

# mythPRINT



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

VOL. 58 NO. 1

SPRING 2021

WHOLE NO. 396

# mythprint

## Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

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
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**Cover Art:** *Yavanna as Virgin Mary for Diverse Tolkien Week*. By Morgan Rogers. © 2021. 

*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 [www.mythsoc.org](http://www.mythsoc.org).

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Due to continued quarantines and health concerns, the Council of Stewards has decided to move **Mythcon 51 online**.

We have not confirmed all the details yet, but the next live, in-person Mythcon (52) will still be in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2022. Previously purchased conference memberships will automatically roll over to the next in-person conference in 2022, but if you cannot attend next year, please contact [REDACTED] and request a refund of your original Mythcon 51 registration.

We *may* be able to plan limited hybrid (both virtual and in-person) options for Mythcon 51 this summer, but New Mexico's pandemic response is still strictly locked down compared to other places in the U.S. and we cannot now plan something that may violate state health and safety regulations, whatever they are in July-August of this year.

The virtual option will be very different from our usual Mythcons, but what we miss out on we hope to make up for in new and different ways, and we'll see everyone once it's safe to do so. On some level this is a chance to get back to our Mythopoeic Society roots and gather with friends (if virtually!) to just discuss what we love. Best of all, the cost of registration will be steeply reduced, though prices have not been set yet.

Check back for confirmed details in *Mythprint* #397 as well as *Mythlore* #138, and as always on our website, [REDACTED]. Thank you for understanding!

### Call For Papers (subject to change)

Papers of the traditional Mythopoeic variety are still welcome, though we are looking forward to trying out a new panel model that we are calling Panel Discussions (see below).

Time slots: Individual long papers may still have hour-long time slots but are now encouraged to be no more than 30 minutes for the paper and 15 minutes for discussion; Individual short papers about 15 minutes for the paper and 10 minutes for discussion; Panels are now 60 minutes, about 30

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

Albuquerque, NCO

~~July 30th – August 2nd, 2021~~

## **MYTHCON 51: A VIRTUAL "HALFLING" MYTHCON**

Moving Online

Dates To Be Determined

minutes for the panel and 20 minutes for discussion. For traditional paper and panel proposals:

Email papers abstracts of 200-500 words to:

Cami Agan (Papers Coordinator), [REDACTED]

Email panels abstracts of 50-150 words to:

Leslie Donovan (Panels Coordinator), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Presenters who have already submitted have the option of presenting at Mythcon 51 virtually or being automatically accepted into the Mythcon 52 program. All presenters must register for the conference they wish to present at.

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

### Discussion Panel and Alternative Programming Options

Though we have not formally revised the call for papers just yet, we are excited to experiment with different presentation models that may work better over an online platform, privileging panels of short papers or group discussion panels.

Have a topic in mind you want to discuss, but pandemic brain has got you down so you don't want to write a paper about it? (Maybe that's just me?) Revive the roots of the Society by proposing to Moderate a Discussion Panel for Mythcon 51—virtually! Moderators would need to come prepared with a mythopoeic discussion topic, some opening remarks, some questions for the attendees, and plan to facilitate discussion.

Want to submit a Discussion Panel, or have an idea for Alternative Virtual Mythcon programming? Email 200-500 word proposals to:

Megan Abrahamson [REDACTED]

**The new deadline for submissions is May 15, 2021.** Please check in on Facebook, Twitter, or [REDACTED] for an updated and complete Call For Papers as well as other updates about the now-virtual conference.

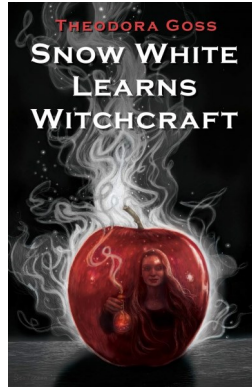
## 2020 MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY AWARDS

On February 14th, 2021, we announced the winners of the 2020 Mythopoeic Awards on our website and our new YouTube Channel, where you can also view author acceptance speeches (@MythSoc).

