

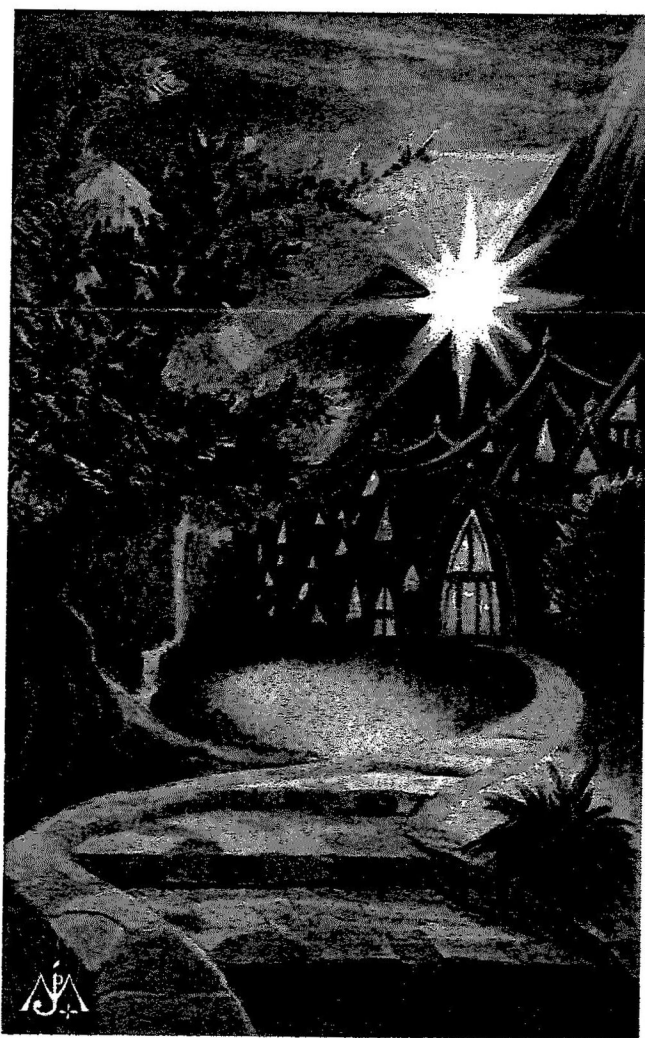
MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 46 No. 5/6

May, June, 2009

Whole No. 326/327



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Cover Art: *The Last Homey House* by Jef Murray

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Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary

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Deadlines for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1st of the preceding month

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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Room and board packages must be purchased by **July 6**.

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

Double occupancy & meals, including Banquet, per person— \$302

COMMUTER MEAL PACKAGES OR BANQUET ONLY OPTIONS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

Registration form is on page 10 or you can register and pay on line until **July 6**.

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J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tolkien On Fairy-stories: Expanded Edition, with Commentary and Notes*, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollins, 2008, hardcover, 320 pages, £16.99, ISBN 978-0-00-724466-9. Reviewed by David Bratman.

Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson propose to write about Tolkien's "On Fairy-stories," though they are aware that this is a rash adventure. It is a perilous essay, and in it are pitfalls for the unwary and dungeons for the overbold.

But they have succeeded in getting into print an annotated variorum edition of the text to stand with the Hammond and Scull *Farmer Giles of Ham*, the Drout *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, and Flieger's own *Smith of Wootton Major*. My aping of the opening sentences of the essay in the previous paragraph show just how iconic a study of fantasy literature Tolkien's work has become. Flieger and Anderson begin with a four-page summary of the essay; many scholars have attempted one, but this one is unparalleled in its lucidity, simply because its authors have grasped the structure of what Tolkien was saying.

Editorial sections also discuss the context – of his fiction and his study of myth – in which Tolkien wrote the essay, recount how he came to be invited to present it, and present the history of its post-publication revisions. A large number of notes to the complete text provide citations, discuss literary references, and even explain obscure allusions. If you're not familiar with the Beatrix Potter stories that Tolkien judges as approaching the status of fairy-tale, for instance, you can find a summary. You can also find that the reason Tolkien expresses "a wild, heraldic, preference for dark blue" is that it's Oxford's school color.

A good half of the book is devoted to the drafting of

the essay. The lecture that Tolkien gave at St. Andrews University in 1939 was considerably shorter than the printed version. We can tell this from the summaries in newspaper reports of that lecture, reprinted here, and in an incomplete manuscript, printed for the first time here, that was perhaps the script and notes Tolkien held in his hand as he talked. This was succeeded by a much longer re-writing, with many cancellations and inserts, that was the rough draft for the final copy.

