

mythPRINT



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

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

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MYTHCON 50: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

San Diego, CA August 2-5, 2019

Please join us in San Diego, California, for Mythcon 50. San Diego is a wonderful “destination city” where Mythcon has been held only once before in 1991 (Mythcon 22) and is well worth the return. Early Mythopoeic conferences were held primarily at colleges and universities, a more-affordable option back in the late 1960s through the 1980s; in the last decade Mythcons have been primarily hotel-based and we find this to be a kind of two-edged sword: hotels are almost always more comfortable in which to stay but much more challenging for shared meals, which many of us really enjoy. They are more expensive housing but sometimes less expensive function space (we must guarantee a high-enough number of room nights and spend a lot of money on food and beverage) but very expensive audio/visual support. These choices are always the challenge in planning every Mythcon.

For Mythcon 50, we are harkening back to our roots and will be on a university campus with very nice meeting space.

Conference Theme

Our theme is a head-nod to Roman mythology’s Janus, the god of beginnings and endings, gates and doorways, transitions and passages and duality. So we are moving forward into the future while also looking backward toward the place from where we’ve come.

Conference Venue

San Diego State University provides wonderful programming space and dorm housing is similar to suites we’ve recently occupied in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Berkeley Mythcons. Program-

ming will be located in the Aztec Student Union, approximately 800 feet from our housing units, across the Aztec Walk East “sky-bridge”—fun for the Procession!

Registration and Room & Board

Registration is now open at [REDACTED], as are Room & Board packages!

We will be staying in the Cuicacalli Residence Hall (“kweeka-cal-ee”) which is comprised of a central building (24-hour front desk), with The Garden cafeteria upstairs (there is an elevator), and two towers (Tepeyac or Tacuba, basically identical—we will be in one of them). There is an outdoor swimming pool which we will be able to use, barring closure for some unexpected reason. The dorms are arranged in suites (see rough layout, below) which generally have six bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a common area with full-size refrigerator, microwave, and sink; you can take a virtual tour or look at a slide show here.

Bedrooms have 1, 2, or 3 extra-long single beds. The 3-bed room is generally laid out with two upper bunks (desk/dresser where the lower bunk would be) and there’s only one per suite; we will use them as larger singles, barring the actual need for a triple (if you need a triple, please email [REDACTED]). Full occupancy for suites during Mythcon will be 6 or perhaps 7 persons.

We will place people in double rooms (two beds in one bedroom) according to your roommate requests, assuming you both request each other. We will try to put people into suite groupings according to your requests but we cannot guarantee it. If you book a double room without specifying your roommate, we will try to assign you a suitable roommate. Doubles may be upgraded to singles at no cost, depending on availability.

The full conference room & board package will include Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights in the dorm; meals include dinner Friday and Saturday, breakfast Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, all at



The Garden cafeteria in the Cuicacalli Residence Hall. The Sunday night banquet will be in nearby Tula Community Center and is also included in the room & board package. If you have food allergies, please email

and let us know your specific limitations so we can advise the cafeteria and banquet catering.

Lunches are not included in the Room & Board package but will be “on your own”—there are many options within easy walking distance, some within the Aztec Student Union itself (including Oggi's Pizzeria, The Habit Burger Grill, and Chipotle Mexican Grill. There's also a Starbucks, although it's possible that specific location may be closed during the summer). On campus to the north there is a Rubios Coastal Grill, Panda Express, and Subway Sandwiches. Just south of the campus are many eateries for those willing to walk a block or two; we will provide a list.

The option to come early and/or stay late on campus is available. Two meals per day are required to stay on campus, so those who come early and/or stay late on campus will include breakfast and lunch in the Garden cafeteria (the least expensive meal combination).

Full Conference Room & Board:

- DOUBLE occupancy, three nights, six meals* - \$350 per person
- SINGLE occupancy, three nights, six meals* - \$430

Call for Papers

Join us as the Mythopoeic Society celebrates the last of our three fiftieth anniversaries: our 50th Annual Mythopoeic Conference!

