

mythPRINT



*Now in the woods his mother came to meet her son [...]
A light bow at her shoulder hung, her loosened hair
She gave in huntress' fashion to the rippling air,
Girt 'neath the paps and kilted to the naked knee [...]*

—Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book I, ll. 313, 317–9, trans. C.S. Lewis

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL.48 NO.5

MAY 2011

WHOLE NO.346

mythprint

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

VOL.48 NO.5

MAY 2011

WHOLE NO.346

TABLE of CONTENTS

FEATURES

An Interview with A.T. Reyes, editor of <i>C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid</i> . By Jason Fisher.	4
Mythopoesis: "In the Beginning ..." By Sarah Beach.....	6
Mythcon 42: Highlights from Progress Report 1. By Jason Fisher.....	8
New and Forthcoming Books.....	11

Cover Art: *Venus Appearing to Aeneas and Achates*,
by Giacinto Gimignani (1611–1681).

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:

Jason Fisher
Editor, *Mythprint*
1915 Province Lane
Dallas TX 75228
mythprint@mythsoc.org

Send other Correspondence to:

Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary
correspondence@mythsoc.org

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

The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore* (subscription \$25/year for U.S. Society members) and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. (\$8/issue for U.S. addresses). 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
Box 71
Napoleon MI
49261-0071

Visit The Mythopoeic Society on the web at
www.mythsoc.org.

REVIEWS

A.T. Reyes, ed. <i>C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid: Arms and the Exile</i> . Reviewed by Jason Fisher.	3
Sherwood Smith. <i>Coronets and Steel</i> . Reviewed by Alana Joli Abbott	6
William Lindsay Gresham. <i>Nightmare Alley</i> . Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller	8
M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel, eds. <i>The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature</i> . Reviewed by Ernest Davis.....	10

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 discussion groups.

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mythopoeic Society membership: \$12/year includes an electronic subscription and \$25/year includes a paper subscription to *Mythprint*; either entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

POSTAGE AND NON-MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Members	Institutions/Non-members
First Class U.S.	Included	\$25/year
Canada/Mexico	+ \$7/year	\$32/year
Rest of the world	+ \$16/year	\$41/year

The number in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label is the "Whole Number" of the last issue of your subscription. Checks should be made out to the Mythopoeic Society. Foreign orders should use U.S. funds if possible; otherwise add 15% to the current exchange rate. Back issues of *Mythprint* are available for \$1 each (U.S. postage included.)

ISSN 0146-9347, © 2011 The Mythopoeic Society

A.T. Reyes, ed. *C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid: Arms and the Exile*. Yale University Press, 2011. xxiii + 208 pp. \$27.50 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0300167177. Reviewed by Jason Fisher.

One of my college professors used to warn us in class that a pretty translation is seldom accurate, and an accurate one is seldom pretty. This observation goes all the way back to the 17th-century, to Gilles Ménages and the metaphor of *les belles infidèles* — which is to suggest, translations are like women: the beautiful ones aren't faithful, and the faithful ones aren't beautiful. Speaking of translations, this is usually true. (The other side of the analogy is the dangerous one! *Ergo silebo*.) But in this nimble rendition of parts of Virgil's *Aeneid*, C.S. Lewis has managed to achieve both fidelity and beauty to a remarkable degree — better than just about anyone I can think of. I have attempted this kind of translation myself, and for anyone who has not, I assure you it's harder than it looks. Lewis carries it off brilliantly, and so the publication of his fragmentary translation, almost fifty years belated, is a cause for celebration in two worlds: Narnia and Ancient Rome.

Lewis was ideally qualified to translate Virgil. In an era when all educated men and women still learned Latin, Lewis was *primus inter pares*. He not only read the language, he composed letters in it. We have a correspondence entirely in Latin between Lewis and an Italian priest who spoke no English. Lewis also saw Virgil through a Medieval rather than a Renaissance lens, putting him more in touch with the ancient author's mindset than any translator since the 16th-century Scot, Gavin Douglas. And the *Aeneid* itself was singularly important to Lewis. It was a work he knew intimately and which he read and returned to again and again, perhaps second only to the Bible. For more elaboration on this, see my interview with A.T. Reyes, following.

The book opens with a foreword by Walter Hooper and a preface by one of the great authorities on the *Aeneid*, D.O. Ross. The latter is particularly valuable for venturing the first answer to an obvious question: why another translation of Virgil's great poem? Is the present translation a mere curiosity, of interest only because penned by Lewis? No, says Ross, and he backs up his praise for Lewis's translation with a concrete example. For a selected passage, Ross gives Virgil's

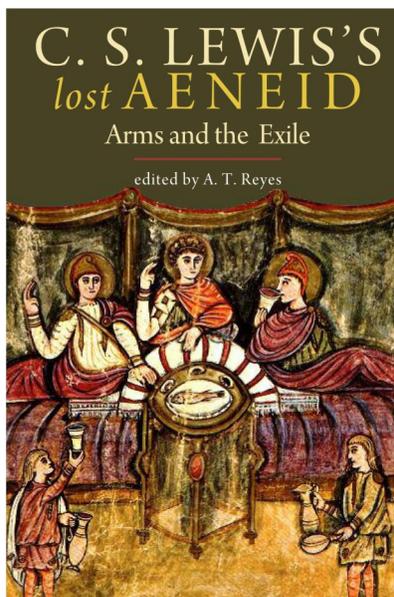
Latin, then Lewis's English, to which he compares three other more recent translations — unfavorably. Lewis, Ross points out, “is less bound to reproduce every Latin word, but he hits off what is striking and important [...]. In every aspect, we are much closer to Virgil” (xxiii).