The rough draft is also printed here in full. Watch Tolkien modifying his definitions and adding or deleting examples. Most interesting in it are a number of sections of varying length that Tolkien left out of the final essay, mostly for being too discursive. A long note explaining the exact nature of his argument against the motor car and airplane fouling civilization is most valuable to understanding his thinking. There are also pungent new expansions on other points, such as his children's dislike for cutesy, twee fairydom. When the family received a plate depicting "infantile [elves] with butterfly-wings," Tolkien reports, "my daughter refused to eat off it."

Unfortunately the editorial note references for the manuscripts are all two or three pages off, the result of the transfer of some text in the proofs stage. (This has been corrected in a reprint that I have not seen.) Also unfortunately, Tolkien's American publishers have failed to pick this valuable work up, so it needs to be ordered from Britain. At least, in the days of Amazon, it's feasible enough to do so. Inquirers may well find it less expensive to order the book directly from Britain than to get it via the American distributors.

The Fall. Directed by Tarsem Singh. Written by Dan Gilroy, Nico Soultanakis and Tarsem Singh. Googly Films, 2006. 117 minutes. Available on DVD. Reviewed by David Emerson

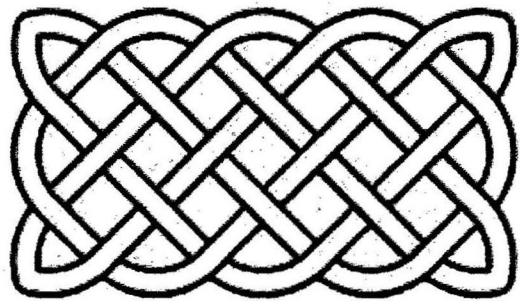
Although not strictly a fantasy, this film definitely has fantastic elements. More importantly, it is a story about *story*, and the power of story to affect both the story-teller and the listener.

Alexandria (played by 9-year old Romanian Catina Untaru in her film debut) is the child of migrant workers in 1920's California, in hospital with a broken arm sustained from falling out of a tree while picking oranges. She meets Roy (Lee Pace, *Pushing Daisies*, *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*), a movie stuntman whose leg was broken in a leap from a railroad bridge during the filming of a western. Roy begins telling her stories, first about her namesake Alexander the Great, then one he invents, "an epic tale" he calls it, about a group of disparate characters bent on revenge against "the evil Governor Odious." Alexandria imagines the tale populated with people she knows: her friends, Roy's friends, other patients, hospital staff, even the guy who drives the ice wagon. As the movie progresses, we learn that Roy is feeling suicidal after the loss of his girlfriend to the western's handsome leading actor, and that Roy's story-telling has an ulterior motive.

The story within the story is where the fantastic elements come into play, and they are a parade of feasts for the eyes and imagination: underwater views of a swimming elephant, a shaman emerging from a burning tree, a human chandelier, a face morphing into a landscape, a hall full of spinning dervishes dressed in deep blue and snow white, and a crowd of aborigines chanting a tattoo of maps onto a shaman's body. The visual design and cinematography of the story sequences are brilliant.

But the real story plays out in the hospital. As the relationship between Roy and Alexandria develops, the plot takes more twists and turns. Her questions about the story begin to direct the story, subtly at first and then more powerfully later. As she takes more active interest, the struggle between teller and listener becomes more dynamic and intense. She even inserts herself into the story as a character in order to perform a *deus ex machina*. In the end, control of the story becomes control of Roy's life. The storyteller is as much affected by the story as the listener; possibly even more so.

At one point, Alexandria questions why the story is moving in a direction she doesn't like. Roy says, "It's my story." She replies, "Mine too." Therein lies the theme of the entire movie. To what extent does fiction "belong" to the writer, and to what extent does it "belong" to the reader/listener/viewer?



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,

June 28: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling, 2:30 p.m. Garfield Park, on Mission St. in South Pasadena.

Oakland: C.S. Lewis Society of California

David J. Theroux,

Web site:

San Francisco Bay Area: Khazad-dum

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

Web site:

September 13: *The Bell at Seale Head* by Patricia McKillip. Hosts:

Chris Gilson and Adam Christensen,

Mountain View

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,

July: Second Annual Movie Extravaganza. Held at either Gallaudet or at Bill Hussar's

HAWAII

Oahu: Sammath Naur

Steve Brown,

Web site :

ILLINOIS

Peoria: The Far Westfarthing smial

Mike Foster,

IOWA

Dorah: 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. 9409

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,

Mythopoeic

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, U Pittsburgh, Department
of English, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: The Columbia C.S. Lewis Society

Nina Fowler, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

Seattle: Mithlond

John D Rateliff, [REDACTED] c-
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: The Burrahobbits

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

June 23: *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* by Michael Chabon. Host:
Don 7 p.m.

July 28: *The Good Fairies of New York* by Martin Miller. Host: Peter.
summer picnic, 6 p.m.

