



Mythcon 53

with Diversicon 31

Fantasies of the Middle Lands

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Double Tree by Hilton – Park Place

August 2-5, 2024

Progress Report #1

A NOTE ON THIS YEAR'S EVENT

This year Mythcon 53 is combining with Diversicon 31, as Diversicon is traditionally held the same weekend as Mythcon, and the two conventions are of similar sizes and share many of the same interests.

About Mythcon

The Mythopoeic Society Conference, informally known as “Mythcon,” is an annual Tolkien and Inklings-focused conference held over an extended weekend late-July to mid-August; the location moves throughout America, and always begins Friday afternoon and concludes Monday at noon. Each conference is constructed around a theme related to Inklings studies and/or fantastic and mythic literature. Conferences usually feature an author and a scholar guest of honor. Papers, panel discussions, readings, entertainment, an art show, a dealers’ room, and other activities fill the four-day event. Another Mythcon highlight is our annual banquet, after which the Mythopoeic Awards are presented. A small (usually 100–200 people) size and intimate setting makes Mythcon an excellent venue for meeting people with common interests. You may see the full history and individual conference pages by visiting our [Mythcon History](#) page. This year’s conference marks a return to Minneapolis for the first time since Mythcon 24 in 1993.

The Mythopoeic Society has always encouraged scholarship in mythopoeic and Inklings studies by providing a venue in which scholars, new and established, may present papers which may in turn be considered for publication in *Mythlore*, assisting scholars in need of financial aid to attend Mythcon, and recognizing student scholars with the Alexei Kondratiev Award.

Mythcons are also a lot of fun and feature some serious play: the [Not Ready for Mythcon Players](#), performing a semi-spontaneous piece of topical silliness, a Masquerade with prizes for everyone, Bardic Circles in the evenings, an occasional Clerihew Contest, and Golfimbul (which Mythcon 45 Chair and former GOH Mike Drout explains in his entertaining report on the [2014 Mythcon](#)).

About Diversicon

[Diversicon](#) is a project of [SF MINNESOTA](#), a multicultural, multimedia organization dedicated to improving contacts among groups and individuals interested in speculative fiction, in and out of the traditional SF community. Their continuing mission: to provide the most thoughtful programming and the mellowest, most welcoming parties of any Minnesota SF convention, and to making our state’s SF community more closely reflect the cultural diversity of Minnesota in the third millennium. SF MINNESOTA also co-produces the Speculations Reading Series monthly at Dreamhaven Books.

Guests of Honor

Eleanor Arnason

Author Guest of Honor

Eleanor Arnason is the award-winning author of dozens of science fiction and fantasy short stories and novels, including stories about a mythic “[Big Mama](#),” and Icelandic troll stories collected in [Hidden Folk](#). She is also a poet, and co-edited the collection *Time Gum and Other Poems* from the Minicon Poetry Readings.

Eleanor’s novel *A Woman of the Iron People* not only won the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award in 1992, but was the recipient of the first-ever James Tiptree Jr. Award, now known as the [Otherwise Award](#). Her stories have been nominated for Hugo and Nebula awards. Eleanor’s earliest stories appeared in the 1970s, and her first novel, *The Sword Smith*, drew upon her reading of Icelandic myth as well as other mythic traditions. *A Woman of the Iron People* and *Ring of Swords*, probably her most critically acclaimed and discussed works, along with the shorter pieces collected in *Hwarhath Stories*, bring an ironic and humorous focus to much more traditionally novelistic narrative.

Over the past fifty years Eleanor has participated in the local Mythopoeic Society Discussion Group, “Rivendell,” continuing those Inklings traditions of talk about ideas and stories, and interactions with other readers. Her incisive and insightful observations on writers’ panels at conventions are always memorable. Eleanor was identified as part of the second wave of Feminist SF in early anthologies and critical articles, such as in Pamela Sargent’s *New Women of Wonder*. We are pleased to celebrate a lifetime of stories and thoughtful conversations, and exemplifying so much important to all of us as readers.



Guests of Honor

Brian Attebery

Scholar Guest of Honor

Brian Attebery is a three-time winner of the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies. Recently retired from Idaho State University, he is a former editor of the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

Thirty-six years ago, Brian was a guest at [Mythcon 19](#), where he shared the role of Guest of Honor with Ursula K. Le Guin, and we recognized his literary history *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature from Irving to Le Guin*. Conversations with Le Guin and Eleanor Arnason at that conference contributed to his later work with Le Guin on the *Norton Book of Science Fiction*, and later projects up through today's editions of Le Guin's works from the Library of America. Meanwhile, he adjusted his focus on literary history to theory in *Strategies of Fantasy*, certainly one of the most cited authorities in today's continuing critical discussions, and continued that inquiry in *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*, and just last year, in *Fantasy: How It Works*, often approaching his topics from several different perspectives and ideas, juggling concept and metaphor to achieve a visionary understanding. Along the way, besides editing anthologies and the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, speaking at conferences and teaching at Idaho State, he also wrote about Eleanor Arnason's work in his fine study, *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*.

