do not wish to have elements of it revealed ahead of time, I recommend skipping these introductory remarks and coming back to them later. But do read them. Hipolito has valuable insights which will enrich readers’ appreciation of the story, particularly regarding the relationship between the three principal characters – Jon, Jak, and Peet – and its seeming reflection of the relationship between Barfield, C.S. Lewis, and A.C. Harwood. Hipolito suggests a correspondence between Barfield himself and the logocentric **Jon**, and while I do not disagree, another possibility

occurs to me. I would hazard that a correspondence with **John** Ronald Reuel Tolkien is equally plausible; after all, **Jak** is pretty clearly C.S. (“**Jack**”) Lewis. Consult pages 25–35 to form your own ideas. If it’s not obvious enough, even the word “inkling” conspicuously appears during this portion of the book (29).

“When the velocity of progress increases beyond a certain point, it becomes indistinguishable from crisis”

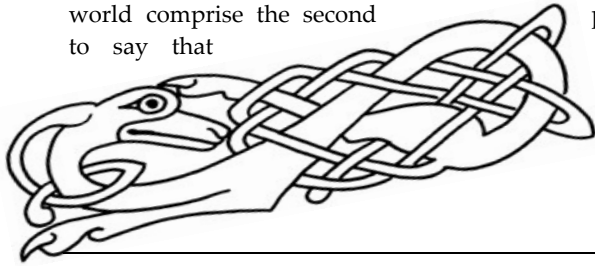


Turning to the novella itself, it is quite a remarkable piece of writing. Without saying too much about the plot, I will note that it is set in the 22nd century, in a society driven underground into the sewers out of fear of invasion and bio-terrorist attacks. Once there, the society develops ever more inevitably to reflect the original scatological purpose of their abode. The novella recalls at different points George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), and William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson’s *Logan’s Run* (1967). The latter, in particular the 1976 film adaptation (contemporary with *Night Operation*), has a great deal in common with Barfield’s work. Cross any one of these with *Poetic Diction* (1928), and you’ll have a good sense of what the novel is like: a futuristic story, punctuated by extended meditations of philosophy, culture, and language.

Some readers may find aspects of the subject matter startling or even objectionable. The underground society of the novella is obsessed with its own biological processes, and with the unrestrained hedonic indulgence of each or all of them, accompanied by piped-in rock music twenty-four hours a day. Satirizing traditional public education, *Night Operation* counterposes against the outmoded Three R’s (“Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic”) a new world order: the Three E’s (“Ejaculation, dEfecation, and Eructation”), or as Barfield dysphemistically terms them on one occasion: “fucking, shitting, and puking” (6). Barfield also bitterly satirizes the notion of Progress (capital P) by redefining it in *Night Operation* as merely the transition from one kind of excretion to another. Yes indeed, the subject matter is bound to raise a few eyebrows, but readers who persevere will find the experience rewarding in the end.

Set against this backdrop of “cultural diarrhoea” (30) is the story of three friends – Jon, Jak, and Peet, mentioned previously. The first half of the novella centers on Jon and his quest to “dig” into language and history (14–5), all but suppressed in a dystopian society at times alarmingly reminiscent of our own. Mingled in with his quest are many thought-provoking ruminations on language, philosophy, and sociology – it is at this point that Barfield will most remind one of Orwell. One particularly droll moment comes in the narrator’s allusion to “Barfield’s Law of literary endeavor (when a book appears with anything upsetting in it, the few who read it don’t need it, and the many who need it don’t read it)” (61). He might have been thinking of *Night Operation* itself.

Eventually, the triumvirate decide it’s time to pay a visit to Aboveground. Why? Because “Society’s passive acceptance of unridiculed absurdities, increasing as it did everyday, was a symptom that could not be overlooked. When the velocity of progress increases beyond a certain point, it becomes indistinguishable from crisis” (34). Pronouncements like these, so prescient as they are of our own culture, more than a decade after Barfield’s death, will give the reader pause, as they do the protagonists of the story. Jon, Jak, and Peet feel they have no choice but to pursue their answers elsewhere, and their explorations outside the insular Underground world comprise the second part of the novella. I will not spoil what happens there, but suffice to say that the conclusion is a surprising and a satisfying one. 🐾



The Mythic Circle Submissions

The Mythic Circle is looking for original stories and poems and artists interested in illustrating them.