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]
[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]

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

Online Discussion Groups

Society Announcements

Sign up: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mythsoc>
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]

A Tolkienist Looks at *The Magician's Book*

The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia, by Laura Miller. New York: Little Brown, 2008. ISBN 9780316017633, 320 pages, \$25.99. Reviewed by David Bratman.

This is not a scholarly book about C.S. Lewis, but a purely appreciative one. As a child, Miller was totally enraptured by the Narnian books, but felt betrayed when she learned they had a Christian symbolic meaning (a fact she discovered from reading Lin Carter's *Imaginary Worlds*, by the way). Many years later she returned to the books and decided she loved them after all, but hers should be a salutary cautionary tale to those who delight in Lewis's conscious strategy to sneak Christianity "past watchful dragons" into young readers' minds. The idea is supposed to be that, on realizing that Aslan is Christ, the young reader is supposed to transfer her love for Narnia into a love of Christianity. Unfortunately, for young Laura it worked the other way around: she transferred a distaste for Christianity into one for Narnia.

(I'm reminded of a story my harmony teacher used to tell. "Once there was a man who decided to train his young children to love modern music. When he gave them their milk, he played Schoenberg, and when he took it away, he played Mozart. So of course you know what happened. [Pause for effect] When they grew up, they hated milk.")

There are no source citations in the book, but Miller has a solid command of the facts and their significance from the standard literature on Lewis. I noticed only one outright, but minor, factual error: she assumes that the baptismal name of Lewis's war-service buddy Paddy Moore was Patrick (p. 135). Actually his name was Edward. Probably "Paddy" was a nickname applied to him by his schoolfellows as an Irish boy living in England. And Miller has learned not to put quite as much blind trust in John

Goldthwaite's execrable *The Natural History of Make-Believe* as she did in her original Salon.com article.

Tolkien gets a lot of page time in this book, but Miller doesn't much care for *The Lord of the Rings*, and I find some of what she says to be a bit off. (Maybe Lewisians will feel the same about her reactions to Lewis.) There are a couple criticisms of Tolkien on page 214 that seem to me to quite miss the mark about the nature and value of Tolkien's invention in his book.

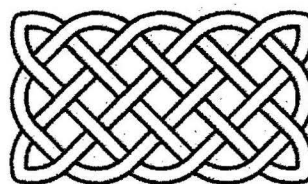
1) "Tolkien's freakishly prodigious powers of invention could not supply the book with what four years of studying English literature had led me to expect from a great novel." Yet on p. 227-28 she explains, accurately, that *LotR* is not a novel but a romance – a genre with quite different expectations. In college she read Hardy and Faulkner and Dostoyevsky (three names that fill me with total ennui) "and knew they sounded depths that Tolkien never touched." True enough, I suppose. But has it occurred to her that Tolkien also sounded depths that *they* never touched? The three novels she names are all deep studies of immorality and corruption. But surely there is also room in great literature for studies of morality and integrity? Nor are war, power, and death – the subjects of *LotR* – shallow themes, and his treatment of them is profound.

2) "All this talk of the vastness of Tolkien's invented world proves that his fans don't really understand what makes literature *literature*; they think it's a matter of the quantity, rather than the quality, of invention." This is true only of those who find the Tolclones who roll this stuff out by the yard to be equally valuable. What Miller doesn't really understand, but Tolkien's more enlightened fans do, is that the quantity, while not by itself sufficient, is a *necessary* component of the quality of his kind of invention. Without that body of background material, his sub-creation would be thin and insubstantial. Quantity, in combination with quality, is what gives it depth.

Whitcomb, Laura. *The Fetch: A Supernatural Romance*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, 379 pages, ISBN 978-0-618-89131-3. Reviewed by Karen Guerin

Initially *The Fetch* seems like it may be an overtly Christian young adult novel, as opposed to an allegorical one, as the works of C.S. Lewis often interpreted to be. However, the seemingly over-simplified after-death world of the Miltonian heaven and its rules does give way to a more complex and less polarized imagery that is more reminiscent of Richard Matheson's *What Dreams May Come*. It becomes, instead, an inverted hero's journey and rite-of-passage tale, in which the young hero, rather than traveling to the Underworld, or Land of the Dead, is already a citizen of that world, and so travels to the Land of the Living. In that journey, Calder the Fetch grows to understand his past, and of course, falls in love. It is love that propels him to take the journey in the first place. Isn't it always? Yet, the object of his passion changes over the course of the plot and, in keeping with the unusual circumstances of the hero and his companions, Whitcomb shows that love can come in many forms, even unattractive ones. Indeed, the form of Rasputin, who becomes an important character in the novel, is quite unattractive in several ways, but that fact does not deter love. Whitcomb puts an interesting twist on the mysterious legends of Rasputin and Anastasia Romanov, and compels the reader to consider possibilities about their fates that, unbelievably, have likely not been considered. She also explores historical perspectives on the Bolshevik Revolution without passing judgment, although perhaps she is a little sympathetic to the ill-fated royal family. Some parts of the tale are irresolvable and unrealistic, but the rich imagery