At Mythcon 53 we hope to celebrate a lifetime of achievement and hear more of his insights. As Ursula Le Guin put it, "Brian Attebery is the most readable, the most knowledgeable, and the least quarrelsome of critics."



Posthumous Guests of Honor

L. Frank Baum (1856-1919)

Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and 13 additional Oz books, 41 other novels, 83 short stories, over 200 poems and at least 42 scripts. [Bio at Wikipedia.](#)

Clifford D. Simak (1904-1988)

Simak wrote for the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* from 1939 to 1976. Simak's many Science Fiction novels and short stories won him three Hugos and two Retro Hugos, as well as Nebula, Locus, and Jupiter Awards. [Bibliography at Wikipedia.](#)

CONFERENCE THEME: FANTASIES OF THE MIDDLE LANDS

The idea of “middle-ness” can suggest stability—the center of an object is less likely to break than its edges. It can also suggest the opposite: something in a state of change can be said to be “in the middle”—neither one thing nor another. Mythcon 53, located in the middle of the continental U.S., welcomes papers exploring the concept of “middle-ness” as it is worked out in fantasy, science fiction, and related genres. Paper topics can cover a wide range of possibilities, including but not limited to the following:

- **Locations:** This could mean the implications of a place name including the word “middle,” such as Middle-earth or Midgard; places in our world that either shape or appear in fantasy such as the English Midlands or Middle America as in *Stranger Things* or *American Gods*; or even liminal places that appear in fantasy such as train stations, purgatory, or The Wood Between the Worlds.
- **Characters:** the middle child in a family (Arya Stark, Edmund Pevensie); adolescents negotiating that in-between space (Luce in *The Owl House*; Ged in *Earthsea*); individuals or people groups who are a mix of others (Tolkien’s Númenóreans; Percy Jackson).
- **Textual middle-ness:** intertextuality, genre-crossing, multiple media, even the middle books/movies of a trilogy (*The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Two Towers*).
- **Authors:** considering the location of the con, Midwestern authors and scholars such as Tim O’Brian, Jack Zipes, Lois McMaster Bujold, or Philip Jose Farmer.

We also welcome papers on the work of either of our Guests of Honor, Brian Attebery and Eleanor Arnason. Because this conference is happening in conjunction with Diversicon, we are also interested in papers on their traditional Posthumous Guests, who this year are L. Frank Baum and Clifford D. Simak. And, as always, we welcome papers focusing on the work and interests of the Inklings (especially J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams), and other fantasy authors and themes. Papers from a variety of critical perspectives and disciplines are welcome.

Each paper will be given a one-hour slot to allow time for questions, but individual papers should be timed for oral presentation in 40 minutes maximum. Panels are also welcome, and both papers and panels may be presented virtually or in person. Paper abstracts of no more than 300 words, along with contact information, should be sent to the Papers Coordinator at papers@mythcon.org by May 15, 2024. Please include your A/V requirements and the projected time needed for your presentation.

If your programming interests are more in line with Diversicon’s focus or their posthumous guests (see <http://www.diversicon.org/>), then please send your proposal to Scott Lohman at scottl2605@aol.com.

All presenters must register for the full conference; please see the Conference Registration section below for information and rates. Participants are encouraged to submit papers chosen for presentation at the conference to [Mythlore](#), the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. All papers should conform to the 9th edition of the MLA Style Manual. Presenters who are full-time undergraduate or graduate students are encouraged to submit their completed conference papers in advance for consideration for the Alexei Kondratiev Student Paper Award.

Alexei Kondratiev Award (Student Paper)

At Mythcon 41, the society introduced a new award for the best paper presented at Mythcon by an undergraduate or graduate student. This award was named in honor of Alexei Kondratiev, long-time Society member and a scholar of wide-ranging interests in mythopoeic and related studies, who passed away in 2010. The winner of the award receives a certificate, a one-year subscription to *Mythlore*, and half-off registration for the next Mythcon he or she attends. The winner will be announced at the Mythcon banquet, on the society's website and in *Mythprint*, and is encouraged to submit their paper to *Mythlore* for publication. More information and the award application can be found on our web site: www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/alexei.htm

In order to be considered for the award, the application form must be submitted to the Alexi committee chair at mythlore@mythsoc.org by July 5th, and the finished paper must be submitted electronically by July 19th. The paper must follow *Mythlore* style guidelines and should be 4000–8000 words long. Applicants must be accepted in or currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at the time their abstract was submitted. Applicants must attend Mythcon and present the paper, either virtually or in person, to qualify for the award.

