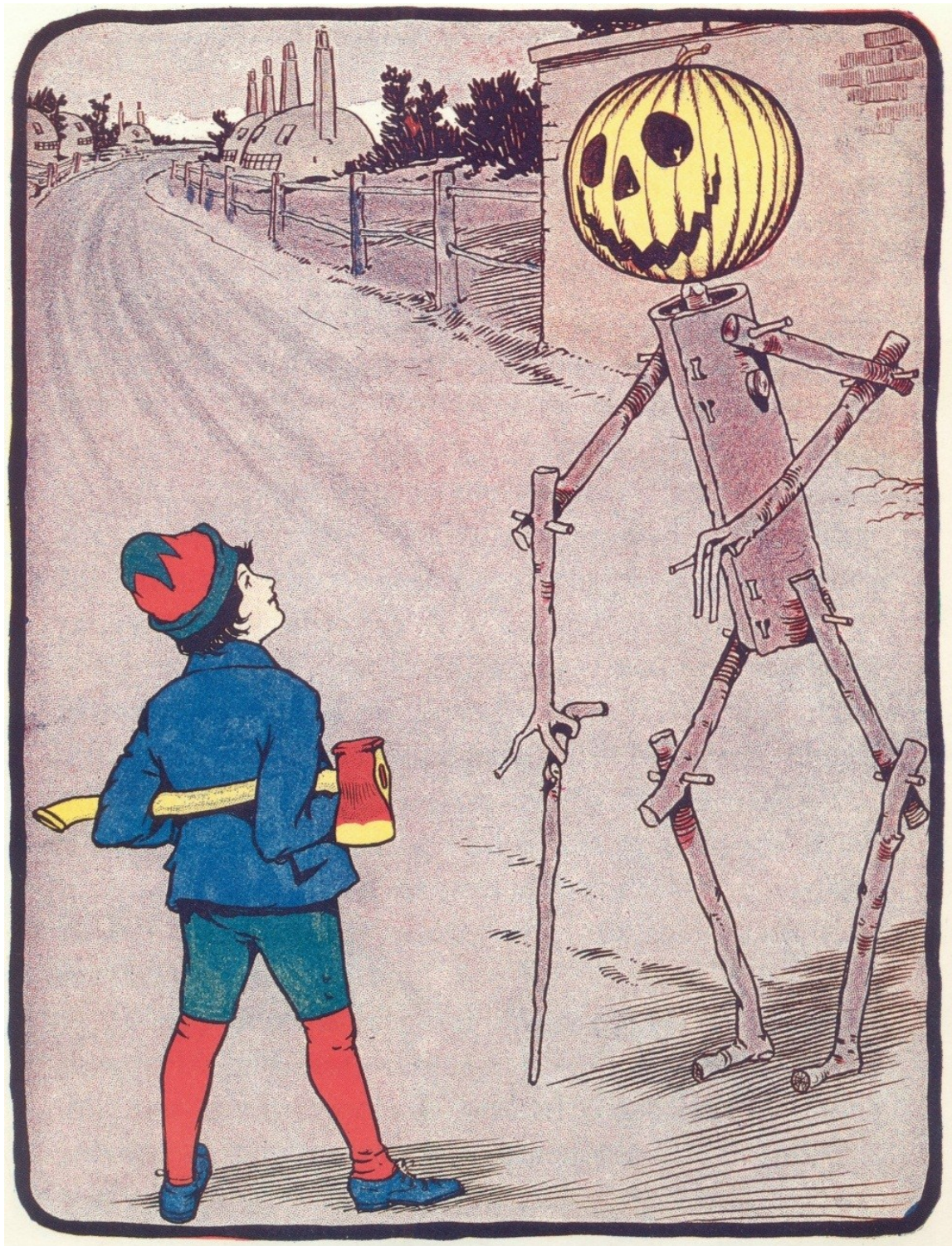


mythprint



The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL.48 NO.7

JULY 2011

WHOLE NO.348



The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL.48 NO.7

JULY 2011

WHOLE NO.348

TABLE of CONTENTS

FEATURES

The Hebrew and Elvish Languages: Why Do So Many Elves Have Jewish Names? By Zak Cramer	3
New and Forthcoming Books	6

Cover Art: *Tip stood the figure up and admired it,*
by John R. Neill, from *The Marvelous Land of Oz*
(Reilly & Britton, 1904). [public domain]

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*



Send other Correspondence to:

Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary



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 (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). Sub-
scriptions and back issues of Society publications may be
purchased directly thorough our web site (using PayPal or
Discover card), or you may contact:

Mythopoeic Society Orders Department



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

REVIEWS

<i>Toward the Gleam</i> — Another Perspective. By Doug Kane	4
Cherie Priest. <i>Bloodshot</i> . Reviewed by Berni Phillips Bratman	5
Ethan Gilsdorf. <i>Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks</i> . Reviewed by Harley J. Sims	7
Carl Phelpstead. <i>Tolkien and Wales: Language, Literature and Identity</i> . Reviewed by Damien Bador	8
Valerie Estelle Frankel. <i>From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend</i> . Reviewed by Hugh H. Davis	10
Lisa Mantchev. <i>Perchance to Dream</i> . Reviewed by Pauline J. Alama	11

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 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 RATES

	Members	Institutions/Non-members
First Class U.S.	Included	\$25/year
Canada/Mexico	+ \$7/year	\$32/year
Rest of the world	+ \$16/year	\$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, © 2011 The Mythopoeic Society

The Hebrew and Elvish Languages: Why Do So Many Elves Have Jewish Names? By Zak Cramer

Why do so many of the Elves in Tolkien's legendarium have Jewish names? This is a naïve question, perhaps. But consider names like Galadriel and Tinúviel. I believe they are inspired by a Hebrew language naming tradition. That tradition constructs names by using a root (usually, but not always, trilateral — that is, three consonants with vowels) and a theomorphic suffix — *El*, in Hebrew, meaning “God.” So, for instance, a name like Raphael is composed of the root *raphah* (healing) and the ending *El*, and means “God heals.” It is also the traditional name of the angel of healing, the theomorphic ending indicating a supernatural power or divine agent rather than divinity proper. Hebrew names like Daniel, Gabriel, Michael, and Ariel are similarly constructed. If one turns to medieval texts, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and, most especially, the magical and mystical literature, both ancient and medieval, one finds literally thousands of angels named in this way. Why does the name Galadriel seem so appropriate to our ears as the name of a high Elf? I think that it is because we are used to angels being named in this way. The name has, for speakers of Western languages, just the right balance of the familiar and the exotic.

