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## Letters

Mary V. Borhek

Paul Nolan Hyde

Darrell Schweitzer

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Kathryn Lindskoog

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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 other's 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, 740 S. Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90005.**

**Mary V. Borhek**

**Saint Paul, MN**

In response to Dr. William Blackburn's article in *Mythlore* 55, "Dangerous as a Guide to Deeds," about politics in the fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien: it would never have occurred to me to look for models for present-day political leaders in Tolkien's fiction. The circumstances of Middle-earth and of our present situation are too different.

If we take a view with a longer perspective, however, we see that the values of such leaders as Aragorn, Gandalf, Galadriel, and even Frodo – though at the last moment he failed because of the overwhelming strength of his adversary – are values which our leaders could well emulate.

In considering Tolkien's "good" characters, C. G. Jung's words seem relevant:

The great events of world history are, at bottom, profoundly unimportant. In the last analysis, the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately spring as a gigantic summation from these hidden source in individuals. In our most private and most subjective lives, we are not only the passive witness of our age, and its suffers, but also its makers. We make our own epoch. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10, para. 315)

In the film, "Matter of Heart," Laurens van der Post says:

The psychology of individuation has nothing to do with politics at all because it deals with the ultimate values. But yet, it has shattering political implications....We are facing a universe within, objective universe within as great as the universe without...We cannot ignore it. And it has enormous political consequences for us. And the kind of Society, the kind of politics that will save us, will have to be aware; more important than any other quality in our politicians, we must demand....psychological awareness because otherwise we get people sparring with their own shadows...the Germans projecting their shadows onto the Jews....And Jung often said to me – he said, 'The human being who starts by withdrawing his own shadow from his neighbor is doing work of immense, immediate political and social importance.'

We can hardly assume that Aragorn *et al.* had done any interior psychological work! Yet Tolkien's heroes and leaders knew their own inner selves rather well. They knew their weaknesses, their shadow side. I submit that Tolkien, by giving his "good" characters real integrity and superb inner values, makes a great contribution to our political thinking in the sense of Jung's and van der Post's words. ♦

**Paul Nolan Hyde**

**Simi Valley, CA**

In response to Diana Waggoner's comment about my "mistaken" use of the word "*tet-et-tet*" (*ML* 57), I submit the following:

According to the *Portmanteau English Dictionary of Folk Etymology* (Parrish Press, 1989; J.E.C. Kelson editor), a far more pervasive and extraneous glossary than the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the historical development and origins of the phrase *tet-et-tet* are long and tortuous. The term was apparently an Old Low Egyptian opprobrium, an exclamation of derision which, loosely translated, meant "go sit on the sofa". It was most frequently used when heads of state found themselves at logger-heads with one another about boundary disputes and indiscriminate pondering of one another. During the second half of the 4th Dynasty (particularly noted for indiscriminate pondering), in the 57th year of the reign of Psammetichus .CCCIV, the Pharaoh received a tremendous blow to the mouth with a jai alai mallet while attempting to quell a peasant revolt in the suburbs of Avaris. The end result was an unfortunate derangement of his mind, which in turn produced in his speech a rather disconcerting lisp, together with a propensity for muttering *tet-et-tet* at anyone within ear-shot. The nobles of the 4th Dynasty, prone to flatter the old King, began to consider it stylish to imitate the King's lisp and to accompany any statement with the Pharaoh's only really cogent phrase, now pronounced *tzet-zet-tzet-tzet*. The peasants, more interested in the new jai alai stadium, thought it nothing short of ridiculous that a speech impediment (especially a self-inflicted one) should receive such notoriety as to be imitated and refused to humor the nobles or the King. The nobles in retaliation obtained a Pharaonic decree making it illegal to pronounce *tet-et-tet* in any other fashion than *tzet-zet-tzet-tzet*. The peasants bristled, and the nobles settled the issue by making the infraction a capital crime. As it turns out, Dr. Kelson asserts, this is first recorded example of a Grim Law, and only one of many. After the Battle of Elision Fields (discussed below), the phrase was reduced to *tzet-zet-tzet*. Because of a later phonological reduction in Middle Low Egyptian, now called the Just-Barely-Above-

Average-Vowel-Drop, *tzet-tzet* was further changed to "Tsk-Tsk" which has found currency in modern speech.

