

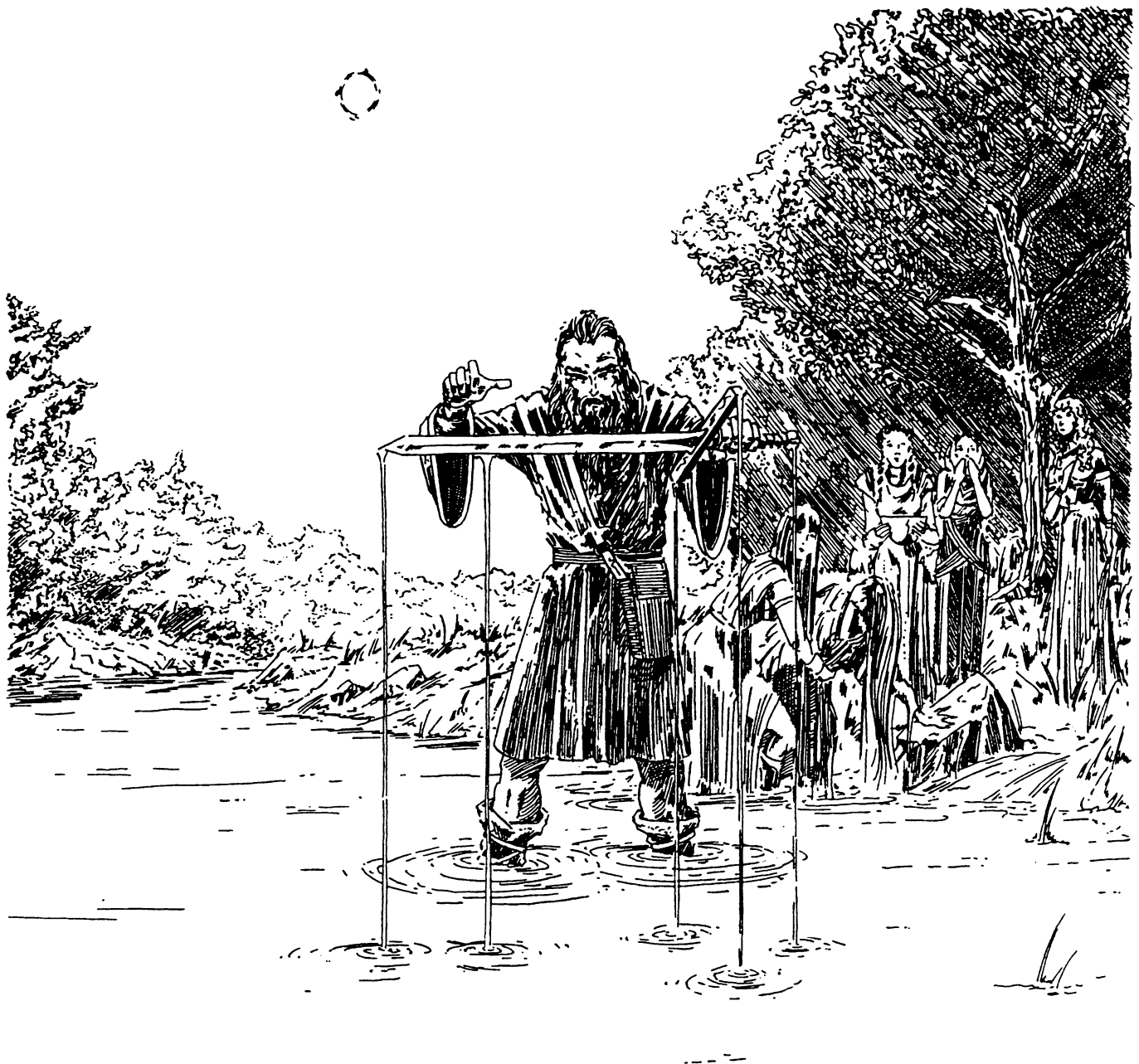
MYTHOPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of The Mythopoeic Society

