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Letters

Humphrey Carpenter

L. Sprague de Camp

Sarah Beach

John D. Ratcliff

Ruth Berman

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Humphrey Carpenter, L. Sprague de Camp, Sarah Beach, John D. Ratcliff, Ruth Berman, Dolores Espinosa, Alexei Kondratiev, Margaret R. Purdy, and Jerry L. Daniel



Humphrey Carpenter

Oxford, England

I'm so pleased that you like the Letters and also the biography of Auden; the fact that both were produced simultaneously and in a very short space of time meant that for about a year afterwards I was utterly exhausted! I am now deep in work on the Oxford Companion to Children's Literature with my wife Mari Prichard - a huge project (an encyclopaedia of children's books, writers, and publishers from the beginning of printing - and before - up to the present day). As to future Inklings projects, well, one never quite knows. I am sure that Christopher Tolkien will have more for the press in due course - indeed, I know he will - but exactly what and in what order remains, I think, to be decided.

L. Sprague de Camp

Villanova, PA.

Permit me to correct an error in Mr. Christopher's review of Carter's and my CONAN THE BUCCANEER (MYTHLORE No. 30, p. 44). The character Queen Nzinga is not based upon the priestess La in TARZAN AND THE JEWELS OF OPAR. I probably read OPAR once, but that was half a century or more ago, and not having lately reread it I remember no details.

Our Nzinga is based upon a real Queen Nzinga, who reigned in Angola in the seventeenth century and spent her life fighting the invading Portuguese. See Basil Davidson: A HISTORY OF EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA, p. 279. Robert Howard, in his pseudo-historical essay THE HYBORIAN AGE, mentions a tribe of black Amazons; so we brought them on stage.

Sarah Beach

Austin, TX

I chanced to re-read both G. S. Lewis' The Abolition of Man and The Last Battle during one weekend, and ran across an interesting connection between the two. On page 28 of my copy of The Abolition of Man (Macmillan paperback, 1965) Lewis has a footnote on the translation of the word "truth" from Hebrew. It's worth quoting in full.

"The word is emeth, 'truth.' Where the Satya of the Indian sources emphasizes truth as 'correspondence,' emeth (connected with a verb that means 'to be firm') emphasizes rather the reliability or trustworthiness of truth. Faithfulness and permanence are suggested by Hebraists as alternative renderings. Emeth is that which does not deceive, does not 'give', does not change, that which holds water."

In The Last Battle, the redeemed Calormene is called Emeth. I think there is little doubt that the one affected the other, for Lewis' portrait of the Calormene fits the above description.

John D. Ratcliff

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

I found the Zimmerman and R. Beare articles v. good, and especially enjoyed Prof. Christopher's "Ents"

poem. Regarding G. V. Gillespie's "The Irish Mythological Cycle and Tolkien's Eldar", Tolkien was certainly familiar with the legends of the Tuatha De Danaan; in his "The Name 'Nodens'" article (1932), he pointed out that the Irish form of 'Nodens' would be 'Nuada' and makes several references to the legend of Nuada of the Silver Hand, onetime king of the Tuatha De Danaan. He also, in the same article, gives us the name of an otherwise unknown god: Nantes -- sound familiar?

