



inklings newsletter

*Liebe Inklings-Mitglieder und Freund*innen,*

mit dem insgesamt zehnten Newsletter können wir nun auf ein Jahr Herausgabeschafft seit der Übernahme von Maria Fleischhack zurückblicken. Die Phantastik ist quicklebendig, und wir zum Glück auch.

Vom 29. April bis 1. Mai fand das Inklings-Symposium „Dem Tode zum Trotz: Unsterblichkeit und Wiedergeburt in der Phantastik“ in Magdeburg statt. Neben den 22 Vortragenden besuchte auch ein breites Publikum unsere Konferenz. Als Ehrengast berichtete Owen A. Barfield über das Leben und Werk seines Großvaters, des „first and last Inkling“. Da Carsten unfänglich in der Organisation eingespannt war und Marthe leider nicht teilnehmen konnte, muss dieser Newsletter ohne Konferenzbericht auskommen.

Für die nachfolgend insgesamt II versammelten Rezensionen danken wir wie immer der tatkräftigen Unterstützung durch unser Review-Team. Ohne Euch wäre dieser Newsletter nicht möglich; danke, dass Ihr so fleißig lest, schaut und schreibt. Bitte macht weiter so!

Über den Sommer werden wir es im Vorstand hoffentlich schaffen, endlich den lang ersehnten – und dringend notwendigen – Umzug der Inklings-Webseite zu realisieren. Um nicht beständig neues Material zu generieren, das dann auch noch umgezogen werden muss, ist die Pflege der alten Webseite derzeit ein wenig zurückgefahren. Auf der neuen Webseite wird dann auch dieser Newsletter wieder sein Zuhause finden.

Wir wünschen Ihnen und Euch eine schöne Sommerpause und hoffen, dass vielleicht die ein oder andere Rezension für neuen Lesestoff im eventuell anstehenden Urlaub sorgen wird. Der nächste Newsletter wird voraussichtlich kurz vor Weihnachten erscheinen.

*Mit herzlichen Grüßen
Carsten & Marthe*

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INHALT

Reviews

	3
<i>Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries</i>	3
<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power</i>	3
<i>Tress of the Emerald Sea</i>	4
<i>The Adam Project</i>	5
<i>A Day of Fallen Night</i>	5
<i>The Hunters and the Hauntings: Lockwood & Co.</i>	6
<i>Short Stories and Personal Poems: A Waiter Made of Glass</i> by Verlyn Flieger	6
<i>A Cursed Love to Break a Curse</i>	7
<i>(Nicht) Schwarmlos</i>	7
<i>The Words That Maketh Empire</i>	8
<i>Wednesday's Missed Opportunities</i>	8

Tolkien-Tage 2023

Ein Bericht aus Mittelerde (NRW): Impressionen von den Tolkien Tagen 2023	9
	9

Vermischtes

Neues aus der Inklings-Gemeinschaft	10
	10



Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries

Heather Fawcett: *Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries*. 18,50€, Little, Brown and Company, 978-0-356-51912-8.

Heather Fawcett's novel *Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries* follows Cambridge professor Emily Wilde's excursion to a harsh Nordic Island to expand her knowledge on the Hidden Ones, a particularly reclusive species of faeries in 1909. As a professor of Dryadology, Emily's existence centres around studying and cataloguing various types of folk and their traditions and customs. Though she is an excellent scholar, she is not good at being social and mostly keeps to the company of her loyal dog Shadow. Through her journal readers follow her excursion to Ljosland where she is determined to ignore any distractions and to finish the last entry for her encyclopaedia which is set to revolutionize the field of dryadology. Having settled into her small cottage, she is quickly confronted with the gruff tight-knit community of Ljosland and, surprisingly, with her almost otherworldly beautiful academic rival Dr. Wendell Bumbleby. Being her exact opposite, Bumbleby quickly charms the locals and hinders Emily with her research. Through the course of the story, however, Emily learns to be more open and to let other people in. Though a cosy fantasy with low stakes in the beginning, as the stakes rise her newfound friends help Emily in her research as she gets closer and closer to the Hidden Ones and to her obnoxious colleague Wendell, who seems to foster some secrets himself.

