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THE CRITICS, AND TOLKIEN, AND C. S. LEWIS ~ REVIEWS by Richard West



Though I feel strongly that J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis are individual artists who should be enjoyed and studied without confusing the two, there are so many current books dealing with one or both of these authors that it seemed most practical to review them in one continuous section.

1. Misunderstanding Tolkien

William Ready, The Tolkien Relation: A Personal Inquiry (Henry Regnery Co., 1968; \$3.95). Published in paperback as Understanding Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings (Paperback Library, 1969; 75¢). One would have liked to be able to give a hearty welcome to the first book-length study of Tolkien, but even the most favorably inclined reader can hardly get through the first, turgid, sentence of this volume without having his expectations quashed, and no reader who has patiently suffered through the entire thing can doubt that the book is not to be welcomed at all. Really, it is only dubiously of "book length" (the slimness of the paperback makes that obvious, but even the large type and wide margins of the hardcover edition could not conceal it), but that physical slightness is of no importance beside the really scandalous insubstantiality of the critique.

It is advertised as an "introduction to Tolkien and his work," but it has very little to offer toward a study of either. It repeats, with very little filling out, biographical details already in print; but some of the dates given are wrong (e.g., Mr. Ready kindly, but inaccurately, adds six years to the life-span of Tolkien's mother), and even the slight commentary is suspect, since it is predicated on a long and close association between the author and his subject and Tolkien has publicly denied the allegation. The most precious additions to our scant biographical information are two letters from Christopher Tolkien and one from his father, but it is hard to be grateful even for so little (and they do not tell us much) after learning that they were printed without the consent of the Tolkien family. Nor is Mr. Ready's discussion of Tolkien's circle very impressive: he gets many details amazingly wrong (e.g., he has Charles Williams managing the Oxford University Press); his portraits of the people seem to bear no relation to what we know of them from other sources (e.g., his "Lewis" is a neurotic). He indicates class snobbery and naive racism in Tolkien's character, but since the only support he offers is the dubious assertion that "everybody in England of Tolkien's generation is like that" we may be pardoned for awaiting stronger evidence before accepting even these less-than-sensational charges. Nor is our faith in Mr. Ready's ethical judgment bolstered by the platitudes, always either very shallow or just plain wrong, that are all he can offer in the way of moral philosophy: to him the idea that the masses are capable of noble action, for instance, is a tremendous insight; and he mouths the tired notion that rewards are demeaning, not noticing the implication that it is horrible for one to obtain the good for which he strives.

The same superficial outlook vitiates his criticism of Tolkien's work. Again and again he gets small but significant details muddled: he has Bilbo married, though his bachelor status is important to his character; he has the Three Rings gone over the Sea, though it is important to the action that they are wielded by Gandalf, Galadriel, and Elrond; and so forth. He is no better on the larger matters. He does not like the appendices, or the verse, or the speech mannerisms of the Hobbits, or a great deal of the story for that matter. He somehow thinks Lord of the Rings a joyous book, anyway, but is blind to the struggle and pain and temptation to despair that lie on the way to eucatastrophe. Nor does he show much grasp of critical terminology:

Lewis denies in another letter that there was any sort of allegory in The Lord of the Rings: the Ring was no symbol of the mushroom ring of destruction that accompanies a nuclear bomb. Allegory in any case was a dirty word to Tolkien, as it was not to Lewis, whose only first-class book is his Allegory of Love. Lewis pointed out in his letter that Tolkien began his Romance before the bomb was invented, but this is of no more account than the assertion that Icarus flew before satellites were blasted. (p. 29)

The murkiness of this paragraph is typical, but despite it it is plain that Mr. Ready confuses allegory and symbolism. That Tolkien could not have known about the atom bomb when he conceived the Ring establishes beyond question that he could not have intentionally allegorized the one in the other, whatever symbolic associations the Ring may have for a bomb-conscious audience. The distinction is easily drawn on this level of the author's known intentions, and it is surprising that Ready cannot draw it, since the second chapter of the book by Lewis that he ranks with such casual confidence is devoted to this very question. It is evident that Mr. Ready derived little benefit from his reading of Allegory of Love--if indeed he does not pass judgment on it solely from knowing it is a popular volume in the reserved book rooms of libraries.

