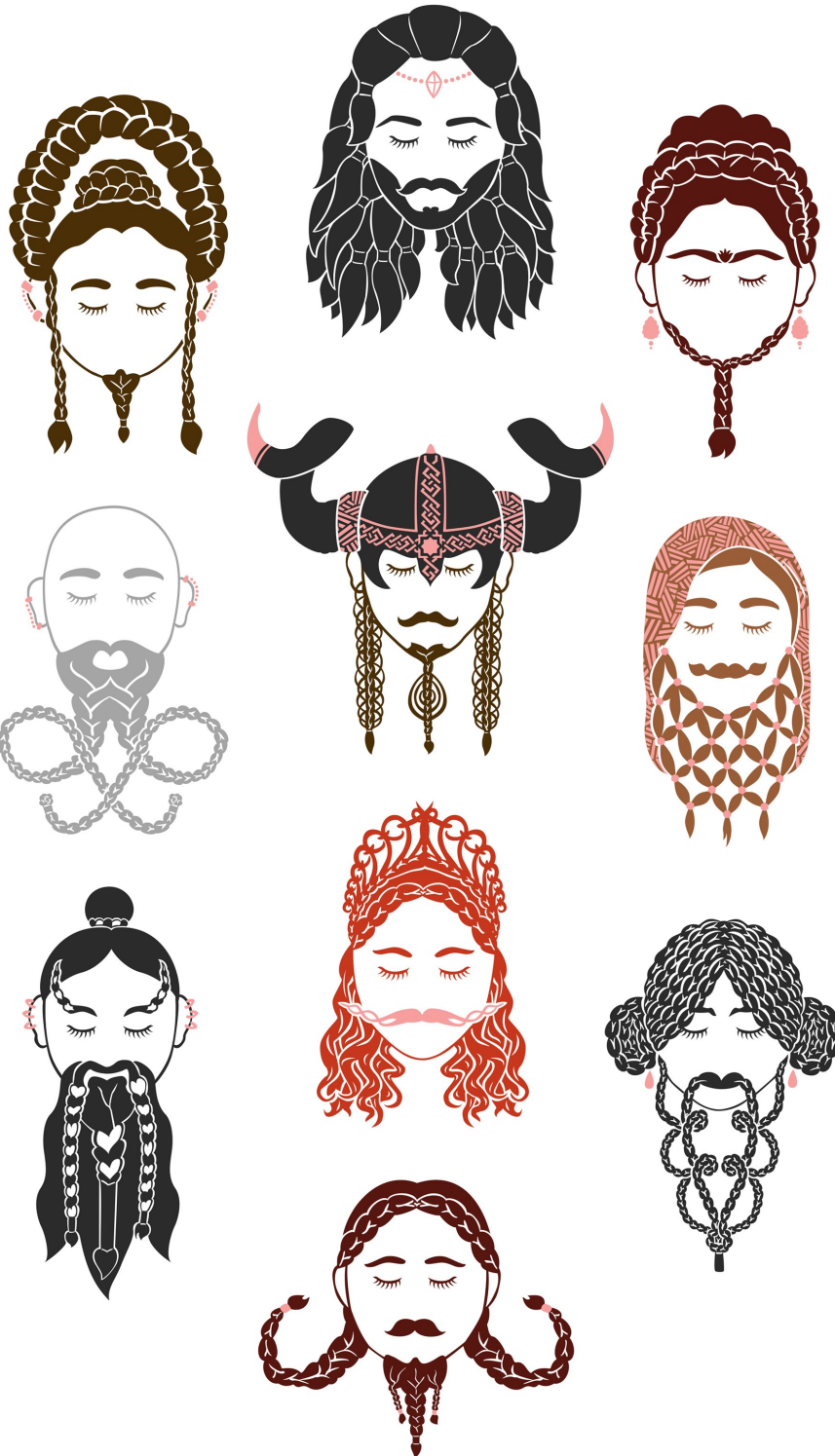


mythPRINT



**Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society with Book
Reviews, Short Articles, Event Information, and More!**

VOL. 52 NO. 1

SPRING 2015

WHOLE NO. 372

mythprint

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Cover Art: *The Unwritten Lady Dwarves of Middle-earth.*

By Flavia Rose. © 2015 [REDACTED]

Reviews, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, notes or short articles, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. In return for printed pieces, contributors who are not already subscribers will receive an electronic copy of the issue in which the item appears. Contributors who are already subscribers will not receive an additional copy. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

Megan Abrahamson
Editor, *Mythprint*
[REDACTED]

Send other correspondence to [REDACTED]

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

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Visit The Mythopoeic Society online at www.mythsoc.org.

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Mythprint is the quarterly 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.

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MYTHCON 46: THE ARTHURIAN MYTHOS

Hotel Elegance, Colorado Springs, CO

July 31 - August 3, 2015

Room and Board packages are up! Travel Information is also posted! Call for Papers is posted (abstracts due April 15)! Register online soon! Go to www.mythcon.org for more information.



Author Guest of Honor:

Jo Walton

Science Fiction and Fantasy Author, winner of the 2010 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature for *Lifelode*.



Scholar Guest of Honor:

John O. Rateff

Inklings and Tolkien Scholar, winner of the 2009 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies for *The History of the Hobbit Part One: Mr. Baggins; Part Two: Return to Bag-end*.



