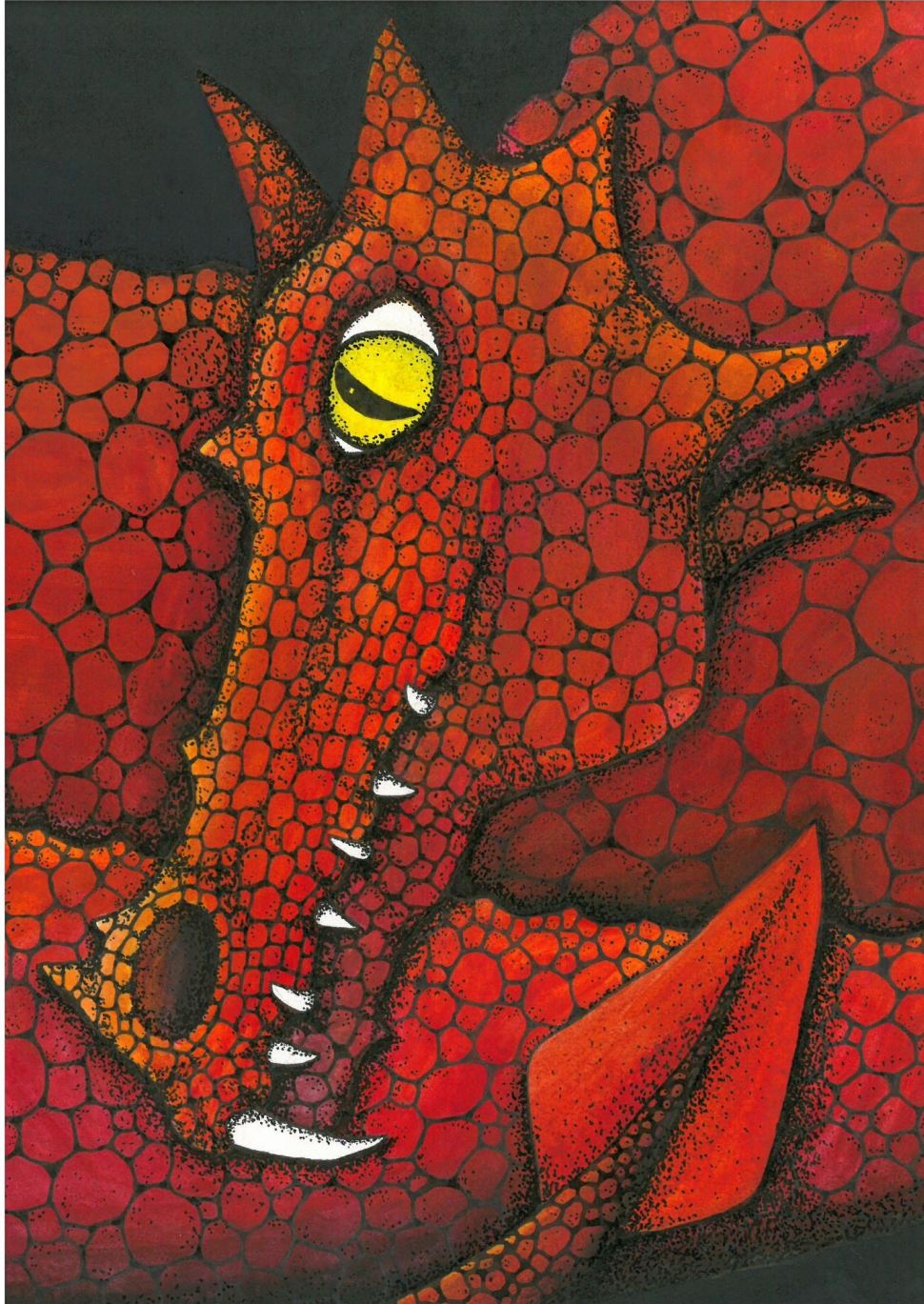


mythPRINT



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

VOL. 53 NO. 1

SPRING 2016

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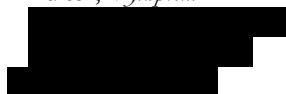
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Reviews, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, notes or short articles, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. In return for printed pieces, contributors who are not already subscribers will receive an electronic 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*



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 thorough our web site (using PayPal or Discover card), or you may contact:

Mythopoeic Society Orders Department



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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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Faces of
Mythology:
Ancient, Medieval
and Modern

The theme of the 47th annual Mythopoeic Conference is inspired by the 60th anniversary of C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* and *The Last Battle*; this year we focus on the mythology that has shaped and "given faces" to so many of our beloved characters, ranging from the myths of the Ancient Greeks to the legends of the Middle Ages and even to the modern mythology of the American Southwest.

