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## Reviews

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

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### Abstract

*Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth.* Brian Attebery. Reviewed by David Bratman.

*The Body in Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on Middle-earth Corporeality.* Edited by Christopher Vaccaro. Reviewed by Janet Brennan Croft.

*Critical Essays on Lord Dunsany.* S.T. Joshi, ed. Lanham MD. Reviewed by Tiffany Brooke Martin.

*History, Guilt, and Habit.* Owen Barfield. Reviewed by Bradford Lee Eden.

*In the Nameless Wood: Explorations in the Philological Hinterland of Tolkien's Literary Creations.* J.S. Ryan. Edited by Peter Buchs. Reviewed by Andrew Higgins.

*The Letters of Ruth Pitter: Silent Music.* Edited by Don W. King. Reviewed by Joe R. Christopher.

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book\_review

### Authors

David Bratman, Joe R. Christopher, Janet Brennan Croft, Bradford Lee Eden, Andrew Higgins, and Tiffany Brooke Martin

# R E VIEWS

**STORIES ABOUT STORIES: FANTASY AND THE REMAKING OF MYTH.** Brian Attebery. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 240 p. 9780199316069. \$29.95; Kindle ed. \$9.99.

BRIAN ATTEBERY WON THE MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD in 1994 for his study of *Strategies of Fantasy*, the book that introduced the now-widespread idea of defining the fantasy genre as a fuzzy set of novels that more or less resemble *The Lord of the Rings*. He had earlier been Mythcon Guest of Honor on the strength of his historical survey of *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature*.

Having spent much of his intervening attention on science fiction, Attebery has returned with this third major study of fantasy literature. Its theme is fantasy and myth: focused not on the usual themes of describing the mythic sources of fantasy novels, or on the reader's experience of fantasy as a modern substitute for myth, but on the more tenuous topic of the use that fantasy makes of its mythic sources, or the practice of assimilating and retelling myth. As Attebery observes, readers crave the mythic experience.

It's a delicate and elusive topic, and the book's eight chapters (plus two, somewhat tangential, interchapters) approach it from a variety of viewpoints. This is because *Stories About Stories*, like *Strategies of Fantasy* before it, is actually a collection of separate essays lightly welded together. They're presented here in roughly historical sequence, with an increasingly close focus on more recent work.

One recurring theme is the place of fantasy within literature. Chapter one opens encouragingly with a discussion of myth itself as literature, positing that myths of living cultures are not static and that their tellers are modern people as influenced by their circumstances as anyone else. The following section is not entirely explicit in applying this principle to the pre-20th century history of fantasy, but it's full of fascinating observations on, for instance, Milton's contribution to Biblical myth and what would be missing if he'd written, as he'd considered, an Arthurian epic instead.

Chapters two and four include robust defenses of fantasy against their dismissal and suppression by modernist critics and writers. Attebery points out that dominant literary paradigms are never the only ones in operation, and that many of the canonical modernist writers also worked in the mode of the fantastic. "People

conveniently forgot that Woolf also wrote fantasy (*Orlando*), James ghost stories, and Forster science fiction" (98). In chapter two, he makes the first of many startling juxtapositions by describing what Eliot's *The Waste Land* would be like if it "were not a densely allusive and cryptically fragmented poem but a novel" (46), and the resulting description turns out to be of *War in Heaven* by Charles Williams. And for a novel of that period which does the same thing to myth in pagan rather than Christian terms, he offers *Lud-in-the-Mist* by Hope Mirrlees.

Chapter four is equally startling, with its readings of pioneering contemporary urban fantasies (Sanders Anne Laubenthal's *Excalibur* and Diana L. Paxson's *Brisingamen*, both largely forgotten outside of Mythopoeic Society readership) as precursors to the now-popular paranormal romance, adding the classic characters of Ozma and Mary Poppins as recipients of displaced romantic feelings. Attebery is neither Freudian nor reductionist, just keenly observant. The chapter concludes with a sweepingly impressive reading of Alan Garner's early novels as a gradual maturation out of the Mary Sue-style wish-fulfillment story, with a particularly robust defense of the genius of *The Owl Service*.

Chapter three is more problematic. It offers a contrast between C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald, claiming that Lewis has assimilated and rewritten MacDonald's ideas and beliefs to fit his own agenda. Questionable as this is, it's outweighed by Attebery's peculiar readings of Lewis himself, mutely passing on Laura Miller's reading of a cognitive dissonance between Narnia and the Christianity it's supposed to express as evidence that Narnia is "much less Christian, perhaps than Lewis intended," without considering that Lewis's whole purpose was to demonstrate that Christianity can be more than the "boredom, subjugation, and reproach" that Miller found in school (qtd. 89). Worse yet, Attebery blindly repeats the complete misreading that Susan Pevensie is "ejected [...] from Narnia for showing signs of adult sexuality" (91). About *Till We Have Faces*, more to his tastes, Attebery is more insightful, using its mythic meaning to save it from reductionist misinterpretations.

Attebery returns to Christian fantasy with moderate success in chapter 6 and the following interchapter. Chapter six is an angelology of fantasy. It offers, in a manner suggested by the taxonomy of Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, several ways of viewing angels, from mythological to those of genuine religious belief, and discusses the characteristic rhetorical style related to each. This is related to a larger consideration of whether an element normally considered fantastic still counts as such if the author believes in it, a question that could use much more extensive consideration. The interchapter on the motives of those Christians who denounce some or all fantasy as morally corrupt shows some insight, but falls before the fact that this movement is not primarily driven by literary considerations.

Chapters five and seven form a fascinating pair on the use of native peoples' and Third World mythologies in fantasy novels, chapter five considering their use by

conventional Western authors (including those of European descent drawing on their own ethnicities), and chapter seven on authors from these native and Third World cultures using their own. Both chapters have a strong focus on Australian Aboriginal material. Chapter five includes the fascinating and startling story of Patricia Wrightson, a white Australian author whose Aboriginal-based fantasies were highly praised when new, but have now reached the “uneasy” position of being “revered but not read” (137-38) and out of print.

Attebery treats with some skepticism the angry reaction of a white critic who “seems particularly irritated” by the praise that Wrightson received by Aboriginal literary figures for her portrayal of their culture (129). Some mystery could have been cleared up here by a panel on literary appropriation as seen by different cultures that I attended at the World Fantasy Convention in 1989. All these statements are generalizations, but, unlike Native Americans (also discussed by Attebery in this context), who tend to see their myths and folklore as purely their own, and consider even those outsider reports they actively cooperated on to be something of an imposition, Australian Aboriginals tend to see only the oral tales as the private property of their storytellers. Written accounts are not the real stories, so the people are entirely content for outsiders to copy whatever they want, in print. That would explain the placid and friendly response of Aboriginals to Wrightson. Despite Attebery’s skepticism of white critics who “take offense on behalf of indigenous Australians who have not chosen to do so” (129) and his careful and robustly presented distinction of cultural appropriation from cross-cultural communication (179-80), he still uses heavy language like “well-intentioned story theft” (128).

Nevertheless, the Aboriginal fantasists discussed in chapter seven are presenting ways of viewing their culture unseen in any fantasies by outsiders based on it, suggesting that our outsider-mediated views of that culture are quite incomplete and misleading. Yet even those writers’ authority to speak for their culture, indeed their very membership in it, has been challenged (183).

Chapter eight operates as a chronological supplement bringing the theme up to the present day, focusing on a final crumbling of all the borders between cultures and the ways fantasists can treat them. Fine readings of Ursula Le Guin’s *Always Coming Home* and *Lavinia* in this context frame discussions of Jeanne Larsen, Molly Gloss, and other writers.

This book is not a comprehensive survey of its subject, but a series of examples. As such, it is thorough and well thought-out. The errors and logical omissions are minor in context, and any problems are dwarfed by Attebery’s keen, often brilliant insights, and his entirely lucid writing style, even when dealing with the most abstract and theoretical concepts. There is even, buried somewhere in the text, a pun, which is how you know this is an authentic Brian Attebery work.