In 1968, Tolkien wrote a letter concerning similarities between his fictional vocabulary and some of William Blake's invented words. Tolkien says that he had just been reading Blake's prophetic books and: “discovered to my astonishment several similarities of nomenclature ... eg: Tiriël, Vala, Orc Most of Blake's invented names are as alien to me as his ‘mythology’ ... nor due to any imitation on my part: his mind ... and art ... have no attraction for me at all. Invented names are likely to show chance similarities between writers familiar with Greek, Latin, and especially Hebrew nomenclature.”¹

Chance similarities between Blake's invented names and Tolkien's occur because both authors are familiar with classical languages — especially Hebrew. The letter goes on to consider the origin of the word *Orc* as derived from Old English and Latin — but it seems obvious that the reference to Hebrew is about the similarity between Tiriël and names like Galadriel and Tinúviel.

This becomes all the more interesting when one considers Tolkien's own middle name, Reuel. This was a family name that he inherited from his father, and that he in turn gave to each of his four children, who gave it to their children.² Reuel is a Hebrew name, composed of the root *Reah*, friend, plus the

theomorphic ending. It is one of the names by which Jethro is known in the Bible — the intention being perhaps that Jethro was a friend of Moses. The similarity of sound between the Hebrew word *El* and the English word *elf* has no real-world significance and is only a coincidence, but one cannot help but notice the resonance between Reuel, meaning El's Friend, and the important Middle-earth name Elendil, meaning Elf Friend. I do not mean to suggest a direct semantic relationship — but the resonance is intriguing, and, I would suggest, points to a subtle relationship between the language of the Elves and the language of the Bible.

Names are not the only way that the Elvish languages seem to be inspired by Hebrew forms. The Sindarin name for the people of Rohan is Rohirrim. Collective nouns like Rohirrim and Haradrim are formed with the suffix *rim*. In Hebrew, collective nouns are formed by adding the ending *im* to the root word. The *rim* and *im* endings do not map to one another exactly, but to anyone familiar with Hebrew the two are sufficiently close so as to sound like a Hebrew collective noun. This could be a coincidence, and, in fact, Tolkien claimed that it was.³ But if we add this to the other places where Tolkien showed Hebrew inspiration, can we really dismiss it so easily? Tolkien had some knowledge of and interest in Hebrew. This is suggested by his letter about William Blake quoted above, and established by the uncontroversial Hebrew elements in the language of Dwarves, Khuzdul, and the language of Numenor, Adûnaic. I do not have the space here to discuss these other languages, but for those interested I did so in my paper ‘Jewish Influences in Middle-earth’ published in *Mal-lorn* in 2006.⁴

Tengwar is the alphabet with which Elvish languages were written. One of its interesting characteristics is that the letters represent only the consonants. Vowels are written by making marks above and below the line of consonants. Such a way of writing would be attractive to a linguist like Tolkien, since it so clearly differentiates between these two linguistic entities — consonants and vowels. The interesting thing is that Semitic languages, including Hebrew, are written in just this same way. Originally Hebrew was written without vowels altogether. But in the course of time, when the Jewish people came to speak many other languages, the scribes and the sages worried that the correct pronunciation of the Biblical text would be lost. So they invented a system of pointing — dots and dashes above and below the letters — to indicate the correct vowel sounds. Throughout the Middle Ages until today, Hebrew could be written

either with or without the vowels. And when it is written with the vowel points, it resembles Tengwar ... at least in this one way.

It would be interesting to catalog all the pseudo-Hebraisms in the legendarium, but I hope that the little that I have offered here is sufficiently engaging so as to inspire others to at least consider the possibility that there is a Hebraic echo in the languages of the Elves. If that possibility can be accepted, then other names and words that are less obviously Hebraic can be regarded in a new light. For instance, names like Aman and Gil-galad might reproduce the Hebrew trilateral root, and names like Amroth or Morgoth or Nan Elmoth reproduce a trilateral root with a Hebrew plural ending *oth*. The name Melkor echoes the Biblical Moloch. Elvish might also be seen to contain numerous examples resembling the Hebrew genitive. The genitive of a female noun ending in *ah* changes its ending to *ath* and precedes the noun it is in a genitive relationship with. Sammath Naur, the chambers of fire in Mount Doom where The One Ring was made and unmade, would seem to imitate just such a construction. This is especially so when one considers that Naur recapitulates the Hebrew word for “lamp” or “fire.” These examples may be able to be explained in other ways, but Tolkien’s work is marked by its richness. One word may evoke more than one echo. If Aman, for instance, reminds us of words in northern European languages, it does not mean that its echo of Hebrew *amen* (truth, certainty) did not also play a role in its attraction for Tolkien.

