

mythprint

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL. 47 NO. 7

JULY 2010

WHOLE NO. 336



SPECIAL ISSUE : MYTHCON 41 CONFERENCE REPORTS



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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:

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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 thorough our web site (using PayPal or Discover card), or you may contact:

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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.

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EDITORIAL

Speaking for a moment not as the editor of *Mythprint*, but as the committee co-chair for Mythcon 41, I would like to introduce this special issue of conference reports with just a few words of acknowledgment. It may seem self-indulgent, but we have received so many compliments that it seems only fair I should share them. Like Bilbo, I promise not to keep you too long, and with a little help from Gandalf, I may even disappear at the end of this editorial.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank the rest of our dedicated committee. Registration and papers were ably coordinated by David Oberhelman and Robin Anne Reid, respectively. Our logo, widely and deservedly praised, was designed by Charise Knittel. And of course, I must doff my chapeau to my co-chair, Randy Hoyt, without whose tireless efforts as site liaison (among innumerable other tasks, both large and small), the Drunken Hobbit song would have gone on considerably longer than it did!

I would also like to offer a special thanks to my wife, Jennifer, and to Randy's wife, Leslie. In addition to their gifts of support and tolerance, they both contributed in many tangible ways to the success of Mythcon 41, even though this may not have been apparent to the scholars, revelers, and scholar-revelers (I'm in the latter category!). Jennifer made several valuable programming and dining suggestions. And Leslie was on site during Mythcon, helping us with the registration desk, dealers' room, and hospitality suite. I'd also like to thank Randy's parents, Danna and Bill Segel, who likewise joined the fray—er, the fun.

It is an irony that conference chairs are always on their feet! (Bilbo: "My toes are all bruised and bent, and my legs ache, and my stomach is wagging like an empty sack.") If I have one small regret, it is that I didn't get to sit down and listen to very many papers or panels. For that reason, the conference reports I am pleased to offer in this issue are of as much value to me as I hope they are to you. They have allowed me to experience many parts of Mythcon I missed (being often behind the curtain). I'm sure this will prove equally true for many of you. And so, I offer a final word of thanks to the contributors of these lively and engaging reports. I hope to see you all next year!

— Jason Fisher
Mythcon 41 Co-chair

Mythcon 41 Conference Report. By Ginger McElwee.

The trip home is accomplished. The dirty clothes are sloshing in the washer. A stack of junk mail, catalogs, and bills sitting beside my computer reminds me that my four days in Dallas at Mythcon 41 didn't eliminate the mundane in my life. Yet it did alter my world. I have already answered a student's question by referencing Janet Croft's keynote speech about the types of ways the struggles of good and evil can be conceptualized. I have relived delightful and humorous events as I edited the pictures I took. (Lynn Maudlin and Lee Speth have been etched in my imagination as Bella and Edward.) Jef Murray's print of Gandalf wandering down a road in Middle-earth has gone to the frame shop with a space waiting for it on my office wall. I have been inspired to read Tim Powers and to re-read *The Silmarillion*, and I have begun to read *The Masques of Amen House* (which has sat on my bookshelf for several years). Also, I will never think of an unpublished manuscript without seeing Sierra Glycer sitting on the stage in all her innocence.

I was privileged to make the acquaintance of young scholars like Michael Milburn, whose paper on Williams began Mythcon for me. I didn't disgrace myself when I bowled with the Goblin head. The evenings of loud conversation in the hospitality suite, the mornings of groggy breakfasts with old and new friends, and the hours spent in chilly rooms listening to papers will remain with me through the year. And maybe, if I am lucky, when I am feeling isolated and frayed, I will recall Tim Powers telling his doppelganger to beware or see Merlin DeTardo leap with enthusiasm for his invisible prize.

I love Mythcon. And this one was almost perfect. (Thank you, Jason and Randy.) But I don't love Mythcon *because* it is perfect but because the people who are Mythcon inspire me and delight me and challenge me throughout the year. I can't wait for Albuquerque. =



Brian Melton, John Wm. Houghton, Don Williams, pre-Procession. (Photo by Jason Fisher)

Mythcon 41 Conference Report. By Eric Rauscher.