I do have a quibble regarding two of your recent reviews. The reviewer of The Atlas of Middle-Earth made a mistake when he said that Fonstad thinks M-E was flat before the destruction of the Lamps of the Valar and round afterwards -- both Fonstad (Atlas, p. xi) and Tolkien (The Silmarillion, p. 281) state clearly that Arda was a flat world before the Drowning of Numenor and was "made round" afterwards, as was proven by the post-Numenorean circumnavigation of the globe. Otherwise, a good review for a good book. I wish I could say the same about the review of Tolkien's Art (Mythlore XXVIII) -- this could have been a good book, and I glad Mz. Patterson liked it so much, but to call it "a work as fine in its way as the masterpiece it reflects" is stretching it a bit, I think. For one thing, Nitzsche does not 'pay exact attention to what Tolkien actually said': her book is full of mistakes, and the overall impression is that she is really not v. familiar with Tolkien's work -- for example, she thinks The Hobbit's Elvenking lives in a treehouse (p. 38), doesn't know the difference between Laketown and Dale (p. 33-45), says Galadriel's gift to Sam was "seeds of elanor" (p. 109), doesn't know that Bilbo didn't have his ring during the encounter with the trolls (p. 43), and says that the fact that Gandalf was the bearer of one of the three Elven-rings was one of the startling revelations of The Silmarillion (p. 130), although this is plainly stated twice within The Lord of the Rings itself. I'm also profoundly unsympathetic to her theory that Tolkien had a split personality as a writer and that all his works reflect an inner conflict between the pedantic critic and Tolkien artist; it has always seemed to me that Tolkien the critic and Tolkien the writer were one and the same. Her thesis also leads her to some v. odd conclusions: to name two examples out of many, she says that we know The Lord of the Rings is an allegory because Tolkien told us it isn't (p. 23) and calls "Imram" a parody because its hero is a saint (:). Although she occasionally does make a good point (her discussion of Denethor and Theoden is the one outstanding section of the book), Nitzsche seems less concerned with illuminating Tolkien's writings than in proving that he agrees with her. In spite of that one complaint, I enjoyed Mythlore XXX and look forward to the next issue.

Ruth Berman

Minneapolis, Minnesota

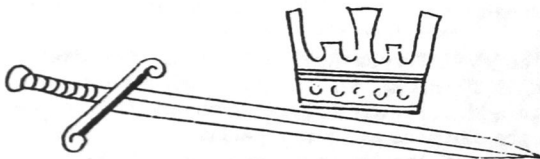
I enjoyed Teresa Noelle Roberts' discussion of the unicorn in MYTHLORE 30. I have some footnotey comments to add. It isn't quite correct to say that the Lin is the Chinese unicorn. According to Odell Shepard in The Lore of the Unicorn (see his footnote 28, p. 286), the Lin is the female unicorn, and the Ki the

male. A unicorn in abstract is a Ki-lin. Oddly enough, Ella Young included a chapter headed "Kyelins, Blue and Green" in her beautiful fantasy based on Irish legend, The Unicorn with Silver Shoes (1932), apparently without realizing that the Kyelins were sib to her title beast. She refers in the text to the Kyelins as having claws, and the illustrator, Robert Lawson, includes a picture of one looking pretty much like a dragon (although I wouldn't think that's what Young had in mind, because she refers to dragons as separate beasts in the parade with the Kyelins). Shepard includes a photograph of an Oriental depiction of the unicorn/Kilin in his book, and there it is quite clearly unguulate. I wonder where Young picked up the idea that it might have claws. For a detailed discussion of psychological interpretations of unicorn symbolism, an interesting article is "The Totemistic Significance of the Unicorn" by Adolf Zeckel, pp. 344-60 in Psychoanalysis and Culture / Essays in Honor of Geza Roheim, ed. George B. Wilbur and Warner Muensterberger, NY: International Universities Press, 1951. Zeckel argues that the myth, especially in the versions in which the unicorn is the size of a kid, is incestuous.

One of the odder appearances of the unicorn is as a symbol of the tribe of Manasseh, showing up in depictions of the 12 tribes fairly often on greeting cards for Jewish holidays, boxes of Hannukah candles, etc. In Moses' blessing over the tribes (Deuteronomy 33) Joseph's older son (i.e., Manasseh) is described as majestic, horned like the r'em. In modern translations the animal is translated as wild-ox, but in most earlier translations it was translated as unicorn. (Which it isn't -- some of the passages referring to the r'em refer to its horns, but those passages in the earlier translations were made to refer either to singular horns or to plural unicorns.)

