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Missives to Mythlore

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Authors

Chad Walsh, J. R. Christopher, Christopher Barczak, Patrick Strang, Sarah Thomson, Colin Duriez, Fred Brenion, Bill Capon, Jack Gaughan, and Richard Shelton

Missives to Mythlore



Chad Walsh, Professor of English, Beloit College. 2219 Marin, Berkeley, Calif.

I have been reading through the January issue of MYTHLORE and find a quality very rare in scholarly journals: every article sounds as though its author enjoyed writing it. I hope this joie de vivre can be retained in subsequent issues; it gives the publication a quite unusual charm and vitality.

Two at least of the pieces seemed to me of primary importance. One is "Sion and Parnassus: Three Approaches to Myth," which does a very useful job in distinguishing the ways myth is used by the three authors. The other is "C.S. Lewis' Theory of Mythology," which shows how sophisticated a concept of myth Lewis held. I have been increasingly certain that Lewis' writings contain certain seminal ideas destined to be "rediscovered" and have an influence in theology and philosophy; his idea of myth is one of them, and this article is an admirable introduction.

J. R. Christopher, 820 Charlotte, Stephenville, Texas. 76401.

I liked George Barr's illustration for Perelandra.... The Mythopoeic Society could perhaps be called the Gassic Society, to follow Lewis in a circa-1939 letter to Owen Barfield. In her latter Claire Howard asked the evidence for the use of Welsh in the LOTR - the reference is in Tolkien's essay, "English and Welsh" (Collected in Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures; Cardiff: Univ. of Wales-Press, '63.

Christopher Barczak, 2449 N. Vermont ave. Los Angeles, Calif. 90027.

Re. Pat Strang's letter in #2: his attitude towards Lewis and Williams apparently seems to be rooted in his overconcern with "spiritual and philosophical insight," allowing these considerations to restrict his viewpoint to the extent of achieving narrow-mindedness. He objects to the Narnia books as being too "Christianity and water," but Lewis wrote these books for children who are not duly involved with philosophical concepts as Mr. Strang is. Granted, there is Christian allegory here, especially in Voyage of the Dawn Treader - however, whether one perceives this or not, whether one has read the Bible or not, one can appreciate the delight Lewis took in creating children's fantasies regardless of this author's orientation. At least I did.

The restricted view of Mr. Strang is also shown in his puzzlement over the relation of the three authors. Yes, they were men of the same faith, but there were many other common ties that would place them in one category. They were all Englishmen, they were all members of the Inklings, they all knew each other or in some way had contact. And in spite of Tolkien's assertion that there was no specific influence upon his TLOTR (except for H. Rider Haggard's She), according to Owen Barfield - who knew both Tolkien and Lewis - there was a great deal of exchange of ideas between these two. Finally, as also stated by Barfield, the trio represented three different aspects of romanticism: with Lewis it was the yearning for the unobtainable; Williams, the idealization of love between the sexes; Tolkien, the happy ending, or eucatastrophe.

Mr. Strang doesn't bother to attempt to catalogue those relationships he feels exist between Williams and Lovecraft "and other occultists" that are greater than those between the Three. In regards visual imagery, Williams and Lovecraft were both masters. However Lovecraft certainly didn't deal with the theme of the idealization of love. If we were to place Lovecraft in any tradition, it would probably be the Gothic. (Gothic literature could be considered as a twisted or perverted off-shoot of the Romantic movement. — Editor)

There are other statements Mr. Strang makes with ease but without the slightest basis of support. Where did Williams capitalize on the "image" of mystical Christianity? Does he mean to question the sincerity of the beliefs of these two? Finally, to the statement that "Lewis never had the talent to write Children's Fantasy, and never ought to have attempted it," one can reply that the same can be said of Mr. Strang as critic.

Patrick Strang, PO Box 567, Balboa, Calif. 92661

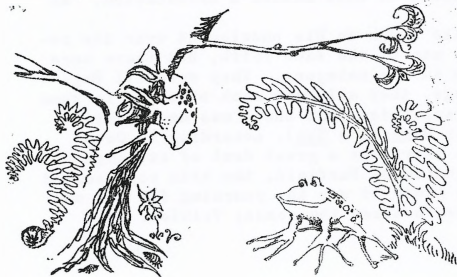
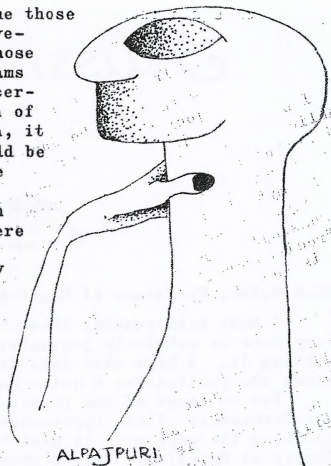
I have just received my first copy of you excellent magazine. I haven't read through all of it yet, but I have to say something, at least about the art work, some of which is really excellent. I include in that category the excellent, wonderful, great cover illustration of the hunting of the Hnakra, from Out of the Silent Planet. Seeing that made me ask the question that doubtless other readers asked themselves, which is WHY we haven't more artwork based on C.S. Lewis' adult works, especially from Silent Planet, which with its assortment of races and peoples and graphic landscape descriptions, seems to beg for artwork. The cover was exactly what I would have expected, too, which is not, unfortunately, the case with either the illustration from Perelandra or That Hideous Strength. The woman in the Perelandra illo just didn't seem to fit, and I had to be told that it was indeed an illustration of the Green Lady. She seems a bit seductive, for one thing.