Landed in Dallas, Texas and didn't see much of Dallas or Texas on the way from the airport to the hotel. I've heard that Dallas is the largest city in the world that is not on a river or seaport. The most you could see off in the distance were tall buildings every once in a while. Not even sure if I ever saw downtown Dallas. Anyway, the hotel we stayed in was intriguing in that the elevator shafts were in the middle of a huge open area, bounded on three sides by the rooms, with flying bridges going from the elevator shafts to the walkways where the rooms were. Very much reminded me of an M.C. Escher print. The usual round of suspects were there, but it was also nice to see a large number of young scholars. There is hope for the Mythopoeic Society! Tim Powers was captivating, as usual, and Janet Croft gave a solid base for discussions of various wars in heaven. I heard many fine papers and went to several panels, all of which was enjoyable. One of the highlights of the con was my wife, Bonnie, winning the Clerihew contest for the "During Tolkien" category:

*Eustace Clarence Scrubb
Would whine and blub.
To obtain stolen treasures,
He took Draconian measures.*

For this, she won the traditional magnum of virtual champagne and a book (see book report below). Bonnie also won the linguist award for the second year in a row, for the worst possible performance in the golfball competition.

The "Not Ready for Mythcon" players, directed by Ellie Farrell (in absentia), weaved a tale in which myself, appearing as Albert Einstein, guided Tim Powers via a time machine until he met ... himself (played by the *actual* Tim Powers). The play was warmly received by the audience. Another fine, dramatic presentation was by Diana Glyer in a series of letters she is soon to publish. These letters are between Warnie Lewis and Blanche Biggs, and the presentation was entitled "The Major and the Missionary: A True Love Story". I'm sure that there are other things I could mention, but I should probably bring this to a close. I hope to see everybody at Albuquerque next year!

The Warded Man by Peter V. Brett

For those of you that have played or do play Dungeons and Dragons, you will recognize this book immediately. It concerns three characters: Arlen, Leesha,

and Rojer who start out young (in their teens). Arlen is a fighter, Leesha is an herbalist/healer, and Rojer is a bard. The world is infested with demons that come out at night. They can be stopped by magic wards. We see our characters gain experience, and eventually the fighter gains a prestige class as "the warded man" by investigating the tombs of an ancient city. The three characters fight to save the healer's home town in a scene reminiscent of *The Seven Samurai*. Not mythopoeic by any stretch of the imagination, but a good enough tale to keep your interest. =

Mythcon 41 Conference Report. By Leah Grover.

My heart seized with sorrow when I realized there was no scheduled Bardic Circle for this year's Con, I contacted Randy Hoyt who enabled me to keep the bard-fires burning, and burn they did: C.S. Lewis' *Evolution Hymn*, a Mongolian camel-mother lullaby, and "Jabberwocky" sung passionately to the tune of "Poor Wayfaring Stranger" with Middle Eastern percussion performed on a wiper fluid jug drum — these were highlights for me.

Melody Green and Joseph Young stunned me with good conversation and presentation subject matter, Green on categories of sacrifice in children's fantasy and *The Lord of the Rings*, and Young with Eddison's intriguing worldview. Tim Powers's postcards/wall calendar/character bio sheets story-outlining techniques were as unforgettable as his 3 A.M. clown-at-the-door image. Panel discussions on self-publishing versus traditional publishing gave me flesh-and-blood encouragement that I may publish boldly what I have never published before.

God bless the Glyers for their readers' theatre delivery of Major Warren Lewis and missionary doctor Blanche Biggs's correspondence love story, an exquisite look into their views on Christianity, sexuality, missions, and the like. I look forward to the book (... movie?)!

Thank you, Mike Foster and friends, for Middle-earthing "Lady Madonna," "With a Little Help From My Friends," and "Twist and Shout" at the Awards Banquet! These songs were as hilarious as Myth and Fantasy Studies Award-winner Marek Oziwicz's acceptance speech was touching, as the emcee read of Marek being scoffed at by Communist inspectors because he read the Narnia chronicles.

I know our collective mythopoeic soul has been nourished by this conference, and for this I am deeply grateful. I thank you all. =

War in Heaven, but Not at Mythcon 41. By Berni Phillips Bratman.

Everyone who attends Mythcon experiences a slightly different conference from all others, depending on which program items they attend and with whom they spend time. It's hard to believe anyone could have had a more enjoyable Mythcon than I experienced this year.