We prefer original work by authors following in the Mythopoeic tradition, which may include commentary and allusion to the works of other mythopoeic authors. We do not, however, wish to see “fan fiction” – stories that make use of characters and settings drawn from works by living or recently deceased authors whose material remains protected under copyright law.

Works submitted on paper should be typed and double spaced and should include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of manuscript. We have, as yet, no hard and fast length limits; as a small publication, however, we have to think very well of a story 5,000 words long to publish it. Shorter stories are more likely to be accepted. Email submissions are also encouraged and are likely to get a faster reply. Simultaneous submissions should be clearly identified as such. It is our policy to respond to each submission.

As a small publication, we can only reward our authors and illustrators with one complimentary copy of the issue in which the accepted work appears. All rights revert to the author on publication.

Submissions should be sent to:

Gwenyth Hood
Editor of Mythic Circle



Mythcon Venue Change

Mythcon 41 was originally to have been held on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Unfortunately, the university’s Conference Services department proved too difficult to work with, so the venue has been changed to the Crowne Plaza Suites hotel. The venue change is actually a fortunate one, bringing with it some significant improvements over SMU, including:

- Everything under one roof; no walking across a sprawling university campus in the heat of the Texas summer;
- Hotel suites with double- or king-sized beds instead of cramped and Spartan campus dormitory rooms;
- A *real* hospitality suite, with a refrigerator, wet bar and other amenities, not a converted dorm room;
- Instead of a campus cafeteria, attendees will dine in the hotel’s restaurant and bistro;
- All the facilities are generally much nicer and more modern, with the cooperation of a capable and experienced staff;
- Low-cost shuttle service to and from both airports; free shuttle service within a five-mile radius.

There is still time to register! Visit the website at:



Ursula K. Le Guin. *Cheek by Jowl*. Seattle: Aqueduct Press, 2009. 149 pp., \$16.00 (softcover). ISBN 978-1-933500-27-0. Reviewed by David Bratman.

A new essay collection by Ursula K. Le Guin is as important an event as a new novel or poetry collection from her. This small book, from a small press, deserves not to be overlooked. Described on the cover as “talks & essays on how & why fantasy matters,” it does not reprint her famous 1970s essays on the subject, but carries on the argument to current time: almost all the contents date from the last decade. Le Guin is still fulminating against what she once called “Poughkeepsie fantasy,” but she now phrases it in terms of the junk fantasy of recent times, the ones about “the Good guys and the Evil guys [who] are hard to tell apart since all of them use violence as the response to all situations.” *The Lord of the Rings* is frequently cited as the antidote to all this mouthwash. I cheered when Le Guin writes that, despite the superficial faithfulness of the films, “the focus on violent action and the interminable battle scenes overshadow and fatally reduce the moral complexity and originality of the book.” Le Guin gets it, in a way apologists for the film do not. (Elsewhere, she has a similar complaint to make about Disney’s version of *Bambi*.)

Several other themes recur in these essays. She cites fairy tales as her earliest influences, long before she set herself up as an author, and hence an influence that one may remain unaware of unless closely examined. Perhaps this may also be so for others. She warns against reductionist criticism, rationalizing fantasy away as satisfying the author’s personal psychological needs (and she places readings of *The Lord of the Rings* as a Catholic apologia or a Great War expiation into that category). She chides critics who dismiss fantasy as childish, or who discuss it while remaining unaware of its genre. The Harry Potter books may be delightful, but a school for wizards was not – as many critics claimed – a unique and unprecedented idea, ruefully says the author of *A Wizard of Earthsea*. All fantasy critics, she says, should read Tolkien’s “On Fairy-Stories.” You can disagree with it, but you can’t ignore it.