Despite featuring very little action scenes, the plot is engaging and creates great means of escapism. As the novel heavily focusses on the characters, Fawcett includes a diverse set of characters that all bring different traits and quirks into the mix. I have especially grown fond of the faery Poe and the villagers Thora, Lilja and Magret. While Emily seldom loses her tense demeanour, Wendell Bumbleby provides funny moments and relaxes the mood.

Particularly captivating was the presentation of faeries as it did not romanticise the faeries but rather

showed their vicious side. The fae are shown as, at times, very violent and disturbing beings who live in a symbiosis with nature and have very little in common with the human species. However, there are a few exceptions of fae that exhibit very kind demeanour, though only after making a bargain benefitting them also. While I enjoyed Emily's character for the majority of the novel, as she gets closer to solving the mystery of the Hidden Ones, she seems to be quite unobservant for the sake of the plot, although she is previously characterized as utterly perceptive and very meticulous.

Personally, *Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries* was the first cosy fantasy I read centred around faeries and academia, and I cannot wait to dive into the genre again when the, still undated, sequel comes out. At first, I was sceptical about the fantasy being set in 1909, as I typically rather enjoy novels set in our current time period, but the absence of technology enabled immersing in the storyworld. Combining fantasy, romance, mystery, and historical elements, I am convinced that Fawcett's novel would appeal to those looking for a fun new fantasy, while not wanting to be caught in a high stakes plot and will make one want to learn more about the folk afterwards. The whimsical writing style and cosy atmosphere draw you in immediately!

— Clara Weinrauch

The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power

On 2 September, 2022, Amazon Prime premiered the first season of its fantasy television series *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*, developed by J. D. Payne and Patrick McKay. It is based solely on *The Lord of the Rings* and its appendices by J. R. R. Tolkien. In their five season spanning series, the showrunners plan to tell the story of the Second Age of Middle-earth, even though critics noted early on that an adaptation of this Age without the rights to the posthumously published *Silmarillion* or the *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* or other works

left by J. R. R. Tolkien could never be congruent with the canon, simply because the producers cannot use most of the canon without the rights.

The first season consists of eight episodes and weaves together different plotlines that run roughly parallel to each other. Alongside the main character Galadriel, who seeks revenge for her brother's death and is searching for Sauron, there are plots exploring the friendship between Elves and Dwarves (Elrond and Durin), the migrating Harfoots (creatures somewhat like Hobbits), who stumble upon an apparently perilous stranger, the political conflicts in Númenor, and an Orc attack in the Southlands led by a corrupted Elf.

Despite the large cast, the pacing of the show is quite slow. The characters remain mostly flat and the season lacks a consistent, well-wrought structure that brings the different plotlines together. The antagonistic forces provide by far the most compelling characters of the series. They have goals, diverse interests, culture, yet appear to be vulnerable and morally intact. In comparison, Galadriel threatens to hunt down and kill every living Orc, is assuming a lot of convenient connections based on symbols rather than actually searching for proof that the symbols belong to the people she presumes they belong to, and antagonizes almost every character she encounters. One might even claim she is the reason Sauron reappears, because Sauron is made to return to Middle-earth by Galadriel's uncalled for intervention in Númenor.

The supposed star of the show, Middle-earth, is neglected despite its award-winning design, since the established distances are given up for convenience and chance. The showrunners eschew explaining the depth of Tolkien's world and most of its characters, and therefore lose audience members not already familiar with the source material. *Rings of Power* would rather have benefited from cutting at least one of the storylines or re-arranging some of the barely fleshed-out conflicts into later seasons. The most anticipated scene, which gives the show its title, the creation of the Elven rings, was cut short and overshadowed by the reveal of Sauron. The best part of the series is the award-winning score by Bear McCreary and the theme by Howard Shore.

In general, the first season could have benefited from more experienced writers. For hard-core fans of Tolkien's legendarium, it might be little more than

a televised fanfiction, and maybe it is better to enjoy *Rings of Power* without comparing it to the original work, which only leads to frustration and disappointment. Viewers not familiar with Tolkien's legendarium might enjoy it for its easy-to-follow premise, the fight-scenes, the score or the breath-taking visuals.

— Francis Lena Franke-Stuhlmüller

Tress of the Emerald Sea

Brandon Sanderson: *Tress of the Emerald Sea*. 25,00€, Dragonsteel Entertainment, 978-1-250-89965-1.

