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## Letters

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Sharon Battles

Margaret Carter

Kathryn Lindskoog

*See next page for additional authors*

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

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



### Authors

Mary M. Stolzenbach, Nancy-Lou Patterson, Sharon Battles, Margaret Carter, Kathryn Lindskoog, and Diana Lynne Pavlac



# 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, 742 S. Garfield Avenue, Monterey Park, CA 91754. USA

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Vienna, VA

Quotation no. 9 on Peter Berube's list from *The Worm Ouroboros* [in *Mythlore* 60] is from Robert Browning's "Prospice," found in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and doubtless in various other anthologies, referring to the poet's famous love for Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and running thus (Oh, why not quote the whole thing? It's a rouser, and rather Eddisonesque.)—

Fear death? To feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
I am nearer the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so— one fight more,  
The best and the last;  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore  
And bade me creep past.  
But let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
of pain, darkness and cold.  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
The black minute's at end,  
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,  
Then a light, then my best,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be the rest!

(Don't ask me what made Robert Browning, who was something of a freethinker, so confident that he had Heavenly accommodations reserved.)

Nancy Lou Patterson

Waterloo, Canada

It is always nice to know that somebody is reading what one writes, so I'm delighted with David Doughan's attentions. He certainly knows how to get to the heart of a

book review! In self-defence I direct him first to Webster's Dictionary, which defines "Americanism" as a "custom, characteristic, or belief of or originating in the U.S." The use of the phrase "quite simply" is certainly "a custom characteristic of ... the U.S." But the definition contains a second sense: "A word, phrase, or usage, originating in, or peculiar to American English," so I grant Mr. Doughan this point. On my second point, however, I hold my ground. Webster defines "savory" as "in England, a small, highly seasoned portion of food served at the end of a meal," which is what I said a savoury was.<sup>1</sup>

Now that I know he reads my work with such care, I'd like to assure Mr. Doughan that I am not responsible for all the typos in my review article, "The Passionate Intellect," in *Mythlore* 59 (pp. 46-49), two of which entirely negate the points I was trying to make. First, I wrote of Dorothy L. Sayers and Ivy Shrimpton, "Now one understands how their girlhood friendship was crowned when Miss Sayers entrusted her son to Ivy's care," Not "No one." (p. 47) Second, in quoting from the Book of Common Prayer, I wrote "and dost forgive the sins of all those that are penitent," not the since of" etc. (p. 49), as the computer so whimsically put it. Readers and computer glitches are alike provided by God to assure the humility of scholars.<sup>2</sup>

1. I.S. Rombauer and M.R. Backer, *The Joy of Cooking* (New York: New American Library, 1964) list Oysters and Chicken Livers in Bacon; Sardine, Caviar, and Roe Croutes; Tomato Tarts; Devilled or Curried Seafish Tarts; and Toasted Cheese Balls as "Savories." (p. 708) Suzy Menkes, *The Windsor Style* (London: Grafton, 1987) lists savories prepared by the Duchess of Windsor to conclude formal meals (she was also famous for including a few American dishes to pique the tastes of her guests) as Welsh Rarebit Savoury, Fingers of Frozen Camembert and Cream Chess, and Fried Toast with Curried Chopped Ham, topped with Hollandaise Sauce, Tomato, and Mushroom. (P. 205)
2. Scholars are those people otherwise known as "pedants," who put footnotes on the Letters to the Editor.

Sharon Battles

Santa Barbara, CA

C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, & *The Great Divorce*

On one of my recent trips to the Wade Center at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, I found a book of Poetry by Charles Williams I had not seen before. I found the slender lime green cloth-covered book in a glass and oak bookcase in the Wade Center, which houses the works of seven British authors, including C.S. Lewis and his close friend, Charles Williams.