Our conference theme references Roman mythology's Janus, the god of beginnings and endings, gates and doorways, transitions, passages, and duality. We are moving forward into the future while also, at least for this Mythcon, looking backward to the places from which we've come.

MYTHSOC TURNS FIFTY!

The Mythopoeic Society has launched into a series of 50th anniversaries:

Founding of the Society in 2017;

Initial solicitation of articles for *Mythlore* in 2018;

First Mythopoeic Conference in 2019.

For this conference, while work on any topic is welcome, we are particularly interested in presentations that

- acknowledge the long history of scholarship on fantasy literature while looking ahead, sometimes in new and unexpected ways

- incorporate or reference past developments in research

- survey the development of critical response to an author or a topic, the use of a certain theoretical approach, or the history of a strand of criticism

- look forward to future areas of research
- consider the genre's place in history and its development into new media and new ways of involving the reader or consumer
- introduce us to new or neglected mythopoeic authors and other creators
- consider liminality, border situations, or the pivot point between old and new
- Papers on the works and interests of our guests of honor are also especially welcome: John Crowley and Verlyn Flieger

Submission Information

Send abstracts of 200-500 words to this year's Paper Coordinator:

Janet Brennan Croft

by April 26, 2019.

See our Alexei Kondratiev Award for details on our student paper award! All presenters must register for the full conference.

MYTHCON 50 GUESTS OF HONOR

Author Guest of Honor John Crowley

John Crowley was born in December, 1942, in Presque Isle, Maine, where his father, an Army Air Corps doctor, was stationed. He spent the war years (of which he remembers nothing) in Greenwich Village, in a family of women: his mother, older sister, aunt and grandmother, and baby sister. After

the war his father resumed his medical practice in Brattleboro, Vermont, and then in 1952 took the family to Martin, Kentucky (pop. 700) to be medical director of a small Catholic hospital. John read Sherlock Holmes and Thomas Costain and *Gods, Graves and Scholars*, and decided to be an archeologist.

Two years later Doctor Crowley got a better job — head of the student infirmary at Notre Dame College (now University). John taught himself to write blank verse, composed the beginnings of tragedies, and planned for a career in the theater. He went to Indiana University, where he dropped that idea, majored in English and wrote poetry. Upon graduation, he went to New York City. There he planned to make films, wrote screenplays that were not produced, and began working on documentary films. He also began writing novels, beginning with a science fiction tale (*The Deep*, 1975) and then another (*Beasts*, 1977). But he had also begun writing a much larger and odder work, which would not be finished for ten years: *Little, Big* was published in 1981 and won the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award in 1982. By then he had moved to the Berkshires in western Massachusetts, where he met a woman he hired, on their first date, to do research for him on a documentary. After some years of friendship, courtship, collaboration, they married and had twin daughters. In 1992, through the intervention of Yale professors who had come to admire his work, he got a job teaching Creative Writing as an adjunct and later a half-time Senior Lecturer, from which eminence he retired in June of 2018.

John won his second Mythopoeic Fantasy Award in 2018 for *K4: Dar Oakley in the Ruin of Ymr*. We include the closing paragraph from his acceptance remarks here: “When he was in his eighties, the English writer Leonard Woolf, husband of Virginia, said at a literary dinner set out for him that the way to gain honor in British literary life is simply to live long enough. I don't think that that's the American standard. Which makes me doubly happy at the age I have reached to receive



again this honor that once before came to me, close to the beginning of my career. My thanks to all who brought this about.”

Meanwhile he has all along continued to write books and stories, some magical, most historical in one way or another, none of them very much like any of the others. They are described on the pages of his website, which includes his blog.

Scholar Guest of Honor Verlyn Flieger

Verlyn Flieger is a specialist in comparative mythology with a concentration in J.R.R. Tolkien. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Tolkien, Celtic, Arthurian, Native American, and Norse myth. She holds an M.A. (1972) and Ph.D. (1977) from The Catholic University of America, and has been associated with the University of Maryland since 1976. Retired from teaching at the University of Maryland in 2012, she is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at UMD. She teaches courses online at Signum University.

