

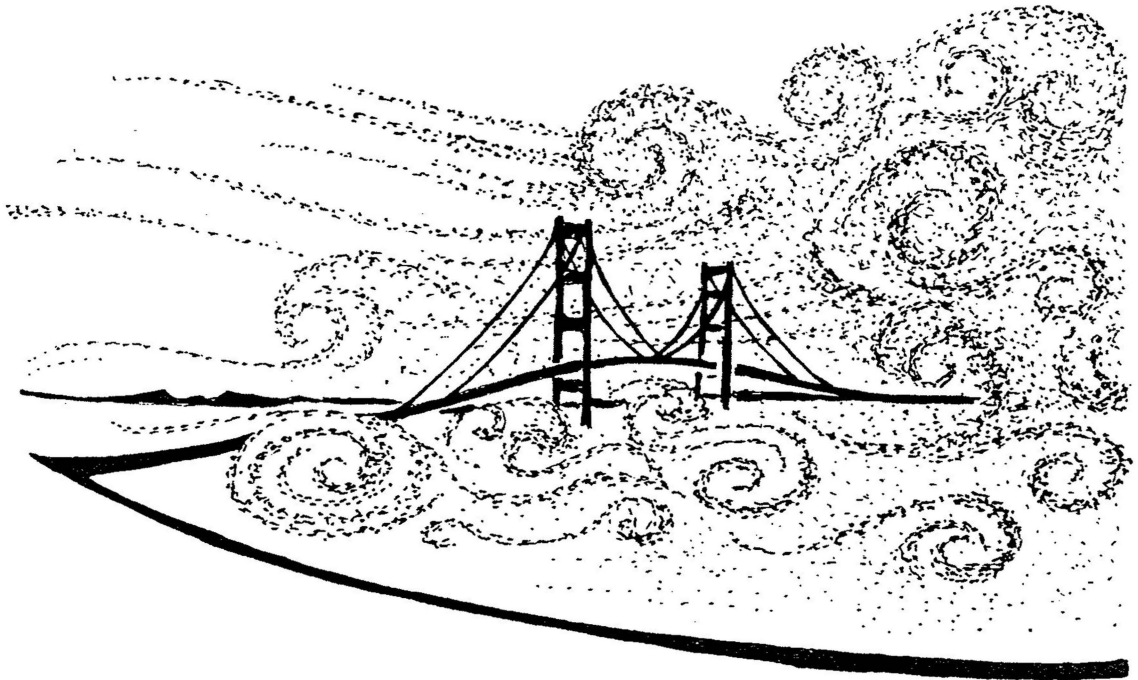
# MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 41 No. 9

September 2004

Whole No. 270



Mythcon 35

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## Illustrations

Cover: Mythcon 35 logo by Sarah Beach © 2003

### Next issue:

More Mythcon reports and notes, Neil Gaiman's Guest of Honor speech, and (hopefully) photos from the conference ...

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See inside back cover

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[Redacted]

DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1<sup>st</sup> of the preceding month (eg, October 1<sup>st</sup> for the November issue).



## 2004 Mythopoeic Awards

### Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature

Robin McKinley, *Sunshine* (Berkley)

### Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature

Clare B. Dunkle, *The Hollow Kingdom* (Holt)

### Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies

John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (Houghton Mifflin)

### Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies

John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Eerdmans)

## Author Acceptance Remarks

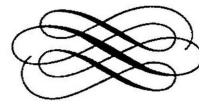
We are honored by your award—especially so because the Mythopoeic Society dedicates itself to the understanding of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. They were not merely scholars, but makers of mythscapes that subtly explore questions of personal destiny, confrontation with adversity, and individual responsibility to community. They shared a prophetic reverence for the non-human that is increasingly relevant to our fragile planet.

When we began our studies of American mythology more than 30 years ago, we encountered conventional wisdom that denied the presence of myth in American culture. Assisted by students who steered us toward the popular narratives they loved, we began to grasp the pervasive myths of superheroic powers that were prevalent in comic books, popular film, and video games. These larger than life figures—whether the Lone Ranger, Superman, or the Terminator—operate in moral landscapes that lack shadings of good and evil. Possessing too much moral purity to be mere citizens, they operate beyond the law, without any accountability to the communities they regularly save.

This heroic theme is hardly limited to entertainment for children or young adults. Its premises occasionally surface in America's conception of itself as the redeemer nation, the exceptional country with superpowers that submits itself to the international community of law only when it suits its own purposes.