Tolkien was a philologist, a student of the history of texts and their languages. His creative work is also an extended meditation on the manner in which we know our history through texts and fragments of texts and variant traditions, high and low. And he was a religious Catholic. It is hard to believe that he had no interest at all in the textual history of the Hebrew Bible. I hear the echoes of Biblical language in the language of the Elves. I hear the echoes of angelic names in Elvish names. Is it really so hard to believe that those echoes are real? ≡

¹ Hammond, W.G. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 25

² McClusky, Joan, “J.R.R. Tolkien: A Short Biography”, in *A Tolkien Treasury*, ed. Alida Becker (Philadelphia, Courage Books, 2000), p. 9–42

³ *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter, letter # 144, to Naomi Mitchison

⁴ *Mallorn* 44 (2006), 9–16

בְּרֵאשִׁית, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ.

Toward the Gleam — Another Perspective.

By Doug Kane.

I was very interested to see Sarah Beach’s review of T.M. Doran’s Tolkien-related novel, *Toward the Gleam*, in the June issue of *Mythprint*, because I myself was just finishing reading the novel at the time that I read her review. In a strange coincidence, the same thing had happened when Sarah’s review of another Inklings novel, David Downing’s *Looking for the King*, appeared in the January issue of *Mythprint*. The difference is that her review of Downing’s book captured my own opinion of that book very closely. However, I had a distinctly different response to Doran’s book than she did.

Towards the Gleam is an unusual book in that I actually liked it a lot even though I did not find it especially well-written. It’s not surprising to me to learn that the author is a professor of engineering, not a professional author. The book has a very herky-jerky feel, jumping from place to place, with virtually non-existent transitions between the various scenes. But unlike Sarah, I thought it presented a very nuanced and compelling picture of Tolkien. And it *is* Tolkien; the “John Hill” that the book refers to is the alter-ego that he adapts in his quest to discover the source of the mysterious manuscript he has discovered (the author specifically states that this was inspired by the hero in the manuscript adopting the name “Underhill” when he left his home). At one point fairly early in the book a student representing an unidentified movement says to him (in the course of a discussion about a devotional picture which Tolkien makes clear he believes is more than just art), “You aren’t an easy man to label.” I think that is an apt description of both Tolkien and his art, both of which evade easy classification.

Sarah’s biggest complaint seems to be that he does not cite scripture in the course of the philosophical debates that form the core of the book. Nonetheless, it is quite clear to me what “side” he is on, and I found it refreshing to have that presented *without* scriptural citation — just as I find the religious connotations of Tolkien’s own work more compelling than Lewis’s, because they are presented in a much more subtle matter, without the heavy-handed allegory that weighs down much of Lewis’s work. I thought it was interesting that she dismisses the “*deus ex machina*” in the defeat of the Bad Guy”; whereas I thought that that the denouement cleverly paralleled that of *The Lord of the Rings*, in which providence takes a hand in rescuing the situation from certain disaster. I also found it surprising that she did not

understand why it was that “John” felt it so necessary to keep the information out of the hands of chief adversary of the book (the “Bad Guy” as she puts it, though Doran is never so unsubtle); whereas I thought it was crystal clear that the manuscript contained information that would allow this brilliant but morally bankrupt man to devise and wield an instrument of great power, the danger of which is self-evident (just as it is self-evident, for instance, why it would have been disastrous for Saruman to have obtained the Ring). In addition, I thought the subtle hints throughout the book connecting the lost manuscript to Tolkien’s legendarium that would only be obvious to someone very familiar with Tolkien’s work were a great touch. I found that to be much more effective than the very stilted device that Downing used in *Looking for the King* of having the members of the Inklings that appear in that book speak with lines quoted from things that they themselves had written.

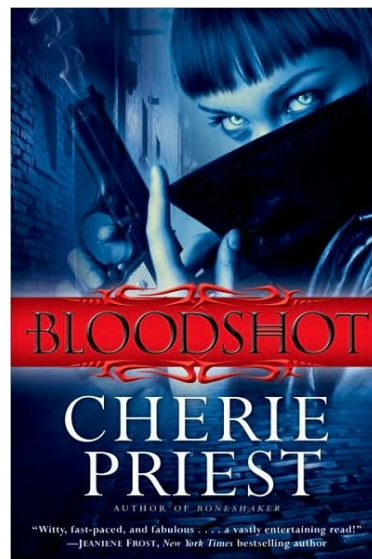
There are some biographical items in the book that are incorrect, although it is unclear whether that is due to willful obfuscation, or simple lack of knowledge. For instance, “E.M” (Edith), “Jack” (C.S. Lewis, of course) and “Owen” (Barfield) all address Tolkien as “John” even when he is not pretending to be John Hill, and as we all know, Tolkien’s intimates did not address him by that name, using instead his middle name Ronald (or the nickname Tollers, or his last name). Indeed, this Tolkien is much more willing to be addressed in a familiar way even by people that he has just met than the real-world Tolkien was. And he is reported as reading to the Inklings what is obviously the story of *The Lord of the Rings* — he reads “a part of the story where the Hero and his companions left their homes, pursued by a terrible menace and not knowing where their path would take them,” an obvious reference to Frodo and his companions being chased by the Black Riders — in 1931, considerably earlier than we know that he actually did so. But as this is not meant to be a biography, such details are not particularly bothersome, at least not to me.

One biographical area that he addresses in a surprisingly subtle way is Tolkien’s relationship with Edith (though I do agree with Sarah that it is odd and somewhat off-putting that Edith is referred to through out as “E.M.”). It is not unknown that there was some tension in Tolkien’s long marriage, although it is not something that biographers or scholars have focused on. Edith/E.M. is presented by Doran in a sympathetic and complimentary manner, but he also manages to effectively illuminate how Tolkien’s obsession with his legendarium (over and

above his other professional duties), and his close friendships in the male-dominated world of Oxford in general and the Inklings in particular, caused tension in their relationship, without undermining the sense of their ultimate devotion to each other. I found the scene towards the end of the book of them together in their old age to be quite moving.

