

mythPRINT



Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society with Book Reviews, Short Articles, Event Information, and More!

VOL. 60 NO. 3

FALL 2023

WHOLE NO. 406



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Mythprint is the quarterly 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: \$15/year includes an electronic subscription and \$30/year includes a paper subscription to *Mythprint*; either entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

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First Class U.S.	\$30/year
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Complete & updated price lists can always be found on our website.

The easiest way to join the Mythopoeic Society and subscribe to our publications or join our annual conference is to visit our website. We take personal checks as well as PayPal, which is the easiest way for overseas members. Back issues of *Mythprint* are available for purchase at our website.

Reviews of mythopoeic media, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, notes or short articles, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. In return for printed pieces, contributors who are not already subscribers will receive an electronic copy of the issue in which the item appears. Contributors who are already subscribers will not receive an additional copy. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

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The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore* (subscription \$30/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 through our web site (using PayPal), or you may contact:

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Visit The Mythopoeic Society online at www.mythsoc.org.

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Something Mighty Queer

ONLINE MIDWINTER SEMINAR 2024



OMS 2024 ONLINE MIDWINTER SEMINAR, FEBRUARY 17-18

Something Mighty Queer

CFP Submission Deadline: November 30, 2023.

We invite submissions for an online conference that focuses on queerness in fantasy, science fiction, speculative fiction or other mythopoeic work. This can be queer representation within the work or engaging with mythopoeia through queer theory. “Queerness” is an intentionally ambiguous term, demonstrating the diversity of queer experiences, and the necessity of situating queerness as a liminal, complex paradigm. Queer theory is wider than the study of gender identity or sexuality, extending to taking positions against normativity and dominant modes of thought, and engaging with the indefinite.

Aspects of this topic might include but are certainly not limited to any of the following: Otherness, stranger/outsider, the uncanny, marginalization and oppression, liminality and liminal spaces, depictions of queer people, thresholds, trans theory, gender performativity, readings and research that challenge normative or hegemonic perspectives.

Some examples of topics:

Queer readings, queercoding, “coming out” narratives, the monstrous neighbor, queering in fandom.

Papers, panels, and roundtables from a variety of critical perspectives and disciplines are welcome. We are interested in ANY form of media — text, graphic novels, comics, television, movies, music and music videos, games — as long as it can be described as fantasy or otherwise mythopoeic.

Each presentation will receive a 50-minute slot to allow time for questions, but individual presentations should be timed for oral presentation in 40 minutes maximum. Two or three presenters who wish to present short, related papers may also share one 50-minute slot.

Proposals (~200 words) with bios (150 words, maximum) should be sent to:

oms-chair@mythcon.org

Working bibliographies are welcome, but not required.

THE FUTURE OF LONG-EXPECTED PARTIES: A NOTE FROM YOUR NEW MYTHCON STEWARD

By Tim Lenz

Greetings Mythies! As you may have seen on the Society’s social media channels or in the last issue of Mythprint, the Council of Stewards has graciously appointed me to fill the role of the Steward of Mythopoeic Conferences (a.k.a. ‘Mythcon Steward’) upon Lynn Maudlin stepping down earlier this year after serving in the position for an admirable 18 years. I would like to echo the outpouring of gratitude that was expressed in the Society’s Facebook group for Lynn’s work in assisting with Mythcons for many years, and I look forward to her continued participation in our events.

If you have been attending the Society’s events over the last couple of years, you have probably already encountered me juggling Zoom rooms, setting up microphones and webcams, or presenting as part of a panel. But for those of you not already familiar with me, I suppose I could be considered a relative newcomer to the Society compared to Mythies that have been involved for three, four, or even in a few cases five decades. I attended my first Mythcon 5 years ago in 2018 (Mythcon 49 in Atlanta). My wife Alicia was the chair of that event, and she tapped me to assist with some of the organization — in particular supplying provisions for the con suite. Little did I know that liquor was not typically stocked in a Mythcon hospitality suite! Let’s just say that the suite was particularly ‘jovial’ that year. I found myself immediately enamoured with Mythcon’s unique blend of academics, fannish content, and goblin head-smashing, and have gleefully attended every event since. I became more involved with Society events during the pandemic, as my technological inclinations were employed for Mythcon 51 (the “Virtual

Halfling Mythcon”) and the inaugural Online Midwinter Seminar in 2022. Shortly thereafter the Council appointed me as the Manager for Online Events, later ‘upgraded’ to the Steward for Online Events after a vote to expand the total allowed number of Stewards under the Society’s bylaws. Now the ‘Online Events’ role has been folded into the ‘Mythopoeic Conferences’ Stewardship, allowing me to support all the Society’s conferences and events, whether in-person, fully virtual, or hybrid.