Mythcon Too Far Away?

Become the next Mythcon Chair and we'll come to you! Historically held at colleges or universities, Mythcons have recently moved more into hotels, for both comfort and economy. Have a good idea for a future theme or Guest of Honor? Contact Lynn Maudlin,

Steward for Mythopoeic Conferences,
at mythcon@mythsoc.org and share your brilliance!

SOCIAL MEDIA

A brief note from your friendly neighborhood *Mythprint* editor—and now, Social Media Steward (taking over from Eleanor Farrell)! It makes sense for now for one person to be handling news both in real time online and at a more stately pace through the society newsletter, though these two positions may branch apart again in the future. If you are technologically inclined, and if you haven't done so already, be sure to check us out on Facebook and Twitter:

The Mythopoeic Society

(Group): Join us for discussion, enjoyment of fantastic and mythic literature, and to follow what fellow Mythies are up to. "Like" the Mythopoeic Society (Page) for News, Announcements, and Updates!



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██████████ is the Mythopoeic Society Twitter handle (if you're a mythopoeic author, artist, reviewer, or scholar, message me for a follow-back!). ██████████ is the Official Mythcon handle.



Please use tags #Mythsoc, #Mythcon, and #Mythcon46 (for the current Mythcon).

Think we should have an online presence elsewhere? Let me know at ██████████ (or on Twitter !

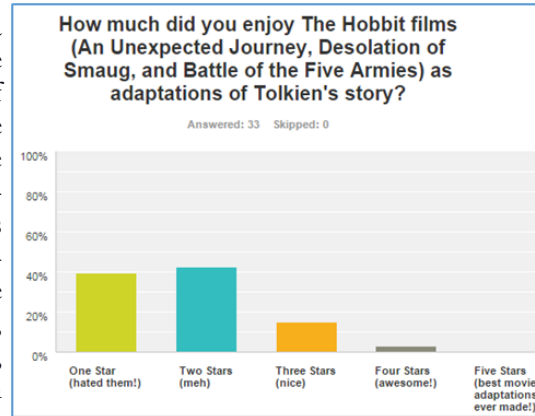
THE HOBBIT FILMS ACCORDING TO MYTHSOC

Film critic Roger Ebert gives *The Hobbit* film franchise (the last two, anyway) an averaged 3.75 stars out of 5 (*DOS* got 4.5/5, and *BOFTA* 3/5). This is just as a point of comparison, because the Mythopoeic Society gives the trilogy 2 stars.

When asked "How much did you enjoy *The Hobbit* films as adaptations of Tolkien's story?" in a survey of thirty-three Mythies (distributed on the Facebook page and through the Mythsoc Yahoo! Group), the answer was predictably low, clocking only 1.84 out of 5 stars. The most common answer was 2/5. "Given that *The Hobbit* is a short book for children," one responder comments, "why couldn't the film makers use the entire contents of the book as a baseline and then flesh it out?" Lee Speth declares the films full of "turgid frenetic action, some good performances, a general air of excess. But the book is lovable; the movies aren't." The films even

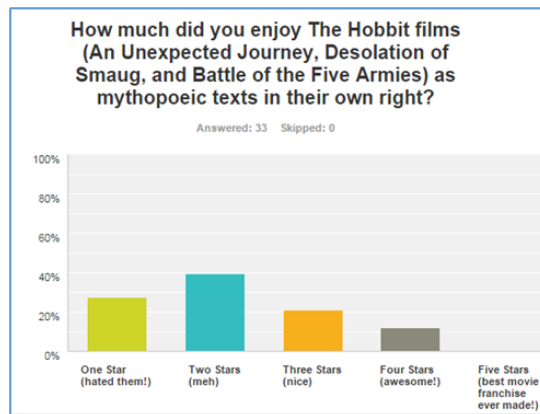
garner such accusations as “a complete travesty, with none of the charm or ‘coming of age’ elements present in the original book.” But should we not expect these sorts of reactions from a society such as ours, for whom textual accuracy matters a great deal? Those who still enjoyed them declare, “they were entertaining films, particularly with the addition of the female warrior elf, but less than satisfactory as an adaptation.” One responder describes what seems to be the consensus: “As its own story, the movies were nice, even awesome a couple times; but as an adaptation of Tolkien’s story, they were horrible, overall.”

It may come as a surprise, however, that when asked “How much did you enjoy *The Hobbit* films as mythopoeic texts in their own right?” the averaged answer only improved to 2.18 stars out of 5. Even when asked to separate their feelings about the work as an adaptation (which many Tolkien fans seem more ready to do with *The Lord of the Rings* films) from their feelings about the work as a successful film on its own, the most common rating Mythies give the trilogy remained 2/5 stars. Many lament “shoot-em-up video game” presentation and the “Disneyland-style rides,” while others describe the changes in narrative to be “boring, repetitious, and unimaginative” and the time and distance compressions as problematic. One responder writes, “My biggest problem with the films was that they failed at meeting the fundamental criterion for successful mythopoeic story-telling, and that is the ability for the reader/viewer to suspend disbelief and enter the world being presented. These films lacked the enchantment that



required a huge amount of story bloat that did not move the plot along.”

