



Mythopoeic Society

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25 Years: The Mythopoeic Society Appreciations

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THE MYTHOPOEIA SOCIETY

APPRECIATIONS

The following tributes were not, for different reasons, printed in the last issue. We are happy to share them with you here.

C.I. "Sherwood" Smith Lowentrou, Westminster, CA

PROSIT

How can one properly express appreciation for something that has been a part of one's life for 25 years? I was a skinny 16-year-old when I first joined the Society, and now I'm a matron of 41.

I came to Tolkien by a somewhat circuitous route: a friend brought me these three library books, saying, "Here's a grownup who's doing what we are. And he published it!" (The 'what' being writing about another world, which I'd already been at for six years.) "It better not have dressed up animals," I said darkly. "I don't think it does," she replied. "Hobbits aren't animals, they're people — with hairy feet." "Hah!" said I. So we sat in her attic, me hotly finishing my ninth novel about that Other Place while intermittently watching her make her way through *The Lord of the Rings*. When she showed me the maps and the languages, I was ready to take Tolkien seriously. I devoured the trilogy in one weekend, and then began my quest to find others who liked that kind of thing... and maybe, maybe, someone else who wrote it.

Never mind about my unsympathetic family who thought fantasy and writing weird, and the West Los Angeles schools that seemed to breed Barbie and Ken cutouts. When the hand-addressed invitation came (I still have it) to that very first picnic, I was thrilled — but my parents refused to drive me the fifteen miles to what was probably going to be a hippie gathering (they thought). So when the next invitation came, to a meeting in January of '68, I found a way to San Gabriel myself — involving six miles of walking to the downtown-bound bus stop, and an all day bus ride, with a changeover on Skid Row in Los Angeles. (If my parents had known about *that* this thing would be a lot shorter!) There I found a discussion rich with the joy of kindred minds sharing the kinds of books they loved, chaired by a genial and extremely well-read young man not much older than I, named Glen GoodKnight, who, far from demanding one pass some arcane test in order to join his august group (as I had feared) welcomed all. After a few swiftly-passing hours of high-energy talk and laughter and book and idea-sharing, I left, dazzled by the feeling I'd come "home" at last, and I knew that I would stay with this group as long as I could.

And I have. Though I didn't find otherworld seers, the ardent spirits I did find made life a joy, and I lived for those monthly excursions. Through the Society I broadened my reading: when, at last, I could drive, I attended as many discussion groups as I could afford gas for. And as my life changed, so did the Society. It was soon after I began driving (1969) that Glen GoodKnight held up the cover drawing for a new magazine he was proposing — *Mythlore*.

Everyone OOOOOHHed and WOWed. And not long after, he announced that there'd be a conference. O joy! O exaltation! A Meeting that would last not hours, but *three days!* Then began the agonizing scramble to scrape up the, what, thirty dollars? for membership, room and board. A lot back then for an impecunious college freshman, but again it was worth it.

How, then, to express appreciation? Sifting through vivid memories, I find the word "Joy!" reified through experience. At the second picnic, I won the Most Beautiful award. Me! A scrawny, bespectacled, reject-from-the-surfer-teenager, wearing a costume handsewn of a 25 year old blackout curtain and an old bedsheet over worn ballet tights. For a few hours I could aspire to the kind of grace and panache all too rare in our dusty, noisy, tech-driven 20th Century; the award meant that someone else — looking perhaps through the lens of kindness — could see it too. I still have that award, a cardboard circle with ballpoint pen-drawn curlicues and a plastic gem set in the middle.

There are other bright memories: the live Narnia Chess Game; the laughter of a pun tourney in the slanting rays of an autumn afternoon; the beauty of voices intertwined in the on-going *The Lord of the Rings* opera; the applause of the audience after friends and I finished dancing my choreographic homage to *Till We Have Faces*. But it would be a mistake to name only the superlatives. There are also the intellectual and philosophical explorations, the way lit by the three authors:

Tolkien putting to words the *sehnsucht* peculiar to sub-creation; the metaphor from Lewis "Farther up and farther in!" inspiring us to widen our awareness while always trying to achieve, and look for, and believe the best; Williams' Co-Inherence, which encourages us to look at one another with understanding and compassion and willingness to learn, while knowing that all our actions, good and bad, passionate and indifferent, weave their way into the fabric of collective human experience.

We played with passionate intensity — and sometimes argued passionately, but this is also good, and right. Caring deeply means passion; those who run the Society bring to it the best of motives, including desiring to give back to it some of the gifts it gave. I know that even after 25 years of helping out in myriad ways, I still have not repaid my own debt.

