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Letters

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Authors

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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

Diana Waggoner

Beverly Hills, CA

Just a note to say how much I admired and enjoyed Elizabeth Arthur's piece on Gollum ("Above All Shadows Rides the Sun: Gollum As Hero") in *Mythlore* 67. It is one of the most original, instructive, and perceptive articles on *The Lord of the Rings* that I have read since I discovered Tolkien thirty years ago, and one of the very best things you have ever published — your general level is high, but this one is really exceptional. Congratulations to Ms. Arthur and to you.

Catherine Madsen

Springfield, MA

Please give Elizabeth Arthur my highest compliments on her paper on Gollum. She's managed to say what nobody else has said quite right in forty years — that in some crucial way he is the center of the book, and the locus of its complexity.

Jeffrey Lee Satterfield

Bogart, GA

While reading Coralee Grebe's article "Bashing Joseph Campbell," I was surprised to see Mortimer J. Adler's book *Truth in Religion* missing from her sources and chronology. His book should've been first on the list.

Adler, indisputably one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, and possibly the most acute philosopher ever from the United States, addresses a severe deficiency in Campbell's works, and that's his basic misunderstanding — and misrepresentation — of Christianity.

Though Adler's book runs very deep, and his explanation and subsequent dismissal of Campbell as someone qualified to discuss Christianity is like skimming a stone across the top of the waters, his thoughtful confrontations with the Campbell mystique should be required reading for anyone interested in the debate over Campbell's place in modern thought. Though he gives Campbell some due as a social scientist in cultural anthropology, Adler writes, "But his competence in dealing with philosophical matters, especially in the field of philosophical theology, is highly questionable," and "Professor Campbell writes as if he were abysmally ignorant of the best in Christian theology or as intentionally inattentive to it."

I personally have given close readings to the Bible, the great many of the Church fathers, and many modern Christian theologians; and from my own readings of Campbell and hearing him on [the television series] *The Power of Myth and Transformations of the Myth Through Time*, I feel that if Campbell is as profoundly ignorant — or at least negligent, and certainly dogmatic — of other myths and religions as he is of Christianity, he should be laughed from reputable bookshelves.

Craig Payne

Ottumwa, IA

"Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth" by Owen Jones, which appeared in the Fall 1989 issue of *The Intercollegiate Review*, is a good article to add to the "Chronology of Pertinent Articles" compiled by Coralee Grebe in "Bashing Joseph Campbell: Is He Now the Hero of a Thousand Spaces?" This article points out Campbell's unrelenting misuse of theological and philosophical terminology for his own ends, such as the continual use of the word "transcendence" for "immanence."

By the way, not only was Campbell certainly anti-Semitic, though Grebe attempts to refute these charges, but he was also anti-Christian and in particular anti-Catholic. Grebe maintains that whatever "hurtful attitudes" Campbell may or may not have had, "they have not survived him in his work." I would recommend watching the videotape series *Transformations of Myth Through Time*. Grebe desires "concrete examples"; to give one example from many in this series: Campbell recounts a story from the Judeo-Christian Bible before dismissing it with the comment, "What a dreary mythology!"

Campbell's basic mistake lies in his misunderstanding of the religious concept of the relationship between mythology as divine truth and historical revelation as the divine self-expression of that truth. Of course, to Campbell, any assertion of historical revelation (as in belief in the incarnation, for instance) frustrates the "transcendent" purpose of myth. But C.S. Lewis put it best, in case we need to be reminded: "As myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact ... By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth; that is the miracle."

Dainis Bisenieks

Philadelphia, PA

I suppose *Mythlore* would be less than it is without its artwork, though any artist should know how audacious it is to try portraying thousand-ship beauty or its masculine counterpart, whether among Men or Elves. Perhaps the best way out is a stylization that does not insist that these people *really* looked like that. Patrick Wynne's "German

woodcut" [in *Mythlore* 64] was a splendid example. How nicely Hannes Bok could have rendered some aspects of Tolkien's world! And Keith Henderson could have drawn his heroes to the life; those who admire his all-too-few drawings for *The Worm Ouroboros* should see what he did for Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, the most superb illustrated book I know.

