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Isolated But Not Alone

Glen GoodKnight

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Isolated But Not Alone

In This Issue

In this issue, we have an article demonstrating parallels between the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. The article is from Bonniejean Christensen, who is currently on leave from her position as a Professor of English at the University of North Dakota, teaching medieval studies in Sarasota, Florida. She is serving as Curate at St. Wilfred's Episcopal Church in Sarasota.

Carla Faust Jones gives us an article describing a computer analysis of "The Dark Tower." She is a full-time technical writer with an engineering firm, as well as working on a graduate degree at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communication. She is a long-time admirer of C.S. Lewis, and in 1978 had the pleasure of visiting Oxford, England. Her article will be of special interest to those who have read Kathryn Lindskoog's new book *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* (which is reviewed in this issue.)

We also have another insightful paper on Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey from Nancy-Lou Patterson. Her scholarship is once again ornamented by her own artwork.

Among the other offerings we have for you are an article on Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, a consideration of Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring*, and a comparison of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and De La Mare's *The Three Mulgars*. Also Angelee Anderson gives us an article on Charles Williams' concept of The City.

The front cover is by Paula DiSante. She is a native of Michigan and a graduate of the University of Michigan.

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An advertising rate sheet is available on request.

She is currently enrolled at the USC Film School in Los Angeles, California. The back cover is by Tom Loback whose distinctive style is a pleasing addition to the art that appears in *Mythlore*.

— Sarah Beach

EDITORIAL

Isolated But Not Alone

My sincere personal thank you goes to all of you who took the time and responded to the Members' and *Mythlore* Questionnaire that was sent out with the last issue. If you haven't yet responded, I urge you to do so as soon as possible, so your feelings and responses can be counted with the others.

It seems that for the majority of Mythopoeic Society members, *Mythlore* is their sole contact with the Society. How I wish more of you would overcome your initial hesitancy -- there are many reasons: time, traveling distance, on-going commitments, inertia -- and come to the annual Mythopoeic Conferences (see pages 66 and 67). Those who have, have found what originally seemed like an effort, before attending, to be a richly rewarding pleasure. Some have and will discover this pleasure, but some will not. Having no Discussion Group in their area, this journal is for most their only contact with others who share our special interests. This is a responsibility I take seriously. *Mythlore* seems very well liked by those who have responded, and the recent improvements are noted and appreciated. There were not many suggestions for improvement. Some conflicted with others -- example: more Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams (TLW); more non-TLW. Both these desires cannot be mutually fulfilled -- even overlooking for the moment the purpose of this journal. Other suggestions will be seriously considered, and gone into further, along with a report on Questionnaire results, in the next issue.

I'm thinking especially of those of you for which *Mythlore* is your only contact with the Society, and may feel isolated from the rest of the members and readers. I understand this feeling very well; it led to the founding of the Society in 1967. Whether we are involved locally with others who share the Society's interests or not, we all have the pleasure and satisfaction of having read and being able to read mythopoeic literature, and knowing we're not alone in this. We are united with others in many places through our shared love of the literature. For this sole reason, many of you have expressed your appreciation of the existence of the Society and *Mythlore*.

To provide greater facility in communicating needs and wants, we are experimenting with Classified Ads in this issue -- see page 10. The desire for this has been expressed before, and if there is a reasonable response, we will continue this feature. *(continued on page 21)*

carries out the same theme; to him good art is a product of "common observation and plain understanding" (p. 28), an ability to pierce the veil of illusion and see the facts for what they are. So it is that, when under Simon's spell, Richard thinks of Jonathan's painting with revulsion. "Art, he thought, should be persuasive." (p. 99) As Simon is persuasive, he might have added. To Williams, proper persuasion consists in speaking what is true, and leaving Truth to speak for Himself.