Editor Reyes's excellent introduction expands on this, buttressed by many insights and thorough, far-ranging references. I learned a great deal from it.

Among other things, Reyes closely examines why Lewis's translation is so satisfying. As I said above, a key reason is the fact that Lewis returns to a Medieval reading of Virgil, rejecting the Renaissance Humanism that, in essence, neutered the Virgil we usually read today. Even where Lewis diverges from “mere translation” (as Douglas also diverged some four hundred years earlier), he preserves the spirit of Virgil's poetry far better than, say, John Dryden — let alone “modern” translators with their disproportionate emphasis on “accessibility”. Reyes's 30-page introduction stands as a terrific preparatory essay on the *Aeneid*, on Lewis on Virgil, and on Lewis on translation.

The bulk of the book is Lewis's translation itself, presented facing the Latin original, without editorial intrusion. Above all, this is just great reading. We have all of Book I, most of Book II, a large part of Book VI, and isolated passages and scattered lines from the other nine books of the *Aeneid*. The translation is full of wonderful words and clever turns of phrase, so many of them uniquely Lewisian: “Oh friends, not new to sorrow, we were worse bested / Ere now” (I.198f.). Some passages remind me of Homer, as this one, peppered with archaic vocabulary: “lay bare / The ribs and draw the numbles out and at the flame / Roast the yet quivering collops of the fatted game” (I.210ff.). Other passages strike an almost Shakespearean note: “her loosened hair / She gave in huntress' fashion to the rippling air, / Girt 'neath the paps and kilted to the naked knee” (I.317–9). And there are innumerable delightful choices sprinkled throughout — of which my favorite is “double-tongued” for *bilinguis* (l. 657), an apt agnomen for Lewis himself.

Ross and Reyes each examine a passage of Lewis's translation closely, as I have noted, but neither discusses the opening in any detail, so allow me to spare a few words on his auspicious beginning. Skipping the spurious four-line preamble (not penned by Virgil, but



which Lewis does retain), the famous opening lines are:

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit
litora — multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
inferretque deos Latio; genus unde Latinum
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae. (I.1–7)

Which Lewis renders:

Of arms and of the exile I must sing, of yore
Guided by fate from Troy to the Lavinian shore
And Italy. Much travailed upon land and sea
By powers in heaven for angry Juno's sake was he,
And proved in war; still endeavouring in our soil to place
His gods and build a city, whence the Latin race
Comes, and the Alban fathers and the walls of Rome. (37)

I appreciate that Lewis preserves the word order of the Latin in the opening phrase, but he translates *virumque* not “and of the *man*”, but “and of the *exile*” — departing from the literal, but hitting the right note in Virgil's great theme. And why does Lewis translate the simple present indicative *cano* “I sing” as something more jussive, “I *must* sing”? A cynical answer might be that he needed another syllable to fill out the line, but with Lewis, it must be more than that. Could it be a tacit admission that Lewis felt *compelled* to undertake the translation, haunted, like Dante, by the ghost of Virgil? Coming back to syllables, Lewis opts for rhyming twelve-syllable Alexandrines (like Gavin Douglas's Middle Scots translation), which fit the original better than Robert Fitzgerald's unrhymed, unscannable lines, or John Dryden's rhyming iambic pentameter. As you can see from the extract above, the music of these verses is irresistible.

But despite the temptation to go on, let me end here. As I hope readers will perceive, there is abundant raw material in this new book for anyone interested in the art and science of translation, and I hope we will indeed begin seeing research along these lines (forgive the unintended pun). In addition, I hope Lewis's lost *Aeneid* will inspire other translators to look backward, recalling their subjects' original audiences, and not to mollycoddle their present ones quite so much. “There are, I know,” Lewis wrote, “those who prefer not to go beyond the impression, however accidental, which an old work makes on a mind that brings to it a purely modern sensibility and modern conceptions [...]. I have no quarrel with people who approach the past in that spirit. I hope they will pick none with me. But I was writing for the other sort.”¹ May I say, Professor Lewis, that “the other sort” are still reading, and still ravenous for more. ☒

¹ Preface to *The Discarded Image*, p. x.

An Interview with A.T. Reyes, editor of *C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid*. By Jason Fisher.

Jason Fisher: Can you tell us how you came to be involved with this project? And what has been your experience with the works of C.S. Lewis in the past?

A.T. Reyes: I first met Walter Hooper in 1984 or 1985, at a dinner in the Kilns, Lewis's old house in Headington, and we have been friends since then. In the academic year 2004–5, I was Visiting Scholar at Wolfson College, Oxford, and it was in the Michaelmas Term that he invited me to dinner to show me the manuscript of the translation. He then asked me to write any notes that a general reader would need to understand the translation, intending, I think, to incorporate these into a new complete edition of Lewis's poetry. As it happened, the notes were far too long to be used successfully in such an edition, and so Walter suggested that Lewis's *Aeneid* become a volume on its own.

I had previously helped Walter to identify some of the quotations in C.S. Lewis's letters, when he was editing the collected correspondence. Before that, I was simply an admirer who read (and re-read) as much of C.S. Lewis's work as I could.

JF: Did you work directly with the manuscript, and can you describe it? Is it possible to determine anything of Lewis's process in making the translation? Were any passages particularly difficult to read?

