MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 42 No. 11 November 2005 Whole No. 284

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Editorial Address: (Send materials for publication, letters, comments, etc.)
Eleanor M. Farrell, Editor
[redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

Subscriptions & Back Order Information: See inside back cover

Mythopoeic Society Information:
Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary
[redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]
Web site: *www.mythsoc.org*

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

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Mythcon 37 Announcement

Dates: August 4-7, 2006

Site: University of Oklahoma campus, Norman, Oklahoma

Theme: The Map and the Territory: Maps and Landscapes in Fantasy

(with a track on Native American Fantasy/Native Americans in Fantasy)

The Site

The Thurman J. White Forum Building is interesting architecturally (in a rather retro way). The auditorium-sized Forum Room in the center of the building holds up to 540 attendees in comfortable chairs behind built-in desks that rise in tiers from the circular stage. It is equipped with soundproof projection and audio booth, multiple screens, state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, and camera decks. The 18 seminar rooms seat up to 50 participants. and three larger meeting rooms seat about 150. Each meeting room at the Forum comes equipped with chalk-board, chalk, overhead projector, A/V screen, and a podium microphone.

Events

Friday night book signing and reception at the University of Oklahoma main campus book-store. The Annual Mythcon Banquet will be held in the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

Housing

The Sooner Hotel & Suites, with both standard rooms and two-bedroom cottages, offers a number of helpful services and amenities. Each room contains a mini-refrigerator, microwave, and cable TV with free HBO and a VCR. The facility also provides a complete line of services, including: on-site ATM, Facsimile and copy services, free parking permits , laundry/valet/dry cleaning, handicapped facilities, free game area with ping-pong, foos ball, and pool tables,passes for Huston Huffman Athletic Center and Murray Case Sells Swim Complex, breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the Commons Restaurant on-site, and lots of open space for Golfimbul...

Campus Highlights

Include the newly expanded Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art with its Impressionist collection, the Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West, The Jacobson House, the Western History Collections, the beautiful rocks, fossils, and minerals exhibits outside the Youngblood Energy Library, and a special exhibit on maps in the History of Science Collection in Bizzell Library.

Transportation

Fly into Will Rogers International Airport in Oklahoma City or the nearby hub airports at Dallas/Fort Worth (a three-hour drive by rental car).

Registration

Conference registration rates, a Call for Papers, and room and board option information will be available soon.

Please join us in Oklahoma in 2006! We never met a hobbit we didn't like!

For more information, contact Janet Brennan Croft, [redacted] or e-mail [redacted]

Book Reviews: Scholarship

K.V. JOHANSEN, *Quests and Kingdoms: A Grown-Up's Guide to Children's Fantasy Literature*. Sackville, New Brunswick: Sybertooth, 2005. ISBN 0-9688024-4-3, tp, 459 pp., $30 U.S.

By "children's fantasy," the author (a Canadian children's writer) means notable books for older children: pre-teens and teenagers (that nebulous category called "young adults") with occasional excursions down to 8-year-olds or so, plus a few writers for adults often read by children (e.g. David Eddings). This is not a history of children's fantasy, though it is arranged historically; nor is it a dry booklist. It is a collection of short essays on nearly a hundred writers, going back to the great 18th-century fairy tale collectors, and showing surprising depth in a choice of a dozen Victorians, but mostly emphasizing contemporary English-language authors. (A few others well-known in translation are included.) The choices are selective, but most major authors within the purview are here, and most of those listed are notable and valuable. The only Mythopoeic Children's Fantasy Award winners discussed are Salman Rushdie, Diana Wynne Jones, Peter Dickinson, and Terry Pratchett, but one will also find such Adult Fantasy Award winners and other local favorites as (among many others) Patricia McKillip and Robin McKinley, Charles de Lint and P.C. Wrede, along with Tolkien and Lewis themselves, George Macdonald and Roger Lancelyn Green. Among earlier writers in particular there's a willingness to dig into the obscure but good. If E.A. Wyke-Smith is not present, Walter de la Mare's *The Three Mulla-Mulgars* is. (Adams's *Watership Down*, however, she considers outside her purview.) The entry on A.A. Milne exemplifies Johansen's method. She does not emphasize the Pooh books, though they are discussed (as Johansen notes, they barely qualify as fantasy anyway). Instead, the purpose of a Milne essay is to discuss his little-known fantasy for older children, *Once on a Time*. At the same time, Johansen is not afraid of the obvious, and does not shrink from describing the Harry Potter books.

