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20 Years and 50 Issues

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Abstract

Comments of members/readers on what the Society and Mythlore have meant to them.

Authors

Rayner Unwin, Robert Boenig, Mindi M. Reid, Vernon Hyles, Norma Roche, Alexei Kondratiev, Joe R. Christopher, Melanie A. Rawls, Robert A. Hall Jr., Benjamin Urrutia, Anne Osborn, Thomas Howard, Kathryn Lindskoog, Jerry Daniel, Paul Ritz, and Ian Ballantine

20 Years and 50 Issues

1987 is the 20th anniversary of the founding of The Mythopoeic Society. This is the 50th issue of Mythlore. The following are comments of members/readers on what the Society and Mythlore have meant to them.



Rayner Unwin

London, G.B.

No one who claims to be interested in serious literary fantasy -- and it is not quite such a minority taste as it used to be -- can afford to ignore Mythlore. Thanks to Glen GoodKnight's dedication over many years there has been a regular, well-produced pulse of scholarship, information and review available to those of us, not only in America, who respect the telling of tales and the exercise of the individual imagination. One of the miracles of Fantasy as a literary form is that it is compulsively readable, and the contributors to Mythlore acknowledge and reflect this admirable quality. I salute its achievement and look forward to reading the next fifty issues.

Robert Boenig

Texas A&M University

As an academic who teaches English at a large public university, I am faced with two groups of people: students who love Tolkien and Lewis merely because they are fun to read and colleagues who find them not quite academically respectable because of either their old fashioned literary tastes or their religious beliefs. Mythlore, among its other virtues, speaks to both groups, mediating these extreme positions, for it can demonstrate to the fan and professor alike that there are glories here well worth serious study.

Mindi M. Reid

Bellevue, WA

Our current age is one of both excess and triviality. People of Dubious or nonexistent talent are exalted to national, even global fame and plaster the covers of popular magazines until the popular taste for their particular triviality or behavioral excess has been supplanted by that of the next Vanna White or Jim Bakker, in a continuity of nothingness. Perhaps this is why I value the Mythopoeic Society and its publications: in the face of a popular culture (or anti-culture) without memory, it persists in an exploration of the rich landscape of imagination -- a cultural imagination that is a type of living, growing Memory with its roots planted in the tradition of Memory: the soil of human wonderment that bears the name of Folklore, Fairy-tale, Fantasy.

The deepest longings of the human heart -- the eternal quest, outworkings of Sehnsucht -- are treated with respect and scholarly attention in the pages of Mythlore. Symbols are valued, and understood... and nurtured into revelatory new forms. Connections, often unexpected, are shown to exist between the written visions of people separated by the gulfs of time. The voice of God is heard in the mythic songs of Man; the struggle between Light and Darkness, Good and Evil -- so often obscured in the modern world by the tawdry uniformity of the players in the drama -- is set forth for us again and again in a noble language that enables us to see it for what it

is, enables us to feel its sharp edge and fearful poignancy. We are ourselves ennobled by a sense of Time, of Craft, and participate in a meeting of heart and mind, art and intellect. The writers of mythopoeic works, and those who critique and evaluate them, join in the Great Dance across Time and Space in Mythlore's pages, and the onlooker is grateful, and taps a foot.

I am grateful. May the sanity and sensitivity of the Mythopoeic Society continue to provide a haven for those of us weary of the short-lived and expendable, the glitzy trash of a disposable culture. The Society has risen far above manifestations of mere fandom -- which too often partakes of the imitative and the vulgar, disconnected from the careful craftsmanship and disciplined traditions of the past. Lewis Williams, Tolkien... I believe they would be pleased, indeed are pleased, with the voice the Society has given them (and all seekers of the Blue Flower) in an age that strives to deaden the impulse to a long-term Quest. Perhaps that is the greatest praise possible.

Vernon Hyles

Univ. of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

I continue to use Mythlore in my SF and Fantasy classes.... I have had articles published in various literary and philological journals, I read many of them regularly, and I consistently find the material in Mythlore superior in quality. [The editor is] to be commended.

Norma Roche

Northampton, MA

What we in the Society share together is more than entertainment or literature -- we've helped each other grow up. My favorite books have made me do some serious thinking about the things we all face in the real world -- courage, faithfulness, caring for the Earth, the need to keep plugging even when hope seems gone, the idea that there is Someone above it all. A lot of factors go into the making of each individual, but for all of us, the books we love are primary ingredients. You -- all of you who write for and work on Mythlore have helped each other with this process. How many times has one of you pointed out a beautiful passage I'd read right over, found new meaning in some point that seemed obvious before, or connected something in Lord of the Rings to something in classic literature, inspiring me to discover that? Without all of you, reading wouldn't be as rich an experience, and who I am would be a little poorer.