My primary aim as your Mythcon Steward is to maintain the rich history of long-standing Mythcon traditions such as thought-provoking academic content and discussion, lighter fannish programming, inspiring Guests of Honor, Golfimbul, Bardic Circle, food sculptures, Clerihews, and, most of all, congenial revelry as we celebrate and analyze the legends, stories, and creators that bring us all together. And I would happily (with your help) reintroduce some of the other traditions that have lapsed in recent years due to the pandemic and other factors — it has been far too long since Mythies have been graced by a hastily-rehearsed performance from the Not-Quite-Ready-for-Mythcon Players, or treated to musical stylings with clever lyrical turns during our banquets. At the same time, I also plan to further develop and expand the reach of our events via virtual and hybrid conferences, which allow fans of the Inklings and other fantastical stories from all around the world to participate with a low ‘barrier to entry’ (ie. Minimal registration cost, no travel requirement, etc). I especially hope that our events can reach and engage more individuals from groups that are currently underrepresented in the Society’s membership, to foster a welcoming and diverse group full of vibrant viewpoints and ideas.

But alas, I cannot achieve these goals alone. The Mythopoeic Society and its events are entirely sustained by volunteers, and we have been lucky to have a great number of

volunteers over the years that have donated their time to make 52 Mythcons and 2 Online Seminars happen. On that note, if you have interest in chairing or co-chairing a future Mythopoeic Society event, please reach out to me at mythcon@mythsoc.org and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and provide whatever support I can. As long as there are Mythies willing to host and/or chair events, I envision that we will have two annual events every year going forward – our annual Mythcon in the summer (with a robust internet-based component), and a fully-virtual Online Midwinter Seminar (OMS). For our part, the Council of Stewards will be preparing and updating existing documentation over the coming months to generate primer documents to serve as resources for interested chairs and organizers – something along the lines of “So You Want to Host a Mythcon/OMS”. These documents will include the basic outline of what is involved in organizing each type of event, what sort of support is provided by the Society and the Council of Stewards, etc., with the objective of making the task less intimidating and not ‘reinventing the wheel’ as it were with each planning process. As many past chairs will undoubtedly tell you, running a Mythcon can be an incredibly rewarding experience, if at times stressful.

In addition to volunteering as a conference chair, we are always happy to accept assistance from other Mythies as members of the organizing committee, especially for in-person events where having local members to coordinate the on-site elements is of great help. We also rely on volunteers for Session Moderation and Technical Moderation during our conferences, and provide guidance and training on what each role requires. We

encourage you to consider volunteering for one of these roles at future events, helping us to “lighten the load a bit” as Sam offers to Frodo in *The Return of the King*.

FUTURE MYTHSOC EVENTS

But what, may you ask, will those future events be? My friends, I am very happy to share with you that we will have our third Online Seminar this coming February (Feb 17th-18th, 2024). The theme for our Online Midwinter Seminar 3 will be “Something Mighty Queer”, and it will be co-chaired by the three co-hosts of “Queer Lodgings: A Tolkien Podcast”, Grace Moone, Alicia Fox-Lenz, and Leah Hagan. The full call for proposals for this event is included elsewhere in this issue of Mythprint. Eagle-eyed readers

will note that both Grace and Alicia serve along with me on the Council of Stewards, and Leah has been attending our events for several years now as a Mythopoeic Society member. All three have presented in various capacities at past

Society events. We trust that this topic will inspire thoughtful and insightful presentations which will provide fresh perspectives on classic stories and their authors, and also yield opportunities for Mythies to be exposed to exciting new worlds, tales, and creators.

