

7-15-1993

## Letters of Comment

Charles de Lint

Thomas Egan

Gwenyth E. Hood

Erin Lale

Ron Blizzard

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Lint, Charles de; Egan, Thomas; Hood, Gwenyth E.; Lale, Erin; and Blizzard, Ron (1993) "Letters of Comment," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 1993 : Iss. 15 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol1993/iss15/3>

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 The Mythic Circle 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>



---

## Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL "HALFLING" MYTHCON

July 31 - August 1, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday)

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-51.htm>



## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

### Additional Keywords

Letters of Comment

# LETTERS OF COMMENT

Dear editors,

Once again, thanks for the latest issue of *Mythic Circle*. Considering the recessionary times, and how many small press endeavors rarely make it into their teens, I'm constantly delighted that *Mythic Circle* not only survives, but appears to be thriving. Every issue has promising stories, voices that I know we'll one day see by-lined in the bookstores. Every issue also has at least one piece that could readily appear in any of the professional markets and do itself proud by appearing there.

This time around, it's heine-koene's "The House of Knowledge," a masterful (mistressful?) contemporary blend of fairy tale and Christian motifs that speaks to the reader in a voice at once timeless and relevant to the present day.

Keep up the good works and best of luck for the new year.

Charles de Lint  
Ottawa, Canada

*We'll be sure to send lala heine-koene a copy of your letter. We don't ordinarily do this, since we hope (hint, hint) that our authors will subscribe and join our continuing creative dialogue, but a letter such as this is so supportive; Ms. heine-koene must see it. TC*

Dear editors,

I received issue no. 13 (Early Summer) in June 1992, but now I wish to comment on it. I was deeply delighted as a long-time (since 1980) contributor to *Mythlore* that I am now a small part of this part of the Mythopoeic Society with the publication of my three poems in the Aliador Cycle. I hope that fans of your journal (and especially Prof. Joe Christopher and Gwenyth Hood) will comment/enjoy my poems. They will eventually inspire a series of short stories in a Tolkienesque mold.

To this end, I am enclosing a map I made some years ago on Aliador and its environs. It's a world a lot like ancient Ireland of the Tuatha-de-danaan and the strange spirits and monster-like folk that fought the wandering Celts. The map illustrates many points in the verse--and suggests many potential stories of the conflict of the Elf-folk of Aliador against the necromancy of Grimemog. It's a "War-of-Angels" (fallen and unfallen, both using their own agents or delegates) with the fate of a hidden world at stake. So I hope you can reproduce the map with my letter.

By the way, I hope you enjoyed the Tolkien Centenary. I dearly envy those who were able to visit England to attend that grand Conference at Keble College. What a feast for the imagination of storytelling, music and lecture-disputes. The likes of Rayner Unwin (no longer a publisher in his old firm, alas--the spirit of Saruman is everywhere!); T.P.

Shippey (I saw him balding with his mustache bristling on public television a year ago on "The Story of English" program series, brilliant like a Silmaril, jolly like a Hobbit); the Tolkiens, Christopher and Priscilla; and so many others, beg to be part of a documentary for American-public television. Alas, it will never be made. (*For those of our readers who are not Mythopoeic Society members, Thomas Egan refers to the Tolkien Centenary Conference held in Oxford last summer to celebrate Tolkien's 100th birthday. The Conference was jointly sponsored by the Mythopoeic Society and the (British) Tolkien Society. TC*)

Your stories and poems are all good-to-excellent. "The Healer and the Storyteller" by Joseph Kurtenbach verges on sentimentality, the maudlin pathos so much of American fiction is besodden with. I'm not against "Love," but that virtue is very hard to find in fantasy. The tale isn't bad, but it's too close to being Erich Segal's "Love Story" in another form. Sorry.

Joe Christopher used to be a correspondent of mine as I sent him my published Tolkien piece for his research on the Inklings (I hope he remembers me!) His poems are part of one long *Kulturkampf* he makes (now for some years) on the modern literary establishment. The academics (especially of the Edmund Wilson type) have been very unresponsive to Tolkien's pleas that he was *not* making another form of allegory to protest the political-social conundrums of the modern era. Tolkien enjoyed fantasy as a way to explore the "real world." His sub-creation was written *first* for himself, then for his potential readership. It makes all the difference in the world for the emotional-intellectual power of a work. So three kudos for Joe Christopher's verse!

The stories by Alex McGilverly ("Frog Prince") and Dan Perlman ("A Visit from Mom") were delightful, "cute" in the best sense of the word, showing an Aristotlean simplicity we should all cultivate. Humor is a gentle creature, slowly drawn out, not to be "belly-laughed" into existence. "The Cyclops Maid" is properly heroic, easy to follow and sympathetic in its characters. Not great reading, but good sturdy prose. The same with David Sandner's "The Witch's Eyes." A lot like the fairy tales translated by the 10th century linguist Andrew Lang. Mary Choo's poetry gives me a reborn taste of Gerard Manley Hopkins' style and techniques--although the subject matter is certainly very different.