In the south of Egypt, in the regions of the Upper Nile, Old High Egyptian had the same phrase *tet-et-tet*, but without the negative connotation. However, the dialectal change which caused the regression of the front-mid-tense vowels to back-high-lentis vowel position (now referred to as the Not-Quite-So-Great Vowel Shift) affected the epithet *tet-et-tet* so that it became *tut-ut-tut*. The effect of the Battle of Elision Fields had similar results in the southern dialect, speaking the phrase to "Tut-Tut", which to most native speakers of English today is similar semantically to "Tsk-Tsk".

The Battle of Elision Fields, which brought the two potentates of Upper and Lower Egypt together, actually began as a negotiation session for trading front-men for the national jai alai teams. As part of the formalities to determine the arrangements for the negotiations, the Minister of Protocol for Psammethichus.CCCXIV asked the Minister of Protocol for Moronicus XXIX (the not well-loved Pharaoh of Upper Egypt) "Where do you want to sit?" To which the other officer responded diffidently, "I don't know. Where do you want to sit?" This exchange went on for nearly two and a half hours when finally Moronicus XXIX erupted with the great vulgarity (at least in the north) "*tut-ut-tut*", an innocent enough suggestion in the beginning but not received well by Psammethichus, who began to sputter "*tzet-tz-tzet*" in his typical moribund fashion. Without going into detail about the blood-letting that followed, suffice it to say that Upper Egypt won the day and ever after referred to the event as the "Tut on the Commons". In mockery of Psammethichus.CCCXIV's lip, he was called "Tut-Uncommon".

The explanation as to how this phrase made it way into French has some interest. The scribes who recorded this event did so in Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic writing on a monument erected near the site of the Elision Fields. The scribes, by the by, were genetically allergic to dust as a result of generations of monument and pyramid building. However, just as the master builders had tamed the large cats of Africa sufficiently to assist in the edification of the Egyptian tombs, so, too, the scribes genetically engineered the great felines so as to enable them to finish the writings which the scribes themselves could not. Needless to say, it was not possible to have the lions and pumas actually learn Egyptian, but they were capable of exacting imitation if given direction. This practice continued for centuries even though great changes took place in the spoken and written language. In the later part of their usefulness, in the later Dynasties, they were commonly referred to as the Coptic Cats, which has been somewhat Anglicized as "copy cat", but retains some of the meaning nonetheless.

When the Rosetta Stone was discovered by Napoleon's troops in 1799, Jean Francois Champollion was given the task of translating the Elision Fields episode involving

Psammethichus.CCCXIV and Moronicus XXIX. When he got to the part about "sitting on the sofa", he was entirely baffled, but could tell that there had been a "head-to-head" confrontation between the rulers. Because of the similarity between "*tete-a-tete*" and the two Egyptian phrases, "*tzet-tz-tzet*" and "*tut-ut-tut*", he postulated that the untranslatable characters must refer to a related notion.

My choice of *tet-et-tet* over *tete-a-tete* was simply an historical one, feeling as I do more of a kinship toward worn, ancient things (not to mention "inexpressibly tired"). I appreciate the opportunity to clarify this little misunderstanding about my choice of words and hope that this little exercise has effectively demonstrated what happens when you have a creative philologist at bay.

I might add that this whole issue was put to the Four Wise Clerks of Oxenford and their response was (in a Greek chorus) "Pshaw", which I have interpreted to mean that we are "Men" and not "Supermen", notwithstanding George Bernard.

PNH is the biggest liar! — G.G.

Darrell Schweitzer

Strafford, PA

[The letter is typed on the letterhead of The Rockefeller University, with the comment "stationery stolen from" added at the top of the page.]

Re. David Bratman's review of *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* in *Mythlore* 57. I think all of us can take a wait-and-see attitude toward Kathryn Lindskoog's *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* according to the Oscar Wilde Principle.

The Marquis of Queensbury left a card at Wilde's club, making certain allegations. Wilde sued Queensbury for libel. Alas, Queensbury could prove it, did, and Wilde was the one who went to jail. The moral of the story — the Oscar Wilde Principle of law — is that you should never sue for libel when the other guy can prove it.

