



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 1
Issue 3

Article 6

January 1972

Closing Session

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Recommended Citation

Carleton, Jim (1972) "Closing Session," *Mythcon Proceedings*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythpro/vol1/iss3/6>

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



Keywords

Mythopoeic Society—History and personal reminiscences

was probably just a nightmare. But he learned from the manager the next day that a man had in fact committed suicide from that window five days earlier.

Evidentially this case is not as strong as the preceding one, since we are not told how soon it was recorded. Such things may become altered in the memory. Joan published it in 1967.

The analogies to Pauline's experience are almost too obvious to be pointed out. Joan takes it for granted that one person can carry another's fear; the vision she sees, although repeated as in Eliade's story, is unquestionably real. Love for another, who is temporarily united with her yet truly other, is the pivotal reality. She does, however, interpret her vision in a different way from Williams. She did not see the experience as an encounter between two people in different times; to her mind the ghost was a split-off portion of the suicide's ongoing consciousness, caught in a backwater and continually re-enacting his death. By enlightening him and taking over his fear, she had enabled him to go on to other things. She would not have considered herself as in any way modifying a past event.

This case is similar to most others insofar as it involves violence. The offer of Exchange is however seldom found in this pure a form. Something similar to Margaret's offer to the suicide in Descent Into Hell is found among certain Spiritualists, who form Rescue Circles to help out earthbound spirits of the dead.

I have found no clearcut case of the modification of a past event. There is one instance of a martyrdom like John Struther's in which the victim, a Roman slave in the arena, lost her fear and horror and was enabled to go out to death unafraid; but whether this was because of the twentieth-century woman who shared her fear, or some other cause, is uncertain. Instances can be found of visions of past scenes in the Trianon gardens at Versailles where the percipients spoke with the figures they saw; but again it is far from certain that this was a modification of a past event, since possibly the figures could have been symbols only.

There is no particular tendency for visions of the

past to occur at night; no more than what might be expected by chance.

They do tend to be associated with particular places, as in Williams' story, especially those associated with violence. Several persons independently of one another have seen visions at Versailles; it has been speculated that these are connected with the French Revolution. Similarly, Henry VIII's seizure of the English abbey has been supposed as a reason why visions tend to be seen there. A battleground of the English Civil War, and another of World War II, have been sites of repeated visions. By contrast, the vision in Nights at Serampore, though it is on the site where the event occurred and deals with violence, is completely dependent on the magician Suren Bose, as the second vision is on Shivananda.

Pauline was in a state of clear consciousness when she saw John Struther; the three friends, or at least the narrator, felt as though they were in a dream at the time of their experience. Both these modes of feeling have been noticed in historical visions. Mrs. Buterbaugh felt perfectly normal and conscious; it was because of this that she became frightened when faced with the changed scene. Similarly, a helicopter pilot who in 1960 apparently saw two long-vanished crematoria of Belsen extermination camp--in operation--was in an ordinary conscious state. By contrast, in some of the Versailles visions people have felt dreamy and depressed, and failed to notice until afterward the inappropriateness of ornate eighteenth-century costume on the figures they saw.

The only element for which I have found no analogy among historical cases is the repetition in Eliade's story of the vision at another place by the operation of a master of magic. (This does not, of course, mean that a historical analogy does not exist, perhaps in the literature of ceremonial magic or of the history of religions.)

In summary, the handling of the retrocognitive vision by Williams and Eliade show similarities in structure and external characteristics, but a profound difference in underlying worldview. Almost every aspect of the visions have analogies to historical material except perhaps that of the vision's repeatability at another place.

Closing Session

With much pomp and circumstance, Mythcon II was brought to a close with three events.

The first was the naming of the winners of the two awards of the Mythopoeic Society. The candidates for the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award, a beautiful gold lion, given for the best fantasy award first published in the United States in 1971, were:

- 1) Lloyd Alexander - The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian
- 2) Katherine Kurtz - Deryni Rising
- 3) Mary Stewart - Crystal Cave
- 4) Roger Zelazny - Nine Princes in Amber

Doing his Bert Parks imitation, Glen asked for the envelope, waited for a good half a minute and finally announced, "And the winner is... Mary Stewart, Crystal Cave." At least, that's what would have been heard if not for the fifty or so Mary Stewart fans who chose that moment to voice their support for the book.

