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## Myers' Knowledge of Hounds, Hunting Comes in Handy for Fantasy Series

Written by Betsy Burke Parker

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Photo by Ellen Robertson

She blames J.R.R. Tolkien.

For a lot of things.

Karen Myers figures the beloved fantasy writer was behind her grinding need to grasp the script and vocabulary of ancient Greek and several other dead languages, after admiring Tolkien's use of language as the basis for his created Elvish tongues. She knew, intellectually, there was little she could "do" with a degree from Yale in mythology, but something tugged at her, appealing to her sense of the deep history of civilization and the possibilities offered by the traditional ways of structuring the numinous world

around us.

Today, it all makes sense. As author of an innovative, imaginative entry in the crowded genre of fantasy fiction, Myers believes her grasp of the linguistics and discipline Tolkien used to create his deep background for Middle-earth has guided her in developing the realm of Annwn.

She remembers well the very moment she began to conceptualize the series "The Hounds of Annwn," the first of which is reviewed in the upcoming spring print edition of *Covertside*. One day last April she and husband David Zincavage were driving through the heart of Virginia's foxhunting region, on U.S. 17 between I-66 and U.S. 50 – Piedmont Foxhounds territory through the beautiful Crooked Run valley north of their home in Hume's Old Dominion Hounds region.

They were chatting about this and that, the day's plans, the future, what they'd do when they retired. "David was off on some tangent, saying we should just retire to 'elf-land,'" Myers said with a laugh. "Something about it just tickled me. I mean, how would you live in elf-land, what would you do, what would it be like, what would it look like?" Gazing at the stunning Blue Ridge foothills as they rolled down the two-lane highway, Myers's story began to take shape.

She considered different genres of fantasy, settling on a form that links the contemporary world to elf-land, intersecting modern era with ancient realm. This is usually styled "urban fantasy," though in Myers's world there's not a city in sight. At last her intimate knowledge of world mythology was going to come in very handy. She began to work out a tale of a modern foxhunter transiting one realm to another, with horse and hound.

Drawing from Celtic myth, Myers's story began to spill from her fingers as she took to her keyboard, typing feverishly late into the night and early each morning. She took the notional "Wild Hunt," a traditional trope involving a mythical pack of red-and-white hounds hunting for justice, and linked it to the modern day foxhunting field. It was a perfect intersect of Myers's familiar Virginia hunt country and traditional myth.

Because traditional tales often contradict one another, Myers had to select among them and add new material to make a consistent story without violating tradition. "I'm cursed with a sense of the right way and the wrong way to build worlds," she said. Like Tolkien's Middle Earth, a laboriously concocted world complete with past, present and future history and a blinding array of specialized languages for each creature in it, Myers "had to create a consistent universe, drawing Gwyn and Iolo from tradition and filling around them with George's story. It's a complete overlay, the elvish land on top of the Piedmont today, parallel, but not the same. A hole opens into elf-land and you've been shunted into another realm."

A graduate of Yale University who grew up in Kansas City, Myers met Zincavage in college, and they have lived and worked – she in computer programming, he in real estate – in Connecticut, New York City, Chicago and California. For the past decade they've called Virginia's hunt country home, since Myers took a job at Insight in Manassas. They first settled on the edge of Blue Ridge Hunt territory in Bluemont, but for the past three years they've lived

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Entertainment you related to this. Zilvavage is a writer as well, producing editorial works on the history of fishing and hunting for trade magazines and periodicals.

To follow Myers and The Hounds of Annwn series, read her blog and updates on her Web site: [www.PerkunasPress.com](http://www.PerkunasPress.com).

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