The book is divided into chapters, some chronological and some thematic, and though the introductions are useful, each author essay stands alone. This is not a book meant to be read straight through: the sameness of the essay formats could become wearying. C.S. Lewis once said he could hardly stand to read yet another student essay beginning "Swift was born ..." Well, almost all these essays begin that way. Each presents a biography of the author and plot summaries of his or her major works in the field. Individual characteristics, the "flavors" of the author, are downplayed in favor of simple facts. The tone is one of descriptive praise: Johansen can be critical, but her purpose is to describe books she considers worth reading. Authors are related to others whose work is similar structurally, not in style or flavor. Although a little context is provided, the emphasis is always on the relevant books. For instance, an essay on Neil Gaiman consists entirely of a detailed discussion of *Coraline*, apart from an introductory biographical paragraph that briefly mentions *Sandman* and *Good Omens*. Many essays go some distance afield, however. The long essay on Tolkien describes all his books that might be read by children and teens, and even mentions some of the best secondary literature.

What makes the book outstanding for its stated purpose is its accurate lucidity. Johansen carefully explains the bibliographic complexity of each author—if a book appeared in different texts with different titles, for instance—without bogging down in detail. (See her essay on J.M. Barrie for a clear description of *Peter Pan*'s complex bibliographic history.) Her goal is to give

the reader a basic familiarity with the shape of the author's oeuvre. What truly amazes, though, is Johansen's reliability and depth of knowledge of the books she discusses, and her accuracy with facts. Too many books of this kind are not reliable, but this one is. I am not in a position to verify all of the facts in this book, but errors I found are very few and very minor, and the plot summaries in particular show full confident familiarity with the books described. The most conspicuous omissions are of Philip Pullman's religious politics (Lewis's is mentioned, but not dealt with in depth) or any discussion of the "politically correct" rewriting of authors such as Lofting and Travers.

Although written in a neutral tone, the essays express a point of view, and one might not agree with all the positions. Johansen is enthusiastic about Andrew Lang's buttercup fantasies, considers Edward Eager to be weak tea next to E. Nesbit, believes that *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* does not measure up against McKillip's later books, and finds the feminist perspective in Le Guin's *Tehanu* to be tiresome. But other judgments will probably be shared by readers here. Johansen accepts the "chronological" renumbering of the Narnia series, but still advises reading *The Lion* first: not because it actually goes first, but because it's the most simply written. In the long essay on Tolkien, Johansen offers a cogent defense of Tolkien against the charge of derivativeness and carefully distinguishes *The Lord of the Rings* from its movies

The sheer volume of knowledge on display here could earn Johansen honors for scholarship. This is a truly useful reference book that, for the moment, is quite up to date.

Reviewed by David Bratman

LAURA K. SIMMONS, *Creed without Chaos: Exploring Theology in the Writings of Dorothy L. Sayers*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. ISBN 0-8010-2737-3, tp, 222 pp., $19.99.

Creed without Chaos is the best book available on Sayers' theological writings. Part I (the first three chapters) considers these writings in their historical context: Sayers as writing in a largely secular society, within a high-church Anglicanism that emphasized the Incarnation and the Trinity, in the context of such lay writers as G.K. Chesterton, T.S. Eliot, and C.S. Lewis (Charles Williams receives almost no mention), and primarily during World War II. Simmons emphasizes Sayers' ability to write for a large audience, to translate theological jargon into a lay language, to largely refuse to write on religious areas outside of her (gradually expanding) expertise, and to speak directly and clearly about problems.

Part 2 (chapters 4-10) covers the theological topics: the Incarnation and nature of Christ (*The Man Born to be King* primarily); the Trinity (*The Mind of the Maker* primarily); sin, evil, redemption, and atonement (a variety of sources, including *The Zeal of Thy House* and *The Just Vengeance*); work, vocation, and business ethics (three essays primarily); words and language (a variety of sources); and women's issues (two essays primarily). Part of the freshness of the book is that Simmons draws on unpublished essays and letters throughout.

