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Across the Brandywine

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Online Winter Seminar



Online Winter Seminar

The Inklings and Horror: Fantasy's Dark Corners

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Via Zoom and Discord

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Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

July 1969, The Claremont Colleges Branch in October 1969, and in January 1970 The Santa Barbara Branch, The Orange County Branch, and the Long Beach Branch. All of the present branches are in Southern California, however there is a possibility of branches being formed in Northern California and other states. The Society has continued to grow, not only because of the interesting material we study, but the friendliness, relaxedness, and enthusiasm (but not fanaticism) of the members. It is a great personal pleasure to me to know so many diverse yet highly interesting personalities. Some might think the Society is a literary cult. In a cult, the object(s) of worship can not say or do any wrong. The purpose of the Mythopoeic Society is discussion, not worship.

Besides the monthly meetings, the Society has its special events, primarily the semi-annual picnics. Each September there is the Bilbo and Frodo Birthday Picnic. The first one was in 1967. At this picnic-party there are relay races, folk dancing, a LOTR quiz, birthday cake and mathom exchange, and costume judging with prizes given for the best Tolkien character costumes. Each year the costumes become more elaborate and well thought out. The 1969 picnic saw over 200 attending, most in costume.

In the Spring a picnic is held to celebrate two events: the Elvish New Year and the Destruction of The Ring. There are the relay races, folk dancing, quiz, and costume judging, with the day ended with the burning of The Ring. To demonstrate how colorful these picnics must look, being held in public parks, Doris Robin, a member, tells the story about the first Spring picnic held in beautiful Lacy Park in San Marino. Doris saw two middle aged ladies looking on from a distance, half hidden by shrubbery. Doris went over to them and asked them to join in. The shy women hesitatingly said "Oh no, we couldn't. We've never been to a love-in before."

Now that many more people are familiar with Narnia, there is a possibility in the future that there might be a Narnia costume picnic.

Besides the meetings and picnics, the Society participated in three special events in 1969: it ran a ring-joust booth at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire in May; a special Mythopoeic Art Exhibit at Westercon XXII (a Science Fiction-Fantasy Convention) in July; and the Narnia Conference in November (see p. 13). In 1970 the Society plans to hold a meeting and display at this year's Westercon XXIII in Santa Barbara for the 4th of July weekend.

In co-operation with The Tolkien Society of America, the Mythopoeic Society will sponsor a conference-convention called Tolkien Conference III/Mythcon I on the Labor Day weekend, September 4,5,6, and 7. Negotiations are not complete as to the location. However we can safely say it will be either Pomona College or Harvey Mudd College, both members of the Claremont group of Colleges. (See page 20.) By sending your memberships in now you are guaranteed progress reports which will give all developments and facts as soon as they are known. We invite papers on Tolkien, Lewis, Williams and other fantasy writers. Those interested should write me now with their intention and tentative subject of the paper. Arrangement can be made for those unable to attend to have their paper read in absentia.

I hope many of you in other parts of the country will attend. I would certainly enjoy meeting you, and I'm sure you will enjoy meeting all of the great people here in Southern California.

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I think I should mention the article "The Great Beast: Imagination in Harness" by Galen Peoples was submitted to Mythlore unsolicited. When I first read it I did not realize the immediate relevancy it has. The danger of taking fantasy as reality expressed in the article has become even more immediate with the news that Charles Manson, who is undergoing trial for instigating the Tate and La Bianca murders, has read Strange in a Strange Land many times. A newspaper article has reported that Manson has copied much of the life style and personality aspects of the main character from the book, even to the naming one of his children after the character: Valentine Michael Smith. Without making this story anymore sensational than it is, and since the trial is still underway, I will only say it seems that Manson did not distinguish the fantasy from the reality.

It is possible from this instance, uninformed persons might attack the reading of fantasy in general. (Although I doubt they could start any kind of movement.) To blame fantasy or imaginative literature for the psychotic actions of a small few is the same as to blame book publishers for the death of someone who had been beaten to death with a book by someone else.

# Across the Brandywine

## by Bernie Zuber

A column dedicated to those who cross the Brandywine to the world beyond the shire.

J.R.R. Tolkien... the magic name that brought us all together. It was because of the popularity of The Hobbit and The Lord of The Rings that many of us joined the Mythopoeic Society. Later, in the discussions, we discovered that there was much more to Tolkien's works than just superficial fairy tale adventures. Tolkien was really the key to the world of mythopoeic writing. We found out about the other two writers closely associated with him, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams, and we read and discussed their works and philosophy. When these three English writers started their literary group, the Inklings, in the late 1930's they couldn't have imagined the effect of their relationship on a group of young Americans in the late 60's. Tolkien, the only survivor of the three, would probably not want to meet us, since he has been so hounded by his fans, but I doubt that he would disapprove of the purpose of our society. We've tried to comprehend what he and the other mythopoeic writers were trying to communicate. What more could any writer wish for? Occasionally our enthusiasm has carried us off on distracting tangents but that can be expected. Any writer who goes into as much detail in his creation as Tolkien should realize his readers will also "get carried away."

The works of Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams inspired the creation of the Mythopoeic Society and the Society, in turn, has created a bond of communication and fellowship between its members. It's as though the Inklings had started a snowball which has rolled over to us from England and across the years. I think it's still rolling and growing to encompass more and more. What I'm trying to say here is based on personal experience within the Society. I found out that most members are not only devoted readers, sincerely interested in the purpose of discussion, but they are also interesting and creative individuals, who like to share their experiences with others. The majority of our membership is of the younger generation everyone is so concerned about these days, what with demonstrations, drugs, new morality, etc. I, on the other hand, am one of the members over thirty and, I suppose, part of the so-called establishment. When I first joined I wasn't sure I'd fit in, but soon found out that there was no generation gap in the Society. I even had the strange feeling I was among the same type of friends I had known when I was in school. It's true that the medieval and semi-hippie clothes worn at Mythopoeic picnics and parties make some people think ours is a group of "flower children," but it just isn't so. I really do believe our members are more impressed with the positive and creative aspects of life brought forth by Tolkien and the mythopoeic writers than they are by any talk of drugs or anti-establishment rebellion. It's also interesting to note that the families of some of our members, who have so graciously allowed the use of their homes for Mythopoeic meetings, understand the positive purpose of our discussions and they too have been encompassed in this bond of communication and fellowship I mentioned earlier. Yes, the snowball is still rolling and it's getting larger all the time.

Meanwhile, for those of you who haven't had the pleasure of attending a Mythopoeic meeting, there's Mythlore. In our previous four issues we have tried to convey some feeling of our society. To Glen, our editor and founder of the Society, goes the credit for putting Mythlore together but the variety of writing and illustration has shown that it is also a group effort. Now this, our first anniversary issue, will be distributed not only to our own subscribers but also to all the members of the Tolkien Society of America. We are pleased to introduce that many more people to our publication and to our Society.

