

MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 37 No. 4

April 2000

Whole No. 217



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See inside back cover

Mythopoeic Society Information:

Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary



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

Feature Review: *Tolkien's Legendarium*

VERLYN FLIEGER AND CARL F. HOSTETTER, eds., *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*. (Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy, 86). Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 2000. ISBN 0-313-30530-7, hc, xvi + 274 pp., \$59.95.

The single most significant feature of this new collection of essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's work is telegraphed by its subtitle. The book is dedicated to Christopher Tolkien, and repeated expressions of gratitude and admiration toward him on the part of the various authors give this the distinct air of a *Festschrift* in his honor. The editors clearly state in their introduction that "[t]he genesis of the present collection...was a desire of the editors to give *The History of Middle-earth* the critical assessment it deserves..." Therefore, the element that distinguishes this critical work from the many others about Tolkien is its focus on those of his works that were edited by his son and posthumously published. In some cases the posthumous material is used to illuminate elements of the elder Tolkien's more familiar works; in others the focus is on those aspects of the legendarium that only saw the light of day in *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and *The History of Middle-earth*. The fourteen essays (and one bibliography) are organized into three sections. The first, "The History," treats the posthumous work as a whole. Rayner Unwin, son of Tolkien's original publisher and famed in Tolkien lore as one of the first readers and recommenders of *The Hobbit*, provides us with an intriguing behind-the-scenes look at just how this unique series managed to get published. Christina Scull is interested in what the *History* reveals of Tolkien's method of writing. To illustrate this she follows the evolution of the central story of the Silmarils and their fate—the first of the contributors, but not the last, to trace the development of a single figure or theme throughout the posthumous

material. Wayne Hammond examines the tension between Tolkien's natural tendency to change, refine, and "discover" his mythology through many (often contradictory) versions of the same story or event, and his perceived need to adhere to that version of the mythology that eventually became "fixed" with the publication of *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. Charles Noad insightfully relates Tolkien's production of multiple versions of everything to his "professional concern with real texts," which compelled him to produce not just stories but "the distinctive texts that contain those narratives and chronicles, texts that are in themselves historical artefacts." In one of the lengthier and more complex essays in the collection, Noad proceeds to treat Tolkien's various "texts" like those Tolkien himself studied in his scholarly work. Based on this textual evidence, he presents a list of those texts that would have constituted *The Silmarillion* if J.R.R. Tolkien had managed to bring it to publishable form in his lifetime. Concluding the first section is David Bratman's lively and readable essay on the often-ignored *literary* value of the posthumous writings—which parts reward us more as readers than as scholars.

Part II is devoted to Tolkien's invented languages. This reviewer, as one without any formal background in linguistics, initially faced this section with no little trepidation. However, all three essays are well organized, argued with clarity, and presented without an excess of specialized terminology. A non-linguist may not have the knowledge to affirm or refute the arguments presented, but should be able to understand and appreciate them. Christopher Gilson traces the links between the early Gnomish language and the later Sindarin to prove the truth of Christopher Tolkien's assertion that "Gnomish is Sindarin"—also the title of this essay. Arden R. Smith relates Tolkien's runic systems to those of the Primary

World. Although many of the shapes are identical the meanings are not, and Smith relates this to Tolkien's changing and sometimes ambivalent attitudes toward the relationship of his *Legendarium* with Primary World history. The last and by far the longest and most ambitious linguistic contribution is that of Patrick Wynne and Carl F. Hostetter. Pulling together widely scattered textual clues, including fragments of poetry in English "translation" and various Elvish languages and dialects, the authors attempt to define the three modes of Elvish verse named by Tolkien.