We therefore believe that scholars in the humanities, in particular, have an obligation to study mythology, exercising judgments regarding cultural health and illness. We have done so in *The Myth of the American Superhero*. We are proud that through our work we became part of your enterprise and are pleased that in conferring this award, you are becoming part of ours.

Robert Jewett  
John Shelton Lawrence



When my book finally appeared—which seemed almost a miracle to me after such a long and

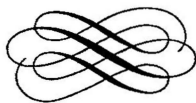
interrupted labour—I made sure a copy went to an early schoolteacher of mine, for the pivotal role she played in transforming me into a voracious reader of books. As she read to her class of seven-year-olds, she breathed life into the pages in the way Aslan breathes life into creatures turned to stone. In the process, I was brought fully to life too. The book she read out to us, of course, was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. So you will understand why this award is peculiarly special to me.

It is also a vindication of the last five years of research and writing, and it makes sense of an active interest in Tolkien dating back much, much further—an interest that must at times have given my elders cause for concern. I still have the notes on Sindarin and Quenya that I made when I was 10 or 11. The other day, clearing out old school books, I found a meticulous six-page summary of *The Lord of the Rings* and my first, teenage attempt at a biography of Tolkien.

My book is arguably as much a biography of the TCBS as it is of Tolkien, not to mention a history of the 11<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers on the Somme and an analysis of the birth of Middle-earth, but my hope is that, for those that have read it, it will enrich Tolkien's books—as Aslan did, breathing in a little new life.

Thank you for this award.

John Garth



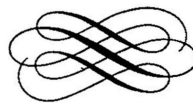
I was delighted when I learned that my first novel had been named a finalist for this award because your society honors literature in the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien, and Tolkien has been a tradition in my family for as long as I can

remember. My mother was an English professor who developed a semester-long course on his writing, and episodes from his books were told in our house just as if they were folktales. My first clear memory connected with his work comes from when I was five or six. My oldest brother wanted to make a tape-recording of himself reading Gandalf's defense of the Bridge of Khazad-dûm against the background of Edvard Grieg's incidental music, "In the Hall of the Mountain King." Those two works of art were thrilling together, and I sat through take after take, enthralled. I could even hear the whip cracks in the music.

When I was in fourth grade, I finally made the journey across Middle-earth myself, and I fell in love with Tolkien's poems. First I typed out them out so that I could carry them with me wherever I went, but soon that just wasn't enough. So I memorized poem after poem until I could recite all the *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* poems by heart and in order: a young bard of Middle-earth, chanting my ballads and sagas as I walked to and from school.

Tolkien loved words, and he understood the power and dignity to be found in our most ordinary words because of their long association with human thought. His poems first taught me to reverence the beauty of my own language. And I still have those glorious lines of poetry with me, underlying and influencing my creative work. I am deeply honored that you consider a novel of mine to be following the tradition of this great man. Thank you very much.

Clare B. Dunkle



Probably no one ever thinks they're going to win a major award, but I nonetheless feel a bit sheepish about joining the queue of Mythopoeic Award winners who knew they wouldn't. When various friends and publishers excitedly sent me the shortlist this year, I said, "*Sunshine*? It did? Weird. Well, it won't win. A modern urban vampire novel, in the spirit of the Inklings? Pull the other one."

Although I'm undoubtedly another Tolkien scion. *The Lord of the Rings* is, unquestionably and incontrovertibly, the single greatest literary influence on me, and one way to view my career is that I keep trying various approaches to rewriting *LotR* with interesting women characters in it. Ironically perhaps, *Sunshine* feels like the least Tolkien thing I've written so far; but there is a breeze from the direction of that less famous Inklings, Charles Williams. He's the only one of the big three who seems to have had any sympathy for cities whose inhabitants don't necessarily want as a first priority to escape; and who—perhaps therefore—also has some sympathy for modern urban human beings. Charles Williams proved that it's possible to write myth into a modern urban landscape.