Regarding the possibility of Hnakra being a cognate of Snark, as Karen Rockow suggested, I have been absorbed in Lewis Carroll, and especially with the Snark, and it is, I suppose, possible. C.S. Lewis certainly couldn't be ignorant of the master of mathematics who wrote fantasy on the side, and the similarity between his name and Dodgson's pen name may have occurred to him, at least unconsciously. However, it should be pointed out that one characteristic of Snarks is that they are more often found on land than in the water.

The above is a sneaky introduction to an apology for some of the things in my last letter, which were baaaaad. I amend nothing in my attitudes toward Mr. Williams, but I feel that C.S. Lewis does deserve more

consideration, at least in The Screw-tape Letters. His adult works do make good fantasy if read in that light, and not as allegories - which it is often a mistake to assume an author's work to be.

And ONE THING THAT I DO NOT WANT TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD is that I do not use the term "Tolkien nuts" disparagingly. Shouldn't have used it at all, of course, but I compose my letters as I type them (almost always a mistake) and as a feeble excuse I could point out that I had been writing Fan this and fan that, and the word "admirer" was somehow not part of my vocabulary that day.



In my saner moments I do not try to analyze an author's political motives anyway.

PS. It seems to me that in one of his books, G.K. Chesterton made some reference to "a tower that is of itself, evil" and "a tree that is something more than a tree," or something of that sort. I thought it was from The Man Who Was Thursday, but I've searched the book from one end to another without finding it. I also have a wild hunch it may have been Dunsany. Does it ring a bell? (Can you readers help? - ed.)

Sarah Thomson, 316 E. Madison ST. #13, Ann Arbor Michigan. 48104.

I have been so excited - and ecstatic - about Mythlore. It is so hard to believe that there are actually all these people who share my interest. The first thing I read was "The Counsel of Elrond," and I knew how you felt. That sounds trite, but it is meant seriously and real-ly. Ever since I discovered Williams four or five years ago, I have searched - mostly unsuccessfully - for others who had experienced his power and were caught by his spell. And now to discover an entire magazine devoted to him and Lewis, whom I've read and enjoyed since I was a child, and Tolkien! It is almost too great a joy to bear.

(I am reminded as to what Lewis said about his having to write the kind of books that he, himself would like to read; its the same with this fanzine with me - Ed.)

Colin Duriez, c/o Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 39 Bedford Square, London W.C.1, England.

Mythlore is the only periodical I've come across which you simply have to read from cover-to-cover. It demands appreciation, as C.S.L. would say. Concerning my article, please thank George Barr for the illustration; especially for the wraiths in the background! The picture of Tolkien is excellent. But fancy mis-printing 'evangelium' into EVANGELISM!!

Your speech at 'The Counsel of Elrond,' and the various poems, suggest Tolkien's renewal of Old Norse myths, with his own creations, should be taken as seriously as English poets have taken Greek myths (cf. Keats, On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer, and the innumerable classical references): which is a very good thing. Tolkien is assured of immortality.

One thing: your artists are continually representing scenes and persons from Middle Earth visually, and you yourself dressed up as Elrond. Don't you think this is incompatible with the spirit of Tolkien, who feels that the power of sub-creation lies in the imaginative effect on the perceiver, rather than any visual effect (cf. Tree and Leaf, pp. 67,68; 45-47, etc., Brit. edition)?

I am looking very much forward to readers' reactions to my article, and preparing for action!

One thing that struck me was how sane Mythlore is; it seems very free from the danger of what C.S.L. would call 'the inner ring'. I think Lewis would have loved it: it has what I imagine 'the inklings' flavour to be.

WHY I LIKE THE MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY

By Bernie Zuber

I like
The Mythopoeic Society
Because
Mythopoeics
Are nice people.
Besides,
Girls go there
And we have fun
Sometimes
We even read books.



Mythopoeism
over all!

ML3

Fred Brenion, 11101 Clover ave, Los Angels, Cal. 90034.

Inspired by Karen Rockow's question on what the connection between Eddison's Ouroboros and Lewis' ourobriandra is, I have done my own research on it. I have figured out what ourobriandra may mean. It is my belief it is the original name of our planet and our Oyarsa (see Perelandra, Macmillian pb. page 212, par. 6). I base this idea in Dante's Divine Comedy (Canto 7, line one of the Inferno, Dorothy Sayers translation) which states "papé Satan, papé Satan Aleppe." According to Dorothy Sayers on a note on this line, she says: "one may safely conjecture that it is meant as an invocation to the Devil, and it is as well to leave it at that." It can be seen that the N.I.C.E. people were doing the same, making an invocation to our bent Oyarsa, who is the voice of the Head, BA-ba-hee would be the equivalent of Aleppe, which is nothing but jargon. Ouroborindra would be the Papé Satan, or Father Satan. I hope that this will help, though I admit I may be wrong.