Since The Mythopoeic Society is not a theological society, I will not go further into the above content. But I want to add that the only matter I believe Simmons gets wrong has to do with pride. Sayers writes in "The Church's Responsibility" of the artist's "disinterested integrity" (qtd. 137)—Simmons offers an interpretation of the phrase, but surely Sayers meant by "disinterested" that the artist should not be filled with pride over his or her creation: the

artist should do good work—if possible great work ("integrity")—but should not have his or her ego involved. Likewise, Simmons writes, "Sayers values work that allows people to reflect in pride and say, 'Look what I made today'" (133, italics added). Perhaps so, but I'd like to see the evidence. (Simmons praises Janice Brown's *The Seven Deadly Sins in the Work of Dorothy L. Sayers* [1998]; this praise is largely deserved, but Brown in an endnote distinguishes between sinful pride and pride in a different sense [317.n4].) In short, so far as I can remember, Sayers always considered pride sinful, not making any distinctions between types of pride nor excepting creative pride. I am open to correction, but, as said, I'd like to see the evidence.

Despite these brief errors, Simmons has written a very good book.

Reviewed by Joe R. Christopher

Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review, edited by Douglas A. Anderson, Michael D.C. Drout, and Verlyn Flieger. **Volume 2 (2005)**. West Virginia University Press, 2005. $60.00 (print subscription). ISBN 1-933202-03-3. Also available on-line through Johns Hopkins University Press, Project Muse: [redacted]/

Volume two of *Tolkien Studies* weighs in at 325 pages, up 135 pages from volume one's 190 pages. Almost a quarter of those 325 pages are dedicated to book reviews and bibliography. David Bratman offers an excellent overview of books from 2001-2002. The remainder of the book reviews concentrate on 2003, with *Parma Eldalamberon* (2001) and *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader* (2004) being the obvious exceptions. Douglas Anderson's useful checklist of Richard C. West's publications is not at the end of the volume as are the other reviews and bibliographic materials, but follows West's own contribution to this issue. The collection contains 10 essays and 4 shorter pieces classified as "Notes and Documents." Space does not, however, permit addressing them all individually, so this review concentrates on essays thought ot be of interest to this publication's readership.

Richard West wrestles with the moral question of whether lying can be justified in the battle with the Enemy in his analysis of the Quest of Beren and Luthien, "'And She Named Her Own Name': Being True to One's Word in Tolkien's Middle-earth." In it, he follows the changes in Tolkien's thinking from one draft to another, until he comes to the conclusion that Tolkien decided that lying cannot be justified.

Miryam Libran-Moreno examines Tolkien's creative process in her search for story elements from classical Greek myth in Tolkien's *Legendarium*. In her article entitled "Parallel Lives: The Sons of Denethor and the Sons of Telamon," she concludes that Tolkien represents a fusion of both the Northern and Classical mythologies that creates "an entirely unique, novel identity ... that is both and neither" (30). Her piece dovetails nicely with Patchen Mortimer's excellent article entitled "Tolkien and Modernism." In this essay, Mortimer comments that because Tolkien sidestepped the "easily recognizable Classical or Biblical allusions that so often serve to earmark 'serious' literature, ... his works are dismissed as fancy" (116). The key point here is that Tolkien's many Classical and Biblical allusions are not easily recognized, because as Mortimer put it, Tolkien created "something so new that the act of its forging obscured the materials used" (127).

Mortimer's article successfully takes on the "fraught endeavor" of defining Tolkien's place in literary modernism, by insightfully focusing on the "implicitly modernist hope about the power of the artist and the potentiality of authorship in

reshaping the world" by employing the power that words have "to unlock new realities, or alter our understanding of this one" (115). This goes right to the heart of the creativity of an author who said that "names always generate a story in my mind," when describing the beginning of *The Hobbit* (Carpenter,[1] 193, see also L.163).

Linda Greenwood also talks about how Tolkien "*dips things in myth* by overturning their traditional meanings" (176, emphasis hers), thereby "deconstructing" the world around him and turning it upside down to present it in a new light (171), as she examines "Love: 'The Gift of Death.'" Her article takes a deconstructionist approach to the examination of the philosophical issues of love, hope, death and immortality. Her conclusion is that Tolkien deconstructed "reality in order to reveal the myth," and that "love allows myth and reality to stand side by side in harmony" (193).

