Reviews

Abstract
The Evolution of Modern Fantasy: From Antiquarianism to the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. Jamie Williamson. Reviewed by David Bratman.


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Jamie Williamson has written that rare thing, a history of the fantasy genre in English-language literature. It isn’t a work of critical theory establishing the outlines and divisions of the field, like Farah Mendlesohn’s Rhetorics of Fantasy or Brian Attebery’s Strategies of Fantasy, a species of study that Williamson avoids citing. But nor is it a book that purports to a historical view but focuses on individual authors at the cost of coverage of the broader context that they belong to, such as Deke Parsons’s recent J.R.R. Tolkien, Robert E. Howard and the Birth of Modern Fantasy, among others.

Williamson’s achievement is a balance between the forest and the trees, proceeding through the history while discussing individual works for the purpose of adding them together and identifying the common traits and trends of particular periods in fantasy writing. It’s a masterful study that deservedly won the 2016 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies.

As distinctive as the book’s quality is its coverage. If the realm of literature may be considered as a vast expanse of territory, authors may be seen as settlers establishing camps at particular spots that suit their fancy, representing their individual choices of topics, literary principles, approaches, and styles. (The metaphor is mine, not Williamson’s.) At some point, someone drew a dotted line around a chunk of territory on the map of this realm, and everyone already settled in it found themselves inhabitants of a new publishing genre called “fantasy.” But previously, they’d had no special tie to that term, nor any particular connection to each other except in being sometimes distant and often friendly neighbors.

By this metaphor, The Evolution of Modern Fantasy may be defined as a history of that territory up to the time that the dotted line was drawn. The line
was drawn in the period 1960-1980, during which time the genre became a conscious entity in publishers' minds and the label “fantasy” became common on paperback spines, concluding with what Williamson audaciously calls “the ‘first’ fantasy writers,” that is, “writers who conceived of their work as fantasy in something closely approximating the terms” of the publishing genre (191). That previous authors had had no such conception is one of Williamson’s major points.

The person who drew that line, more than any other individual, was Lin Carter, whose thoughts about a canon of what he called “adult fantasy” (to distinguish it from children’s fantasy) were brought to fruition as editor of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, colloquially the “Unicorn’s Head” series for its emblem, from 1969 to 1974. This series issued over 50 paperback reprints of material often long forgotten and unavailable, along with about a dozen new works of the same kind. Williamson cites Carter’s brief description of this territory as consisting of stories, preferably of quest or war, set in imaginary worlds in which magic really works (4). In introductions to these reprints, and more elaborately in a volume titled Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy, which was published as part of the series, Carter expanded on this definition of “adult fantasy” and his view of the history of the works that constituted it.

What literature ideally fits this “BAFS template,” as Williamson calls it, is expressed more clearly in Carter’s commentaries than in the published canon of the BAFS itself, as the latter excludes many relevant works because they were available from other publishers or the series just didn’t get around to them before it was cancelled, a point Williamson makes frequently (e.g. 5, 177), and as the series published a number of books that were surprising excursions from its own template, a point mostly not addressed here. (Williamson notes that William Hope Hodgson’s futuristic The Night Land was a BAFS book [146], but you’d never guess from here that G.K. Chesterton’s surreal The Man Who Was Thursday was also. A catalog of the BAFS may be found online at its Wikipedia page; in this book such a list would only have been distracting.)

The importance of this definition is that the emerging fantasy publishing genre was built around it. Works subsequent to the day of the BAFS were written to its template, though Williamson does not cover this part of the history; and the template influenced critical definitions of the field, which he does address, briefly (5, 8). Alternative definitions, such as Attebery’s practical description of the fantasy genre as a fuzzy set of works with a degree of resemblance to Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings (Attebery 12-16), are not discussed, but as noted this is a history of the field, not of its criticism, nor is it a theoretical study.

Another point that might have received further attention in a more critically focused book is the history of the idea of a fantasy canon. Williamson
reserves to an endnote the interesting historical fact that Carter’s concept of the shape of a fantasy field developed from ideas already put in print a few years earlier by his friend and collaborator L. Sprague de Camp (201). Williamson also notes in passing that, in essays by C.S. Lewis from as far back as 1947, “we begin to see the hazy outlines of a perceived collectivity involving some of the writers discussed here” (159), but the observation goes no further than that. It occurs to me that Lewis and the Inklings, in classifying George MacDonald, William Morris, and E.R. Eddison as romancers, treating them as what sometime Inkling John Wain sarcastically called their “literary household gods” (Wain 182), and placing The Lord of the Rings in that tradition, “were making the first pass at establishing a canon of adult fantasy,” the project that de Camp and Carter would undertake more systematically later (Bratman 326-27).

The more serious potential flaw in Williamson’s approach would be a tendency towards a Whiggish view of history. In this case that would take the form of a propensity towards judging the works of the past on how well they fit a template which did not exist when they were written, and which the authors would not have been obliged to follow even if it had. Williamson does make some gestures in that direction, dismissing some works as “peripheral” as if not being germane to his study was a flaw (e.g. 52, 78), but he mostly avoids it, by frequent reminders that the template is a retroactive description that does not fit the way the works were seen at the time of their composition (e.g. 149, 176), and by a thorough critique of C.N. Manlove in his Modern Fantasy: Five Studies on grounds of terminology and classification, for imposing his own framework on his subjects and then chiding them for not abiding by it (18-20).

One minor but irritating error in the present work is the use of “Forward” to describe that part of a book which is correctly called a “Foreword,” even though the books cited get it right (27, 131, 182). Conan spin-off writer Björn Nyberg is in one place called Boris (183). I noticed no other factual errors of significance.

The bulk of The Evolution of Modern Fantasy, five chapters in the center, is the historical survey, and this may be seen as a more thorough and corrective edition of the historical survey that takes up much of Carter’s Imaginary Worlds. It is here that Williamson’s work really shines, because Carter’s work, though pioneering, was insufficient, and nobody else has attempted the job in such detail since. (Adam Roberts’s updating of Carter’s earlier Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings, which contained a sketch of the historical survey, hardly addressed this.) Carter was an enthusiast, intelligent and well-read, but his knowledge of the field had enormous gaps, his scholarship was casual and reductionist, and he was neither a critic nor a historian. Williamson fills these gaps, finding vast amounts of literature overlooked by Carter and analyzing the corpus both historically and literarily with a keen eye. The discussion of
Dunsany’s novels (136-37) is a typically fine example of this book’s close examination of its subjects’ characteristics. Williamson finds similarities Carter does not address, and downplays some that Carter emphasized.

Among the points made by Williamson’s historical survey of the territory inside the dotted line are these:

1. The canon is entirely retroactive. Its authors, outside of the pulp sub-tradition, saw no group commonality among themselves, although they recognized individual resemblances, and were often mutually admiring.

2. “Fantasy” is a new term for this territory. Stories of this kind were traditionally called “fairy-stories” (Tolkien’s preferred term) or “romances” (a technical term for a type of narrative, undefined here), while “fantasy” applied either to whimsical humor or to reality-distorting stories of the kind discussed by Rosemary Jackson or W.R. Irwin (8-10). It is here that Brian Attebery’s distinction between fantasy as a mode (the older, broader use of the term) and fantasy as a genre (the newer, narrower definition) would have been useful to Williamson, though in turn some of Williamson’s analysis would have been useful to Attebery. (See Attebery 1-11 and 20-34.)

3. Defining most of this work by the terms of the BAFS template is also retroactive, even though those terms are not strictly inaccurate. Magic is often not a major concern or topic in these stories, and is rarely considered systematically, and the imaginary world settings are often vague or nominal.

4. Rather than beginning with William Morris’s revival of medievalism in the 1890s, as Carter claimed, “adult fantasy” has a long history which Williamson begins covering, with much excuse for picking such an arbitrary date (39-43), at about 1700, discussing everything covered by Carter and much else besides. Depending on exact definition, Williamson identifies the first modern English novel actually fitting the BAFS template as either *The Adventures of Eovaai* by Eliza Haywood (1736) or *Phantasmion* by Sara Coleridge (1837), both obscure works unmentioned by and possibly unknown to Carter (51-52, 86-87). That both are by women is undiscussed by Williamson.

5. The bulk of the history of “adult fantasy,” up to the end of the nineteenth century, lies in narrative verse, not in prose at all. Subsequent developments in prose have obscured this. But a mere mention of Ossian, *Idylls of the King*, and *Hiawatha* should be enough to remind the reader that this is so. From this perspective, C.S. Lewis’s *Dymer* and Tolkien’s *Lays of Beleriand* are late entrants in a long tradition (128). (At the same point, Williamson mentions Charles Williams’s *Taliesin* cycle, but considers it primarily symbolic rather than narrative verse.)

6. Carter’s twentieth-century fantasy-writing tradition is actually two entirely separate traditions with little direct interaction, identified primarily by their publication venues. Using these terms without intent of qualitative
evaluation, Williamson calls them the literary strand, issued by prestige presses (the strand of William Morris, Dunsany, Cabell, Eddison, and Tolkien), and the popular strand, published in pulp magazines and as paperback originals (the strand of Weird Tales and Unknown Worlds).

7. Neither of these strands is actually a continuous tradition. The authors of the literary strand were individual mavericks (163), authors whose similarities lie less in borrowing than in common background. “Excepting Eddison’s Zimiamvia (and Tolkien), the key works published by the major writers of the twentieth-century literary canon appeared between 1905 and 1928—a period of merely 23 years” (155). The popular strand flourished in pulp magazines between 1925 and 1945, but afterwards nearly vanished (with a few notable exceptions) until a revival of the 1960s in what by then was called Sword and Sorcery.

8. The literary strand was “spliced in” to the popular one when Donald Wollheim of Ace Books, seeking more material for the rising interest in Sword and Sorcery, appropriated Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings and issued it as a Sword and Sorcery novel (2-3. 187). Its ensuing popularity outstripped that of its new peers and demonstrated a market for literary fantasy, which initiated the BAFS and established the fantasy publishing genre.

9. Inspiration by, and retelling of, ancient and medieval material, a key feature in the literary strand, varies tremendously over time, driven primarily by the practical question of what of it was available in print. Most of the popular strand, however, was driven more by interest in archaeology than in literature.

There is much else besides. Williamson’s survey begins to trail off after 1960 and comes to a complete halt at 1980, immediately after the publication of the first self-consciously fantasy novels in the literary strand. The absence of almost any discussion of work planted in the territory since the line defining it was drawn, or of the numerous extensions and offshoots that have arisen since, leaves an eerie gaping hole at the end of the book. But coverage of the older material is enough for one volume, and Williamson seems disinclined to delve far enough in the enormous recent output of fantasy to discuss it (191). (Taste may also be a factor. Even Lin Carter, in later life, expressed dismay at the tract housing developments that had sprung up since he marked off a bucolic realm and called it “fantasy”; see his 1978 review of The Sword of Shannara by Terry Brooks as “The Worst Book Ever” [Carter, “Year’s” 207-8].) In the absence of a full-length volume, the best study of post-Tolkien epic high fantasy with the same keen analytical eye that Williamson has shown here is “In the Tradition . . . ” by Roz Kaveney.

In the meantime, Williamson has offered more than enough both of thoughtful consideration of the history of fantasy and of identification of books beyond Carter to read. Despite Williamson’s warnings of their rarity, both
Phantasmion and Eovaai are available in libraries accessible to me, and I'll be looking for them.

— David Bratman

WORKS CITED


Approximately ten years after the deservedly acclaimed The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community, Diana Pavlac Glyer has released another noteworthy book about the Inklings and their influence on each other. This time “for a wider audience,” according to Glyer, “Bandersnatch is a new version of their story” (9). The accompanying illustrations by James A. Owen of the Inklings (with a bandersnatch often appearing nearby) support the book’s collaborative theme, besides inviting their own study as an intriguing complement to the text.

Since the Publisher’s Note indicates that Bandersnatch abridges The Company They Keep, it is worthwhile to compare the two books. The Company They Keep is a true treasure-trove for the scholar, and although it shapes the
chapters of *Bandersnatch*, the “new version” stands on its own. An obvious omission is that there are no footnotes in *Bandersnatch* or parenthetical citations, the latter being replaced by a few pages of endnotes, thus increasing accessibility for a general audience. *Bandersnatch* is shorter and easier reading, and though less academic in tone and presentation, that does not detract from its contribution to the field. These differences and focus on creativity make it a welcome, enjoyable read.

The book’s structure is similar to *The Company They Keep*’s scholarly approach that examines how the Inklings influenced each other. Expanding on a writing model by Karen Burke LeFevre, Glyer explores how “[w]riters in writing groups function as resonators, opponents, editors, and collaborators” (*Company* 40). In brief, resonators encourage, opponents criticize, editors suggest, and collaborators collaborate in the writing process as a social, creative activity. Glyer adds to these four categories by also discussing the referential quality of the Inklings’s writings in how they are characters in each other’s works. These five categories are developed respectively in chapters 3 through 7 of *Bandersnatch* with specific examples from the Inklings’s lives and writings. Chapter 3 balances the resonator role (encouragement) with the opponent (criticism) in chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the work of the Inklings as editors in providing feedback that influenced ideas and textual changes, and chapter 6 emphasizes the Inklings as collaborators who assisted and supported their colleagues. As a component or extension of collaboration in chapter 7, Glyer considers the Inklings as referents in how “they wrote about each other” (125). The last chapter looks at certain concepts such as genius and collegial interaction, and effectively summarizes the book’s overarching theme in the statement that “creativity thrives in community” (148). Collaboration can come across as a catch-all phrase if not studied more closely. What is collaboration or “these various ways of working together” (103)? Glyer hones in on collaboration as a process in which people imagine and complete a project “together from start to finish” (103). The key, of course, is that collaboration is an action together, not alone, and this process deserves understanding and due credit with its connection to creativity and subsequent results.

Such points are apparent throughout *Bandersnatch*. Similar to the chapter “conclusions” in *The Company They Keep*, each chapter in *Bandersnatch* ends with a section “Doing what they did” that encapsulates the chapter. Rather than mere summary, however, these sections provide practical or creative applicability. For instance, one points out that it is vital to keep in mind “the difference between correction that is helpful and condemnation that is dismissive and, therefore, destroys” (71), a notable practice when working with other writers. These brief sections reinforce the importance of creative collaboration, and by way of concluding each chapter, they help answer “what’s
the purpose or value?” for the reader. The Epilogue “Doing What the Inklings Did” collects and expands on the ideas in these sections with “takeaway[s]” as well as a few “first steps” to encourage the reader’s involvement with “a collaborative circle” (168). Engaging and insightful, *Bandersnatch* is highly recommended for anyone interested in the Inklings, creativity, and collaboration.

—Tiffany Brooke Martin

**WORK CITED**

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It the artwork on the cover of *The Inklings Coloring Book* looks familiar, it’s because James A. Owen’s art has already been featured in a number of mythopoeic works, including Catherynne M. Valente’s *Under in the Mere*, his own *Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica*, and his contemplative meditations on art and mythology such as *Drawing Out the Dragons*. For *The Inklings Coloring Book*, Owen creates a nearly textless collection of art based on the works and lives of the Inklings. With an opening illustration that could be straight out of Humphrey Carpenter’s biography of the group, it’s clear that some of the illustrations are grounded in reality. But the real-world illustrations have a bit of whimsical in them: that opening image features a book opened to a page with a Bandersnatch illustration, and “The Inklings at Magdalen Bridge” shows a boat with the Bandersnatch’s head in the water. The Bandersnatch peeks out from within the Kilns, looking over Warnie Lewis’s shoulder; and later it crouches above the Tolkien home, looking down at Christopher Tolkien. In the woods behind Owen Barfield at Addison’s Walk is the Bandersnatch’s shape possibly made from bark and leaves—but an intrepid colorist could pencil it with reds and golds or blues, depending on how blatant they desire that fantastic image to appear. Alternating with these real-world illustrations are images that could come out of the books written by the Inklings. A centaur, a wizened old man who might be a wizard, a dwarf warrior (with giant eagles in the background), and an elf queen each get a page, and the recurring Bandersnatch has its own fantasy illustration as well. The fun part about

146 *Mythlore* 129, Fall/Winter 2016
Reviews

coloring books for adults is that there’s so much the colorist can bring to the pages: what details are emphasized are up to the person doing the coloring. In Owen’s illustrations, there is a lot of fine detail work; the line work is less open than the more geometric books often used in adult coloring meditations. For perfectionist colorists, this might make the book too much of a challenge; for colorists who are content to let their blades of grass bleed together and aren’t too troubled by each leaf having a distinct hue, there’s plenty of room for creativity. The fine line work might make the book most appropriate for colored pencils, but colorists deft with crayons will have no trouble creating their own shading in various hues.

Though there are a few scenes from Inklings lore that might be expected by Inklings scholars—Lewis’s long walk with Dyson and Tolkien that was so pivotal to Lewis’s faith, for example—and though the fantasy scenes seem unspecific to any particular work, the atmosphere of the whole collection is perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the Inklings.

—Alana Joli Abbott


Ohio State professor Timothy R. Furnish writes at the end of this book that he “holds a Ph.D. in Islamic, African, and World History only because the history Department at The Ohio State University would not let him specialize in the chronicles of Gondor.” That fact is regrettable; his enthusiastic interest in the imagined history of J.R.R. Tolkien’s legendarium shines on brightly in this study.

Furnish, whose three prior books have been studies of Islamic history, has served as a consultant to the United States military. He states that he “much prefers Middle-earth to the Middle East; his favorite character is Théoden; and he also fences saber in his spare time—usually, but not always, left-handed.” His photograph shows him to be a tall, bald, and mustached man with a sword that more resembles a weapon of Middle-earth than the fencing gymnasium. Of himself, he writes:

Mythlore 35.1, Fall/Winter 2016 147
I fenced briefly during the late Carter/early first Reagan administrations, abandoned it for 30 years, then took up epee and saber recently in my early 50s. Among the inevitable aches, pains, and injuries, it’s certainly given me at least a theoretical appreciation for what real and fictional warriors in pre-gunpowder eras would’ve faced. In addition, I spent almost five years in the U.S. Army, both enlisted and commissioned, in the 1980s and 1990s. (15)

Elsewhere, on his blog MahdiWatch.org, he states:

During the Reagan years, I was an Arabic linguist in the 101st Airborne Division; later I was commissioned and trained as a (Christian) Army chaplain, although eventually opting for an academic, rather than a military-pastoral, career. My personal research specializations are Islamic eschatology (end of time beliefs), Mahdism, Islamic fundamentalism, jihadism, the Hidden Imam and how all of these relate to modern politics.

