

# MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 34 No. 12

December 1997

Whole No. 189



## Table of Contents (December 1997)

1998 Mythopoeic Awards .....	3
Obituaries	
Paul Edwin Zimmer (David Bratman) .....	4
Lester Evan Simons (Lynn Maudlin) .....	6
Music: Songs for the Younger Days	
<i>Into the Magic</i> by Michael Whelan (Diane Joy Baker) .....	7
Activity Calendar (David Lenander) .....	8
Mythcon XXIX Information .....	10
Book Reviews	
<i>Defending Middle-earth</i> by Patrick Curry (David Bratman) .....	11
<i>Surprised by Laughter</i> by Terry Lindvall (Wendell Wagner, Jr.) .....	12
World Fantasy Awards/British Fantasy Awards .....	13
"Caught by a Rumour": News and Notes .....	14

### Illustrations

Cover: "Gawain and the Green Knight" by Kevin Farrell © 1997  
Mythcon XXIX logo © Patrick Wynne (p. 10)

Editorial Address:  
(Send materials for  
publication, letters,  
comments, etc.)

Eleanor M. Farrell, Editor

E-mail:

Production and Distribution:  
Graphics & Technical Support:  
Activity Calendar:

Anne Osborn  
Deirdre McCarthy  
David Lenander

Subscriptions & Back Order Information: See inside back cover

Mythopoeic Society Information: Joan Marie Verba, Corresponding Secretary

E-mail:

DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the  
1st of the preceding month (eg, January 1st for the February issue).

# 1998 Mythopoeic Awards

Subscribers to *Mythprint*, as members of the Mythopoeic Society, are invited to join the committees which choose the Society's annual Fantasy and Scholarship Awards, which will be presented at Mythcon next summer, and/or to nominate eligible books. Interested members are welcome to judge as many of the four awards as they're interested in and have time for, but no judge for any award is obliged to do so for any of the others.

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature is given to the fantasy novel, multi-volume, or single-author story collection for adults published during 1997 that best exemplifies "the spirit of the Inklings". Reissues (such as paperback editions) are eligible if no earlier edition was a finalist. Books from a series are eligible if they stand on their own; otherwise, the series is eligible the year its final volume appears. Last year's winner was *The Wood Wife* by Terri Windling.

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature honors books for younger readers (from "Young Adults" to picture books for beginning readers), in the tradition of *The Hobbit* and *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, so use your own best judgment when nominating. Last year no award was given.

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 (1995-1997) are eligible, including finalists for previous years. Last year's winner was *The Rhetoric of Vision* edited by Charles A. Huttar and Peter J. Schakel. 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. Last year's winner was *When Toys Come Alive* by Lois R. Kuznets.

Nominations (no more than five books for each award, please) and requests to serve on the selection committees should be sent by **February 10, 1998** to the awards administrator, **David Bratman,** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (The deadline is early this year because Mythcon is early.)

Volunteers for the committees must state their willingness to read all the finalists, and also state whether or not they are willing to be included on an address list to be distributed among the committee for purposes of discussion. For each committee, David will be sending out lists of nominees February 15th, from which you must pick **five books** that you would like to see as finalists. Your choices must be returned to David by **May 15**; he 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 **June 30**.

Please volunteer, and come to hear the winners announced at the Mythcon XXIX (Lewis Centenary Conference) banquet in Wheaton on July 18th.


## Mythic Circle Rebuilds

A new editor for the Society's fiction and poetry journal, *The Mythic Circle*, was approved at the Council of Stewards' meeting on Sunday, November 8th. Gwyneth Hood will take over the publication, and will be assisted by Trent Walters. More details will be announced soon. Gwyneth can currently be contacted at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (the Society's main address), or via e-mail at: [REDACTED]

# Obituaries

## Paul Edwin Zimmer Swordsman and Poet



Paul Edwin Zimmer could read poetry as if the very words were on fire.

He taught me to appreciate dramatic and epic poetry. That was a kingly gift. (As a child I thought I hated poetry.) Tolkien's "The Nameless Land" (in *The Lost Road*), which I read during my paper at Mythcon this year, is the kind of poem that Paul's voice has taught me to appreciate and to deliver effectively. I read it at a Bardic Circle at Mythcon many years ago, to his approbation.

Paul and Diana Paxson brought the Bardic Circles to Mythcons. That was an even greater gift, for many people. I forget how I came to be invited (they were obscure little things held informally in his dorm room in those days), but I attended my first Bardic Circle at my first Mythcon, at Sacramento in 1976. Later they grew larger and more public, and became one of the oldest surviving Mythcon traditions, newer than the Drunken Hobbit but a lot older than the Not-Ready Players or the Food Sculpture. Paul had been convening Bardic Circles for some time at Greyhaven, the Berkeley home he shared with his family and other writers, and felt that Mythcons would be an appropriate venue to extend them. They have the advantage of being wholly democratic: in a circuit through the room, everyone who so wishes has the chance to be a bard, reading a poem of one's own or a favorite by another author, or sometimes a song or a bit of prose. (Bardic Circles are not song sessions, although science fiction filksingers have picked up the term via Mythcons.)