—David Bratman

**THE BODY IN TOLKIEN'S LEGENDARIUM: ESSAYS ON MIDDLE-EARTH CORPOREALITY.** Edited by Christopher Vaccaro. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2013. 9780786474783. \$40.00.

CHRIS VACCARO'S INTRODUCTION TO THIS UNIQUE COLLECTION poses the central question: "Do bodies matter in Middle-earth?" (1). Is the corporeality of the "incarnated spirits" of Tolkien's world something that deserves our critical attention? Indeed it does, and the introduction is not to be missed as it provides a concise overview of issues related to the body in literature and points out the themes that are of most interest to readers of Tolkien: death and resurrection, pain and suffering, metamorphosis, fertility and celibacy, spirituality and materiality, purity and pollution.

Verlyn Flieger's insightful lead chapter, "The Body in Question: The Unhealed Wounds of Frodo Baggins," proposes to show that "[w]hat happens to Frodo's body over the course of his journey is the outward manifestation of his changing inner condition" (12). Tracing a pattern of images of "thinning," transparency, invisibility, inner light, and contrasts with Frodo's "shadow," Gollum, Flieger demonstrates Tolkien's intent that we pay attention to Frodo's unhealed wounds, which show that the hobbit "pays the highest price and gets the least reward" (18).

Yvette Kisor, in "Incorporeality and Transformation in *The Lord of the Rings*," contrasts incorporeality and invisibility, asserting that they are in fact quite different: fading or invisible things in Tolkien in fact retain their corporeality. She bolsters her argument by examining the transparency and physicality of the Ringwraiths and Gandalf, and contrasting the more "ambiguous" (27) case of Frodo. The Ring, she argues, is "everywhere associated with embodiedness; it necessitates its wearer maintain a physical form in order to wield it, [...] and the invisibility it grants is simply [...] a trick of sight" (24). Kisor also considers the case of the "twilight world" where Frodo encounters both the solidified shadows of the Nazgûl and the white flame-like figure of Glorfindel; usefully, she traces Tolkien's development of this concept through his earlier drafts of this chapter (28-30).

Anna Smol draws our attention to parallels between trauma inflicted on the bodies of soldiers in both World War I's literature and its harsh reality and Tolkien's similar treatment of Frodo. In "Frodo's Body: Liminality and the Experience of War," Smol uses the critical frameworks of the uncanny and the abject to trace out Frodo's lifelong pattern of loss (beginning with his parents) as it culminates in the disintegration of the physical and psychological "boundaries of his self" (48). His wounding and maiming over the course of his quest make visible his "loss of autonomy" (56), making the comparison to shell shock inescapable.

Matthew Dickerson, in "The *Hröa* and *Fëa* of Middle-earth: Health, Ecology, and the War," expands on some of the themes he and Jonathan Evans discussed in

their 2006 book *Ents, Elves, and Eriador*. Here Dickerson examines the tension between seen and unseen reality in Tolkien's Arda. In contrast to materialistic philosophies, Tolkien holds that "what happens in the unseen world has profound influence on the seen" (66), but does not accept the Gnostic or neo-Platonic conclusion that matter and body are therefore evil or at least to be rejected. The implication, then, is that Tolkien "affirmed the reality of the spiritual world, [but] also affirmed the value and goodness of the material world" (72). Dickerson uses this conclusion in support of his assertion that Tolkien was a type of environmentalist, valuing the ecological world for its own sake, and bolsters his arguments with examples both mundane (the relationship of Hobbits to the Shire) and mystical (Yavanna as subcreator, channeling Eru's Flame Imperishable to bring life to matter). Environmentalism, care of the earth as "the dwelling place of God," thus becomes "a spiritual activity" (79).

In "The Ugly Elf: Orc Bodies, Perversion, and Redemption in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*," Jolanta N. Komornicka takes on a question that vexed Tolkien even in some of his final notes relating to his legendarium: the redeemability of the orcs. "[H]ow we read the orcs" (84) should not only be influenced by the arguments of Augustine and Boethius on the nature of evil, but also by Tolkien's own consideration of the centrality of the monsters in Beowulf: evil must have an ultimate origin in good, as orcs do in elves and humans. She points out several revealing patterns in the way orcs are depicted—we rarely see an individual orc (83), they are frequently seen as segments or pieces or glimpses rather than as whole bodies (89-90), and while human, elf, hobbit, or dwarf blood is rarely graphically described, orc blood is (91). What is particularly compelling about orcs is their kinship to us, the readers: "A monster becomes truly horrifying and fearsome when it proceeds from the known. [...] [S]o long as there is the elf, or humanity itself, there is the *potential* for the orc" (89). Indeed, "The monster that shares our traits haunts us more viscerally, more hungrily than one who bears us no resemblance" (93).

Robin Reid takes us in what is a fairly new direction in Tolkien studies with her article on female bodies in *The Lord of the Rings*: using stylistic methodologies to gather and analyze statistical data about the text. As she admits, "[s]tylistic methodology rarely uncovers interpretations at odds with critical consensus" (101), but having actual hard data makes critical conclusions more readily supportable. In this article Reid uses these tools to read "against the grain" (100) and examine the "grammatical construction of female characters' bodies" (98). She analyzes such data as the types of words used to describe characters, the number of times they speak or act, how they are referred to, what types of verbs describe their actions, and so on. One interesting conclusion, for example, is that Tolkien's women have little or no interaction with other women; while one might have suspected this, having data to back it up is useful, and much of Reid's supporting data is included in an appendix. This article includes a footnote on the history of Tolkien scholarship about women characters and by women scholars nearly substantial enough to have been its own

article—and indeed Reid draws on the research presented here in her essay in the soon-to-be-published *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*.

Gergely Nagy's article is dense theoretical going but certainly thought-provoking. He points out, first of all, that the stories of mythological beings like the Valar and Maiar are always narrated by others—they are never viewpoint characters who tell their own tales. As creators, they are “generators of both subjects and the subject matter of stories” (121). Sauron is a special case in that, even when disembodied, he works on and through the physical. In his desire to “produce [his] own meaning” in opposition to Ilúvatar's plan, he becomes involved in the world in a physical way (122)—and thus is trapped in corporeality, unable to control or change his form after the downfall of Númenor. The Eye becomes a representation of Sauron, both as a symbol for his body and for his power of the gaze (125). But in fact the Ring itself also represents Sauron's body and ability to act materially on the world. The particularly interesting insight here is that Sauron's goal is to “become the ultimate meaning simply by erasing all other meanings or subjects able to produce them” (128); but ultimately, “[i]t is not gods who make myths but people” (130)—it is only in the stories narrated by characters within the *legendarium* that Sauron has meaning.

James T. Williamson suggests that “the female body in *The Lord of the Rings* is emblematic rather than biological” (134) in his contribution, and demonstrates what he means by this through an examination of terms used to refer to Goldberry, Arwen, Galadriel, and Éowyn. These women are described most frequently using words that relate them to nature, water, and fertility; even descriptions of their clothing, adornments, hair, movements, and voices tie back to this type of imagery. While this sort of imagery can also be found in the medieval literature Tolkien worked with professionally, Williamson's observation is that this “links their bodies to broader thematic significances” (146): to issues of barrenness and fertility, mortality and renewal, that underlie the entire deep thematic structure of *The Lord of the Rings*. The reader may or may not take issue with Williamson's description of Éowyn's “evasion [...] of what she is” in “male disguise and denial of her womanhood” as “madness” (145), but it is an interesting perspective on the sources of her later change of heart. This article makes me curious to see what could be done in reading imagery associated with the male body in Tolkien's works.

The Germanic gifting tradition and its economic, political, and interpersonal implications is the point of departure for Jennifer Culver's essay. In the literature in which Tolkien was well-versed, such as *Beowulf*, “[w]ith the extension of the open hand, a lord broadened his reach” (158). Public exchanges of gifts defined the status and relationship of the participants to the community. While a gift is meant to be an exchange, the repayment may take the form of an obligation to the community or world as a whole; in other words, the recipient of a gift may offer fealty in exchange. For example, Pippin offers to serve Gondor in exchange for Boromir's sacrifice; at a corporeal level, he is offering his body as a gift. Culver also includes “peace brides”



as a type of bodily gift that establishes a bond between communities; this is part of the function of Arwen's and Éowyn's marriages (164-5). She concludes with an interesting analysis of the nine Ringwraiths as participants in an exchange of gifts with Sauron—their acceptance of the rings binding them to return all they had to offer, their own lives (166)—and the One Ring and its particularly ambiguous function as an exchanged gift.