ATR: I transcribed the manuscript myself, with Walter reading an earlier draft. I am grateful too for the help of Professor Philippa Goold of Mount Holyoke College, who read a later draft of my transcription and introduction. Her eye was exceptionally discerning. The main portions of the manuscript are in two school notebooks, both roughly seven by eleven inches. The manuscript seems to be, in essence, a fair copy, though with corrections and emendations. Lewis's handwriting is normally very clear, though there are occasional moments one has to strain to understand the text. In the book, I have a section which shows the main emendations and changes that Lewis made in his text.

Because the manuscript is probably a fair copy, it is difficult to deduce anything about Lewis's method of translation. It is doubtful that



he translated “linearly.” He probably translated those sections which interested him in particular. The manuscript of the surviving portion of Book II ends with a semi-colon, which should (in theory) suggest a continuation somewhere — but that seems not to have been the case.

JF: How much of the *Aeneid* is represented by Lewis’s translation? So far as you can tell, when were they made? Do you have any sense of whether Lewis actually translated more than we have, now lost?

ATR: The surviving parts of the translation are as follows: all of Book I, most of Book II, and a substantial portion of Book VI. There are solitary fragments from books III, IV, V, and VII. The final couplet from Book XII is also preserved in the exercise-books. He seems to have begun the translation around 1933, revising and translating portions continually until his death in 1963. The substantial portions from Books I, II, and VI, as well as the final couplet from book XII are in the two notebooks. All else is gathered from his extant writings. My guess is that he had not translated beyond Book VII, since there are no substantial fragments after that point. It is not impossible that further fragments will come to light.

JF: Any guesses as to why Lewis chose the books and sections he did? Does his translation represent any particular exciting or compelling or moving passages?

ATR: Books I, II, and VI are among the most important of the twelve books of the *Aeneid*. Of the major books in the first half of the *Aeneid*, only a substantial fragment from Book IV is missing. These books, particularly Book II, bring to the fore, as he wrote to Dorothy Sayers in 1946, the costliness and

tragedy of war. “Life has its tears, and men’s mortality its sting.” (1.458 of his translation). I am sure that he felt that deeply.

JF: Did Lewis include commentary on lines or passages? Are there any well-known cruces in the sections he translated, and if so, how did Lewis attempt to solve them?

ATR: There is no accompanying commentary, and it is not clear from the translation that he attempted to solve any important cruces definitively.

JF: Does *C.S. Lewis’s Lost Aeneid* include any reproductions of manuscript pages so that interested readers may examine Lewis’s handwritten translation for themselves?

ATR: Five pages of the manuscript are reproduced in the book. [See below left for a part of one of these.]

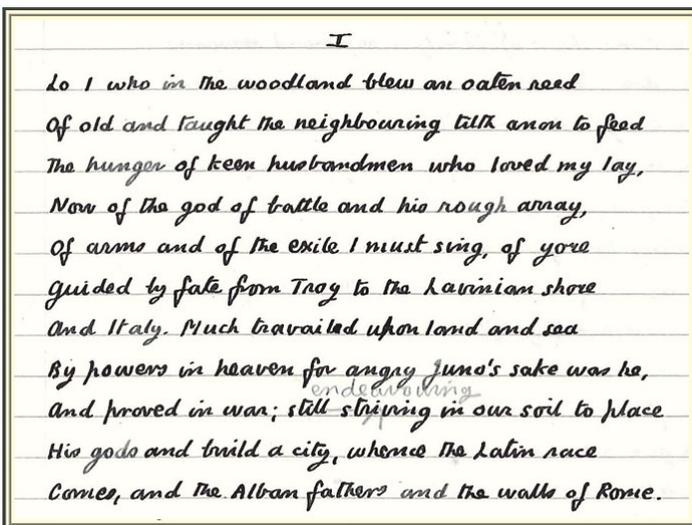
JF: Can you offer any thoughts on what Lewis found so compelling about the *Aeneid*? Why this work and not Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, for example? And why attempt his own translation, when so many others had already been made?

ATR: The tragedy of the *Aeneid*, with its stark examination of war and its costliness certainly affected him. C.S. Lewis also identified with Aeneas, one who finally reaches home after much travel and travail. For Lewis, home was Christianity, and an autobiographical fragment of his poetry makes the explicit comparison between himself and Aeneas.

His translation of the *Aeneid* is an attempt to bring translation of this work back within a Medieval tradition. The original audience of the *Aeneid* would have recognized a liveliness that is missing from translations influenced by Dryden or the Ciceronian predilections of the Humanist tradition. Too often, translators render the *Aeneid* as if it were another bit of Ciceronian oratory, not a tale of arms and an exile.

JF: What new appreciation can readers of Lewis — and readers of the *Aeneid* — find in the translation?

ATR: Extraordinary is Lewis’s ability to maintain a high standard of scholarship with regard to the Latin and an equally high poetic standard in English. C.S. Lewis’s text reads very well as English poetry, but remains exact in its translation of the Latin. The attempt to set the *Aeneid* squarely within a medieval tradition, using Alexandrine couplets, renders this translation unique. ☒



The opening lines of C.S. Lewis’s translation; holograph manuscript, reproduced from C.S. Lewis’s *Lost Aeneid*, with permission.

Mythopoesis: “In the Beginning ...” By Sarah Beach.

Several years ago, I wrote a column in *Mythlore* about creating fantasy. In the time since, I’ve written a book on mythic motifs for storytellers and done more writing of my own. I thought it would be interesting to return to the subject of “myth making” once again. So here we are.

