

# mythPRINT



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

VOL. 57 NO. 3

FALL 2020

WHOLE NO. 394



## Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

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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.

#### MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mythopoeic Society membership: \$15/year includes an electronic subscription and \$25/year includes a paper subscription to *Mythprint*; either entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

#### POSTAGE AND NON-MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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*Complete & updated price lists can always be found on our website.*

The easiest way to join the Mythopoeic Society and subscribe to our publications or join our annual conference is to visit our website. We take personal checks as well as PayPal, which is the easiest way for overseas members. Back issues of *Mythprint* are available for purchase at our website.

Reviews of mythopoeic media, 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:

Mythopoeic Society Orders Department



Visit The Mythopoeic Society online at [REDACTED]

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**MYTHCON 51:  
THE MYTHIC, THE FANTASTIC,  
AND THE ALIEN**

**Albuquerque, NCO**

**July 31 – August 3rd, 2020**

**POSTPONED**

**July 30th – August 2nd, 2021**

Due to quarantines and health concerns, the Council of Stewards has decided to postpone **Mythcon 51** until summer of 2021; the dates will be **July 30-August 2, 2021**. Our venue and Guests of Honor have all agreed to this change and the conference theme will remain the same. Your membership will automatically roll over to next year but if you cannot attend next year, please contact [REDACTED] and request a refund of your Mythcon 51 registration. For those who paid the non-member prices, your membership in the Mythopoeic Society associated with joining the conference will be extended by a year. Thank you for understanding!

This year's theme provides multiple opportunities to explore the Other in fantasy and mythopoeic literature. Tolkien spoke in "On Fairy-stories" of "the desire to visit, free as a fish, the deep sea; or the longing for the noiseless, gracious, economical flight of a bird." We invite discussion about the types of fantasy that are more likely to put us into contact with the alien, such as time portal fantasy and space travel fantasy.

In addition to Inklings, some writers who deal particularly well with the truly alien who might be explored include Lovecraft, Gaiman, Le Guin, Tepper, and others. Other topics that might be fruitfully explored are: depictions of the alien Other in film (*Contact*, *Arrival*, etc.); developing constructed languages that are truly different from those of Earth-based humans; fantastical Others in indigenous myths (such as Coyote and Spider Woman from Native American mythology); and American folklore about the alien (flying saucers, alien abduction, Area 51, Roswell, NM).

Please join us at the Ramada Plaza Hotel by Wyndham in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for

Mythcon 51. Albuquerque is a wonderful destination city where Mythcon has been held only once before in 2011 (Mythcon 42) and is well worth the return.

More information can always be found at [REDACTED]

## Call for Papers

Papers on our conference theme and the works and interests of our guests of honor are especially welcome, although all subjects will be considered.

**PAPERS and PANELS PROPOSALS:** Email papers abstracts of 200-500 words by April 15, 2021:

Cami Agan (Papers Coordinator),  
[REDACTED]

Email panels abstracts of 50-150 words by April 15, 2021:

Leslie Donovan (Panels Coordinator),  
[REDACTED]

Include AV requests and time slot needed. We will make every effort to accommodate A/V requests, but such equipment is limited and cannot be guaranteed. Time slots: Individual long papers are one hour, about 45 minutes for the paper and 15 minutes for discussion; Individual short papers or 1/2 hour, about 20 minutes for the paper and 10 minutes for discussion; Panels are 90 minutes, about 60 minutes for the panel and 30 minutes for discussion.

All presenters must register for the full conference; see the Mythcon 51 Registration page for information and rates.

Eligible presenters should see details on our Alexei Kondratiev student paper award at [REDACTED]





Rivera Sun -  
Author Guest of  
Honor

MYTHCON 51 GUESTS OF HONOR

David Bratman -  
Scholar Guest of  
Honor

**Rivera Sun** is a change-maker, a cultural creative, a protest novelist, and an advocate for nonviolence and social justice. She is the author of *The Dandelion Insurrection*, *The Roots of Resistance*, and other novels. Her young adult fantasy series, the Ari Ara Series, has been widely acclaimed by teachers, parents, and peace activists for its blending of fantasy and adventure with social justice issues. Going beyond dragon-slayers and sword-swingers, heroes and sheroes in Ari Ara's world stop wars and wage peace. They use active nonviolence to make powerful change. In all her works, Rivera Sun advocates that if we want to build a culture of peace, we have to tell new stories that still appreciate, but go beyond the old myths, epics, and legends that rehash outdated war and violence narratives. *The Way Between*, the first book in the Ari Ara Series, has been read by numerous groups of all ages, while the second book in the series, *The Lost Heir*, has been nominated for the 2020 Dayton Peace Literature Prize.

