

Call for Papers: Mythcon 53: 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, a multicultural, multimedia event dedicated to improving contacts among groups and individuals interested in speculative fiction, we are also interested in papers on their traditional Posthumous Guest, who this year is L. Frank Baum. 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. Participants are encouraged to submit papers chosen for presentation at the conference to *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. 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 (see <http://www.diversicon.org/>), then please send your proposal to scottl2605@aol.com .