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## Letters

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

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## Letters



# LETTERS



Readers' Letters are an important form of feedback and exchange, an opportunity to comment on past issues and to raise questions for others' comments. Each letter that is printed extends the writer's subscription by an additional issue. Please send your letters directly to the Editor:

Glen GoodKnight, 742 South Garfield Avenue,  
Monterey Park, CA 91754. USA

**Graham Darling**

**Montreal, Canada**

In *Mythlore* 67 "Above All Shadows Rides the Sun: Gollum as Hero," Elizabeth Arthur writes: "... Gollum, who was unfortunate enough to be swimming in a river when a circle of bright gold glittered on its bottom..." Actually, it was Sméagol/Gollum's friend Déagol who, pulled into the water while both were fishing, discovered the One Ring and brought it out of the river. Sméagol did not so much succumb to ensorcellment by the Ring (of which he caught only a glimpse, as of something "precious"), as to temptations from his already covetous and envious nature, when he strangled his friend to acquire, and be alone with, his "birthday present." By his actions that day, Sméagol freely chose to become Gollum; the loner, the stranger (of "goblin imps"), the luster after the Ring, even the catcher of fish. Much is made that Gollum's last living act Saves the World; yet, had he chosen to continue guiding the hobbits safely into and through Mordor, then Frodo, not so weakened by hardship and Shelob's poison, might have well been able to resist the lure of the Ring enough to cast it away himself. Alas: though given the opportunity to repent and atone (and thus really become a Hero: over Sauron, the Ring, and himself), Gollum confirmed his original choice by once again betraying and assaulting a fellow-hobbit to make the Ring his own (and vice-versa): and I'm very much afraid it was not a Saved Soul who fell wailing into the Cracks of Doom.

[Many times in the history of this journal readers have debated over the interpretation of the final state of mind and intentions of Gollum, and what made him actually fall. I think if we take the time and care to read the numerous comments that Tolkien himself made about Gollum in his published Letters, we would have clearer understanding of what was in Tolkien's mind when he wrote the "ambiguous" climax of *The Lord of the Rings* — I say "ambiguous," because it seems open to arguable interpretations. But Tolkien was not ambiguous in Letter No. 181 where he said that Gollum "ended in persistent wickedness," (p. 234) and that after the "dawning love of Frodo was too easily withered by the jealousy of Sam before Shelob's lair. After that he was lost." (p. 235) See also Letters, nos. 191 and 246. —GG]

In response to a request for bibliographic information,  
the following was written in reply:

**René van Rossenberg Leiden, The Netherlands**

I always enjoy reading *Mythlore*, or I must say studying,

for the articles are often that good, that they require close reading... I find Kondratiev's feature interesting, and as a collector of everything related to Tolkien I find the Inklings Bibliography very useful. A major bonus of *Mythlore* is the excellent artwork. I am sorry... that there are not that many members from non-English speaking countries; this probably has to do with the fact that you need a more than average understanding of the English language to fully appreciate *Mythlore*.

**John K. Hord**

**Fort Walton Beach, FL**

May I make a suggestion that has been drifting through my mind since first reading *The Lord of the Rings*? What did the One Ring symbolize; what was its mythical Meaning for the modern world? May I suggest that it represents technology itself, the whole industrial revolution and its developing consequences. Tolkien was a Victorian gentleman disgusted with the course of twentieth-century history, and I am proposing that in the One Ring he focussed that deep-seated dislike. Technology can give us anything we want, and even things we never dreamed before — but in its schedules, its endlessly repetitive assembly line, its time-and-motion pressures for ever-increased efficiency, its hectic do-it-now commands on daily life, how much does it require in return, and how much more will it require before we are through? I would further suggest that the technological equivalents of the Ringwraiths are already appearing on the borders of our minds. They are evolving characters on a popular television show, *Star Trek: the Next Generation*: the cybernetic people/culture (hardly individuals) called the Borg.



In the last issue Walter B. Crawford wrote to ask:

I wonder if you or some of your readers could help me with the source of a quotation from C.S. Lewis. In his book *C.S. Lewis* (1963), Roger Lancelyn Green, speaking of CSL's "experience of joy," writes as follows "Lewis, drawing from personal experience... speaks of it as 'that unnameable something, desire for which pierces like a rapier at the smell of a bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well at the World's End*, the opening lines of *Kubla Khan*, the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves.'" (p. 22).

Two readers did identify the quote: Margaret L. Carter of Bonita, CA and Tina Cooper of Pasadena, CA. The passage is from the second edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress* by Lewis. The book was originally published in 1933, but Lewis wrote the new Preface on Romanticism, from which this quote is taken, in 1943.