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-- ARTIST --

SARAH BEACH: Cover
(originally published in Mythlore)

-- STAFF --

EDITOR: David Bratman
MANAGING EDITOR and PRINTER: Lisa Deutsch Harrigan
PROOFREADER: Karen Colleen Savitzky
STAFF WRITER: Lisa Cowan
COMPUTER WIZARD and MAINTENANCE: Harold Harrigan
TEXT EDITOR: Wordstar 3.0
MASCOT: "Amber"

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REVIEW

Twisting the Rope by R.A. MacAvoy. Bantam pb, 242 pages, \$3.50. Reviewed by Melanie A. Rawls.

I like Tea with the Black Dragon. I mean I really, really like that book, and Mayland Long is high on my list of characters that I wish did exist so I could meet them. So I went into Twisting the Rope biased in the book's favor. Unfortunately, I came out very disappointed.

Twisting the Rope takes place five years after Tea. Martha Macnamara is on tour with a musical troupe she has organized, with her three-year old granddaughter Marty in tow and Mayland along as road manager. The personalities of the group don't mesh well, so the tour has been a strain on all involved. Then Marty starts wandering off looking for a lost friend she calls Judy. She also begins to suffer seizures which make her appear to be possessed. To top things off, the most obnoxious member of the group is found dead, and everybody has a motive for killing him.

The opening scene is a perfect example of what I most disliked about the book: five unattractive people bickering and fidgeting in an unattractive setting. Martha's fellow musicians were not people I was interested in getting to know; rather, they are the type of people anybody would avoid. They all have some physical or personality quirk -- a marker -- to which MacAvoy often refers but which does not enhance them in the least.

Martha's character has rather less flavor than it did in Tea. And poor Mayland, dogged by his very first cold, spends much of his time coughing and blowing his nose. Yeech!

The troupe members behave with what I thought to be a peculiar inappropriateness impossible to attribute to artistic eccentricity. For example, Mayland's companion on one of their searches for Marty, the missing grandchild, is a gauche young man named Padraig. As Mayland and Padraig search the beach and then the woods for Marty, Padraig gambols along more like a puppy on an outing than a person

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TWISTING THE ROPE REVIEW - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

involved in the serious business of looking for a missing child. In fact, I think Mayland should have smacked him.

Even the death by violence of one of their number does not momentarily sober these people or halt the wrangling and posturing. Admittedly, nobody had liked the late musician, but death usually causes people to stop and take note.

The story itself moves along jerkily with rapid changes of characters and scene. But there is a disturbing repetition of what is said and done. I could swear it was the troupe's harper, Elen, who flopped down on a bed in the previous chapter; here she is, flopping down on a bed again.

Loose ends are tied up eventually: you find out who killed the troupe's piper and why; where Marty has gone and why; and who Judy is. But the explanations seemed hokey to me. Worst of all, there are no subtle indications of the Black Dragon's magic except for rather vague references made by Mayland about his ability to mesmerize with his eyes.

All in all, I found Twisting the Rope to be inferior to MacAvoy's other works. I hope her next book, especially if it's about the Black Dragon, will contain more action, better plot, more magic, and, please, less fidgeting and chatter.

MYTHCON NEWS

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.
31, 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]

NEWS NOTES

Department of New Awards: The first annual Daedalus Awards for fantasy, science fiction, and horror, were presented at Tropicon V in Florida, last December. Best fantasy novel was The Shattered Horse by Somtow Sucharitkul; the fantasy short fiction award went to Jane Yolen. The awards are chosen by the Daedalus Society (unfortunately the press release doesn't say what else the Daedalus Society does).

A group of Christian writers, including fantasists Madeleine L'Engle, Walter Wangerin Jr., and Calvin Miller, have formed an "informal association on the order of the Inklings", and have agreed to compose a group-written murder mystery. (Item courtesy of Locus)

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Longtime Society member and Mythlore bibliographer Joe R. Christopher has completed his book on C.S. Lewis for the Twayne English Authors series. He read a chapter from it as his Guest of Honor speech at Mythcon XII in 1981. The book will be published in April, joining the Twayne volumes on J.R.R. Tolkien (by Deborah and Ivor Rogers) and Charles Williams (by Agnes Sibley).

