

mythPRINT



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

VOL. 58 NO. 4

WINTER 2021

WHOLE NO. 399



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Cover Art: *The Green Knight*. By Marc Rhodes-Taylor.

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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 website, 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 to *Mythprint*; it also entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

Back issues of *Mythprint* are available for purchase at our website.

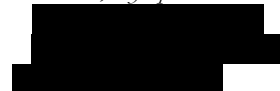
Complete & updated price lists can always be found on our website.

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.

Visit The Mythopoeic Society online at www.mythsoc.org.

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* and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. Subscriptions and back issues of Society publications may be purchased directly through our web site (using PayPal or credit card), or you may contact:

Mythopoeic Society



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MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Mythopoeic Society announced the winners of the 2021 Mythopoeic Awards on October 17 on [YouTube](#). Congratulations to the winners and all the finalists!

For more information about the awards, visit the [Awards](#) section of the Mythsoc website; the finalists for the literature awards, text of acceptance speeches, and selected book reviews are also listed in this section. 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

- TJ Klune, *The House in the Cerulean Sea* (Tor)

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature

- T. Kingfisher, *A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* (Argyll)

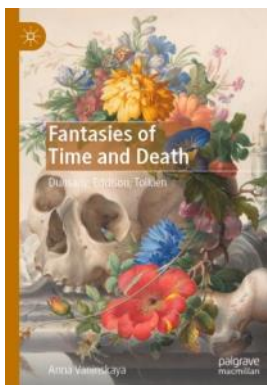
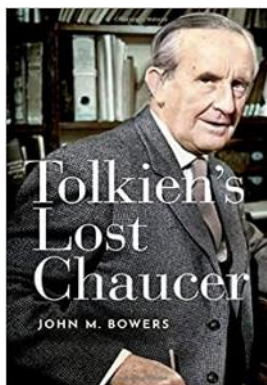
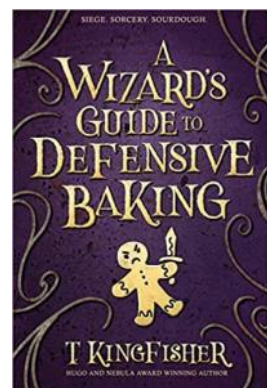
Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies

- John M. Bowers, *Tolkien's Lost Chaucer* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies

- Anna Vaninskaya, *Fantasies of Time and Death: Dunsany, Ed-
dison, 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 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.

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,

**MYTHSOC'S FIRST
ONLINE MIDWINTER SEMINAR:**

**The Inklings and Horror:
Fantasy's Dark Corners**

**February 4-5
via Zoom and Discord**

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

On February 4-5, 2022, the Mythopoeic Society will initiate a new event, the first Online Midwinter Seminar (OMS #1). The theme of this initial seminar is "The Inklings and Horror: Fantasy's Dark Corners." In eleven sessions, eighteen presenters will deliver fifteen papers on horror-related aspects of the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Charles Williams, together with works from writers such as George R. R. Martin, Ernest Cline, George MacDonald, H. P. Lovecraft, and Andrzej Sapkowski; the themes addressed include nature and the environment, the posthuman experience, the undead, Shelob, monstrosity, Merlin, folk horror, others. Two strands of sessions will occur on Feb. 5 from 9 am to 5 pm Central Standard Time, with welcoming events the evening of Feb. 4.

Co-sponsors Victoria Gaydosik (editor, *The Mythic Circle*) and Phillip Fitzsimmons (MythSoc Archivist) welcome you to this new event, positioned halfway between sessions of our longstanding late summer in-person convention. Registration costs \$20.00 and is available online at

As at MythCon 51, paper sessions will occur on Zoom and discussions will convene in Discord. Join the Mythopoeic Society Discord at this link:

Please join us in making this first Online Midwinter Seminar a rousing success!



MYTHCON 51:

**THE MYTHIC, THE FANTASTIC,
AND THE ALIEN**

Albuquerque, NCO

July 29 - August 1, 2022

Due to quarantines and health concerns, the Council of Stewards decided to postpone Mythcon 51 until summer of 2021, and also moved Mythcon 51 online to our first virtual Mythcon. **Mythcon 52** will now be held **July 29-August 1, 2022**. Our Guests of Honor have all agreed to this change and the conference theme will remain the same. Your registration will continue roll over to next year but if you cannot attend in 2022, please contact and request a refund of your Mythcon 52 registration. 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 folk-

lore about the alien (flying saucers, alien abductions, Area 51, Roswell, NM).