Originally scheduled for SMU, Mythcon had been moved to the Crowne Plaza Suites on the outskirts of Dallas where we relished in a luxury not commonly found at Mythcons. When we opened the door to our rooms, I thought we had been given the wrong keys. All the rooms were literally suites with a sitting room with couch, comfy chairs, desk, and a TV, as well as a bedroom with the usual (including a second TV) and a bath. Not to mention the microwave, refrigerator, and second sink.

After picking up our registration packets at noon, we headed off with the female members of the Rauscher contingent to a Cajun restaurant – the only off-site meal we had that weekend. Programming began at 2 PM, as usual. I was pleased to see that people are still delivering papers on Harry Potter and eagerly attended Denise Roper's paper comparing good and evil in Rowling's and Tolkien's works.

The traditional Saturday morning procession did not go out into the Texas humidity, winding instead around the first two floors of the hotel, where it landed in the combined room large enough to hold all the attendees. Those of us who are on Facebook with Janet Croft, scholar guest of honor, were anticipating her keynote address (which we had been informed on FB she had finished). She gave a thought-provoking presentation on free will, disobedience, and eucatastrophe in Middle-earth.

The hotel set out buffets for our meals so we had the typical (and desired) shared meals at Mythcon – just with more coffee and better food. At dinner the first night, we had a quick thrill as the lights went out – there was a lightning storm or something going on. This was followed somewhat later by a dog coming into the dining room, but I don't think the two things were connected.

As I like a good apocalypse, I was curious about Dominick Grace's paper, "*The Last Canadian* and the Canadian Apocalypse." I had never heard of *The Last Canadian*, which turned out to be a little-known novel from several decades past. I followed that up by attending Sarah Beach's "All or Nothing: the Tendency for Dualism in Apocalyptic Fantasies," where she

spoke of more familiar source material such as *Babylon 5*. I was sorry to miss the panel on comics, which is one of my fannish interests, choosing instead to attend Rachel Cantrell's paper on the *Twilight* saga. I had just finished reading the fourth book in preparation for it.

Speaking of books, there was a fine dealers' room as well. There were several book dealers in addition to other items for sale. (Our scholar GOH makes jewelry in addition to painting scarves, and she had some of her work there.) While I had come determined not to buy any more books, I wound up purchasing four. Oh, well, one has to support one's favorite industry!

After dinner, we were treated to John Rateliff's paper on Haggard's *She* and Tolkien before the masquerade. Mythcon masquerades are always cute. We don't attract much in the way of flashy, and some entrants wear the same thing year after year, but they have a certain charm. Newbie Audrey Adams was a charming goddess with apples in a basket (earning her the "How Do You Like *Them* Apples?" award), but I think the contestant with the biggest "awww" factor was young Master Hoyt, Randy's son, as the cutest Prince Caspian ever.

As the masquerade judges conferred, some of us put on a Readers' Theatre production of Charles Williams's *The Masque of the Manuscript*. I played Dorinda to David Bratman's Alexis. Diana Glycer was the master of music and "directions" announcer while Mike Glycer was Colin. The littlest Glycer, Sierra Grace, was the Manuscript ("A Short Treatise on Syrian Nouns," etc.) and did an outstanding job. Emily Rauscher had played the manuscript in our first production in 1995, and now read the role of Phillida, the librarian (and youngest of us all, as appropriately described in the script).

Returning from church on Sunday, I arrived late to Anne Collins Smith's paper on Draco Malfoy (from the Harry Potter series) as I just had to make another Starbucks run! Another convenience of the site was a Starbucks just across the parking lot. One thing I was sure not to be late for was Janet Croft's paper on the Psyche myth, tying it into *The Devil Wears Prada*. After lunch, Diana and Mike Glycer did a very moving presentation, "The Major and the Missionary: a Love Story," which Diana had adapted from the letters between Warnie Lewis and Dr. Blanche Biggs. Diana and Mike were just reading the letters, but it was an incredibly touching story and they read the letters in such a nuanced fashion. (Diana said it was a rare find since they had both halves of the correspondence.)