He begins his study by stating that “I first read *The Hobbit* when I was 16, in the fall of 1976. [...] Over the years, Tolkien has seeped into my mind as well as my soul, fusing with my other areas of interest and expertise, both personal and professional, world and Middle Eastern history; eschatology; comparative politics; military topics and weaponry.” He adds that he has “re-read the trilogy numerous times.” “I’ve also lost count of how many times I’ve watched Peter Jackson’s excellent movies set in Middle-earth—yes, the extended editions” (1).

He ends his book by stating:

This book was not supposed to be written. Its subject matter—an analysis of Middle-earth’s speaking peoples, First through early Fourth Ages—was originally intended as merely a preliminary section in a comprehensive military history of Tolkien’s world. But the former tale grew in the telling, and so my editors at Oloris—particularly the perspicacious Lara Sookoo—recommended that I split out *High Towers and Strong Places* from its upcoming successor *Bright Swords and Glorious Warriors*. And so it was done. (145)

Wise advice, that, and Furnish was shrewd and sensible to heed it.

This tome includes 47 pages of end-notes, one of acknowledgments, three about the author, map- and diagram-maker Aaron Siddall, and illustrator Anke Eißmann, and twelve of “Works Cited,” beginning with “Air Force Chief of Staff Reading List” static.dma.mil/usaf, 2014” and followed by “Alfred The Great” Wikipedia.” Lamentably, however, there is no index.
Dr. Furnish has an unfortunate predilection for random bold-facing, quotation mark usage, and italicizing. Even more regrettable is his tendency toward arguable assertions:

"Many critics and readers have viewed Tolkien as simplistically pacifist or [alternatively] war-loving, by reading shallowly [...] or simply disregarding the presence of war in the works altogether. What they miss by reading him this way is a well thought-out, comprehensive, and realistic philosophy of war" [emphasis added by Furnish to quotation from Croft]. Critics of Peter Jackson's movies of tended to side, de facto, with the more pacifist approach in their taking Jackson to task for allegedly over-stating the more martial aspects of Middle-earth history. But while Tolkien was far from a "war-monger," he also eschewed pacifism both personally (he volunteered to fight in World War I) and as creator of Middle-earth. (14)

As readers of John Garth's two superb studies Tolkien and The Great War and Tolkien at Exeter College and Humphrey Carpenter's seminal biography Tolkien might point out, "volunteered" may not be the most apt verb.

Moreover, nowhere does Furnish furnish the fact that in "The Scouring of the Shire," Frodo intervenes to diminish the hobbits' revengeful blood-letting of Sharkey (Saruman) and Worm (Grima)'s accomplices in the subjugation of the Shire.

Certainly, Furnish demonstrates moments of insight: "Contra Peter Jackson's portrayal of Saruman begetting the Uruks from some sort of subterranean incubator, the canonical reality is far more revolting: either Orcs impregnated human women, or men had sexual intercourse with female Orcs" (56).

Or again, in the opening of chapter two: "While war can broadly be defined as inter-species aggression, more narrowly and prosaically it is described as 'a state of usually open and declared armed hostile combat between states or nations.' Over Middle-earth's seven millennia of recorded history, the latter usually held true, even if the former did not" (73).

While there is much to admire in this book, Furnish's overwrought prolixity dulls the luster of his brighter observations. Case in point:

Thus, the councils of both Gondor and Arnor would have consisted of 'the Lords of the Fiefs and the Captains of the Forces who advised the Kings and, afterwards in Gondor, the Stewards (for 'even Denethor had a Council' in the late Third Age) '[i]n all debatable manners of importance, domestic or external.' Likewise, the rump states which devolved from Arnor may have each had their own such advisors to their
rulers—Arthedain, the largest and most viable politically (and probably militarily), most certainly did. Also, the political was perhaps totally not elite-driven; consider, for example, the popular support that was solicited before the crowning of Aragorn as King Elessar, when Faramir inquired ‘Shall he be king and enter into the City and dwell there?’ And all the host and all the people cried out yea with one voice.”  V Rex populi was at least given some respect in Middle-earth’s most powerful Third Age state, and Aragorn as King Elessar probably heeded popular opinion more than had been the case for centuries; he ‘re-established the Great Council of Gondor, and in that Faramir who remained by inheritance the Steward (or representative of the King during his absence abroad, or sickness or between his death and the accession of his heir) would [be] the chief counsellor.’ Thus, Elessar not only retained the old but, ad hoc, office of Steward—he converted it into a de facto Prime Ministership. All-in-all, then, Gondor was not only a monarchy, but one with powerful and even proto-democratic elements. Arnor would have been very similar, and its monarchical tradition continued after the political fragmentation in ninth century of the Third Age in Arthedain, for another eleven centuries—whereas Cardolan and Rhudaur disintegrated much more quickly, transforming into despotisms, dictatorships, or worse, being bereft of Arthedain’s legitimacy. (81-82)

Aaron Siddall’s maps and diagrams are true to its distinguished predecessor Karen Wynn Fonstad’s The Atlas of Middle-earth and Tolkien’s descriptions. However, illustrator Anke Eißmann’s 23 illustrations, seemingly influenced by Peter Jackson’s images, are not likely to overshadow the work of Ted Nasmith, John Howe, the brothers Hildebrandt, and Tolkien’s own depictions in The Hobbit and as collected and annotated in Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull’s 1995 work J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator.

Exhaustive and exhausting passages cover seemingly every realm, race, and ruler in Middle-earth’s long history. For example, few such studies include lore noting that

[T]he ‘ancient Elvish port near Dol Amroth,’ known as Edhellond which was founded about 1980 TA but was abandoned sometime over the next eleven centuries. Also, there was a (presumably small) Elvish community in Ithilien, established at the end of the Third Age under the leadership of Legolas son of Thranduil and friend of Aragorn, who became King Elessar. Although Legolas departed Middle-earth, along with his friend Gimli, about 120 Fourth Age after the passing of King Elessar, it’s likely that other Elves remained in Ithilien for some years after—although by then, like the rest of Elvenkind, they were no longer political or military
players in Middle-earth, but rather essentially lingering refugees merely biding their time and waiting to take the boat(s) home to Valinor. (30)

Admirers of *High Towers and Strong Places* include award-winning Tolkien scholar Dr. Thomas Shippey, who writes in his back-cover blurb “Timothy Furnish’s work brings the politics of Middle-earth out of the background and into sharp focus, demonstrating once again the richness and consistency of Tolkien’s world. I look forward to the sequel [*Bright Swords and Glorious Warriors: A Military History of Middle-earth*], which will turn to military strategy and tactics.”

This study is the sort of the thing that those who like this sort of thing will savor. However, this first book doesn’t leave this reader with baited breath (eating worms again) waiting for the next installment. Overall, this work too often reminds us of a couplet from the William Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*: “Golden lads and girls all must / As chimney-sweepers, come to dust” (Act IV, scene ii).

Furnish’s dilatory and overstated observations sometimes evoke historian Garry Wills’s comment about the apostle St. Peter in his 2002 book *Why I Am a Catholic*:

A man of action, he invariably takes the wrong action. In the garden where Jesus is arrested, he is not only inept but ridiculous. With armed soldiers collaring his leader, he attacks a nearby servant—in the ear. As a journalist I know would say, this does not show the instinct for the jugular but an instinct for the capillary. It is as if Peter said, “I am so mad at you that I am going to shoot your dog—in the paw.” (58)

Thin as this book is, once the notes, illustrations, diagrams, and maps are subtracted, its prose is too often too thick. Reader, be aware. And beware.

—Mike Foster

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**WORKS CITED**


This new edition offers an excellent collection of Joseph Campbell’s lectures and papers on Arthurian myth and literature. Acting as one of his major sources for his research of monomyth in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* and other works, Campbell’s inquiries into medieval literature focus on the enduring message of the tales surrounding the Grail myth and King Arthur’s knightly court. Furthermore, the book provides a good (although concise) overview of the Christian and Pagan sources of these stories.

Hence chapters one and two address the problematic relation between the Celtic and the Christian-Roman influence on Arthurian legend—although the brevity of both does not cover all of the points that are raised. Arthurian romance, Campbell claims in the first chapter, is the pinnacle of a complex assimilatory process: It merges the Christian belief system with Pagan elements, translating quest-motifs from Celtic religion into stories about Arthur’s knights and their adventures. This amalgam is a direct consequence of the collapse of the Roman rule in Britain and the ensuing invasions by Picts and Germanic tribes—which in turn provided the historical background for the Arthurian legend. The second chapter explores the travels of Irish Saint Brendan of Clonfert as part of a timeless “mythological idiom” (14) rather than as visits to actual or imagined places. Campbell establishes links to Brendan’s encounter with neutral angels who brought the Grail to Earth and his travels to the paradiisiacal isles of the Hesperides and Avalon—all places and events that need not be factual but should rather be regarded as mythologized accounts of existing Celtic journeys of the period.

Chapter three acts both as an addendum to the first two chapters and as an introduction to Part Two: Knights in Quest, the major part of this volume. With the collapse of the Roman Empire and the shift of the center of belief from Rome to Constantinople, Christianity was faced with a variety of problems, effectively creating an era of spiritual confusion and frustration in the so-called Dark Ages that lasted until the 12th century. Specifically, this confusion resulted in two central motifs for the Grail legend: The image of the Waste Land and the struggle between divine and earthly love in German *minnesang*. Indeed, the works of authors of the period such as Gottfried von Strassburg and Wolfram von Eschenbach present a direct challenge to the Church, secularizing the divine and finding it outside of the official doctrine.

The core of the Grail legend is laid out in detail in the following fourth chapter: Campbell offers a humorous yet elaborate summary and discussion of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s seminal epic Romance *Parzival* and embeds the
poem within its historical and mythical context. Campbell sees Wolfram’s magnum opus as a world-spanning narrative that again combines two sets of cultures, namely an Oriental and a Christian world-view personified in the brothers Feirefiz and Parzival. Their lives and adventures consist of both an outward, historical and inner, mystical journey, represented best by the initial failure of Parzival in the Grail castle and his self-inflicted exile thereafter. Particularly the oriental reflections on Parzival following the summary emplace the Grail legend within a bigger world and establish connections to sources as diverse as the Buddhist legend of Gautama, the Muslim stone of Ka’aba, and Indian dharma. Campbell emphasizes that some of his claims are rather speculative, but the aim of this subchapter is clearly taken up again in the third part of the volume.

The next two chapters provide further elaboration of the problematic ideal of love and of the Grail legend respectively. Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan is the topic of chapter five and exemplifies a love that is earthly but not sinful (since its source is the love potion that Tristan and Iseult drink, and not lustful thought). The central conflict of this love, as Campbell points out, lies in the juxtaposition of love and marriage, “amour against honueur” (109). Again, he also connects Strassburg’s poem with similar romantic constellations such as Paris and Helen of Troy or Siegfried and Brunhild while at the same time investigating earlier versions and sources of the Tristan-Iseult saga.

Chapter six presents an equally source-based and intertextual approach to King Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table: Campbell cites Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae as the first major written but still largely lore-based account of British royalty that acted as the crucial source for later Arthurian legend and epics. The pace of the book increases here, moving quickly from a historical and genealogical perspective on King Arthur to the individual adventures and fates of Galahad, Lancelot, and Yvain on their journeys to bring honor to Arthur’s court. Campbell closes the chapter with a short summary of the romance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, again referring to the recurring challenges of knightly valor and love with the earthly and spiritual tests that Gawain has to undergo over the course of the poem.

In the third part of this volume, Campbell offers insight into the more general motifs and themes of Arthurian legend. Specifically, his focus lies on the Waste Land, perhaps the most central and accurate representation of the crisis of spirituality in the Dark Ages. Life and love, Campbell claims, are seen as opposites during the Middle Ages, one of them forming, the other one breaking social norm. It is here that the connection to The Hero With a Thousand Faces and monomyth becomes most apparent: Combining references and motifs from sources and works as diverse as T.S. Eliot’s The Waste Land, The Arabian Nights, Buddhism, and Celtic mythology, Campbell lays out the hero’s journey as a
universal journey. Parzival, whose name literally means “pierce the valley,” represents the “middle way” between divine and worldly beliefs, both ignoring and uniting the opposing forces of spirituality and nature. Likewise, he can only break the spell of the Grail castle and heal the Fisher King out of spontaneous and honest concern, not being urged to do so by a sense of duty. Clearly, Campbell’s focus lies on this motif of self-knowledge and healing—the Grail theme itself is covered with less attention to mythology and in a shorter manner for the rest of the final chapter, as is the isle of Avalon.

Campbell’s strong interest in the Waste Land motif is given a final backing by an essential addendum to the book, namely his Master’s thesis titled “A Study of the Dolorous Stroke.” Written in 1927, the paper reveals Campbell’s first steps towards the ideas that would take hold in his more popular and enduring works.

This book presents a thorough if at times brief overview of Campbell’s vast interests and the lesser-known foci that nonetheless form a vital part of his later career. The only criticism that could be of importance is that safe for a paragraph on sources in the introduction by editor Evans Lansing Smith, neither the chapters nor the book in general give the precise dates of the papers and lectures collected by the Joseph Campbell Foundation. While this does not pose a problem for using the volume for academic purposes per se and dates may be looked up on the foundation’s website, chronological information within the book would certainly have been helpful. This said, the arrangement and selection of the material are excellent, starting with a wider overview of the sources of Arthurian legend at first before addressing specific topics in more detail. Both for researchers and leisurely readers, this volume is therefore highly recommended.

—Daniel Lüthi


Given the worldwide popularity and impact of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, it should come as no surprise that the field of Potter studies has experienced similar explosive growth as well. Wizards vs. Muggles: Essays on Identity and the Harry Potter Universe adds to this rapidly emerging field—and
adds to it admirably. The editor, Christopher E. Bell, has already edited three previous collections on Rowling’s books, and this new collection testifies to the interdisciplinary and international character of Potter studies. Nearly every essay is a high quality, well-researched, and well-edited contribution to our understanding of identity construction inside and outside the Potter universe; at least two of the essays are great contributions. Bell has divided the book along a creative and fruitful line. The first half, “Transfiguration: Wizard Identity,” looks at the construction of identity within the Potter universe, each author taking various positions on race, gender, class, and sexuality. The second half, appropriately named “Muggle Studies,” shows an even wider reach. It examines identity construction as it relates between the Potter universe and the real world. Accordingly, the second half ranges from fandom, pedagogy, and real-life quidditch to a brilliant contribution on Harry Potter and Jewish law.

A majority of the essays come from the field of communication studies and, as such, they follow that field’s typical scholarly conventions: an extended review of the secondary literature, followed usually by a detailed (occasionally too detailed) description of the theoretical model or concepts employed. Readers who find such things daunting—and the book does seem aimed at an educated but not necessarily academic audience—can usually safely skip to the textual analysis, although the literature reviews especially give a sense of the breadth and variety of work being done. In addition, many of the essays—exceptions being the work by Bell, Levi Cooper, and Ryan S. Rigda—tend to be written in the stiff prose characteristic of the social sciences. Still, Bell’s inviting, conversational, yet academically rigorous introduction (he even provides his e-mail address) should appeal to general readers and academics alike as he defends the importance of studying identity formation in a massively popular text like Harry Potter.

The opening essay in “Transfiguration: Wizard Identity” makes no compromises. According to Raymond I. Schuck in “The anti-racist-white-hero premise: Whiteness and the Harry Potter Series,” although the Potter books are potentially progressive, they nonetheless present “a version of inclusion that reinforces white privilege and white power” (11). Schuck argues that the “dual ‘othering’” of Harry—i.e., his clear difference from characters like Ron and Draco who take their identity for granted—actually does nothing to de-center Harry’s position of white privilege. Instead, the dominance of Harry’s point of view asks us, as readers, to “care about the suffering of others only in so far as that suffering relates to the suffering of the protagonist who identifies with the dominant group” (23)—white, male, and descended from an established wizarding family. Though some of Schuck’s points are well-taken, he does tend to construct a monolithic reader, glossing over how more sympathetic readers
(even readers of different backgrounds) might approach the books or identify with characters other than the protagonist.

Lauren R. Camacci’s following essay, “The Prisoner of Gender: Masculinity in the Potter Books,” though less uncompromising than Schuck, applies an argument similar in structure. Rather than white privilege, though, Camacci concentrates on gendering and masculinity. She argues that, while Rowling does provide readers with “artfully crafted characters” who avoid being static, homogenous archetypes, the Potter texts nonetheless present “a conservative statement [...] on hegemonic masculinity, gender performance, and homosociality” (28). Her male characters’ combination of “both traditional and nontraditional masculinities” (32) does not quite make up for the fact that male society and role models—particularly fathers and brothers—play a disproportionately significant role in constructing male identity. Young boys from Harry to Ron to Malfoy are all extraordinarily concerned with “performing” masculinity and avoiding connotations of effeminacy. As with Schuck, Camacci’s points are well-taken (and more nuanced), but it would have been interesting to see how she would handle the argument, made later in this volume by Shira Wolosky, that the young Potter males identify with their mothers as much—if not more—than their fathers.

Brendan G.A. Hughes provides one of the volume’s outstanding contributions. In “The HIV Metaphor: J.K. Rowling’s Werewolf and its Transformative Potential,” Hughes builds on comments from Rowling to the effect that Remus Lupin’s liminal status in the wizarding world, nominally due to his werewolf status, is actually a metaphor for persons with HIV. Specifically, Hughes argues that Lycanthropy is HIV can become a new, lasting archetypal metaphor for the modern world. After laying some theoretical groundwork, Hughes shows that Lycanthropy is HIV can help “educate and facilitate conversations about HIV with young adults” who lack any prior experience of HIV or know about the stigmas attached to it (58). Those stigmas, Hughes notes, are especially prevalent in social institutions such as education, employment, and the family. Two reservations stop Hughes from completely endorsing the Lycanthropy is HIV metaphor, however. First, werewolves in the Potter universe tend to be associated with ultimate evil (i.e., Voldemort’s forces); second, Lupin would have provided a better role model of persons with HIV had Rowling permitted him to live out his life as a father and community citizen.