Glen GoodKnight Starving Scholars Fund

The Starving Scholars Fund was renamed in honor of our founder, Glen GoodKnight, upon his passing in November 2010. Glen always emphasized the importance of encouraging scholarship in Inklings studies and was happy to see this fund come into existence in 1993. The Fund supports attendance at Mythcon for scholars and other participants. Preference is given to persons presenting a paper or participating on a panel, though others are not automatically excluded from consideration. Awards consist of a contribution toward room & board costs or, very rarely, other conference expenses such as travel costs. The Mythcon Papers Coordinator, in consultation with the Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards and the Conference Committee, makes the final decision in regard to award recipients, amounts, and application of funds. No more than half of the Fund's balance may be used in any given year. Contact papers@mythcon.org for more information.

Conference Schedule Overview

The Mythcon 53 registration table will open at noon on Friday, August 2, and there will be program items starting at 2 p.m. Friday afternoon until dinner. After dinner we will have our casual meet-and-greet Welcome Reception, sponsored by the Council of Stewards; other entertainments and activities to be announced. The reception will honor the 50th anniversary of [Rivendell](#), the Twin Cities area discussion group of the Mythopoeic Society. The Hospitality Room and Bardic Circle will be open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights.

Saturday morning, August 3, the Procession and Opening Ceremonies will start at 9:00 a.m., including our Scholar Guest of Honor address, followed by more papers and panels throughout the day, breaking for lunch and dinner. After dinner: entertainments including the Masquerade and post-programming activities.

Auction devotees, be assured that not only will there be the traditional Society auction, but it will be a joint auction with Diversicon. With much more on offer, be sure to bring your wallets!

Programming continues Sunday, concluding with the Banquet, Author Guest of Honor address, and Awards presentations on Sunday evening.

Final program items will start Monday morning at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Annual Mythopoeic Society Members Meeting (all are welcome) and closing ceremonies, concluding at noon.

Dealers Room

Dealer room tables are \$40. If you're interested in bringing your wares to sell, please contact Joan Marie Verba by email at dealers@mythcon.org and she will provide more details.

Masquerade

Mythcon 53 will have a masquerade as part of one of our evening entertainments. A Mythcon masquerade is a staged costume presentation that ranges from the sublime to the silly; its focus is fun and entertainment. Everyone is invited to participate; sign-up forms will be at Mythcon.

The Not Very Annual Mary Stolzenbach Memorial Clerihew Contest

Will there be a [clerihew](#) contest this year? Who can tell? Just in case, polish up your skills for our Not Very Annual Clerihew Contest, named in honor of the late Mary Stolzenbach, who used to sweep the awards regularly. A distinguished panel of judges, They Who Must Never Be Named, will evaluate each entry based on the HOC criteria of Humor, Originality, and Clerihewness. Winners in each category will be rewarded with the traditional prize of a jeroboam of Chateau de Porteur d'Anneau invisible champagne, and we'll all toast the memory of beloved clerihew enthusiast Mike Foster.

Conference Registration

Mythcon 53 online registration for Mythopoeic Society members, general public, and students—prices are in US dollars. These are advance rates from February 16, 2024, until July 1, 2024. In-person rates will go up significantly just before the conference and at the door. Virtual attendance may not include all tracks and papers. Please use online registration if at all possible: <https://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mc53-reg.htm>

- Full Conference Registration (MythSoc member) \$75.00
- Full Conference Registration (non-member) \$90.00
- Full Conference Registration (Student*) \$65.00
- Virtual Attendance Only (via Zoom/Discord) \$20.00

* Full-time students; must present current, active student ID at check-in to get this rate.

Mail-in Registration

If you cannot, or do not wish to, use the online registration process, send checks, made out to The Mythopoeic Society, to the address below. Indicate that the check is for Mythcon 53, and include the name(s) of the person(s) registering, their email and snail-mail addresses, the kind(s) of registration requested (member, non-member, student).

The Mythopoeic Society
P.O. Box 6707
Altadena, CA 91003-6707

Hotel / Conference Venue

Mythcon 53 will be held at the [DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The hotel has full conference and catering facilities, so nearly everything we need will be in one place. This hotel is in a bustling shopping area full of stores, restaurants, and a megaplex movie theater, all within walking distance. We will be able to hold our Welcome Reception as well as our Sunday evening banquet in this same building.

Sleeping room rates for convention attendees have been set at \$129* per night for a regular room, and \$139* per night for a small suite. The suites are the same as the regular rooms except for a small sitting room at the front, and that they open onto the hotel atrium. To reserve rooms online at the special convention rate, go to <https://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mc53-room.htm>. Note the special instructions to follow to get EXACTLY the nights you want! The conference rate is available from Tuesday July 30 through Thursday August 8, so you can come early and stay a few days later at the same great rate. If you prefer not to use web access to reserve a room, you can call the hotel directly at +1 (952) 542-8600 and use the code MCA.

