

# mythPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL. 48 NO. 3

MARCH 2011

WHOLE NO. 344



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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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*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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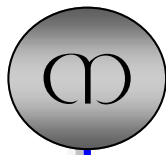
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## Editorial

The arrival of March, 2011 marks the beginning of my second year editing *Mythprint*. I would like to open my thirteenth issue by thanking you all — for reading, for offering your feedback and comments during this transition to color and our new digital format, and most importantly, for sending in contributions. I still value your feedback and suggestions, and I still need reviews of books, movies, plays, conferences — anything of mythopoeic interest. I also welcome interviews, short scholarly essays, artwork, and other kinds of content. If you have an idea, no matter how far out you think it is, please don't hesitate to drop me a line at [REDACTED]

Moving further into 2011, I have plans to begin running some new kinds of content. Notably, I plan to start running a periodic column on J.R.R. Tolkien's languages, and another one on the processes, trials, and tribulations of creative writing. Please don't be shy with your opinions once you've seen these new columns. I'm looking for your thoughts not only on the content, but also the frequency, the length, and so on. This is *your* newsletter — let me know what you like and what you don't.

You may also notice a few other changes going forward (e.g., discussion groups will no longer be listed in each issue). This will make room for longer essays than have usually been possible in *Mythprint*, like this month's round-up on e-readers, an article which features the input of many of you. I hope you will welcome these changes, and even when you don't, *pedo mellon a minno*.

— Jason Fisher, Editor

### Pardon Me, Is That an E-Reader You Have?

By Berni Phillips Bratman.

Readers of this periodical have two things in common: we love to read and we don't have enough space for all our books. With that in mind, some of us have turned to e-readers.

What decided me to try it was reading Carrie Vaughan's blog. (Carrie is the author of the *Kitty-the-werewolf* books.) She had debated the e-reader issue herself and had settled on an iPod Touch. Phone-sized, it can fit in your purse/pocket and you can read books on it. So I bought an iPod Touch. I bought a few books, and I downloaded a lot more from Project Gutenberg. I started reading on it and I made an important discovery: I *liked* reading books in electronic format! I liked being able to adjust the size of the text. I liked having a heavy doorstop of a book in something I could hold with one hand. The iPod Touch has the ability to reverse the polarity of the text so you can read white letters on a black background — they call it "night mode." You can read it in the dark.

After using this for some months, I was hooked, but the iPod Touch was just my gateway drug. Looking around my surroundings, it occurred to me that if I got a dedicated e-reader, I could continue to buy the brain candy I like to read and not have to worry about finding a place for the hard copy in our over-crowded home. I made myself a list of the features I wanted, and headed to the store in search of a reader.

I knew I wanted a full-sized reader, not a smaller pocket-sized one. I wanted something sturdy, since I can be rough on books, tossing them into a totebag. I wanted something where I could download the books via computer, since we do not have wireless at home. And I wanted a longer battery life.

I settled on a Sony Reader, Touch Edition, model PRS-650. I like having the option of turning pages or marking things by either touching the screen or pressing a button. I liked the buttons on this model. I played with some of the others and worried that the buttons might not

work after heavy usage. It has audio capability so I can download an audio book as well. (As I'm a knitter, listening to books has appeal.) I love it. It's nice to be able to read while both your hands are busy, flossing your teeth. I let my husband try it, and he liked being able to search out a phrase in the book. (This came in handy when he was in a panel on a science fiction convention discussing the book.) The only thing I don't like is that, like real print, you can't read in the dark with it.

It occurred to me that there are probably a number of mythies with a variety of e-readers, so I asked for folks on the MythSoc list to talk about theirs.

Lisa Padol also went for a Sony reader, but she decided on the pocket version:

“ I've got a Sony Pocket Reader Pro. It was \$99 when I bought it last year. The first full fiction book I read on it was *The Windup Girl*, and I had no problem reading either that or *Cryoburn*, or some of the short fiction up for a Hugo, as far as sheer enjoyment / reading experience for content. Format is another matter. It doesn't handle PDFs well. The text for *Cryoburn* had some oddities of spacing. [Note: I buy books in the epub format. I have noticed some peculiarities with diacritical marks in some books. -BPB] The Sony [Pocket reader model] does not have a touch screen, which I don't mind. It does not connect to the Internet, which I actively approve of. It doesn't have a lot of space — it'll hold more like 30 books than 300, and it does not have a card slot or equivalent.