Joe Christopher also published an article on "Science Fiction and Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collections" in the December 1986 issue of Choice, a college librarians' magazine, containing annotated checklists of 100 fantasy and 100 science fiction books recommended for college libraries. The fantasy list includes works by at least three Society members (Marion Zimmer Bradley, Diana Paxson, and Nancy-Lou Patterson) as well as Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams, of course.

Barbara Reynolds, the scholar who completed Dorothy L. Sayers' unfinished translation of Dante's Divine Comedy, is writing a book on Sayers and Dante for the Kent State University Press. She has been awarded the 1986 Clyde S. Kilby Research Grant by the Wade Collection at Wheaton College to assist her in this work.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Lots of new and upcoming fantasy novels: Tomorrow's Sphinx by Clare Bell (author of Ratha's Creature), a story of a cheetah living in a far future Egypt (Argo hc, \$14.95); AEgypt by John Crowley, a tale much in the vein of his classic Little, Big (Bantam hc, \$17.95, April); Bones of the Moon by Jonathan Carroll, a novel with an axe murderer in it (Putnam hc, to be published later this year); Caught in Crystal by Patricia C. Wrede (Ace pb, \$2.95, April); The Fall of Atlantis by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Baen pb, \$3.95); Teckla by Steven Brust, set in the same world as his Jhereg (Ace pb, \$2.95); The Fisherman's Curse, by M. Coleman Easton, a sequel to his Masters of Glass (Questar pb, \$3.50); and The Other Side of the Mirror, the newest Dark-over shared-universe anthology edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Daw pb, \$3.50).

Current reissues include first paperbacks of Always Coming Home by Ursula K. Le Guin (Bantam, \$4.95), Dark of the Moon by P.C. Hodgell (Berkley, \$3.50), Godbody by Theodore Sturgeon (Signet, \$3.50), and a rerelease of John Crowley's Little, Big (Bantam, \$4.95).

Department of Amplification: In December we reported on a new edition of The Lord of the Rings which is being published by Houghton Mifflin this month. Douglas A. Anderson, the bibliographer who has written a "Note on the Text" for this edition, wants us to know that, rather than correcting accumulated errors (as we put it), the new edition's function is to collect all of Tolkien's authorized revisions (some of which have only been published in British editions until now), and to correct various longstanding misprints.

CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS

*BALTICON 21, April 17-19, 1987. [REDACTED] GOH: Roger Zelazny. Artist GOH: Michael Whelan. Write: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

*AMIGOCON 2, May 1-3, 1987. At the Holiday Inn, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] GOH: Stephen R. Donaldson.
Memberships: \$12 until April 15, 1987; \$15 at the door.
Write: [REDACTED]

Letters of Comment

Melanie A. Rawls, [REDACTED]

[In reply to Joan Verba's letter in the Jan. issue -- ed.]

I praised Nancy Kress' The White Pipes because I thought the heroine gutsy, the tale absorbing, and the writing very good.

I've no objection to hybrids -- gothic romance with fantasy trappings, science fiction detective mysteries -- provided the writer blends the genres well and the premises are not preposterous. (I once stood in a bookstore goggling for a full five minutes at a romance about a Regency hero somehow transported to the present day. Now that storyline I couldn't buy.) I think Kress successfully blends the genres, and if you don't object to gothic romance, you should enjoy the book.

The paragraph I wrote about Lord Brant was edited out of my review. It read: "Brant is one of the more intriguing 'heroes' to come along in awhile. He is so ruthless in pursuit of the White Pipes that one hesitates to call him a hero after all."

There are a number of scenes in The White Pipes where the behavior of the characters is distinctly unappealing, and Brant figures in a number of these. I didn't see, however, that Kress attempted to tidy up his image by the book's end, as is typical of the romance genre. Brant was just as ruthless going out as he was coming in; and that created what was, to me, an interesting situation -- a villainous hero. I thought Kress presented this ambiguity, and the heroine's response to it, well.

