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Letters

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Letters

Letters

Readers' Letters are an important form of feedback, an opportunity to comment on past issues, and to raise questions for others to comment on. Each letter that is printed extends the writer's subscription by an additional issue. Send your letters directly to the Editor; see page 2 for his address.

Wade Tarzia

Vernon, CT

Mythlore is very well set up. The layout, typesetting, and artwork is superior to most other publications, including well funded commercial ones. It is refreshing to see such care taken for these matters – people like Tolkien, who showed a literary and an actual interest in the craftsmanship of manuscripts, would be pleased to see it. The quality of the actual writing is also high – and again, it is refreshing to see such care taken with the stories that have all meant so much to so many of us fantasy followers.

My only criticism is the closing tone of one article, the one written by Musacchio. His devotion to religion was made evident in the end, and it made me wonder if the line of his argument was founded more by religious belief than a desire to reveal insights through objective deduction. But you see, this is my viewpoint as one with anthropological training that sees equal value – equal shares in the "truth" – in all peoples and religions. Perhaps this is my own biased religion?

Regarding his article in other respects, I see more significance in Ransom's change of heart in *Perelandra* toward alien beings. After he defeats the Devil in the body of the physicist, Ransom suddenly sees no evil or ugliness in the creature that is crawling up from the depths of the planet, where before he had seen the beast as an enemy.

There is nothing new in portraying a man transforming from religious – and self-doubt to religious incorporation – there is almost two thousand years of historic and literary precedent for such things. But it was more of a literary and moral triumph for Lewis to portray Ransom embracing a radically different creature into his universal theory of love. As a citizen of Planet Earth, I find this aspect of Lewis most satisfying, a precedent for humane, socially useful science fiction and fantasy, especially in a modern world where religions tear at each other and where the next door neighbors – aliens – are considered to be appropriate targets for our doomsday machines.

Jan Noble

Wanwatos, WI

Where on Middle-earth did the end of Paul Nolan

Hyde's *Mythlore* 54 article go to? And just when I got to his complaint about publishers hiding portions of important inscriptions within book bindings.

Have you tried looking behind the staples? All levity aside, since apologies to both Paul and the readers for this and embarrassing oversight. In 54 issues this has happened only once before in the early '70s, but it should not happen at all. The conclusion to Paul's column is printed in this issue. –GG.

David Doughan

London, England

A couple of bits of publishing information which may interest *Mythlore* readers:

I don't know how well-known British novelist and essayist A.N. Wilson is in the USA – I'll risk insulting your intelligence by telling you that he is unusual among British writers under 40 for being not only a professing and practising Christian, but for being a rather old-fashioned High Anglican, or Anglo-Catholic (the term "young fogey" was coined to describe him – less than fairly). Recently he published a collection of essays entitled *Penfriends from Porlock*. The essays include a brief but sympathetic review of Tolkien's *Letters*, an interesting appreciation of G.K. Chesterton, and most interesting of all, an essay on C.S. Lewis' Christianity. A couple of quotes;

1) I confess to being puzzled that Lewis is most widely popular these days among those Christians for whom the drama of redemption is, to put it crudely, a cut and dried event.

2) Of course, you could put a man in a sky rocket and launch him from Mount Olivet or anywhere else and he would not penetrate heaven. But what Lewis knew, and these anti-supernaturalists did not know, was that a man could go to heaven and back in the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle

A very different British literary figure was Kenneth Tynan. Of the "angry Young Man" generation, he was throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s, Britain's most influential theater critic, and, to some extent, director. His reputation in recent times rests on such notoriety as being the first man to utter the four-letter word for "copulate" on British TV, and for his production of *Oh, Calcutta* – one of the first plays in a public theater in Britain to employ full frontal nudity. He died (relatively) young, and his widow recently wrote his biography. I haven't yet seen the book, but a review by P.J. Kavanagh in the London *Spectator* (16 April 1988, p. 44) contains the following quote:

At Oxford his tutor had been C.S. Lewis, whom Tynan revered. Whoever would have thought to link those two names? But we are told that for the rest of his life Tynan wondered uneasily whether there was something important in his tutor's habit of measuring all things against an other-worldly standard which Lewis thought of as eternal.