It works pretty well at a filksing, better than my laptop, because I can stand and hold it one handed and look up at the audience occasionally. I can read it when using an exercise bike, although it does slow down both reading and pedaling speed.

Many people have the Kindle, and everyone I know who has one loves it. You can buy beautiful “skins” to personalize the plastic and delight the eye. Jo Foster says,

“ I have a Kindle and love it, especially for travel. We too have a space issue with all our books. I have arranged them into groups as the Kindle allows so I don't have to go through pages of titles.

The Kindle app can be downloaded to the iPhone so you can also use your iPhone to read your Kindle books. Other e-reader/smart phone combinations are out there as well. Walter Padgett reports that he

“ loved Mobipocket Reader and used it daily to read books and articles on my Compaq Ipaq Pocket PC and then later on my Windows Mobile phone (HTC Touch Diamond). The screen on that phone is quite small, but somehow I used to read ebooks more often using that tiny interface than I've read since upgrading to a device with a much larger screen. I now have an Android phone, and miss using Mobipocket Reader, as it is not available for the Android platform. Ebooks in the Mobipocket format can be converted to other formats that are compatible with Kindle and other readers, such as FB Reader or Aldiko Book Reader, that are available as apps for Android, but none of them that I have found have an onboard dictionary.

The Kindle faces stiff competition from Apple's iPad, which also can read Kindle-format and other e-books. I ran into a friend and she said that she has shifted all her reading to the iPad now. And Andy Higgins says of the iPad:

“ I find the Kindle app most helpful in reading old books online and love the



fact that one can have all of Joseph Wright's Primers of Gothic, Old Norse and Middle High German available. The Kindle store in addition to having the bestsellers also has an amazing collection through OpenLibrary of Free Books — I even found the volume of Oxford Poetry that includes Tolkien's early poem "Goblin Feet."

Lisa Harrigan speaks of another iPod/smart phone e-reader alternative:

“ I have an e-reader on my Palm PDA. The screen is almost big enough, and since it is always with me, it means that I always have a few books in my purse without taking up additional space. Readability is sometimes a bit wobbly, but I can enlarge the print to where these older eyes can see clear enough to not die of eye strain. Page turnings are more frequent, but that is easy with the touch sensitive screen. And books with footnotes are much easier to deal with, as the footnote is just a screen touch away. Still I can't read it in bright light, so I won't be using it at the pool any time soon.

I bought *The Hobbit* and *the Lord of the Rings* specifically so that I could have copies with me whenever I wanted them, and being able to search electronically was also a useful function. A Paper Index at the back of a book is nice, but direct search is some times more useful.

Barnes & Noble has been pushing its e-reader, the Nook, and it has a color model as well, something many of the others do not. Janet Brennan Croft writes,

“ I just got a Nook but have not had time to play with it yet! What I'm looking forward to is putting papers

I've written on it to read at conferences. Also I'm hoping that I can download the copies of the Miles Vorkosigan books that came with Bu-jold's *Cryoburn* onto it — the CD has each book in a number of formats, so there ought to be something that works.

What I mainly hope to do is upload copies of many public domain books in my hard copy library and gain a little shelf space — things like my collection of Greek plays and so on, that I might need to look at once a decade but like having handy.

One objection most of us have to e-readers is not being able to lend books as with hard copy. Evidently this is changing. Alana Abbot told me:

“ B&N [Barnes & Noble] account holders who buy e-books can use either their nook or B&N's Nook software for other platforms (I have it on my PC as well, just in case) to lend some e-books to other B&N account holders. Basically, if I buy an e-book from B&N and you have a B&N account that your e-mail address is attached to, I can lend you certain books. (The publishers decide whether or not a book can be loaned.) I "send" you the book. For two weeks, I can't read it, because you "have" it. You can read it on your Nook, or on your Nook software on another machine. As of now, I think loanable books can only be loaned once.