Lynn Maudlin, [REDACTED]

[On January's "Secret Vice" cover -- ed.]

"Special kudos for the Pat Wynne cover; the household had many a chuckle over that. Mister Oboe [Lynn's husband Phil Ayling] especially liked 'Leave It To Bifur' -- I tell you, the boy is sick! (and I hope he doesn't get better)."

Deadline for the Activity Calendar is the first of the month preceeding the month of publication, i.e. April issue information will be due the 1st of March. May information will be due the 1st of April. 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
[REDACTED]

Discussion Group Meetings

CALIFORNIA: North

[REDACTED] STORISENDE

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] AVALON

Laurine White, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] KHAZAD-DUM

Pat Witham, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*March 1, 1987 (Sunday) 1 PM

The Broken Citadel by Joyce Gregorian

At Frankie Jemison's, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*April 5, 1987 (Sunday) 1 PM

The Folk of the Air by Peter S. Beagle

At Randolph Fritz, [REDACTED]

#32, Mt. View, CA. PH: [REDACTED]

*May 3, 1987 (Sunday) 1 PM

Godstalk by P.C. Hodgell.

At Lisa Harrigan's, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

CALIFORNIA: South

[REDACTED] M
Dolores Speth, [REDACTED]

*March 22, 1987 (Su

The Magic Cup by A

At Sarah Beach's, [REDACTED]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA/

Washington & Maryland

Bill Hussar, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

HAWAII

[REDACTED] SAMMATH NAU

Stephen L. Browr

*March 7, 1987 (Sat

20,000 Leagues Und

*April 4, 1987 (Sat

The Last War by Me

*May 2, 1987 (Satur

To your Scattered

*June 6, 1987 (Satu

Ender's Game by Or

Contact Secretary for

LOUISIANA

[REDACTED] ROKE

Douglas A. Rossman



CALENDAR

MYDGARD

PH: [REDACTED]
unday) 2:30 PM
Andrew Greeley.

MARYLAND

KNOSSOS

UR
n, [REDACTED]
PH: [REDACTED]
aturday)
der the Sea by Verne
aturday)
elissa Michaels
rday)
Bodies Go by Farmer
rday)
son Scott Card

time and location.

MICHIGAN

GALADHREMMIN ENNORATH

Dave & Grace Lovelace,

PH: [REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

RIVENDELL

David Lenander,

PH: [REDACTED]

*March 7, 1987 (Saturday)

Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde by Robert Lewis Stevenson.

*April, 1987 (At MiniCon)

Dark of the Moon by P.C. Hodgell.

*May 9, 1987 (Saturday)

The Fantasy of Peter S. Beagle.

*June, 1987

"Fifty Years of J.R.R. Tolkien's Hobbit." Exact Date and Place TBD.

All meetings are tentatively scheduled at

NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY

Romenna

Margaret Purdy,

PH: [REDACTED]

Still discussing The Lord of the Rings!

VIRGINIA

SPARE OOM

Veida & Steve Wissler,

PH: [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]



Editorial

by David Bratman

A book I've been reading lately which is only tangentially about the Inklings nevertheless has given me some insight into how the Inklings should be viewed as a group. The Magdalen Metaphysicals by James Patrick (Mercer University Press) is a study of four philosophers of religion who taught at Magdalen College, Oxford, in the first half of this century. One of these four is C.S. Lewis, a man not usually thought of as a philosopher, though he majored in the subject as an undergraduate, and his background in it was reflected in his later occupations as teacher of literature, as Christian apologist, and as novelist. The group includes one other well-known figure, R.G. Collingwood.

Patrick's interest in Lewis is mostly in The Pilgrim's Regress, which he claims offers the best picture of Lewis' mind at the time he converted to Christianity, and, incidentally, to a philosophy close to that of Collingwood and the others. The Pilgrim's Regress is not often studied, and attention paid to it is mostly as a religious allegory rather than as a philosophical treatise. But philosophy is a real aspect of the work, and of Lewis' intellectual environment, and should not be neglected.