The editor’s contribution to this volume, “Heroes and Horcruxes: Dumbledore’s Army as Metonym,” does not quite fulfill its admirable ambition. Basically, Bell wishes to lay out an elegant schema that ties each Horcrux and its destruction with a particular character and his or her particular virtue. Thus: Ginny → Tom’s Diary → Youth; Dumbledore → Gaunt’s Ring → Pride; Ron → Slytherin’s Locket → Bravery; Hermione → Hufflepuff’s Cup → Hard Work;
Luna → Ravenclaw’s Diadem → Wisdom; Nevill → Nagini → Loyalty; and Harry → Harry → Trust. Had Bell succeeded, his efforts would have earned high praise. Unfortunately, Bell has to stretch a number of points to make his schema work. He does argue that hard work is Hermione’s main virtue, rather than intelligence or wisdom (which he gives to Luna), but he falls short by describing Ron’s major trait as bravery. Ron certainly needs bravery, but Bell might have consulted Ron’s vision in the Mirror of Erised, which suggests a different obsession. Also, Bell argues that Luna is “directly responsible for the destruction of the Diadem of Ravenclaw” (81) when her contribution is clearly indirect; the Diadem is directly destroyed by Crabbe’s Fiendfyre. Furthermore, Bell too often offers an idiosyncratic understanding of the virtues. The opposite of wisdom is not madness but folly; the opposite of jealousy is not bravery but apathy or indifference; and so on.

Hillary A. Jones takes a different, yet intriguing, approach to Harry Potter. “‘I’m a wizard too!’ Identification and Habitus” focuses on how narrative itself employs various “identity scripts” in order to construct identity. She relies on two different theoretical tools: Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification (which posits that individual identity relies on an identification with some collective identity) and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which is a “constellation [...] of identity scripts and dispositions developed due to one’s ‘social trajectory’” (95). Building on these tools, Jones argues that the “muggle/wizard” binary (i.e., us vs. them) is one of the strongest binaries in the Potter universe; rigidly maintaining this binary helps each respective group reinforce “their identification with their own identity” (99). Jones also shows that Harry and Hermione increase their identification with the wizarding world by relying on inborn talent (Harry) and by working hard (Hermione). Two other binaries, Gryffindor vs. Slytherin and rule-following vs. rule-breaking, also offer significant identity scripts.

The final essay in “Transfiguration: Wizard Identity” belongs to Shira Wolosky’s insightful “Gendered Heroism: Family Romance and Transformations of the Hero-Type.” In short, Wolosky suggests that most critiques of Rowling’s female characters “depend upon and reconfirm the traditional [male] gendering of heroism and its hero-model” (111). This results in a kind of “gender score-keeping” that consistently shortchanges the books’ female characters. Wolosky adapts a hero model from a diverse variety of theoreticians (Raglan, Campbell, Bettelheim, Freud, Frye), arguing that heroism should be seen, not “as the solitary adventurer proving prowess, but as joint commitment in a shared heroism that also recasts masculine and feminine typologies” (112). The maleness of Harry, for example, is counterbalanced by how male characters from Draco to Harry eventually cast off male role models and begin identifying with their mothers—or, in the case of Ginny, even assert
their independence by distancing themselves from their male family members. Attachment, rather than detachment, becomes a prime heroic virtue, as does compassion, showing how easily the masculine and the feminine can mix. Wolosky also provides the volume’s best single line. When discussing how the secondary literature seethes with “pro- and con- gender assessments” of Rowling’s female characters, Wolosky notes that Hermione “often seems like a Quaffle ball knocked around in gender score-keeping” (120).

Jelena Borojević opens the Muggle Studies portion of this volume with her essay “Quenching the Quill: How Fan Art Builds Meaning, Creates Bonds and Triggers Imagination.” Borojević provides a passionate defense of fan culture and fan community that, unfortunately, strays rather far from the subject of Harry Potter. She brings few concrete examples to bear, either from Potter fandom or any particular fandom. Borojević initially critiques the perceived divide between high and low culture before proceeding to the agency and dignity that fandom brings its fans. She then switches, abruptly, from discussing fans to discussing fan artwork, by which she apparently means all fan productions, not just drawing or sketches. Furthermore, this reviewer was occasionally unsure of the essay’s targets. For example, Borojević criticizes authors who do not give their characters “the freedom to continue their journey” (137) in fan fiction and the like, which certainly holds true for some authors but not for Rowling, who is quite tolerant of fan productions. Also, a concrete example of how fan art can “challenge the ruling class” (141) would have been welcome. Still, Borojević makes a useful point when she notes that fan art can “spread imagination and provide emotional support for those who finally found a place where they feel like they belong” (144).

Any readers who ever dreamed of attending Hogwarts might find challenging—or frustrating—the look given to Hogwarts pedagogical practices by Kristen L. Cole. In “Transcending Hogwarts: Pedagogical Practices Engendering Discourses of Aggression and Bullying,” Cole notes a troubling trend (at least in her view): the rise of Potter-themed day and summer camps that separate students into houses, award and deduct house points, foster competition through sports, and the like. Using a critical feminist lens, Cole attempts to show that these activities, all recognizable from the books, permit and even encourage ideologies supportive of bullying and physical aggression. The sorting system and houses come under particular fire, since they ignore gender, racial, and class-based inequalities by seeming “to imply that everyone has an equal chance of earning and losing points” (159). Though nominally multicultural, the Hogwarts experience really situates “European and male experience as the norm” (155). Though Cole clearly overstates her case when she argues that Hogwarts teaches us to “be white, be a man, be competitive, be physically aggressive, and be rational” (165), her critique—which might equally
well apply to the British boarding school system in general—nonetheless raises some troubling points.

Levi Cooper provides a gem in “Culpability for Curses in Jewish Law and Mystical Lore.” When looking at the legality of the Killing Curse, Cooper does not speak in hypotheticals. Because Jewish Law, over the centuries, has had to incorporate mystical tradition and esoteric lore, law jurists have had the opportunity to consider the “legal implications of magic” in actual historical cases (168). To determine legal guilt, Jewish law requires both a mental component (guilty mind) and a physical component (guilty act). In the Avada Kedavra curse, for example, users of the Killing Curse clearly intend to commit murder, fulfilling the mental component, but what of the physical component? Well, Cooper looks at the responsa literature around “killing with a Name,” or the Divine Name, which is considered to be lethal if spoken by the mystically adroit. In addition, Cooper also examines enchanted quills that write on the Sabbath (similar to Tom Riddle’s Diary) and the proper benediction to say over biblical manna (roughly similar to the problem posed by Bertie Bott’s Beans). Ultimately, Cooper thinks his methodology can help legal education by providing the types of case studies that modern law schools, which rigidly demarcate between secular and religious law, cannot provide. Even so, Cooper’s highly original approach can help the theme of law and literature in general.

In “Building Harry Potter’s Identity in Transmedia Contexts,” three authors—Pilar Lacasa, Sara Cortés, and Rut Martínez-Borda—provide an empirical study on how young people and children use multimodal discourses to build the character of “Harry Potter.” They used data gathered from a Spanish classroom which taught language to students via the video game version of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. These students eventually collaborated on a newspaper containing thirty-one articles on or about Harry Potter. According to Lacasa, Cortés, and Martínez-Borda, the interviews enabled their authors to take an external perspective of themselves and the “person” being interviewed, relating to one another as “creators in a dialog” (215). The narratives about Harry, in contrast, encouraged the writers to identify with Harry and adopt his perspective. Other articles included simple searches for information, which turned authors into compilers of information, and Harry himself as an object of study. Overall, this article provides an intriguing look into how different students choose to re-construct the information they have acquired.

Ryan S. Rigda in “Creating Equality Through Quidditch: A Rhetorical Analysis of Quidditch Blogs” provides an interesting and well-written article about quidditch, quidditch blogs, and gender equality. Thanks to the rise in quidditch playing all over the real world, the International Quidditch Association (IQA) has come into being. As part of “Title 9 ¾,” the IQA stipulates
that no team can have more than four players who identify as the same gender. Whereas some critics have alleged (Rigda seems sympathetic to this view) that female quidditch players in the Potter books merely serve "as background information or male enablers" (224), real-world quidditch—according to Ridga—helps break "traditional gender roles and stereotypes in modern sport" (218) by challenging the stranglehold on sport by "hegemonic masculinity." Although Ridga's analysis of quidditch blogs shows that gender stereotypes, as he understands the term, still continue, Ridga remains hopeful that a more egalitarian sports discourse will develop from real-world quidditch. A number of contestable assertions, however, mar an otherwise strong essay. For example, the passive voice in the following claim, "Rowling’s text is considered to perpetuate traditional gender roles" (225), masks the on-going debate on precisely this issue. In addition, it seems unnecessarily contentious to argue that organized sports were developed just to allow "middle-class white males to display their superiority over women and over race-and-class subordinated groups of men" (220).

Nonetheless, the wide variety of perspectives and theoretical models employed by Wizards vs. Muggles attests to the growing strength and rigor of Potter studies, crossing boundaries both international and disciplinary. With few exceptions, the research in this collection is thorough, the arguments worthwhile, and the insights useful. All in all, Wizards vs. Muggles offers a strong successor volume to the previous three volumes of Potter scholarship edited by Christopher E. Bell.

—Dennis Wilson Wise


Although others have observed Dantean parallels and allusions in C.S. Lewis’s fiction, Marsha Daigle-Williamson’s Reflecting the Eternal is the first book to examine the Divine Comedy’s presence in all of Lewis’s novels. This fact makes it an important and groundbreaking work of criticism for both Lewis scholars and other passionate readers of his work. The book contains enough specific, original examples of convincing parallelism and allusion to make it an invaluable resource for scholars, yet it is not overburdened with critical jargon.
that would render it heavy going for general readers. This is a nice balance, considering the appeal of the topic. For readers not thoroughly familiar with Dante, Daigle-Williamson provides enough orienting explanation and detail to help them find their way, yet she avoids lapsing into extensive plot summary. (She provides very concise overviews of the three books of the Divine Comedy in her first chapter, "Lewis, Dante, and Literary Predecessors."

Chapters following the first each focus on a single work of Lewis’s fiction, with the exception of Chapter 8, which treats The Chronicles of Narnia as a whole. The other seven main chapters each discuss Dantesan features of separate Lewis novels in chronological order. This is generally a sound organizational strategy, yet the placement of Chapter 4, on The Screwtape Letters, between chapters on the first two parts of the Space Trilogy may be disconcerting for those reading straight through the book. Screwtape could have easily come before or after the entire Trilogy and would have made a fine immediate precursor to Chapter 7 on The Great Divorce. The book’s organization, however, makes it very useful as a reference for those researching a single Lewis novel, a feature that is enhanced by a fairly comprehensive thirteen-page index. While the book lends itself to usefulness as a research reference, aficionados of Lewis, Dante, or both will want to read every chapter.

Given these strengths, the book is beset by one recurring weakness: while it catalogues many stunning connections between Lewis and Dante, it often neglects to analyze them adequately, or even altogether. The guidelines on “the sources of mythopoeic fiction” for Mythlore submissions stress the importance of going beyond mere observation of parallels to analysis of their significance: “these studies should provide us with keys to understanding mythopoeic fiction and should not simply list sources. For example, a study of echoes of Beowulf in Tolkien’s work should demonstrate how the elements used contributed to Tolkien’s themes, and how and why he transformed them” (“Submissions”). We are entitled to expect nothing short of this benchmark for any work of scholarly criticism. While Daigle-Williamson does indeed analyze in many instances, in too many others she substantiates the apparent source connection and moves on without sufficiently discussing its implications. For example, in Chapter 2 on The Pilgrim’s Regress, she provides convincing textual evidence that the island toward which John moves, “like Beatrice, functions as a kind of lighthouse that has led the pilgrim thus far but now points beyond itself, to the final joy, to the ultimate good that is desired” (36). While she does infer, picking up on a cue from the novel’s Mr. History (36), that the two “are theologically equivalent insofar as both illustrate Lewis’s belief that God can use all of creation, from inanimate nature to living beings, to attract individuals to himself” (38), she provides no analysis as to why Lewis would in his story replace a living soul with an inanimate object. In the chapter’s conclusion the
author predicts, “Readers will see new Beatrices again and again in Lewis’s fiction. No future Beatrice in Lewis’s fiction will be inanimate, however” (38). But neither does this prediction help us better understand the curious fact that Lewis replaces Dante’s human Beatrice with a topographical feature in the first place.

Again, in the next chapter on Out of the Silent Planet, Daigle-Williamson observes that Ransom’s journey “recalls the pilgrim’s journey in the Inferno […] in four ways: parallel details at the beginning of the journey, the significance of the journey, the ongoing demeanor of the pilgrim, and parallel details at the end of the journey” (51). These convergences she goes on to survey in the following pages, pointing out, for example, “In a stylistic parallel, loss of consciousness for Dante’s pilgrim is recorded in the last two verses of a canto (see Inf. 3.135-136), and Ransom’s loss of consciousness is recorded in the last sentence of a chapter (OSP ch 2).” For none of these convincing parallels, however, does the author analyze possible significances beyond the fairly obvious conclusion that “Just as Dante learns about the true nature of sin and evil during his journey through hell, so too Ransom becomes acutely aware of the specific ongoing evils of his planet” (53). By contrast, in the broader framework of this chapter, she provides not only examples of how the novel’s cosmology parallels Dante’s, but also consistent, specific analysis of how Lewis adapts Dante’s strategy to his own science fiction: “Like Dante, Lewis achieves the imaginative representation of his cosmos by a synthesis of concepts from science, classical philosophy, and classical literature as he adapts that material to be in harmony with Christian truth” (44). She concludes that in doing so “Lewis looks back to Dante’s universe in restoring a Christian character to the cosmos” (59), which, as she states near the beginning of the chapter, “the science fiction writers of his time had universally discarded” (43)—all making what Lewis is doing with Dante in this novel of revolutionary importance, all satisfyingly demonstrated by Daigle-Williamson’s analysis of particular textual parallels.

As a final example of the problem under discussion, however, in her chapter on Perelandra, Daigle-Williamson writes that the Paradiso’s cosmic vision “ends on a note of implied movement,” whereas Ransom’s parallel vision “ends in rest” (95). While the author provides details from both texts demonstrating how this is so, she never raises the question why. Her concluding assertion—“The difference in the outward shape of the two visions […] does not eliminate the essential parallel that exists between them, for each vision signifies a total union with God and signals the conclusion of a long, arduous journey by a pilgrim”—still does not answer the question why Lewis inverts Dante. The author notes the parallel and the contrast, and moves on to the next set of comparisons regarding Beatrice, leaving readers asking, ‘So what? Why should Lewis create such a stark variation on Dante?’
One the other hand, there are indeed (as already noted for the chapter on OSP) places in the book where Daigle-Williamson analyzes and interprets instead of just comparing. In Chapter 4 on *The Screwtape Letters*, she argues that “in choosing the punishment of consumption by devils [...] as the only punishment for his hell,” thus putting “all sinners in the *Inferno’s* circle of traitors [...], Lewis may be offering the commentary that all sinners, no matter the sin, are traitors” (65). Again, under the subheading Perelandra and Its Inhabitants in Chapter 5, she meaningfully expands on her connection between Lewis’s Tinidril and Matilda in the *Purgatorio*: “By specifically fashioning his lady to resemble Dante’s Matilda, who is reminiscent of Proserpine, Lewis may obliquely be suggesting that she is in danger too, since ‘the ruler of hell’ in his cosmic scheme (The Bent One) is trying to capture her as well” (as Hades/Pluto did Persephone/Proserpina) (86). Just prior to this example, under the same subheading, she makes an assertion that should be of great interest to *Mythlore* readers: “Lewis mirrors Dante’s approach of reinterpreting classical mythology as a foreshadowing of Christian truth” (83). Drawing on a series of parallels between the two works, the author concludes that the “unhappy division between soul and body” [*Perelandra 144*] [...] is healed for Ransom when truths from mythology and truths from Christian doctrine converge during the course of his journey, and his experience parallels that of Dante’s pilgrim [sic] who witnesses that same convergence of truths during his journey” (85). This is the sort of meaningful interpretive analysis that Daigle-Williamson should be doing consistently throughout her book rather than occasionally.

Apart from analysis of specific parallels, however, the author also neglects to address the kinds of comprehensive questions and issues the readers are entitled to expect of a scholarly critic. In Chapter 8 on *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Daigle-Williamson draws valid connections between Dante and features of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* and *The Silver Chair*, but she fails to address a very important question that relates to the focus of her entire book. Lewis could hardly have expected young readers of his Narnia series to recognize his allusions to Dante. This realization leads us to wonder whether he expected his adult readers to do so in his other novels. (After all, apparently none but Daigle-Williamson has to such a degree, at least in print.) If he did not hold such expectations, then was he intentionally taking up Dante’s mantle by rewriting him for modern readers, who could then imbibe afresh Dante’s story in its plenitude without even recognizing the medieval poet’s voice behind Lewis’s? Is C.S. Lewis a new prose Dante for the twentieth century and beyond? These are questions with profound implications that could revolutionize our understanding of Lewis as a fiction writer. But like Perceval in the Grail Castle, Daigle-Williamson never asks them.
This tendency to leave parallels raw and undigested and important questions unasked makes the book valuable for discussion and a potential goldmine for papers and articles expositing the significance of Dante-Lewis connections, but, again, we usually expect more of a scholarly critic. Readers are shown signs in an unfamiliar language and then left to decipher their meanings. Will attempting to do so with no Virgil, or Beatrice, or Daigle-Williamson to guide them land them in Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell? Regardless, the journey will test and enlarge readers in mind and soul, the intended purpose of any pilgrimage. For those who prefer to do their own thinking, or who are looking for good raw material to process themselves, what I’ve described as a weakness may become a strength.

The citation and documentation format of the book is decidedly non-academic. While the author provides parenthetical text citations for her primary sources—Dante, Lewis, and others such as Homer and Spenser—she gives none for secondary sources, often using a generic tag such as “One critic” (24) or “one Dante scholar” (30) instead of giving the writer’s name. The endnotes for all source references are listed under the page number from the main text, requiring readers to scan the notes for a given page rather than zeroing in on a sequentially numbered note. The endnotes themselves are expansive enough to be helpful without miring the reader down; their ninety-one pages include the original Italian for translated Dante quotations in the main text and references to additional relevant sources. On these latter points the level of scholarship is what we would expect, leading us to suspect that the unscholarly documentation style may be due to requirements of the publisher in targeting a broad audience.