Libraries are now offering some e-book check-outs as well. Alana goes on to say,

“ The library option, which is run through Overdrive and uses Adobe Digital Editions (at least at my library — I know there are a couple of other

groups out there that do the same thing), is actually easier: I go to my library's e-book catalog, check out a book, and have four weeks (usually) to read the book before the file expires. I download it to Adobe Digital Editions on my computer, and I use that software to transfer it to my Nook. I know that Sony Readers can also be used this way, and it wouldn't surprise me if Kobo and some of the other indie readers could, too. Currently, from what I'm aware, Kindle can't because of software conflict issues (Adobe and Amazon software programs don't talk to each other). Adobe Digital Editions is also used by some of the galley programs I've taken part in, in much the same way: the e-book file expires when your time is up.

Jo Foster writes that Amazon's Kindle has a similar set-up:

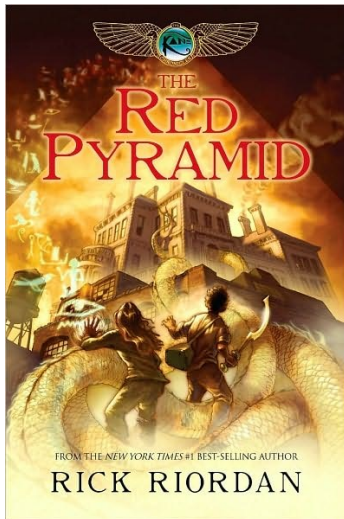
“ Here is the info from Kindle support: Eligible Kindle books can be loaned once for a period of 14 days. The borrower does not need to own a Kindle — Kindle books can also be read using our free Kindle reading applications for PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone, BlackBerry, and Android devices. Not all books are lendable — it is up to the publisher or rights holder to determine which titles are eligible for lending. The lender will not be able to read the book during the loan period.

So if you're thinking of getting an e-reader, I hope you find this information helpful. It may not be for everyone, but for those of us who are finding bulky books difficult to handle with our arthritic hands or who are bothered by the musty smell of old paper, it is a real convenience. (Thanks to all who contributed and allowed me to quote them for this article.) =

Two New Series Starters by Rick Riordan: *The Red Pyramid* and *The Lost Hero*. Reviewed by Alana Joli Abbott.

Rick Riordan hit the big time when Percy Jackson and the Olympians drew young fans across the globe. The Percy Jackson novels are told in first person from the point of view of an ADHD, dyslexic demi-god (most half-mortal children of the Greek Gods have ADHD, which gives them the reflexes for fighting monsters, and are dyslexic, because their brains are predisposed to read Ancient Greek rather than English). The books aren't quite as omnipresent as the Harry Potter novels, but they're huge sellers — and over the Christmas season, booksellers reported that the first two books in Riordan's two newest mythology series were making waves (and helping recover from what was reportedly otherwise a pretty bad year). *The Red Pyramid* is the starting novel in The Kane Chronicles, which deals with a league of magicians and ancient Egyptian gods. *The Lost Hero* takes off where the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series left off: Percy and friends may have saved the world from one great threat, but a bigger one may be on the way.

*The Red Pyramid* is narrated by siblings Carter and Sadie Kane in alternating first person. The conceit of the story is that they're creating a transcript for other kids whose lives are just about to get touched by cosmic powers — which works, especially in both the lead in and the close, which are designed to have kids believing that the story is real (just don't tell the grown-ups!). Carter and Sadie have unique voices. Carter, raised by their African-American archeologist dad, who was always on the move, is very aware of himself as a young, African-American man. He dresses very conservatively to prevent other travelers from viewing him with suspicion, for example. Sadie has been raised by their white British grandparents, and looks more like her mother than her father; she's grown up in one place, and her voice is distinguished not only by her use of British slang, but by her sense of the world as a stationary place,