Part III, "The Cauldron and the Cook," is the most varied. Each essay focuses more narrowly on an aspect of Tolkien's work that has been enriched by the opportunity to study the posthumous material. In a nice segue from the previous section, Joe R. Christopher opens with an essay on "Tolkien's Lyric Poetry." Christopher focuses on four poems that appear (although not necessarily exclusively) in the *History* and analyzes them purely as poetry. His view is fair-minded, treating them as worthy of analysis without minimizing their weaknesses, acknowledging that appreciating Tolkien's Romantic verse forms and those of more contemporary poets need not be an either/or proposition. Paul Edmund Thomas uses the early drafts of the beginning of *LOTR* to analyze how the voice of the narrator changed and evolved from *The Hobbit* to its more ambitious and profound sequel. Verlyn Flieger traces the significant concept of "Elf-friend" throughout the *History*, a figure present from the very beginnings of Tolkien's mythology to its most "challenging presentation" in *Smith of Wootton Major*. One of the most eagerly-awaited revelations of the *History* were the aborted attempts at Tolkien's time-travel story, planned to match C.S. Lewis's on space travel. John D. Rateliff discusses the close relationship of "The Lost Road" and "The Notion Club Papers" to Lewis's "The

Dark Tower." As part of this discussion he presents a compelling argument for a later date for the Lewis work than Walter Hooper suggests. Marjorie Burns shows how the *History* reinforces and expands the intuitions of earlier scholars (limited to *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*) that many of the attributes of Odin are distributed among various Tolkien characters. Richard C. West concludes the essays with a study of Tolkien's interpretation of the concept described by Old English word *ofermod* and the significance of that concept to the story of Túrin Turambar. The last contribution is Douglas A. Anderson's—a selected bibliography of the works of Christopher Tolkien, with a brief and appreciative introduction. It serves nicely to reinforce the dedication at the beginning. The volume also includes "Suggested Further Reading," an index with a "Note on Spelling and Usage," and information about the contributors. Taken as a whole, *Tolkien's Legendarium* is a significant contribution to the study of J.R.R. Tolkien, one that should be added to anyone's collection of basic critical works on that author. The contributors, most of whom are long-time Mythopoeic Society members (including more than one Mythopoeic Scholarship Award winner) are clearly well versed in their subject matter. Since many are independent scholars not affiliated with university English departments (and even those who are so affiliated share in that independence) these analyses are refreshingly free of turgid prose or theoretical bias. The authors' obvious appreciation for their subject of study does not preclude either critical acuity or scholarly rigor. Although the price is high, this is a well-produced book on acid-free paper—both its physical package and its intellectual content are designed to last.

Reviewed by Edith L. Crowe



Mythopoeic Society Matters

The Mythic Circle Seeks Submissions

Attention, Writers of Science Fiction and Fantasy! *The Mythic Circle* is on the lookout for original stories and poems.

What is *The Mythic Circle*? We are a small literary magazine published by the Mythopoeic Society, which celebrates the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. These adventuresome writers saw themselves as continuators of a rich imaginative tradition, encompassing writers as different as Homer and H. G. Wells. For more information, check out our website: www.mythsoc.org/mythcir.html.

Works submitted on paper should be typed and double spaced and should include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of manuscript. E-mail submissions are also encouraged and are likely to get a faster reply. Simultaneous submissions should be clearly identified as such. It is the policy of the editors to respond individually to all submissions.

As a small publication, we can only reward our authors and illustrators with one complimentary copy of the issue in which the accepted work appears. All rights revert to the author on publication.

Mail submissions and Letters of Comment to:

Trent M. Walters



Mythlore in the Mail!

Mythlore 85, sporting a new editor and a totally new look, has been mailed to subscribers; look for the issue in your mailboxes soon. Editor Ted Sherman is actively soliciting papers for future issues, and urges authors, including paper presenters for the past three Mythopoeic Conferences, to submit manuscripts to him at:

Dr. Theodore James Sherman
Associate Professor of English



Subscriptions to the journal are \$15/year (4 issues) for Society members in the U.S.; check the inside back cover of *Mythprint* for address information. Additional rates, back issue availability, and a table of contents for the new issue can all be found on the Society's web site:

www.mythsoc.org/mythlore.html

Society Annual Report

The next (May) issue of *Mythprint* will contain reports by members of the Council of Stewards on 1999 Society activities, and will be sent to all current Mythopoeic Society members. Here's your chance to be heard as well: we welcome letters of comment, suggestions, complaints or compliments from all members and subscribers, and will include as many of these as we can fit in the issue. See page 2 of this issue for *Mythprint* editorial contact information.