Rivera Sun's essays have been published in hundreds of journals nationwide. She is a frequent speaker and presenter at schools, colleges and universities, where *The Dandelion Insurrection* has been taught in literature and political science courses. Rivera Sun is also the editor of *Nonviolence News*, an activist, and a trainer in making change with nonviolence. Her essays and writings are syndicated by Peace Voice and have appeared in journals nationwide. She lives in an Earthship house in New Mexico.

David Bratman has been reading Tolkien for over fifty years, and has been writing Tolkien scholarship for nearly as long. His earliest contribution to the field was the first-ever published Tale of Years for the First Age, right after *The Silmarillion* was published. Since then he's published articles with titles like "Top Ten Rejected Plot Twists from *The Lord of the Rings*," "Hobbit Names Aren't from Kentucky," and "Liquid Tolkien" (on Tolkien and music). He's been co-editor of *Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review* since 2013, and has written or edited its annual "Year's Work in Tolkien Studies" since 2004. David edited *The Masques of Amen House* by Charles Williams and contributed the bio-bibliographical appendix on the Inklings to Diana Pavlac Glyer's *The Company They Keep*. He has also written on C.S. Lewis, Ursula Le Guin, Mervyn Peake, Neil Gaiman, and others. For the Mythopoeic Society he was editor of the monthly bulletin *Mythprint* for fifteen years, and has worked on many Mythopoeic Conferences, including serving twice as chair. He's a retired academic librarian and an active classical music reviewer who lives with his wife, Berni (a soprano and violinist), and two cats in a house they call Minnipin Cottage.



## MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY RECORDING SECRETARY POSITION OPENING

Greetings, Mythopoeic Society Members,  
I have enjoyed the past 20+ years of board service to the Mythopoeic Society as its Recording Secretary. It has been a privilege to contribute even in a small way to their efforts. I am gratified to have worked with so many creative and talented Stewards whom I also regard as friends.

Fondly,  
Gerry Holmes

### The Duties of the Recording Secretary are as follows:

1. MINUTES: Take and write up the minutes from the quarterly Steward Meetings per year held via conference call. After the Call to Order, the Recording Secretary takes attendance and reports to the President the names of the attending Stewards. The previous meeting minutes are then voted on for acceptance with or without corrections. If corrections, additions, etc., need to be made, the Recording Secretary will make any changes, corrections, etc., and then post the amended minutes to the Stewards' List.

2. ANNUAL REPORT: Every year, each Steward writes a report for the Society's Annual Report (AR). As a non-profit organization, the Society is mandated by California law to write and submit an AR. The Recording Secretary creates a short summary of the year's meeting minutes.

3. ELECTION RECORDING: Every three years, the Society holds an election for all the Steward offices. The Membership Steward creates both an electronic and paper ballot which is sent to all members. Any member can choose to run for any Steward office. The election period is generally a month long (1 November - 1 December). The Recording Secretary reads and records all submitted ballots. At the end of the election period, the election results are tabulated by the Recording Secretary and reported to the Stewards via the Stewards' List. The results are published in *Mythprint*, the Society newsletter.

Members who are interested in applying should contact the 2020 Chair of the Council of Stewards, David Emerson, at [REDACTED]

## MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR OPENING

The Mythopoeic Society is now seeking applications for the volunteer position of Administrator of the Mythopoeic Awards, our annual book awards, which consist of the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award (MFA) for Adult Literature and Children's Literature, and the Mythopoeic Scholarship Awards (MSA) for Inklings Studies and Myth and Fantasy Studies. The Administrator is also a member of the Society's governing body, the Council of Stewards, and meets with the other Stewards quarterly via conference call and face-to-face meetings at our annual conferences (Mythcons) to oversee budgets, planning, and other matters of Society business.