Similarly, this mythological influence is also evident in the works of many of our favorite mythopoeic authors, from J.R.R. Tolkien to J.K. Rowling, from Ursula K. Le Guin to Alan Garner, and many, many more.

Room & Board prices are now up at mythcon.org. You can also view the full [Progress Report \(excerpted below\)](#) on the [Mythcon website](#). Looking forward to seeing you there!

MYTHCON 47

Omni Colonnade Hotel,
San Antonio, TX

August 5 - 8, 2016

Room & Board prices are now up
at mythcon.org!

Call for Papers due May 1, 2016

Mythcon 47 Call For Papers

Papers dealing with the conference theme are especially encouraged. We also welcome papers focusing on the work and interests of the Inklings (especially J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams), of our Guests of Honor, and other fantasy authors and themes. Papers from a variety of critical perspectives and disciplines are welcome.

Each paper is generally given a one-hour slot to allow time for questions, but individual papers should be timed for oral presentation in 40 minutes maximum. Participants are encouraged to submit papers chosen for presentation at the conference to *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. Paper abstracts of no more than 300 words, along with contact information, should be sent to the Papers Coordinator at the address below (e-mail preferred) by May 1, 2016. Please include your A/V requirements and the projected time needed for your presentation. You will

Author Guest of Honor: Midori Snyder

Midori Snyder is the author of nine books for children and adults, published in English, French, Dutch, and Italian. She won the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award in Adult Literature for *The Innamorati*, a novel inspired by early Roman myth and the Italian "Commedia dell'Arte" tradition. Other novels include *The Flight of Michael McBride*, *Soulstring*, *The Oran Trilogy: New Moon, Sadar's Keep, and Beldan's Fire*, *Hannah's Garden*, and *Except the Queen*. Her short stories have appeared in numerous publications; her nonfiction has appeared in *Realms of Fantasy* and other magazines, and in essay collections including *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Women Writers Explore Their Favorite Fairy Tales*.



Scholar Guest of Honor: Andrew Lazo

Andrew Lazo co-edited *Mere Christians: Inspiring Stories of Encounters with C.S. Lewis* and has contributed articles and reviews on C.S. Lewis and other Inklings to several books and journals, including *Mythlore*. More recently, he transcribed and edited the landmark "Early Prose Joy," which has definitively corrected the accepted dating of Lewis's conversion to Theism. Lazo regularly speaks in Houston and around the country and has taught Lewis in both Oxford and Cambridge. He also teaches English and a course on Lewis at Houston Christian High School and is currently researching and writing a book on *Till We Have Faces*. This is his first appearance at Mythcon.

be notified if your paper is accepted after that date.

Participants are encouraged to submit papers chosen for presentation at the conference to *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. All papers should conform to the MLA Style Manual.

All paper presenters must register for the conference; please see the Mythcon 47 web page for information and rates.

Jason Fisher
Mythcon 47 Papers Coordinator

Student Paper Award

Papers from graduate and undergraduate students are encouraged; we offer an award for "Best Student Paper." See details here: .

Room and Board

Mythcon 47 will be held at the Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade, San Antonio, Texas. This is a non-smoking luxury hotel and features:

- Large indoor & outdoor pools
- Fitness Center
- Free WiFi Internet service, if you book through us
- Free parking

We strongly urge you to book the hotel with us because the cost of our function space (and therefore the cost of putting on Mythcon 47) is tied to having a sufficient number of room-nights and meeting certain food and beverage minimums, and our room rate is less than the AAA rate. Part of what makes a Mythcon special is our shared meal experience, although this is becoming more of a challenge to manage and we do need to know how important this is for members of the conference. Every year at the Mythopoeic Society Members' meeting, held Monday morning before Mythcon's closing ceremonies, we ask for feedback and we're told that shared meals are important and we should keep organizing the conference around that experience.

We offer an array of options: single, double, triple, and quadruple rooms with full board; single, double, triple, and quadruple B&B (breakfast only); additional B&B room nights before and/or after the conference; a "commuter" dinner & banquet package; and individual banquet tickets. Please contact the conference committee with questions.

Full room and board packages include lodging for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night, along with the following meals: Friday dinner; Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Sunday breakfast, lunch, and banquet; and Monday breakfast. Remember that the banquet is included in the full room and board package.

MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY SOCIAL MEDIA STEWARD STILL NEEDED

The Mythopoeic Society is looking for a social media expert.

The Social Media Steward answers queries about the Society in various forms: sometimes email but mostly through our presence in a variety of social media. Currently we have accounts on Facebook (a page and a group) and Twitter that would require tending; the Social Media Steward could use our accounts at Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Goodreads, Flickr, and our Yahoo discussion group at their discretion. The Social Media Steward is often people's first contact with the Society, and requires someone with excellent communication skills and great tact.