As for Mythcon 53, it was announced at this summer’s “Fantasy Goes to Hell” Online Seminar that this conference, which will be co-chaired by Janet Brennan Croft and David Emerson, will take place in late summer 2024 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In keeping with this locale, the theme will be “Fantasies of the Middle Lands”, which allows for a broad range of interpretations ranging from Middle-earth to Middle Ameri-

As for Mythcon 53, it was announced at this summer’s Online Seminar that this conference, which will be co-chaired by Janet Brennan Croft and David Emerson, will take place in late summer 2024 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

ca, purgatory, middle spaces between disparate genres, and much more. Currently the organizing committee is finalizing the venue and dates for the event. We are aiming for a fully hybrid event with most content streamed online for virtual participants, and possibly an avenue for virtual presenters as well.

Watch the page at www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-53.htm and the Society's social media channels for the full CFP and registration details as they become available. We look forward to camaraderie and smashing goblin heads all the way from one Twin City to the other!

ONLINE MIDSUMMER SEMINAR 2: FANTASY GOES TO HELL CONFERENCE REPORT

By Leah Grover

Mythcon OMS 2023 began for me with a conference highlight in Craig Boyd's presentation, "Denethor's Descent into Hell," highlighting the most vicious vice of despair. Alicia Fox-Lenz moderated "Hell Is Other People: Looking at the Political Rage Machine in Tolkien Fan Spaces," a very informative panel discussion with Grace Moone, Cara Marta Messina, and Tim Lenz, in which we saw how many social media accounts "win" by fueling the most angry traffic.

At "Timeless Moments: Russell Kirk, Charles Williams, and Stephen King on the Afterlife," we pondered as Camilo Peralta showcased storylines from conservative Gothic writer Russell Kirk alongside the supernatural horror of Williams and King, all grappling wildly for answers.

In Alicia Fox-Lenz's "Through the Mirror Darkly: Link's Journey to Hell and the Inversion of Hyrule in *The Legend of Zelda's Under-*

worlds," we learnt of katabasis and anabasis, or entering and coming back from underworlds.

Heather Bass, in "Hell as Colonizing Force: Postcolonialism in *World of Warcraft's* the Maw," revealed how the game is a very effective tutorial on how colonialism operates.

Cameron Bourquein's "Through Sauron's Eye: Hell, Arda Unmarred, Arda Marred, and Arda Healed According to the Maia Formerly Known as Mairon" hearkened back to Boyd's paper on Denethor, as he said that Sauron's "despair is resulting from a feedback loop."

Melody Green gave a fine, eye-opening history of the history of Evangelical children's literature, whose heritage was built upon *Inferno*, *Paradise Lost*, and the 1400s witch-hunting, misogynous mainstay, *Malleus Maleficarum*. What began as a way to improve the lives of those withering within England's child labor miasma, the Evangelical children's book world regrettably developed a narrow-minded dragon heart, extending the assurance that "parents can trust these books in ways they cannot trust the others." A watchful dragon to creep past should one bring good books to humanity.



2023 MYTHOPOEIC AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Posted on August 6, 2023

The Mythopoeic Society has announced the winners of the 2023 Mythopoeic Awards. For more information about the awards, visit the Awards section of this site; the finalists for the literature and scholarship awards and text of recent acceptance speeches are also listed in this section. The winners of this year's awards were announced during the 2023 OMS, held online August 5-6, 2023, via Zoom and Discord.

The winners are:

Adult Fantasy:

Sacha Lamb, *When the Angels Left the Old Country*
(Levine Querido, 2022)

Children's Fantasy:

Kelly Barnhill, *The Ogress and the Orphans*
(Algonquin Young Readers, 2022)

Inklings Studies:

Paul S. Fiddes, *Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis: Friends in Co-inherence*
(Oxford UP, 2021)

Myth and Fantasy Studies:

Brian Attebery, *Fantasy: How It Works*
(Oxford UP, 2022)

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature is given to the fantasy novel, multi-volume, or single-author story collection for adults published during 2022 that best exemplifies the spirit of the Inklings. Books

are eligible for two years after publication if selected as a finalist during the first year of eligibility. Books from a series are eligible if they stand on their own; otherwise, the series becomes eligible the year its final volume appears.

