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Editorial: Some Other Anniversaries

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Editorial: Some Other Anniversaries

Founder's Thoughts "On the Journey"

[The following was given at the Opening Ceremonies at Mythopoeic Conference XVIII.]

When I set out on the journey of this enterprise called the Mythopoeic Society, no wizard or a host of Dwarves had knocked on my door to urge me forward out of literary isolation. I was alone, yet not alone. I had already met and internalized a number of companions, some of which are found on the cover of the last issue of *Mythlore*. It was their interaction with me, and my wonder and love for them and their sub-creators that provided the vision, the call to seek others who shared in its many facets.

The Mythopoeic Society is rooted, centered and fixed, and yet open and far ranging. It is founded on the central and abiding devotion to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams. And it is their collective genius and approach to writing that is our fountainhead and reason for being. Yet we are, as a consequence, very interested as well in the works and writers that came before them and were contemporary with them, together with the genres which they have in turn influenced and enriched, knowing that it is folly to study them in isolation. Our horizons are vast as the Society continues to encounter and honor other authors. It is this particular distinction of being rooted and centered while open to wide horizons that gives the Mythopoeic Society much of its particular character and delicate balance.

The preservation of this delicate balance needs the constant respect and attention of all who are part of the Society. There is the constant possibility that the far flung secondary interests in other authors and genres can become primary to some. Each of us has our own personal interests which are often quite different from others. Without the commonly shared center of the three authors the Society is always in danger of flying apart from centrifugal pressure. My primary overriding purpose twenty years ago was to create a gathering place for those who have seen and responded to the vision Tolkien, Lewis and Williams wrote of. A number of times in this Society's history it has faced a crossroads, and each time a decision was required as to which direction we were to go. I have no doubt that we would not all be here today had not the right decisions been made.

We live in a consumer age, where each of us samples and shops around, seeking to meet our needs and interests. This is a valid fact for us as individuals, and if we do not find what we seek, we move on. The Mythopoeic Society should do all within its abilities to meet its members interests, while not compromising the real reasons for its existence. New and creative ways to fulfill members' interests and Society purposes continue to present themselves. I call upon all Society members to become real participants in those things the Society has to offer: the publications, the committees, the conferences, and the local discussion groups and to share how these activities can be enlarged and improved. I also call upon the members, whether or not every aspect sparks their individual interest, to respect and actively support the Society's stated purposes.

When this journey began the Society set out with a *joie d'être*, a certain enthusiasm and innocent joy

that pervaded much of its attitude and practice. This optimism sprang from the works of the three authors. There has been nothing unclear or fuzzy about what we are about. There have been those who have called for the organization to be devoted to one author, and also those who tried to make the Society into a generalized fantasy organization, unconnected to any particular writer or group of writers. Either way would have radically altered the Society's unique character and appeal.

For twenty eventful years I have tried to do my part to keep the Society on course, to keep it the meeting ground for those that share the mythopoeic vision. In terms of a metaphorical ship, I have seen no need to keep the wind in the sails. The three authors and all that is related to them and their genres, and the response this invokes, have continued to do that very well. Many others, to whom I owe more than I can say, have sometimes quietly and sometimes forcefully done their part in keeping the Society on course, upright, and maintaining its delicate balance. And why do I say all this now? Because I see the Society as having entered a new era of real service and growth. Perception is not always the same as reality, and I now see perception catching up with reality: that we are indeed a truly national and international organization. The days when Aragorn and the other Dunedain served unobtrusively to preserve the peace and order of those who were only dimly aware of them, if at all, needs to come to a close. We have entered a new age of great opportunity, and with it new dangers and challenges.

For those here at the Conference who are encountering the Society for the first time, I say welcome. The Society has much to offer. I see it as a community of people who share deep interests, as this Conference is an excellent example. The wide spectrum of people involved is one of the Society's real strengths. I speak for many in inviting you to become a member, to share and personally participate in what is done. To those who are now members, I challenge you to both become more involved and to keep the Society on course. Do not look to me alone or to the Council of Stewards, the Society's governing committee, which is primarily involved with the nuts and bolts of organizational administration. No, we must all do our individual part in keeping the Society on track, so that five, ten, twenty years from now we will continue to have memorable events such as this, and so the Society will continue to be a primary gathering place for those who have seen and responded to its original vision. To the idea that it is one of the greatest pleasures and honors of my life to be involved with all of you, I can only echo Niggle: "It's a gift!"

EDITORIAL

Some Other Anniversaries

Besides the publication of *The Hobbit*, 1987 marks at least three other 50 year anniversaries. The Golden Gate Bridge in California, Walt Disney's *Snow White*, and the comic book hero Superman also claim 1937 as their completed appearance. While these do not have much similarity to *The Hobbit* at first glance, certain

positive or negative resonances come to mind.

That great span, taking difficult years and lives to erect, bridging the entrance of a bay, uniting two peninsulas and promoting communication. It is an awesome and splendid sight. In the same year *The Hobbit* was the bridge that brought J.R.R. Tolkien out of relative obscurity into popular notice.