The Bible begins with “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” J.R.R. Tolkien took that as the basis for the human impulse to create things — we were made in the likeness of a God who begins by creating. Whatever one may think of the theology in that, it does give an explanation for why so many people become inspired to create “new worlds.” After all, a lot of work goes into creating a “new world.”

However, I will say that your about-to-be-world-creator does need a bit of inspiration in order to get started. Something one encounters fires up the imagination, sets wheels turning. For some people, the awakened imagination is content with the fictional world that generated the excitement. I think this is where fan-fiction springs from. Some are happy spinning more instances of “what if” with the structures of someone else’s Secondary World. *Star Trek*, Middle-earth, Harry Potter and the corridors of Hogwarts, the created worlds of various computer role-playing games: when creative members of the audience for some fictive world get inspired, they frequently want to add to that Subcreation that gave them so much pleasure. It’s a perfectly natural response.

But for others, the creative impulse that comes from inspiration drives them further; it drives them to seek their own “new world.”

For the writer who sets out to create his or her own Secondary World, there is always the factor that the works and authors that initially inspired them will influence the shape the new world takes. Some writers get discouraged by people pointing fingers saying “Oh, you’re copying Tolkien,” “You’re copying Rowling.” The creative impulse that moves to a new world gets choked off by the word “copy.” Echoes, reflections, variations: somehow these terms do not have the same killing power that “copy” has.

The problem for someone looking at a “new world” is how to tell the difference between an unpracticed reflective imitation and an uninspired copy. My first attempt at creating a Tolkienesque world was (to put it mildly) a mess. I did not really understand what I was getting into in creating a “new world.” I wrote a story and then tried to create the world’s mythology and history afterward. But I could never quite

get it to pull together. The story was shallow and the mythology felt cardboard. And it didn’t get any better.

So I stopped, and started over.

Instead of trying to create something that resembled the *end product* of Tolkien’s imagination, I stepped back and gave my own imagination space to pull those elements out of the Cauldron of Story that mattered to *me*.

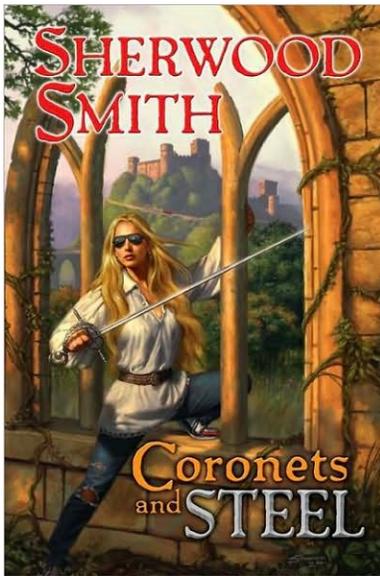
For the aspiring Subcreator, learning to trust one’s own inner drives and sense of story is not easy. There are plenty of people who will want to say “Oh, you’re doing this wrong.” But this may spring from a reader’s sense that the author is uncertain about something in their own creation. I was recently giving another writer notes on an opening chapter, and he had some interesting issues introduced by his characters. Since I don’t know yet where he intends to go with his story, there wasn’t much I could say about the over-all shape. However, there was one incident in this chapter that *did* reflect a Big Picture matter, and I had to say “Be sure you know what you want this to be. Because this statement implies X, and you will have to address this at some point down the road.” He could go in various directions with it, but he did need to be clear in his head that he knew which direction it would be.

So, “in the beginning” the Subcreator is inspired to create some sort of “new world,” one born of a unique heart and mind. The writer needs to trust that sense of uniqueness. After all, it’s possible that somewhere down the line, his Subcreation will ignite the creative impulse in yet another storyteller.

We make according to the Law by which we were made (says Tolkien). Creativity is a highly infectious dis-ease. Don’t get comfortable. ☒

Sherwood Smith. *Coronets and Steel*. DAW, 2010. 428 pp. \$24.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0756406424.
Reviewed by Alana Joli Abbott.

In *Coronets and Steel*, Sherwood Smith is taking a step in a new direction — sort of. Rather than the world where many of her novels are set, an amazingly complex land where sharp-witted heroines duel with their tongues as well as their blades, and where men who at first appear to be villains end up the greatest heroes, she sets her new book in our modern world. Here, Aurelia Kim Murray, a graduate student, fencing champion, and dancer, finds herself verbally sparring with Alec, a man who, at first, appears to be a



villain (albeit a very handsome and charming one). A case of mistaken identity embroils her in a plot of the royal court of Dobrenica, an eastern European country with a magical history, trying desperately to recover from having been under the thumb of the Soviet Union years before.

As in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which the well read Kim compares to her own situation, Kim

finds that she looks exactly like a royal relative. Soon-to-be Princess Aurelia, to whom Kim is mysteriously related, is ostensibly avoiding her upcoming marriage to Alec, but he (the heir to Dobrenica's throne) believes that one of his rivals may be keeping her from her royal commitments. The upcoming marriage is to be a type of renewal for Dobrenica, one he believes necessary for the country. To aid him in uncovering Aurelia's whereabouts, Alec enlists Kim (after kidnapping her — but that, of course, is a misunderstanding) to impersonate his fiancé. While maintaining the charade, Kim begins to get hints of her own family's history — truths that she believes will help her grandmother, whose health is failing, regain some of her will to live. So rather than end her travels when she stops being Alec's accomplice, she travels to Dobrenica herself, seeking the whole story of her family's past — and trying to solve the mysteries that surround the country, making it seem to disappear completely from the world for years at a time. She doesn't truly believe that the fairy tales she learned as a child are real — but she doesn't know how else to explain the ghosts she's begun seeing with her own eyes.