Of course, there’s the contingent of Mythosoc members who, like myself, took the “don’t like, don’t watch” approach and simply avoided the franchise. Whether burned out with *The Lord of the Rings* films, warned off by bad reviews from fellow Mythies, or simply aware of how even small narrative changes would affect their blood pressure, some Mythosoc members elected to vote with their money by not seeing the films at all.



generally high praise was given to Martin Freeman’s Bilbo, the expansion of the Dwarven characters, the expansion of the Laketowners, all of the wizards’ performances, the sets and visuals, and of course,

the dragon Smaug. Also, the messages are good, as a guest from the Barrow-downs writes: “While not canonically sound, nevertheless the morality and lessons learned were valuable for conversations with my two sons and with other young people. The messages of loyalty and dedication, hard work, and the perils of evil and greed, were far clearer in *The Hobbit* films than in most of the other films I have seen since *The Lord of the Rings* films. And they are

Megan Abrahamson
February 14 at 10:11am

Dear Mythies, if interested: Please take a moment to answer two questions about the recently completed Hobbit trilogy, for publication in the upcoming newsletter! Thank you!

The Peter Jackson Hobbit Films Survey
Web survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. Create your own online survey now with SurveyMonkey's expert certified FREE templates.

Like · Comment · Share

Steve Gaddis likes this.

██████████ Megan, where's the "never got around to watching them" option? 😊
February 14 at 1:52pm · Edited · Unlike · 2

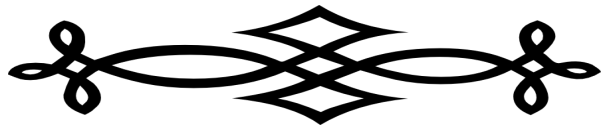
██████████ Or the "didn't bother" option, for that matter? 😊
February 14 at 2:30pm · Unlike · 2

██████████ Ditto. I've seen none of them nor do I intend to.
February 14 at 4:53pm · Unlike · 1

██████████ Double ditto.
February 14 at 10:32pm · Unlike · 1

plenty of fun at the same time.” Ultimately, of course, all Mythsoc members will appreciate that whatever else it does, *The Hobbit* film trilogy encourages people who have never read the book before to pick up it up and try it out.

Thanks to those who took the survey! Please also read on to see another positive impact the Peter Jackson films have had on Tolkien fandom...



FICTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP: How the Peter Jackson Films and Fandom Archives Make Tolkien Fan Fiction Writers into Competent Critics by Dawn M. Walls-Thumma

It's now been almost twenty-five years since Henry Jenkins wrenched to the forefront of media studies the then-radical notion that fandom participation serves a predominantly critical purpose. Fan fiction writers, for example, don't simply rehash over and over stories that have already been told, and they don't reread and rewatch their source texts in the interest of amassing trivial knowledge that translates into social status in the company of other fans. Rather, these stories seek to interpret, analyze, and criticize the original text; they view the characters and world of the original text through the lens of the fan writer's experience; and they often rewrite portions of the text to remedy what the fan writer views as weaknesses, failings, or injustices.

That the community that writes fan fiction based on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien does so with a largely analytical and critical intent is anecdotally obvious to anyone who spends time in their midst, which as the founder and owner of the Silmarillion Writers' Guild, I have certainly done. In December 2014, I initiated a survey of Tolkien fan fiction readers and writers, and the preliminary results from that survey also offer empirical support to the idea that the Tolkien fan fiction community is well-read and critically adept. The majority of writers venture beyond Tolkien's most popular and accessible works and gain enough comfort with these more difficult texts to write fan fiction using them: 76% have used *The Silmarillion* in their fan fiction, 50% have used *The History of Middle-earth*, and 49% have used *Unfinished Tales*. Furthermore, these writers acknowledge fan fiction as a reason why they

have delved so deeply into the world and works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Eighty-seven percent of respondents agreed that writing fan fiction encouraged them to do more research on Tolkien's world than they would have done otherwise, and 75% agreed that fan fiction has encouraged them to read texts by Tolkien that they might not have read otherwise. Two rather unique attributes of the Tolkien fan fiction community, I believe, drive its pursuit of textual and critical competency beyond the appeal of the texts themselves: the influence of Peter Jackson's two Tolkien-based film trilogies and the community's reliance on Tolkien-specific archives for sharing stories.

The Films and Fandom Entry: Although Tolkien is arguably the most popular author of the twentieth century, one can author Tolkien-based fan fiction without picking up a book. In a little over a decade, Peter Jackson has released six films set in Middle-earth. These films have left an indelible impression on the Tolkien fan fiction community, and the release of both trilogies correlated with spikes in participation in the Tolkien fan fiction community by new authors (see Figure 1). Authors who participated in my survey acknowledged this influence, with 73% agreeing that the films encouraged them to write fan fiction.

One *can* author Tolkien-based fan fiction without picking up a book but very few do. In fact, only 0.5% of survey respondents indicated that they use only film and no book sources when writing fan fiction. One can certainly author Tolkien fan fiction without venturing into the more difficult terrain of Tolkien's posthumous works but, again, as the data above suggest, very few do. If the data presented thus far suggest any almost universal conclusion about Tolkien fan fiction writers, it is that authors that remain for any significant length of in the community—even those that began writing because of the films, having never touched one of Tolkien's books—will become readers of his books and generally knowledgeable readers at that. What drives this shift from initiation based heavily around the films to participation based almost solely on the books, and many of the more difficult and obscure books at that?