Besides his marvelous voice and his magnificent heavy beard (his daughter's friends called him "the shaggy earthquake," Paul had

two standard accouterments: his kilt and his cigarette. Even more than most of us, he was a man born out of his time. He wanted to live in a time and place of heroes of old, but since he could not do so he wore their clothes (he was so at home in a kilt that on the rare occasions he wore trousers it looked odd), worshipped their pagan gods, practiced with their weaponry (he was a founder of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and one of its most skilled swordsmen, versatile in both European and Asian traditions), and most especially he read their literature, and wrote more like it. He was a heavy smoker, but like most such in the Mythopoeic Society, always very courteous about it.

One day at the second Long Beach Mythcon, Berni and I were out walking in the morning. It must have been fairly late in the morning, because off across the lawn in the distance we spotted the famously late-rising Paul, stalking along with his usual cigarette in hand. Berni leaned over to me. "Look!" she said. "It's Smokey the Bard!" It was all I could do to keep from breaking into hysterics as we neared him and made our greetings. In fact, it was all I could do to keep from giggling for the rest of the con.

It may have been at the same Mythcon that a woman came across Paul in his usual dress and asked him, "So what *does* a Scotsman wear under his kilt?" Paul grinned and gave what must have been his standard answer to this question: "Etchings, my dear; etchings."

Paul's poetry typically was alliterative verse with a heavy beat that throbbed under the control of his voice. Many of his poems were hymns to the gods, of a wide variety of cultures, and I remember "The Complaint of Agni" in particular, with its mighty cries of "Rama! Rama!", as his most characteristic and effective work. Another less typical but delightfully versatile poem was "The True Critics," a skeptical history of modern poetry written by turns *in* the various styles it described.

(It's excerpted in the coffeehouse-poetry scene in Chapter 9 of Diana Paxson's *Brisingamen*.)

Paul also wrote fiction. His first notable published work was a novella called *Woman of the Elfmounds*, issued as a small-press chapbook by a then little-known Canadian named Charles de Lint. (The year that de Lint was Guest of Honor at Mythcon, Paul wrote the appreciation for *Mythprint*, a good example of the almost burbling—if one can use such a word for the likes of he—enthusiasm he could show for his favorite authors. Check out his loosely-focused but passionate and learned defense of Tolkien's poetry in *Mythlore* 72.) He helped his sister Marion (Marion Zimmer Bradley: you've heard of her) with the battle sequences of a science-fantasy adventure novel called *Hunters of the Red Moon*, and did so well that he formally co-authored the sequel, *The Survivors*. This made him the first commercially-published novelist to come out of Greyhaven after Marion herself (others were to follow, most prolifically Diana Paxson). I remember the publication party for *The Survivors* as one of the liveliest Greyhaven events I've attended, and I have always enjoyed attending readings there, and Bardic Circles, sometimes more than the books in cold print.

Paul also published *Blood of the Colyn Muir* in collaboration with Jon DeCles (also of Greyhaven); and four novels on his own: *The Lost Prince*, *King Chondos' Ride*, *A Gathering of Heroes*, and *Ingulf the Mad*, the first two of which form a diptych (in an age of trilogies, Paul's cry upon their publication was "There is no third book!", which became a Mythcon catchphrase for a while), and all four of which share an invented setting called the Dark Border, whose *content* was that of a deadly-serious sword-and-sorcery epic but whose *style* was not generic Howard but something of Paul's own with a poet's sensibility. The basic concept of a desperate battle by the heroes against an encroaching Shadow with a very specific and distinct borderline (thus the series title) gave Paul

plenty of opportunity for dramatics, in particular detailed and lovingly described swordplay. I was most taken with the intensity of some of the human interaction: a lot of raw emotion comes through in the dialogue. He recently completed a fifth Dark Border book, *The King Who Was of Old*, keeping up the tradition he maintained since the diptych of each book being a prequel to its predecessor.

Finding Paul's books these days might be more difficult than reading them even if they were less readable than they are. I can't call them major works of fantasy, but picking them up and dipping at random, I find I can still hear the author's voice ringing out, and without worrying about the larger plot I can enjoy the moment, just as if I were back at Greyhaven, sitting on a cushion and listening to Paul in the reader's chair, sorting through a well-thumbed manuscript and telling us the tale.

Paul was at Albacon, a convention in Schenectady he attended regularly, partly for its own sake (he once recommended it to me) and partly as it gave him the opportunity to visit friends and family where he grew up nearby. At a party late Friday night he suddenly toppled over with a major heart attack. CPR was applied and 911 was called, but there was no hope. He was cremated and his ashes scattered on the farm that was his family home.