Most of all, I thought the book did a great job of addressing philosophical issues without using a sledgehammer (an often rare talent), in the context of an intriguing and fun mystery story, with plenty of colorful and interesting characters (including both well-known real people and fictional personages) throughout. Though flawed, I found it to be both enjoyable and thought-provoking in a positive way. ≡

Cherie Priest. *Bloodshot*. Ballantine, 2011. 359 pp. \$15.00 (softcover). ISBN 978-0345520609. Reviewed by Berni Phillips Bratman.



Vampires remain popular in fiction, and *Bloodshot* is a prime example of why this is so. Switching gears from her popular steampunk trilogy, *The Clockwork Century*, Cherie Priest dives into urban fantasy in a sort of vampire noir novel.

Raylene Pendle is a vampire and successful finder of lost things. Of course, they were not generally lost before she found them, but she doesn’t quibble over details like that. She prides herself on being so successful and androgynous that government agencies don’t even know what sex she is, much less that she’s a vampire. She stores her loot in a seemingly abandoned warehouse in Seattle, a warehouse that is now home to two scruffy runaways whom she refuses to think of as her pets.

A lone wolf among vampires, Raylene is surprised to be approached about a job by one of her own kind. Vamps are usually pretty self-sufficient, having no need of her services. This one is different. Ian Stott is a vampire, but he’s a blind vampire. His sight was taken from him when he was forcibly detained by a mysterious government project known as

Project Bloodshot. He wants Raylene to find the paperwork from that project in the hopes that it may help a doctor give Ian back his sight.

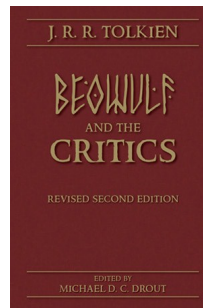
Concurrent with her meeting with Ian, Raylene's runaways report that the warehouse has been infiltrated. She returns quickly to encounter a man who claims to be an urban explorer and practitioner of parcoure (or parkour as it is Americanized).

I knew from her blog that Priest has an interest in urban exploration – basically trespassing in abandoned buildings to see and perhaps photograph what has been left inside – but parkour was unfamiliar. She explains what it is in the text of the novel. Here is what *Wikipedia* has to say about it: “**Parkour** (sometimes abbreviated **PK**) is the non-competitive sport originating in France of traversing mainly urban landscapes by running, climbing and jumping. Participants run along a route, attempting to navigate obstacles in the most efficient way possible, using only their bodies. Skills such as vaulting, rolling, swinging and wall scaling are employed. Parkour can be practiced anywhere, but areas dense with obstacles are preferable and it is most commonly practiced in urban areas.” [from Wikipedia]

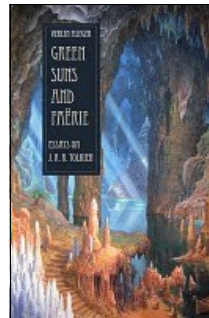
So, innocent trespasser or government Man in Black? When a girl's got to decide quickly, she tends to err on the side of caution, and that was the last parkour outing for him. Raylene winds up dashing around the country picking up inconspicuous cars and a highly conspicuous drag queen/ex-Navy SEAL as she hunts for evidence of the abomination which was Project Bloodshot.

Bloodshot is told in a folksy, occasionally profane, first-person narrative that keeps the story moving in a breathless pace. Priest is a skilled writer, giving us interesting characters who say clever things but do not impede the story with excessive chattiness. Her “info dumps” are well-integrated into the conversations without any awkward, “As you know, Bob”-isms. I was worried as I saw the page count diminishing that there would be a cliff-hanger ending and I would have to wait for the next volume to get the complete story. I was relieved to find that was not the case. While the ending may have been a bit rushed, Priest does not try to tie up all the loose ends. That adds to the credibility of her tale, for life doesn't always give use tidy endings. Instead we have come to a satisfying resting place, and it is certain that we will be following Raylene on some more outings. ≡

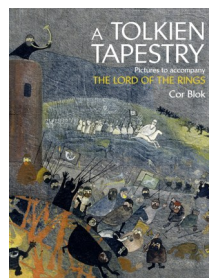
NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS



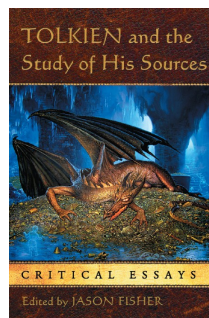
J.R.R. Tolkien. *Beowulf and the Critics* (Revised Second Edition). Edited by Michael D.C. Drout. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. 480 pp. \$58.00 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0866984508. July, 2011.



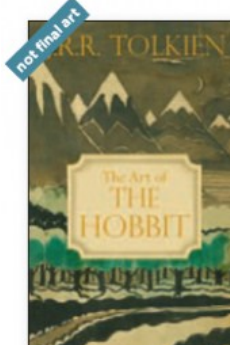
Verlyn Flieger. *Green Suns and Faërie: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien*. Kent State UP. 224 pp. \$24.95 (softcover). ISBN 978-1606350942. August, 2011.



Cor Block. *A Tolkien Tapestry: Pictures to accompany The Lord of the Rings*. HarperCollins. 160 pp. £20.00 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0007437986. September, 2011.



Jason Fisher, ed. *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays*. c. 325 pp. \$40 (softcover). ISBN 978-0786464821. Fall, 2011.



Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull. *The Art of The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien*. HarperCollins. 144 pp. (hardcover). ISBN 978-000744081-8. October, 2011.

Ethan Gilsdorf. *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: An Epic Quest for Reality Among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms*. The Lyons Press, 2009. 336 pp. \$14.95 (softcover). ISBN 1599219948. Reviewed by Harley J. Sims.