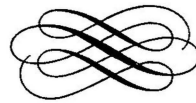
But *vampires*? I wasn't thinking about myth when I wrote *Sunshine* (I wasn't thinking about anything, of course, except trying to get the story down; deciding what it was could come later). *Sunshine's* immediate forebears are *Dracula* and, er, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—and *Beauty and the Beast*, which, the way I keep returning to it,

seems to be the story of my life (although my husband might want me to phrase this a little differently). But myth, to some extent, is where you find it; and you know when you've found it by the way it goes right through you—like the first heavenly, shocking mouthful of ice cream on a hot day, or falling in love. *Whew. Zowie.*

I've written all my stories because they go "Whew. Zowie" at me; and I've written mostly fantasy because I usually find the *whew-zowie* factor highest there. Vampires have always been very *whew-zowie* for me, and as I've said elsewhere, to the extent that I get any input about this (my stories tell me what to do, not the other way around), I would like *Sunshine* to go some way to reclaiming vampires for readers like me, who know that vampires have great dark deep fascinating scary resonant depths, but who can't deal with the graphic-mayhem style of most of today's horror. I always want my stories to be cracking good stories; but I always hope that for some readers there's a resonant depth to them too. Thank you very, very much for telling me that *Sunshine* has that mythological resonance.

My husband, Peter Dickinson, won a Mythopoeic Award in 2002. Now we have bookends. Seriously cool.

Robin McKinley



# Mythcon 35 Reports


## Something Mythic This Way Comes

by Alex Yuschik

After years of hearing my mother tell me that she needed the computer or telephone for her Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards meeting, I began to wonder what exactly the Society was about. This year I finally got to make the trek to Ann Arbor with my mother to participate in a Mythcon. I was not completely clueless about the purpose of the Society—I knew that it was a large group of people who loved fantasy literature, and convened every year to talk about it. (The finer points about the Society’s dedication to the works of the Inklings were obviously lost on the younger me.) Following the plane ride in, I found myself amidst a group of very friendly and intelligent people.

Auntie Amy, Auntie Edith, my Mom, and I attended a couple of scholarly papers, which made me want to read (or reread, in some cases) the books that the speakers were discussing. Attendees I met in the hallways were especially helpful and amicable. Often, someone would come up to greet us or assist us in finding a presentation. Later on, at the panel discussions, I was able to hear a sampling of different opinions on various books. In one of the Neil Gaiman panels (which understandably filled the room) I was impressed at the witty remarks of both the audience and speakers. I was invited to participate in a skit that my Auntie Edith had written for the masquerade, a spoof on Mr. Gaiman’s *Sandman* series. Instead of the seven Endless, the troupe of actors consisted of the seven “Gormless,” of whom I played Delinquency. In the evenings, we were treated to a look at a mythology-inspired ballet, a Celtic concert, and I was even invited to attend a game of Golfimbul.

Some aspects of Mythcon were a little surprising to me. There was the mysterious “blue jello” in the lunch room that never seemed to go away

(leaving some of us to speculate that it had somehow multiplied overnight). The biggest shock of the trip came on the evening of the awards banquet, when my mother and aunts informed me of another Mythcon tradition—Food Sculptures. I was absolutely thrilled. First, before we had a chance to play with the food, the table conferred and planned out the artwork. Our idea was to do puns on the title of Mr. Gaiman’s book *Neverwhere*. This was most likely done because it was the only work of his that I had read at the time, and since the suffix “-where” rhymed with such a tremendous sampling of wonderful words that it was too good to pass up. The end creations were titled “Neverhare” (a rabbit with a circle and slash through it), its fellow pun “Neverhair” (a bald man), and then some conceptual art in “Neverthere” (a blank plate). Also present at the banquet were “Sandwich Man” (a sandwich with eyes and a happy face) and “Coraline” (a line of carrot sticks). Apparently, the food sculptures were popular with Mr. Gaiman as well. In his online journal, he remarked, “I ... met some lovely people, and was, at the banquet, confronted by Food Sculptures: a Mythcon tradition which will haunt me till I die, or possibly beyond...” [Journal entry can be found at: 

The convention concluded with an ceremony where Golfimbul awards were passed out, and the Hobbit song was sung. I contributed a verse to it, a slightly off-key verse, but a verse nonetheless. Although I was unhappy that this pleasant gathering of people had to disperse, I am sure that everyone had taken with them fond memories of riding in Ypsilanti buses to and fro, Neil Gaiman, and blue jello of dubious origin. Can’t wait till my next Mythcon!

# Mythcon Clerihew Winners

Here are the winners of the Third Not Very Annual Mythcon Clerihew Contest.

## Best Inklings Clerihew:

C.S. Lewis  
Would not do this.  
Years of studying medieval verse  
Stayed his hand from anything worse.

*Pat Reynolds*

## Best Charles Huttar Clerihew:

Charles Huttar  
Spoke distinctly, he did not mutter.  
He'd be a good guide to travel on  
The road to Avalon.

