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Founder's Thoughts "On the Journey"

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Founder's Thoughts "On the Journey"

[The following was given at the Opening Ceremony 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'vive*, 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 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 new 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 Niggie: "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