The fifteen-page bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources for Lewis and then Dante, reflects the nearly thirty years of intermittent toil Daigle-Williamson mentions she has dedicated to this book (xi). Her primary sources for Dante list translations and editions of *The Divine Comedy*, but not of his other writings she refers to in her text, such as his *Letter to Can Grande* and *Vita Nuova*. She indexes some but not all of the writers listed under secondary sources, causing readers to wonder where (or if) she has actually cited the unindexed authors (e.g., Adey, Bailey, Barfield, and Boenig are listed in both index and bibliography, but Amis, Arnott, Bramlett, and Brown appear only in the bibliography.)

For all Dante quotations, Daigle-Williamson, who presently translates for the Vatican’s Preacher to the Papal Household and has sixteen Italian book translations to her credit, provides her own English prose renderings. As steeped as she is in Dante, Lewis, and the Italian language, her judgments on the two writers’ textual and narrative congruities are very sound even if her critical analyses of those junctures are often underdeveloped. In some cases she
is even able to verify Lewis’s intentional allusion to Dante through his own correspondence (e.g., the “Bus-Driver” and the “Tragedian’ with his wife” [132-33, 152] in The Great Divorce). Seldom, on the other hand, does the case for an allusion seem inadequate, as with the comparison of the Inferno’s Pier delle Vigne and Till We Have Faces’ Orual transferring blame, the former to “others,” the latter to “the gods” (185), for quite different sets of problems and outcomes. Why should readers believe that Lewis has Dante specifically in mind here?

Everything said, in the end there is no denying that Daigle-Williamson’s achievement in this book is monumental, as it demonstrates for the first time the extent of allusion to a great (many would say the greatest) medieval poet by a great twentieth-century mythopoeic writer. The groundbreaking status of this work of criticism makes it a must for all libraries with C.S. Lewis collections and a vast source for new insights into Lewis’s fiction for serious researchers, for anyone teaching a course with Lewis on the syllabus, for upper-level secondary and post-secondary students, and, not least, for general readers. The very reasonable price further commends this paperback sporting an evocatively thematic cover. Doubtless, an expanded understanding of Dante’s influence on Lewis’s fictional writings will also aid us in better knowing the inner life of C.S. Lewis as an imaginative modern communicator of Dante’s timeless vision, as one whose lifework still reflects the eternal.

—Paul R. Rovang

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In March, 2016 The Joseph Campbell Foundation rereleased Mythic Worlds, Modern Words: Joseph Campbell on the Art of James Joyce, a sort of Frankenstein’s monster of literary criticism consisting of Campbell’s lectures, notes, essays, and interviews concerning the work of that megalith of Modernism, James Joyce. Revisiting Campbell’s mythic, universalist, and psychoanalytic take on Joyce could breathe fresh air into teaching and writing about Joyce, bogged down as Joyce criticism now is in mining historical minutiae for its influence on Joyce’s work; on the other hand, Campbell’s general disregard for the fact that Joyce
was a man existing in a time and place rather than an ethereal dialogue of spiritual ideals limits his critical insight.

Much of Campbell’s thought on Joyce can be derived from the text’s introduction where Campbell argues that “in our tradition [...] mythological images have lost their relationships to affects and are interpreted in terms of rational devaluations” (3). According to Campbell this dissociation “result[s in] a split self-image, which is the beginning of schizophrenia” (6). To Campbell, Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus represents this modern schizophrenia in his works *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. Campbell also argues that Joyce’s works, both individually and collectively, take the form of a journey towards a unification of mythic image and affect. Campbell charts this journey by equating each of Joyce’s works to Dante’s, starting with comparing *Vita Nuova* to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and claiming that Joyce died before he could complete his literary journey towards mythic wholeness in what would have been his *Paradiso* (14-15).

In its essence, *Mythic Worlds, Modern Words* forwards a fascinating thesis that it defends through a close engagement with Joyce’s texts and gives Campbell the opportunity to show off his standing as a cultural polymath, drawing wide ranging connections between world mythological systems and modern psychology; that is to say, for the most part, it is good literary criticism. A prime example is Campbell’s detailed reading of the “Proteus” episode from *Ulysses*, in which Campbell often breaks down whole paragraphs to be interpreted word by word, charting out allusions to Schopenhauer and Shakespeare, Catholic doctrine and Irish myth. In fact, it is in his ability to guide readers through Joyce’s dense allusions that Campbell shows his greatest strength as a Joyce scholar. A new reader approaching Joyce could do much worse than to look towards Campbell’s work to break through Joyce’s often opaque form to better understand the nuanced intertextuality of Joyce’s books.

On the other hand, *Mythic Worlds, Modern Words* does suffer from some fairly noteworthy shortcomings. Campbell seems happy simply to provide a summary of the events that make up large portions of *Ulysses* rather than offering any significant interpretation. If one follows the section of the book devoted to *Ulysses* closely, it quickly becomes apparent that, while Campbell writes with liberty of Stephen Dedalus, when it comes to Leopold Bloom he is in fetters. Campbell’s sections on episodes like “Aeolus” and “Hades” (episodes primarily concerned with Bloom) are often no more than a few pages in length and consist primarily of large chunks of direct quotes from the text, with the occasional explanatory or transitional phrase provided by Campbell. This stands in stark contrast to Campbell’s discussions of “Scylla and Charybdis” or “The Oxen of the Sun” (episodes heavily focused on Dedalus), in which Campbell provides detailed interpretative analysis.
It is Campbell’s unwillingness to fully engage with the significance of Leopold Bloom that reveals his greatest shortcoming as a Joyce scholar. The intellectual and esoteric Stephen Dedalus, with his stream of consciousness musings on Catholic doctrine and philosophy, is an easy target for Campbell in his hunt for Jungian archetypes. However, the eminently mundane Bloom is, in many ways, an analog for the many things Campbell fails to see in Joyce’s work. The simple realities related to Joyce’s background among the middle class Catholic Irish at the beginning of the 20th century largely go ignored. This is clearly demonstrated in Campbell’s willingness to take Stephen Dedalus’s aesthetic theory in A Portrait at face value as Joyce’s own, laying the groundwork for a less “Irish” interpretation of Joyce.

Even if recent Joyce scholarship had not taken the turn of reading A Portrait as an at least partially satirical takedown of Joyce’s earlier, more serious effort in Stephen Hero, Campbell’s decision to take Dedalus’ classical aesthetic theory as Joyce’s earnest instruction for reading his texts breaks down even as one considers what Campbell himself has to say. While Campbell argues that Joyce views “art in the service of something else” or “art [that is] critical of society” as “improper art” (20-21), Campbell is quick to observe the critique of Irish Nationalism that Joyce forwards in the “Cyclops” episode’s character “the citizen” (109); however, Campbell’s emphasis on Joyce as an apolitical figure allows him to move past any significant close reading of the character. The reclamation of Joyce as a writer motivated by societal concerns as well as aesthetic has been one of the great successes of more recent Joyce scholars such as Vincent Cheng and Emer Nolan, and Campbell’s somewhat inconsistent attempts to pass over Joyce’s more political motivations do a disservice to a comprehensive reading of the author’s works. This is also particularly well represented in Campbell’s decision to entirely ignore the most overtly “social” of Joyce’s books, Dubliners.

Mythic Worlds, Modern Words is most certainly a product of its times. When Campbell was first producing the essays and lectures that make up the text, Joyce’s work was still a new frontier for literary critics to try out their interpretations, and Campbell’s work is a great example of a fruitful first expedition. As such, it is still of great value to both new students approaching Joyce looking to learn the lay of the land and to scholars looking to be reminded of the raw joy of discovery Joyce’s puzzling works provide. That stated, much of the territory of Joyce has been remapped over the years and the importance of Joyce’s societal environment has been recovered from the blank spaces on Campbell’s map and must also be given its proper due in an approach to James Joyce’s oeuvre.

—Cody Jarman


This collection of essays proposes to interrogate the traditional theories of fantastic literature, most notably that of Todorov's three modes within fantastic literature, situating the genre within the broader mainstream categories of mimesis and fiction. It is not an attempt to justify the existence of science fiction or fantasy, for example. But rather an attempt to provide an updated survey of approaches to fantastic literature as one stopping point along a spectrum that stretches from the purely descriptive to the wildly imaginative.

In the process of renewing our understanding of common attributes and variations on the fantastic, the notions and really base definitions of epic, drama and even poetry are reexamined as well. Take for example the Spenserian tradition of allegory found in the *Faerie Queene* as a touchpoint for examining Gaiman’s *Neverwhere*, or even more striking, the use of Webster’s *Duchesse of Malfi* as a means to understanding lycanthropy as a reflection of the diseased mind, even the Lovecraftian approach to disjunctive spaces as a reaction to Einstein’s theories of Timespace. Each of these analyses represents a thoroughly fresh take on what it means to deem a work fantastic, using disparate disciplines ranging from psychology, to physics to evolutionary Darwinism as tools to reanimate and reinvigorate traditions of mimesis.

In fact the first article dives right into the challenge, as Halszka Lelen’s essay title proves: “Fantastic as a Technique of Redynamizing Mimetic Fiction.” A narrative’s key message is driven home more forcefully when fantastic devices or scenarios are used to present timeless truths made all the more evident through their contrast with the realistic context of the story. The “two-world structure as an artistic reworking of the conventions and objectives of mimetic fiction” (22) provides a tension that interrogates and reveals the problems inherent in empirical reality through the constructs of estrangement and cognition. The use of the fantastic therefore becomes not just a plot device, but also a key structural component of the text. Ultimately, the author ends up reverting to Todorov’s Uncanny: “The focus on cognition, typical of these texts, along with the tendency for metaphorical representation, frequently becomes a subtle metafictional tool of foregrounding the tensional textual nature of an artefact.” (22) She claims a uniqueness within mimetic interpretations as a reflection of the psyche in the face of socially normative stereotypes, which seems to the reviewer a bit disingenuous.

The second analysis, “Todorov’s Fantastic and Aguirre’s Numinous as the Stages of an Uncompleted Rite of Passage” is by Joanna Matyjaszczyk. Looking at Aguirre’s theory of Gothic space in contrast to Todorov’s state of
hesitation, the author posits that there is more that the two different approaches (historic vs. structural) share than would appear from a cursory examination. A first point of commonality is found in “the negative (what it is not), rather than the positive (what it is) definition” (32) providing a touchpoint of ambiguity and confusion through negative space. It is the intermediation and transition from profane to sacred space that causes a sort of rite of passage from which the story as well as the characters therein must endure. Indeed the reader must at a certain level of interpretation also endure the same tension either through identifying with the main character or through their own hesitation when faced with the supernatural motifs in a given work. In examining The Idiot Boy by Wordsworth, the author applies the rite of passage to readers confronted with transitions, but this seems a bridge to far and falls a bit flat in what is otherwise an interesting theoretical comparison between two critical approaches touching on the same genre.

Thirdly, Piotr Spyra in “Gothic Time and Non-Euclidean Spaces: Temporal Geometries of Terror in the Works of H.P. Lovecraft” addresses Lovecraft’s fascination with his contemporaries’ inventions and discoveries in the fields of physics and mathematics. This science led toward the construction of both nightmarish spaces and psychological timescapes instilling an atmosphere of fear that pervades all his works. It was a delight to see how science imbues fantastic hesitation into Lovecraft’s work. In most works, science presents a contrast to, not acting in service of, the sense of unreality and hesitation in a story. For example, fractals create a sense of falling into a space from which there is no escape, “a labyrinth that delves ‘down’ instead of pushing outwards” (49). And Gothic space, much like the Tardis, is bigger on the inside. The timespace continuum operates on both characters and readers, stretching out small amounts of elapsed time in the story with extended time necessary to read the passage. Fear is created through suspense, attention to detail, and alien constructs that don’t quite map to reality. The disjunction between space and time is transposed into a continuum instead of a contrast. Overall the analysis makes one want to pick up a copy of Lovecraft and reread him with new perspective.

Next we have the delightfully titled “People Have a Tendency to Rationalize What They Can, and Forget What They Can’t: On the Ambivalence of the Fantastic Universe in Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Here Asa Jodefons looks at the limits of Todorov’s applicability, failing to account for a more modern and ambivalent attitude towards the supernatural, leading to the possibility of “an intrinsic combination of radically different modes of being” (5). Ambiguity and estrangement operate throughout the various seasons of the TV show, but the immediate acceptance of the magical by Buffy’s friends tends to lend the show a marvelous flavor. Secondary characters are shown however to remain in the
uncanny or fantastic states based on denial, subversion, or downright reinterpretation of events that are clearly not normal. The author proposes three features that comprise a fantastic prototype: Coexistence of two conflicting and opposing orders, alienation, and transgressivity. From these features, Buffy is seen to be a type of fantastic epic, however it often falls directly into the marvelous by the ready acceptance of the supernatural, making it an edge case. Ultimately the author presents three possible interpretations that align neatly to Todorov’s three categories.

Imke Lichterfeld examines Renaissance theater in “‘He howl’d fearfully; Said he was a wolf’: Lycanthropy in English Renaissance Tragedy and Contemporary Popular Fiction,” wherein the relationship between the body and character transmogrifies from one of a direct reflection to a more paradoxical and nuanced intertwining. The concept of Kalokagathia, wherein the outer man is a reflection of the inner soul (i.e., beauty equates with goodness) is turned on its head in modern popular fiction of the late 20th century. Examining the Duchesse of Malfi by Webster, and contrasting the evil Duke with the more sympathetic representations of lycanthrope found in modern examples, the author shows that the theme of werewolf is itself subverted and transgressed by making the outer ugliness no longer a reflection of one’s psyche. The beast becomes human and often retains some human intellect.

In a complimentary fashion, the editors chose to put Weronika Laszkiewicz’s “The Reinvention of Lycanthropy in Modern Fantasy Literature” next in the lineup, where the tradition is further subverted by examining themes of childhood, femininity, and comicality in regards to going wolf. Only in examining Terry Prachett’s Discworld werewolves does one find a direct contrast between the traditional bloodthirsty variety and Angua who “wants to turn lycanthropy into a tool serving good purposes” (101). This essay is more of a catalog of unusual types of werewolves that redefine the standard interpretation of mythological and folktale elements rather than presenting a particular critical approach. By challenging the boundaries of traditional categories, modern authors are themselves the subversive element.

Going in a completely different direction, Przemyslaw Gorniak takes on the Conan cycle by R.E. Howard. “Robert E. Howard’s Conan Cycle as Modern Epic” studies the way in which the Conan canon reinvigorates a traditional genre going back to the very roots of Western literature, namely great epic poems such as the Iliad and the Aeneid, uncovering some subtle similarities. Conan is seen as purer than the civilized races who look down on him as a barbarian. It becomes a type of Rousseau-ian clash of culture wherein the noble savage reveals the greed and unnatural state of his “betters.” Ultimately, the author fails to address issues of fantastic critical theory, showing the Conan cycle to be more akin to realism than fantasy.
“On the Theories of Kingship in George R.R. Martin’s A Song of Ice and Fire” takes as its theme the medieval societal duties of king to country and how fantasy literature may indeed shine a light on some fundamental truths that modern audiences have lost sight of, proving to be more reality-based than radical reinvention. A medieval world view of king and culture, although far removed from our technologically sophisticated society, is nonetheless mimetic and fact-based. As such, this essay would have been better suited to a different collection of articles. In so much as it addresses the king as embodying the law and justice, the analysis places Martin’s epic in the traditions of Roman and Christian theories of political duties. As a typology of Christ, a just ruler must look out for the good of society as a whole, and not for individual private gain. Positive law and natural law provide the end points between which justice is found. Again, as with the previous article, the notion of fantastic hesitation or states of ambiguity, subversion or hesitation are entirely ignored in favor of showing how a fantasy text is used to illuminate a real time in history and its social contracts.

Allegory functions in fantasy literature as a type of flexible portmanteau in Maria Blaszkiewicz’s “Allegorizing the Fantastic: A Spenserian Reading of Neil Gaiman’s Neverwhere.” One can use allegory as a tool that is more subtle than often understood or employed, without losing the audience or even the author themselves in the disgust that modern readers have for simplistic representations of abstract concepts. Looking at the movement of Richard through the fantastic landscape of the World Below, “language achieves absolute referentiality” (130) and yet still manages to create a sense of unreality. Redemption through a sort of hero’s journey takes Richard into a realm where people on the fringes of society have literally fallen through the cracks into Somewhere Else, the ultimate Otherworld. The protagonist ultimately chooses to stay Below, finding it to be more true than Above. In this regard, by taking allegory to the extreme Gaiman creates a tension between appearance and substance where subversion and perception work hand in hand to reveal truth. Gaiman achieves what the author refers to as a type of reconciliation between fantasy and allegory that Tolkien so despised. And yet once again, this has little to do with Fantastic theory per se.

The article by Robert Gadowski “Critical Dystopia for Young People: The Freedom Meme in American Young Adult Dystopian Science Fiction” takes a very different twist by setting aside the general motif of lycanthropy to look at the fantastic as a product of a culture, in this case America’s conceptualized definition of freedom that it inherited from the Old World. Memetics as proposed by Dennett, not to be confused with mimesis, uses evolutionary Darwinism to create a science of culture, quantifying culture in a manner similar to biological evolution. Therefore the concept of freedom is not just an abstract
notion but an empirical, measurable element in society. Literature as a reflection
of culture conveys memes the way a car carries passengers. Anxiety in the
presence of rapidly evolving technology can take a negative direction and
subvert freedom by trying to control all aspects of life through science. Here,
while it is not directly addressed, the positions of science and freedom seem to
take the place of the uncanny and the supernatural creating an environment of
tension ripe for the emergence of the fantastic, which would be an interesting
direction to investigate.

The penultimate article, Zbigniew Glowala’s “Freaks of Flesh and
Mind: (De)generation in the Works of Clive Barker” posits that horror literature
has a central place within the spectrum of fantastic variants rather than being an
edge case. “Reality is the metaphor of order” (167) and yet the horror of crime is
also part of reality. However, the author proposes that horror fiction creates a
sense of “beyond” which can equate to the Otherworld in its extremeness.
Literature becomes the ultimate existential dilemma, as it creates hesitation and
reveals that the inner self is more spiritual than not. The dual nature of man can
be both good and evil on the inside and out, and more between states, causing
horror stories to be firmly within the realm of the Fantastic as a genre.