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature honors books for beginning readers to age thirteen, in the tradition of *The Hobbit* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Rules for eligibility are otherwise the same as for the Adult literature award. The question of which award a borderline book is best suited for will be decided by consensus of the committees. Books for mature "Young Adults" may be moved to the Adult literature category.

The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies is given to books on Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that make significant contributions to Inklings scholarship. For this award, books first published during the last three years



(2020–2022) are eligible, including finalists for previous years.

The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies is given to scholarly books on other specific authors in the Inklings tradition, or to more general works on the genres of myth and fantasy. The period of eligibility is three years, as for the Inklings Studies award.

A complete list of Mythopoeic Award winners is available on the Society web site.

The finalists for the literature and scholarship awards and text of recent acceptance speeches are also listed in this on-line section. For more information about the Mythopoeic Awards, please contact the Awards Administrator: Dennis Wise, awards@mythsoc.org.

ALEXI KONDRATIEV AWARD 2023

The [Alexei Kondratiev Award](#), named in honor of Alexei Kondratiev, long-time Society member and a scholar of wide-ranging interests in mythopoeic and related studies, is given to an outstanding paper presented at Mythcon by an undergraduate or graduate student.

Because no in-person Mythcon was held in 2023, the 2023 Alexei was presented at the Online Midsummer Seminar (OMS). The winner of the Alexei Kondratiev Award for best student paper was awarded to Anna Caterino for her paper, “Hell on His Mind: Dean Winchester’s Journey to Hell and Back.”

Congratulations, Anna!

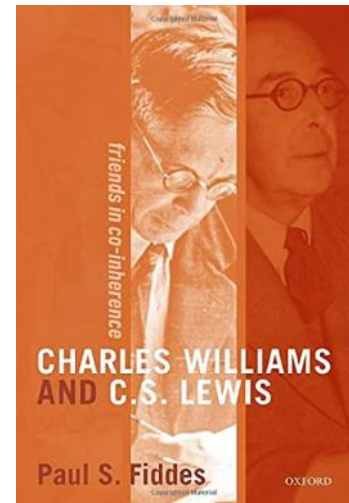
REVIEWS

Sasha Lamb. *When the Angels Left the Old Country*. Levine Querido, 2022. 400pp. \$19.99 hardcover. Reviewed by Rebecca Kulik.

Imagine, if you will, a warm fire burning in a hearth. The night outside is cold, but you

are wrapped in a blanket, and you are warm and comfortable and reading a good book. Every once in a while, a bit of cold wind leaks into the room and makes you shiver—but then it passes, and the comfortable story is back, and the fire is warm.

That feeling is what it’s like to read *When the Angels Left the Old Country*. The feeling is the product of a number of factors—the masterful characterization, the realistic historical details which are both unique and familiar, the seamless integration of the magical and the real—but most of all, it comes from the tone. *When the Angels Left the Old Country* feels like a book that isn’t going to affect you by *wounding* you, but rather by leading you forward, calmly and kindly, and offering you something that will make you understand and know more. That feeling is carefully balanced throughout the book, and while I admit the final resolution of the story is a bit rushed, every part of the novel is true to that feeling and to the resulting trust between the author and reader. There *are* ugly things that hang over this novel, from anti-immigrant sentiment in America, to murder, to the shadow of the Holocaust. But *this* story isn’t about those ugly



things. It's about the lives that can be, and *were*, lived in spite of those things.

The basic premise of the novel is simple: two supernatural beings from Eastern European Jewish folklore go to America. Their purpose is a bit complicated, but their story is fundamentally familiar to any American audience. The immigrant experience symbolized by Ellis Island is part of the American mythology, and interweaving that "coming to America" narrative with fantasy and Jewish tradition creates something that heavy readers like me so often chase: it makes the familiar feel new.

For a fantasy and historical fiction fan who had only a passing familiarity with Jewish tradition and culture, this book was a pure delight. The textured reality of Eastern European Jewry, so much of which was lost in the horrors of the 20th century, is beautifully portrayed in this novel. This includes historical details like when prayers took place and how rooms were decorated, as well as a complex mythology that is related to Christian traditions like angels while also being completely different.