Whole No.81

Feb. 1987

No. 2



KEVIN FARRELL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Special Farrell Family Issue
(Cover by brother Kevin, review by sister Ellie,
special appearance by fictional Joe)

<u>MERLIN'S BOOKE</u> BY JANE YOLEN.....	2
Reviewed by Eleanor Farrell	
<u>THE FOLK OF THE AIR</u> BY PETER S. BEAGLE	3
Reviewed by David Bratman	
NEWS NOTES	5
ACTIVITY CALENDAR	7
<u>HER MAJESTY'S WIZARD</u> BY CHRISTOPHER STASHEFF	9
Reviewed by Sarah Beach	
<u>THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES 12</u> BY ARTHUR SAHA	11
Reviewed by David Bratman	
<u>NEW YORK BY KNIGHT</u> BY ESTHER FRIESNER	12
Reviewed by Danny Low	
MYTHOPOEIC AWARDS	13

-- ARTISTS --

KEVIN FARRELL: Cover, "Evian Steel"
KRISTI HARRIS: Page 2
SERENA CALL: Page 10

-- STAFF --

EDITOR: David Bratman
MANAGING EDITOR and PRINTER: Lisa Deutsch Harrigan
STAFF WRITER: Lisa Cowan
COMPUTER WIZARD and MAINTENANCE: Harold Harrigan
MASCOT: "Amber"

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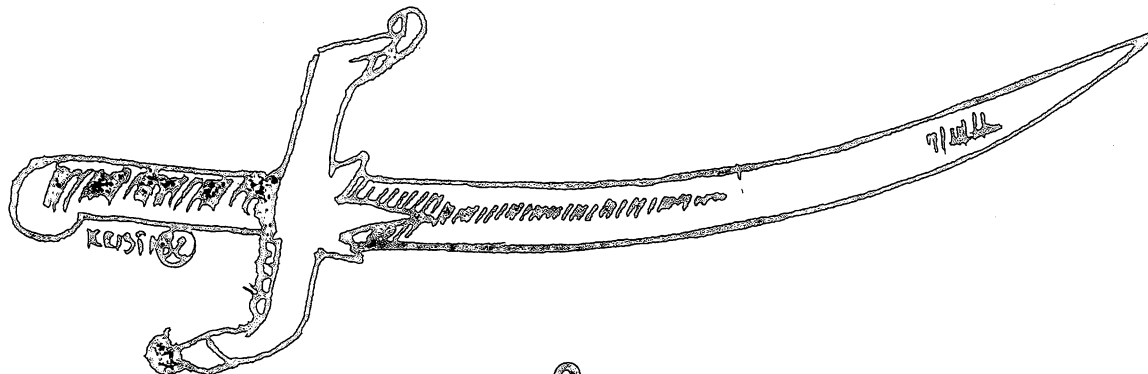
REVIEWS

Merlin's Booke by Jane Yolen. Ace pb, 176 p., \$2.95.
SteelDragon Press hc, \$17

Reviewed by Eleanor Farrell.

Merlin's Booke is a collection of thirteen stories and poems, six of which have not previously been published, about the greatest enchanter of legend. Although the chronology is a progression through Merlin's life, the tales themselves do not make up a cohesive narrative; style and point of view differ with each one. The complete book is a fascinating kaleidoscope of Merlin's life, in which all of the well-known elements are present but are reshaped into stories that become completely new. Yolen is especially successful in filling in the gaps of the Arthurian myth -- in describing the youth of Guenevere in the disturbing story "The Gwynhfar", or in taking a minor episode of Merlin's life and extrapolating from it, fleshing out the myth with living characters. The strongest story in the collection, "Evian Steel" (which was originally published in the 1985 anthology Imaginary Lands, edited by Robin McKinley), tells of the forging of Excalibur and of the women in the center of the Arthurian world: it is totally original, and yet it complements the myth so perfectly as to seem an essential part of it.

