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The Counsel of Elrond

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The Counsel of Elrond

by
Glen GoodKnight

Beginning with this issue I've decided to create a column to speak more informally than in the editorials about a number of things. The title comes from the fact that I have tensely identified with Elrond and come to the picnics dressed as such, ears and all.

The analogy I am about to make to express a certain feeling may seem pretentious - it indeed seems so to me - but I use it because it springs to mind and helps communicate what I feel. When C.S. Kilby - probably the only American to have read Tolkien's saga of the First Age of Middle Earth: The Silmarillion - was out here in California in October 1968, he described parts of it in his talks. One of The Silmarillion's parts has a creation scene that involves an unseen & very beautiful music. The Valar, while in the Undying Lands, are given a vision of Middle Earth by means of this music and are invited to go to Middle Earth to aid in its creation. (This is similar to the creation of Narnia in C.S. Lewis' The Magician's Nephew.) When the Valar arrive they discover Middle Earth to be different than they envisioned it.

Ever since I first read Tolkien in 1958 and soon after discovered Lewis, I had the germ of a dream of a discussion group to seriously discuss these men; this resulted from the profound impact these men had upon my mind. In the words of Coleridge:

"... like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy."

(Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamoni)

This dream was not, of course, a special revelation; it's obvious many others have had a similar hope. But the course of life for many years made the dream remain just that. I knew so few people who had also read these men; no channels of communication were open. About 1964, to my great delight, I discovered Charles Williams and his connection with Lewis and Tolkien. In 1966 when the explosion of Tolkien's popularity began, the phenomena gave me a more lively hope of seeing a group started. In 1966-67 I started a Tolkien Society at my then college - Cal. State L.A. This proved less than a success. The school

is a computer campus, and this with the fact that many of those interested, because of class scheduling, could not attend, saw that the meetings were always a handful. But the group, plus the publicity from my winning first prize in a student book collection contest for my collection of the works of Tolkien, Lewis and Williams, created some interest from off campus. In June 1967 there was party at my then apartment in Glendale of about twenty people. It was soon decided that a large event, probably outdoors, should be held to attempt to bring together all the large number of Tolkien fans in Southern California. Thus the first Bilbo and Frodo Birthday Party Picnic in September 1967 came to be. Many people worked for its success. At that picnic my long dream was announced: the first meeting of the Mythopoeic Society was to be held in October 1967. And it came to be.

Now the Society is $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old; a lot has happened in that time. My vision has not become reality. The Society is not as I had envisioned it. Here my analogy to the Silmarillion ends and I take up another - that of Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle." The real tree was even greater than Niggle's painting of it; so my experience with the Mythopoeic Society. What I want to say is I am overwhelmed with what has happened. Please excuse my being ardent. I want to express my thankfulness, my joy, my wonder at what has and is happening. Hoping not to sound trite, I have met more really beautiful, intelligent and creative people than I could here name. With these people my vision has interacted, so the reality is a fusion of the corporate spirit. After much pressure and reluctance on my part, this fanzine has begun. It is a heavy joy. Through it I have already met many other people by letters; this too has been an unspeakable pleasure. Its like Lewis said, "you feel that too? I thought I was the only one."

And to think this all came about because years ago some men sat down and wrote of the reality they were given to see. As Tolkien wrote:

"Man, Sub-creator, the refracted light through whom is splintered from a single white to many hues, and endlessly combined in living shapes that move from mind to mind."
(Essay on Fairy Stories)

And so we go on. I say thank you to all I have thus come to meet for making this a very enjoyable and personally gratifying experience. We are yet a young group; we have yet much to say, to do and accomplish. Our unity in diversity makes the future very promising. The corporate enthusiasm and intoxicating interaction is more than just shouting about a chance cause that people have caught onto; it results from a sense that something solid and real is being accomplished.

Now that I've waxed sticky, let me comment on a few things: I am especially pleased with the art work in this issue since we have a full page illustration from each book of C.S. Lewis' "deep space trilogy". Tim Kirk has done a possible scene from Out of the Silent Planet; George Barr has pictured the Green Lady on a floating from Perelandra. Bonnie Bergstrom has done a scene from That Hateful Strength, chapter 15, part 4. Lewis, up to now, despite that he is very illustratable, had had far less art work than Tolkien, except of Course Pauline Baynes illustrations of the Narnia books.

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And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night!

People in whose minds the analytic-synthetic faculties predominate may not see anything so painful about such a situation. They may find a multiverse of neutral "its" a pleasant challenge to their own potential of mastery and creative ordering. Doubtless it is "good" that they now have possibilities open that would have been denied them in ages more congenial to myth. But even the scientist on expedition needs a secure place to go home to, and needs to know the way, just as the primitive hunter does. As Jung emphasized, no one is healthy if his mythmaking unconscious is completely dissociated from his conscious preoccupations. Most of us, if given a chance, would enjoy having communion with the supposedly "inanimate" world, as well as we enjoy gaining mastery and efficient control over it. (Of course, the evil goes along with the good; if there are Ents in the forest, there will be Old Willows too.) And there are some people, such as William Blake and Jung himself, who live intimately with the strange denizens of their unconscious, minds alive with images, minds that create by giving birth rather than by craftsmanship (or mass production). Are they hopelessly out of place in a world where their symbols and myths correspond to nothing outside themselves? Or can their intuitions of a face upon things be a perception of the real? Can a myth--any myth--be true?...

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I want to express acknowledgement to Bernie Zuber for his cover on the first issue of Mythlore. Bernia, who has a very mythopoeic imagination, had an extremely difficult task in doing the cover. It is a composite drawn from three different photographs, with some of the angles and positions different. Bernie set aside his creative imagination to do a technical piece requiring much hard work.

My apologies to Nan Braude for her article on "Tolkien and Spenser" not appearing in this article. It will be in the next one.

ISSUE

In the first issue of Mythlore and in flyers, the price of Mythlore was set at 50¢ or 4/\$2.00, however - honestly - the production costs are higher than expected - especially the postage (it was 12¢ last issue and I expect it will be 14¢ for this one). I reluctantly but necessarily announce the rise in price to 65¢ an issue or 4/\$2.50. Believe me we still won't make a profit. The alternative is to reduce the number of pages and art work. The new rates will go into effect on April 10, 1969; all subscriptions and renewals after that will be at the new rate. If you like what Mythlore is doing and want to see it continue to improve, I think this price change will not really disturb you.

On the letter column: I have kept my comments as short as possible in this issue. The readers may consider Missives to Mythlore as much "fair game" as the rest of the issue in their own letters of comment. Those who have their letter printed get a free copy. The more comment the better - except the whole hippie thing which is too complex for a simplistic pro or con attitude. I alluded to to hippies only as an illustration for a point I was making. The letters in this issue are enough on the matter; let's not get side-tracked.