Archives and the Development of Critical Skills: The Tolkien fandom has always been reactive in creating institutions in response to an influx of new fans and the perceived misguided tastes of those fans. John Lennard notes how, after the Ace Books piracy made *The Lord of the Rings* more widely available in the United States, the Tolkien Society was founded to counteract "the appropriation of Tolkien's works by the wilder fringes of the hippie movement" (Part 4).

Internet Tolkien fandom exploded at the same time as Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was released, and similar reactive tendencies can be observed in the fandom institutions that arose online amid an inundation of new film fans (Organization for Transformative Works, "Timeline").

The Tolkien fan fiction community has always been rather unique in its reliance on Tolkien-specific archives rather than multifandom archives or social media platforms for the sharing of stories. Tolkien-specific archives are built and maintained by fans—most of them fan fiction authors themselves—as sites for storing and often commenting on or discussing stories. While some archives accept all or most Tolkien-based writing, others specialize based on character, group, book, genre, or romantic pairing. On the fan history wiki *Fanlore*, the only fandom with more fandom-specific archives listed than the Tolkien fandom is the *Harry Potter* fandom (Organization for Transformative Works, "Category"). I believe that the "fandom geography" created by the existence of so many and such a variety of archives aids in encouraging Tolkien writers to develop a high level of critical competency with the books through a combination of community cohesion and support, and tension between competing interpretative approaches.

The online Tolkien fan fiction community, with its many and diverse spaces for sharing stories, takes on many of the characteristics associated with physical communities. There are places where writers feel welcome, safe, and familiar with the culture and customs, and there are places where they don't. Just as physical barriers can prevent mingling between physical communities, fan fiction writers on different websites can remain completely unaware of the perspectives—often the existence—of other members of the larger fan fiction community in a way that they could not if most fan fiction activity were concentrated on a single multifandom site, like FanFiction.net. In my survey, 65% of writers agreed that they had a site that they considered their "Tolkien fandom home." These "fandom homes" become places to share information and provide support in making sense of the complex

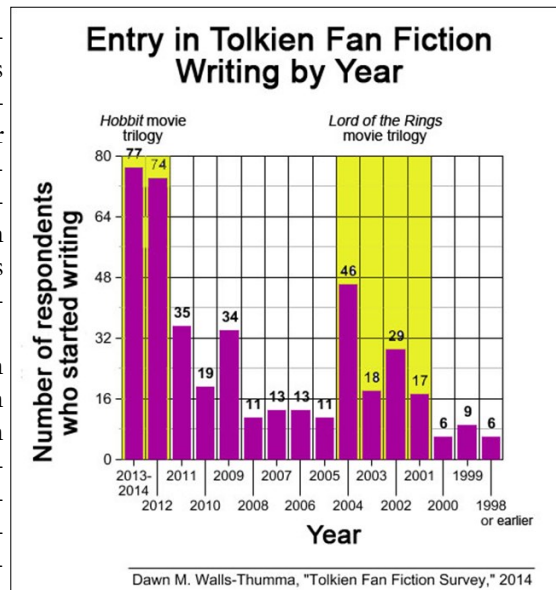


Figure 1. Film releases predict the entrance of new Tolkien fan fiction writers.

welter of canon texts. Members with greater knowledge of these texts are allotted fuller participation and, sometimes, status. Especially on Tolkien-specific archives, site policies about adherence to canon or requiring peer review of stories pushed writers to read more and deeper into the texts.

However, the opposite effect of the Tolkien fandom geography—the tension between different groups and archives—exerts perhaps an even greater influence in encouraging the development of critical perspectives among fan fiction writers. Twenty-six percent of writers agreed that they

avoided posting to certain sites because of the interpretations used by other writers on those sites. Most of these writers use Tolkien-specific archives: 37% of writers who use Tolkien-specific archives avoid groups or sites because of difference of interpretative approach compared to just 19% of writers who post only to multifandom archives and/or social media sites. The perceived tension between archives and other fan fiction communities presses writers to justify their particular interpretative approach (and often minimize the approaches taken on other sites), which requires not only a high comfort level with the texts themselves but an awareness of how details from the texts are selected, discarded, or reshaped in the course of writing a story. Of course, other participants within a writers' home site support the development of such competencies.

Conclusion: In the big picture, Peter Jackson's films and the preponderance of Tolkien-specific archives are two major factors that drive Tolkien fan fiction writers to become competent in their ability to use fiction to comment critically on the texts. The films are perhaps the single biggest reason why new authors begin writing Tolkien-based fan fiction. Reactions to the common misconceptions of new *Lord of the Rings* film fans and the types of fan fiction they preferred undoubtedly drove the policies of many of the first online Tolkien fan fiction communities. Those new fans who stayed around received support from these communities as they began reading and making sense of the texts. Simultaneously, the development of different interpretative approaches to the

texts by different communities required writers to understand and often defend their interpretations, deepening their knowledge and critical capabilities even more. The end result is a fan fiction community that uses fiction to take an interpretative stance on the texts in a similar way that traditional Tolkien scholars use research essays.

This paper is an expansion on one presented, along with other great ones like it, at Mythmoot III, January 10 and 11, 2015. That version will also appear in the Mythmoot III Proceedings.