In 2022, Brandon Sanderson publicly announced that he had written five different novels during the COVID-19 pandemic. This announcement was followed by the launch of the most successful Kickstarter campaign of all times, where its backers were promised a quarterly delivery of four of those works in 2023, published by Sanderson's own company Dragonsteel Entertainment.

The first of these novels is *Tress of the Emerald Sea*, narrating the tale of a girl called Tress. The story starts when she departs from her home – an island in the so-called 'Emerald Sea' – in order to save the life of the boy she loves. She has many encounters on her journey, including creating a friendship with a talking rat, dealing with a group of pirates, negotiating with a dragon, and finally battling a sorceress.

It is also described that her travels initiate a process of self-discovery for Tress: having grown up on an isolated island, the journey she undertakes is her first chance of uncovering new interests, talents, and wishes. It therefore appears that Tress only learns more about her true self through her adventures – causing the story to resemble a modernized fairytale like Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* (1998) in its essential qualities.

Moreover, the story's narrator is Hoid, someone with whom avid readers of Brandon Sanderson's works might already be familiar. Hoid's narration is not only comical in its central elements, but also includes frequent references to Sanderson's other books set in the Cosmere – Brandon's own fictional universe in which many of his books are set.

Generally, *Tress of the Emerald Sea* is a recommendation for die-hard fans of Brandon and new readers alike. While it incorporates Tress's journey into Sanderson's already existing universe, it can also be read without further knowledge of the Cos-

mere and be solely enjoyed as a fairytale-like story about the adventures of a young girl on a quest.

— Julia Zogel

The Adam Project

Netflix released the science-fiction film *The Adam Project* in 2022 after reviving the original 2012 project. The film is directed by Shawn Levy, who is known for producing and directing *Stranger Things* (2016). Based on a script by the writers T.S. Nowlin, who has written the scripts for the well-known *Maze Runner* films (2014-2018), Jonathan Tropper, Jennifer Flackett, and Mark Levin, *The Adam Project* is an absorbing film reminiscent of 1980s classics such as *Back to the Future* (1985), which also delves into the concept of time travel.

In *The Adam Project*, Adam Reed travels back from dystopian 2050 to 2022 and encounters his 12-year-old self during a crash landing. Now he needs to save the future with young Adam's help by destroying his father's time travel machine called the Adam Project. While the stakes are high, old Adam must also face his personal demons which range from his self-hatred, present in his amusing bickering with his younger self, to the death of his father.

With stellar performances from Ryan Reynolds as old and Walker Scobell as young Adam, both lovers of comedy and action films will enjoy *The Adam Project*. Adam's difficult relationship with his younger self provides many comedic scenes that follow in the footsteps of earlier collaborations of Levy and Reynolds like *Free Guy* (2021) while the fast-paced action plot is captivating, as it highlights the dangers of time travel. But the film also addresses serious topics like bullying, death, and grief. It alternates between action scenes featuring vintage music, among others from Led Zeppelin, witty dialogues, and quiet conversations raising philosophical questions. One important theme of the film is Adam's relationship with his parents – his resentment of his absent father and his regret over how he treated his mother when he was a teenager, and many viewers can possibly relate to these feelings.

Due to the film's focus on the relationship between son and father, the female characters lack depth and importance. Despite the presence of a female villain and strong female characters, the women of the film are defined by their relationship with the

men which feels outdated in 2022. Nevertheless, *The Adam Project* is fun entertainment with an interesting take on time travel – namely that it should not exist – and is, all things considered, well worth watching.

— Melanie Melchior

A Day of Fallen Night

Samantha Shannon: *A Day of Fallen Night*. 19,50€, Bloomsbury, 978-1-5266-1976-1.

The prequel to the worldwide success *The Priory of the Orange Tree*, a widely acclaimed fantasy novel published by Samantha Shannon in 2019, tells the story of three very different women from very different places, who have to face dragons, loss, and responsibility while protecting their people. *A Day of Fallen Night* is an interesting addition to the world Shannon has created and worth the read even for those who did not connect with the first part, as both novels are standalones, despite taking place in the same world. While the first part focused on fantastic worldbuilding and characters, complaints were voiced about the rather dry beginning in the first 200 pages. This prequel, on the other hand, immediately draws the reader into the story. While the novel is a bit slow in the middle, it is mostly a fun, and at times sad, read where one cannot help but turn to the next page once the drought is over.