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

Up to date 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 May 15, 2022:

Cami Agan (Papers Coordinator),
[REDACTED]

Email panels abstracts of 50-150 words by May 15, 2022:

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 52 Registration page for information and rates.

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

Mythcon 51 Author Guest of Honor Rivera Sun

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.



Mythcon 52 Scholar Guest of Honor David Bratman

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 LEADERSHIP VACANCY: SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER

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 _____ and _____.
- 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-- _____]
- 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

Godfrey, Paul Corfield. *The Fall of Gondolin: Complete Demo Recording*. Prima Facie CD, 2018. Reviewed by David Bratman.

Paul Corfield Godfrey is a British composer in the classical tradition who has undertaken the massive project of composing and recording an epic four-opera cycle telling the story of Tolkien's *Silmarillion*. Not since Richard Wagner's *Ring* – a comparison easy to make – has there been a project of this kind on this scale, so far as I know. And it's Tolkien, so it's of special interest to us.

What I have here is a “demo recording” of the fourth opera in the sequence, *The Fall of Gondolin*. It's two CDs playing for nearly two hours. The ten solo roles and a small chorus are sung by professional singers from the Welsh National Opera, and they're mostly pretty good, with only occasional wobbliness when their parts threaten to get outside of their range. Some of them, particularly Simon Crosby Buttle as Tuor, are excellent in enunciation; others could be clearer. Pronunciation of the Elvish names is, so far as I can tell, reasonably accurate.

While the singers are live, the orchestra is entirely synthesized by software, with the tinny sound characteristic of most such computer programs. This, and the lack of an orchestral conductor, are unfortunate, as Godfrey relies heavily on his orchestra to convey the emotion of his story – his strongest resemblance to Wagner. But as this recording claims to be no more than a demo, it will have to do.

There is no libretto in the CD case, though there is a link to an online source on the opera company's website. Godfrey compiled the text from a wide selection of Tolkien's posthumous publications (the book of *The Fall of Gondolin* had

not yet been published). This compilation was a particular challenge in the case of Gondolin, for which usable primary sources are rare. This opera is more a series of set pieces than a continuous story, though that's not uncommon for formal, non-verismo opera. The only thing Godfrey could find, for instance, to serve as a love duet between Tuor and Idril was to split between them the lyric poem “The Song of Ælfwine” from *The Lost Road*, which because of its yearning for Valinor must be set after their marriage and the birth of Eärendil (much referred to but not a character in the opera).

But though the second half of the story is the more fragmentary, it's the first half that gives Godfrey more trouble. After a prologue in which Ulmo instructs Turgon to build his city, the tale proper begins with Aredhel requesting to leave, and the plot proceeds on at a glacial pace from there. Halfway through, where you switch discs, Tuor still hasn't arrived at the city. Part of the problem with the first half is that much of the plot is narrated by the chorus, an inelegant procedure. Yet even all this background wouldn't be enough to explain the story to someone who doesn't already know it: what Eöl has against Turgon, for instance, remains a mystery in this text. The other problem is that the composition is as glacial as the story. The sung text is slow recitative, sometimes literally monotonic. The orchestra tends to flood in at key moments, which together with the tinny sound of the synthesizer makes it resemble an organ more than an orchestra.

I would accordingly recommend that the curious listener to this saga start with disc two, which is much better. This begins with strong-voiced Tuor in the wilderness singing a genuine through-composed aria, with melodic grace and presence, the text excerpted from the poem “The Horns of Ylmir” from *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. Tuor is then taken to Gondolin; his meeting with Idril is succeeded by a percussion-laden wedding march, an effective use of the synthesized music; then Idril and Tuor's duet; Maeglin betrays the city (Morgoth has one line, in a deep echoing voice like a Peter Jackson villain); an unaccompanied hymn to Ilúvatar; and the actual fall of Gondolin is the last full scene, a highly formalized procedure in which the weight of the action is carried by the orchestra without the inconstant flooding of the earlier scenes and without any intrusive narration. (There are some faint background sound effects of

battle and flame, and one loud noise: Maeglin screaming as he falls from the precipice.) An epilogue, based on the poem “The Happy Mariners” and set on the shore of the Sea, for soloists and chorus with light orchestration, is musically the most effective thing in the opera.