In her thought-provoking article "The White City," Judy Ann Ford looks into the possible role that the "cultural memory" that the Germanic people in late-ancient, early-medieval northern Europe had of the lost glory, peace and political order of the Roman Empire might have played in Tolkien's mythology for England. While she admits that there are numerous possible original source traditions for Tolkien's mythology for England, including Arthur and Atlantis, she concludes that there seems to be a large amount of evidence "to support the supposition that one layer of meaning" in Tolkien's mythology is the "hope that the Roman Empire could be reborn" to provide the Germanic People "with glory and peace" (71).

Houghton and Keesee's intriguing article examines the philosophy of evil as expressed in *The Lord of the Rings*. It ties in nicely with West's lead article on telling the truth that opens this collection of essays. Houghton and Keesee take issue with Shippey's reading of Tolkien's theory of evil, and counter that Tolkien's nuanced view of the nature of good and evil is part of what makes *The Lord of the Rings* compelling. They argue convincingly that Tolkien's view of evil "is not a departure from Boethius," but rather a "consistently paradoxical" view, "rooted firmly in the neo-Platonic tradition" (151).

Dale Nelson's examination of the influence of Dickens on Tolkien in a "note" (*Tolkien Studies* jargon for a short essay) entitled "Little Nell and Frodo the Halfling" is perceptive (even if I do say so myself, because I just published an article on Parallels between *The Lord of the Rings* and Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* in *Beyond Bree*, April, 2005, pp. 1-3). Nelson touches on *The Pickwick Papers* in a footnote, but concentrates on the parallels between *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Frodo and Sam's crossing of Sauron's accursed realm. This interesting topic is far from exhausted, and Nelson will hopefully not leave the reader with just a "note" on it in *Tolkien Studies*.

If the volume were only available in print, I would consider the lack of an index a great shortfalling, and hope that this 'oversight' would be corrected in the future, but since it is available in electronic format (HTML or PDF) and fully searchable in that form, it is not an overly great concern in this electronic day and age.

Note:

1. Humphrey Carpenter. *Tolkien: A Biography*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.

Reviewed by Mark T. Hooker

Activity Calendar

Matthew Winslow, Discussion Group Secretary
[redacted]

Prospective Groups

CALIFORNIA

[redacted] *Lothlorien*
Linda Sundstrom, [redacted]

CONNECTICUT

[redacted]: *Fantastic Worlds*
Bill Pierce, E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

FLORIDA

[redacted] *Hobbiton*
Paul S. Ritz, [redacted]

[redacted] *Eryn Galen*
B.L. McCauley, [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]

INDIANA

[redacted] *Cerin Amroth*
Ellen Denham, E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey, [redacted]. E-mail: [redacted]

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

[redacted] *Mydgard*
Lee Speth, [redacted]
November: *The Man Who Was Thursday* by G.K. Chesterton
December: The Appendices to *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

[redacted] *Khazad-dûm*
Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe, [redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]
November: *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke
December: Annual Reading and Eating Meeting

COLORADO

[redacted] *Fanuidhol ("Cloudy Head")*
Patricia Yarrow, [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

[redacted] *Knossos*
Mimi Stevens, [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]

HAWAII

[redacted] *Sammath Naur*
Steve Brown, [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

ILLINOIS

[redacted] *The Far Westfarthing smial*
Mike Foster, [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]
November: *The Silmarillion*: "Ainulindale" & "Valaquenta"

IOWA

[redacted] *Alfheim*
Doug Rossman, [redacted], E-mail: [redacted]

LOUISIANA

[redacted] *Roke*
Sally Budd, [redacted]

MICHIGAN

[redacted]: *Galadhremmin-Ennorath*
Dave & Grace Lovelace, [redacted]

MINNESOTA

[redacted] *Rivendell*

David Lenander, [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

NEVADA

[redacted] *CRICKHOLLOW*
Joanne Burnett, [redacted]. E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]
November: *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norell* by Susanna Clark
December: *The Book of Three* by Lloyd Alexander
January: *Alphabet of Thorn* by Patricia A. McKillip
February: *The Face in the Frost* by John Bellairs