Vaccaro's concluding essay, his own "Tolkien's Whimsical Mode: Physicalities in *The Hobbit*," examines the gradual shift in tone in *The Hobbit* in how it treats physical bodies, particularly those of Bilbo and the dwarves. While the book starts in a low mimetic, almost carnivalesque style, Vaccaro locates the fulcrum of a change to a higher style in the Rivendell chapter. The series of similes used to describe Elrond marks a shift towards the epic and poetic. Particularly interesting is Vaccaro's observation that "Bilbo's physicality is tied to invisibility and to a comedy of smallness" (180) which eventually morphs into a more mature "concern over [his] enfeeblement" (181) and serves to underline the divide between his Baggins and Took sides.

This is a solid collection of fairly consistent quality with an interesting approach to Tolkien's legendarium. The articles by Flieger and Smol in particular are well worth seeking out. There is certainly more that could be done on the topic of corporeality; I feel that applying some of the concepts raised by the contributors to *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *Smith of Wootton Major*, and "Leaf by Niggle" would be particularly interesting.

—Janet Brennan Croft



**CRITICAL ESSAYS ON LORD DUNSANY.** S.T. Joshi, ed. Lanham MD: Scarecrow, 2013. 304 p. 9780810892347. \$80.00.

S.T. Joshi's edited collection *CRITICAL ESSAYS ON LORD DUNSANY* is a strong addition to the field of Dunsany studies. Dunsany was a well-known author in his day, but suffered a decline in appeal and accessibility until recent decades. Joshi points out the increasing scholarly interest in Dunsany, and of note to *Mythlore's* readership, Joshi observes, "the journal *Mythlore* has been particularly open to studies

of his writing and influence" (xv). Dunsany is worth studying in his own right as a writer (not just of fantasy) and in his influence on such authors as H.P. Lovecraft and J.R.R. Tolkien. Organized in a reader-friendly manner, the essays are categorized in six groups: Biographies and Memoirs, General Studies, On Dunsany's Fiction, On Dunsany's Plays, On Individual Works, and On Influences.

The three selections in Biographies and Memoirs provide insight about Dunsany's life and idiosyncrasies, what he valued, how he behaved, and what influenced his writing decisions, all of which demonstrates "a man of many contradictions" (59). World War I had a profound effect on him and what he chose to express in his writings. In the General Studies section, Patrick Maume's essay "Dreams of Empire, Empire of Dreams: Lord Dunsany Plays the Game" is particularly helpful in explaining Dunsany's Irish connections. Joshi also includes essays by W.B. Yeats and Lovecraft on Dunsany as a writer.

Of the five essays in the section focused on Dunsany's fiction, Angelee Sailer Anderson's analysis of Dunsany's style reminds readers why Dunsany's short stories can be such fun to read—they are replete with archaisms, poetic techniques, and humor (114) that enrich his storytelling capacity. Megan Mitchell's chapter is devoted to the popular Jorkens stories, and while they are not entirely fantastic, they display Dunsany's humor and promotion of magic. John Wilson Foster's essay "A Dreamer's Tales: The Stories of Lord Dunsany" is notable in its assessment of Dunsany's "inventiveness that sharpens his fantasy" (104). Foster also shows the Englishness of Dunsany and the "double life" that Dunsany lived as both Irish and English yet never fully both (100).

The section on Dunsany's plays looks at some of his dramas, with particular attention to *If*, and his international success as a dramatist. The fifth section of the book explores a variety of Dunsany's works, such as *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and *Don Rodriguez*, Dunsany's first fantasy novel which was influenced by *Don Quixote*. Joshi evaluates Dunsany's use of Christianity and paganism as a novelist in how Dunsany displayed "religious tension" so that he could "employ weirdness [...] to convey profound messages about human life and society" (211). Darrell Schweitzer's essay claims that while Dunsany's work ebbed in its incorporation of the fantastic during part of his career, fantasy constantly linked his work over the decades (221). The final selection of essays discusses how Dunsany's work appears in the output of other writers: Luigi Pirandello, William Faulkner, Lovecraft, and Tolkien.

The essay collection encompasses old and new criticism and biographical material, making this a useful resource for any Dunsany-related studies. Though his overall tone and outlook often tends to be pessimistic, Dunsany emphasizes wonder, and his literary employment of the concept is significant for those studying wonder's use and development in fiction. A renewed interest in Dunsany's work is also timely because of the topics he addresses such as the soul-deadening influence of

materialism and industrialism, and the importance of the natural world and its resources. Despite the somewhat prohibitive price and limited availability, this group of essays is a finely balanced addition to the fantasy field.

—Tiffany Brooke Martin



**HISTORY, GUILT, AND HABIT.** Owen Barfield. Oxford: Barfield Press, 2012. 98 p. 978-0-9569423-2-6. \$18.99.

THIS BOOK CONTAINS THREE LECTURES DELIVERED in October 1978, two at the University of British Columbia and one at the Vancouver Institute. The overall book title refers briefly to the titles of the three lectures, which are: 1) History of ideas: evolution of consciousness, 2) Modern idolatry: the sin of literalness, and 3) The force of habit. These essays were first published in 1979 by Wesleyan University Press, and this is a second, augmented edition. In addition, although this is not indicated on the title page but does appear on the book cover, the essay "Evolution" first published in the journal *Towards* (2.2, Spring 1982) is published here in an amended version given as a lecture at California State University, Fullerton by Barfield in February 1980.

The three Vancouver lectures were delivered on separate days, and the author indicates that #1 and #2 were actually reversed in their order of delivery. Barfield has always had a unique style of delivery in his books and lectures, one that often circles around meanings, tangents, and examples which sometimes loses the reader and listener in understanding exactly what it is Barfield is trying to say. Before I describe what message Barfield is explaining in these lectures, I want to mention two other resources that I have found essential in deciphering and summarizing Barfield's philosophy. The first is Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (revised ed., Kent State University Press, 2002). Flieger has explained Tolkien's interest and knowledge of Barfield's concept of ancient semantic unity first documented in Barfield's *Poetic Diction* (1928). For Barfield, language, myth, and humanity's perception of the world are inseparable and intricately linked; this fascinated Tolkien enough that Flieger is able to document the splintering of both language and light in Tolkien's mythology and throughout Middle-earth's history. Words are expressed myth for Barfield, and while Tolkien never embraced Barfield's

leanings towards Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's metaphysical philosophy, Tolkien the philologist and mythmaker and medievalist was very fascinated with the links between language and myth; Flieger does an excellent job of researching the decay of the Elvish language and of light itself in Tolkien's legendarium. The second resource is R.J. Reilly's *Romantic Religion: A Study of Owen Barfield, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J.R.R. Tolkien* (Lindisfarne Books, 2006). This is a reissue of the same book published in 1971, with a new preface and foreword. The chapter on Barfield is the most understandable and insightful summary on the man and his work that is available. Reilly goes step-by-step through Barfield's publications, his interest in Steiner and Anthroposophy, and is the most user-friendly and approachable explanation that I know of Barfield and his work; that said, the author states in the foreword that Barfield read through the book before its publication and provided him with numerous suggestions and improvements; in other words, one can infer that Reilly's chapter on Barfield comes with Barfield's approval.

Reading through the book being reviewed, then, was made much easier with the background from the two resources above. To summarize the three lectures: 1) the differences between perception and consciousness, and that the study of language is a good way to start studying the evolution of consciousness; 2) how a word can have different meanings, like "heart;" the atmosphere of guilt in modern society, and how contemplation of language in its historical reality is a way to remember our collective history; and 3) discussion of how our mental habit, our "common sense," is a prison, and how thinking actively will help us to get out of our prison. Comments on differences between perceiving and thinking, and breaking down the collective habit round out the three lectures.

