

mythPRINT



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

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FALL 2021

WHOLE NO. 398



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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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Megan Abrahamson
Editor, *Mythprint*



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MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY AWARD SEMIFINALISTS

The Mythopoeic Society has announced the finalists for the 2021 Mythopoeic Awards. For more information about the awards, visit the [Awards](#) section of this site; the finalists for the literature awards, text of recent acceptance speeches, and selected book reviews are also listed in this section. The winners of this year's awards will be announced in fall 2021. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mythcon was not held in the summer of 2020, and the awards committees needed extra time to obtain and evaluate nominated books, thus necessitating a delay in the awards processes for both 2020 and 2021.)

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature

- Alice Hoffman, *[Magic Lessons](#)* (Simon Schuster)
- Jordan Ifuekov, *[Raybearer](#)* (Amulet)
- TJ Klune, *[The House in the Cerulean Sea](#)* (Tor)
- Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *[Mexican Gothic](#)* (Del Rey)
- Garth Nix, *[The Left-Handed Book sellers of London](#)* (Katherine Tegen Books)

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature

- Lev Grossman, *[The Silver Arrow](#)* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)
- Kat Leyh, *[Snapdragon](#)* (First Second)
- T. Kingfisher, *[A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking](#)* (Argyll)
- Tae Keller, *[When You Trap a Tiger](#)* (Random House Books for Young Readers)
- Carlos Hernandez, the Sal and Gabi duology: *[Sal and Gabi Break the Universe](#)* and *[Sal and Gabi Fix the Universe](#)* (Rick Riordan Presents)
- Jenn Reese, *[A Game of Fox and Squirrels](#)* (Henry Holt)

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies

- John M. Bowers, *[Tolkien's Lost Chaucer](#)* (Oxford University Press, 2019)
- Oronzo Cilli, *[Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist](#)* (Luna Press, 2019)
- John Garth, *[The Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien: The Places That Inspired Middle-earth](#)* (Princeton University Press, 2020)
- Catherine McIlwaine, ed, *[Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth](#)* (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2018)
- John Rateliff, ed, *[A Wilderness of Dragons: Essays in Honor of Verlyn Flieger](#)* (Gabbro Head, 2018)

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies

- Kathryn Hume, *[The Metamorphoses of Myth in Fiction since 1960](#)* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020)
- Adrienne Mayor, *[Gods and Robots: Myths, Machines, and Ancient Dreams of Technology](#)* (Princeton University Press, 2018)
- C. Palmer-Patel, *[The Shape of Fantasy: Investigating the Structure of American Heroic Epic Fantasy](#)* (Routledge, 2019)
- Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, *[The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games](#)* (New York University Press, 2019)
- Anna Vaninskaya, *[Fantasies of Time and Death: Dunsany, Eddison, Tolkien](#)* (Palgrave, 2020)

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature is given to the fantasy novel, multi-volume, or single-author story collection for adults published during 2019-2020 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.

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Chil-

dren'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.

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 (2018–2020) are eligible, including finalists for previous years.

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 winners of this year's awards will be announced online in fall 2021. A complete list of Mythopoeic Award winners is available on the Society web site: [Awards](#).

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 the Awards Administrator: Dennis Wise, [REDACTED]

MYTHCON 51 REPORTS

Halfing Mythcon: A Report by David Bratman

A two-day online Mythcon was something we weren't prepared to do last year, and did in a sort of half-baked manner this year, hence "Halfing." There were full daytimes of three tracks of programming, each track with its own Zoom link, plus additional conversation rooms which (unlike Zoom chats) can be preserved, in a separate service called Discord. About 160 people signed up, typical for Mythcon, and most of the papers had about 12-25 attendees, typical for Mythcon.

Saturday began with an informal gathering in one of the Zoom rooms, featuring a lot of discussion of how unexpected spellings threw us as children. Most memorable was one man who confessed that he stopped reading T.H. White because the word *sword* had a W in it.

