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Letters

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Letters

LETTERS

Patrick Wynne

Fosston, MN

I certainly did enjoy the Mythopoeic Conference -- I always have! Usually when something is heralded beforehand as "likely to be the best ever" you stand a good chance of the actual event being unable to live up to your expectations. This definitely was not the case with this year's Conference -- it was the best one I can say I've ever been to.

Christopher Tolkien was, of course, the "crowning glory". Greg Rihn was right when he commented during the closing ceremony that most of us would've been happy just having the chance to look at Christopher! Fortunately, he did much more than just let us look at him. His two presentations, the one on *The Hobbit* revisions on Saturday afternoon and the other earliest draft of *The Lord of the Rings* at the banquet Sunday evening, were enthralling. I knew from his recorded readings of excerpts from *The Silmarillion* that he was capable of giving a good dramatic reading, but his Conference presentations far exceeded my expectations. I can't recall the last time I've seen a speaker so totally capture an audience -- you could have heard the proverbial pin drop on both occasions. It does make one hunger for future volumes in *The History of Middle-earth*, does it not?

I managed to have a brief chat with Christopher Tolkien after his *Hobbit* presentation Saturday (my inner emotions were great pleasure with a dollop of terror thrown in for good measure), I asked him about printing the "pointed ears" quote from his postcard to me in *ML*. He very graciously assented. This actually ties in quite nicely with a remark made in the review "Our Bodies Our Elves" in *ML* #50, that the pointed ears of Richard and Wendy Pini's Elves are "something they may not have in common with Tolkien Elves, unless J.R.R.T.'s description of Hobbit ears as "only slightly pointed or 'elvish' " was not merely the use of a popular idea to help create a mental image." According to Christopher Tolkien, his father did conceive of Elves as having pointed ears:

My father said that 'some thought' that the ancient roots LAS- 'leaf' and LAS- 'listen' were connected -- for 'the Quendian ears were more pointed and leaf-shaped than human [ears]. I know of no other evidence.'

toff-hand; it probably exists.

It would be interesting to find out when this quote was written. I suspect it will turn up in a future volume of *The History of Middle-earth*, and perhaps we'll find out the date then.

This leads naturally into some other comments about *ML* #50. First of all, Glen, congrats to you on the 20th anniversary of the Mythopoeic Society and the 50th issue of *ML*. That the Society and its publications have managed to grow and endure over so long a period of time is truly commendable. The

Society became a very important part of my life over the last five years or so (no, it must be six years, at least). Many of the people I now list among my dearest friends are people I've met through the Society, its publications and Conferences.

My kudos go out to Bonnie for her magnificent color cover. I enjoyed seeing how many symbols I could guess before giving up and cheating with the key (and if you think I'm going to confess how I scored you've got another thing coming). She also deserves hearty thanks from all of us Society members for underwriting the additional cost involved in the color printing. Kudos to Paula as well for her equally beautiful back cover.

I enjoyed and appreciated Lawrence W. Cobb's remarks about my artwork in the *ML* #50 letters column. He had a few questions about my "Cat & Mouse (with Elven-minstrels)" which I'd like to answer. The Elven minstrels were intended as the Elves of Rivendell (part of the valley can be glimpsed out the window), but no specific scene or characters were intended. The cat was originally added as simply a background decoration, but with the addition of the mouse it became a bit of background drama as well -- Elves may prefer songs over food, but a cat's gotta eat. It also gave me an excuse to give the piece a



silly title. As for the Celtic style, that's just something I fall into now and then for the sake of variety.

Jorge Quinones

San Diego, CA

This letter is in regards to a boldly conspicuous error which Robert Foster includes in my edition of *The Complete Guide To Middle-Earth* (Ballantine: Fourth Printing: July 1984). On page 396, under the article title (third sentence) of "Orodreth", Mr. Foster states that "...Orodreth alone of the grandchildren of Fearon [sic]...." The obvious mistake is Orodreth is not the grandchild of Fearon.