The Administrator issues the call for nominations for books and oversees the volunteer members of the selection committees (two for the MFAs and one for the MSAs), vets nominees based on the criteria for the different categories (see [REDACTED]), compiles the lists of nominees for the committees, works with the committees during their reading/deliberation process if questions of eligibility arise, tallies the votes for the finalists and then the winners of the awards, issues press releases through Society channels and other media, and organizes the awards ceremonies held at Mythcons during the summer. The Administrator also fields questions about the awards, communicates with authors after the finalists are announced, works with the current Mythcon Committee should any finalists wish to attend Mythcon, and prepares and ships (at Society expense) the lion trophies, the "Aslans," to the winners.

The office would start with the 2022/Mythcon 52 awards cycle in late 2021. The current Administrator will begin the 2022 awards process depending on when the position is filled, and will be available to assist the new Administrator as needed. Those interested in applying should contact the 2020 Chair of the Council of Stewards, David Emerson, at [REDACTED]. Questions about the awards process can be directed to the outgoing Administrator, Vicki Ronn, at [REDACTED]. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

## A GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP: BUT WHOSE VOICES COUNT IN DISCUSSIONS OF DIVERSITY IN TOLKIEN ADAPTATIONS?

By PETER TRAYNOR.

I was moved by Elyanna Choi's statement in *Mythprint* #393 of *Mythprint* in which she describes her experience at a recent Tolkien conference. She had been invited to speak, and addressed the subject of diversity and representation in Tolkien fandom, but received a negative response from some parts of the audience. It made me think about Tolkien's aims and objectives in his writing, and what he might have made of it.

Elyanna made some interesting points, two of which could be summarised thus—first, that adaptations of Tolkien's works could and should be more inclusive and more representative of the modern world and Tolkien's global fanbase. Second, it is important to include marginal voices in discourses on Tolkien. I would add a further point—that whether you agree with her argument or not, Elyanna is entitled to make it and to be treated with respect when she does.

The first point is by no means new, and was not presented as such: there has been criticism of 'whitewashing' in the casting for the six Peter Jackson films, and also of Jackson's reliance on some of Tolkien's stereotypes in his presentation of some of the villains—the Easterlings and Haradrim for instance, and more broadly the 'Blackness' of some of the villainous races—particularly the Uruk-hai. Ryder W. Miller in #391 of *Mythprint* explored the othering of 'ugly' animal species in Tolkien. I am concerned here with the 'othering' of non-white peoples and the impact of this on fans from ethnic minorities. I can still remember watching *The Fellowship* in 2001—when three young black people walked out of the cinema not long after the reveal of the Uruk-hai—played by new Zealand Mauri actors, and with distinctly non-white features. I cannot say for sure why they left—maybe they were not enjoying the film, but the timing seemed ominous, and my presumption, which still stands, was that they were disturbed to see that the only actors of colour were playing murderous, hyper-potent monsters. Such representations of black people are not uncommon in cinema more broadly, albeit it usually in less exaggerated forms.

Different arguments can and have been advanced

against these points—two can be summarised as:

- 1: The source material—i.e. Tolkien's works, only included white people as characters (or at least good characters);
- 2: The source stories on which Tolkien based his works are based on Caucasian myths and historical events, and should therefore only feature white people as characters (or at least good characters).

On the first of these: is it true that the main characters in the novels are 'white'? Perhaps—but only if we include within this category a broad range of non-human characters—the Elves, the Dwarves, the Hobbits, and several wizards—most of whom, according to Tolkien's own mythos, in addition to being non-human, were also born without souls. I love the elves, but always thought that they would be somewhat monstrous in real life—and certainly not white as we know it. We might expect the dwarves to be pallid given their fondness for the underground, but again as a non-human race it would be hard to categorise them as white and certainly not Caucasian—there isn't even a Caucasus in Middle-earth. Hobbits would most likely be darker-skinned given their lifestyles—and as Elyanna notes, there might even be different ethnicities of Hobbit and indeed all of the races—I'd never thought of Samwise as ethnically ambiguous—I saw him as part of the rural class as opposed to the more gentrified Frodo, but actually the name Gamgee could easily be a name from the Indian sub-continent, and it is entirely plausible that Tolkien intended such.

Many of the humans are distinctly 'swarthy'—Aragorn in the Ralph Bakshi film is more like how I imaged him than in the Jackson trilogy—older, darker-skinned—he is after all one of the Dúnedain, unlike say the Rohirrim who are more closely modelled on early white Europeans—although it's worth noting here that Rohan actually is an old Indian name.