The quoted passage was randomly chosen, but I now find that it leads excellently into the next major defect in The Tolkien Relation: the glaring fact that Mr. Ready cannot write. Let us take the case of that original title (noting in passing that the paperback title, however inappropriate it is to the book to which it is attached, is an improvement). Apparently Mr. Ready means by it both "what Tolkien has written or related, what stories he has told" and also "what relationship exists between Tolkien and anything else that comes into the author's head." He never seeks to define what he means by "relation," however, and very often he doesn't seem to mean anything at all by it. Indeed, he frequently seems to believe he is indulging in clever word-play when he is really gushing inanely and incoherently. Though the quoted paragraph is

actually not as bad as many another that could be found on page after page, its language is imprecise, its movement uncontrolled.

If you check the context of this passage you will also find that it abruptly changes the subject of the preceding paragraph and that the one following represents another large shift, all of them apparently unmotivated. This lack of organization is the last major defect of the book as a whole which we need consider. The author repeats simple assertions several times in different chapters, and he rambles throughout (even within single sentences). One ends up wondering if the book were written in hurried snatches over many lunch hours, and stuck together without re-reading or revision to eliminate redundancies, sharpen expression, verify details, or even develop an argument beyond dogmatic assertion.

Toward Mr. Ready I mean no discourtesy; it is with his book that I am concerned, and I am sorry to have to say that I have searched in vain in it for any redeeming quality. That so shoddy a volume--badly written, poorly organized, inaccurate in many details, and extraordinarily superficial in interpretation--should have made its way into print and been fobbed off as a serious work of scholarship is a disgrace to the profession of literary study. To tolerate such a simply stupid book is not courtesy, but an encouragement to publish other worthless "studies" and a betrayal of high standards of investigation into the pleasure and truth of the art of literature.



2. Misguided Tour

Lin Carter, *Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings* (Ballantine, 1969; 95¢). It is a relief to turn now to the second full-length book on Tolkien, for here one is always sure that at least the author really likes Tolkien's work, and, if one has some reservations about how deathless Mr. Carter's prose is, at least it conveys his zest for the game of source-hunting. This book is not really a critique of Tolkien's fiction, but a treatment of some of the sources on which he drew and of the tradition of literary myth, epic, romance, saga and fantasy in which he worked. The book does not always keep these two areas distinct, but that is not the major reason why what might have been a valuable study is such a failure. Let us again use a quotation to lead into a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this volume:

The mighty German national epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, gives us the legend in nearly its final form. Here is how the German epic tells the tale: Siegfried hears of Kriemhild's beauty and rides to woo her at Worms. He kills the Nibelungs, Schilbung and Nibelung, and seizes their golden treasure, and from the dwarf, Albric, he takes the Tarnkappe, the Helm of Invisibility. He also slays a dragon and, bathing in its blood, becomes invulnerable to any weapon, save in one spot between his shoulders, where a linden leaf stuck, keeping the dragon blood from rendering that part of his body impervious (much as the Greek hero Achilles was dunked in the waters of the Styx and became invulnerable in every part of his body except for the heel, by which his mother had held him when she did the dunking--had the old Germanic poets possibly read the *Iliad*?). Gunther, King of Worms, and the plotter Hagen persuade the invulnerable hero to woo Brünhilde the Valkyrie for the King's bride. He does and weds Kriemhild while Gunther marries Brünhilde. The queens quarrel, and Siegfried is murdered by Gunther and Hagen at the instigation of Brünhilde, who has discovered the one unprotected spot on his body. Kriemhild inherits the Nibelungen hoard and later marries Etzel, whom she persuades to lure King Gunther and Hagen to his kingdom. When they arrive, she traps and kills them, thus revenging the murder of Siegfried. (p. 160)