On Saturday the 25th, there was a "Bardic Wake" at Greyhaven. The attendance was simply tremendous; I have never seen so many people there. Several Mythies were present. Tim and Bonnie Callahan drove up from LA. The gathering opened with a memorial service that Paul wrote himself, invoking the four elements, the gods and the goddess; and then the drinking horn was passed around the room and all had a chance to speak who chose to. Even though everyone was very brief, it took some three hours. But for those of us moved enough to be there, it was well worthwhile.

Some had known him for thirty years or more (not just Greyhaven and family), some had been first invited to the Bardic Circles very recently. Many spoke of what Paul's love for poetry had meant to them. More than a few read short memorial poems, some quite effective and even funny. Many others were SCA swordsmen who had been taught by him, and spoke of that. Several women described how much Paul loved to waltz, and how good he was at it. I was surprised at the number of people who confessed how intimidating he could be. This was never my experience. Potentially fearsome in appearance and manner, to be sure, but although at the time I met him I was easily intimidated by my seniors, he was always very friendly and patient with me. I'm more apt to remember his favors, like the time he used his herald's voice to announce to the entire neighborhood my impending Mythcon paper the year the committee forgot to put it on the schedule, and the hour he spent with me in a corner at a Greyhaven party enthusiastically going over the contents of a Celtic literature anthology he'd just discovered, sharing his evaluation and seeking mine. I counted him as a friend, and I am touched by how many others did likewise. In the words the mourners spoke together after each reminiscence at the Wake,

Hail Paul!

*Written by David Bratman*

---

---

## Lester Evan Simons: 1950-1997

I never knew Lester Simons's age. I knew him as a fellow devotee of J.R.R. Tolkien. We met at Mythcon XV in Berkeley; I have photographs of him in elvish garb at the banquet. Our paths crossed more often when I joined the 1992 Tolkien Centenary Conference committee and for four years

made trips to England to coincide with committee meetings and inmoots. Lester was always delighted to see me and it was mutual; he made me feel very special—it was one of his gifts.

Professionally, Lester was a computer wizard and he was the webmaster of the Tolkien Society webpage. But within fandom, Lester also enjoyed costuming, he loved well-crafted items. He would show me a new acquisition: a silver chalice for wine at the AGM; a finely tooled belt; a handmade leather case for his laptop computer. Lester was a remarkable cook and I regret I was never able to attend any of his famous feasts—but I have seen the menus. Let me simply say the Banquet at the Tolkien Centenary Conference pales in comparison.

We'd share a meal together, at Oxonmoot or the AGM or the occasional Worldcon. We planned to visit the renovated Globe Theatre together before Oxonmoot this year; sadly I didn't get to Oxford and, despite his emailed reports of his improved health, neither did Lester. I came home from a visit up to the Bay area and got the word from England—Lester was dead. It was like a punch in the stomach—I would never see this man again? This dear, funny, brilliant, exacting soul had left the planet?

In the course of sharing grief with mutual friends, I've learned how central to the Tolkien Society and the various linkages Lester Simons was. He introduced so many people; he drew so many people in and encouraged them and made them welcome. His like is precious and rare and he will be greatly missed by all the Tolkien Society and friends thereof. Godspeed, Lester—you are now one of the absent friends we toast.

He never quite made 47.

*Written by Lynn Maudlin*

---

---

# Songs for the Younger Days

MICHAEL WHELAN. *Into the Magic*. (Avalon Productions. DDD. [redacted] CD \$15.95; Book: \$11.95). Reviewed by Diane Joy Baker.

Michael Whelan is an actor-storyteller who hones his craft on the anvil of Irish tale—and a hard anvil it is. Words flow freely and shivers are delightful, but it is difficult to keep the rhythm and provide proper emphasis to maintain interest without sounding a little sing-song. Whelan wisely chooses to provide musical breaks in the story-telling, for the sake of variety, so one gets the impression of a night at an Irish pub or the living room of Irish émigrés in Philadelphia, who lived fearful of the INS, sharing tales to while away time. Sound effects and other actors' voices add variety, for the ear is a demanding thing, requiring change to keep the concentration and interest.

Whelan begins with nearly seven minutes of introduction in two pieces, "To Shorten the Path" and "Irish Emigrants in Philadelphia," setting the scene with memories of story-telling times around the family hearth. "Uncle Gus Comes Through" is a wonderful blend of the memories of a thirteen year old boy in a funeral home, who hears a corpse's movement, and calls on his recently dead uncle to help him. Effectively framed by the words "I know not who this story is about," the tale uncurls as naturally and slowly as pipe smoke. To my mind, this is Whelan's best, for it is short and sweet enough not to need more than a simple approach. "Mother's Coming Home" lends a mythic overlay to the experience of a woman who has Alzheimer's, who "lives in the Otherworld." Whelan, comforted by Celtic myth and the promise of "dancing into the magic," can face the future with courage.