A SENSE OF PLACE IN *THE WEIRD-STONE OF BRISINGAMEN*

by Yvonne Stubington

First published in 1960, this children's fantasy novel by Alan Garner was, and still is, used in school curriculums across the UK. Along with other more well-known classics such as *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* has served as a high fantasy gateway to mythology for generations of British children. Unlike many high fantasy authors however, Garner takes a different approach with his storytelling. He does not set out to create a new imaginary and fantastical world to transport his readers to, but rather he grounds his story in the magic and myth of the world that he himself grew up in; a world that still exists, in reality, to this day. We do not have to step through a wardrobe to enter this land because we already inhabit it. The magic is here, existing alongside our mundane, everyday world. Garner's readers know that a single mis-step or an unexpected meeting on a footpath could just as easily result in their own exciting adventure.

Tolkien takes the myths of Britain as his inspiration to create something larger, grander, more epic. Garner takes those same myths and in doing so makes the land itself one of the main characters of the story. He does this by making use of the physical geography, the folklore and the rich history of the area, along with the people who live there and their dialect.

We can see this intent as soon as we open the book and turn to the title page. The book's title is, as we know, *the Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, but here we can also see the subtitle of the story: *A Tale of Alderley*. A few more pages into the book and we come

across the map. In this map there is no imaginary Shire, no Gondor or Mordor. There is however, the market town of Macclesfield; there is Dane's Moss and Radnor Mere, and of course the titular village of Alderley Edge. These are all real places, and although the passage of time may have changed some superficial features, the geography is still very much recognisable and most places mentioned in the book can be located on a modern day map of the area. The village of Alderley Edge is given its name by the Edge, and is described by Shaw as:

A red sandstone escarpment two miles long, which rises like a great overgrown wall some 600ft above the village that bears its name and the surrounding Cheshire Plain.

Garner introduces us to the Edge through the eyes of his main protagonists, the children Susan and Colin. They are new to the area and, like the reader, are seeing the Edge for the first time.

Nearer they came to the Edge, until it towered above them, then they turned right along a road which kept to the foot of the hill. On one side lay the fields, and on the other the steep slopes. The trees came right down to the road, tall beeches which seemed to be whispering to each other in the breeze.

"It's a bit creepy, isn't it?" said Susan.

It is this dramatic physical feature and the surrounding woodland, bogs and moors that provide the backdrop for this book and inspired the myth that the story is based upon.

The main mythical element used by Garner's story of *The Wizard of Alderley Edge* is one of many versions of the "King under the hill" legend that can be found in different locations across the UK. Other examples include those located at Craig-Y-Dinas in Snowdonia (Wales), Mynydd Mawr in Carmarthenshire (Wales, Sewingshields in Northumberland, England and Freebrough Hill in Derbyshire, England). There are many more and they all revolve around the concept of a great king (often, but not always, Arthur) and his men who are sleeping under a hill, or other geographical feature, where they wait to be woken in their peoples' time of need.

Like Tolkien and other high fantasy authors, Garner also uses creatures from Northern European folklore (dwarves, llios alfar, svart alfar) and characters from Celtic myth (Angarahad Goldenhand, the Morrigan) to expand and embellish his tale, but we never leave the landscape that the book is based on.

Besides the physical geography, Garner also adds the rich history of the area to the story—a

history which he, as a local, is actually a part of. When they first set out to explore, Colin and Susan come across an old well engraved with the face of a bearded man and the words: “*Drink of this / And take thy fill / For the water falls / By the wizard’s will.*”

In 2006, when writing the slip notes for a new edition of the book, Garner wrote:

About 150 years ago, my great-great-grandfather, Robert Garner, carved the face of an old man with long hair and a beard in the rock of a cliff on a hill where my family has lived for at least 400 years, and still does. He carved the face above a well that is much older. How much older, no one knows, but it’s centuries older, or even more.

In one instance Garner plays on the historical place names of the area as the children search desperately for Llyn-Dhu (which translates as Black Lake in Welsh). On failing to find it they ask a local man for directions, only to discover the place they are looking for is now known instead as Lindow.

Some of the most dramatic and visceral moments of the book come about when Garner makes use of the region’s copper mining history. Of the mines, Garner says:

But one thing we never messed with. The mines. The copper mines, worked on and off for 4,000 years until nearly 100 years ago, killed people. But these people were always strangers, never local children. We had lost too many of our families as miners there. The mines were one place we did not go.

And it is the strangers, Colin and Susan, who become lost there, pursued by their enemies through the apparently endless, pitch dark tunnels.

The final element that Garner uses to ground the story are the locals themselves. There are no passages in high elven, or dwarven runes to help immerse us in this world, but we do need to follow the local dialect that runs throughout the story:

“Theer’s little use in saying pigs conner fly, when you see them catching swallows! But I dunner like the sound of it all.”

The only “foreign” language in the book is Latin and it will come as no surprise to learn that this is the language used by the outsider in the story, who is also one of the main evil protagonists.

In 2010 Garner wrote:

I had to get back [to familial ways of doing things], by using skills that had been denied to my ancestors; but I had nothing that they would have called worthwhile. My



ability was in language and languages. I had to use that, somehow. And writing was a manual craft. But what did I know that I could write about? I knew the land.