NEW YORK

[redacted] *HEREN ISTARION*
(THE NEW YORK TOLKIEN SOCIETY)
Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke, The New York Tolkien Society, [redacted]. E-mail: [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

OREGON

[redacted]
Donovan Mattole, [redacted]
Web: [redacted]

PENNSYLVANIA

[redacted]: *C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS*
Neil Gussman, [redacted]. E-mail: [redacted]

SOUTH CAROLINA

[redacted] *THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*
Nina Fowler, [redacted].
E-mail: [redacted]

WASHINGTON

[redacted] *MITHLOND*
Matthew Winslow, [redacted]
Web: [redacted]
December: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis
January: *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman

WISCONSIN

[redacted] *THE BURRAHOBBITS*
Jeffrey & Jan Long, [redacted]
November: *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire
December: Christmas Party

Special Interest Group

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP
Carl Hostetter, [redacted]
Newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar*. Journal, *Parma Eldalamberon*: Christopher Gilson, [redacted]

Correspondence Groups

BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)
Diane Joy Baker, [redacted]
Correspondence circular with set topic. Web: [redacted]
November: *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova
January: *Elantris* by Brandon Sanderson
March: *Sea of Trolls* by Nancy Farmer

ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)
Laura Krentz, [redacted]
Correspondence circular. Web: [redacted]

Online Discussion Groups

MYTHSOC E-LIST
Society activities and general book-related discussion.
Sign up: [redacted] or contact Joan Marie Verba: [redacted]

COINHERENCE
Online discussion of Charles Williams
David Davis: E-mail: [redacted]

Book Reviews: Fiction

NEIL GAIMAN, *Anansi Boys*. New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0-06-051518-X, hc, 336 pp., $26.95.

It is difficult for me to be completely objective about Neil Gaiman's writing. For wholly mysterious reasons, his authorial voice is one of the few that resonates so deeply yet cleanly with me that I find myself loving almost everything he writes, regardless of genre. So it is no surprise that his recently published novel, *Anansi Boys*, is for me an absolute joy to read. It manages to be fun and sweet and a little frightening all at the same time, with plenty of laughter throughout. The humor is light but sure, funny without being mere fluff—and without the throw-away lines that all too often inhabit the writings normally classified as "humor." And it has its moments of fear and of introspection; there is plenty to think, and to worry, about. It is not the serious, dark *American Gods* or the deliberately jokey *Good Omens*. While it certainly ties into all his previous works—even the epic *Sandman* series—it establishes itself as yet another facet of Mr. Gaiman's storytelling abilities. Its sheer unpredictability is what I love most. Reading it reminds me of the old wooden roller coaster on the Santa Cruz beach boardwalk: you can see where it starts, you're pretty sure where it's going to end, but the twists and turns in the middle are going to surprise you.

The multiple settings of the novel—London, south Florida, and the Caribbean—are used to great effect, even if one isn't familiar with each place, and the many characters are believable as well as highly enjoyable (Daisy is my favorite). It also has a beautiful mythopoeic beginning that harkens back to both *The Silmarillion* and *The Magician's Nephew*, just to name a couple of favorites:

> It begins, as most things begin, with a song.
>
> In the beginning, after all, were the words, and they came with a tune. That was how the world was made, how the void was divided, how the lands and the stars and the dreams and the little gods and the animals, how all of them came into the world.
>
> They were sung.
>
> The great beasts were sung into existence, after the Singer had done with the planets and the hills and the trees and the oceans and the lesser beasts. The cliffs that bound existence were sung, and the hunting grounds, and the dark.