Congratulations to the winners!

### Mythopoeic Fantasy Award For Adult Literature

- Theodora Goss, *Snow White Learns Witchcraft* (Mythic Delirium Books, 2019)



The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature is given to the fantasy novel, multi-volume, or single-author story collection for adults published during 2018 or 2019 that best exemplifies the spirit of the Inklings. Books are eligible for two years after publication if selected as a finalist during the first year of eligibility. Books from a series are eligible if they stand on their own; otherwise, the series becomes eligible the year its final volume appears.

### Mythopoeic Fantasy Award For Children's Literature

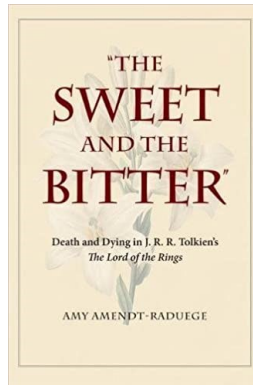
- Yoon Ha Lee, *Dragon Pearl* (Rick Riordan Presents, 2019)



The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature honors books for beginning readers to age thirteen, in the tradition of *The Hobbit* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Rules for eligibility are otherwise the same as for the Adult literature award. The question of which award a borderline book is best suited for will be decided by consensus of the committees. Books for mature "Young Adults" may be moved to the Adult literature category.

### Mythopoeic Scholarship Award For Inklings Studies

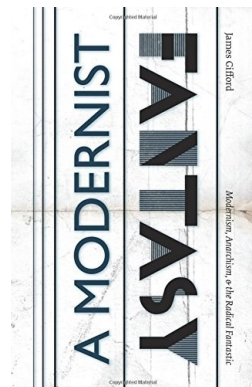
- Amy Amendt-Raduege, *"The Sweet and the Bitter": Death and Dying in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* (The Kent State University Press, 2018)



The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies is given to books on Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that make significant contributions to Inklings scholarship. For this award, books first published during the last three years (2017–2019) were eligible, including finalists for previous years.

### Mythopoeic Scholarship Award For Myth and Fantasy Studies

- James Gifford, *A Modernist Fantasy: Modernism, Anarchism, and the Radical Fantastic* (ELS Editions, 2018)



The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies is given to scholarly books on other specific authors in the Inklings tradition, or to more general works on the genres of myth and fantasy. The period of eligibility is three years, as for the Inklings Studies award.

The finalists for the literature awards, text of recent acceptance speeches, and selected book reviews are also listed in this on-line section. For more information about the Mythopoeic Awards, please contact Awards Administrator Dr. Vicki Ronn, [REDACTED]

## IN MEMORY OF RICHARD C. WEST

*Richard C. West—award-winning Tolkien scholar, long-time member of the Board of Advisors of the Mythopoeic Society and the editorial board of Tolkien Studies, chair of Mythcon 30 (1999) and Scholar GoH at Mythcon 45 (2014)—died on November 29, 2020 at the University Hospital in Madison at the age of 76. Below are some reflections on his passing.*

### Remembered by Matt Fisher

I first met Richard West in December 1982, when I decided on a whim to attend a meeting of the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society at the end of my first semester in grad school. Richard was one of the co-founders of the group in the fall of 1966 and had been the coordinator for many years before I came to the meeting.

That was the start of a friendship that spanned 38 years. Until I left Madison in 1991 to start working as a faculty member, the monthly Tolkien Society meetings were a regular part of my time at the UW. It was Richard who introduced me to the Mythopoeic Society, to Mythlore and Mythprint, and to conferences on Tolkien (including Mythcon). Through the UW Tolkien Society (which frequently discussed topics other than Tolkien) I was introduced to a wide range of literary works, from authors like Alan Garner to the Robin Hood ballads in their earliest form to Scrooge McDuck. Richard was ALWAYS willing to share his knowledge on authors and their works.