Godfrey is a tonal composer in a neo-romantic idiom, prone to the employment of key motifs in his accompaniment, though not in the heavy-handed manner of Wagner. His vocal lines are less motivically structured and more chromatic as well as more meandering. The music’s function is to carry the story and not to convey pretty tunes; Godfrey avoids strophism even when the verse might suggest it, and the beauty of his work is of a more distant and ethereal kind.

In general, based on this excerpt it looks like an impressive project, possibly at a larger scale than it can digest artistically but containing attractive and effective things, a respectful and intelligent tribute to Tolkien.

Ireland, Justina. *Öread Nation*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2018. pp. 455. \$11.79. and *Deathless Divide*, 2020. pp. 560. \$19.19. Reviewed by Phillip Fitzsimmons.

The books, *Dread Nation* and *Deathless Divide*, by Justina Ireland are the first two volumes of the *Dread Nation* series, an alternative history in which the American Civil War ended “when the dead rose up and started to walk on a battlefield in a small town in Pennsylvania called Gettysburg.” (3) I, the reviewer, am not usually a fan of zombie stories, but I read *Dread Nation* because of my wife’s enthusiastic recommendation of the first book of the series. She said the author wrote like Mark Twain. My wife’s claim intrigued and led me to read two enjoyable books. The first-person narrative of 17-year-old Jane McKeene brings the character to life, with her lively, smart, and irreverent turns of phrase that are reminiscent of Twain’s Huckleberry Finn. Unlike Huckleberry Finn, Justina Ireland’s narrative voice of Jane McKeene is a perfect creation of a young educated speaker who

uses vernacular English as she describes her story, first in *Dread Nation*, of being taken as a child slave from her mother and her home at Rose Hill Plantation to being a student at “Miss Preston’s School of Combat for Negro Girls” (9) outside of Baltimore. There, she excels in combat training, especially with using a scythe, is generally a solid student, but is weak in the study of etiquette. Being able to function in high society is necessary for Jane to be employed as a lady’s attendant upon graduating from school. She explains, “An Attendant’s job is simple: keep her charge from being killed by the dead, and her virtue from being compromised by potential suitors. It is a task easier said than done.” (10)

Jane McKeene works hard to achieve what she sees as the best of many bad choices in this alternative history in which she must become an attendant to have some protection from the undead, called shamblers, that threaten the entire United States. She is a compelling character that I rooted for as she makes comments in her narrative, such as the following:

About Katherine, another student at her school: “Girl would rat out Jesus to the Romans.” (96)

In another, she describes saving the guests at a high-society dinner party, where she is working as a server, and puts down a man as he is transforming into a shambler as they dine.

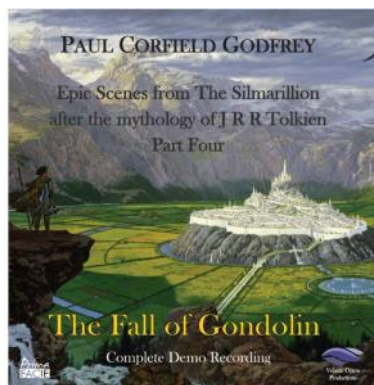
“Everyone’s eyes are upon me now, their faces twisted in disgust, as if killing a dinner guest, shambler or no, is a terrible faux pas.” (166)

Here is a conversation with The Duchess, a character she meets in Kansas, ““Look at you, with those pretty manners. Wherever did they find you?”

“At the junction of hard luck and bad times,” I answer. It’s something that my momma says.””

The aforementioned Katherine, who is a major character in the *Dread Nation* series, is also memorable. Jane describes this moment with Katherine, who says:

““I’m a lady, Jane. I would never turn my hand to violence; that is what my Attendant is for. Besides, as long as I am trapped in this godforsaken place, I will have to do all my dealings in the currency of besotted idiots. What would you have me to do, alienate the entire town?” ... She snaps open



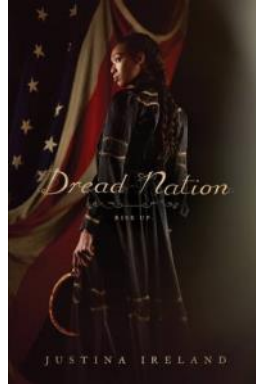
her parasol and gives me a haughty look over her shoulder. I can't decide if she's brilliant or utterly insane." (341)

My purpose here is to give a taste of the author's wit, dialogue, and creation of characters. These samples represent the uniform quality of the two books, which feature many well-developed characters and are enjoyable adventures.