'Caught by a Rumour'

News and Notes

Forthcoming Books

(by authors we like...)

- Guy Gavriel Kay, *Lord of Emperors* (HarperPrism hc, March) (sequel to *Sailing to Sarantium*)
Terry Pratchett, *The Fifth Elephant* (HarperPrism hc, April)
Patricia A. McKillip, *The Tower at Stony Wood* (Ace hc, May)
Robin McKinley, *Spindle's End* (PenguinPutnam hc, May)
John Crowley, *Daemonomania* (Bantam hc, August)
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Telling* (Harcourt hc, September)
Peter S. Beagle, *A Dance for Emilia* (October)
Tim Powers, *Declare* (Morrow hc, October)
George R.R. Martin, *A Storm of Swords* (November)

And of course another Harry Potter book:

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Doomspell Tournament* (Scholastic/Levine, July)

Awards

Horror Award Nominees

The International Horror Guild has announced nominees for its 1999 awards, recognizing achievement in the field. The IHG Awards will be presented May 12 at the World Horror Convention in Denver. Included:

Novel

- Jonathan Aycliffe, *The Talisman*
Richard Bowes, *Minions of the Moon*
Kim Newman, *Seven Stars*
Stewart O'Nan, *A Prayer for the Dying*
Peter Straub, *Mr. X*

First Novel

- Michael Cisco, *The Divinity Student*
Fred Durbin, *Dragonfly*
Paul Griner, *Collectors*
China Miéville, *King Rat*
J.G. Passarella, *Wither*

Nonfiction

- Neil Barron, ed., *Fantasy and Horror: A Critical and Historical Guide to Literature, Illustration, Film, TV, Radio, and the Internet*
Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*
Chris Jarocha-Ernst, *A Cthulhu Mythos: Bibliography & Concordance*
S.T. Joshi, *Sixty Years of Arkham House*
Victoria Price, *Vincent Price: A Daughter's Biography*

1999 Nebula Awards Final Ballot

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America has released the final ballot for the 1999 Nebula Awards. Winners will be announced during the Nebula Awards Weekend in New York City, May 19-21, 2000. This year's ballot is the first with the revived category for dramatic presentation, now called 'Best Script'. Included:

Novel

- Ken MacLeod, *The Cassini Division*
George R.R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*
Vernor Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky*
Maureen F. McHugh, *Mission Child*
Sean Stewart, *Mockingbird*
Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Talents*

Script

- "The Devil's Arithmetic", Robert J. Avrech (based on the novel by Jane Yolen; Showtime Television)
"The Iron Giant", Brad Bird & Tim McCanlies (based on the book by Ted Hughes; Warner Bros.)
"The Matrix", Larry & Andy Wachowski (Warner Bros.)
"The Sixth Sense", M. Night Shyamalan (Buena Vista)
"The Uranus Experiment: Part 2", John Millerman (Private Black Label)

The 31st Annual Mythopoeic Conference



Mythcon XXXI
Myth and Legend of the Pacific
August 18-21, 2000
Kilauea Military Camp
Volcano, Island of Hawai'i, Hawai'i

Guest of Honor: Steven Goldsberry

Author of *Maui the Demigod: An Epic Novel of Mythical Hawai'i*
Associate Professor of English (Creative Writing), Univ. of Hawai'i at Manoa

The first Mythopoeic Conference in a year beginning with a "2" promises to be a unique event and a definite change of pace. Belying its name, our site—Kilauea Military Camp (KMC)—is a luxurious private resort located at the edge of Kilauea Crater adjacent to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island of Hawaii. (You can't get much closer to the Crack of Doom!) The local Society discussion group, Sammath Naur, invites everyone to help celebrate their 25th anniversary at a Mythcon focusing on Pacific Island mythology.