Critics will say that *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* does not have the scope of *The Lord of the Rings* and of other high fantasy where we are taken to a new land with new rules, new geography, languages and people, but Garner’s strength is that his story remains in the land that created it. He has written about the land and legends that he grew up in and around. This is a place that the reader can walk in, can touch, can physically visit. Alderley Edge is still a place of mystery and recreation

for the people who live there today. The land, now owned by the National Trust is open to the public and a well-marked “Wizard’s Walk footpath” and popular walk for families on a nice sunny day, finishing at the Wizard’s Tea Room for a sandwich or the Wizard’s Inn next door if something more alcoholic is to your taste. Shaw did this and you can read about it in her article “Travel: A Wicked Wizard Ramble,” and I have included a picture from my own most recent visit. By not separating the myths from the land that created them, Garner creates a tangibility, a nearness, to the story that other, created, imaginary worlds cannot hope to recreate.

Garner, Alan *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (50th Anniversary ed). London: HarperCollins Children’s Books, 2010.

--- Slip notes from 2006: [REDACTED]

Parkinson, Daniel. “The Wizard of Alderley Edge.” *Mysterious Britain & Ireland: Mysteries, Legends and the Paranormal*. [REDACTED]

Shaw, Annie. “Travel: A Wicked Wizard Ramble.” *The Daily Telegraph*, London (UK) Apr 26, 1997: [REDACTED]



REVIEWS

Jodi Meadows. *Asunder*. Katherine Tegan Books, 2013. 406pp. \$9.99. Reviewed by Shiloh Carroll.

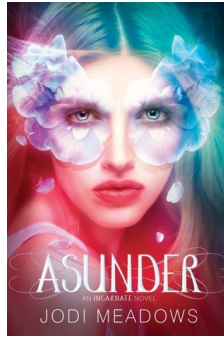
Asunder is the second book in Jodi Meadows’ *Newsonl* trilogy, following *Incarnate*, which sets up a society in which the million or so residents of Heart are reincarnated repeatedly, and have been for about

five thousand years. That is, until one of them doesn't return, and Ana is born instead. Because she is new, and because people feel that she "stole" the life that ought to belong to their lost friend, she is mistrusted, abused, and shunned by all but a few close friends. At the close of *Incarnate*, Ana discovers the truth about why the old soul didn't return, and a manufactured catastrophe causes Heart to lose nearly a hundred more old souls. When the first new baby born in Heart after "Templedark" is a newsoul, chaos erupts in the city and it is up to Ana to fight for newsoul rights and try to discover why the old souls reincarnate, and what Janan, the entity who lives in the Temple, has to do with any of it.

Asunder suffers from the affliction that hinders so many middle books in trilogies in that the worldbuilding is already primarily set up, and the ultimate ending to the story is another book away, so there's a slump in pacing and plotting that occurs. Sometimes serious character development makes up for the slow pace, but this unfortunately is not the case in *Asunder*. While Ana finds her courage, self-worth, and ability to assert herself, those around her seem stagnant. This could be explained away by the fact that they are all nearly five thousand years old and thus don't change very much, but Sam, Ana's boyfriend, in particular seems flat and immature, defined almost completely by his relationship with Ana and without the depth of character that one would expect from someone so old, who has died and been reborn so many times. The last few chapters pick up tremendously, giving the plot a major shove toward the final book, *Infinite*, as Ana discovers the horrible truth about Janan, the reincarnations, and sylphs, the threatening spirit-creatures that roam the wilds outside Heart.

Despite these drawbacks, some interesting parallels to Tolkien can be found in *Asunder*. Janan is an incorporeal being who possesses the tower known as the Temple; like Sauron in Barad-dûr, he has little direct influence over the world except through his devoted lackeys. Like Sauron, Janan gained his power through deception and by binding others to his will; the reincarnations are his side of the bargain that gave him immense power, and he continues to thrive by consuming newsouls before they can be born.

While few of the residents of Heart remember making this bargain—Janan makes them forget almost anything having to do with him, the Temple, or their bargain—they continue to benefit from it. While only a hint of the true nature of the sylphs is revealed at the end of *Asunder*, they seem to have some similarities to



the Ring-Wraiths; at least one of them is proven to be the soul of one of Ana's friends who died in the Temple.

Likewise, some subtle social commentary can be read in the text. The conflict between old- and new-souls reads very much like the contemporary generational conflict between Boomers and Millennials; the old souls see nineteen-year-old Ana as a baby, too young and inexperienced to add anything to society.

Although Templedark left them without several important people (including the person who monitors the seismic activity in the caldera near Heart), none of the remaining citizens trust Ana—or any newsoul—to replace them. Ana is frequently frustrated by the old souls' refusal to see her as a whole person or accept her as a citizen. Despite teaching herself to read and figuring out many major life skills without any help, she is continually made to feel inadequate because all the old souls have known how to read or play music or navigate using a compass for thousands of years. The old souls' greatest fears are of being replaced and of death itself, as they have never experienced permanent death and do not know what to expect.

The entire *Newsoul* trilogy raises interesting philosophical questions about the nature of society, life, death, and growing up. After all, what is the value of life if the soul will return in a few years—with all of its memories intact? How much would or should someone care about the well-being of another person if bodies are renewable resources? Also, how much does biological sex matter if two souls love each other, and that love carries over several incarnations? For that matter, how much does physical age matter when the souls are five thousand years old? On the other hand, does the age of the soul or the body matter more in Sam and Ana's relationship—both physically nineteen years old, but Sam being an old soul while Ana's is new. Like many YA novels with immortal/mortal romantic pairings, the reader is left to decide whether the pairing is inappropriate and creepy or whether age is less important than love.