As always, the author's storytelling is flawless, her language both vivid and intricate. Yolen is a master of the form of short fiction, and this collection enhances her strength further by focusing on a theme that has held the imagination of readers for hundreds of years. Thomas Canty, one of the finest fantasy artists around, did gorgeous covers for both the hardcover and the paperback, which make this collection even more valuable to anyone interested in the Matter of Britain.



The Folk of the Air, by Peter S. Beagle. Del Rey hardcover, 330 p., \$16.95. Reviewed by David Bratman.

Dare I call this book Peter Beagle's Silmarillion? This is the novel he's been writing off and on for eighteen years, ever since The Last Unicorn was published, while fans of that gentle, slightly wacky fantasy, and the even gentler and wackier A Fine and Private Place waited patiently ...

So the publication of The Folk of the Air is an Event, no doubt about it, which makes this book notable on two counts. The other reason for taking note is its quality. I didn't see it until December 27th, but it is easily the best new fantasy novel I read last year. "Gentle" is not a word I would use to describe this book, but it has a full measure of Beagle's humor, imagination, and eye for the strange.

The main character is Joe Farrell, who first appeared as the hero of a short story called "Lila the Werewolf" (which may be found in the omnibus volume The Fantasy Worlds of Peter S. Beagle). It's several years after "Lila", and Farrell is making his first visit in a long time to his old stomping grounds in Avicenna, California, a city which the author describes as "based on Berkeley, when I felt like it". (He felt like it most of the time.) There Farrell has new encounters with old friends (there's a bit of sixties nostalgia about this book), and gradually drifts into a group called the League for Archaic Pleasures, which is to the Society for Creative Anachronism as Avicenna is to Berkeley. (The League is introduced to Farrell and to the reader in a marvelously subliminal way.) Both the real Society and the fictitious League consist of people who like to dress up in medieval costumes and improvise at play-acting battles and other courtly behavior. And then enters, stage right, the magical subplot ...

If The Folk of the Air had been published five years ago, it would by now be seen as a foundation stone in the currently flourishing subgenre of contemporary urban fantasy -- books like Moonheart by Charles de Lint, Tea with the Black Dragon by R.A. MacAvoy, and Brisinghamen by Diana Paxson. How much

THE FOLK OF THE AIR REVIEW - CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

the final published version of The Folk of the Air may owe to such books I couldn't say, but Beagle has captured the style of the subgenre perfectly. From the beginning, where the sense of something magical and uncanny is in the air nearly from the start, long before the supernatural actually rears its head, to the end, which features a bang-up magical battle between two of the principal characters while the others look on in dazed wonder, this book has everything to capture the interest of fantasy readers who like a magical tale in the here and now. Even the Northern California setting seems de rigeur for most books of this sort.

Farrell's character, the presence of the League, and the interplay between them are what distinguish The Folk of the Air from the books it superficially resembles. Farrell's reaction to the events around him is sometimes detached, sometimes intense. Looking at the story through his eyes gives a unique tint to the proceedings: part sardonic, part gripping. Similarly, because the League is so serious about its play-acting, it contrasts vividly with the "real" supernatural. Beagle's writing style is well-suited to the proceedings. In the early chapters in particular he keeps coming up with the most wild and offbeat possible similes and metaphors, that well suit Farrell's bemusement at the events which befall him. The asides, of varying length, concerning Farrell's various attempts at being gainfully employed are hilarious. The interplay between all the characters is complex and deftly handled, and the League members make a colorful backdrop to the magical proceedings.

Farrell doesn't take the League as seriously as they take themselves, and the scene in which his friend and lover Julie takes him to his first League event may have some SCA members wincing in embarrassment. But at the same time he sees the magic even in their play: at one point he fancies he sees the costumes dancing by themselves -- "These are surely the folk of the air", he says to himself. And so they are. In reviewing this book, I feel more than usual the difficulty of describing it adequately. The Folk of the Air is a novel that you owe it to yourself to read.

NEWS NOTES

New Mytho Magazine Alert!