Like recent titles, *The Elfish Gene*, *Confessions of a Part-time Sorceress*, *In the Land of Invented Languages*, and—to an extent—Wil Wheaton’s *Just a Geek*, Ethan Gilsdorf’s *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks* represents a documentary-style genre of first-person narrative intended to provide a frank and in-depth look at fantasy-driven pursuits and mindsets. Ranging from role-playing games through fantasy-literature fanaticism to the pitched battles of the Society for Creative Anachronism and tours of New Zealand’s *Lord of the Rings* filming locations, Gilsdorf roves across a whole landscape of imaginative communities. It is a travelogue framed by the author’s soliloquies and impelled by his desire for therapeutic self-discovery. The book’s commodification of geekdom is nothing new, but the specific manner in which its author situates himself vis-à-vis his subjects will provoke readers in memorable ways.

Described as a “nonlinear, noncontiguous odyssey of self-reflection, cultural analysis, and free mead” (22), Gilsdorf’s pilgrimage includes stops at the gravesite of J.R.R. and Edith Mary Tolkien in Oxford, the birthplace of *Dungeons & Dragons* in Wisconsin, a castle construction site in Guédelon, France, and a number of conventions and role-playing events in the eastern United States. Gilsdorf relates the importance of each to his own understanding of fantasy and escapism, and introduces a number of personalities everywhere he goes. Just a few of the latter are a Harry Potter tribute band, a ‘recovered addict’ of computer role-playing games, and a forty-seven-year-old French Canadian whose life was transformed after watching the *LOTR* films and attending subsequent fantasy conventions. Along the way, Gilsdorf plays a well-endowed female elf in *World of Warcraft*, dons a tie-dyed bedsheet for a mock medieval battle, and spies on special-effects master Richard Taylor through the window of Weta Workshops in Wellington, New Zealand. He also tries LARPing (live-action role-playing)—likely the most extreme of the fantasy activities he samples. One of the most informative aspects of the book involves the terminology of its

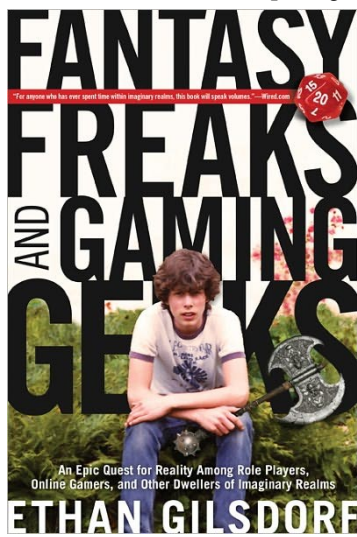
subject matter, including *filk* (“A musical genre that encompasses songs about novels and characters, computers, technology, pop culture and the culture of fandom itself” [301]) and *groggnard* (“Slang for war-gamer. Typically an experienced gamer who prefers the older version of a game or rules [302]). Besides this, there are some well-selected epigraphs, good photos, and a very thorough index.

Gilsdorf’s perspective on fantasy as an escape from the hardships of the real world is established in the prologue, entitled “The Momster.” It is a pun referring to the author’s single mother,

who, when he was twelve years old, suffered a freak aneurysm which left her with brain damage and a distorted personality. In the same year, 1979, he was introduced to *Dungeons & Dragons*, and the effect was instantaneous: “My crappy house faded around me. The peeling wallpaper, the mounds of dishes, the cigarette smoke, my mother’s limp. All of it disappeared” (xv).” So for six years—six hours every Friday—Gilsdorf would retreat into a make-believe world of swords and sorcery, forgetting for a time the tragic circumstances of his youth and reveling in the control fantasy role-playing afforded him. This passion

for the world’s best-selling tabletop RPG served to introduce Gilsdorf to works in other fantasy media, including the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien. It may sound stodgy to point out that this is historically the reverse of things, especially when far more young people have likely played role-playing games inspired by *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* than have read the books themselves. Nevertheless, it is important to keep this precedence in mind as one reads *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*, as it is central to the author’s perspective on the fantasy genre.

There is a great deal one might say about this book, part of which is that the author’s self-presentation is in many ways more interesting than his product. In my review of Arika Okrent’s *In the Land of Invented Languages* in *Mythlore* 111/112, I wrote of Okrent as holding a conflicted vantage on her subject matter; as a linguist, but someone who neither invents languages nor admires Fantasy and Science Fiction, she tries to assert dual citizenship—that is, being both an insider and an outsider—as she steps into the domain of her subject. The result is something that often seems unconsciously mean-spirited and exploitative, suggesting that perhaps the author was a little too close to the topic to be a docu-



mentarist, but too detached to serve as an actual authority on it. Gilsdorf, though far more self-deprecating than Okrent, is in much the same boat. Despite *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*'s cover photograph (showing a young Gilsdorf holding a computer-generated battle axe) and many (movie) quotes and asseverations within, the author is not the best ambassador for his subject. He even introduces himself to a rather indifferent Sean Astin at the 2008 Dragon*Con as a "reformed geek" (230). The prologue and most of the first chapter make a strong case for the author as a fantasy guy (more on the term 'freak' below), but it is clear that, after giving up Dungeons & Dragons in 1983 or so, Gilsdorf had next to nothing to do with the genre until Peter Jackson's *LOTR* films emerged between 2001 and 2003. It was at that time, as for tens of millions of other viewers, that Gilsdorf's dormant interest in dragons, elves, and wizards was ratified by the \$280-million trilogy, and he began to feel a sort of legitimized (and opportune) nostalgia for his dice-rolling days. Besides the gap of nearly twenty years, Gilsdorf states that he dropped his interest in fantasy due to some pretty mainstream competition ("college, sex, beer, cars, job, travel, and heartbreak" [11]), not only implying such things to be antithetical to his previous interests, but also referring to those interests as a "rite of passage" to relative adulthood.

