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## Dear Mistress Ellwood

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Dear Mistress Ellwood

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### Authors

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# DEAR MISTRESS ELLWOOD

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I have "traveled in the realms of gold", a line, of course, from a poem of old. (Who quipped: "A pretty thing well said, It's nice to keep it in your head"?) But it flashed into my mind last eve as from my work I took glad leave to reach the *Mythlore* I found at my door, (ignoring the dishes, the dust on the floor, the letters unwritten, the pots that weren't gleaming, the silver all tarnished, the foods that weren't steaming). I strolled through the articles, lingering a while to admire a picture or a poem's quaint style.

Though the niggardly muse has denied me the light I can drink in with joy what others may write... Though this daughter of Eve births not a fresh thought, I can freely rejoice in what others have wrought. It is a great blessing... I cannot disdain, and I'm thankful for those who with exquisite pain have brought forth this *Mythlore*, this hour of delight, that lets my cribbed mind like a skylark take flight.

John Canaday

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I would... like to congratulate you on a highly successful first issue; the layout and contents were superb. If the members of the Mythopoeic Society can continue to look forward to publications of this caliber they will be fortunate indeed. Thank you for a most enjoyable read, and I wish you luck in the future.

David T. Nethery

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Well, well, the much publicized "moving paintings" have hit the screen and basically I would say that I was disappointed by Ralph Bakshi's attempt to film *LotR*. I've read all the letters and reviews in #19 and I agree very much with Dale Ziegler that lack of attention to detail and pronunciation, along with the constant switching of animation/rotoscoping techniques and very amateur actors (the rotoscoped actors, not the voices) all contributed to the less-than-satisfactory-kind-of-just-plain-bad tone of the film. Now on the other hand let's first consider that none of us knows what kind of pressure United Artists put on Bakshi to get the film completed and into the theatre. I have feeling that the reason this film failed to get it all together is because director Bakshi is not on familiar territory. "The Lord of the Rings" is not "Heavy Traffic" or even "Wizards" so while Bakshi succeeds in other films he falls short in this one.

Now while on the subject, who out there has seen the film adaptation of "Watership Down"? I don't know about anyone else but I loved it. Somehow or another Watership worked. Several parts were changed from the book but it was very well acted and superbly drawn in classic animation style that had a rich, flowing feel to it that I missed in "Lord of the Rings." So now all this brings us down to the question of a remake. On pg. 26 of #19 Margaret Purdy asks for volunteers to give it a try and so I hereby accept the task of bringing The Lord of the Rings to the screen. Actually I had started before Bakshi's film was announced but I shelved the script to wait and see what Bakshi's was like and now I've started again. Any suggestions? Send them all, I'll welcome any help. Are there any Society members in the animation biz? I'd like to hear from you. Elen sila lumenn omentielvo!

I meant to write a review of the animated *Lion, Witch and Wardrobe*, but it turns out that I don't have enough criticisms to make a review. It followed the book with exemplary fidelity, and I am satisfied with most of the images presented. My only big complaint is about Tumnus. To me he didn't look like a faun; more like a cereal-commercial leprechaun. Also, the Witch could have looked more beautiful as opposed to bizarre — maybe more like the Queen in *Snow White* (whom Lewis admired). The Professor was just right. (But why didn't he say, "What do they teach at these schools?" — my favorite line out of the whole series!)

The articles on Williams are inspiring. I have read three of his novels and understood nothing, except the greater part of *All Hallows Eve*. Now I have bought the paperback *Taleissin/Arthurian Torso* and shall try again to penetrate the mystery.

I didn't hate *Lord of the Rings* (animated) as much as everyone else did. Maybe that is because I simply don't know enough about the art of film! I thought Frodo & Gollum were perfectly realized. As for the clarity of the exposition, I can't fairly judge it because I missed the first 5 minutes of the movie. I always understood what was what — but how much of that resulted from having read the books, who knows?