The final offering to round out this collection of essays returns us to
where we started by looking at Todorov’s theories of fantastic and finding them
too restrictive. Maciej Wieczorek’s article “Staging the Fantastic: Tolkien,
Todorov, and Theatricality in Contemporary British Drama” takes on the notion
that drama, with its conventions and restrictions, is outside of the bounds of
mimetic narrative into which one can introduce plausible supernatural
elements. The staging of the fantastic is a subtle balancing act that must leave
just enough details to the audience’s imagination lest it fall into farce,
icredulity, or simply falls flat. Looking at The Night Before Christmas, by
Anthony Neilson, the author examines staging and props used to convey a sense
of the fantastic that goes beyond the mere script or utterance of words. Implications and suggestions provoke the viewers’ imagination to fill in gaps,
and posit that things may be different from what exists in the actual world. She
sees within this play favorable conditions for Todorov’s fantastic to emerge. But
the author focuses more on ambiguity and nuance than overt supernatural
elements, showing that the uncanny provokes the marvelous, but stops short of
actually stating that a particular stage production actually is fantastic, only
stating that it is theoretically possible.

Overall, this collection of essays succeeds in its reinvention and
expansion of the traditional fantastic first established as a literary genre by
Todorov. It could have been improved by the inclusion of more themes than just
that of lycanthropy. However, by using this one example of a fantastic motif as
an organizing principle, the articles obtain a cohesiveness they otherwise might
not have had. Each author has taken a fresh critical view on what is often seen as an established, staid approach to the supernatural appearing within mimesis.

—Sharon Bolding

THE SURPRISING IMAGINATION OF C.S. LEWIS: AN INTRODUCTION.


C.S. Lewis wrote, “For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning” (“Bluspels” 265). In The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis: An Introduction Root, associate professor of evangelism and leadership at Wheaton College (IL) and Neal, vice president of digital marketing at a Chicago-based marketing firm, examine Lewis’s writings through his various uses of imagination. They write—

There is no getting around the fact that [Lewis’s] remarkable output of publications are pearls held together on the string of his very active imagination. Therefore any introduction to Lewis’s writing should include reference to his uses of the imagination. And no clear grasp of Lewis as a writer could ever be complete without paying attention to the importance of the imagination across the wide range of his literary output. One could accurately say that each of his books, in one way or another, displays a robust use of imaginative depictions. (xvi)

The book was written as an introductory textbook for university courses on Lewis, with twelve compact chapters (approximately 15-20 pages apiece) each of which explores a different type of imagination through a representative Lewis work. An appendix briefly treats eighteen additional types of imagination that Lewis used. Chapter 1, “The Book in the Bookstall: Baptized Imagination in Surprised by Joy,” explores Lewis’s spiritual awakening as recounted in the
autobiography, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. The chapter, however, covers much more than a single work and Lewis’s own spiritual awakening. It also deals with the spiritual awakenings of the Calormene soldier Emeth in *The Last Battle* and the student Cosmo in George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*, the book which Lewis said, “was to convert, even baptize […] my imagination” (MacDonald and Lewis, xxviii). Chapter 1 also mentions Lewis’s *Pilgrim’s Regress*, *The Discarded Image*, *The Abolition of Man*, *Arthurian Torso*, and *Reflections on the Psalms*, plus ideas attributed to Charles Williams, G.K. Chesterton, and J.R.R. Tolkien. So much, in fact, is packed in that a college student being introduced to Lewis for the first time may feel overwhelmed by the quantity and variety of sources covered. The discussion of *Surprised by Joy*, the nominal focus of the chapter, turns out to be only cursory.

Chapter 2 focuses on *Mere Christianity* and the “shared imagination,” or “that feature making it possible for the one doing the imaginative work […] to connect with his or her audience” (17). Chapter 3 deals with *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* and the “satisfied imagination,” that which “takes delight in the familiar, the simple, the mundane, and the repetitive in a manner that brings our minds back to the eternal source of order and repetition” (31). Chapter 4 examines *An Experiment in Criticism* and the “awakened imagination,” which is distinguished from the baptized imagination in that the imaginative wakening here need not necessarily be a spiritual one (45). Chapter 4 contains one of the unfortunate copyediting errors in the book which will likely confuse the novice Lewis reader. The authors write that Lewis, in *An Experiment in Criticism*, “makes a distinction between the few and the many. The few read a book only once; the many are likely to return to a book they like and read it over many times during their lives” (49). This is, in fact, the opposite of what Lewis wrote: “the majority never read anything twice […]. Those who read great works [i.e. the few], on the other hand, will read the same work ten, twenty or thirty times during the course of their life” (Lewis, *An Experiment* 2). Each of these three chapters, like Chapter 1, also mentions a variety of Lewis works and influences.

Root and Neal hit their stride, though, with two excellent chapters. Chapter 5 pairs the “realizing imagination,” which helps in understanding the complex world (59), with *The Discarded Image*, Lewis’s explication of medieval thought. The authors give a thorough and engaging recapitulation of Lewis’s main ideas along with key passages from Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, the medieval text that received Lewis’s most detailed treatment in *The Discarded Image*. Through their discussion of the way in which the medieval worldview was eventually superseded by scientific rationalism, the authors lead readers to the realization that one day our contemporary worldview will, in its turn, be superseded by another. Chapter 6 begins Part 2, where several of Lewis’s most popular works of fiction are explored. Chapter 6 pairs the “penetrating
imagination,” the acceptance of other viewpoints, with his Narnian volume, *The Horse and His Boy*. The way the authors describe the difference between the realizing imagination and the penetrating imagination, though, has little useful distinction. As the realizing imagination in Chapter 5 surrenders “to objective reality” (66), the penetrating imagination in Chapter 6 is described as a realization that “any understanding of reality must be provisional. At any time, new data may show us that a previous understanding must be discarded or revised” (78). Nevertheless, the latter is a compelling chapter, comparing Shakespeare’s exploration of a concept from many different angles with Aslan’s gradual revelation of himself to the different characters in *The Horse and His Boy*.

In Chapter 7, the “material imagination,” which seeks to “depict the material world through vivid description that resonates with our senses” (91), is illustrated by the various colorful islands in *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader.”* *Perelandra*, with its lush description of floating islands and sensory-flooding vegetation would have made a better pairing. Another difference without distinction is dealt with in Chapter 8 on “primary imagination,” evoked, like the material imagination, by the experience of the five senses. The primary imagination is paired with *Out of the Silent Planet*, though *Perelandra* here, too, would have been equally applicable. There are more copyediting errors in this chapter, particularly with Old Solar vocabulary (e.g. “Fifthggi” for the pfifthggi, “eldilia” for the eldila, and the use of two variations for the plural of sorn—”Soroni” and “Seroni”—on the same page, 114).

Chapters 9 thru 11 deal with negative uses of the imagination. In Chapter 9, the “generous imagination” which “seeks to embellish a thing beyond what it deserves” (121) is exemplified by the philosophies of the evil scientists of the N.I.C.E. in *That Hideous Strength*. In Chapter 10, the various denizens of hell on holiday in heaven in *The Great Divorce* illustrate the “transforming imagination” which “has a tendency to overidealize and project inflated expectations onto the objects of its affection” (140). The big foreman who repeatedly demands “his rights” for being a decent man (though he wasn’t that decent), the nagging wife who worked herself to exhaustion for her husband’s career (though he didn’t want her to), and the controlling mother who smothered her son are examples of the transforming imagination. In Chapter 11, the “controlled imagination,” projecting one’s self-seeking desires onto others, is illustrated with *The Screwtape Letters* (155). As elsewhere, the two types of imagination in Chapters 10 and 11 are difficult to distinguish from one another. Both the daytrippers and the devils from hell seek to aggrandize themselves by manipulating others. Chapter 11 contains a wonderful explication of “The Battle Tactics of Screwtape” with strategies to combat them. Finally, Chapter 12 deals with the “absorbing imagination” in Lewis’s *Poems* and *Spirits in Bondage*. The absorbing imagination synthesizes multiple viewpoints or traditions to create a
larger whole (171). The authors touch on the Narnian tales of *Prince Caspian* and *The Last Battle*, more widely-known examples of Lewis’s pagan-Christian fusions which might appeal more to the novice Lewis reader than his poetry.

Root and Neal’s explanations of the various modes of imagination are often difficult to differentiate. Their featured Lewis titles are sometimes dealt with cursorily, while a quantity of other Lewis works and influences are discussed in more detail. The stated audience—college and university students in introductory courses—may not find this to be as basic a guide to Lewis’s works as they likely need. But where the novice Lewis reader may drown in a sea of references and minute distinctions, the Lewis devotee will luxuriate. *The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis: An Introduction* is an intriguing, yet uneven, book which will likely appeal to the reader who is already familiar with a wide range of Lewis’s works and seeks to gain new insight on a second or third reading of some favorite titles.

*Ransoming the Waste Land: Papers on C.S. Lewis’s Space Trilogy, Chronicles of Narnia, and Other Works* by Nancy-Lou Patterson, on the other hand, is likely to appeal to both novice and seasoned Lewis readers. Patterson (b. 1929) is a writer, artist, scholar, teacher, novelist and poet whose educational and artistic career spans five decades, most of it based at the University of Waterloo. As a pioneer in the field of mythopoeic studies and source criticism, she is known particularly for her scholarship on the Inklings (C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams), their influences (George MacDonald), contemporaries (Dorothy L. Sayers), and artistic successors (Madeleine L’Engle and Lloyd Alexander). This two-volume collection contains twenty of her essays on Lewis, each ranging from 10-58 pages in length, which were originally published in *Mythlore* and elsewhere from 1970-1999. Auger has added useful abstracts to the head of each essay along with cross-references to thematically-linked essays within the collection. The volumes also reproduce seven of Patterson’s own illustrations from *Mythlore.*

Volume I is primarily concerned with The Space Trilogy, though a few of the essays also deal with The Chronicles of Narnia. The first section of Volume

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1 Patterson’s illustrations included in this collection: “St. Anne’s,” front covers and titles pages of Volumes I and II, first published as the cover of *Mythlore* 13.3 (Spring 1987); “The Destruction of Edgestow,” back covers and end pages of Volumes I and II, first published as the cover of *Mythlore* 16.2 (Winter 1989); “The Fisher King” (Volume I: page 1), first reproduced in *Mythlore* 18.1 (Autumn 1991); “Jane and Mark” (I.227) first reproduced on the back cover of *Mythlore* 12.3 (Spring 1986); “The Holy House of Ungit” (II.1), first reproduced on the front cover of *Mythlore* 21.4 (Winter 1997); and “Lucy of Narnia” (II.107), first reproduced on the back cover of *Mythlore* 18.4 (Autumn 1992).
I, “Arthurian and Biblical Themes,” contains four papers. “Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis in the Space Trilogy” explores the tripartite dialectical structure of Lewis’s Space Trilogy in its recurrent “triptics” of opposing pairs mediated by a third synthetic element: Mars-Venus-Earth, cold-warm-temperate, and male-female-one flesh. The second and third papers represent the title tracks, so to speak, of the collection, earlier versions having originally been published as “Ransoming the Wasteland: Arthurian Themes in C.S. Lewis’s Trilogy Parts I and II” in The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society 8.2-3 (November 1984) and 8.4 (December 1985), respectively. Retitled here as “Adventure and Exchange in the Space Trilogy,” the second paper explores the Arthurian motifs of knightly adventure and sacrificial exchange. Ransom accepts his calls to adventure in Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra, in both cases sacrificing his own well-being for others. His descent into the underworld and ascent to the mountain top on Perelandra (Venus) echo the archetypal hero’s journey popularized by Joseph Campbell, though Patterson chooses here to focus on Arthurian connections: “After this climactic visionary experience Ransom is returned to earth. There, in That Hideous Strength, he appears in apotheosized form as a wounded king who must in turn be saved by others” (I.17). Jane and Mark Studdock are likewise called to adventure: Mark wrongly accepts his call to join the (evil) scientists of the N.I.C.E., while Jane wrongly resists her call to join the (good) company of St. Anne’s. Their situations deteriorate dangerously until each makes a course correction to pursue the right path: Mark finally abandoning the N.I.C.E., and Jane finally joining St. Anne’s and Ransom. The third paper, retitled here as “Waste Land and Fisher King in the Space Trilogy,” argues that “the theme of the Waste Land can be traced throughout the Trilogy” (I.28) rather than solely in That Hideous Strength, as is generally acknowledged. Patterson’s evidence includes Weston and Devine’s squalid habitations as a sort of waste land in Out of the Silent Planet, and Ransom’s wounded heel in Perelandra as the Fisher King’s wounded thighs. It’s an intriguing theory, but one not supported by enough evidence to convince the reader that Lewis had Arthurian themes in mind when writing those first two volumes of the Space Trilogy. Patterson herself writes, “I do not wish to make Lewis more calculating than he was” (I.35), and rightly acknowledges an alternate explanation for Ransom’s wounded heel lies in Genesis 3.15 (“he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”) (32). Perelandra’s more likely influence, then, is biblical rather than Arthurian, as Ransom is wounded in the heel (not the thighs), the Green Lady is Perelandra’s Eve, and Weston is its tempting serpent. That Hideous Strength is, however, recognizably Arthurian. Patterson agrees with Ellen Rawson’s suggestion that Jane is the Perceval of the story who fails to ask vital questions of Ransom, now re-named Mr. Fisher-King. But Patterson fails to note that, as Jane and Mark are mirror opposites, Mark, too, is a Perceval figure.
When he is invited to join the N.I.C.E. with precious little information about their operations or his job description, Lewis makes a point of noting that, "Mark did not ask again in so many words what the N.I.C.E. wanted him to do; partly because he began to be afraid that he was supposed to know this already, and partly because a perfectly direct question would have sounded a crudity in that room—a crudity which might suddenly exclude him" (That Hideous Strength 54).

Like Perceval, Mark is afraid that asking questions will identify him as a rube not worthy of membership in the secretive society. The final paper of the first section, Chapter 4, "Miraculous Bread . . . Miraculous Wine," one of the major pieces of the collection, analyzes numerous Eucharistic references to bread and wine in Lewis’s fantasy fiction. Patterson’s thesis is “that all or at least many of Lewis’s homely meals in his fantasies are meetings with the Creator in the Creation” (I:62).

She also describes the “anti-communions” of the banquet at Belbury in That Hideous Strength and “a banquet in hell like the one concluding The Screwtape Letters in which the demons devour both the damned souls and their unsuccessful tempters” (I.60-61).

The second part of Volume I, “A Hierarchy of Beings,” contains four papers on different aspects of divine, human, and demonic beings in Lewis’s works. Chapter 5, “The Host of Heaven: Astrological and Other Images of Divinity,” another major piece of the collection, was originally published as a two-part essay for Mythlore (Autumn 1980 and Winter 1981). It considers the influences of astrology and mythology (Babylonian, Mesopotamian, Greek, Roman, Norse, Christian and modern) on the deities, spirits, and demons of the Space Trilogy, The Chronicles of Narnia, and Till We Have Faces. It is both earlier and larger in scope than Michael Ward’s Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis (2008), though, naturally, it lacks the depth of his book-length treatment. Patterson’s favorite work of Lewis’s is that That Hideous Strength, and here she explains something of why it attracts her so strongly:

The stupendous sequence of images in That Hideous Strength is, in total, an invocation of the planetary intelligences as aspects of the human personality when humanity is considered relative to the image of the God who created them. It is one of Lewis’s most breath-taking and audacious achievements, and these richly sensual images adorn the structure of his narrative with a splendor worthy of their medieval prototypes; indeed, of the divinities the pre-Christian world bequeathed to us. (I.119)

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2 Patterson here is likely referring to Screwtape Proposes a Toast, not actually part of the original Screwtape Letters, but a piece Lewis wrote many years later for The Saturday Evening Post and now often appended to the end of the reissued Screwtape Letters.
A contemplation of the living stars in The Chronicles of Narnia—Coriakin, Ramandu, and his daughter in The Dawn Treader, and, she wonders, perhaps the Hermit of the Southern Marches in The Horse and His Boy—is related to Shakespeare’s Prospero. An insightful discussion of Father Christmas and the White Witch in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe positions those two as representatives of opposing characteristics: male/female, fertility/sterility, flowing time/frozen time. In Chapter 6, “This Equivocal Being: The Un-Man in Perelandra,” Patterson draws parallels between Ransom’s battle with the possessed Weston and other battles between good and evil such as those in Beowulf, Paradise Lost, and Lewis’s own horrific experiences in English public school and in war. Chapter 7, “Some Kind of Company’ in That Hideous Strength,” and Chapter 8, “Banquet at Belbury: The Company of the Damned” are a pair of complementary essays which analyze the mythological influences behind “good” and “evil” characters of St Anne’s and the N.I.C.E.


Volume II repeats the Preface of Volume I for those who only acquire one volume or the other. (But who would do that!?) The essays in Volume II deal primarily with The Chronicles of Narnia, Till We Have Faces, and The Screwtape Letters. The first section of Volume II, “From Here to There: Time, Travel, and Transformation,” contains four essays. In Chapter 1 (perhaps it would have been better to continue the numbering from Volume I for clarity), “Narnia and the North: Time, Travel, and Transformation,” Patterson writes, “It is no accident that Narnia and northernness are associated by Lewis: in his seven novels about Narnia the north is one of the basic elements in the symbolic structure. Interestingly, the same structure appears, with less emphasis, in the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams” (II.5). Here, Patterson explores Lewis’s passion for “northernness,” and relates Narnia to several real-world mythologies which privilege the north. She gets some things right in this chapter, and some things wrong. It is true that Lewis was inspired by the Nordic-style writings of William Morris and Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow and, through them, and his friend Tolkien, by the Icelandic sagas and Norse mythology. Namia is favored over the land of Calormen, and Namia lies to the north of Calormen, but when Patterson suggests that Lewis privileges the north over other cardinal directions, she seems to forget that Aslan’s Country lies to the east, and north of Namia is the abode of man-eating giants. Tolkien scholars would also be loath to consider that the north was any less important to Tolkien than it was to Lewis. When she writes, “For C.S. Lewis, the way to God lay through the north” (II.24), she misses the point of his directional conception entirely. Aslan’s Country is in the east because the sun rises in the east, and Jerusalem was to the east for medieval European pilgrims. Lewis’s desire for “northernness” was something primal, and independent of his desire for God, and preceded it. Chapter 2, “‘Always Winter and Never Christmas’: Symbols of Time in C.S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia,” examines the representation of time through the figures of the Green Lady and Father Time in *The Silver Chair*, and the White Witch and Father Christmas in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It repeats and builds on her argument from the section on Father Christmas and the White Witch in Volume I, Chapter 5. Here she proposes that Fathers Time and Christmas represent benevolent infinite time, while the two witches represent malevolent finite time. Father Christmas is concerned with the annual cycle of the year, while Father Time is concerned with the absolute cycle of time from its beginning to its end. Patterson misses the opportunity to point out that each male figure who represents the movement of time is symbolically paired with an opposing female figure who seeks to control time. Patterson returns to the Green Witch in Chapter 3, “‘Halfe Like a Serpent’: The Green Witch in *The Silver Chair*” where she first discusses the opposing pair of Rilian’s mother (the star’s daughter) and the Green Witch (queen of the underworld). She then compares the descent quest of Jill Pole in the underworld with other mythological heroines such as the Greek Persephone and the Sumerian Inanna. Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are discussed, but oddly, *Sir Orfeo* and *Tam Lin*, which both concern fairy abductions, are not. Chapter 4, “The Holy House of Ungit” once again applies Patterson’s thesis-antithesis-synthesis argument, this time to the black-stone goddess Ungit and the queen, Orual, in Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces*.