In the essay "Evolution," Barfield reveals some interesting letters and correspondences between Charles Darwin and Max Muller, in which Muller convinced Darwin that his theory of evolution could not explain the origin of speech (that feature that most distinguishes humanity from other animals). Barfield also mentions a number of authors, books, and articles that he feels support his theories regarding mind, matter, and investigating the inside of the mind with instruments belonging to the inside world, for which he of course refers to Rudolf Steiner.

Overall, the essays contained in this book outline a number of Barfield's major theories: the distinction between the evolution of human consciousness and the history of ideas, the nature of morality, and the danger of mental passivity becoming habit. Barfield's only essay on physical evolution and its relation to the evolution of consciousness is also included. For those who would like to consider Barfield's theories in his own words, these essays contain those germs. A knowledge and reading of the two resources which comment on Barfield's theories are strongly recommended as well.

—Bradford Lee Eden

**IN THE NAMELESS WOOD: EXPLORATIONS IN THE PHILOLOGICAL HINTERLAND OF TOLKIEN'S LITERARY CREATIONS.** J.S. Ryan. Edited by Peter Buchs. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2013. Cormare Series. No. 30. xv + 365p. US \$24.30 ISBN 978-3-905703-30-6.

WALKING TREE PUBLISHERS HAVE FOLLOWED THEIR 2009 publication of the first volume of Professor J.S. Ryan's essays, *Tolkien's View: Windows into his World*, with this second volume of twenty-three essays edited by Peter Buchs. As with the first volume, Walking Tree should be applauded for their work with Professor Ryan—one of the few living Tolkien scholars and writers who had a personal connection with J.R.R. Tolkien. Ryan studied with Tolkien at the School of English at Oxford University, and throughout both volumes of essays Ryan indicates (usually in the many and not-to-be-skipped-over footnotes!) that he is drawing his observations and conclusions from past personal communication with Tolkien, either one-on-one conversations or the lectures Tolkien gave at Oxford. In this sense alone, this collection of essays are invaluable to the Tolkien reader and scholar in gaining a closer insight into Tolkien's thoughts on certain key narrative and philological ideas. However, added to this are Ryan's own insights from his years of exploring how Tolkien's primary world academic and philological studies inspired the development and themes of his own mythology.

As with the first volume, many of the essays in this volume have appeared previously in various now hard-to-find journals and publications. As the subtitle of this volume suggests, each of these essays are explorations into the philological hinterland of Tolkien's literary creation. Ryan digs deep into the etymological truth behind one particular word or group of related words, and by doing so offers the readers speculative suggestions as to where Tolkien may have derived a specific name or concept. These suggestions are also backed up with a wealth of source information (again, usually in the not-to-be-passed-over footnotes) that direct the reader to texts that Tolkien would have studied in his formative years. The editor of this volume, Peter Buchs, indicates in the introduction that many of these works are now online and can be accessed by students for further exploration.

This volume consists of a prequel essay, "'The Nameless Wood' and 'The Narrow Path'" (based on a speech Ryan gave at a Mythopoeic Conference in New South Wales in 1986) and then four thematic sections of essays:

1. The Ancient Middle East and Its Associations (5 essays)
2. Romano-British Lydney and Its Remarkable Importance for Tolkien's *Ceuvre* (4 essays)
3. The North and West Germanic Tradition and Christianity (9 essays)
4. Twentieth Century Oxford & England (3 essays)

The volume concludes with an original essay, “J.R.R. Tolkien and the Ancrene Riwe, or Two Fine and Courteous Mentors to Women’s Spirits.”

Ryan’s method of applying combined textual and linguistic analysis to Tolkien’s literary creation can be seen in full flow in the ‘prequel’ essay “‘The Nameless Wood’ and ‘The Narrow Path,’” which takes the reader on a journey through the dark and nameless forest of the Ancient East, the *Myrkvithr* of Old Germanic tales. Along the way Ryan makes some interesting observations on the role of the forest as a liminal place between that which is safe and that which is the place of the other—the woodland realm inhabited by unknown forces, dragons, ‘woodwoses,’ and outlaws. Ryan analyses the old Germanic word *walt*, which meant both ‘wood or forest’ and ‘wilderness, uninhabited place.’ Ryan uses this depiction of the forest to explore textual, philological, and metaphysical ideas around the concept of barriers and the passage from one land to another or from the world of reality to a more dangerous and ominous outer one (4). This rather dense and intriguing analysis includes an interlude at The Forest of Dean which Ryan suggests, based on anecdotes that were going around Merton College in the 1950 and 1960s, was the inspiration for all the forest and forest-themed notions in Tolkien’s life (13).

The second theme that Ryan picks up on in this prequel essay is the ever present ‘path’ that leads the hero through this dark and liminal space, usually to a place of refuge where the hero is put through a series of tests or temptations before reaching their objective. Ryan explores the word *path*, which has a shady etymological history (the type Tolkien loved to explore), citing several possible origins—from C.T. Onions who defined it as “a way beaten or trodden by the feet of men or beasts,” to Joseph Wright’s “a steep and narrow way, a footpath on an acclivity; a wooded glen,” to Walter Skeat who believed it to be connected to the Latin *batuere*—to beat “the thing/place beaten down” by the feet, especially of those who might be hastening along it. Ryan also indicates that Wright defined a path as “A Roman road; *gen.* in place-names” (15-16). This third sense give the path a romantic association with such Victorian storytellers as Charles Kingsley and Rudyard Kipling (citing the Roman Road in *Pook of Pucks Hill*). Ryan suggests we can see all these different potential origins of the word ‘path’ used by Tolkien in his early 1915 fairy poem “Goblin Feet” which mentions “the road,” “I hear [...] the padding feet,” and “the crooked fairy lane” (16-17).

Ryan expands this analysis to the Victorian fascination with “the form, location and survival of the dramatically straight ancient roads and paths, especially of and in the southern and south eastern counties of England” (17). Ryan ties all this Tolkienian etymological investigation together by suggesting that “there has been intense linguistic and topographic speculation in England for more than a century about the form and origin and meaning range, various subliminal associations—and so as to the socio-cultural and landscape significance—of the Modern English word, *path*” (19). This first prequel essay is a masterful sprawling exegesis through the

concepts of the nameless wood and the path and sets the tone for the textual and philological exploration to follow.

The five essays in “The Ancient Middle East and its Associations” each explore the influence of Near Eastern mythology and language study on some key concepts and place names in Tolkien’s mythology. Ryan states that this influence would have come to Tolkien through the study of comparative philology texts—especially the works of the leading British Assyriologist and linguist A.H. Sayce (1846-1933) who taught at Oxford in 1919. Sayce’s *The Principles of Comparative Philology* (1874) and *The Introduction to the Science of Language* (1879) were key texts for undergraduates during Tolkien’s time at Oxford. One of Ryan’s footnotes asserts that Tolkien did study these works when he was an undergraduate and evidence of it can be found in Tolkien’s papers (44).

The first of these essays, “Indo-European Race-Memories and Race-Fears from the Ancient City of Uruk . . . and so to Tolkien as the quietly Speculative Philologist,” starts with a philological supposition that the Ancient City of Uruk, the largest Sumerian city in the epic poem *Gilgamesh*, gained an evil reputation and thus became the source for several words for evil creatures, demons and monsters. Ryan suggests that this evil association started in the Early Dynastic period (c.2360 B.C.E) when a Semitic court official usurped the throne, took the name Sargon, and established the first Mesopotamian or Akkadian Empire. In the Akkadian language Uruk took the form ‘Erech.’ In a footnote, Ryan plants a Tolkienian link by comparing Sargon the Usurper to Sauron “who, from a fair beginning, then became ‘the Dark Lord’, the most terrible ruler in Middle-Earth” (38n2). One wonders if Ryan is stretching the point a bit too much here, especially as we are not given any more biographical background on Sargon and whether he started out in the same moral position as Sauron. Ryan then uses passages from *Gilgamesh* to suggest that Uruk/Erech gained this evil reputation because the rulers enslaved people to build their walls. The people were finally given a deliverer in the form of Enkidu, whom Ryan calls “a Sumerian wild man who lived with wild animals” (39). Ryan draws a comparison between Enkidu killing the wild bull sent by the god Anu to trample the city and the Ents and their destruction of Isengard in *The Lord of the Rings*. Building on Uruk/Erech and the idea of evil, Ryan then suggests a whole series of words including Modern Arabic *Wark*, Latin *Orcus*, *Orcades*, and Modern English *Ogre*. Ryan suggests that it was from this grouping of words, all derived from this common root in Uruk, that Tolkien derived his name for his Orcs.