Shannon carefully crafted a world around various mythologies, like the legend of St. George which the reader might recognise from our world. It is easy to follow the different plot lines, which are carefully woven together toward the end of the novel. The most interesting aspect about the worldbuilding is probably the separation of the four different regions: The South, the West, the East, and the North. Every region has their own culture, religion, and belief systems, which are perfectly represented by the characters coming from each region. Reading about them is refreshing and interesting, especially when taking their growth throughout the novel into consideration. Glorian, for example, goes from an annoying young princess to a calculated and wise queen. The novel is also doing a great job when it comes to representation of diversity, like characters who are part of the LGBTQ+ community or of different skin colours and religions. The most unusual main character is probably Tunuva, a woman in her late 40s/early 50s, a very underrepresented age group in media, who was shown to have a fully formed personality that did not revolve around

children or marriage.

The writing was easy to follow, especially when one compares it to some other fantasy novels, while still being very descriptive and beautiful. In the action and combat scenes, Shannon easily picks up her pacing, but takes her time to build her characters' relationships with each other. In her sixth published book, she truly gets to show how much she has grown as a writer.

A Day of Fallen Night is a delight in writing, interesting characters, and most of all worldbuilding, and one of the best books I have read so far this year. I would recommend this novel to everyone who likes fantasy and fully-formed, strong female characters. Those who enjoyed the first part, those who have not read it, and maybe even those who did not enjoy *Priory of the Orange Tree* as much will want to return to Shannon's world or give it another chance.

— Merve Kehlbeck

The Hunters and the Hauntings: Lockwood & Co.

Amongst the many new projects on Netflix, there is a hidden gem: *Lockwood & Co.* The adaptation of the successful book series by British author Jonathan Stroud (2013–2017) premiered in January 2023 and blends a classic detective story about three teenagers solving a murder mystery with supernatural and horror elements.

In a bleak parallel universe where the British Isles are infested with malicious ghosts, only children can detect the supernatural beings and are hired by 'agencies' to make a living fighting them. Talented but traumatised Lucy Carlyle joins Lockwood & Co., a small agency with large financial problems. When a rich industrialist hires them to investigate a haunted house, Lucy and her team are soon fighting for more than the survival of the agency – their very lives are on the line.

Developed by Joe Cornish, who is best known for his work as a writer for *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011) and *Ant-Man* (2015), the series is a twisty and fast-paced mystery with convincing special effects and spooky sets. Ruby Stokes (Lucy) shines in her first major part after playing Francesca Bridgerton in the eponymous Netflix hit and newcomer Ali Haddji-Heshmati (George) is a scene-stealer and the breakout star of this series.

While the adaptation is faithful to its source material, the decision to fit the first two novels of the series into one season means that there is little time for world building. The origin of the British ghost problem remains unexplored, as does society's reliance on what is essentially child labour. Nevertheless, *Lockwood & Co.* accomplishes the difficult task of satisfying fans of the books and those who have never come into contact with Stroud's dark alternate London(s) before. Having been cancelled by Netflix after only one season, it is to be hoped that *Lockwood & Co.* might yet find a new home with another studio and live up to the potential it clearly has.

— Milena Wein

Short Stories and Personal Poems: A Waiter Made of Glass by Verlyn Flieger

Verlyn Flieger: *A Waiter Made of Glass*. 9,99€ (ePub), Quickbeam, 978-1-9593-6000-1.

When entering the gravitational pull of Tolkien's Middle-earth and its admirers one can be sure to encounter two phenomena: a fascination for the non-real and an appetite for texts of all forms and origins. It should then not come as a surprise that acclaimed Tolkien scholar and four-time Mythopoeic Award winner Verlyn Flieger herself has ventured into the field of fiction with her new half prose, half poetry collection *A Waiter Made of Glass*.

Beginning with the prose part of the book, the reader will soon notice that these stories are literally short. Two men ignored by all bystanders turn out to be invisible ghosts. A man obsessed by an optical illusion. A life story told through a prairie horse. What sounds like blurbs on a book cover can also be considered summaries. Yet this shortness should not be counted as a flaw, as there is an artful craftsmanship in these narratives which displays the fundamental devices and techniques of fantastic story telling. These quintessential yarns can be explored as the foundation behind greater or more ornamented narrative productions, such as Lovecraftian epics or urban legends shared over campfire. Yet the reader is left with a question: What is so special about these skeletal fantastic stories, when one can find more elaborate and awe-inspiring creepypastas in the depths of the internet?

