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## Letter to the Editor

J. Aleksandr Wootton

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

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### Abstract

A reply to a point made by Andrew Lazo in his essay in *Mythlore* #130 about Lewis's comments on T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

### Additional Keywords

Eliot, T.S. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*; Lewis, C.S.—Attitude toward T.S. Eliot

- . *The Lord of the Rings*. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed., Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- and Christopher Tolkien. *The Return of the Shadow: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part One*. Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

**VERLYN FLIEGER** is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at the University of Maryland, where for 36 years she taught courses in Tolkien, Medieval Literature, and Comparative Mythology. She is the author of five critical books on the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*, *A Question of Time, Interrupted Music, Green Suns and Faërie: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien*, and *There Would Always Be A Fairy Tale: More Essays on Tolkien*. She edited the Extended edition of Tolkien's *Smith of Wootton Major*. With Carl Hostetter she edited *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*, and with Douglas A. Anderson she edited the Expanded edition of Tolkien's *On Fairy-Stories*. She is co-editor of the yearly journal *Tolkien Studies*. She has also published two fantasy novels, *Pig Tale* and *The Inn at Corbies' Caww*, and an Arthurian novella, *Avilion*.



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

J. ALEKSANDR WOOTTON

**I**N *MYTHLORE* 35.2, ANDREW LAZO BEGAN HIS PAPER with excerpts from Eliot's *Love Song* and Lewis's *Confession*: an engaging entrance to an insightful offering.

Fuller treatment of the two poems' dialogue would not have served Andrew's thesis, which needed them only for a springboard. But I should like to observe, in Eliot's defense, that in *Prufrock* it is of course only a bit of grammatical misdirection which implies that "evening" is "like a patient etherized upon a table," a misdirection which cunningly reflects a reversal of cosmic perception in the modern era. Evening is "spread out against the sky," there to be studied and dissected; man as detached observer. Whereas according to the medieval model, well-known to Lewis, it is "we" who are the patient, under the influence of *aether* (that which gods breathe, through which the affecting planets move, and from which the medical anesthetic got its name); we who are being operated on by heavenly powers.

I would add as well, in Lewis's defense, that this subtle acknowledgment of the overturned cosmos is unlikely to have escaped his attention; therefore, that the "coarseness" of which he complains in *Confession* is a mere conceit. Poets such as these do not converse superficially.

Sincerely,  
Jack

**J. ALEKSANDR WOOTTON** IS the author of *FAYBORN*: contemporary fairytale-fantasy that invites our old friends from *Marchen* and classic literature along for new adventures in the present era. In spare time, Wootton chairs the Folklore Department at Lightfoot College. More at [www.jackwootton.com](http://www.jackwootton.com).