It's the help of his fellow actors—Linda Whelan, Imelda Chambers, and John R. Schaefer—who bring the tale of "The Mermaid, the Fisherman and the Rope" to life. Their vibrancy engages the ear; voices weave back and

forth. The story itself is fun, but I am glad Whelan didn't take all of it, for his diction and vocal ambiance begins by now to sound repetitive, and I find he's not able to act beyond a certain level.

Linda Whelan is a refreshing change, just when I feel I need one. She is very good on the Finn story included here, "The Warrior Finn Challenges the Wizard," one I particularly enjoyed because of my own forays into Celtic myth: her narrative power and great energy sweeps the listener along like a tidal wave.

The second musical number, I'm afraid, is painful to hear. Perhaps it's because I've heard so many bad versions of "Danny Boy" that I am particularly sensitive. I tend to cringe even when I hear the title, and if I can get through that song without my teeth being set on edge, it's well done. Imelda Chambers ably assists on story telling (particularly on "The Mermaid") but perhaps "Danny Boy" is not the best choice. The vibrato jars, and her support for the long intervals the song needs seems forced. It requires a sensitive, even gentle quality, which her voice does not possess. I'd like to hear her perform something better suited to her ability; perhaps "Whiskey in the Jar."

By the time we get to "Dancing Ghosts," I've had about enough of the whole gang. There's nothing wrong with the story, but it seems much like the ones which preceded it. The tale of a skeptical coffin-maker who's cursed to host the dead of his village at his home every full moon should have been riveting, but I got little energy.

This company has produced a number of other audio tapes, among them *Rappuccini's Daughter* (a favorite tale of mine), *The Banshee and Hawthorne*, and *Fire Whispers*, along with a book. Here, the stories (some of them from Whelan's plays) are beautifully illustrated by Mike Kelley. In some ways, it may be more satisfying than the CD, for you can be your own story-teller.

# Activity Calendar

The Activity Calendar is maintained by David Lenander, the Secretary for Discussion Groups. Send all calendar information to David, and contact him if you would like to form a group in your area.

David Lenander

Online version of this calendar on The Bird & Baby Web Page:

The Hermits' Pool contains files providing ideas and support for starting and operating discussion groups. Link to it from The Bird & Baby!

## Prospective Groups

### GEORGIA

*CENTRAL ATLANTIS*  
Irv Koch, c/o The SF & Mystery Book Shop Ltd.,  
E-mail:

### MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey,  
E-mail:

### MISSOURI

*THE KHAZAD*  
S. Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell,  
E-mail:

### NORTH CAROLINA

*W. N. CAROLINA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*  
Don King. E-mail:

### OHIO

Diane Joy Baker,  
E-mail:

### PENNSYLVANIA

*(NE PA)*  
Glenn Sadler,  
E-mail:

### TENNESSEE

*SPARE OOM*

Mary & Conrad Stolzenbach,  
E-mail:

### TEXAS

*SOUTH FARTHING*

Richard Ruane,  
E-mail:

### WASHINGTON

Lenore Jackson,  
E-mail:

## Chartered Groups

### CALIFORNIA

*: NIGGLE'S PARISH*  
Glen GoodKnight,  
E-mail:

*MYDGARD*

Dolores Speth,  
E-mail:

*KHAZAD-DUM*

Edith L. Crowe & Amy M. Wisniewski,  
E-mail: or

December 6: Annual Reading and Eating Meeting  
January 11: *Death Comes As Epiphany* by Sharan Newman

February 8: *Freedom and Necessity* by Steven Brust & Emma Bull

### COLORADO

*FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")*

Patricia Yarrow,  
E-mail:

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*: KNOSSOS*

Mimi Stevens,  
E-mail:

December 14: The Christmas Party  
January 3: Paul Hussar's birthday/*Hamlet* taste test  
January 14: *Tarzan* books by Edgar Rice Burroughs



## FLORIDA

[REDACTED] *HOBBITON*

Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## HAWAII

[REDACTED] *SAMMATH NAUR*

Vanessa Cole, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

## LOUISIANA

[REDACTED] *ROKE*

Douglas A. Rossman, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## MICHIGAN

[REDACTED] *GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH*

Dave & Grace Lovelace, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

December 6: *The Lost Road* (Part I) by J.R.R. Tolkien

## MINNESOTA

[REDACTED] *RIVENDELL*

David Lenander (See address above)  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

December 6: "Readings from Rivendell" (original stories)

## NEVADA

[REDACTED] *CRICKHOLLOW*

Joanne Burnett-Bowen, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

December 26: *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien

## NORTH CAROLINA

[REDACTED]

Matt & Renita Peeler, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

## PENNSYLVANIA

[REDACTED] *C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS*

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] or [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

## SOUTH CAROLINA

[REDACTED] *THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*

Will Vaus, [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Meets 8 P.M. at Barnes & Noble, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

December 2: *A Severe Mercy*

## WISCONSIN

[REDACTED] *THE BURRAHOBBITS*

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

*The Burrahobbits* have a sub-group devoted to Tolkien discussion, which also meets monthly apart from regular meetings.