The second part contains poetry of mostly non-fantastic content, which nonetheless deals with

a gripping topic: Grief and loss. These verses originate from experienced and raw emotional depths: “Some god must have warned me / that our time was run out. Now it’s over. It’s done. / All that’s left is the pictures”. Yet again, despite all artisanal talent, these poems lack the edge and gravitas that differentiate between aesthetically pleasing word chains and verses sharply ingraining themselves in the reader’s mind.

At the end, the reader of Flieger’s collection is quite simply left underwhelmed by this venture into non-academic writing. Although it showcases some literary skill and understanding of the imaginary from a highly respected academic writer, *A Waiter Made of Glass* ultimately just constitutes a bland collection of sketches and poetry.

— Niklas Weber

A Cursed Love to Break a Curse

Marissa Meyer: *Cursed*. 11,50€, Faber & Faber, 978-0-571-37160-0.

Cursed (2022) by Marissa Meyer is the conclusion to her newest fairy tale-retelling duology focusing on Rumpelstiltskin and Erlkönig that had been introduced with *Gilded* (2021). The plot commences where the first part left off – in the enchanted castle of the Erlkönig behind the veil.

Serilda, who is to meet regularly with the Erlkönig so he can claim her unborn child as his own, has not told Gild of his upcoming fatherhood. While she befriends the other ghosts of the Erlkönig’s court, her and Gild’s secret mission is to find not only Serilda’s and Gild’s bodies that the demon took to curse them into spiritual beings but also to prevent him from capturing all seven Gods. Soon, however, the Erlkönig takes Serilda and Gild away, back to his real home, where they are welcomed by a mysterious assortment of mythical creatures led by an obscure little ghost girl who claims to be the castle’s mistress.

After the first part introduced the world, Meyer uses the familiarity she created to delve deeper into its finer mechanics. It is easy to find back into the story and remember what was so captivating about the first part – the innovative take on a beloved fairy tale and the detailed characters. Nevertheless, the ending leaves one of the main themes of this story, and the fairy tale it was based on, unresolved. In a story that puts a lot of power into names, it feels unsatisfying to not uncover the real names of the male protagonist,

his sister, and his child. Still, all other loose ends are tied up.

All in all, *Cursed* is a worthy follow-up novel to *Gilded*. Like many fantasy novels, it ups the stakes and deepens the lore of the fantastical realm in which it takes place. At the same time, it stays true to its groundwork. The story does not lose the ties to the rules and customs laid out in the predecessor – therefore being nearly compulsory reading for fans of the first part.

— Renée Winkel

(Nicht) Schwarmlos

Der Schwarm (2023) ist das neueste Serienhighlight des ZDF, basierend auf dem gleichnamigen Roman von Frank Schätzing (2005). Fast 20 Jahre nach Erscheinen des Romans ist das grundlegende Thema der Konsequenzen menschlicher Handlungen für die Erde und ihre anderen Bewohner aktueller denn je.

Als sich eines Tages das maritime Leben gegen die Menschen wendet, kostet das nicht nur einen Fischer sein Leben. Wale greifen Boote an, Hummer sterben, um die Menschen mit einer fremdartigen Substanz zu vergiften, und die Küsten werden von einer neuen Lebensform belagert. Eine Reihe von Forschern*innen entdeckt und untersucht die unterschiedlichen Phänomene und tut sich zusammen, um die Welt davon zu überzeugen, dass eine bislang unentdeckte Art Krieg mit ihnen führt.

Auch wenn nicht von Anfang an ersichtlich ist, wie stark die Geschichte im Science-Fiction Bereich angesiedelt ist und mehr der Eindruck eines Umwelt-Thrillers entsteht, so weckt das Mysterium der Meere, die sich gegen die Menschen wehren, doch genug Fragen, um bis zum Ende dabei zu bleiben. Leider wird ein Großteil dieser Fragen nicht beantwortet, teils um Raum für Spekulationen und eine potenzielle zweite Staffel zu lassen, teils, weil sie einfach vergessen wurden. Aber auch die Figuren bleiben, vor allem im Vergleich zur Romanvorlage, blass. Die Wissenschaftler*innen haben alle ihr Fachgebiet und ein privates Problem, dass sie mit in die Serie nehmen. Weitere Eigenschaften fehlen oder wurden weggelassen – so fehlt beispielsweise Sigurs Arroganz, die dem Roman so viel Charakter verleiht, völlig in der Verfilmung und er wird einzig und allein über seine Liebe zu einer Frau definiert. Trotz dieser Kritikpunkte schafft *Der Schwarm* es, dank der Schauspieler*innen

und vieler Ortswechsel, die der spannungsgeladenen Geschichte die nötige Geschwindigkeit verleihen, zu überzeugen.