To point this out is not to disqualify Gilsdorf from his own involvement with fantasy, but rather to suggest that a more objective mode of inquiry were adopted; most of the fantasy-types he talks to are themselves unapologetic and unselfconscious lifers, and my suspicion is that more fantasy-oriented people are likely to pick this book up than any other sort of reader. To both groups, the author will likely come across as a dilettante at best, at worst as a sort of troll or back-stabber. There are several places where Gilsdorf reports private disdain for the people he is trying to fit in with, and many more places where he disdains himself for having comparable interests. To follow the author's encounters with Tolkien experts, medievalist re-enactors, and grown women who play MMORPGs (massive multiplayer online RPGs) for dozens of hours a week, one feels that one should not have to wade through the author's constant musings and denials about his obvious midlife crisis, as well as about the potential 'geekiness' of what he and others are doing. With its excessive self-indulgence, embarrassing amount of self-disclosure, and apparent disregard for any specific audience, *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks* is a good specimen of what might be called postmodern nonfiction.

The book is not recommended for those who use fantasy as means of recovering and enriching their appreciation for the real world. What Gilsdorf provides is provocative insight into one man's mixed relationship with fantasy and fantasy gaming, in particular the attitude he cultivates towards those who share his interests and pursue them freely. The book's title is a perfect indicator of this attitude, and should serve to caution those imaginary-world aficionados who seem to think the word 'geek' worthy of appropriation; 'freak', on the same token, is by no usage positive, and it is telling that, by applying them to himself, the author presumes to condone these tags on behalf of all those he encounters. ≡



Carl Phelpstead. *Tolkien and Wales: Language, Literature and Identity*. University of Wales Press, 2011. 224 pp. \$25 (softcover). ISBN 978-0708323915. Reviewed by Damien Bador.

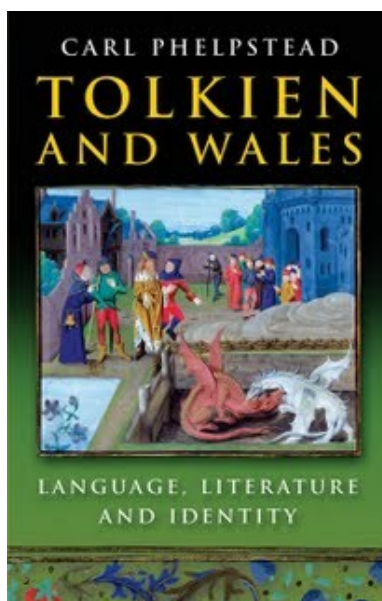
With this work, Carl Phelpstead corrects a flagrant injustice. Many books have studied the influence of Germanic or Finnish language and literature upon J.R.R. Tolkien, and rightly so, but nothing similar had yet been attempted for Wales, also a major source of inspiration for Tolkien, both for his academic and his literary works. Phelpstead's book focuses on Welsh language, literature, and identity in the British Islands. A short chronology mentioning events linked to Tolkien's interest for Wales, and a description of Tolkien's Welsh library, now hosted in the University of Oxford, complete his study. Examining the annotations left by Tolkien in his books is one of the strengths of *Tolkien and Wales*, as these annotations provide crucial evidence of Tolkien's interest in Welsh. Hence, the description of his Welsh library is particularly useful.

The first section of the book deals with Tolkien's Welsh studies. While it doesn't bring many new facts, it is interesting to see how Tolkien's expertise in Celtic and Germanic philology informed his academic research. Phelpstead provide a detailed analysis of the paper "English and Welsh", where Tolkien presented his theory of inherited linguistic predilections. According to the author, Tolkien's acute taste for languages made him sensitive to the interaction between history, language, peoples, and lands. Indeed, Tolkien was entranced by Welsh, but did not like Irish at all. He dismissed clichés on so-called Celtic characteristics, considering them to be grounded in unscientific beliefs.

Tolkien's taste for languages made him invent his own Elvish tongues, whose history soon became interwoven with the Middle-earth tales. Phelpstead reminds us that E.L. Epstein noticed the similarity between Sindarin and Welsh as early as 1969. However, it was only in *An Introduction to Elvish* (1978) that Jim Allan proved this to come from phonological and structural grounds rather than simple lexical borrowings. This chapter can serve as a useful introduction to Tolkien's language invention method, but we can only regret that the author chose to comment on secondary sources without bringing any new elements of his own. No linguistic manuscript published after *I-lam na-Ngoldathon* is discussed, which forecloses any serious discussion on the evolution of the language that ultimately became Sindarin.

The second section is perhaps the most interesting, though fans won't find any new information on *The Fall of Arthur* there. But nobody can blame Phelpstead for that. The first chapter deals with Tolkien's interest for Welsh mythology and the *Mabinogion*, whose first branch he partially translated. Phelpstead summarizes how Tolkien reused the Welsh matter through his Red Book of Westmarch, a fictive equivalent to the Red Book of Hergest. The similarity between Tolkienian Elves and Welsh *tylwyth teg* is mentioned, but not thoroughly studied. The ambiguous relationship between Tolkien and Arthurian literature clearly interested the author. He notes how Tolkien stressed the Celtic origin of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in his edition of this medieval text. He is also interested in Tolkien's literary inroads in the Arthurian matter, and summarizes what is known on the alliterative poem dealing with Arthur's demise. Phelpstead tracks down Arthurian echoes in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as Frodo's departure to Tol Eressëa. He shows how Merlin's figure is diffracted through the three *Istari*, in a reversal of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who aggregated several legendary figures to build his Merlin Ambrosius. The causes of Tolkien's dissatisfaction with Arthurian myths are investigated, and their "imperfectly naturalised" nature linked to the fact that they describe Anglo-Saxons as the enemy.