I brought the book back to my chair, which happened to be at the large oak table that was once in C.S. Lewis' kitchen; (though I usually sit on the couch near the window with the red geraniums). I settled back into my chair and was enjoying my new-found poetry, which I was



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surprised by a poem entitled "In a Motor-bus." It goes:

*In a Motor-bus*

Narrow and long the motor-bus  
Lumbers round bend on bend:  
My limbs are stiff with standing up,  
Leaning against the end  
For a long hour, on either side  
From the roof three lamps depend.

This is no car wherein I ride,  
These are not me I see;  
Narrow and long my coffin is,  
And driven lumberingly,  
As I go onward through the dark  
And Death goes on with me.

These are the churchyard images  
My Misty eye beholds;  
This is no raincoat but a shroud  
My chilly limbs no mortal heaviness  
But *rigor mortis* holds.

London and God are left behind,  
Far, far behind; we go  
Down through the dark night and the sleet  
To a cold country woe.  
And if my soul shall yet be saved  
Nor death I can know . . .

O as my hear beats forward now,  
And hardly does suspire,  
Shall I remember, when indeed  
Death does my soul require  
How once from Golder's Green we went  
Down into Hertfordshire?<sup>1</sup>

While I was reading the poem I kept thinking about *The Great Divorce*, the novel by C.S. Lewis, where people living in Hell take a bus to Heaven. I wondered if C.S. Lewis has read this poem before he had written his book. I flipped to the front of the poetry book and found it had been published in 1920.

I immediately spoke with Mr. Pat Hargis who works in the Wade Center and who is writing his doctoral dissertation on Charles Williams.

"What year was *The Great Divorce* published?"

"1945."

"This poem," I said, "was published in 1920."

I read the poem aloud, watching him smile as he caught the similarities between Williams' poem and Lewis' book. He agreed that C.S. Lewis probably had read the poem since he greatly admired Charles Williams and there were several corresponding images.

I mentioned that when I had first read *The Great Divorce* in 1971, I had wondered where Lewis had gotten the title; did it mean more than the separation between Heaven and Hell?

What if Lewis," I aid, "wanted to show how much Charles had influenced him, wanted to pay homage in some way. He could take a poem from a small book of poetry called . . ." I closed the book and showed him the

title. The word "Divorce" was stamped in gold letters on lime green cloth. "He could take a poem from a small book of poetry call Divorce and turn it into a book, a book-length form of the images, and call it — it would really be an inside joke — the GREAT divorce."

We were both grinning at each other by this time.

"Wasn't Sarah," I asked him, "in *The Great Divorce*, the old woman with all the animals surrounding her, wasn't she from Golders Green?"

He didn't remember and neither did I. But since then I have reread *The Great Divorce* and in Chapter Twelve, C.S. Lewis writes of her, "... Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green.

1. From *Divorce* by Charles Williams. London: Oxford University Press, 1920, pp. 110-111.

Postscript: For those interested in these images, they may want to read "The Celestial Omnibus" by E.M. Forester, written in 1923.

### Margaret Carter

### Annapolis, MD

I like the cover of *Mythlore* 60 very much, and I see several articles I eagerly look forward to reading. I had to write to you at once, however to thank you and Joe Christopher for the long review of my recent books. It is just the kind of review every author must hope for — thorough, insightful, and charitable. I noted one apparent typographical error, though, in the first paragraph of the second column on p. 56. "Carter does not list more than twice as many pieces of fiction as Riccardo does" should read "does list" — and I presume from the general tone of the paragraph that this is what the reviewer meant to say. And to avoid misleading potential readers, note that in the first column on that page, the typesetter has mistakenly used a nine instead of an opening paren after "Non-English Vampiric Fiction in Translation"; there are only 23 items. "Dramatic Works" covers only plays, not movies, since many authorities have discussed and indexed vampire films.

I especially appreciate Dr. Christopher's noting of articles, and one story, that I missed. The Boucher story he mentions will certainly appear in the 1991 version of the annual update of the fiction list that I'm self publishing. Also, Dr. Christopher is not the first person to censure me for failing to note a reprint sources for some of the obscure stories! *Mea culpa!* A list of such reprint appearances will eventually be made available, probably in the 1991 update. I may also prepare a title index to the fiction list — a mammoth undertaking, but it has been suggested to me as highly desirable.