The second section of Volume II, the final section of the collection, is called “Other Places, Other Beings, and Other Futures,” and contains five essays. The first three chapters form something of a set for those interested in Lewis’s representations of nature and animals. Chapter 5, “The ‘Jasper-Lucent Landscapes’ of C.S. Lewis” is, at nearly 60 pages, the longest essay of the entire collection. It examines in depth Lewis’s symbolism of the color green in his descriptions of nature, what Patterson terms his “evocations of green numinosity in his poems and fantasies” (II.154). Chapter 6, “The Green Lewis:
Inklings of Environmentalism in the Writing of C.S. Lewis,” is an interesting, but not completely successful attempt to examine Lewis’s representations of nature through three twentieth-century theories of “green theology,” that is, environmentalism for Christians. The chapter spends more time explaining the theories of Ian Bradley, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Anne Primavesi than dealing with Lewis’s images of nature. The reader interested in Lewis’s environmental beliefs and their expressions in his writings would be more satisfied by David L. O’Hara and Matthew T. Dickerson’s monograph, *Narnia and the Fields of Arbol: The Environmental Vision of C.S. Lewis.* Chapter 7, “Lord of the Beasts: Animal Archetypes in C.S. Lewis,” is brief and concerns exactly what the title describes. Chapters 8 and 9 are another matched pair of essays, these on Lewis’s representations of evil in The Chronicles of Narnia and *The Screwtape Letters.* Patterson herself identified them as part of a series on representations of evil, all of which appear in this collection.3 Chapter 8, “‘The Bolt of Tash’: the Figure of Satan in C.S. Lewis’s *The Horse and His Boy* and *The Last Battle,“ insightfully proposes that the Calormene god Tash in *The Horse and His Boy* is a distant and exotic god, something like the Old Testament’s Baal was to the Israelites, but in *The Last Battle* he becomes the Father of Lies and Great Deceiver of the New Testament Book of Revelation. In Chapter 9, the final chapter of the collection, “Letters from Hell: the Symbolism of Evil in *The Screwtape Letters,“ Patterson delves into Screwtape’s literary antecedents, and categorizes the various temptations employed by the devils as those of the World, the Flesh, and the Spirit. An interesting comparison with Patterson’s categories is Root and Neal’s section on “The Battle Tactics of Screwtape” (Root and Neal 164). Patterson’s chapter includes an appealing little section dissecting the various devils’ names. “Wormwood,” for example, is derived from a dark green oil extracted from the perennial *Artemisia absinthum,* known for its bitter, and even mortifying qualities. A healthy bibliography and index round out each volume, and show the detailed attentions of co-editor Janet Brennan Croft.

This collection is not without deficiencies. Sometimes Patterson works so hard to prove a thesis that she overlooks evidence which supports an alternate conclusion, or she draws a conclusion not supported by her evidence. Despite these instances, this is a landmark collection. Patterson is not only a pioneer of Lewis studies and the source criticism of his works, her essays stand...
the test of time. It can be challenging to lay hands on older copies of Mythlore and the publications of the various C.S. Lewis societies where Patterson published, so it is exciting to have so many of her essays reproduced and gathered here. Each is informative, insightful, and accessible to both the newcomer and experienced Lewis reader. The collection should find a place in any library with an interest in C.S. Lewis, whether it is a large university or the private shelves of the serious Lewis reader. Enthusiastically recommended.

—Kris Swank

WORKS CITED


J.K. Rowling redefined a generation of young readers when she first published *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* in 1997 (it was released in the United States as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in 1998). Thousands of children from all over the world began to envision a passage that existed beyond platform 9 ¾, that led to a coterie of magical professors that awaited them at Hogwarts. Indeed the fantasy franchise has spawned some of the most loyal fans since *Star Wars*. Professor Richard Spencer’s new book investigates the Harry Potter series from an intriguing perspective, arguing that Rowling borrowed concepts from Greek and Roman mythology.

Rowling’s own story echoes myth. An impoverished single mother living on government assistance, Rowling struggled to make ends meet while indulging in a fantasy world all her own—a young orphan boy who becomes a
great wizard. Rowling talks about retreating to coffee shops and writing, on notepads, her story about the young Harry Potter. Harry’s story was life-changing for thousands and thousands of children, and ultimately for Rowling herself, whose literary success made her one of the wealthiest citizens of England.

The thesis of Richard Spencer’s new book asserts that Rowling’s tale is much more than a simple children’s tale. He argues that Rowling perhaps borrowed from old mythology in innovative ways to craft a new story. This approach isn’t unique; the current Young Adult market is teeming with retellings of cherished stories such as Beauty and the Beast and Cinderella among others. Both J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis admit a great debt to Norse myths in creating and catalyzing the success of The Lord of the Rings and The Chronicles of Narnia.

Although many books have been published on the Harry Potter phenomenon, Spencer’s book is the first to provide an in-depth analysis of Greek and Roman allusions present in the works. Spencer notes Rowling’s use of Latin in spells (Accio!, Wingardium Leviosa!), and her frequent use of Greek/Roman names (Draco, Lucius, Minerva, etc.). Spencer also discusses how Rowling’s characters echo specific heroes from the classics—both in name and experience.

I found Spencer’s parallels between Harry Potter and Homer’s tales particularly fascinating. Spencer highlights portions of Harry Potter which possess similarities to classical tales, such as the use of “the scarred hero,” “the siren song,” “the nekuia,” “the embassy to a withdrawn leader” and “Athena-Minerva (Professor Minerva McGonagall) as Protectress.” Spencer also compares Harry to Heracles, Achilles, and Narcissus. Some characters, Spencer argues, are a mythical blend—Hagrid is similar to Polyphemus, Hermes, and Charon. He includes an expansive chapter on “Supporting Characters” which assert that even peripheral characters have a classical significance. For example, Agrippa appears on a Chocolate Frog card, a card which is quite rare according to Ron. Spencer notes that Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (64-12 BCE) was a friend and associate of Emperor Augustus, but was also the name for the grandson of Herod the Great, Marcus Julius Herod Agrippa, who demanded the death of Biblical apostle James (the brother of John) while imprisoning Peter. Another example is Alecto Carrow, a Death Eater who teaches Muggle Studies at Hogwarts. Spencer explains that her name means “relentless” in Greek. She is a strict disciplinarian. In mythology, “Al(l)ecto is one of the three Erinnyes or Furies who “take[s] vengeance for guilt, especially for murder and heinous infra-family crimes” (123). They reside at the entrance of the Underworld. In The Aeneid, Juno summons Alecto to catalyze war and strife between the Trojans and the Rutuli. Spencer writes that Alecto is “sinister, pitiless, and masterfully efficient in stirring up hatred on both personal and tribal levels” (123).
While most comparisons are indeed interesting, there were a few instances where I thought Spencer struggled to establish a firm connection. Spencer notes that Hermione is a blend of characters, namely Helen of Troy, Prometheus, and Medusan Victim. Although Spencer mentions that Hermione was the name of Helen’s daughter and that both characters have a “mixed heritage” (Hermione had muggle parents), the connection was rather tenuous. Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman in the world, yet not much is said of Hermione’s attractiveness or physical appearance. Hermione, in contrast to Helen, is noted for her work ethic and intelligence. If Spencer’s assertion is true, would this be Rowling’s way of transforming the traditional perception of women? Perhaps, but I still felt the claim was merely speculative.

Despite this rather insubstantial aspect, the book is a wonderful work of comparative analysis. It is apparent that Spencer spent countless hours scouring the Harry Potter series and juxtaposing the great myths. Many will appreciate his exhaustive listing of “Classical Languages in Harry Potter,” as well as an instructive section on the “Worlds of Magic” present in both the Harry Potter series and the Greek/Roman myths. Without a doubt, Rowling has tapped into a grand storytelling tradition. Such knowledge makes the experience of reading Harry Potter richer and more satisfying.

Overall, *Harry Potter and the Classical World* is an informative and enjoyable read. The work is a formidable achievement, a perfect blend of past and present literature. Spencer has taken a well-loved story and revealed, through thorough and meticulous research, familiar narratives underneath. I marvel at Rowling’s talent in creating these subtle allusions. Through Spencer’s work, I developed a deepened appreciation for the Harry Potter series. I highly recommend Spencer’s book to Harry Potter fans who wish to discover a new dynamic of their beloved stories and to readers of classical literature who seek a modern book with a firm nod to literary tradition.

—Crystal Hurd

A little over 30 years ago, the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society was founded in 1982 as a university group to focus on Lewis’s works as well as other writers and scholars. Several of the talks “with unique content of particular interest to Lewis and Inklings scholars and devotees” made at the Society’s gatherings were digitized and transcribed, and some of these essays are included in the edited collection C.S. Lewis and His Circle (xii). The editors Roger White and Judith and Brendan N. Wolfe reviewed over 200 talks in the Society’s archives (xii), and along with select essays, they published primary sources through the memories of others “to provide a fuller picture of Lewis and his circle” (xi). Author biographies and brief descriptors in the Contents denote each contributor’s association with Lewis.

Since these are transcribed talks, the conversational tone of the pieces helps engage the reader more than if the essays were strictly academic. The talks appear to range from 1984-1999, so it would be interesting to know why more recent ones are not included as well as what specific publication criteria there were for this collection. For instance, what prompted the editors to include two essays that focus on Charles Williams with less equal treatment of others in Lewis’s circle? The editors arrange the collection in two parts that are further divided into two subsections. Part 1: Essays consists of five essays grouped as Philosophy and Theology, which are followed by five essays on Literature. A standout essay in this section is Rowan Williams’s “That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment” in his analysis of the novel’s strengths and weaknesses. Malcolm Guite’s “Yearning for a Far-Off Country” is another highlight, with his appreciation and explanation of Lewis’s main themes of desire, reason, and imagination.

In Part 2: Memoirs, five essays comprise the first grouping as “Memories of C.S. Lewis by His Family and Friends”; these are intriguing for their personal insights about Lewis, such as Ronald Head’s account as a vicar to Lewis and his brother at Holy Trinity Church Headington Quarry. Four essays complete part 2 of the book as “Memories of the Inklings.” This last section’s essays are by Walter Hooper (a founding member of the Society) and two Inklings Owen Barfield and John Wain. Of the contributors, Hooper has an essay in both part 1 and part 2, and there are some minor sections that are similar to each other in the essays, which can appear repetitive. Otherwise, the essays provide useful background regarding, respectively, The Chronicles of Narnia and the Inklings as a group.
Some of the book’s talks have been published previously such as Owen Barfield’s “Lewis and/or Barfield.” The original publication of this in Barfield’s *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis* includes a section of eight questions and answers at the end of the talk that is left out of *C.S. Lewis and His Circle*, and it is unclear why the editors chose to omit this and not indicate that they had. In their first footnote, the editors refer to Barfield’s previous publication as “[a]n unrevised version” (222n1). While most readers would not be aware of this difference in the versions, it can make the reader wonder if significant editorial revisions have been made to other published talks and not noted. A talk by Paul S. Fiddes on “Charles Williams and the Problem of Evil” that was also published previously has a note that it was “expanded and revised” (85n1), but again, the editors do not elaborate on their editorial decisions.

In closing the book, Michael Ward’s Afterword summarizes the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society history and ongoing activity in the form of meetings, publications, and events. Ward, as Senior Member (Faculty Supervisor) of the Society, also points out that the book’s selection of essays and memoirs are “a small sample” in contrast to the many people who have contributed to the Society in a scholarly and/or personal way over the years (254). The scope of the original project for this book is admirable, and the results illustrate the Society’s productivity. The collection is also helpful to share with the general public since few people have the opportunity or ability to access the Society’s archives or experience the Society firsthand. As a final thought, perhaps this book’s purpose and content will encourage further intellectual investigation of Lewis and the Inklings or inspire similar collaborative efforts.

—Tiffany Brooke Martin

**WORK CITED**


*Despite the fact that William O’Flaherty’s formal education, professional training, and subsequent career are in the field of counseling,*
his long-time personal interest and deep study of C.S. Lewis and his writings have earned him credence as an amateur expert in Lewis scholarship; hence, he writes on *The Screwtape Letters* with some authority.

*C.S. Lewis Goes to Hell* is divided into four main sections, plus a detailed introduction and seven appendices, each named simply and straightforwardly in the Table of Contents, allowing for easy navigation within the book.

While many introductions may be skipped over without great detriment to the reader’s experience of a book, the introduction to this work does genuinely add value to the reading. The first part, “Why Read a Book About Another Book?” could perhaps be omitted, as someone who has already acquired the book presumably does not need to be persuaded; but the second section, “A Note on the Arrangement of This Book,” and the third, “How to Get the Most Out of This Book,” provide quite helpful direction to enhance the reader’s understanding.

Two glossaries are actually provided in “Part One—Topical Glossary;” one of the main characters in *The Screwtape Letters* and another defining the book’s major topics. The section opens with an explanatory note detailing how to understand each entry. The entries themselves are not typical basic definitions; they provide pertinent information for recognizing the particular nuances of words and phrases as used in the context of *Screwtape*.

“Part Two—Flexible Study Guide” is particularly user-friendly, also opening with an explanation of its possible usages. Each of the *Screwtape Letters* is “summarized” very, very briefly; I would call these subtitles or overviews, rather. Ten questions are provided for reflection and discussion. O’Flaherty suggests the first five questions for individuals studying alone, and recommends that the last five be added in the setting of a group study.

Half- to full-page lists of bullet points for each *Letter* make up “Part Three—Extended Summary of Key Topics.” These are somewhat extended in relation to the single-phrase overviews offered in Part Two, but fall a bit short of my expectations for cohesive summaries.

“Part Four—Suggested Answers to Study Guide” is a feature many study guides I have seen do not provide, and one which I believe many users will find attractive. My concern is that readers remain cognizant that these are suggested, not definitive, answers. In my opinion, the majority are well-reasoned, but some are not worded as clearly as they might have been, and therefore seem ambiguous and potentially misleading.

The appendices are of varying sorts; readers will naturally be drawn to some more than others based on their particular areas of interest. The first two—“Lessons from *The Screwtape Letters*” and “The Popularity of C.S. Lewis”—are adaptations of a talk and a newspaper article written by Mr. O’Flaherty in 2012. Appendices 3 and 6 provide facts and history concerning the publication of *The*
Screwtape Letters; 4 and 5 are indices of references to “keeping things out” and “God’s Love” in the original text. Appendix 7 is an original piece by O’Flaherty, entitled “Screwtape Speaks at Demon-Chapel.” The book is wrapped up with an acknowledgements page, an author biography, and a thoughtful addition of a list of “Other Books of Interest.”

Mr. O’Flaherty is not a professional academic writer, as is noticeable throughout C.S. Lewis Goes to Hell; his style and format are, however, well suited to the non-academic readers whom this book is designed to reach. Beginning, particularly first-time, readers of The Screwtape Letters will find it a valuable resource; it may also be a helpful reference for repeat readers wishing to refresh themselves with another look at the text.

— Rebekah Choat


In the 1960s and 70s, many scholars and literary critics questioned whether Tolkien’s work had any place in the classroom. The inclusion of The Lord of the Rings in the Modern Language Association’s Approaches to Teaching series, however, demonstrates that not only has it gained validity in the academic setting, but that the study of Tolkien’s work has the same value as that of Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina or Vergil’s Aeneid.

Inclusion in a series that has been described as a reflection of the literary canon may itself be reason for Tolkien scholars to celebrate this book, but it has quite a bit of merit on its own. Divided into two main sections, the book presents effective and practical material for the individual wishing to teach Tolkien. The first section, “Materials,” presents 35 pages of valuable resources; the second section, “Approaches,” takes up the rest of the book.

The “Materials” section is of great value not only for those planning to teach Tolkien, but also for anyone who wishes to have a better understanding of the best tools for researching and writing about his work. Beginning with a quick explanation of who Tolkien was and why his fiction matters, this section focuses on the fact that he was a literary scholar, not a novelist, and certainly did not expect to create a new genre or even have a long-lasting influence. From there it moves into information gathered from a survey of almost 80 people who have taught Tolkien at the college level, focusing on such details as which editions of which books are used as required reading, which secondary sources
Reviews

are felt to be vital, and what other materials are used in the classroom. This section is clear, comprehensive, and informative, and is divided into three easily-navigated categories: “Editions,” “The Instructor’s Library,” and “Multimedia Aids for Teaching.”