I enjoyed Lynn Maudlin's paper on Tim Powers's works and how they were reflected in the conference

theme, "War in Heaven." It was a good warm-up to Tim's GOH speech after the banquet. I had heard Tim tell the story before about accidentally setting the door-to-door missionary's Bible on fire, but I laughed just as hard this time. The banquet was the usual blend of serious and silly. I don't know how many food sculptures were presented to Tim and Janet, but surely there was at least one for each table. David Oberhelman announced the winners of the Mythopoeic Awards. Lynn Maudlin presented Emily Rauscher, newly minted Ph.D. in astrophysics or something brainy like that, with a suitable crown. There were also the now-traditional clerihevs contest and "Lord of the Ringos" musical presentation.

In the absence of Ellie Farrell, Emily also stepped up to the plate by scripting and directing this year's skit by the Not Ready for Mythcon Players, an introspective of Tim Power's works. Jason Fisher, in a borrowed Not Ready T-shirt somewhat too small, played Tim Powers, colluding with Eric Rauscher's Albert Einstein. Other characters from Powers' works popped in and out until the author himself came up on stage. It was silly and it involved sheets, so I guess you could say it was another successful Not Ready production (as those seem to be the only two requirements, silliness and sheets).

The only thing that can top the Not Ready skit for silliness is Golfimball. A gang of us trooped across the street to the only bit of green we could find in the sea of concrete. It belonged to the Baptist Church. None of us burst into flames, so God must have been amused. The Hunnewells were there this year so we had the official Golfimball kit, featuring the orc's head (a doll's head gruesomely enhanced many years ago by Pat Wynne), stand with the orc's "body" (a McDonald's worker's shirt which had been altered to read "Mordor U"), baseball bat, and little pink bunny for the accuracy round. (The little pink bunny was stuffed. Don't worry, PETA, no animals were harmed in the pursuit of our silliness.) The accuracy round was won by some ladies, including first-timer Kazia Estrada, who needs to return next year to defend her title. The distance round was dominated by men, with the "Georgia Giant," Don Williams, taking the gold. There is also a bowling round, which is harder than you might think – that orc's neck throws things off.

I was probably not the only one reluctant to go home on Monday. It was a rare Mythcon, one where we were scrambling to come up with things for the Drunken Hobbit song since there was really nothing to complain about. Next year, Mythcon in Albuquerque – see you there! =

Selected Upcoming Events



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



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



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



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



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



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



The 7th Annual C.S. Lewis Festival.
Running throughout October, 2010 in Petoskey, Michigan.



Joseph Rex Young, in the Hospitality Suite. (Photo by Bonnie Callahan)

Discussion 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.

Starting with this issue, only **active** groups are listed here. 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 *Mythprint*. 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 www.mythsoc.org.

Marion VanLoo
Membership & Discussion Group Secretary

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles/Pasadena: *Mydgard*

Lee Speth, [REDACTED]
August 22: *The Princess Bride*, by William Goldman. At the Callahans' home, 3771 Alzada Rd., Altadena; 2:30 PM.

San Francisco Bay Area: *Khazad-dum*

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Sept 12: *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrun*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. In Berkeley. 2:00 PM.
Dec. 4: The Annual Reading and Eating Meeting. At Edith and Amy's. Time TBD.

COLORADO

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

Patricia Yarrow, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Aug. 15: *Coyote Road: Trickster Tales* (anthology) edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling
Sept. 12: *The King of Elfland's Daughter* by Lord Dunsany
Oct. 10: *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, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
July?: *Knossos Film Festival*. At Bill Hussar's, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

HAWAII

Oahu: *Sammath Naur*

Steve Brown, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Or, Ken Burtness- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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.

ILLINOIS

Peoria: *The Far Westfarthing smial*

Mike Foster, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

IOWA

Decorah: *Alfheim*

Doug Rossman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: *Rivendell*

David Lenander, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
TBA: *Thirteenth Child*, by Patricia Wrede.
TBA: *The Magician's Book*, by Laura Miller.

NEVADA

Reno: *Crickhollow*

Joanne Burnett, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

OREGON

Portland: *Bywater Inklings*

Gary Lundquist [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh: *Fantasy Studies Fellowship*

Lori Campbell, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

Seattle: *Mithlond*

John D Rateliff, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: *The Burrahobbits*

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]
[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.

The Mythcon at Minas Ergil. By Mark T. Hooker.