Wenn man zurückhaltende Science-Fiction mag und Interesse an den durch den Menschen verschuldeten Veränderungen der Erde hat, lohnt es sich, diese Serie anzusehen. Dabei sollte allerdings immer im Hinterkopf behalten werden, dass es eben doch Fiktion ist und wissenschaftliche Arbeitswege und Informationen nicht zwingend zutreffend sind.

— Renée Winkel

The Words That Maketh Empire

R.F. Kuang: *Babel*. 16,99€, Harper Voyager, 978-0-0630-2142-6.

Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution already suggests with its full title that author R.F. Kuang does not abandon her preferred theme of the multi-layered nature of colonialism in her most recent work. The novel tells the story of four students who, all but one displaced from their respective home countries under conditions that left them without much choice, receive the mixed blessing of studying at Oxford's Royal Institute of Translation. This institution, widely known as Babel, fuels the British Empire of Kuang's alternate 1830s with its silver working, magically manifesting the meaning that is lost in translation between words inscribed on silver bars.

For evoking a sense of wonder the text relies more on the dark academia aesthetics of Edwardian Oxford than translation-fuelled magic. Underneath all its gloomy glamour, however, the dark underbelly of imperialism and colonialism can always be glimpsed, and it is this double exposure that allows the text to explore the increasingly complicated relationship which the characters develop with their situation and the hegemony that sustains it. It is only after around 300 of the novel's 545 pages that the conflict erupts that has been boiling under the surface for the first part of the plot. The preceding part, while more concerned with painting a picture of the characters and the academic world of *Babel*, skilfully establishes likable characters and stakes the reader can care about, although some might find it a slow burn.

The pages are frequently annotated with footnotes on the etymologies of words through which Kuang's particular brand of magic works, as well as notes on academia, politics, and everyday living in

the newly industrial England. The academic nature of these annotations ties into the thematic content and gives readers an even deeper glimpse than afforded by the main text into the complex make-up of international exploitation and the, often hidden, ideological power of language.

Every step of their way throughout *Babel*, the reader is reminded that the underlying issues that haunt Kuang's fictional iteration of the British Empire are the same ones at work in the global world we inhabit today, and the author manages this with remarkably few slips into sententious moralising.

— Robin Rau

Wednesday's Missed Opportunities

Late in 2022, Netflix released *Wednesday*, its take on Charles Addams' *The Addams Family* (1964–1966), focusing on the family's daughter Wednesday. The dry-humoured morbid teenager is now the titular character of Tim Burton's first attempt at directing and producing a serialised project. His attachment to the series adds to his famous style of grotesqueness and oddity. The clever reveal of the monster and its special effects and practical design are as much a highlight as Jenna Ortega's acting as the titular character.

Wednesday must attend the Nevermore Academy for outcasts, as she is unable to restrain her violent tendencies, as a ghoulish (her species is not stated in the series), at her public High School. She is determined to escape the academy, but her attention and determination weaken as murders – committed by a mysterious monster – are taking place in and around Nevermore. At this point, the series becomes a supernatural detective story which has to be reconciled with the coming-of-age storyline of Wednesday figuring out her prophetic powers as well as a love triangle. Additionally, she becomes roommates with Enid – a werewolf girl – who is the colourful opposite of Wednesday's black gothic persona.

Wednesday can be viewed as part of the zeitgeist of spin-offs, remakes, and sequels. Therefore, it relies on previously established characters and settings but modernises and places them in the context of current topics. The gothic touch creeping into the narrative brings with it topics of feminism and queerness, as the story revolves around central female characters and societal outcasts. However, by focusing a signif-

icant amount of its screen time on the heteronormative love triangle around Wednesday, the story misses several opportunities. Firstly, the gothic and dark motifs are not given much space, placing Wednesday in some out-of-character situations, as her (re-)actions become too human. Secondly, the show decides not to engage in meaningful queer representation. Nevertheless, *Wednesday* leaves room for these themes to develop throughout the course of the next season(s).