*Mike Foster*

## Best Neil Gaiman Clerihew:

Neil Gaiman  
Is surely no layman.  
Old god or new, mythic beast —  
You might call him a sort of priest.

*Ellen Denham*

## Best General Clerihew:

The Mythopoeic Society  
Has a certain notoriety.  
We make food sculptures for dinner guests,  
Who, we hope, appreciate such jests.

*Pat Reynolds*

Congratulations to all winners!

I would now like to abuse my privilege as one of the Clerihew judges by presenting a few runners-up. These had a majority, but not unanimity, of judges' votes. They are listed in no particular order.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
Hailed from the land of spaghetti.  
He painted women seeming  
Lost in dreaming.

*Deborah Sabo*

Neil Gaiman  
Uses words for playin'.  
Black dressed always, it would  
seem  
He appears a relative of Dream.

*David Clark*

She was no moron;  
She knew she'd end up worse than  
Sauron.

*Mike Foster*

The statue of Pallas Athena by  
Phidias  
Which you saw in Nashville if you  
went with y'us  
Scared us out of our wits:  
Mount Rushmore with tits.

*Mike Foster*

Pippin Took  
Was not exactly a crook.  
But if, in the fields of Farmer  
Maggott,  
He saw a mushroom, he'd bag it.

*Mike Foster*

Kalamazoo  
Had a door that squeaked out the  
wazoo.  
Lordy!  
Spray that hinge with some WD-  
40.

*Mike Foster*



Peter  
Jackson's films of Tolkien could've  
been completer.  
And if you don't believe that, man,  
Just ask David Bratman.

*Mike Foster*

Have you heard of Lady Jane Grey  
Who lost her crown in more than  
one way?  
Tis a sad story when a queen with  
all power  
Is the next day to be led to the  
Tower.

*Laura Schmidt*

John Ronald Reuel  
Stoked up on artistic fuel.  
His creative engine is still in gear,  
Gaining momentum, year by year.

*Suzanne Rosenthal Shumway*

Galahadriel  
Could have had the One Ring,  
but wotthehell.

As a result of my experience as a  
judge, I offer the following of my  
own (not eligible for competition,  
offer void where prohibited):

Some writers of Clerihews  
Wrote verses that did not amuse.  
Others lost points for lack of  
rhyme, accuracy or universality,  
Or some other technicality.

*David Emerson*

# Activity Calendar

Matthew Winslow, Discussion Group Secretary

## Prospective Groups

### CALIFORNIA

*San Diego: LOTHLORIEN*

Linda Sundstrom,

### CONNECTICUT

*Southington: FANTASTIC WORLDS*

Bill Pierce,

### FLORIDA

*Tampa Bay: HOBBITON*

Paul S. Ritz,

*North Central Florida: ERYN GALEN*

B.L. McCauley,

### ILLINOIS

*Peoria: THE FAR WESTFARTHING SMIAL*

Mike Foster,

September: *The Hobbit*, Ch. IX-XIX

### INDIANA

*Central Indiana: CERIN AMROTH*

Ellen Denham,

### MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey,

## Chartered Groups

### CALIFORNIA

*Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD*

Lee Speth,

Sept.: *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien

October: *The Bad Beginning* and *The Reptile Room*  
by Lemony Snicket

*San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DÛM*

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

Web: [www.mythsoc.org/kd.html](http://www.mythsoc.org/kd.html)

September: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*  
by J.K. Rowling

### COLORADO

*Denver area: FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")*

Patricia Yarrow,

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*Washington & Suburbs: KNOSSOS*

Mimi Stevens,

September: *Over Sea, Under Stone* and *The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper

October: *Consider Phlebas* by Iain Banks

### HAWAII

*Oahu: SAMMATH NAUR*

Steve Brown,

November: *Spirits in the Wires* by Charles de Lint

### IOWA

*Decorah: ALFHEIM*

Doug Rossman,

### LOUISIANA

*Baton Rouge: ROKE*

Sally Budd,

### MICHIGAN

*Ann Arbor area: GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH*

Dave & Grace Lovelace,

### MINNESOTA

*Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL*

David Lenander,

September: Bilbo and Frodo's Birthday Party  
October: Tim Powers

## NEVADA

*Reno: CRICKHOLLOW*

Joanne Burnett,

September: *The Lays of Bereliand* by J.R.R. Tolkien  
Oct.: *Bronwyn's Bane* by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough  
November: *Sunshine* by Robin McKinley  
December: *Puck of Pook's Hill* by Rudyard Kipling