### Special Interest Group

*THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP*

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Publishes newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar* ("News Letters")  
The ELF also publishes *Parma Eldalamberon* ("The Book of Elven-tongues"). Christopher Gilson,  
[REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

### Correspondence Groups

*BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)*

Eleanor Farrell, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Correspondence circular with set topics, published odd-numbered months. Info& topics: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Jan: *Freedom and Necessity* (Brust & Bull)

March: *Last Call, Expiration Date* and *Earthquake Weather* (Tim Powers)

*ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)*

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

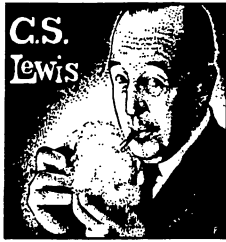
Correspondence circular, published even-numbered months. More info: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### Online Discussion Group

*COINHERENCE*

Online discussion of Charles Williams Currently discussing *All Hallow's Eve*.

Contact David Davis: E-mail: [REDACTED]



# 29th Annual Mythopoeic Conference

July 15–20, 1998

## C.S. Lewis: A Centenary Celebration

Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

Special Guests: Paul F. Ford and Verlyn Flieger

**Paul Ford:** Author of *A Companion to Narnia*, the indispensable guide to C.S. Lewis's created world, and Professor of Theology and Liturgy at St. John's College in California.

**Verlyn Flieger:** Author of *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*, which demonstrates Tolkien's use of the language theories of Owen Barfield. Her latest book is *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie*.

Other confirmed speakers: Joe Christopher, Bruce Edwards, Wayne Hammond, Charles Huttar, Doris T. Myers, John Rateliff and Christina Scull.

**Wheaton College:** Located 25 miles due west of Chicago, Wheaton College is accessible from Chicago O'Hare or Chicago Midway airports. (This conference is not a function of Wheaton College.)

**Conference Schedule:** Registration starts at noon Wednesday, July 15, with a reception in honor of the special guests on Wednesday night. Opening ceremonies will take place on Thursday morning, and the conference will end with closing ceremonies on the morning of Monday, July 20.

**Pre-Conference Workshop:** Dr. Bruce Edwards of Bowling Green State University will conduct an in-depth study on C.S. Lewis during a 3-day workshop July 13–15. Cost of the workshop is \$85 (until 12/31/97); attendance limited to 50 people. For more details contact Dr. Edwards at [REDACTED], E-mail: [REDACTED].

Workshop checks should be made out to Mythcon XXIX and sent to the conference address below.

**The Mythcon Tradition:** The conference will contain everything you expect from a normal Mythcon—papers on all sorts of mythopoeic topics, art show, dealers' room, con suite, masquerade, and the Not-Ready-for-Mythcon Players. There will also be many more special events, dramatic presentations, and exhibits.

**Conference Membership:** \$75 until December 31, 1997. Room and board packages are now available, with discounted rates until February 15, 1998. For complete information on rates, partial room and board packages, or any other information about the conference, contact:

Mythcon XXIX  
c/o Lynn Maudlin, Registrar

E-mail: [REDACTED]

**Progress Report 2:** Now available, this contains many details about conference programming, confirmed speakers and panel topics, accommodations, the Screwtape Letter contest, and more. Contact Mythcon XXIX to obtain a copy of the PR, along with registration and room and board application forms.

### Call for Proposals

1998 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of C. S. Lewis and also of that of his friend and fellow-Inkling, the philosopher Owen Barfield. Papers on either author are welcome, as well as ones on other Inklings such as J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, or the broader fields of myth and fantasy literature (and in particular on Charles Lutwidge Dodgson/"Lewis Carroll"). Papers should be suitable for oral presentation in 15–45 minutes. (Further time will be scheduled for discussion.) Papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication in *Mythlore*, the Society's journal.

Send abstracts (300–500 words) by March 1, 1998 to the Papers Coordinator, Charles A. Huttar, [REDACTED]. Fax [REDACTED] Phone: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. E-mail: [REDACTED].

If you would like to organize a panel for a full program slot of approx. 75 minutes (2–4 papers with chair, or 4–5 discussants on a given topic), please inquire by February 15, 1998; deadline March 15 for completed package.

## Book Reviews

PATRICK CURRY, *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 206 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 0-312-17671-6. Reviewed by David Bratman.