Bill Capon, 149 Ridgedale ave., Madison, New Jersey. 07940.

Mythlore 1. The cover was pretty good. Let's see: Tolkien, Lewis, Williams. Is that a good guess? (Yes - ed.) Tim Kirk's illos on pages 10,11 are hilarious, but at the same time rather frightening. It couldn't happen here?! After reading "Rape of the Hobbit" I guess it could happen here. In spite of the good points made in the article on making LOTR into a movie, I shudder when I think of it. George Barr's illustration of Galadriel is good but for one thing - I don't think anyone could draw the lady in a satisfactory way. The lady he drew is very well done, but nothing even approaching my concept of the Lady. The essay on Lewis and mythology is unbelievable. It's as though something I could only half believe previously (Lewis writing) was finally proven to actually exist. It sort of makes his writing more legitimate (if such a word is appropriate in this context). Bernie Zuber's description of the TSA meeting just convinces me a little more that I must get to one. I am about half way through with the Last Unicorn. I haven't found it quite as appealing as Lewis or Tolkien yet, but Treebeard would shudder if I passed hastily judgement. To hear C.S. Kilby would be a great pleasure, the same for Ian Ballentine, Beagle or Ed. I am going slowly insane waiting for the Silmarillion. (aren't we all! - ed.) To have a course here Georgia Tech on Tolkien would be wonderful, but practically impossible. Now we come to something of interest - the Bilbo and Frodo Birthday Party. It sounds very exciting. To see 200 parents turned on by Tolkien would truly be amazing. I somehow can't see myself dressing a up as one of Tolkien's characters, at least partly because I wouldn't be satisfied with my portrayal. The young ladies who dress as Galadriel or Arwen must have a lot of courage. I would truly like to see someone who felt she adequately represented one of the Elves. A gift exchange with genuine mathoms? A Bacchanalian festival? I guess I better stop here as far as ish one goes,

Mythlore 2. I think your vision is a very fortunate thing to have. It reminds me to a certain extent of some of the visions in LOTR. The only word for the New Year celebration is unbelievable. Your speech at the Ring destruction sounds almost like Tolkien might have written it. It sound sort of like a sermon, meaning nothing but good. If every one in the world had read Tolkien and if everyone read or heard your speech, then perhaps our disarmament conferences could be stopped. Hoping not to sound too terrible in anyway, I'd like to say your speech was inspirational. I liked the



"Ring of Power" poem. Its good to see so much concern over conservation in the fanzines. NIEKAS review is somewhat understandable, I've been getting it since last year. "Rape of the Hobbit" is singularly appropriate for describing what was done to it. May we live all the days of our Lives,

Jack Gaughan, P.O. Box 516, Rifton, New York. 12471.
(in a letter to Bernie Zuber)

Yes, I did receive Mythlore and enjoyed. Though, to tell the truth, I'm no great enthusiast for JRRT.

I'm sorry that I've been unable to answer or contribute but my philosophy of doodling sketches for fanzines, while having my morning coffee, has been utterly destroyed by my having been appointed Art Director of Galaxy and If. This absorbs much too much of my time at present because nothing seems to get done on any recognizable schedule.

Tim Kirk is the only illustrator outside of Arthur Rackham (on whose work I feel Tolkien patterned almost all of his images) I'd even consider to illustrate JRRT.
Good man!

When things (if things) ever settle down to schedule I hope to be able to send stories out to various fan artists. But I emphasize the fact that I shall remain unable to send work out until a production schedule somehow materializes. This may take months. I just don't know how much time. Meanwhile I'm eager to see fanzines like yours which are excellent display-cases for such art. Pax.

Richard Shelton, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. 55057

I have received and enthusiastically read the first two issues of Mythlore and welcome the advent of another good Tolkien-oriented publication, even if it isn't entirely loyal (Williams and Lewis addicts read "devoted") to Tolkien. Ruth Berman's article on the etymological skeletons hidden in the orc's closet was very well done. More of the same (in answer to Alpajhuri's suggestion) may be found in Lin Carter's excellent book, J.R.R. Tolkien, a Look Behind the Lord of The Rings (Ballentine).

Tim Kirk's efforts on pp. 10-11 need no comment. Let all fans take heed.

In general, the art work is excellent. The back on #1 and page 10 of #2 are superb, and kudos are due to George Barr for his portrayal of Bilbo (but what is this pointed ear bit? No textual authority - not even for Elrond!) and to Bernie Zuber for putting some hair on hobbit feet (#2. p. 44) rather than the few token strands one generally finds.

May your snail be never damp,

Ed Meskys, Belknap College, Center Harbor, N.H. 03226

Many thanks for the 2 Mythlores thus far. I haven't had time to read read either completely, but I read about half of each and both are really excellent! The articles are interesting, the art-work is great and the layout is good too.