Her best-known books are *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (1983; revised edition, 2002); *A Question of Time: J. R. R. Tolkien's Road to Faerie*, which won the 1998 Mythopoeic Award for Inklings Studies; and *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (2005). She won a second Mythopoeic Award for Inklings Studies in 2002 for *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*, which she co-edited with Carl Hostetter, and a third Mythopoeic Award for Inklings Studies in 2013 for *Green Suns and Faërie: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien*.

With David Bratman and Michael D. C. Drout, she is co-editor of *Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review*.

Verlyn has also written *Pig Tale* and *The Inn at Corbies' Canny*, a novella, *Avilion in The Doom of Camelot*, an anthology of Arthurian fiction edited by James Lowder, and a short story, “Green Hill Country” in Doug Anderson's fantasy anthology, *Seekers of Dreams*.



MYTHIC CIRCLE EDITOR POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Greetings, Mythopoeic Society members,

I have edited *The Mythic Circle* since 1998, and have decided that the time has for new leadership here. *The Mythic Circle*, the society's poetry and fiction magazine, is now an annual, scheduled to come out just before the annual Mythopoeic Society conference. It publishes "Mythopoeic" poetry and fiction, that is, broadly speaking, works belonging to a rich imaginative tradition encompassing writers as different as Homer and H. G. Wells but especially associated with the twentieth century authors J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Charles Williams whom our society celebrates. The editor of *MC* is responsible for reading submissions, to accept, reject, or suggest revisions on them, and is also responsible for layout and printing; the *Mythopoeic Society* pays for the printing and mailing of a small run. Work is currently in progress for an on-line version of the publication, but not all the details have been worked out yet.

The editor of *The Mythic Circle* is a member of the council of Stewards and must stand for election; but I will give my hearty endorsement to anyone who works with me on producing this next issue; also, I am ready to hand the position over to any person elected according to the Society's procedures. Besides this, I will be happy to help the new editor with work and advice (as desired) until the editorial situation seems under control. Those interested in applying should contact the 2016 Chair of the Council of Stewards, Janet Brennan Croft, at [REDACTED].

Mythically yours,
Gwenyth Hood

ON THE SUPPOSED UNSUITABILITY OF FAIRYTALES FOR ADULTS, Part One

By J. Aleksandr Wootton

My dear Lucy,

I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairytales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairytales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what

you think of it. I shall probably be too deaf to hear, and too old to understand a word you say, but I shall still be your affectionate Godfather, C.S. Lewis

— Dedication of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*

In Autumn and Winter 2017, *Mythprint* published my open letter on the supposed unsuitability of fairytales for children, which criticized the notion that children should be sheltered from fairytales. Another view, more prevalent, is that fairytales are an *exclusively* children's literature, the rightful domain of saccharine animated films and kindergarten story-time.

These two views—that fairytales are unsuitable for children, and that they are *only* suitable for children—are less at odds than one might suppose. United by common failure to recognize the true worth of fairytales, adherents of both groups are likelier to prefer banning fairytales altogether than they are to haggle about age-appropriate demographics.

According to one view, exposing children to fairytales may scar them psychologically and impede or warp their development. According to the other, adults who read fairytales for personal enjoyment are odd, abnormal, coping with adulthood by clinging to comforting fixtures of their childhood—something like adult thumb-suckers. In both views, fairytales are things which have to be "got over" or "outgrown."

But I am deeply convinced that we have not and shall not outgrow Faerie.

This may be an unpopular view, particularly with certain *sophisticates* and *intelligentsia* among us; but no group of minds is more enslaved to intellectual fads than such self-important neo-aristocracies.

Lewis' Narnian dedication correctly infers that the season of life in which we are "too old for fairy tales" is specious rather than mature. The attitude occurs during that age in which we begin wanting to be "taken seriously" by others and feel that, to attain this goal, we must zealously safeguard our fledgling adulthood.