Emily St. John Mandel. *Station Eleven: A Novel*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. 352pp. \$24.95. Reviewed by Jason Fisher.

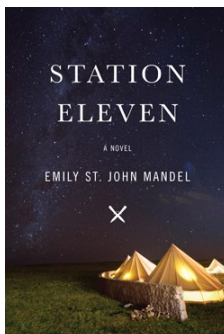
Mythopoeic literature is about building new worlds and shaping new mythologies. Sometimes, in order to build a new world, you first have to destroy the old one. Many dystopian authors do a great job at the destruction but don't always do so well at (re) creating a new and believable world to take the place

of the old one. In *Station Eleven*, Mandel excels at both.

The novel is an intricate and highly non-linear exploration of the consequences of a global pandemic flu, one that wipes out more than 99% of the human race. If you catch it, you're dead in a matter of hours. The small pockets of people who escape the flu in one way or another find ways to get by, but that's not really enough, because "survival is insufficient."

This phrase, borrowed from *Star Trek: Voyager*, becomes a repeated refrain in the novel (58, and many times after), and it explains how something like the Traveling Symphony could come into being in such a ravaged world. This rag-tag band of musicians and thespians moves across the desolate countryside performing classical music and Shakespeare to scattered village audiences for exactly that reason: because survival alone is insufficient. A band of survivors living in the Severn City airport establish the Museum of Civilization with similar motivation. There is something about people that makes mere survival not enough; they must cling to whatever vestiges of culture and civilization they can. It's part of what makes us human.

Just as the Traveling Symphony moves across the novel's physical landscape, drifting back and forth, but ever eastward toward the promise of a metaphorical dawn, so too the novel's narratives move back and forth in a temporal landscape, describing the world before, during, and after the devastation of the pandemic. Shakespeare—who himself lived in a time of plague—is a repeated motif mediating these narrative threads. The novel's opening scene describes a fatal heart attack during a performance of *King Lear*, witnessed by a child actress who will go on to perform Shakespeare in the Traveling Symphony years later. Others in the theater have different fates. The actor who dies on stage serves as the first harbinger of the death and loss to come. His first wife, Miranda (an appropriately Shakespearean name) is an artist whose comic book series, *Station Eleven*, provides another strand interwoven with the past and present and the characters in each. The dystopian story-within-a-story of *Station Eleven* and its leaders, Dr. Eleven and Captain Lonagan, appropriately mirrors the catastrophes unfolding in the novel's real world. Miranda only wrote two issues, and only made two copies of each, but miraculously—for a world in which 99% of the population is dead—they eventually come together again.



Meanwhile, the journey of the Traveling Symphony is complicated by a dangerous encounter with one of the many cults that have sprung up in the aftermath of the flu. New religions and mythologies always arise in the wake of global tragedy; after all, "a new world requires new gods" (261). The story of the Prophet, the charismatic leader of the cult of St. Deborah by the Water, also figures prominently in the novel's intermingling plotlines.

Even after so much death, the Prophet represents another existential threat to the members of the Traveling Symphony. To say much more would spoil the pleasure of discovering how these plotlines and characters come together, so I had better leave it there. But if intelligent dystopian fiction written for adults is a genre that appeals to you, make sure to give *Station Eleven* a try. I found it an immensely satisfying read, in the same tradition as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Justin Cronin's *The Passage* (whom, incidentally, Mandel mentions in her acknowledgements).



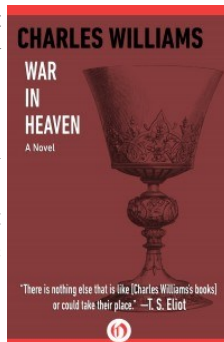
PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ebook Release of *War in Heaven* and six other titles by Charles Williams (February 17, 2015). Seven books by Charles Williams, including *War in Heaven* will be released as ebooks for the first time on February 17. Best friend to J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams is the sometimes overlooked—but incredibly influential—member of their writing group, "The Inklings."

While Williams achieved less commercial success in his day than his friends, TS Eliot said of his work, "there is nothing else that is like them or could take their place," and he was credited by C.S. Lewis for trailblazing a type of story which mixes "the probable and the marvelous." In other words, Charles Williams was perhaps the first author of the supernatural thriller—a genre which has exploded in recent years, drawing on noir mystery, thriller, contemporary fantasy, and frequently on religious themes, to form a blend all its own.

Preceding the likes of *The Da Vinci Code* by half a century, Williams' first novel, *War in Heaven* is a provocative, page-turning tale of the race for the Holy Grail that ignites the ultimate battle between good and evil.