Like many of Sherwood's novels, *Coronets and Steel* is clearly a fantasy, and there are magical elements woven throughout. But the magic provides a backdrop, rather than a focus for the story. The main action is in the characters and how they relate to each other — and to their duties. While the story is probably a contemporary or urban fantasy by category, it fits into a market segment that I think of as "courtly fantasy" — here is the court intrigue, the nobles jockeying for position, the moments of derring-do accomplished by heroes who should believe they are too important to their nations to be risked, but risk themselves anyway to save the day. The motives are com-

plex, and while there are a few real villains, most of the people who seem dastardly have real reasons for their course of action.

Kim is a charming and engaging narrator, and if she occasionally refuses to admit what's in front of her face — well, who wouldn't doubt when facing the supernatural? But one of the most fun things about Kim has little to do with her own story, and far more to do with how I imagine I would relate to her as a real person: I could see her fitting in beautifully well among members of the Mythopoeic Society. She talks about liminal space, about a sense of the numinous, about the nature of story — all without ever detracting from the main thrust of the narrative. Rather than having a standard urban fantasy narration style, Kim has a voice that feels like someone I would know and be friends with — or at least have out to coffee or chat with at a Mythcon.

The novel ends, if not quite on a cliffhanger, at least with a clear lead-in to the second volume. The sequel, *Blood Spirits*, is slated for September 2011. ☒

— WANTED — Books about the Inklings

Thanks to all of you who have supported the Apocryphile Press' efforts to get *all* of Charles Williams' works back into print. We're not there yet, but we're steadily working on it!

We'd like to expand our Inklings Heritage Series, as well, and we'd be grateful for your help. If you know of valuable books *about* the Inklings or their works that are currently out of print, but that you think ought to be widely available, won't you please contact us and suggest them? We would love to reprint them. (It would be particularly helpful if you also had contact info for the author or rightsholders.)

Thank you again for your support in our mutual interest in Inklings scholarship.

Sincerely,
John R. Mabry, Publisher
The Apocryphile Press
(apocryphile@me.com)



Mythcon 42: Highlights from Progress Report 1.

By Jason Fisher.

Readers will find the complete Progress Report and a wealth of other information at www.mythcon.org

Mythcon in the Land of Enchantment” is coming sooner than you think. The hard-working committee, led by Leslie Donovan at the University of New Mexico, has just released its first progress report, which is chock full of details on what you can expect at the 42nd annual Mythopoeic Conference, July 15–18, 2011, in Albuquerque. For those in the desert southwest of the United States, this is the first time Mythcon has ever come to New Mexico. Prior to that, you have to go back a jaw-dropping 31 years to Mythcon 11, which was held in Reno, Nevada. Mythcon 42, like last year’s conference in Dallas, Texas, is determined to introduce visitors to a part of the country many Society Members never see. Make sure you don’t miss the opportunity!

In addition to the Guests of Honor — Author Catherynne M. Valente and Scholar Michael D.C. Drout — the Mythcon committee has now confirmed a ... What is the collective noun for a group of fantasy authors? Anyone have a suggestion? ... well, an impressive collection of participants for their Writers’ Track. These currently include Daniel Abraham, Ty Franck, Jane M. Lindskold, Melinda Snodgrass, Leslie Stratyner, Ian Tregillis, Robert E. Vardeman, Carrie Vaughn, and Marek Oziewicz, winner of last year’s Mythopoeic Scholarship Award — with more to come. In addition to the Writers’ Track, Mythcon 42 will offer an Artists’ Track — very à propos, given New Mexico’s artistic heritage.

Leslie reports that as of this writing, Mythcon has accepted “twenty-four papers and two panels, with several more of each promised”, “cover[ing] a wide range of mythopoeic authors, including J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Dante Alighieri, George MacDonald, Neil Gaiman, J.K. Rowling, Roger Zelazny, Nancy Farmer, Susannah Clarke, and others. In addition to presentations and panels grounded in the conference theme, a sampling of topics so far span a wide spectrum of subjects, such as Norse and Celtic motifs, Vedantic thought, medieval architecture, Persephone figures, Dungeons and Dragons, wartime themes, Alaskan Native Americans, fantasy poetry, Transcendentalism, gendered monsters, and, of course, werewolves and vampires!” Well of course, werewolves and vampires; how could we do without those?

Those presenting papers at Mythcon should take note of special opportunities for assistance and recog-

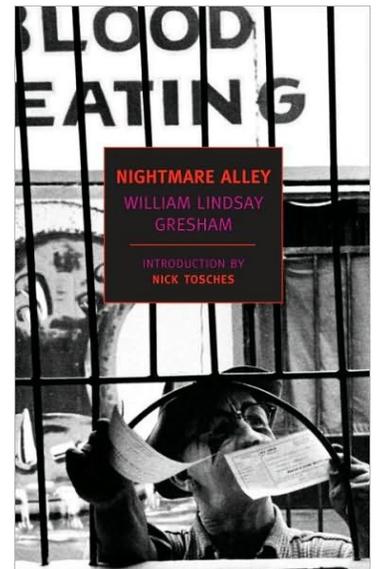
nition. First, the Alexei Kondratiev Award for Best Student Paper, inaugurated in 2010, will be awarded for the best paper presented at Mythcon by an undergraduate or graduate student. This award comes with more than just bragging rights; check the progress report for details. Second, the Glen GoodKnight Memorial Scholarship Fund will award financial assistance to “staving scholars”, helping to partially defray the costs of attending Mythcon. Again, check the progress report for details on how to apply. The deadline is rapidly approaching: May 20, this year.

