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Ye Ink Stand

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Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL “HALFLING” MYTHCON

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Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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Abstract

Letter from fans in *Mythril* #4.

Keywords

Mythril; Mythopoeic; Letters

YE INK STAND

Sharyn Lawler

Springfield, Ohio

Just a brief note to congratulate you all on the two issues of Mythril so far. This is a really good idea and you are doing it beautifully. The diversity of interests of the Society and the productivity of the different special groups is a very encouraging indication of the health of the organization as a whole.

I can't resist mentioning a few favorites. Sharon Wells' "The Legend of Loch Ness" is charming, and the last episode is specially well done, with the farmer's discovery that George's clothes don't get wet. "One Stayed Home" by Simone Wilson retains the flavor of genuine old folk tale in spite of the delightful unconventionality of the whole adventure's taking place in John's own village. The accompanying silhouettes by Farley are exactly right. In fact all the art work is very fine, including the fancy letters and marginal decorations; Bonnie GoodKnight's dragon on the cover of the Winter '72 issue is splendid and terrifying. Tatiana Szeftel's "Juniper Hill" can only be compared to the Great Cake in Smith of Wootton Major--besides being good overall, there is a treasure in nearly every paragraph. And Tim Kirk's song-of-sixpence king is delicious also!

I know one's not allowed to ask what a myth means, but Lyne Motis' "The Meeting" is too compelling to let by and too ambiguous to let be. Within the narrative itself, there is a problem absorbing the sudden appearance (or rather materialization; his appearance is just one of the things lacking) of the third horseman. And then, of course innumerable meanings can be read into the story, including contradictory ones; the author hasn't given many clues even to the general direction in which to find meanings; I for one am not sure whether the meeting is a good thing, or a bad thing--or merely a necessary thing with the ultimate outcome still undecided. However, this odd little piece has the true mythical quality, and it is unforgettable.

Darrell Schweitzer

Strafford, Pa.

Some comments on MYTHRIL 3:

The package is attractive but you should have more artwork. Paula Marmor can draw quite well, so why not have her do some? //Did you but know!(Sigh)--LAR//

The contents really didn't impress me.

"Korath Tuglon" is an attempt at a Dunsany story, and not a very good one. It basically lacks enough development to make it interesting. The plot isn't much, but Dunsany could pull something like this off by great numbers of tiny marvellous details. For example, "The Long Porter's Tale" has no plot at all, but filled with tiny things that make it work.

Also this problem has the problem of lacking a protagonist, which means that another means has to be found to hold the reader's attention. It has to be made into quasi-legend, and this means either a great epic-sense (e.g. great scope, many years), or thru pure stylistic power. Stylistic power is something that Cook doesn't have. (See "How One Came, As Was Foretold, To The City of Never"--this one lacks any real plot, but

makes it on style alone.)

"The Homeless" is simply too full of cliché's to be interesting. This bit about the homeless waif who is cruelly persecuted in a mighty castle and becomes either the savior or the destroyer of the place has been done just too many times. It was obvious as soon as the Talisman was mentioned that the kid would find it, and the only surprise was that he would sprout wings, which seems more a sign that the story was written around the cover than anything else. The means of the finding of the talisman is also less than plausible.

"Richard" is somewhat better, though it smacks too much of women's gothics, with the indispensable frightened heroine wandering around in the dark sequence. What's it doing in MYTHRIL?

I didn't read the serials yet, as I'd rather judge them as a whole.

One comment on the map on page 13.

The graphics end of it is superlative, as is everything Tim does, but there's something lacking in this map. I think it's details. This map is full of strange names (many of which sound like something from Tolkien) and is covered with little houses and rivers and the like, and it implies nothing. One of the most important things about a fantasy map is that it should suggest a lot--like the history of the world, not to mention the plot of the story.

You could look at the map of Middle Earth, and even if you had never read the books you could see a lot in it. "Here of Old was the witch-realm of Angmar" for example. There is a certain sameness about the map in this issue, that makes it rather dull. I'm sure it's functional for the story, but by itself it isn't much.

I might suggest an idea for making a map interesting easily. I just throw half-formed ideas around mine. You get things like "Phariti's Expedition Perished Here", "Here Thindarek and Ginspuin met in peace for the last time", "The Holding of Hing Huian" etc. When I started this I had no idea what those things were, but they ended up suggesting to me. I've since written about Hing Huian and Thindarek.

That's cheating I suppose, but it does make things more interesting.

June 5, 1972

Okay, I read the serials--and was very very surprised, and must greatly revise my opinion of the magazine...the serials are some of the best fiction I've ever read in a fanzine. "Night of the Wolves" has two characteristics which I envy very much--ability to get the reader immediately involved in the narrative without use of stylistic tricks, and the proper handling of action scenes. Also it shows a rare development to the proper length, which suggests that the author could be selling professionally with a little work (Also there is a category problem--the 1st installment at least isn't fantasy, therefore there might be considerable difficulty selling such a thing.)

"Juniper Hill" is somewhat derivative of the early chapters of LOTR, but still delightful. Again there's a quality of writing here very rare in fanzines. It's the ability to sustain interest over length without padding.


Perhaps the only thing Tasha should learn is not to tell so much about her characters which reads like synopsis, but show these things, allowing the desired information to seep through conversation and situation. It's a very fine story so far, and if it doesn't run off to a predictable and trite ending it could be excellent.

Even after reading the Szeftel serial I think her map is empty and unsuggestive. Does not give any impression of fantasy, but looks like English countryside.

Myth I would define as a constantly recurring pattern of human thought and experience.

It might go to the Jungian racial memory/archetypes business. I believe that the handling of the religious elements is the most important thing in creating a fantasy world. (2nd is the geography)...you have to decide which of your imaginary gods, if any, are real...this then determines the culture and behavior of the inhabitants. Which in turn influences your plot, etc. I am basically interested in anything with mythic undertones, and have a noted weakness for religious science fiction. (Also for light treatments of folklore--there's a story in the new CRAS about a Jewish vampire who went into a 1000-year sleep to evade the Nazis.)

The Scarecrow



I stand before thee, fool unmanned,
my body strewn with ruby signs,
the witchlines jeweled in living blood
and bruises livid on my breast,
the tuneless graveyard wind my breath,
my tresses charred and grey with mud.

I battled with the gilded bitch
and witchcraft wielded as a sword
that glittered wilful toward her doom;
now ruins, shattered litter lie
with brass illusion cast aside,
all losers, trapped in Truth's black tomb.

And thou art found the witchwhore's trick,
a stickclown forged of pitchfork wrack
all wrapped in gilt-stitched garments gay
and charmed, a clockwork man all wound,
a mockery with feathers crowned
together bound to stock her play.

Ah--helpless art thou, scrapheap-born,
and hapless, shorn of manhood's prance?
Thy princely form knows ignorance
no more; nor lives my once proud lord;
we mournful limp down dim-lit shores
to drown in insignificance.

Come, thing of straw and pumpkinhead,
while bitter summer's winds blow bleak.
I'll bind thy broken sticks with string
and bits of ribbon; bleached by sun,
we'll seek an end where brine-waves run,
or mend, perhaps, in the way of things.

By Paula Marmor