The plot, without spoilers, centers on Fat Charlie Nancy discovering that his recently dead father is not just the most embarrassing dad in the entire history of dads, but is also the trickster god Anansi. And that Fat Charlie has a brother named Spider who somehow managed to inherit all the god-like qualities—the ability to manipulate mere mortals, carelessness with the lives and emotions of those same mortals, and a distinct lack of conscience (among other abilities even more magical)—that Fat Charlie, a meek, somewhat bumbling yet goodhearted young man, missed. When the four old women who were his neighbors when he was a child in south Florida tell Fat Charlie how to contact Spider, he makes the mistake of doing just that. He then finds himself embroiled in an hilarious situation of mistaken identity worthy of Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest* but with far more serious consequences. When he seeks the help of the old women in getting rid of this brother who is screwing up his whole life, he finds himself in the mythic world of Tiger and Bird Woman and Monkey and Hyena on the edge of creation, making a wrong scary cosmic deal to rid himself of Spider. (I was especially reminded at this point of Jill on the top of Aslan's mountain.) As often happens in real life, what Fat Charlie wishes for is not what he really wants and certainly not

what he gets. He finds himself in a struggle to reconcile with his brother, a fence-mending vital to the much more serious battle Fat Charlie finds himself in that he must win if he is to save the lives of every person he loves. While there are certain elements of a pat happily-ever-after ending (think P.G. Wodehouse), any writer who can give me a line like "Daisy looked up at him with the kind of expression that Jesus might have given someone who had just explained that he was probably allergic to bread and fishes, so could He possibly do him a quick chicken salad: there was pity in that expression, along with almost infinite compassion" is going to be forgiven any and all real or imagined faults. In the end of the novel, Mr. Gaiman shows this world as a magical place filled with beauty and savagery and music and fear. But most interestingly, he shows how it is our irritating, embarrassing, complicated families and loved ones who make this magical world worth living in.

Reviewed by Grace Walker Monk

ADELE GERAS. *The Tower Room*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1998. ISBN 0-15-205537-1, pb, 204 pp., $6.95.
—, *Watching the Roses*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1998. ISBN 0-15-205531-2, pb, 192 pp., $6.95.
—, *Pictures of the Night*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1998. ISBN 0-15-205543-6, pb, 192 pp., $6.95.

In recent decades the retold fairy tale has become a popular fantasy subgenre, which includes a series of novels under the editorship of Terri Windling, an anthology series edited by Windling and Ellen Datlow, Tanith Lee's stories collected in *Red As Blood: Tales from the Sisters Grimmer*, many of Angela Carter's stories, Mercedes Lackey's *Elemental Masters* series, and numerous other works written for both adults and children. Fairy tale adaptations tend to fall into two broad categories, those that feature supernatural events and those that narrate mundane events using a traditional tale as a model.

Adèle Geras's **Egerton Hall** trilogy, originally published in England in 1990 but set in the early 1960s, belongs to the latter group. Each book focuses on one of three friends sharing a tower room at Egerton Hall, a girls' boarding school. The series makes frequent allusions to "Mallory Towers," a popular series of English school stories for girls. Geras's novels, however, are not school stories in the usual sense. Egerton Hall functions only to bring the three heroines together and provide a backdrop for adventures that take place almost entirely outside of school. Each novel translates the plot and symbolism of a familiar fairy tale into non-supernatural events. *The Tower Room*, based on "Rapunzel," stars Megan, who lives at school full-time as the ward of Dorothy, one of the teachers, who became her guardian when her parents died. When Megan falls in love with Simon, Dorothy's young lab assistant, the rift between guardian and ward forces Megan and Simon to run away together. *Watching the Roses*, an adaptation of "Sleeping Beauty," explores the secrets of Alice, who withdraws from the outside world as a result of being raped on her eighteenth birthday. Bella in *Pictures of the Night* plays the role of Snow White. When Bella leaves school to sing with a band in London and Paris, she begins to suspect that the near-fatal "accidents" she suffers actually mean her jealous stepmother is trying to kill her.

Told in first person by the heroines, the narratives of the three books unfold in an interlaced structure. The stories take place more or less simultaneously, and each novel contains allusions to incidents within the others. They could be read independently without great loss, but the best sequence is the order listed above. The mature writing style and the thoughtful, psychologically astute portrayals of teenage girls on the

verge of womanhood make these books well worth reading for both teenagers and adults. But be warned that their plots contain no fantasy elements aside from a few slight hints of magic realism. (Does Alice's Aunt Violette really have the ability to create tangible results with her "ill-wishing"? Do the white cats that frequently cross Bella's path bear supernatural warnings?) Nevertheless, the stories have a mythopoeic flavor that lingers on the mental palate after reading. At the risk of embracing a stereotype, I suspect this series would appeal more to female than male readers, with its emphasis on the emotional content of the young heroines' interior life. Although each book contains a love story, however, they are not so much romances as coming-of-age tales.