Regarding the second point: an interesting comparison can be made with the recent BBC adaptation of the Bernard Cornwell novels about King Alfred and the strife between the settled Anglo Saxons in Britain and the invading Nordic peoples. The cast of the series is pretty much entirely white, but this has not been controversial because it is a fictionalised account of a real period in which arguably the majority of people, though not necessarily all, would have been Caucasian.

I would argue that *Lord of The Rings* is entirely different to Cornwell's works on two counts and these are the nub of my argument. First—*The Last Kingdom* is a relatively modest show that does not have global

ambitions and appeals largely to a British or at least Anglophile audience. By contrast, Tolkien's works are some of the highest-selling, most translated books of all time—and, like the Jackson trilogies, became a global phenomenon.

Second, unlike the work of Cornwell and other historical writers, Tolkien worked in the fantasy genre. Tolkien of course was deeply embedded in the lore and languages of a particular set of peoples at a very particular time and place—that is, broadly, those of northern and western Europe before and after the retreat of Roman military power, and it was this corner of the continent, and its interrelated myths and legends, that Tolkien sought to weave at a time of what he saw as a loosening of identity for the British people. (For insights into Tolkien's thinking, I am particularly indebted to David Day's book: David Day. *The world of Tolkien: Mythological Sources of the Lord of the Rings*. Bountary Books. 2013.)

So does that mean that Tolkien is only for the direct descendants of those peoples? Can we say on this basis that any adaptations of his work should feature only a white cast? As a person of mostly English and Irish descent, I consider some of the source myths that Tolkien drew on part of my cultural heritage, and I find them deeply compelling. But so do members of my blended family, some of whom have origins in Asia, as do friends from around the world. Indeed, whatever Tolkien's intention, as any writer knows—once a book is written it goes out into the world and becomes a different animal. In Tolkien's case, I believe, his writing has become so much more than a retelling of the myths of some interconnected peoples and is better viewed as a gift to the world, like the works of Shakespeare, or *Journey to the West*.

It is also important to note that Tolkien looked further south and east for inspiration. His writing was deeply influenced by the fall of the Roman Empire, and in his letters, he suggested that Gondorians were most similar to the people of ancient Egypt.

Taken from this perspective, I believe it is wrong to say that there were no people of colour in *The Lord of the Rings*. These are *mythic* spaces—not white spaces. However, the over-arching approach was to cast only white people in significant roles—and in fact, there controversy over this in the casting for the *Hobbit* which Peter Jackson distanced himself from. They did work hard to make the more monstrous races less equivocally racialized in the films—by giving, for in-

stance, cockney accents to many of the orcs, which, if we are being entirely factual, would have meant that the orcs stopped off in 19<sup>th</sup> century east London for a while on their way to Barad-dur. The films did also feature some fairly obvious racial stereotypes as villains—the Haradrim for instance, are clearly similar to Arabic peoples, or at least how they were portrayed in films from an earlier period of Hollywood. If we can forgive Tolkien for this, I don't think we can be so easy on Jackson. September 11<sup>th</sup> happened just a few months before the release of the first *LOTR* and created a huge surge of resentment and anger towards people of Arabic race and appearance—yet Jackson persisted with portraying the Haradrim in this way by the third film.

At the same time, the world has changed so much since Tolkien's day—the great diversity that we now see, the globalisation that is in part the result of the efforts, positive and negative, of the inheritors of Tolkien's most cherished myths. It is easy to forget that the varied people who until relatively recently made up 'the British'—the Celts or Gauls, the Germanic tribes, the ancient Britons, the Picts and so on and their successors—the Saxons, Vikings, British, Scottish and Irish, not to mention the Romans, were once the bitterest of enemies who over the course of many centuries inflicted untold and grievous harms upon one another. What is British now incorporates many others

who may once have been considered with a similar enmity—from the Indian Subcontinent, from Asia, from Africa and the Americas.

So can we really justify whole films with no people of colour in today's age? And could films like *Lord of the*

*Rings* feature actors of different ethnicities and still retain felicity? The recent adaptation of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, starring Dev Patel, has shown how successful 'colour-blind' casting can be and seems to have attracted little controversy, and the Royal Shakespeare Company has successfully operated such a policy since the 1960s. So even if Tolkien were writing about only white people—it is not fair or correct to say they can only be white now.