Does anyone have any idea why Lewis decided to make Jewel the Unicorn's horn blue (The Last Battle)?

I can't agree with TNR that it's a sad thing to have so much unicorn jewelry available on the market. It's true that most of it is kitschy and cutesy, but that's true of most mass-produced things. What's more important (if you like to wear jewelry and have no skill in carving or molding for yourself) is that when there are many forms available, it's possible to find a few that are beautiful. Restricting their wear to virgins or Christians (or Christian virgins?) would be unkind to those longings for beauty, purity, innocence felt by all (even whores). It's curious that in a recent issue of the Darkover Newsletter a Darkover fan lamented that she had been scolded by Christians for wearing unicorn jewelry, on the theory that unicorns are used as symbols in witchcraft, and must therefore be signs of the Devil. You can't win -- and probably shouldn't try. Those of us who like unicorns will wear them without symbolic meaning, and attempts to confine unicorns to a single symbolism cannot succeed.



Dolores Espinosa

Alhambra, CA

On behalf of the countless people who wear crosses and other Christ symbols round their necks I am offended by the unicorn poem in the last issue. ("Unicorns" p. 41, Mythlore 30.) The poem is wrong on two counts.

1.) It is wrong to state flatly that a unicorn is a Christ Symbol. Just as a Star of David is only sometimes a Christ symbol. I think it notable that no Christian church (qua Church) I know of makes use of a unicorn as Christ symbol in rubric, prayer, or doctrine. Such uses are individual, rare, and obscure. In the minds of most people a unicorn is not a Christ symbol. I know people who are Christians and unicorn fans; they never mention Christ when talking unicorns. It is unreasonable, arrogant, and harsh to assert flatly that a unicorn is a Christ symbol and then to scold those of different mind for debasing it.

2.) I think it is wrong to deplore the easy availability and wide use of Christ symbols. Why shouldn't we miserable sinners wear crosses, fishes, Stars of David on our chests? And why shouldn't we get them for low prices at local stores? The Body of Christ is available in every Catholic church, for children and those with overworked chests, as well as for virgins and True Unicorn Lovers. Or am I off the point? Am I to understand that unicorns are more sacred than crucifixes?

As to the form of the poem: I've read it carefully and repeatedly (I don't immediately write off modern poetry); and I cannot be convinced that it is in fact an actual poem. A non-poem disguised as a poem with elipsis and one-word lines is fakery. I had thought Mythlore was too good for this sort of thing. There's no use improving the format without improving the contents.

((Mythlore is not meant to represent a single point of view. If it did, only one person would need to write it all. The Letters section is for readers to question and dispute various points, be they right or wrong, and provoke further comment. -- Editor))

Alexei Kondratiev

Flushing, NY

Congratulations for a fine issue. Dr. Rhona Beare's study of Williams's Angelicals was particularly enlightening. I also very much enjoy Mark Allaby's verse, and hope to see more of it in the future.

Having already expressed my own general opinion of Morgan Llywelyn's Iion of Ireland, I was happy to read George Colvin's very different appraisal of it. I'd let the matter rest there, if it weren't that Mr. Colvin seems to find acceptable the one monumental anachronism that nearly ruined the book for me. He speaks of womens' place in "patriarchal" Ireland -- a term I find strikingly inappropriate. Llywelyn does show us a society in which submissive dependent women expect to be sex objects for coarse, contemptuous men, but that picture owes more to Sword & Sorcery conventions than to anything suggested by documents from early Ireland. Indeed, it runs directly counter to the image of woman expressed in Celtic literature throughout its history, and which accounts for so much of the originality of the Celts within Europe. In early Celtic (pagan) society women enjoyed considerable authority, were not bound as chattel to their husbands, and disposed of their own property. During the first centuries of Christianization, under

the autonomous Celtic Church, little appeared to change in religious matters. After 700, as the Roman Church slowly asserted its control over the Celtic domain, Continental authority helped to impose a more "Mediterranean" model of woman's place in society and in the home; but this was a gradual process, never completed, and could certainly not have led, by Brian Boru's time, to such a complete overturn of the old Celtic order as Llywelyn depicts. Even during the modern period, the "Mediterranean" model of sex relations took root most firmly where the Gaelic language and the culture it served had lost their hold--in the towns, especially. Where Gaelic remains strong, so does women's self-assertion. Anyone who has lived for a length of time in the Gaeltachts (Gaelic-speaking areas) of Ireland will know what I mean.