The major portion of this Steward position consists of managing (and preferably expanding) our social media accounts. The Social Media Steward coordinates with the various department heads and others to collect and publish news, information and publicity about Society activities.

This must be provided on a regular basis to keep the Society's social media presence fresh and active.

The Social Media Steward, as are all Stewards, is a member of the Council of Stewards, the governing Board of the Society. This requires attendance (within reason) at quarterly meetings. Three are via conference call, and one is held at the annual Mythopoeic Conference. All Stewards are expected to contribute to overall governance with information, analysis, and meeting participation. If you are interested in serving, please contact either Janet Brennan Croft ([REDACTED]), or Gerry Holmes ([REDACTED]).



THE DANGERS OF WANTING

By Aúcia Fox-Lenz

Throughout Tolkien's legendarium, there is a unifying string of wistfulness and longing. This is typified in the treatment of the Elves left upon Middle Earth in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, showing up prevalently in Tolkien's verse. Longing is not relegated to only the Elves living in exile who yearn to return to the Undying Lands, it is a thread that appeared quite early—even before Tolkien's idea of Elves had fully crystallized—and does not always have positive connotation.

In one of Tolkien's early poems, "Why the Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon" we are introduced to this sense of longing, but it's one that once fulfilled proves that contentment in ones circumstances is better. The eponymous man lives on a pretty, though monochromatic moon—other than his belt and halo that are described as being gold, everything is white, like the moon itself; silver; or clear. He spends his days gazing down upon a brilliantly colored earth, described in similar gemological terms: ruby, sapphire, emerald, beryl. The earth's riotous color as it gaily spun past him, coupled with the mirth found within its large population, eventually proved too much for his drab, lonely existence. He began to see his life on the moon as a prison to be escaped. While lost in thought, dreaming of the warm light of the fires and sun on the earth and the decadent earthly food he could be eating, he accidentally falls from the moon. However, upon falling to earth the man in the moon is awakened to the harsh realities of life, and the beautiful fantasy he has concocted in his head of what earthly life is like is confronted with a cold, wet reality. He plummets into an ocean where some fishermen catch him in a net. They then bring him to the local inn to dry off, but given the hour of his arrival, no one is awake and the fire he longed for was only ash in the fireplace and there was no food made for him. His longing for merry song was met with only the snores of the town. He is left to bartering away all his possessions for dry clothing and sub-par food from a grumpy cook. The poem ends with "He arrived much too soon / For unusual guests on adventurous quests / From the Mountains of the Moon," suggesting if he had stayed his longing and was content to wait for the appropriate time to embark for earth, he

would have received a warmer welcome, more similar to the visions he had in his head of what an earthly life would be.

This negative sense of longing is quite different from Tolkien's later writings, where longing becomes thoroughly enmeshed with the character of the Elves, as a people exiled who long to return home. In Legolas's song "To the Sea!" in *The Return of the King*, his yearning to cross the sea is shone in a more positive light, likely because it is the fate of elves to cross the sea to join with the rest of their people in the Undying Lands. Instead of the unnatural desire on the Man in the Moon to come to Earth, Legolas' desire is completely natural. Though his longing is unrequited in the narrative, as he does not pass into the West save in the appendices, his desire is not framed in the same fantastical way as the man in the moon, who dreams of an idyllic place and is rudely brought to reality. Legolas knows exactly what awaits him across the sea, and instead of images of paradise, his desire is framed in simple statements of what he will do when that time

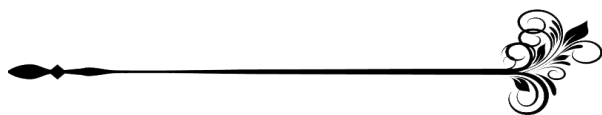
draws near. The poem begins with the beckoning of the gulls, which sets his heart thinking toward the wind and foam of the sea and what lies on the other side of it: the voices of his people calling to him to join them. He calls to the Grey Ship, which he will sail across the ocean in the

future and begins his affirmations that he will leave the woods that bore him because the time of his people is ending. His lonely sailing is then juxtaposed with the sweet voices of his people in Tol Eressëa, pointing to the fact that this journey and the longing leading up to it is ordained, since the reward for completing the journey is a good one: Legolas is leaving the land of men and has arrived in the land of the elves where the leaves do not fall and his people live forever.

With the exception of characters who long for power and fall into evil, it is rare for simple longing to bring about negative consequences in Tolkien's writing. In the case of the Elves, longing is so engraved into their character that it is perceived as noble, if a little melancholy. It's interesting to look back and see a period where Tolkien treated longing completely differently, as something that disturbs the natural order of things as opposed to a feeling of wanting to return to that natural order. Given the span of years between these two works, "The Man in the Moon" being written in 1923 and *The Return of the King* in the latter

With the exception of characters who long for power and fall into evil, it is rare for simple longing to bring about negative consequences in Tolkien's writing. In the case of the Elves, longing is so engraved into their character that it is perceived as noble, if a little melancholy.

