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## Missives to Mythlore

Lloyd Alexander

Ann Early

Karen Rockow

Pat Strang

C. S. Kilby

*See next page for additional authors*

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

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### Authors

Lloyd Alexander, Ann Early, Karen Rockow, Pat Strang, C. S. Kilby, Nan Braude, Alpajpuri, and Claire Howard



## Missives

to

## Mythlore

Lloyd Alexander, Drexel Hill, Pa. 19026.

Even admitting that we like best what we agree with most, I still have to tell you how much I liked -- and agreed with -- the editorial, Fantasy and Personal Involvement.

I've been trying to express some of these ideas and attitudes in my own articles and lectures. Many thanks for your very lucid presentation.

And all my best wishes for the success of MYTHLORE.

Ed. - Mr. Alexander has recently won the latest Newberry Award for his children's fantasy, The High King.

Ed. - In January we sent information about MYTHLORE to Houghton Mifflin, the American publishers of TLOR and received a subscription. In March we received this honorific message. I roared when I first read it. How many fanzines can claim such distinction!

Houghton Mifflin, 2 Park Street, Boston, Mass, 02107.

We have read MYTHLORE with interest, but I am sorry to report that our editors do not feel it would be a book which Houghton Mifflin could publish successfully for you. Therefore, we are unable to make you a publishing offer.

We are returning your manuscript to you under separate cover with many thanks for giving us the opportunity to consider it.

Sincerely yours, Ann Early, Editorial Department.

Karen Rockow, Unicorn, 1153 East 26 Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11210.

Your first ish just arrived, but a severe case of post finals eyestrain prevented me from reading it thoroughly. My swollen eyelids scream at your mimeography. The art is good, but there are a few too many typos and the writing could be a bit tighter. (Bernie Zuber please note - "irregardless" is a word but shouldn't be.)

Simone Wilson mentions Charles Moorman's Arthurian Triptych. I wonder whether she is familiar with Nathan comfort Starr's King Arthur Today, a study of Arthurian literature since Tennyson. Prof. Starr is acquainted with Tolkien and knew Lewis; he tells some delightful anecdotes about them. He taught a course on

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the two last year at the New School for Social Research in New York. Incidentally, Simone did not make it clear that T.S. Eliot did not originate the identification of the wounded Fisher-King as a symbol of physical barrenness. The sterility of the land is connected with the Fisher-King's malady in all the Perceval-Grail romances--Chretien, the Didot Perceval, Peredur, Perlesvaus and Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival. It is Wolfram who explicitly states that the king has been wounded in the genitals. The king's sterility causes the land's sterility. It is a very ancient conceit.

Ruth Berman's article on orcs was very interesting. I knew of the Anglo-Saxon orcneas and had wondered about the connection with Orclug. There is also an Old Irish verb whose root is org- (the g is spelled c after endings are added), which means "to slay." Tolkien adopted a number of words from the Anglo-Saxon -- ent, theoden, orthanc, deagol, maedum are just a few.

A question for Prof. Kilby: Is there any possibility that Lewis' hnakra is an anagram for "snark"? Also, what is the relationship between Edisson's Ouroboros and the chant which the N.I.C.E. people repeat before the Head? What is the root?

I'm looking forward to discussions of Chesterton and Dorothy Sayers. But how are they related to Lewis, Tolkien and Williams?

Ed. Chesterton was a strong literary influence on Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers was an occasional visitor to the Inklings and a good friend of Williams and Lewis.

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Pat Strang, P.O. Box 567, Balboa, California. 92661.

...the selection of Williams, Tolkien, and Lewis as the three authors you are most interested in puzzled me. Especially since Tolkien has very definitely stated that Williams had no effect, inspirational or otherwise, on the trilogy. That all three authors were "men of faith" is undeniable, but there is little else to form a common denominator between them. Tolkien shares my dislike for allegory (see Tree and Leaf, which unfortunately also contains one instance where Tolkien backslid.) Lewis and Williams, on the other hand, rehash mystical Christianity. Even when I was a fanatical Christian I disliked the "Christianity and water" attitude of the Narnia books, and the only thing of Williams I ever read was rather anti-semitic, so I doubt very much if I would be interested in discussions of The Greater Trumps or any thing else of that sort.

Actually, I can see more relationship between Williams and some of the other authors cited, Lovecraft and other occultists, than between Tolkien and Williams, or between Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. Lewis never had the talent to write children's fantasy, and never ought to have attempted it. As for his "adult" works, I used to be all thrilled with them, too, and probably Out of the Silent Planet would still be enjoyable, but of all those books Screwtape Letters was probably the best, and perhaps it might not fall into your definition of "fantasy." "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," on the other hand, struck me as the old John Campbell-Bishop Shoen-William F. Buckley distortion of Democracy as "rule of the mob," or "tyranny of the masses," which has been more lucidly discussed by Jose Ortega y Gasset.