I got through six papers and discussion sessions before the typical hot afternoon intermittent failures of my internet connection caused me to give up. Learned surveys of the historical philology and of the Christian faith at the root of Tolkien's work and an inter alia demonstration that Gandalf is the result of Tolkien rethinking who Odin ought to be; discussions of the whither of the Society's awards and of favorite fantasy short fiction; and a paper on Superman.

This last was particularly interesting, depicting Superman as constructed out of Jewish legendry – he has the strength of Samson and the origin story of Moses, inspirations which Jerry Siegel testified to; he's an immigrant made good, his alter ego is a cerebral nebbish, and Siegel claims he served as a model for Joe Shuster drawing Clark Kent. That was very interesting, but the problem for me is: how much of a model for immigrants can Superman be if he's presented to readers as a WASP from Kansas?

I reappeared long enough for the first round of the trivia quiz, before I was kicked offline again. The first round was general sf&f, and featured supposedly tough questions like who was the editor of *Astounding* and *Analog* from 1937 to 1971? We were given only 5 seconds to answer, which at least for a slowpoke like me is not long enough to read all the answers, pick the right one, and then move my cursor to hit the right



MYTHCON 51
A Virtual "Halfing" Mythcon
JULY 31 - AUGUST 1, 2021

symbol on the Kahoot page, so I missed a lot.

On Sunday, I got to the computer in time for my 9 AM Zoom panel (11 or 12 for the other panelists) on Tolkien's poems "Errantry" and Bilbo's song of Eärendil and their startling similarity. My job was to describe the writing process by which one poem turned into the other, a description aided by the existence of 22 varying drafts, quoted in full or part in the posthumous books. Janet Croft in her contribution to the panel suggested that not only are they the same poem, they're the same character, and "Errantry" is some sort of hallucination that Eärendil suffers during his first, frustrated attempt to pass the shadows that protect Valinor. I'm not sure I believe it, but it's an interesting theory.

Someone in the chat function chided my pronunciation of *chalcedony*, a key word in the poem, but they didn't attempt to correct most of the speakers' persistent mispronunciation of *Eärendil*. Those two dots over the a: that's a diaeresis, indicating that the two vowels are separate sounds. It's something like AY-ah-REN-dil, not AIR-andil.

Such post-panel discussion as there was time for went well, and I hoped more of the audience would follow us over to the chat function on Discord, but in the end there were just three of us posting, though we got a lot said.

An interview on MythSoc history was another program I hoped would spill over onto Discord. This time I went to its AV channel and found just one other person there. Fortunately it was Paula DiSante, an old friend, and we chatted affably; gradually a few other people, both known and unknown to me, showed up and we passed some time agreeably.

The other full presentation I got to on Sunday was a panel on Tolkien and racism. This was highlighted by discussions of Tolkien's co-opting by the alt-right, from a scholar studying that, and a first-hand account concerning the recent Tolkien Society seminar on Tolkien and diversity and all the ignorant abuse they had to go through over that. What do you *do* about such people? Don't let them in to your society, that was one definitive suggestion. I don't think we need worry about that much here. The MythSoc is too small and obscure. We have a few paleoconservatives, but no alt-right types that I know of.

Some useful comments about Tolkien's own racial views were made: I was particularly struck

by the observation that, though the good guys in *The Lord of the Rings* are diverse, that's only within the context of their all being white. (Or we presume they are. Another presenter showed fan art depicting Silmarillion elves as brown or black. Apparently fan artists are willing to do that there, but for stories of which movies have been made, the movies seem to be considered definitive.) Although there is a notable passage where Tolkien humanizes a dead brown-skinned enemy soldier, he clearly had a long way to go. That was a fair criticism. But I was astounded to be told that this passage from Tolkien's letters – "I have in this War a burning private grudge against that ruddy little ignoramus Adolf Hitler, [for] ruining, perverting, misapplying, and making for ever accursed, that noble northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe, which I have ever loved, and tried to present in its true light" – showed that Tolkien was just like Hitler, only not as bad. What? Is there *really* no such thing as innocuous pride in ethnic heritage? I thought what made the Nazis' ethnic policy evil was that they sought to elevate themselves, to lord it over other ethnicities and persecute them. Tolkien did nothing of the sort. If Tolkien is to be called a crypto-Nazi, he's right about one thing: Hitler has made Germanic ethnic fandom for ever accursed.