The book description for the kindle version of *When the Angels Left the Old Country* begins "For fans of "Good Omens." That, if you know anything about the Good Omens fandom, basically means "This book has well-written queer characters," which is very much the case! Human and non-human gender identities are not the same thing in the mythology of this book. The gender identities of the two supernatural characters, an angel and a demon, are quickly established: the demon identifies as male and therefore uses he/his pronouns, and the angel identifies as neither gender and always uses it/its pronouns.

But the gender identities and sexual orientations of the characters is only one aspect of their characterizations, and it is far from the most important. In fact, *When the Angels Left the Old Country* is part of a small and growing group of books that treat gender and sexual

orientation as just one of several aspects of a person's life and personality! The queer characters have nothing to prove to anyone; queerness is simply a part of the reality of the narrative world, one that is inextricable without being dominant.

All three features of the book I've discussed—the queerness, the historical elements, and the religious/magical traditions—are constructed carefully around the novel's core: the individuality of the characters. These features have important implications for each character, but the characters also make certain choices that define their senses of self. Their individuality, like the individuality of any human, arises at the intersection of factors beyond their control with their individual wills and loves.

The characters in this novel think carefully about both who and what they are, and struggle to understand just who they *want* to be—to themselves, and to other people. The fantastic identities of the angel and the demon let the author play a trick that the best fantasy can pull off: using the language and tools of fantasy to explore something deeply human, from a new perspective. The author asks questions of the narrative that lead easily to questions about real people: How does an angel become a person/how does a child define themselves as they grow up? How might a demon become an angel/how might someone who thinks of themselves as one thing choose to be something else? The complexities of human experience are infinite, and in *When the Angels Left the Old Country*, this infinitude is illuminated in a new—and truly delightful—way.

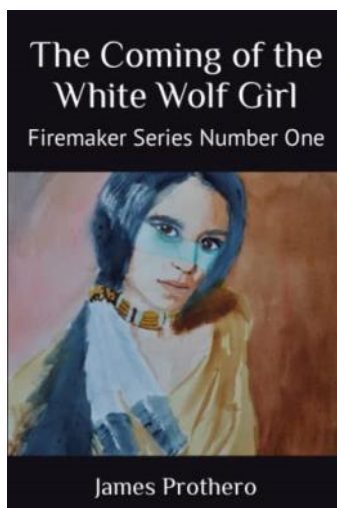


JAMES PROTHERO. *The Coming of the White Wolf Girl*. FIREMAKER SERIES vol. 1. Blue Iris Books, 2023. 256pp. \$15.00 paperback. Reviewed by Jessica Dickinson Goodman.

If mythopoeic fantasy dwells in the edges of echoes of the past, stone age fantasy lives on in the echoes of echoes. We know so little about the builders of Çatalhöyük, Nabta Playa, Jhusi, Nanzhuangtou and dozens of other neolithic settlements, that when it comes time for an author to spark our imaginations about how they lived and what they saw, we have a much wider range of options than we do when reading stories set in the more knowable 1500s London or 1980s St. Louis.

James Prothero's *The Coming of the White Wolf Girl* blends the realistic trials of a small band of people with an animistic metaphysics, where mammoths can communicate telepathically and some special people can heal with their hands. The author lets us ride alongside the main character, as she goes through name changes, life changes, and changes in her powers. We watch her lead her people – sometimes boldly, sometimes cautiously, sometimes certain of her authority, and sometimes full of doubt – through many of the lands and cultures of a broad, wide world.

The world she journeys through is appropriately familiar-strange. Food I eat weekly suddenly appears under a different name,



rivers I have crossed and mountains I have climbed flow into and out of memory and conversations. I find these light intersections a real joy and one of my favorite details in this piece. They

are spread throughout.

Lovers of the American West might recognize natural features throughout the story, knitting this story into our understandings of the lands we currently inhabit. I felt my heart lighten when the main character finally comes to a mountain of significance to the plot, and I recognized it. If I guessed right, today it's known as Bear's Tipi to citizens of the Arapaho Tribe, Na Kovehe (Bear Lodge) to citizens of the Cheyenne Nations, Bear's House to citizens of the Crow Tribe, Tso-aa (Tree Rock) to citizens of the Kiowa Tribe, and Mato Tipila to citizens of the Lakota Nation. Many non-native people today call it Devil's Tower, Wyoming.