If you are really interested in spiritual and philosophical insight which are woven into a story rather than just used as allegorical material, its funny that you should avoid altogether Frank Herbert's Dune and Dragon In the Sea. Herbert isn't too fashionable because he doesn't say "look at me, see how thoughty I am," and he doesn't write in a pretty mystical style about crystal palaces and the Holy, Grail and tinnny trumpets blattting in the wind, but he's more writer (and philosopher) than either Williams or Lewis put together. These two writers have capitalized on the fact that mystical Christianity already has an "image" going for it, and readers

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are preconditioned to accept it as "good," or meaningful, without too much effort on the author's part. Tolkien does not have that advantage, because it is too easy for us to see the elements of Mordor in ourselves, and so get defensive. Herbert makes this defensive attitude by making the reader think, rather than giving him predigested pap to soothe his belly.

C.S. Kilby, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. 60187.

Yesterday I received "Mythlore" and went through it with a great deal of interest. I know that it must be a terrific task to carry through on a thing of this sort, so congratulations to you and your staff. I hope that you will soon have a large circulation. As you know, I wholly agree with you in your view that Tolkien, Williams, and Lewis are both worthwhile simply as writers and also Christian in their outlook, so you are doing a work that I heartily approve of. I wish nothing but success for it.

Perhaps you might like a few of my criticisms (remember that that word means good as well as bad comments) for what you may think they are worth.

Good: the very fact that you have brought the idea and then the periodical into being and have already interested so many people. The illustrations are all satisfactory and those on pages 33, 37, and especially the back cover are unusually good. The front cover is very good; I hadn't the least bit of trouble knowing the three writers represented. You have a rather nice "mixture" of pictures and articles. Not all your articles are of the same quality, but I don't think you necessarily intended them all to be so. I was myself really informed by "Here and Orc. There an Orc" and by your Middle-earth Calendar for 1969, and, thought I myself am not specially interested in the Sindarin-Queinya dictionary, I think Sandra Ballif's undertaking will make a wide appeal. It looks very substantial to me. Of course I like Margaret Hannay's article and the rest of them generally. And I read with great interest Bernie Zuber's account of the September 2 meeting. By the way, I am ordering a couple of copies of Shaggy, one for me and one for our Collection in the library.

Bad: I hope you can find a better mimeograph machine or cut the stencils better. The spelling is terrible!!! Can't you persuade someone to read your copy with this especially in mind. But it would be even better if someone could try to tighten up all the writing, or nearly all.

Well, you see the Good outweighs the Bad. I shall be looking forward to other issues.

Nan Braude, 2644 Dwight Way, Berkeley, California. 94704.

On my article: on rereading it, I'm not sure I made it clear that I meant LOTR "does not point outwards to a grater reality" in the sense that it is not true that it can be most clearly understood only by locating and interpreting allusions to primary-world realities (the allegory-of-the-bomb ploy). I am not so foolish as to deny that the work and its values are relevant to our primary-world existence.

On Ruth's article: The orc is in Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (in a version of the Perseus-Andromeda legend), not the Gerusalemme Liberata. As for orcneas in Beowulf, according to J.B. Bessinger's A Short Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (Toronto, 1960), the word is a compound of orc and neas, "corpses," and means "evil spirits of the dead." The singular would thus (if he is right) be Orcne(o).

The passage in Beowulf cited by Ruth is relevant on more than philological grounds. It is part of the introduction and characterization of Grendel, one of

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these monstrous descendants of the accursed Cain. But of which kind? Not an elf; they are dangerous but beautiful ( the heroine of the Anglo-Saxon Judith is said to be "elvish-fair"), and Grendel is hideous. Not a giant; we get the impression that he is not incredibly large despite his supernatural strength (e.g. he has no trouble getting through the door of Heorot). Presumably, then, he is of the orcneas. And Tolkien's orcs resemble Grendel in many ways -- dwellers in the secret parts of the earth, greedy, cruel, implacably malicious (Grendel is a "hater of the joys of men"), strong, filthy, and accursed in origin (not descendants of Cain, but creations of Morgoth). Further scientific evidence on the nature of this species will have, to wait until the Mythopoeic Society can equip an expedition to the Orkneys to study the inhabitants.

And then there are the Anglo-Saxon ents.....