Both volumes are reminiscent of the popular literature of the 19th Century. Chapters have titles such as "In Which I Am Born and Someone Tries to Murder Me", (1) "In Which I Attend a Rather Eventful Dinner", (152) and "In Which Some Time Passes and I Grow Restless". (272) Jane McKeene often refers to the contraband western serials that she sneaks into the school and reads. The reader will see that our heroine turns out to be featured in the type of adventure story that she loves to read. And, true to formula, she is intelligent, loyal, exceptionally talented, and her own worst enemy. Misfortune descends upon her from the time of the ill-fated dinner party on. She soon finds herself in Summerland, Kansas, where the trouble escalates.

Like with other great adventure stories, Jane McKeene learns about friendship and how to work with others as they all fight to survive in a world of shamblers and as they struggle with the evils of white privilege and bigotry. The author does not flinch nor show a rose-tinted vision of racism in the United States. Also, diversity and inclusion are shown with a spectrum of LGBTQ+ characters who are sympathetic, positively drawn, and central to the story. The LGBTQ+ characters occur mostly in volume two, *Deathless Divide*.

To wrap up this review, I really enjoyed and recommend *Dread Nation* and *Deathless Divide* from the *Dread Nation* series by Justina Ireland. I am looking forward to and will read the third installment when released. These books are good for middle-school, high school, and public libraries. They are good for colleges and universities with education programs. And, they are good for the general reader wanting to dive into a good new series. I recommend them as solid pieces of writing that are both contemporary and fine homages to the serial literature of the 19th Century. I recommend them because of their presentation and development of characters such as Jane McKeene, Katherine Deveraux, Jackson Keats, Big Sue, and



Daniel Redfern. Finally, I recommend the books because they provide compelling stories that continue in a satisfying progression from volume to volume. I expect the adventure to be as satisfying in volume three as it is in the first two books.

The volumes in the *Dread Nation* series, as an alternative history, are not an exact fit with the fantasy literature that we typically discuss in the Mythopoeic Society and that are reviewed in *Mythprint*; however, it is close enough for me,

especially with the repeated appearance of a ghost in the books. Ireland is no stranger to fantasy literature. She has written the young-adult fantasy novels *Promise of Shadows* (2014) and *Vengeance Bound* (2013). Between her earlier fantasy novels and the *Dread Nation* series, Ireland is an author we should watch for in the future, and who I think many members of the Mythopoeic Society will enjoy.

Sebastian, Laura. *Half Sick of Shadows*. Ace, 2021. pp. 443. \$17.94. Reviewed by McKenzie Peck.

"I will die drowning; it has always been known" (1).

From the first sentence of *Half Sick of Shadows*, New York Times Bestselling Author, Laura Sebastian captures her readers, never to let go. Lovers of medieval Knights of the Round Table lore, to Victorian era Tennyson poetry, to modern retellings of Arthurian legend may all find something to enjoy in this story of Elaine Astolat, Lady of Shalot. Any reader of Arthurian myth knows Elaine's tragic death, but what is her story before that?

In each chapter of *Half Sick of Shadows*, Sebastian weaves together the present, the past, and the future of Elaine's life. In the past, Elaine is living in Camelot as a young child. Her mother is controlling, having been taught for generations to hide her own magical powers, forcing Elaine to do the same, driving them both into madness. Elaine is living as a sheltered outsider, ridiculed and bullied by Morgause and her entourage because of her mother's madness. In the past, Elaine is leaving Camelot and her mother behind, riding forward to Avalon with her best friend Morgana by her side.

Now, ten years later, Elaine is living in Avalon, learning how to scry with her loom, Nimue as her guide. Arthur and Gwen are already lovers. Morgana is practicing her magic. Lancelot is running carefree, catching Elaine's eye. All five are best friends, inseparable, seemingly invulnerable against their impending destinies. Still, Elaine keeps weaving, keeps seeing visions, keeps trying to prevent the future.

In the future, some events are clear but many of Elaine's and her friends' fates "come[...] down to a choice that hasn't been made yet, a choice the future of [their] world hangs on. One choice, from one girl" (8). In the future, Morgana will always betray Arthur. Lancelot and Gwen will always be disloyal. Arthur will always fall. Elaine will always die drowning. But, what choices will they have to make along the way? And, what happens after their destinies?