Now this does make *Nibelungenlied* sound interesting, but it gives a largely false impression of it. One would not guess from this précis that Siegfried's winning of the treasure and slaying of the dragon are only told in brief flashbacks, for these elements are important for Mr. Carter's source study and he has therefore stressed them more than the Middle High German poet did. Since about half of the epic is of little interest for his purposes, he summarizes it hurriedly in the last two sentences. It is misleading to state that Kriemhild "inherits" the treasure, for it is hidden from her before she can take possession (it is the Rhine Gold). Another mistaken detail is that it is Hagen, not Brünhilde, who tricks the knowledge of Siegfried's weak spot out of Kriemhild. Mr. Carter has also suggested a more Germanic *Sturm und Drang* atmosphere for the story than actually pertains (this would better fit the latter part of the epic, which he hurries over), for the world depicted is one of French-influenced courtliness and refinement, of *zucht* and *hohiu minne*. The query about the cultural knowledge of "the old Germanic poets" has implicit in it a superior smugness ignorant of the real sophistication of a medieval court. But the answer to it is that in the early thirteenth century Greek was not widely known in Western Europe and the Troy story was familiar not through Homer but in the Latin versions of Dares and Dictys. However, the motif of incomplete invulnerability may well have been widespread among Indo-European peoples. Still, it must be pointed out that the story of Achilles and the Styx is not told by Homer but first appears in the late Greek cyclic epics,

and furthermore that the Achilles of the *Iliad* is not represented as being invulnerable (that is why he needs armor).

If we broaden our scope to look at the context of this passage, we will find that Mr. Carter's treatment of the evolution of a theme oversimplifies complex problems of literary history (e.g., the processes of legendarization by which international conflicts become family quarrels, or Attila the Hun becomes the benign Etzel). He is also sometimes careless in chronology: he rightly discusses *Völsunga saga*, which preserves material similar to that of the *Nibelungenlied* in earlier form, but fails to mention that our text of the saga is about sixty years *later* than our text of the German epic. We do not have in the quoted paragraph a clear case of confusion due to imperfect knowledge of the original language of the work under study. But on the page previous we have the rather charmingly naive comment that the Sigurth of the *Poetic* (or *Elder*) *Edda* is the Sigurd of the *Prose Edda*, when all this really represents is two different modern translators choosing different options of transliterating final *eth* in the original Old Norse "Sigurð." This is not important, for the spelling of proper names in medieval manuscripts is erratic, anyway (I hope Mr. Carter's orthographic sensibilities will not be too badly upset if I point out that his "Siegfried" is usually "Sifvrit" in the original Middle High German). What is important is that an imperfect grasp of a language also means an imperfect grasp of the mentality it expresses, and this helps explain why Mr. Carter constantly misreads older works by imposing inappropriate modern notions on them. He might have rectified this to a considerable extent by reading the scholarship on the works and periods under study, but there is no indication that he has done so.

Such are the defects which abound on practically every page of this book. Sins of omission are plentiful, more than can be pardoned even in a book proposing to sweep from *Gilgamesh* to Alan Garner. What can one think, for example, of a section on medieval romance which overleaps most of the Middle Ages to rely almost entirely on the late *Amadis of Gaul*, mentions the Arthurian legend only allusively, and ignores Chrétien, Béroul, Thomas, Gottfried, Wolfram, Malory and nearly every major romance? Then, with what is included in the discussion, one is continually dissatisfied with imperfect summaries, inaccurate information, and misrepresented literary qualities. Again and again one sees incomprehension: of Greek religion, of the Spenserian letter to Raleigh, of Morris' view of the Middle Ages. One might expect the treatment of more recent works to be better, but here I don't think Mr. Carter ever gets much below the surface and he does not always do full justice even to this. This should be apparent from the outset with his sketchy summaries of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (one wonders why he even attempted this, since anyone who would want to read this book should already have read them and probably has).

Mr. Carter is at his best in the section on Tolkien's sources, since he points out much valid and valuable information, but that he is deficient even here is indicated by my taking my sample quotation from these very chapters. He is also curiously vaunting about his "discoveries," since not only have all of them been announced previously both in scholarly journals and in fanzines, but most of them are of the sort that makes it likely they have been noticed independently by hundreds of readers (e.g., anyone who has read either of the *Eddas* will recognize that Tolkien has mined the *Dvergatal* for names for dwarfs and for Gandalf).

Sadly, then, this tour of the landmarks of the tradition out of which Tolkien arises cannot be recommended: the guide does not understand the natives or their works and his information is untrustworthy.