Alexei Kondratiev

Flushing, NY

Those for whom the reading of high fantasy is a profound experience, both aesthetic and spiritual, are a small and scattered minority, constantly faced with misunderstanding on the part of those who view fantasy only as a superficial entertainment with commercial possibilities. As a member of that minority and one who for many years had little opportunity to share with others my feelings about my favorite writers, I have found the Mythopoeic Society to be a vital and irreplaceable terrain for stimulating exchange. Again and again I wonder to see, in the pages of Mythlore, evidence of so many others who are sensitive to the life giving power of the mythic imagination, who view it as something wholesome, necessary,

and indeed holy (regardless of religious affiliations). Gradually, as I have been able to attend some Mythopoeic Conferences, I've come to know the faces behind the names seen in print, and gained some friends and correspondents among them. The Society has evolved and matured in the years I've observed it: understanding and appreciation of the Inklings has deepened, and I am gratified to see attention being paid to other great fantasists. The original vision and enthusiasm that shaped the Society have stood the test of time remarkably well, and I hope to see it grow with undiminished vigor in the future.

On the Fiftieth Issue of Mythlore
by Joe R. Christopher

Mythlore... is a continuing source of articles about... the... Inklings, but the quality of those articles is very uneven. Generally they are quite brief, more in the nature of notes than articles; most are the work of dedicated readers (addressed to a like audience) rather than scholars.

--Kathleen Spencer

The Common Scholar lacks in scholarship,
reading to satisfy his common grip
on what has happened and on what it means,
delighting equally in styles' cuisines,
like golden apples, with richness to the pip.

And does he shape his thoughts into a scrip,
and does she praise imagination's trip,
then publishing within a magazine,
that Common Reader?

Ah, he or she within a book can dip,
then read enthralled, if that romance can slip
a Mystery beyond the common scenes:
the Inklings wrote their novels not for deans,
and not for scholars, alive for learning's tip,
but Common Readers.



On the Placement of Criticism
by Joe R. Christopher

[M]any of the articles in [Mythlore] are quite respectable enough for [Speculum or PMLA].

--Judith A. Johnson

Respectability's the scholar's game,
for one's promotion's built upon that frame:
"Yes, Mythlore's nice, but is it refereed?
I'm up for tenure, and I have this need"--
so one, embarrassed, might confess in shame.

No, no, a dean will never deem the fame
of it up to an older, unillo'd name--
or else, the contents he'd have to judge,
agreed
respectable.

But wisdom, ah, deep learning, is a flame
which burns not only in ovens, well-banked and
tame;
there's wildness too, which forests will out-
speed--
do Tongues of Flame be-cap the Ph.D.'d?
Who care what journals solemn deans proclaim
respectable!

Melanie A. Rawls

Thomasville, GA

Congratulations to Mythlore on its fiftieth issue and to the Mythopoeic Society for its twentieth year. Fantasy literature appears to light the creative imaginations of its readers: essays, poems, pictures, books, costumes, songs, plays, sculptures and who-knows-what-else pour out. We are fortunate to have the Society and its publications to provide us a forum.

Robert A. Hall, Jr.

Cornell University

As a specialist in linguistics, I firmly believe that the study of language and that of literature should be joined hand in hand in philology, the study of a culture (real or imaginary) through its texts, ancient and modern. Philology is, as Tolkien pointed out in his Oxford valedictory address, based on love of words and their meanings. Philologists are lovers of words.

In recent years, this noble undertaking of philology has been subverted by a movement based on a supposed "radical skepticism concerning language." Its adherents aim at "deconstructing" (ie. demolishing, destroying) every text they deal with. First they deny that any word can have a clearly identifiable meaning. Then they foist wildly perverse interpretations onto the text, often reading into it a meaning exactly the opposite of what its author specifically intended. In Tolkien's terminology, the deconstructionists are misologists, haters of words. Like the orcs in The Lord of the Rings, they treat words and their meanings as things to be defiled and played nasty games with.

Here is where Mythlore and the Mythopoeic Society come in, to reaffirm the positive value of both language and literature. We, as contributors and members, love the texts which we discuss, and we love the language which is the vehicle of these texts. We know that the authors intend meanings (even when the worlds they discuss are intentionally imaginary), and we do our best to discover those meanings. We may disagree among ourselves on one point or another, for of such is intellectual discourse made. But any disagreements are (I hope!) friendly and constructive. They are of very minor importance compared with our love of the literature we read and analyze, and of the fantasy which nourishes our imagination and our scholarship.

Benjamin Urrutia

Provo, UT

During my first ten years in the Society, my involvement was from a distance -- sometimes a very long distance. In 1985 and 1986, it changed drastically. I actually met several Mythopoeic people in person -- Gracia Fay Ellwood, Glen GoodKnight, Sarah Beach, Bonnie Callahan, Steven Walker, Patrick Wynne, etc. I actually attended a Society Conference. My life has been immeasurably enriched by these wonderful folks.

Anne Osborn

Riverside, CA

I have belonged to the Mythopoeic Society since 1970, when a pointed-eared Elrond-robed Glen got me to play Toss the Ring Into the Mountain at the L.A. Renaissance Faire. As is so common, this was the first time I had realized that other people felt as deeply as I did about Tolkien and Lewis (my appreciation for Williams came later). I have met some of my dearest

friends through the Society, and have drawn some of my dearest friends into it. The Society gives me a place to be the truest me, and its value to me increases with age.