The next essay in this section, “Oath-Swearing, the Stone of Erech and the Near East of the Ancient World,” continues this theme by focusing on the Stone of Erech in *The Lord of the Rings*, suggesting it came from Tolkien’s study of Near Eastern mythology via the philological works of Sayce. Ryan also draws parallels between Tolkien’s Black Stone of Oath-Swearing and the Ka’ba—the small shrine located near the center of the Great Mosque in Mecca. Ryan suggests that Tolkien’s use of these

elements associated with the Near East may reflect his attempt to convey an early proto-history of the Indo-Europeans and their own subconscious memories of their ancient past. Ryan sums this up as “Thus, the whole becomes a classic illustration of the Tolkienian uses of the mediaeval story-telling device, *inventio*, or the combining of a selection of known ingredients—or at least familiar to him—to produce new artistic tensions and fresh literary insights” (69).

In “Saruman, ‘Sharkey,’ and Suruman: Analogous Figures of Eastern Ingenuity and Cunning,” Ryan suggests a possible Eastern origin for two of the names of Tolkien’s fallen wizard Saruman, an alternative to the more popular Germanic-based origin of OE *saeru* ‘craft, device.’ Ryan bases this on the alternative nick-name that both the men and orcs of Isengard call him—Sharkey—which Saruman characterizes as “[a] sign of affection” (*LotR* VI.8.1018). Ryan quotes from “The Annals of Sargon,” which mentions a vassal called ‘Suruman’ who is said to have possessed great skills in metal work as well as considerable greed (74), and lists several dictionaries in which the word ‘shark’ is glossed as ‘a greedy fellow or fish.’ Ryan offers a comprehensive rationale for the Eastern origin of Saruman. Again, all very intriguing observations linked to an alternative philological study that we tend not to immediately associate with Tolkien.

Ryan’s tantalizing and too short “Túrin, Turanian and Ural-Altai Philology” suggests that Tolkien’s construction of the names ‘Túrin’ and ‘Turambar’ (first attested in the early c. 1915 “Qenya Lexicon” and in the 1917-1920 *The Book of Lost Tales*) may have originated in a term that the 19<sup>th</sup> century linguist Max Müller coined in his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861-1863). Müller refers to a certain division of proto-language speakers who came out of the Central and Northern Asia as *Turanians*, from an original name *Tura* which implies the swiftness of their horses. Müller makes the point that the Turanians spoke an agglutinative language and that the Northern division of the Turanian family was also called Ural-Altai or Ugro-Tataric, ancestor of later languages like Finnish and Hungarian. Ryan suggests that *Turanian* would have been in Tolkien’s mind when he invented his name for the *Kalevala*-inspired hero Túrin Turambar—whose origins can be seen in Tolkien’s earliest retelling of the Finnish Kullervo story in October 1914 (published in *Tolkien Studies* 7). Ryan also brings in Sayce’s philological work again: in his *The Principles of Comparative Philology* (1874) Sayce also explored the Turanian language group in relation to languages that included Finnish, Lapp, and Mordvinian, and suggested Turanian was one of the earliest forms of a primitive European language and a counterpart of the Indo-European languages. Ryan suggests that the concept of the Turanians was an important linguistic and speculative link to the pre-history of Europe and nearer Asia for Tolkien. Ryan’s observations are certainly interesting here; however the date of this essay (1983) shows that it does not take into account some of the later work that has been done on Tolkien’s Túrin and his relation to the Finnish *Kalevala*—primarily the work of Verlyn Flieger, who edited and published



Tolkien's original story of Kullervo for *Tolkien Studies* 7. In her article "Tolkien, Kalevala, and 'The Story of Kullervo,'" Flieger shows that according to Domenico Comparetti's *The Traditional Poetry of the Finns* (1898), there were some places in Finland where the hero Kullervo was known as Turo or Turikkinen (193). Tolkien may have been just as likely to have derived the name Túrin from this source as the philological one via Müller that Sayce proposes. I would suggest that a student exploring this pathway go armed both with Ryan's essay and Flieger's work in this area.

In "Gollum and the Golem: A Neglected Tolkienian Association with Jewish Thought," Ryan attempts to link Tolkien's Gollum to the Jewish legend of the golem, a human figure made of clay and brought to life supernaturally. Although the word *golem* does not appear in English literature until 1897, in Henry Ilowizi's story "The Bal-Shem and His Golem," the concept first appeared in late Jewish legend as re-told by Jacob Grimm in his 1808 *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (Journal for Hermits). In Grimm's retelling the golem is a figure, akin to a human being, created artificially from clay or mud, and brought to life when the miraculous name of God was pronounced over it. Ryan draws from Talmudic and Jewish medieval traditions of the golem as a creature that served a master, ferreted out secrets, and had the power to prevent (vicious) plots (90). In later Jewish tradition, the golem becomes a creature who is sent by God to protect the Jews, but at the same time an incomplete creature deprived of the light of God. Ryan also links the golem with the legend of "The Wandering Jew." In another one of those treasure-filled footnotes, Ryan states that Tolkien was particularly interested in this legend and found vestiges of it in the character of the old man in Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale" (Ryan cites personal knowledge from Tolkien's Oxford Lectures in 1955 [90n6]). Ryan makes several convincing links between Tolkien's Gollum and the golem, motivating readers and students of Tolkien to explore these links further.

The second group of essays focusses on the significance and impact of Tolkien's work in the late 1920s on the Romano-British temple complex site of Lydney Hill in Gloucestershire. In the introduction to the volume, Ryan pays credit to Nora Chadwick,<sup>1</sup> who knew Tolkien and was the first to suggest that Tolkien used his experience with his analysis of this site when he was writing *The Lord of the Rings* (xii).

In 1928-29 Sir Mortimer Wheeler and his wife excavated the Lydney Park site in Gloucestershire. The site showed evidence of settlement since pre-Roman times. In the mid fourth century A.D. it had become a considerable site of pilgrimage with evidence of a series of buildings including a temple dedicated to a pagan god Nodens/Nudens. The Wheelers also found evidence of an iron mine on the site.

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan dedicates this volume to Frederick T. Wainwright (1917-1961) and Nora Kershaw Chadwick (1891-1972), both inspirational scholars of Europe's Migration Ages and Dark Age Britain, and significant recovers of their country's richly storied cultures and landscapes.

During the 1928-29 investigations they brought some specialists to work the site, including archaeologist and writer Robin G. Collingwood and a little known and very youthful professor of Anglo-Saxon, one J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien did philological work on the name 'Nodens' and his analysis appeared in the appendix to the site report (reprinted in *Tolkien Studies* 4). Using this early experience of Tolkien's as a jumping-off point, Ryan suggests several possible literary influences on his later work. In the first essay, "The Lydney Archaeological Site and Tolkien's Portrayal of the King As Healer," Ryan suggests that The Houses of Healing in *The Return of the King* and particularly the aspect of Aragorn as a healing king may have been inspired by Tolkien's work on the Lydney site. This link derives from a suggestion by Wheeler and Collingwood in the final excavation report that the Lydney site may have been a place of pagan pilgrimage and healing in the late Roman Britain period. Ryan compares the reported geographic layout of the Lydney Site and The Temple of Nodens with Tolkien's later Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith.