"On the Edge" by Valerie Giusti is perhaps the best story in plotline, characterization and "power" here.

So, the best to all...*Pax vobiscum in spiritu Christi*. I hope there are some Valar watching, as they are angels, over our poor American New World (Order). I sympathize with those who celebrate Columbus *re* your poem by G. Hood in issue no. 12, *pace* Charles de Lint. He's a good writer but I don't agree with him on Columbus. The latter was *not* a

racial/religious/genocidal maniac. His sins were real, but limited. His genius was real, too....

Thomas Egan  
Woodside, New York

*It's always fun to have the concrete detail to flesh out the action of a story or poem. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of xerographic technology, we were not able to include the map. Thanks for responding to our issue! TC*

Dear editors,

I admire you for continuing with *The Mythic Circle* with everything you have on your mind! I am sorry I missed writing a LOC on the last issue, so I am hereby writing one to go along with this.

"The Magic Carpenter" by John R. Alderson is a fine story. The prose is smooth and flowing. The magical concept is convincing. The characters are well drawn, especially the patient father, Eldewin Whiteharte. But I'm guessing that Alderson wants my ideas, such as they are, for making the story publishable for professional markets. So here they are.

Alderson explains twice how Pwill died, first in Fescue's thoughts and then in Fescue's words to Dak. Wouldn't it be more effective if Pwill's death were only hinted at in Fescue's thoughts, the full story being told the first time in Fescue's words to Dak?

Although the magical concept is convincing, it is so convincing that I have a hard time believing that Fescue the wizard wouldn't have known, or at least suspected, the true risk of trying to create living beings through magic. It would be more plausible if Pwill acted in defiance of Fescue, rather than in cooperation with him.

And that is part of the reason why, though Eldewin comes through clearly, Fescue and Dak aren't quite as convincing. Dak's mixture of willful rebelliousness and affectionate loyalty needs to be depicted more strikingly.

By the way, when I shared some of these comments on-line (GENIE network), a friend pointed out that Dak was the name of an electronic catalogue company. I get their catalogue too, but didn't realize how wide their distribution was. A change of name might be in order.

In Ron Blizzard's "Iorg and the Dancing Sword," the basic gag words, but other points need to be developed. It is understandable why the magical animated swords have formed a union, but what's in it for the dragons, trolls and monsters? Who provides the treasure? And if there had been a bit more foreshadowing of the ultimate catastrophe, with Iorg utterly failing to take the hint, it would have been more effective.

The central idea in "Color it Vanity" works well, but the lengthy dispute over whether the wizard would undertake the mission in the first place, and whether the lord would pay him in the end, was less interesting, and could have been dropped without harm to the story.

Karen J. Connell's story "To Kill a Wizard," once more, had an excellent central premise; a bit more background color would help. Also the scene at the beginning where Litha kills a vagrant without hesitation or apparent provocation seems undermotivated. But I really liked the ironic situation set up with two tricksters learning each other's trade.

"Ragwort, Ragwort," was well written, but I had difficulty understanding what the leprechaun's key unlocked.

The central gag in "Naughty or Nice" is side-splitting, but I thought both the child and the cat were too mean. I would have enjoyed a more muted and subtler conflict.

That's as far as I got. Maybe I'll write more later.

I suppose I should mention that I'm bemused to have my sestina, "To Christopher Columbus," become the center of a small controversy, with the redoubtable Charles de Lint objecting to its alleged pro-Conquistador bias and the *MC* editors defending their decision to publish it. I'd be the last to deny that poetry has political implications; however, short lyrics are not the best medium for extensive development of them. If I had written a long epic poem glorifying the Conquistadors and not mentioning the shame of what they did to the indigenous American populations, then de Lint's point would be compelling. But short lyrics are intensive, not extensive. I think it is legitimate to write a short lyric expressing sympathy and admiration for a fifteenth century explorer without exhaustively cataloguing the implications of his actions. And I will stick by that opinion.

Congratulations for a fine issue, and I look forward to the next.

Gwenyth E. Hood  
Huntington, West Virginia

*Thanks, Gwenyth, for a fine, detailed letter. This is the substantive feedback our authors need to hear, since most of them do want to make that break into the professional markets. TC*

*Excellent comments on the stories, Gwyneth. Thanks. Re: "intensive" versus "extensive" - sometimes intense poetry evokes an intense response! CISL*

Dear editors,

Hi, everyone! I just have a couple of nits to pick here—I generally loved the last issue's contents, but I noticed a few minor flaws.