In the present, Elaine and her friends meet their destinies, riding back to Camelot, holding tightly to the repeated refrain, "Arthur needs us" (66).

Although pieces of Elaine's and her friends' stories will be familiar to many readers, Sebastian's version fills in the gaps of their childhood and teenage years, building characters and friendships, victories and losses, lives and deaths. Sebastian skillfully expands on absent details from medieval and Victorian Arthuriana while staying true to the Arthurian world and lore readers already adore.

In early Arthuriana, Sir Thomas Malory treats Elaine, the Fair Maid of Astolat, as but a pining damsel, dying for her love of Lancelot. Similarly, Alfred Lord Tennyson in his poem "The Lady of Shalott" (1832) treats Elaine as but a cursed, forgotten face in a tower, weaving steadily, sighing that she is "half sick of shadows." Sebastian, on the other hand, builds upon existing Arthurian myth to give Elaine a backstory, a life, and agency. Readers should delight in an Elaine who no longer lives in the shadows, watching the world float by her -- she is now orchestrating her own future as well as the future of Arthur and Camelot.



In addition to Elaine, Sebastian presents Morgana and Gwen as strong female characters. In Sebastian's world, the trio of females each get opportunities to make destiny-changing choices, which at times relegate Arthur and Lancelot to the more submissive, follower roles traditionally given to women in Arthurian legend. Sebastian's Elaine, Morgana, and Gwen are strong, powerful, and bold. They know their own minds and seek opportunities to lead Camelot into a better future. For, as Nimue counsels Elaine, "... you were not raised to be safe, you were raised to be heroes" (9).

Sebastian's focus on female characters and developing their stories places her novel within the current trend of female authors whose writing focuses on the furthering the female perspective in classical literature, including Madeline Miller (*Circe* 2018), Natalie Haynes (*A Thousand Ships* 2019), Jennifer Saint (*Ariadne* 2021), and more. Moreover, Sebastian's book, though shorter and more condensed, is reminiscent of the female-led *The Mists of Avalon* (1983) by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Half Sick of Shadows has a casual, easy to read tone while remaining action-packed and stimulating. This style may best interest young adult readers; although, the desire to know more about underwritten characters like Elaine might entice any fan of Arthurian lore. Other readers that are interested in female-led stories, magic, fey, and visions may also find Sebastian's work entertaining. Readers should keep in mind that, although Arthur, Gwen, and other beloved characters are prominent in *Half Sick of Shadows*, the story itself does centralize around Elaine, her visions, and her suicide. Readers should not expect a full reimaging of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* or T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* where the ending is the demise of King Arthur.

Instead, the ending of *Half Sick of Shadows* echoes the first line: "Elaine Astolat, the Lady of Shalott, dies drowning. When she does, it is a choice" (420).

But, is that truly Elaine's ending?

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MYTHPRINT SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES: ELECTRONIC ONLY

Dear Mythies,

We regret to announce that due to the vacancy of the Subscriptions Manager position, beginning with Issue #400, the Mythopoeic Society can only offer *Mythprint* electronically until such time as this position can be filled. The physical printing and mailing is an important role of the Subscriptions Manager, which, if outsourced to a private company, will be vastly more expensive than it is worth for the length of our newsletter. For various personnel and environmental reasons, we are considering making *Mythprint* an electronic-only publication in the future regardless of the Subscriptions Manager replacement status.

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- If you purchased a membership + paper subscription in the U.S., your membership + electronic subscription to *Mythprint* will be extended an additional 6 months (+2 e-*Mythprints*). Members should check Issue #400 to ensure that they have been comped 2 additional *Mythprints* and contact Lynne Darga at [REDACTED] if not.
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- If you purchased your subscription recently and find the above compensations unsatisfactory, you may contact Treasurer Lisa Harrigan ([REDACTED]) for a refund and repurchase your membership at the e-*Mythprint* rate.

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Megan Abrahamson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

We apologize for these unavoidable changes and want to thank Marion VanLoo for all she has done for the Society! We would also like to take the opportunity to once again encourage any interested members to consider volunteering to take over Marion's crucial work in the form of the Subscriptions Manager. If interested, contact this year's Mythopoeic Society Chair, Megan, at [REDACTED]

Mythically Yours,

Megan B. Abrahamson, *Mythprint* Editor

The Mythopoeic Society



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