## NEW YORK

*New York: HEREN ISTARION*

(THE NEW YORK TOLKIEN SOCIETY)

Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke,

## OREGON

*Mid-Willamette Valley Area*

Donovan Mattole,

September: *The Wood beyond the World* by William Morris  
October: *God in the Dock* by C.S. Lewis  
November: *The Mystery of Things* by Debra Murphy

*Portland: BYWATER INKLINGS*

For more information, contact DG Secretary

## PENNSYLVANIA

*Lancaster Area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS*

Neil Gussman,

## SOUTH CAROLINA

*Columbia: THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*

Nina Fowler,

## WASHINGTON

*Seattle: MITHLOND*

Matthew Winslow,

Sept.: *Paladin of Souls* by Lois McMaster Bujold  
October: *Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe*

## WISCONSIN

*Milwaukee: THE BURRAHOBBITS*

Jeffrey & Jan Long,

September: *Speed of Dark* by Elizabeth Moon  
Oct.: *Hotel Transylvania* by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

## Special Interest Group

*THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP*

Carl Hostetter,

Newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar*. Journal, *Parma Eldalamberon*. Christopher Gilson,

## Correspondence Groups

*BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)*

Diane Joy Baker,

Correspondence circular with set topic. Web:

September: William Morris

November: *The Last Light of the Sun* by Guy Gavriel Kay

January 2005: *Scholarly Magics* by Carol Stevermer

March: *The Knight I The Wizard* by Gene Wolfe

May: 2005 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award nominees

*ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)*

Laura Krentz,

## Online Discussion Groups

*MYTHSOC E-LIST*

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

Sign up: or contact

Joan Marie Verba:

*COINHERENCE*

Online discussion of Charles Williams

David Davis:

# More Mythcon 35 Reports

## A Gift of a Weekend

by Grace Monk.

Any adventure that begins in the company of Mary Stolzenbach and her sweet husband Conrad has the potential to be great—especially when I’m driving their Saturn that zips and we’re hitting the highway at 3:45 a.m. Did I write “great”? Make that supernaturally great.

Since last summer, when I discovered that Neil Gaiman was to be our author guest of honor at Mythcon 35, I have lived in a state that can best be described as fevered anticipation. I really love Neil Gaiman’s work—in fact, he was in my top three living writers I wanted to meet; throw in the dead ones and he’s still in the top fifteen—and I was thrilled with the idea that I might actually get to meet him. So thrilled in fact that I decided to psyche myself down to be ready for any disappointment that might occur (I honestly didn’t believe he’d show up; I was sure something would come up and prevent him from being with us). Also, as time passed and the Mythcon date loomed larger on my calendar, I realized that in truth what I was most looking forward to was seeing my much loved yet geographically distant friends—as well as the papers, the panels, the masquerade, and the Not-Ready-For-Mythcon Players. And in all these aspects, Mythcon 35 was practically perfect in every way.

Friday afternoon started the Mythcon in fine Gaimanesque fashion, with our arrival time allowing me to attend Berni Phillips’s paper “Reused and Recycled: A Look at Gaiman’s Use of Other DC Comics Characters in *The Sandman*” and David Bratman’s “A Game of You—Yes, *You*.” These excellent papers helped me combine my goals of “People I Want To See” and “Papers I Want To Hear,” an inspiring beginning to the weekend’s events. Dinner gave me more time to catch up with other old friends—most

notably Ted Nasmith, Ellie Farrell, Dr. Amy Sturgis, the Linguists (Chris, Arden, Carl, Bill, Pat—you know who you are), the Rauscher family, and many others—while giving me the opportunity to meet new friends such as Dr. Matthew Dickerson, professor at Middlebury College in Vermont and more notably the author of the excellent *Following Gandalf*. Dinner also revealed that wonder of wonders: Mr. Neil Gaiman was indeed at our very own Mythcon. Wow. The evening improved, amazingly enough, with a highly fun reception at the original Borders. I ate chocolate, drank way too much caffeine, spent money loading up on good books, and got a couple of lovely signatures for myself and my son Nathan from the charming and patient Mr. Gaiman. The evening ended with a visit to the hospitality suite, where once again I ate chocolate (and a bunch of other nummy food), and drank and talked with friends. What more could anyone wish for? (All of which made me too tired to attend the Sale of College Land meeting at 3:49 a.m., but one can’t have absolutely everything.)