In "The Magic Carpenter" (which I like very much!) something bothers me about the way Fessie and Dak talk to each other, but I'm not sure what exactly.

"Iorg and the Dancing Sword"—this is a laugh riot! But—"sewage-infested pools?" It's not alive. At least, I hope it's not.

"Images"—I'm confused on one point. Is the picture of the unicorn color or black and white? Most of the clues point to black and white—she develops her own film, prints

a contact sheet, sends prints, not slides, to the publisher, and stores negatives. But on the other hand, the author refers to the photographer snapping away at a "play of shapes and colors."

O.k., I'm done nit-picking. Happy 1993 everyone!

Erin Lale  
Sonoma, California

*Personally, I rather enjoyed the "sewage-infested" image, since for me it evoked an unnerving feeling of something unthinkably slimy living in the water--very effective in the context. And the black-and-white-or-color question really didn't occur to me--I'm not sure it's important, since the story doesn't turn on it in any way, but perhaps other readers will have a different impression. TC*

*I, too, enjoyed the "sewage-infested" image. Very (eccch!) evocative. The Dak/Fessie conversation is an interesting blend of "forsoothly" and slangy language, a blend that might not work for some. I'm not a fan of "forsoothly" language, so I feel that anything that lightens it up is to the good. CISL*

Dear Editors

I was quite happy to receive issue #14...not only was it nice to see "Iorg" in print but the variety in #14 is very good. Before I forget to mention it, thanks to Tim Callahan and Lynn Maudlin, their art fit the mood of "Iorg" very nicely.

The ending of "The Magic Carpenter" was good (this was my favorite story in #14). Although Fescue's willingness to sacrifice himself for Dak may have been the climax, the story's main attraction (in my opinion) was the unexpected strength of Dak's father. It left me wondering what these two, father and son, might be up to in a few years.

"Color it Vanity" drew me in at the start but the mention of the computer ruined the mood. It seemed to be there only for novelty. What hurt the story most, however, was the seeming invincibility of Martyl. You felt he was never in danger and, what's more, he was smug about it. I'm probably too sensitive about this because I've seen many overly powerful heroes in the stories that have come to the Rambler. It destroys suspense. They never have to reach into themselves and pull out that last little bit of reserve. You never have that moment when all hangs in the balance. And...well, ahem, I'll get off my soap box now. "Vanity's" basic plot and writing were good, though I think more time could have been spent with fighting the demon and less with shaming Sir Landsworth.

Jesup in "To Kill A Wizard" intrigued me, but I found Litha and Gethin about as shallow as soap opera characters. By the end I was hoping that Litha would kill Gethin, confess the murder and then we could get on with the main attraction, Jesup. This sounds harsher than it should because the story did hold my attention. I really would like to hear more of Jesup, though.

I have mixed emotions about "Ragwort, Ragwort."

The "feel" of it, the conversation and interaction come across as authentic, but there may have been too much detail. At times it seemed to get in the way of the story. Although I was happy for Seamus at the end, he saw that his dream would come true, it was hard to shake the feeling that he was just a vehicle for a lecture on the history of Ireland.

"Fiddler of Sundown Lake" definitely held my attention. The story progressed well and I liked the conversation and interaction between the characters. My problem was Mark's sense of euphoria when I realized what the fiddle playing had done. I suppose now he understood his father's actions and that would be a relief but "euphoria"? He and his father's cheery attitude seemed unnatural to me.

I like the idea of desert unicorns presented in "Images." I only wished the story had paused a little more so it could really sink in. (Desert unicorns!) When Kelley found the colt I wanted to see the wonder in her eyes. To see her feel something. When the unicorn saved her life by clearing the pool it was also handled, in my opinion, too matter-of-factly.

"The Seminar" made a good point in an entertaining manner. It was well paced and convincing. That is, until Poe's speech as he faded out of sight. I find it hard to believe that most "scholars" would give a rat's behind what their subject thought of their studies. Other than that I liked the story.

"Naughty or Nice" was a good, "got his come-uppance" short story. My only advice would be to cut it off after Chuckie squishes Pesker's present between his fingers. The rest is not necessary and takes away from the climax.

"Bridget Skla's Dreamworld Tea" suffers from the same problems, in my opinion. I liked the story, the idea of a different "dreamworld" reality changing events in the real world. But the story meandered at the end. I think it would have been much stronger if, after the baby was born and lightning split the boulder, the story came to an abrupt end. (Like this comment.)

I'm sorry that this LOC is negative. It's easier to pick out weaknesses than strengths, especially when time is short. I can only hope that something I've said helps and that no one will be tempted to slit their wrists (or mine) because of my OPINIONS (pigheaded though they may be).

Ron Blizzard  
Weiser, Idaho

*I think such specific, concrete comments are extremely useful to our writers, although they may not always agree with them! Thanks--TC*