In summer of 1972, I sat alone in Oxford's Bird & Babe and saluted the Mythopoeic Society. As I write this — August, 1992 — a number of friends are over there now, in Oxford, and maybe even at the inn, holding their glasses high. To them, to everyone — Prosit! Here's to another 25 years!

Ted Nasmith

Toronto, Canada

I believe I first heard about the Mythopoeic Society through the "Small Press" column in *Amon Hen*. By this time, as a recent member of the [British] Tolkien Society, I was familiarizing myself with the Tolkien fans scene, and was more than a little intrigued at the several fanzines and journals available. I decided to give *Mythlore* a try and haven't looked back since. My first Mythopoeic Conference was in 1987 at Marquette, and, as if to fully cement my complete loyalty, it was one of the most memorable Mythopoeic Conference in many years, as those fortunate to attend will attest. I discovered with The Mythopoeic Society several things, including consistently penetrating analysis of Tolkien's work, a lively exchange of ideas in members' letters, the first objective assessment of my Tolkien illustrations, but most importantly, my acceptance into a warm community of kindred spirits and new found friends who remain among my most cherished acquaintances. After years of painting scenes from Tolkien relatively isolated from other fans, I now could enrich my work with ideas and inspiration that contact and exchange with friends and members of the M.S. (and T.S.) provide.

I'd always known there was an audience for my art, but The Mythopoeic Society gave that notion shape and identity. Interacting with certain members has challenged me and inspired me to ever new heights.

Melanie Rawls

Tallahassee, FL

A burden shared is halved; a pleasure shared is doubled.

Sounds like something Bilbo Baggins would say doesn't it? I'm not sure where I heard or read this aphorism, but the latter half of the statement certainly applies to The Mythopoeic Society. I know that my pleasure in the mythopoeic imagination and all that it produces — tales, poetry, music, drama, art, dance, etc. — has been more than doubled by knowing that other people share my enthusiasm. I'm positive that other Society members feel the same.

Most of the contact with the Society is through its publications. I can't wait to receive *Mythlore* in the mail. A quality publication — lovely to handle, easy on the eye, obviously a labor of love. And the contents! Such a satisfaction to belong to a group whose members' contribution

express wide-ranging interests, keen and flexible intelligence, care and craft, humor and hope. One could almost be hobbit-smug about such an association. I count my own publications in *Mythlore* and *Mythprint* as true feathers in my cap. (Very prominent on my resume!) I'm proud to have made the grade.

Mything Persons are so often regarded by non-Mything people as folk who have somehow gotten stranded in childhood or whose elevators go sideways. Explaining one's interest in fantasy literature and related fields can be so unrewarding: "How can you read this stuff?" people ask, and go on to proudly add that they've "never read that kind of thing." This kind of proud ignorance can be most exasperating when you wish to share something wonder-full, exciting, thought-provoking, moving. The Mythopoeic Society is a refuge from that kind of condescension. What a relief to be able to discuss and display mythopoeic imagination without having to recount plots, explain that Tinkerbell isn't all there is to magic, or justify justify justify your interest. Kick back, we're all on the same wavelength here.

That's the Mythopoeic Society — forum, refuge, and association that doubles the pleasure. A satisfying example of fellowship.

MYTHOPOEIC CORE READING LIST

MYTHLORE frequently publishes articles that presuppose the reader is already familiar with the works they discuss. This is natural, given the purpose of this journal. To be a general help, the following might be considered a core reading list, with the most well known and frequently discussed works. Due to the many editions printed, only the title and original date of publication are given.

J. R. R. Tolkien

The Hobbit, 1937; "Leaf by Niggle," 1945; "On Fairy-Stories," 1945; *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* 1954, *The Two Towers* 1954, *The Return of the King* 1955; *Smith of Wootton Major* 1967; *The Silmarillion* 1977.

C. S. Lewis

Out of the Silent Planet 1938; *Perelandra* 1943; *That Hideous Strength* 1945; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 1950; *Prince Caspian* 1951; *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* 1952; *The Silver Chair* 1953; *The Horse and His Boy* 1954; *The Magician's Nephew* 1955; *The Last Battle* 1956; *Till We Have Faces* 1956.

Charles Williams

War in Heaven 1930; *Many Dimensions* 1931; *The Place of the Lion* 1931; *The Greater Trumps* 1932; *Shadows of Ecstasy* 1933; *Descent into Hell* 1937; *All Hallow's Eve* 1945; *Taliessin through Logres* 1938, and *The Region of the Summer Stars* 1944