Still, it is so evident that he has enjoyed the trip that he might persuade others to look in at some of his stops, and it is to be hoped that they may quickly realize that they have to go beyond him. A reader of this volume might best employ his time by looking up the items in the bibliography. And here Mr. Carter, as editor for Ballantine's Adult Fantasy series, has done us a real service: he has brought back into print in inexpensive editions many excellent old works. It is unfortunate that he is no scholar (I do not mean merely that he lacks a degree--for all I know he has one--but that he lacks the knowledge and understanding necessary for the type of study he attempts), but let us be grateful for his love of books.

3. Meaningful Squiggles

Gracia Fay Ellwood, *Good News from Tolkien's Middle Earth: Two Essays on the "Applicability" of The Lord of the Rings* (Eerdmans, 1970; \$3.25). What I first heard about this volume scarcely attracted me to it. An essay on Christ imagery in Tolkien seemed likely to be simplistic; an essay on Tolkien and psychic phenomena seemed likely to be mind-boggling. So it was a long while after I acquired the book that I sat down to read it, partly out of reluctance, partly to shove my expectations to the back of my mind in order to give the argument a fair hearing. To call the upshot a pleasant surprise is an understatement: I feel that this is a really excellent study of Tolkien.

The section on the paranormal is, happily, not the work of a credulous crank. Mrs. Ellwood does not claim to be psychically gifted herself: indeed, she remarks humorously that her efforts to photograph her thoughts in imitation of those so gifted resulted in film showing only "some meaningless squiggles which I hope are not representative of my thought" (p. 156). Rather she rests her case on the argument that it is unreasonable to reject as fraud or mistake all instances of the paranormal when many are well attested under controlled conditions by careful examiners. She is content to cite what seem to her interesting phenomena and leave the demonstration to the experts to whom we are referred in the footnotes. She devotes a substantial section to this, but it does not bulk so large as to dominate the essay. Nor does she try to connect it closely with her discussion of Tolkien (from which it is both separate and separable), but only suggests that she finds a thrill in supposing some elements of Faerie might be "primarily" true. It is her discussion of those elements--of the animate universe, the word of power, prescient dreams and prophecies, the perception in physical terms of invisible dimensions of reality, and the like, with which *Lord of the Rings* abounds, and which give such pleasure to a part of the human sensibility which a strict materialism cannot satisfy--that can be read with delight and profit.

The essay on Christian parallels in Tolkien's fantasy is also intelligently presented, keeping firmly in mind that literature is not theology, and avoiding the shallowness and downright impiety that are all too common in studies of this kind. Basically, the essay treats of the great mythic themes of the Hero's call to adventure, the descent into the underworld, the facing of the dark powers of Chaos, and rebirth, and of their significance, with an emphasis on Christianity but not a narrow isolation of it.

It is a most enjoyable and insightful book, and it is a shame that it is packaged and advertised so as to frighten away its audience. I particularly object to the hideous cover: I have the impression that all books having anything to do with psychic phenomena have exactly that cover, but quite apart from that association the design is repulsively garish.



4. A Gathering of Critics

Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, edited by Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968; \$7.50; paper, \$2.95). In his introductory essay, Mr. Isaacs declares with pardonable pride that the editors have assembled the best of the previously published work on Tolkien (the essays of Lewis, Auden, Reilly and Moorman and the revised essays of Spacks, Fuller and Bradley) as well as offering eight new ones. I cannot entirely go along with that judgment. The editors have overlooked a large number of fine studies available to them, more than the ones by Roger Sale and Marjorie Wright that they acknowledge: those by W. R. Irwin and George H. Thomson, for example, and also many of the papers from the Mankato symposium (particularly those by Bruce Beattie and David Miller). C. S. Lewis' two Time and Tide reviews are so valuable and have been so seminal that it is a mistake to have included only one of them. And Marion Bradley's contribution is given in such a sadly truncated form (really a travesty of a wonderful essay) that one must still prefer to consult it in its earlier appearances in the fan-zines, which, though less accessible, give it in full. Nonetheless, this is a fine collection.

Not all of the essays are as noteworthy as John Tinkler's study of Old English among the Rohirrim or Mary Kelly's of Tolkien's verse. Mr. Keenan may over-stress the primal pattern of the contest between Life and Death at the expense of Tolkien's moral concerns, but he provides a good study of one important aspect of Lord of the Rings. Mr. Raffel's denial of literary status to LOTR may be surprising, but his definition of literature seems curiously narrow and his judgment not entirely in keeping with his deep enjoyment of the work (in his essay on translating Beowulf, in Robert Creed's anthology on Old English poetry, he expresses the wistful wish that he could have written Lord of the Rings). The resemblances Mr. Moorman finds between Tolkien and others among his friends may seem somewhat shallow and overstated. And the essays do not add up to a total picture of Tolkien. But it is a very interesting and informative collection, and should foster a climate for good criticism, as Mr. Isaacs intends.