The name Nodens/Nudens appears to be cognate with the Old Irish *Nuada*, who in the 'Irish Mythological Cycle' was the first king of the Tuatha De Danaan. Nuada lost his arm in battle and was given a silver one by the physician Dian Cecht, earning the epithet *Airgetlam* 'silver hand.' The link with Aragorn as King Healer is brought up in another one of Ryan's footnotes. In his philological analysis of the name Nodens/Nudens, Tolkien suggests that the Germanic stem /neut/ meant to catch, entrap, and so acquire. Under 'entrap' Ryan makes the philological note that Tolkien also associated /neut/ with the Gothic /outa/ which is used in the Gothic translation of St Mark's Gospel to gloss 'fisherman' (one who entraps). Ryan makes the point that in his Gothic studies Tolkien would have read St Mark's Gospel, as it was considered a prime text by his Gothic teacher Joseph Wright. This creates the possible link between the god Nodens and the Christian idea of Christ the Fisherman, and may show evidence of both early Christian and late pagan influence. Ryan characterizes the Lydney Site Complex as "a place of this great cultural change, one where the Roman and the compassionate Christian worlds could be seen in the moment of transition" (119). All very interesting observations, but I am straining a bit to see here the connections with the concept of the King Healer and the site complex of Lydney.

In the next essay, "The Mines of Mendip and of Moria, with some Reflections on *The Lair of the White Worm*," Ryan suggests that Tolkien's knowledge, depiction, and illustrations of mines and secret passageways was inspired by J.W. Gough's book *The Mines of Mendip*, an Oxford publication of 1930 which was read by R.G. Collingwood (who as indicated above had worked on the Lydney Site with Tolkien). Gough's book traced the history of mining in the Mendip Hills in the area around Lydney Park back to pre-Roman times. Ryan suggests this book may have come into Tolkien's hands and inspired his thoughts on ancient mining in England and its link in his mythology to the dwarves and the mines of Middle-earth. He

concludes by suggesting that Tolkien's description of mines may have also been inspired by a particular edition of Bram Stoker's gothic short story *The Lair of the White Worm*, published in 1911 with six dramatically colored plates by Pamela Colman Smith, who was a member of the Golden Dawn and the creator of the designs for the classic Rider-Waite deck of Tarot Cards. Again, while there is no direct evidence of Tolkien reading this volume, given the subject matter and its popularity it is not out of the realm of the possible that he did.

In "Ancient Mosaic Tiles from Out the West" Ryan suggests that Tolkien's heraldic illustrations and emblems from the great Elvish households were inspired by the floor mosaics found at the site complex of Lydney and suggests "the smallest item of Tolkien's artistic creation is capable of linking his Middle-earth and its past history to England's own history and legendary (religious) past" (135). I think this is an intriguing point, but would have liked to have seen examples of Tolkien's own creative work printed side by side with the reproductions of the Lydney Hill mosaics to make a better assessment of these artistic parallels.

In the third series of essays, "The North West and Germanic Tradition," Ryan turns to Germanic legend and philology to explore some key ideas and names in Tolkien's mythology. "Frothi, Frodo—and Dodo and Odo" is a philological exploration of possible origins and sources of the name Frodo in Germanic legend and history. Ryan concludes this interesting meander through Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon by suggesting there is ample comparative and figurative material here for our aesthetic, onomastic and etymological satisfaction (147). In "The Knee and the Old English *Gifstol* as Sacral Symbols of Protection and of Forgiveness" Ryan sees influences for Tolkien's depiction of Gollum's attempt at repentance with similar scenes in the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Wanderer* and the role of Grendel in *Beowulf*. Ryan says that Tolkien told him that one of the most painful scenes to recall in *The Lord of the Rings* was when Gollum approached the sleeping Frodo and touched or caressed his knee (*LotR* IV.8.714-15), and "[the] fleeting moment [...] passed beyond recall" when Sam awoke and accused Gollum of sneaking. The moment of abasement and possible forgiveness by Gollum had passed.

In the next essay, "King Alfred's Developing Concept of 'Wisdom' and its Relevance to Tolkien's Grand Moral Philosophy," Ryan explores how Tolkien's ideas about wisdom may have been shaped by his early study of King Alfred's vernacular *Cura Pastoralis* ("Pastoral Care"), a text "so carefully crafted for the healing of his nation, both treating of earthly kingship and for directing every man's religious quest" (165). It was included in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* (1876), which Tolkien studied as an undergraduate. Through textual comparison of this work with Tolkien's depiction of wisdom in *The Lord of the Rings*, Ryan deduces that Tolkien adopted Alfred's key concept of wisdom as the extension of pity and mercy to all fellows, however much they have hurt us—certainly the position of both Aragorn and Frodo at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*.

In “Uncouth Innocence—some Links between Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach and J.R.R. Tolkien,” Ryan contrasts the character of the Grail Knight Perceval/Parzival and his initial innocence with that of the Hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings*. Ryan suggests that both Chrétien and Wolfram’s texts explored the medieval concept of the naïve or ill-made knight, the artistic effect of which was to provoke ironic juxtapositions of conflicting values. Ryan suggests that this influenced Tolkien’s development of the role of the Hobbits as mediating characters who enter the world of the Elves and great men of Middle-Earth. In the case of Frodo especially, it is the naïve hobbit who becomes the hero in the same way as the ‘innocent fool’ Perceval/Parzival becomes the redeemer of the Grail. Ryan also explores parallels between Chrétien’s and Wolfram’s use of landscape and the concept of the pathway and temptations from the path as sources for Tolkien. Ryan suggests that this is certainly not a direct influence but one that is worth further exploration—again we see Ryan planting seeds for further research and investigation.

In a short essay “Lore of Dwarves—in Jacob Grimm and Thomas Keightley” Ryan explores two key source works that Tolkien drew from—Grimm’s 1880 *Teutonic Mythology* (translated by J. Stallybrass) and Thomas Keightley’s 1850 *The Fairy Mythology*, reissued in 1878 as *The World Guide to Gnomes, Fairies, Elves and other Little People* (reprinted in 1968)—and makes some interesting philological notes on the character of the dwarves that inspired Tolkien. I was a bit surprised not to see any mention or analysis of Tolkien’s earliest versions of the dwarves from *The Book of Lost Tales* period, which was in print at the time this essay was first published in 1986. This essay seems to indicate that the dwarves started with *The Hobbit*, and given *The History of Middle Earth* we know this is not the case.

In “Warg, Waerg, Earg and Werewolf—a Note on Speculative Tolkienian Etymology,” Ryan suggests that the origin of the name *warg* is an example of Tolkien indulging himself in both etymological speculation and restoring to the living English language a pattern of meanings long forgotten. In “The Number Fifteen, Heroic Ventures and Two Horrible Songs,” Ryan makes a numerical connection between *The Hobbit* and *Beowulf* though the number fifteen. Beowulf comes to Hrothgar’s Hall to fight the demon Grendel with a band of fourteen men, just as Bilbo in *The Hobbit* journeys with fourteen heroic companions on his mission to recover the dwarves’ treasure from Smaug—counting Gandalf the Wizard, though he does not make the entire journey—making Bilbo the fifteenth member of the expedition, as in the mocking Goblin song “Fifteen birds in five fir trees” (*Hobbit* VI.116-117). Ryan contextualizes this through several cases in Germanic literature where the number fifteen is used for magical purposes and incantations, significant because the fifteenth day is half way through the phases of the moon. In also another ‘bread crumb’ for further investigation he also quotes the sea chant from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883)—“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest / Yo-Ho-Ho and A Bottle of Rum.” Ryan states that in 1934 Tolkien may have become aware of an article by

Vincent Starret about the real location of Treasure Island—"The Dead Man's Chest, A Stevensonian Research"—which could have inspired his thoughts on this poem and the number fifteen. Again, another pathway to explore.

"Fear and Revulsion in 'the cold and hard lands'" is another short note in which Ryan explores the reaction of evil beings to blessed objects, using the scene in which Gollum says of the Elvish rope "It hurts us, it hurts us" (*LotR* IV.1.617). "The Origin and Cultural Association of the Place Name *Wetwang*" explores the place name which in Tolkien's Middle-earth refers to the marshes where the Anduin and Entwash rivers merge and the Anduin subsequently divides into many rivers. Ryan cites Eilert Ekwell's *Concise Dictionary of English Place-Names*, which locates *Wetwang* in the East Yorkshire Riding; Tolkien abstracted Ekwell's work in his three *The Year's Work in English Studies* 1923-1925.