Being "too old for fairy tales" is an adolescent attitude. As a claim to literary maturity, it is analogous to acting macho (a claim to strength of body, mind, and character), or to adopting an air of worldly-wisdom and superiority (a claim to understand matters inexpressible to those of lesser experience).

Just as acting macho is proof of our weakness—just as acting ineffably wise is proof of our inability

to articulate experiences we ourselves do not yet understand—so, too, is dismissal of “childish” fairytales proof that we are not yet ready for them.

Nor is this test solely faced by individuals. From time to time whole societies experience hubristic fits of scientific or religious “enlightenment,” during which people come to believe that they can safely scorn and ignore “simple” folk wisdom – only to discover down the road that they really ought to have spent a few minutes sitting at the feet of the old woman or the “uneducated” man. It so often turns out that they knew something valuable about life, after all.

If we substitute the more appropriate term *folklore* for *fairy tale*, we immediately start to grasp, through sheer intuition, what is worthwhile about this genre of world literature:

Folklore transmits an entire heritage of “common” sense and everyday wisdom in memorable, highly-imaginative parables

Folklore unites us with our earliest human ancestors and our most distant kin – our neighbors furthest-removed in time and space

Folklore reveals that individuals are not isolated by the challenges we face (unless by choice)

Folklore reminds us that the choices before us are real. Our decisions affect both ourselves and those whose inheritance we presently steward

But because *folklore* is an academic term, we simultaneously introduce a new misconception: “Ah, well, *folklore*, of course. Naturally there's merit to *academic* study of folk literature. But no well-adjusted person past the age of ten reads fairytales for *fun*.”

This attitude is a Modernist fad. Thanks to the rise of the middle class during the Victorian era, and a corresponding upper-class obsession with fairies and idealization of Childhood, children's versions of folk-stories began to be produced. Up to and through the Victorian era, folk-stories were all-ages entertainment. It was only afterward that fairytales became “old-fashioned,” then “anti-modern,” then “un-scientific,” then “escapist” and “anti-progressive.”

Partly, this was because whether or not fairies actually existed (in a taxonomic sense) was still a raging debate. Terri Windling points out that fairy abductions were commonly reported in newspapers until well into the twentieth century, when they were finally replaced by reports of alien abductions. But Modernists want us to “face the facts”: science cannot confirm that fairies exist. *Ergo*, we should

assume they don't. *Ergo*, literature which claims or assumes the existence of fairies is false. False stories are lies. Lies are harmful. *Ergo*, fairytales are harmful, and a distraction from actual zoology.

Funny, isn't it, that we haven't adopted the same reductionist attitude toward the aliens—!

To be continued in Mythprint #389...

REPORTS AND REVIEWS

Return to Middle-earth: A Comparative Review of Tolkien Exhibition at the Bodleian and Morgan Libraries. By Jason Fisher

In the Fall 2018 issue of *Mythprint*, Robin Anne Reid reviewed the exhibition, *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth*, as presented at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Without echoing her too much, I'd like to compare the presentation there to the exhibition as currently staged at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City. *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* opened at the Morgan on January 25. I visited the exhibition over St. Patrick's Day weekend, March 16–17, as part of a one-day Tolkien symposium (keynote by John Garth) and the New York Tolkien Conference at Baruch College the following day.

There are some significant differences between New York and Oxford. For one, the Oxford exhibition—which I visited on its opening day, June 1, and several more times over the ensuing days—was free of charge, although booking a ticket was recommended. The Morgan, on the other hand, isn't quite so affordable. Getting into the Tolkien exhibition doesn't cost anything *extra*—though admission is not guaranteed if it's full—but the Morgan itself charges a \$22 admission fee for adults (\$13 for students). Admission is free on Friday evenings from 7–9 PM, but one can't be sure of getting into the Tolkien exhibition at that time.