Yes, there were some difficulties with the transportation the following morning. But for me, it didn’t detract from the wonderful paper presented by Charles A. Huttar, the Scholar Guest of Honor, or from the other interesting papers I attended that morning. Even when angered, I at least was inspired to think. [And regarding the papers, really, all I ask is that one get one’s facts straight. Opinions are one thing, and God bless you for having them. But please, facts are another. Present correct facts.] After hiking to lunch, I returned to the Michigan League for the highlight of the afternoon: the Neil Gaiman reading and signing. In truth, I am still

contemplating his work, "The Problem of Susan." Whatever I may think of the story, Mr. Gaiman himself was a delightful guest, open to questions and comments about his works, and once again willing to sign and decorate just about any type of object put in front of him. He was so great, I stood in line twice. Then back to the hotels for dinner and a great performance by the Chelsea House Orchestra. These talented and energetic teenage artists expressed so much enthusiasm in their music that even I, relatively ignorant about Celtic music, enjoyed every minute of their performance. And then what to my wondering eyes did appear but a nasty ugly goblin head (thank you, Pat Wynne), and Golfimbul was on! How does one explain the joy of playing Golfimbul to those who have never experienced it? The cheers of the onlookers, the crack of the bat, the sight of an evil little plastic head bouncing through the dewy grass . . . ah, Mythcon 35 at perhaps its finest moment. I was especially gratified by my second place finish in the accuracy competition. My secret to success: always keep your eye on the head.

Could the Mythcon get any better? Apparently, it could. Sunday continued my immersion in Gaiman-themed papers and panels. I especially enjoyed Danielle Bienvenue and Mark Christopher Hill's presentations on different mythic aspects of Gaiman's *American Gods*. Once again, I trekked to lunch and then back for an afternoon of sheer pleasure. First, the Neil Gaiman discussion panel, moderated by the splendid Edith Crowe. The hour-and-a-half flew by, with stories aplenty told by Mr. Gaiman and good questions from the moderator and other panel guests. I then had to leave the continuing discussion because I, yes I, was scheduled to take part in the Dorothy L. Sayers panel—with David Bratman and Edith Crowe! Someone could probably sue me for fraud for daring to place myself in their company, but I hope no one

will. It was perhaps the shortest hour of my life and I learned far more than I could have hoped. After the panel, I managed to participate in the last bit of the Society Auction and through the kindness of Eric Rauscher, I even scored a book real cheap. My goal is to one day be as good as Lynn Maudlin at getting what I want at the Auction. After some more to-ing and fro-ing, we returned to the Michigan League for the banquet. I snagged a seat with the Linguists and Mary Kay Kare, and got to watch Pat Wynne's artistic and non-nauseating food sculpture take shape and form. Once again, our author guest of honor was a joy to listen to as he told of his experiences reading Lewis and Tolkien. It was personally affirming to learn that someone else had read the Trilogy in much the same fashion as I (over and over and over and over) and with much the same reaction, that it was the greatest work ever written and there was no point in reading anything else. Thankfully, for my own good fortune, Mr. Gaiman not only went on to read more but he went on to write his own great works of literature.

Back to the hotel for the evening entertainment and, seriously, one of the highest honours of my life: I was asked to be a part of the Not-Ready-For-Mythcon Players. I was going to be Death from Gaiman's *The Sandman*! Words cannot tell how thrilled I was. But first, there was the Masquerade. I wish I had kept track of who was what, because it was really one of the best I've seen. I will however always remember Mary Stolzenbach as a Rhine maiden! There were a couple more presentations that I unfortunately missed parts of (it's not easy to find an ankh in a Holiday Inn), but I did get to hear the presentations of the Masquerade Awards. Once again, our guests of honor outdid themselves in their participation, with the help of Lynn Maudlin, and the awards somehow included a bottle of Pepto-Bismol as a gift to Neil Gaiman. Odd

that, but once again, life would get even better. "The Endless Musical" began, written by the talented Ellie Farrell and narrated by David Bratman. I did my darndest to be a convincing Death, but really I was out of my league. Arden Smith per usual completely stole the show as Dream. I am grateful I got to be his sister for even a brief few moments. After the end of the evening entertainment, I was given one of the best gifts ever. Remember that bottle of Pepto-Bismol? Mr. Gaiman stated that he was trying to give it away but no one seemed to want it, and I pounced. Could I have it please, and would he sign it? And did he ever sign it! Not only signed it, but drew on it a full picture of Dream himself, and labeled it, "Grace's bottle of Death." How cool is that. I even got to stick around and listen to Mr. Gaiman talk to Clare Dunkle (the children's lit award winner) and Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman, among others. It was a night I

will remember for years to come.