Reviewed by Margaret L. Carter

ELAINE ISAAK, *The Singer's Crown*. New York: Eos/HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0-06-078253-6, tp, 480 pp., $14.95.

The Singer's Crown is Elaine Isaak's first foray into writing and she's done a great job. A mesmerizing story set in a fantasy milieu, it's epic in size and proportion. The characters are very lifelike and quite personable at times, and the story delves into adventure, war, fantasy and intrigue to form something similar and akin to Stephen King's *Eyes of the Dragon*, but told in a better manner similar to that of Tanith Lee.

The story revolves around an usurped throne and the castrated singer who is the last of the royal lineage of that family. Taking pity on his "favorite nephew," Duke Thorgir sends young prince Kattanan du Rhys off to a monastery where he is castrated, per religious beliefs, to become a singer. It's years later when he finds himself in the court of King Gerrod. Traded to the princess, Melisande, as a gift in the hopes of his last lord gaining favor during courtship, a murder later he finds himself running from Gamel's Grove where the despicable Orie has gained the young girl's favor and had the singer discredited—not realizing that this is the long lost royalty figure that the kingdom of Lochalyn has been searching for.

Overall this is a great story and, while it took a while to get moving, kept on steadily once it did, with all the pieces of intrigue in place to unravel later. The idea of wizards having no power over a person unless asked was excellent and unexpected, leading to great dialogues of punch, jab and dodge to keep a wizard's inquisitiveness at bay without accidentally calling upon their power and opening yourself to their touch.

As the war to oust traitor and throne usurper King Thorgir came to an end, you'd figure this would be the end of the plot. While climactic as a whole it certainly wasn't the end of all the political movements that were occurring as Orie stepped up in an attempt to capture not only the newly freed Lochalyn throne, but that of Bernholt and King Gerrod as well. There was still a bit more to go as Prince Wolfram's body was borne back to the palace at Bernholt for his funeral and subtle royal outrages as the plot thickened and the final climactic ball, confrontation and battle finished *The Singer's Crown* with a very unexpected ending.

Nearly 500 pages, *The Singer's Crown* isn't one of your standard small fantasy pulps. Nor is it written as such. I'm curious what the author could do with a true, multiple volume epic as well now. *The Singer's Crown* could have been one of these, but Isaak kept it to one book and ran it well.

Reviewed by Marcus Pan

BRANDON SANDERSON, *Elantris*. New York:Tor, 2005. ISBN 0765311771, hc, 496 pp., $24.95.

Elantris was once the proud capital of Arelon, a city of beautiful god-like beings with magical powers. Yet its inhabitants started out as ordinary human beings, until they were transformed by the Shaod. Ten years ago, at the time of the Reod, something went wrong, and now Elantris is a decaying, slime-covered city of people with blackened skin, bald heads, and bodies wracked with pain. They no longer have any magic, but they can't die unless they are burned or beheaded. Kae, a city on the edge of Elantris, is the new capital. But the citizens are still randomly stricken by something like the Shaod, so that they become like the inhabitants of the present Elantris. When this happens, the victims are pushed into the walled city to fend for themselves, after being given shroud-like garments and food offerings as if they were dead. Raoden, the crown prince of Arelon, wakes up one day to discover that his own transformation has begun. He is shoved into Elantris and his family says he has died. Raoden was about to marry a young princess from the neighboring country of Teod. The marriage would be a good alliance for both countries (the last two that haven't fallen to Fjordell), and the couple had seen possibilities in each other through their correspondence, though they had never met.

Princess Sarene arrives to find that her wedding contract was binding, and she is now considered Raoden's widow. This was her last hope for marriage. Sarene is tall and outspoken and never fit in well in her society. Determined to stay and find a new life for herself in Arelon, Sarene begins to teach martial arts to the women of the court. She discovers that she has an uncle in Kae who has been working against oppressive King Iodan in secret, along with several of the nobles, and she soon becomes a leader in this group. She finds ways to oppose Hrathen, the Fjordell priest who is trying to convert the people of Arelon to his religion, in preparation for conquest by the Fjordell emperor. She also learns that she is supposed to do a "widow's trial," a sort of community service, and she decides that her project will be to bring food to the starving people of Elantris.

