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A Word from Mistress Ellwood

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Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward

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A Word from Mistress Ellwood

Additional Keywords

Thadara Ottobris

of ancient and modern Gnosticism are the same; the same emphasis on esoteric teaching and secrecy (which the modern Gnostics in *The Place of the Lion* received from Mr. Berringer), the same emphasis on special writings. Yet, we must note that there is a vast difference between some of these modern Gnostics: some, like Mr. Richardson, and eventually Anthony and Damaris Tighe, turn out to possess a true *gnosis*, while others like Mr. Foster and Dora Wilmot turn out to be under the power of *daimonia*, who destroy them.

¹ i.e. the Epistles to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Romans, Trallians, Philadelphians, Smyrnaens, and to Polycarp.

² L.W. Barnard "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch" *Vigiliae Christianae* 17 (1963) pp. 193-206.

³ The denial of the bodily reality of Jesus Christ is called Docetism. See St. Ignatius' attack on this heresy in *Magnesians XI*.



A WORD FROM MISTRESS ELLWOOD

My name is Gracia Fay Ellwood, and I am the new editor of *Mythlore*.

Introducing oneself calls for a sorting out of the different dimensions of one's personality. People tend to define themselves primarily by what they do ("I am a writer") or by relationships ("I am a mother.") It is also possible, though less neat, to define oneself by one's major preoccupations. Going this route, I would say that what I think about most is the Great Adventure, and that it is the point of unification for almost everything else that interests me.

The Great Adventure: a heroic figure encounters dangers, evils, mysterious events; struggles desperately with them and is almost bested, but ultimately wins handsomely.

The forms of the Adventure that I encountered first were chiefly from the Bible, and involved the heroes' entering the belly of a fish, or a pit or prison or cave, all images closely analogous to the womb, so that rebirth still is to me the most basic image of what takes place in the Happy Ending.

As a feminist I also find my deepest spring in the Adventure, centering in God as giver of new birth, as ultimate mother.

I am also interested in psychical research, particularly retrocognition. This relates to the Adventure in several ways. The tales that I most enjoy involve other worlds, with marvels and wonders sometimes analogous to those I study as a parapsychologist. Both in fiction and history, then, I love the boundary where worlds meet. Secondly, it has been observed that persons who have had especially gruelling ordeals and vivid experiences of rebirth often emerge with supernormal powers. Thirdly, instances of retrocognition (i.e. visions of past events) frequently involve symbols of the Return to the Womb, but seldom do they include the Happy Ending; it is as though the Adventure were arrested in mid-course. In Williams' *Descent Into Hell* the visionary Pauline offers resolution and rebirth to a beleaguered hero, but seldom in real life have visionaries thought to do so.

Then there is psychiC kinship, the sort of

thing that causes people to think "I have been here before" at a first visit, or "You have been mine before" at a first meeting. I am intrigued by the possibility that the co-inherence of these "families," spread out over space and time, may be the means whereby apparent defeats of justice find their resolutions, and one person's rebirth may be shared by many.

All this interest in adventure does not mean that my daily life contains much of it at present, which is fine with me. Adventures are nasty disturbing uncomfortable things that make you late for dinner.

My personal predilections are not necessarily to be taken as indicators for the direction of *Mythlore* from now on. *Mythlore* will continue to print articles dealing with many aspects of myth and fantasy, together with poetry and artwork. Hopefully the letter column will be lively with new insights, agreement and disagreement. (Letters not printed, or substantially edited, will be answered personally.)

* * *

A problem arises occasionally in the matter of addressing female correspondents. Some women object to "Mrs." or "Miss" because they reject the idea that they are to be publicly defined by their relationship, or absence thereof, to a man. Because our culture has long penalized single women, and because I don't want anyone to hurt like that, I have favored the use of "Ms." Others, however, dislike "Ms;" they are uncomfortable with its associations, or (as Evangeline Walton charmingly put it) "It makes me feel too much like a manuscript."

Unfortunately, unless people indicate how they want to be addressed, I can't tell which to use. It occurred to me to go back, in such cases, to the term for which "Mrs.," "Miss" and "Ms." were all once abbreviations, namely, "Mistress." Of course the word has acquired a negative meaning since then, but not as a title; and it has a pleasantly archaic feel to it.

* * *

May all your Adventures have Happy Endings. *Gracia*