Goblin
and
Warg

Shadows of Imagination: The Fantasies of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams, edited by Mark R. Hillegas (Southern Illinois University Press, 1969; \$4.95). This volume devotes four essays to each of the three authors (or perhaps I should say that Lewis gets four and a half pieces and Tolkien three and a half, for Mr. Moorman's contribution is divided between the two). I am afraid that this inclusion of the three in a single volume may subtly foster the widespread notion that they formed a "school," though Mr. Hillegas in his introduction is careful to stress that they were unique and very different writers.

The attack by the late J. B. S. Haldane on Lewis' science-fiction was included in an effort to give a balanced presentation, but I do not think the choice was altogether wise. This essay strikes me as being very wrong-headed and imperceptive, not at all a credit to its great scientist-author, and the observations by which Lewis so thoroughly refutes Mr. Haldane in his reply in Of Other Worlds must surely have been apparent to any sensitive reader of the Deep Heaven trilogy. (I think Haldane's other, "anti-Lewisite" essay--both can be found most readily in his Everything Has a History--offers more cogent criticism of Lewis, so it is a pity that its topic--Lewis' apologetics, not his fiction--makes it inappropriate for this volume.) Chad Walsh's Apostle to the Skeptics remains a highly insightful study, but much of his later work in this area (this essay on "The Man and the Mystery" for one, and his introduction to the book by White discussed below) seems devoted to tempering, almost to recanting, his original enthusiasm. Yet his earlier praise seems to me far more valid than his later fear that Lewis was not sufficiently committed to social reform. Still, Mr. Walsh's psychoanalysis of Lewis, seeing him as being more concerned with the external universe of which he was a part rather than with his inner psyche, is a useful way of approaching him, and has more to recommend it than Robert Plank's reading of "Some Psychological Aspects of Lewis' Trilogy." I fear Mr. Plank's opinion of Lewis' coldness to sex and glorification of violence misses a great deal of the symbolic overtones given to these aspects in the fiction. The destruction of the N.I.C.E. by aphasia, bestiality, and earthquake, for instance, is not gratuitous but a logical consequence of their perversion of language and of the natural order, and its fantastic character is proper to its genre ("a modern fairy-tale for grown-ups"). The best essay in this section is that by Mr. Hillegas. He sets Out of the Silent Planet firmly in the minor genre of the cosmic voyage, and if the point seems evident, it is so often unconsidered that it is well to have it thoroughly treated here.

Charles Moorman's essay on "The Fictive Worlds of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien" seems, like much of his work, to have taken an interesting subject and treated it too hurriedly to have thought it out deeply enough. His point about Lewis' Christian didacticism in the Narnia books seems partially valid but overstressed (Lewis was not always preaching), as does his argument about the "essentially pagan" nature of Middle-earth; while the sharp contrast he assumes between Christianity and paganism is simplistic. Daniel Hughes gives a fairer picture of a Christian Tolkien refreshing the heroic tradition. And Gunnar Urang's study of hope and despair and Providence in the Third Age is valuable. Clyde S. Kilby develops his thesis about the wholeness of Tolkien's world in his usual sound manner.

When Patricia Spacks revised her essay on Tolkien for the Isaacs and Zimbardo anthology, she downgraded her evaluation of Tolkien's imaginative power. She has similarly mixed emotions about Lewis. And here she argues that, in spite of his attractiveness, Charles Williams failed in his attempt to fuse different levels of experience in his fiction. Now I