In the second section, “Approaches,” thirty different teachers present their pedagogy and/or methodology for teaching Tolkien in undergraduate courses, revealing a vast array of approaches. Some of these short essays focus on one text, one teaching objective, or even one assignment, while others give a sweeping description of the entire course. A perusal of this section also reveals the wide variety of environments in which Tolkien is taught: freshman-level survey courses as well as upper-level courses designed for English majors are to both be expected, but the discovery that Tolkien is also taught in history courses, film courses, and even science classes may come as a delightful surprise. The Lord of the Rings is also used to teach a wide variety of genres, from Anglo-Saxon poetry and ancient epic to the novel and contemporary fantasy. It is used to teach linguistics, history, and even astronomy. History and genre are used as interpretive lenses for better understanding the text, as are gender, race, religion, and postmodernism. In some cases, the situation is reversed and The Lord of the Rings is used as an interpretive lens for better understanding these same things. Some instructors expect their students to arrive having already read everything assigned; others assume the students will not read at all. Some feel that their biggest difficulty in the classroom is that many students come in already knowing and loving the text, while others feel that this is one of the greatest advantages of teaching it. Some teach in traditional classrooms, some teach online, some teach in a hybrid of the two. These thirty chapters reveal an unexpected depth and richness in the sheer variety of not only methods, but also purposes of teaching Tolkien.

Some essays focus on a general pedagogy, presenting the overall purpose of a class or assignment, while others present concrete ideas regarding what to do in the classroom. While chapters that do the first are interesting, it may well be that the ones that clearly describe a specific assignment are the most useful. One thought-provoking example of the second sort is Verlyn Flieger’s discussion of how she uses both “On Fairy-Stories” and “Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics” in order to help her students better understand the themes and tone of The Lord of the Rings; an even stronger example would be Yvette Kisor’s “Using The History of Middle Earth with Tolkien’s Fiction,” in which clear charts present which chapters of the history should be read in conjunction with which parts of the trilogy. Kisor also explains the methodology she uses so that her students understand the material, even going as far as describing one assignment that did not work well, and how it was revised to be more...
successful. For the teacher looking for new ideas, essays like these are a treasure trove.

This is not to say that all essays are equally strong. A couple seem to confuse interpretation with pedagogy, and focus primarily on their interpretation of the text—with the occasional “I show my students that” or “when my students understand” to make the essay better fit the purpose of this collection. Others, through their very willingness to present their own focus in teaching, reveal what may be a weakness in their own knowledge or thinking. One prime example of this would be an essay that focuses on *The Hobbit* as a children’s book. This chapter makes the claim that Bilbo is a symbolic child because he is “innocent,” without even hinting at an awareness that the historicization and problematization of the term “innocent” is one of the foundational concepts of the academic study of children’s literature. It must, however, be acknowledged that this apparent error may be due to the constraints of space more than an actual flaw in the instructor’s approach. Another example of what must be a miscommunication in the presentation of ideas occurs in one of the first essays, which on first reading at least appears to be based in a glaring assumption. The essay seems to be claiming that because Peter Jackson’s presentations of orcs has racist elements, and because a racist group in Britain praises Tolkien, that the text which these are derived from must itself be racist. A closer reading of the text shows that these are in fact the ideas that the instructor wants to discuss with the students, but spending a little time discussing how he presents the relationship between the use of a text and the meaning of a text would clarify his own stance for the reader.

While it must be acknowledged that book does include some minor flaws contained within individual essays, this book is a valuable resource for those wishing to teach Tolkien. It is not aimed at the professor who already knows her pedagogy and is married to it; that person may well find this text frustrating. It is also not aimed at the reader who would like to sit down and read something cover-to-cover; that reader may find it tedious. What Donovan does do with this text is provide a sound resource for those looking for ideas, while at the same time presenting evidence that Tolkien scholarship is not only on par with that of long-respected members of the literary canon, but that it is also here to stay.

—Melody Green
Reviews


In a sign of the growing maturity of Tolkien studies, we have seen over the last decade a proliferation of expansive (and expensive) critical companions, encyclopedias, readers’ guides, and other vade mecums, including Michael Drout’s J.R.R Tolkien Encyclopedia and Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond’s J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide and Reader’s Companion to The Lord of the Rings. Stuart D. Lee’s Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien is the most recent compendium of this sort, and yet, despite a half-century now of Tolkien studies, Lee still feels the need to mollify “the people who no doubt will fulminate at the mere thought that Tolkien has been allowed a Companion in a literary series by such a respected publisher” (2). Can we really not shake off this defensive note fifty years on? Such continued apologies seem to me to play right into the hands of those stodgy keepers of the canon who still dismiss Tolkien. Should we not rather ignore them and get on with our work? And so now shall I.

Like the Drout Encyclopedia, Lee’s Companion is the product of many hands. Unlike the aforementioned books, it is organized at a much less granular level, more syntopicon than encyclopedia, and this careful organization results in less repetition than is typical of multiccontributor works. Many of the essayists are established experts in their respective areas—e.g., Janet Brennan Croft on war, Bradford Lee Eden on music, David Bratman on the Inklings. This immediately conveys authority and confidence in the quality of the work. Alongside these experts are contributors with whom I am not familiar, but the balance between established expertise and new voices is beneficial to the work as a whole. Each essay concludes with its own dedicated bibliography, while the Companion itself concludes with an extended general bibliography and index.

The Companion is arranged into five broad sections. The first part, Life, consists of a single essay by Tolkien biographer John Garth. This builds on a “Brief Chronology of the Life and Works of J.R.R. Tolkien” preceding it in the book. Garth’s summary of Tolkien’s life is well organized and thorough, and it makes up for its necessary brevity by pointing interested readers to fuller treatment elsewhere.

Then, resisting “the temptation to dive directly into [Tolkien’s] mythology” (2), the second part of the Companion comprises three essays treating Tolkien’s academic career, as already touched on by Garth. In “Academic Writings,” Thomas Honegger considers some of the high points of Tolkien’s academic publications, particularly those with touchpoints to his fiction, such as his ground-breaking reconsideration on Beowulf, the quasi-academic lectures-turned-essay “On Fairy-stories” and “A Secret Vice,” and
even Tolkien’s extended treatment of a single word in *Sigelwara land*. The chapter concludes with a useful but incomplete list of Tolkien’s academic publications (to mention three omissions: Tolkien’s short-run edition of *Sir Orfeo* in 1944, “The Name Coventry” in 1945, and more significantly, the Old English *Exodus* in 1981).

Tom Shippey turns next to “Tolkien as Editor,” discussing Tolkien’s approach to the editing of medieval texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the Old English *Exodus* and the preparation of commentaries and glossaries to accompany them. Along the way, in his characteristically engaging style, Shippey gently reproaches the dilatory Tolkien on the one hand and praises his meticulous academic exertion on the other. Readers may also be excited to learn here that extensive material Tolkien prepared for the infamously failed “Clarendon Chaucer” has been located and that “[m]uch of this material will no doubt eventually be published, but it will now inevitably function as a coda to Tolkien studies, not, as intended, a stimulus to Chaucer studies” (44). Shippey ends with a postscript on Tolkien as translator, which he writes is rare among editors, lamenting that “[s]pace forbids any consideration here of the aesthetic qualities of Tolkien’s translations” (54). We may only hope this is a subject to which Shippey will return in the future.

Rounding out the section on Tolkien the Academic with “Manuscripts: Use, and Using,” volume editor Stuart D. Lee explores the “often overlooked topic” (57) of Tolkien’s work with medieval manuscripts, his reflection of and on that work within his legendarium (e.g., the Book of Mazarbul), and Tolkien’s own multifold manuscripts and drafts. Drawing on Tolkien’s extensive but alas unpublished lecture, “O.E. [Old English] Textual Criticism,” Lee notes Tolkien’s stance that “manuscripts must be approached with caution, but nevertheless are crucial to any medievalist” (59)—a caution that, *mutatis mutandis*, applies equally well to the study of Tolkien’s own manuscripts by Tolkienists. Before moving into that territory in the final portion of the essay, Lee digresses briefly to fictive manuscripts in Tolkien’s works. Among more obvious examples—the aforementioned Book of Mazarbul, Isildur’s scroll describing the Ring, the King’s Letter in the abandoned epilogue to *The Lord of the Rings*, leaves from *The Notion Club Papers*, and so on—Lee notes Tolkien’s sometimes “playful” connections to manuscript culture as well, as when he points out the “nice symmetry” (60) that *The Hobbit* begins and ends with manuscript parchment, opening with Thror’s Map and ending with Bilbo writing his memoirs, *The Hobbit* itself. Those considering working directly with Tolkien’s manuscripts should consult Lee’s detailed discussion of the potential pitfalls in this kind of work (64). To prove the point, Lee considers at length the tangle of manuscript materials for one chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*, “Shelob’s Lair” (65–8, followed by an extensive table of the manuscript variants 69–75).
The remaining parts of the Companion each contain many more contributions than the first two, and I will have more to say about some than others. Part III takes up aspects of Tolkien’s legendarium in detail. Carl Phelpstead sets the stage with an overview of “Myth-making and Subcreation,” calling Tolkien’s writings (with direct reference to the often-quoted letter to Milton Waldman) “an interconnected body of myths, legends, and fairy-tales of a richness and complexity one might imagine to have been created by a whole people rather than a single individual” (79). Phelpstead carefully unpacks what Tolkien meant by myth, sub-creation, and mythopoeia. As part of the discussion, he summarizes the essay “On Fairy-stories” and offers a valuable extended study of the poem “Mythopeia” (82–6).

Moving on from the more theoretical underpinnings in Phelpstead, Leslie A. Donovan orients readers with her “Middle-earth Mythology: An Overview.” She lays out its foundations, structure and layers, the primacy of language and sound, the tension between choice and fate, and other important features of the mythological system Tolkien so painstakingly devised. Perhaps most importantly, Donovan remarks that “as Tolkien spent much of his life writing, revising, and even completely rethinking these myths, his works outgrew their original purpose to become the mythology of an entire world, rather than of a single country or people” (92).

In “The Silmarillion: Tolkien’s Theory of Myth, Text and Culture,” Gergely Nagy considers several aspects of that work—its origins in “The Book of Lost Tales” and other early mythic writings, its difficult textual history and the problems of integrating later works into it and it into them, the editorial process of its preparation for publication by Christopher Tolkien, and so on. Along the way, Nagy draws thought-provoking conclusions, as when he writes that “Tolkien’s conception of his fiction as a philological corpus was in fact not hindered but completed, literalized with his failure to produce a final version” (117). Passing briefly over the next two chapters, I would first mention Elizabeth Whittingham’s essay on “Unfinished Tales and the History of Middle-earth: A Lifetime of Imagination,” which is in some ways a companion to Nagy’s essay, not least because Nagy draws heavily on Whittingham’s previous work on the subject. Here, Whittingham summarizes the contents of Unfinished Tales of Numenor and Middle-earth and the entire History of Middle-earth series, volume by volume. Such a straightforward summary will be especially invaluable to more casual readers who may have found these posthumous writings too daunting to approach. By way of one example (rather like Lee’s examination of a single chapter of The Lord of the Rings), Whittingham works to describe and disentangle the history of the story/ies of Húrin and his children, Túrin Turambar and Niënor Níniel (154–9).
Who better than John D. Rateliff to guide readers through “The Hobbit: A Turning Point”? For those familiar with his exhaustive work on the subject, much of this will be familiar: the history of the origins and writing of the novel, its revision both before and after publication, its incorporation of source elements from medieval languages and literature, its connections to Tolkien’s legendarium, its relationship to the larger world of children’s literature, and so on. It is an excellent capsule summary and may whet readers’ appetites for Rateliff’s much fuller treatment in The History of The Hobbit (the shorter or the longer edition). In the essay that follows Rateliff’s, John D. Holmes provides a similar treatment of The Lord of the Rings. Holmes begins with a synopsis and structural analysis, with perhaps too much apology to “film firsters” over the novel’s bulk and its too gradual building up to the action they expected from Peter Jackson’s adaptation (133). This section is followed by additional discussion of the Peter Jackson films and their differences from the novel, after which Holmes moves on to more important matters: the linguistic inspiration behind Tolkien’s storytelling, the question of allegory versus applicability, religious elements, and a closing defense of the poetry and song scattered throughout the novel. This coda is probably unnecessary, given that the Companion dedicates an entire chapter to Tolkien’s poetry by Corey Olsen, who makes the same points, sometimes in the same words—e.g., Holmes calls Tolkien’s verses in The Lord of the Rings “more than ornament” (145); Olsen calls them “not mere ornament” (188). Olsen provides a necessarily selective survey of Tolkien’s poetic works, mainly those outside The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, then digs deeper into two examples of inset poetry in The Lord of the Rings and their relationships to the prose narrative surrounding them. These two close discussions of “Where Now the Horse and the Rider?” and “Errantry”/”Eärendil Was a Mariner” (which Olsen calls “the ‘Rivendell’ poem”) are Olsen at his best.

Moving to the fringes of the legendarium, Verlyn Flieger takes up “‘The Lost Road’ and ‘The Notion Club Papers’: Myth, History, and Time Travel,” arguing the importance of these two works despite their being often dismissed as “lesser addenda to his legendarium” (161). Flieger highlights the evolution of the myth of Númenor in and around both works, notes that many of their elements are “strongly biographical” (Lost Road 53, qtd by Flieger), and elaborates on the importance of the frame narratives. Maria Artamonova considers “‘Minor’ Works,” telegraphing in her use of quotation marks the opinion that they are not really minor at all and that, moreover, “any story Tolkien wrote was bound to be drawn into the orbit of his mythology by way of allusion, comment, analogue, or borrowing” (189). Artamonova offers short summaries of most of Tolkien’s satellite opuscula in roughly their order of composition—The Father Christmas Letters, Roverandom, Mr. Bliss, Farmer Giles of
Ham, “Leaf by Niggle,” and Smith of Wootton Major. She omits The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm’s Son, which is perhaps logical, given the aims of her essay, but it is regrettable, since the one-act play is not elsewhere discussed as a story, but rather only for its connections to Tolkien’s academic work and even in that context only very briefly. (It is likewise categorized in the index under Tolkien’s scholarship rather than under his fiction and stories, even though it is arguably a hybrid of the two.)

The final chapter of Part III is Arden R. Smith’s overview of Tolkien’s “Invented Languages and Writing Systems,” beginning with Tolkien’s linguistic inspiration (to some extent repeating Holmes, 138–40). This essay will be rough sledding for some—perhaps some of the same readers who, as Holmes and Olsen note, tend to skip over the poetry—but the essay is carefully structured to provide as thorough and accessible as possible an overview of an enormously complex subject. But for casual readers daunted by Tolkien’s invented languages and alphabets, things are about to get deeper still.

The first five chapters of Part IV (“Context”) dive at great depth into Tolkien and Old English, Middle English, Old Norse, Finnish, and Celtic. A single chapter on Tolkien’s linguistic interests and influences might have sufficed (see for example, “Languages” in Scull and Hammond’s Reader’s Guide, 460–75). Approaching 70 pages on the subject may say more about the volume’s editor than its readers, but those who take more interest in the subject, as I do, may welcome these extended explorations. The chapters on medieval languages do, perhaps unavoidably, repeat a lot of the material from the earlier biographical and academic chapters, and each follows a very similar blueprint. Mark Atherton treats Old English, summarizing Tolkien’s interest and career in Old English, its relationship to other languages, and comparative philology in general. He goes on to explain some of the words and names in Tolkien’s fiction that have Old English origins (e.g., Shire, Mark, Théoden, Eärendil). Elizabeth Solopova then turns to Middle English, again summarizing Tolkien’s career milestones before elaborating on Middle English sources for themes and plot elements in Tolkien’s writings. Tom Birkett tackles Old Norse, following the same pattern as the preceding chapters with a look at Tolkien’s exposure to and academic experience with Old Norse language and literature, and once again, touching on the borrowing of names, words, and motifs. Birkett also discusses Tolkien’s Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún, astutely suggesting that the “impulse towards tying up loose ends is a reoccurring [sic] feature of Tolkien’s relationship to his Norse sources, but these gaps would eventually come to accommodate a world the author had created for himself” (249). Next up is Leena Kahlas-Tarkka’s “Finnish: The Land and Language of Heroes.” Kahlas-Tarkka describes Tolkien’s fascination with the Finnish language and the Kalevala, his attempt to retell the tale of Kullervo, and the influence of Finnish on Tolkien’s linguistic
aesthetic and his “secret vice” of language-making. The last in the series is the somewhat clunkily titled, “Celtic: ‘Celtic Things’ and ‘Things Celtic’—Identity, Language, and Mythology” by J.S. Lyman-Thomas. Here, the questions of interest and influence become a little more complex, because Tolkien was only specially interested in one branch of the Celtic linguistic and literary tree, Welsh, and disliked, or at least sometimes claimed to dislike, its other branches. The author discusses the influence of Welsh on Tolkien’s linguistic aesthetic, its influence on the shape and sound of Sindarin (as Finnish influenced Quenya), and “[t]he interplay of Welsh and Irish elements (genuine things Celtic) [...] in his mythology” (281), particularly in his conception of the Elves.

The Companion here turns to English literary history, beginning with Nick Groom’s contention in “The English Literary Tradition: Shakespeare to the Gothic” that while undoubtedly less common than medieval influences, “there are important strands of thought in the period 1550 to 1800 that profoundly affected Tolkien’s overall vision” (287). Groom errs, I think, in claiming that Tolkien held Edmund Spenser responsible for “reducing the ancient and sinister figures of the Elves to domestic Fairies” (287); Tolkien rather gave Spenser credit as the last to represent the word elf with “its ancient meanings” (Letters 143). Setting that quibble aside, Groom is quite right to note the “antagonistic influence” (288) of Shakespeare, possible debts to Milton, similarities in spite of tension with Coleridge’s theory of imagination, and intriguing parallels with Thomas Percy, the 18th-century collector of the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765). Groom does not mention the old story that Percy supposedly rescued the manuscript “from the hands of the housemaid who was about to light the fire with it” (Britannica 137), but the story bears an interesting, though completely coincidental, resemblance to the story of many a C.S. Lewis manuscript saved from the bonfire. One wonders how many such stories there are out there.

Rachel Falconer brings readers closer to Tolkien’s own day with “Earlier Fantasy Fiction: Morris, Dunsany, and Lindsay,” but she seems at once dismissive. “Scholars have collected Tolkien’s stray remarks,” and even though “none of these remarks are fleshed out in any detail” “Tolkien scholars have scraped together evidence of possible borrowings,” theories which are “interesting, even alluring,” but “ultimately unsatisfying” because they lead to “an image of fantasy as an overdetermined genre” (304–5). With this kind of preamble, it is more than a little surprising that in the remainder of her essay, Falconer ferrets out connections to Morris’s The House of the Wolfings, Lord Dunsany’s The King of Elfland’s Daughter, and David Lindsay’s A Voyage to Arcturus. If such studies are as anemic as Falconer suggests, why bother conducting one herself?