The last chapter in this section discusses Tolkien's interest in Breton legends — most noticeable in "The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun", which derives from the ballad "Aotrou Nann hag ar Gorrigan", published



by Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué in his *Barzaz-Breiz: chants populaires de la Bretagne* (1839). Phelpstead mentions Tolkien's archaic use of *Britons* and *Britain* to mean *Bretons* and *Brittany*, underscoring their links to Wales and Cornwall. The reuse of the legendary Breton name of *Meriadoc* in *The Lord of the Rings* is also mentioned, but nothing is said of the parallelism between the colonization of Brittany by Cornish people and the colonization of Buckland by Hobbits from the Marish.

In the last part, Phelpstead further explores the notion of identity in Tolkien's works. Not only did Tolkien distinguish between the various Celtic

peoples, but he was of the same mind for England, as shown by his frequent comments about his Mercian origins. Thus, his conception of peoples seems to be rooted in the early Middle Ages, when each Anglo-Saxon kingdom maintained its independence while being open to external influences. Referring to Mercia, the English "March" at the Welsh boundaries shows that Tolkien's passion for Welsh was an integral part of his English identity.

Phelpstead's style can sometimes seem too academic, but this is compensated for by the thoroughness of his documentation. The endnotes are particularly numerous, covering more than 40 pages out of a total of 183. A couple of mistakes suggest that the author is more familiar with medieval Welsh literature than with Tolkien's writings. He mistakenly claims that all Hobbits came from the Angle between Hoarwell and Loudwater (p. 19), whereas only the Stoors went to this region during their westward migration. Elsewhere, Phelpstead seems to mix up the various Teleri tribes and suggests that the Noldor's return to Middle-earth was a consequence of an exile imposed by the Valar for their disobedience, quite a regrettable misinterpretation (p. 44). Fortunately, these errors have no influence on the main topic.

In the end, this book will surely interest Tolkien's fans who would like to learn more about his Welsh sources of inspiration. The mutual influence of literature and linguistics in Tolkien's works is particularly well described, and this confirms the usefulness of such an approach. The study of Tolkien's academic works is interesting, and their impact on his literary inventions well documented. Still, many parallels mentioned would have deserved a closer examination, rather than being potted in a mere paragraph. ≡

Valerie Estelle Frankel. *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend*. McFarland, 2010. Print. 376 pp. \$35 (softcover). ISBN 978-0786448319. Reviewed by Hugh H. Davis.

When I was working on my thesis, my advisor gave me advice which still resonates strongly with me today, when he noted, "I've never read an academic book I wished were longer." His hint was for this would-be scholar, fond of lengthy analysis and verbose discussion, to aim for brevity, but it also caused me to realize how often academic texts can, in fact, push the boundaries of suitable length. However, while reading *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend*, I thought I had found the book to serve as exception to my advisor's rule. Frankel's book is so enthusiastically written, so thoroughly researched, and so articulately argued that it leaves the reader anticipating each subsequent chapter, enjoying each exemplary tale, and longing for further discussion.

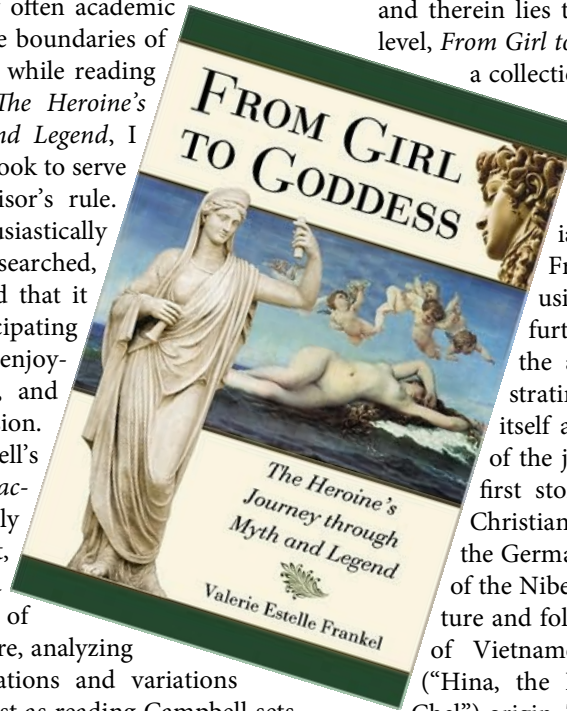
Like Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, the book most naturally evoked by this text, Frankel's volume is a journey through years of myth, legend, and literature, analyzing and considering permutations and variations through different texts. Just as reading Campbell sets in motion a series of associations and allusions, moments of recognition by the reader of other examples which fit the archetypes which form the hero's journey, reading Frankel sets in motion its own series of moments of inspiration, providing for readers a parallel framework for the heroine's journey. Throughout the reading, the analysis evokes memories of further texts and stories, as Frankel outlines that framework, revealing the durability of this archetypal journey. *From Girl to Goddess* shares a clear heritage with Campbell's seminal text, but the danger in noting that comparison is to suggest this is simply a feminine-sided approach to Campbellian myth. In fact, Frankel's very point is that the stories she is writing about should not be discussed reductively by forcing them into Campbell's patterns. While the similarities of the journeys are clear, their natures differ significantly enough that this text should be seen not as merely a companion which covers the "other side of

the story." Frankel does not attempt to challenge Campbellian notions but to augment them with further discussion which prompts (re)evaluation of many varied texts. Frankel's book stands well alongside Campbell's as an intelligent and insightful consideration of fantastic literature and legend which invites the reader constantly to rethink past readings. That invitation leaves the reader asking for more, hoping for further opportunities to consider and reconsider heroines from myth and legend.

Frankel has actually created three books in one, and therein lies the text's greatest strength. On one level, *From Girl to Goddess* is an anthology of stories, a collection of tales highlighting the different elements of the heroine's journey.