After I left Madison, Richard and I saw each other roughly once a year. We shared meals, sometimes a hotel room at conferences, and many lengthy conversations on Tolkien and other fantasy authors. He stayed with my wife and me for one Tolkien symposium. Through all those experiences, one continuous thread was his love for a wide range of literary works and authors, in particular his deep and abiding love of Tolkien.

Many years before we met, I read Richard's highly regarded essay on the narrative interlace structure of *The Lord of the Rings* that was published in *A Tolkien Compass*. I was a teenager at the time with almost no background in medieval literature. Yet I found Richard's analysis and presentation clear and straightforward to follow. Years later, over dinner I told him about that experience, and

his face lit up with an enormous smile. He responded that it had always been important to him that ANY scholarly work he did be accessible and understandable by the widest audience possible.

In talking with others who knew Richard after we learned of his passing, the same two words came up over and over, "kind" and "gracious." They are apt descriptions of Richard West the person, the scholar, and the friend to so many people. I miss him more than I can express in words.

### Remembered by David Bratman

I've known Richard West's work longer than the thirty or forty years I've known him personally. When I first explored Tolkien scholarship, I quickly learned that he was responsible for much of the best work in fanzines. In the pages of *Orcrist* he was the first scholar to begin to poke around in Tolkien's draft manuscripts of *The Lord of the Rings* at Marquette University, and to report in print on what he found there. His judgment, "If we pick [various discarded ideas] out of the scrap heap it is only to show how wise the author was to throw them there," has long been my lodestone in dealing with this material, and I've quoted that sage advice in papers of my own.

Since then he's never stopped, in recent years concentrating on bringing insights to the stories of Lúthien Tinúviel and Túrin Turambar. His studies are always both clear and detailed. In the hospital, he was still planning his next trip to Marquette to look over the manuscripts there again.

As Guest of Honor at Mythcon in 2014, he gave a remarkable speech on the theme of "Where Fantasy Fits," drawing on his knowledge of science fiction and its fandom to discuss their perception of the category of fantasy in the years when Tolkien was writing, before fantasy became a publishing genre of its own.

You may read that speech online at the *Mythlore* archives, but it was another thing to be there in the auditorium to hear it. The formal honor led to Richard's greatest triumph in public speaking. Ordinarily he was not a prepossessing speaker. He spoke quickly and softly, and seemed to address a lot of asides to himself. But if you could hear what he was saying, it was always worthwhile, as the printed versions show. This time, though, his voice rang out with gratifying clarity.

At the 2000 World SF Con in Chicago, Rich-

ard, myself, Doug Anderson, and Tom Shippey were on a panel investigating the reasons for Tolkien's popular success. The highlight of that was actually the evening before the early-morning panel, when the four of us went out to discuss it over dinner at one of Chicago's notable steakhouses, one of those glorious outings of four people truly dedicated to Tolkien's works.

Richard was a private person, reticent about his personal life, a devout Catholic and a support to Berni in her searches for a good church to attend Mass at when the two of them were at a conference together. His observations in discussions of others' presentations were as worthwhile as his own, and despite his retiring social quality he could be a good companion for one-on-one conversation, as I found a couple times when we went out for meals together.

His application of his librarian profession to Tolkien studies in the two editions of the bibliography *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* (1970 and 1981) are still useful for evaluating and checking up on early Tolkien scholarship; little-known is that Richard also published a supplement, a selective annotated evaluative list of the best Tolkien criticism of the next 20+ years, published in *Modern Fiction Studies* in 2004.