Monday morning was only a let down in that it was the end of the Mythcon. But before that dreaded end, I was able to see some truly beautiful artwork in Ted Nasmith's slide presentation and also to indulge my love of baseball and literature by attending Ellie Farrell's paper, "A Swing and A Myth: Baseball in Fantasy Literature." Good-byes are always sad for me and I don't want to dwell on them. I was parting from true friends, but the knowledge that "a friend is a friend near or far" is always a comforting thought.

Thank you, Marion, and all those on the Mythcon 35 committee. Everything went so far above any expectations I had, which is saying quite a lot. I really cannot thank you enough. It was one of the greatest weekends of my life, a time of joy and friendship and fun that happens only once in a blue moon . . .

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## My Middle Eastern Mythcon

*by Berni Phillips Bratman*

Mythcon XXXV was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan on July 30-August 2, 2004. As Michigan is on eastern standard time yet is pretty far from the Atlantic coast, I like to refer to it as the Middle East.

The conference theme was "Bridges to Other Worlds: Thirty-five Years of Mythopoeic Scholarship" with guests of honor Neil Gaiman (author) and Charles A. Huttar (scholar).

This Mythcon was unique in that it offered a split venue: housing, Friday and Monday sessions, and evening programming were in the North Campus Holiday Inn while daytime sessions on Saturday and Sunday were held in the picturesque Michigan League building on the University of Michigan campus. This had good and bad points. The Michigan League building

was quite charming and looked antequely academic, but staying on campus all the time just wasn't practical. The university could not house us in the style to which we've become accustomed: air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms. These the Holiday Inn provided, along with better food (breakfast and dinner) than we get at most Mythcons.

I have to say here that My Mythcon contained no panels or papers pertaining to those films of recent notoriety. If you're interested in that, you'll have to read someone else's Mythcon report. My Mythcon was a lot of fun in the Gaiman-related programming and seeing friends I haven't seen in a year (Hi, Stolzi! Hi, Paula!) and meeting in person those I've only seen online (Hi, Ginger!).

I presented my second-ever Mythcon paper, "Reused and Recycled: A Look at Gaiman's Use of Other DC Comics Characters in *The Sandman*." This went over well, I thought; or at least I kept within the assigned time period. The audience I was writing for was people who have read *Sandman* but are unfamiliar with comics in general. David's paper on *Sandman*, "A Game of You—Yes, *You*" was a big success. Neil Gaiman even commented later in his online journal that he really enjoyed it, too. In this paper, David sought to defend "A Game of You," one of the stories collected in graphic novel form, from its critics and offer why he felt it was actually the strongest story in *Sandman*.

I had to miss Amy Sturgis' Harry Potter paper, "For Whom Does the Hogwarts Bell Toll? Rowling's Problem, Tolkien's Solution," but I was able to pick up a copy of it at the Society's table. I did manage to slip in for Kathryn McDaniel's delightful "Why Won't They Be Free? J.K. Rowling's House-Elf Problem." I'm so glad to see papers on Rowling at Mythcons since I enjoy the books immensely.

Dinner was buffet style; it was nice to be able to sit with a variety of attendees in a quiet place that didn't have other members of other conferences as well. The hospitality suite, open later in the evening, was also very well stocked with a variety of interesting Michigan cheeses, chocolates, and wine, among other things. Kudos to the Van Loo family, who did most of the grunt work associated with that!

In true Mythcon tradition, it rained Saturday morning, which truncated the traditional procession almost as much as having to do two bus runs did. Chuck Huttar's scholar guest of honor speech was interesting, what could be heard of it, but the room had really funky acoustics: anyone walking in the back of room was heard louder than the amplified speech, and it sounded like they were walking on the roof rather than the

floor. Very odd. Very mythopoeic.

Unfortunately, the problems relating to the Ypsilanti bus drivers not being able to get around Ann Arbor according to schedule threw the morning's schedule off by half an hour. I very much wanted to hear Stephan Rauch's "Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Joseph Campbell: Creating the Modern Myth" which was scheduled for 11:00. (It was held in room "K'zoo," which I finally realized was a contraction of "Kalamazoo," but which called to my mind the plastic musical instrument endemic of the Mythopoeic Society's lighter side.) By 11:30 the previous paper was over but quite a heated discussion was going on. (Note to first-time paper givers at Mythcon: Know Your Audience. If you're going to give a paper on Tolkien with a decided opinion on how he treats X, maybe run it past an experienced Mythcon-goer to see how it will be received. The room was smoking when I got in, and there was not a lit cigarette in sight.) Wishing I had brought my button that reads "Society of Pushy Bitches: Self-appointed Chapter Head," I stuck up my hand and asked if they could please continue the discussion elsewhere so we could hear the next paper.