1940s, there are a number of circumstances that could have contributed to this shift. Is this shift indicative of a maturing Tolkien's worldview changing? Could it be tied to his experiences during the World Wars—the youthful man yearning for an experience that turns out to be folly, and an older man seeing his children enter into this same folly and wishing to a return to normal, peaceful times? Perhaps Tolkien was simply drawn to the idea longing as a strength instead of a weakness. So much of Tolkien's writing is tied to his life, I'd imagine there is a biographical element to the shift and my money would be on the touch of the War.



REVIEWS

SARAH AVERY. *Tales from Rugosa Coven*.
Darkquest, 2013. 358pp.. \$15.95. Reviewed by
Emilee J. Howland-Davis.

In *Tales from Rugosa Coven* Sarah Avery provides readers with an insightful and entertaining look at a modern Wiccan coven and the troubles that the twenty-first century provides for the modern witch. *Tales from Rugosa Coven* is a collection of three novellas that tells the story of Rugosa Coven in New Jersey. I found this book to be a fun read with sympathetic characters and rich detail. It is clear that Sarah Avery is very knowledgeable about modern paganism, and she weaves her knowledge throughout this entertaining collection of stories.

We are first introduced to Rugosa Coven in the first work, “Closing Arguments.” Modern Wiccans Bob and his sister Sophie must handle their parents’ estate after the sudden, and simultaneous, death of both parents. What they discover in their ancestral home is a complex history of hoarding. Bob and Sophie call upon their coven mates to help them handle the overwhelming mess, both physical and spiritual, left by their parents. Bob soon learns, through the post-it notes his parents send him from beyond the grave, that something in the afterlife has a hold of his parents. As a result his parents are unable to rest and neither can Bob. Bob undertakes a spiritual journey in an attempt to help his parents move on in the afterlife. This story does a great job of introducing the various characters and the background of Bob and Sophie who were raised within the theosophical movement.

In “And Ria’s from Virgo” we are introduced to

Bob’s coven sister Ria who is keeping a secret from her coven. She suffers from debilitating, and self-diagnosed, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Her wiccan practice has become another outlet for her obsessive rituals. Through much trial and error Ria finds a therapist who is sensitive to Ria’s religious practice, and she begins taking medication to help with her disorder. She was prepared for the listed side effects, but she was unprepared for the changes to her religious practice and her career as a tarot reader. Ria has the ability to read auras, and this sixth sense is tested and changed as a result of Ria’s medication. Ria’s story shows us the struggles of a woman suffering from mental illness and her attempts to hide her symptoms from her closest friends. Her story also highlights the experiences of people who care about people with mental illnesses and the toll mental illness can take on friends and family.

Finally, in “Atlantis Cranks Need Not Apply” the coven discovers a strange man during a ritual on the beach. The coven initially believes he is dead, but he is merely unconscious. The man has gills on his neck and speaks a strange version of ancient Greek. Coven members believe he may be from the lost city of Atlantis. Sophie and Jane agree to keep the strange man at their cottage. Sophie’s history as a serial dater is brought up when she quickly begins a relationship with the mysterious stranger, and things escalate quickly from there. She is physically changed because of her relationship. The coven must learn to work with the new Sophie and the decisions she makes. This final story in the book serves as a nice conclusion to the stories of Rugosa Coven. For example, Ria is brought back to help Sophie and the man, and Jane learns to move on after her disastrous marriage.

The three works in this collection provide an interesting look at modern paganism and the relationships that are formed and lost within a religious community. While Bob and Sophie are concerned about the mess their parents left, the rest of the coven is worried about Jane and her abusive, alcoholic husband. Ria’s mental health struggles affect not only her but also her coven mates who do not understand her behavior. Ria is pushed from the coven because her behavior has become too difficult to deal with and because her own secrecy regarding her mental health. Jane’s former marriage continues to affect her, as the coven struggles to make peace with Sophie’s departure. Avery’s work is not just about the New Age movement. It is a work that explores what it means to be Wiccan in twenty-first century America, what it means to struggle with mental illness, and the struggles of a world that is

skeptical about paganism.

One of the best parts of Avery's work is her attention to detail. In the introduction she names numerous people who helped her; including doctors, attorneys, and numerous Wiccan covens. It is clear that Sarah Avery's work is well-researched, and her research is important to the world she has created. The descriptions of rituals and events are fantastic. Avery describes ritual structure, ritual tools, and the experiences of individual members. A reader familiar with Wiccan practices will find many familiar details. I do not believe that Avery's use of religious ritual detail in any way prohibits the reader unfamiliar with the neo-pagan religions. An uninitiated reader will be able to accept Avery's world building at face value. She provides enough description that any reader is easily able to understand and imagine the story, although there are a few parts of the story that are rather thick with meaning and some readers may not understand all that is possible in those passages. Sarah Avery also provides plenty of "in-jokes" for pagan readers. Pagan readers will readily recognize their own occult shop owner in the description of Morgan who runs the "Transcendence Perfection Bliss of the Beyond" occult shop, and readers will understand the references to "kitchen witch" and "fluffy bunny."