Another big difference is the size of the exhibition, by which I mean both the number of items exhibited and the space in which they are displayed. The space was physically cramped when I visited. I'm told that weekdays are better. Visitors are shunted through tight spaces, sometimes doubling back, which created traffic jams. On the other hand, you can get a lot closer to most of the items in New York than you could in Oxford. I examined maps

and watercolors with my nose about an inch away from them! Still behind glass, of course. The lighting is a mixed bag: good overall, perhaps a bit brighter than Oxford, but my own head sometimes cast a shadow over the items I was looking at.

The scope of the exhibition is also much smaller. In Oxford, close to 200 items were shown. In New York, it's about half that. Most of what is omitted falls into a few major categories:

- (1) Fan letters. At the Morgan, a photo and song lyrics by Chuck and Joni Mitchel are on display, but a dozen or so other letters did not make the trip, including those from C.S. Lewis, W.H. Auden, Terry Pratchett, Iris Murdoch, Arthur Ransome, Queen Margrethe of Denmark, and a real-life Sam Gamgee.
- (2) Personal items. A number of family photographs and personal belongings have not come to New York. This includes several letters from Tolkien to Edith Bratt, the famous and heartbreaking letter to Tolkien from G.B. Smith, books and art prints from Tolkien's personal library, his wartime diary and other school and wartime items, his writing desk, and most of the family photographs. One significant consolation prize in this category: Tolkien's honorary D.Litt. gown, which was supposed to be displayed in Oxford, but actually was not, is on view in New York. The gown is accompanied by a photograph of Tolkien wearing it in 1972, walking briskly through the streets of Oxford.
- (3) Academic papers and lesser known works. The Bodleian displayed pages from Tolkien's *Beowulf* translation and the related short story "Sellic Spell", his unfinished *Fall of Arthur*, a page from *Roverandom*, and so on. Most of this material is absent from the exhibition in New York, which instead focuses primarily on Tolkien's major works and personal life.
- (4) Items associated with *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*. This might be the most disappointing for some visitors. In Oxford, one saw little Rayner Unwin's reader's report of *The Hobbit* as well as a much later reader's report in "Beren and Lúthien" by Edward Crankshaw; pages from "Tuor and the exiles of Gondolin" in Edith's handwriting; and perhaps best of all, Tolkien's three facsimile pages from *The Book of Mazarbul*.

None of these made it to New York.

Still, how can one complain? In spite of dozens of items not making the trip across the Atlantic

(and several not even making it from Milwaukee), all of these items are beautifully reproduced in the exhibition catalog. And while 100 or so items is not as good as nearly 200, it's far better than none. And some of the most impressive artifacts *are* on display at the Morgan: Tolkien's watercolors for *The Hobbit*, cover designs for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the cover of *The Book of Lost Tales*, the "King's Letter" from the abandoned epilogue to *The Lord of the Rings*, the "Tree of Amalion" (or one of them), paintings from Tolkien's *Book of Ishness*, and so on.

Regardless, for those who couldn't or didn't make it to Oxford, this is still a once-in-a-generation exhibition! The last time I saw paintings and manuscripts from Tolkien's own hand displayed in the United States was in 2004 at Marquette University, and this exhibition contains about twice as many items as that one did. The centenary exhibition in Oxford in 1992, *Tolkien: Life and Legend*, was larger even than last-year's exhibition in Oxford, but it was also more than 25 years ago. A few years before that, Tolkien's drawings, watercolors, and maps for *The Hobbit* were exhibited at Marquette in 1987. That exhibition, like the one at Marquette in 2004, consisted of only about 50 items. So as you can see, the Morgan's staging of *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth*, while only half the size of the Bodleian's, is still the largest collection of Tolkieniana shown in America in more than 30 years.

