



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

---

Volume 21  
Number 4

Article 11

---

1997

## Letters

Grace E. Funk

David Doughan

Todd Jensen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Funk, Grace E.; Doughan, David; and Jensen, Todd (1997) "Letters," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 21 : No. 4 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol21/iss4/11>

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact [phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu](mailto:phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu).

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:  
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

SWOSU<sup>TM</sup>

---

## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



## 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, 245-F SOUTH ATLANTIC BLVD., MONTEREY PARK, CA 91754 USA

OR BY EMAIL: GGOODKNI@LAUSD.K12.CA.US

Grace E. Funk

Lumby, B.C. Canada

I have just finished reading *Mythlore* 81. I just want to say *thank you!* Thank you for Gail Sobat's paper of "The Heroine's Quest for Self." Thank you for the review of "The 1996 J R R Tolkien Calendar." It made me take it down and enjoy carefully again all the pictures. Thank you for printing "A Mythcon Farewell." Thank you for your work and effort in the whole issue.

Here is a reference to Tolkien in an article that annoys me very much. You may wish include some note of it.

In Autumn issue of *New Trail*, which is the alumni magazine of the University of Alberta, an article has appeared on Sean Stewart. The condescension of it takes my breath away. Under a sub-title "Sean Stewart injects a literary sensibility into sci-fi writing," the author is pleased to say that

Spaceships and cyber-gadgets, knights and dragons — these are the usual trappings of science fiction and fantasy....Stewart has risen to the top by combining the emotional power and imaginative freedom of science fiction with the intellectual heft of literary fiction."!!!!

Cyber-space I have heard of. Will someone please tell me what are "cyber-gadgets" and what on earth is "literary fiction" with or without "intellectual heft"???

The article is laudatory (Sean Stewart is a graduate of The University of Alberta). The writer also has a UofA BA, '86, which makes the tone of the article more astonishing. She seems to have been thoroughly brainwashed by the notion that neither science fiction nor fantasy is "literary fiction." She is also patronizing about words like "mythopoeic" and "numinous."

Sean Stewart is reported as saying that he began to read Tolkien at the age of seven, but later found that he couldn't use Tolkien's world view, but "had to find the numinous in the post-industrial era." Fair enough, and well enough indeed, considering all the awards he has won. But someone should have saved him from the writer of this article.

David Doughan

London, England

Once again it's been a pleasure to receive *Mythlore* 81. I particularly enjoyed Cath Filmer-Davies on matters Ar-

thurian — I have to confess that I did not know the works of Stephen Lawhead, which I shall now seek out. Still, I do have a few niggles.

First, though no champion of Gwynfor Evans, I have to admit that he got it right about Arthur. He was indeed a Welshman, which is what English invaders called the Romanized Britons (these matters were dealt with in more detail in my article "An ethically cleaned Faëry?" in *Mal-lorn* 32, and in greater depth and incomparably grater scholarship by J.R.R. Tolkien in his "English and Welsh"). That is, unless he was Irish.

Secondly, there is the question of the historical Arthur, which over the centuries has provided much innocent entertainment. I have to admit (again!) that I don't know Phillips and Keatman's book (bibliographic details, please) but it seems to fit well into this pattern. I don't think that this is the first time that Arthur's ancestry has been traced to Cunedag — or to Padarn Pesrut, or any of the other names heading the Welsh king-lists. This is pure speculation, which considering the lack of evidence is fair game, so long as one speculation is not privileged above another. I don't know of a Camlan near Dolgellau, though there is an Afon Gamlan (river) not too far away; however, on purely linguistic grounds the most likely ancestor of "Camlann" (or "Camblan" in Geoffrey) is the Roman fort of Camboglanna on Hadrian's Wall — which also has the advantage of being a Roman day's march from the fort of Aballava, a possible linguistic ancestor of Avallon, on the Solway Firth ... but that's another story.

Finally the very name "Arthur." The derivation from Welsh *arth* (= bear) has often been canvassed, but alas, is improbable — it's a bit like deriving the surname "Palmer" from the palm of the hand, rather than palm branches borne by pilgrims. The least unlikely derivation is from the Roman gentile name Artorius, which would fit well with the Welsh forms of other Roman names, e.g. Emrys for Ambrosius, Meiron for Marianus, Geraint for Gerontius, Padarn for Paternus, etc.

Anyway, quibbles over — as you may gather, I thoroughly enjoyed this issue. Keep it up!

Todd Jensen

St. Louis, MO

On Issue 79: I very much enjoyed Lisa Padol's article on the use of language in modern-day Arthurian literature, especially since I happen to be writing an Arthurian fantasy myself, and find that a topic of some concern. In fact, her remarks remind me of Tolkien's own defense to Hugh Brogan of his archaic style in "The King of the Golden Hall"; people living in that sort of time period cannot be genuinely portrayed as speaking like moderns, since they have an entirely different world-view. I cer-



tainly think it wise advice for any writer setting his work in a "Mythic Past" to follow, regardless of whether it is Arthurian-age or not.