The Mythopoeic Scholarship Award was awarded twice. A majestic lion, similar to the one for the Fantasy Award, was given to C. S. Kilby, guest-of-honor at Mythcon I and to Mary McDermott Shideler, guest-of-honor at Mythcon II. The awarding of the lion to Mary was greeted by a five-minute Standing Ovation.

After things had quieted down, Glen made some closing comments on the con and the Society in general, to wit:

"I don't have any formal statements, but I would like to say a few things at the close of the convention. I can hardly believe it's over! Well, it isn't over yet! The timing has been very bad for us all, but this has been a very good convention. I think back to last Mythcon and about the Society in general and the growth that we have seen; not only the growth of the Society, but the growth of individuals in the Society. It has personally been very gratifying. There are aspects of the Society that were never anticipated. All I wanted to originally do was get people together, with a cup of tea on their knee, and discuss books.

But at the time I didn't realize that if you get together with people just to discuss books, you don't relate to them on that level only. You relate to them on many levels. Therefore, the social aspects

of the Society have, I think, been a real catalyst. Not all of us here today, but many of us, are the type of individual who, even when they were young, were not very much in the 'jet set'. In Junior High and High School, we were the kind of people that liked to read books, who were rather introverted and were set apart, not in an elevated sense, but in a removed sense, from the main stream. As we grew older we found the Society, and, I think, the Society will influence us all of our lives.

Lewis talks about how he wrote certain works of his: he wrote them because he wanted to read certain things and nobody had written the books. So he wrote them himself. And this is kind of the way I feel about the Society. I see those who were, more or less, bookworms, slightly withdrawn, having some social barriers around them, who have come together in a smaller group. The Society is growing, but it is still very small. And here's a chance where we can relate, have something in common, that makes us central and yet makes us different people. I have seen a lot of people who were like buds. And I have seen the petals open.

I can see that the need is for interaction; we cannot be islands within ourselves, and still develop to our full potential. We need interaction. There are, in the Society, all kinds of people, and we need interaction with all kinds of people.

I think of what has transpired since last Mythcon. We had twelve branches. We now have quite a few more, many from out-of-state. We have a growing nucleus of branches in Northern California; and interactivity between them. We have seen the development of the special interest groups: Inklings II, The Performing Arts Workshop, The Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship, The Company of Logres. We have gone through a very long and sometimes very tedious process of drafting the Articles of Incorporation and the by-laws. Those who were involved know what I'm talking about. It wasn't fun and it took a lot of time. It's hard for a group that's already in a gelled state to re-write its basic documents, but it was accomplished. We are now incorporated and tax-exempt, giving us certain advantages, as well

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bridge. Then, in October, it became clear that the end was near--or, as Lewis might have put it, the beginning. He spent his last weeks with his lifetime companion, Warren, and his acting secretary of a few months, Walter Hooper, an Episcopal priest from North Carolina. In one of his last letters he commented about death, "It is all rather fun--solemn fun--isn't it?"²⁴ He died on November 22, 1963, at home in his room after late afternoon tea. Within an hour or so, he was followed by John F. Kennedy who died near mid-day in Texas.

****LEGACIES****

Lewis was quietly buried under a yew tree in the yard of the little stone church where he was a member at Headington. His home was soon rented to strangers, his long-time housekeeper retired, his teenage stepsons went their own ways, and Warren Lewis and Walter Hooper lived on separately in Oxford.

Lewis' royalties were left to his wife's two sons; his 37 books were left to us. Since then, fourteen more books by Lewis have been published; seven of them collections edited by the indefatigable Hooper.

Shortly after C.S. Lewis died, Dr. Clyde S. Kilby of Wheaton College wrote, "My impression was of a man who had won, inside and deep, a battle against pose, evasion, expedience, and the ever-so-little lie and who wished with all his heart to honor truth in very idea passing through his mind."²⁵

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF A BOOK IN PROGRESS

FOOTNOTES

1. *Time*, Sept. 8, 1947.
2. Alistair Cooke, *New Republic*, April 24, 1944.
3. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, Harcourt Brace and World, p. 190.
4. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, Eerdmans, p. 62.
5. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 228.
6. C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, Harcourt Brace and World, pp. 3-4.
7. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 184.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
9. *Letters*, p. 54.
10. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 183.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
17. *Letters*, p. 123.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
21. John Lawlor, "The Tutor and the Scholar," p. 73, in *Light on C. S. Lewis*, Jocelyn Gibb, ed., Geoffrey Bles, 1965.
22. *Letters*, p. 253.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
25. Clyde S. Kilby, *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis*, Eerdmans, p. 5.



