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## Letters

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# LETTERS

Thomas M. Egan

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I am a newcomer to MYTHLORE as reader and contributor, but its contents in issues number 24 and 25 are enormously varied and well written. There is literally too much to comment on. A feast for the eyes and mind!

But first off, I wish to commend your art efforts. Annette Harper is always magnificent in her depictions of fantastic beings. However, her cover treatment of MYTHLORE #24 has serious flaws. Her Legolas figure in total shadow is wonderfully done. The Elf figure has the feel and shape of manly beauty and dignity while leaving exact features to our imagination. The dwarf Gimli is rapt with adoration, and not at all a cloying Disneyesque cartoon-figure. His innocence and good proportions testify to Annette Harper's love of Tolkien and her ability to catch a mood-scene of High Fantasy.

Yet regrettably, her Galadriel irritates the mind and eye. The elf-queen seems like a flirtatious mistress of the house who has set her mind on overwhelming poor Gimli. Her neck is too long, her facial features seem too sharp, too clever. A great drawing marred. I wish Galadriel would be shown as a figure with more compassion (her hands brushing her hair adds to the supercilious attitude she portrays).



Pauline Baynes' drawings in both MYTHLORE #24 and #25 are superb. Her evocation of evil in Middle-earth (back cover, #24) catches the anarchic "spirit" of Hell, while her devil-prince figure in the cover of MYTHLORE #25 catches the reader's interest and surprise as he contrasts this central-figure with the idyllic scene of background material. I enjoyed Nancy-Lou Patterson's article of appreciation on Miss Baynes' background and artistic techniques. Stylized convention seems more in keeping with the imagination of High Fantasy than naturalism. The latter tends to seal off our imagination (except when it's very well-done). Too many covers for Ballantine Books' fantasy series have suffered from a stiff confining naturalism (eg. Brothers Hildebrandt and Darrell Sweet all too often), instead of the intriguing hints of what *might* be (eg. Robert Lo Grippo, Gervasio Gallardo, etc.). Look at the worst efforts of the Tolkien Calendars from Ballantine from 1975 to 1980. Naturalism tends too easily to fall into "sticky" sentimentality. There are exceptions of course, and Miss Pauline Baynes is among the best of these.

Stephen Peregrine's heavy brushwork in his drawing of a Dwarf King on page 25 of issue #25 is a fine piece. It catches the pride, fierceness and yet possessiveness of the Dwarf race. Edith Crowe is another good artist with her intriguing illo as man the ever-pilgrim of life shows (p. 16). Diversity of styles is one of the strengths of MYTHLORE's art efforts.

The articles are all finely done as they touch a whole variety of areas in fantasy and "real-life". I am appreciative of Thomas Gray's reminder of how bureaucracy has become a cliché for evil government (issue 24), although Tolkien himself was a high critic of the Welfare-State of Britain and the West. Everything depends on the degree of governmental machinery. Some bureaucracy is always a necessity. Look at MYTHLORE itself — a little bureaucracy of departments and features.

To Glen Goodknight, thanks indeed for that short piece on Owen Barfield re The Inklings. Perhaps some of his verse could be reproduced in the future issues of MYTHLORE?

Nancy-Lou Patterson's research in odd corners of the occult and ancient-medieval lore is most impressive. Her "Host of Heaven" article on C. S. Lewis' imagery (MYTHLORE 25) is overawesome in its detail of astrology-history and the role of the ancient gods in people's lives. Yet we should not forget one central fact in their use by modern Christian authors. The gods represent only a contingent "order of being" in the universe.

The gods — all of them — were in pagan mythologies (from the Amerindian Popul Vuh to the Hindu Vedas) all created from chaos — they sprang from the basic dislocation of the cosmos. They give a channel to order, yet they have no true sense of hierarchy which medieval Christendom valued so much. They always fight each other in the pagan mythologies. Their functions clash one with the other. There is no central Being who can channel them as creative spirits. The love of Venus/Aphrodite is powerful but it is easily corrupted by jealousy and lust. Check your basic Thomas Bullfinch on these deities. The history of the fertility cults is well-known, and human dignity was not enhanced by them in any culture, or so I believe. Only in a particularly well-developed Christian culture could they be used with "safety" (eg. Michelangelo's art of the Sistine Chapel; popular festivals baptized by the medieval Church, etc.).

So I ask Nancy-Lou Patterson to remember the actual history of these gods' cults. Don't make them too important on their own. Tolkien adapted their functions in The Silmarillion to make them "Valar" from the angelic beings of

the Aimur. They had many of the Nature aspects/functions of Life, but grafted on to a Christian-Natural Law philosophy with a Creator-God guiding them. Tolkien could thus intimate in The Valaquenta that human cultures corrupted the functions of these earth-angels, and then made them (given human selfishness) very corrupt gods.

Well, 'nuff said. Your issues are fantastic. Robert Morse is another good speculative writer for analogies of Classical thought (Plato and Cicero no less) to Middle-earth and the Ring of Power.