Even better, there are also several items on display at the Morgan which were *not* at the Bodleian, and this is where our British friends can be a little envious of us Yanks. In addition to Tolkien's D.Litt. gown, mentioned previously, there are three other important items you can see in New York alone. The first is Tolkien's manuscript letter to Geoffrey Selby, dated 14 December 1937. This letter is part of the Morgan's own collection, acquired in 1985. It was displayed at Marquette in 1987, but it has been rarely shown since. Another item is a six-page typed letter from Tolkien to the Scottish novelist, Naomi Mitchison, dated 25 April 1954. Anyone can read this in Tolkien's published letters, but seeing the original letter, which belongs to a private collector, was a very rare treat! And finally, the Morgan is showing two copies of the first English edition of *The Hobbit*, one with its dust jacket.

Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth runs at the Morgan through May 12. From there, it travels to the Bibliothèque National de France, where it is expected to

run from 21 October 2019 through January 2020. According to early announcements, the exhibition in Paris will contain more than 200 items, which would make it a little larger than Oxford, but it's not clear yet exactly which items we're talking about.

And that's it. Three cities, and then everything goes back into the vaults. I don't think I'll make it to Paris, unfortunately, but two out of three ain't bad!

New York Tolkien Conference Knocks it Out of the Park by Ryder W. Miller

Fun to gather in NYC for the New York Tolkien Conference, this time in conjunction with The Morgan Library which is showcasing the *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* exhibit through May 12th, literally in the shadow of The Empire State Building.

This was the same exhibit, mostly, that was displayed at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, UK, last year. At the Morgan there were original paintings on the walls, but not a showcase of Tolkien books translated to many different languages. Hard to provide an exact inventory comparison, but maybe a curator could. The space seemed a bit cramped, but it is rather Tolkien's popularity that made the space crowded. The Morgan also has to contend with Manhattan's outlandish real estate values. On display were many of the images Tolkien fans, critics, and explorers have seen over the years. Here though they were in their original form. The accompanying write ups were erudite and knowledgeable. They were also the same ones to be found in England a curator told me.

Hoped to see something else like a close up of some of the famous jewels and jewelry at The Morgan that led to so much contention in Middle-earth. One wonders where Tolkien's fascination with such things came from? His father was a banker in South Africa? Did his wife or mother care about such things?? Sadly missing was actual pictures of the Silmarils. There were a few pictures with rings in them. There is also Smaug lying on a pile of treasure with some bright jewels, one being The Arkenstone, but it is only a small thing that gleams on a bigger pile of gold and other shining objects. No close up for this or the Sil-

marils either; there only technically. Still left to wonder how Tolkien would have depicted them?

Tolkien did have a great regard for color in some of his paintings and sketches. One finds designs that have the bright colors of what could have been stained glass. There were also covers of early editions of his book. Some of the less widely seen or never seen images does have Tolkien struggling with creative expression. Most of the images were not transporting one to Middle-earth, but there were some paintings that could rival the paintings of many others. One could look from the heights with the majestic giant eagles, there was the trip down the river to Lake Town, a visit to the quiet and introspective woods, and also scenery from The Shire. Great exhibit for study and celebration, but also to explore the creative process and the relationship between the art and the literary. One might want to add to Tolkien accolades that his artistic process has been explored more than any other writer in English, probably.

Adding to a wonderful day at the exhibit, and a screening of the new biopic film that will premier in May, was a presentation in the museum and library auditorium that included half a dozen scholars from near and far. There was John Garth, Nicholas Birns, Chris Vaccaro, Kristine Larsen, and Leslie Donovan, who wowed the gatherers who were interested in the Tolkien "sub-creation." Garth talked of the challenge that led Tolkien to Númenor and Lewis to *The Space Trilogy*. Larsen pointed out that Tolkien was a [literary] "amateur astronomer." Donovan gave a wonderful talk that put teaching Tolkien into a fascinating historical perspective. Tolkien will remain a classic and will lure curious and demanding reader to Middle Earth.