The remarks on Woolley's Guinevere trilogy, in particular, struck me as quite interesting. I had not noticed before the specific examples that Padol cites, but it had occurred to me that Woolley's version of Arthurian Britain seemed more modern, in some ways, than other versions. Much of this, I imagine, was also due to her constantly using modern place-names throughout, often ones whose names brought up the 20th century more than the 5th or 6th, but there were other elements, such as Igraine's fondness for teatime, and Lancelot being given a housekeeping couple at Joyous Garde named Mr. and Mrs. Badger, in an age before surnames would have been in use. It is a peril that I hope to avoid in my own book.

While still writing, I should like to comment on one passage in Sarjeant's description of *The Sword of Northumbria*. The book sounds very interesting, and I would be glad to see it brought back into print from what Mr. Sarjeant said of it, but his remark "No ambitious King of Wales ever did beguile a King of Mercia into aiding him in conquering Northumbria" is not entirely accurate. Something similar, if not identical to this, did indeed happen in the early 7th century, when King Cadwallon of North Wales and King Penda of Mercia joined forces to make war upon King Edwin of Northumbria, defeating and slaying him at the Battle of Hatfield Chase in 633. Doubtless the circumstances were somewhat different in Woodruff's book from the historical event, but nevertheless, the rough parallel is there, and may even have been a partial influence on it.

On Issue 81: Having finally received your latest issue, I wish to include my responses to two of the articles in it, Cath Filmer-Davies' on King Arthur and Rhona Beare's on time travel.

There are one or two minor corrections on Filmer-Davies' article that I wish to make. The archaeological opinion now is that the Dark Age settlement at Tintagel may have been a royal stronghold rather than a monastery after all, indicating that the legends were slightly closer to the truth than would have previously seemed the case (although, of course, there remains no evidence that Arthur, Uther Pendragon, Gorlois, or Igraine had any real-life connection with the site at all!). Actually, though, there is never any mention in the romances that I know of of Arthur being actually born at Tintagel, and I suspect that what those people who say "Tintagel was Arthur's birthplace" are really thinking of is his conception, which does take place there in both Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory. I might add, also, that Phillips and Keatman to the contrary, there is no serious evidence for Arthur's name meaning "the Bear." The biggest obstacle is that the bear is not Arthur's symbolic animal; the only time that it plays an allegorical function in the legend, it represents the giant of Mont St. Michel which Arthur slays (see Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Malory's account of the war between

King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius). Generally, Arthur's animal is the dragon than he bears.

On a less pedantic level, I agree with Filmer-Davies' remarks on the attempts by neo-pagans to appropriate the Matter of Britain. As I have stated in a previous letter, the Marion Zimmer Bradley version of the old Celtic pre-Christian religion bears as much resemblance to what we know of the "real thing" as those movies about cavemen being chased by dinosaurs do to actual prehistory, and there is not even any serious evidence that paganism had survived in any significant form in 5th and 6th century Britain (except for the Saxon gods, of course). I applaud correction of this error.

Moving on to Beare's essay on time travel: there may be one "time travel" story of a sort before the 19th century, namely, the Dream of Rhonabwy from the High Middle Ages in Wales. Here, a Welshman from the 12th century experiences a dream in which he is transported to Arthurian Britain, on the eve of the Battle of Mount Badon (although with some temporal confusion, as when his guide speaks of having caused Arthur's death at Camlann). It is a dream rather than "genuine" time travel, but comes close enough to the concept to count. Arthur, incidentally, recognizes Rhonabwy as a time traveller, commenting ruefully on the reduced stature and prowess of the Britons of "the future" might add that I also count Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as a time travel story. After all, in it, Ebenezer Scrooge is transported both into the past and into a possible future timetrack (which becomes an alternative future timetrack not to be realized when he mends his ways, thus creating a new future). I don't believe that it has been recognized as a member of this category of fantasy before now, but I think that it belongs there.

I must confess that I still feel mildly bewildered by the stress that *Mythlore* puts on Dorothy Sayers. I believe that it should take more than having been friends with a couple of the Inklings to qualify a detective story writer for inclusion as a "principal" in a journal dedicated to mythopoetic fantasy, surely.

## ART SUBMISSIONS

**MYTHLORE** welcomes the submission of new artists to its pages. Both full page and column pieces are encouraged. Full page art should be 7.25" wide by 9.25" tall — it may actually be larger if it is in proportion. Column art should first be 5" wide by 6" to 8" tall, which can be photographically reduced to fit the printed size of the column. Material inspired by or illustrating the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, or Charles Williams is especially sought, but other mythological and fantasy inspired artwork is also welcome. Write directly to the Art Editor, whose address is found on page 2.