Although these are stories about modern paganism, in a variety of forms, the religious practices are not the center of the story. Instead, Sarah Avery has created a story where the connections and relationships among people within the New Age movement shine. These are stories of family and of friendship. Sarah Avery provides readers with a glimpse of several religious practices that have been and continue to be misunderstood and marginalized. The men and women of these stories live their mundane lives while trying to balance normal adult issues within the context of an often misunderstood religious practice. The lives of the coven members are the focus of these stories.

I enjoyed this book because Sarah Avery made me like all of the characters. The characters are by no means perfect, but that imperfection allowed me to enter the story completely. Readers may not be able to identify with the pagan elements of this book, but many readers understand what it means to have to clean out a deceased parent's home. Readers might identify with the Ria's struggle with OCD. Avery's book gives us a look at characters with complicated, funny, and tragic lives. The relationships in Rugosa coven are the center of this enjoyable read. I could not

put this book down once I started it.

Tales From Rugosa Coven was a winner of the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature.

Raymond Edwards. *Tolkien*. Robert Hale, 2014. 256 pp. \$43.95. Reviewed by Katherine Neville.

The reader of Raymond Edwards' 2014 biography of J.R.R. Tolkien will find an extensive examination of the author's 'academic interests,' for the strength of this work is in its author's sympathy with two of the major influences in Tolkien's life: philology and Catholicism. The dust jacket says that Edwards "followed the Oxford undergraduate course originally devised by Tolkien," which would have required mastery of Old English and Middle English philology as well as Anglo-Saxon and Medieval texts through Chaucer: the very matters which occupied Tolkien's professional life. Edwards is also Catholic, and has published works on Catholic Traditionalism and the Reformation, and has some experience working as a researcher for the Oxford English Dictionary. All these shared life experiences provide Edwards with a unique perspective on his subject.

Edwards has organized his biographical story into four parts of decidedly different lengths, with a fifth part devoted to posthumous developments and a brief appendix focusing on Tolkien's Catholicism. The first part, "The Making of a Philologist," is the longest, covering the years before Tolkien became Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in 1925. From the first, Edwards draws attention to any event which finds resonance with Tolkien's later writing.

One of the strengths of this biography is the attention given to details about the influential persons in Tolkien's early life, including Father Francis Morgan, who became Tolkien's guardian on his mother's death. Edwards fills in Father Morgan's life story. Edwards also presents historical context for the story of Tolkien and Edith's forced separation, softening the harshness that modern readers might perceive. In light of contemporary Edwardian customs, he calls Father Morgan's actions only "a touch old-fashioned" (36), adding that Tolkien's acquiescence shows that he did not think his guardian entirely unreasonable. Again, Edwards draws parallels to Tolkien's fiction, with his many orphaned characters, and the sometimes misguided actions of their parents and guardians.

Of Tolkien's school days, Edwards gives most at-



tention to the books which were important inspirations, from Wright's *Gothic Primer* to the poetry of Francis Thompson and the stories of Dunsany and Buchan. Edwards calls Thompson "sentimental, technically patchy and lexically incontinent" (42)—an example of his own opinion sometimes intruding rather too forcibly into his discussion of influence. Nevertheless he points out many places these influences may be seen in Tolkien's early work. Edwards does not neglect mention of the T.C.B.S., but is more concerned at this point with finding the earliest roots of Tolkien's imaginative development.

Edwards did not have the personal access to Tolkien's family and personal papers that Humphrey Carpenter had, but he is exceptionally knowledgeable about the philologists and scholars in his academic and professional life. Edwards helps us to understand the world in which Tolkien was educated, because that world is "utterly unlike what any English School looks like today, even (or especially) at Oxford" (67).

Edwards quite naturally covers Tolkien's reunion with Edith, and provides a chapter on his experiences in World War I. Again, his focus is on how the events of Tolkien's life became manifest in his work; stories of life events include poetry or tales which Tolkien may have been working on at the same time, or influences which appear later.

After the war, Tolkien was a veteran with a wife and an infant son to support on a very small stipend from the Army, but his First Class degree from Oxford opened some doors for him. Throughout the remainder of this biography, Edwards takes great pains to explain the domestic and professional demands which occupied so much of Tolkien's time, but also fed his imagination in unexpected ways. For example, the Two Trees of Valinor came into Tolkien's mythology while he was working at the OED, and may have been inspired by a scholarly article by Henry Bradley, his boss, and Kenneth Sisam, a former tutor. The piece has a very brief mention of two sacred trees in India, trees of sun and moon. It would have been a passing mention, but the eventual importance of the light of the Two Trees makes it worth noting. Tolkien's family was growing, he took on extra work compiling glossaries and tutoring Oxford undergraduates. But still he continued to work on his legendarium.

