

MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 46 No. 3/4

March/April, 2009

Whole No. 324/325



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Editorial Address:

Send materials for publication to

Ginger McElwee

Send other Correspondence to

Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary

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Mythcon 40

Sailing the Seas of Imagination

UCLA – DeNeve Plaza
Los Angeles, California
July 17-20, 2009



Guests of Honor

James A. Owen is the artist and writer of the noted independent comic book *Starchild*, and the young adult fantasies, *Here, There Be Dragons* and *The Search for the Red Dragon*.

Diana Pavlac Glycer, Ph.D. is a professor of English at Azusa Pacific University. She has published extensively on Lewis, Tolkien, and the Inklings, including contributions to *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* and *C.S. Lewis (Four Volumes): Life, Works, and Legacy*. Her latest book, *The Company They Keep*, won the 2008 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies.

Members \$70

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Single occupancy & meals, including Sunday Banquet — \$446

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www.mythsoc.org

Kristin Cashore, *Graceling*. Harcourt Children's Books, 2008, hardback, 480 pages, \$17.00, ISBN 978-0152063962. Reviewed by Alana Abbott

In a land of seven kingdoms, some kings are better than others. Katsa, a girl who is graced--supernaturally gifted--with the ability to fight, is the niece of a king who is better than some but worse than others. She serves, unhappily, as his enforcer, breaking fingers or worse to show what happens when the king is disobeyed. In rebellion, Katsa has organized the Council, a network of informants and contacts who seek to right the wrongs that the kings ignore--or perpetuate. One of these tasks is rescuing the father of the Lienid king, who has been imprisoned for no reason the Council can determine, and getting to the bottom of the mystery behind his capture. In doing so, Katsa is introduced to Po, a prince of Lienid who is also graced with fighting, and the two find their missions intertwined.

Cashore paints Katsa and Po's world in broad strokes; the details always compliment rather than overwhelm, and the culture is introduced gradually enough that it is easy to feel at home inside the story. Katsa is a prickly heroine, but easy to identify with--she desires friends and connections with people while she hopes equally to push others away and hold them at arm's length, for fear that they will abandon her, or that she will be forced to abandon them. She struggles with the gift that holds her apart from others, believing that it makes her a savage to be so talented at killing. Po is a wonderful balance to Katsa's struggles--he is intuitive and wise, but often just as unsure as Katsa.

Neither of them quite fit into their world the way they'd like, and both of them question the norms that make up their cultures, grappling with issues of ethics, freedom, and love.

The themes of responsibility and power run throughout the novel as well. If Katsa acts as her uncle's hand because he has power over her, who is responsible for her actions? Can she choose to rebel, or is she truly powerless? When the kings do not care for their people, who is responsible for the bad things that follow? The idea of grace compounds this, particularly in Katsa's culture, where all children who are graced are essentially given to the king. If their grace is useful, they belong to the crown. If not, they are returned to their families, still ostracized by their peers. And what if a king, himself, is graced, and uses his power badly? Who will stop him? The dynamic of control and power thread throughout the story, alongside Katsa's quest to determine her own fate, to belong solely to herself and not allow her future to be chosen by anyone else.

Cashore depicts the growth of a friendship, which becomes a romantic relationship as well as a partnership of equals, in beautiful depth, capturing Katsa's awkward emotional development as deftly as she paints Po's insecurities, hidden behind layers of charm. The surrounding cast is fully formed, and though the villain's motives are never truly revealed, his grace impacts the narrative directly, and shapes how he himself is depicted. On the surface, *Graceling* is a story of magic and adventure, and could certainly be read like that, but deeper, it is a tale of friends learning how to choose their own fates, and how to trust each other rather than continuing on alone.

Ono, Fuyumi. *The Twelve Kingdoms, Volume 2: Sea of Wind*. Los Angeles: Tokyopop, 2008, hardback, \$12.40, ISBN: 978-1598169478. 2009, paperback, \$8.99, ISBN: 978-1427802583. 320 pages. Illustrated by Akihiro Yamada. Translated by Alexander O. Smith and Elye J. Alexander. Original in Japanese, Tokyo: Kodansha Ltd., 1993. Reviewed by Daniel Baird.