Wednesday is an entertaining show which asks the audience to think along during the mystery plotline and achieves to humanise what has been an almost gimmicky protagonist in previous instalments. Therefore, fans of *The Addams Family* might enjoy a deeper dive into Wednesday's personality. For newcomers this series is an easy introduction into Tim Burton's gothic style.

— Sonja Kisseljow

Tolkien-Tage 2023

Ein Bericht aus Mittelerde (NRW): Impressionen von den Tolkien Tagen 2023

Vom zweiten bis vierten Juni 2023 fanden im niederrheinischen Geldern-Pont die von der Deutschen Tolkien Gesellschaft organisierten Tolkien Tage statt. Laut der Website des Events handelt es sich dabei um „die größte Veranstaltung zu den Werken des britischen Erfolgsautors in Europa“. Jenseits dieses Superlativs ergaben sich definitiv interessante Einblicke in die Welt der Fans von Mittelerde & Co.

Auf den ersten, durch unseren von omnipräsenter Popkultur abgestumpften Blick erschien die Veranstaltung mit ihren Kunsthandwerksständen und Kostümierten wie jeder andere Mittelaltermarkt. Diese oberflächliche Perspektive ignorierte jedoch die handwerklichen Qualitäten und den Enthusiasmus, der sich im Gesamtkonzept der Veranstaltung zeigte. Tatsächlich erwarteten die Besucher*innen neben der üblichen Gastronomie und Kitsch-Händlern auch exotischere Angebote, wie z.B. eine Kamelfarm oder

eine Schwertkampfschule. Kleine und große Aufbauten, wie die Seestadt Estragoth oder das Spinnennest im Düstewald (beides Schauplätze in Tolkiens *Der Hobbit*), ließen in ihrer handwerklichen Qualität Teile von Mittelerde lebendig werden.

Eher ungewöhnliche Erfahrungen auf den Tolkien Tagen ergaben sich durch die breite Präsenz von Multimedialität zum Thema Tolkien und Mittelerde. Neben den üblichen Verdächtigen (Literatur, Musik, Vorträge) fanden sich verschiedene Veranstaltungsteilnehmende aus dem Bereich der digitalen Medien, darunter vor allem YouTube-Kanäle und Podcasts. Auch größere Marken, wie das Kartenspiel *Magic: The Gathering* oder die Computerspielfirma Daedalic Entertainment, waren mit eigenen Ständen zum Thema Tolkien vertreten.

Neben allen Aktionen und Angeboten waren natürlich die Besucher*innen das große Highlight der Tolkien Tage. Diese konterkarierten das Klischee vom Tolkien-Fan als bleicher Nerd oder verstaubter

Akademiker durch ihren heterogenen Mix aus Filmfan und Buchpurist, Jung und Alt, Mann und Frau (in Rüstung und Gewandung!). Selbst der Vorwurf, dass Tolkiens Kreationen eher reaktionäres Gedankengut anziehen würde, wurde durch eine überraschend hohe Dichte an Pride-Symbolen entkräftet.

Abschließend seien noch einige Kritikpunkte zur Veranstaltung genannt. Anfahrtstechnisch empfiehlt sich für potentielle zukünftige Besucher*innen das eigene Auto, da man am ländlichen Niederrhein teilweise von stündlichem oder nur telefonisch reservierbarem Nahverkehr abhängig ist. Und einen großen Teil der Veranstaltung bei bester Junihitze auf einem staubigen Ascheplatz stattfinden zu lassen, darf nachträglich als gewagte Entscheidung betrachtet werden.

— Niklas Weber

Vermischtes

Neues aus der Inklings-Gemeinschaft

- » Das nächste Inklings-Symposium wird vom 3. bis 5. Mai 2024 unter der Organisation von Andreas Bieber und Francis Lena Franke-Stuhlmüller auf Schloss Malberg stattfinden und sich dem Themenkomplex der phantastischen Kinderliteratur in besonderer Verbindung mit dem 200. Geburtstag George MacDonalds widmen.
- » Die Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung (GfF) e.V. veranstaltet 2023 zusammen mit der Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) vom 15. bis 19. August in Dresden eine Konferenz unter dem Titel „Disruptive Imaginationen“. Weitere Informationen finden sich auf der Veranstaltungswebsite: www.disruptiveimagination.com.