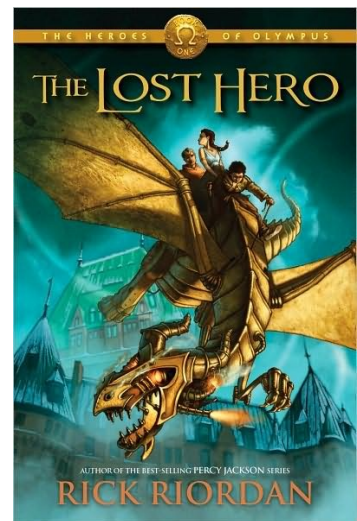
and her longing for both adventure — which she’s always assumed Carter has had without her — and for the feeling of being at home when the dangers they find themselves in cast them adrift. The novel begins as their father tries to complete a ritual that left Carter and Sadie’s

mother dead years before — and has him vanishing before their eyes, leaving them to the mercy of a mysterious group of magicians who are determined to keep the Egyptian gods from interfering with the world. Carter and Sadie, however, come to believe that the only way to keep chaos from overwhelming the world is working *with* the old gods, instead of against them. Accomplishing this, however, is easier said than done — and while the first volume ends with success (and even some happiness) for Carter and Sadie, it’s clear that their mission will take, most probably, another four books.

In *The Lost Hero*, Riordan returns to Camp Halfblood, the setting of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, this time with three new heroes — one who has mysteriously lost his memory, and two who are far more powerful than your average demi-god. Rather than using a first-person narrative, Riordan uses limited third person in this book — which works fantastically well for being able to take on the perspective of each of the three heroes without forcing a unique voice for each of them. Clearly, he can make that style work — but here, the changes between the narrators would be too jarring to be successful, particularly after the previous, single first-person narration of the previous Camp Halfblood books. Piper, the daughter of a famous actor, is a thief — or, as she explains, people just give her things, then end up regretting it later and reporting her. She wants her father’s love, and wants him to be-

lieve in her, but seems unable to get his attention unless she’s getting in trouble. Now that he’s missing, she’s determined to do anything to get him back — even if it means betraying her friends. Leo not only has a way with tools, he has a way with fire — but that’s a secret he’s not willing to share with even his closest pals, because he believes he’s at fault for his mother’s death. Jason doesn’t remember his past, but he remembers some things about the world, and although everyone else he knows seems to see the world through a Greek lens, his view is entirely Roman. What the three of them have to uncover on their quest is a secret that has been kept from the other demi-gods for centuries, and it has everything to do with why Percy Jackson has gone missing. Like Riordan’s other books, *The Lost Hero* has a great sense of pacing, but an even better sense of *fun*. The characters all have real desires and real worries, and they seriously consider the consequences of their choices (something that can’t be said of all main characters in novels for this age group), but despite those qualities, they have moments of lightheartedness, of enjoying each other’s company, and of giving each other hope and support. Riordan had to raise the stakes for saving the world to continue the series, but the writing in this book definitely seems up to the task — and I suspect that more heroes (probably some of the favorites from the Percy Jackson series) will become part of the narrative as the story moves on.

Overall, each book is a strong launch to a new series — readers who followed the Percy Jackson series will find a lot of the same things to love here, and will be glad for more adventures in Riordan’s steeped-in-myth world. ≡



**Gospel Echoes in Fantastic Fiction.** Part 2 of 2.  
By Travis Buchanan.

Resuming where we left off in part one of this essay, we will now consider the two remaining qualities of 'fairy-stories' from J.R.R. Tolkien's essay on that topic, Escape and Consolation, and why he thought the gospel could be heard to echo through these qualities in particular.

Escape 'is one of the main functions of fairy-stories' (*OFS*, 53), and therefore it is no surprise that fantasy literature is often disparagingly accused of being 'escapist', as Tolkien acknowledged. However, Tolkien thought those critics who so accuse fantasy have misunderstood the type of escape offered. In short, they have mistaken the flight of prisoner for that of the deserter. But 'Why should a man be scorned,' Tolkien queried,

if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. (54)

As we saw with the quality of Recovery, then, fantasy literature may actually serve to take its reader deeper into, and not away from, reality. G.K. Chesterton, an Anglo-Catholic writer from an earlier generation beloved of both Tolkien and Lewis, and whose prodigious imagination and incisive wit also occasionally expressed itself through fantasy, memorably stated the paradox as follows: 'No; the vision is always solid and reliable. The vision is always a fact. It is the reality that is often a fraud' (Chesterton 2006, 33).