In volume one, readers followed the story of Yoko, a Japanese high school girl kidnapped and drawn into a fantasy world loosely based on Chinese mythology. In volume two, Ono introduces Taiki, the unicorn from the kingdom of Tai whose story predates that of Yoko's. (Don't worry, Yoko will be back in a later volume.) For those of you who have not yet read volume one, each of the twelve kingdoms has a ruler and a unicorn associated with the ruler. By focusing on the unicorn in book two, Ono is able to explain in more in depth the role of the unicorn and its link between Heaven and the ruler of the kingdom. This particular unicorn, Taiki, is rather bewildered at first, and must learn how to understand the will of Heaven, how to find and choose a ruler, how to shape-shift between a human form and his natural form as a unicorn, and many other things necessary to fulfill his obligations. As he learns, the reader learns, and of course the ever-fascinating world Ono introduced in book one continues to enthrall readers as it is developed in book two. Besides the unicorn, we are introduced to several new types of creatures including Sanshi—part woman, part leopard, part snake who is a very fierce yet gentle caretaker to Taiki. We also learn about the role of immortals (sometimes

sometimes translated as wizards), and their lives high in the sacred mountains are explained in depth.

This book does assume quite a bit of knowledge from book one, so I do not recommend reading it without reading the prior book: *Twelve Kingdoms: Sea of Shadow*. If you enjoyed the first book, then you will love the second book!



Elizabeth Bunce, *A Curse Dark as Gold*. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine, 2008, 414 pages, \$17.99, ISBN 0-439-89576-6. Reviewed by Laura Krentz

After her father's death, Charlotte Miller struggles to keep the Stirwaters woolen mill operating since the mill provides a livelihood for most of the people of the town of Shearing. The story takes place at the start of the Industrial Revolution, and the owner of a mechanized mill offers to buy her out, but she refuses. Foppish Uncle Wheeler shows up and takes over as the guardian of Charlotte and her younger sister Rosie, since his sister, their mother, died earlier. He is not much help, and Charlotte will not ask him for money when a handsome young banker arrives and tells her that her father had mortgaged the mill. She and her millworkers work hard and almost earn enough for the payments until bad luck, accidents, and vandalism make it look like the rumored curse on the mill may be real. She is so desperate for the money that she makes a bargain with the mysterious Jack Spinner to spin straw into gold thread. This fine new retelling of the Rumpelstiltskin story joins Donna Jo Napoli's *Spinners* and Gary Schmidt's *Straw Into Gold*.

Groups

For more information or to start a new group, contact
Marion Van Loo, Membership and Discussion Group Secretary

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles/Pasadena: Mydgard

Lee Speth,

Oakland: C.S. Lewis Society of California

David J. Theroux,

Web site:

San Francisco Bay Area: Khazad-dum

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

Web site:

June 14: James A. Owen's *Here there be Dragons* and other books.
(Mythcon 2009 Guest-of-Honor) Host: Frankci, Saratoga.

COLORADO

Denver area: Fanuidhol ("Cloudy Head")

Patricia Yarrow,

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington & Suburbs: Knossos

Mimi Stevens,

May 15: *The Road* by Cormac

McCarthy. Host Ellen V.