Disney's *Snow White* was a major artistic achievement of the time. It was the first feature-length animated motion picture and a delight in many ways. Who can forget the transformation of the evil Queen into the Witch? Small children cover their eyes in terror. For a nation in the Great Depression the assurance that one's "Prince will come" and the transcendent happy ending was gladly received. But oh, those dwarves! Both Tolkien and Lewis were appalled at their vulgar debasement when they saw the film. What a contrast to Thorin and Co.. It is regrettable that Disney's seven have heavily colored the popular perception of dwarves. Both Tolkien and Lewis' dwarves are a far cry from those, but the damage has been done and will take decades more to overcome.

Fifty years ago was an age hungry for heroes. The Fuehrer had proclaimed the superrace, heir of Nietzsche and Shaw. Great forces were on the move while isolated America limped through the Great Depression. Then, from beyond the stars yet American as apple pie, a new hero was born, complete with his own mythic origins and super powers, albeit upon poorly drawn comic book paper. The appeal and response has been strong and on-going to a certain public. But despite Superman's virtues and deeds, I prefer the more humble heroism of Bilbo Baggins. I respond more readily, identify more easily with his emerging virtues and heroics. This gentle hero is one I can learn from, especially his foregoing of self interest near the end of the book.

Fifty years is a long time for most of us. Much has happened since 1937, but Bilbo Baggins has faded well and continues to inspire new generations.

This year's Mythopoeic Conference at Marquette University, whose theme was *The Hobbit's* 50th anniversary, was an event to be long remembered. Attendees from 25 states and five other nations made this probably the best attended to date. The programming, with more than 80 items, sparkled with quality and substance. The Committee's long and careful preparation resulted with manifest success. Christopher Tolkien spoke several times to audiences eager to hear him. The exhibits of Tolkien's manuscripts, artwork, and books rounded out this very stimulating and pleasurable event for all. Beginning with this issue, we are printing many fine papers given at the Conference, along with other papers and regular features.

The Council of Stewards

This is a brief summary of the Stewards' meeting of May 9, 1987.

Glen Goodknight proposed the Bylaw change that was previously printed in *ML* 50, p. 26. Passed unanimously. Then the statement to the members was proposed by Glen that was printed in the previous issue, p. 26. Lee Speth recommended the previous word "insure" be changed to "provide" and that "inadvertent" be added before "abuse." Passed as amended.

It was agreed that a summary of minutes should not be printed until the minutes of a given meeting have been corrected, if necessary, and approved at

the following meeting.

To better facilitate good communication between the Council and Mythopoeic Conference Committees, Christine Lowentroup moved that a new Stewards position be created, that of Secretary for Mythopoeic Conferences. Christine nominated Paul Nolan Hyde. Passed unanimously.

Jon Lackey and Mike Urban were added to the Society's Honor Roll for past services.

Lynn Maudlin proposed that a new Steward, Diana Pavlac, assume her former position, that of Secretary for Publicity. Lynn also proposed she assume new duties as a Steward, that of Membership Secretary --precise definition to be determined later, but would include P.O. Box mail forwarding and maintenance of the *Mythlore* mailing list on her computer. Passed Unanimously.

Glen moved that the minutes show who voted yes, no, or abstain when a vote is not unanimously passed. He then proposed the creation of a Stewards position as Secretary for the Board of Advisors, and that there was a need for an active BoA. Don King was nominated, but the matter was tabled until the July meeting, where Don would be present. (Don was approved at the July meeting.)

There was discussion as to which address is best for the Order Form which was being updated. Matter to be settled at the July meeting.

David Bratman, as immediate past Chair of the Council, was approved to chair the remaining 1987 meetings as Acting Chair, on account of Lee Speth's resignation as Chair.

Copies of the May 9, 1987 approved minutes are available by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope with \$.39 postage to the Recording Secretary: Anne Osborn, 2750 Orange, Riverside, CA 92501. Matters that may need Steward action should be sent to her. General questions about the Society and its interests and activities should be sent to the Corresponding Secretary c/o P.O. Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001.

Conference Guidelines

One of the necessary elements for a successful Mythopoeic Conference is a group of people in a given area to form a Committee to organize the Conference. For those interested in the possibility of organizing a future Mythopoeic Conference there is a set of Guidelines, available from the Society's Secretary for Mythopoeic Conferences, Paul Nolan Hyde, 2661 E. Lee St., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

Mythopoeic Celtic Stationery by Patrick Wynne

This stationery is available for \$5 plus \$1 in handling. It features four designs, all found in *Mythlore* 35: The Celtic circles portray themes from J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. Each circle is at the top right of the page and is 3 5/8" in diameter, with a lined border around the page. The fourth design is of the four corners found on page 2 of issues before 50, but much larger in size. The set includes 4 sheets of each design, making 16 printed sheets, 12 blank sheets, plus 16 envelopes. The paper is of neutral but beautifully antique-appearing parchment. Each set makes fine personal stationery both for men and women, and are excellent for a special mythopoeic gift. Send your order to: The Mythopoeic Society, P.O. Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001.