must confess that I take small pleasure in reading Williams, so my inclination is to agree with her. But since she enjoys Williams tremendously, and reads and re-reads him avidly, there seems to be a curious discrepancy between her aesthetic experience and her aesthetic judgment here, and one suspects that the two of us are missing something. Miss Spacks strikes one as an eighteenth-century worthy anxious to avoid "enthusiasm" in her literary pronouncements. The more balanced judgments of George Winship and W. R. Irwin are probably better criticisms of Williams' art, though I can more readily agree with Mr. Irwin that there is no discrepancy between Williams' doctrines and his literary forms and tactics than I can agree with him that they are well realized imaginatively (or with Mr. Winship that Williams' themes are so realized). I am afraid my blind spot for Williams (probably related to my lack of enthusiasm for the occult and the mystical) does not make me a good critic either of him or of his critics, and I would not have written even this much on the subject if I had not been committed to review this book by my interest in the other sections. The fourth and last piece on Williams is an informative reminiscence by Alice Hadfield on the man among his colleagues at Amen House.

The essays are too uneven in quality for me to give the anthology a very high recommendation, but anyone with more than a casual interest in any of the three authors will surely find a perusal worthwhile.



5. BroadSides

Catharine R. Stimpson, J. R. R. Tolkien (Columbia University Press, 1969; \$1.00). It might have been expected that the university which hosts a TSA meeting annually would eventually include Tolkien in its series of Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, though it has taken them until their forty-first entry to do so. But it is a strange pamphlet. The author admits to liking Tolkien once, and has faithfully read his works, both imaginative and scholarly, as well as the relevant criticism; and she has done an admirable job of fitting discussions (however brief) of all his fiction into about forty-two pages. But she is continually pointing out how Tolkien reworks old mythic motifs and elements from honored narrative traditions, and then turning about and declaring by fiat in the teeth of her own evidence that the result is weak. Hence when she concludes that the modern world needs "genuine myth and rich fantasy" one is left wondering wherein Tolkien has failed to supply this. Since she includes in her condemnation Hermann Hesse and William Golding, both writers whom I admire, we may simply have here a case of a radical difference in taste. But she does have her blind spots: one can just understand how she can see antifeminist attitudes underlying the wounding of Shelob, though it seems a misreading of the symbolic dimensions of this event, but when the lovely myth of the Ents and the Entwives is also seen as supporting this all credibility is lost.

Peter Kreeft, C. S. Lewis: A Critical Essay (Eerdmans, 1969; 95¢). This is another worthy offering in the series of Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective, giving a good, though short, introduction to Lewis. Mr. Kreeft covers Lewis' many facets about as well as his limited space allows, and his liberal quotations do much to convey Lewis' thought and flavor. There is rather an excess of exclamation points, and Lewis might have been embarrassed by it (who could keep a straight face upon learning he "was not a man: he was a world"?). But it is well for a critic to be enthusiastic about his subject. At the end Mr. Kreeft lists some of Lewis' books in the order of his personal preference; this is unlikely to win much agreement, but Mr. Kreeft is entitled to his own opinions. Still, I view the whole effort as a lamentable example of what I call the "top ten mentality"--the insistence on ranking things in a supposed hierarchy of quality, whatever straws must be split to put something into second place rather than first and so on, instead of enjoying individual things for individual excellences.

Nathan Comfort Starr, C. S. Lewis' Till We Have Faces: Introduction and Commentary (Seabury Press, 1968; 85¢). This is the fifth entry in the series on Religious Dimensions in Literature that the Seabury Reading Program has offered. It follows the usual pattern of the series in first giving biographical information about the author and a précis of the work before launching into a full-fledged discussion, and Mr. Starr sketches in these things well enough for general purposes while keeping most of his twenty pages or so for his essay proper. This is intended to be more suggestive than satisfying, but he focuses very nicely on some major themes of this perplexing novel: love as devotion and as possession, death as awakening to truth before the death of the body, the divine as mysteriously both good and terrible. Our reading is the richer for the comments of our guide. But two errors must be mentioned. On p. 21, it should be Weston and not Devine who is identified as the Un-man of Perelandra. And on p. 22 it should be John Milton's masque, Comus, that Lewis revered, not the oeuvre of Albert Camus.

6. Lewisiana

William Luther White, The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis (Abingdon Press, 1969; \$5.95). This is the latest in a long line of introductions to Lewis and his work. Now, since Lewis is noted for his clarity

and readability, I can think of few writers who are less in need of any introduction at all; or, if such were necessary, I would have supposed that the efforts of Chad Walsh, Clyde S. Kilby, Richard B. Cunningham, Peter Kreeft, and the contributors to Light on C. S. Lewis, would already have sufficiently introduced him. But take heart, for though this book does range over the whole Lewis canon, it keeps to the specific focus announced in its title, and provides a really excellent study.

