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## Online Midwinter Seminar (OMS) #1 Report

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## ONLINE MIDWINTER SEMINAR REPORTS

By Phillip Fitzsimmons

A week later I am still feeling a glow from the experience of participating in the first annual Online Midwinter Seminar (OMS #1) *The Inklings and Horror: Fantasy's Dark Corners*. I learned a lot during the planning process by working directly with members of our Weatherford, OK, MythSoc chapter, The Writers of the Rohirrim, especially from Victoria Gaydosik, our leader on this project. I am grateful for the work of Mythopoeic Society leadership and members, and of the Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) administration and faculty, from across campus and disciplines, in doing hosting of event sessions and being technical administrators and moderators for the Discord and Zoom platforms used during the seminar. This brief report would be very long if I named everyone and the roles they played in making OMS #1 happen. But it was gratifying to see people from so many experiential and geographical backgrounds to come together to make the event happen.

After the success of Online Mythcon 51 during the Summer of 2021 the Stewards saw that it would be a good idea to have an annual one-day Online Midwinter Seminar in order to keep the work of the Mythopoeic Society going between in-person Mythcons, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This would give participants the opportunity to get out and have a virtual place to be, to see friends and colleagues, without the risks of the pandemic in the physical world. My experience throughout OMS #1 is that it successfully carried out both the academic and social functions of a Mythcon. The seminar also creates the opportunity for international participation in MythSoc events. It was wonderful to listen to papers from and interact with scholars from all over the United States and around the world. I particularly enjoyed the presentations "Tolkien as a Folk Horror Author" by Monica Sanz in Spain, "White Shadows. Black Riders and Restless Wights" by Franz Klug in Germany, and "Charles Williams' P'o-L'u – the Cthulhu Connection" by Eric Rauscher and "Delight in Horror: Charles Williams and Russell Kirk on Hell and the Supernatural" by Camilo Peralta, both presenters from the United States. I also enjoyed the Friday evening opening ceremony, which included live and video welcome messages, and the video game demonstrations of *The Witcher* and *Lord of the Rings Online* demonstrated by Ben Dressler and Scott Long, respectively. I was not able to attend The Bardic Circle, which was a shame, because I heard that it went well. I think people were happy to see each other, and there was plenty of playful and serious discussion and banter on Discord and during Q&A and social sessions throughout the seminar. I found the seminar to be a success both academically and socially, and the glow I mentioned above is from both my experiences as an attendee and a host of the event. I am looking forward to attending OMS #2 in 2022, *Fantasy Goes to Hell*, to be hosted by Janet Brennan Croft, at the University of Northern Iowa.

In conclusion, I want to give another shout out to the TechMods who used their expertise and digital magic to make our experiences with the Discord and Zoom platforms seamless and pleasant and to record the scholars' presentations. As I write this, I am working with SWOSU library media technician Doug Reichmann to crop and render the videos in preparation to be uploaded to the repository. The Zoom videos are being archived on the OMS #1 page of the MythSoc digital repository and can be viewed here <https://dc.swosu.edu/oms/oms1/>. I expect them to be uploaded and available to the public during the week third week in February 2022. Finally, I want to thank everyone who contributed to and participated in OMS #1 and made it a successful and memorable event.