Mythcon 41 was held 9-12 July 2010 in the Lone-Star State in the Crowne Plaza Suites Tower in Dallas. The eleven-story tower offered a panoramic view of the Interstate ring around Dallas, but the accommodations were **excellent**. This was especially brought home by the comments I heard from those who had attended Mythcon 39 in Connecticut about the lack of sheets and towels, plus showers down the hall. The sheets in Dallas were smooth to the touch, and more than suitable for use by the Not Ready for Mythcon Players. The towels were large and fluffy, and the bathrooms literally *en-suite*. But most of all, Mythcon 41 was a chance to meet old friends and make new ones. A marvelous time was had by everyone I talked to.

Like any Mythcon, this one had its problems. A thunderstorm took out the power in the hotel, and the lights in the dining room went off at dinner the first evening. A wag near me in line for the buffet said, "This is supposed to make it more romantic," but the hotel staff soon resolved the problem, and turned the lights back on anyway. At the post-banquet entertainment, the microphones were discovered to be hooked up to a different set of speakers, but again the problem was quickly rectified. I wonder what the people near the set of speakers to which the mike was first connected thought of the cryptic announcements that were not intended for them. There were two other conferences going on in the hotel at the same time, and while we saw people with other badges walking around, and even talked with a few of them, it felt like we had the full attention of the hotel staff throughout Mythcon. Thanks to them all.

There was a presentation on Russian Hobbit illustrations by yours truly in memory of Alexei Konratiev who died unexpectedly in the run-up to Mythcon 41. The presentation concluded with a prize drawing for a Russian edition of *The Hobbit*, which was won by Joe Christopher. A copy of the presentation on CD-ROM went to Karen Guerin. One of Alexei's students, Ekaterina Svetova likewise held a memorial showing of a short Russian film that Alexei had seen and liked. Alexei will be missed by his many friends and students. The Kondratiev Memorial Student Paper award went to Michael Milburn for his paper entitled "Art According to Romantic Theology: Charles Williams' Analysis of Dante Reapplied to J.R.R. Tolkien's 'Leaf by Niggle'."

A wide range of papers was presented this year, covering everything from *The Odyssey* to *The Devil*

Wears Prada to more traditional Inklings fare. The *Twilight* series of modern vampire fiction and Harry Potter were also well represented. The participant from furthest away was Joseph Young from New Zealand. He gave a presentation entitled "Aphrodite on the Home Front: E.R. Eddison and World War II." Eddison is a British fantasist who was an associate of C.S. Lewis, and one-time visitor to the Inklings. Young's presentation whetted one's appetite for reading this little-known author.

The "Tolkien and Source Criticism" panel was particularly interesting because two of the participants are involved in a forthcoming book project entitled *The Bones of the Ox* (Jason Fisher, ed.), which is a collection of source studies. David Bratman made the point that many things that label themselves "source studies" could more successfully present themselves as "comparative literature studies," because the links to Tolkien in some of them are tenuous at best. John D. Rateliff responded that source-study authors must take care to document Tolkien's awareness of the "source" texts, using such peripheral Tolkien materials as *Companion and Guide*.

This Mythcon had a "Writers Track," in addition to the normal fantasy papers and panels. The focus was primarily on fiction writing, and the sessions for that were well-attended. There was a panel that addressed the concerns of non-fiction writers as well. It was entitled "No Publisher? No Problem. The Nuts and Bolts of Self-publishing." The consensus of the panel (Diana Glyer, Denise Roper, moderator Jason Fisher, and again, yours truly) was that as publishers push more and more of the responsibilities for the various parts of a publishing project (editing, layout, indexing, marketing) onto authors, that there is less incentive for authors to take the "traditional" path to publishing. Using this approach to publishing also allows niche projects that traditional publishers would consider unmarketable to reach their intended audience. An economic advantage of benefit to all in the current "Great Recession" was also pointed out. While a non-fiction book traditionally published by an academic press might sell for \$175, if self-published, it can be sold for \$15, providing the author with larger royalties and the reader with a more affordable price.

The auction of hotel property at 04:20 on Sunday morning was not entirely a failure. While there were no bids for the hotel cooling system, a passer-by bought a bridge in Brooklyn for a goodly sum. (This event really was on the schedule. I didn't go, so this report is based entirely on hear-say.)