Meanwhile, Raoden has been learning how to survive in Elantris. He learns that Elantrians don't really need to eat, but their bodies still feel hunger. And if they receive a wound, it continues to hurt as much as when they first received it. That is why many Elantrians eventually go mad from accumulated injuries. Three groups currently run Elantris, and depending which way a new resident turns, that group will take his small gift of food, sometimes injuring the person in the process. Raoden is determined to make things better in Elantris. He starts by rescuing new people as they enter, helping them find hope and a purpose by giving them projects such as farming or cleaning the muck and slime from buildings. He also begins to study books in a hidden library, to try to learn more about the aons, or runic symbols, that are the basis of Elantrian magic and perhaps find out why the magic of Elantris failed.

Hrathen, the high priest from Fjordell, has come to Arelon with a holy purpose. He wants to convert the people from their gentle Shu-Korath religion to his harsh Shu-Dereth, so that his emperor can take over the country without bloodshed. Hrathen is trying to get the people of Arelon to hate the Elantrians as part of his conversion tactics. But his new assistant, the fanatical Dilaf, soon begins to try to take over instead of just following orders. And Hrathen may be experiencing a crisis of faith.

All of these elements come together in very complicated and interesting ways. Readers will wonder how Sanderson will be able to pull it off

when they get very near the end with events still unresolved. But he does succeed, leaving only a small hint of a possibility that could be developed into a sequel. The book stands quite well on its own, which is unusual in the world of fantasy trilogies. The characters are sympathetic, and Sarene is a strong female character. There are some surprising plot twists and revelations about the characters. The world building is quite complex and is worked into the text without a lot of explanation. There really is a good reason why the Elantrians don't change that is integral to the plot. The seons are a wonderful invention, a kind of floating device with a personality and intelligence, yet choosing to serve the person they belong to; they also work as long-distance communication devices. This highly inventive first novel has it all—a noble prince, a non-stereotypical princess, political scheming, religious conflict, intrigue, romance, and even touches of humor.

Reviewed by Laura Krentz

CARRIE VAUGHN, *Kitty and The Midnight Hour.* New York, Aspect (Warner Fantasy), 2005. ISBN 0-446-61641-9, pb, 259 pp., $6.99.

Many book covers these days declare what's inside to be comparable to Laurell K. Hamilton and her popular Anita Blake series. *Kitty and The Midnight Hour* truly can stand up with the better Anita Blake books.

Kitty Norville is a brisk twenty-something college grad who is the D.J. for a late-night radio show called The Midnight Hour. Bored with the music requests and the goth chicks who call in, she starts musing one night about the hokey "supernatural" items seen in a typical supermarket tabloid. People respond and call in, and she soon finds she has spent her entire program discussing vampires, werewolves, and the potential existence of Bat Boy.

Initially abashed, she finds that it was popular enough that the station wants her to continue with this new format. After all, she speaks with such perception and authority on the matter. She should—she's a werewolf.

As the most junior member in her pack, she is expected to be submissive and quit the show when told to by her pack leader. After all, he and the Master vampire in town don't want attention drawn to them, and she is definitely is drawing attention. Kitty's best friend, T.J., the number two wolf in the pack, sympathizes with her, but won't go against the leader.

Kitty finds she loves what she's doing so much that she doesn't want to quit. She may actually be helping people. Of course, when a werewolf hunter stalks her in her own studio and she gives a blow-by-blow account over the air, the popularity of the show intensifies and draws Kitty to the attention of the local police.

What follows is a well-paced and exciting story of Kitty learning to assert herself in the midst of drama including a serial killer who is a werewolf, the dynamics of the wolf pack, and turning an enemy into a friend.

Vaughn's characters are well-rounded and sympathetic. The length of the book felt just right—it never felt padded or rushed or incomplete. The issues of humanity versus the wolf inside the werewolf are very sensitively and sensibly discussed. Not many books these day are able to grip me enough that I stay up reading them when I should go to bed. This one did.

Reviewed by Berni Phillips Bratman

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.

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