While her examples in the introduction are from well-known, primarily-Western stories, using familiar fairy tales to draw in the reader, Frankel casts her literary nets wide, using stories from around the world, further illustrating the universality of the archetype and thoroughly demonstrating the potential both for the journey itself as an archetype and the framework of the journey she is discussing. While the first stories presented at length are Hans Christian Anderson's "The Wild Swans" and the German story of "Brünnhild and the Ring of the Nibelung," two pillars of Western literature and folklore, Frankel turns quickly to tales of Vietnamese ("Tam and Cam"), Samoan ("Hina, the Fairy Voyager"), and Mayan ("Ix Chel") origin. The approach turns this book into a global tour of myths and legends, with the reader given the opportunity to enjoy this sampling of international folklore, a sampling which leaves readers left excited about continuing and completing.

On a second level, *From Girl to Goddess* is an insightful collection of analytical essays, discussing the stories in the anthology. This analysis forms the core of Frankel's book; while reading and encountering the stories is a treat in itself, Frankel's intelligent and articulate discussion helps make this that rare academic book which could be longer—her analysis is clear, and she writes with an enthusiasm for the works that spills over to the reader. On a third level, *From Girl to Goddess* is a Jungian reader, considering the role of anima in myths and legends of heroines. These discussions, found at the end of sections of analysis, provide a clear use of theory (without falling into the trap of being too jargon-laden for the average reader), unveiling a solid application of Jungian con-



cepts in a specific-but-differing-from-the-norm realm of study. On all three of these levels, Frankel's writing is direct and effective, rewarding readers with a trio of books bound in one volume, each inviting further readings and reconsiderations, and each begging to be made longer.

I vividly remember the first time as a child I encountered Greek myths. Having found them in one book at school, I came home telling about them, and my father took down a copy of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, leaving me to read and discover, and I remember the excitement I felt as I discovered patterns and commonalities among myths. Valerie Frankel's *From Girl to Goddess* is filled with the same sort of excitement, as she finds, rediscovers, and traces such archetypes throughout a myriad of texts. As her introduction reveals, these patterns may be found in many works beyond myth and legend, and her gift to readers is to leave those patterns to be discovered with further readings. Frankel's work could well claim a place as a key text for analysis of archetype and the heroine, but it would still need to be longer. ≡



Lisa Mantchev. *Perchance to Dream*. Feiweil and Friends, 2010. 352 pp. \$16.99 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0312380977. Reviewed by Pauline J. Alama.

Perchance to Dream, the second book of Lisa Mantchev's *Théâtre Illuminata* trilogy, does not stand alone, so if you haven't read *Eye Like Stars*, get that one first. In fact, if (like me) you read *Eyes Like Stars* when it was new, you will probably want to refresh your memory, because this second volume starts right where the first one left off, taking the revelations of its busy conclusion and running with them in new, ever-weirder directions.

If you like theater, Shakespeare, or stories that play self-consciously with the concept of storytelling, don't pass up this Young Adult trilogy about performers from an enchanted theater inhabited by all the characters enshrined in "The Complete Works of the Stage," a magical book that's bigger inside than out.

Beatrice Shakespeare Smith, or Bertie for short, is not one of these characters but a foundling child raised in the *Théâtre Illuminata*. Aided and abetted by her best friends, four small fairies from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, she sows chaos and change in a place accustomed to scripted characters speaking the same lines every night. Now seventeen and discovering her abilities, she seeks her own place in the theatre as the

Teller of Tales, capable of adding new dramas to the *Compleat Works*. Bertie's emerging word-magic is a threat to the order cherished by the Theater Manager. Meanwhile, two stage characters seek her love: Nate, a good-hearted pirate with a bit part in *The Little Mermaid*, and Ariel, the airy spirit from *The Tempest*, portrayed as a sexy bad boy who encourages Bertie's chaotic impulses even more than the fairies do.

Perchance to Dream follows Bertie's journey out of the Theatre *Illuminata* with a small traveling company — Ariel and the four fairies — to rescue Nate from the clutches of Sedna, a vengeful sea goddess. A journal becomes Bertie's magical script book: the words she writes in it are enacted in the world around her, but never in the way she expects. She struggles with the risks and limitations of her power, learning that even her best-intentioned actions can do damage. Often, the consequences of her magic run to comedy, especially in her efforts to satisfy the fairies' craving for pie. But darker consequences threaten Bertie and her friends: her attempt to rescue Nate simply by writing "ENTER NATE" summons a fading ghost of him, a spirit torn from his body as Bertie's magic wars with that of Sedna.

The romantic plot is refreshingly complex: rather than the often-used *Pride and Prejudice* formula in which one man is Mr. Right and the other Mr. Absolutely Wrong, Bertie hovers undecided between two equally balanced suitors, both lovable, both sincerely caring, but neither quite the boyfriend you'd wish on a friend. Ariel, ever the "tricksy spirit," is just plain untrustworthy, but Nate's solid protectiveness often seems too paternal for a lover. Both seek to possess her, while Bertie struggles for a sense of self-possession.

Sparkling, witty, warm, literate, and offbeat, *Perchance to Dream* continues the mix of whimsy and wonder that made *Eyes Like Stars* a success (and a 2010 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award finalist). Bertie's quest to balance autonomy and love may strike a chord with many adolescents—and not a few adults. The sequel, *So Silver Bright*, will come out in September, and I can hardly wait. ≡



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.



MYTHCON 43

**Across the Continents:
Myths and legends from Europe
and Asia meet and mingle**

Clark Kerr Campus,
University of California – Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
August 3-6, 2012

GUESTS OF HONOR

Grace Lin — Author

Author and Mythopoeic Fantasy Award
winner for *Where the Mountain Meets the
Moon* (2010)



Prof. G. Ronald Murphy, SJ — Scholar

Myth and folklore scholar, winner of the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for *The Owl, the Raven & the Dove: The Religious Meaning of the Grimms' Magic Fairy Tales* (2002) and *Gemstone of Paradise: The Holy Grail in Wolfram's Parzival* (2007)