***The Prince of the Aquamarines* by Louise Cavellier Levesque; Translated and with an Afterword by Ruth Berman (Aqueduct Press, 2105).** Written in 1722, Levesque's two fairy tales were reprinted in 1744 and again as part of the Cab-



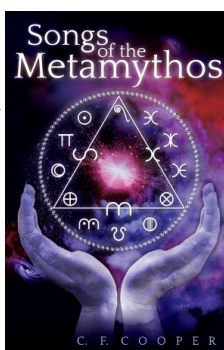
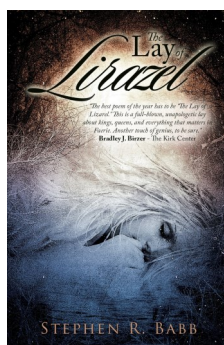
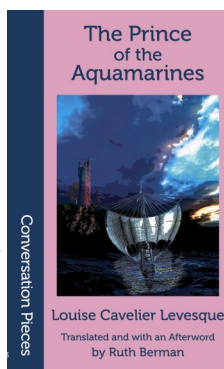
inet des fées. A much-abridged translation of "The Invisible Prince" was included in Andrew Lang's *The Yellow Fairy Book* (1894), but "Le Prince des Aigues Marines" has not appeared before in English.

***Lay of Lirazel* by Stephen R. Babb (Sound Resources/Hidden Crown Press, 2014).** Epic poetry meets high fantasy. An Edenesque garden, a haunted tower, a forest shrouded in twilight where-in dwell Centaurs, Elves and a myriad of creatures fantastic and mysterious; this is the setting in which Babb's "Lirazel" comes to life and where the tragedy of her life must unfold. Her doom is fixed, deadly, unavoidable and all the more tragic because of the choices Lirazel makes as she spurns wisdom for folly in a desperate gamble for love. Inspired by the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson, the paintings of John W. Waterhouse and the writings of George MacDonald, William Morris and Lord Dunsany; *The Lay of Lirazel* is the essence of the mythopoeic set to verse. Perhaps not since J.R.R. Tolkien penned "The Lay Of Leithian" has a modern writer attempted poetry on such a grand scale. Author and Tolkien-scholar Bradley J. Birzer named it "the best poem of the year," and went on to add, "Make no mistake, this is a full-blown, unapologetic lay about kings, queens, and everything that matters in Faerie. Another touch of genius, to be sure."

***Songs of the Metamythos*, by C. F. Cooper (Altair Imaginarium Press, 2014).** Hidden in the metamythos lies a riddle: It echoes from the lips of a face forever shrouded in shadow...drives the earth mother to a desperate feat of magic to save her children...brings unimaginable consequences when the goddess of death tries to get pregnant...and unfolds in slow turns on this very page, right before your eyes. Spanning from the birth of time to the death of stars, these tales will take you on a journey through a world both wondrous and familiar—our own. And with each new wonder comes one more key to unlocking the mystery at the end of the metamythos.

CALL FOR PAPERS:

The Hungarian Tolkien Society, together with the Institute of English and American Studies at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, holds its 5th Academic Conference on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien on **3-4 September, 2015** in Budapest, Hungary. The title of the conference will be: ***J.R.R. Tolkien: Individual, Community, Society***. The chief focus of the upcoming 5th International Tolkien Conference is the social aspect of Tolkien's oeuvre, especially the role of the individual in the community. Papers more loosely connected to the main subject are also welcome. We wish to reach and involve in the expanding field of Tolkien Studies' more and more university students, professors and researchers both in Hungary and abroad. The organising com-



mittee is expecting applications from Hungarian and European academia, especially young researchers and doctoral students. We plan to publish a volume of the conference papers. Presentations should not be longer than 20 minutes. Please send a 250-300-word-long abstract of your talk not later than **April 3, 2015** to the e-mail address [REDACTED]. Official languages of the conference are English and Hungarian.

DISCUSSION REPORTS:

November 22, 2014, the **Rivendell Discussion Group** met at the Rondo Library in St. Paul (MN) with the intention of watching the extended version of the second *Hobbit* movie, *The Desolation of Smaug*. After some unsuccessful attempts to try some form of access that might work (but didn't), I suggested that I hadn't seen the extended version of *An Unexpected Journey*, and would enjoy seeing it (or most of it—there wasn't quite enough time to play the whole movie, but watching far enough to see all the scenes marked as new or expanded got us most of the way through), so we did, and we all enjoyed it. David, who has felt lukewarm about this cinematic *Hobbit* until now, commented afterward that he was really starting to enjoy it as extended. Like the extended versions of the three *Lord of the Rings* movies, the extensions here are mostly bits that emphasize character rather than action, and so greatly enhance the too-action-y versions of the theatrical releases, even without adding up to a great increase in length—Mikeal said that the extended *AUJ* was about 15 minutes longer, and *DOS* about half an hour longer. I particularly enjoyed an added short scene, of Bilbo as a child meeting Gandalf for the first time, at a party where Gandalf was providing fireworks—which isn't something in the book, but makes a nice background to Bilbo's excitement on meeting Gandalf at the start of the movie (and the book) because of his fond memories of those fireworks.

Q: So *Mythprint* publishes Discussion Group Reports now?

A: Yes, if we have space! It used to be a regular thing, and I'd like to bring them back! Also check out our Discussion Groups page and make sure yours is on the list: [REDACTED]

Q: Why so much Tolkien? Isn't this a general society for Inklings and Mythopoeic appreciation?

A: Yes—but I publish what I have! *You* can change that, though, by submitting reviews, notes, articles, art, and more on other Inklings authors and mythopoeic texts and subjects! Submit to mythprint@mythsoc.org.

The Mythopoeic Society



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