## Remembered by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull

Richard West was one of our oldest friends. We first met him in the nineteen-eighties, and were awed by his knowledge, kindness, and humility. When asked by a Tolkien fan if he was *the* Richard West, he replied that he was only *a* Richard West. But as one of the leading figures in Tolkien studies, he was indeed *the* Richard West, noted bibliographer of Tolkien, a founder (in 1966) of the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society (which itself this year became a victim of the pandemic), editor of its journal *Orrist*, and author of one of the best essays on Tolkien even to this day, 'The Interlace Structure of *The Lord of the Rings*' (1975). For nearly four decades we have been honoured to see Richard from time to time at Tolkien-related gatherings and to read, and hear, his occasional essays. His scholarship was always full of insight, well informed, and well argued. We cite many examples in our own books.

Richard did not shy from considering aspects of Tolkien's *legendarium* less studied by other schol-

ars, such as mythology in the story of Beren and Lúthien (2003) and 'tragedy and divine comedy' in the tale of Aragorn and Arwen (2006). Recalling his B.A. and M.A. studies in English language and literature at Boston College and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, he explored Old English elements in Tolkien's story of Túrin (2000) and *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth* (2018). He also (in 1997) gave Warren Lewis the attention he long deserved, as a historian and scholar in his own right, not merely the brother of C.S. Lewis and a diarist through whose eyes one could view the Inklings. A list of Richard's writings was compiled by Douglas A. Anderson for *Tolkien Studies* 2 (2005), and is to be updated.

We often consult both editions of Richard's *Tolkien Criticism* – the first (1970) marked writings he thought 'especially valuable or that ought to be read for some reason', the second (1981) was expanded but, perhaps necessarily, omitted critical recommendations. A brief addendum appeared in 2004 in *Modern Fiction Studies*. *Tolkien Criticism* influenced Wayne's early efforts as a Tolkien bibliographer, and was essential to Christina when, in her first years as a collector, it served as a *vade mecum* as she sought out books and articles to read and copy. When we came to edit *The Lord of the Rings*, we looked for guidance into Richard's ambitious but unrealized plans in the nineteen-seventies to create a variorum edition of that work.

Richard was a librarian, by the time of his retirement a few years ago the Senior Academic Librarian at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He was also active in the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies symposia at Kalamazoo, Michigan, and in the Dorothy L. Sayers Society. His interests extended far beyond Tolkien, and he could speak just as expertly about comic books, animated films, and classic detective fiction. He leaves his wife, Perri, and many friends and admirers.

## Remembered by Verlyn Flieger

The loss of Richard West is a huge one to the Tolkien community at large, but it is devastating to the friends he leaves behind. (I mean that last word literally; he's gone where we cannot follow—yet.) The card I sent to his last hospital address, with its cheery message of "of course you're going to get well because we all want you to" was



returned to sender, unable to forward. I cannot bear, now, to read the message I wrote then, so I haven't opened it. But I'll keep it.

Knowing that I'll never again hear his high-pitched, infectious laugh, relish his quiet and unassuming presence, appreciate his impeccable scholarship—that's even harder to bear. It's also something I never expected to happen. Richard would always be there. Now he isn't.

I first met Richard in 1983 and he has been in my life ever since—at conferences in Oxford, Kalamazoo, Palo Alto Madison, Milwaukee and so many other places. The experience of sitting across a table while he gave a paper with insights I'd never expected, or hearing him give a keynote speech that crossed boundaries I'd never thought of—these are the kinds of things I used to look forward to. They were things I took for granted. Now they are memories that remind me that's all I have left.

I knew Richard for almost forty years, and in that time I never heard him say an unkind word. But I never saw him flinch from a difficult argument either, or back away from an unpopular opinion even in the face of opposition. He could disagree without challenging, and dissent without contention.

Richard had a mind that looked beyond the edges. In a period of apostolic devotion to C.S. Lewis, Richard wrote about Warnie Lewis, whose personality and lifelong interest in 18th century France were overshadowed by his more prolific, charismatic and combative younger brother. I learned about the eighteenth century from Warnie, but I learned about Warnie from Richard, and was abashed at the extent of my own ignorance.