We, as readers of Lewis' fictions and, some of us, of his apologetics and literary essays, don't tend to think of him as a philosopher, any more than we think of Charles Williams as a book editor, though that was how Williams earned his living all his adult life. Should Patrick claim that Lewis was "really" a philosopher rather than an author and teacher, we would rightly object. Lewis was never only a philosopher. But Patrick emphasizes that he is not offering a complete evaluation of these four men, or suggesting that they formed a "school" of philosophy. They didn't even all know each other well, and the eldest of the quartet had already left Magdalen before Lewis came to teach there. What Patrick does suggest is that there are certain similarities between them that are worth exploring, and (most importantly) that each sheds light upon the others, light that would otherwise not be cast.

EDITORIAL - CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Perhaps we should look at the Inklings the same way. It might save us from at least two errors of critical interpretation. Some of the Inklings' contemporaries, seeing how closely the three mythopoeic authors agreed with each other, and how far they were from other literary men of the time, on matters of religion and the place of fantasy in literature, regarded them as a closed circle ruled by a shared dogma. Of course it's absurd to consider the Inklings as interchangeable cogs -- you couldn't possibly mistake a paragraph of Tolkien's for one of Williams' -- but yet, this critical tendency has continued to the present day. More thoughtful observers have been bothered by it, not least the Inklings themselves. John Rateliff, in a paper in Mythlore 45 last spring, suggests that Tolkien, towards the end of his life, tried to retroactively distance himself from both Lewis and Williams in part to distinguish himself from them in the eyes of critics.

There's another error as well. Humphrey Carpenter, in his definitive book, The Inklings, devotes a chapter to considering his subjects as a group, specifically to counter the tendency I've just described. But in doing so, Carpenter protests too much. For instance, by citing differences of opinion between Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams, he implies that they didn't have a collective point of view, and he leaves us with the impression that the Inklings were nothing more than an almost random group of Lewis' friends. But this also is absurd. However many differences they had as individuals, the Inklings were not a meaningless association. Lewis chose his friends very carefully. The similarities they shared -- in being professing Christians in a time and place where most literary men were not, or in Lewis' admiration of Tolkien's theory of subcreation as something done by Man in imitation of God -- tie them together. To look at these men through the prism of their common experience as Inklings is wholly legitimate. It brings out a particular side to their work.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



STAR TOURS

by Lisa Cowan

"Incredible! Fantastic! The best experience of my life!" Ten years ago those were comments from people walking out of theatres showing a new movie called Star Wars. Those same people, and many more, are now saying the same things about the latest attraction at Disneyland in Anaheim, California. Star Tours is as close to a real-life adventure into the home galaxy of Luke Skywalker and R2D2 as any fan can dream of.

Some of the first voyagers on opening day, January 9, 1987, were the crew of the Voyager round-the-world airplane, Jeana Yeager and Dick Rutan, as well as astronauts Gordon Cooper and Donald Slayton. Bert Rutan, the Voyager's designer, had perhaps the best line of the day when he said, "It totally blew me away. I feel like going home and hooking up the VCR to my recliner."

That sort of explains what Star Tours is like -- a flight simulator turned into a forty-seat "Starspeeder" that is to speed you to the Moon of Endor. The rider feels safe enough entering the realistic looking shuttle-room and sitting down in the spacious seats, but when the droid pilot, RX-24, or "Rex", announces that this is his first flight too, and promptly launches the spacecraft through the wrong door, straight down a deep shaft, and out into the wrong zone, you know you're in for the ride of your life! The Starspeeder is completely synchronized with the special effects outside the windshield. Clinging to your seat, you drop, bank, accelerate and decelerate through space, past laser-shooting Tie fighters, and through the tail of a comet!

Rex the pilot is a bit of a dare-devil, and declaring "I've always wanted to do this!" he takes us zooming down the trench of a Death Star! At a press conference on opening day, George Lucas was asked if he had "always wanted to do that". He answered that it was a collaborative statement -- everyone who worked on the ride wanted to do that. And now everyone can, too, on Star Tours at Disneyland where even our most astronomical dreams come true!