The highlight of the issue was Margaret Hannay's article. Though I felt she sometimes blurred the distinction between myth and allegory in speaking of Lewis' own fiction ( but we may be responding differently to the same story patterns: one man's myth is another man's prosin'), it was on the whole a masterful organization and presentation of the material. It should be required reading for all perspective LOTR filmmakers!

The Notre Dame Press people at MWA informed me that Isaac's and Zimbaro's Tolkien and the Critics will be out in paperback this spring.

The artwork in Mythlore is, as expected, of very high quality. I especially liked Tim Kirk's bacóver and George Barr's Galadriel (though the hobbits in the same illo look a little too much like human children for my taste). Bernie Zuber's front cover I found upsetting because I never imagine any of our Wise Men as looking so young!

I saw the BBC Tolkien film at the Belknap Conference. It was marred by an almost totally incomprehensible sound track (due, I believe, to the projection equipment rather than to the film itself). It concentrated on portraying Tolkien's Oxford world, with emphasis on the qualities it shares with Middle Earth (food, fire, trees, etc.), interspersed with comments from Tolkien readers, most of whom seemed to be University students. Ed Meskys says the film will be available for loan to "organized groups;" from Ballantine, I think. Write to Ed for more information. I should think a chapter of the Mythopoeic Society would qualify.

Incidentally, according to the Oxford Universal Dictionary (the shorter OED), -poeia as in "onomatopoeia" (and presumable "mythopoeia" is pronounced pee'a: the oei is sounded like ie in "thief." The adjective would presumable be myth-o-pee'ic, with the secondary accent on myth-.

What a thing it is to be a pedant! Under the mercy,

Ed. - Arrangements are being made to show the film at Westcon in Santa Monica during the July 4th weekend. At the same time Doris Robin and Karen Trimble, two Society members, will be in England and Scotland. We hope they will go all the way to the Orkneys and take a few pictures of the Orcs.

Alpajuri, 1690 E. 26 Ave. Eugene-Oregon. 97403.

As I gaze down at Mythlore I:1 before me I see three gentlemen in a study. The three, I presume? (Odd -- your back cover is far, far better. You are indeed blessed to have Tim Kirk within your grasp!) But tell me: which is which? I mean, is Tolkien the one with the glasses?

Turn to page four. My first impression of your editorial is that it's really very heavy. Editorials don't have to be written in such thick prose, you know -

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you could have said the same thing (and perhaps better) in a more causal style. Second impression: I agree whole-heartedly with your idea of making use of fantasy to see 'this reality' in better perspective. Excellent. Third Impression: Hmmmmn. Have you ever dropped acid? If you had I doubt if you would have placed that phrase in quotes. Your observations on hippies are okay from someone who has not. But are we speaking of the same concept of hippie? Since you mention them and acid in almost the same breath I assume you mean those hippies whose philosophies have been oriented by the stuff. And if so, then you really should drop before you tell us why hippies like Tolkien. As far as I can guess, it's not so much an identification with the drop-out hobbits as it is an utter enthrallment in the total fantasy of Middle-earth. While you (and I) read fantasy to put 'real life' into a broader perspective, acid hippies (and I) read fantasy to learn more about real life directly -- all is one, and one is all.

Ruth Berman -- I wonder, have you looked up many of the other words Tolkien uses? An Old English dictionary would help. Ents, wargs, thains, theodens, eorls, smeagols, deagols; they're all there if you'll look. In an early Tolkien Journal someone wrote about several Dwarf names she found in Teutonic legends. Go on from there and discover what bits and pieces of Northern European mythology he has fit together into that of Middle-earth.

Pages ten and (especially) eleven testify once again to the skill of Tim Kirk-Molly Titcomb's article on a possible movie of LOTR -- ah, now here's a refreshing viewpoint! At last I have heard of someone who neither cowers in a corner nor waves flags about this subject. But later in the issue I see that somebody already has rights to animate the Hobbit. Well I've seen Yellow Submarine, the artist of which has expressed an interest in doing Tolkien, but at this point I feel the full seriousness of Tim Kirk's page eleven catastrophe. Imagine the Balrog looking like a Blue meanie!?! And the Beatles doing the music? Perhaps -- note the moods expressed in "Blackbird" and "Mother Nature's Son". Judge not the Fear-some Foursome on their stereotyped image alone... Hmmn: everyone keeps yelling "Keep LOTR out of the Disney studios!" -- well what about their version of Sleeping Beauty? Do any of you remember the dragon from that? That, my friends, was Disney. (However, so is Mickey Mouse...)