Though lesser degrees of Consolation are to be sought and found in fairy-stories through the 'imaginative satisfaction' of these 'ancient desires' (*OFS*, 60) such as escaping from prison or the ultimate jailer, death, it is 'the Consolation of the Happy Ending' that is most significant. The 'Eucatastrophe' ('good catastrophe') is the

term from ancient rhetoric Tolkien appropriated to describe the 'true form' and 'highest function' of fairy-stories — the unexpected 'turn' in the story which takes the reader from the brink of despair to the joyful consolation of the Happy Ending. But there is more. In the *eucatastrophe* 'we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater — it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world' (62). Therefore it followed for Tolkien that 'The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories' including the 'most complete conceivable eucatastrophe' (62) — the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the God-man. If this is so, then God has chosen a means to redeem man consonant with his nature as a sub-creator and myth-maker, as Tolkien sought to explain to his son Christopher once in a letter:

Of course I do not mean that the Gospels tell what is *only* a fairy-story; but I do mean very strongly that they do tell a fairy-story: the greatest. Man the story-teller would have to be redeemed in a manner consonant with his nature: by a moving story. *But* since the author of it is the supreme Artist and the Author of Reality, this one was also made [...] to be true on the Primary Plane. So that in the Primary Miracle (the Resurrection) and the lesser Christian miracles too though less, you have [...] a glimpse that is actually a ray of light through the very chinks of the universe about us. (*Letters*, 100–1)

The immense difference therefore between the fairy-story elements of the Gospels and other fairy-stories is that the Christian story 'has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation' (*OFS*, 62). In other words, God did not merely walk through the pages of a book or the imaginations of those listening to a story but through the dry dust of first-century Judea. Jesus was not merely a type,

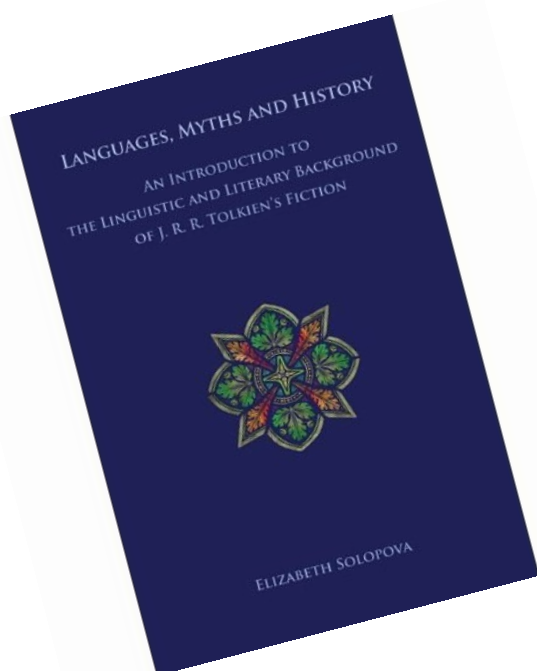


a symbol of the dying God in some remote, unspecified time and location — he was God incarnate who ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate’, as the creed states, and was condemned to die by this historical Roman governor of Judea, and promptly crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem. The gospel story is the ‘true’ myth, myth become fact, myth incarnate in primary reality. As Tolkien concluded: ‘this story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men — and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused’ (63).

And so this in the end may be the reason for the widespread and enduring appeal of fantasy literature (and of *stories* generally) to humanity — that through the fantastic, subcreative worlds of a Tolkien or a Lewis, even a J.K. Rowling or a Stephenie Meyer, primary truth may not only be tasted, but the voice of Ultimate Truth Himself overheard, even if only in echo. =

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Elizabeth Solopova. *Languages, Myths and History: An Introduction to the Linguistic and Literary Background of J.R.R. Tolkien's Fiction*. North Landing Books, 2009. 107 pp. \$16.24 (softcover). ISBN 978-0981660714. Reviewed by Larry Swain.

In this slim book, Elizabeth Solopova has provided a work that is difficult to describe. The audience of the book is really her own students; she wrote the introduction specifically to address students who were encountering Tolkien's fiction for the first time. And in that regard the book succeeds very well. I would use it, in fact, in a similar course. There is simply no other succinct and effective treatment of Tolkien the academic, the influence of some of the more important languages on his imagination, and a description of those languages as they pertain to the world of Middle-earth.