Summary of the online Mythcon as a technical achievement: The program items were superb. They allowed people who'd never manage to get together in person to converse, the post-talk discussions for the rest of the time slots were lively and invigorating, and the tech support was utterly vigilant and always helpful. The rest of what makes Mythcon was not so great. It's not the fault of the tech people who set them up that not much seemed to come out of the Discord sessions, at least the ones I attended. There were papers where my desire to continue discussion exceeded my interest in the following programming. That's what Discord was for, or should have been for. And it ought to have gone into the evening, as well. Those late-night porch chats are one of the things I've most enjoyed about Mythcons. (Though Margaret Dean tells me that the Bardic Circles, which I didn't get to, worked rather well.) Perhaps if we'd been pushed more directly at the Discord AV channels ...

Mythcon51 by Jessica Dickinson Goodman

On Saturday August 31, 2021 through Sunday September 1, 2021, the Mythopoeic Society held a halfling conference using Zoom and Discord (full schedule | program). It was composed of 3 tracks with 34 total talks, ranging from traditional paper readings to an interactive, productive roundtable on “Race, Racisms, and Tolkien.”

The conference included many experimental elements:

1. Using Zoom for all of the parts of the conference that would happen in presentation rooms (watch recordings of most of the talks here).
2. Using Discord for all conversations that would have happened in the hallways of a regular conference (join the Discord here).
3. Using Tech Mod volunteers to help manage technology for presenters.
4. Including 2 technical trainings for members and attendees who were unfamiliar with Zoom and/or Discord, plus having volunteer Tech Mods providing on-call technical support.
5. Translating some in-person elements of Mythcon (like the Bardic Circle) while letting others rest that did not translate well to an online environment (like Golfimbul).

Attendees are encouraged to submit their perspectives on the efficacy of these experiments for the Stewards to consider, but anecdotal feedback has been largely positive.

New attendees reported getting a good sense of the community and being excited about attending future conferences, whether in-person or online; long-time attendees were able to connect with colleagues, friends, fellow fans and scholars. Little bits of culture managed to sneak through the digital interface, from attendees gossiping in the Zoom chat like it was the back of a conference room to friends pulling each other into readings in Bardic Circle.

Several of the presentations stood out for their creativity, dedication, and adaptability: “Finding and Organizing Tolkien’s Invented Languages” by Eileen Marie Moore; “Habla Amigo y Entra: Tolkien and the Language of Wonder” by Martha Celis-Mendoza, Guillermo Don Juan, Aline Esperanza Maza Vázquez, and Jorge

de la Vega; and “The Personhood of Nature in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Legendarium*” by Sofia Parrila.

The call for papers for the next online Mythcon, “The Inklings and Horror: Fantasy’s Dark Corners” has been released. It will be held on Zoom and Discord on February 4-5, 2022, focusing on the connections between and among Inklings authors and the literary tropes of the horror sub-genre of speculative fiction. As we all wait out this pandemic, it is good to see the Mythopoeic Society continue to experiment, evolve, and grow.

Mythcon 51 Report by Leah Hagan

I can honestly say I never expected my first MythCon to include a fascinating discussion on eerie Victorian hair fixation; a thorough breakdown on the queer mythosphere of Lil Nas X’s “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)” video; a disturbingly relevant and stirring panel on racisms in Tolkien fanspaces; and a thoroughly de-ranked viewing of Russian film adaptations of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but what a joy and delight to experience all of these! (And if you weren’t there... you missed a lot!)