The conference site is accessible via Hilo airport, and direct flights are available from the mainland to the island of Hawaii. Specifics on room and board rates, travel suggestions, recommended background reading, and other pertinent information will be available shortly. Please check the Mythopoeic Society web site for updates and relevant links, such as the KMC web site.

Paper Call

Papers dealing with the conference theme are encouraged. We also invite papers focusing on the work and interests of our Guest(s) of Honor, or on the Inklings (especially Tolkien, Lewis and Williams). Papers on other fantasy authors and themes are also welcome. Some that suggest themselves are island worlds; the Great Sea; sea journeys; symbolism of earth and fire. We are

interested in papers from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.

Papers should be suitable for oral presentation within a time period of 20 to 45 minutes, leaving 10-15 minutes for questions. They should conform to the *MLA Style Manual*. Papers chosen for presentation at the conference will be considered for publication in *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. Abstracts of papers should be sent to the Papers Coordinator at the following address by April 30, 2000:

Edith L. Crowe, Clark Library



Registration

Conference registration is \$55 until June 1st, 2000, and will increase after that date. Please make checks out to Mythcon 31 and send to:

Eleanor M. Farrell, Treasurer
Mythcon 31



Activity Calendar

Matthew Winslow, Discussion Group Secretary
17207 8th Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98155
mwinslow@firinn.org
www.mythsoc.org/actcal.html

Prospective Groups

CALIFORNIA

San Diego: LOTHLORIEN

Linda Sundstrom, [REDACTED]

CONNECTICUT

Southington: FANTASTIC WORLDS

Bill Pierce, [REDACTED]

FLORIDA

Tampa Bay: HOBBITON

Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]

North Central Florida: ERYN GALEN

B.L. McCauley, [REDACTED]

GEORGIA

Atlanta area: CENTRAL ATLANTIS

Irv Koch, [REDACTED]

Hoschton: SHEEP, INDEED

Beau Farr, [REDACTED]

ILLINOIS

Peoria: THE FAR WESTFARTHING SMLAL

Mike Foster, [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey, [REDACTED]

MISSOURI

St. Louis: THE KHAZAD

Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell, [REDACTED]

NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville: THE WEST N. CAROLINA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

Don King, [REDACTED]

Charlotte: THE CAROLINA TOLKIEN SOCIETY

Matt & Renita Peeler, [REDACTED]

OHIO

Akron

David Staley, [REDACTED]

Cincinnati

Diane Joy Baker, [REDACTED]

Dayton-Kettering: THE PRANCING PONY

Eileen Ribbler, [REDACTED]

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh area

Will Vaus, [REDACTED]

Scranton-Wilkes-Barre area (NE PA)

Glenn Sadler, [REDACTED]

TENNESSEE

Nashville: SPARE OOM

Mary & Conrad Stolzenbach, [REDACTED]

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

Greater Los Angeles: NIGGLE'S PARISH

Gracia Fay Ellwood, [REDACTED]

Topic: *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD

Lee Speth, [REDACTED]

San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DUM

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe, [REDACTED]

April: *Jerlayne* by Lynn Abbey

May: Favorite passages from *The Lord of the Rings*

June: Guilty Pleasures

July: *Mauie the Demigod* by Steven Goldsberry

COLORADO

Denver area: FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")

Patricia Yarrow, [REDACTED]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington & Suburbs: KNOSSOS

Mimi Stevens, [REDACTED]

April: *Inherit the Stars* by James P. Hogan
May: *Puck of Pook's Hill* by Rudyard Kipling
June: *Tigana* by Guy Gavriel Kay