I don't know if Lord Dunsany was all that friendly to the Christian priesthood. I get the impression of a disdainful attitude, despite what Darrell Schweitzer says.

Best wishes to all. Till Middle-earth rises again. I'm glad to be a part of MYTHLORE.

Mary Ann Hodge

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I am compiling a Middle-earth cookbook and I would like to invite MYTHLORE's readers to submit recipes for the dishes that appear in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. Anyone whose recipe is accepted will receive a free copy of the book when it is printed. Those who wish to contribute should include a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of their recipe and a note telling me its origin.

I'd also like to ask the Society's Group Mind if the cramsome bread mentioned in the poem "Perry the Winkle" is real or just something Tolkien made up to fit the meter.

Benjamin Urrutia

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It has been brought to my attention by Dr. Rhona Beare that Professor Tolkien patterned the Numenoreans after the Egyptians. Considering the similarities between the Realms in Exile on the one hand, and Judah and Israel on the other, then the journey of the Faithful from the down-fallen island to Middle-earth seems to be parallel to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (on 1666 BC according to Thrasylus of Mendes), but with two important differences: 1) the journey of Elendil and his sons was by sea, not land. 2) It was from an originally blessed land that had been defiled. In these two respects, it is more like the journey of Lehi and his sons in the Book of Mormon than like that in the Book of Exodus.

In my letter in Mythlore 24 I made two mistakes: I said that succession in the northern kingdom of Israel was "mostly by assassination" - but there were 19 kings of that realm, whereof those slain by their successors were seven, which is not a majority. I should have said "often" - not "mostly". Also, when discussing the relationship between Hebrew and Khuzdul, I should have said "syntax" instead of "grammar" - since morphology is part of grammar also.

Errare humanum est, as I always say. And as the Romans used to say, Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus (even good old Homer dozes off now and then). And a writer even greater than Homer, J. R. R. Tolkien, also makes mistakes, if that is any consolation to the rest of us. Exempli gratia: Those who have read the first edition of The Hobbit will recall that, at a certain point, a justifiably impatient Bilbo says, "Well, what about your gift?" When Professor Tolkien found out what had really happened in that grotto, he changed the sentence to, "Well, what about your guess?" But this is psychologically impossible. In such circumstances, would you encourage Gollum to try again? What Mr. Baggins said at this point was actually: "Well, what about showing me the way out now?"

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In keeping with journal practice, in future issues the full address of letter writers will be included if requested in the letter.

# MATTERS OF GRAVE IMPORT

GRACIA FAY ELLWOOD

## INTEND TO HAVE JOY

Many persons of a mythopoeic bent had unhappy childhoods in which they were misunderstood or unwanted by family members, rejected by classmates. Such experiences tend to create an outlook in which the primary world is a grim place where one has the choice of fight, flight or defeat. This attitude is likely to be reinforced in sensitive people troubled by the pain of others besides themselves.

For someone who has felt this way for years, the coming of happiness may actually create problems. The first reaction is "It can't be real" "It won't last." But if it does, one has to rethink one's stance. Suppose that, amazing as it may seem, I am now devotedly loved and achieving something of what I always wanted to achieve, while horror and meaninglessness and despair go on as usual in the rest of the world. Is it appropriate for me to enjoy my little happy space?

Charles Williams has Pauline face this question in Descent Into Hell. Pauline had enjoyed the dress rehearsal for their play until she remembered that John Struther had been burned at the stake in that very same place. "How can we be happy, unless we forget?...how can we dare forget?"

I faced Pauline's question recently when I went from a science fiction convention to visit a friend. I had been floating about in costume, enjoying others' costumes and displays and sharing my enthusiasm for The Empire Strikes Back with like-minded friends. I entered a home full of pain, where the long nightmares of agonized childhoods, never completely dissipated, threatened to take over and turn the household into a Dark Island.

A maxim from the Book of Proverbs advises us not to sing songs to a heavy heart. Its meaning is clear enough; I must not remain insulated in my own space, chattering away oblivious of another's pain. But there is a sense in which one does sing songs to a heavy heart. Happiness that had its immediate source in something as apparently frivolous as a costume event can be translated into embraces and loving, hopeful words; and, amazingly, blessedly, it can go some ways toward healing ancient wounds. One need not be ashamed of a small private income of joy.

People who are in mutual pain can even offer joy to one another, as I found recently when I was bereaved of a friend who was also my sister. In a time of tears and desolate night awakenings my relatives and I clung together, savoring one another's company; and, often, we laughed. Perhaps that is the other side of the region where tears and laughter flow together.

At one point I felt a strong need to release tension in physical action. I thought about Zorba the Greek, who danced after the death of the young widow. At the time I had found that intolerable; but now I felt I understood. So after apologizing to my aunt and younger sister, who said they understood too, I did a little Rumanian folk dance called Alunelu, marked by much stamping.

I did not have the music. But I intended joy.