*The C.S. Lewis Hoax* certainly impugns Walter Hooper's professional and personal reputation to an amazing degree. It at least approaches accusing him of what looks to me to be criminal fraud. (i.e. selling *The Dark Tower* to the publishers as Lewis material when he knew it wasn't.) All of this is exceedingly actionable.

Unless Lindskoog can prove it. Unless Hooper knows that Lindskoog can prove it. Frankly, I find the book most convincing for this very reason: that no publisher in his right mind (never mind authors, who are not always in their right minds) would have brought out such a book unless it was reasonably safe from lawsuits.

So the rest of us can just wait the legal fallout. If there is no suit, or if Lindskoog wins, the allegations are probably true. If Hooper wins, they are probably false. I realize this isn't scholarship, but for the majority who will never

actually *do* real Lewis scholarship, particularly of the layman-on-the-manuscript variety, it may be the most reliable path to the truth.

Meanwhile, I am just glad I'm not a professional Lewis scholar. I feel like I missed the plane that was bombed. The whole field must be coming apart right now. The texts have to be checked and re-established before any serious scholarly endeavor may continue. My sympathies go out to anyone who might have read *The C. S. Lewis Hoax* and then had the sinking feeling that his or her Ph.D. thesis is going to have to be scrapped. ♦

*Things are not quite that simple, since Lindscoog claims fraud on internal stylistic criteria alone, and dismisses any attempt to verify the authenticity of the actual manuscript, believing that the best fraud is the one not detected and proved by the experts. In the meantime, the manuscript has been examined by a group of experts. Their "Warner Report" – mentioned in Lindscoog's letter in this column – has pronounced that the manuscript appears authentic.* —GG

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Vienna, VA

Reactions to *Mythlore* 57 follows —

1. Carla Faust Jones' "The Literary Detective" is a fascinating analysis of "The Dark Tower." But I was bemused by the comment quoted from the New York C.S. Lewis Society bulletin that many readers "had not expected Lewis' imagination to produce such a perverted figure" as the Stingingman.

Really! The same Lewis whose imagination produced Fairy Hardcastle and the Un-man? And the same Lewis who invented the Objective Room (in *That Hideous Strength*)? Lewis' imagination had in it some very dark streaks which are easy to forget when we are thinking about the light he has showed us.

2. When it comes to perversion, will Paul Nolan Hyde please explain for us all the utility of two glossaries which spell the words backwards – advertised immediately below the close of Carla Faust Jones' article? I feel I am in Looking-Glass Land here. (And I do hope that the Tetragrammaton does not figure as a "linguistic element" anywhere in Tolkien!) Did this come in on April 1... ♦

Kathryn Lindscoog

Orange, CA

I try to resist my natural desire to defend or explain every important little jot and tittle brought up by a reviewer. So I will make only three points in response to David Bratman's review of *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* in issue 57.

1. Thanks to Bratman for wrestling with what he and many readers find distasteful subject matter. All of his points are worthy of my response, and I will gladly comment on specifics if asked.

2. To my surprise, I keep making many startling discoveries. I am issuing them gradually in the newsletter that



MERRY STUDIES AT RIVENDELL

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I stated for that purpose, *The Lewis Legacy*. Two of the discoveries bear on key points in Bratman's review. First, I now have evidence that Hooper's time with Lewis in Oxford was even shorter than I said in the book and far shorter than Bratman indicates in his review. Second, Hooper's suspect *Dark Tower* manuscript is now described (in the Warner Report, which was sent to my publisher by Hooper's lawyer) as a "fair copy" in Lewis' handwriting, not a first draft as Bratman and many of us assumed. This means a major shift in our criticism of that writing. It can no longer be judged as just a first draft if Hooper's own defense describes it as a 62-page fair copy.

3. Ursula Le Guin (who attacks *The Dark Tower* in her new collection *Dancing at the Edge of the World*) has kindly sent me her response to *The C. S. Lewis Hoax* with permission to use it as I please:

A fascinating piece of literary detective work, which may serve to free C.S. Lewis from the shadows of misogyny and arrogance which it appears may have been cast upon him rather than by him. I finished it liking Lewis, as a man and artist, better than I had even done before. Although some of the subject matter is rather shocking, the book's temperate, pleasant tone and elegant illustrations make it a pleasure to read. (Ursula Le Guin, February 7, 1989) ♦

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