Nancy-Lou Patterson's review of "Timeless at Heart" in *Mythlore* 53, with her comments on C.S. Lewis' attitude to pacifism, has made me wonder about "Fairy" Hardcastle. Even granted that she is a caricature, she is obviously meant to be based on contemporary figures. "She had been, at different times, a suffragette, a pacifist, and a British Fascist ... She knew from both ends what a police force could do and what it could not..." (*That Hideous Strength* p.69). It is also evident, though never explicitly stated, that she is a lesbian of exaggeratedly "butch" propensities. In fact, there were several fairly prominent women around in the 1940s who were not too far from this stereotype, most notably Commandant Mary Allen, the "pioneer policewoman," who in the years before 1914 had been imprisoned for her militant suffrage activities, and who, during the First World War, was one of the first members of the nascent women's police service in Britain. She went on to become Britain's highest-ranking policewoman, despite (or perhaps because of) her severely masculine style of dress and behavior. Although her personal character seems to have been more attractive than Fairy Hardcastle's, she did



create a mild furore in 1940 by making some public remarks approving of Adolf Hitler.

It will be noted that the list corresponds fairly closely: a (probably) lesbian policewoman with a suffragette past and fascist tendencies. However, one item is blatantly missing: pacifism. It is certainly true that, contrary to what is popularly accepted, very many suffragists became active pacifists in 1914-1919, including such notable militants as Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Sylvia Pankhurst. However, I know of non who also joined the police; and as for fascism, some pacifist women went so far in their loathing of it that they supported World War II as being the lesser evil (notably the Anglican preacher Maude Royden). On the other hand, fascists (and, from 1939-1941, Communists) in Britain took a line which, though Strictly speaking neutralist, could be interpreted as pacifist, particularly by those who, like Orwell, were at pains to define pacifists as being "objectively" pro-fascist. I suspect that this is the only sense to have little in common with such actual suffragist-pacifists as Jane Addams, Rosika Schwimmer, Aletta Jacobs or Catherine Marshall.

I hope that potential contributors to *Mythlore* won't be put off because they can't afford to put their copy on diskette. Another potential source of discouragement appeared in issue 53, viz. the parading of contributor's academic bona fides, which makes it seem as though one is expected to have at least a Ph.D., and preferably a tenured teaching post at a university. I think that this is not the impression you wish to give; it might reassure folk if you said so. One final quibble: I always thought that the genitive of Lewis was "Lewis's," not "Lewis'" (surely there was only one of him).

Nai kaluva anar tielyanna!

To respond to your last three points: 1) the majority of submissions are still typewritten. The computer revolution has not yet reached the majority of people. I know, I put off getting a computer for years (what do I need one for - they are too complicated to learn). Yes, we prefer disk submissions, but NO submission is rejected on the basis of it being typewritten. 2) Credit is due to Sarah Beach for undertaking the preparation of the information on the contributors, which is of interest to the readers. It is valid to give the academic background on the contributors as part of the general information. This is to inform, not to impress. Did you also notice that not all contributors have academic credentials? As Editor, it is my policy to consider the merits of the material submitted as the sole criteria, regardless of who the writer is or what their credentials may be. 3) There is (or was) a debate over "Lewis's" or "Lewis'" but the matter was settled for me years ago by Walter Hooper, Secretary for the Lewis Literary Estate (and needs little introduction to most readers) who told me he used "Lewis'." Thanks you for your interesting letters that display amazing background knowledge. --GG

Benjamin Urrutia

Salt Lake City, UT

Having seen *Shadowlands*, I agree with almost every

word of the review by David Bratman in *Mythlore* 50. The sole exception is that I think the statement that actor Joss Ackland "doesn't look much like Lewis, except in a very general way" is a great understatement. Mr. Ackland looks very much *unlike* C.S. Lewis. He has a severely and deeply lined face. Jack Lewis had a smooth, round, jovial unlined face, to judge from all the photographs I've seen of him.