HAWAII

Oahu: SAMMATH NAUR

Steve Brown, [REDACTED]

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: ROKE

Sally Budd, [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor-Flint: GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH

Dave & Grace Lovelace, [REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL

David Lenander, [REDACTED]

NEVADA

Reno: CRICKHOLLOW

Joanne Burnett-Bowen, [REDACTED]

April: *The Singing Sword* by Jack Whyte
May: *Red Prophet* by Orson Scott Card
June: *Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper
July: *Possession* by A.S. Byatt

OREGON

Portland area

Donovan Mattole, [REDACTED]

April: *The Two Towers* by J.R.R. Tolkien
May: *The Return of the King* by J.R.R. Tolkien

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster Area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

Louise Grooms, [REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

Seattle: MITHLOND

John James, [REDACTED]

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: THE BURRAHOBBITS

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]

April: *Brown Girl in the Ring* by Nalo Hopkinson
May: *A Clash of Kings* by George R.R. Martin
June: *Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling

Special Interest Group

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]

[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. Info:

May: 2000 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award nominees
July: The Mythopoeic Graphic Novel
ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)
Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]

Online Discussion Group

COINHERENCE

Online discussion of Charles Williams

David Davis: [REDACTED]

Currently discussing *Descent of the Dove*.

Short Reviews

LLOYD ALEXANDER, *Gypsy Rizka*. Dutton, 1999. ISBN 0-525-46121-3, hc, 176 pp., \$16.99.

Greater Dunitza boasts an excellent horse trough in the town square. The townspeople are also proud of the town clock, which frequently tells the right time. The town's distinguished citizens include Mayor Pumpa, General Hatvan, Chief Councilor Sharpnack, and the cloth merchant, Mr. Podskalny. The only blot on the town's reputation is the Gypsy girl, Rizka, who lives by herself just outside the town in an old wagon. Rizka is hoping that someday her father will come back for her. In the town, she is always meddling in people's affairs, helping those who need it, and planning elaborate tricks and revenge on those who deserve it. Sharpnack wants to have her run out of town, but Rizka also has her allies among the townspeople. Will she find a way to defeat Sharpnack once and for all? Alexander's latest tale is full of hilarious incidents and wild farce and would make a good read-aloud story.

Reviewed by Laura Krentz



DAVID ALMOND, *Skellig*. Delacorte Press, 1998. ISBN 0525461213, hc, 176 pp., \$16.99.

Michael's family has just moved into a house that is not in very good condition. The garage, or shed, out back is even worse. In the dilapidated garage, Michael hears movement, and digging through the dirt and junk, he finds a creature that seems to be part man and part bird or angel. He and his new friend Mina, who loves anything with wings, visit Skellig and bring him food (Chinese take-out), drink (brown ale), and medicine (cod liver oil capsules). Michael's baby sister is ill and may be dying, but an operation

might help her. As the children get to know and help Skellig, they have some magical moments together. And somehow Skellig is able to help the baby, too. Told in lyrical prose, this unusual tale has a magic of its own.

Reviewed by Laura Krentz



FRANNY BILLINGSLEY, *Well Wished*. New York: Atheneum, 1997. ISBN 0689832559, pb, \$4.99.

This is a proper fantasy. The chief character is a spiteful wishing well, determined to compel people to make hasty or unwisely worded wishes (one wish in a lifetime), which can then be twisted against them. Just how the well got there is not explained, but the old trick of wishing for more wishes only results in the individual becoming the well's Guardian, sitting by the well and reciting three rules to all comers. In this village live eleven-year old Nuria and her grandfather. All the other children in the village have been mistakenly wished away, so Nuria is lonely. When a crippled girl comes, Nuria is delighted to have a friend, but not so delighted that she cannot be jealous. So the unwise wishes multiply until Nuria and her friend are switched into each other's bodies. Then somehow, the wishes have to be reversed. As in proper fantasies, the characters make mistakes, and learn from them to be generous, forgiving, wise enough to outwit the well. It can be done.