* Plus the usual taxes & fees, of course. We can't avoid that these days, can we?



Getting there—airport, ground transportation, parking

Plane: MSP (Minneapolis-Saint Paul) Airport is one of the most pleasant airports in the country, and as a major hub, it's easy to get to. There's a cheap but time-consuming public transit option (take the Metro Blue Line light rail north to downtown Minneapolis and pick up a #645 bus from there), but you'd get to the hotel a lot quicker via Lyft, Uber, SuperShuttle, or cab, or by renting a car. It's about a 25 minute drive from the airport.

Train: The Amtrak station is in Saint Paul. From there, it's about a 25 minute drive to the hotel. There are also several public transit options.

Automobile: Minneapolis is easy to drive to and through; I-35 cuts through north-south, and I-94 east-west. The hotel is in the western suburbs, so you can most likely avoid driving through downtown. Parking at the hotel is free.

Public transit in general: Minneapolis has a great public transit system with light rail and bus options. There's a bus stop quite close to the hotel. If you come in through the airport, you can buy a transit pass there before you descend to the light rail platform. Find out more here: <https://www.metrotransit.org/how-to-ride>

Meals and Banquet

We'll be providing a Welcome Reception (sponsored by the Council of Stewards) with light refreshments and cake on Friday afternoon, and there will be a hospitality suite every night after the end of programming. The hotel has an on-site restaurant and a grab-and-go market, and there are lots of great eating options within walking distance. We're still working out whether some meals will be provided. Banquet registration will be announced soon.

Things to do

Plan to take advantage of the special hotel rate before and after the conference – there's lots to do and see in the Twin Cities!

Since we're all book people, let's start with bookstores.

- Uncle Hugo's/Uncle Edgar's <http://www.unclehugo.com/prod/index.shtml> New and used science fiction/fantasy and mysteries; in a new location. Say hi to Ecko, the store dog!
- Dreamhaven <http://dreamhavenbooks.com/> New and used SF, fantasy, horror, film and media, comics, and graphic novels.
- The Irreverent Bookworm <https://irrevbooks.com/> Queer-owned; new and used books, media, and other merch; one of the owners is a big Tolkien fan!
- Magers and Quinn <https://www.magersandquinn.com/> A big general new and used bookstore in the bustling Uptown area.
- Need more, more, more? Check out the Midwest Independent Booksellers Association's Bookstore Roadmap! Pick up a paper copy at any indie bookstore. <https://www.midwestbooksellers.org/independent-bookstore-directory> .

Looking for a great place to eat?

Minneapolis is a multicultural food paradise! We'll provide some more personal recommendations in the second progress report, but for now feast your eyes on these:

- <https://www.exploreminnesota.com/list/best-minneapolis-restaurants>
- <https://twincities.eater.com/maps/best-restaurants-minneapolis-st-paul-38-map>

Looking for other cool things to do?

- <https://www.exploreminnesota.com/article/where-to-shop-minneapolis-st-paul-area>
- <https://www.exploreminnesota.com/minneapolis-st-paul-area>

Cautions

ALLERGENS: There must be NO NUTS, and especially NO PEANUTS, and NO PETS in our function rooms due to potentially DEADLY allergy reactions. This is non-negotiable. If you have a service animal who must be with you in public function spaces, please contact a conference committee member well in advance so we can plan how to handle this.

COVID Safety Policy: Any COVID masking and vaccination policies will be tied to local recommendations at the time of the conference. Please check the conference webpage before you travel. The Mythopoeic Society accepts no responsibility for any spread of COVID-19 as part of travel to, from, or participation in Mythcon 53.

For more information

If you have questions or ideas, or wish to volunteer to help out, please email the appropriate committee member or the chair at the address below. Note that we would welcome volunteers to run an art show, arrange the program schedule, staff the at-con registration table, or host the hospitality suite, among other things.

Mythcon 53 Committee

- David Emerson, Chair: chair@mythcon.org
- Janet Brennan Croft, as Vice Chair: co-chair@mythcon.org
- Janet Brennan Croft, as Alexei Award coordinator: mythlore@mythsoc.org
- Melody Green, Papers Coordinator: papers@mythcon.org
- Joan Marie Verba, Dealer's Room and Publications: dealers@mythcon.org
- David Lenander, GoH Liaison and Local Publicity: david_lenander@icloud.com

Diversicon 31 Committee

- Diversicon: diversicon@gmail.com
- Scott Lohman, D31 Chair: scottl2605@aol.com
- Eric M. Heideman, Programming: eheideman@dhzone.com