



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 1
Issue 30

Article 4

July 1998

C.S. Lewis: What's All the Fuss?

Diana Pavlac Glycer

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Recommended Citation

Glycer, Diana Pavlac (1998) "C.S. Lewis: What's All the Fuss?," *Mythcon Proceedings*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 30 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythpro/vol1/iss30/4>

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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>



Abstract

A general appreciation of Lewis's broad literary output.

Keywords

Lewis, C.S.—Appreciation

C.S. LEWIS: WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS? The centenary celebration of C.S. Lewis's birth has been marked by an outpouring of books, articles, and special events, including the conference for which the present booklet has been prepared. It is a year of abundance for Lewis fans! Nonetheless, it is something of a wonder to gather in Wheaton, Illinois to celebrate a man who has been gone more than thirty years, who lived his entire life more than five thousand miles away, and who wrote in a dialect difficult for American readers and about topics wholly foreign to the average baby boomer, buster, or Gen X'er.

Furthermore, Lewis's books present us with a number of difficulties. As J.R.R. Tolkien observed, "Lewis is always apt to have rather creaking, stiff-jointed passages," and inconsistent details in plots as well. His writing in general bears the marks of hasty composition. And even more problematic, Lewis was extremely well-read and could hardly write a page without referring to some book or author he assumes we know as well as he did. And his writing is peppered with opinions – about women, hierarchy, marriage, evolution, education, and more – that are likely to make any number of folks uncomfortable, if not downright angry.

Why then does Lewis remain so popular? Some say it is because he wrote so skilfully in so many different genres: poems, children's stories, lay theology, science fiction. Others have suggested it is the down-to-earth quality that characterizes his work, a burly, beefy fellow in rumpled tweeds, with a booming voice and quick wit, who has got just a few things figured out and is happy to share them if you will listen. Still others point to the use of metaphor and imagery in his writing, so that the most difficult concepts, theological, philosophical, and intellectual, come into clear focus with a word picture.

What is remarkable to me is that Lewis eagerly sought the things that really matter, the things that are important, and good, and true. Not content with an ordinary life, he applied both his imagination and his intellect to explore and explain things of eternal consequence.

We gather in this centenary year to celebrate Lewis, warts and all: to enjoy his good humor, to experience his creativity, to honor his memory, and to reflect on the things he has taught us. In doing so, we don't pretend he wasn't a flawed human being. If anything, we enjoy him all the more when we acknowledge that the Divine Light shines so clearly in such a pedestrian package, in such an earthy jar of clay.

Diana Pavlac Glyer