The Ringwraiths were beyond expectation in their terribleness, and I was impressed by the "evil" scenery. (Not so impressed by the pictures of places like Rivendell.) In general I agree with the flaws pointed out by others, however. Especially the jarring use of "live animation" and the length of the battle scenes; I find battle scenes supremely boring anyhow, and I'd have been content with 30 seconds of it. Also, I thought the movie ended at a very unsuitable moment in the story. (And that unbelievably grotesque end!)

I don't see the dangers others see, of corrupting the imaginations of those new to Tolkien (at least, not to a grave degree). The non-readers will never read the book anyway. Reading types will be drawn to read the book out of curiosity, and Tolkien will do his work on them.

I enjoy the thought-provoking essay on "Children, Magic, and Choices."

Curiously, the book of Susan Cooper's that the author liked most, *Greenwitch*, was the one I liked least. Can't say exactly why. While I don't find the series entirely satisfactory, I was enraptured by the menace and the "dark backward & abysm of time" in *The Dark is Rising* and *The Gray King*. The betrayal and final salvation of the Walker, in the former book, I did find deeply moving. In the last book, *Silver on the Tree*, I was strongly affected by the revelation of the children's woman-friend as one of the Dark.

I think the lack of temptation facing Will, which the author complains of, is rooted in the dualism of Cooper's world-view. That dualism is, I think, the series' real defect. Will cannot be tempted because an Old One is of the light, by nature, and that's that. There seems to be an absolute gulf between the Masters of Dark and Light. *Silver on the Tree* states that there are neutral realms where neither Dark nor Light has power. Light is not (as in Christianity) the Creator, with Dark the parasite. The two are independently self-existent in a universe that favors neither. As Lewis proves, a fuzzy-minded system!

As for the author's comments on Lewis: I cannot be objective, for something about Lewis' conversational yet

supremely clear style makes me love everything he writes. I first read the Narnia books (most of them, not all) as a pre-teenager; I loved them without ever suspecting the religious background. So I know the attraction is style and story, not philosophy. (I came back to CSL as an adult, after many years' gap.) Yes, I see that Lewis' direct addresses to the reader, commenting on the action, are a defect. But I cannot feel them as a defect; they have never spoiled the atmosphere of the stories for me. Maybe Lewis did "pull his punches" regarding loss & pain in Narnia (but surely not in *The Last Battle?*). I have never thought of that point before — bears considering. It isn't strictly true that we never see the children changing in real life as a result of experience — Edmund does change visibly, and we see the results in the mundane world (school) of Eustace's conversion.

If the author thinks that the school in *The Silver Chair* is a straw target, he must not know *Summerhill!* That "boys and girls should be allowed to do exactly what they like" is shouted on every page of that book! (Not to mention a positive glorification of untidiness and anti-intellectualism.)

Nancy Perich Daly

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Hooray for MYTHLORE 18! It has been so long I was afraid my subscription had expired—but it is well worth the wait.

With the arrival of my fourth child and a need for more desk space for another baby book, I cleaned out the whole desk. Eleven years' accumulation of *Green Dragons*, *Tolkien Journals*, (starting with Vol. II, No. 1) *Mythprints*, and *Mythlores* seemed unsuitable for a private individual; turning to the nearest source of higher learning, Rice University, I prevailed upon the Rice Library to take the material. I'm afraid I stressed the "indexed in PMLA" and failed to mention the "fantasy, story-telling and costumes." May I be forgiven! I did try to remove all the patient reminders from your end that my subscription had expired, but I threw in the pretty bright flyers for the Mythcons.

Rice accepted, asked me to continue giving as the material came out, and declared me a patron—doesn't that sound like Lorenzo de Medici? So, beginning scholars, would-be scholars, or has-beens like the writer—it's all on reserve at Rice in Houston for your research.