In the afternoon, Neil Gaiman read his short story, "The Problem of Susan" and did a signing. He warmed up before his reading with three short poems he'd written, which were delightful.

The main entertainment Saturday night was the Chelsea House Orchestra, a mostly string orchestra of high school students who played Celtic music with great gusto. I would have enjoyed it greatly had their teacher not insisted on amplifying them. After the first song, the director asked if the volume was too loud. When I told him that yes, it was much too loud, rather than taking the asked-for feedback, he just blew it off with a "well, I'm a rock musician and I like it loud," which I thought was incredibly rude and inconsiderate. Why ask if you're going to

ignore the answer? I went into the adjacent hallway, where I could hear it just fine. The group was bigger than some pit orchestras I've seen; 20 violins in unison do not need amplification.

A meeting of the Council of Stewards delayed the start of Golfimbul that night. The orc head suffered some damage—his chin was split—but otherwise held up. I don't remember all the medallists, but Carl Hostetter upheld the pride of the linguists in one event. (Sadly, Jessica Weldon, a daughter of a linguist, won the Linguist Award for worst performance.) Scholar Doris Myers and her sister Dorothy acquitted themselves nicely in Golfimbul. Newbie Brad Scott walked off with a medal, which I hope encourages him to come back to further Mythcons. And artist Ted Nasmith proved that he's as good with a bat in his hands as he is with a brush. (Monday morning he gave a short slide show previewing his artwork which will be featured in the new edition of *The Silmarillion*, which should be available in mid-November.)

The banquet was held in the same room with the funky acoustics, but we could hear Gaiman's speech better. Authors Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman arrived in time for the banquet, and presented the fiction awards. Unfortunately, the schedule did not allow time for the procession of the food sculptures. I don't know what the other tables came up with but we did three food sculptures. Knowing my hubby doesn't eat butter on his bread, I grabbed his artistic little butter rosebud, which became "American Globbs," a pun which made more sense once Bernadette Bosky created an American flag with lipstick stripes and blue-ink stars out of the inside of a sugar packet. The next two utilized the two slabs of hated eggplant (the vegetarian entree) and the generous and quite sturdy sprigs of rosemary which garnished all the plates. The rubbery and disgusting eggplant made a nice base for the rosemary. On mine, I also added some mushrooms, poured

coffee cream around it and called it "Fiddler's Green in the Creaming." (I realize this is all pretty incomprehensible if you haven't read Gaiman's *Sandman* and *American Gods*.) Bernadette Bosky made a little man of cauliflower on her rosemary-studded eggplant and poured water around it, transforming it into Ransom on an island on Perelandra, which was presented to Chuck Huttar.

The masquerade was suitably silly. Edith Crowe had the idea to do a riff on the Endless in *Sandman*. In the comic, *Cerebus*, there was a take-off on the Endless called the Clueless, so we were the third cousins, the Gormless. First Carl Hostetter came on as the sneering Derision, followed by me as Disorder, my shirt inside out and misbuttoned, mismatched shoes on my feet, digging through my purse looking for my sigil. Amy Wisniewski was the drunken Dipsomania. Her sister, Gerry, was the green-in-the-gills Dyspepsia, clutching her bottle of Pepto-Bismol. Gerry's charming teenage daughter, Alex, was transformed into the multiply pierced tattooed tart, Delinquency. Gary Hunnewell did a Monty Python Gumby impression as Dementia, and we all ran from the disgusting old pervert, Arden Smith, as Depravity, flashing us all. We were followed in the masquerade by Tim Callahan's even larger group of Agent Elrond Smith, all of whom carried masks of Elf Elrond with the sunglasses of Agent Smith from the *Matrix* movies.

Ellie's Not-Ready skit was hilarious. She did "The Endless Musical" with appropriate theme songs for each. Arden Smith finally got to wear pants in a Not-Ready skit, making as impressive a Dream/Morpheus as he did a Xena.

Before we all staggered off Monday, information was passed out for next year's Tolkien bash in Birmingham, England (which will incorporate Mythcon 36). Hope to see you all there and/or in Seattle, the planned location for Mythcon 37, in 2006!

*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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The Mythopoeic Society



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