The Mythic Circle is the Mythopoeic Society's new fiction magazine, co-edited by that charming and go-getting duo, Lynn Maudlin and Christine Lowentrout. Issues will be published quarterly; Number One is already in production and scheduled for this month. Queries, contributions, and subscriptions are welcomed, and the editors promise to answer their mail. Single issue \$3, 4/\$9. All mail to: The Mythopoeic Society, [REDACTED]

Sammath Naur, the Mythopoeic Society's discussion group in Hawaii, was so captivated by Maui, the Demigod, a book retelling the myth of Hawaii's origins which they discussed last May, that they have created and awarded to author Steven Goldsberry the first annual Sammath Naur Writer of the Year Award. "What Homer did for the Greeks, Goldsberry has done for the Hawaiians", says their press release. Prof. Goldsberry teaches at the University of Hawaii.

The Charles Williams Society has put up a plaque on the site of 36 Victoria Street, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, his childhood home. The unveiling ceremony took place on Dec. 13, 1986, mere weeks before the end of the Williams centennial year. (Item courtesy of Pat and Trevor Reynolds.)

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Susan Cooper's The Dark is Rising and its three sequels, Greenwitch, The Grey King, and Silver on the Tree, are being reissued in new paperback editions by Collier Books for \$2.95. These Celtic fantasies for young adults are often considered classics. (Over Sea, Under Stone, the "prequel" of the sequence, is not being issued in this edition; it's available from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for \$4.95.)

Stephen King, best-known for his horror fiction (to put it mildly), has written a basic fairy-tale fantasy, with kings and evil magicians, titled The Eyes of the Dragon. The Viking hardcover, published this month, is illustrated by David Palladini and costs \$16.95.

NEWS NOTES - CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Boxen, the tale of an animal kingdom which C.S. Lewis wrote as a child, is now available in paperback (HBJ, \$4.95). So is Nerilka's Story, Anne McCaffrey's recent "Pern Adventure" which was reviewed here last month (Del Rey, \$3.95).

From the cauldron of the Greyhaven fantasists: The Blood of Colyn Muir by Paul Edwin Zimmer and Jon DeCles (Avon pb), and a novel by Diana L. Paxson based on the Tristan legend (Morrow hc) are both in the works for future release.

CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS

* Denotes a new or significantly updated listing

KING KON 7, March 13-15, 1987. At the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] GOH: Robert Vardeman, Sontow Sucharitkul.
Memberships: \$17 until Feb. 28, 1987; \$20 at the door.
Write: [REDACTED]

BOSKONE XXIV, March 13-15, 1987. At the Sheraton Hotel,
Boston, MA. GOH: C.J. Cherryh. Memberships: \$27 at the door.
Write: c/o NESFA; Box G, MIT Branch PO; Cambridge, MA 02139.

*NORWESCON'S ALTERNACON, March 26-29, 1987. At SeaTac Hyatt
Hotel, Seattle, WA. GOH: Orson Scott Card. Memberships:
\$25 until Mar. 1, 1987; \$30 at the door. Write: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

*OZMOPOLITAN, June 27-28, 1987. Zion, IL. Write: Fred N.
Meyer, [REDACTED]

MYTHCON XVIII, July 24-27, 1987. At [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] GOH: Christopher Tolkien & John Bellairs.
Registration only: \$30 until June 1, 1987; \$40 at the door.
Total Package (room, meals, registration): \$130 until Dec.
1986; \$145 until June 1, 1987; \$160 at the door. Write:
[REDACTED]

MYTHCON XIX, July 29-Aug. 1, 1988. At the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] GOH: Ursula K. Le Guin & Brian
Attebery. Memberships: \$20 until further notice. Write: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Deadline for the Activity Calendar is the first of the month preceeding the month of publication, i.e. March issue information will be due the 1st of February. April information will be due the 1st of March. All Calendar information should be sent directly to Mythprint. Thank you.