Remember Miss Hardcastle sending for "devil'd bones" when Mark and she were concocting propaganda in *That Hideous Strength*? Here is a recipe from the *Fannie Farmer's Boston Cooking School Cook Book*, (revised edition 1946). The soda-bread recipe comes from the 1964 edition of *The Joy of Cooking*. (C. S. Lewis had soda bread for breakfast at "The Great Knock's")

#### Deviled Bones

2 tablespoons butter	Drumsticks, second
1 tablespoon chili sauce	joints, and wings of
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce	a cooked chicken
1 tablespoon walnut catsup (?)	Salt and pepper
1 teaspoon prepared mustard	Flour
few grains cayenne	1 cup Chicken Stock
	Finely chopped parsley

Melt butter and add chili sauce, Worcestershire sauce, walnut catsup, mustard, and cayenne. Cut 4 small gashes in each piece of chicken. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, dredge with flour, and cook in seasoned butter until well browned. Pour on stock, simmer 5 minutes, and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Quick Irish soda bread (makes a 9 x 5-inch loaf)

Preheat oven to 375°  
Have all ingredients at about 75°

Sift together in a large bowl  
2 cups sifted all-purpose flour  
3/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon sugar

Cut into the flour mixture with a pastry blender, until of the consistency of coarse corn meal:  
6 tablespoons chilled shortening

Stir in:

1/2 to 1 cup raisins  
1 tablespoon caraway seeds

Add gradually:

1/2 to 2/3 cup buttermilk

The mixture should not be dry. Knead briefly and shape into a round loaf or a 9 x 5-inch one. Put the dough in a greased bread pan. Cut a bold cross on top, letting it go over the sides so the bread will not crack in baking. Brush the top with: Milk

Bake for 40 to 50 minutes. Test for doneness, by tapping the bottom of the pan (should give a hollow sound) or seeing if the bread has shrunk back from the sides of the pan.

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Kathryn Lindskoog

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It is an old story now how several years ago the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation of Atlanta paid \$100,000 to Walter Hooper and Owen Barfield, Trustees of the C. S. Lewis Estate, for exclusive use of the Narnian Chronicles. This gave them the legal right to deny the musical, artistic, and dramatic uses of Narnia to all who requested them, as many people did all the time. Some of these people wanted to use the material for charitable purposes, but all were turned down in the name of protecting Narnia from low-quality uses.

I know of one group of dedicated young people in Southern California who circumvented the Episcopal ban by locating a Chicago publishing company that held rights to an inferior dramatic version of *THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE* that Lewis had OK'd. This young group developed a superb musical adaptation of the story on their own and presented it freely on week-ends at countless churches, camps, classes, and hospitals. Every time they performed, they had to send royalties to Chicago for the use of the dramatic version they did not use. That is how they were able to perform their charitable service legally. Members of the cast work during the week at jobs like selling shoes or clerking in banks.

In contrast, Kraft Cheese spent \$3 million on its TV adaptation of the same story, and the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation spent \$140,000 beyond its initial \$100,000 investment on additional theological and legal expenses. The results were seen on CBS April 1 and 2, straight from the pits of Saturday morning cartoonism. Well, what can you expect for \$3,240,000? Ralph Bakshi?

Beginning with some of the antics of the lurid (green-haired) faun early in the cartoon, I was struck by some uncanny echoes of the live adaptation of the Southern California troupe. My husband and I were mystified. We had learned that the animation was really done by a Los Angeles firm. Was it possible that someone from that firm had attended the charitable adaptation for ideas? The next morning a member of that troupe called me to ask if I had seen the cartoon. I immediately asked him if my perception was correct, that some of their original touches had been borrowed. He agreed. "There is no way we can prove it," he observed, "but it made me sick." He recalled a man who had attended their performance a few times and asked questions of them indicating that he had plans for a production. They had no idea who he was. Now it seems likely that he was from the animation group that got the job from Children's Television Workshop.

I don't think my young friends would have minded the fact that their labor of love was used a bit without credit if the result had been a good work of art. What they disliked was contributing unwillingly to a travesty of bad taste.

Things are sad in England too. C. S. Lewis arranged for Narnia to come out in paperback with Puffin Books, noted for great commitment to the welfare of children. Now those rights are being transferred to Collins, which is noted for its high prices and the low quality of the reproduction of the illustrations in its hardback copies of Narnia. (Compare the price and quality of the Collins copies to that of the Bodley Head copies for vivid contrast.) Goodbye to the Puffin Narnia.