For the Conference attendees there was a also full day of talks and presentations at nearby Baruch College on the Sunday following. Many of the stars from the Mythopoeic Society, which will be celebrating a 50th Anniversary in San Diego this summer, were in attendance and without which the conference would have been smaller. There were presentations on a lot of subjects by many also revered and accomplished. There was art, music, politics, imagination and creativity. There were giants, investigators, scholars, gamers, and lovers present. The LBGT was included and represented. There was also an interest in diversity. Some

of these papers are bound for *The Journal of Tolkien Research*, others on subjects that will be revisited. *The Fall of Gondolin* does not seem to have been digested yet, with some probably worried about regurgitation. No detailed public response yet. Stay tuned, but think twice about looking into magic balls.

This report also appears in April 2019 Beyond Bree.

Inklings Festival Report by Lynn Maudlin

On March 9, 2019, the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society held their first annual “Pacific Inklings Festival” and general meeting. Held at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, it was comprised of four plenary talks with breaks in between for music and perusing merchant tables.

Inklings scholar David Bratman started the morning with “C.S. Lewis Writes a Fan Letter,” detailing CSL’s fan letters to Charles Williams, E.R. Eddison, T.H. White, and Mervyn Peake, and Lewis’s practice of inviting the authors to Oxford to meet with him and others interested in fantasy—essentially, the Inklings, although in the case of Peake the group was no longer meeting. It was delightful to see Lewis the enthusiastic reader through these letters, several of which were written in archaic language and spelling, to evoke the book he praised.

Sorina Higgins spoke on “The Inklings among Other Arthurs,” using C.S. Lewis’s metatextual device of Lucy reading the spell for the refreshment of spirit, which was a story within the magician’s book of spells on the island of the Duffers/monopods; Lucy is an English girl within the Narnian story, so there’s at least four levels represented. The story involved a sword, a green hill, a tree, and a goblet—and Sorina used those four subjects to enter in to the field of Arthurian legends and whether Arthur actually need be present, as layers spin off of layers and more layers. She made good use of visual images, many from the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* movies.

Before lunch, Jim Prothero, president of the SCCSLS, presented two awards. The first was the Paul F. Ford Award for Excellence in Lewis Scholarship in Teaching and Writing; this was given to Dr. Diana Pavlac Glyer (Paul F. Ford is a C.S. Lewis scholar, teacher, and author who founded the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society in 1974).

The second was the Golden Lion Award for Service; this was given to Edie Dougherty. Both recipients were surprised and both well deserve the honors they received.

After a lunch break, Michael Paulus of Seattle Pacific University presented a paper, “From the City to the Cloud: Charles Williams’s Image of the City as an Affirmation of Artificial Intelligence.” This fascinating talk pitted Jacques Ellul’s view of “the City” as anti-God and argued Williams’s perspective saw the overlay of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven, upon the existing and developing city, full of archetypes.

The program closed with Jim Prothero’s talk, “Bright Drops of Spilled Religion: Inklings and Romanticism: C.S. Lewis,” from a book co-written with Don Williams, *Gaining a Face: The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis*. Jim provided his own definition of Romanticism and argued it is often confused with Postmodernism and that literature is not linear but cyclical. He looked at the relationship between Coleridge and Wordsworth and used CSL’s repeated re-readings of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* to develop his argument, quoting Lewis in *The Four Loves*, “If you take nature as a teacher, she will teach you exactly the lessons you had already decided to learn,” and observing that “reason is the organ of truth; imagination is the organ of meaning.”

The audience was well-engaged and after each talk we were given an opportunity to ask questions which were insightful and provoked further discussion. It was a very worthwhile day and I trust that the SCCSLS will do it again next year. Lots of postcards for Mythcon 50 in San Diego were picked up so we will hopefully have some overlap.

CHRISTOPHER JON HEUER, editor.
Tripping the Tale Fantastic: Weird Fiction by Deaf and Hard of Hearing Writers. Handtype Press, 2017.
\$22.00. 198 pp. Reviewed by M. STURTEVANT.