Reviewed by Grace Funk



DIA CALHOUN, *Firegold*. Winslow Press, 1999. ISBN 1890817287 tp, \$9.95.

An entirely original coming-of-age story with a real impact. Blue-eyed Jonathan Brae, of mixed blood, was just 13 years old when his world fell apart—is mother was killed, and he was exiled because it was believed he had caused a blight on the orchards. Worse, Jonathan has visions and feels compelled to seek the blue-eyed people who killed his mother. The story is rich in many magics, in talismans, traditions, fine horses, friendships, wise counsellors, mountains and birds. Two ways of life are starkly contrasted, valley village agricultural and mountain tent-camp hunting. There is violence and prejudice and bitter envy. There is a tender love shown to a frail handicapped girl by her brother. Jonathan suffers much, partly from ignorance and self-doubt; he also grows in body and learns knowledge and skills as he grows. After Jonathan learns to forgive, and to accept his double heritage and to use his particular talent, the unexpected denouement solves the mystery of his parentage, of the vanished apple called Firegold, and of his true love. Jonathan is still only barely fourteen. Does that say that we do not permit our children to grow up soon enough?

After reading this book, I read *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, and I was struck by similarities in these two very different books. Both boys have lost their mothers; both live at times among people who hate, misunderstand, and abuse them; both grow up in ignorance of their true parentage; both have animal partners; both must learn to use unusual talents; both need teachers, and friends.

Reviewed by Grace Funk



DAN GORDON AND ZAKI GORDON, *Davin*. New York: Yearling Books, 1998. ISBN 0440411920, pb 176 pp., \$4.50.

A toys-alive story that owes something to *The Twelve and the Genii* by Pauline Clarke, something to Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Land of Counterpane," something to *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Banks, something to *The Borrowers* by Norton, something to *Winnie the Pooh* by Milne, and certainly something to *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Bianco. The toys come alive to aid their sick owner. Their difficulties of size, their ingenuity, as in utilizing an old toy aeroplane, their various characters, are all entertaining. Not all the toys are altruistic, either. A bloodthirsty pirate and an evil Dark Knight complicate the endeavours. The ending is predictably happy and sentimental, when the old teddy bear, Davin, sacrifices himself, but is restored. The format is story-within-story, which is a little precious, but would make it fun to read aloud.

Reviewed by Grace Funk



ELIZABETH HAYDON, *Rhapsody*. New York: Tor Books, 1999. ISBN 0312867522, hc, 479 pp., \$24.95.

This thick volume has rave reviews posted on Amazon.com, so I thought I had better issue a warning. First of all there's a heavenly film editor arranging things in the prologue. (I can hear Tolkien muttering, "Now why didn't I think of that?")

After the prologue, alas, we get to the characters. Characters in a totally alien world (complete with endpapers map, of course), who have names like Sam and Jo and Emily and who dance the waltz, or the mazurka, and who say things like "Are you kidding?"

Characters in whom sudden love shows itself in this way: "... it might have been the mild humming in his eyes..." [say what!?!]... "Gwydion ... heard a door in his heart open." [Clunk!] "There was something much more than the alien chemical excitement" [?] "that had been coursing through him from the moment he laid eyes on her, leaving him feeling giddy and stupid."

He's not the only one.

Well, after this inauspicious beginning, we move on to our heroine Rhapsody, who is sort of Fafhrd-and-Grey-Mousing around in the company of a rather engaging ogre named Grunthor, who speaks British-TV-Yobbo dialect, and a devilish adventurer named Achmed the Snake. Rhapsody is a girl who has, well, been around, and we get plenty of graphic sex and four-letter words tossed about. Even fourteen-year-old Sam and Emily have pretty graphic sex in the first pages. Once again I hear J.R.R. Tolkien muttering "Now why didn't I think of that?"

