



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 7
Number 2

Article 17

6-15-1980

Owen Barfield in Southern California (2)

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Recommended Citation

GoodKnight, Glen (1980) "Owen Barfield in Southern California (2)," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 7 : No. 2 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol7/iss2/17>

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Online Winter Seminar

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Via Zoom and Discord

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Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

Additional Keywords

Bg Callahan

OWEN BARFIELD

IN

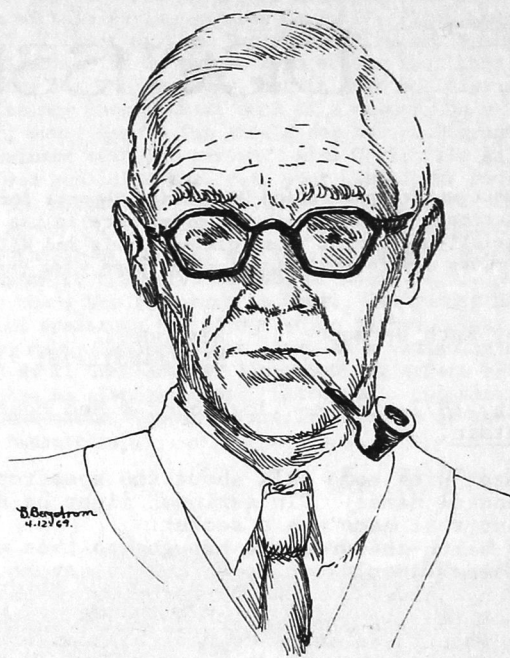
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (2)

GLEN GOODKNIGHT

The reason this is entitled (2) is a very fine report on Owen Barfield's previous visit to Southern California at Redlands University in the Spring of 1969 that appeared in MYTHLORE 4, written by Rand Kuhl. The drawing is the same one that appeared with that report.

The most recent visit was at California State University at Fullerton, February 26-28. I became apprised of the details of his visit by Bruce Weber of the faculty of CSUF, who was one of the prime movers in arranging this visit. The visit was highlighted by an address of the topic "Evolution" on the 26th and a question and answer session on the Inklings on the 28th. Following the question and answer session there was a reception jointly hosted by The Mythopoeic Society and the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society. It was a pleasant time of chatting and book signing by Mr. Barfield.

Now at the age of 81, Owen Barfield has seen a new rise of interest in his thought and writings over the last decade and a half, particularly in the United States. His books on philosophy are not easy reading, but some feel they point to a new world-view that provides solutions to some of the thornier problems of current scientific philosophy. Barfield is considered one of the most important philosophers of this century, albeit this recognition has been a long time in coming.



After Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams, Owen Barfield is the fourth best known member of the Inklings. He was a life-long best friend of C.S. Lewis, who waged "the Great War" with him on philosophical matters. This is covered by Humphrey Carpenter's book The Inklings. Admirers of C.S. Lewis might make the mistake of viewing Barfield's importance primarily as Lewis' friend and not considering his importance in his own right — as writer and philosopher. A very good introduction can be found in Romantic Religion: A Study of Barfield, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien by R.J. Reilly.

AN INKLINGS BIBLIOGRAPHY (13)

COMPILED BY JOE R. CHRISTOPHER

Nicholls, Peter (ed.). Science Fiction at Large: A collection of essays, by various hands, about the interface between science fiction and reality. New York: Harper and Row, 1976. 224 pp. [Lewis, 132; Tolkien, 20-21, 159-160.]

Nicholls explains in his "Introduction" that these essays were read at an Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, between January and March, 1975 (with one exception, when the speaker became ill and could not deliver the paper). There are eleven essays, seven by science-fiction (or fantasy) writers, four by respectable names in other fields (such as Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock). Three of the essays mention Lewis or Tolkien:

(a) Ursula K. Le Guin, "Science Fiction and Mrs Brown", pp. 13-33 [Tolkien, 20-21]. Le Guin writes one of the better essays, discussing characterization in science fiction and using Virginia Woolf's "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" as her starting point. She uses The Lord of the Rings as her example of characterization in fantasy: ". . . as traditional myths and folktales break the complex conscious daylight personality down into its archetypal unconscious dreamtime components . . . so Tolkien . . . broke Frodo into four: Frodo, Sam, Smeagol, and Gollum; perhaps five, counting Bilbo. Gollum is probably the best character in the book because he got two of the components, Smeagol and Gollum. . . . Frodo himself is only a quarter or a fifth of himself. Yet even so he is something new to fantasy: a vulnerable, limited, rather unpredictable hero, who finally fails at his own quest . . . and has to have it accomplished for

him by his mortal Enemy, Gollum, who is, however, his kinsman, his brother, in fact himself. [Moreover, Frodo] has to go on, leave home, make the voyage out, in fact die—something fantasy heroes never do, and allegories are incapable of doing" (p. 21).

(b) Alan Garner, "Inner Time", pp. 119-138 [Lewis, 132]. Garner writes a very personal essay, about his nervous problems and their solutions. He describes the relief and new energy gained from the removal of a psychological blockage in these terms, in addition to the more personal ones: "The involvement of an academically-trained Western mind with a primitive catastrophic process (that is, the waking experience of Aljira, Dream-time, the Illud Tempus of anthropology) is not always pleasant, but it is never far from what C. S. Lewis calls 'Joy', and I would have it no other way" (p. 132).

(c) Peter Nicholls, "Science Fiction: The Monsters and the Critics", pp. 157-183 [Tolkien, 159-160]. Nicholls points out his adaptation of the title of Tolkien's essay "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics", but the rest of Nicholls' essay does not make a point analogous to Tolkien's—the monsters are not the bug-eyed monsters and other aliens of science fiction but bothersome aspects of the SF field itself: The Sentimental Stylist, The Blurb Writer, The Insufficiently Monstrous Alien, The Monster of Anarchy (actually a discussion of the methods of depicting anarchy), and The Monster of Fulfilled Promise (the writer who repeats himself). The types of critics receive equally cute titles.