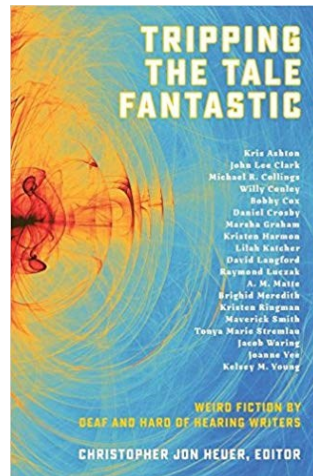
Nineteen stories in the classic sci-fi mode, for better or worse, with a twist; each is written by a deaf or HOH writer. This book slid across my desk a few months ago, with one other by Handtype Press, Kristen Ringman’s *I Stole You*, which was also a group of short stories. In this offering, each short

has a different author, including one piece I'd previously read by Ringman.

I'm HOH myself, dependent on a set of finely tuned digital hearing aids to get by, but I learned a lot about the anger that seems deeply embedded in the HOH/Deaf communities from the short stories expressed. Science Fiction is usually about taking the modern and projecting forward, either from a certain scientific point, or from a social standpoint. This is the tradition in early science fiction, almost to the point of humor. It's hard to look back on *Them!* From a modern standpoint and do anything but laugh. Giant ants? Come on.

So, what do you get when you thematically apply the culture of deaf anger and disinclusion to the sort of projections needed for science fiction? Well, sometimes it's near enough that it's just fine. Sometimes it's *Family Dog*, in which the deaf protagonist likens themselves to the family pet and then happily relishes the turnaround, wherein her family is subjected literally to the fate she'd only metaphorically thought herself part of. Or the final story, *Tommy Goes to College*, in which refusal to make allowances for understanding is removed to such an extreme that countries are built on it and the reader loses the thread of relatability. (Giant ants? Come on!)

In all honesty, I found most of the stories that centered around Deafness itself to be too simple for me to get a proper hold on, to relate to. Maybe the anger comes with really being deaf; the central themes I saw were empowerment through rejection of any attempt to fit in with the hearing community, or leaving behind friends and family if they were 'holding you back' to communicating verbally. Many of these stories put sign language on a pedestal, and yet they also failed to give me what I craved. Deafness was reduced to an 'othering' effect, made itself into the element that took the story into the 'fiction' territory, instead of taking me into a narrative where a deaf person was reasonably accommodated and also the hero. I found myself craving a story where someone captained a mission in space, and happened to be deaf. Where they faced off against a monster made of silence, and they



alone were immune.

I wanted a deaf protagonist whose story was strengthened by his or her deafness, but didn't revolve solely around it. So that brings me to the book's strengths; the stories which were simply science fiction written by deaf and hard of hearing authors. *Starting from Scratch* stands out in my mind as a deeply chilling tale of science gone too far, of a man willing to sell a biological weapon getting just deserts. *Dreaded Silence*, the story of a muse reaching out to someone in a time of loss. These stories were well-told and

resonated with me in a way the stories that rang with anger didn't.

Ghostly Demands came the closest to reaching what I wanted, creating two deaf protagonists that solve supernatural crimes in the mode of *Dresden Files* or *Anita Blake*. While they are somewhat disparaging toward their hearing hire-on, overall it illustrates a story of both worlds co-existing and managing to work something feasible out. I would happily read a series about Marsha Graham's characters, and I think that's where the true strengths of this book lie.

In a collection of short stories, you can always find something that appeals to you. Thematically, *Tripping the Tale Fantastic* is somewhat all over the place. We revisit Ringman's stories of the Fae, and planets of the future where gestures are forbidden and only speaking is allowed. There is a span of experiences, some of which miss the mark with me but may well hit them with folks who have more severe or complete hearing loss.

Overall, I enjoyed the chance to experience what deaf and hard of hearing authors have to say, both on the subject of how their experiences sometimes feel (though largely taken to an extreme in the name of fiction), and what stories they tell. Their voices are all unique, and we should listen to them when the words on the page bridge the gaps. I hope you'll

give this set of works a chance, dig in, and dig through to find a voice you like, because there's sure to be something in here that takes you someplace new.

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