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Letters

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Letters

Authors

Grace E. Funk, Arden R. Smith, Deborah A. Oosterhouse, Manfred Zimmerman, Natalia Grigorieva, and Chris Seeman



LETTERS



Readers' Letters are an important form of feedback and exchange, an opportunity to comment on past issues and to raise questions for others' comments. Each letter that is printed extends the writer's subscription by an additional issue. **Please send your letters directly to the Editor:**

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Grace E. Funk

Lumby, B.C., Canada

It was with considerable surprise that I read in the review "Lengthening the Rope" by Pat Reynolds (*Mythlore* 64, page 44), the statement that William Mayne's *A Grass Rope* was "the story of a unicorn hunted by science, with the fairies' help escapes." Apart from the dubious syntax, it must be a very long time since Pat Reynolds read *A Grass Rope*, if indeed she ever read it at all. If the paper by Alison Lurie was about the fantasy of William Mayne (the statement is not quite clear on this point), then *A Grass Rope* was quite rightly not included. William Mayne has written several books about little bits of local history, little leftover bits of earlier building, or technology, or land, which are found or utilized by contemporary children. One of these is *Underground Alley*, another *The Twelve Dancers*, and another is *A Grass Rope*. The book is not a fantasy, it is a quite realistic story in which four school children rediscover the truth of a long-told local story about some lost dogs. The children discover an old hunting horn which had been built into an inn sign, learn about the oddities of local echoes, and how an old mine has an outlet in a swift little stream. There is no unicorn in the book, although there is a narwhale's tusk, and the only fairies are in the lively imagination of the youngest child.

I am surprised that a reviewer would let such a gross mis-remembering slip by.

Arden R. Smith

Berkeley, CA

I very much enjoyed Carl Hostetter's article on Earendil/Earendel in *Mythlore* 65, probably most of all because it combines my two favorite fields of study: Germanic philology and Elvish philology. I have a few things to add regarding Lombardic *Aurriuandulus*, the earliest recorded form of the name. Wilhelm Bruckner, in *Die Sprache der Langobarden* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1895), does not list various sources, listing instead *Aurriuandulu* and *Aurriuandalo* (p. 230). These both appear in a manuscript called the Codex Augiensis (circa A.D. 830), published in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Libri Confraternitatum Sancti Galli Augiensis Fabariensis*, edited by P. Piper (Berlin: Wiedmann, 1884). Unfortunately, this document does nothing to elucidate the myths behind the name, since the two occurrences of the name are here

merely entries in a long list of monk's names. Brucker also has his own theories on the meaning of the name, relating the first element to Old Indic *ushas* 'dawn' (p. 230) and the second to Old Saxon *wand* 'variable, various,' Old Norse *vandr* 'bad, evil,' and the name of the tribe of the Vandals (p. 318).

Deborah A. Oosterhouse

Grandville, MI

I was pleased to discover Issue 65 of *Mythlore* in the library of Grand Valley State University, which I attend as a major in English Secondary Education. I found the articles thoroughly interesting and informative. I also enjoyed the panel discussion on the influence of Tolkien, Lewis and Williams on American fantasy literature and the discussion with Ursula Le Guin about her recent book. Although I have never read anything by Charles Williams, I look forward to reading the books on your core reading list.

Manfred Zimmermann

Cincinnati, OH

Let me first express my appreciation of the continued high standard of *Mythlore*. I know it takes a lot of largely unseen work and effort.

I think we all must congratulate Patrick Wynne and Arden Smith on their discovery of an illustrated Early Modern German incunabula edition of *The Silmarillion*: *Das Silmarillion, die geschicht von den elbischen stayen silmarilli genant*, Nürnberg: Peter Wagner 1493 (cf. *Mythlore* 64, front cover and p. 20). Pat Wynne's reproduction of one of the woodcuts is certainly very impressive. It was obviously done by one of the best artists of the period.

However, while the text inside the banner is late 15th century East Franconian enough, it raises an interesting linguistic problem, which might tempt some people to question its authenticity:

The word "halpbruder" (Modern German "Halbbruder") is not attested in High German before the middle of the 17th century, and then only in Northern Germany on a Low German substrate — being, in fact, a loanword from Low German. It is unlikely that the word would have been in Nürnberg usage before the mid-18th century. The normal High German word was "Stiefbruder," which would probably have been spelled "stieffbruder" at the time (cf. English "stepbrother").

If a physical examination of the volume in question proved that it is genuine and not a hoax, we would have to conclude that the unknown translator was influenced by the language from which he translated (Quenya "per-toron"?). At any rate, we owe thanks to Pat Wynne and Arden Smith for drawing our attention to this interesting item of Elvish bibliography.