Thomas Howard

Beverly Farms, MA

In Narnia, both the good folks and the bad knew certain things because there were still people (and other creatures) about keeping the old tales and rhymes alive. We seem to live in a world like that: if the ancient Story is not kept alive, certain things will die. Those "certain things," of course, are The Most Important Things -- what T.S. Eliot called The Permanent Things.

Orchids, laurels, and hats off to Mythlore for being one of the conduits.

Kathryn Lindskoog

Orange, CA

How fast the past twenty years have gone -- as if in a fantasy. I am always thankful for the friends, the stimulation, the entertainment, and the enrichment that the Mythopoeic Society has added to my life. I never tire of Mythlore. I rejoice in friends old and new who appear there through the years.

Jerry Daniel, Editor CSL New York C.S. Lewis Society

All I can say is "Magnificent." No one else is providing exactly the same pleasure and instruction you are providing for those who love fantasy literature and the Inklings. Joe Christopher's "Inklings' Bibliography" is a feature which should be continued and expanded.

Paul Ritz

Clearwater, FL

The Mythopoeic Society and Mythlore have influenced my entire life. I have been aware of fantasy and because of it became involved with books, first working in a bookstore and now as a librarian. It has also added in helping me find my friends with similar interests.

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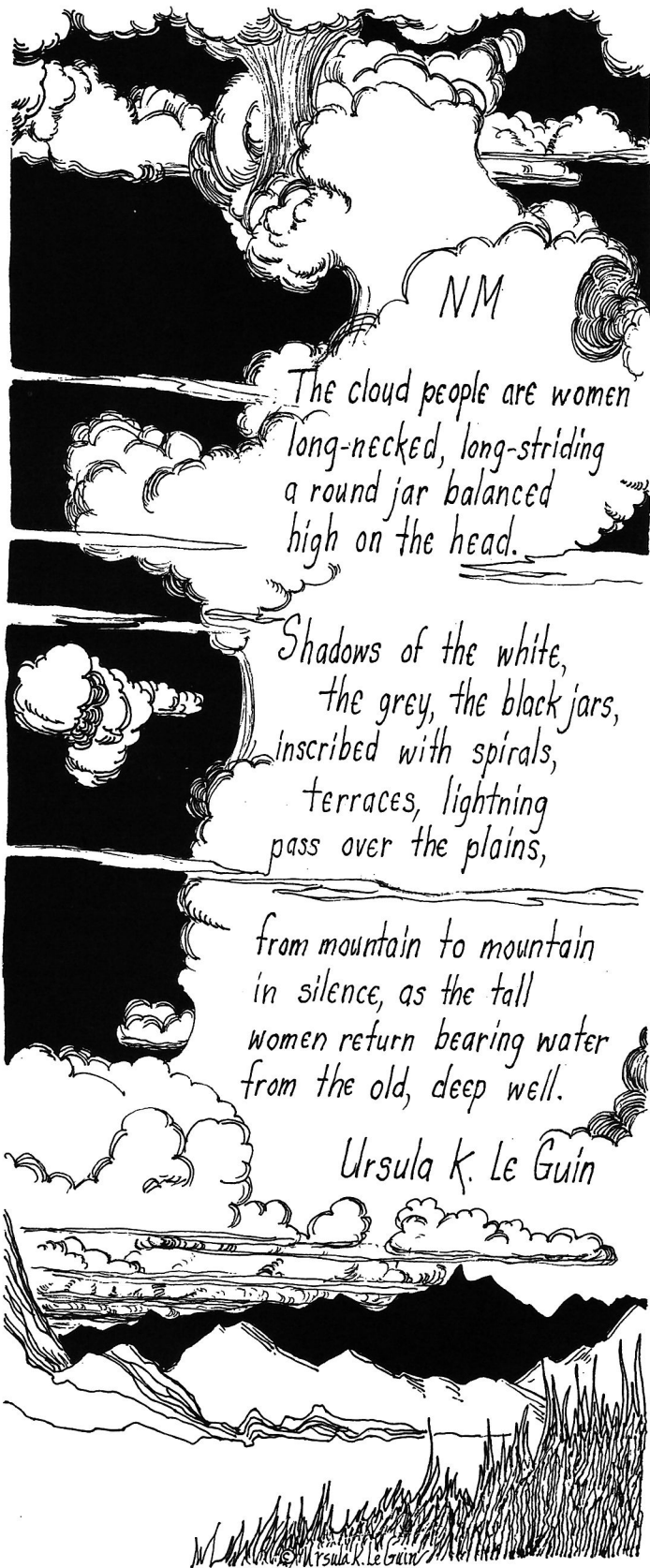
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Ian Ballantine

New York, NY

I have enjoyed and admired Mythlore since you began publication. You have made an important contribution to gaining a full appreciation of authors of high imagination.



Ursula K. Le Guin