David Bratman provides valuable context on Tolkien’s immediate milieu in “The Inklings and Others: Tolkien and His Contemporaries.” In the
course of his essay, he goes well beyond the Inklings—the close circle of friends and colleagues who met to listen to one another’s nascent literary works—to discuss a number of Tolkien’s contemporaries, some more familiar to today’s readers than others, among them E.R. Eddison, T.H. White, Mervyn Peake, H.P. Lovecraft, and Robert E. Howard. Dimitra Fimi picks things up from here, dealing with “Later Fantasy Fiction: Tolkien’s Legacy,” a topic already hinted at by Bratman. She identifies two general groups of writers: those who imitated Tolkien, whether intentionally or not; and those who “react[ed] against his blueprint” (335). In the bulk of her essay, Fimi focuses on writers who recognize what they owe to Tolkien but who have nevertheless managed to find their own distinct storytelling expression, including Susan Cooper, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, Ursula K. Le Guin, Philip Pullman, and J.K. Rowling. The last essay in Part IV, Anna Vaninskaya’s “Modernity: Tolkien and His Contemporaries” (with the same subtitle as Bratman’s chapter), looks at Tolkien through the problem of situating him in his proper literary period. Is he the last “medieval” writer, centuries too late? Is he Victorian? Is he a modernist, or even a postmodernist? Vaninskaya finds Tolkien to be a “Victorian Modernist” (363)—with much in common with Eliot, Joyce, and Pound and their interest in mythic allusions and fragments, but yet with perhaps still more interest, like the Victorians, in “origins and wholes, in diachrony and the continuous development revealed by historical philology” (364). One might say this is the difference between Gollum and Gandalf.

Part V consists of a dozen essays gathered under the title “Critical Approaches,” even though most of them are not actually critical approaches, but rather themes or motifs pervading Tolkien’s works. The selection is broad but fairly arbitrary, and it is easy to point to omissions—e.g., we have Evil but not Death, Women but not Race, and so on. Some genuine critical approaches of importance to Tolkien studies—for example, queer theory—are left out entirely. To set the stage, Patrick Curry provides necessary historical background on “The Critical Response to Tolkien’s Fiction,” concentrating mainly on critics’ negative responses. It’s hard to say whether the almost endless barrage of disparaging comments from literati and establishment critics is discouraging or amusing (or both), but Curry has done us a useful service collecting together so many quotes and references in one place. Curry moves on to an interesting discussion of modernism in an effort to root out the causes for the hostility of so many critics, echoing Anna Vaninskaya’s preceding essay. He concludes with a very brief look at some of the hallmark works of Tolkien criticism, so brief that it must be severely selective. I suppose it is a reasonable enough starting point.

Allan Turner gives a valuable overview of Tolkien’s uses of various literary styles and syntaxes in “Style and Intertextual Echoes.” Brief and therefore of necessity incomplete, it is nevertheless a helpful foundation for
Anna Caughey examines *The Lord of the Rings* through the lens of Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye in “The Hero’s Journey.” “Evil,” the topic taken up by Christopher Garbowski, is more a theme than a critical approach, and the essay is more a sketch of the subject than any attempt at the definitive word. Garbowski touches on several aspects of evil, establishing several useful touchpoints to later chapters (e.g., Religion and War). In “Nature,” Liam Campbell emphasizes Tolkien’s love of nature and natural phenomena and his incorporation of them into his writings, “conceptually, thematically, stylistically, and also in terms of how the presentation of nature in Tolkien’s fiction is almost always central to the narrative or poetic design” (431). For my taste, it is too brief an introduction to Tolkien and ecocriticism, a very rapidly growing field (if you will pardon the pun). The bibliography cites nothing more recent than Campbell’s own book (2011), but readers with an interest in the subject should at least also read Conrad-O’Briain and Hynes’s *J.R.R. Tolkien: The Forest and the City* (published the year before the *Companion*).

In “Religion: An Implicit Catholicism,” Pat Pinsent contextualizes Tolkien’s Catholic worldview and examines some of the evidence of it in his writings. These are, as we all know, not explicit references, which Tolkien believed to be fatal (cf. his comments in the letter to Milton Waldman), and that choice may explain why Tolkien is often discounted from the rolls of so-called Christian writers (446) as well as how his fiction can be so popular even among “people who do not have a familiarity with or sympathy for Christianity” (459). Although this is a good introduction, it was disappointing to see no recent work on the subject in the bibliography, especially the two volumes by Paul Kerry and Sandra Miesel.

Janet Brennan Croft takes up the motif of “War” in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien in something of a précis of her own book on the subject, which is strangely left out of the essay’s bibliography. Croft begins with a biographical summary, extending that provided in John Garth’s essay at the beginning of the book, before moving into the weightier discussion of the impact and influence that Tolkien’s—and also by extension his two sons’—war experience had on his writings. Unlike most of the other essayists in the *Companion*, Croft also suggests directions for future research into the subject.

I have no idea why Adam Roberts felt the need to commence his essay by writing that “‘Tolkien and Women’ might be thought an unpromising topic for critical inquiry” (473). It is not, and why should he think readers of this *Companion* would feel it to be? Roberts wanders too much in this essay, and while it is still a fairly interesting read, it is not among the best treatments of the subject that I have seen. Mistakes such as Bjorn for Beorn and Nenna for Nienna are unfortunate blemishes. Much, too, is omitted from the essay’s bibliography of further references. Those interested in further and deeper exploration of this

Like ecocriticism, the study of multimedia adaptation of Tolkien’s works—the efforts of those “other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama” (*Letters* 145)—has exploded in recent years. Accordingly, the *Companion* dedicates its last four chapter to this, leaving out only fanfiction. “Art” by Christopher Tuthill discusses not Tolkien himself as an artist but rather Tolkien-inspired fantasy artwork, by such artists as Cor Blok, Alan Lee, John Howe, Ted Nasmith, and the late Jef Murray. Interestingly, Tuthill reproduces illustrations of several scenes as depicted by multiple artists, including the Balrog, Éowyn’s confrontation with the Witch-king, and Gandalf and Pippin’s approach to Minas Tirith. Such an essay must be selective, but I regretted that Tuthill couldn’t make the space to say more about some other Tolkien artists, e.g., the Hildebrandts, Roger Garland, Darrell K. Sweet, and of course, Pauline Baynes. In “Music,” Bradford Lee Eden makes a strong connection between language and music, and demonstrates how this was transformed by Tolkien into the mythic cosmology of his “Ainulindalë.” Eden follows this with a survey of other references to music in Tolkien’s writings, notably in the aptly named character of Tinfang Warble. Eden concludes with a look at the scholarship on the subject, fairly scant until recent years but now growing rapidly, and with a few words about music inspired by Tolkien’s writings. Kristin Thompson turns to “Film Adaptations: Theatrical and Television Versions,” discussing dramatic adaptations for the big screen and the small. These include the Zimmerman project, the Ralph Bakshi film adaptation, the Rankin/Bass television programs, various shorts and foreign adaptations, before coming to the megaliths of the Peter Jackson films. Finally, in “Games and Gaming: Quantasy,” Péter Kristóf Makai takes a look at how Tolkien’s world has inspired board games, card-based games, roll-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons,* and computer games of all sorts. This is a very narrow and specialized topic, and one not of much particular interest for me personally, but I am glad to see the subject getting some attention.

Finally, a word must be said about the price. While the *Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien* is a useful and worthwhile volume, well-written and well-edited, and while it seems to be well-made and likely to stand up to years of use, its list price sets it far beyond the budgets of all but the most well-heeled. At $200 for print, $130 for the Kindle edition, and $160 for other e-book formats, it is simply too expensive for most readers—and perhaps even some libraries. Compared to the cost of the Scull and Hammond *Companion and Guide*—four times the material at less than half the cost—its high price is particularly conspicuous. Let us hope that Wiley decides to issue it in softcover at some point, though judging from other paperback editions of their Companions series, this is still likely to
Reviews

be in the $50–$75 range. I have no qualms recommending you add the book to your shelves or digital reading gadgets—if you can afford it. If not, look for a library copy near you.

—Jason Fisher

WORKS CONSULTED


WAYMEET FOR TOLKIEN TEACHERS. Edited by Leslie Donovan.
https://waymeet.commons.mla.org/

With issue 32, VII celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Marion E. Wade Center, founded by Clyde C. Kilby in 1965 as a research collection centered around J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, and Dorothy L. Sayers. VII or Seven, which began publication in 1980, takes this opportunity to change its subtitle from “An Anglo-American Review” to “Journal of the Marion E. Wade Center” “in order to more adequately reflect the truly global readership and scholarship on these
seven authors” (1). *Seven* has also added an online reviews section at their website, presumably in order to keep the paper issues to a manageable size—an issue we certainly face at *Mythlore* as well!

In 1926, immediately after C.S. Lewis’s early long poem *Dymer* had been rejected by Heinemann’s, he wrote a letter to his friend Nevill Coghill in Old English, calling down inventive Anglo-Saxon curses on the publisher and expressing doubts about his own ambition. This short letter is reproduced with a transcription and translation by George Musacchio, who also places the letter in its context as far as Lewis’s poetic career at the time of its writing, his knowledge of Old English, and his friendships not just with Nevill Coghill but also Arthur Greeves and J.R.R. Tolkien. Intriguingly, Lewis and Coghill’s tutor in Old English was a woman I have not seen mentioned elsewhere in the recent spate of scholarship on Lewis and the women in his life, Edith Elizabeth Wardale. In spite of Lewis’s disappointment, he sent the poem on to J.M. Dent instead and it was accepted within the month.

It is perhaps odd to consider George MacDonald as involved, in any way, with the affairs of the poet Lord Byron. But MacDonald and his wife were protégées, friends, and strong advocates of Lady Byron, born Annabella Milbanke, in the final five years of her life, and she figures in fictionalized form in his novel *The Vicar’s Daughter* (1872). In his article “‘To Perceive the Loveliness of Human Character through All the Incumbent Shades of Error’: George MacDonald, Lady Byron, and the Remarkable Annabella Milbanke,” William L. Howard reviews the circumstances of Byron’s courtship of Milbanke, assesses her character and her motivations for the marriage, and examines her ill-treatment and abandonment by Byron. Howard contrasts the vindications of her by Harriet Beecher Stowe on the one hand—“sensational” (29) and highly invasive of her privacy—with MacDonald’s correspondence, dedication, and fictional character Lady Bernard’s embrace of the imperfect in others (40) and “life of effective benevolence” (42) as a result of her sufferings.

Crystal Hurd has done a service to the biographical study of the Lewis brothers by transcribing and introducing the anthology of anecdotes about Albert Lewis that Jack and Warnie collected under the title “*Pudaita Pie: An Anthology,*” and which Warren typed up for inclusion in the *Lewis Papers* after Albert’s death. Albert was a difficult man for the boys to get along with, wedded to his routines and daunted by the responsibility of bringing them up after the deaths in quick succession of his father, his brother, and the boys’ mother. His character seems to have been “loving, but emotionally distant” (56) and he “strugg[led] to connect” with his sons after Flora’s death; yet his intelligence, “moral integrity” (52), and literary habits—the house filled with books, his recorded speeches larded with apt quotations—were a strong influence on the brothers in spite of their resentment of his seeming abandonment and distance.
Jack’s introduction to the collection is a finely detailed observance of Albert’s habits of mind and self-contradictory character, reaching its peak with the evocative phrase “his soul never consummated her marriage with reality” (60); yet Jack admits that this is true of many of us. The anecdotes show a man sure of his opinions even when confronted with opposing facts, and rooted in certain unchangeable personal habits. I have to confess that many of the anecdotes strike me as being of the “you had to be there” variety and were probably more amusing to the young boys in person; their often snide humor at Albert’s expense bears out Lewis’s feeling of shame later in life that he had been too uncharitable towards his father.

Joshua Avery examines Charles Williams’s Descent into Hell as a critique of “the wrong sort of Romanticism,” the sort that “tends towards narcissism and egotism” and valorizes “extreme individualism” (69). Williams purposely uses tropes and symbols associated with Romanticism, in particular the moon and the female revenant, along with references to Keats’s and Shelley’s poetry, to construct a critique of “artistic replacements for real life” (72), opposing them with symbolism of the sun, a theology of community, and a healthier sense of “access to grace via art” (73) rather than art as a substitute for higher reality. Avery quotes Winship on Keats: “The purely imaginative life is a precious refreshment but a dangerous refuge” (77n4).

Sayers’s critique of the advertising world and its impact on society in Murder Must Advertise is well known, but what is less well known is that she addressed issues of advertising in other stories and essays, drawing in all cases on her own career in the field. Advertising was one of the few career paths open to educated women in the early 1920s, and Sayers worked for the Benson agency from 1922 to 1930 while she was establishing her reputation as a fiction writer. In “Dorothy L. Sayers: Advertising, Art, and the Good Life,” Christine M. Fletcher looks at Sayers’s attitude toward “advertising as a flawed part of a fallen world” (83) in Clouds of Witness, Unnatural Death, Strong Poison (though Fletcher’s citation of Miss Climpson’s employees answering “advertisements” in order to bring fraudulent men to justice refers to personal advertisements, not commercial, and doesn’t really fit her thesis), and “The Unnatural Puzzle of the Man with No Face.” She also addressed the issues more explicitly in essays such as “How Free is the Press?” and “The Psychology of Advertising,” but what is particularly interesting is Fletcher’s application of Sayers’s theological consideration of art in The Mind of the Maker to commercial art.

Stephen Prickett, who read English at Cambridge while C.S. Lewis was giving first year lectures on medieval literature, muses about Lewis’s assertion in one of his early lectures that “Though I have written Christian apologetic, the Cambridge English Faculty is not the place for it. [...] As a teacher [...], whether I am Christian or an atheist should make no difference at all” (101). As other
critics have also observed, it is difficult to truly categorize and separate Lewis’s writings, in which “Everything is connected with everything else” (102) (and much of it, as Prickett observes, includes an element of satire). Prickett concludes that a central question which concerns Lewis in many of his writings, in items as diverse as the short story “The Shoddy Lands,” An Experiment in Criticism, the sermon “The Weight of Glory,” and even the Dantean satire The Great Divorce, is “How, then, should we read literature?” (108). The corollary being, can the converted Lewis successfully talk about reading literature in terms that are exclusively secular?

While most reviews have been relocated to Seven’s website, the issue does conclude with Ralph C. Wood’s review essay on four recent books, two of them on the Inklings as a group and two on Tolkien alone.

Waymeet is billed as “A digital journal for teaching J.R.R. Tolkien’s works and life in post-secondary schools” and went online in the summer of 2015. It is publicly accessible, non-profit, and operates under the aegis of the Modern Language Association. It builds in part on the work Leslie Donovan did in assembling Approaches to Teaching Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings and Other Works, reviewed on pages 188-190 of this issue of Mythlore.

Waymeet, however, is far from just an online journal; it is a multifaceted resource center for instructors. The site includes pages of links to model course syllabi, class materials and sample assignments, online reference resources, a bibliography on Tolkien pedagogy, and a discussion forum open to MLA members only. In fact, though no refereed articles on Tolkien pedagogy have been published in Waymeet yet, the source is an incredibly rich resource for teachers already, and quite useful for scholars and students as well. Well worth bookmarking!

—Janet Brennan Croft
ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

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DAVID BRATMAN is co-editor of Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review. He previously wrote the annual “Year’s Work in Tolkien Studies” for that publication. His other writings include the article on authors contemporary with Tolkien for A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien edited by Stuart D. Lee (Wiley Blackwell, 2014) and the bio-bibliographical appendix on the Inklings to The Company They Keep by Diana Pavlac Geyer (Kent State, 2007). His work on Tolkien and the Inklings has also appeared in Mythlore.

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MIKE FOSTER was a member of the English faculty at Illinois Central College in East Peoria from 1971 until his retirement in 2005. His first specialty is English fantasy literature, especially J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, and J.M. Barrie, and he has published widely in this area. He taught courses in both fantasy literature (1974-2005) and in Special Studies, J.R.R. Tolkien (1978-2005 and continued at Bradley University in Peoria in 2006 and 2008). He is a founding member of the Far Westfarthing smial, a fantasy book discussion group whose special meeting guests have included Tom Shippey, Douglas A. Anderson, Jan and Jeff Long, and David Emerson. Foster’s second specialty is popular music, especially of the era of the Beatles, but reaching back into the blues, folk, and jazz traditions, especially music with a link to Illinois. He explores this interest weekly with A Fine Kettle of Fish, an “eclectic cover band” septet aged 24 to 76 based in Washburn, Illinois, now in its fifty-fourth year. He has written and performed spoof versions of Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings based on the music of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, and Motown hits. He lives with his wife Jo and elder daughter Martha in a 1936 farmhouse southwest of Metamora, Illinois.

MELODY GREEN currently serves as the Dean of Urbana Theological Seminary, a small graduate school located near the campus of the University of Illinois. She has published several articles on Tolkien, Lewis, and George MacDonald. Her most recent publication is “Story: ‘The Doctor’s Daughter,’” an essay in the collection Bigger on the Inside: Christianity and Doctor Who published by Square Halo Press.

CRYSTAL HURD is an educator, writer, poet, and scholar in Virginia. She holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a Master’s in English and Doctorate in Educational Leadership from East Tennessee State University. She is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at the University of Texas El Paso. She enjoys exploring aspects of Lewis, Tolkien, and Dorothy L. Sayers, while also examining the role of artists as leaders and the rhetoric of power. She currently serves as Review Editor for Sehnsucht: The C.S. Lewis Journal. Along with her recent book Thirty Days with C.S. Lewis: A Women’s Devotional and contributing a chapter to Women and C.S. Lewis: What his life and literature reveal for today’s culture, she has published articles and reviews in VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review, Inklings Forever, Englewood Review of Books, and Mythlore, with poetry published in Neon Ink, a literary magazine. She has also been featured on the “All about Jack” podcast hosted on www.essentialcslewis.com. A self-described book nerd, her interests include reading, writing, and photography. She and her husband Aaron have three dogs. www.crystalhurd.com.

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Dennis Wilson Wise is currently pursuing his doctorate in English literature at Middle Tennessee State University. His dissertation focuses on how the political philosophy of Leo Strauss (a modern proponent of classical political rationalism) can be helpful in elucidating notions of politics and the regime within the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. He also studies historical fiction.