Richard's deep devotion to Perri, his staunch loyalty to friends, his clear-sighted and unfaltering faith, his painstaking scholarship were all parts of a unified field. They were fundamental forces springing from a single impulse, a personal Big Bang that made him the fine person he was.

The Tolkien community has lost a distinguished scholar of great learning, clear thinking and high integrity. I have lost an old and dear friend.

I'm missing him.

## SURPRISED BY MAINE

By S. Oorman

There are a number of "surprised by" titles in Amazon including, at the top of such lists, CS Lewis's own *Surprised by Joy*. In other titles we find authors surprised by Hope, by Oxford, Motherhood, Christ, Sin, Forever, Laughter, Healing, Truth and other wonders. So this title follows a *Lewisian* tradition.

Having written fantasy featuring the fictive Mark Twain and CS Lewis, I would like some sort of connection to Maine for either of these authors so that I might write about their relevance to Maine. And there *is* a real-life connection between Mark Twain and Maine, in its coastal York Village. I hope to write about that someday. So far I find no Maine connection with Lewis. What I find surprising is Maine's connection with the young Joy Davidman—eventually the loved wife of Lewis.

Helen Joy Davidman summered as a youth with her parents on one of Maine's multitudinous lakes. I was surprised while reading the borrowed biography by Abigail Santamaria (in a beautifully bound hardcover edition)—*Joy: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman Who Captivated CS Lewis*. Joy being a prodigy and pen-woman, for whom writing was essential, I imagine her writing in Maine from the moment she stepped into the log cabin they rented each year. They came to escape New York City, and Joy also spent adult writing time here, sometimes escaping her parents in rowing out on the lake. But where was this Maine lake Joy so enjoyed, those woodlands and hills she relished for beauty and solitude?

The biography gave me no clue (or perhaps I missed it among its pages). I suspect the mystique (still lingering) in this place called Maine may have been enough to give Santamaria's readers a proper impression of Joy's experience without giving the definite village or lake. When you say "Maine," you are saying, woodlands, headlands, pinelands, mountains, rivers, ponds. The sea, The Gulf.

When Joy was a Communist she was discouraged by what she saw coming: "an end to regional peculiarities." This was the biographer's quotation from one of Joy's articles in *New Masses*. She may have been inspired by

the burgeoning folk music of artists like Woody Guthrie, or influenced by the Depression so affecting upon Steinbeck. Joy's upwelling concern, over how we might best live, was real. Following her first love—inspired discovery of literature—she experienced increasing passion for this cause.

Santamaria records and construes the shifting phases of Joy's life and creativity in a lively, captivating way. I looked forward to picking up this bio each night ... after I had initially opened my reading mid-book when CS Lewis begins entering the story. There is no Maine after that, no. So I knew nothing about the surprise awaiting me. I was merely curious—at first—to see the author's evidence of Joy's passion over our mentor and friend, Jack Lewis. In fact, this is why I borrowed the book. There was no plan to read the early life because I'd read of it before in a book by a forgotten author. (My mind is not retentive and I don't have the rigorous approach of a scholar.) Yet, after the ending of the present biography I had to go back to the beginning because Ms. Santamaria *made* the story. A story that must be experienced beginning to end... or, in my case, end to beginning.

And so, after reading the ending, I came to this first part where I discovered the Maine connection. Now this biography was alive again: I kept seeking that place in Maine, the lake, the village, or those particular woodlands.

I came to the part where she looked forward to bringing her spouse, Bill Gresham, to Maine. She wanted to take him rowing, fishing, show him the beauty niches. But it didn't happen. A violent first trimester of pregnancy intervened.

Sometime after the birth of her older son David she visited Maine with her parents and future sister-in-law, Ruth. Spoofing, she called it their "Great Maine Expedition." Here there are family flare-ups.... And I believe this is one of the last direct mentions of Maine in the biography, although there is the allusion to this place, so designated by one of Maine's nicknames. This time Joy is joking in another vein—what Ms. Santamaria calls "half-joking."