Mr. White's good sense is refreshing. He is the first person I know of to point out in print that not everything Lewis wrote was intended to preach the Christian faith--his literary criticism, at least, was nonpartisan, and his fiction was imaginative expression and not a serious attempt to create a space age theology. It is well to have the reminder, especially since Mr. White's own concern is with Lewis the amateur theologian and so naturally he stresses the preaching element. And a very good study he gives of the non-literal nature of religious language (in which the reality is more, not less, than the metaphor expressing it), of Lewis as a Christian re-mythologizer for modern men, and of Lewis' dour view of the existential human condition and his exhilarating view of the human potential. A superb (though, alas, unannotated) bibliography of critical works on Lewis adds to the value of the book. Tolkien fans will be interested also in a letter from that gentleman in Appendix 5, on the name "Inklings" and the formation of the group.

A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis, edited by Clyde S. Kilby (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969; \$5.75). Here Mr. Kilby has done for Lewis much what Lewis did for George MacDonald. He has culled out favorite passages and arranged them under several broad headings, to illustrate the range and character of Lewis' thought, his wit and logic, and his gift for a good turn of phrase. The volume is primarily concerned with the theological, the philosophical, and the ethical; the literary and critical observations are largely unrepresented, sad to say. But this is good reading, as Lewis always is. And it might serve as yet another introduction, and whet the appetite of the reader for the full-fledged original works.

C. S. Lewis, Narrative Poems, edited by Walter Hooper (Geoffrey Bles, 1969; 25s.). Lewis' primary ambition was always to be a great poet, but I am afraid I must concur with his own judgment that he was not particularly successful in this area. Still, though I am hesitant to recommend his verse to others, who may not share my tastes, I enjoy it myself. I have read even the Spenserian stanzas of Dymor with pleasure, if not rapture. This poem is here printed for the third time (wisely, Lewis' interesting preface to the second edition is also included), but the other three works had not appeared previously. Of these, the fairy-tale atmosphere of "The Nameless Isle" reminds me of the poetry of William Morris. I confess to a special fondness for the fragment of "Launcelot," because of its matter (I love the Arthurian legend) and because of what I think would have been its theme (the destruction of the good by the best: "The Sangrail has betrayed us all"). And it is this poem which gives some of the best examples of Lewis' pictorial imagination, as this view of Launcelot riding on the Grail Quest:

The sun rose high: the shadow of the horse and man
Came from behind to underneath them and began
To lengthen out in front of them...

or this snapshot of the Queen waiting for the return of Launcelot:

...The tormented flame
Leaned from the candle guttering in the noisy gloom
Of wind and rain, where Guinever amid her room

Stood with scared eyes at midnight on the windy
floor,
Thinking, forever thinking...

But "The Queen of Drum" shows the most flexible handling of verse, and the story (of the appeal and the danger of the dreamworld) is quite gripping.

C. S. Lewis, Selected Literary Essays, edited by Walter Hooper (Cambridge University Press, 1969; \$7.95). But to find Lewis at his best, we go to his essays, where he had freest play for his talent for romantic ratiocination, for imparting order to large masses of information, for clarifying complex and abstruse ideas with witty analogies and revealing metaphors, and for logical argument. These twenty-two pieces have all been published elsewhere, sometimes in very out-of-the-way places, and it is good to have them all gathered together. Whether he is talking about Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Donne, Scott, Morris, or Kipling, meter or metaphor or medieval poetry, Lewis always enlightens us and enriches our understanding. And let us be grateful for the inclusion of such classic essays as Lewis' refutation (not too strong a word, for the replies by Mr. Loomis and Mr. Utley miss the whole point) of "The Anthropological Approach" to the criticism of medieval literature, and his wonderful inaugural address at Cambridge.

And Lewis remains, I am happy to say, one of the most prolific of posthumous authors. We have not yet caught up with all his unpublished writings, nor seen collected all his pieces that have only appeared in scattered journals. A collection of his theological and ethical essays, called God in the Dock, should be published by Eerdmans before this issue of Orcrist appears, and other books are also being planned.