Natalia Grigorjeva

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Григорьевой Н.В

I am one of the "Moscow Hobbits" and I've been interested in the life and works of J.R.R. Tolkien for some years. It was a pleasure to learn about my magazine and the activities of The Mythopoeic Society. Is this the same as Humphrey Carpenter wrote about in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*? [Yes, it is — GG] I would be happy to communicate with others seriously interested in the philosophical, theological and esoteric aspects of the Inklings.

I am 28 years old and work as a programmer in the State Oceanographic Institute. The first reading of *The Lord of the Rings* enchanted me. Together with Vladimir Grushetskiy, I translated it into Russian in 1985, and three years later *The Silmarillion*. Our friend Alexander Nikolkaev illustrated them. Nearly a thousand typed or xerox copies of this amateur edition have been made to date. Now the state publishing house is undertaking publication, and I hope it will be printed this year.

My purpose is to introduce the Inklings to Russian readers because their ethics and philosophy seem to me important, especially in our country. The work of Tolkien and Lewis are known to me, but Charles Williams is unknown here. I've only seen two articles about him and the material in Carpenter's *The Inklings*. Could you help me find copies of his books?

Needless to say, I hope to take part in "The Long-Expected Party Mythopoeic Conference in Oxford, England in 1992.

[We give Natalia's full address here in these extraordinary times, to help open fuller communication between all of Mythlore's readers and this fascinating young lady. If you have any extra Inklings related books, especially by or about Williams, you might consider sending them to her. It is gratifying to learn more of yet new awakenings in the East. — GG]

Chris Seeman

Novato, CA

I am pleased that Glen GoodKnight chose to publish his editorial comment on "War and Priorities" in *Mythlore* 65 (pp. 4, 21). He is to be commended for venturing to broach this sensitive topic, written as it was before the conclusion of the U.S. military action in the Gulf. The presence of war and the intolerable evils it breeds and is implicated in rightly challenges our own daily pursuits and their "relevance" (or lack thereof); yet I found Glen's invocation of C.S. Lewis rather disturbing for reasons which I would like to elaborate. What follows is a brief comment regarding how I feel the experience of this particular war might have relevance for our study of mythopoeic literature.

Shortly before the war effort was launched, Bush sent out a letter to several American universities which was addressed to students such as myself - a kind of papal encyclical of the *Pax Americana*. In this letter we benighted youths were patronizingly instructed that our president's magisterial decision to make war was in fact an absolutely unambiguous act of good against evil - it was a mythical boon on behalf of the new cosmic order - and, consequently, we ought not to question the legitimacy of such deliberations as our misguided predecessors of the sixties did. A few days after the ground war had begun, Bush asserted that the specter of Viet Nam has been permanently washed clean on the sands of the desert - honor and purity have been restored to our nation through the mythical catharsis of human sacrifice upon the altar of the God of War. At a recent visit to West Point following the return home of American troops, Bush continued to valorize the soteriology of the Gulf War in the defence of "sacred values."

From start to finish, the Gulf War was a thoroughly mythical conflict: it was consciously engineered as such by the Bush administration, it was consciously produced as such by the "Superbowl-like" coverage it received from the media, and it has served a profoundly mythical function for our nation - that of redemption. Perhaps one of the most tragic, long-term consequences of the war (after the slaughter of a hundred thousand lives and the exacerbation of our national debt) has been the mythical effect of redemption. By adhering to the self-avowed CIA strategy of picking enemies who cannot possibly hope to triumph against the might of the U.S., the "victory" over oriental tyranny has mythically redeemed our government's more questionable actions of the past and present. The "Secret Government" does not even have to put up the pretense of being secret anymore because it has succeeded in publicly imbuing its mercenary values with a mythic aura of redemption. Given these aesthetically and politically effective productions of "the Gulf War experience" a kind of narrative has been created that might well be called mythopoeic.

While it is certainly true that there is a significant difference of urgency between killing Iraqis in Kuwait and sitting down to enjoy a reading of the Inklings, it is less clear to me that, given the highly mythopoeic dimensions of the Gulf War, it is adequate to characterize the study and discussion of myth as "such comparative trivialities as literature and art" and then to speak of war as a "distracted" from the pursuit of beauty. Beyond the fact that both realities *already* involve and invoke the discourse of the mythical, the kind of dichotomy between grim necessity and delightful contemplation which Lewis implicitly affirms as spontaneously "given" to human nature risks the danger of segregating off an idealized refuge of value and desire which can never be allowed to enter into the rest of our lives. The problem, however, is not so much how we are to "make" mythopoeic literature "relevant" to our

present situation (although this may form part of our possibilities, however banal it may sound; rather, the challenge that we face in such times of crisis is how our study and criticism of literature is to be made *answerable* to that situation.