(This is not to say that, in periods of political chaos and constant warfare, women were never brutalized by men; but that in Ireland, if anywhere, strong cultural safeguards existed to prevent such abuse from becoming rampant.)

This insensitivity to such a central matter leads me to believe that, while Llywelyn has done enough research on dates and socio-cultural generalities, she hasn't taken the time or trouble to get a feeling for her material. Her characters are vividly drawn, but they don't seem to belong to their time. They're much given to self-analysis in modern psychological terms, which leads to jarring anachronisms in their speech and to much more jarring anachronisms in the concepts they expound: for instance, to cite one minor example among countless others, when Mahon refers to homosexuality as "the monks' disease" (as a Christian, he would have called it a sin; as a pagan, he would have dismissed it as someone else's personal quirk; but there's no way he could have thought of it as a "disease":).

Her "Druids", too, have a false ring to them. They sound like modern Theosophists who have unaccountably gone back to nature. Any number of novels have portrayed Celtic paganism more convincingly.

I cannot, of course, condemn Lion of Ireland as story: the development of Brian's larger-than-life personality will fascinate many readers. But I wish to introduce my own caveat: readers with a special love for the Middle Ages, Ireland, and things Celtic could well be disappointed by the book.

Historical fiction is written for many literary purposes, aiming for many different levels of entertainment, and thus for varying degrees of accuracy. But only rarely does a historical novel succeed in expressing the "Otherness" of the past with the vividness we expect from fantasy. Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* is the example that comes to mind at once: characters as complex and interesting as any moderns, but with motivations and thought-patterns

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a well-written and closely argued exploration of what in Tolkien's youthful reading, religious beliefs, and professional career contributed to the special character of *The Lord of the Rings* . . . I have read it with much pleasure and intellectual excitement."

— Richard C. West,
Author of *Tolkien Criticism:
An Annotated Bibliography*

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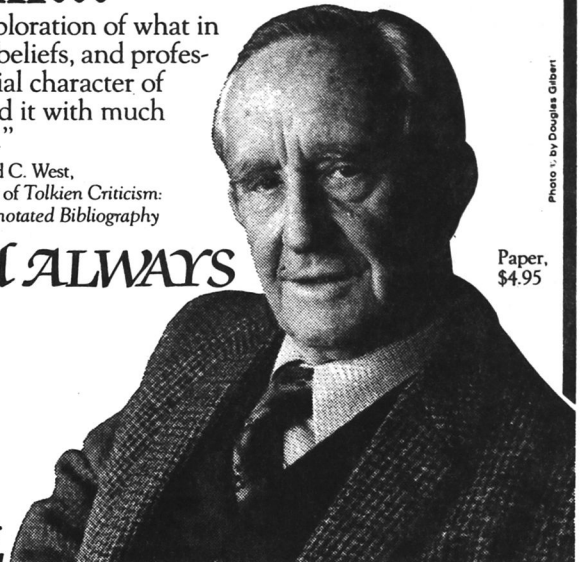


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wholly of their time, quite alien to our century yet completely engrossing for the reader. When a historical romance reaches such a peak of imaginative vision, it can indeed claim kinship with fantasy, or even with sf.

Finally, for those who might like to read other fiction about mediaeval Ireland, closer in tone and spirit to the native sources (and closer to the idiom of fantasy), I recommend Austin Clarke's works, especially *The Bright Temptation*.