His next position, Reader in English Language at Leeds University, introduced him to George Gordon. Together they revised the English School syllabus, and for years labored on an unfinished Chaucer anthology.

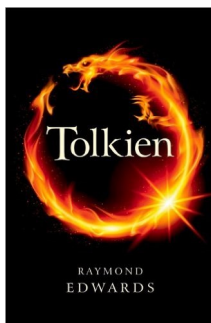
E.V. Gordon was another lecturer with whom he collaborated on many projects, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. As Edwards describes Tolkien's life at Leeds, the reader sees the pattern which will continue throughout his life: teaching cannot be delayed, family will not be ignored, and the limited time remaining goes more often to his art than to his scholarly pursuits.

The second section, "Philology in Practice," describes Tolkien's first years as Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. Tolkien's seminal lecture on *Beowulf*, "The Monsters and the Critics," is placed in context with his work on *The Hobbit* and *The Lost Road*. He similarly looks at Tolkien's friendships, primarily with C.S. Lewis, but also with other Inklings and with his students, many of whom played a role in getting *The Hobbit* into the hands of Allen & Unwin. In discussing these works, the reader sees why Edwards spent so much time on the foundational influences of Tolkien's early life. This section, essentially, is a look at how Tolkien lived and worked in the days before the

Second World War, and shows how he began to make a name for himself as a scholar and as a writer of fantasy. Nevertheless, there continues to be more work unfinished than published.

The third section is called "Achievement," and deals with the effort surrounding the production of *The Lord of the Rings*. He looks at the environment surrounding its creation. The strain of wartime danger was ever-present, along with the additional demands at

Oxford as tutors and lecturers join the war effort. Apart from the personal and professional strains, the war also brought the Oxford University Press into Oxford town, along with an editor named Charles Williams. C.S. Lewis had begun a correspondence with Williams a few years earlier, and now he brought Williams into the Inklings circle where he became the focus of Lewis' admiration. Tolkien felt the loss of attention dearly. According to Edwards, Lewis' friendship had come at a particularly painful time in Tolkien's personal life, when Edith was unhappy with life in Oxford and life as a Catholic. Tolkien acknowledged that without Lewis' encouragement he might never have finished *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien felt slighted by Lewis' turning to Williams for inspiration; sadly, Lewis did not seem to have noticed. After the war, pressure to 'modernize' the English syllabus at Oxford grew. Tolkien was mired in the complicated negotiations over the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* and may not have given academic



matters his full attention.

In the last biographical section, “Last Years,” Edwards examines the factors which kept Tolkien from finishing *The Silmarillion*. The primary problem was one of distraction. Tolkien could not seem to find the proper framework for all the pieces of his legendarium—one that would work with what had already been published in *The Lord of the Rings*. Questions from readers prompted responses which sometimes led to other revisions, or to new stories. His elderly aunt, Jane Neave, asked for more about Tom Bombadil, and so Tolkien re-wrote and polished an assortment of poems for publication. The American copyright dispute required that he revise *The Lord of the Rings*. A request for an introduction to a volume of George MacDonald led to the writing of *Smith of Wootton Major*, a lovely story, but yet another distraction.

Another concern, one which plagued him and Edith throughout their life, was ill health. As an infant, Tolkien had not thrived in South Africa; one of the main reasons Mabel returned to England was for his health. His bout of trench fever during the First World War was unusually virulent and left him susceptible to colds and flu thereafter—he nearly died of pneumonia in Leeds. Edith had had a very difficult childbirth with John, and was often ill throughout their marriage. Edwards chronicles each major illness; looking back, it is astonishing that they each survived into their eighties.

Edwards calls his final section “Niggle’s Parish,” an appropriate title for a look at Tolkien’s Sub-Creation after his death. The first chapter is an overview of the posthumous publications of Tolkien’s writings, primarily by Christopher Tolkien, but including editorial work done by other scholars. The second chapter is another brief overview, this time of the film versions of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. These two chapters are essentially lists; Edwards makes no attempt to enter a conversation about their place within a study of Tolkien’s work. His epilogue acknowledges that despite the fact that Tolkien could not finish *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* is accomplishment enough.