By answerability I mean a recognition of the fact that, as a discourse, the mythopoeic is not a sublimely sealed off domain as Tolkien, Lewis and others would have it, but it is in fact *also* a constitutive element of the dystopic realities with which we are today confronted. To be "answerable" to this fact does not simply mean disclaiming something like the ideology of Bush's neocolonialism as the "misuse" of an otherwise pure mythopoeic realm of affectivity (although it may very well include such a denunciation). As a discourse and an experience, the mythical is not necessarily automatically predisposed to emancipatory consequences; on the contrary, it is impossible to fully appreciate a mythopoeic aesthetic without appreciating its insertion into a particular aesthetic ideology as an integral condition of its existence. It is only when this dimension of the texts which we take as *our* proper focus as a society is made a conscious part of our study and discussion, that a basis for the critique of such non-literary appropriations of mythical narrative will be at all convincing (to ourselves as well as to others) as a "relevant" priority.

(Your comments are quite tangential to the point of the editorial, which was that war makes the awareness of mortality as unavoidable, and asks what is the value of learning when death may be so near? I would recommend you read Lewis' essay "Learning in Wartime" in its entirety, as you have misunderstood his purpose as well — although this may come from the short quotations taken from it. The editorial took no political position on the war, because Mythlore is not meant to be a political journal. I leave others to comment on the points of your letter, particularly those on Tolkien and Lewis. —GG)

Notes to "Fantasy Characterization," pp. 37-41

1. Like the study of literature generally, the study of fantasy has mushroomed during our time: so much so that there is not even room here for an accurate summary of the variety of theories and positions. Those interested in the subject may consult Lynette Hunter, *Modern Allegory and Fantasy: Rhetorical Stances of Contemporary Writing* (New York, 1989). While her prose is forbidding, her overview of the subject is thorough.
2. Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, ed. Edith J. Morley (London, 1911), p. 138.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston, 1984), p. 139.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 148. The other satisfactions of fantasy, named in this same passage, are Recovery and Consolation.
7. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York, 1986), p. 42.
8. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Hawthorne's Works: The House of the Seven Gables* (Boston, 1900), p. xxi.
9. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*, p. 116.
10. T.A. Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth*. (Boston, 1983), p. 104.
11. The irony is all the greater since Shippey is responding to critics who deny moral depth, complexity, or significance in Tolkien's works. The

lapse, however, is uncharacteristic, and I should add that Shippey does a superb job of showing the many sides of Tolkien's complex view of evil.

12. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*. p. 153.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
14. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings I*, "Lothlorien." I shall identify subsequent quotations from *The Lord of the Rings* parenthetically within the text. Because of the large number of editions readers may be using, I shall not cite pages but only book numbers and chapter titles.
15. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*. p. 153.
16. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*. p. 113.
17. Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Boston, 1981), pp. 106-107.

Works Cited for "The Now of Salvation," pp. 42-43.

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- Williams, Charles. "Et In Sepulcrum Pereant." in *Visions of Wander: An Anthology of Christian Fantasy*, ed. Robert Boyer and Kenneth J. Zahorski. New York, 1981.
- . *The Image of the City*, ed. Ann Ridler. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

◊ IN MEMORIUM ◊

Taum Santoski, scholar, linguist, advisor to *Mythlore*, died in the morning of August 19th. I regret that I did not know him better. Our love of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien brought us together eight summers ago and bound us in friendship. But we saw each other rarely, heedless, as only the young can be, of speeding time. We did not have the grace of Lórien, and in these mortal lands the cup of our parting was drunk much too soon.

Taum was not as well known in Tolkien studies as he deserved. This was his way: smiling and good-natured among friends, as a scholar he was quiet and unassuming, even timid. In fact, he was one of the foremost authorities on Tolkien's manuscripts, having studied the Marquette papers at length. Careful readers will have seen his name acknowledged by Christopher Tolkien in *The History of Middle-earth*. He was an expert on J.R.R. Tolkien's difficult handwriting, as well as on his texts, his invented languages, and his art.

At his death from cancer Taum left unfinished a number of Tolkien-related projects, most important among them an authorized history of the writing of *The Hobbit*. Others now will carry on his work, honoring the memory of their friend. We hope that Taum will approve our efforts, wherever he may be beyond the circles of the world.

— Wayne Hammond

Chad Walsh, poet and literary critic, died on 16 January 1991. Born on 10 May 1914, he was the first person to write a book on C.S. Lewis in 1949: *C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Sceptics*. His interest in Lewis continued, and in 1979 he wrote *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis*. Walsh taught for 32 years at Beloit College.