SECRETARY FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS
(Please write to him about forming groups, or if you have any questions):

David Lenander

Discussion Group Meetings

CALIFORNIA: North

STORISENDE

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes,

PH:

AVALON

Laurine White,

PH:

*February 21, 1987 (Saturday) 7 PM

The Summer Tree by Guy Gavriel Kay.

At Phil & Chawn Asher,

PH:

KHAZAD-DUM

Pat Witham,

PH:

*February 8, 1987 (Sunday) 1 PM

The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco.

At Jeffrey Soreff's,

PH:

*March 1, 1987 (Sunday) 1 PM

The Broken Citadel by Joyce Gregorian

At Frankie Jemison's,

PH:

CALIFORNIA: South

Dolores Speth,

*February 22, 1987

Merlin's Booke by

Dolores Speth's, s

CAIR PARAV

John Mulvey,

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA/

Bill Hussar,

PH:

HAWAII

SAMMATH NAU

Stephen L. Brown

*February 7, 1987 (

Contact by Carl Sa

*March 7, 1987 (Sat

20,000 Leagues Und

*April 4, 1987 (Sat

The Last War by Me

*May 2, 1987 (Sat

To your Scattered

*June 6, 1987 (Sat

Ender's Game by Or

Contact Secretary fo

LOUISIANA

ROKE

Douglas A. Rossmar

CALENDAR

MYDGARD

L. PH:

(Sunday)

Jane Yolen. At Lee &
see above.

WEL

PH:

/MARYLAND

KNOSSOS

JR

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PH:

(Saturday)

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turday)

der the Sea by Verne

turday)

elissa Michaels

eday)

Bodies Go by Farmer

riday)

rson Scott Card

r time and location.

MICHIGAN

GALADHREMMIN ENNORATH

Dave & Grace Lovelace,

PH:

MINNESOTA

RIVENDELL

David Lenander,

PH:

*February 14, 1987 (Saturday) 1:30 PM
The Heirs of Hammerfell and/or Free
Amazons of Darkover by Marion Zimmer
Bradley.

*March 7, 1987 (Saturday)
Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde by Robert Lewis
Stevenson.

*April, 1987 (At MiniCon)
Dark of the Moon by P.C. Hodgell.

All meetings are tentatively scheduled at

NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY

Romenna

Marqaret Purdy,

PH:

Still discussing The Lord of the Rings!

OHIO

THE PRANCING PONY

Eileen Ribbler,

PH:

VIRGINIA

SPARE OOM

Veida & Steve Wissler,

PH:

MORE REVIEWS

Her Majesty's Wizard, by Christopher Stasheff. Ballantine pb, 342 p., \$3.50. Reviewed by Sarah Beach.

That's "Wizard", not "Warlock". The first thing to notice about this book is that it is not part of Stasheff's amusing series about the Warlock, Rod Gallowglass, The Wizard in Spite of Himself and its sequels (which are from Ace while this book is from Ballantine).

In the note at the end about the author, there is an important paragraph about the nature of this tale:

"One day, [Stasheff] realized that most of the medieval fantasies he read seldom mentioned the Devil, and never God. He vehemently maintained that wasn't the way medieval Christians really saw the world -- they saw God everywhere, in everything, and the Devil always lurking, looking for an opening -- and that authors really ought to write their fantasies a little closer to reality. Then he realized that, being a fantasy author, he was stuck with writing his next story that way."

Good and Evil are certainly operative forces in this book. Indeed, Stasheff's characters are obliged to decide somewhere along the line whether they will side with Good or with Evil. In this respect, Her Majesty's Wizard is certainly closer to High Fantasy than are the Warlock books. However, Stasheff's penchant for word play and rationalization are still very prominent, and so keep the atmosphere less serious.

Matt Mantrell, the hero, is a graduate student dawdling over finishing his doctoral dissertation. By reciting some mysterious runic verse which he'd found in an old copy of the Njaalsaga, he is translated into a parallel universe where magic -- and Good and Evil -- are operative. He quickly discovers that the magic is controlled by verse, and so he starts cribbing from the verse of his own world-- everything from doggerel to Shakespeare. Occasionally he constructs his own verse to suit the need. This is a new approach to the people of this universe, and they are much impressed by his ability.