Patrick Curry clearly loves *The Lord of the Rings*, and he wants you to know it. He is also clearly aware that his love is widely but not universally shared. *Defending Middle-earth* is a chatty, rambling romp, but not through the wonders of Tolkien's prose (quotations from *LotR* to demonstrate his points are few) nor the errors of his critics (something he says he's working on separately). Instead it's a once-removed reviewer's tour through Curry's thoughts about other people's thoughts about Tolkien, and doesn't attempt to prove anything. His keynote seems to be: Tolkien is clearly lovable, and his critics are clearly wrong, but, he writes (e.g. on p. 33), "I am not too concerned to persuade the reader to agree."

It's strange, really. Curry has read all the right books. He's read T.A. Shippey's demonstration, in *The Road to Middle-earth*, of the coherence and subtlety of Tolkien's sub-creation; and Brian Rosebury's defense, in *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment*, of Tolkien's place as an important 20th-century writer; and the demolition, by Shippey in his book and elsewhere, and by Brian Attebery in *Strategies of Fantasy*, of Tolkien's most foolish critics. All these are careful, rigorous scholars who build their points methodically, with assurance, and directly to the point. If only Curry had built on their achievement, and written a similarly methodical study of Tolkien's relevance to Green values (ecology, community, pastorality, etc.), which Rosebury, in one of his few errors, scoffs at; which Philip Helms tried to do in his booklet *Tolkien's Peaceful War* but didn't get very far; and which Curry attempts to do. This chapter is the best in his book, and the one on religion and spirituality has its points as well, but he doesn't manage to pin these matters down any more than

he can explain Tolkien's enduring popularity and the sneers of "the critics."

Instead, the impression he gives is of a man dancing light-footedly around his subject and never quite engaging with it. He often writes, "As [somebody] says," without always showing why it is as that person says. It's expected to be self-evident. He keeps repeating and meandering, and his prose is conspicuously awkward. The definition of "modernity" (he means "modernism") on pages 21-22 is highschoolish. It begins "What do I mean by modernity?", but never actually defines anything, only describing, distantly, its spread and its effects. The paragraph on page 150 discussing Terry Pratchett's relation to Tolkien is a remarkable feat of driving forwards and backwards at once, stirring together the similarities and dissimilarities until the head spins. This paragraph also contains a sentence with more subsidiary clauses and parenthetical asides than any other sentence I've ever read.

What points Curry makes of his own seem somehow off. Unwin Hyman's ownership of Tolkien's works surely made it more attractive to HarperCollins, but that's hardly the main reason a publishing behemoth would want to swallow a smaller firm; this happens all the time with no Tolkiens as bait (p. 12). Galadriel is not a princess and Rohan is not feudal (p. 14). Tolkien's care for the accuracy of the phases of the Moon in *LotR* is best demonstrated by ample evidence in *The History of Middle-earth* rather than by Barbara Strachey's atlas (p. 60). Tolkien's dislike of Disney was because the cartoons were cutesy and vulgar, not because the studios are a soulless behemoth of consumerist culture; this hadn't happened in 1937 when Tolkien made his most famous remark on the subject (p. 148). Curry's concluding list of books comparable to *LotR* is not only random and idiosyncratic, he admits it! ("Those that spring to my mind ...

There are undoubtably others...”, p. 151) Nor are most of them as mythic as Tolkien, at least not in the same way; and none of them, even *LotR*, are “their authors’ life-works.” (Possibly he means their greatest works.) This gives the impression that Curry dashed the book off the top of his head, which is all the sadder as he tells us he’s been working on it for five years. He means well, and his research is thorough, but he has not thought his argument through.

These are not incidental objections, but illustrations of a cast of mind whose company can be wearying on a 200-page journey. Patrick Curry is the first book-length author on Tolkien since Lin Carter to deem necessary a plot synopsis of *LotR*. Like Carter’s *Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings*, and like some “Tolclone” novels, Curry’s *Defending Middle-earth* is mainly valuable as evidence of its author’s own great enthusiasm for Tolkien. May he enjoy many more years of appreciating *The Lord of the Rings*. And may his readers have them, too. But they will not learn here why they like *LotR* so, nor what makes it enduringly popular, nor why Tolkien’s work is great.



TERRY LINDVALL, *Surprised by Laughter: The Comic World of C. S. Lewis*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996. ISBN 0-7852-7689-0. \$22.99 (hardback). Reviewed by Wendell Wagner, Jr.

*Surprised by Laughter* is a good illustration of both the virtues and the deficiencies of C. S. Lewis scholarship. Like most books about Lewis, it’s written by someone sympathetic to his ideas and thus is free of the obligatory trashing of the subject that’s practiced by some literary critics and biographers. Furthermore, Lindvall’s obvious devotion to Lewis has inspired him to make a truly thorough review of all of Lewis’s works—fiction, nonfiction, published and unpublished letters, as well as other people’s

memoirs of Lewis—for all mentions of the subject of humor. He has also organized this information well, so that anyone interested in knowing what Lewis said about humor, jokes, laughter, fun, joy, or any related subject can quickly find it in this book.