Review

The Unlikely Ones, by Mary Brown. McGraw-Hill hc, \$15.95.
Reviewed by David Bratman.

Here's a new quest fantasy whose selling point is its unusual cast of characters. There have been quests with threadbare knights before, quests with shy, retiring young women, quests with unicorns, even quests with cats; but this is the first quest with all of the above plus a crow, a toad, and a fish. A fish? Yes, our narrator the heroine has to lug around an occupied fishbowl throughout much of The Unlikely Ones, and constantly keep track of the rest of her faunal menagerie as well, and this mundane task can serve as a keynote for the book.

The name of Mary Brown is not devised to be remembered, but you may have seen her one previous novel, Playing the Jack, a large, sprawling tale of a young woman wandering around 18th century England in disguise. The setting has been exchanged for your typical anonymous medievaldom, but The Unlikely Ones is otherwise much the same. The heroine, whose only name is Thing, is deformed and so ugly that she always wears a mask. She and her, uh, pets were formerly slaves of an evil witch, but escaped when angry villagers burned down the witch's cottage. Now they are seeking freedom from the witch's binding spells, and a safe place to live. They meander all over the landscape, seeking legendary places, getting lots of plot foreshadowing in the form of mysterious prophecies that always come to pass, meeting various heartwarming companions who have lessons to teach them, and so forth. And before the end, Thing discovers that she ... but I'm sure you can guess.

The animals do not speak, but they keep up a running conversation with Thing and each other by means of gestures which Thing, in telling us the story, "translates" into words. The gestures are doubtless economical, but the result is a very wordy story, often bogged down in detail -- this crew does not travel with particular ease.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

THE UNLIKELY ONES REVIEW - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

The problem with a quest whose destination is mysterious to the questers is that the plot tends to wander, and this one is no exception. I found The Unlikely Ones overlong and rather over-detailed as well as predictable, and the characters all seemed like successful graduates of psychoanalysis, except for a few who were obviously in need of it. The quest menagerie is a clever idea, but turns out to be a burden. The book is redeemed mostly by Brown's very deft use of occasional bawdy. The scene near the beginning where the witch attempts to seduce the knight shows that the author is very aware that style is everything, even in a sex scene. An interesting book, and one worth considering if you like a combination of mundane slogging and magic spells, cliches and something a little out of the ordinary.



EDITORIAL - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

So let us look at the Inklings as James Patrick looks at the Magdalen Metaphysicals. The Inklings were indeed a circle of Lewis' friends -- Carpenter proves this ably -- and the group was not the sole occupation of any of its members. There are other lenses through which we can view all three men, and we certainly should do so. Jared Lobdell led an interesting discussion session on "Williams as Detective Novelist" at Mythcon XVI, for instance. There are lots more possibilities on that line, and Patrick's view of Lewis is a new and refreshing one. But the perspective of viewing these writers as Inklings has been richly rewarding. The Inklings were not some kind of earthly Trinity, but they do shed light on each other, a light that helps us see much.

"The great thing about not having studied literature is that you don't think obscurity is profound."

-- Vikram Seth

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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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.

SUBMISSIONS

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.

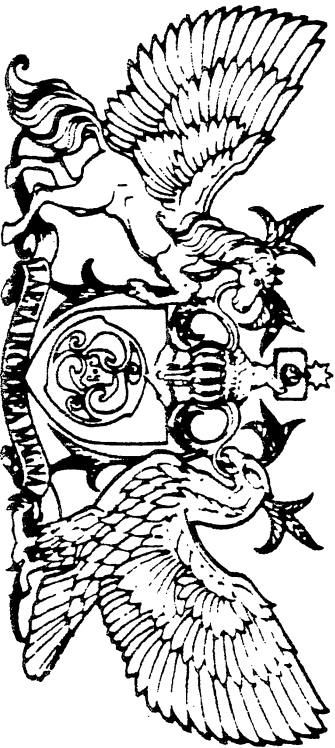
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