On the jacket, Jennifer Roberson, Piers Anthony, and Morgan Llywellyn have committed themselves to praise of this, er, work, while Mary Jo Putney lets us in on the most hair-raising secret of all: there's going to be a trilogy.

Reviewed by Mary M. Stolzenbach



DIANA WYNNE JONES, *Deep Secret*. New York: Tor Books, 1999. ISBN 0812575725, pb, 384 pp., \$6.99.

As entertainingly ingenious a magical plot as any Diana Wynne Jones has ever served up. The plot is played out in the middle of a fantasy con, described with hilariously horrible accuracy. (Mythcons are much better organized.) It is also a tongue in cheek parable on providence. Although fallible, the 72 Archons arrange things

so that most of the debacles are "intended." But flipping through the worlds on a Mobius strip with two self-willed teenagers, trying to hold together a crumbling Empire that was supposed to crumble, Magid Rupert Venables has to deal with a wounded centaur, clues hidden in an old nursery rhyme, and a couple of power-hungry magicians continually twisting the vortex so that the hotel rooms are never where they were last (a nice touch, that—I've been in places like that!). The excitement never lets up: there are car chases and gun fights and an unlikely romance. A journey into self-discovery which is at the same time a journey into self-sacrifice resolves most of the conflicts. The climax comes with a magical battle in the middle of the guest of honor speech at the fantasy con. Summoned is a goddess who is really a thorny bush. Of course odd costumes and even odder goings-on are only to be expected at a fantasy con, aren't they? Finally the real Emperor arrives, he having finally got it all together—got all the pieces of himself together, that is.

Reviewed by Grace Funk



PATRICK O'BRIAN, *The Aubrey-Maturin Novels*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970–2000.

Patrick O'Brian's series of 20 Aubrey-Maturin novels was recently completed, just prior to the author's death. These are available from W.W. Norton in both hardcover and paperback (except for #20, *Blue at the Mizzen*).

Are they fantasies? Not in the sense that anything supernatural makes an appearance. However, we are in the most miraculously complete subcreated world—the "wooden world," that is, the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars—since J.R.R. Tolkien laid down his pen;

and we are in the presence (I make bold to assert) of one of the finest prose stylists in English of the last century.

In biting wit or hilarious commentary O'Brian has no superior; at other times, he can state the human condition with piercing accuracy; or show us one of the finest male friendships in literature, between two totally different, equally well-realized characters; or make palpable the experience of going to sea under sail; or show us with newborn sight the natural wonders that were becoming known in this age of science and discovery. Describing the sea, in any of its many moods, he reaches truly lyrical heights.

And with all this he was a master fantasist in life: O'Brian was not Irish, as he made himself out to be; had very likely never been to sea under sail; and had abandoned his original life and name for another of his own creation; all of which lends a curious double richness to the experience of his work.

I would be remiss in my duty if I did not bring this superlative reading experience to the attention of the discriminating readers who make up the Mythopoeic Society. If the heavy dose of nautical terminology in the opener, *Master and Commander*, causes you to gasp and gluggle a bit, persevere. You'll be glad you did.

Reviewed by Mary M Stolzenbach



LOUIS SACHAR, *Holes*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. ISBN 0374332657, hc, 233 pp., \$16.00.

Yes, this book deserves the Newbery Award (note the spelling, please!) and the National Book Award, and any other awards going. I have seldom read anything like it. Actually, it is only barely fantasy—one might really believe that