She interestingly contrasts fantasy with realistic fiction for older children. The latter is mostly didactic message fiction. It spoils the reader into looking for messages in everything. When asked by child readers in those terms, she replies, “I’m not an answering machine – I don’t have a message for you! What I have for you is a story.” For fantasy is a branch of myth: it’s stories that tell us who we are. And it does so by taking us out of ourselves. Realistic children’s fiction is mostly relentlessly quotidian. Fantasy can “include the nonhuman as essential.”

This explains the longest essay, which takes up about half the book. It’s the title essay, a taxonomy of animals in children’s literature, both realistic and fantastic stories. (“Cheek by jowl” is, of course, how humans and animals live, in societies that do not artificially separate them.) Le Guin surveys about thirty books, classic and new, famous and forgotten. Her highest praise goes to the realistic books describing animals’ lives from their own, animalic perspective, because like fantasies they take us into the nonhuman. These include not just the famous tales of horses and dogs and deer, but one about a cow and another about a chipmunk.

Moving towards more anthropomorphic stories, Le Guin becomes more critical. She is cautious but forgiving of classic writers like Grahame and Kipling, but she inserts insightfully ruthless barbs into some well-loved authors. Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, she points out, despite appearances is virtually animal-less. His daemons are wish-fulfillment fantasy pets that don’t even have to be fed. Adams’ *Watership Down*, though it claims to be realistic about rabbits, is to Le Guin deeply dishonest here, a rigidly sexist story where even the good guys are militaristic, and in both respects it is anthropomorphic. (Though I love that book, I must admit this criticism is well-taken, except for one thing: of the acquiring of does from another warren, Le Guin says, “That the females might have any voice in the matter is not even considered,” which is flatly untrue. They want to go, they take initiative, and they are active if secondary partners.)

But it’s not all negative at this end of the animal story. *Charlotte’s Web* and *The Sword in the Stone*, by the two Whites, are true to their own premises and face the tough moral questions about animal-human relationships unflinchingly. She even has a good word for *Through the Looking-Glass* as a cat story.

This essay has nothing to say about her own work – catwings, she decided, were out of the essay’s remit – because Le Guin is a true critic and not just a me-me-me author. Yet elsewhere she has new and interesting things to say about her own work. “The Poacher,” she says, is a story built on dredging out those unexamined childhood fairy-tale influences. In an essay on *A Wizard of Earthsea*, she talks about writing for older children without prior experience, and about the difference between intentional decisions, like making her wizard non-white, and unconscious creation of implications, like citing the myths surrounding him, which she intended as purely a trick to create resonance, but which generated whole new stories afterwards. 🍀

The Mythopoeic Society



This issue of Mythprint is brought to you for free and open access by

the [Mythopoeic Society](#) at the [SWOSU Digital Commons](#).

For more issues of Mythprint go to https://dc.swosu.edu/mythprint/all_issues.html

To join the Mythopoeic Society, go to: <http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

Authors and artists of items in this issue may request to have their materials removed from the digital repository. To do so, contact the platform administrator at archives@mythsoc.org or the *Mythprint* editor at mythprint@mythsoc.org.



The 41st Annual Mythopoeic Conference

From the great epic poems of ancient Greece and ancient India to the Book of Revelation and the Poetic Edda; from John Milton and William Blake to J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams; from Philip Pullman to Neil Gaiman and beyond, conflict amongst and against the gods has been a perennial theme in mythology and mythopoeic literature.

Scholar Guest of Honor



Janet Brennan Croft is editor of *Mythlore*, one of the premier periodicals on the Inklings and fantasy literature. She has published three books on J.R.R. Tolkien, including *War in the Works of Tolkien* (2005).

Author Guest of Honor

Tim Powers is a science-fiction and fantasy author. He has received numerous awards and nominations for his works, including the World Fantasy Award for his novels *Last Call* (1992) and *Declare* (2000).



Crowne Plaza Suites

Dallas, Texas

July 9-12, 2010