For the experienced Tolkien fan who has dipped into some of the standard works on Tolkien studies, such as Carpenter's biography and edition of letters, one or both of Tom Shippey's works, and other such standards, Solopova offers little that is new or revelatory. But that little in my view is well worth the modesty of the book. The two best examples of those gold nuggets are the chapters on Finnish and Gothic. While it is well known that Tolkien was interested in these languages and their literatures, there are few Tolkien scholars who have done any extensive commentary on the nature and depth of their influence on Tolkien. Solopova begins to redress that lack.

But she does go further. Not only does she discuss Gothic, but she discusses the influence of the Goths themselves, who come to us chiefly through Roman sources. Solopova in her chapter on Gothic provides the most readily available translation of “The Battle of Catalaunian Fields” from Jordanes's *History of the Goths* (to use its English title). This battle scene seems to be the template for the charge of the Rohirrim at Pelennor Fields in *The Lord of the Rings*. Although she is using the standard translation of Jordanes's work, done in 1915, at least in North

America, Solopova's book is more readily available. Those two chapters, in my view, make this little book worth owning by Tolkien neophytes and advanced scholars alike.

Each chapter concludes with a brief "Further Reading" section. More importantly, however, is that bibliography at the back of the text. Solopova has gathered together not just the typical and necessary foundational Tolkien scholarship, but she has also included works referring to primary literature in the discussed languages and select scholarship on those languages and literatures. The bibliography will be a significant aid to any classroom or independent Tolkien fan.

There are weaknesses, some of which Solopova herself admits in the beginning of the book. There is no treatment of any of the Celtic languages; nor is there any comment on the influence of Hebrew (slight though it was) on the language of the Dwarves. Most glaring, however, is the lack of any comment on Tolkien's work in Middle English and its influence on his work, nor in Latin and Greek. Some of this is not surprising; no one, not even a scholar of Solopova's talent, can be expert in everything. The book can only cover areas in which the author has knowledge and expertise. Nonetheless, some of these gaps are regrettable.

Finally, I would like to comment on the usefulness of this book in a particular context, the context in fact from which it sprang and for which it was written: the undergraduate literature course in Tolkien. For that purpose, this book is an excellent tool, and taken in conjunction with Solopova's *Keys to Middle Earth*, co-authored with Stuart Lee, both books provide a foundation in the principal languages and literatures that influenced Tolkien and provided him a number of sources for images and scenes in his stories in Middle-earth. I thus recommend the book, even for the experienced Tolkien fan and scholar. ≡

#### Mythcon 42 Approaches. By Leslie A. Donovan.

On ancient desert sands under endless skies with mythical sunsets, Mythcon 42 calls forth scholars, students, and special guests to Albuquerque, NM, July 15–18. This year's theme, "Monsters, Marvels, and Minstrels: The Rise of Modern Medievalism," celebrates the 75th anniversary of both C.S. Lewis's *Allegory of Love* and J.R.R. Tolkien's lecture "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics."

To personify this theme, Mythcon 42 proudly welcomes Catherynne M. Valente and Professor Michael D.C. Drout as our Guests of Honor. Author of *The Orphan's Tales* series and *Palimpsest*, Valente is sure to electrify the Mythcon atmosphere with her contemporary twists on developing alternative realities and interlacing mythic themes and structures. A co-editor of *Tolkien Studies* and past Mythopoeic Scholarship award winner, Drout will captivate audiences with his wide expertise on Tolkien, especially his comprehensive knowledge of Tolkien's famous lecture, which this conference will commemorate.

Continuing last year's trend toward more comfortable accommodations, this year's attendees will enjoy the High Desert style of the MCM Elegante Hotel, with spacious guest rooms, a full service restaurant, indoor pool with sundeck and jacuzzi, and complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport, malls, and historic Old Town! Conference-goers also get 2 complimentary drinks to enjoy at the hotel bar each night under the star-filled skies of Albuquerque.

In addition, this year's Mythcon will easily satisfy fantasy writers, scholars, and fans alike by featuring a host of other fantasy authors and artists from around the Southwest, who will present as part of the newly formed Writers' and Artists' Tracks. Topics for the 2011 Tracks are likely to include, "An Inkling of an Idea: How to Shape a Network of Writers," "Tell Me More: From Single Book to Successful Series," "It's About a Quest: Pitching Your Idea to Publishers, Agents, Editors, and Readers," and "What in the World: The Musts and Maybes for Creating Successful Worlds."