A final point on this matter is about criticism—should Tolkien's works, and adaptations of them, be considered immune to criticism? George RR Martin doesn't think so—his towering *A Song of Ice and Fire*/*A Game of Thrones* series tried to address some of the flaws he saw in Tolkien's work. He is in good company, Tolkien himself created the Ents as a reproach to what he felt was Shakespeare's disappointing use of

"These are mythic spaces—  
not white spaces."

the myth of a wandering wood in *Macbeth*. So criticism can be a good and heartfelt thing.

To return to the second point raised at the beginning of this piece—is it fair to treat harshly those who raise critical questions about Tolkien? Let's look to Tolkien's work for inspiration. I would argue that Sauron is not the main enemy in the Lord of the Rings, nor Saruman, nor the orcs. Nor is Smaug the main enemy in the Hobbit. In the case of both, the main enemies, I believe, were the dynamics between the varied and complex 'good' races—the men, the elves, the dwarves, wizards, and a tendency in all of them towards partisanship and parochialism, an a propensity to suppress or neglect the voices of marginalised peoples and individuals.

Whether or not Tolkien himself was racist has been discussed at length elsewhere, but he was drawing on some of the racist tropes of his time. At the same time, Tolkien calls on us to tolerate the 'other'; to work hard to reduce tensions between ethnic, religious and cultural groups, and to listen to voices of dissent, sometimes lone voices that ask things of us, like Bilbo, or Frodo, in the face of rigidity, inflexibility and hostility. One of my favourite bits in the *LOTR* series of films is near the end; the four Hobbits, who have endured a fair amount of vilification over the course of the story, are gently admonished by Aragorn—"you bow to no one". If the returned king of Gondor and his elven queen, not to mention Myrthandir the White and the king of the elves, can stop and listen, who are we to turn away, to harrumph like grumpy dwarves, at voices, like Elyanna's, within the global community of those who love the works of Tolkien and who sometimes ask questions that might unsettle but which are nonetheless important?

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## REVIEWS

Tim Akers. *The Winter Vow: Book Three of The Hallowed War*. Titan Books, 2018. 512 pp. \$14.95. Reviewed by Emilee Howland.

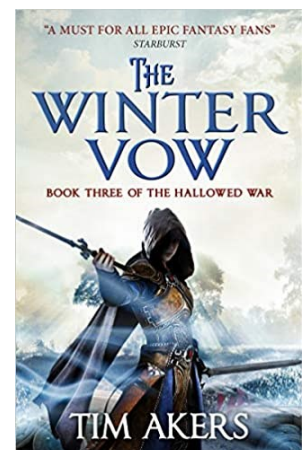
At long last I was able to read the final installment of Tim Akers' *The Hallowed War* series (see *Mythprint* #386 for my review of book two as well as a good overview of the setting). I was very excited to receive this book and read the conclusion

to this epic fantasy series. As this is the third and final book of the series, this review may contain some spoilers for the series.

*The Winter Vow* picks up from the cliffhanger at the end of *The Iron Hound* with several different factions fighting together and sometimes against each other to gain control of Tenumbra. Malcolm Blakely, his son Ian, and Gwendolyn Adair each battle against internal and external forces in an attempt to finally bring peace to the land. Darker forces are conspiring for their own hidden agendas and trust is hard to earn and keep, even within the same family. The Celestial Church continues its attempt to control all and destroy all heretics, while pagan forces work towards their own ends. Both sides engage with long-dead gods in an attempt at control, and our heroes must battle human and supernatural forces.

Like the first two books in the series, *The Winter Vow* is dense with names and details. I would have benefitted from a re-read of the first two books since it had been so long between reading books 2 and 3, so do keep that in mind if you want to approach this series. Now that they are all published, it would be easy to maintain the image and knowledge of Akers' mythic landscape. Because there are so many characters, it was occasionally challenging to remember which character was fighting for which side. This denseness also works for the complication that Akers creates, I believe. It is hard for a reader to keep track because it is also challenging for the characters to know who to trust. Factions switch and people deceive in order to unite various forces. Suspending your disbelief in this story and going along with the characters confusion is actually a benefit to the enjoyment of this story.

The details I noted in my review of *The Iron Hound* are still relevant in this final book. One of the strengths of Akers' series is the gender equality amongst fighting characters (though it is still a binary system). Men and women both fight using traditional warfare or magic, and the forces of good and evil are evenly distributed.