The progress report also summarizes the details of registration, room and board, and gives us a first look at the many friends, new and old, you can expect to meet this July: more than sixty people are registered so far. Join us, won’t you? ☒

William Lindsay Gresham. *Nightmare Alley*. NYRB Classics, 2010. 288 pp. \$14.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-1590173480. Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller.

Reissued last year with an introduction by Gresham scholar Nick Tosches was *Nightmare Alley*, the book that made William Lindsay Gresham famous (and \$60,000), and which was adapted quickly for the big screen. This noirish crime tale from 1946 does have an indirect bearing on Inklings studies.

Joy Davidman Gresham, who was later married to C.S. Lewis, was first married to and had two children with William Lindsay Gresham. They both had eclectic political and religious interests, and were later Christian converts because of C.S. Lewis’s writings. William Lindsay did not remain a Christian and appeared never to have conquered his demons, the seeds having fallen on barren rock, as it were. Inklings scholars will easily see how *Nightmare Alley* relates not just to Joy Davidman (to whom it is dedicated) and to C.S. Lewis, but it also resembles somewhat the dark supernatural thrillers of Charles Williams. It should be remembered that Gresham wrote an introduction to *The Greater Trumps*. *Nightmare*



Alley differs markedly in style from the works of the Inklings, which generally lack sex and petty criminals. It is more of a crime novel than the supernatural thrillers of Charles Williams, but though it follows a different course, it is generally of the same milieu.

The novel uses the cards of Tarot as chapter titles providing both symbolism and metaphor. The story centers on the carnival with also its advertisements of encounters with the supernatural. [Gresham is not the only novelist to turn to the Tarot for inspiration. Another notable example, Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* (1973), constructs a narrative entirely out of Tarot cards. —Editor.]

Nightmare Alley tells the story of Stan Carlson, a carnival hustler who later becomes a religious charlatan. It is a bleak picture that Gresham paints of a man seeking escape from the strange world of sideshows and geeks. The novel was collected by The Library of America as one of the most notable crime novels of the 1930s and 1940s, but it is not so hard bitten as many others of its like. Sometimes sympathetic Stan has religious yearnings and caters to others with the same yearnings, even if he does so disingenuously, looking only for enough money to get away from the whole mess.

As Tosche notes: "As piercing as the psychological probings of *Nightmare Alley* are, eerily the tarot

alone is bestowed at times with a hint of ominous gravity and credence amid all the other spiritualist cons of the novel that are to Gresham and his characters nothing more than suckers' rackets." *Nightmare Alley* gives one a sense of what the Greshams were trying to leave behind. Here is the claustrophobic world of society's disconnects and strays. Creatures still human but some so geekish, so odd, that people would pay money just to see them. They may also see parts of themselves in them.

William Lindsay Gresham "was" Stan, whose despair is tempered by a dream of paradise — something which he had in common with the Inklings. In his story one finds also a desire for life to have meaning, for there to be something to strive for. Gresham writes of Stan: "Ever since he was a kid Stan had had the dream. He was running down a dark alley, the buildings vacant and menacing on either side. Far down at the end of it a light burned, but there was something behind him, close behind him, getting closer until he woke up trembling and never reached the light." Down there at the other end of the dark tunnel of life there was also possibly light, as the Inklings believed. There, one could hope for a happy ending or salvation. But only Joy Davidman Gresham was able to escape, crossing the Atlantic with their children. William Lindsay Gresham was left behind. It is beside the point of this review to consider why she left, but Gresham was an alcoholic, insolvent, a womanizer, and sometimes violent. Surely, these would have been reasons enough.

She may also have found more fresh air in epic fantasies rather than the strange world of the carnival. William Lindsay Gresham wrote other works about the "carny" life, and even one about Houdini, not being able to escape himself. He committed suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills in September, 1962. Like Charles Williams, William Lindsay Gresham never lost his interest in the supernatural, and he never found the light at the end of the tunnel. But *Nightmare Alley* succeeds as a great study of the individual trying to cope with a difficult and bizarre world. The book may be a bit risqué for young Inklings readers; it contains expletives and adult themes. It has, in fact, been banned for such reasons in the past. The Inklings in their heroic fiction tends to focus more on clean-cut folks with worthier aspirations. This book is more an exploration of the desperate places of the soul — but not without its merits for all that, or perhaps even *because* of that. ☒

Mythprint has received this notice
from Daniel Baird:

For those of you who are fans of the Japanese fantasy series, *Twelve Kingdoms*, I have learned of the following information from Tatsuya Morimoto, licensing manager at Kodansha International Rights Dept.

"Thank you for your interest in *Twelve Kingdoms*, and we really appreciate fan's great expectations toward the series. Right now we have no plans to publish the rest of series in English, unfortunately. But we are still seeking opportunities to make it happen in the near future (I cannot guarantee though)."

It would seem therefore that Book 4, *Skies of Dawn*, which I reviewed in *Mythprint* in June, 2010 is the last to be published for now. If you have an interest in seeing the rest of the series translated into English, I would recommend you email sales@kodansha-intl.co.jp to let them know of your interest.

