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## Letters to the Editor

Lloyd Alexander

Bonniejean Christensen

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## Online Summer Seminar 2023

August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

<https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2023.htm>



## Letters to the Editor

Camelot, Lancelot  
Arthur and Guenevere  
Regally married in  
Their Middle Age:

Carbonek, Camelot!  
Lancelot and Guenevere:  
The Knight serving loyally,  
Purely, his Queen;

A ménage à trois that's so  
Courtly adulterous  
Must quickly progress to a  
More dreaded stage.

But they were latently  
Heterosexual,  
A circumstance checked when  
Her mate intervened.

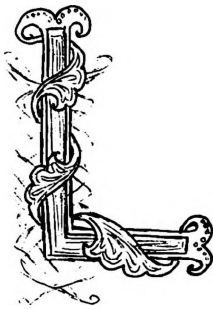
RCW

RCW

Finally, finally!  
Our gentle readers have  
Made it unscathed to  
The end of our verse.

Let critics recall that there  
Not inconceivably  
Could have been more and they  
Could have been worse.

DH



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lloyd Alexander  
16 January 1969

Dear Richard West:

ORCRIST NO. 11 just came, and I was delighted and altogether impressed by the whole publication. Many thanks for sending it. I've read it not only with great interest but with real enjoyment.

From my own point of view, you can imagine I was especially pleased at being included among "The Tolkienians." That, in itself, must be the greatest compliment anyone writing in the genre could hope for. The Lord of the Rings, in my opinion, is one of the greatest masterpieces of literature. The best glimpse I had of his genius was when I came on some texts that Tolkien had probably read (or something very like them) and saw how he had so superbly transmuted the material. He must be simultaneously the inspiration and the despair of anyone attempting a heroic romance.

What especially tickled me in your article was your pointing out the details of some of the episodes in The Mabinogion and showing how they came to work their way (mixed up in bits and pieces) into the five books of Prydain. (By the way, I used Lady Charlotte Guest's translation, the Everyman edition, with the footnotes which were as useful as the text itself.)

Here's an added detail that might interest you: Prince Rhun, in The Castle of Llyr, resulted from a phrase in the "Taliesin" chapter of The Mabinogion, "Now Rhun was the most graceless man in the world..." In the text, of course, he's graceless in a very brutal sense. But it started me thinking of Rhun as a feckless, goodhearted, accident-prone blunderer.

Another interesting point: you were absolutely and brilliantly on target when you saw that the personality of Efnisien was absorbed into the character of Prince Ellidyr, in The Black Cauldron; so, in exchange, I'll reveal that a good bit of the personality of King Bran went into the making of King Smoit!

I'd better stop, or this letter may go on indefinitely. Writing the Prydain chronicles has been, for me, a very personal sort of joy; over these past few years, the books have come to mean a great deal to me, and it's a pleasure to know that you've read them and enjoyed them.



Bonniejean Christensen  
December 3, 1968

Dear Mr. West,

I'm pleased my references are of use to you. I'm afraid there's no simple answer, like a bibliography you don't know about. I just seem to have a knack for finding things when I'm interested in a subject. I have a number of items, secondary sources, which are not in Or crist #1 or #2. I don't have the time right now to send them--because I don't have the time to sort them out and type them--but I will send you the bibliography for my dissertation when I get it typed, God willing, before Christmas. [Mrs. Christensen's checklist does not entirely overlap with mine and we agreed it should be published. It has been accepted by Bulletin of Bibliography and will appear in the near future. -- RCW]

Odd bibliographical problems plague me, as they do you, and I hope the "Supplement to the MLA Style Sheet," which my husband prepared some years ago for USC, will help you, as it does me. He eliminated Roman numerals in favor of the Arabic numbers in the earlier editions, but while he was on Sabbatical his committee reinstated them, to his chagrin. I like your method of supplying both.

The article by Karen Winter employs a valid folkloristic method of comparison, but the force of her argument is reduced by her lack of information and lack of judgment on perhaps peripheral issues, but issues that indicate a lack of maturity and depth on her part, and consequently make the reader wary of accepting her evaluation. For instance, her incredible misreading of "those monsters / Born of Cain" to indicate that the monsters are "of the same descent from Adam as Beowulf or any other human being" (p. 28), or her interpreting the marriage of Hrothgar's daughter to Ingeld as a symbolic assurance of fertility, when it actually brought destruction, seem no more than willful perversion of the material to prove a point. It is on a par with her placing the marriage at the end of Beowulf (p. 34) to force it to conform to the sequence of a marriage in Perelandra or The Return of the King. She has a mould into which she is going to contort the material, and the pity of it is, she would have a better case if she made a comparison of the actual works, showing how each conforms to or departs from the archetype. After all, the important thing is not to show that an author does use an archetype, but how he uses it.

The dreadful book by William Ready is beginning to receive notice, and some of it is not unfavorable. Do you want me to write a critical review of it? I use the word "critical" in its proper literary context, but the review would be condemnatory. JRRT had hoped the book would disappear if it were ignored, but I'm afraid it's not being ignored. [I jumped at the suggestion, and Mrs. Christensen's perceptive and trenchant review appears in this issue. -- RCW]