The Tenth Not Very Annual Mary M. Stolzenbach

Memorial Clerihew Contest made awards in three categories: “Before Tolkien,” “During Tolkien,” and “After Tolkien.” These were won by Edith Crowe, Bonnie Rauscher, and Merlin DeTardo, respectively. The contest is named for Mary because she once swept all three categories in an unprecedented win. She was an exceptional lady, and I am pleased to have known her. Emily Rauscher was also “crowned” by Lynn Maudlin with a unique crown of Lynn’s own design in recognition of having “grown up” with Mythcon. The crown was a replica of a solar system, with stars and planets dangling from wires attached to the headpiece, primarily in recognition of Emily’s PhD in Astrophysics, but it was also in well-deserved recognition of Emily’s having survived a childhood of Mythcons, and nonetheless having turned into such an elegant, poised, and beautiful young woman. Sierra Glycer, Garrett Hoyt and Rachel Hunnewell look like potential future recipients of this unusual award.

Writer Guest of Honor Tim Powers gave the post-banquet speech, which proved him a witty raconteur. I especially enjoyed the story of how he dealt with an evangelical couple at his doorstep. When they questioned the quality of his salvation because Tim is a Catholic, he offered to demonstrate why they were mistaken using their own *Bible*, just to prevent them from being able to say that the Catholic translation of the *Bible* might have been doctored in his favor. They gave him their *Bible*, and Tim pulled out his magnifying glass to be able to read the small print. It being a sunny day, the inevitable conflagration scared off the evangelists, who left, never to return, undoubtedly even more firmly convinced of the “evil” of Catholics. Too bad that the fire safety regulations prevented him from doing the same thing live on-stage.

This was followed by the “Not Ready to Sing Band,” consisting of Lynn Maudlin, Merlin DeTardo, David VanLoo, Mike and Jo Foster. Lynn quipped, “You couldn’t pay us to do this . . . and you wouldn’t.” Despite her self-deprecation, the performance was hardly welcomed by all present. It consisted of a series of tunes from a number of “oldies but goodies” recast with Hobbit lyrics. There was “Back in the Shire,” sung to the tune of “Back in the USSR”; “Lady Galadriel, Hobbits at your knee,” sung to the tune of “Lady Madonna”; “What would you do, if I went on a quest?,” sung to the tune of “With a Little Help from My Friends”; and “Twist it Off, Frodo,” done to the tune of “Twist and Shout”. I want to know when the CD comes out.

The “Not Ready for Mythcon Players” were out in almost full force, brought up to strength by Jason



Fisher—in a T-shirt two sizes too small—filling in for Ellie Farrell, who was on a trip to China. They did a hilarious send-up of writer guest of honor Tim Powers, in which Powers (Fisher) joins Einstein (Eric Rauscher) on a madcap trip via time machine to do “research” for Powers’ new book. During the course of their trip they meet Powers’ doppelganger (played convincingly by Powers himself), the stars of the Twilight Vampire series, the Pre-Raphaelite poets, and some pirates, in reference to *On Stranger Tides*, the Powers’ book that is being adapted into the new *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. The punch line came when Powers (Fisher) took the stack of 3x5 cards of collected research, and shuffled them into a random order for use in the new book. Applause!

The entire Mythcon Committee certainly deserves a word of “Thanks” for all their yeoman-like efforts to make Mythcon 41 a reality, and for resolving what few problems arose quickly and efficiently. [NB: A shorter version of this report appears in the August 10 issue of the J.R.R. Tolkien newsletter *Beyond Bree*. My gratitude to Mark Hooker and Nancy Martsch for their permission to reprint the full report here.] =

Procession, Banquet, Panel, Members' Meeting, Food Sculptures. (Photos by Jason Fisher, Bonnie Callahan)

Mythcon in a Hotel. By David Bratman.

As the Mythopoeic Society's former Secretary for Mythopoeic Conferences (the position now held by Lynn Maudlin), I've always been interested in the future and the planning of Mythcon sites. Mythcons have traditionally been held on college campuses, because in the early days the members were mostly impecunious students looking for cheap housing, and were used to living in college dorms anyway. Even as we've gotten older and slightly wealthier, and have sought out campuses that were less hilly, had air conditioning and shorter walks between buildings, and came with en-suite bathrooms, we've continued with college settings for good and sufficient reasons of seclusion from the noisy, commercial outside world, attractive atmosphere (yes, most of our campuses have been stunningly beautiful), and above all the cafeteria group meals which, more than anything else, cement a feeling of community that is the essence of Mythcon.