The reader still doesn't know why particular members of the Celestial Church have set these events in motion, and in the end, it doesn't really matter. The larger conversation is about the use of faith to manipulate people for colonial goals. Pagans who had been forced into hiding come out to fight and there are larger conversations throughout this novel about the world needing a balance of all the gods, not just the binary system created by the Celestial Church. As such, the world Akers has created appears critical of a binary faith system with no room for multiple beliefs and practices. The knights of the church (both men and women), must learn about all aspects of religious practice in order to be more effective wielders of faith. More importantly, many characters must confront what it means to be a heretic, and these confrontations have serious personal ramifications. This isn't a story just about pursuing and prosecuting heretics, it is also a story about understanding and questioning the very accusation of heresy. In a world of religious upheaval and civil war, who gets to make the accusation of heresy? How does one fight against that charge? These are the questions the characters are engaged with throughout the 3-volume series.

This final book wraps up many of the loose ends created by books one and two. There isn't a clear "happily ever after," and there shouldn't be. A nation doesn't just move on from these events. Additionally, there are a couple of storylines that don't seem to be resolved, or the resolution glosses over bigger issues that were at play in the story, so that was a bit disappointing. As I noted in my review of *The Iron Hound*, Akers' description of characters and the way he paints a scene are lovely and thoroughly engaging. This is a thoroughly enjoyable series, and I recommend reading all three books in quick succession because of the complicated storyline and dense list of characters.

Walter S. Judd and Graham A. Judd.  
*Flora of Middle-earth: Plants of J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium*. Oxford University Press, 2017. 424 pp.  
 \$30.69 Hardcover. Reviewed by Janet Brennan Croft.

This impressive reference work by a father-and-

son botanist and illustrator team has the aim of providing a proper botanical description for every "plant" (tree, flower, crop plant, even seaweed, mushroom, and algae) that appears in Tolkien's writings about Middle-earth. As Middle-earth is conceived to be an earlier age of our own world and centered on north-

western Europe, most of the plants covered will be familiar ones: apples, bracken, cedars, dandelions, elms, ferns, and so on. It is extensively illustrated with vigorous and atmospheric woodcuts that illustrate both the plant in question and an event connected with it in the legendarium.

Overall, the book serves as a quite decent textbook of botany. It begins with some basic orientation to plant communities of Middle-earth and their primary-world equivalents, and provides a solid technical grounding in evolution and plant morphology before moving on to the alphabetically arranged listings which make up the bulk of the book. For the most part, the invented plants of Middle-earth are integrated into the alphabetical list, except for an introductory chapter on Telperion and Laurelin. There are concluding chapters concentrating on the ecology of Ithilien, food crop plants, and hobbit names derived from plants. The individual listings each include a quotation from Tolkien's writings and a discussion of the plant's distribution and use in Middle-earth and the primary world, etymology from real-world languages and in Tolkien's languages if available, and a highly technical scientific description.

Ambitious as the book is, it can't stand alone on one's shelves if one is serious about identifying the plants one encounters and associating them with Tolkien's Arda, or in gaining a deeper knowledge of Tolkien's sources. As an aficionado of field guides, I have my quibbles with this book, which can be easily addressed by pairing it with some other resources. First, the alphabetical arrangement makes it a little harder to do the sort of decision-tree-based identification that a thematic arrangement can help with (though the authors do provide a "dichotomous key," that doesn't help the amateur much). Having a book arranged so



that one can, for example, find all the trees together, and then all the evergreen trees together, can make identification quicker and easier for the casual user. Another small but annoying lapse is the lack of blooming and fruiting seasons for the plants; it can help to know if something blooms in the early or late spring, or if its fruit is ripe in high summer or just before frost.

Additionally, while the woodcuts are lovely and evocative, they are insufficient for identification. (The artist does elaborate on his choices and the virtues of simplification in a postscript chapter.) For this I recommend having both photograph-based (like the *Audubon Society Field Guide* series) and drawing-based (like the *Peterson Field Guide* series) guidebooks on hand to supplement *Flora of Middle-earth*; each method of illustration has its strengths and weaknesses, but a comparison of print, photo, and drawing is a powerful aid to identification. Another important complement to this book is Dinah Hazell's *The Plants of Middle-earth* (Kent State University Press, 2006) which Judd & Judd do reference frequently. Hazell's book is arranged more thematically, with "tours" of various regions, provides more in the way of literary associations outside of Tolkien for different plants and flowers, and has truly lovely color

illustrations. And to really recreate the experience of travelling through Middle-earth with hobbits, one needs a reliable field guide to edible wild plants, preferably with recipes!