As it is, we usually get conventionally attractive men and women; one may wonder what in these portrayals will "date" most badly — like the way women's lips were drawn eighty years ago. Yet there is enchanting beauty ... something about the eyes, something about the corner of the mouth: what Barganax tried to capture in paint. I have seen it; the camera can capture it, as might be seen in a Time-Life book on Gypsies ... An Ozma rather than a Lúthien or Fiorinda. Botticelli might have been able to paint that look.

And What do you suppose William Blake might have done with *The Silmarillion*?

Walter B. Crawford Westminister, CA

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 small of a bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well as the World's End*, the opening lines of *Kubla Khan*, the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves'" (p. 22).

It seems to me that such a comment would most likely be in Lewis' *Surprised by Joy*, but I couldn't find it there, nor in my second choice, *Grief Observed*. Could you help me? I would like to be able to annotate the Lewis reference to *Kubla Khan* in my comprehensive annotated Coleridge *Bibliography*. I would be most grateful for your assistance.



PLEASE NOTE

Important Policy Change regarding the Society Membership Directory

Since the Society has published directories of members, it has been the policy to only publish those who have specifically requested to be included. *This is now going to change.* In the next directory, all Society members will be published, except those who specifically ask not to be listed. This includes all individual subscribers to *Mythlore*, unless they have asked for a non-member subscription. If for any reason you do not wish to be listed in the next Membership Directory, please write the The Mythopoeic Society, P.O. Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91003 USA.

Nature as Supernature

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The Chronicles also share with *The Faerie Queene* the presence of psychological or spiritual journey as a structural principle.⁹ Artegall matures in justice as Covenant ultimately achieves Christ-like love and innocence in spite of his leprosy and his many crimes against the Law when he sacrifices himself under Kiril Threndor. Since he defeats Lord Foul, the externalization of his own dark side, he has worked out in the Land the psychological renewal he could not achieve on his own at Haven Farm. But unlike a Spenserian Knight, he does so unaided by divine grace. For Thomas Covenant, then, the author's statement in his preface to "Gilden-Fire" (an original part of *The Illiarth War*) is a fitting elegy: "In reality as in dreams, what matters is the answer we find in our hearts to the test of Despite."⁹

Notes

1. See my earlier article, "The Hero's Education in Sacrificial Love: Thomas Covenant, Christ-Figure," *Mythlore* 54 (1988), 34-38.
2. All biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.
3. All quotations are from Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, Books I-VI (New York: Ballantine Books); *The Lord Foul's Bane*, *The Illiarth War*, *The Power that Preserves* (1977); *The Wounded Land* (1980), *The One Tree* (1982), *White Gold Wielder* (1983). All references appear in the text.
4. See "The Hero's Education in Sacrificial Love."
5. Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 59. Covenant's own explanation bears out Rabkin's point "Culture shock is what happens when you take a man out of his own world and put him down in a place where the assumptions, the — standards of being a person — are so different that he can't possibly understand them" (I.199). Hurthloom's power to regenerate Covenant's dead nerves, compared with our own world's ills, provides an apt illustration: "We have cancer, heart failure, tuberculosis, multiple sclerosis, birth defects, leprosy — we have alcoholism, venereal disease, drug addiction, rape, robbery, murder, child beating, genocide — but he could not bear to utter a catalog of woes that might run on forever" (I.283-84).
6. It is a minor flaw in Donaldson's tale that the painfully introspective Thomas Covenant does not realize that Vain is Law once he puts on the heels of the Staff of Law at Revelstone in Book IV, or after ring fire partly transforms one of his arms into wood.
7. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
8. Roger C. Schlobin mentions but does not directly compare *The Faerie Queene* and *The Chronicles* in "The Locus Amoenus and the Fantasy Quest" (*Kansas Quarterly* 16 [1984], 29-33). For a broader study, see Raymond H. Thompson, "Modern Fantasy and Medieval Romance: A Comparative Study," in *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art*, ed. Roger C. Schlobin (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 211-25.
9. *Daughters of Regal and Other Tales* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 91.

