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Missives to Mythlore

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Louis Marvick

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William Linden 83-33 Austin St., Kew Gardens, N.Y. 11415

What about parallels between the ents and the seroni? Similarities between Augray carrying Ransom to Meldilorn and Fangorn carrying the hobbits to Entmoot are obvious. And in one of his letters Lewis mentions a planned collaboration with Tolkien. Does anyone have information about that?

I would like to comment at some length on "A Comparison of Cosmological Geography." I question your islanding of Carbonek. First, Carbonek, is a castle, not a country, and there is no traditional reason to make it an island. The only support is the description of Broceliande as a "sea-wood." Taliessin reaches Broceliande overland. I picture Broceliande and the accompanying eerie regions as covering the western reaches of Britain - the old Wales-Cornwall-Somerset heartland. (Inasmuch as it has any spatial location.) I make Sarras an island corresponding to your "Carbonek." It jars to make the city of Sarras a whole continent. P'o-L'u is not in the Orient. The description of it as "antipodean" would place it in the Southern Hemisphere. Presumably it is the antipodes of Sarras; I imagine this would somewhere near the real location of New Zealand.

On the Third Age: I picture the flat world with Valimar at one end and America at the other. The Atlantic should be the true edge rather than the Pacific; America is joined to Asia by the Islands. This eliminates identification of America with Valinor, which is to me unthinkable in view of its present state. Then, at the ending of the Fourth Age (I do not agree with the view that we are still in it; further epochal events must have destroyed the Edain civilization and removed the Undying Lands), a warping of space brings the present spheroid shape, the Atlantic joins to America, and the Undying Lands vanish. The existence of antipodes, of course, implies a spherical world for the Taliessin cycle.

((Whether Carbonek is a castle, island or what ever, is not the essential point; rather the metaphysical state of consciousness. Carbonek is a castle in Malory. My understanding of Williams leads me to think P'o- L'u is located in Indonesia. I agree with the theory that the flat world of Middle Earth has been warped into a present sphere.))

Louis Marvick, 10499 Wilkins Ave. Los Angeles, Cal. 90024.

I am strongly opposed to all visual depiction of the people or scenes in the works of any serious fiction writer, fantasy or otherwise. When an author designates certain physical traits of his characters, irrespective of their detail or extent, he allows for some free-play in the mind of the reader. I believe this sketchy specification to be one of the unique qualities of literature, and no artist should have the right to publish his or her interpretation of those characters in a literary journal, no matter what it is called. I am reluctant to single out the work of any one such "contributor" to Mythlore as inordinately self-imposing, but the grossly stylized efforts of George Barr seem to me especially ludicrous.

((As editor, I seldom, if ever, totally agree with the art work published in Mythlore, but I gladly publish it because even though I have my images from the books more or less clear in my mind, I enjoy, and I think the readers will enjoy, seeing how the books have created images in the minds of the artists.

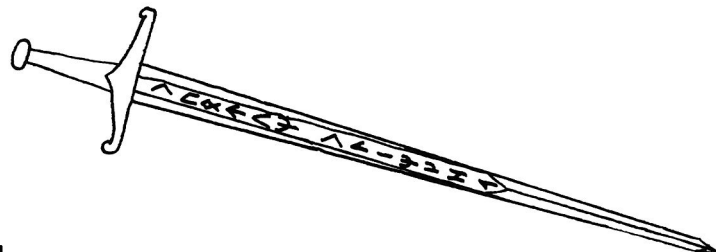
Did you read George Barr's two page explanation of his illustration? He concluded by saying: "I don't expect anyone at all to agree with my depiction of Gollum... I can draw him as I want him; you can picture him however you please. And neither of us can prove the other wrong."))

Molly Titcomb, Rt. 1, Box B-140, Nevada City, Calif. 95958.

I don't think Tolkien's Undying Lands are metaphors of heaven. They have closer parallels in such traditions as the Elysian Fields, although Tolkien himself would probably insist that they are what he says and not metaphors at all. This is not to say that God and Heaven are not hinted at - remember Man's Doom and also Man's Gift? Aslan's country is clearly Heaven with a capital H. But even if you don't mean that, since I notice your article writes it with a small h, the undying land would still be quite different - they seem to have room for imperfections (Galadriel was banished) and you have to be alive to go there, whereas you can't stay in Aslan's country while you're alive - although Lewis does make the passage in Narnia not so obviously death (as with Reepicheep, isn't it, who rows off at the end of Dawn Treader?), so it does seem like the voyage to the Undying Lands in at least one book. I agree that you've found some interesting parallels and strong ones.

There is a book by a psychologist named Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being for any who'd be interested in exploring further your ideas in the editorial titled "The Affirmation of Joy." If Maslow's right, Glen, you are really on to something which can be confirmed by clinical psychology as well as just personal experiences and speculations. Apparently human nature may be proven to be basically good!

((Despite your kind letter, I still do believe the Undying Lands is a metaphor of heaven, but it is a metaphor seen through the lens of Celtic metaphysics. In my next article comparing similarities of the three author works, I plan to mention a hither to unstated parallel between the Undying Lands and Aslan's Country.))



Joe Pearson Jr., 13727 Oxnard St., Van Nuys, Cal. 91401.

Congratulations are in order for the truly outstanding job that you have done on Mythlore. When I think of what the Mythopoeic Society, and the several long phone conversations I have put you through, have meant to me, they conjure forth emotions that only Lewis can fully express. I am proud to share in even a little bit of your dream and vision.