HAWAII

Oahu: Sammath Naur

Steve Brown,

Web site :

ILLINOIS

Peoria: The Far Westfarthing smial

Mike Foster,

IOWA

Docorah: Alfheim Doug Rossman,

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: Roke

Sally Budd,

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor area: Galadhemmin-Ennorath

Dave & Grace Lovelace,

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: Rivendell

David Lenander,

Web site:

MISSOURI

St. Louis: Imladris

Tonia O'Neal, The Tolkien Adventure Community,

NEVADA

Reno: Crickhollow

Joanne Burnett,

Web site:

NEW YORK

New York: Heren Istarion

(The New York Tolkien Society)

Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke, The New York Tolkien Society,

Web site:

OREGON

Mid-Willamette Valley Area

Donovan Mattole,

Web:

Portland: Bywater Inklings

Gary Lundquist [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster Area: C.S. Lewis and Friends

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Pittsburgh: Fantasy Studies Fellowship

University of Pittsburgh, Lori Campbell, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: The Columbia C.S. Lewis Society

Nina Fowler, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

Seattle: Mithlond

John D Rateliff, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Web site: [REDACTED]

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: The Burrahobbits

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

May 26: The Black Book of Secrets by F.E. Higgins. Hosts: Jan/
Jeff, 7pm

Prospective Groups

Tampa Bay: Hobbiton Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

North Central Florida: Eryn Galen

B.L. McCauley, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

INDIANA

Central Indiana: Cerin Amroth

Ellen Denham, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MISSOURI

St. Louis: The Khazad

Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte: The Carolina Tolkien Society

Matt & Renita Peeler [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

OHIO

Akron David Staley [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Web site: [REDACTED]

Special Interest Group

The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Web site: [REDACTED] / Newsletter, Vinyar Tengwar.
Journal, Parma Eldalamberon: Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Correspondence Group

Once Upon A Time (children's fantasy)

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Correspondence circular. Web site: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Online Discussion Groups

Society Announcements

Sign up: [REDACTED]

or contact Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED]

Mythsoc E-List

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

Sign up: [REDACTED]

or contact Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED]

LiveJournal Mythopoeic Society discussion forum

Society activities and general book-related discussion,

Sign up: [REDACTED]

or contact Lisa Deutsch Harrigan: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Douglas A. Anderson, ed., *Tales Before Narnia: The Roots of Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New York: Del Rey, 2008. ISBN 978-0345498908, sc, 352pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by Jason Fisher

Following up his previous collection, *Tales Before Tolkien* (2005), Douglas Anderson now presents eighteen tales (and two poems) that inspired C.S. Lewis or that share common themes with his works. In spite of its title, Anderson is quick to note that “it is not restricted solely to precursors of Lewis’s seven volumes of *The Chronicles of Narnia*; rather, it encompasses the much wider breadth of his fictional output” (ix). To that end, the stories cover almost the whole range of the fantastic, from the traditional fairy tale to the pseudo-medieval fantasy to the gothic horror story, and ending on an almost realistic note with William Lindsay Gresham’s touching story, “The Dream Dust Factory” – strongly redolent of Stephen King’s novella, *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* (1982). In spite of the subtitle of the collection, there is almost no science fiction to speak of here. But the closest thing we get is a remarkable story: “The Man Who Lived Backwards” by Charles F. Hall. This very clever tale presents time travel, hackneyed though the subject has since become, in a completely novel way, and it feels like the imaginative progenitor of both Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* (1991) and Christopher Priest’s *The Prestige* (1995).

As I have already hinted by quoting from it, the book commences with a short introduction. This sets the stage and provides only such background material as is absolutely necessary for appreciating the book’s mission and the parade of stories to follow. As readers work their way through the volume, Anderson provides spare but valuable introductions to each piece.

The clarity and brevity of Anderson’s editorial comments are most laudable, allowing as they do the words of each author to assume center stage in succession. For those acquainted with *Tales Before Tolkien*, Anderson follows the same approach here. He concludes the collection with further notes on each author as well as recommendations for further reading – including authors not represented in the collection (e.g., Algernon Blackwood, John Buchan, Lewis Carroll, and Lord Dunsany, to name just a few).

In a short review, it would be impossible to say something about each of the stories in this wonderful and engrossing collection, so I will have to confine my remarks to only some of the best (including the two already mentioned above). In the subcategory of traditional *märchen*, or fairy tales, Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Snow Queen: A Tale in Seven Stories,” “The Magic Mirror” (an excerpt from George MacDonald’s 1858 novel, *Phantastes*), Charles Dickens’s “The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton,” and Owen Barfield’s beautifully ambiguous “The Child and the Giant” are particularly excellent. The Dickens story has the added bonus of being *funny*.