Joy claims never to be "an alarmist," but now she understands that the world she knows can be destroyed. She was pregnant again and the atomic bomb had destroyed not only the

city centers of one source of her artistic sensibility, Japan, but also her hope that the world would always survive. "The next war finds me and kids hiding in a cave in the Great North Woods."

But where was this beautiful provisional place in Maine? Visions of lakes and woodlands danced in my head. What if it was a place I knew —*intimately?*...

... Better still....

What if— a place I knew *not at all?! A* place I might *newly* experience? Maybe even on snowshoes or biking!

I began hunting, first in online biographical searches, then checking with the curator of the Maine women writer's collection, then back online to a Google-book search on a particular word: Maine. There this mystery was disclosed to me by Mr. Dorsett. According to Lyle W. Dorsett in his *And God Came In: the Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman*, the Davidmans paid a caretaker to prepare the place, and fertilize the garden for planting. *And* Mr. Dorsett is my forgotten author who, with his biography, had first introduced me to Joy Davidman. The first introduction after the letters of Lewis, that is. And the good journals of Warren Lewis, Brothers and Friends.

Crescent Lake, says Mr. Lovett!

...Where is that...?

## FINDING FEMALE NARRATIVES IN AN AGENDER MURDERBOT

By Bethany Abrahamson

Within the last few years, I re-discovered reading for pleasure.

I say reading—I really mean listening. Audiobooks have allowed me to enjoy more stories of my own choosing than I probably have in years. It's changed the way I think about writing, and the way I see the writing of others. This year, when I've had a lot more time for reflection, Martha Wells' *Murderbot Diaries* series gave me a lot to think about. The *Murderbot Diaries* are a series of short stories with one full-length novel, *Network Effect*, released in 2020. Wells' series so affected me this past year that I tried something I've never really attempted before: writing seriously from a very



personal perspective. A *feminine* perspective.

This might not seem like a radical concept, as a woman myself. For many women it probably isn't. But I've never been able to (that is, *thought I was able to*) write a woman's perspective in an honest way. I admit I never really tried. Occasionally I made an effort to understand feminine perspectives in media, by playing women in character-driven video games or reading about feminine protagonists in literature with an open mind. But I've typically found myself surrounded by male narratives. Male stories explored a whole host of plot arcs for me to choose from. Female stories, in comparison, followed a few canned plot arcs that revolved around romance or 'being as good as any man' (yet still overshadowed by the male hero in the end). Mostly, I saw men as the vehicles of the most sincere depictions of flawed humanity, struggling with human problems. In these stories, women are often less-than-human: either stereotypical 'strong female characters' (with no flaws to speak of and no need to develop) or victims in need of rescue (and therefore not worthy of any real development either). I hardly ever saw examples of women I wanted to emulate, so I transferred those feelings to the men I saw in media, and subsequently into my own writing. Given ten seconds I could list twenty men in film and literature that I would like to emulate, and maybe two or three women.

Murderbot, the main protagonist in Wells' series, is a non-gendered construct: more machine than organic, who doesn't think of itself as human—would prefer not to think much at all really. Unfortunately, the construct is in charge of protecting humans in a hyper-capitalist future society akin to the American 'wild West', and finds itself in all sorts of difficult situations all while trying to ignore such intrusive and inconvenient feelings as compassion, loneliness, and fear of the humans that have enslaved it.

Seeing humanity and femininity in this character doesn't make a lot of sense. I'm not sure why I did myself when I started to read the series. The narrator for the audiobook presents a masculine voice, and the role that Murderbot fulfills as a protector is stereotypically masculine. In fact, Murderbot actively rejects gender and emotions. Perhaps I chose to read

this character as feminine because the author is a woman, or maybe because the author specifically distanced the character from gender, careful to add in both masculine and feminine descriptors. Maybe, when presented with a blank slate, I decided to buck with the author's intent and view that slate as feminine rather than the masculine default I was used to, just to see if I could. Whatever the reason, I decided to consciously think of this character in my mind in more feminine terms.