The third issue of Mythlore was the best yet, although the other two far surpassed my wildest expectations. The art that especially appealed to me in the third issue were the front and back cover. George Barr's picture of Gollum was the closest any illustration has come to my personal picture of him. Tim Kirk's illustration of Aslan at the hands of his enemies was the perfect picture of evil. His figures really looked gleeful at being able to torment their arch-enemy. All of the inside illustrations were good. Bernie Zuber showed a remarkable sense of humor in his myriad masterpieces. Bonnie Bergstrom was up to her usual excellent standards of art.

A comparison of Cosmological Geography was well thought out and presented nicely. I would enjoy seeing you do another article on the similarities between the fall and breakup of the Roman Empire and the fall and breakup of Numenor. The Editorial was good in that you had something to say, unlike many other fanzine editorials.

"A Lost Page From The Red Book of Westmarch" was much too flowery and heavy. Tolkien to me at least wrote with a much lighter style. "The Punishment of Sauron" was fair, but I personally prefer short fiction such as "The Simple Prince" from the second issue.

One of my favorite sections of Mythlore is Bernie's two informal columns. They're sort of a combination book, artist, fanzine, and prozine review column, topped off with general information on what's going on in Fandom today.

Unlike many Tolkien fans I did not think that it was so disastrous when you announced that The Lord of the Rings was to be made into a movie. Personally I feel that a good movie can be a great way to introduce Tolkien to the masses. On the other hand, a bad movie can do just as much harm. I feel that if United Artists takes the advice and offered aid from the Mythopoeic Society and the Tolkien Society, and make it as big a production as they did Hawaii they could make The Lord of the Rings into a first class production. I would prefer to see them do an animated version over a real life version because it gives them a wider and more imaginative field to work with.

It was in this frame of mind that I sat through an animated movie on television titled "Alakazam the Great." Aside from the plot which was ridiculous the movie was very interesting, largely due to excellent animation. In the grand finale a whole kingdom of darkness is destroyed, largely due to the efforts of a magnificent volcano which resembles Mt. Doom. The animation was done in Japan with painstaking care. It was released here by American International. With good animation like that done by Japanese, and a much higher budget United Artists could do possible justice to The Lord of the Rings.



Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit ave., Hagerstown, Md. 21740.

The editorial on chronological snobbery made a lot of sense. But I remain unconvinced that the "generation gap" is perceptibly worse today, either an abstract situation or for the effects on how people behave, than it was a quarter-century or a half-century or a century ago. It's just one of those subjects that are in the public eye because all the newspapers and magazines and broadcasters are constantly talking about the subject. I don't know what possesses all the media to come to an unspoken agreement to play up one subject or another and eventually to discard it for another, but it happens. In the first years after World War Two, it was the threat of atomic war that was hammered home endlessly and today you hear very little about that threat even though it's obviously much greater today with more nations possessed of atomic weapons and all nations owning fresh, undecimated generations of men of fighting age who haven't been selectively thinned out by a global conflict. Highway dangers are out today with the media; drugs are in. The liquor problem is out; racism is in. Changing fads in women's clothing are out; changing taste in young people's music is in. Why did all the newscasters and reporters suddenly start running around hunting up people who were willing to complain over the expense of the space program, during the Apollo 11 flight, after all those previous space shots had been reported with little effort to play up criticism? The Lewis quote which you use to introduce the editorial is absolutely true, but it's true of any time, not just today.

((It seems to me this kind of snobbery is one of the congenital immaturities of our species, which never-the-less we should seek to outgrow, and be wary of its appearances. -ed.))

One of the few ways in which I consider myself superior to most humanity involves this matter of filmed versions of novels. I'm blessed with the ability to enjoy the printed and the pictorial form of the same creation to whatever degree the quality of the respective versions permits, without the awful side effects that so many people experience - chronically nagging thoughts all during the movie over how the screen version should be doing this in such a way instead of that way, whether they'll be able to enjoy the book as of old now that they've seen the movie, a sense that one's private world of the imagination has been violated by this entirely different pictorial form that the story took in Hollywood. So I don't have the same worries about a movie version of LOTR as most Tolkien fans will suffer. I suspect that my print-oriented mind is responsible for this state of affairs. I don't really see in imagination the events that I'm reading about. I comprehend them in an abstract sense but I rarely gain mental concepts of what the characters look like, special qualities in the sets where the action goes on, and so on. So when I see a movie based on something I've read, there is little or nothing to clash between this film and the mental notions, and when I turn back to the book again after the film, the book reminds me of the movie only in the spots where the two are identical in atmosphere, direct quotations and bits of action. ((That's alright for you, but what about those of us for whom the detailed descriptive imagery of Tolkien has created a correspondingly vivid mental pictures in our mind?))

The art work is a series of joys and beauties throughout. The back cover of Mythlore 4 impressed me most of all. There is something about the eyes and lips that lends tremendous significance to the way the left hand of Thrain is about to draw the weapon and use it for some dreaded but inevitable purpose. As usual, my main criticism on fanzines with art as fine as that of Mythlore is directed toward the size of many sketches. It seems criminal to run something as beautiful as Errantry on page 30 in such a postage stamp dimension. ((Note: Mr. Warner won the 1989 Hugo for best fan writer.))