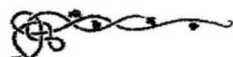
In the domain of the horrific, Sir Walter Scott’s “The Tapestry Chamber; or, The Lady in the Sacque” and Charles Williams’s “Et in Sempiternum Pereant” (the only short story he ever published) are quite striking, each in its own way. Both are masterpieces of the gothic horror genre, easily standing up to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” or Saki’s (H.H. Munro’s) “The Open Window.”

More conventional (i.e., medieval) fantasy is represented here by William Morris's "A King's Lesson" and Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Waif Woman: A Cue — From a Saga." Both stories convey moral lessons of duty and honor. The longest story in the collection, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's novella, *Undine*, abuts this genre as well, but stands in a class by itself, recommended heartily by MacDonald, then Lewis, then Anderson, and now by me. For those who come to agree, be sure to look for Amy Sturgis's new edition of Fouqué's *The Magic Ring* (2006; originally published almost two centuries earlier).

The two poems are Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's moving "Tegnér's Drapa," provided as a proem to the collection, and Tolkien's early work "The Dragon's Visit" (a work contemporary with *The Hobbit*). While it is nice to see the latter reprinted, I'm not sure the poem could have been of any notable influence on Lewis, and I wonder whether something else would have been more appropriate to the goals of the collection. Perhaps a selection from *The Notion Club Papers*.

Two further pieces, an excerpt ("Letter III") from Valdemar Thisted's curious novel *Letters From Hell* and John Macgowan's "Fastosus and Avaro," seem to point to Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. But the resemblance is really only superficial. Lewis read Thisted's novel; however, that novel is nothing like *Screwtape*. But as for Macgowan, which does resemble *Screwtape* in several tantalizing ways, there is no evidence Lewis read it (in fact, there is direct testimony to the contrary).

Two selections, E. Nesbit's "The Aunt and Amabel" and Roger Lancelyn Green's "The Wood That Time Forgot: The Enchanted Wood" (the second chapter of a still unpublished novel), deserve special mention. Each bears in its own way a striking resemblance to aspects of Lewis's Narnia. In the case of Nesbit's charming tale, an enchanted wardrobe is the means of ingress into a fantasy world. In Green's novel, children explore an enchanted wood very much like Lewis's Wood Between the Worlds. For all admirers of Lewis (the intended audience of this marvelous collection in any event), these two stories will be especially welcome.



Thank you to all the people who requested books for review. Please remember to send the reviews to [REDACTED]. Follow the format you see in the reviews published in *Mythprint*. Be sure to include your full name so I can give credit to the reviewer. While I prefer to receive reviews as attachments, I use Microsoft Word, so if you use another word processing program, do not send the review as an attachment.

If you decide the book you receive is not worth reviewing in *Mythprint*, please notify me so I will not be expecting your review. If you decide you don't have time to read the book, you may mail it back to me or pass it along to someone else who wants to do a review. The book is yours to keep if you write a review.

This month, I only have one review copy to send out. If you would like to review *Genesis* by Bernard Beckett, contact me and I will mail the book to you.
Ginger McElwee

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REAL NAME: _____
NAME FOR CONFERENCE _____
BADGE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
Optional - e-mail address: _____
Optional - phone number: _____

CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

_____ (number attending) Mythopoeic Society Member @ \$70 per person _____
_____ (number attending) Non-MythSoc Member @ \$80 per person _____
_____ (number attending) children under age of 12
(We need to know the number of children who will be present at the facilities)

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(Please specify name of your preferred roommate)

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_____ Adult (over 18) @ \$111.50 per person _____
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BANQUET ONLY PACKAGE

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Mythopoeic Society Web Site:

www.mythsoc.org

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Mythopoeic Society Orders Department



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:

Ginger McElwee, Editor



The Mythopoeic Society



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