That is why, for this reader, Williams' vision of the Kingdom as expressed in his art is so persuasive and powerful. T. S. Eliot has said that most religious poetry is bad poetry because it expresses what the poet thinks he ought to feel and not what he feels in fact.¹⁶ There is none of this dishonesty in Williams. His paints no portrait of perpetual happiness as the earth counts happiness for the community of Christ's saints; being one of their number, he speaks from experience of the joy of co-inherence but also of the sacrifice it requires, of the delight of contemplating the King's beauty in all He has made but also of the necessity of refusing one's whole heart to any lesser beauty than His. With common observation and plain understanding he records his glimpses of the splendour of heaven, and shows us plainly that all ways which lead there run past the Cross. Thus when Williams tells us of the nature of the love for which the Kingdom's citizens are destined, we know that he speaks as one who has counted the cost and found it worth the exchange. On his witness, we can believe that the very horror of the wilderness is a shadow cast by the Glory of the City, that the fearful eve of All Hallows is a herald of the never-dimming Day of the Church Triumphant. With him and all saints we may earnestly pray, "Thy Kingdom come . . . in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6.10)

Endnotes

¹ Glen Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. viii.

² C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*, (1944; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 214-220.

³ See Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps*, (1932; rpt. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 94-96.

⁴ Charles Williams, *All Hallows' Eve*, (1948; rpt. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), p. 189. Hereafter cited in text.

⁵ Cavaliero, p. 143.

⁶ Charles Williams, *Descent into Hell*, (1937; rpt. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 91-112.

⁷ See *Descent*, p. 98.

⁸ C. S. Lewis, "Williams and the Arthurian", in *Talisman Through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars, and Arthurian Torso*, (Oxford University Press, 1948; rpt. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 335.

⁹ See C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1936; rpt. 1977), pp. 322-323.

¹⁰ "Arthurian", p. 335.

¹¹ Preface, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, (Oxford University Press, 1947; rpt. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. vi.

¹² Charles Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven*, (London, 1938); quoted by Dorothy L. Sayers, "Dante and Charles Williams", in *The Whimsical Christian*, (1963; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 191.

¹³ *Heaven*, quoted by Cavaliero, p. 132.

¹⁴ Charles Williams, "John Milton", in *The Image of the City*, (London:

Oxford University Press, 1958); quoted by Cavaliero, p. 130.

¹⁵ Dante, Canto III, v. 6, in *The Inferno*, trans. John Ciardi, (New York: Mentor, 1954), p. 42.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Axis: The Newsletter for Christian Writers and Artists of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Santa Ana, CA), 1, (Summer 1985), 26.

Editorial — continued from page 3

Assumptions may build up and accumulate that can be half-truths exaggerated beyond recognition or simply untrue. Some examples are: Mythopoeic Conferences are almost always held in California; most members are in California (see *Mythlore* 50, page 26); Southern California is a "hot bed" of activities, and where everything seems to happen. Actually, all of the above are mistaken assumptions that have not been even half-true for many years.

Several people asked why the Society doesn't hold a Mythopoeic Conference on the East Coast? There was also the implication, by some, that these Conferences are held only in California. In fact, Reno, Nevada was the location of the 1980 Conference; Wheaton, Illinois was the site of the 1985 Conference; Milwaukee, Wisconsin was the site of the 1987 Conference; and the 1989 Conference (see page 67) will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and at least two future ones are planned out of California (and will be announced soon). There is a reason for the success for every Mythopoeic Conference: a group of dedicated people in an area who form a Committee to do the indispensable work of organization and logistics necessary for a Conference to take place. The Society would be delighted to hold a Conference in the East Coast region, and I wait for that day. But many aspects of a Conference cannot be organized or managed outside the proposed area. *They can only be done by a local Committee.* The Society can do many things for the Conference, and it has each year. One of the things that is very helpful is the *Guidelines for Prospective Committees of Mythopoeic Conferences*. Copies are free on request from The Secretary for Mythopoeic Conferences, Christine Lowentroun, 1017 Seal Way, Seal Beach, CA 90704. I hope a number of people will write for these Guidelines. Christine is very helpful in giving suggestions and practical ideas for prospective Conferences. I hope we will see future Conferences in many parts of this and other nations.

If anyone might have thought I appeared critical of the Council of Stewards in my last editorial, I apologize for giving that impression. The Council is currently composed of ten distinctly different people, and as might well be expected, do not agree at all times. Notwithstanding, it is a hard working body, and shows teamwork, cooperation, and dedication in many ways.

Sarah Beach has served for more than four years as Society Treasurer, a technical and demanding service. She wishes to step down, but is willing to serve until a new Treasurer is found. Those interested in this important position should contact the Council of Stewards for details. (Christine Lowentroun is the 1989 Chairman.)

— Glen GoodKnight