The remaining essays all focus on Tolkien's experience and influences from a contemporary point of view. In "Wild Wood—Place of Danger, Place of Protest," Ryan returns to his inaugural exploration of the forest and wild wood but now sets it in a modern literary context by exploring its depiction in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). Ryan suggests that Grahame's depiction of the Wild Wood marks a change in the characterization of the wood and forest from the Dark Ages notion of pagan menace, first to the medieval Greenwood, and then to a modern concern with eccentric behaviour as well as the preservation of the pristine landscape. By late Victorian/Edwardian times the wild wood had become the realm of small animals symbolizing the abject poverty and obsequiousness forced upon the hitherto free country folk in wake of the Industrial Revolution (232). Ryan ends by again suggesting that more study needs to be done on the links between Kenneth Grahame and Tolkien—two late Victorian writers who both honored and explored the forests and the paths of the ancient dark woods.

The next essays focus on Tolkien's relationship with two different poets. In "J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Roy Campbell" Ryan explores how the South-African poet Roy Campbell (1902-1957) became an occasional guest Inkling, whom Tolkien seems to have gotten on better with than Lewis at times. Ryan investigates whether Tolkien would have read Campbell's poetry, especially the volumes *Flaming Terrapin* (1924) and *Flowering Rifle* (1931). Ryan concludes this essay with a very interesting vignette "The Classic Biography is still to Come," calling for an update to the official Carpenter biography which would include more examples of Tolkien's meetings and encounters with other poets and writers. In the next essay, "Tolkien and Auden," Ryan explores the close relationship between Tolkien and the Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden, who like Tolkien died in 1973. Auden had been one of the earliest reviewers and interpreters of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and wrote the first major reviews of the books in *The New York Times*. Ryan includes a series of quotes of Auden's early writings on Tolkien's work including a very poignant quote from an

essay in the magazine *Encounter* (“A World Imaginary, Made Real”)—that the nature of the work necessitated “scientific historical research” (246).

Ryan reproduces in this essay poems that each wrote for the other. To honor Tolkien’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1962, Auden produced “A Short Ode to a Philologist,” which was included in the festschrift *English and Medieval Studies: Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. This rarely printed ode concludes with the lines “What J.R.R. Tolkien has done / As bard to Anglo-Saxon.” Five years later Tolkien would return the compliment by penning a tribute to Auden in the journal *Shenandoah*: “A Tribute to Wystan Hugh Auden on His Sixtieth Birthday” (also known as “For W.H.A.”), written in the Mercian dialect of Anglo-Saxon with facing English translation. In the appendix to this essay Ryan also suggests several other links between Tolkien and Auden, including Auden’s 1968 published lecture *Secondary Worlds*, the title of which Auden explained he had taken from Tolkien’s own *On Fairy-stories*. Additionally, Auden’s *The Elder Edda: A Selection—Translated from the Icelandic* by W.H. Auden and Paul B. Taylor, is dedicated to Tolkien and mentions the ‘riddle game’ used by Bilbo Baggins.

In the appendix, Ryan includes an original essay “J.R.R. Tolkien and the *Ancrene Riwe*, or Two Fine and Courteous Mentors to Woman’s Spirit.” The thrust of this essay shows Ryan as a man on a mission. In the introduction to the volume he characterizes the work and analysis he did on this essay as an “endeavour to correct and clarify the ever more numerous stereotypical and journalistic views of Tolkien the man and the writer” (xiii). Here Ryan explores Tolkien’s work with several of his undergraduate students, many of them Roman Catholic women, with the series of religious texts found in the Katherine Group of documents. Ryan juxtaposes the wisdom and compassion shown by the authors of these texts with Tolkien’s attitude in mentoring the women students who worked on elements of these texts with him. Ryan gives us a highly personal portrait of Tolkien the teacher, mentor, and supporter of the very type of narrative and philological exploration that Ryan has suggested in each of the essays in this volume. It is a textually and philologically rich exploration of Tolkien the man, the teacher, and the mentor and a brilliant way to end this volume.

This is a very important volume in Tolkien studies, and each of Ryan’s essays can be deeply and widely mined for clues and sources to better understand how Tolkien thought and from where Tolkien may have derived some of his ideas. In the course of one of the essays, Ryan sums up the linkage of Tolkien’s linguistic thinking linked and his myth creation in three key points:

- A. Tolkien’s fantasies are indeed philological, i.e. they are concerned to tease out and illustrate by *exemplum* (‘appropriate story’) lost or half-forgotten senses to words that survive today.
- B. They illustrate the movement, across the whole Indo-European cluster of

countries and of languages, of thought enshrined in lexical form, i.e. words, whose roots prove their common source and identity or early borrowing.

- C. The most serious of his writings are in no sense 'A Secret Vice' of made-up language, but, rather, highly unorthodox and imaginative explorations of the meanings of words, extending the senses found in medieval texts. (200)

This volume certainly asks more questions than it answers, and it is worth several readings which must include Ryan's textually rich footnotes and suggestions for source readings. There is also a very complete bibliography and helpful reference index.

Ryan's two volumes of essays will be a resource I will return to again and again in my Tolkien studies and research. I highly recommend them to all who want to travel down the path into Tolkien's own dark forest towards the philological hinterlands of his mythic creations. I do hope a third volume is on the horizon.

—Andrew Higgins

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**THE LETTERS OF RUTH PITTER: SILENT MUSIC.** Edited by Don W. King. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014. xxvii + 547 pp. \$120 (hard cover); \$119.99 (publisher's suggested digital price). ISBN 978-1-61149-451-8 (cloth); 978-1-61149-450-1 (electronic).

Ruth Pitter (1897-1992) was a good poet, and that is the main rationale for this volume. But she seems to have been a largely intuitive poet, and one should not expect a greatly analytic discussion of poetics. Sometimes she refers to the ability of write good poetry as a "gift"—e.g., she writes of T. S. Eliot that he has "the gift" (271). She think Eliot's poetry a disaster for the traditional English poetry she loves and writes, but she does not deny his skill—although she might not have called it "skill"

precisely. (Her attitudes toward Eliot shift in various ways in different letters. She knew him well enough to talk to upon occasion.) It must be admitted that she does not, for the most part, correspond with the major poets of her day, but sometimes she tells of interesting acquaintanceships. For example, she writes of Dylan Thomas in a 1946 letter: "Oh dear! He came to our nice respectable Poets' Club dinner and threw rolls at the President—a dreadful affair" (129). She comments later in the book, after listening to a radio broadcast of "Under Milk Wood," that Thomas (dead by then) "quite certainly had the gift" (249). In fact, she refers to him as her better (in poetry). She also comments in this 1954 letter, "I remember with compunction the queer shy way he used to look at me. For of course my little reputation was made before he was anybody, and he probably knew I should not think him respectable" (249).

The above suggests that these letters (selectively) contain the material to satisfy much of one's interest in Pitter as a commenter on poetry and in the poetic culture of her times. Don W. King has organized the letters chronologically in fourteen chapters, all of them, after the first, covering two to five years. King notes that he omits some business letters, including many with the BBC (cf. Ch. 9, "BBC Personality [1957-1959]"). The second chapter, "Successful Poet (1935-1939)," reflects Pitter involved in the cultural life of London of the time, but this time was ended by World War II (Ch. 3, "Surviving the Blitz [1940-1945]"). The next four chapters capture her life in London after the war; a large number of the letters are thank-yous for food parcels from America and Australia. Then she and Kathleen O'Hara (her long-time business partner) buy a home in a village, not far (but two bus-rides) from Oxford—this last period covers seven chapters. The number of poems Pitter writes goes down (she worries about this in several letters), but she is busy gardening and appearing on the BBC, both radio and television—the latter as an occasional minor-celebrity/ discussant on the "Brains Trust" series. By the last letters, she is blind (cataracts) and having the letters written down for her.