“Aside from the incalculable delight it has brought to generations of readers, it has also unsealed a whole vast area of the human imagination” (289). Edwards chose to place his consideration of “Tolkien the Catholic” in an appendix to the main biography, perhaps as a nod to Tolkien’s choice to keep overt religion out of *The Lord of the Rings*. He looks first at how Tolkien’s faith was expressed in his life: his attendance at Mass,

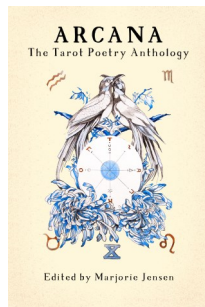
the prayers he memorized, and his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He contrasts Tolkien’s commitment to the sacraments and to private prayer to Lewis’ public evangelism. Interestingly, although many know that Tolkien preferred the Latin form of the Mass, Edwards suspects that his complaint may well have been as much with the translation as with the use of the vernacular.

Edwards finally turns to a consideration of the influence of faith on Tolkien’s work. He is not an admirer of those who look for simple equivalences: Galadriel is Mary, Frodo is Jesus, etc. Edwards prefers to look back to Tolkien’s poem, “Mythopoeia,” which was the fruit of a long discussion with C.S. Lewis about the truth of the Incarnation story. He brings in Tolkien’s ideas as expressed in *On Fairy-stories*, as well as the manifestation of true sub-creation found in *Leaf by Niggle*. Edwards suggests that the creation of elves may be the key to Tolkien’s idea: “they are above all makers, of song, story, works of hand and mind, freed from the limits imposed by a human life-span and gifted with skill beyond human measure” (298). This appendix brings to mind the Epilogue Tolkien attached to the published form of *On Fairy-stories*, in which he drew comparisons between the beauty and eucatastrophe in fairy tales with the greater beauty and ultimate eucatastrophe which is the story of the Jesus Christ. This epilogue is a reminder that what underlies everything is too deep not to merit separate attention. And it almost requires that one go back and read the entire work in light of the last words.

Edwards does not really present Tolkien’s entire ‘life in the round;’ such an endeavor would require considerably more than 256 pages. Nevertheless, I found his biography added to my understanding of Tolkien’s struggle to balance his public commitments and his private dreams.

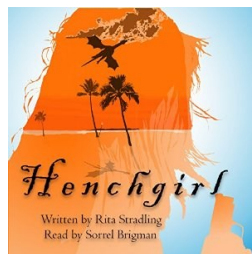
Marjorie Jensen, ed. *Arcana: The Tarot Poetry Anthology*. Minor Arcana Press, 2015. 146 pp. \$22.00. Reviewed by Emily E. Auger.

Arcana: The Tarot Poetry Anthology is a collection of seventy-eight poems based on Tarot divided into three sections: Majors, Minors, and Spreads. Tarot was invented in the fifteenth century as a set of twenty-two trumps added to the familiar fifty-six-card four-suited gaming deck. The Marseilles-style variants of the trump images subsequently became the convention; eventually such decks were found useful for fortune-



telling, with the cards laid out in spreads or patterns that related each to a particular aspect of a situation or query. In the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, occult applications, which use the cards as a map of psychic or spiritual realms comparable to cabala and astrology, were discovered, and the trump cards labeled the “major arcana” and the suits the “minor arcana.” In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Tarot cards have come to be understood as expressions of archetypes and re-visioned in relation to a wide array of established mythic traditions and personal experiences.

Many of the poems in *Arcana* are based on variants of the conventional Marseilles-style deck or the ever-popular *Rider-Waite Tarot* (1909), but some obviously refer to less familiar card compositions. Many also rely on ekphrasis—the translation of visual art into literary form—as famously exemplified in John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819): “O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede / Of marble men and maidens overwrought / With forest branches and the trodden weed; / Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought.” In like manner, Rosalie Morales Kearns writes (ekphrastically) of the Tarot Fool that he marches to the edge of the cliff, whistling and grinning. Like the other poets represented in this anthology (and Keats long before them), Kearns knows well the Narnian lesson that a star is more than the “huge ball of flaming gas” that it is made of (C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 1952). Just so, ekphrasis involves more than descriptively cataloguing the parts of an image: as an archetype, the whole of a Tarot card is greater than the sum of its visual parts. Kearns develops her Tarot Fool as that fool in Psalm 14:1 who declares there is no God, but adds that this declaration is “said in my heart”; and while “the nuns glared,” she toyed “with the mystery” by picking a card from her deck because “Who can argue with the heart?” This poetic amplification begins with a visual description of the card figure, makes the figure into a character by lending her a bible-based utterance, elaborates and contextualizes this character as a young girl in a religious school, and transitions seamlessly to the practice of cartomancy as an expression of the heart. The Fool/protagonist/reader-of-the-poem thus all begin with/as the Tarot Fool and end practicing cartomancy



as part of a truth that, like all archetypal realities, cannot be denied.