This is both my first MythCon, and the first time I’ve been able to be a member of the Mythopoeic Society, despite having a long interest and awareness of the society. It was truly wonderful to find excellent company across a wide range of ages, countries of origin, gender identities and sexualities, expertise, and interests. However, it was very apparent, and more than once remarked on, how overwhelmingly white the membership and attendance of MS is. In the light of the ongoing conversations around race and racism in Tolkien fanspaces, especially with new media on the horizon that is deliberately subverting the dominant narrative that adaptations must feature all-white casting, this seems a particularly important area for the MS in general to focus attention and education on. It may take a lot of concerted effort and difficult conversation to provide a safe and brave place for scholars and fans of color, especially when some members do not have the foundation or desire to join in any anti-racism efforts. This was, sadly, apparent more than once in several panels I attended, but notably the Race and Racisms panel. I would strongly encourage

future online conferences to have more robust guidelines for behavior, and strict enforcement, to protect marginalized communities from harm.

My favorite paper by far was Sofia Parrila's award-winning "All Worthy Things: The Personhood of Nature in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium," closely followed by Kathryn Colvin's fascinating "'Her Enchanted Hair': Rossetti, 'Lady Lilith,' and the Victorian Fascination with Hair as Influences on Tolkien." As a self-described animist/polytheist "witchy weirdo," Sofia's deep and thoughtful insights on the character of Middle-earth resonated so powerfully, and Kathryn's paper was absolutely a joy to listen to. I also thought the roundtable on "Lil Nas X's Montero: A Visual Mythology," was an absolute delight to watch, and reflects the new and exciting future of mythopoeia that I am so especially interested in.

I absolutely plan on attending a MythCon in person in the future, but was truly grateful for the online conference this year, as I am a member of the working-poor and low-income, and travel is often difficult, if not completely out of reach for me. However, with the new friends I have made, I cannot wait to make that happen in the future and enjoy MythCon again!

Mythcon 51 Report by Tim Lenz

MythCon 51 was a very different dragon than usual, and as such required a different set of skills to tame. The obvious circumstances and ongoing uncertainty made an in-person gathering untenable to organize, and rather than opt to skip the event entirely for the second year in a row, the decision was made to instead hold the first fully-virtual 'halfling' MythCon – indeed the first MythCon ever with any significant online component, to my knowledge.

Certain long-standing traditions unfortunately needed to be sacrificed, in particular those which simply would not translate well to an online conference. Sadly no one could devise a way to play Golfimbul remotely, without someone 3D-printing copies of Gary Hunnewell's goblin head and club and mailing them to all attendees in advance of the conference. However, efforts were made to incorporate as many MythCon mainstays as possible, including a Bardic Circle for sharing of song, poetry, readings, and other artistic pursuits, and an online game of 'Cards Against Arda' which would usually take place in some shameful

secret back room with many giggles and guffaws. We even attempted to sing a poorly-synchronized rendition of 'Way, Hey, the MythCon's Over' during the closing ceremonies. In an effort to provide entertaining evening social activities and maintain the congenial atmosphere of an in-person MythCon, a number of new 'alternative programming' events were introduced. The online format was capitalized on to provide unique offerings – watching or participating in video games (*Lord of the Rings Online*, and a 'Beowulf' segment of *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla*), and a very spirited 'Mystery Science Theater 3000'-style viewing of the recently-unearthed Russian adaptation of 'The Fellowship of the Ring'. Such a great time was had roasting this hilariously bad version that we continued on to watch the Russian adaptation of 'The Hobbit' as well.

A marked change in the attendee composition of this online MythCon was noticeable. The online format certainly allowed MythCon to host a more diverse group of attendees than usual, both geographically and culturally, which was a welcome change. When not limited by barriers of geography and cost, scholars and enthusiasts from Central America, Europe, New Zealand, and all across North America were able to attend and present. Lowering the barrier of entrance to attend increased the Society's reach substantially, allowing for the inclusion of fresh and welcome new perspectives. However, with the change in format, some long-time regular attendees of in-person MythCons chose not to attend an online MythCon, and their absences were certainly felt. Other veterans of the event valiantly strode headlong into battle against new and unfamiliar technologies and formats, and largely emerged victorious.