From the dazzling Guests of Honor to the enchanted landscapes of New Mexico, this year's conference promises to delight regular attendees and newcomers! Participants and guests should register online at: [REDACTED]. For questions, please direct correspondence to [REDACTED]. ≡



Kelly Meding. *As Lie the Dead*. Dell, 2010. 432 pp. \$7.99 (mass market). ISBN 978-0553592870. Reviewed by Alana Joli Abbott.

Moments after the conclusion of *Three Days to Dead*, Evy Stone is ready for a long nap, a vacation, and generally permission not to be involved in any high-stakes, life-changing events. She's still getting used to her new body and the Gifts that came with it — after having been murdered by goblins, she was resurrected into the body of Chalice Frost, and when the spell reached its completion, she found that not only is she sharing Chalice's body, but many of her emotional memories as well. Really, Evy is hoping for a little time to figure out herself, and maybe figure out her new relationship with Wyatt Truman, the man who brought her back to life, and who loves her, but for whom she hadn't had any romantic feelings in her old body. It's hard for Evy to get close to anyone after a childhood of continually being abandoned and a life of violence trying to keep humanity safe from things that go bump in the night. A few days off is just the start of what Evy needs to get her head around where she goes from here.

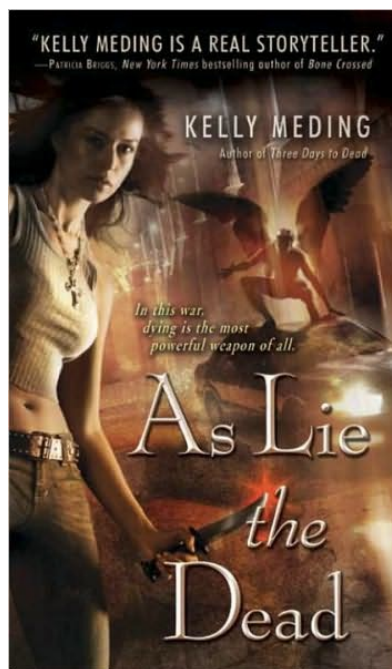
But since a vacation wouldn't be a very good way to start a new novel, Evy hardly gets an hour off before she's smack dab in the middle of another time limit: find the person behind the brutal murders of all of the city's Owlkin (bird shape shifters), or her friend and ally Rufus St. James will be handed over to the council of shape shifters to be executed. It's an impossible task, and one that involves having to betray the Triads, the organization that gave Evy a goal in life before they betrayed her and tried to hunt her down. But more than that, Evy has a lot to learn about what it means to side with the people she's always referred to as "Dregs" — the magical creatures

that the Triads teach are nothing but a threat to humanity. There's a whole world of complexity beneath the simple assumptions she was taught, and Evy doesn't have a lot of time to unravel how she fits into this brave new world, find the greater threat, and save the life of her friend.

Most second novels don't begin quite so immediately after the heroine's first adventure, but it's important to the story that Evy is on a limited time budget. It's not just that the time constraints give the novels a 24-like feel, though that may be part of it. Evy gets no breaks because so much of the story is what's happening in Evy's head. While the plot revolves around Evy's quest to clear the name of her friend — and, as her investigation progresses, stop a Dreg coalition, run by a human, from starting a war with the Triads and slaughtering hundreds of innocent humans — that's almost the background against which Evy's real drama is set. Dying and being reborn would have been enough for emotional trauma on its own. Dying and being reborn in a body that doesn't have muscle memory for the life you had before, that is attracted to different men, and that prompts memories and emotions based on smells and sights the old consciousness experienced — that means a complete shift in self-awareness. Evy is both the person she was, and the new person she's become. The change scares her and makes

her feel vulnerable, emotions she's prone to fight just as much as she'd like to fight the Dregs. But the changes also bring new awareness and understanding, giving her the possibility of a life that has meaning rather than purpose, that has real friendships rather than just alliances and team bonding. The core of Evy's story is coming into that understanding, and being willing to stop clinging to her desire not to change.

All, of course, while living the action heroine life fitting of an urban fantasy star. ≡



The Mythopoeic Society



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