Matt begins by insisting that people call him a "wizard". He doesn't want to be called a "sorcerer" and thus associated with Evil. Having begun by aligning himself with Good, Good works (it seems) to keep him in line. If there is a weakness in Stasheff's story, it is that Matt does not seem seriously tempted to Evil after he learns the nature of this universe. He occasionally comes close to error by over-rationalizing certain things, or by lack of understanding, but never is he tempted to willful misuse of the great power he has access to.

Stasheff's characters are always interesting people to meet, but he holds back on really letting the reader feel with the characters. When Matt has a dream/vision/experience of Hell, we only get a partial sense of his terror. Stasheff rationalizes a shade too much to really give the fantasy the freedom it needs to answer his observation about medieval reality. Still, he comes close. If he can let go of his need to rationalize things, I think Stasheff could write a very effective fantasy.

A final note on this book: Darrell Sweet did the cover, which is not too bad. He has accurately depicted most of the details in the scene he illustrates, but he has not paid full attention to the description: Princess Alisande should have golden hair, not red-brown! Could we please have editors (not to mention artists) who pay attention to these things?



The Year's Best Fantasy Stories 12, edited by Arthur W. Saha. DAW pb, 226 p., \$2.95. Reviewed by David Bratman.

Anno 1985 was a good year for fantasy, and this collection of eleven fantasy short stories from that year bears that statement out. The stories vary in quality, but all are at least interesting and a couple may well become classics.

Decidedly the best to my tastes is "Flight", by Peter Dickinson, a long tale which is actually not a story at all, but a mock-scholarly narrative from the highly inventive history of an imaginary country that Dickinson has created. "Flight" tells a story of a primitive tribe and its encounters with outside authority over a period of centuries, and does so in a wry, dead-pan style that owes something to Douglas Adams. My reaction on finishing this story was immediately to re-read it, twice. It's a footnoted delight.

There are several other fine stories in the collection. "Dinner in Audoghast" by Bruce Sterling effectively answers the question, What if Shelley's Ozymandias had had a prophet to warn him of his impending destruction? He wouldn't have believed it, of course. "Preliminary Notes on the Jang" by Lisa Goldstein is a surreal tale of an anthropology student who finds an unknown civilization that's living in an apartment in Los Angeles. "Fortunes of a Fool" by Nicholas Yermakov and "The Face in the Cloth" by Jane Yolen are both newly wrought fairy tales of some subtlety. And "The Castle at World's End" by Chris Naylor is the best Dunsany pastiche to appear since H.P. Lovecraft's.

"Paladin of the Lost Hour" by Harlan Ellison has been widely acclaimed, and won a Hugo, but I found it excessively heart-warming and sentimental, something like a Spider Robinson story, only better-written. "Unferno" by George Alec Effinger is enjoyable in itself but badly placed as the lead-off story, as its cute Yiddish view of hell spoils the appetite for the less slapstick virtues of the stories following it.

Overall, this is one of the best volumes to appear in this series. Due credit goes to the authors for writing these stories, and to Saha for choosing them.

New York by Knight by Esther Friesner. Signet pb, 252 p., \$2.95. Reviewed by Danny Low.

This is easily one of the best fantasies that I have read in a long time, even though the story is rather simple and predictable. A dragon is roaming the multiverse destroying worlds. A knight named Persiles has been pursuing the dragon, and their final battle is to take place in contemporary New York City. When the knight first appears in New York, he is mugged. He spends most of the story trying to recover his horse, armor, and magical weapons -- the only way to defeat the dragon. Persiles enlists the aid of Sanchi, a streetwise Puerto Rican kid, and Sandra Horowitz, a Jewish American Princess. There is a host of secondary characters, including an elf and a giant.