near the end of the story lingers in the mind's eye in a way that is, again, reminiscent of Milton, and much later, Matheson. However, it should be noted that the novel, of course, lacks the epic quality of either Milton or Tolkien. It does have an overtly positive message about the afterlife, while acknowledging the suffering of all beings on earth. Yet, the afterlife is also a place where there is work to be done and personal feelings can still run the full range of the emotions. Perhaps because of the setting and the Christianized, albeit fantastic, view of an afterlife, *The Fetch* does have somewhat of a spiritual message that many will appreciate. *The Fetch* is an ambitious effort in every way--theme, setting, characterization--and in that, it is a risky undertaking for which Whitcomb may be either summarily praised or criticized; but it is an enjoyable and rewarding read, neither too complex for the youthful set, nor overly simplified and predictable for mature readers. Whitcomb should be commended for her creation of a unique spiritual fantasy and journey tale, in the lofty tradition of Milton, Matheson, and perhaps even Dante, rather than relying on poor belabored vampires and elves to provide the material. She ambitiously reaches back to the ancestors of the genre and, in doing so, provides an escape for readers who are looking for more than a twilight blood ritual.



Two 2009 Narnia near-Facsimile Editions

C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, London: HarperCollins, 2009, ISBN 978-0-00-728897.

C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia*, London: HarperCollins, 2009, ISBN 978-0-00-728898. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight

Last year I was contacted by Deborah Murrell of HarperCollins because of my knowledge of Narnia books from my website: *Narnia Editions and Translations*. Since my website is a labor of love and not for profit, for legal reasons, I was careful not to offer any scans or other material that would include payment. In the end, I was able to give useful information that helped Miss Murrell and her associates produce the first two Narnia books. She expects Harper Collins to release the other five editions by the end of 2009 and during 2010.

The intent of this facsimile is to reproduce copies of the British first editions with the color front pieces and all the illustrations. They are facsimiles except they are published by HarperCollins, while the original first editions were published by Geoffrey Bles. The changes show in eight places: 1) The front dust jacket has a copyright claim by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. 2) The current price is printed above the original price. 3.) HarperCollins is listed as publisher on the title page. 4) Various copyright changes and ISBN information is found past the title page. 5) ISBN, barcode and HarperCollins information is on the back of the dust jacket. 6) The original books were 14.1 cm wide by 20 cm tall; these editions are 13.4 cm wide by 20.4 cm tall. 7) The point size of the dust jacket and book spines is two points smaller than the originals, and the HarperCollins flame symbol is added above the name BLES. 8) The new editions include the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper information. Also the new editions have the map of Narnia on both end papers, while the original books had it only on the front. These books are enjoyable because they let the reader see the colored front pieces by Pauline Baynes, as well as minor illustrations by her that have not been seen since the first editions.

From the Editor

Thank you for the reviews that have been arriving regularly. I am, however, once again beginning to run low on material to publish. Those of you who are reading books for the book awards, please consider writing a review for publication in the July newsletter.

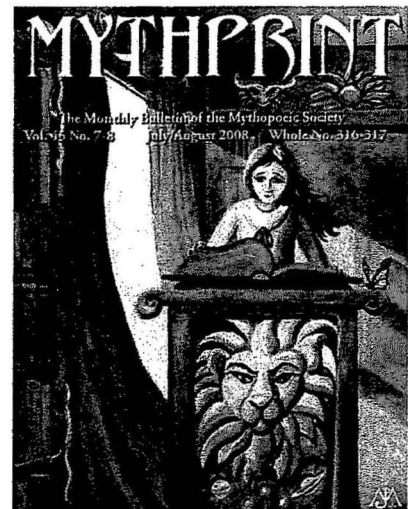
Also I still need art work. Jef Murray has been very generous to provide cover art, but my supply is beginning to dwindle. Those of you who are artist, please send art work.

Finally I want to remind all of you who are going to Mythcon that I will publish an issue with articles about Mythcon. Please send me your responses to the formal and informal parts of the con. (You still have until July 6th to register.)

Ginger McElwee

Pictured below is the cover of the July/August 2008 *Mythprint* as it should have appeared. The copy that was published distorted Jef Murray's picture of Lucy. Thank you, Jef, for working with me to correct the problem.

Ginger McElwee



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:

www.mythsoc.org

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The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* (subscription \$25/year for Society members, \$4 for a sample issue) and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. (\$8/issue). Subscriptions and back issues of Society publications may be purchased directly thorough our web site (using PayPal or Discover card), or you may contact:

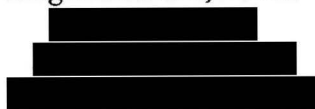
Mythopoeic Society Orders Department



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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