Occasional Mythcons that have been forced into hotels for logistical reasons have mostly been unsuccessful: abysmal programming space, insufficient isolation from other guests and the mundane world, and the lack of group meal facilities—these in turn in part the result of looking for hotels in the same price range as campuses.

Unfortunately, campus accommodations have been getting trickier in recent years, not just for the above reasons but because of increasing cluelessness in the college conference offices. I could tell you stories about the one two years ago ... Anyway, when intractable problems of this kind forced us out of our intended beautiful campus for this year's Mythcon and into a Crowne Plaza Suites set amidst the concrete sea of a commercial strip along a freeway interchange, there was concern about what this would do to Mythcon, mitigated by two factors: that the hotel would cater all our meals so that we could dine together, and that—by the alchemical process by which convention hotels determine all their function pricings—it would all cost no more than we'd been planning to pay for the room and board package on campus.

And it all turned out splendidly. Nothing went wrong except for a brief loss of power one evening during a thunderstorm. The hotel forms a huge atrium with rooms along the outside walls and an elevator block in the middle with bridges leading out to the rooms area. Combined with a cool modernist architectural style, looking up from below it uncannily resembles a cell block, but the plastic vegetation on the bridges and the modestly luxuriant lounge area below

mitigate the effect. A sufficiency of basic hotel function rooms—much better than some of the oddball patio suites we've used at past hotel Mythcons—extending out on ground level from the basic block in one corner served our programming purposes. (A couple of other events were going on in other function rooms, but they had no impact on us at all. The oddest thing about the programming rooms was their pretentious English names, like Windsor and Manchester. Couldn't the hotel chain have come up with something Texan?) The banquet was held here; other meals were in the hotel restaurant. Breakfasts were a basic buffet, and we were apparently almost the only guests present. Lunches (a cold collation plus soup) and dinners (hot) were also buffet and held in a comfortable multi-level private dining area.

As the hotel's title suggests, the rooms were suites: one large sitting room and a bedroom, plus bath. Comfortable beds and chairs; enough closet and drawer space, not always a feature of hotel rooms. Two TV sets, which is more than we have at home, not that we ever turned either of them on. Our room was right next to the hospitality suite, but amazingly, there was no noise leakage. I hadn't thought there was a hotel built since the 1920s with real soundproofing.

If we were cooped up in this building for the entire Mythcon (except for Golfimbul, but that's a story in itself), it was at least large and varied and pleasant enough not to leave a feeling of being confined. (Compare this to one Mythcon held in a free-standing conference center which was literally locked up for the weekend, with nobody inside but us and the kitchen staff. The doors were locked from outside, so if you went out—not that there was anywhere to go but the parking lot—you had to know the keycode to get back in. We had the keycode, of course, but it still felt a bit creepy.) At Mythcon 41, the outside doors were of course always open. There were enough corridors overlooking the atrium to have our traditional Procession in. And not having to go outside, unless you wished to venture to the Starbucks down the street, was a further advantage, for while it was balmy enough in our atrium, outside it was still July. In Texas. (As General Sheridan said, and rightly too, "If I owned Texas and Hell, I'd rent out Texas and live in Hell." He'd been there in July.)

So that was our site. And given these important provisions that were well satisfied this year—cost containment, comfort and a pleasant environment, decent group catering, and separation from other events—we could do it again this way. This, for once, was a successful experiment. =

Mythcon 41 Conference Report. By Merlin DeTardo.

Contra Edna Ferber, the Texas skies were not vast and brassy but low and percussive when I arrived Thursday afternoon in Dallas; the hike I planned for the grasslands to the north became a slow drive through heavy traffic and intense rains. The weather, when not storming, was hot and moist for the whole weekend. Fortunately, the whole of Mythcon was contained in one cool and pleasant hotel.