Similarly effective approaches to the cards are evident in Rachel Pollack’s *Fortune’s Lover* (2009), which was unquestionably an inspiration for *Arcana*. The poems in this collection also bring the descriptive aspects of Tarot to life with reference to myth, memory, and experience. *Fortune’s Lover* was published as part of *A Midsummer Night Press*’ series of “works inspired by mythology, folklore, and fairy tales.” Marjorie Jensen, the *Arcana* editor, acknowledges Pollack and some of her other literary mentors, as well as the mythopoeic tradition in general, when she writes of the Tarot Moon card: “On Midsummer’s Night, she descends, dances, / celestial inklings still seen in her brow.”

Kearns and Pollack’s poems on the Fool and Moon respectively are part of the Majors section of this fascinating volume; both the Majors and Minors sections are dedicated to individual cards and it is these poems that are most obviously mythopoeic. Those in the final section titled “Spreads” are less consistently identifiable as such, but all add depth to the poem-reader’s immersion in the Tarotist’s practice of relating archetypal card images to experience and visa versa. This is definitely a collection that students of mythopoeic literature should take note of: if the visual status of Tarot has caused them to pass it by, they are very fortunate that the *Arcana* poets were not hindered by the same limits of imagination.

Rita Stradling. *Henchgirl*. Audible, read by Sorrel Brigman. 2016. Reviewed by Bethany Abrahamson.

I listened to the audio version of this book in February. *Henchgirl*, the first book in its series, combines many genres including fantasy, romance and mystery as it follows the life of Dakota, a high-school girl of human and dragon descent, who works for her dragon grandfather in the family business—a mafia of sorts. She and her other dragonblood family members use their unique ‘aspects’—supernatural powers granted to them by their dragon blood—to carry out their assignments. She earns a place as a fighter in a patriarchal society through her grandfather’s attention to her combat training, as well as the power of her aspect, which grants her the ability to manipulate souls.

The world she lives in is run by dragons and those with dragonblood, and though an uneasy peace exists between humankind and dragonkind, Dakota and the reader discover that conflict is about to emerge. Dakota must fight for her family's survival, complete the missions her grandfather gives her, and navigate romantic entanglements, all while maintaining her alternate identity as a normal high school girl among her human classmates.

As I listened to this novel rather than read it, I had a different experience than I might have had reading it. The story, as first in a series, is difficult to judge by itself as well; however, there are many things to like even for a casual reader—primarily, Stradling's world-building. As she mentions at the end of the novel, the author took much of her creative influence from Hawaiian society, which can be seen in character names and island vs. mainland culture. This is a welcome change from the typical Euro-centric fantasy novels common in the Western world. The supernatural aspects afforded to dragonblood characters are also quite inspired, as each aspect is unique to each character. Dakota's ability to manipulate souls is explored to the novel's great advantage, with Stradling's careful descriptions of the different souls and emotions she encounters providing a thought-provoking aspect of the tale. With similar meticulousness, Stradling explores the different thought processes and psychologies of the supernatural beings around her, which adds another dimension to both Dakota and her interactions with others. Young readers who are interested in the different ways writers can flesh out the worlds they create will certainly appreciate Stradling's attention in these areas.

However, readers may have some of the same problems with *Henchgirl* that I experienced, which had to do both with mechanics and with plot elements. The writing lacked vibrance by telling rather than showing information to the reader, while descriptions often provided unnecessary information. Overall the writing felt clunky. The other difficult side of this story resides in the world that Stradling created. The fictional world created is patriarchal, with women able to fill only a few subservient roles in the dragon family power structure. The patriarchal society is recognized as unbalanced in the narrative, but not directly challenged by any of the characters. In fact, my impression of Dakota left me feeling that she, as a woman filling a traditionally male role in her family's hierarchy, disparaged other dragon-blood or dragon-associated women for their femininity. Some romantic relationships in the story bear similar patriarchal overtones. These

overtones may change as the series progresses—however, this somewhat concerning aspect may be something to consider before reading.

Overall, I found the story interesting if problematic in some areas, and would recommend it to avid fans of romantic modern fantasy.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers: Arts and the Inklings

Arts + The Inklings, September 28-30, 2016. The 2016 Verge Conference at the School of the Arts, Media + Culture, Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

This interdisciplinary arts conference invites presentations on topics relating to and stimulated by the work of the group of Oxford authors known as The Inklings—including C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, and J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as friends such as Dorothy L. Sayers, and their literary mentors, earlier writers such as George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton.

We invite presentations on such topics as...

- The Inklings authors' contributions to the arts
- Translating their work into other media—film, theatre, music, visual art
- The relationship between faith and story
- The Inklings' legacy as culture critics
- The role of friendship and mentorship in their/our/others' artistic creativity
- and other topics related to the theme

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Michael Ward, Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford, author of *Planet Narnia* (2008).

This conference welcomes submissions from any discipline that explore the topic under consideration. Proposal deadline is May 15, 2016. For more conference information visit [\[redacted\]](#)

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