What *Surprised by Laughter* is short of is what too much of the scholarly work on Lewis lacks: any significant analysis of its subject. One looks in vain for any criticism of Lewis’s ideas, since Lindvall apparently agrees with him on everything. The question of whether one might learn more about Lewis by analyzing his writings for unstated assumptions also doesn’t occur to Lindvall. Apparently everything in Lewis’s works is right there on the surface to be understood. Even if one thinks that any deeper analysis of Lewis’s works is unnecessary or objectionable, it’s hard to see what additional benefit is produced by the existence of this book. Wouldn’t it be more useful to produce an anthology of Lewis’s writings on humor? Such a volume would be more interesting to read than this book, which tends to be somewhat wordy and repetitious, as though Lindvall were being paid by the word.

Another question that didn’t occur to Lindvall is whether the subject of humor is a particularly good theme around which to organize a study of Lewis’s works. Given the works of any moderately prolific author (like Lewis) and any constant of human life (like humor, laughter, joy, etc.), there is some area of overlap. Lindvall has researched that overlap thoroughly, but he hasn’t convinced me that humor is a basic theme of Lewis’s writings. A better case can be made that humor is a central element in the works of G. K. Chesterton, whom Lindvall quotes or mentions about once every two pages. Chesterton tended to think more than Lewis in terms of paradox rather than logic, and his books were consistently funnier than Lewis’s. Did Lindvall actually want to write a book about Chesterton but decide that books about Lewis sell better?

Much of *Surprised by Laughter* is organized around the categories of humor delineated by Lewis in the eleventh letter of *The Screwtape Letters*—joy, fun, the joke proper, and flippancy. Joy is an important part of Lewis's philosophy, but there are better books about this subject, including Lewis's own *Surprised by Joy*. The topics of fun and jokes are dutifully covered, but there are no particularly new insights on them. What I found most interesting was Lindvall's defense of Lewis's and Chesterton's position that flippancy depends on the joke teller's inability to question his unstated beliefs. Lindvall doesn't notice that a paradox is in a way complementary to a flippant statement. When someone makes a flippant remark, they are making fun of a new situation in order to avoid thinking about how their assumptions have been contradicted. On the other hand, a paradox arises when an unexpected new fact forces one to question one's beliefs. Both flippancy and paradox are thus about the contradiction between one's ideas and the actual facts of the world. Flippancy is more pernicious because it allows one to ignore new facts, so that one never learns anything new, but an excessive reliance on paradox has its own problems. If one simply accepts a paradox without trying to understand it, one loses the chance to discover if there's an underlying unity to this contradiction.

C. S. Lewis is a more interesting writer than Chesterton precisely because he saw the paradoxes in the world but was willing to analyze them further, as Chesterton often wasn't. A great book could be written by comparing the paradoxical side of Lewis (the Chestertonian side, we might call it) and the analytical side (the Kirkpatrickesque side, we might name it, after Lewis's severely logical boyhood tutor). *Surprised by Laughter* isn't that book, but perhaps it's half of a preface to it.

.....

## World Fantasy Awards

Announced November 2, 1997 at the World Fantasy Convention in London.

**Life Achievement Award:** Madeleine L'Engle

**Novel:** *Godmother Night* by Rachel Pollack

**Novella:** *A City in Winter* by Mark Helprin

**Short Fiction:** "Thirteen Phantasms" by

James P. Blaylock

**Anthology:** *Starlight 1*, ed. Patrick Nielsen Hayden

**Collection:** *The Wall of the Sky, the Wall of the Eye* by Jonathan Lethem

**Artist:** Moebius (Jean Giraud)

**Special Award—Professional:** Michael J.

Weldon for *The Psychotronic Video Guide*

**Special Award—Non-Professional:** Barbara &

Christopher Roden, for Ash-Tree Press

**Special Convention Award:** Hugh B. Cave

## British Fantasy Awards

**Novel:** *The Tooth Fairy* by Graham Joyce

**Short Story:** "Dancing About Architecture"

by Martin Simpson

**Anthology/Collection:** *The Nightmare Factory*

by Thomas Ligotti

**Artist:** Jim Burns

**Small Press Publication:** *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*

by S.T. Joshi (Necronomicon Press)

**British Fantasy Special Award** (the Karl

Edward Wagner Award): Jo Fletcher

"The books that help you most are those which make you think the most. The hardest way of learning is that of easy reading; but a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty."