Margaret R. Purdy

Ridgewood, NJ

I was quite impressed by *Mythlore* #30; the new layout and printing look very classy, as does the tinted cover. The only objection I might have to larger print is that it means fewer words to read (*Mythlore* is always too short for me anyway); however, it is easier on the eyes.

I must say something in appreciation of the artwork of Sarah Beach. Her pictures in this *Mythlore* and the last one delighted me, not only for their undeniable artistic merit (she seems, for one thing, to have a fine sense of the dramatic), but simply because the scenes of *The Silmarillion* have been sadly neglected up until now, and it is gratifying to see them done justice at last. My favorites so far have been Elwing coming to Eärendil (just because it is so beautiful), Elwë and Melian (one of my own favorite passages from *The Silmarillion*), and this issue's back cover of Idril, Tuor and Maeglin, which gives me the shivers every time I look at it.

Thomas Egan said in his letter that it was the artwork that made *Mythlore* look great, and professional. I agree with the "great," but disagree with the second half of the statement. I like the artwork precisely because it is not "professional," but on the contrary is "amateur" in the original, good sense of the word; it expresses in a way a scholarly article cannot the sheer love of the worlds our three

authors have created. While I value Mythlore's articles for their insights and intellectual stimulation, it is the pictures that I look at and say, "Yes, this person sees something of the same vision I do," or, better yet, "This person has given me a new vision of the world I love." Poetry has something of the same effect; it too appeals to the heart rather than the head. Both of these things help to make Mythlore the very special journal it is.

Jerry L. Daniel

419 Springfield Ave.
Westfield, NJ 07092

C. S. Lewis had a brief letter published on the dust cover of Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1954). (G34 in Walter Hooper's second bibliography). This letter was not reprinted on any subsequent edition, and the few copies of the 1954 edition I've located have lacked the dust cover. I have exhausted all avenues of search of this letter! I've checked hundred of libraries, including those reported to have a large collection of science fiction. I've checked with the publisher, with Walter Hooper, and even with Arthur C. Clarke himself. No luck. Surely some reader of Mythlore owns the Sidgwick & Jackson edition. It would mean a great deal to me to get a photocopy of the Lewis letter.

(Please try to write letters of comment within a month of receiving an issue, so that timely letters can be included in the next issue. — Editor)

LOOKING AHEAD

Editorial Notes - Glen GoodKnight

As a response to readers' interest, the next issue will be a special one focusing on The Silmarillion, Unfinished Tales, and The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien. As part of that issue, we would like to publish readers' comments on how these books have affected and changed their previous view of Tolkien. A sheet is enclosed for your comments for possible publication.

In the following issue, we will mark the 15th anniversary of The Mythopoeic Society. We would like to include comments from readers on what the Society has and does mean to them. The same enclosed sheet can be used for this.

I hope you will take part in both of these to share your thoughts and feelings.

The changes that were begun in the last issue have brought very favorable comments from many quarters. Your support is vital for Mythlore's ongoing improvement. Please make its welfare your personal concern by: encouraging your friends to subscribe; giving gift subscriptions; becoming a patron; posting the flyer that was enclosed in the last issue in libraries, English Departments, etc. (more copies are available on request); requesting or asking a faculty member to request that your library subscribe; and resubscribing yourself before we need to send you a renewal letter.

You, the individually involved and concerned reader, are the most important reason for Mythlore's success. Only through us working together with a sense of common purpose can Mythlore continue to improve.

The change-over to the new format with larger print, and the addition of the Subject Index, have meant less room for Reviews and Letters for this issue. If we can increase our subscribers by about 15 to 20% we can add at least six additional pages for each issue and other improvements.

1983 Mythopoeic Conference

At this point there has been no definite interest shown in the organization of the 1983 Conference. Those interested should write this year's Chairman of the Council of Stewards, Christine Lowentrou, 115 5th St. #2, Seal Beach, CA 90740 for guidelines.

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