In time, I fell in love with Murderbot, particularly for its relatable and shockingly honest inner thoughts. Most days all Murderbot wants to do is check out and watch movies all day, and can't we all relate to that? When Murderbot is embarrassed, it literally hides in a corner: an urge we've all had. The kind of frankness Murderbot displays isn't often seen in typical heroes, who don't seem to struggle with just getting up in the morning. Murderbot's voice felt like one I encountered all over my personal communication with friends and family. Murderbot's tired reaction to the world felt true, and evoked a state of mind I understood very intimately, without gender to get in the way. But consciously seen as feminine, Murderbot's characteristics—complete honesty in private, exhaustion with the world around it, frustration with intrusive emotions—took on especially poignant meaning. Murderbot communicated aspects of femininity I had experienced subconsciously in a male-dominated society, entirely without reference to gender itself. It felt real in a way that the women in media—previously viewed simply as plot devices, "machines," really—never had. It made me start to ask some of the questions I never asked myself before: What is it that makes a person, masculine or feminine, worthy of attention, empathy, and growth?

I realized that maybe gender had less to do with the importance of a story arc than I had thought. Like the humans that surround Murderbot, I wasn't giving the women I had seen in media enough credit. I could embody those women, just like I could embody the men I saw, if I gave them a chance. I could also demand more honesty from the women I saw in literature, including my own. There's something human to be found in anyone or any character, something that you can make mean-

ing in (whether or not the original author intended it). For me, Murderbot opened that door.

I wrote my first female voice in a very long time this year, and I hope books like *The Murderbot Diaries* continue to help me expand my authorial empathy and insight.

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## REVIEWS

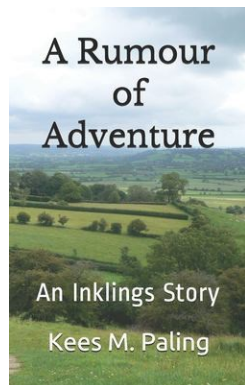
Kees M. Paling. *A Rumour of Adventure*. 2018. 101 pp. \$15.82.  
Reviewed by David Emerson.

This slim volume contains a story of a fictional walking trip taken by four Inklings, based on what is known of actual walking tours enjoyed by Tolkien, Lewis, et al. This account uses a bit of hand-waving and creative license to have the walking party consist of Lewis, Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams – a combination which probably never occurred in actuality.

The author, a sociologist working as a communication consultant for the Dutch government, is familiar enough with the four featured Inklings to give each of these fictional characters a good resemblance to their actual personalities. For example, Tolkien's propensity for stopping and examining local flora is mentioned, and Williams's ill health is also highlighted.

In addition to the travelogue nature of the description of the physical environments through which the travelers move, Paling also includes several snatches of philosophical dialogue amongst the four, in various combinations. Readers familiar with these writers' non-fiction writings will recognize the ideas and attitudes presented.

In what appears to be an attempt to enliven an otherwise commonplace



sequence of events, the author includes a surprise guest appearance by Aleister Crowley, here portrayed as an antagonist to Williams in particular and the other three in general. This incident, and another which introduced a waitress named Arwen, seemed forced and out of place in an otherwise charming narrative.

In the frontispiece is a rough sketch map of the route of this imaginary trek, starting at Samuel Taylor Coleridge's home in the Somerset village of Nether Stowey, and ending at Porlock on the Bristol Channel. Although the story of this walking tour is fictional, the route is real, and is now an official footpath known as The Coleridge Way, about which Wikipedia says, "In 2008 [it] was selected by *The Times* as one of Britain's best autumn walks," so interested Inklings fans could retrace this very route in real life. It is to be hoped that there are still plenty of pubs along the way to refresh weary travelers, as described in *A Rumour of Adventure*.