In terms of academic programming, highlights for me included the fascinating powerhouse panel of Janet Brennan Croft, David Bratman, David Emerson, and the always-illuminating Verlyn Flieger on the Errand of Eärendil, Roy Schwartz' paper on the Jewish elements that found their way into the mythology of Superman, Eileen Marie Moore's presentation of her herculean efforts to create a fully-indexed dictionary of Tolkien's invented languages, and a powerful and unfortunately timely panel on racism in Tolkien studies, of which I will not name the contributors for privacy reasons. This latter panel in particular

gave a harrowing depiction of one of the most significant modern challenges facing Tolkien studies and fandom – identifying and eliminating toxic, racist actors seeking to co-opt Tolkien’s works before they are able to take root in our spaces and infect the neighbouring lush, green forests. The Q&A with Lee Speth was also wonderful, and gave newer members such as myself some excellent insight into the early years of the Mythopoeic Society and its founder, Glen Goodknight. Yet another advantage of the online format was that most of the academic sessions were recorded, so if you found yourself making difficult decisions on what to attend during the event, odds are you could go back later on your own time to access most of what you missed.

Kudos to the organizing committee for their significant efforts to adapt to a challenging situation. Overall the technical aspects of the event worked well, especially considering that this was the Society’s first virtual event. The addition of a Discord server allowed for expanded opportunities for discussion beyond the time limits of the schedule, and the Society’s Discord will continue to be available to all on an ongoing basis for discussion of the Inklings and other topics Mythopoeic in nature. The event was not fully without its technical wrinkles, but these were largely minor and seemed to be taken in stride. There were also some shortcomings observed regarding moderation of content, particularly in some of the Q&A sessions, which I hope will prompt adjustments for future online events. But overall, I very much look forward to both a return to in-person MythCons, and (as an avowed horror nerd) the introduction of the online Winter Seminar, which will allow the Society to further increase its reach and scope.



MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY LEADERSHIP VACANCY: SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER (NON- STEWARD POSITION)

As of December 31, 2021, I will be retiring from my long-held position as Subscriptions Manager. I began my formal service to the Society in 1999 as the Membership Steward and, when the position of Subscriptions Manager was split off from that role, took on this work. It is time for me to hand on the job.

I have gotten to know many Society members, if only by name, and this has been one of the joys of the job. I know that there is some detail-oriented, service-driven person out there who would make a wonderful next Subs Manager. The Stewards will be seeking a person who can give a couple of hours a week to keeping routines going, and a few hours every quarter to getting out *Mythprint* and the mailing lists for *Mythlore* and *The Mythic Circle*. Working with the Editors, and all the Stewards, has been the biggest joy of having served this function. Please consider if you may be the next person to serve your Society in this role, and contact any Steward to express your interest.

Sincerely,
Marion VanLoo

Duties of the Subscriptions Manager

- Keep an accurate record of each personal and institutional subscriber.
- Maintain an Update File of all information added or changed for Members, and share regularly with the Membership Secretary.
- Maintain a Shipping Log of all publications sent, or caused to be sent, to subscribers/purchasers.
- Respond and/or confirm appropriately, in a timely manner, to each subscriber payment, update, or question.
- Receive and resolve claims for subscription problems, along with any subscription agency involved, the publications’ editors and the Treasurer as appropriate.
- Monitor and respond as appropriate to emails sent to [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

and [REDACTED]

- Send regular reminders of needed renewals for *Mythlore*, *Mythic Circle*, and to any non-member subscribers to any publication.
- Rent and maintain a PO Box for subscriptions-related mailings, with reimbursement from the Society. [Current-- [REDACTED]]
- Receive, record, and deposit checks for subscriptions, memberships, and royalties, using endorsement stamp and deposit slips provided by the Treasurer.
- With reimbursement from the Society, maintain equipment as needed:
 - laser printer of quality needed for *Mythprint*,
 - scanner;
 - office supplies and postage as needed.
- Receive, record, deposit, and share with Membership Secretary, any membership information received in the Subscriptions P.O. Box.
- Submit a report to the Stewards prior to each quarterly Stewards' Meeting.
- Advise and assist publications Editors as appropriate.
- Other duties as assigned by the Orders Department Steward and/or the Council of Stewards.