M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. xxv + 293 pps. \$29.99 (softcover). ISBN 978-0521868198. Reviewed by Ernest Davis.

The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature is a collection of sixteen essays in literary criticism of children's literature, on thematic topics. There is also a chronology, mostly publication dates of major works, with an unusual focus on book production and printing technology; e.g. "1931, Jean de Brunhoff, *The Story of Babar*, an outstanding early example of offset colour lithography." The essays are, for the most part, very well written, erudite, thought-provoking, and informative. The books discussed form a remarkably eclectic collection, spanning a broad historical range; there is much more on 18th and even 17th century literature than I usually see in this kind of collection. The one significant limitation is that, with occasional exceptions, only books first published in English are considered. Most importantly, the tone is, for the most part, appreciative rather than adversarial; authors and illustrators are viewed as creative artists who are doing their best to produce worthwhile reading, rather than stooges of the Ideological State Apparatus.

Two of the essays, it seemed to me, are significantly weaker than the rest. "Animal and object stories" by David Rudd is, as far as I know, the debut of a new form of political correctness-based criticism; that of animal rights. In this view an animal story is worthwhile to the degree that it realistically portrays the suffering of animals at the hands of humans. Thus, *Black Beauty* and *Arlene Sardine* (about a sardine that ends up in a can) are given high marks, whereas *Winnie the Pooh* and *The Wind in the Willows* are scorned as hopelessly anthropomorphic. Whatever the ethical merits of this viewpoint, it does not, it seems to me, say anything valuable about animal stories as a literary genre. The second, Roderick McGillis in "Humor and the body in children's literature", promotes two ideas: switching big and little is funny, and bodily

functions are funny.

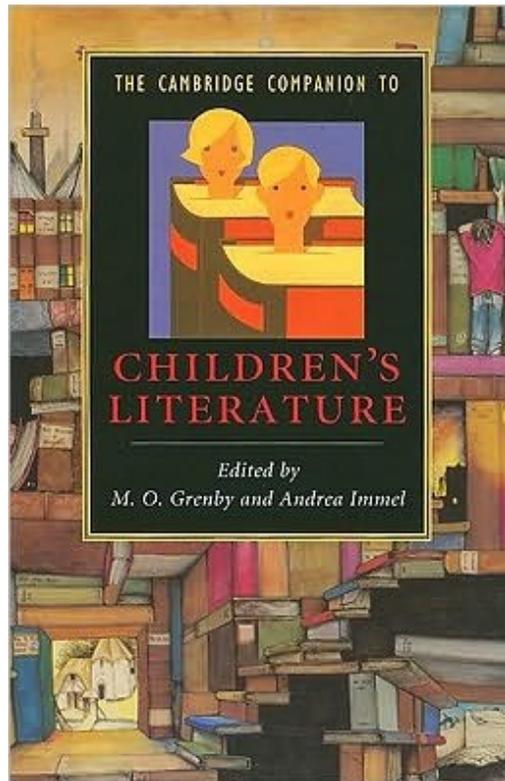
But the rest of the essays are all worthwhile, and some are excellent. Let me briefly discuss three that I found particularly interesting. Richard Flynn's "The fear of poetry" finds much to bemoan in the way that poetry is currently written for, collected for, and taught to children. In his caustic phrase, "While we don't need any more 'Hoary Chestnuts: Poems Adults Think are Good For You,' neither do we need any more 'Because I Could Not Pick My Nose: Poems Guaranteed to Gross Out Your Parents.'" Flynn is particularly unimpressed with the poems of Jack

Prelutsky, the current U.S. Children's Poet Laureate, who is an example of the latter. Likewise, Flynn finds that the teaching of poetry in school tends to focus on writing poetry rather than reading poetry, and to favor such forms as free verse and haiku, which rarely interest children.

But Flynn's essay seems to me stronger on the negative than on the positive side. We can all agree that the teacher who forbade her students to use rhyme in their poems because it "gets in the way of their self-expression" is some kind of relative of Dolores Umbridge. But I am not convinced, on the basis of this essay, that I would choose Flynn to put together a reading list for a fifth-grade poetry class. His consistent preference is for poetry which is "challenging", which is fine up

to a point, but obviously runs the risk of that you end up having the children memorize "The Wasteland" under the baleful eye of the Tiger Mother. Also, he hardly discusses the most common interaction of children with poetry, namely in the lyrics of songs; certainly a major omission in this kind of essay.

In her essay "Children's texts and the grown-up reader", U.C. Knoepfelmacher is, strictly speaking, cheating; the essay has almost nothing to do with the title subject. Rather it is mostly a fascinating discussion of one of the strangest frames in children's literature, the first chapter of *The Borrowers*, with its three levels of indirection (Kate hears the story from Mrs. May, who heard it from her brother) and its unreliable narrator. Knoepfelmacher analyses Norton's own

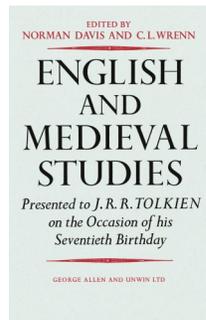


account of how she came to create the story, the structure of the opening chapter, the information given throughout the story about the boy and about Mrs. May, various details from the text and the illustrations that either shed light or (deliberately) don't fit; and she shows how these make the story both richer and more tantalizingly elusive.