ancient curses have to be “fulfilled” or worked out, knowingly or not. More like magic realism, but not quite that either. Fantastic realism, perhaps? Really good books are hard to classify. It is a bitter denunciation of bureaucracy, letting lazy and greedy and sadistic persons be given charge of children. It is a story of almost unbelievable loyalty and courage and endurance—the kind of loyalty that children can give to each other. Because a scheming, greedy woman believes there is a treasure buried somewhere in the Texas desert, the juvenile offenders sent to her “camp” must dig for it—dig a hole every day, in the heat, suffering thirst and blisters and harassment. Stanley, wrongly accused under an old curse, winds up there, but by remembering some family history, manages to run away, to rescue another boy. In doing so, he fulfills the curse, finds the treasure, and outwits the greedy woman. Interspersed with Stanley's story is the old family story of the reason for the curse, and another story from the time of the treasure. The telling is spare and taut, using simple, straightforward language. Suspense is kept up, because the story is told from Stanley's viewpoint, and he never quite knows what is going on. I have only one quibble with the plotting. A clue to the treasure is a gold lipstick case. But the treasure was buried in the nineteenth century by an outlaw stagecoach robber called Kissin' Kate Barlow. Did such women use gold lipsticks????

Reviewed by Grace Funk



PATRICIA C. WREDE, *Mairelon the Magician*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1992. ISBN 0-812-50896-3, pb, 280 pp. \$5.99.

I have been seeing a lot of Patricia Wrede's post-

ings in *rec.arts.sf.composition*. She seemed like a very sensible and interesting person, so when I saw this book on the recommended shelf at my local sf store, I thought, "I've never read any of her books. I'll give it a try." Oh, reader, I'm so glad I did.

It is billed as taking place in "... an England that never was, but should have been"—a pseudo-Regency England where magic is real and there is a College of Wizards. We discover this England through the eyes of Kim, a young girl pretending to be a boy and living on the streets of London. One fine day she encounters a magician of the prestidigitatory sort who isn't what he seems and we're off and running. And run we do, through London and out into the country side while seeking the mysterious Saltash Set. It has been stolen from the College of Wizards and our heroes seek to return it to them. Part of the joy of this book is the way the reader discovers, along with Kim, what is happening, and therefore, I fear to tell you much more about the plot.

I began reading without much real interest, but by page 10 I was hooked. The main characters are quite well drawn and interested me from page one. Some of the lesser characters are more off-the-rack sorts, but such, I fear, is the fate of lesser characters. It was the character of Kim who hooked and held me firmly, along with the depiction of a London in which magic is real.

Wrede knows well the Regency romance style she is—not parodying, perhaps paying homage to. In fact one of my quibbles involved the large amount of coincidence working in these pages. The book's only other major flaw, for me, was that the ending was very talky. Sort of a lot of explanation crammed in all at once and not especially gracefully.

Nevertheless, when I realized there was a sequel, *Magician's Ward*, I ordered it immediately and it is even now winging its way my direction. When it arrives I shall pounce upon it with

glad cries of delight. And lucky you, you haven't even read the first one yet.

Reviewed by Mary Kay Kare



JANE YOLEN, *The Sea Man*. Illustrations by Christopher Denise. New York: Philomel Books, 1997. ISBN 0399229396, hc 48 pp, \$14.99.

I enjoyed *The Sea Man* much. At 40 pages, it's long for a picture book, but short for a chapter book. This is another story in which Yolen draws on her researches in the history of merfolk, in this case, a 17th century record of the capture of a merman by Dutch sailors, seen from the view of a scientifically-minded lieutenant and an open-minded cabin-boy. Historically, one might guess that the captured merman was a "dumb" (mute or retarded) human found swimming, but in the story he's actually a tailed merman. The merfolk theme is one that is usually powerful in her writing, and that's the case this time, too, as the lieutenant comes to realize that his merman is a person, not a dumb animal to be studied by science, any more than he is the malevolent omen of doom the crew think he is, but rather a person with a family and a language, someone they can at least start to communicate with. The descriptions of the sea and the seafolk are especially vivid. ("Its breath is labored, its gill slits now all gray... Its skin is no longer slippery, no longer wet, but feels spongy and warm. Twice Pieter drops the tail on the stairs and it slaps against the steps, a loud thudding.")

Reviewed by Ruth Berman



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