In Friday's first session, Joe Christopher, spotting some points of comparison between Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Lewis's "The Nameless Isle", wondered if "durned" in the latter is a misprint. A noisy sticking door interfered only a little with Denise Roper's talk on Rowling and Tolkien, where one audience member wondered how the Christian motifs Roper had identified in the Harry Potter books would impress people who complain that the series glamorizes witchcraft. The witty "Faith and Fantasy" panel discussion played to a packed room. So I sat on the floor in back for a half-hour before ducking into the conclusion of Michael Milburn's presentation on Tolkien, Williams, and Dante, perhaps the first Mythcon paper to cite Tyra Banks. What I remember most clearly about the panel on Tolkien source studies is that it's difficult to take notes while serving as moderator. David Bratman, Jason Fisher, and John Rateliff all spoke eloquently on the delights and dangers in seeking out the ox-bones Tolkien used to make his soup.

Saturday's opening procession, which I watched from the hotel restaurant, was followed by Janet Brennan Croft's scholarly keynote address. She considered the interaction of characters such as Denethor and Beregon in light of the infamous Milgram psychological experiment. I haven't read the *Middle-earth Minstrel* collection yet, but if Jason Fisher's paper on alliterative verse is indicative of the quality of the whole, it should prove a fine book. Having skipped some sessions to practice, I finished my afternoon by reading two papers by authors who could not attend Mythcon (Anne Marie Gazzolo and Jared Lobdell). In the evening, John Rateliff returned to a subject he'd considered 29 years earlier: connections between the work of Tolkien and H. Rider Haggard. This time he praised Dale Nelson's identification of Haggard's story, "Long Odds", as a likely source for the nature of Frodo's illness at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*. The children of Randy Hoyt and of Diana Glycer were the darlings of the Masquerade contest and of the reading of Charles Williams's *Masque of the Manuscript*. The masque, whose subject fit nicely into the writers' track that was

part of this year's conference, was ably directed by David Bratman. The night's entertainments wrapped with the first appearance by Peter V. Brett. And then the second, the third, and many more.

I know too little about St. Augustine to comment on Brian Cambra's paper, presented in the first Sunday morning slot. It was nice to see Jennifer Sawayda point out a hint of Farmer Giles in "On Fairy-stories". In the lengthy panel discussion on Tolkien in the classroom, Cami Agan explained how her students read *The Lord of the Rings* and much of *The Silmarillion* in an intensive three-week summer class. Everyone attending "The Major and the Missionary: A Love Story" got a fine souvenir playbill. Afterward, Wendell Wagner argued that this moving epistolary dialogue between Warren Lewis and Lucy Blanche Biggs, read here by Mike and Diana Glycer, would make a better movie than *84 Charing Cross Road*. In the second of Jef Murray's two presentations, he projected many of his Tolkien paintings and answered questions. On the funny "Don't Judge a Book by its Movie" panel, A. Lee Martinez described himself as "a really successful writer, and I bet most of you haven't heard of me". And then, the banquet.

Try as I might, I couldn't come up with a food sculpture pun on *The Anubis Gates* – but someone else made it work. All the award winners in fiction and scholarship seemed to be traveling abroad, but among the acceptance remarks (*in absentia*) was a poem by Jo Walton, read for her by Tim Powers. In his own keynote address, Powers entertained the crowd with witty remarks on religion, fiction, and Texas. After an interlude, the evening entertainment resumed with three songs composed and performed by Lynn Maudlin (at the piano), and then a five-piece "The Lord of the Ringos" set, led once more by Mike Foster. There being no music stands in the hotel, I was pressed into service to hold song sheets. Finally, Jason Fisher impersonated Tim Powers, playing against Eric Rauscher as Albert Einstein in a time-traveling expedition by the Not Ready for Mythcon Players. Rauscher would reprise his role next morning, delivering the best line in the "Drunken Hobbit" song that closed the conference.

The late evening included Golfimbul on the lawn of the Park Central Baptist Church. I missed the accuracy and bowling rounds, but played for distance. In the wee hours in the Hospitality Suite, Randy Hoyt recited the first lines of the *Iliad* from memory, while Jason Fisher performed an excellent impersonation of Greedo from *Star Wars*. But the merriment concluded at 3 a.m. in disappointment, when no one could think of a way to get hold of a clown suit to visit upon Tim Powers, a few doors down. =

The Mythopoeic Society

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Monsters, Marvels, and Minstrels: The Rise of Modern Medievalism

The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
July 15–18, 2011

Author Guest of Honor:
Catherynne M. Valente

Scholar Guest of Honor:
Michael D.C. Drout