The story is written as serious drama, but many of the plot situations are comedic. Despite this -- and the stereotypical characters, and the predictable plot -- the book works very well. The sole reason is the superb character development. Each character is a distinctive individual with the strengths and flaws of a real person. Friesner has a superb ear for dialects. Most authors write dialect speech phonetically; Friesner uses word patterns and sentence structure to convey a dialect. The accents leap out from the page at you. Friesner also knows New York City very well, and has presented a vivid picture of the city.

My initial impression from reading the cover blurbs was that this book was going to be either extremely good or extremely bad. I am happy to say that it turned out to be extremely good.

=====

"The roots of names interest me even more than the roots of other words. Did you know that Larry Niven is the Man from the Snows of Laurentum, or that Kate Wilhelm is the Pure Woman With the Desirable Helmet? Nearly all of us have legionary or warrior or high fantasy names of one sort or another. My own means a Wolf Is Born. But Vincent Di Fate is the Liege of the Conqueror From Faerie, which is best of all."

-- Gene Wolfe

Mythopoeic Awards

The Mythopoeic Society presents two annual awards, its Fantasy Award and Scholarship Award, at Mythcon each summer. Subscribers to Mythprint and Mythlore, as members of the Society, are eligible to nominate for both of these awards, and to serve on the selection committees, which choose the finalists and the award winners.

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award is given to a fantasy novel, multi-volume novel, or single-author story collection published during 1986 that best exemplifies "the spirit of the Inklings". Reissues (such as paperback editions) are eligible if no earlier edition was a finalist. Individual books in a series can be nominated if they stand on their own; if they don't, the entire series counts as a multi-volume novel, and is eligible the year the final volume appears. Last year's winner was Bridge of Birds by Barry Hughart.

The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award is given to a book on Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that makes a significant contribution to Inklings scholarship. For this award, books published during the last three years (1984-86) are eligible, including previous years' finalists. Last year's winner was Charles Williams, Poet of Theology by Glen Cavaliero.

Members may nominate books for both awards, and may serve on both committees. Nominations (no more than five books for each award, please) and requests to be on either or both committees should be sent by February 20, 1987 to Christine Lowentrout, [REDACTED]

Requirements for committee members are the same for each committee (please note these before you volunteer!): You must state your willingness to read all the finalists, and also state whether or not you are willing to have your name and address included on a list to be distributed among the members of your committee for purposes of intercommunication. For each committee, Christine will be sending out lists of nominees by February 28th, from which you must pick five books that you would like to see as finalists. Your choices must be returned to Christine by May 1st; she will then tabulate the vote and inform the committee of the five finalists. These five are the books you must read (or re-read) by the final voting deadline of July 15th.

Mythprint is the monthly 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.

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c/o Lee Speth, [REDACTED]

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The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two quarterly magazines: Mythlore, a journal of Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, Fantasy and Mythic Studies (subscription is \$12/year) and The Mythic Circle, publishing fiction, etc. (\$9/year). Send subscriptions to the Society at the address above.

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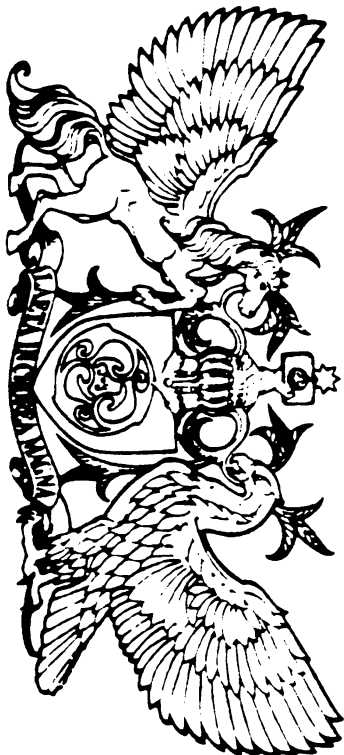
Reviews, discussion reports, news items, letters, and other submissions are always welcome. We can retype material into our computer, so any readable form is accepted.

Artwork is also always wanted, especially cover art! The maximum cover art size is 6 inches high by 6 1/2 wide, but we can reduce or enlarge.

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