*This book was also reviewed in Mythprint #390.*

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## REPORTS

News from the Writers of the Rohirrim, March 1, 2021. Victoria Caydosik, reporting

The Eagle and Child pub of Oxford, England, bears little resemblance to the Lobby Bar at the Best Western in Weatherford, OK, but both provide(d) homes to fantasy-oriented literary enthusiasts: writers (notable writers!), in the case of the Eagle and Child, and readers, in the case of the Lobby Bar. Specifically, the readers of the Weatherford chapter of the Mythopoeic Society named the "Writers of the Rohirrim" meet monthly at the Lobby Bar, and have done so since 2018. And why are we the Writers of the Rohirrim? Well, we live on a prairie, as do the Rohirrim, and though none of us has horses, even though Oklahoma has the highest number of horse trailers per capita, we do all have e-mail accounts—and *those* we exercise vigorously. Also, it's a pun, and some

of us cannot resist a pun.

Each month, the chapter discusses a new title suggested by members; these are usually in the fantasy genre, but we have also discussed non-fantasy realist novels, science fiction, horror, and other genres. Recently, our readings included *The Rithmatist*, by Brandon Sanderson (09/2019), featuring innovative fantasy world building for young adult readers (some of us are youngish); *The Dwarves*, by Marcus Heitz, relating dwarvish adventures in a fantasy context; *Lilith*, by George MacDonald; *A Darkness Forged in Fire*, by Chris Evans (apparently not the actor), featuring elves evolved to handle the metals that might kill their traditional cousins; *The Diamond Age: or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*, by Neal Stephenson (02/2020), telling a science fiction story in a decidedly fantastic and mythic setting, with an even more fantasy-oriented story embedded in the main narrative; and *The War in Heaven*, by Charles Williams.

Our schedule has been considerably broken up by the pandemic, but we intermittently have continued with our project, reading some short fiction by H. P. Lovecraft, with consideration as to whether it is standing up to the passage of time; then, in August of 2020, when issue #42 of *The Mythic Circle* appeared, we read the whole issue for our discussion, and since several members were also the voice talent for the audio versions of the issue's content, we liked it immensely; by November of 2020, we read Terry Pratchett's *Going Postal*, a Disc World novel in that comic series that proves fantasy can be funny; then Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Tolkien, followed by Tolkien's essay "On Fairy Stories," which yielded an incredibly vigorous discussion. Many of us (the ones who aren't youngish) are now vaccinated against the novel coronavirus, and we look forward eagerly to reading Brandon Sanderson's first volume of *Mistborn* in March of 2021, and then to Jo Walton's *Lent*, an excellent nominee for the Mythopoeic Society's literary award, in April (still properly masked and somewhat distanced). Additionally, it's time to start thinking about the hoped-for conference that might happen this summer in Albuquerque.

If you happen to be in the neighborhood around 6:00 pm on the last Monday of March

or April, stop by for some literary discussion in a fantastic vein, with a light nosh and a tipple. You'll be glad you did!

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Call for *The Mythic Circle* Contributions

*The Mythic Circle* is the creative writing outlet for the Mythopoeic Society, in continuous publication since 1987. We seek contributions of new, original creative works from our membership and the general public—fiction, poetry, and images—that develop mythic themes in any kind of speculative expression. Although we publish a number of established writers, we also seek new contributors, including aspiring artists who have never published before.

To be considered for inclusion in issue #43, to be published by August 1, 2021, use either of these two portals:

Through the Mythopoeic Society website, send email attachments of PDF/jpeg files to [REDACTED]

OR, by joining our digital repository, upload documents or images at [REDACTED]

We are eager to see your newest work! Please send potential contributions today!

Editors:

Victoria Gaydosik, fiction and visual art.

Nolan Meditz, poetry and visual art.

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*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:*

The Mythopoeic Society



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