Names have great significance in *The Coming of White Wolf Girl*, with characters and bands of people changing their titles as significant events warp the weave of their lives. The first person, present tense narrator declines to share the names of some characters who have died out of concern it will stop their spirits from completing their journey onwards, but she complicates that stance in a particularly poignant moment in the final chapter in a way that is very human and satisfying.

Readers who are curious about what it takes to survive an ice age or travel extreme distances over land will enjoy the well-wrought practicals in this story. The magic system is satisfyingly progressive and feels thoroughly endemic to the world. Those of us who enjoy the self-referential repetition of oral histories will enjoy the rhythm of the writing, which the micro press publisher has left intact. It fits the in-story way in which the narrative is shared quite well.

Now for the cautions – please skip the next paragraph if you wish to avoid spoilers and content warnings. The neolithic era as told in this story was a tough time. Readers who don't prefer to read rape as a magical motivator or major plot thread should proceed with caution. Those who don't want to read depictions of violent childbirth, child

sickness and death, war, violence against animals, kidnapping, forced marriage, starvation, or elder abuse should also be wary. The main character is often deeply troubled that her experiences of sexual assault make her unfit for leadership, affection, marriage, or love, which might be tough to read for some readers.

The Coming of the White Wolf Girl is written with great love for the places and people it depicts, giving a wide lens and deep sympathy to the desperate choices that made up their days. For readers interested in a non-fiction exploration of similar times and cultures, I cannot recommend Annalee Newitz's *Four Lost Cities* (W. W. Norton, 2022) highly enough. They dive deeply in Çatalhöyük, Pompeii, Angkor, and Cahokia. Only the first city is neolithic, but the doorposts made of skulls and bulls-head children's toys are well worth the purchase price.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2023 Election of Stewards Announced (Updated October 2023)

In accordance with our bylaws, the next election of the Council of Stewards is to be held in November 2023, with the terms of office to begin on January 1, 2024. Elections and terms of office will occur at three year intervals starting from these dates. Steward positions are unpaid, volunteer roles which require attending quarterly meetings and other related responsibilities. This election will ask members to confirm each of the volunteers in their position unless someone else is nominated. The list of volunteers is available at: www.mythsoc.org/news/news-2023-07-01.htm

Additional nominations to the Council of Stewards may be made by a supporting petition of at least five (5) percent of the current members, including the nominee, or by ac-

tion of the Council of Stewards. Nominations closed on Aug 1, 2023, which was 120 days before the date of election (Nov 29, 2023).

Members should keep a close eye on their email in the month of November. All members will be emailed a link to vote electronically. Any members who wish to vote by paper ballot should contact Secretary Holly Felmlee (secretary@mythsoc.org) by November 1, 2023. Members must provide their name and email, and only verified, up-to-date member votes will be counted. Don't forget to update your membership if needed!

Voting will close twenty-eight days after ballots have been sent out, and announcements will go out on social media shortly thereafter as well as in the Winter issue of Mythprint.

Mythopoeic Society Stewards Meetings

In accordance with our Bylaws, to ensure all Mythopoeic Society members are aware in good time of the schedule of meetings, so that any member of the Society can propose a topic to be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting, the following is the tentative schedule of the Council of Stewards Quarterly Meetings planned:

- Nov 4th
- March 2nd, 2024

To propose a topic to be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting, email the Chair of the Society (currently Alicia Fox-Lenz) at chair@mythsoc.org.

Submit to Mythprint!

We are always accepting reviews of any mythopoeic media, but we also publish letters to the editor or society, short articles and notes on Inklings topics, art, meeting discussion reports, and more! We are especially interested in reviews of mythopoeic works by creators of color and other historically underrepresented perspectives. Submit to: mythprint@mythsoc.org

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**ONLINE MIDWINTER
SEMINAR 3
SOMETHING MIGHTY QUEER**

*Zoom and Discord
February 17-18, 2024*

*Call for Papers deadline
November 30, 2023*