Dr. Christopher's review of *Payer of Tribute* is thoughtful and intriguing. Again, I must thank him for his courtesy in giving such concentrated attention to a small-press release. He'll doubtless be glad to hear that my husband so mercilessly ridiculed my attempt at a naturalistic



winged vampire (I had in mind parachute silk, light and filmy but extremely strong, and a mode of flight something like hand-gliding, but my husband, a physicist, convinced me that even with a 12-15 foot wingspread it wouldn't work) that in my "canonical" works, including "Rite of Passage" and three novels I'm currently trying to sell, I switched to a borderline-fantasy concept of including the transformation among the vampire's psychic gifts; my vampires now have the ability to change their outward appearance (not underlying body structures) by psychic force, and the "flight" is explained as levitation.

I found Dr. Christopher's interpretation of the subtext of the novelette very interesting. Having been brought up in the school of the New Criticism, I have no grounds for claiming that my reading (as author) should be any more privileged than anyone else's. For the record, though, I must say that although the romanticizing of "the perverted lover" (and how interesting that our culture, dominated by male patterns of sexuality, defines any lovemaking devoid of ejaculation as "perverted") is certainly a possible reading, my conscious intent was to portray what is conventionally considered "monstrous" as not necessarily evil — as in almost all my vampire fiction, to portray a positive view of the vampire. I'm sorry that entailed a negative view of Christianity, which is not my usual habit (some modern fantasy contains more than enough Christianity-bashing), but Isobel needed a solid motive for abandoning her home. I thought especially novel about this enterprise, since there exist dozens of novels and short stories in which the vampire is shown as not evil.

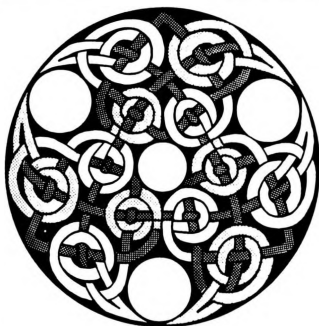
Yes, the motif of vampire as dark Byronic hero certainly lies somewhere behind the tale, since I've always enjoyed that kind of vampire. But I'm surprised Dr. Christopher didn't pick up the primary source of the story, which I feared would be so painfully obvious that readers would

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condemn it as trite. My interest was to rewrite "Beauty and the Beast" in vampire terms — right down to the motif of the maiden's love saving the "monster" from death.

Again, I thank you for running such a thought-provoking review. I feel honored.

[She goes on to say she looks forward to attending the 1990 Mythopoetic Conference in Long Beach.]

**Kathryn Lindskoog**

**Orange, CA**

In *Mythlore* 58 Darrell Schweitzer suggested a practical wait-and-see attitude toward *The C.S. Lewis Hoax*: "If there is no suit, or if Lindskoog wins, the allegations are probably true. If Hooper wins, they are probably false." His proposal call for an update.

Readers of *Mythlore* will be interested to note that *Hoax* was released late in 1988, and well over a year has passed without a hint of a legal suit from anyone. I think that fact speaks volumes.

**Diana Lynne Pavlac**

**Chicago, IL**

The papers in *Mythlore* keep getting better: more specific, more scholarly, more articulate. In the Winter 1989 issue, though, it was a special feature that most completely arrested my attention. "Three Artistic Versions of the Death of Glorfindel" was a visual treat. Even more, to hear each artist articulate her or his concept, rendering, sources and the like, offered all of us a useful lesson in seeing. Kudos to Sarah Beach, Patrick Wynne and Paula DiSante.

**Errata:** In the last issue, number 60, an error was made in Douglas Loney's "Humpty Dumpty in the Heavens" On page 17 the ð in "Danæ" was not properly read by the computer, leaving it "Dane," and the proofreading changes arrived from the author after the issue was at press.