Talking about looks.... every now and then I see lions on television. And most of the time I think, of course, of Aslan – who has given a bit of His holiness to all lions. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every time we saw a human being we thought of Christ? I think Lewis, and other exceptional Christians, did and do just that.

Back to *Shadowlands* ... I confess that I was more than a bit disappointed that J.R.R. Tolkien and the journey to Greece were left out. But you can't have everything. And I was more than a bit surprised that, in a scene where Jack and Doug have a good cry together, the crying is very realistic. They weep as people do in real life, not as they usually do in movies.

Martin Moynihan's *The Latin Letters of C. S. Lewis* contains an error which I suppose must be a misprint. The Latin passage given in note 9 ("...Communis operatio, oratio, fortitudo, communes (si Deus voluerit) mortes pro Christo adunabunt.") should be translated as "common work, prayer, courage, common (if God should will it) deaths for the sake of Christ shall bring us together." However, the translation given on page 20 includes no English equivalent of the words *pro Christo* (for the sake of Christ). These words are too important to have been left out on purpose. Besides, if the omission had been deliberate, there would be an ellipsis (...).

Tom Loback

New York, NY

Holy Moley! Aragorn and Thomas Covenant as Christ figures. I guess I didn't read these books as carefully as I thought. I missed the parts about their virgin births and crucifixions. Speaking of crucifixion, Conan the Barbarian makes a better Christ figure than those two. In the first place, he actually gets crucified on a tree. In the second place, he is a nicer person than Thomas Covenant (almost everyone is).

Seriously, a case might be made for Aragorn being comparable to the Messiah in the Hebrew sense, the King of Israel, descendant of David and Solomon by blood, and anointed by God in much the same way most kings claim to be. But to compare Aragorn to the metaphysical Christ of the New Testament is a stretch of credulity this reader certainly cannot muster. And Thomas Covenant — the premis is too absurd to even entertain the notion of trying to follow it.

I know *Mythlore* likes to print a wide range of opinions, but sermons like these really should be subject to some

Lionlight

*In a black winter of unbelief I stood
thinking myself found
sapless, sceptic's feet enrooted
in a fallow ground
Soul without a star.*

Then

*the Golden Lion, solar song
burnt in upon my safe stupidity;
I learned the bitter joy of belief
as the darkness splintered away –
before the onslaught
of the Narnian Sun.*

Mindi M. Reid

editorial criteria. Especially as such things are specifically denied by the author (at least in Tolkien's case). The least you could do as editor for articles of proselytism is require that the author make some attempt at thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Otherwise, *Mythlore* becomes a pulpit from which sermons are served on the unwary and more serious analysis, like that of Catherine Madsen, are lost in the crowd of Bible thumpings.

I much preferred the debate on language between Paul Nolan Hyde and Christopher Gilson. Now that gave some serious insights into the nature of Middle-earth. Rage on, Great Winds, Rage on. And "Echoes in Age" was very enlightening. J.R.R. Tolkien's Calendars was fascinating, if baffling.

You are right, *Mythlore* does like to print a wide range of opinions. As was said in the previous statement on Editorial policy (*Mythlore* 53, page 4) it is for you the readers to react, as you have done. Of course we can wander too far in giving latitude to interpretative opinions, but I'd rather err on the side of too much, than towards a very strict and narrow line of acceptability. I have said before that if *Mythlore* were to print material that the Editor agreed with 100%, then it would print very little material indeed. Over the years a number of writers have written on Aragorn's Messianic character that corresponds as a type or partial parallel to Christ – see Ellwood's *Good News from Middle Earth* as a starter. "Bible Thumping" is infelicitous and misapplied hyperbole. As past, present, and future issues have and will demonstrate, there are a myriad of interpretations – not all harmonious – of Tolkien's works. As Lewis said: "Myth is ... like manna: it is to each man a different dish, and to each the dish he needs." Provided there are no verifiable factual errors, nor insensitive or inept style or tone, then let the writers present their ideas, and let the readers react – as you have. I have great respect for the readers' intelligence, and doubt we have few, if any, "unwary" among them.