REVIEWS

Brennan Croft, Janet and Annika Röttinger, editors. *"Something Has Gone Crack: New Perspectives on J.R.R. Tolkien in the Great War."* Walking Tree Publishers, 2019. 383 pp. \$29.15. Reviewed by Michael McCartney

Rather infamously, Tolkien disdained what he perceived as the "excessive interest in the details of the lives of authors and artists," claiming that such study distracted from the author's actual

work (qtd. 45). As someone writing and studying from the vantage point of almost a century since Tolkien penned that condemnation, all I can say is, the editors of this present edition were right and our dear Professor Tolkien wrong. This collection of essays, focusing in particular on his experiences in the Great War and how he and his legendarium were shaped as a result, shows us his error. Far from distracting from our understanding of the Middle Earth opus, a close study of Tolkien's life actually helps us (or at least helped me!) to connect more deeply with some of the material that was most precious to him and from which I once found myself most distanced.

In this commendable compendium, Croft and Röttinger bring together a wide (and most essentially, *diverse*) group of thinkers to study the various ways in which The War to End War left its mark on Tolkien and the universe that he created. Without going into exhaustive detail, *"Something Has Gone Crack"* contains essays by, among others, child psychologists, aerospace engineers, military historians, literary critics, and writers and thinkers of all stripes, not to mention such Tolkien luminaries as Tom Shippey and John Garth. Not only is the varied and intellectually formidable authorship impressive, but the text is also organized in a refreshing and exciting way.

The editors have broken this text up into four main sections. My description of the categories will be, of necessity, reductivist, and I apologize in advance to the scholars whose works I may unintentionally pigeonhole as follows: Military History; Biographical Study; The Origin of Major Themes in the Legendarium; and Social, Sexual, and Gender Studies.

I admit that, if I had not been asked to review the text, I might have skimmed a few of the sections. Fortunately, when I read for someone else, I avoid such dilatoriness! Many of the essays, particularly those by John Garth and Annika Röttinger, are superlative. But to misuse a quotation from one of our other dear friends, I was consistently surprised by joy. Each section, regardless of how you might react to the headings given by the editors (or the inferior ones given by me), contains gems that cast Tolkien and his world in new and surprising lights. I'd like to highlight two such surprises here.

I had a great deal of fun with Michael Flower's exhaustive essay about the influence that

Yorkshire played in Tolkien's worldbuilding. Each nook and cranny of the area around Roos, where Tolkien was centered, is examined and its relationship to Middle Earth explored. I wish the author's photographs could have been included - the essay itself could almost form the basis of a coffee table book for us! - but being able to access them on the author's website was still helpful. Lynn Schlesinger's essay exploring the role of women, specifically as nurse-healers, in both the Great War and Tolkien's works is also particularly engaging. In this case, the author takes us through the often problematic roles that women could and did play in WWI before examining Tolkien's own convalescence and the role women played in his recovery. The author takes special effort to break apart some of the jejune criticism of Tolkien's own use of women in his world before moving on to a sensitive and thorough examination of Eowyn as "a transgressive figure" (Croft & Röttinger 307).

I would love to see a companion piece that covers a topic only hinted at in this collection: the ways in which the Second World War impacted Tolkien and his writing. As a veteran, a teacher whose students are being sent away, and as a father, the psycho-social impact on the man must have been significant, as it was to everyone who lived at the time.

It is only natural that, in a text of this nature, some essays are more interesting to one reader than they are to another. Why that might be could easily form the subject of some pleasant future psychoanalysis. For now, it is enough to write that Croft and Röttinger have collected a sheaf of essential essays that each deserves a place on the shelf of anyone who has ever wondered what forces acted to create the man who created Middle-earth.