The reason a book like this is even possible is because Tolkien was both "botanically knowledgeable" and "loved plants," and took great care to accurately represent natural communities of plants in their proper environments all through his created world. A goal of the authors is to help us, as Tolkien said of fantasy, re-gain a clear view of the world around us and appreciate its beauty (3)—in fact, to help cure our all-too-human tendency to "plant blindness" and its associated lack of understanding of the importance of plant life and nature to our environment as well as to our souls (36). Verlyn Flieger has spoken of seeing the world through Tolkien-colored lenses (at her talk at the *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* opening in New York in March 2019), and this is exactly the effect this book has: one looks at the raspberry-brambles and firs, cresses and clovers, in one's backyard with a new appreciation for their association with the beloved landscapes of Arda. I look forward to re-reading *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* with this book at my side.



This Digital Commons Readership map shows the global reach of the digital archive of the Mythopoeic Society literary journals, a total of 1,515 downloads in 63 countries together for *The Mythic Circle*, *Mythellany*, and *Mythril*. (See page 11)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Mythopoeic Society Literary Journals Available Online - August 3, 2020.

A half century of the Mythopoeic Society's literary journals have now been uploaded to the SWOSU Digital Commons. This includes all of the issues of the current journal, *The Mythic Circle*, along with the Society's two earlier journals, *Mythellany* and *Mythril*.

*The Mythic Circle* was founded in 1987 and first co-edited by Christine Lowentrout and Lynn Maudlin. The journal started as a quarterly that was designed to function as a writers' workshop in print and hosted a lively letters column. Today *The Mythic Circle* is an annual publication that features original short fiction, poetry, and artwork.

The current co-editors are Victoria Gaydosik and Nolan Meditz. Gaydosik said the latest issue of *The Mythic Circle* appeared in late August 2020. The digital copy will include the addition of audio readings of the submissions.

The project to make five decades of the literary journals available online began a year ago, with the thirteen most recent issues of *The Mythic Circle* available beginning June 27, 2019. Since then, download numbers have been steadily growing, with readers in 63 countries downloading items from *The Mythic Circle* 1,424 times as of August 2, 2020.

Issues of *The Mythic Circle* have a one-year digital access embargo. The latest issue, No. 42, will be available on the SWOSU Digital Commons in Summer 2021.

A print version of No. 42 is available this fall by purchase. Print copies of back issues are also available. Orders can be made at [REDACTED]

Submissions are also welcome for *The Mythic Circle*. Contributions requested include fantasy- or mythic-inspired original stories, poems, and independent works of visual art, as well as artwork created as text-dependent illustrations for poems and stories. Complete guidelines are available at [REDACTED]

### Submit to Mythprint!

*We are always accepting reviews of any mythopoeic media, but we also publish letters to the editor or society, short articles and notes on Inklings topics, art, meeting discussion reports, and more! We are especially interested in reviews of mythopoeic works by creators of color and other historically underrepresented perspectives. Submit to: [REDACTED]*

### Mythopoeic Society Stewards Elections November 15–December 15

Check your Mythopoeic-Society-affiliated email (where you get your *Mythprints* sent to!) on November 15th, when you should receive a ballot to re-elect your governing body, the Mythopoeic Society Stewards.

You have until December 15th to cast your votes.



### Beyond Bree is happy to announce its 2021 Calendar

The themes of this year's calendar are fellowship, friendship, family and love, as interpreted by artists from around the globe - Soni Alcorn-Hender, Emily Austin, Elyanna Choi, Anke Eissmann, Elmenel, Donato Giancola, Sylvia Hunnewell, Tim Kirk, Octo Kwan, Wenjin Lu, Nancy Martsch, Ted Nasmith, and Gordon Palmer. Featured art is "The Old Forest" by Soni Alcorn-Hender.

The color and black and white calendar will be 11 x 8 1/2 inches, opening to 11 x 17 inches. It will feature both Middle-earth and real world holidays.

Pricing: \$20 plus shipping - USA \$2.00, the rest of the world \$5.00. For large orders, please inquire for details. For PayPal orders please add \$1.00. Send payment (in USD) to: [REDACTED]. Send check or

postal money order (in USD drawn on a US bank) payable to: Nancy Martsch, [REDACTED]

You may send U.S. currency, at your own risk, in a sturdy envelope. For more information please e-mail: [REDACTED]



The Mythopoeic Society



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