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as responsibilities, that we didn't have before. The Society has come a long way, but it also has a long way to go.

Today we see the signs.... Perhaps we will have a Mythcon in Chicago. It will be a matter of years before that can happen, but it can occur. It will and should happen, when there are sufficient members in the area to support a convention.

Mythcon I was a turning-point and a plateau in the history and development of the Society. It showed that the Society was large enough and organized enough to hold a three day convention. At its beginning, the Society would not have been capable of such a feat. There was a long growing and learning period between the founding and Mythcon I, and in growing one cannot always keep things in the same way as they were before.

I haven't heard it much in the last six months, but before that I heard early members of the Society reminiscing about the Society when it was only one, two, three, of four branches. In their remembering there was a time of a kind of newness and an intimate feeling. If we have lost this I regret it, and yet I don't. You can't retain newness or keep the past forever in the present. In those early days, in the first couple of years, (we're only four years old) people knew each other more closely; but then there were fewer people to know. One got to know individuals better than one seems to now. There were both advantages and disadvantages to this. There was an enthusiasm, perhaps best exemplified in the first few picnics. It was great. Even though the picnics are better than ever now, that initial newness has faded. It couldn't help not to. It's like eating some strange exotic food for the first time; it's very unusual. But you can't keep on eating this same food indefinitely and still experience its unusualness. The food can continue to be very pleasant to the taste, and continued to be experienced.

Any group will experience an eventual loss of newness, including ours. That is not its crucial test however. It would have gone the way of so many groups and organizations started solely out of a gush of enthusiasm, if it was like them. No, rather the real test of the Society is whether or not it can continue to be an active and need-fulfilling organization to its members. This in great part is dependent upon the attitude of the members toward their organization and toward other members.

Each one of us brings our own prejudices, different orientations, irascibilities, and irrationalities.. There is a responsibility to prevent our personal irritations from getting out of hand. We can develop a subtle sourness, that not only harms our enjoyment but also that of those around us. We can lose the joy. We want that certain group dynamic that can happen, but which is fragile and needs the awareness of each member to maintain.

After this Glen presented the Great Pax, that was first presented at the previous Spring Picnic. After reading the text, and the names which had been signed before, as: an act of reaffir-

mation, he called for everyone who had not signed to come forward to sign their names.

While waiting for Bonnie to make her grand entrance, someone played recorder music, and Glen, now playing the part of King Arthur, fretted and thought about what he was wishing he would rather be doing. Finally Bonnie arrived, and together she and Glen led a procession out through the building to the wide lawn on the north side. There they were met by Reverend Hartung, Vicar of the Episcopal Church in Isla Vista. The wedding ceremony was held on the green lawn, under a blue sky, with a good breeze blowing from the west. Their ceremony was interspersed with Collects written by Charles Williams himself in 1939. Gracia Fay Ellwood and Bernie Zuber were the witnesses.

Bernie Zuber described the end of the con this way: "As Glen and Bonnie drove off to their honeymoon and the rest of us went home, the air had a certain sharpness that cleared the coastal landscape, there was a rainbow over Ventura and the setting sun colored the western clouds.



Mythprint is the monthly bulletin and newsletter of The Mythopoeic Society. You won't find scholarly papers printed there, but you will find much that will probably interest you. There is meeting information for all the branches and special interest groups; Society news; reports of branch discussions; short reviews of books; editorials; columns, topic suggestions with notable art work; letters; and often humor. Associate members receive 12 issues for \$2. If you do not receive *Mythprint*, you may send your \$2 to The Mythopoeic Society, Box 24150, Los Angeles, California 90024. Sample copies available on request.

Back Issues

Because The Mythopoeic Society has truly educational goals and purposes, it has tried to print more copies of its publications than the immediate need required. We have kept extra copies for those who would find out about us at a later date, and desire the articles and information in these publications. There are copies of *Mythprint*, *Mythlore*, and *Tolkien Journal*. Write for information about available back issues.