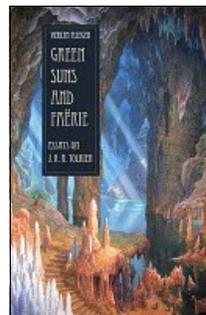
My favorite essay, though, is "Picture-book worlds and ways of seeing," by Katie Trumpeter. The conventional wisdom about writing survey articles is that, above all, you must avoid the trap of simply listing a lot of stuff. This article does just that, brilliantly. (In fairness, the article also has some general discussion, also very interesting.) It enumerates some hundreds of titles, authors, and illustrators — some classics, some I have heard of, most entirely new to me — with a succinct, precise, and vivid descriptions of their contribution to the art of children's illustration; and I now want to go out and look at them *all*. "Beatrix Potter's *Tale of Two Bad Mice*, Wanda Gág's *Snippy and Snappy*, Marjorie Flack's *Angus and the Cat*, and William Nicholson's *Clever Bill* view the human world from the stance of mouse, dog, or tin soldier, sometimes bending or refracting perspective in the process." "Madlenka ... explores a single New York City block using differently scaled visualizations, from an aerial city map to 360-degree circular mapping ... of each building. In the process Sís reconciles apparently disparate genres within expository picture books: sketchbook experiments in perspective and cross-section; city planning books; panoramas." "William Kurelek's *A Prairie Boy's Winter* recalls ... Depression-era rural poverty; yet the apparently monotonous prairie landscape proves visually rich, teaching the author to see and to paint. Kurelek's semi-naïve tableaux record striking compositional conjunctures: fresh truck track on snowy road; skaters' rigid, asymmetrical legs bisecting flat prairie horizons; snowfall, blizzard, or snowploughbackdraft changing the quality of light; a woman bending over the fence, calling the pigs; transparent water becoming opaque skating-rink ice." (I did actually buy a copy of Kurelek after reading Trumpeter's description.)

Since this is *Mythprint*, I should add that there is little discussion of Tolkien — Bilbo is praised as an instance of a "non-macho" hero — and less of Lewis. But many other famous authors fare no better; the emphasis here is on thematic criticism rather than on criticism of individual authors and books. The essay on fantasy is unfortunately one of the weaker ones in the collection. ☒

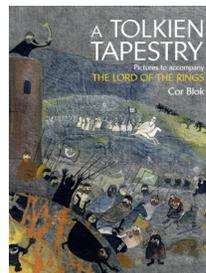
NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS



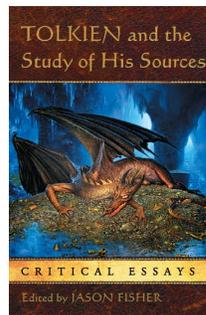
Norman Davis and C.L. Wrenn, eds. *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien [...]*. HarperCollins. 339 pp. hardcover). ISBN 978-0007426317. May, 2011.



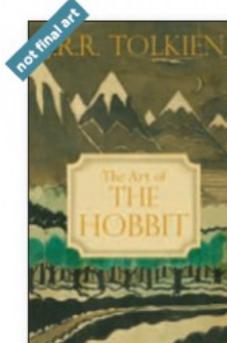
Verlyn Flieger. *Green Suns and Faërie: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien*. Kent State UP. 224 pp. \$24.95 (softcover). ISBN 978-1606350942. August, 2011.



Cor Blok. *A Tolkien Tapestry: Pictures to accompany The Lord of the Rings*. HarperCollins. 160 pp. £20.00 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0007437986. September, 2011.

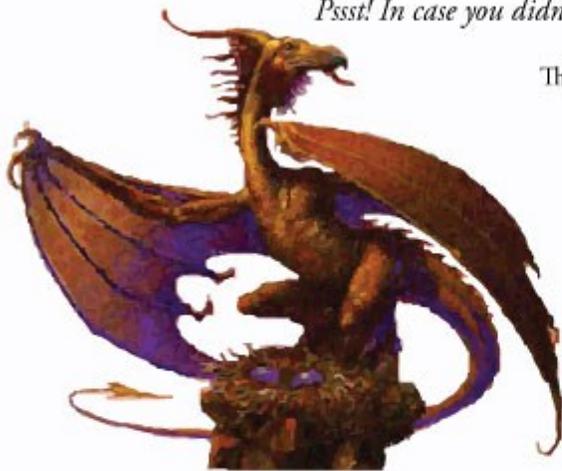


Jason Fisher, ed. *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays*. c. 325 pp. \$40 (softcover). ISBN 978-0786464821. Fall, 2011.



Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull. *The Art of The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien*. HarperCollins. 128 pp. (hardcover). ISBN 978-000744081-8. Spring, 2012.

The Mythopoeic Society
Box 6707
Altadena CA 91001



Pssst! In case you didn't know...

The 42nd annual gathering of the Mythopoeic Society
will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico
July 15th-18th, 2011

Presenters, scholars, and guests are invited to enjoy
**“Monsters, Marvels, and Minstrels:
The Rise of Modern Medievalism”**

Call for Papers Deadline: May 6th, 2011

Register online: <http://www.mythcon.org>
Direct questions to: mythcon42@mythsoc.org

Conference highlights include: Michael D.C. Drout (Scholar Guest of Honor), Catherynne M. Valente (Author Guest of Honor), Writers' and Artists' Tracks featuring fantasy and science fiction authors/artists from around the Southwest, and so much more!

Hurry, there's no time for 'dragon' yer feet. Register today!