The Green Knight. Directed by David Lowery. 2021. Reviewed by Marc Rhodes-Taylor

I was really struck when this film was withdrawn from UK cinemas and am still looking for a place where I can see it on the big screen, hopefully we will all be able to at some point. This is really a requirement for a film as visually stunning as this film is, a rare achievement in itself. I am not sure whether this film will be for

everyone as it leans very much on artistry and drama and character and has limited action which is what many people look for in their entertainment.

The green knight is looking for something much deeper and longer lasting, and I think that it is a film which will endure. You may need to watch this film more than once as it feels like a grower, a film which you start to like more and more the more that you think about it, rather than an immediately lovable film due to the deep intellectual and artistic content. *The Green Knight* feels distinctly different from *Excalibur*, perhaps the most obvious point of comparison. Although there are some signs of combat, unlike *Excalibur* the combat is very much in the background.

On an artistic level *Excalibur* is highly operatic, whilst *The Green Knight* might be described as somewhat Shakespearean in its intent. Dev Patel does a great job in providing Sir Gawain with layers of character and development, making him believable and watchable even though he is not obviously likeable. Gawain is highly flawed in many ways and there is every suggestion that his mission is misguided or even a failure. This film is very much about an individual's personal quest to find themselves rather than the traditional and popular adventure. Gawain is not a knight at the beginning and there are frequent questions over whether he is ever really a knight in the true sense as he often fails in his duties. There is also the question of whether the quest is more important than the destination, which is very much unknown and unknowable. I must say that this film looks absolutely beautiful and is well worth seeing on that basis, it is not likely that you will soon see a film which appears more stunning.

The film can be very dark in places, which sometimes made it hard to work out what was actually happening. Darkness and shadow are used quite heavily here at many points. The sound design and music are equally wonderful, as is the choir which sometimes appears in the background. Some of the music is medieval, some of it is very strange indeed; I was absorbed by the very weirdness of certain pieces such as the green knight theme.

The green knight himself is an excellent design clearly designed to represent the green man of legend. Nature is here seen as a palpable force

in its own right, and magic as being real; the green knight's appearances often bring supernatural phenomena of some form with them. The talking fox was a nice idea but I didn't quite get it, I didn't understand quite what it was supposed to be and the CGI was not completely convincing in any case. Aside from the knight himself we also have the mysterious giants, an overtly fantastical element; much of the rest of the film feels fairly realistic and convincing. Arthur is portrayed in a rather interesting way as a very elderly king who is looking increasingly fragile and helpless; the rest of the court including the knights and indeed many of the citizens of the kingdom appear equally aged and withering away. Morgana is depicted in a somewhat understated manner but is still capable of deception and magic.



There are a few unexpected and almost random incidents which do change the course of events, some were straightforward some I did not quite understand. Joel Edgerton's lord is quite important, by his words and actions he implies that he actually knows Gawain quite well; raising questions as to how this is so, possibly Edgerton is another manifestation of the green knight himself in shapeshifted form. Gawain takes the axe at an early stage and keeps it with him for some time; clearly this is symbolic in itself in some way as the camera often lingers on it and it becomes part of the plot, although exactly what it means I couldn't quite work out. It could be related to the quest for personal honour as Patel himself says that he desires honour and that this is what a knight is supposed to strive for.

There is a magical scarf which Gawain wears around his waist which supposedly grants him invulnerability, this gift is significant as well and turns up at a number of points. Gawain is passed Arthur's sword at one point but has to give it up for the green knight's axe instead, perhaps this means that nature is more important than the human kingdom. Another important point is that sometimes women turn up wearing blindfolds, there are at least two women who do this although why they do so is again not completely clear. Possibly this is some reference to the supernatural and seership and being able to see beyond the everyday world into the realms of hidden mysteries.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mythopoeic Society Online Winter Seminar on *The Inklings* and *HORROR: Fantasy's Dark Corners*

Special online winter seminar coming up on **February 4-5, 2022** (Saturday and Sunday) Via Zoom and Discord.

Call For Papers and Registration available at the website—

Paper abstracts (250 word maximum), along with contact information, should be sent to the

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