Theodore Parker

# "Caught by a Rumour"

## News and Notes

### Conventions

**Potlatch 7.** January 16–18, 1998. Jack London Inn, Oakland, California. Book of Honor: *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells. \$30 to January 1, 1998; \$35 at the door. Contact: [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

A small, friendly convention focusing on books, reading and writing.

**Minicon 33.** April 10–12, 1998. [REDACTED] (and other hotels) [REDACTED].

Guests: Dave Langford, Gardner Dozois. \$35 to 3/1/98. Contact: Minicon 33, [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

E-mail: [REDACTED] Web: [REDACTED]

**19th Annual International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts.** March 18–21, 1998. Airport Hilton, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Guest of Honor: Peter Straub. Special Guest: Lois McMaster Bujold. Guest Scholar: Gary Wolfe. Info: IAFA, [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] Deadline for hotel registration: February 20, 1998.

### Call for Artists: IAFA

The IAFA is seeking submissions for the 19th Annual ICFA (info above) from artists whose work reflects a commitment to imagery, or a conceptual orientation that investigates art of a fantastic nature, using traditional or cutting-age media. Participants are expected to attend the conference, exhibit representative pieces, and present a slide/video/etc. presentation or discussion of their work. Contact IAFA Visual Arts Curator David Mesple, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]; or Jim Hayes via e-mail at [REDACTED] for more information.

### Arthurian Miniseries

Currently filming in Wales, *Merlin* will air as an NBC miniseries in 1998. Based on the Arthurian tales of the legendary magician, the four-hour program will star Sam Neill as Merlin, with Helen Bonham Carter as Morgan Le Fay, Isabella Rossellini as Nimue, and Rutger Hauer as Vortigern.

### Inklings Book Sources

**Aslan Books** advertises itself as "Colporteurs by mail of titles by C.S. Lewis, his friends, and Americans of kindred spirit." A recent mailing includes books by and about Lewis, plus titles by Owen Barfield, G.K. Chesterton, George MacDonald, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Oswald Chambers, Frederick Buechner, Richard Foster and Madeleine L'Engle. To obtain a full catalogue, contact Lee & Grayce Nash, [REDACTED].

E-mail: [REDACTED]

**Thornton's of Oxford** (Booksellers and Publishers since 1835) offers a tempting selection of Tolkien-related material obtained through auction and other sources. They provide an electronic mailing list and listings on their web page at [REDACTED].

thorntons. Mailing address: [REDACTED].

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Check out the Mythopoeic Society's growing list of book-related web sites, "Books, Books, Books," linked to the main Society page at [REDACTED]. If you have found an Internet treasurehouse for collecting or research, let us know and we'll add the site to our listings.



*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. 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 and written discussion groups.

Mythopoeic Society Web Site: [REDACTED]

## Membership and Subscriptions

Membership in the Mythopoeic Society is \$5 per year, which entitles you to members' rates on publications.

### *Mythprint* Subscription Rates

	Members	Institutions and non-members
Third class U.S.	\$12.00/year	\$17.00/year
First class U.S.	\$15.50/year	\$20.50/year
Canada	\$16.50/year	\$21.50/year
Overseas surface	\$19.50/year	\$24.50/year
Overseas air	\$26.00/year	\$31.00/year

The number in the upper right corner of your mailing label is the "Whole Number" of the last issue of your subscription. Checks should be made out to the Mythopoeic Society. Foreign orderers should use U.S. funds if possible; otherwise add 15% to the current exchange rate.

The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore*, a quarterly journal of Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, fantasy and mythic studies (subscription \$15/year for Society members, \$4 for a sample issue) and *The Mythic Circle*, publishing fiction, poems, etc., three times per year (\$13/year for Society members, \$6.50 for a sample issue).

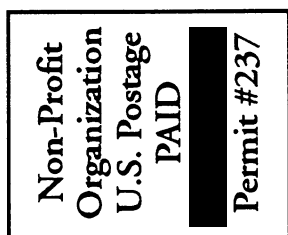
For subscriptions and back issues of *Mythprint* and other Society publications:

Mythopoeic Society Orders Department  
[REDACTED]

## Submissions for *Mythprint*

Reviews, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

*Mythprint*  
Eleanor M. Farrell, Editor  
[REDACTED]  
E-mail: [REDACTED]



This issue of Mythprint is brought to you for free and open access by the [Mythopoeic Society](#) at the [SWOSU Digital Commons](#).

For more issues of Mythprint go to [https://dc.swosu.edu/mythprint/all\\_issues.html](https://dc.swosu.edu/mythprint/all_issues.html)

To join the Mythopoeic Society, go to: <http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

Authors and artists of items in this issue may request to have their materials removed from the digital repository. To do so, contact the platform administrator at [archives@mythsoc.org](mailto:archives@mythsoc.org) or the *Mythprint* editor at [mythprint@mythsoc.org](mailto:mythprint@mythsoc.org).



The Mythopoeic Society