George Barr's drawing on 19 is okay technically I guess but too commercial, sterile. The hobbits look about four years old and Galadriel would make a Playboy bunny look like an ironing board... Yeachh. However the same artist on 47 outdoes himself. Or maybe he does himself just right, for a self-portrait of the kind of person who could mess up the Mirror scene so terribly.)

Page 36: the calendar scheme. Glen, I've followed the whole of 1968 with Shire dates and don't agree with your calculations at all. I think your trouble is that you have forgotten Overlithe (1968 was a leap year), according to my book:

1968: Thursday, June 20 = Meresdei, Forelithe 30

Friday, June 21 = Lithe I (Highdei)

Saturday, June 22 = Midyear's Day

Sunday, June 23 = Overlithe

Monday, June 24 = Lithe II (Sterrendei)

Tuesday, June 25 = Sunndei, Afterlithe 1

And following this through;

December 21 '68 = Foreyule 30, skip two yule days, and

December 24 '68 = Afteryule 1, and eventually

January 1, '68 = Afteryule 9, Monendei.

See III:338/483 (Hardcover/Ballentine): "...our New Year's day corresponded more or less to the Shire January 9." Negeleting the "more or less", that is what my reck-

oning has come to. The system comes out evenly, so if you once begin our year on Afteryule 9, it will in every year thereafter.

Sandra Ballif seems to be doing fairly well with her Elvish Dictionary, though there are a few mistakes: Aglar.'hi' = 'long live'; but instead 'glory to'. Anann = 'great praise', but instead 'great length' or the like; the sentence Cuio i Pheriañ anann means literally 'lively (imp.) the Halflings long'. Anor is Sindarin for 'sun'; S 'and is nor, Q = dore. If adar indeed means 'father', the plural = edair, not 'adair'. However, I would like to await the completion of the thing before pronouncing sentence (pun...?) Sandra seems to be indecisive as to whether to write an Elvish dictionary or encyclopaedia -- for anga she has 'iron,' but for angmar she has 'witch-realm' instead of 'iron-home'...

Egad -- I find myself at the end already -- but its a commendable first issue: I only wish Carandaith could be so voluminous! But just wait -- as soon as the Australian Tolkien Society picks up steam we shall be hard on your heels!

Ed. - See p. 478 The Return of The King (Ballentine). Sorry Paul, every year begins on the first day of the week (Saturday). Dec. 23, 1968 was nine days before Jan 1, 1969, but it was a Monday. The "more or less" cannot be neglected. Yule II has to be on a Saturday, therefore the years started Dec. 21, 1968. On the Cover: Tolkien is on the left, Lewis is standing up, and Williams is on the right. I never tried to tell you why hippies like Tolkien; I said I didn't know. Do you think if I have ever dropped acid, I would be dumb enough to say it in print? I noticed you never go around to actually saying whether you do or not.

Claire Howard, 150-14 15th Drive, Whitestone, New York, 11357.  
I have enjoyed my first issue much. Interest in fantasy and myth appears to be increasing in this country. Mythlore will therefore be welcome as a kind of symposium of opinions not only on Tolkien, Lewis and Williams but on Eddison and other fine fantasists.

Who said that Tolkien is a favorite of the Hippies? Frankly, I suspect that one day some reporter went down to the Haight or the East Village and asked a local hippie-type who his favorite author was, to which the hip one no doubt replied: "like, man, you know, like, Tolkien, man, I mean." The media being what they are this immediately became "Tolkien is a favorite of the hippies."

Do hippies read, I doubt that they would be attracted to LOTR because of its "escapist" nature. Only those unfamiliar with LOTR would accuse it of being escapist. Rather, I have a feeling that the flower-and-bead set would sympathize with the innocence (not synonymous with naivete) of LOTR. Conflicts between good and evil are clear cut, black and white. There are no grey areas. Middle-earth is a far simpler world than our own. (I imply no criticism of LOTR here.) This simplicity would appeal strongly to the immature mind of the hippie. Also, Middle-earth is a pre-technological world. We all know of the hippies' aversion to technology. (Except when it comes to transistor radios, and rock recordings.) Finally, there is the profound love of unspoiled nature that pervades Tolkien's works. This too would appeal to the hippie; to anyone, for that matter.

I wonder where Molly Titcomb got the idea that Elvish is related to Welsh. More information would be appreciated. I am one of those who object to making LOTR into a movie, for all the reasons Molly listed. However, if someone did a well-drawn cartoon movie, I'd go to see it. I think a cartoon film could stick more closely to the text than one using live actors. Also, the producers could stretch their imaginations to the utmost.