According to the *Silmarillion*, the only known grandchild of Fearon was Celebrimbor (and to say that Orodreth was in any way related to the accursed House of Fearon is an outrage to one who is, in reality, of the House of Finarfin). The writer believes that actually what Mr. Foster was trying to say is "...Orodreth alone of the grandchildren of Finwe...." Orodreth's father was Finarfin, whose father was Finwe: thus, Orodreth is the grandchild of Finwe.

Foster's guide is a nearly unrivaled work of Tolkien scholarship, despite this small error.

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Vienna, VA

On the plane returning from Mythopoeic Conference XVIII, I read a book on the Early Church Fathers purchased at Marquette. What was my delight in finding the following two passages quoted from the Fathers, which I offer to the attention of students of *The Silmarillion* and in particular of the "Ainulindale". I would presume that J.R.R. Tolkien was familiar in outline if not in detail with the Fathers.

The first is from Clement of Alexandria:

[God] structured the universe into a melody and turned out the discordant sound of the elements into an ordered harmony, a harmony that would prevail through the whole.... The dissonance of the universe he mixed into a harmony. This deathless sing, the mainstay and harmony of the universe, stretching from the center to the extremities and thence to the center, has harmonized the whole....

The second, a short pendant to it, from Gregory of Nyssa:

There was a time when rational creation was a single chorus, intent upon the one leader of the chorus and moving and turning to that harmony of triumph which arose from him and which was according to the commandment.

On another topic, I am sorry to disagree with Edward Croft's article in *Mythlore* 50 on Charles Williams. But I think he has misread the paragraphs in the opening of *All Hallows' Eve* about lighted London which Lester sees; though it is quite possible of course that some degree of symbolism is intended. First of all, Williams does not say that "all the shutters and blinds... are missing" (Croft), but that "shutters and blinds and curtains had been removed or left undrawn" in the windows visible to Lester, surely a perfectly possible, non-surrealistic operation (except

of course for the observer's being dead).

"Those lights were the peace..." and the sentences following sound symbolic and poetic as so much of Williams' writing. But I am pretty sure that what they mean to say is simply that the war -- World War II -- has recently ended and the blackout regulations are no longer in force. Special, light-proof coverings had been necessary during the blackout, often ugly affairs that people would be anxious to remove. Compare the following, from Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings*, p. 199:

The war gradually drew to an end. Blackout curtains were removed and street lighting was switched on. "I actually went out to an Inklings on Thursday night and rode in almost peacetime light all the way to Magdalen for the first time in five years," Tolkien noted.

Folk of the Elder Days such as myself remember these things.



Mythopoeic Core Reading List

Mythlore frequently publishes articles that presuppose the reader is already familiar with the works they discuss. This is natural, given the special nature of *Mythlore*. In order to assist some readers, the following is what might be considered a "core" mythopoeic reading list, containing the most well known and discussed works. Due to the many editions printed, only the title and original date of publication are given. Good reading!

J.R.R. Tolkien

The Hobbit (1937); "Leaf by Niggle" (1945); "On Fairy-Stories" (1945); *The Lord of the Rings*: Vol. 1, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954); Vol. II, *The Two Towers* (1954); Vol. III, *The Return of the King* (1955); *The Silmarillion* (1977); *Unfinished Tales* (1980).

C.S. Lewis

Out of the Silent Planet (1938); *Perelandra* (1943); *The Hideous Strength* (1945); *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Horse and His Boy* (1954); *The Magician's Nephew* (1955); *The Last Battle* (1956); *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

Charles Williams

War in Heaven (1930); *Many Dimensions* (1931); *The Place of the Lion* (1931); *The Greater Trumps* (1932); *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933); *Descent into Hell* (1937); *All Hallows' Eve* (1945); *Taliessin through Logres* (1938); and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944) (printed together in 1954).