The news is that Beatrix Potter will be off the market in ten years because her books are shaped for little hands to hold instead of for standardized packaging. Books and works of art seem to be a commodity in the business world on a par with processed cheese. The bones of C. S. Lewis and Beatrix Potter may be thrashing in their graves, but that doesn't interfere with business.

This is called The Year of the Child.

Daile Nicholson

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For two years now we have all been discussing Ralph Bakshi, and no one has yet cleared him of the plagiarism charge in Glen Goodknight's review of "Wizards" in *Mythlore* 16. Glen remarked on the similarity of certain background paintings in that film to work by Ian Miller, and then commented, "I presume Mr. Bakshi has made the proper arrangements with Peacock Press and/or Ian Miller." Well, as any good credits-reader knows, Ian Miller himself collaborated on "Wizards" and received film credit both fore and aft for his background work. The art in question was no doubt new and original with only a coincidental resemblance to the Gormenghast painting Glen mentioned. The correction of this point is long overdue. Let's not get so prickled at Bakshi that we invent innuendos to accuse him with.

In response to Albert Proudorn's letter regarding "Star Wars" being derived from Tolkien, I was planning to say essentially the same things that Alex Whitney, Judi Davidson, and Margaret Purdy did. But an additional argument is that other sources for "Star Wars" exist that are such

close parallels, and so obvious, that they make any similarity between the film and Tolkien's work seem coincidental. Going into them here would be making a rather pronounced detour from the Society's interests, but I'll be happy to expound them in detail to anyone who writes me and asks.

It would not be surprising, however, if Bakshi were to confirm that he was influenced by "Star Wars" in making his filmed version of "Lord of the Rings." Certainly reviewers of the latter film, in *Newsweek* and *The Boston Globe*, repeatedly mentioned what seems to them a suspicious similarity between the two films. Sometimes they are only mistaking archetypal figures for plagiarism, but at other times they are accurately noticing that the visual appearances of characters in "Star Wars" and "Lord of the Rings" are similar. At least one actor is featured in both films: British performer Anthony Daniels, who plays C-3PO in "Star Wars" and Legolas in "Lord of the Rings." Perhaps this partly explains why the same kind of snide, antihomosexual comments have been levelled at the character of C-3PO as Stephen C. Walker applies to the elves in Bakshi's film. I think Daniels' light, clipped voice is perfect for Legolas but that is my personal opinion.

Wendall Wagner's discussion of the hobbits' apparent ages shows that he forgets what most people do: that Frodo does not age after receiving the ring. "Outwardly he retained the appearance of a robust and energetic hobbit just out of his tweens," Tolkien says, meaning that Frodo does look like a young man in his early twenties. Since Pippin is four years short of his coming of age, he would look like a mature teenager. It's been observed that artists, notably the Hildebrandts and Bakshi, tend to portray Sam as older than Frodo, and to give the pair a Sancho/Don Quixote quality. Marion Zimmer Bradley mentions the literary basis for this interpretation in *Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship*.

I am surprised that no one has reviewed or even mentioned the beautifully animated film of "Waterhip Down." It is a British film, and I feel certain, although I haven't confirmed, that it features some of the same voice-actors Bakshi used. In many respects I liked it better than the filmed "Lord of the Rings." The art and animation are impeccable, the adaptation both gripping and moving. I cried during the film, which is more than I did reading the book.

Regarding titles, while I do like "Mistress", I have had it with allegedly intelligent women (this means you, Mary M. Stolzenbach!) who pretend not to know that the ungainliness of "Ms." is strictly due to unfamiliarity, and that there is nothing inherently more graceless about "mizzz" than about "missuzzz." As for business letters, I begin mine with "Salutations:" and any business that doesn't like it can do without my custom!

If any Society member wishes to write to me, I invite her or him to do so.



## Note

Several people have expressed an interest in seeing branch reports once again in *Mythlore*. So - branch secretaries, if not an extinct species, are invited to send reports, which will at first be included in the letter column. If the thing catches on, we will resume the Branch Report section.