But, of course, one of the major interests of this Society is in Pitter's ties to the Inklings. The first member that Pitter met was David Cecil, two years before Cecil returned to Oxford in 1939. That was at the Hawthornden Award ceremony in 1937, which award Pitter received for *A Trophy of Arms* (Lord David had proposed the book to the committee). Pitter's first letter to him comes from the next year—first to Rachel, his wife, on the birth of her and Lord David's first child (7 March 1939, p. 65) and then to Lord David, about some letter-writing campaign not explained in King's notes (24 April 1939, p. 66). Pitter writes one or the other—mainly Lord David—over fifty letters; she often is invited to weekend at the Cecils' home; and she became godmother of their daughter, Laura (cf. 163). (She also dedicated a poem to him.) King sometimes quotes from Lord David's letters to Pitter, praising her poetry (cf. 78.n56 on *A Trophy of Arms*).

In 1949 (16 July) Pitter received a letter from Owen Barfield. Marjorie Milne had shown Barfield's poem "The Unicorn" to Pitter, she had praised it, and Barfield



now writes to invite her to lunch (192n31). King quotes from several other of Barfield's letters in his notes, but of Pitter's replies—King reports—"at this point we do not have any" (192n31). King calls the correspondence between Barfield and Pitter "extended," and they met sometimes—for example, Barfield, Pitter, and C.S. Lewis met for lunches or otherwise six times in 1949 (193n31) and Barfield and Pitter by themselves at least on 2 October 1949 (194n33). But, as said, there are no letters from Pitter to Barfield in this book.

Pitter first met Hugo Dyson at a luncheon hosted by C.S. Lewis (133, 156n56—this reference is not in the book's index); the first reference to W.H. Lewis in the index is a meeting in 1969, decidedly after C.S. Lewis's death—but she met him earlier. (In W.H. Lewis's diaries, he mentions the same luncheon as with Dyson on 9 September 1946 at which he [W.H. Lewis] sat next to her [*Brothers and Friends* 195].) Neither Dyson nor W.H. Lewis receive any of these letters from Pitter. John Wain is mentioned in several letters after the period of the Inklings—he interviewed her for the BBC, and he praised her poetry. Her 1969 comment on Wain's poetry is certainly moderate compared to her earlier struggles with Eliot's: Wain is "more than a generation younger than I, and so his poetry is not my cup of tea" (424). No letters to Wain appear in the book. Charles Williams she discovered after his death: "I must get 'Taliessin through Logres'; since Lewis is so interested there must be a good deal in it: there must be underlying systematic thought" (121). Some of her later letters show some knowledge of Williams's thought. (She gave a BBC talk on "Heroes of Our Time: Charles Williams" on 18 July 1961, but that is not involved in this collection of letters.)

This leaves C.S. Lewis—and there is only one letter from Pitter to Lewis in the book (17 July 1946, p. 128, also reproduced in a photograph on 262d). King found that letter tucked into a copy of Pitter's *The Spirit Watches* in the Wade Center (153n37). (The present reviewer was told one time, second hand, that George Sayer had said that Lewis tended to stick copies of letters from some authors in their books in his [Lewis's] library—if so, this seems to be the sole survivor of a winnowing at some point.) King, of course, has a number of quotations from Lewis's published letters to Pitter in notes—e.g., pp. 154n45, 155n49, 155n54, 156-57nn62-63, 157n72. These are sometimes complemented with excerpts from the journal Pitter wrote for the Bodleian Library, providing a context for Lewis's letters that she was giving that depository (e.g., 158n73).

These bibliographic comments about Pitter's sole surviving letter to Lewis (mainly about some copies of her books she is sending him) are not meant to downplay the importance of Lewis in Pitter's life: his war-time broadcasts over the BBC (later made into *Mere Christianity*) were the cause of Pitter's becoming a Christian; later they met on various occasions as friends. But the book under review is a volume of her letters—and only one letter from Pitter to Lewis survives (or is presently known to survive).

However, one important point is recorded in this book: Pitter's rejection of a certain aspect of Lewis's poetry. Lewis had sent some of his poems to Pitter for evaluation. She writes to Lord David on 22 September 1948:

I have had some correspondence with C.S. Lewis lately about his poems. I had to tell him that I think he has a tinge of the Flaubertian *haine et mepris de la vie*. [...] Well, one has to get down to brass tacks about poetry—one can't criticize *round* it. Technique is all very well, but it's a man's profound feelings about life that make or mar poetry. (170)

(Don W. King provides a translation of the French: "A hate or disdain for life" [190n15].) Pitter seems to be suggesting that Lewis has cleverness in verse forms, *etc.*, but his content is intellectual, not speaking emotionally to the common reader. Although other explanations have been offered for why Lewis married Joy Davidman, not Ruth Pitter—despite his long and real friendship with Pitter—perhaps this basic rejection of his poetry played its part.

Related to these letters to Inklings are Pitter's eight letters to Walter Hooper, especially interesting for Pitter's discussion of C.S. Lewis's attitudes toward women (418).

Of the book itself, Don W. King has done a masterful job. The extensive (and needed) endnotes appear at the end of each chapter. (King refers to these as "footnotes" in his "Editorial Principles" [xiii], so presumably the placement of the notes was an editorial decision.) King's "Introduction" (xv-xxiii) is a good statement of Pitter's awards for her poetry and her good reputation as a poet—although King says "critical evaluations of her poetry have *always* been favorable" (xv, reviewer's stress), but later in the book he quotes from one from Stephen Spender that was not (72, 85n142). The frontispiece is a drawing of Pitter by William Rothenstein; between pp. 262 and 263 appear eight pages of pictures—three photographs of Pitter and one drawing (the latter by Mervyn Peake); the photograph of Pitter's letter to Lewis; a photograph of one of the tea trays that Pitter decorated (all of the photographs are in black and white); Pitter's tombstone; and other items.

In the back of the book, King adds a primary and secondary bibliography (511-526); a "Biographical Index" of brief biographies of the major or otherwise significant correspondents (527-533); and an Index (535-545). Some typos and minor flaws appear in the book. Oddest is the classification of Pitter under "Women poets, American" in the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data on the copyright page, though that certainly cannot be attributed to King. One example of the textual slips: on p. 79, in note 67, William Empson is identified as a "twentieth-century literary"—presumably "critic" was accidentally dropped. In the bibliography, Pitter's review of Lewis's *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer* is listed twice, on either side of an earlier essay (522).

King has done Pitter good service with this volume, as with his earlier *Hunting the Unicorn: A Critical Biography of Ruth Pitter* (2008). It would be good if he collected some of Pitter's essays sometime in the future, certainly including her major statement on behalf of traditional poetry—"A Return to Poetic Law" (1952). But what he has done is far more than what readers had before—and appropriate as evidence of Pitter's importance in one of the branches of British poetry in the twentieth century.

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—Joe R. Christopher



**BRIEFLY NOTED**

**TAROT IN CULTURE.** Edited by Emily E. Auger. 2 vols. n.p.: Valleyhome Books, 2014. 9780993694417, 9780993694424. v.1 \$30.48, v.2 \$51.64. Available through Lulu.com.

THIS EXTENSIVE, WIDE-RANGING COLLECTION OF ESSAYS on Tarot includes sections on History and Innovation, Tarot in the Arts, The Art in Tarot, and Special Topics and Primary Sources. *Mythlore* readers may find the section Tarot in the Arts in volume two particularly interesting; the four essays discuss Tarot in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Charles Williams's *The Greater Trumps*, Samuel R. Delany's *Nova*, and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

**COREOPSIS: JOURNAL OF MYTH AND THEATER.** <http://coreopsis.org/> ISSN 2333-0627.

COREOPSIS IS A FAIRLY NEW ONLINE JOURNAL which has just published its third issue. "Theatre" is broadly defined as "ritual, sacred, and folk performance art" on their home page, but seems to be interpreted even more loosely in practice. The contents are a mix of editorial articles, peer-reviewed scholarly articles, visual and literary artwork, and reviews. The current issue includes an article on the Cambellian hero-journey in *The Wizard of Oz*; previous articles have covered the film *Black Orpheus* and the genre of Celtic Rock, among other topics.

—Janet Brennan Croft

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